Mary Jo Salter's anthology resuscitates "some poems I was still fond of."

out of print," she says. *A Phone Call to the Future* "was a way of resuscitating some poems I was still fond of."

With her own poetry, Salter could pick and choose as she pleased, though she did take advice from her long-time editor at Knopf, Ann Close, and her husband, the poet and novelist Brad Leithauser '75, J.D. '79 (himself the editor of the *Norton Book of Ghost Stories*). But when Norton hired her in 1992 as an editor for its anthology, she had to balance her own preferences against poets' historical import. "Just because I'm not a huge Ezra Pound fan," she points out, "doesn't mean I can presume to take him out of the *Norton*." But she did take the chance to speak up for writers whose work she felt had been unduly neglected—Marianne Moore, for example. "There is something wonderfully shaped and new and strange about how she wrote," Salter says. Moore had just four poems in the third *Norton*; in the fourth, published in 1996, she had nine.

For the fifth edition, which appeared in 2005, Salter had to add more authors without adding more pages. Cuts, whether of poems or poets, were inevitable. "In the case of dead writers, they don't protest," she says. "In the case of living ones, that was a little more stressful." Still, she relished the opportunity to reconsider which threads best represented the whole tapestry of a poet's life. Salter dropped one of Moore's later poems and added two earlier ones that showcased her tendency to fit each poem into a brand-new verse form. "I didn't particularly like Moore myself when I was younger," Salter admits. "But I've become a big fan of hers in the last 10 to 15 years."

As *A Phone Call to the Future* demonstrates, Salter, too, invents new forms. The nine stanzas in "Costanza Bonarelli" are all seven lines long, and each line has three stressed syllables. Another poem, "Poetry Slalom," tries to look like someone flying down a hill on skis. Salter enjoys language games and favors words with double meanings. The first line of "Costanza Bonarelli" describes the sculpture literally as a "bust," but the word, in one of its more colloquial uses, hints at the awful violence ahead. She also likes words she can use in a variety of ways, in both verbal and adjectival forms, for example. In "Please Forward," she finds a postcard in a used book that she and the writer of the card, Salter surmises, thought equally unreadable: "So Gert/...had failed, like me, and stuck/the postcard in the early/scene where she got stuck."

Poetic form is also something Salter knows how to teach, along with the history of meter and the many uses of rhyme. At Harvard she took classes with Elizabeth Bishop (herself a Moore protégée) and Robert Fitzgerald, and was poetry editor of the *Advocate*, the undergraduate literary magazine. After graduation, she taught English in Japan for three years and, beginning in 1984, poetry at Mount Holyoke. What started as a part-time, annual contract lasted until last year, when she and her husband both accepted positions at Johns Hopkins University's Writing Seminars. They took the jobs to move closer to family—her father lives in Mary-

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Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Ken Bresler requests a source for "God looks down and judges."

"tyranny of the left versus that of the right...dogs and cats" (March-April). Thomas Owen forwarded this unattributed anecdote from *Leo Tolstoy* (1946; page 651), by Ernest J. Simmons: "When asked 'Is there not a difference between the killing that a revolutionist does and that which a policeman does?' Tolstoy answered: 'There is as much difference between cat-shit and dog-shit. But I don't like the smell of either one or the other.' "

"Carving nature at her joints" (May-June). Lydia Kirsopp Lake was the first to identify Plato as the ultimate source of this concept, seen (in Harold N. Fowler's translations for the Loeb Classical Library) in *Phaedrus* 265 d-e, "dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver," and in *Statesman* 287c, "Let us divide them, then, like an animal that is sacrificed, by joints."

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Photograph by Bill Denison