

Malahat *lite*

Virtual Newsletter of *The Malahat Review*

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ISSUE LAUNCH EDITION

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www.malahatreview.ca

1. Issue 174, Spring 2011 In the mail and on newsstands in May!

Our Spring issue showcases the winners of our 2nd-annual Open Season awards: Cynthia Woodman Kerkham, Philip Huynh, and Jessica Hiemstra-van der Horst.

This issue also contains Michael Larson's "The Woods," a gentle, almost old-fashioned tale of childhood reminiscence, sibling bonds—and fairies. It's also about the importance of imagination.

In spite of our inability to make it useful, however, the pond remained our important secret, and we liked to imagine that we alone were the witnesses to its existence.

In Hal Walling's "Party," a 16-year-old boy is allowed to host his own birthday party. As it progresses, his parents wait it out in their bedroom, allowing the boy's father to contemplate the twists and turns of his own life and the choices that led him to this night.

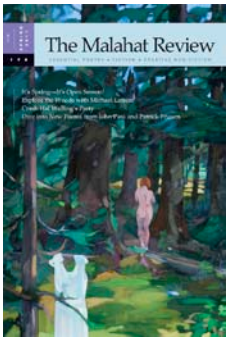
Nate knows it's his ass if anything goes haywire, so the drinking's not a problem. I'm even having one myself. If the kids ask, we're out—that's what Karen told Nate. 'So the parents don't think we're running the show.'

A hauntingly timely work of non-fiction graces our Spring issue as well. The recent devastation in Japan will, no doubt, come to mind when you read "At War's End in Indonesia" by Toshiro Saito (1907-1992), as translated by his granddaughter, Sally Ito. This memoir chronicles Saito's bittersweet journey from his post in Indonesia to reunite with family in Japan at the end of World War II.

As integral to the season as cherry blossoms, our Spring issue hosts a bouquet of fresh poetry from Patrick Friesen, Deanna Young, R. Johnson, Brian Bartlett, Hamish Guthrie, Jody Aliesen, John Pass, Karen Hofmann, Saint James Harris Wood, Anne Marie Todkill, Tim Bowling, and Elizabeth Ross.

No *Malahat* is complete without reviews of new Canadian titles. This issue's well-read reviewers include: Erling Friis-Baastad, Sara Cassidy, Corinna Chong, Katia Grubisic, Donna Kane, June Halliday, Amy Reiswig, and Mark Callanan.

2. Spring Issue Launch Party



Tuesday, May 3 2011
7:00 - 10:00 p.m.
UVic's Fine Arts Building
Lobby and room 103

FREE admission
(and treats!)

Come out and celebrate the launch of our Spring issue! The winners of our 2011 Open Season Awards in poetry (**Cynthia Woodman Kerkham**) and short fiction (**Philip Huynh**) will read from their winning pieces. **Patrick Friesen** will read his poems from the issue, and Assistant Editor **Rhonda Batchelor** will read from **Michael Larson's** "The Woods." We'll also hear from two of our editorial board members: **Barbara Stewart** will read from her creative non-fiction book, "Campie," to be released by Heritage House in Fall 2011, and **Iain Higgins** will read some of his new fiction.

All **Friends of The Malahat** in attendance can enter their names in a draw for two prizes donated by some of our supporters:

- A free one-year subscription to Arc Poetry Magazine
- A book donated by The Overleaf Café-Bookshop

Be sure to listen to "Wild Orphans" on CFUV 101.9 FM on Monday, May 2nd from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. to hear Cynthia Woodman Kerkham and Patrick Friesen read from, and speak about their poetry.

3. Board Meeting: A Q&A with *Malahat* fiction board member Aaron Shepard

Aaron Shepard is a recent graduate of UVic's MFA Writing Program, and has a background in outdoor recreation management, forestry, fisheries and music. That is, he used to stumble around clearcuts with his brush-saw by day, and play drums in Kootenay taverns by night. He has served on The Malahat Review's fiction board for a little over two years.



He's currently giving his first novel a final edit before sending it out, and getting antsy to start the next one.

Describe your ideal work of short fiction.

A great short story surprises and challenges me with its vivid, multifaceted imagery—objects or events that defy easy definition or categorization. The story should deliver an emotional impact in a subtle, almost accidental fashion: believable characters and understated relationships that sneak into your heart without being sentimental or earnest. I'm always amazed at the beautiful economy of great writing, when nothing is wasted, and every word helps build the central idea of the story. And I do like stories that aren't afraid of big ideas or themes, even though we're told, as writers, not to think about them too much.

What is your favourite (for the moment or all-time) short story?

There are a ton of stories I admire, including a lot of the usual suspects. But I'll go completely off the board and say "The Narrow Jet," by A. S. Byatt, which has been one of my favourites for a while now. It was in the Paris Review back in 2005, but has never been anthologized. For starters, the level of detail is wonderful—she's not afraid to slow down and really paint us a picture, yet it never feels like she's showboating. Every rich detail contributes to the story's meaning in the economic way I mentioned before. The characters and the setting all seem mythical, as though out of a fairy tale, but contain such complexity that the obvious symbolic meaning of each thing—a fountain, a sculpture, a strange creature—is subverted, and the story's moral remains elusive. You sense that the author is still wrestling with the questions raised in the narrative. In terms of conflict, the story is very low-key—two old men battling against time? Art vs the primordial?—so most of the tension seems to come from the relationship between the reader and the imagery. Finally, although "The Narrow Jet" is what I'd call an "ideas" story, it's also about a friendship. I find the story both uplifting and comforting, and I keep re-reading it for that reason.

From the time you started on our fiction board, what has been your favourite pick?

"When in the Field with Her at His Back," by Ben Lof (Spring 2009, Issue 166). As part of my graduate coursework I volunteered to edit the story, which we don't normally do. By exchanging a few drafts with him, I got to watch characters and ideas change as the piece became more polished and tight. The emotion of Ben's story is wonderfully understated, despite a setting that's both dramatic and exotic. It went on to win the Howard O'Hagan Award for Short Fiction and to be nominated for the Journey Prize, so that was also a pleasure for me, knowing I'd played a very small role in the story's shaping.

What are you *not* seeing in submissions to *The Malahat* that you would like to see?

I see a lot of stories that are well-crafted, especially in one or two particular elements: there's a strong voice, or the dialogue is extra snappy, or the structure is fresh and startling. So there's skill, but not always a lot of heart. Writers seem to be writing about the things they feel they ought to be writing about, and not the things that obsess them. That is, a lot of stories are missing that sense of the writer wrestling or contending with something vital to him or her. When we find a story that does have that sense of an author's struggle, we can usually tell. It's often the one that gets chosen—it just has that extra layer to it, that tendency to resonate long after it has been read.

4. Winners of our 2011 Founders' Awards

2011 JACK HODGINS FOUNDERS' AWARD FOR FICTION

Established in honour of the celebrated Victoria novelist's contribution to Canadian letters and to the University of Victoria, the **Jack Hodgins Founders' Award for Fiction** recognizes the excellence of *The Malahat Review's* contributors by awarding an annual prize of \$1000 to the author of the best short story or novella to have appeared in the magazine during the previous calendar year. The winner, selected by an outside judge, is announced prior to the publication of *The Malahat Review's* Spring issue.

This year, judge Caroline Adderson chose "**Girl on the Fire Escape**" by **Kris Bertin** (issue #173, Winter 2010).

Of Bertin's story, Caroline Adderson said: "First, my apologies to the venerable Jack Hodgins for choosing as the recipient of the honour that bears his name a story that features webcam sex. 'Girl On the Fire Escape' won me over despite the fact that what people get up to with their PCs is usually too much information for me. This in itself is proof of writer Kris Bertin's talent. Add to it his tightly controlled sentences, his spot-on dialogue, his surprising narrative line, but most of all his kick-ass Gretchen, or Katja, or Tonya, or whatever the heck her name really is. A heroic female character with the attitude of an anti-hero? Yes!"

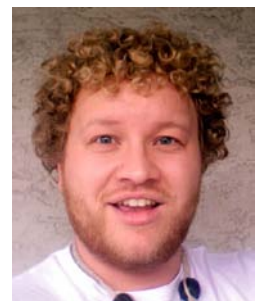


Kris Bertin is a Halifax-based writer with work published (or soon-to-be-published) in *The Malahat Review*, *The Antigonish Review*, *PILOT*, and *WORDS & IMAGES*. He currently works as a bartender at *Bearly's House of Blues and Ribs*, where his faith in humanity is destroyed and restored on a weekly basis.

Stay Focused. Eat Healthy. Don't Kill Yourself. Kris Bertin on Writing "Girl on the Fire Escape"

Will Johnson: "Girl on the Fire Escape" is one of the raciest stories I've ever read in a Canadian literary magazine. The raw sexuality and taboo subject matter is unusual for a publication like *The Malahat Review*. What inspired you to write about the world of cam girls?

Kris Bertin: For me, cam girls are just an ordinary part of the internet landscape. I can barely watch a video of a dog doing something funny without one showing up and trying to get me to join her show and give her money. I didn't even think about it as a particularly racy idea when I was writing it, and it was never meant to be the focus of the piece. It just seemed like the right place to go for this particular character. It serves an important function in the story, and that's all that really matters to me.



Read the rest of this interview on our website: www.malahatreview.ca

2011 P. K. PAGE FOUNDERS' AWARD FOR POETRY

The **P. K. Page Founders' Award for Poetry** recognizes the excellence of *The Malahat Review's* contributors by awarding a prize of \$1000 to the author of the best poem or sequence of poems to have appeared in the magazine during the previous calendar year. The winner, selected by an outside judge who is recognized for his or her accomplishment as a poet, is announced prior to the publication of *The Malahat Review's* Spring issue.

This year, judge Russell Thornton chose "**Jetlag**" by **Steven Heighton** (issue #171, Summer 2010).

Of the poem, Thornton wrote: "Steven Heighton's 'Jetlag' is an extremely fine evocation of moments of awareness in which an individual fuses imaginatively with the bedrock authenticities of his life—the growing into truthfulness, the experience of love, fatherhood, 'sheer being,' and the hearing of a child's 'chanting the genesis of all she spied'—all leaving the speaker 'summoned to seeing.' I kept coming back to the 'no one room' in this poem—literally a room in which the speaker finds himself upon his arrival in a city in the far north of European Russia, travel-harrowed, body clock awry—and marvelling at how the piece moves from a vivid description of jetlag to an intense recording of how, in certain circumstances of dislocation, a person can be allowed intimations of the depths of his own life and of the bewildering contraption of human consciousness and existence, period, and be deeply altered. How a person can register in his physical being and be instantly schooled in an 'urgent inventory' of psychic essentials that will 'rudder' him 'in the real' while 'it's night in [his] bones.' On a variety of fronts, including richness of theme and superb lyrical execution, the poem's a genuine triumph."



Steven Heighton's most recent books are the novel *Every Lost Country* and a poetry collection, *Patient Frame*, in which "Jetlag" is included.

Back Through the Ear's Narrowed Estuary: Richard Cole in Conversation with Steven Heighton

"Jetlag" is set in Arkhangel'sk. What is your connection to this Russian Province that inspired your poem?

The connection is purely imaginative. I've never been to Arkhangel'sk, the city or the province, and I doubt I'll ever go. I did get the idea for "Jetlag" and wrote the first draft while teaching a poetry course in St Petersburg, Russia, and I wrote a second draft on an overnight train heading further north to the small city of Petrozavodsk. But Arkhangel'sk was another night's journey north, just shy of the Arctic Circle, and though I wanted to go, I ran out of time.

So why did I "place" my finished poem, by means of that italicized subtitled line, in Arkhangel'sk in June? To confuse things further, the June part is true—I did experience St Petersburg's annual White Nights fever, squads of revellers roaming the twilight streets at 1 a.m., brandishing magnums of awful Crimean champagne. The setting didn't feel quite right for the poem, so I shifted it two nights' journey north.

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