

Malahat *lite*

Virtual Newsletter of *The Malahat Review*

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FRIENDS EDITION

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1. Meet a Friend: Barbara Colebrook Peace

Barbara Colebrook Peace joined The Friends of *The Malahat* at our Spring issue launch in May, 2011. *Malahat* circulation and marketing manager, Susan Sanford Blades interviewed her for this edition of *Malahat lite*.

Susan Sanford Blades: You attended our Spring issue launch in May. What were some of your favourite readings from the evening?

Barbara Colebrook Peace: I enjoyed the Spring issue launch very much; the readings were full of life and so diverse. To tell you the truth, I enjoyed all the readings! What stood out for me was Cynthia Woodman Kerkham's lovely glosa, "Late Summer in Frederick Arm," which was moving and thought-provoking; I also loved Patrick Friesen's poems, especially "daughter" which haunted me for weeks after the reading. It was a great joy to hear my friend Barbara Stewart read from her book, "Campie," a creative nonfiction account of her experiences working on a northern oil rig. She and I met in a writing course when we were both setting out on the writing journey, so it meant a lot to me to be there on this occasion.

SSB: You couldn't make it to our recent panel discussion on creative nonfiction. Do you have any suggestions for future *Malahat*-sponsored panel discussions or workshops?

BCP: Yes, I'd really like something on editing from both sides: how to offer editing suggestions, and how to receive editing suggestions, in a way that will most help the work. I think this topic would be of general interest, not just to editors: we are all engaged in trying to help each other so that the work can be the best it can be.

SSB: What have been some of your favourite pieces published in *The Malahat Review* this year?

BCP: I found Eve Joseph's "Intimate Strangers" outstanding (issue #173, Winter 2010). It's one of those pieces of writing that actually changes one's life. These are "comfortable words" in the old sense of that phrase, when it used to mean "words that strengthen." Reading this thoughtful record of someone who has spent many years working in hospice, I found much to comfort me and much to think about.

Poetry is my favourite form of reading, so I always read the poems in *The Malahat Review* first as soon as it arrives. It's hard to choose among so many excellent poems, but in addition to the ones I already mentioned, I love Darren Bifford's "Wolf Hunter," [winner of the 2010 Far Horizons Award for Poetry] and Patricia Young's palinode, "Heartsick" (both from issue #172, Fall 2010). I very much enjoyed Anita Lahey's insightful review essay on the three last books of poetry by P. K. Page (issue #173, Winter 2010).

I also loved Dede Crane's short story "The Fall of Langue d'Occ" (issue #172, Fall 2010). That's something I read very recently (I don't read through entire issues when they arrive) and I find myself thinking about it lately when I'm doing the dishes or walking the beach.

SSB: Have you taken advantage of any of the other Friends benefits (discount at Renaissance Books, discounted membership to Open Space Arts Society, discounted subscriptions to *Arc*, *EVENT*, and/or *The Fiddlehead*)?

BCP: Not yet, just because I've been unusually busy, but I do intend to. I was lucky enough to win a subscription to *Arc* at the *Malahat* spring issue launch, so I'm looking forward to it!

SSB: You are a local poet, with two books of poetry to your name (*Duet for Wings and Earth* and *Kyrie*). What is, in your opinion, the importance of literary magazines in cultivating the literary arts in Canada?

BCP: Imagine what the world would be like without literary magazines. Cook books and crime books would continue to flourish. For the first few years it might seem as though nothing had happened: we would still have all those back issues of literary magazines to curl up with. But down the road, all sorts of writers simply wouldn't exist, because they wouldn't have received the encouragement of an audience and readership. Poets, especially, would start to disappear... Perhaps we'd have to buy tickets at a thousand dollars apiece to go and hear the last living Canadian poet.

SSB: Let's hope it doesn't come to that! Thank you very much for your time, your thoughtful answers, and your support of the magazine. I hope to see you at our Summer issue launch on September 19th at UVic's Fine Arts building (more details in the coming weeks).



2. New Friends Offer:

Discounts on cards and *Malahat* author portraits by local artist Chelsea Rushton

All Friends of *The Malahat* will now receive discounts on beautiful cards and *Malahat* author portraits by local artist and Malahateer, Chelsea Rushton.

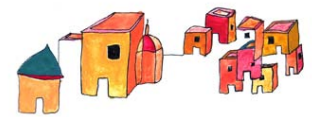
For Friends of *The Malahat*:

All cards: 4 for \$10
8 for \$20
Additional cards can be purchased for \$3 each

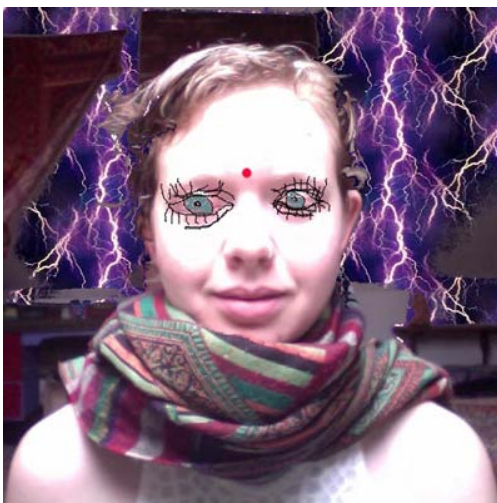
Malahat author portraits: \$5 each

Chelsea's work can be viewed at <http://chelshotel.com/malahat>

Send orders to Chelsea at:
chelshotel@gmail.com
(she will then invoice you)



TEPPER TOWN
Chelsea Rushton



Chelsea Rushton is a poet, visual artist, and meditator from Victoria B.C. She graduated with distinction from the University of Victoria's department of Writing in 2010. From 2007-2009, Chelsea served as the president of the Writing Students' Union and the editor-in-chief of *This Side of West*, the university's undergraduate literary journal; and from 2008-2010, *The Malahat Review* enlisted her as editorial assistant. Since she received her BFA, Chelsea has had two solo art exhibitions, certified as a yoga instructor, and has published *sunmoon*, a chapbook printed by burgeoning Oak Press. She can still be found at *Malahat* launches, making mischief with pen and paper and camera. Chelsea divides the rest of her time among painting, writing, mantra, asana practice, and playing with other people's cats.

3. Recap of *Malahat* panel discussion

To Tell the Truth: The Many Faces (and Controversies) of Creative Nonfiction

In May 2011, *The Malahat Review* hosted a panel discussion on creative nonfiction. Entry was free for Friends of *The Malahat*. *Malahat* volunteer Vanessa Herman summed it up for us.



So many creative nonfiction writers constantly worry over sticking to the absolute truth and never consider crossing that barbed wire fence into the fog of imagined fact. Others disregard that fence completely and tigers have dialogue, memory becomes pliable, and the truth is the author's own telling of it. At *The Malahat Review's* panel, *To Tell the Truth: The Many Faces (and Controversies) of Creative Nonfiction*, authors David Leach, M. A. C. Farrant, George Sipos, and Christin Geall discussed the challenges and issues faced by writers of creative nonfiction.

"Everyone that encounters the term creative nonfiction, finds it slightly odd and bewildering," said **David Leach** as he began the discussion. He gave an overarching history of the genre from its roots in Ancient Greece to its present form, "a big tent of diversity: of styles, voices, and approaches to writing... it [is] more than the truth or true story dressed in narrative." As Lynne Van Luven would say, it is a magpie genre.

Anyone left wondering what a CNF story really looks like should check out the winning story of *The Malahat Review's* 2010 CNF contest, "Intimate Strangers," by Eve Joseph in issue #173, Winter 2010. According to David Leach it is a personal essay in the classic sense, with "fragmented sequences of anecdotes, observations, and literary allusions, all tied together by the author's perceptions and poetic ear, rather than an overarching story."



With the introduction finished, each panelist was invited to the podium to discuss their work and how it fits into the genre of creative nonfiction, or if they chose, just their perspective on the genre.

Christin Geall briefly mentioned her work as a grad student and how in such a program much of the work produced quickly became predominantly memoir since a large volume needs to be written in a short time. Geall has a fiery passion for CNF and quickly turned the discussion to fake memoirs/nonfiction, how they come about and who is getting caught and why. "People love true stories," says Geall, creative nonfiction has become such a major part of pop culture in the last ten years that, "everyone is writing memoir, and just like currency, counterfeits begin to show up." When authors are caught people ask why didn't they just call it fiction from the start? "Well fiction doesn't sell... True stories have been the currency all the way back to St. Augustine's Letters." According to Geall it is an easy formula to fake, and "every time one of these memoirs is debunked writers and critics get together to discuss what constitutes nonfiction. Often there is an argument put forward for emotional truth, which is supposed to cover lying. My definition of nonfiction is simple: it is a radically subjective account of events that objectively took place." There is tension between memory and what actually took place, which makes the genre so fascinating. For Geall there is also a difference between the

memoir as a novel and the personal essay that leans on the idea of truth and questions the author's own sense of memory and the idea of truth. Nabokov's *Speak Memory* is an example of this style.

Until **George Sipos'** book, *The Geography of Arrival: A Memoir*, was nominated for the Charles Taylor Prize for literary nonfiction he had never considered his work to be nonfiction. "The concept of genre really doesn't matter," to this veteran bookseller and author. What does matter is good writing. "Readers respond to good writing, they respond to the book if the book catches their attention and provides them with some kind of structural delight or pleasure, and its genre doesn't really matter to readers. It certainly doesn't matter to writers." As Sipos went on to discuss the organic formation of his memoir, how it evolved from writing letters to someone who was visiting a town in Ontario that he used to live in, he continued to note how as a writer he was simply interested in exploring the old places he used to know, following wherever the story led him in the



writing process. He wasn't concerned if his work was "true" or make believe, he just wrote the story for its own sake. It wasn't until the book was being published and his editor insisted that the book be labeled with a genre in order to put it on the right shelf in bookstores, that it became a memoir. Sipos explained, "Was it a memoir? Sure because much of it actually happened. Was it a work of fiction? Yeah, a fair bit of it is made up. Was it a guidebook? Damn right. So the concept of genre held no interest for me."

"The business of genre really is very interesting," said **M. A. C. Farrant** as she took her place at the podium. "I want to talk about how I came to write

My Turquoise Years which was my coming out for calling my work what it is, which is nonfiction." The quote that inspired her approach to her first memoir was this, "We are shaped by our stories and by the stories of those who have loved us," (from a memoir she reviewed for the *Globe and Mail*).

Instead of writing an entire life into a single book Farrant chose to focus on just six weeks during the summer of 1960 and two significant events in her life, her adolescence and her mother's first visit since she was 5-years old. These two elements became, "the clothesline that carried the story along." As long as she kept these two points in mind she was free to digress to tell any other story that took place in those six weeks. "I made up all of the dialogue in *My Turquoise Years*. I took courage from Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, and the scene of his baptism that opens the book. It's a beautiful scene, but he couldn't possibly have remembered the dialogue when he was only a week old. If he can do that, I can do that." Her main issue in writing her memoirs, *My Turquoise Years* and *The Secret Lives of Litterbugs*, was "how do we remember what has passed? Do we display our memories, the stories we tell about ourselves like jewels on a tray and select the brightest ones? Are they that easily retrieved? Or more probable, is it that our stories are more like hauled baggage bumping along behind us, broken in places and with parts missing, roughened and paled by the years? I discovered that in remembering, what we do is select and refashion these artifacts from our lives, whether they were moments ago or years, piercing some together, discarding others like anthropologists." The way a writer can weave the personal, a moving and important moment in her life, and the story she is supposed to capture, as well as the reality of time and place into a work of creative nonfiction is what makes the genre so remarkable.



(read the rest of this recap on our website
<http://www.malahatreview.ca/friends/cnfpanel.html>)

4. Become a Friend of *The Malahat*

I want to be a Friend of *The Malahat*!

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Expiry:

{Please make **\$45** cheques payable to
The Malahat Review}

Mail to:
The Malahat Review
Friends of *The Malahat*
The University of Victoria
PO Box 1700, Stn CSC
Victoria BC V8W 2Y2

As a Friend of *The Malahat*
you will receive:

- 1-year subscription to *The Malahat Review*
- 10% discount at Renaissance Books (14 Bastion Square in Victoria)
- Invitations to four issue launches per year
- Free admission to all ticketed *Malahat* events
- Special offers at issue launches, such as free books, or entry for door prizes
- Free admission to two Malahat-sponsored workshops or panels per year
- Discounted subscriptions to select Canadian literary magazines: *The Fiddlehead*, *Arc Poetry*, and *EVENT*
- Malahat *lite* delivered monthly to your inbox
- A free coffee, tea, or cookie at Overleaf Café and Bookshop's Saturday salons (1105 Pandora Ave. at Cook)
- Discounted membership to Open Space Arts Society in Victoria (openspace.ca)
- discounts on gift cards and illustrations of *Malahat* authors by local artist, Chelsea Rushton (visit chelshotel.com/malahat for details)

A one-year
membership costs
\$45

5. Upcoming *Malahat* Contests



2012 Open Season Awards

Deadline: **November 1, 2011**

Prize: \$1000 awarded in each of three genres

Entry fee: \$35 (includes a one-year subscription)

Enter either:

- up to three poems max 100 lines each
- one short story up to 2500 words in length
- one creative nonfiction story up to 2500 words

2012 Novella Prize

Deadline: **February 1, 2012**

Prize: \$1500

Entry fee: \$35 (includes a one-year subscription)

Enter a single work of fiction between 10, 000 and 20, 000 words in length. No restrictions as to subject matter or approach apply.

2012 Far Horizons Award for Poetry

Deadline: **May 1, 2012**

Prize: \$1000

Entry fee: \$25 (includes a one-year subscription)

Writers whose poetry has yet to be published in book form (book = 48 pages or more) are encouraged to enter up to three poems of 60 lines or less.

More info on all contests:

http://www.malahatreview.ca/contests/contests_info.html

2012 Creative Nonfiction Prize

Deadline: **August 1, 2012**

Prize: \$1000

Entry fee: \$35 (includes a one-year subscription)

Send in a personal essay, memoir, literary journalism, etc. between 2000 and 3000 words in length.