

# Malahat *lite*

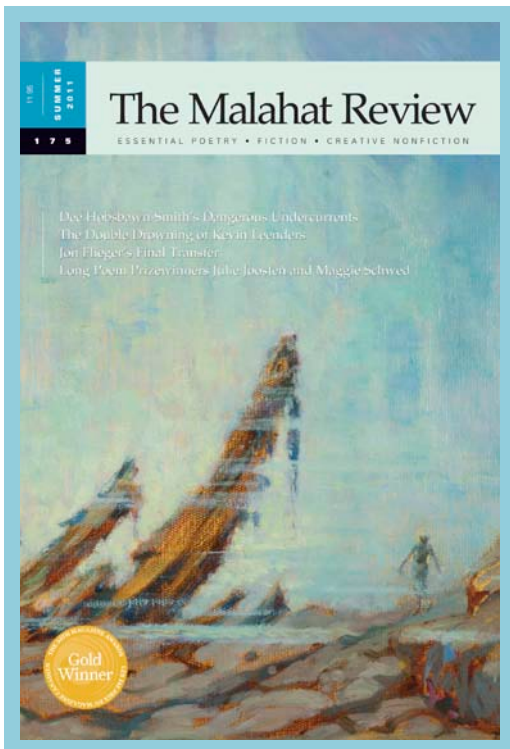
## Virtual Newsletter of *The Malahat Review*

Vol. 8, No. 6, July 2011

**ISSUE LAUNCH EDITION**

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[www.malahatreview.ca](http://www.malahatreview.ca)

### 1. Issue 175, Summer 2011 On newsstands in August!

Highlighting our summer issue are our 2011 Long Poem Prize winners: Julie Joosten's "The Sun Estate," and Maggie Schwed's "The Constant Gardener." Both are meditative and assured, with language that sings and takes risks.

Andrea Routley's short story, "Habitat" concerns the well-meant but ineffectual efforts of Ray, a divorced, animal-loving hoarder to make room for his teenaged daughter (and her guinea pig) in his chaotic environment.

Another well-meaning man features in "Undercurrents," a story by Dee Hobsbawn-Smith. Peter Merrick befriends a mysterious down-and-out family staying at his campground. His largesse stems primarily from his attraction to the teenaged mother of a toddler whose father is either absent or all too present.

*I sat with a Scotch by the fire and spun tales for myself, inventing possible scenarios, ignoring the implications. They all involved a long-legged redhead. A chubby child played at the periphery like a question mark.*

"Transfer," by Jon Flieger is a heart (and gut)-wrenching, stream-of-consciousness tale told from the perspective of a young guy employed to recover bodies from accident sites and transport them to the morgue. The narrator's thick-skinned approach belies a tender soul.

The creative nonfiction in this issue is "Double Drowning," by Kevin Leenders. On a routine naval training dive, Leenders almost died. Twice. The description of this rare first-hand experience, and the subsequent emotional after-effects are the basis for this unique essay.

*After four choking lungfuls my vision turned blood red then closed to a single dot in the centre. And then there was nothing."*

As usual, rounding out this wide-ranging issue are insightful book reviews of recent Canadian titles. Take a deep breath and plunge right in for some unforgettable summer reading.

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[www.malahatreview.ca/subscribe.html](http://www.malahatreview.ca/subscribe.html)

## 2. **Board Meeting:** **A Q&A with Malahat Poetry Board Member Jay Ruzesky**

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*Jay Ruzesky began his long career with The Malahat Review when Connie Rooke hired him as a work study student in 1985. After finishing his MA with Alistair MacLeod in Windsor, Ontario, Ruzesky joined the editorial board in 1989 making him the longest serving Malahateer ever—a fact of which he is some proud. Reading manuscripts makes him believe that other people care about writing too and has inspired him toward three collections of poetry and a novel called The Wolsenburg Clock (Thistledown, 2009). He has recently been gallivanting around Grenada, Tanzania, and soon will pet penguins in Antarctica and hopes to write about that. He is also working on a novel and a blues opera.*

### **Describe your ideal poem.**

There is no subject that poetry cannot approach, but whatever you do, you have to do it well—find the right form for the idea or emotion. I look for poems that surprise me rather than take me to predictable ends, for language that crackles and has that “new car” smell, for images that are born as I read them. I’m suspicious of earnestness and of easy emotion. I like a poem to take me through waves of feeling: “I laughed, I cried; it was fabulous.”



### **Who is your favourite (for the moment or all-time) poet?**

I’d like to think I’m too eclectic in my reading to be able to choose one favourite poet but I can narrow things down a little. I love Rilke for his knowing, Sharon Olds for her metaphors, bp Nichol for his wisdom, and P. K. Page for all of the above plus technique. Three poems that I rate highly are “Filling Station” by Elizabeth Bishop, “The Cinnamon Peeler” by Michael Ondaatje, and “Forests of the Medieval World” by Don Coles. Those poems use language in precise ways and are extremely moving and yet are driven by a sense of humour and grace that lifts them off the page.

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

We’ve been so lucky to have the richness we have had as far as submissions go. The ideal for the poetry board, strange as this might sound, is to have so many excellent poems that we have to reject very good work. It’s difficult but better than saying “okay” to a poem we’re not wild about. One of the things I love about being on the board is that in every round of discussions we have fine poems by poets I’ve never read before. I like best finding great poems by new poets.

A very long time ago, it was my job to open all the *Malahat* mail and to catalogue submissions. I remember opening an envelope from John Newlove and being the first person in the office to read his poem. I was poetry starstruck and my fingers tingled touching the page. It was a poem called “Bugdancing” and you’ll find it in issue #77, December 1986. I think it was one of the last poems he published. I took it straight to Connie Rooke and it went in the next issue.

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

This may sound odd too, but I’d like to see more submissions from Canada’s better-known poets. I know I said I like finding poems by emerging writers, and I do, but I think those writers feel honoured when their poem is printed beside a new poem by a well-established poet. It can be a lot of work to administrate poetry submissions so I understand why some writers tire of it, but I think it’s vital for the strength of our literary magazine/small press culture to have our established voices represented in this arena.

It may also be that poets tire of rejection slips after years of getting them. We rejected some poems by a well-known Canadian poet back in the eighties and he was furious—wrote a nasty letter telling us off. I can’t understand that. No one writes perfect poems all of the time. Why would he want a poem that is not his best work to see the light of day?

### **3. Upcoming *Malahat* Contests**

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#### **2011 Creative Nonfiction Prize Deadline: August 1, 2011 (postmarked)**

**Prize:** \$1000 CAD

**Entry fee:**

\$35 CAD for Canadians

\$40 USD for US entries

\$45 USD for entries from elsewhere

(entry fee includes a one-year subscription)

Enter one piece of creative nonfiction between 2000 and 3000 words in length. It could be memoir, personal essay, cultural criticism, nature writing, literary journalism, etc.

#### **2012 Open Season Awards**

**Deadline: November 1, 2011 (postmarked)**

Prize: \$1000 CAD in each of three categories

Entry fee:

\$35 CAD for Canadians

\$40 USD for US entries

\$45 USD for entries from elsewhere

(entry fee includes a one-year subscription)

Enter up to three poems (100 lines max. each), one short story (2500 words max.), OR one creative nonfiction story (2500 words max.) per entry.