

POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry
(Issue #3 – October, 2021)



POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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COVER: “Aurora” – by Kari-Ann Anderson

DEDICATION

This Issue is Dedicated to William Shatner

We live in incredible times. I watched the launch of Captain James Tiberius Kirk into space! No matter what others say about Jeff Bezos's idea to put the Kirk character into space, it was a gift to William Shatner, and therefore, a gift to all Star Trek fans. It was indeed a stellar moment in fan history, and please pardon the pun. I watched enraptured as Shatner attempted to convey his astounding experience. The blueness of Earth, the blackness of space, the barely perceptible thinness between the two. He was emotional as he struggled to find the words to describe the awe and wonder of his experience. He needed poetry, a poem to encapsulate his out of this world encounter.

At that moment, I realized why poetry is so important, so vital to the experience of the "blue light" of life. That "Aha" moment brought about by inspiring insight rather than only rationale. Poetry can capture that incredible emotion of an enthralling experience around which our minds boggle but our hearts heave. My love for science fiction and fantasy has been playing out in my lifetime. From the time my parents said we were taking a road trip to Cape Canaveral to watch the first men fly to the moon (we lived in Toronto at the time), to watching one of the most iconic characters in fiction fly, for adventure, into space. I cried for William Shatner as he struggled to convey the experience. I get it. That's why those of us who write science fiction and those who write poetry and science fiction do it; we feel that tension between love and fear and the thin delineation between the "blue light" of life and the black unforgiving nothing of outer space. Outer space is where we must go to reignite our love for our planet, to invoke over and over that feeling of life's fragility and the sweet comfort of home. We all experience it when we view the sharp contrast between the shining blue beacon of life and the infinite black backdrop of the final frontier.

Rhea E. Rose

EDITORIAL

Look Out

Welcome to the third issue of Polar Starlight! Three, a very satisfying number as in three wishes, three clicks of the heels, the three little pigs, the three bears! Well, this, our third issue has nothing more to do with the number three except that it is just that, a very satisfying issue numbered three; however, as you read through the poetry here, you'll soon discover how we poets "love" our furry scaly friends, but do they love us back? Perhaps a bit more than we'd like, especially if our pet is an unconventional creature, an insect or exotic, like a dragon for instance. Those exotic pets eat, well, anything if they come from space or realms unknown, right? Here's a little poetic idiom I made up to for those attracted to alternative pets from elsewhere to recite to themselves before deciding to take home a stray from the netherworlds—"When 'doggy' eats bone we don't serve the new family pet our own—bones, that is. When 'kitty' licks a paw, rough tongues might hide a spacer's saw. And what's worse than a 'kitty,' 'dog,' or tribble find, why two or more of every kind." Just a little warning written with you-who-love-a-stray in mind, to make you think thrice before bringing home that little monster you found unceremoniously sealed inside the virus-proof space capsule. Me, I'm a cat person. I shave my whiskers and bind my tail, my ears are clipped but what the hell, despite no claws and filed teeth the mice in town think I'm a beast—meow!

Okay, enough of my pet poetry. I've got to walk the dog and, while I'm being dragged down the street by my hellhound, read these amazing poems—some serious, some sad, some silly but all sensational signs of talented poets. And they are not all creature-themed there's science fiction speculative love poetry here, too.

There's one more Polar Starlight issue to come for the year. With bold, powerful cover art by Tracy Shepherd and a stellar lineup of poetry, I can't wait to see the issue #4 mock-up. Fear not poets, if your poem has been accepted but doesn't appear here or in the final issue, it will appear in Polar Borealis. A finely crafted poem is like a faceted jewel and my only problem in the process is how to set it off so that the starlight catches its depths and reflects in all its surfaces.

I'm delighted to announce that Polar Starlight is loved. The download numbers indicate that there is an audience with an appetite for speculative poetry! Really? Are we surprised, maybe a little bit? To date issue #1 of Polar Starlight has been downloaded 380 times and issue #2 has been downloaded 362 times. Congratulations to our star power poets.

Cheers

Rhea E. Rose

THE GOD OF THE WOBBLY MENAGERIE

by Neile Graham

I finally found all the sheep

and the lion

and the rabbits with their ferocious eyes

cowered together in a paper cave

that was no protection from dust

or

the purely hypothetical rain

all unremembered, they

had tumbled, fallen

footloose

but not free

I picked them up

and the penguin

him

too

arranged them so carefully

they swayed

on their suddenly

grounded feet

then sang

a tune full of air

in such tones

was all I could do

not

to ruffle fur and feathers

in plastic, affectionate bliss

not to

feed them to your open mouth

two by two by two

CAT PEOPLE CAFÉ

by Carolyn Clink

Cats perch on tables
drink from cascading
cream fountains
nibble salmon sashimi.

*For dessert, just a mousicle for me,
I'm on a diet.*

Humans loll about
on the floor, brush
against table legs,
beg for scraps.

*Don't worry, the door's
too small for them
to escape.*

A Siamese flicks a gobbet
onto the floor between
two particularly large humans.

*Mine got outside once
and came back pregnant!*

The café owner quiets
the squabbling humans
with a quick belly rub.

*It was a stray.
I had to have it put down.*

RED MOON PROMISED: A HAUNTING VISION

By Changming Yuan

Perhaps in a dream or delirium, but
He did clearly see an enlarged furry beetle
Orange-backed, yellow-bellied, flat-bodied
Long neck reaching up like a cobra
Head looking the same as his first class- &
Sex-mate named Red Moon from
A Shanghai university, as she kept
Shouting at him high above her voice
Definitely in complaint or protest
But he just cannot hear a single sound
Like a wounded gull lost in darkness
Listening hard to a whale screaming to sky

THE PLACEBO EFFECT

by Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

It all depends
on how you sell it.
For our Olympics,
(the only real ones, I believe)
we immortals peddle
flowery prophecies
to our chosen,
polish possibilities
like used car salesmen
with a sub-par Ford,
affect a minor
miracle or two—
or seem to,
and then step back
to watch the wars
that we have sparked,
the better to decide
which of us true godly players
earn a gold or bronze,
and which poor mortals
earn pine box rewards.

WHEN WE LEAVE HOME FOR GOOD

By Lisa Timpf

In the eerie silence
that follows the Final Pandemic
and its attendant misfortunes,
how long will it take

for the small creatures—
the mice, the scolding squirrels,
the cheek-packed chipmunks—
to find the cracks, the gaps,

the vulnerable spots to push against
as they move into our houses,
seeking shelter against
the indifferent winter?

Snow will fall, as it did before,
though there is no one to clear it
from the concrete sidewalk
where chattering high schoolers

used to pass, never seeming to be
dressed warmly enough against
the east wind's bite, for fear
of not looking cool.

Grass will grow knee-tall,
rhubarb and asparagus run wild,
and shy deer will come to graze
the apple tree's tender branches.

Oh, the cat might
miss us for awhile,
complaining when he finds
the food bowl empty,

but he'll remember soon enough
how to fend for himself
and the dogs may mourn
our absence for a space,

till they form their own packs
and gallop through the fields, barking
at the moon or at nothing at all
with no-one to tell them "no."

AT SOME FUTURE MOMENT

By Changming Yuan

At some future moment, demons start to revolt
With ghosts from under the ground
Struggling fiercely to possess fleshly bodies

Trees begin to grow downward, birds suddenly
Drop dead as if obeying a universal order
Sentiments sweating out of skin, tattooed or not

At a future moment, every movement of man &
Machine is halted in blood as all sound & fury
Became depressed, words evaporated

Nets or links broken, thoughts dried, waters
Boiling into darkness, mountains covered with
Faggots, snakes flying amuck in foiled flocks

At some future moment, each mind resonates
With a skyquake as all buildings collapse
In a tsunami filled with viruses & monsters

UNCAGED

by Greg Fewer

asleep in my bed
something hairy brushes my face
spider free again?

PEPIE OF LAKE PEPIN

by Richard Stevenson

Pepie of Lake Pepin has got
a big enough playpen to hang low
or put on a show. Big as Nessie's
Lake Ness, for sure. Deep, wide, long.

Not some shallow billabong or swamp.
but a lake big enough to pretend
to be a log and take the sprogs
out for a swim. Practice tumble turns.

Hasn't scarfed a human yet—
too stringy, fat, or toxic maybe.
Not the sort of flesh he wants
to be mackin' on anyway. Thank God!

Not as famous as Nessie,
Champ, or Ogopogo, though
she's been known to flash
a flipper, a little neckline.

Might favour you with a long
stretch of her back, a few humps.
Usually, when she sees humans,
she does a little duck dive.

Heads for the deepest trench.
No big splash or commotion:
She's not into mugging for the press.
Or posing for selfies with mugwumps.

We're the monster species, see.
Toss beer bottles at her head,
foul the water. Leave peacock-feather
spots of gasoline floating everywhere.

We start up our outboard engines
and make way too much noise.
How's a lady supposed to catch fish
or take a snooze or avoid getting hit?

We bop her noggin, cut her flukes
and flippers with engine props.
Leave toxic fumes, pollute the water... .
Ain't no otters doin' what we oughter.

And we want her to star
in some creature feature? Right.
Like she's the monster about to
chomp our runabout in two.

She's the one to pick her teeth
with broken splinters of our skis.
Pleee-ease! The fifties are over!
She's no eel or elongated pinniped.

Did she blunder down the Mississippi
into some radiation pond or toxic
stream of effluent that caused
gigantism in her species? As if!

She just got wise. Eats what fish
she can and avoids the ones with
big carcinomas growing on their lips.
She's hip to our ways. Oh yeah!

If she had hands,
she'd be givin' us the finger,
not a grinnin' cryptid
and idiot homo s. selfie.

ATHLETES

by Roxanne Barbour

athletes requested meeting
alien negotiations
stalled
dolphins requested
satisfactory contract completion

FROM PARALLEL WORLDS

by Mahrie G. Reid

I stirred my porridge
Thoughts drifted
Into areas submerged
The keys upon the dresser top
Gone
For three days
I could not find them
And then
A flash of blue hand
Flickered and withdrew
The keys were back
As if never gone

My sleep unsettled
Light flickered
on eyelids tightly closed
I could not stir
And in the morning
Crop circles
parted my hair
Alien marks
Of visitors here

You may not...
But I do...
Believe
We share our space
With beings
Unseen
Beyond our perception
Yet genuine
As real as you and me.

EVERYWHERE A SIGN

by LeRoy Gorman

TIME TRAVEL LOGISTICS
ONE STEP AHEAD
OF THE REPETITION

EVENT HORIZON
NO TIME
LIKE THE RECENT

TIME PORTAL
MAINTENANCE
EXPECT RELAYS

WORMHOLE CATERING
SATISFACTION
TIME & THYME AGAIN

GRAVITY WELL
NO WISHING
NO FISHING

ACME TIME TRAVEL

Gone

Fishing

LACK OF INTEL

By Greg Fewer

entering orbit
the ship's fuel tanks explode
this world's ring unseen

ROCKETMAN DOWN

by Douglas Shimizu

Flight track to Saturn's rings, on time.
Retro rockets, set to glow.
Last mysterious flight. It's my time to go.

Computer error light. No false alarm.
Capsule spinning. Heavy G's.
Feels like I'm falling fast.

And I see you spinning round and round my mind.
Remembering us, together one more time.
I'm missing you, in the dark all alone.
Want you to know, that here I am.
Here I am, burning atmosphere, so high above.

Training sequence flashes, loud in my mind.
Procedures moving me.
Alarms bells scream. I hear them. I'm still alive.

Crash landing Titan, northern polar base.
Damage heavy; it's hard to breathe.
And there's no one here to hear me, if I scream.

And I think I'm gonna see you again tonight,
In my heart if not again in my sight.
I'm not as brave as I pretend at home.
I know you know.
But now, here I am.
A rocket man, praying through my tears for you my love.

And I hope I'm gonna see you again, my love.

ROCKETEER'S LAMENT

by LeRoy Gorman

ten
nine
eight
seven
sex
for
three
two
one
blastoff

CONFESSIONS OF AN OLD SPACER

By Lisa Timpf

(Inspired by “High Flight,” by John Gillespie Magee)

Wouldn't trade it for the land-lubber's life,
sling-shotting out of the solar system
into the inky vastness,
traversing the unmarked channels
of space.

Solitude even in company—
we live with our deepest thoughts
and every voyage, there comes a time
when by mutual though unspoken consent,
the crew speaks in whispers, only,

struck by the fragility of our lives,
and humbled by the knowledge
that we are strangers, come unbidden to
a sacred place, a sacred space.

ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

Kari-Ann Anderson

Kari-Ann was born and raised in Fort Frances, Ontario and now resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She started out as a wildlife artist but has always loved the fantasy genre and was heavily influenced by her love of comic books. She eventually made it over to the Fantasy genre but retains the ability to create in multiple genres.

Kari-Ann won the Ducks Unlimited Provincial Artist of the Year for Manitoba in 2005 for her piece titled *Family Excursion*, and has been nominated for an Aurora Award in the Artistic Achievement category. She has also painted covers for books and other projects. If you would like to take a look at more of her work please visit www.kari-annanderson.com

Roxanne Barbour

Roxanne has been reading science fiction since the age of eleven when she discovered *Miss Pickerell Goes to Mars* by Ellen Macgregor. The years passed by while she had careers as a computer programmer, music teacher, insurance office administrator, and logistics coordinator for an international freight company. She took early retirement in June 2010. Six months later, she decided to put to use all the books on writing that she had accumulated over the years, and actually start writing. To date her books include: *An Alien Collective* (2014, Wee Creek Publishing), *Revolutions* (2015, Whiskey Creek Press), *Sacred Trust* (2015, Whiskey Creek Press), *Kaiku* (2017, Self-Published), *Alien Innkeeper* (2017, Wild Rose Press / Fantasy Rose), *An Alien Perspective* (2017, Self-published), *An Alien Confluence* (2019, Self-published.)

She also writes speculative poetry, and has poems published in *Scifaikuest*, *Star*Line*, *Polar Borealis*, and other magazines.

Website: <https://roxannebarbour.wordpress.com/>

Carolyn Clink

Carolyn won the 2011 Aurora Award for Best Poem/Song for “The ABCs at the End of the World.” Her genre poetry publications include *Weird Tales*, *Analog*, *Imaginarium 2012: The Best Canadian Speculative Writing*, *On Spec*, *Tesseract*, *Tales of the Unanticipated*, *Room*, and all 5 volumes of *Northern Frights*.

Greg Fewer

A *montréalais* by birth and descent from seventeenth-century colonists, Greg has grown up largely outside of Canada. His first and, for many years, only published story appeared in 2007. He took up genre writing again in 2018 and has had flash fiction and poetry published in (among other places): *Flash in a Flash*, *Dirty Girls Magazine*, *Lovecraftiana*, *Monsters: A Dark Drabbles Anthology*, *Page & Spine*, *Polar Borealis*, *Star*Line*, *The Sirens Call*, *Tigershark Magazine*, and *Utopia Science Fiction*. He was a Dwarf Stars 2021 finalist.

LeRoy Gorman

LeRoy lives in Napanee, Ontario. His poetry, much of it visual and minimalist, has appeared in various publications and exhibitions worldwide and has garnered numerous awards including, most recently, the 2017 Dwarf Stars Award. His latest book *goodwill galaxy hunting* was published by Urban Farmhouse Press in 2019.

Neile Graham

Neile is a Canadian by birth and inclination, though she has lived in the U.S. (mostly Seattle, so she is leaning toward the border) for many years. She writes both fiction and poetry and recently wrote the introduction to a collection of essays on writing by Clarion West workshop instructors. That’s because she spent 20 years associated with that workshop initially as a

student, then as their workshop director. Now she has stepped down and is concentrating the build-out of her fantasy romance empire. Her poetry has been published in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. and on the internet. She has four collections, most recently *The Walk She Takes*, an idiosyncratic travelogue of Scotland, which includes ghosts, ruins of all kinds, and a landlady named Venus.

Mahrie G. Reid

Mahrie is a multi-published mystery author, feature writer, speaker, and workshop instructor with over thirty years of writing and publishing experience. Her workshop topics include basic writing skills, mystery and romance novel structure, recording life stories (creative non-fiction), and writing life. Her published items include non-fiction, poetry, and books that include *The Caleb Cove Mysteries*, a historical, *The Left-Behind Bride*, with BWL Publishers, and a writing-craft book, *Tools Not Rules, how to write your book YOUR way*. Her website: www.mahriegreid.com, offers writing tips and guidelines for beginners and experienced writers.

Andrea Schlecht

Andrea grew up in Hamilton, Ontario, but since the 1980s Ottawa has been her home. She is a retired archivist, and Andrea is spending her retirement simply doing what she wants: outdoor photography, walks in the woods, writing, reading, and fires in the fireplace. The list was somewhat longer pre-COVID. Some of her stories and poems have seen print, mostly in sf publications (and that includes a poem in *Polar Borealis* #9 and in *Stellar Evolutions*).

Douglas Shimizu

Douglas is a Vancouver artist involved in writing, illustration and photography, having studied at UBC and Emily Carr. He has previously been published in *Polar Borealis* and *Stellar Evolutions*.

Richard Stevenson

Richard is a retired college English and Creative Writing instructor. He taught for thirty years at Lethbridge College in southern Alberta and recently moved to Nanaimo, B.C. He has the usual pedigree: MFA in Creative Writing, thirty published books, and a CD. Forthcoming are a number of children's books: *Action Dachshund!*, *Cryptid Shindig* (a trilogy including the volumes *If a Dolphin had Digits*, *Nightcrawlers*, and *Radioactive Frogs*) and a stand-alone collection, *An Abominable Swamp Slob Named Bob*.

Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

Marcie is a writer/poet/editor from B.C.'s rain-soaked Sunshine Coast. She lives surrounded by deep, dense underbrush and various noisy animals, both human and not. Her latest poetry collection, *Midnight Comes Early*, was published by Hiraeth Publishing in early 2021.

Lisa Timpf

Lisa is a retired HR and communications professional who lives in Simcoe, Ontario. Her writing has appeared in a variety of venues including *New Myths*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *Polar Borealis*, *From a Cat's View I and II*, *Dreams & Nightmares*, and *Future Days*. When not writing, Lisa enjoys bird-watching and spending outdoor time with her border collie, Emma.

Changming Yuan

Changming edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan at poetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Credits include 11 Pushcart nominations, 10 chapbooks and appearances in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry* (2008-17) and *Best New Poems Online*, among 1,839 other literary outlets, across 46 countries. Recently, Yuan served on the jury for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards (English poetry category).