

# POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry  
(Issue #2 – June, 2021)



# POLAR STARLIGHT Magazine

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## Art Credits

COVER: “Break Away” – by David F. Shultz

## Editorial

Welcome, welcome come inside, we're delighted to have you for Issue #2 of Polar Starlight which brings us a mashup of madness, myth, mystery and music from the poetry muses at large. While I thought this might be exclusively a horror issue, I was right—and wrong. Yes, there's plenty of scare to go around in this poetry, but you'll also find the tender touch of gods messing with the minds of the many and the few. If you can't sleep now you won't sleep once you've succumbed to the verses and curses found on these pages. Insomniacs unite and huddle in the dark if you must, but not before you read these poems that whisper in your ear, worm into your head and haunt your waking hours with hot words from hell that float like spores to enter your orifices and land there like the tepid breath of Edgar A. Poe. Dance in the night or on the moon but beware of dark tunes that entice your dreams, take you to hell, rip out your soul and toss it in the garbage. Make sure it's placed in the correct bin because they are coming to take you away, oh my.

If you're a fan of feathers you'll find plenty to tickle your fetish, too; birds rule here, ask Alfred. Is anything more frightening than marching armies and the ashes of apocalypses? The answer is yes! I won't give away too much, but I'd double check that jar of pickles before you open it and stab away with your fork. All piles of humeri aside, there is seriously fantastic and fantastical poetry here. Dig in and eat up this second helping of Polar Starlight, a dish heated by the radiation of the stars.

Rhea E. Rose

# GOD OF THE APOCALYPSE

*by Neile Graham*

When the circles caught harshfire  
and ragged faces began to vanish

I lost them too. Their canary voices  
were in my head awhile

then gone.  
A blessing. Or not.

We don't go there now.  
Still, you must tell your grandchildren

of the strange, pure silence  
now, of the sun always setting

paying its last disrespects  
to the worlds we'd made.

I look out at the black birds  
on the roof, shining with burnt

light. I wish one of them  
would take wing to prove

they still can. But below  
me now the scent of bread

rises. Laughter, quickly  
hushed, a startlement of sound.

In a sudden splay of feathers  
the black birds rise. Life above me,

life below me, life after.  
Life after life.

# CHILDREN OF THE DREAMWAYS

*by Marcie Lynn Tentchoff*

Mint grew all over, then;  
we'd stuff it in our tent bags,  
using them as pillows  
so the pungent fragrance  
would lure us into dreaming  
of adventures far beyond  
the borders of our camp.

Sometimes, music drifting from  
the dirt and grass clump  
stages near the fair grounds  
woke us from our slumbers,  
dazed, but ready to defend  
with gilt and plywood weapons  
we had purchased at the booths.

In our minds we fought  
in desperate duels with ring-wraiths,  
challenged sphinxes over riddles  
we were sure we'd always guess,  
and toiled in dust-dim classrooms,  
learning magic out of eldritch tomes  
of elemental spells.

And so, although  
when we grew older  
our world's invaders came

not from some wizard's portal,  
but out of star ships,  
sleek, and bright and deadly,  
built beneath far distant skies,

we did not quibble  
over crossed subgenres,  
or worry that our mint-fueled dreaming  
held us bound to ancient weapons,  
but learned to forge our blades  
from star-beast teeth and lasers,  
and weave our spells from alien tech.

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# WATCHMAKER

*by Carolyn Clink*

what if I were the watchmaker  
who set the universe in motion  
what if I removed the back of the world  
what if I misplaced the mainspring  
what if minutes didn't matter anymore  
what if there were no more spare parts  
what if I lost my balance  
what if I struck my crown  
and slowly unwound my mind

-----



# UNBOUND

*by James Grotowski*

easy hammock sways  
I drift up into the sky  
my tether breaks

-----

# AN OTHER REVOLUTION

*By Changming Yuan*

As giant ants march ahead in nightly arrays  
Demonstrating against the ruling humans  
Along the main street of every major city  
Hordes of hordes of vampires flood in, screaming  
Loud, riding on hyenas and  
Octopuses, waving skeletons  
In their hairy hands, whipping at old werewolves  
Or all-eyed aliens standing by  
With their blood-dripping tails

Gathering behind the masses are ghosts and spirits  
Of all the dead, victims of fatal diseases  
Murders, rapes, tortures, wars, starvation, plagues  
Led by deformed devils and demons  
As if in an uprising, to seek revenge  
On every living victor in the human shape  
Some smashing walls and fences, others  
Barbecuing human hearts like inflated frogs  
Still others biting at each other's soul around black fires  
All in a universal storm of ashes and blood

Up above in the sky is a red dragon flying by  
With a heart infected by the human virus

-----

# SHE FOLLOWS

*by Robert Stevenson*

Fitful sleep dragged night to day  
Reluctant sun arose  
I stumbled out to greet the rays  
With coffee, jam, and ghost

Yes, she was there, she always is  
I never walk alone  
Disapproval follows me  
From room to poem to ruin

-----

# CHRYSALIS

*By Roxanne Barbour*

chrysalis

downward opening

emerging life form

off-worlder desire

dinner

-----

# ÉDOUARD MANET STAYS FOR DINNER

*By Carla Stein*

Did Damocles know his name would hang suspended by a silver thread  
while the alligators lurked with appealing eyes,  
death floating beneath water lilies and swamp scum;  
you served dinner by the murky edge  
talked of fame and fortune  
fed Beauty to the hungry watching maws  
clapped and laughed to see  
if the sword would fall,  
ran away with the ghosts of gods.

-----

# THEY NEVER LET ME SLEEP

*by Josh Connors*

He screams,  
Weak, but still alarming.  
I rush to his side.

A nightmare,  
Sound of himself  
waking.

He feels safe,  
My arms wrapped  
round him.

Asleep,  
Once more,  
with nothing to fear.

If only I could  
Join him, but  
they keep me awake.

The voices,  
In my head, screaming louder  
than he ever could.

-----

# THE SPIRE

*by A. O. Wallat*

City-slum, low and small  
On rolling hill, the buildings still,  
People strange and fevered, all

In the centre, towering tall  
Black spire stands,  
Directing all

Working metal  
Welding, drilling  
Sounds and screams  
Like wailing children

In the centre, towering tall  
Black spire stands,  
Controlling all

Within the spire's colossal sphere  
Frozen ears and stolen tongues  
Asunder, under blackened snow  
Books,  
Nature,  
Bone,  
Remnants of old and young

In the centre, towering tall  
Black spire stands  
Enslaving all

-----

# CROWS ARE BEING BORN AGAIN

*By Changming Yuan*

It is an undeniable fact now:  
They have arisen from the bare ground

Like the phoenix flapping its wings out of its  
Legendary ashes, where are they going?  
Nowhere but high up into a virtual space, a world  
That, like a history book, is full of black headlines

Big names, & bold details. All transmitted  
Into digital forms. Even the most unidentifiable  
Has become a star above its dark caws.

Each  
Taken for an angel winged with the rainbows  
Of tomorrow, while all cranes and swans are lost  
In their dances to the tune of death

-----



# INSIDIOUS SEDUCTION

*by Josh Connors*

She's watching me again.  
The third night this week.  
I'm lying here motionless,  
Afraid to fall asleep.

In the shadow  
Caused by fear, she feeds.  
I never see her moving  
she's getting close to me.

I'm staring at the ceiling.  
She's hanging from above.  
My ear becomes the landing  
place for her decrepit tongue.

She's inside of me again.  
The third night this week.  
For I am a welcome host,  
For her to take her seat.

I'm lying here motionless  
Her tongue inside my ear.  
Insidiously whispering seductions  
It's what I long to hear.

When she calls  
I answer, no matter her demand.  
She is the one who owns me,  
I am her kept man.

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# TERPSICHOREA

*by Robert Stevenson*

Aliens are dancing on the Moon again  
You can see their shadows glide by  
What used to be the Sea of Tranquility  
Is a disco in the sky

Aliens are dancing on the Moon again  
Mostly they fly by  
Aliens are dancing on the Moon again  
Why, oh why, oh why

Aliens are dancing on the Moon again  
Raising clouds of dust  
If we learn to gavotte or maybe waltz  
We could join them, oh surely we must

Perhaps it's not aliens after all  
We may have pushed our gods that way  
Terpsichore, her family and friends  
Now dancing on the dusty Moon

So graceful they, so light and slow  
Less rude than dune buggy astronauts  
Rooster tailing near ancient craters  
Leaving Earth boy tracks wherever they go

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## ON GARBAGE COLLECTION DAY

*by Changming Yuan*

One neighbor took out a blue box  
Full of cat skulls and dog legs  
Rather than glass or plastic bottles

Another carries out a yellow bag  
Containing human bones, mostly children's  
Instead of magazines or paper products

A third pushed out a green bin  
Filled with failed evils and devils  
Where there should be leaves and twigs

Behind every house in a neighboring back alley  
The garbage truck is placing a big time bomb

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THE PERILS OF USING  
TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN MODERN CULTS

*by Marcie Lynn Tentchoff*

the men trapped within  
scream as the flames rise higher  
while we who burn them  
choke and die from poisoned smoke  
gods damn that new faux wicker

-----

# MUSÉE DUPUYTREN, PARIS

*by Carolyn Clink*

Dissonant jars  
shelved five high  
sing with syphilitic mouths,  
holes eaten into their empty,  
echo-chamber skulls.

Hydrocephalitic fetuses  
scale the descant  
gurgling formaldehyde  
while a harmony of Siamese twins  
counterpoints  
the wheeze of tuberculoid lungs  
and the beat of bone xylophones.

Mouths agape,  
the chorus crescendos  
in a diaphragm splitting,  
insides on the outside,  
requiem for their own souls—  
preserved,  
lost,  
open

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## ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

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### **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/>

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### **Carolyn Clink**

Carolyn won the 2011 Aurora Award for Best Poem/Song for “The ABCs of 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*.

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## **Josh Connors**

Josh is just your average playwright, director, home baker, '80s slasher nerd, drag queen, theatre professional living in Corner Brook, NL. Graduate from The Randolph College for The Performing Arts Toronto Class of Summer 2012. He self-published his first play *Small Town Queer (STQ)*. Shortly after self-publication in December of 2019 *Small Town Queer* was chosen as a mandatory reading in three courses at the local university, Grenfell Campus. Two selections of English 1001: Critical Reading and Writing (Poetry & Drama) and one selection of Queer Literature taught by Professor Stephanie McKenzie.

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## **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.

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## **James Grotkowski**

James Grotkowski is a native Albertan who now calls Calgary home. He holds a degree in geology but presently works in the IT systems development sector of the aviation industry. He is a long-time member of the World Haiku Club with a number of his works included in its published reviews. Two hard sci-fi short stories were published in *Enigma Front* anthologies. Another story and several poems are slated to appear in upcoming issues of *Polar Borealis* and *Polar Starlight* magazines.

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## **David F. Shultz**

David writes and paints from Toronto, Ontario, where he organizes the Toronto Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers group and is lead editor of *Speculative North* magazine. Author webpage: [davidfshultz.com](http://davidfshultz.com)

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## **Carla Stein**

Carla's images and poetry have been published in *Lemonspouting*, *Sustenance*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *Friday's Poems*, *Island Arts Magazine*, *Island Woman*, *Stonecoast Review*, *Sad Girl Review*, and *Please Hear What I'm Not Saying*, an anthology benefiting mental health awareness in the United Kingdom. She has released two poetry chapbooks, *Sideways Glances of an Everyday Sailor*, and *Shrieking from the Shore*. Carla lives with her family in Nanaimo, B.C. She is the current artistic director of Wordstorm Society of the Arts, and a co-founder of 15 Minutes of Infamy, a Nanaimo-based performance venue for wordcrafters. View her artwork at: [www.roaeriestudio.com](http://www.roaeriestudio.com)

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## **Robert Stevenson**

Robert, a lyricist, has written 105 songs since May 2017, beginning with a collection of unorganized bits and pieces collected over the previous 15 years. Most remain song lyrics, but some stubbornly insist on being poems. He states he depends "on random inspiration, as opposed to regular perspiration, most of the time."

And also "I don't write to a subject. I just start with words that seem to be willing to form lines that have a beat and maybe rhyme. It's all just word play until I get a critical mass of lines that I can start to shape into a narrative by rearranging them or editing them. Sometimes I'm totally surprised by what I've written, sometimes amused, and sometimes I even impress myself."

Whereupon his wife Joyce likes to remind him of something said by former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson's wife Maryon, "Behind every successful man, there stands a surprised woman."

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## **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 recently released by Hiraeth Publishing.

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## **A.O. Wallat**

A.O. Wallat is an expert of ideas, a novice at writing them down and believes that like chocolate cake, stories are better when shared.

A dual Canadian/UK citizen, he lives in London, England, co-hosts the [holtandwallt.com](http://holtandwallt.com) podcast and when not distracted by wild imaginings, dabbles in horror, medieval fantasy, sci-fi and poetry.

His poem *The Spire* was inspired by a snowy walk to the top of Mount Royal in Montreal where he saw a very sci-fi looking communications mast.

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## **Changming Yuan**

Changming edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan at [poetrypacific.blogspot.ca](http://poetrypacific.blogspot.ca). Credits include 11 Pushcart nominations, 10 chapbooks and appearances in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry* (2008-17) & *BestNewPoemsOnline*, among 1839 other literary outlets, across 46 countries. Recently, Yuan served on the jury for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards (English poetry category).

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