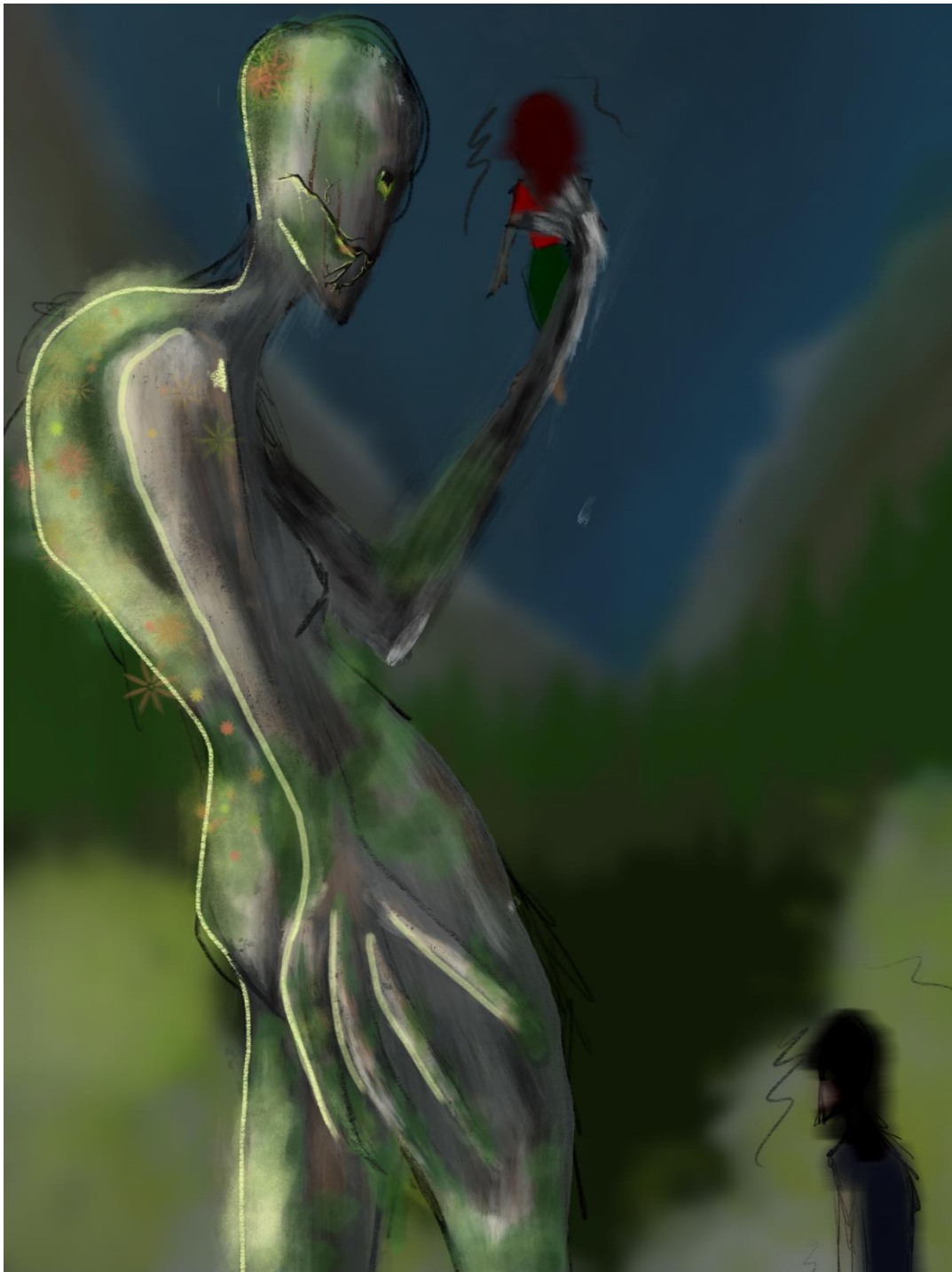


POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry
(Issue #9 – March 2023)



POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

Issue #9 – March 2023 (Vol.3#2.WN#9)

Publisher: R. Graeme Cameron

Editor: Rhea E. Rose

Proofreader: Steve Fahnestalk

POLAR STARLIGHT is a Canadian semi-pro non-profit Science Fiction Poetry online PDF Magazine published by R. Graeme Cameron at least four times a year.

Distribution of this PDF Magazine is free, either by E-mail or via download.

POLAR STARLIGHT buys First Publication (or Reprint) English Language World Serial Online (PDF) Internet Rights from Canadian Science Fiction Genre Poets and Artists.

Copyright belongs to the contributors bylined, and no portion of this magazine may be reproduced without consent from the individual Poet or Artist.

POLAR STARLIGHT offers the following Payment Rates:

Poem – \$10.00

Cover Illustration – \$40.00

To request to be added to the subscription list, ask questions, or send letters of comment, contact Editor Rhea E. Rose or Publisher R. Graeme Cameron at:

< [Polar Starlight](#) >

All contributors are paid before publication. Anyone interested in submitting a poem or artwork, and wants to check out rates and submission guidelines, or anyone interested in downloading current and/or back issues, please go to:

< <http://polarborealis.ca/> >

Note: The *Polar Borealis Magazine* website is also the website for *Polar Starlight Magazine*.

ISSN 2369-9078 (Online)

Headings: ENGRAVERS MT

Bylines: *Monotype Corsiva*

Text: Bookman Old Style

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03) – EDITORIAL – by Rhea E. Rose
- 05) – START SOMETHING NEW – by Gerald L. Truscott
- 06) – TEA AND ALIENS – by Frances Skene
- 07) – ALIEN FACES – by Roxanne Barbour
- 08) – ALIEN CANDY – by James Grotkowski
- 09) – DANDELIONS: A GARDENING POEM – by Michèle Laframboise
- 10) – INVASIVE – by Marcie Lynn Tentchoff
- 11) – OTHER WORLD EULOGY – by Gregg Chamberlain
- 12) – WE STOOD AND WATCHED – by Jameson Grey
- 13) – THE PUNISHED WORLD – by Alexander Zelenyj
- 15) – WHEN ON ALPHA TAU... – by Lisa Timpf
- 16) – NOT AMUSED – by Roxanne Barbour
- 17) – TERRIBLE TOUCH – by Richard Stevenson
- 19) – LAST CONTACT FIRST – by Elina Taillon
- 21) – SCARECROW – by David Shultz
- 23) – CATTLE MUTILATIONS – by Richard Stevenson
- 24) – FARAWAY MOO-N – by Rodolfo Boskovic
- 25) – ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

ART CREDITS

COVER: *Golem* – by Kasia Runté

EDITORIAL

By Rhea E. Rose

The “madder than a March hare” 2023 issue of Polar Starlight is here! A time when this part of the world is betwixt and between winter and spring. A time to ponder Caesar and Brutus, St. Patrick, and the March hare’s mating rituals, chasing, boxing and leaping.

At the same time, quieter things break through the earth, poking alien heads and tentacles toward the sun, ready to proliferate. We Northerners still wait for warmer days. Until then, I thought I’d mention how I’ve selected 16 poems and themes for each Polar Starlight in this magazine’s second year. The short answer is—I don’t pick them. They steadfastly present themselves to me.

But I do consider each poem’s qualities and the time of year in which the publication is to appear. It’s very subjective; spring, summer, fall, or winter poems get put together, and then the subject matter of each poem invites me to push certain pieces into the same issue.

If possible, I try to bring all speculative areas into an issue, preferring to mix it up and use as many speculative genres as possible. Even so-called literary works—the ones that walk that fine line between the veil of speculation—are considered and published.

While I’m in the thick of this selection process, I sometimes imagine an infinite sea of ideas that exists as a collective consciousness where zeitgeists are born and from which, on a good day, the muses open the gates so writers can tap in for ideas. Yes, a place in a parallel dimension where our ideas actually come from. Perhaps it’s more of a cauldron of soup—a primordial cosmic collective consciousness from which thoughts and words spin out into the dreamcatcher brains of writers.

So, I give what I get; and by that, I mean I offer readers what I see the poets writing about, be it alien abduction, cattle mutilation, the quiet takeover of a nation, or even tea for two with visitors from another place. Infiltration and invasions are popping up like mushrooms in this issue.

Sure, there's some tweaking and rejecting going on behind the scenes and preferences like preferring lyricism to prose poetry, but I respect the latter very much—I love free verse—I do like poetic structure and rules and such. I consider other things like what the world's been up to lately, such as invading spy balloons and climate clashes and attempt to mix that with the flow of ideas within submissions. For me, a poem must have a title and punctuation of the creative kind. Yet, I love a poet rebel—a player—who dabbles with a poem's levels, syllabic sensibilities, and the number of its lines. I always find that in selecting the 16, a theme arises.

I select talented and skilled poetry that is original in its evocation, even if the subject isn't new but possesses that mysterious, unquantifiable spark that is the magic in compelling writing. The poem must be previously unpublished.

I then tuck those poems together in a thoughtful order with other similar-yet-different variations of expression on a theme. Some poems present as starters for an issue while others present themselves as finishers, a kind of punctuation at the end of the reading experience.

When poetry is whimsical, compelling, full of fun and frolic, cleverness and craft, it should still impact on some level. A poem should re-vision the mundane and discover the profound in the human condition, whether good, bad or alien, and it should do all this without feeling like it tries too hard. Those are my conditions for getting poetry selected for an issue of Polar Starlight. Chants and spells accepted, too!

Editor
Rhea E. Rose

START SOMETHING NEW

By Gerald L. Truscott

it's time to start
something new mix
it up change tackle shuffle
the dreck turn the tableau burn
your biography ignore that vibration
in your pocket reform re-e-val-u-ate re-ha-
bit-u-ate shred your inhibitions step up step out

start your
engine spend
foolishly strike out
on purpose liquidate your
aesthetics crash a political party
tell shameless truths turn the dial to
eleven act out your fantasies dance madly
backwards soar like a frigate bark like a god create
a cosmic storm embrace the starry night paint a rooftop
greeting to aliens tell them now it's time to start something new

TEA AND ALIENS

by Frances Skene

I awake, remembering a grainy scene
of ladies gathered in a sitting room.
Servants carry plates of cucumber
sandwiches, and pour milk and black tea
into china cups.

Outside, a worker trims a rosebush.
Later, there will be blooms, the petals
in disheveled profusion, their fragrance
floating through open windows.

The ladies talk about the ambassador
from Mars. He looks human, they agree,
except for the scales.

Perhaps they can invite him to an
evening of singing and piano music.

ALIEN FACES

by Roxanne Barbour

flushed alien faces
unusual colors
allergy or emotion?

ALIEN CANDY

by James Grotkoski

hate those aliens
they said they came in peace then
they ate my candy

DANDELIONS: A GARDENING POEM

By Michèle Laframboise

Die, die, die !

Says the angry gardener
to the dandelions
squirting a triple mix
of heavy-duty toxic cloud
over the quiet yellow heads
dotting the emerald span of domestic grass

And

Die do the dandelions
slender stems drooping kissing the ground
dented leaves withering like in bad movies
hard cellular walls battling death to buy time
for the corollas to shed sun-colored petals
and turn white and fuzzy and cute

But

a complicit wind blows thar
carrying white snowflakes of seeds
far, far away to another land
where they will bloom and conquer
made stronger than before
invincible mutant dandelions
striking fear in every gardener's heart

INVASIVE

by Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

They brought their climate with them,
not exactly by intention, like the frogs
and other near extinction creatures they had
frozen and preserved within their labs,
then loaded into their ship's holds,
set for raising on New Earth,
but in their actions, hidden even from
their surface thoughts, and in stark contrast
to their well-meant resolutions.

They brought their habits with them,
years of conquest and displacement,
genocide by softer titles, residential schools
and offers of "a chance to pause on breeding,
get some rest, and fix your lives," combining
with a love of tech, and power usage, laziness,
and mindsets based on capitol, consumer pride,
built-in obsolescence, and a knowledge that the need
to buy the latest trend offsets environmental costs.

They brought their failures with them,
in their quest for change, and hope, and *life*,
they changed our world into theirs,
they changed our problems into theirs,
they changed our cool, and wet, and free, and sweet,
into their wildfire summers, melting icecaps,
regimental "brand name casual" fashions,
melting pot mentality, and a rash of mass endangered species,
where the only things that really thrive
are weeds that somehow came with them... and spread.

OTHER WORLD EULOGY

by Gregg Chamberlain

Where do these humans come from?
These marching soldiers with blazing guns?

Why do they journey so far from home?
To die beneath these alien suns?

WE STOOD AND WATCHED

by Jameson Grey

We stood and watched
As the sky erupted,
As rainbow sparks and seared orange ignited the dusk.
How beautiful that summer evening looked in its own awful way.

We stood and watched
As the mushroom billowed in springtime's dawn,
The acrid breeze scratched at our throats,
Regret blazed crimson trails down our cheeks.

We stood and watched
As summer rain fell,
Grey dirty water tinged with death,
The hail of radiation stripping flesh from bone, leaving skeletal sentinels
in situ.

We stood and watched,
Knowing we'd written this fall ourselves.

We stood and watched.

THE PUNISHED WORLD

by Alexander Zelenyj

Ours is a single tribe
bound in the man's visions:
gifted with unlimited promise of dreams,
blighted with history we made

High-rise cavepeople, gather round the fire
hear him today like we half-heard yesterday,
prophet as much as mirror-bearer

His Africa lay frozen in crystal
Jeweled fauna and flora bewitched
in a remade Cameroon
Were this dark-dream of beauty to live, today
would lepers walk into the shining jungle heart?
Should we follow?

And the oracle cried for the water gone away,
industrial waste-crust the cancer of the waves
as crops to dust and rivers to streams
splintered our tribe again

In 1962, he drowned the world
global fever, the New Paleozoic,
a return to primordial Eden
where the scattered found a gift inside:
species memory; falling back, and back
to the start of a savage story

{Machine-love is
static washing over us,
currents from better climes
with origins in the hub of possibility}

We are young, selfish as children
He rendered us bleakly, and true;
the texts survive, their forecasts clear
see how our promise is dimmed

Read him well, our timeless astronaut
before we bed down in our caves
content in dreams of skin and kill and crash,
this fleeting balm to soothe
entrenched atomic fear

Ballard sends regards
from his orbit overhead
Cape Canaveral the site of starts and vigils
without end

WHEN ON ALPHA TAU...

by Lisa Timpf

the butterfly people of Alpha Tau
know when it's time to fly
they've managed through famine
and shortage and war
though scientists can't say how
the butterfly people always know
when it's time to take to the sky

the butterfly people of Alpha Tau
can tell from a knock on the door
whether their guest is friend or foe,
and if the latter, it's time to go
and away they fly

so if you should travel to Alpha Tau
remember that they've survived
through famine and shortage and plague and war
don't let pride glue your feet to the floor—
if the butterfly people should fly,
do as the other Taus do, for they know
when the butterfly people choose to leave
it's time to go

NOT AMUSED

by Roxanne Barbour

meeting of offspring
dancing children
uncover
non-webbed feet
aliens not amused

TERRIBLE TOUCH

By Richard Stevenson

In a tent in the woods
of Mt. Washington I fell asleep.

Not a peep or soft batting
of a Polyphemus moth

against a tent flap, yet
I felt I was being observed.

Fitful sleep. Tired the next day—
Chalked in down to nervous stress.

Next night, not so lucky—
Hat men! Shadow persons with

index fingers on my navel
like they were gassing up!

So tired. Could barely make out features...
Fedoras, no eyes or noses... Yelled "NO!"

They vanished! Into thin air as they say...
Better print my story or you'll be sorry...

I was wide awake when I saw
what I saw! Not much, but the touch...

You had to feel that! A subtle zap,
the feeling of being sucked up a straw!

That was no dream or hallucination!
Look! Rings like Saturn's around my eyes!

Don't sleep much now. Cat nap
with feelers flexin'. A few hours...

Just don't enter the room suddenly.
I'll be duked up, standing in my BVDs!

LAST CONTACT FIRST

By Elina Tailon

would they really draw circles
in the corn when it withers
and sprouts in time-lapse,
waves of wind smoothing
the earth's shore blank again

or would they go to the city's light
drunk stumbling, like us to casinos
to watch symbols spin merciless
and meaningless, hoping for answers

maybe we're scared of probes
and vats and experiments
because we didn't think anyone
was here to witness our behaviour,
or do it to us

maybe we stargaze as a means
of promising ourselves more
sunsets than we're strictly allowed
(though we don't watch those either),
and more ways of going forward

and we would finally fall overripe
to the earth, returned, if we knew
we were free to destroy ourselves,
or at least we might be caught
by an outstretched palm

at the park we'd nod appreciatively
at the alien memes on our phone,
our surprise old and crumbling,
thumb scrolling idly and breeze
picking itself back up again

wondering if we have enough chips
at the back of the cupboard for very late
guests; a small dog tugging at its leash
until the owner lifts it up to safety
for fear it'll choke on its enthusiasm

SCARECROW

By David Shultz

Dawn's light reddens the thick rolling fog
surging over the reeds and willows
where a restless corpse lies still in the bog

the dew-wet scent of milkweed wafts on
heavy air, and the blue flowered lotus
grows over the buried body in the copse

a presence is felt near the farmhouse, cursed
by a chorus of jackdaws, a murder of crows
squawking endlessly like hung jurors

guarding against the rooks' insistent caws
a scarecrow is staked in the cornfield
on his post, tattered rags stuffed with jackstraw

wind blows over the fields of switchgrass
and the crowkeeper turns on his wooden stake
caught in the cold bluster's grasping

shifting and twisting in the wind, distraught
as if searching for absolution in the maize,
a sleepless prisoner in the corn stalks

In the tangled thistle are chirping crickets
buzzing flies in the hog millet, mud toads
croaking from their mounds in the bramble thickets

and above it all, the sound of cawing crows
from their rookery of clumped nests in gnarled
branches of long dead trees where nothing grows

crooked rotwood like fingers reaching up
from a cold grave, clutching the unjust sky,
a dreadful omen. the land is corrupted

blight withering the wheat, writhing pests
within the corn, and beneath the judging gaze
of the strawman roils a plague of ghoulish insects

darkness like a vengeful force resides,
driving the barkbeetles and jointworms
that congregate in the savage countryside

as crops were overrun in the twilight hours
by the pestilential scourge that lingers
near the scarecrow, that fountain of dark power,

the farmer, driven to madness within his home,
resolved to torch the crowkeeper, hoping
to end the curse else reap what he had sown,

but found the scarecrow gone. now in its place
is a carcass, pinned on the meagre pillory
that was the former strawman's wooden stake,

whose tattered rags contain the flesh and bones
of a body that will not lay to rest:
the farmer serves his sentence in the corn.

CATTLE MUTILATIONS

By Richard Stevenson

At first, the military brass didn't balk
at the abduction of a few head of cattle.
Even helped ETs load 'em in black helicopters.

But then the saucers made the job
more efficient, ETs started abducting cattle
from every state in the union, and humans too!

All the while, we tried to reverse engineer
the technology that made saucers fly—
so neat, so fleet. Biopsied dead saucer folk.

And how do we reveal the plan to humankind
now that the reptoids and their minion greys
have had their stories implode? Confess?

Too late for that! Maybe it's no big hairy deal
the reptoids will thrive for a time before
the temperatures exceed their lizard needs.

Enter the cockroach. Maybe it doesn't mind
rapid mutation. Can stomach a few
radioactive pellets and polluted water.

However things turn out, it's clear fear
never bought us a spot on Parnassus.
Even the dinosaurs will have had a better run.

FAR AWAY MOO-N

By Rodolfo Boskovic

Violet winds from a rouge sky
Flow through a wild field
Of bright blue hues without end.

Distant suns distractedly
Shine down their dim lights
Like faded blessings given.

Lilies rain down from on high
A delicate waltz
Against the torrent of wind.

Above, disks of bronze hover
Watching us below,
Foxes to our damned coop.

Closer my sisters gather,
As though it will help
If in unison we moo.

ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

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 had poems published in *Scifaikuest*, *Star*Line*, *Polar Borealis*, and other magazines.

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

Redolfo Boskovic

Rodolfo is a Brazilian-Canadian writer who lived in Vancouver for fifteen years and just recently relocated to Toronto. He has had three short stories published. When he is not writing, he spends his days reading comic books.

Gregg Chamberlain

Gregg lives in rural Ontario, Canada, with his missus, Anne, and their cats who leave it to the humans do all the mouse-catching around the house. He

writes speculative fiction and zombie filk for fun and has had several dozen examples published, including appearances in *Polar Borealis*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Speculative North*, *Mythic*, *Weirdbook*, and various anthologies.

Jameson Grey

Jameson is originally from England but now lives with his family in western Canada. His work has appeared in *Dark Recesses Press* magazine, *Dark Dispatch* and in anthologies from publishers such as Ghost Orchid Press, Heads Dance Press and Hellbound Books. He can be found online at jameson-grey.com and occasionally on Twitter @thejamesongrey.

James Grotkowski

James is a native northern Albertan who now calls Calgary home. He holds a degree in geology but presently works in IT systems development for the aviation industry. He is a long-time member of the World Haiku Club with dozens of his works included in its published reviews. James has just begun his non-haiku writing endeavours, with two short stories having been published in *The Enigma Front* anthologies. Much more is soon to come. So far, few of his readers have been lulled to sleep. *ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ*

Michèle Laframboise

Michèle Laframboise feeds coffee grounds to her garden plants, runs long distances and writes full-time in Mississauga, Ontario.

Fascinated by sciences and nature since she could walk, she studied in geography and engineering, but two recessions and her own social awkwardness kept the plush desk jobs away. Instead, she did a string of odd jobs to sustain her budding family: some quite dangerous, others quite tedious, all of them sources of inspiration.

Michèle now has about 20 novels out and over 60 short stories in French and English, earning various distinctions in Canada and Europe. Her most recent SF book, *Le Secret de Paloma* (David, 2021) deals with teen angst and grief on a remote, hostile world. It is currently in translation and waiting to start its quest for a good home.

You can stop by at her website www.michele-laframboise.com to say hello, or visit her indie publishing house www.echofictions.com to get a taste of her fiction!

Kasia Runté

I am in my first year of nursing at Lethbridge College and enjoying attending classes after the isolation of doing high school from home through most of Covid. I often find myself drawn to darker themes and images in my art, partly as a form of catharsis, and partly to balance my super-cheerful pieces.

David Shultz

David writes 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

Frances Skene

Frances is a retired librarian who has been actively involved in science fiction fandom and promoting science fiction literature since the 1970s. She is also a co-author of the Science Fiction novel *Windship: The Crazy Plague*, which can be found here: [Windship](#).

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 the stand-alone collections, *An Abominable Swamp Slob Named Bob* (altered Reality), *Hairy Hullabaloo* (Starship Sloane), and—just out!—*Eye to Eye with My Octopi* (Cyberwit).

Elina Taillon

Elina holds an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC and an MA in French Literature from the University of Toronto. They have worked for the *Young Adulting* blog and was Managing Editor at *PRISM Magazine*. They freelance as a translator on occasion—their first translation, “Scenes from the Underground,” came out with House of Anansi in October 2022. Their hobbies include D&D, befriending street cats, digital illustration, tea tasting, knitting, and suspicious composting.

Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

Marcie is a writer/poet/editor from Gibsons, BC, where she lives in the middle of a whole lot of prickly greenery with her family and various other critters. Her work has appeared in such publications as *Star*Line*, *Dreams & Nightmares*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Illumen*.

Lisa Timpf

Lisa is a retired HR and communications professional who lives in Simcoe, Ontario. Her speculative poetry has appeared in *New Myths*, *Star*Line*, *Triangulation: Habitats*, *Polar Borealis*, and other venues. Her collection of speculative haibun poetry, *In Days to Come*, is available from Hiraeth Publishing. You can find out more about Lisa's writing projects at <http://lisatimpf.blogspot.com/>.

Gerald L. Truscott

Gerald spent 33 years as an editor and book publisher, all the while restraining his own creative impulses. Now he's setting his inner self free.

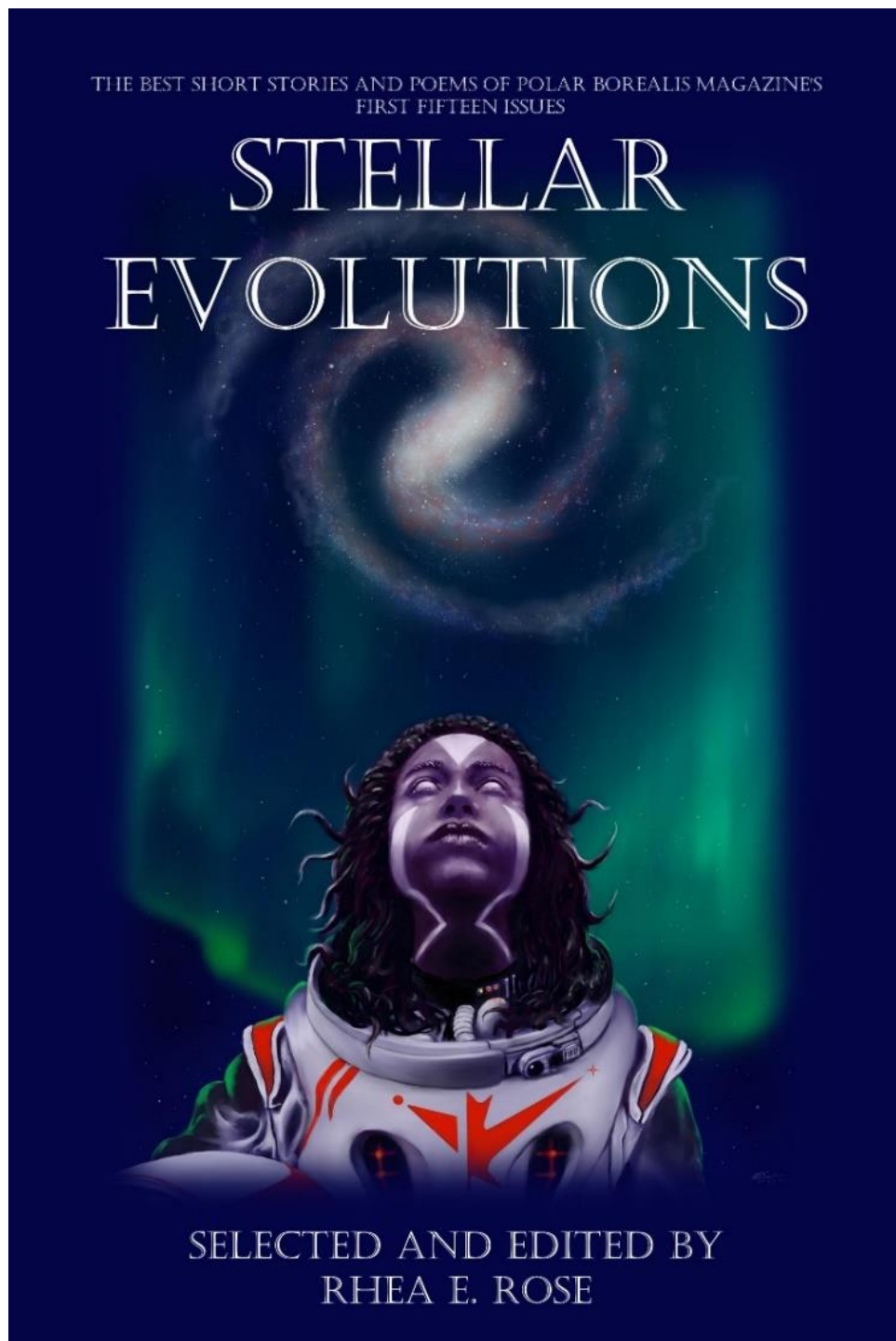
Alexander Zelenyj

Alexander is known for his cross-genre work in the areas of science fiction, dark fantasy, horror, and magical realism. His books have been published by Eibonvale Press, Independent Legions Publishing, and Fourth Horseman Press. His latest book, *These Long Teeth of the Night: The Best Short Stories 1999-2019*, was published by Fourth Horseman Press in 2022.

Alexander lives in Windsor, Ontario, with his wife, Elizabeth.

Website: <https://www.alexanderzelenyj.com/>

The Best Short Stories and Poems from the first Fifteen Issues of *Polar Borealis Magazine*



Cover: Space Force
– by M.D. Jackson

Poetry – by Lynne Sargent, J.J. Steinfeld, Melanie Martilla, Lisa Timpf, Kirsten Emmott, Catherine Girczyc, Andrea Schlecht, Selena Martens, JYT Kennedy, Taral Wayne & Walter Wentz, Douglas Shimizu, Marcie Lynn Tentchoff, Matt Moore, Richard Stevenson, Mary Choo, and Y.A. Pang.

Stories – by Mark Braidwood, Jonathan Sean Lyster, JYT Kennedy, Casey June Wolf, Monica Sagle, K.M. McKenzie, Jeremy A. Cook, Lawrence Van Hoof, Lisa Voisin, Elizabeth Buchan-Kimmerly, Dean Wirth, Robert Dawson, Michael Donoghue, Steve Fahnstalk, Michelle F. Goddard, Chris Campeau, Ben Nein, Karl Johanson, William Lewis, Tonya Liburd, Jon Gauthier, Jonathan Creswell-Jones, and Akem.

Available on Kindle for \$5.00 CAD

Go To: [Kindle version via Amazon.ca](#)

Or you can order it as a 209-page paperback, 9 x 6 inches in size, for \$18.62 CAD.

Go to: [Print version via Amazon.ca](#)