

POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry
(Issue #10 – May 2023)



POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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ART CREDITS

COVER: *Starfield with Flowers* – by Cynthia A. Rose

EDITORIAL

By Rhea E. Rose

It's about time; it's about space, about 16 poets going to the strangest place—ah, well, I'm probably the only one who barely remembers that old TV show. Most of us would have been small children watching with our parents in the early 60's. The show, "It's About Time," was a Gilligan's Island-styled episodic program about the slapstick follies of two astronauts launched into orbit. They break the time barrier by going faster than the speed of light, only to go backwards in time and find themselves in a prehistoric land with cave people and dinosaurs—sans Raquel.

Welcome to Polar Starlight issue 10. The spring publication. In this poetry collection, you'll read poems that convey the sublime to the ridiculous. Still, all the poets touch down in space or time: outer space, cyberspace and time in all its iterations, expanses and instants—in these pockets of words hanging in page space, you'll find places to buy your time and bide your time and ponder the end of time. But there's no trading time for material gain, at least not yet.

The idea of time is so important to us; its rhythms in our daily lives and the necessity of the passage of time permits us to function and thrive. Like the inner workings of a mechanical clock, tik tok tik tok, we assume order in the associated workings of the cosmos. We need order and precision, or at least the illusion of them.

There's no going back in time to try and change the course of history. Instead, the poetry on these pages reaches out to the cosmos forcing difficult questions. Is there a possibility for rebirth or renewal, or is the end truly final and absolute? Does something new arise from the ashes of the old, or does everything fade into nothingness?

Do time and space, time, and place, carry the potential for new life and creation in the vast dark expanse? Is our future tied to new orbits? Are we the bearers of purpose and direction amid the unknown cosmic stretch? Or will we become lost in chaos and disarray as our minds distort the idea of time? Time is multifaceted, constant, fleeting, structured, and unpredictable, just like the poetry here.

These poems do an excellent job of capturing the vastness and mystery of the universe while also celebrating its beauty and awe-inspiring nature. The sense of wonder that the universe inspires in us while acknowledging the vastness and complexity that makes it so difficult to comprehend is timeless.

I hope you take time to enjoy this space.

Rhea E. Rose

MOMENTS

By Frances Skene

Our timeship floats on a blue sea
in this deep past; the atmosphere is hazy
and sweet-smelling.

I touch the water; minnows brush
against my fingers.

I want moments in this time to stay fresh
in my mind for when we return
to our overheated present,
for when I lose people important to me,
or learn of another extinction.

Maybe, beyond our time, our world
will return to the simplicity I see here.

Maybe it will start again.

RIPPLES ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

by Irena Nikolova

Look at the cold on a winter night,
a squirrel hole in the dark,
burrows of groundhogs,
leaden sky frozen with grief,
grass buried in snow,
dry beech leaves in mourning.

All frozen in fractals
is the symmetry of the universe.
Gravitational ripples
traverse the earth.

Laser beams bend
and black holes collide
to the symphony
in space.

TIMELINES

By Douglas Shimizu

Done! The greatest scientific achievement in history.
So what?
Time travel busted. Could go anywhere I wanted.
Set the date. Fire up the transducer. Go.

Oh, what dreams I had, such ambition.
Change the course of history. End war. Save millions.
The theory was, you go back to change an event
And alter the flow of time.

How vain! What hubris! What ego the scientist has.
Bending time and space to your will
On the strength of mathematics and engineering.
To claim the power of Gods with the terahertz of your processor.

The first choice, the obvious choice:
Stop Hitler before he gains power.
Without his dogmatism, never would arise
Nazis, World War, Holocaust.
If only it could be so simple.

I killed the leader; a lieutenant took over.
I killed the instigator; the martyr fueled more followers.
I killed the student; a comrade took up the mantle.
I killed the child; the parents had another.

I killed, maimed, bribed, imprisoned a dozen Hitlers
At various points of his (their?) life.
Yet, the movement grew, the Party flourished,
The wars ignited and the bodies still multiplied.

I changed names and footnotes in historical texts
But events and conclusions remained untouched.
No matter how many stones I planted

The river of time flowed undeterred.

Try again. Something easier?

Save JFK.

A single bullet's flight.

How difficult could that be?

Stopped Oswald. No problem.

What? There really was a second shooter?

Stopped all three snipers.

A car bomb. Are you kidding me?!

Wars flared up despite my efforts.

Assassins hit their targets unencumbered.

Fires and explosions destroyed cities.

The Towers still fell in September.

I've spent the last decade changing timelines

Not that you would have noticed.

We're still at the same end point,

The same linear conclusion.

My hopes for a better world crushed

My pride in my invention dashed.

My breakthrough's utility only for

The temporal tourism trade.

Call it fate or pre-destination,

Or what you see is what you get,

Our past deeds are set in stone and

There is no going home again.

The only timeline to change is forward,

No mad science project required.

Just be sure to tread carefully, cause

No one can change what you've conjured.

PARTWAY

by James Grotkowski

how far to the stars
my arm reaches partway
it's cold up there

SLEEPER SHIP

by Carolyn Clink

asleep
in the starship's hold
the past behind them
and the future
a head on a pillow
dreaming
of dark matter dust
becoming a nursery
of napping stars
their futures
tied to dusty planets
in orbits
sweeping through veiled light
leaving a lone
central star
in cold sleep

AIR

by Peter Storey

2.1....

2.0....

1.9....

It is quiet
and dark, no shades, just black
Are my eyes even open?

1.6....

1.5....

1.4....

I no longer have—
a sense of direction.
I no longer know—
what there is around me.

1.1....

1.0....

0.9....

can no longer see
can no longer feel
can only hear a rasp
as the last breath of air
that was being held

0.4....

0.3....

0.2....

escapes, as the
gauge reads...

0.0

MISS UNIVERSE

by Jeanette C. Montgomery

Beyond the black silk
adorned with silver
sequins and brilliant diamonds
beyond serenity
lies infinite mystery

Her dark expanse arouses
ancient longing
The rise of her shining
eye bathes all
in her enigmatic light

Yearning to travel
beyond limiting boundaries
we are held in place
by her aloofness

Could we but breach
gravity's burden
would we find new adventure
or only more of her

MELTING WATCHES

by Irena Nikolova

In the midday hour sunrays pierce
hot air—arrows in a Dali painting
scorch earth and flowers
and plants gasp, wilting
in dry heat, looking
for drops of rain.

Our watches melt.
Time stops. We live beyond
wrapped in a ribbon
of Ur-time, of non-time.

What if evening never comes
and the parching heat stays
and night turns into day
and we get no sleep?

We need a clockmaker
to sell us back time—
rhythms pounding,
staccato notes on a piano
to beats of moonlight music.

TIME

by Colleen Anderson

Ticking and ticking
and ticking and ticking
and ticking and ticking
and ticking
tik tik tok
tik to tok
Talk to me of time.
time to find time that's mine
I cannot tell what time is mine
Whether I'll go before my time
or if I'll find and serve my time
Tea with sugar, and scones please
It's tea time now, at least for me
Now I think it's time to flee
to see if I can travel time
find if it travels in a straight line
or travels to the end of time
Time to see the great bells chime
the hours captured in successive rhyme
and when it's time to go again
I'll fly with time just the same
for time, as always
is on time again

AFTER ETERNITY

by Carolyn Clink

after eternity

the still night dreams close up
remembers a sun like floral fire

after eternity

life sleeps storms collapse
in crystal symmetry into a flat pool

after eternity

all matter even time
runs down packs it in

after eternity

VACUUM FLOATING

By James Grotkowski

floating with stars
buoyed in the vacuum of space
I need more air

LEAP YEAR

By Angelle McDougall

Leap Year is where all the leftovers go.
Not food, but things like misplayed notes on a piano,
the extra keys pressed on a typewriter,
the words from unfinished sentences,
partial thoughts, fragments of unused time,
redundant words and lost translations.

The Goddess takes all these bits and pieces
and collects them throughout the years,
carefully storing them in a large jar
like grains of sand in an hourglass.
Every fourth year she tips the timer over
and lets all the pieces flow out into the Universe
to settle and fill in the empty spaces.

SHRAPNEL

by James Grotkowski

bright rings of shrapnel
show this world's spaceship greetings
no gold's been taken

SHADOWMAN II

By Richard Stevenson

Who needs vampiric
hoes and haberdashery?
Who needs bat and wolf familiars
when you can taffy-take a
whole meme on the Internet
with pseudopodic grace
without features or a face?

I was born on the Web!
You think I don't have tentacles?!
Shadowman you call me,
2-D toffee-stretchin' gif
on the Internet. Safe as milk
as Captain Beefheart would put it.
More fun than Mr. Rogers' Neighbourhood!

It's a pefect day on the Internet...
Watch me come with my intergalactic
magnet of mirth and merriment.
Invaginate into your tender children,
Bud 'em off their reality and into mine.
No muss, no fuss; no bite, no blood.
Yer incubus/succubus toffee tosser.

Gotta love these kiddy rubes!
Pop their heads and quaff their blood
if I could. They're so sippy sweet!
Don't have to though. Gotta better move...
Yep, Just extend another pseudopod,
swallow you whole, bod by bod.
I get bigger, with no Identikit.

SPACECOAT

By James Grotkowski

sweet airtight space coat
liner's orange, for safety
when I float away

THREE YEARS

By Rhonda Parrish & Leslie Van Zwol

She was stunning—
bone white skin,
an oil slick of hair
lipstick bright teal blue.

“It’ll buy whatever you want,”
she said, flipping the coin to me.
“Make your wish and throw it in.”

Sunset burned the copper gold,
turned the water molten,
shimmering with possibility.

Gilded temptation danced
through my fingers
“But what,” I asked, “is the price?”

“Nothing you’ll want,” she said,
her laugh a sharp caw.
“Only three years,
from the end of your life.
Three decrepit years
of diapers and walkers,
and pain.”

I thought of Grandma’s last years
bedridden, pale as the sheets she lay on.
Would she have traded those years away
for a little extra?
Or had she seen the bedside laughs
through bloodstained coughs
as a gift?

If not for genie-wish semantics I would
toss the coin,
Save the world,
The temptation was real,
saccharine,
I could taste it.

But the old stories had warned
of handsome devils
and shadow deals too good,
far too good,
to be true.

The coin left my hand,
but never found the fountain.

Back to the woman it soared,
dropping
secure and heavy
into her palm instead of mine.

The fountain took a breath.

The woman smiled, satisfied and bright,
spiriting the gilded lure away to places unknown.

“Sometimes,” she said, kissing my cheek,
“Three years is sooner than you expect.
And, to buy the time back,
you have to find someone
who’ll say no
to the coin.”

ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

Colleen Anderson

Colleen is a multiple award nominee, with poetry widely published in six countries, in such venues as *Andromeda Spaceways*, *Lucent Dreaming*, the award-winning *Shadow Atlas*, and *Water: Sirens, Selkies & Sea Monsters*. Her experimental poem “Machine (r)Evolution” will be reprinted in Tenebrous Press’s *Brave New Weird* in 2023. Colleen lives in Vancouver, BC, and is a Ladies of Horror Fiction, Canada Council, and BC Arts Council grant recipient for writing. Her poetry collection, [*I Dreamed a World*](#), is available from LVP Publications. *The Lore of Inscrutable Dreams* is due for release in 2023.

www.colleenanderson.wordpress.com

Carolyn Clink

Carolyn won the 2022 Aurora Award for Best Poem/Song for “Cat People Café” which appeared in *Polar Starlight*, Issue 3. She won the same award in 2011 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*.

James Grotkowski

James is a native northern Albertan who now calls Calgary home. He holds a degree in geology but presently works at IT systems development in the aviation industry. He is a long-time member of the World Haiku Club with dozens of his works included in its published reviews. A wide range of concerns and topics are reflected in his haiku.

James has recently begun non-haiku writing endeavours, with several short stories published in *The Enigma Front* anthologies and *Polar Borealis*

magazine. Hard and far out sci-fi with a touch of humour best describes his short stories.

Angelle McDougall

Although born and raised in Northern Alberta, Angelle now lives on the Canadian West Coast with her husband (Nanaimo from 2008 to 2019, and now Port Coquitlam). She writes poetry, drabbles, flash fiction, personal essays, news articles, and short stories in various genres. She has had a few fantasy drabbles and a flash fiction story published, but the appearance of “Leap Year” in *Polar Starlight* is her first paid publication. She wrote and acted in a television commercial, prepared quotes (French and English) for an anthology of Canadian sayings, traveled to 25+ countries (including the USSR in 1981), and co-hosted a call-in show with her brother for a radio station in Northern Alberta.

Jeanette C. Montgomery

Jeanette C. Montgomery began writing when her Grade Two teacher instructed the class to write about the Norman Rockwell print on the blackboard. Jeanette wrote a story about the boy, his dog, and their adventures. That set a lifetime pattern of writing about whatever adventure pops into her busy mind. Living and traveling in Vancouver, BC, and various global locations, exposed her to diverse legends and mythologies. She credits her wild imagination to an Irish ancestry and a limitless curiosity which sometimes leads her into trouble.

Jeanette has published articles, poems and stories in *Write On!*, *Talespinners*, *Folklore*, *Freelance*, and McGraw Hill Ryerson’s *Modern Morsels – Selections of Canadian Poetry and Short Fiction*. She has two stories included in the Saskatoon Writers’ Club Inc. anthology *Fact, Fiction & Fantasy*. She lives in Saskatoon, writing YA fiction and poetry.

Irena Nikolova

I began my life as a poet when I developed an obsession with the poetry of the English Romantics P. B. Shelley and J. Keats. This obsession brought me from Sofia, Bulgaria, to the continent of North America where I pursued my graduate studies in Romanticism at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois, and Western University in London, Ontario.

I have taught British Romantic poetry, Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction and other literature courses at the University of Sofia, Western University, and the University of Ottawa.

I am an active member of the Algonquin Square Table, a poetry circle created by A. F. Moritz at the University of Toronto. This poetry workshop has been chaired for many years by Carolyn Clink. I have also participated in the Poetry Fluency Salon of Margaret Christakos at U of T. I have worked with Molly Peacock, who has been a source of poetic inspiration, a mentor and a very insightful critic and editor of my poetry.

I have published a book on the poetry of P.B. Shelley and J. Keats entitled *Complementary Modes of Representation in Keats, Novalis and Shelley* (Peter Lang, 2001). I have also published articles on the poetry of W. Wordsworth (Sofia University Press, 1990), the drama of W.B. Yeats in *Drama and Criticism* (New York: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009) and the European Romantic Epic in *European Poetry* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002).

Rhonda Parrish

Like a magpie, Rhonda is constantly distracted by shiny things. She's the editor of many anthologies and author of plenty of books, stories and poems (some of which have even been nominated for awards!). She lives in Edmonton, Alberta, and she can often be found there playing Dungeons and Dragons, bingeing crime dramas, making blankets or cheering on the Oilers.

Her website, is at <http://www.rhondaparrish.com>, and her Patreon is at <https://www.patreon.com/RhondaParrish>.

Cynthia A. Rose

Cynthia grew up in the village of Anmore BC. She studied fine art at Emily Carr University in Vancouver and then went on to become a finder of props and set decoration in the film and television industry for many years. She now spends her time painting and finding poetry.

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*, *Polar Starlight* and *Stellar Evolutions*.

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](#).

Most recently, her work, “Angels” is on the long list of nominees for the 2023 Rhysling Award for short poetry.

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, BC. 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).

Peter Storey

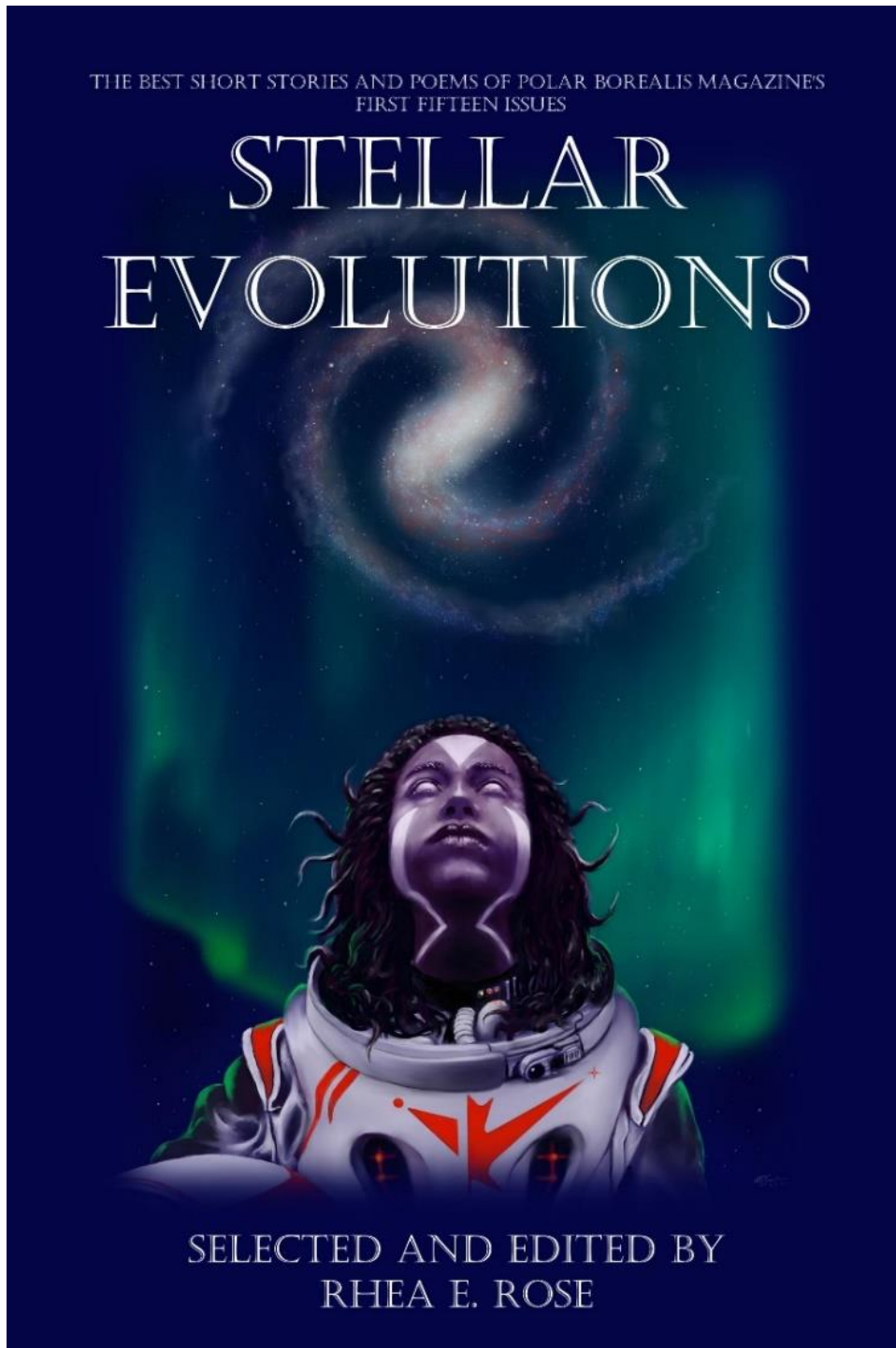
Peter emigrated to Canada in the spring of 1992 and obtained his Canadian citizenship in March of 2011. He mostly writes free-form poems. Words come into his mind, from beginning to end and/or bits and pieces, and he writes them down with whatever is available at the time. What goes on, creatively, in his thoughts, are words and pictures. The words come out as poems and the pictures as abstract art.

Published works include “Awake” in the *Urban Green Man* Anthology, Edge Publishing, 2013, “Flight Song” at *WritingRaw.com* in February 2015, “Becoming Immortal Again” at *WritingRaw.com* November 2015, and his 2019 self-published Graphic Novel “Awake” illustrated by Janice Blaine.

Leslie Van Zwol

Leslie is an author who enjoys exploring new terrain in her writing, be it through trope-bending, genre-fusion, or dabbling in unfamiliar forms. Poetry is new territory for her and this is her first published poem.

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



Cover: Space Force
– by M.D. Jackson

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