

UNISPHERE

#50

June 2026

SFPA Grand Masters



JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION

FAN-PRO COORDINATION BUREAU

Ionisphere #50, June 2026

Edited by Jean-Paul L. Garnier

61871 Twentynine Palms Hwy. Joshua Tree,
CA 92252, USA

email for the editor and magazine

spacecowboybooks@gmail.com

Published for the National Fantasy Fan Federation. To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and address. Memberships are \$18 for a full membership and \$6 for an electronic membership. Public (non-voting) memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah, Nevada 89049. Pay online at <https://tnfff.org/>

Cover art: Thomas Smillie, 1890

∞

This issue is dedicated to John Thiel
1945-2026

Editorial

This issue's focus is the Grand Masters of Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry. This distinction is awarded by the [Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association](#) and this year we have our newest Grand Master - Ruth Berman. Congratulations Ruth!

This year also saw the passing of Grand Master Jane Yolen (1939-2026). I had reached out to Jane for an interview, but alas I was too late. RIP Jane. You'll be missed.

This issue features interviews with all of the living SFFPA Grand Masters and each of them

has been kind enough to also provide a poem, so you're in for a treat!

Speculative poetry might be having its moment in the sun with Hugo and Nebula awards finally being given for poetry, but the SFFPA has been a home for speculative poets since 1978 and has given the honor of Grand Master since 1999.

As always, letters of comment welcome. I'd love to hear from you.

Jean-Paul L. Garnier
Joshua Tree, CA
June 2026

∞

Table of Contents:

Interview with Ruth Berman	2
Interview with F. J. Bergmann	5
Interview with Akua Lezli Hope	7
Interview with Mary Soon Lee	12
Interview with Linda D. Addison	14
Interview with Ann K. Schwader	16
Interview with David C. Kopaska-Merkel	18
Interview with Marge Simon	20
Interview with Robert Frazier	22
Poetry of the Grand Masters	25
About the Grand Masters	38

2026 Grand Master

Ruth Berman



Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

RB: I actually started writing poetry before I knew how to write. When I was about five I composed a poem about seeing moonlight on the water during a train ride, and got my oldest brother to write it down for me, as I didn't know how to write. The books of poetry for children that we owned were a pretty good introduction to poetry — Dr. Seuss, A. A. Milne, Mother Goose, and a couple of anthologies of poems-for-children. In third grade I discovered that the school library had a whole long shelf full of fairy tales and myths and plunged into those, and in the summer going into 8th grade I was introduced to science fiction when a classmate loaned my next-oldest brother a copy of Arthur C. Clarke's *The Sands of Mars* — which he didn't read, but I did. During high school and college I was mostly choice-reading fantasy and sf prose

stories, although school assignments included a fair amount of poetry, and I wrote a lot of poetry (mostly not f/sf), as well as fiction (all f/sf). When I graduated from college I looked over what I'd been writing and could see that the fiction was bad and getting no better, while the poems were fairly good and getting better. Reluctantly, I decided I should concentrate on poetry and forget about fiction — reluctantly, because at the time I thought science fiction necessarily meant fiction and fiction necessarily meant prose. I did later get back to writing fiction, when a compulsion to write "Star Trek" stories resulted in some stories that were actually pretty good, as I realized with some surprise — one, re-written with an airplane crew instead of a starship crew, was published, as "Ptolemaic Hijack," in 1971 in *Worlds of Fantasy*, the short-lived sister-publication to *Galaxy* and *Worlds of If*. But I've continued to be more a poetry-writer than a fiction-writer. And 1971 was also when I first started getting poems accepted in professional markets, including among the earliest a pair in the *Saturday Review*: "Soundstage" and "Computative Oak." "Soundstage" was not exactly sf on the surface — but it was actually a description of the "Star Trek" soundstage (and of DeForest Kelley's multiple appearances in Gunfights at the O.K. Corral). "Computative Oak" was straightforwardly sf. Somewhere in there it had dawned on me that fiction was not necessarily prose, and the elements of f/sf were not even necessarily narrative and fiction at all but could be lyrical and poetry. Reading a lot of Tennyson's Arthurian and mythological poems for classes and acquiring a copy of August Derleth's anthology *Dark of the Moon* were probably what alerted me to the

possibilities. My poems since have been about half and half spec and non-spec.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

RB: A few years back I decided that no one was asking to do collections of my work, and I never won in contests for books of poetry, and some of my friends among the Twin Cities SF Poets (a group for encouraging and critiquing our poetry) were in the same boat in spite of the fact that, as I thought, we all wrote spectacularly good poetry, and Terry Garey had been editing well-received anthologies of sf poetry that featured our work prominently as well as poems by sf poets from all over. So I started publishing some collections myself, starting with a pair of chapbooks (under Terry's imprint) to celebrate the work of our member Cassandra O'Malley after she died; and, under my own imprint (crumbfairy press — so named because of the publication by Black Goat Press of *The Crumb Fairy and other tales*, my translations of fantasy stories by a little-known-in-English-but-important 19th century French writer, Charles Nodier), a collection of poems by another of our members, Rebecca Marjesdotter (*The Owl Kingdom and other poems*), a collection of Terry's stfnal poems (*The Cat Star and other poems*), a long narrative poem by Eleanor Arneson (a Spenserian allegorical epic, no less, *Amnita, The Legend of Amnita, or The Amazon*). After which I decided it would not be too egotistical to start doing some chapbooks of my own work (so far *Beyond the Moones Sphere, poems in eccentric orbits*, of science-fictional poems; and *To Faery Lond They Came*, of fantasy poems). (Don't correct the spellings of the titles — they're allusions to Spenser.)

What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

RB: I don't really think there are major differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets, except that the genre community is smaller and more closely in communication. "Regular" poets are more likely to be in touch through state-organizations rather than national ones, although there are many groups organized nationally, as well. The difficulties of scope make it difficult for the national groups to be closely connected and difficult to have international communities of English-language poets at all, much less organizations of poets writing in many languages. The sf community doesn't have a lot of such wider contacts, either, but does have some.



How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

RB: Can't say as I know how I balance narrative and imagery. The major example that occurs to me of difficulty in balance was "Cloud Manufactory," which I wrote first as a poem. But it implied a rather complex future in which rain-cloud manufacturing was common, and no one I showed it to understood it. So I wrote a story to go around it, in which the manufacturing was spelled out, and the editors all said it was a fine poem but not much of a story. So I dropped the story but added a footnote of explanation, and it was

accepted by George Scithers (an editor who did a lot to encourage sf poetry, first in *Amazing*, and then in Asimov's) for *Amazing*. But it happened that the poem without the footnote just filled one page, so it was published there without the footnote — and no one understood it. (Terry later reprinted it — with the footnote.)

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

RB: The biggest change in speculative poetry is that writers, editors, and readers are more conscious of the fact that it exists and can be worth reading.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

RB: The recent addition of spec poetry to the Hugo and Nebula Awards is delightful, as showing the extent of the increased awareness and enjoyment of spec poetry.

What does the editing process look like for you?

RB: I haven't actually edited much poetry — not in the sense of suggesting changes that might (or might not!) improve the work. I have been dealing mostly with reprinting poems that had been previously published, and I don't like to suggest changes for poems that have already gone through an editing process (unless there are typos to correct). *Amnita* had not been previously published, but Eleanor had polished it over a long period (there being no market for long fantasy poems when she wrote it), and I didn't see a need for further changes. I am more concerned with

trying to get a sort of dominoes effect, so that in a collection one poem is followed by another that in some way links up with it — not always possible to achieve. Gardner Dozois commented in a talk at Minicon one time that an anthology should have two especially — and obviously — fine works as the opener and closer, and I try to follow that advice. (Editors have sometimes suggested changes to me that I thought definitely improved the work, and sometimes changes that I disagreed with, sometimes resulting in the editor's withdrawal of the suggestion, sometimes after discussion reaching a different change that we could agree on, sometimes resulting in no agreement and no publication). Sometimes after many rejections, I decide that a poem just isn't working and stop sending it out (or sometimes try rewriting it). Sometimes I just keep sending an old poem out, if I still like it. I think at this point I am not still sending out any of the poems I wrote in the 70s (the last of them accepted and published just last year — I didn't tell the editor how old it was, or that it had been rejected at the magazine before — probably not under the same editorship), but I am still sending out some that I wrote in the 80s. If I still like it I don't give a damn how many editors didn't like it. (When I first started sending out work on submission it took some years before any was accepted. I dealt with the discouragement I felt in consequence by deciding that it was like collecting stamps, and I was going to get samples of rejection from all possible markets because it was a Collection. Once I started getting some acceptances, however, I threw out my Collection-of-Rejection-Slips.)

2024 Grand Master F. J. Bergmann

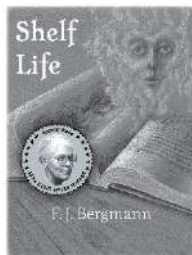


Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

FJB: At bottom, pure escapism. I discovered science fiction and fantasy in grade school and never looked back. Although I started writing poetry much later (my last year in high school), my first published poem was SFF, and it always seemed to me that my work was richer for the introduction of genre narrative.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

FJB: My latest published poetry book is *Shelf Life* (Space Cowboy Books, 2024), which is a collection of (mostly) persona poems in the voices of books. At the moment I have 7 or 8 not-quite-finalized full-length



science fiction, fantasy and horror poetry collections that I'm trying to finish and send out for publication.

What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

FJB: I think of speculative work as more expansive and less exclusionary. Judging by the relative abundance of paying markets and lack of submissions fees, the genre community puts far more value on creative work. Speculative writers, publishers and readers are of necessity more open-minded—unlimited is one way of putting it.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

FJB: The way I write tends to happen automatically; I don't think about how I do it. I like prompts and constraints (including those of form); probably my ideal way of generating a poem is to use a list of random words.

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

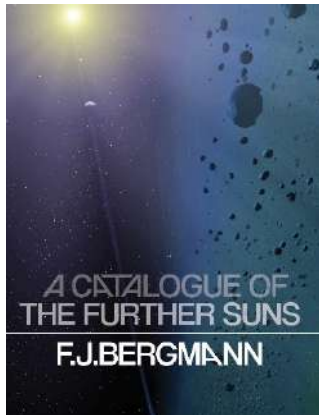
FJB: In my opinion there has been a vast (and sorely needed) improvement in editorial standards. When I first started submitting poems in the early 2000s, the few genre markets I encountered were very disappointing, in terms of both the quality of poems published and basic editorial skills. I submitted my speculative poems to mainstream venues, where they were well received. I finally

joined SFPA in 2007, and it seems to me that there have been amazing developments and growth in the field since then.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

FJB: Important and useful. This legitimizes specpo in the larger SFF community as well as offering more publicity. While speculative poets tend to be very familiar with works of fiction in the field, an interview in *Locus* with a few well-known SFF writers a number of years ago, asking about their favorite poems, made it clear that this interest was not mutual—all named only high-school English warhorses. So disappointing—and subsequent to a letter from me that appeared in *Locus*, they instituted a speculative poets' round table.

What does the editing process look like for you?



I don't do a lot of reworking or multiple drafts. I participate in a few writing groups, both IRL and online, and I will definitely revise if I feel that criticism I've received is

warranted. (NB: if one or two poets in your group have an opinion you disagree with, they can safely be ignored ... but if *all* of them share that opinion, they are right.) Occasionally I'll catch something on a much

later rereading that was not apparent in the heat of the forge. I don't consider rejection of a submission to be any indication of the poems' quality or an impetus for revision; tastes vary, the editor's tastes are not likely to match mine, and there are always hundreds of other venues to try. I've won awards for poems that had previously been rejected many times; "Lost Ark," which won the 2025 Rhysling Short Poem award, received 21 rejections before Linda D. Addison accepted it for *Space & Time Magazine*.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

FJB: The process is the same, except that fiction is more tedious. And when I write prose, there isn't really a distinguishable border between prose poems and flash fiction. It's much more difficult for me to write at length—which is why I have no finished novels.

2022 Grand Master Akua Lezli Hope



Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

ALH: Speculative poetry, compels me. The why for this compulsion is about a collusion and collision of nature and nurture, the psychographics of my being — a third generation New Yorker parented by African Caribbean Americans, who made myth and magic manifest in the megalopolis. There was poetry on the bookshelf and madness and mayhem in the Zeitgeist. Men went to the moon. Our school drills prepared us for the nuclear bomb. Little black girls like me were bombed while worshipping at church. They were fire hosed and attacked by dogs. Yet Star Trek said there was a way forward and beyond these horrors. So the speculative called me to occupy a place that included parts of me and my concerns that I did not find addressed in other poetry. Though it's all one—while the speculate frame predominates in me, it is part of a whole.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

ALH: I thank Jean-Paul for encouraging me on my TELEPATH journey.

TELEPATH presents poems unpacking the world-view of those possessing the gift we all once shared, in the hopes that such exploration and recounting goes beyond witnessing to affirm, strengthen, and enlighten. Exploring this metaphysical and ordinary world, the poems inhabit an array of forms including pantoum, villanelle, triolet, concrete, haibun, micro-acrostics, a sonnet crown, as various personae express the wonder and burdens, possibilities and constraints, of this realm-of-being in American society.



The speculative lens enables a wryly compelling and evocative insight on prevalent oppressions where ability is misconstrued as disability. A familial foundation of unspoken thought transmission enables ordinary magic to persist, protect, and resist denials.

TELEPATH explores telepathy as an ancestral and integrated human capacity. The collection examines connection, consciousness, and Black American experience. The work moves between the intimate and the cosmic.

TELEPATH continues to evolve beyond the book to an ecosystem, a trans-media story world, centering TELEPATH and including other texts, objects, and signal forms: sculpture, sound, wearable art, and edible signals. There's a TELEPATH poetry line*, a playlist,

jewelry, hats, recipe book, postcards. People can experience the work in different ways and modalities.

*TELEPATH Poetry Line 607 622-0414

What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and “regular” poets?

ALH: The difference between the genre poetry community and so called “regular” poets is focus: what is celebrated; what publications are extolled; what appearances in print are applauded and what is lauded. There’s a difference in poetic concerns and who gets play is profoundly different.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

ALH: The question suggests there is a hierarchy or that the presence of one undoes or subverts or usurps the other. Haiku instructs/exemplifies how the smallest rendering of an image may open a tale if you understand what’s being described, if you entered the image with an understanding of time, place and culture. This specificity relates a story. We can decode and unpack the image and therein lies the tale. If I talk about grape hyacinth, you can know I’m talking about a geographic location at a particular time of year, most likely in a cultivated not wild place. *grape hyacinth rise/April snow vanishes/loon song before dawn.*

This is a provocative question because I don’t know if I do or that I necessarily strive to, either. What I get from the question is the

suggestion that they need to be in balance, that too much of one is not enough of the other. For each in every and all poems, the poet has a something that they want to communicate. What makes the communication succeed or fail is the use of tools. There is a vast array of tools that one can employ in the toolbox and the question one always engages after the utterance is transcribed is what/which of these tools will best serve one’s impulse ... how language and its constructs can convey your idea. Imagery is only one mode of conveyance, sonics convey, and yes, I do ride the trope lightrail on the regular, I sit in different compartments for every journey.

So imagery—

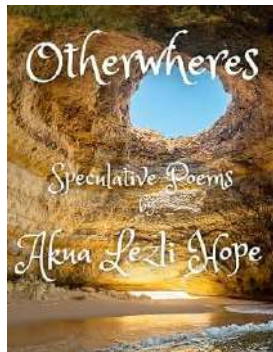
Are you painting pretty pretty pictures or are you telling a story and is telling the story done in such a way that there is a visual picture evoked? Because in telling the story there’s always an image and I hearken back to the idea of show don’t tell. The essential struggle in every poem is how am I telling because I am always showing. Can I tell in a way that’s compelling and what are those tools and devices that make a compelling show and further for me always is can I both understand and convey more than one thing at the same time?

This is a challenge for me to the extent that the overculture doesn’t get my code clues or signifying...my metaphors, symbols, allegories, allusions....

My first exposure to layered meaning was in elementary school reading Emily Dickinson, who is so deeply speculative. Recently, I thought again about the poem “Why do they shut me out of heaven,” a poem, which signals and does so many, many things in that

speculation about being barred from an exalted/holy/sacred place. She presents the imagined as real, and uses the real to expound on the imagined. This speaks to me of oppression and patriarchy and you name it, any repressive, denying “ism” for she talks about the denial of access, about being judged and excluded.

The one color in the poem is the white robe and in the bare bones of it she says more than I will enumerate here but to sit with it — that I sing too loud — did I sing too loud? she asks in asking why she is denied access.



We who are also denied wonder why, the child self wonders why, the adult may know why, but may also attribute the denial to something less unfair than the real rationale ... we are denied access and one day may even wake up and say that’s not heaven in the 21st-century, we say why are we even knocking there at *that* door? Why can’t we manifest the joy that is us? Why are we contained/constrained/rebuffed/rebuked shut out.

Here is how the story and the image are so much one, a fountain of experience and ever unfolding meaning. I’m laughing at these words, see how one has to wrestle them into behaving versus just spouting or blathering on the page. I’m thinking of another poem that ED’s evokes, ancient of days also about why would God “make a poet, black and bid him sing”* which in my head holds kinship to ED’s questioning of the celestial judge/overseer/overlord, that the

celestial/supernatural is invoked to assess or assist in interrogating the inequities that continues to prevail in the world.”

*(Yet Do I Marvel, poet Countee Cullen, my father’s teacher)

I love the speculative frame for the ways in which it enables and invites me to interrogate the world, to render the world in ways that examine and remake it. I am so profoundly grateful for the remaking, for the ways in which I can reimagine, recast create new possibilities.

A room is still a room, even if there is nothing there but gloom and a room is not a house and a house is not a home but when that room looks out on *terraformed* fields, I know so many things have happened, and I can fill that room with present experiences or future experiences and imagine possibilities and relationships where no song is too loud and every little hand that knocks is answered. Though perhaps what answers still assesses and is maybe not human but AI or another carbon based species. And the little hand may have suction pads on its finger tips or be cerulean blue.

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen in the field of speculative poetry?

ALH: To offer some context, I wrote my first speculative poems over 60 years ago. My first professional publication was in an anthology with my heroines including Nikki Giovanni, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, in 1974. I was a member of the SFPA in the 1980s. There’s great joy that there are at long last, so many others who love dragons and

Dragonriders, who know there are varieties of aliens and cultures. who have read *Dune* and *Lord of the Rings*, etc. When I was reading these works and ANALOG in the 60s, I only had my younger siblings to inflict my musings and stories on. Now, there's a world of millions sharing these interests and concerns.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

ALH: So the growth of the field, the proliferation of speculative poets, the boom in books, anthologies, and other speculative poetry media products, is so gloriously affirming for me. The recent recognition of speculated poetry in the HUGO, NEBULA, and other genre awards is welcome, wonderful and long overdue. Our mass culture is an award show/competition based one, so the inclusion of speculative poetry endeavor in this cultural construct is affirming.

What does the editing process look like for you?

ALH: Editing is sometimes wondrous and at times excruciating. It is iterative. I am made mad by the many ways to say something so the decision to surrender/stop is about achieving the architecture and the song. I'm angry when I have to surrender song to sense because I am trying to communicate something only to discover that what I made, what I wrote probably only makes sense to me.

To talk about editing is to describe my writing process which resists description as it is

ever changing as technology has enabled improvisation.

Pilot precise pens scrawling on legal white pads is where it begins. The technology has enabled utterance, so in reading the written word into text, hearing the word aloud, leads to changes from hand to digital text. Then that may be changed on the screen, printed out and again amended, I keep a mental checklist of the sensory and the sonic in the making of sense.

There are bags and bags of notepads, even though I tear out pages, which is why I stopped keeping those lovely bound journals, but those journals are more like a space lab of store seeds than graves or headstones.

Reading aloud, enables me to discern the thuds, though not always. Cadence is critical to me.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

ALH: I've written speculative fiction since I was a teenager. My speculative fiction is published in *Dark Matter*, the renowned first anthology of African-American Science Fiction and a number of other anthologies, the most recent are my two stories in *Afrofuturism Short Stories* (Flametree) from last fall.

My poetic practice does inform how I edit my fiction. I want it to sound good to the ear and the show don't tell prevails here too. The balance is about a dance, an alchemy, a transformation. Imagery is used to ensure the narrative is felt as well as seen. Exposition is challenging for me. I'm not into it. So I engage in the processing, layering of details during a second and third pass, while considering if I

have that perception in stripping away, removing any redundant explanations.

Poetic devices I seem to favor are allusion, alliteration, rhymes of different types, puns. Editing, reading aloud, enables me to discern the thuds so not always the cadence. The length of my breath was long when I was younger and I favored long lines, then it got short then I started deep breathing and my lines lengthened again.

An auditory check is important. I think about what the Afrosurrealist poet, Ted Joans said “you have nothing to fear from the poet, but the truth” so honesty underpins my effort. My favorite diagnostic tools include the big tome, ROGETS Thesaurus, a topology of thought where I can travel through the categories of meaning along the webs of association, engaging the struggle of how to find the right word to fit it into a particular syntax without damaging the surrounding phrases.

Time is important to my editing process. To create a work and put it away for a while after wrestling and wrangling with it, is optimal. I don’t always have the time I want, but there’s something about time away from the work and returning to the work that either affirms or makes clear what needs to be amended.

2022 Grand Master Mary Soon Lee



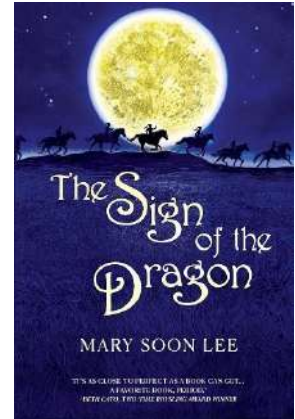
Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

MSL: I think much of my poetry is speculative because much of my reading is speculative. I've been an avid fantasy and science fiction reader since I was small. Imagining other worlds and possible futures is a delight. That said, I also write a substantial amount of non-speculative poetry. A quick check of the ten poems I've written most recently shows that half of them are non-speculative.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

MSL: A print edition of my epic fantasy *The Sign of the Dragon* was published last year, and includes 40 superb illustrations by Gary McCluskey. The book is nearly 600 pages and tells the story of King Xau, chosen (very mild spoiler) by a dragon to be king. This story is told in hundreds of poems, most of them free verse, and from dozens of viewpoints — including Xau's guards, his

enemies, his cleaning woman, a dragon, a monster, even the palace cat. Of all the things that I have written, this is the one that means the most to me. Its roots lie in my childhood, with Xau drawing on my father's Chinese heritage and Xau's first enemy drawing on my mother's Irish background. N.B. My family warned me that Xau was too perfect, but he's exactly how I wanted him to be!



What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and “regular” poets?

MSL: I have considerably less contact with “regular” poets than genre ones, so I can't give an authoritative opinion. The genre poetry community is very friendly, yet so is what I've seen of the general poetry community here in Pittsburgh. Both communities are deeply committed to poetry.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

MSL: I don't have a general rule for balancing narrative versus imagery. Each poem is its own creature with its own voice. Some are lyrical, some are matter-of-fact; some are free verse, some conform to a structure (haiku, triole, villanelle, et al). There are probably poetic devices that I use a lot, but I'm not sure what they are! Alliteration, perhaps, and repetition; rhyme when I can (internal rhyme as

well as rhymes at the end of lines). In *The Sign of the Dragon*, I used some Homeric tags (e.g. referring to Xau as the Horse King and his enemy as the Red King).

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

MSL: The proliferation of online publications has been a big change, both for speculative poetry and for other poetry, and indeed for fiction. More recently, the inclusion of poetry in major awards, notably the Hugo and Nebula awards, has been a significant shift.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

MSL: I love it! [I am on the poetry committee for SFWA, which was the force behind adding poetry to the Nebula awards.]

What does the editing process look like for you?



MSL: I do a large amount of editing when I'm first writing a poem, so that my first complete draft is typically reached after I've revised and re-revised the poem's parts. I often return to that first draft over the next day or so, tweaking the poem further. Some poems are finished at that point. Others I come back to days, weeks, occasionally even years later.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

MSL: I began by writing short stories, then later added poetry into the mix. For the past couple of years, I've only written poetry, although I think I will return to occasional fiction in the future. With both poetry and prose, I think about many of the same things: characters, emotion, language, ideas. In the borderlands, flash fiction and narrative poetry overlap.

2020 Grand Master Linda D. Addison



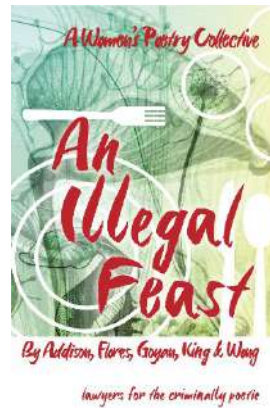
Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

LDA: I really don't have a choice, it's just the way my imagination works. When I look at reality I always daydreamed about something different, cats with wings, stars that I could reach up and grab. I was drawn to poetry because in kindergarten teachers would read fairytales and fables, which often rhymed. When I started reading poetry on my own I heard a kind of music in the fables that I enjoyed.

Tell us about your latest speculative poetry collection?

LDA: In 2025 I was part of two new speculative poetry collections, one was "Everything Endless" written with Jamal Hodge. It's a poetic journey through inner and outer space, reflecting both the dark side of humans and the evolutionary light of humans within the universe. Jamal and I do a kind of call and

response in our poems where one of us wrote a poem and then the other would write a poem inspired by that poem. Most of the poems in the first two sections are dwarf forms so they are 10 lines or less. The third section is based on The Seven Hermetic Principles, where we each wrote poetry again as call and response to each other. The last section is one poem Jamal and I wrote together, "Though You Always Are" in the form of a letter (epistolary form).



The second book "An Illegal Feast", was written with Consuelo G. Flores, Andrea Goyan, Elizabeth Eve King & Elizabeth Wong. Each poem in the collection was created in an unusual process: E.E. King

would send us prompts, then take the resulting poems and magically weave them into one fantastic poem.

What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

LDA: At first glance the difference might be the subject matter, a genre poem tends to play with reality in the images or language and go into areas of horror, science-fiction, fantasy but then again I've read what is considered

regular poetry that weaves in images that aren't quite real either. There are many poems that could be "regular" and genre.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

LDA: I don't pay much attention to what I'm writing in the first draft. I just let it come through me and put it down, even though much of what I write does have a story. After the first draft I go back and edit the poem to shape it to find the actual rhythm that I want. The editing tools I use are while reading out loud look for different words to make the images interesting. I've found that often using words with opposite meanings can make the story and music stand out for the reader. Another thing is to remove unneeded words to heighten the energy. If a line sounds too much like a sentence then I try taking out words. Shaping the poem by using indents in stanza to emphasize the flow of images. Another thing I love to do is try new poetry forms, like Fibonacci, or concrete/shape form.

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

LDA: Poetry in general reflects the good/bad times in the world around us. Much speculative poetry today reflects the technology and social tensions that come in conflict with humans. Another difference is the growing markets that publish speculative poetry and recognition by speculative writer's professional organizations adding poetry to their conversation.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

LDA: I suspect this is happening because more poetry collections are being published and publications like magazines and anthologies are including poetry. With these changes readers are more aware of poetry and bringing it into conversation with organizations.

What does the editing process look like for you?

LDA: After writing first drafts quickly I'll edit by reading the poem out loud, sometimes doing research online about some image I'm working on in the poem to find other terms to use. Occasionally a poem feels like a shape/concrete version comes to mind and I'll try to see how that looks. I've centered some poems at times to see if that is interesting. I keep multiple copies of the poem so I can always back away from a big change. Always checking by reading the poem out loud if it feels finished.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

LDA: For fiction, I definitely use the poetry tools of removing extra words, finding more interesting words to replace some words. I'll play with the sentence lengths, some longer, some shorter.

For poetry, I'm aware of the story I'm telling, even if it is a flash scene.

2018 Grand Master Ann K. Schwader



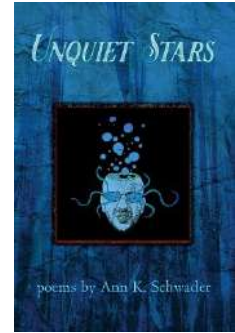
Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

AKS: I mostly read speculative fiction — as opposed to mainstream fiction — so why wouldn't my poetry run to the speculative? I did write quite a bit of mainstream poetry in college, and for the first few years after, but I'm not sure I ever enjoyed it as much. Markets were harder to come by, as well. With spec poetry, there's a wide variety of markets. More editors seem open to formal verse, though that varies from year to year.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

AKS: My last collection was *Unquiet Stars*, out from Weird House in 2021 and edited by F.J. Bergmann. It's a mix of weird, dark SF, and straight-up cosmic horror. The

centerpiece is a previously unpublished sonnet sequence, "Faces From the House of Pain," inspired by *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. As usual, most everything included is formal — though there are also a few speculative haibun. It received a third place Elgin Award from the SFPA in 2022.



What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

AKS: I don't know many "regular" poets, so I'm mostly judging from what I see in my emailings from *Poetry Daily* or *Poem-a-Day*. It seems to me that there's a much greater emphasis on academia in the "regular" poetry world, though plenty of genre poets also have MFAs or MAs. (I plead guilty to the latter myself.) No one I know of is writing spec poetry to get tenure! There is possibly more collaboration in the genre poetry community, and more crossover between writing poetry and writing fiction.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

AKS: Speculative poetry seems to have a storytelling imperative baked in, and I think that's a good thing. I do enjoy creating memorable images, but I'd rather they didn't detract from the poem as a whole or the reader's comprehension. So far as poetic devices go, I'm not great at remembering the technical

terms for those (grad school was back in the last century). I enjoy making forms feel less formal by doing things like sentence breaks in the middle of lines, or using near rhyme rather than true rhyme — and when it comes to picking the more accurate word or the word that sounds more musical with other words in a line, I'll always go with the music.

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

AKS: The explosion of the Internet made a tremendous difference. When I first started writing and submitting to spec publications, everything was in physical print. There were fewer magazines, fewer reliable market lists, and less up-to-date publishing news. Today, being published online is probably more common than being published otherwise. Also, anyone seeking to share their work directly with readers can do so online at little cost, through a blog or social media.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

AKS: I'm a little sorry it took so long — HWA has had a Poetry Collection Bram Stoker Award for years — but I'm so glad they've decided to join the party. Poetry is probably the oldest form of literary storytelling, and it makes sense to include it in genre awards.

What does the editing process look like for you?



It's a fairly short process, since I tend to edit a lot as I write. If a word doesn't sound right, or look right, it bothers me until I figure it out. Most of the time, I can't just go on for more than a line or two without

going back and fixing the problem. Sometimes I can put something in brackets and go back the next day, but that's getting rarer.

I usually wait at least a day or two after completing a first draft, and then go back to the poem. Reading it out loud is my first step. If something snags in the reading, I know it's probably wrong. Then I just go through it, line by line, checking to be sure the rhythm is smooth and that I haven't repeated the same word too many times. I also check rhymes to be sure they're exact if I intended them to be, and not if I didn't.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

AKS: I write fiction occasionally, always speculative and mostly for projects I've been contacted about. I don't know that my poetry informs my prose much, though I do sometimes catch myself rewriting a prose sentence to make it sound rather than mean better.

2017 Grand Master David C. Kopaska- Merkel



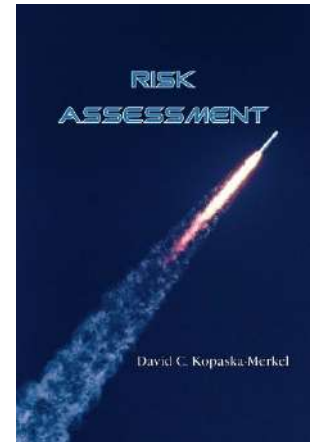
Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

DCK: I enjoy writing speculative poetry because speculative literature is mainly what I have always read. The broad possibilities of past and future worlds have always fascinated me. I started out writing short fiction, but when we were expecting our first child I expected to have a lot less free time (this turned out to be correct). For that reason I switched to poetry, because poems are shorter and don't take as long to write.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

DCK: My last collection, *Risk Assessment*, was published in July of last year by Island of Wak Wak, a Swedish publisher. This is a book of speculative senryu (fantasy, science fiction, and horror). Senryu resemble haiku, but they don't have to follow the many rules that apply to traditional haiku. For instance, some people allow a couple of extra syllables here and there, and they definitely do not have to refer to a season, as haiku have to do. Senryu

are the poetic equivalent of popcorn; each one takes a short time to write, good or bad. At least, that's my strategy: write multiple poems one right after the other, and then look at them the next day and see which are good.



What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

DCK: I really don't know the answer to this question. I imagine that regular poets take poetry more seriously than we do, but I might be wrong about that. I do know that what we write is more accessible, in general, than mainstream poetry. However, much speculative poetry uses tropes that the reader would not be familiar with if he or she did not read speculative fiction.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

DCK: I mostly write narrative poetry. Even many of my senryu tell a story. The only poetic device that I consciously use on a regular basis is enjambment, which obviously does not apply to extremely short poems. I do like to write blank verse sonnets, which obviously require the use of meter.

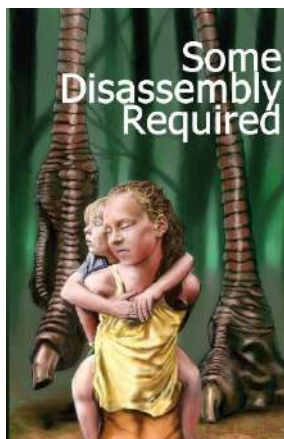
During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

DCK: I have been writing speculative poetry since about 1981. During that time, I have seen a steady increase in the number of speculative poets. I also think the percentage of female speculative poets has increased.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

DCK: This is definitely a good thing, and we have been waiting for it a long time. It's pretty exciting. However, hundreds and hundreds of speculative poems are written each year, and only one can win each of these awards. Of course the same thing is true of longer works, but the longer the work the fewer there are and therefore the better chance a given piece of writing has to win the award. The awards given by the SFPA are better, because there are three different awards for different lengths of poems, and also because all (or most) nominees are published in award volumes. This has to be balanced with the greater visibility of the Hugo and Nebula.

What does the editing process look like for you?



times more than one before rereading the

poem. This allows me to get a slightly different perspective than the one I have just as I finish the poem's draft.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

DCK: I haven't done much lately, but I do sometimes write flash fiction and haibun. I feel sure that my poetry and fiction inform each other some way, but I can't really see how. I will say that when I write a bunch of flash fiction it becomes quite difficult to write poetry, and vice versa. This is why I haven't written much fiction lately. In fact, when I write senryu, as I have been doing lately, it becomes harder to write longer stuff.

2015 Grand Master Marge Simon

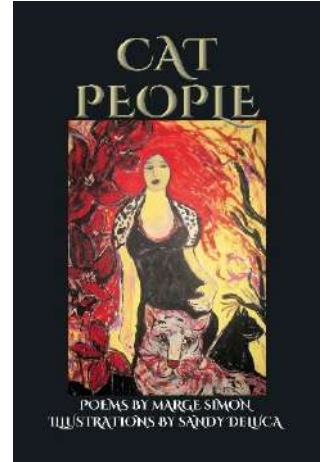


Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

MS: As a reader of genre fiction from an early age, and because of a love of poetry—it naturally followed. I might add it was thanks to a high school teacher for introducing Steven Crane’s poems to me so many years ago. From there, I discovered e.e. cummings – and I was more than ready to explore beyond the limits of rhyme as taught back in the day. My first specpo was published in Bradley Strahan’s VISIONS special SF edition, 1987.

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?

MS: CAT PEOPLE is a collection of my poems for Sandy DeLuca’s brilliant art, Wolfsinger Press 2026. The cats featured are goddesses and familiars, predators and muses, hunters and healers. Moving through myth, dream, and city streets, these poems explore feline power in all its forms—seductive, feral, comic, dangerous, and tender. Blending dark fantasy, surreal humor, and intimate moments, *Cat People* examines transformation, desire, aging, devotion, and hunger. Cat women, cat gods, witches, artists, and lovers share space with alleyways, moonlit rituals, and quiet domestic magic.



What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and “regular” poets?

MS: The main difference might be mindset. We who speculate tend to view the world differently, coming from a background reading speculative genre fiction.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

MS: I balance by intuition. I like the call and response for collaborative work using free verse, which Mary A. Turzillo and I often have used in our collaborative poems, or verse with interior rhyme

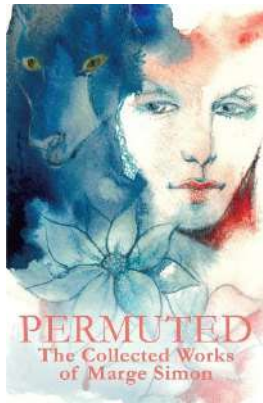
During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen in the field of speculative poetry?

MS: My observation is it has gotten so dense, with references I find difficult to follow such as referencing relationships. Poems often become too layered with alternative meanings for my taste, but I'm speaking of literary journals—not *Star*Line*.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

MS: On the one hand, I am gratified. However, I hope someday that these awards will be for collections, and not just one poem.

What does the editing process look like for you?



MS: Interesting question. My husband, Bruce Boston (the first SFPA Grand Master), sometimes revised poems he'd written and published years previously. These could be minor details, such as a line or a word. I find I sometimes do this myself. Some poems take me years before I am totally satisfied.

Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

MS: Yes, I write short fiction, mostly flash and vignettes which are closely tied together in poetic language and expression. For example, "The Lady in the Bar" which appears in the Spring issue of New Myths this year: <https://sites.google.com/new-myths.com/newmythscomissue74/issue-74-stories?authuser=0&pli=1>

2005 Grand Master Robert Frazier



Why do you gravitate to writing speculative poetry?

RF: A month after graduating high school, Russia's Lunar 15 craft crashed on the moon hours after I watched Aldrin and Armstrong, 300 lunar miles away, walk on Mare Tranquillitatis in grainy black and white. It wasn't a space race to me. It was a race to capture our imagination. That's a muscle I try to exercise, whether in oil paint or poetry.

What do you think are the main differences between the genre poetry community and "regular" poets?

RF: Well, the specpo community is so proactive. That's one. Also, non-genre poets seem to develop more access to sustaining opportunities such as professorship in higher education. Also, I designed a series of chapbooks for Berkeley's Pantograph Press in the mid-90s that focused on surrealist poets. Full on. I remember from visits to the west coast that there were philosophical spats and a few petty quarrels between the surrealists and the

mainstream cadre of dialectic poets and confessional poets. I don't see that in specpo. Today specpo is a valued contributor to the wide fabric of speculative writing and poetry in general.

During your time as a poet what are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the field of speculative poetry?

RF: First you need to telescope back a half century or so to the growth years for specpo. When I became active in 1976-77 publishing/editing *Speculative Poetry Review*, you had to suss out published works where you could find them. Edward Lucie-Smith's anthology *Holding Your Eight Hands* (a holy text) captured a UK/US contingent of speculative poets in 1969. Two themed anthologies of space age/science poetry were published: *Inside Outer Space* and *Frontier of Going*. In the prozines *F&SF* featured the occasional poem. Asimov's *SF* kicked off in 1977 with a poetry conscious editor. Activity also percolated in the small press. The *Rocket Candy* anthology. Mark Rich's zine *Treaders of Starlight*. Virginia Kidd's *Kinesis*. *Janus* from the Wiscon crowd featured future Rhysling winners Ruth Berman and Terry Garey.

Then the Big Bang for specpo came in 1978, The transformative change. Suzette Haden Elgin's watershed founding of the SFFPA (SFFPA) focused exclusively on poetry. Its *Star*Line* newsletter shared poetry market info. A revelation. *S*L* published new works. And Suzette and the organization launched the Rhysling Awards. A tangible community rapidly coalesced within its sphere that linked up like-minded poets and publishers. It gave Cal poets Andrew Joron

and Bruce Boston a platform on par with known professionals like Ursula K. Le Guin and Jane Yolen. Within a handful of years, the scene mushroomed with more zines, more anthologies, more author collections. And importantly, more visibility.

Another shift contentwise, the influx of powerful fantasy and horror poetry today has balanced out an earlier penchant for science fiction and science themes.

What are your thoughts on the recent recognition of specpo in the Hugo, Nebula, and other genre awards?

RF: All positives for the Nebulas. Love that. For a while I worked for SFWA as graphic designer of their Bulletin publication. As an author member I had expressed my support for a poetry Nebula in the early 1980s. Not exactly on deaf ears, but... So as the main SFPA volunteer, I lobbied for the reprinting of Rhysling Award winners in the Nebula Awards anthologies. Which in practice meant each year having to convince the individual anthology editor, only a few of which I knew. We had success for volume 17 (1983), then none for 18 and 19. But starting in 1986 a long string of sympathetic Neb anthology editors like Mike Bishop included Rhysling winners. It became their tradition, the SFPA volunteers still aided with info, etc. So kudos to SFFWA.

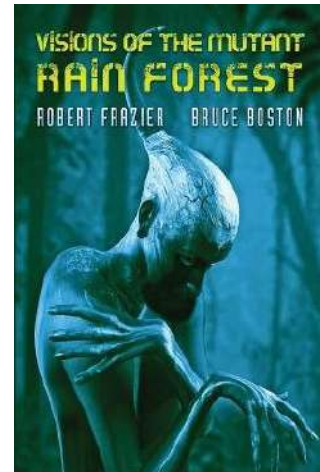
What does the editing process look like for you?

RF: Editing my own work is not radically different than, say, editing a documentary piece. I can't merely see through to what works. I need to hear that my voice rings true. Within a poem that often means killing my babies,

yes, but also not flushing everything out with the bath water. I find that the first lines or words or even feelings that kickstart my process get gutted eventually, but also in some form may end up at or near the end.

How do you balance narrative and imagery, and what are some of your favorite poetic devices?

RF: The sizzle of your imagery can reduce your reliance on narrative. It can supersede the narrative. As to my devices, I read out loud over and over. And I find myself running a draft through a kind of John Ciardi filter in my head. You know, how does the poem mean versus simply what does the poem say or mean. Craftwise stuff taken from my early 1970s days in Iowa City as an undergraduate sneaking into semester after semester of graduate courses at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. I also like it when subtle internal rhymes crop up. And sibilance.

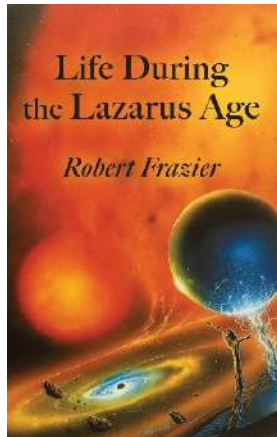


Do you also write fiction, and if so, how has poetry informed your prose or vice versa?

RF: I write fiction less these days, but a storyline can still fuel the engine of my writing. I'll get a story idea, then challenge myself to express it in as few lines as possible. Simplify your composition, I often tell my oil painting students here on the island. So I try to condense not just the line count but the emotional punch, or the inherent activist zinger. The

title piece to my latest collection is a prime example. “Life During the Lazarus Age” is about extinct species doing a phoenix thing in the modern world. With the zinger being something like ‘we’re all coming back to haunt you’. Added subtext - are we coping with our present population explosion?

Tell us about your latest specpo collection?



RF: My previous solo collection was in 2012, *Phantom Navigation*, and the publisher has disappeared completely with all copies likely pulped. So *Life During the Lazarus Age* means a lot. LDTLA covers a range of influences on my imagination: time travel, archaeology, astrophysics, magic, spacer life, dragons, surreal love, as well as poems from two of my long standing obsessions - my Your Clone series and the Mutant Rain Forest. My favorite might be “Here Is What Is Lost to Me” and it’s last line: “The words for simple truths.”

Poetry from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association's Grand Masters

Cloud Manufactory

by Ruth Berman

We are the cloud spinners
Shaping clouds on the wheel
Of a metal shell
In the midst of water tumbling
Under the winds around us.

We are the cloud spinners
Not to be reached by air
And hardly by sea, for turbulence.
Water enters into air
The shell opens
And clouds rise
Tumbling up from wave to wind.
Not for us
Rainfall
Rivers
Wells of fresh water
In dirt and stone.
Clouds bring these to continents,
But we are the cloud spinners
Shaping clouds
Endlessly shifting.

There are faces in the cumulus
Played on by brief emotions
Twisting in the air.
Strange animals lurch into the sky.

Islands of vapor
Are built upon
With flowing castles
For dissolving giants.
We are the cloud spinners
Rising and falling on the wave
Shaping clouds
For the solid land
Behind the wave of the horizon.
We are the cloud spinners
Shaping clouds.

(Note: The poem is set in a future in which heating plants, located in rows off the western coasts of continents, provide fresh water wherever it is needed by heating sea water to produce cloud vapor, which is then released to ride the prevailing winds inland.)

Fame

by F. J. Bergmann

Somehow managed to attract a small disturbed following ...
—Jay Griswold, “Autobiography III”

Because they took to lurking behind bookcases,
wearing velvet cloaks over their stained armor,
instead of sitting in the neat rows of folding chairs,
the word has gotten out to most bookstores
that it would not be a good idea to have me read.

Coffee shops said that my audiences didn’t spend
enough on muffins and could make one small house
coffee last three hours, but I knew that it was really
because their insectile hauberks put the regulars right
off their cappuccinos and cherry-vanilla cheesecake.

Cabals of librarians whispered disapprovingly about
the humming along, or, in the case of an especially
rousing poem, the chanting repetition of last lines,
punctuated by sharp blows in unison with the handles
of their pikes. Nor were the torches appreciated.

In public parks, I always seemed to have the wrong
kind of permit, and was charged with everything from
littering to sedition. They arrested *me*, not my odd
listeners—who for some reason were never asked for
spare change. Nobody minded the missing pigeons, though.

In order to read where no one would notice my sinister
fans, with a snorkel I waded into a cold, murky river
whose amphibrachic name began with Y—or was it Z?
I recited hastily from my gently dissolving chapbooks
as the wavering shapes began to materialize and close in.

T- Stroll

by Akua Lezli Hope

—from TELEPATH

2026 Gnashing Teeth Publishing

Thoughts fly, flail, flagellate, fill you unbidden
Ever present energies engaging your innards
Lingering as you move past others, through crowds, down streets
Enticing glimpses into many minds, all sentience radiating
Pathways to enter, mystic meridians to follow, qi linked
Access to multiplicities of nows, a flooding roar of perceptions
Traveling along gossamer energy lines, floating errant web strings
Hindering your walkabout, healing your singularity,
your singularity

Interregnum

by Mary Soon Lee

—first published in *Star*Line*; reprinted in *The Sign of the Dragon*

Sixteen years old, fourth son,
still they sent him to the mountain

together with his brothers
before their father's body stiffened,

the kingdom suspended without a king:
four princes, one crown

(a crown he had no use for,
a crown of war, alliances, duty).

He slept on straw near his horse,
displacing the stableboy,

waited for his eldest brother to return
triumphant, ready for the throne—

then brother after brother vanished
into rock and ice and cloud.

The steward took his sword,
his shield, sent him out at dusk:

no torch, no guide, no horse,
no servant, no food, no water.

Snow deepened under his boots;
he waded through drifts,

fell once, twice. The wind mocked him;
he thought of the warm stable,

the bed of straw, his horse,
sleep—but sleep meant death,

so he stumbled on. The wind
called his brothers' names.

He shouted back his own name;
the wind laughed. Snow fell.

He walked half-blind; sleet kissed
his forehead. The wind said sleep.

He sang to drown it, sang hymns,
nursery songs, drinking songs,

dirges, ballads, marching tunes,
the love songs his mother had favored

(she who was bartered for peace
to a man she'd never met).

He fell, pushed himself upright,
saw a black cloud speed against the wind.

She landed beside him, her breath ash,
snow steaming from her wings.

He knelt, but did not beg,
and asked after his brothers.

"One slept. One fought. One pissed
himself. They didn't taste like kings."

She laughed. "And you? What will you
pay for a crown, little princeling?"

"Nothing. I don't want it."
She flamed, and he saw himself reflected

in her scales, a kneeling, shivering boy.
"Then why," she asked, "are you here?"

“Because they sent me.” He stopped. “No.”
He was so tired, he couldn’t think—

“Because the kingdom needs a king.”
He struggled to his feet.

“And what will you pay for the crown,
little princeling? Gold? Men? A song?”

“My freedom!” he shouted at her.
“Well,” she said, “that’s a start.”

*

Years later, on a spring morning,
his queen asked, greatly daring,

about the woman whose name he cried
in his sleep. “Not a woman,” he said,

his heart on the mountain
where he entered his kingship.

Land Sharks

by Linda D. Addison

—Originally published 9/1998: *Asimov's SF* magazine

Designed as tiny harmless pets
 their escape from the genetic lab
was barely news worthy,

Cruising the concrete sidewalks
 their miniature fins bobbing up
through cracks in the grey squares,

Hoping for a tired pigeon or dropped food
 steering clear of leather soles
and running rubber cleats,

When death comes their tiny bodies
 lose form and meaning
becoming part of a crumbling sidewalk,

You might see a round grey pebble
 of an eye glint before it rolls over
to its rough concrete stomach.

Apocalypse Swap

by Ann K. Schwader

—Originally appeared in *Abyss & Apex*, Oct. 2019

Reprinted in *Unquiet Stars*, 2021

Apocalypse was simple once. A phone
the shade of midnight sunrise rang somewhere
in Washington or Moscow, & the moan

of missiles filled our momentary air
to bursting with their urgency. One flash
before the sirens' silence — then who cared

what happened next? We fixed our hopes on ash
& shadows, all the madness burned away
forever. Now we watch a planet trashed

& drowning in Antarctica's decay
depopulate — too slowly — in its shroud
of satellites. How many years afraid

before whatever exit we've endowed
our future with? I miss that mushroom cloud.

Stationary

by David C. Kopaska-Merkel

—Publ. in *Focus*, summer 2025

My dear,
surely one is not set to depart
before beginning to arrive,
before having left the station for the fabulous,
nay stratospheric, vistas this world can offer,
before sampling even the tamest of wines not made by humans
(first-aid kits may be found
in all of the better drinking establishments,
and many others).

Time presses?

At the very least, thrill to the delicious architecture
around and above you....
A showman?! Oh, no no no,
a resident, that's all, alas,
but I take it upon myself to ensure
that the facilities,
the necessities and (far more beautiful) unnecessaries
are appreciated to the utmost,
for this to succeed, you must discard plans, intentions,
itineraries and preconceptions,
to teeter on the brink, astonishment
unfolding like a fern's fiddle.

Good eye. These alabastrine fluted columns,
the carvings on each depicting an entire age of the world,
were recently restored. Magnificently so!

This tea shop, my favorite; its walls of jade and onyx,
porphyry, labradorite, and serpentine marble,
adhere strictly to the architectural rules
of a short-lived artistic movement of the past,
but I like them.

This is my favorite table. Won't you sit?
The miniatures! A jeweled cacophony of time and space:

here, a lean warrior of the Austrofani,
hand on the shoulder of her mount;
there, two Oblim, dark and broad,
pushing a cart cut from a blue gem;
and here, and here, a group of six Mrr,
extinct before our star opened its petals;
all unique, all priceless, exact replicas.
And yet, despite their diversity and beauty,
I see none like you, none to match your grace.

That one, why, the young spacefarer!
Perhaps...there are so many bipeds,
so man...your brother, three months gone?
Indeed, there may be a family resemblance,
a felicitous slip of the artist's hand, perhaps,
but stay, our tea is here, also cakes
(the baker has worked here for millennia;
princely sums have been waved away),
and shavings of the fabled steilo nut,
which takes centuries to mature.
That? It grows only...I see,
passing by the window is a child
of the Fabularch, Dreamer of worlds,
whispered to have made parts of this one,
but the tea! Drink up, while the steam
still rises, while its flavor can work
its transcendent magic upon you,
a jewel set in all time.

Spinning, the tea leaves me egg-beatered,
head awhirl and equilibrium disturbed,
I fall; come to my senses
on a featureless stony plane;
a gigantic hand reaching for me.

South

by Marge Simon

You promised me no problems
when the temperatures dropped,
assured me that we were prepared.
Holding hands we watched
the great migration south.

With synthetic skins, cryo foods,
and prefab domes, you said we couldn't lose.
There was little need to leave the domes.
Safe from the fierce glacial winds,
we made love on autumn colored furs.

Yet you were the first to grow restless,
to stand all night at the southern window
following the great move of stars.
We shared the bitter smoke of silence
until one morning, you were gone.

I waited for you, my fingers
tracing love symbols on the icy glass.
I slept with the red wing of your guitar.
Then moon-shadow tall, you came home.
Inside the door, I didn't know your eyes.

This year, I read while you play solitaire.
Our conversations are textured with frost.
I ache for your laughter,
the taste of grass on your skin,
a bouquet of crocuses in a blue vase.

The Monster's Box Lunch

by Robert Frazier

At the floe edge of the Arctic ice fields
He lifts a schooner's great hatch
Atop a low blocky pressure ridge
Carefully spreading the contents out
Like a table feast at Victor's apartments
But with only his knife for a utensil
First a blubbery slab of scavenged seal
Then olives and oily sardines from tins
From the same bear hide layers he wears
He unwraps a small chipped wine glass
Chews cowberries and spits them in
Flavor for a chalice of fresh melt water
He folds together his weathered hands
Considering both his misery and luck
Then offers scraps of seal to the gulls
Bellows thanks to the Norse sea gods
For another day of immunity to cold
Another day defeating Fate with grace

About the SFPA Grand Masters

Ruth Berman's speculative poetry has appeared in *Asimov's SF*, *Amazing Stories*, *Analog*, *Aliens and Lovers*, *Burning With A Vision*, *Fungi*, *Tales of the Unanticipated*, *Weird Tales*, *Worlds of Fantasy and Horror*, *Star*Line*, and other magazines and anthologies. As a translator from French, she has placed work in *Space & Time*, *Tales of the Unanticipated*, and *Fantasy Macabre*. Editing credits include working with Mythlore and Pandora, assembling a collection by past Rhysling winner Terry A. Garey, *The Middle Earth Songbook*, *The Star Trek Songbook*, and the in-house newsletter on the set of the original Star Trek.

Her impact in and out of the genre has been far-reaching. In 1973, she was a nominee for the John W. Campbell category Best New Writer. She won the first ever Dwarf Stars Award (2006), won the Rhysling Award twice (2003 & 2016) and placed twice (2nd in 2000 & 3rd in 2015). Her articles on genre writing appeared in *Jabberwocky* (from the Lewis Carroll Society), *Extrapolation*, and *Children's Literature in Education*.

She was active in the performances and publications of the group the Lady Poetesses from Hell. Her imprint of crumbfairy press has published sf/fantasy poetry by herself, Terry A. Garey, Rebecca Marjesdatter, and Eleanor Arnason.

F. J. Bergmann is the poetry editor of *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change* (mobiusmagazine.com), past editor of *Star*Line*, the journal of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association (sfpoetry.org), managing editor of MadHat Press (madhat-press.com), poetry editor for Weird House Press (weirdhousepress.com), and freelances as a copy editor and book designer. She lives in Wisconsin with a husband, intermittent daughters, cats and a horse, and imagines tragedies on or near exoplanets. She is a Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association Grand Master and a Writers of the Future winner. Her writing awards include SFPA Rhysling Awards for both long and short poems and SFPA Elgin Awards for two chapbooks: *Out of the Black Forest* (Centennial Press, 2012), a collection of conflated fairy tales, and *A Catalogue of the Further Suns*, first-contact reports from interstellar expeditions, winner of the 2017 Gold Line Press manuscript competition. Venues where her poems have appeared include *Asimov's SF*, *Missouri Review*, *Polu Texni*, *Spectral Realms*, *Vastarien* and elsewhere. She has competed at National Poetry Slam with the Madison Urban Spoken Word slam team. While lacking academic literary qualifications, she is kind to those so encumbered. She likes to ride horses. She is pretty sure she'd like to ride unicorns, if only they'd cooperate. She thinks imagination can compensate for anything.

Akua Lezli Hope, a Grand Master of Fantastic Poetry (SFPA), has been in print since 1974 with over 500 poems published. Her collections include *Embouchure: Poems on Jazz and Other Musics* (Writer's Digest book award winner), *Them Gone, & Otherwheres* (Elgin Award winner). A Cave Canem fellow, her honors include the NEA, two NYFA fellowships, SFPA, Rhysling, IGNYTE & Critter awards; as well as multiple Best of the Net, Rhysling, Dwarf Star, & Pushcart Prize nominations. She has won NYSCA grants to create Afrofuturist, speculative, pastoral poetry, disability poetics, and divination poetry. She created the ongoing Speculative Sundays Poetry Reading series, now in its 7th year. She edited NOMBONO: An Anthology of Speculative Poetry by BIPOC Creators, the history-making first of its kind and the largest Eye to the Telescope. Her speculative fiction is included in the ground-breaking anthology, *Dark Matter*, and in the celebrated *Africa Risen* anthology, among others. A multimedia artist, she creates sculpture and jewelry in several media and has published over 130 crochet designs. She exhibits her artwork regularly, sings daily, practices her soprano sax and makes good manifest. Her collection TELEPATH is out from Gnashing Teeth Publishing in April 2026.

Mary Soon Lee grew up in London, lives in Pittsburgh, and commits poetry. She is a Grand Master of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association and winner of the AnLab Readers' Award, Asimov's Readers' Award, Dwarf Stars Award, Elgin Award, Rhysling Award, and Utopia Award. An illustrated edition of her epic fantasy *The Sign of the Dragon* was published in 2025. Website: marysoonlee.com.

Linda D. Addison is an award-winning author of six collections, including *Everything Endless* written with Jamal Hodge, and the first African-American recipient of the HWA Bram Stoker Award®. She is a recipient of the HWA Lifetime Achievement Award, HWA Mentor of the Year and SFPA Grand Master of Fantastic Poetry. Find her work in: *An Illegal Feast* written with Consuelo G. Flores, Andrea Goyan, Elizabeth Eve King & Elizabeth Wong; and anthologies: *Waterborne*; *The Big Bad Book of Kaiju*; *All Hallows Eve*; *AfroFuturism Short Stories*; *Spacefunk!* She has published over 500 poems, stories, articles and is a member of CITH, HWA, SFWA, SFPA and IAMTW.

Ann K. Schwader lives in suburban Colorado with her husband and a female Pembroke Corgi. Her eighth poetry collection, *Unquiet Stars*, appeared in 2021 from Weird House Press. It won a 3rd place Elgin Award (full-length collection) from the SFPA in 2022. Ann is a two-time Bram Stoker Award Finalist, and has received Rhysling Awards for both short and long form work. She was named a Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association Grand Master in 2018. Her most recent collection of weird fiction, *Dark Equinox & Other Tales of Lovecraftian Horror*, appeared in 2015 from Hippocampus Press. Find out more at <http://www.schwader.net/>

David C. Kopaska-Merkel, a retired geologist, won the 2006 *Rhysling* award for best long poem (for a collaboration with Kendall Evans), and edits *Dreams & Nightmares* magazine. He has edited *Star*line*, an issue of *Eye To The Telescope*, several *Rhysling* anthologies, co-edited the 2023 *Dwarf Stars* anthology, and is an SFPA Grandmaster. His poems have been published in *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *Strange Horizons*, and elsewhere. *Some Disassembly Required*, a collection of dark speculative poetry, won the 2023 Elgin award. His latest collection, *Risk Assessment*, was published in 2025 by Island of Wak Wak.

Marge Simon lives in Ocala, FL. She is the second woman to be acknowledged by the SF&F Poetry Association with a Grand Master Award and Lifetime Achievement Award from the HWA. A Bram Stoker Award recipient and multiple finalist, she has Rhysling Awards for Best Long and Best Short Fiction, the Elgin for two of her several collections. Other awards: Dwarf Stars and Strange Horizons Readers' Award. Marge's poems and stories have appeared in *Asimov's*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & SF*, *New Myths*, *Polu Texni*, *Clannad* and *Daily Science Fiction*, to name a few. Winner (with Bryan Dietrich) of the Lord Ruthven Assembly award for Best Vampire fiction collection, 2020 she attends the ICFA annually as a guest poet/writer and is on the board of the Speculative Literary Foundation.

Robert Frazier is a founding member of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. He acted as editor / associate editor for the SFPA *Star*Line* journal from issue 4/1 through issue 14/1, plus the earliest Rhysling Anthologies. He has been honored with three Rhysling Awards for both long and short poems, and was designated an SFPA Grandmaster in 2005. He also was the 2013 SFPA Poetry Contest winner. He treasures 2 Asimov's Readers Poll Awards for poetry. Nominations include: Nebula Awards (for fiction), Locus Awards, Analog Readers Poll, Balrog Awards, Bram Stoker Awards, Dwarf Stars Awards, Asimov's Readers Poll, Rhysling Awards, Anamnesis Press book contest (won in 2000). Poems reprinted in the *Nebula Awards Anthology*, *Year's Best Science Fiction Annual*, and *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror Annual*. Bob edited the speculative poetry anthology *Burning With a Vision*, 1984; and also edited the 1970s speculative poetry magazine *Speculative Poetry Review/T.A.S.P.* His ten poetry collections include *Perception Barriers*, *Phantom Navigation*, *The Daily Chernobyl*, *Invisible Machines* (in collaboration with Andrew Joron) and *Visions of the Mutant Rain Forest* (in collaboration with Bruce Boston). Bob lives on Nantucket Island, working as Artistic Director for Artists Association of Nantucket, with a 50-year career as an oil painter.

Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association Grand Masters by Year

Ruth Berman (2026) - F. J. Bergmann (2024) - Akua Lezli Hope (2022) - Mary Soon Lee (2022)
- Linda D. Addison (2020) - Ann K. Schwader (2018) - David C. Kopaska-Merkel (2017) -
Marge Simon (2015) - Steve Sneyd (2015) - Jane Yolen (2010) - Ray Bradbury (2008) - Robert
Frazier (2005) - Bruce Boston (1999)

[illegible]

-Sound & Fury Book Reviews



WIND TIDE

A space opera series by Jonathan Nevair

[@JNevair](http://www.jonathannevair.com)

NEW FROM SPACE COWBOY BOOKS

EUGEN BACON
MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH
TARA CAMPBELL
ALICE W. FULLER
ROCCO HARRIS
CHARLES PLATT

DR. PHOENIX ALEXANDER ON
THE EATON COLLECTION
OF SF&F AT UCR

**GREGORY FEELEY ON
THOMAS M. DISCH'S
AMNESIA: RESTORED**

JOHN CLUTE
INTERVIEWED
BY JAMES
MACHELL

Electronic Brain
CULTURAL IDIOPATHY

GREGORY FEELEY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

WWW.SPACECOWBOYBOOKS.COM

RADON JOURNAL

Poetry and fiction that disrupts and reimagines.

READ THE REVOLUTION

RADONJOURNAL.COM

@RADONJOURNAL

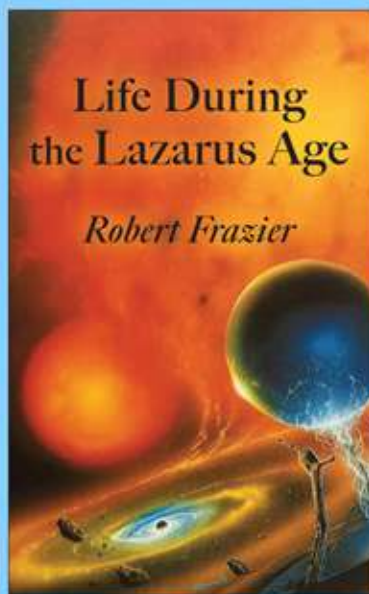
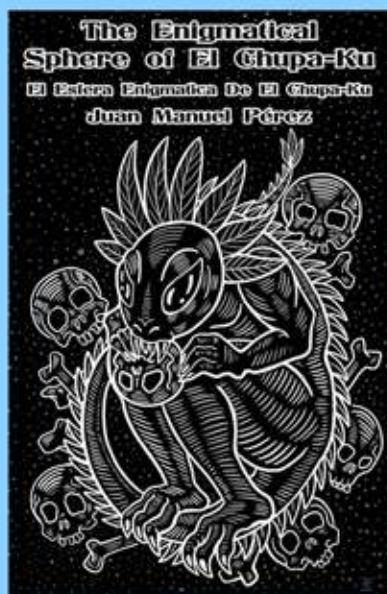
Featuring the
Next Generation
of Sci-Fi & Fantasy



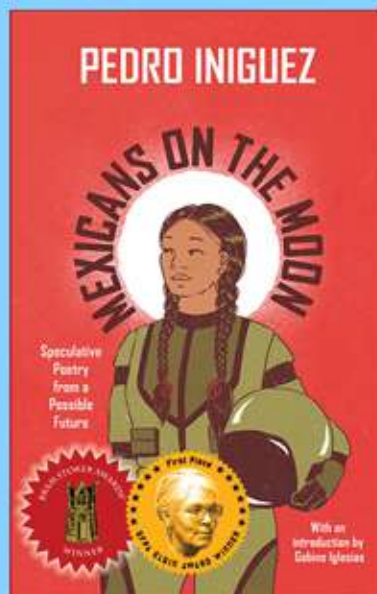
If 42 is the answer,
these stories ask
the questions worth
thinking about.

15 Short Stories
plus Art &
Writing Tips by
Orson Scott Card
Brian C. Hailes
Nina Kiriki Hoffman
L. Ron Hubbard
Larry Niven
Paperback, eBook,
audiobook
Get your copy
GalaxyPress.com





SpaceCowboyBooks.com



Speculative Poetry Books & Chapbooks

