

# STAR LINE

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Fall 2016

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*Communing with the Ancestors* by Hasani Claxton



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## Catsitting on Halloween

Horror movie marathon—  
 From beneath the couch  
 The cat keeps swatting  
 My bare ankles.

I realize much later  
 That she has been  
 Asleep beside me  
 All this while.

—Christina Sng

planet of flowers  
 with every fresh red blossom  
 someone disappears

—ayaz daryl nielsen

## Witching

Rain held dominion  
 the afternoon we became witches.

A globe was spun  
 every time my shovel hit the earth.

We buried talismans in the rain-soaked dirt,  
 gathered stones, drizzled twigs,

arranged them in a circle.  
 Sitting in our puddled clothing,

we sank into the ground,  
 stones and twigs surrounding us.

Tree rings witnessed another spin  
 of the globe, the sound of bark cracking.

—David Clink

## Unknown Quantity

it glows, inimical  
 black eyes glittering  
 under the lab's harsh light  
 the white-clad scientists  
 standing behind thick glass  
 still don't feel entirely safe  
 it weaves its web and waits  
 though no whisper of wind  
 no hint of breeze  
 disturbs its artificial habitat  
 a horror drawn  
 from the quaking well  
 of children's nightmares  
 quilted from a patchwork  
 of DNA and audacity  
 it gazes down  
 dwarfing its captors  
 "How many of these—*things*—"  
 one of them whispers  
 voice harsh in the silence  
 and the unspoken answer  
 echoes bouncing through the lab  
 chilling their hearts  
*no one knows*  
 and that's where the true  
 terror  
 lies

—Lisa Timpf

first contact  
 the backyard  
 filling with pods

—Carolyn M. Hinderliter

## History Teacher

Mr. Egbert's voice sent shivers up your spine  
like fingernails on a blackboard  
and yet somehow managed to maintain  
a shrill monotone drone.  
Despite this, his class listened with rapt attention.  
You see, whatever Mr. Egbert said in his history class  
was the absolute truth.  
Not before he said it, but once the words were uttered  
the entire classroom was transported to alternative timelines  
where what he said was the absolute truth.  
Sometimes the students walked in and somebody was president,  
and when the bell rang and the students exited  
it was somebody else holding the office.  
Once during a particularly spirited lecture  
when Mr. Egbert murdered a Chinese emperor  
who had never been murdered before  
and the timelines instantly adjusted,  
one of the students in one of the middle rows  
spontaneously changed sex, transforming from a short chubby boy  
to an awkwardly tall slender girl  
(and unfortunately just as homely in either gender)  
and the whole class just laughed.  
No one wanted to ask any questions  
about how such a thing was possible.  
They only knew that whatever Mr. Egbert said that day  
became the gospel truth,  
entire timelines shifting to make it so.  
You did not have to listen closely  
to realize Mr. Egbert's lectures  
always featured a beautiful, spirited heroine,  
Sacagawea, Amelia Earhart, Jane Goodall and others,  
the same beautiful, courageous, goddess  
appearing in different forms over many centuries  
and always just beyond his reach.  
The bell rings and Mr. Egbert gathers his papers,  
heading towards the quiet home he shares with a patient cat,  
spending his evening dreaming up new histories  
for tomorrow's lecture,  
and trying to align all his alternative timelines  
until at last his world is ruled by a benevolent queen.

–Gary Every



## HELLO OUT THERE

All too briefly, aliens were real. For just a few days, many of us were thrilled by reports of an alien signal. We hope for and in some cases fear the existence of all sorts of aliens—not just ETs, but fairies, ghosts, and other currently unreal beings. And some of us generate them and their worlds. I haven't played computer games since the days of Obsidian and Myst, mainly because I know myself too well (TIME SINK ADDICTION), but I have been tempted by No Man's Sky, which is effectively an infinite universe inside our universe—which may itself be a hologram created by entities in another, external universe.

We wonder at what point Reality ends and Imaginary begins. Recently, there's been some discussion among members as to what constitutes a rigorous definition of "speculative" poetry—and it appears that all of us have different criteria. The definition of our founder, Suzette Haden Elgin, includes science poetry, which to me would mean non-fictional, and even the definition of what is science rather than science fiction is open to discussion—I take issue with the idea, in the current Stealth column on p. 25, that something like *The Martian* could possibly be considered science rather than hard SF. Based on scientific knowledge, certainly, but there are major obstacles to be overcome before travel to Mars becomes reality. It seems to me that the unreal—what cannot exist at this time, or maybe ever—is what we're all about. However, speculative writers have predicted the unforeseeable successfully for centuries!

In the northern hemisphere of our current planet, where most SFPA members and contributors reside, fall is inexorably advancing, making the butterflies and hibiscus blossoms of the cover painting only a memory—but others live where spring is in full bloom, or the eternal summer of the equator, and who is to say how many more summers dwell within us?

Will tomorrow be beautiful?

—Juliet Patterson, "Draft of a Landscape"

Wishing you all infinite universes to write and read in.

—F.J. Bergmann, *Star\*Line* editor

### 4.367 light years

though she will hold me in descent  
in the last mist

this is not a dream

—Robin Wyatt Dunn

### Your New Political Machine: Care and Maintenance

"... picking  
the least unsavory  
candidate  
from its teeth ..."

—C.R. Harper

## The Reports

The reports that said the world had been destroyed were wrong, but we read them anyway. It seemed important to get the reports immediately, and the truth would just get in the way, we thought. And the reports came quickly, and we ate them up like so much cabbage. They started to report things that were happening (or not happening) right now, I mean, right now. Then they did the unthinkable, they reported what was going to happen (or not going to happen)! It seemed time was against us, that patience was no longer an option, it was now, this instant, and the reports were coming fast and furious. That was when most of us stopped reading them. We didn't want to know how we would (or would not) live out our lives, how they would end (or not end).

–David Clink

## The Other Side of the Fence

Although *fence* may be a misnomer here, given that the containment room is built inside a secure research facility with an abundance of safeguards, while the portal for viewing the genetically-altered *Poaceae* is itself a type of specialty glass developed for space travel.

But the part about verdancy still remains true, the molecules of super-chlorophyll designed to suck up excess carbon from the atmosphere being so intense and vivid and steeped in greenness, that just a minimal walk of ten seconds upon its carpeted lushness will literally take your breath away, sucking the CO<sub>2</sub> from your lungs, causing them to collapse, and you, ungrasslike, to turn a much less pleasant hue of cyanotic blue.

–Robert Borski

t  
he  
rei  
sapoi  
ntatw  
hiche  
veryt  
hingm  
ustco  
metog  
ether  
butth  
ewaitis  
torture  
untilth  
ethunde  
rofblas  
to  
ff

–LeRoy Gorman



We're now using MailChimp to deliver official SFPA messages, reminders, and Star\*Line .pdf links. If you haven't received them, e-mail [sfpanews@gmail.com](mailto:sfpanews@gmail.com).

Any SFPA postal correspondence or votes may be mailed to **SFPA Secretary Shannon Connor Winward, 117 McCann Rd, Newark DE 19711, USA.**

## NEW SFPA PRESIDENT

**Bryan Thao Worra:** is our new president—which means we need a new treasurer! We also need 2017 Dwarf Stars, Elgin, and Contest Chairs; David C. Kopaska-Merkel will be the 2017 Rhysling Chair. To volunteer, contact Shannon Connor Winward, SFPA Secretary: [ladytairngire@yahoo.com](mailto:ladytairngire@yahoo.com).

## DWARF STARS AWARD WINNERS

*66 members voted.*

**Winner:** We Begin This Way • Stacey Balkun • *Gingerbread House* 16

**2nd Place (3-way tie):** “at the barre” • Julie Bloss Kelsey • *Rattle* 51  
The Doorman • F. J. Bergmann • *Grievous Angel*, May 2015  
Weathering • Sandi Leibowitz • *Silver Blade* 25

**3rd Place:** Alice was chasing white rabbits out of a black hole • John C. Mannone • *Abbreviate Journal*, July/August 2015

## ELGIN AWARD WINNERS

*48 members voted.*

### ELGIN CHAPBOOK AWARD

**Winner:** *Undoing Winter* • Shannon Connor Winward (Finishing Line Press, 2014)

**Second:** *Stairs Appear in a Hole Outside of Town* • John Philip Johnson (Graphic Poetry, 2014)

**Third:** *A Guide for the Practical Abductee* • E. Kristin Anderson (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014)

### FULL-LENGTH BOOK AWARD

**Winner:** *Crowned: The Sign Of The Dragon Book 1* • Mary Soon Lee (Dark Renaissance Books, 2015)

**Second:** *The Robot Scientist's Daughter* • Jeannine Hall Gailey (Mayapple Press, 2015)

**Third:** *Dark Energies* • Ann K. Schwader (P'rea Press, 2015)

## 2016 SFPA POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

There were 93 Dwarf, 140 Short, and 36 Long entries from around the world. Our judge, Michael Kriesel, ended up reading all the poems to make his decisions. Please see [sfpoetry.com/contests/16contest.html](http://sfpoetry.com/contests/16contest.html) for winning poems and judge's comments.

### DWARF POEMS

1<sup>st</sup> - Craving: Shannon Connor Winward

2<sup>nd</sup> - Dragon Tongue Sushi: Robert Borski

3<sup>rd</sup> - "speed of light": Susan Burch

Honorable Mention: Blurred Future, Bruce Boston; "at work," Susan Burch; A Pop Culture Fairy Tale Tweet, MX Kelly

### SHORT POEMS

1<sup>st</sup> - Regarding the Mastodons: Timons Esaias

2<sup>nd</sup> - Gretel at Menlo Mall, 1996: Stacey Balkun

3<sup>rd</sup> - Even Happy Ghosts Can Be Scary When You're 7: Kathleen Lawrence

Honorable Mention: Apple-Child Learns the ABCs, Stacey Balkun; The Myth of the Sun: Lisette Alonso; Singed, Unhurt, E. Kristin Anderson

Other poems Mike said were excellent: "Balloon Animals" by Robert Borski, "Time Tourist" by Frederick Lord, "After the Conquest the Premier Orders Mt. Rushmore Dismantled, June 2210" by Kali Lightfoot, "Starfire Notices She Has Breasts" by Lanette Cadle, and "X-Ray Glasses" by David Cowen.

### LONG POEMS

1<sup>st</sup> - Elvis Triptych: William Stobb

2<sup>nd</sup> - Thirteen Ways to See a Ghost: Shannon Connor Winward

3<sup>rd</sup> - We Shall Meet in the Star-Spangled Ruins: Wendy Rathbone

Honorable Mention: The Problem of the Horse, Frederick Lord; The Blind Elephants of Io, Karen Bovenmyer; The Container Store, Gene Twaronite

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### One Giant Leap for Wolfkind

The cosmonaut's lycanthropic nature  
was highly classified, but astronomers  
saw what happened when the werewolf  
set foot on the luminous lunar surface.

full moon  
a suave Count sets up dates  
on the Internet

—Francis W. Alexander

—J. P. Brown

## The Time Traveller's Tale

She has been very far, this traveller.  
Dropped like a stone into the future  
eons deep, riffling through the pages  
of history too fast to read; with adventures  
in cities that glowed like valve radios,

hot with the smell of science; or fleeing  
artificial men who wanted her body  
parts; the planet empty, then full again,  
continents scurrying to new geographies,  
the Earth nudged further from a ripening sun.

She is adopted by fellow temponauts  
with not enough digits and too many teeth  
and eyes that blink like elevator doors,  
whose immaterial engines hurled them  
forwards so fast the dials on her contraption

kept spinning through zero, only halting  
at a world grown spavined and bleak as Mars,  
to gawp like tourists in a cathedral.  
An Age of Gods, they confided later,  
beyond which their physics refused to work.

And heading back to cheer on the Big Bang,  
they playfully drop her off the moment  
she sets out. They are sad for their little friend  
whose mayfly days will soon lack all purpose.  
Eternity does this to simple souls,

the certainty of oblivion  
a torment to the prehistoric mind.  
These early travellers rarely settle after,  
as if time provides a kind of refuge,  
as if meanings are to be found there.

—David Barber

three suns  
now I have  
seen everything

—Christina Sng

every day  
waking up  
in a parallel world—  
the same questions  
licking my lips

—Susan Burch

old photo  
all those years  
we thought  
the ghost  
was just a smudge

—Christina Sng

a world  
of possibilities  
my cat in a box

—Christina Sng

regrowing  
yet another limb  
the captured salamander  
still refuses  
to give up his intel

—Christina Sng

## Morning during Migration Season

she awakens to the  
sharp ammonia stench of magic  
an immediate reminder  
that it's migration season

still clad in pajamas  
she clutches an iron blade  
checks every windowsill  
panes crusted with wards of salt  
the other side of the glass  
mounded with dead fairies

miniature faces frozen  
in feral grimaces  
toothpick-sized swords in hand  
their wings already blackened  
by the first pink beams of sun

fairy stragglers too slow to escape the dawn  
are fizzling motes falling to the lawn  
and will add crunchy sound effects  
when the woman mows on Saturday

coffee burbles  
toast sizzles  
the morning news perkily states

“only three more nights of curfew!  
maybe we can make this our third  
consecutive year without anyone  
being dragged to Fairy Land.  
Stay indoors all night, folks,  
or you'll be the special guest  
of the Queen's feast  
roasted with an apple in your mouth!  
Next up, here's Bob with the weather—  
that rain's coming in now, right?”

she sips her coffee  
grimaces at the thought  
of the drifts of fairy corpses  
that must clutter her door sill

## demon lovers

you mean nothing to me  
nor I to you  
yet our  
bone-winged  
children  
wish to  
move back  
home

—Greer Woodward

Lamp for sale  
One deceased owner  
Two wishes left.

—Matthew Wilson

One does not simply walk into Mordor  
But if you work there  
You commute.

—Wendy S. Delmater

a few bodies are bound  
to be stuck to her car windshield wipers, too  
those grotesque little things  
spread-eagled  
arms waving with every arc  
through a smear of rain  
and pollen-thick magic

“three more nights,” she mutters  
only a week of inconvenience every year  
she can deal  
her job is good  
the mortgage paid

blue sun  
daily reminder

she shoves her feet into  
her heaviest boots  
soles so thick they almost  
prevent her from feeling  
the crackle of bones underfoot

I am never going home  
—Christina Sng

—Beth Cato

### **Cataclysm Days: Acquiescence to Agony Continues in Michigan**

We let the giant rabid raccoons bite us since that didn't count as suicide. Even before the apocalypse, life in Michigan didn't seem worth the effort, but we endured the chill-bone winters and the rust stench of ruined factories, evading the roving tweaker packs, a threat more dire than any zombie horde. Then the Earth convulsed for two straight days and the Monroe reactor blew, containment domes popping like stripper cakes, spewing radioactive confetti celebrating new bouts of diarrhea and blisters that completed the symptom trifecta begun by lead-induced puking incident to corroded water lines.

Mutagenic fallout spawned behemoths whose dread forms inspired hysteria. Spruces transformed to splinters by the maws of elephantine voles fed our despair. Why view such affronts to logic when foaming jaws could grant sweet insanity? Unbeknown to us, the hydrophobia spread by the mutants bestowed true visions, infected victims with event-anchored dreamtime instead of unmoored dementia. What purpose do sights of the sun's yolk oozing from dawn's fractured eggshell serve? Who needs views of melting timepieces juxtaposed against uranium-fouled lakes? But the roses blooming in the mounds of our bloody stools did improve our vistas.

—Chuck Von Nordheim

## First Extrasolar Settlement

We  
eat  
rabbit  
once again  
grateful they survived  
the crash landing on Belos V,  
unlike the female crew members. In  
the end, this world is  
settled by  
rabbits  
not  
us.

*–Herb Kauderer*

no shore  
that does not touch us  
gravitational waves

*–Ann K. Schwader*

## The Dark Between the Stars

It's always night in space,  
the distance between the stars  
devoid of warm light,

the scattered stars beacons  
of possibility, islands of gravity  
tugging at the imagination.

It's midnight aboard  
this starship between here to there,  
the traditional witching hour,

Earth fears and superstitions  
packed along with our other baggage;  
one-way tickets punched.

Darkness resides within  
the hearts of the android crew, and  
the dreams of the cold-sleepers;

the claustrophobia of the ship,  
its locked hatches, the constriction  
of one's own skin sitting heavy.

The color of time changes  
by degrees, like a fading ember,  
finally turning coal-black

as the end draws near;  
numb fingers in cold-sleep coffins  
clawing towards the light.

*–G. O. Clark*



Welcome to the final issue of *Star\*Line* for 2016!

What an amazing year it has been for speculative poetry around the world! In this issue we are pleased to announce the winners of several key awards the Science Fiction Poetry Association presents including the Elgin Awards for Book and Chapbook of the Year, the Dwarf Stars, recognizing the best of 2015's short poems, and the winner of this year's Science Fiction Poetry Contest. I want to thank all of our editors, volunteers and our guest judge, Michael Kriesel for their extraordinary time and effort to make this all possible.

As I begin my term as the newly elected president of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, I do want to announce our search for a new treasurer for the organization. We also have several other volunteer positions that need filling in order to help our members keep up to date on new opportunities, markets and achievements in our community.

I hope you all enjoy your upcoming holiday season! May it be filled with joy, creativity and good company. This is also the point in the year where I encourage many of you to consider renewing your membership for 2017 and to consider gift memberships for friends and family as a way to share the wonderful work being done in the field of speculative poetry today!

Cheers, and keep inspired!

—*Bryan Thao Worra*, SFPA President

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## stories for bedtime

A thousand wings flutter against a pale sky as dawn shatters another night. While red-cloaked thieves steal dandelions beside the path, wolves wait in candied cottages for hikers without GPS devices, crunch the high-protein bones of explorers long forgotten. The hunter becomes the fairy godmother, hunting new dreamscapes with laser scopes through brush impenetrable except by the pure of heart, the youngest son, finally arrived to draw portals in porch lights at high noon when the light streams down. The last possibility of redemption, a climb up the golden stairs, innocence and truth hand in hand.

—*John Reinhart*

Please respect the forum rules

Doctor Who fans only

Time Travellers must not ruin series ending.

—*Matthew Wilson*

## A Shapeshifter Approaches Retirement

You mimicked  
a thousand impossible things  
before breakfast.

Now as you approach retirement  
you are lost in your former selves  
when you were a stubborn mule  
a cat that ate a canary.

You have become a broken watch  
and must wear one face  
for the remainder of your days.

—David Clink

### SN 1006

The visitor star burned in the heavens,  
illuminating the night like the moon  
with its face turned halfway  
from the slumbering world below.

Philosophers and astrologers,  
baffled. Some told kingly lies  
about prosperous portents;  
others insisted that war  
and the end of all things  
were at hand.

möbius world  
landscape repeating—as if you can  
step into the same stream twice

—David C. Kopaska-Merkel  
& Kendall Evans

Lovers clasped hands in its light,  
believing this their last embrace.  
Artists carved the star's visage  
into rock, bones of the earth,  
while its radiation recorded  
another story in that same stone,  
invisible to human eyes.

Into a world that believed the heavens  
were celestial spheres, changeless, perfect,  
the ghost of a star seven thousand years dead  
intruded, and wrote an epitaph  
for both itself and a way of thinking  
that took a little longer to die.

—Deborah L. Davitt

## Adolescence

I have seen the mermaids come near the shore.  
I have listened to them make feral air bursts  
In the roil of the shallows; I have counted  
The flashes of bent moonlight against scales:  
A task no one has asked me to do, yet I do  
So as not to be unsuspectingly idle. I have heard them  
Singing their boastful heritage songs, teaching  
Oceans of intent, embellishing their history  
Of intimacy, and exposing their science of water magic:  
All the lore that comes to the awkward air  
As perjury after generations of backward-speak.  
When one shatters the surface, I will sometimes myself  
Rise, my skirt in the wind full-shadowed.  
In my imagination, sea spray and  
Atmosphere are translated into one thing.  
My ache is not for the sea, but for community.  
I see those of our men who have  
The gift of listening go dumbly down  
To the water's sharp edge, strip themselves  
As naked as birth and with full eyes glide  
Into the welcoming mist of mermaids:  
Into the coil and current of beasts  
That fear the net, but desire the men  
Who cross-draw the net. I watch  
As those glistening men snake as gracefully  
As injury's after-thought through our water,  
Going in the bare company of mythical mermaids,  
Out to the darker water where, dared, they will drown alone.

*–Ken Poyner*

A shrill whistle cracks the air. My eyes, buggy and bloodshot, scan  
war-stained skies in twitchy jerks. No sign of cruise missiles,  
killer drones, or asteroids hurling from moon-based launchers.

In my padded trench I scunch deeper as the sound bursts into glass-  
crunching decibels. Gravestones uproot and dance the mambo.  
Inverted crosses boing-boing around me like phantom pogo sticks, riderless.

I'd wave goodbye if only a soul were left to wave goodbye to.

*–Ronald A. Busse*

## How to Tell If You're Human

When stopped at a red light  
you see a buck with enormous antlers.

Do you get excited  
and point it out  
to everyone in the car?

Or do you do  
nothing?

### The Planters' Season

Our blood said to plant.

We made the seeds from glass and steel,  
Faceted like a dragonfly's eye.  
We gave them to the soil and missed their heft  
In our hands.

—*Jessy Randall*

Seeds like sleek white birds  
That smelled of ozone before a storm  
And would spin on your open palm  
Forever.

They were not fast growing crops  
And the fields seemed fallow  
Under sunsets that rusted  
Trust and expectation,

After the hydroponics catastrophe  
his torment and salvation was the survival  
of fast-growing eggplant  
and little else.

But the day came.

At first, they looked like foxgloves  
With fresh shoots spun from liquid glass  
Blooming chrome and circuitry.

—*Herb Kauderer*

They climbed hundreds of feet  
And when they met the wind,  
They greeted it in its own language,  
Syllables old as oceans.

The fruit we harvested  
Took our thirst and our hunger  
And sizzled on our lips like rain on pavement.

When the winds talked back,  
There was an ember on the tongue of the world  
And we turned toward the heat like flowers toward the sun.

—*Jarod K. Anderson*

## Fairest

The queen looked out on a field of snow;  
the soot settling from the air grayed it,  
reflecting the leaden clouds above.  
Her blameless spindle drew no blood today.

But that hardly mattered; she'd forgotten  
that the distaff held a woman's magic;  
forgotten that blood evoked its power;  
forgotten that with it, she could foretell.

The future had arrived without such things:  
servants cleared slush from black roads lacing  
this desolate kingdom. Mirrors rarely  
spoke, and dwarves mined coal, not diamonds.

The spindle's touch holds no power, compels  
no sleep. The huntsman hides in the woods,  
where castles and cottages hear railroad bells,  
and dwarf-mined coal-smoke stains the air.

Here, the hunter makes offerings of hearts,  
leaves blood on the snow to sate the old gods,  
hunting deer in place of children, per the  
old covenant. But still the magic fades.

And people don't wish for its return. They  
reason, *Better a gray world, with heat and  
food, than to risk what the gods might ask.*

—Deborah L. Davitt

## What'll it Be?

First bar built on Mars.  
My first Martian drink.  
Might try a "Marstini,"  
or "Blue Sunset Blink."

—Lauren McBride

\*Dust in the Martian atmosphere deflects  
blue light less than red, resulting in ruddy  
daytime skies and blue sunsets.



Ringmasters Dance by Denny E. Marshall

# DARK RENAISSANCE BOOKS

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## 2016 Elgin Award!

The first book of *The Sign of the Dragon*, an epic fantasy in verse by 2014 Rhysling Award winner **Mary Soon Lee**, draws upon elements from Asian and Celtic culture while incorporating dragons, horses, bloody wars—and the true meaning of kingship. With gorgeous black-and-white illustrations by M. Wayne Miller.

*“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.”*

“Lee conjures the magic of hoofbeats and human kindness in her poems revolving around the remarkable King Xau. These Chinese-inspired epic fantasy poems are both easy to read and profound. I’m very glad that this is just book one.” —BETH CATO, author of *The Clockwork Dagger*

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*CROWNED* has won the 2016 SFPA ELGIN AWARD  
for full-length speculative poetry book.

Published by Dark Renaissance Books in 2015.

**Purchase copies at [darkregions.com](http://darkregions.com).**

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***Moon Facts.*** Bob Schofield. (Nostrovial Press, 2015) 33 pp. Free online: [nostroviatowriting.com/uploads/9/0/3/8/9038323/moon\\_facts\\_by\\_bob\\_schofield\\_\\_online\\_release\\_.pdf](http://nostroviatowriting.com/uploads/9/0/3/8/9038323/moon_facts_by_bob_schofield__online_release_.pdf)

[...] one of the three 2015 winners of the Nostrovial Chapbook contest [...]. After [the print edition] is sold out, the book is available as a free online PDF. [...] nicely designed, with illustrations. Perhaps a quarter of the poems are prose poems. All poems are titled “FACT #\_\_” (fill in the blank), and they are indeed, little known facts about the moon [...] rich in figurative language, and well outside any semblance of realism. For example, “FACT #011” includes:

THE MOON ties The Ocean to its throat  
Jumps from chair to chair

Because this is still  
the dawn of time

and the floor is lava

[...] lapse into nonsense and word salad, and somehow I loved it anyway. [...] The sense of humor that runs throughout is best served in the author’s deadpan delivery. [...] a sort of delicious indulgence [...].

—Herb Kauderer

o o o

***Sacrificial Nights.*** Bruce Boston & Alessandro Manzetti. (Kipple Officina Libraria [Italy], 2016). 123 pages. [www.kipple.it](http://www.kipple.it)

[...] poems by each of the authors separately and some in collaboration. [...] set in Sacrificial City, a hardcore lawless urban district. [...] meant to be read in order, but I would recommend not in one sitting [...] it is, more than anything, noir [...] the whole book qualifies as horror. I leave the question of how much of the book qualifies as speculative [...] a dark poetry of fatalism, betrayal, and a morality far more brutal than anything discussed in clean suburban sermons. [...] from “Requiem in a Taxi”:

The driver turns to her,  
his face like that of her father,  
lord of whiskey and punches,  
buried now three years  
in a loose blue suit.

Some is more figurative, such as this excerpt from “Deep in His Coma”:

the head of the future  
hissing from a manhole  
with the language of a snake,

[...] some graphically violent moments, but the poetry doesn’t dwell on the horrific scenes. [...] sometimes merely implying the real loss and

blackness, worrying about the subjective anticipation more than the excesses [...] not to say that the poets avoid the darkest shadows of humanity. Make no mistake: people will die in these poems [...] celebrates the imperfection of what is wrong [...] transcendent crescendo in which darkness reaches its event horizon and bursts into flame [...] exceptional. [...] The sustained tension, interest, and fascination of this book amazes me. [...]

—Herb Kauderer

o o o

***Straight Away the Emptied World.*** Leah Umansky. (Kattywompus Press, 2016) 20 pp. \$12 print. [kattywompuspress.com](http://kattywompuspress.com)

[...] presented as dystopian poetry, [...] the dystopia that is within (the center of the self is a star. / (Aren't all stars dead?). [...] rather self-aware. [...] her motivation for many of these poems stems from dissatisfaction "with being a single woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century." [...] juxtaposition of frustration, dissatisfaction and longing with and hope and wonder, and yet, I wouldn't say that the poems come across as particularly feminine or woman-oriented. [...] I haven't read anything like it before. [...] brings you up short with the wonder of the juxtaposition. [...] new, startlingly specific image: "wonder-felt," "poured-truth," "keen-spike," "frothy-tusks," "Not-Earth," and "steeled-beauty" [...] very vivid as a result. [...] never trite. This is a dystopia after all. [...] interesting and different, with a literary flavor; you will enjoy this brief collection.

—Diane Severson

o o o

***What Strange Miracles.*** James Brush. (White Knuckle Press, Chapbook #37, 2016) 14 pp. Free online at <http://www.whiteknucklepress.com/#!brush/tzszf>

James Brush is the editor of *Gnarled Oak*, an online literary journal that occasionally includes speculative poems. [...] consists of ten prose poems of less than a hundred words each [...] Some poems are obviously speculative [...] with images such as, "The ocean spits out plastic: faded, thin, but whole. The great-grandchildren of those who threw it in retrieve the relics, invent stories and religions for their ancestors..." Others are deliciously nebulous [...] "She wondered if horses knew about fish. Did equine visionaries imagine them and call it sci-fi?" (from "Beginner's Mind).

[...] highly lucid, [...] step out into surrealism. [...] "The World Is a Magnet" steps toward science fiction [...] "Compasses pull toward the heart, the pole star. This is understood in the robot impulses of beetles." [...] speak with one voice. [...] the book creates a dislocation and altered world view [...] In under a thousand words it looks at the world through the eyes of generations, [...] and makes the endurance of plastic an unintended heirloom.

Given the brevity of the collection, its accomplishments are impressive.

—Herb Kauderer

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#### REVIEW POLICY

To review speculative poetry books for *Star\*Line*, e-mail [starlineeditor@gmail.com](mailto:starlineeditor@gmail.com). Due to labor of transcription, only e-mail reviews will be accepted; .rtfs preferred. Because we give preference to poetry itself, reviews will be excerpted in *Star\*Line*, but posted in their entirety (may be further redacted) at [sfpoetry.com/sl/reviews.html](http://sfpoetry.com/sl/reviews.html).

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## **Futures, the Odyssey**

There's no gravity here. Or there is. Your mind controls velocity, linear speed, friction, every kind of force. There's no need to date because, deep in the recesses of your brain, you can make a male or female take shape, give him or her organs, make them beautiful or handsome (most likely), and you can go at it for hours, timing orgasms, if you desire. Here, on your lounge of flowerbeds, feel the delight of misting Garden of Eden fanning. That's the leaf-palm and umbrella pines (with hot stones) massage. Your French grand piano, to the right, has 88 perfectly tuned keys. Of course, nothing is real, or ever will be. You can travel anywhere. Very high levels of intelligence and knowledge are programmed in, destinations and schedules set, and it all ends when you get bored. Yes, some desire extra conflict, evil, and hit the Earth-mode button when they realize perfection and eternity are overrated. You are one of those people. Soon you will open the door to your old house, stick your head out of your bedroom window, suck in the beltway, maybe walk your bearded collie around the corner. Debriefing will start with a newborn's crying: photos of your significant other, Jada, the kids, the desk at your prior job, copies of your credit report, a look at that gas guzzler (jumper cables in the trunk), all the deadbolts you'll ever need. If you can stay away from the red-ribboned Lucite box on your fireplace for at least a week, I can swipe my teleport card, tap in my itinerary, and take your place in the rotation till, like you, I can't take it anymore.

*–Isaac Black*

psionic laughter  
the comedy club's smoldering ruins  
re-ignite

empty portals  
the last Terran iceberg  
melts

*–Billy Antonio*

*–LeRoy Gorman*

## Cybernaut

I know how to place hurt  
In the history of nations. Really.  
It is not difficult. You line up  
The proper magnetic resonance  
With the right data reader and make sure  
The target nation is on the line. But  
Every nation is always on the line,  
So you do not have to be specific  
About that dangling causal angle. Just make sure  
The connecting line is tough and you can tunnel  
Anonymously down it. Then  
You whisper in your counter-option's ear  
And it lets loose the hurt. Somewhere  
In some unspectacular nation a mother  
Will be arguing with her three children  
And wondering on a back channel  
Why ever she had three, why the husband  
Just could not wait when already  
There were two. *No, you cannot  
Eat Jeffrey's cereal, there is only  
Enough for one bowl; Marge,  
Don't play with your orange juice—*  
And, whoosh, first go the lights and then  
Goes the water and the bottom  
Falls out of the banks and whole  
Futures sizzle like steaks on a grill.  
But there will be no steak for  
A long, long time and the orange  
Juice and the cereal will be a  
Memory the children do not remember  
Fighting over. Then you go  
To your list of other nations,  
Thinking you have met the mother  
And her three easy children before;  
Perhaps you have even exchanged pleasantries.

—Ken Poyner

paranormal games  
it's dead deader deadeast  
for bronze silver & gold

—LeRoy Gorman

## How to Lie to a Telepath

Write things down,  
then forget about them.  
Leave yourself messages.  
Don't do the counting numbers  
thing, it's far too old  
and far too obvious.  
Work stuff is always good—  
meetings and deadlines and  
underneath them all the muted  
*thump thump thump* of the affair.  
I hid a boy once for a  
month almost, under the  
racquet and ball *tok tok tok*  
of Roland Garros and Wimbledon,  
and all he saw from me was  
red clay and grass and sweat.

You see it doesn't matter  
that sooner or later he will  
find you out, dreams dripping  
on to your pillow like spittle  
or a soapy thought-bubble sliding  
off of you in the shower,  
because you thought a closed  
door meant you were alone.  
You see when he does find out,  
all you have to do is  
open yourself wide and say—  
*I love you.*

Because what other people see  
through a veil behind a wall  
of words, he sees naked like  
a sun flooding his world  
with light, and even if he  
unfurls his wings, it is only  
to once again circle your flame.

—Rohinton Daruwala



*Black Wings* by Denny E. Marshall

## Previous Plans for Escape

Broken time have you been captive  
on this peculiar little planet  
a hundred of their sad years  
the first of your species  
sent to explore for reasons  
long forgotten as you have been.  
Crawling through a dark prison  
constructed for your strangeness  
the corridor long and unfamiliar  
the sounds loud and sinister  
someone else's makeshift beliefs  
yet familiar photographs on walls  
of confinement and privation  
the blood on the ceiling  
reminds you of the sacred region  
of your distant in memory planet  
you have only injured swiftness  
left to get to the corridor's end  
into that place of journey's memory  
where a hidden spacecraft awaits  
but movement is nothing but mockery  
of previous plans for escape.

—J. J. Steinfeld

## Cetacean Prosthesis

I place my new arm on the table  
and it gestures to me, wiggles fingers  
reaching for my nerves, joints crackling.  
I worried, imagining I'd falter in assembly,  
but the skin on the new limb  
feels pulpy like a whale's back,  
safe, like pools of circumcised rays,  
perfection down to the rounded  
silhouettes of the cartilage nails.  
This new piece of myself devours my flesh,  
merges human and beast,  
and I dream of underwater shelves,  
biotic deserts, abyssal plains,  
and the taste of krill.  
The reef teems, coral victories,  
disparate entities, this white skin  
and fluke of nature.

—Holly Walrath

## The Good Samaritan

He coughed up a lung.  
It landed on the coffee table.  
I picked it up and handed it  
Back to him. It was his right lung.  
As I gave it back to him  
He thanked me for handing him back  
His favorite lung. He must have  
Noticed me eyeing it  
With keen interest and was perhaps  
Worried that I would ask to keep it.  
I would have never been so greedy  
Since I already have two lungs of my own,  
Plus three extra lungs  
That I've accumulated in my travels.

—Steve Castro

## Dog Days

I suppose like all diseases  
lycanthropy has its mutations,  
including a rare daytime variant,  
triggered by the sun, but who  
would have believed that chasing cars,  
marking hydrants, and sniffing butts  
could be so much fun?

—Robert Borski

pandemonium  
in the toy box  
everyone  
swapping heads  
for halloween

—Christina Sng



## SCIENCING THE S\*\*\* OUT OF POETRY Denise Dumars

A debate has arisen recently about whether or not “science” poetry is really a part of science fiction poetry. So my title this time references the famous line from *The Martian*: “I’m gonna have to science the s\*\*\* out of this!” Now, some may see that book and its film adaptation as science fiction, but I don’t. We don’t have humans on Mars yet, but if Elon Musk—the CEO of Tesla and Space-X corporations—has his way, we will. Certainly the science exists to make this possible (if not exactly easy or affordable.) Similarly, the film *Gravity* is billed as science fiction, when it is nothing of the sort. Space shuttles do occasionally explode, and the International Space Station does exist, even if the events in the film are fictional, so to me it’s not science fiction.

Some have called science fiction the dominant form of literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, implying that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is diminishing in importance because we now live in an SFnal world. While I would say that we definitely live in, sadly, the dystopian high-tech world predicted by the 1980s cyberpunk writers, I do not think that SF is dead, just reimagined to fit the times. But I digress. We clearly live in a time when the lines between science fiction and science fact are blurred, and I believe that science poetry is very much a part of SFnal literature. So this month’s column features markets in which science-based poetry and sometimes other types of poetry are welcome.

Since medicine is both a science and an art, it is not surprising to find that a fair number of medical journals publish poetry. Consider these lines from “Consultation Request,” by Ronald Pies, MD, published in *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*:

Did I not get  
my optics right?  
Or does the soul’s prism  
once kicked out of kilter,  
no longer  
refract the light?

While *JAMA* is probably the best-known medical journal that publishes poetry—and you don’t have to be a doctor nor a person who plays one on TV to submit to it—there are others. For example, *AJN, The American Journal of Nursing*, does too. Here are some lines from “A Patient Tells Me About Her Suffering” in *AJN* by Cortney Davis, RN:

Isn’t it odd, she asked me, how long the nights can seem  
everyone asleep, only the cold outside and your thoughts,  
like owls,

sweeping through the woods on the urgent  
downstroke of their wings?

*MJA, The Medical Journal of Australia*, also yields poems. Here are a few lines from “The Daily Coracle,” by Gina Mercer:

she’s almost over  
the depression  
it’s just  
every morning  
she wakes  
in a noxious puddle  
of bilge water  
at the bottom of  
her tiny coracle

*CMAJ, the Journal of the Canadian Medical Association*, and the journal *Neurology* are also examples of medical journals that take poetry—there are a lot of them! Looking online for medical journals might yield some good journals to submit to, but a trip to your local public or college library might yield more information in the form of hard copies, which often have poems that might not make it into the online journals or might be hard to find in the journal’s search engine. For example, I have seen science-based poetry published from time to time in *Scientific American*, *Science News*, *Sky & Telescope*, and *Smithsonian* magazines, but their writers’ guidelines do not mention poetry, nor does it appear in every issue.

As for examples of science-based poetry in astronomy and related fields that science fiction poets are so often interested in, *Astropoetica*, though it is no longer being published, has online archives that are a good place to see what poetry in the astronomical sciences is like. For example, here is part of “Five Pounds of Sunlight” by SFPA member and rocket scientist Geoffrey A. Landis:

Some of that five pounds of sunlight reflects back  
into space.  
The kitten bounces off the kitchen cabinets, reflecting back into my  
office  
                  scattering books and papers  
But three or four pounds of sunlight stays, warming the Earth.  
The kitten, temporarily stationary, naps in the sunlight.  
I cup the kitten in one hand  
and imagine that I am holding all the sunlight striking the Earth.

*Abyss & Apex* is a highly regarded speculative poetry magazine that specifically lists science poetry in its guidelines. As an example, here are a few lines from “Principles of Entropy” by Shelagh M. Rowan-Legg:

keep a record  
of the swings of a pendulum  
the timing of each swoosh  
will decide everything

And as past SFPA President and internationally renowned haiku poet Deborah P. Kolodji could tell you, science is certainly welcome in haiku magazines, and I don’t just mean those that take scifaiku. This is explained by

a claim that will probably make some peoples' heads explode: science poetry is, in my opinion, a form of nature poetry. Think of it in terms of what is called *kigo* in haiku: a word or phrase that connotes a specific season. Moon phases and constellations certainly fall under that rubric, as do other natural (and sometimes theoretical or mathematical) processes described by science.

By way of example I hop on over to *Frogpond, The Journal of the Haiku Society of America*, and I find this, by LeRoy Gorman:

o            n  
nuclear winter

I didn't even have to look far to find science-based poetry in *Frogpond*, so then I decided to dip into one of our best-known literary magazines, *The American Poetry Review*, and what do I find? "The Astronomer," by Kazim Ali:

His azimuth splendor maps the city twice in time  
and he feels the drag of the tide pulling him along through millennia  
into other cities each of which existed here in this same place.

So no worries on placing science-based poetry; it's everywhere. For more science journals that publish poetry, check your college library's databases or browse the shelves, where you might find hard copies of some of the more popular journals that the Nursing program, for example, might subscribe to.

And here's one more suggestion for submitting science poetry: if you regularly read or subscribe to a scientific journal, why not submit a poem to it? Just because "Poetry" isn't in the specific submission guidelines, this may not necessarily mean that poetry isn't welcome. As I've said before: I've seen poems on occasion in a variety of science magazines. And keep submitting to science-fiction-poetry markets too: I personally don't know of any that reject science poetry out of hand. (No, it's generally horror poetry that they reject out of hand!) I just had to get in one last stab, didn't I?

#### References and Markets:

*Abyss & Apex*, <http://www.abyssexpexzine.com/submissions/>

*AJN*, <http://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/pages/default.aspx>

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*Astropoetica*, <http://www.astropoetica.com/>

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*The Martian*, Dir. Ridley Scott, 2015.

*MJA*, <https://www.mja.com.au/>

Weir, Andy, *The Martian*, Reprint Ed. Broadway Books, 2014.

Submissions are open for the **SFPA Halloween page**,  
curated by Stace Johnson.

See **[sfpoetry.com/halloween.html](http://sfpoetry.com/halloween.html)** for seasonal poems  
and images from our members.

## Timebenders

You see them flicker past in shaded corners,  
These travelers who twist the strands of time,  
At funerals the uninvited mourners,  
All actors in some wordless pantomime,

A captured face in some old grainy photo,  
A face someplace you know there shouldn't be,  
Contorted like a twisted Quasimodo.  
But if examined closely you will see

It's one who is unanchored in his placement,  
Untied to either future or the past,  
The man who moves in temporal displacement,  
The one who was the first but is the last,

The visitor who has no lasting home,  
That one, condemned by destiny to roam.

–Glenn A. Meisenheimer

storm surge  
self-planting seeds  
head for the hills

–LeRoy Gorman

## Death Poem

I received a letter in the mail stating that I was cordially invited  
To attend my own death. It would happen at the intersection  
Of Palm and 118<sup>th</sup>, exactly 42 minutes after sunrise  
On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, 2029. I would be 44 years old.

*It won't be the cigarettes, the letter stated, but it will  
Involve smoke signals.* The letter also informed me  
That I should be prompt, as Death is busy, schedules  
Must be kept, the world can't slow for one asshole.

The letter came with an RSVP and a note asking  
For a list of anyone I wanted to invite, up to 5 guests.

*It is often a mistake to invite parents.*

*It is often a mistake to invite love*

*In any form.*

I wrote down the names of the first 3 girls I thought  
About kissing and did. I added *Tupac's hologram,*  
*The saddest person living in Detroit.*

–C. J. Miles

## Tidal Disruption Event

A star's death is most beautiful of all  
The random cataclysms we embrace  
Inside our darkness. Lost beyond recall

As fire drawn into filament, it falls  
For gravity with cinematic grace:  
A star's death. Is *most beautiful of all*

Not epitaph enough? What else to call  
A sun struck down, spun out across the face  
Of starving darkness? Lost beyond recall,

Its X-ray flare alerts no rescue. Mauled  
By tidal claws, to die alone in space ...  
A star's death is most beautiful? Of all

Unfeeling observations, this seems small  
At light-years' distance. Hardly a disgrace—  
Inside our darkness, lost beyond recall,

So many inhumanities appall  
Us briefly. Let this latest find its place.  
A star's death is most beautiful of all  
Inside our darkness, lost beyond recall.

—Ann K. Schwader

## Protocols

In the decontamination chamber,  
water and bleach spray, then oven-like heat;  
waiting for the cycle's end, the lock's click.

We explore new worlds that we cannot touch  
beyond footprints. What touches us, we leave  
in the decontamination chamber

It's for everyone's safety, theirs and ours,  
not to make our encounters face-to-face.  
Water and bleach spray, then oven-like heat,

destroy their microbes as we stand in the spray,  
watching galaxies circle down the drain,  
waiting for the cycle's end, the lock's click.

—Deborah L. Davitt

## Horse and Girl

the girl called, and the horse heard  
his ears perked, though she spoke  
in a way that didn't carry on the wind  
the stars themselves shouted at him  
through their sly, twinkling silence

his cloven hooves pounded across prairie  
clods of dirt airborne in his wake  
high grass bowed and flexed and screamed  
*hurry, hurry, hurry*  
and he hurried

sweat frothed his skin  
breath in heavy huffs  
he made himself go slower  
he'd be no good to her dead  
even as birds squawked, *go, go, go*

he walked and loped and walked again  
nights and days flickered past like gnats  
he ate, drank, slept in restless spurts  
the grass grew shorter, blades sharper  
flatlands swelled into hills and mountains

a catamount on high in a tree howled  
*hurry, hurry, she needs you*  
the wind shoved him from behind  
the sun tucked itself into a nest of clouds  
to reduce its wicked glare

finally, finally, the girl's very scent  
beckoned from her flying castle afar  
he couldn't help but gallop as he screamed  
*I'm here, I'm here*  
and when he reached the cliff

he bounded into nothingness  
wings unfurled from below his withers  
feathers white as bone and soft as breath  
hooves finding purchase on icy air  
solid as mountain stone

only after  
the siren signals ...  
can we rest assured  
none among us  
are unaccounted for

*-dl mattila*

he could see her, at long last  
there on the balcony, arms wide  
the castle on its cloud rushed his way  
the girl's laugh of relief and delight  
far sweeter than any hay

–Beth Cato

### Marriage

Every day  
I brush against you  
but you never notice  
Things haven't changed  
that much since I died

–Christina Sng

after the divorce  
reopening  
the ship's air vents

–Susan Burch

### Overheard in an Antarean Bar

I know you've been a while in space  
It's got to be a drag,  
This interspecies mating, though,  
Is really not my bag.

For how am I to turn you on?  
You have the wrong designs,  
You haven't any gills to grab  
Nor any dorsal spines,

Your covering is pale and soft,  
No evidence of scales.  
You don't have very many eyes  
And even fewer tails.

There are too many differences  
That cannot be resolved.  
Come see me in a million years  
When you are more evolved....

–Glenn A. Meisenheimer



Spider Skull by Cesar Valtierra

waking this morning  
burping memories of you  
need to floss the fangs

–ayaz daryl nielsen

## Smuggler to the Stars

Hermetically sealed crates  
line my cargo hold. Their contents  
won't make me filthy rich  
but could bring in a tidy sum.

Jettison them? No way!  
Bad idea at my current warp.  
Prob'ly end up blowing out  
my Alcubierre drive.

Nor can I stand in space  
and fight. It's just me  
and my secondhand Robotcrew  
flying this old bucket.

Klentags crowding my aft,  
gaining fast. And those creeps  
shoot first and ...  
well, you know the rest.

Why can't life be like a holoflick  
where an asteroid field to hide in  
lies around every bend of space  
like some ubiquitous chain  
of convenience starports?

—*J. P. Brown*

## La Villa de Sirenia

Stretch your fins  
with this beachfront  
vacation rental.

3 bedrooms, 12 baths.  
Clawfoot tubs for sleeping.  
Trident racks available.

No smoking.  
No fishing.  
No sailors.

Selkie owned,  
selkie operated.

—*Jack Ralls*

## Semelparity

“The single reproductive event of semelparous organisms  
is usually large as well as fatal.”

—Ricklefs & Miller, *Ecology*

This is joy, the natural order of things. Nature demands  
I siphon into you, and yet I serve  
your hunger mouth, my monster darling.  
I am bone.

How long? How much,  
your teeth and fists.  
Is it Nature's wish  
that we dissolve into our young?

—*Shannon Connor Winward*



# PUBLISHING SPECULATIVE POETRY: HOW THE POETRY BUSINESS WORKS

## POETRY WITH BITE Cardinal Cox

I've been a genre poet for many years, and reviews of my work have appeared in *Star\*Line*. I've also held residencies, including writing for The Dracula Society. With its international membership, this has been an intriguing post. Out of that, last August I was approached by Mark Grist re producing a show of my work. Mark is a full-time poet who has performed internationally.

The plan was that we'd apply for a grant to develop the show. The essential thing with UK Arts Council grant applications is to show how it will help you and other artists. We roughed out a budget of £5000: £1000 each for my producer (half for production, half for mentoring me to run a writing workshop) and the director, then £400 for the poster designers (optimistic, as it ended up closer to £700), and £200 each for a photographer and a music producer to create a theme tune. Other expenses covered in the application were props/costume, equipment (a new smartphone for me to do more social media) and transport/food during development. My wages for writing and performing were also included, at £1000.

Together we worked on the grant application and started to develop the show. We also had agreements to help from both the John Clare Cottage (Clare was a local nineteenth-century peasant poet) and Metal (an arts organisation with an international reputation and a branch centre in my home city of Peterborough). After a couple of attempts, the grant was approved.

Having two experienced poets producing and directing me meant I would often hear "that poem has to go". They were merciless with anything that didn't relate to the show. A show, rather than a poetry reading—they reordered the poems into a plot, all for the better for a spoken-word show, in this case, a "spooked word" show. It took me a while to comprehend the differences. My poetry comprised about a third of the show but had to be integrated with the linking material. An analogy I might use is that a sit-com is not just a string of gags but also has to have a story for the jokes to fit into.

The show grew out of my work for The Dracula Society to look at fears in general, to explore the darkest aspects of human existence, and then to award prizes for the best shoes worn by members of the audience, plus one bit of puppetry. At the John Clare Cottage I was allowed a corner to write in, away from the distractions of my home. At Metal we rehearsed, and I blogged about the show's development on their site.

When Stamford Arts Centre (next town along the railway), where I've performed, heard I was developing a show, I was invited to present it as part of a poetry festival in April. Then I had to do more re-writes. We premiered the show at Metal in Peterborough on World Dracula Day in May, and filled a small performance space. Even before that, I was offered a slot at a small literary festival (In Other Words) in Cambridge in June (I just happened to meet the organiser at another event—pure luck). The staff at the Arts Centre

have helped me draft an email to pitch the show to other venues and events; I hope to also take it to convention.

In a desperate attempt to get me to learn the words ahead of time, Mark bought me an mp3 player (I'm not a tech person; I've still got a large collection of vinyl records) and got me to record poems in the producer's home studio (a garden shed with a microphone and a computer because that is all producers need now). So I listen to myself on bus journeys. I've never thought that memorizing poems is essential; however, knowing the poems well enough to not look down at the page the entire time is good. Look the audience in their eyes (if you can see them) as much as possible.

The experience has been a good one, pushing me in directions I'd not previously considered. The money has meant that I can both work with professionals and pay myself for my work. Not a lot, but it is good to be paid.

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## Apocalypthèque

All along the western coast  
our people move to a distant beat,  
the waves respond to rhythm now  
and the tide won't suck us in.

icy roads  
the wendigo dresses  
for dinner

We turned off the TV long ago,  
found our way by candle flame  
and raging storm, the light display  
of a scorched sky,  
a dying world.

—LeRoy Gorman

We'll clap our hands and move our feet,  
dance for all the ones below  
who cower now in tiny spaces,  
but at this hour we won't go out  
with whimpers or in silence—  
we'll lift our voices, singing,

breakfast with the soothsayer  
and she  
predicts  
"this day  
will be cold,

*If the world keeps burning  
we'll all stay warm,  
if the bombs keep falling  
the earth will shake  
its bass into our bones.*

—Anton Rose

cold as a once-revered saber buried  
within a forgotten battlefield's debris,  
a saber capable of transmuting ill-will  
and evil intent into an intrinsic realization  
of the sacredness within all existence ...  
and this saber ...” pausing, she grasps  
my arm. . . “it can, it must be found, found and  
wielded by hero and heroine, working together,  
as one ... and you and I” she states firmly,  
squeezing my arm “it's up to us ... it's us”  
the steaming coffeecup  
halfway to my lips, suspended  
in the silent, fertile morning light ...

—ayaz daryl nielsen

## A Feeling of Motion

It isn't that Chou dislikes his job  
crawling along the outside of the *Odyssey*  
as it travels between stars  
performing maintenance and improvements.

But the books and the old videos that he  
watches to preserve the culture of the planet  
as it is transported across generations  
and interstellar space,  
show and talk about wind:  
the unpredictable movement of air  
across flesh and through hair.

Inside the *Odyssey* he has stood  
before the fans of heating units noting  
the movement of his hair and the feeling  
on skin, but it is nothing like the descriptions.

Outside, even at three quarters  
the speed of light, the stars are static  
unmoving flames spattered across the dark  
and he daydreams about  
what it would be like if he were on the  
exterior of an airship instead of a spaceship  
feeling the speed and motion  
completely lacking  
from the unmoving stars around him  
and from the still and boring life he lives.

–Herb Kauderer

## Time Machine

Today I'll do tomorrow, and tomorrow, yesterday,  
On Monday I'll be visiting a thousand years away.  
On Tuesday I'll do Saturday or else the Pliocene,  
The Civil War on Wednesday in my little time machine.

And then it's to the future and the Cybernetic War.  
I'll visit friends I've long not seen, since thirty thirty-four,  
Then watch the sun consume the earth, or maybe even worse.  
I'll go and watch the cave-in of my clockwork universe.

–Glenn A. Meisenheimer

## The Hand

There is a hand that leans against the churchyard wall.  
Its twisted fingers, two feet long, seize the stones  
And reach into the cracks. The wrist, submerged in earth,  
Has skin of pitted alabaster, green with lichen.  
Clumps of moss are wedged beneath its finger nails.  
And, shaded by the palm, a ring of toadstools grows  
Upon the verge where daffodils announce the spring.

When I first came, I wondered at the weathered fist,  
Expecting village folk to have a tale, some lore  
Of how it came to grip and guard the holy ground.  
But no-one knew. Or no-one said they knew. And no-one  
Seemed concerned to know. Except, they said, to ask  
The Major (Army, long retired) renowned collector  
Of the town's old tales and keeper of its past.

He laughed to hear the question, sighed and laughed again,  
Tossing back his head to calm those listening in.  
“It was my son,” he said, “when still a boy he carved  
The form from solid stone, modelled on my own.”  
He raised his hand and twisted it into a claw.  
“The sculpture was too big to house, and so it bides  
Beside the church, until devoured by rain and wind.”

Decades passed, I gave no thought to what I'd learned.  
The hand remained, girdled by weeds, drenched and frozen,  
Blown and baked, but never changed, and never aged.  
Or else, it aged too slowly for my mortal eyes.  
I wondered at the Major's words, God rest his soul.  
If years had barely nipped the skin or gnawed its hide,  
What time had hereto feasted on its pock-marked flesh?

The Widow Pierce departed, leaving no attendant heir.  
As parish justice, I was tasked to settle her estate.  
Her house was set well back along the old coach road,  
An ancient home of antique stone and dark grey slate.  
(I'd had no cause to visit it before that day).  
Beside the gate a plaque of weathered granite named  
Her farm “The Hand,” and dated it into the distant past.

The blocks that made the lower floor I recognised:  
Massive cubes of martial rock that formed the castle  
And its curtain wall. Rent and carried here  
By what titanic force? I cannot say. Behind,

The fields slope off towards the stream, beyond which lies  
A burial ground from days before the Christians came  
And farther still, the farmland of the Major's son.

He bought the Widow's land. I counter-signed the deed  
And, signing done, I asked him of his boyhood art.  
He frowned. "It was my son, when still a youth, who carved."  
"Your father claimed as much of you," I said. He snarled.  
"And my son too, when I am gone, as scores before.  
Lies make us safe: the village need not understand.  
You must not seek the bulk below the broken hand."

*-Ian Duncan*

\*

Once this bedroom door is closed the rug  
deals in flowers, its dark scent  
reaching up where your eyes  
expect sunlight and miles away the heady whiff  
from a firefly —already she's naked

the woman you just this minute  
inhaled, a deep breath  
who can't see, has to feel along the grass  
though the dead still stake a claim

and never leave —the room is locked  
with the fragrance stones come for  
—it's a little room  
a place you keep for yourself  
so the door can become the distance  
that fastens her arms to yours

and you wait for the pathways  
to fall inside your throat  
as the cry for footsteps  
filled with kisses and fingernails

and the rug torn apart for rags  
smells from loneliness  
from the mouth you will gently place  
over her heart and time to time.

*-Simon Perchik*

## A Robot's History of Art

We still don't know the significance  
of their two-dimensional acts. We all know

when Panderob manufactured his greatest work,  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Street silicone shower, its utility was seamless;

the copper pipes gently arced over the traditional  
street paved in gold, a perfectly balanced web

of light and shadow spraying the finest-grade lubricant  
over our dry hinges as we rolled to the plants

on Formosa Avenue. Their art served other purposes,  
unclassified. And now, some collectors treasure

renderings of piles of shoes, broken, hairless dolls  
or the soup can repetitions, but none know why

they were formed. Maybe a visual inventory  
was needed to replace the time spent motionless

at night. Maybe they had no permanent memory.  
Their soft language was circular, random,

like the logic-loop infection that shut unit six down.  
This was their peculiar fate. Nothing existed

except by how other things described it:  
the sun, *a chariot racing across the sky,*

*marking the hours; the hours, a stream of sand  
pooling in a greening metal bowl, emptied when filled.*

–Lanette Cadle

## The Generations

It follows, as so often it does, that two people  
will meet, while a third gets in the way.  
After that, the third meets a fourth, as a fifth comes  
between them. And when the numbers have all  
been thrown off across one generation, it all  
starts again in the next: when a boy sleeps  
with a robot, and some cyborg gets in the way of that.

–Soren James

## Hopper's *Nighthawks*: Large Ginger Cat Remix

Another night at the diner and the greenish light  
gives a clue that this cup of coffee may be the last.  
The end of the world is looming outside  
and it looks hungry. Ginger cats need four squares  
plus extras and this one is door-high and tired of waiting.  
Where is the milk? The greasy burgers he smelled  
blocks away? He would even take a strawberry  
if you rolled it outside. This is how it could end:  
one soft pounce outside the door, or an open maw  
waiting for food in suits to walk in. Or, it's barely possible  
humans will exit with pie and tuna salad, offerings  
that postpone death for another night.

—Lanette Cadle

museum visit  
his handwriting  
in the old journal

—Billy Antonio

## In The Museum Of The Future

Instructive icons: (1) a carryall  
in camouflage; ammunition crammed  
in the cylinder of a Beretta that the owner jammed  
in manuscripts marked *Manifesto, Fall,*  
2035. The children love  
the gun. (2) A virtual post without a name,  
the face a blot. No words. Only a frame  
the killer filled with a sketch in the shape of a dove  
downside-up. (3) Days of rage displayed in a maze  
of cases built from bones. The point brought home  
by State curators, painters, architects.

Docents take roll. Not a place to stargaze;  
no bow to Paradise. No Greece or Rome.  
Wall texts are vetted. What would we expect?

—Richard Merelman

## **Centaur**

Vetz Mai was trapped outside in the dark, his oxygen running low, while Maigul and his army waited on the other side of the airlock ...

What the many ride are we; born now; brilliant; our hides bent to the wheel, of this divorce, from one well to another ...

What one mends another refuses, and so we resort to our abuses, of our tongue, to stain the wait of our thrum gun, shooting us to our new star ...

We are singing, and we are winning, where we are. We remember the threaded logic of our quiet cycle, after the war, how far we stepped beneath the sad embrace of our founders' beliefs ...

We are Rain and Many, we are children of a god who was a man, and a man who would be god, Vetz Mai Vettershaul and his lonely truck, out of his crèche at seven, eight, and nine, to storm the temper of his times ...

We fly the stars. We are the children of this song. And this is what we sing while we are working: tending maps and trimming locks and nourishing our gardens ...

This is the map of our intent as well, sent to relieve our twenty years of silence, in memory of the dead, and in memory of you ... our old well ...

We sing to be. And so we are. And we salute you, across the vacuum of time. Hello.

Why in song?

Why transmit our meaning in this music?

Why thrum the waiting drum with our melancholy bombs? Of verbs, and tummies hurling out their fricatives and diphthongs; our love:

Urge my youth to rend their fear and sear it to the door; for we shall not get out the airlock till we know what for;

For the many know the few—even as we know you, so far away, from the archives—and because we send this missive to warn and mend and hue the ruth of our wars, so as to hope they will not plague you too;

So for an epic of peace.

But like all such it sings of war:

Vetz Mai Vetershaul and Maigul the Black! And their thunderous drums!

And when this transmission reaches you, we will be 90,000 AUs out from our former star ...

*–Robin Wyatt Dunn*

### **Dracula's Poet**

He thanks me for the work I have done  
The poetic embellishments I have given to his family's story  
All those years, decades, centuries  
Different men sharing the same name, the same title  
But are they different?  
I have my doubts  
The years dripping off his frame  
While I grow paler, weaker

This is the end of a chapter  
He tells me  
another one is about to begin  
far away from here  
in a foreign land ripe for conquest  
I have noticed the boxes being loaded  
onto carts in the castle courtyard

On our last night together  
He is once again the genial host of my arrival  
His face unlined, unblemished  
Hair full and dark, like his mustache  
Somehow I know it will be the last meal  
we will have together  
and I realise I have never seen him eat or drink

He tells me he is leaving  
and I am staying  
Another poet will chronicle his adventures  
in another land

*–Ian Hunter*



SFPA's membership is international; we encourage submissions of speculative poems translated from other languages into English (we are able to translate poems submitted in French, German, or Spanish). Translations are eligible for SFPA awards.

## سَفِينَةُ الْفِضَاءِ

الخطاط السفينة —  
أنا الناج وحيد  
على هذا كوكب أجنبي.  
إذا لا يجد حياة ذكي  
أو اكتشف طريق  
إلى النظام شمسي  
محل الميلاد إنسان ،  
أنا يجب أفتح النافذة  
وقن .

### Spaceship

Shipwrecked—  
I'm the sole survivor  
on this alien planet.  
If I don't find a sentient species  
or discover a way back  
to the Solar system,  
the human birthplace,  
I'll be forced to risk opening  
a time window.

—Angelo Niles,  
translated from the Arabic by J.P. Brown

Read *Eye to the Telescope*, SFPA's quarterly online speculative poetry journal, at [eyetothetelescope.org](http://eyetothetelescope.org). The October theme is Ghosts, edited by Shannon Connor Winward. Submit robot poems for the next issue; see [eyetothetelescope.org/submit.html](http://eyetothetelescope.org/submit.html). Interested in editing a future issue? See [eyetothetelescope.org/edittett.html](http://eyetothetelescope.org/edittett.html).

## To A Child

Christmas snow  
I scatter tinsel  
for the drones

—LeRoy Gorman

### Winter Approaching

When we dead awake,  
gray blooms to blue,  
brown to green,  
and rust to red.  
Scattered ashes rise  
into dragon's flame.  
We are terrifying,  
but do not fear us.  
We are only you  
ascended into  
your brightest dream.

When we dead awake,  
you will know us  
by the dark blue clouds  
floating over our eyes.  
The rain never ends,  
and twilight floods  
over the edge of the earth.  
The moon rises in place of the sun  
and shines with its own  
shadow from our faces.

When we dead awake,  
those who never dance  
rise to music with bones creaking  
like rusty hinges  
on gates newly opened.  
Angels, no longer needed,  
ceding to the storms of birth,  
drift their bodies down  
like crimson leaves over the earth.

—Ronald Terry

I see your days now  
A medical hologram of layered yous  
Fused into a hybrid image

I see you tiny as a hydroponic pea  
With snowflake fingernails  
And toes aligned in a pod of seven

I see you racing your Altairan mother  
Swimming under pale blue skies  
Struggling to breathe atmosphere

I see you grown tall and  
holding the eight hands  
Of your husband on the altar

And too I foresee you  
Living on these foreign headlands  
Your airlock open to all visitors

See my grandkids spin around you  
Your windowsills covered  
Each hand-rubbed stone a memory

—Robert Frazier

my travel log—  
pressed between the pages  
a single leaf

beside each photo  
of every world  
I've seen

—Lauren McBride

## fairied tales

intrepid offspring offered  
sacrifice to clouds spell  
thunder in rainbows tied  
in pigtails bouncing yesterdays  
golden, red, brown, green  
shoot underfoot after foot  
between runic stone paths  
illuminated by white hair  
intoning bells curved along  
ponds fished by starlight wishes,  
princes, princesses, mud forms  
transformed into coins  
fairied toward new tales, myths  
of woodland paths leading home  
etched indelibly into the skin  
behind her left ear, moonlight  
lit the path before us where  
no antlers braved the brambles,  
even airships skirted darkness—  
yet the moon shone through  
illuminating the petals dropped  
by abducted elves dragged to certainty  
along uneven ground, the only proof  
to show us satellites fail because  
the moon's pull is too bright  
and the only channel is a trickle  
in the woods lit by starry fish

—John Reinnhart

rings  
of dew  
in a  
dappled glen  
old fairy ground  
Mother  
hurries me  
along  
as if the  
magic's gone

—Greer Woodward

## STAR\*LINE

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