

Space Cowboy Books Presents: Simultaneous Times Newsletter

#21 January 2022

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to our first issue of 2022. This month is the six-year anniversary of our bookstore! We're so thrilled to have made it this far, we couldn't have done it without you, thank you! Last month we were also deeply honored to find out that our podcast Simultaneous Times made the longlist for the Hugo Award for best semiprozine, we are incredibly humbled by this, thank you to all those that nominated and voted for us! In this issue we bring you an interview with Elgin Award winning poet Akua Lezli Hope. Happy new year everyone!

Jean-Paul L. Garnier



Your book Otherwheres won the 2021 Elgin Award. What has this experience been like?

The experience has been affirming, validating and exhilarating. Otherwheres is a collection of 12 speculative poems in a range of voices and forms.

You also won a competition to edit a speculative poetry anthology. Tell us a bit about that experience.

In 2020, I submitted a proposal for Sundress Publications competition to create an anthology and won. The working title was Proliferating Possibilities and it became NOMBONO: Anthology of Speculative Poetry by BIPOC Creators from Around the World. It is the FIRST anthology of BIPOC speculative poetry!

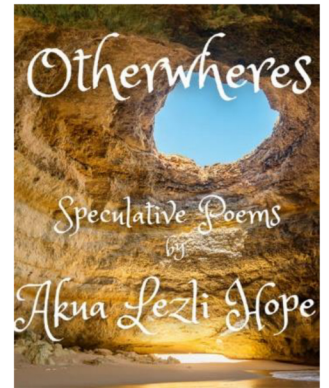
My other 2021 editing experience was with Eye to the Telescope, the quarterly magazine of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Association that chooses guest editors and different themes for each issue. I am the editor for issue number 42 on the SEA, which is a historic and record-breaking issue -- over seven hundred poems came in from 236 poets. I chose 33 poems by 30 poets. The collection is free and available online in perpetuity for your reading pleasure on the Science Fiction and Fantasy poetry association's website <http://www.eyetothetelescope.com/>

What drew you to speculative poetry and what do you find to be the strengths of speculative poetry versus non-genre work?

I wrote my first speculative poems in the sixth grade. I remember all of one of them and most of the other. More than half a century ago, I saw poetry making as one part of a realm of exploration, an aspect of experiencing life and literature and being and expressing it. Speculative poetry was not a thing apart. I read Animal Farm in the 4th grade; 1984 in the fifth grade; Brave New World in the sixth grade. I loved Poe. I went through siren drills where we practiced for the possible arrival of an atomic bomb. At home we loved the Twilight Zone on television. At 12 my father gave me a subscription to Analog Magazine so I'm naming context to say it's not so much that something drew me to it but it was OF me.

You've been publishing poetry since the 70s, how has your relationship with poetry changed over the years?

My relationship with poetry has not changed at all. I've been writing poems from before I was literate. I began reading poetry as soon as I was literate. I wrote poetry while pre-med, while in business, school, while being a corporate drone. I write whether happy or sad, whether monied or impoverished, as I am now. I will always read and write poetry. Creating is who I am, it is what I do, it is what I've always done. The test of time has said that has proved this to be true. My earliest poems I dictated to my mother to write them for me because I was not yet literate. Poetry for me predates my own personal literacy. My first pro sale was in 1974, but I've been writing since about 1960.



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You are also a papermaker, how does this artform interact with and inspire your writing?

I'm a hand paper maker and I've written a series of poems about papermaking. I'm very honored this year that my poem, Why Paper, was used by HAND PAPERMAKING for their annual broadside and fundraiser. My science fiction short story, The Papermaker, to be published in Africa Risen (Tor 2022) draws deeply and profoundly from my experience as a hand paper maker. This month an incredible paper maker said to her Facebook group 'think about language in paper.' Everything has its moment, Kaboom something opened for me in a new way. What came together was a series of micro acrostics, words that I have put *in* paper and artist books of these words in paper and micro acrostic on paper. The artist books are in forms that reflect the subject matter. They are Idea, Bone, Sage, Mage and SEER. You can see some of these in process and finished on Instagram. So thank you for asking because just this November began a whole new path for me.

You facilitate the Speculative Poetry Sundays reading series, can you tell us about the series and what inspired you to start it?

I was trying to get an organization to undertake presenting speculative poetry and they rebuffed and derided me. I attended ConZealand and something miraculous and unbelievable happened to me in the summer of 2020. Then NASFIC, my first con and I had an epiphany. And the Epiphany was that speculative poetry needed an ongoing platform, a regular presentation of its creators; a place for people to come to hear the poetry. And so in September 2020 I began the Speculative Sundays Poetry reading series. It concluded December of 2021. There were 22 or so poets presented. All the readings were recorded live on Facebook via Zoom. I learned an enormous amount because for all that had books, I purchased and read their books before presenting them so that I could have an informed discussion about their work. Nine times out of ten though

I was just overwhelmed by the experience by the sheer Joy of hearing what they chose to read, of being in their presence, so what may have begun thoughtfully was often devolved into my enthusiastic and excited in the moment responses.

Tell us about your Words on Wheels program?

I won an Individual artist Grant to create Words on Wheels. I invited area poets and artists to send me images of their paintings and poetry and I made poem art cards. These were distributed to the frail elderly who are serviced by Meals on Wheels. There was to be another component where young people placed the cards around town in the library in the mall and coffee shops, what I called a “wild distribution” of these poetry art cards. They were distributed every month to six weeks with their food to the meals-on-wheels recipients. I got fabulous feedback. I conceived of the program because I'm a frail, under-serviced elder in a place without paratransit. I'm paralyzed and in a wheelchair, and exist unassisted in any way shape or form e.g. I got stuck shoveling my sidewalk in my wheelchair. So I very much understand the challenges of being both elderly and frail. But as I haven't eaten meat for half a century, Meals on Wheels is not a program that I could ever use.

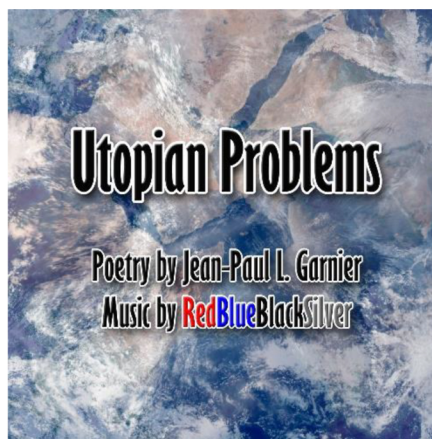
What's next for you, and what are you currently working on?

I just learned that I won the Individual Artist grant from the New York State Council on the Arts for my project "Creating Speculative, AfroFuturist, Pastoral Poetry" so that's the future. I'm currently working on micro acrostics. My essay on them, and three of them, will be in SciFaikuest in February 2023. Perhaps others will find their way in other publications that have shorter deadlines. They were inspired by the idea of putting them somehow in paper. If I had my druthers, I'd love to have a small printing press. What I do with the words in paper is, I vacuum form paper. I create faces with wire and then I realized I could create words with wire and then vacuum form the paper with these words. I really wish that other than my inkjet that I had another printer that I could actually print on my handmade paper. I'm also working on a collection of poems, it's kind of simmering and burning in me and I've written bunches for this collection but I keep being reminded of what more it could be and that collection is *Priestess*. *Priestess* has been calling to me for a while. I'm trying to figure out how much is speculative and how much is not speculative. *Priestess* was my first thought as an artist book in August 2021— how to create these wire inscribed papers with faces of priestesses to accompany the poems that I've been writing about priestesses. Thank you for reading. I'm excited to participate and be presented in this newsletter, wishing you all joy in the making.

Find out more about Akua's work at <https://akualezlihope.com/>



New from the Small Press



Utopian Problems
By
Jean-Paul L. Garnier
with music by
RedBlueBlackSilver

New from Space Cowboy Books - Utopian Problems, a musical audiobook of utopian poetry. First released as a limited-edition mini chapbook,

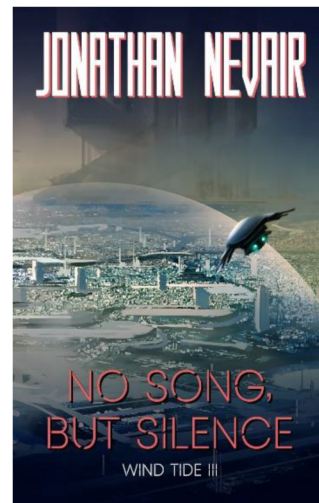
this collection is now presented in audio format with an original soundtrack created by RedBlueBlackSilver. Recorded live in Joshua Tree, CA.

Download it for free at <https://spacecowboybooks.bandcamp.com/album/utopian-problems> CDs also available

No Song, But Silence **Wind Tide Book 3** By Jonathan Nevair

Can the secrets of a lost philosophy break the cycle of vengeance?

The tide of justice ebbs. A mysterious and reclusive superpower threatens to extend its reach, colonizing new star systems for Wind energy and spreading a corrupt political empire. The People's Army, once the hope for a new federation of allies in the Arm, has dwindled to a mere spectator in the fight for political control. Ailo's role in its revolutionary fervor is over. The esoteric philosophy of the legendary Cin Quinti is her only concern now. But when an unimaginable threat sends a political shock wave through the Arm she must weigh the cost of self-preservation, hiding in the shadows as civilization falls to despotism and tyranny.



Light years away on Kol 2, a young librarian grows inspired by a mentor's clandestine teachings. What he discovers with the newfound knowledge reveals a moral avalanche. The dubious and cruel political power corrupting his society must be exposed, but it will take a leap of faith to challenge an empire.

A space opera inspired by the Eumenides (Aeschylus), and the epic conclusion to the WIND TIDE trilogy.

Find many of the books mentioned in our newsletter at our online shop www.bookshop.org/shop/spacecowboybooks