

### Candidate Statements for the 2023-2025 SFRA Executive Committee



**Keren Omry**

Below, please find the statements from the candidates for two Executive Committee positions that are open this year: President and Secretary. Each successful candidate is expected to serve for a three-year term. In addition, you can see the candidates for our one-year pilot At Large positions. Please read and consider all the candidates' statements and, when we open our online voting page in early December, cast your vote.

I want to take this opportunity to express my warmest gratitude and greatest appreciation for everyone I've had a chance to serve with during my eight years on the SFRA Executive Committee. A volunteer association is only ever as good as its members make it and it's been a true privilege to watch the Association grow and change, always striving to do more and better for the incredible community to which we belong. May the next stewards of this ship always roll with the waves and sail true. Finally, I want to send my sincere thanks to all the candidates who are putting their names in the hat and wish them good luck!

#### **PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES**

**Hugh C. O'Connell**

I've been a member for the SFRA since 2015, and during this time I've served on the Student Paper Award Committee (2016-2018) and as the organization's treasurer (2018-2021). Over the last couple of years, the organization as a whole has worked hard to diversify the core membership and to increase member representation on the Executive Board. If elected as president, my main goal would be to continue working with the membership and E-Board on the new programs that have been put in place, while also seeking new avenues for members to help guide and shape the organization. In many ways, my experiences through joining the SFRA, attending the conferences, and working within the organization created that first sense of having an academic home, and it would be a privilege to continue to serve the organization and hopefully extend that feeling for both new and longtime members.

**Peter Sands**

I've been a member of the SFRA for most of my professional career, stretching back to the 1990s, when I was the first webmaster for the group, and published Rich Erlich's *Coyote's Song*: the Teaching Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin as the first digital publication of the SFRA. Much of my professional energy has also been directed to the steering committee of a sister organization, the Society for Utopian Studies, where I am currently finishing my term as President; I have a good deal of experience in caretaking of scholarly societies. For many years I have also been the liaison

between SFRA and SUS. Most of my publications are in utopian studies as well. My academic career has trended recently more toward administration; my experience as undergraduate chair for a large English department in a R1 university, and as Director of the Honors College since 2014 have been good preparation for managing the business, communications, and continuity of groups such as ours. My primary focus and success as an administrator has been improving the diversity of the student body and of the staff in the honors college; I believe that scholarly societies as well need as soon as possible to look less like me and more like the diverse rests of the world. I'm eager to give back to the SFRA, which has been a congenial home and intellectual engine for so many of us and for so long, and to continue the good work of those who kept us all going through the recent very weird years.

## **SECRETARY**

### **Sarah Lohmann**

It would be an honour for me to be considered for the position of SFRA Secretary. The SFRA has been an academic home for me since the 2016 conference in Liverpool – one of my first conferences – and I have been looking for opportunities to become more actively involved. I think the position of Secretary would be ideal given my background in academic organising, which I will briefly bore you with.

Firstly, during my undergraduate and MA years at the University of St Andrews, I served as Secretary and then President of three student societies, significantly increasing membership and hosting well-known speakers (like Iain M. Banks!). Following this, during my PhD at Durham University, I organised a well-received museum exhibition on time travel narratives, convened two successful lecture series, and served as PhD student representative. Finally, in my postdoctoral position at the University of Tübingen, I have become involved with the new College of Fellows and am designing a comprehensive orientation course for international MA students. All this has given me a great deal of committee experience, insight into academic procedures, and event management practice, which I would particularly like to make use of as SFRA Secretary during this time of change in the association: I would love to help mediate this transition, as I especially enjoy facilitating dynamic processes.

In addition, I would like to contribute the collaborative potential that comes with being a bilingual (English and German) and trinational (German, American and British) academic: for instance, I am well-positioned to help the EC unpack the international complexities of diversification and representation.

My work in this position would also, of course, be informed by my love of SF, which has been my central academic focus since I stumbled across a wonderful SF class in my undergraduate years. I am now preparing to publish my PhD thesis on feminist utopias as science-fictional thought experiments modelling complex systems, and other recent projects include a chapter on

utopias as living organisms in a Festschrift for Lucy Sargisson, edited by Lyman Tower Sargent and Raffaella Baccolini, as well as several contributions to *This is Not a Science Fiction Textbook*, edited by Mark Bould and Steven Shaviro. My teaching also features SF or science-fictionality across speculative genres: I always find ways to explore the critical potential of cognitive estrangement and other science-fictional narrative mechanisms, which often incites great interest in the genre, and I am currently planning courses on SF and the Anthropocene.

I am unsure what the future holds, but having recently had the honour of being interviewed as an ‘up-and-coming SF scholar’ by current Secretary Sean Guynes for the SFRA Review, I have no intention of deserting this amazing field anytime soon: I have two SF-based academic books in the pipeline, plenty of SF-informed teaching material lined up, and many plans for SF-focused events up my sleeve. Serving as SFRA Secretary would be a wonderful addition to these endeavours, and I would do so with pleasure and to the best of my ability.

## AT LARGE

### Helane Androne

I am happy to stand for the At-large position on the Executive Committee of the SFRA. I am currently Professor of English at Miami University of Ohio Regional campuses, and an Affiliate of the Global and Intercultural Studies Department. I teach courses in African American literature, Latine literatures, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, and SFF—all of which engage my primary focus on the sacred. I am committed to teaching and learning practices that engage non/traditional students through multidisciplinary and multi-modal learning, and I seek to reflect that concern both in my courses and in my scholarship. My current project uses Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* alongside Malidoma Patrice Somé’s rite of passage teachings to point out how myth and magic operate as an activism of radical survival in black womanist SFF. I have recently engaged SFF to present on Love Theory, on anti-racism, on activism and resistance, on intersectionality and the image of God, and on methodologies of emancipation. Along with scholarly interests, I have concrete experience and skills that enhance my candidacy: I have successfully written and co-written almost \$200K in external and internal grants; presented for more than 70 conferences, workshops, and lectures; published 2 books and written more than 15 other publications. I have chaired a department; been an independent magazine editor and writer; chaired the 1921 Award for 2 cycles at the American Literature Society; and have served on several editorial boards and in multiple literary societies. As an At-large member of the SFRA, I believe I’ll bring a balance of academic experience, administrative conscientiousness, and scholarly aptitude, as well as energetic support for the diverse and expanding role of SFF.

**Gabriela Lee**

As an academic and author from the Global South, I am very excited to run as an at large member of the SFRA. I am looking forward to highlighting and raising up voices from my side of the world and bringing them into conversation with other scholars and writers from the Global North. I am also looking forward to more actively supporting regular activities that the SFRA currently has and encouraging new initiatives, and I intend to bring my energy and work ethic to these projects. Outside of the SFRA, I am also the co-editor of an upcoming sourcebook on Philippine speculative fiction, soon to be published by the University of the Philippines Press. I am also currently a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, as well as a faculty member (on leave) at the University of the Philippines, where I teach creative writing, children's literature, and Philippine literature in English. Broadly speaking, my creative and critical work has usually focused on intersections of children's literature, speculative fiction, and the post/de/anti-colonial, especially the ways in which it manifests in Philippine literature. I hope that through the at large member position in the SFRA, I can contribute to making visible many creators and scholars who may not have had opportunities to be seen and heard, as well as learning from a community of like-minded scholars and writers. I look forward to serving SFRA community in imagining and moving towards a kinder, more compassionate world.