

## Statements by SFRA 2022 Award Winners and Committee Chairs



### The SFRA Board

#### SFRA Awards Presented at the “Disruptive Imaginaries” 2023 Conference at TU-Dresden

##### Student Paper Award

The Student Paper Award is presented to the outstanding scholarly essay read at the annual conference of the SFRA by a student.

The winner of the 2021 award is Josie Holland for their paper “Constructing Radical Queer Futures and Deconstructing Noir Fiction in The Penumbra Podcast.”

##### Mary Kay Bray Award

The Mary Kay Bray Award is given for the best review to appear in the *SFRA Review* in a given year.

This year’s awardee is Dennis Wilson Wise for his “Review of *Hidden Wyndham: Life, Love, Letters*” (*SFRA Review* 52.1)

The selection committee also awarded an honorable mention to Jeremy Brett for his “Review of *WandaVision*” (*SFRA Review* 52.1).

##### SFRA Book Award

The SFRA Book Award is given to the author of the best first scholarly monograph in SF, in each calendar year.

This year’s winner is Emily Midkiff for *Equipping Space Cadets: Primary Science Fiction for Young Children*.

The selection committee also awarded an honorable mention to Anne Stewart for *Angry Planet: Decolonial Fiction and the American Third World*.

##### Thomas D. Clareson Award

The Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service is presented for outstanding service activities-promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, and leadership in SF/fantasy organizations.

This year’s awardee is Shelley S. Streeby (Professor in the Departments of Ethnic Studies and Literature at the University of California, San Diego).

### **SFRA Innovative Research Award**

The SFRA Innovative Research Award (formerly the Pioneer Award) is given to the writer or writers of the best critical essay-length work of the year.

This year's awardee is Paweł Frelik for his essay "'Power Games: Towards the Rhetoric of Energy in Speculative Video Games,'" from *Er(r)go. Teoria - Literatura - Kultura*, 44 (2022). The selection committee also awarded an honorable mention to Nora Castle for her essay "In Vitro Meat: Contemporary Narratives of Cultured Flesh," from *Extrapolation* 63.2 (2022).

### **SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship**

Originally the Pilgrim Award, the SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship was created in 1970 by the SFRA to honor lifetime contributions to SF and fantasy scholarship. The award was first named for J. O. Bailey's pioneering book, *Pilgrims through Space and Time*, and altered in 2019.

This year's awardee is Steven Shaviro (DeRoy Professor of English Wayne State University Department of English)

## **Award Committee Statements**

### **Student Paper Award, outgoing chair: Josh Pearson**

Out of this year's strong field, the committee has selected Josie Holland's "Constructing Radical Queer Futures and Deconstructing Noir Fiction in The Penumbra Podcast" as the winner. The paper offered a sophisticated fusion of theoretical approaches, delivered through an engaging and accessible argument. We were excited by the paper's engagement with the Podcast medium, an increasingly important venue for SF worldbuilding. The paper brings together both the genre conventions and the critical discussions of Noir and SF in order to map a vision of queer futurity "where queerness is everywhere and therefore, nowhere," clearly represented but also "so universalized that it disappears from the daily language" of narrative world. We congratulate Holland on this excellent piece and look forward to seeing more of their scholarship in the future.

### **Mary Kay Bray Award, outgoing chair: Rich Horton**

The Mary Kay Bray Award committee has chose Dennis Wilson Wise's review of *Hidden Wyndham: Life, Love, Letters* (by Amy Binns) as the recipient of the Mary Kay Bray Award for 2023. We were impressed by the well-written and thorough review, which intelligently describes the content of the book, in the context of deep knowledge of the book's subject; and which also smartly engages with *Hidden Wyndham's* potentially contestable claims, and with its literary conclusions. The review introduced us to a worthwhile work, and on its own enhanced our understanding of an important and somewhat less-remembered SF writer, while whetting our appetite for further investigation.

Among many other impressive contributions to the *SFRA Review* in 2023, we were also impressed by Jeremy Brett's review of the limited series *WandaVision*, which gave us insight and new ideas about a fine television production, which we want to recognize with an Honorable Mention.”

**Book Award, outgoing chair: Keren Omry**

I'm super excited to present the 2022 SFRA Book Award. This award seeks out game-changing monographs by new scholars or those new to the field which means that as the committee chair, I've had the opportunity to read hundreds of books over the past four years. As you can imagine this has been an unbelievable intellectual experience and for those of you (us) still struggling to churn out your first SFS book, I'm here to say, don't lose heart, at least four people will read it!

After four years chairing this award committee I will be stepping down but before I do I want to express my warmest appreciation of my fellow committee members: Joan Gordon, Chris Pak, and Dan Hassler-Forrest who managed to make a daunting project both efficient and good fun.

We had a surprisingly sparse turn out this year which on reflection, I think is at least partly the natural impact of COVID 2020. Happily, the quality of the scholarship did not drop one iota. I want to begin with an honorable mention for *Angry Planet: Decolonial Fiction and the American Third World* (U of Minnesota Press) by Anne Stewart, which came at a very close second.

Stewart's richly layered analysis of the ways in which sf can portray our natural environment not as a passive space but as an active, even vengeful agent in our stories and imaginations is a necessary and timely intervention in the field. Her writing is perceptive, nuanced, and impassioned, while the variety of diverse sources do important work that helps further shift sf studies' traditional focus on sf as a colonizer genre into welcome new territory. Congratulations!

With no further ado, on behalf of the committee, I want to announce that the winner of the 2022 SFRA Book Award is Emily Midkiff, for her *Equipping Space Cadets: Primary Science Fiction for Young Children* (UP of Mississippi)

Midkiff's book offers a comprehensively research entry point into an under-discussed and under-researched aspect of science fiction. As a field of academic inquiry, sf studies has been so preoccupied with distancing itself from the childishness so commonly attributed to the genre that the vast and hugely important topic of children's sf. Her book not only provides a compelling reinvigoration of this hugely important field of cultural production; it's also a lot of fun to read.

**Thomas D. Claeson Award for Distinguished Service, outgoing chair: Rebekah Sheldon**

The Thomas D. Claeson Award for Distinguished Service recognizes excellence in science-fiction teaching, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, and leadership in sf organizations. This year the committee recognizes Shelley Streeby for her advocacy of historically excluded and marginalized writers and her leadership in bringing together science fiction, public policy in the sciences, and social justice activism. Through her collaborative public-facing projects and in her work as a mentor and teacher, Dr. Streeby has been unstinting in

her commitment to fostering diverse communities of science fiction writers and critics toward a more sustainable and joyful future for everyone.

Shelley Streeby is Professor of Literature and Ethnic Studies at University of California San Diego and the author of three monographs and two edited collections in the field of Popular Culture Studies. From 2010-2021, she served as Director of the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Workshop where she helped to foster important new voices in science fiction and fantasy writing including Tamsyn Muir, Carmen Maria Machado, and Jordy Rosenberg, among others.

Shelley's leadership role at the Arthur C. Clarke Center for Human Imagination at UCSD has helped to transform the Center into an invaluable institution at UCSD and in the broader San Diego community. One of a very few such research centers in the country, the Clarke Center supports innovative interdisciplinary projects that use speculation to imagine more just collective futures, bringing the techniques of science fictional extrapolation to work in the sciences and the sciences to humanistic inquiry. As a board member, she has hosted numerous SF luminaries, including Ted Chiang, Jeff VanderMeer, George R.R. Martin, and Alex Rivera.

In addition to her Directorship of the Clarion, Shelley Streeby was instrumental in establishing the UC Speculative Futures Collective from 2019 through 2021, supported by co-PIs Neda Atanasoski, Christopher T. Fan, and Nalo Hopkinson. A major initiative funded by a UC Multicampus Research grant, the collective brought together activists, scholars and graduate students from across the UC-system and the state of California for a series of symposia to think together about how to confront the legacies of imperialism, racism, and colonialism as they impact sex, gender, education, and ecology through the technique of "speculation from below." Through Shelley's leadership, dozens of research projects were funded through the grant, leaving a major impact not only on intellectual life in the UC system, but throughout the region.

One such project was San Diego 2049, a conference in which engineers, scientists, SF writers and theorists worked together to produce speculative designs for San Diego's future and to "cancel dystopia," as speaker and SF writer Annalee Newitz put it in a discussion Newitz and Streeby continued at the 2019 San Diego Comic-Con.

Shelley Streeby's own work on speculative futures is strongly oriented to the past and to questions around collective memory, archival practices, and historiography, a combination she names "Histo-Futurism" from her study of the Octavia Butler archive at the Huntington Library. In a series of essays and in her current book project, Dr. Streeby considers how Octavia Butler's auto-archival scrap book projects are a kind of speculative world building and transformative time travel. In Streeby's generative reading, Butler's archival practices constellate current events into critical apparatuses for confronting the real conditions of the present and for envisioning utopias of the future. In Streeby's reading of Butler, the public library, the archive, and the scrapbook become portals to other worlds.

Through the Clarke Center, Dr. Streeby collaborated with Ayana Jamieson, the founder of the Octavia Butler Legacy Network, on 2016's Shaping Change conference, which included writers like Nisi Shawl, Walidah Imarisha, and Ted Chiang as well as scholars-activists such as Rasheeda Philips, andrienne marie brown, and Moya Bailey in the project of histo-futurist interpretation. She was also a co-organizer of the 2017 Octavia E. Butler Studies convergence. Her current book project, *Speculative Feminist Environmentalisms: Hidden Histories and Ecologies of Science Fiction World-Making* promises a transformative reading of feminist SF ecological imaginaries in the works of Ursula Le Guin, Judith Merrill, and Octavia E. Butler. This continues the project of her most recent book, *Imagining the Futures of Climate Change: World-Making Through Science Fiction and Activism* (University of California Press 2018) which Conrad Scott in *Science Fiction Studies* called "an indispensable text in working to turn the dystopian now toward more positive and inclusive means of fostering world community-building."

In addition to these projects in SF Studies, Streeby has been an important voice in working class studies and comic studies. Her first two books, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, And the Production of Popular Culture* (University of California Press in 2007) and *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, And Visual Culture* (Duke University Press in 2013) reconsider how sensation literature reflected the importance of imperialism in the popular American imaginary as well as how that same genre was also put to radical political ends by working-class, Black, and socialist writers. Her interest in anti-racist popular culture has led to collaborative editorial projects including the anthology *Empire and the Literature of Sensation: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction* from Rutgers University Press in 2007 and more recently NYU Press's **Keywords for Comic Studies**, produced with co-editors Ramzi Fawaz and Deborah Whaley.

It is our great honor to recognize the dedication and vision of Dr. Shelley Streeby. Thank you for all you have done over the years to foster radical inclusiveness in science fiction, to promote public recognition of science fiction as a powerfully utopian genre, and to labor with such creative and collaborative energy at the undervalued but absolutely crucial world-building work of administering programs, securing grants, and running conferences. I should mention that several of Shelley's mentees and colleagues helped the committee to put together a full picture of the many aspects of Shelley's work at UCSD and that collaborative spirit strikes me as entirely in keeping with her ethos of community-building and collective self-determination and movingly reflects how important she has been to so many friends and comrades. The Claeson Award Committee takes great pleasure in presenting this award to the 2023 winner, Shelley Streeby.

**Innovative Research Award, outgoing chair: Anna Kurowicka**

The committee decided to award the SFRA Innovative Research Award to Paweł Frelik's "Power Games: Towards the Rhetoric of Energy in Speculative Video Games." We thought this piece offers an insightful analysis of the way energy economy is treated, or more often ignored, in game scenarios and strategies, as well as about the motivation for this widespread ignorance in the game industry's dependence on extractive industries and non-sustainable energy use. The article

has a broad view of the field and a sure grasp of the scholarship and the theoretical issues within the field, coupled with an engaging style, which makes it useful both for the readers who are well-versed in game studies and those who are new to the field. Most of all, we anticipate that this is a piece that will generate new exciting conversations about science fiction's engagement with matters of energy.

The SFRA Innovative Research Award Honorable Mention is awarded to Nora Castle's "In Vitro Meat: Contemporary Narratives of Cultured Flesh." The piece describes how in vitro meat has been treated in recent SF in ways that are entirely germane to debates over the ethical, economic, and ecological effects of producing and consuming IVM. In Castle's reading, SF is a narrative vehicle for this sort of speculation. As such, the article is a particularly engaging example of using science fiction to illuminate contemporary issues.

**Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship, outgoing chair: Isiah Lavender III**

We are honored to present this year's Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship to Steven Shavero, DeRoy Professor of English at Wayne State University in Detroit. For many years now Steve has treated science fiction as an intrinsic element of his wide-ranging and internationally recognized work in philosophy, cultural critique, film theory, and the cognitive sciences. More recently he has focused on the non-human turn in the humanities, as an influential proponent of the new materialisms in important monographs such as *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (2014) and *Discognition* (2016). *Discognition* won the Science Fiction and Technoculture Studies Book Award in 2017; it opens by making a case for science fiction thinking, because "perhaps we will be able to imagine what we are unable to know" (8).

Steve's scholarship spans the mid-1980s to the present and it brings a whole new meaning to eclectic. His writings have influenced an array of fields, from poetics and postmodernism to multiple speculative media to the philosophies of Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari – and, of course, to science fiction studies. It is a fascinating exercise to review his expansive body of work and simultaneously to appreciate the flows and flights of wild curiosity as well as the narrative fabric that his diverse research areas comprise. One feature of his science fiction research is his innovative convergence of philosophy, critical theory, and sf across media. His writings toggle between working through philosophy by way of engaging science fictions and theorizing science fictions by engaging them through particular philosophical theories, frameworks, and tools.

For anyone who has come across Steve's invocations of Peter Watts in his writing or public talks, for instance, the elegance of his keen insights within this sf-philosophy toggling is truly awesome and inspiring. His 2015 book, *No Speed Limit: Three Essays on Accelerationism*, provides an excellent example of how his varied explorations over decades can merge into a powerful vision that emerges from time and mind spent in sf and that opens new pathways for colleagues and comrades to expand through our ongoing scholarship. *No Speed Limit* in particular played a significant role in articulating a Marxist critical approach that was not then dominant and that holds vast potential specifically in the field of sf research.



Steve's engagements with neurodiversity also run through his work. In that sense, his research has contributed vanguard work in disability studies within sf studies from before it became a more prevalent area of exploration and analysis. His keen perceptions of music videos in *The Rhythm Image* (2022), as it pertains to the cyborg image of Dawn Richard in her video "Calypso," allows us also to claim him as an Afrofuturist.

Steve is the author of 12 books. His recent *Extreme Fabulations: Science Fictions of Life* (2021) reads a diversity of science fictions in terms of what they can suggest about biological life in all its differences and vulnerabilities. And it's good news that he has just completed the ms. for a new book tentatively titled *Fluid Futures*, "my effort to say all the stuff I want to say about science fiction." In his preface, he writes that:

*Fluid Futures* considers the status of science fiction as a discourse that, in a meaningful sense, is *about* the future. Of course, the future is in principle unknowable. It is open, and not entirely determined in advance: fluid rather than fixed in stone. But the future is also not altogether arbitrary; it *follows* from the past and the present in some manner that needs to be described and unfolded. I claim that science fiction works towards just such an unfolding. It does not predict the actual future, but it offers a mimesis of *futurity*, understood as a kind of pressure, or incipience, that is already implicit within the present moment.

Steve's accomplishments as a scholar and as a public intellectual range too widely for us to even begin to address them here. We are just lucky that some of his prodigious intellectual energy has been spent thinking about science fiction.

### Award Recipient Statements

#### Student Paper Award Winner, Josie Holland

Thank you all for having me. It is an honor to be awarded the SFRA Student Paper Award for my work "Constructing Radical Queer Futures and Deconstructing Noir Fiction in The Penumbra Podcast" presented at last year's conference on Futures from the Margins. In a time when LGBTQ+ people are increasingly under threat in the U.S. and worldwide, creative work and scholarship showing that queer folks can and will exist in any kind of future and any kind of story are especially important to uplift, and I am honored to have my paper contribute to this message.

I would like to thank my mentor Kristen Bezio, for sharing my enthusiasm for critically reading queer popular culture and encouraging me to push my research beyond the page and into practice. I am also grateful to Kylie Korsnack, who introduced me to the Science Fiction Research Association and encouraged me to reach higher and higher with my academic work. I have learned so much from my peers in the past few years of attending SFRA conferences, and I look forward to continuing to learn from them in the years to come. Finally, I would like to thank

the committee members Josh Pearson, Kania Green, and Kathryn Heffner for their time and consideration.

**Mary Kay Bray Award Honorable Mention, Jeremy W. Brett**

I am very much gratified to SFRA for recognizing me with the Honorable Mention for the Mary Kay Bray Award, and generally for the good work that SFRA does to further the cause of important, accessible scholarship in science fiction. I'm grateful that you believe my little observations merit attention and honor. I would like to thank Leimar Garcia-Siino for his very helpful editing suggestions, that assured the piece would be better than when I began it. I also would like to thank (not that they're listening) the creators, cast and crew of *WandaVision* for the exciting, thought-provoking, and emotionally resonant series they put together, and special geeky thanks to the amazing Elizabeth Olsen for her beautiful performance as Wanda Maximoff.

**Mary Kay Bray Award Winner, Dennis Wise**

Receiving the Mary Kay Bray Award comes as a huge surprise to me, not to mention a great honor. Normally when one writes a review, you do it as service to the field. They're a nice break from teaching and heavier types of academic writing, and for myself, at least, I often pick subjects on which I have only passing familiarity. Reviews are therefore good excuses for me to dive into little research tangents, and that's exactly what happened with Amy Binns's biography of John Wyndham. Although I had heard of *Day of the Triffids* and "cozy catastrophes" before, and dimly remembered watching the BBC adaptation of *Chocky* when I was a small child during the mid-1980s, I actually knew next to nothing about Wyndham himself or his work. So I quickly ordered every novel he'd ever written, and fell in love almost immediately. Nothing could have been better, I thought, than *The Midwich Cuckoos* ... but then I read *The Chrysalids*. After that, Binns's excellent biography was simply icing on the cake, and writing the review itself an added bonus.

So, please let me thank the SFRA Executive Committee and everyone who reads for these awards. Having served on awards committees myself, I know the time commitment they entail. Likewise, I'd like to thank Dominick Grace and his excellent work as reviews editor, and also of course Amy Binns, whose biography I whole-heartedly recommend. Thank you all, and your efforts are much appreciated.

**SFRA Book Award Honorable Mention, Anne Stewart**

What a tremendously exciting honor! I am thrilled to have *Angry Planet: Decolonial Fiction and the American Third World* recognized by the SFRA. I know it's not the most sci-fi-oriented project in some ways, but in others it is a project absolutely committed to speculation and futurism, and I am deeply indebted to the work and imaginations of SFRA theorists in developing the reading practice in this project, which follows the angry earth as a conduit to survivable futures.



**Book Award, Emily Midkiff**

I would like to thank the SFRA and the book award committee for this honor. This book was a long time in the making, as any scholar who works with IRBs and large datasets knows well, and recognition like this makes those years of labor worthwhile.

I cannot express how much I appreciate this confirmation that childhood is a worthwhile area of study for science fiction scholarship. There was a time when both science fiction studies and children's literature studies were both struggling for legitimacy and combining them seemed like it would only prevent either one from being taken seriously. Similarly, I am relieved at this indication that science fiction scholars are willing to embrace empirical methodology intruding into our field. Scientific methods are not a replacement for humanities-based science fiction studies, but I hope this award demonstrates that mixed methods have a lot to offer us—especially when dealing with topics that come with a lot of cultural bias and baggage, like the concept of childhood. Thank you all for taking me seriously while I played in the children's section, and I hope that some of you will consider playing with me in all the data that our field has to offer.

**Clareson Winner, Shelley S. Streeby**

Thank you, Science Fiction Research Association and Executive Committee, for this honor. It is a lovely surprise to receive this year's Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service. I wish I could be there with you all, but my beloved father, James Alan Streeby, passed away this summer, and I have been busy taking charge of his affairs and spending time with my family in Iowa. As I write my thanks to you, I am remembering how Dad would often join me in the summers when I was directing the Clarion workshop. He would fly out and stay with me for a while in San Diego and often ended up coming along on the weekly car rides to Mysterious Galaxy for instructor readings. He was amazed at what a world-making project the Clarion workshop is, and how it fosters communities of care and love beyond the bio-family. As a marathon runner, track coach, and mentor to dozens of young women and men, Dad always modeled that for me. That is also one of the things I love most about science fiction: how it creates communities of care of various sorts that have lasting impact. It was a joy to be a part of Clarion communities for a big chunk of my life, more than twelve years. It reoriented my scholarship and how I connect my writing and teaching to the world. It was fun beyond measure. This award means a lot to me. Thanks again.

**Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship Winner, Steven Shaviro**

I would like to thank the Science Fiction Research Association for this award. I have published three volumes of science fiction scholarship and criticism to date, with a fourth book coming out in 2024. It is lovely to have my work in this field recognized.

When I was 9 years old, in 1963, my Uncle Morris, who was a French professor but also a science fiction fan, gave me *Triplanetary* by E. E. 'Doc' Smith to read. I loved it, and I became infatuated with science fiction, an infatuation that still exists for me today, six decades later.

Doc Smith might well seem more than a bit retro, sixty years after I first read him. Admittedly, his books are filled with the limitations and prejudices of mainstream white American culture at the time when he was writing, in the 1930s and 1940s. But the splashy excitements of space opera are still very much with us today, in books by writers like Valerid Valdes, Becky Chambers, Martha Wells, and many others. Such contemporary writers are much more politically savvy and sensitive, much more open to extreme possibilities, and much more multicultural, than Doc Smith ever was; but their books still contain much of the same charm, and many of the same thrills.

As I got older, I increasingly discovered how science fiction was often quite intellectually challenging, as well as being fun. I owe a great deal of my expanded understanding of the richness of sf to my comrades in graduate school in the late 1970s, Carl Freedman and John Rieder, both of whom are previous winners of the award that I am receiving today. Together we explored the writings of Philip K. Dick, Ursula Le Guin, and many other writers whose legacies remain vital today.

When I lived in Seattle from 1984 to 2004, I got to know a number of people from the science fiction community there; not scholars like myself, but brilliant sf writers such as Eileen Gunn and Nisi Shawl. I remain grateful for all I learned from them about science fiction from the perspective of its creators.

Above all, I have been an avid reader of science fiction over the past six decades. This is something that I will continue to do as long as I am able. My official academic specialty is film and media studies. Nonetheless, I value written science fiction in particular. I have read science fiction novels and stories quite extensively; but I am happy to know that there is still quite a lot of written sf that I haven't yet gotten to, with more being produced every year. I am happy about how our horizons as science fiction fans have been broadened in recent years, with the increasing prominence and visibility of sf being written by women, by people of color, and by others who do not fit into the white-male-christian-heterosexual norm. I am also grateful that much more science fiction written in languages other than English has been translated, and made available to Anglophone readers such as myself, than ever before. Science fiction, in general, looks to the future; it extrapolates, speculates, and fabulates well beyond the limits of our oppressive and dangerous present moment. I am happy that, even though I do not write science fiction myself, I can contribute to its dissemination, and to our ability to enjoy it, to understand it, and to learn from it.