

SFRA Awards Presented at the 2026 “Into the Slipstream: Watering Futures” Conference at Michigan State University



Student Paper Award

Committee Chair: Yilun Fan

We are delighted to present this year's Student Paper Award to Franklin Mitchell for “I Must Put Things in My Mouth”: Loving Trans Children in Octavia Butler’s Adulthood Rites”.

How might we better understand and care for trans children? And in what ways can science fiction intervene in and illuminate these urgent questions? This paper addresses these concerns through a nuanced and well-developed reading of Butler’s novel, engaging closely with its themes of temporality, autonomy, and care. Bringing together textual analysis and theoretical insight, it foregrounds the concept of chrononormativity and its implications for trans childhood, demonstrating how science fiction can open up alternative frameworks for thinking about these questions.

This paper makes a strong contribution to science fiction studies while also speaking to broader concerns reflected in last year’s SFRA theme. It is both timely and deeply considered. Our hearty congratulations to Franklin Mitchell for this excellent work.

We would also like to recognize Shaoni C. White with an honorable mention for her paper examining the eighteenth-century it-narrative and its significance for contemporary science fiction studies. Her work demonstrates how questions of gender fluidity, material identity, and subject formation were already being explored within early modern literary forms shaped by colonial and capitalist circulation. By tracing these historical foundations, the paper offers an original analysis that thoughtfully situates itself within current scholarly conversations on speculative fiction and political economy.

Franklin Mitchell's response: I am deeply grateful to accept this award from such an important organization as SFRA, but more importantly I feel humbled to be honored by such a wonderfully warm and thoughtful community of scholars. I often joke that my job amounts to reading books about aliens and thinking about them so hard that I get headaches, but occasions like the annual SFRA conference are a stark reminder of how important the work we do really is. Gathering with all of the attendees and presenters makes it crystal clear how worth it all of those headaches are. I cannot express how proud I am to be associated with an organization like SFRA that continues to affirm the existence and importance of trans lives now and in the future. I want to thank everyone who was involved in last year’s conference. In a time when transgender people are experiencing organized violence and calls for social death that rise to the level of genocide, every planner, presenter, and attendee coming together to boldly and unequivocally declare that

“Trans People are (in) the Future” not only usefully intervenes against that violence, but also fills me with a profound sense of hope as a trans person myself. Thank you all very much.

Lastly, I want to specifically thank Dr. Benjamin Robertson. Ben not only encouraged me to submit an abstract for last year’s conference, he also urged me to submit my paper for this award. I am lucky to have a mentor like Ben who is so deeply dedicated to demystifying the world of academia and insisting on seeing the value of my work, even when I don’t. Thank you so much Ben, and thank you again to SFRA and the student paper award committee.

Mary Kay Bray Award

Committee Chair: Dennis Wise

The year 2025 was exceptionally strong in reviews for the *SFRA Review*, but one that stood out especially was Paromita Sarkar's review of *The Blaft Book of Anti-Caste SF*, edited by R.T. Samuel, Rakesh Khanna, and Rashmi Ruth Devadasan, and which appeared in issue 3. A good review must always describe the item under discussion, but a stellar review does more. It must also, without being obvious about it, display the reviewer's thorough familiarity with the subject at hand. It must situate the reviewed item into larger conversations possibly unknown to the general reader. Sarkar does that and more with *The Blaft Book of Anti-Caste SF*, contextualizing "digital India" for the lay reader as well displaying her familiarity with the work of Blaft Publications. At the same time, from the opening paragraph to Sarkar's conclusion, her writing style sparkles with liveliness and clarity. For all these reasons, the Mary Kay Bray Committee is proud to select Paromita Sarkar as the 2025 award recipient.

Paromita Sarkar's response: I am extremely grateful to the SFRA committee for this honor. It truly feels like a full circle moment to have encountered Professor Bray's writings during my MA thesis on Samuel R. Delany and now, to receive an award bearing her name on my very first review publication. In countless conversations with my peers and my PhD Advisor, Dr. Sami Ahmad Khan, I was quite hesitant about submitting this review to SFRA given the novelty of this research. Dr. Khan and my peers, it turns out, were right to push me. I am grateful they did. Anticaste SF has had a growing presence in South Asia and continues to hold potential for the field at large, making this acknowledgment and recognition of the review special and quite validating. Thank you so much.

SFRA Book Award

Committee Chair: Sean Guynes

The SFRA Book Award is given to the author of the best first scholarly monograph in SF studies published in each calendar year. It's judged by a committee panel of sf scholars

representing a range of research specialties and currently includes Karen Hellekson, Amy Butt, and Sean Guynes (chair).

In our approach to the SFRA Book Award, we read and consider monographs against the idea that the winner would ideally be considered future required reading for scholars in the field. Our selection should also keep in mind that some of the best sf scholarship moves beyond the field and offers insights for broader critical inquiry.

Looking back at the relevant books published in the field during 2025, the committee read and considered twelve monographs from six publishers. Each book was the author's first book-length work in sf studies. There were, of course, many critically exciting and theoretically energizing books on our nominee list that collectively testify to the vibrancy of sf scholarship today.

The winner of the 2026 SFRA Book Award is Tavia Nyong'o's *Black Apocalypse: Afrofuturism at the End of the World* published by the University of California Press as part of the American Studies Now: Critical Histories of the Present series. The book series is dedicated to scholarship that explores "historical cultures of power and protest" and highlights "the political importance of cultural practices." Tavia Nyong'o is William Lampson Professor of American Studies at Yale University and his theoretically rich scholarship focuses on Black queer performance and speculative aesthetics. His first two books were *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) and *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York University Press, 2018).

Nyong'o's *Black Apocalypse* extends his work in Black queer studies and speculative aesthetics by turning to the increasingly prominent role of Afrofuturism as a cultural practice of resistance, a tool for reading the polycrisis of the present. At the center of *Black Apocalypse* is the often noted tension between, on the one hand, the historical concerns of Afropessimism and, on the other, the speculative imaginaries of Afrofuturism—two projects that address the fundamental question of anti-Blackness in American and global histories, literatures, and cultures. Nyong'o handles the tension between these two approaches to anti-Blackness by breathing new life into Suvin's "cognitive estrangement," suggesting a kind of "Black counter-speculation" whereby the reality that cognitive estrangement extrapolates from is the reality of anti-Blackness. In his critical reading of Black queer theory, Afrofuturist cyberpunk, episodes of *Black Mirror*, and work by Octavia Butler, Nyong'o shows how Afropessimism is itself an agent of Afrofuturism and they both, together, offer a necessary basis for countering, dismantling, and reimagining an anti-Black world.

There's no doubt among the committee members that Nyong'o's *Black Apocalypse* is required reading for the field. It's a short, snappy, theoretically rich, and necessary challenge to the siloing of sf studies at a time when the work of speculation has never been more important.

Thomas D. Claeson Award for Distinguished Service

Committee Chair: Stina Attebery

The Thomas D. Claeson 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 committee, Keren Omry, Alison Sperling, and myself, are delighted to be able to present the award to Patrick Sharp. Patrick was a standout in all of the categories the Claeson Award celebrates. Here are only some of the accomplishments we listed when deciding on a winner:

Patrick is an incredibly accomplished scholar and editor in our field. He has published two monographs (most recently *Darwinian Feminism* and *Early Science Fiction*), and co-edited three collections (often working with people in this room). He's the Founding Book Series Co-Editor of *New Directions in Science Fiction*, and an Editorial Advisory Board Member for *Science Fiction Studies*, *Extrapolation*, and *Science Fiction Film and Television*. He's written 15 articles and book chapters, and numerous reviews for *SFRA Review*, *Extrapolation*, the *LA Review of Books*, and other publications.

Patrick's teaching and mentorship are also extraordinary contributions to our field. He developed the curriculum for the science fiction minor at Cal State LA. He's also written *A Brief and Practical Guide for Writing Critical Analysis Papers in Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Contexts*—a book that is genuinely both brief and practical, and that I regularly use in my own teaching. One of his colleagues at Cal State LA has recently spearheaded a program teaching cultural studies to inmates in the California prison system, so he now divides his teaching time between the college and the prison, teaching science fiction stories to both underserved populations. I had the opportunity to teach part time for Patrick's department while I was a grad student, which was the first chance I had to develop a course that wasn't composition, and Patrick was a wonderful resource for figuring out how to structure a class, although his influence has left me with the lingering feeling that I really should start any syllabus with Darwin.

Since 2013, he's been the Director for Eagle-Con, a convention that connects the diverse student body at Cal State LA with Hollywood industry folks—students get the opportunity to both hear panels from industry professionals working in costuming, special effects, art direction, and other areas, and to present their own academic work. And I believe Patrick has fundraised over \$15,000 annual support from the Art Director's Guild (and other Hollywood guilds) for the event. And if that wasn't enough work, he also co-organizes the new Speculative Fiction Across Media conference that meets annually in LA.

Patrick Sharp's response: I want to thank the SFRA and the members of the Thomas D. Claeson Award committee for this amazing honor. My first science fiction conference was a joint SFRA/Eaton event in 1997 that was held on board the Queen Mary in Long Beach. It was interesting. It was weird. And I loved it. Since then, I have attended whenever possible. For the past twenty-five years I have been teaching in East LA, bringing the many things I learn from

my SFRA colleagues to my teaching, research, and editing roles here. I was fortunate to serve for the last fourteen years as the faculty director of EagleCon, a student-focused conference devoted to diversity in speculative genres across media on the Cal State LA campus. Many of my SFRA colleagues have come to EagleCon and presented their work to our campus community. More recently, I have worked with some of my SFRA colleagues on the Speculative Fiction Across Media conference, which looks to expand the engagement between SF scholars and the entertainment industry. I have been elated to have so many of my SFRA colleagues – and scholars from across a number of disciplines – come out to join us in LA for these conversations.

What many of you may not know is that I have also been centrally involved in the Prison Graduation Initiative for the past four years, and teach regularly in the Liberal Studies bachelor's degree programs at the men's and women's prisons in Chino, California (and starting next year, in San Quentin). Teaching the work of my SFRA colleagues to incarcerated students has only reinforced my belief in the transformative potential of the arts and humanities, and the power of science fiction to change people's perspectives on the past, present, and future. We are living right now in what Josh Pearson calls the stupidest possible timeline, and the attacks we are facing on many fronts can be truly disturbing and disheartening. I am grateful to be part of a community that provides so much intelligence, clarity, and support in the face of such abject stupidity.

I want to thank my wife Sharon – who has also been a part of many SFRA conferences – for all of her support throughout my career. I also want to thank my many friends and colleagues in this organization for your inspiration and comradery. Reading through the list of previous Clareson awardees is truly humbling: it has so many people I admired when I first came into the field, and also so many great colleagues, collaborators, and friends I have come to know and respect over the past three decades. I am thankful to be counted among them.

Innovative Research Award

Committee Chair: Sümeyra Buran

I am Sümeyra Buran, chair of the SFRA Innovative Research Awards committee. Regrettably, due to unforeseen family and health emergencies, neither my fellow committee members nor I are able to attend this year's conference. We are deeply grateful to Stina for stepping in to read this statement on our behalf.

I want to thank my fellow committee members, Ciarán Kavanagh and Agnieszka Kotwasińska, for their dedicated work in reading, evaluating, and judging the many excellent essays nominated for this award. Thanks also to everyone who nominated an essay; it is your engagement that ensures this award remains a vital recognition of excellence in our field. This year, we were particularly impressed by the caliber of submissions, which led us to not only select a winner but also to recognize three exceptional works with Honorable Mentions.

Our choice for the 2025 Innovative Research Award is Regina Wang's "Growth, Resource,

Population: The GRP Triangle in Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction by Female Writers.”

As the chair of this committee, I found Wang’s work to be a standout example of what this award represents: true innovation in scholarship. Wang’s article is a timely and profound intervention in contemporary Chinese SF scholarship. As the committee highlighted in our review, Wang brings into sharp focus “the often-overlooked Chinese female SF writers who, shaped by China’s demographic policies at socio-economic and psycho-physiological levels, foreground demographic concerns as a central thematic axis of their narratives” (Wang 324). Also, what makes this paper so compelling is how it bridges the gap between sociological data and literary imagination. Wang doesn’t just analyze fiction; she uses it to critique the very structures of our global reality. In my view, her articulation of the ‘GRP Triangle’ serves as a vital intervention, reminding us that science fiction is not just about ‘what if’ but a profound reflection on the material constraints of our world.

This perspective was shared by my colleagues. Agnieszka emphasized the critical acumen with which Wang foregrounds the “embodied, material aspects of literary production,” showing how the lived experiences of female writers who came of age during China’s one-child policy are “crucial for understanding their narratives.” On the methodological side, Ciarán noted that Wang’s combination of “distant reading, industry data, interviews, and gendered environmental critique” is not only contextually rich but “methodologically fresh and intellectually generative.” He observed that the GRP triangle offers SF scholars a new way to consider futures projected not just by literature but by states ascribing to a belief in “permanent, or simply necessary, economic growth.” As Wang herself argues, these narratives “challenge the simplistic masculine pursuit of unlimited growth,” offering instead a nuanced, gendered critique of our current trajectory. In Wang’s own words, this pattern serves as a tool to examine the limits of a “simplistic masculine pursuit of unlimited growth.”

Before I present the main award, the committee also wishes to recognize three scholars with Honorable Mentions for pushing SF scholarship in exciting new directions:

- Kiana T. Murphy, for productively bringing Black girlhood studies into dialogue with SF: “Bending Black girlhood Spacetime travel and the gendered calculus of anti-Blackness in See You Yesterday.”
- Christina Lord, for her vital work in recovering the frequently overlooked influence of Francophone comics on mainstream SF: “Valérien et Laureline and Twentieth-Century Countercultural Shifts.”
- Ali Riza Taskale, for his fruitful merger of SF studies, economics, and urban theory: “Subverting speculative urbanism: Cityscape in New York 2140.”

It is my great honor, as the Chair of this committee, to award Regina Wang the SFRA’s Innovative Research Award for 2025.

Regina Kanyu Wang's response: It is my great honor to receive the SFRA Innovative Research Award this year for my paper "Growth, Resource, Population: The GRP Triangle in Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction by Female Writers".

I want to thank the award committee and the SFRA executive committee for this incredible honor, and thank the hosts for organizing the conference this year, though I cannot be there in person. I was among the organizing team back in 2022 when the SFRA conference was held in Norway. Believe me, the behind-the-scenes work is immense, so the committee and hosts deserve a round of applause.

Looking at the list of past winners, I realize how many of them have actually inspired my own research. I was born in 1990, the same year the award was established. And the very first winner of this award (when it was still named the Pioneer Award) happens to be Veronica Hollinger, the editor of *Science Fiction Studies*, who worked with me on this paper. My deepest thanks to Veronica, who offered tremendous help with revising and polishing this paper before it was published. My thanks also go to the reviewer (whom I now know is Cara Healey) for all her suggestions, and to Sherryl Vint, who helped during the journal publication process. They are all women scholars whom I deeply admire, and I could not be more delighted to receive this award for a paper on female writers, made possible with their help.

I also want to thank all my CoFutures crew, without whom none of this research would have been possible. Bodhi, Sami, Jomy, Merve, Bergsveinn, Marta, Patrick, Joel, and Ingri, thanks for all the discussions of ideas, for reading through my drafts, and for making the triangle chart look better. I feel so lucky and proud to be part of this team, and to have had you by my side throughout my PhD years.

This paper is part of my article-based PhD thesis, so I want to thank the University of Oslo and the ERC as well for supporting my research, and thank all the writers, editors, researchers, and industry practitioners whom I have interviewed for the PhD project. As you can see, interviews and industry data play a big role in this paper.

I myself am the only child of the family, just like many of the writers I write about in this paper. I want to dedicate this award to my mom, who just passed away last month on Mother's Day. She endured so much in bringing me into this world and raising me, and she always supported me in pursuing my dreams. She was, and always will be, the best mother in the world.

If I'm not mistaken, I am the third person from Asia and the first person from China to win this award. Next year, the SFRA conference will come to Asia for the first time in history. I hope to see many of you in Seoul, and I do hope that the conference can travel more in the future.

As someone who has moved across many disciplines, from business administration to creative writing, and from fan to industry practitioner, I really appreciate that SFRA is inclusive enough to accept my research that does not fall into any traditional disciplines. As someone who writes SF stories, works in the SF industry, does SF research, and has stayed in SF fandom for the majority

of my life, I sincerely believe that SF has the power to make our world a better place. And it is the collective efforts of everyone in this community that bring this vision to life. Thank you all, and to our shared CoFutures!

SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship

Committee Chair: Steven Shaviro

Award Winner: Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.'s response: Stina's e-mail to me with the news of this award came as a wonderful surprise. Not only for the honor of joining so many powerful and original predecessors that have been chosen by the SFRA. For me personally, it represents a kind of closure for a career as an editor and scholar that I didn't have much distance from while it was happening. Since my retirement from teaching in 2020, and as co-editor at Science Fiction Studies in 2025, I have unmoored my boat and drifted off to other shores. In my post-professional rustication, my main connections with sf have been editing my old correspondence with Stanislaw Lem, keeping abreast of the Nerd Reich, and watching daily doses of Angine de Poitrine videos. But viewed from a greater distance, I've never been so immersed in sf – the actually existing kind; as many of us speculated back in the day, social reality and sf have interfused materially to a degree that even we, who used that interfusion as a guiding imaginative trope, did not imagine.

The honor you are bestowing is also important to me because the course of my career in sf research was completely unforeseen, and even accidental. I came of age in an unlikely environment for it. I grew up thoroughly bicultural. My parents were not just Hungarian refugees from Communism; they were almost religiously devoted to the high culture of pre-World War II Europe. By day, I attended Virginia public schools, listened to rock and roll that my parents forbade, played sports that my parents didn't understand, and watched American TV, which my parents restricted mercilessly. At night, when they came home from work, they home-schooled my sister and me in Hungarian, using my father's old textbooks; in many ways, we endured a more sophisticated education in our living room than in our American schools. In the house, we were forbidden to speak English, we were taught to revere classical literature and art, and to disdain popular culture altogether.

By the time I got to college, I was more European than American. I studied the classical European literature and philosophy that I was trained to value as the highest forms of culture. What I emphatically was not trained to value was technology, the supposed enemy of idealist aspiration. I entered college basically as a technoscientific illiterate. SF held little interest for me; national and ethnic literatures were my portals to the exotic. When I got to grad school in 1972, it was in a Comp. Lit. program of a distinctively conservative European sort.

Then it all changed. In the bowels of the Princeton library's reading room, I came across an early volume of *Science Fiction Studies*. Bolts of lightning. The first bolt was seeing Fredric Jameson

as a contributor. At the time, Jameson was one of my idols, and here he was, implicitly giving his imprimatur to the genre. Then things picked up speed. In the next few years, through the journal I learned the theoretical underpinnings of the SFS founders – the ideas of Darko Suvin, Peter Fitting, Marc Angenot, Joanna Russ, the New Left and feminist models that SFS never abandoned. And I was also introduced to the writers that shaped my understanding of the heights sf could aspire to reach – Philip K. Dick, Ursula Le Guin, Russ, Ian Watson, Samuel Delany, and their like – the founders, in my view, of critical sf.

And most of all, Stanislaw Lem. Lem, whom I knew nothing about before I read his essays in SFS and Suvin's commentaries, was my gateway drug. A writer of imaginative genius equal to Borges and Calvino, a Central European to boot, familiar with the history and philosophy of science, and respected throughout Europe as Nobel material. I picked up two of his axioms early as guideposts for my own thinking. First, that sf is the philosophical literature of the technological age – even though, as he put it, its potential was hopelessly squandered by commercial pulp. The other: that every history from now on must include a futurology – there can be no valid historical understanding without including histories, philosophies, and models of the future.

My first attempts to make myself known to the editors of *SFS* came with translations from Hungarian versions of some of Lem's essays that had not yet been rendered in English. My advantage through much of my career was that so much of Lem's work was unavailable in English, while most of it had appeared in the languages of the so-called "fraternal nations" of the Soviet bloc. It was also a fortunate time for the internationalist Suvinian direction of *SFS*, the period of détente, when many important works of Soviet sf – that great body of sometimes mystical, sometimes discreetly critical sf – were made available in English.

I was invited to be a consulting editor during the journal's Montreal years – and basically went to grad school a second time, this time in sf studies. Needless to say, there were no university positions in the genre, and I took a job teaching World Literature and critical theory at DePauw. And then it all changed again.

When *SFS* returned to Indiana under Dale Mullen's head editorship, Dale chose a new editorial board including Art Evans, Veronica Hollinger and myself, soon to be joined by Carol McGuirk, Rob Latham, and Joan Gordon. What evolved was not so much a braintrust, as the most efficient and collegial anarchist collective I have experienced. Almost all functions were equally distributed, mutual aid was freely given. We taught each other – humanities scholars all – about editing, about technoscience, about politics, and about the evolving genre. The internationalist focus that had been established by Suvin and Marc Angenot was massively reinforced. It looked like the urbane New Left, liberationist identity of the journal was assured.

Up to that point, my bailiwick, such as it was, was mainly Central European and Soviet sf. Then cyberpunk happened, like a bullet through a windshield. Cyberpunk appeared to synthesize vanguard sf, new social understanding, and technoculture that changed the landscape of sf scholarship. The writing was often artistically ambitious, we were young enough to appreciate its

visions of culture, and most of all, c-punk seemed to open up new ways of thinking theoretically about both sf and the culture at large. We published and wrote some strong critiques of the new direction, but we—especially I – had a lot to learn. My first frame-breaking project as an editor was a special issue in 1991 on what we called “SF and Postmodernism.” It included contributions by J.G. Ballard, Katherine Hayles, Scott Bukatman, Roger Luckhurst, and others – and an essay by myself on sf ideas in the work of Jean Baudrillard and Donna Haraway, where I tried to identify ways in which some of the most sophisticated contemporary social theorists were beginning to use sf not only to illustrate ideas, but as models for designing visionary theory in a world saturated by digital technologies. Here were Lem’s axioms in practice: sf as philosophy, history as futurology.

From that point on, the journal’s whole project seemed to coalesce around that conjunction of critical theory, the analysis of the ever-deeper penetration of digital technologies into social life, and cyberpunk’s ambivalent concept of contemporary reality as inconceivable except as sf. None of us believed we had abandoned the journal’s origins – but now we had new critical tools and concepts, in tandem with new forms of sf, influenced by digital technoculture. Sherryl Vint and Lisa Swanstrom, who were especially informed about that technoculture, joined us to help shape that direction. For me personally, still retaining an old-school sensibility, it led to an expansion of the transnational historical perspective. I submerged myself in sf’s role in colonialism and imperialism, and worked especially to emphasize non-European traditions and connections of the genre. That led to, among other projects, the special issue on Japanese sf that eventually became the critical anthology, *Robot Ghost and Wired Dreams: Japanese science fiction from Origins to Anime*.

In the midst of all this, my traditionalist, humanist side became anxious that the tsunami of new technologies and theories would sweep away the older perspectives that I loved, and whose language was, essentially, my scholarly mother-tongue. For the first seven, magical years of the 2000s, I worked on my first book, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, which Peter Nicholls in the Encyclopedia of SF accurately calls an “anatomy of the SF megatext.” My education in Comp Lit revered especially the great male, Anglo-European historical synthesizers – Erich Auerbach, Mikhail Bakhtin, Georg Lukacs, and most of all, Northrop Frye. I hoped in 7 Beauties to formulate ideas that would help the inclusion of sf into the great literary culture of the world – expanded into our age. In other essays, which I later included in my recent *Mutopia*, I proposed ideas that would allow folks to see how much science-fictional thinking penetrates not only technoculture, but the physical and social sciences too, and – following Lem’s axioms – even philosophy and religion.

In the Oxford Dictionary’s special book on sf neologisms, *Brave New Words*, published in 2007, the editor attributes one of the first uses of the term “science fictionality” to me, which I had defined as a way of perceiving and conceiving reality as if it were a work of sf. (Fwiw, the word was actually first used in print by my friend David Pringle in the UK.) Science fictionality can be active, too, as when sf provides explicit models for how reality should be shaped. In other words, “science fictionalization,” the materialization of fictive science-fictional ideas.

We now inhabit such a world, and thinkers such as Steven Shaviro and Seo-Young Chu, among others, have articulated how sf has been the main vehicle for making it visible. It's a world that poses distinctive challenges for the generations of artists, historians, and critics that are succeeding mine. We live in a world in which sf is no longer treated as an art or an industry, but a grounding discourse, a source of blueprints for quasi-utopian material projects, core structures of business prospectuses, material prophecies inspiring investment strategies, economies, and political projects. I won't dwell on things you know too well, like the notable adoption of visions from sf like Elon Musk's Neuralink and Mars fantasies, Thiel's Palantir and materialized Antichrist, technofascist dreams of immortality, the visions of plutocratic thinners and world devourers evoking Philip Dick's villains, and the institution of new forms of plantation slavery straight out of Octavia Butler's Parables. Blueprints drawn from reading sf with what Charlie Stross calls "irony bypass." Cohorts from now on will have to accommodate sf as an actually existing sf, political realities based on its fictions.

But there's another important challenge. My focus throughout my career was first on sf as a kind of art. I like to think of myself as a literary historian in an old-school tradition. When I dealt with sf's political and social history, I was dealing with the power of an art. Surprisingly, my fields of literary history and theory have not devoted much effective attention to what fiction actually is, its ontology, its specific relationship to the real that it always levitates over. In this time, when the fate of the humanistic and scholarly institutions in general is in crisis, when matters of social justice on a worldwide scale urgently impinge on us, scholars of sf have to understand and explain how sf can lead both to violent distortions of thought, but also to freedom, where the great perspectives of art – irony, play, thought experiment – assert their autonomy from the language of real despots.

And on that note, allow me to suggest a sneaky hope. As idiotic, reactionary vandals labor to dismantle the humanities in our schools, sf may be the Trojan Horse that can defeat them. SF can be presented as an auxiliary vehicle for critical and humanistic thought in mercenary curriculums. Since sf prefers parable, indirection, and ironic vision to direct ideologizing, many of the concepts being banned by our contemporary barbarians can survive and prosper under the radar. Many folks have thought we could develop whole curriculums out of sf. Never before has that thought been more relevant.

Thank you again for honoring me with this award, but as you can see, I really should share it with the many brilliant colleagues I have had the privilege to work with along the way. A special shout out is due to the new editors of *SFS*, who will carry the project in this challenging new age, and especially to Sherryl Vint, who almost single-handedly saved the journal and its project, continuing the work of her predecessors, Dale Mullen and Art Evans, in piloting the ship to shore in troubled waters.