

SFRA Book Award 2019



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, the inaugural winner of the award, is Xiao Liu of McGill University for her book *Information Fantasies: Precarious Mediation in Postsocialist China* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

Committee Statement

Keren Omry (chair), Paweł Frelik, Graham Murphy, Ida Yoshinaga

IT has been a particular honor and a unique challenge judging the inaugural 2019 SFRA Book Award for the best first scholarly monograph in SF. On behalf of the award committee, I am delighted to announce that Xiao Liu's *Information Fantasies: Precarious Mediation in Postsocialist China* (University of Minnesota Press) has been unanimously selected as this year's winner.

Information Fantasies locates the origins of contemporary China's pervasive information economy and digital media in more than the technology itself. Instead, Liu maps out a history of techno-cultural imaginations and practices that develop alongside postsocialism. To do this, she recovers a stunning array of long forgotten, neglected, and/or underexamined science fiction, films, theories, and cultural practices, and brings them to the fore.

While science fiction is only one of several fields to which the book contributes—Liu delves into the emergence of new media, she combines media, politics, philosophy, and textual production as her subject matter, and she offers insights into a much larger socio-historical context—*Information Fantasies* is remarkable in its relevance to science fiction scholarship. Adding nuance and sophistication to the growing body of work in Chinese SF, the book places science fiction at the center of a rhizomatic system of ideas, technologies, and politics.

Aside from solid scholarship and writing, Liu's pathbreaking work integrates the SF subject matter into a theoretically challenging framing of an area and an era that is largely unknown to Western readers and academics. *Information Fantasies* effectively expands the boundaries of what we are increasingly recognizing as the

science fictionality of our world.

I'd like to take this opportunity to send warm thanks to my fellows on the committee, Pawel Frelik, Graham Murphy, and Ida Yoshinaga, whose hard work, commitment, and sense of humor, are hard to overstate.

Awardee Statement

Xiao Liu

McGill University / Canada

I'D like to express my deep appreciation to the SFRA book award committee for such a great honor. At a time of unpredictability, nothing stands as a more powerful narrative than science fiction in envisioning possibilities, and offering deep insights on human aspirations and dreams, and ultimately, what makes us human when life *per se* can no longer be separated from the technical.

I am fortunate to be continuously inspired by the imaginations and the empathy towards human life of the global SF community, whose unfading curiosity towards and genuine respect for unknown others foster a culture of true diversity and open great possibilities for life that is often curtailed and constrained by ignorance and bigotry. I am also grateful to generations of Chinese science fiction writers, as well as scholars, particularly translators, who always stand at the frontier of communicating across borders, and with whose efforts Chinese science fiction has become accessible to global audiences.

Finally, with media and technology having been turned into the machine of disinformation and manipulation, science fiction is more “real” than ever in revealing the powers of control, and the lines of flight.