

Mary Kay Bray Award 2019



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

This year's awardees are Erin Horáková and Rich Horton for their essays "Treconomics" and "Gene Wolfe," respectively, both from issue #327.

Committee Statement

Katherine Bishop (chair), Agnieszka Kotwasińska, Jessica FitzPatrick

THE Mary Kay Bray Award is given to any interview, essay, or extended review published in the *SFRA Review* in 2019. We chose from fiction, non-fiction, and media reviews as well as Feature pieces, roundtable submissions, and SF Retrospectives. Given the increasingly wide range of items featured in the *Review*, we agreed that awarding just one piece would be unfair. Therefore, we chose two winners of merit, *ex æquo*, in alphabetical order:

Erin Horáková, "Treconomics," *SFRA Review*, no. 327, pp. 69-71.

Horáková employs an engaging and distinct voice as well as very clear organization in this lovely-in-execution negative review. She is respectful, but not overindulgent of, the reviewed text. Attending to matters of race, global economics, and cultural production while drawing upon her wide-ranging acumen to comment upon the matter at hand, Horáková fearlessly takes the author of *Treconomics* to task with humor and sensitivity in a review that feels refreshingly honest, bold, bright, and necessary.

Rich Horton, "Gene Wolfe," *SFRA Review*, no. 328, pp. 5-7.

The best thing an obituary can do is to bring a glimmer of the deceased back into the world. Horton does this. He celebrates Gene Wolfe's life without venerating him, deftly reminding the audience of Wolfe's humor, brilliance, and humanity. Along the way, he adds colorful details such as Wolfe's part in making Pringles and an anecdote about finding the author paused in humble gratitude in front of his book on a shelf

in a mall bookstore.

Thank you to all who contributed to the *SFRA Review* over the year! Your scholarship is *greatly* appreciated.

Awardee Statements

Erin Horáková

University of Glasgow / Scotland

THANK you to Sean Guynes for telling me to write the review for which I'm being recognized rather than simply stew in annoyance on a locked Twitter account for an improbable amount of time, like a boeuf bourguignon of regret. Thanks also to the award committee and to SFRA.

Rich Horton

Science Fiction Critic / USA

I cannot readily express the surprise and joy I felt to learn that I had been awarded the 2020 Mary Kay Bray Award. I am humbled to share this award with Erin Horáková, whose essay “Treknomics” is something I can only admire. I wish I could be standing in front of all of you to say this—and I am sure that, leaving aside any consideration of the value of what I might say, all my readers wish that it had been possible for any of us to go to conventions in July!

Finally, on rereading my piece on Gene Wolfe, I realize that the man I really must thank is Gene himself. I feel this way any time someone thanks me for a review of their work—all thanks are due to the writer who inspired me to write a nice review. And doubly, triply, infinitely are thanks due to Gene Wolfe. His writing inspired me to believe that there was value in writing about this science fiction that I love so much. Without writers like Wolfe (and Le Guin, and others) I would not have this avocation—criticism—that is so enjoyable. Do I think my award-winning essay is good? Yes, I do, I admit. But it is good because of its subject—it is good because I had such wonderful work to write about, from a writer who was a model for any writer. I hope only that what I have written might lead to those who loved Gene's work remembering it the more after his death; and to those who haven't discovered

him yet to discover him now.

In close, I'll quote the closing words of Gene's great story "Forlesen" once more, changed a bit: "I want to know if it's meant anything . . . if it's been worth it? 'Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.'"