



Letter from the Editor

As the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Science Fiction*, I have had the immense pleasure of watching our publication grow and evolve to include increasingly rigorous and thought-provoking scholarship about works of science and speculative fiction. Ever since the successful release of our first special issue on Afrofuturism last year (February 2018), the *Journal* has sought to address questions of intersectional identity, minority consciousness, genre, and the interplay between individual rights and state power, dedicating one issue per annum to the exploration of such topics of interest. In that vein, the disability special issue before you foregrounds the lived experiences of people with disabilities and offers ample opportunity for reflection and discussion surrounding disability representation, inclusion, and accessibility.

The pieces collected here were submitted from all around the world with scholars examining works of Italian and Chinese SF in addition to an array of British and American works. The global discussion about disability in SF clearly offers an avenue for exploring the potential that coalitional engagement and interdependence amongst the disabled have to change the material realities of social existence, and connect individuals across cultural boundaries, geographical restrictions, and physical or mental limitations.

But perhaps most importantly, as a genre dedicated to imagining possible futures—replete with all the standard explorations of technology, biopolitics, environmental destruction, and encounters with the alien other that they entail—science fiction is uniquely capable of materializing visions of a brighter tomorrow that includes and normativizes the existence of every conceivable type of body, attesting to the value of the perspectives gained from promoting and revisiting difference, and testifying to the inherent worth of disabled lives.

As proponents of the social model of disability, which contends that disability arises from society's unwillingness to make public life accessible to people with a variety of bodies and impairments, the *Journal of Science Fiction* editorial staff has been particularly invested in publishing

scholarship that places the social model into conversation with issues as wide spread as identity and normativity to the commodifying, disciplinary gaze and the origins of disability stigma, including the heyday of early American freak shows, and beyond. In this issue, you will encounter meditations on physical and mental disabilities, visible and invisible impairments, and the role that we assign to ethics in sustaining and advocating for a positive culture surrounding disability. You'll read reflections from some of the foremost scholars currently researching at the intersection of science fiction and disability studies. You'll also discover novel readings of texts and films both familiar and unfamiliar, and engage with thought-provoking scholarship about meaning, identity, embodiment, and more.

Given the breadth of voices present in this issue, encapsulating the coalitional engagement between professional scholars (both affiliated and independent), graduate students, artists, and readers, I direct you towards the insightful "Foreword" contributed by Dr. Sami Schalk and a measured contemplation of current disability studies offered by Dr. Michael Bérubé. I am particularly indebted to Sami and Michael, as well as Dr. Melinda C. Hall (who also contributed a reflection featured here), for their ongoing engagement with the Museum of Science Fiction's exploration of disability—from our panel on neurodiversity at Escape Velocity 2019 to the anticipated success of this special issue—and for the strength of their voices and depth of their reflections. And as always, such an endeavor would not be possible if not for the dedication of our editorial staff.

As you contemplate alternate bodyminds (Schlak) throughout this special issue, we hope that each of you will be personally and professionally inspired to pay more attention to disability literature, representation, advocacy, and lived experience, especially through a science fictional lens. As a genre fundamentally invested in exploring the future, science fiction will continue to push the boundaries of normativity to promote and ultimately, assure, a future in which



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everyone has a right to exist—so long as we nourish and prioritize the primacy of such discourses. We hope that the scholarly contributions included here foreground the visibility and importance of our commitment to disability.

- Aisha Matthews Walker

Managing Editor, MOSF *Journal of Science Fiction*