

## The Beyond Borders Conference



### The LSFRC Directorate

“Beyond Borders: Empires, Bodies, Science Fictions” took place on the 10-12 September 2020 as the fourth annual conference of the London Science Fiction Research Community (LSFRC). The Beyond Borders theme for our 2019-2020 programme arose from a desire to work more actively to decolonize our thinking and reading practices. Mindful of the ways in which the violence of borders visible and invisible—between territories, bodies, species—shaped and rendered precarious lives across the world in an extension of the centuries-long project of colonialism, we sought to explore how SF can help us think beyond borders, while helping us to dismantle those that exist in the present. In turn, our discussions and experiences working toward that theme helped birth our present focus on Activism & Resistance (see also Francis’s contribution to the UK Report elsewhere in this edition of the SFRA Review).

As part of our preparations for the event, we formed hugely generative partnerships with the London Chinese Science Fiction Group and SF Beyond the West, and also enjoyed hosting a stimulating and enlightening reading group series organized around the theme. 2020 brought with it unexpected developments, in response to which we switched to an online format for the conference, and also released an anti-racism statement with accompanying resources. The call for papers elicited a high level of interest and response, at one point even catching Bruce Sterling’s eye. The ranks of our wonderful conference guests included Emily Jin and Sawad Hussain for a roundtable discussion of SF & Translation; Chen Qiufan, Larissa Sansour, and Linda Stupart for the Creator Roundtable; Michael Darko and Jordan Wise for an inspirational “Provocations Beyond Fiction” session; and Florence Okoye and Dr Nadine El-Enany as keynote speakers. In addition, the event featured fifty-five speakers across four continents presenting a scintillatingly diverse array of top-notch papers and workshops, as well as a grand total of over two hundred registrants, of whom over half took up the option of free registration. The conference itself went about as smoothly as expected, particularly considering that we had practically no prior experience of running an online event of this size, and particular thanks are due to outgoing LSFRC directors Katie Stone and Tom Dillon, resident archmistress of the digital Sasha Myerson, conference designers Sinjin Li, whose amazing artwork and graphics for the conference can be seen below and in the conference programme, and, of course, all our allies and contributors.

While we were pleased that so many people from so many different countries and backgrounds attended the conference, we at LSFRC are committed to doing what we can to facilitate people’s access to our events, whether that’s during or before the event proper or after the fact. Our website features a post with various recordings and transcripts from the event—including video recordings of the two keynote lectures—shared with the consent of their authors, and we will be continuing to update the post with new material. To this end, we are delighted to have been able to collaborate with the *SFRA Review* in the presenting of the Beyond Borders

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symposium. Featuring twelve papers from contributors based in India, The Philippines, Turkey, the UK, and the USA, we are honored to be able to share such an excellent array of scholarship, both as an indication of the warm, exciting, affirming occasion that was the Beyond Borders conference, and as a set of intellectual contributions in its own right.

—Ibtisam Ahmed, Angela Chan, Cristina Diamant, Francis Gene-Rowe, and Rachel Hill on behalf of the LSFRC team



*"Beyond Borders Conference Art" • Sinjin Li (2020)*