

From the President

Stina Attebery



This summer we gathered in person and virtually for the 2026 SFRA conference on the theme “Into the Slipstream: Watering Futures” in East Lansing, Michigan. I want to thank the conference organizing team for all the amazing work they put into the event, especially the work they did to make the conference virtually accessible to those of us unable to travel. My thanks and appreciation to Sonja Fritzsche, Brian deVries, Eric Aranoff, Blaire Morseau, Jessica Stokes, Michael Stokes, and Vered Weiss for organizing a really special conference.

I’m struck by the way the cover image from the program captures this conference’s negotiation between virtual access and physical embeddedness in place. The image, modified from Rob Beck, USBS Land Processes Data Center, features a vibrantly blue bloom of color representing Michigan’s waterways superimposed over a satellite image of East Lansing. As an organization, we were also both together and telepresent at this conference, experiencing the waters of Michigan in person and learning about them remotely. While the experience of virtual and in-person attendance is necessarily different (I’m afraid virtual attendees weren’t able to visit the MSU Museum Exhibit “Blurred Realities” and the tours organized for the Comic Art Collection, marvel at the amazing science fiction bookstore in town, or navigate around the geese populating this beautiful campus), the conference team made sure that our main keynotes and events were accessible for everyone through the distributed, virtually-connected (and only sometimes buggy) spaces of the internet.

All of the keynotes were navigating virtual and physical spaces in different ways, and not only because Damian Duffy was very generously able to present remotely around travel delays and then follow up with an in-person Q&A after arriving. Duffy’s explanation of his and John Jennings’ process behind adapting the Parable graphic novels was fascinating, and the decisions to represent Lauren’s embodied journey through California through maps, journals, and botanical illustrations, as well as her daughter Larkin/Asha Vere’s reimagining as a virtual reality creator, resonated with the conference’s own negotiation of the virtual and the physical. Petra Kuppers’ keynote on “Eco Soma” and drifting in disability art and culture similarly explored the affordances of virtual spaces and embodied practice in her work around Michigan water activism and community opposition to data center construction in the region. Her work made me feel very connected to and appreciative of the lands and waters hosting us. Kinitra Brooks gave a fascinating talk about Black women’s conjure practice in history, contemporary practice, and pop culture examples like Sinners, connecting the physicality of these material histories and spirit work, reminding us that the slipstream can also create other forms of remote connection across time and space. Finally, the Roundtable on Ancestral Futures: Indigenous Speculative Storytelling, Repatriation, and Slipstreaming Archival Time with Debra Yepa-Pappan, Zack Khalil, Kai Recollet, and Jason Wesaw (hosted and moderated by Blaire Morseau) brought together Indigenous artists and

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scholars from Michigan and from other unceded and occupied native land, emphasizing the shared politics and artistic practices needed to protect the different spaces we live. My thanks to everyone who attended in whichever format, and I hope that this conference was as productive and joyful for you as it was for me.