



## Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany

*Nisi Shawl (Editor), Bill Campbell (Editor)*

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## **Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany** Nisi Shawl (Editor) , Bill Campbell (Editor)

*Stories for Chip* brings together outstanding authors inspired by a brilliant writer and critic, Science Fiction Writers of America Grandmaster Samuel R. “Chip” Delany. Award-winning SF luminaries such as Michael Swanwick, Nalo Hopkinson, and Eileen Gunn contribute original fiction and creative nonfiction. From surrealistic visions of bucolic road trips to erotic transgressions to mind-expanding analyses of Delany’s influence on the genre—as an out gay man, an African American, and possessor of a startlingly acute intellect—this book conveys the scope of the subject’s sometimes troubling, always rewarding genius. Editors Nisi Shawl and Bill Campbell have given Delany and the world at large, a gorgeous, haunting, illuminating, and deeply satisfying gift of a book.

## **Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany Details**

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## From Reader Review Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany for online ebook

### Ernest Hogan says

Praise for Delany. Nostalgia for the New Wave. Rumblings of a new one. I'm proud to have a story in this anthology.

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### Glaiza says

"Delany was instrumental in supporting the decolonization of my imagination, truly the most dangerous and subversive decolonization process, for once it has started, there are no limits on what can be visioned. This type of science fiction/speculative fiction, "visionary fiction"- as opposed to mainstream SF that reinforces dominant paradigms of power and oppression – is the foundation of my work now, thanks to visionaries like Delany, Butler, Due, and many others."

– 'Samuel Delany and Visionary Fiction' by Walidah Imarisha, from Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany.

I must admit that I have only read two short stories by Samuel R. Delany. (For the curious: *Aye, and Gomorrah*, and *Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones*. Both can be found in *Aye, and Gomorrah: And Other Stories*.) If you're unfamiliar with Samuel R. Delany, I recommend this great article on his work – *Samuel Delany and the Past and Future of Science Fiction*.

*Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany* is comprised of original speculative stories and creative essays by writers inspired by his work. I liked that each speculative story embraced diverse possibilities. I also found each story to be accessible in a stand-alone fashion for readers who are unfamiliar with Delany's work. Although it was sometimes, jarring to jump from one voice to another as there are no contextual notes around the stories. I highlighted a few stories & essays over at the blog.

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### Josie says

*Stories for Chip* is a mix of 33 pieces, some are fiction and others are nonfiction. Unfortunately there wasn't an introductory essay explaining the rationale for the pieces chosen nor for the organization of the book. Perhaps this will be added in a later release of the book, I do not know. As I read the book I felt jolted from one story, one experience to the next. However that is what is most outstanding about this book. There is a fabulous diversity of writers and modes of expression – this group is multi-gendered, multiracial, multiethnic, and international. The aggregate of all of those points of view and types of literary expression does truly make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

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## **David says**

Very eclectic collection of stories. This earns its way as a tribute to Sam D..

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## **Greg Hullender says**

A disappointing collection of short stories by authors inspired by Samuel R. Delany. I've always been a big fan of Samuel Delany, so when I saw that other reviewers had recommended a few stories from this volume, I was eager to read it. My first disappointment was that out of 33 stories, only 21 are new fiction. The rest are either reprints (some as old as 1968) and/or non-fiction. I only read the 21 new stories, so my review only addresses those.

Only 19 of the 21 have any speculative element. I have written detailed reviews of those (<http://www.rocketstackrank.com/2015/1...>) but the quick summary is that I only found one story to recommend. The rest are murky, they use scientific words with no apparent understanding of their meaning, they frequently don't end, and they often don't seem to have anything to say at all.

There are actually two fun stories in the volume, but only one of them is SFF. *Jamaica Ginger* is a neat little adventure story set in a steam-punk 1930s New Orleans. It has almost no symbolism and almost no cultural references, which makes it the least Delany-like story in the volume, but it's an entertaining read without being a lightweight.

*Characters in the Margins of a Lost Notebook* is literary fiction set in 1970s or 1980s New York City. It has no speculative element whatsoever, and it has little or no plot, but it's without doubt the best read of any story in the volume. What saves it is "Jack," a thinly-disguised Samuel L. Delany, who mentors the narrator and offers great bits of salty wisdom.

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## **tyto says**

I received this from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

3 1/2 stars

So, a confession. I haven't finished any Delany. Yet. I've been meaning to, and I will, but I just haven't gotten to it yet. But when I saw this collection and some of the authors that contributed, I was very interested. It's a really interesting collection, and I really liked most of the stories. However, I didn't care as much for the creative nonfiction that was interspersed among them. Overall, this was a very good collection - I especially appreciated the wide variety of authors.

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## **Clare O'Beara says**

"His screams are lost in a cacophony of cyclonic arpeggios." There's a lot of that sort of sentence in this collection of shorts by various writers.

There are also a few essays on being a black person who reads and writes SF, in which works by the black Delaney are analysed to pieces. Among comments are that editor John W Campbell was racist, anti-women and anti-Zionist, which wouldn't have occurred to me given that he published Asimov. One writer claims that his college writing tutor belittled him and his approach specifically because he was black - while admitting that he was taking an easier approach than the other students who were comparing with philosophers. We are also told that cyberpunk a la Gibson could not have arrived without 1970s feminist SF. I think it would; times change. But these essays are heavily annotated. I hope the authors don't mind some mild disagreement. Especially since some of them run short of prepositions.

I read Delaney's short 'Aye, And Gomorrah' which made an immediate impression and stuck with me for ever, despite my not having a clue that the author was a gay black man. I wouldn't have cared. The story read well, involved me, and said something important.

Sadly I did not enjoy a single one of the tales in this collection, which deal with future life, America, aliens and ships of various sorts. More story and less style, please. I say this without knowing if any author is a man, woman, gay man, lesbian, robot, of any nation or race, unless they specifically said so. But I'm afraid to reflect my lack of enjoyment - which may be based on the fact that many of them are dark fiction bordering on horror, and several are strongly infested with swear words and / or violence - with fewer than three stars, in case I'm accused of discrimination. Which in itself seems to me to be discrimination. Well, I'm sure somebody else will enjoy the stories more than I did.

A copy of this book was sent to me for an unbiased review.

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### **Berta Kleiner says**

Uneven. I bought this book because it contains <> by Kai Ashante Wilson.

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### **Tracie McBride says**

(Disclosure: I received an electronic review copy via NetGalley.)

As the blurb says, the short works within Stories for Chip cover a wide scope of styles, sub-genres and themes, whilst staying true to the overall vision. You'll find everything from erotic horror to space drama to chilling dystopias to non-specific slices of life. The essays range from scholarly to deeply personal.

Standout favourite for me is the first story, *Billy Tumult* by Nick Harkaway. It's fun, clever and inventive. I also particularly enjoyed the steampunk-flavoured *Jamaica Ginger* by Nalo Hopkinson and Nisi Shawl with its resourceful young heroine.

Be warned: This is by no means a lightweight read. As a relatively uneducated reader with little familiarity with Delany's work, I found some of the stories and essays difficult to appreciate. By all accounts, Delany is an exceptionally intelligent man, and this lofty intellect is reflected in the contents of this anthology. For an example, here is a one sentence excerpt from Hal Duncan's *An Idyll in Erehwyna* -

Poesis is the suppositional calculus, notated not in symbol but in stance: epistemic, alethic, deontic, boulomaic.

(Please tell me I'm not the only reader who has no idea what the previous sentence means!)

A second warning: Don't let this put you off. It does no harm to stretch your brain every now and again.

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## **S says**

I had read and enjoyed some of Samuel R. Delaney's work, but I was woefully ignorant of his personal details and impact on the field. But no longer!

The short stories in this book were all over the place (the essays were generally of a kind), but in a good way. A huge diversity of different styles and foci, yet you could see why they were included. There were a few duds, but overall this is a great anthology with some truly unique and challenging reads.

My biggest complaint: that some of them are not blown out into full-fledged novels! There were numerous of these stories that are just begging for a bigger life. Hopefully they will come back around again, expanded.

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## **Daniel says**

Publishing since the age of twenty, Samuel R. Delany is a highly respected novelist and literary critic alike. Familiarly known as "Chip", Delany has written science fiction and fantasy (SFF) known for pushing boundaries, for challenging the notions of speculative genres, and experimenting with approaches to literature in general. Delany's writing both subverts conventions and transcends fiction to explore social realities, most notably the existence of the Other. Indeed, as a man who could be described with terms such as academic, homosexual, polymath, African-American, and intelligent, Delany writes from the point of view of the Other, a spectrum of under-represented perspectives within SFF.

Both Delany's fiction and nonfiction have been hugely influential, inspiring, and appreciated, partly due to this unique vision. However, his works have also resonated so strongly because Delany's vision is not just unique, but uniquely brilliant, honest, and perceptive. With all of its challenges and transgressions against comfortable familiarity, Delany's work strikes universal human chords, conveying both beauty and progressive encouragement.

Delany's 1975 novel of apocalyptic literature, *Dhalgren*, remains the best-known representation of the themes to his fiction, and so far happens to be the only piece of fiction I've read by the author. (It is hard to read past works when it's so much to just keep up with the new wonders!) Thus, reading a recent collection of works written in appreciation of Delany reminded me a lot of my experience reading an issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* in tribute of Gene Wolfe soon after starting to really read extensively. At the time utterly unfamiliar with the author, much significance was surely lost to me. Nevertheless, how I did enjoy it despite its challenges and personal obscurity.

*Stories For Chip: A Tribute to Samuel R. Delany*, published by Rosarium Press and edited by Nisi Shawl and Bill Campbell, is a remarkable collection of both fiction and essays that very correctly does not aim to emulate Delany's style, or even to copy the precise themes of his highly personal works. Yet, elements that echo Delany are certainly present in the fiction here, from eroticism to explorations of identity and perception.

At times surreal, the stories here are often as subversive and challenging as Delany's own writing, making the collection no light reading. But as with Nisi Shawl's own collection *Filter House*, this anthology will be meaningful to the right readers, and bears repeated readings. Of the thirty-three pieces that make up the collection, nine are reprints and the remainder original. Of the reprints, Junot Díaz's "Nilda", first published in *The New Yorker*, is likely the only one that probably reached a particularly large audience.

The nonfiction essays of the collection are mostly focused reflections on Delany's works and influence, in a broad (Imarisha's essay), individual (Swanwik's), or combined (Lavender's) context. This avoids including critical essays that try to tackle Delany's own academic interest and experience directly, and it also provides readers who may be more new to Delany some context for appreciating some details of the story a bit more. Without any editorial comments from Shawl and Campbell (which honestly would have been still nice), these essays become near essential for some readers. I've previously enjoyed a collection of essays edited by Lavender, so reading more in this vein was welcome.

Like the contributors to the collection, the writing itself covers a significant diversity. A few instances of fiction, particularly the opening story by Eileen Gunn, are even closer to exercises in creative nonfiction. My personal two favorite stories among the fiction offerings were those by Claude Lalumière and the collaboration between Nalo Hopkinson and editor Shawl. Lalumière's "Empathy Evolving as a Quantum of Eight-Dimensional Perception" falls into one my favorite categories: the weird alien encounter. In this case octopuses that dominate a far future Earth discover a human time traveler and attempt to absorb understanding of this strange creature. "Jamaica Ginger" by Hopkinson and Shawl is a far more "conventional" steam-punk tale that provides the most pure enjoyment from the collection.

Though I was going to limit myself to two, I just can't help also mentioning Chesya Burke's "For Sale: Fantasy Coffins (Ababuo Need Not Apply)" and Sheree Renée Thomas' "River Clap Your Hands", a pair of fantasies each with intense emotional resonance and powerful characterization.

*Stories For Chip* is a collection that both makes you want to go and (re)discover what was so special about Delany while also look for more by some authors that are likely unknown to most readers. No work is really "for everyone", but people who are looking for depth and diversity and challenges compared to what they may normally encounter in the SFF genres should find much to appreciate in this tribute anthology.

Contents:

"Michael Swanwick and Samuel R. Delany at the Joyce Kilmer Service Area, March 2005" by Eileen Gunn

"Billy Tumult" by Nick Harkaway

"Voice Prints" by devorah major

"Delany Encounters: Or, Another Reason Why I Study Race and Racism in Science Fiction" by Isiah Lavender, III

"Clarity" by Anil Menon

"When Two Swordsmen Meet" by Ellen Kushner

"For Sale: Fantasy Coffin (Ababuo Need Not Apply)" by Chesya Burke

“Holding Hands with Monsters” by Haralambi Markov

“Song for the Asking” by Carmelo Rafala

“Kickenders” by Kit Reed

“Walking Science Fiction: Samuel Delany and Visionary Fiction” by Walidah Imarisha

“Heart of Brass” by Alex Jennings

“Empathy Evolving as a Quantum of Eight-Dimensional Perception” by Claude Lalumière

“Be Three” by Jewelle Gomez

“Guerilla Mural of a Siren’s Song” by Ernest Hogan

“An Idyll in Erehynna” by Hal Duncan

“Real Mothers, a Faggot Uncle, and the Name of the Father: Samuel R Delany’s Feminist Revisions of the Story of SF” by L. Timmel Duchamp

“Nilda” by Junot Díaz

“The First Gate of Logic” by Benjamin Rosenbaum

“The Master of the Milford Altarpiece” by Thomas M. Disch

“River Clap Your Hands” by Sheree Renée Thomas

“Haunt-type Experience” by Roz Clarke

“Eleven Stations” by Fábio Fernandes

“<>” by Kai Ashante Wilson

“On My First Reading of The Einstein Intersection” by Michael Swanwick

“Characters in the Margins of a Lost Notebook” by Kathryn Cramer

“Hamlet’s Ghost Sighted in Frontenac, KS” by Vincent Czyz

“Each Star a Sun to Invisible Planets” by Tenea D. Johnson

“Clones” by Alex Smith

“The Last Dying Man” by Geentanjali Dighe

“Capitalism in the 22nd Century” by Geoff Ryman

“Jamaica Ginger” by Nalo Hopkinson & Nisi Shawl

“Festival” by Chris Brown

Disclaimer: I received a free advanced reading copy of this novel from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review that originally appeared at SkiffyandFanty.com

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### **Zach says**

There were a handful of stories which were worth the time, but not NEARLY enough.

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### **Morgan Dhu says**

I've been eagerly awaiting the publication of Stories for Chip: A Tribute to Samuel Delany, edited by Nisi Shawl and Bill Campbell, since I first heard it was in the pipeline, for a very personal reason. Delany was one of the first authors - not just of science fiction, but of any genre - who wrote books that crawled inside my brain and stayed there. There are others - Suzette Haden Elgin and Naomi Mitchison among them - but I can honestly say that simply reading Babel-17 was such a world-altering event for me that, had I never encountered it, I might be a very different person today.

In short, Samuel Delany and his work are very important to me.

Contributions to this volume include fiction and non-fiction, and they are tributes, reflections of how Delany has influenced other writers rather than attempts to recreate Delany's aesthetic. As Kim Stanley Robinson says in his Introduction:

"These tributes mostly don't try to imitate Delany's style, which is good, as it is a very personal style, one that has morphed through the years in complex ways. Imitation could only result in pastiche or parody, forms of limited interest, although a good parody can be fun, and I've seen some pretty good ones of Delany's work elsewhere. A "Bad Delany" contest would be at least as funny as the famous "Bad Hemingway" and "Bad Faulkner" contests. But a better tribute, as the writers gathered here seem to agree, results from considering not style but substance. Delany's subject matter, his mode or method, involves a characteristic mix of the analytical and the emotional, the realistic and the utopian. By exploring this delanyesque space (and I think delanyesque has become an adjective, like ballardian or orwellian or kafkaesque), the stories and essays here make the best kind of tribute. They perhaps help to make the Delanyspace a new genre or subgenre. However that works, it's certain that Delany's work has effected a radical reorientation of every genre he has written in. Time and other writers will tell the sequel as to what that means for science fiction, fantasy, sword and sorcery, pornography, memoir, and criticism. Here we get hints of what that will be like."

There are no weak contributions in this collection, only strong, and stronger. Among those that hit hardest for me:

- Chesya Burke's powerful, heart-breaking short story "For Sale: Fantasy Coffins (Abobua Need Not Apply)"
- Walidah Imarisha's essay on the importance of imagining black futures, "Walking Science Fiction: Samuel

Delany and Visionary Futures"

- "Be Three" by Jewelle Gomez, a parable about forbidden relationships and the desperate need to find some way for love to survive
- Junot Diaz' "Nilda," a bleak story about the existential despair of the marginalised, the unvoiced pain of personal loss and the self-destructive roles we are pushed into by social forces beyond our control
- "River Clap Your Hands" by Sheree Renée Thomas is a powerful story about loss - loss of heritage and lineage, loss of home and comfort, loss of future hopes - and about going forward to find a new life in spite of it.
- "Jamaica Ginger" by Nalo Hopkinson and Nisi Shawl, a steampunk tale of a young woman who finds her way out of a seemingly dead-end situation.

\*This anthology contains 14 contributions by women out of 34 pieces (including the Introduction).

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### **Charles Dee Mitchell says**

*Stories for Chip* is a collection of fiction and essays in honor of Samuel Delany. Two ways of approaching this review suggest themselves.

1. Since I have read only two Delany novels and would place neither on my favorite list, I could humbly remove myself from making further comment.
2. I could consider my relative lack of first hand experience of Delany's work as a plus when it comes to considering the stories anthologized here strictly on their own merits.

Obviously I am going to go with the second option, but I need to say something more about the first.

I read *Nova* and *The Einstein Intersection* about four years ago. *Nova* I didn't particularly like for reasons I no longer clearly remember. *Einstein* entertained and intrigued me, although I remember not quite "getting" the end. Looking at other reader reviews, I saw that I was not alone in that response. Looking recently at a range of reader reviews I see that Delany can be a polarizing author. Encomia are balanced out by disparaging comments from those who find the work opaque or over-written. This is especially true when it comes to Delany's big books, *Dahlgren* and *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*. In one of his letters, Philip K. Dick, an author I think very highly of, reports throwing his copy of *Dahlgren* across the room before he was a hundred pages into it. In some cases, readers are put off by Delany's content. These negative, sometimes angry responses, combined with what I've read in this new book, have actually renewed my interest in going back to Delany.

I have also read a third Delany novel. When I was in the book business, a small gay publishing house needed to remainder a few hundred copies of *Hogg*, one of Delany's forays into pornography. I bought them and sold them for between \$10 and \$50 as their number decreased. I also read it. I can't take the time to be shocked, but it is a variety of violent, transgressive pornography that leaves me puzzled about both its purpose and its audience. But a recent edition of the Los Angeles Review of Books ran an article on *Hogg*, "Uses of Displeasure: Literary Value and Affective Disgust," by Liz Janssen. Again, the jury is split.

Stories for Chip is not a collection of pastiches. The writers have apparently been chosen because they work under Delany's influence and address his themes. I have to say "apparently" because the book comes with essentially no editorial content, and it is badly needed. This situation was worsened by the advance ebook I received from Net Galley. The Table of Contents listed a Contributors page, but it was nowhere to be found. And the transcription was the worst I have ever encountered. Words were run together, sometimes up to the extent of an entire sentence. A couple of stories with particularly dense or playful language were unreadable.

There is a lot of very good stuff here, and even the absence of the Contributors section worked to my advantage. I knew only a fraction of these writers, and several of those only by name. Most of the stories occasioned a trip to Google, where I found information and links I would not have in the couple of sentences the book itself might have contained.

The contributors are an international, multi-ethnic roster whose interest in Delany shows in their attention to race and gender and the pleasure they take in language. The book was funded by an Indiegogo campaign, and the publisher's website had an open call for submissions. Somehow I doubt that Junot Diaz, Nalo Hopkinson, Kit Reed, Michael Swannick and a few of the others answered an open call. And then there is Thomas Disch, who died in 2008. As I said above, more editorial content is badly needed, but finally that can't take away from the enjoyment of the 30 stories and four critical essays included.

A few personal favorites, specifically from authors I did not know:

Claude Lalumiere: "Empathy Evolving as a Quantum of Eight-Dimensional Perception." A misanthropic human time traveler finds himself millions of years in the future. Octopi are the dominant species, and if they don't eat you they absorb you. This sets off a change of incarnations over the eons, in one of which the cephalopod/human entity may become God.

Anil Menon: "Clarity." A professor of computer science in India finds himself living inside one of the theoretical models he and his co-workers consider thought experiments.

Geentajali Dighe: "The Last Dying Man." According to Hinduism, the world destroys and recreates itself in cycles involving millions of years. And yet it has to happen sometime. A man and his daughter in Mumbai find themselves dealing with the day-to-day reality of the transition.

Wesleyan University Press keeps in print around 1500 pages of Delany's critical and theoretical writing, and he prompts a fair amount of critical writing from others. There are several essays here, but Walida Imarisha's very personal account of her engagement with both the man and his writing best conveys the significance Delany has had on writers of color. "So long seen as the lone Black voice in commercial science fiction Delany held that space for all the fantastical dreamers of color who came after him." She goes on to propose that she and other writers become "walking science fiction...living, breathing embodiments of the most daring futures our ancestors were able to imagine."

She is not asking anyone to sign onto her vision, but reading *Stories for Chip* you see that vision in action.

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