



## **Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora**

*Sheree Thomas (Editor) , W.E.B. Du Bois , Kalamu ya Salaam , Samuel R. Delany , Nalo Hopkinson , Akua Lezli Hope , Charles W. Chesnutt , Octavia E. Butler , more... Linda Addison , Charles R. Saunders , Nisi Shawl , Steven Barnes , Jewelle L. Gómez , Henry Dumas , Tony Medina , Kiini Ibura Salaam , Robert Fleming , Derrick A. Bell , Darryl A. Smith , Ama Patterson , Walter Mosley , Honorée Fanonne Jeffers , Paul D. Miller , Evie Shockley , Leone Ross , Tananarive Due , Amiri Baraka ...less*

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This volume introduces black science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction writers to the generations of readers who have not had the chance to explore the scope and diversity among African-American writers.

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## **Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora Details**

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# **From Reader Review Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora for online ebook**

## **Carolyn Reed says**

excellent read by some of your favorite authors who you may not have known delve into science fiction. Worth the time.

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## **Xev Author says**

Best anthology of the genre that I have encountered so far. There are a few stories that demand more will to read through (due to lack of interest) but that may simply be due to my leaning more toward scifi vs fantasy.

That said, if you're into afrofuturism, I wouldn't discourage anyone from picking up this fantastic read.

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## **Christine says**

I loved this book. My favorite short stories were Can You Wear My Eyes, Like Daughter, Chicago 1927, and The Comet, and the novel excerpt from Black No More.

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## **Christy says**

This anthology is a useful collection and contains some wonderful fiction. However, its subtitle, "A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora," led me to expect a collection of texts that really does attempt to represent the last century. Instead, only one third of the book is constituted by stories that were published prior to the year 2000 (ranging chronologically from 1887 to 1999). This places the emphasis of the book less on revealing how much black SF has been written in the past and the traditions of black SF or black writers who venture into SF and more on introducing new voices in black SF and encouraging contemporary black writers of SF. That is a worthy goal; I don't mean to imply that it's not. It's just not what I expected.

The inclusion of the few short critical pieces at the end of the anthology is a nice touch. Featuring essays by Samuel Delany, Charles Saunders, Walter Mosley, Paul Miller (DJ Spooky), and Octavia Butler, the book approaches the question of race in science fiction from a variety of perspectives.

Regarding the stories themselves, there are many that are excellent. I particularly enjoyed (and might like to teach at some point) the following:

\*\*"Sister Lilith" by Honoree Fanonne Jeffers (2000), a re-telling of the Creation story from the perspective of Lilith, Adam's first wife.

\*\*"The Comet" by W. E. B. DuBois (1920), which addresses issues of inequality and prejudice in the aftermath of a disaster that kills millions.

\*\*an excerpt from *Black No More* by George S. Schuyler (1931), a story about a scientist who invents a way to turn black people white and what happens as a result. I plan to read the whole novel based on the excerpt included here.

\*\*"separation anxiety" by Evie Shockley (2000), set in a future America built on segregation/separation of racial groups.

\*\*"Can You Wear My Eyes" by Kalamu ya Salaam (2000). This one is interesting to me because it speaks less directly to racial experience and more to the experience of gender.

\*\*"Like Daughter" by Tananarive Due (2000), a story about abuse and second chances that made me cry.

\*\*"The Evening and the Morning and the Night" by Octavia Butler (1987). I just always like Butler.

\*\*"The Space Traders" by Derrick Bell (1992), a story about politics and race relations in America, centered around a first contact scenario in which an alien race offers America wondrous technology and great riches in exchange for all African American citizens.

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### **Lucas says**

As uneven as you'd expect in an anthology this length, but well worth reading. Has an Octavia Butler story that blew my mind a little. I'm in love with Nalo Hopkinson now too. Gonna read the sequel.

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### **Kate Raphael says**

Loved this book. So many great writers. Some I had heard of, others not.

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### **Josiane says**

I love this book. The short stories are all engaging. I own this and re-read it from time to time.

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### **Matthew Gatheringwater says**

"Why don't they make white robots?" is the question posed by the lyrical and tragic story *The Pretended* by Darryl A. Smith, one of the best stories collected in *Dark Matter*. It works on all levels: black themes, black author, using a future setting to say something related to the present, etc. I love this story. Unfortunately, not all the other stories are equally at home in the collection.

Some, like *Gimmile's Songs* by Charles R. Saunders are good science fiction of their type, but use African themes merely as a kind of exotic setting. Other stories are heavily into African identity projected into the future or the supernatural but they aren't otherwise the best representatives of their genre. Some aren't stories at all, they are excerpts from novels which intrigue, but don't hold their own as short fiction. No less than three stories feature time/space travel by means of rhythm, which makes me wonder about the difference between stereotype and cliche.

The earliest story in the book (1887) is a surprise and delight. I had no idea W. E. B. Du Bois wrote what we'd now call science fiction! Despite the inclusion of his excellent story, people who, like me, are interested

in early speculative fiction, will be disappointed. Seventeen of the collected stories are from 2000, which is not what I expected from "a century of speculative fiction." The scope of the collection is further limited by having some contemporary authors contribute more than one story.

Still, there are some gems here: Fans of the lesbian vampire novel *The Gilda Stories* will be pleased to see a new Gilda story here. Evie Shockley offers insights into one reason human cloning holds a perhaps irresistible fascination for people who didn't get life right the first time. There are stories by genre giants Samuel R. Delany and Octavia E. Butler, which are gateways to great science fiction for people who picked up the book for the African angle. There are also some great essays by black science fiction authors about the role race plays in their writing or in the science fiction community.

My overall impression, however, is of a confused and lazy anthology that would have benefited from a broader scope and introductory essays to help connect the stories to the stated theme of the collection.

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### **Miriam says**

Sister Lilith/Honoree Fanonne Jeffers -- Didn't love the story, but opening with something set in the time of Genesis (Bible, not band) felt appropriate.

The comet/W.E.B. Du Bois -- Great writing. Du Bois convincingly and succinctly conveys the feelings of the protagonist under a series of abrupt, shocking changes.

Black No More/George Schuyler -- Hard to assess, as it is an early-on excerpt from a novel and I don't know where it goes. Certainly seems like a good historical document regarding racial and cultural issues of the 1920s.

Like Daughter/Tannarive Due -- Sad, creepy, horrifying. Poor everybody. I keep meaning to read more by this author.

Greedy choke puppy/Nalo Hopkinson -- Life is tough. Granny is tougher! That sounds jokey, though, and although this story has humor it is not a frivolous story. In fact, it is unexpectedly hard-hitting.

Tasting songs/Leone Ross -- Aside from the idea of hyperhydrosis so extreme that one literally poured water constantly (wouldn't you dehydrate?) this doesn't really seem like spec fic - a photographer talks about his affair with a model and the effect on his marriage.

separation anxiety/Evie Shockley -- African Americans are voluntarily segregated into cultural reservations where they protected from alternate cultural influences. Most of them prefer this, but young people find the increasingly intrusive demands of anthropological record-keeping offensive.

Aye, and Gomorrah.../Samuel R. Delany -- Body as subject of and unit of exchange in capitalism, sex, psychology.

Ganger (ball lightning)/Nalo Hopkinson -- It's a story as old as time: buying your partner sex toys instead of talking about your feelings never works out in the end.

At the huts of Ajala/Nisi Shawl -- Interior journey as coming of age, via a sort of allegorical dream-quest. I don't know what this is called, but I've seen it done a number of times, often more interestingly. I did like the concept of being "two-headed"; I don't know if Shawl invented that or if it is a part of the voodoo tradition.

The woman in the wall/Steven Barnes -- An American artist abroad is wrongfully imprisoned in a camp for contagious refugees. Her husband is shot and she is left responsible for his daughter, with whom she has a rocky relationship. The camp with its starvation and filth was viscerally horrible. I'm not sure where the "speculative" aspect came in.

Ark of bones/Henry Dumas -- Wow. That was really different, and impressive. It's like Twain took some hallucinogens and decided to write something mythopoetic.

Depressingly, it appears that all of Dumas' stories and poems were published by a friend after his premature "accidental" death by transit cop.

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### **Ethan says**

I figured reading this was a good way for a science fiction nerd to celebrate Black History Month. I've been wanting to read this for a long time, and I'm glad I finally did. This anthology features superstars like Samuel Delany and Octavia Butler as well as other established authors such as Nalo Hopkinson and Stephen Barnes. There are also a few authors not normally known for science fiction like W.E.B. Du Bois and Amiri Baraka. I was also pleased to see a lot of names I wasn't familiar with before.

Like most anthologies, the quality of the stories can be uneven. My favorites were the stories by Butler, Delany, Hopkinson, Du Bois, Schuyler, Shockley, Addison, Bell, and Smith. There are also some really interesting essays at the end. Although most of the stories are at least decent, a few of them surpassed my ability to understand, perhaps due to my lack of intelligence and/or hipness.

Many of the stories and essays deal in specific ways with the experiences of people in the African diaspora, especially African Americans, through the lens of science fiction, fantasy, horror, or other speculative fiction. For instance, Derrick Bell's "The Space Traders," imagines that extraterrestrials offer to give the United States advanced technology if all people of African ancestry can be taken away to the ETs' home planet, which prompts a meditation on the value accorded to black people by white Americans. This is also a major issue in Darryl Smith's "The Pretended," George Schuyler's "Black No More," and Sherree Thomas's introduction. In light of the recent Black Lives Matter protests, these stories offer powerful ways to think through these issues.

Other stories deal less specifically with the African diasporic experience, but feature black characters or African-inspired settings. I loved Hopkinson's weirdly sexy "Ganger (Ball Lightning)" and Butler's "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" (which I had read before). Charles Saunders's "Gimmele's Songs" is interesting African-inspired fantasy.

Delany's essay "Racism and Science Fiction" deals with some specific ways institutions of racism have been and are affecting the field and fandom, while the essays by Saunders and Mosley focus on the need for more black science fiction writers.

The anthology ends with a short, but brilliant essay by Butler called "The Monophobic Response," in which she explores our science fictional fascination with aliens (I have dealt with this issue in a far less brilliant

way on my blog: <http://examinedworlds.blogspot.com/20...>).

As an anthology, there are a lot of different things going on here, so it's harder to pick out a few big philosophical themes. Nonetheless, the very idea of this anthology and the work it contains do bring up the general issue of difference. How have we encountered difference here on Earth? What are some alternatives? Is difference to be erased? Celebrated? Shamed? Subjugated? Can we recognize commonalities without erasing distinctive identities? Of course, these questions are dealt with in this anthology in ways that I, as a white man looking in, can't fully appreciate. I can't speak with any authority about what sorts of things black readers might encounter in this anthology, but I can say from my own experience that encountering these questions has challenged and expanded my understanding of myself and others. And that's just what good science fiction ought to do.

For more philosophical reflections, see my blog: <http://examinedworlds.blogspot.com/20...>

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## **Cameron says**

I'm awfully late to this party - Dark Matter was released in 2000 - but better late than never, right?

Sheree Thomas did a commendable job picking stories and authors for the collection. One of my favorite gems was the opening chapter or two from a book written in the 30s about one of the first patients for a new medical procedure to turn black people into white people. The only really totally missed note for me was the story by Steven Barnes, and I suspect that's because I just don't very much like to read the things that he likes to write. Other than that, I was reacquainted with some old favorites and introduced to some phenomenal new-to-me writers. I'd recommend the book without any reservation.

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## **Stark King says**

I find most anthologies of short fiction hit and miss, but the hits in this one were more than enough to compensate for the misses. Some standouts include:

### 1. Chicago, 1927 - Jewelle Gomez

For fans of the Gilda stories, here's a nice short one, combining Gomez's unique take on vamp lore with a queer eye view of Chicago in the roaring 20s. If you're not familiar with Gomez's other work, this is a great introduction.

### 2. Like Daughter - Tananarive Due

I can't say much without giving the story away but I will say it is a unique approach to looking at the long term effects that cycles of poverty, abuse, and racism have on the psyche.

### 3. Greedy Choke Puppy - Nalo Hopkinson

I love the way Nalo weaves Caribbean folklore into her stories, and I especially love a soucouyant.

### 4. Ganger (Ball Lightning) - Nalo Hopkinson

This is what happens when sex toys take the place of good communication in a relationship. Lord love a cautionary tale.

## 5. The Evening and the Morning and the Night - Octavia Butler

I love disease dystopias, and this one is especially great because it centres on the way human connection can be as important as any medical treatment.

## 6. The Space Traders - Derrick Bell

This one is perpetually relevant, although written in 1992. It predicts an American response to an offer by intergalactic traders who have offered the solutions to all of America's financial, environmental, and energy problems... in exchange for all of the black people. And it could have been written yesterday.

This list is by no means exhaustive; there are a whole bunch of excellent stories in here, some by authors with whom I have not been acquainted, but will now be reading.

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## Pandemonium says

An important collection that corrects former overviews of Speculative Fiction that completely ignored the extensive and ground-breaking contributions of African American authors. Incredibly, the second book in the series, 'Reading the Bones' is out of print. So wrong, Warner Books. So very wrong. This is how history is lost and writers who should be in 'the canon' get left out. It matters!

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## Michael says

**dark' mat"er** - *n*: a nonluminous form of matter which has not been directly observed but whose existence has been deduced by its gravitational effects.

The above citation from NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab glossary is referenced in the Introduction of this captivating anthology, to great effect. Indeed, the contributions of black writers to the field of speculative fiction has often been overlooked, even dismissed, whereas this collection is a testament to their presence, their influence, and to their historical contributions that all SF fans should be aware of, regardless of racial background.

In this amazing collection of Black speculative fiction, roughly half are stories by "contemporary" authors (published 2001, the copyright dates on those stories are 2000), while the other half are an historical review of stories from as early as 1887. To me the title implied more stories from earlier years, but the modern entries are all so strong and diverse, it seems the editor just couldn't say no after receiving all the submissions.

The collection is perfect for someone like me, who a) is naive about and would like to know more about the rich history of authors from the African diaspora in science fiction and fantasy, and b) wants an A-list of authors to try who are currently active in the field.

I've given this collection 5 stars, not because every story was 5 stars (they weren't) but because it is such an amazingly strong collection, and because it has such historical and cultural relevance. It has the occasional lull and "what??" moments, but overall I would say this is one of the most consistently interesting and meaningful collections of stories I have ever read.

I've listed all of the titles and authors in case you want to follow up on any of them, and it was an easy way to post quick reviews of each story. The main body of the book contains 29 fictional short stories/novel excerpts, and five non-fiction essays are included at the end of the book. There is a second collection, *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones*, published 4 years after this one, though it is a more modern anthology and only has five historical stories.

### **Entries in the order they appear in the book**

Fiction:

*Sister Lilith* (2000) by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers (5 stars) - Great retelling of the Adam/Eve creation story, with a lot of poignant commentary on race and male/female relationships.

*The Comet* (1920) by W.E.B. Du Bois (4 stars) - This should totally be 5 stars; not only is this a story of historical significance (who knew W.E.B. DuBois wrote science fiction?) but the scenario offers excruciating insight into race relations and what it means to be human. Unfortunately, I thought the last 5 sentences of the story changed the tone and implications of the previous succession of events and insights, in a way that diluted the message. Others may not feel this way (short story endings are a very subjective experience) but it spoiled the overall effect for me. It is still highly recommended reading: probably worth buying the book just for the historical significance of this one!

*Chicago 1927* (2000) by Jewelle L. Gomez (4 stars) - I loved the storyline and atmosphere of this one, clever interplay of history and mythology. I stumbled a bit on the writing style, and I thought the last minute exposition at the end could have been handled better, but otherwise a wonderful experience. I plan to read *The Gilda Stories*, a whole collection of stories about this character.

Excerpt from *Black No More* (1931) by George S. Schuyler (5 stars) - Whimsical, edgy exposition on the potentialities of becoming "white", told from a kind of "man on the street" perspective. Reminds me of Eddie Murphy's skit on the subject. 5 stars for the excerpt, because it hits on so many poignant aspects so quickly and efficiently, with an engaging conversational prose. The final line is so haunting as a short story endpoint, it makes me wonder if some of that effect will be lost in the book. Still, I'm interested to see what other aspects the book explores, and I'm amazed I'd never heard of it before now.

*separation anxiety* (2000) by Evie Shockley (3 stars) - Good writing and characterization, but the world-building was not quite believable: separate but equal doesn't seem like something that people of color would be fighting for given historical precedent. And I didn't really like the way her brother handled things.

*Tasting Songs* (2000) by Leone Ross (4 stars) - I'm not a big fan of stories about infidelity, but this one has enough surprises and emotional reflection to make up for it. The "speculative" nature is not as pronounced as other stories, (it seemed like ordinary literary fiction for at least the first half) but it seems to meet the definition in an unusual way.

*Can You Wear My Eyes* (2000) by Kalamu ya Salaam (4 stars) - Spooky and short, it loses a little steam by trying to cover so many issues, but it is a haunting idea about getting some "perspective".

*Like Daughter* (2000) by Tananarive Due (4 stars) - A spooky, philosophical tale rich in character development. A little confusing because it is presented in a mysterious, keep-you-guessing format, but the ramifications of the situation reverberate long after the story concludes. This one, like *Tasting Songs*, doesn't really get to the speculative element until near the end.

Greedy Choke Puppy (2000) by Nalo Hopkinson (5 stars) - Haunting from the get go, this one is much darker, almost horror, than previous entries, and has a worthy, poignant ending. The Creole diction and cadence peppered throughout creates a hypnotic rhythm that flavors the story.

Rhythm Travel (1996) by Amiri Baraka (5 stars) - Fun, free-floating little interlude with amazing wordplay ("Ellisonic", "Dis Report on Appearance") and some interesting ideas. Some of the references definitely went over my head.

Buddy Bolden (1996) by Kalamu ya Salaam (5 stars) - Wow, so beautiful I cried. And the writing was so sumptuous I could taste the words. Slight dependency on the female form as a stand-in for sexual ecstasy, but the high-minded ideas here more than make up for it.

Aye, and Gomorrah (1968) by Samuel R. Delany (3 stars) - An interesting world/idea, but the overall impression I got from this tale was of intolerance, which was not appealing, and not representative of why I read sci-fi. At one point he lumps homosexuality in with sexual fetishes, so I don't know if it dates the book or is a reflection of the author's sensibilities.

Ganger (Ball Lightning) (2000) by Nalo Hopkinson (5 stars) - Wow, creepy, sensual, what-the-f\*ck! Seems like Hopkinson may be an author to avoid late at night! But I'm definitely a fan.

The Becoming (2000) by Akua Lezli Hope (4 stars) - Very short and efficient; great world-building considering the brevity - I especially loved the realistic slang. Had to take a point off because I did not understand Jason's role in the story, the mystery strayed too far into confusion by the end. But the punchline is great, especially if you've never read the concept before. A later short story by a different author developed this idea further, but it's a spoiler for this story so read at your own risk ((view spoiler))

The Goophered Grapevine (1887) by Charles W. Chestnutt (4 stars) - Somewhat anticlimactic ending, but a great atmospheric tale, with some fun imagery. Particularly interesting for its historical value, as it is written two decades after and makes reference to the Civil War. Much of the narration uses the vernacular of Blacks in the South at the time, which makes it slightly difficult to read, but adds a bit of realism. Also interesting is that it is told from the perspective of a white man, even though the author is Black. Evidently he received a rare acclaim in his day from the white community, and much seemed to be made of the fact of his mixed heritage, and how he could "pass" for white.

The Evening And The Morning And The Night (1987) by Octavia E. Butler (5 stars) - I'm always enthralled by the ethical and philosophical pondering in Ms. Butler's work, and this one is no exception. It has a bit of flavor of Beggars in Spain (or the reverse, since this was written first), and I would have been interested in staying longer in this world.

Twice, at Once, Separated (2000) by Linda Addison (5 stars) - Beautiful story where, surprisingly, I didn't mind the combination of science fiction with fantasy and thought it worked to enhance both. Nice coming of age tale and left me wanting to know more about this world. I was so caught up in the mystery that I almost didn't realize what a female-empowering story it is.

Gimmile's Songs (1984) by Charles R. Saunders (3 stars) - This is a tough one. The writing and storyline for the most part was a solid 4 stars. But I'm inclined to give it 2 stars because of its horrible rape apologist message. ((view spoiler)) Disappointing because otherwise it is a strong story with a competent and independent woman protagonist.

At the Huts of Ajala (1996) by Nisi Shawl (3 stars) - The writing is great, and the story engaging, but not much happens in this short parable and I think it would work better as a preface to a more interesting novel. Will look for more from this author, though.

The Woman in the Wall (2000) by Steven Barnes (5 stars) - This is almost straight literary fiction, with only a vague speculative twist in the nature of the camps where the story takes place. So 5 stars for the story, but maybe 2 stars to the editor for its inclusion in this collection. I thought I was going to hate this one because the topic is so depressing, but the events construed to create a very moving commentary on relationships, ethics, and sacrifice.

Ark of Bones (1974) by Henry Dumas (4 stars) - Not quite clear what is going on here, but the writing is lyrical and the symbolism feels weighty: you don't even have to "get it" to get it.

Butta's Backyard Barbecue (2000) by Tony Medina (4 stars) - Brief but vibrant mixtape of music and art related references, with bits of humor, all at a backyard barbecue.

Future Christmas (1982) by Ishmael Reed (3 stars) - Hmm, seems like it is posing some interesting ideas here, but I found it a bit hard to follow. This is an excerpt from The Terrible Twos, and it definitely did not work as a short story the way the earlier excerpt from Black No More did.

At Life's Limits (2000) by Kiini Ibura Salaam (4 stars) - Took me a minute to get into it but this was fantastical and compelling. I really wanted to know more about this world, and I only took off a star because I was left with too many questions. Very memorable.

Excerpt from The African Origins of UFOs (2000) by Anthony Joseph (3 stars) - This was a tough one, because it is clear there is literary genius going on here - there are more ideas and allusions presented in six sentences than some books have in six chapters, but it is not entirely comprehensible. I'm not sure if that is me, the author, or the fact that this is an excerpt. Probably a bit of all three. I can see why it needs to be in the collection, but wow I found it hard to absorb.

The Astral Visitor Delta Blues (2000) by Robert Fleming (4 stars) - Nice Twilight Zone moment captured here. I was actually most impressed by how well the author conveyed the environment at the bar, but the contrast with the SF piece was stirring, too.

The Space Traders (1992) by Derrick Bell (5 stars) - Holy Mother of !! What an amazing piece. Probably 10 stars. This shows completely the potential of what SF can do when applied to questions of the African diaspora. Very typical sci-fi presentation, and yet not typical at all.

The Pretended (2000) by Darryl A. Smith - (5 stars) - Wow, they are clearly saving the most profound pieces for the end. This one was amazing. Another 10 stars. And that ending. Wow.

Hussy Strutt (2000) by Ama Patterson (4 stars) - This is clearly a great writer, and the atmosphere she has created here is nightmarish and visceral. There is no info dump; instead the story gradually brings you into the center of things. The problem is, we never quite got there and I couldn't figure out what the situation actually was, and I have no idea what happened at the end.

Non-Fiction:

Racism and Science Fiction (1999) by Samuel R. Delany (4 stars) - Very insightful and accessible discussion

of race/racism from the person often described as "the first African-American science fiction writer", a label he treats with irony. The everyday examples may (or may not) help people understand the difficulties of trying to get beyond race as a writer of color in any genre.

Why Blacks Should Read (and Write) Science Fiction (2000) by Charles R. Saunders (3 stars) - There is some nice name-dropping here, for Black authors to follow up on, but the essay seemed to meander quite a bit, and he seemed to randomly focus on specific items with no smooth connections between them.

Black to the Future (2000) by Walter Mosley (4 stars) - There is not much of a chance to develop his ideas here, as the essay is only 3 pages, but he made some important connections between imagination and breaking barriers, and the last paragraph is sublime.

Yet Do I Wonder (1994) by Paul D. Miller (3 stars) - Very poetic and at times enlightening, but his metaphors were too much for my comprehension much of the time. Still, I'm glad I got to that last paragraph where he compares "flava" to Arrakis spice!

The Monophobic Response (1995) by Octavia E. Butler (5 stars) - Just two pages, but a very poignant and effective look at the meaning of alienness. Actually made me tear up more than once; what a loss her death was.

Contributors (4 stars) - This section gave details on the authors, their backgrounds, and some of their works. I found it immensely helpful and referred to it many times while making my way through the collection. It helped cement the names into my memory, and see the connections and other possibilities for future reading.

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## **Mike Franklin says**

Sister Lilith: Honoree Jeffers P 4 Interesting take on the Genesis Lilith story.

The Comet: W E B Du Bois 4 Classic style sf piece addressing racism

Chicago 1927: Jewelle Gomez P 2 frankly rather lame and amateur urban fanatsy peice with black oh so nice and good vampire. Overtones of lesbian sexual fantasy that never goes anywhere and contributes nothing to the very weak story.

Black No More: George Schuyler P 4 An interesting satirical piece on social displacement if a black person is suddenly turned into a caucasian.

Separation Anxiety: Evie Shockley (P) 3 written in 2000 set in 22nd Century; and they don't seem to have mobile phones. the futuristic dystopian setting ofhtis story was interesting however that major plot hole blows what was a pretty pathetic plot completely out of the water.

Tasting Songs:Leone Ross P 1 not only was this a heavily drawn out idea that wasn't that impressive to start with but also I can see no way at all that this story could be classed as the least bit speculative.

Can You Wear My Eyes: Kalamu ya Salaam (P) 2 Utterly ridiculous foundation but with an interesting idea built on it.

Like Daughter: Tananarive Due P 3 Interesting idea but overly drawn out. It could have been half the length and said as much, probably with more impact.

Greedy Choke Puppy: Nalo Hopkinson 3 Another variation on the vampire but at least a little more interesting this time.

Rythm Travel: Amiri Baraka P 1 blessedly short.

Buddy Bolden: Kalamu ya Salaam (P) 1 New age astral travelling claptrap.

Aye, and Gomorrah: Samuel R Delany P 3 This one was actually half decent and if it had focused on something of more significance than sexual perversion could have been quite interesting.

Ganger (Ball Lightning): Nalo Hopkinson P 3 Despite the over use of purple prose this worked quite well. The juxtaposition of eroticism with horror was good. If the author's prose had been reeled in a little would have been 4.

The Becoming: Akua Lezli Hope P 2 A strong idea but the story was rather confused. Not helped by more of the black dialect writing.

The Goophered Grapevine: Charles W Chestnutt P 4 A great old (1887) voodoo type story. Again difficult to read the slave dialect.

The Evening And The Morning And The Night: Octavia E Butler P 5 First really good story, interesting idea and an interesting plot and well written.

Twice, at Once, Separated: Linda Addison P(ss) 4 An interesting variation on the generation ship theme.

Gimmile's Songs: Charles R Saunders P 5 Very good S & S story in the spirit of REH.

At the Huts of Ajala: Nisi Shawl (P) 3 Moderate interesting and well written voodoo story.

The Woman in the Wall: Steven Barnes P 4 Really a very good story but nothing about it justifies its inclusion in a book of speculative fiction.

Ark of Bones: Henry Dumas P 4 Very good ghost story of a sort.

Rutta's Backyard Barbecue: Tony Medina P 1 Blissfully short.

Future Christmas: Ishmael Reed P 2 Extract from a book and maybe that's why it was completely confusing. I couldn't see what it was trying to say. The novel is supposed to be a satire but, for me, the satire fell completely flat in this story. Not to mention continuity errors.

At Life's Limits: Kiini Ibura Salaam P 1 I couldn't finish it.

The African Origins of UFOs: Anthony Joseph (P) 1 I couldn't finish it

The Astral Visitor Delta Blues: Robert Fleming P 2 At least I finished this one. Weak story that never actually said anything wrapped up in black Delta culture.

The Space Traders: Derrick Bell P 3 Interesting if somewhat implausible idea which could have been very interesting if it could only have made up its mind as to whether it was a story or an essay on racism and the law. Note the author is a professor of law.

The Pretended: Darryl A Smith (X) 1 Couldnt' make head nor tail of it.

Hussy Strutt: Ama Patterson X 1 Confusing and I don't really know what it was about other than racism.

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