



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

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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** From Aspect - Warner Books Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Dark matter: the nonluminous matter, not yet detected, that nonetheless has detectable gravitational effects on the universe.

Dark matter: the Afro-American presence and influences unseen or unacknowledged by Euro-American culture.

*Dark Matter*: the first anthology to illuminate the presence and influence of black writers in speculative fiction, with 25 stories, three novel excerpts, and five essays.

This anthology's critical and historical importance is indisputable. But that's not why it will prove to be the best anthology of 2000 in both the speculative and the literary fiction fields. It's because the stories are great: entertaining, imaginative, insightful, sharply characterized, and beautifully written. The earliest story in *Dark Matter* is acclaimed literary author Charles W. Chesnutt's "The Goophered Grapevine" (1887), in which an aging ex-slave tells a chilling tale of cursed land to a white Northerner buying a Southern plantation. In "The Comet" (1920), W.E.B. Du Bois portrays the rich white woman and the poor black man who may be the only survivors of an astronomical near-miss. In George S. Schuyler's "Black No More" (1931), an excerpt from the satirical novel of the same name, an African American scientist invents a machine that can turn blacks white. More recent reprints include science fiction master Samuel R. Delany's Nebula Award-winning "Aye, and Gomorrah..." (1967), which delineates the socio-sexual effects of asexual astronauts; Charles R. Saunders's heroic fantasy "Gimmile's Songs" (1984), in which a woman warrior encounters a singer with a frightening, compelling magic in ancient West Africa; MacArthur Genius Grant recipient Octavia E. Butler's powerful "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" (1987), in which the cure for cancer creates a terrifying new disease of compulsive self-mutilation; and Derrick Bell's angry, riveting "The Space Traders" (1992), in which aliens offer to trade their advanced technology to the U.S. in exchange for its black population. Other reprints include "Ark of Bones" (1974) by author-poet-folklorist Henry Dumas; "Future Christmas" (1982) by master satirist Ishmael Reed; "Rhythm Travel" (1996) by playwright-poet-critic Amiri Baraka (who has also written as LeRoi Jones and Imam Amiri Baraka); and "The African Origins of UFOs" (2000) by London-based West Indian author Anthony Joseph.

Most of the stories in *Dark Matter* are original; these range even more widely in their concerns and themes. In the generation ship of Linda Addison's "Twice, at Once, Separated," a Yanomami Indian tribe preserves its culture in coexistence with technology, while visions tear a young woman from her own wedding. Bestselling novelist Steven Barnes examines degrees of privilege and deprivation when an African American woman artist is trapped in an African concentration camp in his unflinching contribution, "The Woman in the Wall." In John W. Campbell Award winner Nalo Hopkinson's sexy, scary "Ganger (Ball Lightning)," two lovers drifting apart try to reconnect through the separation of virtual sex. A mystic power awakens in the devastated future of Ama Patterson's gorgeous and tough "Hussy Strutt." An artist's infidelity changes two generations in Leone Ross's astute, magic-realist "Tasting Songs." In Nisi Shawl's sharp, witty mythic fantasy "At the Huts of Ajala," the spirit of a modern woman must outwit a god before she is even born. Others contributing new stories are Tananarive Due, Robert Fleming, Jewelle Gomez, Akua Lezli Hope, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, Kalamu ya Salaam, Kiini Ibura Salaam, Evie Shockley, and Darryl A. Smith. -- *Cynthia Ward*

### From Publishers Weekly

The striking central metaphor that Thomas (who edits the literary journal *Anansi: Fiction of the African Diaspora*) chose for this first collection of SF stories and essays by black authors is "dark matter," the scientific term for a non-luminous form of matter not directly observed, but whose existence is deduced from its gravitational effects on other bodies. Ranging from Charles Chestnutt's self-parodying 1887 tale "The Goophered Grapevine," to more than a dozen brilliantly diverse selections dated 2000, this big anthology includes 26 stories and excerpts from two novels, as well as five thoughtful essays from the leading black authors in the field. Accurately observing in her introduction that black writers have been engaged with speculative fiction for far longer than is generally thought, Thomas hopes her collection will inspire more black authors to enter the field, since, as Walter Mosley observes in his essay "Black to the Future," this genre speaks clearly to the dissatisfied through its power to imagine the first step in changing the world. Almost all of these stories explore the profound sense of loss central to the "black diaspora" Dloss of self-respect, loss of identity, loss of a sense of humanity itself. In manyDnotably "Sister Lilith," Honoree Fanonne Jeffers's biting contemporary vision of Eve as Adam's trophy wife, Samuel R. Delany's widely praised "Aye, and Gomorrah," where sexuality is sacrificed to spacefaring, and Steven Barnes's searing "The Woman in the Wall," which hurls an American black woman artist into a hellish African concentration campDthe brutal common denominator is the depredation of the soul through the violation of the body. Several of these stories are almost unbearably poignant, like Ama Patterson's "Hussy Strut," and many are ferociously angry, like Derrick Bell's savage "The Space Traders." All manifest a powerful effect, far stronger for being largely unacknowledged, and perhaps heralding, as Mosley projects, a coming explosion of black SF. Agent, Marie Dutton Brown. (July)

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### From Library Journal

Ranging in variety from the lilting cadence of Nalo Hopkinson ( *Greedy Choke Puppy* ) to the understated bleakness of Derek Bell ( *The Space Traders* ), this collection of 28 tales by African American sf and fantasy authors showcases a wealth of talent that spans over 100 years. Including early stories by Charles W. Chestnutt (1887) and W.E.B. Du Bois (1920) as well as contributions from Olivia Butler, Samuel Delaney, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and other modern authors, this anthology contains a broad diversity of styles and subjects. A selection of essays provides thoughtful commentaries on the state of speculative fiction and the significant, and often overlooked, contributions made by African Americans to the genre. Highly recommended for most libraries! sf or short story collections.

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