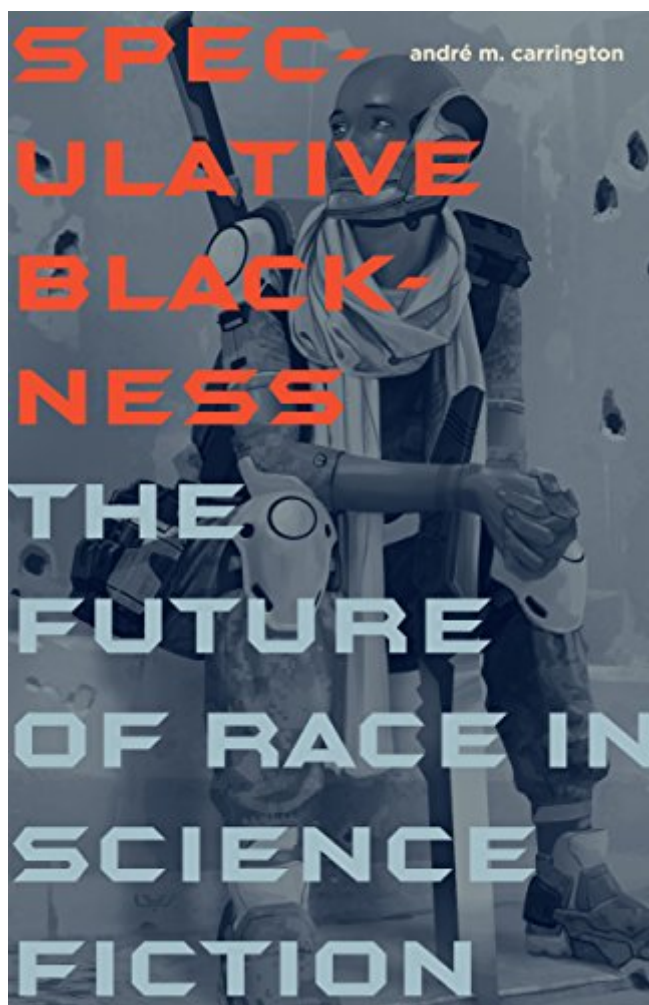


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Speculative Blackness: The Future Of Race In Science Fiction



Synopsis

In *Speculative Blackness*, André M. Carrington analyzes the highly racialized genre of speculative fiction—including science fiction, fantasy, and utopian works, along with their fan cultures—to illustrate the relationship between genre conventions in media and the meanings ascribed to blackness in the popular imagination. Carrington's argument about authorship, fandom, and race in a genre that has been both marginalized and celebrated offers a black perspective on iconic works of science fiction. He examines the career of actor Nichelle Nichols, who portrayed the character Uhura in the original *Star Trek* television series and later became a recruiter for NASA, and the spin-off series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, set on a space station commanded by a black captain. He recovers a pivotal but overlooked moment in 1950s science fiction fandom in which readers and writers of fanzines confronted issues of race by dealing with a fictitious black fan writer and questioning the relevance of race to his ostensible contributions to the fanzines. Carrington mines the productions of Marvel comics and the black-owned comics publisher Milestone Media, particularly the representations of black sexuality in its flagship title, *Icon*. He also interrogates online fan fiction about black British women in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the *Harry Potter* series. Throughout this nuanced analysis, Carrington theorizes the relationship between race and genre in cultural production, revealing new understandings of the significance of blackness in twentieth-century American literature and culture.

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Customer Reviews

Great add to collection

If you've found your way to this title and actually are taking time to read any reviews, chances are this book is for you. For fans of sci-fi, fantasy and related geekdoms this is a book that takes you seriously. Now Carrington doesn't promise to get to every single Fandom subcategory, but you've got your Star Trek, Sci Fi Mags, Comic Books (Marvel and DC, well sort of DC), Harry Potter, novelizations, and Buffy Too and those are just the touchstones. You've got letters, phantom fans, digital archives -- it's an intelligent geekdom discussion salad bar. For those most interested in Blackness, Af-Am Studies and related literary fields this is a work that illuminates a broadening vision of "the black experience". There's good discussion here on a diverse constellation of texts, all of which intersect with "blackness" in fascinating ways. And in a similar turn, the frame Carrington builds here also can help "make meaning" out of flashes of the fantastic that pop up in canonized black lit like Morrison and such. For academics I can't claim to know how this book fits in the current winds of academic discourse, but it seems to me Carrington has laid out a successful argument for thinking about genre writ large -- Let's take this category known as Speculative Fiction and this category known as Blackness, and admit that they have porous, contested, interrelated, contradictory definitions. And with this understanding as the anchor for the lens of inquiry, we go through close readings of a diverse cross-section of texts (and their material conditions of reception and production) that illuminate a world of SF that is much more astounding and engaging than what SF may seem to be at face value (i.e. just pulp.). For me as a black sci-fi writer this book has laid out a useful frame for thinking about my own work, especially in relation to the broader SF Universe. It's a context-setting

text that successfully weaves together disparate elements of what it can mean to claim both blackness and SF. So yes! Useful book. Lots of fascinating nuggets. And a productive frame for re-thinking and repurposing all sorts of creative and intellectual pursuits.

This is an extremely smart discussion of race and science-fiction fandom. It thoughtfully discusses downsides like the way Uhura in Star Trek was marginalized, or how Storm in the X-Men is based on stereotypes. But it also talks about how black fans find interest and inspiration in these characters, and rework them or rethink them in novelizations, fan fiction, and sometimes in canon. I was lucky enough to interview Andre; our discussion provides a good summary of the book's content and approach:

[...] <https://randomnerds.com/an-interview-with-dr-andre-carrington-author-of-speculative-blackness-the-future-of-race-in-science-fiction/>

I am the author of the book *The Politics of Star Trek: Justice, War, and the Future* (2015). I note on page 2 "That Uhura had a minimal role in the show's plots is neither here nor there as a true racist stance would never afford a bridge officer position to an African-American. Also noteworthy is the fact that an African-American actor (in the original series) plays one of the Federation's leading scientific minds (The Ultimate Computer 1968)." Also, Carrington fails to discuss the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* characters of Geordi Laforge; Worf; and Guinan (all played by African-American actors). "These characters are admirable examples of the highest intelligence, fortitude, and integrity" (page 2). Carrington makes the following unfounded, baseless claim: "Star Trek is a discovery narrative, imaging a new age of exploration modeled on European colonial expeditions" (page 161). As I explain in *The Politics of Star Trek* (chapter one), original series episodes are perhaps the most powerful and clear-throated critiques of empire and colonialism in all of popular culture: "Mirror, Mirror", "Arena", "Private Little War", "A Piece of the Action", "The Paradise Syndrome", "Patterns of Force", "Friday's Child". All these episodes to one degree or another take aim at Western colonialism.

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