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## FUTURIST FICTION & FANTASY The *Racial* Establishment

by Gregory E. Rutledge

*"I don't like movies when they don't have no niggers in 'em. I went to see, I went to see "Logan's Run," right. They had a movie of the future called "Logan's Run." Ain't no niggers in it. I said, well white folks ain't planning for us to be here. That's why we gotta make movies. Then we'll be in the pictures."*

—Richard Pryor in "Black Hollywood"  
from *Richard Pryor: Bicentennial Nigger* (1976)

Futurist fiction and fantasy (hereinafter referred to as "FFF") encompasses a variety of subgenres: hard science fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, sword-and-sorcerer fantasy, and cyberpunk.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, even though nearly a century has expired since the advent of FFF, Richard Pryor's observation and a call for action is still viable. Despite the growing number of Black FFF writers, the proportion of Black FFF authors to White FFF authors is dismal. This disproportion means that Black FFF authors have a limited presence in the industry. Thus, although Black FFF authors have produced novels falling into the last four FFF categories enumerated above, they have not produced a single hard-science fiction (hereinafter referred to as "hard SF") novel, although Samuel R. Delany, Jr., and Octavia E. Butler have incorporated hard science into their speculative fiction.<sup>2</sup>

One can easily understand why there are so few Black FFF authors. Given the tendency of many literary scholars and authors, Black and otherwise, to think of FFF as hedonistic, and the systemic racism of the FFF industry that persisted for many years, among other things, the resulting cosmology of constraint limited and limits the exploratory aspirations of many (diasporic) Africans.<sup>3</sup> For example, the thoughts of Ralph Ellison, perhaps the most significant African-American (male) creative writer of the 20th century, may be illustrative. In his 1980 introduction to *Invisible Man* (1952), he articulates his dilemma in conceptualizing his idea of the invisible man, admittedly a quite fanciful notion, and pairing it with racial issues:

It was, I thought, an intriguing idea for an American novel but a difficult task for a fledgling novelist. Therefore I was most annoyed to have my efforts interrupted by an ironic, down-home voice that struck me as being as irreverent as a honky-tonk trumpet blasting through a performance, say, of Britten's *War Requiem*. And all the more so because the voice seemed well aware that a piece of science fiction was the last thing I aspired to write. (xv)

Thus, Ellison seems to belittle, even if unintentionally, the potential and need for Black FFF. Ironically, the freedom *leitmotif* present in much Black canonical fiction, including *Invisible Man*, is not incompatible with the didacticism of the FFF genre. For FFF author and critic Joanna Russ, the uniqueness of “science fiction” is that it is quite “worshipful [] and religious in tone,” and thus connected to “human concerns” (556-57, 562). Fantasy is structured in similar manner. According to John Clute and John Grant, fantasy follows a pattern of

an earned passage from BONDAGE—via a central RECOGNITION of what has been revealed and of what is about to happen, and which may involve a profound METAMORPHOSIS of protagonist or world (or both)—into the EUCATASTROPHE, where marriages may occur, just governance fertilize the barren LAND, and there is a HEALING. (338-39, capitalization in original)

Morality (bondage and freedom), religion and the supernatural, and the human condition (healing and metamorphosis) have long been themes of African-American literature. The burgeoning presence of Blacks in FFF has strengthened these elements. Notwithstanding the didacticism underlying much of the FFF genre, several decades elapsed after the incipience of the genre in the 1920s before the first Black FFF writer, Samuel R. Delany, Jr., would appear. A chronological study of Black FFF would begin with the origins of fantasy, which predated FFF by many centuries.

While the futurist fiction genre arguably begins with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) (Aldiss, *Detached* 52),<sup>4</sup> the general consensus among fantasy historians and critics is that fantasy existed in virtually every culture, often in the oral tradition, far earlier. Much of this oral tradition arose out of folklore that was passed down through the ages as various nations adopted and altered it (Kratz 3-4, 9; Stableford 63). In contrast to realism and futurist fiction, which are supposedly tied to the realm of scientific possibility, fantasy may include impossibilities because it contains “irreducible” elements of a supernatural or magical nature (Kratz 3; Stableford 63-64). Because of its often radical departures from fact or truth, fantasy is often associated with the terms *secondary world* or *otherworld* (Clute and Grant 338). The link between *Otherness* and the otherworld phenomenon of both fantasy and futurist fiction is something with which many persons of African descent may identify. Relegated early to the position of the exotic *Other*, Africans and their descendants have been marked as the primitive for centuries.<sup>5</sup> Diasporic Africans have been the subjects of a protracted science fiction, or insidious fantasy, against which the slave narratives were some of the first counter-briefs. The early decades of FFF also necessitated the production of 20th-century counter-briefs by diasporic Africans.

The futurist fiction literary genre is a 20th-century phenomenon. According to Gregory Benford, a physicist and a much-laundered hard SF author, “[S]cience fiction arose in a time affected by science’s unsettling relations about ourselves, about our position in the natural order—and by relentless technology, science’s burly handmaiden. Science fiction has tried to grapple with ideas which disturb our sense of being at home in the world” (16). Kathryn Cramer sets the beginning of futurist fiction proper in the 1920s (25), as does David G. Hartwell, who claims futurist fiction began when Hugo Gernsback, editor for *Amazing Stories*, labeled the new genre as “scientification” in 1926 (31, 37). During the 1920s, Hartwell maintains, a growing split developed between high- (Modernist) and low- (popular or paraliterary) literature. Futurist fiction took the brunt of the split as H. G. Wells lost his long aesthetic battle to Henry James, who championed “art for art’s sake.” Wells proceeded to become a popular and successful author and one of the first authorities on futurist fiction technique. As Well’s proto-genre took shape, it evolved in antithesis to Jamesian Modernism by rejecting the valorization of style and

innovative content (Hartwell 36). According to Hartwell, clear definitions for futurist fiction would not arise until the mid-1930s when John W. Campbell, who prized scientific integrity in the new genre, assumed editorial responsibility for *Astounding Stories* (37).

Damon Knight, one of the foremost critics in the field in the 1940s to 1960s, holds futurist fiction to be no different than other genres—e.g., detective, romance, and mainstream fiction—in its relationship to the real world. The relationship of standard fiction to futurist fiction is, Knight believes, quite simple:

What we get from science fiction—what keeps us reading it, in spite of our doubts and occasional disgust—is not different from the thing that makes mainstream stories rewarding, but only expressed differently. We live on a minute island of known things. Our undiminished wonder at the mystery which surrounds us is what makes us human. In science fiction we can approach that mystery, not in small, everyday symbols, but in the big ones of space and time. (15)

Knight was confident in the growth of futurist fiction and its place in literature. Even when his essay containing this perspective appeared in 1956, Knight predicted that futurist fiction was “already moving out of the realm of disreputable forms” (15). Other futurist fiction critics and author-critics disagree. According to many of them, futurist fiction “generates a feeling of radical distance or escape from the real world” (Hartwell 32). For Samuel R. Delany, Jr., *speculative fiction*, as he preferred to call the genre, is radically different from standard fiction for reasons ranging from syntactic variation to thematic vistas to authorial function (*Science* 447-51). Joanna Russ agrees with Delany’s assessment. She notes that futurist fiction is highly didactic, and for any didactic work to be understood by its reader-critics, they must grasp its constitutive principles. Thus, Russ maintains, as science generates new paradigms, the vast majority of contemporary literary critics who lack a sufficient scientific understanding cannot credibly assay speculative fiction (556-67).

Although Russ’ polemic can be applied to futurist fiction generally, it is most directly relevant to hard SF. Hard SF valorizes the central tenet that scientific plausibility must constitute the guiding framework for the story. Although John W. Campbell promulgated its tenets in the 1930s, hard SF would not become a distinct FFF subgenre until the late 1950s or mid-1960s. Some critics see the establishment of hard SF as a conservative reaction to the New Wave literary movement, which embraced extra-scientific influences. According to David G. Hartwell, hard SF writers generally regard other futurist fiction as subordinate (31). Moreover, many hard SF authors decry the postmodern—e.g., structuralism and deconstruction—trend of speculative fiction (Benford 21-22).<sup>6</sup> If anything, Black FFF is definitely a postmodern phenomenon.

Before the emergence of the Black FFF tradition in the 1960s, the racial politics of the society at large exerted a strong influence on the publication policies of the industry. Not only were there no Black authors, but Black characters were a rarity. Black characters appeared in the fiction of White authors such as C. S. Lewis’ *Out of A Silent Planet* (1938), which features a Black protagonist, Theodore Sturgeon’s *More than Human* (1953), Robert Heinlein’s *Farnham’s Freehold* (1964), which is a novel in which Blacks in a future era are “the Chosen,” and Ursula K Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) (Govan 44). Although they are not malefactors, seldom did these characters enjoy more than secondary status. The reason for the dearth of Black characters is probably manifold. Sandra Govan, a literary scholar who has written on futurist fiction, suggests that to the extent racism was considered not to be a problem of the future, White authors merely ignored the implications of the non-articulation of Black being:

[S]cience fiction implies that the knots of terrestrial racism will eventually loosen because Terrans will have to unite against the aliens, androids, or BEMs [Bug-Eyed Monsters] of the galaxy. Under these circumstances, humans become remarkable for their humanity, not their ethnicity. Robert Scholes seems to have this concept in mind when he remarks that science fiction as a form “has been a bit advanced in its treatment of race and race relations. Because of their orientation toward the future, science fiction writers frequently assumed that America’s major problem in this area—black/white relations—would improve or even wither away.”<sup>7</sup> . . .

While Scholes and others conveniently assume that distinctions based on race will become invalid in possible future worlds and that it is therefore unnecessary for a character to have a distinct racial background, their presumed total eradication of distinctions based on color or ethnicity seems doubtful short of the Millennium. (44) (parenthetical added)

Hence, although the imaginative intent behind the raceless future is benign, it could well give rise to a White future that reinscribes existing racial divisions.

Another possible reason for the absence of Black authors lies in the publishing industry’s market-driven policy. In the United States, for example, with the exception of the performative aspects of the entertainment industry and arts (e.g., singing, dancing, and acting), the African-American presence has been strongly circumscribed by European-American culture. It was commonly believed that European-American FFF readers would not pay to read about the doings of Black characters. Sandra Govan reports that Richard Lupoffs *One Million Centuries* (1967) and Samuel R. Delany’s *Nova* (1968) were initially rejected because they contained Black protagonists (44). In a market where the readership was heavily male and European American, this reasoning seems valid. Implicit in Govan’s critique is that this position overlooks the relationship between media image and viewer interest, for if African Americans were proportionally represented, they probably would have been and would now be a larger part of the market. One need look no further than standard televised and cinematic representations of futurist-fiction futures—*Lost in Space* (1965-68), *Star Trek* (1966-69), *Battlestar Galatica* (1978), *Space: 1999* (UK, 1975-77), *Buck Rogers* (1939 film; 1979-81 serial), the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977, 1980, 1983), *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-94), *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993-1999), *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-), *Space: Above and Beyond* (1997), *Babylon 5* (1993-98), and *Lost in Space* the movie (1998)—to find evidence of the blanching of the future.<sup>8</sup> The tacit rationale for deemphasizing race because it would be irrelevant in a more advanced society, as has been argued, is specious at best. As Govan notes, since futurist fiction writers reinscribe into their futures quotidian vices such as greed, classism, and theft, then surely racism would be present, too (44).

An alternative reason why Blacks are not substantively part of the FFF genre is the history of fiction masquerading in the guise of science (e.g., Dr. Samuel George Morton’s 19th-century cranium-size studies). This *science* has been anathema to diasporic Africans’ attempts to abrogate their dehumanization by society. The strong connection between science and its print-media disseminators—i.e., (text)book, magazine, and newspaper publishers—underlies the currents of antagonism existing within the Black community. A counter-prejudice to these media and to science should be expected when the apex of thought, science, and the best purveyor of its advances, the print media, have frequently been hostile to diasporic Africans since the 18th century.<sup>9</sup> Many studies have documented the distrust African Americans bear toward science and medicine and the mass media for their negative portrayals of Blacks.<sup>10</sup> Still

the phenomenon of re-entrenching the prejudice continues, as ostensibly *scientific* works like *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (1994) continue to find dissemination within the publishing industry.

Diasporic Africans may also be under-represented as FFF authors for reasons correlated with socioeconomics, time, and freedom of thought. Wealth and security generate zones of freedom to indulge in speculative thought, reading, and writing. Futurist fiction is certainly a speculative enterprise most often well-developed in wealthy, technology-based societies possessed of substantial reflective time. Neither Black communities in Africa nor in the African diaspora, long encumbered with sociopolitical and socioeconomic travails, has had the opportunity to acquire the critical momentum to make speculative fiction a broad phenomenon. Indeed, James Weldon Johnson himself thought the same of the African-American literary canon in the 1920s. Speculating on the relative dearth of Black (literary) creativity in the United States *vis-à-vis* the belletristic output from other countries, Weldon posited the enervating effect of racism as the causal factor:

I know the question naturally arises: If out of the few Negroes who have lived in France there came a Dumas; and out of the few Negroes who have lived in England there came a Coleridge-Taylor; and if from the man who was at the time, probably, the only Negro in Russia [Alexander Pushkin] there sprang that country's national poet, why have not the millions of Negroes in the United States with all the emotional and artistic endowment claimed for them produced a Dumas, or a Coleridge-Taylor, or a Pushkin?

The question seems difficult, but there is an answer. The Negro in the United States is consuming all of his intellectual energy in this grueling race-struggle....

In considering the Aframerican poets of the Latin languages I am impelled to think that, as up to this time the colored poets of greater universality have come out of the Latin-American countries rather than out of the United States, they will continue to do so for a good many years. The reason for this I hinted at in the first part of this preface. The colored poet in the United States labors with limitations which he cannot easily pass over. He is always on the defensive or the offensive. The pressure upon him to be propagandistic is well nigh irresistible. These conditions are suffocating to breadth and to real art in poetry. (869, 879-80)

The rarity of the FFF genre in various *developing* countries throughout the world supports this conclusion.<sup>11</sup>

A final possible explanation for the nonBlack nature of FFF stems from the problem of objectivity, or the lack thereof; in Western science, especially the social sciences.<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, finding scientific methodology wanting, has advanced the notion of the *theorization effect* in *The Logic of Practice* (1980) to characterize the fallacious reasoning of various scientific disciplines. Bourdieu criticizes the tendency of the putatively objective scientific method to reduce the complexity of the *habitus*, or our perceptual world, to graphs and synoptic statements, a phenomenon that always benefits the observer (86). Western anthropologists have especially earned Bourdieu's ire (33, 68, 79). On a less broad scale, Marianna Torgovnick has presented a similar polemic with respect to the primitivization of nonWhite cultures by Western scientists, particularly anthropologists (7-8). Furthermore, in S. P. Mohanty's classic essay on the problems underlying relativism as an answer to past discrimination, she notes how the *rationality* underlying Western anthropology may fail to account for different modes of

cultural practice and belief not amenable to a logical hermeneutic (15-18). Indeed, the South African griot, Djeliba Mamoudou Kouyaté,<sup>13</sup> expresses what he considers to be the limitations of the foundation of Western science—writing—even more poignantly:

Other peoples use writing to record the past, but this invention has killed the faculty of memory among them. They do not feel the past anymore, for writing lacks the warmth of the human voice. With them everybody thinks he knows, whereas learning should be a secret. The prophets did not write and their words have been all the more vivid as a result. What paltry learning is that which is congealed in dumb books! (Niane 41)

Whether or not one subscribes to Griot Kouyaté’s belief in the fundamentally undermining nature of writing, he joins Torgovnick and Bourdieu in providing theoretical support for the proposition that Blacks and Western science have been at odds often.

The philosophy of the hard SF writers, who represent more traditional perspectives on the sciences and independent thought, would arguably conflict with the spiritual, interdependence-based *science* of the Black community. The devotion the hard sciences and hard SF entail might be especially inconsistent with Black theology. Kathryn Cramer notes the paradox hard SF presents for Black religion. Positing developments in physics as the source sustaining the viability of the human fascination with technology and its innovations, Cramer holds that

[t]his notion leads to one of hard sf’s paradoxes: If our faith in science replaces religious faith, science is co-opted into becoming a religion, which, of course, would be unscientific. . . . The primacy of *the sense of wonder in science* fiction poses a direct challenge to religion: Does the wonder of science and the natural world as experienced through science fiction replace religious awe? . . . The idea that in the future better and more scientific things will replace all the things we currently need and use—a cosmic belief in an ever-improving standard of living—constitutes what I call the *replacement principle* of sf. (28)

The question of more pointed significance to the Black community is whether the advent of and devotion to science—which has been used, as a *science fiction*, throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries to justify slavery and the inferiority of Blacks<sup>14</sup>—will undercut religion in the African diaspora. Religion has long occupied the central role in the freedom struggle of the Black community (Du Bois, *Souls* 211-20; Franklin 92-95, 146-47; Woodson 52-53). According to Hartwell, much of futurist fiction in the 1940s and 1950s elevated scientific knowledge above other systems of thought, and thus “a lot of it was xenophobic, elitist, racist, and psychologically naive” (38). Apparently, not even the recent unmasking of the widespread eradication or co-opting of diasporic scientific accomplishments engendered by the wave of Black studies programs initiated in the early 1970s has undone the Black community’s suspicion toward science.<sup>15</sup>

Despite such past conflicts between diasporic Africans and Western science, the futurist fiction genre has evolved and matured. As Hartwell notes, futurist fiction now includes “a mixture of literary influences . . . and paraliterary or extraliterary influences . . .” (39). Much of this *speculative fiction*, a term first coined by preeminent futurist fiction critics Damon L. Knight and Judith Merrill, was written in response to the White supremacist bent of John W. Campbell’s

magazine, *Astounding Stories* (38). Notwithstanding the changes in futurist fiction, there are still no Black hard SF writers and only a handful of Black FFF writers nearly forty years after Delany published his first FFF novel.

Although no self-described African-American speculative fiction author predated the arrival of Delany, elements of both speculative fiction and fantasy nevertheless manifest themselves in African-American writing well before Delany arrived with the *New Wave* futurist fiction movement of the 1960s. In his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Frederick Douglass used a mystical root as an element of romantic fantasy to pique and hold the interest of his readers. Not long after he was whipped for the first time ever, Douglass received the root from a fellow slave to evoke spirits to ward off further whippings (49). Though he later decried the incident as mere superstitious nonsense, Douglass nevertheless conceded that no one whipped him ever again (50). The context for Douglass' use was nothing less than his very own physical freedom: the quintessence of what theologian Robert Cummings Neville calls the *cosmology of freedom*. The use of science (as a) fiction in a Black author's novel first appeared in 1931 with the publication of George Samuel Schuyler's *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free*. Schuyler worked with the *leitmotif* of "colorphobia among Blacks and whites" (Gayle 127) to satirize the penchant of African Americans to seize upon even the most unscientific invention to escape their physical features. In *Black No More*, a Harlem-born, German-trained physician invents a process for bleaching away the melanin in African Americans. The process itself, which reflects the Modernist fascination with technology, is fantastic. Max Disher, Schuyler's protagonist, finds the Black No More, Inc. sanitarium where he undergoes his treatment to be unlike anything he had encountered before:

He quailed as he saw the formidable apparatus of sparkling nickel. It resembled a cross between a dentist's chair and an electric chair. Wires and straps, bars and levers protruded from it and a great nickel head-piece, like the helmet of a knight, hung over it. The room had only a skylight and no sound entered it from the outside. Around the walls were cases of instruments and shelves of bottles filled with strangely colored fluids. . . . [A] blue-green light would ever and anon blaze through one of the doorways as a patient was taken in. There was a low hum and throb of machinery and an acrid odor filled the air. Uniformed nurses and attendants hurried back and forth at their tasks. Everything was quiet, swift, efficient, sinister. (21-22)

Schuyler's novel uses *speculative* fiction elements for his satire, which is arguably the first Black speculative fiction novel, even if the author did not envision it as such. According to literary critic Ben Lawson, because of the satirical nature of *Black No More*, the novel "does not come immediately to mind as pre-eminently a work of science fiction" (94). Lawson finds this problem even more manifest in the second-ever Black speculative fiction and fantasy novel, Schuyler's *Black Empire* (1991).<sup>16</sup> Written under the pseudonym Samuel I. Brooks, *Black Empire* presents a scenario where the Black Empire, an advanced "near-future utopia" (Lawson 98), uses futuristic technology and sophisticated espionage in its war with a covetous Western Europe. Despite appearing as what Henry Louis Gates, Jr., terms "'an Afrocentrist's dream,'" (Lawson 96),<sup>17</sup> Schuyler's remarks about *Black Empire* make his actual intent abundantly clear. As Lawson notes, Schuyler was "greatly amused by the public enthusiasm" for the book, "[W]hich is a hokum and hack work of the purest vein. I deliberately set out to crowd as much race chauvinism and sheer improbability into it as my fertile imagination could conjure. The

result vindicates my low opinion of the human race" (96).<sup>18</sup> Schuyler has fallen into relative obscurity and now receives less critical attention because of his ideological battles with Langston Hughes and his increasingly conservative stance on race (Gates and McKay 1171).<sup>19</sup> Lawson is again helpful in explaining why Schuyler's speculative fiction, especially *Black Empire*, has been subject to what Sandra Govan, speaking of the lack of attention given Delany's works, calls a "critical astigmatism" (Govan 43):

To write a science-fictional racist diatribe packed with "displays of bravery and romance that leap out of the popular imagination of the day", then simply to reverse the colors, was not to domesticate an African-American form or make the characters convincing. Texts yield answers only to the questions we ask of them. To the few non-white readers of 1936, therefore, the futuristic format might co-opt other meaning and render it innocuous by communicating altogether something else about African-American culture: that a worthy and advanced black civilization can exist only as a science-fictional fantasy. (97)<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding this perspective that troubled so many African Americans, Schuyler is important because he was the first Black author to appropriate the tropes of FFF. Moreover, Schuyler "inadvertently discovered how readers might take African-American futurist fiction, and certainly furthered the 'trend away from the old caricatures' (even the caricatures of *Black Empire* are not the *old* caricatures)" (Lawson 100). But, Schuyler's foray into FFF, even as a satire, was too prescient for either White or Black audiences. The genre would not witness another Black voice for more than three decades.

Beginning in the 1960s, Black FFF began its ascent with the arrival of Samuel R. Delany, Jr., the Father of Black FFF literature and criticism. Before then, futurist fiction had provided little more than token obeisance to the plurality of society, and few futurist fiction novels contained Black characters. Even fewer had Black protagonists. As one would expect given the sociopolitical climate, few of these novels addressed questions of racial or ethnic discrimination. Such was the state of futurist fiction when Delany, a prolific writer since his adolescence, began publishing in the early 1960s. He has established himself as one of the most prolific and lauded among the contemporary African- and European-American FFF authors. In the 1960s and early to mid-1970s, Delany was an undisputable master of speculative fiction plots, which do not rely on the hard sciences. Rather, they draw on the soft sciences—e.g., sociology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, semiotics (Benford 15, 16; Hartwell 31). In accord with the turbulent times of the 1960s and 1970s, Delany's work was highly sociopolitical. The ingenious level of allegory and metaphor underlying some of his novels evidenced the concerns of an intelligent African American gazing on those times and speculating a way toward a better world (Rutledge, *Black* 2000). In this sense, one might describe Delany as the architect of the Black Futurist Fiction/Fantasy Movement, not unlike LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka's role relative to the Black Arts/Power movements. Following a frenetic pace set from the time he first published a novel at the age of nineteen, Delany published more than ten novels—*The Jewels of Aptor* (1962), *The Ballad of Beta-2* (1965), *City of a Thousand Suns* (1965), *Babel-17* (1966), *The Einstein Intersection* (1968), *Nova* (1968), *The Towers of Toron* (1968), *The Fall of the Towers* (1970), *Driftglass* (1971), *The Tides of Lust* (1973), *Dhalgren* (1975)—before the second Black FFF author, Charles Robert Saunders, published a nonfiction study of Robert E. Howard in 1976.<sup>21</sup> During this period, Delany received two Hugo Awards (selected by futurist fiction readers) and four Nebula Awards (selected by futurist fiction writers and critics).

Because of this success and his youth, Delany quickly ensconced himself in the FFF genre as one of the major new voices. As critics note, his writing was not only amazingly fresh (Aldiss, *Trillion* 291) and his pen fecund,<sup>22</sup> but his complex plots were rife with theoretical concepts interwoven with material from his background in physics. For example, *The Jewels of Aptor* (1962) addresses ecology in the nuclear age (Govan 45); *Babel-17* (1966) explores issues of semiotics and power (Govan 45; Malmgren 8; Slusser 30); and, *The Einstein Intersection* (1967) works foremost with questions concerning mythology and religion (Govan 45). In 1976, Delany published *Dhalgren*, which critics hailed as the novel establishing him as a “major American writer” (Gates, McKay 2342). But Delany’s prolific pen did not stop, for in 1976 he also published *Triton*, a novel he uses to explore some of the feminist issues popular at the time; in 1977, he published a collection of short stories called the *Tales of Nèverjón*, which was a fusion of sword-and-sorcery fantasy with philosophical issues; and, in 1983, the sword-and-sorcery novel, *Neveryóna* (1982), continued some of these themes. His next major work was the novel *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984), a speculative fiction text that contains, for the very first time, a protagonist who is entirely gay. In addition to these and other novels, Delany has published several nonfiction works<sup>23</sup> that place him among the top futurist fiction critics as well. As Black FFF author Charles R. Saunders describes him, and as his many awards and diversity of talents indicate,<sup>24</sup> Delany is a “formidable intellect” (Bell 91) who has contributed widely to the formation of a critical theory of futurist fiction.

In the mid-1970s, Delany was joined by Octavia E. Butler, a novelist who has won the Nebula and Hugo Awards, and been granted a McArthur “genius” award (1995), among other accolades. With the successful publication of Butler’s first novel, *Patternmaster* (1976), the direction of Black FFF would change yet again. Butler directly forced into the foreground concerns Delany had addressed surreptitiously in his novels of the 1960s. For example, Butler’s *Kindred* (1976) and *Wildseed* (1980) explore the antebellum era of the United States and recreate the brutality of slavery.<sup>25</sup> Continuing to articulate the issues of sexual exploitation and the conflicts addressing slave women first discussed by the slave narratives of such women as Harriet Jacobs,<sup>26</sup> Butler initiated the Black feminist phase of African-American FFF. Along with the works of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, *Kindred* has often been the focus of literary studies, Black feminist theory, and historical excavations of slavery.<sup>27</sup> Her protagonists are often strong-willed women caught between historical forces, which are strongly patriarchal. Although these forces present the most redoubtable challenges, some of which leave permanent physiological and psychological scars, these women nevertheless emerge triumphant. Unlike Delany, who used a variety of protagonists and surreptitiously addressed race, Butler’s novels foreground race and gender issues by combining speculative fiction with insightful perspectives on gender and ethnicity. Hence, Butler works with motifs such as a species of Blacks with superhuman abilities, a planet populated entirely by Blacks, the consequences of men suddenly being blessed or cursed with the ability to have children, and eugenics. Butler’s *Xenogenesis* trilogy—*Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1987), and *Imago* (1989)—involves the story of earth’s last remaining humans, placed in hibernation after the earth was nearly destroyed, being reawakened by an alien species. This three-gender species intends to breed with the humans and even marry them, provided humanity can abandon its fatal evolutionary flaw: violence. Butler’s largest body of related works is the *Patternist* saga—*Patternmaster* (1976), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Survivor* (1978), *Wild Seed* (1980), and *Clay’s Ark* (1984)—which tracks the deeds of a female demigod from late 17th-century Africa into the future. Her latest series is the *Parable* saga, *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998), which explores faith against the backdrop of the inner-city jungle. Butler has also written short fiction, including the very successful “Bloodchild,” which won the Nebula Award in 1984. She was awarded the Hugo award for “Speech Sounds” (1983), which is also a short story. Having

published her first novel as a result of attending a workshop, Butler has assisted other aspiring Black FFF authors, including Nalo Hopkinson.

By elevating the discourse on questions of gender and race, Butler set the foundation for a futurology on which many diasporic Africans had fantasized: the restoration of Africa as the *locus* of epic legends and mighty empires. Such was the task Charles R. Saunders, the first Black writer working exclusively in the sword-and-sorcery fantasy subgenre, set for himself in the early 1980s. Characterizing Butler as a truer “storyteller” than Delany (Bell 91), Saunders drew upon Africa’s ancient storytelling tradition for his *Imaro* trilogy—*Imaro* (1981), *Imaro II: The Quest for Cush* (1984), and *Imaro III: The Trail of Bohu* (1985). Working in a fantasy vein, Saunders was forced to confront the identification of Blackness as the *locus* of the primitive and evil and those qualities most associated with them: violence, deceit, hypersexuality, and irrationality. Ironically, some of these qualities have been appropriated to give life to some of the most recognizable *White* heroic figures—e.g., Robert E. Howard’s Conan and Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Tarzan—in fantasy literature. Saunders’ fantasy novels, which directly respond to this situation, are modeled after Conan and Tarzan. Using his fascination with African mythology, Saunders created Imaro, a protagonist not based on any specific figure, but traceable in various cultural traditions from Samson of the Old Testament to Beowulf and Kimera, a Ugandan mythical hero (Bell 91). In historical terms, Imaro is modeled on the person-become-legend, Shaka (or Chaka) Zulu, the great South African conqueror of the 19th century. Saunders’ novels differ from Burroughs’ African fantasies in one key manner: Africans are not demonized or dehumanized. Instead, Saunders delved deeply into the psychological impetus behind his protagonist, who often encounters sophisticated African civilizations and a complex cast of characters. *Imaro* was nominated in 1982 for the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award because of Saunders’ “innovative approach to heroic fantasy” (Bell 90). Saunders stopped publishing novels in 1985 even though “[h]is fiction was showing signs of growth when he ceased publishing” (Schweitzer, *Saunders* 514).<sup>28</sup> He remains one of the more obscure fantasy authors on both sides of the United States-Canada border.<sup>29</sup> Without question, Saunders is a key figure in Black FFF for he was the first author since Burroughs to make a serious attempt at reinstituting Africa as the fictive backdrop for a fantasy series (Schweitzer, *Saunders* 514).

Even as Delany turned his attention toward futurist fiction criticism and teaching college literature, and Saunders ostensibly ended his fantasy-writing career, other African-American FFF voices were already emerging. During the 1980s, Butler would obtain cult status among feminist readers, a considerable number of whom were African-American females. At the same time several new Black FFF voices appeared, among them Steven Emory Barnes. With the publication of *Dream Park* (1981), a game-world novel with plots driven by high technology, Barnes made his debut alongside co-author, Larry Nivens, who received top billing. The Nivens-Barnes collaboration has extended to the sequels to *Dream Park*, *The Barsoom Patrol*, published in 1989, and *Achilles’ Choice* (1991). Barnes has also collaborated with Jerry Pournelle, who joined the Nivens-Barnes duo to produce *The Legacy of Heorot* (1987), a novel drawing upon *Beowulf* for its plot of planetary exploitation. Barnes has not labored in the shadows of Nivens entirely. In the early 1980s Barnes emerged as the first African-American cyberpunk-*action* author. Cyberpunk is unique in that hip-hop culture often assumes a significant role in the plots, which often focus on the decay of humanity, especially the younger generation, and its embrace of cybernetic and cyberspace technology (Clute and Nicholls 288-90). Hence, Barnes’ novels emphasize techno body-shaping, mind-altering drugs, music and dance clubs, and a shadowy cityscape. Moreover, in contrast to the *inner-journey* plots of Delany and Butler in which action is frequently subordinate to psychological and intellectual drama and suspense, Barnes’ plots typically involve much more physicality.

Beginning with *Street Lethal* (1983), Barnes situated his work within a post-holocaust *inner-city* of 21st-century Los Angeles. Featuring the Black streetfighter Aubrey Knight as the protagonist, this novel is another milestone for Black speculative fiction and fantasy writers: *Street Lethal* documents the pernicious effects of Reaganomics on inner cities. Barnes limns the psychology of drug addiction and the dependencies created, the abandoned waifs who scavenge to survive, and the corrupt power structure thriving upon their exploitation. A Californian like Butler, Barnes was born and reared on the inner-city streets of south-central Los Angeles, the setting for several of his solo-authored novels.<sup>30</sup> Despite the urban setting and the strong African-American male and female characters, Barnes did not directly address the question of race in his novels until the release of *Blood Brothers* (1996). *Blood Brothers* represents Barnes' direct engagement with racism, a matter he said he had to overcome psychologically before he could write about it (Mooney B2). Barnes believes there are so few Blacks in FFF because of the racial bias of market forces:

'Black people, if they're going to work in that village [that produces society's mythologies], still have to write mythologies that are attractive to the groups that are controlling the media ["television, movies, books, New York and Hollywood"], which means they don't get to write about themselves being smart and brave and sexy.' . . . [T]hey get to write about white people being smart, brave, and sexy. And black people in general 'exist to get killed, to die heroically protecting white people,' especially in fantasy and action adventure, . . . 'I think that racism is primarily tribalism. . . . It's primarily due to the fact that the human perceptual apparatus works in two different basic ways: It notices the differences between' and the 'similarities between'. (Mooney B2)

Although as late as 1993 some critics claimed Barnes had "yet to speak in his own voice" (Clute and Nicholls 92), the 1996 release of his first hardcover futurist fiction novel, *Firedance*, has drawn him more attention.

Neither attention nor criticism has been a stranger to Derrick A. Bell, Jr., the first Black author to combine specific legal objectives with FFF.<sup>31</sup> Long known for his ideas concerning critical race theory, Bell took Black FFF in a new direction. Bell combined his legal wit and analysis with fantastic allegories and fables to argue that racism is not a transient social condition fading to nothingness, but an indelible problem the government should address as such (Greenhouse 7). A unique form of legal advocacy, Bell's quasi-fiction novel, *Faces At the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (1992), unites law and FFF. While some of the fables are normative fictional dialogues conveying various viewpoints on issues concerning race, two of them use fantastic frameworks whose plots renew the debates about forced recolonization and voluntary separatism that have long been present within society. "Afrolantica" is a story about the sudden and inexplicable surfacing of a lost continent in the Atlantic Ocean where conditions prevent anyone but Blacks from remaining, even when they use protective gear. African Americans are confronted with the question of whether to self-expatriate themselves *en masse* to escape the legacy of racism. In "Space Traders," Bell creates a plot extrapolating from the goal of the American Colonization Society. In the 19th century, this organization sought to solve the race problem by recolonizing all free African Americans, a plot later denounced as a plan to further entrench slavery by removing its most trenchant opponents. In Bell's 20th-century speculative fiction makeover, extraterrestrials offer the United States a panacea for its social, economic, and environmental problems in exchange for its African-American population. African Americans would be expatriated to a celestial destination and

unknown end. Bell has produced other quasi-fictional works of a less fantastic nature. The most recent, *Afrolantica Legacies* (1998), extends from the Afrolantica tale; it has not been as well received as its predecessor (Lewis 30).

The most recent Black FFF authors, all publishing their first FFF novels after 1996, constitute the most rapid appearance of new Black FFF authors in the short history of the genre. LeVar Burton—best known for his roles as Kunta Kinte in the 1977 television dramatization of Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976) and most recently as Lt. Commander Geordi LaForge of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*—is perhaps the most well-known of all the authors. Following in the footsteps of William Shatner, who is best known as Capt. James T. Kirk of the original *Star Trek* serial and subsequent movies, Burton has moved from directorial engagements with the *Star Trek* phenomenon to speculative fiction. His novel, *Aftermath* (1997), unfolds in a post-Holocaust Los Angeles. *Aftermath* follows the exploits of three people, an African-, European-, and Native American, who are attempting to save a United States decimated by the assassination of its president, a major earthquake in the Midwest, and socioeconomic collapse in the aftermath of the nation’s second civil war. His speculative fiction career has not generated much attention, despite endorsements from Barnes and Ben Bova.

The second member of this newest set of Black FFF authors, Nalo Hopkinson, has already made her mark by winning the Warner Aspect First Novel Contest and the Locus Award for *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998). Hopkinson ensures the continuation of a female voice in Black FFF. As a native West Indian, she has already introduced new elements into the genre. Afro-Caribbean gods enter the theatre of fiction as active participants in a manner respecting the traditional theology surrounding these deities. Hopkinson uses themes similar to those found in Butler’s *Parable* saga and Barnes’ cyberpunk novels. But by setting *Brown Girl* in Toronto instead of Los Angeles, Hopkinson assumes the vantage point of a single, unwed, Black mother attempting to reconcile tradition, modernity, and romance in an inner city *officially* severed from society. Race loses much of its centrality in Hopkinson’s novel as class warfare, often existing along ethno-racial fault lines, predominates.

The publication of Walter Mosley’s *Blue Light* (1998) could well be the most significant event for Black FFF yet. In *Blue Light*, a mysterious blue light from the firmament strikes the Earth and hyper-evolves those humans caught in its beam well beyond their former peers. Told by a biracial male, the novel ventures into questions of identity, race, and humanity probed by such notable novels as James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1923), and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952). Even more important than its connection to the canonical texts is the institutional significance of *Blue Light* as a Black FFF text. As the author of the very successful Easy Rawlins series, Mosley has seen one of his novels—*Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990)—converted to cinematic life in 1996. Moreover, former President William Jefferson Clinton has endorsed him as one of his favorite novelists. Mosley’s established name, which no doubt now has national as well as international recognition, may provide Black FFF greater legitimacy among the African- and European-American lay and academic communities. When Delany began writing in the early 1960s, his goal was to create classic works of literature respected by literary scholars. In some sense, the circle has been completed, for the Black FFF authors whose efforts made *Blue Light* a possibility likewise benefit from its release: Butler has released yet another novel, *Parable of the Talents* (1998), the much anticipated sequel to *Parable of the Sower* (1993), her preceding novel. Perhaps out of this synergy one is witnessing, as Mosley observed, “[T]he beginning of a new world of autonomy created out of the desire to scrap 500 years of intellectual imperialism” (33). Indeed, as the next millennium rushes forward, it is possible for one to say, of diasporic African arts and letters, it is going where no person has gone before.

NOTES

1. A hybrid genre lying midway between futurist fiction and fantasy may be what Benford calls "science fantasy," which "uses the trappings of hard sf—spaceships, jargon, high-tech ornaments—awash in the devices and thought patterns of fantasy. Galactic cultures coexist with feudal planets, complete with their swords, queens, and quests" (Benford 22). Although sure to draw criticism, I have left from the FFF ranks the horror genre, which the publishing industry classifies separately. Thus, the works of African-American horror novelist, Tananarive Due, are omitted from this historical summation.
2. Physics was one of Delany's early formative interests (Delany, *Motion* 9-10).
3. I use (diasporic) Africans here to avoid the chauvinistic exclusivity connoted by terms such as African American and Black American, for writers of African descent in Africa and the diaspora have engaged the FFF aesthetic in some form or fashion for decades.
4. This position is not without its detractors, for suspense author Stephen Marlowe argues that science fiction is "one of the genres Poe can be strongly argued to have invented" with the publication of his short story, "The Balloon-Hoax," in 1850.
5. Numerous scholarly works reconstruct the progression of the *exotic* African in European cultures from the Enlightenment in Europe to the antebellum South. See, e.g., Ruth Cowhig, "Blacks in English Renaissance Drama and the Role of Shakespeare's Othello"; Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama*; Elliot H. Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama*; and Alden T. Vaughn and Virginia Mason Vaughn, "Before Othello: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans."
6. Paradoxically, even though he is a speculative writer who uses the soft sciences to address social issues (postmodernism) and his early desire was to write works some day to be ranked among the literary classics (*Motion* 104), Delany also has problems with canonical tools used to assay futurist fiction. Consistent with his views noted above, Delany holds that standard literary techniques, including those wielded by academic critics, create a "rupture" when they are used in an analysis of a work of futurist fiction (*Science* 442-46). Likewise, Cramer notes the trend over the last decades in which the bond between science and futurist fiction has given way to the pairing of futurist fiction and literature. The result, she says, is "speculative fiction,"

a term more SF writers and critics prefer because the social position of a futurist is more desirable than that of a science-fiction writer. From this view, speculative fiction, which addresses not just the past and present, but also the glorious, mysterious future, is a much broader field than 'mainstream' (the sf world's dismissive term for nonscience fiction) set in the currently known or historically known world, usually involving only those characters and situations that we conceive of as appropriate to a realistic account. Thus defined, mainstream is a subset of science fiction, and the greats of literature are, intentionally or not, merely speculative fiction writers without much talent at speculation. . . . [W]hen [this definition of SF] is stripped of . . . technology oriented futurism it takes on a different meaning: Science is marginalized in favor of social extrapolation. (25)

This would thus seem to bring speculative fiction into a much closer relationship with the mainstream. Consequently, the *respectable* writing done under the rubric of *magic realism*, for example, takes on different perspective.

7. Govan cites from Robert Scholes, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*.
8. Avery Brooks, who occupies the role of Captain Benjamin Sisko on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, is the first of the *Star Trek* captains to be Black. His presence is a marked improvement over the previous two *Star Trek* series and the other speculative-fiction serials. A number of the plots have featured Captain Sisko in roles rarely addressed: racial discrimination, romance, and general issues concerning Black families. Nevertheless, the demographic constituency of this *Star Trek* and the other serials presents a disproportionately White Federation and alien worlds associated with it. Captain Sisko's unique status sends the message that he is special. The absence of a greater percentage of people of color in the Federation, a utopic society where intellectual

- accomplishment is the norm, still reflects the same insidious attitude toward Blacks.
9. Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1778) is one of the first *scientific* expressions of the inferiority of Blacks. David Walker's "Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World" (1829) early refuted the logic upon which Jefferson predicated his conclusion (Walker 185-88).
  10. There are numerous books, academic articles, news stories, and pamphlets written to address these issues directly and indirectly. For diasporic Africans and medicine and science, see, e.g., Edward H. Beardsley, *A History of Neglect*; Herbert M. Morais, *The History of the Negro in Medicine*; Clovis E. Semmes, *Racism, Health, and Post-Industrialism*; and, Judith L. Sylvia, *Directing Health Messages Toward African Americans*. For material on the negative portrayals of African Americans in the media, or their absence and under-representation, see, e.g., Bradley S. Greenberg, "Minorities and the Mass Media"; Robert B. Hill, "A 'Strength Perspective' on Black Families"; Charles Husband, ed., *White Media and Black Britain*; and, Tom Sherwood, "Jackson: Media Portrayal Keeps Blacks in Low Regard" (Jesse Jackson decries the media's portrayal of Blacks and their othering of him by referring to him as "black" but not calling his opponents, like Gary Hart and Walter F. Mondale, "white").
  11. In *post-apartheid* South Africa, for example, there are no Black FFF writers although the genre has been in existence for several decades. At present, only a small number of its Black writers—Zakes Mda and Chris van Wyk—include a moderate use of fantasy tropes to any significant degree. Their works are considered to use magic realism.
  12. A more contentious issue related to the question of objectivity stems from the belief that African-American philosophy is wholistic as opposed to linear, the mode characterizing Western thought and science (Harris 353-54; Norment 558; Van Deburg 59-60). Whereas Western epistemology emphasizes the individual and logic, the argument goes, African epistemology emphasizes the interdependence between individuals, living and dead, the community, and nature. As thus articulated, one could argue that Blacks consider certain scientific precepts, including those upon which speculative fiction stands to be, quite simply, wrong.
  13. According to Djibril Tamsir Niane in his book *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (1965), Kouyaté is an "obscure griot from the village of Djeliba Koro in the circumscription of siguiru in Guinea" (vii). By Kouyaté's own reckoning, his family has been the official griots of the Keita princes of Mali since "time immemorial" (Niane 1). Niane shares Kouyaté's disdain for Western semiotics, which "has taught us to scorn oral sources in matters of history, all that is not written in black and white being considered without foundation" (vii). The reason for the "parsimony" among the griots is their belief that "the Whites have vulgarized knowledge. When a White knows something everybody knows it" (Niane 92, note 51).
  14. The mid-19th-century studies of Samuel George Morton are the quintessence of this phenomenon. For a summary and critique of Morton's methodology and conclusions, see Stephen Jay Gould, "Morton's Ranking of Races by Cranial Capacity." Moreover, in *Black Skin. White Masks* (1967), Frantz Fanon reports the outcomes of two penile-length studies completed in the late 1940s, which is surely a variation of Morton's cranial-capacity studies. No differences were found in the penis sizes of Black and White men (170).
  15. For a synoptic discussion of the history of formation of Black Studies in colleges and universities in the United States of America, see William L. van Deburg, "The Development of Black Historical Studies in American Higher Education."
  16. *Black Empire*, which originally appeared as two separate stories, "The Black Internationale" and "Black Empire," was published in weekly installments in the Black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, between 1936 and 1938. Not until 1991 were the two stories published together as a novel (Lawson 96).
  17. Lawson quotes from Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "A Fragmented Man: George S. Schuyler and the Claims of Race."
  18. Lawson quotes from the afterword to *Black Empire* at page 260.
  19. For example, Langston Hughes' "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) was written in response to Schuyler's "The Negro-Art Hokum" (1926), in which Schuyler claimed there was no distinct and original African-American art form. Both works appeared in the same issue of the *Nation* magazine in June 1926 (Gates, McKay 1171).
  20. Lawson quotes from John A. Williams's afterword to *Black Empire* at page 260.
  21. Charles R. Saunders, *Robert E. Howard: Adventure Unlimited*. This followed Saunders' publication of his short story, "City of Madness" (1975), which was selected for publication in the DAW Books anthology edited by Lin Carter, *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories* (1975). Though he

published a futurist-fiction piece before Octavia E. Butler, Butler actually published several novels—*Patternmaster* (1976), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Kindred* (1979) and *Wildseed* (1980)—before Saunders' first fantasy novel, *Imaro* (1981), appeared.

22. Delany wrote five novels from 1962 to 1965, one of which he wrote in less than two weeks while in Europe. This incredible pace and his rather complex personal life took its toll, which contributed to his nervous breakdown. He wrote three other novels before the decade ended.
23. See, e.g., *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1976), a collection of thirteen essays; *The American Shore* (1977), a book-length study of a single 5,000-word short story; *Heavenly Breakfast* (1979), an autobiographical work on his time with the commune/rock group "heavenly Breakfast"; *Starboard Wine* (1983), another collection of essays on futurist fiction; and, *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988), which is an autobiography about his life in the East Village in New York in the early to mid-1960s.
24. Among other things, he has played in a rock band, edited a newsletter, directed a film, and been a scholar of literature at the State University of New York (1975-1977) and a professor of comparative literature at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, since then.
25. Delany's *Tales of Nèverjōn*, published in the year after Butler's first novel appeared, also tackled racial issues directly. Some of the short stories in *Nèverjōn* combined sword and sorcery with attacks on a feudal slave system.
26. Jacobs was the first African-American female slave to write a slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), although it was not the first to be published.
27. See, e.g., Missy Dehn Kubitschek, *Claiming the Heritage: African-American Women Novelist and History* ("What Would a Writer be Doing Out of a Slave Market': *Kindred* as Paradigm, *Kindred* in Its Own Write"); Patricia Maida, "*Kindred* and *Dessa Rose*: Two Novels that Reinvent Slavery"; Adam McKible, "These Are the Facts of the Darky's History': Thinking History and Reading Names in Four African American Texts," (analyzing *Kindred* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Gayl Jones' *Corregidora* [1975], and Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose* [1986]); and, Diana R. Paulin, "De-Essentializing Interracial Representations."
28. Saunders now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he's a copy editor and columnist with *The Daily News*. He wrote a review of the novel by the newest Black speculative fiction author, Nalo Hopkinson. See Charles Saunders, "Sci-fi minus alien works," rev. of *Brown Girl in the Ring*, by Nalo Hopkinson, *Daily News*, online, 12 July 1998.
29. Saunders is an expatriate from the United States to Canada, where he relocated in 1969 after receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Lincoln University. He has been a Canadian citizen ever since.
30. Like his protagonist, Barnes is a specialist in the martial arts: he has black belts in Kempo karate and judo, teaches tai chi, studied Filipino martial arts—stick fighting and knife fighting, and kick boxing—for three years, and he moved to Vancouver, Washington, after living in Los Angeles for forty-two years, to train in the Indonesian martial art, *pentjak silat* (Jewett A3; Mooney B2). Like many individuals who turn to the martial arts, Barnes did so because he was "the classic 90-pound weakling" in his youth (Mooney B2).
31. A former Harvard University law professor who, in 1971, was the first African-American Harvard law professor to receive tenure, Bell withdrew from, and later lost, his twenty-three year-old post in protest of the discriminatory tenuring practices of Harvard University (Greenhouse 7).

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