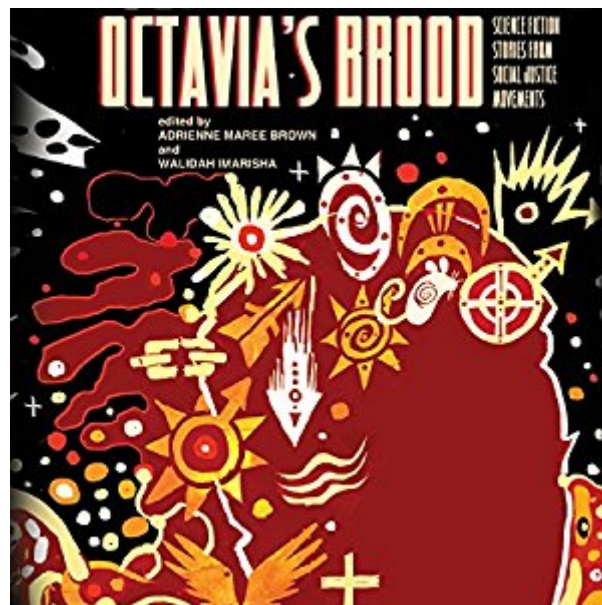




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Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories From Social Justice Movements



Synopsis

Whenever we envision a world without war, without prisons, without capitalism, we are producing speculative fiction. Organizers and activists envision and try to create such worlds all the time. Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown have brought 20 of them together in the first anthology of short stories to explore the connections between radical speculative fiction and movements for social change. The visionary tales of Octavia's Brood span genres - sci-fi, fantasy, horror, magical realism - but all are united by an attempt to inject a healthy dose of imagination and innovation into our political practice and to try on new ways of understanding ourselves, the world around us, and all the selves and worlds that could be. The collection is rounded off with essays by Tananarive Due and Mumia Abu-Jamal and a preface by Sheree Renfroe Thomas.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a fan of speculative fiction and an aspiring writer in that domain, Octavia Butler has always been my matriarch. She is the writer that may not have been my first inspiration, but she certainly left a deep, lasting impression on my soul. Her work is so seminal and I want to weep every time I encounter a reader or writer unaware of her contributions. Octavia is as important in my mind to the fabric of Blackness as any Civil Rights activist. Her work empowers and calls us to be great. Octavia's faith in humanity's ability to rise above so tremendous. So imagine my absolute delight when I found out there was going to be a book from social justice

movement figures dedicated to Octavia. I was ready to devour the stories and see just what was given birth from the minds of people who were already accustomed to dreaming. Any work where you fight for the marginalized if you're not careful can make you cynical and cause you to lose sight of those dreams that propelled into doing the work in the first place. I wonder how many of these authors walked away from this collection feeling rejuvenated about their work. Because they certainly made me feel rejuvenated about mine. There were quite a number of works in this collection and admittedly, some were stronger than others. But they all came packed with a message and I think that alone is powerful. In the interest of time and modern day attention spans, I'm going to mention the works that really crawled into my mind and/or heart and lingered there for a while. Like that one friend who you know will tell you what you need to hear even when you're not quite ready to hear it. Some of the ideas took me to sad, contemplative places. But we need to wander through those spaces as much as we need to enjoy our happier moments. A reader and most certainly a writer has to take in the full richness of life, not just its sweeter moments.

“Revolution Shuffle” by Bao Phi was an excellent choice for the opening story. I was introduced to a new fear I had never thought about. Never even considered it whenever I watched anything related to zombies, but it's a powerful point. We all know the privileged would be looking to point the fingers somewhere and in the story it was the Asians and Arabs. Like I said, it was a fear I never even considered and didn't even realize that these groups probably live with daily. The day something terrible happens to America they're likely going to be the ones with the finger pointed at them. It put a new perspective on things for me because it made me wonder just how much terrified a Muslim-American is of a terrorist attack happening versus your average American. They have to know that the hammer will fall on them first if such a thing was to occur. What a terrible thing to live with and this story takes that kind of racist stereotyping to a dark conclusion.

“Black Angel” by Walidah Imarisha struck me with its rawness and it also taught me something new. Any story that give me genuine knowledge will always anchor itself to my mind. This tale is gritty and revolves around a fallen Angel, but fallen because she disobeyed God by saving lives during a terrible war. It makes God seem cruel, but the Bible is full of enough examples of that to have precedence. And I enjoy stories that dig into the greater religious questions without being overly for one side or the other. The reader is allowed to draw their own conclusion. As far as what I learned, I had no idea that illegal immigrants were shipped away to maquiladoras like chattel. The story made me do research and I became livid with what I read. In that way and the first, this story enlightened me.

“Homing Instinct” by Dani McClain made me fearful for those who are so young and for those are still yet to be born. It

broke my heart because the premise of the story seems like something that could potentially happen. The story centers on climate change and people being forced to choose a place to live in an effort to slow down the terrible damage we've already caused. People are going to be allotted only so many travel miles a year and people who are on the other side of the U.S. from their families (like myself) have to make some real hard decisions. This story was perhaps the most striking to me because it struck so close. I could relate to the main character's struggle of wanting to stay true to themselves, but not wanting to leave their Mother all alone. My God, what a terrible decision to have to make on so many levels. Dani captured such immensity in such a small space. Truly a great piece of fiction here. There are quite a few other pieces in this anthology (22 if I'm numbering right) that cover topics ranging from sexism, breaking gender norms, racism, deforestation, cultural destruction, twisted medical breakthroughs and so much more. There really is a plethora of topics here available for any sci-fi fan to explore. The anthology makes a powerful point early on that if you are interested in social justice then you must be interested in science fiction. Because the black people of today were only dreams and science fiction to our ancestors longing for freedom not so long ago. This and other reviews can be found on my blog at: <https://rrapmagazine.wordpress.com/> Also follow on Facebook for updates on what's being reviewed next: <https://www.facebook.com/rrapmag>

This was a book that I wanted to love, really badly. Speculative/science-fiction and social justice? That's a great theme for a collection of short-stories. Unfortunately, it was the writing that came up short. Many of the stories have some great ideas, but they're never developed. I understand that these are short-stories, but to be satisfying to read, it still has to be a completely realized vision. Despite the unique ideas present in some of the stories, I found reading the entire book to be a bit of a slog, given the inconsistency. It takes more than imagination and good intentions to make a great work of fiction.

This is one of the most phenomenal selections of speculative fiction short stories that I've ever read. The framing of the book - that all activism is science fiction or speculative fiction and that to change the world, we must be able to dream of a different one - is probably my favorite framework for anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist speculative fiction. Phenomenal considerations of race, difference, gender, disability and ability, capitalism, the prison industrial complex, and other issues. This is probably the best book I've purchased all year.

I wanted to like this book so much, because I really love what it set out to do. I was looking forward to an anthology of fiction that didn't follow the usual science fiction patterns (not that those are inherently bad!) and presented compelling viewpoints from characters unlike those that we usually encounter in fiction. Unfortunately, after making it halfway through, I just couldn't continue because the stories are, by and large, not very good. Many are really more fragments or character sketches than fully realized pieces of fiction, and in many cases the writing is just stilted and awkward. Or they're just plot summaries with no real characterization. The result is just kind of amateurish. I will probably go back and read more of them - if there's a gem or two it will be worth the time - but I really couldn't recommend this.

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