



Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film

Adilifu Nama

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Winner, Rollins Book Award, Southwest Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association, 2008

Science fiction film offers its viewers many pleasures, not least of which is the possibility of imagining other worlds in which very different forms of society exist. Not surprisingly, however, these alternative worlds often become spaces in which filmmakers and film audiences can explore issues of concern in our own society. Through an analysis of over thirty canonic science fiction (SF) films, including *Logan's Run*, *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, *Back to the Future*, *Gattaca*, and *Minority Report*, *Black Space* offers a thorough-going investigation of how SF film since the 1950s has dealt with the issue of race and specifically with the representation of blackness.

Setting his study against the backdrop of America's ongoing racial struggles and complex socioeconomic histories, Adilifu Nama pursues a number of themes in *Black Space*. They include the structured absence/token presence of blacks in SF film; racial contamination and racial paranoia; the traumatized black body as the ultimate signifier of difference, alienness, and "otherness"; the use of class and economic issues to subsume race as an issue; the racially subversive pleasures and allegories encoded in some mainstream SF films; and the ways in which independent and extra-filmic productions are subverting the SF genre of Hollywood filmmaking.

The first book-length study of African American representation in science fiction film, *Black Space* demonstrates that SF cinema has become an important field of racial analysis, a site where definitions of race can be contested and post-civil rights race relations (re)imagined.

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