



AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers

Ivor W. Hartmann (Editor) , Nnedi Okorafor (Contributor) , Sarah Lotz (Contributor) , Tendai Huchu (Contributor) , Cristy Zinn (Contributor) , Ashley Jacobs (Contributor) , Nick Wood (Contributor) , Tade Thompson (Contributor) , more... Sally Partridge (Contributor) , Chinelo Onwualu (Contributor) , Uko Bendi Udo (Contributor) , Dave-Brendon de Burgh (Contributor) , Biram Mboob (Contributor) , Sally-Ann Murray (Contributor) , Mandisi Nkomo (Contributor) , Liam Kruger (Contributor) , Joan De La Haye (Contributor) , Mia Arderne (Contributor) , Rafeeat Aliyu (Contributor) , Clifton Gachagua (Contributor) , Mazi Nwonwu (Contributor) , Efe Tokunbo Okogu (Contributor) , Martin Stokes (Contributor) ...less

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AfroSF is the first ever anthology of Science Fiction by African writers only that was open to submissions of original (previously unpublished) works across Africa and abroad.

'Proposition 23' by Efe Okogu nominated for the 2013 BSFA awards.

TOC:

'Moom!' Nnedi Okorafor
'Home Affairs' Sarah Lotz
'The Sale' Tendai Huchu
'Five Sets of Hands' Cristy Zinn
'New Mzansi' Ashley Jacobs
'Azania' Nick Wood
'Notes from Gethsemane' Tade Thompson
'Planet X' S.A. Partridge
'The Gift of Touch' Chinelo Onwualu
'The Foreigner' Uko Bendi Udo
'Angel Song' Dave de Burgh
'The Rare Earth' Biram Mboob
'Terms & Conditions Apply' Sally-Ann Murray
'Heresy' Mandisi Nkomo
'Closing Time' Liam Kruger
'Masquerade Stories' Chiagozie Fred Nwonwu
'The Trial' Joan De La Haye
'Brandy City' Mia Arderne
'Ofe!' Rafeeat Aliyu
'Claws and Savages' Martin Stokes
'To Gaze at the Sun' Clifton Gachagua
'Proposition 23' (Novelette) Efe Okogu

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From Reader Review AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers for online ebook

Liz Henry says

Super awesome book of short stories. Lots of mid-apocalypse writing.

Many writers that I want to look up. It would be nice to go back through the book, list the authors, and add them all to my to-read list if they have novels!

Nerine Dorman says

It's always gratifying to see literary offerings that give genre fiction's upcoming talents more exposure; of all the continents, Africa presents us with a very different lens with which to view the world—especially refreshing for those of us who've grown up with a US- or UK-centric world view.

The AfroSF anthology brings together a broad cross-section of writing, ranging from first-timers to seasoned African writers, with tales ranging from stark, dystopian futures to rollicking space operas. There's a little bit of everything here, for sure.

Moom! by Nnedi Okorafor tells of the natural world's revolt against mankind's oppression, from the perspective of a marlin or swordfish (from what I gather). Okorafor's descriptions are quite lyrical, and I could clearly picture events as they transpired.

Sarah Lotz never disappoints, and *Home Affairs* strikes a chord with anyone who's ever had to deal with bureaucratic queues – hell on earth doesn't even begin to describe it. As always, Lotz offers her signature brand of black humour and a tale that one hopes will never step from the realms of fiction into the real world.

Five Sets of Hands by Cristy Zinn takes us to Mars, where one race has enslaved another, digging for ancient artefacts in the dirt. Zinn comments on slavery and lives that are outcast and untouchable. This is also a touching story of courage, and an individual acting to bring about change in the face of injustice.

A theme that recurs in a number of stories is that of pharmaceutical corporations holding society to ransom. *New Mzansi* by Ashley Jacobs is one such, delivering a dystopian vision of a possible future that might already be unfolding. This is a discomforting read.

As always, Nick Wood delivers a treat. He is a master of evoking environment, and the complex relationships between people, place and history. *Azania* takes us with an expeditionary crew travelling from Earth to a new planet, and the complications they face, cut off from their past by time and space.

Notes from Gethsemane by Tade Thompson plays on the horrors of biological warfare as the main characters find themselves affected by the malevolent and mysterious Pit. I felt as though I wanted a bit more of a punch from this story, but its ending was nonetheless suitably discomforting.

The aliens are coming, and they aren't all friendly. SA Partridge draws on popular culture's fascination with UFO lore in *Planet X* and gives us a possible reaction to an alien invasion that is uniquely South Africa. In

doing so, she comments on our own notions of xenophobia.

Lovers of Star Wars and Firefly-esque SF will no doubt perk up and enjoy Chinelo Onwualu's *The Gift of Touch*. This is space opera territory, and it's sufficient just to sit back and enjoy the ride. Some lovely one-liners are passed between characters ("It's a very big gun" is a classic example.)

The Foreigner by Uko Bendi Udo returns to xenophobia and cultural identity. I feel this story could have been developed further and needed a bit more voema, although it has a great premise.

Warfare is never pretty, and it's perhaps even more horrific when the opponent is inexplicable. Dave de Burgh's *Angel Song* drops readers directly in the thick of conflict and offers a hopeless struggle. The tension in this tale is unrelenting, crisp and well executed.

Biram Mboob examines possible conflict between Africa and the Orient in *The Rare Earth*. Traditional African culture transform modern technology. I wasn't sure what to make of this story, to be honest, and am tempted to wonder whether the author couldn't have pushed the story a bit more.

Terms & Conditions Apply by Sally-Ann Murray is another tale offering pharmaceutical companies in the role of antagonist. Although the writing is crisp, I didn't take to the premise.

In *Heresy*, Mandisi Nkomo takes a sly, humorous stab at South Africa's political climate. I don't want to give too much away, so I'm not going to go into details, but if you've ever been frustrated with our politics, past and present, this story will resonate with you.

The opening line of *Closing Time* by Liam Kruger pretty much sums up the story: "I drew the connection between alcohol and time travel pretty late in the game, all told." This nasty little tale will leave you scratchy behind the eyes. Kruger's worth looking out for.

Masquerade Stories by Chiagozie Fred Nwonwu touches on traditional African values vs. modernity, and the possible conflicts that ensue. This is an engaging tale, and I honestly did not expect how it would conclude.

Joan De La Haye's *The Trial* is a claustrophobic glimpse into a dystopian future we do not want to consider, where the government has the power to cull the population. She asks what makes a person valuable, and it's easy to see a little of ourselves in her narrator.

Brandy City by Mia Arderne sees society descend to a form of indentured servitude supported by a dop system. Characters' lives are miserable, and even those who have the means to pull themselves out of the mire are themselves prisoners.

Ofe! By Rafeeat Aliyu changes the tone to a futuristic thriller, where two unlikely allies must work together to outfox the schemes of a scientist who has sinister intentions. It's an enjoyable, fast-paced read and although the ending could have been more dynamic.

Martin Stokes delivers commentary on the issues of poaching of wildlife vs. supply and demand in *Claws and Savages*. The story is a straight-up revenge drama, painted in visceral, graphic detail.

To Gaze at the Sun by Clifton Gachagua examines how the patterns of humanity's sense of obligations, of parenthood and the relationship between children and their parents balanced by our need to conform to society's expectations – another discomforting read.

Proposition 23 by Efe Okogu is a novelette that quite clearly references William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and *The Matrix*. The author keeps readers constantly off guard, and touches on the concepts of terrorism, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. This story is also a suitably impactful ending for the anthology.

While I feel that some of the stories in this anthology are clearly stronger than others, I still recommend this collection to anyone who has a love of Africa, or a deep, abiding curiosity to encounter writing in the SF genre by Africans. Hartmann has selected a diversity of tales here, some of which will remain with me for a while.

Having recently read a collection of classic SF novels, I found this collection to be especially pertinent, particularly in the light of how our relationship with technology has changed since the mid-1950s. Those early writers certainly hadn't envisioned how social media would shape our way of interacting with others, and what's certain is that we face many further developments. Importantly, some of the stories in this collection highlight such issues as privacy and individuality, and how we are, as a society, giving away our freedom in an era where it is easy to fall under the illusion that we have more freedom than ever.

Many of the stories also initiate a dialogue with readers about what it means to be African, in a society where there is often conflict related to a clash of traditional values vs. the West. Africa's people are not a homogenous nation. We bear the scars of slavery and colonialism. How we move ahead into the future and what we make of all the opportunities presented to us, is another matter.

May it be so that some of the realities portrayed in this collection never come to pass.

Ivor Hartmann says

It has been a real honour to edit and publish *AfroSF*, the very first pan-African SciFi anthology. I am proud of all the stories in this anthology and the remarkable journey we have made together to publish it. I couldn't have imagined an anthology of this strength, uniqueness, and quality of work, when I first embarked on this project in 2011 with nothing more than a hope and a dream. We have created an anthology that will forever be in the history books of African literature, and literature as a whole. We have broken a long-standing majority silence when it comes to writing about our future from our African perspective. I truly hope many more African writers will be greatly emboldened to follow suit, to envision any and all futures that we quite rightly have something to say about, and a say in, as African people.

Tiah says

- She'd always loved her smooth skin but now it became impenetrable, its colour now golden like the light the New People gave off. The colour reminded her of another life where she could both enjoy the water and endure the sun and the air. - 'Moom' by Nnedi Okorafor

- No one knows she's here. She could get lost down here, disappear forever, absorbed by the ghosts of bureaucrats past. - 'Home Affairs' by Sarah Lotz

- I rate the pain five out of ten and akin to a bright blue candle burning inside my ear. I close my eyes to pour cooling imaginary water onto it, but it continues to burn just as brightly, just as painfully. - 'Azania' by Nick Wood

- Mounk knew Cronje would work himself to death but he was determined to be the best at everything, even slavery. - 'Five Sets of Hands' by Cristy Zinn

- He had drifted with the winds of his intellectual inquisitiveness, taken courses in everything from vitalism to vincristine. He had no major, no goal save the acquisition of knowledge in the most general forms allowed under the current academic curriculum.- 'Notes from Gethsemane' by Tade Thomson

- I was fourteen years old, and when I got drunk what I felt was nothingness. I chased that feeling for a few years, but when it became clear that it wasn't going to happen again, I learned to appreciate the other gifts that booze could bring: the memories that weren't memories; the dreams of worlds that weren't; the discovery of hands that weren't my own. - 'Closing Time' by Liam Kruger

- A corporation cannot be killed thus no matter how heinous the crimes it commits, the worst it can face is a fine. - 'Proposition 23' by Efe Okogu Lugard

Federico says

Un buen libro lleno de dystopias, exploraciones planetarias, horror urbano y más, destacan en el libro autores como Dave de Burg cuya historia Angel Song me sorprendió por lo curioso de relatar una guerra entre humanos y ángeles y la rara forma en que estos últimos matan y como son muertos también. Sara Lotz por otro lado con un estilo ligero y envolvente en Home Affairs y por supuesto un deleite Nnedi con Moom! y la fuerte emotividad que otorga a sus personajes dejándose sentir a cada paso lo que sienten y piensan. Sin duda algunas de las historias se pudieron desarrollar un poco más ya que a veces sentí que podían continuar después de lo relatado. Siendo honesto no todas las historias que componen este volumen fueron buenas algunas incluso me parecieron un poco planas, aunque lo mejor siempre será conocer nuevos autores para después seguirles la pista.

Emi says

Fantastic effort. Some stories definitely stood out for me, loved most of them. There were also some I wish would develop into a larger story. Can't wait for the next edition.

behemoth says

Nice and timely collection, I'm really glad this exists. I particularly enjoyed the ones that focus on bureaucracy, corruption, and state/nation affiliation. I am not really a short story person, but I will certainly keep an eye out for full lengths by some of these authors.

Stafford Battle says

I constantly hunt for collections of speculative short stories featuring themes and characters with an Africa flavor. I was excited to discover AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers edited by Ivor W. Hartmann. AfroSF presents 22 noteworthy and emerging authors who are Africans living on the continent and throughout the world.

I have read or been involved with other sci-fi collections such as Genesis: An Anthology of Black Science Fiction (Black Science Fiction Society); Dark Matter: Reading the Bones edited by Sheree R. Thomas; and The Darker Mask: Heroes from the Shadows edited by Gary Phillips and Christopher Chambers. I've published my own anthology (AFRO Sci-Fi) that features my stories. I like sci-fi anthologies, a lot. I am always happy to see a new one.

AfroSF as with all anthologies has literary high plateaus, mediocre valleys and dismal pits. Most readers will find at least one or two stories that they will thoroughly enjoy and be enlightened by and perhaps even be moved emotionally to tears. There are mid-range stories that despite flaws are still worth the time to read and ponder. And, some stories will make you wonder, how in heavens did the manuscript get past the editors.

My biggest concern is the price of the e-book: I paid a whopping \$9.99 for a Kindle edition! In reality, this is far too much money for a digital volume of this scope (apparently, the U.S. Justice Department agrees with me). However, my curiosity overcame my fiscal sensibilities. I wanted to read purely "African" science fiction; and embrace the hopes, fears and view-of-the-future by writers who are knowledgeable of the 54 individual nations and thousands of social cultures in Africa.

"Home Affairs" by Sarah Lotz is set in an African dystopia where robots are the face of the government that most people interact with. A slight computer error can cause a catastrophic loss of your personal and national identity. It is a thought-provoking piece that is probably closer to reality than we would like to admit. "The Rare Earth" by Biram Mboob is an excellent piece set in a future Africa ruthlessly controlled by global corporations, hi-tech gangs, and a self-proclaimed messiah who uses stolen technology to produce religious miracles. There are other stories offering killer drones, spaceships, political and technological conflict that I found interesting. However, many of the contributing writers are not conversant with concepts such as FTL and other sci-fi hardware. For instance, traveling to the edge of the Earth solar system in a chemical-powered rocket would take more than a few months such as depicted in "Heresy" by Mandisi Nkomo. The NASA Voyager space crafts, the fastest human-made machines ever, have been traveling for more than three decades just to reach the fringes of the solar system boundaries. The science in science fiction should be plausible or at least current with existing tech.

The real power of AfroSF flows from the exploration of everyday human problems in futuristic settings. Situations involve oppressive government, incurable diseases, innovative expressions of sexuality, foreign nations occupying huge tracts of native lands, corporate greed, global climate change and religious fanaticism. These are relevant issues for Africans today and tomorrow. Many of the writers in AfroSF strove to investigate the crucial element of sci-fi by asking, "What if Africa . . .?"

Cara says

There were startlingly original ideas in some of these selections and I would recommend this anthology for those passionate about or intrigued by the nexus of Afro/sci-fi.

Amanda says

This is pretty much what the title states: science fiction written by African writers. It's an interesting mix of time travel, planetary exploration, differing viewpoints, and dystopias. I really liked most of the stories in here (I'm terrible when I read short story anthologies on my kindle -- I don't take note of authors and titles, and as such I forget them when I go to review the anthology as a whole).

I really really enjoyed the novella at the end, and I know I've picked up a whole bunch of authors to check out in the future. Definitely a great read.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2761996.html>

Lots of good stories here, some by writers who I had heard of, many that I hadn't. One or two fell slightly flat, sticking too close to standard sf tropes without bringing much extra to them. But most of them were very good - there is an early pairing of "Home Affairs" by Sarah Lotz and "The Sale" by Tendai Huchu which both look at bureaucracy; "Azania", by Nick Woods, looks at colonisation both in the sfnal and geopolitical senses; "Brandy City", by Mia Arderne, looks at virtual reality and addiction; and the closing novella, "Proposition 23" by Efe Okogu, has a world where citizenship and the right to live are being eroded by technology. I find it immensely reassuring of the future of sf that it speaks as a genre to many writers from the oldest of the continents, and I hope that European and American fandom can start to draw more from this well of talent.

Tyrannosaurus regina says

This is really good. Really *really* good. All different kinds of stories from all different kinds of people and all different kinds of places throughout the continent. One thematic element I found interesting was how many of the stories mixed hard SF with spirituality, and how *well* they did it. (And it was amazing and wondrous to see in an anthology of this quality how many of the stories are the writers' first publications.)

Thomas Hale says

I am so, so glad I picked this up. A meaty anthology of short SF stories, with styles and influences ranging from high-concept what-if stories to soft, pulpy SF to grubby cyberpunk and transhumanism. A lot of these stories are the authors' first published work, and the quality fluctuates from piece to piece, but there were only a few I would call boring. It's really interesting as a white-as-hell English guy to see familiar tropes combined with unfamiliar names and places. Especially as many of the stories deal with themes of exploration, colonialism and humanity's relationship with technology and the unknown; these are well-worn

topics for SF writers, but the perspectives of writers whose nations were colonised and exploited brings a new resonance.

I read these over a couple of months, so some of the stories have lapsed out of my memory, but I'll recommend a few: 'Five Sets of Hands' by Cristy Zinn is a great story about loss and cultural cohesion, following the lives of a slave race on colonised Mars. 'Planet X' by S.A. Partridge is about the discovery of the mythical planet, and the chaos that follows said discovery. Tade Thompson's 'Notes from Gethsemane' is a dark gangland tale set in a near-future Lagos. 'Angel Song' by Dave de Burgh is pretty gripping military SF that reminds me a little of Zack Parsons.

And finally, my two favourites: Mia Arderne's 'Brandy City' and 'Proposition 23' by Efe Okogu. Both are grim and dystopian, shot through with hard Gibson-style cyberpunk. The former reminds me a little of Shirley Jackson, a grim portrait of a town and a world with an inexorable slide towards disaster. Okogu has by far the longest story, but uses it to flesh out a rich and troubling universe. If you're even slightly interested in science fiction, I guarantee you'll find some gems here.

seak says

This is a science fiction anthology solely by African authors and hence from an African perspective. Not only did this spark my interest, but one of the authors, Dave de Burgh, is a fellow blogger and all-around stand up kind of guy. He's the reason I wanted to at least read a couple of the stories in this anthology. I feel like if bloggers can make exceptions for their harsh no-indie-published-books rules, it should be for other bloggers.

I don't have lots of time and I'm already far behind in my review queue for the end of the year, so I figured I'd give at least a couple stories a go and maybe some day I'll have time in the future (yeah, not likely I'm sure).

Moom! by Nnedi Okorafor - The World Fantasy Award-winning author of Who Fears Death gives us a story from the perspective of a swordfish. I can't say I've ever read a story from this perspective, but I can definitely say she nailed it. I thought I was swimming along, witnessing the destruction of its habitat by those greedy for oil. Very unique and interesting. (4/5)

Home Affairs by Sarah Lotz - This story really resonated with me. I recently had to make a call and go through what seemed like an infinite set of automated responses while my query was unique enough I knew I needed to talk to someone. After going down so many automated paths I was about to scream, I finally found the number to press for a human, where I was told it was too busy and it hung up on me! Not even a hold. Anyway, that's as frustrated as you'll get reading this story, but it's so well done, and even humorous at times though serious for the most part. I couldn't put this one down, great story. (4.5/5)

Angel Song by Dave de Burgh - Angel Song is a great burst of military action with a very interesting idea, the angels as beings of light who have begun attacking humanity's distant settlements. Some believe they are actually angels sent from God, hence the name, but not all, especially with the death and destruction they cause. Well done. (4/5)

Roddy Williams says

I often wonder what became of Victor Sabah. Back in the 1970s, Elaine and Larry Elbert spent two years in Ghana teaching for the American Peace Corps at the curiously named Hohoe Secondary School. Due to a chronic shortage of books there they appealed (not to any church organisation who would doubtless have sent truckloads of Bibles) but to the Science Fiction Writers of America, who supplied copious reading matter for the students' edification. As a result Victor Sabah was so inspired he wrote a story as part of a school exercise that ended up in Brian Aldiss' and Harry Harrison's seminal annual collection, 'Best SF of The Year.' The Elberts should be eternally cherished.

Since then any SF produced in Africa seems to have passed the West (or at least me) by. Judging by the work included in this volume that is a terrible shame, and Hartmann has to be applauded for bringing this African flavour to a wider world.

This is fascinating collection of - as may have become apparent - African SF. Despite the fact that the tales were presumably written in English (apologies to all if that is not the case) and are in the main heavily influenced by Western SF they have a freshness that is often missing from our homegrown genre.

There's also a difference in structure and style in some cases, with some tales having a poetic edge and ending abruptly.

There are some themes you may expect, such as beaureacracy, governmental control, corruption, HIV and ecology, but all are treated in an original manner. There is also a good representation of female writers which can only be a good thing.

All in all it's a quality volume with only a couple of stories coming over as either weak or cliched and possibly in need of a rewrite. There's certainly some writers - such as Efe Okogu, Cristy Zinn, Clifton Gachagua and SA Partridge - who have an original voice and are well worth keeping an eye on.

'Moom!' Nnedi Okorafor
'Home Affairs' Sarah Lotz
'The Sale' Tendai Huchu
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'Proposition 23' (Novelette) Efe Okogu

'Moom' - Nnedi Okorafor

A poetic prelude to a novel involving an intelligent swordfish and a possibly alien artefact. Eco issues involved.

'Home Affairs' - Sarah Lotz

A slightly satirical near future which looks at the potential results of self-service robots in customer facing government offices.

'The Sale' - Tendai Huchu

Similar in theme to Sarah Lotz 'Home Affairs' this again examines the corruption and bureaucracy that is seemingly rife in Africa.

'Five Sets of Hands' - Cristy Zinn

An excellent piece of work here looking at a slave culture where a community of humans, genetically adapted to survive the climate of Mars are digging for tech left over after a failed terraforming project. Beautifully written against a complex setting.

'New Mzani' - Ashley Jacobs

In a cyberpunk African future, a young man tries desperately to get his friend his annual HIV treatment that will extend his life another year.

'Azania' - Nick Wood

There's some very poetic work in this anthology. This is no exception, set at the landing of a colony flight to a new world.

'Notes from Gethsemane' - Tade Thompson

This is a gritty near future piece which ends quite mysteriously and unexpectedly after a botched delivery by a youth gang.

'Planet X' - S.A. Partridge

Another short poetic piece which in reality is about mob mentality, paranoia and rumour... but touches on many other things and is very very good.

'The Gift of Touch' - Chinelo Onwualu

This story suffers from its brevity and would benefit from being a little longer. A merchant spacer accepts a commission to ferry a farming family to Ganymede, but has suspicions as to who they are and what they plan on Ganymede.

'The Foreigner' - Uko Bendi Udo

A nice little tale about a half-alien Nigerian and his quest for recognition.

'Angel Song' - Dave de Burgh

A military leader on a distant world leads a force against an invading army of souls transformed to glowing 'angels'? Are they what they appear to be? It's a clever piece that makes one think.

'The Rare Earth' - Biram Mboob

A Messiah from the Congo is gathering followers due to his ability to heal the sick and see the future. A very clever story, dealing with issues of political power and belief. There is a confusing ambiguity in the Messiah which perhaps his hostage sees through... or not.

'Terms & Conditions Apply' - Sally-Ann Murray

A cyberpunk tale of... to be honest, I'm not quite sure. I suspect it's about treatment to make male/female interaction more efficient, but by the end of the story I couldn't have cared less anyway. I suspect it's far better story than I am suggesting and needs to be read at least twice but, sadly, I really didn't want to.

'Heresy' - Mandisi Nkomo

Again, we see themes of political corruption and belief in a satirical tale where South Africa has invaded Russia and is in a space-race with China. A barrier has been found at the edge of the Solar System and God may be on the other side.

'Closing Time' - Liam Kruger

A well-written first person narrative, based on the unusual premise that alcohol can allow one to jump through time to one's future body

'Masquerade Stories' - Chiagozie Fred Nwonwu

One of a couple of stories that deal with ancient extraterrestrial contact with Africans taking in themes of cultural identity and ecology.

'The Trial' - Joan De La Haye

De La Haye tackles the issue of political power and overpopulation in a short but powerful piece.

'Brandy City' - Mia Arderne

In a future Africa we look at the effects of climate change, virtual sex and alcohol.

'Ofe!' - Rafeeat Aliyu

A fascinating story involving a female detective and a group of people descended, it would appear, from aliens. Much is unexplained, but it works.

'Claws and Savages' - Martin Stokes

An allegorical tale of a gangster who makes his living from extracting drugs from the claws of vicious extraterrestrial beasties. Slightly retro stylistically with a dash of noir.

'To Gaze at the Sun' - Clifton Gachagua

A beautiful and surreal piece which manages to capture the emotions and the cultural problems of an old couple adopting a child designed to be a soldier in an unexplained war. It's one of those rare stories that manages to say an awful lot in a very short number of pages.

'Proposition 23' (Novelette) - Efe Okogu

This marvellous novelette concludes the volume, taking on themes of terrorist / freedom fighter, the dispossessed and artificial intelligence. Excellent stuff told via a three voice narrative.
