



The Darker Mask: Heroes from the Shadows

Gary Phillips (Editor) , Christopher Chambers (Editor) , Ann Nocenti (Contributor) , Jerry Rodriguez (Contributor) , Doselle Young (Contributor) , Mat Johnson (Contributor) , Peter Spiegelman (Contributor) , Alexandra Sokoloff (Contributor) , more... Victor LaValle (Contributor) , Wayne Wilson (Contributor) , Walter Mosley (Contributor) , L.A. Banks (Contributor) , Naomi Hirahara (Contributor) , Lorenzo Carcaterra (Contributor) , Tananarive Due (Contributor) , Stephen Barnes (Contributor) , Mike Gonzales (Contributor) , Gar Anthony Haywood (Contributor) , Reed Farrel Coleman (Contributor) ...less

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Expanding on the concept behind Byron Preiss's *Weird Heroes* from the 1970s, George R. R. Martin's *Wild Card* series, and Michael Chabon's *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales*, *The Darker Mask* is a collection of original prose stories recalling the derring-do of the beings we call Superheroes and the worlds they fight to save. But unique to *The Darker Mask* stories is that these plots and characters color a literary universe outside of what has been predominantly white, idiosyncratic, and male in previous homages to pulp. This is the stuff of urban legends, new mythos, and extraordinary folks who might live in a soon-to-be-gentrified ghetto, the dreary rust-belt of the city, or in another dimension. *The Darker Mask* offers an eclectic mix of popular fiction writers exploring worlds gritty, visceral, and fantastic.

Including stories by: Walter Mosley, L. A. Banks, Naomi Hirahara, Lorenzo Carcaterra, Tananarive Due and Stephen Barnes, Mike Gonzales, Gar Anthony Haywood, Ann Nocenti, Jerry Rodriguez, Reed Farrell Coleman, Doselle Young, Mat Johnson, Peter Spiegelman, Alexandra Sokoloff, Christopher Chambers, Gary Phillips, Victor LaValle, and Wayne Wilson.

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From Reader Review The Darker Mask: Heroes from the Shadows for online ebook

Tyrannosaurus regina says

I started reading this over a year ago, on a flight home for Christmas, and the thing about short story books is they're easy to put down and come back to a long time later. Overall I thought the collection was kind of uneven but it opens and closes very strong, two of my three favourites are the opening and closing stories - "Dream Knights" and "Housework" - and then in between I really liked "Henchman", among others. I really loved the premise of this collection, and I definitely recommend it.

Chris Westbay says

A couple really good stories and a few that just didn't appeal to me. The good ones were enough to make it a worthwhile read, tho.

Mike Klein says

High quality adult short stories of the other side of being a superhero. Not all stories are great but most are. Well worth the time and in some ways (blaspheme alert) better at what it is trying to do than The Watchmen.

Elizabeth says

A series of dark, short stories about superheroes (often accidental heroes, or villains who were really heroes), most involving race relations. The writing was a bit uneven, but I liked most of the stories. It was a good accidental find at the library.

Stephanie I says

There are a few stories I liked, one I really wanted to keep going-- Sweeper-- some that I found pointless and overall, not worth buying, even though I did. If you had gone to the Capital Bookfest and heard the authors go on about it, you would have done the same thing I did. I mostly regret the lost \$14 but some of the stories were worth like \$8.

Gwen says

I have to agree with the majority of the other reviewers: this is an uneven collection. But, from the worst (Tat Master) to the best(The Henchman), at least each story has something interesting to say (well, maybe not Tat Master, did I mention how bad that was?).

The three that really stood out for me were Trickster, The Angel of Loneliness and The Henchman (the author of that last story also wrote Incognegro, an amazing and disturbing graphic novel). The book is worth picking up just for these stories alone. There's also a decent Walter Mosley entry and The Whores of Onyx City is a pretty good read too. Over all I'd recommend this collection, but would also warn anyone picking it up that not all the stories are winners.

P.S. I'm giving this book four stars just because of The Henchman (and also a bit because of The Angel of Loneliness and a little because of the ending of Trickster).

Seth says

I liked the ones about class struggle - "The Henchman" was my favorite, I think. Some of the stories in here are icky revenge fantasies and pulpy pulp pulp, but there were a few standouts.

Neal Litherland says

I've had bad luck of late with collections, but this one felt awkward and immature; a teenage amateur dressing up for his first night on patrol. Many of the writers tried to literally describe comic book action, but the problem is that comic books work only because they're illustrated. Making that literal made it feel adolescent rather than action packed. It was even more of a disappointment because the introduction talked up the content eloquently and really got me excited for what was inside. But by the time I got through "The Whores of Onyx City" I had seen so much disbelief-stretching action with so little explanation and believable characterization (hard to do in a short story, but if writing was easy everyone would do it) that I couldn't take any more. It felt like picking up issue 179 of a big, ongoing series... there probably were answers to all my questions, but because I'm not starting way back at the beginning, I'm just confused and disappointed by what I found.

Ben Langdon says

A bit hit and miss, but the concept of writing a more inclusive shared superhuman universe is a great one. I'll follow up some of these authors and see what their longer works are like.

Patrick says

This collection of heroic tales focuses on folks who aren't normally explored as superheroic characters.

Don says

Can't wait to get to this collection of superhero stories written by "genre" authors and compare it to Who Can Save Us Now?, written by "literary" ones.

Ladyjax says

Sometimes a little uneven, but overall enjoyed most of the efforts. Particular standout story: "Housework" by Doselle Young.

Colin says

There were some really great stories in here, and some that I didn't like that well. I did appreciate the concept of the collection, a re-centering of the "superhero" as the oppressed/disregarded/underdog. Yes to that. Mat Johnson's "Henchman" was hilarious, "The Picket" by Walter Mosley thought-provoking, and both "Dred" by Jerry A. Rodriguez and "The Whores of Onyx City" by Michael A. Gonzales gave me kick-ass women heroes with badass outfits, and I do LOVE those.

Eric says

Everybody is reinventing superheroes these days. But if authors are going to tug on Superman's cape, they better have something interesting to say. *The Darker Mask* is a collection of superhero stories that emphasize racial and sexual diversity. That's cool. The heroes in this book are often confused by the extraordinary physical gifts they possess. And more often than not, they come from disadvantaged backgrounds and don't relate to Batman-like philanthropic gestures. They're just trying to pay child support or drive a nice car. That's it.

Full review here: <http://superheronovels.com/2010/06/23...>

Chris Youngblood says

The stories in this book all deal with the supposed 'uncommon' heroes of fiction - the ones that don't fall into any broad category already established by modern superhero tropes. None of the protagonists in this book would pal around with Superman or Wolverine, no sir. No figure-hugging spandex for these folks, nuh-uh! It is because these stories depart from the usual superhero norms that they are far more entertaining than what one gets reading the usual comic-book pablum that's out there.

That being said, the book itself was only 'okay' in my estimation because, while the stories were generally uncommon and out-of-the-box, they were also wildly inconsistent in quality, ranging from the worst 1920's pulp revenge fantasies, to nuanced and well-thought-out examinations of issues that spanned farther than the story itself. One in particular (I don't have the book directly at hand at the moment, so I cannot recall the title) struck me as purely amateurish and puerile, and not worthy of publishing.

Now that's going to bug me forever, so I'll have to come back to this review when I've got *The Darker Mask* close by.

