

Cruising/Queer/Afrofuturism: Time for Another Kinship

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What makes the future unclear is not only the fact that it is, per definition, ahead of us, or the fact that, for example, nuclear missiles could eradicate the world within hours, or the fact of global warming. The future is uncertain because the notion of linear time, a time that is behind us and ahead of us, might just be one of many conceptual modes of time. Certain strands of cultural theory, art and popular culture have been exploring different chronological conceptions, among them are those gathering under the label of Afrofuturism, and the theories of queer temporality. Both queer people and the black diaspora – descendants of kidnapped and enslaved African people – are familiar with cultures of heritage, modes of kinship, history and futures, that are all but mainstream regarding their alternative kin and networks. Such a central topic like time provides an abundance of pictures and philosophies of »un/certain futures« from the perspective of those who have been denied a place near the hegemonic center. Ten million men and women were kidnapped from Africa and sold to the Americas. All those who survived the middle passage of the slave trade in the Black Atlantic were robbed of their past, their histories, families and roots; they were forbidden

to speak their native languages, were given new Christian names, and had no agency in making families of their own.¹ Since the second half of the 20th century, a diasporic community has conceived of an impossible movement through time, which is at once futuristic and nostalgic, future and home, retro and utopian, a black futurology.² This occurred in writing, music, and film, or in the arts³, as well as in comics, fashion and graffiti: a queer time⁴, a queer temporality.⁵

Cruising Utopia by José Esteban Muñoz, from its publication in 2009 to Muñoz' untimely death in 2013 and afterwards, has been an inspiring resource for many scholars, artists, and activists alike⁶, and it is like a manifesto pointing to a possible future.⁷ Quoting from Oscar Wilde, »A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth glancing at« Muñoz starts off in announcing:

»Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the

1 See, among many others: Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves*, Harvard MA (Harvard University Press) 2003; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London (Verso) 1993; Norbert Finzsch, James Oliver Horton, Lois E. Horton, *Von Benin nach Baltimore. Die Geschichte der African Americans*, Hamburg (Hamburger Edition) 1999.

2 Rasheedah Philips (ed.), *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice* [Volume One], <http://blackquantumfuturism.tumblr.com/post/153451344575/black-quantum-futurism-theory-practice-volume-nov-20th-2016>, and <http://blackquantumfuturism.tumblr.com>, last accessed July 22nd, 2017.

3 Blackness and temporality are framed by what Adusei-Poku calls »heterotemporality«: »I argue that it is the temporal, spatial, and cultural synchronicity, which I call heterotemporal, that most significantly marks the conditions of being a black subject in the contemporary and is intrinsic to post-black art.« Nana Adusei-Poku, *Post-Post Black?*, in: *Black Portraiture[s]. The Black Body in the West*, ed. by Cheryl Finley, Deborah Willis, a special issue of *Nka, Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 38/39, Nov. 2016, 80-89, here 82.

4 Judith Halberstam introduced »queer time« in 2005 not only as a different use of time by queer people, especially thinking about future not in terms of biological reproduction, in opposition to the institutions of family and heterosexuality, but of other logics of location, movement, and identification (referring to Leo Bersani 1996 and Lee Edelman 1998

writing in the wake of AIDS): »Queer time« is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance.« Judith Halberstam: *In a queer time and place: transgender bodies, subcultural lives*, New York, London (New York University Press) 2005, chap. 1: *Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies*, 1-21, here 2, 6. An insightful and extensive introduction into the field, including a critical discussion, provide Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis: *Introducing Queer Futures*, in: *ibid.*, eds., *Queer Futures. Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political*, Farnham, London (Ashgate) 2013, 1-15.

5 José Muñoz spoke of a »utopian performative«: queerness, in his view, could never be fully achieved, but it formed a perpetual horizon, never to be fulfilled or reached; but in desiring it and moving towards it, queerness would be produced... While heteronormative concepts might place queers out of a historical idea of lineage, linear time and reproduction, with the child as a central icon for the future of a community, queer scholars have pointed to the fact that kinship does not need to be just biological, but that the queer kinships of choice might be even more suitable and reliable in our futures than the heteronormative models have proven to be. See José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York, London (New York University Press) 2009; »the future is kid stuff« in: Lee Edelman, *No Future. Queer theory and the death drive*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2004; the notions of »queer time« vs.

»straight time« in: Judith Halberstam, *The Anti-Social Turn in Queer Studies*, in: *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 5, Nr. 2, 2008, 140-156, here 4 et passim; notions of chrononormativity, temporal drag and queer asynchronies in: Elisabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2010; Heather Love, *Feeling Backward. Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Harvard MA (Harvard University Press) 2009; Beatrice Michaelis, Gabriele Dietze, Elahe Haschemi Yekani, *The Queerness of Things Not Queer: Entgrenzungen – Affekte und Materialitäten – Interventionen*. Einleitung, in: *Feministische Studien*, Heft 2, Nov. 2012, 184-197. I thank Henriette Gunkel and Elahe Haschemi Yekani for their inspiring work with these concepts in international as well as German speaking academia.

6 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; see Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Henriette Gunkel, *Tribute to José Esteban Muñoz*, in: Johanna Fernández, Danae Gallo González, Veronika Zink (eds.), *W(h)ither Identity. Positioning the Self and Transforming the Social*, Trier (WTV) 2015, 67-70.

7 One might criticize his own readings, mainly his numerous references to Ernst Bloch's »Das Prinzip Hoffnung« with all its misogynist currents and Muñoz' weird apology for that (2-5); one does not need to like this particular mode of writing, which might be suitable and inspiring for a manifesto and an essay, but not necessarily a book – a manifesto, says Muñoz, is a performative text, »it does utopia...« (26); but we do get a lot of his reasoning about potentiality and possibility, as well as performance.

warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future.«⁸

Muñoz insists on the potential of possibilities in every ›given‹ situation. To do so, he looks for the not-yet-knowable – in any time, in the past or present, and in many areas such as philosophy, popular culture, or art. His writing is not linear, it follows associations, and at times his personal experiences, which resemble the movement of cruising. Meaning in gay culture: strolling through an area in search of sexual encounters. Desire drives us in nonlinear ways. In Western philosophy, the distinction between potentiality and possibility is fundamental.⁹ »Unlike a possibility, a thing that simply might happen, a potentiality is a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense,« Muñoz writes.¹⁰ But how, then, could we conceive of the potentiality of the not-yet-existing, in its present but not actual mode of being? One way would be to look at the negative, to the points, where the present is criticized (here with Paolo Virno, Muñoz speaks of a »modality of the possible« in criticism.¹¹). The present is not enough (especially for minorities), but must be known in relation to alternative temporal and spatial maps, which may appear on the horizon: you can see it, but can never reach the line (a messianistic figure). While going for it, you produce what you desire. For this figure of thought, we can find many formulas, speaking about utopia, or about performativity:

- »›utopia draws us like a magnet‹; ›it is here if not now‹« (Krishan Kumar)¹²
- performativity and utopia are kinds of a ›doing in futurity‹;¹³
- »a utopian performativity [...] is a manifestation of a ›doing‹ that is in the horizon, a mode of possibility. Performance [...] is imbued with a sense of possibility.«¹⁴

The performative speech act is the one that produces reality (I promise you, I baptize you ...), it produces a jump in time. Afrofuturism, by queering linear time in looking into the future but also by looking into the past, shakes the whole idea of succession or chronology even more fundamentally. Wouldn't this ›future making‹ be relevant now, not only for queers but any person? Yes, and no. Because the idea of the future, the concepts of time are in our

8 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

9 Just like potentiality/actuality: a ›structuring binarism,« Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 9.

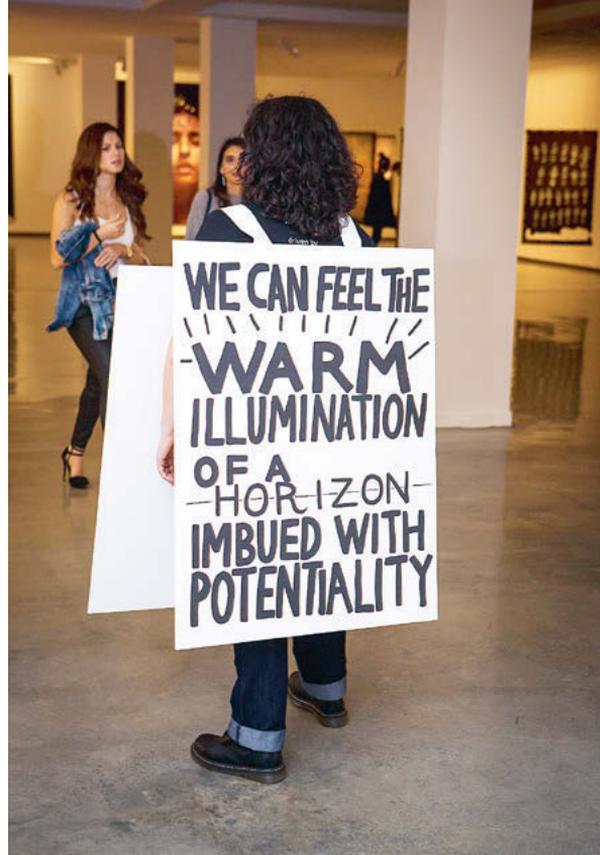
10 Ibid.

11 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 12.

12 Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism, Milton Keynes* (Open University) 1991.

13 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.

14 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 99, in referring to Agamben: »Possibilities exist, or more nearly they exist within a logical real, the possible, which is within the present and is linked to presence. Potentialities are different in that although they are present, they do not exist in present things. Thus, potentialities have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity. Potentiality is and is not presence [...]«



1 Kelly Doley, »The End is Nigh«, performance documentation, ARTBAR – Curated by Hissy Fit at Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney 2015.

culture intertwined with ideas of reproduction. Queer theorist Lee Edelman argues in *No Future*¹⁵ that the whole idea of future in our society, of a »reproductive futurism« and its fantasy of continuance plays before the perpetual horizon of the figure of the child. Jennifer Evans followed up, in order »to question the linearity of time in favour of layering, to advance histories of complexity instead of cohesiveness, and to chart third possible paths;«¹⁶ »queer theorists pointed to time’s heteronormativity, based on a model of kinship that until very recently denied queer experience, organized as it was

15 Edelman, *No Future*. (Muñoz contradicted Edelman, see *Cruising Utopia*, 10).

16 »While Koselleck revealed the layering of timescapes and their distinct trajectories and tempos, queer theorists pointed to time’s heteronormativity, based on a model of kinship that until very recently denied queer experience, organized as it was to a great extent around biological, that is, reproductive time: birth, adolescence, marriage, childrearing, death. Queer theory’s

temporal turn, then, was not just a critique of historicism, it was aimed at the unconscious perpetuation of historiographical truisms without full consideration of how these might actually foreclose our ability to imagine alternative ways of being in the first place... delinking our historical project from the search for transtemporal, collective cohesiveness in the name of progress and identity.« Jennifer Evans, Introduction: Why Queer German History, in: *German History*, vol. 34, issue 3, June 2016, <http://gh.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/06/28/gerhis.ghw034.full?keytype=ref&ijkey=mwfAiMoKeFHx2rC>, last accessed July 22nd, 2017.

to a great extent around biological, that is, reproductive time: birth, adolescence, marriage, childrearing, death.«¹⁷ Today, alternative ways to act on climate change and ecological disaster are being searched. Naomi Klein, cultural critic and political author, wrote about her observations of a »kinship of the infertile« and a »trans-species empathy«: These

»might be the beginnings of a queering of social reproduction that would allow a different kind of narration to enter into the massive extinctions that we are currently witnessing, one that is less focused on individual reproductive capacity and the love and care that may accompany that, toward a love and care that extends outward, beyond one's immediate biological family.«¹⁸

Jasbir Puar even argued for an »anticipatory temporality« or »antecedent temporality;« though being haunted by the ghosts of the past, we could sniff the ghosts of the future: »the becoming-future is haunting us.«¹⁹ This should be a »politics of the open end,« against the fetishization of innovation and progress, a »deviant chronopolitics«²⁰, deconstructing the naturalization of time (its administrative units of measurements, et cetera). Something is happening to time, not in time!²¹ Where the natural world is ever more intoxicated, Heather Davis continues, there are many forms of kinship, which encompass the biological ones.

»[...] we must also learn to accept all kinds of strange life forms, human and nonhuman, toward which we generate care, compassion, and commitment. We must learn from queer subjects to build worlds of familial care that are not bound by biology. [...] The lessons of queer social structures [...] might be instructive in facing both our non-filial human progeny, and a world filled with increasing uncertainty.«²²

Davis' use of »queer people not having babies: as role models for coping with survival on a toxic planet does not make too much sense in a time where gay and lesbian couples do have kids, transgender men and women are getting pregnant, and heterosexual families queer reproduction through technologies, so that the use of the term queer cannot refer to homosexuals exclusively. But it can be used to designate lines through space and time, in the way philosopher Sara Ahmed proposes:

17 Ibid.

18 Klein, Naomi (2014): *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, New York (Simon & Schuster), quoted in: Davis, Heather (2015): »Toxic Progeny: The Plastisphere and Other Queer Futures«, in: *philoSOPHIA, A Journal of Continental Feminism*, vol. 5.2, summer 2015, pp. 231-250, here p. 239.

19 Puar, Jasbir K. (2007): *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Durham/London: Duke University Press, xx.

20 A notion taken from Elisabeth Freeman. Puar: *Terrorist Assemblages*, xxi.

21 Referring to Derrida, Puar: *Terrorist Assemblages*, xxii.

22 Davis, *Toxic Progeny*, 245-246, writes about queer values: »[C]aring not (just) about the individual,

the family, or one's descendants, but about the Other species and persons to whom one has no immediate relations – may be the most effective ecological value,« 232; »the lessons of queer social structures, of families not based on biology, and lives not necessarily afforded protection from the state or other institutions of power, might be instructive in facing both our non-filial human progeny, and a world filled with increasing uncertainty.« 246.

- queer: off line, mixed orientation, out of line, sexual aberration, odd, bent, twisted,
- make things queer: disturb the order of things,
- the sexual orientation ›queers‹ more than just sex, but also the mechanisms for the reproduction of culture, families, and whiteness.²³



2 Gay Pride Parade, NYC, June 24, 2012.

Genealogy, that is: the pictures we have, the stories we tell, and the knowledge that is produced about inheritance and descent or ancestry, they are a kind of »straightening device.«²⁴ Inheritance and race,²⁵ sexual reproduction and species reproduction usually get conceptually blurred, although the mentioned straight lines in reproduction are just some of many. Evolutionary trees or family trees depict coherent lines, genealogical grids, where the familial and racial become aligned.²⁶ Ahmed's re-thinking of the genealogical time extends to the past, too: »Looking back is what keeps open the possibility of going astray. This glance also means an openness to the future, as the imperfect translation of what is behind us.«²⁷ She might as well have said this regarding to Afrofuturism.

23 Ahmed, Sara (2006): *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham/London: Duke University Press, 161.

24 *Ibid.*

25 They do so in »reproducing whiteness,« writes Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 120.

26 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 122. Feminist scholars like Sarah Franklin showed how these schemes do not depict many other hidden lines of kinship.

27 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 178.

Strategies of mixing science-fiction, iconographies of space travel and aliens, mythology, technology, and Pan-African politics into speculative stories told in film, music, literature, comics and in art: this is what makes Afrofuturism a »magical realism.«²⁸ In (white) mainstream sci-fi, the time-travel paradox – in which changing something in the past might erase your very existence in the present – trips up any attempt at changing history. This is not the case in Afrofuturism, where linear time is not only bent and folded anew, but layered and paralleled, interlacing time segments that are futuristic and those that belong to other periods.²⁹ Afrofuturism may criticize hegemonic beliefs in technological progress, or technological fetishism, and appropriates these technologies at the same time, as it can be seen in hip-hop: Sampling is an alternative way of using new technologies, cherishing the heritage of Black culture and music, and creating an own, unforeseen and never heard of future in doing so. We might consider this as a new mode of critique (not only in the social critique in the texts of rap music, but also in the modes of production), a new production of knowledge about history, which brings forth new techniques of its own, while analyzing the old, paying it tribute, using



3 Sun Ra in *Space is the Place*, movie still.

28 The term Afrofuturism was coined by white American writer Mark Dery in »Black to the Future« in 1994, which is a text and a sequel of three interviews with Black Science fiction author Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate (African-American writer, musician, »hip hop journalist« for *Village Voice* etc.), and Tricia Rose (professor of Africana Studies, cultural critic). Mark Dery, *Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose*, in: *ibid.* (ed.), *flame wars. The Discourse on Cyberculture*, Durham, London (Duke University Press) 1994, 179-221; see *ibid.*, *Black to the*

Future: Afro-Futurismus 1.01. Schwarze US-amerikanische Science Fiction zwischen Literatur, Film und Techno, in: *springerlin*, 3/98, *Medien-Orte-Kontext*, translated by Dietmar Dath; *ibid.*, *Afrofuturism Reloaded: 15 Theses in 15 Minutes*, 1.2.2016, www.fabrikzeitung.ch/black-to-the-future-afrofuturism-3-0/, last accessed July 22nd, 2017. See also Henriette Gunkel, »We've been to the moon and back.« *Das afrofuturistische Partikulare im universalisierten Imaginären*, in: Ulrike Bergermann, Nanna Heidenreich (eds.), *total. Universalismus und Partikularismus*

in *post_kolonialer Medientheorie*, Bielefeld (transcript) 2015, 149-162; *ibid.*, *Rückwärts in Richtung queerer Zukunft*, in: Dagmar Brunow, Simon Dinkel (eds.), *Queer Cinema*, Mainz (Ventil) 2018, 68-81; *ibid.*, *kara lynch* (eds.), *We Travel the Space Ways: Black Imagination, Fragments and Diffractions*, Bielefeld (transcript) 2018; Gunkel, »We hold this myth to be potential.« *The Chronopolitical Implications of an Africanist Science Fictional Intervention* (tbc), Bielefeld (transcript) 2019.

29 Greg Tate in Dery, *Black to the Future*, 208.

it, destroying it, and bringing it to a new life. Samuel Delany pointed out, that technologies and consumer culture are linked to money and capitalism. In the entertainment industry a Black access oftentimes has been one of misuse, of a »conscientious desecration of the artifacts of technology and the entertainment media.«³⁰ That way, Greg Tate argues, »the condition of being alien and alienated, speaks, in a sense, to the way in which being black in America is a science fiction experience.«³¹ He justifies that

»[B]eing a black subject in American society parallels the kind of alienation that science fiction writers try to explore through various genre devices – transporting someone from the past into the future, thrusting someone into an alien culture, on another planet, where he has to confront alien ways of being. All of these devices reiterate the condition of being black in American culture. Black people live the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine.«³²

At the very same time, this very real life takes place not in opposition to but intertwined with Afrofuturist time. And the im/possibility to express this time in our old linear notions is best addressed by an Afrofuturist thinker/artist/activist. In trying to convince the Black youth to join him in going into space, Sun Ra, in the famous Afrofuturist film *SPACE IS THE PLACE*, says:

»I'm not real. I'm just like you. You don't exist in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights. You're not real. If you were, you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So we're both myths. I do not come to you as a reality. I come to you as the myth. Because that's what black people are, myths.«³³

The question of being is a question of time, past and present. How can myths be heard, here and now? It is the concept of hauntology, that offers an explanation. I refer to Mark Fisher here, who wrote about »Afrofuturism and Hauntology« in *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Music Culture* (and it is no coincidence, that the question of time and being enfolds itself in Black music). The philosophical notion of ontology conceptualizes ones, the being, in terms of its foundations and an order of things. But where the past haunts the present, because it cannot pass, because the dead are undead, and what will be cannot just follow today, the foundations and temporal logics

30 Tate in Dery, *Black to the Future*, 192.

31 Tate in Dery, *Black to the Future*, 208. Tate points to the TV series *Alien Nation*, where the aliens were former slaves who were brought to Earth on a ship and dumped on these shores.

32 Tate in Dery, *Black to the Future*, 212.

33 Sun Ra, born Herman Bount, was a musician, an artist, and a scholar.

In 1971, he taught a course at the University of California in Berkeley with the title »The Black Man in the Cosmos.« He claimed that he came from planet Saturn, and that he had been abducted by aliens once. And he wrote the script for the film *SPACE IS THE PLACE*, filmed on a very tiny budget on 16 mm, where Ra and other aliens form outer space try to convince the Black people to come with them and settle on a new planet. Their spaceship is driven by energies taken from music by Sun Ra and his Arkestra,

dressed in Egyptian style; Ra travels back in time to Chicago in 1943, meets his enemy The Overseer, they enter a duel over the fate of the Black people; the FBI tortures Ra with Dixie music [...] in the end, Ra wins, the spaceship takes off, and Earth is destroyed. *SPACE IS THE PLACE*, dir. John Coney, written by Sun Ra, Joshua Smith, featuring Sun Ra and the Arkestra, USA 1972/74, 85 min.

are out of joint: »There is no way in which a trauma on the scale of slavery [...] can be incorporated into history. It must remain a series of gaps, lost names, screen memories, a hauntology [...] a termination of family lineage, a destruction of narrativised time.« This is especially noticeable in music, maybe not in rock music, where the cult of authenticity and presence is central. It is audible, however, in the gaps, scratches, and breakbeats of sampling. Recorded music has always had an intrinsically »hauntological« dimension.³⁴ Electronic music bears the characteristics of future in its sound, and getting back to it in the 1990s revives the old »signifier of future«, albeit in a paradoxical nostalgia.³⁵ »In sonic hauntology, we hear that time is out of joint,« Fisher writes. Sampling »unsettles the illusion of presence« through the phonographic revenant and in highlighting the conditions of being of the recording.³⁶

»Afrofuturism unravels any linear model of the future, disrupting the idea that the future will be a simple supersession of the past. Time in Afrofuturism is plastic, stretchable and prophetic – it is, in other words, a technologised time, in which past and future are subject to ceaseless de- and re-composition. Hip-hop depended on the turntable and the mixer, which converted pre-recorded material from an inert museum into an infinite archive, ripe for recombination.«³⁷

Coming back to José Muñoz (as quoted above: »Unlike a possibility, a thing that simply might happen, a potentiality is a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense«³⁸), we see that this potentiality queers time and it is present in Afrofuturist pictures, sound, and thought. They go from entelechy (the inherent driving force, having its telos, its aim in itself) to »Funkentelechy« (Parliament, with George Clinton, Funkadelics, 70s, here: 1977). What happened to the »un/certain futures?«

»We're not interested in NGO-supplied African Futures [...] Or artworld-induced Afrofuturism. We've been rejecting this idea of the future as progress – a linear march through time – for some time. Our sense of time is innately human: »it is time« when everyone gets there.«³⁹

34 Fisher, *The Metaphysics of Crackle*, 43.

35 Fisher, *The Metaphysics of Crackle*, 45.

36 Fisher, *The Metaphysics of Crackle*, 48f.

37 Dery, *Black to the Future*, 212, continues: »Jungle could only happen when samplers allowed breakbeats to be timestretched, maintaining pitch but increasing tempo and producing the vortical,

implosive whorls of sound that prompted Kodwo Eshun to call it »rhythmic psychedelia« (1999: 05[070]).« Take another example, another aspect of sampling: appropriation. Wondering why the German band Kraftwerk had such a great influence on Black music, Tricia Rose quoted musician Africa Bambaataa: »We have been robots all the way.« »Adopting the robot«, for him, was the response to the fact that Black people had been the labor force for capitalism. And even while Kraftwerk was rather

affirmative towards technocapitalism, it is in the mode of appropriation, that Black music turns the time. *Ibid.*

38 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 9.

39 Call for contributions to an African SF comic collection of Chimuranga Magazine, Facebook posting, March 2nd, 2016.

↳ **Stefanie Rau:** To ask of the potentials of a non-linear conception of time is to consider *disorientation* as a mode of exploration and escape of given constraints. In Sara Ahmed's words: »Sometimes, disorientation is an ordinary feeling, or even a feeling that comes and goes as we move around during the day. I think we can learn from such ordinary moments. Say, for example, that you are concentrating. You focus. What is before you becomes the world. The edges of that world disappear as you zoom in. The object – say the paper, and the thoughts that gather around the paper by gathering as lines on the paper – becomes what is given by losing its contours. The paper becomes worldly, which might even mean you lose sight of the table. Then, behind you, someone calls out your name. As if by force of habit, you look up, you even turn around to face what is behind you. But as your bodily gestures move up, as you move around, you move out of the world, without simply falling into a new one. Such moments when you ›switch‹ dimensions can be deeply disorientating. One moment does not follow another, as a sequence of spatial givens that unfolds as moments of time. They are moments in which you lose one perspective,

but the ›loss‹ itself is not empty or waiting; it is an object, thick with presence. You might even see black lines in front of your eyes as lines that block what is in front of you when you turn around. You experience the moment as loss, as the making present of something that is now absent (the presence of an absence). You blink, but it takes time for the world to acquire a new shape. You might even feel angry from being dislodged from the world you inhabited as a contourless world. You might even say to the person who addressed you with the frustrated reply of ›What is it?‹ What is ›it‹ that makes me lose what is before me? Such moments of switching dimensions can be disorientating. [...] The point is not whether we experience disorientation (for we will, and we do), but how such experiences can impact on the orientation of bodies and spaces, which is after all about how the things are ›directed‹ and how they are shaped by the lines they follow. The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope.« (Ahmed 2006: 157p)