

**BLACK QUANTUM FUTURISM**

SPACE-TIME COLLAPSE I:  
FROM THE CONGO TO THE CAROLINAS

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**Space-Time Collapse I: From the Congo to the Carolinas**

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TO THE CAROLINAS**



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# FOREWORD

*Alicia J. Lochard*



**B**lack futures transcend history, but history is their Bessential matter. If we go back to move forward, is anything really lost? Isn't this also revolution?

The bold perspectives in this anthology call us to divest from acts and institutions that make regular occurrence of suffering. If we pay attention, exhaustion can be an act of rebellion. Action is not always immediate. Repetition is not always redundant. Remember: stillness, ritual, quiet, breath.

What follows: a gathering of insurgent refusals of imposed order, imperatives to think and rethink renderings of present/future/past over and against the logistical compression of black time orientations forged before and through the darkness of dungeon and hold, but no longer trapped there. An elegy for the ancestors left on the ocean floor.



# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE PASSAGE

*Camae Ayewa*



*The Ethiopian Sea Is Red Must Be All Them  
Dead Bodies Babies Clinging To Their Bloated Mommas  
Frozen Human Glaciers Of A Time  
When A Choice Was Made  
To Escape A Hell Coming  
- Eviction Day*

## **MWILI**

inspection. after the terror. after the madness. before the packaging. inspection. the first bout of violence aboard the ship is not like what we just witness, a quiet ripping open of an entire being over several months. 50 days from Angola the guns are waiting massive guns aboard waiting to call you a animal waiting to separate you from your family your language away from everything you know. 50 men chained together denied the right to breathe. as soon as you leave the ship. unpacking bodies. inspection. after the terror. after the madness. inspection. you must be technology. The grunts of men, the sound of copper forced to exercise. Force fed. Forced dead bodies over board. At least one every day

sometimes two decide I will not survive for this. I will not survive to continue offering my blood as sacrifice to those claiming to be human steering ships of hell. there is not enough air and the sharks smell the blood of bodies caught in nets after trying to jump overboard. Death and peace and the privilege to die to meet your ancestors to join in on a ritual of mutiny. Women allowed to walk the ship just enough room to choke on the hot air. gagging on a mist of yellow fever. Not enough room to escape eyes and hands coming for you. a fog of small pox chasing after your children. women, children are allowed to walk the ship. Fighting to breathe.

Getting free wasn't a problem but understanding the definition of what it meant to be free upon a slave ship was a learning process often met with a death unbecoming. Learning how to avoid the sharks following closely. Learning how to die without a disease killing you first. Learning how to die with your hands around a European slavers neck. The white man dies so fast and is easy to kill. Without reason - only destination in his eyes - his destiny - there is no future. i turns into putty soon as someone gets a hold of one. The fear is forever. And every time a story of revolting or revolution gets traded or recorded in journals the imperialist becomes more disabled, vile and malicious. How many have to be slaughtered in front of you before you choke on your tears silently. Before your brain convinces you that you are already dead. And if you are still breathing you shouldn't be. Because soon as they catch you they will take it away.

## **SAUTI**

Some think its magic they way the ship forces itself through darkness. The way it knows how to keep your back wet below the deck against the planks. Some wander amid the

haunting and dehumanization of the world to ponder what drives the ship what forces it down its path. In the thick of bile. A larger source controlling the air and the lines of latitude and longitude keeping us in bondage. The same lines we first drew on maps. You can lose your mind in a matter of minutes and live out each looping second for months. Some wonder how such evil men hold such power and be undeniably useless in that power. meaning there is another force at play. Seventeen days feels like years. Time moving slowly outside of the body but accelerates inside one's self. A quickening of death and there wasn't any doctor or auction block that was going to change or cure it. Wailing waves are screaming us in the wrong direction. I remember the ferry man honoring the dead. I remember the ferryman counting stars and circling the moon.

Under a sky you can't see. On top of water you can't feel. The sound of suffering. Chains heavy screaming and chanting. I recognize these spells. Someone is trying to sink the ship. Another is cursing the captain. Im not sure who is alive or dead. Even them chained right to me. i know even in death the chanting continues. Life meets a paradoxical reality. once you step foot on the ship you started dying. How many have to be slaughtered in front of you before you choke on your tears silently. Before your brain convinces you that you are already dead. and If you are still breathing you shouldn't be. When the white man declares himself science he is no longer human. The sound of everything at once. The sound of babies screaming for mother and mothers gaging in agony for the return of their babies snatched from the womb. Fear in the form of sweat falls off the ship's captain. Pointing at us like merchants dreaming of a currency that hasn't been developed yet. They take the strongest man and kill him in front of everybody. one by one each limb dismembered and shredded. Very few can see. Sometimes the killing is silent. so quiet you can almost

hear the chaos of people gathering spells and curses in they head. They are making money. out of blood and flesh. for gods to trust and build empires. A billion curses left in the water. you can feel them. once you reach the shore barely alive. the water hits your feet sends you whisper to return, to run away, to die. you wonder how did i make it. how did i survive. without space. how did i survive without hands. without mouth. without my legs. pissing laying down. Its dinner time. they are eating us alive. they say its ok because we are not human. We are skinned alive and mounted in living rooms. the more negro skins you have the more valuable. The sound of us resisting even in death haunts the crew, the ship and the future.

No one sleeps.

## **TEKNOLOJIA**

On the shore was something else altogether. Reprogrammed without language, time, without agency and our own technology. Accustomed to being shackled mouth to mouth, stomach to stomach, foot to foot and shipped all over the world. Stripped naked placed upon auction blocks. Bought as gifts for friends.

The black body is the first technology in which man gathered and traveled from far and wide to finance to torture and control.

The black body was the first form of time travel discovered in stolen journals and artifacts from African people and were used to jump start the Industrial Revolution.

The black body was the ship that was the guiding force of creating massive change and evolution around the world with each visit.

The brightest minds of imperialism spent their time developing ways to enforce and continue the enslavement of Africans thus keeping the temporal rhythm of the earth's biological clock devoid of memory and we as Black Quantum Futurists are reactivating the temporal meridians that are the constellations of the African consciousness.

### **HAIKU 76**

Back to Africa  
On ships of antiquity  
Ethiopian



# DISMANTLING THE MASTER(S) CLOCK(WORK UNIVERSE)

Rasheedah Phillips



*Where is the master clock? Who watches it and who keeps time?  
If the master clock stops, does time stop?*

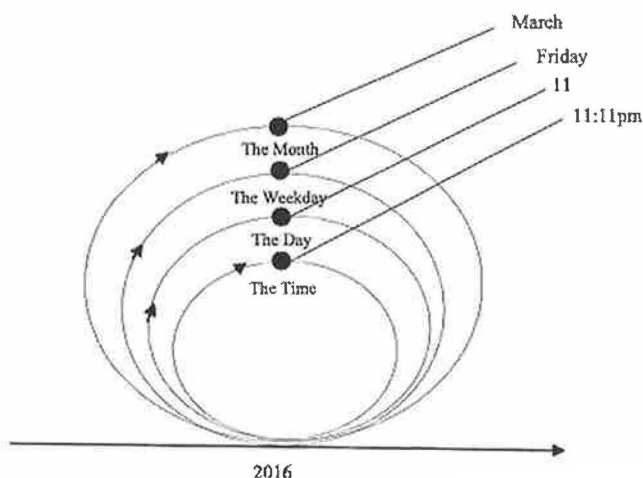
*Most people take out their everyday experiences of time as a factual, unalterable facet of reality. There are clocks that chart the hours, minutes, and seconds; calendars that chart the march of days, months, and years; suns, planets, and stars that chart the ages, mapping out cosmic time. More subtle, however, are the ways in which time governs our social interactions, regulates our motions and movements, frames our worldviews, informs our politics, and leaks into our very consciousness. The ways in which we are situated in time are reflected in how we talk about, think about, and conceptualize the world around us. In America and many other places, natural time has been overthrown by Western linear time, where temporal orientation is facilitated by clocks, schedules, cell phones, and digital calendars.*

Traditional European spatiotemporal consciousness, around and prior to the 14th century, saw time as flow and

inevitability. Early recordings of an abstract sense of time as a continuous duration arose during the 14th century, while the word "time" itself derives from the word "tide" or "tidiz." , which Tidiz has its etymological roots in the sanskrit word for "division," "to cut up," or "to flood" (as in, "the time of high water"). Within the European Judeo-Christian religious order, work and prayer times were heavily regulated by laws, and because of a belief in Biblical apocalyptic visions of the end being near, time had to be tightly regulated. In *"Time Wars,"* Jeremy Rifkin notes that "Western culture ... institutionalized its images of the future by way of religion and politics," making sure that "the future can be made predictable and controlled." (1987, 146,7).

It is through religion and politics that a linear temporal orientation first came to be discerned, simultaneous to the development of Western culture. A linear, Western time consciousness stresses fixed events along a forward moving timeline, while events are seen as irreversible. The linear timeline is embedded within cyclical time - hours, minutes, and seconds in their abstract, numerical form, repeat. Events themselves, however, are unique occurrences that will never repeat on a progressive, linear timescale.

[Graph 1 – reenvisioned from Zerubavel’s Linear and Circular Visions of Time Graph in *Time Maps*, p. 24]



The structure of time eventually came to be organized discretely and causally into a past, present, and future, with fixed events set against a forward moving timeline—one that would eventually come to a climactic, chaotic end.

[Graph 2]



The increased building and usage of public clocks, and eventually personal watches and timepieces, further inscribed a mechanical order of time, impacting all aspects of the Western way of life. Zerubavel notes in *Time Maps* that “only in the last couple of millennia [...] did our uncompromisingly linear view of the past – symbolically captured in the modern relegation of ‘time travel’ to science fiction – actually come into

being.”

This progressive future, one that is unidirectional and that does not allow access to the past, was further forged through other significant events in science and technology. The laws of thermodynamics specifically, developed most significantly during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reinforced the linear notion of time speeding into the future toward a chaotic end, where “energy was conserved, but cannot be reversed.” (Adam, 1990, 61). Other significant temporo-historical events—, such as the building of the first long distance railroads and the invention of the telegram—, allowed the future to be conquered through a compression of space-time. In *Time & Theory*, sociologist Barbara Adam notes how there was a shift in focus in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “from quantity and timeless laws to change, growth, and evolution [occurring] almost simultaneously in physics, biology, astronomy, philosophy, and the arts.” (1990, 61). Many of these milestones intersect with, or are simultaneous to significant events of the Maafa. One could sketch out a timeline of significant events in Black American history, such as the Civil War (1861-65), the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), or the last voyage of the TransAtlantic slave trade (1887) for example, and find them in close succession to, or overlapping, sociohistorical and temporo-historical events; such as the first long-distance railroads (1830), development of the second law of thermodynamics (approx. 1854), and the establishment of the four continental US standard time zones by the railroads (1883).

An accurate measurement of time became crucial to maritime navigation. Although you can measure latitude (north-south) by reading the sun, ship navigators had to guess in order to measure longitude, which often lead to grave inaccuracies on long voyages. A clock or timekeeping device was necessary to accurately measure longitude (east-west). Wikipedia notes:

*“Since the Earth rotates at a steady rate of 360° per day, or 15°*

*per hour, there is a direct relationship between time and longitude. If the navigator knew the time at a fixed reference point when some event occurred at the ship's location, the difference between the reference time and the apparent local time would give the ship's position relative to the fixed location. Finding apparent local time is relatively easy. The problem, ultimately, was how to determine the time at a distant reference point while on a ship."*

Stephen Kern writes of the relationship between "the future" and imperialism and colonialism, noting how the "annexation of the space of others" and the "outward movement of people and goods" are examples of "spatial expressions of the active appropriation of the future." (2003, 92). If this is true, then the outward movement of people as goods – chattel slavery – must be the most potent example of the appropriation of the mode of time known as the future. In the previous writing, *Sights and Sounds of the Passage*, Camae Ayewa explores speculative temporal narratives of enslaved Africans snatched from their homes, forced into the ships, and taken across the waters to other lands (page 9). The events that took place there comprised the first great Indigenous African Space-Time Splintering, a long wave form of trauma that continues to spread, touching upon the present day. This splitting bears a close temporal relationship to what Kodwo Eshun describes in "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism" as "the founding moment of modernity" ( 2003, 288).

The inscription of linear space-time came to be discerned in later boundaries on slave ownership.<sup>1</sup> 36°30' north is the parallel of latitude that divides where slavery was allowed and prohibited in America under the Missouri Compromise, the line that separated the United States from the Confederate States. In *Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South*, Mark. M. Smith describes the process by which white southern slave masters adapted a mechanical clock time and corresponding linear time construct as the dominant temporal consciousness over that of nature-based

timekeeping methods. He notes in detail how this transition impacted the social order and reinforced values of discipline, economic gain, efficiency, and modernity.

In general, an indigenous African space-time cultural traditions time consciousness has been described as having a backwards linearity, in that when events occur, they immediately move backward towards what John Mbiti described as *Zamani*, or *macrotime*. In many indigenous African cultures and spiritual traditions, time can be created, is independent of events, is not real until experienced, and is often intimately connected to genealogical, astrological, and ecological cycles ecology. In his article *Time & Culture Among the Bamana/Mandinka and Dogon of Mali*, Kassim Koné provides examples of the ways in

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1. *Although, truly, the notion of ownership over the space-time of millions of human beings cannot be said to contain boundaries, but there should be an implied artificiality and arbitrariness. It is important to note that temporal-spatial traditions and practices varied widely across cultures, countries, groups, and individuals across Indigenous Africa, but that the observations presented in this brief essay are based on extensive research on space, time, and spiritual traditions of a number of African cultures and groups that yield basic generalizations and assumptions. Many scholars have criticized Mbiti's work for what is considered inaccurate, or in some cases, limited observations. This author agrees with some of those criticisms; particularly, earlier versions of his work that represented Indigenous African time traditions as having no concern from the future. However, most agree that he was the first to articulate a detailed theory of time from an African-centered cultural perspective or worldview, and further studies of work on Indigenous African space-time traditions have reaffirmed the value of his work and generalizations. The use of his work in this essay is based on a later edition of African Religions and Philosophy that addresses critiques and clarifies the positioning of the future "no-time" as a realm of open possibility, and is not "faced in the same way in Africa as it is in the West." (Koné, 81). This notion will be studied in more depth in Black Quantum Futurism Theory & Practice Volume II: Community Futurisms (coming summer 2017)*

2 *It is important to note that temporal-spatial traditions varied widely across cultures, countries, groups, and individuals across Indigenous Africa, but that the observations presented in this essay are based on extensive research on space, time, and spiritual traditions of a number of African cultures and groups that yield basic generalizations and assumptions.*

which “the historical past and genealogies are conceptualized within contexts of space, place, totemic affiliation, and family names,” for example, as opposed to “exact chronology, recorded history, dominant figures, royal succession, centralized states, and international relations” like the West. (1994, 94-95).

From this time perspective, time is composed of events, while days, months, and years, as well as clock time, may be considered just a graphic or numerical representation of its events. The indigenous heritage of time “often made no sharp distinction between the past, present, and the future (yesterday, today, and tomorrow)” and generally “uninterested in the minutia of time,” according to Omari H. Kokole. (1994, 52). In his worksheet *A Comparison of the Western and African Concepts of Time*, Bert Hamminga notes “we have to compare the Western linear dead physical timeline (with ‘past,’ ‘future’ and a regularly moving ‘now’) with the African ‘living time’”. Koné points out that “from a Western point of view, African time can be said to be one that is socialized” in contrast to a Western regimentation of time which favors the alienation of other people’s space, place, and time by private individuals.” (1994, 83). Events are “situated in time as well as in context.” (1994, 95).

As noted above, Indigenous African notions of time in many traditions were generally connected to natural events, such as rainfall and the rising and setting of the sun, or saw time as a natural rhythm or pacing, such as the time it takes you to walk from one place to another. Koné points to the example of the Kòmò farming ritual of the Bamana people, which makes offering sacrifices to religious deities through various farming activities, with its primary significance lying “in its role in the social construction of time rather than as a ritual that sets in motion the farming season, as seen by the West.” (1994, 83). Such an experience of time has such features as “concern for details of the event, regardless of time required; exhaustive consideration of a problem until resolved; and emphasis on present experience rather than the past or future.” (Hamminga

worksheet).

Future events are situated in a potential time, until experienced or actualized. Those events do not depend on some specific clock time or calendar date for their manifestation. Instead, time depends on the quality of the event and the person experiencing it. Once the future event is experienced, it instantaneously moves backward into the present and past dimensions. Those two dimensions bear the most ontological significance, where "a person experiences time partly in his own individual life, and partly through the society which goes back many generations before his own birth," according to Dr. Mbiti.

One potent example of the retention of the indigenous African spatiotemporal orientation during slavery is the use of the North Star to point North on the Underground Railroad. Other examples include naming children after their day of birth or after ancestors.

However, if but for survival purposes alone, enslaved Africans came to internalize some form of a linear time construct. Modern-day mechanical clock time and its ancillary linear, temporal rhythms were encoded into the enslaved Black African by means of the whip, and other forms of torture and physical violence, and enslaved Africans, through this violent force and torture, came to internalize some form of a linear time construct.

Simultaneously, they were forbidden any access to the future, in much the same way they were denied access to full humanity, both in vision and practice. In his essay *Time and Revolution in African America*, Walter Johnson notes that "one of the many things slaveholders thought they owned was their slaves' time; indeed, to outline the temporal claims that slaveholders made upon their slaves is to draw a multidimensional portrait of slavery itself. Slaveholders [ ...] defined the shape of the day." (Johnson,153). He goes on to

note how slave masters controlled enslaved Africans' biographical time, where they "recorded their slaves' birthdays in accounts books that only they could see; they determined at what age their slaves would be started into the fields or set to a trade, when their slaves would be cajoled into reproduction," and otherwise "infused their slaves' lives with their own time[...]through the daily process of slave discipline."

Masters further encoded a temporal order by use of sound; bells, horns, public clocks, chants, songs, speech patterns, and the like were used to regulate slave labor on the plantation. Temporal literacy and ownership of timepieces, was also for the most part forbidden for enslaved Africans, lest it be used as a tool by which to gain their freedom. Timepieces came to be seen as a symbol of status and progress, as well as symbolic of the conquering of time and space, like the train and the telegram.

Enslaved peoples both obeyed and resisted clock time as if it were an extension of the slave master himself. Both Smith and Johnson detail ways in which "time could be turned back upon its master," by utilizing such passive strategies as "working slowly, delaying conception, shamming sickness, or slipping off," (Johnson, 153) and explicit acts, such as mutinies, revolts, escapes, poisonings, magic practices, and other spiritual and religious practices. In Arica in America, Michael Mullin notes that:

*"In the Caribbean [...] Christianization which inspired major resistance, was held up until the slaves themselves judged the traditional and dynamic sources of their rites and knowledge to be ineffectual. In Jamaica, slaves experimented with a variety of cults, including Christianity, as they struggled to find an antidote to the whites' power and magic. Consequently, religion, as contemporaries understood, was a far more important element in resistance to slavery in the Caribbean than it ever was in the South. (pg. 62)*

The so-called emancipation of enslaved Africans from bondage

did not automatically free them of the Master's clock. At the point of emancipation, the Western, linear construct of space and time was already encoded into every aspect of the American way of life, social order, economy, transportation, and communication. Time continued to be used as another form of social control against oppressed communities. There would be no practical way to totally eschew linear temporal consciousness while remaining in this society. If seeking to integrate into it, or to at least peacefully co-exist (though that ultimately proved to be unsuccessful), compromises had to be made. A split spatiotemporal consciousness, one parallel to that of the Dubosian double consciousness, was thereby gradually developed in the emancipated Africans, what some have called Colored People's, or CP Time. BQF Creatives see the event as the second space-time collapse.

### **Present-Day Spatiotemporal Consciousness or "CP Time"**

*There is no past, or, rather where does the line between the past and the present draw? Was slavery simply over once declared? At what time did we become free? If time orders actions, when and where was the act of liberation, when did subjugation end? What time was it in the land my people were stolen from? How far away from slavery are we, when slavery as an institution was encoded into the dominant temporal order? In Temporalities of pre slavery, pre , and post-freedom superimposed, then collapsed into one/other.*

*"It's how we remember that which cannot be said."*

*Ntozake Shange*

In *Physics of Blackness*, Michelle M. Wright cautions that "if we use the linear progress narrative to connect the African continent to Middle Passage Blacks today, we run into a logical problem, because our timeline moves through geography chronologically, with enslavement taking place at the beginning, or the past, and the march toward freedom moving through the ages toward the far right end of the line or arrow,

which also represents the present” (2014, 57). Black Americans today, bound to and by the linear progress narrative, are the stark embodiment of temporal tensions, a disunity between cultural notions of time, many of us occupying what Rifkin calls “temporal ghettos” (1989, 190) as well as physical ones. How we negotiate time and space in relation to the event(s) that forced us upon these shores, the transatlantic slave trade, provides context for the struggles that we continue to endure in the present. As Eshun notes, “It is never a matter of forgetting what it took so long to remember. Rather, the vigilance that is necessary to indict imperial modernity must be extended into the field of the future” (2003, 288). We were told that slavery ended, but if so, *when* remains the crucial question, particularly with the linear temporal-spatial history of the world fully intact but up for question.

That a community bound by particular events in space-time, such as enslavement, would experience overlapping and conflicting temporalities should be of no surprise. Zerubavel rightly points out that “Being social presupposes the ability to experience things that happened to the groups which we belong long before we even joined them as if they were part of our personal past,” and that “such a remarkable existential fusion of one’s personal history with that of the communities to which one belongs also helps explain the radiation of pain and suffering carried by American descendants of African slaves as well as the personal sense of shame felt by many young Germans about the atrocities of a regime that ended long before they were born” (2003, 3).

Theoretical physicist Alberto Hernando deCastro uses the laws of physics to study the ways in which communities retain social memories, finding a time-based, underlying logic in how communities develop and interact. , with a community’s growth

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3 This notion will be studied in more depth in *Black Quantum Futurism Theory & Practice Volume II: Community Futurisms* (coming summer 2017)

being largely dependent on factors in that community's past. This research is useful in understanding how traumatic and post-traumatic events can connect or disconnect us from our pasts, and the ways in which human behavior, in the aggregate, can influence an entire community or city. It helps us to understand how historical events, such as slavery or war, transform our communities in such away that it displaces us completely from those events and its sources. The past is still with us, in contact with the present--not cut off along a temporal axis, like the block universe or the Master's clockwork universe.

CP Time is often seen and studied as temporal orientation of presentism in the Black community. Use of the presentism time orientation is class, and— by extension—, race -based. It has been recently reappropriated by New Age philosophy, and yoga, and meditation mantras; however, when a presentism time orientation is applied to Black people, it is often cited negatively, considered as lacking a sense of future and only concerned with present pleasures and immediate concerns. and It has been associated with laziness, indolence, and lateness.

These traits are, in turn, used to justify the Black community's disproportionate rates of poverty, joblessness, homelessness, disease, and the like. In studies on increased presence of heart disease in African Americans, for example, presentism time orientation is often cited as one of the causal factors. African Americans with a present-time orientation "may not see the need to take preventative medication or to finish antibiotics when symptoms disappear," or "may delay seeing a physician until symptoms are severe, and begin interfering with their work or life." (Cultural Diversity Training materials, ELDER Project, Fairfield University School of Nursing). Often, such explanations as culture -based fears of the hospitals and medical institutions due to decades of illegal medical experimentation on Blacks, or the inability to afford sustained medical treatment, go unconsidered.

LittleLess analyzed areis the ways in which, contemporarily, this temporal orientation is connected to class oppression, racism, white supremacy, and the legacy of slavery. Slavery was where time was inculcated into our very skin, where the ring of the bell or the tick of the clock regulated our fate, labor, birth and death, taking over the natural rhythms and spirits, spatio-temporal orientation and consciousness. (and I only speak here of temporal disorientation, but a spatial disorientation should be implied, to the extent that the fabric of the two are co-associated in an Einstein universe). CP Time has been both a defense mechanism, against Black communal trauma and post-trauma, under the conditions of class warfare and racial oppression, *and* a harkening back to a more natural, ancestral temporal-spatial consciousness and presentism.

Rifkin explains that the consequence of the linear progress narrative being applied to an oppressed people keeps them “confined in a narrow temporal band, unable to anticipate and plan for their own future, [...]are powerless to affect their political fate.” For those deprived of access to the future, the future becomes “untrustworthy [and] unpredictable” (1989, page 192). They become stuck only being able to plan for the present and limited time in the future, as the society around them speeds forward in illusory, linear progress. This narrow temporal band is used to penalize people on a daily basis. In the present day, we continue to be punished for not being “on time.” For being ten minutes late to an appointment, for example, you could lose your livelihood, children, home, or freedom. Hierarchies of time and lack of access to the future informs intergenerational poverty, in the same way that wealth passes down between generations in traditionally privileged families. Such a narrow temporal band is clearly distinguishable from the sense of presentism or “living in the moment” that is offered as an option for those tapping into or capitalizing off of so-called New Age techniques appropriated from ancient spiritual practices and spatiotemporal orientations.

## **Dismantling the Master ('s) Clock[work Universe]: Black Quantum Futurism Temporal Dynamics**

*"Now suppose that this high tech substitute of the ancestor worship is self-adaptive. I mean that the rules of this game (which we call natural laws) are not fixed forever but can change defending the participants' creative output. So to say, we are co-creators of this world not just passive actors. Of course such a world view is strongly anti-Copernicean, contrary to the last century's scientific mainstream, but I find nothing particularly impossible in it. In such a virtual reality the past is not fixed in every detail, otherwise it would be a foolish waste of computer memory. Backward causality is a natural thing in such a universe: some details of the past are fixed only when we pay our attention to them from the future."*

Z. K. Silagadze

How can we control our own time and create new cultural, healthier time orientations? How can we encode new temporal algorithms? What does it mean to dismantle the Master's clock, physically, spiritually, psychologically, cognitively? How do we access and take back control of communal memory? How do we begin to map our return to our futures? There is a necessity to dismantle the master's clock and reinscribe a CP Time, or, perhaps more affirmatively, to construct a new diasporic African spatiotemporal consciousness. There is a necessity to dissolve or dismantle the thermodynamic arrow of time and the arrow of progress. Mechanical time is not absolute time. The present moment is the ether, the absolute frame of reference.

It is unrealistic to expect that we can ever return to the time consciousness of our more distant ancestors, enacting a complete reversal to a pre-transatlantic slave trade spatiotemporal construct. In recognizing that it is not realistic to enact a complete reversal or return to an African spatiotemporal consciousness, we can instead incorporate

particular aspects of these time constructs as they parallel or overlap natural tendencies already encoded into the descendants of formerly enslaved Africans. We seeking to reconcile our bifurcated time consciousness by creating or adapting a time consciousness consistent with our experiences as diasporic, displaced Africans, living in communities that have by and large adopted a linear time construct.

There is a meaningful way to embrace the paradox and allow these two opposing temporal modes to co-exist, in the way that light co-exists both as wave and particle on the quantum level. This is done by crafting a unique time construct that takes account of a Western time mode and our own natural time tendencies, as inscribed in our DNA through biology, ancestry, culture, spirit, and natural rhythms. Such a time construct inevitably requires a new language, a way to speak of the past, present, and future without resorting to time hierarchies. Eshun notes that “by creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory” (2003, 297).

Black Quantum Futurism (BQF) is exploring and developing modes and practices of spatiotemporal consciousness that would be more beneficial to marginalized peoples’ survival in a “high-tech” world currently dominated by oppressive linear time constructs. In crafting new communal temporal dynamics that can function BQF is developing and enacting a new spatiotemporal consciousness. BQF theory, vision, and practice explores the intersections of quantum physics, futurism, and Black/African cultural space-time traditions. Under a BQF intersectional time orientation, the past and future are not cut off from the present - both dimensions have influence over the whole of our lives, who we are and who we become at any particular point in space-time. Our position from the present creates what that past and future looks like, what it means at every moment. We determine what meaning and what relationships both dimensions of time have to our present

moment.

The etymology of the word “future” itself admits of such this kind of a relationship. The word future, by definition, designates a time period or temporal space that is not now, one that is situated ahead (or before) us, and distinctive from times that lie behind (or before) the one we are currently situated in. Etymologically, future developed out of the Old French word *futur* in the late 14th century, and meant “a time after the present,” or “that which is yet to be.” *Futur* can be further traced back to the Latin *futurus*, via the stem “fu-,” (to grow or become), which is the future participle of the word *esse*, to be. Oxford Dictionary notes that “both *esse*, to be, and *futur*, to become, share “be” at their root.” This may explain why the word “be-fore” can both denote an event that has already passed and is now in the past, or an event that has not yet happened. This is one way linearity does not lie at the root of the words “before” or “future.”

The following principles of temporal dynamics should be coupled with BQF modes, principles, and practices outlined in BQF Theory and Practice Vol. 1 (2015) and will be further developed in BQF Theory and Practice Vol. II (2017):

*Retrocurrences* -a backwards happening, an event whose influence or effect is not discrete and timebound -- it extends in all possible directions and encompasses all possible time modes.

BQF seeks to unravel the processes of how communal memory is seeded, how the collective memory spreads across time and space, reaching backward in time and forward in time simultaneously to include everything that has and will happen. This dynamic event process, which BQF coined a “retrocurrency,” takes on features and characteristics reminiscent of quantum matter, where time is naturally reversible and information can flow in both directions. Retrocurrences provide pathways of opportunity for seeding

new schemes of spatiotemporal consciousness.

*Entangled Histories* – the quantum physics notion of entangled histories was recently developed by nobel laureate Frank Wilczek and colleagues and tested experimentally. Entangled histories are “cases in which a single chronology is insufficient to explain the observed changes in the properties of a particle,” (1, 2015), meaning the history of a particle may be incomplete without consideration of the existence of multiple, intertwined timelines. The principle essentially states that such multiple timelines must be entangled, demonstrating the “many worlds” quantum mechanics interpretation. With entangled histories, Wilczek explains, “the separate chronologies are intertwined and eventually come back together.”

This suggests that timelines aren’t “lines” at all, but perhaps strands, or something less rigid and more flexible than a line. Entangled timelines invoke layered timescapes, overlapping circles of time. It suggests that one event can have multiple temporal perspectives, operating simultaneously.

**For further inquiry:** *How might retrocurrences apply to slave-time phenomenon? We (the present) are constantly injecting ourselves into the past. The gaze of history shapes it, crystallizes it, collapses it upon the linear timeline. How do we keep ourselves tethered to the narrative provided to us in history books? When and where do the ancestors speak for themselves? Adopting a similar mode of “potential time” as proposed by ancient Africa space-time practices is parallel to Quantum/Potential energy (meaning no definite space/location. Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle implies open future/open past. Nature is inherently indeterministic. What is the special role of time? Can we use the quantum eraser to erase the past and change the future?*

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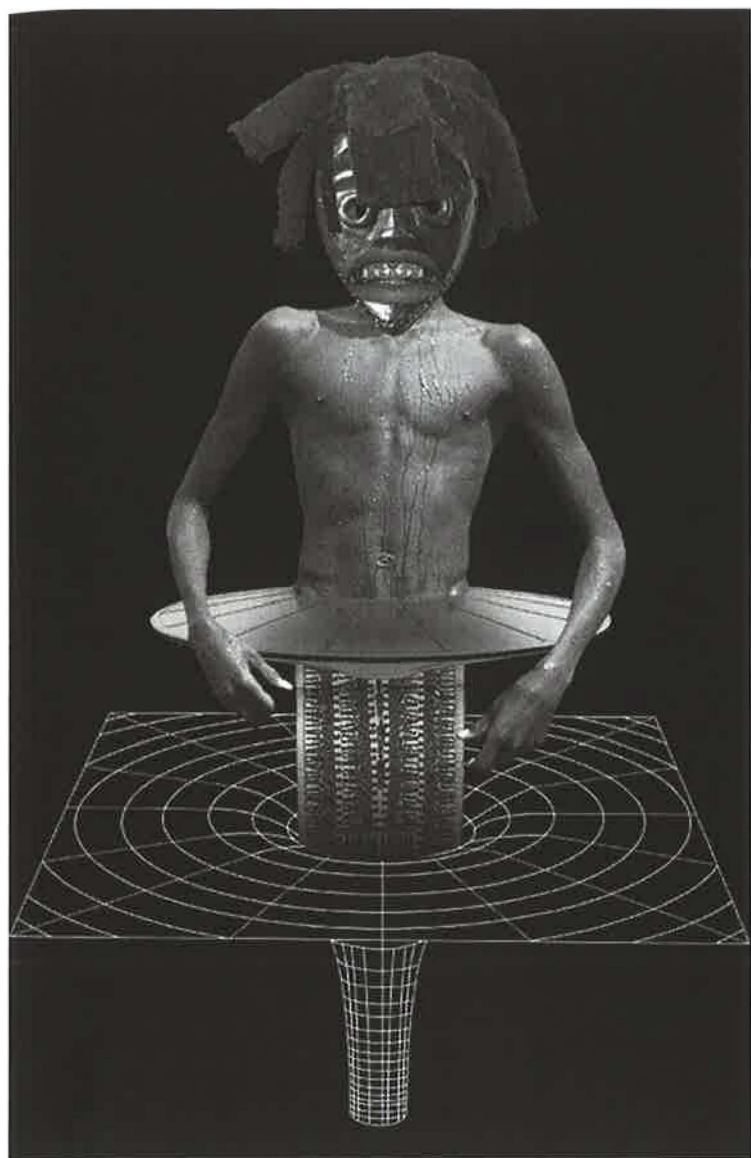
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## **INDIGENOUS SPACE-TIME SPLITTING**

*Dogon Krigga*





# ALTER DESTINY, FREE BLACK MUSIC AND THE TEMPORAL CULTURE OF THE MAROONS

*Thomas Stanley*



**I**n their social dances, the people once widely called the “Black Caribs” use two single-headed drums that are played by hand – a bass drum, called *segunda* and a smaller, otherwise identically constructed drum called *primera*. Punta rhythms are sparse, fast, and danceable. The *primera* player starts by following the steady triple-beat of the bass drum, but will break away from this foundational ostinato to improvise rapid rolls and nastily off-the-beat accents. The dance, in both traditional and contemporary contexts, has a lot to do with the hips.

The term Black Carib is dated and derogatory, now, in much the same way that Black people in North America no longer accept the labels Colored or Negro. The Garinagu, as the people are properly named, are a small minority found primarily in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. They have significant communities in the U.S. cities of Los Angeles, Houston, and New York. They are most commonly

identified by the name of their language, Garifuna, which is among the most endangered in the world. Its use as a primary language is almost nonexistent and its pool of fluent speakers declines precipitously with each generation.

The spirituality and cosmology of the Garinagu is anchored by a strong sense of cohesion and reciprocity with ancestral spirits. The most organized ritual expression of this mutual bond is the dugu ceremony. "I am for you and you are for me," the Garifuna person declares, as he or she faces their ancestors, both recent and ancient. A dugu is what is classically termed by anthropologists as a rite of propitiation. A family will convene a dugu as the ultimate spiritual recourse when misfortune strikes with particular severity. The dugu I witnessed about ten years ago was held for a family who, among many other setbacks, had seen their beautiful daughter afflicted with the advanced effects of HIV infection. The dugu is a resource-intensive affair, bringing together families and individuals from across the region, and often from abroad. In addition to food and drink, the services of musicians, tailors, and other specialists must be paid for. At the time that the ancestral domain commands that a dugu should be held—usually in the form of a lucid dream—a special piglet is selected and separated from the regular swine to be hand-raised on table scraps as one of many sacrificial animals. In addition to the hogs, I saw a seemingly uncountable series of chickens offered to the feast of the spirits, each dispatched by the buyei (spiritual leader) who held its feet as he rapidly swung the bird's head into a cinder block.

Perhaps not coincidentally, in the remote coastal villages where the traditions remain respected, the Garinagu are the most grindingly poor. I saw a large table made from sheets of plywood filled with roasted meats, crab, fish, lobster, delicately arrayed fruits, sweets, bottles of soda pop, and

sheets of cassava bread. I felt a little sorry for the pigs and the chickens, but I was so glad to think that my humble hosts would allow themselves to kick back after this marathon ritual of all-night dancing, drumming, and singing to enjoy a rich communal feast. In the end, only the sodas were given to the children; the rest was bundled up, placed in a wooden boat, and rowed out to sea where the ancestors would dine on the feast that was gathered and prepared for them. The blessings, the healing, the relief from hardship, was the community's end of the exchange.

Three sacred drums, larger than the *segunda*, but, again constructed similarly, play special rhythms that accompany songs that are only heard during the *dugu*. The dance is a simple, trance-inducing shuffle, forward and back, over and over, without interruption. No hips in this one. I was told by a respected *buyei* that the three drums represented the three phases of time that we live in – past, present, and future – and that it was life's incessant pulse that was echoing across the three drums in the mystic space of the thatch-roofed *dugu* temple.

I have heard the same idea expressed before--in slightly different ways--as the core ethic defining a musical culture. It is not generally spoken of as either traditional or, particularly, spiritual. Once when asked what it was like to be able to play anything he wanted, the improvising jazz bassist William Parker – an uncharacteristically gentle and soft spoken man – shot back sharply that he didn't know anything about that as he was too busy struggling under the rather weighty responsibility of having to both conceive and execute the exact right note at every possible moment. Our music has a center, like the fat part of a bell curve. This center gets more than its fair share of scholarly attention and critical acclaim. In America, we know this Black music like we know English and television. But Black music has a

margin, an outlying edge, where form and functionality have taken a hard left turn away from commerce and conformity. If this music is called “free” by others, then it is a freedom masked in the most uncompromising disciplines of tone scientists and time rebels.

As a language, Garifuna is most similar to forms of Arawak spoken in the Eastern Caribbean at the time of European first contact. It has many French and Spanish accretions, but very few confirmed West African cognates. As a culture, the Garifuna represent hybridity, both racial and cultural. Phenotypically, they present as Black folk. In fact, in some of the areas where they are concentrated, they are the darkest of many people of color. Culturally, traditional Garifuna village life is indistinguishable from other Native American fishing-cassava cultures found throughout the Caribbean. They resemble the culture in parts of the Orinoco River basin, where the Arawak originated, and yet these villages also resonate with people who have traveled to similarly scaled hamlets along the Atlantic coast and inland tributaries of West Africa.

There is a dominant creation myth for how these linguistically Indian black people came to be found in the Eastern Caribbean, and later, Central America. The core of this myth asserts that sometime in the mid-seventeenth century, a Spanish-registered slave ship went down in bad weather off the coast of an island. This island was called Yurumei by the Indians, and is known today as St. Vincent. The Blacks killed their captors as the sea sucked the ship down beneath the waves. When they swam ashore, the local Kalinagu Indians were so impressed by Africans’ swagger in handling their business, that they gave them land, women, and fishing canoes. Thus, the Kalinagu Indians fully integrated them into their Amerindian social, genetic, and temporal body.

The dugu drums are the largest in the Garifuna family of drums. Each of the three is equal to the other two. The reader (as a member of a musical culture that has had decades of experience with radio, records, personal digital libraries, and most recently, streaming musical services) should be well-familiar with the capacity for music to trigger emotional memory. In doing so, music serves as a powerful repository of sonic nostalgia. But the free music of the Black Atlantic--is not a nostalgic music. Despite the movement of similarly inspired, but geographically and temporally disparate musics, that might historically begin in the late fifties with the most radical departures in jazz by Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, and Sun Ra--it is not about the past.

The past, present, and future drums are equal. Like the three phases of temporal existence that surround human life, the artist has a responsibility to build in a way that equally honors what was, what is, and what might be coming. All creative endeavors that foreground improvisation and innovation are responding to and pushing back against a conservative (i.e. two-drum) culture. We live in a social world that venerates a mythic past that affirms contemporary politics and value, reinforces a stable present. The future is reduced to a marketing gimmick connecting us into some kind of progressive gradualism, but only by means of the technocratic successes of Western neoliberalism.

And so, on a terrain defined largely by music as industry, most of Black audio culture has served white/colonial politics and tended in its imbalance to freeze development and regularize change. But this free music now spans free jazz and avant turntablism, as well as any number of other synthetic pop-up genres and microstyles that defy a verbal

tag. Precisely because they were born outside of capitalism, they have exceeded the need for any kind of marketing label. This music is not a reflection of popular tastes. It is not fashion. It is improvisatory and expeditionary because it is a living dialogue with cosmic forces and a laboratory for cosmogenesis. It is a cipher and an alchemy by which the entrainment of brainwaves through rhythmic groove is so effective at achieving something like time travel that it is hardly worthy of comment.

In the standard Garifuna creation myth, the black people escape slavery by reconciling themselves with indigenous ecology and indigenous time. They operated on terms that were more like those that bound the Native to her land and less like the temporal order by which the European sought to dominate the land. Thus, according to the established Garifuna creation narrative they ally themselves with so-called maroon populations throughout the New World. The word maroon derives from the Spanish term *cimarrón*, which means feral or wild. Certainly, our core ideas about wildness devolve into ideas about time and our orderly behavior within it. The wild man bows only to nature's time and will frustrate any and all civilized attempts to confine his behavior to clock or calendar. Maroon as a political descriptor of resistance and self-determination spans the broad geographic palette on which the bitter saga of African enslavement was painted. In the U.S., the Black Seminoles of Florida were a group of black people who, like the Garinagu, found their freedom in the embrace of a Native American temporal culture that flourished in the inhospitable interior of the Everglades. In Cuba, small bands of Africans escaped bondage by fleeing to the highlands and taking refuge with Taino Indians. Similarly, Jamaica's mountainous interior became the refuge for a large scattered community of free blacks who evaded capture with a combination of stealth and guerilla tactics.

They eventually secured a degree of political autonomy that allowed them to sign a treaty with the British. In Portuguese Brazil, Black escapees reestablished the African village in inaccessible settlements called quilombos, cut deep into the Amazonian jungle, where they also resumed life within some facsimile of African time. Similarly, in Suriname, Maroon populations were able to escape slavery by receding into the temporal truth of a dense jungle that protected and nourished them. They, too, reconstituted a slavery shattered society by following the Indians in an acceptance and integration of natural cycles. The maroon was in every case the most successful forced black sojourner in establishing in the New World something like what she had left behind. And yet, no matter how much the maroon settlement aesthetically mirrored the African village, it was still, in all instances, a hybrid, a synthesis, an adaptation.

That standard Garifuna creation myth, however, has several problems. Sometimes the ship in question is a single ship; sometimes the story involves two ships. 1675 is the year the ship sank or 1635 is the year. Sometimes the ship is registered in Portugal. In any event, identifying the specific ship or ships that might be the kernel of truth in this archetypal myth, has eluded many serious researchers who have availed themselves of the copious logs of the maritime commerce of that era. In the end, the identification of the Garinagu as the descendants of escaped slaves seems to have been the brainchild of one white colonial observer, who no doubt found the best explanation for the presence of blacks anywhere outside of Africa-- their passive transport as cargo. But what if there is another explanation for a Black presence in the Americas? A presence which precedes Columbus, who wrote in his log about Indians eager to talk about Black-skinned traders from the Southeast who apparently cut a much better deal than the Italian? With Dakar, Senegal, a mere 2500 nautical miles away, Yurumei

would have been within reach of seafaring Africans who might have been visiting the Eastern Caribbean as tourists and traders, centuries before Columbus. What are the implications of this alternate Garifuna creation myth, that the linguistically-Indian blacks of the eastern Caribbean were the descendants of African settlers who arrived in Yurumei over the course, perhaps, of generations?

The body is a vessel for storing time. This time is measured by the changes that the body can impose on the world and the many changes that the world will necessarily impose on the body. The image of death is the image of the police. And in a culturally fragmented world, the image of the police is the only image of society that is truly recognizable as social, as shared. For some time now, we have all shared images of police releasing the time stored within black bodies and allowing that time to spill into the space that we are told to call home. The bodies being destroyed in these proliferating images tend towards Black primarily because Black bodies are inherently photogenic in a world of White frames.

The image of survival is the image of the maroon. The maroon strategically and instinctively retreats away from the time-wasting touch of the enslaver-police. Her retreat into wildness is not a counter-civilization, but an anti-civilization. In a broken-down system, the work of the free musical artist is one of few remaining activities that is not a rerun or a sequel. We have chosen to manage our lives as creators in a manner that looks a lot like the way the Maroons held the highlands of the Jamaican interior against the master's best efforts to recover his property. Right now, the stage, the concert hall, the gallery, even networked media, are all functioning as Maroon settlements for society's creative exiles, spaces where the runaways can safely assemble in numbers to exchange goods and weapons, plot communal strategy. This new collective has

engulfed community, however, eaten it like angel food cake, and what is left, stops short of a coherent congregation. It is better thought of as an aggregate of magically militant individuals. Hearing this, you should resist any misplaced sentimental attachment to or nostalgia for community, the unified body politic. It is dead forever. This aggregation is stronger, more flexible and adaptive, and far less prone to fascistic excess than any community forged around common ideology.

There are many ways to get off the grid of civilization, to retreat into the bush. You can hock your stuff, move to Idaho, put some solar panels on your roof, grow your own food, hunt and fish, that whole survivalist thing. A friend of mine who tends a large organic garden on a piece of land less than an hour from D.C. told me that growing your own food is the highest expression of anarchy. I think there's great truth in that viewpoint. But we're talking about the initial and invisible part of the (r)evolutionary gesture, the one that begins by unplugging from the grid of language, especially at the places where the first person singular becomes the first person plural. That is to say, in the places where I is transmuted into We and agency becomes a co-property. This expansion of identity through the renegotiation of first person singular into first person plural pronouns is the first metapolitical operation; it is the linguistic bedrock of every coupling, coalition or congregation. It is the verbal precondition for nation and clan, tribe and sect. This gesture, this movement of electrical charges and chemicals somewhere within the human brain is perhaps the most consequential action the human body will ever perform. It is our prime choice and ties us into a social time – a collective myth of history, a social apprehension of now, a religious vision of eternity. As such, this right to choose should never be traded away cheaply or forfeited through accidents of geography or

genotype.

The maroon has left the home (home culture, homeland, home time) to which she was assigned by fate, by destiny, and has accepted some measure of rootlessness, hybridity, and nomadism as the price of liberation. The semantic domain called Art is our first opportunity to make a complete break with civilization and its slave system of money and work. Formed from nothing more substantial than molecules of moving air, music is the most malleable of the arts, and therefore the one best positioned to provide cover for our wholesale exodus from the carceral condition of what's been passed off as a modern civilization. This arduous effort to escape the plantation and to grow our lives in this wilderness is something that each of us can be proud of, but our efforts cannot stop there. We are, after all, still fugitives, and at some point these people might stop manufacturing jihadis so that they can spend trillions of dollars to destroy them. At that point, though, they might notice that some of their property is missing and send the police.

So, let's look at this controversial, and admittedly speculative Garifuna creation alter-myth. What lessons can be gleaned from a story that begins not with black bodies chained in the holds of slave ships—the image of bondage—but with black tourists on something like cruise ships—the image of leisure and freedom? We must first deconstruct and abandon any notion that time is like a string along which events are sequentially positioned like pearls. Time is not a line, but a deformed plane, a topological manifold on which little bubbles of time roll around somewhat freely, like the tiny steel shot in a pinball machine. History, rather than being some grand chronicle of all events, is the accumulated dynamism and artefactual residue of so many collisions between these little nodules of time. If we accept the

traditional story of Yurumei's black population, the Garifuna story becomes a reiteration of the maroon narrative. But if we consider the alter-myth, the Garifuna story suddenly becomes a singularity. It becomes living proof of a pre-Columbian African presence a uniquely powerful clot of temporal energy sliding around on the lumpy table of history, an African presence that did not enter the Americas to dominate and conquer its people, to replace their time, but an African presence that came as explorer, visitor, and friend. The plains Indians say Aho Mitakuye Oyasin--all my relations--and in one simple, but closely held prayer, annihilate Genesis 1:26-28. That portion of the Judeo-Christian screed where mankind (a kind of man?) is given "dominion" over the earth and license to "subdue" it is, of course, an essential part of the machinery of European time. Dominion is the largest gear in the white man's clock.

Our free music trails out of our bodies as an effluent, a virtual by-product of our blackadelic struggles through modern Babylon. Unmonetized and underexposed, it is a survivalist music. Our eyes (all three) are open. We are fearlessly performing our life pulse spread across the time spheres of all three drums with the logic of rhythmically ordered sound. We are essentially improvisers. We can only play what we live. Our art must reflect our historical and contemporary realities, but most critically, it must also project and energize an authentic future, a future that is more than just a reconstitution of the past or continuation of the present. Sun Ra called that future--the one swollen with novelty, the future that has not been determined by European time, its pretensions, or its toys--Alter Destiny. Ancient people of Kemet knew exactly which species of acacia held the most beneficial alkaloids in their root bark. These chemical interventions were, of course, also well known to their Native American allies who similarly

understood that human beings (at times a dull species of habit) needed periodic assistance in refreshing their dynamic link across the three spheres of time. Just as lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) should be understood as a force within nature, language, and history summoned forth to counterbalance atomic arsenals, and the grim countdown of nuclear time, our free black music – not Motown, not bee bop or big band, not hip hop (per se), or the blues – should be understood as an equally extreme reaction, counterforce, and pharmacological response to the death-bomb holocaust of the middle passage. Like the mind-expanding pharmacopoeia born of ethnobotany and neuroscience, the interventions born of tone science are offered as a ticket out of civilized time.

The dugu feast was received, but the beautiful daughter died. We have been faithful and replete in offerings of precious blood to our ancient ancestors. Our unborn descendants also require supplication. We feed them with our sound and if we want them to enter their present (our future) as tourists and visitors rather than servants of clocks and prisoners of money, then we must engineer an audio culture that will be palatable and nourishing to these unborn time nomads.

Listen! In a clearing in the forest, a makeshift temple has been assembled from straight saplings and thatch. There, the modern maroons have gathered in the thick mist of a virtual forest jungle and are beating their drums. Most of the drums have cables now and these are connected via MIDI to an omniverse of unprecedented sonic truth. As they beat their drums, they are beating time, whooping the dog shit out of its oppressive ass, pulverizing its coveted clocks and calendars into an unrecognizable mass of granular time. We call this the seconds, bargain basement moments. Trash, actually, to be recycled.

# TIME TRAVELING BODIES

*Joy KMT*



**H**aving no home to go back to, neither a body nor a past, the afonaut is left to her own devices in creating a compass. She did not realize that her education in space/time subjectivity came during the moment when her babysitter made her \*\*\*\*\* and she left the confines of dictated reality. Nor did she realize the advanced training came when she would travel to that action as a present tense memory.

Trauma made her realize that her body is fungible, and so is time, and so is space. This can lead to problems in the timeline she holds onto most tenaciously, if she does not realize the greater force of "destiny" enacting itself upon her travels. She may break the lines, becoming too diasporic, becoming something none will recognize in any time, not even herself. The compass. This is found in her knowing, beyond fungibility to subjectivity.

[Who is the "i" we speak of? Where is the "i" located? Are you sure? hold onto it. This is your compass. Now we may travel. If you do not have the "i," there are many many ancient texts (blah.blah.blah.) which you may read to get in

touch with your "i" or "I". Be careful, read with caution. Suspension of belief (not suspension of disbelief) is necessary for your travels.]

Currently, our mechanisms are based on entering space/time from an abducted and/or murdered timeline. Incredulously, this is an auspicious timeline to begin from, for many myths can be drawn from in order to create the compass. However, it does have some drawbacks in that inhabitants of a missing and murdered timeline do not (necessarily) have a compass that orients them and can bring them back. If the afonaut does not build a local "i," she risks death and insanity.

The insanity comes more from the struggle of the alpha "I" definition, which does not wish permanent dissolution amongst infinite possible "I's". The "i" is a living thing. Like most living things, "I" will fight to live. And to not exist in the story of her timeline is similar to what we think of as death.

Temporary insanity is necessary if she wishes to permanently inhabit another space/time. There must be a moment--similar to Grand Orgasms-- in which she abandons all of the "i" that is herself. To relocate on a timeline and to be on the other side of a timeline without losing insanity, one must build a Lucille Bridge. The Lucille Bridge is made of

Starshine  
Clay

And she must have made it for herself: The Clay--the foundation of her hypothesis of reality-- the thing which makes this real to her. For instance, when she was ten and she floated once and was never able to do it again in this reality. There is a hypothesis there. Any miracle,

supernatural occurrence, mystery, open-ended question in the alpha- I's timeline is a rupture of time-space from which an alternate hypothesis may begin to form.

The caveat is that this new hypothesis must find its home in her body. It is for this reason that most afronauts have alternate timeline access points of childhood and trauma. During childhood one's timeline is not firm --one has multiple timelines running themselves as "imagination" during this time period in this timeline. Trauma is usually the point where one chooses--consciously or unconsciously-- a fixed reality. It is also why most untrained afronauts travel back again and again in a closed feedback loop to the site of trauma.

Clay. It is the matter--the genesis-- of a new reality. The Clay is the rich density from which temporary timelines bridge time-(/?)space realities. It is the collection of subjective facts from which one can build a myth strong enough to cross on.

Starshine is the element which the untrained trauma-looping afronaut does not access, and thus forms a dense bridge between two points and two points only. And those points are a straight line. The line is between now and trauma and back again. It is not the traveling to trauma that increases susceptibility to insanity, it is the constant travel in a closed feedback loop, which creates a timeline from which the starting point is a negation of the "i." To be clear, most--if not all-- Black people are operating in a closed feedback loop where the starting point is the trauma of slavery.

It is why we so casually speak of us as having been the ones to endure it, why our flesh remembers the sting of whips and the terror of lynchings and the fear of dogs and the

trembling humiliation of loop. As a people, our feedback loop begins and ends at the fixed point of enslavement. It is why we are consistently operating on a level of insanity. It is also why our history has been tampered with, sanitized, why we have been allowed very few access points of resistance, why our memories and myths have been stripped from us. It is the engagement of afronauts everywhere.

I digress. Starshine is the stories which are sung to us by the stars. The stars are a universal compass. Though they change depending on perspective, they are almost always available to afronauts in this dimension. They are the thoughts sent to us by angels (for purposes of this essay, angels are the beings which travel across many timelines--we are often angels ourselves and don't realize it), to offer the afronaut new definitions of being. These are the "aha!" thoughts. "Aha!" thoughts symbolize another timeline possibility. They are the break in a feedback loop. They offer you the substance of ritual necessary for the body to cross the bridge to another timeline. The "I" that is the alpha "I" will fight these "aha!" moments unless there is a cultivated relationship with the angels that ease the fear of death. The fear of death is often eased with the knowledge of something bigger than you that will not destroy the "i" or the "I", like the stars (it is my personal opinion that stars are great death companions, be that of the physical or psychic kind). This is particularly true for the afronaut who is not only on the ancestral feedback loop but the personal feedback loop.

### **Afronaut 101:**

*Activity: Breaking the Ancestral Feedback Loop*

Materials:  
afronaut clothing  
the ocean

the stars  
frankincense  
analog clock  
bowls of dark water  
names of yo ancestors  
a grounding stone  
food  
a mat to lay on  
a djembe  
a drummer

This is best done in a collective of 5 or more. Leave all electronic and communication devices outside of the bounds of ritual. Bring the analog clock, place it face down on a mat on the edge of your ritual site. Light frankincense, form a circle around it. Wait until you can smell the frankincense in the air. The drummer should start a slow beat on the drum. The Master of Ceremonies should pour libations, while all call their ancestors as far back as they know. This is the Clay of the bridge. All must look up to the stars, and find one which says "You are here" when libations are complete.

With the right foot as pivot, the afronauts must begin to spin counter clockwise. The drummer should keep up with the afronauts and also slightly increase the speed until a breaking point is reached by all participants. When the participants are ::open:: and no longer spinning, the drummer must bring the bowls of dark water to the participant. These bowls should have been left open to the starlight. The afronaut will look up again at the star which is her guide.

Into her bowl, The Master of Ceremonies will hum a note. Others will follow with a cordant or discordant note into their bowls. The notes should be loud enough for each other

to hear. They should be so close as to cause ripples in the water. This forms the traveling merkaba. While humming, afronauts should look into the bowl and listen for the stories which allow afronauts to go beyond the feedback loop.

Remember to close the circle when you are done.  
It may take several sessions to begin to construct a new timeline.

# THOUGHTS ON NAVIGATING THE TIME WARP OF HORRORS AND RIDING THE DNA STRANDS OF RESILIENCE

Ytasha L. Womack



One winter day in Chicago, after attempting to go jogging in the three inches of snow, I returned to the car I'd parked near a downtown playground and realized my tire was flat. Bundled in three layers of jogging clothes, I wandered into the empty Park District house, and found a lone employee who allowed me to hang around his office until AAA assistance arrived. The employee was a long-time Chicagoan and descendant of Polish immigrants with a special love for local sports teams. He was bored. I needed a place to stay warm. While I hung around his office drinking bitter and watered down coffee, we ended up talking about race. I seem to be a magnet for these kinds of conversations. Long before I wrote Afrofuturism or Post Black, I would find that people of all heritages were drawn to discuss the more controversial dynamics of race with me in the most random of situations. I've accepted overtime,

that this may be one of my “gifts.” Some people are psychic, some can teleport, and I can have diplomatic dialogues about the most tenuous aspects of ethnicity and race. Nevertheless, what could have been an unmemorable moment wound up being one that stuck with me. This grandson of immigrants spoke of his African American friends and their puzzling use of the word “we.” Whenever his black friends-- all of whom were Gen-X-ers-- would talk about the Antebellum South they always used the term “we.”

“They would say ‘when we were in slavery’ or ‘when we were being lynched,’” he continued, “I told them that I understood their anger,” my newfound Park District host said between his own sips of disgusting coffee “but that ‘they’ hadn’t experienced any of these things,” he added.

Now, to say that “we” hadn’t experienced such pains in the collective black consciousness identity would usually be seen as a backhanded slap, and disrespect to the millions of ancestors who did. But that’s not what he was saying, nor was that the intent of what he was saying. I consciously circumvented the emotional spiral of the collective identity as “we” to hear what he actually was saying. The fact remained that “we” and everyone I knew had not experienced these things. For some reason his notion that “we” had not was novel. Why was this very logical assertion a bit difficult to affirm?

I counteracted his argument, noting that the term “we” just emphasized how strongly connected blacks in North and South America felt to these atrocities, and that the use of “we” was a way to personalize this bizarre Western world legacy that explained why so many of ‘us’ were in fact on these lands. But his comment sparked an epiphany of sorts. “We,” as in my generation, may have had a sliding scale of

personal or institutionalized outgrowths of slavery, but “we” had never been enslaved. Our parents had not been enslaved. Our parents’ parents had not been enslaved. In some cases our parents’ parents’ parents had not been enslaved. “We” were lucky if we even knew the first name of the last generation in our lineage that experienced enslavement, and if we did, no more than a handful of tangible stories in oral family history remained<sup>1</sup>. The names of countless others before them were lost to the wind. Even with a well-intentioned DNA test, the names in this lineage were not in conscious memory. In fact, the DNA test couldn’t name any of the people, the 80% of most African Americans ancestors who were already on American shores by the end of the 1700s.

So no, “we” had not experienced enslavement. But there was nothing in “our” intense anger which often erupted in panel discussions, on black radio, and in schools across America that would indicate otherwise.

Our use of the word “we” was a way of keeping the horror of the enslavement period alive, or wasn’t it? I mentioned this use of “we” to my mother and she asserts that this dynamic of using “we” when talking about enslavement is an outgrowth of the Black Power era. Prior to that there was no discussed “we” in talking about enslavement. “We didn’t talk about slavery before that time,” she said.

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*1 If we look to history and if “we” rely on Henry Louis Gates’ documentary “The African American” documentary, then by the late 1700s, a few years shy of the revolutionary war, nearly 75% of most African American’s ancestors were already in the US. This implies that beginning with the American Revolution “we” had more enslaved ancestry in the timeline of this nation than ancestry who lived free. Again, I’m talking about most people, but not all. A similar, albeit longer timeline is applied to those with roots in other nations in the Carribbean, Central and South America as well.*

Shortly after my caffeinated epiphany, a minister I often quote referenced the same thing in a lesson. Reverend Johnnie Colemon, a pioneer in the New Thought Movement, gave a lesson once where she referenced the enslaved experience. Typically, she avoided conversations about race (color based power balances enforced through law and violence that we are currently dismantling), emphasizing that in Spirit such identifiers as race (refer to parenthesis above) and gender don't exist. The spiritual identity was the true identity. It was a sentiment that Sun Ra echoed in emphasizing the reality of the cosmic identity. But one day, while listening to Colemon, I again heard this juxtaposition of "we" that struck me. She spoke of the enslaved Africans and noted that she didn't know why "they" had to have such a horrific experience. The use of the word "they" made me cringe. Because it wasn't a "they," it was "we," or wasn't it? Was I, in my word choice and sense of identity, connecting to an experience that was not my own as my own? How conscious was this act? How unconscious was this choice? Again, I had to accept that "I" had not experienced any of these things, and yet, on occasion I'd use "I" or "we" would function as if I had.

By the time I spoke with an angered art curator friend, peeved by artists and their "pimping" of the Black Holocaust to juggernaut strong reactions in their work, I was used to the flipped use of "we" and "they."

Yes, we, as in people of African descent on this planet today, functioning as 5th dimensional beings navigating the 3-D reality, have a range of intriguing experiences, but enslavement and the Transatlantic slave trade is not one of them.

I do a lot of talks about identity and blackness. My narrative

is usually one that expresses identity as fluid rather than fixed, a narrative of opportunity rather than limitation. This discussion of blackness in this way is not aligned with the more typical manner of describing our experience (note my use of *our*) in the legacy, horror and trauma of enslavement and its aftermath. I stretch out the timeline a bit; I emphasize resilience and the use of the imagination to transcend circumstances. I avoid words that instinctively have beleaguered and weighted consciousness. I talk about Afrofuturism. I do this because I have witnessed the webs of emotionally charged words invoking the anger of race that disorient its speakers. I have witnessed this disorientation take hold of an audience, then rendered immobile in space and time as they tumble down an emotional spiral and run on the hamster wheel of horrors. I have witnessed speakers and audiences begin with a present awareness of being in the twenty-first century, and after a litany of words around race, suddenly speak as if we're in the Antebellum South, or as if we've just moved North during the Great Migration, or as if we hadn't just elected an African American president twice. I've seen this time-warped trauma function as a drug, as crowds or speakers reiterated slave or other radicalized traumas, enjoying the high of the oratory explosion, but rendered powerless when the awareness of present time surfaces. I have witnessed people stuck in time, all moments of racialized traumas: 1968, 1955, 1919, 1880. I have witnessed people slip into these times and slip out. I have witnessed people live as if these times haven't changed; work as if these times haven't changed, and be ready to fight you if you assert that they have. I call it the hamster wheel of horrors. I call it "the stuckness."

Some have witnessed this as a function of DNA memory. A recent study by New York's Mount Sinai Hospital proves that the trauma suffered by those interned in a Nazi concentration camp, those who witnessed or experienced

torture during the Holocaust, and those who had had to hide during the second world created genetic changes that were passed on to their kids and in some cases their grandkids. It is one of the first scientific studies to substantiate what African, Indigenous and esoteric healers across the world have said for several millennia. In some cases, yes these experiences are acutely attuned to DNA memory, and in other times it's acutely attuned to the consciousness of words.

## **Word Power**

I believe that words have power. I believe that words, as vibrations have their own energy. I believe that if enough people use these words with the same intent, and the same vibration, that every time a person uses this word, whether they want to or not, they will instantly connect to the consciousness of this word, the intent behind this word, and a consciousness created by all the emotions associated with the words over the space/time continuum. We do this all the time for our benefit. People in times of need may call on the names of deities and enlightened beings, from Jesus to Buddha. Regardless of what Jesus or Buddha may have done in their own lives, the consciousness of what people have believed about them over the centuries has its own consciousness as well. Others rely on ancient prayers or affirmations with words of empowerment to elevate their consciousness and reshape their worlds. But this same power in words applies, even when one is speaking negatively, or if a person is speaking words with dire emotional charges. They will experience emotions that are not their own. They will identify with a trauma that is not their trauma. Somewhat regularly, there will be various individuals in the talks who feel much more comfortable talking about blackness as a catastrophic experience of horrors. And, always, within seconds, it becomes obvious

that they are not talking about now, they are not talking about the past, they are on a treadmill of emotion, a loop of horrors that they refuse to get off of. The conversation becomes nonsensical. If one mentions that no one is denying these things but simply choosing to focus on another narrative, the anger intensifies and they repeat the same thing over and over. I've witnessed that they are balls of lodged trauma, a trauma they have not necessarily experienced personally. I believe such individuals have lapsed themselves into a time warp of horrors I've seen it. I work to navigate around it, but the time warp of horrors has a reality for all too many who struggle to claim the power of the present. "Every word you speak is a prayer or meditation of reinforcement which creates permanence," says Bryant McGill, human potentiality expert. He is not the first person to utter this sentiment, it is an extension of ancient wisdoms and yet word power in our ability to shift time is overlooked.

## **Word Power 2**

Words have emotional charges. I prefer to use the term enslaved Africans as opposed to the word slavery. I prefer to say Transatlantic Slave Trade over the term Middle Passage. I prefer to not to use the words Jim Crow. I prefer to talk about race as a technology created and enforced by law and violence that we are currently dismantling rather than speak of race as this fundamental categorization system with a list of ascribed beliefs, patterns and automatized ways of life that dehumanize the people we're speaking of. The latter terms and phrases have emotional gateways that lead to the downward spiral, which leads to the time warp of horrors.

Do an experiment. Say the word race. How do you feel? Do you feel a weighted heaviness in your heart? Are the images that come to you historic symbols of violence? Do the

images and thoughts have anything to do with the present? Now say the word ethnicity. Does this word feel lighter than when you used the word race? Do you have images of fun foods or great moments in culture? The word ethnicity does not have the same conscious emotion as the word race. Granted race and ethnicity evoke different concepts with respect to definition, but the point of the exercise is to note the level of agency one has when using one word versus another. Say the word enslaved, then say the word slavery. Now say the word bondage. The first is a newer term used to reference an experience, and notes a large process of ensnaring freedom. The word slavery denotes a static sense of existence. To say that one is enslaved acknowledges the individual's humanity, their individuality, and implies a range of human experiences despite their inability to navigate physically under the laws of the time. The term slavery in part because of its use and how it's been used in our vocabulary for the past several hundred years in reference to the Transatlantic Slave Trade has less levity, is massive, dire, immobilizing, dehumanizing. The word bondage invokes imagery of the Jewish people and Moses leading them to freedom. Its use concerning the Transatlantic Slave Trade invokes a relationship between these two experiences. Bondage seems escapable. These three words essentially mean the same thing, and yet, the consciousness around them creates very different emotional contexts, very different perceptions around the experience of time.

Do each of these words have their own consciousness? Is the word slavery an amalgamation of all the atrocities people of African descent have experienced around this word, along with all the dire feelings people have about the system itself? When one uses the word slavery are they invoking not just a definition of a system but rather a consciousness? Can the use of the word itself send people to a non-space, a

vortex of perpetual motion? If we string together the words slavery, race ,Middle Passage, are we connecting to a consciousness that is an umbrella to the horrors that the word invokes? Does this combination of emotions and histories associated with the words create its own time travel, but not to a physical location, per se, like the Antebellum South(as in the film Sankofa), but rather to a consciousness of the horrors and rage experienced? Is the manipulation of a word or the choice to use a new word an adequate tool is circumventing this time warp travel?

### **Time Warp of Horrors**

I like Afrofuturism because it can function as a space of healing. I have witnessed that the use of strings of familiar words around the power imbalances in humanity (note my choice not to use the word race) create different experiences of agency within time. Various words, despite our own intentions, can invoke past pains in human consciousness (not to mention DNA memory) that can render the experience of the Time Warp of Horrors. My hope is that through changes in language, changes in conscious word choice individuals can actively circumvent the Time warp to experience empowerment in their own lives. I think this is especially helpful when discussing racialized experiences that are not our personal experience. I think it's a basis for healing. Afrofuturism, in its use of the imagination, facilitates the power of the imagination. However, word choice and the consciousness of words are equally important.

I don't believe that "our" ancestors want us to re-experience the traumas they lived. They don't want us to forget. They don't want us to become the perpetuators of the calamity they experienced. However, I don't believe they want us to take that burden consciously into a time where it doesn't

serve us or them into our own futures. I may be taking some liberties in this assertion. Nevertheless, I choose not to experience these cycles as a masochistic tribute. Yet, I am committed to dismantling power imbalances and perceived power imbalances in humanity. “Our” existence is in part due to “their” resilience and it’s the lineage of resilience, the resilience of the human spirit that I will move forward into my future and claim in my future now.

# THE INEXTRICABLE LINKING OF US

*Dominique Matti*



**B**ridle my mouth, or I'll tell the truth. Yank my body back by the hair, chin lifted, your blade to my neck. Muzzle me. Shut me up. Try to. Leather, or musket, or both. I stared down and carried your barrels before, held death between my tongue and the roof of my mouth, and still devised new ways of speaking. Shackle me. Do it. But I'll always have insurrection in me, and walk around like the proof that I am. I am almost but not quite free, the taste of it on my lips, eyes burning with the evidence of evil. So many centuries and you still try not to see me, don't want me to see you. But I do, and I remember you, your look of not looking. So many centuries and it's still in the blood, mine and yours. Brutality and branding rods and whips and chains. Nooses! Water cannons! Dogs! The tear gas, the tanks, the cages, the comments, confinement. You want me gone to extinguish the remembering, the guilt you got, all those flames inside you, bright red just beneath the skin. Light me up then, cowboy, like a torch! Wipe me out, it won't stop your smoldering. Hang me, make my tongue swell in my mouth. My voice will still echo in the chambers of your chest, haunt the halls of your head. You don't want to hear this humanity, wailing like a siren in your skull. You want

to hear the story you wrote, over and over. Play that again, turn the volume up, read it out loud. Make me memorize it. A white hot take on genocide. Beat it into me. My body won't forget what it knows. There is a night you can't tame. A darkness you can't expunge. A universe you can't control. Put a collar on my neck, fashion long sharp rods, loud bells to signal my escaping. Infect every inch of the world with your will. I'll still slip your grip, transcend you.

There's no healing in hiding from the history haunting us now.

# ELEVATE

*Femi Matti*





# THE NIGHT DOCTORS: THE TERROR BEHIND THE ALIEN ABDUCTION PHENOMENON

*Theo Pajmans*



**L**ike a Jack-in-the-Box, the alien abduction syndrome burst with urgency and unease on the scene of a nascent 1960's Western Space Age. The Vietnam War was trending. In countless living rooms, grainy black-and-white television screens--embedded in post-Jetsons family Sci Fi curves--projected images of giant B-52 bombers hovering over foreign landscapes, saturating distant jungles in hellish firestorms of Napalm death. Simultaneously, mass media drenched the American psyche with unsettling images of race riots, student uprisings, Black leader assassinations and the ritual sacrifice of an American president who had ignited the Space Race. America had left its epoch of consumerist optimism behind and had embarked on the gloomy road towards dystopia.

The modern UFO phenomenon that had started in 1947

turned a darker shade as well. Gone were the early naïve stories of blonde, blue-eyed, benevolent masters who came from Venus to teach mankind. The era of the forced medical experiment had arrived. With it the alien abduction motif entered the pages of Western culture.

But where exactly do we locate the origin of our perception of the UFO abduction phenomenon, that modernist fear, symbolic of the uncertainty of the citizens of an empire in decline? Is it found in the cold vastness of space or instead is it deeply buried in the soil and folklore of a suppressed race?

There's a good chance that an African American of a century ago, no matter where they might live in the United States, would mutter in agreement to those questions, before hurrying off in utter fear.

Then, as now, large parts of the American population were the victim of a virulent racism, which has never gone away. This racism also introduced a unique divergence of the folkloric beliefs and superstitions of the various racial populations that made up America. African Americans, ultimately having roots in Africa, inherited the religious beliefs, traditions and folklore of their overseas ancestors who were brought to the continent as slaves. The same went for, say, the poor Irish, Dutch or Swedish colonists. Each racial, cultural or national group introduced its own set of folkloric traditions from the old countries to the fold, and with these mythologies came their own brand of demons, fairies, monsters, witches and things that go bump in the night.

The old tales brought from Africa to the new world by way of the terrible slave ships were stronger than the American melting pot that excluded Black slaves, anyway. These traditions survived the ancestral memory deletion process of

assimilation in the new country. And since there was a communications gap, to put it mildly, between the Black slaves and their White masters, the beliefs and superstitions of the former could linger and grow in relative seclusion, in places unseen and unheard.

African American communities, at the whim and mercy of their White masters, found solace in a new and unique mythology. It was based on old traditions, yet made to explain the wanton, senseless and random cruelty that befell them. With it came the warnings embedded in folklore, assembled by astute and intelligent Black explorers of the dream roads of ancestral heritage. The most well known piece of advice was this: you should be very wary of what you might encounter at the crossroads, and never, ever accept any gifts from strangers there.

Black explorers championed paranormal anomalies, a genre that Western culture has successfully exploited into an entire storehouse catalogue of Hollywood pulp. The last time you counted, how many Black persons of note inhabited such an iconic series as *The X-Files*? Yet, there were many Black explorers in history, such as nineteenth century occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph. But they'd best be called demonologists and exorcists. That is what the life of an African American consisted of anyway: fighting off their demon slave owners, the White devil-man, and exorcising the deep injustice that came with it.

Black urban legends differ from White urban legends, as Patricia Turner demonstrates in her book *I Heard It Through The Grapevine*. And Black anomaly research is different from White anomaly research. Amongst others, its marked difference lies in the social status of the experimenter. A suppressed people living in chains with their fates decided by the unpredictable whim of their cruel masters will

formulate a different set of tales to explain and fathom a careless, nihilistic and dark world. A free people will entertain a different outlook on life and the universe. For instance, there was a time when poor Irish peasants lived in dread of the “good folk” and their children-snatching antics. In contrast, well-to-do nineteenth century Victorians gravitated towards a totally false idea of fairies as cute little darling creatures with butterfly wings. It may also mean that, the better off a folk will become over time, the more they drift away from their dark and atavistic folkloric fears. In due time, folklore may even be seen as superstition, a mental aberration of more primitive times, which is the wrong road to take. There are things that go bump in the night, and there are manifestations for which there is no answer.

How does this relate to the UFO-phenomenon? We’ll come to that.

In 1872, several American newspapers recorded a curious superstition among certain African American populaces in and around the city of Washington, involving the existence of what they called “night doctors.” According to these beliefs, the night doctors wandered the streets in pairs, between the midnight and daybreak, in search of victims to be abducted for the dissecting room. They abducted their victims with the help of adhesive plasters, lying in wait for suitable subjects in dark alleys. They stealthily and quickly emerged whenever they saw a Black man or woman of the desired size and physical proportions. A nineteenth century source describes what happened next:

*“Advancing with muffled step behind the unsuspecting victims, one of these terrible ‘night doctors’ reaches his hand over the shoulder of the colored man or woman, and dexterously claps the adhesive plaster over his or her mouth,*

*in order to prevent any outcry, while his confederate quickly ties the arms with a cord, with which he is prepared. Unable to give an alarm or make anything like successful resistance, the poor victims are placed in a covered carriage in waiting nearby, and carried to the dissecting room where he or she is chloroformed into insensibility, and then bled to death by the heartless students.”*<sup>1</sup>

There, the horrors did not stop, since, after the body was dissected, the fatty parts of the body were “tried in cauldrons for the purpose of obtaining the oil, which, according to the popular belief among the colored people, afterward appears at the drug stores in the form of castor oil.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the newspapers, these beliefs were held so firmly by African American communities that it was only with greatest hesitation, even fear and trembling, that they would go out at night, and “take to their heels whenever they notice anything suspicious in the movements of the passers-by.”<sup>3</sup> They asserted:

*“The number of colored people who have disappeared is much larger than usual, and they are convinced that the doctors of Washington are not only supplying the dissecting rooms of the city with subjects, but are furnishing ‘castor oil,’ manufactured from Colored adipose matter to the large cities throughout the country[...] Those who indulge in this singular*

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1 ‘The Night Doctors – A Curious Superstition Among Some of the Colored People – How they Think Castor Oil is Made’, *Evening Star*, Washington, District of Columbia, 15 January 1872; *The Cleveland Morning Daily Herald*, Cleveland, Ohio, 19 January 1872; *The Indianapolis News*, Indianapolis, Indiana, 22 January 1872; *Janesville Daily Gazette*, Janesville, Wisconsin, 23 January 1872.

2 *Ibid*

3 *Ibid*

*superstition relative to 'night doctors' imagine that young and obese subjects are preferred, on account of the oil which they yield, and that hump-backs are especially desirable, on account of their peculiar physical conformation, which renders their dissection of particular interest to medical students. Indeed, it is reported that as high as \$150 each for first class hump-backed subjects is offered by the 'night doctors'. We know not how this strange hallucination originated, but imagine it must have come down by tradition from 'the good old times' before the war."*<sup>4</sup>

This "tradition" was a means to control the nineteenth century African American slave populations through the exploitation of this type of folkloric fear by their owners. One must think of the sinister garb of the Klansman or the Ghost Riders or Night Riders. It was, as Gladys-Marie Fry notes in her book *Night Riders In Black Folk History*: "a system of psychological control."<sup>5</sup> When the stories of the night doctors began to surface in early nineteenth century America, a newspaper offered what it thought was a plausible solution as to the origin of these stories:

*"Where did this belief originate? Perhaps in darker Africa, in days when ancestors of the race in this country were changed from Africans to Americans through the medium of the slave ship, manacle and lash. The more reasonable explanation is to be had in studying the effects upon the Colored people in this country of the crime which gave a new word to the dictionary – 'burking' – stealing corpses for purposes of dissection."*<sup>6</sup>

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4 *Ibid.*

5 Gladys-Marie Fry, *Night Riders In Black Folk History*, University Of North Carolina Press, 1975

6 *Afraid Of The Night Doctor*, *The Wisconsin State Register*, Portage, Wisconsin, 8 August 1891.

Seen in that light, the fears of these “night doctors” were not unfounded. The practice of dissection was widely spread in nineteenth century America, and the graves of African Americans were the main source of corpses. It was, after all, less risky to dissect a Black cadaver as opposed to a White one. In as early as March of 1827, Freedom’s Journal, an African American newspaper, instructed its readers “how to create a cheap mortsafe, a complex contraption of rods and plates that protected the coffin[...].” This contraption ensured that “the longest night will not afford time to empty the grave.”<sup>7</sup>

And sometimes a corpse wasn’t quite dead to begin with, as in the gruesome case that was dubbed “An Ohio Horror” by the newspaper that reported upon it in 1884:

*“Wherever there is a medical college the Colored people are in mortal fear of the ‘night doctors’. Most people have laughed at the suggestion that a Colored man is liable to suffer a mysterious disappearance through the need of ‘subjects’ in the dissecting-room, but if the Ohio story is true the colored people do well to keep as far away from the medical college as possible.*

*It appears that the Ohio Medical college was short of subjects and called on the usual purveyors, Colored men. The latter promised to have three subjects that night. Sure enough, the bodies were brought to the dissecting room on time. They were the bodies of a colored family named Taylor, and were still warm when placed on the tables. They showed evidence of violent death. It is the common opinion, and it is supported by good evidence, that these colored persons were murdered*

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<sup>7</sup> Sheena Morrison, *Body Snatchers: Tales from the Crypt and Beyond*: [http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/body-snatchers-  
tales-from-the-crypt-and-beyond.html](http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/body-snatchers-tales-from-the-crypt-and-beyond.html)

*by the body-snatchers[...]* In St. Louis some years ago, an excitement was created by the dissection of a body under circumstances much less horrible, and it ran so high as to endanger the existence of the college building. A negro was employed to scrub the dissecting-room and was sent up without being told of the character of the room. When he saw the subjects on the tables he dashed out of the room in great fear, stumbled and fell headlong down the stairs, breaking his neck. Instead of notifying the coroner, a class out of subjects quietly carried the body up again and devoted it to the advancement of science. It was with the utmost difficulty that the building was saved from the mob that formed when the facts became known..."<sup>8</sup>

In 1879 the fear of the 'night doctors' was so strong that it became dangerous if one was perceived to be a night doctor, as events in Little Rock, Arkansas, demonstrated:

*"At rather a late hour I was going along Second street with a friend. My friend was drunk. I had not been drinking anything. Meeting an old negro man, my companion caught hold of him and goodhumoredly told him to go on. I requested him not to detain the man. Just then several parties rushed up, when I told my friend to run, which he did. I walked on, not suspecting that I would be molested, when suddenly something struck the back of my head[...] I was cut in several places, and I have been informed that after I had been knocked down I was dragged under a shed and left for dead. A woman did the cutting, and I understand that when she left me she exclaimed that she had killed one d-d doctor's kidnapper."*

This fear was apparently well known by segments of the

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8 'An Ohio Horror', *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 28 February 1884.

White populace of that town and even exploited by them as an instrument of terror, as the continuation of the account demonstrates. There we read that another statement mentions a group of drunk men invading the house of a Black man, pretending to put plaster over his mouth. Fortunately several Black people went to his aide:

*"...during the melee which ensued one man was knocked down and it was thought fatally stabbed... So strong is the belief fixed in the minds of colored people in certain sections of the city, that the streets immediately become deserted, and all business suspended and doors closed as soon as a physician appears."*<sup>9</sup>

Obviously incidents like these, and we may well take into account that there were many more that escaped reporting by the nineteenth century media, not only embodied the rudimentary alien abduction scenario, they also formed the foundation for these later beliefs.

In 1885 in Washington, surgeons were driven off during an operation on a young African American named William Harris:

*"The case of Harris became hopeless after the physicians were driven away. There he lay, with his bowels exposed and severed. He sank rapidly, and before the police could drive out the howling mob he was dead. The operation is a critical one at best, but the doctors believe they could have made a successful case but for the interference. There have*

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<sup>9</sup> 'I'll Shoot 'Em. A Belief Now Prevailing Among the Colored People. The Medical college – Solitare's Scare. The Second Street Cutting Grew Out of the Suspicion. Something Which Should Be Stopped. Even by a Card from the Mayor', *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Little Rock, Arkansas, 28 October 1879.

*been demonstrations against night doctors in Washington before, but nothing quite so serious as this.”*<sup>10</sup>

During a hearing in the Police court in regards to the unfortunate demise of Harris it emerged that the recently introduced long ulsters were thought to be used by their wearers, slab doctors, as the African American populace held it, to hide kidnapped children victims in these long coats.<sup>11</sup>

From South Carolina an 1889 scare was reported on as far away as Boston involving a night doctor with phantom anesthetist character traits:

*“The Negroes of Clarendon, Williamsburg and Sumter counties have for several weeks past been in a state of fear and trembling. They claim that there is a White man, a doctor, who at will can make himself invisible, and who then approaches some unsuspecting darkey, and, having rendered him or her insensible with chloroform, proceeds to fill up a bucket with the victim’s blood, for the purpose of making medicine...”*<sup>12</sup>

The newspapers reported with regularity on the fears felt so strongly by the African American communities for the night doctors well towards the end of the nineteenth century.

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10 *‘I’ll Shoot ‘Em. A Belief Now Prevailing Among the Colored People. The Medical college – Solitare’s Scare. The Second Street Cutting Grew Out of the Suspicion. Something Which Should Be Stopped. Even by a Card from the Mayor’, Daily Arkansas Gazette, Little Rock, Arkansas, 28 October 1879.*

11 *‘Surgeons Driven Off. Silly Negroes Spoil An Operation. Strange Hostility of Washington colored People to the Use of the Knife by a Doctor-Four Physicians Mobbed in Broad Daylight’, The Trenton Times, Trenton, New Jersey, 4 June 1885.*

12 *Boston, Boston Herald, 23 May 1889.*

Tellingly, one newspaper remarked how the belief in the night doctors was especially prevalent among “a certain grade of negroes in Washington, particularly those who drifted there after the war from the extreme south.”<sup>13</sup> These were people who in all probability would have carried with them tales or personal experiences of persecutions by the Ku Klux Klan or the Night Riders. The night doctor belongs to this line of horrors originating on the crossroads of White slave owners, virulent racism, psychological warfare and suppression. It could manifest itself in various formats. They travelled in pairs but could also act alone. One description pictured a night doctor as

*“...a supernatural being, formed like a man, having long, hook like fingers and a poisonous breath, and that wherever he turns and breathes upon a house where a child lies sick the child is doomed to death before another night. It is not ominous to one to hear the night doctor, as this being of superstition is called, and always after the death of a child the negroes get together and ask who of them heard the night doctor pass by. Some one is sure to assert that he or she heard the low, moaning, rushing sound made by the night doctor’s quick flight. But it is regarded as a surely fatal sign if any one sees the night doctor.”*<sup>14</sup>

The “night doctors” are more than a scare stemming from dim folkloric roots. Something evil lies at its heart as well, and that is to be found in the relationships between the White medical profession and the African American

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13 ‘The Night Doctor. A Singular Superstition Among Washington Negroes’, *The Topeka Daily Capital*, Topeka, Kansas, 3 April 1887; *Janesville Daily Gazette*, Janesville, Wisconsin, 28 April 1887; *The Interior Journal*, Stanford, Kentucky, 6 May 6, 1887; *The Columbus Journal*, Columbus, Nebraska, 10 August 1887.

14 *Ibid.*

populaces. These have been tarred by horrible practices as the Tuskegee experiment that lasted from 1932 until 1972 and there are many more and much older examples. There was, for instance, Dr. J. Marion Sims (1813-1883) who used enslaved African American women as experimental subjects, "...most of whom he bought and kept on his property for this purpose. Some were operated on up to 30 times.

Flash forward to a fateful night in September 1961. A beautiful and vivacious Black husband and White wife are driving in their car to Portsmouth from Niagara Falls. And, as unique as their interracial marriage is at that time, they are on the verge of having an equally groundbreaking experience. It will become so influential, that it will forever mark the very beginning of what has since been known as "the abduction phenomenon." As they are driving in the vicinity of Twin Mountain, and there's a Twin Peaks for you, they see an odd craft with flashing lights, but worse, the odd craft sees them. One mile off Indian Head, the object descends causing the couple to halt their car in the middle of the highway. In front of them hovers a huge, silent object, filling the entire field of the windshield. Grabbing his gun, the man leaves the car. Behind the windows of the craft he sees "[...]about 8 to 11 humanoid figures who were peering out of the craft's windows, seeming to look at him.[...]Barney had a conscious, continuous recollection of observing the humanoid forms wearing glossy black uniforms and black caps[...]Beings that were somehow not human[...]" <sup>15</sup>

The couple is Betty and Barney Hill, and their unbelievably weird encounter would essentially mark the recorded beginning of the abduction phenomenon. There were a few claims to earlier abductions, that of Antonio Vilas Boas in

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15 See John H. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey*, The Dial Press, 1966.

October 1957 for instance, but it was not properly recorded until a year after the Hills. Yet another pre-Hills claim was found in a French newspaper from 1954, where a letter writer recalled a certain childhood incident from 1921. The anonymous writer claimed that he was snatched away by two tall men wearing diver suits and helmets, taking him to an 'oddly shaped tank. But let's return to Barney Hill. British ufologist Peter Rogerson observes:

"Anyone who reads Barney's encounter in the field with the light must suspect that his extreme reaction was more likely to have been a symptom of preexisting post-traumatic stress than something new. His description of the alien as having a Mongolian-type face, wearing a sort of leather jacket and a scarf is curiously reminiscent of a kamikaze pilot. This figure is also seen as an evil Nazi officer and an Irishman (Boston Irish, traditionally hostile to Blacks). In other words, reflected in the unknown light, Barney sees images of evil authority, intolerance and threat." <sup>16</sup>

As Dawn Danella points out in *Night Doctors: Exhuming The Truth*:

*"There are some that say that the "night doctors" are a myth belonging solely to black folklore, a story used to frighten and manipulate. There is no doubt that is indeed what the lore achieved but the night doctors, aka "sack-em-up boys" aka "resurrectionists" aka night riders, did indeed live in more than just whispered stories. The night doctors were a real force that made a lasting impression on history and the repercussions of their horror story can still be felt in African American communities today."* <sup>17</sup>

Did Barney Hill, an African American who also was active in

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<sup>16</sup> <http://magoniainmagazine.blogspot.nl/2013/11/fairylands-hunters-notes-towards.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://digitalcommons.ric.edu/obom/3>

the Civil Rights movement, in this extremely stressful moment, relive that atavistic fear of the “night doctors” which once terrorized scores of African Americans and is even felt today? Was that why Barney Hill reacted in a much more frightened and panicked manner than Betty? It can be argued then that this deeply felt fear of the “night doctors” stood at the base of how the abduction phenomenon in its earliest stage was shaped in our collective psyche. After all, UFO historian Jerome Clark ponders in his *The Ufo Book* how, until the mid 1960s before Betty and Barney Hill’s experience became known “...ufologists knew nothing of an ‘abduction phenomenon’. Indeed the Hills’ account of being taken against their will into a UFO by humanoids and forced to undergo physical examinations seemed unique and, to some to some ufologists, thoroughly unbelievable...”<sup>18</sup>

An African American citizen though might have known exactly where to look for similarities: he or she might even have recalled those old stories told by grandmother --I know my mother told me a fair share about the strange disappearances, the inexplicable abductions and the weird experiments of the terrible “night doctors.” They mirror the medical procedures, the physical examination ritual in the UFO abduction phenomenon that surfaced for the first time with the experience of Betty and Barney Hill on a deserted stretch of road, one September night in 1961.

18 Jerome Clark, *The UFO Book: Encyclopedia of the Extraterrestrial*, Visible Ink Press, 1997, page 214.

# STRANGE GRAVITY

*Alex Smith*



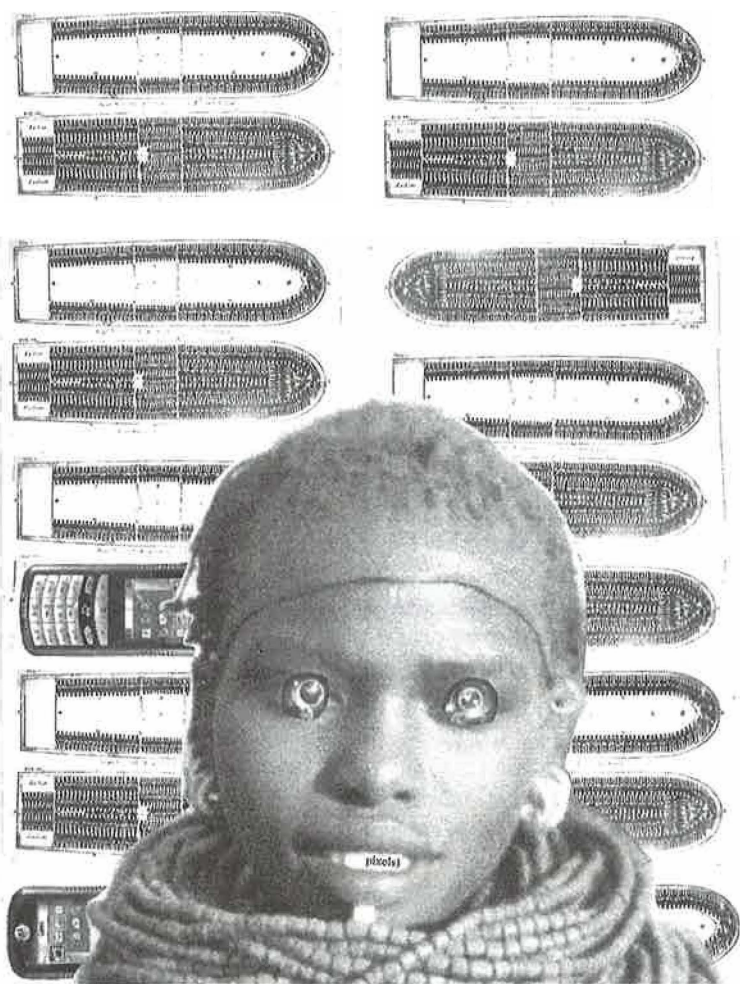
The following account is all, 100% true. Absolutely nothing has been changed to fit any superfluous narrative.

## **PAST**

A vast and purpling sky, a hole in the universe was opened wide by crimson bolts, laced with liquorice blue streak lightning. All around, the atmosphere glimmered in soft, phosphorescent tint. The air lilted, kissed with clouds and rainbows. They'd look up and see anemone stretching tendrils across the sky or dragons' heads mounted on the husk of craggy metal barges, or luminous air dolphins swimming in the mud of the cosmos. Those were dreamy, halcyon days, when gods ignited the atmosphere. Demigods rimmed in silver casing, goddesses with torched hair, nymphs with a universe in their heaven soaked eyes, apparitions from other nebula, and bayoneted boys with dagger tongues and armored eyelids; they all swam together in an amalgamation of power that lit their world aflame.

It was a day like no other, yet somehow strangely familiar. The engines on the Great Ship hummed and collapsed, breathed its briny smoke, lifting itself out of a wet sleep. A

Illustration: Roaming by Alex Smith



gush quaked the harsh rock surrounding the lake as the Great Ship spat out of it, peeling itself out of the water. Airborne, it hovered there while banana sick yellow natives, startled from their day of preening and scavenging their sacred landscape, looked up and gasped at the ship's glory: a vessel a county wide, that could render that moon's sun stoked existence opaque. The ship was a gnarled brass, crudely designed and rusting, eons old-- it leaked fuel and contaminants and bled its liquid membranes all over worlds.

"I love doing that," through the perfect sphere of his domed helmet, you could almost see MetalMan smile. Light traced the leylines of his armor. His chest plate spun in a dangerous centrifuge. His visor display lit up in green pixelated icons as data whipped around every diamond surface on his body.

"Obviously you do," Thunderer replied, his voice heavy and weighty with cosmic years. He pushed a button on the console and said, "People of the Zanchuwan! Fear not! We are the I-Men! We have vanquished Rengoon and his merciless military magma mites! We have protected the last known supply of your beloved antium and sealed off the mines. Know this: while we have traipsed through the darkness to bring you peace and light, through the fiery star fields of the body of the Taurus, only to be met with hammer of Galvatross himself, we, yet and still, the I-Men, bring you light, bring you victory, and an enduring peace."

Rain Woman was standing in the doorway. She offered a slow clap then returned her arms to their position, folded over her chest.

"That was one of your better victory speeches, Thunderer. Now, if it's ok with you two, I'd like to get off of this

godforsaken rock and get some cryosleep."

"Will do," Metal Man answered, turning from her at the ankle, his whole body in a swivel, his feet turning afterward, his armor spitting out angelic commands, "Initiating spin-gauge. Loading prima-fax. Downloading Centauri star map. Light hover thrusters engaged."

"You know, it's really hard to sneak up on bad guys with your stupid armor chirping off like that all the time. Doesn't that thing have a mute button?"

"Certainly. This is class 4 military-grade biotech, fitted with hardware siphoned from all the planets and temporal neutral zones we've visited in the last five years. All of this "chirping off", is simply more fun."

"I liked you better when you were wearing that piece of shit tin can we found you in."

The ship lurched forward and spun out. The jaundiced and odd people of Zanchuwan disappeared as the ship cracked through the thin veil of the planet's atmosphere and launched out into the deep sea of space. They'd be on Earth soon. The mighty Thunderer sat and watched the stars trail past. Eventually, he'd make his way down to the cryo chambers. He liked to watch them all sleep, but especially Crunchor, whose body was an amalgamation of dense particles birthed in unbreathable space, of rippling sinuous, turgid muscle over bones of hollow steel, and of magic. His white blond hair, his face like a child unkempt and prematurely thrust into the throes of barbarianhood. Beside him, locked in magic stasis, were his enchanted axe and his gauntlets carved from the calcified flesh of ancient gods. He wanted to crack open the seal on Crunchor's cryochamber, let the life liquid ooze out slowly, or just enough so that he

could touch the young man's hair with his ungloved hand. Instead, he tapped the glass and returned to his chamber. A mandroid entered into his room.

"The usual dream sir?" he announced in a soft, obedient timbre.

"Yes. The visions of my homeworld, destroyed by lightning beasts, the dying image of my master and teacher Xane."

"I know it well sir."

As Thunderer unsheathed from his uniform-- a modified version of clothes from his long dead homeworld-- dusty boots caked in ashe; twists and ties wrapped over the bolt streaked spandex, the emblazoned symbol of an atom lit up with lightning bolts-- the images of the tranquil world whose destruction he was saved from-- flashed on the surrounding LCD screens.

"Mandroid! Leave this chamber at once!" Mystica was backlit by a swirl of patterns, holograms spiraling around her body. She hovered just inside the doorway, her long cloak gathering under winds she seemed to be creating. Her eyes were piercing white, hollow and vacant.

"Mystica, what madness?" Thunderer, half naked, protested. "We must sleep for the journey home."

Mystica watched the images on the screen, the huts and simple thatch houses of Thunderer's home planet under attack, the whole structure of the world coming apart in a ravenous display of hungry, starved energy.

She screamed out, "Nooo! It's already started! The fabric of this universe-- it is coming apart!"

And she collapsed into Thunderers arms, the mystical display vanishing as if someone had slowly turned out the lights. Her eyes returned to their normal dark green. "We were too late. We couldn't save him. We couldn't...save...any of them."

So, Thunderer held her there for a moment, her elf-like body limp in his hands; he watched her for another moment more as she dreamed of portentous things to come.

## **PAST 2**

Everything in the house was burdensome. Everything in the house had a strange gravity. From my bunk bed, I could see bees outside, flying low and crashing into my window. Young boys were already cutting through our driveway and taking a shortcut through the neighbors' backyard, screeching loudly as their shell-toe adidas and converses clicked up and down the street. I turned on my back and looked at my fingers, flicked them over my eyes; it was an exercise I did just to make sure I was still tangible, not a transparent ghost. I listened; no sounds in the house. An odd tranquility. Last night, he held a gun to my mother's head, his hand sturdy, betraying the fact that he'd had a bottle of whiskey and that the madness had taken over him.

I lost myself in those sick daydreams, running scenarios over my psyche and could hear nothing, just the prattling of my own thoughts, the dark, warm comfort of retreat into a universe that was slowly imploding. And I could feel nothing, and then everything. My brother was suddenly up and moving about the room, throwing K-Mart knock-off GI Joes all over the place, watching them land as plastic debris—it'd be their final mission. My sister, now walking, was up, too, traipsing up and down the hall, her movements

jerky and directionless; just moving for the sake of moving, test-driving her vessel, her body newly discovered, mobile. There was his voice, a low and edgy vibration, almost synthetic and eerily quiet; was he talking about the Braves or the Sugar Ray fight? Was my mom feigning interest as she bustled around the house? It was like I was living in a movie-of-the-week epilogue.

“Boy, get up from there! Fill up these boxes!” Her yelling was laced with pleas, her admonishments lined with a sad, insistent urgency. This was before the days when the devil was in everything; before the days of our awkward freedom, of my burgeoning body taking up space everywhere in her tiny apartment in Cherry Court; before the last Exodus into uncertainty that freedom from his grasp would come to define. This was the time of survival, when my mother and I were at our fiercest, navigating a pathway towards something undefinable, something we missed.

At that moment though, it was time to get up and put my stuff into a box. We were moving to a new house, only a day after his drunken stupor that saw my brother and I lined up against a wall in the kitchen and examined and prodded and lectured into the night. While he compared the sizes of our head to demons, I drifted off, his voice becoming a blur as it fought for space in my head over the episode of Moonlighting that was playing in the other room. I felt sad that, in a parallel universe, there was another family, with the same physical trappings as mine, sitting in that room and watching Bruce Willis and Cybil Sheppard go through the tortured machinations of their will-they/won't-they, that that episode in my own world would go unwatched, starving for an audience that will never come.

I was slowly packing my things in a giant cardboard box, when he appeared in the doorway. Everything stopped, even

my brother, whose rationality was fearless and unprotected; we looked at him.

"What is all that shit?"e asked in a low breathy husk.

I looked back at my box. Certainly, it was filled to the brim with the impractical zeal of a child. Half dead He-Man toes with no heads; colored pencils whittled to their nubs; pages of stories written about my classmates that doubled as weirder retellings of Back to the Future and ET, tomes by Shel Silverstein and Beverly Cleary, and cellophane paper you drew on with magnets and invisible ink. He walked over to one of my boxes.

"You can't take all this shit" he said.

He pried one of them open. An issue of I-Men Number One, their only adventure really, that was born into the world, the cover hanging loosely with rusting staples, its pages stained with cereal milk, panels half finished, and worlds crudely rendered with the lucid, elegiac passion of a 12 year old boy only just then beginning to know the difference between the washed over dream of the fantastic, and the crushing banality of the real world.

"Get rid of it," he said. "Did you buy this? You didn't buy any of this, it ain't worth nothin', just drawings. Get rid of it."

I tried to imagine Thunderer leaping from the pages of I-Men number one, his body crackling with power, and punching his skull out of the back of his head, but was abruptly returned to reality when a pile of my drawings landed against my bony chest. And so, every box was loaded into the car.very piece of our aging furniture, every lamp and light fixture, every dream we had purchased for ourselves

in hopes of a better life, filled two cars. On my final ride, I snuck away and rummaged through a trashcan and, in a panicked flurry, ripped from the rising pile a thin, half torn page, some disproportionate image of something wild, and tucked it into the small of my back.

"Alex! Come get in this car!" my mother called out. I sprinted towards the car and hunkered down in my window seat. My brother gave me a look. I just stared out of the window as our old neighborhood dissolved into the mist of memory.

## **PRESENT**

One. Sitrep. One. Sitrep. Nano. Nano. Star. Stargazer.

The box sits on a creaky table in a dust strewn warehouse, its wires spiraling out of it like angry tentacles. Occasionally it sparks, buzzes, whirrs. Its once angelic voice now hidden behind fuzzy, distorted tangle, lifting out of it in spurts, in random tones and blips, random words.

One. Niner. Star. Transmogrified genomorphs. Temporal temperature gauge gaze. Star.

He punches it, kicks it, bangs it on the desk. He lifts it and, as he's about to smash it for good, there's a noise at the door. Two feet of steel rumbles, shakes, its bolts rattling right out of their hinges. It's blown open and she's standing in the doorway. Her hair is shaved on one side; half of her face is scarred and peeling. Her body is fit snugly into a rotting t-shirt held together by twin gun holsters, calloused leather pants, and combat boots.

"How'd you do that?" He asks her.

"I've been calling you for two days," she says. "What--" She

surveys the area. A moldy cot and moss grown concrete walls, barbs of steel caked in blood, sawn off and discarded all across the room. "Let's get you out of here."

"How the hell did you do that? None of us have been able to use our powers to since the Axis Days."

"Right, well, they just started up again. I don't know. It's like, I can concentrate really hard or if my adrenaline is pumping, you know, I can do some things. It's hard."

"Where are the others?" His eyes are alive now, he's pacing the room, frantic. Metal blotches and corroded wires hang from his body in places where once sat sliding LCD screens and artificially intelligent biocompasses. Nanotech mainframes and shift-ship nav systems now turned into a mesh of decaying steel.

"There are no others," she says, checking her pistol. "You're a mess."

He looks at the deep scar on the side of her face, the smear of ash and blood on her bare, scarred arms.

"And you're still a vision," he remarks. He doesn't even know if he's being sarcastic, part of him is certainly telling the truth.

Cyberlink data disengaged. Cyber link transient touch screen disengaged. Cyber tech Moonlighting GI Joe demon one star gaze star in my pocket like

She looks at the device in his hand, shaking her head.

"God, I've always hated that thing. Let's go," she says.

She pulls him down the long corridor of the warehouse. It's littered with dead bodies, coated in a stench. Its walls are crumbling and grey black. A thought pricks her mind; she's floating over a cloud in a clear blue sky, winds speak in anxious tumult, ice cracks through her veins, and she's backlit by the sun. She rides through cities, etching her jetstreak on the side of skyscrapers, pissing off the stuffed shirts in their office buildings, then she dives down into traffic and plucks a bank robber or a thug or a cybernetic nanoghost mercenary off the streets with but a gust of wind, all at her command.

"I still wish I could control the weather," she says under her breath, in a faint whisper. They make their way through the tunnel of the warehouse, "I wish I-- why didn't we heed Mystica's warning? Why didn't we make sure?"

He turns to her, broken as he is, and tries to comfort her, his boney hands, once strong and empirical, touch her face, "We didn't know what we were up against. We--we didn't know."

The lone tear tracing the wrinkles on his leathery face snaps her out of it. Christ, she thinks to herself. Jesus fucking christ. Let's just get out of here. They get to a door and it's bolted and welded shut. She pulls her gun out-- a hackneyed, jury rigged contraption, probably more dangerous to the shooter than the target.

"Hold on," he says. He fishes into the pocket of his oversized pants and pulls out a bug-like device, latches it on to the door hinge, covers his ears and watches it explode. They make their way through the wreckage and fall out onto the street: giant ships and planes and tank husks heaped in piles; branches and foliage wiring through stopped cars and a sky like lead, thick and black, brimstone and smoke. A man in a terrain vehicle with an exposed engine, with a

canopy roof, is waiting for him, revving the engine.

"Elasticman figured it out," the man says to them.

"Thunderer?" he says, nervously fiddling with his chatty device.

"Get in," she orders, "Move over."

"Aye. And aye." Thunderer slides into the ripped up passenger seat.

"Elasticman, he figured it out. He says that what we're up against isn't some strange force from another galaxy or universe, but in fact, what we're up against is the universe itself. Time itself."

They roar over the terrain. They tear through battle worn landscapes strewn with dead gods. He lays on the tiny backseat, clutching his device, fighting tears, staring up into the starless sky. Helistens to the drone of the Thunderer's voice.

"Time itself is manifesting as the Axis creatures. He says there's a point in the cosmos that we can get to that, if we find the right codes or do the right ritual or hit the right button--he's not sure if it's scientific or magical or some mix of the two-- but we can right the imbalance of this universe and set it aright."

"This universe?" She asks.

"This universe," she confirms.

She had become so accustomed to living in the throes of harsh, unyielding reality that she forgot that the universe,

that time, that reality, that physics, that all these things can bend, are bending, are malleable. She forgot that there are -dragons on the outer rim of the Gansix dream region, guarding the gates of the multiverse, that there are Battle Bats in the subterranean wish worlds of child-gods, birthed into existence in liquid farms at the core of the moon; she forgot that unicorns exist, and then she sees one in her path. She swerves to miss it; it's just standing there, white and shimmering, stars and pixies leaping from its mane like lite dust. Their vehicle goes careening into a ravine of blood and shit and stone, they flail limply, their bodies dashed on the wreckage and the rocks.

One. Star gazer one. Now online. MetalMan protocol now online. MetalMan security code xBx1 stargazer. I-Men identified: Thunderer. Bodily functions: stable. I-Men identified Rain Woman. Bodily functions critical. Stargazer one.

## **PRESENT 2**

When I came home, sweaty and riled from seeing Grumblebunny play their noisy indie-punk tunes, and overcome with encroaching sleep, my mom was in the process of kicking me out of her apartment in Cherry Court. My room was turned upside down, the vacuum cleaner plugged in and ready. This was two days after I'd unburdened myself by telling her I was gay--well, bisexual. I left the door open(that so many of us had in the '90s)that, yes, mother, there was hope yet and still.

"I can't take this anymore," she says.

We were dating white girls, we were staying out until 1 am and we were vegetarians now and we were bringing in strange, orange haired White folks' children and listening to

devil worshipping hardcore punk and we were out of control. So, with the memory of me, aged 17, finally stepping in front of the blows that would rain onto my mother's back for the last time dissolved from the ether, my brother and I, we were released into the world of the taxpaying renters, we were forced into the carousel of a punch-clock life.

So I'm sitting in Whit's car, loaded down with records and comics and clothes—the essentials-- and I'm barreling up I-95 to Philadelphia. We listen to heavy punk tunes and fucked up rap music, barb-laden neo-folk and ethereal world music, or crushing, epic post rock that seemed to beat out a soundtrack of the changing millennium in ten-minute songs of White tribal music punctuated every time in a wall of guitar noise then back to heavy punk. We unload all of my shit into my brother's apartment on Walnut Street and I hug and kiss Whit goodbye.

Through a wave of sad, chaos, I drift, Philadelphia as a pale glow, somehow a hardened mash up of Basquiat's "Boxer" and Ed Hopper's "Nighthawks." City—steel and mesh, neon and gray slabs-- in a religious debate with its people-- paranoid wisdom gleaned from days drenched in marijuana and informed by a newfound love for hallucinogens. So many souls in trucker hats and white tee-shirts and black Dickies whose meditation practices are not nearly as religiously performed as is their love for illegal substances, the drugs often taking the place of the yoga or tai chi or Sufi chant.

I, myself, have been trampling through the harsh terrain of Philadelphia, laying on a mattress on the floor, staring at the ceiling, a slow burning incense filtering through my room. Downstairs is a party of some kind, heavy homemade instruments and washboards clang into the night; drunk crusty punks with scabies-riddled dogs wrapped up in

bandanas mosh through my living room as their spilled rum soaks through the floor. I am not angry, I am lost. I envy them; the hairless ape skinheads with their Doc Martens and suspenders. The goths with their dyed black locks and grey lipstick and bondage clothes; the Rastas on 52nd street with their dreads tied up in an oversized tam; and these crusty punks with their Profane Existence t-shirts and skin tight black jeans-- they know what they want, they know who they are, they are a part of the world, peppering the landscape with their assured image, and though they beat at the doors of the facades that constrain them, in their security they are absolutely free, it seems, coping and struggling and being there.

I wander the cruise spots and peruse Craigslist for a hook up, drifting through bodies, learning a new language. They're gruff boys sometimes, with rubbery hands, or they're spritely cherubs with carved out beards, or they're lost politicians or business in town for the night with a room at the Holiday Inn. On the bus home from a trick, with a dazed trip-hop soundtrack beating in my head, I stand there staring at empty pages and attempt to fill them with the day's dream. The words fall down onto the page effortlessly, but they're just hollow, they're just glancing around the edges of the page, wanting to leap from its white and lined grid and into the abyss of the real world.

"Hand me that wrench," he'd said to me. He'd smack the back of my head. "No the other wrench." I was a dumbass 11 year old. I watched him twist knobs and check valves with a seething disdain. After a while, he'd say, "You know I don't know why you read all them damn books. You know that white man has made all his money from that already. You ain't doing nothing, just paying his rent."

I'd hand him the wrench he really wanted, thinking how

beautiful it would look lodged down his throat, thinking about how he'd stood in the living room firing shots at the ceiling, his eyes turned to a foggy glass from drink. When he got drunk, I'd put my headphones in the drawer, I'd lock the remnants of my drawings in a chest under my bed, and ride out the storm.

So now, I put the comic back on its shelf, and keep walking through the city smelling like coffee and sandwiches, buried in the mire of a low-paying restaurant jobs. Those dreams are not for me; I am only a sad, Black thing sitting on a Septa bus and grinding out an existence.

There's an open mic tonight. I finish my poem and amble over. I sit there, nervous and faint, the only fag in a room of African soldiers, totemic shamans and warrior griots; their fully exploding stars. They beat out a rhythm into the mic that is loud:

I AM THE SUN AND THE MOON AND THE STARS AND SHE IS MY UNIVERSE. I AM TRAPPED IN HER. SHE IS BORN OF ME, THE GOD MAN, THE HEAVENLY MAN, UPON THIS SPIRAL ZODIAC. SHE LIFTS ME UP, HER SPIRIT LIKE BLUNT SMOKE; I AM JUST THE ASH.

I hear in their voices, the ambling spirit of spandex knights. I hear a legion of superheroes-- angel beings with metallic gossamer wings; shark hybrid ninjas with magic-tipped talons; cyborgs with unwieldy gyro axes and time traveling swash bucklers with god killing swords. As each of them drone on, the rhythmic and hollow words that pulse into the atmosphere tap out a song, and I'm reminded of something stronger than any mantra, any meditation, more powerful than any words burned and etched into a sea-salt scroll and ravaged and made untranslatable by the ravages of time.

"Up next, we got-- let's see--Alex Smith, ladies and gentlemen. He calls himself a poet and wishes he was a superhero." I walk up to the mic, oddly nervous, and I speak.

Cyber 1. Online. Image induction teleport device on line.  
Cyber 1. Stargazer. Identification:

## **THE FUTURE**

We will storm Universal Studios armed, hack into their mainframe and burn down the gates. We will hold their children for ransom and inundate them with 50's crime comics, etch rainbows into their eyes and carve out their hearts with a spoon shaped like Captain America. We will mail homemade bombs to every member of the Academy, laced with confetti shrapnel, built from the shredded remnants of JG Ballard novels. We will break into the plush, silk-sheeted homes of CBS sitcom writers and attach wires to their extremities and pull electric levers every time they use anti-transperson language. We will joyride in Lorne Michael's limousines and run them across set lots blasting glitch hop remixes of the A\$AP Mob and dubstep Rihanna mash-ups. We will smear Meryl Streep's make up. We will steal the payroll at Marvel Comics and forward it to homeless shelters and halfway houses in Cincinnati. We will burn down any hall or venue that ever hosted the Grammys or Golden Globes and play laser tag in their hollowed out husks. We will release wild lions at the houses of the executives of the Cartoon Network; one lion for every second a Black stereotype was shown over their airwaves. We will replace Woody Allen's shooting scripts with copies of Dhalgren and put on Drake concerts in his dressing trailer. We will kidnap executive producers at Sony Pictures and wrap them up in reels of film of all the gay sex scenes they've had deleted and pin back their eyes and force them to watch

a cattle-prodded Chris Christie and Rick Santorum in drag do the electric slide over the Benny Hill theme song. We will pour artisanal fair trade coffee over all the keyboards and computers at the Vice magazine and Pitchfork.com offices, holding them down with a weighted pair of Jeremy Scott Adidas while we shave their beards. We will get 90s Angelina Jolie to wire transfer the endowment from UPenn into a trust fund for the children of Azaliea Banks and replace the statues of Ben Franklin with bronze sculptures of Audre Lorde, Essex Hemphill and Maya Angelou. We will march into the offices of DC Comics, replace the catering with grab-and-go Little Caesar's pizza and Bed Bath and Beyond coupons. And every time their editors say "diversity," we'll draw penises on their foreheads or tattoo Spider-man logos on their necks. We're writing Superman now!

I will spin in a nice, swiveling chair, lay back in the lush comfort of a corner office with a view of Metropolis. I will pick up my pen and, from the long hallway, I will see a faint light; it will grow and ebb and rise and pulse around a few dense, half-there/half-imagined figures, turning into a kaleidoscope of purple and green, and when they materialize, bursting from the corona in front of me, I will welcome them into this new universe. You will see, I will save them.

# CONTRIBUTORS



**Alex Smith** is a DJ, poet, writer, artist, activist, super-hero navigating the dystopian neon-noir dreamscape of Philadelphia. A member of the sci-fi artist/activist collective Metropolarity, the founder of the queer sci-fi reading Laser Life, and curator of the retro-futurist electro mash-up art-jam Chrome City, Alex's stories and writings emboldened the weird, strange, and revolutionary dichotomy of being black and queer in a world that marginalizes both. Selected by Rosarium Publishing for the anthology dedicated to the writing of Samuel Delany, *Stories for Chip*, it's Alex's flash fiction collection, "Gang Stalk Oprah", with its lines hashed like an SAT-word injected SEPTA bus graffiti, and self-published sci-fi zine "Ark Dust" that will kidnap you, convert you, shoot you in the leg and then set you free. Contact: [theyarebirds@gmail.com](mailto:theyarebirds@gmail.com)

**Alicia Jade Lochard** is a writer and historian living in Philadelphia. She researches and writes about contemporary poetry, queer intimacies, loneliness, nostalgia, and Black feminist history in North America and the Caribbean. She was born into a family of Black matriarchs in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Black Quantum Futurism Collective** is a multidisciplinary collaboration between Camae Defstar (Rockers!; MMGZ) and

Rasheedah Phillips (*The AfroFuturist Affair*; *Metropolarity*) exploring the intersections of futurism, creative media, DIY-aesthetics, and activism in marginalized communities through an alternative temporal lens. BQF Collective has created a number of community-based events, experimental music projects (*ANTI-KY-THE/RA* released on Deep White Sound label), zines (*NonLocality Series*; *Sun Ra*, *Synchronicity*, and *Superposition*), and an anthology of experimental essays on space-time consciousness called "*Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Vol. 1*" (featured in the *Unveiling Visions* exhibition at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). BQF Collective is 2015 artist-in-residence at West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange, and had their experimental short, *Black Bodies as Conductors of Gravity*, premiere at the 2015 *Afrofuturism Now!* Festival in Rotterdam.

**Camae Ayewa** (*Moor Mother Goddess*) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Philadelphia. A musician performing under the name *Moor Mother Goddess*, she has toured in Europe and the U.S., and has performed at numerous festivals, colleges and universities sharing the stage with King Britt, Islam Chippy, and Claudia Rankine. A soundscape artist with work featured at Samek Art Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art Chicago, and Everson Museum of Art, Camae is also a singer in punk band *The Mighty Paradocs*. Camae is co-founder and organizer of *Rockers! Philly*, a 10-year long running event series and festival focused on marginalized artists. As a workshop facilitator she works with youth centered programs, non profits and shelters. As a curator of fundraising events, Camae has worked with and serves on the board of *Girls Rock Philly*, and is assistant coordinator of *The Afrofuturist Affair*, Philadelphia's premiere afrofuturism organization. Camae is also a poet and author of the forthcoming poetry book *Fetish Bones* and is an avid

zinemaker and collector. She is a member of Black Quantum Futurism Collective, which released its first book, Black Quantum Futurism theory and practice Vol. 1. and has been featured at the Schomburg Center, as well as presented installations at the Rebuild Foundation and Temple Contemporary at Tyler School of Art.

**Dogon Krigga** (Dezz Archie) began making digital art with a distinct purpose. As a self-trained artist, Krigga set out to provide unique and original designs for independent businesses and recording artists. Seeking an outlet to further express his ideas, he founded Makrigga Media in 2011 as a creative entity to address the public and share ideas in a visual format. The visionary aspect of his creations are an amalgamation of culture and esoteric reference. He utilizes his particular sense of synesthesia to transmute sound into an image that invokes a sense of wonder and reflection on the human being's cosmic, aboriginal, and omni-dimensional nature. Raising humanity's vibrations through visual art is the purpose. <https://www.facebook.com/ArtByKrigga>

**Dominique Matti** is an editor, poet, and writer. She ruminates for a living.

**Femi Matti** is a photographer and visual artist based in Philadelphia. His work centralizes blackness--shadows and skin.

**Joy KMT** is a self-taught & queer & black & femme & hood & poet & mother & lover &. She works from the possibility of the personal to be collectively transformational. Her work often blends the magical with the reality of living at the crossroads of multiplicities. She is the producer of Her Voice: The Stories, Tales and Myths of Women of Color which premiered in the Sunstar Music Festival and Testify: A

Black Womanhood Series. Her poetry has appeared in Check The Rhyme: An Anthology of Female Emcees and Poets, Amistad: Howard's Literary Journal, Black Girl Dangerous, Blood Lotus, an Online Literary Journal, Backbone Poetry Journal, The Feminist Wire, Pluck! the Affrilachian Journal of Arts and Culture, Fledgling Rag, Near Kin: Words and Art inspired by Octavia Butler, and is forthcoming in Sugared Water.

**Rasheedah Phillips** is a practicing attorney, author, and mother living and working out of Philadelphia. She is the creator of The AfroFuturist Affair and a founding member of Metropolarity Spec Fic Collective. In 2014, she independently published her first speculative fiction collection, Recurrence Plot (and Other Time Travel Tales), followed by an anthology of experimental essays from Black visionary writers called Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Vol I. Phillips is a 2015 artist-in-residence with West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange as part of the Black Quantum Futurism Collective.

**Theo Paijmans** is hovering like Baron Samedi over the crossroads where westernized post-industrial nightmares of the apocalypse meet with age-old animistic gods from before the dawn of creation. Theo reads the patterns that emerge from the telluric stress zones of our complex 21st century dystopian society to translate their ripple effects into meaningful narratives of our time. Following his study at the Art Academy, Theo specialised in charting the variety of human experience that takes place beyond the threshold of consensus-reality, and the effects on art, literature, technology, social constructs and cultural expression. Theo's books on extraterrestrial intervention and free energy were published in the Netherlands, America and Japan. He was chief editor of Dutch avant-garde art and fashion and digital culture magazines. His many writings on anomaly

experiences and alternative technological viewpoints have appeared in numerous international print publications such as All Hallows, La Gazette Fortéenne, Fortean Times, Darklore and The Anomalist, and the groundbreaking anthology Infinite Energy Technologies (2013). In 2013 Theo co-curated the Museum Night for the Dutch Museum of Modern art, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and won the first prize with the theme of Russian avant-garde art and the genesis of space flight. Theo is also an internationally recognized expert on the histories of early and proto-science fiction. He was invited to lecture at the Cielo Habitado Conference in Madrid (2015), part of the art exhibit ARSTRONOMY. Incursiones en el Cosmos in Casa Encendida, featuring amongst others the works of artists Keith Haring, Mike Kelley, Yves Klein, Panamarenko, Thomas Ruff and Sigmar Polke. At this conference Theo gave a lecture on the 'alien life-form' in early science fiction, and how the imagination of the industrial age connects to the proto-ufo phenomenon. Theo also lectured at conferences in London and Paris on account of his expert knowledge of global subcultural, avant-garde and subversive movements in art, literature, film, alternative thought and anomaly experience. Theo also researches and writes about Afro American folk scares, urban panics and dreams of futurist black utopias, their feedback-loop impact on western culture and their origins in the psychological warfare of institutionalized racism. Theo Paijmans can be reached at [paijmanstheo@gmail.com](mailto:paijmanstheo@gmail.com)

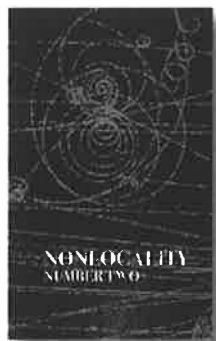
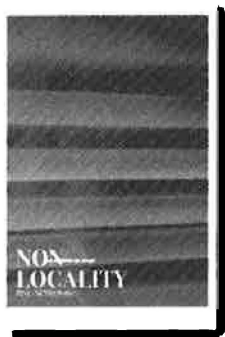
**Thomas Stanley** (a/ka Bushmeat) is an assistant professor at George Mason University where he serves as research faculty with Virginia Serious Game Institute (VSGI). He teaches sound art practice and consciousness studies. He is the author of *The Execution of Sun Ra* and co-author of *George Clinton and P-Funk: An Oral History*. His doctoral

dissertation examines the unique compositional system of Butch Morris. He performs electronic music with Bobby Hill and Luke Stewart as part of the trio MIND OVER MATTER MUSIC OVER MIND. Dr. Stanley is a father, sundancer, and noetic (r)evolutionary.

**Ytasha L. Womack** is author and creator of the Rayla 2212 series. An award winning author and filmmaker, her books include *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci Fi and Fantasy Culture*, *Post Black: How a New Generation is Redefining African American Identity and Beats*, *Rhymes and Life: What We Love & Hate About Hip Hop*. *Rayla & The Red Rock* debuts at C2E2 2015. Her sci fi film *Bar Star City* goes into production Summer 2015. When she's not writing, she's dancing or off drinking ginger beer and red tea. She resides in Chicago.



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Space-Time Collapse is a new experimental writing, sound, and image series that applies Black Quantum Futurism theory and practices to spatiotemporal collapse events and phenomenon. The first book in the series features new visions from Rasheedah Phillips, Camae Ayewa, Joy KMT, Thomas Stanley, PhD, Ytasha Womack, Dominique Matti, Theo Pajmans, Alex Smith, and Femi Matti, with a foreword by Alicia J. Lochard.

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