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FUTURISMUS UND FUTURITÄT

CHRISTOPH BRUNNER & SOPHIE PETERSON

Thinking from the End

On Apocalyptic Realism, Futurity, and Speculative Fabulation

ABSTRACT: Historically, the end of the world occurred again and again for various subjects in the frame of colonization, mass extinction and continued dispossession of populations. Such a conception of the recurrent end dislodges a linear idea of time and a modernist narrative of progress which surfaces in various discourses concerned with the Anthropocene. Here, the end of the world equals the end of humanity while staging the universal human subject as a collective agent of preventing such an apocalyptic scenario. This article draws on critical work on the end of worlds, queer speculative futurity and critical fabulation to carve out narrative techniques for resisting the uniform temporality of what we term *apocalyptic realism*. Proposing the idea of *speculative fabulation*, we foreground the power of speculative engagements with futurity against their subsumption under an all-too-human casting of the future as the dominant narrative mode of Anthropocene's present.

KEYWORDS: Anthropocene, narrative, speculation, apocalyptic realism, perspectivism, queer futurity

CHRISTOPH BRUNNER is Assistant Professor for Philosophy of Media and Technology at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

SOPHIE PETERSON is a student in the MA Critical Studies at Leuphana University Lüneburg.

1 INTRODUCTION

In this article, we embark on a critical engagement with a conception of the end that is mostly synonymous with the end of humanity or the planet earth as a whole. Such a conception of the end defines a teleological point in time – the end of something – that conditions the present and thus should condition *human* action. To get a grip on this conception, we take a closer look at the understanding of temporality in discourses on the notion of the Anthropocene and some of its critiques. For us, the conception of time in Anthropocene discourses shows how the end of the world is constitutive of *our* present. We suggest that the temporal linearity pertaining to an end

(of humanity) insufficiently covers the wide range of narratives concerning the end which defines a recurrent reality for certain groups, species, and populations. In the following, we use the term *apocalyptic realism* to emphasize the capitalist »apparatus of capture«[1] generative of a teleology of the end that goes hand in hand with a perseverance of a certain segment of humanity and life on earth. Addressing the question of how to *re-act* we follow Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro who problematize such a reality as *passive present*, a present that is finitely determined by the facticity of a geological past and thus forecasting a future tied to the *human* destiny and its potential end. Countering such a casting, we engage the works of Aimee Bahng, José Esteban Muñoz, and Saidiya Hartman who consider the future or futurity as potential activations for inhabiting the planet beyond *apocalyptic realism's* nihilistic stance.[2]

Our aim is to seek ways to engage specific times and futures capable of undermining the progressive narrative of the end of the human in its dominant self-image.

For us, apocalyptic realism names a dominant narrative drawing in the Anthropocene's focus on the human as both the culprit and the victim of its own doing. The *human* of this narrative is an exclusive and excluding figure, whose roots reside in a historical conjuncture; that of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and Western humanism. Our aim is to seek ways to engage specific times and futures capable of undermining the progressive narrative of the end of the *human* in its dominant self-image. However, we do not intend to liberate humans from their responsibilities in the face of severe and life-threatening crises. On the contrary, we ask what kinds of being or becoming human have been eclipsed by dominant progressive narratives and how to take account of the potential difference that a non-progressive temporality of becoming-human might entail.

What can we learn from perspectives that address the end not as something to happen in the near future, but which has already happened many times and in many places? What if, as Gilles Deleuze suggests, the *catastrophe* is a general state of existence – a necessity for becoming – and needs to be acknowledged without focusing solely on the finality of the apocalypse?[3] In other words, how to address the catastrophe as an active and activating force in the present that obliges us to think and to act in the presence of the recurring end; an end that is not coming but is immanent to the present?[4] Such a conception of the catastrophic reminds us of Walter Benjamin's angel of history who »sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet« while being carried by a »storm [that] blows from Paradise [sic!]« and that is called »progress.«[5] Minding the catastrophe rather than the apocalypse binds our attention to the present while engaging a future that is not determined by the

1 Deleuze/Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 424–473.

2 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World*, 5–6.

3 Deleuze: *Desert Islands*, 13.

4 The obligation to think and to act derives from Isabelle Stenger's work, whose book *In Catastrophic Times* provides a vital ground for this article.

5 Benjamin: *Illuminations*, 257–258.

finitude of the end and thus transcends the urgency of present struggles. Thinking from the end, we draw on different conceptions of futurity understanding them as a speculative realm of potentiality. With Aimee Bahng and José Esteban Muñoz, we propose a queering of the future. A queered futurity subverts the conventional linear conception of the future and prioritizes the generation of non-linear, alternative stories that diverge from the dominant end-of-the-world narrative.

Queering as a practice allows us to think of the future as futurity in a speculative key. Following Bahng, we propose a practice of *speculative fabulation*: a proliferation of narratives that exceed the present enclosure of dominant discourse. We consider such a proliferation as a continuous activity that occurs as a movement of flight or being fugitive. The double meaning of flight and fugitivity pertains to a shared embodied history of marginalization and escape but also to an inventiveness of new times and ways of existing that emerge in mid-flight. Bahng addresses such *migrant futurities* as potential narratives which diverge from the dominant tropes of history – including the popular conception of the future as part and parcel of the Anthropocene narrative. Experimenting with speculative fabulation allows us to contest the linear assertions of an apocalyptic realism while resisting any romanticizing conception of the future as imaginary (abstract) other.

2 THINKING THE END

The concept of the Anthropocene has long been established in the humanities and natural sciences. The term Anthropocene was first raised in 2000 by Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer.[6] The atmosphere scientist and the biologist established the term to describe a new geological period that exposes the dominant role of the human in relation to the global environment and therefore to the climate crisis. They locate the emergence of the Anthropocene in the beginning of the Industrial Revolution while other scholars argue for different beginnings such as the extinction of the megafauna or the so-called *Great Acceleration*.[7] More recent work of the Anthropocene Working Group acknowledges that the Anthropocene should be considered as an *event* rather than a geological epoch. In doing so, the authors point at the »difficulties in determining the onset of the Anthropocene in the global stratigraphical record, and [...] the fact that human impact has been a diachronous, heterogeneous and socially differentiated process.«[8] We can see that questions of temporality and in particular critiques raised by the humanities haven been included over time into the geological framing of the Anthropocene. In this article, we want to focus less on the question of when the Anthropocene began but more which order of time the de-

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6 Crutzen/Stoermer: *The »Anthropocene«* and further expanded by Crutzen in 2002 Crutzen: *Geology of Mankind*.

7 Zalasiewicz: *Die Einstiegsfrage*, 166–168.

8 Gibbard et al.: *The Anthropocene as an Event*, 5

ployment of the concept propagates in popular discursive formations.

Crutzen and Stoermer's emphasis on human responsibility is relevant to us but we agree with critiques of their universalist claim on humanity as a collective singular. Jason W. Moore argues that the human as such is not the central cause for the climate crisis but the capitalist relations that seize the environment through a Cartesian nature/culture divide.[9] Anthropocene discourses often build on a capitalist enterprise through a grand narrative of the end while sidelining the many lived experiences of ends already underway. For the most part, Anthropocene discourses project a grim future based on »man«-made (human) destruction of the earth and its measurable impact as defined by the discipline of geology. As Kathrin Yusoff points out in her deconstruction of geology as a colonial and capitalist discipline, there is an apocalyptic tone to this story which legitimizes *us humans* (meaning the West/North) to take action and change *our* destiny.[10] One can say that Anthropocene's most prominent attractor for posing human-centered action resides in the postulation of an apocalypse, that is, the finite end legitimized by analyzing the geological past. This rear-guard perspective eclipses the long duration of the present turning it into a passive realm whose destiny is precast.

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Anthropocene's ends of the world are capitalist ends, not the ends of capitalism. In other words, they allow for little to no other forms of future than the apocalypse caused by capitalist modes of exploitation. With the notion of apocalyptic realism,[11] we emphasize that the temporality governing Anthropocene discourses is often one based on geological narratives which, as Kathryn Yusoff states in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None,* were born out of an extractivist and capitalist drive.[12] This drive is based on progress, turned into development in contemporary political parlance. Progress pertains to both, an extractive relation to the earth, and the extraction of cheap labor through enslavement.[13] Colonialism and the modernist science of geology sustain a trauma of an apocalyptic degree to enslaved subjects and their inheritors as much as violence towards the earth in its mineral, fossil,

9 See Moore: *Capitalocene I* and Moore: *Capitalocene II*.

10 Donna Haraway invokes the Capitalocene in its analysis but says that both the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene are (too) big and cynical stories that leave little room for resonance, but rather »apocalyptic panic« and a thinking that it is now too late anyway (Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*, 55–56). Haraway argues for a reknitting of multispecies stories in the *Chthulucene* and combines the claim of a critical diagnosis of the present from a more-than-human perspective and the stories as practices to establish other relations in troubling times – an approach that will also resonate throughout this article.

11 We conceive the term *apocalyptic realism* through Mark Fisher's conception of »capitalist realism« addressing capitalism's totalizing apparatus of capture in the time of late liberalism that makes to imagine rather the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Mark Fisher: *Capitalist Realism, 1*).

12 Yusoff: *A Billion Black Anthropocenes*.

13 See Patel/Moore: *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*.

and biological compositions. The intricacies between capitalism, colonization and the Anthropocene are constitutive of this apocalyptic realism. In its solutionist attitude, the Anthropocene postulates an apocalyptic future which disregards the apocalyptic realism that constitutes the present, disproportionally perceived from non-Western and more-than-human perspectives. For the sake of conceptual differentiation, we will consider the apocalyptic strand as being tied to a temporal linearity that we consider problematic in its framing of the present. Catastrophe, on the other hand, lends itself more eloquently to the differentiated temporal structure of the present. Herein, catastrophe defines a continuity and something that has happened many times and for many different peoples or species thus accounting for its transtemporal and disruptive character of the present. Put differently, the apocalypse is a catastrophy without escape – a static and universal end.

Danowski and Viveiros de Castro criticize a Western concept of the Anthropocene's end narrative. They do so by drawing on popular cultural artifacts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Abel Ferrara's *4:44 Last Day on Earth* and refering to Amerindian philosophies. They ask: how does a concept of the end lead to the idea of an »end of epochality,« meaning the end of a species, the human species, and how to resist such a totalizing view on the human and the world? Apart from their critique of an anthropocentrism focused on the end of the human, their attentiveness towards the end allows us to further inquire about the end as a potential view on the present. Such a present, becomes the very zone for re-negotiating the potential for narratives of futurity to become effective beyond any imaginary hinge.

According to Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, many Anthropocene narratives conceive of the present as »a present ›without a view,‹ a *passive present*.«[14] The passive present pertains to the human being unable to change its prior actions leading to the devastating scenario of the end of the world – at least for the Western Anthropos.[15] Working against the binary of the world and the human at the heart of Anthropocene narratives, the two authors problematize the re-centering of the human, willfully proclaiming an end of the world that is the product of its very own anthropocentric action. The problem of such a view resides in the circumstance that a certain understanding of the human as the locus of action reinvigorates a binary of passive and active. In the context of most Anthropocene discourses, such a divide dovetails with a nature-culture binary, where humans act upon nature to resolve the problem of potential extinction of its own species. At the same time, Danowski and Viveiros de Castro acknowledge the resurgent relationality between processes of thinking the world in conjunction with *terra* undergoing rapid transformation.[16] This relation,

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14 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World*, 5.

15 In her book chapter *The Future is Already Deterritorialized*, Claire Colebrook makes a similar argument by critically decentering the Anthropos of the Anthropocene.

16 We draw on Donna Haraway's conception of

however, requires some reworking against the classic binary of the human and the world and end narratives based on their externality.

3 THINKING FROM THE END

The subject of the Anthropocene claims the power of naming an end, which implies a power over the future and the present legitimated by a definitive past.

For many forms of life, the end has already happened or is underway and certain groups of humans have experienced the catastrophe in endured or recurrent ways more than others. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro outline the complexity of this double bind:

»The end of the world only has a determinate meaning in theses [Anthropocene] discourses – it can only be thought as possible – on the condition that one determines at the same time *for whom* this world that ends is a *world*, who is the worldly or ›worlded‹ being who *defines the end*.«[17]

The quote reveals both the power structures of who gets the right to name the end of humanity and to define who counts as human, while at the same time clarifying that there are many more worlds and potential ends than the Anthropocene narrative suggests. The subject of the Anthropocene claims the power of naming an end, which implies a power over the future and the present legitimated by a definitive past. In naming the end, such narratives deploy a time of the before and after, of a future that transcends the present and a past that is retroactively captured. A past captured with a view on the future is quite different from a past that re-activates through its own capacity for future causation. Explaining the present and potential futures through the past, omits the very existence of the past as actively engaging rather than passively engaged force.

Decentering the human subject as an ordering principle of the world, Danowski and Viveiros de Castro foreground the process of world-making through the conjunction of perspectives.[18] From a perspectivist angle, the process of world-making is not subdued to a human will or its understanding of the world. It is rather a material, sensuous, and spiritual process of shaping relations that take on organic, anorganic, psychic and spiritual dimension and their entanglements. Through this move, Danowski and Viveiros de Castro point at the transformative power of *becoming* from which specific modes of existence arise in their ability to engage a shared world and its potential endings. World-making is not the result of specific actors or subjects making or perceiving the world but a collective process of mutual resonance under specific enabling or disabling conditions.

We follow Danowski and Viveiros de Castro's insistence that the end of the world can-

terra or rather *terrapolis* as »chimera of materials, languages, history«, an »n-dimensional niche space for multispecies becoming-with«, a »fictional integral equation, a speculative fabulation« (Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*, 11).

17 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World*, 20. (Emphasis in the original)

18 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World*, 70. Their take on perspectivism derives from process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead and Amerindian thought rather than an anthropological approach as exemplified by Philippe Descola.

not be universalized under such a perspectivist lens. We further assert that an active-passive binary, where *Anthropocene Man* needs to act, is futile, since what traditionally was conceived passive, i. e., nature or the non-human, is active in scales and temporalities that undermine and exceed human perception. Put differently, to act is a necessity while activity cannot be located in a single sovereign subject. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro's relational approach resounds with Lauren Berlant's »nonsovereign relationality.«[19] Such a relationality is neither passive or active in the classic sense of the concept but rather pertains to the complexity of any process of emergence and its time-making effects. This means that the temporalities which make different worlds conjunct in a shared space-time are differentially concatenated without being finitely determined. This process of conjunctive concatenation is a ground for worlds to collide and thus for decentering universalizing narratives such as the Anthropocene. In resonance with the insistence on the differentiated experiences of the end outlined above, we ask about the conjunction of different temporalities that manifest a reality in their movement together, a relational movement that derives its power from the perspectives of different times, experiences, and bodies. The conjunctive mode of the real might be called a *present* beyond an anthropocentric and Western-humanist scope.

Moving beyond a human-centered conception of existence, Danowski and Viveiros de Castro propose the notion of *slow societies* that focus on maintaining a constant engagement with a general process of transformation and the persistence of concrete modes of existence. Slow societies operate through temporalities which »know infinite speeds, extra-historical accelerations – in short, *becomings*«[20] and which should not be confused with a mere slowing-down of chronological time. Here, the end is not a finitude but relates to a critical engagement with the future or rather futurity as a realm of potential. Thinking about the future and futurity from the end emphasizes a temporality which positions the future neither as succeeding nor as an imaginary extension of the present. The end is not a finitude but a constant reworking of the orientation of the present. As we have stated before, we need to pay attention to the different ends which are underway or have happened repeatedly for certain marginalized groups and populations. Thinking from the end therefore also means to think from the fact that the end is real, life-worlds have ended repeatedly and inscribed memories of intergenerational trauma into the very *flesh* of these populations.

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How can we account for the apocalyptic realist and catastrophic states that certain populations have endured over centuries? One way to do so resides in developing alternative futures, to acknowledge on the one hand that the catastrophe is real for many individuals and groups, while, on the other hand, also insisting on possibilities to undermine a teleo-

19 Berlant: *The Commons: Infrastructures of Troubling Times*, 394.

20 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World*: 68.

logical apocalyptic foreclosure. For us, Aimee Bahng's take on futurity in her book *Migrant Futures* opens ways to overcome or circumvent a passive present whose dominance forces us to eclipse the disrupted and potentially disruptive temporalities (and ends) endured by these populations. What Bahng terms a queering of the future undermines the universalizing drive of apocalyptic realism. The shift we trace through Bahng is a conception of the future that thinks from the end, the end of specific groups and individuals that have experienced a state without a future. Put differently, if your existence is delegitimized as worth counting, for instance as »equally human,« your future is rendered as impossible as is your present/presence and your past.[21] Against this erasure of the catastrophic times that occurred and recur for many groups and populations, thinking from the end or the many ends that have been endured, activates alternative futures which otherwise have been delegitimized in the age of Anthropocene's apocalyptic realism.

Bahng uses »the term futurity to highlight the construction of the future and denaturalize its singularity …« (Fn. 22)

4 FUTURITY IN A SPECULATIVE KEY

In *Migrant Futures*: *Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times* Bahng uses »the term futurity to highlight the construction of the future and denaturalize its singularity, while maintaining an emphasis on how narrative constructions of the future play a significant role in materializing the present.«[22] Her approach towards futures can be thought in resonance with Danowski and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism, questioning the particularity or universality of the future. Against this reductive take on the future, Bahng proposes speculation as a technique of world making to engage many futures populating the present. She identifies the omnipresence of financial speculation as the prime operation of late capitalism, aiming at predicting the future to generate surplus value and to create »legible and calculable subjects.«[23] Bahng counterposes speculation as an empowering practice which activates through a queering of futurity against the omnipresence of speculation as a valorizing economic trait.

Opposing a mere discursive conception of narratives as imaginary or immaterial, we consider such speculation as deeply rooted in bodily, sensuous, affective, material, historical, and technological assemblages of expression. The future is not a blank sheet that can be filled with any idea or an imaginary projection but is always informed by the context in which it occurs. In finance capitalism, the future is primarily imagined as preemptive and securitizing, with the main goal to condition the way value is being harnessed and captured. Preemption operates through a probing of different future scenarios, while structurally inhibiting some and fostering others, thus narrowing the margin of potential towards the

21 Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* is one of more recent striking examples of this *rendering invisible*.

22 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*: 2.

23 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 4.

generation of surplus value. Bahng's approach of analyzing speculation in finance complicates the argument of Anthropocene discourses of the future by showing how such discourses often operate in a speculative and preemptive key to continuously shape the dominant mode of thinking about the future. In terms of anthropocentric speculation, one might say that in this scenario, *Man* is the engine that will drive the world toward the apocalypse. The anthropocentric narrative banks on the factual depiction of the climate crisis, while projecting its scope of attention towards humanity and not all other modes of existence and their temporalities. At the same time, numbers of such studies also demonstrate the effects of the climate crisis, for instance that the end is literally happening primarily to people who must flee from environmentally uninhabitable conditions. In Donna Haraway's words: »The edge of extinction is not just a metaphor; system collapse is not a thriller. Ask any refugee of any species.«[24] The catastrophe as the driving element for a continuous reworking of the present requires a clear detachment from its apocalyptic framing which is merely progressive. The point is not to end or embrace the catastrophe but rather to inhabit the temporalities that occur through the turbulence of its arrival.

Bahng's approach to speculation does not stop at the analysis of financial capitalism. By examining speculative fiction, she proposes a making of other worlds and ways of living that decenter, refuse (or flee) the realm of capitalist realism. Bahng brings up the notion of *Migrant Futures* to resonate with works that are often called Afrofuturist, Chican@futurist, and Asian futurist, »to configure a transnational counterpoetics to the predatory speculations of global capitalism.«[25] Citing the writer Octavia Butler, Bahng emphasizes the importance of narrativization when it comes to practices of activating temporal divergences. Speaking about the practice of writing, Butler insists that a speculative practice needs to intervene into dominant narratives: »You've got to make your own worlds. You've got to write yourself in.«[26] The speculative element combines a resistance against the capitalist making of a passive present and opens a conception of futurity as »counter-effectuation.«[27] Alternative futures are an active intervention into dominant (narrative) structures. Resisting the apocalypse means writing oneself in, through a temporality that speculates from the end toward an *active present*.

The question »who stands to profit from and who risks extinction in prevailing narratives about the future,«[28] draws us towards examinations of futurity's potential for »non-capitalist« and non-Eurocentric (i. e. anthropocentric), straight and linear, narratives of the future. Bahng asks how speculative fiction provides other narratives of the future

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24 Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*, 161.

25 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 8.

26 Butler cited in Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 1.

27 Danowski/Viveiros de Castro: *Ends of the World,* 38.

28 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 4–5.

to challenge the naturalization of certain orientations and ways of being, evoking differential materializations of the present. She wants »to think speculation from below and highlight[s] alternative engagements with futurity emerging from the colonized, displaced, and disavowed.«[29] She further asks: »What would it mean to reconfigure that marginalization from European notions of progress, modernity, history, and futurity?«[30]

Queering of futurity is a way of performing the future in the present while acknowledging that it widens the horizon of what else could be possible – it is an active »writing in.«

It is in the critical stance towards Eurocentric thought that we see a proximity between Danowski's and Viveiros de Castro's engagement of perspectivism and Bhang's dialogue with speculative fiction by marginalized people (that have been cast as not human enough). The passive present, as stated before, is a present where the arrow of time is not just linear but built on ideals of progress and development. In their current condition, these processes are deeply entangled with a financial capitalist capturing of speculation. Countering the passive present, speculative fiction from below contests not only master narratives but activates speculation as a material practice that shapes the present by »writing oneself in«.

For Bahng, the basis for such an undertaking is rooted within speculations of queer futurity that challenge the capitalist normativity of life. She draws on José Esteban Muñoz, who formulates a thorough critique of linear or straight temporalities and future narratives in his book *Cruising Utopia*, posing queerness as »structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.«[31] The quagmire of *our* present concerns not only the facticity of apocalyptic/capitalist realism but also Anthropocene's master narrative of the future and its self-legitimating solutionism in the hands of the one's having a voice and the appropriate means to change the course of *Man*kind's destiny. Posing desire as a queering practice folds the embodied sensation of difference and potential differentiation into the outlined speculation from below.

The way Bahng and Muñoz deploy the concept of queerness links up with non-normative refusals of future narratives in their hegemonic form. For Muñoz, queerness challenges dominant forms of sexuality and gender but also exceeds same-sex desire and rather gives an outlook of desires that rejects heteronormativity. In a similar vein, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley points out in her text *Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic* that queerness needs to be understood »not in the sense of a ›gay‹ or same-sex loving identity waiting to be excavated from the ocean floor but as a praxis of resistance. Queer in the sense of marking disruption to the violence of normative order and powerfully so.«[32] Queering of futurity is

29 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 7.

30 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 5.

31 Muñoz: *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

32 Tinsley: *Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic*, 199. Tinsley develops her understanding of queerness in the intersections of Blackness and the historical trauma of the Middle Passage, that refers to the forced migration across the Atlantic during the transatlantic slave tra-

a way of performing the future in the present while acknowledging that it widens the horizon of what else could be possible – it is an active »writing in.« Queerness is not about waiting, but about affirming the possibility of a »life unscripted« underneath and beside the operations of capitalist capture and preemption.[33]

Muñoz emphasizes that »[q]ueerness is not yet here.«[34] By insisting on the not-yet of queerness, Muñoz reminds us of the reservoir of not yet activated narratives that are nonetheless inhabiting the present while being after »to illuminate histories of empire and exclusion.«[35] Queer futurity is a »projection of a certain futurity into and onto the present and the past, piercing their previous arrangement and administration.«[36] Speculation from a queer perspective, not only undoes the normative order of a hegemonic system but also the normativity of the future as being occupied by a generalized apocalypse. The present, between infinite transformation and the end of the world is not only active but requires non-normative and non-sovereign modes of activating futures.

5 SPECULATIVE FABULATION

While Bahng mobilizes Muñoz' conception of queer speculation, her take on fiction might reinscribe a certain discursivity of narrative practices which we want to expand beyond another potential anthropocentric backlash. This means to account for the conjunctive and perspectival composition of the present that exceeds the individualized action but that also accounts for those subjects that have been strategically excluded from a potential future of human earthly survival. With the term speculative fabulation we challenge the enclosure of (chrono-)normativity and its implicit and explicit social renderings tied to an apocalyptic realism.[37] Investing speculative fabulation as a critical practice, means to also experiment in the making of narratives that shape slow societies and that emerge from below through the eruptions of a queer futurity.

With the term speculative fabulation we challenge the enclosure of (chrono-) normativity and its implicit and explicit social renderings tied to an apocalyptic realism.

Speculative fabulation describes a way of engaging in futurity as a piercing of both a preemptive deployment of speculative futures under a capitalist logic and an exclusively human society as the base for collective emancipatory practice. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro's slow societies are not a human sociality but a conjunctive present emerging through narratives that erupt through the continuous process of a collective remaking of the present. Butler allows us to think of speculation as a praxis of *unwriting* oneself in. Such unwriting neither accepts the master narra-

de, which is why she situates queerness as a mode of resistance and survival for Black diasporic communities.

33 Halberstam: *Queer Time and Place*, 2.

34 Muñoz: *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

35 Bahng: *Migrant Futures*, 7.

36 Moten: *The Beauty*.

37 We use *speculative fabulation* in accordance with Donna Haraway's understanding of the term (Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*, 3).

tive of being marginalized and just requiring entry, nor does to assume that »all *humans* are in the same boat« as the narrative of the end of world apocalypse of the Anthropocene suggests.

To think from the end immanent to those who have lived the catastrophe for centuries requires a whole set of narrative techniques and practices.

Our understanding of speculative fabulation draws heavily on Saidiya Hartman's notion of critical fabulation – a method she invited to account for Black lives that have been systematically eclipsed from the grand narratives of modernism, to which the Anthropocene narrative belongs. For Hartman, »narrating counter-histories of slavery has always been inseparable from writing a history of present, by which I mean the incomplete project of freedom [...]. A *history of the present* strives to illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past, and to imagine a free state, not as the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future of this writing.«[38]

The speculative, in the mode of anticipation, is projective but not predetermining or preemptive. In the fugitive passing of histories through the present, it banks on a futurity of different potentials, of new relations to emerge, of a before which becomes the before of a coming difference in and through unwriting the dominant narrative. While capitalist or apocalyptic realism equally depends on the productive potential of differences, its mode is extractive and thus requires a relapse into one universal value form. An anticipatory engagement of the future, on the contrary, promotes a proliferation of values whose differences have been shunned or eclipsed by dominant power structures.

Thinking from the end means to not only resist against the homogenizing temporality of the Anthropocene, but also to account for the experience of flight that relates different narratives of the »colonized, displaced, and disavowed« and *unwrites* them in. The affirmation of differences that do not divide but bind and resonate in flight allow for a conception of speculative fabulation beyond any universalist tendencies of a homogenized present. This is what we mean by queering and queer temporalities. The inscriptions of these experiences enter the skins and minds of bodies and populations whose status has been rendered marginal or inexistant, however not extinct. The historic experience of the multifaceted catastrophe of being rendered inexistent or abnormal is what becomes a shared ground for possible alliances and practices of solidarity.

Speculative fabulation engages a history of the present that is utterly different from the geological history of the Anthropocene narrative. The proliferation of practices of unwriting oneself in are bound by both a shared experience of a continuous catastrophe and a fugitivity that cuts and undermines the continuation of such a catastrophe. The history of such experiences is what activates speculative fabulation which occur in mid-flight. Such occurrences are a queer futurity because they do not fit in, they trouble and discomfort the temporal order of the present and its sup-

38 Hartman: *Venus in Two Acts*, 4. (The authors' emphasis)

posed values of what counts and what does not in the face of confluent crises. To think from the end immanent to those who have lived the catastrophe for centuries requires a whole set of narrative techniques and practices. In this article, we have outlined some possible ways of temporally undoing the unifying casting of a future that serves no other purpose than re-centering the *human* as world- and time-making agent. Naming a crisis is a dangerous task. With the notion of speculative fabulation we ask how to account for crises in their relational constituency and what are the histories that allow for a differentiated understanding of the present. More precisely: how to account for the temporalities of the lived and endured catastrophes which provide a more nuanced and less straight or linear engagement of the future. A queer futurity of a »life unscripted« that make a »disruption to the violence of normative order« and which are projections and anticipations of freedom provide first steps towards a sociality that resists the progressive logic of an apocalyptic realism. How can a desiring of the not yet make us »feel beyond the quagmire of the present?« How can such a present make space for slow societies that take the time to think from the end or as many ends as possible in order to adequately – that is beyond finitude – speculatively fabulate futures?

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