

Sub-project 4: Concepts of Future in Mediaspaces of Africa and its Diasporas

Objective

The sub-project “Concepts of Future in Mediaspaces of Africa and its Diasporas” is dedicated to fictional conceptualizations of ‘Future’ in the intersecting transspaces of Internet, Fiction, and Africa/n Diasporas. In doing so, literary studies are mobilized as transcultural and transmedial “life science” (Ottmar Ette).

Terms

Diasporas constitute societal spaces that perform entangled (hi)stories and generate transcultural futures that promise creative solutions for global challenges.

Fiction does not exist in a vacuum, rather given constellations of knowledge, power and visions are negotiated polyphonously—affirmed, negotiated and/or subverted.

Diasporas transgress borders between languages and nations just as much as fiction transgresses conventional boundaries of genres and media.

The **Internet** has become a haven and home for these kinds of intersections and interactions of both Africa and its diasporas as well as media and genres. Weblogs, informational as well as social fora (to mention just the most obvious), are **mediaspaces** that are informed by given geopolitical power constellations and yet offer scopes of intellectual and aesthetic mobility that transgress them. Here, a poetics arises that (re)invents itself for the future, coping with history and negotiating the present.



Still from Sun Ra's feature-length film “Space is the Place” (1972). The film follows Jazz musician, bandleader, poet and philosopher Sun Ra with his legendary “Arkestra” on a quest for a new (extraterrestrial) home for the American black community.

Heads of Sub-project 4

Prof. Dr. Susan Arndt (English Studies and Anglophone Literatures) & Dr. Gerd Ulrich Bauer (Intercultural German Studies)

Researchers and Topics

Dr. Henriette Gunkel (Postdoc Researcher): The Chronopolitical Implications of Africanist Science-fictional Interventions (habilitation/monograph)

Peggy Piesche (Postdoc Researcher): Diasporas on the Move: Conceptualizing Future in MediaSpaces (monograph)

Prof. Dr. Susan Arndt (Head of Sub-project): Visions of Future and the Black Independence Movement (monograph)

Dr. Gerd Ulrich Bauer (Head of Sub-project): Mediaspaces in Kenya and Beyond: Visions of Future in Eastern African Weblogs (monograph)

Nadja Ofuately-Alazard (Researcher): Conceptualisations of Europe in African and African-Diasporic Writing (Ph.D. thesis)

Fadi Saleh (Researcher): Exiled into Cyberspace. Egypt's Gender, Sexual, and Ethnic Minorities and the Construction of the Internet as a Diasporic Space (Ph.D. thesis)

Renzo Baas (Associated Researcher): Fictional Representations of Space in Namibia in Selected German and South African Novels: An Investigation of three Colonial and three Apartheid Novels (Ph.D. thesis)

Dr. Cassandra Ellerbe-Dücker (Guest Fellow): African Diasporas and/in the World Wide Web (publication and research application)

Dr. Mariam Popal (Guest Fellow): Conceptualising Future: Muslim Diasporas and the Internet (habilitation/monograph)

Philipp Khabo Köpsell & Asoka Esuruoso (Sub-project Guests): Arriving in the Future. An Anthology of Afro-German Writing (publication)

Dr. Shaban Mayanja (Sub-project Guest): German translation of the novel “Blonde Roots” by Bernadine Evaristo (UK) (novel/translation)

Dr. Kien Nghi Ha (Sub-project Guest): The Future of Asian Diasporas (monograph)

Dr. Paul N'Guessan-Bechie (Guest Fellow): Concepts of ‘Future’ in Blog Literature: Côte d'Ivoire and Francophone (West) African Diaspora (publication)

Further Guest Fellows:

- Prof. Anne Adams, Ph.D.
- Greg Tate
- Prof. José Muñoz, Ph.D.
- Dr. Anja Michaelsen
- Prof. Kara Lynch, Ph.D.

Methodology and Theory

Literary Studies facing transmedial and transcultural fiction has to reinvent itself and resituate its structures, concepts and agenda. It is true, the various projects will rely on an expertise in African and African-diasporic Literatures, English and Anglophone Literatures, as well as German and Romance Literature. Yet conventional pigeon holes such as national literatures and one-language-one-nation-only frames of literary studies are likewise transgressed. As a result, the project performs Transcultural Literary Studies, relying on postcolonial theory and critical whiteness studies, diaspora studies, gender and sexuality studies, and queer studies.

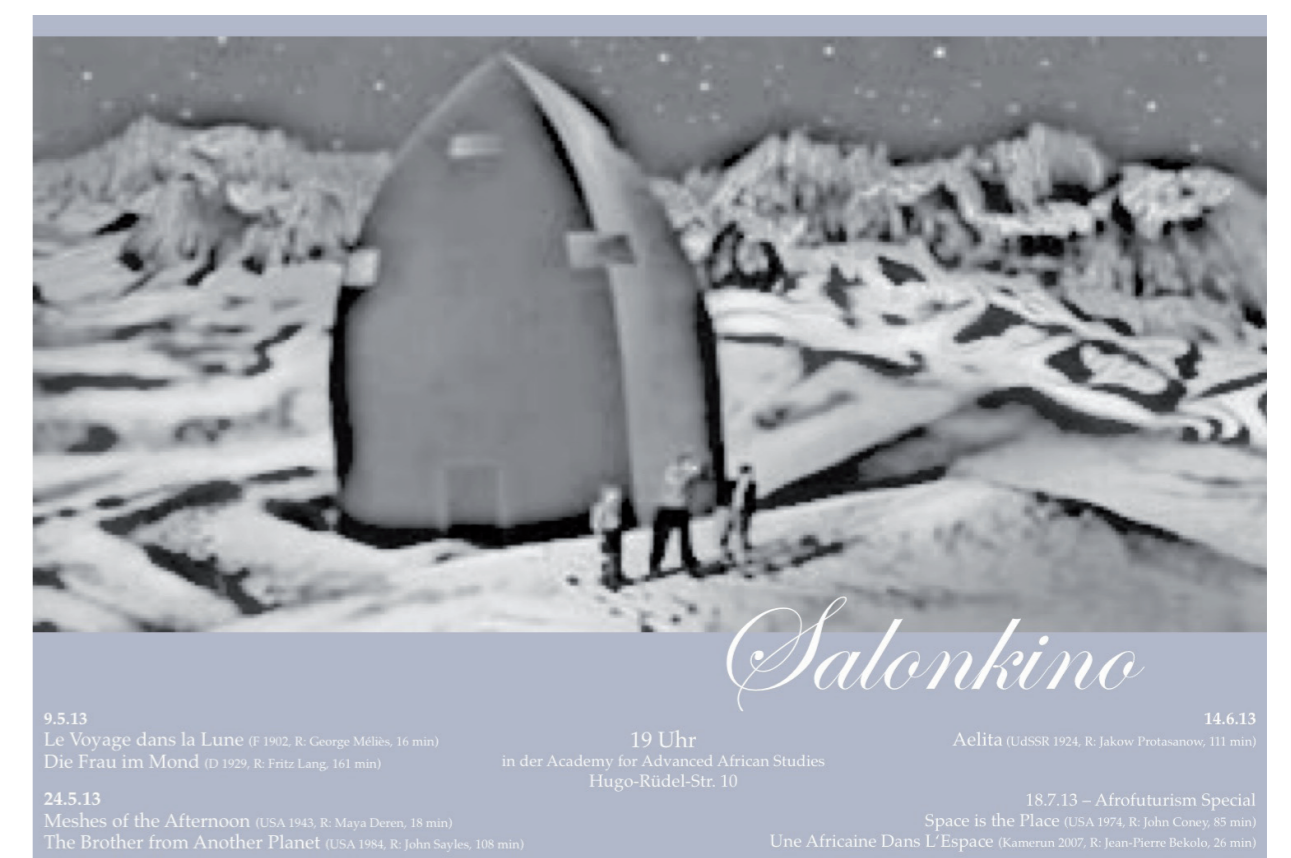
Questions

1. Which visions and projections of ‘Future’—with particular reference to Africa/n diasporas, Europe, and the USA—are negotiated in fiction, above all in Afrofuturism, Africanist Science Fiction and African-diasporic Net-Art?
2. How have Afrofuturism and Africanist SF intervened and generated visions of histories that remember into futures? (How) do Afrofuturism and Africanist SF influence conceptualizations of the future and intervene in contemporary processes? What are the implications of African Science-fictional interventions? How are visions of ‘Future’ as mediated via the Internet?
3. What are the impacts of visions (e.g. of Afrofuturism, Africanist SF) on global archives of knowledge, on transcultural dialogicity, and on local and translocal conceptions of ‘Future’ in Europe, Africa and the USA?



Sankofa, the stylized bird in Akan iconography symbolizes the proverb “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten”.

4. (How) Does the Internet influence other media? Does it open specific potentials for future-oriented, transcultural and transmedial forms of expression, as well as, e.g., new economic and ethical formats of ‘intellectual property’? How do various genres interact, how are their stakeholders and/or agencies cross-linked on the local and/or transregional levels, and how do their literary-aesthetical visions of ‘Future’ influence political activism in ‘real’ (local) settings, especially in urban agglomerations—understood as contact spaces between Africa-/Europe/Northern America/Asia, and Africa/Diaspora(s)—, respectively?
5. Different Web formats (blogs, artists’ websites, publications in social fora, etc.) will be compared in order to discuss: To what extent do new aesthetic genres emerge from and through the Internet, that are of particular relevance for the development and/or presentation of visions of ‘Future’ in/for Africa? In a comparative perspective, Internet literature of the African Diaspora(s) can be analyzed in relation to other, ‘classical’ literary media (publishers, booksellers, literary cafés, academia, etc.), and the relevance of the Internet for different regional spaces shall be considered. Inasmuch as Web-based aesthetic production presents itself as polyphonic genre-crossing, prose and Spoken Word Performances will be compared with genres such as fine (visual) arts, photography, music, and theatre/film production in/of African Diaspora(s).
6. (How) Can research on new literary representations of future (e.g. ‘Africanfuturism’, SF) determine coordinates for the future of a ‘Literary Study in Motion’ (Ottmar Ette), contribute to new paradigms and mappings, and thereby result in the advancement of literature and of literary studies, likewise?



Invitation and programme for the 2013 series of film screenings and discussions—Salonkino—at the University of Bayreuth, organised by Dr. Henriette Gunkel and Dr. Kathrin Rothemann

Past and Projected Events

- BIGSAS Festival of African and African-Diasporic Literatures 2012: “Remembering Flash Forward: African Literatures as Poetics in Motion”
- Opening Workshop, February 1–2, 2013: “Concepts of Future in MediaSpaces of Africa and its Diasporas”
- BIGSAS Festival of African and African-Diasporic Literatures 2013: Intertextuality. Dialogues in Motion
- Filmsalon Summer Term 2013
- BIGSAS Festival of African and African-Diasporic Literatures 2014: Intersectionality
- Annual Conference of the African Literature Association (ALA) 2015: “Future Africa”