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Black Futures and the Queer Times of Our Life

This paper presents the set of cultural products and practices collectively referred to as “Afrofuturism” as a heuristic through which to think connections between the temporalities of blackness, the problems perceptible in an economy invested in futures yet interested in instantaneity, and the creative production of alternatives to existing political logics and imaginaries. The phrase “black futures” is used as a way to index a set of related meanings and to place those meanings in tension with each other.

On the one hand, “black futures” refers to articulations of “life” still to be produced in which Blackness serves as a vital site of investments and becomings. It also marks a perception of blackness as a modality of becoming productive of risk to Capital that must continue to be managed in order for Capital’s futures to remain foreseeable and capable of yielding returns to speculation. This paper lingers in the tension between the disruptive potential harbored by certain articulations of Blackness and the quotidian violence through which the risks posed by that potential are managed in order to reveal uncommon postulates about the body and embodied knowledge, “life”, technology, and temporality. Drawing on Afrofuturism, queer theories of temporality, and feminist theories of the body, this paper illuminates alternative relationships to anticipated returns on futures and to “life” and “death”.