

Ghosts and Zombies — the formless matters

'Hauntology' as a means to think through future

Working Group Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies,
October-February 2017/18

Hosts: Katharina Fink, Marie-Anne Kohl und Nadine Siegert



Still from the installation "Alzire of Bayreuth", FAVT-exhibition 2015, rights: Kitso Lynn Lelliott.

How do we remember ghostly histories and their traces in our lives and in our ideas when our memories are conspirators, collaborative agents and traitors; when too many important books (in both the literal and metaphorical sense of the term) have been set aside... What does it mean to conceive of oneself as a giver of shape to ghosts. (Gordon, 1999; 93)

*Hauntology is not just a symptom of the times, though:
it is itself haunted by a nostalgia for all our lost futures. ¹*

¹ Source: URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical>

'Future', the first funding period of the Bayreuth Academy has shown, is by no means a solid, stable concept or a temporal entity. On the contrary, 'future' emerges as a dynamic performance – influenced by many factors: subject position, political agenda, relations etc. Taking up the threads from the first period of the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, the WG investigates the concept of 'hauntology'. We ask: How can the meandering of between form and 'formlessness', the instability and resilience of 'ghosts' as a figure of thought be made useful for the variety of research questions and perspectives in the BA – and how can it be thought together with the concept of 'future'?

„Hauntology“, a successful academic concept, departing from Derrida's „Spectres of Marx“ and developed in the Cultural Studies by authors such as Gordon (1999) and Fisher (2014) holds a pun on the idea of 'ontology'. It denotes, amongst other aspects, the persistence and lingering of failed, of past, of omitted (often utopian) ideas, also: radical futures. It also brings in the ideas of “dystopia” or “no future” as productive categories. Failing has not only to be considered as negative, there is also the idea of a queer future of failure, that takes into account the possibilities of alternatives, non-linearity, non-normativity, non-reproductivity (Halberstam, 2005). In spite, it considers the cracks, disruption and fault lines as moments of openness and liminality.

Hauntology as theoretical perspective opens a field to discuss presence and absence, visibility and invisibility beyond its classic fields in cinema and visual studies, religious studies or anthropology. It also further develops the “attitudes” towards future that have been developed during the conceptual phase of the FAVT-exhibition (eg in the discussion of the work of Academy-fellow kara lynch and time-crossing myths such as “Drexcija” as in the film by FAVT-exhibition artist Simon Rittmeier). It relates these “attitudes” to the idea of “ghosts” as the haunting presence of concepts and ideas of past or simultaneous futures.

The WG aims to explore the multiple aspects of the concept of 'hauntology' and discuss them with colleagues from the BA, Bayreuth university and beyond, organized in the following thematic sessions. A book published in the series "Thurnauer Schriften zum Musiktheater" des fimt with the publisher Königshausen & Neumann.

Everyone is warmly invited to join for singular sessions; or ideally for all of them. All participants suggested readings in preparation for their event, which you find listed under the very event.

**PRE-EVENT:
19.10.2017, 19h, Iwalewahaus**

**Kitso Lynn Lelliott (Johannesburg)
On Haunting or The Imagining Back of Narratives of Difference as
Method**

In her contribution Kitso Lynn Lelliott speaks through a quote as illustrative gesture towards capturing the drive behind and spirit in which her work has taken shape over the last years.

"You who understand the dehumanisation of forced removal-relocation-reeducation-redefinition, the humiliation of having to falsify your own reality, your voice – you know. And often cannot say it. You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said" (Trinh T. Minh-Ha, 1989; 80).

It is the spirit of these words that she thinks back to, through and enact in her work and will reflect on in this presentation.

>> Readings:

Gordon, A., & Radway, J. (1997). *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press. Introduction.

Maldonado-Torre, N (2007): ON THE COLONIALITY OF BEING', In: *Cultural Studies*, 21:2, 240 - 270. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>

Mignolo, W (2009): *Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom*. In: *Theory, Culture & Society 2009* (SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore), Vol. 26(7–8): 1–23

Minh-ha, Trinh T (1989): *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

**We recommend: Festival Cinema Africa
especially: Filmscreening**

"The Island of the dogs", *Angola, 2016*, at Cineplex Bayreuth, Find the programme here: www.cinemafrica.uni-bayreuth.de

**30.11.2017, 19-0h, Iwalewahaus
19h, Lecture**

**Henriette Gunkel (Goldsmiths College, London)
Time Travel as Hauntologies: Thoughts on the Looped Time of Afrofuturist Trauma.**

This presentation by Henriette Gunkel (Goldsmiths College, London) takes as a starting point Mark Fisher's conceptualization of hauntology in the context of capitalist realism to think through some artistic practices that point us to the concept of future-as-difference, or as Franco Bifo Berard puts it, the possibility of futurability.

>> Readings:

Fisher, M. (2012). What is hauntology? In: *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Fall 2012), pp. 16-24.

followed by, from 21h DJ Set Spoek Mathambo (Johannesburg)

"We mine rhythms and chants to obscure and diffuse an identity long lost. We are neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Colonialism and apartheid made sure to kill me and all of my spawn, long live the ghosts. The ghost that lives in the beats," Spoek Mathambo.

Spoek Mathambo is a South African producer, songwriter & filmmaker. With two critically revered solo albums under his belt (*Mshini Wam* (BBE, 2010) and *Father Creeper* (Sub Pop, 2012), not to mention his collaborative projects *Fantasma* and *Batuk*, and a documentary on SA electronic music (*Future Sound of Mzansi*), Spoek Mathambo is prolific creative. A true music activist, showcasing and stretching the limits of electronic music and hip hop.

Please note:

Solidarity fee: 3 Euros - we dedicate this evening to our college Magdaline Wafula, who's fighting a severe illness right now. We pass your donation (starting from 3 Euros) on to the family to support her in her treatment.

>> Readings:

Fisher, M (2004): *The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology*. In: *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 5(2): 42–55

13.12.17, 19h Esther Peeren (Univ. Amsterdam) Spectral Futures?

In this lecture, Esther Peeren will reflect on the uses of the conceptual metaphors of the ghost and haunting (which are related, but distinct) for thinking not just the past and its lingering influence on the present, but also the future and its anticipation. Departing from Jacques Derrida's notion of the specter as both revenant and arrivant, and from the messianic elements of his hauntology she will argue that while it is more difficult to stage an ef-

fective haunting by the future than by the past (as the case of climate change shows), positioning the future as an insistent ghostly presence in the present can impress upon us the need to deal with future problems not later but now.

>> Readings:

Fisher, M (2004): The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology. In: Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 42–55.

14.12.17, 10-23h

Workshop

What is hauntology? What can a ghost, a zombie mean?

The Unseen in film, music, literature & the archive

A full day workshop and gathering, fusing debate and experience. Find further info and a program at: www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de. The workshop language is English.

Everyone is warmly invited to participate! Please sign up till December 1st via: katharina.fink@uni-bayreuth.de

With:

Renzo Baas (London), Danillo Barata (Salvador da Bahia), Ute Fendler (Bayreuth), Katharina Fink (Bayreuth), Henriette Gunkel (London), Esther Peeren (Amsterdam), Kathrin Rothemund (Bayreuth), Simon Vincent (Berlin/London), Lu Zhao (Erlangen)

Preliminary programme:

10h: Welcoming words - Anno Mungen (fimt)

10-11.30h Focus Film

Introduction by Henriette Gunkel, Ute Fendler

Ghosts as mediators : memory and the negation of time

Ghosts, mystical appearances and supernatural powers are integral part of world visions – and not only – in Africa. While there are even strong subgenres like the zombie film, the horror film in Hollywood cinema, there are rather few films in African cinema produced for the big screen where ghosts make their appearance. In popular film, which might never find its way to cinema halls and festivals, like film from Nigeria, Tanzania or Ghana, ghosts are nevertheless very present and attest the continuum between popular beliefs and filmic storytelling.

Among recent cinema productions from Africa, there are two films that have also toured the international film festivals with success, that make a difference in this shortly sketched context of African film. “The Thorn of the Rose” (O Espinho da Rosa) by Filipe Henriques (Guinea Bissau/Portugal, 2014) and “The Island of the Dogs” (Ilha dos Cães) by Jorge Antonio (Angola/Portugal, 2017). In both films, ghosts play the main role of mediation between past and

present, time wanderers who rather invalidate linear time. Besides the narrative function to create suspense, the annulation of linear time questions fundamental concepts of living together in a community, like e.g. memory, guilt, remorse, and on the other side respect, responsibility, etc. This paper proposes therefore to highlight the intermingling of narrative and aesthetic aspects to create ghosts that question the function of haunting.

Kathrin Rothmund (UBT)

Portraying the Un|dead – Affective Glichtes and Vagueness in Moving Images

Focusing on photographic portraits and mirrored profiles in horror and ghost movies I want to engage with the materiality and the temporality of the facial close-up of the living as well as the un|dead. Looking at one self, looking at the other – haunted characters are freezing in the moment of perception just as the cinema audience does in face of the screen(s). The ghostly present-absence as well as the vagueness of affection image as discussed by Deleuze will be confronted with digital glitches and the haunted spaces of digital media.

11.30 Coffee break

11.45h Focus Music

Introduction by Anne Kohl

Simon Vincent (London)

SHINING. Spectral appearances in the world of music

12.30h Collective Listening Session

13.00 Uhr Lunch

14.00 Conceptual Spaziergang

15-16.30h Focus: Archive & Memory

Introduction by Nadine Siegert

Danillo Barata (Salvador)

Cura

Video work, 8min46

This video work discusses the experiences, contexts and meanings of the healing. The work focuses on the Atlantic relations between the sugarcane plantation Engenho da Vitória in Cachoeira in Bahia and the performance of Tincoã Mateus Aleluia, who lives between Angola and Bahia. The video reinforces the dialogue between the body and the camera, associated with syncretism and candomblé and its forms of resistance and preservation of memory embedded in the flows of African descent in Brazil.

Lu Zhao (Erlangen)

Confucius as a Specter and its Modern Fate

As for my topic, I would like to talk about Confucius as a specter in the recent hundred years of China. I want to talk about him as a specter in two senses: 1. the divination practice often summoned him as a deity to answer questions especially regarding one's personal life and classical exegesis; and 2. in the recent years, how he haunts the discourses of Chinese politics and culture, especially in reviving a "Confucian nation."

Ulf Vierke (Bayreuth)

Further Considerations on the Archive.

Hauntology or the nostalgia for ideas of the future from the past.

The paper picks up on Kodjo Eshun's 2003 text "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism", in which he points at the specific role of Afrodisaporic subjects and their fundamental role in initiating and producing modernity. The archive seems to be both: an institution closely linked to modernity as a project, as well as the archive is a space in which we expect to be haunted by futures past. But, does the archive really initiate and produce modernity? If hauntology is not simply about revisiting the past, if it is about a nostalgia for ideas of the future, the archive might neither be modern nor post-modern, it might be the hauntological space per se.

16.30h - Art objects - Collective experience

Featuring the following works:

Kiluanji Kia Henda – Zopo Lady, Kitso Lynn Lelliott – Alzire in Bayreuth, Ingrid La Fleur - Resonance

17.00 Uhr Focus Literature

Introduction by Katharina Fink

Renzo Baas

Surrounded by Ghosts: Amos Tutuola's My Life in the Bush of Ghosts and the Persistence of the Ghostly

In this paper the idea of ghosts (and specters) is discussed from a literary perspective, taking Amos Tutuola's My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (1954) as its point of departure. The novel abounds with ghosts in physical form but also as haunting concepts, as experienced by the child narrator. The asynchronous nature of the novel with its ruptures and disruptions also points to the presence of specters within the act(s) of narration, memory, and the constant negotiations of being and becoming.

18.00h Derrida - Intervention

18.30 Uhr Dinner

20h Concert

Thurnau-Konzert mit Simon Vincent (piano & electronics)

followed by a Tape-DJ-set : Ghost from the cassettes

6.2.2018, 20h, Forum Phoenix, Bayreuth

>> Community Academy

Mapping Stains: Hands-on examples

Zara Pfeiffer (u.a. DeColonize München, tbc) und Jörg Skriebeleit (Leiter KZ-Gedenkstätte Flossenbürg) im Gespräch über Spuren und Geister, Geistaustreibungen und -einladungen in der kulturellen politischen Arbeit.

Moderation: Marie-Anne Kohl, Katharina Fink