

Lines of Flight: Baseball as Afrofuturist Becoming in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*

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Abstract: This paper deals with the depiction and metaphorical use of baseball and Blackness in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. It argues that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of Becoming can be applied to baseball, integrating Afrofuturist understandings of counterfutures as something that influences the transformative process of Becoming. Furthermore, this paper advocates that Becomings help to understand difference as not being based on identity but on time. This paper first elaborates on how Blackness does not fit into imaginations of linear progress that are evoked with the protagonist's use of baseball as an analogy for linear time. Performing a closer examination of Blackness in *DS9*, this paper highlights how Black memory and future are dealt with in the show. The emphasis of experience is shifted away from a linear progression of time to an understanding of a grid of all possible outcomes of any event, such as a baseball game. Thereby, this paper adds a combination of two frameworks to understanding *DS9*, Afrofuturism and Becoming, emphasizing that the show allows them to work together, producing insights that invite further research.

In baseball, there are nine defense positions: “[P]itcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base, short stop, right field, left field, and center field” (Silliman 110). As Barbara A. Silliman argues, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* “reflects” these nine positions in its “very title” (103). Deep Space Nine (henceforth also referred to as *DS9*¹) is a space station in the twenty-fourth century, surrounding the planet of Bajor and guarding a wormhole that connects distant parts of the galaxy with each other. Benjamin Sisko, a human from Earth, is the station's captain and a baseball fanatic. Moreover, Benjamin Sisko's character is African American, a novelty for a top commanding person in the *Star Trek* franchise. He outspokenly identifies with Black struggles throughout the show, even though *Star Trek* was initially about a future when humanity had left racism behind. Thus, an analysis of the metaphorical use of baseball in *DS9* and how it works in connection to Blackness should prove very fruitful.

¹ I italicize *Deep Space Nine* or *DS9* when referring to the show, and I do not italicize it when I am referring to it as the space station of the same name, where most of the series takes place.

The book chapter “Batter Up! The Mythology and Psychology of Sports and Games in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*” by Silliman and the article “Far Beyond the Stars: The Framing of Blackness in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*” by Lisa Doris Alexander demonstrate that previous scholarship has already examined the rich interconnectedness of baseball with fatherhood and Blackness in *DS9*, altogether forming a solid and useful foundation. Although Sisko being a Black father is important in this paper, the field covered by Alexander and Silliman is extended here to also be viewed in a temporal context. The particular motivation for this paper comes from a scene in the very first episode of *DS9*, when Benjamin Sisko tries to explain the fact that time is linear to beings presiding in the wormhole near *DS9*, who do not experience time as such, using baseball to illustrate different perceptions of time.

Throughout the show, linearity is questioned in multiple ways. For instance, Sisko evokes a past connected to racial struggle in several instances. Instead of a ‘default’ future without his intervention, Sisko determines a future that is better for him, his son Jake, and the people he cares about. Just as “it has been necessary to assemble counter-memories that contest the colonial archive,” preventing Black struggle from being forgotten, it is equally important to establish “counter-futures” in Afrofuturism, preventing a future where Black voices would be silenced (Eshun 288). Counter-memories and counter-futures work together to give Sisko an overview of the grand scheme of possibilities, through which his perception of time is brought to resonate with that of the wormhole beings. Sisko realizes that what he loves most about baseball is exactly this overview: the enjoyment of difference in all situations rather than linearity.

Difference is seen here as a more abstract term, as a dynamic that surfaces within the movement of all things. This article employs the concepts of Becoming and lines of flight, as posited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. These concepts already have been applied to the dance movements of Martha Graham by Johanna Heil in her text “Practicing Graham: Becoming-Body between Counts and Spaces.” Using the concepts by Deleuze and Guattari is partially inspired by her understanding of these terms. An analysis of *DS9* from this angle allows me to align the physical line of flight of the ball in baseball with the line of flight Deleuze and Guattari talk about. Eventually, a line of flight is the trajectory of situations and events unfolding in time through Becomings: “Becoming is the unfolding of difference in time and as time” (May 147). In the show, the wormhole beings can know all the Becomings that a line of flight can take and share this knowledge with Captain Sisko.

This paper employs an Afrofuturist angle to emphasize that this practice of having a more complete overview on temporal unfoldings is deeply rooted in Black intellectual discourse. While the field of Afrofuturism spans into a multitude of

directions, I am primarily referring to Kodwo Eshun's and Mark Fisher's articles, which are grounded in Toni Morrison's argument that slaves who were brought from Africa to America were not just dislocated spatially but also temporally (Eshun 297). This displacement serves as the catalyst for the ongoing Black struggle, aiming to prevent the whitewashing of history, demand reparations, and insist that this effort "must be extended into the field of the future" (Eshun 288). Precisely this extension into the future, as a counterfuture to a future where this struggle is shut down, also happens at each instance of a Becoming. Afrofuturists are choosing their line of flight, if you will, bearing great responsibility "towards the not-yet, towards becoming" (Eshun 289). The central idea in this analysis revolves around the fusion of these concepts, wherein the lines of flight traverse various Becomings, their outcomes carefully chosen with an Afrofuturist overview.

This paper is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter looks more closely at notions of progress and time. I develop the argument that, to truly mark difference as based on time rather than identity, a crucial aspect involves the temporalizing of forms, as advocated for by Black feminist scholar Denise Ferreira da Silva. I implement this temporalizing of forms by using the concept of Becoming, specifically applying it to baseball. Additionally, the logic of a grid is introduced to understand the Afrofuturist overview I am talking about. The second chapter observes the social conditions *DS9* was produced in, with special attention to how Blackness is treated within this context and how counter-memories surface in the show. The third chapter provides examples of how *DS9* can be read from an Afrofuturist angle, keeping in mind the concept of counter-futures developing through various Becomings. Furthermore, I unravel how Afrofuturism deals with the grid by analyzing the *DS9* episode "Take Me Out to the Holosuite," an episode which is entirely dedicated to a baseball game and all its preparations and consequences. Eventually, what the lead character Benjamin Sisko learns in the series is to embrace difference and to acknowledge that difference is based on time rather than identity.

At the core, this paper argues that baseball is used to demonstrate how difference and time are negotiated in *DS9*. Benjamin Sisko's connection to Black baseball and Black culture at large can be read through an Afrofuturist framework, advocating for a temporalization of the categories that produce difference. Resulting from this negotiation that is piloted with Afrofuturist assistance, *DS9*, its protagonist Benjamin Sisko, and baseball can be read as representing and influencing transformative processes of Becoming.

TEMPORALIZING FORMS

In *DS9*, the human perception of time as being linear is first addressed through the theme of loss. The wormhole beings, or ‘Prophets,’ do not understand the finality of what it means to lose a person:

SISKO: She was a most important part of my existence, but I lost her some time ago.

PROPHET: Lost? What is this?

SISKO: In a linear existence, we can’t go back to the past to get something we left behind, so . . . it’s lost. (“Emissary” 01:05:34–53)

To emphasize what it means for Benjamin Sisko to lose Jennifer, Jake’s mother, he needs to explain the concept of linear time to the wormhole beings. A loss can only be perceived as such if time is linear. The wormhole beings have some trouble understanding this, which is why Sisko tries to explain it through the game of baseball:

SISKO: Every time I throw this ball, a hundred different things can happen in a game. He might swing and miss, he might hit it. The point is, you never know. You try to anticipate, set a strategy for all the possibilities as best as you can, but in the end it comes down to throwing one pitch after another and seeing what happens. With each new consequence, the game begins to take shape.

PROPHET: And you have no idea what that shape is until it is completed.

SISKO: That’s right. In fact, the game wouldn’t be worth playing if we knew what was going to happen. (“Emissary” 01:11:42–12:19)

If one did not see time linearly, one would see completed shapes, as one of the aliens interjects Sisko’s explanation about baseball. It is very difficult to imagine how these aliens perceive the universe’s temporality as a multidimensional shape. What Sisko does by explaining the ‘shape’ of baseball is to “convert the temporal problem to a spatial one” (McBeath et al. 569). This has already been done with regards to baseball in the paper by McBeath et al. to calculate the trajectory of the ball after it was hit by the batter. The fact that Sisko comes to talk about the linearity of time because of a loss he experienced demonstrates his restrictive view on temporality. While Sisko regards history as being one linear chain of accelerating social and technological progress for mankind, the wormhole beings consider time as a multidimensional temporality in which loss is not final.

Notions of history and historicity often tend to be understood in spatial terms. Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History” recalls an image of history as a corridor mankind goes through, marking it as a chain of events that progresses in a linear fashion. In his seminal 1989 article, Fukuyama reveals that his understanding of history is influenced by Hegel (4). Hegel proclaimed the end of history in 1806 after

the Battle of Jena, where Napoleon defeated Prussia as the “*vanguard of humanity*” and thereby established “the ideals of the French Revolution and the imminent universalization of the state incorporating the principles of liberty and equality” (Fukuyama 4-5). Everything that happened after 1806 served the purpose of “extending those principles spatially” (5). Again, the temporal problem is converted into a spatial one as the principles need to be distributed in space. Although Fukuyama acknowledges that “there was considerable work to be done after 1806—abolishing slavery and the slave trade, extending the franchise to workers, women, blacks, and other racial minorities, etc.” (5), he simply flattens the achievement of liberty and equality to something that had to be distributed spatially within the world and all marginalized communities.

Contrary to this notion of progress as something that needed to be distributed spatially, Denise Ferreira da Silva calls for “a consideration of the Temporalizing of Forms (as Categories). For without an examination of the World that seeks to expose how Time works through our Categories, the racial dialectic will stay safe” (88). In other words, the implication of linear time as a by-product of the idea that progress moves in space is something that reproduces the current condition of the world and therefore also the positioning of Blackness within that world. Blackness is marked by slavery through the loss of a cultural past and the irreversible damage it has caused. No matter the amount of time passing, as long as time is perceived as linear, this damage cannot be repaired.

To avoid this, difference needs to be understood in a way that is not solely based on identity, or at least not exclusively so. Purely basing difference on identity leads “to an infinite regress or a circle; the founding identities must find their ground in other identities, etc.” (May 144). If the category of Blackness is determined by founding it on identity, it thus must be grounded in other identities, such as Blackness being the racial Other to whiteness. This can lead to a wide spectrum of injustice, from neoliberal colorblindness or tokenism all the way to overt racism. All of these focus on a spatial imagination of society, thereby reproducing the marginalization of Blackness. Using difference as something that arises from identity is grounded in the assumption that identity is static, not allowing the different identities to change, because that would already be a new difference. Hence, “a search for difference in itself must abandon the project of investigating directly the givens of experience and turn toward a more hidden realm. Deleuze discovers that realm in the nature of time” (May 145). Applying this, the following analysis understands the ‘Temporalizing of Forms’ via the concept of Becoming as the unfolding of difference in time rather than space.

I understand Becoming as a process of transformation that arises from a multiplicity, a situation with various outcomes. This can be any kind of change that is manifested in our world, e.g., the movement of a ball in a baseball game.

Therefore, a multiplicity can also be a baseball pitch: The ball is ‘becoming’ from a static object to a projectile force. How the ball moves is determined by its line of flight:

The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight; the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions. (Deleuze and Guattari 9)

Thus, the line of flight² marks the trajectory of the ball that is influenced by all dimensions the ball fills. Width, length, height, and duration of the flight path are all affected by factors such as wind, rain, air resistance, gravity, or the intensity of the pitcher’s throw. As soon as the ball is hit by the batter, another multiplicity arises where the ball’s line of flight is also affected by the fielders’ movements and actions trying to catch or stop the ball, combining several multiplicities together onto one plane of consistency.

The plane of consistency can be seen as the game of baseball in itself. Without again falling into the fallacy of converting the temporal problem into a spatial one, the plane of consistency should not be understood in physical terms as a multiplicity-confining space but rather as a “grid” (Deleuze and Guattari 9) that unifies the variety of all possible outcomes. At the same time, this grid preserves the unique qualities of every Becoming between multiplicities that happens in the game. It is important to note that instances of Becoming are never normative, no matter how they are distributed spatially and temporally. To evoke the exchange between Sisko and the aliens in “Emissary,” the grid depicts the complete shape of the game. According to Heil, Becoming is “an endeavor that finds fertile grounds in places that themselves stand outside of regular space and time” (48). This is why the wormhole aliens, to whom Sisko explains baseball in “Emissary,” see the universe as a grid of all multiplicities and Becomings between them: because they themselves stand outside of human perceptions of space and time.

STAR TREK AFTER THE END OF HISTORY: BLACKNESS AND BASEBALL

SISKO: It’s difficult to explain. It’s not linear.
KASIDY: What isn’t?

² Deleuze and Guattari seem to interchangeably use line of flight with “deterritorialization” (9), but for the sake of the metaphor, I am using “line of flight” here instead of writing “the ball deterritorializes from the pitcher.” However, lines of flight and deterritorialization are complex frameworks that can be explored in much greater depth than possible in this paper to demonstrate how they differ and align.

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SISKO: My life . . . my destiny. (“What You Leave Behind” 01:16:57-17:10)

DS9 was largely influenced by the spirit of the 1990s, a decade that was often perceived in the United States as post-ideological and apolitical. With an initial run of seven seasons from 1993 to 1999 (Alexander 150), *DS9* was the first *Star Trek* show to premiere in the decade after what Fukuyama had called the “End of History” in 1989. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, communism as the only remaining alternative to capitalism had failed, allowing the “universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (Fukuyama 4). Subsequently, the United States were left with no ideological enemy. The decline of clearly ideologically divided politics as motivator for political engagement could be seen in decreasing voter turnouts: Compared to the 1950s, the voter turnout in the United States had decreased by 9.5 percentage points by the middle of the 1990s (Gray and Caul 1097). Additionally, the number of people who identified with any political party in the United States had “decreased by about 16 per cent over the 44 years from 1952 to 1996” (Dalton 26). Altogether, the end of the Cold War and the neoliberal political turn, which aimed to privatize and individualize politics, led to a decline in Cold War ideology-driven interpretations of events and thus were matching with Fukuyama’s notion of the End of History.

Shifting away from ideological master narratives, *Star Trek* also depicted a conflict that, although highly symbolic, did not need to function as a parable for Cold War militarism. At the beginning of *DS9*, “Bajor had been occupied by the Cardassians for fifty years, and Sisko is sent to help the Bajorans rebuild their world and ready them for entry into the United Federation of Planets, *Trek*’s interstellar version of the United Nations” (Alexander 151). This is then a “regional conflict” that lacks “the apocalyptic grandeur of the Cold War” (Hantke 565) but still has an important impact for the region.

The situation around *DS9* is used to create tension in later seasons of the series. The wormhole outside *DS9* connects the region of space where the Federation of Planets and adjacent territories—such as Cardassian, Klingon, and Romulan—are located to the Gamma quadrant, where the Dominion is the only hegemonic power. In the later seasons, the ‘Dominion War’ breaks out, a direct, open, and ‘hot’ war between the Federation, the Klingons, and Romulans on one side, the Dominion and the Cardassians on the other side, and the planet Bajor as the center of this ‘tug of war’ remaining neutral. By depicting the Dominion War in such a multidimensional way, *DS9* emancipated itself from the constraints of Cold War dichotomies that limited *Star Trek*’s previous installments.

Even though the 1990s were often perceived as an apolitical, post-ideological decade by the white hegemonic culture, instances such as the Rodney King beating caused major upheavals and debates about racialized police violence in the United

States and made it clear that Fukuyama's visions of liberalism were still not available to Black communities. Jayne Chong-Soon Lee notes that racist rhetoric reflects differently in the 1990s than it did in the 1960s: "Legal discourse [in the 1990s] uses the language of liberal 'colorblindness,' rather than that of racial inferiority, to undermine racial reform" (751-52). Avery Brooks, the actor who portrayed Benjamin Sisko in *DS9*, auditioned for his role in what is known as a "color-blind casting" (Alexander 151). Lisa Doris Alexander suggests that the character as he was first written was not conceived of as a person of color (151). From the side of the studio executives, this meant to engage, to a certain degree, in the discourse of liberal colorblindness as described by Lee. Colorblindness presupposes that all characters have the same kind of problems, some just happen to be Black,³ thereby erasing any possibilities for representations of explicitly Black struggle but also of Black achievement.

However, with the series being a work in progress, the creators were open to adjusting Benjamin Sisko's character to Avery Brooks. This was already visible in the very first episode. In the scene where Sisko explains how time is linear with the help of baseball, he is wearing a baseball cap of the Homestead Grays, a Black baseball team that was active from 1912 to 1951. As Alexander points out, "[o]nly those baseball fans familiar with the Negro Leagues would notice the cap and know what it represents" (152). The political message behind this choice of wardrobe is subtle, yet it shows that Sisko has a connection not only to baseball but to specifically Black baseball, and that he wanted to highlight the struggles of racial segregation within the sport. By wearing this hat of the Homestead Grays, Sisko points to the fact that memories of a racist past still persist. In *Star Trek's* liberal utopia, the inclusion of such a political symbol is a subversion of the hegemonic colorblindness of the time.

Throughout the show, Brooks's involvement in shaping the character of Benjamin Sisko became more prominent, culminating in the season six episode "Far Beyond the Stars," an episode he not only acted in but also directed. In the episode, Sisko is cast into a vision of a 1950s African American science fiction writer named Benny Russel who imagines *DS9* in a story. However, he ultimately gets fired from his publisher for writing about a space station whose captain "is a colored man" (00:37:40-43). Russel's employment is handled with casual white supremacy, even by his publishers, who do not want Russel's photograph to be taken along with other writers of the science fiction magazine he works at: "The average reader's not going to spend his hard-earned cash on stories written by Negroes" (00:11:30-34). As a consequence of the rejection of Russel's story about *DS9*, Russel has a breakdown

3 Of course one could also look at this through an intersectional perspective, where this discourse would be even more 'blind' toward intersecting marginalizations but for the sake of the argument, I am focusing on Sisko's Blackness specifically. It is also important to highlight that Blackness itself is a spectrum and that Avery Brooks referred to himself and Captain Sisko as a "brown man" (*What We Left Behind* 01:11:30-33).

and needs to be hospitalized. By highlighting Black struggle in this way, the episode demonstrates that segregation and white supremacy still impact the future.

Furthermore, Benjamin's role as a single father to Jake Sisko was a groundbreaking portrayal of Black fathers in the 1990s. As Alexander points out, "Benjamin Sisko stands alongside the handful of fictional black fathers from 1990s television [...] who stand in contrast to the traditional images of black fathers as 'absent, shiftless, unemployed, and overly chauvinistic'" (Neal qtd. in Alexander 153). Throughout the series, Benjamin's willingness to care for Jake becomes evident as he helps to found a school for Jake and the other children on DS9, prepares meals for his family, and later supports Jake in his career decisions. Of the many forms baseball takes in *DS9*, initially it constitutes a "bonding [between] father and son" (Silliman 105). When he introduces baseball to the wormhole beings, Sisko says "It's a game that Jake and I play on the holodeck! It's called baseball!" ("Emissary" 01:10:57-11:00). This suggests that Benjamin and Jake had played baseball many times before on the holodeck, a space where items, places, and people are recreated by a computer to produce any specified scenario. This establishes them as already having bonded over this activity.

The love for the sport also comes from the side of Jake. In the episode "In the Cards," he tries to obtain a baseball card of Black baseball player Willie Mays to lift Benjamin's spirits. Willie Mays was "one of the last black players in the Major Leagues to begin his career in the Negro Leagues" (Alexander 152). Thus, Jake and Benjamin bond over the legacy of Black baseball in particular and recognize the struggles that existed for Black people in the past together.

AFROFUTURIST OVERVIEW IN *DEEP SPACE NINE*

So far, this paper has established instances that look back on different occasions of collective trauma in the past or deal with the situation of Black fatherhood in the present. The *DS9* episode "The Visitor" has Benjamin Sisko uncontrollably shifting through time, turning the relationship between father and son into a possible future. This future is mediated through an Afrofuturist framework. In the episode, an older Jake Sisko tells his story to a visitor, explaining that his father vanished into subspace during an inversion of the wormhole near DS9 when Jake was eighteen. Initially mourned and believed to be dead, Benjamin Sisko sporadically returns to Jake's reality, with no time passing for Benjamin between visits but with years or even decades passing for his son and everyone else. Jake publishes a book and gets married. As the visits from his father keep happening, he puts aside both his marriage and writing career, against the wish of Benjamin, to find a way to bring his father back to his own reality. According to Eshun, Afrofuturism "is concerned with the possibilities for intervention within the dimension of the predictive, the

projected” (293). It is exactly this intervention into a projected future, building a counterfuture, that then happens when Jake sacrifices himself at the end of the episode, reversing the process and sending Benjamin back in time, where he now dodges the energy beam that sent him into subspace in the first place.

This episode demonstrates how Afrofuturism reverses linear time by building a counterfuture: “Afrofuturism unravels any linear model of the future, disrupting the idea that the future will be a simple supersession of the past. Time in Afrofuturism is plastic, stretchable and prophetic—it is, in other words, a *technologised* time, in which past and future are subject to ceaseless de- and recomposition [sic]” (Fisher 47). The de- and recomposition of past and future is a temporalization of those categories of thinking that had been previously formalized under the guise of “universality and its particular arrangement of Space and Time” (Ferreira da Silva 84). Erasing the past for millions of Africans who were transported to the Americas to be enslaved, then, cannot be grappled with from the inside in terms of linear progress. After all, “temporal disjunctions [...] have been constitutive of the Afrodiasporic experience since Africans were first abducted by slavers and projected from their own lifeworld into the abstract space-time of Capital. Time was always-already out of joint for the slave” (Fisher 42). One of the results of the transatlantic slave trade is loss: the irreversible loss of the cultural past of African Americans that leads to a condition where time is ‘out of joint.’ Thus, their difference is marked by the awareness that time functions in a different way for them than for white people, who claim to have universal perceptions of time.

Jake decides to save his father’s life once more in the episode “Rapture,” where Benjamin has visions sent by the wormhole beings as part of a religious ritual that could eventually cause brain damage to him. With the doctor standing by, Jake convinces him to intervene in this ritual so that Benjamin might be saved from suffering severe consequences. Just like in “The Visitor,” this is another intervention from Jake’s side, countering a future where his father would be gone, again. This time, the memories Benjamin gets from his vision imply that he is beginning to comprehend the grid of possibilities that the wormhole beings perceive naturally. After he wakes up, he says to Jake:

I remember the first time I held you in my hands. You were just a few minutes old, and when I looked down at your face, it was almost as if I could see your whole life stretched out in front of you, the joys it would bring, and the bruises. It was all there, hidden in your scrunched up, little face. The baby I’m holding in my hands now is the universe itself. And I need time to study its face. (“Rapture” 00:31:47-32:36)

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The relationship between Benjamin and Jake serves here as an entrance point into understanding the future, projecting and predicting the line of flight for Jake at various Becomings. The visions in “Rapture” take this relationship and start applying it to everything, the universe itself at every moment in time, forming a grid of all possible outcomes, giving Benjamin Sisko the overview over everything.

The episode “Sacrifice of Angels” establishes another intervention into the future. There, DS9 is just about to be retaken from the Dominion by the Federation and their allies. However, the reinforcements for the Dominion are stalled on the other side of the wormhole because it has been sealed by a minefield of the Federation. Just as the minefield is removed and thousands of enemy Dominion ships are heading through, the Prophets visit Benjamin Sisko in his mind again. They detect that Sisko is outnumbered and is going to needlessly sacrifice himself in a hopeless counterattack. By saying “Aggressive. Adversarial” (“Sacrifice of Angels” 00:33:43-47), the Prophets echo the vocabulary that they encountered when they learned from Sisko about baseball. They tell him that “the game must continue” (00:32:54-57), meaning that Sisko still has a role to play in his life, which they now recognize to be linear for human beings. Sisko convinces them that, for this game to continue, the enemy ships must vanish, which the wormhole aliens finally realize.

Afrofuturism appears here in Sisko’s ability to manifest a counterfuture to a future where DS9, Bajor, and the alpha quadrant most likely would have been significantly altered or destroyed. However, the aliens warn him that “a penance must be exacted” (00:35:07-10), without telling Sisko exactly what this penance will look like. In the final episode of the series, it is revealed that Sisko had to join the wormhole aliens through his own sacrifice, appearing to his newlywed wife before the end to tell her that his life and destiny were “not linear” (“What You Leave Behind” 01:17:00-02). This sacrifice made him understand that he himself was involved in a nonlinear process, a path that was already determined before the circumstances arose that made him follow through with the sacrifice.

Throughout the series, Sisko learns that life, as baseball, is not about linear progress but also about differences and deviations. Even Sisko’s attitude toward baseball has its own arc. While Sisko initially uses baseball as a metaphor for linear time in the series, in the seventh-season episode “Take Me Out to the Holosuite,” Sisko learns that baseball is about much more than just the linear passing of time and progressive acceleration of points. Sisko is challenged by a Vulcan captain to a baseball game between the Vulcan and the DS9 crews. He first eagerly accepts and fervently trains his crew to play baseball in order to show the Vulcans that although humans are emotional and thus seen as inferior by Vulcans, they can still beat them in this Earth game. However, as the game unfolds, the crew of DS9 is not scoring any runs and it is only after a member of the DS9 team throws out a Vulcan, who

did not touch the home plate, that Sisko realizes: “That’s what I love about this game. You never know what’s going to happen next. Every situation is different, huh?” (“Take Me Out to the Holosuite” 00:37:08-13). By acknowledging the difference of all possibilities, Sisko thus embraces the view of the plane of consistency, or the grid, and summarizes all the situations in space and time that can occur during the game.

An enjoyment of differences is then also what makes the DS9 crew celebrate, despite their 10:1 loss against the Vulcans. The Vulcan captain, who does not understand the reason for their celebration, accuses them of “a typical human reaction, based on emotionalism and illogic” (00:42:45-50). However, as the DS9 crew also contains beings from other planets, such as Klingons, Ferengi, and Trill, they mockingly point out that mapping this behavior to a specific identity is wrong. The real difference between the Vulcans and the others lies in time, because the Vulcans had been just as emotional as the other species in the past and have only learned to suppress their feelings (“Sarek”).

Additionally, Afrofuturism echoes the knowledge of temporal difference. To learn about the grid is to gain an overview over past and future, like Sisko did multiple times. Countermemories and counterfutures are all part of the grid, but they are usually suppressed or not perceived at all. When a line of flight visits those parts of the grid, it is Sisko who navigates all multiplicities and chooses the Becomings that either honor or save the people he cares about. Although this happens temporally, it is not linear because it might involve traveling through time. Altogether, Becoming serves as an applicable framework to illustrate a founding and embrace of difference that is based on time instead of identity, with Afrofuturist overview as materialized in baseball in DS9 serving as an illustrative example.

CONCLUSION

This article examined baseball in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* in an attempt to decipher and interpret America’s pastime in a way that is rather unconventional. It aimed to spark discussion and draw connections between baseball and Blackness to provide a unique and novel perspective.

Firstly, by analyzing DS9 and weaving in the frameworks of Becoming and Afrofuturism, this paper elaborated on the Temporalization of Forms, as advocated for by Ferreira da Silva, and how this concept goes against linear understandings of time and progress. This understanding was illustrated through Fukuyama’s notion of the End of History, by showing how it does not account for the legacy of slavery. I emphasized that real progress cannot happen without an overcoming of this legacy. By applying Becoming and Afrofuturism to baseball, this chapter

demonstrated how Afrofuturism utilizes the plane of consistency, the grid of all possibilities in the universe.

Secondly, I discussed the treatment of Blackness at the time of production of *DS9* and how Blackness is portrayed and memorized in the show through the character of Benjamin Sisko. For instance, the hints to a segregated past, as well as Sisko's struggle over white supremacy, highlight the legacy of colonialism even in a post-ideological *Star Trek* universe. Furthermore, I argued that Sisko subverts racist depictions of black fatherhood. This illustrates how Benjamin Sisko is a living example of countermemory. Thirdly, with the help of the Afrofuturist notion of counterfutures, I described how Benjamin Sisko's ability to influence the outcome of certain events is only possible with an overview over all struggles existing up to the present and how they would unfold in the future without intervention.

Finally, I disentangled how baseball functions as an example of linear as well as nonlinear time. Eventually, what Sisko enjoys most is embracing all different baseball situations in space and time, a perception he finally shares with the wormhole aliens. Because they stand outside of space and time, they see all the situations through an equalizing perspective that takes their temporal history into account. In a similar fashion, it has been shown that for the African American experience, linear time is out of joint, since the principles of progress are not being distributed equally among all.

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