

A CONCLUDING/OPEN INVITATION TO THE COMPLICATED SF CURRICULUM CONVERSATION

PETER APPELBAUM

Arcadia University

I am pleased to introduce Patrick Phillips' contribution to our multiple-issue section on SF and Curriculum Studies—science fiction, speculative fiction, serious fantasies, solidarity in functionality... Phillips' important article raises for us the critical question, "Why is it only in 2021 that we first have an article grounded in Afrofuturism in *JAAACS*?" Phillips notes that the 2019 introduction to the initial contributions to this special journal section positioned Noel Gough and John Weaver as at the "vanguard in the liminal terrain of Speculative Fiction, Science Fiction, and Curriculum Studies." Phillips writes, "While my thinking in this essay has resonated with Gough and Weaver in a broad sense, what I am attempting to share here is, I argue, distinct: A shift, or at least the beginnings of a shift, beyond learning from speculative fictions as external discursive objects—including ourselves as external objects—to enacting a commitment to a shared futurist orientation in curriculum as a critical anti-oppressive technology." Yes, yet I note, nevertheless, that it was not incorrect to describe Gough and Weaver as "at the vanguard," which again begs the question, "Why not a theorist who represented the shift to which Phillips leans?"

I am not naïve in my questions. The ways in which systemic racism and structures of epistemological and cultural coloniality have led to the privileging of some thinkers over others in curriculum studies is surely no less apparent in the exploration of SF and curriculum than in any other academic and scholarly field. Mark Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1993. Jazz musician and cosmic purveyor of philosophy as an alien from Saturn on a mission to preach peace, Sun Ra, adopted posthumously as an early Afrofuturist based on his prolific work spanning the 1940s through the early 1990s, lived out his beliefs of Afrofuturism in his daily life by embodying the movement not only in his music, but also in his clothes and actions. This embodiment of the narrative allowed him to demonstrate black nationalism as a counternarrative to the present culture—in the 1960s and 70s. So, outside of some few references to Sun Ra, Dery, and others in curriculum studies, why is this the first article to directly address Afrofuturism?

Phillips leaves us hoping for new futures through affective affinity, to welcome other fugitives as kin in our efforts—small choices and actions in the context of global crises and impending constraints. As you read his article, please consider centering Phillips' call for "the "generative possibilities" of speculative thinking [to] do more than anticipate "genuinely 'new' materialisms" in a time that has already come, which requires not only "apprehension and comprehension" but also enacting of "as-yet-unanticipated material-semiotic modes of curriculum as verb."

Here is my invitation to the final installment of this special SF section of *JAAACS*, integrating all future contributions to the complicated SF curriculum conversation with other voices, modes and formats:

Step 0: The grounding! Read Patrick Phillips' article in this issue! Follow their references to understand the genealogy of that article. Expand your sense of canonical texts in curriculum studies.

Step 1: Read some of these books, and find ways to weave what they provoke into your scholarship:

- *Mothership: Tales from Afrofuturism and Beyond*, edited by Bill Campbell and Edward Austin Hall.
- *Gold Fame Citrus*, by Claire Vaye Watkins
- "The Ones Who Stay and Fight," by N.K. Jemisin, from *How Long 'Til Black Future Month*
- *Tales from The Loop*, by Simon Stalenhag
- Katie Williams's *Tell the Machine Goodnight*

Step 2: Listen to more Sun Ra

Step 3: Re-write some canonical texts of curriculum studies as if they were written by each of the authors above. Burn your re-writes. Now write what should have been written in 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, and now. Publish these new writings.

Step 4: Anifowoshe Ibrahim suggests 13 must-watch movies for exploring Afrofuturism, at this website: <https://theportalist.com/afrofuturist-movies>. Educate yourself: watch these movies with friends, families, colleagues, students, and others. Talk about them, think about what they are teaching you about yourself and others, about our world and our communities.

Step 5: Re-write some canonical texts of curriculum studies as if they were informed by each of the movies on Ibrahim's list. Burn your re-writes. Now write what should have been written in 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, and now. Publish these new writings. Make documentary films grounded in Afrofuturism. Create courses and syllabi permeated with these films and your own documentaries.

Step 6: Submit your creative efforts to JAAACS! Don't let this special section die ... make it a continuing conversation. Turn curriculum studies into Afrofuturist explorations.

References

- Dery, Mark (1993). "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose". *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 736.
- Ibrahim, Anifowoshe (2020). "Explore Afrofuturism with these 13 must-watch Afrofuturist movies : To Wakanda and beyond," *The Portalist*. <https://theportalist.com/afrofuturist-movies>.

Reading List

- Hall, Edward Austin, & Campbell, Bill. (2013). *Mothership: Tales from Afrofuturism and beyond*. Rosarium Publishing.
- Jemisin, J.K. (2018). *How long 'til Black future month?* Orbit BooksStålenhag
- Simon. (2015). *Tales from the loop*. Gallery Books.
- Watkins, Claire Vaye. (2015). *Gold fame citrus*. Riverrun.
- Williams, Katie. (2018). *Tell the machine goodnight*. Penguin Publishing.