

# INTRODUCTION

Who are you?” the Cheshire cat asked Alice in the mind-bending *Alice in Wonderland*. As a kid, I found the scary disappearing kooky kitten and his prickly questions nightmarish. When I got to the page where those glow-in-the-dark eyes in my Disney-friendly child-version storybook appeared, I’d flip the page faster than Gabby Douglas on the balance beam. Frightening, albeit intriguing. When Morpheus gives Neo the red pill/blue pill option, prefacing that he will find out just how deep the rabbit hole goes, *The Matrix* viewers know this is another tornado ride to Oz. No, Dorothy, you’re not in Kansas anymore. And for those who adopt the Afrofuturist paradigm, the ideas can take you light-years away from the place you call home, only to return knowing you had had everything you needed from the start.

Readers, our future is now. Fortunately, there are guideposts on this worded journey through the cosmos, key archetypes that anchor the imagination on this spaceship ride dubbed “freedom”: the Dogon’s Sirius star, the fabled mermaid, the sky ark, a DJ scratch that blares like a Miles Davis horn, an ankh, a Yoruba deity, an Egyptian god, a body of water, a dancing robot, an Outkast ATLien. And there’s electricity, lots of electricity,

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nanotechnology, and plants. Someone may shout, “Wake up!” Others will echo chants of hope. Maybe you’ll hop into a parallel universe with a past that reads like a fantasy or a future that feels like the past. But no trek is complete until you spot a sundial-sized headdress or that psychedelic wig. We like really big hair or no hair at all. Call it the power of the subconscious or the predominance of soul culture gone cyberpop, but this dance through time travel that Afrofuturists live for is as much about soul retrieval as it is about jettisoning into the far-off future, the uncharted Milky Way, or the depths of the subconscious and imagination.

Sun Ra, George Clinton, and Octavia Butler are sides of that Giza-like pyramid you find. Although the controls on the spaceship match your video game console, your life is not a video game. You are in cyberspace. Satellite maps don’t work here. You cannot “check in,” although you can click “like.” No hyperlinks. If lost, get down to get up, go up to get down. If you must communicate, invent a communication device with a social media platform, and you’ll be heard. Take photos, lots and lots of photos. Like every good hero, you have a digital soundtrack. But most important, you have nice reading material to smooth the ride. Oh, and you’ll need sunglasses, really cool sunglasses.

Stay Spacetastic,  
Ytasha