

“THE CITY IS GOING TO BEAR WITNESS”

De Afrofuturistische stad als ruimte van verzet in Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland*
(2008)

EEN INTRODUCTIE TOT AFROFUTURISME: *SPACE IS THE PLACE*

- Afrofuturisme
- **Sun Ra: *Space is the place*** (1974)
- **Mark Dery: “Black to the future”** (1994)
- Uiting van ‘blackness’, ‘black struggles’ en ‘black ideas’
- **Womack: *Afrofuturism***
 - “Afrofuturists create new visions” (154)
- Eigenheid van Afrikaanse identiteit, etnische achtergrond en tradities blijven belangrijk, maar krijgen een futuristische en eigenzinnige invulling
- Verleden herdenken, herinterpreteren en het heden veranderen zodat ze de toekomst in eigen handen hebben.



WELCOME TO... WAKANDA

- Waarom de stad?

- *Ethnoscape* (Isiah Lavender):

“ In producing an estranged world, the sf author can formulate an imaginary environment so as to foreground the intersection of race, technology and power [...]” (Bould 182)

- Geschiedenis herschrijven, ‘what if’-scenario’s, *writing back*,... → Afrikaanse steden zijn niet achtergesteld

- Ook in Afrofuturisme:

- Utopische steden
- dystopische steden



Maitu Community, East African Territory
35 years after World War III - The Water War



WELCOME TO WAKANDA



WELCOME TO ... WAKANDA

- Urban planning en architectuur als manieren om naar buiten te treden met bepaalde sociale aspiraties en ambities.

“It only follows that the architecture and design of our fantasies can make a massive impact on how we see our present day” (Sisson 2016)

- “what if”-vragen, ook gericht op samenlevingsstructuren en *urban planning*.

LAUREN BEUKES – MOXYLAND (2008)

- Futuristisch Kaapstad uit de (nabije) toekomst → ‘sluimerende stad’
- Verschillende lagen in de stedelijke ruimte → overlapping tussen reële en virtuele wereld
- Stad als centrale ‘speelplaats’
- Onzichtbare staat, drukkende aanwezigheid door camera’s, informatie- en communicatiemiddelen
- ‘connected’ vs. ‘disconnected’
 - ‘disconnected’ gebruiken de stad als ruimte van verzet.
 - 3 sleutelplaatsen waar verzet en onderdrukking elkaar ontmoeten + waar verschillende ruimtelijke lagen elkaar ontmoeten

LAUREN BEUKES – MOXYLAND (2008)

Reële wereld/ *Realspace* >< gamewereld:

Advisor: this mission will take you into civilian territory. Discretion is advised.* All operatives must tag their SIMs with PlayNet FallenCity™ chips to identify them as players. (191) [...] Players who enter realworld play without chipping their SIMs with FallenCity™ identifiers, or who create a public disturbance or interfere with non-layer civilians will be suspended from gameplay for the period of one month. Repeat offenders will be disbarred from the game. Players who break the law In the course of play or enact physical violence on any persons (players, InGame agents, or civilians) will be barred from FallenCity™ and all other Inkubate Inc.'s titles. If necessary, their files will be uploaded to the SAPS. (192-193)

1. DE KUNSTGALERIJ

‘I don’t need your stubbornness right now, Ten. God, you make me crazy. This fucks everything we’ve done. Yo uwant to talk violation? This – fuck, this is the moral opposite of everything we believe in. This is going to make the news in Tibet!’

‘That is what I’m counting on.’

[...]

‘Looked right at’em. That was the point. Skyward* said we needed to make global news, to force their hand.’ (220)

2. DE BIBLIOTHEEK

We cruise down Adderley towards the station, past the Grand Parade, and the blaring logos and adboards squatting on the façade of the old library like parasites. And what really grinds me is that it was supposed to be ours for Streets Back. We'd rounded up a bunch of kids from the Castle Street shelter with this plan to do graffiti murals. It was a way of letting them **make a mark on the city** that usually filters them out like spam. It was all legit. We had the permits and everything, with a small development grant Ash set up, from an Italian org complete with our own Italian liaisons. It all got fucked up, though. The Italians came out to make a documentary of the whole spiel, and then got all pissy when it wasn't happening. Like it's my fault we ran out of money (49).

2. DE BIBLIOTHEEK

The LEDs, on the other hand, are plug and play. Tiny bulbs the size of the head of a drawing pin, imported specially from Amsterdam. We're using magnetic paint, so it's just matter of positioning and slapping them on. It was what sold Chase Standard on the project – that we could embed lights in the shape of their logo, which would blink all night for all the incoming traffic to see. **You can pre-program patterns to add dimension or words. 'Peace'. 'Love'. 'Ubuntu'. 'Revolution'.**

We're doing up all three of the panels on the side of the ex-library, up there with the logos and adboards and videomercials beaming down. All in the name of a **Good Cause**, the street kids channelling their frustration into something useful, something beautiful. Something the public can feel good about (196-197).

2. DE BIBLIOTHEEK

The footage focuses **on the wall of the old city library**, where a mural of a soccer ball and two hands forming a heart shape with the fingers has been painted. The words UBUNTU appear above it, spangled with glitter – no, lightbulbs, LEDs forming lightshow patterns. **The soccer ball becomes a globe, a skull, a heart. And then the bulbs suddenly all pop, not exactly co-ordinated, with a noise like firecrackers, spraying twinkles of glass, so that people cringe and duck (323).**

3. DE SUBWAY

Overlappen *realworld* met *gameworld*:

I pull the trigger.

The .44 kicks in my hand with a sharp metallic roar. Which should have been the end of her, only the blobby cow is still shrieking, clawing at the wet gobs splattered across her face. She squeals even louder when her hands come away sticky with sheen. I am way pissed now, kids.

‘What are you doing? You’re analogue, baby. You’re out. Fucking go down.’

[...]

‘Hey! She was registered gameplay. It’s not my fault she’s a rookie.’

‘Oh yeah?’ He bends down, comes back with her handbag and dumps out the phone, turns it over to show me. It hasn’t been chipped for in game. It’s so outmoded, it wouldn’t even support the tech. Shit. (255-256)

3. DE SUBWAY

Apotheose conflict tussen verschillende werkelijkheidslagen: *gamewereld*, *realworld* en ontmoeting met anonieme staat (*corporati*)

A ripple of quiet spreads out from one side of the station as the audio chips suddenly fade out, as if they've been dampened. The protester's voices sound hollow without them, too warm, too varied without their mechanical accompaniment, and even the voices are starting to falter. I can't see shit, but I can anticipate what's coming.

[...]

'Warning: if you choose not to disband immediately, it will be assumed under the Tacit Liability Act that you are fully aware of the potential repercussions of your unlawful actions and that you waive your right to seek any kind of legal recourse or financial compensation for any injuries or damages incurred in the course of law enforcement response.'

The uniforms have stopped, arranged in an invert V down the main stairwell, while the Aitos spread out through the crowd, yipping in excitement. It's enough to inspire some of the people to disperse, mostly nervous commuters.

'This is your last warning.'

The tension dies unexpectedly, like a battery running out of juice. It's like the crowd collectively shrug all at once, and start disassembling peacefully and in an orderly fashion so as not to piss off the cops or, more importantly, the dogs.

3. DE SUBWAY

But then the lift doors open and it becomes obvious that the msg hasn't reached the lower floors. Doyenne bursts out, splattered with dye, but not enough to take her out of the game, grinning like a berserker, rabid with battle lust. I'm close enough to see the purper smear over her mouth, as if she's wiped the back of her hand across it. She grins wider and launches into the painfully over-quoted line from Sleepers Phoenix – 'Hi-de-ho, neighbours! I regret to inform you it's time to die!' before opening random fire on the crowd.

Chaos breaks out in shockwaves from the nucleus of the lifts. People drop to the ground, screaming, unaware that it's a game, cos they're idiots, cos you'd never mistake the sting of a dye pellet for a bullet. Others, caught in the panic, surge towards the exits. And then in one convulsive move, *everyone* drops to the ground, twitching, phones crackling as the **defusers** kick in. (257 -260)

3. DE SUBWAY

Een daad van verzet (Tendeka):

‘Your weapons are useless. We defy your attempts to regulate society. We’re voluntarily disconnected! Voluntarily disenfranchised. You cannot control us!’ He holds up the remains of a smashed phone, then drops it to the ground.

I catch on. It’s Tendeka and his BF surrounded by all manner of ragtag humanity; bergies and skollies and street kids who all have one thing in common – they’re homeless and phoneless. Which only means that when they call the dogs in, they’re going to be more savage than usual. (260-261)

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‘Where’s the camera?’ His eyes dart around, hunting out the lenses in my coat.

‘All over. There’re like a thousand of them embedded in the fabric. Miniature. You can’t see ‘em.’

‘Okay, tell them...’

‘Tell’em yourself. You’re going out live. Just speak into the coat.’

He looks up and grits his teeth, focuses. ‘My name is Tendeka Mataboge.’

‘Excellent start.’

‘I’m thirty-two. I’m dying. It’s the only way to show... I’ve been infected with the M7N1 virus as an act of government-corporate censorship. Repression. This is human rights violation taken to its worst. They are wilfully killing their citizens. It’s... It is casting, right?’ (351)

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The coat. The coat. The fucking coat. I check the payback. But there's nothing. Static. Blur. White noise. I rewind, fast forward and there! It's bad quality, but it's there underneath the fritz. 'Human rights violation-' and my snarky comment, overlapping.

Oh fuck, Tendeka. Fuck. I'm sorry. Maybe it can be cleaned up. If I can get it to, I dunno, someone, upload it to some geek site, let them clean it up. And get to a clinic. Get the vaccine. Turn myself in. How long do I have? (366)

CONCLUSIE

- Verzet van binnenuit bij *Communique*: Lerato ontmaskerd → illusie van de vrijheid van het individu
- Verzet van buitenaf: tevergeefs
- Waarom Afrofuturistisch? Waarom de stad?
 - Neo-slave narrative
 - Oude, in ongebruik geraakte ruimtes hergebruiken om sociale revolutie te willen veroorzaken

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