

wondering what worried her so much about Blue Strike's seemingly innocuous comments.

When she returned to the bridge David relinquished the command chair. Enid read the fleet's status reports; most of the fleet was gathering at Brian's Planet as planned. The border worlds had heard of what happened in Sector Five and the disappearance of the Fifth Fleet. Everyone braced for an all-out war with the Repletians. Enid hoped that an escalation of the fighting, which so far had been limited to border fights, wouldn't happen. She knew that her promotion was part of such a hope. The Anphorian Council hoped that the Repletians would wait before firing on a fleet led by one of its own.

Yet, there were so many questions about the destruction of the Fifth Fleet. For one, Repletians tended to use hit-and-run methods that suited their smaller ships. They had never tried to attack a fleet head-on, nor did the council think they had the strength to do so.

As her officers gathered on the bridge, Enid's thoughts were only half on her duties. A part of her mused on the red lights of her panel. She idly tapped her pencil on the arm of her chair to a tune she dimly recalled from her childhood, one of the few things she could remember of her past.

## Men on the Moon

SIMON ORTIZ

(1999)

The reach of imperialism into "our heads" challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred, partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity.

—Linda Tuhiwai Smith (*Maori*)

OUR FINAL INSTALLMENT in the "Contact" section, Simon J. Ortiz's "Men on the Moon," shares skepticism for a common sf trope, the discovery of "new worlds" that offer plunder and adventure to technologically advanced colonizers. The story quietly questions assumptions about Native peoples' "technoprimitivism" by juxtaposing the television imagery of the first lunar landing with an elder's dream of a machine monster on the moon. "It's a dream," he warns, "but the truth." Ortiz's imagery masters technosurrealism by likening the greatest advancement in western science at the time to a traditional *Skquwyuh mahkina*, great and powerful but of evil origins, a living entity to beware. The sublime wonder typical in pulp sf contact narratives is inverted from an Indigenous perspective, which sees nothing of new worlds discovered, only rupture as the old world is catastrophically changed.

Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Professor of English at Arizona State University, prolific writer of more than two dozen volumes of



Indigenous poetry, prose fiction, children's literature, and nonfiction, has played pivotal roles in bringing cultural studies and Native American literatures to mainstream attention, and in offering generous mentorship for many involved in the current Native intellectual movement's attention to Native-centered theory. He also has succeeded in getting the scholarly community to reframe its thinking about Indigenous peoples transnationally, unifying tribal, national, hemispheric, and global perspectives.

Darko Suvin's concept of "cognitive estrangement," a typical sf strategy, guides the reader through the story, as we meet an old man—Faustin, a grandfather—who is unfamiliar with both television and the English language, and thus depends on a grandson's translations, explanations, and possible teasing about the momentous *Apollo II* mission. The televisual images and montage scenes of white smoke and *mahkinas*, huge machines, compound Nana's uneasiness with Mericanos who laboriously quest for knowledge in an arena where they believe there is no life.<sup>1</sup> This irony perhaps informs Nana's perspective on the wonders of the technological sublime conceived "to better mankind" and the astronauts' overwrought efforts to discover "where everything began a long time ago and how everything was made in the beginning." Surprised at the lengths they'll go to in search of answers to simple questions, he wonders, "Hasn't anyone ever told them?"

Ortiz flips the elitism of those immersed in the technological sublime, the testing grounds of the atom bomb, the testing out of space travel, and the search for the "tiniest bit of life" on other planets. This allegorical and abstract story in fact is linked to a sequence that explores the specifics of Kerr-McGee Corporation, an actual petroleum products company that began operations in Depression-era Oklahoma and went on to operate large uranium mines in the US Southwest in the 1960s and 1970s. One site was the Ambrosia Lake mine in New Mexico on Acoma Pueblo land. Presciently, Ortiz's "Men on the Moon," which he originally began in the sixties before revising for publication in the 1999 collection that shares its title, anticipates Kerr-McGee's development into a subsidiary of Anadarko Petroleum and Western Gas Reserves, and Ambrosia's subsequent dubious status as one of the largest uranium tailings in the Western world.<sup>2</sup>

The full cycle of the history of Eurowestern contact thus lies beneath the surface of Ortiz's marvelous little allegory. After making

the people's land lifeless, the colonizers take their final trip to a lifeless land.



# I

Joselita brought her father, Faustin, the TV on Father's Day. She brought it over after Sunday mass, and she had her son hook up the antenna. She plugged the TV cord into the wall socket.

Faustin sat on a worn couch. He was covered with an old coat. He had worn that coat for twenty years.

It's ready. Turn it on and I'll adjust the antenna, Amarosho told his mother. The TV warmed up and then the screen flickered into dull light. It was snowing. Amarosho tuned it a bit. It snowed less and then a picture formed.

Look, Naishtiya, Joselita said. She touched her father's hand and pointed at the TV.

I'll turn the antenna a bit and you tell me when the picture is clear, Amarosho said. He climbed on the roof again.

After a while the picture turned clearer. It's better! his mother shouted. There was only the tiniest bit of snow falling.

That's about the best it can get, I guess, Amarosho said. Maybe it'll clear up on the other channels. He turned the selector. It was clearer on another channel.

There were two men struggling mightily with each other. Wrestling, Amarosho said.

Do you want to watch wrestling? Two men are fighting, Nana. One of them is Apache Red. Chisheh tsah, he told his grandfather.

The old man stirred. He had been staring intently into the TV. He wondered why there was so much snow at first. Now there were two men fighting. One of them was a Chisheh—an Apache—and the other was a Mericano. There were people shouting excitedly and clapping hands within the TV.

The two men backed away from each other for a moment and then they clenched again. They wheeled mightily and suddenly one threw the other. The old man smiled. He wondered why they were fighting.

Something else showed on the TV screen. A bottle of wine was



being poured. The old man liked the pouring sound and he moved his mouth and lips. Someone was selling wine.

The two fighting men came back on the TV. They struggled with each other, and after a while one of them didn't get up. And then another man came and held up the hand of the Apache, who was dancing around in a feathered headdress.

It's over, Amarosho announced. Apache Red won the fight, Nana.

The Chisheh won. Faustin stared at the other fighter, a light-haired man who looked totally exhausted and angry with himself. The old man didn't like the Apache too much. He wanted them to fight again.

After a few minutes, something else appeared on the TV.

What is that? Faustin asked. In the TV picture was an object with smoke coming from it. It was standing upright.

Men are going to the moon, Nana, Amarosho said. That's *Apollo*. It's going to fly three men to the moon.

That thing is going to fly to the moon?

Yes, Nana, his grandson said.

What is it called again? Faustin asked.

*Apollo*, a spaceship rocket, Joselita told her father.

The *Apollo* spaceship stood on the ground, emitting clouds of something, something that looked like smoke.

A man was talking, telling about the plans for the flight, what would happen, that it was almost time. Faustin could not understand the man very well because he didn't know many words in the language of the Mericano.

He must be talking about that thing flying in the air? he said.

Yes. It's about ready to fly away to the moon.

Faustin remembered that the evening before he had looked at the sky and seen that the moon was almost in the middle phase. He wondered if it was important that the men get to the moon.

Are those men looking for something on the moon, Nana? he asked his grandson.

They're trying to find out what's on the moon, Nana. What kind of dirt and rocks there are and to see if there's any water. Scientist men don't believe there is any life on the moon. The men are looking for knowledge, Amarosho said to Faustin.

Faustin wondered if the men had run out of places to look for knowledge on the earth. Do they know if they'll find knowledge? he asked.

They have some already. They've gone before and come back. They're going again.

Did they bring any back?

They brought back some rocks, Amarosho said.

Rocks. Faustin laughed quietly. The American scientist men went to search for knowledge on the moon and they brought back rocks. He kind of thought that perhaps Amarosho was joking with him. His grandson had gone to Indian School for a number of years, and sometimes he would tell his grandfather some strange and funny things.

The old man was suspicious. Sometimes they joked around. Rocks. You sure that's all they brought back? he said. Rocks!

That's right, Nana, only rocks and some dirt and pictures they made of what it looks like on the moon.

The TV picture was filled with the rocket spaceship close-up now. Men were sitting and standing and moving around some machinery, and the TV voice had become more urgent. The old man watched the activity in the picture intently but with a slight smile on his face.

Suddenly it became very quiet, and the TV voice was firm and commanding and curiously pleading. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, liftoff. The white smoke became furious, and a muted rumble shook through the TV. The rocket was trembling and the voice was trembling.

It was really happening, the old man marveled. Somewhere inside of that cylinder with a point at its top and long slender wings were three men who were flying to the moon.

The rocket rose from the ground. There were enormous clouds of smoke and the picture shook. Even the old man became tense, and he grasped the edge of the couch. The rocket spaceship rose and rose.

There's fire coming out of the rocket, Amarosho explained. That's what makes it fly.

Fire. Faustin had wondered what made it fly. He had seen pictures of other flying machines. They had long wings, and someone had explained to him that there was machinery inside which spun metal blades that made the machines fly. He had wondered what made this thing fly. He hoped his grandson wasn't joking him.

After a while there was nothing but the sky. The rocket *Apollo* had disappeared. It hadn't taken very long, and the voice on the TV wasn't excited anymore. In fact, the voice was very calm and almost bored.



I have to go now, Naishtiya, Joselita told her father. I have things to do.

Me too, Amarosho said.

Wait, the old man said, wait. What shall I do with this thing? What is it you call it?

TV, his daughter said. You watch it. You turn it on and you watch it.

I mean how do you stop it? Does it stop like the radio, like the mahkina? It stops?

This way, Nana, Amarosho said and showed his grandfather. He turned a round knob on the TV and the picture went away.

He turned the knob again, and the picture flickered on again. Were you afraid this one-eye would be looking at you all the time? Amarosho laughed and gently patted the old man's shoulder.

Faustin was relieved. Joselita and her son left. Faustin watched the TV picture for a while. A lot of activity was going on, a lot of men were moving among machinery, and a couple of men were talking. And then the spaceship rocket was shown again.

The old man watched it rise and fly away again. It disappeared again. There was nothing but the sky. He turned the knob and the picture died away. He turned it on and the picture came on again. He turned it off. He went outside and to a fence a short distance from his home. When he finished peeing, he zipped up his pants and studied the sky for a while.

## II

That night, he dreamed.

Flintwing Boy was watching a Skquuyuh mahkina come down a hill. The mahkina made a humming noise. It was walking. It shone in the sunlight. Flintwing Boy moved to a better position to see. The mahkina kept on moving toward him.

The Skquuyuh mahkina drew closer. Its metal legs stepped upon trees and crushed growing flowers and grass. A deer bounded away frightened. Tsushki came running to Flintwing Boy.

Anahweh, Tsushki cried, trying to catch his breath.

What is it, Anahweh?

You've been running, Flintwing Boy said.

The coyote was staring at the thing, which was coming toward them. There was wild fear in his eyes.

What is that, Anahweh? What is that thing? Tsushki gasped.

It looks like a mahkina, but I've never seen one quite like it before. It must be some kind of Skquuyuh mahkina, Anahweh, Flintwing Boy said. When he saw that Tsushki was trembling with fear, he said, Sit down, Anahweh. Rest yourself. We'll find out soon enough.

The Skquuyuh mahkina was undeterred. It walked over and through everything. It splashed through a stream of clear water. The water boiled and streaks of oil flowed downstream. It split a juniper tree in half with a terrible crash. It crushed a boulder into dust with a sound of heavy metal. Nothing stopped the Skquuyuh mahkina. It hummed.

Anahweh, Tsushki cried, what can we do?

Flintwing Boy reached into the bag hanging at his side. He took out an object. It was a flint arrowhead. He took out some cornfood.

Come over here, Anahweh. Come over here. Be calm, he motioned to the frightened coyote. He touched the coyote in several places on his body with the arrowhead and put cornfood in the palm of his hand.

This way, Flintwing Boy said. He closed Tsushki's fingers over the cornfood. They stood facing east. Flintwing Boy said, We humble ourselves again. We look in your direction for guidance. We ask for your protection. We humble our poor bodies and spirits because only you are the power and the source and the knowledge. Help us, then. That is all we ask.

Flintwing Boy and Tsushki breathed on the cornfood, then took in the breath of all the directions and gave the cornfood unto the ground.

Now the ground trembled with the awesome power of the Skquuyuh mahkina. Its humming vibrated against everything.

Flintwing Boy reached over his shoulder and took several arrows from his quiver. He inspected them carefully and without any rush he fit one to his bowstring.

And now, Anahweh, Flintwing Boy said, you must go and tell everyone. Describe what you have seen. The people must talk among themselves and learn what this is about, and decide what they will do. You must hurry, but you must not alarm the people. Tell them I am here to meet the Skquuyuh mahkina. Later I will give them my report.



Tsushki turned and began to run. He stopped several yards away. *Hahtrudzaimh!* he called to Flintwing Boy. Like a man of courage, *Anahweh*, like our people.

The old man stirred in his sleep. A dog was barking. He awoke fully and got out of his bed and went outside. The moon was past the midpoint, and it would be daylight in a few hours.

### III

Later, the spaceship reached the moon.

Amarosho was with his grandfather Faustin. They watched a TV replay of two men walking on the moon.

So that's the men on the moon, Faustin said.

Yes, Nana, there they are, Amarosho said.

There were two men inside of heavy clothing, and they carried heavy-looking equipment on their backs.

The TV picture showed a closeup of one of them and indeed there was a man's face inside of glass. The face moved its mouth and smiled and spoke, but the voice seemed to be separate from the face.

It must be cold, Faustin said. They have on heavy clothing.

It's supposed to be very cold and very hot on the moon. They wear special clothes and other things for protection from the cold and heat, Amarosho said.

The men on the moon were moving slowly. One of them skipped like a boy, and he floated alongside the other.

The old man wondered if they were underwater. They seem to be able to float, he said.

The information I have heard is that a man weighs less on the moon than he does on earth, Amarosho said to his grandfather. Much less, and he floats. And there is no air on the moon for them to breathe, so those boxes on their backs carry air for them to breathe.

A man weighs less on the moon, the old man thought. And there is no air on the moon except for the boxes on their backs. He looked at Amarosho, but his grandson did not seem to be joking with him.

The land on the moon looked very dry. It looked like it had not rained for a long, long time. There were no trees, no plants, no grass. Nothing but dirt and rocks, a desert.

Amarosho had told him that men on earth—scientists—believed there was no life on the moon. Yet those men were trying to find knowledge on the moon. Faustin wondered if perhaps they had special tools with which they could find knowledge even if they believed there was no life on the moon.

The mahkina sat on the desert. It didn't make a sound. Its metal feet were planted flat on the ground. It looked somewhat awkward. Faustin searched around the mahkina, but there didn't seem to be anything except the dry land on the TV. He couldn't figure out the mahkina. He wasn't sure whether it moved and could cause harm. He didn't want to ask his grandson that question.

After a while, one of the bulky men was digging in the ground. He carried a long, thin tool with which he scooped up dirt and put it into a container. He did this for a while.

Is he going to bring the dirt back to earth too? Faustin asked. I think he is, Nana, Amarosho said. Maybe he'll get some rocks too. Watch.

Indeed, several minutes later, the man lumbered over to a pile of rocks and gathered several handsized ones. He held them out proudly. They looked just like rocks from around anyplace. The voice on the TV seemed to be excited about the rocks.

They will study the rocks, too, for knowledge?

Yes, Nana.

What will they use the knowledge for, Nana?

They say they will use it to better mankind, Nana. I've heard that. And to learn more about the universe in which we live. Also, some of the scientists say the knowledge will be useful in finding out where everything began a long time ago and how everything was made in the beginning.

Faustin looked with a smile at his grandson. He said, You are telling me the true facts, aren't you?

Why, yes, Nana. That's what they say. I'm not just making it up, Amarosho said.

Well then, do they say why they need to know where and how everything began? Hasn't anyone ever told them?

I think other people have tried to tell them but they want to find out for themselves, and also they claim they don't know enough and need to know more and for certain, Amarosho said.



The man in the bulky suit had a small pickax in his hand. He was striking at a boulder. The breathing of the man could be heard clearly. He seemed to be working very hard and was very tired.

Faustin had once watched a work crew of Mericano drilling for water. They had brought a tall mahkina with a loud motor. The mahkina would raise a limb at its center to its very top and then drop it with a heavy and loud metal clang. The mahkina and its men sat at one spot for several days, and finally they found water.

The water had bubbled out weakly, gray-looking, and did not look drinkable at all. And then the Mericano workmen lowered the mahkina, put their equipment away, and drove away. The water stopped flowing. After a couple of days, Faustin went and checked out the place.

There was nothing there except a pile of gray dirt and an indentation in the ground. The ground was already dry, and there were dark spots of oil-soaked dirt.

Faustin decided to tell Amarosho about the dream he had had.

After the old man finished, Amarosho said, Old man, you're telling me the truth now, aren't you? You know that you've become somewhat of a liar. He was teasing his grandfather.

Yes, Nana. I have told you the truth as it occurred to me that night. Everything happened like that except I might not have recalled everything about it.

That's some story, Nana, but it's a dream.

It's a dream, but it's the truth, Faustin said.

I believe you, Nana, his grandson said.

#### IV

Some time after that the spacemen returned to earth. Amarosho told his grandfather they had splashed down in the ocean.

Are they alright? Faustin asked.

Yes, Amarosho said. They have devices to keep them safe. Are they in their homes now?

No, I think they have to be someplace where they can't contaminate anything. If they brought back something from the moon that they weren't supposed to, they won't pass it on to someone else, Amarosho said to his grandfather.

What would that something be?

Something harmful, Nana.

In that dry desert land of the moon there might be something harmful, the old man said. I didn't see any strange insects or trees or even cactus. What would that harmful thing be, Nana?

Disease which might harm people on earth, Amarosho said.

You said there was the belief by the men that there is no life on the moon. Is there life after all? Faustin asked.

There might be the tiniest bit of life.

Yes, I see now, Nana. If the men find even the tiniest bit of life on the moon, then they will believe, the old man said.

Yes. Something like that.

Faustin figured it out now. The Mericano men had taken that trip in a spaceship rocket to the moon to find even the tiniest bit of life. And when they found even the tiniest bit of life, even if it was harmful, they would believe that they had found knowledge. Yes, that must be the way it was.

He remembered his dream clearly now. The old man was relieved.

When are those two men fighting again, Nana? he asked Amarosho.

What two men?

Those two men who were fighting with each other the day those Mericano spaceship men were flying to the moon.

Oh, those men. I don't know, Nana. Maybe next Sunday. You like them?

Yes. I think the next time I will be cheering for the Chisheh. He'll win again. He'll beat the Mericano again, Faustin said.



yelping and howling. The clown crows crowed in shrill voices and swooped on the cabin. When the federals ran out of the cabin to see what was the matter, the crows swooped again and cawed at them. The dogs ran into the woods howling.

Proude moved to the west side of the cabin next, the black side, the sunset side, the direction of the thunderbirds and summer storms, and the side the federals had entered. The mongrels and clown crows waited out of sight. Proude roared ha ha ha haaaa again and snarled four times. The dogs howled in the distance and then, when the federals ran out of the cabin the second time, the crows called in their loudest voices while hopping and flapping from tree to tree in front of the cabin.

The federal man was so unnerved by the sounds of bears and harsh crows that he picked up his machine and started running, not pedaling, in the wrong direction out of the woods. The federal woman stopped him and encouraged him to return to the cabin. She reminded him of their responsibilities as elite employees of the federal government.

Proude circled to the south side of the cabin, the summer side, the flower side, yellow and green, and snarled and roared four times again. The dogs howled and the crows flapped again. When the federals came out of the cabin for the third time, Proude snarled several more times with his deepest bear voice. The federal man could not be stopped the third time. He ran out of the woods in the right direction with the federal woman following on her machine. Pumping with her stout legs the federal woman was the first to reach the brown cedar ghost border of the circus. Exhausted and near heart failure, the federal man slumped out of the cedar woods, vowing never to return to the wilderness with bad news.

The federals pedaled their machines down the dirt roads on the reservation to the tribal center where they told Jordan Coward, elected president of the reservation government, about their harrowing experiences with the bears in the cedar. Coward first laughed and then his mood changed and he cursed them, calling them louts, addle-brained, beefwitted, and sapheaded federals, while he paced back and forth on the squeaking oak floors of his office in the old federal school building. Spume from his hostile words gathered on his bulbous purple lips.

## from *Mindscape*

ANDREA HAIRSTON

(2006)

The imminent and expected destruction of the life cycle of world ecology can be prevented by a radical shift in outlook from our present naive conception of this world as a testing ground of abstract morality to a more mature view of the universe as a comprehensive matrix of life forms.

—Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red*

ANDREA HAIRSTON, Professor of Theatre and Afro-American Studies at Smith College, has written numerous Afrofuturist plays and will be familiar to sf readers more recently through her exploration of African American, African diasporic, and Native negotiations and exchanges in the short story "Griots of the Galaxy" (2004), in the sf novel *Mindscape* excerpted here, and in her novel *Redwood and Wildfire* (2011). These narratives feature Black Seminole characters (Jay Silverfeather, Aaron Dunklebrot, and Aidan, respectively) whose experiences illustrate the intersections between Native and African ancestries. Of all three works, *Mindscape* provides the strongest invective on the sometimes unconscious imperialisms hidden in forms of western science. On the one hand, it addresses the nineteenth-century pseudoscience of polygenesis, whose critics—including W. E. B. Du Bois and Charles Eastman (Santee Sioux)—decried its placement of Native and African peoples on the barbaric end of a genetic measuring stick of civilization. On the other hand, the novel tackles a contemporary



tendency: "the eulogizing of Africa, proclaiming her demise, mourning the impossibility of any sort of African survival." Hairston explains the motivation for her concern:

Decolonizing the African (Native) spirit was a hopeless futile fantasy. I wanted to imagine something else. In the minds of those folks writing these eulogies, the colonized enter science as refugees from their magical worlds—prisoners of superstition, hostages of the colonizer, slaves of the master narrative. Modernity and post-modernity, although products of colonialism, displace the colonized to the past, to history, to people who once were whole and have now been shattered by their backwardness, their poor competitive adaptation, their lack of science and democracy, their inept economics. The colonizers have consumed the colonized and define the future. So caught up in the past, still trying to survive history, how can the colonized imagine a future? How can a future be imagined that contains the remnants of their broken spirits? This is the kind of challenge I like as a writer.

In *Mindscape*, Hairston imagines a Barrier that mysteriously appears on Earth one hundred years into our twenty-first-century future. This Barrier is a trans-organism, an emergent life-form that operates on a vast, intergalactic, interdimensional scale quite dissimilar to the Earth's interconnected and, by comparison, place-bound ecosystem. The Barrier creates separations among peoples and regions and is too dangerous to breach, providing only spontaneous seasonal openings that permit trade. Civilizations now consist largely of refugee camps residing in the Zones of New Ouagadougou (twenty-first-century capital of Burkina Faso in West Africa), Lost Santos (western portions of the United States), and Paradigma (portions of Europe, particularly Germany). Despite the difficulty of contact among the Zones, they share one common tie: the life-threatening "fire virus" that accompanied the appearance of the Barrier and now threatens worldwide pandemic.

The single antidote to this postapocalyptic fever appears to be a potion of fire ants and malanga fruit brewed up by a new cast of healers, the Vermittlers in New Ouagadougou. Since the abrupt seasonal

openings of the Barrier are very risky, globally all have come to rely upon the Vermittlers, phase-shifters of the Barrier dimensions whose griot-sculpt-singing has the power to form temporary passages connecting the Zones.

One among them, the Wovoka, has gone renegade and attracted lizard-embedded Ghost Dancers living in the *mako sica*, Lakota for "badland," surrounding the environs of Los Santos. These Ghost Dancers, who are born-again Sioux, Indians "under deep cover," are puzzlingly immune to the fire virus. Both groups, the Vermittlers and the Ghost Dancers, are singers and dancers who experience trances, speak in tongues, and wield a symbiotic relationship with the Barrier itself. The Ghost Dancers look forward to the day when the souls of the dead and loved ones will return from the Barrier. The Vermittlers resulted from scientific experiment and therefore are considered post-human and mutant by many. Both groups operate as go-betweens and negotiators and are much needed despite being treated as suspect and *murahachibu*, outcast.

This imaginative conflation of marvelous sf elements along with race theory helps *Mindscape* cross over many of our themes, including contact and apocalyptic (post)colonial allegory. Its commingling of newer fields of physics, such as organic electronics and ethnopharmacology, makes it particularly well suited for discussions of Indigenous scientific literacy. Take, for example, its treatment of the mutualist and parasitic behaviors of plants. As a central metaphor for the new existence that must emerge from (post)colonial intersections, Hairston chooses the Alora, whose flower and leaf provide a stimulant with healing power when eaten together, but poison if eaten separately. This example suggests the symbiogenesis that all figures in the novel must embrace in order to survive and informs the creation of the central character Saint Celestina, a genetic hybrid of two scientists, one Native and one West African. Symbiogenesis creates Celestina, and Celestina creates the interzonal peace treaty that begins the transforming of sovereignties in the novel.

The excerpt here replicates a letter from Lawanda Kitt to her friend and lover Honoré. A Paradigma ambassador, Kitt has been sent to Los Santos to maintain goodwill for the peacekeeping interzonal alliance. Her ethnic speech and dark looks are met with derisiveness, as she becomes increasingly devastated by what she sees as the "spirit



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The single antidote to this postapocalyptic fever appears to be a potion of fire ants and malanga fruit brewed up by a new cast of healers, the Vermittlers in New Ouagadougou. Since the abrupt seasonal

openings of the Barrier are very risky, globally all have come to rely upon the Vermittlers, phase-shifters of the Barrier dimensions whose griot-sculpt-singing has the power to form temporary passages connecting the Zones.

One among them, the Wovoka, has gone renegade and attracted lizard-embedded Ghost Dancers living in the *mako sica*, Lakota for "badland," surrounding the environs of Los Santos. These Ghost Dancers, who are born-again Sioux, Indians "under deep cover," are puzzlingly immune to the fire virus. Both groups, the Vermittlers and the Ghost Dancers, are singers and dancers who experience trances, speak in tongues, and wield a symbiotic relationship with the Barrier itself. The Ghost Dancers look forward to the day when the souls of the dead and loved ones will return from the Barrier. The Vermittlers resulted from scientific experiment and therefore are considered post-human and mutant by many. Both groups operate as go-betweens and negotiators and are much needed despite being treated as suspect and *murahachibu*, outcast.

This imaginative conflation of marvelous sf elements along with race theory helps *Mindscape* cross over many of our themes, including contact and apocalyptic (post)colonial allegory. Its commingling of newer fields of physics, such as organic electronics and ethnopharmacology, makes it particularly well suited for discussions of Indigenous scientific literacy. Take, for example, its treatment of the mutualist and parasitic behaviors of plants. As a central metaphor for the new existence that must emerge from (post)colonial intersections, Hairston chooses the Alora, whose flower and leaf provide a stimulant with healing power when eaten together, but poison if eaten separately. This example suggests the symbiogenesis that all figures in the novel must embrace in order to survive and informs the creation of the central character Saint Celestina, a genetic hybrid of two scientists, one Native and one West African. Symbiogenesis creates Celestina, and Celestina creates the interzonal peace treaty that begins the transforming of sovereignties in the novel.

The excerpt here replicates a letter from Lawanda Kitt to her friend and lover Honoré. A Paradigma ambassador, Kitt has been sent to Los Santos to maintain goodwill for the peacekeeping interzonal alliance. Her ethnic speech and dark looks are met with derisiveness, as she becomes increasingly devastated by what she sees as the "spirit



assault" on Indians and African slaves that has taken place for over five hundred years in this Zone. Encouraged by the Ghost Dancers' enigmatic messages, she reports on her visit to Paradise Healthway, the central medical locus for those stricken by Barrier fever.



Cross-Barrier Transmission/Personal (October 5, Barrier Year 115)  
From: Lawanda  
To: Sweet, Sweet Major

You are some cold dark matter! Your personal transmission be about as close to absolute zero as a human can get. Why am I all surprised? We been together a coupla years, been all insida each other, and I don't even know your name. Is that top secret too? Or one of the rules you don't be breakin'? Captain won't tell neither. So, what, all y'all just a rank in the secret service of the Prime Minister and nothin' else? Well damn, why ain't you a colonel or a general by now?

I do appreciate the diplomat info & instruc you sent and your up-front concern for my mental health. Haven't gone insane yet, but gettin' close. I had a coupla Celestina "visions" too, but it ain't nothin' some human contact wouldn't cure. I'd settle for live Electro exchange—my private channel be wide open 24-7, you just ain't tunin' in. What's the deal?

Los Santos folk got some funky personal Electros (the few who can afford it). Steada minipads & headphones, alotta of 'em wear monster half-masks. Look like bugs or aliens, and you never know what channel they be on. It's rude and they ain't got enough attention span to be spreadin' it 'cross ten Electro channels plus real life. I know you do split-channel too, Major, but there's alotta you to go around. I mean, I always know you're there, somewhere.

Never thought I'd be achin' for your face on a damn Electroscreen.

Armando got me four weeks "on location"—jitterbuggin' thru Sol, Angel City, Paramount Way, Nuevo Nada, plus a day trip to the Vegas-suck-down-site. Studios gonna wine and dine me, show me the sights, a few Entertainment adventures 'fore I hit Studio City and real negotiations. Armando and Hitchcock, the general secretary of this region who wear his lunch steada eat it, cook up this bullshit runaround to keep me outa they business. But Captain say I got these goons by the

balls. Maybe the Captain's more objective . . . cuz I feel like I dashed offa cliff and I'm runnin' on air.

Sorry. I'm procrastinatin'.

Ghost Dancers send me a second invite—over the Electro this time—to check out healthcare for Extras. Word is Ghost Dancers ain't just religious fanatics committin' ritual suicide to bring back a dead past. They hooked up with rebel Extras and fought Los Santos' ganglords even though they didn't sign the Treaty. Some gangstas is still gunnin' for the Wovoka and other born-again Sioux leaders, so Indians be under real deep cover. You can't just search 'em out on the Interweb. But they sure know how to get to me.

Anyhow, yesterday on this born-again tip, Captain and me is unofficially walkin' 'round Paradise Healthway, a Extra "hospital" in the wasteland halfway between Angel City and Sol. Our visit be so unofficial, we have to leave the resta the squad and the bio-corder at the transport fifty meters from the entrance (which I know is risky and stupid, but . . .)

Paradise Healthway useta be a holdin' station for the organ market, where folk waited 'round to get chopped up. Ain't nothin' but nasty shacks and a big red circus tent surrounded by a steel mesh quarantine wall with half-ass power net shieldin' to keep folk in and out. Under the raggedy big top, patients be stacked on triple-decker shelves like aboard a slave ship, lyin' in they own (and everybody else's) puke, pus, and shit. We gotta shuffle down the slimy aisles sideways, single file, and we be bumpin' into patients' heads and feet all the way. Space-age drug-proof viruses and bacteria be havin' a field day. Folk rottin' away in front of my eyes. That make it hard to tell what landed 'em here in the first place. (I'ma send touch-up drawin's with the official report tomorrow. Hard to mind-doodle in my enviro-suit.) Why'n't they just do these suckers quick and get it over with?

Old folks say God don't like ugly. Which God is that I wonder?

Los Santos be so corrupt, anti-Treaty folk don't even bother to front. We talkin' bodacious scammin'. Gangbangers hijack shipments of herbs and supplies. Doctors, nurses, orderlies be collectin' hefty paychecks, don't never show for they shifts. I scoped the login records—just a few guards at the gate for lockdown. Healthway's Ouagadougian medical envoy, Zumbi, is a sorry-ass novice who couldn't make it thru *Healer First Aid*, forget the *Final Lessons*, and he gotta cover ten



of these wasteland quarantine camps. That's ten thousand square kilometers and over twenty thousand sick people. Why'd the Healer Council send him? New O's settin' people up big-time. I mean, Zumbi's heart be in the right place. He claim me and the Captain is tourist thrill-seekers and walk us past the guards. He even guide us thru the Electro-maze of records, highlightin' invisible corruption. Ready to do whatever he can, but there ain't no tiger in his tank. Yellow skin gone gray, stringy hair in knots, hands shakin', one eye hangin' down slack—he look real sick hisself. Not much better than the patient he standin' over.

"Gene art backfiring," Zumbi say. "A lot of that recently. Not a pretty sight." A orderly, one of the healthier lookin' patients, dump the body in a waste bin 'fore I get a good look. "All I do is bury the dead," Zumbi complain. That's a metaphor, he mean throw the dead at the Barrier. I think sometimes he be tossin' live ones too. We walk by a little boy, look like he eat a bomb and explode. I'm starin' at him and can't move. "Fire virus," Zumbi say, steady mumblin' to hisself in old German or Swahili. You know how Healers be with metaphors and dead languages. He don't stop to check the kid out, just signal for somebody to dump him.

"This can't be happenin'. Elleni found a cure for fire virus: ants and that nasty tropical fruit, malangi?" I say, but Zumbi don't hear me. My Electro be on a private channel to the Captain.

"Malanga." The Captain push me to move on. "It doesn't seem that they have the fire virus cure here, does it?"

I'm 'bout to jump bad 'bout Healer shipments and greenhouses in the wasteland when the little boy open his big brown eyes and blink long dark lashes twice. He reach his hand out to me. I jerk back cuz I don't want him touchin' even my enviro-suit. His sallow cheeks flush a moment with color. "They said you were coming." Kid talk so quiet I gotta amplify the sound to the max. "I didn't believe them." He try to hand me a scrap of outprint. "I made you a picture." I have to force myself to snatch the slimy thang and shove it in my enviro-suit pocket. "Nothing ever happens like they say." Kid's voice ain't nothin' but air. "You're not a dream, are you?"

"I'm real, I'm here," I say, but only the Captain hear me.

Boy look down at hisself, insides splattered all over yellow underwear and naked knees. His face twist up, like he tryin' to cry or scream.

Then the spirit leave his eyes, and his face go hard. The patient-orderly stumble up, draggin' a long, thin cart behind her. She roll the kid and his beddin' up in the lime green plastic they use for Barrier bio-waste.

"Said he wanted to be buried in the Promised Land," Zumbi say. I look at him funny, so he explain—"Dancer name for the Barrier. I try to grant last wishes. Everybody wants the Promised Land now."

Kid don't weigh nothin'. Orderly toss him on top the cart and stumble off.

I got on my high-tech suit & helmet with the vacuum seal; ventilator runnin' at max s'posed to keep me cool, collected, and germ-free, and still I'm gettin' sick all over myself. Everybody moanin', groanin', and gaggin'. Me too. How can people do each other like this? I gotta get outa this funky hellhole posthaste.

Captain grab my arm and say, "Nothing we could have done for him."

I switch my Electro to public speaker and make up a big lie for slack-eyed Zumbi, like I'ma meet up with hotshots and talk Treaty talk, try to do somethin' 'bout this health crisis mess. I break bad for a second, almost chokin' up with tears. "No way am I goin' just grin, shuffle alotta Electro outprint, and let folk croak in they own shit, when we got cures! No fuckin' way!" Now why I say alla that?

These terminally sick people hear me BSin' and think I'm a acupuncture ace workin' Chi "vital essence" like Elleni, come to replace the dip-dip, slack-eyed novice who be one step from the grave hisself. These terminals *believe* I'ma channel Chi and make 'em well with my bare hands. If they can just get me to touch they naked skin, spit down they throats, or stick acupuncture needles in they skulls, they won't have to suffer and die. Maybe they even live forever. Gangstas believe any ole no-sense crap. Proof ain't a issue at all. Plus they can't tell a ethnic throwback from a shaman/*Vermittler*. False hope wash over 'em like a flash flood. Alluva sudden I got this horde of half-dead, crippled-up folk chasin' me down narrow aisles in a circus tent. Woulduv been funny 'cept we slip-pin' and slidin' thru bodily fluids and stumblin' 'round patients that ain't exactly mobile. Zumbi try to restrain 'em, but the mob beat him back and keep on comin'. You'd think sick folk'd be kinda slow too, but that ain't necessarily so. Runnin' as fast as we can, we knock over the pitiful medical equipment Zumbi done scrounged up and step on folk who don't even scream.



Finally we bust out the tent into the open and head for the gate. A coupla gangsta guards watch the show from a catwalk along the quarantine wall and crack up. Like we antique slapstick Entertainment, Whetstone Cops or somethin'. Please. Captain turn and shoot a volley over the sick folk's heads. Mob don't stop but a second or two, then they get a surge of adrenaline and pick up speed. Crutches, splints, and filthy, ole-timey bandages flappin' in the wind—I ain't seen no recon-skin. It's a ghastly sight: me and the Captain chargin' thru the wasteland in frontuva Day of the Dead parade. Gangsta at the quarantine gate think this the funniest joke he done ever seen. We ten meters away, and he crackin' up, closin' the gate on us, and chargin' up the power nets. I keep on runnin' cuz I don't believe any of this shit really be happenin'. Captain runnin' right beside me, but with a plan. Gangstas be underestimin' your dream team, Major. Captain deploy one of your fancy scramblers and fuck up gate man's electromagnetism. He don't know what hit him. Power net shieldin' fizzle, gate swing open, automatic weapons drop offline. We run by the creep and don't explain shit.

"Can't be a power-out!" He mumblin' and fumblin' all over hisself, talkin' 'bout goddamned witchdoctors, like we zapped his retarded ass with magic! He don't notice the horde of livin' dead comin' right at him. Captain get our transport up and runnin' with the remote and be whisperin' commands to the home squad when we hear weapons explode behind us. Captain shove me toward the transport and swing 'round, weapons armed, ready to fight and die for me. That trip me right out.

But ain't nobody comin' at us! The crazy sick folk who breached the quarantine perimeter be trashin' the gatehouse. Three gangsta guards is up on the catwalk usin' personal weapons to shoot 'em down. A fourth guard be wavin' his weapon and screechin' at 'em to go back. I'm hangin' at our transport power nets, paralyzed. I scope the fourth guard jump down into the mob. He have to shoot a few but then they snap to and start listenin' to him. Folk stagger and fall back toward the gate. Gangstas on the catwalk steady, shootin' 'em down like it's Electro-spiel even after the Extras be inside the quarantine wall! Fourth guard curse out his trigger-happy cohorts while he herdin' Extras into the big tent and shacks, bullets zingin' by his helmet, folk droppin' all 'round him. Compu-grid come back online and gate swing

shut. Three gangstas on the wall still shootin'. Now they got lasers too, and Extras bust out in flames. I wonder if the fourth guard on the ground goin' make it. Mob startin' to trample itself.

More ugly, and God don't do nothin'.

Captain hustle me inside the transport, say it's not good to watch atrocity, 'specially when you can't do nothin'. I'm beyond worthless at this point, fallin' all over myself. My mind's on the run. I don't wanna think or feel anythin'. Somehow the Captain get us both sterilized and outa that wasteland in less than three minutes.

"I'm getting too old for this crap." She shiver. "Way too old."

I stare at her, grateful for somethin' to do sides relive the freak show. In all this time, don't know that I ever *really* look at her before. Just kinda takin' her for granted, like a invisible force at my back. Who look at the wind? You just watch what it do. So I stare at her good now. Captain got a short cap of silky white hair, dark velvet skin, not one wrinkle, and muscles that look industrial strength like yours, Major. Her ancestors been 'round the world to make that face or at least all over the Pacific. She the kinda lady you draw walkin' on water and boxin' with God. I gotta smile cuz for a second I feel like me and her can turn this mess around. "Too old? For what?" I ask.

"Ghost Dancers, anybody could have set us up back there."

"Naw, Ghost Dancers be hookin' us up with the truth, tryin' to open our eyes."

"That's politics. I'm security. I don't trust anybody. I know better than to just walk into a situation like that."

I try to get her to say more, but she don't talk the whole trip back to Angel City. She already say enuf for me to know the Day of the Dead parade really mess her up—comin' face to face with the Evil Empire, you know what I'm sayin'?

Nobody back home would believe this, like a refugee camp in hell. Before the Treaty, Los Santos thugs be workin' terminal Extras to death on action-adventure and snuff Entertainment, or be marchin' em into the Barrier. Now they marchin' em into Paradise Healthway, which definitely ain't my idea of the promised land, more like middle passage to the grave. The Treaty is a bust! What the hell good is all that cyber-static declarin' no more Death Percent or gang rapes? All the Treaty really mean is unrestricted junk trade and alotta thrill seekers on the loose. Celestina must be squirming in her grave.



I ain't tell Jenassi diddly squat 'bout Paradise. He'd wanna get a payoff, not do a shakedown. Him and most thug leaders in Los Santos be livin' very high drama. It's like I'm stuck in a bad Entertainment. Nothin' seem real. Cartoon characters, Electro-spiel victims, surreal shit. I keep wonderin' where are the real people at? Guess I'm worryin' 'bout the kinda character I'm playin' too. I'm so over my head it ain't funny.

What am I s'posed to do with alla this, Major?

Some big shot's throwin' a gala for us tonight, to make out like he ain't anti-Treaty. Fireworks got me jumpin' out my skin already. Jenassi be the guest of honor. He want me to dress up and slink in there on his arm. Afterward everybody goin' party back at Jenassi's place. He don't never wanna be seen in public with me, so what's up with that? Captain got me mad-dog suspicious. And I'm still pissed at you, but mostly just missin' your chocolate kisses and whirlwind hugs. I wanna curl up insida you, like in the eye of a storm and let the resta the world rush on by. Ain't that pathetic? I just wish I knew how this story was goin' go down. Course, maybe it's better not to know. The ole folks say—a coward, he die a million times, a brave man only once.

Love you, Lawanda

## from *Land of the Golden Clouds*

ARCHIE WELLER

(1998)

My view is that the landscape, the place is dangerous—*that* to me is more of a traditional sense of environment than taking up the kind of Western romance of the environment as pristine and beautiful and a reservoir of hope and resurrection.

—Gerald Vizenor

AUSTRALIAN AUTHOR ARCHIE WELLER'S (Koori) debut novel, *The Day of the Dog* (1981), received both the Australian/Vogel Literary Award and the Western Australian Premier's Book Award in fiction before being adapted into the film *Blackfellas* (1991), which subsequently added two Australian Film Institute awards to the array of critical acclaim. He followed his initial literary success with a short-story collection, *Going Home* (1986), before turning to sf for his second novel, *Land of the Golden Clouds* (1998). Later works include the multiple-award-winning film script *Confessions of a Headhunter*, co-authored with Sally Riley (Wiradjuri). It brought Weller another Western Australian Premier's Book Award and also the Cinema Nova Award, an Australian Film Institute Award for Best Short Fiction Film, as well as the Best Short Film of 2001 Award from the Film Critics Circle of Australia. His latest effort is another short-story collection