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Jennifer Wenzel

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Petro-magic-realism: toward a political ecology of Nigerian literature

JENNIFER WENZEL

The first Nigerian novel in English to make a splash on the Anglo-American literary scene was not Chinua Achebe's landmark *Things Fall Apart* (1958), but instead Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952). Hailed by Dylan Thomas as a 'bewitching' tale in 'young English', Tutuola's novel combines the universal appeal of a quest narrative punctuated by encounters with supernatural beings such as 'Hungry-creature', 'Invisible-Pawn', and 'half-bodied baby', on the one hand, with the exotic appeal of an idiosyncratic, perhaps even primitive, prose style, on the other.¹ The journey that structures the narrative is undertaken by the eponymous protagonist, who travels to the abode of the dead—Deads' Town—in an attempt to bring an important person back to life. Unlike Orpheus, Ceres, or Gilgamesh, however, the palm-wine drinkard seeks the recovery not of a wife, child, or bosom friend, but an employee: a palm-wine tapster, whom the drinkard's father had hired to tap wine for the drinkard from a farm of 560,000 palm trees, and who falls to his death while on the job. Tutuola's unusual, yet parallel, syntax conveys the relationship between drinkard and tapster: 'I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life', the drinkard-narrator tells us, while the 'expert palm-wine tapster [. . .] had no other work more than to tap palm-wine every day'.² Together, the expert palm-wine tapster and the prolific drinkard had formed a closed circuit of production and consumption. Tutuola's neologism, *drinkard*, expresses this professionalisation of consumption in a way that neither *drinker* nor *drunkard* could. The 'work' of drinking palm wine becomes impossible without the tapster, yet the dead tapster cannot return to the land of the living to resume his labour. Embedded within Tutuola's marvellous tale, in other words, is an economic analysis of resource extraction and labour relations.

A similar dynamic appears in at least two other tapster tales from Nigeria—Ben Okri's short story 'What the Tapster Saw' and Karen King-Aribisala's 'Tale of the Palm-Wine Tapster' in her novel, *Kicking Tongues*—and my goal in this essay is to understand what such seemingly magical stories about natural resources tell us about the multi-layered relationships between Nigerian literary production and other commodity exports. Okri's 'What the Tapster Saw' depicts the superimposition of a petroleum economy over a palm economy in the Niger Delta. The equivalent of the journey to Deads' Town in this 1987 short story is the nightmarish vision of a palm-wine tapster who falls from a tree while trespassing on Delta Oil Company territory; during a

seven-day coma, he describes being surrounded by sentient, bespectacled turtles and following a snake down a borehole. In King-Aribisala's 1998 tale of a tapster, the commodity in question is Nigerian literature, both that intended for local use and that deemed export-quality. Okri's tapster 'had seen the sky and earth from many angles'.³ I want to suggest that such multi-perspectival visions can help us to understand the intricate and multivalent relationships among palm, petroleum, and publishing: what tapsters see are not merely liminal, posthumous, or subterranean visions of the 'bewitching' or the fantastic, but also networks of production, consumption, and exploitation, as they survey the Nigerian economic landscape from the treetops.

The palm-wine tapster is an agent of production within a local network of consumption, yet I argue that these fantastic texts situate the tapster on the margins of a broader export economy, whether of palm products, petroleum, or Nigerian literature itself: the palm wine tapsters see, or make visible, the mutual, if uneven, pressures of the global and the local. I am interested in how these texts' figuration of literature as one commodity among others can help us to understand the Nigerian novel's trajectory of 'boom' and 'bust' in the context of Nigeria's place in an international economy. I draw on the concerns of political ecology in order to suggest how we might historicise the signifying work that commodities do, and how literary production in Nigeria is itself constrained by cultural and material contests over natural resources. If the publishing industry, like the palm or petroleum industries, exerts different kinds of pressures within and outside Nigeria as it circulates commodities, then a concept of *petro-magic-realism* offers a way of understanding the relationships between the fantastic and material elements of these stories, linking formal, intertextual, sociological, and economic questions about literature to questions of political ecology.

The reception history of Amos Tutuola's fiction resembles an evolving allegory of resource extraction in a (neo)colonial context. When Dylan Thomas and other metropolitan reviewers celebrated *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, some early Nigerian readers objected to the Anglo-American embrace of what we might think of as Tutuola's inexpert 'tapping' of Yoruba narrative traditions (or, less generously, his unacknowledged borrowing from D O Fagunwa, whose writing had not yet been translated from Yoruba into English).⁴ Unlike the recalcitrant dead tapster in his novel, Tutuola assured his British publishers that he had plenty more stories like *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* that he could offer them. If early Nigerian critics viewed Tutuola as a poacher, illegitimately tapping for his own benefit the trees of a communal tradition, later scrutiny of Tutuola's dealings with libraries and publishers outside of Africa would posit the author as the victim, rather than the perpetrator/comprador, of plunder.

My conceit of resource extraction in tracing this reception history is informed by Chinua Achebe's argument in 'Work and Play in Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*'. In this 1977 lecture at the University of Ibadan, Achebe shifted critical attention on Tutuola from the idiosyncrasies of his language to the persistence of his concern with labour. This critical intervention might not seem as significant as Achebe's famous indictment

of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in a lecture at the University of Massachusetts two years earlier, but in both lectures Achebe identifies in the novels a moral (or, in the case of Conrad, immoral) thrust that other critics had previously overlooked. Speaking to a Nigerian audience that had been largely dismissive of Tutuola, Achebe endorses what he sees as Tutuola's argument for a balance between work and play, as opposed to the excesses of the drinkard's exploitative professionalisation of recreation ('I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life'): 'For what could be more relevant than a celebration of work today for the benefit of a generation and a people whose heroes are no longer makers of things and ideas but spectacular and insatiable consumers?'⁵ In my view, this reading opens Tutuola's work up for material, as well as moral, consideration: Achebe spoke at the height of Nigeria's oil boom, the moment in the late 1970s when, in Andrew Apter's account, 'oil replaced labor as the basis of national development, producing a deficit of value and an excess of wealth, or a paradoxical profit as loss'.⁶ This moment of excess was also, and not coincidentally, the height of Nigeria's publishing boom.⁷ (We might see more random coincidence in the fact that Nigeria 'exported' both its first barrel of oil and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958.)

Indeed, the compulsive numeracy and the repeated concern in Tutuola's novel with exchange, work, professionalism, and wages paid in pounds sterling suggests that there is more to the drinkard–tapster relationship than gluttony or servitude; the fallen tapster spends two years in apprenticeship before he qualifies as a 'full dead man'.⁸ The tapster will not or cannot return with the drinkard to resume tapping the wine that satisfied him and his fairweather friends, but he does offer the tapster a magical egg that can feed the whole world—not an insignificant gift when the tapster returns home to find his town suffering from famine. When carelessness and greed cause the egg to break, the tapster glues it back together, only to find that it now produces hordes of magical leather whips which he then sets loose on the crowds that gather demanding to be fed.

It is tempting to argue here that what Tutuola's tapster sees, in this novel from the final decade of the colonial era, is the Nigerian neo-colonial petro-future—the moment of 'spectacular and insatiable' consumption that Achebe marked a quarter-century later—particularly if we read the egg's linkage of material-plenty-amidst-scarcity with the consequent violence of the whips as a prescient figure of the magic associated with the political ecology of oil. Journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski has written about the false promise of oil, in the context of Iran: "'Oil creates the illusion of a completely changed life [. . .] The concept of oil expresses perfectly the eternal human dream of wealth achieved through lucky accident [. . .] In this sense oil is a fairy tale and every bit a lie.'"⁹ In *The Magical State*, historian Fernando Coronil analyses what he calls 'petro-magic', petroleum's false promise of wealth without work.¹⁰ Within the fantastic frame of Tutuola's novel, the promise of the magic egg is exposed as a lie in the drinkard's unapologetic slaughter of those who had become dependent on it. The disappearance of the drinkard's friends when he can no longer supply them with palm wine offers an ironic lesson in the commodity's displacement of social relations onto objects.

One can compare the excesses of the magical egg with the rationalised juju that the drinkard uses throughout the novel; running short of money for the journey, the drinkard carves a paddle and uses juju to turn himself into a canoe. He spends a month acting as a river-ferry service, thereby earning more than £56. In his study of the cultural effects of Nigeria's oil boom, Andrew Apter links what he calls a 'seeing-is-believing ontology'—the magical aspects of the oil economy noted by Coronil—to occult practices of 'money magic' in southern Nigeria, whereby human blood and body parts are illicitly transmuted into currency; oil, according to Apter, figures as blood circulating through the national body.¹¹ What is striking in Tutuola's treatment of the drinkard-qua-canoe, however, is its emphasis on labour. Whereas the magical egg from the tapster in *Deads' Town* offers an image of wealth (or at least sustenance) without work, the drinkard's use of juju to turn himself into a canoe produces the means of production, but not money itself.

The trope of oil-as-magic points toward the resonance between the dynamics of Tutuola's novel and the concerns of political ecology, which seeks to understand the 'convergences of culture, power, and political economy' that inform conflicts over 'defining, controlling, and managing nature' and natural resources.¹² A political ecology of oil, in other words, would consider relationships between its 'instrumentalities of material wealth and power' and its 'less-material effects that belong to an economy of representation and value-forms'.¹³ Yet this reading of Tutuola in terms of the political ecology of oil is, admittedly, anachronistic. Although Tutuola writes that the drinkard's wife's pursuers 'were rolling on the ground as if a thousand petrol drums were pushing along a hard road', Shell's discovery of commercially viable oil deposits in 1956 would not come until four years after the publication of the novel.¹⁴ Perhaps petroleum must be read retrospectively into *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, but the pressures of the centuries-long *international* trade in palm products must also be read into the novel. The palm economy that preceded petroleum was not only one of local palm-wine consumption, with every drinkard keeping a tapster nearby.

Indeed, in the depiction of turn-of-the-century Igboland offered in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, we read not only of the elders' concern about over-eager young tapsters tapping palm trees to death, but also of the enthusiasm of those making money once, in Achebe's words, 'palm-oil and kernel became things of great price', commodities in the colonial economy into which places like Umuofia were being drawn.¹⁵ Unlike palm wine, which spoils quickly and thus does not travel well, palm oil and palm kernel were drawn into international circuits of exchange. The European trade in palm oil and palm kernel in West Africa dates as far back as the 1480s and was worth a million pounds by 1840. Nigeria's Oil Rivers region was named for palm oil, not petroleum, and palm oil was perhaps as indispensable for nineteenth-century industry as petroleum was for twentieth-century industry: palm oil was used as an industrial lubricant, an edible oil, and in the making of soap, tin, and candles. Beyond their significance as exportable commodities, palm oil and palm kernel have been used locally for edible oil, food, and lighting, and the African oil palm can also be tapped for palm wine; the tree itself yields materials for building,

roofing, and other household uses.¹⁶ Within the riverine economy of the Oil Rivers region, jars of palm oil even functioned as currency.¹⁷

In his essay, 'Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity', geographer Michael Watts argues that petroleum links Nigeria crucially to what he calls 'twentieth century hydrocarbon capitalism'.¹⁸ Yet the same link between Nigerian resources and the global, technocapitalist cutting edge can be made between palm oil and the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, or between slaves and earlier plantation economies.¹⁹ (As I have discussed elsewhere, the rubber and mineral endowments of the Congo, including the uranium that would ultimately destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have given the purported heart of darkness a similarly indispensable role in 'European' modernity.)²⁰ Watts analyses what he calls 'petro-violence', the particular forms of violence (physical, environmental, cultural) that constitute the Nigerian oil economy; the palm trade might seem idyllic in comparison, particularly since we know that palm products replaced slaves as the chief export of the Niger Delta in the early nineteenth century's transition to 'legitimate commerce'. Yet it is worth noting that one effect of the growth of this ameliorative trade was the intensification of the internal slave trade as demand for labour increased.²¹ Nigeria's petroleum economy has literally been superimposed over (or excavated under) the palm belt of the Niger Delta: palm oil production and exports decreased after the 1950s, to the extent that Nigeria became a net importer of vegetable oil in the 1980s. Recent efforts to rebuild the palm industry have been impeded by the poor quality of trees, stunted or sterile due to the environmental degradation associated with petroleum drilling and transport.²²

The social life of *Elaeis guineensis*, the African oil palm, is a nexus of global, regional, and local trading relationships. I want to suggest that the nineteenth-century palm economy *seems* to offer in retrospect—from the perspective of petroleum—an *image* of a balance between local and international orientation that has not been possible with petroleum, given the intensities and excesses of capital, environmental impact, rents, and revenue associated with petroleum and involved in Watts' concept of petro-violence. I am interested here less in an objective comparison between the negative aspects of palm and petroleum than in the shifting webs of meaning associated with commodities in particular historical moments: is it possible that the rise of petroleum makes palm *seem* more 'local', less alienated and alienating, that petro-violence makes palm seem peaceful by comparison?²³ Andrew Apter argues, in a similar vein, that, 'As a moral economy recalled with nostalgia, the palm-oil trade and the forms of "natural value" that it invoked [...] established a profound contrast with the immoral economy of petroleum, which pumps bad money from beneath the ground, only to pollute and destroy the productive base of the economy.'²⁴ The petro-bust of the 1980s exposed the irrational exuberance of the boom years, after the fairy-tale of oil's promises had been exposed. This critique of petroleum informs Karen King-Aribisala's 1998 novel *Kicking Tongues*, which narrates a journey to the capital in Abuja by a diverse group of Nigerian citizens concerned to reclaim their country from the delusions of petro-magic—the excesses of affluence,

corruption, lingering colonial consciousness, and military rule. Each of the pilgrims to the capital offers a tale to ease the journey.

King-Aribisala's parody of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is even more problematic than this description might suggest, not only because the book ultimately sublimates its political protest by turning Nigeria's future over to a decidedly Christian evangelical God (a position King-Aribisala reiterates in interviews), but also because its 'Tale of the Palm-Wine Tapster' in turn parodies Tutuola in order to condemn the international orientation of Nigerian literary culture. (I should note briefly that King-Aribisala's parody of Tutuola's prose style is both cruel and imprecise, implying that he was far less literate than his manuscripts allow.) King-Aribisala's treatment of the tapster figure links the dynamics of the literary publishing industry to an idealised palm economy, coded in terms of the pacific nativism I alluded to above. In her tapster's tale, the tapster has a wife, who is a palm tree. The palm-tree wife provides the tapster with wine, food, and oil until she commits suicide over his predilection for foreign tree species, from which the paper is made for the books of the British literary canon. In other words, the tapster's sin is a fondness for foreign books as well as 'Nigerian Books which pander to foreign tastes', which would presumably include Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. But the tale offers a happy ending. After discovering a 'new kind of language which be not like language of foreign book' but is instead 'natural', expressing 'total Nigeria', the tapster describes the result of his reconciliation with his palm-tree wife:

We get plenty plenty pickin and too much nursery and my wife trust me now and I too happy and she enjoys Joys of Motherhood and she never feel to be Second Class Tree Citizen and in The Ditch with Double Yoke and after I being interpreting this past Season of Anomy with understanding and things definitely not Falling Apart. We all—she and myself be Heroes and road of literature which be Nigerian no longer be Famishing.

The inconsistencies of King-Aribisala's allegory of Nigerian literature in terms of what her tapster calls 'natural resourcing' are patently clear: in integrating the titles of novels by Buchi Emecheta, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Ben Okri into her tapster's tale, she offers a vision of an autonomous, vibrant Nigerian national literature, supposedly freed from the stranglehold of foreignness, but one that has, almost without exception, been written and/or published by agents located abroad. All of this is within a Chaucerian frame and published by Heinemann, which may straddle the foreign/Nigerian divide, but the editor who accepted the novel for Heinemann was an American woman in Boston.²⁵ Collapsing dynamics of production and consumption in its critique of the international pressures on Nigerian literary culture, King-Aribisala's argument suggests an analogy something like 'Achebe is to Tutuola as palm is to petroleum', in terms of the ways their books circulate in Nigeria and abroad.²⁶

Regardless of the limitations of King-Aribisala's critique, however, it allows us to think about the conjunctions of print capitalism and petro-capitalism in Nigeria. If the novel, following Benedict Anderson, offers a medium through

which the nation can be imagined, then too the political ecology of oil can reveal how ‘national imaginings [...] also depend on the very materiality of the nation as a life-sustaining habitat—on differing modalities of configuring the metabolism between society and nature’.²⁷ The nation, in other words, is not only a polity but also an ecology or lifeworld. Beyond the imagining of the *nation*, ‘nationalised petroleum produces a *state* (as the owner of the means of production) that [...] mediates the social relations by which oil is exploited [...] and [...] is simultaneously granted access to the world market’. Oil thus produces the state as an indispensable and magical mediator between international capital and markets, on the one hand, and the national’s political and natural bodies—its human and natural resources—on the other. Yet at the same time that oil yields legitimacy and ‘visibility’ to the state, its excesses ‘reveal [...] the state and the nation to be sham, decrepit, venal, and corrupt notions’.²⁸ The Nigerian novel (or a Nigerian ‘national literature’ more broadly) has functioned in a not altogether dissimilar way, both as a medium for imagining a national community and establishing international visibility, and as a site that lays bare the contradictions of Nigerian nationhood as well as the collisions between the state’s image of itself and sceptical critiques. These disjunctures are evident not only in the thematic content of literature published since the disillusionments of the 1960s, but also (and perhaps more tellingly) in regional and class differences in literacy and readership, language, and genre, as well as in the troubled state of Nigerian publishing and its fraught relationship to presses and readerships abroad.²⁹ In the case of King-Aribisala’s text, at least, the national literature that she identifies as the mode and product of reunion between the tapster and his palm-tree wife is conditioned by the very international pressures that spurred the rift to begin with.

The link between literature and oil, or print capitalism and petro-capitalism, is not merely one of analogy, however. To what extent is Nigerian literature a commodity whose production and consumption are linked directly to more tangible substances like palm and petroleum?³⁰ In suggesting the possibilities for a political ecology of Nigerian literature, I am concerned not only with what happens when we think about literature *as if* it were a commodifiable resource like palm or petroleum, but also with the multivalent relationships between literary production and conflicts involving natural resources. Written in London in 1987, in the midst of the Nigerian oil bust, Ben Okri’s story ‘What the Tapster Saw’ confronts head-on the intersections of the local and the global that cannot be mapped simply onto palm and petroleum. The story offers a phantasmagoric glimpse into a degraded, privatised landscape where the ‘signboards of the world were getting bigger’; one signboard reads, ‘trespassers will be *persecuted*’.³¹ The sun seems never to set or rise as the earth is bathed in the glow of natural gas flares, ‘roseate flames [that] burned everywhere without consuming anything’. A talking snake glistens with the beautiful and deadly iridescence of oil spilled on water. In this landscape where boreholes crowd out palm trees, a palm-wine tapster carries on plying his trade despite the ominous signboards; when he falls from one of a ‘strange cluster of palm trees’, he spends seven days in a

hallucinatory liminal state, persecuted by unseen assailants vaguely associated with the oil company employees trying unsuccessfully to 'level the forest' with the help of witch-doctors and explosives 'left over from the last war'. The Delta Oil Company brings in the witch-doctors to 'drive away the spirits from the forest' and to dry out its climate, while farmers who were living amidst unexploded bombs 'as if the original war was over were blown up as they struggled with their poverty'.³²

Juxtapositions of bombs and bullets, coups and executions, with herbalists and witch-doctors, talking animals and masquerades, in this fictional narrative about the collision of palm and petroleum, yield what I call *petro-magic-realism*, a literary mode that combines the transmogrifying creatures and liminal space of the forest in Yoruba narrative tradition with the monstrous-but-mundane violence of oil exploration and extraction, the state violence that supports it, and the environmental degradation that it causes. The story demonstrates one way of negotiating the pressure of petroleum on literary representation: Okri situates the magical and violent aspects of petro-modernity within an older fantastic tradition. His tapster is not so much a direct descendant of Tutuola's character as a distant cousin within a broader genealogy that the narrator acknowledges by referring to 'mythical figures' that include 'the famous blacksmith' and the 'notorious tortoise'.³³ Direct allusion invokes not Tutuola but rather D O Fagunwa, whose story at the beginning of *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* about the hero's father shooting an antelope who turns out to be his wife is echoed in a fragmentary tale told with 'curious irrelevance' at the opening of Okri's story.³⁴

Ben Okri is the Anglophone African author most commonly mentioned in critical discussions of magical realism as a global literary phenomenon; Tutuola and Fagunwa are taken to be precursors of West African magical realism who, nonetheless, lack cosmopolitan, ironic distance from the 'traditional' or 'indigenous' materials that tend to be identified as a primary source of the magic in magical realism.³⁵ Magical realist texts, unlike petroleum, are a renewable resource, but both are commodity exports of the global south in high demand in the northern hemisphere; indeed, the introduction to an important critical anthology on magical realism playfully celebrates magical realism as an 'international commodity' that might be seen as a 'return on capitalism's hegemonic investment in its colonies [...] now achieving a compensatory extension of its market worldwide'.³⁶ While *petro-magic-realism* might not account adequately for Okri's entire *oeuvre*, what I find productive in the term is its potential to complicate and historicise the empty globalism of the label *magical realism*, in which the magical might be anything unfamiliar to a European or American reader. In his landmark essay, 'Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse', Stephen Slemon acknowledges that magical realism 'threatens to become a monumentalizing category' by offering a 'single locus upon which the massive problem of *difference* in literary expression can be managed into recognizable meaning in one swift pass', thereby 'justifying an ignorance of the local histories behind specific textual practices'.³⁷ International demand for magical realist texts distorts local literary cultures in the ways that Karen King-Aribisala and her

character the palm-tree wife deplore. The problem with the magic in magical realism is broader than the sanctioned ignorance of metropolitan readers, however: the relationship between realism and magic tends to be read as a binary opposition between the West and the rest, between a singular (European) modernity and multifarious worldviews variously described as pre-modern, pre-scientific, pre-Enlightenment, non-Western, traditional, or indigenous. In his metacritique of magical realism, Michael Valdez Moses notes that, ‘if the paternity of the magical realist novel is everywhere the same’ (in the European realist novel and its attendant ideology), then ‘in each locale where the magical realist novel is born, its mother appears to be different, distinct, and as it were, native to the region’.³⁸ The cumulative effect of such strangely binarist readings of magical realism—in which one term is always the same, the other always different—is the consolidation of the West as a single entity confronting innumerable local traditions. This reification of the West seriously undermines claims for magical realism’s subversive, anti-hegemonic, or decolonising thrust.

In troping on the unsatisfactory term *magical realism*, I am arguing that the rubric *petro-magic-realism* reveals how Okri imagines the pressures of a particular political ecology within a particular literary idiom. If petro-magic offers the illusion of wealth without work, Okri’s petro-magic-realism paradoxically pierces such illusions, grounding its vision in a recognisably devastated, if also recognisably fantastic, landscape. The conjunction of magical realism and petro-magic represents a synthesis of the epistemological (or aesthetic) and ontological poles that derive from the two seminal statements in the theorisation of the literary mode. Okri’s deployment of the Yoruba fantastic tradition corresponds to Franz Roh’s 1925 discussion of Post-Expressionist European painting, in which he coined the term ‘*magischer Realismus*’—magic realism—to describe an aesthetic strategy, a mode of representation. The attention in Okri’s story to the devastating material effects of petro-magic, on the other hand, approximates Alejo Carpentier’s 1949 articulation of ‘*lo real maravilloso americano*’—the American marvellous real—an ontology or state of being shaped by the complex history and distinctive landscape of the Americas.³⁹

The conjunction of the aesthetic and the ontological in Okri’s petro-magic-realism has important ideological and temporal implications. His tale of the palm-wine tapster’s nightmarish experience in Delta Oil Company territory thematises the conflict between established and emergent modes of production (here between artisanal palm-wine tapping and capital-intensive petroleum drilling) that Fredric Jameson posits as constitutive of magical realism.⁴⁰ Yet because ‘What the Tapster Saw’ emphasises the phantasmagoric aspects of petroleum extraction, the marvellous reality represented in this narrative has a decidedly modern source, even if it is described in a fantastic idiom with a venerable literary history. Petro-magic is in no way a vestige of tradition or pre-capitalism. (Similarly, Okri’s novel *The Famished Road* portrays the road not as a reductive symbol of colonial modernity opposed to the pre-colonial ‘bush’, but rather as a dynamic, palimpsestic site of both internal and external conflict.⁴¹) The modernity of Okri’s

petro-magic-realism obstructs the consumption of magical realist texts as nostalgic encounters with an exotic yet vanishing world. As Moses points out, the production and consumption of magical realist texts by 'those *who would like to believe* in the marvelous' but who do not actually believe involves a tacit assumption that a disenchanted 'modern world [...] is the only one with a historical future'.⁴² Okri's 'What the Tapster Saw' implicates metropolitan consumers of magical realism and petroleum products not in modernisation's inevitable disenchantment of vestigial tradition, but rather in petro-modernity's phantasmagoric ravagements of societies and lifeworlds. In this sense, petro-magic is the future.

Okri's depiction of Delta Oil Company territory in terms of a Yoruba magical forest also points toward the future in a rather different way. Beyond its thematic concern with collusion between the Nigerian state and private petroleum enterprise, 'What the Tapster Saw' illuminates the conjunction of petroleum and publishing within national imagining. As Ato Quayson points out, Okri's deployment of Yoruba narrative and cosmological traditions is significant not least because Okri is not Yoruba himself (his parents were Urhobo). Quayson attributes Okri's engagement with Yoruba traditions to the 'development of a broadly Nigerian consciousness', and he sees in Okri's work the potential for a 'literary tradition in Nigerian writing as the strategic filiation with a specific discursive field irrespective of ethnic identity'.⁴³ Thus Okri's work points toward the possibility of a Nigerian national literature conceived not exogenously, in opposition to the 'foreign', as in King-Aribisala (who is, however, ironically, herself a native of Guyana now resident in Nigeria), but in terms of affiliation across ethnic and regional divisions within the nation. Even at the level of theme, Okri's juxtaposition of a liminal tapster/tortoise narrative with the environmental and political violence of petroleum extraction by the 'Delta Oil Company' implicitly yokes the site-specific suffering of communities directly affected by oil to a broader imaginary. Indeed, Andrew Apter argues that although Ken Saro-Wiwa's attempt to secure environmental and economic justice for the Ogoni people was seen for decades as a local, ethnic struggle, the Ogoni movement against 'the predations of the military-petroleum complex' had taken on national significance by the time of his execution in November 1995: 'the plight of the Ogoni people came to represent the contradictions of oil capitalism in Nigeria', since the 'vampirism' of the petro-state extracted wealth and welfare from the national polity as a whole.⁴⁴

Ken Saro-Wiwa's status—as a writer (and publisher) of fiction and television series, as an activist for the Ogoni people, and, after his death in 1995, as a symbol of, if not a martyr to, the constitutive element of petro-violence in the Nigerian state—offers a spectacular example of the intersections among literary publishing, petroleum extraction, and the production of the Nigerian nation-state.⁴⁵ These issues remain particularly salient for institutions that would foster literary production in Nigeria. The Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) held its Annual Convention in early November 2001 in Port Harcourt, a setting fraught with echoes of Saro-Wiwa's execution exactly six years earlier. Moreover, the convention's theme was

'Literature and the Environment', which elicited a presentation by Nnimmo Bassey, executive director of the NGO Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth. Bassey exhorted the ANA to become more environmentally conscious and to 'strengthen the voice of impoverished communities, by facilitating exposure of the culpability of the TNCs and local big business'. Invoking the memory of Saro-Wiwa, Bassey condemned the sponsorship of the Rivers State branch of the ANA by oil companies Shell and Elf; to accept such 'blood money', he concluded, 'would be to murder Ken AGAIN'.⁴⁶

Bassey's presentation did not mention the bloody ironies of ANA annual prizes, including the ANA/Cadbury award and the ANA/Chevron award for environmental writing.⁴⁷ Yet perhaps the most egregious thing about the Chevron prize is its size—less than \$500, emblematic of the broader discrepancy between oil company profits tracked in reports to shareholders and paltry investments to compensate affected communities.⁴⁸ What is one to make, then, of the recent endowment of a \$20,000 annual Nigerian Prize for Literature, sponsored by Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG)? This prize was to be awarded for the first time on 9 October 2004, in part to mark the anniversary of the company's first natural gas export. The company's managing director, Andrew Jamieson, noted his concern that Nigeria's fabled literary status on the continent is slipping, given declining rates of literacy, struggling libraries, and gutted educational systems.⁴⁹ One of the most interesting things about this prize, then, is that only writers who have been resident in Nigeria for the past three years can compete—an acknowledgement of the difficulties that confront writers working in Nigeria. Ben Okri's petro-magic-realism offers a harrowing vision, but it was written in London and does not emerge directly out of the kind of conditions that the Nigerian Prize for Literature aims to recognise and palliate. In the same month that this prize was announced, a press release announced the foundation of the African Writers Endowment and a donation by Chinua Achebe of \$75,000. The fund, which is administered in the United States, aims to recognise the 'formidable difficulty and barriers African writers *world-wide* face in getting their works published and in having *world* attention paid to those works, commercially and critically', and hopes to support 'the telling of the African story by Africans [including those of the diaspora], in their own voices'.⁵⁰

The geographic and economic cartographies of these two recent investments in African literature confound global/local distinctions; one wonders which would be judged more approvingly in King-Aribisala's tapster's tale. Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas is a joint venture between the Nigerian government (represented by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) and multinational oil companies Shell, Elf, and Agip. Its literature prize puts real money—perhaps enough money not to be 'blood money'—behind a concern for living conditions in its host country. Yet two things are worth keeping in mind while considering the implications of this 'real money'. First, Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas made headlines in early 2004 not only for announcing the endowment of its \$20,000 literature prize, but also for a \$180 million bribery scandal relating to construction contracts on its plants; the bribes are alleged to have been paid between 1995 and 2002 to the

Nigerian government by a consortium of companies of which Halliburton is a member.⁵¹ Second, the Nigerian Prize for Literature itself has turned out to be somewhat illusory.

After a shortlist of finalists for the prize was released for the inaugural competition, NLNG sponsored a reading tour in September 2004 with stops in Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, and Abuja, in anticipation of the announcement of the winner of the Nigerian Prize for Literature. At the 9 October 2004 award ceremony, the shortlist was further winnowed to three finalists, Bina Nengi-Ilagha, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, and Omo Uwaifo. Then Alhaji Abubakar Gimba, former president of the Association of Nigerian Authors, announced that the judging panel had decided that no prize would be awarded. Of the nearly 100 entries, none rose to a standard worthy of the Nigerian Prize for Literature. Instead, the three finalists would each receive a \$3000 prize; after a spontaneous intervention from audience member and Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka, these consolation prizes were increased to \$5000 each.⁵²

The true winner of the 2004 competition, according to Gimba, was 'the integrity of Nigerian literature'; to award the prize to one of the entries would be to degrade 'the standard Nigerian literature had attained over the years'. The report released by the judging panel found that,

recourse to self-publication short-circuits the traditional publishing processes and this gives rise to the numerous stylistic and grammatical flaws just observed. It is further observed that many writers have not acquired the necessary education or undergone proper apprenticeship and training required for the high level performance expected from winning entries at this level.⁵³

This assessment reprises the early reception of Tutuola, whose 'young English' was judged by Nigerian readers to be an embarrassment. When he announced the endowment of the prize, NLNG managing director Andrew Jamieson indicated that he aimed to intervene in the decline in educational opportunities and the degradation of institutions associated with literature and literacy, which threatened to erode the mid-twentieth-century achievements of Nigerian literature; yet these same factors were cited in the panel's decision *not* to make an award.

By excluding Nigerian authors resident abroad, even those whose books have been published in Nigeria, the multinational enterprise NLNG not only assumed the authority to effect the formation of a national literary canon within a narrow definition of 'nation'; it also, by withholding the prize, signalled that Nigeria has no living canon worth forming. This decision represents a lost opportunity to bring international attention to a new generation of Nigerian writers, according to Mcphilips Nwachukwu: 'very many international publishers have long assumed that no writing was going on in Nigeria after Achebe and Soyinka'. (The results of the 2005 Nigerian Prize for Literature competition likely confirmed such an impression, as the prize was split evenly between poets Gabriel Okara and Ezenwa Ohaeto. Okara, now 85 years old, is best known for his poem 'Piano and Drums', published in 1978. Ohaeto, who wrote his master's thesis on Okara, died of

cancer at the age of 47 only a month after the prize was announced.⁵⁴) Nwachukwu puts his finger on the national/international ironies of the intersection of literature, the petro-state, and its multinational patrons in the Nigerian Prize for Literature: while the prize panel has decided to keep the ‘exclusionary clause’ that limits eligibility to writers resident in Nigeria, the prize is paid in US dollars, rather than in naira.⁵⁵ Nwachukwu further observes that with a \$20,000 prize (which had yet to actually be awarded at the time he wrote), NLNG seems to have bought the silence of Nigeria’s intellectuals: none had taken a stand on the Halliburton scandal. Andrew Jamieson, in the meantime, moved on to a position as vice president of Shell Global Solutions, based in The Hague.⁵⁶

Is the Nigerian Prize for Literature mere window dressing for petro-violence—‘lit-washing’, rather than greenwashing—from the perspective of the columns of zeros in the company’s balance sheets?⁵⁷ Probably. Is \$20,000 annually a substantial investment in literature, in a country where literary patronage is nearly nonexistent? Absolutely. Yet contradictions remain. The dual award of the 2005 Nigerian Prize for Literature elicited a passionate response from activist and writer Dagga Tolar:

How and why must anyone think that literature’s fortune would fare any better, when even oil, the freest of nature’s abundant gifts to the Nigerian state is unrefineable on her own very soil? [...] Nigeria, even with all its oil, does not dictate the selling terms of oil to its own people or to the international consumers. It is those with capital that do, and those at the NLNG clearly have the capital to dictate who and what they must spend their money on.

Even as he made an analogy between literature and oil as national, natural resources under the command of international capital, Tolar resisted the implication that literature be understood simply as a commodity like any other: ‘the logic of profit making applied to gas production and its consumption cannot in any way apply to literature’.⁵⁸ Yet it is that logic of profit making applied to the production and consumption of gas and oil that not only has meant that ordinary Nigerians tend not to consume or benefit from Nigerian oil and natural gas, but also has decimated the institutions that would foster a vibrant literary culture in Nigeria. To wish away the imbrication of literature within local and global economies, as Dagga Tolar seems to do, is no less dangerous than to celebrate NLNG’s patronage uncritically. What tapsters see, and make visible for us, are these kinds of contradictions, born of the intersections of commodities like palm, petroleum, and published writing. They offer a glimpse of what a political ecology of Nigerian literature might look like, a glimpse of the realities created and obscured by petro-magic.

Notes

¹ In Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1982.

² Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1984, p 7.

- ³ Ben Okri, 'What the Tapster Saw', *Stars of the New Curfew*, New York: Penguin, 1988, pp 183–194, p 190.
- ⁴ Early Nigerian responses to Tutuola are available in Lindfors, *Critical Perspectives*.
- ⁵ See Achebe's 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*, New York: Anchor, 1990, pp 100–112, p 112.
- ⁶ Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p 201.
- ⁷ Wendy Griswold offers statistics on the Nigerian novel boom, which reveal a steady increase through the 1970s, wild fluctuation from 1979 to 1988, and a subsequent crash (Wendy Griswold, *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp 37–38).
- ⁸ Tutuola, *Palm-Wine Drinkard*, p 100.
- ⁹ Quoted in Michael Watts, 'Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity', in Nancy L Peluso and Michael Watts (eds), *Violent Environments*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp 189–212, p 203.
- ¹⁰ See especially the introduction in Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. The petroleum industry itself is not immune to the discourse of petro-magic. A Halliburton subsidiary called Magic Earth is a 3-d seismic imaging company which sells and administers a software application called GeoProbe which helps to visualise and interpret oil deposits. See <http://www.magicearth.com>. In the Nigerian context, Andrew Apter describes an exhibit called 'Magic Barrel' at a 1975 national oil seminar: from the Magic Barrel of oil emerged the 'countless commodities generated by oil' (*The Pan-African Nation*, p 24).
- ¹¹ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, pp 14, 50, 249–255.
- ¹² Nancy L Peluso and Michael Watts, 'Violent Environments', in Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments*, pp 3–38, p 25.
- ¹³ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, pp 73, 275.
- ¹⁴ Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, p 22.
- ¹⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), New York: Anchor, 1994, p 178.
- ¹⁶ Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp 1–3.
- ¹⁷ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, p 273.
- ¹⁸ Watts, 'Petro-Violence', p 189.
- ¹⁹ The character Imaro in Femi Osofisan's play *The Oriki of a Grasshopper* offers an eloquent catalogue of the 'richest resources of our land' (slaves, palm and other agricultural products, minerals, and oil) sent 'always, always into the white ships' (*The Oriki of Grasshopper and Other Plays*, Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1995, pp 13–14).
- ²⁰ See 'Remembering the Past's Future: Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World', *Cultural Critique* 62, Winter 2006, pp 1–29. Fernando Coronil's attention to what he calls the 'international division of nature' is also concerned to uncover the global processes by which a purportedly European capitalist modernity is produced only through the exploitation of natural resources found outside of Europe (*The Magical State*, p 29).
- ²¹ For recent considerations of the intersections between the slave and palm trades, see Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa*, and Robin Law (ed.), *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate Commerce': The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- ²² See Albert Aweto, 'Outline Geography of Urhoboland', 31 January 2002, <http://www.waado.org/Geography/UrhoboGeography-Aweto.htm>. There is some possibility, however, for palm/petroleum synergy, as the (French) Bureau for the Development of Research on Tropical Perennial Oil Crops reports some success in using palm oil as a 'replacement for diesel oil to make drilling mud for boreholes'. See J M Noël, 'Products and By-Products', *BUROTROP Bulletin* 19, February 2003, <http://www.burotrop.org/bulletin/19/products.pdf>
- ²³ My point here is about the ways in which commodities are imagined in time, rather than about the history of the palm oil trade. Susan Martin's *Palm Oil and Protest: An Economic History of the Ngwa Region, South-Eastern Nigeria, 1800–1980* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) offers an analysis of the gendered impacts of price fluctuations and the imposition of colonial rule in late nineteenth-century southeastern Nigeria, which she links to the Igbo Women's War in 1929.
- ²⁴ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, p 273. Although its protagonist is from the (Ghanaian) Gold Coast rather than the Niger Delta, Caryl Phillips' narrative of the nineteenth-century British–West African palm oil trade in *The Atlantic Sound* offers a corrective to this nostalgic view. Echoes of the slave trade abound in Phillips' fictionalised historical narrative, in which John Ocansey travels to Liverpool in 1881

- in order to recover £2678 owed to his father for palm oil remitted to a British trading agent; the agent was supposed to have used the proceeds from the palm oil to commission a steamship for Ocansey père to more efficiently conduct interior trade, but the ship was never built (Caryl Phillips, *The Atlantic Sound*, New York: Vintage, 2001).
- ²⁵ Karen King-Aribisala, *Kicking Tongues*, Oxford and Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998, pp 54, 57, 61, 60.
- ²⁶ For statistical data on the African novels taught most frequently in literature courses in Africa, see Bernth Lindfors, 'The Teaching of African Literature at Anglophone African Universities: An Instructive Canon' and 'Big Shots and Little Shots of the Canon', in *Long Drums and Canons*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1995, pp 45–59 and 61–75. Lindfors updates these analyses in 'Who Counts? De-ciphering the Canon', in Dubem Okafor (ed.), *Meditations on African Literature*, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001, pp 45–54.
- ²⁷ Coronil, *The Magical State*, p 8.
- ²⁸ Watts, 'Petro-Violence', pp 204 and 208; emphasis added.
- ²⁹ In a 1975 essay, 'Are there any National Literatures in Sub-saharan Black Africa Yet?', Bernth Lindfors nominated Nigeria and South Africa as most likely candidates for a national literature (*English in Africa* 2(2), 1975, pp 1–9). For a recent discussion of the vexed notion of a Nigerian national literature, see Joanna Sullivan, 'The Question of a National Literature for Nigeria', *Research in African Literatures* 32(3), 2001, pp 71–85.
- ³⁰ In 'The Beatification of Ken Saro-Wiwa', Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi considers Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel/Prison Stories* in terms of the politics of Nigerian literary production in an international context. Teasing out the ways in which the text itself is enmeshed in the dynamics which it critiques, Osinubi examines Habila's treatments of the 'commodification and representation of suffering for literary profit', where, in Habila's words, 'the quickest way to make it as a poet' in Nigeria is to get arrested (unpublished manuscript, pp 16–17).
- ³¹ Okri, 'What the Tapster Saw', pp 187, 185; emphasis added.
- ³² Okri, 'What the Tapster Saw', pp 186, 189, 188. Okri's tapster's tale comes to mind in a field report circulated by the Nigerian NGO Environmental Rights Action in early 2000, which opens with the testimony of John Erakpoke, a palm-wine tapper whose business disintegrated after a pipeline rupture in December 1999 in Adeje. Erakpoke laments, 'Nobody wants to drink palm wine again, they say it is poisoned.' The report does not specify whether he had joined those who had taken to collecting and selling the spilled premium motor spirit after it ruined their farms. See Victor Raphael, 'ERA Field Report #51: Spewing Premium Motor Spirit from NNPC Pipelines around Adeje', 11 January 2000, Benin City, Nigeria: Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, http://www.waado.org/Environment/OilSpills/OilSpills_Urhobo/Adeje.html
- ³³ Okri, 'What the Tapster Saw', p 193.
- ³⁴ Okri, 'What the Tapster Saw', pp 183–184. See D O Fagunwa, *Forest of a Thousand Demons*, Wole Soyinka (trans.), New York: Random House, 1982, pp 12–13.
- ³⁵ See, for example, Wendy B Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004; and Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- ³⁶ Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B Faris, 'Introduction', in Zamora and Faris (eds), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995, pp 1–11, p 2.
- ³⁷ Stephen Slemmon, 'Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse', in Zamora and Faris, *Magical Realism*, pp 407–426, pp 409, 422.
- ³⁸ Michael Valdez Moses, 'Magical Realism at World's End', *Literary Imagination* 3(1), 2001, pp 105–137, pp 115, 110.
- ³⁹ See Franz Roh, 'Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism', and Alejo Carpentier, 'On the Marvelous Real in America', in Zamora and Faris, *Magical Realism*, pp 15–31 and pp 75–88.
- ⁴⁰ Fredric Jameson, 'On Magical Realism in Film', *Critical Inquiry* 12(2), 1986, pp 301–325, p 311.
- ⁴¹ Brenda Cooper makes this point in her discussion of *The Famished Road* (Cooper, *Magical Realism*, pp 68–80).
- ⁴² Moses, 'Magical Realism', p 106.
- ⁴³ Ato Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, Oxford and Bloomington: James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1997, pp 101–102.
- ⁴⁴ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, pp 261, 259, 269.
- ⁴⁵ Saro-Wiwa's 1987 short story, 'Africa Kills Her Sun', offers an uncanny yet ambiguous variant on the intersections between literary realism and petro-violence: the story takes the form of a letter written by a prisoner on the night before his public execution. Ken Saro-Wiwa, 'Africa Kills Her Sun', in C D Larson

- (ed.), *Under African Skies: Modern African Stories*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp 210–221.
- ⁴⁶ Nnimmo Bassey, 'The Land is Dying: Presentation by the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria at the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) 2001 Annual Convention', 2 November 2001, <http://www.waado.org/Environment/PetrolPollution/TheLandIsDying.html>. By 'TNCs', Bassey means transnational corporations.
- ⁴⁷ My essay does not include consideration of the cocoa economy. Karen King-Aribisala's 'Tale of the Palm-Wine Tapster' does, however, include some attention to foreign extraction of cocoa pods, which is interesting given its treatment of palm as a 'native' resource.
- ⁴⁸ Watts cites a series of statistics about the ratio of profits-to-investments: Shell has made \$200 million *annually* in profits from Nigeria for forty years and has invested \$2 million *total* during that time, building one road and awarding almost 100 scholarships ('Petro-Violence', p 198). Sandra T Barnes tracks a new 'strategic philanthropy' among transnational corporations in West Africa: 'performance-based' community development projects that make the community accountable to the corporation, rather than the other way around ('Global Flows: Terror, Oil and Strategic Philanthropy', *Review of African Political Economy* 104/5, 2005, pp 235–252, pp 244–245).
- ⁴⁹ McPhillips Nwachukwu, 'The LNG Prize for Literature: Hopes and Impediments . . .', *Vanguard*, 29 February 2004, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/features/fe1029022004.html>
- ⁵⁰ U O Ugorji and C A Ejueyitchie, 'Press Release: Introducing the African Writers Endowment, Inc. (AWE)', *The Nigerian Village Square*, <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare1.com/PR/AWE.html>; emphasis added.
- ⁵¹ H Igbikiowubo, 'Alleged \$180m Scam: Creditors under Pressure to Ditch NLNG Trains 4&5', *Vanguard*, 4 April 2004, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/cover/f305042004.html>. Kellogg, Brown, and Root, the engineering and construction subsidiary of energy services company Halliburton, is a member of the TSKJ consortium. US Vice President Dick Cheney has ties to Halliburton, which has also been accused of war profiteering in Iraq.
- ⁵² Azuka Ogujiuba, 'NLNG Prize for Literature Gathers Momentum', *This Day Online*, 4 September 2004, <http://www.thisdayonline.com/archive/2004/09/04/20040904sac02.html>; Chux Ohai, '\$20,000 Failed Literary Prize: Soyinka Carpets Panel of Judges', *Daily Independent*, 18 October 2004, <http://www.independentng.com/life/lsoct180401.htm>.
- ⁵³ Quoted in Ohai, '\$20,000 Failed Literary Prize'.
- ⁵⁴ Henry Akubuiro, 'For Me, this Prize is Greater than Commonwealth Crown', *Daily Sun*, 16 October 2005, <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2005/oct/16/literari-16-10-2005-001.htm>
- ⁵⁵ McPhillips Nwachukwu, 'What is Nigerian Literature?', *The Vanguard*, 6 February 2005, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/features/arts/at106022005.html>
- ⁵⁶ Before he left NLNG, Jamieson contextualised his cheerleading for Nigerian literature in terms of his own road not taken: at the Lagos stop on the NLNG reading tour, he told Azuka Ogujiuba that he had been torn between studying English literature or engineering when he entered university.
- ⁵⁷ 'Greenwashing' refers to the practice of using a rhetoric of concern for the environment to conceal and advance agendas (often corporate) that actually foster ecological degradation and environmental injustice: readers in the US need only think of the Bush administration's 'Clear Skies' and 'Healthy Forests' initiatives.
- ⁵⁸ Dagga Tolar, 'Liquefying or Liquidating Literature in Nigeria?', *The Vanguard*, 17 November 2005, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/viewpoints/vp217112005.html>