Readings for Week 8, on Postcolonial Environmental Imagination readings.

1. Context. Read/watch this material for context on the Niger Delta, and on the authors:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/06/this-place-used-to-be-green-the-brutal-impact-of-oil-in-the-niger-delta>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Okri>

1. Read the prescribed readings:

Poetry:

Niyi Osundare: ‘Hole in the Sky’: watch and listen to it in this You-Tube performance by the poet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYuN220KkmY>

Niyi Osundare: ‘Wishes’

Fiction:

Ben Okri, ‘What the Tapster Saw’ [important to read this story before reading the Okorafor stories]

Nnedi Okorafor, ‘The Popular Mechanic’; ‘Spider the Artist’.

To think about, as you read:

--the way in which the literature links local and global experience. Osundare’s poetry is explicitly global in scale, yet grounded in local, Nigerian, cultural expressions. The fiction of Okri and Okorafor is overtly focused on local (Niger Delta) experience, but hints at global dimensions and contexts. What commentary is this literature making on the relationships between local and global spaces?

--the representation of non-human beings, natural, robotic, and spiritual. What relationships are established across these three non-human domains? How does the literature link pre-colonial cultural expressions and belief systems with contemporary realities and beliefs? How does the literature link pre-colonial cultures with speculative future realities?

--Put the Okorafor stories into conversation with the Okri story. What kind of conversation is this? Does Okorafor repeat and extend Okri’s ideas, values, and techniques, does she modify them, or does she depart from them? Would you say that Okri’s vision is pessimistic and Okorafor’s vision is optimistic?

--Look at the ways these authors depict oil as a substance, and the social, environmental and economic effects of oil extraction. This is ‘petro-fiction’, an emergent area in African literature. Is this account of a neo-colonial socio-economic system consistent with Fanon’s account of neo-colonialism, or does it differ?

--Think about ‘zombies’ (human and robotic), as Okorafor presents them. For context on humans as (political/military) zombies in a Nigerian context, watch/ listen to Fela Kuti’s ‘Zombie’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5x6pbJMyU>

This video gives helpful captions containing info on the lyrics and history of Fela’s song. As is typical of Fela’s music, the singing doesn’t start till about five minutes into the track.

Does Okorafor present robotic ‘zombies’ in a more positive light than human ‘zombies’? If so, what do you make of that?

--Would you describe Okorafor’s stories as feminist? If so, in what way?

Discussion prompt: Write 300 or more words on any of the above reading pointers.