

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

Snapfile 4 Lagoon

Aliens in Lagos p. 57

Adaora was beginning to see why Ayodele's people had chosen the city of Lagos. If they'd landed in New York, Tokyo or London, the governments of these places would have quickly swooped in to hide, isolate and study the aliens. Here in Lagos, there was no such order.

Yet and still, the country had vigorous life. Everybody wants to leave Lagos, she thought. But nobody goes. Lagos is in the blood. We run back to Lagos the moment we step out, even though we may have vowed¹ never to come back. Lagos is Lagos. There's no city like it. Lagos is sweet. Even her husband Chris knew this. He'd returned from Germany as soon as he had his MBA in his hand, even though a German company had offered him a job.

It was the reason why, despite the fact that she was a highly sought-after marine biologist who'd taught for some years at the University of California, Santa Barbara, she'd opted to return home. Lagos was riddled with corruption but she couldn't imagine living anywhere else. And its ocean life was fascinating. And problematic. It needed her. Lagos needed her. And Adaora had to go where she was needed.

There were aliens in the ocean and they were going to come out soon.

Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 2014

¹. promise, swear

A city with utopian and dystopian potential p. 58

Situated in the southwest of Nigeria, Lagos is the most heavily populated city in and the financial capital of Nigeria. These factors have led, however, to its less salubrious¹ portrayal, especially in SF. As Noah Tsika contends, the need to fix Lagos is “a popular plot impetus² in Nigerian SF, having generated an array³ of representations of the urban landscape that link overpopulation to poverty, crime, and corruption, as well as to the dystopian possibilities of violent gentrification, ethnic segregation, and eugenically restricted reproduction.” For these reasons, Tsika continues, both Nigerian politicians and SF writers turn to Lagos as a site of countervailing⁴ utopian and dystopian possibilities: “Lagos is an exciting source of imaginative projections, but it also lends itself to a certain pessimism, particularly amid global discussions of its incipient status as one of the world’s most populous and least ‘developed’ commercial centers.”

Hugh Charles O’Connell, “‘We are change’: The Novum as Event in Nnedi Okorafor’s Lagoon”, 2016

1. pleasant
2. the force that makes something happen
3. wide range
4. counterbalancing

Panic in Lagos p. 59

Agu, a soldier, is walking in the streets of Lagos.

“Excuse me, sir,” he called to a man rushing by. “Sir, abeg¹, may I borrow your phone?”

The man stopped and turned to him with eyes so wild that Agu stepped back.

“Eh,” the man said, frowning and stepping toward Agu. “My phone, you say?”

There was a loud crash. Agu and the man whipped around. There were cheers as someone smashed through a computer storefront window. The alarm went off as over thirty people rushed in, then it died. Agu could hear the people inside.

“Yes,” Agu said, fighting to focus. “I just . . . I just need . . .”

“Why?” the man said, now narrowing his eyes. “Why do you want to use my phone? What for?”

“To reach my friends,” Agu begged. “Please, o². Something is happening on Bar Beach, I have to—”

“Your friends? What about Bar Beach, eh? Are you one of them?” the man gasped, stepping further away. He spoke in Igbo³. “Do you want to communicate with them?”

“What?” Agu asked in English.

The man turned on his heel and ran off, as did a few others who had heard what the man said. Agu felt the air leave his lungs; something was very wrong. Looters, rioters, several of them stopped to stare at him. Some moved toward him. A group of Area Boys gathered to his left.

“This man!” a woman shouted, pointing at Agu. She had short wild hair and no shoes. She looked like she’d just walked out of the ocean herself. “He is one of them! Look am⁴. Get am! He is one of them! I saw him go into the ocean last night and come out!” Her eyes bulged with madness. “He was taken by the aliens and infected with alien disease!”

Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 2014

1. "please" in Nigerian English
2. common interjection used in Nigerian English
3. Igbo is one of Nigeria's languages.
4. "him" in Nigerian English

Like a phoenix p. 60

The president had never been a great orator. But today, this early evening, he was feeling his words. He was tasting them. They were humming to the rhythm of his soul. He smiled as he spoke. “For the first time since we cast off the shackles¹ of colonialism, over a half-century ago, since we rolled through decades of corruption and internal struggle, we have reached the tipping point². And here in Lagos, we have passed it. Many of you have seen the footage on the Internet or heard the news from loved ones. Last night, Lagos burned. But like a phoenix, it will rise from the ashes—a greater creature than ever before.

“The occasion that has put me here before you tonight is momentous³. It marks another kind of transitional shift⁴. Now listen closely to me. This shift is cause for celebration, not panic. I will say it again: celebration, not panic. There are others amongst us here in Lagos. They intend to stay. And I am happy about it. They have new technology; they have fresh ideas that we can combine with our own. Hold tight. We will be powerful again, o! People of Lagos, especially, look at your neighbor. See his race, tribe, or his alien blood. And call him brother. We have much work to do as a family.

Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 2014

1. chains 2. *tournant* 3. crucial 4. change

Beyond the chaos p. 60

For Guardian Lagos week, we have ventured from the “waterworld” of Makoko to the hectic Oshodi motor park and the blackout-stricken¹ suburb of Ikorodu, exploring the daily realities and challenges of the city. But we wanted to hear from those of you who live in Lagos: what’s changing? What’s great and what’s difficult? What kind of future do you envisage for the city?

theguardian.com, February 26, 2016

Where else in the world do you see a total stranger smile at you from his car in the snail-paced² traffic snarl on 3rd Mainland Bridge and bellow, seeing the creases of worry as you sit in your own car running late to work, “O! boy, no worry, e go better³”? Where else do you walk up to a complete stranger and say, “Bros, I never eat today” and he replies “My guy, hold this hundred naira, go find something chop. E go better?” The sheer shared humanity of Lagos is incomparable. Beyond the chaos, there is a real human bond. Beyond the I of class, every body eats “boli” and ground nuts in Lagos. It is a beautiful city. E go better.

Babatunde Esan

I have lived in Lagos for more than 6 years, and it’s a beautiful place if one has friends; inclusive, charming, full of problems and full of solutions, conversations are easy and free-flowing. If roads are busy, there are things you can buy off the road. If there’s no power, small roadside bars in unknown streets serve your needs.

Prasoon Kashyap

1. badly affected by power cuts **2.** slow like a snail **3.** Nigerian phrase meaning “it will get better”