

lence of law is not only a question of guns, handcuffs, and gaols, but, far worse, what gives that violence its edge and its lip-smacking satisfaction is deceit in the service of justice...[I]t is so surprising that the paras and the police are virtually the same? (p. 47-49)

The ambivalent or uncertain lines between the law and the lawless, between fact and rumour, between legitimate and illegitimate force, help us to better understand the deep-going nature of Colombia's culture of terror. Taussig's diary teaches us about terror from the perspective of the people who deal with it on a daily basis. In this sense, his diary opens up a world for us that goes beyond the impersonal nature of statistics, journalistic articles, and international reports. But Taussig's work does more than explain Colombia's culture of terror from the ground up. Indeed, to grasp its pervasiveness Taussig, following Walter Benjamin, looks at the everyday world in relation to past events and its manifestations in the present. This is a departure from the usual form of writing history according to which the past is treated as a series of cause and effect moments that have already happened. It is also a departure from those histories that treat the past as that which will soon be superseded by something better. The past cannot simply index the progress of the future. Taussig's work casts doubt on the idea that the capture of Colombia's guerilla leaders, a decrease in homicide states, and the surrender of guns, signals the beginning of peace and prosperity. Instead, his diary reveals the extent to which a long-standing culture of terror, based as it is on fear, uncertainty, and ambivalence, continues to reproduce itself. His diary recalls Walter Benjamin's famous "Angel of History" who sees the connections between past catastrophes and its continuation in the present. Taussig is this Angel (however masculinist!) who understands that we should not see the past in relation to the promised future. The Angel teaches us that there can be no change in Colombia without first attending to pervasiveness of fear, uncertainty, and ambivalence. For without seriously understanding this culture of terror, there can be no real progress, there can be no real peace, no real prosperity, and no real hope for Colombia. In this respect, *Law in a Lawless Land* is a brave and heart-wrenching attempt to make Angels of us all.

Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 296 pages.

Reviewer: *Michael D. Levin*
University of Toronto

Nigerian attacks cause oil prices to spike *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), February 21, 2006

Shell appeals Nigerian fine for polluting delta *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), February 27, 2006

Oil, the state, democracy, justice. An intellectual and realpolitik game of the moment is to find (define) the dots and the

causal arrows that connect these words. The real world on-the-ground consequences version of the game involves resistance, sabotage, hostages and more. It is also a game of metaphors and other literary devices. "Black gold" is perhaps the most clichéd.

The fungible quality of oil, its slipperiness as a commodity is a mimetic duplication of its slipperiness as a material. The whole process of retrieving oil and making it useful is cloaked in technology; labour is sophisticated and highly specialized, transportation and refining are processes that require both physical force and mediating equipment. About the only time we might touch oil is when we get a bit of gasoline on our hands at a self-serve pump. That it fouls the lands of the people who live near its wells is the most direct example of the injustices oil creates. The complexity of mineral rights and the legalities of ownership, access, lease conditions, royalties and environmental laws and regulations does not obscure the immediate environmental damage in particularly vulnerable ecosystems such as the Niger River delta in Nigeria. The nexus of the state as owner of the resources and protector of its citizens and the environment has been a fulcrum of temptation for the politicians, military officers and civil servants charged with mediating and managing the international and local financial and political forces that hover around a commodity, so easily convertible to wealth. In his case study of Nigeria, Apter concludes that money has lost its status as a signifier, a symbol of value, in the sense of what is good, and the state its credibility as an arbiter of justice.

The final section of the book "La mise en abîme" (the story within the story) is two chapters, which deal with two sequences of events at the nadir of Nigerian history, the annulled election of June 12, 1993 and its aftermath, and the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995 after a sham trial before a military tribunal. In the "Politics of Illusion" (ch. 7) Apter devotes 10 pages to 419¹ scams, a leitmotif of the politics of illusion in Nigeria. (Reader, you know what this is. You have received e-mails with too-good-to-be-true offers of easy money, usually in exchange for assisting in the transfer of vast sums from dormant bank accounts.) The 419 scam, of course, plays on the dialogical relationship of the greed of the mark (Goffman 1952) and a self-referential negative stereotype, projected by the con artist, of Nigerians and Nigeria, as a people and a nation, who regard state money or money in a bank as wealth seeking an owner. Money is perhaps the sign of all signs, epitomizing value and so much else, and very often so much less.

The 419 scam is the theme for the Apter's brilliant dissection of the politics of Ibrahim Babangida, the military president, nicknamed "Maradona" after the deft Argentinian footballer, in an ironic salute to his rapid and subtle Machiavellian political manoeuvring. Babangida left politics ignominiously in a chaotic failed transition to elected government. General Sani Abacha staged a coup and became President and Commander-in-Chief. He imprisoned Chief Moshood Abiola, arguably one of the most popular national figures in Nigeria

and very possibly the winner of the June 1993 election. The bumbling harshness and tragic crises of Abacha's regime is the topic of the next to the last chapter. This regime was the most blatantly and ostentatiously corrupt in its management and exploitation of the economy of any regime since Independence.² It brought down on Nigeria international disdain for its corruption and brutality and at home it generated underground political opposition. Popular campaigns to boycott Shell Oil caught the attention of the media. The conflict between the state and the oil companies and the Ogoni people, whose leadership described them as an indigenous people whose lands were despoiled and whose economic and civil rights violated, culminated in the travesty of the Ogoni Nine (including Saro-Wiwa) executions. The 419 scam offers the illusion of money at the centre of the picture, but its image recedes into infinity, forever-out-of-reach, just as the hope for justice in an oil state seems always elusive.

As the newspaper headlines at the top of this review show, Nigeria has been pulled from the periphery of our Western world to the front page. But it is not the demographically predominant place of Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa, its historical and geographical place on the Niger, or its dominant political and military role in the African Union that brings it to notice but stories about oil, communal violence and Muslim-women's issues.

What is today Nigeria finally became a colony in 1914 with the unification of protectorates and territories. This definition of the territory of the state took place after years of pacification of various states, kingdoms and stateless peoples. Nigeria became independent from Britain October 1, 1960.

Apter takes up the story in 1977—seven years after the end of the civil war (or the failed Biafran war for independence), when it became the pan-African nation of his title as the host of FESTAC 77, the second Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, and extends his analysis of oil and the spectacle of culture to the political crisis of the 1990s. His version of the Nigerian story is told against the background of the oil boom and bust phenomena of the Nigerian economy. Oil extraction began in the mid-1950s and lent a material base to the initial optimism of independence (1960) to the over confidence of Biafran secession, and to the next burst of hope with the rise of oil prices (1973). As oil prices declined in the following decades the decline of the Nigerian economy was described as "oil bust." The indexical sign of the exchange rate marks this dramatic reversal of fortune: at the time of FESTAC, in 1977, one Naira equaled U.S. \$1.68 and today one Naira equals 0.77 cents. This is a decline in value of 220%.

FESTAC 77 brought performers, artists and writers, from all parts of Nigeria and most states in Africa, including North Africa, to Lagos and Kaduna, for theatrical performances, exhibitions and readings and seminars. Political and diplomatic dignitaries dominated the often exclusive audiences and the Nigerian political elite had important ceremonial roles at rituals of the events. FESTAC's precursor, the First Festival of Negro Arts, was held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966. Theatres,

other arts facilities and housing were built in Lagos and Kaduna specifically for the festival and were intended to be a legacy for the local community. FESTAC Village in Lagos was lauded as the model of modern housing for Africa. The public relations spin said "an uninitiated person might mistake the Festival Village for any homogeneous community in any Black or African nation [*sic*]" (cited, p. 50). The local debates are a familiar genre that surround any of this type of international event, staged as a controlled spectacle, like world fairs, the Olympics, the World Cup, et cetera. There has been no third FESTAC.

But it is this FESTAC, the second Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, that is the spectacle of culture that Apter puts at the centre of his phenomenology of the oil boom and his analysis of the post-colony. His analysis of two central FESTAC spectacles—the Regatta in Lagos harbour and the Durbar at Kaduna—rests on the connection between the colonial, the precolonial and the postcolonial, as "the elaborate celebration of Nigerian heritage through its earliest icons and symbols [that]...became a unifying expression of the Nigerian people [and produces]...a national culture from regional materials and projecting it throughout the black and African world...a dazzling spectacle and a great success" (p. 123). He concludes this chapter commenting on the cultural commodification of the Regatta, its detachment from its traditional base, and its transformation into an object of national value as it was "decolonized...converting the European legacy of its history into a singularly African spectacle" (p. 166). The (re)enactment of the Durbar is "the nationalization of the colonial tradition by the postcolonial state" (p. 199). I am not sure if these chapters are guides to the invention of national "traditions" and common rituals, surely an element of nation-building, which in turn is surely a legitimate state project for Nigeria, or they are critiques revealing, once again, the inauthenticity of nationalism. Clearly, however, Nigeria is a place where the naturalization of the state is a process, phenomenological or political, analytically revealed or idealistically-cynically intended, which is far from complete.

Apter's central problematic is the link of oil to culture and politics. The three previously published papers (the chapter on the Durbar and the two on 1990s politics in the final section) supported by five original chapters that make up this book are an important contribution to exposing the phenomenology and semiotics of the Nigerian post-colony. Whether Apter's theoretical interpretation of the oil economy, of cultural appropriation and spectacularizing in the national festivals, of international commodity finance and exchange rates, and his use of metaphors linking black gold to black culture fully succeed I leave to the reader.

A comment on production: this is the second University of Chicago Press book I have reviewed recently which could have used editorial attention. Both text and visuals, crucial to a book on performance of culture, are less than first rate.

Notes

- 1 "Advance fee fraud" is the formal name for the scam. "419" refers to the number of the law criminalizing such activity. Readers may want to consult www.scamorama.com for more details of this and other web scams. Contemporary irony (from the web): "Festac Town, a district of Lagos where the scammers ply their schemes."
- 2 The connections between and reiterations of colonial corruption and postcolonial corruption deserve extensive and thoughtful comparison, much beyond a book review.

Reference

Goffman, E.

- 1952 On Cooling the Mark Out: Some Aspects of Adaptation and Failure. *Psychiatry: Journal of the Study of Interpersonal Relations*, 15(4):451-463.

Madeleine Ferrieres, *Sacred Cow, Mad Cow: A History of Food Fears*, Translated by J. Gladding, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 399 pages.

Reviewer: Penny Van Esterik
York University

Historian Madeleine Ferrieres' book provides evidence for the roots of some of our contemporary concerns about food. Part of a series on *Arts and Traditions of the Table: Perspectives on Culinary History*, this is a scholarly book with much to offer anthropology and food studies. With an introduction, conclusion, index and 16 chapters, the author takes us through the Middle Ages to the early years of the 20th century by way of markets, slaughterhouses, gardens and kitchens of Europe, primarily France.

In the early chapters, we learn about presentism and prejudices about the past, including assumptions about the "good old days" when food was plentiful, and there were no problems with harmful food. Fear of food scarcity has been replaced by a fear about food quality. Ferrieres complicates this model with the argument that perception of food risk existed in the past and included both concerns about the quantity and regularity of food supplies and the healthiness of foods.

Considering the depth and historical detail that Ferrieres pulls from archival sources in each chapter, this review can only highlight a few observations that may shed light on contemporary food fears. We learn of the complexity of forbidden meats, and the question, "couldn't our flesh become like the flesh we absorbed?" (p. 20), and of efforts to regulate bread, meat and fish between 1200 and 1500, including laws requiring animals for slaughter to walk through the city gate, to guarantee that meat that was sold at market came from butchered animals rather than those that had died. Evidence for the intersection of medical and culinary writing can be seen in the importance of the senses of taste and smell for detecting harmful foods.

Ferrieres later links the Columbian exchange to the omnivore's dilemma. Torn between the necessity of finding new food substances and the danger of ingesting toxic substances (p. 87), missionaries in the New World complained, "They have neither bread, nor wine, nor salt" (p. 83), and Europeans struggled to fit foods from the Americas into their food systems. What the Indians could eat without risk was not necessarily safe for others (p. 91).

Familiar foods were equated with healthy foods, and perception of food risk increases with every new food that disrupts the food repertoire (p. 86). Europeans expected the food of the other to be contaminated, and consumed it with mistrust. The book addresses some familiar questions, such as why potatoes were considered poisonous and feared as a food that transmitted disease. Although the rich wanted the poor to eat potatoes, "the poor, too, have taste buds" (p. 110).

By the mid-16th century, Europeans were eating less meat and more bread (p. 111). But Ferrieres goes much deeper into the hierarchies of bread than the white bread—brown bread opposition. In 1669, a conference on bread was held in Paris. Until 1760, the king held a social contract with cities to remain faithful and be provisioned in return. Thus, it became the job of police to control bread quality (p. 120). We also learn of the dangers of beer, considered less healthy than wine (p. 127).

Several sections explore the "silent fears" of the rural peasants of Europe as they experienced gangrene from the ergot fungus on rye. In times of food shortages, more rye grains causing ergotism went into the flour. Peasants "sift their grain in the years when it is not expensive, but in years of shortage, they are careful about wasting ergotized grain" (p. 139). But like tobacco that gave pleasure, Ferrieres raises the possibility that the "drowsiness and dreams" of the early symptoms of ergotism may well have been welcome to the underfed peasantry. In addition, peasants knew how to lessen the risks of consuming the diseased rye. Ferrieres also documents the debates about whether disease was caused by bad air or bad food. Deaths in 1706 in Paris were attributed to the introduction of new items such as tobacco or chocolate or to "an unknown poison" (p. 156). Regardless of the cause, the poor always die first, due to the inadequate material conditions of their lives. Some observers blamed the deaths on the working-class diet.

Urban myths targeted pastries that could be stuffed with human meat, or finely chopped cat. Could the urban consumer distinguish cat stew from rabbit stew? (p. 164). Absentee landlords in the cities of France arranged for the delivery of fresh vegetables, eggs, butter and cheese from their rural holdings. Both rural and urban knew the value of the short food circuit (p. 167). Small farmers sold their best foods and kept the poorest foods for home consumption. Pigs were killed for sale in urban markets; villagers ate fresh meat on festive occasions when it was shared reciprocally, and made do with salted meat the rest of the time (p. 169).

Cattle, kept by young children in collective pastures, were also considered to be sources of contagion and disease among