

Through the Prism of History: Ecological Re-reading of Wale Okediran's *after the Flood*

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Abstract

Through the prism of history, this paper examines ecological issues in Okediran's *After the Flood*. Ecological issues have been widely recognized as one of the major threats facing the planet, as man's activities continue to endanger his ecosystem leaving in its wake, myriads of hazards and lethal consequences. Consequent upon this, environmental writers have made environmental concerns top on the agenda of literature and the creatives. Wale Okediran is one of the few Nigerian ecological writers whose work continues to attract favourable criticism in this regard. The paper underscores the environmental issues raised in the novel, most importantly, the writer's stance that these crises are largely manmade and avoidable. With ecocriticism as a theoretical anchor, the study concludes on the confluence of history and literature in addressing environmental crisis as gleaned from Okediran's *After the Flood*, vis-à-vis the practicable ways environmental issues can be addressed towards a healthy, humane, and more habitable society.

Keywords: Ecology, degradation, exploitation, environment, history, hazard, humanity

Introduction

Unarguable, the ecological crisis is one of the most widely discussed issues at the turn of the 21st century. The reason is simply in the fact that it has become evidently glaring that our planet is on the verge of collapse resulting from man's activities against nature and his natural environment. For sure, literature as a field of study is not unaffected by this new turn of events, for the sustenance of ecology and ecological discourse requires a more permeative model which literature comes in handy by the virtue of its power to reach out and speak to all manner of persons. It has the peculiarities to last longer and treat issues with more perceptiveness, more balance, and more inspiration. Therefore, it is no gain saying that literature has a major role to play in the present environmental crisis as it continues to beam as a pointer to man and his responsibility to his environment.

Tracing the chronological rise of environmental literature at different epochs in Nigeria, Chinyere Nwahunaya notes that in general, in all genres represented, (in his book) the concern of

the writers have been mainly on environmental degradation and its consequences; and moral issues. Others confront issues such as health and disease, lack of infrastructure, the need for human capital development and capacity building and socio-economic empowerment and political marginalization of the region... (xix) Environmental issues are fast dominating literary scene which prompted the present study to pry into the ecological leanings in Wale Okediran's *After the Flood*, as part of contributing to ecocritical discourse and enriching the literature in this important area of scholarship.

Wale Okediran is one of the voices in Nigerian literature in the 21st century. Like Adichie, Unaigwe, Ujubuonu, Habila, and a host of other household names, Okediran's creative talent is well harnessed to fulfill the goal of literature evident in the corpus of works produced in decades of writing. Born April 14 1955 in Oyo Nigeria, Okediran has published novels and short stories in several journals in Nigeria and overseas. In June 2010, together with a few friends, he established the first writers' Resort in Nigeria, the Ebedi International writers Resort in Iseyin, Oyo State. A former President of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Okediran is also a physician, writer, and politician and has represented his constituency in Nigeria's Federal House of Representatives. Okediran is a joint winner of the 2010 Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa which he shared with South Africa's Kopano Matiwa with his acclaimed novel, *Tenants of the House*. His other publications include, *The Boys at the Border* (1991) *Strange Encounters* (2004) *Dreams die at Twilight* (2001) *Rainbows are for Lovers* (1987) *Tenants of a House* (2009) *The Weaving Looms* (2005).

First published in 2003, reprinted in 2004, 2008, and revised in 2012, the novel, *After the Flood* is set against the background of death and destruction wrought by Ogunpa flood disaster. The novel is categorized by Anthony Njoku and Gloria Eke as one of the lachrymal works of literature coming from Africa, a branding Charles Nnolim used to label African literature as weeping literature, a literature of lamentation, a product of tears from slavery and colonialism. The critics affirm:

Wale Okediran's *After the Flood* stands tall as a gland of tears, a nest of pain, synonymous with sorrow, mourning, and weeping in the valley of grief. In the novel, beasts and humans are savagely and tragically cut off from life by wild floods and thunderstorms. Bloated carcasses and cadavers like zoomed images litter the streets, constituting a tragic scene as elemental forces run amok... (24).

Okediran ranks among the few Nigerian writers whose works are concerned with the problems and devastations of the natural environment. Others include Isidore Okpewho, Kaine Agary, Tanure Ojaide, Ifeoma Okoye, Helon Habila, Chiemeka Garricks, to mention only a few writers. *After the Flood* is largely concerned with the problems of flooding, pollution, environmental degradation which makes it an interesting literary piece for eco-critical discourse. Set in Ibadan, the novel recreates, though fictionally, the flood devastation of the city of Ibadan in 1980. THIS DAY newspaper editorial on 31st August 2011 accounts that:

Wale Okediran's *After the Flood* is a fictional replay of the inundation of the city of Ibadan in 1980, which took a toll on lives and property. Okediran acknowledged this incident as the source of his inspiration in the Sun's interview of July 6, 2013, thus, 'After The Flood was inspired by the Ogunpa Flood disaster, which ravaged Ibadan in 1980' Indeed, this carnage left indelible relics in the annals of the city and its inhabitants. (qtd in Njoku and Eke 25)

'To memorialize that 'Omiyale' tragedy, many songs were rendered by leading fuji and juju artistes of the time while politicians bickered about whose responsibility it was to ensure it would never happen again. At the end, the Ogunpa River which overflowed its banks and resulted in many of the deaths was channelized and many people believed a lasting solution had been found. (Njoku and Eke 25) However, Anthony Njoku and Linda Gloria in their criticism of the novel, *After the Flood* expose that the novel lacks that mutation necessary for an object that is bound to become a literary creation through the tinkering craftsmanship of an artist, the consequences of which are this melodramatic portrayal of reality in a supposedly de facto fictional world. In their view, Okediran allows the harrowing emotions of flood victims to pour like the stupendous floods themselves into fiction in a way that makes the reader to wonder if one is actually in an imaginary universe. Here a very blurred and graphic painting of the empirical begets fiction (47). Nevertheless, the novel has made its mark on the Nigerian literary scene and beyond and continues to elicit critical commentaries mostly on eco-critical discourse in postcolonial Nigeria.

Ecological Issues in Wale Okediran's *After the Flood*

Wale Okediran's *After the Flood*, like earlier stated, 'is a fictional replay of the inundation of the city of Ibadan in 1980, which took a toll on lives and property. Inspired by the Ogunpa Flood disaster, which ravaged Ibadan in 1980, and the carnage it left behind, the novel presents the lethal consequences of environmental degradation on not just the environment but on the lives of the people. The failure to take care of our environment and provide lasting solutions to several environmental issues is the chief cause of many of the tragedies witnessed not just in Nigeria but around the world. Ecological issues have become a global concern even as man continues to reap several of its actions and negligence to the environment. The tragic scenarios and sad atmosphere that pervade the novel is as a result of the over flooding by the Ogunpa River due to excess rain beyond what its bowels could carry. For sure, rainfall is a natural phenomenon that is unavoidable, but how this nature's gift is managed and harnessed to be harmless on humans is manmade and can be controlled with careful planning. The beginning of the novel introduces us to a situation of imminent heavy rainfall. With the howling of the wind and clappings of thunder, the evening suddenly gave way to a heavy storm. (1)

As a prelude to our argument in this study, it is worthy to note that though it was very heavy rain, nonetheless, it didn't take the people by surprise. The rain had started gradually till it increased to a menacing level and there were warnings and signs from the weather and even weather

reporters. The argument is that in a saner clime and other developed countries where the lives and property of the people is the sole priority of the government, unlike in Nigeria, from the time of the weather forecast, adequate measures ought to have been put in place to forestall eventful moments. Of course, Ogunpa River would not have flooded in the first place if the government and contractors did their best to dredge as well as provide befitting channels for the flow of the river. Typical of Nigeria as gleaned from the narrative, people went on with their duties unconcerned about the rain that has turned to a storm. In civilized countries too, the flooding would have been detected and measures put in place to avert its looming tragedy and protecting lives and property will be the sole priority of all concerned agencies. With a state of emergency earlier declared on the areas near the river, everyone would be placed on red alert and none would be allowed to engage on frivolities during the predicted time of the rain. Ironically, the case is in reverse in Nigeria and worst still with Sade, the wife of Stanley who left behind her little son, Tomi with a young maid, Beauty, two young fellows who are unable to fend for themselves, to attend a party. Even when the signs were evident that it might flood, the party occupied a greater portion in her mind that night. 'This rain is getting heavier. I pray it doesn't result in another Ogunpa River flood.' Sade was feeling nervous. 'Relax, Sade. How can this light rain cause a flood? Your house is well built and safe. You know that.' 'I hope so, Nana... 'You know the house isn't far from the river.' (5) Despite these initial fears, Sade focused on the party, celebrating with Nana on her twenty first birthday was her priority. The action of Sade is only a reflection of the actions of other inhabitants of the city as the storm rages and Ogunpa River continue to suck in more water before it finally flooded. None was reported to be prepared for an emergency:

It was now 11 pm and the rain had been falling nonstop for hours. The Ogunpa channel was having problems coping with the torrential rainfall.... It was not long before the swollen river broke its bank. The flood became unstoppable as it swept across the land adjacent to the river's banks. Before long it washed away the bridges and houses. Since the river took its source from the northern part of the city where the flood had not yet exercised its force, houses in this neighbourhood including James', were yet unaffected. Thus, the guests at Nana's party were oblivious of the disaster going on in the city. (8)

Oblivious of the situation, the guests carried on with the party. Men were making advances on the ladies; lovers were hooking up for the night as Ogunpa river floods the city. Sade too ran into an old boyfriend, Sam Boyo who discomfited her and made her uneasy all through the party. Even James, Nana's man was all eyes for Sade. Beyond their unpreparedness in the face of the flooding, the inhabitants of the city are guilty of dumping all manner of refuse in the river bed which impeded the river's smooth flow and made the flood spread into any available space along the river. Again, the unplanned nature of the city contributed to the rate of the disaster. The city was described as overcrowded with several dilapidated and unregulated buildings along the roads. Houses stand in the water runways and no one cared. The inhabitants of the city in many ways contribute to the problems leading to environmental disaster supporting our argument here that

environmental degradation and its consequences on the people are largely manmade. What we witnessed in the narrative the response of an 'angry nature' the sole reason the writer described the flood as 'an angry flood' thus:

As the angry flood flowed towards the city and sewage channels, it becomes more violent. To worsen the situation, different kinds of refuse which the inhabitants of the city had dumped into the river bed, also impeded the river's smooth flow, and made the flood spread into any available space along the river. It caused a great disaster in the overcrowded heart of the city where the streets were narrow and many dilapidated buildings stood in utter defiance of planning regulations. Houses here, most of them mud, were collapsing like sand castles as the destructive tongue of the Ogunpa River licked them off the ground. (8)

The continual abuse of nature and insensitivity on the parts of the people can only predict far worse disasters like the Ogunpa River flood as witnessed in the novel. The flooding was terrible and menacing in all dimensions— children died in their numbers; death, tears, and hardship were left behind after the disaster. Parents watched helplessly as their children were carried away and fathers gapped helplessly while their hard earned property float away with the flood like nothing they had ever since before. Many lost their shanty buildings which shouldn't have been in existence in the first place if the government had done more to better the lots of the citizens. In an oil-rich country such as Nigeria, shanty and mud houses should only be recounted in history and not in reality but they exist as evidence of poverty, negligence and backwardness which the country can proudly boast of. The author reports:

The storm had destroyed the power lines and thrown the neighbourhood into darkness. Parents could not help their drowning children; neither could children save their parents from the rampaging monster. Piercing screams of the drowning and the wailing agonies of mothers who could no longer trace their children were heard in the dark night of horror. (8)

The novel, *After the Flood* centers more on Sade and Stanley, the two major characters created by Wale Okediran to be core representative other humans under the various forms of environmental degradation and exploitation and its over-reaching consequences on them. The environmental crisis in the novel was the chief factor that caused Stanley and Sade their peaceful marriage after the loss of their son, Timi. After the loss of their marriage, their lives never became the same again and normalcy fled from their lives. Following the loss of their only son, Tomi, Stanley lost his temper and for the first time in his marriage with Sade, he raised his hands and did not just beat her but beat her mercilessly to the point of stupor and even to the side of what looked like an attempted suicide:

As the blood pressure cuff tightened to her left arm, Sade's mind went back to the one-week stay in the hospital. She was glad that she was now fully rested and, except for her

swollen left eye and the plaster on her forehead... Stanley had inflicted the injury on her when he lost his temper. Apart from the swollen eye and the deep gash on the forehead which had required three stitches, her irate husband had also broken one of the teeth. It was the hospital porters who came to her rescue when they heard her cries... (14)

The environmental crisis proved enough to destroy not just the lives of Stanley and Sade but the chains of other characters too. It made some complicit in a crime they would not ordinarily have committed as we could see in the lives of Pa and Ma Lasisi. Just like the speed of the Ogunpa flood after it lost its temper, so was the speed of the disaster and the loss in the life of Sade and other characters. 'She never thought he could ever lose his temper to the point of hitting her, something had never done before. (15) Stanley was embittered at the sight of a reckless wife who abandoned her little child to indulge in what he accused her to be a promiscuous act with her ex-boy friend at a birthday party. Even Nana accused Sade of attempts to snatch her boyfriend at the party after she found the colour of Sade's lipstick on James' lips. The novel, in a nutshell, examines the cases of exploitation of the environment, and how the environment is capable of fighting back, and the extent that the impact of such could be felt as lethal and devastating.

There is no gainsaying that the level of exploitation and environmental degradation in Wale Okaderian's *After the Flood* is quite alarming and disheartening. The writer employs the use of certain characters to recount the issues and problems of exploitation. The military government and the citizens at large are all guilty of exploiting the environment to their collective detriment. As revealed in the novel, the Ogunpa River is the duty of the government to rebuild. Interestingly, the government allocated money for the construction of water canals and channels to forestall the damaging impact of the flooding. Sadly, Stanley's co-contractors resorted to loot the fund and employing inferior materials to execute the projects. These contracts become symbolic, prototypes, and microcosmic representations of selfish leaders, politicians, and individuals who masquerade all around society holding its peace and progress to ransom. Their efforts translate to exploitation of both human beings and the environment which the end product of this negligence results in Ogunpa losing its temper as one of the characters laments while the flood rages on:

'Ha, Ogunpa has lost her temper,' a young man from the crowd shouted as he ran from the scene with the others following him. Suddenly, another clap of thunder rang out and the mud walls of the shrine collapsed on the frail chief priest. Apart from hundreds of people made homeless by the flood, countless others either got drowned in the flood or were killed by the falling walls. Road railway lines and vast areas of farmlands were washed away. (9)

The above excerpt rings a bell in one's mind on how poor governance and negligence has eaten deep into the environment and how a poor environment keeps our lives at risk. One of the heartbreaking scenes during the flooding is the encounter between an old train driver and his teeming passengers. In the wake of the flooding, an old driver plunged into the river with his

passengers after he had mistaken the flooded side of the river as the usual rail track, the pathway on the bridge he follows to cross it regularly. The twenty-coach train glided into the gaping frothy water of the angry river amidst the screams and wails of the over two hundred women and children and their lives were lost in the most gruesome manner. (40) The scene of wreckages and destruction left behind by the flood can best be imagined than described. Deaths, collapsed buildings, destroyed property, irreplaceable losses, broken dreams, and families who knew their lives will never remain the same again. The environment like a Dracula opened wide its jaws and swallowed people in their numbers:

Within that same neighbourhood, the destruction continued unabated. Cars, houses, and belongings were swept away by the river. The destruction of electricity and all communication facilities plunged most of the city into pitch blackness. Above the noise of the storm and thunder, the occasional screams and howls of the dying and drowning could be heard. Once in a while from the illumination of the lightning, the bodies of infants and children could be seen floating on the river. And as major water pipes and aqueducts ruptured, water from the city massive dam was now being added to the mayhem. Some tension wires electrocuted a great number of people. (41)

Some of the government property located around their river was smashed, all the power line were destroyed leaving the neighbourhood in total darkness. People's life time investments were shattered as they floated away like garbage. Stanley's building was also carried away by the flood while his wife was at her best friend's 21st birthday, leaving the poor house girl, Beauty to save the life of the helpless Tomi, barely three months old. While the walls collapse and cave in, Beauty's bravery leaves much to be admired as she fought even till the last hour of her death to save the young innocent Tomi: "...the water level rose rapidly and soon it was waist-high. A bump at her waist made her look down; she noticed a plastic laundry bucket. It was about two feet in length and two feet in circumference... she quickly dropped Tomi in the bucket and the lid shut itself through a spring device attached to the lid.... By now, the water had reached Beauty's breast level. She continued crying, trying to see how to escape with the baby in the bucket. Suddenly another loud clap of thunder rang out and the remaining wall caved in. beauty was knocked unconscious by the falling brick. She did not feel much pain, not even discomfort as the water swallowed her. But she lost her grip on the laundry bucket as it swept through the opening door to join the river which had now overrun the house" (42).

The environmental crisis which culminated in the Ogunpa flood became a deciding factor and a turning point in the life of Sade and her family. She did not only lose her marriage, she was heavily criticized by her colleagues and she also faced betrayal from her best friend Nana. In the end, the city general hospital sacked her for incompetence. Later, she got a job at a Christian medical hospital by the help of Pastor Adeoye. Yet, while struggling to rebuild her life, her past came calling. With the scandal her ex-boyfriend published on the front page of the City Echo newspaper her past engulfed her once more and with the persistent sexual advances of Pastor Adeoye, Sade's life was upturned and her struggles take another pedestal.

One of the insightful satirical bits in the novel is the excruciating reality that it is not only the government that exploits us rather the masses are complicit in fueling exploitation and environmental crises. As recounted by the author, after the first Ogunpa River disaster that took hundreds of lives and destroyed properties and government facilities worth millions, the government gave out money to some contractors to help rebuild the channels to avoid another flood from happening. Stanley who was among the victim of the flood fortunately was one of the privileged contractors that got a contract from the government to rebuild the Ogunpa River, largely because he too was affected by the disaster. Though he did the best he could to make sure the channels were well built, his fellow contractors were only interested in amassing the contract allocation. These contractors resorted to buying cheap and fake materials to rebuild the canals and the excess was dumped in their bank accounts. Some of the loot was channeled to partying, drinking and lavishing money with young girls all around the town with no care about the consequences of their actions to human and nature. Stanley's co-contractors are prototypes of the cankerworms that daily feed deep into the very fabrics of our everyday lives, and they are found in many sectors of our society.

After the launching of the newly constructed water channels to forestall future Ogunpa River flooding menace, there was heavy rain at midnight. Everyone was at peace confident that a lasting solution has been provided to checkmate the flooding. After all, millions of naira had been employed to build three gigantic channels in the form of artificial lakes to take care of the river whenever it decides to overflow its bank. Initially, when the heavy rain started, the Ogunpa River was taking the storm well. The water from the semi-permeable soil that characterizes the city was rushing into the wide belly of the river and going down the torrents into the three artificial lakes. The lakes seemed to be holding out well as the run-off water carrying a large amount of sediment continued to be trapped in these wide bowls of concrete and earth. (142) Yet, it was only a matter of time before midnight that the anger of Ogunpa erupted again and the city flooded once more, this time on innocent and unprepared populace who slept calmly in the hope that the flooding has been taken care of by the huge investment the government allocated to building the canals. Ironically, the flooding was more devastating and destructive than it had ever been in the history of the Ogunpa flooding. Houses were swept away, government properties destroyed and hundreds of lives lost in a more agonizing and traumatizing manner. A humorous but painful experience transpired in a popular brothel in the city during the flooding. In a popular three-storeyed brothel in the red light district, commercial sex workers and their patrons were seen running up to the third floor just before the whole building gave away. People clung hopefully to the roofs of their houses, while buildings disintegrated burying the occupants under torus of masonry, wood and water. (143) One can only pause a while to imagine the tragic end of the prostitutes and their clients and from a religious viewpoint will try to imagine them facing their Creator before the judgment throne. The writer laments: "Ironically, the lakes which had been constructed to save the people had turned out to be the chief culprits in the disaster. The flood several million cubic meters in valuing has struck and flattened completely the high density commercial nerve centre of the town. It was indeed a night of tears and sorrow" (143).

Bulldozers were deployed to aid rescue workers in the grim task of recovering the dead bodies. The workers could also be seen in their masks wading through the mud as they searched for corpses (144). The damages caused by the Ogunpa River were disastrous. The anguished cries of an elderly woman suddenly rent the air; her two-year old grandson's corpse was picked up from a nearby culvert... (144). Some women were lucky to find their children alive, hundreds of others were not. The lucky ones among the lost children found themselves, foster parents, just like the case of Tomi, Sade's boy who was discovered by Pa and Ma Lasisi. They found the baby in the second disaster of Ogunpa River and decided to take care of him as their own since their children were wiped away in the first disaster caused by Ogunpa River. The couple keeps the baby they found with no consideration of the travails and psychological trauma of the real parents following their loss. They named him Moses. It was years later, after the terrible accident that claimed the life of Pa Lasisi and left Ma Lasisi at the point of death, that she handed the baby, now grown to the white doctor, Dr. Graham: 'I want the white... the white doctor to take care of ... of the baby please, adopt him, and treat him like your child.... (70). Ma Lasisi failed to divulge the identity of Moses before she passed on; nonetheless, Dr Graham granted her the wish and took care of Tomi before he travelled back to his country with his wife and left him at the mercy of another couple, Mr. and Mrs. Shelima.

True the second Ogunpa flooding cannot be blamed on the government or the residents of the city, nevertheless, the environmental crisis was orchestrated by human beings embodied in the actions of the contractors who siphoned public funds and resorted to cheap materials for the construction of Ogunpa River channels, which is the crux of our argument here. Again, it is the duty of the government to put measures in place to checkmate and certify projects they awarded. Such was not the case in the novel and if one looks deeper, one is likely to find some of the government officials in collusion with the contractors and their palms greased with a fair percentage of the loot which invariably makes the government complicit in the crime and other individuals culprit in the miasma of exploitation, corruption and environmental abuse.

Following the massive outcry from the general public for the heads of the contractors and politicians involved in the execution of the contract, Stanley, one of the contractors, knew that the military government was bound to ask questions and carry out an investigation about the cause of the flood again. He was seen sweating profusely, as his heart beat wildly within his chest. He would feel better if civilians were in power. But with the soldiers now in charge of affairs in the country, he could not predict how they were going to react to the incident. (145) Stanley, during the heat generated by the flooding, realizes how much he was cheated in the entire project. While he was given two million naira to execute his side of the contract, the other two contractors received a whopping sum of over fifty million naira. Though he executed his part of the contract solidly with expertise, yet, he knew he still had questions to answer as one of the contractors of the project. While on his quest to leave the country, Stanley was clamped down by the military government who placed an express order for the contractors to report themselves to the nearest police station. They were all arrested and investigation only confirmed that the

majority of the contractors used inferior materials to rebuild the river banks in order to make their self-gain. Apart from the carnage and massive loss after the flood, an outbreak of disease such as cholera and typhoid was imminent in the whole city all consequences of man's abuse and negligence of his environment. Though Stanley was innocent since he executed his part of the contract patriotically, nevertheless, in the spur of the moment, he was arrested alongside the rest of the contractors and with the evidence that he tried to leave the country after the flooding; he was found guilty and subsequently detained in Kirikiri maximum prison.

Years later, following several interventions, Sade was able to secure Stanley's release from prison. But before his release, Sade discovers the existence of her lost son, courtesy of the laundry bucket she found, a bucket she lost years ago after the flood. It was the same laundry bucket Beauty had placed Tomi on that night of flood before she died and with that discovery Sade passed through several bizarre experiences to recover her son. Sade ends up in prison, after she was accused of stealing a child. She had stolen Tomi, now Moses, and ran since Mr. and Mrs. Shelima could not release the boy to her for want of evidence to back up her claim as his mother. Stanley secures his release through the process already initiated by Sade and he goes in search of her with a lawyer to secure her release, armed with evidence to reclaim their child. The writer captures this last scenario thus:

When Mr. Opobo arrived in Kano the following day, he was allowed to see Sade in the company of Stanley. Sade was ecstatic to see the two of them and she clung to Stanley and cried profusely. 'I never knew you would come. I thought I'd reach the end,' she said, in between sobs. 'Yes, I am here. I was just released two days ago. Very soon my dear, our son will be free too,' Stanley replied, as he held the trembling body of his. 'It seems like a dream,' Sade continued. 'My dear, I've come for you and it's not a dream... from now on, all will be well.' (193)

All are expected to be well again for the couple though it will be difficult trying to fix their lives together again moving forward. In a similar fashion, all are invariably expected to be well if man will learn how better to deal and cope with nature. Ogunpa River's temper that resulted to flooding and loss of lives is only a representation of several other examples, across the globe where nature has lost its temper and charges destructively due to man's excesses and abuse. Again, Stanley's appearance to save Sade leaves a lesson that connects to our critical thoughts on man and his natural environment. Sade, shoving the past away, did everything she could to secure Stanley's release and before her actions could come to fruition, she steals 'her child' and lands in prison awaiting the worst until Stanley, now free, came for her. This cyclic bout of good gestures only proves that 'one good deserves another. And drawing from this inspiration, to sum up our argument in this paper, we end that: one good turn on the environment will definitely deserve another. If we take care of the environment, all will certainly be well with us just as it obviously will be in the lives of Stanley and Sade afterwards. On the contrary, if we neglect the environment and continue to abuse, rob, and exploit it, the consequence of its anger and retaliation will certainly be at the height of human peril. This lesson is clear and seems the most vital take-home knowledge from the chains of episodic and sordid events that made up the

structural framework of the disheartening story of a flood disaster made possible by the negligence of the environment in Wale Okediran's *After the Flood*.

Conclusion

The novel, *After the Flood*, brings to the limelight the consequences of environmental degradation and manmade actions against the nation. From the government who amass who neglect their duties to the politicians who fuel and profit from the neglect, down to the citizens who fail to do their part to protect nature, the natural environment, and the entire ecosystem, the novel satirically sound the bell on impending environmental crises around us. All around us today and glaring signs of imminent environmental 'anger' and 'protest' looming as a result of our activities to nature, typical of Ogunpa River anger that left carnages and traumatic relics behind.

Wale Okediran through careful and artistic creation and placement of these events and incidents or situations, beckoned on the minds of everyone concerned on the need to embrace lasting solutions towards curbing the environmental challenges. There is something for us to learn from history if we must forestall future environmental disasters looming all around us. This is akin to the position of Anthony Njoku and Gloria Eke that 'What goes around comes around and in as much as humans, especially Africans, in view of our common experience, tend not to learn from history. There was an encore in August 2011 when another tragedy struck. The author recognizes this fact in the same Sun's interview and noted: 'When the same flood disaster occurred in Ibadan two years ago, Longman re-issued the book for wide spread distribution to schools in Oyo State as a way of reminding us about the ability of history to repeat itself if care is not taken.' (25) It is high time we allowed history to guide our further decisions and dealings with our environment which is posing greater danger daily and threatens our collective existence.

To this end, the paper reechoes that the novel, *After the Flood* makes an interesting ecocritical reading. It hinges on the lethal consequences and aftermaths of environmental abuse and pollution thus the fitting title –after the flood– what awaits us at the end of nature's tunnel after our deed of abuse and exploitation is done at our own end of the tunnel. Environmental crises can largely be avoided if we are honest enough to admit the truth and assume full responsibility for our ecosystem. The novel, *After the flood*, no doubt will continue to elicit critical thoughts that will enrich scholarship in eco-critical discourse but beyond all that will be said, the lesson is imprinted in our hearts that the environment is our to nurture not to plunder, our to save and not to loot.

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