

**Environmental Consciousness in the Face of Capitalist Realities: A Study of Wale Okediran's
*After the Flood***

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Abstract

This study has explored environmental consciousness in Wale Okediran's *After the Flood* (2012). The analysis of the selected novels has employed eco-critical stance laced with Nigerian policymaking in raising literary awareness about significant environmental challenges as well as the interpretation of the relationship carved out of human exploitation and environmental degradation. This paper has significantly employed ecocriticism as a theoretical approach in explicating a broad perspective with provocative conditions trapped in moral dilemma—a deeper representation of complex relationships or interconnectedness between humans and the physical landscapes. No doubt, the rising destruction of natural waters, landscapes and human oppression—a form of violent exploitation is perceived as a metaphor of neglect which needs strict national policy for restoration. This research has exposed eco-friendly narratives geared towards sustainable practices.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Policymaking, Social Consciousness, Environmental Exploitation

Introduction

In the ever-evolving narrative of our global landscape, the symbiotic relationship between environmental consciousness and the realities of capitalism has become a pressing and complex issue. No wonder, Udemba and Ojukwu (2023) maintain that “education is the key to social consciousness—an integral part of human society from the very beginning which for ages has received vested interest in human societies” (150). Notably, as our country grapples with the consequences of industrialization and economic growth, the environmental imperative has risen to the forefront of global discourse. Simultaneously, the capitalist ethos, driving forces of commerce and expansion, stands as a formidable influence shaping the contours of our societies. This juxtaposition prompts a critical examination of how our awareness of environmental issues navigates the multifaceted landscapes defined by capitalist realities. In this discourse surrounding environmental consciousness and issues, the role of capitalism has emerged as a pivotal point of discussion and scrutiny. Capitalism, as an economic system, has undeniably shaped the trajectory of global development, commerce, and societal structures. However, with the acceleration of industrialization and economic growth under capitalist frameworks, concerns have arisen about the profound environmental consequences that often accompany these pursuits. In the vibrant tapestry of Nigerian literature, the interplay between economic structures and environmental policy unfolds as a compelling narrative, casting a nuanced spotlight on the challenges posed by the capitalist lens. Capitalism serves as a thematic portal into a literary landscape where authors grapple with the multifaceted dimensions of environmental policymaking within the framework of capitalism. From bustling urban centres to serene rural landscapes, the narratives within these texts reflect the profound impact of economic structures on the natural world and the ensuing challenges faced by policymakers seeking to strike a delicate equilibrium. This exploration is not merely a literary analysis but a journey into the collective consciousness of a nation, where literature becomes a mirror reflecting the intricate dance between profit-driven motives and the preservation of Nigeria's diverse ecosystems. It is an examination of how characters, plots, and overarching themes mirror the ecological realities of a nation navigating the intricate web of capitalism and environmental policy challenges.

Capitalism, as a dominant economic system worldwide, has been instrumental in propelling unprecedented economic growth, technological advancements, and global interconnectedness. However, this pursuit of prosperity has not occurred in isolation from environmental consequences, giving rise to a discourse that questions the sustainability of the capitalist paradigm. Capitalism is marked by private ownership, market-driven competition, and profit-seeking endeavors. While these principles have undeniably fueled innovation and lifted millions out of poverty, they have also been implicated in activities that pose profound threats to the delicate balance of our ecosystems. One of the central critiques levelled against capitalism in the context of the environment lies in its inherent emphasis on the pursuit of profit. In the relentless pursuit of short-term financial gains, corporations may adopt practices that prioritize economic interests over ecological sustainability. This prioritization can manifest in a range of environmentally detrimental activities, from the overexploitation of natural resources to the generation of copious amounts of pollution. As economic entities vie for competitive advantages, the toll on the environment may intensify, sparking a critical examination of the balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship. The concept of externalities looms large in discussions surrounding capitalism and the environment. In the pursuit of profit maximization, businesses often externalize the true environmental costs of their operations. This externalization involves the offloading of ecological burdens onto society at large, as the repercussions of pollution, resource depletion, and habitat destruction are not adequately reflected in the prices of goods and services. Consequently, the true toll on the environment remains obscured, fostering an unsustainable cycle that perpetuates environmental degradation.

Many scholars, environmentalists, and activists have expressed concerns about the role of capitalism in contributing to environmental degradation. It is important to note that perspectives on this issue can vary, and not everyone within these groups holds the same viewpoint. Naomi Klein, a prominent social activist and author, has explored the connections between capitalism and environmental issues in her works, such as *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. (2014) She argues that the pursuit of profit within a capitalist framework often conflicts with the necessary measures to address climate change and environmental degradation. Klein (2014: 38) states that “right now capitalism is winning hands down. It wins every time the need for economic growth is used as the excuse for putting off climate action yet again, or for breaking emission reduction commitments already made.” Therefore, the pursuit of profit within a capitalist framework can create significant conflicts with the essential measures needed to address climate change and environmental degradation. Klein's central thesis challenges the prevailing notion that the market-driven approach inherent in capitalism can effectively address the climate crisis. She contends that the profit motive and the inherent need for constant economic growth within a capitalist system are fundamentally at odds with the urgent and transformative actions required to mitigate climate change. Klein argues that capitalism is an economic system that is driven by an intrinsic need for perpetual growth. The relentless pursuit of profit and expansion, she posits, encourages the exploitation of natural resources and the perpetuation of environmentally harmful practices. This growth imperative, according to Klein, creates a perpetual cycle of consumption and depletion that exacerbates environmental degradation. One of the focal points of Klein's critique is the entrenchment of fossil fuel industries within the capitalist framework. She contends that the powerful influence of fossil fuel corporations, driven by profit motives, hinders the necessary transition to renewable energy sources. In her view, the dependence on fossil fuels not only contributes to climate change but also influences political and economic decisions that prioritize short-term profits over long-term environmental sustainability. She argues that the capitalist system, particularly in its neoliberal form, tends to prioritize corporate interests over the collective well-being of societies and the planet. This, she suggests, leads to the dismantling of environmental regulations and the weakening of measures aimed at curbing pollution and resource exploitation. The pursuit of profit, according to Klein, often overrides the imperative to protect the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. Klein is critical of market-based solutions to climate change, such as carbon trading and cap-and-trade systems. She argues that these mechanisms, rather than addressing the root causes of environmental degradation, often serve to commodify nature and create new avenues for profit-making without delivering substantive environmental benefits. Klein's work encourages a

holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, and social concerns, urging for transformative change to create a more sustainable and equitable future.

Buhari and Umut (2020) in their research work, *Capital, the State, and Environmental Pollution in Nigeria*, explores the environmental pollution caused by capital in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region and highlights the potential for a new social and political agency. The contradiction between oil production and mining activities presents a complex dilemma that highlights the tension between economic development and environmental conservation. On the one hand, these activities are essential for meeting the growing energy demands of society and driving economic growth. On the other hand, they pose significant risks to the environment, including habitat destruction, water pollution, and climate change. Buhari and Umut (2020) believe that:

The oil prospecting and mining activities generate two key contradictions; the workers, who work because they need to survive, and the community-based social movements that emerged to challenge the degradation of the environment of the host communities by the capital. These two historical agents as identified have the potential to transform the capitalist exploitation and expropriation in Nigeria.

The working class and community-based social movements are essential but not sufficient agents of transformation in the capitalist economy. Cooperation between global and local sites of resistance, including trade unions, community-based social movements, and activists, is crucial for transforming capitalist domination, exploitation, and expropriation. In Nigeria, the concept of "movement of movements" is used to revisit the conversation on capital's role in environmental pollution. The works of Helon Habila's novel *Oil on Water* (2011), Ken Saro-Wiwa *Sozaboy* (1985), and other eco-texts have dealt extensively with the contradictions and consequences of capitalism. It is important to state that there have been tensions between economic growth and environmental stewardship, the dilemmas faced by policymakers in balancing progress with preservation, and the potential solutions envisioned by Nigerian authors. The literary narratives become a crucible for understanding not only the challenges but also the possibilities and pathways towards sustainable policies that reconcile the demands of capitalism with the imperatives of ecological well-being.

In the relentless pursuit of economic growth and development, the global community has witnessed an unprecedented strain on our planet's ecosystems. Policymakers face a formidable challenge in navigating the complexities of the capitalist pattern. Nigerian literature serves as repositories of scientific rigour, presenting policymakers with a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationships within ecosystems and the detrimental consequences of human activities. These texts often provide empirical evidence, offering a factual basis for the formulation of policies that go beyond mere rhetoric. Policymakers can leverage this scientific foundation to craft legislation that not only acknowledges the environmental challenges but also establishes concrete measures to mitigate them. *After the Flood, A Drop of Mercy*, and other texts emerge as invaluable resources, providing policymakers with a compass to draft laws that transcend the confines of the current economic system. These works, which range from peer-reviewed scientific studies to policy recommendations from environmental experts, serve as comprehensive repositories of knowledge. Grounded in scientific rigour, these texts offer policymakers a nuanced understanding of the delicate balance within ecosystems and the ramifications of human activities on the environment. Armed with this empirical evidence, policymakers can forge legislation that not only acknowledges the severity of environmental challenges but also outlines concrete measures to mitigate the adverse impacts. As they grapple with the imperative to address environmental degradation within the existing capitalist paradigm, the significance of eco-texts becomes increasingly apparent. These texts, ranging from scientific studies to policy recommendations, offer a wealth of knowledge that can guide policymakers in drafting laws to counteract the negative environmental impacts associated with capitalism. The field of environmental consciousness and ecological economics, embedded within the selected texts, introduces alternative economic models that prioritize sustainability over relentless growth. Policymakers can glean insights

from these texts to explore frameworks that consider the ecological limits of the planet. Concepts such as steady-state economies and circular economies, woven into the fabric of eco texts, provide a roadmap for policymakers seeking to reshape economic structures to align with environmental imperatives. International agreements and conventions, elucidated in eco-texts, contribute to the global environmental governance framework. Policymakers can leverage these frameworks as blueprints for crafting laws that align with international efforts. By integrating these global perspectives into legislation, policymakers foster collaboration on a scale commensurate with the transboundary nature of environmental challenges, emphasizing shared responsibility and collective action.

Eco-texts on capitalism play a significant role in shaping environmental consciousness by providing a critical lens through which individuals, policymakers, and societies perceive the intricate relationship between economic systems and the natural environment. These texts serve as educational tools, fostering a deeper understanding of the environmental consequences of capitalist practices such as the environmental externalities of industrialization, resource extraction, and consumer-driven economies. They expose the challenging notion that perpetual growth within the capitalist framework is sustainable by encouraging a re-evaluation of the prevailing economic paradigm. *After the Flood* also illuminate the unequal distribution of environmental burdens, emphasizing how vulnerable communities often bear the brunt of ecological degradation. This awareness fosters a sense of environmental justice, prompting readers to consider the ethical dimensions of capitalism and advocate for policies that prioritize the well-being of both the planet and marginalized communities. These texts often propose alternative economic models rooted in ecological sustainability. Concepts such as steady-state economies, circular economies, and sustainable development featured prominently in the selected texts. They offer viable alternatives that prioritize long-term environmental health over short-term gains. They inspire readers to envision a more harmonious relationship between human activities and the natural world. Eco-texts on capitalism also contribute to the formulation of environmentally conscious policies. Policymakers, armed with the insights from these texts, can design regulations that mitigate the adverse environmental impacts of capitalist practices. This may include measures to reduce emissions, protect ecosystems, and incentivize businesses to adopt sustainable practices. They also facilitate a broader conversation about the need for systemic change. They encourage a shift in societal values and norms, advocating for a reevaluation of success beyond mere economic indicators. This cultural shift is essential to fostering a collective environmental consciousness that transcends individual actions to address the systemic roots of environmental challenges. In essence, eco-texts on capitalism serve as catalysts for awareness, education, and advocacy. They empower individuals to question the status quo, inspire policymakers to enact change, and contribute to the broader societal shift towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future. Through their influence on perceptions, policies, and cultural narratives, these texts play a crucial role in shaping a heightened environmental consciousness in the face of capitalist realities.

Eco-critical Perspectives in Okediran's *After the Flood*

In the realm of contemporary literature, the union of narrative artistry and ecological contemplation has given rise to a genre that not only tells stories but also invokes a deep sense of environmental consciousness. The implication is that certain “thematic factors in Postcolonial literature have been broadened as a result of different emerging trends, issues and changes in the African social cultural environment. Hence, African literary artists have tried as much as possible to react to these issues with all seriousness using their literary techniques” (Odinye 2018: 2). Among these narratives, *After the Flood* emerges as a powerful literary work that skillfully weaves an intricate tapestry of human experience and ecological awakening. At the intersection of literature and ecology, the lens of ecocriticism comes to the fore, offering a profound framework for understanding the perspectives that *After the Flood* shares regarding our relationship with the natural world. Ecocriticism, as a theoretical perspective, has enriched the study of literature by illuminating the environmental facets of literary narratives. It invites readers and scholars to look beyond the surface of storytelling and explore the profound connections between literature and the environment it portrays. In this case, *After the Flood*, when examined through the lens of ecocriticism, reveals the nuanced layers of environmental

consciousness woven into the narrative fabric. *After the Flood* is a literary and social discourse deconstructing the relationship between man and his environment, focusing on exploitation and neglect. The novel highlights the environment's suffering and the loss of beauty and freedom due to human greed. Many authors believe that God's creation is perfect in its design and purpose. Everything in the natural world, from the intricate structures of atoms to the vast expanse of the cosmos, reflects the wisdom and creativity of its creator. This is the reason Ikejiani (2009:3) relies on the dialogics of St. Augustine of Hippo to draw a distinction between God's perfect creation and man-made distortions.

The whole, therefore, of the heaven and the earth, with all things that are in them, Thou hast composed in a marvelously good manner, yea, in the most excellent manner, seeing that Thou art excellent, and seeing that Thy delights are to be in Thy whole creation, whereof each part has, in its own way, its own delights.

St. Augustine acknowledged the fallen nature of humanity and the potential for distortion when he emphasised that the city of God and the city of man are not the same. As opposed to God's city, man's earthly city is founded on appetitive and possessive impulses, which are corrupt and torn by strife. Such appetitive and possessive impulses often lead men to exploit their fellow men and their natural environment. One of the key perspectives of ecocriticism that *After the Flood* deftly explores is the concept of nature as a construct. Within the realm of ecocriticism, the idea of nature being a construct acknowledges that the depiction of nature in literature is not a mere reflection of the external world but, in fact, a creation influenced by cultural, historical, and social contexts. *After the Flood* is a fictional representation of the 1980 Ogunpa flood disaster that claimed lives and properties in Ibadan. It weaves a narrative where the environment is portrayed to reflect the dynamic and evolving characters' perceptions and experiences. The story presents a vivid but imaginary world where the physical environment is reshaped by ecological catastrophes and human actions, as in Okediran (2012:62):

River Ogunpa, the principal river in the city of Ibadan runs across the city. The river is to Ibadan what River Seine is to Paris and the Thames to London. However, this is where the comparisons end. For unlike the Thames or Seine, River Ogunpa gable and apart from one segment of the river that is dammed for fishing purposes, it really serves no other useful purpose whereas the Seine and the Thames are about six hundred and three hundred long respectively, the Ogunpa is not more than thirty-two kilometers long. However, the inhabitants of the poorly planned city have found the river useful for refuse disposal. During periods of scarcity of portable water, the river becomes a source of water supply.

This dynamic portrayal highlights the fluid nature of landscapes and ecosystems and their capacity to reflect the consequences of environmental choices. This shift, often characterized by human suffering, invites readers to consider how the human-nature relationship has evolved and how humanity's treatment of the environment has contributed to the narrative's ecological crises.

In ecocritical analysis, nature is often considered a character in its own right. Ecocritical theory examines how the novel personifies nature and treats it as an active participant in the story. This involves exploring the agency of nature, its impact on human characters, and the ways in which the characters interact with their natural surroundings. *After the Flood* portrays nature as a dynamic and active character, highlighting its power and agency, human-nature interactions, symbolic representation, emotional connection, and environmental lessons. The novel explores the complex relationships between humans and the natural world, emphasizing the dependence of humans on nature for sustenance, shelter, and transportation. The flooded landscapes and vastness of the water symbolizes the environmental crisis and the overwhelming power of nature. The characters' lives and survival are closely tied to their ability to navigate and adapt to the aquatic environment. This emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humanity and nature. The emotional connection between humans and the environment is underscored by the characters' emotional reactions to nature. The novel also conveys environmental lessons, emphasizing the consequences of environmental degradation and the urgency of addressing climate change. Nature's presence and influence serve as a reminder of the fragility and

interconnectedness of ecosystems. It encourages readers to reflect on their own relationship with the natural world. By treating nature as a character, *After the Flood* emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the power and interconnectedness of the natural world. The novel aptly captures the deadly implications of depleting the environment for everyone. Human negligence towards his surroundings is the primary cause of most environmental crises the country experiences. The novel portrays tragic scenes and a devastating atmosphere due to Ogunpa River flooding. Rainfall is a natural phenomenon, but its management and harnessing for human safety can be controlled with careful planning. The text begins with heavy rainfall, which was gradual and later escalated to a dangerous level that resulted in chaos and disruption. In developed countries, prioritizing people's lives and property is crucial, unlike in Nigeria, where adequate measures are not taken to prevent environmental issues. A state of emergency would have been declared in areas near the river, putting everyone on red alert and preventing frivolities during the predicted time of the rain. As readers engage with the novel, they are prompted to reflect on the environmental constructs depicted within it, such as characters' experiences, cultural influences, and the evolving state of the natural world. These are some of the perspectives that align with ecocriticism's emphasis on recognizing the human role in shaping ecological narratives. It invites readers to become more aware of the dynamic interplay between human perceptions and the environment.

The novel presents an imaginative exploration of the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change. It employs ecological imagination to create a vivid and imaginative picture of the consequences of environmental degradation and envisions a future shaped by climate change. Ecological imagination is evident in the creation of a unique ecosystem where new forms of life emerge. This encourages readers to think about the resilience of life and nature's ability to adapt. The novel also highlights human-environment interactions, emphasizing the interdependence between humans and the natural world. The novel explores both the destructive consequences of environmental degradation and the potential for positive change, thereby encouraging readers to consider the urgency of addressing environmental issues while holding onto hope for a sustainable future. The novel addresses real-world environmental concerns, such as climate change and sea-level rise, prompting readers to think critically about humanity's relationship with the natural world and its role in shaping the planet's future. Ecocriticism analyses how the writers, based on scientific understanding or critical observations, envision and depict the ecological crisis and human-environmental interconnectedness.

Unpreparedness is an aspect of the ecocritical theme; this subject delves into the literary exploration of how individuals, communities, and societies are often ill-equipped to deal with the ecological challenges and environmental crises that they encounter. In Nigeria, the situation is not different. After *the Flood* portrays the unpreparedness of the characters in the face of eminent dangers, with Sade, the wife of Stanley, preferring to leave her son Tomi and maid, Beauty, to attend a party despite the flood warnings, as reflected in Okediran (2012:5):

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.'

This shows the complex relationship between humans and the environment. The fact that Sade prioritizes celebrating Nana's birthday reflects the attitudes of Nigerians towards the environment. It compares cultural priorities with the environment, and the result shows that cultural and social events often take precedence over environmental concerns. This can reflect a broader attitude within Nigerian society, where cultural traditions and social activities are highly valued. It highlights the role of individual decisions in shaping environmental outcomes.

Having prioritized social events over pressing environmental needs, the text highlights the consequences of unpreparedness in the face of environmental issues and emphasizes the need for

heightened awareness and proactive measures to address ecological concerns. As the storm rages and the Ogunpa River surges, no one is prepared for the outcome. Okediran (2012: 8) highlights the lack of preparedness from the government and citizens:

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.

This shows the various ways in which individuals, communities, and societies are unprepared for ecological disruptions such as natural disasters, climate change, and environmental crises. It is a concept that transcends the immediate response to an event and delves into the underlying causes, consequences, and human attitudes and behaviours in the face of environmental challenges. The passage vividly describes a disastrous environmental scenario where an angry flood engulfs a city, exacerbating its violence due to various factors. The "angry flood" personifies the force of nature as it surges towards the city. It symbolizes the uncontrollable power of the environment, which can become a destructive and unpredictable force, especially during extreme weather events. The flood's violence is emphasized by suggesting the ferocity of its onslaught. This shows the destructive potential of natural disasters, which can bring devastation to human settlements. The passage highlights human contributions to the disaster and how the inhabitants of the city dumped refuse into the river bed. This human activity exacerbated the flood, obstructing its smooth flow. It underscores the idea that human actions, such as pollution and mismanagement of natural resources, can intensify environmental crises. This illustration shows nature's capability when provoked. Nature has the capability of breaching its natural boundaries and infiltrating urban areas, thereby affecting communities and infrastructure. The scene is set in an overcrowded city with narrow streets and dilapidated buildings that defy urban planning regulations. This urban environment is ill-prepared to cope with a natural disaster, highlighting the vulnerability of poorly planned cities to environmental threats. The destructive impact of the flood is evident as it causes houses, many of them made of mud, to collapse. This can then be interpreted as a metaphor for environmental neglect and the consequences of human indifference to the natural world. It illustrates how short-sighted actions, such as dumping refuse into rivers, can lead to disastrous outcomes. The destructive power of nature exacerbated by human actions, serves as a poignant illustration of the consequences of environmental neglect. It calls to mind the need for responsible stewardship of our natural resources and urban planning to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable communities.

The Ogunpa River flood in Nigeria was a terrible disaster, causing death, tears, and hardship for many. This novel reflects on the untold hardships resulting from abusing nature. The loss of biodiversity is stark, with ecosystems disrupted and species struggling to survive in altered environments. The devastating change in climate is a result of environmental abuse, which leads to more frequent and devastating floods. The aftermath of floods is often marred by severe air and water pollution, posing health risks to affected communities. Polluted water sources can cause waterborne diseases, while contaminated air can exacerbate respiratory conditions. Resource depletion exacerbates the crisis, making recovery efforts more challenging. Natural disasters like floods cause loss of life, property damage, and the displacement of communities. The abuse of nature amplifies these impacts, as climate change intensifies the severity of flooding events. Food insecurity becomes a pressing issue due to damaged crops and the loss of agricultural land, hitting vulnerable populations hardest. Economically, floods can be devastating, and the hardships are compounded when environmental degradation leads to more frequent and severe floods. Job losses, economic downturns, and increased poverty level follow in the wake of such events. Social disparities are magnified; as marginalized communities often face the brunt of nature's abuse.

Furthermore, the loss of cultural and spiritual connections with the environment is deeply felt after floods, especially by indigenous communities. Migration becomes a necessity for many as communities are forced to leave areas rendered uninhabitable by floods and the degradation of nature. This migration can lead to conflicts over limited resources and refugee crises. These hardships are long-lasting, and some may be irreversible. The aftermath of a flood serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of abusing nature, emphasizing the urgent need for sustainable practices and responsible environmental policies. The government's insensitivity and abuse of nature contributed to the disaster, resulting in the loss of shanty buildings and a history of poverty and negligence. The country's backwardness and negligence are evident in the story, highlighting the need for better government, policy implementation, and action to address these issues. The novel paints a vivid image of the effects of environmental degradation. The storm destroyed power lines, causing darkness in the neighbourhood. Parents could not help drowning children, and mothers could not trace their children, among many others. The untold hardships that these characters experienced due to flood issues and the lack of environmental care in a novel can be profoundly moving and evoke a sense of empathy in readers. These hardships often go beyond the immediate physical challenges; they encompass emotional, social, and economic struggles. In other words, the displacement of people, frustration, sadness, financial difficulties, strained relationships, death of loved ones, and trauma involved with watching flood disasters underscore humanity's interdependence with the environment. They remind us of the real-life consequences of environmental negligence. The untold hardships serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for environmental awareness and action. They emphasize that environmental care is not just an abstract concept but a matter of life and death for many individuals and communities. Examining the narratives in the context of ecocriticism challenges us to reflect on the ethical and moral responsibilities we have towards our environment and the profound impact of our actions or inaction on the well-being of people and the planet.

The government's insensitivity and abuse of nature therefore become major contributing factors to environmental disasters, as seen through the lens of ecocriticism. When government policies prioritize short-term economic interests over environmental conservation, the consequences can be dire. Insufficient regulation of industries, deforestation, and unchecked resource extraction can lead to the degradation of ecosystems, biodiversity loss, and the alteration of natural landscapes. The way the government responds to environmental crises, such as floods or resource depletion, plays a crucial role in exacerbating or mitigating these disasters because any inadequate or delayed response can intensify the impact of such events and hinder long-term recovery efforts. *After the Flood*, exposes that the influence of the government's actions can also influence public perceptions and attitudes towards nature. If government prioritizes economic gains over environmental protection, it can contribute to a culture of environmental indifference or denial. This can lead to a cycle of environmental neglect and inaction. In addition, government policies that disregard the cultural and spiritual significance of the environment to indigenous communities can result in the erosion of their values and traditions, further alienating them from mainstream society. This impact of government actions is not uniform and can exacerbate social and economic disparities. The unequal distribution of environmental impacts can disproportionately affect marginalized communities, perpetuating social injustices. Therefore, government decisions influenced by powerful corporate interests can lead to policies that favour profit-driven industries at the expense of environmental well-being. This can result in the abuse of nature and ecological disasters.

In the realm of literature and art, ecocriticism examines how authors and artists use their work to critique government policies and raise awareness about environmental abuse. It serves as a platform for advocating change and increasing public awareness about ecological issues. Ecocriticism provides a lens through which we understand how government insensitivity and abuse of nature contribute to environmental disasters. It also addresses these issues, necessitating a reevaluation of policies with greater emphasis on sustainability and a commitment to responsible environmental stewardship. In the text, the government's insensitivity and abuse of nature played a significant role in contributing to

environmental disasters, as observed through the lens of ecocriticism. This perspective underscores the interplay between human actions, environmental consequences, and the impact on the narrative's world. Through an ecocritical lens, the novel highlights how government policies and contractors' actions prioritize short-term gains over long-term environmental sustainability. The government's disregard for nature and exploitation of natural resources reflect a common theme of environmental degradation in literature. This negligence exacerbates the environmental disasters, which, in the context of the story, lead to catastrophic floods, resource depletion, or other ecological crises. The government's actions symbolize a broader societal attitude that often values economic interests and political power over ecological well-being. Analyzing the text from an ecocritical perspective highlights the systemic issues that contribute to environmental disasters and emphasizes the need for a more responsible and sustainable approach to nature. Ecocriticism in the novel draws attention to the complex relationship between humanity and the environment. This framework serves as a critique of the government's role in perpetuating environmental problems. It invites readers to reflect on the real-world implications of such actions and challenges us to consider the consequences of our collective treatment of the natural world.

Environmental crises have a profound impact on human lives, and ecocriticism offers a valuable perspective for understanding this relationship. Ecocriticism serves as a medium for exploring family relationships. *After the Flood* depicts Stanley and Sade, a couple coping with environmental degradation and exploitation. After the loss of their son, Timi, Stanley loses his temper and violently beats Sade, causing her to suffer from a near-suicide attempt. The text highlights the devastating impact of environmental crises on human lives, especially on love and relationships. Couples worry about the health, safety, or future of their children. Disagreement over how to address the impact of environmental crises can lead to tension and discord, putting a stain on the bond between partners. Okadiran (2012: 14):

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.

The aftermath of environmental neglect impacts relationships; the crisis destroyed love relationships between the couple, which is a reflection of what is seen in our world today. Ecocriticism underscores how environmental crises expose human vulnerability and the psychological and emotional toll on individuals and communities. The fear and trauma associated with disasters, loss of homes, and displacement have profound and long-lasting effects on mental health. Ecocriticism explores the ways in which *After the Flood* and other literary works reflect these emotional experiences. It highlights how Stanley, Sade, and others' lives changed after the flood and how the environmental crisis made them commit crimes they would not ordinarily commit. How the disaster led to Stanley's anger and guilt, while Nana accused Sade of snatching her boyfriend. The novel explores the exploitation of the environment and its ability to fight back, highlighting the lethal and devastating impact of such actions. It highlights alarming exploitation and environmental degradation in Nigeria, with the military government and citizens committing the same offence. The government's responsibility to rebuild the Ogunpa River is highlighted, but co-contractors loot funds and use inferior materials. Contracts symbolize selfish leaders, politicians, and individuals holding society to ransom, causing exploitation of human beings and the environment. Ogunpa loses her temper during the flood, and a character laments, as seen in Okediran (2012:9):

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.

Poor governance and negligence have led to environmental damage and a risk to our lives. During the flooding, an old train driver and passengers were thrown into the river, causing over two hundred deaths and injuries. The aftermath left behind wreckage, destroyed property, and irreplaceable losses, leaving families with lifetime trauma, broken dreams and a lasting impact on the environment. Okediran (2012:41) highlights how the environment swallowed people like Dracula, causing chaos:

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.

The flood destroyed government property, power lines, and lifelong investments in the neighbourhood. Stanley's building is also destroyed, while a poor house girl, Beauty, tries to save the life of a three-month-old baby, Tomi. Beauty fights until the last hour of her life, dropping Tomi in a laundry bucket that reaches her breast level. She is knocked unconscious by a falling brick, and she loses her grip on the bucket. The Ogunpa flood led to Sade's life turning point, resulting to severe criticism, betrayal and failed marriage. She is sacked by the city general hospital and later finds a job at a Christian medical hospital with Pastor Adeoye. However, her past resurfaced with the scandal of her ex-boyfriend and Pastor Adeoye's sexual advances, causing her struggles to take on a new level.

The novel highlights the exploitation of the masses as well as government's complicity in fueling environmental crises. After the Ogunpa River disaster, the government provided money to contractors to rebuild channels. Stanley, one of the privileged contractors, was among the victims. However, his fellow contractors were only interested in amassing the contract allocation, buying fake materials, and spending the excess on partying and drinking. Stanley's co-contractors are like canker worms, deeply ingrained in society. The Ogunpa River flooding crisis began with heavy rain at midnight and the construction of three artificial lakes to control the river's overflow. Initially, the semi-permeable soil in the city held out well, but anger from Ogunpa erupted, causing the city to flood again. The flooding was more devastating than ever, causing thousands of lives to be lost. A brothel in the city witnessed a tragic scene, with commercial sex workers and patrons running up to the third floor before the buildings collapsed, burying the occupants under a torus of masonry, wood, and water. The flood, which is millions of cubic metres, flattened the high-density commercial centre, causing a night of tears and sorrow. Bulldozers were used to aid rescue workers in recovering dead bodies from the Ogunpa River disaster. The disaster caused numerous deaths, with some women finding their children alive while others were not. The lucky ones found themselves as foster parents, like Tomi, Sade's boy. They named him Moses, ignoring the psychological trauma of his real parents. Years later, after Pa Lasisi's death, Ma Lasisi handed the baby to Dr. Graham, who adopted him and treated him like a child. Dr. Graham granted her the wish and took care of Tomi before leaving him at the mercy of another couple, Mr. and Mrs. Shelima.

The second Ogunpa River flooding is not solely attributed to the government or residents, but rather to contractors who syphoned public funds and used cheap materials for Ogunpa River channel construction. The government should have implemented measures to check projects, but in the novel, some officials are found in collusion with contractors, contributing to exploitation, corruption, and environmental abuse. Stanley, a contractor involved in a flood project, is shocked by the public outcry and the military government's investigation into the cause as he realises he is cheated, receiving two million naira for his part of the contract and the other two contractors over fifty million naira. The

military government orders the contractors to report to the nearest police station, and investigations revealed that most use inferior materials to rebuild river banks. The flood caused massive losses and an outbreak of diseases like cholera and typhoid. Stanley, innocent of his actions, is arrested, found guilty, and detained in Kirikiri maximum prison.

Sade secures Stanley's release from prison after several interventions, and she finds her lost son, Tomi. However, because there is insufficient evidence to prove that she is Tomi's mother, she is sentenced to prison. Stanley secures Sade's release through a lawyer's search, reclaiming their child with evidence, as seen in Okediran (2012:193):

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 hers. '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.'

The couple's lives are expected to be restored, but it will be less challenging if humans learn to cope with nature better. The Ogunpa River's temper, resulting in flooding and the loss of lives, is a global example of how nature can become destructive due to human excesses and abuse. Stanley's appearance to save Sade connects to the lesson that one good act for the environment deserves another. If we care for the environment, it will be good for us, just as it will be for Stanley and Sade. Neglecting the environment and continuing to abuse, rob, and exploit it will lead to human peril. This lesson is crucial to the story of the flood disaster in the novel because it highlights the consequences of environmental degradation and human actions and the need for lasting solutions to curb environmental challenges. The novel explores the government's neglect, politicians' profit, and citizens' failure to protect nature and the ecosystem.

Furthermore, ecocriticism also involves examining the ethical dimensions of human relationships with the environment. Analyzing *After the Flood* through this lens can involve exploring the characters' moral responsibilities towards the natural world and the choices they make in response to the ecological crisis. You can assess how the novel presents environmental ethics and whether it encourages readers to reconsider their own ethical stance. *After the Flood* explores environmental ethics through the characters' moral responsibilities and choices in response to the ecological crisis. The novel raises questions about the moral obligations humans have towards the environment, focusing on resource allocation, biodiversity preservation, and treating fellow humans with respect. The consequences of human actions on the environment and the broader ecosystem are illustrated, emphasizing the need for ethical considerations in environmental decision-making. The novel emphasizes the interconnectedness of human beings and the environment, highlighting the direct implications for human well-being and survival. The novel also explores themes of sacrifice and cooperation, prompting readers to consider the ethical dimensions of resource allocation, cooperation, and the trade-offs involved in environmental decision-making. The novel encourages readers to reflect on their own values and attitudes towards the environment, presenting an extreme scenario that challenges societal values and ethical frameworks. By examining these elements, *After the Flood* addresses environmental ethics by examining the characters' moral choices, the consequences of human actions on the environment, the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, and the reflection on human values.

Conclusion

In the context of *After the Flood*, this paper has addressed issues such as resource exploitation, overconsumption, and the impact of political and economic systems on the environment. This analysis has revealed the author's commentary on the real-world's ecological challenges and the potential consequences of unsustainable human actions. *The* novel explored ecological critique through its examination of societal and cultural practices that contribute to environmental degradation. This exploration has further highlighted the consequences of unchecked resource exploitation, pollution, and

overconsumption. It critiques political and economic systems that prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability, questioning their ethics and role in exacerbating the environmental crisis. The novel has also examined human responsibility for the environmental catastrophe, prompting readers to consider their individual and collective actions and raising questions about accountability. The novel therefore calls for transformative change and a fundamental shift in attitudes, policies, and behaviours to address the environmental crisis. By presenting the consequences of inaction and the potential for a sustainable future, the novel encourages readers to critically examine their call for transformative change and a shift in societal values and priorities to address pressing practices and advocate for positive environmental change.

After the Flood is a captivating novel that employs different techniques in order to offer readers a quintessential and thought-provoking journey. The novel seamlessly combines elements of resilience and adaptation, ethical dilemmas, adventure, and character-driven stories to create an immersive reading experience. The novel explores the archetypal polarities of good and evil, natural and supernatural, and action and consequence. The novel highlights the consequences of environmental degradation and human actions by the government, politicians, and citizens who fail to protect nature and the ecosystem. The novel satirizes the impending environmental crises, highlighting the anger and protest caused by human activities. This innovative work of art encourages everyone to embrace lasting solutions to curb environmental challenges. For policymakers, the novel serves as a reminder of the need for a more sustainable future. It suggests that literature can serve as a valuable tool for gaining insights into the complex interactions between humanity and the environment. Through the characters' experiences and those reflected in the novel, policymakers may glean valuable perspectives on the social, economic, and ethical dimensions of environmental issues, and drawing on the insights presented in the novel, policymakers can better understand the potential repercussions of environmental neglect and develop strategies to address these challenges.

Additionally, the narrative has emphasized the importance of learning from the past, as literature becomes a repository of knowledge that can inform decisions and policies in the face of environmental transformations. *After the Flood* has used powerful and descriptive diction that effectively creates an immersive world, conveys characters' emotions, and explores environmental degradation, human resilience, and ethical responsibilities. The emotional resonance of the characters captured through carefully chosen words and phrases allows readers to connect with the characters and the environmental challenges they face. The dialogue in the novel is authentic and realistic, reflecting the characters' diverse backgrounds and personalities. The atmospheric tone is created through concise and impactful language that heightens suspense and builds anticipation. Symbolism and subtextual meanings are also present, allowing for deeper interpretations and thematic exploration of the novel's ecological themes. *After the Flood* is a powerful and captivating story that effectively captures the characters' emotions and contributes to the exploration of environmental degradation, human resilience, and ethical responsibilities. For policymakers, this literary use of language fosters a deeper understanding of the human and emotional dimensions of environmental issues, potentially influencing the development of policies that are not only informed by data but also empathetic to the experiences of those affected by environmental changes.

The exploration of ecocriticism in *After the Flood* offers a profound and illuminating lens through which to view the novel's narrative, characters, and overarching themes. As the story unfolds against the backdrop of the 1980 Ogunpa flood disaster that claimed lives and properties in Ibadan, ecocriticism becomes an indispensable tool for unravelling the complex relationship between humanity and the natural world. One of the key revelations of an ecocritical examination of *After the Flood* lies in the recognition of the environment as a central character in the narrative. The devastated landscapes and altered ecosystems are not passive settings but active participants in the unfolding drama. Through vivid descriptions and immersive storytelling, the novel underscores the reciprocal nature of the relationship between characters and their environment, emphasizing how the environment shapes the characters' lives while, in turn, being profoundly impacted by human actions. The symbolic significance of nature

within the novel gains prominence through an ecocritical perspective. Elements of the natural world cease to be mere backdrops; they become potent symbols carrying profound ecological, ethical, and existential implications. The rising waters, depleted landscapes, and struggling ecosystems serve as metaphors for the consequences of environmental neglect and the urgent need for responsible stewardship.

Ecocriticism unveils layers of meaning in these symbols, inviting readers to reflect on the broader ecological narratives embedded in the novel. Ethical considerations also come to the forefront when viewed through an ecocritical lens. The text prompts readers to grapple with the ethical dimensions of survival in a world grappling with environmental degradation. Choices made by characters, such as resource allocation, power dynamics, and the pursuit of self-interest, are cast in an ethical light, compelling readers to confront the moral complexities of navigating a world on the brink of ecological collapse. *After the Flood* transcends its immediate narrative to become a reflection of real-world environmental concerns. Through the prism of ecocriticism, the novel serves as a cautionary tale, urging readers to contemplate the consequences of environmental exploitation, climate change, and the unsustainable use of natural resources. The ecological challenges faced by the characters become allegories for the pressing issues confronting our own planet, fostering a sense of ecological awareness and a call to action.

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