



Lagos as an Archive of Ecological Trauma and Speculative Renewal: A Study of Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*

Idowu, Stephen Olufemi, Ph.D.

Department of English Education, Lagos State University of Education, Epe-Noforija
Campus, Lagos State.

Email: idowuos@lasued.edu.ng Phone: 08034082450

Corresponding Email: idowuos@lasued.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examines Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* through the intersecting lenses of ecocriticism, Afrofuturism, and postcolonial memory studies, situating the novel within broader debates on African speculative fiction and the environmental humanities. The analysis foregrounds the ways in which Lagos is represented as a backdrop and an active agent in shaping ecological, cultural, and historical narratives. By presenting Lagos as both a vulnerable and regenerative urban space, *Lagoon* dramatises the tensions between environmental degradation, political instability, and the enduring capacity for renewal. The study highlights how the novel engages with the concept of environmental harm as a slow, cumulative process that intertwines with colonial and postcolonial histories. Pollution, urban decay, and social disarray become symbolic of broader patterns of historical trauma and political neglect, while the arrival of the extraterrestrial visitors reconfigures the city as a space of possibility, transformation, and new ecological relations. This tension between decline and regeneration underscores the novel's critical intervention in contemporary environmental and cultural discourses. Afrofuturist frameworks provide an avenue for examining how *Lagoon* imagines African futures that are neither dystopian inevitabilities nor utopian fantasies, but complex negotiations of resilience, agency, and survival. The novel constructs speculative ecologies that bridge the human and the nonhuman, opening space for rethinking planetary interdependence and ethical responsibility. At the same time, its engagement with memory and historical trauma suggests a mode of narrative archiving that preserves cultural resilience while challenging the limits imposed by colonial histories. Ultimately, this paper argues that *Lagoon* embodies a mode of ecocritical Afrofuturism that reimagines African agency in the face of ecological crisis. It positions the urban environment as a critical site of struggle and possibility, demonstrating how African speculative fiction can articulate new paradigms of survival, sovereignty, and collective transformation in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Lagos, Afrofuturism, Ecological trauma, Speculative fiction, Urban ecology

Introduction

Cities are more than built environments; they are also repositories of memory, sites of historical violence, and complex ecological zones where human and nonhuman life collide, coexist, and contend (Kennedy & Silverstein, 2023; Rabani & Mishra, 2023). In contemporary African literature, urban spaces like Lagos have become emblematic of the postcolonial condition, chaotic yet vibrant, wounded yet resilient, ecologically burdened yet imaginatively rich. As Africa's largest metropolis and a cultural epicentre, Lagos presents a unique ecological paradox: a city defined both by accumulated environmental trauma, pollution, overpopulation, and infrastructural decay, and by its potential for speculative renewal, rooted in traditional cosmologies and visionary futurisms.

Nnedi Okorafor's novel *Lagoon* (2014) engages this paradox through the viewpoints of African speculative fiction, reimagining Lagos as both an archive of ecological suffering and a location of environmental transformation. The novel opens with a foreigner landing in the polluted waters of the Lagos Lagoon, catalysing a series of encounters that force residents, human and nonhuman alike, to confront the city's ecological degradation, spiritual disorder, and sociopolitical instability. Rather than depicting foreign arrival as a purely destructive or imperial force, Okorafor uses it as a metaphor for ecological rupture and speculative possibility, challenging prevalent experiences of urban dystopia and inviting a reimagining of Lagos as a place of multispecies healing and post-human futures.

This paper argues that *Lagoon* positions Lagos as a living ecological archive, a palimpsest of colonial legacies, environmental decay, and multispecies trauma, while at the same time offering it as a speculative location of cosmological renewal and planetary ethics. Okorafor transforms Lagos from a symbol of postcolonial failure into a dynamic space of ecological recognition and transformation, where spiritual memory, environmental justice, and foreign intervention converge.

By examining how Lagos is marked with histories of ecological trauma, from the “dark, thick, and sour” waters of its lagoon (p. 2) to the mournful cries of marine creatures, and how the city is reimagined through speculative, Afrocentric, and post-human visions of coexistence, this study contributes to growing interdisciplinary conversations at the intersections of urban ecocriticism, postcolonial environmentalism, and Afrofuturism. In Okorafor's Lagos, the city is not just the setting of ecological collapse; it is a speaking, feeling, transforming body, an archive of what has been lost and a map toward what might be recovered.

Objectives and Research Questions

This paper seeks to address a gap in the existing scholarship on African speculative fiction and ecocriticism. While much research on Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* has focused on its Afrofuturist dimensions, questions of identity, or its representation of alien encounter, little attention has been given to how the novel conceptualises urban ecology and frames Lagos as an archive of ecological trauma and speculative renewal. Likewise, African ecocriticism has often concentrated on rural landscapes, extractive industries, or the Niger Delta, leaving the ecological and imaginative dynamics of African cities underexplored. By focusing on Lagos as both ecological location and narrative figure, this study contributes to the emerging field of African urban ecocriticism and extends trauma studies into environmental and multispecies registers.

The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to analyse how *Lagoon* represents ecological trauma through depictions of pollution, environmental degradation, and systemic violence; second, to examine how Okorafor reimagines the archive by granting narrative authority to nonhuman and multispecies voices; and third, to explore how

Afrofuturist imagination reconfigures Lagos as a location of speculative renewal, capable of generating alternative ecological and social futures.

In pursuing these objectives, the paper responds to the following questions:

1. How does *Lagoon* depict Lagos as an archive of ecological trauma and memory?
2. In what ways do multispecies narrators function as archivists of environmental injury?
3. How does Okorafor employ Afrofuturist aesthetics to imagine renewal and futurity within a context of ecological crisis?
4. What new insights emerge when Lagos is read through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, archive theory, and speculative fiction studies?

By engaging these questions, the paper demonstrates that *Lagoon* not only represents the ecological wounds of Lagos but also reimagines the city as a generative site where trauma and renewal are interwoven.

Literature Review

African speculative fiction has increasingly been read through the outlook of urban ecologies and environmental memory. Lagos, in particular, has become a focal point for this critical inquiry, as it embodies both ecological vulnerability and imaginative potential. Scholars of urban ecocriticism stress that African cities are not passive backdrops but dynamic ecological zones where human activity, infrastructure, and environmental forces interact in complex ways (Bennett & Johnson, 2010). This perspective positions Lagos in *Lagoon* as a city that is deeply scarred by environmental degradation yet remains capable of regeneration.

Postcolonial environmental criticism extends this conversation by linking urban ecological crises to the enduring legacies of colonial exploitation and global capitalism. Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence" has been particularly influential in describing how environmental harms accumulate invisibly over generations, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities. In African literary studies, Akanwa and Iheka (2018) argue that such environmental violence is often represented in fiction through images of infrastructural decay, polluted waterways, and dispossession. Okorafor's *Lagoon* participates in this tradition, depicting Lagos's oil-slicked lagoon and collapsing infrastructure as material reminders of both historical exploitation and contemporary neglect.

Afrofuturist criticism has brought a further dimension to these debates by integrating speculative imagination with ecological inquiry. Foundational works by Dery (1994), Eshun (2003), and Womack (2013) establish Afrofuturism as a framework that retrieves suppressed African diasporic histories while imagining radical futures. Building on this, more recent studies have emphasised Afrofuturism's ecological turn. Dubey (2023) identifies ecological fragility as a central concern in contemporary Afrofuturist narratives, while Butler (2021) underscores how speculative fiction combines ecological anxieties with possibilities of ethical transformation. Similarly, Young (2023) highlights

Afrofuturist literature's ability to envision new forms of symbiosis between human and nonhuman life.

Further contributions focus on the planetary and ethical stakes of speculative ecologies. Evans (2025) examines how Afrofuturist texts stage moral dilemmas of survival under conditions of ecological crisis, while Aquilone (2023) suggests that speculative fiction serves as a testing ground for alternative relationships between humans and the planet. Dorenbos (2023) and Lubek (2020) reinforce this line of argument by exploring how speculative texts reimagine environments not as static backdrops but as sites of negotiation and transformation. Within this constellation of scholarship, *Lagoon* exemplifies a distinctly African ecological Afrofuturism. The alien ambassador Ayodele, emerging from the polluted lagoon in the guise of a Nigerian woman, symbolizes renewal through hybridity, spiritual recognition, and cosmological openness rather than Western technological mastery.

Alongside ecocriticism and Afrofuturism, scholarship on archives and memory provides another interpretive perspective for reading *Lagoon*. Foucault's idea of the archive as a system that governs knowledge and remembrance has been extended to postcolonial contexts, most notably by Mbembe (2002), who frames the archive as a space of rupture, survival, and re-narration. Contemporary theorists have built on this foundation to explore the material and spatial dimensions of urban archives. Premat (2021), for example, argues that African infrastructures can themselves be read as ecological and social archives, while Grillo (2021) demonstrates how urban neglect and disorder encode histories of struggle and dispossession. O'Halloran (2016) adds that cities also function as sites of imaginative re-narration, where memory is both preserved and contested. These perspectives shed light on Lagos in *Lagoon* as an embodied archive: a city whose polluted waters and broken structures are not only material scars of environmental trauma but also speculative grounds for reimagining futures.

Synthesis and Analysis

By synthesising these diverse perspectives, it becomes clear that *Lagoon* constructs Lagos as both an ecological archive and a speculative horizon. The novel showcases the city's ecological trauma while offering possibilities for renewal and transformation. Through its exploration of urban ecology, postcolonial environmentalism, Afrofuturism, and archive theory, *Lagoon* provides a subtle understanding of the complex relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. Four key areas of inquiry are foundational: urban ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental studies, Afrofuturism and speculative ecologies, and archive theory in ecological discourse. These perspectives allow an analysis of how the city stores environmental memory, embodies structured trauma, and enacts imaginative responses to ecological crisis.

1. *Urban Ecocriticism*

Traditional ecocriticism has often privileged rural or wilderness settings; however, recent developments emphasise the city as a dynamic ecological system. Urban ecocriticism considers cities as ecotones, zones of environmental conflict, hybridity, and transformation, where environmental pressures interact with human labour, infrastructure, and cultural identity (Bennett & Johnson, 2010). In *Lagoon*, Lagos emerges as such an ecotone: polluted yet spiritually vital, chaotic yet capable of metamorphosis.

2. *Postcolonial Environmentalism*

Environmental degradation in African cities cannot be understood outside the historical legacies of colonialism and global capitalism. Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence" is particularly useful for analysing the incremental, often invisible harms that accumulate over time. Building on this, postcolonial environmentalism provides a framework for reading *Lagoon's* depictions of ecological ruin as both the product of contemporary mismanagement and the residue of historical violence.

3. *Afrofuturism and Speculative Ecologies*

Afrofuturism combines African history, cultural identity, and speculative aesthetics to imagine alternative futures (Dery, 1994; Eshun, 2003; Womack, 2013). Within this framework, speculative ecologies foreground the entanglement of human and nonhuman life. *Lagoon* demonstrates this orientation through Ayodele, the alien ambassador whose arrival prompts a rethinking of Lagos's ecological future. Rather than representing invasion, she embodies renewal, suggesting transformation through hybrid and cosmologically informed consciousness.

4. *Archives, Memory, and the City*

Cities can also be read as archives, spaces that preserve trauma while enabling re-narration. Foucault's idea of the archive as a site of epistemic regulation, alongside Mbembe's (2002) reconceptualisation of the postcolonial archive as a locus of rupture and survival, provide a foundation for this study. These insights frame Lagos in *Lagoon* as an embodied archive, where infrastructure and environment carry the imprints of memory, suffering, and possibility.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative literary methodology that combines close textual analysis with theoretical insights from ecocriticism, postcolonial studies, and archive theory. Rather than treating *Lagoon* as a mimetic record of ecological realities, the analysis reads the novel as an aesthetic and cultural archive that encodes ecological trauma and imagines speculative forms of renewal. Close reading is therefore central, allowing attention to Okorafor's narrative strategies, such as multispecies narration, urban personification, and hybridisation, which reframe Lagos as both wounded and regenerative.

The first interpretive structure draws on postcolonial ecocriticism, particularly Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence," to examine how the novel depicts ecological injury not as spectacular catastrophe but as accumulative and systemic. A second layer applies archive theory, with Achille Mbembe's conception of the archive as a political site of

power guiding the analysis of how *Lagoon* decentralises human authority and invests nonhuman voices; the bat, the swordfish, the spider, as alternative archivists of environmental memory. Finally, the study mobilises insights from Afrofuturism and speculative fiction studies to highlight how Okorafor envisions Lagos as a repository of trauma and a horizon of imaginative futures rooted in African cosmologies and urban vitality.

Methodologically, the paper proceeds through thematic and narratological analysis of selected passages, such as the polluted lagoon, Adaora's hybridisation, and the aliens' ethics of cohabitation, as exemplary locations where trauma and renewal converge. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the argument that literature functions as both archive and speculative laboratory, enabling *Lagoon* to theorise ecological trauma and renewal in ways that exceed empirical or policy-driven discourse.

Textual Analysis

Lagos as an Ecological Archive of Trauma

Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* paints a vivid and multi-sensory portrait of Lagos not simply as a futuristic city but as an ecological archive, a structured terrain bearing witness to environmental degradation, socio-spiritual estrangement, and multispecies suffering. Lagos in this story becomes more than a location; it is a storied body, inscribed with scars, whispers, and resistances, storing not only physical toxicity but also the cultural memory of abandonment and ecological violence. Okorafor employs speculative devices, nonhuman narrators, and urban realism to articulate this trauma, making Lagos a character that remembers, mourns, and anticipates.

A. Pollution and the Lagoon as a Wounded Place

The novel opens with a direct confrontation with ecological degradation. The Lagos lagoon, central to the city's geography and symbolic structure, is described in painfully visceral terms:

"The water was dark, thick, and sour. The fish were dying, the sea was dying". (p. 2).

This description establishes the lagoon not only as a setting but as a body that is diseased, suffocating under phases of oil pollution, waste, and neglect. The alien Ayodele's emergence from these polluted waters dramatises the encounter between the wounded Earth and speculative redemption. Still, the pain remains marked in the text, surfacing through the reactions of marine creatures and the marine biologist Adaora, who reflects:

"My mother says the waters are all dirty and dead because of the oil companies". (p. 92).

This simple remark by a child to Ayodele registers an everyday ecological knowledge: a Lagosian understanding that the city's waters, once sustaining, have become location of death and disorientation. These environmental conditions are not abstract; they are felt in everyday life, by fish, by citizens, by the Earth itself.

B. Voices of the Nonhuman: Witnessing Ecocide

What deepens the ecological trauma of Lagos is that the city's nonhuman inhabitants are given voice. In a rare and daring move, Okorafor allows creatures like bats, swordfish, and spiders to speak, offering an alternative archive of memory and pain.

The bat, who becomes “the most enlightened bat on earth,” experiences the ecological impact of alien arrival and environmental toxicity in both physical and spiritual terms:

“She sees a thousand [colors]. She can taste them. They are meaty like mosquitoes, leafy like palm fronds, fruity like mangos... She has no words for color because she is a bat... But she sees them now”. (p. 3).

This synesthetic experience blends awe and disorientation, situating ecological trauma within the animal's sensorium. Her sudden death, struck by a plane, becomes a metaphor for how ecological insight is destroyed by techno-industrial violence.

Equally, a swordfish is described by a human character as having spoken “like a member of that group Greenpeace,” testifying to the moral clarity of marine creatures in the face of human greed:

“That swordfish hates us,” Adaora says after speaking to it. (p. 31).

These nonhuman agents function as archivists of environmental injury, documenting not in ink but in flesh and instinct.

C. Lagos as a Speaking Subject: The City as Memory

Lagos is not merely a setting for action, it is endowed with consciousness. In one of the novel's most powerful meta-fictional moments, Lagos speaks:

“I am alive. I have always been”. (p. 325).

This self-identification transforms the city into a living archive, capable of sensing, storing, and voicing its own history. The urban environment becomes a living witness to pollution, abandonment, resilience, and rebellion. As a narrative strategy, this personification highlights the entanglement of ecological trauma and collective memory. Through Ayodele's observation, Lagos also becomes a place of contradiction and unresolved tension:

“In less than twenty-four hours, I have seen love, hate, greed, ambition and obsession amongst you... This is life. We love life”. (p. 293).

In this, the city is not only an archive of trauma but also of vitality, a fractured, dynamic place where ecological collapse and moral possibility coexist.

D. Spiritual Ecology and Environmental Mourning

Adaora's spirituality is closely linked to the polluted land and soil of Lagos. In a moment of despair and fear, she prays not only to deities but to the spirits within the very ground:

“She prayed to all those spirits she knew lived deep in the polluted soil of Lagos”. (p. 234).

This expression blends African cosmology with ecological lament, treating the land as spiritually inhabited but physically violated. The polluted soil becomes a sacred archive, a place where the spiritual and the environmental meet in grief and resistance.

In *Lagoon*, Lagos is not a passive backdrop for speculative action but a central actor, a storied city saturated with ecological pain, human neglect, and planetary urgency. Its waters cry, its soil remembers, and its animals testify. Through this ecological and narrative complexity, Okorafor offers a portrait of Lagos as a city wounded but alive, a living archive that demands not only recognition but transformation. The trauma it holds is heavy, but not immutable. In the next section, we turn to how this same city becomes the location of speculative renewal, cosmological repair, and reimagined futurity.

Lagos as a Place of Speculative Renewal

While Nnedi Okorafor’s *Lagoon* presents Lagos as a place of accumulated ecological trauma, it equally reimagines the city as a space of cosmological rebalancing and speculative regeneration. The arrival of the alien ambassador Ayodele catalyses a chain of events that not only unsettles existing systems of power, but also invites the city into a process of transformation, physical, moral, spiritual, and ecological. Through Afrofuturist aesthetics and post-human interventions, Okorafor re-identify Lagos as a place where new futures might emerge, rooted in collaborative multispecies ethics and African cosmologies.

A. Alien Arrival as a Catalyst for Change

The aliens’ descent into Lagos is not one of conquest but of communion. From the beginning, Ayodele introduces herself as a being of change:

“We landed here in the night... From beyond earth. From space. You all will call us aliens. We are guests who wish to become citizens... We are change. You will see”. (p. 106).

This declaration redefines alien invasion tropes by shifting the narrative from fear to collaboration. The aliens come not to dominate but to “refuel your future,” pointing to the dual promise and danger of Nigeria’s oil-rich landscape:

“Your land is full of a fuel that is tearing you apart”. (p. 107).

Through this metaphor, Okorafor criticises extractive capitalism and introduces an alternative approach of resource stewardship and collective flourishing.

B. Adaora’s Transformation and Post-human Ecology

The transformation of Adaora, the marine biologist, from a human into a hybrid sea creature, suggests the possibility of symbiosis between species and environments. Her

physical metamorphosis, growing gills and a fish-like body, reflects bodily adaptation and also a new mode of ecological consciousness:

“Her legs were no longer legs... a giant metallic blue fish... a lunate caudal fin, like that of a sailfish... She was breathing water”. (p. 241).

This transformation is not imposed but desired. When Ayodele asks, “Is it what you wanted?” Adaora internally affirms:

“Adaora had always loved the water... Yes, it was”. (p. 242).

Her evolution becomes a metaphor for ecological alignment and acceptance of new post-human futures. Rather than resisting alien transformation, Adaora embraces a fluid ontology in which human and nonhuman merge to survive and thrive.

C. Reanimation of the Earth and Sea

The ecological renewal is not limited to human characters. The marine environment itself is depicted as regenerating in the presence of the alien beings. Adaora marvels at the revival of marine life:

“She’d never seen such a thriving coral community in any of her dives off the coast of Lagos”. (p. 229).

Species once absent; clown fish, eels, sea bass, shrimps, starfish, return in vibrant numbers, signaling that the presence of the aliens does more than disrupt: it heals. The lagoon that was once “dark, thick, and sour” now teems with life. In this way, Okorafor enacts a speculative ecology where intervention and communion restore what extraction has broken.

D. City Consciousness and Narrative Multi-vocality

The city of Lagos, personified and awakened, directly declares its agency:

“I am alive. I have always been”. (p. 325).

This line encapsulates Lagos as a storied, breathing entity capable of memory and transformation. As a narrative strategy, Okorafor gives Lagos not only sentience but the capacity to become a moral and ecological agent. This awakening is reinforced by nonhuman narrators, spiders, swordfish, and bats, whose stories connect with human narratives, creating a multi-vocal ecology. The spider Udide Okwanka says:

“Now the world sees what is happening inside Lagos and her waters... I will leave my web. I become part of the story”. (p. 327).

Here, storytelling becomes activism. The spider’s participation suggests that all life forms are now invested in the city’s future. Lagos is no longer just the place of decay, it becomes the nucleus of a multispecies coalition for planetary renewal.

E. Governance, Healing, and Afrofuturist Ethics

Even national governance is impacted. The Nigerian president, previously disillusioned and spiritually depleted, is healed by the aliens:

“He’d filled out since the alien woman healed him... He truly was cured... For the first time, he felt like a president”. (p. 320).

His rejuvenation symbolises the potential for ethical leadership, reborn not through power, but through communion with a new planetary consciousness. Ayodele’s message to him is direct:

“We do not want to rule, colonise, conquer or take. We just want a home... What is it you want?” He answers: “To be alive again.” Ayodele responds: “I will make it so”. (p. 107).

This exchange captures the Afrofuturist ethos of the novel: transformation comes not through domination, but through a shared desire for life, balance, and planetary healing.

In *Lagoon*, Lagos does not merely survive an alien encounter; it is revived by it. The speculative interventions of Ayodele and her people act as metaphors for spiritual awakening, post-human potential, and environmental redemption. The polluted lagoon becomes a womb for new life; the traumatised president becomes a servant of change; and the city itself, long silenced by decay, begins to speak, heal, and reimagine itself. In this literary ecology, Lagos is not just a mirror of disaster, but a portal of planetary renewal.

Pedagogical and Critical Implications

Okorafor’s *Lagoon* does more than narrate an alien landing; it reorients how we read, teach, and imagine the African city in environmental discourse. Through its speculative imagination, multispecies narration, and ecological themes, the novel challenges dominant pedagogical approaches that treat urban Africa either as a dystopian case study or as an ecological blank space. This section explores how *Lagoon* functions as both a critical resource and pedagogical tool in the environmental humanities, particularly in African, urban, and postcolonial education.

A. Repositioning the African City in Environmental Education

Environmental education has often sidelined the African metropolis in favour of wilderness conservation or rural ecologies. In that, *Lagoon* insists that Lagos itself is a dynamic ecological zone, a living terrain conditioned by pollution, population, biodiversity, and cultural memory. The novel challenges students to:

- Read cities as ecotones, liminal spaces where life forms, infrastructure, and histories intersect.
- Recognise how colonial extraction and capitalist development continue to influence urban environmental injustice.
- Understand African cities not as ecological failures, but as potential places of renewal and futurity.

By identifying Lagos’s ecological trauma and transformation, the novel pushes educators to include African urban settings in the global conversation on climate, ethics, and sustainability.

B. Multispecies Pedagogy and Ethical Imagination

One of the most distinctive aspects of *Lagoon* is its use of nonhuman narrators, from bats and swordfish to spiders and the city itself. These voices cultivate multispecies empathy, encouraging readers to imagine the world from the perspective of those affected by human activity but rarely heard.

In the classroom, these narrative strategies can support:

- Ethical reflection on anthropocentrism, species extinction, and environmental violence.
- Creative exercises where students write from the point of view of rivers, trees, animals, or ecosystems.
- Dialogues around planetary stewardship that extend beyond human rights to include nonhuman agency and care.

Such pedagogical methods foster a deep ecological consciousness, rooted in imagination and empathy, not only analysis.

C. Afrocentric and De-colonial Approaches to Speculative Ecology

Lagoon also contributes to de-colonial environmental education by rejecting Western techno-utopias and centering African cosmologies and Afrocentric aesthetics. The alien arrival is formed not through conquest but through hospitality, spiritual rebalancing, and communal healing. The inclusion of African deities, oral storytelling, and urban rituals grounds the speculative in cultural continuity.

Educators can use the novel to:

- Explore African Indigenous knowledge systems in environmental thought.
- Discuss how science fiction can affirm Black ecological futures outside Western approaches.
- Analyse how African literature deconstructs dominant climate stories and introduces plural planetary imaginaries.

This creates space for learners to think with African cultures, not just about them in conversations on sustainability and futurism.

D. Climate Fiction and Youth Engagement

For younger audiences, *Lagoon* can be introduced as a form of African climate fiction (**cli-fi**), a narrative that dramatises environmental collapse, ecological interdependence, and speculative hope. Different from dystopias that end in despair, Okorafor's novel affirms the transformative power of storytelling, music, empathy, and courage.

Educational use of *Lagoon* might include:

- Projects on the role of storytelling in climate justice.

- Comparative reading with Western cli-fi texts (e.g., *The Water Knife*, *The Overstory*) to examine cultural frameworks of eco-crisis.
- Role-play activities based on scenes where characters must choose between destruction or ecological care (e.g., the soldiers, the president, Adaora).

In this way, *Lagoon* becomes an accessible, flexible, and emotionally resounding text for teaching ecological ethics, narrative activism, and planetary belonging.

Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* offers an urgent and innovative contribution to environmental literature and pedagogy. It challenges educators to move beyond narrow, Western models of climate teaching, and instead engage speculative African urbanism as a source of ethical, imaginative, and decolonial environmental knowledge. The novel encourages readers to witness ecological trauma, and also to dream of renewal and to act accordingly. In a world increasingly shaped by climate anxiety and ecological breakdown, *Lagoon* provides a map for teaching planetary care through African speculative futures.

Conclusion

Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* invites readers to reimagine Lagos, not as a dystopian symbol of postcolonial urban failure, but as a living archive of ecological trauma and speculative transformation. In this novel, the city's polluted waters, voiceless creatures, and fractured infrastructures become testimonies to a long history of environmental neglect caused by colonialism, capitalism, and technocratic violence. Upon that, *Lagoon* refuses to leave Lagos in a state of despair. Through the arrival of alien beings and the activation of spiritual, ecological, and affective connections, the city becomes a place of cosmological renewal, multispecies empathy, and collective rebirth.

This study has shown that Lagos functions in the novel as both:

- An ecological archive, bearing witness to multispecies grief, industrial exploitation, and spiritual dislocation; and
- A speculative space, where transformation is possible through embodied ecological consciousness, Afrofuturist reimagining, and collaborative planetary ethics.

Okorafor's narrative strategies, personifying the city, giving voice to marine life, and fusing Indigenous cosmology with science fiction, challenge dominant representations of African urbanism and climate crisis. She offers not a singular solution, but a narrative that opens up plural futures: ones that affirm care, healing, hybridity, and ecological co-survival.

In pedagogical terms, *Lagoon* provides a powerful model for teaching environmental humanities through an African perspective. It enables students to explore the entangled histories of urbanisation and environmental degradation, while also engaging their imagination through speculative storytelling. It cultivates not just awareness but responsibility, not just criticism but hope.

In all, *Lagoon* positions Lagos as a city that remembers and dreams. It is both wounded and wise, broken and alive. And in that complexity lies its potential, not just to survive the Anthropocene, but to teach the world how to begin again.

This study has demonstrated that *Lagoon* reimagines Lagos as both an archive of ecological trauma and a site of speculative renewal. Through close reading, it addressed the objectives set out at the outset: analysing depictions of environmental injury, tracing how multispecies narrators expand the idea of the archive, and exploring how Afrofuturist aesthetics project futures beyond crisis. In answering these questions, the analysis affirmed that Okorafor's novel not only registers the slow violence of ecological degradation but also envisions new modes of resilience and cohabitation, positioning African urban literature as a critical archive and speculative laboratory for ecological futures.

Gaps and Future Research Directions

Further research could explore the intersections between Afrofuturism and environmentalism in other African literary works. Additionally, examining the implications of archive theory for urban planning and environmental policy in postcolonial cities could provide valuable insights.

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