

Spatializing Poetry through Evaluation of Ecocritical Spaces in Tony Afejuku's *A Spring of Sweets*

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Abstract

This essay explores the interplay between spatial literary criticism and ecocriticism and how they help present the poet's representation of ecological destruction in the Niger Delta. It reads the poems of Tony Afejuku in the collection: *A Spring of Sweets* (henceforth abbreviated as ASOS). Through textual-analytic method, the poems are critically read to unveil the various connotations evident in the construction of ecocritical spaces. The spatial configuration of the poems reveals that two main ecocritical spaces are framed to underscore the poetic vision of the Niger Delta environment. The article concludes that Afejuku spatialises Warri River as well as oil companies as ecocritical spaces through which the reader can appreciate the depth of ecological hazard happening in the Nigerian coastal region, the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Spatialization, Warri River, Oil companies, Space, Ecocriticism, Poetry.

Introduction

Spatialization deals with the construction of space and meaning relations as an independent entity within a social spectrum. Spatializing poetry, therefore, presupposes the reading of poetry from the angle of space which transcends physical place to other several meanings constructed round it. This article attempts to investigate how space is fictionalized against the backdrop of ecocriticism. Rahaman explains that: "The term "spatial" refers to position, area, and size of things. The term is borrowed from Latin *spatium*, used with the sense of space" (684). The idea of space extends beyond physical terrain to other related meanings. Rahaman explains further that "in Humanities and Social Sciences, "space" is studied in the context of social, geographical and psychological phenomenon" (684). This broad perspective smacks of an interdisciplinary usage. In this view, space encompasses the perception of physical environment including the people living in it and their emotional state as it relates to the ongoing events in the said social and physical place.

In the opinion of Conkan and Gordan, "space and place have become totemic concepts in the effort to interrogate the relationship between literature, ideological representations and real-and-imagined spaces" (4). The study of literature is incomplete without the investigation of how space and place influence the events and shape the literary expressions. Also, the spatial imagination of writers helps to interrogate how the various ideas are constructed. In several ways, these elements of setting function as the conveyor belt of ideas and representation of facts as they relate to the various spaces involved-both real and imagined. This study relies on two theories which undergird the argument. They are spatial literary criticism and ecocriticism. Sheila Hones explains that: "Spatial literary studies is one of the newer terms used to describe the kind of spatially-oriented criticism that has emerged in literary studies in the wake of a relatively recent expansion of interest in geographical themes and concepts" (147). In other words, spatial literary criticism involves the description of space in literary texts. Put differently, it refers to any criticism of a literary text from the angle of space. Thus, it focuses on the thematization of space and place in literary products.

Extending the theory further, Robert T. Tally explains that spatial literary criticism comprises "almost any approach to the text that focuses attention on space, place and mapping" (2). The place of mapping reveals the writer's understanding of the topographical terrain and survey as it helps to expand the reader of the text's basic knowledge of the geography

of place in literature. Roseberg explains that: “by embodying the practice of a place, the writer shows how a place is experienced. He does not define spatiality, he presents it through action.” (289) The main point in Roseberg’s explanation of spatial literary criticism is that the writer embodies the place and that he or she does this, not by representing spatiality through definition, but through action ascribed to the place or by representing the action or experience connected to the place. For this reason, Roseberg adds that, “literature thus renders spatiality visible and palpable, which is a way of rendering it intelligible” (289). The spatial study or criticism of a text is done with the hope of unveiling certain meaning relations hidden behind the surface structure of the text. By doing this, the place assumes a more significant dimension to the meaning of the text.

Spatial literary criticism explores literary works and according to Kang et al., the writer’s works take the concept and practice of “place consciousness as their theme” (145). The literary critic cannot afford to ignore the writer’s literary sensitivity to place. Hence, there is a need to read the text against the writer’s evocation of the sense of place as they relate to other events happening in the place. In the view of Maggie Kennelly, “Writing is a spatiotemporal concept. This spatial turn, the notion that space is not solely aligned with one single subject, but can be aligned with multiple concepts”. (3) What this means is that, in order to have in-depth knowledge of a text, it is important to examine the connection between space and time. Every event or action happens in a place at a fixed time. Hence, making meaning out of a literary text requires a focus on the time variable. Having explored spatial literary criticism as a theoretical foundation on which this essay is anchored, it will be useful to examine the other theory, which is ecocriticism. Glotfelty is its leading proponent who defines it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xx). The keywords in Glotfelty’s definition are “physical environment” as different from other kinds of environment. Ecocritical discourse examines how the physical or nonhuman environment is represented in literary texts. The said “relationship” between literature and the physical environment is implicated in what aspects of the environment is portrayed and explored in the literature. Glotfelty further opines that “ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). Based on this, ecocriticism explores how human beings affect the physical environment as well as

how it affects them in a vicious cycle of destruction, degradation and demise.

In the words of Radwan Gabr El-Sobky, ecocriticism “deals with ecological problems like pollution, global warming climate change, deforestation and other ecological exploitations (1342). Ecocriticism examines how the above listed ecological problems are created and how they cause severe damage on the environment. In the same vain, El-Sobky adds that ecocriticism “is associated with the desire to investigate and remedy the current environmental problems” (1342). Beyond exploring environmental disasters, ecocriticism proffers solutions and seeks to restore the environment to its proper status and quality. Equally crucial to the tenets of ecocriticism is the impact of technology and politics. Jennifer Hamilton explains that ecocriticism is “a critical intellectual category of the natural brought on by technology and politics” (1). As one important factor in the destruction of the environment, technological inventions have led to the ruin of the environment. Also true is the politics of environmental benefits which have led to massive depletion of environmental resources. Thus technology and politics are key influencers of environmental destruction which eco-critics present in their works.

Neema describes ecocriticism as a movement that seeks to “make people care equally about all creatures that live in any single environment” (371). Ecocriticism studies how nature especially landscapes are protected from ruin. Neema explains further that “any side of the environment that is victimized by people in a way should be repaired as soon as possible so as to seat that equality of human and nonhuman individuals who should be cared about the same way” (371). Neema insists that both human and nonhuman aspects of the environment should receive equal treatment. Those who make the environment object of destruction are cautioned to equally remember that it is their responsibility to improve and remedy the quality of environment. According to Serpil Oppermann, “Ecocriticism does enable the critic to examine the textualisations of the physical environment in literary discourse itself and to develop an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (34). The text is the operative key in the representation of the environment. The text helps to present an authentic picture of ecological imbalance. Thus an ecocritic takes advantage of the text to evaluate the environment in textual contexts.

The evolution of ecocriticism has taken the form of “waves”. Derek Gladwin explains that ecocriticism has been divided into “waves”

for easy historicisation. “The first wave” of ecocriticism tended to take “a de-historicised approach to nature” (5) in which the focus tended to celebrate nature writing and wilderness. In the second wave, new ideas take the centre stage: “imperialism and ecological degradation, agency for animals and plants, gender and race as ecological concepts, and problems of scale” (5). The new vision tends to express the degradation and other gender related issues on the environment”. The “third wave” advocates for a global understanding of ecocritical practice through issues like global warning. It combines elements of the first and second waves but aims “to move beyond Anglo-American prominence” (8). As Gladwin has written, ecocriticism has taken three evolutionary phases of evolution. This essay will dwell on the last phase which is an integrative phase of evolution. This article demonstrates that Afejuku represent the Warri River and oil companies in the Niger Delta as ecocritical spaces in *A Spring of Sweets*.

Warri River as Ecocritical Space

The major theme of Afejuku’s poems in *A Spring of Sweets* is the Warri River as site of ecological destruction. In many of the poems, the poet recalls several nostalgic experiences whenever the thought of the Warri River comes to the mind. By the poet’s vision of the river, one becomes aware of the destruction whether in terms of extinction of aquatic life via water pollution or the exploitation of oil resources in the river. All these form an indelible mark which the poet imprints on the reader’s imagination. In the poem, “A Mango Heart,” Afejuku tacitly thematizes the Warri River as ecocritical space to examine ecological destruction in the following lines:

Clap for him, night-wind in the nosy leaves of the mangrove tree.
He’s in love.
Heaven shining on the brown Warri River of wealth,
Brighten the opaque waves. (ASOS 72)

The central poetic device used to concretise the message is colour symbolism. The Warri River is said to be “brown”, a colour which denotes dirty, badly ruined and precipitates some kind of impurity. It also connotes pollution or the pouring of chemical substances to damage the beauty of the river. To further thematise the Warri River, Afejuku configures the image of darkness to explain the destruction of the river. Hence, the speaker summons the sun to shine on “the brown Warri River” and

"Brighten the opaque waves". Both the river and the waves are two dark water bodies ruined by oil explorers through pollution.

Also, paying attention to the poem's rich visual imagery, one comes to terms with the celebratory tone which runs through the above poem. The surrounding atmosphere to the Warri River smacks of natural exigency. Firstly, the speaker compels the "night-wind" to clap for the addressee through the auditory imagery of "the noisy leaves" which hang luxuriantly from the mangrove tree. Already the atmosphere painted above yields impetus to the shining sun in the next lines. Secondly, the speaker wants "Heaven" representing the sun to shed light on "the brown Warri River of wealth". The point being canvassed is that those who have destroyed the river are motivated by the oil wealth or deposits in the river. Hence, this explains the poet's thematisation of the Warri River as the area or place where the people can see the extent of ecological destruction in the Niger Delta. Similarly, Afejuku reconstructs the above idea in yet another poem entitled "Gone is the Scent". The poem is a one-stanza lyric which thematizes the Warri River as official site of ecological destruction:

Gone is the scent of your abel-mosk
Which now flows in the fragrance of oily Warri River whose
estuaries mirror listlessly your future futility
And halt my hunger for a bit of bread
Of your love now tasteless without pity. (84)

This poem bemoans the loss of aquatic scent which the Warri River used to release but now gone. This scent is metaphorically compared to the one by "abel-mosk", an edible and aromatic seed pods of tropical Asia. The beautiful quality of this stanza is appended on the use of olfactory imagery or the image of smell. The speaker laments the loss of that childhood smell which Warri River used to emit which is now replaced by the oily smell. By this clever deployment of olfactory imagery, Afejuku hints indirectly at environmental pollution of the Warri River. Apart from the ruin of the smell, it has changed everything about the river and its estuaries (Coastlands). The tone of this poem is sorrowful and depressingly mournful as the speaker bemoans the sense of loss, not of lives, but of smell which used to characterise the Warri River. This change of situation saddens the speaker especially the replacement of the abel-mosk smell with the oily smell. Whereas in the past, the river and its estuaries used to give off aromatic smell, this is now replaced with awful and repugnant smell of oil fumes. Afejuku does not hesitate to amplify

this loss with the use of alliterative lines cleverly woven round ideas in the following words. For examples, the speaker talks about “future futility” and “halt my hunger”. The mellifluous flow of these words is meant to remind the reader of how the Warri River used to be in time past: a source of pleasure. This mellifluity is replaced by a sad picture of ruin which paints the future and drains the speaker of his or her energy. Also, it has prevented the speaker from eating as the view of Warri River appalls and leaves everything “tasteless” and in pitiable condition.

Afejuku has relied on the poetic device of apostrophe to boost the rhetorical power of the poem. In apostrophe, the speaker addresses an animate object, an absent personality or even a dead person as if they were alive or physically present. Here in this poem under study apostrophe runs through this one-stanza poem and it adds force and beauty to this well-written verse. It is equally refreshing to note that this lyrical poem is enhanced through the technique of personification. A careless reader will think that the speaker is talking about someone, not knowing it is addressed to the Warri River. The personificatory pronoun “your” introduces this confusion which actually is not, but an act of personification. That the river has lost its aroma underscores the sense of loss which the now “oily Warri River” has begun to emit: a smelly and offensive odour. Afejuku continues to thematize the Warri River as space of ecological destruction in the poem, “An October Ballad for Fatherland”. Ordinarily, this poem has its purpose spelled out: to mark Nigerian independence celebration. It however offers the poet-persona the opportunity to address the ecological disaster and its effects in Niger Delta. The poem begins thus:

Another October
 And the bells ring and twinkle and ring...
 Golden bells of delight!
 What a fiesta of merriment in pain
 And pain in merriment. (ASOS 98)

The poem is situated in the context of celebration, but the speaker explains that the merriment is marked and truncated by pain. That is, the people are in pain but compelled by the time to celebrate. Hence, Afejuku employs paradox in the line “pain in merriment”. What the persona wants the reader to understand is that the country celebrates independence from colonial overlords but there is nothing really to celebrate as the people are in pain, a metaphor for frustration and disillusionment. The speaker then

turns attention to the condition of the Warri River as a metaphor for the predicament of the Niger Delta people:

In an icy day in a floral October
When in the mangroves of Warri
Our rivers sing songs of doom with music
And showers and strokes of pain
Of delightless delight in an orchestra. (98)

The stanza above thematizes the Warri River and presents it as an image through which the poet reveals the condition of the Niger Delta people. Thus the river is the instrument and weapon for drawing attention to the ecological disaster in the area. The use of personification in which Afejuku describes the “rivers” as singing “songs of doom with music” unmistakably envisions the violent agitations which the Niger Delta militants and environmental rights agitators have been campaigning for years in order to improve their conditions. By thematizing the Warri River as space of ecological destruction, Afejuku succeeds in portraying the pain of the Niger Delta people. In yet another stanza, the poet speaker recalls with nostalgia the destruction of the Warri River.

In the bosom of an icy wind of un-delight
From Maiduguri of palpitating cactuses
To Warri of once rapturous rivers now rivers of
Chilling pain
Horrifying, terrifying and drowning our turtle-doves. (98)

The poet has used contrast in the above stanza to paint a vivid picture of the Niger Delta eco-world, an artistic vision of the ecological situation in the area. Two pictures are discernible here. The first is set in the past before the ecological destruction of the river. According to the poet, the “rivers” were once “rapturous”. This means they used to imbue the speaker with ecstatic joy or delight. This is as a result of their ‘untaintedness.’ The second picture is a clear departure from the first. It is set in the present. Now, the “rivers” are causing the inhabitants “chilling pain” because all the aquatic life and resources have been drowned which the “turtle-doves” in the excerpt seem to symbolize. The sight of the ruined rivers fills the speaker with “horrifying” and “terrifying” reminiscences. All these are meant to thematise the pain of Niger Delta people whose lives depend on their rivers for economic survival and aesthetic value. The poet further thematizes Warri River as ecocritical

space in the poem “Love itch”. The context of the poem is quite intriguing. The speaker recalls the experience with one Dix-Lizzi, a lady who typifies an extremely nightmarish experience:

I itch
 To forget you forever
 dix-Lizzi
 My melodious insanity
 My irreplaceable nightmare
 Slowly floating, gently
 In my mind
 again and again
 Like Warri River
 and its estuaries
 in melodious moons of tears (80)

Here the speaker is eager to forget “Dix-Lizzi”, the lady who is being described as his “melodious insanity” as well as “irreplaceable nightmare”. Suddenly, this lady is compared to the irreplaceable Warri River. Just as Dix-Lizzi once holds a pride of place in his life but has become a ‘nightmare’ so is Warri River. His thought about the river conjures several hidden ideas. The simile is striking because it shows the speaker’s awareness of the depreciating quality of the river as a place which used to evoke the sense of beauty and attraction. Also striking is the alliterative technique in the words: “melodious moons”. Even though the poet might have intended these words to attract the reader’s attention, it is done to point them to the inherent metaphor. Although the destruction of the river reveals “melodious moons”, but they refer to several years of “tears” which the speaker has endured. Thus the speaker is unable to forget the pain which the river represents to the people. By thematizing Warri River as ecocritical space, Afejuku demonstrates his concern for ecological destruction of the Niger Delta.

In the poem, “Her Fire and Flame” the poet employs the image of Warri River as an ecocritical weapon through which the ecological ruin is appreciated and contextualized. Although the poem has nothing to do with ecological theme, the poet unwittingly amplifies the depth of ruin when the reader is compelled to remember what Warri River used to conjure in the speaker’s imagination thus:

In the fire and flame of her bosom
I feel the peace of ages, agelessly so
I swim in dreams in the centre of a stream
Of my whole life: childhood, boyhood, adulthood,
Middle-aged-hood and death-hood merge
In oneness
How feelingly fireful and flameful is her bosom's music (24)

The above first stanza employs some semantic codes that suggest water body. The fact that the speaker intends to "swim in dreams" which is "the centre of a stream" mirrors his entire life from "childhood" to "death-hood". This experience reminds the reader about the attraction which the river holds for them. Even though the lady's bosom appears to evoke "fire" and "flame", a metaphor for emotional appeal and excitement, the Warri River equally represents for the speaker an emotional response of excitement before it was destroyed. Hence the speaker adds: And how lovely, as Big Warri River, is my loins. As both merge in signs and the geography of higher emotions. More delicious, more blissful than bliss and higher bliss (24).

Even though the speaker refuses to talk about the destruction, there is an increasing awareness about the delightful power which the river once holds in the speaker's mind. Thus if the lady in the poem evokes sensuous emotions of love, of vibrant appeal and attraction, that is exactly how Big Warri River used to be to the speaker. For this reason, the poet indirectly paints a terrible image of what that river has become: a place deserted by its people because it has lost its appeal and attractiveness. What used to excite the speaker's boyhood emotions and offers him bliss and higher bliss has become the opposite of it.

A fragile boat easing through a tumultuous
Storm to a radiant peace, pleasant spring
this heart is, this song of relief
passing from a troublesome burden
to an easing calm of love and beauty. (32)

The poem begins with the focus on a fragile boat which floats on Warri River which the speaker describes as "a radiant peace", "a pleasant spring", "an easing calm of love and beauty". All these qualities show that the river was clearly unpolluted and beautiful. The speaker later returns from the previous time, in fact, from the past to the present thus:

In our mangrove homes of oil shrubs
 Of desolation and pitiless desolation
 where fish and turtle and periwinkle
 for water's lack die of thirst
 surely imprinting the devastation. (32)

The speaker indirectly complains of how oil pollution has taken over the mangrove area where shrubs used to sprout and luxuriate. As a result of oil spillage, the entire land area becomes one of "pitiless desolation". The reason for this desolation is later given because of lack of water for the survival of aquatic life. "Fish", "turtle" and "periwinkle" are unable to survive the area because oil fumes poison the water. This ecological devastation also affects the inhabitants who themselves have to relocate from the mangrove forest. The beauty of this poem resides in the visual imagery which evokes the sense of emptiness, silence and quietude.

Oil Companies as Ecocritical Space

This section demonstrates from poem after poem how certain multinational oil companies through their activities destroyed the environment in the Niger Delta. An excellent example is found in the poem entitled "Mystery Love".

In this river of mystery we play our play
 In these water shrubs of mystery
 Combed by Shell and Chevron
 We plunged and plunged for turtles (69)

The speaker opens the poem on the note of nostalgia and fond memories about the Warri River where they used to "play" and have fun. There is a hint at two giant oil companies who prospect for crude oil in Niger Delta. They are "Shell" and "Chevron". These represent the ecocritical space of ecological destruction. According to the speaker, these companies are said to explore the rivers for oil. The speaker later returns to memory to recall how as kids, they used to plunge and plunge into the river in search of "turtles". In the next stanza, the speaker is unable to comprehend the magnitude of the destruction thus:

Now drowned by these explorers
 Who bring finless silence
 To our abodes of desire
 In the mangrove hey explore
 To naught and misery ... (69)

The turtles symbolize rich aquatic resources in the Niger Delta. By Shell and Chevron's activities, "these explorers" have "drowned" the turtles. The image of drowning accounts for how pollution through oil spillage has ruined the physical environment. Another clever use of synecdoche is noticed in the phrase: "finless silence". This represents the whole fish. Thus, "finless silence" evokes the picture of a fish, while the silence suggests the destruction of the fishes. In other words, "finless silence" is a clever evocation of ecological destruction in the name of visual imagery. These two companies when one reviews their activities, it is clear that Shell and Chevron contribute to causing untold hardship and misery to the people. Shell and Chevron's oil exploration and destruction of aquatic life has resulted in hunger: We swim in love's waves. And dissolve hope in patience. In the absence of turtles for meal ... (69). The point being made is that the killing of turtles and several aquatic animals have made these food yielding animals to be absent – a metaphor for destruction. Invariably, this situation results in hunger. Afejuku's aim in this poem is decrying these oil companies who typify the ecocritical space (human agency) responsible for the ecological disaster in the Niger Delta. The above idea preoccupies the imagination of the poet when he begins the poem, "The song of the sea-bird" with some nostalgic recollections.

From the deep emerald water of the rivers
From the fragrance strokes
And enticing spines so still,
Came to the carol of the sea-bird
So enchanting, so enthralling, so rapturous,
The song of the sea-bird
As the ships rose and fell harmoniously
In a benign hour of light and rain... (35)

The opening line reveals some important details about the rivers in Niger Delta. They all have "emerald" colour. This is suggestive of freshness, untaintedness, purity and cleanness. It connotes the fact that these rivers have not been polluted by the human agency. The speaker reveals when they used to enjoy the harmonious songs of the "sea-bird". The speaker also uses olfactory imagery to express the sweet "fragrance" which the river used to emit. In the next stanza, the speaker comes to the present and explains thus:

And the oil men came
 And the oil workers came
 Close-whacking, close-walking
 Down to the shores of the water
 The path by the swamp. (35)

The speaker becomes emotional when he recalls the beauty of the rivers especially against the backdrop of the ruin. The parallelism in the first two lines emphasises the ecocritical space which is represented by “oil men” and “oil workers”. These Shell and Chevron staff members have completely destroyed the aquatic animals. For example, the oil workers by their activities of “close walking”, “from the shores of the water”, to “the path of the swamp”, nothing is spared, as they whack the aquatic animals to death. The consequences of the above exploratory activities are that the people are made to suffer:

The path by the mangrove
 To halt the carol of my bird
 And the pines and the slips and the strokes
 Became forlorn and so still
 And their hush voices tallied the present
 Muteness of the caroller
 And the shore of peace heats and dries
 And the faiences of our shore and forest
 Are shorn of divine beauty and blessing ... (35)

Afejuku takes stock of the destruction in this last stanza. There is the destruction of the sea-birds resulting in the silence which now characterizes the environment where birds used to chirp and glide. This is metaphorically constructed through the image of “the carol”. The kinesthetic image or image of movement further depicts the picture of the birds in the sky. According to the speaker, the bird “pines”, “slips” and “strokes” up in the sky until it becomes “furlon” and “so still”, that is, motionless. Also, the “shore” which is known for its quietness “heats” and “dries”. This is the most devastating of the disaster. That the shore heats up and becomes dried owing to the dangerous activities of oil men, a metaphor for oil companies, goes to underscore their destructive nature to the environment. The poet continues to decry the human agency of ecological destruction which goes to establish the ecocritical nature of the poems. Another example is found in the poem, “The Brewer”. Here the

speaker takes advantage of the ruin caused by Shell and Chevron companies to make comparison to the way his lover has hurt him:

As the walk of an aged man
Are your steps of grief in me
O lovely brewer
Of urine of a chess of broken
Promises floating in pain
In the estuaries
Of my heart, turbid and shoreless,
As Warri River's,
Of Shell and Chevron,
Drownness of loves and dreams. (71)

The entire poem is constructed round three similes. The first compares the unsteady nature of his lover to "the walk of an aged man". Just as that walk is strained and difficult so is the love difficult to express. The lady is described as the brewer of wine, but not the real wine. This time it is the wine of aches of broken promises. The said broken promises remind the speaker of what Shell and Chevron companies are doing in the Niger Delta. They have ruined the estuarine coasts with oil spillage. The rivers are said to be "turbid". That is, they are completely tarnished with massive dumping of chemical and industrial effluents into the river. Thus the river becomes thick with chemicals and black in colour as the industrial deposits float in the river. Even the air is thick with oil fumes in the sky. As a result of this, the shore becomes shoreless as one can hardly notice the demarcation between the river and the banks. Shell and Chevron companies are the drowners of loves and dreams of the Niger Delta people. The third simile is expressed in the following way:

As lost reeds
In the sea
Joying more in sorrow
Than you or I in joy
But joy is joy and must stay joyful
With or without Shell and Chevron. (71)

The third simile draws a comparison between the speaker's interest and the loss of reeds in Warri River. This ecological ruin depicts one of the devastating consequences of oil or water pollution in Niger Delta. Reeds are plants growing in the river used for thatching roofs and

other household uses. The situation where reeds cannot grow in the water will definitely affect the people negatively especially in terms of money, building and other essential needs. The speaker makes up his mind to “stay joyful” whether Shell and Chevron permit them or not. This section has presented the human agency – Shell and Chevron oil companies as the harbinger of environmental disaster. Through evocative imagery and tone rich in deep introspection, the poet decries their activities which often lead to pollution of the water bodies and destruction of economic life as well as disruption of social activities.

Conclusion

The entire study has explored the spatialization of poetry by focusing on ecocritical spaces in Afejuku’s poems. The argument stands on two ecocritical tenets, namely the thematization and decrying process of both the Warri River as site of ruins and the human agency responsible for the ecological destruction in his poetry. Even when Afejuku writes about love for his beloved friends and ladies, the poet is unable to hide his pain about the Warri River and the agency responsible for it. Thus, he makes several allusions and comparisons to the striking resemblance between the two entities. Afejuku employs these two phenomena: the Warri River and the Oil Companies as ecocritical weapons with which he fights for environmental restoration, preservation and revitalization as well as calls for the rehabilitation of riverine people who are physically, socially, and economically dislodge.

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