

METAPHOR AS AN “EXPRESSIVE” TOOL IN SOYINKA’S INTERVENTIONS III

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ABSTRACT

Authors and social critics use language to capture innate ideas, values, feelings and desires about society. Soyinka, a poet, playwright, novelist and social critic, uses language to explicitly capture his feelings and emotions as well as reflect societal ills with the aim of influencing and inducing change in society, particularly through the Interventions. Previous studies on Soyinka have looked at his fictional and autobiographical works from the perspectives of literary criticism, stylistics and pragmatics without much attention paid to his use of metaphor as a tool in public discourse, in his non-fictional works. This study, therefore, investigates language use by focusing on metaphor in Soyinka’s Interventions III in order to determine the “expressive” value of metaphor in the language and discourse of social change in Nigeria. The study adopts Critical Metaphor Analysis and Cognitive Semantics by Charteris-Black as the theoretical framework in identifying, interpreting and explaining how metaphors are used in Intervention III. Soyinka’s Intervention III constituted the source of the data, and was purposively chosen for its content as a commentary on social issues and advocates for social change in Nigeria. Metaphor analysis of Soyinka’s use of language provokes a deeper understanding of the confluence of language and social reality; thus providing a better understanding of how public discourse shape and is equally shaped by the use of language in context specific ways.

Keywords: metaphor, “expressive”, social critic, social change, intervention.

Introduction

Several studies have been carried out on Soyinka’s literary and non-literary works. These studies, except Hunjo (2010), have not examined his texts metaphorically. Hunjo (2010) studies Soyinka’s auto-biographical texts and *Interventions I* within postcolonial political discourse while situating his analysis within the theoretical provision of Critical Discourse Analysis. His work provides illuminating insights into the nexus between language and social reality, and opens our minds to Soyinka’s political struggle against colonial political relics that constantly affect the Nigerian leaders’ duty to evolve strategies that would offer a lasting solution to the misery of the masses. To him, Soyinka’s writings depict him as a politician since his texts are sites for social interaction where participants engage in activities that are connected at various social levels and cultural activities in which the writer is a member of the interactions he creates in his writings.

Hunjo (2010) focuses on critical discourse analysis and political discourse, unlike the present research which focuses on critical metaphor analysis, and describes metaphor as an expressive tool for social change. As such, this study is significantly different from Hunjo’s work, because not only does it focus on Soyinka’s lectures alone, as against Hunjo’s work, which looked at both lectures and Soyinka’s autobiographical texts which can be viewed as belonging to different discourse genre; the study discusses metaphorical uses using excerpts from very recently published lectures of Soyinka. And, while Hunjo looks at Soyinka as a politician, this work looks at Soyinka as a public commentator. In other words, this study explores the role of metaphor in public discourse, using lectures from Soyinka’s *Intervention III* as its source for data and Charteris-Black’s (2011) Critical Metaphor Analysis as its theoretical framework.

When we talk of social change, we often consider the need for changing the state of affairs and happenings in society to something better and more ideal – for a better society. In the search for a better society, writers, social critics, artists, politicians, preachers and even the media are at the forefront. Authors and critics through their use of language try to influence and, to a large extent, control the society for a positive change. Preachers preach sermons; politicians give speeches and addresses, and journalists write on important issues that affect the society. What appears common to all these people is the need to use language to effect a change in their society. Language has remained a veritable tool in the hands of people concerned with the need to change their society. Language is used by humans to look inwards and outwards: it promises a better future considering wrongs that pervade the present, and communicates a vision by activating inherent ideas, values, feelings and desires for a better society.

Language is thus used to instigate, influence, induce, control and express social change.

Soyinka, as a writer, activist and social critic, employs language for varied purposes. He specifically with great explicitness captures his feelings and emotions, with the aim of influencing and inducing change in the society. His use of language in a pictorial and metaphorical manner in the delivery of both spoken and written discourses makes his messages vivid, captivating, understandable and appreciable. As a social critic, he also uses language to portray and condemn negative happenings in the society, with the view to intervene, by awakening and reviving national consciousness to happenings in the society. This study is therefore, an exploration into an aspect of his non-fictional work titled *Interventions III*.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate language use in Soyinka's *Interventions III* with a specific focus on metaphors and its use in the representation of social change in the Nigerian society and its contribution to comprehending meaning in the text.

Theoretical Framework

Metaphors help us look at the world in a way which may differ from the way we normally would look at it, and as a result, offers some fresh insights. It is a feature of language use or discourse which forms a major part of both written and spoken language. Etymologically, it is got from the Greek word 'metapherein' which means 'to transfer'. As such, one aspect of our experience is transferred to another aspect, or is represented using another aspect (Charteris-Black, 2011). Fairclough (2001) believes that metaphor is by no means restricted to the discourse type it tends to be associated with stereotypically: poetry and literary discourse. In other words, metaphors are ubiquitous, because they can easily be understood and produced in appropriate social and linguistic contexts (Gibbs, 2006). Kovecses (2005 p.9) views metaphor as "a many-sided phenomenon that involves not only language, but also the conceptual systems, as well as social-cultural structure and neural and bodily activity."

Metaphor has varied classifications, some of which are: dead metaphor, live metaphor, root metaphor, cognitive metaphor, etc. *Dead metaphors* are metaphors with a relatively fixed meaning; *live metaphors* are creative metaphors that invite a multitude of interpretations, *root metaphors* relate the underlying worldview that shapes an individual's understanding of a situation, while, *cognitive metaphors* are the association of object to an experience outside the objects environment (Arseneault, 2006).

In this study, Charteris-Black's (2011 p.31) definition of metaphor is adopted. Therefore, whenever and wherever we have a word or phrase which has a different source and target domain; a word or phrase that is used with a sense that differs from another in a common or basic sense, that the word or phrase has; and a word or phrase which allows us to bring our own meanings to the text, we have a metaphor. It is this shift in meaning that enables metaphors to evoke emotional responses that are used as "expressive" tools.

This study adopts Charteris-Black's (2011) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and Cognitive Semantics (CS) as its theoretical point of reference to identify, interpret and explain the metaphors used. CMA is an extension of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor theory, which is explicitly explained in the text: *Metaphors we live by*. Charteris-Black (2011 p.45) defines CMA as:

an approach to the analysis of metaphors that aims to identify the intentions and ideologies underlying language use.... There are three stages to this approach: first metaphors are identified, then they are interpreted and then explained. Metaphors are identified using the criteria of whether a word or phrase is used with a sense that differs from another more common or more basic sense as demonstrated by identifying a source domain that differs from the target domain.

In other words, CMA enables one to identify which metaphors are selected, as well as explain why the metaphors were selected through exemplifying and describing how they contribute to societal growth. Prior to this, a conceptual metaphor is identified because as Charteris-Black (2011 p.2) opines "a conceptual metaphor is one that identifies a pattern of thought from a number of actual instances of metaphor". For example, YOUTHS ARE INVESTMENTS will be the conceptual metaphor that will

subsume other kinds of appropriate metaphors such as finance metaphor. As noted by Charteris-Black (2011 p.49), identification “of conceptual metaphors is inevitably subjective, like all other qualitative judgements.”

CS is used to assist in the interpretation of metaphor since the approach’s basic claims are that, the mind is mostly unconscious and abstract concepts are largely metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999 cited in Charteris-Black, 2011 p.45). CMA does not limit itself to the analysis of metaphor alone, but is equally concerned with metonymy, personification, reification, depersonification, etc. since “metaphor is most effective when interlaced with other figures of speech to become part of a wider system of meaning creation” (Charteris-Black, 2011 p.312).

Therefore, the framework used here integrates Conceptual Metaphor theory and Cognitive Semantics, and is appropriate for this work because it provides us with a theoretical frame for identifying, interpreting and explaining metaphors used in the *Intervention* by not just identifying metaphors, but also inferring perceived or intended meaning(s) based on context of use.

Schema for CMA & CS adopted
The critical metaphor analysis and cognitive semantic theory
WOLE SOYINKA’S INTERVENTIONS III: AN OVERVIEW

Identify Metaphor Used	Interpret Metaphor as used	Explain Metaphor Used
Metaphors are identified using the criteria of whether a word or phrase is used with a sense that differs from another more common or basic sense. In other words, do the words used keep unexpected company?	CS is used to assist in the interpretation of metaphor since the mind is viewed as mostly unconscious and metaphorical concepts as largely abstract. Here, metaphorical expressions are interpreted in relation to their source and target domain.	Metaphors are explained based on their context of use, to show how they help to instigate, influence, induce, control and express social change.

In *Interventions Volume III*, Soyinka in three lectures describes the current socio-political scene in the Nigerian nation and courageously lashes out at the significant issues, particularly those which in his perception are fast destroying the nation – religious violence, injustice, child abuse and violation of human rights. His outrage is conveyed through his use of language in a categorical and severe manner.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Through the analysis of Soyinka’s lexicalisation and subject matter that relate to social change, the following – morality and national issues – are the major issues discussed in the text.

1) Morality issue

Excerpt 1:

...the children and the young... To place this in hard-headed, unsentimental terms is to state that society sees them as a **fundamental investment** in its own survival... **virtual investment**, lodged in a **virtual banking institution**... since such **a capital investment** is extremely accessible, palpable to the point of vulnerability... It is a commodity under constant siege, subject to abrupt or systematic devaluation. (pp.50-51)

The conceptual metaphor here is YOUTHS ARE INVESTMENTS. It used to capture and discuss *morality issues* by drawing words from the source domain of finance to portray the invaluable nature of youths (target domain) and decry their devaluation when they are reduced to sexual objects and exploited at will by members of society who ought to protect and safeguard them. Ordinary, the word INVESTMENT has the semantic features +inanimate and +money, while YOUTH has the features +animate and +human. In this context, however, youths are ascribed this inanimate nature to portray their worth. As such the words keep unexpected company since the concept ‘investment’ is transferred to youths, to metaphorically capture and express their invaluable nature to society.

The lexical item 'investment' is repeated three times in the excerpt, along with other collocating words (capital and banking) from the finance domain. Youths are portrayed as invaluable and fundamental assets to a society's growth, and they are also depicted as a nation's capital and society's lifeline. In other words, without them, any society would become extinct, since they are irreplaceable assets. By enumerating and emphasising their worth, Soyinka indirectly reinforces why we should all guard against their devaluation in whatever form and by whomever.

2) National issue

Excerpt 2:

The open defiance of Law by a law-maker **rattles the walls** of whatever **edifice** we all claim to collectively **inhabit**. When a politically opportunistic, mimic 'Body of Benchers' on whose authority such a man reinforces his right to illegal conduct – The supreme Councils for Shar'ia – wades into battle on his behalf, using the same legal system that their scion has openly repudiated, then we had better **look beyond cracks in the walls and ceiling**, and **pay attention to the rumblings in the very foundation of the common edifice**. . . their mission, unchecked, is to bring about the **collapse** of regulated society in whatever sphere, but first milking it of all it is worth. (pp.53-54)

The conceptual metaphor here is THE NATION IS A BUILDING. The source domain is building and the target domain is the nation. A building is a physical object that can be seen and touched while a nation cannot be seen and touched the same way. Words from the domain of building are, however, used to conceptualise the nation. Soyinka chooses these words to pictorially discuss *national issues* and decry the double standard nature of most political leaders and religious clerics, which invalidates separation of religion and state, and threatens national cohesion.

The nation is portrayed as a building that has rattled walls, cracks in the walls and ceiling and rumblings in its foundation: features of a house that is poorly cared for and on the verge of collapse. In other words, the nation is conceptualised as a building on the verge of collapsing. Ahmed Yerima the first governor of Zamfara State, the governor who Soyinka says was one of the precursors of Boko Haram, and currently a senator, is the law-maker whose open defiance of the law, rattles the wall of the Nigerian edifice. This is because, when he was reprimanded for marrying a thirteen year old girl, a child young enough to be his granddaughter, he invoked the Qur'an as his guide and placed it above the Nigerian constitution. Soyinka warned against turning a blind eye or a deaf ear to the ex-governor's disregard for the country's law, a warning the Nigerian nation ignored and whose ripple effects is still felt severely at the time of this writing. It is this act by the governor and subsequent happenings which have caused 'rumblings in the very foundation of the common edifice' called Nigeria.

Excerpt 3:

If, when such outbreaks occur, we do not, at the very least, *drill a hole* through those **reinforced concrete doors erected in the generous spirit of amnesia**, and let through the enabling propositions of the past, we are doomed to confront a repeat of those past events in the future, again, again, and again! (p.14)

THE NATION IS A BUILDING is also the conceptual metaphor here. The *national issue* discussed here is the nation's inability to remember or learn from its past failures and mistakes. In the excerpt above, we have a nested metaphor: this describes the rhetorical practice of placing a metaphor from one source domain within a metaphor from another source domain. Here, amnesia from the domain of disease is placed within the building domain. It is used to appraise the nation's general attitude to things. The Nigerian nation's inability to learn from its past mistakes is captured in the expression 'reinforced concrete doors erected in the generous spirit of amnesia'. Soyinka encourages the nation to drill holes through the walls, in other words, the nation is advised to learn from its past mistakes and use the experience to forestall a repeat of such unpleasant happenings in the future.

Excerpt 4:

No, I do not say that those secessionist states necessarily invented Boko Haram—after all, there was also the Maitasine long before

Zamfara, and others, only slightly less extensive, less humanly catastrophic in scope, those comparatively minor but nonetheless exacting interjections that did not even bother to dignify themselves by any name. They **erupted** like long **over-ripe boils**, **spattered** the nations **face** with **blood** and **pus**, and sank back into the **seething cesspit** of hate and intolerance. A thickening **rain rods** has been beating us since Zamfara however, no less than **rods of blood**. (p.35)

In the excerpt above, the conceptual metaphor RELIGION EXTREMISM IS A DISEASE is exemplified. The disease metaphor (source domain): boil, which is a painful pus-filled abscess on the skin caused by bacterial infection of a hair follicle, is used to capture the pain caused by religion (target domain) which is felt by members of the Nigerian nation from the killings carried out by members of the Boko Haram sect. Religious crisis is a *national issue* that affects and threatens the stability of the Nigerian nation. Using metaphor as an expressive tool, Soyinka portrays religion as a disease causing pains to the nation from the abscess, which has erupted and spattered the nation's face with blood (literally). This refers to the explosion of religious riots that has seriously threatened the Nigerian society.

However, its eruption only compounded the problem of the nation, a problem that even now seems to defy any solution; due to the fact that the eruption of the boil was not properly treated, but allowed to get infected. Weather metaphor: rain, is nested in the disease metaphor to effectively portray the intensity of the disease. In other words, for the problem of Boko Haram to be effectively solved, it must be attacked from the root: no state should declare any religion as being supreme to the Nigerian constitution and defaulters should be dealt with severely from the start.

Excerpt 5:

However, to ignore the element of the increasing **theocraticisation of parts of the nation**, both subtly and overtly, is to **bury our heads in the sands of evasion**. Appeasement, this, alas, was also the watch word of eight years of the Obasanjo regime under which **the creeping theocraticisation** of the nation turned into **a canter**, then a **full gallop**. *Check the statistics, whoever will—the incidence of religious riots, plus the scale of destruction* and statistics of death will be found to be at least four times the accustomed frequency, since the declaration of **Zamfara as an enclave of theocracy**. (p.26)

'Theocraticisation of parts of the nation... Zamfara as an enclave of theocracy' and resultant religious riots and scale of destructions, represents the conceptual metaphor RELIGION IS DESTRUCTION. The destruction of federal, state, local and private properties during religious riots is a *national issue* that makes one question our leaders' abilities. The expression 'bury our heads in the sand of evasion' depicts the ostrich's tendency to shy away from eminent problems. 'Creeping, canter and gallop' literarily capture the progressive movement of a horse, and is used metaphorically to capture the progressive nature of destruction caused by religious faithful with the declaration of Zamfara as a theocratic enclave.

In this excerpt, we have the ostrich and the horse as animal metaphors. The first is used to portray the cowardly nature of a Nigeria's fourth generation president, whose regime's inactions and problem evading leadership style helped to create and entrench Boko Haram, by not addressing the excesses of the then Zamfara State governor, Ahmed Yerima, who declared Zamfara a theocratic enclave and pronounced the 'sharia' as superior to the Nigerian constitution. As Soyinka (2011:16) notes, to "order two hundred buses in order to enforce the segregation of men and women, as the governor of Zamfara, Ahmed Yerima, has just done, is 'Boko Haramism' in creed and deed. And, the ostrich's (source domain) timid behaviour is used to describe Obasanjo's behaviour (target domain), which helped to entrench the beginning of destruction on a larger scale in the name of religion. The second animal metaphor: horse has its movement (source domain), used to give a picture of the progress of destruction caused by religion (target domain) in the Nigerian nation; brought about by accepting, tolerating and condoning religious intolerance in the nation, by trying to appease religious fanatics, which is threatening national cohesion.

Therefore, Soyinka uses language metaphorically to decry the social ills caused by the upsurge brought about by extreme religious fanaticism and the seeming inaction of Nigerians and its leaders to nip these theocratic tendencies at the bud. The metaphors in the text discussed are summarised in the table below:

Types and frequency of metaphors in *Interventions III*

Metaphor Types/Domain		Some Conceptual Metaphors	Number of occurrences (Source domain)				
Source domain	Some Target domain		L1	L2	L3	Total	Percentage
Disease metaphor	Religion	RELIGION IS A DISEASE	5	-	3	8	15.7%
Animal metaphor	Corruption	CORRUPTION IS AN ANIMAL	3	-	-	3	5.9%
Person metaphor	The nation	THE NATION IS A PERSON	4	1	-	5	9.8%
Building metaphor	The nation	THE NATION IS A BUILDING	2	1	2	5	9.8%
Weather Metaphor	-	-	2	-	-	2	3.9%
Finance metaphor	Youths	YOUTHS ARE INVESTMENTS	-	4	3	7	13.7%
Battle metaphor	Survival	SURVIVAL IS A BATTLE	2	-	1	3	5.9%
Journey metaphor	Religion	RELIGION IS A JOURNEY	-	1	1	2	3.9%
Sexual metaphor	-	-	1	2	-	3	5.9%
Slavery metaphor	-	-	-	-	2	2	3.9%
Others	-	-	6	1	4	11	21.6%
Total			25	10	16	51	100%

Key: L = Lectures

The table shows that disease metaphor occurs more frequently than other metaphor types. This is because it is used to vividly portray the decay and rot in society.

Conclusion

In the study, we see how in *Interventions III*, Soyinka uses his immediate audiences' common background to create analogies and to draw his metaphorical expressions in the lectures; as a result, most metaphorical expressions used reflect the immediate discourse context. The themes and discursive issues in the study are morality and national issues. They are not just discussed abstractly, but rather in a vivid and pictorial manner that leaves the messages imprinted on the minds of the listeners and audiences; and solutions are proffered. In terms of frequency, disease metaphors are more frequent than other metaphor types/domain. Diseases are easily comprehended by humans and more often than not, they are ready to go the extra mile required to get a cure. This domain is used to reflect the decay and rot in the Nigerian nation, with the hope that Nigerians would go to any length to find a 'cure' for its malaise. Taking the context of use and co-text of the metaphors into consideration; they depict how Soyinka deploys language as an "expressive" tool, to show in a pungent manner the ills in the society, and how he advocates for a radical change and a revolution. The study brings clarity and insight to the understanding of metaphors as an "expressive" tool in the discourse on social change in Soyinka's *Interventions Volume III*.

Metaphor analysis is pertinent to the analysis of social issues in the Nigerian nation and the larger world. It is an effective tool which helps us to perceive the writer's intent and purpose; and to explore how language is used as an instrument for social control. It is, also, an "expressive" tool which

explicitly illustrates the society's ailments and proffers ways of remedying them. Metaphor analysis in Soyinka's *Intervention* helps us to appreciate discursive issues on social change in public discourse. The study throws light on Soyinka's use of metaphor in public discourse.

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