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Metaphor and the absurd: Reimagining the discourse on nationhood in Ola Rotimi's plays

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Working within the framework of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) model of conceptual metaphor, this paper investigates Ola Rotimi's use of metaphor to frame the absurdities in the Nigerian society. Previous studies on Ola Rotimi have examined some of his texts from the perspective of the absurd or from literary criticism, but no conscious effort has been made to study the conceptual or cognitive dimensions of the texts. The rhetoric of metaphorization enables him to create new categories, schemata and semantic domains that present the ideology of social disjuncture, exclusion and inclusion in his society. The primary texts are selected plays of Ola Rotimi in which the absurdity in human situations and actions are framed metonymically as the image of the nation. The texts are *Holding Talks*, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, and "*Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*". The rhetoric of metaphorization provides the resources with which a writer can express their experiences and vision of the semiotic system. Conceptual metaphor provides the frames and schemata through which the reader comprehends the socio-economic and political realities that informed the writer's rhetoric, and also signifies how language gives rise to meaning among individuals and groups of individuals, and how these meanings are integrated in matters of cooperation and conflict (Chilton, 2004).

Key words: Metaphor, absurdities, rhetoric, frames and schemata, Ola Rotimi.

INTRODUCTION

The general understanding of metaphor is derived from the rhetorical tradition concerning the tropes. The concept of metaphor dominated classical study of rhetorical tropes, because it was conceived as a special use of language for special effect. Philosophers like Plato, Hobbes and other empiricists condemn metaphorical use of language while Nietzsche perceives metaphor as the foundation of meaning and truth. For many reasons, the subculture of science and its various subgroups provide an interesting example of how metaphorical source domains change over time. This change can even be traced back to Plato.

Ortony (1993) however opines that inquires into the classical or traditional concept of metaphor is 'obliged to start with the works of Aristotle.' Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* have remained the most influential body of knowledge in the study of rhetorical tropes. Much of what is known today in the traditional conception of metaphor is indebted to the Aristotelian taxonomy of rhetorical tropes. Gumpel (1984) contends that 'Aristotle may not have been the first proponent of metaphor, but from the

contemporary vantage point he is acknowledged as the major influence of this tradition and has thus become its undisputable progenitor'. Aristotle was interested in the relationship between metaphor and language and the role metaphor played in communication discourse. Aristotle believed metaphors to be implicit comparisons, based on the principles of analogy, a view that translates into what, in modern terms, is generally called the *comparison* theory of metaphor (Ortony, 1993).

The 'comparison theory' seems to dominate the traditional approach to metaphor and perceives metaphor as a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another by saying that one is the other. Kovecses (2002) says that this is a 'widely shared view – the most common conception of metaphor, both in scholarly circles and in the popular mind'. The concept of metaphor has been approached from diverse perspectives in contemporary scholarship.

The conceptual theory of metaphor proceeds from the assumption that metaphor is conceptual and part of everyday thought and language. Lakoff and Johnson

(1980) are not the first linguists to theorize on the concept of 'Conceptual Metaphor'. Lakoff (1993) pays homage to Reddy's (1979, 1993) now classic essay: 'The Conduit Metaphor' as the first contemporary theory of metaphor that shows that metaphor is 'primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language' (203). Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003) obviously grew out of Reddy's postulation that ordinary everyday English language is largely metaphorical, thus, dispelling the traditional view that 'metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or figurative language' (Lakoff, 1993).

It must however be stated that most of the major arguments contained in Lakoff (1993) like the traditional assumptions about metaphor; conceptual metaphor; generalizations; mappings; novel metaphors; etc seem to have been drawn from Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This explains why Kovecses (2002) posits that a 'new view of metaphor that challenged all ... aspects of powerful traditional theory in a coherent and systematic way was first developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980 in their seminal study: *Metaphors We Live By*.

Kovecses (2002) argues that Lakoff and Johnson base their argument that everyday language is largely metaphorical on five grounds: (a) metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words; (b) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or aesthetic purpose; (c) metaphor is often not based on similarity; (d) metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; (e) Metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning.

Lakoff and Johnson contend that metaphor can be understood as the mapping from a source domain to a target domain. Source domain is the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. Thus, it is appropriate to accept Kovecses' definition of metaphor as 'understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain' (4). Kovecses further states that another way of understanding metaphor could be found in the following: 'conceptual domain (A) is conceptual domain (B)'. A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A simple diagrammatic representation of the analogy is presented in Figure 1.

The analogy therefore maps the ontology of conceptual domain B on that of conceptual domain A. Fauconnier (1997) argues that 'analogy maps partial structure of a source domain onto partial structure of a target domain' while Chilton defines analogy as a 'relation between spaces that do have deictic co-ordinates.' The phrase 'mapping' is central to the conceptual theory of metaphor. Fauconnier (1997) opines that 'mappings between domains are at the heart of unique human cognitive faculty of producing, transferring, and processing

meaning'. Lakoff (online) posits that this cognitive faculty is central to human understanding and conceptualization of experiences. According to him 'each of us, in the prefrontal cortex of our brains, has what are called "mirror neurons." Such neurons fire when we perform an action or when we see the same action performed by someone else. There are connections from that part of the brain to the emotional centers. Such neural circuits are believed to be the basis of empathy'. Lakoff (1993) therefore contends that metaphor simply involves the mapping of ontological correspondences across conceptual domains.

While postulating that the conceptual system underlying a language contains thousands of conceptual metaphors – conventional mappings from one domain of experience to another, Lakoff (1993) argues that metaphors can also be realized in obvious imaginative forms and products such as cartoons, literary works, dreams and myths. Kovecses (2002) provides a detailed list and analysis of 'non-linguistic realizations of conceptual metaphor'. This goes to show that conceptual metaphor permeates every domain of human experience, event or activity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON OLA ROTIMI

Ola Rotimi was born on April 13, 1938 in Sapele. He attended St. Cyprian's School in Port Harcourt from 1945 to 1949; St. Jude's Secondary School, Lagos from 1951 to 1952, and Methodist High School, Lagos from 1952 to 1956 before travelling to the United States of America in 1959 to study Theatre Arts at Boston University. He later earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Playwriting and Literature from Yale University on Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.

Ola Rotimi taught at the University of Ife (now Obafemi University, Ile-Ife) and the University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He was also a visiting professor, playwright and director in Germany and Italy. Ola Rotimi is one of Nigeria's and Africa's foremost dramatists. His dramatic works have been performed in Europe and Africa, and are the focus of study in European and American universities with African Studies programme. Some of his works include *Kurumi*, *The Gods Are not to Blame*, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, *If...*, and *Ovoranwen Nogbaisi*. Ola Rotimi died in 2002. His *Four-One Act Plays* was posthumously published in 2007 by University Press Plc, Ibadan.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

Holding Talks is essentially and deeply steeped in absurdist meaninglessness. It is not surprising that most readers of *Holding Talks* would wonder about the utilitarian essence of the play, but amidst this meaninglessness in human situation and actions. Ola

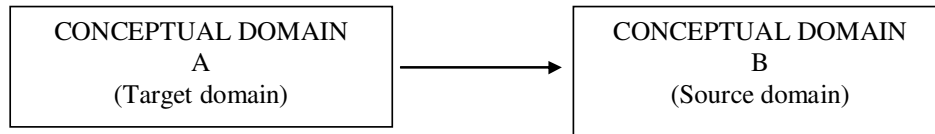


Figure 1. Conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B.

Rotimi uses the play to conceptualize the meaninglessness of the Nigerian situation.

Right from the beginning of the play, Ola Rotimi gives enough linguistic signals to show that the play is intended to depict the hopeless and meaningless situations in his society. We are told that the apprentice barber is 'sitting on the stool. Nothing to do... leafing through the pages of some tattered newspapers', while the master barber 'himself lies full-length, face heaven-wards, asleep. Or trying to sleep...'. And while the Barber and his Apprentice remain in this state a Man that is 'affluently attired' (1) walks into the 'room'.

The room evokes the container image schema which shows the barber's shop as containing certain properties which in themselves motivate certain experiences or actions. The spatial image schemas, coupled with the conceptual metonymies, deployed in the first page of the play conceptualize the Barber's shop (room) as a nation: the four corners of the shop are its territorial space, and its existence within a certain geographical context presupposes that it is bordered by other nations. Saeed (2009) says that the schema of containment 'derives from our experience of the human body itself as a container; from experience of being physically located ourselves within bounded locations like rooms, beds, etc; and also of putting objects into containers.' Similarly, Kovecses (2008) observes that the 'container image schema has the following structural elements: interior, boundary, and exterior' so the swivel-chair, the fan, the stool, the bench, etc define the geo-physical properties that exist within the interior of the nation. The Barber, his Apprentice, the man, and other characters that participate later in the play represent the various social groups and ideologies that make up the nation. It is therefore through the interaction – actions and speeches of these dramatic elements that Rotimi frames the Nigerian nation.

Ola Rotimi wants the reader to perceive the Nigerian nation in terms of the underlying metaphors that emerge from the actions and situations of these elements that make up the nation. The Apprentice is said to have 'nothing to do' other than 'leafing' and not 'reading' through the pages of some 'tattered' newspapers, while his master, the Barber, is 'asleep' or 'trying to sleep'. Ola Rotimi wants the reader to perceive the Nigerian nation as an idle State that has nothing meaningful to do with its time and resources – the unutilized resources of the nation is framed as the various equipment that are lying idle in the barber's shop. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observe that a writer may use metaphor to express and

conceal notions and ideas. Thus, the metaphor behind the apparent idleness of the Barber and his Apprentice presupposes that while the two men, who metonymically represent the people of the Nigerian nation, are wasting their time, serious minded people of other nations are 'working'. The inference pattern that is encoded in the metaphor prods the reader to evoke the analogical relationship that exists between the 'tattered newspapers' and a nation that is apparently in tatters as a result of idleness and lack of resourcefulness.

The writer also uses the metonymic configuration of the fan and the swivel-chair to frame the dismal condition of his society. Kovecses (2008) further contends that our knowledge of the world comes in the form of structured frames, schemas, or ICMs. These can be construed as wholes with parts. Since frames are conceptualized as wholes that have parts, there are two general configurations of wholes and parts that give rise to metonymy-producing relationship: 'the "whole and its parts" configuration and the "part and part" configuration.' Thus, the fan and the swivel-chair are construed as parts of a whole – the Nigerian nation. The fan simply 'refuses to pick up speed' (1979:2) even when it is 'put on high' (1979:2). The conceptual structure of the expressions wants the reader to perceive the Nigerian state as a place where nothing works, or at best, where things move in cyclical progression like the swivel-chair. The image of the 'shaky hand' (1979:4) of the barber also frames the nation as not just being in tatters like the newspapers, slow like the fan, cyclical like the swivel-chair but also shaky like the Barber's hand. The scenario entails that while the Nigerian state is in tatters, slow and cyclical in movement, and shaky, other nations are wholesome, forward moving and firm. The writer wants the reader to perceive Nigeria in terms of the incongruities in the text.

Ola Rotimi also uses the three main characters in the play to frame the asymmetrical power structure in his society and the ideological positions they represent. He uses the metaphor of polarity to frame ideological conflicts in his society. While the Barber and his Apprentice belong to a certain social group, the poor, the Man belongs to another, the rich. This is evident in the fact that while the Barber can only boast of 'ten pence and five pence' (1979:5) Man 'peels out a pound sterling from a fat wad' (1979:6). The argument that ensues between them shows that both groups are ideologically opposed to each other. Man is seen trying to impose his ideology of domination on the Barber, while the Barber on the other hand tries to resist same. By engaging the

Barber in a meaningless argument and trying to coerce him into accepting that his hand shakes, Man is trying to control him 'mentally' and to subdue him into accepting his perspective to the argument. Man's perspective encodes the ideology of his group – domination and exploitation of other groups. Ola Rotimi frames Man as a ruthless exploiter who has no concern whether the Barber's 'wife and children must eat' (1979:6) or the Barber is 'hungry' (1979:7). Man who is rich, educated and comfortable still finds delight in collecting the very last reserve of the dying Barber. He is also presented as being stingy. He could not spare 'five pence' (1979:14) for the beggar. Rather, for giving him one penny, he 'yanks two bananas off the stalk' (1979:16) of the bunch he finds in the beggar's bag. The blindness of the beggar is used to conceptualize the blindness of the nation. The framing image presents the nation as being blind and this explains why it does not see itself as being exploited by elements who disguise their selfish interest as a rescue mission. This act presupposes that Man is exploitative and would like to gain from every interaction or dealing with other groups.

Ola Rotimi extends the meaningless talks between individuals to similar ones going on among nations. He weaves the situation between Man and the Barbers into the international tussle—the tussle between the rich versus the poor nations. Metaphorically, what this implies is that the talks get the developed countries of the world richer and the developing or under-developed countries poorer. Rotimi conceives talk as a new form of missile with which a nation reduces another to rubble. Metaphorically, this implies that the rich nations use talks as a new weapon of mass destruction with which the poor nations are intimidated, oppressed and exploited. All these can be understood through the juxtaposition of the unyielding talk of Man with the failing discussions at the international scene. The newspaper reports of 'TALKS—all species of TALKS: national, international, continental, intercontinental—you name it' (1979:1) and the radio also reports of talks:

leaders throughout the world are arriving in Mo'in the Ethiopian Capital of Addis Ababa, the Organization of African Unity today discussed...' [a shrill squeak] European Common Market Ministers are meeting in Brussels to discuss...' [a clucking sound] 'In Washington, the American and British Heads of State continue high level talks on ...' [a howl]... 'Socialist Party scow for a five-day conference at which they will discuss...' [a babble] 'And in New York, an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council has been scheduled tonight to discuss....[croaking sound] (1979:32).

The metaphorical configuration evoked in this scenario is that of spatial CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema that is the dominant ideology in Western construction of its relations with other groups whom they regard as

outsiders. The dichotomous categories in the text present personal and group relations in asymmetrical pattern of the poor versus the rich; Africa versus the West; Organization of African Unity versus the United Nations; the Socialist Party versus the Capitalist European Common Market, in which each group represents certain ideological configuration. It also frames a situation in which one group tries to impose its hegemonic ideology on the other. Interestingly, Ola Rotimi also uses the metonymic configuration of part for a whole image structure when he mentions Addis Ababa, Brussels, Moscow, and New York. The cities entail certain ideological orientation, interest, and the distribution of economic and political power at the global level. The talks are all about how to sustain or resist the hegemony and parochial interest of each group. Ola Rotimi wants the reader to infer that the talks are meaningless because while the talks are going on at inter-personal, inter-group and intra-group levels, the poor (like the Barber) are dying and the wretched (like the beggar) are being exploited by the dominant ideology and power configurations. The crux of Ola Rotimi's argument is that talks that lead to nowhere is destructive. The writer therefore uses the rhetoric of metaphORIZATION to show the absurd situation the poor and the wretched of the earth find themselves in a world that is drifting towards meaninglessness and hopelessness. Next, we examine Ola Rotimi's presentation of the Nigeria society in *Hopes of the Living Dead*.

Unlike *Holding Talks*, Ola Rotimi's other play, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, is not typically absurdist but clearly demonstrates the absurdities in the construction of inter-group relationship in human society. Ola Rotimi uses metaphor to strongly demonstrate how the various groups perceive each other in their social relation. It reveals how groups use the rhetoric of language to exclude/seclude and to include one another in social interactions. The 'heroes' of the text are the lepers who refuse to accept the social conditions allotted to them by the dominant ideology. Their resistance becomes a metaphor for resistance against oppression and domination.

Ola Rotimi uses the historical knowledge frame of the 1928 to 1932 'Lepers' Rebellion' in Nigeria as a background to reveal the struggle by one group to resist the ideological domination of the other. He uses metaphorical resources to clearly delineate social boundaries between groups. The CONTAINER image schema is evoked to reveal that the actions of the play take place within a certain geographical space that has interior, boundary, and exterior structural elements. The physical setting of the play, the General Hospital, Port Harcourt, is metaphorically used to construct the Nigerian nation. Thus, the General Hospital, the participants in the actions and the actions themselves represent the Nigerian nation in microcosm. The struggle between the lepers and the hospital authorities frame the struggle between groups in Ola Rotimi's society. The play shows the asymmetry in

the social relationship between groups.

At the macro level, the underlying metaphor reveals that Ola Rotimi conceptualizes the Nigerian society as being diseased like the lepers. He wants the reader to perceive Nigeria as a sick nation. Leprosy is a contagious or infectious disease and victims are quarantined so as to contain its spread. Similarly, the Nigerian state is suffering from a contagious disease hence other nations of the world isolate it as a pariah nation. In traditional Africa, leprosy is perceived as a well deserved nemesis from the gods for certain wrong doings, hence victims of leprosy are isolated and in most cases banished to the fringe of the community. The image of Nigeria as a sick nation therefore presupposes that Nigeria must have offended certain powers hence it has to suffer the physical pain of leprosy and the psychological pain of isolation from the comity of nations. The writer further reveals that while the Nigerian nation and its citizens could be conceptualized as 'patients', the society also discriminates between 'regular patients' (1991:13) and leprosy patients, depending on their social status. While the rich belong to the first, the poor belong to the latter. The writer also shows that within the latter group is a further discrimination between the patients with 'skin type...just the surface, the merciful kind' (1991:30) of leprosy and those without fingers and toes (the malignant variant of leprosy). The first group count themselves luckier than the latter. This is evident in the fight between Jimoh and Alibo over who should possess the bed of another inmate, Catechist. Having separated the combatants, Harcourt Whyte, the hero of the play, tells Alibo who is close to Catechist to occupy the bed while Jimoh occupies Alibo's mat. Jimoh refuses, claiming that Alibo's own kind of leprosy is worse: 'the gods forbid it! Why? Mine is the skin type of leprosy, but this man's, the fingers and toes are gone' (1991:26). Harcourt Whyte repudiates that impression by reminding them that 'It's all a lie my brother – we are all the same...The baboon laughs at the vulture for the baldness on the vulture's head. But what's on the buttock of the baboon? Baldness, brother, baldness. Same thing' (1991:30). This portrays the level of polarization between groups and within groups in Ola Rotimi's society.

Ola Rotimi uses metonymic configurations to frame the groups in the Nigerian society. The poor and the despondent of the Nigerian society are conceptualized as the lepers of the text. The isolation theory shows that the poor and the despairing are perceived by the rich as being as dangerous and infectious as the disease of leprosy and therefore must be quarantined. The attempt to silence and brutalize the lepers depicts efforts by the elite and dominant ideologies to emasculate the poor. The lepers, in their protest letter to the authorities, note: '...we have...been victims of utter neglect such as befits only a nation where the dignity of man has no place and the sanctity of his soul, no value' (1991:37). Hannah's defiant interrogation of the authorities' highhandedness

reveals the feelings and emotions of the lepers to their inhuman condition. She asks the Matron: 'Don't we have a right to live in this land – just because we are like this...? ...You think we don't feel? Think we can't sense...Be human, my friend' (1991:9-10). All the poor of the land seem to be asking for, just like the lepers, is to be accorded the basic human dignity. Hence Hannah's utterance is a discursive resistance of dominant forces by the dominated.

The writer uses the different major characters of the play to metonymically frame the different ideologies and identities that constitute the nation. Harcourt Whyte is used to frame the image of a visionary and revolutionary leader. His emergence at a very critical stage in the history of his people gives the impression that hard situations throw up visionary leaders that chart the course of change for their people. His ability to overcome his physical challenges and stand up to the totalitarian tendencies of the authorities infers that individuals and groups must rise above the constraints of their social conditions to challenge oppressive forces and ideologies that dominate them. The admonition to his people: 'The future, brothers. We won't continue like this forever. A time when we too shall prove that we are people deserving of respect (1991:19). We fool ourselves if we believe that the big men of this place will care for us' (1991:21) marks the beginning of the social revolution in the society. The utterances indicate that Whyte has a clear picture of the social situation of his society; the asymmetry in the social contract between the groups; the culture and ideology of domination by the 'big men of this place' (1991:21); and the need for his group to fight for their right as human beings. He challenges his oppressors to: 'give us a chance to live like human beings, or we shall remain bones in your selfish throats forever' (1991:49). This statement infers that the social problem in the society is as a result of the refusal by one group to see the humanity in the other. Whyte's physical deformities correspond to the social and political impediments that visionary and selfless leaders must contend with. His arrest and curtailment of his personal liberties also correspond to the price and strains of leadership.

Ola Rotimi uses the image of the Senior Medical Officer (SMO) and the Superintendent of Police to frame the ideology that is responsible for the dehumanization of the dominated group. They rely on the use of naked power to define the social relationship between them and the Other. Besides intimidating the lepers psychologically, they also send the police to forcefully evict them from their G and H Wards. They employ the language of power and coercion in dealing with the Other. For instance, in a meeting with Whyte and Nweke (the lepers) the police officer declares 'The position of the government in this matter is clear. Needless to say also, that, that position is irrevocable' (1991:45). When he and the SMO talk of evicting the lepers 'in the interest of public health...in the exigencies of service to the people'

(1991:45), they obviously do not include the lepers among the specie that go under the generic label of 'people'. As far as the authorities are concerned the lepers are not human beings but social aberration that must be done away with hence no provision is made for their welfare. This ideology is interrogated by Whyte when he asks them: 'When you say the "people" the "people", my lords, who really do you have in mind?' (1991:46). Whyte also reminds his oppressors that there are different configurations of the 'The people of Nigeria' (1991:46) whom they (the authorities) claim to be fighting for. According to Whyte 'the Nigerian people have many faces. Some faces are smooth, well-fed; some are wrinkled, hungry; others well-fleshed, no troubles ...' (1991:46). He therefore asserts that while the authorities are anti-people, 'we are not fighting the people. We are fighting *for* the people.' This clearly portrays the ideological differences between the two groups involved in the struggle.

The text reveals the polarization of the society into 'they vs. us'; 'we vs. them' (1991:54); 'the ruler vs. the ruled' (1991:48); 'colonial oppressors vs. downtrodden Blackman' (1991:51); and 'kites vs. chicks' (1991:64) structure in which one group (the kites) tries to devour the other (the chicks). The predator image schema frames the dominant group as beasts without human feelings. This explains why Court Clerk opines that the oppressed and dominated group must 'demand' (1991:37) for their human rights. He disagrees with Editor that they should 'beseech' (1991:24) the authorities, reason being that: 'in the first letter, we *begged*. In the second letter we *appealed*' (1991:24) and got no positive response from the authorities. Similar to the predator image schema is the covert presentation of the authorities as the Biblical Pharaoh. The lepers addressing Harcourt Whyte as their 'Moses' (1991:88, 91) evokes the Biblical knowledge frame which equates their suffering and desire for freedom with that of the Biblical Jews under the Pharaohs. Thus, Harcourt Whyte is expected to lead the lepers to Uzuakoli, the Promised Land.

The Biblical knowledge frame is very strong in understanding the text. Harcourt Whyte, as the Moses-figure, tactfully re-enacts the military and leadership qualities of the Biblical Moses/Joshua in their struggle with the authorities. He sends out two of his men, Nweke and Nwodo, to proceed to Uzuakoli to find out the facts about the land just as the Biblical Joshua (Joshua: 2) sent out two men from Shittim as spies to find out the facts about the Promised Land. The two spies Harcourt Whyte sent out return with good news. According to Nweke: 'We arrived at Uzuakoli, and children of our fathers, our eyes saw paradise...I have seen the Promised Land, now let thy servant depart in peace!' (109-110). The Moses/Joshua frames indicate that the oppressed people of Nigeria are in bondage and urgently need the arrival of their own Moses/Joshua to lead them to the Promised Land just as Harcourt Whyte leads his

people, the lepers, to their promised land at Uzuakoli.

Ola Rotimi uses the lepers rebellion to frame group resistance against oppression by the elite and the powerful. Ola Rotimi's presentation of the absurd situation in Nigeria's political system is further examined in "*Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*" belongs to what is generally regarded as 'political satire' in literary criticism but our interest in the text is on Ola Rotimi's use of the resources of language to conceptualize the absurdity in the Nigerian political system. Chilton (2004) contends that 'Some metaphors are deeply involved in structuring systems of political belief or ideologies...The fundamental, abstract components of political thinking are conceptualized by means of metaphor.' We shall briefly examine the framing images used by Ola Rotimi to conceptualize politics in Nigeria. The frames includes the following:

(i) Politics is war: Ola Rotimi uses Lejoka-Brown, a retired army major, to depict that the business of politics as conducted in Nigeria is war. The metaphorical conceptualization of politics in Nigeria involves the mapping of the ontology of war on that of politics. In other words, one can understand the domain of politics in Nigeria by evoking the knowledge frame one has about war. Very early in the text the reader encounters Lejoka-Brown perfecting his military strategies for a political warfare. The play opens with Lejoka-Brown rehearsing his military songs of 'Ai remembah when ai was a soljar', 'Hippy ya ya, hippy hippy ya-ya'(1977:3), etc. He is later joined by another ex-soldier, Okonkwo, with whom they nostalgically take a mental flight into their days in army, and 'march-drill(ed) the living-room' (1977:4). The text frames the scenario as importation of military ideology into politics. This is later confirmed when he affirms that 'it is war! Politics is war' (1977:7). In the text, all the underlying metaphors used in war are also present in politics. The text reveals that politics involves the following presuppositions as in war:

(i) a 'military strategy' (1977:50,76) and 'army tactics'(1977:7); (ii) 'surprise and attack' strategy (7, 52); (iii) a 'counter-attack' (iv) coercive and autocratic strategies (1977:52, 53, 66); (v) a fight (1977:73); (vi) a 'take over' of enemy territories(1977:70); (vii) 'victory' (1977:62); (viii) the 'enemy' (1977:50) who 'lost' (1977:7) the war becomes a 'war prisoner' (1977:29), (ix) and is eventually 'court-martialled' (1977:76).

This study reveals that Lejoka-Brown makes no discrimination between war and politics and this explains why his choice of language is dominated by war rhetoric.

And since politics is not different from war, he frames his political opponent as an enemy who deserves the most conventional military strategy to subdue. He equates politics with his military exploits in the Congo where he

and Okonkwo fought 'shoulder to shoulder...against those long-nosed Belgians' (1977: 5). Politics is also not different from the *Kiriji* war in which his grandfather, Gbogungboro Ogedengbe, 'plucked down fifty-three human heads in one battle' (1977:37). Thus, rather than market his party's manifesto to the electorate he spends most of time fine-tuning his 'military strategy' (1977:76) against his political enemies. He outlines this strategy thus:

"our election campaign plans must follow a pattern of military strategy known as surprise and attack. Now, what is surprise and attack? Surprise and attack, Gentlemen, is "to catch the enemy off-guard, and wipe out his power before he can mobilize enough force to launch a counter-attack."... About one month before election day, we launch a sudden two-pronged drive from small towns and villages right into towns and cities. Our political enemies are...SURPRISED. ...all over. We carry Ibadan...Abeokuta falls under our feet...we uproot Ilesha...Oyo trembles into our arms...we welcome Ogbomosho ...Ilorin opens up the door up the door, and we're in the north, Gentlemen. Once There, an arm of our propaganda brigade crosses over to Jos, Jos to Oturkpo, heading South...Enugu puts up a tough fight, we hop over Enugu...marching through Port Harcourt...sweep Calabar...we begin campaigning in Onitsha...cross over the bridge, dance through Asaba, shake up Benin, hop over to Warri and fullstop. (1977:50-51,)"

The preponderance of military rhetoric in the text indicates that Lejoka-Brown perceives 'election campaign' as a 'military campaign.' The text shows the mapping of the ontological correspondences of war on that of politics. The underlying metaphor presupposes that election in Nigeria is a do or die affair between 'political enemies' and thus deserves the application of maximum force for one to be victorious. Politics is also framed as madness.

(ii) Politics is madness: Politics is also metaphorically conceptualized as madness in Ola Rotimi's society. This could be examined as a subframe of "politics is war" image schema because one really has to be in a mad frame of mind to perceive politics as war in a supposedly democratic setting. Lejoka-Brown concedes that '...crazy politics came and turned my head upside down like...' (1977:75) and regrets that 'I wouldn't have got my crazy head into politics'(1977:28). The metaphor of politics as madness shows that politics is capable of driving one mad. Sikira, one of Lejoka-Brown's wives, reveals that her husband obviously got obsessed with politics because: 'Not only is the master in love ...madly in love with politics, he breathes politics, he washes his mouth every morning with politics, he sleeps with politics and dreams of...' (1977:23). The frame entails that Lejoka-Brown is metaphorically mad for him to be so obsessed

with politics. The underlying metaphor also entails that Lejoka-Brown must be a bad husband because rather than being madly in love with his two wives he chose to be madly in love with politics. The writer therefore uses the image of Lejoka-Brown to repudiate the militarization of politics and political spaces in Nigeria. Further, we examine the framing image politicians use to orient themselves positively and their opponents negatively to the audience so as to win public sympathy.

LEGITIMIZATION AND DELEGITIMIZATION STRATEGIES

The rhetoric of metaphorization reveals how individuals and groups in a political setting use the resources of language to advance their own interest. In this section, we shall briefly present how language is used in situations of cooperation and conflict to: persuade, coerce, include, exclude, boast, denigrate, deceive, blame, accuse, insult, etc.

Sandikcioglu, in what he calls '*frames of Self-presentation vs. frames of Other-representation*', shows how speakers use language to construct positive face for themselves and a negative face for others. Van Dijk (1995) contends that there is the prominence of overall strategy of *Positive Self-Presentation* of the dominant in-group, and *Negative Other-Presentation* of the dominated out-groups in political discourses.

In "*Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*", the National Liberation Party (NLP) appeals to emotion and sentiment when it asserts:

Vote for freedom now or forever be slaves
National liberation party shall make you free
You bear the Children we pay their School
You too can chop life just vote NLP
We will give you freedom of birth and life as rich as Rolls-Royce (ix-x).

Here, besides appealing to sentiment, the NLP is trying to construct a positive face for itself. It wants the electorate to know that NLP is the only party that can guarantee them the best things of life such as freedom, free education, life of abundance, etc. It wants to portray itself as the real friend of the people. It wants the audience to perceive the party as party with a positive vision for the electorate and their children. The framing image indirectly wants the electorate to perceive the opposition as an enemy of the people – a party without good plans for the electorate. The underlying metaphor constructs the opposition as selfish, self-centred and lacking in positive agenda for the electorate. Chilton (2004) refers to this form of euphemising strategy as dissimulation. Boasting about one's status is part of the political rhetoric of the text. Here, we see Lejoka-Brown boasting about his financial might to weather the political storm. He tells his friend, Okonkwo:

Wallahi Kalahi! If they put you on auction right now – you, your degrees, your coat – everything...I can buy you ten times, and still have plenty money left to buy you all over again! But I'm pumping a lot of money into this election. (1977:6)

The speaker wants the reader to know that politics is an expensive business in Nigeria and that he is wealthy enough to contest and win the election. Again, he wants the opposition to know that he has the financial muscle to win the election. In other words, winning elections in Nigeria is determined by the amount of money one is ready to pump into it and not by ones degrees, deportment, and ideology. Further, the speaker employs the delegitimization metaphor of 'commodifying' Okonkwo as a cheap article that can be acquired in a public auction. It is a self-glorification strategy that is intended to diminish the image of the referent and present the speaker as a more important personality in spite of Okonkwo's 'degrees'. The statement is a threat to fellowship face because it is intended to present the referent in the negative while the speaker presents himself in the positive.

The text is full of instances of positive Self-presentation and negative Other-presentation that space will not permit us to examine in detail in this paper. Some include Lejoka-Brown referring to Sikira, his second wife, as a problem: 'I married that problem only four months ago' (1977:10). Sikira refers to Liza, Lejoka-Brown's American wife, as a 'grasshopper', 'fowl', 'cockroach', 'antelope', 'mosquito' (1977:24). Similarly, Liza describes Lejoka-Brown as 'monster of a husband' (1977:26) and Sikira as 'that smutty, ill-bred, foul-mouthed, uncouth, mangy, grossly ribald, whipper-snapper of a chipmunk!' (1977:27). Lejoka-Brown himself describes his Nigerian wives as 'two little crickets', and the American wife (Liza) as a 'canary' (1977:28), and Okonkwo as 'crowing all about' (1977:76). All the metaphors are specifically deployed to demonize and decivilize the opponent. They involve the mapping of the ontological domain of animals or lower creatures on that of human beings. Chilton (2004) observes that the extreme form of delegitimization is such that denies the 'human-ness of the other.' Unfortunately, this is the dominant configuration in the way the speakers perceive and frame each other.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how the rhetoric of metaphorization can be used to conceptualize issues of identity and inter-group relationship in the social system.

It reveals the use of language by individuals and groups to segregate, alienate, or include and solidarize. The use of language in the texts shows the unequal power relations between individuals and groups and the kind of social relationship that is engendered in the process. Ola Rotimi obviously chose the metaphorical mode of conceptualization as a way of providing the reader with a better and fuller understanding and interpretation of the socio-economic and political conditions of Nigeria.

By projecting the absurd situations in the plays, Ola Rotimi seems to be presenting Nigeria as a society in which things can still be put aright if all groups can perceive each other with some degree of mutual respect and a touch of humanity.

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