



STYLISTIC REPRESENTATION OF METAPHOR AND DISCOURSE ISSUES IN EBI YEIBO'S THE FORBIDDEN TONGUE

¹Ojo Akinleye AYINUOLA, Ph.D, ²Adenike Opeyemi OMOLAOYE

^{1,2}Department of English Ajayi Crowther University

¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1005-3857>

¹oa.ayinuola@acu.edu.ng/ayinuolaojo2@gmail.com, ²meetnikkygold@gmail.com

Abstract

Ebi Yeibo is one of the third generation of Nigerian writers whose works have received global attention. Extant studies on the poetics of Ebi Yeibo have paid insufficient scholarly attention to metaphorisation of political trauma in selected works of Nigerian writers especially Ebi Yeibo's the Forbidden Tongue. This study, therefore, investigated stylistic representation of metaphor and discourse issues in Ebi Yeibo's The Forbidden Tongue with a view to unpacking the stylistic devices used in construing the realities in the Niger-Delta. While Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor theory served as theoretical framework, Ebi Yeibo's The Forbidden Tongue is selected because it is the representation of realities in the Niger Delta. Five metaphor types are identified namely: nature, human, animal, food, and place. Source domain "drought" and target domain "politicians" are conceptualised as 'Politicians are the drought' as explicated in "they are the dragons, and the drought, the hunters and the hounds". Source domain "Mother Theresa" and target domain the "Niger-Delta region" as denoted in "they forget, Mother Theresa breathed fresh air, into suffocating seas, from Calcutta's black hole" is conceptualised as 'politicians are merchants of power'. Source domain "upturned cockroaches" and target domain "the people" as exemplified in "like upturned cockroaches, we struggle in vain" is conceptualized as 'the people are the upturned cockroaches'.

Keywords: Source domain, Target domain, Metaphorisation, Traumatic experience, Ebi Yeibo's The Forbidden Tongue

Introduction

Metaphor is a rhetorical device that structures how we perceive, how we think, and what we do (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). According to Zhang (2009), a metaphor is needed, not only to make a thought available to other people; people themselves need it in order for the object to become more accessible to a thought. Metaphor is not only a means of expression; it appears as an important tool for thinking. It is understood that metaphor is not merely a matter of words, but a matter of thought, and that language and cognition cannot be separated from each other as metaphors enable us to understand one conceptual domain with regard to another domain. Metaphor is defined as "the understanding of one conceptual domain in terms of another" (Kovecses, 2010:4) and it is a property of concepts that helped in the understanding of concepts used effortlessly by people in everyday discourse and in the processing of human thought and reasoning

(Kovecses, 2010:x). It is not just a matter of language, but it is an indispensable tool in people's language and thought. Language is considered as a tool for accessing the general principles of understanding thought. Language is the expression of literature.

Poetry is one of the genres of language, fascinating sentences, and magnificent words. According to Wolosky (2008), poetry can be many things, such as philosophy, which can describe pictures, models, or tell stories. It can also contain innuendo, political, and informative issues. It can be said that poetry provides insights related to the intrinsic nature of things. In literature, poetry is the oldest of its genre. According to Solanke (2013), in treating the issues that bedevilled the Nigerian state, poets have focused on the leadership of the country, personalizing those involved. Recent Nigerian poetry in English seems to focus on the most pressing socio-political conditions in Nigeria.

Nigeria has always provided a rich context of order and chaos appropriate for shaping the imagination of its writers along a defined course or perspective. Each phase of the nation's socio-historical evolution has spawned its own corpus of writers who have exploited the timeless relationship between literature and politics to make bold statements concerning the state of the nation. Poets draw metaphors freely from any field of human endeavours. Ebi Yeibo, the writer of *'The Forbidden Tongue,'* expresses the despicable experiences in Nigeria's social environment through the use of stylistic devices.

The poems were written in a harrowing season of political recklessness and human depreciation in Nigeria, and they underscore the horrid realities of the contemporary world - from political arrogance and irresponsibility, incessant homicides, and raging insecurity, endemic ignorance and spinelessness, to hypocrisy, betrayal, and the depressing rhythm of economic recession. The literary works clearly resent the exaltation of wealth and power over decency and humanity. The poet reveals his dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the contemporary Nigerian socio-political setting, with reference to the post-democracy in Nigeria, where all sorts of evils are celebrated with impunity by the leaders, thereby leading to traumatic experiences for the people.

All these appalling experiences definitely affect and cause trauma in the masses. Harvey (2001, p. 23) defined trauma as "a specific term referring to extreme psychological reactions to major losses, such as the death of close relation". A feeling that arises from a traumatic experience can cause an extreme reaction both in the psyche and psychology. This means that trauma is an event that can possibly happen because of one's loss of material or loved ones. Although many trauma researchers argue that trauma is not caused by a single traumatic event, there is always rather the accumulation of related experiences. Herman (1997) suggests that trauma can indeed be traced to a specific moment when the traumatic event comes into being, leaving its victim(s) helpless. The representation of that specific traumatic moment in poetry is what this study explores.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, there have been different studies on Ebi Yeibo's literary work, most especially studies conducted on the stylistic and pragmatic features of the text. Researchers explored different aspects of interest in analysing selected poems in the text. Charles (2023) investigated how Ebi Yeibo employed nature as a metaphor to signify the dissonant relationship between the people of the Niger-Delta and the Nigerian government on one hand, and the African men and women on the other hand. He analysed some selected poems from the angles of the realist presentation of the situations of the Niger-Delta minority and

African women. There are several similarities and differences. Both studies investigate how metaphors are deployed to construe environmental realities in Ebi Yeibo's poems. However, the differences lie in the subject of investigation.

Aim and objectives of the study

The current study examines stylistic representation of metaphors and discourse issues in realities in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*. The specific objectives are to:

- (a) discuss the stylistic devices deployed in the discourse issues and;
- (b) explain how metaphor is used to represent sociocultural realities in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*

Literature Review

Okpabi's (2021) research focused on the dialectics of nationhood and environment in the poetry of Ebi Yeibo. The research evaluated the elements of nationhood, such as thematic preoccupations, poetic idioms, imagery, as well as the constituents of environmental damage in the Niger-Delta. The study also examined the predominance of images of environmental degradation as well as the relationship between humans and the environment. Both Okpabi's (2021) research and the current study focus on the work of Ebi Yeibo. However, there exist differences. While Okpabi's focus on the notion of nationhood and environmental decadence in the poem of Ebi Yeibo, the current study is different in that it emphasizes metaphorisation of political trauma in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*.

Similarly, Ayinuola and Salami (2021) examine ideological representation in Ibiwariko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* and Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbly Sky*, and the study asserts that eco-critical writers are committed to ecological revolutions. While there are similarities between Ayinuola and Salami's (2021) work, the differences lie in the theoretical orientations and methodological standpoints. Ayinuola and Salami examined eco-critical poems. However, the current study focuses on the metaphorisation of political trauma in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*, while Ayinuola and Salami investigated the construction of eco-critical ideologies in selected works of Ibiwariko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* and Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbly Sky*.

It is obvious from the foregoing reviews that these researchers have examined the poetic imagery and stylistic perspectives of the selected text with insufficient attention paid to the metaphorization of political trauma in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*.

Theoretical Framework

According to Crystal (1996), stylistics is the study of systematic variation in language use (style) and the tactical way of identifying the linguistic features that constitute the person's style. Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics that studies the interpretation of texts in terms of their deployment and language peculiarities (Ottoh-Agede, 2022).

Critical Metaphor Theory (CMT) aims at revealing the implied intentions and ideologies of language users (Charteris-Black, 2004) as well as the conceptual nature of metaphors. Charteris-Black's framework for metaphor analysis suggests that, in metaphor analysis, the linguistic and cognitive should be combined in order to effectively account for metaphor in any linguistic expression. CMT argues that human cognition

is organized into conceptual schemas, which “constitute cognitive models of some aspects of the world, models that we use in comprehending our experience and in reasoning about it are not conscious models; they are unconscious and used automatically and effortlessly” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, pp. 65-66). According to Osisanwo (2017), metaphor is a way of thinking, is concerned with language, and can be monomodal or multimodal. While monomodal can be pictorial, auditory, and verbal, multimodal metaphor can occur in diverse modes in form of verbo-pictorial. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) the essence of metaphor is “the understanding and experience of one kind of thing in terms of another.”

Critical Metaphor Theory (CMT) re-evaluates not only the role of metaphor in everyday language (Semino & Steen, 2008) but also introduces a new viewpoint regarding metaphor in literature. In *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggested that metaphors are pervasive, not only in certain genres striving to create some artistic effects, but also in the most neutral forms of language. According to Critical Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphor resides not only in language but also in thought. Metaphors can be used, not only by speaking about certain aspects of words, but also to think about them. CMT further makes a distinction between a source domain which is the physical concrete concept, and a target domain which is the understanding derived through the use of the source domain (Koveses, 2010).

In general, CMT proposes that more physical domains typically serve as source domains for abstract targets. This observation is based on the examination of hundreds of conceptual metaphors that have been discovered and analyzed in literature, and the assumption that most of these conceptual metaphors involve more physical domains as sources, and more abstract domains as targets makes it logical.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative design. The primary data source is *The Forbidden Tongue* by Ebi Yeibo (2007). Besides the primary data source, the researchers use secondary sources which helps to interpret the content of this paper. The secondary data sources are relevant books and journals, mostly sourced online. The purposively selected collections are carefully obtained and used in discussing how the Niger-Deltans and Nigerians at large are being ostracized by the ruling class. The data are subjected to critical metaphor analytical tools.

Stylistic Devices in the Discourse Issues in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*

Four discourse issues are identified and discussed in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*, namely: environmental and ecological pollution explicated through the use of alliteration; bad leadership and corruption in parallelism; destruction of human and material resources explained through anaphora; and suffering signified in repetition. Each of these issues is discussed below.

Construal of the Theme of Environmental and Ecological Pollution through the Use of Alliteration

“Alliteration,” according to Wales (1989:18), is referred to as “initial rhymes”. Lea et al (2008) added that alliteration is a very handy tool for foregrounding the initial sounds to achieve emphasis and to aid memorability. The poet deploys alliteration to project his stance and displeasure with the harmful pollution of the environmental space in the Niger Delta region. Pollution is defined by the European Union Council

Directive (1996) on Integrated Pollution Prevention and control (IPPC) as the direct or indirect human introduction of substances, vibrations, heat or noise into the air, water or land which may be harmful to human health or the quality of the environment, resulting in damage to material property or impair or interfere with amenities and other legitimate uses of the environment (Fagbeja et al, 2008). Environmental pollution and destruction of the ecosystem in the Niger Delta are prominent themes in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*. Niger Delta is the economic hub of Nigeria and is rich in natural resources such as crude oil, natural gas, and so on. The Niger Delta region has the largest oil deposit in the world. Despite the abundant natural resources in the Niger Delta region, the region is still underdeveloped because of environmental and ecological pollution.

The poet is bitter about the situation in this region, as the Niger Deltans are expected to be rich due to the wealthy land, but all the riches go to the pockets of the ruling class. In stanzas 6 and 7 of his poem titled "Rage of a River," he writes:

Excerpt 1:

Dwellers of the Delta
Wax wild on the wings of wreckage
Who wouldn't whose paradise
Becomes a prostitute's rag

Whose patrician pockets
Hoist harmattan's flag
Whose hallowed virginity
Is stolen the wrong way (p. 28)

Excerpt 1 highlights the economic and environmental situations of the Niger Delta. "Dwellers of the Delta" refers to the Niger Delta residents who live on the slum wings of wreckage. The residents live in abandoned places because their lands were desecrated. "The harmattan flag that hallowed virginity" refers to environmental pollution. Also, the paradise turning into a prostitute's rag suggests the desecration of the environment. The deployment of alliteration suggests the pollution in the Niger Delta. The patrician pockets are the political office holders whose rules and policies have polluted the land of the Niger. The above excerpt indicates how the Niger-Deltans are treated wrongly on their own land. Their paradise has turned into a prostitutes' rag. This explains how what is supposed to be a relief for the Niger Deltans is now what brings evil to them. Ebi Yeibo further stated in one of his poems, "Rage of River" how the land got totally polluted with harmful chemicals, which cause grave damage.

Excerpt 2: *Whose savoury swamps*
Are cauldron of chemical (p. 28)

The resultant effects of land pollution lead to reduction in agricultural activities, water supply, settlements, and the ecosystem or biodiversity within the region. This also supported how the people of that region are being treated and neglected. Crude oil, which is supposed to be a source of income and development, has, unfortunately, become the source of poverty to the people of Niger Delta. The oil business in the Niger-

Delta region is profitable only to the stakeholders (the government, political and community leaders) who indulge in exploitation (Bodo, 2019). The alliterative device deployed shows the pitiable state of the Niger-Delta area. Savory swamps in Excerpt 2 above depict that the region is surrounded by salty water where oil is exploited. Despite avalanche of abundant resources in the region, the Niger Delta is characterized by chemical pollution, which has resulted in outbreaks of epidemics and the destruction and pollution of natural resources.

Construal of the Theme of Bad Leadership and Corruption through the Use of Parallelism

According to Hanoon and Al-wah (1988), parallelism is the concept that is summarized by observing the linguistic structures that have equivalent relations based on the principles of equitable linguistic structures. Parallelism is deployed to portray the theme of bad leadership and corruption in Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta region. The Nigerian society has never been well-governed because of leadership crisis and corruption since it gained its political independence in 1960 (Oluwasanmi, 2007). Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013) believe, that from the first democratic experiment in 1960 to military regimes and back to democracy as practised in the country today, Nigeria has unfortunately been managed by leaders who are visionless, weak, parochial, morally bankrupt, narcissistic, egoistic, greedy, and corrupt. All available means have been employed by Nigerian political leaders to ‘grab’ power, including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments and acts of brigandage. All these have precipitated social dislocation, insecurity, abject poverty, socio-economic and political instability.

Ebi Yeibo condemns the deceitful and exploitative deeds of successive Nigerian leaders. He further denounces how these exploiters devastate people’s livelihood to enrich themselves. These leaders have exploited the Niger-Delta region. This is explicated in excerpt 3 below:

Excerpt 3: *Dawn bristles*
 With a fiery flame of fraud
 Burning up blossoming barns
 Like brittle forests
 In the heart of the harmattan
 Sagging our stomachs
 Swelling their pockets (p. 31)

The above excerpt obviously shows how leaders enrich their pockets at the detriment of the masses. In the very heart of the harmattan, the politicians “sag the stomachs” of the people thereby enriching “their pockets”. The parallels “sagging the stomachs” and swelling their pockets contrast the opulence of the leaders and the abject penury of the Niger-Delta residents. The poetic persona through the use of pronouns shows the poet’s solidarity with the masses. The use of “our” shows that the poetic personal bemoans happenings in the Niger Delta. The antithetical contrasts of “our” and “their” reveal that Ebi Yeibo connects with the masses.

Also, the poet laments that bad leadership is the bane of development and growths in the Niger-Delta region, and “with a fiery flame of fraud” shows the epidemic spread of corruption in Nigeria. The linguistic choice denotes that fraud (corruption) is a flame that will burn and consume the nation. The leaders are selfish and are not bothered about the people they govern. The “fiery flame of fraud” lambasts

and laments corruption that has become the order of the day in Nigeria. Ebi Yeibo, in one of his poems titled “Song of the New Moon” further, exposes the deliberate twists in the new democracy. In the new dawn, the poet persona laments that undesirable elements and area boys enjoy the nation’s wealth because they are beatified for their criminal roles in democracy. Intellectuals are not accommodated. Promises of politicians are not matched by actions. Footsteps of the founding fathers of Nigeria are not even followed, not to talk of those who sacrificed for democracy. The poet succinctly portrays this thus:

Excerpt 4: *As zero action*
 As secret weapon
 We mangle homely melodies
 Of ancient crooners

 Like upturned cockroaches
 We struggle in vain
 To regain ourselves. (p. 57)

This excerpt indicates a tragic vision that illuminates deceit and erosion of values, which lead to suffering and starvation even in the midst of plenty. All these are as a result of bad leadership. “As zero action” depicts the state of non-implementation of government policies that will help in the betterment of the masses. Lack of proper implementation makes the masses to “struggle in vain” in order to regain themselves. Some policies have been put in place by successive governments, which have not been implemented. This is the bane of socio-economic developments in Nigeria.

Destruction of Human and Material Resources Explicated through the Use of Anaphora

Anaphora, according to Reinhart (1999), is a linguistic term that denotes any case where two nominal expressions are assigned the same referential value or range. The poet employs anaphora to explicate the annihilation and damage to human and material resources in the Niger Delta despite the richness of the land. Nigeria is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, especially huge deposits of rocks and oil, which have contributed immensely to the national wealth with associated socio-economic benefits (Lawal, 2010). Mining of minerals and petroleum exploration are common practices in Nigeria that stimulate economic growth but are not managed well and eventually have adverse effects on the environment of the host communities. This was made clear in Excerpt 5 below:

Excerpt 5: *O how does one blink bleary eyes*
 Where the air is taut
 With constant fumes of things frazzled
 Where raw blood
 Ravishes the river
 Like biblical Pharaoh’s
 Primed to remand rivalry (p. 58)

The tactical deployment of anaphora in Excerpt 5 above showed that there is destruction of human and material resources in the Niger Delta region. The air is constantly polluted, and water is turned into blood. The use of “raw blood” is to show that the people are suffering and property is destroyed. Another device deployed is biblical allusion to the constant rivalry between Pharaoh and Moses. Furthermore, the above excerpt shows how much damage and destruction have been done to the land, thereby affecting not only the people’s sources of livelihood but also their health. Despite the tremendous natural and human resource base, the region’s potential for sustainable development remains unfulfilled, partly because it is threatened by environmental degradation and deteriorating socio-economic conditions, not being holistically addressed by present policies and state Acts.

The Theme of Suffering Signified through the Use of Repetition

Repetition is a multifunctional stylistic device that “promotes the emotional aspect of communication through emphasis, raises the efficacy of the speaker’s intentions, achieve the appellative function, and holds the attention of the listener” (Peredon, 2017, p. 51). The poet has used repetition as a linguistic device to reflect his emotional intentions regarding the suffering and exploitation of the Niger Deltans. The world has always seen Nigeria as a poor country with a dwindling standard of living, despite a handful of rich Nigerians (Campbell, 2019). One of the major themes in the selected text is suffering. It reflects how the government and oil companies exploit Niger Deltans despite being a region that produces oil. The land is full of sorrow and affliction. The Niger-Delta communities have remained grossly socio-economically underdeveloped and pauperized amidst the immense oil wealth, owing to systematic disequilibrium in the production exchange relationship between the State, transnational companies, and the people. Enormous money had been derived from oil export, but the area has been subjected to severe land degradation, socio-economic exploitation, poverty, misery, and bloody violence (Pegg, 1999).

“Rage of River” buttresses how the land, which he called “paradise,” is degraded to a mere ‘rag,’ a land that is supposed to be full of milk and honey. He further explains how a rich land is now short-changed, and all its wealth goes to the neighbours.

Excerpt 6: *Who wouldn’t whose paradise
 Becomes a prostitute’s rag*

*Whose patrician pockets
Hoist harmattan’s flag*

*Whose hallowed virginity
Is stolen the wrong way*

(p. 28)

While the Nigerian government and oil companies exploit the Niger-Delta, the people’s subsistent means of economic opportunity is also being destroyed. Niger Deltans economically depend on their farmlands, fishponds, and rivers. This means of economic dependence was radically altered when oil companies spilled crude oil on their farmlands, rivers, and fishponds, thereby rendering their economic means of survival lifeless and without compensation. As a result, the people who were once self-reliant

and productive (in their self-employed farmlands and rivers) hit the worst economic disaster (Okonta and Douglas, 2001). Thus, frustration, poverty, and misery set in and consequently acted out through criminality as an escape route. Nnam (2015) explained that the people of the Niger-Delta have suffered exclusion of different kinds in their day-to-day activities. They are frequently abused and neglected politically, abandoned, and their constitutional rights denied with impunity.

The Theme of Insecurity Depicted through the Use of Animal Metaphor

The widespread impoverishment of the Niger-Delta community, glaring security failure, and/or criminal activities of both state and non-state actors have worsened the living standards of inhabitants of this region. Consequently, people are afraid to walk on the streets at night (Oviasogie, 2013) to avoid falling prey.

A good example of insecurity in Nigeria is insurgency, which the poet depicts in the text. Insurgency, according to Ahmed and Shauibu (2018), is a violent action by organized groups to frustrate constituted authority to achieve their social, economic, and political motives. Ndubuisi (2019) opines that the insurgency in the north is due to the inability of the government to deliver public services and provide for the basic needs of the masses.

Ebi Yeibo buttressed, in one of his poems, that the coercive action of the government against the people often lead to crises that eventually created insecurity in the concerned area.

Excerpt 7: *When a hawk swoops on chicks*
 The mother goes wild (p. 28)

The metaphoric expressions of “chicks” and “hawk” show how insecurity has pervaded the nation called Nigeria. It is expedient to say that the animal metaphors depict the powerful and the powerless. The powerful are the Boko Haram insurgents and militants, who have been a menace to the socio-cultural and political developments in Nigeria. The chicks are the innocent Nigerians, while the mother refers to social media and the Nigerian media. The various activities of the militants and insurgents have created a state of general insecurity in the region. Ebi Yeibo maintained that this action was due to the way the government chose a coercive measure in tackling the problems of militancy and insurgency in the region. These problems have stagnated Nigeria and have made the nation a haven for insurgents and militants.

Excerpt 7 explains that the responses of the people might be because there is obvious oppression from the political leaders who are backed by the government's armed forces. The actions of the government gave birth to militancy. The militants agitated against environmental degradation and poor infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region, and this has been a recurring issue. Following the ultimatum given to oil companies to leave the region, the resolve to fight for improved ecological protection, increased provision of social and economic infrastructures, and control of regional petroleum resources, armed youth organizations emerged in the region.

Representation of Metaphor in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*

Six metaphors and their conceptual metaphors are identified and explained below:

Table 1: Types of metaphors and their representations in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue* metaphors

s/n	Metaphor Type	Referent	Reference	Conceptual metaphors
1	Nature	New moon	Hope	The hope is the new moon
2a	Human	New lords	Political leaders	The political leaders are new lords in charge of the affairs of the country
2b		The Mother	The Niger-Delta Region	The Niger-Delta region is the mother land
3	Person	Mother Teresa	The Niger-Delta Region	The Niger-Delta region is Mother Teresa
4	Animal	White eagles	The militants	The militants are the white eagles
		A hawk	The armed forces	The armed forces are the hawks
		Chicks	The Niger-Delta agitators	The Niger-Delta agitators are the chicks
		Upturned cockroaches	The people	The people are the upturned cockroaches
5	Food	Basket of yams	Nation's treasure	The Nation's wealth is the basket of yams
		Fish pond	Nation's wealth	The Nation's wealth is the fish pond
6	Place	Paradise	Niger-Delta	The Niger-Delta is Paradise

1. Nature metaphor

The first type of metaphor from the table above is nature metaphor. According to Mark Meiner (1995), nature is an evocative image, which sees the earth as the home. The nature metaphor has mixed values in referring to the earth as the mother. Mark further opines that the metaphor of nature expresses the partial truth that nature is where we live. Ebi Yeibo, in his poem, Song of the New Moon, also illuminates deceit and erosion of values, which lead to suffering and starvation in the midst of plenty in the land.

Excerpt 8: *Below, eggheads smoulder
in the soulless song
of the new moon*

(p. 57)

The deployment of visual imagery is used to convey the metaphorical nature of corruption in Nigeria. Excerpt 8 explains how politicians give misleading promises, which tend to deceive the people. The use of alliteration of "soulless song" depicts promises that have remained promised in Nigeria. It is worth noting that politicians often tend to tell lies and employ deception to garner support (votes) from the people. These politicians simply make promises even without knowing what the people (masses) need,

give hope and expectations, and at the end, all promises are empty. Promises are explicated in the “soulless song”. The promises have remained promises because the eggheads engaged in soulless song in the new moon. The nature of metaphor of “new moon” represents new hope and a beginning at the end of four years when politicians in Nigeria visit their constituencies to canvass for votes.

Excerpt 9: *They are the dragons*
 *And the **drought***
 The hunters and the hounds (p. 34)

Ebi further explained, from the above excerpt, how the politicians have looted the people of good life, and left the populace with emptiness and dryness. The dragons and the drought refer to politicians. They are dragons. They have gone weird and become uncontrollable, because they make laws that favour them and enrich themselves at the detriment of the Nigerian populace. They do not, in any way, care for the people or their good being. This care-free attitude has left the people in a state of dismay and hopelessness.

Human Metaphor

From the table above, the use of human metaphors shows that the politicians are negatively portrayed as wicked, inhuman, autocratic, and selfish. Lexical choices of renegades and new lords show that the politicians are traitors, detractors, and have a penchant for deceit. In spite of all the promises and assurances, these politicians will still end up swimming in the pool of corruption, manipulation, embezzlement of funds, greed, and so on. Ebi Yeibo called them the “renegades” as they refuse to ensure the masses did not suffer, and “new lords” who dashed the hope of the people. They further hinder any form of objection or complaints, and also betray the people’s trust and dash their hope.

Excerpt 10: *I lie waiting at crossroads*
 for the return of those renegades
 who barter a basket of yam
 for a healthy bowl of beetles

 I lie waiting at the crossroads
 *For the **new lords** of the land*
 Who murder the new moon
 Right on our lap (pp. 20-21)

The above lexical choice of ‘new lords’ reveals that politicians are betrayers and traitors. The semantic features of renegades have + traitors, +distractors, +betrayers, +deserters, -loyalists. The foregoing reveal that the politicians are devil incarnate. The human metaphor shows the attitude and character of Nigerian politicians. The collocative expressions of “new lords” with “murder of new moon” show that “new lords” are killers, murderers, wasters, heartless people, and delayers of hope. The “new hope” symbolizes a new beginning being bashed and destroyed because of the ineptitude of the new lords. They promise the people which are often captured in the political party manifestos, but eventually end up unfulfilled. The excerpt shows that the politicians are highly self-absorbed, egocentric, self-centred, and

are only interested in what benefits them maximally. They comprise the welfare and lives of the citizens in order to gain or protect political interests. This shows that politicians are greedy and power-drunk.

The table above further shows human metaphor as a type of metaphor employed by the poet. Human metaphor can be characteristic of a family setting, which comprises father, mother, and children, to depict land, nation, or territory. For instance, Ebi Yeibo refers to the Niger-Delta region as “the Mother” and “Mother Teresa”. This explains the reaction of the mother (Niger Delta) when her chicks are caught in the web of the hawk. This is exemplified in Excerpt 11 below:

Excerpt 11: *When a hawk swoops on chicks*
 ***The mother** goes wild...* (p. 41)
 They forget
 ***Mother Teresa** breathed fresh air*
 Into suffocating seas
 From Calcutta's black hole (p. 49)

The Niger Delta is regarded as the mother and motherland. The semantic features of mother have +animate, +human, + productivity, +fertility, + good care, and + diligence, -infertility, while the Niger Delta has semantic features +inanimate, and +abstract. The above excerpt further explains the protective nature of the Niger Delta region, which ‘breathed fresh air into the suffocating seas’. *Mother Teresa* tries to sustain the environment that has been desecrated by oil spillage. The desecration and pollution brought poverty, hunger, dryness, and other unpalatable experiences in the region. This shows that the Niger Delta region is protective, productive, and fertile.

Animal Metaphor

From the table, animal metaphor used by the poet represents the military. According to Mohammad (2011), animal metaphor is the use of an animal name or characteristics, which conventionally stand for an animal, as the source domain rather than the target. For example, He is a fox. *Fox* here is the source domain, and this sentence is an example of animal metaphor. In the context above, it can be seen that it represents all those traits which we have accepted for a fox and then attributed to the target. In the same vein, Ebi Yeibo labeled the militants of the Niger-Delta “white eagles”. The poet likens the militants to eagles to explicate strength, vigor, purity, innocence, and the Niger-Delta militants are fearless, tenacious, focused, prepared for training, and have keen vision.

Excerpt 13: *O the slaughter of **white eagles***
 Leaves the animal kingdom
 In sackcloth (p. 28)

The metaphoric deployment of “white eagles” shows that the Niger Delta militants are the white eagles. The semantic features of “white eagles” are +vigor, +vision, +fearlessness, +commitment, +calculative, +tenacious, +vitality, +nurturing, and –weakness, while white symbolizes purity, innocence. This implies that the Niger Delta militants have vision and vitality to combat inhuman government policies and programmes. Militancy started in the Niger-delta due to the fact that over the years, successive

governments, at all levels, seemed to have paid lip service to the conditions of the people. This is explicated in the devastating consequences of gas flaring and oil spillage activities of multinational oil companies across the region. The people who had sustained themselves over the years through sustenance economy in terms of land-based and aquatic agricultural practices were deprived of their means of livelihood arising from exploration activities with little or no compensation or commensurate alternatives. With all these, the government interventions are reactionary rather than responsive in nature.

Also, the poetic persona tactically deploys animal kingdom to represent Nigeria. The animal kingdom is characterized with lawlessness and hopelessness. Situated within George Orwell's *Animal Farm* where all animals are equal but some are more equal than others, the animal kingdom refers to Nigeria's banana republic, where politicians are the powerful and the masses are the less powerful. The masses are the "upturned cockroaches", while the government employed coercive measures by deploying security apparatus to the troubled zones. Ebi Yeibo further refers to the Niger Delta residents as "*upturned cockroaches*" to show the level of hopelessness of the people. This is explicated in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 14: *Like **upturned cockroaches***
 We struggle in vain
 To regain ourselves (p. 57)

The similitude of Niger Delta residents as upturned cockroach suggests that they are hopeless and helpless. The collocative expression of "we struggle in vain" suggests that the people are in bondage to the powerful, and all efforts to regain their freedom prove futile. Excerpt 14 shows that the people are not catered to, are starved, and eventually die in their miserable states. This shows that the people have been deceived, betrayed, and manipulated by the leaders they so much trusted to represent them. This made the masses suffer and "*struggle in vain*".

Food Metaphor

These are metaphors regarding edible things, which are connected with feelings of respect, joy, and socializing; metaphors of non-edible things are connected with distaste and even disgust. Food is an engine and source of metaphorical meanings that permeates our lives. For example, apples can incorporate references to sin, toxin, or simple life; olives are seen as signs of peace, and tomatoes can symbolize blood and love.

From the table above, the poet explains the corrupt ways of our leaders as they carelessly export oil and other valuables, but divert the proceeds to personal gain which significantly has a negative impact on the economy of the country.

Excerpt 17: *I lie waiting at the crossroads*
 For the return of those renegades
 *Who barter a **basket of yams***
 For a healthy bowl of beetles (p. 20)

Though oil export is seen as the engine of economic growth and development, this excerpt explains how leaders refused to channel this blessing to the masses by making necessary provisions for the comfort of the people. Communities where the oil-well are being discovered and explored (Niger-Delta) are suffering from devastation and low-economic viability because the Federal government has failed to enact and enforce environmental protection against all the hazards caused by companies that exploit the oil. Exportation of oil and other mineral resources is supposed to generate foreign exchange that is required to import capital goods, which will, in turn, stimulate the country's capacity to produce, but Nigeria leaders instead deal in exportation for their personal gain, and the revenue is not effectively used for the development of the economy. Large proceeds are obtained from the domestic sales and export of petroleum products; its effects on the growth of the country's economy, as regards returns and productivity, is still questionable. As a result of corruption and mismanagement, oil exploration, development and production operations have constituted danger to the quality of life, and hence have become a threat to health, safety and the environment.

Place Metaphor

According to Arendt (1979), metaphor affords one potentially common ground from which to approach the question of the metaphor of Place. In mainstream traditions of geographical thought, place has been regarded in a variety of ways. For example, place as *niche* within an originally constituted universe; place as *node* within networks of functionally-organized space in a world conceived as a mechanical system; place as *arena of spontaneous events* in a world without fixed coordinates.

The table above shows how the Niger Delta is represented as the Place metaphor. The Niger-Delta is a richly endowed land with great resources that places Nigeria as one of the best oil producing countries in the world. Ebi Yeibo metaphorically represented the Niger-Delta with the word ‘*paradise*’.

Excerpt 18: *Who wouldn't whose **paradise**
Becomes a prostitute's rage* (p. 28)

This excerpt makes two incontrovertible facts about the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. First, it is a region of strategic importance to both the domestic and international economies. Secondly, it is a region of great, troubling paradox, great wealth, and inhuman poverty. The metaphor juxtaposition of paradise and prostitute rage shows the realities and ideal situation of the Niger Delta. Niger Delta was supposed to be paradise because of the avalanche of resources in the region. It is regrettably sad that the region has been abandoned and it lavished in abject poverty. The metaphoric representation of prostitute rage was to bemoan abandonment, poverty, and neglect suffered by the Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

This study has examined the stylistic representations of metaphor and discourse issues in Ebi Yeibo's *The Forbidden Tongue*. The paper has elucidated the prominent discourse issues in the text and how metaphor is used to represent sociocultural realities. The discourse issues are environmental and ecological pollution, bad leadership and corruption, destruction of human and material resources, and suffering. All these themes are portrayed through the use of alliteration, parallelism, anaphora, and repetition. Ecological and

environmental pollutions bemoan the condition of the Niger Delta, explicated in alliteration, bad leadership and corruption signified in parallelism, destruction of human and material resources explicated in anaphora, and suffering signified in repetition. The text is characterized by six metaphors with their conceptual metaphors. The nature and human metaphors conceptualize politicians as the drought and the new lords. This implies that politicians are responsible for infrastructural decadence in Nigeria. Their inhuman activities cum atrocities have been injurious to the socio-economic and political developments of Nigeria. While human metaphor construes Niger Delta region as the motherland, animal metaphor depicts that Nigerian military are vultures and hawks. While Niger Delta is epitomized as paradise, food metaphor shows that the region is the food basket of a nation. The animal metaphor conceptualizes the Niger Delta militants as white eagles. This means that the militants are strong, fearless, bold and united. The metaphors used in the text are not merely decorative but are conceptual tools that shape the readers' understanding of Nigeria's post-democratic experience marked by oppression, poverty, and despair, especially those in the Niger Delta region.

Ebi Yeibo's poetry functions not only as a literary expression but also as a form of socio-political documentation that gives voice to ostracized experiences. It illustrates how metaphor can serve as both a cognitive and emotive mechanism for articulating realities in a politically volatile society. The study underscores that the Niger Delta experience is a microscopic reflection of socio-cultural realities in Nigeria. While this study has explored the stylistic representation of metaphor and discourse issues in *The Forbidden Tongue*, future research could expand the scope to include comparative studies of metaphor use in the works of other contemporary Nigerian poets. Also, interdisciplinary approaches that combine cognitive linguistics with ecocriticism can also offer better insights into how metaphors shape collective memory and social consciousness.

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