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Conceptual Metaphor in Ezenwa Ohaeto's Collection, *Bullets for Buntings*

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Abstract

One of the defining characteristics of literature is its ability to generate multiple meanings and interpretations. While the orality of Ezenwa Ohaeto's poetry and performance have received more positive criticisms by critics as well as acceptance, his use of metaphor as a potent amour in poetry seems to have been neglected, hence, it has received less attention by critics. This paper is set to investigate Ohaeto's use of metaphor in his poetry using Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This work attempts a textual and sub-textual analysis of conventional language into special effects by the poet which often leads to the poetic effectiveness and literary style of the poet. Motivated by the scanty scholarly linguistic studies on metaphors in his poetry, this paper examines the different categories and functions of metaphors in his poems. Building on qualitative research methodology, Ohaeto's select poems from his collection, *Bullets for Buntings* as primary data are studied and analysed with a view to examining his reliance on metaphors as discursive strategies to question socio-political issues in Nigerian and by extension, Africa. Again, this paper identified

and addressed some aspects of metaphors in Ohaeto's poems using contextual model in bringing out his aesthetic contributions to scholarship. It also demonstrated that metaphors play contextual roles such as being interactional cognitive tool in the hands of the poet. It is found out that the poet deployed metaphors as linguistic armories to question and address socio-political and cultural problems in order to bring about radical changes in his milieu. Metaphor to a very large extent is found to be one of the versifier's favourite devices in writing.
Keywords: Meanings, Interpretations, Metaphor, Discursive strategies, Contextual roles.

Introduction

The beauty of poetry is perceived in its exploration, exploitation and manipulation of language, hence, different poets have developed or adopted different styles and techniques of writing in a bid to making impact in one way or the other in the minds of the audience of their works or the society in general. Poetry is seen as a special use of language to express intense feelings (Ogungbemi, 2020). This means that poetry deploys language in a special way to evoke and exalt special qualities of life and suffices readers with feelings. The language of poetry can be said to be an admixture of sound devices, imagery and symbolism. According to Sage (1987) poetry is one of the most effective and powerful transmitters of culture. Poems contain many cultural elements - allusions, vocabulary, idioms, tones and images (metaphors) that are not easy to translate into another language.

It is a commonplace of literary criticism that one of the defining characteristics of literature is its ability to generate multiple meanings and interpretations. Recently, a renewed interest in metaphors has stressed their importance as instruments of cognition. Metaphors according to Lakoff and Mark, (1980) have been assigned a central role in our perceptual and cognitive processes; in fact, we live by metaphors, as the title of their

influential study on the subject suggests hence, literary critics are adept at producing such readings, readings which are often insightful and illuminating. They however, have never explored the principles or the processes by which such multiplicity occurs. Freeman (2012) believes that critic readings and meanings they make are shaped by the theoretical stances they take, whether psychological, sociological, historical, or deconstructionist, to name just a few. The aptness and necessity of metaphorical awareness usually focus on the problem of content: what does a particular metaphor express and how? There is, however, another question that needs to be asked, namely: how felicitous is a particular metaphor in a particular context, such as solving a problem, obtaining consensus, elucidating difficult subject matter and so on? As repositories of our past experiences and for guidance in dealing with new ones, metaphors are necessary for our survival (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This means that metaphors may make it difficult for us to understand, and be understood by other people: either because we cannot grasp the others' use of metaphors, or because the other party is unable to follow ours. Either difficulty reflects the fact that our ways of thinking are rooted in a common social practice. Metaphors are not individual means of conceptually dealing with the world, but means that have become current within a given linguistic and cultural community. If it is true that there are metaphors we live by, then different ways of life will correspond to different metaphors; our understanding of "life's meaning" (in whatever sense of the expression) crucially depends on our understanding of those metaphors, and on our ability to bridge those differences (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

The importance of metaphors as a means of dealing with the world has been stressed recently by researchers in various fields. One of them, Anthony Judge, in a thoughtful contribution on "Incommensurable Concepts and Their Comprehension through Metaphor," speaks of a "metaphoric revolution", by which he

means a new openness to the diversity of beliefs and belief systems prevalent among the world's peoples and communities (quoted in Mey, 2007). Drawing our attention to the multifarious use of metaphor in different cultures and to the ways in which such congealed forms of thinking are relevant to, as well as supportive of, mutual understanding. Judge maintains that such "openness" is necessary to avoid the conceptual or linguistic "imperialism" as that downgrades all those who do not think and talk the same way as we do ourselves. Emphasizing our own ways of doing metaphors, Mey (2007) believes that we reject the ways practiced by other people as invalid. For this reason, metaphors are always charged with high pragmatic explosives; metaphors are "loaded weapons" in need of being secured. To this end, wording as could be said is the process through which humans become aware of their world, and realize this awareness in the form of language.

However, the words are not just labels we stick on things; the process of wording is based on interaction with our environment. This means that we bespeak the world, and it speaks back at us. Mey (2007) believes that "the world we word" is, furthermore, "a world of people"; we can only become language users through the social use of language. Once language is created in this social environment, once the world has been worded, our wording creates a shared world-picture. Without words, the world remains a black box, an unread picture-book. Using the common wordings that are available to us, we open that book, not just to look and make sure everything is still in place, but to see ourselves as part of the worded world. One of the most effective ways of seeing the world in this way is through "the use of analogies: understanding one thing by way of another" (Mey, 2000).

Conceptual Review

The classical Greek philosopher, Aristotle declared metaphor one of the highest achievements of poetic style. According to him, "it is the mark of genius" for to make good metaphors "implies an eye

for resemblances" (Dukore, 1974). Our literary world especially, the African literary world is pervaded with metaphors. Metaphor has become an indispensable part of our literary world that recent research into our everyday literary life shows that we use four metaphors per minute (Tompkins and Lawley, 2005a). This statistic could come as a surprise because metaphor has become much fundamental in literature that out of the vast majority of metaphors we use, only the more obvious ones register in our minds. As a literary device, metaphor is both descriptive and prescriptive. It is descriptive in the sense that the essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing or describing one kind of thing in terms of another. Through this use of metaphor as a literal description of unconscious processing, it becomes a gateway to increased awareness, understanding and change. Thus, metaphor specifies and or constrains our ways of thinking about the original experience thereby invariably influencing the meaning and importance we attach to the original experience, the way it fits with other experiences, and the actions we take as a result, hence, its prescriptive essence.

In addition, Amore and Amusan (2020) assert that in the traditional figurative vantage point a metaphor is regarded as an art of verbal inducement and an exchange of words when it is paraphrased into a non-metaphorical expression by means of analogy between the substitution term and the term being substituted. Therefore, metaphor is considered to be an ornament of language which conveys no new information. It is said that poetic language is beyond ordinary language. Harold (2003) describes it as something different, special, with extraordinary tools and ideas beyond the reach of the speaker.

Yang (2015) defines metaphor as "mapping across conceptual domain" in which "the schemata structure of the source domain is projected onto the target domain in a way that is consistent with inherent target domain structure." Based on the cognitive theory of

metaphor, poetic texts are analyzed in the framework of cognitive poetics. Lakoff and Turner (1989) suggest the ways in which poets aim at poetic effects from conventional cognitive metaphor. Thus, four techniques are proposed in the following: extending a conventional metaphor in a novel way, elaborating the image-schemas by filling special or unusual cases, questioning the limitation of conventional metaphors and offering a new one, and forming composite metaphors by the non- conventional combination of multiple conventional metaphors for a given target domain. These techniques, which use conventional metaphors in special and non-automatic ways, make poetic metaphor noticeable and memorable. Poets by their non-conventional use of metaphors, lead their readers beyond the bounds of ordinary modes of thoughts. This research makes an attempt to elucidate how poems can be analyzed in term of the conceptual metaphors.

The understanding of the various backgrounds of poems enhances the knowledge of the reader in getting clear pictures of the meaning conveyed to the audience. According to Spenser and Gregory (1964) a text may, that is, be regarded as an "utterance" which is part of a complex social process and therefore the personal and social process linguistics, literary and ideological circumstances in which it was written need, as literary. According to them:

> Scholars have always recognized to be called upon from time to time when any serious examination of a literary text is being made, be it for the purpose of Stylistics or indeed any literary study. (Spenser and Gregory, 1964)

For any piece of literary text to have meaning, it must be placed within a context of situation. When the context changes, its meaning also changes. The context of situation is the environment in which a text comes to life; an environment is where every utterance is interpretable in relation to the background. Hence, in

contextualizing the select poems in Ohaeto's *Bullets for Buntings*, our motif is to project and state some of the metaphoric details that will be of relevance in our attempt to make meaning out of the collection.

As a literary device also, Lawley and Tompkins (2005b) observe that metaphor is "an active process which is at the very heart of understanding ourselves, others and the world around us"; this is the very essence of literature. To Lawley and Tompkins, metaphors need not be limited to verbal expressions, they should include any expression or thing that is symbolic for a person, be that non-verbal behaviour, self-produced art, an item in the environment or an imaginative representation. In other words, whatever a person says, sees, hears, feels or does, as well as what they imagine, can be used to produce, comprehend and reason through metaphor. From the foregoing, it will be observed that the use of metaphor as a literary device is something optional that makes a good literary work. It is the icing on the cake of composition. It is not just essential literary figure, but has the power and potentiality of making any literary piece compelling and special. As with icing, metaphor requires careful handling: used sparingly, it makes a sweet impression, spread too thickly; on the other hand, it is not just sweetening, but sickening (Lawley and Tompkins 2005b). This means that a speaker can put ideas or objects into words or containers, and then send them along a channel, to a listener who takes that idea or object out of the container and makes meaning of it. In other words, communication is something that ideas go into. The container is separate from the ideas themselves whether for good or bad effect.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), sometimes called Cognitive Metaphor Theory, was developed by researchers among cognitive linguists and became widely known with the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson, in 1980. This

theory provides a very useful tool for analysing linguistic phenomena. It involves the use of metaphor not just for pointing at similarities between two different entities but for the organization of some realities of life. The main point of the theory is that our conceptual system is based on a group of mental metaphorical images that determine our way of thinking and influence our experience of the world.

Lakoff (2003) opines that there are two domains for conceptual metaphors. The source domain, which is the concept from which the metaphorical expressions are drawn; for example, with the expression "Love is a Journey" and "Time is Money", Journey and Money are the source domain, (which is one domain of experience), while Love and Time is the target domain that we try to unravel. The process of mapping across these conceptual domains puts the two elements together (LOVE and JOURNEY, TIME and MONEY) so that one can see the common ground, similarities, resemblances and parallels that may exist between the source domain and the target domain. Metaphor, as asserted by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is primarily based on this mapping and language is only secondary. From this standpoint, metaphor is defined as a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system (Lakoff, 2003). Thus, metaphors could be referred to as conceptual mappings, or metaphors, with the metaphorical expressions being individual linguistic expressions. The source domain lays the foundation for the concept, which in its turn forms mappings, or conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphor will further provide a whole number of linguistic expressions, or as we might call them linguistic metaphors, that finally deliver the idea to the target domain.

Conceptualization is the principle of understanding an idea or a concept in terms of another. The principle can be stated informally as a metaphorical scenario. With regards to death, it can be understood in terms of a journey, a rest, an end, a better location, a

loss etc. It is also understood in terms of human beings as travellers on a journey, with death and/or "going to heaven" seen as a destination to be reached. According to Jakel (2002), most metaphorical expressions are not to be treated in isolation, but as linguistic realizations of conceptual metaphors. Metaphors involve understanding one domain of experience, like death, in terms of very different experiences. In other words, metaphor can be understood as a mapping from the source domain (in this case journey, rest, end, loss, better location etc.) to a target domain (in this case death). In Nigeria issues dealing with death are developed by reasoning about the dead, dying and/or death in terms of other concepts or ideas for instance in terms of journeys, resting, a loss, a better location, a final destination, regrouping and joining one's ancestors and God, to mention but a few.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are inescapable in everyday life, not just in language, but also in thought and action. A common definition of a metaphor is a comparison that shows how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in another important way. They explain how a metaphor simply understands and experience of a thing in terms of another. The authors call this concept a "conduit metaphor". This means that a speaker can put ideas or objects into words or containers, and then send them along a channel, or conduit, to a listener who takes that idea or object out of the container and makes meaning of it. In other words, communication is something that ideas go into. The container is separate from the ideas themselves. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) gave several examples of daily metaphors we use, such as "argument is war" and "time is money". The authors also suggested that communication can be viewed as a machine: "Communication is not what one does with the machine, but is the machine itself" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). As Fernandez (2004) explains, the mapping process that occurs with metaphors such as to "die is to sleep" involves mapping our perception of sleep onto our perception of death and fulfilling a

euphemistic role where the source domain mitigates the target domain. To illustrate this point, it can be said that in the euphemistic mechanism, the euphemistic expression (source) replaces (mapped onto) the taboo expressions (target) and, in the process, the positive aspects of the target domain are highlighted while the negative aspects are hidden (quoted in Lakoff and Johnson, 2005). Lakoff and Johnson admit the possibility of highlighting and hiding, suggesting that metaphors provide a coherent structure, highlighting some things and hiding others.

From the fore going, it is obvious that Conceptual Metaphor operates from two domains: "Source" and "Target". Going by the submissions of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) it is conspicuous that poetic metaphor is enrooted within the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The duo further elaborate on what it means for a concept to be metaphorical and they illustrate their point, giving many examples. To mention only one, they tackle the concept "argument" and the conceptual metaphor "argument is war". The metaphor is demonstrated in daily life in such expressions as: your claims are "indefensible"; he "attacked every weak point" in my argument; his criticisms were "right on target"; I "demolished" his argument; I've never "won" an argument with him; if you use that "strategy", he'll "wipe you out". He "shot down" all of my arguments. Those expressions are not mere words of language; they actually represent realities of life that are witnessed in terms of the facts that we "win or lose arguments", we see the person we are arguing with as an opponent, we attack our challenger's positions, we defend our own and we gain or lose ground, etc. The relevance of Conceptual metaphor to this study is notable as it helps to reflect the conception of the poet through explanations from other concepts.

The Use of Conceptual Metaphor in *Bullets for Buntings*

Poems cannot exist wholly without metaphor because of the meaning it creates in poems and it is metaphor that makes a poem

as vivid as a reflection of actual life as it enforces and reinforces images at the visual, olfactory, tactile, gustatory and auditory levels as well as kinesthetic level too. The poems of Ezenwa Ohaeto generally reflect the common realization of images, focusing on the interaction between objectivity and subjectivity and depending on the physical experience and cognition in real life as touching his environment. To this end, bullet as perceived by Tikkanen (2024) could be said to be a metal projectile for firing from a rifle, revolver, or other small firearm, typically cylindrical and pointed, and sometimes containing an explosive. It is a **"**kinetic projectile that is shot from a gun barrel" (Tikkanen, 2024). He further states that, it is the projectile part of a cartridge, which also includes the case, primer, and propellant. It is seen as an elongated metal projectile that is fired by a pistol, rifle, or machine gun and are measured by their calibre, which indicates the interior diameter, or bore, of a gun barrel. On the other hand, bunting among other possible meanings is perceived as a coarse**,** open fabric of cotton wool used for flags, signals, etc. It is also a lightweight, loosely woven fabric used chiefly for flags and festive decorations. Bunting is often used for patriotic and festive decorations made from such cloth, or from paper, usually in the form of draperies, wide streamers, etc., in the colors of the national flag (Britannica.com, 2024)**.** It can also refer to rows of brightly coloured small flags, often in the colours of a country's flag that are hung across roads or rooms, or above a stage, as decoration for special occasions or political events.

There is a juxtaposition of the bullets and buntings which could be identified as telescoped metaphors which in other words is known as complex metaphor. This happens when the vehicle of one metaphor becomes the tenor of another closely connected to it. In other words, the vehicle of one metaphor transforms into the tenor of another. We have an example from the title "bullets for buntings". In the example above, "bullet" is the tenor and "bunting" is the vehicle, initially, but as the versifier moves on

"bunting" becomes the vehicle and takes on the "bullet" as the tenor. Here, we noticed that the metaphor continues to unfold and extend like a collapsible telescope. The symbolic message here is that with words we can achieve a lot. Keeping silent when we are being oppressed will not take us anywhere. It is a testament to the fact that people can win when they speak and fight for their rights but when they keep quiet they have lost.

To help preach his revolutionary ideology, Ohaeto employs a considerable number of metaphors, but he concentrates more on the metaphor of the bullet as he projects its effects on the people in his collection entitled *Bullets for Buntings* published in 2007.
From the title of the collection, the poet metaphorically juxtaposes "bullet" with "buntings" as ornamental and decorative objects for celebration so to speak in Nigeria and Africa milieu in general. Consequently, because of our carelessness in the use or exchange of fire arms, Ohaeto metaphorically presents bullet as an object to be packaged and given out as we exchange gifts and dresses in our best newest fabric materials during festivity and festive periods which often ends in massacre of innocent citizen as people are decorated with bullets and are left in their pool of blood. This is depicted in "Bullets for Buntings" as the persona voices out that;

…it is festival time
A procession of fanciful figures
Bearing bowls of bullets
For a feast of doomed souls,

Bullets are buntings
Trust only your feet,

Bullets are buntings
Speak with your eyes

Bullets are buntings
The flesh receives answers, (Ohaeto, 18)

From the domain of military hard ware, the bullet is conceived as it is being packaged as a gift to be giving out in the domain of festivity. The doomed souls during festive time receive bullets as buntings while the versifier fore warns at the same time that as this gift is going round people should get ready with their feet, speak with their eyes or else their flesh will receive answers as well. This portrays typical scenario of Nigerian politics and political campaigns during which political thugs distribute and share bullets to the electorates and electoral officers who may have refused to compromise and those alive within the scene must flee for their lives while the press is gagged by the political heavy weights because "bullets swell like blisters" (18). One can infer a metaphorical representation of unnecessary acquisition, supply and use of the military hard ware (bullet) in Nigeria and other parts of Africa as the title of the collection depicts and as well suggestive of their use during military and paramilitary parades; slightest provocation among gangs and sects; clans and communities including friends and colleagues clashes etc.

Therefore, the versifier strongly identifies bullet as a metaphor when he declares that "the bullet is always a metaphor" and goes on to rhetorically ask in "On My Mind" why is "the bullet always a metaphor/why is the bullet always present?" (1). To him, bullet is seen as a necessary evil in everyone's hand both the good, the bad and the ugly of our society when he sees it as a paradox of;

> Not only a troubled land but also of a troubled psyche. In the hands of the
> Virtuous, in the hands of the vicious, and even in the hands of the
> Effeminate the bullet is a weapon. (Ohaeto, 1)

As a metaphor of destruction, the poet is of the view that every nation, community or even families, and friends etc, go through turbulent periods in life at which they exchange bullet at one time or another. They cannot escape the exchange of bullet as in life we

exchange gifts. To illustrate this, the persona uses the concept of bullet as a destructive metaphor to describe in concrete terms the different categories and degrees of damages and injuries we suffer when we exchange it as gifts. To this end, with the use of first-person personal pronoun "I", he becomes a victim in his environment where bullets are being fired at hazy target. This is vividly buttressed when he avers that;

> Many bullets have been fired; sometimes at hazy target and
> Sometimes with hazy vision. I have been to the frontline.
> I gathered a bowl of bullets. Let us count our losses
> for we have made bullets into buntings. (Ohaeto, 1)

With the concept of bullet as an agent of destruction, Ohaeto is of the view that the turbulent times Nigeria and Nigerians are witnessing in their socio-cultural, socio-political, economic and religious lives, are not out of place as these have at one time or the other been the lot of the developed nations of today. The only problem peculiar to Nigeria's experience is that an average Nigerian never learns from history and has failed to harness the use of bullet positively. He therefore calls for caution as we count our losses as we have made bullets into buntings. Instead of taking these precautionary measures, we have continued to hunt and hurt ourselves at various times and places causing devastating and colossal damages. This has led to our many woes that have kept us stunted even as we cannot sleep the sleep of innocent and we cannot eat our meals in comfort because "the bullets have made us anxious" (1).

The term "reminiscence" refers to the use of recall as a poetic strategy as it applies to the experiences of the persona. In this collection, we are aware of what has been the past experience of the people of Nigeria shortly and lately after the civil war. The experiences being portrayed by Ohaeto may be that of a particular

sect (Igbo) in Nigeria or the society at large. However, the use of reminiscence connects the pundit with the poet and the entire society. Through reminiscence we are informed about the unfortunate experiences of the poet and the citizens from every part of the country who for a period of time enjoyed the "booty" of the bullet before they were caught in between. The Nigeria populace trying to escape the bullet of bad leadership, has been reduced to having "hazy visions" which brought about many losses. The rich (the haves) amass wealth by all means to buy houses in abroad and stash away public funds in foreign banks. To show the extent of devastation the Nigerian masses are suffering in the hands of their leaders, Ohaeto uses "bugle blows" metaphors to describe the situation of their helplessness and hopelessness when he says that "the people chant unceasingly: as the bugle blows" (1).

Another metaphoric conception of the bullet is as an instrument of destruction. Frankly speaking, the question is what is the relationship or similarities between the "bullet" and "buntings?" On the surface, there seems to be none. But speaking from the angle of lexical relations; germane to the study of lexis is the semantic field ideology which holds that the meanings represented in the lexicon are interrelated because they cluster together to form fields of meaning which in turn metamorphose to a larger field of entailment. This cycle meaning continues until the total language is encompassed. To this end, the issue of lexical relation between bullets and buntings is closely related to the notion of semantic field of destruction. Continuing, the basic semantic relations are identified as synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy. Synonym in this regard refers to similarity of meanings and antonymy suggests oppositeness and also denotes converseness for the reversible relationships otherwise known as relative opposition; while, hyponymy on the other hand is the relation of inclusion. Therefore, the versifier uses hyponymy to compares the "bullets" with "buntings" in order to express the dangerous awe in which the

Nigerian society holds the power of the bullet as an instrument of destruction. The visual image created therefore is so powerful and vivid such that a blind man could see and feel the effect or impact.
Since our understanding of the word "bunting" lies in the conception of "bullet", there is a need for a proper stylistic description of bullet hence the persona lists the variants of bullets calibers using a kind of pattern repetition by stating that;

The bomb is a bullet
Words are bullets
Power is a bullet
Ideas are bullets
And even hope is a bullet (Ohaeto, 1)

Considering the above excerpt, there is the repetition of the NPs which is an example of foregrounding because in the normal language code, the use of a single expression "the bomb" would serve the same purpose. However, the stylistic significance of the above repetition is for rhetorical emphasis to bring the message of destructive effects of the bullets to the forefront of readers' mind. The repetition of the VPs "is" and "are" three times and two times respectively, as well as the repetition of the "bullet(s)" are all forms of foregrounding deployed by Ohaeto in order to convey to the reader the message of destruction conceived in the bullet.
At the same time, there is a foregrounding of imagery of destruction which draws attention to itself when Ohaeto places the bullet side by side with other destructive elements. This is done through a componential analysis and all of them exploring different features of massive, devastating and exploitative destruction:

Bullets
bomb
power
word + are placed in guns
idea
hope (Ohaeto, 1)

Again, at the paradigmatic association level, the nature of semantic relations that can exist among lexical items that occur in the same grammatical slot and the literary significance of the relationship are very important to note. Consequently, as earlier noted, there is a synonymous relation in the excerpt above. At this point, we say that two or more lexical items are synonymously related when they share a general semantic feature. Therefore, the NPs seen above belong to the same paradigm by virtue of the fact that they are in syntagmatic relationship with the verb to-be "are". They are also synonymously related under the general semantic feature (+ weapon of mass destruction).

Meanwhile, although they are all potent destructive weapons in the hands of anyone who would use any of them to his merit. "Word", "idea" and "hope" could be said to be paradigmatically associated with the other items in the list, but, whereas the first three items can be said to be synonymously related under the general semantic feature (+ weapon or + evil), the last three items in the schema which intra-textually, have the semantic feature (+ virtue) are in ironic contrast with the first three items. This means that the relationship between "Word", "idea" and "hope" and "bullet", "bomb" and "power" are of antonymous.

In addition, "Word", "idea" and "hope" being the last three items in the schema are juxtaposed with other variants of bullets symbolically conceived to be more powerful and potent agent or weapon of destruction in the hands of their users but ironically perceived by other variant users as a weak weapon. Consequently, there are many bullet calibers in the market today, but you are likely to meet and probably use only a few in your lifetime. Why is that so? As it is believed that, a lot of people use their guns and bullets for the same reasons, mainly for hunting, sporting and also for self defence. Some of the commonly used bullet calibers today are those that are used for the same reasons as these listed before (Turner, 2024). To this end, the common bullet calibers in use

today are many as well, and everyone is highly likely going to get what fits his needs from the list. This seems to be what the persona intended by placing the different bullets at human disposal together.

Conclusion

This paper examines the different categories and functions of metaphors in Ezenwa Ohaeto's collection, *Bullets for Buntings*; motivated by the scanty scholarly linguistic studies on metaphors in his poetry, metaphors are necessary for our survival because it reflects the fact that our ways of thinking are rooted in a common social practice. Metaphors are not individual means of conceptually dealing with the world, but means that have become current within a given linguistic and cultural community. A study of metaphors in Ohaeto's poetry, apart from breaking the silence on the discourse values of metaphors, has lend a better understanding of his poetry, as figurative languages usually have close associations with the thematic preoccupation and vision of a writer. Therefore, this work has examined how contextual considerations and ideology influence the choice of metaphors and the use of Conceptual Metaphor in Ohaeto's poetry.

Meanwhile, as a post-colonial Nigerian poet seeking to institute a people-oriented art, the poet created an Afrocentric tradition of poetic expression, and to make poetry relevant to the prevailing social-political realities of the day, he has returned home to borrow from his indigenous environment the material for his poetic composition. This also signals a radical shift from the obscurantism, privatism and eurocentrism that characterized the poetry of the earlier generation. Ohaeto's poems therefore are suffused with literary modes evident in the use of powerful locally derived imagery realized through the apt application of local metaphor and dialectics. Our exploration of the versifier's poetry has also led us to see convincingly that by the application of locally derived metaphor in his poetry, he has given his poetry a

people-oriented tilt; his art becomes closer to the people and raises a high sense of nationalist consciousness and cultural nationalism as it brings the people's ordeal and national issues close to the public sphere. It is worth noting that Ohaeto's poetry exudes a strong African flavour and powerful evocations of the Nigerian socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political heritages. The images of expression in his poems considered in this study agree with the main ideas advocated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

Finally, at the lexical level the poet creates mental images and motions of chaos, destruction and helplessness in the face of monumental damages and fears created by the bullet, the tragic sense never wavered in its omnipresent conspicuousness as the poetic compilation moves from piece to piece and part to part, evolving along the line a thought of revolution that overshadows the several glimpses of text and sub-text intricately fashioned and woven together by the commendable artistry of the poet-laureate.

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