

Metaphorising the Nigerian Space: A Critical Stylistic Study of Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the metaphorical representation of the socio-political and religious space, Nigeria, in Stephen Kekeghe's award-winning collection of poems, Rumbling Sky (2020). Contemporary Nigerian space has been plagued with social, political, and religious vices such as election malpractices, corruption, religious intolerance, cyberspace crime, farmers-herders clash, secessionist claims, kidnapping, killings, and terrorist activities, just to name a few. Writers from different genres of literature have captured these vices in their creative output and critics have remained committed to such writings. This paper examines several vices that ravage the Nigerian space which are reflected and represented in Stephen Kekeghe's Rumbling Sky, poems that received accolade by the 2020 Association of Nigerian Authors. The analysis of poems, therefore, employs critical stylistics and applies the conceptual metaphor approach as its framework, adopting Naming and Describing as its critical stylistic textual-conceptual function. The findings reveal that Stephen Kekeghe's Rumbling Sky might better be considered as an adequate representation and reflection of the contemporary Nigerian space in poetry. It further reveals that the ills of the political ruling class and the tacit connivance of the Nigerian presidency are responsible for the perpetuation of social, political, and religious vices.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; critical stylistics; Nigerian space; socio-political vices; Rumbling Sky

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a study of the metaphorisation of the contemporary socio-political and religious vices plaguing the Nigerian space in Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* (2020). The political space, Nigeria, is richly blessed with abundant human and natural resources to make its citizens rich. However, it ranks as one of the poorest nations in the world. Its wealth has been hijacked and stolen by its past and present leaders who are deeply corrupt. Corruption and the attendant poverty by the majority have given rise to other socio-political and religious vices in the Nigerian space (see Akingbe, 2014; Maledo, 2021). Among these are election rigging and political killings, terrorism and armed conflict fuelled by religious and ethnic differences, unfaithful religious leaders, excessive greed for wealth, general insecurity, kidnapping and abduction of a large number of people, nepotism, and above all, the total insensitivity of the present leadership of the country to the plight and sufferings of ordinary Nigerians. Responding to such socio-political and religious issues has broadened one of the functions of literature in general and specifically poetry. As such, this paper employs critical stylistics to examine how Stephen Kekeghe metaphorises the Nigerian socio-political and religious spaces in his poetry collection, *Rumbling Sky*, by specifically using conceptual metaphor approach.

The term, metaphorisation, as used above is derived from the word, “metaphor”. Metaphor is a kind of linguistic embellishment in which a comparison of two distinct, yet similar, things is established by the claim that “X is Y” (Norgaard et al., 2010). It is a trope of resemblance; as a figure, metaphorisation constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution (Ricoeur, 2003). Ivor Amstrong Richards (1936, as cited in Abrams & Harpham, 2015) introduced the terms “tenor” and “vehicle” to distinguish the subject and the metaphorical term across metaphorical expressions.

Studies have approached the concept of metaphor from different perspectives. Some of these include the similarity, interactive, pragmatic, and cognitive perspectives. The similarity perspective states that a metaphor is a departure from the literal use of language in that it involves an implicit comparison of disparate things. The interactive view states that a metaphor works by bringing together the disparate “thoughts” of the vehicle and the tenor to affect a meaning that results from their interaction. The pragmatic view challenges the assumption that there is a metaphorical meaning, distinct from the literal meaning, positing that metaphor comprises the words in their most literal interpretations and no more. The cognitive or conceptual approach rejects the assumptions in the earlier views that metaphor is a deviation from literal language for rhetorical or poetical reasons. It claims that the ordinary use of language is inherently metaphorical and that metaphor persistently and profoundly structures the ways human beings perceive what they know and how they think (Abram & Harpham, 2015).

The approach of conceptual metaphor is relevant to this study. As argued by Lakoff and Turner (1979): knowing a metaphor means knowing several correspondences between two conceptual domains and such correspondences have to do with mapping between the two conceptual domains. Through such metaphorical mappings, source domain structures are used for reasoning about the target domain (Lakoff, 2008). In light of the above, Norgaard et al. (2010, p. 60) define conceptual metaphor as “the understanding of some conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain”. A conceptual domain is “any coherent organisation of experience” (Kovecses, 2002, p. 4). Goatly (2007) explains conceptual metaphor as thinking of one thing (A) as though it were another thing (B), where A is the topic or target and B is the vehicle or source. This process is called mapping and the similarities or analytical relationships are called grounds. This study holds the view that metaphor is like an analogy. “An analogy is a mapping between two represented situations in which common relational structure is aligned” (Gentner, 1983, as cited in Gentner & Bowdle, 2008, p. 109). And it rests on Ricoeur’s (2003, p. 3) assertion that “metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality”. Therefore, this study is carried out to show how the contemporary Nigerian socio-political reality is represented and redescribed through conceptual mappings in Kekeghe’s *Rumbling Sky*.

THE NIGERIAN SPACE

The term, “space,” has been given different definitions. DiSalle (1999) defines space as an extended manifold of several dimensions, where the number of dimensions corresponds to the number of variable magnitudes needed to specify the location in the manifold. From the critical perspective, Prieto (2011) views space as a dimension that has been produced by social forces that in turn constrain future possibilities. To Tuan (1977), space is an area of freedom and mobility, a centre of established values. Westphal (2011, p. 6) states that space is “a concept that encompasses

the universe; it is oriented towards the infinitely large or reduced to the infinitely small, which is itself infinitely and infinitesimally vast". In Literature, space is commonly regarded as the physical environment, an environment in which an event or a story takes place alongside characters who live and move. It is mutually intertwined with places in which different materials are located (Azizi & Afrougheh, 2013). It can be real (physical space) or imagined (fictional space). We can infer from the above that all literature is a product of space.

The Nigerian space can be defined from the time Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960 to the present day. A lot of incidents have defined this space negatively ranging from failed democratic leadership, military coups, military regime and deficient political system; a civil war that lasted for three years, ethnic marginalisation, religious imbalance, gross indiscipline, nepotism, corruption and neo-colonialism among others. Such issues which Kawu (2014) describes as dysfunctional social spaces have become more strife in the contemporary Nigerian space. Poverty has become more endemic and corruption has become a norm. The greed with which Nigerians want to acquire wealth has heightened the rate of corruption in all fabric of society. Politicians have become more corrupt, engaging in political killings and rituals. They provide arms for innocent youths to help them rig elections and fight against one another. The unarmed ones get involved in rituals and cybercrimes to get rich quickly and drive exotic cars. Joblessness has become the order of the day as graduates roam the streets and engage in different kinds of criminal activities. Armed religious sects like Boko Haram and other terrorist groups are on the increase, killing, and destroying property, including making the country a theatre of war and blood. Ethnic and secessionist agitators are everywhere. The herders-farmers clash goes on unabated and the present leadership of the nation pays deaf ears to the herders' attack for nepotistic reasons. The churches and mosques are no longer what they used to be. Worshippers are no longer safe for fear of terrorist attacks. Again, pastors and imams have left their callings in Nigeria and they have become "proprietors" of churches and mosques. All these and other miscellaneous negative characteristics of the Nigerian space have been captured in Nigerian literature.

CRITICAL STYLISTICS

Critical stylistics is a sub-field of stylistics developed by Lesley Jeffries (2010) in reaction to critical discourse analysis as an approach to ideology in language. Stylistics itself is the linguistic study of literary texts. Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:2) see it as:

A branch of linguistics which studies the situationally-distinctive uses of language, with particular reference to literary language and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.

It is a critical procedure which seeks to replace what is claimed to be the subjectivity and impressionism of literary analysis with a more objective and scientific analysis of texts (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:318). According to Norgaard et al. (2010), critical stylistics is largely inspired by critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis and concerned with works in stylistics that investigate the ways in which social meanings are manifested through language. To Jeffries (2014), the core tenet of critical stylistics is the level of meaning which sits between "langue" and "parole". At this level, the text uses the resources of language to present a particular view of the world. Thus, it is left to the analyst to work out what the text does, that is, how it presents the world of texts.

The main tools of critical stylistics are known as “textual-conceptual functions” (Jeffries, 2014). These are a combination of textual features (triggers) and ideational functions. They are “part of the ideational function of language in that they create a particular view of the world” (Jeffries, 2014, p. 412). They try to capture the functions of texts conceptually in presenting the text world. They also explain how the resources of the linguistic system produce conceptual meaning (Jeffries, 2014, p. 409). The textual conceptual functions comprise *Naming and Describing, Representing Actions/Events/States, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating, Prioritizing, Assuming and Implying, Negating, Hypothesizing, Presenting Speech and Thoughts of other Participants* and *Representing Time, Space and Society* (see Jeffries, 2010, 2014). For this study, *Naming and Describing* is chosen as our textual-conceptual function.

The most important thing about texts, whether spoken or written, fictional or factual, is that they name animate, inanimate, and abstract things that belong to the projected world of texts. The linguistic resources used to realise this function are the nominal group, comprising the adjectives preceding the head noun and prepositional groups or relative clauses, and nominalised verbs (Jeffries, 2014). In naming, there may be an acceptable choice between two or more ways of referencing the same thing (Jeffries, 2010). Naming creates ideological meaning in texts through the following ways: 1) a noun can be chosen out of the available alternatives, 2) other information included within the boundary of the nominal group, and 3) through the processes of nominalisation in which the processes and actions described by verbs are converted into nouns with ideological implications (Jeffries, 2010, p. 18).

The main ideological importance of nominal groups is that they can package ideas or information that are not necessarily concerned with entities, but those descriptions that explain processes, events or actions. This has to do with the choice of a word with pejorative or ameliorative connotations. In this case, the choice of a word not only refers to something but also shows the speaker’s opinion of that referent (Jeffries, 2010). This point is illustrated quite clearly in this study as the data analysis shows.

LINGUISTIC APPROACH

Stylistics and all its subfields fall within the discipline of applied linguistics. The validity of any stylistic study lies in the application of a linguistic approach (Kadiri et al., 2022). Following Jeffries’ (2010) assertion that an understanding of the structure of the English nominal is required to appreciate the topic of naming in ideological terms, this paper adopts the structure of the nominal group as presented in Halliday (1961) and Adejare and Adejare (2006).

A nominal group (or a noun phrase) is a group headed by a noun, a pronoun or a nominalisation. This implies that other word classes may combine with the noun head to form the group or phrase. Halliday (1961) presents the nominal group to have the structure “Modifier”, “Head”, and “Qualifier.” As such, it has an inventory of (M)H(Q) and the total range of possible structures are H, MH, HQ, and MHQ, wherein only the H element is obligatory (see Adejare and Adejare, 2006).

Having seen the possible structure of the nominal group, it is useful to know and draw out the *naming part* of the nominal word group, including its functions in a clause. According to Jeffries (2010, p. 19), we should be “concerned with the part(s) of the sentence that typically ‘names’ an entity;” a nominal group functions as a Subject and as a Complement in the structure of a clause. It also functions as a Complement to a preposition at the secondary degree of delicacy.

The Subject packages information while the nominal group at the Complement position reduces our anxiety in the presentation of ideological and social meanings in the clause (Kadiri et al., 2022). This model is adopted in our data analysis.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Stephen Kekeghe is one of the emerging contemporary Nigerian writers. He is a poet, a playwright and a literary critic and he teaches African Literature, the Medical Humanities and Creative Writing in the Department of English, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo State, Nigeria. His first major literary work is titled *Pond of Leeches*, a play published in 2015. Ezema (2016) describes the play as another new voice ingeniously crafted as a strong indictment of the political leadership of Nigeria. His first poetry collection is *Rumbling Sky* published in 2020. Before this, his poetry appeared in *Words Without Borders*, an international magazine for literature in 2012. *Rumbling Sky* emerged as a joint winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Prize for Poetry, 2021. Stephen Kekeghe's work warrants critical attention; as Akuburunwa (2021) puts it in a review: Stephen Kekeghe is a creative and revolutionary poet who believes in the power of redemption through poetry. Through *Rumbling Sky*, issues that plague Nigerian society and humanity in general are investigated.

Nigerian poets have grappled with such socio-political malaise which form the pivot of Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* and such poets and their poetry have since received commensurate attention from critics. Aboh (2013) examines the connection between language and social realities in Joe Ushie's poetry. The paper states that given Nigeria's socio-political quagmire, Nigerian poets have risen to challenge the weaknesses and failures of the nation's leaders by proffering solutions. He argues that Ushie brings his knowledge of linguistics to align with his artistic crafting of social realities using pronouns. Similarly, Maledo (2021) affirms that Joe Ushie appropriates lexical innovations to underscore the themes of deception and man's inhumanity in the political, social and religious cycles all over the world in general and specifically in Nigeria.

Akingbe (2014) studies the articulation of social decay in contemporary Nigerian poetry. He addresses Nigerian social and political problems using satire to crystallise the malaise that affects the society. It emphasises the role of Nigerian poets as synthesisers of, and conduits for, the concerns of the Nigerian society for which they claim to speak. It concludes that the selected poets have used their poetry to generate awareness about the impact of corruption, mismanagement, and profligacy of successive Nigerian governments and to repudiate the moral vices prevalent in contemporary Nigeria. More importantly, the paper argues that poetry is used to provide convincing "metaphors of Nigeria" in their descriptions of the tragedy of missed opportunities and broken promises (Akingbe, 2014. p. 201). This point is particularly relevant to the present study as it views Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* as a metaphor for the Nigerian space. In the same vein, Ifejirika (2013) undertakes a satirical study of Ezenwa Ohaeto's poetry and affirms that the poet is deeply and socially committed to problematise sensitive and profound social ills and challenges in Nigeria. It concludes that Ohaeto's major concerns comprise the blatant abuse of power by leaders at various levels of governance, poor leadership, unpredictable and faithless followership, poverty, insensitivity, and falsehood in high and low places.

In studying forms of political consciousness in Tanure Ojaide's poetry, Bassey (2011) sees the poet as the voice of the voiceless concerning his social relevance in two of his poetry collections. The force behind the paper involves how Ojaide uses his craft to comment on the

political realities of Nigerian society (see Maledo, 2019). It contends that the problem with Nigerian society is the leadership failure as the selected poems for the study bristle with indignation at the ineptitude and selfishness of the political leaders. It reveals that Ojaide’s poetry is replete with all indices of failed leadership and concludes that the poet’s cleavage to socio-political reality can be said to be in the form of a prophet going into the future and foretelling of later events.

The above review shows the interconnectivity between poetry and society. This relationship is one of the continuing relevance as the poet constantly finds that the social terrain of his environment affects his output. Thus, it is wise to state particularly that the contemporary societal terrain of the Nigerian space informs the poetic muse in Kekeghe. Therefore, this study is relevant in the sense that it applies the conceptual metaphor theory to study the interface between Kekeghe’s *Rumbling Sky* and the Nigerian socio-political space.

DATA ANALYSIS

The opening poem of Stephen Kekeghe’s *Rumbling Sky* (2020) is entitled, “Hovering Horror”, a nominal group with an MH structure. The M is a participial adjective which indicates some qualities of the head of the nominal group, *horror*. Through this, the poet states his ideology of fear, uncertainty, and nightmare which hovers around the social and political space of his homeland, Nigeria. This ideology is generated through metaphorically naming and describing Nigeria as a failed state. Out of the available alternatives, the poet makes choices of words with pejorative meanings and negative modifiers and qualifiers to determine the nature of the noun heads which are conceptually mapped to the Nigerian space, a space where the poet and his people live. These metaphorical terms, which can be described as sources following the cognitive approach to metaphor, are *belly*, *cemetery*, *camp*, *colony*, *hut*, *cavern*, *zoo*, *colony*, *shithole* and *depth*, while Nigeria can be implied as the target through which Kekeghe directs his negative ideological stance.

In the opening stanza, Kekeghe paints a picture of hopelessness and uncertainty through naming and describing. The first two lines are presented here as a single line for ease of analysis (this is the case for most excerpts in this study):

We	are	in	the	hollow	belly	[of the murky sky]
S	P	M	M	H	A	Q

This is a clause with an SPA structure; A is a propositional group with a nominal group (NMG) as a complement. The NMG follows an MMHQ structure where the H represents *belly*, a metaphor for Nigeria pre-modified by the definite article, *the*, and an adjective, *hollow*, to show that Nigeria as a country is empty and hopeless. The H, *belly*, has a negative connotation of “deep”. It is further expanded by another prepositional group, *of the murky sky*, where *sky* is modified by a pejorative adjective, *murky*, to further foreground the poet’s ideology of gloom, uncertainty, fear, and hopelessness in the Nigerian space.

The concept of a cemetery peopled by ghosts and callous caretakers is conceptually mapped to Nigeria in an implicit metaphorical manner in stanza two:

a	cemetery	[of dumb ghost and callous caretakers]
M	H	Q

We are in a smoldering hut [[abandoned by a sanitation army]]
 S P M M H Q
 A

The subject of this clause is the personal pronoun, *We*, which refers to ordinary Nigerian citizens, including the poet; *a smoldering hut* is an implicit metaphor for naming Nigeria while the relative clause, *abandoned by a sanitation army*, functions as a qualifier to the head noun *hut*. The participial adjective, *smoldering*, which pre-modifies *hut* shows that Nigeria is on fire while the relative clause qualifier to *hut* indicates that the country has been abandoned by those who should put off the fire. They are busy chasing after irrelevant things, *a menacing mouse / sprinting out of the fire*.

The poet further names and describes Nigeria metaphorically as a large, dark cave inhabited by mad demons:

a cavern [of crazy demons]
 M M H

To him, what happens in this dark cave during election periods is that ballots are burnt to aid in election rigging. And those who burn the ballots are the youths whom he describes through a modifier-head NMG as *yoked youths*. *Yoked* is an adjective suggestive of “chained” in this context. It pre-modifies *youths* to show that Nigerian youths are in bondage to the whims and caprices of the political class. They are the ones that help the politicians to rig elections and they are the ones most affected by misrule and misgovernance.

Stanza seven metaphorises Nigeria as a *zoo* made up of victims who act strangely and unconventionally to evade the military onslaught that may be unleashed on them by the ruling military government in democratic garb. A case in point is the “Operation Python Dance” which was unleashed on the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria at the very slightest provocation:

a zoo [of fretful preys [[that display bizarre drama]]]
 M H Q

The above is an MHQ NMG with the Q made up of a prepositional group which describes the inhabitants of the *zoo* as *fretful preys* (MH) where the adjective *fretful* with negative implications pre-modifies the noun *preys* (victims). Thus, *fretful preys*, is a conceptual metaphor for Nigerian citizens who are worried and who feel uncomfortable.

As a country that places emphasis on the lives of cattle more than the lives of humans, the poet further names and describes Nigeria through a conceptual metaphor as a colony of cattle with bloody herdsmen:

a cattle colony [of grimy herders [[who bloodbath decent residents]]]
 M M H Q

The above nominal group has an MMHQ structure. The noun modifier, *cattle*, gives the attribute of the *colony* representative of animals, not humans. Cattle is a domestic animal reared predominantly by the Fulanis of Northern Nigerian. It is a known fact that the president and his cabinet emphasise the place of cattle over humans in Nigeria. This gave rise to the national discourse on the establishment of cattle routes and RUGA villages in every state of the federation. The cattle herders destroy people's farms with their cows and kill the owners of the farms at the

slightest provocation with the tacit support of the Nigerian presidency. The tales of herders-farmers clash and bloodbaths are everywhere in Nigeria. Yet, the government gives them maximum protection. This essentially is why the poet names, describes, and conceptually metaphorises Nigeria as a *cattle colony*. The NMG complement to the preposition makes this more vivid: *grimy herders* [[*who bloodbath decent residents*]] where the poet ideologically pitches in opposition *grimy herders* and *decent residents* to foreground the fact that these dirty, malicious and vile herders kill and soak innocent and decent Nigerians in their blood. This is obvious in several reported killings in Kaduna, Benue, Plateau and most Eastern States of the country. To date, not a single herder has been prosecuted by any court of law in Nigeria. This may be due to the nepotistic inclinations of the Nigerian president towards the herders.

Furthermore, Nigeria is named and conceptually metaphorised as a country that has no restrictions or checks on the chief executives of the few industries that manage to exist:

a	shithole	of	[triumphant CEOs
M	H	Q	[[that snatch adults and kids]]]

In the illustration above, Nigeria functions as the target domain while *shithole* serves as the source domain. The complement to the preposition *of* is an NMG with MHQ structure. The modifier is *triumphant* with connotative implications: jubilation at the expense of ordinary Nigerians. *CEOs* is the head, qualified by a relative clause which supplies damaging information on the head of the nominal group. It tells what they do to both adults and children: they are exploiters. And because we live in a “shithole of a country”, no regulations to check and curtail the activities of these CEOs.

Despite these negative metaphorisations, naming, and describing Nigeria, Stephen Kekeghe sees hope as he states that as we bear our *burdened episodes / of our harrowing histories*, we should *seek the half moon in the sky / to light up our world*. As such, the negative implications of the HQ nominal groups, *burdened episodes* and *harrowing histories*, are overshadowed by the ray of hope that the MH nominal group of *half moon* provides. It is this hope in the *half moon* that will light up Nigeria for a better place.

Given the above scenario, Kekeghe says the sky rumbles in the poem, “Rumbling sky”. The poet advances reasons why the sky rumbles, roars, and pumps torrents of fear through naming and describing:

the	streaming	streets	of blistering black bloods
the		morgues	of mangled corpses
the		markets	of decomposing cadavers
M	M	H	Q

Streets in the first line above is pre-modified by a participial adjective, *streaming*, giving it the attributive quality of a continuous flow. What flows is provided by the qualifier element, a prepositional group with an NMG as a complement that functions to tell us that it is *blistering black blood* resulting from the unprovoked and constant killings in all parts of the country. *Morgues* is also described through a qualifier prepositional group composed of *mangled corpses* because the corpses are butchered and mutilated by the heartless herders and suicide bombers. And after such mass killings, everywhere is littered with dead bodies. This is captured in the third line where the noun head, *markets*, is qualified by *decomposing cadavers* to foreground the fact that the corpses are abandoned to decay and rot away. All of these are conceptual metaphors of the common realities in the Nigerian space.

Amid these and other issues bedeviling the country, the poet says no one blames the *ASO ROCK god*. The *ASO ROCK god* is a conceptual metaphor for the Nigeria president who has turned himself into a "god":

Nobody	blames	the	ASO ROCK	god	[[that sucks the conscience of society]] [[that hews the heart of humanity]] [[that preys on hapless offspring]]
S	P	M C	M	H	Q

The above clauses exemplify an SPC structure. The C is an NMG with an MMHQ structure. The first M is a determiner while the second M, *ASO ROCK*, is a nominal group pre-modifier to the noun head, *god*. *ASO ROCK* is the seat of power of the presidency in Nigeria and the Nigerian who resides in Aso Rock is named and conceptualised as *god* and described with three different relative clauses to foreground the callousness and the insensitivity of the Nigerian president. Thus, through naming and describing, Kekeghe metaphorises the Nigerian president as a cruel god that sucks the conscience of his society, destroys the heart of humanity and preys on its unlucky offspring by destroying their future. Other reasons for the rumbling of the sky are seen in:

the	decapitated	head	of a toddler	to be swapped	with	Venza	[of putrid class]
M	M	H	Q	P	A	H	Q
S							

A	hungry	haggard	man	slaughtered	[[to appease the dignifying face of a well-fed cow]]
M	M	M	H	P	A
S					

In the first clause above, the Subject is an MMHQ nominal group while the adjunct is a prepositional group with HQ NMG as a complement. The participial adjective, *decapitated*, which pre-modifies *head* in the subject position underscores the ritual killings that are very prevalent in the present Nigerian space. The adjunct is a prepositional group with a nominal group *Venza of putrid class* as a complement to the preposition, *with*. *Venza*, a Toyota brand of car, is a metaphorical symbol for the ill-gotten wealth of the “yahoo-yahoo boys” who perpetuate cybercrimes and human rituals for easy and quick riches in the Nigerian social space. The qualifier to *Venza*, *of putrid class*, indicates the poet's ideological disapproval of ill-gotten wealth. In the second clause, the attributes of *man* are *hungry* and *haggard* while *cow* is pre-modified by *dignifying face*. This contrast that positively delineates *cow* against *man* is a conceptual metaphor for the attitude of the Nigerian government in preference for the lives of cows to the detriment of human lives.

Other nominal groups such as:

the / industry / of hallelujah - MHQ
 the / crucifix / of fear - MHQ
 cynical / salvation / seekers – MMH
 hollow sanctuaries – HQ

are vivid descriptions of the reality of the Christian religion in the Nigerian religious space. The type of churches we have is described as *industries of hallelujah* because the so-called men of God

see it as a source of income rather than as a means of salvation. Thus, the *crucifix* that should have been a source of hope is now a source of *fear* while the so-called Christians are described as *cynical salvation seekers* (MMH) because of their insincerity while the *sanctuary* (of God) is now described with an MH attributive adjective, *hollow*.

The above, according to Kekeghe, are parts of the reasons why the earth must rumble in the Nigerian space. But unlike in “Hovering horror” where the poet sees hope, in “Rumbling sky” he calls for revolution to salvage Nigeria:

We must welcome *the righteous rage*
of the storm to sweep away
the yellow and brown leaves
that litter our plundered landscape.

The nominal group, *the righteous rage of the storm*, metaphorically refers to revolution but the head noun, *rage*, is pre-modified by *righteous* to define the kind of revolution: a legitimate revolution. The qualifier, *of the storm*, tells us that the revolution is going to be heavy, hence he uses the word *storm*. In *the yellow and brown leaves*, the head is *leaves* while *yellow* and *brown* are adjectives for pre-modifying *leaves*. The expression implies weak and lifeless leaves. As used, they are implicit metaphors for the weak and tired politicians who have refused to surrender to the business of bad leadership in the Nigerian political space. The relative clause *that litter our plundered landscape* qualifies *leaves*, the head noun. The information it provides is that they are in all parts of the Nigerian space, destroying it.

The poem “Steams of sorrow” opens with imagery of bombing and explosion which has become a very common sight in the present Nigerian social space. The first two lines of the first stanza state thus:

They throw bombs at us
 as toddlers do with play things;

Then, the next nine stanzas name and describe the *They* who throw the bomb:

i	They	are	the haramers [with bloodied fingers]
ii	They	are	the haramers [[that stole our moon]]
iii	They	are	the haramers [[that smoke our budding twig]]
iv	They	are	the haramers [[that defend an impotent god]]
v	They	are	the haramers [[that murder humanity]]
			M H Q
	S	P	C

Excerpts (i) – (v) comprise the first two lines of stanzas 2-6. The lines have the clause structure of SPC with an intensive verb linking the subject and the complement to the same referent. Each line names the *They* that *throws* the *bombs* as the *haramers*, the head of the NMG which functions as the complement. The lexical item "haramers" is derived from the noun "haram" which means forbidden in Arabic. In Nigeria's socio-political and religious space, it is associated with an Islamic religious group that goes with the name “Boko Haram”, a terrorist organisation founded around 2002 which has declared total hatred for Western education. They have claimed the responsibility for the majority of the bombings, mayhem and other terrorist-related attacks and unwarranted killings of innocent Nigerians that persisted in the Nigerian space in recent years. Having named them, the poet continues to describe them and question the ideology behind their activities and the lacklustre attitude of the Nigerian government towards them.

In (i), the qualifier to the head noun is a prepositional group which describes the *haramers* as a group which has stained their fingers with blood. Further in the stanza, they are also metaphorically equated with *hovering vultures* (HQ). In (ii), the qualifier is a relative clause which tells us that the *haramers* *have stolen our moon* and have given us a *sad sun* (HQ) of *baked mangled corpses* (MMH). *Moon* is a metaphor for joy, peace, and good living while the *sun* and *corpses* are metaphorical opposites of *moon*. *Sun* is pre-modified by *sad*, an adjective with a pejorative implication. In the second case, the lexical item, *corpses* and its pre-modifiers, *baked* and *mangled* are all pejorative in meaning. These underscore the poet's negative ideology and disapproval of the *haramers*.

The qualifier in excerpt (iii) is also a relative clause which describes the *haramers* as those who bomb to maim and destroy the youth, the younger generation and render them hopeless. The expressions:

...smoke our budding twigs
and sacrifice its greenness

foregrounds this message. In the last line of this stanza, the poet goes ahead to metaphorise the Nigeria social space where these atrocities are taking place as a:

morgue of muddled destinies (HQ)

This is an HQ nominal group where *morgue* is the metaphorical source while Nigeria is the implicit target domain. The ideology here is that Nigeria as a nation is a place where destinies are distorted and destroyed.

The *haramers*' claim that this is done to defend their god. Why not allow this god to defend itself? This is the ideological question the poet is asking in stanza 4 where the Q element describes the *haramers* as those who defend an *impotent god*. And they do this by concealing their identity as we observe in the nominal groups, functioning as a complement to the preposition in *the dark cloud* and *behind the dead moon*. In the first case, *dark* is an attributive adjective pre-modifying *cloud* which can be taken as a metaphor for Nigeria in the context of the activities of Boko Haram. Similarly, *dead* has its negative attribute to *the moon* that functions to metaphorise hopelessness in the Nigerian space. The Q element in (v) is a that-relative clause which describes the *haramers* as those who murder humanity. They do this in the guise of politics and religion as the poet presents an NMG that serves as a complement to a preposition in *the alter of poli-religion* which has the NMG structure of MHQ. The *haramers* are further described as a group with *muffled minds* (MH) and their prosperity is described as *bizarre prosperity* (HQ). *Muffled* and *bizarre* are pejorative attributes to *minds* and *prosperity* respectively and they project the poet's ideological disapproval to the activities of the *haramers* in the Nigerian space.

And in a recursive prepositional group, the poet metaphorises, names, and describes Nigeria in the following way:

in the belly [of the dark cloud [of nightmare and nemesis]]

Belly as exemplified above is the head of the nominal group while the *dark cloud* serves as the source of the metaphor and Nigeria is implied as the target. This is further described by another prepositional group, as a place of *nightmares and nemeses*. In stanza seven, the poet questions the

ideology of the tacit protection given to this group by the Nigerian government where he metaphorises, names, and describes Nigeria again pejoratively through another NMG:

These	famous	haramers	are adored	in	this	dark	hill	that inhabits us
M	M	H			M	M	H	Q
S			P	A				

As the above shows, the subject is an MMH NMG where the H, *haramers*, has a positive ameliorative attribute *famous*. The adjunct, a preposition group has an MMHQ as a complement to the preposition, *in*. The head of the NMG, *hill*, is preceded by a deictic element, *this*, and an attributive adjective with a pejorative implication, *dark*. The Q element, a relative clause, *that inhabits us*, metaphorically identifies the head of the group, *hill*, as Nigeria.

The haramers are further described as those who derive pleasure in inflicting pain and obscuring love in the Nigerian space:

They	are	marketers	of cruelty [[that beclouds communal love]]
S	P	M	Q
		C	

In this clause, the S is an H type NMG and the P functions as an intensive verb. C is an HQ NMG where the Q describes the type of wares the haramers market. Their ware is identified as *cruelty* and it is further qualified by a that-relative clause which tells us that *cruelty*, the sole ware of the haramers, denies people love. This lack of love is endemic in the activities of Boko Haram in the Nigerian space.

The wares the haramers market, *cruelty*, is subsequently described through a relative clause functioning as a qualifier, that deprives the people of communal love. This lack of love is seen in the wanton destruction of human lives and properties by Boko Haram in the Nigerian space. Thus, the poet describes the god which they worship as:

a	god	that consumes its devotees
M	H	Q

The ideology which the poet interrogates at the end of this poem is the reason why the haramers worship a god that consumes his worshippers thus:

...why	do	the haramers	worship	god	that consumes its devotees?
A	P-	S	-P	H	Q
				C	

As such, the clause above is interrogative in nature, constructed with the structure of AP-S-PC. Our attention is on the complement (HQ structure), a structure in which H is a relative clause qualifying the head noun, *god*. The information it provides is relevant to our understanding of the nature of the gods the haramers worship; it is a god that kills its worshippers. And this killing is done on an *altar of steaming sorrow*, an HQ nominal group and a conceptual metaphor for Nigerian space where the masses live in abject poverty and in perpetual sorrow emanating from the incessant killings by the haramers, the herders, the kidnappers and the “unknown gunmen” which has become a new compound lexis in the lexicon of killings in the Nigerian socio-political and religious spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Stephen Kekeghe's *Rumbling Sky* is a reflection and refraction of some of the current vices in the Nigerian socio-political and religious space through the use of metaphorical mappings. The conceptual metaphor approach provides this study with a means of conceptually mapping the metaphorical source domains in the selected poems to the metaphorical target domains in the contemporary realities in Nigeria in what can be described as an implicit metaphor. Through this, we are made to visualise and comprehend the conceptual domain, Nigeria, through the conceptual domains inherent in the selected poems. Furthermore, the textual-conceptual function of *Naming and Describing* presents insights into ways of revealing the ideological predisposition of Kekeghe and the linguistic means of unravelling the structure, style, and meaning in the selected poems. In line with the previous studies on socio-political issues in contemporary Nigerian poetry, this study has demonstrated that Stephen Kekeghe abhors and disapproves of the social, political and religious ills plaguing the Nigerian space. It thus aligns the poetry of Kekeghe as the poetry of social commitment with the poetry of Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Odia Ofeimun, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Obari Gomba, Ebi Yeibo, Joe Ushie, and Ogaga Ifowodo, just to name a few.

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