

**METAPHOR AND SOCIAL CRITICISM OF SELECTED POEMS KOLA**

**EKE'S *AUGUST 1985***

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of metaphor as a tool for social criticism in selected poems from Kola Eke's *August 1985*. The research explores how Eke employs figurative expressions to expose and challenge social, political, and economic injustices in Nigerian society. Through vivid metaphors, the poet critiques corruption, class oppression, gender inequality, and moral decay that characterize post-colonial realities. The study interprets these metaphors as symbols of resistance and social awakening, reflecting the voice of the marginalized and the oppressed.

The analysis focuses on how Eke transforms ordinary experiences into powerful social commentaries that provoke thought and inspire change. His language of protest and imagery of struggle reveal the tension between the ruling elite and the common people, making his poetry not only artistic but revolutionary. The study finds that Eke's metaphors deepen the meaning of his criticism, turning poetic language into a weapon of awareness and reform.

The research concludes that metaphor in *August 1985* is not just a stylistic device but a conscious political act. It exposes inequality, questions authority, and advocates social justice. By merging art with activism, Kola Eke's poetry strengthens the tradition of Nigerian writers who use literature to mirror society and drive transformation.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how Kola Eke uses metaphor in *August 1985* to reflect and criticize political corruption, religious hypocrisy, and gender inequality in post-colonial Nigerian society.

### 1.2 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the analysis of metaphor as a literary device in Kola Eke's selected poems, using the Marxist Literary Theory as the analytical framework. It will explore how the poet employs metaphor to expose issues related to politics, religion, and gender oppression in Nigerian society. The research will be limited to fifteen poems written by Kola Eke, which represent his social, political, and moral vision. These poems will be examined to reveal how the poet uses metaphor as a form of social criticism and as a voice for the oppressed and marginalized groups.

### 1.3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with focus on fifteen selected poems by Kola Eke, which will be analyzed to identify and interpret the use of metaphor in conveying social, political, and religious criticism. Each poem will be closely read to examine how metaphors reflect class struggle, gender issues, political corruption, and religious exploitation. The analysis will be guided by the principles of Marxist Literary Theory, which will help to explain how Eke's metaphors critique the societal structures and power relations. Data will be presented in a descriptive manner, using

direct quotations from the poems, with interpretation linked to Marxist concepts of oppression, resistance, and ideology.

<b>Politics</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Gender Issues</b>
August 1985 I.	Eyeball to Eyeball	Mother Day I
The Poor Class	Prosperity Gospel	A Cabin Crew of Women
Transition Politics	Contractor Preachers	Queen Idia
Predator President	Media Envangelism	Women Have Come of Age
Desert Republic		Women Hovered Like Flies
At Ring Road		

## **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **Marxist Literary Theory**

Marxist literary theory examines the intricate relationship between literature and the social, political, and economic conditions in which it is produced. Terry Eagleton, one of the most influential critics in this field, argues that Marxist criticism is not merely a “sociology of literature” concerned with the author’s class or the work’s publication. Rather, it aims to study the literary work in its entirety by examining its forms, styles,

themes, and meanings, while simultaneously situating it within its historical and social context (Eagleton 3). Eagleton emphasizes that literature should be analyzed not only as an artistic creation but also as a reflection of society and its ideological currents. In essence, one cannot fully understand literature without understanding the society that produces it.

Louis Althusser adds another dimension by focusing on ideology. He defines ideology as the “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 162). According to Althusser, people’s understanding of themselves and the society they live in is shaped by dominant ideas that may obscure the realities of class, power, and social structures. Literature, as part of the cultural superstructure, both reflects these ideologies and reinforces or challenges them. Althusser’s perspective highlights that Marxist literary criticism goes beyond examining economic conditions to include the subtle ways literature shapes consciousness and social awareness.

Michael Ryan complements these views by defining Marxist literary criticism as an approach that seeks to understand “the social roots of literature with a sense of its political ramifications” (Ryan). Ryan emphasizes the dual nature of literature: it is a product of its society but also has the power to influence social thought and action. Literature does not exist in a vacuum; it mirrors social hierarchies, exposes injustice, and can act as a form of critique or resistance. Taken together, the definitions provided by Eagleton, Althusser, and Ryan underscore the central principle of Marxist Literary theory: literature is both shaped by society and capable of shaping the way society perceives itself.

#### **4.1 Key Concepts of Marxist Literary Theory**

## **A. Base and Superstructure**

The base refers to the economic foundation of society, such as factories, land, labor, and capital, while the superstructure consists of cultural institutions like literature, law, politics, and religion that arise from and reflect the base (Marx 47). Eagleton emphasizes that literature, as part of the superstructure, is “a site where ideological struggles are played out” (Eagleton 14). Althusser explains that literature reproduces and sometimes challenges the economic base through ideology, shaping how people perceive society and their roles within it (Althusser 162). Thus, base and superstructure illustrate the connection between material conditions and literary production.

## **B. Class Struggle**

Class struggle refers to the ongoing conflict between different social classes with opposing economic interests (Marx 78). Literature often represents this struggle, portraying oppression, rebellion, and inequality. Eagleton notes that literature can reinforce dominant class ideologies or amplify the voices of marginalized groups (Eagleton 22). Lukács highlights that realist novels portray the everyday lives and consciousness of oppressed classes, fostering awareness and empathy among readers (Lukács 50). Ryan adds that Marxist critics examine how texts depict power relations and class dynamics, revealing both social oppression and resistance (Ryan). Class struggle remains a central lens for understanding the social relevance of literature.

## **C. Ideology**

Ideology is the system of beliefs, ideas, and values that shape social consciousness and maintain or challenge the status quo. Althusser defines ideology as the

“representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 162). Eagleton points out that ideology operates through literature, influencing both the production and reception of texts (Eagleton 18). Ryan explains that Marxist criticism seeks to uncover how literature reproduces, critiques, or transforms dominant social ideas (Ryan). Ideology demonstrates how literature functions not only as art but as a tool of social influence.

#### **D. Hegemony**

Hegemony, introduced by Antonio Gramsci, refers to the ways in which ruling classes maintain power through cultural and ideological consent rather than mere force (Gramsci 88). Literature can either support or resist hegemony, subtly shaping public beliefs and social norms. Eagleton notes that texts often participate in hegemonic control, consciously or unconsciously, by normalizing certain ideas (Eagleton 26). Althusser adds that literature, as part of the Ideological State Apparatus, helps maintain consent through cultural channels (Althusser 162). Ryan observes that analyzing hegemony reveals how literature functions as a site of struggle, capable of challenging social domination (Ryan).

#### **4.2 Application of Key Concepts in Literature**

These key concepts can be applied in analyzing literary texts. For example, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* can be studied through class struggle, showing the exploitation of factory workers. Similarly, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* can be analyzed through hegemony and ideology, revealing how colonial forces imposed new cultural norms. Such applications demonstrate how Marxist criticism offers insights into the social, political, and economic dimensions of literature. Marxist literary theory

provides a comprehensive framework to study literature in relation to society, power, and history. The definitions, historical development, and key concepts discussed by scholars such as Eagleton, Althusser, Lukács, Gramsci, and Ryan show that literature is both shaped by and shapes social conditions. By examining base and superstructure, class struggle, ideology, and hegemony, Marxist criticism reveals how literature reflects, critiques, and influences social realities. Its continued evolution, incorporating post-colonialism, feminism, and globalization, makes Marxist literary theory a dynamic and relevant tool for understanding literature and society today.

### **1.5 Review of Scholarship**

Scholars who have studied Kola Eke's poetry, especially *August 1985 and Other Poems*, describe him as a poet who uses traditional myths, strong images, and direct language to speak against corruption and injustice in Nigeria. His poems show concern for social problems and express a deep desire for moral change and national renewal. Eke combines the old and the new—African traditions and modern political realities—to teach values and call for justice.

One of the most discussed aspects of Eke's poetry is his use of traditional myths and gods to promote social control and justice. Esther Iria Jamgbadi notes that Eke uses mythical figures "in order to actualize social control" (1). In her study, she quotes Eke saying that "political leaders should henceforth be paraded before the shrine of Ani" (qtd. in Jamgbadi 4). This idea reflects Eke's belief that the goddess Ani can punish wrongdoers and restore moral order. Jamgbadi explains that African religion, with its "unbribeable deities and ancestors," can bring justice where human courts often fail due to corruption (4). She also observes that Eke "invokes mythical figures to actualise social control, articulate societal redirection and envision accountability."

According to her, African deities “cannot be bribed and as such, they can guarantee justice” (qtd. in Jamgbadi 48). In some of his poems, Eke also calls on Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder, to condemn corrupt officials and remind readers that wrongdoing will always face consequences. Through these myths, Eke shows that African spiritual traditions can guide people toward moral discipline and honesty. Eke also uses strong imagery to criticize bad governance and moral decay. A critic writes that he is “never slack in attacking the parasites and viruses eating into the moral-standards, conscience and core of our society” (“Kola Eke’s resourceful use” par. 1). This critic adds that Eke “demonstrates genius in his poems as he uses medical imagery to criticize the shortcomings and excesses of the government” (“Kola Eke’s resourceful use” par. 3). The website Iwemi also comments that Eke “delves into Nigeria’s political history and exposes some of the ills in the African political landscape,” especially how some leaders “prioritize personal enrichment over national development.” Clement Eloghosa Odia similarly notes that Eke’s poems denounce “oppressive and corrupt leaders, while envisioning change” (qtd. in Jamgbadi 48). In this way, his poems become moral lessons and a call for positive social transformation. Through vivid imagery, he paints a picture of a sick society that needs healing and honesty.

Another important part of Eke’s poetry is his use of language to demand change. Efosa Julius Legemah, in his analysis of Eke’s June 12 poems, observes that Eke uses “material processes, declarative mood system and topical themes in foregrounding the ugly experiences common with elections in Nigeria” (Legemah par. 1). Legemah also notes that Eke repeats the modal verb *must* many times to urge a “revolutionary movement that will not only be beneficial to the people of Nigeria but free them completely from their political oppressors” (Legemah 62). Through his choice of

words, Eke does not only describe Nigeria's problems but also calls on citizens to act. His poems encourage readers to reject injustice, fight corruption, and believe in the power of collective change.

Altogether, the studies on Kola Eke's poetry show that he is not only a writer but also a social thinker and reformer. His work combines African spirituality, strong images, and persuasive language to speak out against corruption and poor leadership. By using deities like Aní and Sango, by employing medical and historical images, and by using powerful words such as *must*, Eke makes his poetry a voice for justice and national renewal. His poems teach that art can serve as a tool for truth, accountability, and hope for a better Nigeria.

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

This study is important because it explores how Kola Eke uses metaphor as a tool of social criticism, particularly in relation to politics, religion, and gender issues. While many studies have examined Kola Eke's poetry for its imagery or themes, few have focused specifically on the intersection of metaphor and Marxist analysis. By combining metaphorical analysis with Marxist Literary Theory, this research fills a gap in scholarship by showing how Eke's figurative language not only beautifies his poetry but also exposes societal oppression, corruption, and inequality.

Furthermore, the study highlights how metaphors in Eke's poems reflect real social realities, giving a voice to the marginalized — workers, women, and ordinary citizens — and critiques the dominant power structures. This approach is significant because it goes beyond traditional literary appreciation, linking literary form with social function, and contributes to a more socially engaged understanding of contemporary African poetry.

By addressing these issues, the study provides fresh insights into both Eke's poetic technique and the sociopolitical relevance of his work, making it valuable for scholars of African literature, literary criticism, and social commentary.

### **1.7 Thesis Statement**

This analysis employs metaphor to highlight socioeconomic inequalities and power structures in post-colonial Nigerian society.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL METAPHORS IN *AUGUST 1985*

Kola Eke's collection of poetry *August 1985* interrogates the power and economic structures in politics in selected poems: *The Poor Class*, *August 1985 I*, *Transition Politics*, *Predator President*, *Desert Republic* and *At Ring road*. This is achieved through a focus on the use of metaphor in the analysis of these poems to reflect the power dynamics embedded in political structures using the Marxist concepts of class struggles.

#### 2.1 *August 1985 I*

The poem *August 1985 I* uses the metaphor of weeds to describe the rise of corrupt and oppressive military rulers who take control of society. The poet presents a nation overtaken by “unwanted military weeds,” using this image to criticize how those in power exploit authority and suppress social progress. Through this metaphor, the poem reflects the Marxist idea of class domination, where the ruling elite—the military and political class—control the means of governance while the ordinary people remain powerless.

In the opening lines,

“Again weeds took over

Took over the helm of affairs

With their Hooks” (lines 1–3),

the “weeds” symbolize corrupt leaders who have seized control of the state. Just as weeds invade and destroy fertile soil, these rulers disrupt the productive structure of society. In Marxist terms, they represent the bourgeoisie, the dominant class that maintains power through force and manipulation (Marx 56). The repetition of “took over” emphasizes forceful occupation, suggesting a cycle of exploitation where political power repeatedly falls into the hands of selfish rulers.

The line

“Unwanted military weeds

Dispersed authority

With their wings

Across the farmland” (lines 4–7)

extends the metaphor. The “farmland” here represents the nation’s economic base—the productive foundation of society where ordinary citizens labor. The “military weeds” spreading across it reflect the way political elites infiltrate every sector of governance, controlling the economy, institutions, and public life. According to Terry Eagleton, Marxist criticism sees politics as an expression of deeper economic structures; those who dominate the economy naturally extend their control into politics (Eagleton 19).

The poet deepens this criticism in “Weeds took over / Christened our specialists and teaching hospitals mere consulting clinics” (lines 8–9). This metaphor exposes how corruption and military misrule degrade public institutions like hospitals and schools. It shows the superstructure - institutions built upon the economic base - being

corrupted by those in power. In Marxist terms, when the ruling class controls the base, it manipulates the superstructure (education, health, law) to maintain control over the people (Marx 67). The line suggests that under the “weeds,” even knowledge and science are devalued, turning institutions of progress into hollow names.

In

“Weeds took over

Preached and told us of their medicinal values

Told us of their medicinal posture

To cure the sickness of administrative rigidity” (lines 10–13)

the poet mocks the rulers’ false promises. The “medicinal posture” represents political propaganda—the illusion of reform and progress. The rulers claim to “cure” the nation, but their leadership only worsens the situation. Marxist theory calls this ideology a tool used by the ruling class to deceive the masses into believing that oppression is necessary for their good (Althusser 45). Here, the poet exposes how military governments justify dictatorship as a cure for “rigidity,” but in reality, they protect their own class interests.

The image continues in

“Ousted ruler and rulers

Granary of dictatorial policies

Contaminated decision making process” (lines 14–16).

The “granary” symbolizes a storehouse of harmful ideas and repressive policies. It reflects a system where political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a few, contaminating governance with greed and injustice. This reflects Marx’s claim that corruption and inequality are not individual problems but structural results of class control over resources (Marx 88).

Finally,

“Suppressed the growth of consultation

Weeds took over

Tales of plans

To resuscitate hope” (lines 17–20)

shows that these rulers destroy democratic participation. “Suppressed the growth” refers to the silencing of the people who encompass the proletariat, whose voices are excluded from governance. In a Marxist reading, this symbolizes how the upper class prevents the lower class from gaining consciousness and organizing for change.

Eagleton explains that art and politics reveal class conflict through the tension between oppression and resistance (Eagleton 24). The poet’s repetition of “weeds took over” serves as both an accusation and a warning: the rulers are suffocating the land, and only collective awareness can restore growth.

The “weeds” metaphor, therefore, captures the heart of Marxist social criticism.

Weeds grow uncontrollably, destroying useful crops, just as corrupt leaders destroy the productive potential of society. The poet uses this metaphor to expose the exploitation and moral decay of the ruling elite. The ordinary people who represent

the base of the society are left to suffer while the leaders enrich themselves. This imbalance between the base (the poor masses) and the superstructure (the ruling government) leads to the stagnation and decay that the poet describes so vividly

## **2.2 The Poor Class**

The poem *The Poor Class* uses plant and growth metaphors to describe the situation of the poor in society. Through the image of “suckers,” the poet compares the poor to plantain, banana, and pineapple suckers, showing how the lower class multiplies, struggles, and survives under difficult economic conditions.

In the lines

“Members of the poor class

Like plantain suckers

Like banana suckers

Like pineapple suckers” (lines 2–4),

the poor are represented as plant shoots that grow from the same parent root. This metaphor suggests that poverty reproduces itself from one generation to another. It reflects the Marxist idea that the working class (proletariat) remains trapped in a cycle of hardship because the economic base of society is controlled by the ruling class (Marx 47). The poor, like plant suckers, depend on the same soil (the social and economic system) that limits their growth and development. The poet continues,

“Terminal buds of the poor

Have grown above the soil

Matured into shoot” (lines 5–7).

This image represents the poor who try to rise above poverty through education or labor, but the “soil” here stands for the economic structure that determines their opportunities. According to Marxist theory, the base of society—its economy and production system—controls the superstructure, which includes education, politics, and culture. The poet implies that no matter how much the poor “grow,” they are still rooted in an unequal system (Eagleton 21).

When the poem says, “Have grown and developed / Adventitious roots / Overcrowding everywhere” (lines 10–13), the poet shows that the poor are multiplying and spreading across society. The “adventitious roots” symbolize the poor’s efforts to find alternative ways to survive, such as informal jobs, street trading, or migration. However, “overcrowding” suggests that the system cannot support everyone equally, leading to tension and competition. This mirrors Marx’s concept of class struggle, where the working class competes for scarce resources created by the unequal distribution of wealth (Marx 78).

The poem reaches a strong social critique with

“Great competition for

Education and job opportunities ...

Stiff competition for

Available food resources

Available energy resources” (lines 14–18).

Here, the poet reveals the harsh reality of capitalist societies where the poor must fight for basic survival. Education and jobs, which should be accessible to all, are limited to a few. This reflects how the ruling class maintains control by owning the means of production and restricting access to economic and social advancement (Eagleton 23).

The metaphors of growth and competition effectively portray the Marxist idea of exploitation and inequality. The poor are like plants struggling for sunlight and water in barren soil, while the wealthy control the environment that determines who thrives and who perishes. The “Green Republic” symbolizes a nation that looks fertile and full of life on the surface but hides deep inequality beneath.

From a Marxist perspective, the poem exposes how economic power determines social life. The poor may “grow” and “blossom,” but without control over the means of production, their growth only serves to sustain the existing system. Their labor, like the energy of the plants, feeds the republic, yet they remain deprived. The poem thus becomes a voice of protest against social injustice and capitalist oppression..

### **2.3 Transition Politics**

The poem *Transition Politics* exposes the hypocrisy and corruption behind supposed democratic transitions in a society controlled by elites. Through vivid metaphors, the poet portrays politics as a system manipulated by the ruling class to maintain power while deceiving the masses. The poem echoes key Marxist concerns about class domination, false democracy, and ideological control of the oppressed.

The first metaphor appears in

“Transition politics

parades a cadre of

installed candidates

Enthrones favoured friends” (lines 1–4).

The phrase “parades a cadre of installed candidates” suggests a show or performance in politics as spectacle rather than genuine democracy. The word “installed” shows that those in power select leaders, not the people. The line “Enthrones favoured friends” reveals nepotism and class privilege: leadership remains within a circle of the elite. This reflects Marx’s idea of class struggle, where political institutions serve the interests of the ruling class or the bourgeoisie who control the means of production and political power (Marx 64). The masses are left out of the process, deceived by the illusion of freedom and participation.

The metaphor continues in

“Transition politics

Stabilizer of winner

loser loses everything” (lines 5–8).

Politics is described as a “stabilizer,” but not of society rather, it stabilizes the dominance of those already in power. The “winner” represents the ruling class, while the “loser” symbolizes the working class, who lose not only elections but also access

to justice, welfare, and opportunity. This aligns with Marxist thought that under capitalism, political systems are structured to maintain inequality power and wealth stay concentrated at the top (Eagleton 18). The metaphor captures how supposed democratic transitions are just another mechanism to protect elite interests.

In

“Transition politics

Breeds perceived enemies

wiper of compromise

wiper of negotiation” (lines 9–12),

the poet uses the metaphor of “breeding enemies” and “wiping” to show how power politics destroy dialogue and unity. The ruling class uses division to sustain control, turning citizens against one another. In Marxist terms, this is a form of false consciousness—the ideological manipulation that prevents the working class from realizing their shared oppression (Althusser 48). The idea of wiping out compromise also points to the authoritarian nature of political elites who suppress dissent and debate to secure their dominance.

The line

“Transition politics

disqualified candidates and

qualified candidates” (lines 13–15)

represents the injustice of class privilege, where ability and merit are ignored in favor of loyalty and connection. The Marxist concept of superstructure explains this: the political system (superstructure) reflects and protects the economic interests of the ruling base. Those who challenge elite interests are “disqualified,” while those who conform are “qualified.” This structure perpetuates inequality, keeping the poor powerless and dependent.

Further, the poet writes,

“Zoomlens of

Transition politics

Over-regulation

Auditing of democratic process” (lines 16–19).

Here, “zoomlens” serves as a metaphor for excessive surveillance and control. The political system magnifies and manipulates small details to justify the restriction of freedom. This mirrors the bureaucratic mechanisms Marx warned about, where the state becomes an instrument of domination rather than liberation (Marx 81). The poet critiques how leaders use the rhetoric of democracy while tightening their control over the masses through “over-regulation.”

The final metaphor,

“Transition politics

Baptised consensus

A retinue of candidates

And the people yearn for deregulation of democratic process” (lines 20–26),

is powerful. “Baptised consensus” suggests a false sanctification—a deceptive ritual that disguises oppression as unity. The ruling class uses ideology, religion, and propaganda to sanctify their rule. According to Louis Althusser, ideology works to make inequality seem natural and acceptable by disguising it as consensus (Althusser 50). The phrase “the people yearn for deregulation of democratic process” reflects the people’s growing awareness and resistance—a central Marxist theme of class consciousness. The masses desire freedom from the manipulated system that controls their choices and silences their voices.

In summary, the metaphors in *Transition Politics* portray politics as a drama of deception, where the ruling elite maintain power through manipulation and ideological control. The repeated phrase “Transition politics” becomes a refrain of irony—what should be a process of progress is instead a cycle of oppression. The poem reflects the Marxist belief that political power is inseparable from economic power, and that true change can only come when the oppressed classes recognize and resist their exploitation.

## **2.4 Predator President**

Kola Eke’s *Predator President* uses animal and survival metaphors to expose political oppression, fear, and the abuse of power in a corrupt leadership system. The poem shows how the ruling class, symbolized by the “predator president,” dominates and exploits the masses through violence and control. Using Marxist literary theory, the

poem can be read as a critique of class domination, dictatorship, and the manipulation of ideology to sustain the power of the elite.

In the opening lines,

“Strangled military funds

Orchestrated a coup

Rode into power

As Ugandan president” (lines 1–4)

Kola Eke portrays the president’s rise to power through deceit and force. The verbs “strangled” and “orchestrated” reveal violence and calculation—he seizes control of the economic base (“military funds”) to achieve political dominance. According to Marxist theory, the class that controls the economy controls the state (Marx 75). Thus, the president’s manipulation of military funds represents how the ruling class uses material resources to sustain its power and authority.

The repeated metaphor “Predator president” (line 5) is powerful. It describes the leader as a predatory animal that feeds on its victims—the citizens. The word “predator” suggests cruelty, greed, and domination. In Marxist terms, this mirrors the bourgeoisie, the oppressive class that feeds on the labor and suffering of the proletariat (working class). The metaphor exposes how political leaders in post-colonial African states often exploit their citizens just as predators exploit their prey, maintaining control through fear and coercion (Eagleton 18).

Kola Eke extends the metaphor in

“Buried civil law

Resurrected military tribunals

Herded extrajudicial killing” (lines 6–9).

Here, “burying civil law” symbolizes the destruction of justice and democracy, while “resurrected military tribunals” represents the creation of oppressive institutions that serve the ruler’s interest. This shows how the superstructure—the political and legal systems—is manipulated to protect the ruling class. According to Marx, the ruling class creates laws and systems not to serve justice but to defend their economic and political power (Marx 82). The “extrajudicial killing” reflects how power is maintained through fear and the silencing of dissenting voices.

The poet continues,

“Citizens must develop

Defensive adaptation like chameleons” (lines 10–11).

The “chameleon” metaphor describes how the oppressed must disguise themselves to survive under dictatorship. It reflects how the working class adapts to oppression to avoid punishment. This adaptation, however, represents alienation—citizens lose their individuality and truth out of fear. As Althusser notes, ideology shapes how people behave under power, forcing them to accept oppression as normal (Althusser 46). The people’s ability to “change colour” (lines 17–18) becomes both a survival strategy and a symbol of their loss of freedom.

The line

“Predator president

Distributed his venom

Amongst thousands of people” (lines 12–14)

deepens the metaphor. The “venom” represents the corrupt influence and fear spread by the government. Venom kills slowly but surely—just as oppressive regimes destroy a nation’s economy, justice, and morality over time. This reflects Marx’s idea that capitalism and dictatorship poison society by spreading inequality and false ideology. The “thousands of people” signify the poor masses, the victims of the predator’s system, who bear the burden of suffering and exploitation.

In

“Persecuted certain ethnic groups

To avoid persecution

Better to change colour

Like the chameleon” (lines 15–18)

Kola Eke highlights how the ruler uses divide and rule tactics—targeting specific groups to maintain control. This echoes the Marxist concept of class conflict, where the ruling class deliberately divides the oppressed to prevent unity. The “chameleon” again symbolizes the psychological effect of oppression—citizens must hide their identity to survive, becoming complicit in their own subjugation.

The closing lines,

“The cross

Feel the pulse of Ugandans

Calling on John of

The cross

For intercession” (lines 19–22)

introduce religious imagery. The “cross” represents suffering and hope for salvation. In Marxist theory, religion often acts as an ideological tool—a way the oppressed seek comfort while enduring exploitation. As Marx famously stated, religion can be “the opium of the people,” dulling their awareness of social injustice (Marx 92). Kola Eke, however, presents this not as weakness but as desperation—people turn to faith because their political system offers no relief.

Thus, the central metaphor of the “predator president” captures the essence of Marxist criticism: the ruler is not just a political oppressor but a symbol of class exploitation. His rule depends on violence, control of resources, and ideological manipulation. The citizens, like prey, must hide and adapt, losing their freedom and identity in the process. The poem exposes how political leadership, instead of serving the people, becomes a mechanism of exploitation sustained by fear and economic inequality.

## **2.5 Desert Republic**

Kola Eke’s *Desert Republic* uses the extended metaphor of a desert to represent a poor, corrupt, and economically decaying nation. The poem criticizes how greed and mismanagement by the ruling class create poverty, inequality, and human suffering.

From a Marxist perspective, the poem reveals how the capitalist and political elite exploit the country's resources for personal gain while the masses are left to struggle in a "recession" (line 2).

In the opening line,

"The republic swims

Gradually into recession

For obvious reasons" (lines 1–3),

Kola Eke presents the economic collapse as something predictable. The "recession" is a metaphor for a nation sinking under the weight of corruption and exploitation. The phrase "for obvious reasons" suggests that the cause which are corruption, greed, and bad leadership is known to everyone. A Marxist perspective sees this as reflecting the inevitable crisis of capitalism, where the selfish pursuit of profit by the few leads to the suffering of the majority (Marx 102).

The line "Children with retarded growth" (line 4) extends the economic metaphor into the social realm. Here, stunted children symbolize the stunted growth of the nation itself both socially, economically, and morally. It shows how inequality and hunger affect the most vulnerable. Marxist theory argues that in a society divided by class, the working poor (proletariat) bear the worst consequences of exploitation. Kola Eke uses this image to expose how the elite's mismanagement harms innocent citizens who lack the means to survive.

In

“The Republic

Looks too ugly

Looks like a desert” (lines 5–7),

the metaphor of the desert becomes central. A desert is a dry, lifeless place—symbolizing a nation drained of resources and hope. This metaphor reflects Marx’s idea of alienation, where people become disconnected from their work, society, and humanity because of poverty and oppression (Eagleton 32). The “ugly” image mirrors the moral ugliness of a corrupt system that enriches a few and impoverishes many.

The next image,

“Very high temperature of hunger

Survival depends on scattered cloud bursts” (lines 8–9)

extends the metaphor of the desert into that of suffering and scarcity. Hunger is personified as a burning heat that scorches the people, showing the harsh living conditions caused by inequality. The “scattered cloud bursts” symbolize rare opportunities or reliefs perhaps government aid or sudden economic improvement. These are not enough to sustain life, reflecting how capitalist systems provide only temporary or selective benefits to the poor.

The line

“She wallows in recession

The Republic

Hellish here since sunshine

Directed to the ground” (lines 11–14)

portrays the republic as a living being suffering under unbearable conditions. The “sunshine directed to the ground” symbolizes relentless hardship—light that brings no hope but destruction. This image connects to Marxist criticism of the bourgeois state, which appears bright on the surface but burns the working class beneath.

Kola Eke intensifies the imagery in

“Obnoxiously hellish

Winds of starvation

Too strong and lack of

Trees to act as breaks” (lines 15–18).

The “winds of starvation” represent the economic and social crises that sweep through the nation. The absence of “trees” as “breaks” suggests the absence of protective systems—no social welfare, no justice, no compassion. The metaphor indicates that the poor have no shield against the destructive forces of inequality. In Marxist terms, this reflects how the state fails to protect the working class because it serves the interests of the ruling elite (Althusser 46).

The final part of the poem turns to those who survive in this harsh environment:

“Only desert rats can survive

Recession

Live in burrows

With their stolen cash” (lines 19–22).

The “desert rats” symbolize corrupt politicians and the wealthy elite who hoard stolen public funds. Their “burrows” are secret hiding places—perhaps foreign bank accounts or private mansions—where they conceal their “ill-gotten wealth” (line 27). The metaphor of rats fits the Marxist view of the bourgeoisie as parasites, living off the labor and suffering of others. While the majority struggle, these few survive comfortably, untouched by the nation’s hunger and poverty.

The closing lines

“Only kangaroo rats

Survival of the fittest

Can withstand Desert Republic

Blessed with ill-gotten wealth” (lines 23–27)

Reinforces the survival theme. The “kangaroo rats,” animals that adapt to desert life without water, represent those corrupt elites who thrive in chaos. The phrase “survival of the fittest” echoes Darwinian capitalism, where only the powerful survive, not the just. Kola Eke’s use of irony in “Blessed with ill-gotten wealth” shows the poet’s anger toward those who benefit from national decay. Marxist theory interprets this as false consciousness—a situation where society mistakenly admires or accepts the success of exploiters.

Thus, through the extended desert metaphor, Kola Eke criticizes how political corruption and capitalist greed turn a once fertile nation into a barren land of hunger and despair. The poem reflects Marx's belief that social and economic inequality stems from ownership and control of resources by the ruling class. In *Desert Republic*, only those who exploit others can "survive," while the poor remain buried in the sands of deprivation.

## **2.6 At Ring Road**

Kola Eke's *At Ring Road* uses strong animal metaphors to expose the suffering, frustration, and resistance of the oppressed masses under corrupt political leadership. The poem represents the people's cry against economic injustice, government greed, and political exploitation—issues central to Marxist literary theory, which focuses on class struggles, oppression, and the inequality between the ruling and working classes.

From the beginning, Kola Eke situates the poem at "Ring Road"—a symbol of public space, where citizens gather to voice their anger and demand justice. It becomes the center of class conflict between the oppressed working class and the ruling elite. The first metaphor appears in

"We hear workers protesting

Making croaking noises

Like frogs

About worrisome arrears of salaries" (lines 1–5).

Here, the “workers” represent the proletariat, the laboring class whose voices are ignored and mocked by those in power. Their protest is described as “croaking,” likening them to frogs whose noise is dismissed as irritating but harmless. This metaphor reflects how the ruling class dehumanizes workers, seeing their struggles as mere noise rather than legitimate demands. In Marxist terms, this shows alienation, where workers are separated from their labor’s value and denied dignity (Marx 102).

The poem continues,

“People are buzzing

Like mosquitoes

Protesting against the Governor’s

shabby conduct of local elections” (lines 6–9).

The metaphor of “mosquitoes” implies that the masses are viewed as pests small, powerless, and easily crushed. Yet, like mosquitoes, their persistence causes discomfort to the governor and the corrupt system. Kola Eke uses this metaphor to show the tension between the oppressed and the oppressor—the people’s attempt to challenge political deceit even when they are powerless. Marxist theory supports this by emphasizing that revolutionary consciousness often begins when the oppressed realize their collective power, even in small acts of resistance (Eagleton 35).

In,

“The elderly are cooing

Like pigeons

Protesting non-payment of

Pensions and gratuities” (lines 10–13),

Kola Eke turns to the older generation, comparing them to pigeons—symbols of peace and patience. The “cooing” sound shows their weak and gentle protest. Despite their quietness, their suffering underlines the failure of the state to care for those who built the nation. From a Marxist point of view, this represents the betrayal of the working class by the state apparatus, which serves the interests of the ruling elite rather than the people (Althusser 47). The elderly’s lack of pensions mirrors the destruction of social welfare in a capitalist system that prioritizes power and wealth over human needs.

Kola Eke deepens the imagery in

“Some persons are barking

Like dogs

Governor is consuming funds

Meant for local councils” (lines 14–17).

The metaphor of “barking” expresses anger and confrontation. The people’s voices now grow louder and more aggressive, like dogs defending their territory. The line “Governor is consuming funds” shows corruption and greed, where the ruling class feeds off public resources like parasites. Marxist theory identifies this as economic exploitation, where the ruling elite enrich themselves through the labor and suffering

of the masses (Marx 89). The use of the word “consuming” emphasizes greed—  
leaders devour resources meant for everyone, leaving others impoverished.

The tone becomes darker in

“Masses are hissing

Like snakes

Governor has plunged the

State into indebtedness” (lines 18–21).

The metaphor of “snakes” suggests growing anger and hidden rebellion among the people. Their “hissing” shows suppressed resentment—an undercurrent of revolutionary energy that could erupt at any time. This reflects the Marxist concept of class tension, where the oppressed become increasingly aware of their exploitation and begin to resist. The “indebtedness” symbolizes the economic decay caused by mismanagement and corruption - a key feature of capitalist and authoritarian systems criticized by Marxists.

The poem ends with a powerful image:

“Masses are roaring

Like lions

Governor disburses state funds

To his friends and cronies” (lines 22–25).

Here, Kola Eke transforms the oppressed masses from weak creatures into roaring lions, symbolizing awakening, strength, and courage. The roar represents revolutionary resistance—a moment when the people refuse to remain silent. The mention of the governor giving state funds to “friends and cronies” exposes nepotism and class privilege, where wealth circulates within a small elite circle. Marxist theory supports this as the functioning of a superstructure built to protect the economic interests of the ruling class. The roaring masses thus signify the rising class consciousness that challenges this structure (Eagleton 39).

Throughout *At Ring Road*, Kola Eke uses animal metaphors such as frogs, mosquitoes, pigeons, dogs, snakes, and lions to represent the different stages of the people’s awakening and resistance. These metaphors show how the poor evolve from weak and voiceless creatures into powerful agents of change. In Marxist terms, the poem traces the movement from oppression to revolution, revealing the inevitable conflict between the exploited masses and the corrupt elite.

### **CHAPTER 3**

## ANALYSIS OF RELIGION METAPHORS IN *AUGUST 1985*

Kola Eke's collection of poetry *August 1985* interrogates the hypocrisy of religion in Nigeria through selected poems: *Contractor Preachers*, *Prosperity Gospel*, *Media Evangelism* and *Eyeball to Eyeball*. A focus on the use of metaphor in the analysis of these poems reflects the hypocrisy and corruption of the pastors and priests (upper class) and the marginalization of the poor masses (lower class) in their churches.

### 3.1 Contractor Preachers

In *Contractor Preachers*, Kola Eke criticizes the commercialization of religion and how spiritual institutions have been turned into profit-making businesses. Through extended metaphors of trade, networking, and the human body, Eke exposes how the morals of religion has become compromised and has become part of the capitalist system that Marxism condemns. The poem reveals how the superstructure (religion and ideology) supports the economic base by protecting and sustaining exploitation and inequality (Marx 54).

The title itself, *Contractor Preachers*, immediately suggests the blending of two opposing roles: spiritual leadership and commercial enterprise. A preacher, in traditional sense, serves God and the community. However, when described as a "contractor," Eke implies that religious leaders now operate like businessmen who sign deals and seek profit. The line

Networking of churches

Networking of ministries

Networking" (lines 1–3)

compares churches to business enterprises linked in a global profit network. This metaphor of "networking" portrays the church as a capitalist corporation whose

success depends on expansion, marketing, and connections, rather than on faith. Marxist theory explains this as commodification, where even sacred things like religion are turned into commodities for economic gain (Eagleton 22). Ek's critique is further reflected through a bold and satirical metaphor: "Scrotum of the church / protects evangelical testes / Against enemies" (lines 4–6). Here, he uses an anatomical metaphor to show how the church has become obsessed with protecting its material and institutional interests rather than its moral purpose. The "scrotum" and "testes" symbolize the reproduction of wealth and influence within the religious establishment instead of producing spiritual renewal. Marx's idea that ideology serves to preserve the interests of the ruling class applies here—the church, as part of the ideological superstructure, helps maintain the capitalist system by pacifying the masses while enriching its leaders (Althusser 47).

The poem also satirizes the global commercialization of evangelism by naming famous preachers:

“Benny Hinn  
Reinhard Bonke  
Enter into contract  
To evangelize us  
Don Moore  
Morris Cerullo  
Sign contracts to  
minister to us” (lines 10–17).

The repetition of “contract” underscores the poet's irony—preaching has turned into a signed business deal. Kola Eke uses this metaphor to show how Western and local religious leaders collaborate in turning faith into a global industry. This reflects the

capitalist tendency toward monopoly and globalization, where religious figures become “monopolists in the business of evangelization” (line 9). In Marxist terms, religion becomes another tool of imperial capitalism, exploiting the faith of the poor while transferring wealth to the powerful elite (Marx 78).

The metaphor becomes sharper in

“The church  
Now the epididymis  
of commerce  
of manufacturing money” (lines 18–21).

The “epididymis,” a biological term linked to reproduction, symbolizes how the church now breeds and multiplies money instead of spiritual growth. This transformation of the church into a “factory” of wealth mirrors how capitalism transforms human and spiritual relationships into material production and profit-making (Eagleton 41). The once-holy space has become a site of economic reproduction, where religion serves as an ideological cover for greed.

Toward the end, Eke hints at rising discontent among the people:

“Protests have begun  
To brew  
To uproot profit-making  
Churches and evangelization” (lines 23–26).

This marks a moment of class resistance, where believers, representing the exploited masses, begin to reject the manipulation of their faith for profit. According to Marxist theory, this awakening reflects the rise of class consciousness—the recognition of exploitation and the demand for change. The people’s protest symbolizes the potential

for revolution not just in politics, but also within religion itself, reclaiming faith from capitalist corruption (Eagleton 45).

### **3.2 Prosperity Gospel**

*Prosperity Gospel* is a socially conscious poem that critiques the commercialization of religion and the exploitation of believers through materialistic preaching. Using sharp metaphors and vivid imagery, Kola Eke exposes how religion has been turned into a capitalist enterprise that serves the rich while manipulating the poor. Through the Marxist lens, this poem reveals the economic and ideological exploitation of the working class, portraying how the church, once a spiritual refuge, has become a marketplace driven by greed and class oppression.

Eke establishes the central metaphor of religion as a capitalist system in the line, “Prosperity gospel continues unabated” (line 1). The phrase “prosperity gospel” functions as a metaphor for capitalist religion — a system that equates faith with wealth and blessings with material success. By describing it as “unabated,” Eke suggests that this form of religion operates unchecked and dominates modern spirituality. From a Marxist perspective, religion here acts as an ideological tool that maintains social inequality, teaching the poor to see wealth as divine favor and poverty as a curse.

Eke strengthens this critique with the metaphor “Pastors talking too much on material acquisition” (line 2). This line satirizes preachers who focus on material gain rather than salvation. The overemphasis on “material acquisition” symbolizes the ideological corruption of faith, where economic success becomes the central message. According to Marxist theory, such teachings reinforce false consciousness which is mostly a condition where the oppressed internalize the values of the ruling class and see their

exploitation as divine will. The pastors become instruments of capitalist ideology, using religion to justify greed and class dominance.

The metaphor “A peculiar tingling pains down our thighs” (lines 4–5) adds a human dimension to the poem’s critique. It reflects the physical and emotional discomfort of the oppressed believers who sense something wrong but remain trapped in faith. The “tingling” symbolizes the psychological manipulation and confusion experienced by the masses. In Marxist terms, this image represents alienation — the separation of people from their true consciousness due to ideological control. The believers are emotionally enslaved by a faith system that promises prosperity while draining their resources.

Eke’s metaphor “A vast afforestation of exotic cars” (line 11) is one of the poem’s most striking images. By describing the accumulation of luxury cars as a “vast afforestation,” the poet equates the unnatural spread of wealth with the growth of a forest which humorously means a forest of greed. This ironic image portrays materialism as an invasive and artificial phenomenon. Under Marxist analysis, this reflects commodity fetishism, where people worship material goods instead of human values. The church, once meant for salvation, has become a “marketplace” where wealth is idolized, and the pastors’ possessions symbolize capitalist success rather than spiritual purity.

The line “The preacher preaches what they like to hear” (line 15) reveals how religious leaders manipulate ideology to control the masses. Instead of delivering messages of truth, preachers say what pleases the congregation, keeping them comfortable in ignorance. This reflects Louis Althusser’s concept of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), where institutions like churches maintain social control by spreading the ideology of the ruling class. The preacher’s words act as tools of

manipulation that maintain the status quo, ensuring that the poor remain submissive while the rich continue to profit.

Eke also exposes the moral corruption within this capitalist religion through the line “Poverty is a nuisance” (line 18). This statement reflects the reversal of Christian morality. Instead of showing compassion for the poor, poverty is demonized, and wealth is glorified. This distortion of values mirrors the condition in which the oppressed begin to despise their own class because they have absorbed the mindset of their oppressors. The prosperity gospel thus turns religion into a system that promotes inequality rather than justice.

The metaphor “Prosperity pastors trick us out of our life savings” (line 21) highlights the economic exploitation at the core of this system. The phrase “trick us” conveys deliberate deception, while “life savings” represents the total sacrifices of the working poor. Kola Eke shows how pastors exploit the faith and desperation of believers to enrich themselves. From a Marxist perspective, this is a direct example of class exploitation: the pastors represent the bourgeoisie, and the believers represent the proletariat. Through offerings, tithes, and false promises, the poor sustain the wealth and comfort of the few who control religious institutions.

Eke concludes his poem with biting irony in the line “Afflicted with expensive wears, addicted with exotic shoes” (lines 25–26). The metaphor of “affliction” suggests that materialism is not a blessing but a disease. The pastors are “addicted,” unable to detach themselves from luxury and greed. This final image encapsulates the corruption of faith by capitalism — the transformation of religion from a source of moral guidance into a system of moral decay. In Marxist terms, this addiction reflects the destructive power of capitalism, which corrupts not only social institutions but also human values.

### 3.3 Media Evangelism

Kola Eke's *Media Evangelism* exposes the commercialization of religion through modern media such as television and radio. The poet employs vivid anatomical metaphors to portray how religious messages infiltrate private spaces and intimate lives, turning faith into a mechanism for economic exploitation. Using the of Marxist literary theory, the poem reveals how religion, as part of the superstructure, reinforces class inequalities by manipulating the beliefs and behaviours of the masses for the benefit of the elite.

The poem begins with the metaphor, "Through the prostate gland of television or radio programmes" (line 1), which likens media channels to reproductive organs that disseminate the "gospel." This metaphor emphasizes the pervasive and systematic nature of religious messaging, suggesting that media evangelism actively reproduces ideology throughout society. In Marxist terms, this reflects how the superstructure (media and religion) serves the economic base, promoting ideas that support and legitimize class hierarchies.

Kola Eke continues the reproductive metaphor with "Urethra which passes Gospel messages to homes and sitting rooms" (line 3). Here, media evangelism is likened to a bodily canal transmitting ideology directly into private and domestic spaces. this represents the spread of false consciousness, as the church uses media to indoctrinate the faithful into accepting capitalist and religious authority. The believers are metaphorically "penetrated" by the ideology, consuming messages that pacify them while encouraging economic contributions to sustain the institution.

The metaphor of the "Oviduct which passes religious messages to Bedrooms and guesthouses" (line 5) extends this idea, suggesting that media religion reproduces ideology across intimate and personal spheres. Kola Eke emphasizes that religious

and capitalist influence reaches every corner of life, reflecting Marxist concerns about how ideology permeates society to maintain the power of the ruling class. The church, through media, ensures the continual reproduction of beliefs that align with the interests of the wealthy and powerful.

Eke further critiques the commodification of spirituality with the metaphor,

The vulva with which we experience deliverance

laying of hands” (lines 7–8).

Here, the experience of deliverance is represented as a tangible product, suggesting that blessings, healing, and prosperity are marketed and sold to the masses. From a Marxist perspective, this demonstrates commodity fetishism, where spiritual experiences are commodified, and the working class’s labor, money, and devotion enrich the elite preachers.

The poem continues with the metaphor of the “uterus where we encounter prayers of prosperity, warfare and prophetic prayers” (lines 9–11). The uterus symbolizes a site of production, where ideological messages are cultivated and distributed to the faithful. This mirrors the Marxist concept that the superstructure reproduces the economic and social relations of the ruling class, using religion as a medium to maintain obedience and extract economic resources from the poor.

Kola Eke also highlights the selective distribution of spiritual benefits through the metaphor,

“The cervix which allows the passage of Bible reading

Release of blessings

Breaking of curses” (lines 12–15).

The cervix represents controlled access, showing that media evangelism mediates who receives blessings or spiritual rewards. Marxist theory interprets this as the ruling

class controlling ideology to preserve class dominance, allowing only compliant followers to benefit while maintaining the power of the elite.

### **3.4 Eyeball to Eyeball**

Kola Eke's *Eyeball to Eyeball* critiques the proliferation and commercialization of churches in modern society. The poem employs vivid metaphors to portray religion as a competitive and profit-driven enterprise, exposing how pastors exploit faith for personal gain. The opening metaphor, "Some eyeball to eyeball with each other" (lines 5–6), represents the close competition among churches in urban spaces. By likening churches to neighbors pressed "eyeball to eyeball," Kola Eke critiques how religious institutions compete for influence, followers, and material contributions. From a Marxist perspective, this mirrors the capitalist competition among the bourgeoisie, where institutions jostle for control over resources and ideology, maintaining class divisions while presenting an illusion of spiritual freedom to the masses.

Kola Eke uses the metaphor of

"Pastors hang on to Mental gymnastics

Hang on to Psychological gymnastics" (lines 10–12)

to depict how religious leaders manipulate the minds of their followers. This metaphor highlights the use of elaborate or deceptive rhetoric to control the congregation, reflecting Marx's concept of ideological manipulation. Religion, as part of the superstructure, shapes consciousness to maintain the dominance of a few who profit from spiritual authority. The "mental gymnastics" are symbolic of strategies used to sustain false consciousness, making believers complicit in their own

exploitation. The poem further portrays churches as large-scale economic enterprises with the lines,

“Large scale enterprise

As churches display

Signboards billboards banners

And posters” (lines 14–17).

Here, Kola Eke uses the metaphor of the church as a commercial business, emphasizing materialism and profit motives. Marxist theory interprets this as religion functioning as an instrument of capitalist exploitation, where spiritual services are commodified, and the labor and devotion of the faithful enrich the religious elite rather than serve the community.

Kola Eke also critiques counterfeit pastors with the line,

“Artificial pastors

Listen

Through the genitals

A man incurs an evil lineage” (lines 20–23).

This metaphor suggests that fake religious leaders manipulate the most intimate and personal aspects of their followers’ lives for economic and spiritual control. Marxist analysis would interpret this as a demonstration of class exploitation and ideological control, where the ruling class (here, the pastors) uses religion to dictate moral and

social norms, ensuring obedience while extracting material and psychological resources from the proletariat. The poem highlights the performative and theatrical aspects of modern churches through the metaphor,

“Pastors gyrating around

Members of congregation

Screamed their admiration

Display of halleluyah chorus” (lines 8–11).

The spectacle becomes a tool for attracting attention and securing followers, reflecting the commodification of spirituality. Marxist theory emphasizes that this performativity serves the economic interests of the church elite, maintaining their power and wealth by turning religious devotion into a consumer transaction.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR OF GENDER ISSUES IN KOLA EKE'S

#### *AUGUST 1985*

Kola Eke's *Mother's Day I*, *A Cabin Crew of Women*, *Queen Idia*, *Women Have Come of Age*, *Women Hovered Like Flies*, uses metaphors to explore the social, political, and historical oppression of women while highlighting their resilience, agency, and contributions to society. These poems depicts women in roles that challenge traditional expectations such as warriors, caregivers, and leaders in which Eke transforms ordinary actions into symbolic acts of resistance. Using Marxist literary theory, which focuses on class structures, social inequalities, and the struggle between the oppressed and those in power, these metaphors can be understood as critiques of patriarchal and societal systems that exploit women while simultaneously celebrating their labor, intelligence, and collective power.

#### **4.1 Mother's Day I**

Kola Eke *Mother's Day I* uses metaphors to celebrate women's historical power and to critique the social structures that have marginalized them. One of the central metaphors is the burial of the umbilical cord, which represents the symbolic rejection of women's inferior status. Eke writes,

Women clustered around

Tinubu square

To bury umbilical cord

of second class citizen (lines 1–4).

The umbilical cord, traditionally associated with birth, here symbolizes the social inheritance of oppression. This metaphor highlights the structural inequalities that position women as subordinate, showing how patriarchal society exploits and limits the potential of half the population.

Eke also uses metaphors of royalty and political power to emphasize women's historical significance. He writes,

Voices recalling the

High positions of women

in the great empire

Sounded boastful of

Iya Oba

Women's collateral security (lines 8–13).

Women are metaphorically portrayed as “collateral security,” indicating that their presence and contributions were essential to the stability of the Oyo Empire. Marxist literary theory interprets this as a critique of social systems that fail to value the labor and influence of oppressed groups. Although women were crucial to the functioning of the empire, their power has often been undervalued or ignored by dominant patriarchal ideologies.

The poem also depicts women as politically and spiritually empowered figures. Eke writes,

Iyakere a woman to be

Proud of

Baptized with political powers

Women's great asset (lines 14–17).

The metaphor of being “baptized with political powers” portrays authority as an innate quality that women possess, yet one that is often denied recognition in male-dominated society. Marxist theory would interpret this as highlighting the latent potential of oppressed groups, suggesting that social hierarchies are artificially constructed to suppress certain classes—in this case, women.

Finally, the poem emphasizes women’s dignity through metaphors of reverence and social status. Eke notes,

Are-Olite

Sat close to the king

On state occasions

Iya Mode

who presided over

the veneration of the

Spirits of kings

The king addressed her

as 'father

knelt down to

Greet her (lines 18–27).

By depicting women in positions of respect and authority, the poet uses metaphor to contrast historical female power with contemporary social subordination. Marxist literary theory would view this as a critique of the ideological structures that diminish the role of women, while also celebrating their historical influence as evidence of their inherent value in society,

#### **4.2 A Cabin Crew of Women**

*A Cabin Crew of Women* employs metaphors to challenge societal assumptions about women's roles and to highlight their labor, service, and social importance. The central metaphor of women as a "cabin crew" transforms the idea of passive femininity into active, purposeful engagement. By likening women to a cabin crew, Eke suggests that they are essential operators who manage, care for, and guide the social and spiritual life of their communities. He states,

Women make up cabin crew

Men wrongly see

Women as passive (lines 4–6).

This metaphor emphasizes that women's contributions are often invisible or undervalued by a patriarchal society that regards them as secondary or passive.

The metaphor underscores the social labor performed by women and critiques the unequal valuation of that labor. Just as a cabin crew works diligently behind the scenes to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers, women perform extensive social and religious labor that sustains the moral and spiritual structure of society. The poem notes, Carry load of / Religion on their shoulders (lines 15–16), highlighting the burden of unpaid, often unrecognized labor that women carry. Marxist theory emphasizes the economic and social consequences of labor under unequal power structures, and here Eke shows that patriarchal society exploits women's service while denying them recognition.

The poem also extends the metaphor to include the women's engagement with marginalized populations, suggesting that their work has both practical and ethical significance. Women are described as visiting the dumb and the deaf, and conducting prison visitation to diagnose the plight of female prisoners (lines 17–22). These lines reinforce the Marxist reading that women perform necessary social labor that sustains the community but is rendered invisible by dominant power structures. The metaphorical cabin crew navigates the "troubles of society," much as proletarians provide essential labor that is unacknowledged by those in positions of authority.

Furthermore, Kola Eke critiques the ideological structures that perpetuate women's subordination. The line,

Women adjudged passive

Tell our menfolk

Lack of knowledge is

Darker than night (lines 31–34)

highlights the disconnect between the actual labor women perform and the perception imposed by patriarchal ideology. In Marxist terms, this reflects false consciousness, where the ruling class (in this case, men with societal authority) misrecognizes the value of women's contributions. Eke uses metaphor to reclaim women's agency and assert their centrality in both spiritual and social spheres.

### **4.3 Queen Idia**

In *Queen Idia*, Kola Eke employs metaphors to highlight the power, agency, and social influence of women, particularly through the historical figure of Queen Idia. One of the central metaphors in the poem is the comparison of women's struggle for recognition to curing a disease. Eke writes,

See women

Attempting to cure

the disease of male dominance (lines 9–11).

This metaphor portrays male dominance as a sickness in society and women as active agents fighting to heal the inequality. From a Marxist perspective, this reflects the critique of oppressive structures in society, where the dominant class, men who exploits women's labor and social roles, and women act to challenge that hierarchy.

Eke further uses metaphors of war and military conquest to show women's strength and leadership. He states,

Aspiring to be

Like Queen Idia who planted soldiers around

Her son Oba Esigie (lines 12–14)

and

Queen Idia mobilized

And swallowed Igala forces

Restoring military prowess

To the great kingdom (lines 15–18).

Here, the women are likened to military strategists, with Queen Idia as the ultimate model of authority and courage. This can be read as women exercising power in a historically male-dominated system, reclaiming influence over social and political structures that have historically marginalized them. The metaphor transforms women from passive participants into active leaders capable of shaping society.

The poem also uses metaphors of wealth and privilege to signify recognition and reward for women's labor. Eke writes, Esigie conferred on her Iyoba / Blessed with special palace and staff / First Iyoba to command Soldiers (lines 19–22). The palace, staff, and title symbolize social and political capital, showing that women's labor and leadership have material and symbolic value. Marxist theory emphasizes the role of material conditions in social status, and these lines suggest that women's contributions to governance and society are significant but have historically been underappreciated.

#### 4.4 Women Have Come of Age

In *Women Have Come of Age*, Kola Eke uses metaphors to highlight the oppression, struggle, and eventual empowerment of women in society. One of the central metaphors is the comparison of women's inferior status to a brewed condition at birth. Eke writes,

Inferior status of a

Girl child is

Brewed on her

Birthday (lines 1–4).

This metaphor suggests that society predetermines a girl's lower social status from birth, reflecting a systemic oppression that denies women equality. Using Marxist literary theory, this can be interpreted as an illustration of the social structures that maintain women as a subordinate class, similar to how the ruling class exploits the labor of the proletariat. The poet further uses metaphors drawn from war and struggle to represent women's fight against oppression. Eke describes key female figures as Mujahideen of women's war (line 23). The term "Mujahideen" metaphorically casts women as warriors, showing that they actively resist patriarchal domination. From a Marxist perspective, this represents the struggle of an oppressed class against dominant social forces, emphasizing women's agency in challenging structures that perpetuate inequality.

Metaphors of sports and teamwork are also employed to illustrate women's collective action and solidarity. Eke writes,

The ball was

Headed to Calabar

Trapped tackled dribbled

And passed to Opobo (lines 31–34).

Here, football becomes a metaphor for organized struggle, with the ball symbolizing the cause of women's liberation being passed from one group to another. This aligns with the Marxist idea of class consciousness, where collective action among the oppressed is necessary to confront systemic inequality. Eke also uses the metaphor of flies to represent women's persistence and influence. He states, *Women hovered like / Flies / to contaminate tales / of women's inferiority* (lines 35–38). Flies, though small and often overlooked, are relentless and can spread widely. By comparing women to flies, Eke portrays them as a persistent force challenging false narratives of weakness and inferiority. In Marxist terms, this can be seen as a representation of the oppressed reclaiming their power and disrupting the ideology imposed by the ruling class, in this case, the patriarchal structures that have historically devalued women.

The poem also employs metaphors of history and social recognition. Eke notes,

Women's second class status

Thrown into the

Dustbin of History (lines 25–27).

This metaphor suggests that the long-standing oppression of women is being discarded, symbolizing social progress. From a Marxist perspective, this represents a

shift in power relations and the overturning of historical structures that have maintained inequality.

#### **4.4 Women Hovered Like Flies**

Kola Eke employs metaphors to depict women's resistance against social oppression and to challenge the patriarchal systems that seek to control them in *Women Hovered Like Flies*. One of the basic metaphors in the poem is the comparison of women to flies, which portrays them as persistent, unstoppable, and capable of disrupting established social norms. Eke writes,

Women hovered like

Flies

To contaminate tales

of the weaker sex (lines 10–13).

This metaphor highlights the women's collective power to challenge the false narratives that portray them as weak or subordinate. From a Marxist perspective, this represents the struggle of an oppressed class against a dominant ideology, showing women actively confronting patriarchal authority.

The poem also uses metaphors of dance and the body to express rebellion. Eke describes,

Women danced and danced

in obscene manner

A number of them

Half-naked (lines 4–7).

The women's dance is a metaphor for public protest and defiance, transforming their bodies into instruments of social resistance. Marxist literary theory interprets this as a critique of social structures that regulate and control women's labor and autonomy, showing that the oppressed can reclaim their agency through collective action. Eke extends the metaphor of organized struggle by using imagery from sports to symbolize coordination and solidarity. He writes, The ball of

Demonstration against oppression

Kicked off in Aba

Passed to Owerri (lines 22–25).

Here, the football metaphor represents the continuity of women's resistance, with the ball symbolizing the cause of liberation being passed strategically from one group to another. In Marxist terms, this reflects the formation of class consciousness, emphasizing the importance of collective action among the oppressed to challenge systemic inequalities.

The poem also critiques the ideological systems that legitimize male dominance. Eke notes,

To parade women

as the weaker sex

Fallacious

A mirage (lines 14–17).

This metaphor exposes the falsity of patriarchal claims about women's inferiority. Such ideological forms from a Marxist perspective, constructs serve to maintain power imbalances by masking the true value and labor of oppressed groups, in this case, women. Eke evokes historical memory as a source of empowerment. He writes,

Look at women

Convulsed with pride

As they recalled Aba women riot (lines 18–20).

The metaphorical recall of the riot links present resistance to past struggles, showing how historical awareness strengthens collective identity. Marxist theory would interpret this as the building of social consciousness, where oppressed groups learn from history to challenge the structures that exploit them.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine the use of metaphor in Kola Eke's selected poems, focusing on how the poet employs figurative language to expose and critique the social realities of post-colonial Nigerian society. In line with the thesis statement, the study revealed that Eke uses metaphor as a tool to highlight socioeconomic inequalities and power structures that shape people's experiences. The research adopted a qualitative method, analyzing fifteen selected poems to identify and interpret the use of metaphor in addressing issues such as class struggle, gender discrimination, political corruption, and religious exploitation. Through close reading and textual interpretation, the study applied the principles of Marxist Literary Theory to explain how Eke's metaphors serve as instruments of resistance and social commentary. The data were presented descriptively, using quotations from the poems and linking them to Marxist concepts such as oppression, class conflict, ideology, and resistance.

The findings of the study reveal that Kola Eke's poetry is deeply rooted in social and political awareness. His metaphors function not only as literary devices but also as weapons of protest and enlightenment. The analysis shows that Eke uses figurative expressions to expose the exploitation of the poor by the ruling class, the marginalization of women by patriarchal structures, and the hypocrisy of religious leaders. The metaphors portray the struggles of ordinary people and their collective will to challenge injustice. Each poem reflects the poet's deep concern for societal transformation and his belief that poetry can be a voice for the oppressed. The

findings further establish that Eke's use of metaphor bridges art and activism, giving meaning to lived experiences of inequality in Nigeria.

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on African poetry, especially in understanding how literary devices such as metaphor can serve ideological and revolutionary purposes. It provides insight into how Kola Eke's poetry functions as a mirror of society and a vehicle for social change. By applying Marxist Literary Theory, the research offers a new perspective on the relationship between literature and class struggle in African writing. The implication of this study is that literature should not only entertain but also question and reshape society. It is therefore recommended that future researchers explore how other contemporary African poets use metaphors and other figurative devices to critique power and inequality. Teachers and students of literature should also engage with Eke's works to appreciate how poetry can be used as a tool for social awareness and transformation.

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