



TECHNIQUES AND SOCIO-AESTHETIC CONFIGURATION IN REMI RAJI'S POETRY

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Abstract

Techniques in poetry are essential vehicles that convey the striking messages of the poet to the readers. Such messages, nevertheless, are the end products of realistic representation of various happenings that are mostly evident in society, upon which the poet and his creative works are rooted in. It is against this backdrop that this paper sets to carry out a sociological reading of the poetic techniques in Remi Raji's poetry. Through a purposive sampling method, this paper selects thirteen poems from four out of the total six published poetry collections of the aforementioned poet which include: *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997), *Webs of Remembrance* (2001), *Gather my blood rivers of Song* (2009) and *Sea of my Mind* (2013). On the premise of qualitative analysis, this paper reveals that there are good deployments of various poetic techniques which project musicality, free flow of thoughts and creation of imagery through figurative devices in the studied poems. This paper further reveals that the poetic interest of the poet is predicated on the oppressive structures which are against the social wellbeing of the hapless masses in society. Drawing strength from these findings, this paper strongly concludes that the embellished poetic techniques in the studied poems are distinctive channels through which the socio-political messages of the poet are conveyed to the target readers or audience.

Keywords: society, commitment, poetry, techniques, Remi Raji

1. Introduction

The corpus of Remi Raji's poetry is distinctively, an encapsulation of socio-political decadence that imbues an individual's innermost aspirations of life in an embattled society. This projection of societal concerns, glaringly, shows the lofty place of a writer or poet as an indispensable figure in the threshold of exposing travails of his or her immediate society. Ker (2004) admits that "*the writer is a member of a society and his sensibility is conditioned by social and political happenings around*

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him which should be present in his work" (7). In support of the above view, Amuta (1986) affirms that "as a refraction of social experience through the prism of human imagination, the ontological essence of literature is to be located in terms of the extent to which it recycles experience and transforms it into an aesthetic proposition" (38). This implies that the beauty of any work of art lies on its strength in exploring vital social preoccupations. Ezeigbo, in her inaugural lecture titled, *Artistic Creativity: Literature in the Service of Society*, equally observes that "literature in its oral and written forms has consistently remained the greatest tool in the representation of reality and has become an important means of understanding and interpreting aspects of society such as politics, religion, social conflicts, class struggle and the human condition" (2008:8). The above view consolidates the need for a writer to employ his or her artistic vision in exploring happenings in society which in the words of Osundare "...enables [the poet] to chart the terrain of the future with a compass, sensitive to both present reality and their past antecedents, a future of possibilities and alternatives" (2007:12). Thus, the role of the writer in using literary works as a medium of conveying societal issues cannot be over-emphasized. In the position of social commitment, Agbasiere (2000) says that "writers [especially Africans] have shown themselves to be committed artists and have defined their roles and responsibilities to art and society" (81). In same light, Jegede (1997) submits that "the poet takes on the role of a prophet, protester and social reformer, combining foresight with insight" (140). These scholarly views, in no doubt, project writers especially poets and their creative (re)productions as conveyors of their peoples' "...big social and political issues to avoid ending up being completely irrelevant" (Achebe, 1975:78). In this context, nothing can be said of Raji's artistic prowess and vision in advancing aspirations of his society or humanity than his preponderance of "...human feelings, when expressed in words, could be poetic" (Dasylya & Jegede, 1997: 3). Those human feelings are arguably, geared toward restoring the dangling expectations of the vulnerable people in an estranged society through the creative ingenuity of a poet especially in African poetry that is "borne out of the political schisms and predicament of independent Africa" (Mowah, 1997: 106).

African poetry has received and still, garnering diverse masterly creative boosts from her revered poets especially of the older generation; like Gabriel Okara, J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Okot p' Bitek Wole Soyinka, Kofi Awoonor, Lanrie Peters, Jared Angira, Dennis Brutus, L. S. Senghor, Niyi Osundare and other notable poets from the continent. However, the legacies of these founding fathers of African poetry thrive (d) through artistic and social commitment of the contemporary poets in "expressing feelings and attitudes in such economically desperate times as Africans have been going through" (Ojaide, 1996: 73). Thus, Raji occupies a conspicuous position in the league of contemporary African poets as a significant voice in addressing the socio-political issues that bedevil his society especially Nigeria, through his poetry. Based on this premise, Egya (2009) declares that "as a poet with a consummate political theme, Raji, one of the most eloquent political poets of his time, sees versification as an engagement in the socio-political discourse of his land, aimed at forging a just and equitable nation" (6). It is pertinent to note that the poet under study has a total of six published poetry collections to his credit which have been read to audiences in both local and international circles. The poetry collections include: *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997), *Webs of Remembrance* (2001), *Shuttlesongs America: A Poetic Guided Tour* (2003), *Lovesong for my Wasteland* (2005), *Gather my blood rivers of Song* (2009) and *Sea of my Mind* (2013). One of the vital aspects of Raji's poetry is the deployment of possible techniques which serve as a form or structure in conveying his thoughts to the readers.

Poetic techniques, bearing in mind its artistic relevance, are like containers through which poet's messages are expressed in a more pleasant form. Therefore, its deployment in poetic oeuvres by poets remains paramount. This is as a result of the unique roles which those techniques play in the overall understanding of the embedded messages in poetry. Suffice it to say that poetry is distinguished from other writings, which according to Egya (2006), exists "*as a phenomenon of beauty requiring the writer to be sensitive to the language, style and literary devices he uses to express his thoughts*" (201). The hallmark of this view is that the poet's use of language and literary devices efficiently, is based on style which Ebeogu affirms is "*associated with the peculiar manner in which the language of the text is expressed in order to achieve a striking effect...often associated with the creative imagination*" (1998:206). The above affirmation explicitly shows that a poet has the poetic license to deploy any peculiar technique in conveying his or her messages which is said to be "*essentially a method of expression by suggestion through invented imagery, rhythm and sound*" (Egudu, 1979:9).

Significantly, Raji's poetry has attracted a great deal of concern and studies among critics owing to its striking thematic preoccupations. It is interesting to note that none of those existing studies as evident in literature has investigated poetic techniques in Raji's poetry through a sociological approach. It is this yawning gap that this paper aims to fill in literature. Thus, the concern of this paper is to carry out a qualitative sociological reading of poetic techniques in the poems of Raji, to be selected from his aforementioned total published collections of poetry aside the duo; *Shuttlesongs America: A Poetic Guided Tour* (2003) and *Lovesong for my Wasteland* (2005).

2. Remi Raji's Poetry: Crossroad of Techniques and Socio-aesthetic Configuration

Amongst other genres of literature, poetry is a special art with essential techniques as vehicles conveying its beauty and messages to the readers or audience. The true nature of poetry and its endearing prospects differs from other forms of writing. This is confirmatory in the words of Akporobaro (1994), who sees poetry as a "*unique and specialized form of expression having some artistic features*" (2). It is the responsibility of the poet to ensure the quality use of those artistic features which form poetic techniques and deploys them when and where necessary, either as on the basis of conventional practice or as a personal stylistic choice. Explicitly, poetry appears dead at the absence of techniques, which in no small measure, are carriers of its embedded messages. It is against this backdrop that Egudu (1979) affirms that "*it is not the thing said, but the method or way in which it is said that characterizes poetry*" (11). Based on this affirmation, Raji, in his poetry, shows possession of distinctive techniques as a channel of expressing beauty, emotions and messages of socio-political decadence as a poet, who according to Izevbaye (1979), is "*involved in a kind of ideological dialogue*" (19).

The judicious use of sound techniques in Raji's poems shows remarkable excellence of artistic masterly display of a poet with musical inclination. It is clear that sound techniques aid in enriching melodious pleasure in sending emphatic messages of the poet to the readers especially in poetry. The beauty of sound in poetry cannot be over-emphasized owing to its distinctive effects. This is one of the interesting parts of poetry which in the words of Egya (2006) is "*naturally enslaved to music of rhythms*" (57). This assertion manifests in many of Raji's poems as they are imbued with effects of sound devices in bringing out their musical nature. In "Have

you seen that land?" the persona exposes the precarious condition of a country where great tidings are quite impossible. The poem carries essential sound techniques that bring out the emphatic level of poet's feelings concerning his retrogressive society in a rhythmic flow. The persona reads thus:

Have you seen that land
where pleasant tales are told without end?
Have you seen the village
where folks neither fade nor age?
Have you seen that garden
where wild roses never wither?
Have you seen that spring
where waters of joy never cease?
Have you seen that orchard
where the scents of wine-fruits never die?
Have you seen that shade
where the warm wind whistles forever?
Have you dreamt of that land
where Laughter's beams bury Earth's pain?
Have you seen that land? (1-15)

The excerpt above shows the deployment of sound techniques in conveying its overt message to the reader. The use of repetition performs quality role in the poem. In order to create emphasis and most especially, melody in the poem, the poet uses repetition of the poetic words, "Have you seen" which appears in the beginning of almost all the stanzas. There is melody in the rhythmic flow of the poem through the conscious use of the poetic words which bear the emotional burden of the poet in passing his messages as regards the terrible state of things in his society. This manifests on the tone of the persona which is sarcastic in the entire poem. Furthermore, there is equally the repetitive use of "Have you seen that land?" which occurs in both opening and ending lines in the poem. This mode of repetition influences the consciousness of the reader in understanding the thought of the poet through rhythmic flow of sound effects in the poem. The poet also uses alliteration to aid the sound effect of the poem especially in "*where wild roses never wither? /where waters of joy never cease? /where the warm wind whistles forever?*" (6-12). There is a special effect on the continuous use of consonantal sound /w/ as it adds musicality to the poem through the above lines. It equally brings about uniformity in the sound production of words as they mingle with similar ones in giving melody to the poem. The use of alliteration also manifests in "Wind song". The sound effect of the poem is heightened as echoes:

For long the streets hold signs of filth,
Fresh smell of stumps of stains of slime...
Return the bliss, return
Seedlings still cry for a caress of twigs. (11-14)

The use of alliteration is achievable in the above excerpt with the repetition of consonants at the initial points of two or more words on the same line which produce /f/, /s/, /r/ and /k/ sounds. The essence of this technique of adopting the use of alliteration is to ensure lyrical and uniformed sound for a smooth flow of the poem in passing the poet's message of pain in his immediate society.

The credence on Raji as a poet-singer becomes obvious on the use of refrain in most of his poems. According to Egudu (1979), refrain "*implies repetition, but it is repetition which occurs at regular intervals in a poem*" (60). This particular poetic technique functions as a chorus or repeated song at the end of each verse or stanza which gears towards bringing out the musicality of a poem. The deployment of such musical element also helps in conveying poetic messages. This very technique finds expression in "Out of the deep" which on first contact by the reader shows repeated chorus or poetic lines with sound effects that overwhelm it. The persona expresses:

Rivers of remembrance
I have followed a complex course
Rivers of remembrance
We have reached a simple end...
Rivers of remembrance
I have seen the coast of watery lies. (1-4)

The importance of refrain in this context, echoes on the emphatic and rhythmic extent of the suffering masses which the persona outcries amidst pity. The use of "Rivers of remembrance" serves as refrain via chorus that ends a verse or stanza and ushers in new ones in the poem. Also, in "Out for worship 11", the poet uses the same technique as shown below:

It is Sunday
The sky swarms with thousand faiths
There's a trickling flight
From the streets of sins
From Sodom smell of things
Immaculate the songs
From dirty minds
It is Sunday.... (1-8)

There is repetition of "It is Sunday" which serves as a chorus in ending and introducing new stanza in the poem. This, in no doubt, heightens musicality in the poem. In "This house full of noise" the use of refrain also resurfaces. The poem is dominated with this repeated chorus:

This house will not fall or break
This house too full of noise and fury
This house that spins on the pin of our pains
This house will not collapse on its own. (1-4)

The above chorus is repeated, virtually at an end and beginning of different stanzas in the poem. This particular device is employed by the poet to ensure the musicality of pleasure and for emphasis in the poem. It is worthy to note that the use of refrain also manifests in "Run, country, run" though as a title, it serves as a chorus, introducing various lines from the second to the fourth stanza of the poem.

The use of anaphora and parallelism as parts of sound techniques are equally dominant in Raji's poetry. These sound techniques in Raji's poems justify the fact that "*the poem is not conceived words on paper...those words strive to imitate the musicality of the song lyric and the rhythm of dance*" (Garuba, 2004: xi). Succinctly, anaphora is the "*repetition of a phrase or words at the beginning of two or more lines of a poem*" (Dasyuva & Jegede, 1997:14). In most cases, it works with parallelism to ensure balance and unity of arrangement of words. The poet employs anaphora and parallelism in "Bound to remember" as a clear message of nostalgic experience of a country in total shamble. The poem details:

I will be like God vengeance of truth
I will be thunder in the kidneys of liars. . .
I will remember the bomb-game goon
I will remember his landmines of lies
I will remember the oasis of blood. (5-13)

The critical view of this excerpt shows the conscious effort of the poet in laying emphasis and adding musicality in the poem in sending his message of societal pain. There is repetition of phrases like "I will be" and "I will remember" in the lines above. The use of anaphora achieves its sound effects as it balances the rhythmic flow in the poem through parallelism. This consolidates Johnson's idea that "*poetry has been reduced by poets into language of song...in driving home their messages*" (2001:196). The scintillating use of anaphora and parallelism shows a good dexterity in the use of words by Raji as a dynamic poet. These techniques also manifest in "Echo" as a poem that bears the burden of the poet towards a total redemption from painful moments. The use of anaphora and parallelism appears thus:

It does not matter when the sun winks her brief farewell
It does not matter when solitude delivers me into
sanity's lap . . .
I survive where death stalks the sky, where love has no name
I survive where the coffin maker's prayer is louder than Hunger. (1-12)

The repetition of phrases in the beginning of each line and its balanced sound effects is evident in the above excerpt. The poet uses phrases "it does not matter when", and "I survive where" and they are repeated in a parallel manner with special sound features in conveying his emphatic emotional message. Furthermore, the use of anaphora and parallelism also surfaces in "A butterfly song" with repeated phrase "I am" in more than two lines, in capturing the poets' society in a pitiable condition, though in musical form:

I am the cage. I am the world.
I am the world, the open cage.
I am proof of the ignorance. I am the pain. (6-8)

It is interesting to note that Raji also employs the use of rhymes in his poems. This manifests either as initial or end rhymes or both, as the case may be. This is geared towards production of sound in order to add melody and emphasis in the poem. In "Out of the deep", the use of initial rhyme manifests thus:

The paddle is lost
the boat is sunk
the net is torn
the bait is gone. (5-8)

The poet uses the definite article "the" rhythmically, in the beginning of each line of the poem to register the appalling state of things in his society. These lines equally show the use of initial rhyme by the poet to aid the musicality of the poem through the production of /ð/. Also in "This house full of noises", there are both initial and end rhymes in the poem, "Listen to the heartbeat of ants/ Listen to the desires of bees and birds" (23-24). These particular lines show the manifestation of both initial rhymes as in "Listen" with sound production of /l/ and on the other hand, the end but visual rhymes which produce /s/ and /z/ in the case of "ants" and "birds". This placement of different types of rhymes helps in the melody of the poem and in passing the deep content of the poet's feelings to the reader. The same deployment of both initial and end rhymes equally appears in "Run, country, run" with sound production of /i/ in "into", /ið/ in "fire" and /s/ in "waters" as shown below:

Into the fire
Into the fire
Into the waters
Into the waters. (16-19)

Suffice it to say that the use of enjambment also features as one of the dominant techniques in Raji's poetry. The rationale behind this technique is to allow the poet's thoughts to flow without any distortion as it appears in prosaic form. In "Wind song", it is glaring that the poet uses enjambment in each of the stanza of the poem. For instance, the persona says:

when you left, I heard
only dry whimpers of woe
for the bee has lost its bearing of petals
And there's no promise of pollen and honey. (7-10)

The indication of the run-on-line technique shows the completion of each line in the subsequent ones without hampering the thought of the poet as it affects his failing society. In

same light, Raji uses enjambment in "Echo" to convey his message of redemption in a precarious condition. He is very conscious of his society which has subjected him to horrible experiences. The manifestation of his thoughts also flows freely in the poem as thus:

Now I leave you with a sensation as of a lover's departing night
And the last echoes of your depraved anger follow me...
I am your lost passion, the forgotten one, like others
Who are lost to the indifference of remembered rituals. (3-6)

The profundity in the stylistic nature of creating or inventing imagery in Raji's poetry is quite spectacular. This lends credence to the nature of destructive imagery which dominates some of the selected poems under study. The imagery conveys painful messages of the poet, in respect to his society to the reader. As earlier illustrated, Raji's poetry is embodied with influence of social and political thrusts which carry the aspirations of his degenerating Nigerian society. The imagery in Raji's poems creates pictures of high level of decadence in his society, resulting from an oppressive force via military dictatorship. The importance of imagery in poetry is not far-fetched. Egudu (1979) argues that it "*represents an idea, a thought, or an emotion by an object, action, or situation without mentioning that idea, thought, or emotions*" (19). This imaginative representation of idea, thought or emotions are conveyed through various figures of speech as part of poetic techniques.

As a socially committed poet, Raji explores socio-political issues through the nature of the imagery that he creates in driving home his messages. This justifies Nwahunanya's opinion that "*a writer has not yet started to write when he does not believe he has a socially relevant message...which expresses his sincere observations of society's failings and points the way forward in the right direction*" (2010:379-383). Raji uses simile as a technique to create imagery of pain in some of his poems. In "Bound to remember", the persona outcries thus, "*I will be like God vengeance of truth*" (5). The mental picture that is created in this line depicts the condition of things in society which the poet tries to portray. He indirectly compares his state of mind to that of the God of vengeance whose punishment is always severe and full of rage. There is also the use of simile in "This land tickles me". The persona admits that, "*This land tickles me like a new love/ This land strikes me like the shooting range.../ when the priest prays for a column of criminals*" (1-14). The persona is bewildered on how hypocrisy has eroded his society. He compares it to 'a new love' and 'the shooting range' which is full of unpredictable expectations and fury in his society.

Furthermore, the masterly use of metaphor equally brings out destructive imagery in Raji's poems. The need to create the picture of a failing society becomes sacrosanct through such imaginative portrayal of ideas. In "I rise now", the persona cries:

Everyday we hear
In neighbouring lands
the news of acid rain. (1-3)

The poet creates a picture of a land that is overwhelmed with news of acid rain. This implies that the land is in total shamble owing to the destructive ability of "acid" on any object

as metaphorically represented. Also in "A butterfly song", there is a deployment of metaphor in creating imagery of pain as thus, "*Blinded by the friendliness of the cosmetic sun/ but stretched back into darkness/battered by the bloodless teeth of the rain/still thirsty through the pool of flooded days*" (2-5). The metaphorical implication of these lines creates pictures of a hopeless society, linking it with negative effects of scorching sun, rain and flood. The poet, through this medium, undeniably paints the mental picture of a failing society.

There is also the use of hyperbole in creating of imagery in Raji's poems. This is seen in "I give you" as the persona says, "*I give you/ a billion baskets/of bountiful wishes...(6-8)*". There is an over-exaggeration of expression of wishes in "*a billion baskets*" which captures the depth of sincerity of the poet's message. This equally echoes in "Song of Toronto" as the persona voices, "*my certificate is long, VERY L-O-N-G/ Broader than your homegrown degree*" (1-2). The implication of these lines indicates over-exaggeration of facts which exposes the level of suffering of the poet in his failing society. The poet expresses his feelings in remembering the country of his sojourn [Toronto] where there is little or no suffering as he has been passing through in his own country. The use of personification in creating imagery is well captured in Raji's poems. In "The mutineer's song", the poet creates imagery of destructive elements to showcase the level of oppressive condition in his society. The persona says, "*Let the skies cry in crimson rage I shall not flee/Let the skies become one big breast I shall not hide.../let the wind sneeze in toxic waves I shall not fret...*"(1-13). The poet gives attributes of human beings to inanimate objects as "the skies cry", "the skies become one big breast", and "the wind sneeze" which they are not naturally supposed to possess. This same technique is also deployed in "Rain Song" as thus, "*There's a blue eagerness in the loin of clouds/The wind is pregnant...*" (7-10). This excerpt shows the transfer of human characteristics of having "eagerness" and being "pregnant" to the cloud and wind which are lifeless objects. Raji equally uses metonymy to create imagery of painful experiences in his poems. In "This house full of noise", the persona says that, "*the cabinet is on fire, the shrine is looted.../listen to the common cries of remnant voices*" (11-25). The poet substitutes words that are closely associated with the subject or person of interest. In this context, "the cabinet" stands for military government that causes uproar in Nigeria. In same vein, "the shrine" replaces the country treasury while "remnant voices" are the oppressed in society. The same technique surfaces in "Siren sense I", as the persona echoes, "*Brother man, be warned or / begone when you see us / our naked lights above / koboko clubbing bayonet banning*" (1-4). The use of "naked lights" as associated to cars with siren bulbs fixed at their tops, and "koboko" and "bayonet" represent soldiers who are the main force of oppression in society which gives the poet, a deal of concern.

The dominant use of apostrophe remains one of the major techniques that are quite outstanding in Raji's poetry. This technique resonates in some of his poems as the persona communes with abstract beings towards salvaging his society which is on the brink of degeneration. The good use of apostrophe surfaces in "Wind song" as the persona appeals thus:

Wind, oh wind
Slave to fire, master of rain
Come in your spiral beauty
With dancing dust;
Come in the sweeping likeness

Of bellowing brooms
When you left, I heard
Only dry whimpers of woe. (1-8)

In same light, Raji further employs the use of apostrophe in "Resolve" as the persona presents thus, "*Oh lucky hour, oh stretched second/Give me the lavender smell of night/Give me the limbless stealth of winds/Give me the teeth of valiant bees/Give me the Vulcan gush of tomadoes/Give me fire/Give me love*" (1-8). The obvious study of the excerpt above shows the good use of apostrophe where the persona voices out his desires and speaks as if there is a close affinity between him and the abstract being. This plea carries the weight of the resolution of the poet in anticipating the ticking movement of time to settle the stormy incident of life and that of his society.

In no small measure, Raji's poetry is also characterized with the deployment of symbolism in conveying his message to the reader. The relevance of this technique is to show the extended representation of words which are used in poems by the poet. In order to avoid direct mentioning of persons or places, the poet uses symbolical words in projecting the expected meaning. There is an impressive deployment of symbolism as part of poetic techniques towards conveying the poet's ideas or thoughts. This is seen in "Have you seen that land?" with rhetorical questions from the persona on the social decadence in his society. There is conscious and indirect use of words like "land", "village", "garden", "spring", "orchard", and "shade" which are truly significant. Their usages are beyond surface meaning in literal interpretation of the poem. Indirectly, these words symbolize "Nigeria" as a country bereft of good living which becomes a centre of attraction in the message of the poet in showing a degenerated society where impossibility and pains thrive. This very technique also manifests in "Out of the deep" as shown thus, "*The paddle is lost/the boat is sunk/the net is torn/the bait is gone*" (5-8). Significantly, words like "paddle", "boat", "net" and "bait" are symbolical in the context of their usages in the poem. These words symbolize leaders, and the total administrative system of Nigeria as a country, going into extinction amidst horrible condition. This technique strikes the reader to know the deeper meaning of these symbols beyond their ordinary usages in the poem. This use of symbolism also dominates, virtually the entire stanzas of the poem "This house full of noise". The poem reads:

This house will not fall or break
This house too full of noise and fury
This house built on the menstrual love of warriors
This house will not die less we die. (27-30)

The use of the phrase "this house" symbolizes Nigeria which is bedevilled with a lot of misfortunes. From the above excerpt, it shows that the poet (Raji) is patriotic in using his art to instil hope of revival amidst bad situations in his country.

Moreover, the use of allusion as a poetic technique in Raji's poems presents him as a poet with charming skills. The poet uses allusion of place, time, and persons as either implicit or explicit referents in driving home his messages to the reader. This very technique is seen in "Out

for worship 11" which has allusion of time and place that is of great significant. The poem reads thus:

From the streets of sins
From Sodom smell of things
Immaculate the songs
From dirty minds
It is Sunday. (4-8)

There are cases of allusion in "Sunday" and "Sodom" which have deeper connected meanings in capturing their positions in the poem. These allusions to time and place are truly biblical. The use of "Sunday" alludes to a special day set aside by Christians for worship while "Sodom" is a city in the bible which is full of iniquities that Lot and his wife were directed by God to move out from, owing to the latter's intention of destroying it. The technique of allusion in the above excerpt sends a message on the need for people to abandon their immoral behaviours and come closer to God towards a better society. The poet equally uses allusion in "Bound to remember" as the persona remembers his pitiable experiences in the opening stanza:

No water runs where the Niger flows
No fish swims where the Benue berths. (1-2)

There is a historical allusion of major rivers in Nigeria which are river Niger and Benue. The two rivers serve as referents to Nigeria which has become highly retrogressive as "water" and "fish" find it impossible to survive in collaboration. The poet's use of allusion of historical place or rivers in the poem underscores the inability of the masses to live freely owing to the horrible condition of the Nigerian society. This same technique is also seen in "A butterfly song" when the persona accounts that, "*I, Tiresias, the fool in a wise world*" (18). There is an allusion of historical personality in this context. The persona alludes himself as "Tiresias". This particular person or name is traceable to Greek mythology. Tiresias is a wise blind prophet of Apollo who takes delight in listening to the songs of birds in receiving and interpreting the message of the gods. This allusion to wise prophet in the poem indicates the importance of wisdom among concerned citizens towards salvaging the terrible condition of the portrayed society.

3. Conclusion

The strength of this paper is to examine, through sociological lens, the overt manifestation of poetic techniques in Raji's poetry. It is deduced from the findings of this paper that the studied poems have preponderance of interesting techniques. There is good deployment of musical techniques such as repetition, alliteration, refrain, anaphora, parallelism, initial and end rhymes. These techniques of musicality, in the words of Boulton, form "*sound when poetry is read or heard mentally*" (1953:7) and in no doubt, ensure melody and emphasis of the poet's messages. In same vein, the images in Raji's poems are full of destructive elements owing to its messages of pain and socio-political concerns. This production of images manifests through the use of figurative

devices like simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification and metonym. The use of enjambment, apostrophe, symbolism and allusion are truly found as parts of techniques in most of the studied poems. It is worthy of note that the poet uses simple resources of both language and sound in conveying his poetic messages to the readers as it affects his failed society.

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