



## SYNAESTHETIC METAPHOR AS A LANGUAGE STYLE IN REMI RAJI'S POETRY

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**ABSTRACT:** *Every poet possesses a style of writing that makes his poetry different from that of others. His style of writing predominantly aids in expressing meaning to his readers. A poet's style may be assessed in terms of language use, pattern of thematic exploration, poetic structure or figurative expression, etc. Be it as it may, there is no wide gap between his language style and meaning exploration (that is, the literary message he intends to express). This paper therefore is a study of Remi Raji's poetry with the intention of examining the use of synaesthesia as a language style in his poetry. Adopting Burrow's (2012) pattern, the research sets out to determine the situation that may have aroused the poet's use of synaesthesia. According to Burrow's argument, synaesthetic capacity was stimulated by cultural, social and technological conditions. However, we have limited our investigations to the socio-political conditions which the poems explored and the significance of synaesthesia in portraying them. The research interest therefore was not just to identify synaesthesia as a device but mainly to find out the contextual effects and how they may have helped to stimulate meaning in Remi Raji's poetry. The poems studied were randomly selected and the method of analysis was qualitative. The conclusion of the paper is that the manifestation of synaesthesia in Remi Raji's poems is by no means a fortition; rather, it has stylistic significance which aids the conveyance of the literary messages of the poet.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Linguistic stylistic, synaesthesia, metaphor, meaning, imagery.*



## INTRODUCTION

The use of synaesthesia as a style in writing has existed for so long, but it was made popular by nineteenth century scholars. Even though the thought of it initially was linked to psychology and neurology, Marks (1978), Hubbard (2001) and Ward (2008), all cited in Burrow (2012), believe strongly in the link between synaesthesia and creative writing. Burrow (2012:12) emphasises that the synaesthetic effect in literary works is not a chance poetic technique; rather, it is a style predominantly used in the fields of creative arts ranging from music to visual arts and creative writing. Marks (1978), for instance, observes the trace of synaesthesia in most of Shakespeare's works, giving instances in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* where Duke Orsino says, "If music be the food of love, play on." Here, Shakespeare expresses a perception of sound (music) by using the word related to taste (food) and feeling (love). Other instances where Shakespeare made use of synaesthesia are in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*: I see a voice: now will I chink/ to spy and I can hear my Thisby's face. (Act V, Scene I). Note the way senses are intertwined in the above expression, here, the sense of sight (see) and the sense of sound (voice), also chink (sound) and spy (sight) as well as hear (sound) and face (sight). Hence, Marks (1978) suggests the purpose for the use of synaesthetic transference in the above quotations is to showcase derangement of senses (Burrow, 2012: 33). However, the fact remains that Shakespeare creates meaning by the use of images derived from these senses. Most synaesthetic effects are intricately arranged to achieve the purpose of creating pictures that arouse meanings. Hence, the transfer of senses are tactfully done.

Apart from Shakespeare, the use of synaesthesia has been traced in so many other literary works of great repute. Notable among them are the works of the English Romantic poets and the French symbolic writers of the nineteenth century (Reichard, Jakobson & Werth 1949, 2015; Simner, 2012; Lucky-Medford, 2010; Day, 1996). Moreover, synaesthesia is not peculiar to English writers but it is a global phenomenon that has been traced to other writers across the globe. For instance, the Russian novelist and poet, Vladimir Nabokov and the French symbolists, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire made use of synaesthesia in their writings.

Observations made by linguistic scholars suggest that cultural and social experience may have influenced the use of synaesthesia by the writers. Therefore, this work will serve as an extension of already existing knowledge with the purpose of investigating the works of Remi Raji, a Nigerian third generation poet.

### Definition of Synaesthesia

Etymologically, the word synaesthesia is derived from two Greek words—*syn* which means 'together' or 'union' and *aesthesia* which means 'sensation'—hence, the word can literally be translated as 'perceiving together' (Lucky-Medford, 2010) or joining senses (Burrow, 2012; Simner, 2007) or 'union of sensation'. In fact, Cytowic's book captioned *Synaesthesia: A union of senses and The Man who Tasted Shapes* craftily summarises the definition of the phenomenon. Simner (2007) further explains that synaesthesia is observed in situations where more than one senses are merged in an expression. In other words, there is a kind of cross stimulation of more than one senses in a thought.

According to Lievers and Huang (2016: 2271), a synaesthetic expression consists of two sensory modalities: the **target** and the **source**. The **target** is the word in a synaesthetic expression which is being talked about while the **source** is the word that expresses a different



sense which is transferred to the target. For instance, in the expression *sweet voice*, *voice* is the target while *sweet* is the source. Similarly, Cytowic (1989), cited in Day (1996), groups synaesthetic expression into primary sense and synaesthetic sense, where, in the example above, *voice* is the primary sense and *sweet* is the synaesthetic sense.

Furthermore, scholars such as Ullman, Cytowic, Shen and Cohen, Marks, etc are of the opinion that in synaesthetic expressions, there are two classifications of senses: the lower senses (gustatory, olfactory and tactile) and the higher senses (visual and aural). Their observation is that words that express the higher senses are usually the target or the primary senses while words which express the lower senses are the source. Lievers and Huang further argue that one is more likely to see *sweet* (gustatory) *melody* (aural) than *melodious sweetness*.

Synaesthesia is a phenomenon that has drawn great attention from scholars across different disciplines. However, the way in which synaesthesia is perceived by the scientists is different from the way it is perceived by the artists. The scientists view it as a condition whereas the artists perceive it as a device. In any case, both fields of study agree on the definition: that synaesthesia is the transfer of one sensory modality to a different one (Cytowic, 1989; Day, 1996; Simner, 2010, Reichard, Jackson & Werth, 1949, 2015; Burrow, 2012; Ward & Cytowic, 2006).

From the findings of scholars such as Ullman (1957), Marks (1978), Cytowic (1989), Day (1996), Simner (2007), Lievers and Huang (2016) to mention but a few, metaphor is discovered to be the principal link between synaesthesia, language and literature because of its creative impulse to the mind's ability to surpass the basic meaning and forge a new multiple sensory meaning. The meaning in this case, is generated through semantic processes (Day, 1996; Simner, 2012). In fact, Charmhun Jo (2017), citing Williams (1976) and (Geeraerts 2010), states that synaesthesia is better understood in terms of metaphor. In a similar vein, Lievers and Huang (2016) define it as a metaphorical process whereby one sensory modality is transferred to another sensory modality. In this case, one can perceive an experience that is related to one sense but explains the experience in words by aligning the related sense with words with different senses. An example is seen in the expression *sweet voice* where the sense of taste, *sweet* is assigned to the sense of sound *voice*. In other words, *voice* is talked about as if it is something one has tasted with the tongue and assessed to be *sweet*. In the expression, therefore, there is a cross activation of the senses of sound *voice* and taste *sweet*. Another example is *bittersweet memories* where the senses of taste, *bitter* and *sweet* are transferred to that of sight, *memories*. Therefore, synaesthesia among the researchers in this field of study is perceived as a language device (Lucky-Medford, 2010: 4) common in literature especially in poetry. From all indications from previous researches, the relationship between poetry and synaesthesia is inseparable. Notably, Day (1996) describes it in this way, 'a certain perceptual mode is initially specified, but the imagery is linguistically related in terms of belonging to one or more differing perceptual modes.'

Considering synaesthetic expressions as metaphorical suggests that synaesthesia in its literary domain is a device that facilitates meaning. Today, synaesthesia is explored as a normal phenomenon by considering its physiological attachment with sense-related metaphorical connection. According to Lievers and Huang (2013: 2270), classic studies of synaesthesia are usually associated with literary texts especially in poetry where it finds its most significant evidence. Burrow (2012) for instance, bases her studies in early twentieth century English and American poetry. She considers the socio-cultural changes which have proven a threat to the



existing tradition, rapid technological advancement and war as the instigators of synaesthesia in the poetry of the early twentieth century.

Burrow (2012), on citing Downey (1912), further states that when one reads the literature of synaesthesia, he is frequently impressed by the poetical value of many sense correlations reported. For instance, the French symbolist, Rimbaud in his poem *Vowels* (1872) describes the vowels as having not only chromatic associations, but as being associated with senses of smell, feelings and sounds.

Accordingly, the interest of researchers in synaesthesia could be dated as far back as the early nineteenth century (Burrow, 2012; Simner, 2010). At that time, research on synaesthesia was purely medically and psychologically based and it is believed by these researchers that it is an abnormality as a result of either idiosyncrasy or hallucination (Burrow, 2012). In the late twentieth century, Cytowic reinvigorated the research on synaesthesia by describing the condition as “an involuntary joining in which the real information of one sense is accompanied by a perception in another sense.” (Burrow, 2012; Cytowic, 1989). This move by Cytowic became an important turning point for the study of the phenomenon since it opened a wide range of horizons at the forefront of knowledge. Today, research on synaesthesia has caught the interest of a good number of researchers across different disciplines including philosophy, sociology, architecture, music, theatre, film, visual arts and creative writing (literature).

In fact, there are numerous researches that focused on both the nineteenth century English romantic poetry and French symbolist poetry believing it to be a style widely practiced by the poets of those generations. For instance the poetry of Percy Shelly, John Keats, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire are the main areas of concentration for the study of synaesthesia in nineteenth century poetry. (Burrow, 2012).

### **Synaesthesia and Metaphors**

Recent scholars on synaesthesia have observed a strong link between synaesthesia and metaphor (Day, 1996, 2013; Cytowic, 1993; Simner, 2012). According to Cytowic, synaesthesia is associated with the construction of synaesthetic metaphors. However, Day (1996) believes that synaesthetic metaphors are culturally and linguistically built. In this case, Day traces synaesthetic metaphor through the theories of metaphor. Citing Ullmann's investigations in 1964, he observes that the movement of synaesthetic metaphors is not haphazard but conforms to some basic patterns:

- Transfers from the lower to the more differentiated senses were more frequent than those in the opposite direction. Over 80 per cent of a total of 2000 examples showed this 'upward' trend
- Sense of touch was in each case the largest single source
- Sense of sound was the largest recipient.

Hence, Ullmann's 'less differentiated' senses were smell and taste, the 'more differentiated' were hearing and sight (Day, 1996).

Furthermore, adopting Ullmann's theory of hierarchical distribution, Leiver and Huang (2016) carried out research on non-literary texts; utilising both manual and automatic



procedures to extract synaesthesia, they reached a conclusion that in the case of synaesthesia, the compilation of a controlled vocabulary of perception related lexemes has helped them attain reasonable results through semi-automatic procedures more than manual procedures (Leiver & Huang, 2016: 2275). However, the process of how these synaesthetic metaphors help to create cognitive imagery that facilitates meaning remains untouched. Similarly, Jo (2017) adopts both Ullmann's theory of *hierarchical distribution* and Leiver and Huang (2016) as a framework in his investigation on the synaesthetic transfer route of the Korean National Corpus. In his conclusion, Jo (2017: 252) observes that the senses of touch and taste take up a significant position in Korean or Asian cultural context, and so people in the cultural circle make descriptions gliding the two senses.

Meanwhile, Burrow (2012) believes that synaesthesia, which she observed to be significantly used in the poetry of the early twentieth century, appears in different forms initially characterised by a more traditional use, similar to that of the English romantics and the French symbolists. Following this was her study on the imagists who significantly paired imagery with synaesthetic tactile impression (p. 277), which was progressively strengthened by World War I and the change after the war which reflected more on the consciously incorporated synaesthetic expression, with music and paintings combining the *tactile sense* with what she termed *visual/aural* aesthetics. By the mid-twentieth century, according to Burrow, the use of synaesthesia reverted to the normal romantic's style particularly in the use of *conceptual and emotive* metaphors. Burrow observes the link between synaesthesia and the socio-cultural experience of the era.

Thus, it could be observed that synaesthesia is connected to metaphor through unusual transfer and alignment of senses. Again, such transfer is interpreted and understood against the background of culture and context specifics.

### **The Third Generation Modern Nigerian Poetry**

Literary works are usually grouped and studied based on the period that they were written. This helps in the understanding and appreciation of their thematic weaves and stylistic significances. Against this background, we shall briefly discuss the third generation of modern Nigerian poetry as an era in the poetry development in Nigeria and in which Remi Raji belongs.

According to Egya Sule (2012), modern Nigerian poets generally represent opposition to the ills of society. To support this stand, Sule Egya (2009: 2), in his critique of the third generation modern Nigerian poetry, states that the poems of the third generation modern Nigerian poetry are written by

“...very conscious activists, radical poets who, in textualising the event of the repressive rule of the military regimes of the 1980s and the 1990s in Nigeria, have raised, through poems, a hegemonic discourse that installs itself as a political struggle towards unclenching the fists of what they consider viperous regimes on the land.”

Hence, ‘military era’, especially between 1983 to 1999, is a *historical marker* for these poems and the poets (Egya, 2012). The military era is earmarked by an implant of mismanagement in the cognizance of Nigerians. This includes mismanagement of both power, resources and





public funds. Hence, people are deprived of freedom and are totally governed by decrees. The cost of living was far above average of the expected standard and the educational system generally was poorly funded. The era also witnessed an influx of Nigerian elites who had migrated to other countries on exile. It is therefore a legacy of desperation and lack that poets of this era inherited (Egya, 2009, 2011; Inyabri, 2012; Olaniyan, 2014).

The modern third generation Nigerian poetry has piqued the interest of so many researchers and critics and has been exploited in the area of satire, imagery, themes, tone, diction and so on. However, this paper will restrict its investigation on the synaesthetic expressions in the poetry of Remi Raji. The paper will observe the instigators of synaesthesia in his poems and the influence on the meaning-making process of the poems.

### **Remi Raji and His Poetry**

Remi Raji is a renowned Nigerian poet, an activist and a scholar of the third generation of modern Nigerian poetry. His poetry has won him recognition both at the national and international levels. For instance, he recorded great success in his first poetry, *A Harvest of Laughters* (1997), and won the Association of Nigerian Authors/Cadbury VOCA Award for Best First Published Book. Raji also won awards with some of his other collections such as: *Webs of Remembrance* (2001), *Shuttlesongs America: A Poetic Guided Tour* (2003) and *Love Song for my Wasteland* (2005), *Gather My Blood Rivers of Song* (2009) and *Sea of the Mind* (2013).

As previously highlighted, during the time Raji wrote his poetry, the people in his world were experiencing a series of notoriety and brutality from their autocratic leaders, leaving the people helpless, confused and in despair. So, Raji identifies with the people in his poetry and then ridicules and exposes these anomalies committed by these leaders (Owhorodu, 2019, Olaniyan, 2014; Egya, 2009).

Just like other writers of the third generation in modern Nigeria such as Ezenwa Ohaeto, Femi Osafisan, among others, Remi Raji, in his poetry brings his personal experience as a form of reality in the society. This he confirms in his interview with Uche Peter Umez where he reveals that he draws his inspiration from experience and ideas stating that: *My practical experience has been both primary inspiration and secondary inspiration.*

Influenced by classical poets such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cumming, John Keats and William Wordsworth, Remi Raji shapes his world in his poetry by intricately combining senses in order to create visual imagery that helps bring his readers to consciousness reality. He also reveals this in the same interview when he states: *For me, Poetry is all about feelings of knowing by all the senses possible—seeing and hearing and perhaps touching as well.*

His statement is in line with Burrow's (2012) observation of *tactile senses with visual-aural aesthetics*, a style peculiar to the imagists who coincidentally are source of his inspiration. This calls us back to the interest of the paper which centres on investigating how his experiences help to shape the synaesthetic expression that are found in his poetry.



## METHODOLOGY

The data for this study are collected from six randomly selected poems, all from collections written by Remi Raji and they are: 'Silence I', 'Silence II' (in *Webs of Remembrance*), 'If this poem could only speak', 'Kalamazoo' (in *A Shuttle Song: America*), 'Prologue' (in *Love Song for Wasteland*), 'Questions and Prayer' (in *Gather My Blood*). Using a qualitative analytical method, the study based its analysis on synaesthetic expressions in the poems. We also classified them by considering the synaesthetic senses or the source senses and they are as follows:

- a. Visual sense as the source
- b. Aural sense as the source
- c. Gustatory sense as the source
- d. Olfactory sense as the source
- e. Tactile sense as the source
- f. Multisensory alignment.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One important attribute of a good writer is bringing to his readers the reality of an experience that he expresses through his style of writing. Remi Raji is able to achieve this by developing a unique style. The obvious, as acknowledged by Egya (2011), is his ability to create images in the minds of his readers. Raji seems to follow the technique adopted by the imagists who focus on the expression of meaning through experience rather than direct statement or symbolic abstraction. To achieve this, Raji adopts what the imagists called *lived experience* which in turn focuses more on perception as the basis of lived experience. This explains his reason for employing synaesthetic expressions as a device to create images.

### Analysis

#### Visual Sense as the Source

This is predominantly observed in virtually all the selected poems. We also observed that the most common is the visual/aural alignment. In 'Silence', a poem from *Webs of Remembrance*, for instance, emphases are mostly placed on visual experience as the focal point of forming images. In the poem, he sees colour (visual) in silence (aural). Raji here sees colours like dark, red, white, yellow, blue-black etc as he writes: 'I see silence in a million-and-one colours.' So, the combination of visual (see) and aural (silence) senses in this poem vividly projects images that help his readers understand the writer's experience. Through the use of visual/aural, Remi Raji captures the picturesque representation of the condition which the military dictators have created in his society. The people live in fear and are denied freedom of expression due to the leader's brutality. Blue-black depicts the height of dehumanisation by these leaders.



*Shuttlesongs: America* captures his experience while on exile in America. Even though the poems are short, this does not stop him from adopting synaesthetic appeal in his writing though they are sparing. In 'Kalamazoo', for instance, Raji once again exploits synaesthetic expression as his writing style. In this case, he uses visual/aural in lines 12-14 when he writes: My *green* (visual) *horn tale* (aural) grows//on the wings of *butterfly* (visual) *affection* (tactile)//I arrived the boat of stories.

Note that in line 13, there is a transfer of visual sense to tactile sense. Raji also uses the same form of synaesthetic expression in lines 15-17: Kalamazoo, my zoo of memories//it is to you I *weave* (visual) *this tale* (aural)//give me wind and let me sail. Notice that the synaesthetic form which he adopts in line 16 may be perceived in different forms. Hence, in the underlined expression above, the word *weave* could give both visual and tactile appeal at the same time.

The 'Prologue' of *Lovesong for Wasteland*, portrays intensely the synaesthetic potentialities of Remi Raji. His perception of sight was not lost; he continues his associations by creating ideas with visual qualities aligning them to other senses. A good example of synaesthetic expression appears where words are given visual/aural qualities in the statement: the land became *colourful* (visual) in *silence* (aural). In this case, Raji exploits his synaesthetic perception of seeing colour in other senses. More examples in this category are seen in the expression, think of those who never made it//beyond the *darkness* (visual) *of the past* (tactile).

Raji at this point uses his synaesthetic ability to create the image of a corrupt society with the idea of combining these senses that stimulate imagery. In this case, he expresses his worries on the outcome of bad leadership and corrupt practices in the past, the present and the future of his society. This is well emphasised when he perceives sense of colour (darkness) in sense of hearing (the past) in this expression, think of those who never made it//beyond the darkness of the past.

### Aural Sense as the Source

In 'prologue' *Lovesongs for Waste Land*, we observe transference of aural sense to visual when he personifies the *land* by giving it a *mouth* and *ear* which are an attribute of humans in this expression: the people are *the ear and the mouth* (aural) *of the land* (visual). Note here that even though mouth is usually associated with gustatory appeal; in this expression however, mouth gives a sense of aural appeal.

Similarly, in 'If This Poem Could Only Speak', Remi Raji uses a cross aural and visual in lines 17 and 18 when he writes: it's all wise to *speak* (aural) *with the eye* (visual)//when the *mouth* (aural) *sees* (visual) too much. Here, the mouth which is an appeal to the sense of sound is assigned the visual sense *sees*. In other words, there is a transference of visual sense to aural sense. Also, in lines 10-12 of *Silence II*, he uses aural/tactile form: when *rhyme's* (aural) *winds* (tactile)//run amok//like amputated tongue.

Relatively, in 'Prologue' of *Lovesongs for Wasteland*, Raji exploits his perceptual ability in the idea where the sense of hearing assumes shape or physical forms thereby projecting images from aural and tactile senses in a bid to express himself. An instance is observed in this expression: It is your *story* (aural) I have come to *spin* (tactile)//In the marketplace of thought.





### Gustatory Sense as the Source

Further in Prologue of *Lovesongs of Waste Land*, Raji uses his appeal for the sense of taste (gustatory) when he aligns the sense to the visual sense. An instance is found in this expression: What kind of destiny do you believe in? //the one which *devours* (gustatory) *dreams* (visual)? In the alliterated words in this context, we see transference of sense of taste to sense of sight. Hence, Raji uses his synaesthetic appeal on the gustatory sense *devours* which he perceives in a visual sense *dreams*. Thus, he draws a picture of distressed and hopeless people. In the image that he created from the synaesthetic expression, we observe Raji's description of his people who are already distressed and hopeless, a situation that is caused by cruel actions of the tyrant leaders who have turned out to be dream killers. Another example is seen in the words: Sweet (gustatory) *dreams* (visual) became the handle//of every man who knew the big man in the toilet (olfactory) of power (tactile). Note that the phrase toilet of power shows another cross sensory appeal of two senses of smell and feeling.

In Question and Prayer, he attributes *oceans* (visual) to *saliva* (gustatory), thereby displaying his cross perception of the sense of taste in the sense of sight. There are also occasions where he combines the sense of taste and feeling. For instance, in line 26 where he describes *agony* (tactile) as *dessert* (gustatory).

### Olfactory Sense as the Source

In 'Kalamazoo', we spot olfactory/visual form in the line 20: Kalamazoo of *scented* (olfactory) *days* (visual). Other examples are discovered in the Prologue of *Lovesongs of Wasteland*. They include:

- a. It is the *smell* (olfactory) of *history* (aural) that choke the singer out of silence //Who begs of you your *smelling* (olfactory) *biography* (aural)//in a season fit only for business and leisure?
- b. Your *history*, my *history*, the *past* (aural) which *stinks* (olfactory)// and threatens the present.

### Tactile Sense as the Source

This category of cross sensory alignment is predominant in 'Question and Prayer', a poem from *Gather My Blood*. In the poem, Remi Raji predominantly aligns tactile sense with visual sense or aural sense. For instance, in line 2, *years*, which has a visual appeal is being personalised by attributing a tactile appeal, *fractured* to it. Also, in line 4, the same tactile sense is aligned with visual sense when he attributes stubbornness to rock. Still in 'Question and Prayer', we observe a combination of visual/tactile and aural in line 7: red (visual), hunger (tactile) of truth (sound). Likewise, in line 8, Raji displays his appeal for sound as he aligns the sense with that of touch in the expression, *sailing* (tactile) *tongue* (aural). Meanwhile, in line 34, Remi Raji sees *tongue* (aural) as *fire* (tactile). Also, in lines 10-12 of Silence II, Raji uses tactile/aural form in this expression, when rhyme's winds// run amok //like *amputated* (tactile) *tongue* (aural). Note that here *tongue* as used in the expression is assigned the sense of hearing rather than the sense of taste. In this case there is a transfer of tactile sense to the sense of hearing. Also in Prologue, we discover tactile/aural alignment in this expression: But I cannot run away from the *lashes* (tactile) of *history* (aural).



## Multiple Cross Sensory Alignment

There is also evidence of multiple cross sensory alignment in Remi Raji's poetry. For instance, in 'Silence II', Raji combines multiple senses of visual, olfactory and aural to create strong images in lines 2-5: When we thicken// with dreams of blood/ when sorrow's (tactile) scent (olfactory) suffocates (tactile)//the remains of lean (visual) laughter (aural). The same situation is observed in 'If This Poem Could Only Speak', a poem in *Shuttlesongs: America*. In this case, Raji uses the same form in lines 12-14 where he exploits multiple senses of hearing, sight and feeling: the tongue (aural) is torn (tactile)/ in an orphanage (visual) of spite/ and despair (tactile).

## CONCLUSION

Synaesthetic appeal is central to Remi Raji's language style which he consciously or subconsciously employed to enable him bring his experience to the brim of external reality. Hence, his choice of synaesthetic metaphors fast-tracks meaning and easily aids his readers to capture the messages of his poetry.

Three senses: tactile, aural and visual are predominantly observed while olfactory and gustatory are sparingly used in his formation of cross-sensory metaphors. Meanwhile, there are occasions where multiple cross-sensory forms are observed. In most cases, tactile/aural/visual forms of synaesthesia are recorded.

Furthermore, Raji uses words such as *tongue*, *mouth* which ordinarily appeal to the gustatory sense to describe his appeal for sense of sound.

Generally, Remi Raji's use of synaesthetic expression depicts a *tense situation* where, in his experience, he and his people are oppressed and brutalised by tyrant military and political leaders. However, in *Shuttlesongs: America* (a collection of poems which he wrote while on exile in the United States of America), less synaesthetic expressions are noticed throughout the entire collection of short poems. Egya (2011) asserts that Raji's state of mind, as at the time he wrote the poems, may have been more relaxed. This single evidence may indicate the possibility of the poet's style of writing being influenced by the socio-political tense situation of his contemporaries.



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