

Laughter and Anguish in Remi Raji's *A Harvest of Laughters*

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“We know that some tribes are said to be dour and unlaughing. Others laugh easily. Pygmies lie on the ground and kick their legs in the air, panting and shaking in paroxysms of laughter”.

(Douglas, 1971: 387)

“Èrín mú èrèké dùn; èkún ba ẹnu jé” (Laughter sweetens the cheeks; crying disfigures the mouth) (Yoruba Proverb, Owomoyela, 2005:480).

Abstract: *The therapeutic relevance of laughter among humans has been a motif in psychological and medical related studies. However, literature being a humanistic discipline also ventures into this aspect as it is instrumental in the restoration of humanity. Contemporary Nigerian poets are committed to writing about the ills in their polity. Remi Raji does not only reflect the untold anguish his milieu has come to live with as a result of various irregularities in the nation; but offers laughter as an antidote that would cushion their pain. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the antithetical representation of laughter and anguish in Raji's *A Harvest of Laughters* with a view to exploring people's anguish and instrumentality of laughter in ameliorating their agonising condition. Relief theory of laughter is adopted for the study while the selected text is subject to critical textual analysis. Various factors responsible for people's inability to laugh are critiqued in the study.*

Keywords: *laughter, anguish, relief theory, A Harvest of Laughters, Remi Raji*

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1. LAUGHTER AND THEORIES OF LAUGHTER: AN OVERVIEW

Contemporary Nigerian poetry serves as an anchor that charts the path of survival and stability in the face of political stalemate, economic ruination, cultural erosion, moral decadence, leadership crisis and social conflicts. By addressing various challenges confronting the nation, contemporary Nigerian poets show how socially committed they are. Their pen has, thus served as a veritable tool to normalising the abnormalities in the polity. It is undeniable that citizenry are subject to pains, owing to various hardships with which they have to cope; this has repressed laughter in the people.

There are several ways through which humans express their emotions to show what goes on inside of them. Two of these ways are laughter and anguish, depending on external occurrences. Humans beings are by nature, “laughing animal” (McComas, 1923). There have been some studies on laughter and humour. For instance, Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1999 and Provine, 2000 find out that laughter is a universal human behaviour. It is universally recognisable and occurs in a characteristic, stereotyped form (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1999). Quoting Herbert Spencer (1891:458), Jauregui (1998:70) views laughter as “a form of muscular excitement, and so illustrates the general law that feeling passing a certain pitch habitually vents itself in bodily action...strong feeling of almost any kind produces this result...joyous emotion...mental distress...tickling...cold, and some kinds of acute pain”. The phenomenon of laughter has attracted various theories through which it has been studied. These include incongruity, relief, superiority/aggression, tension-release and play theories. To proponents of these theories, laughter means different things.

However, considering the nature of this study in relation with the issues raised in Remi Raji's *A Harvest of Laughters*, the relief theory of laughter is adopted for the study. Post-independence Nigeria is faced with multifarious challenges that have resulted into anguish for people. To relieve people of their untold anguish, Raji offers laughter as a therapy in his first collection of poetry.

Relief theory has been popularised by medical practitioners, child psychologists, and some sociological fieldworkers. The theory has psychological dimension. It is postulated that laughter is the release of nervous energy caused by the laughter situation. Sigmund Freud, the primary proponent of the psychic power premise, develops his version of this theory mainly in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, but continues to develop the theory in succeeding essays. Morreall (1983:27) describes Freud's theory in this way:

The core of his theory is that in all laughter situations we save a certain quantity of psychic energy, energy that we have summoned for some psychic purpose but which turns out not to be needed, and this surplus energy is discharged in laughter. In joking... we save energy that is normally used to suppress forbidden feelings and thoughts; in reacting to the comic we save an expenditure of energy in thought; and in humour we save an expenditure of energy in emotion.

Freud is unquestionably right to an extent. According to Morreall (2009:18), when people laugh, "there is a release of psychic energy, not the energy of repressed feelings, but the energy that normally represses those feelings." Humans release the energy typically needed to suppress such taboo thoughts and are able to participate in a moment of breaking social convention. Contemporary postcolonial society is faced with antithetical realities of laughter and anguish.

The subject/concept of laughter has been variously considered by a plethora of thinkers, from the Greek philosophers to modern psychologists, literary critics, and sociologists. In recent years, empirical research in the nascent field of 'humour research' has been growing at a considerable rate (Eduardo Jauregui, 1998). However, this study differs from the previous ones, in that it is not based on the funny happenings around man, but rather on pathetic occurrences and realities to which man's response should be laughter as Raji posits in his seminal collection.

Jauregui (1998) posits that most humans laugh – smile, smirk, snicker, giggle, chuckle, cackle, guffaw – almost every single day of their lives. At times, laughter may correspond to some measure of real amusement – an automatic bodily response to a 'funny' perception, including a pleasant subjective sensation of 'funniness' or 'hilarity', while other times, laughter may be relatively 'hollow' – feigned or exaggerated at something not truly considered amusing or funny. On the other hand, humorous amusement which arises may remain unexpressed, with laughter being actively suppressed where it might have been more easily released. As for the things which may be considered 'funny,' these include spontaneous, unintentional laughables such as harmless blunders or deflated pretensions, but also words or actions openly intended to provoke amusement, displays of humour. Humorous incidence usually triggers laughter; but on the contrary, it is 'disastrous' realities that Raji wishes people laugh at in order to be relieved of the pains sustained through their experiences.

2. LAUGHTER AND ANGUISH IN A HARVEST OF LAUGHTERS

Published in 1997, *A Harvest of Laughters*, which is the very first published collection of poetry by one of the established third generation Nigerian poets, Remi Raji, addresses various socio-political issues. The collection is divided into six parts which are: Sower Songs, Nature Songs, Dimple Songs, Songs of Experience, Departures and Harvest I-VI. As depicted in the title, the poet's vision is "to affirm the potable necessity and the therapeutic force of laughter (Raji, 1997:11). There are reasons people laugh, either negatively or positively. In reality, considering socio-political and economic happenings in the world today, laughter has on gone on recess. In other words, the efficacious therapy of laughter has given way for languishment as there are no reasons for people for laugh. However, Raji acknowledges unwelcomed developments and occurrences in his polity; he encourages his reading audience to see hope out of their despondency. This paper, therefore, aims at investigating the *incongruous* thematics of laughter and anguish in Raji's seminal poetry collection.

Laughter and Anguish in Remi Raji's a Harvest of Laughters

Raji announces his desire to rise above other writers in narrating the woes in the land without creating hope. This is exemplified in "I rise now". The first two stanzas depict the reason why people no longer laugh:

Everyday we hear
in neighbouring lands
the news of acid rain
Everywhere we smell
on our harvest tracks
the blighted clouds of a locust rain (15).

The world is recently faced with natural disasters which have destroyed the ecosystem. Although 'acid rain' may not have been experienced in this writer's country, the news alone has psychological effect on his countrymen as they are in fear, not knowing whose turn it would be. Raji establishes the ubiquity of 'locust train' that is responsible for the wanton destruction of 'harvest tracks'. 'Locust train' metaphorises the successive reign of carnivorous political leadership across the globe. The national harvest that everyone is supposed to benefit from has become 'blighted'. Leadership remains the main challenge of the human race. Thus, as portrayed in this poem, 'locust train' is culpable for the pauperisation of the people who are living in abundance. The foregoing prevents people from laughing:

Nobody
no body seem to know
how to smile again,
not even a grin colours the face; (15)

The above shows different facial expressions – smile, grin and laughter. The simplest of them is smile. The poet-persona declares that no one seems to know how to even smile or fake it, let alone engage in real laughter. This is, however, because they are depressed by what they hear and experience both abroad and at home. Furthermore, other social anomalies that have made laughter vanish from the mouth of the people are hinted in the following lines:

Here in the muzzle-grip of Hell,
where mushrooms of hate grow
under water
in the wind
in the rash of times
in the bellies of lovers and children (15).

Hatred ravages the whole land. Love appears to have left humans; hence, Raji compares the context of this poem with 'Hell' as a result of absence of tight-knit familial relationships in human society. Usually, someone who is a victim of hatred finds it difficult to burst into laughter because of the traumatic agony of hatred.

Unperturbed by all these unwholesome realities, the poet-persona refuses to be weighed down by despair as he declares:

I rise today
the memories of slaving rites
gone out my veins;
I rise today
Repeated child of eloquent births
And I rise now

With long drums of laughter

To slaughter a thousand dragon-dreams of pain.

Oh laughter, legacy of mask

my wind of burning words

beyond the blues (16).

The speaker encourages people to rise above their plight and embrace laughter to get rid of their inglorious history of 'slaving rites'. Laughter is a ritual that banishes 'the memories of slaving rites'. Raji reiterates the medicinal power of laughter when he says that he would use laughter 'to slaughter a thousand dragon-dreams of pain'. Age-long pain gets relieved in the course of laughter; this is why the poet-persona apostrophically sings the epideictic oration of laughter so that he may be possessed by the spirit of laughter.

The poem titled "Have you seen that land" is laden with rhetorical questions which the poet-persona poses to emphasise the fact that a utopian world is non-existent:

Have you seen that land

where pleasant tales are told without end?

Have you seen that village

where folks neither fade nor age? (20)

This points to the ephemerality, frailty and transience of humans. Human tales are mixtures of both the pleasant and unpleasant ones; these are not endless though. Human world is neither utopian nor dystopian, but the combination of the two. Man is likened to flowers that grow today and wither tomorrow. In the same vein, Raji re-echoes his mission statement in this collection, which is to affirm the therapeutic force of laughter. He rhetorically asks:

Have you dreamt of that land

where Laughter's beams bury Earth's pain? (20)

It is clear from the foregoing that Raji is not unaware of the reality of pain and languishment in his society. However, as far as the poet is concerned, the cure that can 'bury Earth's pain' is 'Laughter's beams'. Laughter is capitalised to personify its indispensability. Since it is true that one may not find that land where pleasant tales are endlessly told, where folks are immortal, where waters of joy flow ceaselessly, where the scents of wine-fruits never dies and where the warm wind whistles eternally; it is expedient that one dreams of that land where laughter is embraced to terminate all painful agonies of reality.

As the voice of both the devoiced and voiceless, Raji exposes the agony of the poor orphans in "Orphan cry". Through the employment of tactile imagery, the poet paints the pains of the poor in his milieu:

Too long, too long

a generosity of thorns tickles my skin;

a legacy of weals and debts

adorns my infant neck.

Too long, too long

a generation of spears peels my flesh. (23)

Raji decries outright unjustified painful languishment of orphans. These victims have suffered pains for long with no one to come to their rescue. As a concerned writer, Raji could feel the agony of 'thorns' and 'weals' that the poor orphans pass through. It is unfortunate that the poet-persona, though wishes to render succour to the orphans, he lacks the will power to do so, thus, he can only look:

In this fallow track, I have nothing

than the ill of looking

I looked at the faces of hungry children

And behold, the totem of all my hate; (23)

Orphans are victims of hunger. Hunger here is metaphorical in the sense that the subject of the poem is not only hunger for physical food, but also for justice, good life, opportunity and equity. By "the totem of all my hate" the poet means that his major hate in life is maltreatment of the orphans. Again, orphans are not limited to the parentless ones in the society; some children though with their parents alive are nothing but orphans while there are many orphan parents whose life is a symbol of poverty and hunger.

To cushion the pain of the poor, therefore, the poet-persona wishes to use the stroke of laughter to end their perennial perils:

With you, children of stars,

I'll walk with the herbalist sun...

To the wake of roaring dreams,

I'll seize upon the lemon smell of laughter

With you, these scars crescent like the moon

may sprout dimples bristling with love. (24)

Raji refers to these orphans as 'children of stars' to show that they are not unimportant. Many of them are destined to be great but for the ill-starred circumstance in which they find themselves. With 'the lemon smell of laughter', orphans' scars can be healed.

The poet-persona, through the use of first person plural personal pronoun, 'we', associates himself with the crying orphans:

Accustomed to the bronze fiction

of promises of politics,

inheritors, you and I,

of dust of bones and rust,

we've grown beyond the blue lullaby

of silence.

Inheritors of nothing now

I know we'll be healed

by the rattle-wisdom of scalpel songs. (24)

It clear from these quoted lines that insincerity of the political leaders is a factor that promotes the plight of orphans and the poor in the nation. Politicians are fond of making beautiful promises which they usually break the moment they are empowered through the people's votes. Leadership failure makes orphans 'inheritors of nothing', thereby pauperise them. Raji is, nevertheless, optimistic that 'I know we'll be healed'. Since writers are healers of social malaises, Raji writes to heal his people's scars by the application of 'the rattle-wisdom of scalpel songs'. As Adeoti and Elegbeleye (2005:308) say of Soyinka, Raji is "an activist...often in confrontation with the establishment, denouncing corruption, repression, mismanagement and exploitation among other ills of postcolonial government".

In the same way that earth is not lubricated until when rain falls, humans do not experience relief from their multifarious pains. Raji draws a link between rain and laughter in the poem titled "Rain song":

I crave the laughing touch of rain

that the roots of rocks may sprout again

and the beaks of flowers suck my pain. (27)

Rain is not a balm that softens the compactness and hardness of the earth, the moment rain falls, earth rejoices. Every organism benefits from rainfall, even 'the roots of rocks may sprout again'. This illustrates the restorative power rain. Laughter serves as a social lubricant that oils life's frictions.

In "Parting passer-by", Raji presents a dramatic monologue that involves the poet-persona and an imaginary friend who has suffered confusion, hardship, conspiracy, betrayal and memory haemorrhage:

I woke up this morning
to see you struggling
to find a possible path
out of the mess-mud
of a pretentious tenderness (43).

The addressee in the above is in a confused state, struggling 'to find a possible path'. To bring peace and joy to the heart of this confused personality, Raji offers him 'the smiling sun' which would swallow 'the story of your passer-by pretence':

Now

I walk into the smiling sun
of a royal and simple love
the story of your passer-by pretence
a receding cloud
in the eager rays
of my lasting song (44).

What Raji offers here is the illuminating power of laughter. One finds it difficult to see clearly when enraptured in problems. In spite of the fact that the poet-persona's friend is overwhelmed by his manifold challenges, the poet-persona decides to 'walk into the smiling sun' where he would have access to the 'eager rays' to lighten his darkened path.

In the poem "Out of the deep", Raji chronicles the socio-political situation which is applicable to most of the African nations. Out of 'rivers of remembrance', he presents the issue of betrayal as common among the leaders. Understandably, when one considers the realities in postcolonial Africa, laughter would vanish from one's mouth:

rivers of remembrance
we have reached a simple end:
the paddle is lost
the boat is sunk
the net is torn
the bait is gone (45).

The scene painted above is that of political confusion where leaders have misled followers; hence, the latter are disillusioned.

Africa is fraught with lying leaders as the poet reminisces:

rivers of remembrance
i have seen the coast of watery lies.
Tell me oh wondrous waves

where is the mermaid you promised me?

tell me on callous cliff

where is the fairyland you promised me? (45)

The foregoing reiterates mendacious characteristic feature of the leadership which has rendered the people despondent. It is a well-known fact that during electioneering campaign, political aspirants make all sorts of unfulfillable promises; it is this instance that is pictured in this poem. The poet aesthetically writes the first person singular pronoun 'I' in small letter (i) to show the level of thingification that the people suffer. In other words, they are not treated as though they are humans, but as thing. Again, the use of 'i' emphasises the invisibility of the people to their leaders. Even though they cry for mercy, no one notices them.

Furthermore, the poet uncovers the truth about the pretence of the lying leader:

the mermaid is gone

hidden among a seaweed of lies

the mermaid is drowned

in a spillage of colourful pretence (46).

The mermaid metaphorises the national goodies that every citizen should be entitled to but has now gone to the private pocket of the anti-people's leadership. However, out of this reason for disillusionment having been let down by the trusted leaders, the poet-persona refuses to be encumbered with the trauma of the betrayal as he declares:

And out of the deep once again

I rise, fisherman of golden fins

out of the deep...

I rise fisherman of tender taste

out of the deep

a bright shoal of love about my eyes (46).

He who thinks too deep would soon burst into tear; but out of the deep thought of this poet-person emanates hope. Like the South African anti-apartheid poet, Dennis Brutus, whose poetry usually ends on the note of optimism; Raji in this collection portrays the anguish of his people and offers laughter as the therapy to cure their painful languishment.

Raji foregrounds his messianic vision in the poem "Come to me". This is a clarion call on the wretched of the earth who have been wounded and whose hope of survival has been dashed; they are called upon to come but without 'plastic frowns', 'the canine growls' and 'the cataract sighs'. All these are symbols of sorrow, despondency and anguish. Instead, the people are urged:

come to me

with the covenant sighs

of sunny smiles (47).

Thus, Raji wishes to put smile on the frowning faces of the languishing people. The poetic aim of Raji is, therefore to lead to people in his milieu to realm:

where streams make joyful laughters

down under below above

the embrace of rocks and sea-beds...

Come. (47).

As long people continue to embrace their multifarious problems, it is impossible for them to sincerely laugh; hence, the poet intends to usher them to a serene arena where they would be made to forget their life challenges. While it is very clear that Raji acts here as a prophet of

laughter, he does not hesitate to fore the anguish of his people which has sent laughter on holiday among them. In fact, when some engage in laughter it is a mere derision as it lacks sincerity. Laughter is, thus, an antidote for people's agony.

The poems "Silence" and "Silence II" vividly capture the voicelessness of the people under oppressive government. In silence the people suffer hunger with no one to satisfy their 'hungry throats...' According to Raji:

I know the colour of your silence

red, raw like bleeding flesh

like the expired breadth

of a slit goat, I know

the colour of silence is white

blank as the full emptiness

in a deadman's eyes

blank as the sudden stillness

of a broken love symphony (50).

This is the representation of people agony; they bleed ceaselessly; their life is 'full of emptiness'. All this painful situation makes the people silence. The only means by which they can communicate their plight is to remain silent.

"Silence II" is laden with rhetorical questions; the poet depicts the unfortunate reign of bestial dictator under whose administration no one dare sing:

who sings when the Beast prowls

when Night thickens

with dreams of blood (52).

It is this dictatorial and blood-thirsty leadership that prevents the oppressed people from singing. The "Beast" not only prowls, but also 'dreams of blood'; this shows the level of its inhumanity and callousness of the animalistic leader. Definitely, no one sings under this kind of governance.

More so, the poet reveals that people cannot sing because their tongue is amputated while their mind is maimed:

who sings

when rhyme's winds

run amok

like amputated tongues

when boots barrels

and the gift of grenades

chase the choir intosilence.

WHO SINGS WHEN THE BEAST PROWL? (52).

It is not as if people do not know how and when to sing, but they have been chased into silence. The roaring prowl of the beast renders them mute. Without mincing words, this is one main reason people in this poet's socio-political ambiance have forgot how to laugh since they are exposed to different forms of anguish both physically and psychologically. The emphasis in the last line of the poem is used as an element of foregrounding; wherein the extent of bestiality is presented.

"On behalf of silence" is written on behalf of the silenced people who, in spite of the shame that leaders have brought upon the nation, still love their nation. The people air their voice:

Those of us in tropics of hunger
whose bellies are filled
with howling airs, ruled
by hurricanes of anger
we love our land
and its history of shame...(55)

The 'tropics of hunger' represents every human society where people are hunger for justice, good governance and mercy. It is disheartening that the bellies of the hungry people are only filled with howling airs; this makes people to be angry as a popular saying that a hungry man is an angry man. Meanwhile, it is ironical that despite their state of disillusionment, this hungry and angry people, remain patriotic to their nation with 'its history of shame'. The poet goes forward to be identified with the oppressed poor ones as he says:

We who are tattooed by measles of misery
immersed in deep-rivers of yaws,
in the vaulting echoes of empty lores
we stay alive, by clock-hands of timeless mystery (55).

One does not need to be told of the misery of the people since their whole body is 'tattooed by measles of misery'; this attests to the fact that their life is an epitome of sufferings.

More so, Raji's polity is characterised with 'the castration of men's dreams', 'seizure of children's prattles', 'abortion of female rites'. All these anomalies occur in the country because 'our emperor is fooled by remnant-smiles// of sycophants...and silence'. Instead of the emperor's cabinet members to tell him the truth about what the people feel; they choose the path of sycophancy, he is thus fooled by their mendacious smiles. As seen in this poem again, the poet depicts reason for absence of laughter and persistent presence of anguish among the citizenry.

The poem titled "A dozen monologue" preoccupies itself with the recurrent socio-political imbalance in post-independent Nigeria where many labour but only few are enjoy the benefit:

we mine the coal
they spend the gold
we mint the coins
they spend the notes (67).

The scene painted here is that slavery. Masses are treated as slaves through hard labour; however, they are prevented from benefitting in the produce of their own labour. This is nothing but enslavement of the people in their own land. Leaders accrue the nation's wealth to themselves while the poor ones are left to wallow in poverty. Raji portrays the ever-labouring masses as constructive, fruitful, profitable and nation's developers; whereas the ever-devouring leaders are depicted as destructive, non-profitable, consumers, looters and betrayers. The following lines lend credence to this:

we till the land
they loot the soil
we kill the game
they hunt the stew
we bless the meal
they steal the meat
we slash the dark
they steal the light (67).

The foregoing pictures the kleptomaniac attribute of the post-colonial Nigerian political rulers. Although the people try to make the nation work, leaders make their effort futile. Leaders are, therefore, enemy of progress as against the widely publicised news that leaders are working but some anti-development citizens are working against the nation's growth. Leaders are supposed to cushion people's plight but they end up aggravating it. Considering all these abnormal situations in the society, the last thing one expects from such unfortunate people is to engage in laughter. However, what Raji emphasises in this collection is the therapeutic relevance of laughter as it would cure people's socio-psychological trauma caused by disheartening happenings in the polity. The preponderant use of first-person and third-person plural pronouns further foregrounds the socio-political and economic classification of society into two: 'we' vs. 'they'. The poet-persona pitches his tent with the oppressed half-not.

Post-colonial society is peopled with extra-judicial killings, police brutality and man's inhumanity to man. Many well-meaning citizens have been sent to the grave beyond by 'no-non-sense' rulers. Raji dedicates "Deadlines" to Dele Giwa, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other patriots who laid their dear lives for their land. These people are heroic martyrs whose annihilation cannot be ignored by committed writer like Raji. The poem is presented in mourning mood and melancholia tone. The poet-persona cannot hold his emotion:

Now that you slapped my land
with a mascara of mourning
Now that you fed your beast
with the flesh of suckling birds
Now that you filled your tongue
with darts of denials and lies
Now that you killed laughter
like a cruel coward... (77).

As shown above, Raji challenges the killer of Nigerian martyrs for causing sadness in the land. Sin begets sin; the murderer adds lies to the heinous crime. Dele Giwa was killed under the administration of the former military president, Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, while Ken saro-Wiwa was killed by Gen Sanni Abacha. In other words, military government is synonymous with brutal and extra-judicial killings which rulers eventually deny.

The poet in this poem decries life-destroying military dictator's sycophancy:

How do you console me now
gleeful orator at funeral rites
sucking lice in your throats
thorns in the very palm
of your handshake... (77)

The image painted in the foregoing is that of a culpable brutal ruler who covers his misdeed through insincerity and flattery. The poet-persona is, therefore, befuddled by the incessant and unchecked extra-judicial killing which has become the order of the day in the poet's socio-political milieu.

As a social committed and people-oriented poet, Raji offers and revives hope in the already despondent citizenry of his dear nation in the poem "To the tragic one":

Like yesterday's ember
it will die
this hot-iced
cold fire

of pain

in your eyes (78).

The speaker in this poem emphasises the fact that no condition is permanent; hence, the need for the hopeless people to be hopeful. The artist dispels sense of pessimism among the tragic ones in his nation. He reiterates that their seemingly insurmountable problem would soon become a thing of the past. As far as the optimistic and restorative poet is concerned, his people's plight would be healed soon. He, therefore, urges them to:

Let this veil of pen be lifted

Let a legion love lice your tears (78).

Thus, the poet charges the people to put off the garment of their suffering and put on the garment of love and laughter. Raji has proven himself as a creator of hope for the disillusioned people.

As the poet concludes this collection, he conscientises his audience on the healing power of laughter. This he achieves in "Harvest I-VI" where he discusses many challenges facing his polity and which are responsible for sending laughter on vacation:

if only

if only we know

if only we know the crescent of Laughter

we will ride the flood of predicted pains

we'll toast to a tomorrow full of love

without stiches or stains

without brimestones of plagues

without milestones of snakes;

grim-faced brother, Laughter can heal

if only you know... (82).

3. CONCLUSION

Although it is true that Raji dwells so much on the anguish with which his milieu is laden, his main mission in this collection is to sermonise the therapeutic nature of laughter. Thus, it is high time human society learnt to take refuge in laughter. Without being equivocal, this third generation poet has been able to prove himself as one of the *crème de la crème* among his peers.

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