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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND AESTHETIC TRANSFER IN THE POETRY OF OKOT P'BITEK

By

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Bujumbura, November 2004

DEDICATION

To you my parents,

To you my late elder brother

Ndikumana Laurent,

To you my late younger sister

Kabura Léoncie,

To you my younger brother

Nyandwi Révérien,

To you my beloved

Nibigira Primitive,

I warmly dedicate this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work would not have been possible without the contribution and advice of many.

Special thanks go to Dr. Divine Che Neba, lecturer at the University of Burundi, who kindly accepted to supervise this work. I express my deepest and heartfelt gratitude for his invaluable guidance and availability from the initial stages of this work to its accomplishment. His constructive criticism brought this work into existence.

I am also indebted to my parents for their ceaseless support. I am grateful to the Nahimanas, Fathers Aster Kana, and Audace Nzopfabarushe for their constant support.

My heartily and profound gratitude goes to all my teachers from Primary school to University.

Last but not least, I thank all my friends who supported me during the hard times. May all of you find in these pages the expression of my sincere and heart-stirring gratitude.

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ABBREVIATIONS

S.O.O. : Song of Ocol.

S.O.L : Song of Lawino.

S : Section

Afr.C.R. : African's Cultural Revolution.

Afr.C.R. : Africa's Cultural Revolution.

Afr.W.T. : African Writers Talking.

H.O.M.L : Horn of my Love.

S.O.P. : Song of Prisoner.

T.L.W : The Last Word.

QTD: Quoted.

ABSTRACT

This work examines the polemics of the cultural impasse in Africa and the means of abrogating the concept of inferior cultures. In this vein , this work is based on the hypothesis that culture is the source of a people's identity and that with changing times there is a necessity for its domestication. To achieve this objective, the new historicism approach becomes very cardinal. Indeed, this approach is concerned with reading , writing and then teaching as actions than as descriptions of actions. It is widely open to disciplines such as literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and fits well within the confines of a cultural study.

This work discusses the fact that colonialism alienates African culture. It calls upon Africans, especially intellectuals to return to their roots. Moreover, the present work shows how P'Bitek domesticates African oral aesthetics into written literature.

In a nutshell, the African elite should pay more attention to their own culture and see how he can revalorise it, for the future of Africa and Africans depends on the way Africans make it.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Since man is a gregarious being, culture has been a regulatory tool for individuals in a given society. Culture generates beliefs, laws, myths, traditions - all types of sanctions and regulations which members of a given community adhere to.

Unfortunately, Africans have suffered many setbacks because of colonialism. Many Africans abandoned their own ways of life for the so-called civilised way of life. They changed their religion and adopted that of the West. They also changed their way of eating, clothing, brief, approximately, everything in Africa was destabilised. The assimilated began to despise their own customs, deny their own culture, and treat their fellow Africans as primitive and barbaric. In the midst of this, some African writers with nationalist aspirations have taken pens to redress this situation. Among these writers we have Okot P'Bitek, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, to mention a few.

This work seeks to answer the following questions: Can African Oral tradition and aesthetics be transferred in a written literature? Is there a necessity for the domestication of oral tradition in the new forms of writing?

In this light, this work aims at examining the polemics of cultural impasse and the means of abrogating this conception of inferior culture in Africa. Indeed, after so many years of independence, Africans are still in need of a renaissance in their culture. They need more than ever to deconstruct western thought about Africa. The present

work seeks to revoke the questions of the loss of identity and self-confidence. Our analysis will be focussed mostly on the poetry of Okot P'Bitek.

Before proceeding with our analysis, it is necessary to define certain key-terms that will preoccupy us in the course of this work. These terms include "culture" and "aesthetics."

The term "culture" is defined by Edward Burnett Taylor in Religion in Primitive Culture as "a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral customs, and all disposition and habits acquired by human being as a member of a society" (2). On his part, Eric O. Ayisi in An Introduction to the Study of African Culture sees culture as "the sum total of the material and intellectual equipment where they (the people) satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to their environment" (1). Edward Said W. in Culture and Imperialism gives to this term a two- fold definition. He says firstly that "all those practices like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economy, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms...." (xii). Secondly, "culture" is seen as, "a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought" (xiii). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his introduction to P'Bitek's African's Cultural Revolution adds that culture is "the social organization of life on which it is built" (xii). For the sake of the present venture, Ngugi's definition will sound more appropriate.

Hence, this work tackles "cultural nationalism" as a means of domesticating national culture, the appropriation and defence of one's own culture. It is in this vein that Chid Amuta in " Fanon, Cabral, and Ngugi on National Liberation" writes that

" the native intellectual remembers his authentic identity and kicks against attempts to assimilate him" (159). He goes on affirming that "cultural nationalism" is a phenomenon that has a political significance mainly at a continental level.

As far as the term " aesthetic" is concerned , Tunde Okanlawon in "Aesthetics in the Oral Context" sees it as a combination of "the styles of a particular genre of oral literature, the form and the amount of audience or group participating" (495). Ropo Sekoni in "Aesthetic Elaboration in Yoruba Folk Narrative" adds that "aesthetic" is the "initial and background knowledge of fiction which forms the foundation of direct effort at developing special taste". (482). Kamau E. Brathwaite, on his part in "The Love Axe" defines "aesthetic transfer" as "a writer's transferring forms of the oral stock to a written form as a recognition of the functions of verbal art in society"(7). For Lamuel Johnson "aesthetic transfer" is

> An examination or assessment of the degree to which translations, cultural transfers and the mediations that come with publication and continuity have achieved a certain compositional and thematic equilibrium... (Qtd Charles Bodunde, 3).

The present work therefore examines "aesthetic" as the characteristic elements of African oral tradition and "aesthetic transfer" as a strategy of transferring these elements into the written tradition.

This work is based on the hypothesis that culture is the source of a people's identity and that with changing times, there is a necessity for its domestication. Hence the revisiting of the denigrated aspects of culture and tradition is imperative.

The approach that will centre our discussion is new historicism. In fact, as Wilfred L. Guerin, et al clarifies in A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, " new historicism is concerned with reading, writing, and teaching as actions than as descriptions of actions"(320). This approach is widely open to many disciplines such as literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and other disciplines and sciences so that it fits the study of human beliefs, customs, and tradition. Indeed, history and culture must be described as constantly changing constructions made by various interested men and women. New historicism maintains its multidimensionality and remains true to its strengths. This is why the new historicists have consciously resisted to identifying their approach with a simple methodology. New historicism seeks to break the frontiers between separated disciplines, particularly politics and literature. It rehistoricizes the past to justify the present and especially to prepare the future. It is on this premise of cultural rehistoricization, that P'Bitek resuscitates the thirst for cultural preservation and the eminent need for the revalorisation of African identity.

The key assumptions of this approach are as follows: every expressive act is imbedded in a network of material practices; every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it opposes; literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably; no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature; a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. These assumptions reveal that, new historicists reject any controlling ideological grid in favour of discovering meaning in

previously ignored events or statements, which then they reread in order to reveal through analysis of particulars codes and forces that control a culture.

Carolyn Porter, one of the proponents of new historicism upholds in Are We Being Historical? that "the new historicism arises out of a diverse set of practices that are not in themselves new" (743-749). She hammers out that the turn toward history has been in evidence for some time. She also gives list of other great figures of this approach including Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Frederic Jameson, Raymond Williams, Michail Bahail Bakhtin, Terry Eagleton, Hayden White, Myra Jehlen, Bruce Flanklin, Annette Kolodny, Sacvan Bercovitch, and Eugen Genovese. Forrest G. Robinson identifies the multidimensionality of this approach as a principled flexibility, a sharp eye to the distortion in all perspectives. John Klancher, him, explains why this theory appeared during Renaissance Studies and says that it is because the Renaissance uniquely appeals to post-modern culture in that it did not separate politics and literature as subsequent eras did.

This study will help the reader to re-examine the value and the importance he attaches to his own culture. Given that the world has become a global village, Africans need more than ever to be conscientised about their identity. The younger generation especially, is called on to pay more attention to their culture and protect it.

P'Bitek's poetry has attracted the attention of many a writer and commentator. George A. Heron in The Poetry of Okot tackles this poetry separately. He analyses P'Bitek's poetry and makes a comparative study of P'Bitek and other African writers. He concludes that P'Bitek's poetry is unique in form.

Charles Bodunde, exploits the usage of symbols in Okot P'Bitek's Song of Lawino. He considers this poem as a masterpiece of P'Bitek and seems to ignore his other songs. Flavia Mutamutega in "Literature as a Cultural Debate: The Case of Okot P'Bitek's Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol" on her part aims at contrasting the behaviours of Lawino and Ocol, and consequently African culture with that of Europe. Nijimbere Mathilde also studies P'Bitek's poetry in "Okot P'Bitek's Song of Lawino and Song of Malaya" with particular attention to female voices. Lawino and the Malaya are viewed as "two female voices" revealing "two opposed worlds". Finally, Sebigo Josephine studied the style of P'Bitek in " A stylistic Analysis of Okot P'Bitek's Song of Lawino." Her interest is limited only to P'Bitek's style in Song of Lawino.

This work differs from the aforementioned in that it deals with Okot's poetry as a whole. It does not focus only on form and content but moves ahead to show how orality is transformed into print. Hence, the mission of Okot is still valuable today and the present study seeks to reread it and reinforce it in favour of today's and the forth-coming generations.

This work is divided into five sections namely: a general introduction, three chapters, and a general conclusion. The general introduction highlights the problem, aim, scope, defines key-terms, establishes a hypothesis, states the approach that is used, brings out the significance of the study, reviews related literature and of course exposes the structure of the work. The first chapter entitled "Colonialism and P'Bitek" deals with various forms of colonialism that Africa is facing and shows P'Bitek's opinion about this situation and his suggestions towards the eradication of this

syndrome. The second chapter entitled " Cultural Nationalism" examines aspects of African culture. Moreover, it affirms, after P'Bitek that these aspects deserve to be preserved or domesticated in varied forms. The third chapter entitled " Oral Tradition and Aesthetic Transfer" is of great importance in this work in the sense that it clarifies how Okot proceeds to put into practice what he advocates for by transferring African oral aesthetics into print. The general conclusion highlights arguments advanced in the different chapters of this work, brings out findings, clarifies the contribution to scholarship,and states recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

COLONIALISM AND P'BITEK

In writing Song of Lawino, P'Bitek had in mind a strong desire of exposing to the world the sad feelings of Africans towards their invasion by the West. To make his point clear, he uses a village woman (Lawino) who epitomises the realities of the Acoli traditions in particular and the African tradition as a whole. P'Bitek is not confined to his tribe, but, as he says in Lee Nichola's Conversations with African Writers, he uses the customs of his tribe to go beyond, to embrace the whole continent. He adds that "this is a total review of modern Africa in terms of the way in which the village woman looks at it.....", (246). Many Africans still believe very much that nothing good can come from Africa. They keep on imitating and this does not only diminish their creativity but also robs them of their identity. This is what P'Bitek is fighting against. This Chapter therefore examines the denigration of African values. Flavia Mutamutega in "Literature as a Cultural Debate: The case of Okot P'Bitek in Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol" intimates that "Okot P'Bitek commits himself to warn the society about the danger of being up-rooted in the period of cultural whirlwind, unless they are fixed in the tradition"(8). In view of this, the chapter handles the major forms of colonialism inherent to the poetry of P'Bitek. These forms include: the psychological, social, cultural, religious and political forms of colonialism.

From a psychological perspective, the poetry of P'Bitek is a reflection of his own life. At the moment when he was in school at the University of Aberystwyth

offering Law, he underwent a psychological metamorphosis, which made him lose his Christian commitment. Because of this, he waded off the strange or foreign clothes he had been putting on for so long . Having done this, P'Bitek turned to his African ways of life. George A. Heron in the introduction to Song of Lowino and Song of Ocol postulates that "the direction of his (P'Bitek's) interest changed from the European traditions he had been studying to the traditions of his own people"(3-4).

This turning over shows P'Bitek's psychological evolution. He decides to return to his roots. This psychological repatriation gives him an identity and asserts him in his society. He now stands a better position to support his own customs and ways of life. From this moment, he pursues his studies with the eye on the traditions of his own people as George A. Heron further portrays: "while studying the Medieval European tradition of trial by ordeal he recognized a parallel to the traditions of the Acoli" (4). He does this to be creative in his own place, to recognize Africa as his home and the master of his home. His body is in Europe but his mind is in Africa. He does not want to be assimilated again. He receives education through European tradition but uses African tradition to assimilate it. Flavia Mutamutega illustrates this when she holds that "Okot P'Biket criticises those Africans who imitate foreign stars and others who call themselves after white people even those famous robbery like Jesse James and yet are proud of it (9). This imitation sweeps up the minds of people and they become "brainwashed". For P'Bitek, the youth of Uganda should think and enjoy the riches of their motherland. They should sing songs of joy and songs of sorrows of Uganda not of the Western world. He warns the people against the "psychological wound" inflected on the whole generation by colonialism and Christianity (9). The

redemption of Africa lies in the acquisition of such a reality. People must be aware of the problem they are facing. P'Bitek is inviting all of us, Africans, to be conscientious of the African problem. He especially challenges intellectuals to be aware of the work that awaits them. He publicly declares through his protagonist that

Tell the world
In English or in French
Talk about
The African foundation
On Which we are
Building the new nations
Of Africa.
(S.O.O.S9, L60-66)

Okot P'Bitek within this realm is conscientising Africans to regain their roots. He uses Ocol to warn people who are uprooted. In fact, these people find what is linked to Africa to be dark, backward, primitive and ugly, while what comes from the West is progressive, civilized and beautiful. They appear, like Ocol, in white masks and have lost their personality. They act as robots tuned by the white man. It is this mental enslavement that P'Bitek denounces in Song of Lawino. In this work therefore, Lawino cries over the loss of African identity in modern Africa. The intention of P'Bitek matches with that of Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier who claim in Modern Poetry from Africa that " black consciousness really begins with the shock of discovery that one is not only black but is also " non-white..." (15) So, the alienated people have to reach this level where they are going to discover what they are instead

of desiring to be what nature did not make them to be. To overcome this problem, alienated and assimilated people have to ask themselves in reality, who they are? This is the solution proposed by Franz Fanon in the Wretched of the Earth when he stipulates that "because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?" (12)

Socially, Lee Nicholas writes that P'Biket is an anthropologist and a sociolinguist (246). Being then endowed with knowledge of human society, P'Bitek fights against sociological colonialism especially through his vigorous criticism of the social conditions of his people. In so doing, he rejects all that comes to perturb the social harmony that characterises the African society. There are elements of foreign behaviour that have invaded Africa and that are still invading Africa that he detests. Each society has a symbol that serves as its identity. For instance, Lee Nicholas says that "an egg is a great symbol of power in Ghana" (83). While George A. Heron declares in The Poetry of Okot P'Bitek that "Okot's use of the words 'bila' (horn), 'twon' (bull) and 'tong' (spear) reflects their social importance..." (49). And quoting Taban lo Liyong in Eating Chiefs, he insists on the social significance of a spear :

> A man is not a man without his spear. With his spear he can defend his own and win his wars and kill his game. In our spear, our manhood resides. In our manhood, our spears are found. A chief has his drums of rule. He must also have the royal spear in which the collective might of his people resides. If he loses this spear, the kingdom falls (52).

This shows that when these symbols of a society are questioned, it is the existence of the society itself that is questioned.

To avoid this situation, the remedy is to regain one's roots. And, to achieve this goal, P'Bitek proposes a cultural revolution, while Chinua Achebe, in Morning Yet on Creation Day, proposes a social revolution. He claims that "here then is adequate revolution for me to espouse - to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the call with the same ear. By his alienation he is ready to destroy these symbols of his own society. The symbols that his clansmen consider as their raison d'être. Lawino laments that

When you took the axe
And threatened to cut the Okango
That grows on the ancestral shrine
You were threatening
To cut yourself loose,
To be tossed by the winds
This way and that way...
(S.O.L. S13, L153-161)

Another great symbol that seems not to attract Ocol's attention is the name. In Africa, a name is an indicator of a social identity. This means that each name must have a deep social meaning. Lee Nicholas gives us P'Bitek's explanation of his own name : "Kot is rain. That means when I was born the after-birth contained bubbles of water and so immediately naturally called Okot, of rain, because that's a sign of rain. And P'Bitek means one day he will become strong" (243).

Actually, a true African cannot understand how a name can be given to a child without any consideration of this innermost conception. If this happens, the name becomes shallow, bereft of any meaning and even difficult to pronounce as Lawino exemplifies it :

But my husband's name
Is so difficult to pronounce;
It sounds something like
Medikijedeki Gilirigoloyo.
(Milchizedek) (gregory)
.(S.O.L. S8, L 467-470)

In Acoliland there are two kinds of names, as Flavia Mutamutega clarifies it, "bull names are given to children following the order in which they are born while jok names are related to superstition and other religious practices" (39-40). However, because Ocol is profoundly affected by Christianity, he rejects this view and Lawino cannot tolerate such a behaviour and explains to him a bull name and a "jok" name as follows :

Bull names are given
To chiefs of girls
Because like bulls
They lead their age-mates,
Like the full moon at night
They dominate the stars.
(S.O.L. S8, L 485-490).

While

Apiyo and Acen

Are Jok names

Twins are joks

And are deeply respected.

Akelo is the one

Who comes after twins,

Ajok and Ajara

Grow extrafingers or toes

Adoc comes out

Of the belly feet first

...

(S.O.L. S8, L 497-506).

As such, bull names incite children and make them to become brave, fearless like their ancestors. They have the objective of strengthening their spirit. On the other hand, "jok" names are feared and deeply respected because they are linked to superstition and uncontrolled circumstances. Nevertheless, Ocol claims to be a modern man and wants to surpass his own tradition, but Lawino sees him as socially uprooted.

Another element that gives an identity to a people is food. A people can be identified by their eating habits. Ocol abandons the Acoli food and prefers the white men's foods. This leads to the disintegration of his household because he, at the same time, rejects his wife clinging to tradition. Lawino comments on her husband's behaviour as follows:

My husband says.

He rejects me

Because I do not appreciate

White men's foods

And that I do not know

How to hold

The spoon and the fork

. (S.O.L. S6, L1-L7)

Like the white man he uses a spoon and a fork to eat. Ocol does it and wants his wife to do it, to behave like white women in drinking raw eggs, which Lawino does not agree with. To get rid of this, P'Bitek proposes that anthropology should be abolished in African Universities because westerners have a wrong image of Africa, and this of course stems from colonialism.

Coming back to the symbol of horn, Heron shows how it is sociologically meaningful. In fact, every Acoli young man in the countryside has a horn on which he can produce his own personal note or group of notes that serves as his identity. Any person in that society is able to interpret the message conveyed by the horn. If someone therefore attempts to look down on such a symbol, he is equally belittling the whole society.

As far as the cultural form of colonialism is concerned, we find that in his poetry, P'Bitek analyses the fact that the Acoli culture has been eroded by a foreign culture. In this view, people who leave their community and go abroad become assimilated as they embrace the foreign ways of life. Instead of seeing the beauty of

their community, they despise everything. Heron once more remarks that « many wives have seen their husbands move out of the range of their education and experience through travel. Many 'Ocols' return home with nothing but contempt for the ways of their parents and their wives »(12).

Given this situation, Lawino stands for the customs of her ancestors. She despises the western ways of life. To her, those who are lost in western tradition do not take time to understand their own culture. This is why she reminds her husband to recognize that the ways of the ancestors are good and that the Acoli custom is solid. She cautions Ocol that

> Listen Ocol, my old friend,
> The ways of your ancestors
> Are good,
> Their customs are solid
> And not hollow
> They are not thin, not easily
> Breakable
> They cannot be blown away
> By the winds
> Because their roots reach deep
> Into the soil.
> (S.O.L. S2, L263-273)

Ocol's vision of his ancestors' ways is superficial and suspicious. But Lawino shows him that his vision is false. As such, he is called upon to stay in his house and entertain it. The manners Ocol advocates for are odious in Lawino's understanding.

Flavia Mutamutega intimates that " the African world is a world embodied in songs, dances, myths and the like" (8). Each of these practices has its own way of being performed but Lawino is surprised to see that Ocol's dancing style is different from that of his people. She says that

> Each man has a woman
> Although she is not his wife,
> They dance inside a house
> And there is no light.
> Shamelessly, they hold each
> Other
> Tightly, tightly
> They cannot breathe!
> (S.O.L. S3, L153-160)

The Acoli people believe that only married persons are allowed to dance at closer range or to hold tightly as they want. But seeing how customs are violated by western dances, Lawino feels very sad. In fact, it is not only suspicious because it is done in darkness but it is also shameful. However, as those who are doing it seem to ignore where they are (in Africa), they are shameless. Thus, this is totally a strange act to Lawino. In his behaviour, Ocol is already a foreigner. He does everything "as white people do". Lawino castigates that

You kiss her on the cheek

As white people do,

You kiss her open-sore lips

As white people do,

You suck slimy saliva

From each other's mouths

As white people do.

(S.O.L. S3, L169-175)

This way of doing things shows that Ocol is no longer himself. He no longer knows how Acoli people behave but he knows how white people behave, which is incredible to Lawino. Actually, when music is provided, the alienated hold their fathers, lie on the chests of their uncles, prick the chests of their brothers with their breasts and what is more,

"... they dress up like white

men,

As if they are in the white

man's country"

...

(S.O.L. S3, L211-213).

This is a sign of being lost. They misbehave until they do not remember where they are. They think "they are in the white man's country" and do what is unusual in Africa. Lawino in a sarcastic tone reminds Ocol that Africa is hot and not cold like Europe. For this reason, there is no need of putting on " blanket suits" (S.O.L. S3, L217). In

addition Ocol has lost the African conception of time and this has enslaved him. While in Africa, "there is no fixed time for breast feeding", Ocol is all the time rushing. When there is a visitor, instead of chatting with him, his face darkens and he hurries to ask him what he can do for him. Brief, he has completely lost the concept of African time and to him 'time is money' as Lawino emphasizes in the following lines:

He says
He has no time to waste.
He tells me
Time is money
(S.O.L. S7, L201-204)

Ocol has quitted his role of being a man, he has changed into a woman. By distancing himself from the way his own society lives, he finds himself outside his responsibility. Instead of being a husband in his family with the implications of this status, he changes into a wife of time and therefore loses his dignity. He returns to his infancy as Lawino says :

Time has become
My husband's master
It is my husband's husband.
My husband runs from place to
place
Like a small boy,
He rushes without dignity.
(S.O.L. S7, L281-287)

In Africa, a man must behave like a man not like a child. But as Ocol is no longer in communion with his societal norms, he falls in the margin of the society and also acts in the margin of his age-mates. The above statement constitutes the problem that haunts P'Bitek. His dream is to see Africans regain what has been denigrated.

John S. Mbiti in African Religions and Philosophy attests that " Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices" (1). He goes on affirming that religion permeates into all domains or aspects of life. As such, religion has been and still is a pedestal to African cultural heritage. In Uganda in particular and in Africa in general, no major activity takes place without a religious ritual. A.M. Lugira highlights this in " Religion and Politics in Uganda: "From time immemorial traditional religion has been indeed a well felt ingredient in the very cooking of Uganda politics"(253).

Unfortunately, this great role played by religion was broken with the first visit of a foreign person who entered Uganda. That is the Arab sheik Ahmed-bin-Ibrahim who corrupted the king Kabaka Suna at the beginning of the 19th century. This corruption continued with the influence of other white men who came with their own religion. After this break, Ugandans, especially educated ones started looking down on traditional beliefs. P'Bitek gives us a good example of this rejection through Lawino:

He says (Ocol)

....

We should pray to Joseph

And Petero, and Luka

And the other ancestors of

White men!

He says

It is stupid superstition

To pray to our ancestors

...

(S.O.L. S10, L168.173-179)

With the new acquired beliefs they reject all what they have in their belief system. According to Heron, P'Bitek himself had been a christian, but, at a given time, he realised that his faith was dying and at the same time his nationalistic summit and resentment of missionary suppression of African culture was at its peak.

The alienation in P'Bitek's character stems from ignorance. The proof is that Ocol is unable to answer the questions of Lawino, especially that of distinguishing charms and the crucifix. P'Bitek brings out this controversy in the following articulations :

My husband wears

A small crucifix

On his neck,

And all his daughters

Wear rosaries

But he prohibits me

From wearing the elephant tail

necklace,

(S.O.L. S10, L185-192).

If one takes a cursory glance into the aforementioned argument, one will realize that there is no difference between charms and the crucifix or rosaries and what is incredible actually is that Ocol cannot clarify his faith. He is not responsible of his attitude. Rather, he gets it from his teachers who, like him, are unable to clarify their teachings and therefore hate questioning. P'Bitek makes a clear statement in reference to this when he states that

To them
The good children
Are those
Who ask no questions
Who accept everything
Like the tomb
Which does not reject
Even a dead leper!
Who accept everything
Like the rubbish pit,
Like the pit-latrine
Which does not reject
Even dysentery.
(S.O.L. S9, L112-124)

Lawino insists on the fact of being critical. She reaches this level because she is deeply rooted in traditional religion but Ocol who seems to be ignorant of his own

acquired religion becomes naive and accepts everything like " the tomb" , or "the pit-latrine".

The alienation of Ocol is complete. He is determined and convinced by what he gets from the white men. For him the rites and beliefs of his people are superstitious and are dictated by fear. He can then do nothing to understand the spiritual aspect they contain. He takes the decision to leave them behind him because, to him, they are simply devilish:

He says
He has left behind
All sinful things
And all superstitions and fears.
He says
He has no wish
To be associated any more
With the devil.
(S.O.L. S8, L471-478)

In leaving behind him " all sinful things" Ocol leaves behind him his roots, the life itself. Indeed, as John S. Mbiti postulates in African Religions and Philosophy, " religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned" (2). As such, religion plays an important role and to pretend to get rid of it is not to live but to make oneself cheap. This is what Ocol is doing because he ignores that in Africa, religious beliefs are part of the individual.

Politically , Okot P'Biket reveals a furious fight against political colonialism. In fact, many Africans, best exemplified by Ocol have been running after political issues to the point that they have lost their personality and dignity P'Bitek clarifies this affirmation through Lawino in the following words:

With the coming
Of the new political parties
My husband roams the country
side
Like a wild goat;
(S.O.L. S11, L1-5)

This new political elite is tearing families apart than uniting them. To Lawino, her husband Ocol is no longer a person, he is like a goat. Not even a tamed one but "a wild goat". Insisting on the gravity of Ocol's situation, she proceeds by naming him "another man's dog" (S.O.L. S12, L190).

Lawino is interested in tangible activities not meaningless shouting of Uhuru. She would like to see Ocol going

... to hoe
The new cotton field
Or to sow the millet
Or to harvest the simsim.
(S.O.L. S11, L8-11)

The rest is nothingness for her. Politics has taken Ocol. He is never at home, he is never with his family and he is often unsteady. He has no time to deal with his family affairs because

All day long

He is away

...

He is away all night

.(S.O.L. S11, L12-22)

But the affairs of the whites preoccupy him so much : "He says their car got struck in the mud" (S.O.L. S11, L24-26). And consequently he runs here and there to try to deal with them.

The alienation through political parties is also revealed in the way of clothing. Instead of dressing in the Acoli way, Ocol and his friends :

(They) dress differently,

They dress in robes

Like the Christian diviner

priests.

....

(S.O.L. S11, L66-69)

This indignation makes Lawino confirm that the white man is bent on taking her husband by using all means including Christianity and politics. This is what Flavia Mutamutega calls the " psychological wound" inflected on the whole generation by colonialism and Christianity"(9). This shows how Africans in general are reduced to

U. B.

white men's slaves. From the above, it is evident that the western politics imposed on Africans plays a very important role in this destabilising the African mind. Instead of promoting national consciousness, it breeds a sense of retrogression in national issues among Africans. Ashcroft in The Post Colonial Studies Reader, writes:

> National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystalization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obivious result of the mobilisation of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. (156)

He proceeds to affirm that, this traditional weakness is the result of the mutilation of the colonized and intellectual laziness. This fact explains why Ocol and his friends decide to teach whites' ideas while they are not skilled to do it. They act as propaganda tools for the white man and Lawino wonders why they behave in this manner:

> I have never seen
> A white padré
> In the Democratic Party!
> At the market place meetings
> There are many Catholics
> But I have not heard an Italian
> Shout 'D-P! D-P! Uhuru!'

Do they teach the leaders

In the dead of night

In the Bishop's house?

(S.O.L. S11, L220-229)

For Lawino, the white man is responsible of what is being taught but he is clever because he sends blacks to teach it. Unfortunately these black teachers do not measure the consequences or the tenor of their message. Thus, the white man is so subtle that he alienates the blacks through blacks. They are compared to people who rush to share a buffalo, pushed by hunger:

Someone said

Independence falls like a bull

buffalo

And the hunters

Rush to it with drawn knives,

Sharp shining knives

For carving the carcass.

(S.O.L. S11, L286-292)

This interpretation of independence by the masses shows that they did not master what independence was all about. All those who are out to carve "the carcass of the buffalo" are pushed by their individual interest and not that of the people they are about to represent. Indeed, instead of giving an example of this unity they are fighting for, they give an example of division between brothers. Ocol says that " his brother wants to kill him" (S.O.L. S11, L163). In this way, members of parties are searching

for position and wealth at the expense of the spirit of brotherhood and sharing that has always been the foundation of the African society. P'Bitek depicts this state of affairs and highlights the divergence between people and dislocation in communities because the new political elite wants his own share of the political feast organised by the whites in the name of independence. Ocol belongs to the Democratic Party and fights for Uhuru as well. He is against ignorance and disease. His brother belongs to the Ugandan Congress People and fights for Uhuru and Peace. But, these two brothers are opposed to one another as if :

They have not slept
In the same womb,
You would think
They have not shared
The same breasts!
(S.O.L. S11, L132-136)

It becomes evident that the new political system introduced by colonialism is a politics of separation. Ocol has no project of his own but he is ready all the time to win a good name before white men. Instead of being a man in his homestead, his heart is not in its place, he overjumps like "a newly eloped girl" who is not self-confident but seeks to win confidence from her husband . Lawino laments that

... when the party leaders
Come from Kampala,
My husband jumps,
He is like a newly eloped girl.

(S.O.L. S11, L349-352)

In this state, Ocol is failure to his society as he acts more or less as "another man's dog". He is unaware of his status and the role he is supposed to play in his family and society at large. Lawino tries to awaken him but to no avail. She cries out that

...

You are my master and my
husband
You are the father of these
children

...

Do you not feel ashame
Behaving like another man's dog
Before your own wife and
Children?

(S.O.L. S12, L182-191)

Here, Ocol's responsibilities are reechoed. Lawino wants him to change his ways. She wants him to shake off the heavy darkness in which he is plunged into. As such he will give a good example to his children who will know the ways of their ancestors through their father and this is the dream of Lawino.

In Conclusion, P'Bitek is conscious of the chaos in his society and wants this to be re-examined critically. He warns his people of the invisible forces. Some critics like Taban lo Liyong and Ali Mazrui consider P'Bitek as the latter-day voice of negritude. Indeed, negritude claims for the existence of Africa and African culture at the same

scale as other cultures, mainly the western culture. But as Mutamutega notes: "Okot P'Bitek does not write about Negritude. His writings are against the colonial aftermath in African cultural values especially in Uganda. He exhibits African culture which is despised by sons and daughters of Africa" (8). To P'Bitek, the African world is alive and valid. Therefore, there is no need imitating the white man. P'Bitek is concerned with an authentic self that gives reality to his universe. For him, the fact that African elite scornfully repudiates their roots is beyond comprehension. He wisely advises them to turn to the world that Lawino vividly evokes to retrieve their innate and innermost values.

CHAPITER TWO

CULTURAL NATIONALISM

This chapter examines the role of education both in cultural alienation and revalorisation. It also brings out the proposals of P'Bitek towards the resolution of this dilemma. For him, to get rid of this ill, we have to revisit, revalorise our ancient ways through a revolutionary prowess where the rejected values will be placed at the centre. We have to let African experts in culture teach it in our universities. In his opinion, the universality of education will not be affected in any way, but rather, it will be improved because African ways will be taught by African teachers, that is, the owners of the culture themselves.

In this way, P'Bitek rehabilitates African songs, riddles, proverbs, stories in written literature so that Africans may know who they are and the values of their societies and at the same time, the whole world may know the general cosmic order and world view of the African people. Hence, he demystifies western assumptions that Africans are primitive, barbaric or are a people without a history and who need to be civilised. As such, P'Bitek in Africa's Cultural Revolution says "we have rejected such false assumptions... we have challenged the youths of Uganda to stop aping western singers" (96). Also, through his protagonist in Song of Lawino he celebrates the strength of African culture.

Talking to Serumaga Robert in African Writers Talking, Okot P'Bitek declares that

> I think there's no denying the influence of songs like "Ba Ba

> Black sheep have you any wool?" which we sang at Primary School, and the constant predication by our teachers, mainly from England, that we must "Progress !" We must change, we must have this new civilization; the fact that we learnt all about Shakespeare and so on has done something in our minds to make us, somehow ashamed,.... (152)

Here, P'Bitek raises the question of identity. He insinuates that they do not dare claim for their blackness and their customs because they think these are inferior. He proceeds by arguing that, at Makerere University the situation is not different. In fact, through the educational meal, pupils are "brainwashed" and when they are matriculated into the University, they begin to feel that they have had quite a great deal of western civilization and thus despise their own ways of life. They behave like Ocol who asks his mother "why he was born black" (S.O.O.S2, L71-72) and threatens to smash the mirrors which reflect his blackness. According to P'Bitek, this happens to Africans who are caught between western values and African traditional ways of life.

In Homecoming, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o clarifies the African contribution to the building of Europe and America. He upholds that

> ...Africa has contributed much to the development of the rest of the world through centuries of trade and conquest. It also should not be forgotten that it was African labour and Africa's material wealth that built America and the major cities of Europe".(3)

Interestingly, Ngugi argues that African sculpture has decisively influenced that of Europe : a collection of African art will be found in major museums of the world. Unfortunately, those who are assimilated do not think about such cases. P'Bitek justifies why he had to learn European literature. He holds that he was a victim of circumstances in search of a western invention in the name of a certificate. He asserts that

> When the year ended we made bonfire of the now useless notebooks and English set books. Somehow I managed to pass the literature paper; but on leaving school, I never read another novel or book of poetry, and never visited the theatre until much later on .(Afr.C.R.,21)

The above statement shows that P'Bitek is aware of his identity and he is not ready to sacrifice it at the expense of a foreign one. In fact, George A. Heron, declares that "literature is the communication and sharing of deeply felt emotions..." (1) and hence, P'Bitek does not want to share with Europeans their deep emotions, rather he wants to share with his own people. He does not swallow what he is taught blindly but his eyes are wide open, such that, he looks on other cultures as an extension of his knowledge and not as a base or foundation of his identity.

In the same interview with Serumaga, he affirms that, he is not against having plays from England, from other parts of the world, but, :"I'm concerned that whatever we do should have a root, should have a basic starting point, and this should be Uganda, and then of course, Africa, and then we can expand afterwards" (Afr.C.R., 153). This is the reason why even Lawino recognizes the change within her own

culture when she disagrees with Ocol who says that there is no difference between Lawino and her grand mother who covers herself with animals skins.

In P'Bitek's understanding, the problem of Africans is basically rooted in their education which is western oriented. This makes those who receive this education not to have interest in their own culture. P'Bitek once more asserts this when he tells Serumaga that "the educated folk are spoiled, in the sense that they don't belong, they don't enjoy fully the culture of the people...." (Afr.W.T., 149).

Robert A. Lystad in The African World.A Survey of Social Research, quoting the Memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa holds that "education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life..." (203). According to Lystad, if these principles had been followed carefully by the West during the invasion of Africa, the present difficulties would have been non-existent. It is commonly acknowledged that education in Africa should be developed within an African framework with Africa at the centre. This is the main preoccupation of P'Bitek who feels disappointed with his western education. In his poetry, he insists on an African education. He shows the short-comings of those who are totally alienated by western education and are no longer "alive" . In view of this, Lawino cries to her clansmen over Ocol, her husband, as if he were dead. She laments that

Listen, my clansmen

I cry over my husband

Whose head is lost.

Ocol has lost his head

In the forest of books

... (S.O.L. S12, L1-5)

And the reading

Has killed my man

(S.O.L.S12-L18-19)

Heron adds that according to her, reading makes a young man into a "stump" in 'the ways of his people' and the cream of Acoli young men 'were finished in the forest of books' (149).

For P'Bitek then, the best way of educating oneself is staying in the native community. He gives an example in Horn of My Love, of children who spend the day playing and singing. Any grown-up boy or girl who may be tempted to join them in their games is rebuked and told: "You are no longer a child, you should be ashamed of playing in the sand" (3). He lays an emphasis on this kind of self-education by mentioning a song sung when a boy likes to stay in the kitchen instead of playing with other grown-up boys outside :

Odure , come outside,

Leave the cooking-place,

Fire from the stove will burn your

penis , ah! (3)

For P'Bitek, people who grow up in this way will be pillars in their societies. They will be a pool in which people will fetch cultural values. Once more, he tells Serumaga that, "to spread wider culture into Uganda, one should look into the village and see

what the Ugandans, not any Ugandans, but "the proper Ugandans" (152), not those who have been to school because these are "brainwashed", then see what they do in the village, and see if one cannot find some root there, and build on it. So, P'Bitek considers culture as the foundation of an edifice that makes up human life. Whatever can be built without a strong foundation must end up in ruins. Ocol ends up in ruins as he denies his identity. He roars to his wife in these terms:

To hell
With your Pumpkins
And your old Homesteads,
To hell
With the husks
Of old traditions
And meaningless customs,
...

(S.O.O.S3, L1-7)

According to P'Bitek, this alienation comes from the inside of the walls surrounding African schools and Universities. This is why he proposes to break them down and let the people who know African culture teach African people. He dreams the Africanization of African curriculum in a meaningful manner so that African culture may form the core of the African curriculum and foreign culture will be at the periphery.

Each person who is then destroyed by assimilation has first to realize the disastrous state in which he finds himself and then seeks means to regain his roots.

This ill-intended education from the West must be vomited and the glasses from the West worn not to see one's own customs , maybe unconsciously, have to be removed. This is what Lawino asks her husband when she tells him that

Remove those dark glasses,

Throw them away,

Then remove the scales

That have formed on your eyes

During daylight

When you closed your eyes

In prayer

...

(S.O.L.S13, L49-55).

To Lawino, the white man's church has brought to Africa nothing other than blindness towards one's identity, shyness so that no one can dare plead for his ways of life. This is why she asks Ocol to vomit the shyness he got from the church and embrace the ways of his ancestors.

In his book title The African Image, Mphalele Ezekiel evokes the same idea of going back to one's roots. Giving an example of the French colonization, he compares French education to a pipeline. Each one who enters it forgets about what he is. He forgets about the beauty of Africa and, as P'Bitek adds , the only way out is a resort to the reverse process consisting of coming out of the pipeline: "... if you came out of the French pipeline thirty years ago and realized what they had made of you, you felt the only solution was to go back to the source, 'le pélérinage aux sources', as they say"

(39). In doing this pilgrimage to the sources, one has to think about them, to analyse them and understand them. After this, he will discover the beauty of Africa: the palm trees, savannas, drums, masks, bit of the ancestors, oracles, in sum, all the elements that make up the African culture. Having done this discovery, one feels the urge to sing about them and, to do so, one must first abandon the former symbols (here the French ones).

This discovery is also found in Fanon's reflection when he holds that "each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it" (206). Thus, each generation of Africans is bound to be aware of its mission of perpetuating the ancestral traditions, lest everything will fall apart.

However, Fanon has a positive vision of the future of the Third World culture in general and the African culture in particular because he recognizes that much has been done by Africans in the sense of its rehabilitation when in under he utters that

> In under-developed countries the preceding generations have both resisted to the work of erosion carried by colonialism and also helped on maturing of the struggles of today. We must get rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thickof the fight of minimizing the action of our fathers... (206).

According to him, then, the corner stone has been set up for new generations to keep up building their countries rather than helping the colonizer to demolish them. Instead, they are required to respond to Ocol's challenge:

> Tell the world
>
> In English or in French,

Talk about

The African foundation

...

(S.O.O., S9, L60-64)

explain

The African philosophy

On which we are reconstructing

Our new societies.

(S.O.O.S9, L73-76)

Thus, they will be fighting against the contempt of the action of their fathers. Nevertheless, in order to achieve this, they must themselves be a living part of Africa and of her thought, as Fanon persistently claims. They must be elements of the popular energy which is entirely called forth for liberating Africans. So, all artists and intellectuals are called upon to be conscientious of this fact so that they can enlighten the masses, propagate the riches that are stored in the villages known and should be recognized as objects of African pride and self-confidence.

Concretely, P'Bitek is mainly concerned with the rehabilitation of African culture. Once the Director of the National Cultural Centre in Kampala, he thinks that it is important that our cultural artefacts should be assembled in our national centres. He notes that " the National Cultural Centre of Uganda had to have a Ugandan cultural character" (Afr.C.R., 95). P'Bitek adds that cultural nationalism is neither limited to Acoliland nor to Uganda: "Nairobi is in Kenya, and then in Africa; logically, it should reflect Kenyan culture first and foremost. Precisely, if Nairobi does not do this, what

other city in the world will? ..." (Afr.C.R., 99). Certainly, it is not Paris, London or Tokyo. In view of the above he sets up a national choir that sings mainly Ugandan songs, and gives many successful concerts in and around the city of Kampala. This insistence on national performances awakens Ugandans a great deal. P'Bitek gives an example of the army, police and prison bands competing in Ugandan music and songs. He notes that:

> Each (band) claims to have the largest collection of Ugandan music and songs, all these bands used to play British tunes before Uganda's "Uhuru"; and the crowds used to watch them in silence; but today, wherever they perform, the people dance. They have become vehicles for the music of the people. (97)

This shows the newly awaken spirit of the Ugandan people towards their cultural values. At first, they were considering the bands' concerts as ceremonies to be looked at and enjoyed at distance. But now, they are no longer spectators , they are equally performers. In these exhibitions there are dances, an art exhibition, children play songs, a drama session and a wonderful session on traditional games. P'Bitek does not organize these festivals but he participates in some. George A. Heron notes that he is "both an organizer and a participant, singing and dancing in some of the groups taking part in the festival..." (4).

So, when local folklores are performed, committed natives strive to participate fully than being observers. Everyone has the same feeling and everybody gather

around the same issue and therefore become united. In a similar vein, W.E. Abraham emphasizes this uniting aspect of culture when he says that

> By uniting the people in common beliefs, actions and values, culture fills with order that portion of life which lies beyond the pale of invention...
>
> It fills it in such a way as at the same time to integrate its society, on the basis of common attitudes, common values. It creates the basis of the formulation of a common destiny and cooperation in pursuing it. (Qtd in The Mind of Africa,7)

It is this unity and consciousness that P'Bitek is seeking when he decides to expose Ugandan culture from the unknown and remote tribes enclosed by the country borders to the world scene. He domesticates oral tradition in written literature through songs, stories, proverbs, and riddles. As such, P'Bitek emphasizes the content of his writings as follows: " Here is the poetry of the Acoli people: their lullabies and love songs, their satirical verses, their religious songs and chants, their war songs and funeral dirges" (H.O.M.L., ix). Hence, no aspect of life is left out. So, P'Bitek intends to reflect his people's thought and belief about life, their moral values, sense of humour, fears and joys.

When this uniting characteristic of culture is lacking in Africa, human life becomes quasi impossible. In fact, Aristotle defines a human being as a "social being". So, when he is no longer linked to his society, his existence becomes questionable. It is the lack of this unity that troubles Lawino when she regrets Ocol's participation in politics. Lawino is concerned with the fact that the coming of the new political parties

has separated Ocol from the ways of his people. The disintegration among people is then total. Indeed, Lawino, by referring to the word "homestead" does not mean the buildings, houses and farms, but she means more than that, that is, cordiality between the Acoli people: good relationships which are being and have been spoiled by the conflicts in politics. People living in the same community are no longer in harmony. On the contrary, they hate each other. Lawino says:

I do not understand
The meaning of Uhuru!
I do not understand
Why all the bitterness
And the cruelty
And the cowardice,
The fear
The deadly fear that
Eats the hearts
Of the political leaders
...
.(S.O.L.S11, L 275-284)

According to Lawino, political leaders are an embodiment of cruelty, violence and hatred. Unfortunately, these ills do not remain only in them , but are transmitted the masses. This is why she goes on describing quarrels between ocol and his brother:

When my husband
Opens a quarrel

With his brother

I am frightened!

.(S.O.L.S11, L 127-130)

For Lawino, politicians are not fighting for the people. In fact, they are fighting for "Uhuru" which is meaningless for the masses. Not only the homestead is destroyed but the individual is also destroyed. It is in this vein that Lawino speaks of the masculinity and the athletic pride which she feels Ocol has lost. Similarly, the Prisoner's sense of his own fate is made more bitter by the memory of his own manhood :

Do you know

I was a footballer

And a boxer

I have been a wrestler

And a runner,

...

.(S.O.P. S1, L53-57)

These qualities have been destroyed by politics. P'Bitek commitment towards culture is so strong that in his process of cultural revolution, he accuses other writers of not following the right path of the revolution. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his introduction to Okot's Africa's Cultural Revolution remarks that "while I agree with P'Bitek's call for a cultural revolution, I sometimes feel that he is in danger of emphasizing culture as if it could be divorced from its political and economic basis" (xii). Thus, for Ngugi it is politics and economics that make Africans ape a decadent white culture, and pattern themselves to the West. They are the material base for their apemanship and he thinks

that when Jomo Kenyatta says that "a culture has no meaning apart from the social life on which it is built..." he is absolutely right. Amilicar Cabral, like Ngugi, espouses the same idea in viewing "national liberation as an act of culture". Hence, he recognizes the supremacy of culture over politics and economics.

Without national consciousness and cohesion, there is no possibility of national liberation. Cabral declares in "National Liberation as an Act of Culture" that "whatever may be the ideology or idealist characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people" (160). He emphasizes the fact that national liberation struggle as a historical act also becomes an act of cultural resistance. For him, the great force of culture as an instrument of nationalist resistance derives from its ideological appeal in terms of its ability to reflect history, its own history. Heron adds that "one result of P'Biket's lack of interest in economics and low evaluation of the strength of economic forces is the very pale reflection of economic forces in his poems"(129).

What is important in Heron's analysis is that he clarifies P'Bitek's idea. He tells us why he seems to forget about economics. In fact, he notes that P'Bitek does not ignore the economic basis of his cultural revolution. Rather, he denies that economics is the basis and contradicts Marx in asserting the primacy of religious and cultural expression over economics. All the preceding comments show us how P'Bitek sees culture as a priority to human life. He has known, like Fanon, that "the demand for a national culture and the affirmation of the existence of such a culture represent a special battlefield" (209). Instead of launching himself into politics he concentrates on

cultural nationalism. He applies what he teaches namely that a real intellectual has to be humble and serve like a spokes person for his people.

Another important issue on P'Bitek's cultural renaissance is the manipulation of the language by his characters in his different poems. A language is a vehicle of communication. Obiechina, in Culture, Tradition and Society in West African Novel, affirms that it is the novelist's tool to express his ideas. He argues that

> The novelist tools are words. His description of his characters' appearance, clothes, actions, habits and inner feelings and thoughts, his exposition of a particular moral or vision, the ordering of his incidents and events to convey that moral or vision are conveyed entirely by his manipulation of language .... (155)

Indeed, each people has their way of appearing , clothing, acting, exposing their thought and morality. These are elements that make up an identity of a given people. Obiechina tells us that all these can be expressed by language. Thus, language is a very important identifying element in the life of a given people. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o adds that the first achievement of colonialism has been the imposition of the colonizer's language. The consequence of this has been the fact that anyone who learns it begins to despise the peasant majority and their 'barabaric' tongues. And, by acquiring the thought-processes and values of his adopted tongue, he becomes alienated from the values of his mother tongue, or from the language of the masses. Ocol remains an exemplar of such alienated people. Lawino on this note laments that

He abuses me in English

And he is so arrogant

He says I am rubbish,

He no longer wants me!

(S.O.L., S1,L56-59)

Ocol is proud of his knowledge of the English language and this makes him to be deaf to the language of Lawino, which yet, contains much advice. Hence, Ocol goes astray because of the language he acquired outside his homestead and forgets that, as Ngugi insists " a language after all is a carrier of values fashioned by a people over a period of time" (16) .

P'Bitek then manipulates his language in order to reveal Acoli beliefs, sympathy, joys, fears, brief and their life as a whole. Most of the time, we find questions in P'Bitek's poetry that are intended to intensify the emotions of interlocutors, be they implicit or explicit. From the moment when the prisoner hears :

Do you plead

Guilty

or

Not guilty?

(S.O.P., S1, L27-30).

These words repeatedly recur in his mind because, to him, they are meaningful. He understands that he needs to plead guilty so that he can escape at least the torture of the light that is never put out, whether ~~the~~ he is guilty or not. So, this question does

not need an explicit answer but pushes him to think more. A similar case occurs when Lawino addresses Ocol. She says :

Ocol, my husband,

My friend,

What are you talking?

You saw me when I was young

(S.O.L. S4, L36-39)

Here, Ocol is not asked to respond to Lawino but rather, to change his attitude. Lawino wants him to be aware of their youth when he was "wooing" her before he fell "in love with a beautiful girl who speaks English" (S.O.L.S2, L4-6).

Hence, Lawino is presented as someone standing in a world of loneliness, despised by her husband and thus looking for help from her village people. She is made to speak for the Acoli man. This is why she is crying for help, summoning upon all her clansmen without exception:

O, my clansmen,

Let us all cry together!

Come,

Let us mourn the death of my

Husband,

....

.(S.O.L.S12, L237-241)

We know that in Africa mourning is a communal act. The alienation Ocol is undergoing necessitates the intervention of the whole village and by extension, the

whole Africa. This is why in her cry she calls her clansmen for assistance. In order for her cry to be heard, she does not want to go on crying alone but she is asking her clansmen to join her: "come" and "cry together". In this way, their cry will be heard. Lawino is calling for her clansmen's sympathy like the singer does in " The warrior fights alone":

The warrior fights alone,
Behold the bull dies alone oh!
Abong, why, help your brother;
The only one, he is dying, oh!
(H.O.M.L, 123)

Here, it is uncalled for that a person may fight alone while living in a community. This is why 'Abong' is asked to act. Unfortunately, he is asked an impossible service because the warrior is fighting with death. The singer is requesting for assistance from the community even in difficult or impossible matters. Though ironically, the prisoner also has recourse to this intuitive solidarity while addressing his wife :

The best lawyers
Will defend me,
Our black nationalist judges
And those who hired me
Will set me
Free...
(S.O.P. S7, L39-44)

The prisoner does not believe in the beauty of lawyers because he is suffering from an imprisonment without a crime.

To conclude, P'Bitek has undertaken a noble and difficult task in his fight for cultural nationalism in Acoli Land in particular and Africa as a whole. Nevertheless, in spite of the problems he encounters, he goes on to challenge paternalist assumptions that foreign cultures are superior to Ugandan or African culture. Rather, he encourages Ugandan artists , singers , poets , and dramatists to imprint and valorise the African culture without forgetting that no one is complete alone, and recognize that "everyone" would like to have the modern facilities that science offer- electricity, good homes, a good bed , a good water supply"(Afr.C.R., 100).

CHAPITER THREE

ORAL TRADITION AND AESTHETIC TRANSFER

This chapter examines elements of oral tradition in P'Bitek's poetry. These elements include among other aspects local imagery and symbols, proverbs, myth, and repetition and the role of performer and audience. The chapter does not stand out apart from some critical aspects, that is why it points out some difficulties of translation revealed by critics and ends by indicating that these criticisms do not affect the greatness of P'Bitek's achievement.

As far as oral performance is concerned, P'Bitek's poetry supplies various instances that show the spontaneity which exists in oral literature. According to the subdivision of African literature made by Ruth Finnegan, the performer has an opportunity to exhibit his skills and is at the centre of the centre of the crowd around him . There is what Kofi calls recreational and festival occasions where artists perform in order to share their creative joy with their own people. There is also a performance consisting of a dominating central event such as a ritual, ceremonial occasion, etc. (Qtd Kofi Agovi, 173-174). All these aspects of performance are found in P'Bitek's poetry and particularly in The Horn of my Love. For instance, players of the nanga are "loved and feared. They are loved because of their ability to compose songs that touch the hearts of the people...; they are feared because of their sharp tongue" (11-12). Here, we have the artist who performs and the audience listen to him. The more the performer performs, the more the audience is touched. The performer is at the centre of the action and the audience complements his actions. P'Bitek says that they are "killed" by such songs:

Where are you going Lagama?

I am going to Death's home.

Take my greetings to Death.

Okay!

Listen, a certain man has composed a

song,

And the song has killed Okoli.

Yes, sure, sure.

Thank you for your greetings,

I will take them to Death. (12)

Taking into account the fact that death and its corollaries are feared in Africa, as Mphalele shows it " the ancestors will keep you and carry you, you do not throw an old man or woman out because they are soon to become ancestors...." (39), it is striking to hear that there is a person (Lagama) who can go to Death's home especially when this is told children whose imagination are not mature yet. This inevitably creates in them a feeling of fear when they sit listening to him under the bright moonlight but fortunately. A.H. Gayton calls it in "Perspectives in Folklore", as an " imbibing traditional knowledge and attitudes" (Qtd Bodunde, 12).

Another instance of performance in which the artist wants to share his artistic ingenuity with his own people is the 'Otole-the war dance. The oralist says that

Aliker, return my cattle;

You coward,

Tell the army of the white man

To stop, and wait for me,

We shall meet at Lamola;

O yes, o yes;

Muloji is a coward

Even a woman defeats him;

(H.O.M.L., 14)

As P'Bitek clarifies it, this song embodies the history of a chiefdom. Consequently , its " significance and meaning can be best understood in the context of the inter-chiefdom strifes,..." (H.O.M.L., 14). Here, the singer is condemning Eliya Aliker, the chief of Payira before his people because many people have lost their cattles in the war that he has engaged his people into. The singer wants his clansmen to share the feeling that their chief is coward; that he is a slave to the white man. Hence, this song shows how the singer wants to conscientise his clansmen of the odious effect of colonisation and the cowardice of African leaders.

Another aspect of oral performance is seen in the burial scene. P'Bitek vividly describes the burial ceremony in eloquent terms. He says that

> When the grave is ready, a brief ceremony, "kwer" takes place inside the house where the corpse is lying. It is attended only by a few elderly people [...] . The widow is made to lie over the dead man, or his eldest son. The father of the dead man, or his eldest son covers the couple with a " duiker" skin and taps their heads with "Olutu know" (a wooden spoon used for making millet bread), and " ogwec" (a wooden spoon used

for making gravy). Then the head of the dead man is shaved and smeared with " pala", red ochre and oil....(H.O.M.L., 21)

The aforementioned throws more light on rituals that are organized around the corpse of a dead person. This corpse is at the centre of all what is performed. Unless there is a corpse, the rituals cannot take place. From time immemorial, death has always been an event which brings people together. And all what they do is dictated by fear. Ntahokaja Jean-Baptiste in Imigani n'Ibitito notes that "un des événements les plus dramatiques au debut du monde fut l'introduction de la mort dans le monde" (20). " one of the most dramatic events at the beginning was the introduction of death in the world " (translation mine) . For this reason, people are eager to chase it away and this is realised as they ululate against it. P'Bitek shows us how men, followed by women, "armed with battle axes, make ululations and shout the praise name of the clan" (H.O.M.L., 22).

In so doing, they wish to see death chased away and they do it in an organized way with a soloist and a chorus :

Soloist: Oh, fire rages at Layma, oh,
Fire rages in the valley of river
Cumu.
Chorus : Everything is utterly utterly
destroyed ;
If I could reach the homestead of
death's mother,
Soloist : My daughter, I would make a long

grass torch;

Chorus : If I could reach the homestead of

death's mother,

I would destroy everything utterly

utterly;

Like the fire that rages in the valley

of river cumu, oh!

(H.O.M.L., 23)

From the above performance, we clearly see how togetherness is strength. They do not only aspire for solidarity against death but also express a strong desire to exterminate death by destroying with rage its background, that is, its mother's homestead. As Taban lo Liyong says in Popular Culture of East Africa, " he or she receives the message by the ear and responds to it by the whole organism"(vi).

Besides performance, other aspects of oral tradition in P'Bitek's poetry include the usage of local imagery, proverbs, myth and repetition. Heron points out that

> The most important influence Acoli songs have on Song of Lawino is the imagery Okot uses. Okot has completely avoided the stock of common images of English literature through his familiarity with the stock of common images of Acoli literature"..(7)

The above statement reveals that P'Bitek's objective is not out to imitate the West like the Pioneer Poets. Rather, he adopts a method of using Acoli images found in Acoli

and this approach distinguishes he is writing from that of previous poets (particularly the Pioneer Poets).

The accumulation of Acoli images gives P'Bitek's poetry a taste of freshness and a sense of Africanness. For instance, we have the traditional images used by Lawino to describe Clementina, the woman she shares a man with. She describes Clementina's lips as " red hot like glowing charcoal" (S.O.L S2. L26-27). And when she "dusts powder on her face, she resembles the wizard getting ready for the midnight dance"(S.O.L S2. L34-36). This description lies beyond the literal translation and matches with the meaning P'Bitek has in mind. Obviously a wizard is abnormal and cannot act under daylight. By trying to change her appearance, she demolishes her personal image and ipsofacto, becomes a wizard who fears to appear under daylight. This shows clearly how Lawino is indignant of the woman with whom she shares a husband. In section eleven of Song of Lawino, Lawino compares independence to a fallen buffalo where eager politicians rush to share like hunters. She declares :

Independence falls like a bull

buffalo

And the hunters

Rush to it with drawn knives,

Sharp shining knives

For carving the carcass.

And if you chest

Is small, bony and weak

They push you off,

...

.(S.O.L S11, L287-295)

Lawino being raised in a traditional milieu compares politicians to hunters. Indeed, hunting is a vital activity which supplies games to families and most often than not, it is the preoccupation of men. So, each man hunts so that he could feed his family. This is why Lawino says that when a bull buffalo falls, the hunters rush with sharp knives, for carving the carcass. She adds that the one whose chest is small, bony and weak is pushed off. And, if his knife is blunt, he gets the dung on his elbow. This shows the cruelty, self-centredness and carelessness of hunters. In Lawino's expression, so are the politicians. Instead of striving for the establishment of a harmonious development of their country politicians , like most hunters strive for the self. This explains why they join political parties "when they have the purse in the trouser pocket carrying only the coins" (S.O.L S11. L334-336). Thus, Lawino criticises politicians for being selfish.

Lawino equally uses the image of the python to portray the lives of Acoli politicians. She compares their disappearance after having been voted to the python "with a bull water buck in its tummy" (S.O.L S11. L511-512). Again, instead of responding to the needs of people, they only fill their bellies with the nation's wealth. Referring to the migration of the kite found in an Acoli song (Bodunde (10)), Lawino says that

They return

To the countryside

For the next elections

Like the kite

That returns during the Dry

Season

...

. (S.O.L S11, L515-520)

P'Bitek's imagery is not limited to animals. He uses other meaningful images like the horn, bull and spear which are very symbolic. Heron clarifies it when he says that " Okot's use of the words ' bila' (horn), ' twon' (bull) and ' tong' (spear) reflects their social importance and their use in oral literature" (49). This means that, the objects are very symbolic in Acholiland society. Lawino relies on such symbols to lament her husband's loss of traditional touch. For instance, Bodunde tells us that "the horn is not only a musical instrument but also a ritual object connected with the whole process of initiation into adulthood" (8). In given ceremonies, young men and women blow their horns as symbols of their own attributes and reputation. Heron comments that "he (every Acholi young man) will blow the horn to signal his position to other during a hunting or in a battle and after the battle the notes of the horn tell the women of victory before they see their men " (49).

So, a horn is so characteristic of each individual, that the memory of the notes of a young man's horn is nostalgically important to mourners when he dies. Equally, Lawino speaks of her own reputation that goes beyond her own environment like a sound of a horn :

I was the leader of the girls

And my name blew like a horn

Among the Payira and I played

On the bow harp and praised my love.

(S.O.L. S4, L30-35).

In sum, Lawino uses the symbol of a horn in many cases to show its importance in Acoli customs. In fact, to show the gravity of death, she uses the horn to contrast the celebration of the majority of the clan after a victorious battle (a very great joy) with the mourning of those who have lost a son (an extreme pain if we consider the connotation Africans have on a child especially a boy). The former come home "blowing their horns, loud and clear!" while the latter chant dirges. In the same vein, Lawino evokes the sound of a horn as success. She says that the horn of the victor is loud and proud while that of a vanquish is silent.

Another instance in which the horn is used is in the song " The only son of my mother has melted away". The oralist chants :

....

Son of Alal blew his horn

Son of Alal used to blow his horn,

Ee, he blew his horn standing atop the

buffalo that he had killed;

My mother used to blow his horn from

the hill top, oh.

(H.O.M.L., 131)

From the above-mentioned, the singer is regretting the memory of his brother with his horn. He is regretting his disappearance and consequently the lack of his prowess for he is not blowing his horn for its own sake but "atop the buffalo that he had killed". This shows that he was really a man who was singing his manhood to affirm his existence in his society.

Another image which is very symbolic is "(bull). Bodunde tells us that "among the Acoli, the bull is a panegyric title used as a compliment for bravery and respect" (9). A man of reputation and fame is considered as a bull. In her speech, Lawino shows how the ancestors are bulls and at the same time regrets her husband's loss of manners and uses this occasion to remind him of the glory of his grandfather so that he can change. She says :

...

Your grandfather was a Bull

among men

And although he died ago

His name still blow like a horn

His name is still heard

Throughout the land.

(S.O.L S12, L201-206)

Lawino combines the symbols of " bull" and "horn" to bring Ocol back to reason, because, seemingly, he does not notice the respectability and the fame of his ancestors. According to her, a bull is a strong and determined fighter whose qualities are very much recognized. It symbolises strength and courage without forgetting respect. She

says that "in a battle he (Ocol's grandfather assimilated to a bull) fought at the front fierce like a wounded buffalo-girl (S.O.L S12, L223-225). So, Ocol's grandfather is described as "a Bull among men" (S.O.L S12, L201-202)and his grandson Ocol is given the little of " son of the Bull"(S.O.L S12, L18). In so doing, Lawino reminds her husband his lineage pride by giving him respectable titles.

In The Horn of My Love, the symbol of "bull" is plentifully. It may be found in the following songs: " The Bull Gonorrhoea" (68) " Get a dry peg" (72) " You People, ask Barakia" (73), Where shall I find a Bull" (83), and 'The only Son of my Mother has Melted Away " (131). In each of these songs, the term "bull" is referred to as a sign of strength, power, respect, and fame in society. For instance, in "You People, ask Barakia", when the singer sings that

You people, ask Barakia,
Where will he get a wife?
You Dica,
This bull witch
Where will he get a wife?
The bushy headed man,
Ee, he was already a witch
in his mother's womb.(73)

The term "bull" here refers to a supernatural man . A man who deserves respect and reverence because in Africa, witches are often feared and above all, this man " was already a witch in his mother's womb", which is enough for him to be feared.

Another symbol common in P'Bitek's poetry is the "tong" (spear). The spear has a ritual significance within chiefdom in Acoli community. Heron associates it to the two previous symbols in affirming that

> Because of its role in hunting and battle in achieving the manly reputation of a proud blower of horns and a bull among men, the spear is important as a practical object, a ritual object, and a symbol both of general manly qualities and specifically of sexual prowess and the penis. (50)

These lines above demonstrate how a spear is a culmination of the aspirations of an Acoli man. It is an object of "a proud blower of horns and a bull among men". This means, a spear is not taken by any person, but by someone who has achieved something to blow the horn and a courageous man to be called a " bull among men", not a coward who can be defeated by a woman like Aliker (H.O.M.L,14).

Socially, the spear appears to be a symbol of reproduction (the penis) and hence acquires a mystic image for all members of Acoli land. In one of the songs sung during spirit possession ceremonies, it is associated with the sexual privileges that the diviner has when he comes to perform his rituals in a given homestead :

> The spear with the hard point,
> Let it split the granite rock;
> The spear that I trust,
> Let it split the granite rock;
> .....(H.O.M.L. 91)

As Sebigo Josephine claims in " A Stylistic Analysis of Okot P'Biket's Song of Lawino", this song shows that " the phallus of a man is compared to a spear with a hard head that penetrates into a hard rock"(73).

In many instances, the term " spear" is used with such a connotation. Lawino gives us an example when she advises her husband that:

Ask for a spear you will

trust

One that does not bend easily

Like the earth-worm.

Ask them to restore your

manhood!

For I am sick

Of sharing a bed with a woman!

(S.O.L S13, L123-130)

The above view drives us to the fact that she wants her husband to possess a spear "that does not bend easily like the earth-worm". In this way, his manhood will be restored, otherwise he will remain a woman, which makes Lawino sick to share a bed with another 'woman'. She compares her husband's soft spear with an earth-worm. So, she concludes that her husband's phallus is not strong enough as she expected. It does not work properly as it should for "a true man". Briefly, the above statement means that Ocol lacks the power of a true African man in sexual matters. Beside the fact that P'Bitek uses the spear as an image for sexual potency, he equally uses it for

physical strength. For instance, Lawino refers to the spear as a remedy to Ocol's uprootedness and advises him to be rearmed with a "new spear":

Beg forgiveness from them (ancestors)
And ask them to give you
A new spear
A new spear with a sharp and
hard point.
A spear that will crack the rock
....(S.O.L S13, L217-222)

Ocol reacts to this in the opposite sense. Instead of being rearmed, he claims that even those who still armed (like Lawino) will be disarmed, if need be, by force. He maintains that

You will be disarmed,
If need be, by force,
All your spears
And colourful shields,
All your bows
And poisoned arrows
Will be destroyed,
Not one will be left
Even for the museums.
(S.O.O. S5. L152-160)

Ocol does not care for his rearmament but he is committed even to disarm all those who think they are still armed. Above all, he threatens blacksmiths to be jailed (S.O.O.S5, L161-162) so that they no longer produce spears.

P'Bitek uses this image to describe victory in wars and plays. When Madi killed Abuga, Chief of Atyak Chiefdom in 1906, he celebrated his victory driven by the retaliated warriors of Atyak across the Nile saying that "his spear forced the Pagiri (Madi) to cross the river"(H.O.M.L,15). While the football match between Acoli and Lango is fiercely played and the Acoli team and their supporters sing that "spears met spears" (H.O.M.L,15) to mean that force is opposed to force.

The second aspect of oral tradition in P'Bitek's poetry is the usage of proverbs. These are common features of oral tradition. J. Olowo Ojoade in "African Moral Education Seen through Oral Literature Together with Foreign Analogues" stresses that " in no part of the globe are proverbs as important as in the continent of Africa". (99). In P'Bitek's poetry, especially in Song of Lawino, the central proverb is that built around the pumpkin. As Sebigo Josephine notes: "it is said that the Acoli were until recently semi-nomadic"(75). She argues that they moved to new pieces ofin fertile soils, famine, political disputes or wars. Generally, pumpkins grew wild in the deserted settlements and, anyone who possessed these settlements would leave the pumpkins growing because to destroy them, would be a destruction of food and consequently the destruction of life. In the same vein, Bodunde says that " in the Acoli oral tradition, the pumpkin planted around the homestead is never uprooted even when the old homestead is to be abandoned (10-11). This is why Lawino mostly recourses to the proverb " The pumpkin in the old homstead must not be uprooted" (S.OL. S2,

L301-303). As such, Lawino warns her husband Ocol who has uprooted the pumpkin in his old homestead following the new ways brought by the colonizers. So, the pumpkin stands for continuity and unity between the new and the old. Thus, when Ocol threatens to plough it up (S.O.O. S1, L150-153), he is threatening to destroy the only link that ties him to his ancestry.

With regards to proverbs P'Bitek sees them as means of "self-realization, better human relationships , the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual" and consequently the whole community. Lawino sticks to the idea of the revalorisation of the African identity. She reveals her vision through the following proverbs:

No leopard
Would change into a hyena,
And the crested crane
Into the bold-headed,
Dung-eating vulture,
The long-necked and graceful
giraffe
Cannot become a monkey.
(S.O.L35, L371-379)

She concludes steadfastly that " Let no one uproot the pumpkin" (S.O.L. S5, L380-381). Here, Lawino conveys a very important message to her people. A message of "self-realization" because, from the behaviour of Ocol, she remarks that many an African are not self-conscientious. Instead, Lawino would like her husband to be like

her (Lawino's) friend who sings praises to Lawino's smooth and black skin (S.O.L.S5, L355-360). Lawino then conscientises by indicating what is the right type of values, what are the attitudes inherent to their survival without making too much noise. But , she does it, in telling them how even animals are proud of what they are and would hate to be changed into any other animal, however, strong or beautiful it may be.

To emphasize the deep conviction of Lawino in traditional values, Heron quotes the Acoli version of Song of Lawino, a quotation that ends by the repeated proverb of the pumpkin and this version is translated as follows:

> A river does not flow back to its source, people don't behave like wild animals. But a strong tree must have strong deep roots in the ground if it is to struggle and stand against a whirlwind... THE PUMPKIN IN THE OLD HOMESTEAD MUST NOT BE UPROOTED , THE PUMPKIN IN THE OLD HOMESTEAD MUST NOT BE UPROOTED , DON'T UPROOT THE PUMPKIN.(40)

The repetition of this proverb reflects the inner feeling of Lawino towards her addressees.

The third aspect of oral literature in P'Bitek's poetry is the use of myth. Heron views in his chapter entitled "Myth making" P'Bitek's vision of the roots of the problems described in his problems as a reflection of "his own experience and his attitude to the function of myths within a society" (131) . In this sense, P'Bitek's poetry can be seen as a personal construction in order to expose the ills of the society and thereby re-establish them. This is why Heron considers Malaya as "the

mouthpiece of a particular set of ideas as her 'social behaviour', is untrue to that of the social type she represents" (127).(sic)

Equally, Lawino and Ocol also can be seen as mouthpieces of particular ideas respectively: the traditional ways of life and the modern ways represented by westernisation. Heron calls Song of Malaya, Song of Lawino and song of Ocol a "colloquy" on value conflicts in contemporary Ugandan society" (127).

Brief, Lawino, Ocol, and Malaya are each to some extent, mouthpieces of P'Bitek's satirical agenda: their lampoons and general satirical attacks express comments on society which are P'Bitek's own. In the same way, Bodunde tells us that "one of the technical devices used by P'Bitek in Song of Lawino is the incorporation of the Acoli myth to shape Lawino's character as well as to locate the setting of the poem"(11). P'Bitek himself shows his interest in myths in mentioning an example of myth entitled "the story of the split between the Alur and Acoli" (Afr.C.R.26). Again, his interest to myth is shown by modern objects that are troubling Lawino. Whenever she fails to account for a given device which appears strange to her, she makes recourse in myths surrounding this device in her tradition. For instance, unable to relate to the process by which electricity works, Lawino says :

They say
When the Rain-cock
Opens its wings
The blinding light
And the deadly fire
Flow through the wires

And lighten the streets

And the house;

And the fire

Goes into the electric stove.

(S.O.L.S6,L78-87)

Here, Lawino considers the functioning of electricity as a myth : "they say" because to her it is beyond ordinary reasoning and she takes refuge in her own tradition. In her opinion, the electric light is blinding and surprisingly comes from the Rain-cock's wings. Moreover, it contains the deadly fire. But here, she is astonished to hear that

> He who touches the electric stove containing this deadly fire this one runs through him and cuts the heart string as they cut the umbilical cord, and the one stands there, dead, a standing corpse!" (S.O.L.S6,L88-93).

This is a myth in Lawino's understanding.

The last aspect of oral literature in P'Bitek's poetry is the repetition and the role of audience in oral performances. In fact, repetition is recurrent in oral performances. Since oral literature is a participatory art, the audience comes in from time to time during performances to repeat stock phrases. This issue is illustrated by what P'Bitek tells Serumaga in Duerden, D.and Pieterse, C.:

> In the countryside we don't have artificial drama or artificial music, or anything like this, and by "artificial" I mean things taken out of context. In the villages you have death-dances and marriage dances and so on, and the poetry and the death-

> dances are about death , and they are very real, and when people are repeating these poems they are shedding tears at the same time . (153)

Thus, P'Bitek excels in the usage of repetition. As seen above , the repetition of " The pumpkin in the old homestead must not be uprooted" (Heron, 40) intends to emphasize Lawino's attempt and wish to preserve traditional values in the face of the destructive influence of western tradition. Lawino attacks seriously Ocol for his alienation from his own roots. For example, she is very critical about Ocol's relation with Clementina and repeats this utterance "As white people do" in a song-like rendering to emphasize Ocol's obsession with white man's social values:

> You kiss her on the cheek
> As white people do
> You kiss her open sore lips
> As white people do
> You kiss the slimy saliva
> From each other's mouths
> As white people do.
> (S.O.L. S3, L 169-175)

Lawino repeats "As white people do" to reveal to Ocol that he is not behaving as the Acoli do but as strange people. So, Ocol should notice that he is going astray from his own ways.

Repetition in P'Bitek's poetry cannot be exhausted but some examples are conclusive. Lawino insists on her identity to show her husband how she is proud of it by repeating the locution "I am":

Listen
My father comes from Payira,
My mother is a woman of Koc !
I am a true Acoli
A am not a half-caste
I am not a slave girl;
(S.O.L.S 5, L15-20).

This shows how Lawino wants Ocol to have a vivid image of what she means. She is not ashamed of her identity but on the contrary she is proud of it, which allows her to repeat it so that her message can reach its destination.

The lengthy song of " Warrior's Titles" is another good example in which P'Bitek uses repetition. The usage of emphasises the action and achievements of the warrior:

One who throws only one spear and
puts the enemy to flight.
One who kills a man and a boy.
One who kills by moonlight.
One who kills a cripple; one who kills
an enemy who is crawling away
One who kills by night when the owls

cry.

One who kills secretly; whose deed is

not celebrated.

...

(H.O.M.L 176-178)

Equally, the chant "The ancestors have spoken today" (H.O.M.L.93-95) is imbued with repetitions especially towards the end where the Elder speaks and the audience repeats:

...

All

Let it take , take, take.

Elder

Let the setting sun take them

All

Let the setting sun take them.

All

Let it take

Elder

Let it take

All

Let it take

...

(95)

Also, there are many instances of repetition in Song of Prisoner:

She kisses

My bosom

My Belly button

My back

My buttocks

...

(S1, L9-14)

All these examples are evidences of the dominance of oral aspects in P'Bitek's poetry. The singer repeats the possessive adjective "my" to show his feelings, or to show that each part of the body that is kissed is his and not another's. Consequently, he demonstrates the relationship that exists between him and his lover.

Concerning the audience involvement, it is a significant aspect in oral art. Abur Abarry in "Oral Rhetoric and Poetics" states that "this is so important that its removal will render any oral performance meaningless" (24). Again, P'Bitek insists on audience involvement in his interview with Serumaga in Duerden, D. and Pieterse, C. when he says:

> We had Fellows of the Royal College of surgeons, for instance, a Mr.Odoga, who came from Mulango for this week-end, and he was really completely involved in everything, carrying his tape-recorder with him and taking part in occasional dances here and there ...(150).

This shows that once an individual gets into contact with traditional exhibitions, there is no way to stand apart from it. In this respect, Heron writes: "P'Bitek was both an organizer and a participant, singing and dancing in some of the groups taking part in the festival,..." (4).

This explains why Lawino, who is the mouthpiece of Okot, wants to involve the audience in her narration in the song-like type of repetition illustrated above. And a direct address to the audience is signalled by expressions like "come brother" and "my clansmen":

O, my clansmen,
Let us all cry together!
Come,
Let us mourn the death of my
husband,
(S.O.L.S12, L259-263)

Here, Lawino wants to share her inner feelings with the audience.

In sum, this device provides an insight into the nature of oral aesthetic, which one may describe as a collective production involving the oral performer and audience. This involvement slips slowly into the absorption of the audience. Indeed, oral performance depends for its success on the artistic ingenuity of the performer. The master performer creates charm, joy, fear, sorrows, and wonder with the skilful use of words. Patrick Mbunwe-Samba gives a similar view in "Oral Literature and Education" when he states that:

> In the African society the time comes in the story where there is no audience as the listeners are involved in the dialogue or in the singing or even questioning the narrator to the point that everyone is involved, listener and teller a like". (93)

This is what Lawino is looking for in her calling for her clansmen's attention as well as her husband's attention. She wants them to break spontaneously into her view and embrace her way. She does all that she can bring them to her opinion, even though her husband is seemingly stubborn.

P'Bitek's poetry therefore culminates in the transformation into facts of his dream of preservation of tradition. This third chapter has shown how P'Bitek deals with oral tradition and aesthetic transfer by transposing African customs, African beauty and African behaviour. We can affirm that P'Bitek has succeeded in his cultural renaissance as well as his literary revolution. O.R. Dothorne emphasises this point in his The Black Mind: A History of African Literature where he states that " Okot P'Bitek is one of the most important writers emerging on the East African scene. He is work presents almost a complete break with the traditional past, for instead of praising the group, he berates it" (300). This statement clarifies the extent to which P'Bitek distances himself from the tradition of writing in vogue in favour of the preservation of tradition. He does not follow the western model of writing as most of his predecessors. This is why P'Bitek's songs are somehow odd and he says himself that "these poems are called songs because in Acoli language the word "poem" does not exist" (Qtd Lee Nicholas, 250). So, what he writes is long, that is long songs dealing with many aspects of life.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding this innovation and success of P'Bitek, it is worth mentioning some difficulty, namely the one of translation that killed the flavour of his message. Heron mentions it when he says that "inevitably, there have been some losses of idiomatic and proverbial meaning through translation" (55). He mentions many instances of difficulties of translation. For instance, in Song Lawino, Lawino's description of the low status of bachelors is supported by her use of the proverb 'Labot kilwangoka dek wi kot' while in the English version this proverb is omitted. Heron concludes that this kind of problem may be part of the reason for the omission of section 14 from this version, as it is full of proverbial sayings. Moreover, Taban lo Liyong is equally critical of P'Bitek's translation method throughout the poem:

> ...the meaning of deep Acoli proverbs are made very, light by their rendition into English 'word for word' rather than 'sense for sense' or 'proverb for proverb". So, P'Bitek has devalued Acoli 'gagi' for a trifle English ten cents..." (T.L.W.141).

However, in spite of these criticisms, P'Bitek's achievement remains unmatched among critics of his contemporary. He affirms this when he says : "When I was doing my work on the oral literature of the people of Northern Uganda, I first got the inspiration. I found that the poetry was rich, the oral literature was full-blooded, the dance was wonderful and the music just inspiring. And I just couldn't stop..." (Qtd Durden, D. and Pieterse, C., 149).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work set out to validate the thesis that culture is the source of a people's identity and that with the changing times there is a necessity for its domestication.

In the discussion, we realized that Okot P'Bitek has a sad feeling about the western invasion of Africa and wants his clansmen in particular and Africans in general to share with him the same feeling. We noticed that Africans have the habit of copying everything from West. As such, they tend to denigrate African values and priority is often given to the West values. To get rid of these ills, Africans have to revisit their traditional values, to renegotiate their own culture and operate a kind of cultural revolution. In this vein, Okot undertakes to rehabilitate African songs, riddles, proverbs, stories in written literature so that Africans may know who they are and the values of their societies.

In order to understand P'Bitek's message, we examined elements of oral tradition in his poetry. These elements include local imagery , symbols, the use of proverbs , myth, repetition, and the role of performers and audience. We discovered that Okot is able to domesticate these elements in written literature.

By the way of contribution to scholarship, this work has continued the fascinating but crucial debate on the prior relevance and central role of African culture on the literary map of world tradition using P'Bitek's poetry as a springboard of such a discussion. In order to reform the African mind about the African identity and the preservation of the rich cultural heritage, school programme designers should establish a well-defined scheme for national and cultural identity. In this light, parents are called upon to equally lay emphasis on traditional education as a complement to modern

education. Hence, if African children grow up with their own tradition and culture, they will be able to fit themselves well within the global milieu.

This work might have awakened researchers interested in oral aesthetic transfer of African oral tradition. For further research, others can attempt to critically examine the root causes of these denigrations of African values. Also, they can equally examine why, in Africa, Ministries of Culture do not take tangible actions in promoting African culture.

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