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Oedipal Identity and the Freudian Construction of Orality in Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol

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OEDIPAL IDENTITY AND THE FREUDIAN CONSTRUCTION OF ORALITY

IN OKOT P'BITEK'S SONG OF LAWINO AND SONG OF OCOL

(TITLE)

BY

PAUL KENT OAKLEY

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, Ocol and Lawino, presenting themselves as a university-educated man and his non-literate village wife, argue the various merits and failings of traditional, Acholi village life and modern, Westernized life. Accompanying this socio-political argument is the personal, emotional conflict between the two: Ocol is rejecting Lawino in favor of a Westernized second-wife, but Lawino refuses to leave him, trying instead to coerce him into returning, body and soul, to her bed. The scenario seems straightforward. But below this superficial reading is a more complex one in which Lawino is Ocol's mother rather than his wife. In this reading, Lawino has no voice of her own, being Ocol's projection of his own repressed oedipal fixation, against which he reacts intensely both in the fictionalized Lawino's presentation of him and in his own song.

The first clue to this oedipal reality was revealed by p'Bitek in some of his interviews. He claimed to have based Lawino on his mother but Ocol on himself. Yet Freudian theory is Western, and it is not certain that it is universally valid. However, the Acholi proverb, "Your first wife is your mother," seems to bridge the gap of uncertainty. And textual examination reveals, further, that Lawino is indeed Ocol's mother and Europe his father.

This disparity between self-presentation and reality suggests further doubt concerning the authenticity of Lawino as an oral villager. Indeed, some critics have claimed that p'Bitek made her exaggeratedly simple. But beyond such a complaint, an application of Walter Ong's

elements of orality to a critical evaluation of Lawino's song shows that, despite heavy borrowing of techniques common in Acholi orature, Lawino "sings" in a style and with a consciousness which are necessarily literate. Furthermore, she fails to follow the basic rule for the Acholi woman: to obey and respect her husband. The Lawino presented in this song cannot be its singer.

Ocol, however, does not refute Lawino on any of her points of inauthenticity. Furthermore, critics tend to agree that he, rather than Lawino, is insecure, unhappy, or psychologically afflicted. Freudian examination reveals that he is fixated in the oedipal stage of development, his true desire being for his mother Lawino. Yet, unable to accept this morally repulsive desire, he represses all conscious awareness of it. He then projects this desire onto a fictionalized image of Lawino, which accommodates the repression by making Lawino into his "wife." Thus Song of Lawino is Ocol's masked expression of his repressed desire. And similarly, Song of Ocol is his open reaction against that desire. Additionally, many of Ocol's childish or violent actions and reactions which may otherwise be inexplicable can be seen as a Freudian regression. Ocol is a man ruled by the mechanisms to which he turned for psychological defense.

DEDICATION

To Walter Lazenby, my Lebensgefährte, without whose loving support and gentle insistence I would not have begun this thesis, let alone finished it.

And to Michael Loudon, my thesis director, who introduced me to East African literature as well as to lots of theoretical "stuff" and who accepted and trusted me in my refusal to do "normal" things--both academically and personally.

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I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Bernth Lindfors of the University of Texas at Austin, who generously answered the questions that I sent him when trying, early in my thesis research, to fill gaps in the information then available to me on Okot p'Bitek and his work. His kind response helped me decide on a focus for this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Okot p'Bitek was perceived by his East African contemporaries to be important in the cultural and socio-political development not only of Uganda, but also of all post-colonial Africa. His words and ideas have, in fact, been the object of both praise and deprecation throughout the African continent. And many who have voiced an opinion on African issues since the appearance in 1966 of Song of Lawino have done so in terms of p'Bitek and his work--even to the point of referring to living people according to their ideological relationship to p'Bitek's characters. Peter Nazareth, for example, refers to Taban lo Liyong at different stages of his developing socio-political thought at one point as the brother of Ocol and at another as the brother of Lawino ("Bibliyography" 167-8).

Yet p'Bitek's work was not important solely in socio-political terms; it was also a literary watershed. Peter Nazareth claims, "Song of Lawino was the first 'poem' in English to break free from the stranglehold of British writing" ("Waiting" 10). For prior to its appearance, the African poets generally held in high regard, Rubadiri and Nagenda, for example, depended heavily on the English canon that they had been exposed to at the mission school as source and pattern for their own work. Nazareth further contends, "It owed little to any English or Western model: in one bold movement it swept away the ghosts of T.S. Eliot, Wordsworth and others..." ("Waiting" 10). Goodwin likewise maintains p'Bitek's importance: "There is unlikely to be dissent from the proposition that the most original and powerful poet in East Africa is Okot p'Bitek" (224).

This "most powerful poet's" beginnings, however, were much more humble than his later achievements would suggest. P'Bitek was born in 1931 in Gulu, Uganda, to Christianized Luo parents of the Acholi¹ tribe, who clung to traditional ways despite the urgings of White missionaries to become Westernized. His education, however, was the schooling of the mission school. He grew up, thus, with a strict dualism of language and culture. For while he spoke Luo at home with his parents and in the cultural milieu of the village, in the eurocentric cultural milieu of the school, he was required to speak English. And upon moving to Kampala to go to King's College, Budo, he found the dual strains to be increasing in tension. Kings College had been founded for the use of the Baganda "aristocracy" and was located on one of their most important traditional sites. Yet it was an English school, formed according to English patterns and teaching English materials with the goal of turning out "English" gentlemen (p'Chong 1, 2). This tension continued, sometimes following and sometimes leading him through his 51 years, but it was always present. Indeed, it became the focus of his life--academic, political, and literary.

As a school boy at Kampala with Song of Hiawatha as his immediate inspiration, p'Bitek wrote a long poem based on a Luo myth. Later, after participating in a production of Mozart's Magic Flute, he composed, in imitative style, an opera on the traditional African subject of bridewealth, the goods or money traditionally given the father of the bride by the groom in purchase of the bride. He helped form a choir for

¹While leaving quotes unaltered, this thesis uses "Acholi" rather than "Acoli", both being accepted alternates and "Acholi" approximating more closely the sound for the speaker of English.

which he composed many songs. He wrote many love songs to the girl with whom he was in love. In short, his literary life had begun (p'Chong 2-4). He continued developing it while at Mbarara Teachers Training College in Western Uganda from 1951-1952 by writing his first and only novel, Lak Tar Miyo Kinyero Wi Lobo [Are Your Teeth White? Then Laugh]. The Euro-African linguistic and cultural tensions are here very evident. He wrote in Luo but in a Western form, the novel; he wrote about a native African practice but about that practice as it had been corrupted in a Westernized Africa. In fact, though he was yet to experience much and develop further, something characteristic of his later career is evident in all this: in both form and content, his work mixes things African and things European. Yet it is a mixing without any smooth dissolution of one into the other and likewise without any neat synthesis. Europe and Africa each retain their identity, if not their integrity. Thus, in the resulting tension p'Bitek finds both his ideological and artistic space.

While at Samuel Baker School in Gulu, he took a more political turn, becoming a founding member of the Uganda National Congress. Here, in 1956, p'Bitek wrote his first drafts of Wer pa Lawino. This Luo version was rejected by the publishers, after which he did nothing more with it for several years (p'Chong 5).

In the interim, he took a teacher's training course at Bristol, took a degree in law at Aberystwyth, and earned a Certificate in Anthropology and a Bachelor of Letters degree at Oxford. In each of these academic experiences, the tension between African and European world views further increased. At Bristol his Christian faith was fatally wounded. Subsequently, while he was at Aberystwyth, a visit to the Edinburgh

Festival provided the germ of his own later efforts at cultural festivals in Uganda. Then at Oxford he discovered, much to his dismay, that academic disciplines are not necessarily based on objective observation and fact; in fact, he found British anthropological studies to be nothing more than a tool of colonialism. As a result of this discovery he decided to write his B.Litt. thesis on the orature¹ of the Acholi and Lango, in the hope that to some degree this--in his view--accurate representation of Ugandan peoples would dispel much of the misunderstanding which stood as part and parcel of the discipline of anthropology, especially as it inscribed these Ugandan peoples (p'Chong 5-7).

In 1963 when p'Bitek returned to Uganda, he returned to an independent nation and to a post as Lecturer in Sociology and Social Anthropology. He moved quickly, however, into the Extra-Mural Department, where he could find the freedom to write his research on Luo religion and to organize folk festivals. At this time p'Bitek rediscovered and rewrote his Wer pa Lawino, which he quickly translated or, more accurately, interpreted into English as Song of Lawino, published in this English version then in 1966, the year p'Bitek became the first African director of Uganda's National Cultural Centre.

Only two years later, however, p'Bitek was forced into an exile of eleven years because of "explicit and extreme criticisms of politicians" which he made while on a visit to Zambia (Heron Poetry 4). During this exile, mostly in Africa but including extended stays in the United States, he continued the same work that he had started in Kampala: teaching,

¹While leaving quotes unaltered, this thesis uses "orature" rather than "oral literature", as "literature" etymologically implies letters, that is, writing or print.

organizing festivals, and writing. In 1970 he published Song of Ocol. This was soon followed by two more song-poems, two collections of Acholi orature, and three volumes on anthropological topics. Then in 1979, on his return from exile, p'Bitek was given a research post at Makerere University, a post he found an insult, because it separated him from what he saw as the real work of the university. He believed that administrators had isolated him because his previous work did not easily fit under the rubric of any one discipline, because, instead of a fragmenting specialization, he had "taken a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Man and society" (p'Chong 9, 10).

Finally, however, in 1982, the year in which he would die, p'Bitek received official recognition of his literary success and importance: he was appointed the first professor of creative writing in Makerere's Department of Literature. Soon after this appointment, he died a quiet death at home. But his writing, his artistic endeavor, and his political and social involvement, all of which hung on the dualistic tensions which had been with him since birth and which had increased with each major event of his life, were with him to the very end (p'Chong 10).

P'Bitek appears, and claimed, to have been exploring and searching for Uganda's future. Yet Song of Lawino presents no clear analysis (Gathungu 57-8); it presents, rather, an unresolved personality disorder. P'Bitek is often perceived as preaching the gospel of Africanism--such defenses of Africa against traditional eurocentric approaches are, in fact, the essence of his essays. But in Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, he comes closer to doing what he claimed in one interview to be his purpose: providing "ammunition for the upcoming battle over what Africa

is to become" (Lindfors Mazungumzo 143). And this "ammunition" is equally available for the use of all factions.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie claims, "...Song of Lawino is one of the most critically neglected works in African literature" (7). She further argues that despite the lyricism and imagery which brought this work to the attention of the world, Song of Lawino is essentially untrue, "the mission-educated man's vision of Africa" (7). It is, however, precisely in its "untruth" that Okot p'Bitek's representation of Africa in Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol is most true. One discovers that Lawino has no voice of her own, being Ocol's projection of his own repressed oedipal fixation, against which he reacts intensely both in the fictionalized Lawino's presentation of him and in his own song. This distorted view of the mission-educated man, Ocol, shows clearly the dilemma of modern Africa, for only in the distortion can the complex nature of the dilemma be discovered.

This dilemma is, in fact, essentially oedipal, a first clue being p'Bitek's statement that, while he had modeled Lawino on his mother, he had based Ocol on himself (Interview: Lindfors 282-4). Yet, Freudian theory being Western and not necessarily universally applicable, one hesitates too quickly to apply it to African literary characters. However, its application seems justified here because of the Acholi proverb, "Your first wife is your mother" (Heron Poetry 67).

In the ensuing Freudian analysis, then, Lawino and Ocol emerge as mother and son. Just below the surface of matrimonial discord lurks this incestuous source of conflict and self-hatred. The overall thrust of Song of Lawino is to decry Ocol's rejection of Lawino. But, while claiming to

be Ocol's wife, Lawino presents herself through images symbolic of the womb and motherhood and refers, further, to Ocol's being like a child, thus undercutting her concealment of their oedipal relationship. Furthermore, Lawino warns Ocol about the castrating European educational system, identifying, thus, Europe as Ocol's father in this oedipal relationship. Ocol as well identifies Europe as his father in his making demi-gods of the European founders of modern Africa, a natural oedipal reaction of the son who has succeeded in eliminating the fatherly rival for the mother's sexual favors.

The primary relationship of the poems thus found to be misrepresented by the characters, the authenticity of the characters themselves comes into question, particularly the authenticity of Lawino as an oral villager as she so assertively demands the reinstatement of the misrepresented relationship. Ogundipe-Leslie claimed Lawino to be, in fact, an "impossible and unlikely image of the rural woman" (7). And indeed, while representing herself as an oral villager and an exemplar of Acholi values, Lawino is actually a literate violator of the values she claims to uphold. For, if one applies Walter Ong's elements of orality to Lawino's song, one finds that, despite heavy borrowing of techniques commonly used in Acholi orature, Lawino "sings" in a style and with a consciousness which are necessarily literate. Furthermore, she fails to follow the basic rule for the Acholi woman: to obey and to respect her husband.

If the Lawino who misrepresents the oedipal relationship misrepresents her own identity as well and Ocol refutes neither misrepresentation, then Ocol is also to be suspected of some

inauthenticity. Furthermore, critics tend to agree that he, rather than Lawino, is the insecure, unhappy, or psychologically afflicted one. Returning, then, to Freudian theory, one discovers Ocol to be engaging in the five defense mechanisms of projects, fixation, repression, reaction formation, and regression. And while Ogundipe-Leslie asserts that, "The figure of Lawino is a displacement from the mind of a male, Westernized writer..." (7), indicating authorial misrepresentation at the root of the "impossible and unlikely image of the rural woman" (7), p'Bitek has not misrepresented but has, rather, accurately represented the "complex-ities" of his character Ocol.

Ocol is fixated in the oedipal stage of development, his true desire being for his mother Lawino. Yet, unable to accept this morally repulsive desire, he represses all knowledge of it. As it does not disappear, however, he projects it onto his fictionalized image of Lawino, the fictionalization accommodating the repression of the desire by making Lawino into his "wife." Thus Song of Lawino is Ocol's masked expression of his own repressed desire. And similarly, Song of Ocol is his open expression of his reaction against that masked, repressed desire. Additionally, many of Ocol's childish or violent actions which may otherwise be inexplicable can be seen as a Freudian regression. Ocol is a man ruled by these mechanisms, to which he originally turned for psychological "salvation."

In other words, there is no "true" voice given us--either in Song of Lawino or in Song of Ocol. Both voices are, indeed, as Ogundipe-Leslie claims, the distorted view of a "mission-educated" man: Ocol. And the characters' "falsehood," that is, Ocol's reliance on Freudian defense

mechanisms, is, in fact, at the root of the author's truth. This truth, then, is an examination of the "complex-ity" of building a future for an Africa with an (as yet unresolved) "complex" past.

LAWINO AND OCOL'S OEDIPAL IDENTITY

In interview with Bernth Lindfors in 1976, p'Bitek stated that the primary model behind the character Lawino was his own mother. But when asked whether Ocol, in correspondence, was modeled on his father, p'Bitek responded that Ocol was modeled on himself and his agemates who had received a Western education in the colonial school system (282-4). Thus one finds the models, a mother and her son, transformed into the characters who are a first-wife and her husband. This manipulation of autobiographical claim into literary characterization, of course, opens itself to a Freudian interpretation of the text, where one discovers just below the surface of matrimonial discord the oedipal reality, the incestuous source of conflict and self-hatred.

The first textual hint of Lawino's maternal relationship to Ocol comes in the very first segment of Section 1 of Song of Lawino:

Husband, now you despise me
 Now you treat me with spite
 ...
 You say you no longer want me
 Because I am like the things left behind
 In the deserted homestead.
 ...
 Stop treating me like salt-less ash
 Become barren of insults and stupidity;
 Who has ever uprooted the Pumpkin? (34-5)

Here Lawino compares Ocol's now despising her with the uprooting of the

pumpkin. The pumpkin is, as p'Bitek explained in his B.Litt. thesis, a wild foodstuff which grows on deserted homesites, providing nourishment to the traveler and to the resettler (373). Yet further, in a Freudian approach, the pumpkin in all its voluptuous rotundity is a symbol of the fruitful womb, of motherhood. The poem's overall thrust, furthermore, is to decry Ocol's rejection of Lawino. Thus one sees this injunction against uprooting the pumpkin as against Ocol's destruction of the womb which gave him life, against destroying Lawino.

In Section 2, Lawino claims, "Ocol rejects the old type/.../Ocol is no longer in love with the old type," going on to describe Ocol's new wife (36-7). Yet what she seems to describe here is her husband's--that is, her "son's"--turning away from his previous oedipal urges and finding an acceptable, sublimated, reproductive outlet for his sexuality. The "old type" can be seen as equivalent, in this context, to the first love. And, as everyone acquainted with Freudian theory knows, every boy's first love is his mother. Yet here Lawino equates herself with the "old type." She is the first "wife," the first love of her "son" Ocol.

She further describes her erstwhile relationship with Ocol:

But only recently

We would sit close together, touching each other!

...

Only recently he promised

That he trusted me completely.

I used to admire him speaking in English. (36)

It takes only the hint of the possibility of the relationship's being that of a mother and son to see in these words a mother's regret for the

rapidity of her son's growing up. "Only recently" she would breastfeed him; "only recently" he was at an age of total faith in her; "only recently" his achievements were not weapons aimed at her, so she was proud of them. Thus Lawino again reveals herself as Ocol's mother--not his wife.

The motherly character of Lawino is reinforced in the following:

I do not block my husband's path

From his new wife.

If he likes, let him build for her

An iron roofed house on the hill!

I do not complain,

My grass thatched house is enough for me. (41)

One sees here in Lawino a classical motherly, self-sacrificing attitude for the sake of her son. She is the mother who must accept less than the best from her son, because he has established his own household. And she is not about to let him forget her sacrifice.

But her sacrifice is one which began much earlier. "When Ocol was wooing me/" she says, "My breasts were erect" (47). If one looks at this "wooing" as an act of son toward mother, one finds that Lawino here refers to her pregnancy. When her son was first becoming part of her life, when he was starting to form in her womb, she was still young and sexually alluring. But through carrying and caring for him, she lost her youth.

This interpretation is further supported in that she compares Ocol's former longing for her with a child's longing for his mother:

The son of the Bull wept

For me with tears,

Like a hungry child
Whose mother has stayed long
In the simsim field! (48)

Thus in conjunction with a clue as to the true nature of Lawino and Ocol's relationship, one finds Lawino exposing on the one hand the very thing that, on the other hand, her posing as wife seeks to conceal.

Once again in the seventh section Lawino shows her Ocol as a child; indeed, she describes him as her "son" who continues to act as a child, although he is now an adult:

My husband runs from place to place
Like a small boy,
He rushes without dignity. (68)

This perpetuated childhood can, however, be interpreted as a simplified representation of Ocol's fixation in an early stage of psychological development, the oedipal stage. And as a result of this fixation, his entire personality is unable to progress into a normal, balanced adulthood. Yet one must note that Lawino rather than Ocol seems to be generating the forbidden desire.

Lawino says of Ocol, "He says I make his bedsheets dirty" (53). And what indeed could soil a bed more than incestuous, oedipal relations? Though this filth is presented as physical, the overall moral thrust of Lawino's argument leads one to view any filth in moral terms. And moral dirt on Ocol's sheets combined with his aforementioned longing for his mother, Lawino, can mean little else besides incest.

Lawino, however, continues to obfuscate the true nature of her relationship with Ocol:

Come, brother,
 Come into my mother's house!
 Pause a bit by the door,
 Let me show you
 My mother's house. (59)

By addressing Ocol as her "brother," she presents him as her agemate. Yet the ambiguity of the invitation to enter her "mother's house" is overwhelming. While, literally interpreted, the house is the house belonging to her mother, it becomes, when viewed through eyes seeking to penetrate obfuscation, the house instead where she herself has become a mother. This invitation into the mother's house appears then as a sexual proposition to Ocol. For, further, in Freudian analysis the house is a womb image; thus the invitation to enter is an invitation to sexually penetrate the mother Lawino.

H. O. Anyumba mentions "a certain vicarious relationship between Ocol and Lawino which contradicts an overt polarity." He further claims that, "This relationship is extended to include mother and mother-in-law, clansmen, the ancestral shrine, which are the various connections linking the two as individuals and also to society at large" (32). Yet one can see in these disparate elements something much more than common joining functions for the husband and wife, Ocol and Lawino. These elements compose the psychological womb from which Ocol sprang and are thus true extensions of Lawino the mother. So when Lawino says, "He cares little/About his relatives either" (92), she is complaining more specifically about his neglecting and rejecting her. This interpretation is supported by Lawino herself as she continues:

Of his own mother,
Ocol says
She smokes some nauseating tobacco
And spits all over the place
And she keeps bed bugs
In her loin cloth. (92)

Lawino, naturally enough, objects to Ocol's generally unflattering portrayal of her. Yet particularly objectionable is his vilification of her sexuality; the loins from which he sprang and to which Lawino calls him to return must not be the home of pests and disease!

Lawino objects further:

You cannot abuse your mother!
Because it was that woman
Who hewed you out of the rock
And moulded your head and body. (99)

In so saying, she does, in effect, the very thing she described in the immediately preceding passage: she has lifted her breast to Ocol and asked, "Did you suck this?" (98-9). In so doing she condemns him for rejecting her. It is in this act above all others that she shows her true relationship to Ocol. Ironically, Lawino uses this display of the motherly breast primarily as leverage to call Ocol back to their incestuous "marriage" bed.

To ease generally the interpretive strategy of equating a son and a husband, one should note that Lawino asks, perhaps unwittingly, "What is so sweet in your husband?/What so bitter in other people's sons?" (98). This parallel structure appears at first to be merely a faulty comparison

of categories which are not mutually exclusive. A husband is, after all, the son of "other people." Yet, if the comparison is to be accepted as valid, the husband she refers to must needs be the son of the woman whose "husband" she has called him. The sweetness in the "husband," opposed as it is to the bitterness in "other people's sons," appears to be an inversion of the normative aversion to incestuous sexuality. Thus through parallel structure, Lawino reiterates the incestuous nature of her desire for her own "husband."

Lawino, however, could hardly be more explicit in her acceptance of incestuous sexuality than when she speaks of death:

Mother Death

She says to her little ones

Come! (102)

And the little ones follow her because what she offers is appealing. Even familiarly, death is linked with orgasm. But here death is also linked to the mother figure who commands her offspring to orgasm. And they obey because what she offers is irresistible. Thus Lawino seems to claim that Ocol can find nothing more appealing than her--in fact she portrays herself as being as compelling as death.

But perhaps the most significant expression of Lawino's mother relationship to Ocol is her threatening and warning Ocol of the danger of castration, a natural role of the mother as her son is in the oedipal stage of development. She warns him of the result of angering his mother:

Your vitality will go,

You will behave

As if you were a half-wit,

Your Manhood will disappear
And like a castrated bullock
Women will be perfectly safe with you! (99)

Then she speaks as though this castration were already an accomplished fact. She speaks of the "death of the homestead/of my husband" (110). And in the past tense she speaks of a time when "He [Ocol] had not yet become a woman" (113).

The castrator, whom Lawino sometimes warns Ocol about and who she sometimes simply states has already accomplished the dread punishment, is, significantly, not Ocol's biological father, the chief. Instead Lawino presents the eurocentric colonial education system as the castrator and thus as Ocol's father--at least in terms of psychological significance. "Ocol," she says, "has lost his head/In the forest of books" (113). Through the use here of the double entendre "head," Lawino is able to link Ocol's mental state with his loss of virility, his castration. And both the mental and physical emasculations take place, according to Lawino, in the library, an adjunct to the colonial schools and the repository of Western Knowledge and Culture.

She proceeds through the use of an implied metaphor, comparing testicles to eyeballs, to present the frightful loss:

He says
The ways of the people
Are black
Because his eyeballs have exploded. (113)
...the boiling darkness
Bursts your eyeballs. (114)

She later elaborates on the place where the loss occurred, speaking of "the blindness that you got in the library" (118), the forest of books.

In reference to the eurocentric book learning obtained in this library, Daniel claims of Lawino, "Sa réponse [à Ocol] serait: à quoi bon imiter les Blancs, quand nous avons notre propre pensée, nos propres institutions, etc..." (199). (Her response [to Ocol] would be: why imitate the Whites when we have our own manner of thinking, our own institutions, etc... [my translation]) Yet Lawino herself knows that cultural autonomy is no longer truly an option for those who have received an education in the colonial school system. In fact, she claims, "There is not one single true son left" (117):

For all our young men
Were finished in the forest,
Their manhood was finished
In the class-rooms,
Their testicles
Were smashed
With large books! (117)

This view of education as a destructive force in Africa is supported by La Magna thus: "Education simply castrates the African intelligentia [sic] from their own tribe and customs and produces superficial and awkward imitators" (71). It is a view also supported, though in less drastic terms, by Terrisse:

The school necessarily is in the position of transforming the child and developing new knowledge in him. As a consequence the school

makes him different from his environment. (291)

Despite these references to the educational destruction, castration, of the young men of Acholiland, and specifically of Ocol, however, Lawino offers a belated escape from this fate via a return to the village ways:

A new spear

A new spear with a sharp hard point.

A spear that will crack the rock.

Ask for a spear that you will trust

One that does not bend easily

Like the earth-worm.

Ask them [your ancestors] to restore your manhood!

For I am sick

Of sharing a bed with a woman! (119)

Ironically, in all these depictions and threats of castration, one sees Lawino once again using her natural and acceptable actions as mother not to restore normal marital sexuality between Ocol and his wife Clementina, the modern, westernized "second-wife" whom Lawino ridicules as looking like a guinea fowl (37) and whom she despises as having a fruitless womb--perhaps because of abortions (39), but rather to coerce a return to her bed of incestuous love, just as when earlier she raised her breast to him and asked, "Did you suck this?" (88-9).

It is, however, not Lawino alone who gives the reader clues to the incestuous nature of her relationship to Ocol. Ocol as well shows a hint at least of familiarity with Lawino's incestuous demands as well with his own oedipal relationship with his "father," the castrating eurocentric colonial education.

In Song of Ocol he first alludes to Lawino's desires, using the metaphor of the pumpkin: "I see a large Pumpkin/Rotting" (124). This rotting which he claims to see in the fruitful womb, when taken as having a human referent, is necessarily a moral decay. Thus Ocol here both claims awareness of the natural relationship which Lawino would unnaturally pervert and additionally passes judgment on this perversion. He sees the woman who brought him into the world consumed, destroyed by lust for the fruit of her own womb. And he is disgusted.

Yet he is far from absolute in his stance against Lawino's "unnatural" desires:

We will smash
 The taboos
 One by one. (126)

Among these taboos which Ocol would smash is the incest taboo. Thus if he succeeds in his eradication of the taboo system, he will be freeing himself to participate in the acts he earlier condemned in Lawino.

Once again, however, he condemns oedipal love as cowardly and foolish:

Out of my way
 You cowardly fool
 Creep back and hide
 In your mother's womb. (145)

For only in the act of oedipal incest can the mother's womb be regained. Ocol finds such action cowardly because it entails a desire to escape the outer world and foolish because, even once attained through oedipal penetration of the mother, residence in the womb cannot be maintained, for

such a sex act, like any other, lasts only a relatively short time.

If this oedipal desire is the way of the fool and if the pumpkin, with its attachment in the Acholi mind to the traditional homestead, is the symbol of the desired mother, then Ocol can justifiably claim to have achieved the resolution of his own Oedipus complex:

And let the people sing and dance
And celebrate the passing of
The Old Homestead! (147)

Yet even with these clues to Ocol's rejection, if only tentative, of oedipal desire, his position in an oedipal structure appears most clear in his reference to his "father" Europe. He states:

We spent years
In detention
Suffering without bitterness
And planning for the revolution. (139)

In Freudian terms, every revolution is a rejection of and an attempt to kill the "father." Here it is no different. Lawino has identified the castrator/"father" as the eurocentric educational system or, in more general terms, Europe. And Ocol's revolution is aimed at killing, eliminating, emasculating, or in some way rendering impotent the European "father."

Yet also in accordance with Freudian theory, the revolution successfully completed, Ocol wants, needs, to make a god of the emasculated "father":

We will erect monuments
To the founders

Of modern Africa:

Leopold II of Belgium

Bismark.... (151)

He finds the need also to defend this process of deification:

Which of your ancestors

Established the area

Of your beloved

Country? (151)

In so doing, Ocol rejects the possibility that his father is African. For no African or system of African origin defined the borders of modern Africa, borders which allow Ocol to call himself Ugandan. Those borders were, instead, established and legitimized by the European colonial presence, which Ocol, together with his agemates, has forced back to Europe. Thus it is in the deification of the European "father" that Ocol defines and establishes his own legitimacy.

The oedipal triangle, which has been identically defined by both Lawino and Ocol, does not, however, provide Ocol a psychological home, a place of comfort. As Ogunyemi claims, Ocol feels that "marrying Lawino was the result of a horrible dream" (28). Ocol shouts at her:

Woman of Africa

Whatever you call yourself,

Whatever the bush poets

Call you

You are not

a wife! (134)

Some previous critics have found room in their interpretations to

concur with Ocol's shout. Among them is Ruchoya, who states, "It [Song of Lawino] is, further, a statement full of quality and vigour characteristic of the traditional African motherhood..." (55). While a minor element in Lawino's explicit statements, this traditional African motherly quality is, in Ruchoya's view, the primary emotion of Lawino's song. Similarly, La Magna claims:

Okot very appropriately used a woman as protagonist of this long lament as in Africa the role of the woman, and above all of mother, is greatly respected and thus, people are more likely to turn a sympathetic ear to her cry. (74)

Yet perhaps the strongest critical statement attributing a mother/son relationship to Lawino and Ocol is made by pa'Lukobo. He claims that p'Bitek could have chosen a proverb more apt than "Don't uproot the pumpkin" as the focus of Song of Lawino: "What Lawino has to say would have been better expressed by another Acoli proverb which says...'Your first wife is your mother'" (Heron Poetry 67).

One finds that, despite the surface claims of the characters themselves to be, in fact, husband and wife, the text provides overwhelming clues to suggest a contrary interpretation. One also finds that, while Lawino unswervingly calls Ocol to her incestuous love bed, Ocol is less than unyielding in his repudiation of the oedipal act. There is no question, however, as to the identity of the father in this oedipal triangle, for Lawino and Ocol both clearly identify him as Europe--and both do so in terms of their respective placement in the oedipal arrangement. One can, thus, proceed in this interpretive strategy,

confident in the sound textual support for the view of Lawino and Ocol as mother and son.

LAWINO'S INAUTHENTICITY AS AN ORAL VILLAGER

While Lawino's identity as Ocol's mother is ascertainable from rather superficial textual evidence, it is not the only element of Lawino's unreliability as a character. Her status and identity as an uneducated village woman who can neither read nor write and who is a living exemplar of Acholi values come under suspicion as well when one examines the text at a deeper level. On that level, a comparison of the superficially textual Lawino to techniques of Acholi orature, elements of oral consciousness and oral practice, and Acholi mores presents a Lawino who does not fit the image she presents of herself.

Much has been made of the oral¹ Africanness of Song of Lawino. Gathungu blurts his support of this, saying, "...Okot himself would agree that his was a song and songs happen to be common features of expression in the African world" (53).

In the process of asserting authentic Africanness, the aspect of oral art as performance art has sometimes been pushed to the fore. Heron, for example, claims of Wer pa Lawino and Song of Lawino that both are performable and have been performed (Poetry 10). In fact, p'Bitek confirmed in an interview with Bernth Lindfors, that Wer pa Lawino "has been read and performed publicly in Acholiland" (286).

Interestingly, one of the more recent performances of Song of Lawino was its performance as a ballet directed by Valeria Vasilevski at the Bessie Schonberg Theatre in New York City in January 1988 (Stuart 84).

¹While leaving quotes unaltered, this thesis uses "oral" rather than "illiterate", as "illiterate" is a pejorative within the literate community and "oral" only indicates the absence of literacy.

Yet ballet--even modern ballet with choreographic borrowings from non-Western cultures--is both by derivation and by definition essentially a Western art form. So it seems performability alone is not a proper criterion for determining true oral Africanness.

What can be used, however, is evidence of oral technique and oral-based thought. There is much evidence to examine regarding specific oral Acholi elements used in Song of Lawino. Yet of perhaps even greater use in such an assessment is Walter Ong's catalogue of the universals of orality as contrasted to literacy. Additionally, his outline of the differences in consciousness between oral and literate persons is invaluable.

In the application of Ong's analysis of orality and literacy to the text of Song of Lawino, what one finds, in fact, is a situation quite different from the normally accepted one of an opinionated oral villager speaking her mind. For, while Song of Lawino indisputably depends heavily on sources and devices from Acholi orature and contains a high residue of orality, it is essentially literate. Lawino's implausibility as a character is further validated as one examines the cultural identity of an Acholi woman in contrast to Lawino. In such an analysis one discovers Lawino's voice could not be the voice of the character she presents herself to be. For both her voice and her consciousness are those of a literate subject. No true Lawino can possibly be the singer of Song of Lawino.

In "Transition from Oral to Literary Tradition," Obeichina assures his reader that, though there is an ever-increasing encroachment on oral Africa by literacy and its results, in relatively isolated areas one still

finds stable, traditional, communal life with its oral tradition still "in measure" intact (161). And even where the oral tradition is less intact, Heron states that much of the technique or content of the literature is derived from remains of the at least residually coexisting orature (Poetry 10). Further, in specific reference to Song of Lawino, Nazareth claims that, in addition to technical borrowings from Acholi orature, it maintains a perceptible oral feel:

Although written in English, it gave the listener (since it has the qualities of an oral performance) the illusion that he was listening to the protagonist, Lawino, directly in her own language. ("Waiting" 10)

An examination of specific oral qualities in Song of Lawino is thus suggested. For, in addition to giving an "illusion" of oral, Acholi authenticity, such qualities may provide concrete data to evaluate without illusion.

Giovanna La Magna states of Song of Lawino that, in addition to its having been written originally in an African language, "It still remains typically African in essence as the language serves as a mere technical tool in transmitting a message truly [sic] African." Nevertheless, she lists several specific poetic techniques which, while not in the least unique to Acholi orature, are common features thereof and features with which p'Bitek would have been familiar both from his youth in an Acholi village and from his days as an Oxford student researching Acholi and Lang'o oratures for his B.Litt. thesis: "Alliteration, repetition typical of the refrain and parallelism are characteristic of the song technique

and are evident in all of Okot's poems"--and especially in Song of Lawino (81).

Of these three techniques the most emphatic is parallelism, for Song of Lawino begins with a set of assertions Lawino makes to Ocol in parallel structures, claiming he acts or reacts toward her in certain ways:

Husband, now you despise me

Now you treat me with spite

...

Now you compare me

With the rubbish in the rubbish pit.

(34, emphasis added)

At the beginning of Section 6, Lawino uses parallel structure to talk to a third party about Ocol's reactions to her: "He rejects me/Because...", "He is angry with me/Because...", "He is ashamed of me/Because..." (56). And in Section 13 she claims in parallel form of his actions:

For when you insulted me

...

You were insulting your grandfathers

...

When you compared me

With the silly ojuu insects

...

You were abusing your entire people

...

When you took the axe

And threatened to cut the Okango

...

You were threatening

To cut yourself loose. (119, 120, emphasis added)

Further, in addition to its use in the explication of the relationship of Lawino and Ocol parallelism is also used to express the traditional wisdom of the Acholi. For example:

A lazy youth is rebuked,

A lazy girl is slapped,

A lazy wife is beaten,

A lazy man is laughed at. (69)

In fact, nearly every page and certainly every section of Song of Lawino abundantly uses this technique, just as La Magna claims. And these uses serve many varying functions within the text of the song.

The "repetition typical of the refrain" is most memorably found in the recurring pumpkin proverb, first found in Section 1: "Who has ever uprooted the pumpkin" (35)? It is then found again at the end of Section 2: "The pumpkin in the old homestead/Must not be uprooted" (41), at the end of Section 5: "Let no one/Uproot the Pumpkin" (56), and finally at the end of the entire poem: "Let no one uproot the Pumpkin" (120). Though used only four times throughout Song of Lawino and with three different wordings, this proverb acts, nevertheless, as a clear refrain which expresses the unifying sentiment of all the widely varying subject matter of the separate sections of the song.

A portion illustrative of the alliterative quality La Magna asserts can be found in the following:

The smoke of the tobacco
 The smoke of the cigars
 And the cigarettes
 And the smoke of the candles
 Used for counting the coins
 The smoke in the house
 Is like the cumulus clouds. (45)

Though the alliteration here in part relies on the repetition of "The smoke," the dual alliteration of both the /s/ and /k/ sounds and the extension of /s/ alliteration beyond the repetitive portion shows, in fact, a skilled combination of alliteration and repetition.

Another similarly skilled repetitive alliteration linked with simple alliteration is the following:

They are warming up
 Tinned beef, tinned fish,
 Tinned frogs, tinned snakes,
 Tinned peas, tinned beans,
 Big broad beans
 Tasteless like the cooro! (58)

Not only are there six successive items beginning with the sound /t/Ind/, after an alliterative "pause" from the previous alliteration the next line begins with reference back to the /t/ alliteration.

Another technique which points to the oral African origins of Song of Lawino is its use of a particular rhythmic beat. Goodwin claims, "Its basic three-beat line, with frequent lengthening or shortening, assertively declared its origin in Acoli" (224). Admittedly a basic beat

which is frequently not followed is not exactly simple to detect. Yet here, divided as into musical measures, each receiving one beat, is a segment from Section 3 which illustrates the basic three-beat line:

A g^lrl | whose w^aist | is stⁱff |
 Is a | cl^umsy | g^lrl |
 That is the | l^azy | g^lrl |
 Who f^ears | grⁱnding the | K^abir | mⁱllet.

(43, stress and bar divisions added)

Note that, even with the addition of a measure in the fourth line, the beat is yet more reliable than any meter based on stress, as is to be expected in a song. And, while not all passages can be this neatly divided into a pseudo-musical base of three-beat patterns, this sample does imply a common pattern of Acholi orature within Song of Lawino.

Heron locates another technique commonly employed in native African sources of orature: the apostrophe. But rather than simply asserting the borrowing as La Magna and Goodwin have done, Heron generously refers both to recorded samples of Acholi lyrics and to the parallels he finds in Song of Lawino. From among Lawino's uses of apostrophe, Heron cites "Listen my clansmen" (113), "O! my clansmen" (39), and "My clansmen, I ask you" (48). Each of these (and many others not cited) leads into an emotional appeal to the fictionalized audience of "clansmen" aimed at evoking a participative emotional response sympathetic to Lawino's position (Heron Poetry 13). This greatly extended style of apostrophe use, common both to Acholi song and to Lawino's song, functions, however, to involve the emotions not only of Lawino's audience, but also of p'Bitek's readership. And in both cases, the apostrophic shift from argument to appeal brings

about a sympathetic, if primarily unreasoned, reaction.

Heron further claims the nature of the shift of focus occurring in p'Bitek's "songs" to be related directly to tribal antecedents of orature:

Because of the singer's dispute with those he lampoons, the emphasis of the poem shifts from the follies of the victim to an interest in the conflict between singer and victim.

This technique is not unknown in oral songs. (Poetry 98)

P'Bitek uses this technique frequently. For example, in Section 12, Lawino compares Ocol's behavior toward the white men to a dog's behavior toward its master (115), through this image lampooning his fawning, obedient, dependent approach to Europeans and their customs. But rather than leaving this lampooned image to stand, she shifts her focus to herself and their children as she admonishes him to come back to the ancestral ways (115,16), thus emphasizing the personal nature of their conflict. For, however much Lawino ridicules Ocol's poverty of values, she is concerned primarily with what she holds to be his mistreatment of her. Seemingly borrowed from Acholi oral technique, the shift of focus is here used at least to imply a strong connection between Ocol's interaction with the eurocentric world beyond the village and his treatment of Lawino. Rather than separate, the shift of focus unifies the lampooning and the personal conflict by implying that the connection is so obvious that there is no need to state it outright.

In addition to such direct borrowings from Acholi poetics, there are various cultural-linguistic usages which, Heron claims, identify Lawino as

a legitimate member of oral, song-driven Acholi culture. Among these are the use of respectful titles, comparison of a person to an animal, quotation of proverbs and reference to proverbial ideas, quotation of Acholi songs, and retention in the English of untranslated Acholi words of symbolic or social importance in Acholi orature.

To accentuate Lawino's use of titles of honor, Heron compares her with other p'Bitek personae who avoid such usage:

Lawino's use of oblique respectful titles reflects the fact that she is the only one of the singers [Malaya, Soldier, Ocol] living within a peasant community in which the titles and praise names are still meaningful. (Poetry 19)

Two such praise names by which she addresses (and sometimes speaks about) her husband Ocol are "Son of the Chief" (34 [first use]) and "The son of the Bull" (48 [first use]). In addition, she often uses forms of indirect address reflecting her relationship to Ocol. For example, she calls him "Husband" (34 [first use]), "My friend, age-mate of my brother" (34 [first use]), and "My love" (120 [final use]). These place a distance indicative of respect between them. For instead of speaking to (or about) Ocol simply as an individual, one without status, she addresses him according to his place in Acholi society. She is speaking not merely to Ocol but to her husband, someone in a position of authority over her. And she calls not only upon her "husband," but on the "Son of the Chief" as well. In using praise names and relationship indicators, then, she honors Ocol by acknowledging his status.

Standing opposite such titles of honor, praise, and respect are

satiric or disrespectful comparisons. Heron states:

The reduction of the stature and dignity of a satirist's victim is a major technique of [traditional Acholi] satire and one form it often makes is the comparison of the victim to animals, birds, insects, and even to the vegetable and mineral. (Poetry 95)

P'Bitek frequently makes such satiric animal comparisons. Of the catechism teacher Lawino says:

Then you look at the teacher
Barking meaninglessly
Like the yellow monkey. (76)

She calls the clerics who are self-indulgent with the wealth from the collection money

Fat-bellied men
The backs of whose necks
Resemble the buttocks of the hippo. (85)

She compares Clementina to a guinea fowl (37). Satiric comparisons appear frequently, in fact. Together with forms showing respect, they seem to reflect a culture where such forms are not only "still meaningful" but also essential to meaningful expression.

Another traditional carrier of meaning is the proverb. Heron notes that, though proverbs are used all throughout Song of Lawino, Section 11 is particularly rich in its use of them. In some cases they are simply translated directly into English; for example, in reference to Ocol's prohibition of Lawino's joking with his brother, Lawino says, "Not that

joking may cause pregnancy..." (105)! This is an Acholi proverb whose meaning is clear even in another language and culture. In other cases, however, the translation sometimes includes an explanatory expansion; for example, Lawino speaks of Ocol and his brother when they were children thus:

They were as close to each other
 As the eye and the nose
 They were like twins
 And they shared everything
 Even a single white ant. (105)

Here simple translations of the original proverbs are "They were nose and eyes," and "They [d]ivide an ant between them "(Heron Poetry 46). The additions to the text, however, provide nothing more than a simple explanation for the uninitiated reader. For the nose-eye proverb indicates the closeness of a personal relationship while the ant proverb demonstrates the extent of unselfishness within the relationship, nothing being too insignificant to expend the effort to share it. In fact, Heron claims, "...on the whole [p'Bitek's] extremely literal translations retain the proverbial and symbolic content of the original" (Poetry 46).

Heron points additionally to direct borrowings and quotes from Acholi songs:

The most obvious influence of the verbal content of oral songs of both published versions of Song of Lawino is the presence of acknowledged borrowings, the indented quotations that Lawino uses to illustrate kit Acoli in many respects. (Poetry 47)

Of these quoted songs there are twelve in Song of Lawino. These can be grouped by content into four groups. There are four songs explaining or defending specific social customs (51, 2; 60; 66, 7; 115). Two songs are declarations of bodily strength and vigor (48; 62). Three display traditional reactions to death under various circumstances (83; 98; 101). And the remaining three songs are love songs (76-8; 79; 120).

In every case except that of the love songs, the songs are used as an extension of Lawino's statements on those topics. The first two love songs, however, are interruptions of tribal relevancy into the irrelevant (to the Acholi villager) topic at hand, Christianity. These songs are structured as the sounds of the village breaking into the boring repetitions of catechism class. And the final quoted song, a love song, is in the section outlining a traditional cure of both body and soul for Ocol. In this final song, Lawino's desire for Ocol's return to "health" is akin to the single-minded desire of a youth for the return of his absent lover, the scenario of the song. Thus the sentiment of the song is seen as the reason for the accompanying prescription. And in every case the song quotes are integral to the structure of the greater song.

In addition to direct quotes of large portions of songs and complete songs, there are many images borrowed from Acholi songs as well. Heron states, "Lawino's references to burst eyeballs are an elaboration of the image in [an] orak song against a teacher" (Poetry 48). And in reference to the following elaboration of the former state of Lawino and Ocol's relationship,

But only recently

We would sit close together, touching each other!

Only recently I would play
 On my bow-harp
 Singing praises to my beloved.
 Only recently he promised
 That he trusted me completely, (36)

he directs attention to similar sentiment to that of the first two lines found in a funeral song found in p'Bitek's own collection of traditional songs, Horn of My Love: "'She used to sit close to her husband, touching each other'" (Poetry 48). Clearly, known Acholi songs are amply represented in Song of Lawino.

P'Bitek further links Song of Lawino to the world of Acholi orature by using untranslated words of special significance to that oral tradition. "Okot's use of words like 'bila' (horn), 'twon' (bull) and 'tong' (spear) reflect their social importance and their use in oral literature" (Heron Poetry 49). And such vocabulary occurs frequently throughout Song of Lawino.

However, despite the very strong links to Acholi orature elaborated above, p'Bitek's translation of Wer pa Lawino into Song of Lawino seems deliberately to separate the reader from the Acholi world as it actually is. Heron describes an "exotic aspect" in p'Bitek's translation:

What may be proverbial or even cliché in Acholi,
 through literal translation becomes vivid and
 original and provokes new insights in a new
 language. (Poetry 56)

He further describes

...deliberately odd translations giving a totally

new effect in the translation from that given in the original, where Christian meanings of the words would be accepted without any strangeness by now. (Poetry 57)

"The Hunchback" is an archaic misunderstanding. And any Acholi contemporary with the writing of Song of Lawino would not have used it.

Furthermore, the "internalized fictions" in Song of Lawino are "fuller than those in any of the sung...forms in Acoli oral literature" (Heron Poetry 91). Heron even claims the "rhetoric of apostrophe" to be "the only major formal influence of oral literature on [Song of Lawino] which has survived translation" (Poetry 25). Thus despite all the borrowings, the form appears distinct from what it appears to present itself as being.

Nevertheless, Obiechina states (though specifically of West Africa) that the lingering oral tradition is strong enough to find itself "legitimately portrayed" in the regional literature (143). Such a legitimacy is claimed by Heron for Song of Lawino as well:

Okot's disregard for the contemporary Western ideal of plausibility in fiction suggests that possibility of influences from oral literature on this area of his practice as a writer..." (91)

P'Bitek's abilities, influences, researches, and validity as a speaker for the moment aside, however, one must more closely examine the character Lawino and her abilities and determine her validity as a speaker or lack thereof. For Song of Lawino is not merely about her but is sung as if in her voice.

The AFCA¹ in its assessment of the problems of teaching European languages in Africa asserts:

...it seems that words, even language, do not have the same function for Africans as they do for Europeans. The first thing that hits one as he looks at it is the extreme lack of precision of language for Africans. (97)

While this assertion is worded in a eurocentric--even racist--manner, used here as a defense of French colonial schooling methods, it is a reflection of the same reality which Ong addresses using orality and literacy rather than Africanness and Europeaness as the element of comparison.

Ong carefully categorizes at least thirteen specific elements of orality which distinguish it from literate language use. If one examines the text of Song of Lawino against each of these thirteen elements, one can determine whether or not Lawino is a legitimate oral character. And in such an examination what one does discover is that, while on many counts Lawino uses language precisely as one would expect an oral villager to, in several significant ways she behaves linguistically in a manner impossible for that villager.

Ong claims that, while literate people tend to think of words as labels which can be posted on things and actions in our minds, oral people perceive words as actions in and of themselves. Lawino can easily be claimed to fulfill this criterion of orality. For example, Song of Lawino opens with a sixteen-line overview of Ocol's actions. Reduced to the

¹Association pour la Formation des Cadres de l'Industrie et de l'Administration en Langue Française.

verbs used, those actions are despising, treating, saying, comparing, saying, wanting, insulting, laughing, saying, and comparing (34). Of these ten verbs Lawino attributes to Ocol, all except "despise" and "want" are purely verbal actions. Furthermore, the despising and not wanting she accuses him of give evidence of themselves not so much in physical action as in words. And while Lawino depicts many physical actions throughout the course of the song, Ocol's actions which she reacts most strongly to are those which he says. For his words are actions not just labels without meaning in the oral society.

Ong also claims that oral linguistic expression is rife with mnemonics and formulas. Such techniques are seen

in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, and alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings..., in proverbs..., or in other mnemonic form. (34)

The rhythmic pattern of the basic three-beat line, repetition typical of the refrain, alliteration, and proverbs have previously been cited as evidence of Acholi orature's influence on p'Bitek's formulation of Song of Lawino. But as Song of Lawino is presented as being the words of Lawino, these also serve as evidence of Lawino's place in the orality/literacy matrix. That is, to the extent that Lawino speaks using patterns from Acholi orature, it seems that p'Bitek has created her as an authentic speaker of Acholi orature. And if Lawino fails, under more detailed examination, to maintain the aura of authenticity, then p'Bitek has either failed in his artistic construct or succeeded greatly by creating a

character who on one level appears to be authentic in her self-presentation yet on another level discloses her inauthenticity. In either case, p'Bitek's success or his failure, Lawino manages mnemonics and formulas in a manner suggesting oral authenticity.

In addition to such mnemonic devices, Lawino uses frequent similes with a flavor indicative of common use in oral Acholi culture. Of a clock pendulum she says:

It goes this way and that way
Like a sausage-fruit
In a windy storm. (63)

To describe the sound of the song sung to call her to the arena, she says:

We could hear it faintly
Passing through the air
Like the thin smoke
From an old man's pipe. (76)

Ocol, however, is given an extreme treatment of description by simile:

And he struts
Like a bull baboon
...
He looks like the male aribe bird
And shouts like a train
He walks majestically
Like a bull elephant. (104)

Such descriptions, while picturesque or quaint to the Western reader, are simply expressions of easiest form to the Acholi villager intimately

familiar with the items of comparison used in the similes. And as expressions easily describing both action and attitude in the village context, they become memorable reusable formulas.

In addition to its use of mnemonic devices to aid the oral person in recalling, repeating, and reusing what he has heard, oral expression, according to Ong, tends grammatically to add rather than subordinate one idea to another (37). As a random yet representative sample from Song of Lawino to compare to Ong's standard, one can examine the seventh subsection of Section 7 (70-72). In it, while subordinating conjunctions are used sixteen times and coordinating conjunctions are used a mere twelve times, "and" being used nine of those times, no conjunction is used to connect statements in thirty-five instances. Thus the additive principle outweighs subordination 47 to 16. There is no absolute absence of subordination, yet Lawino's tendency is toward adding ideas for cumulative effect rather than subordinating ideas for an analytical examination.

Ong, in fact, argues the case that, in oral society, analytical thought is considered dangerous, for "without a writing system, breaking up thought--that is, analysis--is a high risk procedure" (39). In no way should such a difference between oral and literate peoples be taken to imply an intellectual inferiority inherent in the oral mind. Rather, as writing is a technology, its absence necessarily results in the absence of ways of thinking or acting made possible by it. Thus to avoid the danger of losing knowledge once it has been gathered through time, oral society bases as much thought and expression as possible in clusters of words rather than in individual words. Among these clusters, according to Ong,

are parallel (or antithetical) terms, phrases, or clauses and epithets (38). For example, an oak tree might epithetically be referred to as a "mighty oak" or a soldier as a "brave soldier." For, while soldiers are generally expected to be brave and oaks mighty, the conglomerate becomes a formula which, unaltered, aids memory and easy recall. And longer formulaic expressions serve the same mnemonic function, both serving to preserve ideas, relationships, and functions once they have been established. For "loose" words and unconnected ideas must be rethought and reconnected with each use while the formula refers back to thoughts already established.

As already noted, Lawino frequently uses parallel forms to structure her complaints against the new and support of the old ways. Yet epithets in their simplest form are not used by Lawino. The previously mentioned Acholi praise names and respectful titles, however, serve as epithet-like word clusters which present an unbending description of a person or of a person's place in society. And even when such a cluster is primarily ironic or even sarcastic, as when Lawino calls Clementina "the beautiful one" (37 [first use]), "The woman with whom I share my husband" (39 [first use]), or "the woman with the large head" (54), its description lends itself to repetition. And indeed, Lawino repeats most such clusters many times.

This repetition even to the point of redundancy is, according to Ong, one of the primary techniques the oral person uses to maintain continuity. Words, phrases, and statements (for example, proverbs) must be repeated throughout an oral performance to keep the listener believing in or understanding the unity of the performance, a unity he can only feel

and not analytically examine as there is no written text (39).

Certainly Lawino repeats words and phrases often. Her primary unifying repetition is, of course, the previously mentioned pumpkin proverb. She refers to Ocol's exploded eyeballs twice, first in Section 4 then again in Section 12 (50; 114). She speaks of "the woman with whom I share my husband" eight times (39, 40, 41, 54, 55). And throughout Section 8 she paraphrases the beginning of the "Hail Mary" prayer three times (75, 78, 81). This particular repetition serves the dual function of maintaining continuity within the section and of contrasting a foreign and thus meaningless repetition with the native Acholi expressions which seek to banish the irrelevant missionary expression and which are full of meaning.

These meaningful Acholi expressions are meaningful precisely because in their formulations the Acholi experience is conserved. And since winning knowledge is an excruciating, time-consuming task, Ong claims, the oral community honors the conservers of old knowledge above creators of new knowledge, thus fostering a conservative politics as well as a traditionalist use of language (41).

Conservatism and giving of honor to conservers are certainly overtly present in Lawino's song. She calls throughout for the conservation of the time-tried Acholi ways and the rejection of borrowed or newly created ways. Furthermore, all of Section 11 is devoted to the political arena. In it she decries all new political parties and processes as destructive to the "right" way for an Acholi to live. She calls, further, for the strengthening, saving, or reinstatement of the old structures of tribe, clan, and family. For her, the creators of new ways are, more

significantly, destroyers of the old ways.

Yet another element of oral thought and use of language is that speakers in a dominant oral tradition do not know or recognize statistics or even facts apart from "human or quasi-human activity." Even such things as lists of names are linked with the actions the listed people performed or that someone else performed on them. As oral people perceive it, that which is acts or evokes action (Ong 43).

In this, Lawino most definitely resembles the oral villager she seems to be. She explains electricity, for example, not in terms of what it is but in terms of how she believes it came into being:

The white man has trapped
And caught the Rain-Cock
And imprisoned it
In a heavy steel house. (57)

In discussing the qualities of various woods, she states:

Opok is easy
To split with the axe;
Yaa burns gently
It burns like oil;
Poi is no use for firewood,
It is rock. (60)

Clearly action, not statistically based information, is the reference of primary importance to Lawino, who has a preference for concrete manifestation in phenomena.

In Section 7 she further demonstrates this attitude as she discusses time. She says that Ocol states the time like a Westerner. But, for her,

time must be a duration in which to do something, not some empty number (64). Such an emphasis on action applies as well to names of seasons and months. Lawino says Ocol ridicules her for not knowing the names of the months. But the Acholi do not have names for the months because the changing of the moon signals no significant action or change in action to the Acholi people. Rather, season names bear the understanding of specific activities in the Acholi village (70, 1).

Additionally, Section 9 stands out particularly as a demand by Lawino that the priests and nuns link the "facts" they demand to be taken on faith to actions which she can comprehend. She understands the actions involved in forming something from clay. But where did God dig his clay; where did he stand when he was digging it; where did he put the things which he had moulded to dry (86, 7)? Without understandable action, there is no possibility for Lawino to believe these foreign ideas.

Due to this demand for action and the corresponding direct, face-to-face nature of orality, both the attractions and antagonisms of interpersonal relations assume a prominent position in verbal interchange, reflecting "the highly polarized, agonistic, oral world of good and evil, virtue and vice, villains and heroes" (Ong 45). People, not facts, come together. And when they do, they must struggle either for common ground or for control.

Certainly interpersonal attractions and antagonisms stand out in Song of Lawino. In fact, the entire song is about the strain on Lawino and Ocol's relationship as well as Lawino's desire for its restoration. All Western cultural elements are presented by Lawino as villainous destroyers both of Acholi culture and of her relationship with Ocol. And

all Acholi cultural elements are heroic sustainers of her life--as they can be for Ocol. Song of Lawino begins "Husband, now you despise me..." (34). It ends with Lawino pleading, "let me dance before you..." (120). And in between she fights for that right, thereby showing herself apparently to belong to agonistic oral society and its ways of expression. For the exaggerated "black and white" images which she depicts serve to polarize the world into opposing forces. And in such a world, Lawino is striking out against Ocol in an attempt both to control him and to bring him back to their common ground, the Acholi village.

However, another element of oral expression closely connected with its agonistic nature is the impossibility of objectivity. While writing separates first the writer and then the reader from the active expression of the known, allowing the development of objectivity, Ong explains, oral expression ties both the speaker and the hearer to the action of the word, making objective distance an impossibility (46). And while writing in and of itself does not cause objectivity, objectivity cannot exist without knowledge of it.

For Lawino, then, to display any objectivity, she would, in Ong's view of orality and literacy, necessarily have to be literate. It is true that most of the time she spouts only her obviously subjective views. Yet in at least three circumstances she drops subjectivity and for a few moments claims objectivity. For example, she claims, despite all her disparagement of Western foods, that each person should be free to choose his own diet, the alternatives all being equal (63). She claims, despite the many insults she heaps on Clementina, to mean no insult to her as Clementina is merely living in a chosen way which differs from the way

(one of many possible and equal ways) that she has chosen (39). She claims, despite the ridicule she dishes out to other races and those who try to look like them, to accept the equality of many differing beauty standards (54). Of course, Lawino does not achieve the objectivity she claims for herself. But her claiming it and attempting to incorporate it into her song necessarily separate her from a realm where such thought is impossible.

Another element of orality which necessarily separates Lawino from the oral world she claims is its homeostatic quality. Oral cultures do not continue using or even remembering things which have been outmoded or which have come to be irrelevant. Words and meanings exist only through current use in a living, active situation (Ong 47).

Yet in Sections 8 and 9 Lawino calls the Bible "the Clean Book," the Blessed Virgin "the Clean Woman," God "the Hunchback," and the Holy Spirit "the Clean Ghost." And according to Heron, such usage is long since outmoded, the normal Christian expressions now being accepted and understood by the Acholi (Poetry 57). Lawino's insistent use of such terms thus shows her to be possessed of a memory which depends on print.

Yet again Lawino is shown to be a fraud in her use of abstractions. Ong claims that abstractions are impossible to the oral person, even abstractions of one word for all concrete objects of the same sort being irrevocably tied in the oral mind to those individual objects. All thought must be situational and be expressed situationally rather than by abstraction (49).

In Section 11, however, Lawino plays a free hand with political abstractions. She tries to conceal her adeptness with vocabulary, saying

for example, "...Communism!/I do not know/What this animal is!" (105). She says, "But what is the meaning/Of Uhuru?" (103). Yet she goes on to explain the abstraction with other abstractions. She says, "They want Independence and Peace" (103), and later, "Where is the Peace of Uhuru?/Where the unity of Independence?" (107). Lawino clearly wants her listeners, including Ocol, to feel she has a "simple," oral mind. Thus she hides behind feigned ignorance while at the same time deftly handling literate abstractions.

Ong describes yet another element of orality against which one can examine Lawino. Ong claims that accurate, non-exaggerated characterization is made possible by print. Orature, on the other hand, can generally produce and perpetuate only colorful characters. For "colorless personalities cannot survive oral mnemonics" (70).

It is true that Lawino's characters (Ocol, Clementina, the catechism teacher...) are colorful. However, on a closer examination of the character Ocol, one discovers that Lawino's portrayal of his actions and opinions is identical to his own more obviously literate expression of them in Song of Ocol. If Ocol has portrayed himself accurately, then Lawino's portrayal of him is a realistic one. And even if he has misrepresented himself, it is hardly possible that an oral villager would misrepresent him in the same way.

Furthermore, Ong claims, "...the oral sensibility...has no way of operating with 'headings' or verbal linearity" (100). He further claims that "scientifically organized" expression is unknown in oral communities (109). For making a heading and organizing an argument in such a way as to eliminate irrelevant material or even in such a way as to form a

logical beginning, middle, and end both depend totally on the ability to see the argument or creative work. And for the oral person, seeing the purely oral work is completely impossible--even in the mind's eye--for literacy alone endows one with the capacity of seeing language.

Once again Lawino here fails the test of orality. As is immediately clear on opening Song of Lawino, Lawino uses headings both to separate off the different sections of her song and to indicate the subject matter of each section. Furthermore, she scrupulously includes in each section only scenarios, songs, proverbs, complaints, and arguments which are germane to the subject of that section.

In addition she uses an overall organization pattern which could be worked out only on the written or printed page. According to Heron:

Sections 1 and 2 of Song of Lawino introduce us briefly to the fictional situation in the poem, but then Lawino deals with one particular aspect of Western influence on Acoli tradition in each of the other sections. The early sections deal with concrete things; dances, ornaments and games, hair styles, and cooking, whilst the later sections deal with more abstract subjects: time, missionary education, Christian myths, medicine, and politics. Sections 12 and 13 conclude the argument, tying the themes together in their extended metaphors. (Poetry 62)

So, not only does Lawino organize a beginning, middle, and end, within the middle she also uses clear and logical divisions and progression from

concrete to abstract topics. Furthermore, within each of these two groups of topics, Lawino progresses from topics of primarily cultural importance to topics more relevant to physical health and well-being.

Thus it becomes clear that despite many definite elements of identity of technique with orality, Lawino speaks with a voice which is literate. She is capable of "scientific organization," non-exaggerated characterization, abstraction, and objectivity--all clear marks of literacy. Lawino's is not the expression of an oral villager but of a literate, highly sophisticated, and well-educated person.

Nazareth asserts:

Although Lawino pretends to be a simple 'bush' [sic] woman, her analysis in presenting the totality of her world--its music, religious beliefs, food, aesthetic values, the significance of names--is not naive. (10, emphasis added)

Rubadiri as well claims, "She knows too much for a simple village girl..." (152). And while it is partly true that one often expects too much simplicity from oral villagers, it has just been shown that most sophistication is beyond their capabilities.

Yet beyond this gap of sophistication between Lawino and the village she claims to represent, one finds a serious cultural gap as well. Apoko claims, "...the role of the Acholi female is to be obedient" first to her parents and then, after marriage, to her husband (64). A model woman, one who has fulfilled her role and duties in an exemplary manner, may be called by the village elders "to give some talks and advice" (47). Lawino's stance, however, is from the beginning set against her husband.

She refuses to follow his lead and accept his authority for his house. And in the process she calls out, unsolicited, to her clansmen to rail against the man she should be subject to if she is a good, true Acholi as she claims.

Lawino claims her husband's failings in his traditional place and duties to be the cause of her actions. But on closer look, one finds Ocol to be living up to his role. For the husband is most definitely the head of the house and always has the final say. He is trained to be strong-willed, unable to be dominated by women. He is, furthermore, considered good and successful if he has a big, strong house, full barns, much livestock, and if he is brave (Apoko 46).

One can, of course, not claim Ocol to be living a traditional Acholi life. Yet it appears he is living most definitely according to the above-stated mores of his tribe. He refuses to be ruled by Lawino and her wishes. He is rich, the owner of a successful farm with tractors as well as bulging barns and large herds (Song of Ocol 141). And he is brave--standing against customs he knows to be harmful, daring to be a political leader in a turbulent world. In short, Ocol's antitraditionalist, neocolonialist attitudes serve as a modified form of the traditional pattern of male dominance in Acholi society.

Pa'Lukobo is quoted by Heron as stating, "Neither Lawino nor Ocol are recognizable as real people; they are caricatures" (Poetry 71). Also pointing to the unlikelihood of the character Lawino, Gathungu claims, "To infer that a woman--even the mother to Lawino--would be averse to the idea of piped water is a gross misrepresentation of our sense of values" (58).

With such a bulk of evidence showing Lawino to be an unreliable

character, it is little wonder that p'Bitek's mother, on whom he based the character, could not understand the song her young son read to her (Interview: Zettersten 31). She wanted the "song" to be singable like a true Acholi song, but it wasn't (Interview: Lindfors 283).

P'Bitek was, in fact, well aware of the gap between Song of Lawino and Acholi culture. He claimed, furthermore, that his main influences were not African at all but Western--specifically Song of Solomon and Song of Hiawatha (Interview: Aarhus University 89). Goodwin referred to this claim as impish (224). Yet the fact remains that the impetus for and the tribal stylistic techniques of this work developed not out of Acholi life but out of an academic investigation carried out at Oxford for his B.Litt. thesis (Interview: Serumaga 150). It is thus in its essence a Western work.

Lindfors has claimed Song of Lawino to be "a hybrid achievement" (147). But the borrowing from orature has been done in a literate manner. The result, thus, is a purely literary work, not the "substantial blending of oral and literary art" which Lindfors claims (147).

Naturally the line thus becomes quite blurred between the responsibility that one assigns to p'Bitek for "misrepresenting" his character and the achievement of p'Bitek's literary skill that one assigns to Lawino for "misrepresenting" herself. But according to Ruchoya, "Lawino's lament or protest is not Okot's voice, it is a dramatic monologue of African drama" (55). And further, in the light of the previously discussed mother/son relationship under the surface of the marital one both Lawino and Ocol present to the reader, it seems quite sound to assume that the characters, not the author, are in some way

untruthful--not only about their relationship, but also, in Lawino's case, about her very identity. The Lawino the reader becomes familiar with is not the Lawino she claims to be. Yet she is not the conscious precipitator of a literary deception. Rather she is a literate construct of an oral persona. For if one accepts that an extra-textually authentic Lawino is the oral villager of the text's surface, then the voice in which Song of Lawino is sung is not Lawino's voice.

OCOL'S FREUDIAN DEFENSE MECHANISMS

If, then, one approaches Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol as expressions of a mother and son, one has a very confused picture to examine. For Lawino calls her son to their incestuous bed while Ocol rejects her totally. Yet both deny the nature of their relationship, claiming it instead to be marital. And further Lawino presents herself as the representative oral villager. Yet she is clearly articulate in a way specific to literacy. She refuses, further, to bow to the basic moral demand that the Acholi village imposes on a woman: respect for and obedience to her husband. But she declares all the while that Ocol is the one living outside the bounds of accepted village morality by rejecting, as he indeed does, the traditional activities and practices of his people. He, however, is actually fulfilling his traditional role by establishing himself materially, becoming a bold leader, and not allowing his wife to dominate him. Yet his fulfillment of the traditional male Acholi role follows undeniably an untraditional pattern as he accumulates wealth through applying a foreign education and foreign technology, expresses his leadership in rejecting traditional practices, and fends off wifely domination by taking a new wife who does not appear even to know Acholi customs and values.

Despite Lawino's apparent failure to fulfill her traditional role as wife and Ocol's apparent fulfillment of his traditional role as husband, however, Heron claims that Ocol, not Lawino, is presented by p'Bitek as "impotent and unhappy" ("Okot" 88). Heywood agrees, claiming, "Ocol emerges as a complex, tortured persona..." (76). Heron also asserts,

"...[Ocol is] compelled by some deep-seated sense of insecurity (Poetry 74). He continues by claiming there to be no indication of its cause (74).

Not everyone agrees, however, that the cause of Ocol's "insecurity" is indeterminable. Kamenju, for instance, claims it to result from "European arrogance and intellectual racism" (60). Heywood, on the other hand, asserts a more internalized cause, claiming Ocol's stance to be essentially defensive (75). In fact, in light of the disguised incestuous relations and rejections together with the unreliable self-presentation of Lawino as an oral villager and as Ocol's wife and the evident corroboration of her assertions, both of her identity and of his actions, from the mouth of her opponent, it seems the entire picture is muddled with compounded distortions of defensive psychology.

If, then, one approaches this problem through the vehicle of the five Freudian defense mechanisms of projection, fixation, repression, reaction formation, and regression, one finds a clear cause of such textual misrepresentation. One finds, in fact, that Song of Lawino is actually a projection from the mind of Ocol. Indeed, as his projection, Song of Lawino is sung not by an actual Lawino but, rather, by a Lawino who is a creation of Ocol's psyche. The Lawino which emanates from Ocol's unconscious mind, his projection, expresses, then, Ocol's own unacknowledged desires and feelings rather than those of the character one initially believes to be "singing." If it is his desire being expressed, then Ocol is fixated in the oedipal stage of development. Yet even as a projection, Ocol is unable to accept outright the oedipal relationship, so he represses its true nature, choosing to think of it instead as a

legitimate marital relationship. Nevertheless, the development of his super ego, which he gained through his colonial education, causes him to form an intense reaction against even the fictionalized marriage, thus Ocol's rejection of Lawino both as wife and as mother. Furthermore, quite apart from the other defensive approaches, Ocol often regresses, leaving behind adult behavior to act and react as a child. Taken together then, Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol are actually Ocol's song of defensive escape from the incestuous, oedipal reality he cannot manage.

Macpherson claims of Ocol that he is "a mixed up man and so cannot have the directness of attack of the single-minded Lawino" (218). Lawino's "attack," however, is single-minded precisely because it is a projection from the mind of Ocol, a projection specifically of one particular element of Ocol's psyche: his desire for Lawino. Thus everything Lawino says and does in Song of Lawino has the unity of being aimed at the same emotional purpose while Ocol's attack lacks unity, because it represents diverse aspects of a human psyche, aspects which sometimes work against coherence.

Certainly one finds Lawino speaking with a literate voice and acting in a manner inconsistent with normal Acholi behavior, for she displays skills of "scientific organization," non-exaggerated characterization, abstraction, and objectivity and refuses to accept her husband's authority. And if one believes the "real" Lawino somehow to be the woman she presents herself to be, one must reject her as the "singer" of her song. One needs then to locate the true "singer" of her song.

In terms of the scenario of Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, this singer would most logically be Ocol himself. For, aside from the

anonymous priests and nuns of her youth, Lawino presents only Ocol as a literate person of significance to her existence. Among those capable of manipulating this text-based song, only Ocol has any personal reasons to represent either Lawino or himself in any way, truthful or otherwise.

One finds further support for the oneness of the two singers in their basic agreement over the actions Lawino and Ocol perform. Lawino says to Ocol, "You say you no longer want me" (34). Ocol agrees:

Woman

Shut up!

Pack your things

Go! (121)

Lawino says, "My husband pours scorn/On Black People" (35). Again Ocol expresses the sentiment Lawino attributes to him:

What is Africa

To me?

Blackness,

Deep, deep fathomless

Darkness. (125)

...

Mother, mother,

Why,

Why was I born

Black? (126)

His self-disparaging deprecation of Black Africa expresses itself over and over again as he approaches specific African customs, in Section 3 even

threatening death by murder or assassination to all who practice the "primitive" ways.

Lawino says, "Ocol rejects the old type" of woman (36). And Ocol responds that indeed he does reject as disgusting traditional Acholi women who work (and are treated like) animals, who stagger under excessive fatness, believing it to be beautiful, who are bought for a price and treated like so much furniture (131-4):

Woman of Africa
 Whatever you call yourself,
 Whatever the bush poets
 Call you
 You are not
 A wife! (134)

One finds, in fact, throughout these two songs that, despite the obvious disagreements about customs and values, Lawino and Ocol present the same facts. For the Lawino presenting Song of Lawino is not an independent character with her own reality to present. She is, rather, a projection of Ocol's unconscious desire onto his fictionalized, distorted view of the authentic Lawino, who is his mother. For this reason the Lawino-projection uses those "facts" to try to woo back the Ocol projecting her song, while Ocol uses them to reject the Lawino/wife projection as well as the Lawino/mother reality. In other words, Ocol uses such "facts" first in an expression of his desire for Lawino and then in an expression of his rejection of that desire.

As has already been shown, Lawino and Ocol are metaphORIZED, psychological mother and son. So this relationship combined with the

projection of Ocol's desire onto Lawino indicates Ocol is fixated in the oedipal stage of development.

Heywood states:

Ocol does recognize of course the hypnotic power of Lawino's Song. To him it is a siren song of the past. Such nostalgia for a golden age in the tribal Eden can only cripple those who are actively engaged in forging a possible future. (73)

It is indeed true that Ocol sees the past and also Lawino's call to her bed as crippling threats. What he fears and rejects most, however, is not nostalgia, but as Heyward better expresses in this reference to Song of Lawino:

Apart from primary rage and aggression, then, there emerges also a dream of universal anarchic hedonism which is the positive expression of the primary libido. (80)

This expression of libido which is found in Lawino's call to her bed is Ocol's oedipal reality. His true and unsublimated desire is for his mother--in a narrow sense, Lawino, but in a broader sense, Mother Africa.

However, despite the fact that he has fixated in the oedipal stage and even despite the escape from responsibility for that oedipal desire possible because of its projection onto Lawino, Ocol's oedipal desires are unacceptable to him. Thus, in both Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, he represses the true nature of the relationship, both Lawino and Ocol "admitting" only their marriage to each other. Lawino calls Ocol

"husband" or "my man" throughout the poem while Ocol calls her only "woman." Yet his demand that she pack her things and leave his house paints a clear picture of divorce. There are, of course, still the subliminal hints of their oedipal relations as indicated previously. But, in overt expression, there is a total repression of this reality.

The oedipal reality being thus so totally repressed, one wonders at the vehemence of Ocol's rejection of Lawino. It seems that simply ignoring the wife-Lawino while paying more attention to Clementina would be sufficient. Yet Ocol still knows the truth at a subconscious level. He is not free of it no matter what mechanism he uses for protection.

Thus yet another Freudian defense mechanism comes into play: reaction formation. The desire Ocol has for Lawino, whether admitted as oedipal or denied, whether imputed to Lawino or accepted as his own, still refuses to fit any alternate subconscious nomenclature. So even the form the reader finds it in must be rejected. Heywood claims of Ocol:

The only escape from his painful tension is total
change, a radical leap into the undefined, still-
to-be-created future. (68)

And while she did not mean to refer to the tension specific to an oedipal complex enmeshed in multiple other defense mechanisms, still the escape she describes is the one Ocol takes. He totally rejects his wife/mother and attempts to destroy anything connected to her and her way of life, forcing himself into a totally unknown and unknowable future. Giving up an illicit attachment to his mother, he hopes, will be a self-preserving act. Yet he has not, in fact, given it up. He has not resolved his complex. He has only formed a reaction.

Furthermore, aside from and in addition to these four defense mechanisms, Ocol engages in the fifth as well: regression. Hall defines regression as "any flight from controlled and realistic thinking" (95). Regression is childish behavior (although sometimes so common as to be accepted as adult) which serves the function of "letting off steam." Sometimes it is harmless, sometimes quite dangerous.

Among the regressive behaviors Ocol indulges in are the following: losing his temper, destroying property, fighting his brother, picking scapegoats, acting out impulses, and preening. In fact, despite several sensible and valid points he raises, Ocol rarely if ever displays controlled or realistic thinking. Ocol is a man ruled by the mechanisms to which he turned for salvation.

If these mechanisms are defense mechanisms, one wonders what they were invoked in defense against. Certainly Ocol's projection of his desire onto Lawino, his repression of the nature of the desire, and his reaction formation against the object of his desire are all in defense against his oedipal fixation. But in defense against what did the oedipal fixation form?

One will recall that, in the oedipal arrangement of Lawino and Ocol's relationship, the father is drawn as the European educational system in Africa. Or, by extension, Europe is father to Ocol. And in a similar supra-personal identity of the mother, Lawino can be taken to represent Africa--especially as she acts as pundit for things African, rejecting what is non-African. But while in a normal, healthy oedipal phase a resolution is reached as the boy realizes that there is an apparent threat of castration by the father if the boy has the mother as

his "wife" and that he does not possess the strength to kill the father and accomplish his goal that way, in Ocol's case he did succeed in at least symbolically killing or castrating his father. Ocol and his agemates forced Europe out of Africa.

This revolution-based "independence," however, halted the normal progression of Ocol's psychic development. The father figure was no longer present to identify with as the oedipal phase was resolved. Ocol was thus unopposed to fulfill his oedipal desire. Yet, from his mission school education, if not by instinct, he knew his "sin." He could not progress beyond this stage, yet he knew he must. And he could partially satisfy that need through the strategies inherent in the defense mechanisms.

In Section 9 Ocol sets up as demi-gods the European founders of modern Africa. In this he is further attempting to bring back the irretrievably lost father so that, in some form at least, resolution can take place. The human father is gone, but the immortal father is here forever. The deified Europe must be honored, African men denigrated, else, Ocol fears, the resolution is forever impossible.

CONCLUSION

It would, of course, be simplistic--even simple-minded--to claim that literary analysis can solve the complex socio-political problems of Uganda, even if the literary work involved concerns itself explicitly (as well as implicitly) with those problems. P'Bitek claimed to be providing through his writing ammunition for the coming battle for Africa. And in the context of an Africa still in touch with its agonist oral roots, the metaphor of battle holds. Yet in the light of the preceding analysis perhaps another and necessarily literate metaphor would serve better: Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol are case notes of the psychiatrist to whom Ocol has gone for his much needed therapy. And this criticism has sought only to extend the case file.

Ocol must resolve his oedipal complex for his Africa to develop a healthy future. He cannot let down his guard (the protection he receives from his reaction formation), however, until there is a plausible hope of finding an acceptable substitute for the incestuous tie he desires yet rejects. Clementina is unlikely ever to satisfy in that regard as she in no way connects with the womanhood exemplified in Lawino.

No, for the complex to be resolved, Ocol needs to find or promote the development of a "new type" of woman. A woman who is Africa yet is modern. A woman who blends the best qualities of Lawino and Clementina but who is distinct from either. If this "new woman" Africa is discovered, Ocol may over time develop a new healthy love for Lawino, one which he can appreciate more because of the future he sees with his new woman. And as he moves toward a total resolution of his oedipal complex,

he must give up his other defense mechanisms as well. In so doing, he will release Lawino from the bondage of the gag, allowing her to speak for herself for the first time since "independence." And speaking for herself, Mother Africa/Lawino will support Ocol in his recovery and in his search for an appropriate future. The past becomes beautiful when it is not in direct conflict with the future.

The Africa p'Bitek presents to us is an Africa pathologically obsessed with its past and with ancient ways but unable to admit that obsession because such an admission would put it in danger of losing the hard-won modern world. Rather than allowing that past world to be the psychological mother of a healthy new world, Africa is stuck (by defending itself) into rejecting the past as an undesirable mate--something it was never suited to be.

The characters that Okot p'Bitek creates and Ocol presents are certainly unreliable. But it is their unreliability which allows the reader to discover a reliable picture of the surrounding mesh. Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol deliberately present false characters because only thus can the overall reality be accurately presented.

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