

The necessity and implications of creative power or poetic authority in Wole Soyinka and Okot p'Bitek.



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Opali, Fred

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Abstract

Wole Soyinka and Okot p'Bitek see Ogun and Lawino as their deities without whose blessing they cannot create poetry. My paper treats the case in which Soyinka and Okot p'Bitek in their anxiety, pursue the creative tradition practised by the major English Romantics. In the same vein they express the need to attain authority to create poetry before beginning to speak for and on behalf of their trapped societies. As its theoretical base, the paper is informed by intertextuality as espoused especially by Harold Bloom and Jonathan Culler in their theories of influence. The paper begins by a brief presentation of the contexts that inform and significantly enrich the poetry of Soyinka and p'Bitek. From this position, the paper then considers the process, necessity, and implications of attaining creative power or poetic authority and concludes by examining the necessity in the mind of the poet-initiate in the creative process of a presence or equivalence. It observes that it is only creative artists in this condition who can attain poetic authority. Throughout the paper, the extent to which Soyinka and Okot p'Bitek extend the range of romantic continuity and intra-poetic relations in their poetry is indicated. The paper concludes by giving a brief evaluation of the Romantic inclination that the two poets display.

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Different authors writing about creative individuals sometimes seem to list different characteristics for the creatively gifted. The variances in perspectives are not so much about the definitive listings of traits as they are about the mixed order of the lists or the way authors tend to describe each characteristic. For instance, one author may describe highly creative people as “rebellious,” while another indicates they tend to be “independent thinkers,” and still another may label them as having “unusual or unique viewpoints.” In essence, all of these descriptors simply indicate that highly