



Post-independence Identity Crisis and Resistance in Bate Besong and Chiha Kim's Poetry*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined how history sources post-independence identity crisis in Cameroon and South Korea as exemplified in some selected poems of Bate Besong and Chiha Kim respectively. It investigated the poets' voices of contestation against cultural affliction in their attempt to map out identities of resistance for their anguished compatriots. Predicated on Manuel Castells' conceptualisation of identity and resistance woven around the text-context dialectic, the paper found that these poets in the logic of their combatant poetry consider the cultural travails of their countries within the context of post-independence, as vantage points for sustained cultural contestation and resistance. Thus, the paper argued that, the various angsts experienced by the identities of Cameroon and South Korea as sourced from their histories one-to-one, invigorate Bate Besong and Chiha Kim's contestation of all forms of cultural denigration, and warrants their construction of identities of resistance.

KEYWORDS: *Post-independence, Identity Crisis, Resistance, Cameroon, South Korea, Bate Besong, Chiha Kim*

*Received 24 Jan, 2022; Revised 06 Feb, 2022; Accepted 06 Feb, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Bate Besong and Chiha Kim are outstanding Cameroonian and South Korean poets respectively. Given that the histories of Cameroon and South Korea are replete with diverse forms of afflictions that seem to be replicated in the todays of the two countries, both poets have dedicated their literary careers towards efforts aimed at transforming the aggrieved realities and existences of their peoples through literary resistance. In fact, they are concerned most especially with the cultural travails endured by their compatriots during the colonial and the post-independence periods. Such ordeals as are related to culture, generate without doubt, what can be termed identity crisis. Consequently, these versatile poets spare no effort in contesting and resisting all forms of

*This research paper is generated from "Post-independence Affliction and Resistance in Bate Besong, Chiha Kim and Derek Walcott's Poetry" (a PhD thesis by Bame Jude Thaddeus Tomnyuy supervised by Professor Gilbert Tarka Fai (PhD)).

predicament that culturally distress their countrymen. Evidently, their poetry can be said to be a fighting literature aimed at transmuting the afflictive cultural realities of their countries and peoples.

It is worthy to point out the historical similarity between the Cameroonian and South Korean experiences because it foregrounds the countries' cultural identity problems and justifies Besong and Kim's resistance. Like Cameroon, arbitrarily apportioned between the victors of WWI—Britain and France, Korea was partitioned between the winners of WWII—America and Russia. Observably, this Western interventionism on the territorial integrity of non-Western countries, laid the groundwork for future cultural frictions within such nations. The division of Cameroon on the one hand, meant the coming into existence of two distinct cultural heritages in the country: French and English while on the other hand, the partitioning of Korea, ushered in Communist—Capitalist affiliations for North and South Korea correspondingly.

As an import of such arbitrary split-ups, there was to erupt such differences as maybe related to socio-cultural, political and economic practices for the countries in question. These variances brought about cultural tensions and of course, identity crisis between the various new compositions of Cameroon and Korea. The case of Cameroon's bicultural nature with eight Francophone and two Anglophone speaking regions, has been, since the (re)unification of the country in 1961, a source of strife between its two entities. That of Korea is no different for, while North Korea sticks to its Communist heritage, South Korea is protective of her Capitalist culture. Noteworthy is the fact that, none of these new components of these countries is ready to compromise its colonial past and cultural bequests. Thus, cultural tensions and afflictions persist in the said countries even to this day.

Although it was hoped that independence would change the afflictive existences orchestrated by the epistemic and physical violence of colonialism, the native bourgeoisies that took over from colonialists, dashed such hopes. The fiasco of these leaders to guarantee socio-political and cultural harmony, warrants Achille Mbembe's submission in *On the Postcolony* that, the postcolony is now made up of "a political machinery...that constitutes a distinctive regime of violence...and a dramatic stage on which are played out the wider problems of subjugation" (Mbembe, 2002, p.102-5). In point of fact, such regimes seem to have as political will, the socio-political, economic and cultural pauperization of their own people.

It is with this background in mind that this paper sets out to investigate how, based on historical evidence that sources the post-independence cultural quandaries and the resultant identity crisis in Cameroon and South Korea, poets like Besong and Kim, attempt to map out identities of resistance by proffering voices of contestation against cultural affliction. Hinged on Manuel Castells' conceptualisation of identity and resistance woven around the text-context dialectic in its discussion of these poets' contestation against the tribulations associated with their identities, the paper will argue that, the various anguishes experienced by the poets' cultures, warrant their construction of identities of resistance. It will also be contended that, these poets in the logic of their combatant poetry, consider the cultural travails of their countries as vantage points for sustained cultural contestation and resistance.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

One of the major concepts that this paper handles is identity. As Manuel Castells submits in "Globalisation and Identity", identity is "a cultural attribute enabling people to find meaning...through a process of individuation" (Castells, 2010, p.94). In framing his theory of identity, Castells pinpoints three types *viz.*, "legitimizing identity", "project identity" and "identity of resistance" which is the focus of this paper. Identity of resistance

Castells explains, involves reactions by a “human collective” that feels culturally, economically or socio-politically marginalised. He avers that this latter kind of identity is created through materials of history and self-identification that empower this collective “to...[resist] what would be its...assimilation into a system in which its situation would be structurally subordinated”. He goes on to add that, this identity is one which “*was asleep and which had not expressed itself with all the strength with which it is expressing itself now*” [emphasis added] (Castells, 2010, p.95).

It should be borne in mind that, the contestation of, and resistance against vilifications that afflict cultures and identities is not necessarily an attempt to substitute the one for the other as Fanon might have insinuated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961, p.35). This is because as Ngugi wa Thiongo states in *Moving The Centre: The Struggle For Cultural Freedoms*, a problem can arise when people try to use “the vision from any one centre and generalise it as the universal reality” (Ngugi, 1993, p.22). Of course, this is far from what the poets under study set out to do for, their resistance here is a form of contestation against the abuse of their cultures and identities within the post-independence matrix through discursive techniques and not an attempt to project their identities as quintessential or that which must suppress any other.

A question that seems to linger around unattended is: what exactly is resistance? For Lennard Davis in *Ideology and Fiction: Resisting Novels*, resistance is a “rejection of [the] power of the political over-structure and a sense of...solidarity against that structure” (Davis, 1987, p.12). Culturally speaking, this enterprise is crafted through a culture of activism with the aim of transforming discourses and practices that culturally torment a people as sustained by wielders of power and or, authority. With the perpetuation of cultural denigration within the post-independence matrix, Edward Said sets the base for cultural resistance in *Culture and Imperialism* when he avers that, counter-cultural discursivity is essential in the process of contesting institutions and practices of denigration and exploitation.

As Said insists, resistance cannot occur without the readiness of the afflicted to project ideas of liberation (Said, 1993, p.200). Of course, poets like Bate Besong and Chiha Kim through their poetry, demonstrate their unwavering readiness to contest and resist the cultural pains of their people. In fact, they express through their poems, their rejection of, and their solidarity against the structures, discourses and practices that continually foment the affliction of their various cultures and identities in Cameroon and South Korea respectively.

III. CONFLICTING CULTURAL HERITAGES

This section discusses how the afflictions resulting from a clash of colonial cultural bequests, rouses a poet like Bate Besong to construct a rebellious Anglophone identity by contesting the socio-political discourses and actions that deprecate it. The section examines how the cultural legacies of French and British colonialism continue to strongly impact Cameroon’s post-independence cultural identity, and how such a bearing, has become a source of identity crisis that endures in the country especially for Anglophones who constitute the minority. The peculiarity of the Cameroonian identity crisis rests on this dual colonial heritage that hatched Anglophone and Francophone cultures in the country.

In actuality, because Anglophones are the marginal in Cameroon, their culture has been shelved. Consequently, in order to voice his contestation of the cultural imperialism of the majority Francophone worldview, a poet like Bate Besong pivots his cultural resistance in terms of a radical cultural identity enterprise that matches in terms of rancour, the suppressive politics that foregrounds Francophone Cameroon’s oppressive cultural tendencies grounded in difference. In this way, Besong appears to set his contestatory poetics in

antagonistic terms as he identifies with the marginalised proletariat against wielders of socio-cultural, political and economic power within the matrix of the Anglophone-Francophone divide in Cameroon.

In the poem titled “Poetry is”, Besong gives voice to his cultural resistance and a bearing to Anglophone Cameroonian identity as he presents his custom-made definition of poetry. The revolutionary tone of the poem sets the base for his contestation against the dystopian tendencies of his country that instigate the cultural affliction of his Anglophone compatriots. According to the poet in the above-mentioned poem, poetry is:

Reggae, not irate marxist slogans
Not hatchet-swinging mallams not
Poetry is
Not the Gulag
Poetry is Jua
Voice of Anglophone Universe. (Besong, 2007, p.27)

By alluding to reggae, it is evident that Besong considers the genre to be revolutionary—a means through which change against Anglophone cultural affliction can be achieved. So, poetry must resemble reggae in form and content as well as, it must be delivered by poets who must be “spartan fakirs / In vision” (Besong, 2007, p.27). Besong’s allusion to the Spartans who were a warrior people can be understood as suggesting that, a poet must be a fighter for his people. In fact, the poet’s voice must challenge the cultural travails of his people through a self-styled resistance and revolutionary vision. In context, the vision of the warrior-poet must be geared towards protecting the endangered culture and identity of his Anglophone countrymen.

Besong’s allusive and metaphorical intimation that “Poetry is Jua / voice of Anglophone Universe” in the poem here discussed bespeaks of the role that the Anglophone Cameroonian politician has to play in contesting and resisting the abrasion of Anglophone culture and identity. Intriguingly, Augustine Ngom Jua was one of the very first Anglophone politicians to raise an alarm against President Amadou Ahidjo’s manoeuvres to efface Anglophone culture in Cameroon. Unfortunately, he was vapourised in 1977—a fact corroborated by Fongot Kini-Yen in *Pan-Africanism: Political Philosophy and Socio-economic Anthropology For African* (Kini-Yen, 2015, p.477). However, as early as 1964, Bernard Fonlon had before Jua, warned in his essay entitled “Will We Make or Mar?” that the tide was “running hard against Anglo-Saxon influence in the Federal Republic of Cameroon.” He added that, if things were left to chance, there would be “hardly any hope of worthy British uses and institutions surviving in...[the] cultural corpus” of Cameroon (Fonlon, 1964, p.11). It is for this reason that Besong believes that, poetry especially that of Anglophones, must be like Jua and Fonlon who like “spartan fakir[s]”, denounced Anglophone cultural ostracism in Cameroon.

The perpetuity of the afflictions on Anglophone culture and identity is signalled in the poem “After Mandela’s Earth”. Here, Besong submits that these wonted cultural tribulations have become an “albatross around the neck / of...[his] people”. The imagery created by the albatross, metaphorically communicates the fact that, the denigration of the poet’s Anglophone cultural identity, has become an annoying burden that his people must contest and resist. By using satire through paradox, Besong estimates that, because of the voracity of the Francophone leadership of his country, “a litre of petrol / costs more than a litre of...[his] anglophone cameroonian blood” (Besong, 2007, p.73). The satire infused in the poem, signals the poet’s cultural resistance as he reprimands these leaders whom he invectively labels “francophonie / crétin” and “Cardinal devil” (Besong, 2007, p.72-4). This invective christening of the political leaders of Cameroon by Besong comes as a result of the fact that these francophone politicians have over the years been privileging the natural resources of Anglophone regions over their lives as well as their culture and identity.

Bate Besong's contestation of, and his satire on the foolishness of Cameroonian politicians who seek to obliterate Anglophone culture strengthens his resistance as he attempts to defend his people's cultural identity from annihilation. The poet's resistance against these leaders who foment the affliction of his Anglophoneness culminates in his invective labelling of such leaders as "frogs" in the poem "Beware frog brother". According to the poet in the just mentioned poem, the socio-cultural and political policies of the said leaders do not guarantee the survival of the minority Anglophone culture and identity *vis-à-vis* the dominant Francophone culture in post-independence Cameroon. Of course, the nonchalance of the francophone leadership of Cameroon has only protracted the Anglophone-Francophone cultural divide in the country. In the view of the poet here discussed, the Francophone leaders of his country who occasion the ruin of the cultural identity of Anglophones in order that they might have a free ride with theirs as well as the resources of the Anglophone regions become as he suggests in the poem "The Party is Over", quislings and economic thieves because they are:

Plunderers of the fruits of our [Anglophone] apple trees.
Looters of the minerals of our unwilling [Anglophone] earth
... / We watched with awe our [Anglophone] oil bonuses
Spreading / Along cobbled amphi-
Theatres / ... / Where; they embrace their orang-utan spell
Of an alliance; / To the Euro-Reaganite transnational
Chancelleries / Which censors our [Anglophone] coasts. (Besong, 2007, p.92)

Besong laments that Anglophones watched with bewilderment how their oil bonuses disappeared through transnational corporations with the help of Euro-American influence on the foolish and traitorous leaders of his country. He is saddened by the fact that, he or anyone else could not talk because "there was fear / Booming loud and long in every [Anglophone] skull" (Besong, 2007, p.92) in a country described by him, as one in which "the sword and / the bullet hold unmitigated sway" in the poem "Appointments in UB" (Besong, 2007, p.22). Of course, Anglophones could/can not talk about these states for these leaders will eliminate any refractory voices like they did that of Augustine Ngom Jua and others.

The fear of the vapourisation of contestatory voices against the denigration of Anglophone culture and identity as well as the economic exploitation of their regions, conveys the brutality of the country's past and present regimes. It also suggests the regimes' violent schemes in putting a check on Anglophones' socio-cultural and political resistance. These circumstances invariably culminate paradoxically into the beauty of exile as the poet hints in the poem captioned "The beauty of exile". One may be tempted to ask: how beautiful can exile really be? Of course, it is ironical that it should be under any context. What Besong seems to imply is that, those who voice contestation against their afflictive conditions do find solace in exile because "it is the beauty" of his activist friend's exile "that has shown how ugly...[Francophones] have become" (Besong, 2007, p.96) in his "flabbergasted / country, fractured / at genesis" as he states in "Eve of an apocalypse" (Besong, 2007, p.26).

From Besong's insinuation in "Eve of an apocalypse" (Besong, 2007, p.26), Cameroon was built on a faulty foundation for he says the country was fractured at genesis. This is why, in his opinion, the Cameroonian government resorts to cruelty in order to preserve the status quo—that is, the dominance of Francophone culture over the Anglophone. Because of this, the poet considers exile to be beautiful since it shades Anglophone socio-cultural and political activists from the repressions of the regime and exposes its wickedness as well as insouciance. As the resistance against the cultural denigration of Anglophone values and other socio-political ills took steam by the 1990s, politicians changed tactics to more subtle methodologies where and when brutality seemed to raise more eyebrows as John Nkengasong asseverates in "Interrogating the Union: Anglophone

Cameroon Poetry in the Postcolonial Matrix” (Nkengasong, 2012, p.61). As the critic submits, these moves were/are a meticulous plan to effectively “obliterate Anglophone identity” (Nkengasong, 2012, p.62).

From the above discussions, Besong’s cultural resistance revolves around the fact that Anglophones in Cameroon are structurally, culturally, economically and socio-politically exploited and denigrated. In effect, his contestation of the subordinate cultural citizenry of Anglophones is empowered by historical facts and a strong desire of self-identification as Manuel Castells postulates in “Globalisation and Identity” (Castells, 2010, p.95). Though the antagonistic perspective from which Bate Besong defends Anglophone cultural identity might be seen as widening the Anglophone-Francophone divide in Cameroon, his poems however, do not suggest an annihilation of Francophone culture in favour of that of Anglophones. Rather, his satirical quirks on the question are read in this paper as a call to conscience for they who afflict Anglophone culture. In fact, it is a wakeup call to Anglophones so they can fathom the extent to which their cultural identity has been subordinated by the dominant identity and culture of Francophones. It seemingly is the view of the poet that if his Anglophone compatriots become aware of the ploys to obliterate their cultural identity, they will keep alive the necessary cultural resistance needed to protect such a culture and identity.

At this juncture, it can be submitted that, Besongian cultural contestatory poetics of resistance produces a literature of incrimination. Nevertheless, the abrasion of British colonial heritage in terms of Anglophone culture and identity in post-independence Cameroon hypothetically in favour of a French colonial legacy is by the estimation of this study, justification enough for Bate Besong’s invective and radical cultural resistance. Obviously, his goal is to challenge the afflictive status quo by putting its guarantors ill at ease as a means of protecting Anglophone cultural identity in Cameroon. Ultimately, it can be said that, the socio-cultural, political and economic condition of Anglophones in Cameroon, signals a well-crafted plan by the powers that be, to annihilate British colonial legacies and by extension, the culture and identity that emanates from it. Consequently, this cultural eradication enterprise has been a source of animosity between French and British colonial heritages that underpin Francophone and Anglophone cultural identities in post-independence Cameroon today. Thus, Besong is of the opinion that all Anglophones must continue to raise their voices in contestation against their socio-political, economic and most especially, their cultural afflictions.

IV. THE PROBLEMATIC OF ALIEN IDEOLOGIES

This section focusses on the poetry of Chiha Kim and explores how he contests and resists the afflictions suffered by Korean culture and identity as a result of geo-political, economic and socio-cultural ideologies like Communism and Capitalism. Of course, such ideologies are brainchildren of Russian and American interventionism in Korea after WWII. Even more, the section examines how these ideological legacies of American and Russian neo-imperialism continue to sway the cultural identity of post-independence South Korea and how such a bearing has become a source of identity crisis that continues to militate against an indigenous Korean identity as well as the re-unification of the country.

Chiha Kim is concerned about what today constitutes post-independence South Korean identity problems. Like Bate Besong, Kim contests and resists the afflictions of his people’s culture and identity in terms of an opposition that pits him against wielders of socio-political and economic power. His contestatory poetics of resistance incriminates the post-independence leaders of Korea for their failure to ensure the preservation of an indigenous ethnic Korean identity as well as the re-unification of the country. His voyage in technique like that of Bate Besong but with a somewhat different intention, casts aspersions on these leaders in order to

interpellate them concerning the alien basis on which the country's culture and identity have been crafted. More or less, such neo-imperial ideologies only thwart hopes of reunification of the Koreas. Chiha Kim believes that, rather than cling to such transcontinental schemes, Korean leaders need to focus on a Koreanness based on the country's ethnological heritage if unity is to be achieved.

In the poem "Sooyu-Ri Diary", Chiha Kim grieves the fact that the disappearance of Korean indigenous culture, tradition and identity in favour of alien binary cultural attitudes has spun his life into an agonising and meaningless shadow. In the poem here discussed, the poet-persona's comparison of the state of his life to the flickering light of his lamp, captures its undetermined nature since he does not recognise himself given that he and other Koreans now have to define their identity on the basis of alien ideologies—Capitalism and Communism. The metaphor of the persona's "humped shadow / flickering" (Kim, 1974, p.44), illustrates Kim's fragmentation that stems from the identity crisis that he and others now suffer. This fragmentation is so intense that even alcohol or Soju, is unable to assuage his agony. Rather, it scorches his heart like the new substance of his identity. Kim's lamentation in the poem raises pathos as it portrays the deep pain he endures sustained by the falseness of the new South Korean culture and identity he is obligated by anti-Communist laws to retain. His contestation against this imported cultural identity imposed by Capitalism and Communism for South Koreans and North Koreans respectively, sets him at odds with the leaders of the country.

Since South Korean politicians have resorted to snubbing the real Koreanness in favour of Capitalist socio-cultural, political and economic ideologies, Kim avers in the poem entitled "Cry of the People" that:

The policies of this regime
Can no longer be believed [because].../
The call for unification,
[Has become] A stream of words;
Dialogue with the North
But propaganda's tool;
Abusing unification,
A last ploy for self-preservation. (Kim, 1974, p.97)

In the view of the poet, the politicians' abuse of the re-unification project is "a last ploy for self-preservation". That is, the protection of South Korea's Capitalist affiliations. This is why he invectively calls this politician a "Foolish ruler" (Kim, 1974, p.98) and further adds that, his self-interest has warped his judgment. In order to put the blame on others, the politician frames innocuous civilians as spies of Communist North Korea. Note is taken of the fact that, General Chung Hee Park's 1972 Yushin Constitution, laid the framework for anti-Communist consciousness in South Korea which upheld the socio-cultural, political and economic affliction of the country after its independence from Japanese colonisation by 1945.

Chiha Kim in the just quoted poem advises this leader to resign because "Sins against the nation / Shall not be forgiven" (Kim, 1974, p.98). From the perspective of the poet, the fact that South Koreans suffer cultural fragmentation because of the alien ideology that now governs their selfhood, the leader of the country is to blame because his anti-Communist laws are "Sins against the nation" that widen the rift between the North and South. This strategy by the estimation of the poet enables the leader to sustain a faux South Korean identity. As Ji Young Heo in "Contentious Narratives on National Identity of South Korea" explains, this ploy works through a discursive mechanism of difference and othering that engenders a "demarcation of enemies" as well as "the attendant political processes of inclusion and exclusion". This new/faux cultural identity in South Korea is thus "constructed in the specific context of intractable conflicts" within which "the North...is, in fact,

regarded as an existential threat” (Heo, 2020, p.14-20). Thus, the poet-persona in “Cry of the People” as already mentioned, warns and advises the politician to resign because his schemes have been unmasked.

The ploys utilized by the South Korean leader in order to fabricate friction with North Korea so that he can institutionalise the new capitalist ideology, culture and identity, foments various kinds of affliction for Koreans. One of such schemes or crimes committed against Koreans as captured in “Cry of the People”, include among others: the framing of harmless civilians and their subsequent oppression (Kim, 1974, p.98). In advising this politician to resign, Chiha Kim decries the fact that the South Korean ruler creates incidents with North Korea so as to divert attention from the crimes he has committed by destroying the country’s indigenous identity. Rather, the poet wishes that all efforts must be geared towards bringing back the real Koreanness in terms of the country’s culture and identity founded on its ethnic homogeneity.

The poet would have preferred in contrary circumstances that, the politician should work towards mending relations with the North. This being so, in “AN ARMFUL OF FLOWERS FOR THE RUSTED LOCOMOTIVE”, Chiha Kim impatiently yearns:

If you could come to me
Holding an armful of full-blossomed lilies
And mountain azaleas,
.../ And If I could go out and meet you
And tearfully embrace
Your flowers and smiles
Rather than your *thoughts and beliefs*,
I would not need to travel /.../
From the North to the South...
[emphasis added]. (Kim, 1974, p.64)

These lines unambiguously capture Kim’s desire to see a united post-independence Korea and consequently, a national identity not constrained or subjugated by alien thoughts and beliefs as is the case even today. In fact, the poet goes on to compare the mending of ties with the North to the blossoming of flowers that he so hungers to experience. In this regard, the loneliness of his people in the South, severed from their brothers in the North by the “demarcation line”, warrants Kim to, “pour a cup of Soju on the earth as an offering” (Kim, 1974, p.65). This libation becomes the poet’s way of supplicating the ancestors of Korea in prayer so that they may help make his dreams come true. Obviously, Kim wishes to see Korea united and glued by an indigenous cultural identity because then, the country was peaceful, prosperous and strong as the persona in the poem “Five Thieves” (Kim, 1974, p.103) contends. The peace and prosperity of the old days when Korea was devoid of any foreign ideologies to taint their traditional ways is the more reason Kim pours a libation in the hope that things will change for the better soonest.

Like the Cameroonian politician who is bent on silencing dissenting voices against the exactions on Anglophone culture and identity, the South Korean politician vapourises any voices of contestation that talk about the reunification of the country with the North. It is with these false accusations that the persona in Kim’s “Blue Suit” (Kim, 1974, p.37) is incarcerated. In the said poem, the persona cries and agonizes as he is tortured for a crime he has not committed. If only he was guilty, he declares that he will willingly die. Again, since his nightly agonies and hallucinations are so intense, he waits for dawn impatiently. Dawn therefore symbolises relief from his torments unlike Besong’s Anglophone persona whose relief from the afflictions in prison comes from exile in “The Beauty of Exile”.

In addition to the blue uniform South Korean prisoners of conscience were obliged to wear, those

accused of liaising with Communist North Korea were supposed to wear a “square scarlet mark” as a symbol of their supposed betrayal to the North which they considered as an “existential threat” to use the words of Ji Young Heo. Sadly, the persona in “Blue Suit” is wearing one of such scarlet badges. Apart from the physical pains, the insignia was meant to put its wearers to shame by identifying them as turncoats. In any case, Kim laments the fact that, the identity of the country should be based on alien socio-political and economic ideologies. Worse, he is enraged because the politician has so bought into the strange creed in order to sustain the rift between the North and South so as to secure the institutionalisation of Capitalism. Consequently, these politicians resort to the maiming of their own people as evidenced by the horrors of the poet-persona in “Blue Suit”.

While in prison, Kim continues to counter-discursively present his views on re-unification and, for a Korean cultural identity not based of neo-imperialist philosophies like Communism and Capitalism. For this reason, he is tortured and brutalised again in the poem “Parting” but he swears that, “Neither oblivion nor death can quench” his afflictions borne on him by his believe in a unified Korea with a true national identity crafted on the basis of the country’s aboriginal culture and tradition. The poet-persona’s long lamentation in “Parting”, testifies to the severity of his prison afflictions that he describes as “Blue flames of grief” (Kim, 1974, p.30-1). Such anguish is replicated in the poems “Groundless Rumors: Origin of a Sound” and “Five Thieves” as evoked by the aggrieved realities of An-Do and Kesoo respectively. Both An-Do and Kesoo are convicted and rough-handled falsely as supporters of Communist North Korea as well as “entertaining anti-establishment thought[s]” and possibly “organizing an anti-government body through telepathic / means” in the poem “Groundless Rumors” (Kim, 1974, p.68). These accusations are levied on them simply because they believe in a united Korea with an identity crafted on the basis of the country’s ethnological culture and tradition.

In the opinion of Chiha Kim, the South Korean post-independence politicians’ adherence to the cultural values of Capitalism is myopic because as he contends in “Something So Obvious”, these leaders have failed to see that “Forward is not the only way”. By the expression “Forward”, Kim can be understood as insinuating that, the leaders of his country are stuck with Capitalist culture and would do anything to preserve it. On the contrary, the poet believes that “Backward is a direction too” (Kim, 1974, p.59). By “Backward”, Kim seems to be advocating for a re-appropriation of Korean indigenous culture and tradition as a means of crafting a true Koreanness not based on the forward-only perspectives of the alien cultures that the leaders of the divided Korea have imbibed and, for which they inflict pains on his compatriots. The satire and consequently the resistance of the poem as a whole is evinced through the title “Something So Obvious”. Through such a title, Kim seems to be mockingly saying that, a modest philosophy as that espoused in the poem cannot be seen or understood by the leaders of his country who have been seduced by alien dogma.

By Chiha Kim’s estimation, the fact that Korean national identity should be constructed on the basis of the country’s ethnological heritage is something so obvious that anyone should be able to grasp. The radical ideologies that now act as principles on which North and South Korea’s national identities are constructed, resemble those of the Identitarian Movement in Europe propounded by scholars like Dominique Venner and Renaud Camus as detailed by Heinz Handler in his article entitled “European Identity And Identitarians In Europe” (Handler, 2019, p.1-11). This is because the country’s two entities—North Korea and South Korea, now delineate enemies by working through a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion wedged on intractable socio-cultural, economic and geo-political conflicts.

Evidently, with the ideological disagreements governing the cultures and identities of the Koreans as well that of the Cameroons, one cannot but remember Edward Said's warnings against such creeds in *Culture and Imperialism* when he contends that, "to leave the historical for the metaphysics of essences...is to abandon history for essentialisations that have the power to turn human beings against each other" (Said, 1993, p.228-229). In fact, South and North Korea's perception of their identities as well as that of Anglophones and Francophones in Cameroon seem to have been wedged on a metaphysics of essentialisations dictated by alien ideologies like Capitalism and Communism in the case of the Koreans, and divergent colonial cultural inheritances in the case of Cameroon. These alien dogmas and colonial bequests have so found a genuine playing ground for their clash in Cameroon and Korea. Consequently, the culture and identity war in the East Asian peninsular and Central African nation persists even today.

V. CONCLUSION

From the poems of Bate Besong and Chiha Kim analysed in this paper, it is evident that, the two poets' voyage in techniques into history enable them to bear witness to the suppressive identity politics of post-independence Cameroon and South Korea respectively. Accordingly, this demarche is a means of contesting and resisting cultural imperialism within the post-independence dispensations of the countries concerned. Such a cultural imperialism through suppressive identity politics that denigrates cultural diversity and difference in the case of Cameroon and supports cultural exclusivity in the case of South Korea, forestalls peaceful coexistence of peoples of different and of the same cultural identities as the case may be. It is for this reason that, both Bate Besong and Chiha Kim proffer voices of contestation and subversively attempt to disconcert the guarantors of the status quos that appear to eternise such cultural conflicts as are related most especially to issues of identity.

By proffering voices of contestation against cultural vilification, Bate Besong and Chiha Kim are unarguably crafting identities of resistance for their compatriots against the various cultural ostracisms suffered in Cameroon and South Korea respectively. Consequently, it is the contention of this paper that, the post-independence cultural identity dilemmas of Cameroon and South Korea as explored, contested and resisted in the poems of Bate Besong and Chiha Kim are closely knitted to the histories of the countries in question. In fact, these cultural afflictions, according to the estimation of this study to a certain extent are sources of energy or agency that propel Besong and Kim's attempt to map out identities of resistance for their browbeaten countrymen. Ultimately, from the poems analysed in the study alongside contextual evidence as discussed throughout in this paper, it can be concluded that the identity crisis in the cases of Cameroon and South Korea from where Besong and Kim hail are inextricably sourced from the histories of the countries.

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