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## Poetry and cultural identity in F. T. Pacéré's writing: from identity affirmation to universal humanism

### Poetry and cultural identity in F. T. Pacéré's writing

My concern is the socio-cultural characteristics of F. T. Pacéré's poetry and their aesthetic and semantic structuring role. Pacéré's poetry is not just about identity affirmation; it is also about being open to the world, namely other people and other cultures. Through this, it seeks to achieve universal humanism. I conclude my study by arguing that like the Burkinabè written poetry of the 1970s, Pacéré's poetry operates on a double dialogic and dialectic process, as required by the negritude movement: rooting in his native culture and openness to the world. **Key words:** poetry, identity, culture, humanism.

### Introduction

I intend to reflect on the emergence of Burkinabè written literature, through defining its crucial role in the manifestation of Burkinabè cultural identity; establishing the stakes and limitations of identity in a globalizing context with the perspective of an intercultural approach to literature. Like most literatures of Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, Burkinabè written literature is emerging. Since the 1980s, this literature has been truly flourishing, considering the number and quality of the written productions and cultural manifestations involving literature. Finally, cultural and linguistic diversity presents as a key asset in the affirmation of Burkinabè identity at the levels of literature and culture.

It is generally admitted that, because a writer always belongs to a cultural and linguistic community with boundaries often difficult to delimitate, he/she (especially the African writer) can never remain outside the duality (the double "I" phenomenon) imposed by the writing "game".<sup>1</sup> According to Emile Benveniste (1974: 78-88), this game consists of reciprocal presupposition relations that, simultaneously, call into play the "I" and "non-I," that is, the Other, in a context of cultures communicating (according to Rogues and Corbin 2004) and consciences communicating (as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre). Further, in the process of identity affirmation where, according to Leopold Sédar Senghor's philosophy, self-affirmation also means affirmation of the Other, is Arthur Rimbaud not right in asserting that "I is another?"

This affirmation of self and the Other has always featured among the important themes of Francophone literature, and particularly concerned Black African writers. The double “I” (or “game”) identity reached its peak with the Negritude Movement, especially through the theory of Universal Civilization (Senghor 1988). After the first generation, that is, the generation of “epigones” to use Jacques Chevrier’s word (1990), most African writers continued to explore that theme across the different genres. The practice has especially been manifest with poets; and the Burkinabè poet Frédéric Titinga Pacéré is a good example. Beside their originality in terms of typography, themes and writing style, Pacéré’s poems, which are highly poetic and hermetic in essence, comply with two demands: rooting in Burkinabè culture, especially Moaaga culture, and openness to the outside world for the sake of universal humanism.

In the context of globalization and an increasingly visible process of reckoning with linguistic and cultural diversity, how can Francophone African writers and, especially, poets, assert their identity serenely, while observing interculturalism? To investigate this issue, I rely on the poetic production of Pacéré to show, first using a lexical approach, that his poetry is based on a double cultural anchoring: a rooting in the local culture, especially Moaaga culture, and openness towards other cultural spaces. This double flux founds his originality and abstruseness and reveals its dialectic and dialogic dimensions. Then through a narrative analysis, I show that this openness, which is at once “physical” and “interior,” makes Pacéré’s poetry “universal” with a humanistic background. Finally, I conclude that his poetry belongs, not just to the 1970s Burkinabè literary wave, but also to the tradition of identity affirmation and to the larger body of Black African poetry.

### **F. T. Pacéré: a man of culture and his poetry**

Frédéric Titinga Pacéré, a lawyer, was born in 1934 in Manéga, “the land of tranquility”, located in the Oubritenga province in the heart of Moogho (land of Moose people), among the drums and sublime profundity of ancestral mysteries. He was educated in the pure tradition of Moose people. All these combined lends originality to his poetry.

Pacéré is particularly known as a poet and essayist. Very prolific, he enjoys continental and international fame, through his collections *Poèmes pour l’Angola* (“Poems for Angola”, 1982) and *La poésie des griots* (“The poetry of griots”, 1982). The *Association des Ecrivains de Langue Française* (Association of French speaking writers) awarded these two collections the *Grand Prix Littéraire* in 1982. For Pacéré, poetry is in essence elitist and sacred, and aims to be useful. In line with this conception, his poems differ from those of his colleagues and compatriots by their originality and quality, despite their disconcerting abstruseness. To him, writing, literature and, especially, poetry must aim to be utilitarian through addressing the actual concerns of populations,

thematically and stylistically. For this reason, Pacéré believes that poetry must be as much as possible accessible to the general reader – though he has difficulties observing this principle because of his deep desire to base his poetry on Moaaga culture.

Typographically, Pacéré's poetry is spatialized and highly versified. Drawing from the oral poetry of griots, this form of writing has favoured the emergence of a stele layout, which has become a signature in Pacéré's practice. For Locha Mateso (1987: 46) Pacéré's poetry is "an heir to the griots. Systematically creating steles, it also crushes the laurels through sarcasm and satire."<sup>2</sup> What is generally referred to as *l'imaginaire tourmenté sahélien* ("the tormented Sahelian imaginary"), common to many writers of the region, translates in Pacéré's poetry in the form of chunked and spasmodic verses miming the suffering of men condemned to death by the iniquity of the powerful. A case in point is the situation of Angola or Korea as portrayed in the collections *Poèmes pour l'Angola* and *Poèmes pour Koryo* ("Poems for Koryo", 1987).

Thematically, Pacéré's poetry follows two directions: a rooting in the local culture and openness to other cultures. Drawing from common places, his themes are firmly anchored in Moaaga culture. It is a fact that the peculiarity of Pacéré's poetry is in line with a process of social identification, enriched by a pan-Africanist, or even, internationalist, vision.<sup>3</sup> Despite its openness to the outside, according to Salaka Sanou (1990: 63), Pacéré's poetry is marked by "a kind of interior look on the Voltaïc people of the time, where man appears troubled and turned in on his culture, seeking to understand it. This poetry is rooted in the national culture, especially Moaaga culture, which to a certain extent explains its abstruseness."<sup>4</sup> Reflecting on Pacéré's literary trajectory, Patrick Ilboudo (1990: 65) has identified three fundamental benchmarks: anti-negritude, *griotique*, and universal humanism. Most certainly, *griotique* constitutes the corner stone of Pacéré's poetry (see Bouah 1989; Porquet 1989). From it originates the theory of *bendrologie* ("bendrology"), which has allowed the poet to tap the traditional poetic creation technique to denounce the evils of contemporary society (see Ouédraogo 1988).

To better grasp the originality of Pacéré's poetry, it is appropriate to locate it historically, as well as in terms of its poetics and its theatricality, following Urbain Amo'a's approach (2003). He first notes the importance of Moaaga history, and especially the history of Manéga, for Pacéré's poetry. Then he observes that the structure of Pacéré's poetry follows the model of the drum's discourse. Finally, Amo'a argues that this writing technique is dotted with implicit indices and indications revealing a theatrical dimension, characterized by a permanent presence of storytelling, epic, fable, and dramatic features.

These observations have led the critic to pose the following questions: in what respect may Pacéré's poetry, which is fundamentally based on drum discourse, in its form and content, be considered as projecting a particular form of writing close to the fable and poetry, while differing from them through juxtaposing mottos almost al-

ways related to fixed referents or to a morality? How does he use the discourse of oral poetry or of the drum's "cult" poetry in his poetic creation? Does Pacéré's poetry observe the general principles of dramatic art, as does the fable? If drum poetry is close to the fable, can we not derive a new concept, which we may call "drama-poetry," from this specific poetic form? To what extent may the drummed text be construed as a didactic poem?

To answer these questions, Amoa analyzes the drummed discourse and asserts that its external structure clarifies the internal structure of Pacéré's poetic texts. He then defines the relationship between drum poetry and Pacéré's poetic language, insisting on the fact that Pacéré's poetry largely draws on drum poetry or else the griots' drummed language, hence the analogy obtaining between the structure of Pacéré's poetry and that of the griots' poetry, that is, drummed language. In Pacéré's writing practice, he concludes, the internal structure of his poetry almost never changes. In other words, the originality of Pacéré's poetry lies in the author's exploitation of the aesthetics of drummed discourse.

Stylistically, Pacéré's poetry has a simple syntax, despite the stèle layout of the verse lines (reminiscent of automatic writing) and the presence of certain terms (Africanisms and neologisms) drawn from Moaaga language. Moreover, Pacéré's poetic texts largely tap the oral poetry of griots. They are replete with marks of juxtapositions involving sentences, words, and groups of words. The poet himself acknowledges this when he says that:

This literature is globally very complex because the sentences flow successively, run into one another and often do not complete each other. This influenced my collection of poems *Quand S'envolent les Grues Couronnées* ("When the crowned cranes fly away"). To understand some of the refrains of this collection, you must always skip one line, [when] reading the poems. (Pacéré 1992: 86, 231)<sup>5</sup>

In sum, Moaaga culture and orality fundamentally dominate Pacéré's poetry. Also, Pacéré's poetic discourse presents a juxtaposition of circumlocutions whose understanding passes through an implicit semic kernel. This polyphonic poetry uses characters without any explicit stage directions, and contains peculiarities like sentence repetition and reduction, and a multiplicity of refrains. The latter operate as transition devices, inducing new lines announcing a change of ideas or of rhythm. All these features testify not only to the complexity of Pacéré's poetry, but also to its quality, provided that we can overcome his almost intentional abstruseness.

### **Double cultural rooting: a demand of interculturalism**

Pacéré locates his poetry in a dialectical synthesis expressing both a rooting in the local culture and openness towards other cultural spaces. This double demand for

rooting and openness justifies that his poetry belongs to the Burkinabè written poetry of the 1970s, generally characterized by a certain determination to assert Burkinabè and African identity. Pacéré especially draws inspiration from his personal experience and from history, philosophy, religion, sociology, culture, and certain great literary actors. All this testifies to the great quality of his poetry, but also to the difficulty of operating a semantic decoding.

This double cultural rooting is one of the demands of interculturalism, as defined by Claude Clanet (1993) and Luc Collès (1994), and implies, among other things, a cultural de-centering/re-centering movement: “de-centering” from the initial culture, and understanding the Other. Under interculturalism in the frame of globalization, does openness to other cultures not require prior self knowledge? Because of colonization, Africans have been for long deprived of their own cultures, which the West has systematically devalued and negated. It is therefore obvious that this negation has, not just been the cause of the movement of negritude, but also and foremost, seared the minds of Africans for ever, with consequences deeply buried in their subconscious. All these contribute to the rise of the movement of “cultural re-centering” observed in most Francophone literatures.

#### **From identity affirmation to universal humanism**

Among the criteria helping to identify Black African literature, there are cultural, linguistic and historical ones. Cultural reference is the most important feature of Black African literature, for it is the foundation of its originality. Literature cannot depart from reality, that is, its context (see Barthes 1982 and Riffaterre 1982 who refer to it in terms of “referential illusions”). Thus, Black African literature may be defined on the basis of the cultural elements it conveys and expresses. This “cultural” approach (seeking criteria of Africanness) to literature has been highlighted by the works of Senghor and Jean Jahn, both of whom propose, first, a definition of “Negro-African Culture” (definition of the modalities of the presence of Blacks in the world), and then a demonstration of how literary productions represent these modalities. If Civilization means the set of realizations of a people, Culture represents *l'esprit de cette Civilisation* (“the spirit of this Civilization”) that is, the entire values.

In Pacéré’s poetry, these values operate on the basis of a double cultural rooting, which is expressed through numerous socio-cultural and lexical references. A lexical approach to Pacéré’s texts reveals that the cultural references relate to Burkinabè, African and non-African spaces at a time. Beyond their relevance to the aesthetic structuring and semantic decoding of Pacéré’s poetic texts, they justify the abstruseness of his poetry. References to Burkinabè cultural space bear on Moaaga culture, especially the culture of Manéga, the poet’s native village, the entire Moogho (Moose land), and the whole of Burkinabè culture. Pacéré himself confirms (Ilboudo 1990: 65)

this: "Once back to the country, I withdrew into my native land where I could observe this primeval form of the milieu and original as opposed to the outside."<sup>6</sup>

In his collection *Refrains sous le Sahel* ("Refrains under the Sahel", 1976) the poem "Manéga" contains the following lines: "SOUKOUS, Karinsé, Luili-Wando and all the rhythms that invigorate natures!" (12); "Zida, Bougoum, Guiéghmdé, Timini, Tanga, all shed their blood for Manéga to bloom" (19); "Gouli, Wendyam, Passawendin, Falinga" (20); "I will dance warba from the heights of the skies" (21); "Like a Jew expecting his saviour, Moogho expects the rainy season" (22); "There is no hope, let's flee to Manéga, Manéga land of repose!" (35); "Tibo, you will answer the call" (38); "To Zida and to the earth, lend life to Lébéndé" (42); "He will not reach Pilimpikou" (43).<sup>7</sup> These excerpts highlight the socio-cultural references to the poet's milieu, namely, Manéga, his native village. A village lost in the midst of the Savannah, in the heat of the Sahel, and portrayed as a land of peace and tranquility. This is a way for the poet to discover his culture, to make it known, and especially to defend it against certain aggressions: "I also write in Mooré to be useful to the cultural essence of the language [...] I have always believed that what can kill Africa is the fact that some people lack knowledge of themselves. I have decided to defend African culture, my culture, the culture of my village." (Pacéré, interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 66)<sup>8</sup>

Let us note here the use of the names of masks (Soukous, Karinsé, and Luili-Wando), of kings who reigned over Zitenga (Zida, Bougoum, Guiéghmdé, Tanga), and of local chiefs (Gouli, Wendyam, Passawendin). There are also the traditional names of Pacéré's mother and spouse (Timini and Falinga), the name of one of the sacred mountains in the region (Pilimpikou), and an almost obsessive reference to Moogho (Moose land).

"Aux anciens combattus" ("To the war veterans") talks about several social groups of Burkina Faso who took part in World War II: the Moose, Bobos, Samos, Dagaris, Gourmantchés, Peulhs, Dioulas, etc. (53). In the poem "Reflets de New York" ("Reflections of New York"), included in the collection *Poèmes pour l'Angola*, there is a constant reference to Manéga (the poet's native village), Waodgo (Ouagadougou in Mooré), and Moogho, the land of Moose people: "A radio set, and WAODGO is switched on and I seem to hear news of Manéga" (54); "My heart throbs, I am thinking of my land, the glory of MOOGHO and of Africa" (57); "Before me, his radio set, he is seeking Manéga but he can only find New York. WAODGO's radio no longer speaks" (73); "I am back in Manéga, my arms open up to swallow Africa, the eternal one" (93).<sup>9</sup>

The poem "Les eaux boueuses du Kadiogo" ("The muddy waters of the Kadiogo River") from *Poèmes pour l'Angola*, confirms the rooting of Pacéré's poetry in Moaaga land. Here are some illustrative passages: "ZAKA-RAMBA, IYIIMIN LAA?" (99); "On that day, WAMPOKO, the female mask, in PISSI's household, was giving birth to a dead baby" (100); "The rivers always carried along the muddy waters towards KADI-OGO" (101); "Tibo, is this Tibo's home?" (101); "Always to the East, over ZIDA's land,

all is dark" (103); "She took the path leading to MANEGA village, to marry a man from Pissi" (103); "She had three children, WEND POULOUMDE (fate)" (104); "Tibo, Tibo is here, N'na poussi zaamin kognoudou" (106); "Our fathers will accept the New Year's ZOM KOM, you will not cry for Tibo (108); "It is moonlight in WAODGO" (110); "And the kunga resounds like hyena coming out of a henhouse" (122); "I am from Wazélé and he, I am told, from Pissi " 126); "Earth's only truth flows into the muddy waters of the river KADIOGO" (138).<sup>10</sup>

These excerpts reveal village names (Manéga, Pissi, Wazélé, Bokin, Waogdo (Ouagadougou), Moose mask names (Wampoko, a female mask), persons' names (Tibo and Titinga, Mooré names given to Pacéré), and Mooré expressions (*zaka-ramba, i yiimin laa?*: "Are you out, people of the household"; *N'na poussi zaamin kognoudou*: "To present you our condolences").

As to the references to the African space, they mainly include Angola, especially in the collection *Poèmes pour l'Angola*. Pacéré (interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 65-66) explains why:

*Poèmes pour l'Angola* and *Chants pour Koryo* are travel notes. At times I realize that the fight we are undertaking here is the same as what others are doing elsewhere. I have seen the war front. I have talked with Angolan writers, some of whom have spent a score of years in the fascist Portuguese prisons [...] Naturally I have written to testify, to reveal war experiences [...] In Angola, we were close to the apartheid system, this crime committed daily against humanity and against which, at the Brazzaville symposium, we writers decided to fight.<sup>11</sup>

In this long poem addressing Angola's civil war, references to the country are legion. Following are some striking illustrations: "Oil will spread Europe under the seas to breathe in Angola" (11); "ANDRADE, COSTA ANDRADE" (11); "If it rains, it will feel good in Angola, if it does not, it will still feel good in Angola" (13); "NETO, I can see a mulatto afar" (23); "On my right, Dagraça and Arnaldo SANTOS; on my left, Costa Andrade and Antonio CARDOSO, further away, Antonio Jacinto and all the others" (33); "AUGUSTO, where is your mother? I do not know; NGANLULA, where is your people? I do not know; AUGUSTO, where is your school? I do not know; NGANGULA, where is your army? I do not know" (39).<sup>12</sup>

The excerpts also reveal names of Portuguese origin (Angola being a former Portuguese colony), and a famous name, Augustino Neto, a statesman and poet from Angola who ruled the country from 1975 up to his death. In this collection, the poet first describes the war situation in Angola, as the following excerpts show: "Death always in the South strikes a brother" (8); "A white man is fighting against a black man, a white man has left a black man" (9); "On the Southern land, machine guns resound from morning to evening" (9); "Somewhere far away, the gun will be the drum of the day" (15); "In the South, a brother is claiming the ancestral land" (16); "Two capital

cities are fighting, while they have a common father" (17); "A while before the arrival, a crime was committed, another followed" (18); "Man has invented a gun with several barrels and triggers; a man is henceforth killing several brothers" (18); "Amidst the rattle of machine guns, man must heal his wounds" (19); "I can read in his dark and white eyes, the violence of a guerrilla" (24); "His pierced and blood reddened trousers, wounded and half-opened hearts" (25); "Our eyes meet under canons resounding at a stone's throw" (25); "He is laughing before canons puking fire" (26); "I bottled Joseph and now Joseph no longer likes me" (27); "I can hear the rattle of a thousand axes, orders, regiments, troops, airplanes, tanks, radars; kill him, they say" (37).<sup>13</sup>

With a narrative approach to poetry (see Bremond 1973, Genette 1970), we may note that by spatially and cognitively separating Angola and the events taking place there, the poet obtains information through his "brother," who, acting as a helper (adjuvant), favours a spatial, actorial and cognitive conjunction: "My brother, running, shouts out this sentence to the Ancestral land: the South wishes to know you" (8); "And on the land of Manéga, my junior brother appears, handing over the letter of a setting sun: you have got to descend into the forest" (9); "My junior brother handed over to my mother a morning letter: The South is calling, you must go" (11); "The drum reminds my mother that one message is for the son" (13); "The message came by way of the red path" (14); Once informed, and therefore in a cognitive conjunction, he decides to leave for Angola: "You must go: the bird flying in the fire covers the continent" (16); "That night, I fell down like a bird gliding into Angola along the way of Arab countries" (19).<sup>14</sup>

In this poem Pacéré clarifies the nature and scope of his fight: the aim of the fight is to re-establish peace and the unity of a country torn by twenty years of civil war: "The gun must go back to the hut" (9); "White men from the South are running to the sacred land that is stretching its fraternal hand to all the colors of the rainbow" (15); "ZIDA's land was shining like a worm" (15); "Brothers from Angola, twenty years separate the men meeting one night; the amicable hand shaking mine sings NETO's country" (20); "Brother, gather the wounded hearts. The village of Manéga has foreseen the war, and in Tamboogo, power has a son called forgiveness" (21); "Gather the disunited bloods; the country is for all" (21); "Shake the brother's hand. Tomorrow my father will sing a new song and I will again sing Angola's flowers" (22); "Build the country and the continent in freshness" (30); "Woman, dance the rumba, but dance the samba of summer evenings, hold tight the gun while hugging this man of new mornings" (32).<sup>15</sup>

The search for peace and unity does not concern Angola alone, but also all the other hot places of Africa and elsewhere. This justifies the universal and humanist nature of Pacéré's fight: "My homeland is neither Angola nor Portugal, my land is celestial truth, colour is but the effect of chance" (22); "I am white because I am black,



the land is ours, and I am one of yours and part of our fight" (23); "Dancing Warba in Angola opened my eyes on the oneness of the continent" (28); "I stretch my hands to encircle the universe" (33); "I over extend my black hands to gather blacks and whites linked by reason and bullets" (34); "Brother from Angola, Africa, the Universe, look at the man who unites, blind to colour, night, and age; remain, remain united" (40).<sup>16</sup>

Once his mission of peace and reconciliation accomplished, the poet returns home, to Manéga: "The bird on the tree is waiting for me to fly to Manéga land; the bird that is flying away leaves behind in Angola this heart which knows no border" (41).<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that from the point of view of temporality, the present of Manéga is euphoric (a place of peace and tranquility) contrary to Angola (a dysphoric present because of the war). The poet dreams of a peaceful and happy future for his country, but especially for the entire Africa and the world. In sum, the narrative approach helps to note, first, that the poet is in a spatial and cognitive disjunction with the other spaces and other interlocutors (because he is in Burkina Faso and precisely in Manéga, his native village). Informed by "mail" and "brothers" about what is happening elsewhere in Africa (especially in Angola and Congo), the poet decides to go there, as a peace messenger. The departure is symbolized by the bird, meaning the airplane, which gives him the opportunity to describe the landscapes. Once in Angola, he describes the situation, meets the actors of the war, and preaches reconciliation, peace, and unity before going back to his native village, Manéga.

The study of space reveals the writing subject acting like a centripetal and centrifugal point. Starting from a "zero space" or "Alpha space" rooting (his native village, Manéga, and more generally his country or continent of origin), the poet opens himself up to an "Omega space," theoretically not defined. Indeed this space corresponds to the entire Universe. The poet perceives and receives his entire immediate and mediate environment, then re-structures it and reveals it under various forms peculiar to him (his poetic language) within the Universal Space. Also, the elements received from this Universal Space are re-structured and thrown back towards that Space. This is a dialectical movement inherent in the give-and-take principle dear to the theoreticians of negritude, and which Senghor advocates in terms of Universal Civilization. By identifying the enunciation spaces of Pacéré's poem, I have been able to reveal their variety and number. If the diversity of enunciation spaces testifies to the richness of Pacéré's poetry, paradoxically it also constitutes a source of difficulty in understanding his poetic texts. The openness concerns physical, cultural and interior spaces. The various openings or references (political, religious, socio-cultural, etc.) lend Pacéré's poetry a "multidimensional," "universal" and "universalistic" scope. They also confirm Pacéré's qualities as a man of culture. From a rooting (to paraphrase Barthes 1972) in his "zero space" (Manéga and/or Burkina Faso), the poet opens himself up to various socio-cultural spaces, or even to Space in the Universal or Cosmic sense of the word.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, these references are not mere Adventist elements. In

their different ways, they contribute to the aesthetic structuring and the semantic disclosure of Pacéré's poetic texts.

Other cultural spaces resolutely contribute to the cultural dimension of Pacéré's texts. These are African sub-spaces like Congo and Zaïre ("ZAIRE shall be a name, CONGO a name, ANGOLA a name" (10). In the collection *Refrains sous le Sahel*, the poet addresses other spaces such as Tyaroye, Madagascar, Ethiopia, etc., in the poem "Aux anciens combattus": "Riddled with bullets at Tyaroye or Madagascar" (55); "Ethiopia is not a selection zone" (56).<sup>19</sup> In the same collection, the poem "La deuxième guerre" ("The Second War") makes reference to African capitals like Yaoundé, Bamako, Pretoria, Salisbury, Ouagadougou, Abidjan, etc., which confirms Pacere's openness to the entire African space.

However, this openness goes beyond the African space to encompass the entire world. For instance the collection *Poèmes pour Koryo* is entirely about the Republic of Korea. Again Pacéré (interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 66) explains why: "In the Korean peninsula, I saw the border separating the two Koreas in 1985. In 1975 I also saw the wall separating Berlin. I do not believe it is necessary to divide the world; unfortunately, human egoisms are difficult to overcome. But peaceful spaces need to be created."<sup>20</sup>

In *Refrains sous le Sahel*, the poem "Aux anciens combattus" refers to other world spaces, including the following battlefields: Verdun, the Orient, the Levant, Danube, Sebastopol, Monastir and Wiesbaden. It also mentions big capital cities like Washington, Paris, Berlin, London, Prague, etc. (66).

In the poem "Reflets de New York" from *Poèmes pour l'Angola*, Pacéré's openness is even more manifest through references to America: "Here is New York, all is beautiful, and sperm flows galore" (48); "Washington pours over the cities the sperm of a sunset" (52); "New York is the capitol of the Earth" (56); "Here is Delaware, a bridge straddles the sea" (59); "The current passes through my body like Philadelphia's sperm" (60); "My neighbour's sex beats like New Orleans jazz" (61); "I will find the land of Uncle" (62); "Holywood (sic) stars are sitting on the ground, the red outfits of a Wilson Jones mix with a caged elephant" (63); "Crosses without crosses fill New Jersey, crescents grow in New jersey, the white smoke of the White House announces the election of a new Pope" (64).<sup>21</sup>

All these references indicate the greatness of Pacéré's poetry. And while they contribute to the semantic decoding of his poems, the references make the reading difficult. They testify to the openness of Pacéré's poetry to other socio-cultural spaces, which, undeniably, play an important role in the semantic disclosure of the texts. The references are not just about the substance of culture; neither are they limited in space. They transcend these to carry a universal content. In other words, there is a kind of rooting, or else, a departure point from which Pacéré's poetry opens up to culture, space and time.

## Conclusion

My initial concern was to see how current Francophone African writers may assert their identity while accepting that of Others, in the context of a changing and globalizing world. To do so, I used the poetry of a Burkinabè poet, Frédéric Titinga Pacéré, with regard to its triple originality: typographical, thematic, and scriptural. My study has shown that this man of culture and letters, in compliance with his own vision of the role of the writer and of literature in society, produces texts that have a double cultural anchoring: rooting in the local culture, especially Moaaga culture, and openness to other cultural spaces in Africa and elsewhere. In so doing, Pacéré asserts his belonging to the Burkinabè poetic wave of the 1970s, characterized by identity affirmation, while resolutely maintaining himself within the larger frame of Black-African poetry.

This study also insists on the fact that the double movement explains both Pacéré's originality and abstruseness. Indeed, while the numerous cultural references constitute a fundamental feature of Pacéré's poetry and a source of difficulty for the reader, they contribute to its aesthetic organization and semantic disclosure. I have also tried to highlight the poet's solid cultural knowledge and open-mindedness, which translates in a peculiar conception of the Negritude Movement: rooting oneself in one's culture while remaining open to the culture of Others. This double demand also reveals the dialectics running through Pacéré's poetry. Both "physical" and "interior," this openness helps Pacéré to create a "universal" poetry founded on humanism.

Translated by Amadou Bissiri

## Notes

1. In the French original of this article there is an interesting pun with the words "I" (*je*) and "game" (*jeu*) which the author exploits throughout his paper [transl.].
2. "héritière des griots. Prompte à ériger des stèles, elle sait tout aussi bien écraser les lauriers sous les sarcasmes et la satire" (Mateso 1987: 46).
3. For his pan-Africanist vision I have in mind the collection *Poèmes pour l'Angola*, which is structured in three parts, the first dealing with Angola and its fights and hopes. Pacéré wrote it after a trip to Angola in 1979. The internationalist perspective arises from his 1987 visit to Pyongyang, the Democratic Republic of Korea, where Pacéré like in *Poèmes pour l'Angola*, reflects on his journey in *Poèmes pour Koryo*. He pays tribute to all those who are fighting to preserve peace and unity in that country.
4. "une sorte de regard intérieur jeté sur le Voltaïque de l'époque, regard intérieur qui présente l'homme troublé, replié sur sa culture et cherchant à la comprendre. Elle s'enracine dans la culture nationale, notamment moaaga, d'où un certain hermétisme qu'on lui reconnaît" (Sanou 1990: 63).
5. "Cette littérature d'ensemble est très complexe puisque des phrases se succèdent, s'entrechoquent et ne se complètent souvent pas; c'est ce qui m'a influencé dans mon recueil de poème *Quand S'envolent les Grues Couronnées* où pour comprendre certains refrains, il faut lire en sautant, chaque fois une ligne" (Pacéré 1992: 86, 231).
6. "Une fois de retour au pays, je me suis replié sur le terroir où j'ai constaté cette forme originelle du milieu et originale par rapport à l'extérieur" (Pacéré, interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 65).
7. From Pacéré (1976b): "Les SOUKOUS, Karinsé, Luili-Wando et tous les rythmes qui revigorent les natures!" (12); "Zida, Bougoum, Guiéghmdé, Timini, Tanga, tous donnèrent leur sang pour que

rayonne Manéga" (19); "Gouli, Wendyam, Passawendin, Falinga" (20); "Je danserai le warba du haut des cieux" (21); "Comme un Juif attend son sauveur, le Moogho attend la saison pluvieuse" (22); " Il n'y a plus d'espoir, fuyons vers Manéga, Manéga la terre du repos!" (35); "Tibo, tu répondras à l'appel" (38); "A Zida et à la terre, prête vie à Lébendé" (42); "Il n'atteindra pas Pilimpikou" (43).

8. "J'écris aussi en mooré pour servir le langage culturel de cette langue [...] J'ai toujours pensé que ce qui peut tuer l'Afrique, c'est le fait pour certaines individualités de se méconnaître. J'ai décidé de défendre la culture africaine, ma culture, la culture de mon village." (Pacéré, interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 66)
9. From Pacéré (1982a): "Un poste de radio, c'est WAOGDO qui s'allume et je crois entendre les nouvelles de Manéga" (54); "Mon cœur palpite, je pense à ma terre, à la gloire du MOOGHO et de l'Afrique" (57); "Devant moi, son poste de radio, c'est Manéga qu'il cherche, il ne rencontre que New York. La radio de WAOGDO ne répond plus" (73); "Je suis de nouveau à Manéga, mes bras s'ouvrent pour avaler l'Afrique éternelle" (93).
10. From Pacéré (*Poèmes pour l'Angola*, 1982a): "ZAKA-RAMBA, I YIIMIN LAA?" (99); "En ce temps-là, WAMPOKO, le masque femelle, dans la cours de PISSI, enfantait un mort" (100); "Les fleuves drainaient toujours les eaux boueuses vers KADIOGO" (101); "Tibo, c'est ici chez Tibo?" (101); "Toujours à l'Est, sur la terre de ZIDA, tout est noir" (103); "Elle prit le sentier pour le village de MANÉGA, pour épouser un homme de Pissi" (103); "Elle eut trois enfants, Wend Kouni (Dieu-donné), Titinga (le fétiche de la terre) et WEND POULOUUMDE (Fatalité)" (104); "Tibo, Tibo est là, N'na poussi zaamin kognoudou" (106); "Nos pères recevront le ZOM KOM de l'année nouvelle, tu ne pleureras pas Tibo" (108); "Il fait clair de lune À WAOGDO" (110); "Et le kunga tonne comme l'hyène sortant du poulailler" (114); "Elle est à Bokin, un gouffre de Pissi" (122); "Je suis de Wazélé et lui, m'a-t-on dit, du village de Pissi" (126); "La seule vérité de la terre se jette dans les eaux boueuses du KADIOGO" (138).
11. *Poèmes pour l'Angola et Chants pour Koryo* sont des carnets de voyage. Je me suis aperçu par moments, que le combat que nous menons chez nous était le même que celui que d'autres hommes menaient ailleurs. J'ai vu le maquis. J'ai discuté avec les écrivains angolais dont certains avaient passé une dizaine d'années de leur vie dans les prisons fascistes portugaises [...] J'ai naturellement écrit pour témoigner, pour révéler des expériences de lutte [...] En Angola, on était à la porte de l'apartheid, ce crime quotidiennement perpétré contre l'humanité que les écrivains ont décidé de combattre au symposium de Brazzaville." (Pacéré, interviewed by Patrick G. Ilboudo 1990: 66)
12. From Pacéré (1982a): "Le pétrole étendra l'Europe sous les mers à respirer dans l'Angola" (11); "ANDRADE, COSTA ANDRADE" (11); "S'il pleut, il fera bon en Angola, s'il ne pleut pas, il fera bon en Angola" (13); "NETO, je vois au loin un mulâtre" (23); "A ma droite, Dagraça et Arnaldo SANTOS; à ma gauche, Costa Andrade et Antonio CARDOSO, plus loin, Antonio Jacinto et tous les autres" (33); "AUGUSTO, où est ta mère? Je ne sais pas; NGANLULA, où est ton peuple? Je ne sais pas; AUGUSTO, où est ton école? Je ne sais pas; NGANGULA, où est ton armée? Je ne sais pas" (39).
13. From Pacéré (1982a): "La mort toujours au Sud frappe sur un frère" (8); "Un blanc lutte contre un noir, un blanc a laissé un noir" (9); "Sur la terre du Sud, des fusils mitrailleuses tonnent du matin au soir" (9); "Au loin, le fusil sera le tam-tam du jour" (15); "Au Sud, le frère revendique la terre des Aïeux" (16); "Deux capitales se font la guerre, alors qu'elles avaient un père commun" (17); "Un crime peu avant l'arrivée était commis, un autre avait suivi" (18); "L'homme enfante un fusil à plusieurs canons et à plusieurs gâchettes; un homme tue désormais plusieurs frères" (18); "Entre les crépitements des mitrailles, l'homme doit panser ses plaies" (19); "Je lis dans ses yeux noirs et blancs, la violence d'une guérilla" (24); "Son pantalon rouge du sang versé et traversé, des cœurs blessés et entrouverts" (25); "Nos regards se croisent sous des canons qui tonnent à deux pas derrière nous" (25); "Il rit devant les canons qui vomissaient le feu" (26); "C'est moi qui donnais le biberon à Josepha et maintenant Josepha ne m'aime plus" (27); "J'entends le crépitement de mille haches, commandements, régiments, troupes, aviation, tanks, radars; tuez-le dit-on" (37).
14. From Pacéré (1982a): "Mon frère, courant, lance cette phrase à la terre des Aïeux: le Sud souhaite faire ta connaissance" (8); "Et sur la terre de Manéga, mon petit frère apparaît, tendant la lettre d'un soleil couchant: il faut descendre dans la forêt" (9); "Mon petit frère tendait à ma mère la lettre d'un matin: c'est le Sud qui appelle, il faut partir" (11); "Le tam-tam rappelle à ma mère qu'un message est pour le fils" (13); "Le message est venu par la voie rouge" (14); "Il faut que tu partes: l'oiseau qui s'envole dans le feu couvre le continent" (16); "Cette nuit-là, je tombais comme un oiseau qui plane dans l'Angola par un chemin des pays arabes" (19).

15. From Pacéré (1982a): "Le fusil doit retourner dans la case" (9); "Des blancs du Sud accourent dans la terre sacrée qui tend sa main fraternelle à toutes les couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel" (15); "La terre de ZIDA brillait comme un vers à terre" (15); "Frères de l'Angola, vingt ans séparent les hommes qui se rencontrent une nuit; la poignée amicale qui me serre chante la patrie de NETO" (20); "Frère, rassemble les cœurs meurtris. Le village de Manéga a prévu la guerre et dans Tamboogo, la force a pour fils le pardon" (21); "Rassemble les sangs désunis, la patrie est pour tous" (21); "Serre la main du frère. Demain mon père chantera un chant nouveau et je chanterai encore les fleurs de l'Angola" (22); "Construisez la patrie et le continent dans la fraîcheur" (30); "Femme, danse la rumba, mais danse la samba des soirs d'été, serre le fusil en serrant cet homme des matins nouveaux" (32).
16. From Pacéré (1982a): "Ma patrie n'est ni l'Angola, ni le Portugal, ma terre est la vérité céleste, la couleur n'est que l'effet du hasard" (22); "Je suis blanc parce que je suis noir, la terre est la nôtre et je suis des vôtres et de notre combat" (23); "Des danses de Warba en angolais ouvraient mes yeux sur un unique continent" (28); "Je tends les bras qui encerclent l'univers" (33); "Je tends aux extrêmes, mes bras noirs qui rassemblent noirs et blancs qu'unissent la raison et les balles" (34); "Frère de l'Angola, de l'Afrique, de l'Univers, regardez l'homme qui unit sans couleur sans nuit et sans âge; restez, restez unis" (40).
17. "L'oiseau sur l'arbre m'attend pour la terre de Manéga; l'oiseau qui s'envole laisse en Angola ce cœur qui n'a pas de frontière" (Pacéré (1982a: 41).
18. A semiotic study of space reveals its aesthetic and semantic importance (see EHESS 1977).
19. "ZAIRE sera un nom, CONGO, un nom, ANGOLA un nom" (Pacéré 1982a: 10); "Criblés de balles à Tyaroye ou à Madagascar; "L'Ethiopie n'est pas une zone de sélection" (Pacéré 1976b: 55, 56).
20. "Dans la péninsule coréenne, j'ai été voir la frontière qui divise les deux Corées en 1985. J'avais aussi vu en 1975 ce mur qui sépare aussi Berlin. Je ne pense pas qu'il soit nécessaire de diviser le monde; malheureusement, les égoïsmes humains sont difficiles à vaincre. Mais il faut créer des espaces de paix." (Pacéré, interviewed by Ilboudo 1990: 66)
21. From Pacéré (1976b): "Ici c'est New York, tout est beau et le sperme coule à gogo" (48); "Washington verse sur les villes le sperme d'un couchant" (52); "New York est le capitole de la Terre" (56); "Ici c'est Delaware, un pont surplombe la mer" (59); "Le courant passe dans mon corps comme du sperme de Philadelphie" (60); "Le sexe de mon voisin qui battait comme du jazz de la Nouvelle Orleans" (61); "Je retrouverai la terre de l'ONCLE" (62); "Les stars de Holywood (sic) sont assises par terre, les tenues rouges d'un Wilson Jones côtoient un éléphant emprisonné" (63); "Des croix sans croix emplissent la ville de New Jersey, les croissants croissent dans la Nouvelle Jersey, la fumée blanche de la Maison Blanche annonce qu'un Pape est élu" (64).

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