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## Transculturalism and the Ontological Spokesperson: Walt Whitman and Okot p'Bitek

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**Abstract**

In this comparative study, the postmodern concept of transculturalism is applied to the mid-nineteenth century Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" and the mid-twentieth century Okot p'Bitek's "Song of Lawino". This rereading takes into cognizance the roles of the individual poets as spokespersons for their peculiar backgrounds are brought to bear in the circumstances of a rapidly changing world. This paper discovers and posits that such a reread generated different but befitting concepts quite varied from transculturalism. Their separate backgrounds produce different realities suiting their disparate inclinations and cultures.

**Introduction: Transculturalism**

Transculturalism is a postmodern concept, and 'The product of a meeting between an existing culture or subculture and a migrant, recently arrived, which transforms the two and creates in the process a neoculture, which is also subject to transculturation' (Yolanda Onghena 182). It is further described by Donald Cuccioletta as "seeing oneself in the other". Multiculturalism is different from transculturalism in the sense that the former emphasizes boundaries based on the cultural essences of nation-states as individually distinct from one another; while the latter bases its being on the breaking down of the said boundaries, and the relinquishing of strong traditional identities and cultures. The process by which