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LINGUISTIC EXPEDIENCY AND/OR THE QUEST FOR A POETIC MODE : TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN OKOT P'BITEK'S POETRY

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The African writer writing in the last half of the twentieth century has had the advantage of belonging to the same generation as most of his critics. He is thus able to not only answer back his critics if they judge his work in bad faith but also to help explain his stand as a writer (the degree of his commitment to a cause or causes) and to throw some light on his technique, in some cases acting as a critic of his own work. (Ali Mazrui has described this as "*autocritique*"¹.) As a result, there have appeared various statements from African writers on various aspects of their art². As a prominent East African writer, p'Bitek is not left out of this trend. He has made statements on his idea of literature, has had occasion to answer such critics as fellow Ugandan, Taban lo Liyong, has discussed his general technique of composition and his translations, and even given background information on his development as a poet³. For example, in the preface to his collection of translated Acoli poetry (*Horn of My Love*), he says :

When recently, my friend Taban lo Liyong wept bitter tears over what he called "the literary desert in East Africa", he was suffering from acute literary deafness, a disease which afflicts those who have been brainwashed to believe that literature exists only in books. Taban and his fast dwindling class are victims of the class-ridden, dictionary meaning of the term "Literature", which restricts literary activity and enjoyment to the so-called literate peoples, and turns a deaf ear to the songs and stories of the vast majority of our people in the countryside... I believe that literature, like all other creative arts, is there, first and foremost, to be enjoyed⁴.

This belief aroused his interest in the literature of the Acoli, especially their poetry and short stories he collected in *Horn of My Love* and *Hare and Hornbill*, respectively. He is interested, not only in their entertainment value but also in the insight they lend into the richness and variety of Acoli culture. As an Acoli he shares the culture with them. Foreign collectors (sociologists and anthropologists) do not share them and therefore suffer a disadvantage which consequently affects the validity and reliability of their recordings and translations. He is interested in Acoli lullabies and love songs, their satirical verses, their religious songs and chants, their war songs and funeral dirges, because, "going through them we may get a glimpse of what these people think and believe life is all about ; their moral values, their sense of humour, their fear and joys⁵". This interest in Acoli oral literature has also influenced his own creations. It has influenced his writing of *Wer pa Lawino* in Acoli language, and its translation *Song of Lawino*, a song in which Lawino, the arch-traditionalist, seeks to maintain the Acoli culture from such corrupting, westernizing influences as Ocol's (Lawino's husband) and Tina, his mistress. The conflict between traditional African and Western cultural norms and values is thematically central to *Song of Lawino*. The importance of this conflict which is high-

lighted in his other Songs (*Song of Ocol, Two Songs*), is that it reflects the centripetal (traditional and modern) forces which converge in his poetic output.

This paper therefore examines Okot p'Bitek's role as author-translator in not only creating his own works in his first language, Acoli, and translating them to English, but also in collecting and translating the oral literature of the Acoli. It also discusses the validity and reliability of his translations *vis-à-vis* those of foreigners, and relates his efforts to his need for the evolution of a distinct poetic mode, consistent with his background.

The keyword *translation* is crucial to this paper and its definition is required so that we may be able to put p'Bitek's practice in proper theoretical perspective. According to Bassnett-McGuire,

What is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar, and (2) the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted⁶.

The above definition of translation, Bassnett-McGuire points out, is rather narrow and dependent on only linguistic criteria. This is because it stresses that translation involves specifically the transfer of "meaning" contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar. But the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also. This observation is apt considering that p'Bitek may not have had only purely linguistic issues to handle, either in translating his own Acoli creations or his translation of communally-derived Acoli texts into the English language.

Edward Sapir claims that "language is a guide to social reality" and that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. Experience, he asserts, is largely determined by the language habits of the community, and each separate structure represents a separate reality :

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached⁷.

Sapir's thesis was later endorsed by Benjamin Lee Whorf to yield the now famous "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" of linguistic relativity. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is related to the more recent view postulated by the Soviet semiotician, Yuri Lotman, that language is a "modelling system". Lotman described literature and art in general as "secondary modelling systems", as an indication of the fact that they are derived from the primary modelling system of language. He declares, as firmly as Sapir or Whorf, that "No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture ; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language⁸". Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.

p'Bitek seems to have been well aware of the mutual relationship that exists between language and culture. And he seems, too, in full control of both the language and culture of the Acoli, an advantage that puts him in a special position as author-translator. Tucker and Bryan have confirmed that in Uganda, "Acoli is used in both Government and Mission schools, and in administration⁹". p'Bitek must have had the luck of learning Acoli and English in school to be able to compose in both languages.

The linguistic nationalism of the Ugandans, especially the Buganda, was responsible for the full development of the resources of some of the indigenous languages. p'Bitek's academic background in addition to his exposure to the arts and culture of the Acoli through the influence and interest of his mother in his development in that direction, helped to ensure that he had good grounding in both languages as well as their concomitant cultures¹⁰. We are well aware in making these claims that complete bilingualism in both languages is an ideal.

Jakobson¹¹ has distinguished three types of translation :

1. Intralingual translation, or *rewording* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language) ;
2. Interlingual translation, or *translation proper* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language) ;
3. Inter-semiotic translation, or *transmutation* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal sign systems).

Having established these three types of which (2) *translation proper* describes the process of transfer from SL to TL, Jakobson goes on immediately to point out the central problem in all types : that while messages serve as adequate interpretations of code units or messages, there is ordinarily no full equivalence through translation. The distinctions are valid because despite the fact that p'Bitek carried out the interlingual translation type 2, and the claim in the preceding paragraph that he has sufficient "grounding" in Acoli and English, we cannot guarantee one-to-one equivalence in his Acoli-to-English translations. Words, expressions, etc., in each language are to a large extent determined by their cultural contexts. Acoli is a Nilotic language of the Southern Lwo family while English is a Germanic language. They are not genetically (even distantly) related and so the divergence in their linguistic patterns makes the possibilities of equivalence more unlikely. This does not however imply that inter-translatability is impossible. It has been attempted by p'Bitek but at a cost, with some loss and some gain on both sides, for the poetry. It has led, for example, to the loss of Acoli rhyme and rhythm in the English text of *Song of Lawino*.

It is possible to examine p'Bitek's translation strategies and map them off those provided by Lefevere to see how faithful he was in retaining SL Acoli ideas and cultural nuances in the English TL version. André Lefevere catalogues seven different strategies for the translation of SL poetry into TL language :

1. phonemic translation
2. literal translation
3. metrical translation
4. poetry into prose
5. rhymed translation
6. blank verse translation
7. interpretation¹².

In Lefevere's discussion of the strategies, *phonemic translation* is that which attempts to reproduce SL sound in the TL while at the same time producing an acceptable paraphrase of the sense. He concludes that although this works moderately well in the translation of onomatopoeia, the overall result is clumsy and often devoid of sense altogether. In p'Bitek's practice, especially in translating *Wer pa Lawino* into *Song of Lawino*, he obviously avoided complete dependence on this kind of strategy. Acoli and English are genetically unrelated and share no linguistic affinity. In spite of this, however, and because of the problem of equivalence, he has retained Acoli words not translated into English, and Acoli idioms and "lump expressions" in phrases and sentences.

So they are not "phonemic translations" in the strict sense. The original forms of these items are not really translated — they are lifted, as "foreign" elements, from ST directly into TT — hence they are often italicized or put in glossaries. For instance, in *Song of Lawino*, the TL patterns are maintained, in spite of the presence of SL forms, as in :

- (1) He says I am silly
 Like the *ojuu* insects that sit on the beer pot

 My husband's tongue
 Is bitter like the roots of the *lyonno* lily,
 It is hot like the penis of the bee,
 Like the sting of the *Kalang*! (p. 16)

Here, the verse is distinctly English and the three Acoli words (*ojuu*, *lyonno*, and *Kalang*) are italicized, showing that they retain their original phonological shape. In oral performance they could be influenced by the isochronous pattern of English rhythm which they may distort slightly if their obviously syllable-timed pattern is retained. This is reminiscent of one of the features of English as a second language where the "universal" (World Standard) English structural patterns are maintained as "common core" but distinctly local elements are introduced. The result is English spoken or written with a different flavour from that of British English, a distinct accent. p'Bitek's adaptation of this kind of translation strategy is not exactly what Lefevere had in mind and criticized, because there is no distortion of the English sense in any form in p'Bitek's Songs (it is not "devoid of sense altogether")¹³.

In the second strategy (*literal translation*), the emphasis is on word-for-word translation and it distorts, according to Lefevere, the sense and the syntax of the original. As said in the preceding discussion of phonemic translation, p'Bitek has produced a distinctively English text. As this is not obvious from the text, and particularly as we are not concerned with reconstructing the Acoli text from the English text, we can therefore disregard this outright. Word-for-word translation, from Acoli to English, can however be inferred from the recurrence of some phrases which, though written in English, do not seem distinctly English in the RP sense. They are English in the geographical sense of being "East African". Examples of these abound in *Song of Lawino* :

- (2) Stop despising people
 As if you were a little foolish man
 Stop treating me like *salt-less ash*. (p. 14)
- (3) He says *my eyes are dead*
 And I cannot read ... (p. 15)
- (4) And because I cannot tune the radio
 Because I do not *hear*
 Swahili and Luganda ... (p. 47)

In example (2), p'Bitek provides a footnote for "salt-less ash" which must be a word-for-word rendering of the Acoli original into English. It is an attempt to describe a distinctly Acoli process of filtration and extraction of salt from the ash of certain plants. The stylistic effect of the use of such images, which certainly have cultural connotations not present in British English, is that they accentuate the peculiar tone of the texts. In example (3), though English words are used and the sense is understood, we feel that in British English, the underlined words would have been phrased as "my eyes are blind". The present form, "my eyes are dead", seems to be a kind of word-for-word translation

from Acoli to English, though the sense and syntax of the original are not distorted. Culturally, and textually, *dead* is abusive, and figurative, implying the irrevocable nature of the state of the eyes. It is more appropriately used in a medical sense ; *blind* would be common. Example (4), similar to the third, may also involve the implication of "deafness" in "I do not hear". In British English, "I don't understand" would be the appropriate form but does not have the intended implication of "hear" in the context of the poem. "Understand" would imply that Lawino perceives the sound waves from the radio with the aid of her auditory faculties, but does not have the competence to decode the sounds. "Hear", on the other hand, used with the negative, implies that she is deaf, her auditory system is faulty. So, as in the other examples, the elements are rendered word-for-word to retain their original implications. These usages are similar to usages in Nigeria where a speaker is likely to render mother tongue forms word-for-word into English¹⁴.

Metrical translation is one in which the dominant criterion is the reproduction of SL metre in the TL. Lefevere concludes that, like literal translation, this method concentrates on one aspect of the ST at the expense of the text as a whole. In his work, p'Bitek makes no pretence at all to this type of rendering. In his preface to *Song of Lawino*, while commenting on his translation, he says that the TT is

Translated from the Acoli by the author who has thus clipped a bit of the eagle's wings and rendered the sharp edges of the warrior's sword rusty and blunt, and has also murdered rhythm and rhyme¹⁵.

Some of the observations made about the differences between Acoli and English phonemic systems will be valid here. The same differences also operate at the prosodic level at which rhythm is analyzed. English is stress-timed while Acoli is, like most African languages, syllable-timed. p'Bitek seems aware of this and does not therefore attempt "the reproduction of the SL metre" in the TT. Though his preface quoted above is apologetic, it is valid to the extent that he laments the loss of the effect of the SL rhyme in the Target Text, an effect whose presence would not have enhanced the quality of the rendition. But this kind of loss is inevitable in the light of the differences between SL and TL. This is evident in the differences between the ST of *Wer pa Lawino* and the TT of *Song of Lawino* : in the TT p'Bitek preferred free verse to the rhymed verse of the ST which, according to Heron, is "a feature alien to Acoli unsung verse¹⁶". The TT is however closer to the unrhymed pattern of poems in Acoli. Once again, Heron confirms this fact when he states that :

The rhetoric of apostrophe is the only major formal influence of oral literature on Okot's practice as a writer which has survived translation. A few other features of oral songs which had a marked effect on *Wer pa Lawino* have had a reduced effect on *Song of Lawino* or have disappeared because Okot concentrated on an extremely literal translation of the poem, retaining the echoes of oral songs, and made little or no attempt to recreate or replace the formal or prosodic features of the original¹⁷.

The fourth translation strategy is that of *poetry into prose*. p'Bitek's translation is primarily from poetry into poetry as far as *Wer pa Lawino* and *Song of Lawino* are concerned. The original Acoli text is in poetic form : stanzas, verse lines, etc. The English TT is also verse though, unlike the ST, it is now consistently in free verse.

The next strategy, *rhymed translation*, involves the translator's entering into what Lefevere has called "a double bond" of metre and rhyme. Where this kind of translation is carried out, he concludes, the end product is merely a "caricature" of the original. This does not obtain in p'Bitek's translation because the English text is not rhymed. As

already observed, it is in free verse. No attempt was made to retain the rhymes of the ST in the TT.

The preceding strategy is followed by *blank verse translation*. Here, again, the restrictions imposed on the translator by the choice of structure are emphasized. As has already been observed, *Wer pa Lawino* is completely different, structurally, from the poetic form of *Song of Lawino*. Neither was it even originally composed in blank verse. As Heron has confirmed, the Acoli poem is "written in an irregular ab ab rhyming pattern", as in this example :

- (5) *Cware ka oera ng'allo Acol*
Timme iwacci min gweno
Ma car, ma myero luum i Kigol.
Delle ma wange obok-aboka
Ma wang'e callo wang' guu'
Timme calo lawaro mupok-apoka
*Ma ger ataa calo ng'uu*¹⁸.

In further discussing the features of the Source Text in relation to the Target Text, Heron attests that

This disciplined verse from [of the Acoli text], with its new controlling features of line length and rhyme supplemented by the embellishments of alliteration and reduplication borrowed from oral literature, is in marked contrast to the irregular free verse of the English poem¹⁹.

There is no doubt that *Song of Lawino* is in free verse, that it therefore has no fixed metre since the length of the lines vary (blank verse has a regular iambic pentametre). There is therefore a major formal difference in this aspect between the ST and TT.

The seventh and last strategy is that of *interpretation*. Under this strategy, Lefevere discusses what he calls "versions", where the substance of ST is retained but the form is changed, and "imitations", where the translator produced a poem of his own which has "only title and point of departure, if those, in common with the source text". From the foregoing discussion of the other translation strategies, it is obvious that, if anything, the target text of *Song of Lawino* could be more appropriately described as the English version of *Wer pa Lawino* since the substance of the source text is retained but the form is changed. The form in this case involves such poetic conventions as rhythm, rhyme and verse form. The TT is by no means similar to the ST only in title. Heron has provided proof that there is a great deal of similarity between the content of both versions when he said, inter alia, that "*Song of Lawino* is very much closer to the 1969 version of *Wer pa Lawino* ... and must be regarded as a translation rather than a new poem²⁰". The differences that occur are mostly editorial, and arise from the linguistic and cultural differences between Acoli and English.

In addition to his translation of *Wer pa Lawino* into *Song of Lawino*, p'Bitek had carried out other translation exercises. He has translated a variety of Acoli literary forms (*Horn of My Love*) and Acoli short stories (*Hare and Hornbill*). But how reliable is p'Bitek, as a translator?

The answer to the above question is at best speculative, in spite of the reassurances of Heron and Moore. One can suggest that he can be relied upon to have done a good job, considering his level of formal Western education, his literacy in English and Acoli, and the degree of his involvement in fostering cultural re-awakening in Uganda, his interest and fieldwork on the Acoli — Lwo traditions of songs, dance and festival — the

totality of the Acoli literary experience. He occupies a special position as the composer of the Acoli original of *Song of Lawino* and its translator into English. His is not the case of the uncommitted translator not involved in the composition of the ST but who, more or less, performs a mechanical function of translating ST to TT without being aware of the strains (as in music) of the original. His uniqueness derives from the fact that he is both author and translator of ST.

In the introduction to *Hare and Hornbill*, under the caption "Sources of African Stories", p'Bitek clinches the idea that he occupies a special position as translator. He points out the problems of early translators who had the disadvantage of belonging to only one culture : the TL culture. This disadvantage distorted the quality of the stories they recorded :

That the quality of most of the recorded African folktales is poor is due to the fact that the pioneer students of the tales had to cope with inadequate techniques, skills and apparatus. *In many cases the collectors did not have a working knowledge of the people among whom they worked.* They had, therefore, to rely on literate English-speaking Africans who either wrote down the tales in English or translated the texts. *But these assistants in many cases did not have a deep knowledge of English. And, in any case, they faced the very difficult problem of translating ideas from one cultural expression into another (emphasis added)*²¹.

The above quotation reveals that p'Bitek was sufficiently aware, in his role as author-translator, that the task of interlingual translation is not only linguistic but that it is extra-linguistic. Early translators like Lindblom (Akamba stories), Wright (Lango folktales) and Rev. Lees (Acoli tales) had the disadvantage of not knowing the languages, and so sharing the cultures, of the people whose tales they studied.

One result of the translation of the Acoli text of *Wer pa Lawino* into *Song of Lawino* is the retention of Acoli words in the English text, especially Acoli items regarded as culturally untranslatable. Of his four Songs, only *Song of Lawino* had an earlier Acoli version. The others — *Song of Ocol*, *Two Songs (Song of Prisoner, Song of Malaya)* — were written straight in English. In spite of this, some of the Acoli items in *Song of Lawino* also occur in the other texts but with decreasing frequency : *Song of Lawino* has 103 Acoli items, with footnotes provided for seventeen of them ; *Song of Ocol* has twenty-seven items and two footnotes ; *Song of Prisoner* has seventeen items and no footnote, while *Song of Malaya* has only nine items and no footnote. This fact makes it plausible to suggest that in the other Songs, the occurrence of Acoli items is not just incidental but has become part of p'Bitek's repertoire, especially in using English with an East African touch. This is a technique p'Bitek shares with other East African writers as well as other African writers whose medium is English.

Timothy Wangusa has criticized the use of words from the indigenous East African languages in East African literature in English :

A device that East African poets will have to be more careful about (...) is the use of the vernacular words. Where an equivalent cannot be found in English, or where the local African word will be better, perhaps with the help of a glossary, this can be very effective. But there is the danger of using too many of them, and without justification²².

Two reasons can account for this stand. First, and more likely, is that Wangusa understands the African languages used and so knows when they are in excess. It is possible too that he is unaware of the linguistic and cultural problems of interlingual translation with regards to provision of TL equivalents for SL elements. But there is evidence that p'Bitek has used Acoli words, phrases and idioms, judiciously, if his patterns of usage and their stylistic function are given sufficient thought. Four techniques can be deli-

neated. First, is the italicization of Acoli elements which makes them foregrounded as "foreign" words. Next, intratextual explanations are provided in the text, making it possible to understand the phenomenon described. For example, in *Song of Ocol* (as in the other Songs), these two techniques are used. The Acoli word *ayah* occurs twice (pages 17 and 41). It is italicized, and its meaning can be inferred from the context, as in

- (6) Women in Africa
 Sweeper
 Smearing floors and walls
 With cow dung and black soil,
 Cook, *ayah*, the baby tied on your back.
 Vomiting,
 Washer of dishes,
 Planting, weeding, harvesting,
 Store-keeper, builder,
 Runner of errands,
 Cart, lorry,
 Donkey ... (*Song of Ocol*, p. 41)

Consistent with the insolent tone adopted by Ocol towards Lawino and the rest of African women, the non-Acoli will immediately infer from the context that *ayah* is derogatory, and is descriptive of some kind of menial labourer, or slave. The third technique is sequel to the second and involves the use of Acoli words as modifiers of their English headwords (or equivalents) in nominal groups : *lyonno* (lily) ; *orak* (dance) ; *kwete* (beer) ; *shenzi* (cattle) ; etc. The last technique is the provision of glossaries or footnotes as suggested by Wangusa. p'Bitek does this and the technique has been adopted by members of his song school such as Okello Oculi²³.

It is our contention therefore that p'Bitek intended these techniques to be stylistically significant. He is first and foremost an East African writer using the English language. His closest audience are however East Africans, particularly Ugandans, for whom the content of his Songs will have immediate impact. He is also writing for a wider audience. His earlier writing in Acoli (*Lak Tar* in 1953 and *Wer pa Lawino*, 1956) had restricted his readers to the users of his language in northern Uganda²⁴. But the use of the English language has exposed him to a wider reading audience that included both university-educated readers and others literate enough to read in English, inside and outside East Africa. He is not writing for a specialist audience. He is a kind of communal literature that demands a communal mode. His use of Acoli words within the predominantly English language texts will aid his East African readers in providing an immediate context upon which to understand the poems. This is not an obstacle to non-East Africans, either. The highly dramatic form of his poetry can be contrasted with the more "scholarly" and obscure lyrical structure of Wole Soyinka and the metaphysical content of Christopher Okigbo, both apparently writing for an educated, elitist English-using audience and heavily influenced by Western poetic forms. His Songs have a rather loquacious and discursive manner that gives them a distinctive flavour when contrasted with the compressed and compact style of Soyinka and Okigbo. If p'Bitek is seen as writing first for East Africans, especially Ugandan Acolis and other Lwos, the Acoli words in his Songs will be familiar to them. These words will provide their reading the kind of freshness similar to that which the Igbo experience in reading Chinua Achebe. This is not to imply of course that only Igbo enjoy Achebe or that only Acolis enjoy Okot p'Bitek. His texts are predominantly English texts, and the "common core" of fea-

tures they share with other Englishes aid mutual intelligibility across cultures and across geographical varieties.

Notes

1. Ali A. Mazrui (1975) : *The Political Sociology of the English Language : An African Perspective*, The Hague, Mouton, p. 165.
2. Various writers have at different times answered back their critics or responded to issues raised about their works or about African literature generally. Classic examples include Chinua Achebe (1965) : "English and the African Writers", *Transition* 4 (18), in response to Obi Wali (1963) : "Dead End of African Literature", *Transition*, 10; the recent exchange between Wole Soyinka (1975) : "Neo-Tarzanism : The Politics of Pseudo-Traditionalism", *Transition*, 48, and Chinweizu *et al.* (1975) : "Toward the Decolonization of African Literature", *Transition*, 48; or Wole Soyinka (1975) : "Aesthetic Illusions : Prescriptions for the Suicide of Poetry", *The Third Press Review*, 1:1 (September/October) and Chinweizu (1978) : *The West and the Rest of Us*, London, Nok Publishers.
3. Okot p'Bitek (1972) : "What is Literature", *Busara*, 4:1, pp. 21-27; (1974) : *Horn of My Love*, London, Heinemann, pp. ix-x; (1978) : *Hare and Hornbill*, London, Heinemann, p. xi; and (1972) : *African Writers Talking*, (eds) Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, London, Heinemann, pp. 149-155.
4. p'Bitek : *Horn of My Love*, p. ix. The same point is made in an interview given to David Rubadiri on 29th April, 1979, at the University of Ife, Nigeria :

... my definition of literature does not exclude the oral traditions ; in fact, for me, it is even more important because this is what the great minds and creative minds in the countryside are telling the world life is like to them, what society is all about. And so they put it in stories, in songs, and so on. So when we get the English language as a tool of expression, we must have our roots in the oral tradition ... (author's emphasis). *Ife Studies in African Literature and the Arts*, 1 (1982), p. 20.
5. *Horn of My Love*, p. ix.
6. Susan Bassnett-McGuire (1980) : *Translation Studies*, London, Methuen, p. 2. The abbreviations SL — Source Language, TL — Target Language, ST — Source Text, TT — Target Text, will be used throughout.
7. Edward Sapir (1956) : *Culture, Language and Personality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, p. 69.
8. Quoted by Bassnett-McGuire (1980) : p. 14, from Juri Lotman and B.A. Uspensky (1978) : "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture", *New Literary History*, 9:2, pp. 211-232.
9. A.N. Tucker and M.A. Bryan (1956) : *Handbook of African Languages : Part III (The Non-Bantu Languages of North-Eastern Africa)*, London, Oxford University Press, p. 103.
10. G.A. Heron (1976) provides a detailed account of Okot p'Bitek's background, in *The Poetry of Okot p'Bitek*, London, Heinemann.
11. Roman Jakobson (1959) : "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in *On Translation*, ed. R.A. Brower, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, pp. 232-239.
12. André Lefevere (1975) : *Translating Poetry, Seven Strategies and a Blue-print*, Amsterdam, Van Gorcum.
13. The present writer cannot read and understand the Acoli language. This is not however considered inimical to the discussion here for two reasons. First, the texts, particularly *Song of Lawino* which was translated from the Acoli ST *Wer pa Lawino* into English, are to be discussed as English language texts. Second, two distinguished scholars, G.A. Heron (1976) and Gerald Moore, "Okot p'Bitek : The Horn of the Grasslands", paper presented to the Fourth Ibadan Annual African Literature Conference, University of Ibadan, July 1979, know Acoli in addition to being mother tongue users of English and have testified to p'Bitek's competence as a translator. This discussion of his strategies and art as author-translator is still valid because, as a user of English as a second language, his communication competence in that language will reflect the fact that he is not a mother tongue user.
14. M.A. Adekunle (1974) : "The Standard Nigerian English in Sociolinguistic Perspective", *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association*, 6:1, pp. 24-37.
15. *Song of Lawino*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1966, p. 6.
16. *The Poetry of Okot p'Bitek*, p. 29.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 25. The loss of these prosodic features made Taban lo Liyong dismiss the Songs as "unsingable", at best "highly lyrical, impassioned, and therefore strike one with the force of a song". "Two Songs by Okot p'Bitek : *Song of Prisoner*, *Song of Malaya*", *Dhana : Makerere Arts Festival '71*, Kampala, Makerere Printery, 1971, pp. 59-61.
18. This excerpt is from *Wer pa Lawino*, p. 13. Heron has provided the following translation in prose : "When my husband starts mocking black people, he acts like a mother hen that is careless, that should be covered

- by a basket. His eyes go red with anger. His eyes are like the eyes of a beast. He acts like a mad hyena, he is needlessly fierce, like a beast of prey." Heron (1976) : pp. 29-30.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 38. In the same light, he says that "*Song of Lawino* is essentially a very literal translation of *Wer pa Lawino* ; in many parts of the poem it is difficult to produce a more literal translation", (*ibid.*, p. 43).
 21. Okot p'Bitek (1978) : *Hare and Hornbill*, p. xi. This accounts for why in translations of Acoli oral literature in *Horn of My Love* (1974), he has included texts, both in Acoli and English. He states that he believes that "there can be other versions. It is for this reason that the vernacular had to be included, to give other translators the opportunity to criticize my translation and also to attempt their own" (pp. ix-x).
 22. Timothy Wangusa (1973) : "East African Poetry", in *African Literature Today (Poetry in Africa)*, n° 6, E.D. Jones (ed.), London, Heinemann, p. 48. A detailed glossary of the kind Wangusa suggests has been provided for *Song of Lawino*. See Laura Tanna (1972) : "Glossary : *Song of Lawino*", *Ba Shiru*, 3:2, pp. 63-68.
 23. See Okello Oculi (1968) : *Orphan*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House.
 24. Okot p'Bitek admits that these works are "practically unknown beyond the borders of Acoli land", because even among the Lwo-speaking peoples who number about four million, "the dialects differ to the extent that (...) they cannot be shared by all the Nilotes". See Okot p'Bitek (1973) : *Africa's Cultural Revolution*, Nairobi, MacMillan Books for Africa, p. 26.