

Five Translations of Seamus Heaney's Poems

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Masters of Arts in English**

May 2010

**Department of English
East West University**



Five Translations of Semus Heaney's Poems

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Masters of Arts in English

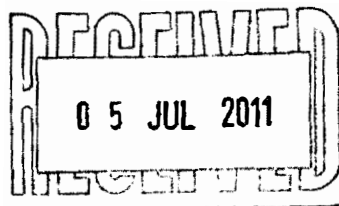
May 2010



Department of English
East West University

Submitted by
Jyatirmay Sarker
ID- 2008-3-93-07
MA in English
East West University

Submitted to
Prof. Dr. Fakrul Alam
East West University

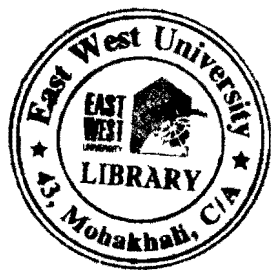


Acknowledgement

Here it is essential to say that a course titled 'Translation Studies' created high enthusiasm for literature especially in the field of poetry and consequently I have been writing poems since after doing the course. Poetry translation made me understand the properties of poetry and inspired me writing poems. The course instructor taught me the mechanism of translation very technically and practically. I am very grateful to him. I would like to thank some other people who took part in sharing and listening to the translated poems.

At last I am going to beg apology to Seamus Heaney as I translated his poems without his concern.

Content	Page
Introduction to Seamus Heaney's Poetry	4-8
Translating Seamus Heaney's Poems	9-13
প্রভূরীপ (ST: "The Peninsula" from <i>Door into the Dark</i> ,)	15
শিল্পী (ST: "An Artist" from <i>Sweeney Redivivus</i>)	16
শকর (ST: "The Skunk" from <i>Field Work</i>)	17
শাস্তি (ST: "Punishment" from <i>North</i>)	18-19
খনন (ST: "Digging" from <i>Death of a Naturalist</i>)	20-21
Conclusion	22
Bibliography	23



Introduction to Seamus Heaney's Poetry

Seamus Heaney's poetry has been growing up with the growth of Irish history, and consequently much of his poems acts as the representative of the struggle of Irish people, conversion to Catholicism, self reflexivity and many other sensual factors. The life of the great poet and his works in relation with the Irish history full of bombing, shooting and endless killing by the swords of power are described bellow.

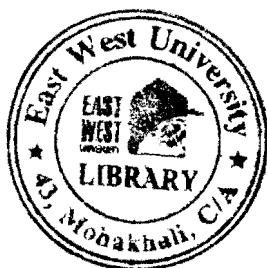
Seamus Heaney was born in the Townland of Tamnairn, at Massbawn, Country Derry, Northern Ireland, on 13 April 1939. He was the eldest of nine children, one of whom died in a road accident and is remembered in the poem 'Mid-Term Break'. His father was a farmer and therefore he lived all his young life on a farm. Much of the raw material for his poetry stems from the farm. Seamus Heaney himself, even though admired the skills and dedication of his father and grandfather ("Digging") did not follow his ancestors in the family tradition.

He attended primary school in Anahorish and it was here that he was introduced to the literary grates. From his school he won a scholarship to St. Columb's College in Londonerry. He was a boarder at the St. Columb's from 1951 to 1957. He attended Queen's University, Belfast, and was awarded a first class honors degree in English Language and Literature. His first public work appeared in the university magazine under the pseudonym; Insertus'. He was now heavily under the influence of Philip Hobsbaum, a

man who gathered a group of like-minded young people to read poetry and talk about literature. It was here that Seamus Heaney met his future wife. Her name is Marie Devlin. He began his teaching career at St. Thomas's Secondary School Belfast, and then went on to St. Joseph's Technical College. It was during this period that he began to develop as a poet. A number of his poems were published in the *New Statesman* and in other London magazines. He married Marie in 1965 and they have two sons, Michael Christopher and a daughter, Catherine Ann.

Death of a Naturalist is the Seamus Heaney's first collection of poetry. It was published in 1966 while he was a lecturer at Queen's University. It was immediately accepted as a remarkable work of literature. Seamus Heaney was just twenty four years old. The collection is concerned with the loss of childhood innocence and the movement into adulthood and all that such a 'journey' implies. The poetry also shows the reader glimpses of his reasons for being a writer, his admiration for his ancestor and the young Seamus Heaney's distorted view of nature.

Seamus Heaney's second collection, *Door into the Dark*, was published in 1969. The poetry was just that a step into the unknown, the step of a poet who was sufficiently confident to take risks and know that he would be successful. He writes about Irish history, Irish Myths, and the Irish people and attempts to create a literary mystical vision.



While at Berkeley University, California, he read the poets Gary Snyder and Robert Bly. Their use of free verse had some influence on his writing in his next collection, *Wintering out*, which was published in 1972.

It was about this time that he decided to become a full time writer. After resigning his teaching post at Queen's University he and his family went to live at Ashford, County Wicklow, in Ireland. It was here that he began the translation of 'The Lament of Mad Sweeney' which he entitled 'Sweeney Astray'. This version was published much later in 1983.

The poems in *North*, which were published in 1975, confront the situation in the North of Ireland directly and nowhere is this seen more obviously than in the poem 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing'. In this collection the reader sees a personal response to the problems of the North.

Eventually the deep discontent of the Catholics, and indeed some Protestants and Presbyterians, led to the founding of the United Irishmen. They fought a battle against their Protestant rulers in Armagh but were defeated and it was after this battle that the Orange Society was created. This society was to ensure that Protestants always held the upper hand over the Catholics.

A number of other battles were fought but the rebellion was poorly organized. The battle of Vinegar Hill saw the rebels' greatest and bloodiest defeat. Twenty thousand men died in May 1798.

the rule of law had been broken down and this encouraged the authorities to set up the Act of Union to unite the Irish and English governments. When the bill was passed in 1800 many of the big landlords who opposed the union moved to England and allowed the English managers to run the estates.

During the 1840s Ireland suffered one of the greatest disasters in its history. The majority of the population depended on potato for food and when the crop failed for three years famine spread throughout the land. In the later half of the 1840s over a million people died and many more immigrated to America.

William Gladstone (1809-98) was convinced that Home Rule was essential if the problems in Ireland were to be solved. Throughout the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century Protestants opposed the idea of Home Rule because they saw it as the end of Protestant ascendancy. Two rebel groups were formed. The Ulster Volunteers were a force dedicated to the Protestant cause and the nationalists created their own group called the Irish Volunteers. This latter group declared itself to be dedicated to protection of the Catholic population. In 1916 the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) seized the General Post Office in Dublin in April 1916 and proclaimed the Irish Republic. The IRB soon surrendered and twelve of its leaders were executed. These executions aroused great sympathy and the mass of the Catholic population now supported the rebels.

Civil war broke in 1920 and the English Government was powerless to create any stability. In the same year partitions were set up. The North and South have their own parliaments. This was regarded as a temporary measure at the time but eventually the

s were clearly defined, the country is now divided in two, the six counties of Northern Ireland and the twenty six counties of Southern Ireland. This arrangement was permanent in 1949 when the United Kingdom assured Northern Ireland that it was the part of the UK constitution.

By the 1950s and 1960s discrimination against Catholics was rife in Northern Ireland. Many were denied the opportunity to work or own property. The power to vote was also denied to many and therefore there was little likelihood that Catholics would have any significant representation in parliament. In 1967 the Northern Civil Rights Association was founded to help combat these injustices. The following year the Civil Rights marches clashed with the police in Derry.

Some of Seamus Heaney's poetry refers to aspects of Irish history. The content of some poems can easily be related to specific incidents but in most poems the poet tends to look at the whole picture and draw universal conclusions or ask wide ranging questions.

Translating Seamus Heaney

terary translation, especially poetry, is undoubtedly a challenge particularly for a new translator like me. Poetry always attracts me and I enjoy translating poetry. Seamus Heaney is one of my favorite poets and that's why I was very excited translating Heaney. As I translated few English poets, I thought that I would face not so many difficulties translating Heaney but when I began translating Heaney I discovered myself fish out of water. The translated poems are written in plain English language but to give birth these poems in Bengali language seemed to me an impossible task at first but I did it by dint of hard labor and deep thinking facing so many difficulties in one hand and on the other hand I did enjoy very much. The problems encountered and some enjoyable events translating Heaney are described bellow.

The first problem, I faced, is regarding equivalence. All the translated poems are written in simple and plain language but the problem arose when I tried to find equivalence as the target language is fully different in mood and expression. To take equivalence instead of an English word suffered me much because there are some words that have no Bengali equivalence though in some cases there are Bengali words, they do not match with the language of poetry. In that case I had to think a lot engaging Bengali language around us line with the dictionary meaning and sometimes I had to consult with people from blackshaw puller to CEO.

Another problem regarding equivalence is finding formal equivalence. In the context of Heaney's poetry it is difficulty to find formal equivalence and to use it. I tried my best to

ie formal equivalence to keep the neutrality of the poems. But in many cases I failed to

ie formal equivalence and in that situation I just kept in mind that

The more the text is form bound, the more formal the equivalence is and

The more the text is context bound, the more dynamic the equivalence is”

or example in the poem ‘The Skunk’ there are some words like ‘damasked’ ‘paraded’

whined’ which has no exact equivalence and if I use formal equivalence here the poem

might lose its poetic sound. This problem is found in the every translated poem, in words,

1 lines, and in stanzas.

Another problem that can be said is the length of words, lines and stanzas. In most of the

poems Heaney uses words that are short in size and consequently the line length of the

poems are also short (i.e. "Punishment"). In Bengali language to find and use such short

words is very problematic because of the functions of the language. In that problem I

tried my best to use short Bengali words in accordance with the English words and

where I used long word instead of a short English word I just kept in mind that I had to

maintain the line length working on other words.

Word and line positions in a stanza also suffered me much. As the two languages are

different sometimes the positions of the words, phrases and even in some lines are

dynamically replaced with a view to maintaining and expressing the expression, meaning

and message though I always tried to keep them in their positions. In some poems like

‘Punishment’ one stanza is related to other stanza. One stanza is finished in the other

stanza keeping a close relation with the other in that case to translate the same stanza in

the target text is difficult and sometimes it seemed impossible and that’s why in some

cases I had to replace or mingled one stanza with other keeping the harmony of the poem.

use of adjectives also created problems while translating as in some cases the use of Bengali adjectives hazards the spontaneity of the poem in that case I just thought to give expression clearly and dynamically.

The use of 'simile' and 'metaphor' in some poems suffered me much as making comparison between two things harmoniously is not an easy task in the form of poetry.

To solve this problem I had to think a lot spending a lot of time too. To show this type of problem we can take example from the poem ' Peninsula' –

'The sky is tall as over a runway'

That would be the translation of the specific line! Here the poet has used simile and to translate this line is not an easy task. The most enjoyable information regarding these types of problems is when I was translating I asked many English learned people to have solution but the results were funny and disappointing.

The use of pronoun like 'I', 'he/she', and 'you' in Heaney's poems is noticeable. This also created difficulty because using Bengali pronoun in some cases does not sound good in the poems and that's why in that cases sometimes I had to omit some pronouns to keep the sound of the respected stanza.

Though there are not so many rhymes in the translated poems to maintain rhymes in poems is like a challenge. Most of the poems have got rhymes in some stanzas and the interesting point is that I don't know whether it is done fortunately or not perhaps it has happened because of the nature of the target language . In that case the process of choosing diction has played a great role. An English word has so many Bengali meanings, which word sounds best in the respected place is a matter of great thinking and the success of a translation largely depends on it. Choice of diction also suffered me as

ere are so many words in lieu of a certain word. In that case I used each and every word relation with the other words and read the respected lines and stanzas loudly and sometimes made others listen to the lines and stanzas and asked his opinion which sounds good. And by these processes I came up with the problem of choice of diction.

Another important problem is expressing the message, meaning or theme of the poems in the language. Much of Heaney's poems speak about some images of something or some events. They are like painted pictures that speak for their characters and incidents. For example 'Digging' 'Peninsula' 'Punishment' etc. To translate these poems and to find out the theme or message I had to visualize all the depicted events and descriptions on my imagination. When I translated the poems I thought myself as the poet himself and I did think that if I were the poet which language I would have used and thinking so I translated the poems.

The voice or tune of the poet is also important in translation. At the time of translating I always checked the poet's voice whether it was going harmoniously or not. When I found that the poet's voice was not maintained I just changed the way of translation. Self-reflexivity is one of the major characteristics of Seamus Heaney's poems i.e. "Digging" and in that case I had to always think myself as Heaney.

After all to translate all the poems I had to adopt and compensate for making decisions that means sometimes I had to add something, cut something, edit something, replace something, avoid something and so other factors maintaining the naturalness of the respected poems.

Frequent reading of the poems helped a lot to get the poet's voice, the themes or messages of the poems and the mood of writing. And this task has created a great enthusiasm for

etry and now everyday I am writing poems. Translation made me learn both Bengali and English language as the success of translation largely depends on language competence.

For me poetry is something that is only poet's conscious, unconscious or subconscious thought engaging worldly and non worldly factors. It is a mystery for the readers because nobody knows, though can only guess, what the poet is actually saying, tends to say something. The more a reader reads a poem, the more he closes to it exploring the mysterious mysteries. Translation of a poem is an uncertain struggle engaging translator's methodology. So, a successful translation depends on proper study, understanding, and thinking and proper competence over both the source and target language. Edition plays a great role in translation. It did a great job in my translations. The more a translated poem is edited, the more it gets its spontaneity. In order to translate Seamus Heaney I tried my best but do not know how successful I am!



Translations

C: English

T: Bengali

ভূমীপ (ST: "The Peninsula" from <i>Door into the Dark</i>)	15
শিল্পী (ST: "An Artist" from <i>Sweeney Redivivus</i>)	16
চর (ST: "The Skunk" from <i>Field Work</i>)	17
শাস্তি (ST: "Punishment" from <i>North</i>)	18-19
খনন (ST: "Digging" from <i>Death of a Naturalist</i>)	20-21

অন্তরীপ

যখন কথা হারিয়ে যায়, একদিনের জন্য বেড়িয়ে
পরনা অন্তরীপের চারপাশ,
রানওয়ে-রূপ লম্বাটে আকাশ,
নিশানাহীন প্রান্তরে হয়ত তুমি গন্তব্যে পৌঁছবে না

যদিও অতিক্রম করবে, ঘুরে বেড়াবে ঢালু গুহা-গিরি।
গুধুলী লগ্নে, মাতাল দিগন্ত হারায় সাগর, পাহাড়ে,
ধবধবে চাঁদওয়ারী চমা মাঠের গলধকরনে আর
তুমি আবারো আঁধারে। এখন স্মৃতিচারণ কর

বালমলে সাগরতট আর ছায়াচ্ছিন্ন বৃক্ষপট,
ঐ প্রস্তর যেথায় ভাস্করীরা ছিন্ন কুটি কুটি,
দীর্ঘাপদী পাখীরা নাজুক-অস্বাভাবিক নিজ পদাকারে,
দ্বীপের পর দ্বীপ ছাড়িয়ে কুয়াশা ভেদ করে

এবার গৃহে প্রত্যাবর্তন কর, আগেরী মত নিশূপ-
গুধু প্রকৃতির দ্বার খুলবে এবার এভাবেঃ সব কিছু স্পষ্ট
তাদেরই মত, জল স্থল নিজ নিজ সীমানায়।

শিল্পী

তার রোশের চেতনা আমার ভাল লাগে
ভালবাসি কাঠিন্যতার প্রতিকূলে তার দুর্দমনীয়তাকে,
কচি আপেল আশ্বাদন থেকে নিজেকে দাবিয়ে রাখাকে ।

তাঁর নেড়ী কুকুর রূপ
যেউ যেউ রত প্রতিচ্ছবি ।
আর আত্মকর্ম বিরাগ তীব্র অবশ্য
একটি বিষয় ছিল ভিনু-
কৃতজ্ঞতা আর চির প্রশান্তি স্থূলতা,
যা তার থেকে তাকেই গোপন
করার সামিল ।

যেকপে তাঁর তিতীক্ষার বাঁধ পোক্ত
করন সে যা বুঝত তাই করত ।
তার ভাগ্য নিষ্কিণ্ড বোল্ডারের মত
গুন্য পটে ভ্রমনরত
আপেল আর শৈলের আঁধারে ।



খচ্চর

টানটান, খাড়া, অস্তিত্বক্রিয়ার ভোজ পর্বে পরহিত
প্রবারনের মত পশমি শালে জড়ানো, বিবস্ত্রিত,
পুচ্ছ প্রদর্শনে খচ্চর দর্শিত
রাতের পর রাত যে ছিল প্রত্যাশিত অভ্যাগত।

দীর্ঘ শব্দ পীড়ন শেষে ফ্রিজটি নিঃশব্দ
কুপির আভায় বারান্দার শেষসীমা পর্যন্ত নিষ্ক।
কমলা ছোট ছোট কমলা শাখে
আমি উত্তেজিত হতে শুরু করলাম গোপন কামনা ত্রাসে।

'স্ত্রী' শব্দটি সামনে রেখে, এগার বছর পর
আমি আবার প্রেম পত্র লিখছিলাম
সম্বন্ধিত পিপার মত, সেন এর যতকিন্তু
শব্দটুকুও ভুব দিয়েছিল ক্যালিফোর্নিয়ার
বাতাস, মাটি আর নিশীতে।

ইউক্যালিপ্টাসের অর্থহীন, চমৎকার সুবাস
খোঁষনা করে তোমার অন্যতা।
পেয়লায় উচ্ছিন্ন মদের দ্বিতীয় চালানটি ছিল
কোমল বালিশের স্পর্শে তোমাকে ভোগের মত।

এবং সেখানে সে, তনায় আর মোহিনী,
সরল, গুহ্য,
পৌরানিক, বাস্তব খচ্চর,
ফুট পাঁচেক দূরে রঙ্গমঞ্চের ইতি টানছিল

এসবি গত রাতের ঘটনা, যুগের সময়
কিছু একটা পতনের শব্দে চোখ মেলে দেখি
তোমার নিতম্ব উপরে, মাথা নীচের ড্রয়ারে
মিহি, কাল নাইট ড্রেস সন্ধানে।

শান্তি

আমি অনুভব করতে পারি
তঁর গলায় জড়ানো ফাঁসে
ধরে হেচকা টানে ছাচরানো,
নগ্ন দেহে বহমান বাতাস।

যা তার স্তন্যগ্রন্থ থেকে
পরহিত পুতিতে প্রবাহিত,
পাঁজরে জড়ানো
গৈতাকে করে প্রকম্পিত।

বাঁশ-কাঠের খুটির নীচে
ঝিলে পুতা, পাথরের টানে
ডুবন্ত দেহ, আমি
স্পষ্ট দেখতে পাই।

যেখান থেকে খুড়ে বের করা
তার দেহখানি ছিল
ছাল চামড়াহীন বৃক্ষ চারারূপ
ওক-হাড়, কুঠুরীগত মগজ:

কালো কচুর মুড়ার মত
ন্যাড়া মাথা
ময়লা ভ্যানায় বাঁধা চোখ
নাকে আংটা

প্রেমের স্মৃতি
সংরক্ষনে।
ছোট ব্যাভিচারিনী,
শান্তির আগে

তুমি ছিলে পীত-কেশরী,
হ্যাংলা পাতলা, আর
কৃষ্ণ কলির মত
মুখখানা ছিল নজর কারা।
হে দীন অভাগী,

আমি প্রায় তোমাকে ভালইবাসি,
কিন্তু জানি আমিও,
গুণ নিস্কৃত্যই নিক্ষেপ করতাম।
তোমার অনাবৃত মগজ

মিশমিশে ঢুল
পেশীবদ্ধ ফিতে আর
গণিত হাড়গোড়ের এক
শৈল্পিক কামুক আমি।

আলকাতরায় চুবানো,
তোমার বিশ্বাস ঘাতক বোনেরা
যখন রেলিং ঘেসে বাঁধা ছিল
আমি, যে এখন বাকশক্তিহীন,

এই সন্ত্য বর্বর নিষ্করতায়
থাকতাম অসাড় পলকহীন
যদিও বুঝি এ এক যথার্থ আর
নির্মম, প্রগার প্রতিশোধ।

খনন

মধ্যমা, তর্জনী আর বৃদ্ধাঙ্গুলীর আলিঙ্গনে
গাটগোড়া কলমটি শান্তিত; যেন গুলিভর্তি আগ্নেয়াস্ত্র।

খিড়কীর নীচে, স্পষ্ট এক ঘ্যাস ঘ্যাস আওয়াজ
বখন কোদাল চলে কর্কস মুক্তিকা ভেদ করে:
বাব খুঁড়ে চলেছেন, আমি নীচে দৃষ্টি ফেলি

যতক্ষননা তার সটান
নিতম্ব হারায় ফুলকেয়ারীর ভীরে,
ভেসে উঠে বিশবছর আগের স্মৃতি -
আলুর কেইলের মধ্যদিনে সামনে চলছেন ছন্দে
সেখানে তার কোদাল চলাছিল অবিরত।

জীর্ন বুটজুড়া টান টান, হাটু বরাবর
আটকে থাকা ধারালু কাটা-কুটা সুক্ষভাবে সাফ করা হল।
উনি লম্বা গাছগুলো সমূলে উপড়ে ফেলেন আর -
সাদাটে তীক্ষ্ণ নিম্নাংশ গভীর গর্তে পুতে দেন
নতুন ফলনের জন্য-যেগুলো তুলেছিলাম
হাতের কোমল স্পর্শে স্নিগ্ধ কাঠিন্য ভালবেসে।

খোদার কসম, ঐ বুড়া ঠিক
তার বাপের মতই কুদাল চালাতে পারত।

আমার দাদা এক দিনে এই মদনাকান্দার
যে কারো চেয়ে বেশী হুগলা কাটতে পারত।
একবার আমি কাগজের ছিপির বোতলে
তার জন্য দুধ নিয়ে গেলাম। উনি দুধ পানের জন্য
সোজা হয়ে দাড়াইলেন তার পর ডানে ঘুরলেন
ভাঁজে ভাঁজে, ফালি ফালি হুগলার বোঝা কাঁধে নিয়ে,
আরও ভাল হুগলা সন্ধানে ক্রমশ নীচেই নেমে চললেন।

খনন ।

আলুর গায়ের ছত্রাকের স্নিগ্ধ কোমল গন্ধ
কাঁচা লাকড়ীর প্যাচ প্যাচ, টুসটাস শব্দ,
জাগরীত চিন্তামূলকে কেটে করে শানিত ।
কিন্তু ওদের মত কোদাল আমার নেই ।

আমার বৃদ্ধাঙ্গুলী, তর্জনী আর মধ্যাঙ্গুলীর [REDACTED]
গাটগোড়া কলমটি শায়িত ।
আমি এটি দিয়েই খুঁড়ব ।



Conclusion

translation is both a challenging and enjoyable task though it takes so much time in thinking. I enjoyed all the time when I was translating Seamus Heaney's poems. To translate five poems of Heaney I had to struggle much as I did not find any previous Bengali translation of this great poet. With so much limitation I tried my best to translate the poems engaging my competence over both the target and source language, power of imagination and ideology. All the translating efforts are successful if only the poems are read worthy.

Bibliography

- Bassnett, S. (2002) *Translation Studdies*, London and New York: Routledge, 3rd edn.
- Daly, S. (1997) *York Notes*, London: York Press.
- Hatim, B. and J. Munday (2004) *Translation*, London and New York: Routledge, 3rd edn.
- Heaney, S. (1966) *Death of a Naturalist*, Faber and Faber
- Heaney, S. (1969) *Door into the Dark*, Faber and Faber
- Heaney, S. (1975) *North*, Faber and Faber
- Heaney, S. (1979) *Field Work*, Faber and Faber
- Heaney, S. (1981) *Sweeny Redivivus*, Faber and Faber

The End

