

A B S T R A C T

One of the tasks of Translation Studies is to examine how far, and with what effects, the Target Language Text (henceforward abbreviated to TLT) adheres to and deviates from the Source Language Text (henceforward abbreviated to SLT). The case becomes rather intriguing with poetry translations, as poetry generically deploys defamiliarization more than prose does. When a translator embarks upon translating a grand-scale poem like the epic, the task becomes even more arduous as its ‘grand style’, which is far removed from the stylistic features of the lyric or the ballad, entails greater problems of what Roman Jakobson calls ‘interlingual transposition’ in translation . So, to translate Milton’s *Paradise Lost* into a target language is much more demanding than to translate his sonnets or elegies. Things become even more interesting for a researcher in the domain of Translation Studies when an SLT is translated into the same target language by different hands.

Clinton B. Seely, as we know, has translated *inter alia* Jibanananda Das’s poetry, and William Radice is a well-known Tagore translator. Seely’s translation of Jibanananda’s poetry and Radice’s of Tagore’s have already been taken up for study by researchers. In 2004 Seely completed his 25 years’ project of translating Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s *magnum opus*, *Meghnadbadh kabya*, and it was published by OUP under the title, “The Slaying of Meghanada: A Ramayana from Colonial Bengal”. By then Radice, too, had completed the first draft of his translation of the same epic, but delayed its publication until 2010, under the title – “The Poem of the Killing of Meghnād”. These translations have not yet been taken up by anyone for a comparative study in the light of translation theories. Hence a juxtapositional reading of them, which is the main object of this study, may not be either trite or superfluous.

It transpires from the excerpts used in the present study that the SLT – TLT movement in Seely is different in many respects from that in Radice. Rendering

Madhusudan's Bengali blank verse in English is a big problem, and a close, comparative reading of TLT₁ and TLT₂ makes it clear that Seely and Radice attempt very disparate solutions to their common problem. In order to negotiate with Madhusudan's *amitrakshar chhanda* (অমিত্রাক্ষর ছন্দ), Seely adheres to the fourteen-syllable, unrhymed line with enjambment although he has not forced his lines to be coterminous with the original. In other words, he frames lines based on fourteen English syllables and takes great care to end his paragraphs with a full, fourteen-syllable line.

For Radice, it appears, 'phrasing' is as much important as 'metre' (the matter of syllable) in encountering Madhusudan's Bengali blank verse. Phrasing, for Radice, means "the length and balance of phrases, the placing of pauses in the line or sentence or paragraph", and unlike Seely he never ends his lines with 'little words'. Radice's lines, on the other hand, "are based on a count of three phrases, a phrase being defined by the pause before or after it that is indicated by any kind of punctuation mark [...] even though the phrases can vary hugely in length". Incidentally, we can take into account Madhusudan; letter of 1 July 1860 to Raj Narayan Basu wherein he categorically says, "Let your friends guide their voices by the pause {...}. My advice is Read, Read, Read. Teach your ears the new tune and then you will find out what it is". It appears that Seely deviates from, while Radice tries and adheres to, Madhusudan's dictate.

The primary focus of the present study would, therefore, be on the divergence of both TLT₁ and TLT₂ from their common SLT as well as on the major differences between the two TLTs. The present study will take into its ambit a very important question – for whom is a translation done? It appears that every translation is 'forked tongue', 'Janus-faced' – speaking both to the reader wholly unacquainted with the Source Language and to the reader having adequate command of the source language who probably would rather enjoy a comparison between the TLT and its SLT.

The objective of the present study and the statement of the problem mentioned above have been articulated out of a reading of an array of important concepts / principles / theories of translation formulated down the ages. We have outlined the principal ones in Chapter-I. There are basically two diametrically opposite views on poetry translation: one proclaims that translation is not possible, translators are traitors because a poem gets killed in translation; the other vindicates possibilities of successful translations – sometimes not excluding even what came to be known in the mid – 20th century as ‘machine translation’. The present study will not take into account the former, and while focusing on the latter it will exclude the matter of machine translation which can translate ‘Out of sight, out of mind’ as ‘invisible lunatic’! It may be useful for the purpose of the present study to refer to some notable practicing translators, engaged in translating poetry from Bengali into English. *Tagore and Modernity* edited by Krishna Sen and Tapati Gupta and published in 2006 has a panel discussion, excerpts from which are reproduced and discussed in the introductory chapter of the present study.

Critical literature on both Seely and Radice as translators of *Meghnadbadh kabya* is less than scanty, limited only to interviews and book reviews. The proposed study therefore cannot make much use of what others have said on the two translations of the same SLT. Apparently, the present study’s being the first of its kind may be a disadvantage; but then there is the advantage of reading the two texts critically without being ‘critically’ influenced by others.

The present study will try and address some such questions as the following:

- (i) What does the phrase ‘the poetics and politics of *trans*-lation’ imply?
- (ii) What are the principles of translation that Seely and Radice have sought to apply to their negotiations with a common SLT?

- (iii) What similarities and differences between the two translators have surfaced in their negotiations?
- (iv) Have the two TLTs achieved the desired equipollence?
- (v) Do the issues of ‘poet-translator’ and ‘non-poet translator’ emerge in the translations?
- (vi) How are the cultural shifts registered in the translations?

As the title of my thesis indicates, the work would be sort of Qualitative Research based on case-study, the translations of Seely and Radice being the two ‘cases’. As it often happens with Qualitative Research, the hypotheses have been spelt out while discussing the conceptual framework. Equipped as much as possible with relevant theories/concepts/principles of translation, the present study would attempt both a comparative and an analytic examination of the variables, viz. the two translated texts of Madhusudan Dutt’s *Meghnadbadh kabya*. It is perhaps needless to say that all the lines of the two TLTs under survey will not, and cannot, be compared or contrasted. Following what is known as ‘Convenience Sampling’ or ‘Judgement Sampling’, the present study will choose as samples a few important lines from each of the Cantos.

This introductory chapter adumbrates the work undertaken; and in so doing it briefly discusses the crux of the research ‘problem’ which the succeeding chapters deal with, the principal principles of translation which constitute the theoretical framework of the present study, the existing critical literature on Clinton B. Seely and William Radice as translators of *Meghnadbadh kabya*, the relevant research questions to be addressed, the methodology adopted, and lastly, a capsule summary of the chapters that follow this.

Any critical appreciation of a translated text should begin with a discussion of the SLT. The second chapter titled “REFLECTIONS ON THE SLT: *Meghnadbadh kabya*

(1861)” discusses the background and the uniqueness of Dutt’s epic poem which generated as many as five English translations: two in the twentieth century and three in the present.

Why has the word ‘trans-lated’ in the title of the present work been partially italicized? What do we mean by the poetics and the politics of translation? Answers to these questions are attempted in Chapter III, with special reference to Umberto Eco, Spivak and Derrida.

Chapter-IV is brief comparative study of Seely’s and Radice’s translations. Specimen lines from each of the nine Cantos (Books) from both the TLTs and their common, corresponding SLT have been juxtaposed for this purpose. The two translators’ prefaces are also extensively used with a view to tracing the similarities and differences between them as translators.

The concluding chapter (i.e. Chapter V) titled “IN(CON)CLUSIVE CONCLUSION” discusses the most recent translation of Dutt’s *Meghnadbadh kabya* done by Biswas and Gupta (2017), and tries to see, with some examples, how it differs from Seely’s and Radice’s translations.

A text gets regenerated through its receptions and translations continuously over time, and no single evaluation of it or its translation(s) can be conclusive. A text has to be evaluated and reevaluated in all its inclusiveness. Hence the fifth and last chapter of the present work has been titled, with a tinge of oxymoron, “In(con)clusive Conclusion”. Structurally, this is the concluding chapter; but that it is *not* ‘conclusive’ but rather ‘inclusive’ (of what is to come) is made clear from our decision to bring in the latest translation of *Meghnadbadh kabya* for a comparative discussion in this chapter itself. The present thesis, therefore, is only part of a continuum; and as we all know, no continuum can have an exclusive conclusion as it always remains in a state of flux to be explained, extended, debated and interrogated, and therefore, supplemented by newer scholarships to come.