

Translating Translated Modernism: A Study on English Translation of Yi Sang's *Nalgae*

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1. Introduction

This is a study on the “decontextualization and “recontextualization of Korean modernism by way of analyzing Yi Sang’s short story, *Nalgae*. It is a translation criticism paying attention to translational shifts considering their relevance in conveying the qualities of Korean modernism to the English-speaking readers.

Korean modernism is the result of adopting Western modernist literary thoughts and styles indirectly through Japan, more advanced in the importation of Western modernity. This is a kind of “translation, and can be called “translated modernism. Modernity is essential to the development of modernism because the latter represents and responds to the former. Korean

modernism stemmed from “colonial modernity which sprung during the Japanese regime in the early 20th century. Korean modernist writers, therefore, mimicked Western and Japanese modernisms, and consciously or unconsciously became ambivalent and mentally hybrid. Yi Sang’s literary works contain these features of Korean modernism—frequent use of foreign words, coined words written in Chinese characters, and literary forms borrowed from Japan, as well as resistance against traditions, trials of experimental techniques, and destruction of old literary forms.

“Mimicry, “ambivalence and “hybridity are critical concepts in the study of Korean modernism and modernity. Homi Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite (122). Since mimicry cannot help producing its “slippage, “excess and “difference, the colonized people experience frustration, and “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence (Bhabha 122). Ambivalence refers to “a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action (Ashcroft et al. 12). According to Bhabha, colonial identity lies between the colonized and the colonizer. It is an “ambivalent identification containing both fear and desire, or “aggressivity and narcissism (Childs and Williams 125). Since the ambivalent colonized agents experience a reconciliation of indigenous and outside cultures, ambivalence is related to hybridity. Hybridity refers to newly composed, mixed or contradictory identities. Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak see the “hybrid identity as “an essential element of colonial modernity (Park 157). The notable thing here is that the mental hybrid agents’ culture destroys the colonizers’ “pure culture. In other words, the colonial culture formed through mimicry of the colonizer’s, inevitably remains to be influenced by indigenous native elements. Such adulteration “spoils the dominator’s authority and culture. Bhabha thinks that the colonized can use their cultural hybridity as a weapon of resistance against their colonizers (Na 122).

Literary works have been an avenue for expressing such resistance. Some

manifestations of hybridity are found in linguistic features such as pidgin or Creole. Yi Sang's texts also show hybridity, for instance, by interposing English, French and Japanese words into Korean sentences. These foreign words lose their original meanings, and get new, different or transformed meanings in the Korean context. This adulteration can menace the Others' "pure and "original cultures, and can be a tool of resistance against their colonialism. Since the most remarkable feature of modernism is the "resistance against existing culture and values, the ambivalence and hybridity of Yi Sang's works show the most significant features of Korean modernism.

Recently, some Korean and foreign scholars have given attention to colonial modernity, and studied Korean modernism in the 1930s with the three key words—mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. They have borrowed the framework from Said and Bhabha's postcolonial theories in order to form their own discourse because they think that the core factor to interpret Korean modern literature from the viewpoint of colonial modernity is "culture. However, in the field of literary translation studies, translators, reviewers or critics of translations have not taken notice of the importance of the cultural viewpoint to decontextualize Korean modern literature during colonial times. Although they recognize the influence of cultural factors in literary translation, they disregard the specific, concrete, literary and socio-cultural background, such as colonial modernity and Korean modernism, that gave birth to the literary work. Mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity of colonial modernity are revealed through the theme, style, words and rhetoric the author employs in his work. Since literary words and rhetoric are allusive and connotative, the translator must try to decontextualize the words and figurative expressions in the work within the context of its socio-cultural background. To achieve this, she or he must have sufficient knowledge not only of the source language and general culture, but also of the literary and specific cultural background surrounding the original work, in this case, colonial modernity and Korean modernism.

Yi Sang's dying words, "I wish I could smell a lemon! show how much he was possessed all along with new, foreign and uncommon ideas during his life because a "lemon is not native to Korea but is imported. His frequent use of foreign words and disapproval of traditional literary styles are definitely influenced from Western and Japanese modernisms. However, the foreign words and the experimental expressions in his works must be understood within the context of Korean colonial modernity since they have different meanings for the same foreign words and similar experimental expressions. As Walter Benjamin says, the task of a translator is "to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work (22). For this reason, in order to decontextualize and recontextualize Yi Sang's work, this study attempts to address two questions: Did the translators of Yi Sang's literary works contextualize the mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity of the original text in relation to Korean modernism based on colonial modernity? How did they render the words, phrases and idiomatic expressions which had assumed various nuances or meanings arising from foreign influences and remnants of old domestic traditions? To figure out the answers, this study chooses the two English translated texts to analyze—"Wings and "The Wings.

"Wings is contained in a Korean modern short stories book, *Flowers of Fire* which was edited and translated by Peter H. Lee. It was published by the University of Hawaii Press in Honolulu in 1974, and its revised edition was republished in 1986. Peter H. Lee is a professor of Korean and Comparative Literature at the University of California in Los Angeles. The other English translation, "The Wings was rendered by Ahn Jung-hyo in 2001. It was a part of a selection of three short stories by Yi Sang, *The Wing* published by Jimoondang in Seoul. Ahn Jung-hyo is a bilingual novelist whose books, *White Badge* and *Silver Stallion* among others, have been published in Korea, the United States, Denmark and Japan. He is also a well-known translator who has rendered numerous novels and essays into Korean and English.¹⁾

2. Analysis of *Nalgae* and Its Two Translations

Yi Sang's original fiction, *Nalgae*, was published in 1936. It consists of two parts—a prologue and a main story. In the prologue, “I” who introduces himself as a genius, showed his state of consciousness through a witty and paradoxical monologue. “I” bids good-bye to his readers, implying his severance from everything else in his past life, and begins to allude to his new life in the future. The story is narrated through a soliloquy from a first-person point of view, without any dialogue. The mood permeating the story is one of frustration. “I,” the narrator in the main part, is an isolated man living in the sunless inner half of one room. He is idle and is devoid of any passion for work or for life. He puts his imagination to task and takes pleasure in it, creating short stories and poems while lying in bed. He is penniless and fits well in his hermit-like existence. The narrator seems to “abandon every human desire.

However, in the prologue, the first narrator shows “I” making a distinction between Dostoevsky and Hugo, for instance. In the latter part of the main story, the second narrator shows “I” being aware of the difference between adaline, a sleeping pill, and aspirin, a cold pill, and implies his familiarity with Malthus and Marx, which men of lesser intellect would not quibble about. Given the fact that this work was published in the 1930s in colonized Korea, those who knew important figures in the fields of literature and economics belonged to the intelligentsia. Yet, “I” lives as a “stuffed specimen, like a caged bird enjoying his restricted freedom inside the sunless room. This leads

the reader to raise questions: Why is “I” so frustrated that he “voluntarily insulates himself in a dark room? Why should there be two narrators of contrasting voices in the story, the first appearing to be a member of the intelligentsia, and the second, a spineless loafer? Is the second narrator’s voice changed, or does it keep the same tone until the end? These questions are significant in providing clues for understanding the theme of this story and the presuppositions of the writer. To understand his frustration, it is necessary to analyze how the story is conveyed to the reader. The two narrators play complementary roles in revealing the true character of “I” in the narrative.

The 1930s was a hopeless time for Korean intellectuals. They had been educated in modern Japanese schools, but when they went out to the world after graduating, they came face to face with the colonial Korean reality which did not fit the ideals they had nurtured during their school days. Moreover, they were powerless to change that reality, and this made them disconsolate and desperate. Some of them became fighters for national independence, but most of them chose to be “modern boys” or “modern girls” who enjoyed “modern lives” in the capitalistic colonial society.

However, Yi Sang could not belong to either group even though he professed to be a modern boy. It lay upon him to provide for his two sets of parents—his biological and adoptive parents. Obsession over his filial duties dogged him until his death, especially because by Korean tradition, it is the duty of an eldest son to provide for his parents. To add to his misery, he contracted tuberculosis, an incurable disease at that time. It can be said that the narrator of *Nalgae* is Yi Sang’s other self who confesses his frustrations. However, there exist two narrators in this story.

One narrator speaks in the epigram-filled prologue and is characterized as being intelligent and cynical. In the original, the epigram is written using a combination of vernacular Korean and Sino-Korean words. The first narrator also mentions many words of Western origin. The other narrator tells the main story, and depicts “I” as an idiot who treats everyone except his wife with an

1) As a clarification, all Korean words, except for the names of persons, are romanized in this study in accordance with the “new Korean Romanization system” promulgated in 2000. References to other writers’ and scholars’ names observe the romanized forms that they have used in their writings. Additionally, for convenience and clarity, every excerpt from the English translated texts is identified with the translators’ names instead of the original writer’s name, Yi Sang.

air of indifference. The main story is written in plain Korean with less Sino-Korean words. The prologue begins with the following poser:

‘剝製가되어버린天才’를아시오

‘bakje-ga doe-eobeorin cheonjae’reul asio? (Yi 268)

Have you ever heard of a ‘genius’ who became a ‘stuffed specimen’?

(Lee 30)

Have you ever seen a stuffed genius? (Ahn 7)

This implies that the first narrator takes the position of a “*cheonjae* (천재), namely, “genius in English, and the second represents a “*bakje* (박제) meaning “stuffed specimen. In other words, the narrator puts across the idea that “I is a “genius who decides to be a “stuffed specimen in the story. The original sentence obviously presents these two personas, “genius and “stuffed specimen. This concept is carried in Lee’s translation whereas Ahn’s fuses the “genius and the “stuffed specimen into one person—“stuffed genius. The latter translation can make the reader oblivious to the existence of two separate individuals, or the narrators in the prologue and the main story, respectively. It is probable that Ahn did not see the significance of the distinction between the two narrators, or that he was simply unaware that the first narrator is a “genius and the second one is a “stuffed specimen. However, understanding these two narrators is crucial in comprehending this story which illustrates the Korean intellectuals’ ambivalent, hybrid and schizoid consciousness under the colonial reality of the 1930s.

In the original text *Nalgae*, the voice tones of the two narrators are clearly distinguishable from each other. Korean readers can easily note the first narrator to be an intellectual through his manner of speech and vocabulary. He addresses his readers directly with a pedantic approach. On the contrary, the second narrator seems indifferent to his readers, and in a soliloquy or diary confesses the events in his life using commonplace words. These two different

voices reveal intentionally or unintentionally the author’s ambivalent and hybrid identity in the colonial modern society. Thus, this analysis of the two English translated texts, “Wings and “The Wings will focus on how the translators rendered into English, Sino-Korean words and foreign words, and whether or not they succeeded in conveying the two narrators’ different tones to the English-speaking readers.

2.1. The First Narrator in the Prologue

The most prominent characteristic of the prologue in the story is that the voice of the narrator is pedantic, erudite, pompous, cynical and nihilistic. The first reason that gives the reader this impression, is that it was written in excessive Sino-Korean words. The nuance and status of Sino-Korean words in Korean language are similar to those of Latinate words in the English language. Some Sino-Korean words have become ordinary words in Korean language today, but the sentences containing uncommon Sino-Korean words impart to the contemporary Korean readers and listeners the impression of being archaic, a style employed in writing academic books or formal reports.

Just as Yokomitsu Riichi, a Japanese modernist writer who is representative of the New Sensationalist School, used a lot of Sino-Japanese words to create an archaic tone in some of his works, Yi Sang also deliberately used Sino-Korean words in the prologue of this story to form a unique character and to present the theme more effectively.²⁾ He made an erudite and pompous protagonist in the prologue, and this person’s existence is very closely related to the theme of the whole story. Thus, the English translated texts are supposed to vividly present the first narrator’s characteristics.

The best way to convey the voice of this narrator to English speaking readers is to translate Sino-Korean words into Latin-based English words.

2) For details on the influence of Yokomitsu Riichi on Yi Sang, see 강인숙. 2006. 『일본 모더니즘 소설 연구』. 서울: 생각의 나무. p.37

However, not all Sino-Korean terms have an exact match in the Latinate words.

肉身이흐느적흐느적하도록疲勞했을때만精神이銀貨처럼맑소

yuksin-i heuneujeok-heuneujeok hadorok *piro*-haesseul ttaeman jeongsin-i eunhwa-cheoreom makso. (Yi 268)

My spirit shines like a silver coin, only when my body is so tired my joints creak. (Lee 30)

Only when the body sways from fatigue does the soul sparkle like a new, shiny coin. (Ahn 7)

“*Yuksin* (육신) is a Sino-Korean word meaning all human physical parts, including the head, arms and legs. Usually, Korean people use “*mom* (몸), a more common Korean word, instead of “*yuksin* when they want to indicate the same meaning. However, Yi Sang chose “*yuksin*, and it is a meaningful device. But what English word can replace this? Both translators rendered “*yuksin*, not a plain word in Korean, into “body which sounds too ordinary and commonplace probably because they could not find a more proper substitute. Even though the meaning of the original sentence is transmitted to the English-speaking reader, its nuance and the narrator’s peculiar trait or position diminish to a certain extent. How then can the translation keep the original nuance and the narrator’s peculiarity intact?

If an appropriate English word corresponding to a Sino-Korean words cannot be found in Latinate or academic vocabulary, plain Korean words or popularized Sino-Korean terms within the same sentence, can be translated into Latinate or uncommon words to compensate for the mistranslation, and thereby, retain the mood of the original. To illustrate, the word “*piro* (피로) was translated as “tired in Lee’s translation while “fatigue was used for the same word in Ahn’s. “Fatigue is less plain than “tiredness or “weariness, but “exhaustion, “languor or “lethargy could have done a better job in maintaining more of the nuance of the original sentence.

그대自身을偽造하는것도할만한일이오. 그대의作品은한번도본일이없는既成品에 依하여차라리輕便하고高邁하리다.

geudae jasin-eul wijo-haneun geot-do halman han ir-io. geudae-ui jakup-eun hanbeon-do bon ir-i eom-neun giseongpum-e uihayeo charari gyeongpyeon-hago gomae-harida. (Yi 2005: 269)

It would be worth your while to put on your mask. Your mask will feel noble and at ease—think of something ready-made that no one has ever seen before. (Lee 30)

It is worth trying to counterfeit yourself. Your creation would be sublime and conspicuous among the ordinary products you have never seen. (Ahn 8)

The original sentences above have four sophisticated Sino-Korean words, “*wijo* (위조), “*giseongpum* (기성품), “*gyeongpyeon* (경편) and “*gomae* (고매), and these terms make them ostentatious. However, Lee’s translation hardly conveys this mood to the reader because the translator rendered all of them into plain English words, while the more formal words, “counterfeit, “sublime and “conspicuous in Ahn’s serve to express the pedantic mood of the original. In fact, “*wijo*-*ha(da)* (위조하다) is a verb meaning “to forge or “to counterfeit, but it also means “to mask or “to disguise in some cases, as it is used here. Thus, “counterfeit yourself in Ahn’s version can seem to be slightly different from the original meaning. “To camouflage can be more appropriate in this case. Nonetheless, Ahn seems to be aware of the nuance of Sino-Korean words and how to translate them.

나는내非凡한發育을回顧하여世上을보는眼目を規定하였소

na-neun nae bibeom-han baryug-eul hoego-hayeo sesang-eul boneun anmog-eul gyujeong-hayeotso. (Yi 269)

I’ve defined the purport of my view of the world by recalling my extraordinary growth. (Lee 30)

In retrospect of my extraordinary maturity, I regularized my view point of the world. (Ahn 8)

This short sentence was also written with five Sino-Korean words. To cite an example, Lee chose a common word, “recalling” to translate “*hoego* (회고), while Ahn translated the same word as “retrospect. However, Lee inserted the term “purport” and succeeds in maintaining the pedantry of the original text.

Using Sino-Korean words is a unique feature of Korean modern literature. It makes a text pedantic and sometimes archaic. In the case of Yi Sang’s *Nalgae*, the role of Sino-Korean words is very significant. In the prologue, the narrator uses a lot of Sino-Korean words pedantically, showing him to be a well-educated intellectual. Thus, when translating this part, the translators are supposed to be better to give attention to the problem of how to render the Sino-Korean words, and how to maintain the mood of the text and the narrator’s character. Another way of making the prologue pedantic while aptly portraying the narrator’s character is the use of words of Western origin.

그위에다나는잇트와파라독스를바둑布石처럼늘어놓소

geu wi-eda na-neun wit-wa paradox-reul baduk poseok-cheoreom
neureo-nosso. (Yi 268)

On a blank sheet I spread out my wit and paradoxes, as if placing the pieces in strategic positions in a game of chess. (Lee 30)

I put down witty and paradoxical thoughts like checker pieces on that white sheet of paper. (Ahn 7)

In the original Yi Sang’s text, there are two English words—“wit” and “paradox. The Korean “*giji* (가지) and “*yeokseol* (역설) could have been used in their stead, but the author chose these foreign words probably because these Korean terms cover a broader context. In Korea, “wit” and “paradox” are typically used in a literary sense. “Wit” or “paradox” inserted in Korean sentences sounds exotic and professional. It shows the narrator’s profound knowledge about Western literature, but Lee’s and Ahn’s translations fail to

reflect this because the translators retained the same English words, i.e., “wit” and “paradox. Unlike in Korea, these terms have other situational applications in English-speaking countries. Hence, it can be inferred that the two translators might not notice this fact, or that even if they did, they could not find worthy substitutes. However, are we really left with no choice concerning the matter of translations? The following can be an example for this:

나는아마어지간히人生의諸行이싱겨워서견딜수가없게끔되고그만둔모양이
오 끝빠이

na-neun ama eoijganhi insaeng-ui jehaeng-i singgeowoseo gyeondil su-ga
eobkke-jjeum doego geumandun moyang-io. Good-bye. (Yi 268-69)

I must have been fed up with all mankind. Goodbye. (Lee 30)

I might even give up the life, bored to the bones by its ordinary events.

Good-bye. (Ahn 8)

In the prologue, the narrator says “Good-bye” in English several times as in the original. That means he will live a new life severing everything from his past. “Good-bye” is a commonplace word in English, but even nowadays, hearing a Korean say “Good-bye” to another Korean would raise quizzical brows. In the 1930s, a person who used the term was regarded an elite steeped in Western culture. Thus, the narrator exhibited erudition through his elitist use of English words. In the English context though, “Good-bye” does not imply any meaning other than a simple parting. Lee and Ahn did not suggest anything noteworthy about the narrator to English-speaking readers. This brings us to the question of how translators can put across the original idea to them. It appears to be more advisable for the translators to try to find another word with a similar meaning, nuance and position in the English corpus, such as “adieu” or “farewell,” and not insist on retaining the English word as used in the original.

Using many foreign words in the prologue is one of the most important

features in this story. Not only Sino-Korean words but also foreign terms show well the narrator's character which is a key to understanding this story showing ambivalent, hybrid and schizoid Korean intellectuals under the rule of Japanese colonialism in the 1930s. Thus, translators should not overlook the significance of how to render Sino-Korean and English words in the story. Additionally, there is another feature of the narration in the prologue. It is that the narrator is talking to the reader directly while the second narrator in the main story is mindless of its reader.

The narrator in the prologue mentions “*geudae* (그대), meaning “you, many times purposively. The translators rendered “*geudae* into “you faithfully, but where the narrator drops “*geudae*, the translators likewise omit “you. However, the original text retains rapport with the audience through the use of *hao-che* with verb inflection, a Korean speech style according respect to an audience. This means that the narrator does not soliloquize in the absence of a listener, but continues talking to the reader.

아니 女人의全部가그日常에있어서개개‘未亡人’이라는내論理가뜻밖에도
女性에對한冒瀆이되오

ani! yeoin-ui jeonbu-ga geu ilsang-e isseoseo gaegae ‘mimang-in’iraneun
nae noli-ga tteutpakk-edo yeoseong-e daehan modog-i doeo? (Yi 270)

No. Wouldmy theory of looking at every woman as a widow offend
women? (Lee 30)

Is it an insult, my theory that the whole of every woman in real life is a
widow? (Ahn 9)

Lee added “would making it seem that the narrator is soliciting reader opinion. Meanwhile Ahn's translation can be interpreted as a self-query and as a poser to the reader. This is not distinguishable from the second or main story narrator's diary speech style. Hence, the addition of “you in interrogative sentences can correct this fault, i.e., “I believe that every woman

is a widow in daily life. Do you think that this theory is an indignity to women?

The different speech styles of the two narrators in the story are essential for the appreciation of the psychological nearness or distance between the narrators and the reader. More details concerning this will be treated in the following section.

2.2. The Second Narrator in the Main Story

In the main story, the narrator changes his voice entirely. He does not use pedantic vocabulary any more, but just speaks aside using plain and at times, even childlike words.

아침결에책보만한 해가들었다가오후에손수건만해지면서나가버린다
achimgyeor-e chaekbo-man han hae-ga deureotdaga ohu-e sonsugeon-man
haejimyeonseo nagabeorinda. (Yi 273)

In the morning, the sunlight enters in the shape of a wrapping cloth in
the afternoon, it goes out the size of a handkerchief. (Lee 32)

The sunshine, as large as a wrapping cloth in the morning, shrinks to the
size of a handkerchief later and then slips out of the room. (Ahn 12)

Describing the sunlight in his wife's room, the narrator “I uses simile in the original text. “*Chaekbo* (책보) is a kind of wrapping cloth for books. In the past, Korean elementary pupils did not have bags, but instead, lugged their books and notebooks wrapped in “*chaekbo*. Wrapping cloths have been traditionally popular among Koreans. Despite the wide varieties of wrapping cloths, the narrator chose “*chaekbo* in the simile. This reveals his infantile state of mind. “*Sonsugeon* (손수건) or “handkerchief is used by both children and adults, but juxtaposed with “*chaekbo*, it serves to project “I as an immature individual. However, the “handkerchief in both Lee's and Ahn's translations does not show this particular trait of the narrator because

“*chaekbo* was rendered simply as “wrapping cloth. How then, can the translator convey the original nuance if he cannot find an appropriate English word in its stead?

내아내외의다른사람과인사를하거나놀거나하는것은내아내낮을보이 좋지 않은 일인것만같이생각이들었기때문이다

nae anae oe-ui dareun saram-gwa insa-reul hageona nolgeona haneun geos-eun nae anae nach-eul boa jochi aneun ir-in geot-man gachi saenggag-i deureotkki ttaemun-ida. (Yi 271)

I think it would hurt my wife's reputation if I were ever to greet the others or play with any of them. (Lee 31)

For me to play with or to say hello to anybody won't do any good in saving my wife's face. (Ahn 10)

The verb “*nol(geona/da)* (놀다) means “to play, but grown-ups rarely use this word in Korea, while the English word “play can mean various things and is not a term meant to concern children alone; for instance, “play cards, “play the piano and “play tennis. “*Insa-hada* (인사하다), meaning “to greet, is not children’s word, but used alongside “*nol(geona/da)* it produces the same effect of child talk as do “*chaekbo* and “*sonsugeon*. Thus, we can infer that in order to retain the above-cited trait, Ahn translated “*insa-hada* into “say hello for lack of an exact English equivalent for “*nol(geona/da)*. He also rendered “*nae anae nach-eul boa* (내아내낮을보아) into “saving my wife’s face while Lee merely translated it into “my wife’s reputation. “*Na(t)ch* (낫) means “face, “features or “honor. In this context, the meaning of “*nae anae nach-eul boa* can be “my wife’s reputation, but “reputation does not jibe with the second narrator’s tone. Like Ahn’s translation, “saving my wife’s face is in keeping with the second narrator’s character, and aptly retains the nuance of the original sentence.

Another feature of the second narrator in the main story is his preference

for soliloquy over conversation. This tends to show his lack of interest in other people and the outside world, content to probe only his own inner world. Even in quoting his wife, he uses indirect speech, thus giving the impression that he interprets what he hears in his own way.

이것을먹고한잠푹자고나면괜찮다는것이다 나는널름받아먹었다

igeos-eul meokko hanjam puk jago namyeon goenchantaneun geos-ida. naneun neoleum badameogeatta. (Yi 292-293)

“Take them and have a good sleep. You’ll be all right, she said. I gulped the pills down. (Lee 42)

She told me that I would be all right if I took the tablets and had a sound sleep. I gulped them down. (Ahn 33)

공연히외출을하다가이렇게감기가들어서저를고생을시키는게아니난다그도그렇다

gong-yeonhi oechur-eul hadaga ireoke gamgi-ga deureoseo jeo-reul gosaeng-eul sikineun ge aninyanda. geu-do geureota. (Yi 293)

“You got a cold by roaming about to no purpose, causing me trouble, she said. She had a point. (Lee 43)

She said I had gone out for no good reason at all but to fall sick and bother her. She was right. (Ahn 33)

However, Lee changed this indirect speech style into direct quotations. Even though these translations do not distort the overall story, they can affect the English-speaking reader’s understanding of the protagonist’s character, the message and the theme. The main story presents an unrealistic atmosphere to the reader since “I rarely shows any interest in ordinary people’s concerns, but absorbed in his own world, he isolates himself, and avoids any communication with others. However, in Lee’s version, his wife’s voice interspersed in the narrative tempers the atmosphere of isolation. The wife’s voice prompts the reader into an awareness of somebody else’s presence aside

from the narrator and himself, and begins to perceive that the narrator “I belongs to the real world. This, however, is a deviation from the message as understood by Korean readers.

The author creates a childish main story narrator in contrast to the prologue intellectual. Ensnared in an unrealistic world, the former is jolted back into reality in the latter part of the story when he begins to go out. Finally, the narrator’s heart sighs out his wife’s name. Inaudibly though, the quotation marks show this to be a direct utterance.

한동안잊어버렸던향기가운데서는몸이배배꼬일것같은체취가전혀나왔다
나는아내의이름을속으로만한번불러보았다 “蓮心이 하고...

handong-an ijeobeoryotteon hyanggi-gaundeseoneun mom-i baebae kkoil
geot gateun chechui-ga jeonhae nawatta. na-neun anae-ui ireum-eul
sog-euroman hanbeon bulleoboatta. “yeonsim-i! hago..... (Yi 295)

In the midst of the various aromas I detected her odor which made me
lose my composure. I called her name to myself: “Yonsim! (Lee 43)

The scent I had forgotten for so long stung my nostrils. I called my
wife’s name in my heart. “Yon-sim..... (Ahn 34)

The original text above is a significant turning point in the story. “I calls his wife’s name for the first time, implying his desire to communicate with the outside world. Thus, Lee’s and Ahn’s retention of the quotations in their translations are appropriate.

After “I discovers a box of adaline in his wife’s room, he unwittingly turns quizzical and intellectualizes in a manner like that of the prologue narrator. However, he obstinately makes a conscious effort to remain the childish man as he walks up the hill figuring out why she plotted to keep him asleep for so long a time.

나는길가에도랑창판구경도못한진개나리꽃종달새돌멩이도새끼를까는이야기
이런것만생각하였다

na-neun gilga-e dorangchang, pin gugyeong-do motan jin gaenarikkot,
jongdalsae, dolmeng-i-do saekki-reul kkaneun iyagi, ireon geot-man
saenggak-hayeotta. (Yi 295)

I thought about flat rocks, about azaleas I’d never seen before, about
larks, and about the rocks laying eggs to hatch. (Lee 44)

I thought about the multiplication and breeding of the roadside forsythia,
the skylarks, and the stones. (Ahn 35)

The “I consciously tries to focus only on childish thoughts as seen above. However, Ahn’s use of the term “multiplication which sounds too academic or professional contradicts the purpose of the original. As a matter of fact, Lee’s version and that of Ahn’s are mistranslations. “*Dorangchang* (도랑창) is a “ditch or a “gutter, “*gaenarikkot* (개나리꽃) is “forsythia flower or “golden-bell tree flower, “*jongdalsae* (종달새) is “skylark or “lark, and “*dolmeng-i-do saekki-reul kkaneun iyagi* (돌멩이도새끼를까는이야기) means “a story about a stone hatching stones. Hence the more exact translation is “I just thought about the ditch in the path, golden-bell flowers already fallen, skylarks, and the story about a stone hatching stones. His thoughts are fit materials for children’s verses or fairy tales. This shows a resistance against a return to the adult self, and an adamant clinging to childish fetish. Thus, it is more advisable that translators likewise, pay attention to similar effect through the use of more appropriate terms.

Towards the end of the story, “I takes an incisive look into his life with his wife and decides he could no longer live as a “stuffed specimen.

이때뚜우하고정오사이렌이울었다. 사람들은모두네활개를피고닭처럼푸드
덕거리는것같은갓유리와강철과대리석과지폐와잉크가부글부글끓고수선을
떨고하는것같은찰나그야말로현란을극한정오다

ittae ttuu hago jeong-o siren-i ureotta. saramdeur-eun modu ne
hwalgae-reul pyeogo dakcheoreom pudeudeokgeorineun geot gatko ongat
yuri-wa gangcheol-gwa deariseok-gwa jipye-wa ink-ga bugeulbugeul

kkeulko suseon-eul tteolgo haneun geot gateun challa, geuyamallo
hyeollan-eul geuk-han jeong-o-da. (Yi 299)

At that moment, the shrill noon whistle sounded. People were flapping
their limbs like chickens; the moment when all sorts of glass, steel,
marble, paper currency, and ink seemed to be boiling up, bubbling—noon
with extreme splendor. (Lee 46)

A siren wailed, announcing noon. It was a glorious noon, people
vigorously whirling around amid the commotion of glass, steel, marble,
money and ink. (Ahn 39)

This part of the original is a climactic scene in the story. With the sound
of a siren announcing noon, “I realizes that he has been amidst modern
civilization signified by “glass, steel, marble, paper currency and ink. People
everywhere are engrossed in their business; “I however, feels alienated from it
all, his very existence being incongruous to the vigorous activities all around
him in the modern city. That is why the author expressed the moment as
“hyeollan-eul geukhan jeong-o (현란을극한정오). Lee and Ahn rendered it into
“noon with extreme splendor and “glorious noon, respectively. “Hyeollan (현
란), a Sino-Korean word that means “gaudy or “garish, has a negative tone
to it. Moreover, “geuk-hada (극하다), another Sino-Korean word meaning “to
go to extremes or “to run to an extreme, serves to intensify its negativity.
Thus, “a glorious noon in Ahn’s translation does not seem appropriate. Since
the second narrator begins to use Sino-Korean words again, it is desirable that
the translation make the narrator’s superior intellect resurface at this point, and
in the same vein, make the negative connotation of the term in the original
text explicit. “An extremely gaudy noon or “an excessively garish noon,
would have been more apt.

Not only Sino-Korean words but also foreign words emerge again near the
end of the story.

오늘은없는이날개머릿속에서는희망과야심의말소된페이지가덕셔너리넘어가
듯번뜩였다

oneur-eun eomneun i nalgae, meorissog-eseoneun himang-gwa yasim-ui
malsodoen page-ga dictionary neomeogadeut beontteugyeotta. (Yi 299)

. . . the wings I don’t possess today. Torn shreds of hope and ambition
shuffled like dictionary pages in my mind. (Lee 46)

The wings that I had no longer; the deleted phantasms of hope and
ambition flashed in my mind like the flipping pages of a pocket
dictionary. (Ahn 39)

The reuse of Sino-Korean and foreign words implies the re-emergence of
the first narrator. This brings about the same translation problems as those that
confronted the translators in the prologue. Meanwhile, the following excerpt
poses a new translation problem, to wit:

날개야다시돋아라 날자 날자 날자 한번만더날자꾸나한번만더날아보자꾸나
nalgae-ya dasi dodara. nalja. nalja. nalja. hanbeon-man deo naljakuna.
hanbeon-man deo narabojakuna. (Yi 299-300)

Wings, grow again! Let me fly, fly, fly let me fly once more. Let me try
them once again. (Lee 46)

Wings, spread out again! Fly. Fly. Fly. Let me fly once more. Let me
fly just once more. (Ahn 40)

This part is the last scene of the story. It shows a struggle to reconcile the
inner consciousness of the second narrator with the first narrator and to come
into an ideal fusion of the two selves into one “I. Korean “nal(ja/da) (날다)
means “to fly, and “nal-ja (날자) is an inflection of “nal-da, meaning “let’s
fly. In Korean, “-ja adds a persuasive tone to the verb. Usually “-ja means
“let’s, but it can also signify “let me or “let us when the listener interrupts
or distracts the speaker while he is about a particular activity.

However, this is not the case with the original because the “wings, if

taken to be the listeners, could not stop the narrator from flying. The narrator's inability to fly or achieve his goal, is not because the wings do not spread out, but rather that his other self, created by the unusual circumstances in his life, restrains the wings from doing so. Thus, it is more reasonable to think that the listener in the original is not the wings but his other self. The narrator is schizophrenic, and the second narrator is speaking to the first narrator showing his desire to communicate and touch base with the outside world and become one whole being with him in the last scene of the story. Hence, "Let's fly, rather than "Let me fly" is a more appropriate translation of "*nalja*."

Additionally, this part of the original refers to the psychological distance or nearness between the narrator and the reader. The prologue narrator talks to the reader directly but the main story narrator monologizes as though jotting down journals in a diary. However, towards the end of the story, the main story narrator restores the voice of the first one in the prologue, and this makes him familiar to the reader. Thus, the last shout "*nalja*" could be directed to the reader. In other words, it is probable that the listener of the original sentences is the reader.

Actually, the author Yi Sang is known to have written many short stories and poems for the members of Gu-In-Hoe, an exclusive literary group. Hence, we could presume that the listener of these original sentences is a Korean intellectual in colonial times, or a reader belonging to the next generation, able to sympathize with the author's preoccupations in the 1930s. The original text could be Yi Sang's invitation to others to fly along with him. With this contention in mind, "Let's fly" appears to be the more logical translation than "Let me fly."

3. Conclusion

Influenced by the ideas of postcolonialist Homi Bhabha, this study

attempted to analyze the English translations of Yi Sang's *Nalgae*. The analysis focused on the decontextualization and recontextualization of Korean modernism based on colonial modernity as influenced by the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. Korean modernist writers formed their own modernism in the process of mimicking Western and Japanese modernisms, and consciously or unconsciously becoming ambivalent and mentally hybrid. Yi Sang's literary works reveal the features of Korean modernism which developed in the colonial modern Korea of the 1930s.

The evaluation of the translated texts is crucial in the case of Korean literature. Korea is not well-known to the world yet, and the translation of Korean literature into English is still at the beginning stage. Early translations of literary works from a strange foreign culture construct a cultural identity in a target society, which may or may not be an exact representation of such culture. Therefore, in an analysis of Korean-English translations, estimation is essential not only for better subsequent translations of Korean literature but also for a proper formation of the cultural identity of Korea in the world.

Nalgae is Yi Sang's best-known short story which is often regarded as an autobiographical story or a private fiction influenced by Japanese private novels because of its little plot and the confessional disposition of the narrator "I" (Kim 15-16). In the prologue, the narrator suggests "camouflage" to the readers, implying that he will camouflage himself in the next story. The first narrator disguised himself as a parasitic and imbecile man with the use of simple words and writing style. The Korean readers cannot help becoming aware of the different tones of the narrator or the existence of the two narrators on account of the different vocabulary and writing styles in the prologue and in the main story. The narrator's or Yi Sang's camouflage, and the existence of the two narrators show a self-portrait of the ambivalent, hybrid and schizophrenic intellectuals in colonial Korea of the 1930s. Yi Sang devised unique frameworks and expression methods to exhibit this desperate and complicated mental state as an intellectual in a colony, not only in *Nalgae* but

also in his other poems and short stories.

The translational shifts noted in the two English versions of *Nalgae*, “Wings and “The Wings, resulted mainly from the translators’ choice of less appropriate English words as substitutes to the original. It is not simply because the translators did not have sufficient knowledge of Korean and English vocabulary, but because they seem to have missed paying attention to the fact that the narrator in the original text possesses two different voices or that there are two different narrators in the prologue and the main story. The translators seem to be better to note that the different tones of the two narrators reflect the Korean colonial modernity, and tried to decontextualize and recontextualize the text focusing on this unique literary value of the original work.

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[Abstract]

**Translating Translated Modernism:
A Study on English Translation of Yi Sang's *Nalgae***

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This is a study on the “decontextualization and “recontextualization of Korean modernism by way of analyzing Yi Sang’s short story, *Nalgae*. It is a translation criticism paying attention to translational shifts considering their relevance in conveying the qualities of Korean modernism to the English-speaking readers.

Yi Sang’s works are intertwined with Modernism and Korean colonial modernity. During the colonial times, Modernism was definitely imported from the West into Korea through Japan. Korean modernist writers, therefore, mimicked Western and Japanese modernisms, and consciously or unconsciously became ambivalent and mentally hybrid. Yi Sang’s literary works contain these features of Korean modernism—frequent use of foreign words, coined words written in Chinese characters, and literary forms borrowed from Japan, as well as resistance against traditions, trials of experimental techniques, and destruction of old literary forms.

This study analyzes two English translations of *Nalgae* by comparing them with the original, in order to determine whether or not the translators were aware of the unique features of Korean modernism and how they tried to render them into English. It notes the existence of two schizophrenic narrators having different voices in the prologue and in the main story, and pays attention to its effects based on Korean modernism and colonial modernity. The analysis starts by dealing with the first sentence of the story, “‘박제가되어버린

천재’를아시오 (Have you ever seen a ‘genius who became a stuffed specimen’?) This study points out that “genius refers to the first narrator in the prologue and “stuffed specimen is the second narrator in the main story. Based on this premise, this study compares and analyzes the two English translated texts, focusing on how the two English versions convey the features of Korean modernism, particularly in revealing the divided self of Korean intellectuals in the colonial society of the 1930s.

The schizophrenic nature of the narrator is unveiled through his style of speech and choice of words in *Nalgae*. The narrator employs distinctively different speech styles in the prologue and in the main story. The intellectual narrator in the prologue uses Sino-Korean and foreign words profusely while the spineless narrator in the main story uses childlike and commonplace words. However, toward the end of the story, he gradually revives the other self, and aches to soar with him towards the ideal world. The divided self with two different voices implies the intellectuals’ ambivalent and hybrid identities frustrated as they are in colonial Korea.

Most of the shifts in the English translations seem to have stemmed from the translators’ lack of awareness of the existence of the two narrators or insufficient understanding about the narrators’ characters although the translators have adequate knowledge of Korean and English vocabulary and usages. The Korean readers notice the two different voices through the use of different vocabulary and speech or writing styles in the prologue and in the main story, but the translators seem to have little paid attention to distinctions between the first and the second narrators’ word preferences.

▶ Key Words: literary translation, Yi Sang, *Nalgae*, Korean modernism, colonial modernity, post-colonialism, ambivalence, hybridity

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