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**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO TRANSLATIONS OF THE POEM  
서시 (SEOSHI) BY THE KOREAN POET YOON DONG JU FROM KO-  
REAN INTO ENGLISH  
BA thesis**

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show that even if the translator understands two different languages, translating poetry is challenging, as there are many cases when, we have to omit or change words or phrases to keep the poetical or prosodic aspects. We can also see that in this case translators can understand that the denotative options do not carry the emotion of the words that are expressed. For this thesis I will study two translations into English of the poem 서시(seoshi) by a famous Korean poet Yoon Dong Ju (1910–1945) and analyse the differences between them. The translations under scrutiny are: Chae-Pyong Song and Darcy Brandel's *Prologue*, Kyung-nyun Kim Richards and Steffen F. Richards *Foreword*.

In the introduction I will briefly introduce Yoon Dong Ju whose work I will be analysing and also state the reason I chose him. In order to analyse the English translations, the first chapter will give a brief introduction to the language of the original poem, the Korean language, since what makes it different from other languages is what the translator should know before translating from Korean. In the second chapter I will analyse the English language translations of the poet Yoon Dong Ju, compare them with each other and propose other ways they could be translated. In the conclusion I will provide an overview of the results of the analysis.

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## Introduction

In this thesis I will be focusing on the two English translations of a Korean poem 서시 (*seoshi*) by Korea's one of the most famous poets of the 20th century, Yoon Dong Ju (1917–1945). The poem has been translated into English by Chae-Pyong Song and Darcy Bandel as well as by Kyung-nyun Kim Richards and Steffen F. Richards.

Yoon Dong Ju was born on December 30, 1917 in Myongdong, North Kando, where he grew up during the Japanese colonisation (1910–1945). He studied in Yonhui College in Korea and went on to study English Literature in Japan 1941, in Doshisha University. In 1945, 16th of February while studying in Japan and participating in rebellion activities against Japan, he was arrested and he passed away in the prison in 1945 from unknown causes. Yoon Dong Ju started writing and publishing poems in 1937 and did it in Korean, which was highly forbidden at the time. His poems often contained rebellious references towards Japan. His popularity with the youth in the 21st century is thought to be due to his poems addressing the inner love and hate relationship, how to survive in the morally corrupted world, which people today can also relate with (The Korean Culture & Arts Foundation 1996: 554–555).

The most popular poem, that has been translated, is the *Prologue* or *Foreword* called 서시 (*seoshi*) in Korean. The first translation under discussion was done by Chae-Pyong Song and Darcy Brandel. Chae-Pyong Song (1960–2013) who received his B.A in English language and literature in Chonnam National University in Korea and his M.A and Ph.D in English in Texas A&M University. He has publications in postcolonial literature and theory, along with other translations of Korean poetry. Darcy L. Brandel is a teacher, poet and literary scholar in the University of Michigan. She has also her B.A, M.A and Ph.D's in English. The second translation under discussion was done by Kyung-nyun Kim Richards and Steffen F Richards. They have published the full translation of Yoon Dong Ju's poetry collection with the title "Sky, Wind and Stars" in 2003.

For this thesis I have used three different works of Peter H. Lee who is a professor emeritus of Korean and Comparative Literature for my main source on the Korean language background. And the works of the Korean Culture & Arts Foundation and Chung-Hyo Cook have been used for the background information of Yoon Dong Ju himself. I have used Brother

Anthony of Taizé's article on modern Korean poetry to show what influenced Yoon Dong Ju to write his poetry and to also define what is a modernist poetry in Korea. I have used Clive Scott's article *The Rhythms of Free Verse and the Rhythms of Translation*, Eleanor Berry's article *The Free Verse Spectrum*, Paul Ramsey's article *Free Verse: Some Steps toward Definition* for defining what is a free verse poetry and based the analysis of the translations on their articles. *Naver Dictionary* has been used as the source of translation between Korean and English.

The thesis consist of introduction, four parts and a conclusion. The first part gives a short overview of the history of Korean language and the time when the poem was written, including a discussion over what is a free verse poetry, how it is defined and what makes it different from other styles of poetries. The second part discusses the possibilities how to translate the title of Yoon Dong Ju's poetry collection into English. The following part continues discussing the English translations of the poem 서시 (*seoshi*) with an aim to compare different aspects of the translations to the original Korean version. The last part compares the English translations to each other, what seem to be the directions the translators have chosen and how well they have managed to carry the message of the poem.

## 1. Translating Free Verse Poetry from Korean

For centuries Koreans used Chinese characters for writing down everything from important state matters to literature, the writing method was known as *Idu*. It was a method of transcribing Chinese characters into Korean language, this was done “in accordance of their phonetic and ideographic values” (Lee 1958: 203). The Korean alphabet and written language is associated with King Sejong who was personally interested in his people and desired everyone to have access to education, which meant creating easier writing system than the Chinese, as the Korean language itself did not use Chinese pronunciation. So in 1443 he, along with his scholars had created an alphabet suitable for the Korean language that would be easy to learn. However, as the Chinese language was seen as a higher language, it was still used for both official documents as well as poetry (Lee 1993: Volume 1, 515–517).

However, with the Japanese invasion starting in 1904, the favouritism of Chinese writing system disappeared and Koreans were proud to use their own alphabet (Lee 1993: 389–390, 401–402, 425–426). Korean was used as a form of rebellion against the Japanese rule, which demanded everyone to take Japanese names and study in Japanese, as part of the tactics of breaking a nation (Nahm 1988: 253–258). The Korean alphabet today consists of 24 letters with 17 consonants and 11 vowels; if added the tense, compound and complex vowel letters as well, then the total would be 40 letters. These letters are combined with each other by placing them vertically and horizontally into a square dimension, which makes a syllabic block. (Hsiang: 442). Even though Korean language is not directly related to any language, it is grammar wise quite similar to Japanese and thus these two languages are sometimes referred also as sister languages (Lee 2003: 15-16). Korean has many loan words from Chinese and Japanese, due to the close proximity and invasions by the latter two countries. Out of these two countries China has had a bigger impact as mentioned previously. (Lee 2003: 17). Thus some words in Korean language have many different meanings depending if they are from the Korean language, sometimes referred as pure Korean, or from the Chinese language, which is also called Sino-Korean (Lee 2003: 17). The pictograms from Chinese language are called *hanja* in Korean (Pratt, Rutt, Hoare 1999: 163). As every pictogram can have more than one

meaning, depending on the context, it is essential to understand and know how to choose the correct translation from all of the possibilities.

Korean language has six different speech levels, meaning there are six different grammatical constructions used to write and speak and they are recognised by the endings of a sentence. The speech levels are following; plain, intimate, familiar, blunt, polite, deferential (Lee 2003: 35). Most Korean classical poems are originally written in *hanja*, which means that translating them into other languages is difficult as there are more variations for choosing the meanings of the words and it is also important to understand what kind of speech level is used. By understanding the speech level only, we can already see to whom the literacy work is referred to or of whom it is talking about. Even though Koreans have translated the majority of the classical poems into their own alphabetical system, as studying *hanja* characters in schools is obligatory, many poems still contain those characters to some extent, yet it can be still difficult to understand how to translate them to a language where there are not so many speech levels. The vocabulary change from Chinese to Korean was categorised into two different systems, one for the meaning of Chinese pictograms and one for the Korean pronunciation of the pictograms.

Modernist poetry in Korea, which is what Yoon Dong Ju is also known for, was born in the beginning of 20th century as a resistance against the foreign occupation in Korea and is not considered to be as refined as classical Korean poetry. What is new is the use of vernacular language that allows the poets to express their feelings more freely (Anthony of Taizé 2015: 13—14). This type of poetry has become known as New Poetry, yet even though it broke away from the traditional structure and limitations, classical Korean poetry can still be felt there. As writing poetry showing defiance against the Japanese occupation could result in torture or death, poets had to find ways to write in subtle ways (Anthony of Taizé 2015: 14). However as modernist poetry in Korea is known to be influenced by the political situation the signs of defiance could be lost in translation, unless the historical background is provided with the poem.

In the English language poetry is focused on the metric stress rather than on the syllable, as it is a stress-timed language, which is similar to classical Korean poem. For example accentual verse, one of the most used forms for children's poetry, uses fixed number of stress-

es in one line rather than counting the syllables. As Korean poetry developed from the Chinese literature and poetry they also copied the poetical structure of using syllables to write poetry. However reading of the poetry, similarly to English, is focused on the stress not on the syllables and rhythm. The modern poetry changed in the 1950s when the theory and methodology of rhythm and meter was introduced by Chong Pyong Uk. Chong said that the classical Korean poetry followed the musical verse setting with an equal and stable rhythmic units, thus having the foot as the basic metric element rather than syllable (Phil: 890). Modernist Korean poetry on the other hand, follows not the structural elements, but the speech-like thoughts of a poet.

The poem that will be analysed in this thesis is written in free verse. Unlike classical English poetry, which is strictly confined in the rules of following meter, syllable counting and stresses, free verse poetry does not follow given rules. Ramsey (1968: 100) defines free verse by being free from regularity that can be measured. On the other hand Berry (1997: 874—875) argues in her work titled *The Free Verse Spectrum* quoting T. S. Eliot that even though free verse poetry is seen as a poetry with no restrictions, a true poet does not see free verse as truly free from the boundaries if they wish to write good poetry. In the case of translation of a free verse poem the rhythm will not follow the classical structure of the meter's syllable and accent count, but it is most likely to be found in the paralinguistic features detectable in the speech, such as intonation, tone, tempo and pauses (Scott: 46). Scott also claims that in translating a free verse poetry the translator could be looking to create a “multi-sensory whole-body experience” rather than looking for the most accurate way to interpret the text (2015: 47). Thus respectively Berry and Scott both agree in their studies that free verse might be free from the classical meter and stress factors, however the rhythm can be found nevertheless. He adds that a poet tends to follow the stress and rhythm patterns existing in their own native language to create poetry (Ramsey 1968: 98—99).

Domestication is also a factor that the translator is most likely to think about, depending on who is their target audience. Yang (2010: 77) quotes the words of Eleanor Nida saying that biculturalism is more important than bilingualism, as the meanings of words only function in their own culture. This kind of a domestication we can also see in the translations under scrutiny.

For the following analysis, when discussing the translations I have used the Naver dictionary, which is the most comprehensive online dictionary used by Koreans and so far it is the most reliable online source for Korean-English learners and English-Korean learners. The dictionary offers also a possibility to translate *hanja* by drawing the symbols in the phone.

## 2. Translation of Yoon Dong Ju's poetry

### 2.1. Possibilities of translating the title of Yoon Dong Ju's poetry collection 하늘과 바람과 별과 시

#### 하늘과 바람과 별과 시

Yoon Dong Ju's only legacy left behind is the poetry collection called *Heaven, Wind, Stars and Poems*, Chongumsa, 1948. Cook (1977: 57) states in his article that Yoon Dong Ju's poetry was not an active defiance towards Japan, but rather a person's own point of view of their life and how they felt to be living at the time. He also argues that Yoon Dong Ju's poems are not work of a perfect skill, but he is much loved due to his way of emotional writing and searching for the guidance, which can be found in his rather strange and beautiful new way of writing poetry in Korea (1977: 57). His writing style is also called *new-style poetry* (Lee 2003: 339). However he is known as a resistance poet, which is why it is important to pay attention how he used Korean language to fight against the oppression of the Japanese. Unfortunately in translation these messages are often lost or changed, not necessarily due to bad translation, but rather because they can be only understood in the original cultural context.

Firstly, I will discuss the translation of the title of Yoon Dong Ju's poetry collection 하늘과 바람과 별과 시 (*Haneulgwa, barambwa, byeolgwa shi*), as we can see that the same translators who have translated the poetry collection with its title and the poem, that will be analysed in the following section of the thesis, have used different translations for 하늘 (*haneul*) in both cases. For the word 하늘 (*haneul*) it is possible to translate it as *sky, heaven* or even *god* at some cases, for the word 바람 (*baram*) there are the following possibilities: *wind, air, wish, desire, extramarital affair*. The word 별 (*byeol*) is most commonly used as a noun *star* or less commonly adjectives *particular, specific*. And lastly the word 시 (*shi*) has following meanings: *city hall, o'clock, time of birth, poem, poetry*. The conjugation 과 is translated as *and*. When searching for the versions of the translated title 하늘과 바람과 별과 시 (*Haneulgwa, barambwa, byeolgwa shi*), I have found many different ways of how it has been translated. In the following I will analyse some of the translations and bring out each option's advantages and disadvantages.

*Heaven, Wind, Star(s) and Poem, published by Datz Press, Seoul, South Korea, 2017 by Barbara Bosworth*. This would be one possible way to translate the title, however, regard-

ing the word *star(s)* in the original Korean title the plural form 星 (deul) has not been used, thus it would be grammatically more accurate to use the singular form. In the case of translating 시 (*shi*) *poetry* can be seen as more poetical option than *poem*, though they are both could be used as it is a title of a poetry collection. *The Heaven(s), The Wind, The Stars and Poetry*, published by Hakmun Publishing, Inc. 1999. In this translation it would be more accurate to abandon the plural form for the same reason as mentioned in the first title translation and perhaps even the definite article *the* as there is no one certain heaven, wind nor stars that the title could refer to. *Sky, Wind and Stars*, published by Asian Humanities Press, Fremont, California, 2003, is also translated by Kyung-nyun Kim Richards and Steffen F Richards, whose translation of the poem will be discussed and analysed later. The word *sky* in this translation seems to serve the purpose well, however this way of translating the original title would be deficient, since the word *poetry/poem* is missing. For a comparison we can later see that in the poem, they have translated the word 하늘 (*haneul*) as *heaven* in stead of *sky*. And lastly *Sky, Wind, Star and Poetry*, published by Yonsei University Press, Seoul, Korea, 2011 by Choi Seon-gyeom. The translation reflects the original best, because the translator has used the singular form for the nouns and included the word *poetry*. The word *heaven* itself is translated differently in Korean, as 천국 (*cheonkuk*) not 하늘 (*haneul*), even though 하늘 (*haneul*) can be translated as *heaven*. This is why it is interesting to see how translators use the word *heaven* more often than the word *sky*, especially when translating poems.

It appears that the most common way of translating the title into English would be leaving out the repetitive conjugation *and*, using commas instead and creating thus a flowing rhythm. Furthermore if the *and* would be kept after every noun using the article *the* would also be more common, hence the title of a poetry collection would become longer. The biggest problem for the translator however, would be how to decide between the synonymic *heaven* and *sky*. *Heaven* being more lyrical word, it is also used more often in religious context, however it is a general term. The Oxford Dictionary states *heaven* to be place, thought by religious people, to be above sky. *Sky* on the other hand, is less poetical and is used more to describe a place. So it can be thought that the choice between these two words could come down to translators own religious or non-religious beliefs.

## 2.2. Translating the Poem's Title 서시: Is it *Prologue* or *Foreword*?

For a more in depth analysis I have chosen two translations of one and the same poem, by Yoon Dong Ju. Depending on each line, I will be paying attention to the grammar and the vocabulary to compare and see what kind of differences there are and how have the emotions of the original poem portrayed in the translations. For some of the lines I will also propose other possible ways how they could be translated, based on the original poetry.

As we can see from the titles of the English translations, there are different ways to translate the word 서시 (*seoshi*). The Korean word 서시 (*seoshi*) itself does not have an equivalent in English and it is considered to be an untranslatable word. It is also a Sino-Korean word meaning that the Korean word 서시 (*seoshi*) is generated from the Chinese pictogram or *hanja* 序詩 (xùshī) next to the title of the poem. Naver Dictionary states in Korean 서시 as following: 책의 첫머리에 서문 대신 쓴 시 (*cheke cheotmeorie seomun daeshin sseun shi*), which translates into a poem written instead of the preface or introduction in the book. The word for *introduction* or *preface* itself is 서문 (*seomun*). For this poem as we can see that the title 서시 (*seoshi*) has been translated in two different ways. The *prologue* is a separate introductory section of a literary, dramatic or musical work. The *foreword* is a short introduction to a book, typically by a person other than the author. As the poem 서시 (*seoshi*) was written by Yoon Dong Ju himself and not by any other writers, it brings up the question, why have Richards and Richards opted to translate the title as *Foreword*. One of the possibilities for translating the title of the poem would be to take the translation of 서문 (*seomun*), *preface*, which is an introduction to a book, typically stating its subject, scope, or aims. However as in English language there is no expression for a poem that introduces a book or a poetry collection, it is up to a translator to choose any of these options, based on how they would like this poem to be interpreted by the readers.

For the following analysis I will be referring to Song and Brandle's translation as translation 1 and Richards and Richards translation as translation 2. In addition the analysis will be conducted by following the lines of the original Korean version of the poem and then discussing how they have been translated. The poems have been arranged in a table format for easier following.

### 2.3. Translating the poem 서시

서시 (序詩) Yoon Dong Ju	Prologue (tr.1) Chae-Pyong Song and Darcy Brandel	Foreword (tr.2) Kyung-nyun Kim Richards and Stephen F Richards
죽는 날까지 하늘을 우러러	Until the day I die	Wishing not to have
한점 부끄럼이 없기를,	I long to have no speck of shame	so much as a speck of shame
앞새에 이는 바람에도	when I gaze up toward heaven,	toward heaven until the day I die,
나는 괴로워했다.	so I have tormented myself,	I suffered, even when the wind stirred the leaves.
별을 노래하는 마음으로	even when the wind stirs the leaves.	With my heart singing to the stars,
모든 죽어가는 것을 사랑해야지	With a heart that sings the stars,	I shall love all things that are dying.
그리고 나한테 주어진 길을	I will love all dying things.	And I must walk the road
걸어가야겠다.	And I will walk the way	that has been given to me.
오늘밤에도 별이 바람에	that has been given to me.	Tonight, again, the stars are
스치운다.	Tonight, again, the wind brushes the stars.	brushed by the wind.

Table 1.

“A poem is the artistic presentation of an appealing thought, expressed rhythmically, with imagination, in a language chosen for its beauty or power or both” these are the words of Charles Ballard (1943: 42). In the case of Yoon Dong Ju’s original poem and the translations of it, the language used seem to be chosen for both beauty and power, as they convey a sad, yet hopeful message during the difficult time of occupation.

The 서시 (*seoshi*) itself is written in free verse form, as stated before, with an irregular rhythm and lines that vary in length. There is one verse and one line, which ends the poem. The poem follows the flow of the poet's thought, which is similar to ordinary speech. This is a lyric poem as it expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet, but it does not tell a story, rather it creates a mood. The original poem uses the past-future-present tenses and hyperbole to create the mood of deep internal desire, talking about a wish of a person to live without any shame and regrets until the day of his death. However while every little movement of the nature brings agony, there is the acceptance of how the life leads its way and the protagonist understands that this is the road that has been given by something or someone greater than himself. Thus they willingly follow the path with a mind that is set on an unknown destination. The poem talks about understanding the ways of life, the acceptance of the hardships and his continuous self-reflection (Lee 2003: 372).

The first half of the first line 죽는 날까지 (*jukneun nalkkaji*) cannot be translated any other way as *until the day I die*. As the Korean version starts off with this line, it shows that the author wanted to stress the day of his death, which is inevitable and could come at any point. Both translation 1 and translation 2 have translated this line the same way, however they can be found in different lines for each translation. The other half of the line 하늘을 우러러 (*haneureul ureoreo*) has been translated following: *when I gaze up toward heaven* in translation 1 and *toward heaven* in translation 2. Grammatically the first translation is following more closely the Korean version, as the verb 우러러 (*ureoreo*) has the meaning of raising one's head or looking up. Translation 2 however seems to have omitted the part of 우러러 (*ureoreo*) where one looks up or raises their head. For the word 하늘 (*haneul*) both translators have chosen the word *heaven* instead of *sky*. In this perspective we can see that translation 2 with the line *toward heaven* has more of a religious connotation, especially with the following line in Korean which talks about having no shame. Translation 1 has less of a religious notion, but it still seems to be there when reading between the lines. The poem itself, as we will see, seems to tell a soul searching story and finding or perhaps even having faith, but Yoon Dong Ju's poems are not thought to be religious by Koreans. In Christianity and Protestantism, where the word *heaven* has deeper meaning than in Eastern religions, started to become popular only after the Korean War (1950–1953) (Kim 2002: 294). However South Korea in 21st century is

considered very religious with over 40% of the population following some type of religion, thus we can debate whether we should translate 하늘 (*haneul*) as *heaven* or *sky* (Kim 2002: 295).

The following line 한점 부끄럼이 없기를 (*hanjeom bukkeuromi eobkireul*) has been translated as following: *I long to have no speck of shame* (translation 1) and *Wishing not to have so much as a speck of shame* (translation 2). The Korean version itself does not contain a word for *wish*, however the grammatical ending part -기를 (*gireul*), which is usually written together with the verb 바라다 (*barada*), has the meaning for wishing or longing for something to happen. Both translations convey the same emotion, while being quite different. Song and Brandel's translation gives more personal and stronger feeling with the use of the verb *long*, having more of a melancholic meaning of yearning desire. The verb *wish* is usually a more hopeful word. So looking at those two translations, we can see that translation 1 tries to convey the sad feeling of desiring something to happen, but also the uncertainty, while the translation 2 is giving more hopeful feeling, that the wish might actually come true.

The next phrase 앞새에 이는 바람에도 (*ipsae e ineun baramedo*) is translated as *even when the wind stirred the leaves* in both of the translations, but it could be also translated as *even by the wind that stirred the leaves*. The phrase 나는 괴로워했다 (*naneun kwerowohaetta*) has been translated as *so I have tormented myself* in translation 1 and *I suffered* in translation 2 however it could also be translated *I was in agony* or *I was tormented*. The verb 괴롭다 (*kweropta*) is most commonly translated as *suffering*, *agony*, *distress* and *shame*. The ending 했다 (*haetta*) says that the action occurred in the past, however depending on how the translator wishes to relay the message, both simple past and present perfect tenses could work well in the poem. These two lines refer to each other to show that the even the wind that stirred the leaves on the tree is bringing agony and suffering to the poet. If we were to translate line by line, keeping in mind the original Korean poem's structure and wanting to follow it more closely, we could translate these two lines as *even the wind that stirred the leaves tormented me*.

별을 노래하는 마음으로 (*byeoreul norehaneun maeumeuro*) has been translated as: *with a heart that sings the stars* in translation 1 and *with my heart singing to the stars* in translation 2. When looking these translations from grammatical point of view, then the first option is

more appropriate, because the article -을 (*eul*) shows that the heart is singing about the stars. If we wanted to translate that the heart is singing to the stars, then we would need to use a different article called -에게 (*ege*). Another way to translate this phrase would be *with a heart that is singing of the stars*. Previously we could see how in the original title of the poetry collection there was no plural form 들 (*deul*), as there is none here, has been translated into both of the English versions of the poem. These two translations, different by their meaning, provides the argument on how differently from the original text could we translate literary pieces, even poems.

For the phrase 모든 죽어가는 것을 사랑해야지 (*modeun jukeokaneun keoseul saranghaeyaji*) the most important grammatical aspect to pay attention to, is the verb ending -해야지 (*haeyaji*). This verb ending has the meaning denoting that someone must or should do something and it is used more in everyday conversations than in writing. In everyday language 해야지 (*haeyaji*) ending is commonly used with a question mark, so it is translated as asking for a confirmation for something. Without the question mark, it becomes an obligation. Thus grammatically this phrase should be translated as *I must/will love all dying things*, because the Korean sentence's meaning is that it is necessary to love all the dying things. It does not give an option to not to love. In this poem, the original line give across the emotion or feeling of asking the confirmation from oneself. However, even though we now know that the verb ending is telling us to translate the phrase in a way to show the obligation there is no exact equivalent for this phrase in English. The translation 1, *I will love all dying things*, is implying that the loving of all the dying things will happen at some point in the future and the translation 2, *I shall love all things that are dying*, seems to give a suggestion instead of stating an obligation.

*And I will walk the way that has been given to me*, translation 1, along with *and I must walk the road that has been given to me*, translation 2, are the translations for the phrase 그리고 나한테 주어진 길을 걸어가야겠다 (*keurigo nahante jueojin kireul keoreoyaketta*). The ending 야겠다 (*yaketta*) is important due to being related to the ending phrase from the previous line 해야지 (*haeyaji*). They both have the same basic meaning of having to do or being obliged to do something, however 야겠다 (*yaketta*) ending has the connotation, that someone or something has reminded us to do the necessary thing. It is most often seen used in first person, as if

talking to himself or herself. Also for this verb 걸어가야겠다 (*keoreoyaketta*) the last two syllables 겠다 (*ketta*) are here in a future form, saying something might happen in the future even though it is unknown. So to directly translate this phrase we would have to understand that there is an implication coming from outside that says, this road that has been given, should be walked by the protagonist with a destination in mind. However because we do not know who or what has told the person this information or has affected their thought, nor do we know what is the destination, we can translate this phrase into English as we translate 해야지 (*haeyaji*) phrase. Both of the modal verbs *will*, which is personal, and *must*, which is driven from the outside, can reflect as the reminder for the task and they both can be used to translate this line. In here we can see that the grammatical construction of 야겠다 (*yaketta*) is difficult to translate into English

The poem ends with the phrase 오늘밤에도 별이 바람에 스치운다. (*oneulbamedo byeori barame seuchiunda*). The translations of the poems are the following: *tonight, again, the wind brushes the stars* for translation 1 and *tonight, again, the stars are brushed by the wind* for translation 2. The translation 1 is in active voice and it is telling us that the wind is the main focus in this line, while translation 2 is in passive voice, telling us that the stars are the main focus but the wind is doing the action. This whole line in Korean is in active voice, which we can see from the ending of the verb 스치운다 (*seuchiunda*). If we wanted to write a passive voice sentence we would have to change the ending of the verb into 스쳐진다 (*seuchijinda*). The verb 스치운다 (*seuchiunda*) is a poetic version of the verb 스치다 (*seuchida*) meaning *to brush by*. By using the verb 스치운다 (*seuchiunda*) Yoon Dong Ju has created a softer connotation to the verb *brush by* and has conveyed the emotion that we could translate into English as the wind *touching very lightly* the stars that it passes by.

Both of those translations have the similar meaning even though the grammar used is slightly different, however I would like to put some focus on the additive particle 도 (*do*), which here has been translated *again*. The reason why I choose to talk about the translation of 도 (*do*) is the fact that in any other case 도 (*do*) would be translated as *also, even* or *too*, which is also the feeling this word conveys in the Korean sentence, *tonight, also/too*. These words on the contrast might not be seen as poetical, which is why we can see that for both translation cases neither of them have selected the most common equivalent. Choosing *again* for the

translation sounds more poetic and in English expresses the feeling of something happening repetitively, while *also* meaning *in addition* gives another feeling as well. Here we can see an example of having to choose between denotative and connotative meanings and a domestication in translation. For Korean speaker the word  $\text{도}$  (*do*), with the denotative meaning *also*, can have a connotative meaning of something happening again. However for English-speaking reader *also* or *too*, would seem out of place and unpoetical. Hence we can see that there are words, where sometimes figuring out the best translation, means choosing the best word to contain the emotion of the line.

#### **2.4. Comparing the English translations**

Hereby I will now analyse how the poems have been translated into English, in the view of translating free verse poetry, and discuss how the message of the poem has been carried through in the process. As I have brought out, the Korean language has grammar aspects that have deeper meanings and that cannot be translated in a few words or perhaps even in a few lines, which is why we can say that the choices the translators have made are just some of the options available and are not definite.

Clive Scott (2015: 47) argues that for the free verse poetry rhythm is the only traditional poetic measure. Rhythm can be best perceived by reading the poems out loud in both the original and the translations. According to Scott when it comes to translating free verse poetry “free verse must justify itself by constantly redesigning verse-resources, by relocating expressive energies, which in turn involves reconfiguring the structural dynamics” (2015: 47). These arguments suggest that there are more possibilities for translating free verse poetry than any other type of poetry. In this context Scott also states that a reader or translator should not aim to reproduce the rhythm that is in the original poem, but to recreate a new rhythm (2015: 49). From this we can conclude that when translating a free verse poetry, translator is free to choose how to complete the work.

Structurally translation 1 and translation 2 are both following the original free verse, but we can also see the traces of iambic tetrameter in both of the translations. However Paul Ramsey (1968: 98) argues in his article *Free Verse: Some Steps Toward Definition* that a

poem that happens to have five iambic meters in a consecutive order is not a verse, as they have to be written deliberately.

If we take this into account then the rhythm in free verse does not exist on paper, but only in the ears of the listeners (Ramsey 1968: 100). The same logic can be used in the case of the translation 1, where the lines have been divided into similar length. Nevertheless, when we read out the poem we can create a rhythm with changing the intonation and tone. Furthermore if we were to actually count the syllables in each line we could see that there is a pattern of 6/8/8/7/8/7/7/6/7/10 in the first translation, which might be an indication that the translators have paid attention to create some kind of a rhythm. In the case of translation 2, the syllable count is 5/7/10/12/8/9/6/7/11. For both of the translations the comas used can be seen as a way to create pauses in the poems. In this respect the translators of the both versions seem to have created their own rhythm, which agrees with the suggestion of Scott, however there is still a difference in the stress and intonation, when comparing all three of them. Respectively we could say that the translators have chosen not to pay great attention on creating a rhythm, but rather have focused on free way of writing and conveying the message of the poem.

Song and Brandel (tr.1) have chosen to follow more closely to the original word order, while Richards and Richards (tr.2) have chosen to translate the poem so it would sound more idiomatic to the English speaking-audience. We can see such domestication when we look at the words and phrases that cannot be translated directly, such as the title of the poem for example. Those words and phrases have been changed so that a person who does not know anything about Korean language could still understand the general theme and message of the poem. Following I will discuss the message an English-speaking readers can find in both of the translations.

The translation 1 has opted to translate the poem in a way to show the protagonist of the poem referring to himself repeatedly as the pronoun *I* is repetitive. This shows that the translators have put more emphasis on who is talking in the poem. The first line of the poem *Until the day I die* shows determination which attracts the readers attention. When we look at the following line as a whole *I long to have no speck of shame, when I gaze up toward heaven*, the religious aspect in the words *shame* and *heaven*, when used together, can be felt in English. Yet the focus of the line seems to fall on the fact that the protagonist is gazing up to-

wards heaven to contemplate on his own feelings. The present tense in the following line *So I have tormented myself, even when the wind stirred the leaves* which gives a more universal meaning of self-distress that the protagonist feels from inevitable things like wind. The line *With a heart that sings the stars* leaves an impression that the protagonist is creating the star with his own heart and words. The two lines where we can find the auxiliary verb *I will* (*I will love all dying things/I will walk the way that has been given to me*) show us that the poem is one person centred and that the decisions have been made by himself. It also shows to the reader that the action is most likely to occur in the future. The determination to love all the dying things and to follow the path, that has been given to the protagonist, are both expressed with this auxiliary verb as well.

In translation 2 we can find the phrase *Until the day I die* at the end of the third line, thus the focus of the poem goes to the phrases above it. Translation 2 has chosen to start off the poem with the phrase of *Wishing not to have*, which shows the reader that the protagonist is uncertain about the future, yet remains hopeful. The lines *So much as a speck of shame, toward heaven, until the day I die*, have much stronger religious connotation than in translation 1, as an English-speaking reader would get a feeling that the fear of living shamefully comes from fear towards heaven or God. This is quite different from the original poem and translation 1. Translation 2 has used simple past in the line *I suffered, even when the wind stirred the leaves*. From that we can guess that the wind bothered the protagonist in the past, but not in the present, leaving the reader under impression that it is a personal memory. Unlike the translation 1, translation 2 with the line *With my heart singing to the stars* creates an image of the protagonist looking up in the sky at night and singing to the stars with the most passionate feelings in the line. Similarly to translation 1, translation 2 expresses the love for all dying things with a strong intention by using auxiliary verb *shall* (*I shall love all the things that are dying*). From translation 2 we can see from phrase *And I must walk the road* a strong sense of obligation that the protagonist feels. The verb *must* could also imply that the action has already begun, which quite different from translation 1, where *will* indicates that the action is going to happen at some point in the future.

With the translation 1 we can see that the general message of the poem is that the protagonist is in agony over fearing that they might not be able to live their life without regrets.

We can see that the person in the poem is fighting with himself. Translation 2 on the other hand, has more uplifting and positively hopeful tone. A strong sense of self-willingness to pursue a shameless life can be felt in translation 1, whereas in translation 2 we get an impression that obligation towards following a given path surpasses the protagonist's self-created desires. The common message that both of these translations convey is the fear of living an unsatisfactory life before the inevitable death comes.

Another common theme for these translations might be religion. The usage of the word *heaven* instead of *sky* is no doubt more poetical, which could be the reason why both of the translations have opted to use it, however as I have mentioned previously the original poem has no linking to religion. What I found interesting was that Richards and Richards who translated both the poem and the title of the poetry collection, including other poems, used both versions for translating 하늘 (*haneul*). To understand if this is just a coincidence or done deliberately we would have to analyse their entire translated version of the poetry collection. Nonetheless if this was done deliberately, we could assume that they chose *heaven* in the poem for its lyrical and poetical connotation, perhaps putting aside the religious connotation, and *sky* in the title for its denotative meaning.

## Conclusion

What we can see is that the translators of this poem have sometimes translated directly from the Korean language and sometimes have modified the translations to suit the targeted readers in English, used domesticating strategies. There is also the question of the choice of vocabulary: what kind of words are used and what is the intention of the translator. The translation 1 by Song and Brandel has first and foremost followed the free verse style of translating Yoon Dong Ju's poem. We can also clearly see that the past-future-present pattern, that the original poem has, is present in their translation. The translation 2 by Richards and Richards, also follows the free verse style of translating, however we can see that the emotions in some lines have gone missing in the translation and in some lines have been added, at the same time there are more grammatical differences than in the translation 1.

On one hand we can see that some of the grammatical aspects are challenging for both of the translations. This is for the case of 해야지 (*haeyaji*) and 야겠다 (*yaketta*), where we would have to be more descriptive in translating to give across the exact emotion that the poet has used, yet when we would do that, then the poems themselves would become much longer and would resemble a short story instead of a poem. On the other hand, we can also see that there is the question with the translation of the word 하늘 (*haneul*). Even though we can find in dictionary that it can be translated as *sky* or as *heaven* they both different connotation in English and can change the message quite a bit in one single poem. The choice between plural and singular form has also come up few times. We could see this in the title of the poetry collection and in the poem where singular word 별 (*byeol*) a *star* was translated into plural form *stars*.

We could say that the translators under observation have chosen the lexical items and grammatical aspects as a result of their own understanding of the poems. It seems that translation 1 and translation 2 are both following the original free verse, but we can see the traces of iambic tetrameter as well. In the English translations the unstressed and stressed syllable pattern is more recognisable than it is in Korean, so reading the translations we can experience a rhythmic flow, which is not something that free verse poems usually have. In the Korean original the stress is on the emotion and the tone of the chosen words.

Another noticeable factor is how there is different rhythm in every version when reading the poems out loud. By Clive Scott's definition free verse is poetry where the rhythm is the only factor left, however as it cannot be found on the paper and the only way to create the rhythm is to read the poem out loud. Free verse poetry gives the translator and the reader the freedom to re-create the rhythm as they wish. Therefore when looking at the English translations of the Korean poem 서시 (*seoshi*) we can see that they are not only different by their choices in the grammar aspects, but the translators have also expressed their own ways to divide the lines to create their own rhythm. A reader creates their own rhythm when reading a free verse poetry regardless of fact if a translator has tried to imply what the rhythm could be on the paper. This is due to the fact mentioned above, that free verse poetry follows the thought of a poet, thus it follows the rhythm of speaking.

In conclusion, it is also important to point out that translating poetry can be much more challenging than translating works in other literary genres. In poetry we would have to understand at first what kind of style is the poem written in, we have to take into account the syllable count, meter, rhythm, sound, tone and even the visual of the poem. By the example of the poem that I have chosen to analyse in this thesis, we can see that even when translators are free of any definite forms that usually define the type of the poem, the process of translating and getting the message across, while still staying in the poetry format can be quite difficult.

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## Resümee

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Elisabeth Rips**

**Titel: Comparative Analysis of two Translations of the Poem 서시 (*seoshi*) by the Korean Poet Yoon Dong Ju from Korean into English**

**Tiitel: Yoon Dong Ju koreakeese luuletuse 서시 (*seoshi*) kahe ingliskeelse tõlke võrdlev analüüs**

**Bakalaureusetöö 2019**

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### **Annotatsioon**

Töö eesmärk oli analüüsida kahte ingliskeelset tõlget ühest ja samast koreakeelsest vabavärsiluuletusest pealkirjaga 서시 (*seoshi*), mille originaali autor on Yoon Dong Ju.

Esimese tõlke autorid on Chae-Pyong Song ja Darcy Brandel, nende versioon kannab pealkirja *Prologue*. Tõlkijate Kyung-nyun Kim Richards ja Steffen F. Richards tõlke pealkiri on *Foreword*.

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