

On the Untranslatability of *Finnegans Wake*:

With an Example of a Korean Translation by Kim

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I

In general, translation is known to be an act of cross-cultural communication. In this sense the real challenge that a translator faces is how to bridge the gap between the two different languages and cultures, or, how to render the source text into other languages adequately. However, in the case of *Finnegans Wake*, the problem of its translation is far more complex because of its peculiar use of language, and a translator must deal with the unique difficulties unknown to the translator of other literary works. More truthfully speaking, the inherent literary characteristics of *Finnegans Wake* make its foreign translation a virtually impossible task.

Then what does make its translation an "impossible task"? What are the main

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things a translator must keep in mind and overcome when he/she translates it? To confront these problems we need to think about, above all, what would be the nature of the text and Joyce's attitude toward writing itself when he deliberately chose the style which appears to subvert the 'normal' patterns of English and, as a result, requires his readers not just to comprehend the exact meaning of the text but to participate in the cognitive process of it. Thus any attempt to grasp the precise meaning of the text does not make sense in its translation. Therefore a translator of *Finnegans Wake* must contrive new devices of his/her own in the act of translation.

Joyce's night dream language of *Finnegans Wake* presents syntactical dislocation, puns, and distortions which endlessly produce neologisms and portmanteau words which "carry three score and ten toptypical readings throughout the book" (*FW* 20.14-15). The resistance to reducing the multiple or even the contradictory meanings creates the playful spirit in the text. For the Wakean view, the "cutanddry grammar" is only an obstacle for Joyce's various word-play. In this sense, the most peculiar characteristic of *Finnegans Wake*, distinguished from that of other literary works is, above all, the dynamic performative of its language. The dynamism both changes and produces meanings ceaselessly in the text.

In confronting these unstable words and sentences of *Finnegans Wake* which always slip out of a reader's grasp, a translator of the work is required to find some other ways than merely practicing cross-cultural communication. The translator of *Finnegans Wake* is required to be creative in his/her translation especially to revive the dynamic textual mechanism of the ceaseless disruption and conglomeration. Therefore, in some sense, the success of the translation of *Finnegans Wake* depends on the revival of the inherent dynamic spirit of the text; how the translator renders the protean character of Wakean language and how he/she keeps the flexibility and indeterminacy in the continuous reproduction and transformation of meanings. Still we must avoid the application of a single principle as a key to reading or to translating of it. Rather we should try to find out the alternative possibilities.

Concerning the dynamic language system, another problem the translator of the

text confronts is how to make a foreign reader who reads the translated *Finnegans Wake* enjoy it as much as the English-speaking reader does, and to participate in producing the ceaseless meaning-making from the open-ended ambiguity of the word puzzles of the text.

Asian translators have more difficulties: that is, the translation into a language that is fundamentally different from European ones. This means that the translator must undergo the hardest struggle to overcome the untranslatability through the careful negotiations between the different linguistic vehicles. Besides the linguistic transformation, the translator must find a way which can preserve the multi-layered mythical, legendary, historical and literary allusions using a language of a different civilization and different socio-cultural background. This problem is far more complex considering the social role of language and its role of the preservation of culture.

Kim Chong-keon, a leading Joyce scholar in Korea, translated the complete text of *Finnegans Wake* in the year 2002. Along with his translation, Kim provides a detailed introduction to *FW* based on widely ranging sources to provide a general idea of the work for neophyte readers. Although he often makes various references, he establishes his own way in his translation of the text. Kim's translation has demonstrated not only his deep understanding of Joyce's text but also his ability to "perform" the text transculturally in the Korean language in his own way.

In this paper, I want to explore the peculiar requirements of the translation of *Finnegans Wake* as well as its untranslatability and problems with translation. Since space is limited, I shall focus on the first page of Kim's translation, which is also the first page of the text.

II

The most obvious characteristic of Kim's translation of *Finnegans Wake* is that he tries to grasp the basic story from the fractured surface. There are repetitive

patterns and anecdotes in the text and, although the elements in *Finnegans Wake* text are apparently dispersed, they seem to be all interconnected with each other in their own ways. Kim tries to trace certain patterns in the stories which are told repetitively in various and different ways. He attempts to figure out the basic structure which seems to be hidden among the disorderly surface of the text. However, the fractured or distorted surface needs to be invoked more significantly to the reader because this is the key to understanding the nature of *Finnegans Wake*.

Since the basic linguistic features of *Finnegans Wake* involve word play, punning, and the portmanteau words, the question is how the multiple and encyclopedic meanings could be implied and changed ceaselessly through semantic and syntactic fusions. Kim confronts these problems with his own inventiveness. His main device is to utilize the linguistic quality of Korean as well as Chinese when he "adapts" Joyce's work into Korean. In this process, Kim sometimes adds and sometimes omits, choosing a certain meaning among several possible interpretations.

The most original device Kim uses to resolve the problem of the peculiar textuality of *Finnegans Wake* such as multiplicity and changeability is to invent his own neologism in Chinese characters. In some way this method is quite effective to include multiple meanings within one word. Contriving a neologism in Chinese characters could be one good idea to get the multiple meaning of Wakean words. Kim has achieved the closest equivalence by transforming the English alphabet game into a Chinese character game. Kim's way of devising neologism in Chinese characters to get multiple meanings is genius as one way to realize the multiplicity of *Finnegans Wake* in his Korean translation. However, concerning the problem of reviving the Wakean sense of word-play I am not quite sure about its achievement in his translation.

I will examine several examples from the first page of Kim's translation to see how Kim negotiates cultural distinctiveness as well as how he deals with the riddle-like words of "puns", "portmanteau words", and "rhythm" through his

Chinese neologism.

III

The consistent theme of the entire text of *Finnegans Wake* appears in its first page. Though the writing is very chaotic and disorderly, still it contains the major themes and introduces the major characters of the work. Though it is presented in a very ambiguous and condensed form the theme of the Fall and Resurrection and of the cyclical pattern of human history is typified by the Irish legendary hero (Finn McCool) and the brick layer of the ballad (Tim Finnegan) and other biblical, historical, legendary figures.

The first paragraph tells the place, and the second, time (it was before the fall, before the flood) while presenting the leitmotifs through Tristan and Isolde, St. Patrick, Jonathan Swift, and others, which are to recur many times.

Though the stories are told in the tangled form the first sentence refers to the region in which the story takes place: Dublin city and its environs. The first word of "riverrun" are obviously coinings of two words and Kim does not put pause between the noun and the verb in Korean translation though it is told in Korean prose. The next phrase of "Adam and Eve's" can be read in two ways though the text does not make it clear whether this phrase is the word of 'church' or not: one is the name of a church on the river Liffey; the other is the biblical names of "Adam" and "Eve", which recall the origin of humankind in the Bible. The Liffey flows past the church of Adam and Eve (implying temptation, fall, and renewal) and into Dublin Bay, where, after circulating down to Bray, it circulates up to the Hill of Howth, the northern area of the Bay. Kim translates it as the name of the church.

The phrase of "a commodius vicus of recirculation" is translated as one word in condensed form of Chinese neologism, "광순환촌도(廣循環村道)" which is a coining of three meanings of "wide", "circular", "country road." Here we can see

Kim's major device of inventing neologysm using Chinese character to imply several meanings within one word. Kim's neologyism is quite understable, but it does not imply the name of the Neapolitan Giambattista Vico(1688-1744) of whom the Wakean readers usually are reminded when they read the word "vicus"(FW 3.02) in the original text. Thus the name of the philosopher of "recirculation", Vico, is missed as Kim chooses the meaning of the word as "country road" though this is true because "vicus" can be read as an area in Dublin: locally, "vicus"(in Latin it means the "lane", "village", of "vicinity") is the Vico Road along the shore of Dublin Bay, the name of a road in Dalkey, a Dublin suburb. However, when we think of Vico's cyclic view of human history in which four stages of development succeed one after another in an endless chain of events, repeating the sequence from everlasting to everlasting is significant enough to become the structure of *Finnegans Wake*.

The words of "Howth Castle and Environs" also imply at least two meanings: while the "Howth" is the name of the hill located in the suburb of Dublin, the castle on the hill, and the surrounding area, it is also one of the three initials of the name of the hero of the text, H. C. Earwicker. Also "Howth", says Joyce, is related with the Danish word of 'hoved' which means "head". While the male hero is hill and castle, the female heroine already appears as the river at the beginning. Kim translates the words as "호우드(H)성城(C)과 주원周園(E)" in which he appropriately puts the initials of the male hero, H.C.E. as well as marking the name of the area.

Though this is a brief survey of the first paragraph, the translator's particular characteristics and his major devices appear: 1) choosing the central meaning among various interpretations, which he calls, the "matrix"; 2) his inventing of neologism in Chinese words to condense the multiple meanings which are different each other; 3) the phonetic effect through the use of rhythm and alliteration in Wakean words is not presented. The rhythmic effect which reminds the reader of the waves of the sea through the use of alliteration of "s" and "b" in the phrase of 'swerve of shore to bend of bay' is quite significant in the first paragraph of the

text. Focusing on the three issues indicated in the above, I would examine Kim's translation of the first page of the text in the following. While examining his Korean translation, I will discuss the problems of Kim's devices.

IV. On the "matrix"

The following two paragraphs of the first page, even denser than the first one, present what had happened in Dublin and in the world in multi-dimensional forms of the biblical, the literary, the mythical, and the historical one. The following two paragraphs tell seven things that had "not yet" happened at the time of Adam and Eve.

The second paragraph starts with the word "Sir Tristram"(FW 3.04). He is not only a man who comes from Armorica(Brittany) to get Isolde in "Europe Minor"(Ireland), but he is also "Sir Amory Tristram", "the first earl of Howth who changed his name into Saint Lawrence, born in Brittany (North Armorica)" (McHugh 3) who acrossed the "scraggy isthmus" of Sutton, and presided over Howth Castle and environs. Tristram, who is both the Tristan of Arthurian legend and the Sir Amory Tristram, is a legendary, literary, and historical figure. Considering these various implications, his name evokes at least two contradictory meanings, those of war and love. In this sense, the epithet of him, "violar d'amores" is to be interpreted in a quite complex way.

Joyce, in his letter dated the 15th of November 1926 to Miss Weaver mentions the word "violer"(FW 3.04) as "viola in all moods and senses" (*Letters* I, 247). His mention implies the attitude that he regarded the meanings of Wakean words as a potentially infinite series.

Tristan could be seen as both the violator of Mark's love and a musical instrument, a viola, with seven strings. In this sense, the word "amores" also incorporates the contrasting meanings of armor and *amour*. Kim, in his translation, chose one meaning by calling him as "사랑의 재사才士" which would be

understood as the "artist of love" or "talented lover." If we interpret "violar d'amores" as only one meaning, the following words and phrases lose the connections with this word. For example, at least three following words could not be interrelated: first, "North Armorica" (that is, Brittany) which may imply the contradictory meanings of armor and amour; second, the word "wielderfight" which, in German, means "refight", or its more idiomatic translation might be "rematch", which has the contradictory meanings also, that of "compete each other, or that of "marry"; the third, the word "penisolate war" can be interpreted both as Wellington's Peninsular War and the Wellington Monument, and when we read it as penis-(des)olate it means the lonely penis. If we read it as the lonely pen or the war of the pen in isolation, this reading also suggests the sibling rivalry of the twins, Shem vs. Shaun. Tristan-Shaun longs for Isolde, and Shem is a lonely penman. In this way, the theme of the recurrence of conflicting polarities such as pen vs. sword and love vs. war are all interconnected with each other, interweaving Vico's and Bruno's ideas as well. The double notes of love and war sound together, chorded throughout the work as a pervasive theme. Therefore, if we understand "violar d'amores" just as one meaning of 'love', the pervasive theme of the conjunction of 'love and war' is totally missed.

Another example of the choosing a single meaning(or "matrix") is the term "the knock"(FW 3.22) which could be understood as both the noun and verb; for the noun, it is the name of Castle of Knock, and for the verb, the act of knocking. Kim chooses to interpret it as the noun only and translates "the knock out in the park" as "공원 밖의 노크 성城" taking "the knock" as Knock Gate, and surely the article before the word supports Kim's interpretation of it. Still, as it is indicated in the above, the word could be interpreted as the verb, the act of knocking implying the holdup of Earwicker by the Cad in the park. Considering the rumor about the mysterious incident happening in the park which involves Earwicker, the Cad, and two girls, and the sense of guilt Earwicker has undergone because of this scandal all through the work, the word "knock" can be read as verb.

One more example of problematic words is that of "rust." Kim translates it as

"무위 휴식 無爲休息" which means the "complete rest without thinking or doing anything." However, the word, "rust", in the text is actually an arena of conflict of two different meanings since it can be interpreted as "lust" and "rest" at the same time. Especially when we consider words such as "knock out in the park", "oranges" and "green" which appear in the same sentence all together, the "rust" should imply the political conflicts between Ireland ("green") and England ("oranges"). Also in the sentence is the word "devlinsfirst" (*FW* 3.23-24), which Kim translates as '최초더블린인' meaning "the first Dubliner". If Joyce means this only, why not write "the first Dubliner" straightforwardly?

V. On inventing neologism in Chinese

Kim's major strategy of translating *Finnegans Wake* is, as we have seen in the above, the use of his Chinese neologism. The purpose of this strategy is to get as many multiple meanings as possible in one word like Wakean words. However, this device of Kim's is fundamentally different from that of Joyce's play on words and sounds. With all his marvellous efforts and accomplishments in tackling the untranslatabilities of Joyce's work, Kim's translation does not quite revive the Wakean spirit. For the reason of this at least two problems could be indicated: one is that, although the neologism in Chinese characters could be a good device to get multiple meanings within one word, the dynamic play(or performance) of the Wakean language is not achieved by the Chinese neologism simply loaded with several meanings; the other is that Kim's neologism in Chinese characters sounds very unfamiliar to Korean readers and thus the access to his translation is not easy. Of course, Wakean neologisms are unfamiliar either; still, at least their alphabet spellings and the sounds of them seem to be familiar to the reader.

Concerning these two issues, I will examine some examples of Kim's translation of *Finnegans Wake*. As the first example, for the very argumentative word of "penisolate" (*FW* 3.06) Kim translates it as 남근반도고전 男根半島孤戰, whose

Chinese neologism consists of three words which mean the "penis", the "peninsular", and "lonely war". However, this coined Chinese word seems strange to the Korean reader. Furthermore, it does not produce the effect of word play found in Joyce's neologism in *Finnegans Wake*. Of course, English neologism of "penisolate" sounds quite unfamiliar to the English-speaking reader, either. The difference between the source word and its translation is that while Joyce's word is itself flexible and ceaselessly changeable, Kim's Chinese word is simply the inclusion of several meanings joined together within one word. Therefore Kim's Chinese neologism loses the dynamism and the performability that Joyce's words have.

The translation of the word "promptly" (*FW* 3.20) is the similar case to the previous one. It is translated as having two meanings in one Chinese word, "신속 慎速" which coins the meaning of "prudence" with the Chinese character of "慎" and that of "prompt" with the "速". This neologism is a quite witty use of Chinese characters: though if we read it in Korean it means "prompt," only it evokes a kind of Wakean word play.

However, with some exceptions, Kim's neologism cannot generally avoid the fixity in the interpretation of the text. The fixity of meaning does not leave no empty space to think of other possible meanings. In other words, it does not provide some unsolvable open space whose arena actually becomes the source of creative and dynamic textuality of *Finnegans Wake*. Similarly even the very simple word of "livvy" (*FW* 3.24), the last word on the first page, would be interpreted in various meanings: River Liffey, ivvy or Eve, (Anna) Livia, the name of the heroine of *Finnegans Wake*, and Livy (Titus Livius 50 B.C. 17 A.D. Roman Historian), Vico's favorite historian. Considering Joyce's own explanation of the first page in a letter to Harriet Weaver (*Letter I*, 246-8), "livvy," the last word, goes with the first word, "riverrun", the author seemed to put some significance on this last word of "livvy" (*FW* 3.24) on the first page of the work. Kim's translation of it, "생엽生葉리피(강)", is the Chinese coined word which means the fresh leaves, or life, leaves, and river Liffy. In some degree it succeeds in embodying the multiple meanings in one word. However, when we think of the text as a

whole, even this one short word is not that simple, especially when this word implies the basic elements of the text. Besides this, the poetic feeling from the sweet and lovely rhythmic sound of the words of "loved livvy" is not quite realized in Kim's translation which sounds heavy and awkward. Especially for this purely phonetic-based English word, the translator would get better musical effect if he uses the phonetic-based Korean instead of the mixture of Korean and Chinese.

The device of Chinese neologism in Kim's translation, though useful to get multiple meanings in condensed form, sounds quite unfamiliar and awkward for Korean lay readers, especially for the young generation who do not use Chinese much either in writing or in reading. The use of Chinese characters, which are meaning-based, does not quite match with the sound-based text of *Finnegans Wake*.

Another problem of Kim's use of Chinese neologism in his translation, though it is quite witty, is that it is very hard to read especially for the reader who do not know the text of *Finnegans Wake*. For example, "wallstrait" (*FW* 3.17) is translated as 벽협가(壁峽街), which is the coining of three meanings of "wall", "narrowness", and "street". This coined Chinese letter not only sounds very unfamiliar for Korean readers, but also it does not remind the fall of stocks in Wall Street. Especially since the word comes just after the "The fall" (*FW* 3.15), the incident of the Wall Street is easily reminded to the reader.

Kim's Korean translation of the last line of the second paragraph is particularly hard to grasp because of the awkwardness of his neologism in Chinese character. The "regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface" (*FW* 3.14) is translated as "눈썹무지개의 혈동단血東端이 수액면水液面 위에 지환연指環然히 보였을지라". The general story of this line is from the Bible, the story of Noah, Shem, Japheth, and Ham. Here Noah is intoxicated by beer instead of wine, which keeps the Germano-Celtic culture. Toward the end of the flood, "the rainbow was seen casting its reflection on the face of the waters. This rainbow, the sign of God's promise. . . ." (Campbell 30-31) The word of "regginbrow" is akin to the German word for rainbow, 'regenbogen', and "ringsome" to 'ringsum.' Germanic "ringsome" also refers to Wagner's ring. The "regginbrow," according to Joyce himself, is an

eyebrow on the face of the waters. Kim translates the "reggibrow" as "눈썹무지개" literary echoing Joyce's remark of calling the rainbow the eyebrow. However, "눈썹무지개" is not a Korean expression and it sounds very strange and awkward. This awkwardness comes not from a Wakean portmanteau word but from the fixity of meaning. Wakean words are playful by their simultaneous condensation and disruption as well as by their ceaseless changes, and through these characteristics the interpretations of every word in the text goes to all directions. The lack of playfulness would make the Wakean words grotesque. Kim's coined Chinese word of "지환연指環然" for "ringsome"(in which 지환指環 means "ring", 연然 means "alike") also sounds very unfamiliar for Korean readers. Lastly, the word of "aquaface" is translated as 수액면水液面, which sounds quite unfamiliar, either, even though it is a Chinese expression. Perhaps Kim wants to imply in this translation the brewing of Guinness and distilling by "Jhem or Shen" (*FW* 3.13), Shaun and Shem or John Jameson & Son(the name of a company) in Dublin. The disorderly but multiple, biblical implications of Noah and the brewing in Dublin are not quite marked in Kim's translation.

Kim's favorite use of Chinese letters often misses the beauty of a phonetic-based Korean word. The word "green" is translated as the Chinese word, "녹초(綠草)", which means green leaves. The use of Chinese is quite unnecessary here, especially, since this word, 'green' is pure English and it would better to translate it in a phonetic-based Korean word rather than in a difficult Chinese letter.

Using the Chinese neologism cannot achieve this peculiar character of Wakean language. The linguistic system of *Finnegans Wake* is not to construct the meaning, but to produce it. In the text, the representational function of language does not work since the meaning of the text is changeable according to how it is read and what position the reader takes. The fundamental problem of Kim's device of inventing neologism in Chinese letters is that by this device the essential textual mechanism of flexibility of the Wakean language cannot be achieved. Also for the phonetic based text of *Finnegans Wake*, it is doubtful that the meaning based Chinese letter could realize the phonetic effects of the text.

VI. On the sound-based Wakean language

According to Roland Barthes's term, *Finnegans Wake* would be a writerly text which forces the reader to '(re-)write' it, to engage him/her more actively in its interpretation. The reader cannot remain as a passive consumer in reading a 'writerly text'. Prof. Jones, in Book I, Chapter 6 of *Finnegans Wake*, is unable to decipher the letter, that is, Anna Livia Plurabelle's "polymorphous Mamafesta", because he attempts to find the right interpretation which the peculiar Wakean language never allows. In *Finnegans Wake*, language is not a simple medium to represent experience, instead of this, through the experience of its language, the representation (meaning) is produced. When we fixate on meaning, we lose the reconstructive process of the book's language, in other words, the generative power of the language of the text.

Finnegans Wake is often called a "sound text", and this means not only its poetic alliteration, assonance, rhythm, and puns, but also the materiality (sound-orientation) of the Wakean language as the main character. Because of this materiality of language in the text, the possibilities of transformation produce "polymorphous" words. The musicality plays an important role in approximating onomatopoeic sound effects in the text, adopting its phonetic techniques and the readers of *Finnegans Wake* are forced to change meaning ceaselessly.

It is an extremely difficult job to get both of the multiple meanings and aural effects at the same time through the use of Chinese letters. Kim translates the word "mishe"(3.09) as "아차(我此)" in Chinese characters which means 'I am' or 'this self' which is right in its meaning since "mishe" means "myself" or "I am" in Gaelic. However, if we read "mishe(아차)" as Korean, it means "Oh my God!" and it makes some sense of Wakean language game. The problem here is the lack of Christian implication. The phrase, "I am", here means "I am a Christian", and the word "mishe" should imply Christianity in some way in its translation. Otherwise it may lose the connection with the following words of "thuartpeatrick" and "tauftauf". The word, "thuartpeatrick" (*FW* 3.10), reminds the biblical phrase

of "you are Peter(the stone)"¹⁾ on which rests Roman Catholicism, and its followers can claim supremacy among the Christian churches. The word of "mishe" is the one the convert says when he is baptised, and 'tauf' is the German for "to baptise". In this sense, St. Patrick and "tauftauf" (*FW* 3.10) are deeply connected with each other.

Also the Christian implication of these words is related with Swift, tricky Dean of St. Patrick's, near the peat ricks. The Irish Church was founded by Saint Patrick, and Ireland has peat ricks, stacks of turf for burning. Joyce also refers to the "peatfire" of faith which would become ardent by the voice of the apostle, 'avoice from afire' which 'bellowed' (*FW* 3.09), meaning both "cried out" and "blew up the flames".

In Kim's Korean translation of the sentence "nor avoice from afire bellowed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatrick" (*FW* 3.09-10) into "원화遠火로부터 혼일성混一聲이 아차我此 아차我此 풀무하여 다변강풍多辯強風 패트릭을 토탄세레土炭洗禮하지 않았으니" the Christian implication of the historical fact of St. Patrick's baptism is not quite clear. Christian implication is hard to be found in any word of the Korean translation of "avoice", "afire", "bellowed", "mishe". The word, 'tauftauf'(토탄세레土炭洗禮) seems to express the baptism by tauf. However, the isolated word without being connected with other words loses the network of meanings to evoke the Christianity. Even the word of "thuartpeatrick" is translated 다변강풍多辯強風 패트릭, that means "changeable and wild windly Patrick", and it loses the general implication of the building of the Church in Ireland by St. Patrick.

As sounds and sights of Wakean words constantly contribute to proliferate the multidimensional meanings as well as enjoyment of puzzle games. The phonetic effects of rhythm, alliteration, and assonance provide the text with the paradoxical impression of the repetition and variation at the same time. Because of its character of "repetition with variation," the *Finnegans Wake* text seems to be stabilized and destabilized at the same time. Without using the similar materiality of Wakean language, any translation could not evoke the phonetic punning and an open entrance

to the text which provides the essential characteristics of the inexplicability, unpredictability, and inexhaustibility of *Finnegans Wake*.

VII

We can never come to the end of our reading of the rich text that Joyce has deliberately written to generate more meanings. Therefore any translation that attempts to fix meanings for the words in it, though the words embody the multiple meanings within one word, would never achieve the textuality of *Finnegans Wake* without realizing its peculiar materiality of language which is a source of its constant metamorphosis, and of its self-contradictory and deconstructive operation. A translation which misses the schizophrenic nature of the text cannot achieve the dynamic quality of the rejuvenation of *Finnegans Wake*. When the text is the very arena of struggle for meanings, we cannot expect any represented meaning in it.

Considering especially this character of *Finnegans Wake*, Kim's translation, which is groping for some sort of unity under the presumption that Wakean unstability is only a superficial kind of distortion, seems to miss the important point that though the text is apparently stabilizing, it is fundamentally undercut by its destabilizing elements. The Wakean distortion or decomposition is never the superficial one.

Kim tries very hard to get the meanings as much as possible through Chinese neologism in his translation, but the problem is his device does not realize the fundamental textuality of *Finnegans Wake*, that is, the constant remaking of meanings. In other words, what Kim missed most in his translation is the dynamic basis of the Wakean language, without it any translation cannot revive the peculiar textual operation of the ceaseless working of unity and dispersion. The translation based upon the practice of pinning down meanings would deprive the reader of his/her creative reading of the text. The other problem in his Chinese neologism is that his words sound unnatural or quite unfamiliar to Korean readers.

In spite of these problems, Kim's translation of *Finnegans Wake* is a tremendous achievement. As Joyce himself said the work would keep the critics occupied for three hundred years, its untranslatability is mainly due to its peculiar language system which is concerned with its cognitive processes rather than with its semantics. When we think of the peculiar textuality of *Finnegans Wake*, it is not the matter of skill of translation itself. Inevitably every translator of *Finnegans Wake* is required to approach the work in his/her own unique way. For Korean lay readers who do not even dare to read *Finnegans Wake*, Kim's translation would be a guide to the text. In this sense, Kim's contribution to the study of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* cannot be overlooked.

As reading *Finnegans Wake* is a never-ending activity, the translating of *Finnegans Wake* is also a never-ending work. As we expect another reading of it, we expect another way of its translation. The original text is thus made anew in each new translation.

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Notes

- 1) "Tu es Petrus, thou art Peter, and upon this rock(Latin 'petrus') will I build my church' the words of Christ to the disciple Simon Peter"

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Abstract

On the Untranslatability of *Finnegans Wake*: With an Example of a Korean Translation by Kim Chong-keon

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In this paper, I explore the peculiar requirements of the translation of *Finnegans Wake* and its untranslatability. For the discussion of these issues I take examples from Kim Chongkeon's Korean translation of the text focusing on its first page. An analysis of Kim's methodology used in his Korean translation reveals his strength as well as weakness, his creativity as well as his limitation. The most original device of Kim's translation of *Finnegans Wake* is to invent his own neologism in Chinese characters through which Kim tries to get multiple meanings in condensed form like Wakean words. Kim's device is quite witty; however, the problem is that his strategy does not revive the Wakean words play. In other words, the neologism in Chinese characters could be a good device to get multiple meanings within one word, but the dynamic play of the Wakean language is not achieved by the Chinese neologism which is simply loaded with several meanings.

Concerning the phonetic quality of *Finnegans Wake*, the meaning-based Chinese characters do not seem to be quite appropriate to get the musicality of the text such as poetic alliteration, assonance, rhythm, and puns. Especially the materiality (sound-orientation) of the Wakean language which transforms words of the text ceaselessly is difficult to be achieved by Chinese characters.

Still, in spite of these problems, Kim's translation of *Finnegans Wake* is a tremendous achievement. For Korean lay readers who do not even dare to read *Finnegans Wake*, Kim's translation would provide one entrance to the text.

■ Key words: translation, the dynamic language system, untranslatability, Chinese neologism, condensed and dispersed text, materiality of language