Shifts, Traces, and Translator's Visibility: A Deconstructive Analysis of an English Translation of *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi*

Intira Bumrungsalee*
Faculty of Humanities
Kasetsart University
Email: intira.b@ku.th
*Corresponding Author

Nanthanoot Udomlamun
Faculty of Humanities
Kasetsart University
Email: nanthanoot.u@ku.th

Abstract

Contemporary deconstructive translation studies are significantly influenced by Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. Generally, deconstruction challenges traditional notions of meaning, language, and interpretation by emphasising the fluidity and multiplicity of meaning within texts. When applied to translation, deconstruction goes beyond the conventional aim of rendering a text from one language to another as faithfully as possible; instead, it prioritises the exploration of diverse interpretations and the creative potential of translation as well as seeking to expose the ambiguities and tensions inherent in both the source and target texts. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a deconstructive analysis of the English translation of Uthis Haemamool's *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi* (2012). The primary focus is on an analysis of translation shifts that reveal the translator's agency. Another key point of discussion is non-standard language translation that requires the translator's creative intervention and results in the translator's traces. Ultimately, this paper aims to argue that, with an act of deconstructive translation, the translator also takes on the role of a creative collaborator.

Amid the current debate regarding the Thai government's national agenda for exporting cultural products, translation has been mentioned as a

tool to provide international readers access to Thai literature (THACCA, 2024). The past decade saw English translations of novels by critically acclaimed writers, for instance, S.E.A. WRITE winner Veeraporn Nitiprapha's *Blind Earthworms in a Labyrinth* (2015) and *Memories of the Memories of the Black Rose Cat* (2018), National Artist Saneh Sangsuk's *Venom* (2001) and *Exile* (2014) by Thanat Thammakaew, which received the PEN Translates Award in 2022. In 2023, Uthis Haemamool's *The Fabulist*, also known as ลัติ (2015) was released under Penguin Random House, one of the world's largest publishers. In the meantime, government-funded THACCA (Thailand Creative Culture Agency) offered translation grants to translate Thai literary writings into English which the Agency would promote at overseas book exhibitions.

Another way to introduce translated Thai novels to new readers is through media articles and discussions. According to Berger et al. (2010), critical reviews, even negative ones, help increase sales of books that were previously less known (p. 819). This is where literary criticism and academia can play a part in the overall effort to create an active atmosphere for international readers and learners of Thai culture. To keep up with the growing number of translated Thai novels, research in translation of Thai novels also needs to expand and welcome more theoretical frameworks and points of view.

While a considerable amount of research in literary translation is carried out each year, only a fraction focuses on translating Thai works into English. For instance, Patama Attanatho (2010) and Wipawee Wongsawan et al. (2008) analyzed the English translation of Ngampan Vejjajiva's *Happiness of Kati* (2006); Painarin and Tipayasuparat (2022) looked into the translation editing techniques in Sri Burapha's *Behind the Painting* (1954); Watcharapong Changprachak (2023) explored the ways in which the translator handled cultural terms in Duanwad Pimwana's *Chang Samran* (2003), also known as *Bright* in its English title. Most existing translation research in Thailand seems to center on the linguistic elements or the strategies for transferring meanings along with cultural implications, and identifying equivalents and losses that occur in the process. It shows that research studies in this specific area are still limited, mostly relying on the same theories and approaches.

Recently, some Translation Studies researchers have applied literary criticism and interdisciplinary theories in their work. Taking an anthropological and sociolinguistic view of translation, Chittiphalangsri (2023) presents a "translationscape" of Southeast Asia, portraying translation as more than just an act of crossing rigid borders, but of navigating through undefined boundaries, such as antipodes and archipelagos. Narongde Phanthaphoommee (2021, 2022, 2023) discusses

the topic of linguistic hybridity in the translations of postcolonial and African-American literature. Techawongstien and Chittiphalangsri (2023) observe how translation practice in Thailand reflects and reinforces the ideal notion of singular "Thainess" and the standard Thai language. These publications have not, however, sufficiently studied how literary works in a smaller language such as Thai get translated into English, which is likely to stand in different contexts and conditions.

Deconstructive reading is one of the approaches that allow researchers as well as readers to look at translated literature in a new light and to see translation as more than just an art of imitation (Varney, 2008, p. 125). Even though the deconstruction theory and translation have often been discussed in terms of principles, it seems that a handful of researchers have actually used it as the main framework in analyzing specific cases. Tóth-Izsó and Lombard (2022), for example, compare two English translations of Giovanni Panini's Italian poems, using deconstructionist analyses to uncover the covert and overt dimensions of the text. Sajarwa (2017) examines two Indonesian translations of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1897) to show how meaning or the "signified" has changed over the years, underlining different socio-political issues. Deepakumari (2013) deconstructs historiography through Laxman Gaikwad's *The Branded* (1998) written in the Marathi language and translated to English. However, from an extensive review of translation research in the Thai context, deconstructive translation and deconstructive analysis of literary translation remain largely underexplored. This deconstructive study of English-Thai literary translation thus aims to respond to one of the gaps found in this broad field of translation studies.

Translation and Deconstruction

Traditionally, translation has largely been viewed in light of equivalence to the point that Bassnett (2002) calls it "the much-used and abused term in Translation Studies" (p. 34). It seems that the first logical step in translating is to look for a word, which contains an equivalent meaning or concept in the target language or target culture. A certain loss in translation is expected. A text or structure that is deemed to be untranslatable is referred to as having a "lexical gap" or a "lacuna" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000, p. 84). For example, Nida (2003) writes "it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Hence there can be no fully exact translations. The total impact of a translation may be reasonably close to the original, but there can be no identity in detail" (p. 156). Newmark (1988), who defines translation as a method to transfer the meaning and intention of the source text in two

different languages, also acknowledges some loss of meaning due to a number of different circumstances (Newmark, 2001, p. 7). According to Catford (1965), "translation equivalence depends on … relationship of SL and TL texts to (at least some of) the same relevant features of situation-substance" (p. 93); thus, "when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text", linguistic or cultural untranslatability occurs (Catford, 1965, p. 94). In other words, the less relevance that can be drawn between source text and translated text, the more meaning tends to be lost and the less translatable a text becomes. When untranslatability incorporates the complex interaction of linguistic, cultural, semantic, and pragmatic factors, the difficulties result from how each language's grammatical constructions, lexicon, and idiomatic expressions are unique.

Deconstruction philosophy and deconstructive translation have also emerged in conversations on equivalence and/or untranslatability in translation studies (see, for example, Florentsen (1994), Koskinen (1994), Kruger (2004), and Davis (2019). This corresponds with an observation of Roland Végső (2019) who remarks on the "linguistic turn" in twentieth-century Western philosophy and how "[t]his state of affairs, needless to say, boded quite well for the fate of translation as a philosophical problem" (p. 158). Deconstruction, led by French philosopher Jacques Derrida, challenges traditional notions of meaning, language, and interpretation by emphasising the fluidity and multiplicity of meanings within texts. When applied to translation, deconstruction goes beyond the conventional aim of rendering a text from one language to another as faithfully as possible. Instead, it seeks to expose the ambiguities and tensions inherent in both the source and target texts. One of the central concepts in deconstruction is *différance*, which suggests that meaning is constantly deferred and constructed through the relationship between words within a text. In his essay "Différance" (1982), Derrida states that meaning is never fully present or fixed. This idea of *différance* suggests that translation is an ongoing process of negotiation and reinterpretation rather than a final, static product. Deconstructive translation embraces this dynamic process, allowing for the continuous unfolding of meaning as well as multiplicity of meanings and the working of chains of signifiers. This challenges the idea of a single, clear correspondence between words in different languages. Therefore, Derrida (1981) proposes substituting the notion of translation with the "notion of transformation". As he puts it,

> In the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and

for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. (Derrida, 1981, p. 20)

In terms of multiplicity of meaning, deconstruction posits that texts are inherently unstable and open to multiple interpretations. This principle challenges the notion of a single, definitive meaning in translation. Instead, a deconstructive translator acknowledges and embraces the plurality of meanings that can emerge from a text, recognising that a text can have multiple valid interpretations and translations. Laurence Venuti (1992), a translation scholar and translator of Derrida, posits,

A translation is never quite 'faithful', always somewhat 'free', it never establishes an identity, always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretive transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings, equally multiple and divided. (p. 8)

Deconstructive translation, thus, represents a radical departure from traditional translation theories by embracing the multiplicity, fluidity, and instability of meaning. It challenges the conventional aim of achieving fidelity to the source text and instead prioritises the exploration of diverse interpretations and the creative potential of translation.

Noteworthily, there have been debates about whether deconstruction is a proper translation studies framework. Some translation scholars find deconstruction's emphasis on ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings to be impractical; for example, Anthony Pym (1995) strongly argues that "[t]he problem with deconstructionist propositions … is that they are decidedly unhelpful once agreed to" (p. 16) and that "deconstructionist theory can and should raise passing doubts on the way to concrete action" (Pym, 1995, p. 17). Others, however, take a different view. Jennifer Varney (2008) states: "It is in its implied empowerment and validation of the translator as an active social and textual meaning producer that deconstruction is perhaps of most use as a framework for Translation Studies" (p. 126). For literary translation studies, deconstruction offers a valuable approach as it proposes a more critical and interpretive approach to the act of translation and allows for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the generative connection between the source and target texts, acknowledging the inherent play of language and the role of the translator as an active participant in the meaning-making process. While deconstruction may not be suitable for all contexts, its focus on the complexity of meanings, the translator's visibility, and

untranslatable elements enriches our understanding of the complex process of translation. Ultimately, deconstruction encourages a more critical, ethical, and context-sensitive approach to translation studies.

Translator's note and translator's visibility

> "I'm likely to be more interested in the complexities of translation than just about any of the book's readers." (Peter Montalbano as cited in Haemamool, 2009/2012, "Translator's Note", para. 9)

It is in the "Translator's Note" of *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi* (2012) that Peter Montalbano, the translator, discloses "a few of the problems encountered and how [he] approached them." ("Translator's Note", para. 3) The translation problems, listed in his "explanatory notes," echo the translator's awareness of the usual concern towards equivalence, especially when the translator himself posits: "A translation from one language to another can never be a one-to-one correspondence of words and phrases, as no two languages have identical sets of these. It often takes a great deal of ingenuity to even approximate the sense and feeling of one set with another" ("Translator's Note", para. 2). Apart from equivalence, the translator also recounts how he deals with the untranslatable. As he noted, "Thai expresses some subtleties of personal relationships in ways quite foreign to English. There are many words for 'you' and 'I,' for instance. … *I have tried to create consistencies of my own here* [emphasis added]. For instance, "Pu" and "Ya" are nearly always used here to refer to the most important set of paternal grandparents in the story, while all the others are called 'grandpa' or 'grandfather' and 'grandma' or 'grandmother'." ("Translator's Note," para. 8) Here, Montalbano acts not only as a translator but also as a critical reader of the source text.

The above foregrounding of the untranslatable and the translator's intervention also reveals the translator's traces and resists what Theo Hermans (1996) in his lecture entitled Translation's Other calls "the self-presentation of translation," which "requires that the translator's labour be, as it were, negated, or sublimated, and that all traces of the translator's intervention in the text be erased." Therefore, using the Translator's Note as a hint of a deconstructive translation at work, this paper thus aims to conduct a deconstructive analysis of *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi* by focusing on translation shifts that reveal the translator's agency and non-standard language translation that requires the translator's creative intervention, resulting in the translator's traces.

Shifts and translator's agency

Translation shifts are defined as "departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL" (Catford, 1965, p. 73). Shifts are expected to happen due to systematic differences between the source language and the target language. However, a number of these changes are not born out of necessity, and they come from translators' decisions that may be influenced by social, cultural, and professional norms. In a study of translation shifts and translator's style, Pekkanen (2007) observes, "Although shifting is part of the translation process, it is usually studied through its product; what happens in the process is identified by comparing the source and the target" (p. 3). Pekkanen's (2007) study also identifies three types of translation shifts: obligatory, optional, and non-shifts, all of which relate to the translator's agency, and "each category may increase or decrease the distance between the source and the target text." (p. 3) While obligatory shifts are unavoidable due to differences in language systems, optional shifts "may take place without any linguistic or cultural necessity" and "always involve the agency of the translator." (Pekkanen, 2007, pp. 3-4) A deconstructive analysis of literary translation may be able to consider shifts as traces of the translation process and the translator's visibility.

The English translation of Haemamool's novel sees optional shifts that may be deemed as the product of a deconstructive translation. One sign of shifts that may reveal the translator's agency is observed towards the end of the novel. Quoted below with back translation (BT) are sentences that echo the novel's thematic message pertaining to the dichotomy between truth and deception. In each, the English translation of the word "ความลวง" is rendered using different word choices as follows:

> SL: เพราะว่าทุกหนึ่งคำถามล้วนมีความตายอยู่ในหนึ่งคำตอบ ความตายของความจริง
>
> กับความลวง เราเลือกให้บางอย่างตายและเลือกให้บางอย่างดำรงอยู่ต่อไป
>
> (Haemamool, 2012, p. 442)
>
> BT: Because every single question has death in every single answer. Death of truth and deception. We choose some things to die and choose some things to live on.
>
> TL: That was partly because the answer to every question contains
>
> a death: the death of truth, or the death of *deception*. We choose for some things to die and some things to live on. (Haemamool, 2009/2012, p. 482)
>
> SL: "ผมเห็น...อย่างที่ประติมากรคนหนึ่งจะเห็น ผลงานของเขาในแท่งหินอ่อนก่อน

ลงมือแกะสลัก" สกัดความลวงออกไป เหลือไว้เพียงความงาม (Haemamool, 2012, p. 444)

BT: "I see…as a sculptor would see. His work in a marble block before beginning to carve it". Remove deception. Leave only beauty.

TL: "I see … what a sculptor would see. His own creation, within a block of marble, before he begins to sculpt." He sculpts out *what is misleading*, [emphasis added] leaving only beauty. (Haemamool, 2009/2012, p. 485)

From the two examples above, the first pair of SL-TL quotes demonstrates the added repetition of "the death of" in the TL, which not only gives emphasis but also eliminates structural ambiguity in the ST. In comparison, the second pair sees an optional shift in grammatical units wherein a single noun ความลวง, previously translated as "deception," is transformed into a noun phrase. The translation shift here is an example of a unit shift or a rank shift, in which "a translation equivalent of a unit in one rank in the SL is a unit in a different rank in the TL" (Catford, 1965, p. 79). The TL reveals how the SL is not a stable and closed system, and the translator's intervention is seen from his choice of an optional shift.

Further evidence of translation shifts may be observed in the translated title. From a poststructuralist perspective, one could interpret the original Thai title of the novel as linguistic sign play. Engaging with a cryptic novel title, Jaroonphon Porapakpralai (2009), in her critical article on the novel, analysed the original Thai title ลับแล แก่งคอย (*Lab Lae, Kaeng Khoi*) and discussed its several implications, including references to the main characters' names, the history of the two main settings (Lab Lae District in Uttaradit Province and Kaeng Khoi District in Sara Buri Province) located on the Mittraphap Road, and two special places of memory for the main characters' father. Porapakpralai's analysis of the novel's title reveals two main categories of meanings: one relating to the brother characters and the other to their father. Translated as "The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi," the English title sees a deconstructive translation at work with a translation shift called an "alteration," which may be seen as "a kind of *residual* [emphasis added] category for those shifts that are neither additions nor subtractions" (Cyrus, 2009, p. 94). With the subtraction of the word "Lab Lae" and addition of "brotherhood," the English title shows a "residual," a trace of the translation process and the translator's intervention. Moreover, when typically a subtraction of signifiers may result in a reduction of signified and meaning and vice versa for an addition, the "altered" title as a deconstructive trace multiplies its meanings and invites more interpretations. As a proper name, "Kaeng

Khoi" may refer to both the character and the place. The ambiguity posed by the proper name echoes Jacques Derrida's argument in his essay "Tower of Babel" (1985). In the discussion of the proper name "Babel", Derrida points out that the myth of the tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis not only narrates the birth of the multiplicity of languages but also signifies a failed attempt to construct a totalizing linguistic structure and a close system of language (Derrida, 1985, p. 165). The TL thus retains the SL title's sign play with the multiplicity of meanings derived from the ambiguity of the proper name.

The translator's decisions in employing different strategies to resolve the ambiguity in the ST can also be found elsewhere inside the novel. For example, in the Thai version, the narrator uses the noun *mae* or "mom" as a second or the third person pronoun, depending on the context. Evidence of the translator's invention in this aspect is found in the quote below:

SL: ผมอายุสิบห้าปีแล้ว โตพอที่จะเผชิญหน้ากับหลายสิ่งหลายอย่าง ผมจะ "หนี"
ไปไหนต่อไหนอีกทำไม ในเมื่อที่ผ่านมาผมเผชิญอะไรมาตั้งเยอะ แม่อยากตะเพิดผมไปไหน
หรืออยากให้ผมอยู่ในตำแหน่งหรือครรลองใด ก็ว่ามาเลย ผมกลัวเกรงหลายสิ่งหลายอย่าง
แต่ไม่เคยค้นพบเลยว่ากลัวเกรงแม่ จำไว้นะแม่ แม่เกรงกลัวพ่อยังไง
แม่ต้องรู้สึกเช่นเดียวกันกับผม ที่จริงแล้วการที่แม่ปิดตาผม
ซึ่งออกจะเป็นพฤติกรรมที่มุทะลุกึ่งเสียสติ แล้วขับรถพาผมขึ้นภูเขา
ก็เป็นการแสดงออกของท่าทีหนึ่งต่อการเกรงกลัวผมใช่มั้ยล่ะแม่ ทั้งยังพาผัวใหม่มาด้วย
และยายสีผู้หลักผู้ใหญ่น่านับถือในหมู่บ้านนั้นอีก
ทั้งหมดนี้เลยที่แม่พยายามไล่ต้อนและควบคุมตัวผมไว้ (Haemamool, 2012, p. 3)

BT: I was fifteen years old. Old enough to face many things. Why should I "escape" to anywhere when I have encountered all kinds of things? If mom wants to drive me away or put me in any position or on any path, just say it. I'm scared of a lot of things but I've never found myself scared of mom. Remember this. How mom was afraid of dad is how mom must feel towards me. In fact, mom's blindfolding me, which was a rather reckless and insane behaviour, and driving me up the mountain were an expression of fear towards me, is that right? Mom also brought along mom's new husband and Grandma See, a respectable elder from the village. All of these are ways mom tries to chase and take control of me.

TL: I was fifteen. Big enough to go head-to-head with a lot of things. So why would I "escape" from anywhere to go anywhere? If my mother wanted to drive me away, or put me in a different position or set me on a different path, well then,

let her say so. I was afraid of all sorts of things, but I'd never under any circumstances been scared of my own mother.

> *Think about that, Ma! You were afraid of Pa, right? I think you're just as afraid of me. Blindfolding me! Seriously, Ma. This kind of behavior doesn't make sense. It's crazy. Bringing me up to the mountain…this is because you're scared of me, isn't it, Ma? So you had to bring New Hubby along, too, and even Grandma See, this respectable senior from town. You're using them as pieces in your play to control my life.* (Haemamool, 2012, p. 3)

The above quote exemplifies the flexibility of the Thai language in a literary context, particularly how it allows fluid transitions between the narrator's interior monologue and dramatic monologue. The ambiguity of these shifts is seen as indicative of the absence of a fixed meaning in the text. The translator, however, attempts to differentiate between the narrator's internal thoughts and direct address to the mother by altering linguistic choices, such as translating "mae" (mom) as "you" and using formatting techniques like segmentation into smaller paragraphs and italicization. These shifts in translation not only affect the language but also reflect the translator's interpretive choices, which shape the way the text is understood while preserving the complexity of the source text (ST). Ultimately, all this highlights that translation is not just about transferring words but also involves conveying the multiplicity of meaning through stylistic devices like formatting and typography.

In general, translation strategies can be placed somewhere in between the spectrum of "domestication" and "foreignization", to use Venuti's terms (2008), in which the former aims towards familiarity and uninterrupted fluency in translated texts, whereas the latter exposes readers to the foreign, bringing them closer to the source language and culture. The translator's choice in keeping the word *Kaeng Khoi* in the title may also be considered an act of foreignization, and the translation shift here may also be referred to as "non-shifts," which according to Pekkanen (2007) are "parts of the text where no shift takes place (except for the change of language system) [and] may have shift-like impacts, since they involve the transfer of an unchanging element (e.g. sentence, clause, phrase, word, image or metaphor) into a different language and culture" (p. 3). Ultimately, such transference of unchanging linguistic elements may be seen as a "means of foreignization" (Pekkanen, 2007, p. 3). However, one may regard the English title as a hybridity, a space in between domestication (with the word Brotherhood) and foreignization, or alternatively this can be seen as a rupture, a gap between two polarities,

that represents the translator's agency and how the SL-TL boundary is breached.

Translator's traces and the politics of non-standard language translation

Deconstruction encourages a critical examination of the power dynamics embedded within language and culture. In the case of the translation of literary texts, there is one more challenge than in other text genres: how to translate a non-standard variety of a language. To carry the extralinguistic information across borders, the translator must break down the source text, study the mechanism of the non-standard language used in the story as well as in its cultural and political settings, find ways to reproduce in another language and reassemble the pieces to create similar effects of the source text to target readers in a whole new environment. Since there are no fixed practical guidelines regarding how to deal with non-standard language translation, it largely depends on translators' personal judgment.

In regard to the theorisation of non-standard language translation, one could also consider Assis Rosa (2012) who classified translation strategies into 3 types: normalization, centralization and decentralisation (p. 86). "Normalisation" standardizes the non-standard varieties by replacing the foreign, especially the less prestigious linguistic markers, with "positive-value options already available in the target-culture's repertoire" (Assis Rosa, 2012, p. 87); "centralisation" recreates the variety in the target language by substituting it with colloquialisms or substandard jargon (Assis Rosa, 2012, p. 89); "decentralisaton" turns a standard language variety into a local dialect, which has a lower-status, with a socio-political agenda. In addition, sometimes an artificial dialect is invented. "Eye dialect", as it is sometimes called, is "the introduction of changes in word spelling in order to portray the discourse as non-standard" (Ramos Pinto, 2009, p. 304) In this method, translators may use non-existent lexical items or syntactic patterns to create a "speech defect", which is a kind of linguistic deformation, but still largely adheres to the spelling and phonetic conventions of the target language (Berezowski, 1997). The creation of a synthetic "speech defect" pattern becomes one of the translator's key translation strategies in this English translation of Uthis Haemamool's novel.

Observably, in *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi* (Haemamool, 2009/2012), translating non-standard language is one of the main concerns for the translator. As he puts it: "Another problem for translation was the frequent use in dialogue of dialect and non-standard pronunciation. Even though such words and phrases are impossible to duplicate in English, they should not be ignored" ("Translator's Note", para. 5). Particularly, the

translator identifies one main character, the protagonist's mother, who "has a slight speech impediment, is uneducated, and is not completely comfortable with Central Thai speech." ("Translator's Note", para. 5) The translation strategy that he employed for the character's non-standard language is creation of a new speech pattern, as he declared, "I gave her a speech pattern designed to give a sense of those qualities, but in no way intended to imitate a real-life accent in English." ("Translator's Note" para. 5) To maintain such speech defect patterns, he opted for a replacement of "r" with "w", for example. This appears throughout the novel in most instances, such as "fwom" (p. 90), "wight" (p. 82), "pwoblem" (p. 451), "twouble" (p. 450), "evewything" (p. 460), "fwiend" (p. 470), et cetera.

Apart from those, one significant mispronounced Thai word is "ฟามกิง" (ความจริง or truth), which is identified by several critics as a main theme of the story. This mispronounced Thai word has been rendered in the English translation as "twuth." However, Chapter 41 in particular sees several appearances of the words "truth" and "true" in the standard English form. In several occurrences of "truth", instead of "twuth", in this chapter, one may be able to observe a deconstructive translation in these two specific sentences:

SL: "หนูจะบอกฟามกิง ฟามกิงทุกประการ" (Haemamool, 2012, p. 41)
BT: "I'm going to tell the twuth. All the twuth."
TL: "I'm gonna tell you the *twuth*. The *truth* about *everyfing*." (Haemamool, 2009/2012, p. 455, emphasis added)

SL: "ในเมื่อฟามกิงทั้งหมดเป็นอย่างที่หนูเล่าให้หลวงพ่อฟัง" (Haemamool, 2012, p. 421)
BT: "when all the twuth is as I told Luang Phaw.
TL: "So, 'cause this is all *true*, *evewything* I tell you now, Luang Phaw." (Haemamool, 2009/2012, p. 460, emphasis added)

In the sentences quoted above, the character's speech defect originally shown through the word "truth" is re-assigned to another word ('everything' which has been rendered "evewything" and "everyfing"). The translation strategy used here may recall a "compensation" which is one of the popular strategies in fiction translation according to Brodovich (1997), who further explains that it is when the translator ignores the non-standard language used in the source text in one place and then compensates by using a non-standard form of the target language in another place where it is not present in the source text (p. 27). This shows that the translator chooses to deliver the author's intention at the text level

instead of the sentence level; the non-standard source language gets shifted in location. Moreover, she also mentions "scenic dialect", a method in which the translator focuses on stereotypes associated with the non-standard variety in the source text and conveys them by using the target language's counterpart although it may create authenticity issues; for instance, a foreign character speaks a local Russian dialect (Brodovich, 1997, p. 28). However, in *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi,* the translator did not employ the scenic dialect method but opted to create a new speech pattern that reflects the language of an uneducated and lower-class mother who is not of Central Thai origin.

Through a deconstructive analysis of the translated sentences above, these optional shifts may also be noted as an act of deconstructive translation that reveals how meanings may be deferred and spilled over. As noted above, the binary between truth and deception lies at the heart of the novel, especially in Chapter 41, from where the quotes above are taken, in which the revelation of truth about the brothers' identity is at the axis. Since non-standard signs are used to signify the marginalised status of the mother character whose speech defect undermines her ability to fully vocalise her truth, when the speech defect is assigned to the signifier "everything" instead of "truth", it allows a full presence of "truth" as a significant sign. Additionally, by making this optional shift, the translator maintains the tension between truth and deception, as well as the uncertainty about the truthfulness of the mother's narrative. The trace of "twuth" that is present in "everyfing", therefore, makes the translator's traces visible.

Conclusion: translator as a creative collaborator

> The contemporary translator is a paradoxical hybrid, at once dilettante and artisan.
> (Venuti, 1992, p. 1)

> Let's leave it here: *writing this translation* [emphasis added] has been like piecing together a grand and fascinating puzzle, and it's enjoyable to finally stand back and see the finished product."
> (Peter Montalbano as cited in Haemamool, 2012, "Translator's Note")

This analysis of the English translation of *The Brotherhood of Kaeng Khoi* proves an interesting case where ambiguity and the urge for clarity co-exist. The translator's identity, perhaps along with traces of his struggle, is not invisible but ever present, from the Translator's Note on the first page to the Glossary section on the last page. Besides adding new

layers of meaning to the novel in his handling of the book's title and non-standard language, his translation shifts can shape how the text is read and interpreted. His foreignizing strategies invite readers to a land of unfamiliar names and cultural references, trying to bring them closest to the source, yet at the same time, he creates his own language style that creates a reading experience for international readers that is different from Thai counterparts. While Pekkanen (2007) compares author-translator collaboration that contains optional shifts in linguistics and styles to a duo performance of two vocal artists (p. 1), a deconstructive approach allows us to examine the dynamic chain of meaning that happens in interlingual translation as well as highlighting the active roles of a translator as a firsthand reader, interpreter, and creative author while liberating the text from the binary opposition paradigm (Ma, 2020), corresponding with Kiaer's (2019) assertion: "translators should be seen as co-authors of their TTs, alongside the ST authors" (p. 87). Montalbano's conclusion (as cited in Haemamool, 2012) in the Translator's Note: "And most of all, many thanks are due to the author, Uthis Haememool [sic], first of all for giving us this unique and significant work, and then for having such patience with me as I slowly pieced together this grand puzzle of his" (para. 11) confirms this notion. Although in most parts the translation product aims to represent the author's thoughts and intentions, a closer look at this finished jigsaw puzzle will reveal evident traces of the person who glued the pieces together.

Throughout history, translators have played the role of a rewriter who "created images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, sometimes even a whole literature. These images existed side by side with the realities they competed with, but the images always tended to reach more people than the corresponding realities did" so their significance in the evolution of literature and human society is undeniable (Lefevere, 2016, p. 4). This is how translation studies can contribute to the effort in promoting a small country's art and culture on the international scale that goes beyond merely providing temporary access to a foreign language but nurturing and sustaining the world literary ecosystem.

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