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# ARUNDHATI ROY IN THAI: COMPROMISING THE LINGUISTIC HYBRIDITY IN TRANSLATION

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## **Abstract**

The article examines the Thai translations of Arundhati Roy's novels, *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which feature linguistic hybridity that addresses the complex, intermingling realities of the former colonized space. Using Klinger's (2015) concepts of symbolic and iconic hybridity to explain the motivation behind the use of non-standard language in Roy's postcolonial novels and their Thai translations, this article argues that the Thai versions fell short of retaining a reasonable degree of linguistic hybridity because the translator chose a compromising method of making Roy's novels more understandable to Thai readers. By compromising, the translator used a specific method of transliterating Pali-Sanskrit etymological terms, a cushioning strategy, and footnotes. The translations appear to contradict the author's viewpoint on the dynamics of core and periphery languages. Multicultural expressions that are meant to symbolically represent different levels of power in the real world are ignored, thereby failing to convey Roy's intention of defying former colonial monolingual practice and breaking free from such a legacy.

## **Key words**

*Arundhati Roy; linguistic hybridity; postcolonial literature; Thai; translation*

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## **1. Hybridity and translation**

Hybridity is one of the concepts associated with postcolonialism that were developed to investigate the consequences of territories falling under the rule of European powers. Hybridity poses a revolutionary question to the form of intercultural relations within the "contact zone" established by the rulers. This "boundaries" metaphor can be seen in various forms of arts, especially literature (Ashcroft et al. 2002: 179–180). Homi Bhabha, a postcolonial thinker, published an important compilation book, *The Location of Culture* (1994), which described the cultural relationship between the colonized and colonial lords. He views hybridity as a synthesis of ethnicity and culture, a significant phenomenon that occurs and is rooted in a colonial worldview (Bhabha 1994: 3–4). The essence of hybridity is the belief that cultural identity is constructed in the middle, making cultural purity difficult to achieve. If we accept the existence of cultural identities, we

can identify cultural differences that occur regularly in what Bhabha referred to as the “Third Space”. When “Third Space” is prioritized, the colonizers’ former cultural myth can be disrupted. The meanings or symbols of various cultures are never fixed, but all seem to be adaptable, interpretable, and re-readable to give way for deconstruction and reinterpretation of colonial discourses.

For this article, this “Third Space” is rich in multicultural meanings, which underscore the importance of hybridity in the case studies of this research. The meaning of cultures in the middle area cannot come about if there is no language as a medium, either the colonial language or the local language of the colonized. Through the use of various “languages” or the language of colonizers that tinkered with those of the colonized, hybridity in postcolonial writing is thus a representative of identity, political thought, and equally racial protests (e.g., Knepper 2006; Bandia 2014; Hunsu 2014; Dibava et al. 2022).

Regarding hybridity in literature and its translation, Spivak (1992/2012) expresses her concerns about the distortion and ideological consequences of translating “Third World” literature into a “hegemonic” language. Translations into these languages frequently fail to extract discrepancies between the locals’ points of view due to the translator’s domestication of eastern elements into the former colonizer’s language repertoire to make it understandable to the West. Similarly, Niranjana (1992: 33), a poststructuralist, maintains that power relations are the central concept of postcolonial translation, and literary translation is a type of discourse that reflects the ideological mechanisms that represent colonialist hegemonic views and stance. Translation has historically been used by colonial powers to create a rewritten image of the colonized that is presented as truth. Niranjana (1992: 167, 173) contends that postcolonial translators and translation studies scholars should question every aspect of colonialism and liberal nationalism and employ an interventionist approach to express the true self of the East, which was heretofore exploited by the unjustified perception of Western-oriented translators.

Following its introduction to the field, numerous studies have used the concept of hybridity to discuss the translation cycles of Western colonized societies all over the world. Tymoczko (1999) examines the literary works of Irish writers/translators in the context of British rule and its consequences throughout the nineteenth century. Bandia (2014) explores an intercultural writing practice (with features such as vulgarisms) that challenges the canons of colonial linguistic propriety through the duplicity of linguistic and cultural norms in African literature written in European languages (the former colonizers). Similarly, Bertacco (2013) claims that European writers’ writings have a multilingual aura, particularly in the language of the colonized region. Writing in English when English is not the writer’s first language allows for an expansion of minds, belief systems, and the possibilities of language shifting. Chittiphalangsri (2014) returns to the concept of Orientalism and sees postcolonial translation as a process in which virtue and power are negotiated to obtain the position of Western legitimacy in representing the East. Rafael (2016) explores the concept of mother tongues in the postcolonial Philippines in the contexts of revolution, war, and societal development.

The abovementioned studies of language, literature, and postcolonialism all emphasize power, whether it is the oppression of indigenous peoples with their

standard language or the struggle against former colonizers with their own dialect. All of this is consistent with Bassnett's (2014: 81–82) belief that it is necessary to consider the text's power relationships because language is the medium of communication, and both the original and the culture expressed in the text have different levels of power. Some cultures are regarded as marginalized while others have advantages over others, owing to political factors resulting from the colonial past.

However, when discussing translation and the postcolonial era in other contexts, it may appear distant from a society such as Thailand, which was never officially ruled by the West.<sup>1</sup> When considering the aforementioned counterpoints to the power of language in postcolonial writings and translations, it is worth asking whether the translation of such literature into Thai will be consistent with the writer's linguistic hybridity. To reflect the use of such a language by postcolonial writers, Phanthaphoommee (2015) proposes an experimental approach to translating postcolonial literature into Thai, borrowing Bhabha's hybridity and calling Thai translations "ultra-hybridity".

This research aims to further investigate the use of language that reflects hybridity in the translation of postcolonial literature into Thai and raises questions about whether and how the insertion of vernaculars into the source texts (STs) was passed on. To illustrate the point, the author delves into the two translations of Arundhati Roy's novels, in which postcolonial ideology is evident in her original writings. To analyze the data, the study uses the framework of linguistic hybridity proposed by Susanne Klinger (2015), which will be explained in the next section.

## 2. Linguistic hybridity in postcolonial literature

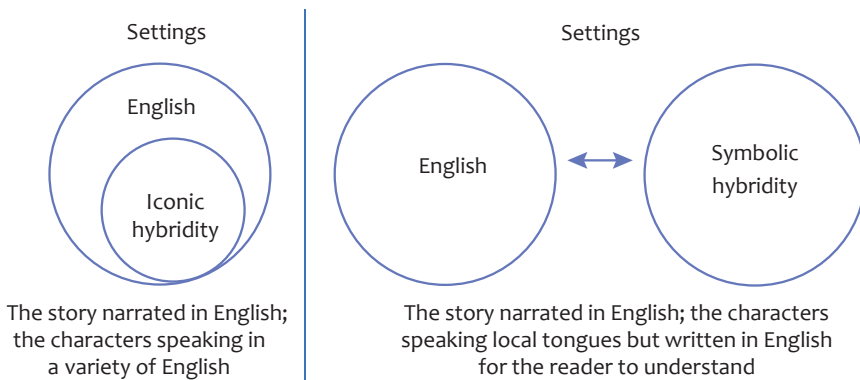
Fiction is the art of presenting versions of reality, with language as an important part of the fictional world. The writer creates an illusion of "reality" for the reader to follow (Fowler 1989: 12–17). The narrative in fiction frequently consists of two layers of truth, the first of which is the "reality" of the world presented, and the second is the understanding that the first layer is being presented (Fludernik 2009: 21). The represented story-world is therefore transmitted through the use of text-level language or the language that the reader sees on the page.

Drawing upon the above concept of reality representation in fiction, Klinger (2015: 12–13) proposes two types of language used in postcolonial literary writing by discussing the aspects of language as "medium" and "object". On the one hand, language is used as a *medium* in a novel with a story set in a foreign land, where the characters do not speak English, but the author writes in English so that readers can understand what they exchange in the story. As a result, despite the characters' use of another language in the "reality of the fictitious world", there is another world in which the characters seemed to speak English. On the other hand, language as an *object* appears in a novel, the context of which is set in English according to the "real world", with some dialects or language variations being used in the characters's dialogue.

The aforementioned qualities are types of *linguistic hybridity* that serve to represent the characters, but they are derived from different motivations in the writ-

er’s storytelling (Klinger 2015: 19–21). Language as a medium is *symbolic hybridity* or the employment of other languages to narrate the tale instead of the characters’ native tongue. The language employed in fiction (i.e., written in English for international readers) is thus only a “medium”, not a state in which languages are genuinely hybridized. Language as an object, on the other hand, is *iconic hybridity* or the result of “self-translation”, in which the characters in the fiction or the narrator show the reader the uniqueness in language use as the story progresses. The ensuing hybridity becomes an “object” to be elevated for readers to view. According to Klinger (2015: 21), this form of hybridity is the result of the author’s presentation of the character’s language use in real-life settings, such as switching between local dialects and English in conversations.

Klinger (2015: 136) relies on Semino’s (2002: 97) work in differentiating the reading effects for each type of linguistic hybridity. Symbolic hybridity conveys to the reader the ethnic groups’ viewpoints and ways of thinking as a whole, whereas iconic hybridity presents the mind-style of characters on an individual or small-group level, but is not representative of the entire ethnic group. Symbolic hybridity denotes the existence of a group-specific linguistic norm, another language buried within the realm of fiction. Iconic hybridity implies that there is a language that deviates from the linguistic norm of the fictional world and that there are many forms of English in the physical realm. The link between the two types of linguistic hybridity and the English language norm is depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Relationship between linguistic hybridity and the English language norm, adapted from Klinger (2015: 142)

When the novelist emphasizes the characters’ ability to speak a variety of English, iconic hybridity distinguishes the characters from the fictitious world’s linguistic norms, which is the dominant standard (in this case, standard English), outlining the character’s personality and mental state. Symbolic hybridity, on the other hand, does not refer to the diversity of English but to another language that coexists in the world of fiction and is represented through the characters’ English words.

Symbolic hybridity indicates the character's ethnic traits, cultural beliefs, and ethnic living conditions, or what Klinger (2015: 144) calls an ideational point of view. In contrast, iconic hybridity conveys his/her educational background or social class; it can only be reflected through the use of the individual or group-specific language, such as pidgin; or what Klinger (2015: 158) calls the character's mind-style. Furthermore, symbolic hybridity highlights a group's identity, which reflects "otherness", whereas iconic hybridity stresses the in-betweenness, particularly in postcolonial literature written in English. This means that the characters have the option of speaking both their mother tongue and English, which somehow reflects the concept of "mimicry"—the ruled wishing to mimic the colonial ruler's language, but with an attempt that was bound to be ineffective (Bhabha 1994: 123).

To analyze the writing that demonstrates a character's ideational point of view in a postcolonial novel, Klinger (2015: 14) suggests employing Stenberg's (1981) four strategies of "translational mimesis". This concept includes the following elements: (1) explicit attribution, stating clearly what language the character is speaking in the text; (2) conceptual reflection, preserving socio-cultural world-views of the colonized; (3) verbal transposition, employing grammatical irregularities or ill-formed sentences; and (4) selective reproduction, scattering the text with words or phrases representing the foreign aspects.

Regarding the character's mind-style that implies iconic hybridity, Klinger (2015: 51) maintains that linguistic variations of English (e.g., dialects) are one of the crucial discourse features in the literature to represent a character's speech, as well as educational background and social status. These linguistic variations in postcolonial literature are often intertwined with the concept of *code-switching*; the author frequently employs it to avoid the challenge of writing in the language of the former oppressors or restricting the audience of their texts by writing solely in their native language. According to Weston and Gardner-Chloros (2015: 199), using code-switching in this manner is not so far removed from real-world language that it cannot be confirmed by the reader's deductive reasoning.

Some scholars have proposed various approaches for research related to the translation of languages that deviate from the standard language in the text, such as translating dialects or dialects following the ideology and way of thinking of the characters (Berezowski 1997; Määttä 2004, Szymańska 2017), language variations by region and social status (Pinto 2009, Rosa 2012), or corpus studies of individualized language variation (Baker 2004). These studies mainly focus on translation strategies or categorization of linguistic variations in general literature by looking at how the language is formed or deviated, rather than the reason behind the novelist's insertion of local terms into the ST.

However, this study aims to explain the likely motivation for such a way of using language in postcolonial literature through the characters' language circumstances, which has a strong anti-colonial implication. Therefore, the use of symbolic and iconic hybridity that mirrors the characters' language use in postcolonial novels is an important aspect of this research. It tries to answer whether the hybridized elements offered in the source texts will be pronounced or eclipsed in the target texts if translated from English into Thai. Will the Thai translations

succeed in capturing the original characters' ideational point of view and mind-style?

### 3. Arundhati Roy and the language used in her novels

Arundhati Roy, one of the most well-known postcolonial writers, has fought colonial language hegemony in her writings, twisting it into a form of symbolic refutation. She aspires to subsume English within her defined parameters of Indian vernaculars and to recreate the voice of Indian people who were brought up under the influence of English (Reyes Torres 2011: 203). In her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), Roy reveals her linguistic flexibility and fosters pastiche with phrases by experimenting with various word forms, which, to a greater extent, reaffirms Bhabha's potential meaning for hybridity (Tickell 2003: 80). The novel established Roy's linguistic creativity and uniqueness in the caste society of India and was praised as the voice of the periphery (Boehmer 2009: 161). Her redefining of English empowers her to deliver a wide range of themes and character types, as well as suggest alternative narratives that denounce and undermine the colonizers' outmoded superiority. Her novel encourages the development of hybrid morals, reinforces ethnic heritage, and enhances a sense of isolation from the reader's mother tongue all at the same time (Reyes Torres 2011: 195).

Furthermore, Roy's use of Indian vernaculars in her fiction is intended to support her political viewpoints. The language used in her writings encompasses several subcontinental tongues to uphold them from marginalization by both the colonizer's language and the dominant Hindi. Her writing manages to challenge monolingual society with multilingual truths (Ross 2019). English, instead, has the mere function of serving as a bridge, allowing different Indian languages to communicate with one another. Roy's multilingualism helps her to offer the prospect of writing novels in hegemonic English that depict a simple yet multicultural world of characters (Neumann 2021). This is, again, consistent with Bhabha's hybridity, which represents the point at which colonial discourse can no longer hold on to its sole authoritative meanings (Bhabha 1994: 155). Likewise, her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), was developed from a particular viewpoint about particular individuals, interwoven with several languages. As Roy (2018) puts it herself, "[this novel] is a story that emerges out of an ocean of languages, in which a teeming ecosystem of living creatures—official-language fish, unofficial-dialect mollusks, and flashing shoals of word-fish—swim around, some friendly with each other, some openly hostile, and some outright carnivorous" (para. 14). Her story depicts a universe of "translation"; the characters must "swim around in an ocean of exquisite imperfection" (para. 15), endlessly translating each other and keeping in mind that those who share a language may not truly understand each other.

According to Roy (2018), *The Ministry* has been translated into 48 languages. This means that translators must deal with a text that has been interlaced with various Indian dialects and varieties of English, and render such a mixture into another language that may have been merged with other languages in the same

way as Indian. This leads to the concept of compromising on hybridity, which the present study seeks to investigate. This article pays special attention to the linguistic hybridity, or Roy's "ocean of language" that has been translated into Thai by the same translator, to see if there is any change in motivation to pass on such mixed forms of English and if there are any features of the Thai language that append to the target texts.

Roy's first novel was translated into Thai, *Thepphachao haeng sing lek-lek*, in 2007 and has been reprinted more than three times, while the second was translated, *Krasuang suk sut-sut*, in 2020 by the same translator, Sotsai (a pen name). For the data analysis, this article compares both the source texts and their translations, applying Klinger's framework, as explained in the previous section, to dissect the translations of infused localism in both novels. The findings are discussed in light of the idea of translating multilingual pastiche and the complexity of coexisting languages in literature into Thai as the only official language in such a monolingual society like Thailand (see also Techawongstien and Chittiphalangriri 2023; Techawongstien and Phanthaphoommee 2022), to see how their translator communicates such an idea to a new target reader who may not be in the same situation as those who were subjected to colonial rule.

#### 4. Re-presentation of symbolic and iconic hybridity in Thai

After analyzing both novels in light of Klinger's (2015) framework, we can observe various aspects of symbolic and iconic hybridity in *The God* and *The Ministry*. They both have scenes where characters can switch between the local language and English, implying iconic hybridity. There are also scenes in which the narrator (third-person omniscient) uses English to describe what characters say to each other in dialects, with some Indian linguistic features, or uses English as a medium to show how the character sees the world through the lens of their culture, implying symbolic hybridity. This section looks at Thai translations of the aforementioned linguistic hybridity to see if the translator can retain the novelist's motivation for using such unique linguistic features in the final translated text. I shall begin with shifts in the character's ideational point of view, then move on to the character's mind-style.

##### 4.1 Shift in ideational point of view

Symbolic hybridity, according to Klinger (2015: 144–145), may not seek to highlight a specific language variation but rather to create an imaginative language with no real-world equivalents, which is required for much of the appropriate approach to translation. Symbolic hybridity strategies, namely explicit attribution, selective reproduction, verbal transposition, and conceptual reflection (Sternberg 1981), can be imitated in the new language as a medium.

To begin with, most educated characters in *The God* tend to be bilingual (fluent in their native language and English). Lower-class characters, on the other hand, would only speak one language. The explicit attribution is quite clear in



this novel; Roy frequently reminds the reader when the characters are about to switch between English and Indian vernaculars. For example, Comrade Pillai, a minor character, can easily alternate between speaking in English and Malayalam. Typically, this is determined by explicitly stating in the story what language the character is using. This does not present a problem if the translator follows the author's line of thought when describing how the character's language changes. Nonetheless, the Thai translation contains an intriguing pattern that hints at specific values.

- (1) ST: 'My own wife. Of course inside the house, she is Boss.' He turned to her with an affectionate, naughty smile. '*Allay edi, Kalyani?*'  
Kalyani looked down and smile, coyly acknowledging her bigotry (Roy 1997: 278)  
ST: 'เมียของผมแท้ๆ แน่นอน เธอคือนายใหญ่ในบ้าน' เขาหันไปมองเธออย่างรักใคร่ ยิ้มมีเลศนัย 'หรือมิใช่ ละ อีกัลยานี' (Roy 2007: 310)  
BT: ['My real wife, of course, she's the boss of the house.' He turned to look at her lovingly, smiling mischievously, '*Isn't it E-Kalyani?*']

In this example, the author characterizes Comrade Pillar by allowing him to speak both Malayalam and English, demonstrating his irony and power over his wife: *Allay edi, Kalyani?* However, this particular phrase that reflects Comrade Pillar's domineering behavior is highlighted in the Thai version, not by transliteration but by literal translation of the Indian phrase into Thai: 'Isn't it, E-Kalyani?'. The translator inserts a pejorative phatic term อี, pronounced [i], before the character's name, further emphasizing the female character's derogatory value. With this added negative sense, the translation appears to even more demonstrate Comrade Pillar's authority in knowing more than one language and exerting firm control over his wife.

While there are numerous instances of explicit attribution in Roy's first novel, most of this strategy is not obviously used in *The Ministry* to demonstrate the character's different education and social background. The author, instead, allows all of the English and dialect-speaking elements to flow from one character to the next without clearly indicating which language they are using.

The second approach is selective reproduction, which in multilingual scenes is distinguished by unexpected remarks from characters in their dialogues. However, if a local expression becomes widely used and immediately glossed, it is not considered linguistic hybridity because translators provide meanings in English to make it intelligible for readers (Klinger 2015: 31). Although *The God* contains several instances of selective reproduction without glossing, they are often followed by the translator's explanation.

- (2) ST: They demanded not to be addressed as Achoo *Parayan*, or Kelan *Paravan*, or Kuttan *Pulayan*, but just as Achoo, or Kelan or Kuttan. (Roy 1997: 69)  
TT: ขอลาย่าให้เรียกคนเหล่านี้ ท่านอง อาจู ปารายัน เคลัน ปราวัน หรือกุดตัน ปุลา ยัน ขอให้เรียกแค่นี้คือ อาจู, เคลัน หรือ กุดตัน เท่านั้น (Roy 2007: 79)

BT: [Don't call these people like Achoo *Parayan*, Kelan *Paravan* or Kuttan *Pulayan*. Call them by name Achoo, Kelan or Kuttan only]

The translator managed to transliterate the names of caste people in India, as in ปารายัน for *Parayan*, ปาราวัน for *Paravan*, and ปุลาโยัน for *Pulayan*. However, although the ST simply inserts those cultural reference items without defining them, the translator assists the target reader in understanding their context by including a footnote to explain the discrepancy between the terms: ปารายัน, ปาราวัน, ปุลาโยัน ล้วนหมายถึงผู้มีอาชีพขึ้นต้นมะพร้าว 'Parayan, Paravan, Pulayan all refer to those who work as coconut tree climbers'.

Furthermore, the Indian dialects, which is selectively reproduced in the English source text but omitted in the Thai translation, causes the character's worldview to shift.

(3a) ST: *Inquilab Zindabad! Thozhilali Ekta Zindabad!*  
'Long Live the Revolution!' they shouted. 'Workers of the World Unite!' (Roy 1997: 66)

TT: การปฏิวัติจงเจริญ! กรรมกรทั่วโลกผนึกกำลัง!  
พวกเขาตะโกน (Roy 2007: 75)

BT: [Long Live the Revolution! Workers around the world join forces!  
They shout.]

(3b) ST: '*Chacko Saar vannu,*' the travelling whisper went. (Roy 1997: 171)

TT: 'จ๊กโก กลับมาแล้ว' เสียงกระซิบเดินทางไปที่ (Roy 2007: 195)

BT: '*Chacko is back,*' whispers traveled around

The translation procedures in Example 3 are similar in that the translation fails to retain the selective reproduction of the Indian phrases that the author attempts to use without providing an immediate explanation in English for them. In (3a), the author introduces the slogan *Inquilab Zindabad! Thozhilali Ekta Zindabad!* being shouted by a group of angry protesters marching down the street as the protagonist's car drives by, and defines it in the character's dialog in the line that follows. The translator, however, only retains the definition and does not transliterate the Indian phrases into Thai in order to blend the foreignness into the Thai version as the ST does. Likewise, in (3b), the selective reproduction of the Indian phrase is placed between the lines of the ST without immediate explanation, implying the presence of this particular character among the Indian community where English is not the norm. However, the translator keeps only the meaning without providing a transcription of the phrase, as the ST attempts to demonstrate: *Chacko Saar vannu* (ST) and จ๊กโก กลับมาแล้ว 'Chacko is back' (TT).

The cushioning strategy of providing the English gloss of foreign terms and phrases is also used in *The Ministry*. In the original, Roy reproduces the entire words of the local language by using the Roman alphabet and translating them into English. The Thai translation follows suit, transliterating the local phrases and translating the English translation of those phrases into Thai.

- (4) ST: ‘Doodh maangoey to kheer dengey! **Kashmir** maangoey to chiir dengey!’ Ask for milk, we’ll give you cream! Ask for **Kashmir**, we’ll rip you open seam to seam! (Roy 2017: 103)  
 TT: ‘ดูธ มานโก เก โต ชีร์ เดงเก! **กัศมีร์** มานเก เก โต จีร์ เดงเก!’ ขอนมเราจะให้ครีม! ขอ**แคชเมียร์** เรา จะฉีกอกมัน เป็นริ้วๆ (Roy 2020: 120)  
 BT: [‘Dut mango ke to khi denke! **Gasami** Mangke ke to Chira denge!’ Ask for milk, we’ll give you cream! Ask for **Khaetchamia**, we’ll tear it apart.]

The above excerpt is an angry chant from a side character concerning the Kashmir dispute. The case is interesting because, although the translator retains the local element by transliterating the Indian dialect into Thai, the Thai equivalent of *Kashmir* arises in two forms: กัศมีร์, pronounced [ga-sa-mi], and แคชเมียร์, pronounced [khaet-cha-mia]. The first is a transcription using a specific set of Thai alphabets, which has long been adopted into the Thai literary canon and conveys a sense of grandeur and archaic, whereas the second, which has emerged in recent writings, sounds more modern and up-to-date.

Overall, the translation of Roy’s second novel seems to contain a larger number of transliteration than her first. However, Example 5 is noteworthy for it reveals the transliteration of an Urdu term but with two different ways of referring to it.

- (5) ST: The hex that had been put on Zainab had made the whole world sick. This was powerful *sifli jaadu* ...  
 In order to better understand the politics of the Duniya that the Bandicoot was growing up in, as well as to neutralize or at least pre-empt the educated Saeeda’s *sifli jaadu* (Roy 2017: 40–41)  
 TT: มนต์ดำที่เป่าใส่ไซหนับทำให้โลกป่วยไข้ไปด้วย *มนตร์*นี้มีอำนาจนัก ... เพื่อให้เข้าใจการเมืองของโลกที่หนูกเคยโต และเพื่อกำราบ หรืออย่างน้อยก็ ชะง่อนนา*สิฟลี จาดู* – *มนตร์*ของ ชาติตาผู้มีการศึกษา (Roy 2020: 53)  
 BT: [The black magic that was blown on Zainab made the world sick as well. This *magic* is powerful ...  
 To understand the politics of the world where Nu Puk grew up and to subdue, or at least, surpass *sifli jaadu* - the *magic* of the educated Saeeda]

To render *sifli jaadu* into Thai, the translator incorporates both glossing (มนตร์ ‘magic’) and transliteration (สิฟลี จาดู) in the same passage. This implies that, while the translator attempts to use a specific method of transcribing Indian languages (cf. Example 4 above and Example 10 below), it is quite limited to only languages well known to Thai people. Pali-Sanskrit or Hindi are acceptable, but not Urdu, which is far more unrelated to Thai culture. The first group shares many aspects of Buddhist philosophy, which arrived in Southeast Asia as early as the 3rd century BCE.

The third strategy is verbal transposition, which does not appear in phrases with just multiple voices but rather hints at its qualities through the medium of English narrative. It is evidenced by the narrator’s erroneous use of English,

which defies established grammatical rules (Sternberg 1981: 228). In *The God*, examples of verbal transposition can be found in the story's description rather than in the speech of the characters. Roy combines rhyme and rhythm, as well as portmanteau and linguistic rearrangement, to reflect the imaginative approach to the language of the twin child protagonists, Estha and Rahel. Syntactical distortion is the first sub-type of verbal transposition found in *The God*. When the novel's young protagonists return to India, they showcase their linguistic innovation by experimenting with sentences and words, merging English with native syntactical formations and breaking them to resist the logic of English grammar.

- (6) ST: And the airport itself! More like the local bus depot! The birdshit on the building! Oh the spit stains on the kangaroos!  
*Oho! Going to the dogs India is.* (Roy 1997: 140)  
 TT: สนามบินก็เหมือนกัน! ยังกะทารกโดยสาร! อาคารเปรอะซึ้นก! โธ่เอ๊ย! จิงโจ้เลอะน้ำหมาก!  
*โอย! อินเดีย เข้าปากหมาไปแล้วแน่ๆ* (Roy 2007: 160)  
 BT: [The airport is the same! Like a bus terminal! The building is dirty with birdshit!  
 Oh! The kangaroo is dirty with spitting chew!  
 Oho! **India has gone into the dog's mouth for sure!**]

In (6), when the character arrives at the Indian airport, he exclaims, *Going to the dogs India*, exhibiting the irregularity of forming an English sentence. The Thai version completely misses such nuanced manipulation of English since the translator appears unable to attain the similar degree of irregularity: อินเดีย เข้าปากหมาไปแล้วแน่ๆ 'India has gone into the dog's mouth for sure'. This might be related to the fact that the Thai language, particularly spoken discourse, allows for the swapping of terms in a clause; the sentence does not have to follow the subject-verb-object structure. The listener/reader can anaphorically or cataphorically infer the subject or object from the co-text regardless of its location in a clause (see also Aroonmanakun 2000; Phanthaphoommee, 2022).

The next sub-type is lexical deviance, which is the incorrect use of linguistic forms that occurs during word formation, either as a result of a character's faulty interpretation or the narrator's deliberate error.

- (7a) ST: 'Thang God,' Estha said ...  
 Their Prer NUN sea ayshun was perfect. (Roy 1997: 154)  
 TT: 'ขอบใจ พระเจ้า' เอสธาว่า ...  
*เสียงเพลงพลิวักังวานดังลมทะเล ตามลีลาแม่ชีเก่า สมบูรณ์แบบ* (Roy 2007: 175)  
 BT: ['Thanks, God,' Estha said ...  
**The music flows like the sea breeze in the style of an old nun, perfect!**]
- (7b) ST: Margaret Kochamma told her to **Stoppit**.  
 So she **Stoppited**. (Roy 1997: 141)

- TT: มาร์กาเรต โกจัมมาบอกเธอว่า **หยุดเดี๋ยวนี้**  
เธอ **หยุดเดี๋ยวนี้** (Roy 2007: 161)  
BT: Margaret Kochamma told her to **stop it right now**  
She **stopped there at once**.

In (7a), the author presents the twin protagonist's English speaking by misspelling *Thang God* in order to reflect the variation of pronunciation that is prevalent among Indians who are still influenced by their native tongue. The Thai translation, however, cannot maintain this flavor of localism. The translator merely depicts the character to speak in an improper register (ขอบใจ 'thanks'), which is supposed to be used for those of lower social status. On the same page, the translator is, again, unable to keep the playing with sound in *Prer NUN sea ayshun* but attempts to translate it word-for-word (แมชชีเกา 'ancient nun' for *Prer NUN* and ดั่งลมทะเล 'like the sea breeze' for *sea ayshun*) with additional information to compensate for those untranslated terms (เสียงเพลงพลิ้วกังวาน 'the music flows').

Another form of the narrator's deliberate error that cannot be retained in the Thai translation and fails to construe the same meaning is shown in (7b), where the twin child protagonists play with the terms *Stoppit* and *Stoppited*. Typically, Thai does not denote tense or aspect with the conjugation of verbs. The translator then uses different viewpoints and alliteration with the terms **เดี๋ยวนี้** 'right now' and **เดี๋ยวนี้** 'there at once', but with different spatiotemporal connotations between the two.

In *The Ministry*, the endeavor to Indianize English hegemony is distinguished by its dismissal as an external, superficial international language. For instance, the author employs English in a localized form to reject the portrayal of a single reality. The patterns and grammatical features of Hindi and Urdu in the novel, particularly in the repetitions of words and phrases, demonstrate that English variation cannot be reduced to a single and confined language (Neuman 2021: 92–96). These Indianized attributes, however, appear to be lost in Thai translation.

- (8) ST: Sleeping bodies of homeless people lined their high, narrow pavements, **head to toe, head to toe, head to toe** (Roy 2017: 96)  
TT: คนไร้บ้านนอนเหยียดยาวรายเรียงบนทางเท้าสูงๆ แคบๆ **ไกลสุดตา** (Roy 2020: 112)  
BT: [The homeless lay sprawled on tall, narrow sidewalks **as far as the eye could see**]

In many instances, we can observe that the repetition mirrors how the locals perceived their surroundings. In Example 8, repetition is used to describe the protagonist's inner thoughts about the countless homeless people on the street. This does not appear to be a problem because the Thai translation can exactly describe such a recurrence. However, the translator may occasionally lower the significance of repetition by expressing it in more idiomatic Thai writing, which inevitably modifies the narrator's original perspective of the scene: *head to toe, head to toe, head to toe* (ST) and **ไกลสุดตา** 'as far as the eye could see' (TT). Fur-

thermore, the vernacularized forms of auxiliary are also employed to suggest the malleability of English.

- (9) ST: Because Miss Jebeen, Miss Udaya Jebeen, was come (Roy 2017: 438)  
 TT: เพราะมิสเจเบิน มีสุท้ย เจเบิน มาแล้ว (Roy 2020: 496)  
 BT: [Because Miss Jebeen, Miss Udaya Jebeen has come]

This phrase appears as the novel's final line, demonstrating the syntactical deviation from standard English. The Thai version read as if nothing had been changed from *was come* into มาแล้ว 'has come'. Due to its flexible nature in phrasal formation in the Thai language, the structure of the TT does not exhibit any trace of standard departure from the Thai written discourse (cf. Example 6).

The last approach for symbolic hybridity is conceptual reflection. Cultural references and social conventions are two examples that contribute to the novel's alienness in the reader's imagination. It does not, however, give visible displays of the foreign language in place of the author's purposeful representation of the novel's underpinning socio-cultural traditions and "semantic mapping of reality" (Stenberg 1981: 230). This strategy (which encompasses proverbs, folklore, and addressing terms) is a trick that lies between text and the physical world. There are certain instances in *The God* where the translator adopts the Thai writing style for terminology that originated from the subcontinent, which has long been entrenched in Thai written discourse. This is unique to terms that have an etymological root in Pali-Sanskrit.

- (10) ST: The marchers that day were party workers, students, and the labourers themselves. **Touchable and Untouchables**. (Roy 1997: 69)  
 TT: คนที่เดินขบวนกันนั้นมีทั้งกรรมกรระดับสมาชิกพรรค นักศึกษา และบรรดาผู้  
 ใช้แรงงานทั่วไป ทั้งพวกมี ชั๊นวรรณะและพวกจัณฑาล (Roy 2007: 80)  
 BT: [The marchers included party-member workers, students and ordinary laborers. **Both caste and Chanthan**]

Despite the straightforward use of English in the novel, the Thai version uses the terms ชั๊นวรรณะ 'caste' for *Touchable* and จัณฑาล 'Chanthan' for *Untouchable*. The term 'Chanthan' is always used among Thais to refer to an outcaste in India. The special Indian attribute in Thai written discourse is also applied to the place, such as โกฎะยัม for *Kottayam*, or social stigma, such as แผลศยา for *Veshaya*. Moreover, conceptual reflection may be highlighted through customs or local rituals, which aid in visualizing the local characters' lifestyles. In Example 11 below, Roy uses a boat song chant among a group of locals to explain how they are preparing food.

- (11) ST: *Theeyome*  
*Thithome*  
*Tharaka*  
*Thithome*  
*Theem* (Roy 1997: 197)

TT: ฮ้ำ ไฮ้  
ฮ้ำ ฮ้ำ  
เห ไฮ้  
ฮ้ำ ไฮ้  
ฮ้ำ (Roy 2007: 224-225)  
BT: [Ha Hai  
Ha Ha  
He Ho  
Ha Hai  
Ha]

Instead of transliterating the sound of the Indian boat song to let the Thai reader grasp the Indian chant that infuses the ST, the translator modulates the song to fit the Thai local boat song. This, in essence, conjures up a different image from the ST.

Similar translation procedures can be observed in *The Ministry*, where the translator takes a unique approach to rendering the Pali-Sanskrit terms into Thai, similar to Examples 4 and 10. However, because Roy's second novel is saturated with various languages (e.g., Urdu, Persian, Arabic) that Thai readers are unfamiliar with, the translator thus relies on Romanization of such terms. For example, the terms *jenaab* and *tehreek* on page 311 are etymologically Persian, and thus the translator opts for transliteration with normal Thai alphabets according to their Roman counterparts to retain the local flavor, while also attempting to reflect the concept of addressing someone of higher social status or someone deserving of extra regard (จึนาบ) and the local movement against the authorities (เตหรีก).

#### 4.2 Different mind-style of the characters

As explained in Section 2, iconic hybridity may be evident in the novel's scenes and settings, which indicate the characters' English speaking but with variations to characterize their educational background and mind-style (Klinger 2015: 160). In a scene in which characters speak an Indian accent of English, Roy employs nonstandard spelling that typographically highlights certain consonants or pronunciations to suggest a deviation from the English standard. Idiosyncrasies in language used in the text can represent variations in English speech. This approach is used sparingly in *The God*, especially when the author wants to describe how locals feel compelled to mimic colonial language but fall short due to mispronunciation.

(12a) ST: The job of a driver is very **fattle**. His **famly** should be very **angshio** (Roy 1997: 158)  
TT: งานของคนขับรถมีอันตารายมาก คอบครัวของเขาจะเป็นหวงมาก (Roy 2007: 180)  
BT: [The job of a driver is very **dangerous**. His **family** will be very **worried**]

- (12b) ST: I **cometoberry** Caesar, not to praise him. **Theevil** that **mendoo** lives after them, **The goodisoft** interred with their bones (Roy 1997: 275)
- TT: ข้ามาฝังศพซีซาร์ ไม่ได้มาสรรเสริญ **ความชั่วที่มนุษย์กระทำ** จะเป็นที่ยังดจำแม่เขาตาย  
**ความดีงาม**ติดตามประดับไว้แม่เมื่อวายชีวา (Roy 2007: 306)
- BT: [I **came to bury** Caesar, not come to praise him. **The evil** that **men do** will be remembered even when they die. **Goodness** follows and adorns them even when they die.]

Example 12 shows how the translator deals with this idiosyncratic variation of English in different ways. The terms *falle*, *famly* and *angshio* that foreground the character's pronunciation in (12a) are re-created with similar incorrect spelling in Thai, อันตราย [antarai], คอบครัว [khob-khrua] and หวง [huang], meaning 'fatal', 'family' and 'anxious', respectively. However, the Thai version does not express the same method of employing eye dialect as in (12b) (*cometoberry*, *Theevil*, *mendoo*, and *goodisoft*); they are rendered with the regular word formation (มาฝัง 'come to bury', ความชั่ว 'the evil', มนุษย์กระทำ 'men do', and ความดีงาม 'the good'). This means that the mind-style of this specific Indian character, who does not adhere to the normal English pronunciation as portrayed in the ST, will not be reproduced in the Thai version.

In *The Ministry*, there are various moments where the author describes how the character is unable to fully comprehend English.

- (13) ST: Ustad Hameed told her how his grandchildren had tutored their grandmother to call him (her husband) a 'bloody fucking bitch', which she had been given to understand was a term of endearment in English (Roy 2017: 109)
- TT: อูสตาบบอกว่า หลานๆ ของเขาสอนย่าให้เรียกเขา (สามีของเธอ) ว่า "นังบ้าสารเลวระยำ" (bloody fucking bitch) เพราะเธอถูกทำให้เข้าใจว่าเป็นคำเรียกอย่างรักใคร่ในภาษาอังกฤษ (Roy 2020: 126–127)
- BT: [Ustad said his granddaughter had taught her grandmother to call him (her husband) a mad, vile, wicked, fucking bitch (bloody fucking bitch) because she was made to understand that it's a very affectionate term in English]

Roy creates this character who is unable to understand English swearing terms, *bloody fucking bitch*. The translator chooses to render it as นังบาสารเลวระยำ 'a mad, wicked, fucking bitch' with a slightly higher degree of negativity and emphasizes that this particular swearing is spoken in English by moving the entire phrase across to the Thai version but in brackets.

There are also instances where Roy uses code-switching as a tactic to refute the Islamic radical doctrine that has resulted in horrible crime and carnage in Pakistan and India (Ahmad 2019: 165). The translator transliterates all of the names of Islamic sects exhaustingly listed in Urdu by a character (Roy 2017: 169), but the last line was rendered with both transliteration and explanation: *Die, kafir!* (ST) and ตายชะ ไอ้พวกกกาฬิรนอกศาสนา 'Die, you all [pejorative in Thai] pagan kafir'



(TT). This translation procedure relates to Example 5, in which the translator depends on the Romanization of this Arabic term since they are less familiar to Thais than to other Indian languages that historically arrived in Indochina and has been integrated into the Thai language repertoire.

## 5. Discussion and concluding remarks

Numerous sociopolitical and linguistic characteristics have influenced and helped define the concept of hybridity (Boehmer 2005: 167), particularly in postcolonial writings. This is certainly true of Roy's command of English, which is exemplified by flexibility and sharpness in her multilingual framing of language to offer new political scenes. The Thai translation, however, appears to be an attempt to reduce the foreignness effect that arises from Roy's approach of translational mimesis and code-switching in both of her novels. As the examples in the previous section inform, there are likely three issues that contribute to the success or failure of communication in Thai translations of Roy's intention to depict a multilingual world of characters.

First, the norm of Thai written discourse plays an important role in the translator's process of "emulating" Roy's Indian touch to her originals, such as peppering Malayalam into English verses while supplying English translations or clarifying them in a way that non-locals can comprehend (Chandran 2014: 268). On the one hand, the translator occasionally fails to convey Indian viewpoints and the author's intention to portray localism in her stories because only the meaning of those Malayalam phrases is retained without transliterating them (as in Example 5), thereby preventing Thai readers from experiencing the same sense of political symbolism through Roy's language use. On the other hand, the translations occasionally use the unique Thai way of transliterating terms derived from the subcontinent to serve as a medium through which the element of foreignness can be somewhat portrayed in the Thai version, albeit with different connotations and purposes from the ST. In certain cases (as in Examples 2, 4, and 10), the method of transliteration without further explanation, as well as the literal translation of conceptual reflection, can represent, to some extent, Indian people's perspectives that are already nested in the world of English-language novels.

To be precise, the Thai unique feature is the use of some alphabets in Thai scripts that are reserved exclusively for terms with etymological ties to Pali and Sanskrit languages. This particular set of alphabets - ฎ ฏ ฑ ฒ ณ ฬ ศ ษ ฐ - are always used for transliterating Vedic hymn of Pali-Sanskrit derived terms, such as Gayatri Mantra (in *The Ministry* on pages 47–45 and its translation on page 61). This lends the Thai texts an ultra-hybrid quality, for they are perforated with such a unique element of "another language" as an additional sense of "being familiar but not quite", to rephrase Bhabha's (1994) mimicry, in the Thai version, which is consistent with Phanthaphoommee's (2015) findings in other postcolonial literature translated into Thai. Nevertheless, this principle is intended to be preserved only for the Indian languages on which Thai scripts are based, rather than some

Urdu terms with which Thais are less acquainted and which are frequently transliterated into Thai in the same way that the Roman alphabets usually are.

The second issue is the misrepresentation of verbal transposition. The Thai versions cannot reflect a syntactical error that represents the Indian extra dimension because the translator fails to recognize such elements as mispronunciation and repetition (as in Examples 6, 7 and 8). The translation falls short of encapsulating the writer-translator approach, as defined by Chandran (2014), of attempting to express foreignness through characters' speech. In our case, the translator is somewhat ineffectual in rewriting the ST periphrasis, one of the travel writing strategies (Cronin 2003: 159), and presenting it in the same way that the English language does with Indian vernaculars.

The final issue is the portrayal of character's different mind-styles and thus the varying levels of attention that may be elicited from the new target readers. According to Gardner-Chloros and Weston (2015: 187), code-switching in post-colonial literature can help authors of subalterns who emerge from colonial rule avoid the problem of entirely using the former occupier's language or just the local one. It is largely because the latter runs the risk of limiting their readers' opportunity to comprehend the character's predicament and, as a result, failing to be commercially successful. Code-switching is aligned with our framework, which is based on that of Klinger (2015: 159), who states that in translation, the translator can invoke similar preconceptions of characters by using code-switching to convey the similar mind-style of a certain character. However, as an example of iconic hybridity, English variations found in STs are sometimes successfully retained, but other times they simply vanish from the Thai version (as in Example 12). One explanation is that the Thai translation norm, which favors smooth and natural prose (cf. Venuti (1995) on domestication), may discourage an accurate reflection of the character's mind-style because the translations read pleasantly, look normal, and arrange the characters' ideas as if they did not have the mental characteristics of a person with a different social background. In this sense, translation norms in the Thai literary circle are much less open to new ideas but tend to promote "linguistic singularity" in the TTs (Techawongstien and Chitiphalangsrri 2023: 84), risking rejecting linguistic hybridity as exorcizing, as warned by Klinger (2015: 81).

Klinger (2015: 162–163) also noted that if the English variation is idiosyncratic rather than established, finding equivalence in the TT is less likely to be a problem than in the case of non-idiosyncratic one with a fairly established pattern of language use (e.g., Pidgin). However, in our case, the translations appear to ignore the dichotomy between idiosyncratic and non-idiosyncratic variations. The reflection of a character's mind-style tends to be assimilated into the target culture (as in Example 12), which inevitably influences the TT conceptual dimensions of the characters and pushes them far away from the novel's present moment. Thai readers may not grasp the reality of the novel settings that the characters are experiencing, which is supposed to be transferred to target readers, at least in the similar fashion that STs do.

Overall, the translator's decision not to transliterate Indianized words or phrases at various points, as well as the translator's inability to re-present conso-

nants in ungrammatical structures, undermines the author's intention to express localism and English's malleability. As Roy once said, [m]ost of our Englishes are informed by our familiarity with one or more of those languages [Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, for example] ... Translation, in my writing, is a *primary* act of creation" (Sejpal 2019: para. 19, emphasis in original). In their presentation of Indian-referenced contacts, the translations in our case appear overly refined and asymmetrical to their originals. This means that the Thai translations are unable to demonstrate Roy's already-translating act, as Menozzi (2019: 32) claims, by reframing her novels as a digressive realism of contradiction through the character's development as the inconsolable.

By way of conclusion, this article contends that the Thai translator has adopted a compromising approach to translating the ST linguistic hybridity in order to make Roy's novels more accessible to the Thai readers who are members of such a monolingual society. By compromising, I mean using a Thai-specific way of transliterating Pali-Sanskrit etymological terms, applying a cushioning strategy (glossing and explanation of foreign terms) and providing footnotes as a thick translation, or a form of self-criticism (cf. Appiah 2012). This seems to differ from Niranjana's (1992: 173) suggestion of an interventionist strategy for translation to demonstrate the authentic identity of the East, which was formerly manipulated by Western-oriented translators' unjustified perception. Furthermore, translations that somehow abandon linguistic hybridity in our case contradict the ST author's lead in considering the dynamics of core and periphery languages, as Bassnett (2014: 82) believes that cultural expression in the source language should be used to combat different levels of power in the real world.

In terms of colonialism, Thai society, which has never been officially "colonized", may find it difficult to endorse Roy's motivation of defying standard language or twisting colonial language to symbolically break free from the colonial legacy and celebrate Bhabha's multicultural "Third Space". The Thai translations of the novels' linguistic hybridity, therefore, seem reluctant to "speak multilingual truth to monolingual power", as Ross (2019: 1) advises, in the same way as her novels are meant to.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Many scholars believe that although Thailand (Siam) was not directly ruled in the colonial era, Western-style thinking was adopted and applied in Thai society in a variety of ways. Some have defined this concept as semi-colonialism (Harrison and Jackson 2010) and crypto-colonialism (Herzfeld 2017).

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