Heterogeneous Thai Voices:

A Contact Zone of Postcolonial Counter-discourse

to

Anna Leonowens' Orientalist Writing of Thailand

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Notice 1

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Abstract

This study arises out of an interdisciplinary research encompassing two fields of study – English and Education. Pratt's concept of "contact zones" is employed to provide a framework for working in these two fields and answering the multifaceted research questions. This concept helps me as the researcher to probe issues relating to unbalanced power relations as well as resistance to power – i.e. both in the Orientalist representations of Thailand in Western texts and in English language and literature classrooms in Thai universities. In effect, this yields me insight into the heterogeneous nature of the contact zones of modernised Thailand and Thailand's English language and literature classrooms.

Furthermore, seeing my research as a kind of contact zone allows me to engage in action research that inquires into how English and Education interact with each other, and on the ways that my teacher participants and I, as former students and current teachers of English language and literature, and my student participants experience this interaction. Simultaneously, this action research prompts me as the teacher-researcher to understand how my professional practice has been influenced by the literary theories that I have studied in universities in Thailand and in Australia. I have finally learned that postcolonial theory has shaped my worldview, affected my teaching practice, and been my impulse to conduct this PhD research project.

I call this research action research because it is built upon the following political aims. First, this research is aimed at deconstructing the East-West dichotomy and homogeneity of Western power on Thailand, generated by means of Orientalist representations of Thailand in Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its subsequent re-writings by other authors. As well, the research is meant to empower Thai students who are normally marginalised in the English classroom by the central figure of

the teacher and the canonical literary texts they are assigned to read, and give them an opportunity to voice their opinions on what they learn in class.

The political aims of this research are enacted through the thesis' textual politics. It is "textual" because my study investigates a selection of narrative texts, namely literary and personal narratives about Thailand by the above-mentioned Western authors and by my Thai teacher and student participants. Said's concept of "Orientalism" is employed as an analytical tool to understand and deconstruct the Orientalist representations of Thailand in those Western narratives. Analysis of the Thai participants' personal narratives reveals their resistance to the Orientalist representations of Thailand in both the literary texts and real life situations, and the counter-discourse they use to deal with unequal power relations in such representations. Drawing on Said and other postcolonial thinkers as well as Bakhtin, I have shaped and presented my thesis as writing that speaks back to the metropolitan centre. Here the textual body of my thesis is transformed into a metaphorical contact space, which contains the multivoicedness of the heterogeneous Western voices and Thai voices, and where the Western power of representation is investigated and subverted.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Pornsawan Tripasai

The plan for this research was approved by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (Reference: 2004/163)

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Chapter 1

"Contact Zones": An Introduction

> Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression -- these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone. Miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread masterpieces, absolute heterogeneity of meaning -- these are some of the perils of writing in the contact zone. They all live among us today in the transnationalized metropolis of the United States and are becoming more widely visible, more pressing, and, like, Guaman Poma's text, more decipherable to those who once would have ignored them in defense of a stable, centered sense of knowledge and reality.
>
> Pratt, 1991, p. 37

1.1 I am at the crossroads: My situation

I begin with an excerpt from my diary, written at the time when I first came to Australia to embark on postgraduate studies. It captures the impulse behind my study and the textual politics that I am enacting by writing this thesis.

> *After a long journey, I came to a crossroads where I met diverse groups of people. I didn't know whence they had come. They looked different from me and from one another. The woman with long black hair over there wore a long sleeved cotton blouse and a long exotic skirt covering her ankles. She looked so reserved. Not far, a brunette in a sleeveless top and shorts talked*

closely with three guys in their swimming suits. Under the big tree, two men held each other close. They did not care that they were looked at by others, especially by a dark-skinned woman with a red dot in the middle of her forehead who put her right hand on her bosom. People in front of me were countless. They looked like dots: white, black, yellow, brown.

I heard some of them speak the same language as me. And I knew the language that the man in a tuxedo spoke because I had learned that language when I was four. Oh, what kind of language did that little girl speak? It sounded strange with glottal sounds. But the youngsters with a different skin colour from her could communicate with her in the same language though with an accent.

There were many voices that I heard in this place, but I didn't understand what they meant. There were also many conducts that gave me pleasure, amazed me, offended me, upset me, or angered me. This crossroads was the place where I had to adjust myself, accept some truth, or made some decision. So did other people at this crossroads. They had to do the same as me though with different degrees and extents. This crossroads was a place where people came, met and learned from each other, willingly and unwillingly. (Pornsawn Tripasai, Diary, 29 September 2000)

1.2 "Contact Zones"

In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008) and "Arts of the Contact Zone" (1991), Pratt makes reference to the *New Chronicle and Good Government and Justice*, an "unreadable" letter written in 1613 by an indigenous Andean, Guaman Poma. This letter was addressed to King Philip III of Spain. The epistle contained almost eight

hundred pages of written text and four hundred line drawings with explanatory captions. Written in a mixture of Quechua and ungrammatical Spanish, this text had puzzled readers for centuries. No one could understand its meaning until the late 1970s when Western scholars could find ways of reading it.

Pratt (2008) explains that Guaman Poma's letter is an example of *contact zones* – the term she coined for "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (p. 7) such as colonialism and slavery or their aftermaths. The relations among colonisers and colonised in the contact zone are not treated in terms of separateness, but in terms of "co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices" (p. 8). Pratt remarks that the imperial monopoly on knowledge and meaning-making of the colonised did not actually exist. It is because people on the receiving end of European imperialism did their own knowing and interpreting. As in Guaman Poma's letter, the writer used the two languages (Quechua and Spanish), and adapted the European genres (such as a chronicle and line drawings) to parody Spanish history concerning their colonisation of the Incas. By this means, he appropriated the language of the coloniser and their genres. He also deployed the Andean symbolic systems in order to express Andean interests and aspirations. Pratt explains that Guaman Poma's practice of incorporating the Quechua language and Andean symbolism into the coloniser's cultural tools is a phenomenon of the contact zone called *transculturation*. This term is used by ethnographers to describe how subjugated peoples select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. Although they cannot control the effects of dominant culture on them, they manage to "determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean" (p. 7). As in the case of Guama Poman, by selecting and appropriating idioms and genres of the conqueror along the line of Andean language and culture, he effectively constructed an oppositional representation of the

Spanish coloniser's own speech and critiqued their invasion. His takeover of the coloniser's tools for creating the Andean self-representation in his letter in response to the representations that the coloniser made of them has made this letter an *autoethnographic text*. Pratt defines the term *autoethnography* as "instances in which colonial subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's terms" (p. 9; emphasis in original). She further explains that *ethnographic texts* are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their subjugated others, and *autoethnographic texts* are "texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations" (ibid.). Pratt (1991) contends that autoethnographic works are heterogeneous on the production end as well as the reception end. This kind of text is often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the writer's own community, constituting a subordinated group's point of entry into the dominant culture. The self-representation made by Guaman Poma, for instance, was intended to intervene in the metropolitan modes of understanding of the colonised subjects. It will be read differently by people in different positions in the contact zone, namely bilingual Spanish-Quechua speakers, monolingual speakers in either language, bicultural Spanish-Andean readers, and monocultural readers due to the hybridised systems of meaning-making the text deploys (p. 36).

The idea of the contact zone, Pratt (1991) goes on to say, can be used to reconsider the ideas of homogeneous community underlying the thinking about language, communication, and culture as part of a shared and unified social world. Pratt recommends us instead to view contacts between different groups of people as interactions made in a contact zone where diversity and anomaly are its common phenomena and where a single set of rules or norms of the dominant institutions or groups governing the interactions between people is critiqued, resisted or subverted. As Pratt shows us through her personal experience in a class she taught, which was entitled "Cultures, Ideas, Values", contact zones can happen in the field of education. Pratt points out that her classroom functioned

"not like a homogeneous community" but like a "contact zone". The significant moment in her classroom was when the traditional classroom and the lecturer's monologue were subverted and turned into a contact zone where students engaged in dialogue with every text they read (either critiqued it, parodied it, compared it, or whatever), and where "whatever one said was going to be systematically received in radically heterogeneous ways that we were neither able nor entitled to prescribe" (p. 40).

Pratt's concept of contact zones reveals the politics in sites where there are unbalanced power relations between the dominant and the marginalised groups, such as (neo)colonial encounters or English language and literature classrooms. Pratt has shown that the power structures set up by the dominant group cannot always be seen as a fixed mode of controlling power, but these power structures can be challenged and subverted by the subordinates when the latter group attempts to emphasise the diversity and heterogeneity happening in the contact space between the two groups. That is to say, suppression of difference (such as cultural difference and ideological difference) may be made, for instance by means of the discourse of (neo)colonial representation, the monologue of the teacher, or coercion of physical violence. Yet in the contact zone where the suppressor and the suppressed coexist, the unequal relations of power can be resisted when the dominated try to communicate their reaction against the domination of the coloniser or the teacher. This communication made by the suppressed cannot be reduced to a one-way conversation, but should be seen as a counterbalance made from the marginalised position, showing their opposition to controlling power of the dominant group, as Pratt has shown us in the cases of the contacts between Guaman Poma in his epistle and the Spanish coloniser and of her own classroom.

For me, the concept of contact zones can, first of all, be employed to create the point of contact between the two fields of inquiry, namely English literature and Education that I

am drawing on in my research, and the many discourses that meet and interact in my thesis writing. In addition, this concept provides a way of understanding what it means to write back and speak back from a marginal position within a postcolonial setting. All of these matters will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

1.2.1 The textual politics of the thesis

My study investigates a selection of narratives, namely literary and personal narratives about Thailand. A key focus of the study is Anna Leonowens' famous story, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, which has since been adapted and re-adapted for stage and screen. But I also use other stories as resources, most notably the personal accounts which university teachers and students have given to me about their experiences of learning English in Thailand. These personal stories provide a counterpoint – a way of "speaking back", to borrow from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) – to Leonowens' construction of Thailand and the Orient in general.

At the heart of this focus on narrative lies a set of overlapping concerns, all of which make up the textual politics of my thesis. Who owns these narratives about Thailand? How are the experiences which the narrators relate mediated textually? Which voices dominate in these literary and personal textual spaces? Which voices are excluded? What kinds of strategies do those who are excluded use to subvert the power of those who are dominating over them? Can any link be made between these textual spaces, including the way they construct or interpellate readers (cf. Althusser, 2001), and the geopolitical space of Thailand, where people remain subjected to neocolonial power?

The textual politics of the thesis will be enacted in the following ways: through interdisciplinary research, involving both English literary studies and Education, and through the concept of postcolonial resistance by means of deconstructing the East-West

binary. I draw particularly on Edward Said's influential account of "Orientalism" (1978/1995) as a point of departure for this deconstruction. Through the creative negotiation of contact zones, I bring together the two different fields of inquiry, combining them as an interdisciplinary research. Employing the concept of contact zones as the basis for developing further discussions in my thesis, I am also able to intricately connect the diverse discourses and ideologies embedded in the social institutions that have governed the way people think or act. That is, the textual and personal narratives from which these discourses and ideologies are extracted for analysis will be strategically positioned together in my thesis, at the crossroads where multiple voices (cf. Bakhtin, 1981) interact and affect one another. A new kind of power relations will be then established.

It is "language", one of Pratt's emphases when she discusses the contact zones, that has become the primary medium of my political positioning, which I use to establish the "textual contact zones" in my thesis, and to create polyphony and diversity in my research. Specifically, this research deals with language as a communicative tool in personal and literary narrative texts of my concern. Gee (1999) asserts that language is never free of politics and power. Cultures, social groups, and institutions shape human social activities. In those activities, interactions that are made and mediated through language are prompted and influenced by a person's socio-cultural background as well as the institution(s) to which he or she belongs. Politics, Gee argues, is thus "part and parcel of using language" (p. 2). I therefore hope that the textual politics in the textual contact zones of my thesis will help generate the heterogeneity of meaning resulting from the disparate voices and standpoints that I am attempting to communicate.

1.2.1.1 Interdisciplinary research: English and Education

My research is a combination of two fields of inquiry, namely English and Education. My study will comprise an analysis of English literary texts, where I will apply literary-

theoretical understandings to a reading of these texts, and an examination of the practices and activities that constitute English language and literature classrooms in universities in Thailand.

The English literary texts that I have chosen for analysis are Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and Margaret Landon's rewriting of Leonowens' text, namely *Anna and the King of Siam* which was first published in 1943. These narratives both tell the story of Anna, the governess in the Court of King Mongkut of Siam, and they have since formed the basis for film and stage versions of the "same" story, including Rodgers and Hammerstein's famous musical, *The King and I*. Drawing on Said (1978/1995), I will be analysing the original story and its reproductions as examples of Western representations of Thailand and the unbalanced power relations between the Occident and the Orient.

My aim is then to relocate this literary-critical analysis of these English literary texts within the context of an investigation of power relations in the real, specific social and cultural site of English literature classrooms in Thai universities. The meaning of any text cannot be said to inhere within it, but must be seen as the product of the context within which it is read and appropriated. The text, as Reid (1984) has remarked, is a medium of "exchange" between the author and his or her readers, "a semantic process by which meanings are transacted through the verbal material, not deposited in it" (p. 56). My study will therefore focus on the pedagogy and curriculum, including the interpretive practices of teachers and students as they engage with English texts within university classrooms. I shall thereby trace how Thai students and teachers are empowered and disempowered in English language and literature classrooms, exploring the possibility that students are able to engage in dialogue with Western representations of Thailand in English literary texts, to "speak back to the centre", as Ashcroft et al. (1989) express it, rather than passively

accepting Western versions of the “Orient”. To do this, I will draw on the personal narratives of my students and Thai teachers of English language and literature, which I have solicited through interviews during my fieldwork study in Thailand.

Interdisciplinary research can be problematic. Since each discipline operates according to its own discursive principles, researchers may encounter constraints regulated by each discipline when they attempt to engage in different disciplinary inquiries at the same time. As Foucault (1981) contends:

> [A] discipline is defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments: all this constitutes a sort of anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it, without their meaning or validity being linked to the one who happened to be their inventor. (p. 59)

Mills (2003), in her explication of Foucault’s concept of disciplinary boundaries, adds that disciplines prescribe what can be counted as possible knowledge within a particular subject area. Their strict methodological rules and corpus of propositions which are considered to be factual allow new propositions to be produced only within tightly defined limits (p. 60).

Shulman (1988), writing from the field of educational research, provides the following perspective on “disciplined inquiry” which seems broadly congruent with Foucault’s view:

> Disciplined inquiry not only refers to the ordered, regular, or principled nature of investigation, it also refers to the disciplines themselves which serve as the sources for the principles of regularity or canons of evidence

> employed by the investigator. What distinguishes disciplines from one another is the manner in which they formulate their questions, how they define the content of their domains and organize that content conceptually, and the principles of discovery and verification that constitute the ground rules for creating and testing knowledge in their fields. These principles are different in different disciplines. (p. 5)

The fields of English studies and Education each operate with their own principles and research traditions. Research on English literature tends to be library research or text-based (Altick, 1963; Belsey, 2005; Knobel & Lankshear, 1999; McKee, 2001). Since the focus of English literature is mostly on "literary" texts, some form of textual analysis is indispensable (Belsey, 2005; Guerin, Morgan, Reesman, Willingham & Willingham, 1999). To understand the importance of the text in literary studies, we need to look no further than M. H. Abrams' classic book, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, where he poses four co-ordinates of literary criticism, namely the "artist", the "work", the "universe", and the "audience". These four elements, according to Abrams, can be rearranged as a triangle, with the "work" at the centre. There are three arrows emerging from the "work", whose arrowheads are directing to the other three co-ordinates. By arranging the "work of art" at the centre of the triangle, Abrams emphasises that the work – in other words the literary text – is typically used by a critic as the base for deriving one of the four elements that then constitute the "principal categories for defining, classifying, and analyzing a work of art, as well as the major criteria by which he [*sic*] judges its value" (Abrams, 1953, p. 6).

In English studies, because the text is privileged, everything around it (e.g. history or society) tends to be treated as secondary, or even conceptualised as "text", rather than anything "real". Research methods which are associated with sociological inquiry, such as

interviewing or ethnographic observations, tend to play only a marginal role within the field, although there are signs that some researchers are beginning to use such approaches for certain investigations (Griffin, 2005a; Griffin, 2005b).

However, textual analysis as a research method within contemporary English studies tends to assume that reading is an interactive process, and this opens up the possibility of restoring the text to its context, although in a far more complex way than simply treating the text as a reflection of history or society (or other "external" dimensions). Reading is not simply a matter of a reader identifying the meaning of a text, but involves the reader bringing certain interpretive frames to a text in order to construct meaning (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). This means that any inquiry should involve explicitly acknowledging the literary theoretical assumptions that a researcher brings to an analysis of a text (including what the researcher actually understands by the word "reading"), as well as the values and beliefs of the researcher – what MacLachlan and Reid (1994) call the "extratextual" assumptions that frame reading. At the same time, it is also reasonable to think of the text as attempting to frame or control its own meaning, which involves attention to how the text is constructed (how it positions readers, the way it uses figurative language, the genre to which the text might be said to "belong", etc.) – i.e. to posit the text "itself". As Belsey (2005) observes, "[t]here may be dialogue within a text, but the text itself also engages in dialogue with the reader" (p. 163). Belsey thereby captures the dialectical relationship between the text and the reader/researcher, highlighting the paradox that the text can be treated as both a self-contained world and a function of elements "outside" it, including the reader's beliefs and the socio-historical context in which the reading takes place.

By contrast, Education explicitly focuses on multi-faceted educational practices and activities in actual settings that are fundamentally social and cultural. Unlike literary

studies, Education apparently has no problem in positing a “real” world. Freebody (2003) points out this socio-cultural nature of Education when he states:

> As the socio-cultural make-up of the clients and participants within the boundaries of an educational authority changes, so necessarily do the qualities of educational goals and outcomes. Similarly, as the economic features, or the cultural values, the material resources, or the projected futures of the community change, so do the qualities of educational practice. (p. 9)

Since Education often locates educational settings within socio-historical contexts, it can be considered to be a branch of the Social Sciences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Hamilton & McWilliam, 2001; Wellington, 2000). The forms of inquiry that Education has traditionally employed derive from other Social Science disciplines, such as Psychology, History, Anthropology, and Sociology (Fenstermacher, 1994; Freebody, 2003; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005). Indeed, many researchers in Education claim to be engaging in a “scientific” inquiry into social reality (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Freebody, 2003; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), a word that is hardly used within the context of English literary studies. Education researchers typically use both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the investigation of social phenomena, arguing the validity of the knowledge claims they make, and defending the epistemological assumptions that underpin their inquiries (Cohen & Manion, 1994, pp. 6-7) – again, hardly traditional preoccupations within the field of English literary studies.

But there is another way to capture the distinctive nature of educational research. Shulman (1988) contends that Education is not itself a discipline. In fact, it is “a field of study” in which various forms, perspectives, and procedures deriving from many other disciplines

are brought to bear on educational issues (p. 5). This view of Shulman accords with the heterogeneous nature of the interdisciplinary research I am conducting – the kind of contact zones where different subject matters, theoretical issues, methods of study, and discourses meet, clash, and produce effects on one another. Shulman's view thus becomes a starting point for my interdisciplinary research embracing English and Education and my conceptualisation of the many ideological and theoretical issues emerging from the research.

From my personal perspective, I see that I myself live at the crossroads where English and Education meet. As a Thai teacher of English language and literature, my work involves both fields of English and Education. I travel back and forth between the two disciplines. I read the literary text myself, applying the skills and knowledge I have developed as a literary critic. But my job is then to teach my students how to read the text when I tell them that it does not matter if they read the text differently from me. As a researcher engaged in interdisciplinary research, I deal directly with both the text (and its world – Said, 1983) and the methods of teaching and the investigation of how students interpret and respond to the text.

In my research, an English literary text will be treated as having connections with the social world – the time and place where the text was written. What I mean specifically by the social world are the ideologies governing the text's production. Such ideologies will be analysed through attending to the language used to form subjects in the text. As Fairclough (1989) argues, "ideology is pervasively present in language" (p. 3). Here the literary text lends itself to literary-theoretical analysis that I use for investigating the ideologies embedded in the text. My next step is that the text will be treated as a resource for teaching and learning English literature within the context of Thai universities. The perspectives of the teachers (as former students of English language and literature) and students (as

readers) will then be analysed to yield an insight into the ideological world which these people inhabit. By employing both forms of analysis, my study aims to bridge the gap between the text (and its world) and the world of social reality – i.e. between the text and its contexts. The textual politics of the thesis will create a contact space where these two worlds overlap and interact. This textual politics not only contextualises the trajectory of English literary studies in a broader socio-cultural dimension of education, but defines the effects that the two fields (English and Education) have on each other.

1.2.1.2 Deconstruction of East-West dichotomy

The textual politics of my thesis involves deconstructing the East-West binary represented in English literary texts and enacted in English classrooms in Thai universities. The deconstruction of the so-called East-West binary has a political implication. That is, I am attempting to disrupt neocolonial hegemony in the Orientalist representations of Thailand in Western texts and in the socio-cultural contexts of English classrooms. My intention to do so partly derives from Foucault's view of relational power. According to Foucault (1980), individuals are not simply the victims of an oppressive power imposed from above, but rather are themselves bound up with the exercise of this power (p. 98). A new analysis of power, therefore, must be invoked:

> One must rather conduct an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination. (p. 99; emphasis in original)

The focus of my research is thus on how power is enacted within the Western production and Western reception of "literary" texts about Thailand. This is to treat literary texts as a crucial means whereby the Orientalist representations of Thailand are put into circulation. Said's concepts of "Orientalism" and the worldliness of the text will be used at this point. However, rather than restricting my focus to the text "itself", my aim will then be to explore how Thais, especially teachers and students in classroom settings, react to these Orientalist representations. To deconstruct the East-West binary and to capture the complexity of the power relations between the East (Thailand) and the West, I, as an agent in the enactment of power, intend to write my thesis in the tradition of what Ashcroft et al. (1989) call "postcolonial writing and speaking back".

By locating my thesis within the framework of postcolonial writing, and writing and speaking "back to the metropolitan centre", I conceptualise my thesis as a site for contesting the East-West dichotomy in the neocolonial discourse of English literature and English classrooms in Thailand. My aim is to displace this binary with a new dialectical and dialogical relationship between the East and the West, and hence to create a site of resistance and appropriation. My hope is that the body of my thesis will carve out a metaphorical postcolonial space where a border crossing from the "periphery" (i.e. Thailand) to the "centre" (i.e. the West) will be made visible, and the suppressed voices of peripheral figures will be reclaimed and made audible as they address the metropolitan West.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft et al. (1989) argue that literary scholars of former colonised countries seize the coloniser's mediums of power, such as the language, literature, and literary theory, and appropriate them for their own means. They deploy these hegemonic tools of the coloniser as their subversive strategies to speak from their marginal position to the European master. By means of these hybridised strategies, colonised

peoples develop an effective postcolonial voice to interrogate the colonial discourse that suppresses the diversity of indigenous cultures under imperial control, and to articulate their heterogeneous cultural experiences.

In their struggle to overcome the silencing of native voices by colonial powers – this is still a legacy with which people in former colonies live, even despite the fact that we are now living in postcolonial times – some postcolonial writers adopt the notion of the agency and authority of the speaking subject (Lazarus, 2004). Employing writing to create a space for the colonised to voice their doubts about colonial discourse, Aimé Césaire (1994), a Martinican poet and playwright, in "Discourse on Colonialism", speaks back to the European coloniser. He juxtaposes European accounts of how they brought "civilisation" to the colonies – evoked by words like "progress", "achievement" – with the way the colonised experienced this process:

> I hear the storm. They talk to me about progress, about 'achievements', diseases cured, improved standards of living.
>
> I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out.
>
> They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals and railroad tracks.
>
> I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo-Océan. I am talking about those who, as I write this, are digging the harbor of Abidjan by hand. I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life – from life, from the dance, from wisdom.

> I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair and behave like flunkeys. (p. 178; emphasis in original)

Writing as a form of resistance to the coloniser and colonial representation is enacted most powerfully in the literary domain. Ashcroft (2001) describes resistance of this kind as "canonical counter-discourse" or "writing back" which appropriates the discourse of literature itself. According to Ashcroft, canonical literary texts are consumed or re-read in such a way that they become a basis for the appropriation and subversion of the values and political assumptions represented in the originals. The consumption or re-reading of canonical texts in this way involves the task of transforming the canonical texts through the revision of the allegories of European culture through which life in post-colonial societies has itself been written (p. 33). Postcolonial resistance is not only enacted by the act of re-reading the canonical texts, but also by the attempt to re-write the canonical texts in a way that allows their cultural assumptions (i.e. the revelation of "universal" human condition) to become exposed and subverted (pp. 33-34). Ashcroft uses Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which is directed at Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, as a classic example of postcolonial writing back. Ashcroft tells us that Achebe wanted to reverse Conrad's view of the "incomprehensible frenzy of prehistoric man". The colonialist's view of Africans as a dehumanised otherness seems to provoke the African writer into a reversal of the imperial binary, to restore the "good" African culture in opposition to the "evil" coloniser. Ashcroft adds that *Things Fall Apart* succeeds in "entering the discourse of English literature, appropriating a foreign language, taking the dominant tool of imperial representation – the novel form – and providing a creative ethnography of such immediacy that English-speaking readers could feel as though they were standing inside the village", with the result that this "became a model for post-colonial writing ever after" (p. 34).

Achebe also reclaims the history of Africa by structuring his novel, especially in its first part, with the Igbo oral traditions of story-telling. These stories are interwoven in a way which is quite at odds with the way European novels operate within coordinates of time and space, i.e. European chronology within European space (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989, pp. 127-128). Moreover, Achebe criticises the Western discourse of history writing when he goes into the District Commissioner's mind. Readers are drawn into the questions concerning replacement of African history by the white man's history-making of Africa that emerge at the end of the novel:

> The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a dead man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (Achebe, 2001, pp. 151-152)

Achebe purposefully presents that the Igbo concept of non-chronological time and space centred on the oral tradition of story-telling is completely replaced and even deleted by the Commissioner's book-writing. The grace and greatness of the native African protagonist of

the novel is reduced to only a "reasonable paragraph" in the book. His name is not mentioned by the Commissioner because he is only a dead primitive man. Ending *Things Fall Apart* with the Commissioner's book title, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, Achebe criticises the coloniser's civilising mission, and control over the natives.

The postcolonial writers and thinkers I have discussed above have thus shown me examples of how to deconstruct colonial binaries and power imposed by the coloniser. In their counter-discourse, these people establish a new kind of power relations, in which resistance to colonial power happens. They use their counter-discourse to enter the colonial discourse, establishing a metaphorical co-presence or a contact zone between the coloniser and the colonised. They then take over aspects of the imperial cultures, using them as cultural tools to examine, criticise, contradict, or subvert the colonial discourse and power. In this postcolonial contact space, the empire speaks out in response to the injustice of the coloniser and writes back to the centre.

Chapter 2

A Hybrid Research Design

2.1 Hybridity of the research design

2.1.1 Multiple methodological approaches for the research

Working in an interdisciplinary area, I have developed a research design that accommodates the theoretical and methodological concerns specific to each of the fields of English and Education. As Gee (1999) explains, different approaches often fit different issues and questions. Also different approaches sometimes reach similar conclusions though using somewhat different tools and terminologies connected to different micro-communities of researchers (p. 5). My research design has had to render visible both the tensions between these two fields and the possibilities arising from their overlap. I argue that this hybrid design is necessary to investigate the heteroglot nature (Bakhtin, 1984) of Thailand as a language community shaped by the history of colonisation and the globalisation of English.

2.1.1.1 English

Drawing on English literary studies, I employ literary textual analysis within the framework of postcolonial literary theory (Ashcroft et al., 1989). In my view, as I have argued earlier, English literature cannot ultimately be treated as an ideal world that is separate from society or the people who create and read it. This is because literary production and consumption and even literary studies as a field of inquiry are governed by certain sets of structures and rules operating within society – or what Foucault (1981) calls "discourse". Eagleton (1996) draws on Foucault to offer the following provocative characterisation of how literary studies works as a discourse (1996):

> Literary theorists, critics and teachers, then, are not so much purveyors of doctrines as custodians of a discourse. Their task is to preserve this discourse, extend and elaborate it as necessary, defend it from other forms of discourse, initiate newcomers into it and determine whether or not they have successfully mastered it. The discourse itself has no definite signified, which is not to say that it embodies no assumptions: it is rather a network of signifiers able to envelop a whole field of meanings, objects and practices. … The power of critical discourse moves on several levels. It is the power of 'policing' language – of determining that certain statements must be excluded. … It is the power of policing writing itself, classifying it into the 'literary' and 'non-literary'. … It is the power of authority *vis-à-vis* others – the power-relations between those who define and preserve the discourse, and those who are selectively admitted to it. It is the power of certificating or non-certificating those who have been judged to speak the discourse better or worse. Finally, it is a question of the power-relations between the literary-academic institution, where all of this occurs, and the ruling power-interests of society at large, whose ideological needs will be served and whose personnel will be reproduced by the preservation and controlled extension of the discourse in question. (pp. 175-177; emphasis in original)

Eagleton's argument emphasises that the reading and teaching of literature are undeniably embedded in a certain discourse within which relationships of power exist. Within this discourse community, power relations are exercised through a complex set of practices that include some people while excluding others. Eagleton's insights have made me realise that the formal methods of textual analysis that tend to dominate literary studies put certain constraints and restrictions on the way readers approach literary texts. Although I feel that

(following Said, 1983) relationships can be established between "the world, the text and the critic", and that literary production must ultimately be located within the larger social relations in which it is conducted, I am nonetheless conscious of the complex mediations existing between literary studies and society, and the fact that a literary text does not simply reflect the social and historical conditions in which it was created.

Literary studies has historically been caught between "extrinsic" approaches to the text (which focus, for example, on the biography or psychology of the author, or the social and political functions of literary works) and "intrinsic" approaches that emphasise aesthetic dimensions such as literary technique (Wellek & Warren, 1949). Any of these dimensions taken in isolation can produce a reductive reading of texts. Literary texts cannot, for example, be explained simply in terms of their origins, whether this is a matter of identifying the authorial intention or the socio-historical conditions at the time that it was written. Equally, however, they cannot be located in a socio-historical vacuum and subjected to formal analysis which denies the ideological work they perform. (cf. Said, 1983, p. 148; cf. Wellek & Warren, 1949). Such formal methods in literary scholarship have privileged certain texts over others. That they have tended to be mainstream texts written by white, male authors, as opposed to minority texts, such as those written by female authors, authors of non-Western origin, and postcolonial authors, shows the ideological nature of such literary scholarship. My goal is to engage in literary scholarship that acknowledges the complex relationship between the text and the text's situation in the world, while still conducting a rigorous formal analysis that shows how the texts I have chosen for discussion are constructed.

Said provides perhaps a more productive model for such literary scholarship than Eagleton. His works, at least, speak to my situation more directly. His concept of the text's "worldliness", as well as his explication of "Orientalism" provide me with analytical tools

with which to construct readings of literary texts about Thailand within a postcolonial framework. Following Said (1983), I believe that texts indeed constitute real interventions in socio-cultural settings. My analysis of Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its subsequent reproductions both presupposes the possibility of such interventions and demonstrates it.

The use of Said's work, as well as other examples of postcolonial theory, provides an analytical framework for understanding the textual construction of Thailand as a "pseudo" colony of the West. That is to say, it renders visible the connections between texts about Thailand and Thai history and culture, as well as prompting an investigation into the ways such texts have been received in the Western world. Postcolonial theory helps reveal the mechanisms of Western ideological colonisation of Thailand as these operate within these texts. My view is that these Western texts about Thailand have played a key role in locating the country both textually and ideologically in the shared history of other colonial countries. All these texts about Thailand contain an allegory about taming the primitives and training them to serve the Western master. Scrutiny of these Western representations of Thailand thus provides a means by which to challenge Western constructions of Thailand's pseudo-colonial history. My aim is to open up the possibility of inserting "rewritten" narrative accounts of Thailand comprising autoethnograhic texts narrated by Thais. These autoethnographic narratives were solicited through other methodological approaches, which I will now discuss. It is by collecting these narratives that I have stepped beyond the boundaries of English literary studies into the field of Education.

2.1.1.2 Education

The field of Education studies has given me the concept of "teacher research" to develop methodological approaches appropriate to my educational inquiry. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) give a definition of "teacher research" as "systematic, intentional inquiry by

teachers about their own school and classroom work" (pp. 23-24). By "systematic", Cochran-Smith and Lytle refer to ordered ways of gathering data and recording information, documenting experiences inside and outside of classrooms, and making some kind of written record. By "intentional" they signal that teacher research is an activity that is planned rather than spontaneous. By "inquiry" they suggest that teacher research stems from or generates questions and reflects teachers' desires to make sense of their experiences – to adopt a learning stance or openness toward classroom life (p. 24). Cochran-Smith and Lytle's understanding of teacher research constructs teachers as active contributors to knowledge about their own practice rather than passive recipients of knowledge developed by educational researchers located outside classroom contexts.

The concept of "teacher research" articulated by Cochran-Smith and Lytle prompted me to conduct research in my classroom and into my teaching practice. I thus hoped to translate the political impulse behind my research into practical action. This meant making a significant intervention in my work as a teacher of English language and literature in a Thai University. If I consciously changed my pedagogy and the curriculum that I had been implementing, then this would open up a perspective on my work as an English teacher that would not otherwise have been available to me. Taking the role of teacher-researcher who is inquiring into my own teaching practice and my own English literature classroom, I thereby saw myself as engaging in "action research" (Mertler, 2006; Stringer, 2004), making a change to my curriculum and pedagogy and monitoring the significance of this change by interviewing my students. Underlying my action research project is the notion of action research as *praxis* or what Carr and Kemmis (1986) refer to as "action which is considered and consciously theorized, and which may reflexively inform and transform the theory which informed it" (p. 190). Within my classroom action research project, dynamic relationships between action (practice) and theory are reflected in my aim to make pedagogical and curricular change that is informed by postcolonial theory and a notion of

postcolonial resistance. These relationships are also manifest in my application of postcolonial strategies (i.e. postcolonial readings, postcolonial "speaking back to the centre", appropriation, etc. [Ashcroft, 2001; Ashcroft et al., 1989]), which I used to make classroom interventions and to disrupt the way English literature is usually taught at my institution.

So as part of my research, I went back to Thailand to teach for a semester at Silpakorn University. I chose to teach the subject *Selected British and American Novels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, which I had been teaching for two years before coming to study for my MA and PhD in Australia. During those two years, all books in the reading list I assigned to my students were classic "modern" texts, namely Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, and Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*. In retrospect, I feel that I took a central role in knowledge transfer. My teaching method at that time involved giving lectures, reading the books to my students and modelling a preferred reading of these texts, which was typically one which did nothing to challenge their canonical status.

When I returned to Thailand to engage in teaching as part of my research, I made significant changes to my teaching by introducing postcolonial reading practices which subverted canonical texts (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 189). In conjunction with my new pedagogical practice of encouraging my students to be active readers of the texts, I also made a different selection of texts for the reading list. To accomplish this, I designed a new reading list with a particular, ordered sequence of texts. Students were assigned to read texts about Asian countries (namely, Burma, India, and Thailand) written by Western authors, two films about Thailand, and a postcolonial text. The texts in the reading list were in the following order:

(1) George Orwell's "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant"

(2) Rudyard Kipling's "Beyond the Pale"

(3) George Orwell's *Burmese Days*

(4) Excerpts from Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*

(5) Two films about Thailand: *The King and I* and *Anna and the King*

(6) Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

By shifting the focus from the Eurocentric texts that had hitherto made up the syllabus to the above-mentioned texts, my aim was to prepare my students to be active agents in their interpretations of the assigned texts. The new selection and order of the texts were designed to provide the students with contexts for interpretive activities and to sensitise them to the ways their interpretations of texts were "framed" (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). Here I took into account Reid's (1992) remarks that teachers are continually involved in framing texts for student readers and that part of their role should be to alert them to that framing (p. 64). The notion of framing and interpretation and the metaphors of framing discussed by MacLachlan (1994), MacLachlan and Reid (1994), and Reid (1992) were integral to the vision of a postcolonial reading practice that I planned to implement in my new English literature classroom.

According to MacLachlan and Reid (1994), the notion of framing draws attention to agency and acknowledges the complex nature of the interpretive process. In the reading process, the meanings of the text are multiple depending on the interplay of different framings involved in the reader's interpretation of the text and the way the text frames itself in various ways (pp. 8-9). MacLachlan and Reid argue that there are at least four types of framing or what they call framing metaphors:

(1) extratextual framing: the values and experiences that a reader may bring to a text;
(2) intratextual framing: signals that the text itself might be said to give as to how it wishes to be read, such as division into paragraphs and chapters, embedded narrative, and footnotes;
(3) circumtextual framing: the physical format by which a text is presented, the cover, the author's name, and the title; and
(4) intertextual framing: the way texts incorporate other texts, sometimes referring to them explicitly or invoking them in some way (MacLachlan, 1994; MacLachlan & Reid, 1994; Reid, 1992).

The dynamic interaction between text and interpreter, as well as text and context, suggested by MacLachlan and Reid's framing metaphors helped me reconceptualise the study of English literature as an empowering activity for my students. I envisaged that they would be able to take the position of active readers and agents who practiced postcolonial subversive reading. I hoped that the textual encounter between my students (as they brought various framings to their interpretation) and the texts (including the various devices texts use to control the students' interpretation), would produce some change in my students' reading habits. I envisaged that they would be transformed from being passive readers who rely on the teacher's interpretation to active readers who are conscious of the way they create meaning through their engagement with texts. I was anticipating that the tensions arising out of this textual encounter would enable the students to recognise the way Orientalist binaries mediated the portrayal of the East in the assigned texts written by Western authors. Subsequently, this subversive reading would prompt the students to reflect upon their position as Thais and the place of Thailand in a globalising world. Hence it would become possible for them to "speak back" to the West.

Of crucial importance to my investigations into the teaching and learning that occurred in my "new" classroom, was my use of "narrative inquiry" as a means by which to access the thoughts and feelings of my students. The use of narrative in educational research is based on the claim that life is made up of stories. People lead storied lives and tell stories of their lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Studies of educational experience can be learned from stories told by teachers and learners who are both storytellers and characters in their own narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Ershler, 2001). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe how the use of narrative in educational research involves two stages. The first part is that a researcher engaged in narrative inquiry listens closely to teachers and other learners and to the stories of their lives in and out of classrooms. The second part, as narrative inquiry proceeds, occurs when the researcher begins to tell his/her own stories. It is in the researcher's story telling that the stories of the participants merge with the story of the researcher to create new stories, which Connelly and Clandinin call "collaborative stories". In effect, these collaborative stories are a result of the collaborative research relationship between the researcher and the participants who become mutually engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving their stories (p. 12).

Narrative methodology has a dual purpose in my research, serving as both the research method for my educational inquiry and the link between English and Education. For the first purpose, narrative as a form of inquiry within educational research yielded insights into the "shared" social and discursive conditions constituting my teaching practice. Kemmis (2005) argues that practices are not just activities undertaken by individual practitioners. Practices also have "extra-individual" features that are social and discursive, locating them in the collective activity of groups (p. 393). Following Kemmis, my research involved first of all a translation of postcolonial theory into practice (which was realised via the classroom interventions). It required as well my understanding of the extra-

individual features of my practice, comprising "the expectations, intentions and values of clients and others" that my practice was intended to serve (cf. ibid., p. 393). To learn about these extra-individual dimensions, I applied narrative as a form of inquiry in order to bring to the surface the shared discursive factors constituting and reconstituting my teaching practice and the social dimensions of my practice. This benefit of narrative study is made explicit by Toolan (1988) when he states that narrative makes us "learn more about ourselves and the world around us" (p. viii). I believed that the social and the discursive dimensions of my teaching could be revealed in the stories told by my students, my fellow colleagues at Silpakorn University, and Thai teachers of English language and literature at Chiang Mai University. The stories acquired through engaging in narrative inquiry would provide what Bahktin calls a *surplus of seeing* (cf. Holquist, 1990), helping me to construct a richer account of my teaching practice that is both personal and social. Holquist (1990) summarises the Bakhtinian surplus of seeing as follows:

> The aspect of the situation that you see, but I do not, is what Bakhtin calls your "surplus of seeing"; those things I see but you cannot constitute my "surplus of seeing". … By adding the surplus that has been "given" to you to the surplus that has been "given" to me … I am able to "conceive" or construct a whole out of the different situations we are in together. (pp. 36-37; emphasis in original)

The second purpose for using narrative methodology in my educational inquiry is to connect English literary studies with Education. Stories are of interest to researchers in various fields of study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elliot, 2005; Kerby, 1991; Riley & Hawe, 2005), including Literary studies and Education. When studying narratives, literary critics or students of literature may pay attention to plot, theme, characterisation, setting, and literary devices used in narratives, in an attempt to understand their meaning and arrive

at a judgment about their value. In the context of educational narrative inquiry, researchers pay attention to the lived experience of respondents, which are rendered in the form of narratives and can be described narratively. When writing a narrative text about their respondents, researchers use some narrative devices to make understandable the respondent's narrative thinking. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, pp. 8-9), drawing on Welty (1979), explain that narrative researchers deploy narrative devices, namely "scene" and "plot", to interpret and textually represent the respondent's narrative thinking and his or her lived experience. By "scene", Connelly and Clandinin mean the place where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories, and where cultural and social contexts play constraining and enabling role. By "plot", they refer to the temporal structure within the story in terms of beginning, middle, and end. Apart from being a tool for the researchers to rewrite the story of the participant, the temporal plot structure is also useful in initiating data collection whereby the researchers encourage their participants to think narratively about their lived experiences.

My hope was that narrative methodology could provide a contact zone between English and Education, as discussed earlier. The overlap and tensions between the two fields of inquiry could be rendered concrete and made comprehensible by thinking of data from both fields as taking the form of narrativised accounts: literary narrative and personal narrative. Then the gap between my English literary research (particularly my focus on the worldliness of Western texts about Thailand) and educational research could be bridged. Out of the co-presence of literary and personal narratives in the contact zone of English literary studies and Education, I could explore the contact zone between East and West, and establish a context for a postcolonial "speaking back" to the "metropolitan centre" (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

I judged that narrative inquiry could facilitate a site for speaking back from the marginal position of Thailand and the East in general. I felt that this site could be established when the Western literary narratives about Thailand (specifically Leonowens' texts and their subsequent appropriations by other Western writers), which I conceived as ethnographic texts (cf. Pratt, 2008) about Thailand, were juxtaposed with the personal narratives told by my Thai participants. To acquire my participants' stories, I conducted unstructured interviews, one of the methods for data collection employed by researchers engaged in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I conceived of the interview process as being a significant moment whereby my participants could develop self-awareness about the way they are situated by Orientalist discourse. Kerby (1991) points out that the self is a product of language, not a pre-linguistic given that merely employs language. The self is a result of discursive action rather than an entity that is ontologically prior to such action and an originator of meaning. People "only 'know' themselves after the fact of expression" (p. 5). In effect, I expected that the interview questions would prompt participants (both student and teacher participants) to reflect upon their experience as students and teachers of English and the effect that an English education had had on them. The stories given by my participants in such unstructured interviews then required narrative analysis in order to understand how the participants constructed meanings out of their experiences (cf. Mishler, 1986). I thereby considered that insights gained from narrative analysis of my participants' stories subsequently allowed me to (re)construct a version of a story of Thailand that is constituted from minor narratives (Lyotard, 1984) told from the perspectives of my Thai participants. These minor Thai narratives address the stories of Thailand told by Western authors.

My next step was then to (re)write what I conceptualised as stories in which the participants were "speaking back" into "autoethnographic texts" (Pratt, 2008). To do this, attention needed to be paid to the subjectivity or the self (Elliott, 2001; Hall, 2004; Kerby,

1991) of my participants. The use of the unstructured interview helped me retain my participants' voices and the subject position from which they told their stories of experience. I believed that the unstructured interview would privilege the agency of my participants. This is because, as Mishler (1986) puts it, in the unstructured interview respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, and they are allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and to elaborate on their responses as they see fit (p. 69).

To respect the subjectivity of my participants as speaking subjects meant that I needed to balance the power relations between me and the participants. My work as a researcher involved interviewing the participants, eliciting stories from them, and selecting, compiling, and reconstructing events in their stories. Those stories were to be woven into my own story and reformatted to suit the purpose of my research, The ethical assumption underpinning narrative inquiry, which requires equality between the researcher and the participants during the interview process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Mishler, 1986), reminded me to acknowledge my participants' voices and their subjectivities, even when I was (re)writing their stories out of the interview transcripts. With this commitment in mind, I then defined my authoring of the autoethnographic texts drawn from my participants' stories and the ethnographic texts drawn from the Western literary texts about Thailand as an act of representing events within the context of a specific local history. By "local history", I refer to both the complex temporal and spatial locations where the narration took place, and the location of the events that the narrators described, interpreted, and represented in their narration. I am also thinking of how the act of narrating itself was influenced by certain social, cultural, and ideological factors, and how the events narrated were constructed by and within certain discourses. As a result, in this thesis there are more "I's" than the speaking voice of the author-researcher's self. And even with respect to my own "I", I can sense a certain division in my position. As Bakhtin (1981) puts it:

> If I relate (or write about) an event that has just happened to me, then I as the *teller* (or writer) of this event am already outside the time and space in which the event occurred. It is just as impossible to forge an identity between myself, my own "I", and that "I" that is the subject of my stories as it is to lift myself up by my own hair. (p. 256; emphasis in original)

To capture the complexity and diversity of the temporal and spatial dimensions present in the Western literary narratives and Thai personal narratives presented in my thesis, I employed Bakhtin's concept of *chronotope* in the dialogical relationships of language as the other methodology. In the essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", Bakhtin (1981) discusses the process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature. He describes it by using the term *chronotope*, which refers to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (p. 84). Bakhtin explains that the historical time markers in human life that occur within well-delineated spatial areas become a model for structuring a representation of events in literature (p. 250). How historical time and space in the real world are transformed into time and space in literature is made understandable when Bakhtin discusses the novels of Stendhal and Balzac. Bakhtin explains that in their realist novels, the two novelists use the space of parlors and salons as the places where the events may unfold and the major spatial and temporal sequences of the novel intersect:

> In salons and parlors the webs of intrigue are spun, denouements occur and finally – this is where *dialogues* happen, something that acquires extraordinary importance in the novels, revealing the character, "ideas" and "passions" of the heroes. … Most important in all this is the weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life, with the secrets of the boudoir; the interweaving

of petty, private intrigues with political and financial intrigues, the interpenetration of state with boudoir secrets, of historical sequences with the everyday and biographical sequences. Here the graphically visible markers of historical time as well as of biographical and everyday time are concentrated and condensed; at the same time they are intertwined with each other in the tightest possible fashion, fused into unitary markers of the epoch. The epoch becomes not only graphically visible [space], but narratively visible [time]. (pp. 246-247; emphasis in original)

Within this long essay, Bakhtin analyses many types of artistic chronotopes and their characteristics and functions in certain literary genres. He concludes that within a single literary work of a single author, there are a number of different chronotopes and complex interactions among them (i.e. chronotopes may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in more complex interrelationships). Bakhtin marks these interactions among chronotopes as being "dialogical" (p. 252). Moreover, there are dialogic interactions between the actual chronotopes of the social world that serve as the source of representation, and the created chronotopes of the world represented in the literary text (p. 253). Bakhtin notes further that the presence of that categorical boundary line between the real and the represented worlds make these two worlds resist fusion. Nevertheless, they are indissolubly tied up with each other and find themselves in continual mutual interaction where uninterrupted exchange goes on between them (p. 254).

The Bakhtinian concept of chronotope is useful for me as the author of the thesis to construct links between different times and spaces among the different types of narrative texts in my thesis writing. The concept functions to bring to the surface what Holquist, the Bakhtinian scholar, refers to as the Manichaean opposition between *centrifugal* forces that

seek to keep things apart and *centripetal* forces that work to make things cohere (Holquist, 1990, p. 69). That is, the concept foregrounds the struggles between different voices, which were originally located in different temporal and spatial situations (i.e. the voices of individual students and teacher participants, of the characters represented in the Western texts about Thailand, of the author-narrators of those texts, and of me who is the author-researcher of the thesis and narrative writer). This multi-voicedness in turn forms a new agenda in my thesis in creating a new dialogical story of East meeting West, whereby Thais address the West. Practising the Bakhtinian concept of the dialogical character of narrative, I also expect another speaking-back moment from the reader of my thesis. Bakhtin (1981) points out that "every literary work *faces outward away from itself*, toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself" (p. 257; emphasis in original). I anticipate that when the event of writing my thesis is renewed at the moment the reader reads it, the reading will generate and enact another significant moment of postcolonial speaking-back.

2.1.2 Materials used in conducting the research

My research drew on two sets of materials or "data": English literary texts about Thailand and data arising out of my teaching experience.

I will discuss the first set of data only in passing here, as I have already considered this facet of my study earlier. The literary texts I employ consist of excerpts from Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*, and the vocal score of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *The King and I*. The second set of data consists of interview transcripts and my reflective journal, which I kept while implementing the new curriculum I devised.

The interview transcripts were drawn from individual interviews conducted with English literature teachers at Silpakorn University and Chiang Mai University, and focus group discussions conducted with my students at Silpakorn University. It must be noted that the names used in the interview transcripts and in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Unstructured interviewing was used for both individual interviews and focus group discussions. As discussed above, I firstly used unstructured interviews as a method of data collection for narrative inquiry to draw stories from my teacher and student participants and to see the world through their eyes. Fontana and Frey (1994) explicate the difference between structured and unstructured interviewing. Whereas structured interviewing aims at "capturing precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behavior within pre-established categories", unstructured interviewing is employed to "understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (p. 366).

In the course of my research, I treated the unstructured individual interview as a conversation in which I tried not to control the direction of the accounts of their experiences given by my teacher participants. I therefore designed the interview prompts to allow for the fluidity of conversation (cf. Patton, 2002). I intended these questions to prompt the participants' critical thinking and to encourage them to tell the stories they wanted to share. The questions actually aimed to stimulate the participants to reflect critically upon some issues crucial to their study of English language and literature when they were undergraduate students and with respect to their current teaching practice.

The focus group discussions (or what I sometimes call "group interviews"), apart from being part of narrative inquiry, were employed in conjunction with my classroom interventions (cf. Fontana & Frey, 1994). Some of the advantages of group interviews, as mentioned by Fontana and Frey (1994), are that they are "data rich", "flexible", and

"cumulative and elaborative" (p. 365). Gall et al. (1996) observe that the interactions among the participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually. The questions asked in the interview were designed to initiate discussion among the participants. They were meant to encourage the participants to take some responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in their group (p. 308). Flick (2006) points out that group discussions feature the dynamics of a group discussing particular topics. In group discussions, "corrections by the group concerning views that are not correct, not socially shared, or extreme are available as means for validating statements and views". In effect, "the group becomes a tool for reconstructing individual opinions more appropriately" (p. 191).

My purpose in using focus group discussion was to collect data from my students in the context of classroom learning and activities. I initially used focus group discussion to better understand my students' reasons for majoring in English, the social and discursive context that affected their study, and the effects of the change of my teaching practice and curriculum on them. As the interview discussion proceeded, focus group discussion then developed into a forum where my students discussed the English literary texts that they studied and issues relating to the situation of Third World countries (including Thailand) in the globalised world that were provoked by their reading of the texts. To this extent, data deriving from the dynamics and interactions in the group where my students exchanged their talk provided me with insights into how they perceived the study of English, how the interpretive community (Fish, 1980) of my Thai students engaged with the English literary texts they were assigned to read, and how they reacted to, defied and resisted Western representations of the East in the texts they read.

I had envisaged that the languages used in the interviews would be both Thai and English, although the interview prompts containing sets of questions were written in English. (It

should be noted that by "interviews" here, I refer to both individual interviews and focus group discussions.) My participants had freedom to use any language(s) to communicate during the interviews, but all participants agreed to use Thai. Because their mother tongue is Thai, my participants felt more freedom when speaking this language. The native tongue gave them freedom to develop their own thoughts, facilitating the flow of the conversation. By contrast, English was clearly felt by the participants as limiting their ability to speak out or express their opinions. This can be seen from Wara's preference for using the Thai language in the interview. Wara is one of my teacher participants. Before the first interview with her began, I asked her which language she wanted to use, English or Thai. Here is her answer: "*We are Thai. It is funny to speak English to each other. And it is easier for us, Thais, to communicate in Thai because we can understand each other well in Thai*". As my study and the interviews exist at the interface between Thai and English, English words were used sometimes during the interview. English was still necessary to indicate some complex ideas or terms borrowed from the West, which Thai did not have at this point or might not be able to express. The interviewees also used the Thai-coined word *farang*, which is generally used by Thai people to refer to a Westerner, particularly a Caucasian with blond hair, pointed nose, and fair complexion.

To present the interface between the two languages in my research, especially to my intended audience in Western academia, it is necessary to consider the issue of translation from Thai into English. Although I attempted to make a faithful translation of the interviews from Thai into English in order to cover and retain every meaning of the Thai words, phrases, and sentences that my interviewees spoke, my effort to do this was in vain. Bakhtin (1981) gives me a guide that language is "never" unitary:

> It [Language] is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is a characteristic of all living language. Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound. (p. 288)

As Bakhtin shows me, translating the interviews from Thai into English means working on the border between the two languages where these two languages intersect, but are not fully absorbed into each other. Consequently, there is still a trace of the Thai system of values and worldviews, which resist a total translation into another language. Good examples are the word *farang* which I just mentioned and the word *krengjai*. *Krengjai* refers to the Thai way of social interaction in which a person is self-conscious about his or her behaviour when dealing with others. The concept of *krengjai* is a mixture of consideration, respectfulness, and reluctance to disturb or offend. No equivalent words in English can fully explain the exact culture-specific meaning of these words. In this sense, my translation can be described as occurring in the contact zone of Thai/English. The resistance of the Thai language that is replete with the culture and worldview of my Thai participants to be absorbed into English is a reflection of the co-existence of the social, cultural, and ideological dissonances between the two languages.

The other fieldwork-based data is my reflective journal. I employed a reflective journal both for my classroom interventions and for the interviews. This reflective journal was useful in recording the atmosphere at each interview, comments on students' reactions and

viewpoints, and other happenings that occurred during the interviews. In addition, for my classroom interventions, the reflective journal allowed me to criticise my involvement in my classroom teaching and to record some change in my students' participation in the classroom.

2.2 Research questions

There are two sets of research questions arising out of the two disciplines that shape this inquiry. The first set of research questions concerning my study of English literary texts about Thailand are as follows:

1. How are Thailand and Thai people represented in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its reproductions?
2. To what extent do these texts reflect an Orientalist discourse as described by Edward Said?

I ask the second set of research questions relating specifically to my work as an educator:

1. What is the significance of English education in Thailand?
2. How are literary interpretive practices currently enacted in English literature classrooms in Thai universities?
3. How will the change of my teaching practice and the change of English literature curriculum affect Thai students' interpretive activities?
4. How can English literature be taught in such a way as to empower Thai students in Thai English literature classrooms?
5. How can English literature be taught to initiate Thai students' critical thinking regarding the neocolonial condition of Thailand?
6. What is the nature of negotiation and resistance that Thai students experience by engaging in a postcolonial re-reading of English literary texts?

2.3 Structure of the thesis

The principle behind the structure of the thesis reflects a Bakhtinian dialogical understanding of language and encompasses the notion of multi-voicedness. *Dialogism* gives a context for structuring the thesis chapters as a cluster of contact zones in which there is a conglomeration of voices (i.e. Thai and Western voices), which makes possible the postcolonial speaking and writing back. In effect, the thesis structure designates the step-by-step dissolving of the Orientalist binary of East and West, starting from the West speaking "on behalf of" Thais, to Thais addressing the West, and Thais speaking "for" and "by" themselves.

The next two chapters (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4) deal with the story of Thailand in Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its reproductions. Specifically, Chapter 3 will give the background for understanding how the stories by Leonowens and her fellow Western writers have been viewed by Western readers and Thai readers and academics. I will also introduce Edwards Said's concept of "Orientalism", which will later be used as the key literary-theoretical framework for my textual analysis of the Western stories in Chapter 4. My use of literary analysis in the postcolonial tradition in Chapter 4 aims to scrutinise and decentre the Orientalist structure of these texts that generates the hegemony of neocolonial power over Thailand.

Chapter 5 is the reclaiming of Thai voices. In this chapter, I bring my literary study of Leonowens' story about Thailand and its reproductions into my study of the real English language and literature teaching context. The stories of Anna Leonowens' bringing of English education to the Siamese told by the Western authors are juxtaposed with the stories of English education in Thailand told by Thai teachers who recall their past experiences as students of English language and literature. By reconstituting Western and Thai voices in the form of a new story of East meeting West, I consider myself as

authoring autoethnographic texts in response to the ethnographic texts about Thailand written by Western authors.

In Chapter 6, I study the worldliness of Leonowens' story of Thailand and its reproductions that create dynamic and reciprocal exchanges between the authors and their Western readers. Then I analyse the counter-discourse that Thai authors use in response to the Orientalist representation of Siam in these Western texts. After that, I move on to the counter-discourse made by Thai students as readers of the texts in the context of my English literature classroom. The aim of doing this is to study how the interpretive community of my Thai students receives these Western stories and how they resist and negotiate the imposition of Western power.

Chapter 7 is a study of the history of English education in Thailand from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Unlike the story of English education in Thailand and modernisation of Thailand told by Leonowens and retold by her subsequent authors, the real nature of Thailand's reception of Western education and modernity is that of a postcolonial appropriation of Western culture. This historical study of English education in Thailand is employed as a backdrop to the discussion of the Thai Government's development policy that is undeniably influenced by the West. The Government's policy is then set against the minor narratives told by Thai students at the microcosmic level. The stories of my students help me as a practitioner who enacts the Government's policy to see through my students' eyes the educational contexts that have made the students the creatures of the educational system. Also my students' stories become a context for my changing practice and curriculum change that can empower the students.

In my concluding chapter, Chapter 8, I reflect on my educational and professional journey. I draw again on postcolonial theory to help me understand my situation of being an Asian

in a Western country. I reflect on how this experience of being an Asian in the West has affected and influenced my research and my professional practice on my return to Thailand.

Chapter 3

Once Upon A Time in Thailand: Anna Leonowens and Orientalism

This chapter and the following one are interrelated. Chapter 3 focuses on Anna Leonowens' Orientalist text, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, and its retellings in subsequent texts that have circulated among Western readers the image of Siam and Siamese people as being primitive and thus needing to be civilised. This portrayal of Siam is so controversial that Thai readers and academics have argued about the factual and historical truth of Leonowens' text many times over the years. Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" will be introduced later in the chapter to provide a more productive way of reading these Orientalist texts about Siam rather than getting bogged down in whether they are factually accurate. In Chapter 4, I employ literary textual analysis in the vein of Said's writing on "Orientalism" to analyse the structure and textual strategies used in Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its reproductions. This is in order to show how Leonowens' image of Siam does indeed seem "true". However, I argue that this image can only be granted "truth" within the ideological world that Leonowens and her Western readers inhabit. By drawing on postcolonial literary theory my aim will then be to scrutinise and decentre the Orientalist structure of these texts and thus to "write back" (Ashcroft et al.,1989) to the hegemony of neocolonial power over Thailand.

3.1 Subject Siam: Thailand in Anna Leonowens' narrative

Thailand has long been a subject of Western narratives. Accounts of Thailand are given in a large number of fictional and non-fictional writings by Western writers, such as official documents, reports, letters, personal journals, travelogues, guidebooks, and novels. Thailand has aroused Westerners' imagination in significantly contradictory ways. Thailand has been variously represented as a place where Westerners encounter

antagonism by local people, or a place where they are greeted with delight and served with gratitude by the natives, not to mention other representations somewhere between these extremes. For all its apparent diversity, much of this writing is presented either as dispassionate reportage or as personal recollections and reactions. It conveys the impression that it is an accurate representation of Thai culture, rather than acknowledging how it might be shaped from a Western standpoint, as distinct from how Thais might see their own culture. All these texts reveal an enduring fascination on the part of Western writers with Thailand and the Orient in general.

The portrayal of Thailand in Western writings raises questions about the position of the authors and their readers within the social world. We are confronted by literary-theoretical issues about the connection between texts and the time and place they were created, as well as how those texts have subsequently been appropriated by readers at other times. The production and reception of these texts reveals, in short, a fascinating interaction between the values the authors originally brought to their writing and the views and values that have shaped readers' responses of these texts. Edward Said's notion of the "worldliness" of the text helps make this interaction discernible. Said (1983) argues that texts are inevitably worldly. Texts cannot be isolated from "the social world, human life, and … the historical moment in which they are located and interpreted" (p. 4). This argument by Said provides me with a basis on which to identify the discursive frames within which Thailand has been textually constructed in narratives by Western writers, as well as the discursive practices which have subsequently shaped the interpretive practices of various generations of Western readers. This investigation of the ways the texts have been framed and reframed in turn opens up questions of the power relations involved in the production and transmission of Thailand as a text.

The text about Thailand, which is the primary focus of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, is a nineteenth-century book by Anna Leonowens – *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, which was first published in 1870. My analysis will show how Thailand is transformed in Leonowens' text, specifically how Thailand is textualised through a discursive practice enacting the West's power over Thai culture and society. However, it is not as though this power was merely exercised once, at the moment when the book was written by its author and then read by her readers. A study of the original book would be incomplete if it did not consider subsequent retellings in the form of its reproductions in Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* (first published in1943) and Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical play *The King and I* (first performed to American audiences in 1951).[1]

Following are versions of the stories of Anna and King Mongkut in a chronological order that have been circulated in the Western world:

Author / Director / Producer	**Title**	**Date of Publication**	**Genre**	**Note**
Anna Leonowens	*The English Governess at the Siamese Court*	1870	Travel account/ Memoir	

[1] I purposefully select Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*, which was first published in 1943, and the musical play *The King and I*, which was first performed in 1951, as texts for my study although there are other versions, such as the film versions of years 1946, 1956 and 1999, and the cartoon version of year 1999. The reason for selecting Landon's book is that, as Landon claims, she tries to retain the gist in Leonowens' original books – *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and *The Romance of the Harem* – as much as possible. I choose the musical play *The King and I* (1951) because the success of this Broadway production among the American audiences made Thailand well-known to the Western world. This stage version is also interesting because of the way it reveals the United States' perpetuation of an Orientalist discourse about Thailand and the transmission of American ideology among Western audiences.

Author / Director / Producer	Title	Date of Publication	Genre	Note
Anna Leonowens	*The Romance of the Harem*	1873	Travel account/ Memoir	
Margaret Landon	*Anna and the King of Siam*	1943	Novel	Inspired by Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and *The Romance of the Harem*
John Cromwell (Twentieth Century Fox)	*Anna and the King of Siam*	1946	Film	Adapted from Margaret Landon's book. Starring Irene Dunne and Rex Harrison
Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein	*The King and I*	1951	Broadway musical	Adapted from Margaret Landon's book. Starring Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner
Walter Lang (Twentieth Century Fox)	*The King and I*	1956	Musical film	Music and lyric by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. Starring Deborah Kerr and Yul Brynner
Warner Bros. Animation and Morgan Creek Productions	*Anna and the King*	1999	Animated film	

Author / Director / Producer	Title	Date of Publication	Genre	Note
Andy Tennant (Twentieth Century Fox)	*Anna and the King*	1999	Film	Starring Jodie Foster and Chow Yun-fat

The construction of Thailand in the original book and its reproductions has perpetuated Western representational discourses and their Orientalist treatment of Thai people and their culture. This is so, even when we are considering what some Westerners might view as simply good old-fashioned family entertainment, in the CD and DVD forms of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Musical, *The King and I*, which viewers can find in video shops. The popularity of this musical shows the pervasive character of such Orientalist representations. Before looking at the vocal score of the musical, however, my focus will be Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court,* and then Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*. I will thereby give an account of the way Orientalist representations of Thailand have been constructed and renewed over several generations.

3.2 Introducing Anna Leonowens and her story of Siam

3.2.1 The reception of Anna Leonowens' story by Western readers and audiences

> Some day, when history adopts a more comprehensive view of the world, King Mongkut's name will rank higher than the names of the empire-builders. For the moment, however, he is hardly known in the West except in a series of grotesque caricatures presented under such names as *Anna and the King* and *The King and I.*
>
> Griswold, 1961, p.2

People from the Western world tend to know Thailand or Siam from a romantic story of Anna, an English teacher, and Mongkut, a despotic Siamese king. The story of Anna and the King of Siam has a fairytale quality – perhaps most closely akin to "Beauty and the Beast" – but Western audiences would also recognise in it another familiar scenario, involving a beneficent Western woman bringing civilisation to a benighted country. This story of Siam was originally written by Anna Leonowens, an English woman who spent five years (1862-1867)[2] in Siam teaching English to the children and wives of King Rama IV (reigning from 1851 to 1868) or Mongkut in her story. After leaving Siam, Leonowens published two books, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* in 1870 and *The Romance of the Harem* subsequently in 1873. She claimed that they were accurate records of her experience in the country. Leonowens writes in the Preface to her first book:

> In the following pages I have tried to give a full and faithful account of the scenes and the characters that were gradually unfolded to me as I began to understand the language, and by all other means to attain a clearer insight into the secret life of the court. (Leonowens, 1870, p. vii)

Leonowens' story of Siam was made popular posthumously by the American, Margaret Landon, who rearranged and combined Leonowens' two books into one volume called *Anna and the King of Siam* in 1943, recasting the story in the third person. Although there are some changes in the details of her version of the story, Landon, as stated in her Preface, attempts to remain as true to the original books as she can (Landon, 1943/2000, p. xii). Landon's book was well received. It was a best seller of her time.

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[2] Smithies (1995, p. 100) recognises that the time frame that Anna Leonowens stayed in Siam was just over five years, while the subtitle of her book *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* is "*Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok*".

Perhaps the most famous reworking of Leonowens' story is Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical play, *The King and I*, which was produced for American audiences in 1951. Rodgers and Hammerstein used Landon's book to write the stage play, which was then produced as a Hollywood movie of the same name in 1956. *The King and I* is influential in creating the image of Siamese people as savages and Anna as their tamer, and has probably been the main vehicle through which the love story between Anna and King Mongkut has been circulated in the Western world.

With each retelling of the story, its factual basis (such as it is) has receded further into the background (cf. Moffatt, 1961, p.viii). We have just noted Leonowens' claim to be writing a "faithful" account of her experiences in Siam – a claim which is belied by the way her experiences are mediated by conventional narrative structures, including fairy tale and the myth of Western culture's civilising influence on primitive people. Landon's text likewise constructs Anna as the embodiment of Western civilisation and the benefits of modernisation. And with the musical production and the films, "the truth", as Griswold (1961) puts it, "loses out altogether, so that King Mongkut presents the unexpected appearance of Rousseau's noble savage interpreted by Gilbert and Sullivan" (p.56). Yet, as Griswold also notes, it remains "disconcerting" to note that, even when the text is designed "to entertain than to instruct", they still contain a strand of documentary "truth", and no one questions whether King Mongkut and his court actually behaved in the ways they are presented in these texts.

It should also be noted that *The King and I* combines yet another strand within the narrative, beyond the fairy tale elements of "good family entertainment". *The King and I* is a much freer adaptation of the story than Landon's appropriation of Leonowens' text. It appeals to American taste and is firmly located within American culture at the time of its production. Klein (2003), an American academic, pinpoints the political use of Rodgers

and Hammerstein's stage and film versions as a cultural mechanism to serve the United States' interests in Asia during the Cold War period. The story of Anna's attempts to educate the Siamese provided a parable for Americans, persuading them to accept their responsibilities to forge good relationships with Asia and to take up the West's civilising mission.

3.2.2 A controversy that won't go away

The historical content in Leonowens' story of Siam has directed the attention of Thais as well as academics to investigating the accuracy of the historical facts in Leonowens' depiction of Siam. Some commentators have focused on the historical accuracy or otherwise of Leonowens' account.[3] More interesting, however, is a perspective which derives from Hayden White's work, and his emphasis on the rhetorical character of all writing, whether fiction or non-fiction. White (1984) argues that all texts – whether history or not – are rhetorical in character. Even when an historian purports to be offering the "facts", his or her account is mediated by narrative structures (pp. 2-3). And we have already noted above how Leonowens' account is mediated by some familiar narratives, namely fairy tale and the myth of Western "civilisation". What I am going to discuss in this chapter and the following one is not the factual or fictional quality of Leonowens' writing, but the ideological work that her writing and its subsequent appropriations are performing. To treat Leonowens' text as "fact" presupposes that her writing somehow floats above the beliefs and values she shared with her contemporaries. Biographical and historical details about Leonowens and King Mongkut is less interesting than the question

[3] Records show that Thai people have reacted quite negatively to Leonowens' representation of Siam. Moffat (1961) reveals that Leonowens' two books shocked the Siamese Court, resulting in the Siamese Government's attempt to buy up all copies (p. viii). Griswold (1961) mentions that when meeting Leonowens in London, the Siamese Ambassador reproached her for slandering King Mongkut, her former employer (p. 49). Bristowe, a British expert on spiders and a frequent traveller to Siam, did not believe in Leonowens' historical integrity. In researching her life, he sought the opinion of Prince Damrong, King Mongkut's surviving son, about Leonowens' story of Siam. As is recorded in Bristowe's *Louis and the King of Siam* (1976), the Prince stated that Leonowens "added drama to her story" to make money from her books to support her children. She "carried far less influence with the King than she claimed". The Prince concluded that Leonowens was only a governess, yet "she was tempted to make out she had said many things to him which in retrospect she may have wished she had said" (p. 23).

of how her text can be read as an example of Orientalism. This is regardless of whether she was deliberately misrepresenting Thailand or she was honestly reporting her experiences, which is likewise a question which need not detain us.

In the next section, I will discuss Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and the way his methodology is grounded in his view of the worldliness and circumstantiality of the text (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999; Said, 1978/1995).

3.3 Edward Said's *Orientalism* and me

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism informs my textual analysis of the representations of Thailand in Leonowens' narrative. The debate as to whether Leonowens' text is fact or fiction does not really challenge the author's "Orientalist" construction of Thailand. Nor does it take me into the kind of intellectual space I intend by working at the "contact zone" between East and West. As Said (1978/1995) describes the purpose of his book, *Orientalism*:

> I have no doubt that this was made possible because I traversed the imperial East-West divide, entered into the life of the West, and yet retained some organic connection with the place I originally came from. I would repeat that this was very much a procedure of crossing, rather than maintaining, barriers; I believe *Orientalism* as a book shows it, especially when I speak of humanistic study as seeking ideally to go beyond coercive limitations on thought towards a non-dominative and non-essentialist type of learning. (pp. 336-337)

Orientalism shows the promise of an East-West boundary crossing of the kind that Said writes about here. All of Said's writing is shaped by his awareness of being an "Oriental"

growing up and receiving early Western education in two British colonies – Palestine and Egypt – and then being educated and working in the United States (pp. 25-27). This awareness prompts him to focus his attention on the Islamic Orient whose situation in the world and material reality are given and connected to an Orientalist discourse of representation. His engagement with the struggle of his being "an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America" (p. 27) – or what Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999) call his "paradox of identity" – yields him an advantageous position, allowing him to destabilise the rigidity of Orientalist East-West categories. Said himself has undergone the metaphorical boundary crossing through the writing of *Orientalism*. The book becomes a textual space for him to write and criticise from within the West the way Western cultural domination has operated via an Orientalist discourse of representation.

For me, Said's *Orientalism* is an example of how the standpoint of an author within the world can produce a textual strategy to counterbalance the Western cultural domination created by Orientalist representational discourse. By "standpoint" I do not mean anything fixed – Said's position is one of perpetual boundary "crossing", not a choice to occupy one position rather than another. For these reasons, I intend to deploy the concept of Orientalism as a textual strategy to problematise the boundary between the East and the West, developing a counter-discourse and enacting a metaphorical border crossing that transcends the East/West binary. In writing this PhD thesis, I am taking the position of a Westernised Thai who spent seven years studying in Australia. Although my experience as a Thai student in Australia is different from that of Said, who spent most of his life time in the USA, I see that my feeling of being displaced and categorised as an Oriental becomes the condition or the worldly circumstance for writing the text of my PhD research. I believe that the PhD thesis itself thus becomes a reflection of my journey from East to West. By this I obviously do not mean that I have become Westernised, disavowing my Thai identity. I am gesturing, rather, towards the possibility of transcending the binaries

that characterise Orientalist discourse as it is embodied in the texts I have chosen to analyse.

3.4 Orientalism: The discourse of representation

In *Orientalism* (1978/1995), Said discusses the discourse Europeans employ to represent the Orient as the "other". He argues that Europe has "invented" the East or the Orient under the East/West binary. The representation of the East as Europe's "other" helps define Europe as "its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (p. 2). By so doing, the representation has less to do with the Orient than Europe's own sense of itself and its supremacy. Nineteenth century colonial racism, as Anderson (1983/1991) contends, attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community by generalising a principle of innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was based within the vastness of its overseas possessions: "if, say, English lords were naturally superior to other Englishmen, no matter: these other Englishmen were no less superior to the subjected natives" (p. 150).

Drawing on Said's work, some writers see Orientalism as a crucial way in which the West justified its "civilising" role. That is, European imperialism used burgeoning "sciences", such as anthropology and the study of "oriental" cultures (i.e. the body of scholarship which Said identifies as "Orientalism") to justify its political domination. Kabbani (1994) argues that European imperialists saw themselves as the "enlightener", not the "exploiter", when occupying the land populated by "slothful" native people, "preoccupied" with sex, violence, and thus "incapable of self-government" (p. 6). Bhabha (1994) points out that the objective of colonial discourse was to interpret the colonised people as "a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin" in order to justify their conquest and political control. In the coloniser's system of representation, the colonised are then

produced as "a social reality" which is an "other" and yet "entirely knowable and visible" (pp. 70-71).

Said (1978/1995) expounds three meanings of Orientalism, which are interdependent. First, Orientalism can be perceived as an academic discipline or a systematic study of the Orient. The second definition of Orientalism is more or less the meanings that it has in the imaginations of people in the West. In this respect, Orientalism is a style of thought adopted by a very large number of writers, which is grounded on the difference between the "Orient" and the "Occident". Writings by these Orientalist writers contribute to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its "other". Third, Orientalism can be regarded as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient in order to dominate it. As Said contends:

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (p. 3)

Said's discussion of Orientalism is grounded in Foucault's notion of "discourse", involving an interaction between power and knowledge. Foucault's understanding of "discourse" shows how the subtle mechanisms of power in the forms of "methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control" are exercised to produce knowledge (Foucault, 1980, p.102). This knowledge is not simply "about" the world, but could be said to produce the world, and hence to exercise power over it. By conceptualising Orientalism as a discourse, Said locates the complex relationship between Europe and the Orient in a relationship of power/knowledge.

For Said (1978/1995), Orientalism is thus "the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice" (p.73). The Orient in Europe's system of knowing is then transformed into a body of knowledge open to scrutiny by European Orientalists. The representation of the Orient made by the Orientalists is not a lie, a myth, or Europe's mere fantasy about the Orient. Instead, it is an institutionalised system of knowledge about the Orient that creates a "political vision of reality" of the Orient as being different from the West (p.43). Constructed as an object of a certain type of knowledge or disciplinary field, the Orient is denied its autonomy or any capacity to represent itself. It is the West that has this privilege – in other words, the power to "penetrate", "wrestle with", and "give shape and meaning" to the East (p.44). Europe therefore affirms its cultural dominance by having such knowledge of the Orient, representing it, and speaking on behalf of it.

In my study of Leonowens' narrative, Orientalism might be said to characterise the representation of Thailand. Although Thailand was not actually colonised, it likewise became the focus of Western Orientalism. In this respect, Leonowens' story is more than a product of her individual imagination, as though she is simply relating experiences that are peculiar to her. The text as a whole is an imaginary world, incorporating myth and narrative (i.e. character, plot, and settings) and displaying the kind of Orientalist sensibility which characterises that time. It is far more than a "reflection" of conditions in Thailand, and thus it is not productive to think about the text's status as "fact" or "fiction". Macherey (1978/2006) argues that the language "spoken" by the writer is not quite the same as that which we use ordinarily. Through a specific usage, the nature of language has changed. Language, as it is modified by the writer, "does not concern itself with distinctions between the true and the false" in so far as it establishes "its own truth" (pp. 49-50). We should then stop asking the question of whether Leonowens is telling a lie, but think instead of her function as the author in the production of her work.

Foucault (1977a) introduces the notion of "author-function", advising us to set aside a socio-historical analysis of the author as an individual and to think of the author as a function of discourse instead. The author's function is to characterise "the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (p. 124). Given Foucault's argument, we should stop thinking of Leonowens as an individual author whose work is simply the product of her creativity. As a text, Leonowens' work embodies an imaginary world which is another way of saying that it is doing ideological work, constructing a certain version of the (Western) "self" vis-à-vis the (Oriental) "other". We therefore must investigate how Leonowens appears and functions in the Orientalist discourse she circulates and how the discourse is articulated in her writing. That is to say, in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Anna Leonowens is actually a character in her own story and also the narrator of her narrative. That she is writing in the first person does not conflict with the notion that there is a division between the "I" that writes the text and the "I" of the first person narrator. This is as distinct from viewing the text as an expression of her personal experiences, her beliefs and values. Matching this recognition of the constructed nature of the text is a recognition of the ideological work it is performing within the apparatus of Orientalism as Said conceptualises it. And this is the task that I will perform in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Once Upon A Time in Thailand: Anna Leonowens and Textualised Thailand

In this chapter, I explore how we can transcend the fact/fiction dichotomy in Leonowens' writing through an analysis of the text as an example of "Orientalism". I shall then consider the various retellings of Leonowens' story and their ideological implications.

4.1 Orientalism and the production of Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*

4.1.1 Anna Leonowens as an Orientalist writer

The English Governess at the Siamese Court is a good example of how language constructs the standpoint from which an Orientalist text is written. The existence of the Orient is arguably the product of the work of Orientalist writers. It is not that an author writes "about" the Orient, as though this object exists outside the text and is directly accessible without the mediation of language and text. Rather the Orient is a textual production, a creation that only exists in very complex relationships with the people and geographical locations that the text is purportedly "about". It is writing – the making of the texts – that enables the process of "Orientalising" out of which the representation of the Orient is made. The Orientalist writer, according to Said (1978/1995), takes the "strategic location" or the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he or she writes about. That is,

> [e]veryone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of

> addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speak in its behalf. (p. 20)

Said's contention is pertinent to the analysis of Leonowens' discursive position constructed within her text. My argument here is that textualised Siam is a result of a distinct writing practice, making possible the author's shifting positions within her text, and hence her controlling power over the subject of her narration – Siam and its people. Given these shifting positions, I have to refer back to what I have mentioned in the previous chapter. That is, we have to differentiate between the "I" that writes the text (the author) and "I" of the first person narrator in order to understand Leonowens' authorial position which reflects, not her personal beliefs and values, but the Orientalist discourse that governs the way Leonowens as the author creates the kind of narrative voice she adopts, the types of characters and images she crafts, and the way she addresses the topics of discussion to her readers. It should be noted that in this thesis I use "Leonowens" to refer to the author in order to analyse the strategies, methods and conditions she employs in her Orientalist representational discourse. When I refer to "Anna", I mean the character and narrative voice that Leonowens has created.

Leonowens writes her account of Siam in the form of narrative – the telling of her personal account of her stay in Siam. Bal (1997) defines a narrative text as "a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof" (p. 5; emphasis in original). According to this definition, one element of a narrative text is the narrator who tells the story. When we investigate Leonowens' text, it is noteworthy that its subtitle, namely *Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok*, is suggestive of this narrative element. This subtitle provides Leonowens a licence to write in the first person in an autobiographical vein. The subtitle implies that the story comes into existence as a product of the narrator who recalls and tells

from her memory her experience as an English teacher at the Siamese palace school. Significantly, as an autobiographical account, the narrator is identified as the writer of the story, and the experiences she recounts are purportedly ones which she has actually undergone. Leonowens uses her standpoint as the author of an autobiographical text to address her readers, inviting them through her narrative voice to share her experiences on a journey to the unfamiliar land of Siam. The narrative voice of Anna, who is the narrator as well as the main character in the story, establishes the context within which the represented world of Siam is portrayed as "real" to the Western readers who hold the same ideological attitude as the author. The authorial standpoint addresses Western readers, assuming the power of a Western gaze, and its capacity to provide a perspective on everything that Anna encounters and presents to her readers.

At the beginning of her book, Leonowens discursively uses a personal letter of King Mongkut as prefatory framing in order to justify the power of Anna's narrative voice, especially in narrating her civilising mission in Siam. In the Preface, Anna tells her reader the cause of her journey to Siam by citing King Mongkut's invitation letter:

> "MADAM: We are in good pleasure, and satisfaction in heart, that you are in willingness to undertake the education of our beloved royal children. And we hope that in doing your education on us and on our children (whom English call inhabitants of benighted land) you will do your best endeavor for knowledge of English language, science, and literature, and not for conversion to Christianity; as the followers of Buddha are mostly aware of the powerfulness of truth and virtue, as well as the followers of Christ, and are desirous to have facility of English language and literature, more than new religions.

> "We beg to invite you to our royal palace to do your best endeavorment upon us and our children. We shall expect to see you here on return of Siamese steamer Chow Phya. (Leonowens, 1870, pp. v-vi)

Anna's mission of enlightening Siamese royal children stated in this letter paves the way for her authority to scrutinise Siamese culture which she exercises throughout the text. Locating herself as contributing to a civilising mission, her comments on primitive Siamese traditions and way of life (always implying a contrast with life in the West) are given legitimacy. The deeds she performs in Siam are rationalised as benefiting the Siamese. The choice of Siam as a topic for her writing derives from an unbalanced power relation since Siam is denied its capacity to act and to articulate its own account of its culture and history. It is represented and spoken for by the authoritative voice of Anna.

Leonowens' discursive position in her text is closely linked to imperialist discourse. Imperialist ideology and values circulating in the nineteenth century shape her perspective on Oriental people and her creation of this text about Siam. Said (1978/1995) explains that Orientalism is inextricably bound up with European and American imperialism. He pinpoints that nineteenth-century writers were well aware of the fact of the empire. Writing of the time was a product of a dynamic exchange between an individual author and the larger political concerns shaped by British, French, and American empires (pp. 14-15). *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* was published in 1870. The time of this publication is in the mid-nineteenth century, when European nations were competing to extend their power in Southeast Asia. This text inescapably reflects the encroachment and the "power" of European imperialists. An example is seen from the chapter on "The City of Bangkok" in which the consulate establishment and the trading post of the imperialists are described:

> The residences of the British, French, American, and Portuguese Consuls are pleasantly situated in a bend of the river, where a flight of wooden steps in good repair leads directly to the houses of the officials and European merchants of that quarter. Most influential among the latter is the managing firm of the Borneo Company, whose factories and warehouses for rice, sugar, and cotton are extensive and prosperous. (Leonowens, 1870, p. 139)

The British Borneo Company is portrayed in this excerpt as being the most influential of the Western trading posts in Siam in order to show the power of British mercantile interests together with England's military expansion outside Europe. Although the chapter has apparently the quite modest aim of capturing Anna's impressions of Bangkok on her arrival, the details presented are doing the ideological work of reaffirming a basic distinction between the East and West. Orientalist binaries are used to make the distinction between the West and Siam. She contrasts the above mentioned account of the European settlement with a negative commentary on Siamese people:

> The more opulent of the native merchants are grossly addicted to gambling and opium-smoking. Though the legal penalties prescribed for all who indulge in these destructive vices are severe, they do not avail to deter even respectable officers of the government from staking heavy sums on the turn of a card; and long before the game is ended the opium-pipe is introduced. One of the king's secretaries, who was a confirmed opium-smoker assured me he would rather die at once than be excluded from the region of raptures his pipe opened to him. (ibid.)

Here Leonowens parallels the "destructive vices" commonly found in Siam with Western order symbolised in the European consulate settlement and the prosperity of the European

merchants. This conception of Orientalist binaries is omnipresent in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*.

In her text, Leonowens constructs Anna as a representative of the British Empire and also the "power" of the Empire. The following snippet shows how the positional superiority of Anna and also the British Consul is constructed within the text:

> Moonshe was condemned to be stripped, and beaten with twenty strokes. Here was an end to my patience. Going straight up to the judge, I told him that if a single lash was laid upon the old man's back (which was bared as I spoke), he should suffer tenfold, for I would immediately lay the matter before the British Consul. Though I spoke in English, he caught the familiar words "British Consul," and turning to the interpreter, demanded the explanation he should have listened to before he pronounced sentence. (p. 23)

Anna tells her readers that the word "British Consul" saved the Persian teacher, Moonshe, from the severe punishment by the Siamese judge. The utterance of the word "British Consul" by Anna reveals the power of this sign. It is not an issue of whether or not Anna tells the truth about her power over the Siamese. It is more that of the dominance of British imperial power implied in Leonowens' representational discourse. By simply mentioning the word "British Consul", Anna draws a line between the powerful and articulate British and the "inferior" Siamese people. The superiority of the British assumed by Anna provides an imaginative geographical space in which Britain is justified in encroaching upon and exercising its authority over Siam, not *vice versa*. The space signified by the words "British Consul" gives Anna the right to interfere in the Siamese justice system and bring the disciplinary proceedings to a halt.

In the next sections, I will discuss how *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* is constructed as a heterogeneous text that creates the credibility of Leonowens' account of Siam and how the textual strategies are used to creates the power/knowledge discourse in the Orientalist representation of Siam.

4.1.2 Framing *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*: The representation of the "real" in Anna Leonowens' text

I have problematised earlier the fact/fiction distinction of Leonowens' text. The issue of the problem of "correct" representations of Siam invokes a further study of the complex way the text as a whole is framed and the related power of Orientalist language to constitute the "real" in the text. Said (1978/1995) argues that as Orientalism is a system of representations, the "truths" about the Orient are delivered by language and embodied in language (p. 203). Language thus plays an important role in making Leonowens' text appear as a faithful account of her experience in Siam.

The English Governess at the Siamese Court is not framed as a fiction, but as an autobiography, particularly an autobiography with a documentary quality. Here the combination of such elements resulting from her artistic and stylistic use of language makes Leonowens' text become a heterogeneous text. Bakhtin (1981) in his reflection on the novel explains that the novel can weave other genres into its structure, making the multi-layered genres in the novel. He discusses the basic and fundamental forms for incorporating and organising heteroglossia in the novel as "incorporated genres":

> The novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others). In principle, any genre could be included in the construction of the novel,

> and in fact it is difficult to find any genres that have not at some point been incorporated into a novel by someone …
>
> There exists in addition a special group of genres that play an especially significant role in structuring novels, sometimes by themselves even directly determining the structure of a novel as a whole – thus creating novel-types named after such genres. Examples of such genres would be the confession, the diary, travel notes, biography, the personal letter and several others. All these genres may not only enter the novel as one of its essential structural components, but may also determine the form of the novel as a whole (the novel-confession, the novel-diary, the novel-in-letters, etc.). Each of these genres possesses its own verbal and semantic forms for assimilating various aspects of reality. The novel, indeed, utilizes these genres precisely because of their capacity, as well-worked-out forms, to assimilate reality in words. (pp. 320-321)

Leonowens' text similarly combines genres in the way that Bakhtin conceives of the novel's heterogeneity. Her writing is a practice combining literary approaches and purportedly objective documentation. The writing combines personal narrative with travel writing, including the use of ethnographic skills to convey a sense of Siam and its people. Writing on this blurred boundary between "subjectivity" (traditionally associated with imaginative discourse, such as literature) and "objectivity" (associated with scientific discourse, such as the human and social sciences) (cf. Clifford and Marcus, 1986) enables the text to do other textual work apart from being an autobiography. The multi-layered nature of Leonowens' text means that the text has multiple meanings that reinforce each other, with the result that the apparent reliability of her personal account supports the truth claims the text makes in its guise as an ethnography. Thus Western readers who are locked

within the same ideological mindset can understand and affirm the information she has given to them.

Now I will describe in detail how the ethnographic genre included in Leonowens' personal account works toward the credibility of the information it presents to readers. The speaking voice of Anna as a narrative device works as a mediator between the two approaches (narrative and ethnographic approaches). It makes possible the shifting position of the author/narrator in the text as discussed in the previous section, and hence the shift of focus from Anna to a "factual" presentation of images of Siamese society. The significance of Leonowens' story does not consist in its status as an autobiography, but in its claims to be a life history of "them" – the Siamese – with whom she came into contact. If, as Birren and Cochran (2001) put it, writing about life experiences and sharing them with others gives "more meaning to our lives by helping us more fully to understand our past and present" (pp. 3-5), Leonowens' autobiographic account helps her readers make sense of the world where the Siamese live and the Siamese people's place in it. Reduced to stereotypical images, Siamese people are positioned as the West's "other". The stereotypical images reinforce the readers' understanding of the Siamese as opposite to their Western "self". In effect, the circulation of Orientalist ideology transforms this autobiographic text into "ethnographic" writing, a record of "reality" that fossilises Siamese people in culture that has no past or future, simply the present that Leonowens writes for them.

Significantly, in Leonowens' ethnographic writing, the author's self-presence conveyed by the narrative voice is crucial for conveying an impression of the verisimilitude of her account of Siam to Western readers. The ethnographic documentation of Siam as a function of the presence of the author in the scenes she depicts underlines the connection between the real and the representation of the real. This aspect of ethnographic writing is highlighted in Ellis's (2004) definition of ethnography:

> Take the word apart, *Ethno* means people or culture; *graphy* means writing or describing. *Ethnography* means writing about or describing people and culture, using firsthand observation and participation in a setting or situation. The term refers both to the process of doing a study and to the written product. (p. 26)

Leonowens' narrative voice becomes a key device operating the ethnographic writing techniques (namely, the use of a preamble and the insider/outsider dual position) used for transforming the world-out-there (as experienced by Leonowens) into the world of the text (as narrated by the voice of Anna).

The use of narrative voice to indicate the author's self-presence in this textual space helps convince the reader of what O'Reilly (2005) calls the author's "being there" and hence legitimates her authority to tell the story (pp. 213-214). O'Reilly further explains that for the author of ethnographic writing to hint at being there is by giving a preamble, which is "often descriptive, about the setting, about their feelings of strangeness on arriving" (p. 214). The opening chapter of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* begins with another incorporated genre – travel writing. Leonowens uses what Pratt (1986) calls the "arrival scene" traditionally used in both ethnographic writing and travel writing, to give a preamble of her journey to Siam. The chapter opens as follows:

> MARCH 15, 1862. – On board the small Siamese steamer Chow Phya, in the Gulf of Siam.
>
> I rose before the sun, and ran on deck to catch an early glimpse of the strange land we were nearing; and as I peered eagerly, not through mist and haze, but straight into the clear, bright, many-tinted ether, there came the first faint, tremulous blush of dawn, behind her rosy veil; and presently

> the welcome face shines boldly out, glad, glorious, beautiful, and aureoled with flaming hues of orange, fringed with amber and gold, wherefrom flossy webs of color float wide through the sky, paling as they go. A vision of comfort and gladness, that tropical March morning, genial as a July dawn in my own less ardent clime; but the memory of two round, tender arms, and two little dimpled hands, that so lately had made themselves loving fetters round my neck, in the vain hope of holding mamma fast, blinded my outlook; and as, with a nervous tremor and a rude jerk, we came to anchor there, so with a shock and a tremor I came to my hard realities. (Leonowens, 1870, p. 1)

The chapter opens with such generic markers as the date and the place when and where Anna as a traveler to Siam wrote her diary. These markers are invoked as a crucial tool for ethnography conveying an impression of "reality". Then the feeling of strangeness and displacement created by the nostalgic tone in the narrator's voice is subsequently employed to differentiate between what she calls "memory" and "reality". This opening paragraph creates in the reader's mind an image of one of Anna's children she left behind. The "hard realities" Anna encountered are juxtaposed with the "natural" sentiments of a mother and the values associated with motherhood as understood in the West. In contrast to the antagonistic atmosphere of an unknown Siam, the image of her child constitutes a sense of the familiar, welcoming home that Anna left behind her in order to travel to Siam. The narrative voice makes the reader part of this journey and her encounter with the strangeness of Siamese culture. The use of the "I" persona enables the reader to see Siam through her eyes, experiencing Anna's feeling of displacement in an unknown land as she enters Siam. At this point, Leonowens' personal narrative is turned into an ethnographic text about Siam as the narrative begins to incorporate ethnographic documentation and

description, giving details of her encounter with the Siamese, their ways of life, culture and other "hard realities".

The other ethnographic technique is the dual position of insider and outsider. The narrative voice functions as the speaking subject, reserving its authority to judge Siam. Such authority comes from the fact that, in being there, Anna adopts two positions: "insider" and "outsider" (cf. O'Reilly, 2005), making "the familiar strange", and "the strange familiar" (cf. Clifford and Marcus, 1986). The preamble in the opening paragraph eases Anna's position of "outsider" into that of "insider" in the course of her narrative telling. Entering into Siam and living among the Siamese for years, Anna describes herself as gradually becoming an "insider". She participated in their activities, learned their language, and even earned trust from the Siamese, especially "harem" women in the royal palace. As a result, the exotic scene became familiar to her. Hence her claim to understand the Siamese:

> As, month after month, I continued to teach in the palace, – especially as the language of my pupils, its idioms and characteristic forms of expression, began to be familiar to me, – all the dim life of the place "came out" to my ken, like a faint picture, which at first displays to the eye only a formless confusion, a chaos of colors, but by force of much looking and tracing and joining and separating, first objects and then groups are discovered in their proper identity and relation, until the whole stands out, clear, true, and informing in its coherent significance of light and shade. Thus, by slow processes, as one whose sight has been imperceptibly restored, I awoke to a clearer and truer sense of the life within "the city of the beautiful and invincible angel." (Leonowens, 1870, p. 101)

The fact that Anna underwent a process of discovery, that this "clarity" and "truth" were not immediately available to her, underlines her authority as an ethnographer, who is stepping inside the place to acquire insight into the Siamese way of life and culture. Interestingly, Anna's description of the Siamese does not reflect her understanding of the Siamese as they really are. She did not, in O'Reilly's (2005) words, "begin to feel part of things and to understand them from the point of view of those being researched" (p. 12). She still reserves her authority to judge Siam from her Western standpoint. Locating herself as an "outsider" from the beginning of her narrative helps Anna stand apart and look at the Siamese from a distance. By this means, she can retain her "Western" perspective when making judgment of the Siamese. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

> Among my pupils was a little girl about eight or nine years old, of delicate frame, and with the low voice and subdued manner of one who had already had experience of sorrow. … Wanne Ratâna Kania was her name ("Sweet Promise of my Hopes), and very engaging and persuasive was she in her patient, timid loveliness. Her mother, the Lady Khoon Chom Kioa, who had once found favor with the king, had, at that time of my coming to the palace, fallen into disgrace by reason of her gambling, in which she had squandered all the patrimony of the little princess. This fact, instead of inspiring the royal father with pity for his child, seemed to attract to her all that was most cruel in his insane temper. The offence of the mother had made the daughter offensive in his sight; and it was not until long after the term of imprisonment of the degraded favorite had expired that Wanne ventured to appear at a royal *levée*. The moment the king caught sight of the little form, so piteously prostrated there, he drove her rudely from his presence, taunting her with delinquencies of her mother with a coarseness

> that would have been cruel enough if she had been responsible for them and a gainer by them, but against one of her tender years, innocent toward both, and injured by both, it was inconceivably atrocious. (Leonowens, 1870, p. 111)

The excerpt shows Anna's response to King Mongkut's treatment of his own daughter. This is presented as a "natural" response that all Western women would have when seeing a father treating his children cruelly. Anna became a sympathetic observer of the scene she had witnessed. The emotive language used here reflects Anna's conventional sentimentality (relating to her love of children). It evokes a universe of values and emotions that mediate what Anna was supposedly "seeing", whatever those events and persons might have actually been.

Taking a stance of both insider and outsider, Leonowens is free to move back and forth between her subjective, Eurocentric comments on the Siamese and the objective aloofness of her descriptive documentation of them. It is not uncommon in her writing to encounter this kind of fusion of subjectivity and objectivity, as in the following excerpt:

> But within the close and gloomy lanes of this city within a city, through which many lovely women are wont to come and go, many little feet to patter, and many baby citizens to be borne in the arms of their dodging slaves, there is but cloud and chill, and famishing and stinting, and beating of wings against golden bars. … I had never beheld misery till I found it here; I had never looked upon the sickening hideousness of slavery till I encountered its features here; nor, above all, had I comprehended the perfection of the life, light, blessedness and beauty, the all-sufficing fulness of the love of God as it is in Jesus, until I felt the contrast here, – pain,

> deformity, darkness, death, and eternal emptiness, a darkness to which there is neither beginning nor end, a living which is neither of this world nor of the next. The misery which checks the pulse and thrills the heart with pity in one's common walks about the great cities of Europe is hardly so saddening as the nameless, mocking wretchedness of these women, to whom poverty were a luxury, and houselessness as a draught of pure, free air. (pp. 103-104)

The foregrounding of her subjectivity in these seemingly objective appraisals of Siamese society allows Leonowens to assert her authority in attempting to capture "the real" in her writing. The combined subjectivity/objectivity makes possible the predominance of Leonowens' speaking voice, affirming her status of an "experiencing" subject, who physically and/or emotionally reacts to what she encounters in Siam. This status helps Leonowens construct, interpret and reproduce Siam and Siamese people textually as if this textual space is a "real" representation of her experience in Siam.

4.1.3 Textual strategies in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*: Knowledge of Siam and neocolonial power

As argued by Said (1978/1995), knowledge and power are interrelated in Orientalist writings. Considering *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* as an Orientalist text helps posit the relationship between power (i.e. neocolonial power) and knowledge in Leonowens' representation of Siam. The interrelation between knowledge and power is made to happen in the process of "Orientalising", the process by which Siam is "Orientalised" and then transformed into an object of knowledge. The relationship between Siam – the represented – and Leonowens who makes the representation is an unbalanced relation of power. This power is not exercised through physical coercion and exploitation, but rather through the symbolic system of representation. Power in Leonowens' Orientalist

writing therefore becomes, as Said (1978/1995) puts it, Gramsci's cultural hegemonic control, which commands consents from those who are represented – of course "imaginatively" in the case of Leonowens' text. This power imbalance is mediated through the textual strategies Leonowens uses in her writing of Siam.

4.1.3.1 Stereotyping

Stereotyping is one of the textual strategies in constructing Siam in Europe's system of knowing the "other". According to Hall (1997), stereotyping is a set of representational practices reducing people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature (p. 257). Loomba (1998) explains that stereotyping is a method of processing information by reducing images and ideas to a simple and manageable form (p. 59-60). In *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Leonowens reduces individual Siamese people and heterogeneous Siamese culture to Oriental stereotypes of "otherness". She manages to cope with and make sense of the unknown Siamese by reconstructing them as naturally "different" from, hence "inferior" to Europeans. The contrasting between Europeans and Siamese is implied in the following scene from *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*:

> I saw in the shadow a form coiled on a piece of striped matting. Was it a bear? No, a prince! For the clumsy mass of reddish-brown flesh unrolled and uplifted itself, and held out a human arm, with a fat hand at the end of it, when Captain B___ presented me to "his Royal Highness." … On a raised dais hung with kincob curtains, the ladies of the Prince's harem reclined; while their children, shining in silk and ornaments of gold, laughed, prattled, and gesticulated, until the juggler appeared, when they were stunned with sudden wonder. Under the eaves on all sides human heads were packed, on every head its cherished tuft of hair, like a stiff black

> brush inverted, in every mouth its delicious cud of areca-nut and betel, which the human cattle ruminated with industrious content. The juggler, a keen little Frenchman, plied his arts nimbly, and what with his ventriloquial doll, his empty bag full of eggs, his stones that were candies, and his candies that were stones, and his stuffed birds that sang, astonished and delighted his unsophisticated patrons, whose applauding murmurs were diversified by familiarly silly shrieks – the true Siamese Did-you-ever! – from behind the kincob curtains. (Leonowens, 1870, pp. 11-12)

The scene operates a set of binaries between Europe and its "others". That is, Anna as a European observer positions herself at the centre for judging the Siamese. There is an implication that if Anna – a European lady – is civilised, then the Siamese are barbaric. If she is sophisticated, they are chaotic and unrefined. If she is morally and sexually righteous, they are corrupted and lascivious. It is noticeable that Anna acts as a harsh observer. Even the Siamese Prince is displayed as having a primitive look – a bear-like appearance. Siamese aristocrats are reduced to an animal level to suggest their primitivism. The word "ruminated" used for animals is employed to describe their chewing manner. Their chewing of areca-nut and betel is compared to cattle eating grass. Siamese children, though in overtly gorgeous dresses, seemed to be uncontrolled and ignorant of European sophistication when they expressed their enjoyment of European juggling arts through their "applauding murmurs" and "silly shrieks". The description of the Siamese as such clearly presents racial stereotypes. Here racial stereotyping is deployed to establish a symbolic boundary depriving Siamese people of their human quality and devaluing their culture. The narrative structure built around the binary between the cultured Anna and the barbaric Siamese enhances the differentiation of races of those who lives in two different time scales of civilisation. Compared to the more developed European civilisation, Siam is still preserved in a primitive time. By positioning Siamese people in the time of the past,

Leonowens can emphasise the importance of Anna's civilising mission to educate the Siamese, uplifting them to another level of civilisation. I will discuss this point later in this chapter.

Stereotypes of "otherness" used to describe the Siamese revolve around familiar European images of the Orient. *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* displays a lot of images of "otherness", but I will discuss only the images that often appear in the text, namely "erotic harems", "religious fanaticism", and "indigenous conspiracies". The image of erotic harems is employed to stress the sexuality and the unrepressed sexual lust of native people. Leonowens describes polygamy as a common practice among the Siamese. She in fact interprets polygamy as practiced in Siam as an oppressive harem. Mongkut, the King of Siam, is portrayed as accumulating a very big harem:

> The king was the disk of light and life round which these strange flies swarmed. Most of the women who composed his harem were of gentle blood, – the fairest of the daughters of Siamese nobles and of princes of the adjacent tributary states; the late queen consort was his own half-sister. Beside many choice Chinese and Indian girls, purchased annually for the royal harem by agents stationed at Peking, Foo-chou, and different points in Bengal, enormous sums were offered, year after year, through "solicitors" at Bangkok and Singapore, for an English woman of beauty and good parentage to crown the sensational collection; but when I took my leave of Bangkok in 1868, the coveted specimen had not appeared yet in the market. The cunning *commissionnaire* contrived to keep their places and make a living by sending his Majesty, now and then, a piquant photograph of some British Nourmahal of the period, freshly caught, and duly shipped, in good order for the harem; but the goods never arrived. (pp. 94-95)

The language Leonowens uses to describe the women in the harem – "these strange flies swarmed" – reflects a bourgeois contempt for the King's polygamy and supposed lasciviousness. Also the word "goods" is used to suggest the King's treatment of his women as sexual slaves. Noticeably, a kind of hierarchical order is set up. This hierarchy ranks English women in the highest position of the scale. It is noteworthy that King Mongkut's yearning for "an English woman of beauty and good parentage" was never achieved. It is implied here that his money could never buy such an English woman who was morally, rationally, and physically superior to Asian women and, of course, the King. The contrast between a "good" English woman and Siamese women is expressed clearly in the scene in which Anna was asked by the harem women of the Siamese Premier if she wanted to be a wife of the prince rather than of the king:

> "The prince, your lord, and the king, your Chow-chee-witt, are pagans," I said. "An English, that is a Christian, woman would rather be put to the torture, chained and dungeoned for life, or suffer a death the slowest and most painful you Siamese know, than be the wife of either."
>
> They remained silent in astonishment, seemingly withheld from speaking by an instinctive sentiment of respect; until one, more volatile than the rest, cried "What! not if he gave you all these jeweled rings and boxes, and these golden things?"
>
> … I laughed at the earnest eyes around, and said: "No, not even then. I am only here to teach the royal family. I am not like you. You have nothing to do but to play and sing and dance for your master; but I have to work for my children; and one little one is now on the great ocean, and I am very sad." (pp. 21-22)

The term “pagan” is employed to refer to “non-Christian and Oriental”. The use of the term is full of colonialist assumption. It implies a set of colonialist beliefs and cultural assumptions, quite acceptable among Europeans at the time, that Europeans are superior, culturally, morally and spiritually. The harem women are shown to be very materialistic if not unspiritual and unaware of greater priorities that define value in human existence – in this case, a sense of motherly obligation. Motherly love and relationships in a Western sense of a monogamous family are presented as superior to the sexual lust and the relationship between the master and his sexual slaves who “play and sing and dance” for the master.

As is observed in the story, Buddhism was the national religion of Siam. A large majority of Siamese people still believed in this religious faith though there were some Protestant missionaries preaching Christian principles and converting the Siamese. Buddhism, which is portrayed as emanating from “the arrogant and impious pantheisms of Egypt, India, and Greece” (p. 185), is regarded as inferior to Christianity. The image of light (symbolising wisdom) and shadow (symbolising ignorance) is displayed to show the contrast between Christianity and Buddhism as in the excerpt below:

> There was majesty in the humility of those pagan worshippers, and in their shame of self they were sublime. I leave both the truth and the error to Him who alone can soar to the bright heights of the one and sound the dark depths of the other, and take to myself the lesson, to be read in the shrinking forms and hidden faces of those patient waiters for a far-off glimmering *Light*, – the lesson wherefrom I learn, in thanking God for the light of Christianity, to thank him for its shadow too, which is Buddhism. (p. 189)

In addition, Buddhism is employed to define and stress the significance of Christianity, revealing the superiority of this Western religion:

> Not that Buddhism has escaped the guessing and conceits of a multitude of writers, most trustworthy of whom are the early Christian Fathers. … Nevertheless, they would never have appealed to the doctrine of Buddha as being most like to Christianity in its rejection of the claims of race, had they not found in its simple ritual another and a stronger bond of brotherhood. Like Christianity, too, it was a religion catholic and apostolic, for the truth of which many faithful witnesses had laid down their lives. …The doctrines of Buddha were eminently fitted to elucidate the doctrines of Christ, and therefore worthy to engage the interest of Christian writers. … But errors, that in time crept in, corrupted the pure doctrine, and disciples, ignorant or stupid, perverted its meaning and intent, and blind or treacherous guides led the simple astray, till at last the true and plain philosophy of Buddha became entangled with the Egyptian mythology. (pp. 190-191)

King Mongkut, though a progressive king, is portrayed as a religious fanatic. He had spent twenty-seven years in his priesthood before his enthronement. During that time, he acquired knowledge of Latin, English, and Western sciences from the Jesuits and the Protestants. However, Leonowens describes that when Reverend Caswell, his American tutor, discussed with Prince Mongkut (his rank at the time) about the Bible, he angrily told the reverend, “I hate the Bible mostly” (p. 240). When the missionaries tried to convert him, here is his angry reaction: “You must not imagine that any of my party will ever become Christians. We cannot embrace what we consider a foolish religion” (p. 241). Although King Mongkut is portrayed as a fundamentalist, some of his many wives and

children are delineated as capable of the wisdom of Christianity. The description of King Mongkut's most beloved daughter, Princess Chandrmondol, is a good example:

> [A]s step by step I [Anna] led her out of the shadow-land of myth into the realm of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"; and I felt that this child of smiles and tears, all unbaptized and unblessed as she was, was nearer and dearer to her Father in heaven than to her father on earth. (p. 117)

Here the contrasting image of "the shadow-land of myth" and "the realm of the truth" where the light of wisdom can be found is indicative of the contrast between her royal father's shadowy ignorance and the princess' capability of redemption through Christian faith.

Another stereotypical image relates to the conspiracies that supposedly made up Court life. This image reflects Western fears of indigenous secrecy, deception, and violence. Leonowens portrays King Mongkut as being at the centre of conspiracies, having his men, "San Luangs", secretly prosecute those who were supposedly working against him. Leonowens writes: "since the occupation of the country by the Jesuits, many foreigners have fancied that the government is becoming more and more silent, insidious, secretive" and that "the midnight council is but the expression of a 'policy of stifling'" (p. 99). The notion of inquisitions is also evoked:

> It is an inquisition, – not overt, audacious, like that of Rome, but nocturnal, invincible, subtle, ubiquitous, like that of Spain; proceeding without witnesses or warning; kidnapping a subject, not arresting him, and then incarcerating, chaining, torturing him, to extort confession or denunciation.

> If any Siamese citizen utter one word against the "San Luang," (the royal judges), and escape, forthwith his house is sacked and his wife and children kidnapped. Should he be captured, he is brought to secret trial, to which no one is admitted who is not in the patronage and confidence of the royal judges. … Spies in the employment of the San Luang penetrate into every family of wealth and influence. Every citizen suspects and fears always his neighbor, sometimes his wife. (pp. 99-100)

The Siamese inquisition is compared to the Spanish one to show the secretive nature of this operation and the torment and injustice the captured received. The notion of spies is also used to incite an impression of insecurity and threat felt by citizens of Siam. Interestingly, Europeans – Anna as an example – are portrayed as beyond reach of the secret operation. It is described in the story that Anna was close to the King and that he listened to her for comments and advice. She was therefore misunderstood to be a member of the "San Luangs". Anna even observed that certain officers and courtiers "rapped, or tapped, in a particular stealthy manner" which she found out later that it was one of the secret signs of the "San Luang" (p. 100).

The use of stereotypes to mark Siam's Oriental differences reflects the stock notions that Europeans have of the Orient. In Leonowens' text, Siam is reconstituted in the form of European's knowledge of people completely different from themselves. The assigned stereotypical characteristics of the Siamese are actually taken from what Said (1978/1995) calls "the catalogue of *idée reçues*" or the repertoires of knowledge about the Orient circulated among Europeans from generation to generation. Said describes Europe's discursive construction of the Orient as follows:

> Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is composed out of those preexisting units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of *idée reçues*. (p. 94; emphasis in original)

Said's emphasis on the discursive practices involved in the construction of Oriental stereotypes reveals the interconnection between power and knowledge. It is Europe's power to construct the Orient as purportedly different from Europe, as Europe's "other". Representing the Orient by assigning particular characteristics to people in Asia means putting them outside civilised European society, transforming them into an object of knowledge. Leonowens' labeling of Siam as opposite to the West is a strategic means of exclusion and control. One feature of stereotyping, as Hall (1997) explains, is that stereotyping is a practice of "closure and exclusion" (p. 258). Stereotyping thus allows Leonowens to set up a symbolic boundary where the binary structure between Siam and Europe is established. The system of exclusion works by differentiating Siam from Europe and situating it on the margins of European culture – symbolically on the negative side of the binary. The marginalised position makes Siam become subordinate to Europe, and subjects Siam to Europe's power of representation. The act of excluding, as Hall further elaborates, gives power to those who control the representation – in this case Leonowens, the author, and in a broader sense Europe. By excluding Siam from everything European and assigning stereotypical characteristics of "otherness" to the Siamese, Leonowens

denies their autonomy and their capacity to define themselves, fixing them in a body of knowledge of the "other".

4.1.3.2 Generalisation

Together with stereotyping, generalisation is another textual strategy Leonowens uses to convey to her readers the meaning of Siam as the "other". In fact, generalisation is another technique for keeping a distance. It helps Leonowens to create the meaning of "otherness" for Siam, and, at the same time, maintain her and Europe's positional superiority. The following description of Siam is an example of how the meaning of "otherness" and distance is created out of generalisation:

> In the opinion of Pickering, the Siamese are undoubtedly Malay; but a majority of the intelligent Europeans who have lived long among them regard the native population as mainly Mongolian. They are generally of medium stature, the face broad, the forehead low, the eyes black, the cheekbones prominent, the chin retreating, the mouth large, the lips thick, and the beard scanty. In common with most of the Asiatic races, they are apt to be indolent, improvident, greedy, intemperate, servile, cruel, vain, inquisitive, superstitious, and cowardly; but individual variations from the more repulsive types are happily not rare. (Leonowens, 1870, p. 25)

In the process of generalisation, Leonowens firstly categorises the Siamese in a certain way. She intertextually draws on the information from Pickering and the Europeans who lived in Siam to substantiate her labeling of Siamese people as belonging to an Asiatic race – no matter whether it be Malay or Mongolian. This generalisation is made effective by the "fixed" and "naturalised" description of Asian people's features, physical appearance, and mentality as seen in the excerpt, resulting in an imaginary division between Asiatic and

European races. That is, by generalising Siamese people as Asian, Leonowens draws a dividing line to exclude the Siamese from the European, and put them under the category of an "Asiatic race". Although there may be exceptions to the generalisation when the "individual variations" are stated, this statement does not work towards promoting a sense of the heterogeneity of individual Siamese people, but instead underlines the narrator's "fair" and "reasonable" judgment of the Siamese. It is a judgment made from the point of view of a person from the European race. The pronoun "they" used in the quotation is also significant when making generalisations. This pronominal usage strategically creates a positional superiority of "we/us" (the European) to "they/them" (the Siamese), and a distance between "here" (Europe) and "there" (Siam – an Oriental country). For the European, Siamese people belong to a different human species from "us". "They" can be anything and possess any character traits that are opposite to "our" positive European characteristics.

Leonowens' generalisations about Siam have fossilised Siam in eternity – the timeless sphere of Western repertoires of knowledge. This fossilisation of Siam is a result of what Said (1978/1995) calls "a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint" (p. 301). Said notes that the verb tense employed in the language of generalisation is the Simple Present tense:

> Rather than listing all the figures of speech associated with the Orient – its strangeness, its difference, its exotic sensuousness, and so forth – we can generalize about them as they were handed down through the Renaissance. They are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not. For all these

> functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula *is*. (p. 72; emphasis in original)

The use of the present tense in Leonowens' generalised description of Siam and Siamese people is embedded in a narrative in the past tense, detailing activities and incidents that Leonowens experienced in Siam. Generalisation uses the timeless present tense, resulting in fixing Siam as exhibiting the negative characteristics of "otherness" drawn from and accumulated in Western repertoires of knowledge. These repertoires are eternal and available for use. They can be applied to any Oriental "other", including the Siamese. While the present tense employed in generalisations fossilises Siam in Western repertoires of knowledge about the Oriental "others", the past tense of the narrative mode indicates a perspective provided by the passing of time, which is directly associated with the active power of the narrator in depicting her past experience from the present moment of narration. The narrator becomes an active agent who, in selecting specific information about Siam (which assumes the form of a knowledge), presents this information in the past tense. It is the past tense that establishes the narrator's power of looking back into her past experience in Siam. This looking back is, in fact, an investigative gaze directed at Siam.

Power and knowledge that are put to work through Leonowens' textual strategies have laid Siam bare for Western investigation. As a naturalised body of knowledge, Siam (the Oriental country) and the Siamese (the Oriental) are subjected to the Western power of the gaze. The power of the gaze transfixes Siam, and reduces it to an object of scrutiny, waiting "there" for Western observers – both the author and readers, who come with privileged power, to explore it, to study it, and then to occupy it – in this case, imaginatively. As Kabbani (1994) argues, the West has to "reshape the Orient in order to comprehend it", and it is the West's "sustained effort to devise in order to rule" (p. 138).

4.1.4 The story of modernisation: Neocolonialism in Anna Leonowens' story of Siam

Leonowens' story can be read as a story of Western imaginative colonisation of Siam. It displays colonial appropriations of King Mongkut's original plan for the country's modernisation in which English education was included. That is to say, the story is built around the narrative of modernisation through English education. Together with political colonisation, education, which taught the language and literature of the imperialists, was the colonisers' tool to culturally colonise native people. Willinsky (1998) argues that apart from being the soul of civilised knowing, the heart of great literature, and the tongue of democracy, English was made an instrument of domination and silencing in the British Empire. It was used to regulate and police access to authority and knowledge among colonised people (p. 191). Furthermore, in the colonial countries, English displaced native languages. One feature of colonial oppression, according to Ashcroft et al. (1989), is the control over language. The imperial centre, by means of the imperial education system, installs its metropolitan language as a "standard", the norm against which all "variants" are measured as impurities and thus marginalised (p. 7). The languages of the masters become the only legitimate languages.

In Leonowens' story of Siamese modernisation, the concept of English education is tied up with the notion of teachable savages, and the related images of the hierarchical relations between teacher and student and adult and child. The reduction of Siamese natives to a primitive race as mentioned earlier makes available the narrative of modernisation, which tells a story of the transformation of Siamese people from a primitive state to a state of civilisation. The notion of teachable savages is in fact a romanticised version of colonial stories in which primitive savages are tamed by the cultured master. Anna as an English teacher is portrayed as a person who is capable of taming wild Siamese savages. Following is the scene where Anna first began her lesson with King Mongkut's concubines:

> About noon, a number of young women were brought to me, to be taught like the rest. I received them sympathetically, at the same time making a memorandum of their names in a book of my own. This created a general and lively alarm, which it was not in my power immediately to allay, my knowledge of their language being confined to a few simple sentences; but when at last their courage and confidence were restored, they began to take observations and an inventory of me that were by no means agreeable. They fingered my hair and dress, my collar, belt, and rings. One donned my hat and cloak, and made a promenade of the pavilion; another pounced upon my gloves and veil, and disguised herself in them, to the great delight of the little ones, who laughed boisterously. A grim duenna, who had heard the noise, bustled wrathfully into the pavilion. Instantly hat, cloak, veil, gloves, were flung right and left, and the young women dropped on the floor, repeating shrilly, like truant urchins caught in the act, their "ba, be, bi, bo". (Leonowens, 1870, pp. 85-86)

The language barrier is the cause of communication problems between Anna and her Siamese students. It seems, to Anna's ear, that her students spoke an incomprehensible language and she only knew a few simple Thai sentences. Because her students speak a different language to her own, it is difficult for Anna in the first meeting with them to control and teach them the sophisticated manners practised in Europe. The students are presented as behaving in an unacceptable manner. As the story goes on, it is not Anna who is going to learn the Siamese language in order to communicate effectively, but Siamese students who need to learn to speak English in order to communicate with the teacher. Anna taught them to pronounce and repeat after her the sound of English language: "ba, be, bi, bo".

In fact, the notion of teachable savages is employed to emphasise the imperial-margin relations between Europe and Siam. The portrayal of Siamese people as teachable creatures is a method of categorising the inferiority of Siamese people and their culture. Yet, their inferiority is not beyond redemption. Being portrayed as creatures capable of enlightenment, the Siamese are positioned, not totally outside civilisation, but on the verge of civilisation, waiting there for Europe's enlightening mission. Their minds will be cultivated only when they learn and adopt European civilisation, and the English language is that tool. Anna's mission as an educator is thus to equip Siamese students with English, the language of the metropolitan master, which would help them acquire European knowledge, culture, and sophistication.

The notion of taming the savages in Leonowens' story is similar to the story of Robinson Crusoe giving Friday an English lesson (Pennycook, 1994; Pennycook, 1998; cf. Phillipson, 1992; Willinsky, 1998) and Prospero teaching his slave, Caliban, the language of the master (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989). These stories tell a story of colonisation through the imposition of the "dominant" language on the inferior races. Teaching the master's language to indigenous people results in their consent to the command of the "high" culture of the teacher. These fictional stories of the imperial power of language teaching coexist with the real context of colonised countries. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) comments on colonial education, which promoted a "dominant" language and literature over those of colonial Africa. He contends that the coloniser used the "colonial alienation" strategy regarding language and literature to uproot colonial children from their own culture. The acquisition of European culture through colonial education can "brainwash" the native's mind and subjugate them to colonial control (pp. 16-17). Pennycook (1994) offers a similar but less extreme argument, that the coloniser's provision of English education implies "the moral imperative to imperialize" (p. 77). Thus learning to speak the given English language not only means picking up a foreign language, but also the implantation of the

ideologies of the “dominant” race in the natives’ minds. It is described in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* that the European “high” culture works well in replacing Siamese students’ animalistic behaviours. Anna was successful in changing and moulding her Siamese students, and on this basis generalised about the capacity of Siamese people to adopt European ways:

> The capacity of the Siamese race for improvement in any direction has been sufficiently demonstrated, and the government has made fair progress in political and moral reforms; but the condition of the slaves is such as to excite astonishment and horror. What may be the ultimate fate of Siam under this accursed system, whether she will ever emancipate herself while the world lasts, there is no guessing. The happy examples free intercourse affords, the influence of European ideas, and the compulsion of public opinion, may yet work wonders. (Leonowens, 1870, pp. 284-285)

The hierarchical relationship between teacher and student is used to belittle the Siamese people, dismissing them as being benighted and thus in need of Europe’s instruction. The Siamese second king, Pawarendr Ramesr, the younger brother of the supreme King Mongkut, is portrayed in the story as an intelligent student. With the help of his English teacher, he could gain access to Western knowledge:

> [H]e contrived to find means and opportunity to enlarge his understanding and multiply his attainments; and in the end his proficiency in languages, European and the Oriental, became as remarkable as it was laudable. It was by Mr. Hunter, secretary to the prime minister, that he was introduced to the study of English language and literature, and by this gentleman’s intelligent aid he procured the text-books which constituted the foundation of his

> educational course. … In his palace, which he had rebuilt after the model of an English nobleman's residence, he led the life of a healthy, practical, and systematic student. His library, more judiciously selected than that of his brother, abounded in works of science, embracing the latest discoveries. Here he passed many hours, cultivating a sound acquaintance with the results of investigation and experiment in the Western world. His partiality for English literature in all its branches was extreme. The freshest publications of London found their way to his tables, and he heartily enjoyed the creations of Dickens. (pp. 229-230)

King Mongkut is also depicted as a student who eagerly yearned for Western progress:

> He had been a familiar visitor at the houses of the American missionaries, two of whom (Dr. House and Mr. Mattoon) were, throughout his reign and life, gratefully revered by him for that pleasant and profitable converse which helped unlock to him the secrets of European vigor and advancement, and to make straight and easy the paths of knowledge he had started upon. (p. 56)

The relationship between teacher and student, which embodies Siam's dependency on Europe's instruction, is enhanced by the contrasting image between adult and child. The adult/child binary is employed to stress the patronising power of Western teachers over immature Siamese students, making effective the claim that Siam's rite of passage and its coming of age is made possible under the guidance of the West. In the story, Anna as an adult teacher is set in contrast with childlike Siamese people. She appears to be surrounded by her young students helping them get through difficulties both in their English lessons and personal problems. Such an image affirms Anna's power to step into the dark land and

educate the fierce, yet immature Siamese. The English education she gave helped lead them to another level of development. Through English education, Anna sowed the seed of Western civilisation in the Siamese soil.

4.2 The production and reproductions of Anna Leonowens' narrative revisited

4.2.1 Language that matters

Language is crucial to the production and reproduction of Leonowens' story of Siam. It is clear that English is the language used in the writing of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its reproductions in *Anna and the King of Siam* and *The King and I*. The issue of language in these narrative discourses becomes significant when considering English as a medium in which meaning is constructed and exchanged. Hall (1997) argues that language operates as a representational system. It is representation through language that is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged (p. 1). The meaning of Siam as Europe's "other" is produced through Leonowens' and her followers' use of English as a method of writing and means of communication. Here, as Honey (1997) argues, language is power. English as the language of the Orientalist writers embodies the power to reduce Siam and its people to the signifiers of their physical and cultural differences from Europe and the Europeans.

English is also closely related to power of the West to speak for the Orient. In her book, Leonowens does not show respect for the interface between Thai and English. She does not try to convey a sense of the structure and vocabulary of the Thai language. As discussed earlier, Leonowens reduces the Thai language to an incomprehensible sound to justify Anna's right to teach Siamese people the English language. With the assumption that Anna had that right and the Siamese did not, Leonowens reduces Siamese people to the level of dependency on Anna. Moreover, Leonowens reduces complex Siamese ways of life to "vocabulary". She occasionally picks up some Thai words, such as *Chow-che-witt* [Prince

of life], *Poot-thoo* [Dear God], and *Mi di* [Bad], using them along with their translations in her book. By doing this, Leonowens creates a sense of the exoticism of the people she talks about. Apart from that, Leonowens' reductive approach becomes a tool for examining and understanding Siamese people and their ways of life and thinking. A good example is from the description of the origin of the names of the Premier's son:

> Koon Ying Phan (literally, "The Lady in One Thousand") was the head wife of the Premier. He married her, after repudiating the companion of his more grateful years, the mother of his only child, a son – the legitimacy of whose birth he doubted, and so, for a grim jest, named the lad *My Chi*, "Not So." He would have put the mother to death, but finding no real grounds for his suspicion, let her off with a public "putting away." The divorced woman, having nothing left but her disowned baby, carefully changed the *My Chi* to *Ny Chi* ("Not So" to "Master So"), – a cunning trick of pride, but a doubtful improvement. (Leonowens, 1780, p. 46)

Such dissection of Thai names follows the same pattern of giving the oriental word and then its translation, a structure of presentation that simplifies a very complex picture of Siamese life. The fact that Anna states the derivations of the child's names (the change from *My Chi* to *Ny Chi*) conveys the need to document the explanation for the "strange" existence of the names in repertoires of knowledge about Siam. At the same time, the implicit comment on the father's injustice and prejudice and the mother's "cunning trick of pride" revealed through the description is the trace of Europe's self-presence and the mark of the Siamese's absence. The presence of Anna's narrative voice means the presence of a Eurocentric voice suppressing Siamese people's real voice and speaking on their behalf. From such a Eurocentric bias, Siam cannot express itself. This is what Kabbani (1994)

argues: “The Orient … is incapable of self-expression, mute until the Western observer lends it his voice” (p. 73).

In addition, English functions to facilitate a “textual attitude” to the Orient. That is, Leonowens’ text (through English as its medium) has authority to create a “reality” of Siam among those who speak or have access to the same language, and, at the same time, take part in the same ideological world as the author. But, as Said (1978/1995) contends, it is a fallacy to assume that human beings can be understood on the basis of what books say (pp. 92-93). This fallacy results in a discrepancy between the perception of what Siam “is” and who the Siamese “are” by Thais and by Westerners respectively. The discrepancy is caused by the fact that Leonowens’ books and the subsequent versions of her story are not intended for Thai readers and audiences. Hall (1997, p. 1) is right in remarking that meanings can only be shared through our common access through language. Siam or Thailand in these narrative discourses does not exist in English for Thai people or for the people with whom Anna Leonowens had contact, but for Westerners.

The use of the English language by Leonowens for producing a specific meaning of Siam is linked to ideology. The ideology of the place where the author is from is mediated through the language she uses to narrate her story and communicate to readers. Eagleton (1991) captures the relationship between language and ideology in the following way: “Ideology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes” (p. 9). Within the narrative discourse, the English language becomes Leonowens’ symbolic tool for conveying the imperial power of Great Britain and the dominance of its culture over Siam. The will-to-power in Leonowens’ story is identified with the imperialist ideology concerning Western civilisation and English education. At the level of the narrative, the connection between English and Britain’s imperial power is reflected in Leonowens’ notion of the power of

English in enlightening the barbaric Siamese. Leonowens writes of the benefits of English education that Anna gave to her students:

> Though a vain people, they are neither bigoted nor shallow; and I [Anna] think the day is not far off when the enlightening influences applied to them, and accepted through their willingness, not only to receive instruction from Europeans, but even to adopt in a measure their customs and their habits of thought, will raise them to the rank of a superior nation. (Leonowens, 1780, p. 78)

In fact, this story of Siam reveals the rhetoric of the imperial coloniser. The imperialist goal of occupying foreign lands is hidden under a veneer of a story of modernisation modeled on Western civilisation (especially through English education). The way Anna conceives of the Siamese and justifies her goodwill for the Siamese is not different from the notion of the white man's burden that European imperialists used as a claim to colonise the natives of "inferior" races (cf. Cohn, 1996; Pennycook, 1998; Willinsky, 1998). Kabbani (1994) criticises the ideology of empire and challenges the rhetoric of the imperialists:

> For the ideology of empire was hardly ever a brute jingoism; rather, it made subtle use of reason, and recruited science and history to serve its ends. The image of the European coloniser had to remain an honourable one: he did not come as exploiter, but as enlightener. He was not seeking mere profit, but was fulfilling his duty to his Maker and his sovereign, whilst aiding those less fortunate to rise toward his lofty level. This was the white man's burden, that reputable colonial *malaise*, that sanctioned the subjugating of entire continents. (p. 6)

The rhetoric of the coloniser and imperialist ideology in Leonowens' narrative will be rendered more concrete when located within the real context of the project of English education for the Empire. The connection between modernisation and English language teaching and colonisation is reflected in the "Minute on Indian Education" written in 1835 by Sir Thomas Macaulay, who influenced language policies throughout the British Empire. Macaulay claims that English education for Indians benefited the colonial government:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of population. (Macaulay, 1972, p. 249)

In the "Minute", it is clear that the teaching of English language and literature was deployed to produce manpower that helped the colonial government to govern native population of lower classes. Therefore, English education became a cultural tool for culturally and ideologically colonising Indian people since it helped sustain Britain's cultural power over her Indian subjects.

4.2.2 The reproductions of Anna Leonowens' narrative

The Orientalist discourse of representation still prevails in the reproductions of Leonowens' story in Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* and in the adaptation of Landon in Rogers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*. Remaining the object of perpetual discussion among these authors, Siam has been handed down through epochs by

one generation of authors to another. These subsequent rewritings show that the Orientalist discourse of the original text has been reproduced in these rewritten texts. However, because these authors lived in different times and places, the Orientalist discourse of representation in their texts does slightly different ideological work.

Margaret Landon was the wife of an American missionary working in the south of Thailand between 1927 and 1937. When in Thailand, she was introduced to *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and *The Romance of the Harem* by Edwin Bruce McDaniel. When back to America, Landon, with her friend's suggestion, planned to rewrite Leonowens' two books.

> … It was my college roommate and close personal friend, Muriel Fuller, who said to me in 1937: "Why don't you combine the biographical parts of the two books to make one? Omit the long discussions and descriptions. They only bore people who aren't students of Siamese history. Then fit the various incidents together in sequence."
>
> I liked the idea of trying to introduce Anna Leonowens to modern readers. The story of her life in Siam was more than interesting: it was the record of an amazing person. I had found the long descriptions far from dull, but I could see how they might be so to people without a special interest in Siam. (Landon, 1943/2000, pp. ix-x)

Landon's target group is her contemporary American readers and the focus of the rewriting is Anna Leonowens and her life in Siam, not the Siamese. With this kind of start, Landon researched the history of nineteenth century Siam and interviewed Leonowens' granddaughter, who supplied her with copies of letters and other pertinent material. By this means, Landon could reconstruct the historical background of the book and Leonowens'

biography while still preserving the original stories of Leonowens' experience in Siam. Landon allocated three chapters to Anna's biography. Doing so enables Landon to position Anna Leonowens as a focal character in her book.

In the *English Governess at the Siamese Court*, telling a story in the first person makes the narrator, Anna, central to her own story. The autobiographic method makes readers identify the narrator with the author. Furthermore, Leonowens' first person narration allows readers to go into Anna's mind, following her to experience what she encountered. However, in *Anna and the King of Siam*, the author, Landon, is absent and disappears behind her work. Landon writes in the third person, frequently assuming the standpoint of an omniscient narrator. Landon did not witness or participate in what is narrated in the story. She stands outside the events. Yet she has the privilege to access her characters' thoughts, especially those of Anna, her central character. An example is seen from the description of Anna's first night in Siam:

> For another half hour the ship moved on into the darkness, dropping anchor near several rotting hulks of Siamese men-of-war. A little farther up the river Anna could discern a long white wall over which towered dimly, tier on tier, the roofs of the Royal Palace. She stood looking at them absorbed, oblivious of the innumerable rafts, boats, canoes, gondolas, junks, and ships that filled the river, the pall of black smoke from the streamer, the roar of the engine, the murmur and jar. Here she was, and there was the Palace where she was soon to take up her work. Would they take her there tonight? Would anyone from the British Consulate meet her? (p. 25)

Since the central character is Anna, the events in the story are told and revealed largely through her perspective. The readers will see and know Siam through the lens of Anna.

They can get into the mind of this leading character and understand the Siamese through her thoughts. This helps preserve the Orientalist discourse of the original text and renew it in this new version of Anna Leonowen's story of Siam.

In addition, an intention to make a connected narrative out of Leonowens' two books inspired Landon to keep the form of the incidents as recorded by Leonowens. However, some changes had to be made due to constraints in the rewriting:

> While it was not possible to do what I originally intended – that is, piece together her own writings without alteration in language or style – as little change has been made as seemed consistent with the change from a first-person to third-person narrative, from the 1860's to the 1940's. If I were asked to give the fabric content of the book I should say that it is "seventy-five per cent fact, and twenty-five per cent fiction based on fact." (p. xii)

"Fiction" as referred to by Landon is her "reconstruction" of the story by means of a change from first person narration to third person narration. Landon duplicates the incidents from the original texts into her book, changes the pronoun "I" of the original story to the pronoun "she" in her story, and adds some conversations she reconstructs from Anna's original texts. An example of this is the scene from Prince Wongsa's palace, which I have already discussed earlier in the section of stereotyping.

> With him [Louis] in her arms she [Anna] struggled up the steps to the landing, where a form was coiled on a strip of matting. In the wavering light of the lanterns it looked alarmingly like a bear. The clumsy mass untangled itself, extending a fat human arm at the end of which dangled a fat human hand.

> “His Royal Highness Prince Wongsa,” said Captain Bush in a matter-of-fact way, rolling the strange syllables easily off his tongue. “Mrs. Leonowens, the new governess, Your Royal Highness.” A soft hand closed on hers and a not pleasant voice greeted her. … On a raised dais hung with kincob curtains, embroidered with gold flowers, some Siamese ladies reclined. About them their children, shining in silks and ornaments of gold, laughed and prattled and gesticulated. Under the eaves on every side human heads were packed, each with a tuft of hair like a stiff black brush inverted. In every mouth there seemed to be a cud of areca nut and betel, for Anna observed that these human cattle were ruminating with industrious content.
>
> A juggler appeared. He was a keen little Frenchman who plied his art nimbly. His ventriloquial doll talked, his empty bag became full of eggs, his stones turned into candies and his candies into stones, and his stuffed bird sang. The audience was delighted. There were applauding murmurs and occasional shrieks from behind the kincob curtains. (pp. 28-29)

Landon’s book employs similar strategies to the original text in an effort to create a realistic effect, and to convince her readers that what Leonowens recorded in the original story is “true”. The fact that Landon’s biography of Leonowens is fictionalised does not affect its status as an “accurate” reflection of Siam. Like the original text it conveys a sense of Siam as “otherness”. Although Landon wrote her text several decades after Anna Leonowens produced the original stories, her narrative discourse is structured by the same binaries.

While the Orientalist representational discourse in Landon’s book, which is similar to Leonowens’ representation of Siam, explicitly indicates the separation and exclusion between East and West, the Orientalist discourse in *The King and I* goes in other direction.

Klein (2003) argues that Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*, of which the first stage play was produced in 1951 and on which the later 1956 film was modeled, belongs to a cultural moment of the period between 1945 and 1961 when Americans turned their attention eastward. The United States after World War II was assuming the new political role of a world leader expanding its power around the world, and the Cold War made Asia important to the United States. Klein remarks that cultural texts (such as cinema, literature, and theatre) were deployed by sophisticated American intellectuals of the 1940s and 1950s, whom she calls "middlebrow" intellectuals, as a means of educating American people about the United States' evolving relationships with Asia. She further explains that middlebrow texts often continued patterns of representations of Asia developed by earlier generations of Americans and Europeans. However, they were different from their predecessors in three significant ways. First, middlebrow representations of Asia took contemporary political issues of the Cold War as the ground for their narratives. Second, the focus of middlebrow texts was not on the people, histories, and cultures of Asia, but on the American or Americanised characters who lived, worked, and traveled in Asia. The interest of the texts was in the United States and its relationship with Asia, not Asia per se. Third, middlebrow representations of Asia went beyond the Orientalist binary construction of the East as an inferior racial "other" to the West. It aimed to promote the idea of racial equality, racial tolerance, and inclusion (pp. 9-12).

Taking Klein's (2003) lead, I see that there is a discursive relationship between *The King and I* as a cultural text and the ideology of the place where this text is produced. Given that *The King and I* is a product of American Cold War ideology, this cultural text is not merely an "expression" or a "reflection" of this ideology. It in turn acts as an ideology that provides American people with rules of practical conduct (cf. Barker, 2003). That is, it becomes a tool that draws consent from the Americans to acknowledge and legitimate the role of the United States as the World's leading democratic country. Subsequently, the

Orientalist discourse of representation in this text is not any more employed to simply implement an imaginary demarcation between East and West, but offers a certain construction of the East that would justify American foreign policy. That is, Orientalism in this text is deployed in an action-oriented way as promoting Cold War ideology among American citizens. The meaning-making of Siam is thus not any more that of "otherness", but a representation of a friend, a dependable ally of Anna, who Klein (2003) considers as being Americanised. The well-known song "Getting To Know You" can be explained as a sign of this friendship. Anna opens a conversation with her Siamese students by saying:

> It's a very ancient saying, but a true and honest thought,
> That if you become a teacher,
> By your pupils you'll be taught,
> As a teacher I've been learning
> (You'll forgive me if I boast)
> And I've now become an expert,
> On the subject I like most,
> Getting to know you.
> (Rodgers and Hammerstein, 1951)

Anna's opening conversation is suggestive of the formation of a friendship between Siam and herself, an Americanised English teacher who is the representative of American friendliness. She actually takes a lead in bringing the subject of getting to know each other to her students when she continues singing her song: "Getting to know you, getting to know all about you. Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me" (ibid.). Anna's singing of this song indicates her open mind, her willingness to learn to like and accept the Siamese. Wanting her students to learn about her, Anna then invites them to join in with her. The teacher and students finally sing the song together. This is a symbolic act of

friendship formation between the Americanised English teacher and Siamese students (cf. Klein, 2003). In addition, according to Klein (2003), the way Anna teaches her students to sing this song conveys the message that Rodgers and Hammerstein sent to their fellow Americans. The two cultural producers wanted the audience to learn from the example in the musical to transform strangers into friends and to forge connections between East and West. In other words, the "Getting To Know You" scene is an exemplar of the promotion of interconnectedness and exchange between the United States and Thailand (p. 12). It is sentimentalism in the musical genre that made possible the spread of this Cold War ideology. The songs in the musical encourage audiences to sing along. The singability, for Klein, allows audiences to "step out of their role as passive observers and temporarily join in the process of community formation that was taking place on stage or screen" (p. 193).

Similar to its forerunners, *The King and I* deals with the issue of the modernisation of Siam. Rodgers and Hammerstein retain the story line of an English woman coming to Siam to promote Western modernisation and democratisation. Their main deviation from Leonowens and Landon is in their more detailed development of the scenes relating to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which purportedly influenced Abraham Lincoln's abolition of slavery in the United States. In *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Leonowens mentions Lincoln and Stowe in passing to advocate her detestation of sex slavery. In *Anna and the King of Siam*, Landon tells about an exchange of letters between King Mongkut and Lincoln regarding the King's offering elephants to Lincoln, and displays the influence of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a character named Lady Son Klin, to whom Anna gave the book. Son Klin immersed herself in the ideology of slave abolition contained in the novel. Landon shows Son Klin's transformation from a grief-stricken harem woman to a freedom supporter in the way Son Klin signed her letters to Anna. Her signature was changed from "Son Klin" to "Harriet Beecher Stowe Son Klin", and finally to "Harriet Beecher Stowe". In addition, in front of Anna, Son Klin freed

her own slaves. Impressed and influenced by Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Son Klin declares:

> "I am wishful," she said in her sweet voice, "to be good like Harriet Beecher Stowe. I want never to buy human bodies again, but only to let go free once and for all. So from this moment I have no more slaves, but hired servants. I give freedom to all of you who have served me, to go or to stay with me as you wish. If you go to your home I am glad. See, here are the papers, which I shall give to each of you. You are free! If you stay with me, I am still more glad. And I will give you each four ticals every month after this day and your food and clothes. (Landon, 1943/2000, p. 384)

Uncle Tom's Cabin appears in *The King and I* in a more dramatic form. Rogers and Hammerstein have adapted it to suit the musical as a genre. The novel of Stowe has been transformed into a form of a ballet and a chorus and included in the musical. This adaptation is called "The Small House of Uncle Thomas" and is narrated by Tuptim, King Mongkut's Burmese concubine. In Rodgers and Hammerstein's version, it was Tuptim, to whom Anna gave the book and who embraced the notion of freedom and slave abolition conveyed in the book. Tuptim went to great lengths to free herself from being King Mongkut's sex slave. In the reception the King gave for his British guests, Tuptim took the role of the narrator of "The Small House of Uncle Thomas". She used the scene, in which Elisa (the slave woman) escaped King Simon Legree and was reunited with her lover, to deplore King Mongkut's attitude and make a public appeal to the King's guests for her freedom. After the performance, Tuptim eloped with her lover. Klein (2003) argues that apart from being addressed to the internal viewers of the ballet (King Mongkut's guests), Tuptim's public appeal is also directed to the audiences of *The King and I*, showing them the cultural common ground Siam shares with the United States (pp. 205-206). The Tuptim

episode in Rodgers and Hammerstein's version makes concrete the culture of the American Civil War. The notion of freeing the slaves is made to exist visually in a form of song and dance and is subsequently confirmed and enacted by Tuptim. The parallel between the scene in "The Small House of Uncle Thomas" and Tuptim's elopement shows a story of the reproduction of the grains of American freedom and slave abolition sowed by the Americanised Anna.

Crucially, although the representational discourses in the reproductions of Leonowens' story in *Anna and the King of Siam* and *The King and I* go in different directions, they have told the same story of neocolonisation of Siam or Thailand. Thailand in both the Leonowens' and Landon's European narrative discourse and Rodgers and Hammerstein's American discourse is "constructed". The construction of Thailand as a body of knowledge about the "other" in Leonowens' and Landon's narratives, and the construction of Thailand as a lesson or learning material for Americans in Rodgers and Hammerstein's narrative both objectify Thailand. The relation between the West and Thailand in these Western discourses of representation is that of hegemony and submission.

In addition, the use of English in the Western narrative discourses perpetuates the story of Thailand among the authors and their Western readers and audiences. The exclusive production, reproduction, circulation, and reception of the story among Westerners have legitimated their ownership of the story. The voice of Thai people is ignored and excluded in the circulation of the story of Thailand among Westerners. The most recent example of a Western appropriation of this narrative is that of the Hollywood producer of the film *Anna and the King* (1999), who insisted that the film be shot in Malaysia instead of Thailand, when Thai authorities did not grant permission for it to be made in Thailand. Once again the exclusion of heterogeneous Thai voices in the story has obstructed rather than assisted Westerners to understand Thailand. Yet the rewritings of Leonowens' story of Thailand by

her followers and the circulation of the story among readers and audiences have proved that the text is continually "reproduced" and "interpreted" on Western terms. The dynamic nature of the reproductions and circulation of the text makes explicit that the text itself is "opened up" to more rewritings and interpretations. Said (1983) is right when saying that "a text in its actually *being* a text is a being in the world" (p. 33; emphasis in original). I therefore raise the question: Who owns the story of Thailand, Thais or Westerners?

In the next chapter, by reconstructing the story of modernisation of Thailand in Leonowens', Landon's, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's narratives, I would like to claim the ownership of the story of Thailand, in other words – to present a history of Thailand by Thais, which retrieves Thai voices as a response to the voices that dominate in the Western narratives.

Chapter 5

Rewriting History: Stories of East-Meeting-West

Strategically, this chapter is an imaginative construction of an East-West boundary crossing and, at the same time, an attempt to enable a postcolonial counter-discourse of speaking and writing back (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989). My purpose is now to juxtapose the Orientalist representation of Thailand in Anna Leonowens' discourse with the voices of the teachers whom I interviewed. I will take excerpts from my interviews with them to illustrate the complexities of learning English in Thailand – complexities that exceed the Orientalist account in Anna's various stories, and that point beyond the binaries which structure the narrative. By this means, the juxtaposition allows me as a researcher to inquire into and problematise Anna Leonowens' Orientalist representation of modernised Thailand, and challenge the subtle power relations manifested in her Orientalist discourse.

We have seen in the previous chapter how Siam or Thailand has been textually created as a discursive "construct" by the Orientalist representational discourse of Leonowens and other writers who have subsequently appropriated her work. Here power operates at two levels. At the level of the discourse of representation within these Western narratives about Siam, the country and its people have been deprived of any autonomy to express themselves or to take action on their own behalf. An all-encompassing "truth" or knowledge about them has been created "for" them, imposing hegemonic control over them. The scope of the prevailing power of the representational discourse then extends to the level of the story telling. The elements of story telling involve the author (or producer or filmmaker, as the case may be), readers (or the audience), and the subject of discussion (Siam). At the level of the story telling, the communication between the Western author and Western readers about the subject Siam occurs in a closed system of signifying practices that allows only limited interpretations. That is, since readers share the same

ideological worldview as the author, they tend to regard Siam as the inferior “other”. The relay of power from the level of the representational discourse to level of the story telling is reflected specifically in Leonowens’ attempt to create a “metanarrative” or a grand story of Siam. Leonowens’ metanarrative is built upon a combination of the Orientalist knowledge about Siam and the Western model of progress upon which the modernised Siam was built. Her metanarrative then establishes its own legitimacy, relating to the supposed universality of the things being talked about. That is to say, the metanarrative performs a unifying or universalising function by excluding all other possible explanations about Siam, and providing a framework for the reader to interpret the characters and scenes depicted. In effect, Leonowens’ metanarrative precludes any acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of other voices, preventing them from emerging and contesting the narrator’s voice.

The legitimation of knowledge about Siam in Leonowens’ metanarrative exists within the Western discourse of representation. However, this knowledge about Siam cannot occupy a permanent dominant position within the changing condition of societies around the world. Jean-François Lyotard (1984) discusses the changing nature of knowledge in highly developed or computerised societies. As he observes, “[t]he narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal” (p. xxiv). By defining “postmodern” as “incredulity toward metanarratives”, Lyotard points out the discrepancy between fragmented knowledge in the form of minor narratives in postmodern society and unified knowledge of the metanarratives of former periods in history, and hence raises doubts about the universal “truth” or knowledge associated with the metanarratives. Using Lyotard’s statement as a starting point for my deconstruction of the Western metanarrative that shapes Leonowens’ work, I argue that the metanarrative of Siam can be challenged when Anna’s story is relocated to the new temporal and spatial setting outside the West. This new position is that of contemporary Thailand. I argue that

the condition of globalisation has loosened the rigid boundaries of the metanarrative's universal "truth".

The concept of "globalisation" is itself a contested one, and I am not proposing to cover all the debates surrounding this term. I shall focus on only one meaning of the word "globalisation", which is to refer to the dynamic relationships among nodal points where countries within the global community come into contact, exchange, interact, and have an impact on one another. Flows among networks of connections have blurred the fixed boundaries of nation-states bringing what was formerly distant into close proximity and enabling us to make connections between the local and the international (Hardt & Negri, 2003; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 2003). The effects of globalisation on Thailand are enormous, and they are both good and bad. One that is relevant to this chapter is that communications across frontiers allow Thai people to have more access to information about Thailand and the world, including Leonowens' story of Siam and its subsequent versions. Although officially they are not permitted to be screened in the country, the videos and DVDs of *The King and I* and *Anna and the King* can be found in some shops or ordered from "amazon.com". As a result, Thais can watch these movies at home. They can also find a copy of Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* or Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* in big bookstores in Bangkok owned by international book companies. Nor is it difficult for Thais to search the Internet and browse for a synopsis or commentary on this story of Siam. With all this in mind, I would like to take a further step and argue that globalisation opens an opportunity for Thailand, which is geo-politically located as a periphery in Leonowens' representation, to encroach upon the centre. Globalisation provides a space of contact where these stories of Thailand by Western authors are available to both Thai and Western peoples alike and thus become open to a wider range of interpretations, including resistant readings outside the ideological space of Leonowens' metanarrative. This "contact" space allows Thai people to claim

ownership of the stories and the history writing of modern Siam. As a Thai researcher who has had an opportunity to read the stories of Leonowens and her followers and see the films based on these stories, my aim now is to develop Thai dialogues that intervene, contest, and challenge Leonowens' and her followers' representations of Thailand. Taking up postcolonial strategies of speaking and writing back to the metropolitan centre, I purposefully and selectively juxtapose the stories of Siam told by Leonowens, Landon, and Rodgers and Hammerstein with autoethnographic accounts of their education as told by my Thai participants. I then reinvent new stories of Thailand, stories that arise out of the "contact zone" that has become available to me in a globalising world.

By rewriting the story/stories of Thailand on the basis of the stories that my interviewees have told to me, I am aware of the danger that, as a Thai researcher who has been educated both in Thailand and in Australia, I might adopt an authoritative voice to "speak for" my participants. This conundrum is discussed in Spivak's essay, "Can the subaltern speak?". Spivak (1988) argues that in their historiographic accounts of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation of India, the Indian intellectual elite paradoxically tend to go down the same path as that of the colonial masters when they use their representation of the disempowered group as a tool to subvert history as told by the former colonial authorities. By doing this, their work continues the marginalising and silencing of the voices of subaltern people, with these historians simply taking over from the coloniser the right to speak on behalf of these oppressed people.

A similar issue in the Thai context is discussed by a Thai scholar, Thongchai Winichakul. Winichakul (1995/2004) argues that since Thailand was never a colonial country, there is no struggle between colonial and anti-colonial scholarship in Thai studies. Thai scholars incline to assume that Thai studies is the thing that Thai people know better than anyone else because Thai-ness is an intrinsic part of Thai people. Westerners can discuss issues

concerning Thai-ness, Thailand, and the Thai people, but these issues can never be felt at the same emotional level at which Thai people grapple with them. Yet the danger remains. Thai scholars presume a privileged status in the field of Thai studies. In effect, studies of Thai by Thai people seem to attain a "natural authority" and become "the inside view on what is good or bad for Thai, what is Thai or not" (pp. 7-8). Winichakul concludes his argument as follows:

> An indigenous view is a good antidote to the power relations of the Orientalist discourse. But the discourse of Thainess has its own sphere of power relations as well. In the context of global power relations, it may represent the periphery's resistance to the metropolis. But in the context of power relations within Thai society, it is a claim to legitimacy of, more often than not, the official or hegemonic discourse operating in its own particular cosmos over the subordinated or marginal ones. (p. 9)

The arguments by Spivak and Winichakul point to the trap into which indigenous intellectuals and academics fall. Beyond the sphere of colonial resistance, these elite groups run the risk of establishing another set of power relation that enables them to claim privilege and authority over the field of their study. In turn, the elite's hegemonic control suppresses the subordinated and marginalised, unifying the latter's voices, which are in fact heterogeneous.

This leads me to step back from claiming that my analysis of Leonowens' story and of later Western constructions of Siam has any privileged status, as though I am somehow entitled to combine my participants' voices within reconstituted dialogues that constitute a final interpretation. Nor do I try to generalise and say that the Thai voices heard in my thesis "represent" all Thai voices. The reconstitution of Thai voices and Eurocentric voices

(including an American voice in Rodgers and Hammerstein's version) in the thesis is for the purpose of juxtaposing fragmented, minor Thai narratives with Western metanarratives. I would rather claim that the juxtaposition is a "re-presentation", not a "representation" of what was said by my participants and by the Western authors. I consider my thesis an open text or a contact zone that accommodates conflicting tensions and a range of voices at both the point of production and its reception. In contradistinction to the monologic nature of Western metanarratives about Thailand, the re-presentation of voices in my thesis is meant to assume a Baktinian dialogic quality of *heteroglossia* or the coexistence of many voices. At the point of production, the thesis reproduces within itself the tensions and diversity of my participants' multiple socio-ideological voices. However, these many voices still exist independently of my appropriation of them, even as I infuse them for my own intentions. In this respect, I see myself as doing similar work to a novelist. As Bakhtin (1981) explains:

> The prose writer as a novelist does not strip away the intentions of others from the heteroglot language of his works, he does not violate those socio-ideological cultural horizons (big and little worlds) that open up behind heteroglot languages – rather, he welcomes them into his work. The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master. Therefore the intentions of the prose writer are refracted, and refracted *at different angles*, depending on the degree to which the refracted, heteroglot languages he deals with are socio-ideologically alien, already embodied and already objectivized. (pp. 299-300; emphasis in original)

As the voices heard in the thesis are a re-presentation, I will offer only a provisional interpretation of the autoethnographic narratives by Thais and the ethnographic metanarratives by Western authors. I want the text of my thesis to have an open-ended quality, leaving other possible interpretations for my future readers – no doubt with different backgrounds from me, whether Thai or other nationalities – to entertain.

The juxtaposition of the Western metanarratives and Thai narrative fragments goes beyond a mere comparison and contrast. Because I am using their statements simply for contrastive purposes, in an effort to tease out the conflict between the experiences of my participants and Western metanarratives about Thailand, I have hardly begun to do justice to the full complexity of the stories that my interviewees have had to relate to me. The participants in my study – like people anywhere – are complex ideological beings, each the product of a certain history and a certain education. They each have a story to tell about what Bakhtin terms their "ideological becoming", which consists of the struggle and dialogic interrelation between "authoritative discourse" and "internally persuasive discourse" within their consciousness. According to Bakhtin,

> The ideological becoming of a human being … is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others. … [A]n individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterized precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one, the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code. The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what

> usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness. (pp. 341-342)

My juxtaposition is therefore intended to be an interrogation from the marginal position made by Thais, which, in effect, infiltrates into the authoritative words of Anna Leonowens and the authoritative discourse of English as a field of study as appeared in the Western stories. The Thai narratives will then question the "privileged" status of the discourse of Western knowledge (especially English language and literature) and its effects on Siamese students' "ideological becoming" as claimed by Anna Leonowens. The fragmented stories by my teacher participants when they reflected on the time they were students will also reveal the beliefs and doubts that they have towards institutionalised Western knowledge and the framework that has shaped their professional being as teachers.

Thus the reconstituted dialogues between the Western metanarratives and Thai minor narratives provide a contact space where a struggle between the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse happens. The Western norms, conventions, beliefs, and ideology conveyed by Leonowens', Landon's, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's representations of Siam form a "closed" authoritative discourse that assumes privilege and authority. The internally persuasive discourse, which is the ideological discourse internally persuasive to and acknowledged by the participants, is more "open" as it is ready to enter into a relationship of struggle with other internally persuasive discourses. In Bakhtin's words, "the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 345). Each of the participants in my story had stories to tell about their experience of growing up and gaining an education in Thailand. They each had a story to tell about how they acquired English. But in telling their stories, none of them supposed that they were privileged, that their story was "the" story about Thailand. To the contrary, their stories each had a richly

particular and concrete character which by that very fact challenged sweeping statements of Western metanarratives about Thailand.

Before moving to the next section, I would like to summarise that in this chapter I am exploring the ideological becoming and current position of the teacher participants in my study. They had all at some stage in their lives been positioned as recipients of disciplinary knowledge and training – in this case, English language and literature studies – when they were students of English. However, the participants were never passive recipients of a particular knowledge and training. They did not receive everything imposed on them without any resistance or negotiation. The stories told by the participants capture their struggles with the disciplinary knowledge they learned and acquired. One participant even goes further and defies the authoritative words of her lecturer, asserting her contesting voice and showing her own standpoint. Whether my participants were openly resistant to the education they received or more accepting of it, their education continues to mediate their professional practice in powerful ways, a prompt for constant reflection by them about who they are and the value of their work as teachers.

5.1 Introducing the participants and their tertiary institutes

All participants' names used in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect each person's identity. The teacher participants were from two universities: Chiang Mai University in Chiang Mai and Silpakorn University in Bangkok. I went to Chiang Mai which is in the north of Thailand to interview my two participants, Chattri and Sukuma, and I interviewed the other two participants, Korakoj and Wara, in their offices at Silpakorn University in Bangkok.

The English Department, Faculty of Humanities at Chiang Mai University has a reputation for having developed a successful English curriculum. In developing the curriculum,

lecturers work together as a team to design the curriculum by looking at the overall picture of all subjects both inside and outside their department, thus forming bridges to the other departments in which students may be working. The curriculum is intended to enable the teacher to develop his or her own preferred pedagogy, including deconstructive approaches to canonical texts. In addition, the curriculum is designed to help students relate what they have learned in the classroom to the social and cultural contexts and the local Thai contexts outside the classroom. The construction of knowledge in the classroom is a combination of what students bring from outside of the classroom and the disciplinary knowledge students drawn from text books and literary books assigned for them.

The English Section, Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Archaeology at Silpakorn University is my working place. At the time of data collection, all teachers, including me, who taught English literature subjects, graduated from the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, which is the oldest university in Thailand, and hence one of the most prestigious universities of the country. Similar to the curriculum at Chulalongkorn University, the English literature curriculum at my university emphasises the canon and canonicity, promoting a teacher-centred approach that comprises mainly lectures. Although there are some slight variations of this tradition, these changes have been made by individual teachers as they teach their classes without any serious discussion with other teachers. Their approach reflects a kind of pragmatic solving of problems at hand rather than any sustained attention to the overall curriculum of the university and the changing social and cultural contexts of Thailand. Thus, when compared to the curriculum of Chiang Mai University, the English curriculum, especially English literature curriculum at my department, is not really very innovative or up-to-date.

5.1.1 Chattri

My interviews with Chattri took place in her office at Chiang Mai University. At the time of the interview, Chattri was in her late thirties. She was a senior lecturer in the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University. She grew up in Chiang Mai, which is the centre of northern Thailand. Chattri completed her primary and secondary education at Chiang Mai University Demonstration School. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Chiang Mai University and graduated with her first Master of Arts in English from the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. She was granted a Fulbright scholarship to do her second Master of Arts in English in the United States. After receiving her Master's degree, she went back to Thailand and taught at Chiang Mai University for two years and then went to the United States again to continue her PhD in English. Her doctoral dissertation is about femininist postcolonial identity and resistance in contemporary Asian American and Afro-Caribbean women's fiction. She graduated with her PhD in 2002 and then returned to her teaching at Chiang Mai University. Chattri's interest was in feminism and postcolonialism.

5.1.2 Sukuma

I interviewed Sukuma at her house in Chiang Mai. Sukuma was in her fifties. She is an Assistant Professor at the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University. She was originally from Bangkok. She spent her childhood in Yala, a southern province of Thailand. She went back to Bangkok to complete her senior high school years at Triam Udom Suksa School in Bangkok. She did her Bachelor of Arts in English at the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. After graduating, she taught briefly at Dhurakij Pundit University, a private university in Bangkok and then went to do her Master's degree in English literature in the United States. After receiving her Master of Arts, she joined Chiang Mai University. Sukuma is interested in performing art and the media. She was one of the first to use media in English teaching at Chiang Mai

University. At the time of the interview, Sukuma was running a campaign on English as a world language. She saw that English is not owned by any particular nation. Native speakers of English are not the owner of the language anymore. She believed that those who know English empower themselves and are empowered. By empowerment, she meant that that person has capacity to connect his or her society or community with the outside world and to bring the local to the global. As a teacher of English, she considered that studying English is an empowering process. Students of English should know that when they study English, they can use this language as a connecting tool for their community. And while studying English, they therefore need to know their cultural roots very well in order for them to understand their community, where their ancestors were from, where their future direction is, and what is happening to them.

5.1.3 Korakoj

Korakoj was in the same generation as Sukuma and Wara, although Korakoj was junior to them. Korakoj was an Assistant Professor in the English Section, Western Languages Department, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University in Bangkok. She received her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in English from Chulalongkorn University. Her interest in English literature is both in the canon and in minority literature, especially Jewish literature. She taught both the compulsory literature subject, *Survey of American Literature* and other advanced literature subjects to English major students. Korakoj was also interested in Western languages, such as Spanish and Italian and also in fine art and Western art, especially Italian art.

5.1.4 Wara

Wara was in her fifties. She was an Assistant Professor at the English Section, Western Languages Department, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. During her undergraduate study at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, she was Sukuma's

classmate. Wara did her Master of Arts in English in the United States. After graduating, she taught at Assumption University, a private university in Bangkok, for a while, and then joined Silpakorn University. Wara taught the compulsory literature subject, *Survey of British Literature* to English major students. Wara wanted to teach other advanced literature subjects; however, she did not have a chance to do so. The reasons were as follows: Wara had a large teaching load in other subjects focusing on the acquisition of English language skills. Also, there were only three teachers of English literature in the Department and not many students wanted to study literature subjects since they thought that English literature required a lot of reading and was very difficult. Moreover, students preferred studying English language skills to English literature. The Department could not offer many literature subjects in each semester. Therefore, Wara had to teach the basic subject, *Survey of British Literature* for many years and the other two teachers took responsibility for the other advanced literature subjects.

Wara's story actually contributes very little to this chapter since she did not give a detailed account of her experiences outside of her English classrooms. She only answered the questions asked in the interview prompts. As the research design for the data collection planned to use open-ended interviews, the interview prompts were used to prompt the participants to think of their past experiences when they were students. They were free to give any answers or tell any stories they liked in response to the questions asked in the interview prompts. As a researcher, I did not expect the interviewees to give me answers that confirmed my own views. I refrained from interrupting them in the course of the interview in an effort to allow them to tell their stories as they chose.

5.2 Stories of East-meeting-West

I put the stories extracted from the writings of Leonowens, Landon, Rodgers and Hammerstein and the interviews given by my participants in italics in order to indicate that they are reconstituted stories of East-meeting-West. My other purpose is to differentiate them from my analysis, which is in normal type.

5.2.1 English education: Is it a story of enlightenment or a story of ideological hegemony?

In Leonowens' representational discourse, it seems that the history of Siam's modern education, English education in particular, is written and recorded in her narrative. Recounting her teaching experience from the viewpoint of a person from imperialist Britain, Leonowens assumes her authority to bring to her reader the story of Siam's enlightenment. In the story, Anna regarded her teaching at the Siamese court as a "mission". She felt that it was compulsory to cultivate the minds of her Siamese students. As discussed in the previous chapter, English education was claimed to play an important role for the future of modern Siam since it would bring European modernity to Siam and sophistication to its people. Anna's civilising mission to enlighten the Siamese is retold in Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* as follows:

> *She had come to Bangkok full of high hopes and great plans. … And above all she had craved hard work. She loved to teach. She had imagined herself helping an enlightened monarch to found a model school that would set the pattern of education for a country just emerging from medievalism. She had looked forward eagerly to influencing a nation through its royal family. She believed so passionately in human freedom, in human dignity, in the inviolability of the human spirit, that she had thought when the chance came to penetrate the harem, the very heart of the Siamese system of*

> *feudalism and slavery, that God had meant her for a liberator. Perhaps – she had dreamed – she would teach some future king, shaping his child-mind for a new and better world.* (Landon, 1943/2000, p. 90)

The description of Anna's hope for Siam seeks to portray a complete picture that leaves no place for doubt that Siam will be in a better position under Anna's plans and supervision. Anna longed to see an ideal society which was governed by an enlightened king and in which the harem and slavery were dissolved. The key condition that would lead to this goal would, in Anna's view, be a new education under her guidance. This description reveals the authoritative discourses of English education and English teachers. Here English education for the Siamese performed the function of a disciplinary institution. That is to say, studying the English language was a good discipline for Siamese students, as the students would learn both the language and Western customs. It is noticeable that the tone of Anna's description of Siam's desired future was authoritative and imperious when she emphasised her plan to establish a "*model school*" in Siam. There was an interrelationship between English education and Anna who acted as both the English teacher and the founder of the English school. The institutional role of this model English school was marked by Anna's intention to "*set the pattern of education for a country just emerging from medievalism*". The values and functions of this model school were aligned with a unified set of beliefs and practices held and performed by Anna. Her beliefs in "*human freedom, in human dignity, in the inviolability of the human spirit*" were ideological. They reflected a certain body of ideas characteristic of the place she was from. This ideology in effect had shaped Anna's teaching practices. She attempted to put her beliefs in a new and better society into practice by planning to initiate her students into the same set of beliefs she had. Her model school's intended curriculum was directed at Western civilisation and modernity. She believed that when students made sense of the world in the same way as her, a future in which they could live in a modern and civilised society was achievable.

Anna's desire to shape the minds of the royal children who in the future would be the key figures in modernising Siam was inextricably linked to the function of the school in disseminating a set of Western ideas and beliefs among its students. From Anna's perspective, English language teaching would benefit the Siamese because English would be the medium for accessing Western modernity and thus building of their nation. The English school run by Anna was, in short, designed to produce ideological subjects of a certain type.

The role of the disciplinary institutions in producing ideological subjects in the grand story of the triumph of the West over the East is consistent with the notion of ideology put forward by Althusser. Althusser (2001) argues that educational institutions, such as schools, are among the multiple Ideological State Apparatuses that help secure the status of the class in power. Rather than being repressive, Ideological State Apparatuses work through the ideological production of individuals as subjects (cf. Colebrook, 1997, p. 157). For Althusser, ideology functions in such a way that it transforms an individual into a subject by the operation of what he calls "interpellation" or hailing. In effect, an individual's acceptance of being hailed means that he becomes an effect of an ideological structure. An individual, as the outcome of ideological production, is thus "provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill in class society" (2001, p. 105).

For Anna, it was imperative that the Siamese system of feudalism and slavery be replaced by the Western notion of human freedom brought about by the new kind of education. This expected outcome of Anna's teaching pinpoints schooling's intermediary role of replacing the "subordinate" Siamese ideology with the "dominant" Western ideology and embedding the latter in Siamese students' minds. Schooling in this grand narrative thus imposed an authoritative discourse that did not allow for the possibility of dialogical relations between dominant and subordinate ideologies. The authority of the new Western ideology achieved

its legitimacy by universalising itself, transforming values and interests specific to the Western world into the values and interests of Siamese students (cf. Eagleton, 1991, p. 56). Moreover, activities in the model English school would function to create the common sense among Siamese students, naturalising their experience of the benefits of Western modernity that they would have from their English education. By this means, Siamese values and beliefs were devalued and replaced by a new set of Western values and beliefs. As the products of schooling operated by Anna, Siamese students were meant to accept what they were told uncritically and adopt certain ideological positions introduced to them by her.

Now let us move to a minor narrative by one of my participants, Chattri. The following story from my first interview with her reveals the course of Chattri's ideological becoming centring on her English education (both the formal and informal education).

> *Why did I choose to major in English literature? When I was a child, I liked English. It was the subject that I could do well and was competent. And I got a very good grade from English subjects. My family background also contributes to my love of English. My father worked at the USIS. He contacted with farangs. At home, we always had books in English. I saw my father speak English and read English books. I myself read English children books. Although at that time I couldn't understand English, I could imagine from the pictures in the books. I told myself that in the future I had to understand English. And that day came. I started studying English. And I did well for my English study. My father bought home some English books. My father was a deputy director of the USIS. He worked in the area of education in Thailand, especially in the matter related to American culture*

> *and American literature. This may be the ultimate motivation that drives me to study English.*

Chattri gave the reason that her good command of English, which has been built up from her family background, motivated her to major in English literature. Her love and interest in English and English literature, American literature in particular, was credited to her father. (It should be noted that the field of English literary study in Thailand typically consists of both British and American literature.) Her informal English education started at home with her father as her example and her supporter. Realising the importance of English, Chattri's father provided his daughter with English books. The use of the collective pronoun "we" by Chattri in the sentence, "*At home, we always had books in English.*", emphasises the fact that the practice of English was encouraged in the family. Although it was not exactly mentioned by Chattri who "we" were, it can be assumed that Chattri included herself in this collective pronoun. Chattri's familiarity with English came in various forms such as reading English children's books and seeing her father speak English and read English books. Chattri herself did not feel discouraged when she could not understand English words in the children's books she read. This fact instead motivated her to learn English.

The work of Chattri's father at the USIS or the United States Information Service needs to be explored. USIS is the overseas name for the United States Information Agency or the USIA whose mission is to "further the achievement of US foreign policy objectives … by influencing public attitudes abroad in support of these objectives … through personal contact, radio broadcasting, libraries, television, exhibits, English language instruction, and others" (Coombs, 1964 as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 158). The USIS in Thailand is connected with the U.S. Embassy. They have branches both in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, and in Chiang Mai in the north. The work of Chattri's father was to promote

English education and American culture and literature. Phillipson (1992) points out that the American government has invested in English language promotion and cultural sponsorship around the world by funding all types of educational and cultural work (pp. 156-157). Phillipson further contends that among the aims of the American foreign policy behind the promotion of English language and American culture is ideological conformity on the part of the recipients of the assistance (p. 160). We can see that in a small scale of his own family, Chattri's father was successful in his mission as the deputy director of the USIS at the Chiang Mai branch. He set an example for his daughter. He made her love English and she became eager to read American literary books, which resulted in her embracing American culture and ideology, as seen below:

> *My interest in English literature resulted from the fact that I had seen and was familiar with books since I was young. … I liked reading Thai translation of English literary books. I usually revisited those books because I really liked them. I could imagine how people in the books lived their life, for example. That's why I like literature. So I chose to study English literature. … In English literature, I could see the characters in the books. I could use my imagination to imagine their life and culture. I think it was more interesting. In other words, I can say that I was "pro" American. I felt that America was good and it was a new world for me. … I think I receive a lot of advantages from studying English literature. I began to know people more and also understand their culture. I felt that my mind was not with me. It was in the foreign country. My mind was opened up. My perception of culture was opened up.*

Chattri's interest in English and familiarity with American literature (though in a translated version) prompted her to have a positive reaction to everything American. The development of the new ideological structure in young Chattri's consciousness results from the fact that she was addressed by American values and beliefs conveyed in the literary texts she read. The role of American values and beliefs in her life was related to how she associated literary books with the social reality that the books portrayed. For Chattri, reading American literary books helped her discover a new world of foreign lands. Her book reading constituted her knowledge about the life and culture of the place where the books were written. The approach she used in her reading might be called "expressive realism", which presupposes that "literature reflects the reality of experience as it is perceived by one (especially gifted) individual, who expresses it in a discourse which enables other individuals to recognize it as true" (Belsey, 1980, p. 7). As Chattri recounted her reading experience, the books she read seemed to be a natural reflection of the human world they described. The expressiveness of the texts and the representation of human experience in the texts created in her imagination the picture of social life and culture new to her, stimulating her to more exploration. Chattri's experience of reading the texts as such facilitated the transmission of American values and beliefs as these were mediated by the texts. The more Chattri read, the more she became familiar with American life and culture. The familiarity she developed became a secondhand experience for her, allowing her to understand people from this country. The new lens through which she looked at the world directed her mind to America. As she revealed, her reading experience made her become "pro-American". Chattri's story therefore tells a story of English books as part of her self-learning. English literary books were meant to be educative materials for learning the language. At the same time, by giving examples through the portrayal of life, ideas, and values of the more civilised country, the books operated at the ideological level to direct Chattri's mind towards America.

Chattri's formal English education in school went along with her extra English courses outside school, and it was her father who encouraged her. He allowed her to take extra English courses at the American University Alumni Association Language Center or the AUA.

> *My father also supported me to study English since I was young. I took English courses at the AUA Language Center. Everything I learned from the AUA was so special. I knew more than other students in my school who didn't took the language course at the AUA. I had more advantages than other students. I don't think I was forced to study English. And I liked English.*

Chattri's love of English developed more at the AUA. Her feeling of having more advantages than other students at school due to the extra courses she took at the AUA made her treasure knowledge she gained from there. Chattri's positive reaction to her English study at the AUA reflected what was considered as the development process contributed by English language teaching to non-native speakers that "may permanently transform the students' whole world" (*Anglo-American Conference Report*, 1961 as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 166).

The AUA Language Center plays a part in the discourse of English language teaching in Thailand. According to its official website, the AUA Language Center was established as a "binational center" in order to "promote further mutual understanding between the people of Thailand and the United States through instruction in their respective languages, customs and traditions" (AUA Language Center, 2010a). To date, the AUA offers language courses in English, Thai, and Japanese as well as training for teachers of English. The AUA started its operation with the purpose of establishing mutual understanding

between Thais and Americans. However, in practice, language courses at the AUA concentrate more on English language courses and training for English teachers rather than Thai or even Japanese language courses. Although the AUA is a "non-profit, non-political and non-religious organization" (ibid.), its role in language teaching and training reveals the politics of English language (i.e. American English) through the discourse of English language teaching. A good example is its Teacher Education Department whose role is to "to work with Thai English teachers, trainers, schools, districts, and Educational Service Area Offices" (AUA Language Center, 2010b). The Teacher Education Department also distributes the *English Teaching Forum*, a journal published by the U.S. Department of State. Articles in this journal are written by teachers and language teaching experts around the world in order to offer ideas, techniques and practical suggestions for teachers of English as a foreign language (AUA Language Center, 2010c).

Before further discussion, a brief note about the work of the U.S. Department of State should be made. As a government agency, the U.S. Department of State has a mission to promote the American English language and American culture around the globe. This can be seen from its division called the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs which aims to "promote friendly, and peaceful relations, as mandated by the *Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961*". Its work is to foster international mutual understanding through a wide range of academic, cultural, private sector, professional, youth and sports exchange programs (Bureau of Educational and Cutural Affairs, n.d.).

Noticeably, outside America, the U.S. Embassies and Consulates distribute copies of the *English Teaching Forum* (see ibid.). In Thailand, the AUA does this work. Its distribution of this journal therefore shows its function as the main American language institute in Thailand that has been more or less connected with the U.S. government's promotion of American English outside its mainland. Phillipson (1992) argues that similar to the British

government, the American counterpart has been eager to promote English. Actually, the governments of these superpower countries collaborate in spreading English around the world. Their effort to promote their language through English language teaching is arguably associated with what Phillipson calls "English linguistic imperialism" or the "dominance of English" as being "asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (pp. 46-47). These structural and cultural inequalities in languages help ensure that English continues to be the key medium for acquiring British and American influences in various forms and the relative political, economic, and cultural power of these two former imperialist countries. From the discussion above, English language teaching and training in Thailand is thus undeniably linked to the former imperialists' promotion of their language and culture.

On the part of the American promotion of language and culture, as shown in Chattri's case, this promotion is part of the U.S. government's foreign policy which also comes in the form of cultural aid to developing countries. The Fulbright program is among the aid that the U.S. government gives to Thailand. The U.S. Department of State mentioned above is involved in the Fulbright program that sponsors and grants scholarships to students and scholars from Thailand to study or research in American educational institutes. As seen from above, Chattri's life has been entangled with the English language, American literature, and other American elements originated from her father's work and his inspiration of her. When Chattri studied for her Master's degrees in Thailand and abroad, the American culture, values, and beliefs that she encountered and adopted through her reading experience and her interest in the language when she was young became a decisive factor for her future study and career as an English teacher. She continued her higher education in English literature at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, and then she applied for a Fulbright scholarship to do another Master's degree in American literature in

America, which is seen from this comment made by her: "*In my second year of my master's study at Chulalongkorn University, I applied for a Fulbright scholarship. I wanted to do my study in American literature*". The following reason, that "*I thought I did not study enough American literature*", which she gave to the Fulbright committee shows her thirst for acquiring more knowledge in this foreign literature, and it was one of the reasons that helped her win the scholarship. With this scholarship, Chattri was able to study American literature in America where she longed to be. There she was exposed to the real life experience of living and studying in the place where the characters in the books she read spent their lives. There she also adopted some American values and beliefs which were later in conflict with Thai ways of life. That is to say, her English education in America formed the next important phase of the development of Chattri's ideological being, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

5.2.2 In the English classrooms: Stories of discipline

School is the place where students are disciplined and taught. There is a scene in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I* in which Anna's students are practising their English lesson.

School-Room Scene

CHILDREN AND WIVES (start to sing behind curtain)

We work and work from week to week at the Royal Bangkok Academy,

And English words are all we speak, at the Royal Bangkok Academy.

ANNA (Interrupting):

Spread out, children.

(Children move downstage)

Now, that last line was 'English words are all we speak.' I didn't quite understand. I want to hear the beginnings and ends of your words. Once again, now, and nice big smiles, because we love our school (Anna conducts) *One, two, three.*

We work and work from week to week at the Royal Bangkok Academy,
And English words are all we speak, at the Royal Bangkok Academy.
If we pay attention to our teacher
And obey her ev'ry rule,
We'll be grateful for those golden years, at our dear old school,
The Royal Bangkok Academy,
Our dear old school.
(Rodgers and Hammerstein, 1951)

The School-Room scene in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical is an example of education as a disciplinary discourse involving authoritative power of English teachers and English language teaching over students. The normative power of Anna and her teaching practice are symbolised in her control over the students and their unquestioning obedience. First of all, Anna's power comes in the form of instructing her students to "*spread out*", a kind of control over their physical body, which is immediately followed by her command, telling them to repeat the lines they were studying from the beginning to the end. Then they were told to give "*nice big smiles*" as a sign of their love for their school. Noticeably, this love was intricately linked to the benefits of knowing English, the language of the teacher, which would make Siam a better country.

Anna's instruction and command reflects the fact that throughout the training, the students become subject to particular modes of discipline. They have to pay attention to and obey Anna's every rule in order to be rewarded with a bright future. Such training is in fact a

technique of disciplinary power that gives authority to the teacher or the trainer who supervises the activities in which the students engage. In such training, students are made subject to the teacher's command. In effect, students observe themselves and have self-control over their doing or activity. This is what Foucault (1977b) calls "docile bodies". The fact that the docile bodies of the Siamese students are associated with the benefits they would receive from being disciplined seems to confirm the worthiness of their effort to learn the language, especially when they sing, "*We'll be grateful for those golden years, at our old school*". However, the grand narrative of English as a beneficial communicative language has glossed over some other negative aspects of learning the language of the colonial master. Pennycook (1994, 1998) questions and challenges the notion that the English language is natural, neutral and beneficial. He contends that English is not free of political value and implication. Having originated from colonialism, the language itself and English language teaching are involved in the colonial discourse, in which the power relations between the master and the colonial subjects are maintained. English is a colonial, cultural construct, which is full of political intention, and the teaching of English is a means to impose cultural domination on native students.

In *The King and I*, English language usage and English language teaching in Anna's classroom implies an asymmetrical power relation between the country where English was spoken as a mother tongue – in this case Britain – and Siam as the peripheral country. Significantly, in this School-Room scene, the audiences are told that English was the only language to be spoken in the classroom while Siamese was not allowed due to the benefits of knowing English for Siam's future. The dominance of English over Siamese pinpoints the political implication of English and English language teaching in the "Third World" discussed by Phillipson. Similar to Pennycook (1994, 1998), Phillipson (1992) argues that English language teaching is not neutral and free from politics. Instead, the teaching of English to non-native speakers promotes the dominance of English or English linguistic

imperialism as I have discussed earlier. This School-Room scene, therefore, is symbolic of the classroom activities that create linguistic inequality between English and Siamese. The unbalanced power relation between the two languages justified cultural inequality between the more civilised England and the yet–to-be-civilised Siam. This rationale was employed to marginalise Siamese students in the classroom, making them dependent on the English teacher.

The rhetoric of the imperial power relating to the disciplinary control is also seen in Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*. There is a scene that tells a story of the necessity to recruit an assistant teacher. According to Anna, the recruitment involved identifying the student's capacity to learn English and commitment to studying the language. The most promising candidate was King Mongkut's lady-in-waiting named Prang.

> *The minute Anna started to teach Prang a thrill of excitement went through her. The girl had a quick and brilliant mind. In a few weeks Anna was sure that she had found someone who could help her with the teaching. Prang rapidly overtook and passed the other pupils. Anna began to devote an hour a day to helping her and was delighted to see that she progressed with a speed impossible to the rest of the school. The girl explored the world of English books with enthusiasm as fast as she was able to read them. She committed long passages to memory for the sheer joy of learning…*
>
> *Any number of the women of the harem had shown a brief flare of interest in the school, only to grow bored a few months later, as Mrs Mattoon had warned her they would. Intellectual discipline was foreign to them. Once the novelty of learning English had palled they returned to their own less exacting pursuits. But Prang had seemed different. She had ability*

and she had tasted the pleasure of study for the sake of knowledge. Her mind was too good to be abandoned without an effort to vacuity. Anna was sure of this. Therefore she tried in many little ways to revive Prang's interest, thinking that the girl had reached one of those plateaus where some stimulus from her teacher was needed to rally her interest. (Landon, 1943/2000, pp. 199-200)

A generalisation about Siamese students' lack of intellectual discipline is used to indicate the problems Anna found in teaching them English. The implication is that there were certain qualities or dispositions necessary for students to succeed in their learning. Prang, who seemed to be different from others, possessed these qualities. She was an apt student. She was enthusiastic about her study and showed her continuing interest in what she learned. She was a good, disciplined student, suggesting that when she became Anna's assistant in the future, she would likewise be able to discipline other students. As Foucault (1977b) contends, discipline "makes" individuals. It is "the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (p. 170). However, to show the difficulty in training a native assistant teacher, Prang is portrayed as needing to receive still more advice and discipline from Anna. Therefore, the teachable Prang is still portrayed as evincing the same inconsistent behavior as other native students.

One day Prang would be in her chair, working over hard sentences, spelling out words, writing and translating for hours on end. Even when the other pupils had gone home she would sit poring over her books, smiling to herself as the meaning of what she had read dawned on her. But the next day she would be listless and indifferent, or worse. She would spend her time impishly kicking the children under the table, hiding their books, or

> *making faces at them. If Anna remonstrated with her, she would be absent from school for days or even weeks.* (Landon, 1943/2000, p. 200)

Prang's erratic behaviour is stressed to convey the necessity for native students to be controlled and their behaviour to be corrected.

> *If Prang had not been so capable of development, Anna could have handled her drastically without compunction, even if it meant that she left school permanently. But Anna could not put away the secret thought that in this girl she had the material of a good teacher. The problem was to find some way of controlling Prang's erratic ambition, and of curbing her puckish inclination to mischief. The girl was like a highly bred colt kicking its heels in the sun, determined not to be mastered. Anna thought ruefully that she herself seemed to have been cast more in the role of trainer than teacher. Nor could she make up her mind whether it was the part of wisdom to persist with kindness or to use an occasional flick of the whip.* (pp. 200-201)

Anna's strategies to discipline Prang are described by the use of a simile of training a colt. Those strategies are related to disciplinary power. Anna had two alternatives to deal with Prang: "*whether it was the part of wisdom to persist with kindness or to use an occasional flick of the whip*". At first, Anna chose the first option. She tried to be patient and used reason with Prang, hoping that Prang would realise the benefit of her academic achievement. However, Anna's attempt failed. After being challenged by Prang, Anna was forced to employ the second strategy:

> *Anna was sorry that Prang had forced the issue which she herself had carefully avoided, but since the girl's challenge was now in the open it was impossible to evade it any longer. For if Anna ignored it that subtle revolt which every teacher fears would spread through the school with Prang its focal centre. Some perversity in the girl had resisted Anna's kindness and had galloped headlong to this crisis. It was hard to imagine why it should give Prang satisfaction, but quite obviously it did. "Prang," Anna called peremptorily above the noise, "take Mentu out at once!"*
>
> *Instantly the children were quiet. The girl stood up in her place, eyes blazing with anger. One by one she took her books and threw them to the floor, then her pencil, her notebook, and finally her slate, which shattered in an explosion of sound. Only after the last of the objects connected with her school work lay at her feet did she take the monkey in her arms and stalk out.* (p. 202)

This episode shows the students' revolt and the teacher's fear that her power might be challenged by the students. To discipline her students, Anna strategically employed what Foucault calls a double system of gratification and punishment used in correct training. Foucault (1977b) explains that the gratification-punishment system is employed in the process of training and correction. The teacher must first try to reward students more frequently than penalise them. It is very beneficial when the teacher encourages a lazy student by rewards rather than by the fear of punishment. When the gratification method fails, the teacher then proceeds to employ punishment. Foucault further argues that this double system operates on the basis of the two opposed values of good and evil. How students behave is therefore categorised either as good or bad (p. 180). A differentiation between the "good" and the "bad", according to Foucault, is considered not as "one of acts", but "of individuals themselves, of their nature, their potentialities, their level or their

value". The penalty that is implemented is integrated into "the cycle of knowledge of individuals" (p. 181).

In Prang's case, Anna's choice depended on whether or not Prang would agree to comply with her. To comply means to be a good student and then Prang would be rewarded as Anna's assistant. But Prang did not. Prang's resistance to being disciplined and her challenge were a threat to Anna. Punishment could not be avoided when the degree of resistance was so strong. Thus punishment as a system of correct training was implemented as part of the disciplinary control to maintain Anna's status as the teacher and to suppress Prang and other students.

As discussed earlier, Prang is portrayed as capable of being disciplined and being potentially a good student. Prang later felt guilty about her bad behaviour towards Anna. She felt grateful for Anna's punishment that made her realise her inappropriate behaviour. This double system of gratification and punishment finally worked wonders for correcting Prang's wrongdoing and shaping her to be Anna's loyal assistant.

> *Then suddenly one day Prang burst into tears and threw her arms around Anna's neck, pouring out the torment of words – her unhappiness and boredom in the Palace; a flood of accusations against herself for ingratitude to Anna, the only person who cared abut her, incoherent promises.*
>
> *The saddle was on. From that day forward as long as Anna stayed in Siam, Prang was her loyal assistant in the school.* (Landon, 1943/2000, p. 206)

The story of discipline in Landon's narrative becomes a showcase of the authoritative discourse enacted by Anna, the English teacher. In this story, Anna was challenged. Yet she managed to retain her disciplinary power. The students were allowed few possibilities to challenge or negotiate with the teacher. They were simply obliged to subject themselves to disciplinary control.

A more insightful story of discipline and control on the part of students is interestingly told by Chattri. In contrast to the story of Anna, which was told from the "imperialist" teacher's perspective, the story told by Chattri that I have drawn from her first interview reveals a Thai student's tension and negotiation with an ongoing process of her English language study. To cope with the difficulty she encountered in handling the discourse of English language study, the young Chattri had to come up with some strategy that required her self-discipline:

> *As for the problems of studying English, I had to struggle a lot because English is not my language. I was not a smart student. I was not talented. When I was young, I woke up at four o'clock in the morning to recite English vocabulary. I remember I wrote sentences which were not sentences at all. When I was in Year 8, my teacher told me that I wrote run-on English sentences. "Didn't you know where to put a full stop in your sentence?" I was very frightened. I had never known before that I did that big mistake. However, I used that mistake as a drive to push me. I started to learn how English sentences are constructed. My teacher told me that I could not write correct English sentences. Another student might have stopped studying English when he or she heard this comment. But I felt it was my drive. I studied extra English courses. I studied more until I could write short stories. Although my writing was sometimes grammatically correct and*

sometimes incorrect, at least I could write English sentences. I think this is the problem that everybody who studies English has to encounter. I also accumulated English vocabulary. I used to be a slow reader. Still now I am a slow reader. I can't read as fast as others.

Chattri's story can be read as a sequel to the School-Room scene in *The King and I*. Her story gives a clear picture of how power is exercised on the students' docile bodies. This story explains how a student enforces disciplinary coercion on herself. Chattri used what she considered a big mistake in her study to force herself to focus only on her study, aiming to improve her English language skills. Chattri's self-discipline, in other words her docile body, comprises her recitation of English vocabulary every morning, extra English courses outside of school, as well as diligence in practising English and concentration when studying the language. Such strict control of herself is consistent with Foucault's explanation of discipline and the docile body. According to Foucault (1977b), discipline "dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection" (p. 138; emphasis in original).

Chattri's story adds some additional dimensions to the stories of discipline we have heard so far. The metanarrative about the School-Room scene emphasises only the benefit for the Siamese students of being disciplined, whereas the story about Prang and other Siamese students' efforts to learn English deals with the intellectual discipline and disciplinary control that Siamese students need for their study of the language. By contrast, Chattri's story renders a student's lens to the stories of discipline. The story reveals how much effort Chattri had to invest and how much pain she had to encounter during the course of her study. Chattri later accepted that she had to pay the price for her success in studying

English. Gaining very good English language skills was at the expense of enjoying her youth:

> *I was a hard working student. I am what I am because I have worked so hard and I have to endure this torment. I could sit at my study desk without leaving it for the whole day. I knew that I had to force myself to do it. I used to set my aim that I would sacrifice my private world. I did not go out and have fun with my friends. I sacrificed it for my study of English. And I have to accept its consequence. I lost my teenage world. Sometimes I regret. When I look back, I think that if at that time I had adjusted myself in a better way, I would have been happier during my teen. However, when thinking twice, I feel that if it had been like that, I would not be a good teacher because my skills in English would not have been this strong.*

Chattri's current teaching career was the reward she obtained from her practice of self-discipline during her childhood. She managed to impose strict control on her body, transforming her self into a disciplining self. Her strict subjection to intellectual discipline increased to a degree of self-denial. She distanced her intellectual life from her public life. However, the choice of intellectual training later in life made her regret not cherishing her teenage years more. Yet the fact that the practice of self-discipline contributed to her success in her studies and career as an English teacher continues to pose a dilemma for her.

5.2.3 Stories of English teachers

The teacher is generally recognised as one of the main elements in education. In Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, classroom activities were intimately tied to the authority of the English teacher. Anna was at the centre of her classroom and the activities of the students. Her teaching practice might be said to involve

inculcating the "official and authoritative word" (Bakhtin, 1981). The authoritative word of Anna was not that of a dialogical nature. It did not allow any negotiation on the part of her students, but simply their obedience and consent. The students were positioned as passive and dependent on her authoritative figure. One of the scenes shows that Anna's authority derives from Webster's spelling book:

> *It was not long before my scholars were ranged in chairs around the long table, with Webster's far-famed spelling-books before them, repeating audibly after me the letters of the alphabet. While I stood at one end of the table, my little Louis at the other, mounted on a chair, the better to command his division, mimicked me with a fidelity of tone and manner very quaint and charming. Patiently his small finger pointed out to his class the characters so strange to them, and not yet perfectly familiar to himself.* (Leonowens, 1870, pp. 85-86)

It is noteworthy that Anna's teaching was mimicked by her son, Louis. This mimicry has a symbolic significance. Louis copied her teaching method. The same as his mother, he occupied himself with the English alphabet in the spelling book, requiring his class to repeat it after him. Here a hierarchical order of an authoritative English teacher (Anna), a neophyte English teacher (Louis), and Siamese students of English was established with the Siamese students at the lowest level in this structure of power. Anna and her mirror image, Louis, employed Webster's spelling book to teach correct English to Siamese students. The use of the spelling book as a tool to mediate knowledge would be an interesting topic to investigate. The significance of spelling books in the discourse of English language teaching is to provide students a pattern of standard English. Honey (1997) gives the defining characteristics of standard English as having the characteristic of "generality", "uniformity", and "correctness". He argues that the third defining

characteristic suggesting the codification of standard English involves dictionaries, grammar books, and a set of rules taught in school (p. 3).

In the excerpt, there is a connection between the prescriptive authority of the spelling book and Anna's established authority. Anna's authority is firmly constituted when she associates herself with Webster's spelling book, which she uses to provide rules for her students to practice spelling. Here the English teacher functions as an agent in distributing the prescriptive spelling rule to the students who are positioned as recipients of knowledge. The dichotomy between the native speaking teacher and the non-native speaking students is thereby reinforced, enhancing the students' dependence on Anna. The dependent relationship of the students on the teacher is an unbalanced power relation since there is no real exchange or inter-communication between the teacher and the students. The teacher's authoritative discourse cannot be questioned or challenged in this kind of classroom as the students become inferior to the more knowledgeable teacher who upholds standard English as her rule. Moreover, the way the students acquire knowledge by repeating after the teacher makes them become subservient to her.

As discussed in previous chapters, the Western metanarratives portray the Siamese royal students, the prospective ruling figures in Siam, studying the English language as a means of gaining access to European modernity. The definition of this modernity included both the advancement of the country and the improvement of its people in adopting "acceptable" social manners. The students' study of standard English is inextricably bound up with their abiding by a new set of rules of politeness. This politeness was judged by the standard of the place with which standard English was associated. Thomas (2004) argues that in the history of English language, there was a connection between standard English and the "ideology of politeness" of the eighteenth century Britain. To use the standard English of the gentry was to show "an affiliation to, and engagement with, a certain set of

values which signalled sophistication and gentility" (p. 189). Thomas further contends that since standard English is equated with authority, discipline and social and moral order, the use of standard English is a signal that its user is complying with society's standards or norms. In the context of Leonowens' story of Siam in the above excerpt, apart from learning politeness in language, the study of standard English as set down in the American Webster spelling book is symbolic of the Siamese students' learning to accept polite Western manners. Since the word "standard" itself is related to a certain set of social norms and conventions, the learning of standard English by non-native speakers can lead to the learner's adoption of the attitudes and norms of the society where the English language was originally developed. Thus, her teaching Siamese students to read and write by using the authoritative spelling books shows Anna behaving as what Mathieson (1975) calls a "preacher of culture" who is attempting to immerse the Siamese students into the socio-cultural ambience of the West. This attempt is exemplified in the following passage from Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*:

> *Then Anna had wanted to supplement her formal classroom teaching with other contacts, which would fulfil the King's urging that his children be taught European manners and customs. She had been thinking that this could best be done by bringing a few of the children at a time into a proper setting and teaching them both by word and example the principles of European etiquette. Their lives were so circumscribed that the introduction of any idea opposed to their own experience and Siamese training was extremely difficult.*
>
> *The maps and the globes had broken down their concepts of geography and astronomy. Even that battle had to be fought over with each new child who entered the class. Recently a very beautiful little girl named Wani Ratana Kanya, a newcomer, had rejected quite firmly the modern*

ideas set forth by her teacher. "I believe," she had said, "that the moon is the beautiful daughter of a great king of Ayuthia, who lived many thousands of years ago, and the head wife of the sun, and not a great stupid ball of earth and rock rolling about in the sky to no purpose but for the sun to shine on!"

The children's love of pictures had helped to widen their horizon. They were able to gain some idea of the outside world from views of other countries and people, which Anna sedulously hunted and brought to class. (Landon, 1943/2000, pp. 233-234)

Through her language teaching, Anna tries to introduce her students to Western concepts that are quite foreign to them. This requires a great effort on Anna's part to gain their acceptance of what had not been in their minds before. Anne uses teaching materials, such as maps, globes, pictures, or real materials to support her teaching and widen their perspective. The case of Wani Ratana Kanya is employed to illustrate Anna's problem of changing her Siamese students' beliefs in native knowledge. Here readers of Landon's story can get an impression of the superiority of Western knowledge to native knowledge from the use of a binary opposition as seen in the excerpt. More advanced Western knowledge based on scientific advancement exemplified in Anna's teaching of Western astronomy is set against irrational native knowledge rooted in primitive beliefs reflected in the little girl's firm belief in the native story of the moon. Though with difficulty, the conflict between Anna, "the preacher of Western culture", and the students was resolved with Anna's success in converting her students to a belief in the advancement of Western knowledge. Such an ending thus marks the authority of the English teacher who saw the importance of modern knowledge of the West as necessary and beneficial to her primitive Siamese students.

The metanarratives of Leonowens and Landon all show the undialogical nature of Anna's teaching practice. Now I would like to present a reflection by my participant, Sukuma, on her English language study in her high school. The following small narrative from her first interview tells a different story from the grand stories of Anna. It involves more than simply the difference between the nineteenth century, as represented by the metanarratives shaping Anna's story, and the twentieth century that forms the backdrop of my participant's story. Unlike the stories I have related above, this story conveys the heterogeneity of Thai students' "voices" and their response to and negotiation with their English teacher's teaching. It also shows the positive feeling of Thai students towards their learning of English.

> *When I studied my senior high school at Triam Udom Suksa School, I got a good English teacher. I am so grateful to her. She was British. Her name was Corky. She was the legend of that era. She changed the world of students. I am still thankful to her. She is an exemplar of my teaching. Ajarn Corky worked so hard. She asked students to write "Thought For The Day" or "TFD" everyday. So I wrote seven stories every week. I cut pictures from books and stuck them onto my TFD book. I could do whatever I wanted. I started by formatting my own songs. What hurt me that day? I saw the sun and the rain. I wrote whatever I wanted. I saw ants walking and I wrote about the ants' route. I followed those ants and noticed what happened to them. When I read the newspaper, I wrote what I found in the newspaper. I struggled a lot when I had to write seven stories though. After I handed in my TFD to Ajarn Corky, she marked it. She asked students to exchange our TFDs. Every student was impressed when getting the TFD back. Ajarn Corky read every story that students wrote and commented on every story. I realised that TFD enhanced my capability of studying English. I got very*

good grades in the English subjects in those academic years. It can be said that my two years at Triam Udom Suksa School was the food that sustained me when I studied at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

It should be noted that the Thai word *Ajarn* means "teacher" in English. In Thai culture, when a person is referring to the teacher, the word *Ajarn* is used before the teacher's name, thus showing respect.

The TFD episode is an example of the teaching practice and classroom activity that recognised the multiplicity of voices in the classroom and how Sukuma's ideological becoming as a student of English had been facilitated. Corky's TFD activity was aimed at encouraging students from non-English speaking background to practice English writing. Corky wanted her students to find connections between what they learned in class with their real life experiences by using what they found outside the classroom as materials for their English writing. That is, as a means for her Thai students to have more opportunity to learn to use English, Corky required students to use the English language in their writing of TFD. She then encouraged her students to make choices about what types or forms of language they wanted to use. As for Sukuma, she employed stories and songs in which she translated what she experienced in a day into words. On closer scrutiny, TFD is thus an activity that allows the Bakhtinian interplay of the authoritative discourse of the teacher and the everyday discourse that the learner encounters to happen.

In Sukuma's case, although Sukuma found it difficult to write seven stories in English – the language that was foreign to her – every week, she felt that it was worth doing so. The encouragement she got from her English teacher gave her a positive experience of English language learning. Here Sukuma's story points to the tension between the teacher's authoritative discourse that required Sukuma to use the English language and the internally

persuasive discourse that Sukuma brought with her to her English writing. Sukuma's struggle with the authoritative discourse was lessened when she had a chance to negotiate a pathway by drawing on her internally persuasive discourse – her freedom to use anything she encountered during the day as a resource for her writing. In effect, this made the writing of TFD become internally persuasive to Sukuma. The negotiation between the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse was enhanced by Corky's acknowledgement of the students' voices and her encouraging them to exchange their writing. By this means, the TFD activity changed the classroom into a contact space where the voices of students as the "others" were acknowledged by the teacher and the fellow students. The tension caused by the authoritative discourse and the internally persuasive discourse, and the negotiation Sukuma made among the two discourses were integral to Sukuma's ideological development as a student of English. As stated by Sukuma, her study of English at Triam Udom Suksa School improved her English language capabilities and sustained her study in the higher level.

Sukuma's ideological development with respect to acknowledging multiple voices is a continuous process. In her university study, Sukuma preferred seminar subjects to the subjects in which teachers employed lecturing as a method of teaching. She saw that she had a chance in a seminar class to communicate with the teacher and the other students, and also express her thought in the classroom. This can be seen from her conversation given in the second interview.

> *In my fourth year, the subjects that I took were seminar subjects. I had a chance to discuss with friends and teachers. I was benefited by these subjects. Most students chose to study the subjects that they did not have to discuss. I was different. I liked seminar subjects. There were only six students in Modern Drama class. The teacher was Ajarn Bob. He was an*

excellent teacher. My world was changed because of him. He discussed with students. He let us see the movies and comment on them. I felt that I had my confidence in this small class. I could use everything to be a resource for my discussion. When I became a teacher, I tried very hard to do this.

Sukuma enjoyed the seminar class in which expressions of opinions by the teacher and students alike were appreciated. She realised the benefits of this kind of learning environment. She accepted the authoritative word of her teacher because within herself she became convinced of the value of learning English literature. The teacher's authoritative word was matched by an internally persuasive word. Her ideological becoming involved gradually accepting the value of English literature and learning to use it in new ways. That is to say, compared to other big lecture classes, Sukuma found in Bob's small seminar class the dialogical nature of the negotiation between the teacher and students, which for her was more useful and interesting. Significantly, this negotiation functioned to create a contact zone of a classroom where the ideological becoming of students was facilitated. To be specific, the first hand verbal contact between the teacher and the students, the contact among the students, and the students' identification with the studied texts made the students feel that they were part of the classroom and their opinions enabled the flow of the discussion. Bob's acknowledgment of his students' voices in the classroom (namely the socio-cultural background that the students could bring with them to the discussion) and the intertextuality of the literary texts (namely the literary texts chosen for study and the movies complementing the texts) then functioned to invite the students into the discourse of classroom community. In this kind of discourse community, the lesson was not totally controlled by the authoritative word of the teacher. Instead, an interplay between the authoritative word of the teacher and the languages and values of the students facilitated the students' ideological becoming, as in Sukuma's case, which I will further discuss later.

There are other aspects of the authority of the teacher's word in a Thai university lecture class that Sukuma's story does not reveal. Therefore, I would like to use a story by Wara, my other teacher participant who was Sukuma's classmate at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, to illustrate the control of the teacher's authoritative word in a lecture-type classroom. As Wara explained in her second interview:

> *The classroom at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University was a big classroom. It was in a lecture hall. Therefore, there was no interaction between teachers and students. It was a lecture class. There was no critical thinking period and students had no chance to criticise or analyse anything. The teaching of English at that time was similar to the teaching of history. My classroom nowadays is a lot smaller. My students have a chance to contradict me or express their ideas if they want to. The study at the time when I was a student was that of receptive. It was a kind of instant knowledge and we received a body of knowledge given to us by our teacher.*

This story reveals that one of the important factors facilitating the teacher's authority in the lecture classroom as Wara experienced it was the large number of students in the classroom. This still happens in traditional lecture classrooms in Thailand these days. As there are a lot of students, it is difficult for communication between teachers and students to happen, let alone communication among students. The teachers have to finish a large amount of the lesson within a limited time. Students have to passively receive, in Wara's word, "*instant knowledge*" transmitted by the teacher. The lecture thus becomes symbolic of the teacher's authoritative word, requiring students to acknowledge it and privilege it over other internally persuasive words. This is hardly an example of joint knowledge construction between the teacher and students.

Wara's story shows the type of classroom that Sukuma wanted to avoid. We can see that Sukuma's experience in the classroom with Bob, her English teacher at Chulalongkorn University, was totally different from Wara's experience in a lecture-type classroom. Bob's teaching confirmed Sukuma's belief in the value of teaching that acknowledges the diversity of students' voices. It is significant that the development of Sukuma's ideological being as a student of English at formative stages of her life (namely her high school and university years) has influenced her current teaching practice. She developed her own classroom, constructing it as a contact space where different voices and opinions meet, and students' talk contributes to the flow of the discussion and the construction of knowledge. It is seen from her second interview that Sukuma avoids a lecture-type classroom where her voice and her lecturing monopolises the flow of the lesson and where she would be the sole source of knowledge in the classroom.

> *When teaching at Chiang Mai University, I am always thinking of the time when I used to be a student. I know what students want and what they do not like. When I was an undergraduate student, I skipped many classes because I knew that I did not need to attend the classes. But I passed the exams because I memorised the lectures that I borrowed from my friends.*

Sukuma's reflection on how she felt about the lecture classes and what she had to do to pass the examination emphasises the distress that she experienced when she was not internally convinced by the authoritative word of her lecturers. She resisted it by skipping the lecture classes. Yet the monopoly of the teacher's authoritative word required her to comply. Examinations were used to screen students. Those who showed their compliance with the teacher's authoritative word were rewarded by passing the examinations. The punishment for students who did not conform to the control of the authoritative word was failure in their study. Sukuma thus had to show her conformity by borrowing her friends'

lectures and memorising them for the examinations. This experience gave her a lesson and confirmed her belief in the importance of the negotiation and connection between the teacher's authoritative word and the student's internally persuasive word. Just as Sukuma thought this moment to be a valuable moment in her own growth or ideological becoming as a young person, so she tried to create the same opportunities for her own students, making her classroom into a contact zone where they could interact with the English language and literature that was being offered to them, assimilating it on their terms. And in her third interview Sukuma emphasises the importance of a developing relationship between the teacher and the students in the classroom, a process in which the ideological beings of both parties were never finalised:

> *I always tell my students that I am not worried about the numbers of texts they have to read. I demonstrate to them that in 45 contact hours that students and I have to meet each other, I hope that we (students and I) can see our growing-up process. In these 45 hours, all of us will bring what we learn from outside the classroom to our discussion. We have to grow up together.*

5.2.4 Getting to Know You: Stories of transformation

Getting to Know You

ANNA (solo)

Getting to know you getting to feel free and easy

When I am with you,

Getting to know what to say,

Haven't you noticed?

ALL

Suddenly I'm bright and breezy

Because of all the beautiful and new things

I'm learning about you day by day.

ALL

Getting to know you getting to feel free and easy

When I am with you,

Getting to know what to say,

Haven't you noticed?

Suddenly I'm bright and breezy

Because of all the beautiful and new things

I'm learning about you day by day.

(Rodgers and Hammerstein, 1951)

One of the most famous scenes in *The King and I* is the scene featuring the cartography lesson Anna gives to her Siamese students. As discussed in Chapter 4, the theme song of this scene, "Getting to Know You", is one of the tools Rodgers and Hammerstein deploy to communicate to their American audience the meanings of mutual understanding and cultural integration between America and Thailand (and Asia in general). Although it is argued by Klein (2003) that the scene is more about the Americans and the education that the Americans of the postwar era received than about Thais, it cannot be denied that the representation of the Thais in this scene is also important.

The combination of the action in the cartography scene and the song, "Getting to Know You" constitutes the metanarrative remake of Siam as a country that is willing to receive Western knowledge and engage in cultural exchange with Anna, the representative of the Western world. Anna's act of replacing the traditional Siamese map with the more recent Western-styled map, in which Siam is only represented as small and far away from the

centre, causes the students' disappointment. It is only after Anna explains to the students that England, the country from whence their teacher came is smaller, that the students begin to understand the lesson Anna is giving to them. Thereafter the teacher and the students begin to develop mutual understanding of one another, which culminates in the their singing the theme song together. The cartography scene can be interpreted as a story about the replacement of an "inferior" Siamese knowledge with a "superior" knowledge of the West on which the Siamese agree to model themselves. On the other hand, the scene itself, together with the song, "Getting to Know You", is indicative of the symbolic transformation of the difference between Anna and her students, both racially and culturally, into the moment of East-West community formation resulting from the Siamese students' eagerness to learn from their English teacher (cf. Klein, 2003).

According to Klein (2003), the theme song, "Getting to Know You", effectively emphasises the educational process that establishes a sense of East-West understanding and interconnectedness. The song and the singing represent a cultural exchange between the English teacher and her Siamese students, including a reversal of the teaching role between them. The structure of the song begins with Anna's introducing her students to the topic of "Getting to know you", out of which Anna implements the educational process of teaching the students the Western manner of shaking hands and curtseying – an initial step to knowing the speaking partner. As they sing along with Anna, the students practise the lesson by reproducing Anna's greeting manner. Then it is the English teacher's turn to understand the Thai culture represented by Siamese students' teaching Anna the fan dance.

It is noticeable that the interaction between the English teacher and the Siamese students is presented in the form of mimicry; both the teacher and the students reproduce the cultural practices they have learned from each other. As a result, it seems that the exchange is made on an equal basis between the two parties. However, given the purpose of the English

education that Anna offers her Siamese students, which is to introduce the students to modern Western civilisation, this exchange between Anna and her students becomes only part of an overall process that aims to inculcate in the students the concept of international connection. In this case, I am arguing that it is rather a case of the Siamese students being educated in Western knowledge and being equipped with Western etiquette and manners than one of Anna being orientalised. That is to say, the voices heard in the metanarrative of "Getting to Know You" – both that of Anna and those of the Siamese students – emphasise the story of international relationship and the transformation of the Siamese into a modern people. In effect, these voices conceal the replacement of local knowledge and culture with the "modern" knowledge and "superior" Western culture at the expense of Siamese people's attempt to really get to know about the West and make meaningful connections between Western knowledge and their own lives.

The price that Thai people have to pay for their learning to become Westernised can be found in a minor narrative by my participant, Korakoj, who told a story of her growing up during the Cold War period. At that time, in order to balance the power and influence of Soviet Russia in such Southeast Asian countries as Vietnam and Cambodia, the United States expanded its power to Thailand, establishing military bases in the country. This close contact with Americans changed the way of life of Thais. It made Thailand become modernised and Thai people Americanised. The following comments by Korakoj, one of my participants, are taken from her first interview. As Korakoj admitted:

> *Everything was in English. Thai people at that time saw English movies, listened to English songs, and read English books. I didn't quite like Thailand. That is true! It was because the environment in which I was growing up was very positive to everything American. It was during the Cold War period. And the environment of Thailand at that time was the pro-*

> *American environment. The "love-American" campaign also led to my preference for farangs. Also, it was the personal taste that "doing nothing Thai" was considered a good thing.*

It must be noted that Korakoj considered the Vietnam War of the 1960s as part of the Cold War between the democratic United States and Soviet Russia.

Karakoj was the product of the 1960s, the time during which she was growing up. In the 1960s, the relationship between Thailand and the United States became closer due to the crisis in Indochina. The more Thailand was threatened by the spread of communism in Indochina, the more it sought help from the US. In mid-1964 when the developments in Indochina became increasingly threatening to Thailand and the US, the Thai Government allowed the US to use Thailand as its military base. Wyatt (1982) explains that there were nearly 45,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Thailand during the Vietnam War period. The influx of American service men into Thailand affected Thai people from all walks of life. The American presence in Thailand during the Vietnam War made Thai people become dependent upon American dollars and they began to adopt American values. Wyatt comments on the cultural impacts of the Vietnam War period on Thai people as follows:

> Until the late 1960s, full access to Western culture, to Western ideas, values, and fashions, was limited to a small Thai elite, but the Vietnam War period brought the outside world face to face with large segments of the population as never before. Here, the war simply accelerated what expanding educational opportunities and mass media exposure had begun a decade or so earlier. This direct exposure of much of the society to the West added force to the confrontation of Thai and Western values – noisily, for

> example, when aspiring musicians found a much readier market for their talents performing Western popular music than traditional Thai music, and when cassette tape audio recording could spread their achievements almost everywhere. With Western tastes and fashions came new ideas of social relationships (including, for example, sexual morality, ideas of romantic love, and the cult of youth supplanting the traditional respect accorded age) and a new questioning of existing Thai economic and political relationships. (p. 289)

Wyatt's comment matches Korakoj's story above. Similar to other Thais who spent their life or grew up in this period, Korakoj was fascinated with Westerners, especially Americans. The interconnection between Thailand and the US during the Vietnam War involved the co-presence of Thais and Americans on Thai soil, a contact space where Thai culture and values crashed into those brought into Thailand by American service men. Korakoj's admiration for everything American and her deviation from the Thai sense of belonging was a result of Thailand's transfomation into a Westernised – or, more precisely, an Americanised – country, a process that made American cultural hegemony happen. Americanisation affected Korakoj's ideological development. She was growing up with Thailand's exposure to the new American culture, values of life, and English language. She was not different from most Thai people at that time who considered anything "modern" as "better" than traditional Thai ways of life. In other words, she was moulded by the Americanised environment. She picked up the new American ideology, which diverted her from the sense of belonging to Thailand.

The growth of this kind of Americanised social environment in Thailand and American ideology she adopted had an effect on Korakoj's English education, as it created her

positive attitude towards the English language. She was eager to learn the language with native speakers. As she recounted,

> *My love for English was also initiated in the classroom that was taught by farang teachers. I have been fascinated with farangs. And in the classroom with farang teachers, I could do very well. I was the beloved student of my farang teachers. I didn't think that English was difficult.*

Korakoj's inspiration to study English and her success in English language study was tied to her ideological development. That is, she internalised American ideology and values, developing a strong preference for anything American, as well as any activities that allowed her to encounter Westerners and their culture. The repetition of the word *farang* by Korakoj in her conversation emphasises her preoccupation with anything belonging to *farang* (or Westerner which, in this case, is American). She became aware that the American taste she had adopted enhanced her ability to study English. This awareness became internally persuasive to her, and consequently became integral to her positive disposition towards America. Such a kind of ideological development in one way equipped Korakoj with English language competence and her knowledge of Western culture. On the other hand, it widened the gap between Korakoj and her sense of Thai identity and belonging.

Korakoj further told a story about her undergraduate years as an English-major student and her work experience after her graduation:

> *I have to confess that my knowledge about Thailand was very little. I got more knowledge about Thailand when I joined Silpakorn University. But I am very good at English. I used to work for the publishing house, Maung*

Boran. The editor had to sit with me when I worked because I couldn't understand the stories about Thailand that were written in Thai. I thought the Thai vocabulary concerning Thai stories or Thai-ness was very difficult. It made me feel that what I studied in the university was very far from Thai-ness. I felt that I was involved in farang cultures. I had farang friends. Also staff from foreign embassies came to the Foreign Relations Club of Chulalongkorn University in which I participated when I was an undergrad student. There was a communication between me and farangs all the time. I felt that I liked farangs more than Thais.

Korakoj's story reveals the learning environment at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, which does not provide Thai contexts for English major students. The curriculum of the English major at the English Department requires students in their first year to study general subjects offered by the university and the faculty. In the other years, they have to study subjects of the English major, in which English is used as a medium of instruction. English majors here tend to be competent and fluent in English because they have been trained to read, write, speak, and think in English as well as listening to English lectures. They have been immersed in a Westernised environment where any notion of Thai culture has been mostly marginalised or excluded. The Thai language and Thai-ness thus become the "other" in the English classrooms of this department. To be successful in their English-major subjects means that students have to comply with the rules of the English classrooms – that is, to use English and think in English all the time in the classrooms. This English classroom discourse requires the students' consent to regard Thai as the language of "otherness". During the four years of their undergraduate study, their engagement in the classroom practice of using English all the time thus gradually separates the students from their sense of belonging to Thailand. In the case of Korakoj, who grew up in the Westernised and pro-American atmosphere of the

Vietnam War era, it was likely that she would refuse and discard what was labelled "Thai", in other words "otherness". Her mind was directed towards the West. Her deviation from being Thai is reflected in the activity she chose to participate in at the university. That is to join the Foreign Relations Club. Being a member of this club gave her a chance to meet and speak English with foreigners. This phenomenon reflects the discursive and hegemonic nature of English language study and teaching, especially in the context of foreign language learners. As Pennycook (1994) describes:

> Clearly, then, language can never be removed from its social, cultural, political and discursive contexts and, to return to Fanon or Fernando or Ndebele – with a changed perspective on what is meant by 'language' or 'culture' – to speak *is* to 'assume a culture', habits of thinking *are* 'infused into the language', English *can* be called 'guilty'. (p. 33; emphasis in original)

Being immersed in the Westernised environment caused Korakoj difficulties when she worked at *Maung Boran*. (It should be noted that the name of the publishing house, *Maung Boran*, is literally translated as "Ancient City". This publisher publishes a magazine of the same name that contains stories and articles about Thailand and Thai culture.) Korakoj struggled with the binary between self and other. As she had embraced the idea of the superiority of English language and Western culture, she found that working with the Thai language – her mother tongue and the language use in *Maung Boran* magazine – was more difficult than with the English language. She was more comfortable with English. Her problem of understanding Thai points to her identification with her Westernised "self", which denied the possibility of using the Thai language in order to express particular Thai concepts and values. However, working with a publisher whose expertise is in stories of

Thailand forced her to learn more about Thailand and the Thai language. Such a struggle made Korakoj realise that her English study had removed her from "Thainess".

As seen below from Sukuma's second interview, Sukuma's story of the impact of the new social and cultural environment on her childhood initially has some similarities with Korakoj's story, since they grew up in more or less the same period of the Vietnam War. Sukuma is about seven years older than Korakoj.

> *When I was five or six years old, I walked in a street of Bangkok. I saw the sentence, "Money is work. Work is money that brings us happiness." written on banners appearing everywhere in Bangkok. It is actually the concept of daily American life that is about success. It is a success from gaining materials. It refers to competition. At that time, it was the Vietnam War period. Our Prime Minister was a puppet of America. America used Thailand as a place to get to Vietnam. I saw G.I. tanks drove past my house and I waved my hand to American G.Is. I listened to English songs. I regarded that everything farangs brought was right.*

However, Sukuma's story diverges from Korakoj's story when she recounts the experience of her university study in her first interview. Sukuma engaged in a lot of activities when she was an English-major student in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Out of her interest in English literature and stage play, she directed the play, *Waiting for Godot*, for the student theatre. As a director, she had to read the original text, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, interpret it, and recreate it in the form of a theatrical performance. Her encounter with Western philosophy – most notably Existentialism, which was prominent in the literary texts she had to study – had an emotional effect on her.

It was a two-side of the sword. It is my frightening experience. I think it can occur with students who study a very abstract thing, including literature. What we are studying is the way that we jump to study Western thinking. Western ways of thinking are totally different from Thai ways of thinking. We study Western thoughts and philosophy without having any transformation ritual. At that time, Existentialism was popular in Thailand. Existentialism was a social process that originated from the Western context of the World War period. It was the time when the whole world was shocked and the Christian world was collapsed. People felt that the world was nothingness. I was about twenty years old. And I read Existentialist writings. I embraced this kind of thinking without living in the same society as Western people or sharing the same emotion with them. What happened to me was that I got a lot of anxiety. For me, the world was very eerie. I could not focus on anything. It was nightmarish. The world contains nonsense dialogues. Things had no meaning. I did not know that I was depressed. It was during the midterm exam period. I had to read books for the exam. But I could not concentrate. I did not understand the books I was reading for the exam because the world of Waiting for Godot was in my head all the time. When time passes by and I look back to what had happened to me, I find that it was the condition called "anxiety attack".

Sukuma's experience highlights the negative side of adopting Western ideology as it is transmitted to Thailand via English literature study. In most Thai universities, the study of English literature in the English Department is considered a complement to the study of English language. An objective of English literature study is meant to enable English majors to have an insight into the culture of English-speaking countries. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate some course description of English literature subjects of the

English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, to understand how it was possible for Sukuma to embrace the Western thinking and how such thinking affected her. In the course description of the subject, *Twentieth Century British Drama*, it is written:

> Subject matter, theme, form and technique of the twentieth century British drama, analysis and criticism of selected plays by major figures. (Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2010)

It should be noted that the teaching of English literature at the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University is still traditional. There has not been much change in the main focus of most English literature subjects. That is, it still stresses the study of the history of English literature, thematic study, genre study, values of the time when the literary texts were produced, the language and forms used in the texts, and the work of canonical authors. There are some seminar subjects, which are only elective subjects.

The study of English literature, namely *Twentieth Century British Drama*, is an example of a traditional form of English literature study that requires students to use a thematic approach, and observe aesthetic function, authorial intention, and social and cultural contexts affecting the author's production of the texts. Students therefore do not have a chance to employ what they actually encounter outside the context of the literary texts they are assigned to read for their interpretation. They can rarely use their real life experience to understand those texts. Since English literature is studied as comprising a set of social and cultural artifacts and the approach to the literary books that students use does not allow other alternative readings, this kind of English education in the English Department thus becomes an ideological apparatus that turns students into ideological beings (cf. Althursser, 2001). It can be a complete change for some Thai students. As stated by Sukuma in the above interview, this way of studying English literature becomes a big jump

for students who are not familiar with Western ways of thinking and philosophy. When students are required to study Western philosophy or social values through their reading of English literary texts, such a study can bring about a transformational process for students. And when Sukuma reflected upon her past experience, she found that in her transformational process, she underwent the torment of the discrepancy between the Thai ways of thinking that she grew up with and the Existentialist thinking that she later adopted when reading *Waiting for Godot*. To understand this play, she tried to identify herself with the ideology that the play conveyed by means of embracing the notion of Existentialism – the philosophy that was very far from the Thai social context she was living in. This abrupt transformation made her later realise that Thai students who study Western thoughts and philosophy need a transformational ritual in order to prepare them for the new ideology they may encounter with their study of Western thoughts and philosophy.

Sukuma took this experience seriously because it affected her emotionally. It then became a lesson for her when she worked as a teacher of English language and literature. In order to prevent her students from being torn between two totally different ideologies, Thai and Western, the issue of developing a cross-cultural awareness needed to be of concern. As Sukuma stated in the first interview:

> *And from my own experience, I have to prepare my students for the issue of "cross cultural dimension". I consider it a "must". I give the highest importance to this issue in my teaching. When I teach some story that has the concept of cross cultural dimension, I have to tell my students about the sources and the differences between social contexts. That is why I come to develop the issue of "narrative" and teach students the "narrative". I also teach the creation of the myth from many nations for my students to use as a background basis for developing their thinking. I want my students to know*

> *where our place in the universe is. Then we can move on to see other world or else we will be harmed.*

Sukuma saw that her students' ideological formation was intricately linked to the construction of cultural identity, which involved the students' cross cultural awareness. She therefore taught the narratives and the creation of myths from many nations to her students, using them as tools to help the students deal with cross cultural issues. She saw that this kind of study was a good source for students to understand the way of thinking of people from each nation. Through such a study, her students could take into account both the social and cultural context of Thailand and the social and cultural difference that could be found in the texts they read. What Sukuma did here was to create what Bhabha calls the "Third Space of enunciation". Bhabha (1994) uses this term to explain the hybridity resulted from the postcolonial condition that allows the marginalised people (i.e. women, the colonised, minority group) to make a movement to the boundary, find some way to dissolve the fixity of that boundary, and finally make a way to enunciate cultural difference:

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (p.37)

Sukuma's classroom then became an in-between space in which cultural difference could be articulated, not the space where a rigid boundary gave rise to alienation. In this Third Space, the negotiation between different cultural identities could happen. Her students were able to make understandable the world of the foreign texts they read from their position of being Thai and through the lens of their Thai cultural perspective. Sukuma saw

this as a strength and a vaccination that helped them grapple with alienation, preventing them from being emotionally harmed.

Chattri's story of her master's study in America is another version of the story of conflicting ideologies caused by cross-cultural encounters. Her relocation to America for her education gave her a chance to reflect upon her American ideology she had adopted when she was young and her uncritical admiration for American culture. In America, Chattri became interested in Feminism, a new theory that she did not have a chance to study in Thailand. Reading feminist texts gave her a new perspective, allowing her to realise her marginalised position as a Thai who, like other minority people, was discriminated against in American society.

> *My Master's degree study in America made me realise that I like Feminism. I like non-mainstream texts. I started to see that America was not so beautiful as I used to think of it. It was the first time in my life that I was against what I had learned. I realised that American culture was not totally good. American people treated black slaves badly. Before this time, I didn't recognised racial discrimination, which appears in the film, Gone with the Wind. I started to know what apartheid was. I felt that I knew the true colour of Americans who claim to be the world's Super Power. They oppress people from other countries.*

The above conversation from Chattri's first interview reveals that Chattri's adoption of a feminist perspective marked the new phase of her changing ideology and the discovery of her new "self". In one way, it made her revise the set of values and beliefs she had adopted from her reading when she was a child, which came into conflict with the new set of beliefs with which she was identifying. In another sense, the idea of assertiveness and

protest against inequality that were features of feminist theory influenced Chattri's new identity formation. Chattri's identity brings to mind Elliot's (2001) argument: "identity is fluid, not fixed once and for all" (p.4). As Chattri stated in this interview, "*I felt that it was easy for me to find my own self*". Chattri's feminist identity informed her of her right to be assertive when the lecturer showed a sign of discriminating against her in his comment on her writing. In defiance, Chattri articulated her own voice:

> *Although I did not even have black skin, they still discriminated against me. Even my lecturer at the university said that my language was too neat. My writing was very correct in its structure. I can remember that I stood up and argued with my lecturer for the first time. I asked him, "How do you know that my English is the English translation of Thai? Do you know Thai?" My lecturer said sorry to me and accepted that he did not know the Thai language. But he felt that it might be my structure or my writing style that he did not agree with. I asked myself, "Do I have to be assertive?" I felt that I had to assert myself for my own right and my own being. I thought that I would not live my whole life in America. Yes, I like an education opportunity, freedom, good condition of life in America. But I didn't like anyone to look down on my human-being, my being Thai, or my skin colour.*

Chattri encountered the problem of the incongruity of her hybrid identity again when she returned to Thailand with her Western perspectives of self-assertiveness and aggression.

> *I returned to Thailand with Western perspectives. After I stayed in Thailand for a while, I realised that that was not me. I did not have to be that assertive. Why did I have to be like that? That was not me! My uncle liked to say that women were bad drivers. I argued with him, "How do women*

drive?" The reason why my uncle and others commented on me was not because they hated me. It was just because their perspectives were narrow. I started to feel that I had never argued like this before. I started to dislike myself. I realised that what I studied from America was not suitable for Thai society. It did not work with Thai society.

Chattri's reflections upon this incident led her to examine the suitability of the Western feminist ideology. Such a reflexive process involved pain and self-hatred. Chattri found that she was taking two ideologies that were totally mismatched. While being a Thai required her to respect her uncle by not arguing with him, the Westernised self told her not to be submissive to his comment about female drivers. Chattri became aware that the Western perspectives she had adopted when she was in America were distancing her from her Thai traditions and was not suitable for the Thai context. As she expressed in the interview: "*I realise that that was not me*".

This experience became a turning point for Chattri when she went America again to continue her doctoral study. She became interested in the works and theories of coloured writers, which gave her some perspectives she had overlooked when she did her master's study. More importantly, these works inspired her to go back to her experience of Thai culture and values.

While I did my PhD, I thought of Thailand all the time. I felt that I would never ever let Western theory lead me. I would not let Western theory guide my opinion. I would position myself at the centre. And I would consider what in those theories were compatible to me. In my PhD thesis, I wrote clearly that I would mix theories of both black people and white people and I would choose things that were useful to me and my texts. I started to find

> *my own self. I would never follow the West any more. I started to hate White people more. I hate the way they regard themselves as the leader.*

The self that Chattri recognised at this time is the self that entailed the concept of her "being Thai". Yet Chattri's identification of her self and her return to the sense of belonging to the motherland still shows the traces of the combination of internal and external perspectives (namely her Thai perspective and the perspective that she got from her study of theories of black and white people). At this stage, the hybridity of her identity achieved harmony in a more suitable blend of the sense of herself as a Thai woman and the foreign elements within herself, of which her sense of identification with Thai culture and values was given prominence over other aspects of her identity. It was at this point that Chattri found that this process of self-interpretation made her understand where her position as a Thai scholar who received Western education was. She traced her ongoing ideological formation and identity formation, and tried to make sense of her action and thinking. Elliot (2001) discusses the nature of the self in relation to self-interpretation as follows:

> The self … is constituted and refashioned through reference to a person's own understandings, opinions, stocks of knowledge, cognition and emotion. The self cannot be articulated independently of such practical knowledge or consciousness, since self-interpretation enters into fabrications of identity and the self in a chronic way. If it did not, the self could not survive or adapt to changes in the social world. (p. 5)

As I have been discussing throughout this thesis, the Western authors' metanarratives of Thailand have created a universal truth and fixed identity for Thais. The "self" in the metanarratives belongs to the West, and the label of "otherness" refers to Thailand and its

people. My textual politics of juxtaposing the minor narratives of my participants with the Western metanarratives in this chapter has done its work of deconstructing the rigid Western paradigm of Orientalist binaries. The Thai narratives have revealed that the participants are complex ideological beings who do not possess a fixed identity as has been represented in the metanarratives. They are active individuals rather than passive beings that are constructed by the Orientalists authors. Their narratives have shed light on their diverse character traits, their frustration and negotiation with what they (have) encountered, and their identity formation. The display of the minor narratives in this chapter retrieves the voices of the Thais which have been silenced in the metanarratives, and becomes a stage for the expression of the active Thai "self" which has been suppressed and constructed as the "other" in the Western representational discourse. This Thai "self" has its own past, present, and future which cannot be determined in advance because selfhood has intricately been formed from various types of contacts that an individual has rather than on the definite design of one person. I would like to conclude this chapter with one key characteristic of the self as described by Elliot (2001):

> [S]elfhood is personally created, interpretively elaborated, and interpersonally constructed. The self, however, is not only fashioned, as it were, from the inside out. In forging a sense of self, individuals routinely draw from social influences, and maintain their sense of self through cultural resources. Social practices, cultural conventions and political relations are a constitutive and colourful backdrop for the staging of human experience and the drawing of self-identity. But even this formulation is perhaps inadequate. The self is not simply 'influenced' by external world, since the self cannot be set apart from the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it is embedded. Social processes in part constitute, and so in a sense are internal to, the self. Neither internal nor

external frames of reference should be privileged; all forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical. (p. 6; emphasis in original)

Chapter 6

Thais and their Stories of Siam

6.1 Problematising a textualised Siam

6.1.1 The Worldliness of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*

In previous chapters, I have argued that Leonowens' text and its subsequent writings can be analysed as narrative texts which operate as Orientalist discourse. Locating *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* in the context of Orientalist writing helps open up the worldly circumstances out of which this representation of Siam as the Orient is made and exchanged. Through the stylistic devices she uses in her narrative, Leonowens' experience in Siam is transformed into an authoritative written account purporting to present knowledge about Siam. To understand this exchange of knowledge between Leonowens and her Western readers, Said's concept of "worldliness" is helpful.

According to Said (1983), a text has a material existence in the world. It is generative to read a text as a product of the circumstances that made it possible. There is a set of contingent and worldly circumstance or conditions, which can be referred to as a "discourse", from which came the writer's decision to write. Written texts (so-called "literary" texts are but one example of the range of texts that might be studied) are produced "in time and in society by human beings, who are themselves agents of, as well as somewhat independent actors within, their actual history" (p. 152). Texts are therefore the result of the author's engagement with the discourse that governs the author's worldview. By this means, texts themselves are always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society. Significantly, according to Said, as a product of a worldly discourse, texts in turn incorporate that particular discourse, and the discourse in effect places restraints on the readers' interpretation of the texts. Said explains this phenomenon as follows:

> … the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are considered as being incorporated in the text, an infrangible part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning. This means that a text has a specific situation, placing restraints upon the interpreter and his interpretation not because the situation is hidden within the text as a mystery, but rather because the situation exists at the same level of surface particularity as the textual object itself. There are many ways for conveying such a situation, but what I want to draw particular attention to here is an ambition … on the part of readers and writers to grasp texts as objects whose interpretation – by virtue of the exactness of their situation in the world – *has already commenced* and are objects already constrained by, and constraining, their interpretation. (p. 39; emphasis in original)

Said's explanation is relevant to *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*. As I have discussed earlier, Leonowens' production of this text is governed by the prevailing imperialist sentiment of nineteenth century Europe where she lived her life. In producing this text, Leonowens functions as an agent, enacting and facilitating Orientalist discourse – a discourse that enhances European imperialists' cultural power over the East. The themes of her writing have been drawn from the Western repertoires of knowledge about the Orient, and the way Siam is represented as the Oriental "other" is to underline Western supremacy. In this sense, Leonowens' text is discursively produced and embedded in the Orientalist discourse culture that produces it and circulates it. The discursive nature of its production makes *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* become an Orientalist text whose material existence, similar to what Said has told us, "has already commenced". To this extent, textualised Siam is the result of what Said (1978/1995) contends as "the

dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution" (p. 24).

The worldliness of this Orientalist text places restraints on its Western readers' interpretation, and hence the exchange of knowledge about Siam among the author and her readers. Orientalism (as a mode of thought) has established a mutual relationship between Leonowens and her Western readers in defining and interpreting the meaning of Siam on terms they share. In this Orientalist discourse, the meaning of textualised Siam is construed in a culturally specific way. The meaning is determined by a network of people (i.e. Leonowens and her Western readers) holding the same Orientalist ideology about what its means to be Siamese, including a judgment about their potential as human beings. Governed by Orientalism, the author and the Western readers mutually frame their attitude to Siam by referring to Orientalist repertoires of knowledge about the Oriental and then imposing that knowledge on Siam.

The reciprocity between the author's representational practice (as the producer of the text) and her Western readers' interpretive act (as the receivers of the text) is made understandable by what Said (1978/1995) calls a "textual attitude". This concept of textual attitude relates to the Orientalist texts' authority to create "not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (p.94). Said points out the two situations that enable this textual attitude to prevail. One of the situations, which is of concern to us here, is the situation when a human being confronts something unknown and threatening. In this case, one tends to rely on what books written about those things, especially travel books or guidebooks, say. Said's comment makes intelligible the reciprocal Orientalist perspective of Leonowens' Western readers. The fact that Leonowens and her readers hold the same universal value that is constructed within the text – in other words, they share a "textual attitude" – makes dynamic their exchange of the culturally-constructed meaning of the

"reality" of a textualised Siam. The exchange of the "reality" of Siam between the Orientalist author and her Western readers shows the power of representation among those who share the same Orientalist worldview. The text about Siam appears to be "real" within the discourse of Orientalism since this "reality" of the Oriental Siamese is made to happen by and within an Orientalist representation. Said warns us of the fallacy of textual attitudes. Said states that a textual attitude or an attitude to reality is attacked or satirised by Voltaire in *Candide* and Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. These writers believe that it is a fallacy to assume that one can understand the world in which human beings live on the basis of what books say. One cannot apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality.

6.1.2 Representational crisis: The problem of the "reality" of a textualised Siam

I am arguing here that the "reality" of a textualised Siam exists in the conception of a group of people who hold the same textual attitude to Siam. There is an exchange of communication between authors and readers, which results in the reciprocal articulation of, to use Hall's (1993) words, the "dominant or preferred meaning" of a textualised Siam. However, it is not always that all readers will extract the preferred meaning from their reading of the text, since they are not always subjected to the discourse of the dominant culture that produced the text.

I have been constructing another position from which to read Leonowens' text, as a reader who does not hold the same textual attitude as the author and her Western readers. To understand the nature of my resistance to this text, we have to pay attention to the text's intertextuality and the centring role of the reader in the act of reading as Barthes conceptualises it. In "The Death of the Author", Barthes (1977) sums up the intertextual construct of a text by declaring that a text is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash". In fact, the text is "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (p. 146). Here Barthes has

removed from the text the “Author-God” who is the source of the text’s ultimate meaning. He points up the text’s open status as a multiplicity of writing. By this means, the meaning of the text is no longer fixed, but its meaning is the product of the exchange between readers, who are variously constituted by multiple readings and intertextual relationships. Following Barthes, I conceptualise my work as a reader as a function of a space in which “all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed” (p. 148).

Now I would like to move one step further. That is, we should regard *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* as an open, unfinished text. To stress the text’s intertextuality is to conceptualise this text as still being made and inviting various kinds of interpretations from diverse groups of readers. What I mean here is that readers of different cultural backgrounds who are governed by discourses other than Orientalism can have different interpretations of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*. They may use a different standpoint as a reference for their interpretation. The emphasis on the intertextuality of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and its subsequent writings thus makes problematic the Orientalist representation of Siam in these texts, which in turn reveals the crisis of representation in the textual construction of Siam.

This representational crisis has a root cause in a symbolic struggle over the meaning of Siam between those who are locked up in the Orientalist ideology and Thai people who are outside the discursive domain of Orientalist culture. Within the textual space of Orientalist representation, the voices of those who are represented are displaced or refracted by the voice of the author, which remains authoritative. As a result, Thai readers often find themselves resisting the representation of Thai society in these Western texts, and questioning its “reality” (see Bristowe, 1976, p. 23; see Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987; see Smithies, 1995, p. 135). This shows the denial and challenge made by

those represented, who have attempted to make apparent the Thai voices that have been muted in the Orientalist textual space.

6.2 Textual politics of *A King of Siam Speaks*: A counter-discourse

In this section, my interest is in Thai authors who have enacted particular textual strategies to equip their readers with a new frame of reference for their interpretation of the story of King Mongkut. My intention to focus on Thai authors here is meant to reveal forms of counter-discourse developed by Thais to the Orientalist representation of Siam. One exemplar of the counter-discourse in the form of a textual politics is seen in *A King of Siam Speaks* (1948/1987), a book by Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj who are members of the Thai royal family. The Pramoj brothers are descendants of King Rama II, King Mongkut or Rama IV's father. They attended a boarding school in England where they later completed university study. With their excellent command of English, they aim to retrieve the voice of King Mongkut by means of authoring a book, *A King of Siam Speaks*. This English book comprises both King Mongkut's letters originally written in English and the authors' English translation of the King's letters where the letters were originally written in Thai. The book interweaves various texts that ultimately contribute to an intertextual display of Thai voices.

The title, *A King of Siam Speaks*, conveys the book's aim to dismantle Eurocentric assumptions about the Oriental Siamese and to signal the capacity of Thai people to articulate their own identity and values. According to MacLachlan and Reid (1994), the title is one of the circumtextual features of a book that frame the readers' interpretation of the text. Apart from serving this circumtextual function, the title also has an intertextual aspect. By giving the book this title, the authors also signal that the book can be read in relation to other books with similar titles. The title, *A King of Siam Speaks*, links the book with its prior texts: *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King of*

Siam, and *The King and I*. The relation that *A King of Siam Speaks* establishes with these texts is a strategic position of "writing/speaking back" (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989). The authors use this title to signal that they are making an attempt to dismantle the Orientalist representation in the Western texts that reduces King Monkut to merely an Oriental king. In other words, the title serves to introduce the whole book as a counter-discourse to the Western representation in texts about Siam which has silenced King Mongkut's voice. As the title suggests, now the Siamese king is speaking for himself.

The choice of language use is an intrinsic part of the textual politics of *A King of Siam Speaks*. The authors intentionally use English as a means of communication to introduce King Mongkut to contemporary readers. Using the English language, the authors manage to situate the King's letters within the world of readers of English, leaving them to judge the King's character by reflecting on his letters. This strategy presupposes that the King is able to speak in his own voice in the language of the "dominant" group, instead of being spoken for by others. When readers read the King's letters, it is as though they are listening to him speaking. This strategy brings to mind Bakhtin's remark that "every literary work *faces outward away from itself*, toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reaction to itself" (1981, p. 257; emphasis in original). English, which is the medium of power in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King of Siam*, and *The King and I,* is seized and appropriated by the authors of *A King of Siam Speaks*. This strategy effectively repositions the once marginalised King Monkut of Orientalist discourse at the centre of the book, speaking back in "English" and justifying himself to the Western world. English as the language of the centre has now undergone a process of what Ashcroft et al. (1989) term the postcolonial "appropriation" – the process by which the language is taken and made to bear the burden of colonised people's cultural experience. The language of the master is adopted as a tool and utilised to express widely differing cultural experiences of the colonised. Here English is used to

show readers the tensions that Thais experience when they strive to define and represent themselves.

Together with the title, other circumtextual elements of the book, namely the Preface by Subhadradis Diskul (King Mongkut's grandson), Acknowledgements by Patanachai Jayant (the President of The Siam Society that published the book), an introduction to each part of the book by the authors, and Notes and Appendix by Thai editorial staff, all contribute to the dialogical and polyphonic quality of the book as opposed to the monological and authoritative character of Western representational discourse. Obviously, the multiplicity of the voices in *A King of Siam Speaks* makes the book a vehicle for Thais to speak for themselves. Henceforth, I will selectively discuss aspects of the many-voicedness conveyed by the book.

In the Preface, readers can hear the voice of Subhadradis Diskul introducing the authors and the book. From the start, the writer of the preface introduces the two authors as Thai scholars and renowned figures of Thailand.

> The writer of this preface is honoured to have been invited by the Chairman of the Publications Committee of the Siam Society, Mr. Kaset Pitakpaivan, to write the preface to this book by the two scholarly brothers and former Prime Ministers of Thailand, M.R. Seni and M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. Both of them are remarkably versatile. The former is a lawyer, politician, artist and musician whereas the latter is a banker, politician, artist in many branches (especially in the performing arts), writer and journalist. They were educated in England. (Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987, n.p.)

It should be noted that the abbreviation, "M.R." stands for *Mom Rajawong*, which shows a rank in the royal family.

The clarification of the importance of the two authors in Thai society by Diskul reinforces the authors' legitimacy in subverting the power/knowledge discursive structure of the Orientalist representation of Siam. As discussed earlier, in the Orientalist representation, Anna Leonowens justifies her authority to speak for the Siamese by stressing that she has lived in Siam for years, and thus has expertise on the subject of Siam. The way Diskul addresses the authors in the preface signals a major break with the West's Orientalist discourse. It displays the power struggles in which Thais have engaged over whose version of the story of Siam is sanctioned. The knowledge about Siam offered by Pramoj and Pramoj is institutionalised by the fact that the authors of the book are "remarkably versatile". Apart from being Thai and being members of the royal family, their careers as Thai Prime Ministers, as well as their expertise in other fields, makes them distinguished and reliable sources of information.

Furthermore, Diskul guides readers to compare the story of King Mongkut by Pramoj and Pramoj with that of the Western authors when he declares: "The two authors in producing this book were trying to portray to the world King Mongkut's real character in contrast to that figuring in the popular book 'The King and I' and the musical movie and play of the same name" (ibid.). This attempt to establish an intertextual relationship between *A King of Siam Speaks* and *The King and I* is meant to invite readers to use a new frame of reference to interpret the story of Siam by associating the Thai version by Pramoj and Pramoj with the Western versions. Doing this, the Western story of Siam is incorporated in the Thai story of Siam when readers reframe the Western story with a new frame of reference they get from reading *A King of Siam Speaks*. This strategy becomes more pertinent when readers are further informed about King Mongkut's character as having been formed

through his being a monk for nearly three decades and the danger of imperialism that Siam in the nineteenth century was facing. As Diskul puts it, this information will help readers gain a new insight into the story of King Mongkut:

> Those who read this book will understand and appreciate, I hope, the real character of the king who had been a Buddhist monk for 27 years before his accession to the throne. His real love for the country and his subjects can be clearly felt. The king was meticulous in everything and if one would think about the danger of Western colonisation during his period, one would understand quite well his prudence and great care to maintain the independence of his country as well as to modernise it with the latest Western technology. (ibid.)

The conclusion to this preface shows that the writer wishes to resist and challenge the Western representation of King Mongkut. Diskul strongly expresses his feeling towards his royal grandfather when he writes, “The love for his family, especially his children, can be easily perceived. The writer of this preface feels extremely proud to be one of his many descendants” (ibid.). The expression of his pride marks the gap, contradiction, and inconsistency of the Western representation of King Mongkut as a tyrannical king and a hateful father. The verb phrase, “feels extremely proud”, and the noun phrase, “one of his many descendants”, destabilise the discursive practice of Orientalist meaning-making of the Siamese. King Mongkut’s children and wives are portrayed in the Western texts as being oppressed and unhappy, and in need of salvation by Anna. Diskul contrasts this Western representation with his own version as a proud descendant. As a later generation of the King’s many descendants, Diskul shows his great respect for his grandfather and feels grateful for the many good things his grandfather did for the Siamese people. Diskul positions himself as an insider who is speaking from the inside. In doing this, Diskul

reinscribes his own agency as a speaking subject. The voices of the King's children that were silenced and spoken for in Leonowens' text and its subsequent writings are now heard. A Thai voice is recovered. By and large, this preface is a counter-hegemonic text within a larger text that challenges Orientalist knowledge about other cultures. Moreover, the fact that this preface is an introduction to the main text makes it a good preparation for readers to engage with the complexity of a Siamese king named Mongkut, and the complicated social circumstances of his time.

Another crucial circumtextual element contributing to the counter-hegemonic discourse is an introduction to each part of the book by Pramoj and Pramoj, the authors. Pramoj and Pramoj divide their book into three major parts: Book I (Contemplation), Book II (Application), and Book III (Destination). Each part is further subcategorised as is described in Diskul's Preface:

> Book I, Contemplation, describes the life of King Mongkut as well as the environment of Siam or Thailand during his time. Some of the king's English letters to his American friends are also included. Book II is described as the Application. It is divided into three parts: Legislation, Diplomacy, and Domestic and private. They contain the English letters of the king as well as the translation into English of the king's letters by the two authors. Each part begins with an introduction by the learned authors. (ibid.)

By dividing the book as such, the two authors introduce to readers many aspects of the King's personal and state affairs. The authors use an introduction to each part of the book to articulate a Thai version of King Mongkut's story. The following is an example from the

introduction to Book I. The first section of this introduction expresses the King's biography and the authors' response to the Western representation of the King:

> On the 17th October 1804 there was born in Bangkok, Siam, a King who has been acknowledged great, according to Siam's way of accounting for greatness; the King who was known to his subjects as Phra Baht Somdech Phra Paramendr Maha Mongkut Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua, and who, when writing to foreign friends, took delight in adding to his style and titles the Latin appendage Rex Siamensium. This was the same King who, by the combined efforts of a Victorian English governess and the wife of a modern American missionary, became known to the western world as a barbaric oriental monarch of an interesting if somewhat doubtful character, by the name of King Mongkut, not Rex Siamensium but Rex Harrison, after Hollywood had crowned the efforts of the two good ladies with the supreme favour of a super-production. King Mongkut was a grandson of King Rama I, the founder of the present Royal House of Siam, the Chakri Dynasty. He was the son of King Rama II, who came to the throne in 1809 and whose name will always be remembered as one of the greatest Siam's poets. It was perhaps the intention of Rama II that the young Prince Mongkut, who was the eldest son born of his chief Queen, Srisuriyendra, should be the one to occupy the throne after his death, and it was perhaps due to this intention that during the fifteenth years of his reign he had bestowed on the young prince all the ranks and honours usually associated with the Heir Apparent. (p. 1)

This introduction is an opening dialogue the authors establish with their readers and the prior Western texts about Siam. The authors in Book I begin the story of King Mongkut from his birth date, his early education in the royal palace, his Buddhist priesthood, his modest behaviour with commoners, and his acquaintance with Westerners and Western ideas of progress. A chronological narrative is employed to introduce the readers to the amiable and agreeable King Mongkut. Noticeably, the phrase, "according to Siam's way of accounting for greatness", at the very beginning of this introduction indicates the point of departure from the Western representation of King Mongkut that the authors of *A King of Siam Speaks* make when recounting his biography. It effectively signals the dialogue the authors create with the Western texts by showing their denial of the Orientalist representation of the King in those texts. This refusal of the Orientalist meaning of the King can be regarded as what Ashcroft et al. (1989) call the postcolonial "abrogation" or the refusal of the fixed meaning of the imperial representation and imposition of imperial culture. In the authors' introduction to each part of the book, the denial of the Western representations of the King can be sensed through the juxtapositions implied. The juxtaposition is not in the form of explicitly positioning the Western story together with the Thai story, but by the reader's making reference to the Western story when reading the Thai story. By this means, the Thai and Western stories are juxtaposed in the readers' mind in order to make them reflect upon the stories and inquire about which story should be privileged.

As the above excerpt illustrates, Pramoj and Pramoj direct their readers' attention to the Western stories of King Mongkut by Leonowens (a Victorian English governess) and Landon (the wife of a modern American missionary). These stories of the King inspired a dramatic film directed by John Cromwell, *Anna and the King of Siam*. Talbot Jennings and Sally Benson adapted Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* into a screenplay for this film. It starred Rex Harrison as King Mongkut and Irene Dunne as Anna. This film was made in

1946, and two years later Pramoj and Pramoj wrote *A King of Siam Speaks* (1948) as a speaking back to the film and to Leonowens and Landon. (It must be noted that this 1946 film was made before the well-known stage play, *The King and I*, which was first performed in Broadway in 1951.) The two authors' intention to speak back is seen from their reference to King Mongkut's Latin appendage to his title, "Rex Siamensium" in comparison to "Rex Harrison", the name of the movie star in the 1946 film. By doing this, the authors ironically emphasise that the name "King Mongkut" used by the Western writers is more widely known amongst Westerners than the name actually used by the King himself when corresponding with his foreign friends. The authors thus proceed to develop a counter-narrative that disrupts the fixity of Western representations of the King in the Western texts. They challenge the impression of the King's "doubtful character" associated with the name "King Mongkut" by juxtaposing it with his other name recognised by Thai citizens, "Phra Baht Somdech Phra Paramendr Maha Mongkut Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua". The mention of the names, "Rex Siamensium" and "Phra Baht Somdech Phra Paramendr Maha Mongkut Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua", which are new to the readers, is meant to introduce them to "another" King Mongkut whose character is different from the familiar picture they get from the Western texts. Pramoj and Pramoj thus aim to signal the contradictions between the actual King Mongkut and his "fictitious" character as represented in the Western representational discourse. These contradictions emerge for readers as they proceed with their reading. Doing all these things, Pramoj and Pramoj deconstruct the Western stereotypical representations of the King that marginalise and exclude his positive and distinctive characteristics, and they introduce readers to a far more heterogeneous and multifaceted character.

The introduction by Pramoj and Pramoj concerning the names of King Mongkut prepares the readers to explore more of the other names of the King, especially those in his original English letters to American friends. The following is an excerpt from the letter to G.W.

Eddy written by Mongkut at the time when he was a prince monk before he was crowned a king.

> The names by which the common people of Siam call me are "Thun Kramom Fa Yai" and "Chau Fa Yai." By these two names I find I am generally known in foreign countries. The former is a title expressive of great respect, and is chiefly used by those who are, in law and custom, my inferiors and dependents; as younger brothers and sisters, children, servants and people. The latter is used by those who are nominally my superiors as those who do not feel themselves particularly dependent on me or accountable to me. The word "Thun" means to put in a high place: "Kramom" is the middle of the top or crown of the head: "Chau" corresponds to the English word Lord, or the Latin Dominus: "Fa" is sky: but when used in a person's name, it is merely an adjective of exaltation, and is equivalent to the phrase "as high as the sky". The remaining word "Yai" means great, or elder; and I am so called to distinguish me from my brother who is younger than I.
>
> But the name which my father, who preceded His Majesty the present King of Siam, gave me and caused to be engraved in a plate of Gold is "Chau Fa Mongkut Sammatt Wongs." Only the first three of these words, however, are commonly used in Public Documents at the present time. "Mongkut" means Crown. The name "Chau Fa Mongkut" means "The High Prince of the Crown" or "His Royal Highness the Crown Prince". I prefer that my friends, when they write me letters, or send parcels to me, will use this name, with the letter "T.Y." prefixed as being that by which I am known in the Laws and Public Documents of Siam.

> But some of my friends at Ceylon who are Mugadhists, have called my name "Wajiraneano" which my Preceptor had given me to be used in Budhism [sic]: it means thus "he has lightness of skill like a diamond." Therefore the Singalese generally address me thus "Makuto Wajiraneano Thero." "Makuto" is changed from a Siamese name to mugadhism; "Thero" is a term for Chief Priest who are [sic] venerable in religious knowledge. (Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987, pp. 12-13)

The content of this letter contains an explanation of Prince Mongkut's various names as he is addressed by different groups of people. The use of each name has its purpose. The names, "Thun Kramom Fa Yai" and "Chau Fa Yai", indicate the social status of the prince and those with whom he has conversations. The other name, "Chau Fa Mongkut Sammatt Wongs" or "Chau Fa Mongkut" was recognised in Public Documents. The prince also showed his preference of the use of the name, "T.Y. Chau Fa Mongkut", by his foreign friends. The names, "Wajiraneano" and "Makuto Wajiraneano Thero" are his religious names used among his priesthood fellows. The significance of these names revolves around the complexities of the prince's social status in Siamese society and his cultural identity.

Identity is not a thing that exists that can be established once and for all. Barker (2003) argues that identity is rather discursively constructed, that it is the product of discourses or regulated ways of speaking about the world (p. 11). However, we can understand and make sense of a person's identity through various representations, in which language and meaning-making play an important role. Identity can take a narrative form when people tell stories about what someone has done (p. 220). With respect to Mongkut's letter above, we can see that each of his names carries with it its own definition, which is the description of his characteristics in the various social circles with which he identifies himself. These

names are a means of his self-identification and social identification. They show how Mongkut invested himself in his role as the prince, the superior (to his younger siblings and dependents), the inferior (to those who were not his dependents), the friend (of foreign comrades), and the Buddhist monk. Here language plays a role as the resource that forms the material for Mongkut's identity formation, which needs to be seen as a process. Jenkins (2004) draws our attention to the concept of identity as a process of becoming, not a fixed entity:

> [I]dentity can *only* be understood as process, as 'being' or 'becoming'. One's identity – one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular *and* plural – is never a final or settled matter. Not even death freezes the picture: identity or reputation can be reassessed, and some identities – sainthood or martyrdom, for example – can only be achieved beyond the grave. … 'Identity' contines [*sic*] to have its uses, therefore, as long as we remember that it always implies 'identification'. 'It' is *not* a 'thing'. … Identity is a matter of knowing who's who (without which we can't know what's what). It is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference. … Identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). The outcome of agreement and disagreement, at least in principle always negotiable, identity is not fixed. (p. 5; emphasis in original)

Considering Mongkut in the letter as a speaking subject who narrates the story of his becoming "self", we can see that Mongkut's identity is shifting. The way he perceives himself via each of his names as shown in the letter reveals that his identity is not a fixed,

natural state of being, but a process of becoming. In his narration, Mongkut takes up a set of shifting subject positions. While talking about his names, Mongkut is aware of the various aspects of his social life and interaction he has with others. The awareness of his subjectivity by Mongkut himself and by others is both socially and discursively determined. In the Foucauldian version of a speaking subject, to speak means that the person is subjected to the regulatory power of the discourse that enables him or her to speak (Barker, 2003, p. 229). The work of discourse in this specific social context of Siam is seen from the fact that names carry meaningful definitions and specify the types of social interaction required when the owner interacts with others. The cultural practice of attaching meanings to the names is social in character. As seen in Mongkut's explanation of the names, "Thun Kramom Fa Yai" and "Chau Fa Yai", all words combined are loaded with cultural meanings specific to the discourse of royalty operating in Siamese society. The name as a whole indicates what it means to be a prince of a very high social rank in Siam and, therefore, dictates the types of social interaction between Mongkut and others, which is governed by the discourse in which Mongkut operated.

In addition, Mongkut's cultural identity as revealed through the use of the word "Yai" in the above names involves difference. This word tells how he as an individual is different from others. Its definition signifies his individual character and differentiates him from his younger brother: "The remaining word 'Yai' means great, or elder; and I am so called to distinguish me from my brother who is younger than I". Here I have been discussing that a name can be a marker of a person's identity. To call a person by name, particularly as in the case of Mongkut, is to use language to tell what it means to be a person and to distinguish him from others. Importantly, we cannot assume that a person is a unified whole. His or her identity is not fixed; it is changeable according to time, place, usage, or cultural contexts. As Hall (1992) points out, "[t]he subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are

contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about" (p. 277).

In contrast to the multiple subject positions of Mongkut revealed through the use of his names in diverse situations in the above letter, the name, "King Mongkut", in the Western texts refers to a fixed identity of a typical Oriental ruler. "Mongkut" as a name fits within the generic definition of a king who is cruel, lustful, arrogant, barbaric, and tyrannical. The name, "King Mongkut", in the Orientalist representation is employed as a mechanism for reducing what should have been regarded as heterogeneous and multidimensional characteristics to be some stable, essential characteristics presumed to belong to every member of the category called the "Oriental". Essentialising obscures the range of characteristics possessed by Mongkut as an individual and conceals the differences between him and others. Mongkut's letter reveals that his cultural identity is shifting, and the meaning of the name "Mongkut", especially when attached to other words, such as "Chau Fa" or when translated into religious names, such as "Makuto Wajiraneano Thero", is unstable when compared to the fixity of the Western meaning of the name "Mongkut". Hall (1997) is right when he says that in cultural representations, "meaning can never be finally fixed" (p. 274). Prince Mongkut in the letter to G.W. Eddy shows his friend how he gives meaning to his names and describes himself to others, how he recognises the values attached to his names when addressed by others, and how each name carries meaning to him and his interlocutors.

Readers who have read Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* may recognise Pramoj and Pramoj's intention of juxtaposing their introduction, beginning with the King's birth date, with Leonowens' autobiographic/ethnographic record, starting with the date and place. Leonowens begins her record of Siam with the arrival scene traditionally used in ethnographic and travel writings. She marks her journey to Siam with

the date: “MARCH 15, 1862. – On board the small Siamese steamer Chow Phya, in the Gulf of Siam” (Leonowens, 1870, p. 1). The picture we get is that of Anna arriving in Siam and communicating information about Siam to her readers. This gives us a sense of an outsider who is starting to become an inside informant. Compared to Leonowens’ writing technique, Pramoj and Pramoj offer their story of King Mongkut as something they are narrating from a biographical and historical perspective. Their reference to the King’s date of birth at the very beginning of the introduction is to create his biography, which is presented in the form of a historical narrative. The use of the date, “17th October 1804”, is meant to be an indicator of a specific time in the historical past. The story of King Mongkut starts with the time when he was born. There is the use of such narrative structures as plot (consisting of beginning, middle, and end) and the narrative voices of the authors. The authors start with his birth date and end with his death. The following is the end of the introduction of the book’s last section which narrates the death of the King. Reading the whole book and reaching this last part, readers will know Mongkut from the first day of his life and will learn about his character development throughout his lifetime.

> After an illness lasting over a fortnight, King Mongkut died on his birthday on the night of the full moon of the 11th month, leaving behind him a sorrowful people and a sick son, Prince Chulalongkorn, then aged sixteenth [*sic*], to succeed him on the throne. When the King’s death was announced in Bangkok, a grief-stricken cry went up from the people that could be heard outside the city walls. One contemporary writer noted that the people wept not at the death of a mighty monarch, they wept not at the loss of a just ruler, but they wept bitterly and without restraint at the passing away of a man whose life was full of goodness and benevolence, a personal friend whom they best loved and whose last thoughts were for their welfare. (Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987, p. 224)

Within the narrative structure established at the beginning, the authors can develop the story of the King logically and coherently. Readers are provided with a new frame of reference that can grasp the full picture of King Mongkut as he is regarded by Thai people, as a beloved king whom they regard as being humane and whom they honour for his "goodness and benevolence".

Pramoj and Pramoj's use of narration in their historical account of Siam in the reign of King Mongkut is an antidote to Leonowens' autobiographic/ethnographic account of Siam that creates the sense of her being there, thus ascribing an Orientalist meaning to the Siamese. Pramoj and Pramoj present a historical narrative to tell a story about the past and, to use White's (1980) description of historical narrative, to "make the world speak itself and speak itself *as a story*" (p. 7; emphasis in original). The use of a historical narrative helps the readers understand the development of King Mongkut's character and construct in their mind his amiable personality, not his egotism as portrayed in the Western versions. As White suggests, the value attached to narrativity in the representation of reality arises out of "a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (p. 27). When readers proceed to read the King's letters, notifications, proclamations, and court circulars, they are being invited to engage in historical interpretation of this significant figure. Pramoj and Pramoj (1948/1987) in the first introduction state: "How well King Mongkut fulfilled his duties as king and layman the reader will find in the following pages. It is the intention of the translators of King Mongkut's works to let the King of Siam speak for himself" (p. 10). In line with the authors of *A King of Siam Speaks*, I would like to invite my readers to read a court circular entitled "Permitting Twelve Ladies to Resign". After reading it, I would then like to ask the following questions to my readers: "Was King Mongkut of Siam a tyrant to his people, and a detestable and unreasonable husband and father to his wives and

children?" "Is he the same Mongkut as is portrayed in those Western stories?". Here is that court circular:

> By Royal Command, Whereas by a previous Proclamation ladies of the Inner Palace, irrespective of youth or maturity, excepting only Mother Consorts, are, by Royal Permit, entitled to exercise their choice to resign of their own accord or at the request of their parents, free from any restraint of detention being practised upon them as was the old custom.
>
> Wherefore, in this Year of the Horse, being the completing year of the Decade, twelve Ladies have been granted leave to resign by Royal Permit without the benefit of the grant of annuities, as follows:
>
> 1. Puek, daughter of Phraya Prachachib (Kot), age 38.
> 2. Saeng, daughter of Phraya Pejda (Noi), age 39.
> 3. Hoon, daughter of Phra Loetai, age 23.
> 4. Tad, daughter of Nai Sri, Royal Page, age 37.
>
> The four ladies above referred to entered the Service in the reign of His Majesty, King Phra Nang Klao. The two first named were promoted to the rank of Lady Consort attached to the Royal Bed Chamber. The third lady remained without any special assignment. The fourth lady served as one of the Miladies of the Lamp. In the present Reign the first two were moved down to serve as Miladies of the Lamp and Tha Service. The third lady was moved up to the Royal Bed Chamber, whilst the fourth remained in her former post. The fourth having expressed her wishes to seek physical and spiritual comfort outside the Royal Palace, was granted leave to resign.
>
> 1. Liam, daughter of Phraya Rajbhakdi Sriratana Rajsompati age 21.
> 2. Poom, daughter of Phraya Prachachib (Kratai) age 16.

3. Klib, daughter of Phraya Prachachib (Kratai) age 15.

4. Sangwal, daughter of Phra Rajsompati age 18.

5. Prig, daughter of Luang Udom Chinda age 16.

6. Liam, daughter of Luang Udhaya Nadhikorn age 15.

7. Sarapi, daughter of the late Khun Burindr age 15.

8. Pun, daughter of Khun Chamnan Kadi age 15.

The eight ladies referred to above entered the Service in the present Reign. The first lady served as Milady of the Royal Sword, but had to resign on being stricken with a nervous break-down. The second and third ladies entered the Service after the death of their father for the purpose of getting a larger share in the inheritance of the deceased for reason of having entered into His Majesty’s Service. Having been awarded their duly increased shares of the inheritance, they resigned. The rest on the list are gifted dancers. A difference of opinion arose with regard to the fourth and fifth ladies. Their fathers wanted them to remain in the Service, but their mother and the ladies themselves decided in favour of resignation. Wherefore, His Majesty gave them leave to resign. The sixth lady was much feared in the Palace for her dangerous eye and ear. After a quarrel she was permitted to resign on the approval of her parents. As for the seventh on the list, the lady was possessed of a doubtful beauty. Her mannerism was altogether over-cultivated. Considering that she might be desirable in the eye of someone who desired her, His Majesty graciously granted her leave to resign. The eighth and last lady on the list was afflicted with the malady of a fast hand, and having been found by responsible persons in the Palace to be untrustworthy with valuables and such like, was advised to resign from the Service.

> The twelve ladies above referred to have now resigned from the Palace and are wholly free to pledge their service to any prince or noble. Should there be any such prince or noble who would get married with them with the consent of their parents, His Majesty would gladly and sincerely congratulate them. That a man should be free to choose a woman of his heart's desire as his wife is the wish of His Majesty, and His Majesty would rejoice if the satisfaction of any such man might be shared by any of the ladies who recently resigned. His Majesty might have gone one step further by graciously giving the said ladies away in marriage, had it not been for the consideration that he might have erred in his selection to the dismay of the parties concerned. Wherefore, the present middle course has been adopted in the hope that the honour and liberality of His Majesty will be firmly established in the newly founded custom.
>
> Given on Monday, the 1st of the Waxing Moon of the First Month in the Year of the Horse, the completing year of the Decade, being the 2724nd day in the Present Reign.
>
> Lady Aab,
>
> Bearer of Royal Command
>
> (Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987, pp. 201-203)

6.3 An interpretive community of Silpakorn University students

This section will present another type of counter-discourse to the Orientalist representation of Siam. This counter-discourse emerged in the course of group discussions, involving a group of Thai readers who read and interpreted the Orientalist text by Leonowens and its subsequent texts. This group of Thai readers comprises ten fourth year students at the Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. They are Bow, Belle, Ida, Kanda, Mink, Nari, Nunda, Pam, Pink, and Pooh. All names appearing here are

pseudonyms to protect the students' identity. When I interviewed them, they were all enrolled in the subject, S*elected British and American Novels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, that I taught. The age group of these students at the time of data collection (2004) ranged between 21 and 22 years of age. Most of them were originally from Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. The rest were from other provinces: Ida was born in Cholburi and grew up in Roi Et, Nunda in Khon Kaen, and Mink in Nakhorn Sawan. All of them majored in English. They all minored in History, with the exceptions of Mink, who was in Art History, Pooh who was doing Museum Studies, and Nunda, who was studying French.

During my data collection, I went back to my university, Silpakorn, and taught this group of students who volunteered to be my participants. I thus took a role of both a researcher and an educator. In my class, I introduced the students to an excerpt from Edwards Said's *Orientalism*. I purposefully assigned them to read colonial texts side by side with postcolonial texts, hoping that they would realise and absorb some postcolonial strategies and Said's way of criticising Orientalist representations of the Orient. To be more specific, in class, I assigned my students to read excerpts from Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*. The students also watched the films, *The King and I* and *Anna and the King*. Apart from these, they had to read other literary texts concerning issues in colonialism and postcolonialism, namely Orwell's short stories and novel ("A Hanging", "Shooting an Elephant", and *Burmese Days*), Kipling's short story ("Beyond the Pale"), and Chinua Achebe's novel (*Things Fall Apart*). I expected that my students would employ Said's theory as an alternative approach to their worldview of Thai nationalism in order to interpret the Western texts about Thailand and Asia.

As a researcher who was researching my own classroom, I managed to solicit a sense of my students' viewpoints about these texts by holding focus group discussions outside the classroom. My student participants all agreed to use Thai as the language of discussion because it was easy for them to communicate ideas in Thai, their mother tongue. I then translated their conversation into English. In contrast to the discursive world of Leonowens' implied reader, I found that these students interpreted the assigned reading texts and films about Siam within another framework. Their discussions highlight the importance of discourse as signifying a shared agreement or understanding that forms a reference point for a community of readers who deploy it as a particular interpretive strategy in their reading. In postulating this community of readers, I am drawing heavily on the notion of "interpretive communities" as put forward by Fish. Fish (1976) defines interpretive communities as being "made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intention" (p. 483). By referring to interpretation as writing or text making, Fish (1976, 1980) contends that the meaning of a text is not fixed within it, as something to be extracted from it. Meanings are multiple as they are determined by a particular set of interpretive strategies employed by members of interpretive communities. A group of individuals who share the same interpretive frame will thus tend to read texts in a similar manner. In this sense, a reader or readers who deploy some other strategy or strategies in interpreting the same texts that reflects the values of a different community will approach the text differently. It should also be noted that a reader can be a member of one or more communities depending on the interpretive strategies he or she deploys.

As an interpretive community, individual Silpakorn students of this group made meaning in their exchanges with the Orientalist texts in a manner that reflected the values and beliefs they shared. They framed their approach by using particular interpretive strategies deriving from their shared situation as Thai students who were completing a university

degree, as well as drawing on their shared cultural meanings and practices. As a result, their interpretation diverged markedly from the values and beliefs implied by the texts and from those of Western readers. This aspect of Silpakorn students' engagement with the texts underlines the unstable condition of the Orientalist representation and meaning-making. Outside the domain of Orientalist discourse, meaning-making is no longer under the control of the text's authority or the discourse governing its production. Instead, meaning-making is transferred to a community of Silpakorn students whose interpretive frame is influenced by a different discourse from that of Orientalist readers. Fish (1976) writes:

> [M]eanings are not extracted but made and made not by encoded forms but by interpretive strategies that call forms into being. It follows then that what utterers do is give hearers and readers the opportunity to make meanings (and texts) by inviting them to put into execution a set of strategies. It is presumed that the invitation will be recognized, and that presumption rests on a projection on the part of a speaker or author of the moves *he* would make if confronted by the sounds or marks he is uttering or setting down. (p. 485; emphasis in original)

Power structures mediated the way this interpretive community of Silpakorn students responded to the Orientalist texts. Their discussions voice the conflict and opposition that they as a socially situated group of individuals experience when they grapple with such texts. Their interpretation is concerned with the contestation over the meanings of the representation of Thai elements in the texts. By analysing their discourse, I will trace a tension between their values and beliefs and the values and beliefs implied by the texts. I shall trace the lines of their resistance to these texts, and identify their position as "resistant readers".

6.4 Reflecting upon the stories of Siam: The contested site of Thai history writing and Thai nationalism

For my classroom, I assigned Orientalist texts and films about Thailand consisting of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King of Siam*, *The King and I*, and *Anna and the King* to my students. They deal directly with Siam or Thailand in the past. I chose them because I wanted to learn about my students' attitudes after they had a chance to experience these Western representations of Siam. As their teacher, I was interested to gauge the extent to which they had appropriated the concept of Orientalism – this had been discussed in class at the beginning of the semester, and I wondered whether it would now provide a frame of reference for their reading of the texts I assigned. I recorded this curiosity of mine in my reflective journal dated 3 June 2004 where my expectation and feeling towards my classroom are reflected:

> In my introduction, I taught my students the nineteenth century imperialism as a social background for literature produced at that time and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (hoping that they would use it as a critical way to interpret the colonial texts). Most students were still confused of what Orientalist representation is and they seemed not to pay their interest in it. However, one student asked me to clarify the word, "Imperialism". The other student asked me if the binary opposition is an example of Oreintalist discourse or Western representation of the East. At first, I did not expect that students would have any question about my lecture. I had thought that Thai students were passive learners. I was encouraged a little bit when I got this rare occasion. At least, there were some students participating in my lecture. I didn't want to be the only one who spoke in class. Yet I still wondered whether my students would use Said's concept of Orientalism as an approach to the texts they had to read in my class.

When I reflected upon this expectation later, I got quite a disappointing answer to my question that I asked in my reflective journal. I found that my students' attempt to understand and make sense of the very new concepts of Orientalism, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism by asking me to explain more about "Imperialism" and "binary opposition" was superficial. Despite their eagerness to learn these concepts, they still did not see the benefit of using them to frame their understanding of the assigned reading texts. Their group discussions, which I conducted outside the classroom, revealed that when it came to the story of Siam, these students employed different interpretive frames from those that I had introduced in order to interpret the texts. Instead, I was able to get a sense of fact/fiction dichotomy from my students' discussions and their denial of the author's authority as in the following dialogue I have drawn from the second student group discussion:

> **Belle**: *In my high school, my teacher told me that there was a farang who wrote a novel. That woman wrote that King Mongkut loved her.*
>
> **Bow**: *At first, I thought it was a story about sex.*
>
> **Pam**: *I thought it had to be an exotic story because it is written by a farang.*
>
> **Mink**: *It had to be a romance like other translated romantic novels sold in Thailand.*

These students were talking about Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*. Belle started the conversation by recalling the time when she first heard this story about Siam. She emphasised that its author was a *farang*. Then her friends, Bow, Pam and Mink, joined her in expressing their opinions. From their conversation, I can trace a sense of the different versions of the story about Siam. The students' identification of the author as a *farang* – a Thai word employed to refer to a Caucasian foreigner – is an indicator of the differences between their perspective and the values and beliefs implied by

Leonowens' text about Siam. Together with this reference, the fact that Belle purposefully avoided mentioning the name of Anna Leonowens as the author of this Western version of King Mongkut's story and used instead the noun phrase, "that woman", shows her denial of this foreign author's authority in telling this story, which, for Belle and her friends, was a story about their country and their king.

The denial of Leonowens' authority is also linked with the students' association of her story with the genre of fiction: "a novel", "an exotic story", and "a romance". As in Belle's case, this story by a *farang* was equivalent to a novel which did not contain the historical facts about King Mongkut. The words, "a novel", "an exotic story", and "a romance", used by the students to refer to Leonowens' story shows that they did not grant it status as a reflection of reality. That is to say, this interpretive community of Thai students did not see the account of Siam by Leonowens as an accurate record of what happened in Thai history. Belle rejected the historical content of the story when she skeptically remarked, "*That woman wrote that King Mongkut loved her*". For Belle, this romantic love did not at all take place in the history of Thailand. The fictional element of the story was stressed for one more time when Mink associated the story with "a romance" and then compared it to "*other translated romantic novels sold in Thailand*". By this means, the reliability of Leonowens' story of Thailand was questioned and disrupted.

The issue of credibility of this foreigner's story reinforces differences between the story of Siam by Thais (or as known by Thais) and that by foreigners. This community of Thai students was positioning the West, Westerners, and a Western story as being opposite to their understandings of Thailand. They saw themselves as a collective group of Thais living in an "imagined" space called Thailand, in Anderson's (1983/1991) sense. They felt dissatisfied with the "incorrect" and "distorted" historical information in Leonowens' story. At odds with this Western version of Thailand, they were aroused by the feeling that

the imagined geography of their homeland was being trespassed upon by Orientalist writers like Leonowens. They reacted against this penetration by creating a binary opposition of a historical fact as known by Thais and a fictional story as written and known by foreigners. Power was exercised in their ability to create the binaries: Thai/*farang* and fact/fiction, where "Thai" is equal to a historical fact and "*farang*" to a fictional story. With these binaries, they privileged a Thai version of what they considered as the "correct" Thai historical events, and began to emphasise the "un-Thai" elements in the Western story.

Winichakul (1995/2004) calls the way ethnic peoples define themselves in terms of the differences among ethnic groups as "negative identification". The signification of negative identification is to stress its opposite, which, in this case, is the positive definition of Thainess. As Winichakul argues, "Once the un-Thainess can be identified, its opposite, Thainess, is apparent" (p. 5). This differentiation between being Thai and un-Thai made by my students gave them, as Thais, authority and power to scrutinise any story of Siam told by foreigners and to assert their right to discuss Thai elements in these stories. This is similar to what Winichakul points out:

> Thai people, scholars or not, have always been warned not to *tamkon farang* ("tag along behind the Westerners"). For them, Thainess, Thailand, Thai people, Thai studies, or whatever Thai, is something the *farang* can approach but never reach with the utmost intimacy that Thai people can. This Thainess is what Thai people belong to and are part of. In another sense, it is what belongs to them and is a common part of their lives. The sense of identity as a part of each other enables Thai scholars to presume a privileged status in the field of Thai studies because "Thai" is not just an area of study but an intrinsic part of them. By contrast, *farang* scholars have

> to overcome an enormous distance between the writing itself and the subject written about. (p. 7)

Like Thai scholars in Winichakul's argument above, my students presumed such a privileged status as the ones who, compared to the foreign outsiders, could attain an inside view on the story about Siam.

My students' conversation above also shows that they approached the texts about Siam on the basis of stories that they had already heard about Anna Leonowens and King Mongkut. This is reflected in Belle's emphasis on the fact that she heard about this story from her teacher when she was in her high school and Bow's presumption concerning the nature of sex scenes in books by *farang* writers. For Bow, Leonowens' story had to be a story about sex because it was written by a *farang*. It should be noted that most English books and films sold in Thailand containing a love relationship between male and female characters usually have sex scenes. Bow therefore expected Leonowens to write a sexual story when it dealt with the relationship between King Mongkut and Anna.

Analysing my students' group discussions, I also found that these students did not construct readings in a way that matched my own understanding of the issues of Orientalism and Postcolonialism, but their readings nonetheless showed traces of a burgeoning consciousness of these issues. This is seen from the fact that the narratives drawn from my students' conversations were filtered through their sense of national belonging and possession, which was indirectly awoken by their study of these issues. I can detect traces of nationalist sentiment – national history and national identity – in their discussions. However, this nationalism indubitably centres upon the familiar binary opposition of fact (true) and fiction (not true).

At this point, I had to accept the fact that my students did not arrive at a very sophisticated understanding of the ideological work that Said's *Orientalism* performs. They still slipped back into the so-called binary opposition of historical fact and fictional story, and tended to apply an essentialised notion of nationalism and Thai history in order to strongly criticise the Orientalist stories. The equations of "Thai" with "historical fact or truth" and "*farang*" with "untrue story or fiction", which they constructed, became their tool for showing disapproval of these stories about Thailand. Their resistance to the Orientalist representations of Thailand that came in a form of their censure of the "distorted" Western representation of King Mongkut helped them reverse the positive and negative signs of the binary, West and East, in the Western representations. Rather than judging Thai identity as somehow inferior to Western identity, they have turned this binary around.

After my students read and watched the Orientalist texts and films about Siam (comprising *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King of Siam*, *The King and I*, and *Anna and the King*), they focused on and were critical of the appearance of reality in the historical events presented in these texts. An example of this is seen from their discussion about the two films, *The King and I* and *Anna and the King*, that I have drawn from the second student group discussion. In her comment on the films, Pam invoked a notion of the "true" or "truth" by saying "*What they are telling is not all true. There is truth only in some parts.*". Pam associated this "truth" with historical truth as the story she saw in the films dealt with the account of King Mongkut, the ruler of Thailand in the past. For Pam, stories narrating Thai history should contain what she considered to be historical facts of Thailand, or else it was not "Thai". Winichakul (1995/2004) helps cast light on this kind of logic:

> Fundamentally, history is a prime database of what may be regarded as Thainess. Most interpretations of Thainess proudly claim to find support for their views in history. In this sense, history also becomes an authority of what is, and is not, Thainess. There is hardly any interpretation of Thainess which does not use history to authorize its validity. (p. 12)

As the discussion went further, the students showed their frustration, disapproval, and even denial of what were portrayed in the films, especially in the parts containing the account of King Mongkut. The conversations below, which are also from the second group interview, show the unacceptability of the film, *The King and I* by the students and the older generation of Thai people, due to its distortion of King Mongkut's character:

> **Pink**: *Even if that I am not a person who lived in the reign of the King, I feel disappointed. If people from the generation of my mother see the film, I cannot think of what will happen.*
>
> **Kanda**: *In the past, Thai people paid the highest respect to the king.*
>
> **Mink**: *It is more of a love story than truth.*
>
> **Bow**: *I can't accept this story.*
>
> **Mink**: *I don't like it.*

The students saw their revered king transformed into a disrespectful ordinary man who behaved badly. It was hard for them to bear with this inaccurate and exaggerated Western version of Siamese courtly traditions and ceremonies. Being offended by this, the students refused to acknowledge the existence of what was presented in the film, arguing against their inaccuracy. This is reflected in Ida's ardent announcement: "*They write the story about us. So we resist.*", and in Mink's frustration: "*This person [Anna Leonowens] wrote a story about us without our consent. Such an unpleasant story!*".

These students' reaction to the film, *Anna and the King*, was not different from their response to *The King and I*. When they specifically focused on the portrayal of King Mongkut in *Anna and the King*, they felt offended due to the negative representations of the Thai monarch, who they considered as a morally righteous king and a ruler with integrity. As Nari stated when she discussed with her friends in the third student group discussion:

> *I think it is appropriate that the Government did not to allow the movie,* Anna and the King*, to be filmed in Thailand. It is an insult to the Thai monarchy. The image of King Mongkut in the movie is inappropriate. It is so low. The King seems to be positioned at an equal level as Anna. He looks unrespectable. He is like Anna's friend. He does not behave himself.*

It must be noted that in all students' focus group discussions, my students spoke in Thai, and I later translated their conversations into English transcripts. It is seen that even though the above conversation is a translated one, it still retains the high level of my students' disappointment with the Western stories of Thailand.

Nari's use of the opposite words, "appropriate" and "inappropriate", in this conversation reveals her reversal of the positive and negative signs of the East/West binaries. The positive word, "appropriate", was used by Nari to support what she thought of as the rightness of the action taken by the Thai Government in challenging the authority of the film, *Anna and the King*. She, in effect, developed a feeling of an imagined community in Anderson's (1983/1991) sense, identifying with the Thai Government by showing her approval of its strong action against what it took to be an "insult to the Thai monarchy". Nari directed the negative word, "inappropriate", to the insulting portrayal of King Mongkut. She thought that it portrayed the King's negative characteristics, including his

inability to suppress his sexual desire, of being arrogant and immorally cruel to his consorts and people, and as having an undignified manner. All these for her were untrue. It was also unacceptable to see King Mongkut as being too much influenced by Anna, reducing his role to that of her follower. The Thai Government's banning of the film and Nari's disappointment with the "inappropriate" portrayal of King Mongkut reflect Thai beliefs in the high status of the monarch. For Thais, the king has the highest status of a semi-god, who cannot be violated. He is the centre of the Thai nation. Therefore, this "incorrect" Western representation was then considered an incursion into the Thai imagined territory that needed to be counteracted. The zealous feeling of belonging to and possession of the imagined terrain of the Thai monarchy that cannot be violated can be summed up in Ida's statement drawn from the second student group discussion: "*They should not film the story about the Thai king. They should not touch our king*". Here Ida indicated the force of Thai beliefs and values by saying "our king" that showed how she identified with the Thai collective body or imagined community. She felt that she needed to fight for it.

It is worth noting that the notion of Thai history is naturalised in the minds of my students by means of national education. Thai history as a body of knowledge is compulsory in basic education in Thai schools. Thai history is included in textbooks used in the core study called "Social Studies, Religion and Culture" (see Bureau of International Cooperation, Ministry of Education, 2012). In class, school students study biographies of prominent Thai kings in the past (King Mongkut or Rama IV of the Chakri Dynasty included), who had made great contributions to the country. Apart from that, in the case of my students, as mentioned in passing above, most of them minored in History. In the Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, students minoring in History have to study *Ancient Thai History* and *Local History* as compulsory subjects and choose eight elective subjects from the three categories: Thai History and Local History, Asian History, and

International History (see Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, n.d.). What I have been arguing here is that the ideological knowledge about Thai kings and their contributions is imposed on the students by educational system and institution, which can be viewed as a major ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 2001), and therefore is naturalised in my students' minds. This naturalised knowledge in turn becomes a reference point for them to interpret the story of Siam in the Western texts that represent Thai people and events during the reign of King Mongkut.

The Thai historical discourse was doing its ideological work in my students' reactions to *Anna and the King*, figuring in their minds as a version of Thai history that contrasted with the version of Thai history told by Leonowens and her followers. This contrast between two versions of the historical account of Thailand demonstrates that history is an ideological construction, an account of events in the past that is shaped by present interests and perspectives. Seeing history in this way helps to highlight the broader socio-cultural context and discourses influencing the construction of history (cf. Kruger and Mariani, 1989).

I have been arguing throughout this thesis that Leonowens' text and its subsequent writings and films construct an Orientalist view of Siam and the world. As Orientalist texts, they retail many of the attitudes and values that Said identifies as characteristic of Orientalism. Siam is presented as primitive, as lacking "history", whereas the West is seen as the embodiment of civilisation, of a glorious history that culminates in the achievement of the British Empire. This act of history writing for Siam produces an unbalanced power relation between the civilised West and the non-historical Siam. This is relevant to what Hayden White (1984) refers to as "a process of relatively autonomous or autochthonous relationships [which] now becomes a process of progressive interaction and integration between the so-called 'historical' cultures and those 'non-historical'" (p. 32; emphasis in

original). Siam now appears to have a history because it has been integrated within the Orientalist narrative of the West. This is a history that is now consciously available to Thai people because of the efforts of people like Anna Leonowens and her followers. In this sense, the history of non-historical Siam is brought into existence by the act of history writing by Anna Leonowens and those authors as representatives of the West. The documentation of Siam by the Orientalist authors becomes a historical record presenting Siam's progressive transformation from a primitive society into a modernised nation as a result of its modeling on Western civilisation. Let me quote White once again:

> This is that panorama of the domination of the so-called "higher" civilizations over their "neolithic" subject cultures and the "expansion" of Western civilizations over the globe that is the subject of the standard narrative of the world-history written from the point of view of "historical" cultures. But this "history" of "historical" cultures is by its very nature, as a panorama of domination and expansion, at the same time the *documentation* of the "history" of those supposedly "non-historical" cultures and peoples who are the victims of this process. So that, we could conclude, the very records that make possible the writing of a history of historical cultures are also the records that make possible the writing of a history of the so-called "non-historical" cultures. (ibid.; emphasis in original)

The way my students reacted to these Western stories about Thailand, which, for them, contained historical accounts of Thailand and the Thai king, was totally different from the Orientalist writers' and readers' view. As "insiders", this group of Thai students felt offended by the "distorted" information of Thai history in the stories and could not tolerate it. The expression of my students' intolerance as well as resistance came in a form of essentialist Thai nationalism, which was intrinsically aroused by the naturalised historical

consciousness I have discussed above. Thai nationalism in effect became an interpretive frame that mediated the students' engagement with the representations of Thailand in the Western stories.

From my students' discussions about *The King and I* and *Anna and the King*, I could detect in their conception a sense of Thai nationalism in a form of fixed Thai identities rather than shifting and hybridised ones. These Thai identities are namely language, physical features, and culture and ways of life. The act of watching the films that portrayed "inaccurate" Thai elements aroused my students' sense of national belonging. They negatively reacted to what was supposed to be the Thai language, generalised physical features of Thai people, and Thai culture and ways of life in the films. For them, the Thai language, specific physical features, and culture and ways of life were boundary markers that identified whether or not a person belonged to the imagined community of the Thai nation.

When they watched *Anna and the King*, the use of Thai language by Thai characters attracted their interest. Though the film is made in English and the characters speak English most of the time, there are some scenes in which Thai is used to give audiences an authentic "feel" of Siam in the film. However, the Hollywood intention to create authenticity did not work well with my students. As is revealed through the second group interview, the students were upset by the scenes in which the characters speak Thai because they did not perceive this as a genuine Thai accent:

> **Ida**: *I don't like the idea that people from other countries perform as Thai people in the film.*
>
> **Students**: *Yes.*
>
> **Pam**: *The actors cannot speak Thai clearly. Their accent is a Malay accent.*

Ida was disturbed by the performance of non-Thai actors and actresses who acted as Thai characters in the film. For Ida and her friends, the Thai language belonged to Thais. People from other countries might try to speak Thai, but they could not speak genuine Thai. Only Thais could. In this film, my students were able to trace that the Thai language spoken in the film was actually broken Thai and the characters' unclear accent was a Malay accent. This is because my students associated the accent they heard in the film with the fact that *Anna and the King* was shot in Malaysia since it was not allowed to be filmed in Thailand. It was not just that the students focused on the characters' speaking with a foreign accent, but rather on the casting of the actors from other countries where their countrymen spoke other languages in order to perform the role of Thai characters. Here the issue of the use of the Thai language by Thais becomes an indicator of being Thai. Anderson (1983/1991) argues that the official language of a nation calls forth unity among members of an imagined community. My students did not feel any attachment to the supposedly Thai characters in the film, and thus did not identify with the characters and events that the film attempts to present. Together with this, "inappropriate" manners of the non-Thai actors and actresses in the film, which were presented through both actions and Thai conversations, caused dissatisfaction among my students. This case reveals that language is a boundary marker for inclusion and exclusion. A person whose mother tongue is Thai has an automatic self-identification of himself or herself as a member of the Thai national community. This self-identification in effect becomes a basis for the formation of a Thai identity in the speaker. My students did not feel that the non-Thai actors and actresses had any right to identify themselves with Thais and perform on behalf of Thais. The attempt of the performers to speak Thai was little more than mimicry of the Thai language – a production of sound that carries no symbolic meaning with respect to Thai identity or community.

Physical features, cultural aspects and ways of life are another boundary marker of Thai national identity. In their discussion of *The King and I*, the students became upset with physical features, mannerisms, and cultural values and artifacts assumed to be characteristics of Thai characters in this film:

> **Ida**: *The characters look more Chinese and Malay than Thai. The music in The King and I is not Thai music. It is Chinese music. Chinese fans are used in the stage play scene. Thai people would not do like that.*
>
> **Mink**: *The way that the royal children pay respect to the King and Anna is a Chinese way, not Thai. Thai people are more modest.*

The above discussion from the second student group discussion reveals a conflict between the stereotypical physical features of Thais seen from the Western filmmaker's perspective and the specific features of Thais perceived by my students. In the film, generalisation was employed to convey an image of Thai characters. Collective physical features, such as yellow and darker skin colours, black hair, almond eyes, and flat noses, which were assumed to be characteristics of Asian people, were ascribed to the Thai characters. My students felt offended by this generalisation because as Thais, they regarded themselves and their fellow Thais as being different from other Asian people. Recognising some features of Chinese and Malay people in the film, they refused to be convinced that the characters were Thai. Moreover, generalisations about Thai-ness in this film were presented in the form of learned social manners, cultural values, and ways of life. My students showed their disapproval of the filmmaker's application of generalisations about Asian cultures in the film, namely oriental music, fan dances, and ways of greeting. They perceived these things as aspects of Chinese culture, not Thai culture. They saw that Asian cultural aspects in the film were represented through Chinese cultural values and artifacts, which for them was not true. Each nation has its own way of presenting its culture.

In order to subvert the Western stereotypical notions of Asian people, and affirm the cultural heterogeneity of people in Asia, most notably the differences between Thai and other cultures, the students playfully imagined how they would present themselves when they traveled in the West:

> **Ida**: *It is Hollywood. They just mix and match. They mix all Asians together*
>
> **Belle**: *Next time when we travel to Western countries, it is enough to tell farang people that we are Asian. That's enough. They think all Asians are the same. They can't differentiate Thai people from those from other Asian countries.*
>
> **Pam**: *They can't differentiate us from the Japanese, Vietnamese or whoever.*

In addition, the students' nationalistic sentiment, which is associated with the authority of Thai people over their culture, is revealed through their third group discussion about *Anna and the King*. This is seen at the point when they discussed the issue of the Hollywood filmmaker employing a Thai assistant, Paothong Thongjeu, in their film production.

> **Mink**: *I once watched a television program in which Paothong Thongjeu was interviewed. Paothong was a Thai consultant for the Hollywood production team. He was employed to give advice on Thai costumes and culture. I learned from this interview that he argued with the Hollywood team when he co-worked with them. This dispute was caused by the production team's misunderstanding of Thai people and Thai culture. For example, there was a scene in which people paid respect to monks. In the scene, Thai characters pressed their palms together, which was not correct. The correct one is that laymen have to separate their palms and place them*

> *on the floor. To correct the Hollywood team, Paothong had to show them photographs as an explanation for the way Thais show respect to monks. Paothong also argued with those farangs. When he couldn't argue well in English, he sometimes spoke Thai to show his frustration. Anyway, farangs neither listened to him nor followed his advice.*
>
> **Pam**: *I am angry when I hear this. They didn't listen to the facts about Thailand and Thai culture.*

This conversation shows the students' conceptualisation of authority of Thai people on the subject of their legitimate possession of Thai culture. For the students, Paothong Thongjeu, who was a Thai art historian and an expert in Thai culture, knew very well about Thai art and culture. They thus assumed that the foreign filmmaker should listen to him. When they knew that his advice was ignored by the Hollywood team, they felt very angry with the production team's refusal to acknowledge the advice. Pam felt that this denial of the Thai expert's advice was a rejection of what is "Thai". She conveyed her extreme displeasure by denouncing the production team's prejudices and satirising their tendency to suppress Thai opinion and monopolise the idea of Thailand. In retaliation, Pam made her hostile remark: "*In this case they should not have a Thai consultant. They should have made the film according to their production. We would not have anything to do with them*".

Learning from all students' group discussions, I realised that the way my students interpreted the texts about Siam by Western authors was different from my expectation. I wanted to see these students employ the new approach that I taught them in class as an interpretive strategy. To be specific, I taught all students, who enrolled in *Selected British and American Novels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, excerpts from Edward Said's *Orientalism* and other colonial and postcolonial writers. I then wanted them to see the love relationship portrayed in Leonowens' story as the Orientalist representation of the

Oriental King Mongkut as a lustful and despotic king in contrast to the representation of Anna as a virtuous and reasonable Western woman. I longed to see them perceive Western generalisations of Asian people and cultures as an Orientalist attempt to cope with their fear of the Oriental unknown. My study and analysis of the students' reactions to the Western stories of Thailand as appeared above proved to me that my expectation was still not fulfilled. I thus tried to find an explanation for this phenomenon, and Bakhtin's understanding of dialogism gradually yields me the answer:

> And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294)

Bakhtin has shown me that words are spaces in which ideologies clash. The fact that the students had learned about Orientalism, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism in the classroom did not guarantee that they would employ these concepts as their interpretive strategy and that these concepts as such would help them understand the Orientalist texts about Siam in a way that was congruent with my own reading of these texts. Said's *Orientalism*, which for me is a book of border crossing, makes sense to me because I took a kind of journey that made me directly confront some Westerners' Orientalist prejudices. Orientalism then became my tool to understand their raison d'être. For my students, they did not take the

same journey as me. They did not spend their time outside Thailand living among Westerners. Nor had they had a chance to take the benefit of looking back to Thailand. Therefore, when I tried to impose a new set of ideological issues on them, it was difficult for them to understand the very new concepts. They felt uneasy and confused. This problem that I faced became a lesson that I have learned from researching on my students' discussions. The students inhabited a different ideological world from me. I have to admit that cramming the new ideas of Orientalism, Colonialism, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism into their heads and expecting them to realise the advantages of using Orientalism and Postcolonial theory as tools for their empowerment and liberation did not result in the way that I wanted. These ideas became only alien concepts for my students. As my student, Bow, remarked in the first student group discussion, "*What I encounter in class is Colonialism and Imperialism. How can I read those stories?*". Bow's complaint shows the difficulty she encountered when managing to employ the new literary notions, "Colonialism" and "Imperialism", to interpret the reading texts in class. Although I taught these notions to all students including Bow, Bow was still uncomfortable with them because she did not see the point of how they worked as an analytical tool to help her understand the stories.

Coming to this point, I have to accept the fact that my students' responses to the Orientalist texts were disappointing. The responses did not match my intention as an educator, which was to enable my students to develop a critical stance vis-à-vis Orientalism. I was then upset because it seemed that my teaching was ineffective. I was not successful in making my students see the importance of Said's Orientalist concept that would give them another perspective on how Thailand was conceptualised by the Westerners. Pondering on this problem, I came to realise that my disappointment was caused by a difference between two kinds of curriculum: the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum (Barnes, 1976). I recognised that I tried to keep the control of my students' knowledge construction by

wishing to hear the expected interpretation of the Western representations of Thailand from them. I temporarily forgot that I could not transmit my knowledge of Orientalism to them because they were not passive learners. My failure resulted from that fact that I did not allow a contact space to take place for me and the students to make a negotiation between my knowledge and theirs. I just imposed my knowledge on them, expecting them to repeat my teaching and claiming that this thing was useful for them. At this point, I was facing a dilemma, a kind of teachers' dilemma stated by Barnes (1976):

> Here is the dilemma. How can teachers carry out what they believe to be their responsibilities when these include both control of pupils learning *and* encouraging pupils actively to formulate knowledge. In one direction lies control so strong that that school knowledge remains alien to the learner (whether he rejects or plays along with it); in the other direction lies a withdrawal of guidance, so that the learners never need to grapple with alternative ways of thinking. The teacher has to find his way between the two. (p.178; emphasis in original)

And at this stage, this dilemma was still a labyrinth for me. I had yet to find the way to create that contact space.

Chapter 7

A Postcolonial English Classroom:

Reconceptualising Neocolonial Condition of a Globalised Thailand

7.1 The Neocolonial condition of globalised Thailand: Discourse of modernity, development policies, and education

7.1.1 Siam in the nineteenth century: A contact zone and transculturation

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that was not politically colonised by European imperialists (Dhiravegin, 1975; Winichakul, 1995/2004). In the nineteenth century, King Mongkut of Siam (r. 1851-1868) realised the threats from European imperialists that could claim Siam's sovereignty. He read the Singapore and Hong Kong newspapers, seeing the fate of Siam's neighbouring countries, and noting the way the imperialists justified their obligations to rule over "uncivilised" countries as part of the so-called "White Man's Burden" (Wyatt, 1982, p. 184). Dhiravegin (1975, p. 15) and Bristowe (1976, p. 27) record that King Mongkut believed that the policy of isolationism could not help Siam survive the situation that was developing around the country. Therefore, in response to European colonialism, Siam had to open herself up to Western powers. The policy of modernisation became necessary because a willingness to modernise herself indicated Siam's cooperation with Western powers.

This historical narrative from history books on Thailand pinpoints the seemingly unbalanced power relations between powerful European imperialists and Siam, a small kingdom in Southeast Asia. The threats from the imperialists who had powerful armies behind them required Siam to accept the imperialist binary of civilised/uncivilised on their terms. As a result, Siam had to transform herself into a modern country, using Western modernity as a model for the reforms that were required. As Wyatt (1982, p. 187) puts it,

King Mongkut began to voice the opinion that his country was backward and in need of reform.

One aspect of King Mongkut's modernising scheme was education. This was not, however, education designed for commoners. Instead, it was aimed at his royal children, especially Prince Chulalongkorn, the heir-apparent to the throne. Siam during the nineteenth century was an Absolute Monarchy. King Mongkut's plan for modernisation was therefore primarily centred upon the royal court and undertaken by the royalty who would become the ruling elite in the future. To educate his children in Western knowledge and science, he established an English school in the palace and hired English teachers to teach his children, preparing them for the task of modernising Siam. Anna Leonowens was among the teachers he hired.

This sketch of the history of Thailand provides a counterpoint to Anna Leononwens' metanarrative. I have constructed a narrative from a Thai standpoint, showing that it was King Mongkut who originated the plan for Siam's modernisation. This modernisation is a product of his agency, not of the beneficence of Western civilisation, as embodied in the figure of Anna Leonowens. Indeed, I want to argue that the introduction and deployment of modern education, especially English education in the Siamese royal court by King Monkut, is an example of transculturation, of the "contact zone" (Pratt, 2008). That is to say, the appropriation of Western knowledge and science by the Siamese royalty in the nineteenth century was specifically modified for Siamese contexts. They did not passively accept Western knowledge and science. Although the Siamese could not avoid the impact of their encounters with European imperialists, they managed to select from materials and knowledge transmitted to them by the Europeans for their own purposes. This is reflected in King Monkut's letter to John Adamson, the manager of the Borneo Company at Singapore, who helped find Anna Leonowens. King Mongkut wrote:

> [A]lso it is not pleasant to us if the School Mastress [Anna Leonowens] much merely endeavour to convert the scholars to Christianity than teaching language, literature &c &c like American Missionaries here because our proposed expense is for knowledge of the important language & literature which will be useful for affairs of country not for the religion which is yet disbelieved by Siamese scholars in general sense. (Pramoj and Pramoj, 1948/1987, p. 217)

It should be noted that this letter was written in English by King Mongkut himself. The very long sentences and coined expressions are specific characteristics of his English writing.

The letter reveals that King Mongkut was thoughtful and selective. He stressed that his purpose in hiring English teachers was for educating his children in English language and literature, not in other matters. The King was political in deciding that the royal children should learn the language and literature of a European power. He planned to employ English education as a tool to facilitate Siam's entry to modernity. Access to modernity would allow Siam to acquire a mode of representation that it could, in turn, utilise in her international affairs with the imperialists. That is, English language and literature would help Siam obtain Western knowledge, science, and technology. Siam would employ these things to show her compatibility with Europe, and thus demonstrate her right to independence and sovereignty.

It was not that, by representing herself as modernised and civilised, Siam was abandoning her autonomy to the imperialists and succumbing completely to so-called European "civilisation". In such a representation, Siam still reserved her right to make her own choice in selecting and appropriating the types of modernity she preferred. King Mongkut

envisaged that Siam would be "civilised" on the condition that while undergoing modernisation, Siam could maintain her cultural identity, in this case Siamese Buddhism. The King knew well that the acquisition of Western knowledge and science by this means more or less risked placing Siamese cultural identity under threat. Western teachers, especially the missionaries, intended to convert Siamese students through their teaching. Attempting to preserve Buddhism, which was at the heart of the Siamese way of life and Siamese cultural identity, King Mongkut could not avoid grappling with Western influences. But modernisation of Siam through English education had to be on Siamese terms. He worked on the belief that English education could be appropriated in such a way that the notion of a Siamese cultural identity – Buddhism – was strengthened, not swallowed up by Western influences. The acquisition of Western knowledge and science through English education thus had to accord with or, at least, not endanger Buddhist beliefs and ways of life. This is discussed by Sivaraksa (2002), a Thai academic and a social critic, as follows:

> For Mongkut, Siamese identity meant bending to Western demands in order to preserve our independence politically, culturally and spiritually. We even lost some of our economic and judicial independence in order to be the masters of our own country. We had to give up some aspects of our identity for a more universal aspect of civilization not only acceptable to the West, but also righteous, i.e. according to the Dhamma, the Buddhist Middle Path, the pristine teaching of the Buddha that predated *The Three Worlds* which mixed Buddhism with Hinduistic cosmology. … More important, however, was our education, i.e. we had to understand the West and to change our outward identity in order to preserve our inner strength to cope with the West. Hence missionaries were no longer allowed to teach the royal children. To learn English and Western technology was to preserve

> the essential core of Siamese identity which was part and parcel of the spirit of Buddhism. (pp. 34-35)

Sivaraksa's repeated use of the pronoun "we" and the possessive pronoun "our", especially in "our own country" in his account of King Mongkut's political scheme is significant. The first person plural pronoun is an indication of Siamese identity in the sense of Anderson's (1983/1991) "imagined community". The words convey in their meaning an imagined landscape where Siamese identity is fostered. King Mongkut's notion of Siamese identity is tied closely to his policy that helped Siam (the collective "we") survive as a free country. The King came up with a strategy to preserve and, at the same time, strengthen Siamese identity, which was faced with the threat of being wiped out if Siam was politically colonised. To survive meant that Siam needed to be flexible and clever in trading "our economic and judicial independence" for political, cultural, and spiritual freedom. Matching Siamese Buddhism against Western civilisation, he stressed the universality of the Buddhist Middle Path, which was underlying his policy. The practice of the Middle Path meant that Siamese people stepped back from holding extreme views. It helped them accept the changes that would enable Siam to survive in this threatening situation. This emphasis shows that for King Mongkut, Buddhism was an integral part of Siamese people's perception of themselves and of the world. Buddhist beliefs were the inner strength that needed to be preserved, even when the outward appearance of Siamese people was undergoing significant change. Siamese identity, for him, meant Siamese Buddhism as an essential part of being Siamese but could also show traces of the Western "other" and behaving in a way deemed acceptable to Westerners. In other words, to be a Siamese in this new situation, a person had to achieve a balance between his or her inner identity (the unique cultural and spiritual one, namely Siamese Buddhism) and their outward identity (an outward-looking Western disposition).

The modernisation of Siam on a grand scale was undertaken by King Rama V or King Chulalongkorn, King Mongkut's son, who came to the throne in 1868. During King Chulalongkorn's reign (1868-1910), the threat of Western imperialism still prevailed. King Chulalongkorn was faced with the same task as his father. According to Dhiravegin (1975), "he [King Chulalongkorn] realized forcibly that if his country was to preserve her independence, she must, *willy-nilly*, put her house in order according to the prevailing European notions, or at least keep up the appearance of doing so" (pp. 27-28; emphasis in original). Although Buddhism was no longer emphasised in King Chulalongkorn's policy, modern education, especially for commoners, was still of considerable importance. King Chulalongkorn saw that education reform that would give Siamese citizens a chance to be equipped with modern knowledge would keep Siam free from colonial status. As he stated in the 1898 Royal Proclamation on Siam's Education:

> As the times and the course of things in our country have changed, it is essential to promote the advancement of all our academic and technical knowledge and to prevent it from succumbing to competition from outside. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to make haste in education so that knowledge and ability will increase. (Chulalongkorn in Benda & Larkin, 1967, p. 172)

It is noteworthy that during King Mongkut's reign, education (in English) was conceived as the preserve of royalty, whereas for King Chulalongkorn, education was understood to be something that was important for commoners, and it was to be conducted in Thai. Like his father, King Chulalongkorn appropriated modern knowledge acquired from modern education modeled on the West. For him, the benefits of modern education were at least twofold. First, education modeled on the West helped Siam maintain the appearance of being civilised by producing citizens with modern knowledge and skills, who would

become a mechanism for the country's reform. Siam needed people with these preferred qualities in order to show the Western powers her improvement against a Western ideal of progress. Second, sovereignty and cultural autonomy were proof of Siam's independence. To maintain the imagined territorial integrity of Siam, a balance between a Siamese "self" and a Western "other" was required. Modern education was therefore employed as a form of interpellation (Althusser, 2001) that produced and reproduced citizens who, through education, were not totally embedded in Western ideology and values but still held Siamese beliefs. This is reflected in the latter part of the Proclamation that invokes the qualities of a "worthy citizen of Siam":

> The purpose of such education and training shall be to inculcate the following qualities: inquisitiveness for knowledge to whet intelligence and capacity, good and righteous behaviour, concern for family welfare, generosity to relatives, unity and harmony with spouses, faithfulness to friends, economy, kindness to others, regard for the public good, compliance with laws, willingness to serve the country with courage, loyalty to the throne in times of need, and gratefulness and loyalty to the throne at all times.
>
> When all these elements of responsibility have become so deeply rooted in one's nature as to be manifested in all outward behaviour, then training and education may be said to have succeeded, and any one who has successfully undergone the process may be said to be an eminently worthy citizen of Siam. (Chulalongkorn in Benda & Larkin, 1967, pp. 172-173)

As stated in the proclamation above, inquisitive for (Western) knowledge was important, especially for keeping the appearance of a civilised nation. Yet other qualities were equally necessary. The preferred qualities of Siamese citizens that King Chulalongkorn also

stressed are concerned with morality, family institution, harmonious society, economy, law and order, patriotism, and monarchy. These things are the integral aspects of Siamese society that needed to be maintained in order to sustain the life of the Siamese nation. Therefore, modern education modeled on the West was appropriated to suit the needs of Siam. The goal of this education is to promote a citizen's ties with his or her family and (on a larger scale) with the country and the king. It is important to note that at that time Siam was still an Absolute Monarchy. The king was considered the centre of the nation-state.

The appropriation of imperial knowledge, science, technology, and culture by King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn helped Siam manage to escape the political dominance of Western imperialism. The success of the strategy of appropriation reveals Siam's capacity for transforming, translating, and localising imperial discourse. Siam could seize the imperialists' cultural tools and utilise them for her own purposes. Thus Siam was able to empower herself and resist Western imperial powers.

7.1.2 Thailand in the twenty-first century: In the global community

As with Siam during the age of empire, so contemporary Thailand has to achieve modernity in order to compete with other countries in this globalising and interconnected world. This orientation towards modernity of contemporary Thailand can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century, particularly after the end of World War II. To gain the acknowledgement of powerful Western nations, Thailand after the World War willingly accepted the West's labeling of it as a "developing" Third World country. This shows how Western views of Thailand affect the way Thailand sees herself. Accepting the status of a "developing" country means that Thailand has to upgrade herself in order to be compatible with the "well-developed" Western nations. The significance of the notion of Western modernity for Thailand in the mid-twentieth century is shown by the fact that the Thai

Government set a developmental goal for the country and started to deploy the First National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1963.

Included in Thailand's First National Economic and Social Development Plan (1963-1966) was educational development. It was stated in the Education Development Section of the First Plan that it was important to provide education to the Thai population in accordance with the country's need for manpower (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2008). In this sense, education was intended to be an instrument for producing the educated workforce required for the country's development. At the tertiary level, the Government established some language policy for universities. In the Education Section of the Second National Economic and Social Development Plan (1967-1971), the Thai Government presented a plan to develop tertiary education in the capital and establish more universities in the regional areas. The Government cooperated with American universities to produce university lecturers for Thailand. Furthermore, it was officially stated in this Second Plan that the Faculty of Humanities of Chiang Mai University and the Faculty of Science and Arts of Khon Kaen University would provide English education for students from other faculties in these two universities (ibid.). University students were required to know English. The Government's policy to include English in the syllabus of all faculties in Thai universities is a continuation of the same story of this dominant language in the discourse of modernity during King Mongkut's and King Chulalongkorn's reigns. Since funds, technology, and investments are mostly from overseas, English becomes a communicative language that helps Thailand access these resources. Thailand therefore needs educated citizens with enough knowledge in English to function in many parts of the country that are developing along the line of Western modernity.

This is to say that Thailand is again acquiescing in the binaries of civilised/uncivilised and primitive/advanced that shaped the country's destiny in the 19th century. The direction for Thailand's development since the First National Economic and Social Development Plan has aimed to transform Thailand from a "poor" agricultural country into an industrial country. Thailand has obtained this modernity at a price. The deployment of National Economic and Social Development Plan has transformed Thailand into a capitalist-consumerist society, which is a big leap for her. The rush to develop and to satisfy the demand for consumer products subsequently causes problems, such as dwindling agricultural land, deforestation, overpopulation and slum areas in big cities, as well as pollution (Tuchrello, 1989). This direction of Thailand's development has been criticised as emphasising Western notions of wealth accumulation, materialism and consumerism, and ignoring other fundamental Thai aspects, especially agriculture, cultural values, and local wisdom. Sumet Tantivejkul's special lecture on "King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy" delivered on 14 June 1999 gives an insight into the dangers of Thailand's unbalanced development. Tantivejkul is the current King Bhumibol Adulyadej or Rama IX's right-hand man and project advisor. He serves as Secretary-General and Member of His Majesty's Chaipattana Foundation, Secretary-General of the Royal Development Project Board, and Secretary-General of the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board. It should be noted that the lecture was given by Tantivejkul in Thai and the following text is my unofficial translation of his lecture.

> When looking at the Third National Economic and Social Development Plan, you can see that we dislike agriculture. We say that there is no way for us to get rich if we still do agriculture. This kind of thinking shows that we adopt Western thinking. That is, we forget our roots. We forget our intellect. We forget our local wisdom. We forget how we live in accordance with our environment. We think that doing agriculture is not worth time and

investment. It is written in the Third Plan, “Thailand reduces agricultural production and activities as much as possible. Instead, Thailand will be directed towards industrial development”. … It means that by policy … and by the general current in the society at the time, we aim to destroy agriculture, which is the foundation of Thailand. Or simply speaking, we are destroying our life without any awareness at all. …

First, what happens is we want investment. When asking whether Thailand has investment, the answer is no. We do not have investment. What we have to do is to borrow money from overseas.

Second, what we need is technology. Do we have technology? No, we don’t. We have never developed our own technology. We have just bought technology from overseas for use. We have to use the term “transfer”, not “development”. “To transfer” means to take other people’s technology, to move their technology to Thailand.

Third, we do not have manpower. Our education system has never produced manpower that can work in the high levels of administration. Now we can see a lot of Japanese and *farang* people in Thailand. The real executive people are foreigners. That Thailand is growing and becoming rich primarily results from the fact that we, Thais, do not own anything at all. Therefore, if one day the three factors mentioned above disappear from Thailand, it will be the end of the story. This is what is happening at present. When investment is removed from our country, when they stop giving us technology, and when we do not have money to buy, everything ends. I insist that our current education system is ten years behind the Western education system. Our learning procedure is outdated. Our graduates cannot think critically and make any decision. … We have never

> implemented critical learning procedure in Thai students. We just give them knowledge. (Tantivejkul, 1999, pp. 299-300)

Seen in Tantivejkul's statement are two types of narratives that criss-cross: a grand narrative of becoming rich by transforming Thailand into a consumerist-capitalist economy through industrial development, and a smaller narrative about Thailand's loss of agricultural society, Thai roots, Thai intellect, and local wisdom. From these two narratives emerge conflicting senses of Thailand's place in a globalising world. The first one is the dream of being a "developed", modernised country, which is reflected in a government plan that is in tune with the grand narrative of the Western understandings of success as being bound up with industrial development. The collective "we" of this imagined capitalist Thailand, for Tantivejkul, is the "we" that "adopt[s] Western thinking", that "dislike[s] agriculture" which is the root or foundation of Thai society, and that "forget[s]" their "intellect" and "local wisdom". This "we" is equipped with the modern thought of following the path of Western capitalism and cutting their connection with their own roots. But running parallel to this narrative and in conflict with it, Tantivejkul tells another story. In this counter-narrative, Tantivejkul offers another imagined reality that is happening in a globalising Thailand, one that the grand narrative glosses over, because it is the price that the modernised "we" has to pay for success on Western terms. He points out that the "we" in the small narrative is facing a tragic end, in contradistinction to the story that is typically told about modernisation. This is because the foundation of Thai people is agriculture. If Thailand's economy has grown but her national resources have dwindled and been destroyed, the nation cannot be independent in this capitalist world. Thailand has to rely on foreigners and resources from outside.

Tantivejkul develops a powerful counter-narrative, posing a set of questions in order to criticise the metanarrative of capitalist economy that Thailand is currently adopting. In the

grand narrative, to become an industrialised nation, Thailand needs three things for investment: money, technology, and manpower. The questions Tantivejkul asks and the answers he gives reveal that Thailand does not have the three key factors necessary to become an industrialised nation. Thailand has to borrow money, import technology from overseas, and hire foreigners for the high administrative levels. This means that Thailand apparently depends on others for her industrial development. The direction of this development in turn has destroyed agriculture, the foundation of the nation. It shows that this kind of development is not a balanced and sustainable development that will enable Thailand to survive as an independent country in the globalising world.

This comment by Tantivejkul discloses the tension between conflicting directions that globalising Thailand is moving towards as the comment opens up the question of Thailand's ability to cope with the torrent of Western influences on the country. He tries to raise Thai people's awareness of Thailand's detrimental dependence on Western values (in this case, the capitalist-consumerist economy), asking them not to discard the Thai roots. For him, Thai intellect, local wisdom, and agriculture as firm foundations can help Thailand survive the globalising situation where the economic power of the West prevails. This is because with firm Thai roots, Thai people will be able to cope with and appropriate what emanates from outside without getting lost and being swallowed up by the Western influences.

Tantivejkul's comment on the influences of Western thinking and economy on Thailand pinpoints the new form of neo-imperialism. That is, by and large, countries in the world are now subjected, not to the political power of European imperialists, as in the nineteenth century, but instead to a global economy, global institutions, and global culture which still reflect the Western world's hegemony. Although colonialism formally ended after World War II with decolonisation, the former colonisers have continued to exert their power and

influence over the rest of the world. As Said (1993) remarks, "[i]n our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism … lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices" (p. 8). This is to say that the phenomenon of globalisation, as Held and McGrew (2000) put it, might be seen as "imperialism [that] has acquired a new form as formal empires have been replaced by new mechanisms of multilateral control and surveillance" (p. 5).

This connects with another argument about the changing nature of globalisation as a form of imperialism, which is that globalisation no longer implies cultural homogenisation (as in Macaulay's (1972) famous "Minute on Indian Education") but operates through the heterogeneity of existing cultures, involving a tension between the local and the global (Ashcroft, 2001; Block and Cameron, 2002; Robertson, 1994). Ashcroft (2001) points this out by noting that globalisation is not just a simple replacement for imperialism. It is rather that imperialism has been affected and shaped by colonial experience. Globalisation, in his opinion, is "the radical *transformation* of imperialism, continually reconstituted, and interesting precisely because it stems from no obvious imperial centre" (p. 213; emphasis in original). It is a kind of interchange where the local contributes to the character of the global (p. 215). That is to say, globalisation opens up possibilities of postcolonial resistance, as former colonisers and colonial countries are forced to redefine their roles within a globalising world. In a world with no frontiers, what used to be the imperialist binaries and power imposition of imperialism can be disrupted and loosened within the global system of cultural interaction.

For Thailand, globalisation has created a space for the reconsideration of her relationship with the West and her engagement in the discourse of Western modernity. Mobility and exchange (i.e. between Thai local knowledge and the global) become key terms for

Thailand to deal with the global influences pressuring and threatening her (See Reynolds, 2002, pp. 328-330). Tantivejkul's lecture above is an example of this phenomenon. In one way, it is indicative of the impact of modernisation on globalising Thailand. With modernisation, Thailand in this century is not immune to Western influences, which have had an impact on Thailand's social, cultural, and economic fabric. However, with the current global environment, the interaction between contemporary Thailand and the West has become more versatile and negotiable due to the fact that globalisation opens up a chance for the flow and exchange between Thailand and the global. Although the discourse of modernity is still operating in contemporary Thailand, with globalisation, Thailand has redefined her relationship with the West as seen by Tantivejkul's asking Thai people to go back to their Thai roots (i.e. Thai intellect, local wisdom, and agriculture) when making their contact with the outside world.

From the sketch of Thailand's socio-economic development path, it is seen that Thailand continues to be caught in a situation where it is trying to reconcile competing interests relating to its place in a globalising world. A redefinition of Thailand's relationship with the world in terms of local and global exchange is reflected in the Thai Government's Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan. It is stated in its section regarding education reform and lifelong learning that national curriculum shall have more variety and flexibility, and could be adapted to conditions and needs of local communities. This would be done by means of an increase of such study contents as foreign languages and Information Technology, as well as morality, Thai culture, and Thai history in school curriculum (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2008). This plan for a national curriculum reveals that there is an attempt at the level of policy making to achieve a balance between a curriculum that enhances Thai students' identification with their roots and a curriculum that contributes to the economic development of Thailand within a globalising world.

7.2 Classroom stories revealed: A counter-narrative

7.2.1 English education at the Western Languages Department, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University

What has been discussed so far is the relationship between education and the discourse of modernity from the macro-level of those who are in the position of power – the Thai Government and its policies. I shall call the Thai Government's development policies the metanarrative of beneficial development and empowerment. This narrative is a story of Thai people's empowerment through modern knowledge that leads Thailand in the direction of social and economic progress. With the facilitation of educational institutions, the Government in implementing these development policies – namely Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans – has made education, which is the mechanism for the nation's development, become entwined with Thai people's lives. Consequently, the grand narrative has been retold and mutually reproduced by educational institutions, educational practitioners, and individual students.

My reflection on the Thai Government's metanarrative has shown me that as a Thai teacher of English at the Department of Western Languages, Silpakorn University, I have given my students some kind of education that embodies certain values and ideologies favoured and promoted by the Government. The grand story conveying the policy statements of the benefits of education for Thailand's development has the quality of Clandinin and Connelly's "sacred story" – the "theory-driven view of practice shared by practitioners, policy makers, and theoreticians" (1996, p. 25). I cannot deny that the socioeconomic progress of Thailand has stemmed from the education sector, to which I, as a member of those practitioners of educational curriculum and pedagogy influenced by the Government's policies, belong. I can see my role as that of a facilitator, enabling my students to fill the professional positions that help move Thailand towards a progressive path. It seems this story of socioeconomic progress is a preferred story that is welcomed by

educational practitioners and the Government. I myself feel happy and pleased every time my former students come back to me and tell me their news of getting good jobs. It is a good story indeed! Yet there are some other narratives that are displaced or marginalised by the sacred story that are waiting to be revealed and heard. They are classroom stories told by students – those who are the products of such education policies, the promise for the country's development. These classroom stories give me access to students' tensions and conflicting impulses that actually happen and need acknowledgement. I wish to show that, while the grand narrative of modernisation is undoubtedly the dominant narrative at this moment in Thailand's history, other narratives are in circulation, in the form of stories told by students that conflict with the larger claims made by the metanarrative of modernisation.

Following are stories from my Silpakorn students that bring to light how the Thai Government's development policies through the mechanism of educational systems play a role in internalising English education in the students' lives. I treat these conversations as classroom stories that have the qualities of identifying, reflecting upon, and providing a counterpoint to the metanarrative of beneficial development that is made possible and manifested by the tertiary curriculum and teachers' pedagogies. Listening to my students' classroom stories can make me understand the teaching context in which my students have been made the creatures of the Government's policies. This understanding will in turn become the professional knowledge context for effective teaching – teaching that empowers Thai students.

7.2.2 Listening to students' classroom stories

A series of classroom stories that subsequently appear in this section are from the first student group discussion that I conducted on my students at Silpakorn University. The students' conversations will be in italics. In the conversations below, students were talking

about reasons why they chose English as their major study. Their talks relate particular academic motivations and constraints which led them to major in English. Although these stories are expressed as personal stories, they, at the same time, explain the socioeconomic policies – including specifically education policies – developed by the Thai Government in response to globalisation that I have discussed earlier.

> **Pink:** *I don't like Mathematics. So I chose to study in Language-Arts stream in my high school. After studying in the Language-Arts stream, I thought I had better end up in studying English. That was why I chose to major in English at Silpakorn University.*
>
> **Kanda:** *I chose English because I don't like Mathematics. In my senior high school, I chose to study the language. And my school didn't require language students to study Maths. I studied French. Also I had to study English. There were three compulsory English subjects I had to study. So I didn't have time to study Maths. And I didn't want to study in other faculties that require students to study Maths in the first year. I don't like Maths. When I had to read English books for my independent reading in my high school, I enjoyed reading those books. So I thought that if I chose the faculty that has the English major, there would be a lot of enjoyable books for me to read.*

These conversations display the reason behind Pink's and Kanda's decision to major in English at the university level. In their secondary schools, Pink and Kanda were students of the Language-Arts stream. For Pink and Kanda, the Language-Arts stream was an escape for those who did not want to study Mathematics. To this extent, the statements of their dislike of Mathematics and their preference for studying foreign languages are an explanation of their choices in personal terms, as a matter of their disposition to study

foreign languages. Yet the statements also posit the broader contexts that paradoxically control the direction of Pink's and Kanda's future study. When we ask the question, "For whose interest the school curriculum is created?", it can be inferred from Pink's and Kanda's talks that they are making their choices within a policy environment that pre-exists them. That is to say, their personal choices are mediated by the larger socio-cultural contexts of globalisation and the dominance of English as a powerful international language. This is seen from the fact that the students have to make a decision from the already-prepared streams of study offered by their schools, and those streams of study reflect the Thai Government's development policy to produce educated manpower for Thailand's socioeconomic growth. To understand this, the role of senior secondary school in preparing students for university study in relation to the Thai Government's National Economic and Social Development Plans should be investigated.

In the senior secondary education level (Years 10 to 12) in Thailand, students are given limited choices with the study program. This limitation is caused by the number of study streams available for them and by the rigid boundary of each stream that prevents or discourages them from seeking knowledge across disciplines. In Year 10, students have to choose from one of the three streams of study areas, which they have to continue until they finish their senior secondary school years: Language-Arts, Language-Mathematics, and Science-Mathematics. Apart from the general subjects, students in the Language-Arts stream concentrate their study on English and the other foreign language, namely French, German, or Japanese. This study stream provides basic knowledge in the language field, preparing students for their future university study in the Faculty of Arts or Humanities. As well, students in the Language-Arts stream can choose to study in other faculties in human science and social science disciplines such as Law, Political Sciences, Communication Arts and Education. In the Language-Mathematics stream, students have to concentrate on Mathematics, Management, and the English language. The stream aims to prepare students

for study in the Faculties of Business and Economics, Commerce and Accountancy, and similar faculties. Whereas students of Science-Mathematics stream are required to study Applied Mathematics, Applied Sciences, and Computer IT (Triam Udom Suksa School, n.d.) As a result, they can choose to study in the Faculties of Medicine, Science, Engineering, Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and the like. By and large, the study streams offered by secondary schools provide a basic framework for students to match their interests, skills, and competences to more specific fields at university level. The provision of the study streams provides guidance for pursuing study by narrowing down the variety and choices of study areas that students can choose for their specialised field in higher education.

Given that higher education marks a continuation of the practices in secondary education, students' progressive path from secondary education to tertiary education occurs under the discursive and hierarchical power structures (namely, secondary education institutions, tertiary education institutions, and the Government) and directed by a set of educational mechanisms (such as curricula and disciplines of study). The provision of education as determined by the curriculum at secondary and tertiary levels is powerfully shaped or mediated by the Government's policy. Such provision of education more or less corresponds to the demand for employment of white-collar workers in the labour market boosted by the Government, which in theory and practice contributes to social alleviation and economic growth of Thailand. That is to say, educational providers function to select, prepare, and generate students with specific interests and the capacity to fit into the Government's development scheme in diverse government and private sectors, for example language-related, accounting, engineering, technological, and medical areas.

These discursive structures of power can be understood by seeing education in the light of Bourdieu's (1986) "cultural capital". As discussed earlier, since the First National

Economic and Social Development Plan was implemented, education has been regarded as one of the target areas which the Thai Government aims to improve and subsequently employ as a tool to produce the workforce essential to Thailand's development. The socioeconomic purpose behind the inclusion of education in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans reflects the Government's attempt to invest in education – a kind of "cultural capital" in Bourdieu's (1986) term – which is regarded as an effective mechanism for promoting social change and economic growth in Thailand. The Government's educational policies are primarily driven by economic considerations, specifically the need to build human capacity that will enable Thailand to take its place in a globalising economy. Within this framework, individuals exercise choice with respect to the pathways or career trajectories they will follow, but it is a "choice" determined by these larger factors.

At a micro-level, educational institutions are obliged to respond to the Government's educational investment and development policies. One example is in the context of secondary school system that provides the already-prepared educational channel for students to continue their study in particular disciplines at the tertiary level discussed above. In the context of the Department of Western Languages, Silpakorn University, one of the Department's objectives in producing graduates is "to equip students with knowledge in English that can be applied for future careers". In accordance with this objective, my Department then offers the following English subjects for English majors: *English Writing for Public Relations and Advertising*, *English for Guides*, *Translation for Business*, and *English for the Workplace* (see Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, n.d.). These practices indicate the Department's acknowledgement of and hence response to the notion of demand and supply in the labour market resulting from the Government's boost in socioeconomic growth. It can be seen that the areas of employment that English major graduates from Silpakorn University enter into are the product of

economic demands. The graduates mostly work in the private sector. For example, they become tour guides, flight attendants, and secretaries for international firms, where they can use and apply their knowledge of English (see Planning Division, Silpakorn University, 2007).

At a personal level, students respond to the changing social conditions reflected in the Government's development policies and the consumerism that is their by-product. They enact the Government's policy even when they imagine that they are behaving as free agents. This is very akin to what Althusser (2001) says about ideology and the way individuals are interpellated. The Department of Western Languages, Silpakorn University as one of the Ideological State Apparatuses plays an intermediary role in teaching students the "know-how" required to become skilled manpower with a good command of English, the international language necessary for Thailand's socioeconomic growth. Education provided by the department as students' pathway to their future career points out the department's role in reproducing a workforce to fill in the job positions in response to the development policies set by the Government. This kind of education provision thus subjects students to the ideology that serves the Government's aim and interest. It is this ideology that interpellates students as its subjects responding to, enacting, and practising the Government's discourse of development (cf. Althusser, 2001). This is reflected in the conversation of Mink who recognised the role of university graduates as fitting into the areas of work deemed necessary for Thailand's development:

> *After graduating, we will be personnel who contribute to our country's development. If we don't know English well, we can't take any responsibility for anything that has to deal with English. In this case, for example, it seems those who work in the Civil Service must have been*

> *foreigners. We should attempt to study English to the advanced level so that we don't need to hire foreigners to work as government officials.*

Mink's statement retells the Thai Government's story of the benefits of English for Thailand's development. Without necessarily being aware of the precise details of Government policy, she knows that English is essential for her country's economic growth. Mink uses the collective pronoun "we" to represent herself and her fellow students. This "we" indicates that she perceives herself and others as agents participating in a shared discourse. As English majors, Mink knows that good English knowledge will make her and her friends suitable as mechanisms for the nation's progress. Her example of the necessity for civil servants to be competent in English justifies the need for Thai people to be equipped with English as this foreign language is a key factor that helps develop the nation.

Apart from that, the interconnectedness between socioeconomic growth resulting from the Government's development policies and English education as a form of cultural capital makes students recognise the possibility of transforming knowledge of English into economic profit in the form of working careers. Another student, Kanda, sees English education as a kind of investment: "*Financial factor is involved. I see that as we have invested money in our education for years, we should get something in return when we graduate and have a job*". This is similar to Ida who experiences the privileged status of being the most fluent English speaker as she realises the benefits of this language in terms of economic inducement from her part-time work at an international conference:

> *In the AIDS Conference in Thailand, those who could speak English got more money than those who were not competent in English. They were paid only 300-400 baht. Those who spoke English well didn't need to do much*

and received more than 1,000 baht. Knowing English is considered a special ability. We have more advantage when knowing English.

Moreover, English education as a form of cultural capital can be converted to other types of benefit, such as advanced or specialised knowledge. Knowledge of English can help students access scientific, technological, and academic information which are mostly expressed in English (cf. Honey, 1997, p. 131; Jenkins, 2003, p. 36). The following story by Kanda is about this academic gain:

Majoring in English is a stepping stone for us. Knowledge of English becomes a basic for us to continue our Master's degree or study in foreign countries. Now I'm interested in Art History. I think that my knowledge of English will help me do my Master's study in Art History abroad. I see my friends who major in Archaeology struggle and have difficulties in reading English texts for their assignment paper. I think that I have more advantage than them when I do the same assignment because I have better understanding in English texts than they do. I'm happy that I can translate the English texts I read.

Kanda compares her situation with those of her friends majoring in Archaeology. Although she did not choose Archaeology as her main study, her ability to read and understand English enables her to understand Archaeology texts written in English whereas her Archaeology-major friends encounter difficulties when reading those texts. For Thai students, English is a foreign language. Most of the time, to understand English texts which contain knowledge of a specialised field such as archaeology, students need to translate the English content into Thai. Therefore, good English language skills give English majors an advantage over students from other major studies whose English is

poorer. The case of Kanda is an example of a student who has more chance to expand her studies to other fields because of the English language skills she has gained from her English major study. Realising this benefit, Kanda sees a possibility to change her field of study to Art History at a higher level of education. She had more choices for her future education.

The above stories show that the socioeconomic conditions of Thailand are conducive to the emergence of a discourse of development, spoken not only at the level of government but by students as they contemplate their career prospects. These students share the commonsense assumption that knowing English can empower them and help them get access to certain privilege and status available for those who are competent in English. However, hidden in this rather glossy metanarrative of development and empowerment as retold by the students are counter-narratives relating to their rites of passage. These are stories regarding the challenges students experience when trying to enter into another discourse – the discourse of English language learning and acquisition. Participating in the discourse of English language learning and acquisition means that the students are regulated by a set of constraints imposed by the discourse. The minor narratives discussed below do not tell a smooth way to success. On the contrary, they disclose the students' difficult times of struggle and failure before their goal is achieved.

One of the constraints is the language capacities that are expected of the students. Majoring in English has a connotation of being able to master this foreign language. This expectation becomes a constraint on those who want to achieve the position of a competent language user. The notion of achievement has a particular impact on students. As students of English, they expect and are expected to improve their English and master it. However, when they see little improvement or no improvement in their English language skills, they are upset and discouraged. The following conversations show the students being caught

between their struggle to access the discourse of language learning and the demand of the discourse. The phrases, such as “can’t do that”, “not getting there”, and “not capable enough”, reflect the students’ frustration and self-doubt about their ability to meet the demands of the discourse.

Pink: *I chose to major in English at Silpakorn because I was upset with myself. I was upset because I have studied English for many years and I couldn’t speak English well. Even now I still can’t do that! I chose to major in English because I want to be competent in speaking English.*

Kanda: *I feel good to study here. I like it [English]. I like to study here. When I keep on studying here, I feel that I used to like my study and I still like it. But why am I still at the same level? I’m not getting there. My English is not better. Anyway, I still like my study.*

Bow: *I want to tell you guys about my high school study. When I was in senior high school, I liked English because my friends told me, “Bow, you are good at English. So concentrate your study in the English language”. This made me feel like my English was so good. I thought, “Okay, I have an ability to study English”. But when studying here, at Silpakorn, I feel that I’m not good at all. I shouldn’t have listened to my friends. When I was in Year 12, I thought my English was good. I could even help my friends with their homework.*

Nunda: *Do you like English?*

Bow: *Yes, I like it. But I am not capable enough. Although I want to be fluent in English speaking, I can’t speak well. My knowledge in English grammar is not good. Yet, overall I like English. I want to be competent in English.*

It should be noted here that in the context of English language learning in Thai schools and universities, students are taught standard English – the English language used in text books and formal language testing. They are required to write the standardised form of written English, and perform well in their reading and speaking of standard English. The conversations above show that my students cannot do well in using “correct” English which is the demand of learning standard English. As Bow says, her knowledge in English grammar is not good.

As foreign language learners, Thai students need to comply and cope with English language rules with which they are not familiar although they have studied English for many years. There are no serious or explicit punishments for not being able to master the language; however, students feel very upset and even discouraged when they fail to have good command over it. Pink, Kanda, and Bow all express their strong feeling of disappointment. They seem to be in despair over their inability to improve their English to the level of a competent user. It also needs to be noted that Thai students lack opportunities to communicate in English within real-life situations since the language around them is predominantly Thai, not English. Students have a chance to use English mostly in English classrooms. However, learning English in classroom is not enough for them to practice their communicative skills and make them fluent in English. And this is the situation that Pink, Kanda, Bow, and others have to cope with.

What is used as the criterion for judging students’ language capacities is the level of competence and proficiency in their English language usage, whose benchmark is how close students are to the level of standard English employed by native speakers. This benchmark is a constructed one that presupposes the ability to handle standard English in the framework of the prestigious British English and American English, and thus prioritise British and American people as native speakers or owners of so-called standard English.

Such a benchmark supposedly reflects native speaker competence without problematising the notion of a “native speaker” and the existence of varieties of “english” spoken of by Ashcroft et al. (1989) or the notion of “world Englishes” described by Kachru (1996). In Thailand, which is the Expanding Circle, to use Kachru’s (1996)’s category, so-called standard British English and standard American English have been used as the norms in the academic discourse of English language teaching and learning (cf. Honey, 1997, p. 30; cf. McArthur, 1998, p. 115). It needs to be clarified here that Thai students may have learned British English or American English (or both) depending on the schools students attend and the texts books they are assigned to study. The domination of standard English in the discourse of English language teaching and learning in Thailand reflects the connection between language and power and the complex exercise of power through the manufacture of consent (cf. Fairclough, 1989). That is, through the process of learning standard English, students must acquiesce in that standard. The structure of English subjects offered for English majors by the English Section, Western Languages Department, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University is an example of this acquiescence. To achieve a position of a competent English user, students have to study a series of English subjects, namely an English language skills module, an English literature module, an English culture module, and an English linguistics module. These modules all presuppose a model of standard English, and they are supposedly structured in order to enable students to acquire the goal of a user of standard English. Tests and examinations are then used as the criterion against which students’ work in these subjects will be judged. For example, in the subjects, namely *English Writing*, *English Listening and Speaking*, and *English Phonetics*, students have to learn “correct” English, codified grammar, and standard pronunciation and are tested at midterm and at final examinations (see Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, n.d.). However, studying the subjects in all modules does not guarantee that students can become English language experts. They still have to work hard for their English study.

Academic requirements relating to knowledge of standard English (such as the ways of learning codified in grammar and syntax through writing and reading subjects, and a standard system of English pronunciation through phonetics) were criticised by the students. One of them, Mink, expressed her opinion on this way of learning standard English in the university as being "academic": "*I have found that studying English in the university level is more academic. There are a lot of academic contents concerned*". Mink's remark was directed at the prescriptive rules, taught through English subjects, which are imposed on students as English language users. She thought that what was studied at Silpakorn was beyond basic English communicative skills suitable for everyday use. Another student, Belle, sarcastically questioned the role of academic English in real life, the world outside the university:

> **Belle:** *Uneducated street vendors speak broken English. They only say, "You! You! I remember you." and they can sell their products to farangs. For us, English major students, we have tried very hard to study English in the classroom and try to speak English fluently, but it doesn't work well. That's so bad, huh. Vendors speak only few words and they can earn money.*
>
> **Ida**: *They try to communicate.*
>
> **Belle**: *They can speak only broken English, yet they can earn a lot of money. How about us? We still don't gain anything from our English study.*

The statement Belle made disrupts the hierarchical levels of competent users of standard English. Belle's comparison between street vendors and students of English highlights the discrepancy between students' endeavour to study standard English and the seeming fruitlessness of their attempt. Reflected here is the idea of the superiority of communicative purpose, which sometimes does not require a speaker to know standard

English, over the academic demand of authoritative English rules. For Belle, vendors pick up English effortlessly. They use this language as lingua franca and can do better than Belle and her friends in everyday use. It is a paradox that outside the academic learning context in Thailand, where English is a foreign language, those who speak broken English can earn money from their imperfect English while students of English who are more knowledgeable cannot transform their knowledge into money. Belle and her friends are stuck in the rigidity of the authoritative norm of standard English and their effort to get accepted as competent users of the language. Their situation is different from that of street vendors who are using English for their own purpose – that is, to sell their products to foreigners. The English language street vendors use occurs in the context of the heteroglossia of everyday use, in which the utterance is made in a particular context and then refracted and added to, and the meaning of the utterance that is said can even be subtracted for communicative purposes of its user (cf. Bakhtin, 1981). The use of English in this kind of situations reveals hybridity of everyday language, which can be just as effective as standard English for achieving certain goals, or even more effective in the case of Belle and her friends. In this sense, the English language vendors use (however "broken") is a living language, not the language in a textbook, with the hierarchical structures and progressions that textbooks embody.

Another paradox is that these students experience English as something to which they must kowtow or bow down. English will supposedly empower them, and yet its acquisition also involves a powerful feeling of subjugation or disempowerment – one could even say "colonisation". The feeling of being subjugated and disempowered is forcefully expressed in Belle's critique on English study: "*How about us? We still don't gain anything from our English study*". This critique brings into question the necessity of learning standard or academic English. For Belle, it seems that students of English do not

gain advantages and privileges of knowing standard English. In contrast, they feel handicapped.

It is not always that students of English will feel comfortable and empowered from their English study. It is partly true that learning standard English is a means to empower students as John Honey, an advocate of standard English, has stated.

> [C]ausing children to learn standard English is an act of empowerment which will give them access to a whole world of knowledge and to an assurance of greater authority in their dealing with the world outside their own homes, in a way which is genuinely liberating. (1997, p. 42)

However, in the context of Thai students as non-native learners of the language, the so-called liberating power of standard English comes at the cost of Thai students' dependence on the demand for their English language proficiency. In order to get the privilege that native speakers of English have, Thai students have to attempt to master the model of standard language, which is a difficult task for them. Only a few can do it. It is not that all foreign language learners of English can achieve the superior status of "educatedness", which, as Honey argues, "usually leads to a degree of respect even from those who do not themselves possess it" (p. 131). Belle's case is an example of a student who, instead of being liberated, is caught in self-doubt about her ability. She learns in class knowledge of how to master the language, but in practice, she still cannot get there.

The conversation below also tells a different story from Honey's story of empowerment. The conversation shows Bow's desperate attempt to master the English language and be at the same level of native speakers, and her pain of not achieving it.

I notice that the English language of my friend who is now studying abroad is better than mine. In Year 12, her English was so bad. She didn't pay attention to her study. Now when we chat on the internet, I'm wondering why her English is better than mine, why her English grammar is that of educated people. I'm majoring in English, but I still use basic English vocabulary. I think if I couldn't have passed the Entrance Examination and couldn't have got into Silpakorn and I would have enrolled in Assumption University. At Assumption, English is used as a communicative language. I have to use English. In order to survive in there, I have to do every way to make myself understand English. Why couldn't I have failed the Entrance Examination and have studied at Assumption? My English would have been a lot better. I want my English to be better than this. But I'm not capable.

Bow compares herself with a friend who studies abroad. Unlike this friend who uses English in her daily life, Bow uses it only in the confines of English classrooms. Bow considers this lack of opportunity to practice and improve her English outside the classroom as a disadvantage of being a foreign learner of the language, the factor that makes her remain in the inferior status of the outsider. She shows her desperation to be accepted as a competent user of English by criticising her luck to get into Silpakorn University. In Thailand, government universities particularly in Bangkok have higher status than private universities. Those who pass the Entrance Examination and get accepted by government universities are considered more intelligent than those who fail and thus have to attend private universities. Silpakorn University is a government university in Bangkok; Assumption University is a private university. Considering this fact, it seems to be a paradox when Bow says, "*Why couldn't I have failed the Entrance Examination and have studied at Assumption? My English would have been a lot better*". Bow does not feel privileged in studying at one of Thailand's government universities. For

Bow, to be near natives is an important factor in having a chance to use English in everyday life, which Silpakorn cannot offer. This paradoxical statement points out the ironic lack of opportunities to use English at Silpakorn, an educational institution where English is taught as a major field of study and whose role is to implement the Government's development policies.

What has been discussed thus far are classroom stories that tell real-life experiences of Thai students of English at Silpakorn University. Their stories demonstrate another side of the story of English language as power. They are counter-narratives that reveal what has been glossed over in the grand narrative of the Thai Government's discourse of development and empowerment. For me as a teacher researcher, learning from my students' classroom stories is a way to learn about teachers' professional practices mirrored in how students experience the curriculum I offer them. Knowing about these things from the students' narratives will subsequently open up the possibility of negotiating a curriculum with them, despite the hierarchical structures of power that exist within Thai educational system.

Chapter 8

Conclusion:

Reasoning and Practising the Postcolonial Theory

> In practice, I suggest, *research* is always a fumbling act of discovery, where researchers only know what they are doing when they have done it; and only know what they are looking for after they have found it.
>
> Hamilton, 2005, p. 288

8.1 A reflection on postcolonial theory: The awakening

My interdisciplinary research in English literature and English education in Thailand originated from my realisation of the paradoxical nature of my identity as a Westernised Thai. This awakening began when I left Thailand to pursue higher education in Australia in 2000. The paradox of identity would not have been a problem if only it had not caused me a feeling of alienation and displacement. This did not happen suddenly – and I could not name my emotions for some time (in either Thai or English) – but the feeling gradually developed as I began to look back at my home country, my people, and myself, within the new frameworks that were available to me as an international student.

My eyes were opened wide when I began to understand Edward Said's *Orientalism* and other books on postcolonialism I was assigned to read when doing my Master of Arts in English at Monash University. These books bewildered me when I first read them. I was not familiar with postcolonial theory. In fact, I had no ideas at all what postcolonialism was because I had never read any book in this field before. I kept asking myself whether I needed to know postcolonial theory. I came to Australia to study "English" literature, which, for me, meant canonical literary works written by great British and American

authors of the past. I did not want to study something contemporary that contradicted my undergraduate and my first masters training in English in Thailand. Nor was I willing to pick up another unaccustomed practice of reading against the grain (hooks, 1994) that was totally different from my teaching practice at Silpakorn University, Thailand. Most importantly, Thailand was never a European colony. I did not think I needed to know about postcolonialism. I therefore tried to avoid immersing myself in the postcolonial mentality.

Years later, my second reading of *Orientalism* was different. I found something in the book that rang true to me. Living in Australia for a while had changed my attitudes towards the Western world. Some local people I met asked me whether I had a television and a refrigerator at home in Thailand. When I said, "Yes, I do.", they looked surprised. Worse still were questions about corruption and prostitution. I felt embarrassed when hearing these questions.

This experience drove me to look back at my country. For me, Thailand in the new millennium was still a country where old and new were mixed. However, the contemporary condition of Thailand means that people have less opportunity to access the old and to maintain traditional practices and beliefs. Globalisation opened more opportunities for Thais to update their contacts with modernity and technology. In the contemporary consumerist society of Thailand, especially in big cities, people worked hard to earn money to buy Western commodities and to live a modern Western life-style. It was not hard for Thais with means to get new high-tech equipment that was just launched abroad. It was not uncommon to see Thai people spending times after work or weekends viewing new release Hollywood films, rather than going to Thai temples to listen to Buddhist monks' religious teaching. What the monks had to say seemed boring and increasingly irrelevant, when compared with the colour and excitement of a Hollywood blockbuster. Yet even though the Thailand I knew was becoming increasingly Western and

modernised, I was constantly being told that it was a "backward" country. That, at least, is how I interpreted many of the things that people in Australia were telling me.

This forced me to look at myself. I saw an image of a black-haired, yellow-skinned woman. My look was totally different from Caucasians. Westerners assumed from my appearance that I belonged to a group called "Asian". Everyone around appeared to accept the view that Asian countries were "undeveloped", and they blithely repeated generalisations like this in their conversations with one another. Such generalisations upset me because I had never seen my country in this way before. In Thailand, *farangs* I met seemed to like Thai people because according to them, we, Thais, were generous and helpful. They seemed to admire our tradition and culture, and appreciate our ways of life. Some visitors told me that Bangkok was among the top modernised cities in Asia.

This retrospection gave me pain. But it helped me understand what Said (1978/1995) called Orientalist discourse – the Western representation of the Orient. Indeed, Orientalism shaped the dialogue I was having with people I met in Australia. Even though they were not necessarily negatively disposed towards me personally, they still spoke from an Orientalist position, positing the East as inferior to the West.

I also began to understand the painful yet advantageous dual position of insider and outsider occupied by Indian authors who migrated to Britain, as described by Salman Rushdie (1981):

> Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding

> new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. Or it may be that that is simply what we must think in order to do our work. … Indian writers in these islands, like others who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society. This stereoscope vision is perhaps what we can offer in place of 'whole sight'. (pp. 15-19; emphasis in original)

Also living outside Thailand had made what was familiar to me strange when I reflected on myself and my home country. I became aware of my hybridity. Although living in the Bangkok metropolis and being educated in a Western-modelled educational system directed my attention to the West, growing up with Buddhist beliefs and practising traditional Thai customs were reminders of my Thai being. I recognised that, like my country, I am a combination of old and new, tradition and modernity. Yet my new knowledge of Western negative attitudes towards Thailand worked to differentiate what I used to think of as a perfect blend from a new awareness of my identity. I painfully came to the realisation that I was caught in the grip of a contradiction between being Westernised and my life as a Thai.

8.2 My educational journey revisited: Shaping the researcher, shaping the research

There was once a phase in my life that I asked myself why I became an English teacher, and the answer was that I loved English literature. What made me love English literature? The undergraduate study at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand was my first drive and inspiration. I then did my two Master's degrees in English, one at Chulalongkorn University and the other at Monash University, Australia. These questions and answers later brought to me an awareness of my professional becoming.

My engaging with English literary texts was intricately influenced by literary theories and approaches I learned. They became an essential part of my formative years in the universities, and in turn have shaped my worldview and my professional knowledge and practice. When I first encountered English literature in my undergraduate study, I asked my teacher, "Why do I need to study English literature?" I felt that there was no need for Thais to study the literature of other countries. My teacher's answer was that English majors had to know both the language of Britain and the United States and their cultures as represented in the literature of these nations. I thus understood the purpose of studying English literature, which seemed to have nothing concretely relevant to the concerns of Thailand and Thai people. In English literature classes, I studied the history of British and American literature, and developed an understanding of literary genres and literary periods. I also learned about the forms and preferred ways of valuing English literature as practised by English literary critics. By analysing novels and plays through a thematic approach and characterisation, I learned that a literary world was a unique moment that laid open the universal truth about human beings. In effect, this made me see English literature as a miniature representation of a full array of human attributes, of experiences that constituted being "human". English literary texts gave me a second-hand experience, helping me understand the types of people in the social world I lived.

I had not been trained to be a teacher. I had been trained simply to exercise the discriminations that were appropriate to fully appreciate the wealth of the English literary heritage. But my love of literature inspired me to become an English teacher at Silpakorn University. I thought that being a teacher would give me a chance to enable others to experience the "treasures" of the English literary heritage in the way that I had done. When becoming a teacher myself, it seemed natural that I should use the same texts that I had studied as an undergraduate. These texts were mostly canonical and mainstream texts, which perfectly matched the course descriptions of English literature subjects in the

English curriculum of Silpakorn University. I thought the canon was the best and hence the authority when it came to making literary judgments. It was therefore a must for students to know the beauty of the English language used in canonical texts, the best of writing styles and techniques explored by canonical authors, and the universal human values and emotions that the "great" British and American authors represented in their works. I taught my students to approach and interpret the texts in the same way that I had learned from my teachers.

My second Master of Arts in English at Monash provided a new perspective on how to study English literature. My dedication as a "preacher of culture" (Mathieson, 1975) explained why studying at Monash in the English Department proved to be such a shock to me. Instead of finding myself being further introduced into preferred ways of reading, I was presented with an array of positions deriving from contemporary literary theory, all of which problematised accepted or canonical interpretations of texts. I started to read English literary texts written by minority groups and even literature in English written by non-native authors. I then became aware that these authors had different worldviews and their writings were different from the authors of mainstream texts. Most importantly, I became more critical of the canonical and mainstream texts I read.

It was the works of postcolonial theorists and authors, especially those of Said, that greatly contributed to the next phase of my professional knowledge and practice. While Said's *Orientalism* gave me an answer to discriminations in the real social world, his *The World, the Text, and the Critic* provided me with an insight into the worldliness of the text – the discursive relationship between the text and the social, historical world where the text is located and interpreted. This book made me understand the hegemonic power of the dominant Eurocentric culture influencing the writers' productions of their texts and the readers' receptions and responses to the texts. It helped me see that individual writers and

readers are historical and social actors in the culture (Said, 1983, p. 15). Said describes culture as "a system of discriminations and evaluations", whereby a certain class identifies with it and therefore exercises "a system of exclusions" that keeps what does not belong outside it (p. 11). Literature as part of a dominant elite culture thus has hegemonic power to designate what belongs to the culture that produced it by means of defining a boundary marker by which "the concepts of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to the culture come into forceful play" (p. 9). This insight into the text's worldliness helped me locate the connection between the reproduction of the Eurocentric culture and the area of academic criticism, namely English literature teaching that trains students to be the readers or, more specifically, interpreters of English literary texts.

Using the notion of the text's worldliness to investigate English language and literature activities in my Western Languages Department at Silpakorn University, I became aware of how the structure of English literary knowledge was embedded in the Eurocentric literary culture. I found that the aims and contents of activities in English literature classrooms I myself experienced tended to follow the Eurocentric model and leave the Thai culture and contexts or even other "minority" cultures out. Said even assisted me to reflect upon my own professional practice when he criticised literary appreciation and interpretation based mainly on the use of canonical texts taught and performed by teachers of English literature:

> When our students are taught such things as "the humanities" they are almost always taught that these classic texts embody, express, represent what is best in our, that is, the only, tradition. Moreover they are taught that such fields as the humanities and such subfields as "literature" exist in a relatively neutral political element, that they are to be appreciated and

> venerated, that they define the limits of what is acceptable, appropriate, and legitimate so far as culture is concerned. (1983, p. 21)

I came to the realisation that I was a product of and, at the same time, an operator of this Eurocentric model of English literature teaching. And unconsciously, I naturalised the process of validating the authority of the Eurocentric culture. This awareness of being an agent in the operation of the Eurocentric values became a new phase of my professional development. I knew that as an English teacher, I was a "preacher of culture". But being in this position could give me an advantage of politically enacting my resistance. Said's following statement was my inspiration: "if culture exerts the kind of [hegemonic] pressure … and if it creates the environment and the community that allows people to feel they belong, then it must be true that resistance to the culture has always been present" (p. 14).

My engagement with Said and other postcolonial thinkers taught me some methods of resistance. To unravel the hegemonic power of Eurocentric culture in the context of English language and literature learning and teaching in Thailand, the unbalanced relation of power had to be restructured. First of all, resistance to Eurocentric (or neocolonial) power had to start from myself as a learner-researcher. I saw that while conducting research on postcolonialism, I was taking the position of a former student and a current teacher of English language and literature. For me, integral to the learning and teaching of English literature was the act of reading, the reading of English literary texts. Therefore, my inquiry focused on the tensions between literary texts written about Thailand (namely Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*), and myself as the reader of these texts. In my research, my postcolonial reading practices strategically subverted the power of the Western representations of Siam and disrupted the ideologically unified meaning of Siam as the Oriental "other" in the texts that I had chosen to analyse. Said's notion of

Orientalism guided me through an alternative reading of the three texts. It helped address and problematise the textual structure of the Orientalist signifying system, uncovering the silencing of the voice of the Siamese people in these texts. This alternative reading exposed the discursive system of values that constitutes the meaning construction of Siam as "knowledge" of the "other". The disruption of the supposedly immutable meaning of Siam meant the disruption of power invested in the control of Orientalist meaning construction. When the so-called power was disrupted, a change in the power relation within the signifying system was made possible. This opened up a way to shift the meaning construction of Siam into the new discursive realm of my postcolonial writing that I regarded as a response to what has been written of and spoken for Siam in the three Western texts. This is what Ashcroft et al. (1989) calls the "new event" created by postcolonial writing (p. 186).

As a writer of a PhD thesis about the way key Orientalist texts have constructed versions of Thailand and the Thai people for Western consumption, I regarded myself as engaging in a political act of writing back to the centre, in the way that Ashcroft and his coauthors have described. The "new event" created in the textuality of my thesis resided in the dialectical and dialogical relationships between a set of the minor narratives told by Thai teachers and students of English language and literature and a set of the metanarratives told by the Western authors. This new kind of relationships set up the hybridised condition of the thesis' textuality, or what I shall call the "intertextuality" of this study. Within this intertextuality, the thesis itself was transformed into a "contact zone" (Pratt, 1991, 2008), where the metanarratives about Siam were subject to being rewritten and replaced by the contradiction, supplementation, and interaction brought about by the juxtaposition of the minor Thai narratives.

I regard my research as political in nature. I have called the intertextuality of my research a "textual politics" that also deals with my personal history and larger institutional history of English language and literature teaching in Thailand, and, ultimately, Thailand's situation within a globalising world. The intertextual contexts of my research allowed me to transform the problematisation of Orientalist readings of the texts about Thailand into an inquiry into my own teaching practice. What I have learned from the dialogic interaction between my personal experience as a student of English and as an English teacher is that my professional practice was framed by my education as a student of English in Thailand, by my induction into the scholarship of English literary studies in a "traditional" way. This educational background became the theoretical rationale for my practice as an English teacher when I first joined Silpakorn. I adopted this kind of theoretical training as my teaching method. But in Australia, as a result of the alienation I experienced as a student in an Anglo-phone culture, the theory that I learned in Thailand in turn sent me back to investigate my practice. By revisiting this theory that I used to think of as an appropriate way of teaching, I was scrutinising its rationale, and trying to see how my practice might appear differently through another theoretical framework that I was learning from my study in Australia. In other words, my professional journey influenced by the literary theories that I learned from my studies in Thailand and in Australia became the rationale for my critical self-reflection on my teaching practice. Carr (2005) calls this experience "theorising as a practice" or an understanding of the role that theory has played in one's professional development (p. 335).

At that stage, I found myself confronted by practical questions of what and how I should teach. I felt that the focus of the English curriculum of the Western Languages Department at Silpakorn was on how to make students understand and appreciate British and American cultures via English literature learning and how to produce manpower for Thailand's development. For me, this signaled a departure from Thai culture. I wanted English

language and literature learning to be more than this. It could be a tool to make students be aware of the situations and conditions of Thailand and Third World countries in our contemporary world. I wanted students to interpret English literary texts from Thai perspectives. I wanted them to use English to speak themselves to the world. To resist the influx of global cultures into Thailand, students should bring the local to the global.

Realising this limitation of English language and literature teaching in my university and my desire and political intention, I came up with an action research proposal, and postcolonial theory was to be my guide. I decided to research my own teaching practice, and I engaged in developing an alternative way of teaching English literature in my own classroom. Postcolonial theory and my teaching practice were dialogical. This theory threw light on and addressed the problems I encountered in my teaching. What I have learned from my research is that the findings were not confined to possible solutions to my immediate practical problems. Carr (2005) indicates that when he was trying to find solutions to his practical problems about what to teach, educational theory and action research were always seen as part of the problem rather than a source of the solution (p. 341). Similar to Carr, I found that in the process of pursuing my action research driven by postcolonial theory, the professional knowledge I gained from my research rather pointed towards a developing understanding of the ideological work I performed as a teacher of English in Thailand. That is to say, I have realised that I am a "preacher of culture". I did not want to be a preacher of the Eurocentric culture. I made it my commitment that I would rather be a preacher of "cultures". This word, "cultures", came with the plural form, meaning that more than one culture would be acknowledged in my classroom.

Professional practice and development do not deal solely with individual practitioners in relation to the professional knowledge they have learned and gained from practical reasoning. It inescapably involves the shared social and discursive conditions constituting

practice. According to Kemmis (2005), knowledge and theory are "always concretely situated in time and space, socially, discursively and historically" (p. 412). Kemmis warns that practitioners should avoid privileging knowledge in people's head over the social and discursive orders that support that knowledge. To do that,

> practitioners wanting to understand the world of practice must also enter the discursive and social realms of practice at a meta-level, consciously seeing themselves as shaped by modes of practice and ideas about practice that are part of a shared social and discursive world with its own distinctive modes of structuration that exist 'outside' the heads of individual practitioners (even if they can only be apprehended cognitively, that is by knowing subjects). (p. 402; emphasis in original)

Once again I found that my teaching practice has also been shaped by "extra-individual" features in Kemmis's term or the social and discursive features that make my practice the collective property of groups (p. 393). In the course of my research, I have learned from my practical knowledge that my teaching practice has been formed and conducted in a social setting that is larger than my individual self. There is an intersection between my personal history, and larger institutional history of English teaching in Thailand, and the situation of Thailand in a globalising world. I discovered that like all my teacher-fellows, I am part of the education system. My teaching practice is shaped by the discourse of modernisation and development initiated by the Thai Government and operated by educational institutions and teachers who implement the Government's policies.

My action research was grounded on Kemmis' statement that since practices are constituted by extra-individual features as well as through the actions of individual practitioners, changing practices is then "an extra-individual process". Action research

therefore includes not only changing “the actions of individual”, but also “making changes in the social, discursive and historical dimensions in which practices are constituted and reconstituted, as they evolve over time” (p. 393). Taking Kemmis’ argument as a starting point, I began to study the dynamic between my individual personal dimension and my knowledge of the literary theories I learned and the social, discursive settings within which my teaching practice is shaped and reshaped (namely teachers, students, English literature curriculum, history of modern education in Thailand, the Thai Government’s development plans, and the globalising condition of Thailand). Therefore, the purpose of my action research project is not only problematising and understanding the socio-historical world in which my teaching practice is embedded, but also changing it (cf. Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 186).

My consciousness about the neocolonial discourse and postcolonialism led me to apply some postcolonial strategies to an intervention in my own English literature classroom I was researching. In my classroom action research project, postcolonial strategies were enacted in the form of a new selection of curriculum contents and materials and new pedagogical activities aiming for a change in my teaching practice and hence a change in teaching and learning conditions. The classroom intervention did the following work. It transformed the unbalanced power relationship among the Eurocentric ideology accompanying the Eurocentric model of English literature teaching, the teacher as an authoritative figure in the classroom, and the students as recipients in knowledge transfer into a more balanced relationship.

With the new teaching practice, I have found that students are never passive receivers of training and socialisation (see Barnes, 1976, p. 18). In my postcolonial classroom, students were not positioned as passive learners of transferred knowledge, but I wanted them to feel that they were equipped with the power to speak for themselves. They used this

opportunity to lead communication in their learning process, bringing the social and cultural contexts outside the classroom into their classroom discussion of the literary texts they studied, especially of those Orientalist texts about Thailand. This meant a chance to speak, not merely in order to locate themselves in the social and cultural history of Thailand, but to identify as belonging to an interpretive community, engaging critically with and challenging the ideological work represented by the Orientalist texts. Talking thus became their means of learning from their own interpretation and from those of their friends. Their classroom talks were then transformed into meaningful activities, in which each student helped construct knowledge from what they brought with them to the lesson. Their dialogue was not solely constrained by the Eurocentric content and ideology of the English literary texts they read and by the instruction that I was giving. Their talks developed into a negotiation between the existing body of knowledge that was transferred to them by the texts and by the teacher, and their knowledge that was jointly constructed out of what each of them brought from outside the classroom. As Barnes (1976) shows us, classroom learning is best seen as "an interaction between the teacher's meanings and those of the students, so that what they take away is partly shared and partly unique to each of them" (p. 22). This is why I have presented my students' conversations in this thesis in the form of the minor narratives counterposed to the Orientalist metanarrative about Thailand.

In addition, I learned about the meaning and significance of researching my students' and my fellow teachers' talk. In order to understand what my participants understood, I had to critically understand and interpret their conversations and actions, which were socially, culturally and ideologically shaped, and which subsequently framed my action research. It was like a moment of epiphany once I became aware of the significant moment of my active and critical engagement in my participants' talk. I came to realise that I was not a passive observer in the process of learning from my participants. Like my participants, I

was part of my research project. I was active in learning to appreciate that my professional knowledge was a joint construction between my reflection on my own teaching practice and my critical response to what my students and fellow teachers of English language and literature learned from their talks. Here Mercer (1995) whispered to me that knowledge exists as a social entity, not just as an individual possession (p. 66). Professional knowledge is therefore socially shared. I could not improve my practice only by considering my individual needs and ignoring the precious resources of knowledge constructed by those involved in my self-learning process. I have finally realised that even though I am a teacher now, I am still learning. I keep learning from my self-critical reflection and from other people around me. Learning is a life-long activity indeed.

8.3 Final comments and suggestions for future studies

8.3.1 Into the postcolonial community

In my literary study of the three Orientalist texts about Thailand, I have offered an alternative postcolonial reading of these texts by positing Said's concept of Orientalism as an interpretive frame. With their historical and biographical approaches, academics in Thai history and Thais who express their general concern about the distorted portrayal of King Mongkut in the texts tend to conclude with a judgment about the unreliability of Anna Leonowens' information about His Majesty's life and the historical facts during his reign. By contrast, my postcolonial reading encompasses an analysis of the construction of "textual reality" in these texts, putting forwards a way to understand how this "truth" or "reality" is constructed in the conception of those who inhabit the same ideological universe as Leonowens, the original author. My reading foregrounds as well how neocolonial power is invested with the Orientalist binary that positions Siamese as "otherness" in contradistinction to to the Western values familiar to Leonowens. Together with my reading, I studied my students' reading of these texts. Although within different interpretive frames, my interpretation and those of my students are both treated in the

thesis as narratives expressive of the experiences of those who have seen their nation and countrymen portrayed in the Orientalist texts about Thailand. The textual politics of my thesis writing has turned these interpretations into comments that expose and challenge the discursive Orientalist representations of Thailand.

Apart from this, I have taken into account the complexity of the ideological becoming and identity formation of Thai teachers of English revealed through their personal narratives. I juxtaposed their stories with Leonowens' writing (as well as its subsequent reproductions) about her role as an English teacher committed to civilising people of a primitive land, and promoting the supposed benefits of knowing English. This approach enabled me to reveal the tensions and subtleties of the experiences as well as the plurality of identity formation of Thai people, who in the Orientalist texts are "written about" and "spoken for". I took this chance to rewrite a version of history of English language teaching and learning in Thailand. Contained in my history writing is the dialogical configuration of many voices, some of which offer frustration and resistance to the ideological interpellation of certain aspects of English education, some of which provide support. My history writing redefines the relationship between the East and the West, which is established by the textual strategies in the three Orientalist texts of my study. Such recognition of the multifaceted East-West relationship in my history writing has dissolved the rigid Orientalist boundary marker between East and West, allowing the border crossing from East to West. The stories of the East have been interwoven into the stories of the West. They become the story of East-Meeting-West.

Thailand was never a Western colony. However, when we view Orientalism as a process of "conquering, dominating, administering, and governing" the Orient (Lazarus, 2002, p. 33), we can see that the Orientalist tradition with which Leonowens writes her story about Thailand has symbolically brought Thailand under Western cultural domination. The case

of Thailand is that of a pseudo-colony. In such a pseudo-colonial occupation, Orientalist representations have objectified Thai people, rendering them as a body of knowledge for Western consumption. Real Thai people with a voice and a history have been transformed into the "Oriental" – the ideological construct that is universal and generic of "Asian". Like colonial people, Thai people's voices are silenced, and the history of Thailand has been written for them, not by them. Viewed in this frame, Thailand has more or less shared the tensions of colonial experience.

To enact a counter-hegemonic strategy, I made the space of my thesis a "contact zone" – a site where disparate voices and standpoints, Thai and Western, are brought together. Writing in this contact space allowed me to reclaim the multiplicity of Thai people's voices, letting them speak out about what has been written and glossed over in the Orientalist history writing. With a political intention in mind, I turned this "contact zone" into a postcolonial site of "speaking and writing back" to the European centre. Their subjectivity is restored to them; rather than being objectified by Orientalist discourse, they are turned back into the subjects of their history and experiences. Their tensions are acknowledged as they experienced them.

The postcolonial perspective of my thesis writing has allied the "experiences" of Thai people in my research with those of the former colonial subjects who constitute a world-wide postcolonial community. Together with theirs, the Thai experiences have become another critique of Western cultural domination, interrogating the marginalisation, and discrimination of the East made by and from the West. People of the postcolonial community have found their ways to respond to their *sahibs*. So have I. My research has shown that Thais have power to speak by and for themselves. The Thai voices in my thesis have resonated with the postcolonial voices, renouncing the normalisation and naturalisation of the all-inclusive Orientalist representations.

"Cultural difference" is the key term that I would like to direct to the West. To borrow from my students' remarks on the Orientalist generalisation about Thai people, I want to say to the West that they cannot "mix and match" us with other Asians (see Chapter 6 of this thesis). Thailand is a uniquely individual nation. We are different from other nations, socially and culturally, since we are historically located in different and specific social and cultural contexts.

8.3.2 Towards future collaborative postcolonial pedagogy and curriculum

In the aspect of postcolonialism, my action research, designed for my pedagogical improvement, sets out a hidden agenda for empowering my students. By empowerment, I mean my role as a teacher to prepare students for the world outside classroom. An issue concerning the new generation's increasing abandonment of Thai culture, including Thai language, values, and beliefs, and their absorption of Western social and cultural values, has been widely discussed in Thailand. I hold the view that English literature education can be more than teaching Thai students to understand British and American cultures. It can be employed to empower Thai students by raising their awareness of how Western power takes cultural expression in our everyday life. Certain teaching methods, teaching materials, and classroom activities will help students develop a critical consciousness, and critically interrogate the influx of "dominant" Western cultures into Thailand.

My PhD research is an initial stage of this. While improving my teaching practice, I have made a change in providing students the conditions to develop the knowledge and skills that enable them not only to recognise their historical locations and subject positions, but also to be aware of the effects of "dominant" cultures on Thai aspects of life. Locating myself in the position of a preacher of "cultures" (not of "a" culture) in my research, I suggested to my students a new way of thinking about and dealing with the lingering omnipresent Western domination in contemporary Thailand. Classroom discussions of the

new selection of literary texts became a practice – in other words, an exercise – for students to critically engage with and comment on the position of Thailand in the eyes of Westerners.

However, still essential to the empowerment of students are issues of how to detach them from the metropolitan West, whose influences appear nearly everywhere in many forms in Thailand, as well as how to develop their awareness of and appreciation of Thai culture. These are yet to be researched in the future. However, I consider that this work cannot be conducted by me alone. It still requires participation from a self-critical community of my colleagues at the Department of Western Languages, Silpakorn University. The English curriculum as a whole needs to be improved to serve this necessity. It means the action research process has to be extended from just my individual practical matter into involving other teachers in my university. My fellow colleagues have to recognise the need for the curriculum reform, which is closely related to their teaching practice and the effects of their role as preachers of culture(s) on students. "We", as teachers, have to set a collective agenda to improve our teaching for the purpose of finding new ways to prepare students for the globalising world outside the university.

A brief final note should be made here. It should not be taken for granted that in liberating Thai students' mind, they have to be antagonistic towards the West. If it is so, students (and even teachers) will easily fall into the same trap as the West's "white supremacy". Instead, the postcolonial pedagogy should make students acknowledge cultural differences that will be helpful to them in the era of intercultural communication. In their contact with people from other cultural background, students should try to cross the cultural barriers, and learn to understand and appreciate different cultures.

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Appendix 1: My Diary

29 September 2000

Now I'm in Melbourne, Australia. This is the place where I want to be. I come to this Western country to study. In Thailand, I'm a teacher. Here in Australia, I'm what Australians call an international student. Teaching is the career that gives me passion. This is my passion for more knowledge. I have passion for living in a foreign land and then learn their language and culture.

I'm so excited to be here. Excitement is not the only feeling that I have now. I don't know how to express these feelings that are lingering in my mind. I feel like I'm traveling, traveling to the land where there are many people …

After a long journey, I came to a crossroads where I met diverse groups of people. I didn't know whence they had come. They looked different from me and from one another. The woman with long black hair over there wore a long sleeved cotton blouse and a long exotic skirt covering her ankles. She looked so reserved. Not far, a brunette in a sleeveless top and shorts talked closely with three guys in their swimming suits. Under the big tree, two men held each other close. They did not care that they were looked at by others, especially by a dark-skinned woman with a red dot in the middle of her forehead who put her right hand on her bosom. People in front of me were countless. They looked like dots: white, black, yellow, brown.

I heard some of them speak the same language as me. And I knew the language that the man in a tuxedo spoke because I had learned that language when I was four. Oh, what kind of language did that little girl speak? It sounded strange with glottal sounds. But the youngsters with a different skin colour from her could communicate with her in the same language though with an accent.

There were many voices that I heard in this place, but I didn’t understand what they meant. There were also many conducts that gave me pleasure, amazed me, offended me, upset me, or angered me. This crossroads was the place where I had to adjust myself, accept some truth, or made some decision. So did other people at this crossroads. They had to do the same as me though with different degrees and extents. This crossroads was a place where people came, met and learned from each other, willingly and unwillingly.

Appendix 2: My Reflective Journal

3 June 2004

First week (Introduction and Orwell's "A Hanging")

At least 25 students enrolled in the subject. This subject is an elective subject for English major students. Most students do not have many choices for elective subjects. That is why there are a lot students enrolling in this subject. My colleague said to me before class that it maybe because they are intersted in the film, *Anna and the King* that I plan to use as a study text in the subject.

Not all students came to this first class. Only 20 students came. As usual, Silpakorn students come to class late. They come after me. While waiting, I looked at the study chairs where my students would sit. There were five rows of chairs and each row contained about 10 chairs. This arrangement of chairs was not suitable for the new class I wanted to experiment. Maybe I had to rearrange the chairs next time. Few students started to come in. I waited for a while. My class started 15 minutes later than the scheduled time.

Today was my first class after stop teaching for about four years. Compared to the very first literary class that I had taught four years ago, I was not so nervous. I had more confidence than that time. Still, I didn't think I had good preparation for my teaching.

I realised that language competence is the problem for me and my students. For me, lecture in English is very difficult. I have to prepare for the lecture in English and have to recite it. At first, I planed to use the English language in my teaching. One student agreed with me. But other three students asked me to use Thai. The rest of the class kept quiet. I decided to use the Thai language as a medium for my teaching for this time. Using Thai, I had more confidence in what I was saying because I did not have to be cautious of the English grammar, syntax, and vocabulary in English. However, some concepts could not be communicated by the Thai language. For that reason I had to switch to English terms. The Thai language could not be used to communicate complex ideas, such as colonialism,

imperialism, Orientalism, and Orientalist discourse that I gave to my student as an introduction.

My students are not familiar with listening to lecture in English. They are afraid that they cannot receive all of what I want them to know. In the past four years, my former students, though majoring in English, were not competent enough to speak and write perfect English. Their reading skill was not good. Their problem in reading was that they were not familiar with reading long literary texts. The longer the texts are, the more complex ideas they contain. While reading, they had to translate sentences into Thai. (English is a foreign language in Thailand.) It was even worse when they had to learn the complex and unfamiliar themes. Lirerature is believed to be the study of beautiful and standard English, plus the example of universal theme. But this time may be different. I have been informed by my colleague who has taught this group of students since they were in their first year that some students are pretty good. Their English is good, and they are cooperative.

While I gave the lecture, most students jotted down what I was saying. Some just listened to me. About three students at the back looked so bored with my teaching. And they talked with one another. I was a bit discouraged. I told myself that it was the usual reaction that I got from the literary class. English literary texts are difficult. Literary theories are confusing and students are not familiar with these theories. Studying English literature requires more than the basic skill of reading. It's not just analysing strings of words clustering together in the sentences and paragraphs. English syntax does matter. Style is important. In addition, students still need to know the social background in which the text was produced and they have to know the biography of the authors of the texts. They also need to recognise the metaphors, figures of speech, and the technique that the authors use. Students cannot analyse the texts from nothing. But when I looked at my students (when I taught George Orwell's "A Hanging"), their face looked blank. I tried to encourage them to speak something. "What do you think this sentence imply?" Still, they

kept quiet for a while. Some tried to answer my question silently. They might be afraid that they would give the wrong answer or they might not understand what happens in the story. I had to emphasise that there was no wrong answer in this class. Yet it was not a success at this time. So I had to postpone my plan to prompt them to think critically for the next class. I am still not sure whether the next class will be better or not.

I gave students excerpts from Edward Said's *Orientalism*. One student asked me whether she could study only the extract from the literary texts (the 3 novels) that I assigned them. I said, "no". Students have to finish the whole book because this subject is not the introduction to English literature course. They need to read the whole book. I realised that I had to find some technique to help them read through the long text.

I emphasised to my students that what I wanted from this course is their critical thinking. And I wanted them to be able to adapt their skill of critical analysis to their everyday living. Literature is not just a text – old-fashioned and abstract text which does not yield anything to the reader. They can manage the reading texts for their own application.

In my introduction, I taught my students the nineteenth century imperialism as a social background for literature produced at that time and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (hoping that they would use it as a critical way to interpret the colonial texts). Most students were still confused of what Orientalist representation is and they seemed not to pay their interest in it. However, one student asked me to clarify the word, "Imperialism". The other student asked me if the binary opposition is an example of Oreintalist discourse or Western representation of the East. At first, I did not expect that students would have any question about my lecture. I had thought that Thai students were passive learners. I was encouraged a little bit when I got this rare occasion. At least, there were some students participating in my lecture. I didn't want to be the only one who spoke in class. Yet I still wondered whether my students would use Said's concept of Orientalism as an approach to the texts they had to read in my class.

While teaching “A Hanging”, I noticed that students were stuck with their understanding of the Burmese context and imperial power in colonial Burma. I tried to help them associate some ideas or images with Thai contexts. Still, they were confused and didn’t have a clear picture of what happened in the story. Vocabulary is also their problem. A student told me that when reading English literary texts, she had to look up all the words that she didn’t know. That’s why she was slow in reading and was struggling with her understanding of unfamiliar concepts and whatever. I told the class that it was not necessary to know all words in the text because they could guess from other surrounding words. They said to me that they tried very hard to understand the texts by using that technique, yet they found that it did not work well. It was hard to understand literary texts containing difficult vocabulary. After listening to their problem, I thought I had to do something to solve this hard-to-be-solved problem. Reading the whole text together was, of course, not a good idea because it takes time. Students will not have a chance to think and the class will be boring. But I don’t know what to do!

It is obvious that one student concerned about her grade. She asked me how many students got an “A” in last year’s class. I believe that most students in my class think have the same thinking. I think that grade is always a barrier in learning English literature in the Thai classroom. Students are afraid to think differently. How can they learn to think critically if they keep thinking of getting a good grade from me? And it is very difficult to change their attitude. I want my student to be active in my class and to go back home with some thoughts that prompt them to associate classroom thinking with their everyday life.

I finished the lesson by asking students to finish the two short stories (Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant” and Kipling’s “Beyond the Pale”) before coming to class. And I know that they won’t read the short stories. They are waiting for me to digest the stories for them.

Appendix 3: First-round Interview Prompts (Teacher)

<u>Past Experience</u>: These questions are aimed to prompt you to think about you past experience as a student of English language and literature. Feel free to answer any question that you want.

1. Think about your experience as an undergraduate student. What factors made you decide to major in English?

2. Did you like to study the English language? Why? What benefits did you get from English language study? What disadvantages did you get from English language study?

3. Based on experience as a student of English literature, what advantages do you think you had gained from studying English literature?

4. What were its disadvantages?

5. How much do you like English literature?

6. Think of your very first classes of English literature. What did you feel when you started studying English literature?

7. What problems did you have?

8. Since English is not your mother tongue, how could you manage to cope with reading English literary books?

9. What was you classroom environment?

10. What was your opinion about the teaching styles of your teachers?

11. Do you have a chance to express your opinion about or discuss the reading texts in your classroom?

12. What kind of English literary texts were you assigned to read?

13. What was your most favourite book at that time? Why?

14. What was your worst book? Why?

15. Did you feel any oppression when studying English literature?

16. Do you think that you English literature study has shaped the way you look at the world?

17. How have these things impacted your own perception of yourself and your attitude towards the position of Thailand in the global community?

Appendix 4: Second-round Interview Prompts (Teacher)

Your current professional practice as a teacher:

1. What do you think are the similarities and differences between English classrooms you attended when you were a university student and the classroom that you are teaching now?

2. What is the best book you have ever taught? Why?

3. What is the worst book? Why?

4. What were your reactions to those books?

5. What problems do you have when teaching English literature?

6. How can you manage to solve those problems?

7. What are your criteria in choosing English literary books for your students?

8. Are you happy to teach canonical or mainstream texts?

9. What do you expect from teaching those books to your students?

10. Have you ever taught minor literary texts or other alternative to your students?

11. Have you tried to insert something else apart from the content of the reading book in your literature class?

12. What you think your students can gain from your teaching and from studying literature in general?

13. Is it necessary to have English literature course in the university level?

14. What do you think about motivation in studying English literature?

15. What is your opinion of the saying, "Literary world imitates the world we live in and reveals human nature"?

Appendix 5: Third-round Interview Prompts (Teacher)

Postcolonialism and English literature classroom

1. Do you think that Thai people are Westernised? Why?

2. What do you think of Western civilization, modernity and knowledge?

3. Do you think that Thai people are culturally and ideologically colonised?

4. What you think of English literature and that kind of situation of Thailand?

5. In your opinion, do you think whether there is a connection between colonialism/imperialism and English literature?

6. What is your ideal English literature classroom?

7. What do you think of your current English literature curriculum?

8. What should be the direction of English literature teaching in your opinion?

9. What is your ideal classroom?

10. Any comment?

Appendix 6: First-round Interview Prompts (Student Group Discussion)

Discuss the following questions. These questions are flexible. Feel free to answer or say anything you want. Speak as if you were speaking among friends. You don't need to answer all questions. This prompt aims to encourage you to have conversation with your friends.

1. Why do you choose to major in English?

2. Do you like to study the English language? Is it necessary to study English in the university level? Why?

3. What do you think of the idea of English as a global language (the language that people around the world use to communicate to one another)?

4. What do you think is the significance of English in Thailand now?

5. Do you like to study English literature? What do you think you get from studying it? Is it necessary to study English literature in the university level? Why?

6. How much do you like English literature?

7. What is your favourite English literary text you have ever read? Why?

8. What is the worst text? Why?

9. Before coming to your first class with me, what did you expect this class to be?

10. Think. What do you expect to get from this class when the end of the semester comes?

11. Compared to other subjects you have studied before, what do you think of English literary texts you have to read in this class?

12. Do you have any problem in reading and interpreting English literary texts in general? What do you think is the problem of studying English literature?

13. How can you solve your problem? What strategy do you use to understand the book?

14. What kind of classrooms do you want English literature classroom to be?

Appendix 7: Second-round Interview Prompts (Student Group Discussion)

You have read English texts and films written and made by Westerners about Asian countries. (They are *Burmese Days*, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King*, and *The King and I*.)

Burmese Days

1. Do you like Burmese Day? Why or why not?

2. What do you think you get from studying this novel?

3. What is your reaction to the representation of native characters in the book (any character)?

4. What is your reaction to the representation of Western characters in the book (any character)?

5. Do you think differently from the author of the book?

6. What are your arguments and contradictions with the story?

7. Can you make any connection between this text and Thailand?

The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, *Anna and the King*, and *The King and I

1. Have you ever heard about any story about Anna Leonowens before you study this story from this class?

2. If yes, can you tell the story? What was your reaction to the story at that time?

3. What did you expect when you knew that you have to study Anna's story with me in this class?

4. How much do you like the two movie versions of Anna's story (*Anna and the King* and *The King and I*? What did you like and didn't like in the movies?

5. How much do you like Anna Leonowens' writing of Thailand in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*?

6. What is your agreement or disagreement with Anna's story (in any version)?

7. What did you think when seeing Thailand mirrored in the story?

8. Can you make any connection between Anna's story with the current situation of Thailand?

Appendix 8: Third-round Interview Prompts (Student Group Discussion)

Seeing the two movies, *The King and I* and *Anna and the King*, do you have any of your own alternative version of Anna's story? Discuss the questions freely.

1. How do you want the story of Anna and King Mongkut to end?

2. What kind of story do you think King Mongkut would have told about his relationship with Anna?

3. What kind of story would you like the story of Siam to be?

Appendix 9: Explanatory Statement (Teacher)

Monash University letterhead

Explanatory Statement for Teacher Participants

Date: 31 May 2004

Project Title[4]: Post-colonial Approaches to English Education in a Thai University

English literature taught in British empires was used as a cultural tool to colonise the mind of native students. It has power to impose on native students' minds British culture, ideology and value judgments. The teaching and study of English literature lead to students' adoption of Anglocentric attitudes in which Britain becomes a centre and British culture becomes 'superior' to native culture. Thailand as a free country has adopted the same English literature curriculum as that of colonial countries. English canonical texts as 'great literature' are used in Thai universities. Traditional interpretive activities focusing on aesthetic values, universalism and authorial intention of canonical texts empower the Anglocentric culture conveyed by the texts, and thus silence the voices of Thai students. My name is Pornsawan Tripasai and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Brenton Doecke an associate professor in the Faculty of Education towards a PhD (Education) at Monash University, Australia.

The aims of this research are to investigate the power of English canonical texts that leads to cultural and ideological colonisation, to empower the voice of Thai students that are silenced in traditional classrooms, and to develop teachers and students' understanding of the adoption of Anglocentric attitudes accompanying traditional English literature study. I hope that the findings of this research will pave the way for the acknowledgement of Thai students' voices in English literature classrooms and cooperation between students and teachers in resisting neo-colonial influence accompanying English literature teaching and study.

As you know, I am a lecturer at the Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. I am seeking English literature teachers to participate in my research project. Participants will be asked to take part in personal interviews that will take a form of ongoing discussion between the researcher and the participant. The interviews will be divided into 3 meetings. Each meeting will take about 45 minutes at your convenient time while you are at the university. The venue for the interviews will be teachers' common room. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd meetings will be in June, July, and August 2004 consecutively. The language(s) used in the interviews will be Thai or English or both. Any language can be used at any time during the interviews. You will be invited to double check, change, modify, and comment on tape transcripts. The interviews aim to prompt you to think critically about the relation between neo-colonial power of English literary texts and your professional practice, as well as Thailand's neo-colonial condition.

No findings which could identify any individual participant will be published. All participants will be given pseudonyms in tape transcripts and written records. Access to tapes and original copies of writing assignments/writing examinations/reflexive journals will be restricted to participants. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the coded

[4] The title as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original Research Proposal was submitted in March 2004.

data which will be stored for at least five years as prescribed by the university regulations, and then destroyed.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate you may withdraw at any time. You will not be required to give a reason to me, and neither not participating at all nor withdrawing will have a negative effect on you. You also have the right to decline to do particular activities without giving reasons.

I will send a copy of the thesis to Secretary of the Faculty of Archaeology when it is finished. If you are interested to have a summary of the results of my research, please let me know before the project finishes or contact me at the below address. I am hoping to publish various parts of it as journal articles and conference papers. It may also be appropriate to publish the whole in book form.

Before 1 October 2004, if you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me at Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, Bangkok 10200, telephone: [redacted] fax: [redacted]

After 1 October 2004, please contact me at Faculty of Education, Building 6, Monash University, Victoria 3800, Australia, telephone: [redacted] fax: [redacted] email: [redacted]

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research (2004/163) is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at the following address:

The Secretary
The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH)
Building 3D
Research Grants & Ethics Branch
Monash University VIC 3800
Australia
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Fax: +61 3 9905 1420
Email: scerh@adm.monash.edu.au

Thank you.

____

Pornsawan Tripasai
Telephone: [redacted]

Appendix 10: Explanatory Statement (Student)

Monash University letterhead

Explanatory Statement for Student Participants

Date: 31 May 2004

Project Title[5]: Post-colonial Approaches to English Education in a Thai University

English literature taught in British empires was used as a cultural tool to colonise the mind of native students. It has power to impose on native students' minds British culture, ideology and value judgments. The teaching and study of English literature lead to students' adoption of Anglocentric attitudes in which Britain becomes a centre and British culture becomes 'superior' to native culture. Thailand as a free country has adopted the same English literature curriculum as that of colonial countries. English canonical texts as 'great literature' are used in Thai universities. Traditional interpretive activities focusing on aesthetic values, universalism and authorial intention of canonical texts empower the Anglocentric culture conveyed by the texts, and thus silence the voices of Thai students. My name is Pornsawan Tripasai and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Brenton Doecke an associate professor in the Faculty of Education towards a PhD (Education) at Monash University, Australia.

The aims of this research are to investigate the power of English canonical texts that leads to cultural and ideological colonisation, to empower the voice of Thai students that are silenced in traditional classrooms, and to develop teachers and students' understanding of the adoption of Anglocentric attitudes accompanying traditional English literature study. I hope that the findings of this research will pave the way for the acknowledgement of Thai students' voices in English literature classrooms and cooperation between students and teachers in resisting neo-colonial influence accompanying English literature teaching and study.

As you know, I am a lecturer at the Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. I am in charge of the subject 323453 Selected British and American Novels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. I am seeking students enrolling in the subject 323453 who are willing to be participants in my research. Participants will be asked to:

- Join focus group discussions,
- Keep reflexive journals about literary texts and film studied in the classroom,
- Give me permission to use/quote in my thesis/journal articles/conference papers their writing assignments and/or writing examination that reflect their personal attitudes towards neo-colonial power of English literary texts and neo-colonial condition of Thailand.

The focus group discussions will prompt participants to think critically about English literary texts and film studied in the classroom as well as Thailand's neo-colonial condition. The group discussions will be divided into 3 ongoing meetings. Each meeting takes about 45 minutes during the day after participants' study time. The venue for the meetings will be students' common room or University's cafeteria. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd

[5] The title as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original Research Proposal was submitted in March 2004.

meetings will be in June, July, and September 2004 consecutively. All meetings will be audiotaped. The language(s) used in the group discussions will be Thai or English or both. Any language can be used at any time during the group discussions. Participants will be invited to double check, change, modify, and comment on tape transcripts. The reflexive journals will take about 10 to 15 minutes. They will be done after the end of the study of each assigned literary text or film. Any language can be used to write the journals.

As you know, I am taking a position of both a teacher and a researcher. Participation or refusal to take part in my research will not affect your class assessment. Your class participation and assessment are separable from my research project, which focuses on your attitudes towards English literature study, and your reflection on neo-colonial power of English texts and Thailand's neo-colonial condition. Your grade will be marked on the basis of and in accordance with Silpakorn University's policy on assessment. You will not gain any favour from me for your participation and will not receive any disadvantage/punishment for your refusal. Any quotation from your reflexive journals, writing assignments and/or writing examination will be done only after all final class assessment is over and only with your permission.

No findings which could identify any individual participant will be published. All participants will be given pseudonyms in tape transcripts and written records. Access to tapes and original copies of writing assignments/writing examinations/reflexive journals will be restricted to participants. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the coded data which will be stored for at least five years as prescribed by the university regulations, and then destroyed.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate you may withdraw at any time. You will not be required to give a reason to me, and neither not participating at all nor withdrawing will have a negative effect on your class assessment. All group participants also have the right to decline to do particular activities without giving reasons, but must be willing to contribute to the group discussions, rather than merely listening and observing.

I will send a copy of the thesis to Secretary of the Faculty of Archaeology when it is finished. If you are interested to have a summary of the results of my research, please let me know before the project finishes or contact me at the below address. I am hoping to publish various parts of it as journal articles and conference papers. It may also be appropriate to publish the whole in book form.

Before 1 October 2004, if you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me at Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, Bangkok 10200, telephone: [redacted]
fax: [redacted]

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email: [redacted]

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Research Grants & Ethics Branch
Monash University VIC 3800
Australia
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Fax: +61 3 9905 1420
Email: scerh@adm.monash.edu.au

Thank you.

____

Pornsawan Tripasai
Telephone: [redacted]

Appendix 11: Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title[6]: Post-colonial Approaches to English Education in a Thai University

I agree to take part in the above Monash University research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- be interviewed by the researcher
- allow the interview to be audiotaped
- double check, change, modify and comment on tapes transcripts
- allow the researchers to use/quote the tape transcripts only with pseudonyms in the thesis and related publications, namely journal articles and conference papers

- ❑ I understand that a pseudonym given to me by the researcher will be used to protect my identity from being made public
- ❑ I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research
- ❑ I also understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
- ❑ I also understand that in order to protect my identity from being made public, the tape transcripts will be used/quoted only with pseudonyms in the thesis and related publication, namely journal articles and conference papers

Please tick the appropriate box:

- ❑ The information I provide can be used in further research projects which have ethics approval as long as my name and contact information is removed before it is given to them
- ❑ The information I provide cannot be used by other researchers without asking me first
- ❑ The information I provide cannot be used except for this project

Name:
Signature:

[6] The title as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original Research Proposal was submitted in March 2004.