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When bisexuality becomes a heteronormative fantasy: Gender bias in the English-Thai translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*

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ABSTRACT

While an ideal translation would be unbiased, achieving this is not always possible, as translations can reflect various biases held by translators, whether positive or negative. Translation is not a neutral process; it involves subjective choices made by translators, who may be influenced by their personal biases. Such biases, whether related to race, age, gender, or ethnicity, can appear in different forms, from subtle stereotypes and assumptions to explicit discrimination, affecting fairness and equity in both personal interactions and broader societal contexts. Against this backdrop, this article examines the gender bias present in the Thai translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, which centers on the main character depicted as bisexual. Through textual analysis, it will demonstrate how the main character's bisexuality is straightwashed to align with heteronormativity in the target text. The focus will be on how the translator's biased choices impact the portrayal of the character's bisexuality in the Thai translation, as well as possible reasons behind this straightwashing.

KEYWORDS

translation; gender bias; bisexuality; straightwashing; heteronormativity

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INTRODUCTION

Thailand has seen a surge in gender diversity representation, evident in various forms of media such as films, dramas, series, and literature that highlight LGBTQIA+ themes. However, much of this focus tends to center on gay, lesbian, and transgender narratives. In bookstores and literary festivals, there is a devoted section for *niyai wai* (นิยายวาย), or *yaoi* or Boy's Love (BL) novels, which typically feature romantic stories between two boys. Similarly, *yaoi* series, known as *siri wai* (ซีรีส์วาย), are produced in abundance, while representations of lesbian and transgender stories are less common. Bisexuality, in particular, receives even less attention, compared to these groups.

In 2023, a controversy erupted on X (formerly Twitter) over the novel *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, which features a bisexual main god character. Written by New York Times bestselling author Rick Riordan and published in 2016, the book is celebrated for its inclusivity—be it race, sexuality, gender identity, and body image. With its translation available in 2017 and a debate emerging in 2023 amid the spread of so-called "woke"

awareness in the country, many Thai netizens praised the novel for its representation of queer identities, while others criticized it as an imposition of a "gay" identity onto the main god character. This sparked a heated debate, with supporters of the novel responding by educating the critics about the historical context of pederasty in Greek and Roman mythology. This criticism not only reveals a common misconception that equates bisexuality with being gay, but it also highlights that, despite growing awareness of gender diversity, heteronormativity and homophobia continue to persist in Thailand. Additionally, the target text (henceforth TT) of the novel, at times, tends to favor a heteronormative perspective by means of "straightwashing," reflecting the translator's bias and potentially undermining the inclusive nature of the source text (henceforth ST).

Although striving for unbiased translation is an ideal goal, there are instances when translations can be biased. This is because translation is not a neutral process; it involves subjective decisions made by translators, who may be influenced by their personal biases (Abdelnasser, 2023, p. 1212). When discussing bias, it often revolves around variables, such as race, age, gender, or ethnicity. These factors frequently become focal points for prejudice and discrimination as well as influence how individuals and groups are perceived and treated. Bias related to these aspects can manifest in various ways, from subtle assumptions and stereotypes to overt discrimination. As a result, this culminates in harm to fairness and equity in both personal interactions and broader societal structures. With that in mind, this article aims to shed light on gender bias textually presented in the TT of the inclusive ST, *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*. Specifically, it will explore how the main character's bisexuality is straightwashed in the TT. The focus will be on (1) how the translator's biased choices, whether conscious or unconscious, impact the portrayal of the character's bisexuality in the Thai translation, and (2) possible reasons behind such straightwashing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Straightwashing and bisexual erasure

Like whitewashing, a process that involves the erasure or minimization of racial or ethnic identities in media and representation, straightwashing is the process of assimilating individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, or otherwise into heteronormativity. In simple terms, it involves portraying non-straight people or characters as straight (Smith & Mitchell, 2024). Recently, straightwashing has become increasingly prevalent in Hollywood films. That is, LGBTQIA+ characters still face significant challenges in media, especially in comic book adaptations. For example, Mystique from the *X-Men* is bisexual in the comics but is portrayed as straight in the films. The 2018 film *Black Panther*, while praised for its diverse cast, was criticized for removing a lesbian romance. Similarly, Star-Lord from *Guardians of the Galaxy* is depicted as bisexual and polyamorous in the comics, but this is not reflected in the films. Also in 2018, the Freddie Mercury biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* was accused of straightwashing and bi-erasure (Smith & Mitchell, 2024). Moreover, not only is straightwashing found in films, but it is also present in games. Ruberg (2018) found that

although the video game *Undertale* is widely beloved across various gaming communities, it has been significantly straightwashed. This process involves the erasure of its queer content and the recasting of the game to align with the interests of heterosexual male gamers.

Back in cinema, straightwashing is most often evident in the casting process, where directors choose heterosexual actors for queer roles, thereby denying opportunities to queer actors. Often, the bisexual community is particularly affected by erasure and straightwashing. In 2020, only 10% of the films released by major studios featured bisexual characters, down from 14% in 2019. In contrast, 60% of gay men and 50% of lesbian characters were present in these films in 2020 (Lynch, 2023). According to Lynch (2023), one of the most prominent aspects of bisexual erasure is that the term "bisexual" was not used in eight out of ten films. The only films in which the term was mentioned are *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, with the term appearing only once in each. In the other films, it is left to the audience to determine whether a character is bisexual. The lack of representation is evident when characters make offhand remarks or glance at another same-sex character with affection, yet their sexuality is never explicitly explored. *Lady Bird* (2017) exemplifies this issue with the most noticeable instances of bisexual erasure.

Although studies on straightwashing are evolving, a review of the literature reveals that most research on straightwashing and bisexual erasure focuses on the issues in audiovisual media. Few studies examine straightwashing in written translation. This scarcity has prompted this study to explore straightwashing alongside the translator's bias in turning bisexuality in fiction into heteronormativity, which operates on the assumption that sexual and romantic desires are exclusively between women and men.

Bias

Bias often accompanies a readiness to favor one's own perspective while simultaneously showing reluctance or negative judgment towards the positive aspects of others' viewpoints. This is evident in people's strong inclination to either accept or reject other individuals or groups (Simo & Ahmed, 2022, p. 12251). The statement well aligns with those given in a number of dictionaries that provide similar definitions of "bias." They describe it as an inclination or preference that unfairly favors one side, person, or group over another, often influenced by personal opinions or prejudices and not based on objective judgment (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024; Collins Dictionary, 2024; Oxford Dictionary, 2024). According to Wallett (2023), there are seven distinct types of bias in writing: confirmation bias, anchoring bias, groupthink bias, stereotype bias, cultural bias, assumptive bias, and generalization bias.

Bias can be detected through the language used. This means that the way something is expressed—whether through word choice, tone, or framing—can reveal underlying biases. Such biases might be subtle and manifest in the selection of certain terms or the emphasis placed on particular aspects. Navarro (n.d.) defines bias as an unfair preference or prejudice towards one person, group, or thing over another, which can be held by individuals, groups, or institutions and may lead to both positive and negative outcomes. She points out that biases, whether conscious or unconscious, extend beyond just ethnicity and race. While

racial bias and discrimination are well documented, biases can also be directed towards any social group. Factors, such as age, gender, gender identity, physical abilities, religion, sexual orientation, weight, and other attributes, can all be subject to bias. Navarro identifies two types of biases: conscious bias (or explicit bias) and unconscious bias (or implicit bias). She notes that unconscious biases are social stereotypes about specific groups formed outside of one's conscious awareness. These implicit biases are more common than explicit prejudice and often conflict with an individual's conscious values. Certain situations can trigger these unconscious attitudes and beliefs (Navarro, n.d.). Based on this, biases can be classified into two main categories, epistemological bias and framing bias, both of which were discussed in Recasens et al.'s (2013) study on biased language. Epistemological bias involves linguistic elements that subtly influence the perceived credibility of a statement, often through presuppositions. This type of bias deals with propositions generally accepted as true or false and is subtly implied, assumed, asserted, or qualified within the text through the use of factive verbs, entailments, assertive verbs, and hedges, as further explained in detail below.

1. *Factive verbs* like "realize" and "reveal" presuppose the truth of their complement clauses, unlike verbs like "stand" and "indicate," which present propositions as beliefs or results (Kiparsky & Kiparsky, 1970, as cited in Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1652).
2. *Entailments* are directional relations where the truth of one word or phrase is a consequence of another. For example, "murder" entails "kill" because you cannot commit murder without killing. However, "murder" specifically involves killing in an unlawful and premeditated manner (Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1652).
3. *Assertive verbs* assert a proposition without presupposing its truth, with the level of certainty varying by the verb, where verbs like "say" and "state" are neutral, while "point out" and "claim" express doubt (Hooper, 1975, as cited in Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1652).
4. *Hedges* reduce commitment to the truth of a proposition, as shown by "Eliminating the profit motive *may have a lower* rate of medical innovation" compared to the more assertive "Eliminating the profit motive *will decrease the* rate of medical innovation (Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1653)."

In straightforward terms, epistemological bias can be bidirectional. That is to say, it can arise either from questioning a proposition typically accepted as true or from making assumptions about a proposition generally regarded as false.

Conversely, framing bias is typically more explicit. This occurs when subjective intensifiers and one-sided terms are used, clearly reflecting the author's side of a certain viewpoint (Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1653).

1. *Subjective* intensifiers are adjectives or adverbs that enhance the subjective impact of a phrase or proposition, as seen in "fantastic" in "Schnabel himself did the fantastic reproductions of Basquiat's work," compared to the more neutral "accurate" in "Schna-

bel himself did the accurate reproductions of Basquiat's work (Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1653)."

2. *One-sided terms* reflect only one of the sides of a contentious issue (Recasens et al., 2013, p. 1653). Patel and Pavlick (2021) further study linguistic biases and call the term "polar words" to describe words that evoke strong emotional responses, either positive or negative. They adopt this term from Wiebe et al. (2004).

Interestingly, framing bias has been explored in studies on attitude recognition and argument subjectivity. Researchers may draw on concepts from the subjectivity literature to identify assumptions and implications that reveal framing bias.

In the realm of translation, Simo and Ahmed (2022, p. 12250) put it plainly by stating that "bias in translation is the translator's act of violating the principle of truth or sincerity and hence presenting the translated material in a new form that is either beautified/positive or distorted/negative." And according to Ghazala (2002, pp. 154-158), the two major types of biases in translation are negative and positive. "Negative bias" refers to any unjustified alteration of the source language text that may cause a harmful considerable loss of meaning. This bias can stem from changing, adding or dropping something in the TT for personal reasons, for example:

1. *Impressiveness* refers to an addition or alteration made to the ST in order to make it appear more striking, dramatic, or emotionally impactful than intended.
2. *Snobbishness* refers to an attempt to elevate the perceived sophistication or intellectual quality of the text, often at the expense of accuracy or appropriateness. This can involve using overly elaborate or pretentious language to impress readers, rather than faithfully conveying the original meaning.
3. *Hypocrisy* involves altering the text to present a more favorable or politically correct version than the original, often to align with societal or cultural expectations or to avoid offending certain groups.
4. *Lack of precision* refers to changes that result in a loss of specific detail or nuance, leading to a less accurate or less informative representation of the ST. This can involve substituting precise terms with more general ones or altering the intensity of expressions, which can impact the overall meaning, such as replacing "hundreds of people" in the ST with "a number of people" in the TT (Ghazala, 2002, p. 155).
5. *Ignorance* refers to errors or omissions that arise from a lack of knowledge or understanding about specific details, such as names, cultural references, or specialized terms, leading to inaccuracies in the TT.
6. *Negligence* refers to errors that occur due to a lack of attention to detail or carelessness, leading to inaccuracies in the TT.
7. *Excess of commitment to the ST*, even to blunders and historical mistakes, occurs when a translator adheres too closely to the ST without correcting or addressing errors, inaccuracies, or outdated information. This excessive fidelity can lead to the perpetuation of incorrect or misleading details.

8. *National motives* involve altering the TT to reflect specific national, cultural, or ideological perspectives. These changes are often made to align the translation with particular viewpoints or to avoid political or cultural sensitivities, which can lead to a distortion of the original meaning. Ghazala (2002, p. 155) gives an example of the term "Persian Gulf States" in the ST that is changed to "Arab Gulf States" in the TT due to political or cultural sensitivities. That is, the former is seen as reflecting the Iranian perspective, while the latter aligns with the views of Arab countries in the region. This change is often made to avoid offending or alienating specific groups, reflecting regional or national preferences, and aligning with political or cultural identities.
9. *Racial discrimination* involves adding or emphasizing terms that reflect racial or ethnic biases, which can alter the ST's meaning and potentially perpetuate prejudice. In this instance, Ghazala (2002, p. 156) provides an example where "Nazi" is added to "Germany" in the TT.
10. *Prejudice* involves introducing biased or judgmental terms that reflect negative or subjective views not present in the ST, such as changing "the developing countries" in the ST to "backward countries" in the TT (Ghazala, 2002, p. 156).
11. *Exaggeration* refers to the practice of inflating or overstating details in the TT, which were not as extreme in the ST, such as rendering "many" as "thousands" (Ghazala, 2002, p. 156).
12. *Minimization* involves downplaying or understating details, making them appear less significant than they are in the ST. This can lead to a misrepresentation of the scale or severity of the situation.
13. *Humiliation* involves introducing terms that belittle or disparage the subject matter, often adding a derogatory tone that was not present in the ST. This can distort the meaning by implying negative qualities or a lower status than originally intended.

In contrast, "positive bias" refers to the translator's justifiable adjustment to show respect to readership, avoid insulting them, explain ambiguities, glorify or euphemize for social purposes, correct blunders and printing mistakes, drop out unnecessary, trivial or taboo words, etc. (Ghazala, 2002, p. 156). The following are examples of positive bias.

1. *Showing respect* involves making modifications to ensure the TT is considerate of the target audience's sensibilities, avoids offense, and maintains a level of professionalism.
2. *Avoidance of insulting readers* involves making adjustments to avoid potentially offensive or sensitive content. This can include omitting, altering, or softening terms that might be considered inappropriate, taboo, or disrespectful.
3. *Explanation of ambiguities* involves adding clarifying phrases or classifiers to ensure that the target audience understands the intended meaning of terms or references that might be unclear or ambiguous in the ST.
4. *Glorification* involves using elevated or reverential language to enhance the perceived importance or sacredness of terms and concepts.

5. *Social euphemization* involves using softer or less direct language to address sensitive, taboo, or potentially offensive subjects.
6. *Correction of mistakes* involves fixing errors or inaccuracies from the ST to ensure that the TT is factually correct and aligns with historical or contextual realities. This practice helps to maintain the accuracy and reliability of the TT.

Translating sexuality

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2006), sexuality is defined as "a central aspect of being human throughout life that encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction." Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships (WHO, 2006). When it comes to research that combines sexuality and translation, it is found that the prevailing perspective is that translation projects itself onto the translation of sexuality rather than the sexualization of translation (Santaemilia, 2018, p. 12). Translating the language of sex or pleasure is not a neutral endeavor, but a political act with significant rhetorical and ideological implications, reflecting the translator's attitude toward existing conceptualizations of gender/sexual identities, human sexual behavior(s), and moral norms (Santaemilia, 2018, p. 12).

Foucault (1990, p. 224, as cited in Bassi, 2020, p. 523) states that sexuality should be understood as a modern construct, emphasizing the need to examine the connection between the societal obligation to speak truthfully about sexuality and the prohibitions imposed upon it. Santaemilia (2018, p. 13) notes that the queer turn in Translation Studies has led to a more critical examination of sexuality and translation, emphasizing how individuals' identities and desires are textualized and offering analytical frameworks for understanding these particular textual representations. Recently, a lot of research has paved the way for the field to move beyond treating heterosexuality as the default object of study, promoting resistance to heteronormativity as the primary critical stance and challenging the idea of fitting into fixed sexual identity categories (Santaemilia, 2018, p. 13). Démont (2018) examined the strategies that translators can adopt when faced with queerness's evanescence. The study identified three distinct modes of translation: misrecognizing translation, minoritizing translation, and queering translation. The misrecognizing translation simply ignores queerness, whereas the minoritizing translation diminishes its fluid nature by reducing its connotative richness to a flat, superficial exchange of denotative equivalents. In contrast to these two approaches, queering translation respects the elusive nature of queerness by using techniques that maintain its complexity and richness. What Démont noted in the study is noteworthy—it is said that although the misrecognition of the queer sexual dimension can be simply detected by comparing between a ST and a TT, it stills serves as a reminder of the ethical dimension of a translator's task, which is connected to the reader through an ethical contract of trust, and it testifies to the ongoing efforts to erase queer sexualities and, ultimately, queer individuals (Démont, 2018, p. 158).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method through textual analysis, comparing between the ST and the TT. The ST for this study is *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, written by American author Rick Riordan and published in 2016 by Disney-Hyperion. It consists of 376 pages and is divided into 39 unnamed chapters. The novel revolves around Apollo, the god cast down from Olympus and transformed into a teenage boy in New York City. With divine power stripped away, he must navigate the modern world while seeking to regain his father Zeus's favor. Throughout the story, he faces enemies—gods, monsters, and mortals—and finds shelter at Camp Half-Blood, where he confronts the challenges threatening his existence. The TT is translated into Thai as เทพยากรณ์ผู้ซ่อนเร้น and consists of 420 pages with the same number of chapters. The translation was done by Davis Chanchaiwanit, a male translator who received the Surintaracha Award for Outstanding Translators in 2021, and was published in 2017 by Enter-Books.

To address Research Question 1, the textual analysis was employed to compare the word choices and meanings in the ST and the TT. This process involved a detailed examination of words, phrases, and sentences within their specific contexts, focusing on assessing the ST's inclusivity, neutrality, and portrayal of bisexuality. Using Recasens et al.'s (2013) concept of biased language, this analysis aimed to identify semantic shifts and biased language in the TT throughout the story. It revealed how the translator's biases might have affected the translation and highlighted any distortions in the depiction of the character's bisexuality. To address Research Question 2, Ghazala's framework on translation biases was used to explore the underlying reasons for the observed biases.

RESULTS

Biased language in the translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*

In *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, the context clearly reveals that the main character, Apollo, is bisexual—he finds both men and women physically, sexually, or emotionally attractive. For example, in one excerpt, Apollo reflects on his own experiences and feelings about his romantic relationships through the first-person point of view "*I*." He mentions:

> *Oh. Perhaps some of you are wondering how I felt seeing him with a boyfriend rather than a girlfriend. If that's the case, please. We gods are not hung up about such things. I myself have had…let's see, thirty-three mortal girlfriends and eleven mortal boyfriends? I've lost count. My two greatest loves were, of course, Daphne and Hyacinthus, but when you're a god as popular as I am—*
>
> (Riordan, 2016, p. 94)

From the excerpt at the very beginning of the story on page 94, it is clear that Apollo's sexuality is bisexual. He openly discusses his romantic experiences with both female and male partners, reflecting a nonchalant attitude towards traditional gender norms. His reference to having had numerous romantic relationships with both genders and his notable loves, Daphne and Hyacinthus[1], underscores his fluid approach to sexuality. Moreover, there are further excerpts that indicate his bisexuality:

> *You loved every pretty girl, she scolded. And every pretty boy, for that matter.*
> *"Not like you," I cried. "You were my first true love. Oh, Daphne!"*
>
> (Riordan, 2016, p. 239)

> *I wanted to flirt with Chiara[2] and steal her away from Damien…or perhaps steal Damien[3] away from Chiara, I wasn't sure yet.*
>
> (Riordan, 2016, p. 345)

In the second excerpt, Apollo's acknowledgment of loving "every pretty girl" and "every pretty boy" highlights his attraction to both genders. The scolding nature of the remark emphasizes that his romantic interests are well-known and showcase his fluidity. When Apollo responds by declaring Daphne as his "first true love," it underscores a deep emotional connection with a female figure while also affirming his affection for male partners like Hyacinthus. The third excerpt further exemplifies Apollo's bisexuality as he expresses his desire to flirt with both Chiara and Damien. His uncertainty about whom he wants to pursue reflects an openness to romantic possibilities without restriction to one gender. This playful consideration reinforces his multifaceted nature in love and attraction. Together, these excerpts depict Apollo as a character who navigates love and attraction without the constraints of a strictly defined sexual identity, thereby reinforcing the notion of his bisexuality throughout the narrative.

However, when it comes to the Thai translation, the translator, at times, straightwashes the bisexuality of the main character into heteronormativity. The patterns of straightwashing will be presented through Recasens et al.'s (2013) concept of biased language below. The textual analysis revealed no epistemological bias; however, two types of framing bias were detected. The shifts are shown in the backtranslation (henceforth BT) as follows:

Polar word

(1)	ST	TT	BT
	I hadn't even had my first kiss! (Yes, my godly catalog of exes was filled with more **beautiful people** than a Kardashian party guest list, but none of that seemed real to me.) (Riordan, 2016, p. 62)	ผมยังไม่เคยมีจูบแรกเลยด้วยซ้ำ! (ก็จริงที่แค็ตตาล็อกแฟนเก่าฉบับเทพของผมนั้นเต็มไปด้วยรายชื่อ**สาวสวย**เยอะยิ่งกว่ารายชื่อแขกที่มาปาร์ตี้ของคาร์เดเชียนเสียอีก แต่ตอนนี้เรื่องเหล่านั้นเหมือนกับไม่เคยเกิดขึ้น) (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 75)	I hadn't even had my first kiss! (It's actually true that my godly catalog of exes was filled with more **beautiful young women** than a Kardashian party guest list, but those stories now seem to have never happened.

In (1), the phrase "beautiful people" in the ST is gender-neutral; the term "beautiful" can describe a range of attributes for both men and women. The phrase encompasses individuals of all genders, which allows for a broader interpretation of Apollo's attractions by the readers. For example, this is evident in Apollo's narratives, where he says, "*I'd lost the **beautiful Hyacinthus** because of a quarrel with Zephyros* (Riordan, 2016, p. 234)" and "*He bent all my love toward the **beautiful Daphne*** (Riordan, 2016, p. 240)." This neutrality implies that Apollo's past romantic interests could include both men and women. In contrast, the TT opts for สาวสวย, "beautiful young women," which specifically refers to only one gender. The use of the specific term "women" in the TT restricts the narrative to a particular subset of Apollo's romantic interests. This framing bias is expressed through such one-sided term and thus affects how Apollo's bisexuality is perceived by confining the narrative to a single gender and overlooking the broader scope of his attractions. Consequently, this change results in a loss of the broader interpretation of Apollo's bisexuality and limits the understanding of his romantic interests in this instance.

(2)	ST	TT	BT
	Even when I was a god, I had trouble remembering the names of all my exes. The young woman sang a harvest song at one of my Delphic festivals. Her voice was so beautiful I fell in love. True, I fell in love with each year's winner and the runners-up, but what can I say? I'm a sucker for **a melodious voice**. (Riordan, 2016, pp. 129-130)	...แม้จะเป็นเทพ ผมก็ยังจำชื่อแฟนเก่าได้ไม่หมดหรอกนะ เอาเป็นว่าจะมีสาวคนหนึ่งร้องเพลงเกี่ยวข้าวในงานเทศกาลเฉลิมฉลองเดลฟีของผม และเธอคนนี้ก็ร้องได้ไพเราะมากจนผมตกหลุมรัก ก็จริงที่ผมตกหลุมรักผู้ชนะเลิศของทุกปีรวมถึงผู้เข้ารอบทุกคน แต่จะให้ผมพูดอะไรได้ล่ะ ผมแพ้ทาง**สาวเสียงหวาน**นี่นา (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 149)	Even when I was a god, I still couldn't remember the names of all my exes. Anyway, there was a young woman singing a rice harvest song at my Delphic festivals, and she sang so beautifully that I fell in love with her. It's true that I fell in love with all the year's winners and runners-up. But, what can I say? I have a weak spot for **melodious-voiced young women**.

Like (1), the ST in (2) uses the gender-neutral phrase "a melodious voice," which emphasizes a specific trait (the beauty of the voice) rather than the gender of the singer. This allows for a broader interpretation, suggesting that Apollo's romantic interests could have included individuals of any gender. In comparison, the phrase สาวเสียงหวาน, "melodious-voiced young women" in the TT is gender-specific and narrows the focus to women. This change, once again, exemplifies framing bias through the use of a one-sided term that highlights a particular gender. It reflects a negative shift in the portrayal of Apollo's bisexuality by suggesting that his romantic interests were confined to young women with melodious voices.

Subjective word

(3)

ST	TT	BT
…I wasn't sure Rachel would want to see me. She would expect explanations from her Main Man, and while I had invented ***mansplaining*** and was its foremost practitioner, I had no answers to give her. (Riordan, 2016, p. 90)	...ผมจึงไม่แน่ใจว่าเรเชลจะอยากเจอผมหรือเปล่า เธอคงอยากได้คำอธิบายจากหนุ่มของเธอ และแม้ผลจะเป็นผู้คิดค้นการ***โอ๋สาว***ขึ้นมาในโลก แถมยังเป็นหัวหอกในวงการนี้ ผมก็ยังไม่มีคำตอบจะให้เธอ (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 107)	...so I wasn't sure Rachel would want to see me. She would expect explanations from her man, and while I had invented ***man-consoling*** in the world and was its practitioner, I still had no answers to give her.

In (3), "mansplaining" often positions the man as the authoritative figure who explains things to the woman, which can undermine her agency and knowledge. Conversely, "consoling" involves a nurturing approach, where one partner offers comfort and support during difficult times. This act fosters emotional closeness and vulnerability that create a more equitable and intimate relationship dynamic. Changing the original "mansplaining" into "consoling," therefore, intensifies the focus on nurturing dynamics and highlights the emotional support instead of authority.

(4)

ST	TT	BT
You'll hear stories about the goddess of springtime being all sweetness and daffodils and **nibbling on pomegranate seeds**… (Riordan, 2016, p. 153)	คุณอาจได้ยินตำนาน เกี่ยวกับนางมาว่านางเป็นเทพีแห่งวสันตฤดูที่อ่อนหวานราวกับดอกแดฟโฟดิล **คอยขบเมล็ดทับทิมอย่างน่ารัก**... (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 176)	You might have heard the myth that she was the goddess of springtime, as sweet as daffodils, **nibbling on pomegranate seeds adorably**…

The ST in (4) is taken from a narrative where Apollo refers to Persephone, the goddess of springtime, describing her as sweet. The use of the word "sweetness" in the ST likely

influenced the translator to convey his own impressiveness of Persephone, thus leading to the addition of the adverb อย่างน่ารัก, "adorably" in the TT. This addition enhances the affectionate and charming image of Persephone's action and reflects a subjective interpretation by the translator. Evidently, (4) can be another example that showcases how preexisting narratives and internal biases can shape the translation process of the translator.

(5)

ST	TT	BT
The Nine Muses were my **constant companions**, all of them beautiful in their own way. (Riordan, 2016, p. 240)	เทพธิดามิวส์ทั้งเก้าเป็นเหมือน**ผู้รู้ใจข้างกาย** ทุกนางล้วนสะสวยในแบบของตนเอง (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 270)	The Nine Muses were like my **constant soulmates**, all of them beautiful in their own way.

In (5), while "constant companion" refers to a person that has been with someone most of the time (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024), the term is rendered as "soulmate," suggesting a deeper emotional and romantic connection. This shift from "companions" to "soulmates" thus reflects an inclination to frame relationships in a more heteronormative context.

(6)

ST	TT	BT
My second instinct was to turn to Meg McCaffrey. How quickly I **had grown used to** her annoying yet strangely endearing presence! (Riordan, 2016, p. 318)	สัญชาตญาณต่อมาของผมค่อยนึกถึงเม็ก แม็กแคฟฟรีย์ ไม่อยากเชื่อว่าผมจะ**เกิดติดใจ**นิสัยน่ารำคาญแต่ก็น่ารักของเธอคนนั้นได้เร็วขนาดนี้ (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 357)	My next instinct was then to think of Meg McCaffrey. (I) couldn't believe how quickly I **had come to be smitten with** her annoying yet endearing habits.

In (6), "Had grown used to" suggests a process of becoming accustomed to something or someone over time. This implies a gradual adjustment or acceptance of Meg McCaffrey's presence, which may not necessarily be positive or negative but reflects a neutral adaptation. In contrast, เกิดติดใจ, "Had come to be smitten with" in the TT conveys a more positive emotional shift, indicating an affectionate or warm feeling towards Meg McCaffrey. This phrasing implies a positive, personal connection rather than mere adaptation. It is important to point out here that Apollo's feelings for Meg McCaffrey in the story are complex. As the narrator, Apollo does not explicitly express romantic love for Meg, as he once said, "*Don't misunderstand me. I felt no attraction to Meg* (Riordan, 2016, p. 39)." Instead, his emotions are more layered, showing a profound sense of friendship, respect, and protective care rather than clear romantic affection. Therefore, the translator's choice of using subjective words subtly alters the emotional tone of the relationship described. This adjustment could inadvertently introduce a heteronormative bias, which implies a deeper, potentially romantic connection that may not be present in the ST.

(7)

ST	TT	BT
Then a woman appeared in my passenger seat. "You've got to hurry, man." I almost jumped out of the sun. My guest was dressed like a Libyan queen of old. (I **should** know. I dated **a few of** them.) (Riordan, 2016, p. 80)	แต่แล้วก็มีผู้หญิงคนหนึ่งปรากฏกายตรงเบาะนั่งฝั่งผู้โดยสาร "รีบหน่อย" ผมสะดุ้งแทบลอยตัวไปจากรถพระอาทิตย์ แขกของผมคนนี้แต่งตัวเหมือนราชินีลิเบีย (ผมแยกออก**อยู่แล้ว** เพราะเคยเดตด้วยมา**เยอะ**) (Chanchaiwanit, 2017, p. 95)	But then, a woman appeared in my passenger seat. "Hurry." I flinched, almost jumping out of the sun chariot. My guest was dressed like a Libyan queen. (I (can) **definitely** tell. I dated **many of** them.)

There are two shifts in (7). First, the modal "should" in the ST is changed to "definitely" in the TT. While the former suggests a degree of uncertainty or approximation and implies that the narrator is somewhat knowledgeable based on limited experience, the latter indicates certainty and confidence. The shift from "should" to "definitely" introduces a subjective intensifier that enhances the narrator's perceived confidence and authority, suggesting a stronger and more assured knowledge of the Libyan queen's appearance. Consequently, this change can affect how readers view the narrator's self-perception on the subject. Second, changing "a few" to "many" implies that the narrator has had a significantly larger number of such relationships. This amplifies the extent of the narrator's relationships, which skews the perception of Apollo's romantic history as well as suggests a more pronounced focus on these types of relationships than initially indicated. As a result, this shift may misrepresent the narrator's focus on women. If the character is portrayed as leaning more towards heterosexual experiences than intended, it could overshadow other aspects of his bisexual identity.

In summary, examining the issue through the lens of framing bias, as discussed by Recasens et al. (2013), the results reveal that straightwashing in the TT can occur through the use of one-sided words and the use of subjective words by means of addition and shifting. This, therefore, leads to the undermining of the ST's inclusivity and neutrality as well as narrows the portrayal of the character's sexuality by imposing a biased perspective to align with heteronormativity.

Exploring reasons behind straightwashing

Note, however, that bias can be either unconscious or conscious. The examples found in the translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle* can be further elucidated by examining the theories and concepts put forth by scholars. These frameworks help explain how both overt and subtle biases may have influenced the translation process. The straightwashing in

the TT through the use of one-sided and subjective language reflects a negative bias, as defined by Ghazala (2002), in three ways:

1. The translator's personal motive for impressiveness or alignment with conventional norms, contribute to these distortions. Although the context clearly establishes the character's bisexuality, the translator may have held a preconceived belief that men are generally attracted to women. This underlying assumption likely contributed to the shift towards a heteronormative portrayal in the translation, undermining the character's true sexual orientation. In other words, the translator's reliance on stereotypes reinforces a binary view of male attraction, ignoring the character's non-binary sexual orientation.
2. Negligence on the translator's part, in failing to preserve the ST's inclusive nature, further exacerbates this bias. This could be due to the translator's focus on the primary meaning of terms like "beautiful" and "melodious" which may have been shaped by the particular context of the narrative, often centered around women. It should be noted that the translator's negative bias, resulting from his negligence, can be likened to the concept of "inadvertent bias" discussed by Mazzoleni (2007, as cited in Simo & Ahmed, 2022, p. 12254) in the context of political reporting. Inadvertent bias arises when journalists unintentionally present a subjective or distorted version of reality due to a lack of awareness. Similarly, in translation, negligence manifests when translators inadvertently introduce bias into the TT by failing to recognize or address their own unconscious prejudices or oversights. This type of bias is not the result of deliberate intent to mislead but rather stems from a lack of critical awareness or thoroughness.
3. The translator's exaggeration might stem from a desire to enhance the narrative's dramatic effect and amplify the narrator's personal experiences. According to Example (7), this exaggeration not only boosts the dramatic intensity of the narrative but also makes the narrator appear more knowledgeable and assertive, which might be intended to engage readers more effectively.

DISCUSSION

In examining the translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, several critical issues related to translation bias and its impact on the representation of gender and sexuality emerge. The discussion here focuses on straightwashing and the underlying reasons for the negative bias in the Thai translation.

According to Santaemilia (2018, p. 12), translating the language of sex or pleasure can reflect the translator's attitude toward existing conceptualizations of gender/sexual identities. This study shows that the translator, sometimes, straightwashes the TT through the use of one-sided (or polar) and subjective language, which reflects a negative bias. To discuss the findings, it is worth noting Wright' (2015) article. In the discussion surrounding the straightwashing of the *Pride DVD* cover, director Matthew Warchus notes that the removal of specific queer references was likely a marketing decision aimed at broadening the

film's appeal. While he finds the changes "clumsy" and "foolish," he understands the instinct behind them, as the intent was to attract a wider audience by minimizing perceived barriers related to sexual orientation. However, while the straightwashing might expand the audience, it risks undermining the film's core message and its significance in representing queer identities. In another scenario, according to Ruberg's (2018) study on straightwashing in the video game *Undertale*, the normalization of queerness is a double-edged sword; Ruberg warns that if queerness is fully normalized without deeper engagement, it might lead to straightwashing, where straight players ignore or downplay queer content. To combat this issue, Ruberg advocates for depicting bias—whether external (from society) or internal (from individuals). This approach encourages players to confront the realities of queerness rather than merely acknowledging its existence. Ultimately, the reasons behind straightwashing, as highlighted in both reviews, include marketing decisions aimed at broadening audience appeal, the fear of alienating potential viewers uncomfortable with explicit queer content, and commercial pressures that prioritize financial success over authentic representation. These factors often lead to the dilution of queer elements in both film and gaming.

While Ruberg suggests depicting bias, it is undeniable that bias can be either conscious or unconscious, which makes it challenging to determine whether the bias is intentional or merely a result of oversight. In translating *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle* into Thai, it appears that the bias in question is likely due to the translator's impressiveness, unconscious negligence, and exaggeration, as outlined by Ghazala (2002). Negligence, in particular, is worth mentioning. When the surrounding context focuses on women, the translator's own unconscious bias shines through the TT. This is evident in the way neutral terms like "beautiful" and "melodious" are replaced with gender-specific language, reflecting a stereotype that men are predominantly attracted to women. This unconscious bias leads to a portrayal that leans towards heterosexuality, thereby obscuring the character's bisexuality and distorting the intended representation of his sexual orientation. Therefore, it can be argued that the context within which a translator works can significantly influence and potentially mislead their translation choices, as context plays a crucial role in shaping how translators interpret and convey the meaning of the ST. In a similar vein, Démont (2018, p. 158-159) pointed out that the misrecognition of context often results in an isolated interpretation of content, failing to account for the broader nuances that are essential for an accurate translation. It should be noted that this comes primarily from the fallacy of literalness; it does not actually bring us "closer" to the original.

With that in mind, understanding the cognitive view of context, as proposed by Baker (2005), is crucial for analyzing how unconscious biases can influence translation. This perspective highlights a fundamental distinction between the objective reality of the world and the subjective interpretations of the language user or translator. In essence, it posits that it is not the actual state of the world that shapes language use but rather the translator's personal assumptions and perceptions about that world. These cognitive biases influence how language is interpreted and how meanings are inferred in a given situation. Applying this to the translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle*, we can see how the translator's own assumptions about gender—specifically a bias toward viewing men's

attractions as predominantly heterosexual—can shape translation choices. Despite the ST's depiction of Apollo as bisexual, the translator's unconscious bias results in a skewed representation. This aligns with the cognitive view, which suggests that the translator's internal assumptions and the surrounding context significantly impact how he renders the text. Thus, the translation reflects these cognitive biases rather than the more nuanced depiction of Apollo's bisexuality, highlighting how personal and contextual factors shape translational behavior.

To prevent such biases from affecting the translation, it is essential for the translator to go beyond merely focusing on the immediate sentences and instead take into account the broader context surrounding the text. This means that translators should examine both the preceding and subsequent content to fully grasp the nature and complexity of characters. Context should be regarded as a resource that provides valuable insights and aids in accurate interpretation (Melby & Foster, 2010, p. 3). By considering the entire context rather than just isolated parts, translators can better understand the character dynamics and thematic elements.

CONCLUSION

The Thai translation of *The Trials of Apollo 1: The Hidden Oracle* reveals important insights into the challenges of gender bias and its effects on character representation. Based on the thorough analysis of biased language vis-à-vis gender bias, only framing bias was found. The analysis of the TT reveals that the translator straightwashes the main character's bisexuality through the use of polar and subjective language. These linguistic choices significantly narrow the depiction of the character's bisexuality, skewing the portrayal toward a heterosexual norm. In other words, although some words are neutral, the translation restricts the character's romantic interests to women alone, which omits or downplays the character's attraction to individuals of all genders.

Such biased language can be attributed to three main reasons behind the translator's biases. First, the translator's personal impressiveness for a heteronormative perspective may lead to bias. This perspective assumes that men are predominantly attracted to women and vice versa, which can result in stereotyping. Second, the translator's biased language may be a consequence of negligence and a lack of thorough attention to the ST's neutrality and inclusivity. Despite the clear indication of the character's bisexuality in the original context, the translator may have been misled by isolated contexts focusing on women, failing to recognize that certain words could be inclusive of all genders. Finally, the translator's exaggeration likely arises from his effort to heighten the narrative's dramatic impact and intensify the portrayal of the narrator's personal experiences.

To address these biases, translators need to adopt a more comprehensive approach that considers the broader context of the ST. This involves a thorough examination of both immediate and overarching narrative elements to accurately capture the complexity of characters and themes. By being mindful of framing biases and stereotypes and by striving

to be faithful rather than exaggerating, translators can better preserve the ST's integrity and provide a more authentic representation in the TT.

NOTES

1. Daphne and Hyacinthus are figures from Greek mythology, both of whom are significant in the context of Apollo's romantic history. Daphne was a nymph who was pursued by Apollo. According to myth, she was transformed into a laurel tree to escape his advances. This transformation is why the laurel tree became sacred to Apollo. Hyacinthus was a young Spartan boy and a lover of Apollo. In myth, he was accidentally killed by a discus thrown by Apollo, and in his grief, Apollo transformed Hyacinthus's blood into the hyacinth flower.
2. Chiara is an Italian Greek demigod daughter of Tyche, the Greek goddess of luck, chance, destiny, and fortune.
3. Damien White is a Greek demigod. He is in a secret relationship with Chiara.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest, including relevant or material financial interests related to the research described in this paper.

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