

CHAPTER 3

PORTRAYAL OF THAI PEOPLE AND CULTURE IN RECENT NOVELS SET IN THAILAND BY WESTERN NOVELISTS

Thailand is generally known as “The Land of Smile” and “The Land of Arts and Culture” (<http://www.thailand.com>). The Thai Kingdom was established in mid-14th century and was known as Siam until 1913. The country is the only Southeast Asian country which has never been taken over by European colonial power (CIA’s file: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/th.html>). Nowadays, in the midst of the dramatically changing world, Thailand is stepping into a new millennium in the globalized age filled with consumption driven economic environment and high economic competition. To follow this changing current, many developing countries try to seek the best answer to meet the needs of prosperous nations, and then they find that tourism is the best effective strategy to succeed.

Over the past two decades, Thailand has become one of the fastest economically growing countries. The 4 billion dollars a year in tourism revenue is the core support of the Thai economy (Bishop, p. VI). From statistical survey by EIU (the Economist Intelligence Unit) on Thailand’s travel and tourism background in 2002, the travel business accounted for 5.6 % of GDP. In South-East Asia, Thailand’s economy relies the most on International tourism, accounting for 27 % of the regional market and 1.5% of the world market. In the rapid growth of tourism industry, international public relations and advertising are important factors. The success of the tourism industry is from the “many attractions located in various parts of the country” as well as “the uniqueness of the Thai people”—“their friendliness and hospitality” (Bishop, p.67) attributed by Thai officials. Plenty of media, including prints, television advertising and internet websites mention about Thailand and the government’s attempt to promote the country, Thai people and Thai culture.

There are a lot of previous studies on Thai people and culture by both Thais and foreigners. Most studies are the analyses of existing Thai literature by Thai writers. A study by Neils Mulder, *Inside Thai Society : An Interpretation of Everyday Life*(1992), examines individuals and society in modern Thai literature written by Thai authors, such as Seni Saowapong, Sriburapa, Lao Khamhom, Botaan, Nimit Poomtavorn, Kammaan Khonkhai and more, and points out some issues of Thai people and culture from the Thai perspective. His study defines that the image of Thai society found in Thai novels seems to validate the old loose structure hypothesis, despite devoid of the concept of individualism because people appear to be socially bound yet morally afloat in the wider setting of society. He notes that, in the writing of Thai authors, individuals are almost always placed in clear and recognizable social setting and define them. Suvanna Kriengkraipetch and Larry E. Smith, in "Value Conflicts in Thai Society: Agonies of Change Seen in Short Stories," discover that there are some conflicting values in Thai society especially from social change reflected in short stories by Thai authors, for instance, traditional vs. modernity from *Mother of Waters, Thaokae Bak, and a Dog* by Sri Daorueng, *Second Nature* by Sujit Wongthet, *As If It Had Never Happened* by Witthayakorn Chiangkul, *Changes* by Manop Kaewsnit, *May They Know Nothing* by Nikhom Rayawa, *A Village by the Sea* by Ussiri Dhammachoti; individualism v.s. group solidarity from *Mayom's Hope* by Sri Sarakam, *Thaen* by Wongduen Thongchieo, *Khok Phra-Nang* by Wimon Sainimnuan, *The Lost Arm* by Nikhom Rayawa; conflicting roles of women from *The Fifth Train Trip* by Ussiri Dhammachoti, *Destination* by Tawanchai, *Choice of Life* by Sila Khomchai; ideological confusion from *Whom Should I Ask* by Suphan Phromsen, *Good Citizen* by Seksan Prasertkul, *Let What Is Gone, Be Gone* by Ussiri Dhammachoti, and alienation in urban society from *Chilled in the Heart* by Suwanni Sukhonta, *Middle Class* by Chamlong Fangcholjit, *The Capital* by Wanit Jarungkitanan, *Mother..Help!* by Sri Daoruang, *A Path From Home* by Kritsana Asoksin. Nevertheless, all writing in the study are by Thai writers. There is also a study exploring foreigner's perspective. In *International Issues in Thai Context*, Somporn Varnado finds that there are some literature written by westerners about Thailand but with a great amount of negative image of the country that can ruin the country's reputation through books or websites. In the chapter called "The Issues in Thailand under Western Eyes," she points out the worst image of Thailand through sex

trade, especially that of Thai women. At one point, she explains that tourists throughout the world have presented the image of beautiful young Thai women as prostitutes or easy ladies (easy to have sex with). Also she notes about a book written by a tourist who spent only three months in Thailand and wrote the book *Nightlife in Thailand*. In the beginning, it seems he was making a study of the habits of Thais and suggestions of nightspots to visit. But later on the readers will find out he suggests where a tourist could pick up girls and how to do it. The worst advice he gives is to say the following words to any woman they meet, "You're beautiful. I want to f*** you. How much?" This is one part that reflects a false view of Thai women. In the same research, there is an example of one novel set in Thailand entitled *The Siam Inheritance* written by the Australian novelist, Harold Nelson. The novel is about a westerner's experience in Thailand and his relationship with Thai people, particularly Thai girls and prostitutes.

Many kinds of media, especially the internet and guidebooks present negative view, especially of Thai women. For example, in one query in a web board forum of The Nation's website, a person called John asks,

Author: John

Date: 11 July 2546 22:41

I visited www.thailand.com to read about Thailand and read with my astonishment that the page is advertising prostitution. No wonder Thailand's reputation, still, is bad. Under "nightlife" they write about all the sex clubs, and even the costs of sexual entertainment/intercourse. And in their "learn Thai" section you can read; "You khun (in general), thaan (polite), thoe (intimate)", how to ask someone to have sexual intercourse. Isn't it better not to be so informant about these matters so that immoral men do not find any opportunity to exploit girls? What is going on with prostitution in Thailand? Officially it might be illegal, but is someone doing anything to stop it?

As worldwide media, novels set in Thailand written by western novelists also reflect westerner's attitude towards Thai people and culture. In some ways, existing attitudes of westerners show incorrect perception of Thai people and culture. Therefore, in order to study further this issue, this study will take an overview of the portrayal of Thai people and culture, using characteristics appeared in three recent novels set in Thailand as a basis of investigation. Then, the study will explain the attitudes of the western

novelists towards Thai people and culture and present factors that possibly relate to the formation of those attitudes. These will be done through analysis.

In the three novels, *Minor Wife* by Christopher G. Moore, *Tea Money* by Jake Needham, and *Even Thai Girls Cry* by J.F. Gump, there are 12 positive issues and 29 negative issues. Furthermore, some characters are stereotyped and do not accurately reflect the image of Thai people. Some of both positive and negative behaviors mentioned in the novel are not representation of all Thai people.

To understand the reflection of Thai people and Thai characteristics as a sort of stereotype, the concept of stereotype is used to explain the above phenomenon. In their study “A Connectionist Model of Person Perception and stereotype Formation,” Christophe L. Labiouse and Robert M. French claim that we acquire stereotype through social learning such as gossip or media and display directly to group members. People will apply their perception to draw inferences about the others. This process is to put each characteristic into stereotype which results in individual’s and group’s perception. To make this point clearer, national stereotype is described by Joep Leerssen in his article “Image-information- national identity and national stereotype” as “the conventions and commonplaces inherited from a pre-existing textual tradition fully overshadow the experience of reality” (<http://cf.hum.uva.nl/images/info/leers.html>) From this study, each extracted characteristic is considered to be analyzed by both the author’s identification of the characteristics and the frequency of reference to Thai’s behaviors and culture from each novel.

The most outstanding and interesting issue very often mentioned in the three novels is the image of Thai women which is presented both positively and negatively. Besides the gorgeous, beautiful appearance; the slim figure with black hair, honey-poured skin with pleasant face and nice smile, believed to be foreigners’ preferences through many advertisement or airline’s brochure, Thai women are assumed to be submissive and serviceable, as Jake Needham portrays in *Tea Money*,

In my own case, when people started hearing I was going to live in Bangkok, most of them—primarily women, I noticed—quickly jumped to a common conclusion. They attributed my sudden adjustment in address to a fatal dose of middle-aged male angst and

some overly moist fantasies of slim, submissive Thai women serving me never-ending rounds of colorful drinks with paper umbrellas in them (p.25).

This description portrays westerners' perception of Thai women's appearances and habits, probably resulting from media and service ads such as those about hotels, entertainment and tourism. The submissive and serviceable characteristics seem to be of general Thai women. However, it's not certain whether new generation of Thai women still have these habits, if it's not compelled by their occupation in service work such as waitress or hostess of which submissiveness and service-mindedness are required. Furthermore, this is just a prejudgment and superficial looking at only some Thai women. It's only the ideal Thai women as Somporn Varnado explains in *International Issues in Thai Context* in the chapter "The Issues in Thailand under Western Eyes," when she gives an example from the Thai novel, *The Woman Named Boonrawd* by Botaan. From the story, the protagonist, Boonrawd, is not being close to the ideal woman with good manners, being a good housewife, speaking only a few words, ...attentive to her husband,...young and innocent and timid (p.132). Boonrawd is none of these. She is independent and outspoken. She believes that men and women are equal. She is a representative of modern Thai women. Moreover, she married an American airman Bob who admires her self confidence, self reliance and sense of responsibility.

Another characteristic is their aggressiveness. Christopher G. Moore finds and describes Thai women as a wife in *Minor Wife* as unpleasant women when Thai men have a '*Klua Mia*' behavior or fear of his wife. The readers would imagine that a Thai wife is aggressive from his description, "Nothing was more frightful to a married man in Thailand than his enraged wife"(p.271). Many other negative aspects are mentioned in the novels. One worse image of Thai women is Thai prostitutes. Thai people have to accept that prostitution exists in Thai society. It is shameful when foreigners bring this topic to a conversation. Though prostitution exists through out the world, from eastern world such as Japan, China, Korea, to civilized western world like in Germany, United Kingdom or the United States of America, we do not see any countries being stigmatized as "a place where there are a lot of PROSTITUTES" (Longman's Dictionary of English Language and Culture) like Thailand is.

From the novel *Minor Wife*, the author uses the Thai word ‘*Yings*’ to refer to bar girls and prostitutes and some scenes are around Soi Nana, Soi Cowboy or Patpong, the main sex trade centers in Bangkok. At one point these girls are described as “upcountry *yings* not yet out of their teens”(p.173), which implies child abuse and child prostitution. In *Tea Money*, a foreign visitor observes “As soon as he spotted us, a pudgy, neatly-dressed local man put on a big smile and broke out of a pack of touts that lay in wait there to ambush passing male tourists. He approached us in an odd, crab-like gait, scuttling almost sideways. ‘Massage, boss? Many sexy girls. Take look?’” (p.80-81) This shows the atmosphere of sex trade in the capital of Thailand.

In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, sex trade scene is set in Pattaya, a city described “as one of the sex capitals in Thailand or even Asia. Almost everywhere you go you will find prostitutes or a go-go bars. Especially in South Pattaya, down walking street.” (<http://www.mypattaya.com/55introductiontopattaya.asp>) J.F. Gump describes Pattaya in his novel as

A pink fluorescent city that makes cigarette cherries glow green. Insert fifteen or twenty smiling bar-girls, some older or fatter, but mostly young, thin and sexy. Add hordes of tourist, mostly German, and mostly male. Throw in a lot of beer and some Mekong Whisky, and you have it- a Pattaya beer bar. They might seem unique any place else in the world, but Pattaya churns them out like cookie cutters. Beer bars are in the business of selling beer, booze and sex. When a girl leaves the bar with a man, he must pay the bar money for the privilege of taking her out. It is called a bar fine and it is usually just nit noy money (p.53).

His novel is filled with scenes in beer bars, sex between western man and Thai girls and characters related to prostitutes and sex trade in the bars.

Besides the atmosphere of sex trade, many characteristics of Thai prostitutes are identified in some novels. The first obvious behavior is “money sucker.” In *Minor Wife*, Moore writes, “*Yings* never got tired of money talk. Money taken from the wallet of John in a booze or drug induced slumber was a symbol of courage. One *ying* had opened a sleeper’s wallet and, upon finding a dozen hundred dollar bills, took one out of the middle, saying that he would not notice one missing from the middle of his stash” (p.235). Gump portrays this habit through his western male character, Randy,

“We’ve both seen these girls set guys up just to get money from them” (p.118). This behavior is one of the negative habits of Thai prostitutes or bar girls in the westerner’s perspective. Anyway, I think not all prostitutes steal. The second Thai prostitutes’ behavior found in the novels is their lives of betrayal and faithlessness, such as bar girls in *Even Thai Girls Cry*, “In fact, all of the girls at the bar wore smiles, but sometimes their words belied their expression” (p.38). These women in the story are labeled as deceitful and fake, besides being greedy.

It seems that though prostitutes can gain a lot of money from men, they are insulted by westerners in the novels in different ways. For example, the prostitutes are looked at as birds and chicken as Moore mentions “Prostitutes were judged by same formula. Birds in their prime had backers, trainers, marketers; an audience. A Thai slang word for *ying* was *gai*—chicken” (p.65). Likewise, they are identified as goods for men as in the way an Arab looks over a horse before buying it. Anyway, they are not worth as much as the Arab’s horse, they are just compared to 99 cent video game (p.93), a few hours of entertainment for men. Moreover, they are called ‘golden flower: *dork thong*’ which in Thai is highly insulting and means promiscuous woman or prostitute.

Besides Thai prostitutes, *Minor wife* shows another negative picture of Thai women, that of *mia noi* or minor wife who is the main character in the novel. No better than prostitutes, Moore portrays minor wife as a “Nang Rai” or bad woman by describing, “the leading character in almost every prime time TV show, portrayed as greedy, devious, emotional, demanding and mistress of the finer arts of betrayal”(p.16).

In Thai society, minor wife is looked down upon and not accepted in the society. First, she breaks one of the five commandments in Buddhism; do not have love affair with a married person. Second, she breaks a social value which says idealistic women should be neat and good. In general, minor wife’s social life, is unpleasant because “people stare, point a finger, snicker, hurrying along so as not to be associated with such a person” (p.267). And because she steals another woman’s husband, a minor wife will get bad karma in return by being disliked by people around her. She is an outcast in the same way people who commit adultery or sin are. Women

who can steal someone's husband have no pride, ethics nor morality. A minor wife is also treated as a slave.

The third negative image toward Thai women found in the novels is Thai women's physical appearance. In the three novels, Thai women are mostly illustrated as sex objects. In *Minor Wife*, Thai women are naked in a high class prostitute's paintings, while in *Tea Money*, Jake Needham writes about Thai women jogging in Lumpini garden: "...a huge throng of tanned and athletic-looking women pushing gracefully along with firm, confident strides. Running just behind a pair of tiny shorts that barely covered taunting buttocks, reveling in the sight of two light brown, exquisitely turned legs as they glided effortlessly around the park ..." (p.158). For Thais, it is quite impolite to describe women's figure in this sexual way. For Thai's perception, it is insulting and unacceptable. Most Thai writers like to portray women's figure indirectly by comparing it to other things. For instance, in *Ramayana*, the author describes the beauty of Sida, the female protagonist as follow;

พิศพักตร์ผ่องพักตร์ดั่งจันทร์ Looking, her face is like the moon

พิศขนงก่งงอนดั่งคันศรศิลป์ Looking, her eyebrows are like arrow
bow

พิศเนตรดั่งเนตรมฤคิน Looking, her eyes are like deer's eyes

พิศทนต์ดั่งนิลอันเรียงราย Looking, her teeth are like lined blue
sapphire

พิศโอษฐ์ดั่งหนึ่งจะแย้มสรวล Looking, her mouth is willing to
laugh

พิศนวลดั่งสีมณีฉาย Looking, her skin color is like glowing jewel

พิศปรางดั่งปรางทองพราย Looking, her cheeks are like glowing
gold

พิศกรรมคด้ายกลีบบุษบง Looking, her ears are like lotus petal

พิศดูไรคั้งหนึ่งแกล้งวาด Looking, her hair line is like a drawing

พิศคอวิลาศคั้งคองหงส์ Looking, her neck is like a swan's neck

พิศกรคั้งวงคชาพงค้ Looking, her hands are like the trunk of an elephant

พิศทรงคั้งเทพกนิรา Looking, her figure is like an angel (half- bird half -human)

พิศถันคั้งประทุมเกสร Looking, her breasts are like lotus

พิศเอวเอวอ่อนคั้งเลขา Looking, her waist is graceful like a drawing

พิศผิวผิวผ่องคั้งทองทา Looking, her skin is like golden glaze

พิศจริตคิริยาก้จับใจ Looking, her manners is impressing

There is a difference between the western style and traditional Thai style of description. Westerners describe woman directly, but Thais do not accept that way because it is obscene and it contrasts with the Thai concept.

Besides women's appearance, another negative image of Thai women is reflected through their promiscuous behaviors, which are not accepted in Thailand. In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, Tippawan Bongkot or Math, is not a bar girl but she loses her job in Bangkok and runs away from her hometown Phitsanuloke and finds herself in Pattaya looking for her brother. Accidentally, she meets a westerner, Mike, and goes home with him and has sexual relationship with him without knowing that he has a wife. Before that, she has had sexual affair with a police captain in Bangkok while she has her fiancé in Phitsanuloke. This behavior, for Thais, is worse than prostitutes' behaviors. Good Thai women will never do this. This does not mean that having sex with westerners is immoral, but the guilt is that the woman breaks moral standard. Free sex and to be easily seduced are still taboos in Thai society.

Though Thai people cannot deny the existence of prostitutes in Thailand, it is incorrect to generalize about them. It is necessary to request westerners to avoid stigmatizing and categorizing people which can make the reader imagine and assume wrongly about Thai women as a whole. This is not an overstatement; one case I experienced was that a hotel maid was asked by a foreigner if she could sleep (have sex) with him and how much the cost would be. This research did not want to blame the foreigner who presumed that Thai women were easy. He might have got distorted information about Thai women from some media or people. Therefore, novelists, as their work is a kind of the media, should be aware of the information that could possibly lead to distortion and misunderstanding.

Besides Thai women's image, the second important issue is the interrelationship among people in Thai society described in each novel. This part of the paper is to understand social relationship, both among Thai people and Thai people with westerners.

Hierarchy is an obvious issue that differentiates Thai society from western one. In *Minor Wife*, there is an explanation of how hierarchy affects Thai people. It also affects westerners' view of Thai way of life. Moore describes, "...most *farang* lacked the hardware or software to decode the way Thais thought or acted; where they stood, what they thought, how they judged and were judged. Survival depended on a person's place in an accident, mysterious hierarchy that had one foot in the fourteenth century" (p.136). He portrays that foreigners didn't fit into the hierarchy system.

Moore shows strong negative attitude of westerners toward hierarchic system in Thailand. In western perspective, hierarchy is just mysterious system that "had one foot in the fourteenth century." It is just an out-of-date idea in the western eyes. Nevertheless, it works very well in Thai society even in the twenty-first century. For Thai people, hierarchy is the way of life and relationship that people are imbued with. However, foreigners do not have to be part of the hierarchy, but they just have to try to understand it.

Another obvious characteristic of the interrelationship, which is part of hierarchy system in Thai society, is the relationship between Thais and westerners. In the novel *Minor Wife*, Moore cites that “A Thai called another man *pee* or *nong*, older brother, younger brother. Even a *farang* was called *pee* or *nong* if the Thai felt that the foreigner belonged in the community, looked important, or had some capacity to make their life difficult, if not better”(p.242). This reference is not a good representative of relationship between Thai people and foreigners. From my observation, it's rare that a Thai would call foreigner by the term *pee* or *nong*, instead Thais call foreigners ‘Khun’ in general and even when one feels the foreigner belongs to the community. And even among Thais, it depends on people, place and time or *kala tesa* in Thai. Thai people call waiter or waitress “*nong*” all the time even when he or she doesn't know them before, but Thais will not call every person *pee* or *nong* when they first come to job interviewing, for instance.

Relating to the hierarchy system in Thai society is another important type of interrelation among Thai people--social connection. There is an obvious example of the way social connections work in Thai society in *Even Thai Girls Cry* when Math is finding a new job. Sawat, her fiancé says “The manager is a good friend of mine. If you want, I can ask him to hire you” (p.234). Finding job evolved a lot of connections, “Competition for good jobs was fierce with most of them going to relatives or friends of the employer” (p.231). It's general knowledge. Like wise, in *Tea Money*, Jake Needham implies about social connection in Thai society when Jack Shepherd is informed by an official in the ministry of Foreign Affairs that “Whenever you fly Thai International, always remember that your pilots got their jobs exactly the way everyone else in Thailand got their jobs” (p.126). That is the way social connections work in Thailand. However, it is partly true that many Thais get their jobs through relatives, not with their abilities. Although the pilot uses connection, he must probably be qualified as well.

Another type of interrelationship in Thai society is the relationship among family members and friends. There are many reflections of this kind of relationship, for example, in *Minor Wife*, the author portrays the tight familiar relationship when he describes, “spontaneous arrivals and departure in and out of the lives and office of

friends and family. It was the 'No knock, No phone' rule of friendship. A friend's door was always open" (p.71). For Thai person, it is hard to agree with this criticism. It's true that Thais have strong and tight relationship with friends. Thai people are also taught to be well-mannered or "*mee marayart*", therefore, the 'No knock, No phone' is not a rule or standard for Thai people in general.

Besides the strong tight relationship among people in Thai society, there is a negative relationship portrayed in the novels. Domestic violence is illustrated in *Even Thai Girls Cry* both in the relationship between father and daughter and between husband and wife or lovers. Math was beaten by her stepfather and she was attacked by Sawat, her fiancé. Nuang tells her that she is not safe there, "Sawat has been drinking tonight and you know how Thai men can be when they are drinking. You remember what father was like" (p.151). However, it is one-sided reflection of family life in Thailand. This situation is a type of social problems happening in some units of society. The stereotype "How Thai men can be when they are drinking" cannot be used to judge all Thai men.

In order to understand more about Thai people and culture these writers observe from the behaviors of Thais. In this study, social behaviors of Thai people are variously identified by western novelists in each novel. The first social behavior is the Thai smile. Foreigners mostly expect that Thai people love to smile and smile easily, as in Thailand's slogan "The Land of smile." In a website about Thai smile, Shaun Boland describes that "The reason is there's a much broader range of uses for smiling in Thailand, some of which would be considered as inappropriate or even as rude in the west. For example, if a Thai bumps into you in a bar and spills some of your drink, he'll probably smile - a reaction that is unlikely to go down well with the average foreigner. But the smile (*yim* in Thai) is perceived in Thailand as being just about the most appropriate reaction to any possible situation. It's used to show happiness, embarrassment, fear, tension, resignation, remorse etc...What the smile means depends on the 'type' being used." (<http://www.chaophrayamuaythai.com/thaiculture.htm>)

Boland gives many types of Thai smiling which can be categorized into 4 groups. First is the simple smile such as "yim tak tai" or greeting smile and "yim chuen

chom” or admiring smile. Second is smile when people don’t want to smile, such as “fuen yim” or smile when one does not want to smile from inside, “yim yair yair” or frustrated smile, “yim hang” or unhappy smile; literally:dry smile, “yim sao” or sad smile. Third is tricky smile, such as “yim cheut cheuan” or fiery smile, “yim dak dan” or sarcastic smile, “yim mee les nai” or artificial smile and “yim yor” or cynical smile. Lastly, mixed emotion smile, such as “yim tang nam dtah;” smile with tears and “yim soo” or smile to encourage oneself. Though Boland understands and interprets the various Thai smiles quite well, it is not easy to general foreigners to interpret Thai’s smile that has cultural context sometimes it’s difficult to understand. For instance, if Thai people accidentally steps on other’s foot, he or she will smile and apologize to that person. That does not mean it is greeting smile or ridiculous smile, but it is to show sympathy and to redeem the situation for Thais. It is important that foreigners have to learn to read Thai smiles because it can help avoid misunderstanding.

In *Minor Wife*, Moore notes that Thai smile “means anything or nothing” (p.121). It can be interpreted in a negative way, such as having no meaning or a forced smile. Moreover, Moore tries to portray that foreigners could not believe what is the real feeling when Thai people are smiling and Thai smile is sometimes deceitful. It seems Moore has a negative attitude toward Thai smile, probably from multi-way interpretation, such as in Boland’s sample in his article, “that people smiling if you happen to trip up may not actually be laughing at you (*yim yor*), but just giving you a *yim yair-yair* to try and stop you feeling embarrassed.” It’s difficult to judge the meaning of smile. Nevertheless, for Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai smiles are more positive than negative as they use it in the promotion of tourism in Thailand with the slogan the Land of Smiles.

Another unique characteristic of Thai people is the concept of *Sanuk* or fun which is mostly portrayed through Thai New Year celebration or Songkran festival in Thailand. For Thai people, “*sanuk*” is an essential part of social life especially to villagers and agricultural community. It is a way of living and a kind of relaxation from hard work. In *Minor Wife*, Christopher G. Moore mentions about *Sanuk* or fun loving of Thai people through the activities on Songkran day, “In April around the Thai New Year, the intense heat flattened memory and morale, Three months before

the international New Year had been celebrated. But that foreign celebration lack the rush of April's full court press of water, shot out of guns, hurled out of barrels, packed with ice in plastic bags and launched like grenades. It was fun. Sanuk" (p.1). In addition, *sanuk* is closely related to Songkran when "... people had smeared white chalky paste on each other's face, giving a ghost like appearance to many of the occupants. What had been wonderful fun now spooked the neighbors" (p.69).

Some westerners seem to have a negative attitude toward Songkran, " 'I hate Songkran... What the fuck!' said Alex Polsky, wiping his face and seeing the dry blood from his ear" (p.94). This is the no-limit *sanuk* of Thai people without awareness of danger to others. As Thai people know that Songkran festival now has changed from our traditional celebration, there are violent behaviors instead of graceful deeds practiced by Thai ancestors. Even though some Thai people also hate violence that comes with Songkran, to give accurate information about Songkran, the novelists should seek information about traditional Songkran and concept of Songkran to create positive attitude. A lot of Thai people keep the traditional Songkran full of attractive custom and fun without violence.

Another concept of *sanuk* for Thai people is the famous cock fighting which is usually followed by gambling in rural Thai villagers. In *Minor Wife*, cock fighting and gambling is portrayed through a westerner, Mcphail, who is fond of Thai cock fighting and gets involved with a well-financed gangster with strong influence, who provides a private army to protect Mcphail. Nowadays, cock fighting is not only for fun like in ancient times, but for a lot of income from gambling. However, cock fighting and gambling are illegal and morally wrong, according to Buddhist teaching. From my observation, new generation of Thais does not support cock fighting, so to say that cock fighting is almost like a national game is inaccurate. Some Thais also think it is animal abuse.

Another social behavior of Thai people which is noticeable for foreigners and frequently notified is a locution *Mai pen rai*: which is translated to 'never mind'. In *Tea Money*, Jake Needham informs us that "The Kingdom of Thailand thrived on contradictions, and it was with them that it eventually seduced you" (p.232). He claims

that Thai people are generally placid and charming, also he hypothesizes that Thai people somehow have contrived to combine Buddhist stoicism and the upheavals of modern life into a brew of ambivalence that beguils the Western soul. Needham identifies "*Mai pen rai*"—never mind—as the national motto. Shaun Boland (2003) also informs about the concept of *Mai pen rai*,

Mai Pen Rai, a phrase best translated as 'never mind'. Most Thai would rather shrug their shoulders in the face of adversity than risk escalating a difficult situation. Solutions that contribute to restoring or maintaining calm are welcomed. In fact, one reason the Thais have survived intact as a sovereign nation is by adopting a superb sense of compromise, putting trifling or trivial matters in perspective, or else ignoring them. Truly this aspect of the Thai character may be likened to a bamboo, bending without breaking, then snapping back into place and swaying in the breeze.

<http://www.chaophrayamuaythai.com/thaiculture.htm>

In *Minor Wife*, Moore gives an example through his main character,

Driving up the ramp to the parking lot, Quinn explained that about half of the units had been empty. The original owners were bankrupt. Not broke—they had cash enough offshore—they just decided to default on their loans. Everyone else was doing it. The system was supposed to punish failed greed. In Thailand the system let it ride on the rails of *mai pen rai* and that train steamed on forever without any problem (p.198).

In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, there are a total of twelve points when *Mai pen rai* is mentioned--pages 29, 31, 61, 145, 150, 166, 197, 200, 234, 245, 279 and 288. For example, when Math's suitcase was missing on a flight, the airline lady was very apologetic and Math told her, *Mai pen rai*- never mind. This is a reflection of foreigners' attitude on how this concept affects Thai people and society in everyday life. As '*mai pen rai*' is a phrase that Thai people frequently use in both serious and not serious occasion, it is not surprising to see westerners misunderstand about this behavior. Most westerners will think that Thai people are submissive because of this phrase. However, still there is one point that westerners might not know about '*Mai pen rai*'. The truth is that, like Thai smiles, it can be anything or nothing for Thais. For example, *mai pen rai* can be used to keep one's polite manner, or to refuse and even hide one's sorrow or just a phrase people love to say without meaning. Therefore, it is necessary for foreigners to interpret what is behind the word, especially when unintentionally said or in a forced situation. Sometimes *Mai pen rai* is not from being

submissive, but from keeping 'good manner' instead. Furthermore, foreigners could not expect *Mai pen rai* from all Thais. Nowadays Thai people are more aware of human rights and personal rights. Therefore, if anyone transgresses Thais' right, for example, smoking in public area, probably some Thais will not say *Mai pen rai* to that person. Foreigners do not fully understand that *mai pen rai* is to accept whatever happens and its consequence and then to cope with the situation. For instance, if a business fails, people might say *mai pen rai*, which means they accept the situation and will try to solve their problem in the future. Unlike the word 'never mind' to foreigners, which means 'no big deal' or forget about it and there is nothing to worry about. This is the different perspective between Thai and western way concerning *mai pen rai*.

Another Thai behavior identified by western novelist from this study is trustfulness. There are two ways of trusting presented in *Minor Wife* by a Canadian novelist, Christopher G. Moore, trust between neighbors and friends. For trust of neighbors, the novelist cites a dialogue which portrays trust between neighbors: "Do you have a key to 8K's apartment?" "Yes, it's normal. It is the Thai way to help out neighbors" (p.21). From the dialogue, the reader acknowledges the Thai way of intimacy and familiarity between the neighbors from the action of having a neighbor's apartment key that not only implies trustfulness, but also being helpful between them. This phenomenon probably does not happen regularly in western social life which highly values privacy and it must be strange in the western eyes.

With trust among friends, Moore represents it through 8K, a prostitute and Sunan, a minor wife. A friend can devote her life to her friend. Moreover the author portrays this positive attitude through a Thai police, Pratt, "Pratt was at home, having dinner with his family...The last thing he wanted was to leave his family. However, Pratt would never abandon a friend. If there was one superior aspect of old-fashioned Thai culture, it was the loyalty of friends" (p.28).

Nonetheless, this phenomenon is no longer general concept in Thai society. According to social changes and modern life style as portrayed in the novels in Bangkok in 2002, it is hard to find neighbors whom one can trust with one's apartment key. Many people say, "Nam jai" or kindness is rare to find in this age. Fortunately, the

novelists have experienced this with people who are kind, trustful and helpful, and then they portray Thai people in a positive way. This stereotype of trustfulness in westerners' view is not accurate in real Thai city life. The information is out of date and probably from old research, literature or article. As in *Inside Thai Society: An Interpretation of Everyday Life* by Neils Mulder:

Other interesting insights can be derived from contemporary Thai literature about village and family life; generally such books present a picture of people who are close to each other, willing to help each other, sharing happiness and grief, rituals and tradition, and who are intimate as a matter of course. Both the village and the family are pictured as a small, self contained unit of relatives and quasi-relatives (*jaadphiinoong*) who can be trusted and whose concern for mutual well-being is intrinsic to their mental make-up (p.62).

This is partly true but it can not be representative of all Thai society. We have both city life in city areas and rural life in rural areas in Thailand. It is a distortion if the novelists or westerners generalize that way.

Another social behavior of Thai people found in the study is having a cool heart: *Jai yen yen*. Similar to *Mai pen rai*, *Jai yen yen* is famous of Thais when they are facing problems or obstacles. In this story, the author relays how Thai people cope with their anger through caddies in a golf club, "...looking confused, trundled behind, saying, '*jai yen yen, jai yen yen*'. Have a cool heart, be patient, laugh, smile, dance and sing" (p.167). He assumes that it is the Thai way of dealing with anger.

In addition, having a cool heart can subdue any other unwanted situation like Shaun Boland informs in his article on Thai Culture that "It is difficult to stir a Thai to real anger. A smile and an apology should deflate almost any tense situation. Anger demonstrated by physical violence or raised voices, can provoke serious hostility, however, an angry Thai can be very aggressive indeed". <http://www.chaophrayamuaythai.com/thaiculture.htm>

However, the characteristics of *Jai yen yen*, having a cool heart or being calm could not be applied to Thai people as a whole. In reality, much news reflects how Thai people forget the phrase *Jai yen yen* in coping with their problems. Many years ago, one piece of news was about a man who was shot by another man driving on the

street because he was overtaken by the other. Another good example was a group of people fighting in free concert without a good reason. Also much crime is caused by negligence of *Jai yen yen* concept. Therefore, it is not accurate for westerners to claim that *Jai yen yen* is a way to solve problems for Thais.

There is still another false social behavior found in the novels. In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, Gump points out how Thais like to eat all the time, "... 'Are you hungry?' He changed the subject. He knew she would be. Thai were always hungry. Eating seemed to be their national pastime" (p.65). This is an overstatement. Though Thailand has 24 hour food service around big cities, it does not mean Thai people are hungry all the time. And eating is not the national pastime like the novelist has claimed. The assumption for this stereotype, turning to capitalism is main factor that makes Thai people are looked always hungry due to we can buy things to eat easily. Anyway this habit can only happen to rich and middle class people who have buying power. Looking for proportion between rich and poor people, there is no way eating to be national pastime because the number of poor people who do not have buying power is many times much more than rich people. Furthermore, this overstatement can be assumed that Thai people have a lot of free time and have nonsensical recreation.

The next negative habit of Thai people in the novel *Even Thai Girls Cry* is that Thai people like to gossip, "Gossiping was the one thing Thai people like to do more than eat" (p.65). Similar to eating habit, it seems to be an overstatement.

Another negative habit which is mentioned belongs to upcountry Thais. In *Minor Wife*, during Thai New Year's celebration or *Songkran* festival, the author says that upcountry Thais have a habit of melting away without a word. A possible reason for the phenomenon could be that upcountry Thais are strongly bound by family ties. Therefore, when they get any news from their families, from little to big matters, such as birth, sickness or death in the family, they must go back home. They vanish without a word because they feel '*Krengchai*' of which Asst. Prof. Wadee Kheourai explains in the book *Thai Studies Through Games* as an extreme reluctant to impose on anyone or disturb his personal equilibrium by direct criticism, challenge or confrontation and "In general, people will do their utmost to avoid personal conflict."

Niels Mulder also points out:

The behavior of some people seemed to be dominated by an excess of *kreengcaj* (Krengjai) that seemingly stimulates extreme reluctance to be visible and to act, resulting in giggling and inertia. Such shyness that is inspired by incipient feelings of shame or fear can hardly be considered as positive 'consideration of the feelings of others'. Similarly, while relating to one's superior an avoidance of initiative coupled with and extreme concern to please the boss may lead to acceptance—but smells of sycophancy rather than *kreengcaj*. Whereas it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between these two attitudes, it remains true the *kreengcaj* attitude encourages people in the avoidance of unpleasantness and interpersonal confrontation (p.109).

For this reason, for upcountry Thais, it is better to melt away without any word to avoid conflict with their employers.

Besides Thai social habits in general, there are many interesting points on Thai behaviors and attitude toward westerners portrayed in the novels. The first Thais' attitude is the anti-westerner feeling. From *Minor Wife*, when Calvino asks a Thai character why a westerner wants to kill 8K, he says "Huh, you don't know, lah? That farang is an evil man. They are all evil. They try to destroy our country. They tried to turn us into whores. It's true. You know. Everyone knows" (p.54). This is a strong anti-westerner feeling, though literarily not all westerners or foreigners turn Thai people into whores. However, social problems such as prostitution, corruption, crime, drug, etc., in Thai society nowadays are partly caused by capitalism adapted from the western world. Therefore, materialism, as a result from capitalism, turns Thai women and men into whores, as can be found in the news and media about student prostitutes. This is because they respond to extravagant life. So indirectly it can be assumed that the country is destroyed by foreigners, but Thais themselves may actually destroy themselves.

Like in *Minor Wife*, in *Tea Money* there is one description relating to anti-foreigner attitude of Thai people. The author claims that there is a group of old Thai people who have an anti-foreigner attitude. But he does not give a reason why this group does not like foreigners. From the researcher's hypothesis, this conservative attitude does not play a very strong role in Thai society nowadays. However, it will do

them more justice if the novelist declares the reason why the old Thais do not like foreigners. They probably do not agree with the different culture of westerners of which they feel strange. On the contrary, through modernization and international commerce, old Thais have adapted and accepted western culture in some ways such as in education system and technology.

Likewise, *Even Thai Girls Cry* portrays anti-westerner attitude. Besides foreigners' appearance of which the author claims they smell bad, are fat and ugly, an anti-westerner idea is portrayed: "Also, there was almost a total absence of foreigners. That was good because most of the people in Phitsanuloke were *anti-farang*" (p.105). Also Tippawan's family has a negative attitude toward westerners, "That night Math and her father talked, but not much. They never did. She mentioned Mike to see her father's reaction. As expected, his reaction was negative. Her father, like many people in Phitsanuloke, was very *anti-farang*" (p.254). Unlike the anti-westerner idea of Thai people in the previous two novels, the anti-foreigner in this novel is from suburban inhabitants in Phitsanuloke, a province which is 377 kilometers from Bangkok. However, this characteristic of suburban people in this novel is out of date in Thailand nowadays. According to cultural flood from western world, foreigners are not odd anymore in Thailand. The most obvious phenomenon is that more and more western men get married with Thai women in the northeast of Thailand. And these western men are accepted and welcome to the community. In the article "Rural Women's Cross-cultural Marriage in Udonthani" by Asst. Professor Sirirat Adsakul, statistics by National Economic and Social Development Committees in the year 2004 show the number of cross-cultural marriage between women in North eastern Thailand and foreign men (westerners) as follow: Khon Khaen 2,435 couples or 15.9 %, Udonthani 2,228 couples or 14.6 %, Nong Khai 1,141 couples or 9.4 % and Mahasarakham 1,205 or 7.9 %, Chaiyaphum 1,112 or 7.3 %, Srisaket 1,057 or 6.9 %, Sakonnakorn 992 or 6.5 %, Surin 985 or 6.4 %, Buriram 818 or 5.4 % and Lei 542 or 3.5 %. Statistics show that cross-cultural marriage between rural Thai women in Northeastern Thailand tend to increase.

In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, the author notifies that Thai people, especially Thai men, imagine that all western men want to have sex with Thai women. Math's brother,

Anan, says, “I don’t like my sister sleeping with a farang. It is not polite..... It’s just that I see so many *farangs* with Thai ladies that sometime I get sick of it. Most of them are no good. All they want is to have sex with a Thai woman” (p.196). This is the author’s portrayal of how Thai people stigmatize western men. It is not fair to generalize like this about Thais’ attitude towards westerners. What makes Thai people think that way? Thai people probably think this way because multitudinous western tourists come to Thailand for sex tourism. In reality, Thai people can differentiate westerners. No Thai will think that a professor from a University in U.S.A. wants to use Thai prostitute’s service when he comes to an academic meeting in Thailand. It depends on the westerner’s status and behavior also. Most well-educated people do not like sex tourism and human trade because they are aware of human dignity and human rights.

In *Even Thai Girls Cry*, Math’s mother was not pleased with foreigners. As far as Nui was concerned, all *farangs* were bad people. This stigmatization gives a bad image of Thai people. From the novel, Nui doesn’t even know any foreigner, but she has a bad picture of all foreigners in her mind. This situation reflects prejudging which might not be true.

The next issue which is portrayed in the novels is the negative image of Bangkok. In *Tea Money*, Thailand’s capital and center, Bangkok, is portrayed in many different views. First, the author identifies the false perception found in Bangkok through a character, “I suspected he might very well—not right then perhaps but almost certainly a little later when he got down to business and discovered his dazzling companion was actually a *katoey*, a man. The guy was about to learn the most fundamental rule for hitting the streets in Bangkok. Nothing was ever quite what you thought it was” (p.70). This shows how Bangkok can be deceiving in the western eyes and it can create negative attitude towards Bangkok.

The second characteristic of Bangkok scene is its night life in different aspects. First of all, Bangkok night life is a trap. Needham portrays in his description, “For a foreigner, stepping off into Bangkok at night was like falling into a black hole. You made your way on faith and instinct, not judgment. You grabbed for the rhythm beaten

out by the natural voodoo of the place, and then you just held on” (p.68). According to this westerner’s view, it sounds horrible spending a night out in Bangkok. In fact, it is as risky to walk in the streets of New York or London. Night time is not an appropriate time to survey anything, not only Bangkok.

Another negative characteristic is motels or *Man rood* in Thai. Let’s see how the author describes this kind of motel which relates to sex:

There were *man roods* all over Bangkok. There was only one crowd like A-Bar. The place was a shifting kaleidoscope of gorgeous Thai women and flamboyant gay men; flat-eyed Chinese billion-aires and laid-back American hustlers; chubby Arab con-men and twitchy German gangsters; eager-beaver Israeli gun runners and expressionless Japanese art smugglers. A-Bar was a Whitman’s sampler of the assorted riffraff that Bangkok sucked up like a vacuum cleaner (P.240-241).

The author frames *man rood* as a center of evil men. Actually, for Thais, it is a taboo place for good people. If *man rood* is a sign of adultery and sexual behaviors for most Thais, imagine how the description “There were *man roods* all over Bangkok” makes the readers assume how much adultery is practiced all over the city. It is another overstatement about Thailand.

Crime and mugging is the third distorted issue of Bangkok scenes in the novel. The author says, “Locals didn’t get mugged in Bangkok, only tourists, and even then mostly Taiwanese tourists for some reason. That approach had apparently become something of a firm rule among muggers since tourists seldom had much interest in returning at their own expense to testify against them, even if the mugger was unlucky enough to get caught—which he almost never was” (p.103). It is acceptable to say there is mugging in Bangkok, but it is not true that “Locals didn’t get mugged in Bangkok.” More and more local news for crime and mugging happen to Thai people. Furthermore, the description “It’s tough to get much done around here without occasionally having somebody shot” (p.231) reflects Bangkok as a violent place where it is easy to commit crime.

Apart from Bangkok scenes, there are other misunderstandings about quality of things in Thailand. Besides the criticism on low quality construction, coffee,

government officials, police, security guards, pilots of Thai Airways, medication, doctor and phone system, the novelists portray two interesting points. The first issue is English skills of Thai people from *Even Thai girls cry*. It is acceptable that most Thai people lack English skills. But what this research found mentioned in the novel is implausible. The author writes, "He tried to tell the stewardesses to give her a little time and she would be okay, but they did not speak English and they could not understand his Thai.....One of the stewardesses looked at him and said something in Thai that he did not understand. He nodded anyway"(p.221). This is extremely a discredit to the human resource department of Thai Airways, and it must be objected, like many Thais will object and say that people who work with the airlines must have efficient English skills, if not, they cannot pass the airlines' test. Therefore, this situation is almost unlikely to occur in real life.

The second issue is about the lack of standard of Thai education system in *Tea Money*. In this issue, the author says:

My only class on Monday was an afternoon seminar which carried a particularly dizzying moniker in Sasin's course catalogue: The Creation of Public Securities Markets and their Regulation in the Developing Countries of Southeast Asia with an Emphasis on Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. I couldn't begin to imagine why anyone would register for a course with a name like that. I couldn't even figure out what the hell it was supposed to be about. My mind was a long way from the enforcement mechanisms for insider trading regulations in Malaysia, and I'm not sure how much sense I made to my students. Still, most of them either didn't notice, or pretend not to. Somehow I got to the end of the hour without anyone asking me if I had the slightest idea what I was talking about, and that by itself amounted to a personal triumph of a sort, I thought (p.208)

This saying can be interpreted as poor education system in Thailand. However, it is not accurate, especially at undergrad level. Nowadays, new generation students are implanted new attitude to ask questions and to be creative. Innovative ideas are also applied to education system, such as individualism and child-center. Moreover, most educational institutes participate in ISO (International Organization for Standardization) system and have education quality assurance.

In fact, students of each country are suitable for different way of education system. Imagine Thai students under American education system and American curriculum and they begin to think like Americans, learn about American ways and absorb what they have learned, what will be left of Thai root? This is not a resistance to American ways, but what this research would like to recommend is that Thai people should integrate advantages of each system to adapt the most suitable way for students, not just following international standard, because, sometimes international standard does not suit Thai way of life.

The last noticeable negative portrayal of Thai people and culture from this study is the way Thai people are inferior to western eyes. In *Minor Wife*, the author describes a Thai pianist: “A Thai with a flat nose and large lips wore a dinner jacket and played the piano. The tune was Summer Time. Fortunately, he didn’t sing” (p.195). It is fun for foreigners but is politically incorrect as it is contemptuous and racist in the same time. Joep Leerssen explains how people of each nation are formed in his article “Image-information- national identity and national stereotype”:

We know most foreign cultures, and much of our own culture, by reputation only. We have an ‘image’ of the Scottish, Belgian or Spanish national character even though we personally may know at most only a handful of people from those countries, and have no way of assessing how ‘typical’ these persons are as representatives of their nation. Even so, we have no problem in recognizing certain temperamental attributes as being ‘typical’ for certain nation: the Scottish reputation for stinginess, the Belgian reputation for stupidity, the Spanish reputation for pride, are sufficiently well known for us to enjoy jokes or stories which invoke and rely on knowledge of those attributes. (<http://cf.hum.uva.nl/images/info/leers.html>)

In the same way, in *Tea Money*, the author reflects the inferiority in the following two situations: “A Thai spy?” Anita was beginning to giggle. “Who does he spy on? Laos?” (p.147). This insult reflects how a westerner evaluates the quality of a Thai spy; the author thinks it is lower than international standards. Another example shows how Thais are viewed by westerners, “Westerners look at Asian and laugh a little, don’t you? We’re not people you think of as particularly formidable. Mostly small, generally talking in bursts of indecipherable noise, not white enough” (p.164). It is discrimination when westerners evaluate Thais as lower than westerners and it is

stereotyping when the author frames Thai people through Asian looks; formidable, small, talking in loud noise and not white. It is an inaccurate portrayal of Thai people.

In conclusion, there are positive (12 issues) and negative (29 issues) attitudes portrayed in the three novels. Some attitudes seem to be only stereotypes and not accurate observation, since not all people have the kinds of behaviors mentioned in the novel. In addition, the authors portray sensitive issues such as Thai women and prostitution or minor wife, inferior Thais, corruption and Thai customs that can unavoidably defame Thailand's reputation. For example, Thai women are described in nudity and in sexual terms, while Thai men are stigmatized with sexual harassment. Also Thai police are related to corruption and inefficiency. For customs, Songkran festival or the Thai New Year is reported as a fun festival for Thais but violent for westerners.

Consequently, the hypothesis attained from this study is that there are five main factors; time, accommodation, people one interacts with, occupation, and attitude that affect western novelists in their portraying of people's characteristics and culture.

Time is one of the important environmental factors affecting the perception of the novelists. According to continually cultural and social change in the society, collecting information for writing about the events or people in each period of time will be different. For example, writing about Thai people in the year 1990 is different in some parts to the people in the year 2005. In the same way, describing Thai economics in year 1985 is dissimilar to economics in the year 1998. Also the atmosphere of each period of time is diverse. Therefore, in term of time, the authors should not use the information they found at one time to apply to describe Thailand in general.

Furthermore, the period of time in Thailand plays an important role in the novels. More time spending in one place make people learn more about the people and environment of the place. Then the novelists can portray what they have learned with more experiences they have gained. Christopher G. Moore has been spending time in Thailand since 1983, lives permanently since 1988 and came to learn Thai more than ten years ago. Jake Needham first visited Thailand in 1970 after graduated from Law

school in the United States and after he married a Thai-born concert pianist more than ten years ago, he and his family claim that Bangkok is their home. J.F. Gump spent three years living and working in Thailand since 1995. Accordingly the duration of the authors' stay affect their perception of Thailand and Thai people as longer stay provide various perceptions to the authors. For example, Gump's three years time portrays only simply story of love affair and general family life and a few economic issue, while more than ten years experience of Moore and Needham reflect more issues such as education, politics, media and corruption.

Similar to time, the accommodation zones and living places affect the information that novelists portray in their works in general. For instance, the author of the *Minor Wife*, Christopher G. Moore, lives on Sukhumvit road in Bangkok for many years, as he says in an interview:

I first came to Bangkok in 1983 and have lived here on a permanent basis since 1988. In some ways a very long time, in other ways a midsummer's night sleep. Bangkok is a 24-hour city, with excitement, adventure, and diversity. I have lived in New York and London, and spent substantial time in Tokyo and Paris, but it is in Bangkok one finds a truly international city living in the midst of a very old, unique culture. It is a place of many contradictions and this provides more than ample material for a novelist to drawn upon.

(http://www.bangkok-private.com/interview/cgmoore_e.htm)

Therefore, his novel *Minor Wife* reflects many of lively Bangkok scenes that make the readers imagine his scenes. However, probably because he is only in Bangkok, he portrays Bangkok as if it is Thailand. It is generalization and sometime it is inaccurate.

Another factor is people one interacts with. Imagine a novelist who wants to write about Thai students, there is no way to have information about Thai students if the novelist did not have any interaction with Thai students. In the same manner, in writing about Thai prostitutes, the novelists must create interaction between these women or men for information.

The next factor is occupation of the writer. Each writer tends to focus on things that they know. In the first novel *Minor Wife*, the author is a former law professor so he describes many inefficient laws and rules in Thailand. In *Tea Money*, the author is a

screenwriter, therefore, he describes the scenes in his novel elaborately. Unfortunately for the last novel *Even Thai Girls Cry*, there is no information of the novelist's occupation. In conclusion, occupation also affects novelists' perception about Thailand and Thai people as in some ways their perception is one-sided and their judgments is depended on occupational view. For instance, in *Minor Wife*, Moore portrays his perception to Thai court and Thai police, "This is Thailand. What do you want me to do, go to court? Sue Polsky? Forget it. Only one thing works in this place: muscle. It's got nothing to do with the cops shutting us down as one" (p.9). This is an evaluation from his occupation background as a law professor and he assumes there is always injustice in Thailand. Moreover, in his point of view, all Thai court and Thai police are inefficient though it is not true.

The last factor is author's attitude. According to the concept of attitude referred by Martin Fishbein (1967) in *Positive and Negative Attitudes*,

An attitude characteristically provokes behavior that is acquisitive or avertive, favorable or unfavorable, affirmative or negative, toward the object or class of objects with which it is related. This double polarity in the direction of attitude is often regarded their most distinctive feature. It has a central place in Bogardus' definition (1931, p.52) : An attitude is a tendency to act toward or against some environmental factor which become thereby a positive or negative value." Likewise, Thurstone defines an attitude as "the affect for against a psychological object (1932) (p.8).

In the three novels, both positive and negative attitudes of the novelists influence readers' perception of Thailand. Their bias and prejudice are also influential to the characters and their behaviors in the novels. This results in stereotyping in the novels.

What the novelists portray in stereotypes can defame Thailand and Thai people's reputation because the readers are inaccurately informed. The author's stereotyping can create imagination in one's mind. When people experience real situation which is unlike their pre-perception or imagine, it will be upsetting and disappointing. For example, when foreigners idealize that Thai people have their hospitality to visitors, they expect to meet warm welcome from all Thais.

Unfortunately, they meet Thai people who do not give a warm welcome. Then foreigners will have a negative attitude towards Thai people. It will be better if Thai people are looked at as real human beings who can have variable behaviors.

The portrayal of Thai people and culture through the western novels set in Thailand is a mirror for Thai people to reflect on what Thais are like to internationally and how people from the other countries have ideas about Thais and Thailand. Although, some observation is true but there are much negative portray, which is hurtful to Thais. Sometime Thais want to hide shameful behaviors from foreigners, such as what the Thai government tries to do, but in this globalized world where international media conquers almost every area, it is not easy for one to try to hide the truth. Instead, Thais must learn from the foreigners' attitude and try to improve from the weak points they found.

In the same manner, foreigners must be aware of cultural aspects and social differences. They have to try to understand them. Furthermore, to avoid stereotyping, foreigners must be aware of the fact that not all people have the same manners, to say the majority represent the whole is inaccurate. Therefore, it is better to avoid the word "Thais are", "Thais like" "All Thais" in expressing Thai people.

Also the settings in the novels affect the portrayal of Thai people and culture. From this study, almost all the scenes are set in Bangkok and Pattaya. For that reason, foreigners will think that all of Thailand is like Bangkok and Pattaya. From the study, it is found that there is a lack of extensive analysis due to the limited novels and limited scenes to portray Thai people and culture, such as there is not much comparison between Thai city life and rural life. For further study, it is suggested that a research employs more novels and diverse scenes and backgrounds which will provide more substantial results and accuracy.