

INTERTEXTUALITY AS A PARADIGM FOR LITERARY STUDY IN THAI LITERARY AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS ¹

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Literary Study in the Age of Multimedia

In the age of Multi-media, the status of poetry seems to lessen. How do contemporary Thai poets view their own status and their works? In a time when poetry is not the dominant genre in literary circles, poets without patronage can hardly survive in the material world, yet they are brave enough to declare their poet's manifestoes. The status of poetry is still divine and eternal, beyond history and time, yet it comes down to earth to serve social needs in creating a better society and world.

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Remaking Literary Traditions: Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Literary Study

The application of the theory of intertextuality to contemporary Thai poetry is based on the hypothesis that intertextuality is a rich theory which opens a new path for the study of literature to the core of history. From an intertextual perspective, every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations. Every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts. The earlier text opens out the present text to an uncontrollable play of historical predecessors. The prior texts themselves drive intertextuality. They generate the infinite, impermanent, flexible and pluralistic paradigm of the reading process which is similar to the Buddhist law of impermanence as the absolute truth. The ideology which intertextuality carries is in opposition to individualism. The theory of intertextuality encourages the concept of pluralism, relativism and the infinity of the intertextual process and the continuation of the traditional heritage. It supports a democratic ideology by offering another choice of a more reasonable, broad-minded and fruitful paradigm of reading and interpretation.

Intertextuality in Thai Literary and Social Contexts

The theory of intertextuality is appropriate to Thai literary and social contexts in which traditions have played such important roles. Especially modern Thai poetry, unlike other forms of modern Thai literature such as novels and short stories, has continued to follow the tradition of poetic expression. The concept of Thai poetics can be divided, as is Thai literature, into two periods. These are the traditional poetics or the concept of poetics before contact with the West and modern poetics or the concept of poetics after contact with the West. Though modern Thai poetics has inherited many characteristics from the traditional, there are differences in emphasis and some new concepts influenced by the West and the trend toward social criticism. While the traditional poetics emphasized the musicality of words as the primary poetic value, the "following the master" tradition and its view of poetry as performance, modern Thai poetics is more concerned with the unity of sound and message, the status of poetry, a poetic repertoire and the poet's responsibility to the society.

Despite the prosodic forms and techniques of verse composition which modern Thai poetry has mostly inherited from the classical period, the subjects of modern Thai poetry are totally different from the traditional subjects. The most common subjects of traditional Thai poetry are romantic love and adventure, heroic deeds, religious and moral teaching, the life of the Buddha, and the Jataka tales (previous lives of the Buddha). The themes are usually those of war and love and moral conflicts between good and evil. It is

characterized by a preference for long narratives with various episodes rather than concise and unitary ones. The distinguishing characteristic of modern poetry is the short poem, approximately 6-12 stanzas, concentrating on a single main theme. The subject matter can be divided into two trends: the lyric, which concentrates on the contemplation of feeling of an individual; and the "poem of idea", the main trend, emphasizing political, philosophical and social themes. While the unity of idea or theme is the main concern, the style of composition in jingles, puns, rhymes and alliterations still predominates.

Instead of emphasizing only the musicality of sounds as the principal poetic value, modern poetics also pays attention to another distinctive feature as the essence of poetry: the dichotomy of sound and message must be in harmony in the process of creation and reception.

Wanit Jarungkitanan, a contemporary poet, expresses his concept of poetics in "Teacher" which is supposed to be the "paying respect to the teacher" episode at the beginning of his collection of poems. It is composed in one of the most popular traditional prosodic forms (Klon 8) of Sunthorn Phu's style. (Sunthorn Phu was the most popular poet of the Early Bangkok period who developed this popular prosodic form to the highest beauty which has been considered as the master pattern of this prosodic form). This poem explicitly expresses the poet's respect for his master whose works not only are his model for composing poetry but also inspire him to compose poetry that lasts through time like his master's. In this poem, it is clear that the poetic garland has kept on stringing its works from the traditional period to modern

times. In the Thai version, every word is carefully chosen to twine this jewel garland which intends to please the ears of not only ordinary listeners but also of the poets themselves.

Teacher

*(I will) compose a beautiful string of words
With melodious, harmonious rhythms
In order to perform poetic actions
To reveal the truths of poetics.*

*(I) concentrate my thought on poetic vision
With a rejoicing of magnificent words
The jewel-language which should please poets
Words full of flavor and skill.*

*This brilliant, delightful, rhyming melody of words,
Neatly arranged and presented with respect
To long enchant both the hearts of nobles
And those who serve them.*

*Though things they say are sweet everlastingly
Then become tasteless,
Sweet words are sweet eternally
The dance of words assigns utterances
And chant them dazzlingly.*

*Whatever may be sharp
No other sharpness compares to sharp-witted words,
The composed, fascinating sharp-witted
Can cut even the strongest heart.*

*Between the two sky shores of the horizon
Is not as wide as poetic vision
Even those high, bright stars
Are not beyond the reach of poetry.*

*The deep ocean
Is not as deep as composed words
The land is sunny because of sunlight,
But not as bright as a human heart
Illuminated by arranged words.*

*Bright words present a variety of options
They are intricate ornaments,
To embellish people's hearts
Those fascinated by literary charms
Magic verses deeply impress
Inspire me and sharpen my determination
To learn to write poetry.
If I go on rambling,
There will be only these elusive spoken words,
And nothing to prove I'm a poet
I think of Sunthorn Phu, the Master of Poetry
I want to write poetry that last long,
Like the works of the Master.*

The most interesting point that can be observed from the poem "Teacher" is the loud and proud voice of the Past. The poet himself explicitly refers to his poetic authority, especially Sunthorn Phu who is the master of the Klon 8 prosodic form. In the Thai version, both style of composition and message recall the influence of this master. However, there are other new concepts which the poet absorbs and reacts against in literary texts and literary activities of the modern times.

First is the reaction against Thai social criticism which states that all literature has to belong to or serve a particular class. Wanit denies this statement by confirming that poetry serves all, not only nobles but also common people, not only rulers but also those who are ruled. Secondly, he mentions respectively the poetic repertoire which covers the melody of sounds and profound thoughts. The image of "jewel-language" recollects the imagery of the Ayutthaya's garland of words. For Wanit, this quality in imagination can arouse, illuminate and inspire those who write poetry. All these characteristics are embedded in words; thus he states that nothing is as sweet, sharpwitted, wide, deep and bright as the words of poetry, which echoes the traditional concept of poetics.

Besides these intertexts, Wanit's dictum of comparing the qualities of poetry also evokes another prior text, the work of Nai Mee, one of the most successful disciples of Sunthorn Phu, who expresses his poetry of love which is influenced by Sunthorn Phu's style. The style of comparison and expression of Nai Mee also transcends to Wanit in this poem.

"Teacher" also evokes another intertext expressing the pleasant and fascinating domain of poetry. The concept of the enchantment received from listening to the melody of words also connects with another modern poet, Prince Phitthaya-longkorn, (1876-1945) who compares the realm of poetry to heaven. In the opening scene of *Sam Krung* (The Three Cities, 1944) an epic of the three cities-Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Rattanakosin, *Prince Phitthaya-longkorn* composes a

song about the poet's heaven where the singing and dancing of birds symbolize the poetic process. This excerpt, which is at the beginning of the epic poem, also serves as an evocation and an invitation to the muse of poetic composition.

Another point worth mentioning is that the musicality of words is tremendously emphasized here. When explicating the quality of poetry, the poet has chosen musical terms. These are /prieu/ (rhythmic, wavy), /siang/ (sound), /sano/ (euphonious), /phairo/ (melodious), /phiang dontree/ (like music), /theekha/ (long sound), /ratsa/ (short sound), /jangwa/ (rhythm), /lamnam/ (rhythm), /duriyasap/ (musical sound), /khleun/ (wave) and /saday/ (to listen to). These words have been used in describing the nature and quality of poetry as well as music from the past to the present which is clear evidence that modern poetics has developed from traditional poetics.

From the intertextuality presented above, it can be concluded that one of the differences between traditional poetics and modern poetics is that, while traditional poetics gives the primary poetic value to the melody of sounds, modern poetics prefers to emphasize the unity of the musicality of sound and the profound message or the "taste of sound" (rot kham) and the "taste of message" (rot khwam).

The second point is that the intertextual network viewed in modern Thai poetry is a mixture of the continuation of traditional poetry, especially from the Early Rattanakosin Period, i.e. Sunthorn Phu and his followers, and the modern authority, i.e. Prince Phitthayalongkorn plus response to

the social context. The poem "Teacher" is a strong Rattanakosin Period voice which harmonizes traditional and modern authorities. Wanit's dialogue with the past is the voice of consent and harmony with the authority of the Past.

Earth, Life and Immortal Art

Angkhan Kanlayanaphong

I

*Once, Earth was the ocean
Over the longevity
The haughty mountains emerged
Like the crown of the earth
Piercing the lofty clouds
The low sand turned to challenge the
moon and the stars,
At the horizon.*

II

*The eyes of the earth looked up at the
glittering and starry sky
Everything in the first era was buried in
the lower earth
Built up as the previous earth
More precious than the jewels of heaven.*

III

*Speeding itself bravely
Imagination can fly loftily
Sprinkle the sparkling and luminous sand
dust to eternity
Its value is divine and everlasting
Broader than the earth
Beyond the heavenly sky.*

IV

*Earth raised up the precious supreme
knowledge of enlightenment
The three gems remain valuable and
amaranthine
But earth profoundly sits still,
pays respect to it.
Who always performs his splendid duty?*

V

*Footsteps walk over the earth
Step on it, demoralize it.
They naturally blur, vanish
And blend into graveyards
Without the real essence of humanity.*

VI

*Traces of the timecircle hide in the ground
Overtime, stones crumble into sand
Mountains which pierce the lofty clouds
Melt down to mire to bury humans of the
next era.*

VII

*Sand and soil are alive to create the earth
To rejoice in all lives
And abate in their sorrows
With pure, marvelous, and luminous art
The old teacher creates the new one
tomorrow.*

VIII

*Only a short moment
Then one life is buried in the earth
What is left is only splendid art*

*Giving the world what it has been longing
for
Precious immortal art
The essence of the world, beyond heaven.*

IX

*Short-lived but creative
Immortal and priceless
Time passes to waste
Only the heart illuminates to create works
of art.*

In this poem, Angkhan uses his favorite and familiar images of the dichotomy of the lower (earth, sand, human, etc.) and the higher (heaven, star, god, etc.) to confirm the law of impermanence and the interchangeable status of the lower and the higher through time. The triumph of the lower over the higher is possible and human beings, like poets, can create something immortal and eternal beyond the law of impermanence. The dignity of imagination competes with history and time. Poetry illuminates not only human beings but all creatures in nature. The permanent and lofty status of poetry is even more important than Buddhist truth. This "humble" poet praises the three gems of Buddhism and faithfully believes in the law of impermanence, which allows that through time, something low can conquer something higher. The poet, as low as a tiny grain of sand, can create sacred poetry which lasts forever. The status of poetry and poetics seems to be paradoxically expressed by its small and mortal creator but has splendid and immortal life.

In what kind of dialogue does this poem converse with traditional poetics? As opposed to traditional poetics which uses

nature as the artistic model or sees nature as a metaphor for feeling while viewing man as the center of nature, this poem expresses the concept that man is only a part of nature and as a part of the whole, human beings should recognize other elements of nature as companions on the same earth. More than that, man should learn from nature.

The prior text here is Mother Nature in which all scripts of the past are embedded. The reading of nature will enlighten man to spiritual truth. The poet is only a medium who "translates" the multitudes of wonders contained in Nature, or in other words he signifies nature to signifiers, i.e. poems. In this sense, poetry is intimately linked with nature and the universe, and is involved in "history." The significance of the past lies in its place in the present.

Though human beings are small creatures compared to the whole of nature, they can make the world "brighter than heavens" and "challenge the clouds," for the poet can create a "soul sanctuary" for the world and the universe. Even if nobody cares for poetry, the poet still carries out his duty to enchant another world, i.e. heaven throughout eternity.

The Buddhist Hymn

As Buddhism has been the major religious belief of the Thai people for more than 800 years, the relationship between literature and Buddhism is very close. Not only is Buddhism the system of belief but it also defines the way of life and the world-view of the Thai people. In "Wheel of Truth," the essence of truth can touch the feelings

and inspire the imagination and insight of the readers.

Wheel of Truth

Naowarat Phongphaiboon

There is something for which we have no words

*And proof of it is never heard in reason
This state cannot be captured by the mind
And striving for it is to no avail.*

*We cannot say that it does not exist
For it is always present to our view
Yet it will not do to say it has existence
It does not hide, yet somehow it seems hidden.*

*When a murky pool begins to clear
Reflections of the clouds appear as crystals*

*Such a pool is like the mind at peace
A present peace presented as elusive.*

*This world of ours is only what it is
But we suppose to have it otherwise
Our minds are never free of these projections*

*Not for a minute do we perceive in truth
But let the wheel of truth begin to move
Still advancing, turning, stand still
And we will see the beauty of what is
Motionless and turning and complete.*

An interesting question can be asked after reading this poem: if the majority of Thai people are Buddhists, why do they still want to read about the essence of Buddhism in poetry? There is one important aspect of the social context

which it is necessary to clarify. There are differences between Buddhism in practice among common people and Buddhism in theory or in doctrine of which there are a variety of interpretations. In doctrinal Buddhism, Nirvana is the final freedom from the eternal cycle of birth and death, the ultimate life attained by the Buddha and certain advanced Buddhists. However, in the Thai social context, it is almost impossible to find a Buddhist who aims for Nirvana. All ordinary Buddhists prefer to aspire to being reborn again into a better life. Some Western scholars who have studied Buddhism and visited Thailand are surprised to find that the average Thai Buddhists may not even know the four noble truths, and probably could not recite the eightfold path either.

In this poem, Naowarat presents philosophical Buddhism concerning the state of mind free from defilement and misery which, according to him, is unexplainable and beyond language. It can not be captured by any effort. In order to perceive it, one must relinquish every attachment. This peaceful mind is like a crystal clear and calm pool which is so clear that it reflects the cloudless sky. When one experiences this paradoxical state, the truth of life is perceived. The mind is motionless, yet it is moving.

In Naowarat's Buddhist poem, the interpretation of enlightenment is influenced by the voice of Buddhadasa (in Thai Phutthathat), one of the most influential Buddhist philosophers in Thailand. Buddhadasa's thought has influenced a large number of Thai intellectuals and writers. Buddhadasa has certainly been the most creative and controversial Theravada

interpreter in the modern period of world religious history. He has been a critic of Thai Buddhism for the more than thirty years of his monastic career. He criticizes Thai monks for their preoccupation with empty ceremonial and magical ritual and has urged a return to an authentic Buddhist doctrine with a serious quest for Nirvana. He has placed emphasis on the monks' concern for the entire Buddhist community. Buddhadasa started this reform movement in 1934. According to him, Thai Buddhists today are confronting two important enemies, namely, a "materialistic" way of life and superstitious beliefs which are the residue of traditional society. His rationalistic account of Buddhism has reformed the focus of this religion, emphasising not the transcendent "other world" or reincarnation or the concept of the next life but the immediacy of life here and now. He finds that most Thai people think that "Nirvana" is a goal which can be achieved by monks while laymen should be satisfied with daily problems, waiting for a better next life. He points out that this traditional belief has its origin in the fifth century in Sri Lanka and is based on a misinterpretation of the Law of dependent ordination or Patitcasamutpada by Buddhakhosachan. According to Buddhadasa, enlightenment is possible for everybody. It can happen here and now, at any moment. He concentrates on the concept of "jit-wang" or a mind free from moral impurities and misery. Many of Buddhadasa's early writings deal with this theme including one of his major works, "Tua Ku, Khong-Ku" (Me and Mine).

What Naowarat refers to in "Wheel of Truth" is the state of mind which Buddhadasa called "jit-wang" or the "impurity-free mind." In order to maintain

this state, one must be in the middle path, without ambition to conquer it. Only when one drops everything which is supposition can this state be attained. This state of "free from supposition" or "emptiness" is explained in another poem by Naowarat.

Emptiness

Naowarat Phongphaiboon

*The senses pour sensation
In the mind,
The mould in which our sculpted
Self is cast;
Within lies the result
Of worldly sense:
Then trap, and grasp, and shape
Of what we are.*

*The eyes engaged in looking
Think they see;
The ears receiving sounds
Suppose hearing
To air that enters, nostrils
Lend a fragrance,
While tongues encountering food
Accord a flavor.*

*Skin, reaching, touching
Believes it feels;
And contact with another
Forms desire;
To the prodding from the heart,
Love and Hate,
We imagine as
Reality.*

*Everything known is known by means
Of the senses,
Each of which asserts
Its own existence.
Thus, the sensing mind is binding;*

*Its constructs shape
A world of gross perceptions...
Without escape.*

*Yet, by means of insight
It can be seen
That we are merely attached
To an epty self,
And what seems clear is as shifting
As a shadow.
The limitations of our thoughts
Conceal the truth.*

*A single strand of hair
Can hide the mountain,
But, like nature, truth is everywhere
Inside and outside;
This is the way things
Ordinarily are;
Use Truth to strip the mold...
And find the void.*

In this poem, Naowarat explains the noble truth about suffering by pointing out its origin in attachments. The senses of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste are only suppositions and are impermanent. The root of all unhappiness in this world lies in the attachment to and craving for things. Craving or selfish desire is rooted in ignorance: craving for sexual pleasures, craving for existence and craving for self-annihilation. One can stop this unhappiness by understanding three characteristics of life: impermanence (Anitcang), suffering (Dukkha), and no-self (Anatta). The concept of anatta, or no self explains the fact that what is called a being, a person, an individual or "I" is merely a changing combination of physical and mental phenomena, and has no real existence in itself. In order to liberate oneself from suffering, each human being should have a full knowledge of self. This

truth is everywhere but it cannot be seen because "a single strand of hair can hide the mountain". Only when one realizes this truth can happiness prevail.

The influence of Zen Buddhism and the technique of catechism in Buddhadasa's concepts can also be observed in Naowarat's poems. In "The Turtle and the Fish," Naowarat presents a dialogue between two ignorant beings who seem to have different points of view about what truth is. The turtle has travelled to a land which neither he nor his listener (the fish) has ever experienced before. The boastful turtle proudly shows his knowledge while the fish can agree only with what he has experienced. The dialogue continues to emphasize the fish's expectations that the land is something comfortable according to his knowledge. His norm of happiness is based on the best standards for his living. What is beyond his experience and his norms does not exist and is beyond his understanding and imagination. The dialogue can be interpreted as empirical questions about what truth is. From an aesthetic perspective, this application of Buddhism seems to be more charming than the direct explanation of Buddhistic teachings because rich interpretations and intertexts are required in reading this poem.

The Turtle and the Fish

Naowarat Phongphaiboon

*To the inquiring fish
The turtle proudly said,
"I have crawled
On land filled up with dryness.*

*I've dawdled in the breeze,
And pondered earthy noises,*

*And nibbled fruit
That grows on things called trees."*

*In plain perplexity
The fish pursued it further:
Could you do whirls?
And is land smooth and trickling?"*

*When the turtle shook his head
The fish suggested flow,
And undertow,
And even brought up flood.*

*"Not so," the turtle said
Of his discovery
And the fish believed
That he was being misled.*

*"How dare you lie to me,
Proclaiming what isn't real!
I truly feel
The truth is here, at sea!"*

The characters represent those who believe only in what they have experienced and can not imagine the world outside their perceptions. But in this wide world, there are many facets of life and truth which are beyond the reach of empiricism and physical experience. The ignorant characters try to explain to each other by using their limited perspectives but the results are only humiliation and ignorance. From the Buddhistic point of view, truth or Nirvana is the state of mind which is beyond explanation. One has to experience it oneself.

Catechism and allegory are also teaching techniques which Buddhadasa, influenced by Zen Buddhism, prefers both in his writing and teaching. At his temple, Suan Mokkhaphalaram (The Garden where souls are aroused to attain Liberation),

these techniques are applied to paintings and sculptures. Thus, the influences of Buddhadasa in this poem are both in subject matter and technique. Buddhism as prior text in these poems creates a network through various forms of text and with many media.

The Rhythm of Social Criticism

The trend toward social criticism is the major characteristic of modern Thai poetry. The new poetic genre, "the poem of idea," has shifted emphasis from the musicality of sounds to the profundity of message presented in poetry. After the political changes of 1932, when the absolute monarchy was replaced by a constitutional monarchy, the "poem of idea" gradually emerged with the influence of social thoughts and writings. Poets have become more aware of their role as potential agents for social change. Their poems express problems in modern Thai society with its unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity. According to this group of poets and critics, poetry should have a serious purpose by revealing "real" social conditions and depicting the plight of the oppressed, the underprivileged and the poor. Poetry should indict meanness, cruelty and barbarism and point the way to a more just society.

Though this kind of "literature engage" may sound didactic and unsophisticated, in converting this theory into practice, due to the nature of prosody and the traditional way of Thai poetic expression, the result in the best poems can be aesthetically presented. The subject matter of poems in this trend covers all major social, political, economic and moral problems, such as

oppression, state tyranny, poverty and the role of women. The role of poetry as "the mirror and the lamp" does not sound out of date in the Thai literary context.

Justice Once and for All

Naowarat Phongphaiboon

I asked a little child-

A Child with an innocent smile.

"Buy me candy!

Or even better, take me for a ride"

I asked a vendor

"Not asking me

*To lower the price just one baht or
half a baht*

That would be just."

I asked a shopper

"Low standard prices

*Guaranteeing outstanding quality
And speaking gently"*

I asked an advertiser

"To be worth the price

Articulate and concise

To entice with a charming smile"

I asked a seller of mats

"Oh! carrying mats, walking,

*Until my heavy shoulder is almost
broken,*

Walking for free in all lanes.

Big mats and little mats,

Would you like to buy one?"

I asked a seller of chairs

"I lie down and wait until I fall asleep

Good chairs have to be folding chairs

To support your back comfortably."

I asked a lawyer

"Study the law thoroughly

The context, the evidence

*Virtue and evil are judged by
intention."*

I asked a religious person.

"The Chinese, Khmer, Laotians,

Vietnamese, Burmese

Start fights for self-interest

Killing and war are not virtuous."

Who knows where justice lies?

*Each asserts what justice means
everywhere*

Demands justice according to his own view

Justice here, justice there,

Whose justice is it?

Justice, goodness and virtue

"Balance" is where the answer lies*

*Promote everyone's well-being and
happiness*

*Thus we reach the answer to the question,
What is justice?*

(Balance or scales are the symbol of
justice)*

In this poem, several implicit and the explicit intertextual phenomena can be observed. First, the implicit intertextual phenomenon manifests itself in the form of a Buddhist technique of searching for the truth. The technique of presentation echoes the voice of Buddha in his teaching or "Sutra" called "Kalamasutra," the teaching for the Kalama villagers. This sutra concentrates on searching for truth which should not depend on any authorities but should be based on one's own prudent consideration of wisdom.

In "Kalama Sutra," the Buddha specifically warns against blind obedience to doctrine

by encouraging doubt and questioning authority and tradition with these ten "don'ts".

1. Do not believe just because it is told through time.
2. Do not believe because it is old.
3. Do not believe because it is rumored.
4. Do not believe because it is written in a text or scripture.
5. Do not believe because it is predicted or refers to logic.
6. Do not believe because it is literally interpreted.
7. Do not believe because it is shown as it should be.
8. Do not believe because you like it or it goes along with your system.
9. Do not believe because the teller is reliable.
10. Do not believe because the teller is your teacher.

But do believe when: you have studied and have tested it yourself;

You see it to be the truth on all occasions;

You can prove it to others;

You can see the benefit in studying and adopting it;

You can learn it by yourself."

In this poem, after showing that everyone still holds his/her own perspective based on personal benefit and prejudice, he concludes with the "right" answer, that there should be justice for everyone. It is ironic that he does not follow the Kalama Sutra and let readers find the answer by themselves, but directly presents his opinion as the conclusion. This poem also shows that the role of poetry as illumination with the light of Buddhism is still active in contemporary poetry.

The second explicit intertextual aspect is the reference to social contexts. The everyday lives of common people such as vendors, sellers of chairs and mats are parts of a familiar scene in Bangkok. Realistic social events are one of the prominent prior texts in contemporary poetry. The poet refers to these texts explicitly and the readers can easily share these texts as the public domain.

The Feminist Choirs

The trend toward feminism is a product of the trend toward social criticism. Literary critics and poets who are interested in social criticism also pay attention to feminist issues. The women's movement only appeared in the last two decades during the student uprising. In "The smile of the Goddess of Rice," Jiranan Phitpreecha, the best poet of this trend, challenges traditional social values which give priority to beauty and physical appearance. In this poem, the beauty of women originates from her labor and her generosity. In traditional literature, the beauty of working women had never been praised. The female protagonists were all from the high class or well-to-do families. The poet denies these values by evoking the image of working class women.

The Smile of the Goddess of Rice

Jiranan Phitpreecha

*Tightening her calf muscles,
She steps on the pestle...*

Tup... Tup

*Lifting and releasing, repeatedly
The husk is pounded,
By firm legs that move
To the rhythm of the pestle,*

*Tuk Tak Tup...
Tuk Tak Tup...*

*Her skillful legs,
Neither white or tender
Tip up the edge of her lower garment,
Her movement is strong and skillful.
She lifts her foot to press down the pole,
Press and release,
Press and release,
The sound of pole striking the husk...*

Tuk Tuk Tup! Tuk Tuk Tup!

*Faster and faster she pounds
Again and again she wipes away the
glittering sweat,
But her smile remains
The smile that chokes my heart
Many young women stand shoulder to
shoulder
Stepping and releasing again and again
The sound of the pestle mixed with
laughter
And teasing.
When the husk is cracked
Two small hands scoop
The shining white rice from the mortar
Carefully pour it into the winnowing tray
...*

Taralaek! Taralaek!

*The grain spins and bounces
To and fro
Nearly missing the tray.
Left and right it sways,
With a rice-dance, hypnotic motion.*

*Beauty and strength mingle
In that winnowing tray
With sweat that pours freely.*

*When no one forces it
It pours energy
That spreads a stream of the spirit
Of selflessness.*

*There are no traces of tears in the sweat
With this rice... the people repay their
warriors
The goddess of rice, carrying her baskets,
approaches
With the hint of a smile
Wipes the sweat from her brow.*

From an intertextual perspective, this poem demystifies at least three major concepts. First is the shift in the social value from judging woman by her appearance to judging her by her virtue and her role in contributing to others. Second, the protagonists in this poem are the opposite of what they used to be in traditional poetry. The graceful and beautiful image of the working women is poetically expressed with energetic and powerful rhythm. Third, by comparing these working women to the goddesses of rice, the poet revolutionizes the superstitious belief about this goddess who brings prosperity to the farmers by saying that it is these women's labor, not other supernatural powers, that produces rice. She expresses not only the difficulty or the misery of life, but also presents a new appropriate female image according to this new social value.

The Multiple Dimensions of Intertextuality

It is interesting that by applying the theory

of intertextuality to the criticism of contemporary Thai poetry, one can observe the multiple dimensions of intertextuality and the intertextual networks.

The first dimension is that the intertextual paradigm generates the meaning of the text as the infinite carnivalization of intertextuality. Intertextuality views text as a discourse of the signifying process. Text is plural, constitutive, open-ended, and linked to networks of other texts. The present text opens up the network of prior texts which cover written and oral texts, literary and non literary texts, including other forms of texts, i.e. art, music, social contexts, legends and beliefs, etc. The carnivalization of the texts in the textual relation is unfinished as long as the text is read. In the Thai literary context, intertextuality among literary texts both written and oral is also active.

The second dimension is that of extending the meaning of the prior texts. From the intertextual perspective, the meaning of texts and prior texts expands from literary texts to those of social, political and philosophical contexts.

The third dimension is that history from an intertextual point of view is embedded in the present text as a "here and now" unity. By reading the present text, the literary past will be illuminated in the present. The present text evokes the prior texts in memory which may flash back to only particular texts in some particular periods of time as they are explicitly and implicitly embedded in the present text. History from this perspective is a journey through the multiple episodes of time and overlapping pictures of the past. Through this passage,

the interrelationship and the discontinuing of literary traditions will keep on playing their changeable roles.

The intertextual network drawn from the present text links the past to the present in the form of the carnivalization of the prior texts. The prior texts cover both the authoritative Past and the modern or contemporary texts.

The fourth dimension is the textual repertoire as the variable factor in generating the carnivalization of the prior texts. The factors controlling the discourse of this complex intertextual network are both the intertextuality of the poet and that of the reader. The competence to interweave an intertextual network from each text depends upon the textual repertoire, i.e. the poet who may have rich intertextuality, and the reader whose intertexts are also significant in the process of reading the text.

The fifth dimension is the relationship between the present text and the authority of the past. The present text creates a dialogue with the authoritative past and may accept the hegemonic relation or deny it by arguing, criticizing or adapting its authority.

In the Thai literary context, there are two major voices of these dialogues. First is the voice of consent. Second is the challenging voice which may ignore or twist the voice of the authority. There is another interesting phenomenon in which the authority is neither consented to nor disputed, rather authority is used as a technique for expressing sensitive issues.

The sixth dimension is the network among poems of the same poet. The development of a particular poet shows the intertextual network among his/her own works. The poet's own works can be his/her prior texts. Some may repeat one's own voice with only slight differences. On the other hand, some may deny and create a more innovative voice.

The seventh dimension is the system of belief, i.e. Buddhism in the Thai cultural context which creates a subtle intertextual network. The influence of Buddhism as a world view can still be observed in the forms of prior texts. Buddhism has its own intertextual network with complicated dialogue among each text.

These multiple dimensions of intertextuality interweave as the network in the Thai contemporary literary domain. It is interesting and challenging for us, as teachers of literature, to transcend these prior texts and a paradigm of intertextuality, as a paradigm of reading, not only to succeed literary and cultural heritage, but also to create contemporary artistic traditions.

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