ของเด็ก แต่การที่เด็กอายุ 10 กว่าขวบ เล่นน้ำไปและร้องรำทำเพลงไปพร้อมกันด้วยความสนุกสนาน และก็ร้องเพลงลิเกเสียด้วยนั้น ดูจะไม่ใช่สิ่งธรรมดาเสียแล้ว เขาอาจจะไม่ได้เรียนร้องหรือเรียนรำมาโดยตรงจากโรงเรียน แต่คงจะได้ดูดซับวัฒนธรรมการแสดงดังกล่าวมาจากสภาพแวดล้อมของอัมพวานั่นเอง การที่เขาปีนขึ้นบนยางที่ลอยตัวอยู่ผืนน้ำ แล้วก็พลัดตกลงมา แต่ยังไม่ยอมแพ้ ชวนให้คิดว่า ศิลปะการแสดงแบบประเพณีของเราคงจะต้องต่อสู้เพื่อความอยู่รอดกับสภาพของสังคมใหม่ ซึ่งมีเทคโนโลยีเป็นตัวหนุน และการที่เด็กน้อยขึ้นไปยืนอยู่บนยางรถ (อันเป็นผลผลิตของเทคโนโลยียุคใหม่) ได้ไม่นานก็ต้องพลัดตกลงมานั้น ก็ดูจะเปรียบได้กับการที่มนุษย์ในยุคใหม่ต้องใช้ความพยายามมหาศาลที่จะเป็นนายเทคโนโลยีให้ได้ และผู้เขียนก็อยากจะตีความไปในทางบวกว่า ถ้าพลัดตกลงมานับไม่ถ้วนครั้งแล้วยังไม่ยอมแพ้ วัฒนธรรมอัมพาคงจะมีความแข็งแกร่งที่จะต่อสู้กับการคุกคามของเทคโนโลยีได้อย่างดีทีเดียว

ในบทความที่ว่าด้วย "ศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กัน" ที่กล่าวมาแล้วข้างต้น ผู้เขียนได้พยายามจะชี้ให้เห็นว่า การที่คนไทยยกย่องความสามารถหลายทาง (versatility) อันมีพระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธเลิศหล้านภาลัยทรงเป็นตัวอย่างอันโดดเด่นนั้น คงจะมิใช่เรื่องของอัจฉริยภาพเฉพาะบุคคลเท่านั้น แต่เป็นพลังของชีวิตแบบไทยที่มีอยู่แล้วในระดับของชุมชนมาช้านาน เราคงจะต้องไม่ลืมว่าพระองค์ท่านประสูติมาในฐานะสามัญชน ได้ซึมซับชีวิตของชาวบ้านไทยก่อนที่สมเด็จพระราชบิดาจะได้ขึ้นครองราชสมบัติ และเมื่อพระองค์ท่านเองได้ทรงสืบต่อราชสมบัติ ก็ทรงสามารถที่จะหลอมรวมวัฒนธรรมราชสำนักกับวัฒนธรรมชาวบ้านให้เข้ากันได้ พระมหากษัตริย์พระองค์เดียวกันทรงพระราชนิพนธ์ละครในเรื่อง *อิเหนา* ซึ่งได้รับการยกย่องว่าเป็นสุดยอดของวรรณกรรมการละครไทย แต่ในขณะเดียวกันก็ทรงพระราชนิพนธ์บท *ละครนอก* ไว้จำนวนหนึ่ง ซึ่งยังคงความเข้มข้นของความเป็นชาวบ้านไว้ได้อย่างเต็มที่ราวกับจะประกาศให้โลกรู้ว่าคนไทยเราชาญฉลาดพอที่จะนำวัฒนธรรมลายลักษณ์มาสนองวัฒนธรรมมุข-ปาฐะ คือนำราชสำนักมารับใช้ประชาชนก็ได้ ในเมื่อพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงวินิจฉัย

ให้เป็นไปเช่นนั้น ในขณะเดียวกันผู้เขียนเองก็โชคดีพอที่เกิดทันได้ดูลิเกทรงเครื่องที่นำพระราชนิพนธ์อิเหนามาเล่นใหม่ โดยเดินเรื่องตามพระราชนิพนธ์แต่นักแสดงด้นกลอนสดเองตามแบบแผนของศิลปะการแสดงแขนงนี้ เมื่อพระมหากษัตริย์พร้อมที่จะรับใช้ชาวบ้านได้ด้วยการเขียนละครนอกไว้เป็นลายลักษณ์อักษร ชาวบ้านนอกวังก็สนองพระมหากรุณาธิคุณในทางที่กลับกันด้วยการนำของสูงคือละครในมามอบกลับไปให้ประชาชนในรูปของการแสดงลิเกอันเป็นที่ชื่นชอบของบุคคลธรรมดาสามัญ นั่นคือ **พหุนิยมทางศิลปะ** อันเป็นรากฐานแห่งวัฒนธรรมอัมพวาที่เอื้อให้ราชสำนักกับชาวบ้านทำหน้าที่เป็นแสงส่องทางให้แก่กัน

ในบท *ไหว้ครูข้างต้น* ผู้เขียนได้เอ่ยถึงแนวคิดทางการศึกษาของศาสตราจารย์ ม.ล.ปิ่น มาลากุล มาแล้ว[14] ในที่นี้จะขอโอกาสขยายความเรื่องของการศึกษาให้ครอบคลุมเรื่องของวัฒนธรรมด้วย เมื่อครั้งที่ยังดำรงตำแหน่งรัฐมนตรีว่าการกระทรวงศึกษาธิการ ศาสตราจารย์ ม.ล.ปิ่น มาลากุล เตรียมแผนงานที่จะสร้างอนุสรณ์สถานของพระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธเลิศหล้านภาลัยขึ้น ณ อำเภออัมพวา ในรูปของโรงละครที่มีการจัดแสดงพระราชนิพนธ์ของพระองค์ท่าน และละครไทยอื่นๆ ที่มีคุณค่า โดยจะมีฤดูการแสดงเช่นเดียวกับ Shakespeare Memorial Theatre ที่บ้านเกิดของมหากวีชาวอังกฤษ ณ เมืองสแตรทฟอร์ด-อัพพอน-เอวอน (Stratford-upon-Avon) ผู้เขียนได้เคยรับฟังแผนงานดังกล่าวด้วยวาจา และก็คิดคล้อยตามนักการศึกษาผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ท่านนั้นไปว่า หลักการของการสร้างโรงละครเพื่อเป็นอนุสรณ์สถานนั้น ดูจะหนักแน่นและมั่นคงไม่ต้อยไปกว่าโรงละครที่ Stratford เป็นแน่ ที่เลือกสร้างโรงละครเป็นแกนกลางก็ด้วยเหตุที่ศาสตราจารย์ ม.ล.ปิ่น มาลากุล ยกย่องพระมหากษัตริย์พระองค์นี้ว่า ทรงมีพระอัจฉริยภาพโดดเด่นในเรื่องของการละคร และในขณะเดียวกันละครก็เป็นที่หลอมรวมศิลปะหลายสาขาเข้าไว้ด้วยกัน ศาสตราจารย์ ม.ล.ปิ่น ดื่มด่ำกับ

(14)เจตนา นาควัชระ : "บทวิพากษ์ว่าด้วยความคิดเรื่องอุดมศึกษาของศาสตราจารย์ ม.ล. ปิ่น มาลากุล" ใน : **วารสารมหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร ฉบับครบรอบ 25 ปี คณะศึกษาศาสตร์**, 2539. หน้า 51-63.

อุปรากรตะวันตกและทราบดีว่าพื้นฐานทางวัฒนธรรมของไทยเราหนักแน่นพอที่จะหนุนความคิดเกี่ยว *ศิลปะรวมสาขา* (เรียกเป็นภาษาเยอรมันว่า das Gesamtkunstwerk) ดังที่คีตกวี ริชาร์ด วากเนอร์ (Richard Wagner) ได้เสนอเอาไว้ ตั้งแต่ปลายศตวรรษที่ 19 เราคงจะไม่ลืมว่ารัชกาลที่ 2 ทรงเป็นทั้งกวี นักดนตรี คีตกวีผู้ประดิษฐ์ท่ารำ (choreographer) และทัศนศิลปินผู้เชี่ยวชาญในด้านประติมากรรม นั่นคือพระองค์ท่านเป็นปรากฏการณ์อันโดดเด่นของหลักการ "ศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กัน" ซึ่งผู้เขียนได้ให้อรรถาธิบายไว้แล้วข้างต้นว่า ความคิดด้านการวิจารณ์และทฤษฎีการวิจารณ์เกิดขึ้นพร้อมๆ กับความคิดเชิงสร้างสรรค์ในทางศิลปะ เราอาจจะขยายความต่อไปได้ว่า วัฒนธรรมอัมพวาเป็นวัฒนธรรมที่เอื้อต่อการสร้างแนวคิดเรื่อง "การวิจารณ์ส่องทางให้แก่กัน" ได้ด้วยเช่นกัน

ครั้งหนึ่งผู้เขียนได้ไปบรรยายทางวิชาการในการสัมมนาด้านการศึกษา และได้เอ่ยถึงวัฒนธรรมอัมพวาในความหมายที่กล่าวมาข้างต้น และได้เล่าเรื่องเด็กเล่นน้ำประกอบไปด้วย มีอาจารย์โรงเรียนมัธยมท่านหนึ่งซึ่งเป็นชาวอัมพวามายืนยันกับผู้เขียนว่า ประชาคมศิลปะที่ผู้เขียนได้บรรยายเอาไว้นั้นยังมิได้สูญสลายไปในยุคปัจจุบัน อาจกล่าวเป็นความเปรียบได้ว่า เด็กตกน้ำแล้วปีนขึ้นยืนบนยางรถยนต์ได้อีก และก็คงจะไม่หยุดร้องรำทำเพลงตามแบบของเขาต่อไป

ในทัศนะของผู้เขียน *วัฒนธรรมอัมพวามิได้ด้อยไปกว่าวัฒนธรรมสแตรทฟอร์ด-อัพพอน-เอวอน* แต่ประการใด ส่วนที่เราด้อยกว่าเขาอาจจะเป็นด้วยว่า เราขาดความแข็งแกร่งในทางวิจารณ์และในทางวิจัยที่จะวิเคราะห์ให้เห็นถึงคุณค่าของวัฒนธรรมนี้ เพราะในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับเชกสเปียร์นั้น วงการวิชาการทั้งของอังกฤษเองและทั้งของนานาชาติ ได้ร่วมกันสร้าง Shakespeare Criticism ขึ้นมาอย่างต่อเนื่องเป็นเวลาหลายร้อยปีแล้ว ในขณะที่การวิจัยก็ส่งผลออกมาอย่างน่าชื่นชมในรูปของ Shakespeare Scholarship ข้อด้อยของเราจึงเป็นเรื่องของความอ่อนแอในเชิงวัฒนธรรมการวิจารณ์และวัฒนธรรมทางวิชาการที่ยังไม่พร้อมที่จะปรับตัวให้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวัฒนธรรมลายลักษณ์ ผู้เขียนมีความ

เชื่อว่าถ้าจะอธิบายความแข็งแกร่งนี้ให้เห็นประจักษ์ชัดได้ แนวคิดเรื่อง "ศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กัน" และ "การวิจารณ์ส่องทางให้แก่กัน" จะเป็นตัวจักรสำคัญในการสร้าง "ทฤษฎีจากแผ่นดินแม่" ขึ้นมาได้ อัมพวาจึงมีความหมายเกินกว่าแหล่งที่มาของกะลาสามโหนกที่ใช้ทำซอสามสายที่ดีที่สุดในประเทศไทย และเราคงจะไม่เพียงแต่จะกล่าวขวัญถึงถิ่นที่นี้ตามเพลง "สาวอัมพวา" เท่านั้น

สหบทแห่งศิลปะ

จากประสบการณ์ในชีวิตประจำวัน เราจะสังเกตได้อยู่แล้วว่าศิลปะสาขาต่างๆ มีปฏิสัมพันธ์ต่อกัน ในบางครั้งก็มีการอ้างถึงกัน หรือหยิบยืมองค์ประกอบและเนื้อหาบางอย่างซึ่งกันและกัน หลักการของ **สหบท** (intertexuality) สามารถนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในการอธิบายความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างงานศิลปะบางประเภทได้ ตัวอย่างที่อ้างกันบ่อยที่สุดก็คงจะเป็น *จิตรกรรมฝาผนัง* ที่ดำเนินเรื่องตามเนื้อหาที่มีอยู่แล้วในรูปของ *วรรณคดี* ไม่ว่าจะเป็นลายลักษณ์หรือมุขปาฐะ สังเกตได้ว่าวิธีการรับงานศิลปะดูจะพ้องกันในหลายๆ แขนง เช่น ในกรณีของจิตรกรรมฝาผนังนั้น สร้างขึ้นไว้ในสถานที่อันศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ดำรงคงอยู่เป็นเวลานาน ผู้คนดูซ้ำแล้วซ้ำอีกเมื่อมาประกอบกิจทางศาสนา การดูซ้ำหาได้ทำให้เกิดความรู้สึกเบื่อหน่ายเพราะความซ้ำซากจำเจไม่ หากแต่เป็นวิธีการในการดูดซับและปลูกฝังสัจธรรมอันเป็นอกาลิโก ประสบการณ์ทาง *ทัศนศิลป์* ในลักษณะที่ว่านี้ จึงต่างจากนิทรรศการของยุคใหม่ที่มีการเปลี่ยนเนื้อหาอยู่ตลอดเวลา เพราะเป็นการแสดงประสบการณ์ทางโลกที่มิได้มุ่งตอกย้ำสารอันเป็นสัจธรรม เมื่อเราพิจารณาปัญหาข้ามสาขาไปยัง *วรรณศิลป์* ก็จะสังเกตได้เช่นกันว่า ตัวงานวรรณกรรมอันเป็นที่นิยมของคนไทยส่วนใหญ่แต่เดิมนั้นมีองคนิพนธ์ (repertoire) ที่จำกัด เราอาจไม่ได้สนใจความหลากหลายของเนื้อหา ยิ่งในขนบมุขปาฐะนั้น เรื่องเดียวกันอาจนำมาเล่าซ้ำได้นับครั้งไม่ถ้วน ยิ่งถ้าเป็นการดันสด ผู้ขับหรือผู้แสดงแต่ละคนก็สามารถนำเรื่องเก่ามาเล่าใหม่ได้โดยไม่มีข้อจำกัด *เนื้อหา* จึงไม่สำคัญเท่ากับ *การแสดงออก* นวนิยายจึงเป็นของใหม่สำหรับคนไทย การ

หยิบยืมเนื้อเรื่องมาเล่าใหม่จึงไม่ถือว่าเป็นการละเมิดสิทธิ์ *ดนตรี*ก็เช่นกัน การแต่งเพลงในลักษณะหนึ่งคือการนำทำนองที่มีอยู่แล้วมาปรับปรุงใหม่ อาจจะขยายขึ้นหรือทอนลงก็ได้ สังเกตได้ว่าเมื่อเข้าสู่ประชาคมโลกที่ให้ความสำคัญกับเอกสิทธิ์และความเป็นเจ้าของทรัพย์สินทางปัญญา เราจึงจำเป็นต้องปรับตัวกันเป็นอย่างมาก ที่กล่าวมาทั้งหมดนี้ก็เพื่อต้องการจะชี้ให้เห็นว่าการวิจารณ์ในสังคมไทยคงจะไม่สามารถจำกัดวงอยู่แต่เฉพาะศิลปะประเภทใดประเภทหนึ่งได้ เมื่อตัวงานสร้างสรรค์อยู่ในขนบของสหบท การวิจารณ์ก็เลี่ยงไม่ได้ที่จะต้องดำเนินไปในกระแสของสหบทเช่นกัน

จากการวิจัยในโครงการ "การวิจารณ์ในฐานะพลังทางปัญญาของสังคมร่วมสมัย" เป็นที่แน่ชัดว่า ไทยเรามีวัฒนธรรมแห่งการวิจารณ์ที่มักจะดำเนินไปในรูปของเสวนาวิวาทะในกรอบของประชาคมและวงการที่มีความสนิทชิดชอบและเป็นกันเอง โดยไม่นิยมบันทึกข้อวิจารณ์ไว้เป็นหลักฐานเพื่อเผยแพร่ไปสู่สาธารณะชน การแสดงออกที่เป็นสาธารณะย่อมจะต้องเป็นไปในรูปของการแสดง มีกติกาว่าเป็นการเล่น คือผู้แสดงสำนึกอยู่ตลอดเวลาว่าตนกำลังแสดงบทบาทและผู้ดู ผู้ชม ผู้ฟังก็ยึดกรอบกติกาเดียวกันว่ากำลังชมการแสดงซึ่งมิใช่เรื่องของชีวิตจริง เพลงพื้นบ้านทั้งหลายมักจะกำหนดให้มีการต่อสู้กันด้วยปฏิภาณ มุ่งเอาชนะกันด้วยความแหลมคมของความคิด และความเฉียบคมของภาษาที่ดันออกมาได้ในทันทีทันควัน สมาชิกของคณะเดียวกันเมื่อขึ้นเวทีก็เล่นบทเป็นปฏิปักษ์ต่อกัน เชือดเฉือนกันด้วยคำร้อง บางครั้งห้ำหั่นกันอย่างรุนแรง แต่ทั้งคนบนเวทีและผู้ชมเบื้องล่างก็เข้าใจดีว่านี่เป็นการเล่น แต่คำว่า "เล่น" ในภาษาไทยนั้นเรียกร้องความชำชองและความจัดเจนในระดับที่สูงมาก (ดังเช่นตัวอย่างของคำถามที่ว่า "คุณเล่นทางไหน" ซึ่งคงจะต้องแปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษว่า "What do you specialize in?") กล่าวได้ว่าคู่อริสมมติที่แบ่งกันเป็นสองฝักสองฝ่ายนั้น (ซึ่งบางครั้งเป็นสามีภรรยากันในชีวิตจริง) ตั้งหน้าตั้งตาที่จะ *วิจารณ์กัน* บางครั้งก็เก็บเอาความคิดหรือคำพูดของฝ่ายตรงข้ามมาแต่งเสียใหม่ ปรับให้เป็นอาวุธไปโค่นฝ่ายตรงข้ามให้จงได้ เรียกได้ว่าเป็น *สงครามแห่งสหบท*

สังคมที่กล่าวมานี้จะถือว่าปราศจากวัฒนธรรมแห่งการวิจารณ์ได้อย่างไร

ที่น่าทึ่งยิ่งไปกว่านั้นก็คือ การเรียนรู้และการหยิบยืมเทคนิคข้ามสาขากันทำให้เกิดการวิจารณ์อีกประเภทหนึ่งที่ไม่ต้องใช้ภาษาเป็นตัวสื่อ วงการดนตรีรู้จักดีที่จะวิจารณ์กันในกรอบของสงครามแห่งสหบทที่กล่าวมาข้างต้น เมื่อมีการประชันกันก็จะต้องมีการเตรียมต่อสู้กับฝ่ายตรงข้ามด้วยการเฝ้าสังเกตการบรรเลงของอีกฝ่ายหนึ่ง แล้วนำเอาองค์ประกอบบางประการมาปรับเสียใหม่หรือหาแนวตอบโต้อื่นที่สัมพันธ์กับแนวของฝ่ายตรงข้ามตีกลับไปด้วยวิธีการที่เหนือชั้นกว่า นั่นก็คือการวิจารณ์ซึ่งกันและกัน ในรูปของการวิจารณ์ที่ไม่ใช้ภาษา (ในความหมายตามตัวอักษรที่เทียบได้กับภาษาอังกฤษว่า "non-verbal criticism") การชิงไหวชิงพริบกันในลักษณะนี้เท่ากับเป็นการยืนยันว่า การวิจารณ์มิใช่เป็นกิจกรรมทุติยภูมิที่มารองรับงานศิลปะต้นแบบดังที่รู้จักกันในสังคมยุคใหม่ แต่การวิจารณ์เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของกิจกรรมสร้างสรรค์ทางศิลปะ จึงถือได้ว่าอยู่ในระดับของกิจกรรมปฐมภูมิได้ กล่าวอีกนัยหนึ่ง การวิจารณ์มิใช่วาทกรรมที่แยกตัวออกมาเป็นอิสระจากวาทกรรมขั้นปฐมของงานศิลปะ ดังที่กล่าวมาแล้วข้างต้น กิจกรรมการวิจารณ์แบบไทยประเพณีจึงแฝงอยู่ในงานศิลปะ เราคงมิอาจกล่าวได้ว่าวิธีการเช่นนี้เป็นเอกสิทธิ์ของวัฒนธรรมไทย Michel Butor ซึ่งผู้เขียนได้อ้างมาแล้วครั้งหนึ่งในตอนต้นพยายามจะตีประเด็นในกรอบของสหบท และมองงานวรรณกรรมบางชิ้นว่าเป็นเรื่องของการวิจารณ์งานที่มีมาก่อนหน้านั้นแล้ว เขาอ้างถึงกวีชาวอเมริกัน เอซรา พาวนด์ (Ezra Pound) ซึ่งกล่าวไว้ว่า "การวิจารณ์ที่ดีที่สุดที่เกี่ยวกับงานชิ้นใดก็ตาม...มาจากนักเขียนหรือศิลปินสร้างที่สร้างสรรค์งานชิ้นต่อมา และมิได้มา หรือเป็นไปไม่ได้ที่จะมาจากหนุ่มน้อยหน้ามนทั้งหลายที่กล่าวถึงลักษณะทั่วไปของศิลปินผู้สร้างสรรค์ งานชื่อ *ซาโลเม* (Salomé) ของลาฟอร์ก (Laforgue) เป็นการวิจารณ์ที่แท้จริงของวรรณกรรมชื่อ ซาลัมโบ (Salammbô) จอยส์ (Joyce) และอาจจะเป็น เฮนรี่ เจมส์ (Henry James) ด้วย ก็เป็นผู้วิจารณ์งานของโฟลแบรต์ (Flaubert)"[15] สรุปได้ว่า การจะสร้างงานวิจารณ์ขึ้นมาให้เป็นวาทกรรมอิสระ

เป็นสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นใหม่ เพราะดังที่นักวิชาการชาวฝรั่งเศส อ็องตวน ก็องปัญญอง (Antoine Compagnon) ได้กล่าวเอาไว้ "จุดกำเนิดของการวิจารณ์คือห้องนั่งเล่น"[16] เราคงไม่สามารถปฏิเสธความจริงเกี่ยวกับจุดกำเนิดของการวิจารณ์ได้ สิ่งที่ผู้เขียนใคร่ขอยืนยันก็คือ ถึงเวลาแล้วที่เราจะดึงการวิจารณ์ออกมาจากแวดวงของการสนทนา และยิ่งไปกว่านั้น เราจะสร้างความมั่งคั่งให้แก่การวิจารณ์ได้ด้วย การกรุยทางไปสู่หลักการของ *การวิจารณ์ส่องทางให้แก่กัน*

การเรียนรู้ข้ามสาขา : กรณีตัวอย่าง

ดังที่ได้กล่าวมาแล้วข้างต้น ผู้บุกเบิกทฤษฎี "ศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กัน" คือ ออสการ์ วัลเซิล นั้น เริ่มต้นด้วยการหยิบยืมวิธีการวิเคราะห์งานทัศนศิลป์มาใช้ในงานวรรณศิลป์ ซึ่งในกรณีของเขาเอง เขายอมรับสารภาพว่าเพิ่งจะเข้าใจเซกสเปียร์ได้ก็ต่อเมื่อได้วิเคราะห์เซกสเปียร์ในด้านของคุณลักษณะของศิลปะบาร็อค[17] ในที่นี้จะขอนำวิธีการของวัลเซิลมาใช้ในการพิจารณาการวิจารณ์ศิลปะข้ามสาขา โดยจะขอเริ่มต้นด้วยการใช้การวิจารณ์ **ประติมากรรม** มาอธิบาย **วรรณศิลป์** ดังที่ผู้เขียนเคยให้ตัวอย่างไว้แล้วในหนังสือ *ทฤษฎีเบื้องต้นแห่งวรรณคดี* ถ้าจะอธิบายความงามของ **ลิลิตพระลอ** ตอนพระลอและพระเพื่อนพระแพงถูกสังหาร นักวิจารณ์คงจะชี้ดวงให้แก่ตัวอยู่ด้วยวิธีการของการวิจารณ์วรรณกรรมเท่านั้นมิได้ ผู้เขียนใคร่ขออนุญาตอ้างข้อความบางตอนจากการวิจารณ์ของตัวเองมาไว้ในที่นี้

> *อารมณ์โศกในที่นี้คละปนไปกับความชื่นชมในวีรกรรมในความสง่างามของลามกษัตริย์ ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น กวีนิรนามผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ยังสามารถที่จะเสริมความงามทางวรรณศิลป์ด้วยความงามที่*

(15)Michel Butor, op.cit., p. 174.

(16)Antoine Compagnon : **Le Démon de la théorie**. Paris : Seuil, 1998, p. 20.

(17)เจตนา นาควัชระ : "วรรณคดีวิจารณ์และวรรณคดีศึกษา" ใน : วรรณไวทยากร (ฉบับพิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2) กรุงเทพฯ : โครงการตำราสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์, 2520. หน้า 25.

ภาพประกอบที่ 1 พระศรีศากยทศพลญาณ ณ พุทธมณฑล

หยิบยืม มาจากศิลปะแขนงอื่น ภาพของสามกษัตริย์ที่หันหลังเข้าหากันหันหน้าสู้ศัตรูจนตัวตาย เป็นความงามที่เรียกได้ว่าเป็นความงามทาง "ประติมากรรม" แต่กวีผู้ยิ่งใหญ่มิได้หยุดแต่เพียงเท่านั้น ยังเสริมความสง่างามนั้นด้วยการแต่งประติมากรรมที่ไร้วิญญาณให้ดูราวกับ ฟื้นคืนชีพขึ้นมาได้ ดังความที่ว่า "ยืนอยู่ฉันบมิตาย" เราอาจจะต้องยอมรับว่าเห็นจะมีกวีน้อยคนที่สามารถสร้าง "อารมณ์ซดเซย" ได้แนบเนียนและประทับใจถึงเพียงนี้[18]

จะขอขยายความต่อไปว่า ความเข้าใจในเรื่องประติมากรรมจะเป็นตัวหนุนให้เกิดความเข้าใจในวรรณศิลป์ได้ ประติมากรรมในที่นี้สร้างความสง่างาม

(18)เจตนา นาควัชระ : ทฤษฎีเบื้องต้นแห่งวรรณคดี. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2. กรุงเทพฯ : สำนักพิมพ์ศยาม, 2542. หน้า 74-75.

ที่เป็นแนวตั้ง แสดงออกถึงความแน่นหนาแข็งแกร่งและสง่างามมากกว่าแนวนอน ถึงอย่างไรก็ดีความรู้สึกของเราที่มีต่อจินตภาพนี้คงจะหยุดนิ่งตามประติมากรรมโดยทั่วไปเห็นจะไม่ได้ เพราะตัวบทวรรณศิลป์บ่งบอกถึงความเคลื่อนไหวอันเป็นพลวัตที่แฝงอยู่ในภาพ อันที่จริงประติมากรรมแม้จะสร้างขึ้นจากวัสดุที่ไม่เคลื่อนไหว แต่ประติมากรก็สามารถสร้างความรู้สึกแห่งความเคลื่อนไหวได้ ดังเช่นในกรณีของ องค์พระประธาน ณ พุทธมณฑล คือ พระศรีศากยทศพลญาณ (ดูภาพประกอบที่ 1)

โลกของประติมากรรมคงจะมิได้คับแคบเพราะถูกกำหนดด้วยวัสดุ ประติมากรรมแนวนอนที่ให้ความรู้สึกอันลึกซึ้งได้ก็มีอยู่ ดังเช่นในกรณีของพระพุทธไสยาสน์และกวีบางคนก็สามารถรับแรงดลใจจากประติมากรรมเพื่อนำไปสร้างงานทางวรรณศิลป์ที่ยิ่งใหญ่และลึกซึ้งได้ การแลกเปลี่ยนประสบการณ์ของศิลปะข้ามสาขา จึงเป็นตัวกำหนดให้การวิจารณ์จะต้องปรับตัวให้ทันเช่นกัน ตัวอย่างที่คัดมาข้างท้ายนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของกวีนิพนธ์ซึ่งกวีชาวอังกฤษ เกรเวล ลินดอป (Grevel Lindop) ได้เขียนเอาไว้เป็นการพรรณนาพระพุทธไสยาสน์ที่โปลอนนะรุวา ประเทศศรีลังกา ซึ่งผู้แต่งตั้งชื่อว่า "Recumbent Buddha at Polonnaruwa" (ดูภาพประกอบที่ 2)

จะขอคัดข้อความตอนหนึ่งมาดังนี้

"... It is as though the rock itself had slept
to dream this shape, the eyelid's curve, the lip
smoother than any nature form except
maybe the moon's rim or a water-drop ; ..."

...ดูราวกับว่าก้อนหินเองนั้นได้หลับไป
เพื่อนึกฝันรูปทรงนี้ขึ้นมา วงโค้งของเปลือกพระเนตร ริมพระโอษฐ์
เรียบยิ่งกว่ารูปทรงธรรมชาติใดๆ เว้นเสียแต่
อาจจะขอบดวงจันทร์หรือหยดน้ำ...

(มาลิทัต พรหมทัตตเวที : ผู้แปล)

แม้ว่ากวีนิพนธ์บทนี้จะเป็นการพรรณนาประติมากรรม แต่ถ้าผู้วิจารณ์

ภาพประกอบ 2 พระพุทธไสยาสน์ ณ เมืองโปลอนนะรุวา ประเทศศรีลังกา

ใช้ความรู้แต่เฉพาะในด้านของประติมากรรมก็คงจะไม่สามารถอธิบายความหมายและคุณค่าของบทกวีได้อย่างเท่าที่ควรจะเป็น โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งเรื่องของการใช้ความเปรียบอันเป็นกลวิธีเฉพาะของวรรณศิลป์ ดังข้อความที่ว่า "...the rock itself had slept / to dream this shape,..."(19) ต้องการความจัดเจนในด้านของวรรณศิลป์ในระดับหนึ่ง เพราะในที่นี้กวีกระตุ้นให้เราใช้จินตนาการตามไปจนถึงขั้นที่ประติมากรรมหินอันแข็งแกร่งกลายสภาพมาทำหน้าที่ได้ราวกับเป็นมนุษย์ที่หลับและฝันไป และตัวความฝันเป็นผู้กำหนดเรือนร่างของพระพุทธไสยาสน์อันทรงพลังแห่งความงามนี้ จากนั้นกวีก็ใช้ความเปรียบเพื่อกระตุ้นจินตนาการของเราต่อไป ด้วยการอ้างถึงขอบดวงจันทร์หรือหยดน้ำ ซึ่งอุปมาทั้งหลายที่กวีกล่าวถึงมิใช่สิ่งที่ปรากฏเป็นประติมากรรม แต่การสื่อความด้วยภาษาซึ่งโยงใยไปสู่ปรากฏการณ์ทางธรรมชาติ เอื้อให้เราสร้างประติมากรรมเสริมขึ้นในจินตนาการของเราได้ ในกรณีที่ว่านี้การวิจารณ์วรรณศิลป์จึงสนอง

(19)รายงานการวิจัยเรื่องกวีนิพนธ์ในฐานะพลังทางปัญญาของสังคมร่วมสมัย : บทวิเคราะห์และสรรนิพนธ์กวีนิพนธ์อังกฤษ, 2542, หน้า E 202-E203.

ความเข้าใจในความงามของทัศนศิลป์

ในระดับที่ลึกซึ้งและซับซ้อนยิ่งไปกว่านี้ จะขอยกตัวอย่างที่เป็นรูปธรรมว่า **วรรณศิลป์** จะอธิบาย **ทัศนศิลป์** ได้อย่างไร ในที่นี้จะขอย้อนกลับไปหาวัฒนธรรมอัมพวา ซึ่งเมื่อศิลปินอัมพวาผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ได้ขึ้นเถลิงถวัลยราชสมบัติ ณ กรุงเทพมหานครแล้ว ก็ได้ทรงริเริ่มงานประติมากรรมไม้ที่จัดได้ว่าเป็นสุดยอดของการสลักไม้ในยุครัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น จะขออ้างถึงบานประตูพระวิหารศรีศากยมุนี (ซึ่งปัจจุบันเก็บรักษาไว้ในพิพิธภัณฑสถานแห่งชาติ) ถ้าพิจารณาในรายละเอียดจะเห็นว่าเป็นรูปของสิงสาราสัตว์จากเบื้องล่างไต่สูงขึ้นไปในแนวตั้ง (ดูภาพประกอบที่ 3) กิ่งพันธุ์พฤกษาทอดยาวต่อเนื่องกันไปอย่างไม่รู้จบ เชื่อมจากกิ่งหนึ่งไปอีกกิ่งหนึ่งแตกยอดผลิดอกออกผล (ที่จำเป็นต้องจบก็เพราะเนื้อที่ของบานประตูมีเท่านั้น) ความรู้สึกที่ได้เมื่อพินิจงานชิ้นนี้ก็คือลักษณะลื่นไหลและต่อเนื่องมีพลวัตแฝงอยู่ภายใน เพราะแม้จะเป็นแนวตั้ง แต่สิงสาราสัตว์ที่อยู่ในกรอบแห่งงานชิ้นนี้ก็มีทั้งส่วนที่มองขึ้นเบื้องบนและส่วนที่มองลงเบื้องล่าง แต่กิ่งไม้และพันธุ์ไม้นั้นดูจะชวนให้มองตามธรรมชาติว่าเติบโตขึ้นเรื่อยๆ สูงขึ้นอย่างไม่หยุดยั้ง ความรู้ด้านประติมากรรมคงจะช่วยอธิบาย

ภาพประกอบที่ 3 บานประตูสลักไม้ พระวิหารศรีศากยมุนี วัดสุทัศน์เทพวราราม

กลวิธีของการสลักไม้ได้ลึกซึ้งยิ่งกว่าที่ผู้เขียนได้เสนอมา ณ ที่นี้ แต่ผู้เขียนอดคิดไม่ได้ว่า ทัศนศิลป์ที่ปรากฏอยู่บนบานประตูไม้นี้ มีเนื้อหาเดินเรื่องไปในขนบชมดงของวรรณศิลป์ ซึ่งเป็นที่รู้จักกันดีในวรรณคดีไทย สิ่งที่สะดุดใจผู้เขียนก็คือความลื่นไหลและจังหวะที่มีอยู่บนบานประตูนี้ เมื่อดูภาพไปก็แทบจะได้ยินเสียงของงานประพันธ์แบบประเพณีของไทย อันเป็นเสียงที่ค่อนข้างจะลื่นไหลและราบรื่น เมื่อถามตัวเองว่าเป็นเสียงของฉันทลักษณ์ประเภทใด ก็เห็นจะต้องตอบในทางปฏิเสธเสียก่อนว่า ไม่ใช่โคลงอย่างแน่นอน แต่ชวนให้คิดถึงฉันทลักษณ์ที่มีระบบอันเป็นอิสระมากกว่านั้น อาจจะเป็นกลอนก็ได้ เพราะสัมผัสทั้งที่เป็นสัมผัสระหว่างวรรคและสัมผัสใน ก็เทียบได้กับงานไม้สลักที่มีความเชื่อมโยงของกิ่งก้านสาขาที่ปรากฏอยู่ และเมื่อคิดถึงสัมผัสก็อดเห็นเป็นภาพไม่ได้ถึงสิงสาราสัตว์ที่มองขึ้นเบื้องบนและมองลงเบื้องล่างสื่อความสัมพันธ์กันอยู่ภายในภาพนั้น ถึงกระนั้นก็ตามผู้เขียนก็อดคิดไม่ได้ว่าน่าจะมีฉันทลักษณ์ที่นำมาอธิบายความเป็นเสรีและความเคลื่อนไหวได้ดียิ่งกว่ากลอน ซึ่งในท้ายที่สุดก็คงต้องมาลงเอยที่ **ร่าย** ถ้าจะตั้งคำถามว่านายช่างผู้มีความสามารถในทางสลักไม้ได้ยินเสียงร่ายอยู่ในโสตประสาทหรือในขณะที่พวกเขากำลังสลักเสลาภาพอันวิจิตรภาพนั้น คงจะไม่มีใครตอบได้ว่าเป็นเช่นนั้นหรือไม่ แต่ผู้วิจารณ์ที่เติบโตขึ้นมาในวัฒนธรรมไทย อันมีวัฒนธรรมอัมพาเป็นตัวนำ อยากที่จะกล่าวว่า ถ้าได้ยินเสียงของวรรณศิลป์ไทยจะได้รสจากการมองภาพสลักไม้ชิ้นนี้ และ **การวิจารณ์ประติมากรรม** ย่อมจะมั่งคั่งขึ้น ถ้าได้รับแรงหนุนจาก **การวิจารณ์วรรณศิลป์**

ประเด็นที่ขอนำมาอภิปรายต่อไป เป็นเรื่องของการใช้การวิจารณ์ **สังคีตศิลป์** มาอธิบาย **ทัศนศิลป์** ดังที่ได้กล่าวมาแล้วในตอนต้น ถึงการที่จิตรกรรมฝาผนังมีวิธีการ "เล่าเรื่อง" ของตนเองที่อาจจะแตกต่างไปจากวรรณศิลป์ จะสังเกตได้ว่าจิตรกรรมฝาผนังสามารถดำเนินเรื่องหลายเรื่องที่เกิดขึ้นพร้อมกันได้ในเวลาเดียวกัน ซึ่งวรรณศิลป์ในรูปของเรื่องเล่ามิอาจทำได้ เพราะการแสดง

ออกด้วยภาษาถูกกำกับด้วยลำดับก่อนหลังที่ต้องยึดตามการเล่าเรื่องด้วยภาษา การจะเข้าถึงอัจฉริยภาพของศิลปินที่สามารถใช้ผืนภาพในช่วงเดียวกันพรรณนากิจกรรมของตัวละครต่างกลุ่มกัน เช่น ในขณะที่ท้าวพระยามหากษัตริย์กระทำกิจของตนอยู่ในช่วงกลางของภาพ เบื้องบนเทพและผู้มีอิทธิฤทธิ์ทั้งหลายอาจจะกำลังเหาะเหินเดินอากาศอยู่ ในขณะที่เบื้องล่างของภาพเป็นการพรรณนาถึงชีวิตของคนธรรมดาสามัญ ซึ่งในบางครั้งก็เป็นเรื่องออกตลกหรือกระเดียดไปในทางสัปดนเสียด้วยซ้ำ การดำเนินเรื่องทั้ง 3 แนว ใช่ว่าจะขาดความสัมพันธ์ต่อกันโดยสิ้นเชิง แก่นเรื่องหลักยังเป็นตัวกำกับอยู่ แต่แนวเรื่องรองของคนแต่ละกลุ่มก็ดูจะมีความเป็นตัวของตัวเองอยู่ไม่น้อย การจะอธิบายถึงความจัดเจนและความลุ่มลึกของการเล่าเรื่องในลักษณะนี้ อาจจะต้องพึ่งความเข้าใจในด้าน **สังคีตศิลป์** วงดนตรีไทยมีลักษณะเฉพาะของตน นักดนตรีซึ่งเล่นเครื่องดนตรีเฉพาะของตนอาจจะมีเสรีภาพมากกว่านักดนตรีตะวันตกที่เล่นอยู่ในวงซิมโฟนี เพราะเครื่องดนตรีไทยแต่ละเครื่องมีทางของตัว ต่างคนต่างเดินไปตามทางที่ตนถนัด ดูราวกับว่าจะมิได้ *เล่นด้วยกัน* แต่เป็นการ *เล่นร่วมกัน* ในลักษณะที่มีแนวหลักกำกับให้ทุกคนอยู่ในกระแสที่เป็นเอกภาพ เรียกได้ว่าเอกภาพกับความหลากหลายมิได้ขัดกัน ความเข้าใจในเรื่อง *ดนตรีไทย* น่าจะช่วยให้การวิจารณ์ *จิตรกรรมฝาผนัง* ดำเนินไปได้อย่างลึกซึ้งยิ่งขึ้น ผู้รู้บางท่านอาจจะนำโครงสร้างของดนตรีตะวันตกในเรื่องของดนตรีหลายแนว (counterpoint) มาอธิบายจิตรกรรมฝาผนังได้ด้วย แต่ผู้เขียนอดคิดไม่ได้ว่า วิธีการบรรเลงดนตรีไทยอาจจะสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงเสรีภาพและอัตลักษณ์ของบุคคลได้ดีกว่าการผูกโยงกันอย่างเป็นระบบด้วย counterpoint ของดนตรีตะวันตก ถึงอย่างไรก็ตาม ไม่ว่าจะเป็นไทยหรือตะวันตก การวิจารณ์ในสาขาหนึ่ง ซึ่งในที่นี้คือสังคีตศิลป์ก็สามารถ "ส่องทาง" ให้แก่การวิจารณ์ในอีกสาขาหนึ่งได้ ซึ่งในที่นี้ก็คือทัศนศิลป์

ในอีกกระแสหนึ่ง **สังคีตศิลป์** ก็สามารถอธิบาย **วรรณศิลป์** ได้เช่นกัน ในที่นี้จะขอยกตัวอย่างที่เป็นรูปธรรมจากบทวิจารณ์การแสดงละครชุด *Oresteia*

ของกวีกรีก อีสคิลุส (Aeschylus) ซึ่งลงพิมพ์ใน *Times Literary Supplement* ฉบับวันที่ 17 ธ.ค. 1999 ผู้วิจารณ์คือ ไมเคิล ซิลค์ (Michael Silk) เป็นศาสตราจารย์ทางภาษาและวัฒนธรรมกรีก จึงย่อมเข้าใจดีถึงตัวบทต้นแบบซึ่งเป็นภาษากรีก และได้รับการแปลมาเป็นภาษาอังกฤษโดยกวีแนวหน้าของอังกฤษคือ เทด ฮิวจส์ (Ted Hughes) ผู้วิจารณ์พยายามจะเปรียบเทียบให้เห็นถึงความแตกต่างของบทแปลภาษาอังกฤษในยุคต่างกัน โดยย้อนกลับไปหาบทแปลของกวีอังกฤษในศตวรรษที่ 18 คือ จอห์น ดรายเดน (John Dryden) เพื่อนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับฉบับที่นำออกแสดงครั้งนี้ เขาพยายามจะชี้ให้เห็นว่า บทแปลภาษาอังกฤษล่าสุดนี้ขาดความละเมียดที่กวี ดรายเดน สามารถสะท้อนให้เห็นได้ ผู้วิจารณ์คิดไม่ออกว่าจะอธิบายความแตกต่างได้อย่างไร และในที่สุดก็ต้องหันไปพึ่ง *สังคีตศิลป์* เขากล่าวถึง "ความนิ่งสงบในรูปแบบที่แฝงอยู่ในงานอีสคิลุสและโศกนาฏกรรมกรีกโดยองค์รวม ซึ่งฮิวจส์และโลกปัจจุบันไม่มีเอาเสียเลย ลองคิดไปถึงความมีระเบียบของจังหวะในงานของกวีเช่นดรายเดน ลองคิดถึงโมซาร์ตสิ ฮิวจส์ (เช่นเดียวกับโลกปัจจุบัน) ไม่มีความเป็นโมซาร์ตเพียงพอ ผลที่ตามมาก็คือ ความเข้มข้นที่เป็นระบบกลายเป็นเรื่องของโรคประสาทไป"[20] การเอ่ยชื่อคีตกวีผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ คือ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart ขึ้นมาในที่นี้เพียงพอแล้วสำหรับผู้ที่คุ้นเคยกับสังคีตศิลป์ตะวันตก สำหรับผู้ที่มาจากต่างวัฒนธรรมก็อาจจะประสบอุปสรรคอยู่ไม่น้อยเลย แต่ถ้าจะแปลงเป็นไทยเสียเราก็อาจจะทดแทนคำวิจารณ์ที่ว่า "ไม่มีความเป็นโมซาร์ตเพียงพอ" (not Mozartian enough) ด้วยการให้ข้อวินิจฉัยแบบไทยว่า "ยังห่างจากอิเหนามากนัก" เพราะผู้ที่คุ้นเคยกับละครในของไทยเรื่องนี้ดี ย่อมจะต้องรู้ว่าความรุนแรงของอารมณ์ที่แสดงออกมาในละครถูกกำกับและได้รับการขัดเกลามาแล้วด้วยขนบอันละเมียดละไมของทั้งวรรณศิลป์ นาฏศิลป์ และสังคีตศิลป์ของไทย การนำเอาโมซาร์ตกับรัชกาลที่ 2 มาเปรียบเทียบกันนั้นอาจจะเป็นการล่อแหลม ถ้าเราจำต้องพิเคราะห์ในรายละเอียด แต่ถ้ามองในแง่ของต้นแบบแห่งอัจฉริยภาพ

(20)**Times Literary Supplement**. 17 December 1999, p. 16.

ทางศิลปะก็น่าจะพอเทียบกันได้ กรณีที่กล่าวมานี้ก็เป็นอีกกรณีหนึ่งที่การวิจารณ์ในสาขาหนึ่ง "ส่องทาง" ให้กับอีกสาขาหนึ่ง

ผู้เขียนได้พยายามชี้ให้เห็นว่า แนวโน้มของยุคปัจจุบันที่พยายามจะมีการเสนอ "ศิลปะใคร่แสดง" (performance art) ขึ้นมาเป็นอีกกระแสหนึ่งที่แตกต่างไปจาก "ศิลปะการแสดง" (performing arts) ในความหมายดั้งเดิมนั้น เป็นทิศทางบุกเบิกที่มาจากวงการ *ทัศนศิลป์* เสียเป็นส่วนใหญ่ คือ แทนที่จะใช้งานศิลปะที่สร้างด้วยวัตถุเป็นเครื่องแสดงออกถึงอารมณ์ความรู้สึกและความคิด กลับใช้ *ตัวบุคคล* ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่คือตัวทัศนศิลปินเองมาเป็นตัวแสดงในแบบต่างๆ ที่ต้องการจะกระตุ้นความสนใจของผู้ชม ซึ่งในบางครั้งก็เป็นการท้าทายและยั่วยุ ดังเช่นในกรณีงานของอารยา ราษฎร์จำเริญสุข ชื่อ "ทุกข์แห่งปรารถนา" ซึ่งศิลปินเองนำเอาวรรณคดีไทยมาอ่านเป็นทำนองเสนาะให้ศพฟัง ซึ่งศพเหล่านี้ตั้งเรียงรายอยู่ในห้องดับจิตในโรงพยาบาลแห่งหนึ่ง เราคงจะไม่สามารถใช้วิธีการวิจารณ์ศิลปะการแสดงในระดับทั่วไปมาวิจารณ์งาน "ศิลปะใคร่แสดง" ในรูปแบบที่กล่าวมานี้ได้ ในบางครั้งผู้วิจารณ์จำเป็นจะต้องข้ามสาขาไปมาอยู่ตลอดเวลาเพื่อที่จะตีความหรือประเมินคุณค่าตัวงานบุกเบิกของยุคใหม่เหล่านี้ให้ได้

จะขอยกตัวอย่างงานของต่างประเทศอีกชิ้นหนึ่ง ซึ่งคงจะไม่สามารถจัดระบบลงไปให้แน่นอนได้ว่าเป็นศิลปินประเภทใดแต่เพียงสาขาเดียว นั่นคืองานชื่อ De Profundis หรือ "จากห้วงลึก" ของคีตกวีชาวอเมริกัน เฟรเดอริค เซฟสกี (Frederic Rzewski : เกิด 1938) ผู้แต่งนำข้อความ 8 ตอนจากบันทึกของนักประพันธ์ชาวไอริช ออสการ์ ไวลด์ (Oscar Wilde) มาสร้างเป็นงานประพันธ์สำหรับเปียโน โดยที่ผู้เล่นเปียโนจะต้องทำหน้าที่หลายอย่าง อันได้แก่

1) แสดงงานเดี่ยวเปียโน ซึ่งอยู่ในระดับที่ยากมาก
2) กล่าวข้อความจากวรรณกรรมของ Oscar Wilde ออกมาราวกับเป็นการอ่านกวีนิพนธ์ พร้อมทั้งเล่นเปียโนคลอไปด้วย
3) เปล่งเสียงที่ส่อให้เห็นถึงสภาวะใกล้วิกลจริตของผู้เขียน De

Profundis

4) แสดงท่าทางต่างๆ ที่ส่อสภาวะใกล้วิกลจริตเช่นกัน

งานศิลปะชิ้นนี้ Associate Professor Jeffrey Gilliam จาก มหาวิทยาลัย Western Washington University ได้นำออกแสดงในกรุงเทพฯ เมื่อวันที่ 10 ธันวาคม 2542 และได้รับความสนใจจากผู้ชมเป็นอย่างยิ่ง เพราะยังไม่เคยมีผู้ใดนำงานในลักษณะนี้ออกแสดงมาก่อนในประเทศไทย การที่จะวิจารณ์งานชิ้นนี้ได้จะต้องใช้ความสามารถในหลายทาง ในขั้นแรกผู้วิจารณ์จำจะต้องเข้าใจถึงที่มาของวรรณกรรมซึ่งเป็นอัตชีวประวัติของนักประพันธ์ชาวไอริช ซึ่งเป็นบันทึกที่เขียนไว้ในขณะที่ถูกจองจำด้วยข้อหาเพศสัมพันธ์วิปริต (ตามกฎหมายของสหราชอาณาจักรในขณะนั้น) แต่ด้วยความเป็นกวี การแสดงออกถึงความอัดอั้นตันใจของผู้ที่ใกล้วิกลจริตกลับสื่อออกมาได้ด้วยคุณลักษณะทาง **วรรณศิลป์** อันสูงส่ง ผู้วิจารณ์จึงจำต้องมีความจัดเจนในด้านวรรณศิลป์เป็นทุนเดิมอย่างเพียงพอแล้ว ในขณะเดียวกัน เมื่อเชฟสกีนำงานของออสการ์ ไวลด์มาเสนอโดยมีส่วนที่ใช้เปียโนประกอบ ผู้วิจารณ์ก็จะต้องสามารถชี้ให้เห็นได้ว่า **คีตศิลป์** สัมพันธ์กับ **วรรณศิลป์** อย่างไร เอื้อต่อกันหรือไม่ ขัดกันแย้งกันหรือไม่อย่างไร และการแสดงออกซึ่งตัวบทวรรณกรรมก็มิใช่เป็นการขับร้องซึ่งรู้จักกันดีในรูปของ art song ในวงการคีตศิลป์ตะวันตก แต่ใช้สุ้มเสียงแบบการอ่านกวีนิพนธ์ประกอบดนตรี ซึ่งนักวิจารณ์ก็จำต้องแสวงหาวิธีการที่เหมาะสมมาใช้ให้ได้ สำหรับส่วนที่เป็น **ดุริยางคศิลป์** ซึ่งแสดงด้วยเปียโนล้วนๆ นั้น บางตอนเป็นการใช้เครื่องดนตรีสะท้อนบทวรรณกรรม บางตอนมีความเป็นตัวของตัวเองสูงมาก คือ เขียนเป็น fugue คล้ายกับงานของโยฮันน์ เซบาสเตียน บาค (Johann Sebastian Bach) คือแสดงความคงแก่เรียนของผู้แต่ง แต่ก็กระเดียดไปในเชิงทีเล่นทีจริง ดูราวกับจะได้รับเชื้อแห่งสภาวะกึ่งวิกลจริตมาจากตัวบทวรรณกรรม นอกจากนี้บางส่วนก็เป็นการแสดงด้วยเปียโนที่ไม่เป็นเสียงดนตรีเรียกได้ว่าเป็นเปียโนกำมะลอ บางตอนก็ใช้นิ้วเคาะจังหวะบนฝาเปียโนให้ความรู้สึกไปอีกแบบหนึ่ง สำหรับส่วนที่เป็น "ศิลปะใคร่แสดง" นั้น เป็นการที่ **คีตศิลป์**

และ **วรรณศิลป์** รับช่วงเอาแนวคิดของ **ทัศนศิลป์** ในเรื่องของ "การแสดง" (performance) มาใช้ คำพูดบางส่วนเป็นภาษากวีต้องออกเสียงอย่างมีจังหวะจะโคน มีการเล่นคำ มีการสัมผัสพยัญชนะ ราวกับเป็นการล้อคำร้องในมหาอุปรากรของคีตกวี ริชาร์ด วากเนอร์ (Richard Wagner) บางตอนเป็นคำพูดที่ไม่เป็นภาษาคน บางตอนเป็นการส่งเสียงประกอบกิริยาท่าทางที่แปลกประหลาด รวมทั้งการตบหน้าและทึ้งผมตัวเอง ทั้งหมดนี้เชฟสกีเขียนกำกับไว้ในรูปของโน้ตดนตรีและในรูปของการบอกบทอย่างละเอียดลออทุกขั้นตอน ผู้แสดงซึ่งเป็นนักเปียโนอาชีพอธิบายว่า เขาต้องไปหาครูสอนการแสดงมาฝึกฝนให้แก่เขาเป็นพิเศษในเรื่องของการออกเสียงและแสดงท่าทางต่างๆ นี่คือศิลปะตะวันตกที่ผู้แต่งกำกับบทไว้ทุกอย่าง มิได้ให้เสรีภาพในการด้นเท่ากับศิลปะแบบประเพณีของไทย การที่จะวิจารณ์งานเช่นนี้ได้ ผู้วิจารณ์จำเป็นจะต้องมีความจัดเจนทั้งในด้านวรรณศิลป์ ทัศนศิลป์ การละคร และดนตรี เราคงจะต้องกล่าวว่า ถ้าศิลปะดังเช่นงานของเชฟสกีดังที่กล่าวมานี้เหมาะกับยุคสมัย คือ เป็นการหลอมรวมศิลปะแขนงต่างๆ เข้าด้วยกัน การวิจารณ์ก็จำจะต้องปรับตัวให้เข้ากับยุคสมัยด้วยการเรียนรู้ว่า การวิจารณ์สาขาต่างๆ "ส่องทาง" ให้แก่กันได้อย่างไร[21]

ปัจฉิมบท : จากการวิจารณ์ศิลปะไปสู่การวิจารณ์ชีวิตและสังคม

ประเด็นที่ว่าด้วยพหุนิยมในทางความคิดก็ดี กระแสโลกาภิวัตน์ที่น่าจะนำไปสู่การเชื่อมโยงระหว่างประชาชาติต่างๆ ก็ดี หลักการที่ว่าด้วยศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กันและการวิจารณ์ส่องทางให้แก่กันก็ดี ล้วนแล้วแต่ยืนยันปรัชญาที่ว่า การยอมรับความหลากหลายและความพร้อมที่จะเรียนรู้จากกันและสร้างความมั่งคั่งให้แก่กันคือทิศทางที่โลกสมัยใหม่น่าจะดำเนินไป การอภิปราย

(21)ผู้สนใจแถบบันทึกภาพการแสดงโปรดติดต่อโครงการวิจัย สกว. (การวิจารณ์ 2) office@thaicritic.com โทรศัพท์ : 0-2435-3962, 0-2434-6257 โทรสาร : 0-2434-6257

ประเด็นต่างๆ ที่ได้กระทำมาแล้วข้างต้นดูประหนึ่งว่าจะเป็นการมองศิลปะว่าเป็นอาณาจักรที่ไม่ขึ้นต่อใคร และความมั่งคั่งทางปัญญาที่สร้างเสริมให้แก่กันได้ก็ดูจะเป็นเรื่องภายในของวงการศิลปะ อันที่จริงโจทย์ที่ตั้งไว้ก็เป็นเช่นนั้น แต่ถ้ามองให้กว้างและลึกซึ้งลงไปก็คงจะต้องยอมรับว่า ในเมื่อศิลปะเป็นงานที่มนุษย์สร้างขึ้น ความเกี่ยวพันระหว่างศิลปะกับชีวิตและสังคมมนุษย์จึงเป็นสิ่งที่เรามิอาจมองข้ามได้ ในแง่หนึ่ง การวิจารณ์ศิลปะจำเป็นจะต้องทำหน้าที่วิจารณ์ทั้งตัวงานศิลปะ ผู้สร้างสรรค์งานศิลปะ และบริบทแห่งงานศิลปะ และองค์ประกอบสุดท้ายที่กล่าวมานี้ก็บ่งบอกอยู่ในตัวแล้วว่า การวิจารณ์ศิลปะอาจจะต้องขยายวงไปสู่การวิจารณ์ชีวิตและสังคมด้วย พัฒนาการขั้นสูงสุดของการวิจารณ์อาจเป็นไปในรูปของการสร้างวาทกรรมอิสระที่มิใช่เป็นกิจกรรมระดับทุติยภูมิ แต่เป็นการส่งสารที่มีความหมายต่อชีวิตและสังคม โดยที่จุดเริ่มต้นอาจจะเป็นเรื่องของการแสดงปฏิกิริยาต่องานศิลปะหรือต่อศิลปะโดยรวม ในท้ายที่สุดแล้ววาทกรรมแห่งการวิจารณ์อาจจะก่อตัวขึ้นมาเป็นแหล่งหลอมรวมความคิดที่เกี่ยวกับชีวิตและสังคมได้ โดยที่ในบางครั้งเรามิได้พะวงว่างานวิจารณ์ที่ทรงคุณค่านั้นเป็นการวิจารณ์งานศิลปะที่เป็นรูปธรรมอันใดหรือไม่ ถึงอย่างไรก็ตาม เราคงจะปฏิเสธไม่ได้ว่า โดยทั่วไปแล้วสถานะของงานศิลปะในสังคมอาจจะมั่นคงและสูงส่งกว่างานวิจารณ์ ผลที่ตามมาก็คือ สถานะของศิลปินมักจะสูงกว่าสถานะของนักวิจารณ์ การจะปรับบทบาทของการวิจารณ์ศิลปะให้เป็นบทบาทของการวิจารณ์ชีวิตและสังคมจึงดูจะผูกอยู่กับความน่าเชื่อถือและเกียรติภูมิของผู้วิจารณ์ด้วย เราจึงมักจะได้พบเห็นศิลปินผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ทำหน้าที่เกินจากการเสนองานศิลปะต่อสาธารณชน และแสดงความกล้าหาญทางจริยธรรมในรูปของเสียงแห่งมโนธรรมที่มีลักษณะเป็นการวิจารณ์ชีวิตและสังคมไปด้วย จะขอจบบทความนี้ด้วยการอ้างถึงข้อวิจารณ์ของนักดนตรีเอกของโลก คือ ลอร์ด เยฮูดิ เมนูฮิน (Lord Yehudi Menuhin) ผู้ซึ่งจัดได้ว่าเป็นหนึ่งในบรรดานักไวโอลินชั้นนำของโลก ลอร์ด เมนูฮินเป็นยิว เกิดในอเมริกา บิดามาจากอิสราเอล มารดาเป็นชาวอเมริกันยิว เขามีความสำนึกอยู่ตลอดเวลาว่า มนุษย์เรามิอาจ

ปฏิเสธชาติกำเนิดของตนได้ แต่หลักการที่ยิ่งใหญ่ไปกว่าชาติกำเนิดคือ ความอยู่รอดของมนุษยชาติที่เรียกร้องอุดมคติไปถึงขั้นที่อยู่เหนือความผูกพันในเรื่องของเชื้อชาติไม่ว่ากรณีใดๆ ข้อความที่คัดมาข้างท้ายนี้เป็นการแสดงความคิดเห็นอย่างตรงไปตรงมาเกี่ยวกับนโยบายของประเทศอิสราเอลที่มีต่อชาวอาหรับ ซึ่งลอร์ด เมนูฮิน ประณามอย่างเปิดเผยว่า ไม่เป็นไปตามหลักของมนุษยธรรม คงจะมิใช่ผู้ที่มีเชื้อชาติยิวแต่เพียงผู้เดียวที่มุ่งมั่นที่จะแสดงความเป็นกลาง และไม่เข้าพวกกับชนเชื้อชาติเดียวกันโดยปราศจากวิจารณญาณ กวีแนวหน้า เชื้อสายยิวชาวออสเตรีย ซึ่งลี้ภัยมายังประเทศอังกฤษ Erich Fried ก็แสดงความมีใจสูง ไว้เช่นเดียวกัน ในบทกวีซึ่งเขียนขึ้นเมื่อเกิดสงครามระหว่างอิสราเอลกับชาติอาหรับ ในปี ค.ศ. 1967 จะขอคัดทั้งต้นฉบับและบทแปลมาดังนี้

Höre, Israel	**อิสราเอล จงฟังข้าฯ**
Als wir verfolgt wurden	เมื่อพวกเราถูกไล่ล่า
war ich einer von euch	ข้าฯ เป็นหนึ่งของพวกเจ้า
Wie kann ich das bleiben	จะให้ข้าฯ เป็นเช่นนั้นต่อไปได้อย่างไร
wenn ihr Verfolger werdet?	ในเมื่อเจ้าได้กลายเป็นผู้ไล่ล่าเสียเอง
Eure Sehnsucht war	เจ้าโหยหาที่จะเป็น
wie die anderen Völker zu werden	เช่นชนชาติอื่น
die euch mordeten	ที่เคยฆ่าพวกเจ้า
Nun seid ihr geworden wie sie	มาบัดนี้เจ้าก็เป็นเช่นพวกเขาไปเสียแล้ว
Ihr habt überlebt	เจ้ามีชีวิตยืนยาวมาเกินกว่า
die zu euch grausam waren	พวกที่โหดร้ายต่อเจ้า
Lebt ihre Grausamkeit	แล้วความโหดร้ายของคนเหล่านั้น
in euch jetzt weiter?	ได้เข้ามาสิงอยู่ในตัวเจ้ากระนั้นหรือ
Den Geschlagenen habt ihr befohlen:	เจ้าออกคำสั่งต่อผู้ที่พ่ายแพ้ว่า
>>Zieht eure Schuhe aus<<	"ถอดรองเท้าเสีย"
Wie den Sündenbock habt ihr sie	เจ้าขับไล่เขาเหล่านั้นราวกับ
In die Wüste getrieben	เป็นแพะรับบาปออกไปยังทะเลทราย

in die große Moschee des Todes	ออกไปสู่สุเหร่าแห่งความตายอันกว้างใหญ่
deren Sandalen Sand sind	ให้ผืนทรายเป็นเครื่องรองเท้า
doch sie nahmen die Sünde nicht an	แต่พวกเขากลับมิต้องรับบาป
die ihr ihnen auflegen wolltet	ที่พวกเจ้าต้องการจะยัดเยียดให้
Der Eindruck der nackten Füße	ความรู้สึกที่ได้จากภาพของ
im Wüstensand	คนเดินเท้าเปล่าไปในทะเลทราย
überdauert die Spur	จะคงอยู่นานกว่าร่องรอย
eurer Bomben und Panzer	ระเบิดและรถถังที่เจ้าได้ทิ้งเอาไว้

ERICH FRIED (1921-1988) เจตนา นาควัชระ (ผู้แปล)

(แปลจาก : Erich Fried: **Gesammelte Werke. Gedichte**. Berlin : Wagenbach, 1993, p. 430.)

ภาพประกอบที่ 4 Yehudi Menuhin เมื่ออายุ 8 ปี ฝึกซ้อมดนตรีกับครูของเขา คือ Louis Persinger หัวหน้าวงซิมโฟนี แห่งเมืองซานฟรานซิสโก

จะขอกลับไปสู่คำพูดของลอร์ด เมนูฮิน อีกครั้งหนึ่ง ท่านจบท้ายข้อวิจารณ์ของท่านด้วยการวกเข้าหาโลกแห่งศิลปะ โดยแสดงทัศนะต่อไปนี้

> *ขณะที่ผมยังเป็นเด็กตัวเล็กๆ ทำหน้าที่เล่นไวโอลินให้คนฟัง ผมมีความฝันแบบซื่อๆ ว่า ผมจะสามารถสมานแผลในหัวใจของผู้ที่ตกทุกข์ได้ยาก และด้วยการทำเช่นนั้น ผมก็จะปฏิบัติตามอุดมการณ์ของคนเผ่ายิวของผม นับตั้งแต่ผมจำความได้ ผมได้พยายามมาตลอด ที่จะผูกความงามของดนตรีอันยิ่งใหญ่ไว้กับความประสานสัมพันธ์ของชีวิต เมื่อตอนที่ยังเด็กอยู่ (ดูภาพประกอบที่ 4) ผมถึงกับจินตนาการไปว่า ถ้าผมสามารถบรรเลงเพลง ชาคอนน์ (Chaconne) ของบาค (Bach) ให้ถึงใจคนได้ในวิหารซีสตีน (Sistine) โดยที่มีท่านไมเคิลแองเจโล (Michelangelo) (ดูภาพประกอบที่ 5) เพ่งมองอยู่แล้วละก็ อะไรๆ ที่เลวร้ายและต่ำช้าก็จะอันตรธานไปสิ้นจากโลกนี้ราวกับปาฏิหาริย์*[22]

ถ้าจะถามว่าศิลปะเข้ามามีบทบาทอย่างไรในวาทกรรมเชิงปรัชญานี้ (ซึ่งเริ่มต้นด้วยการวิจารณ์การเมืองระหว่างประเทศ) คำตอบก็คือว่า ศิลปินการแสดง (performing artist) ทำหน้าที่เป็นผู้สื่อสารงานที่ยิ่งใหญ่ของคีตศิลปินไปสู่มหาชน โดยยึดมั่นในอุดมคติที่อยู่เหนือข้อผูกพันแห่งโลกของศิลปะ ศิลปินผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ซึมซับอุดมคติมาแล้วแต่วัยเด็ก แม้จะมีความเชี่ยวชาญเฉพาะสาขาของตน แต่ก็สามารถมองข้ามพรมแดนไปสู่ศิลปะแขนงอื่นได้ เพื่อจะนำพลังของงานที่ยิ่งใหญ่ในสาขาอื่นๆ มาเสริมให้แก่สาขาของตน ในที่นี้ ลอร์ด เมนูฮิน เริ่มต้นจากงานอันยิ่งใหญ่ทาง *สังคีตศิลป์* แล้วนำตัวเข้าไปผูกอยู่กับงานอันยิ่งใหญ่

(22) ถอดความจากแถบบันทึกภาพ Yehudi Menuhin : **The Violin of the Century**. EMI Classics, 1996. งานสำหรับเดี่ยวไวโอลินที่รู้จักกันในนามของ "Chaconne" เป็นกระบวนที่ 5 ของ Partita No. 2 in D minor ของ Johann Sebastian Bach ส่วนจิตรกรรมฝาผนัง ซึ่ง Michelangelo เขียนประดับวิหาร Sistine แห่งพระราชวัง Vatican นั้น คือ ภาพทางศาสนาที่ชื่อ The Last Judgement.

ภาพประกอบที่ 5 จิตรกรรมฝาผนัง ชื่อ The Last Judgement ของ Michelangelo ณ วิหาร Sistine พระราชวัง Vatican

ในสาขา *ทัศนศิลป์* ในกรอบของ *สถาปัตยกรรม*ทางศาสนา จะว่าปัจจัยเหล่านี้เป็นแต่เพียงเปลือกนอกของวาทกรรมเชิงจริยธรรมก็คงจะไม่ถูกนัก เพราะในทัศนะของลอร์ด เมนูฮิน ศิลปะที่ยิ่งใหญ่น่าจะดลใจมนุษย์ให้ละกิเลสทั้งหลายทั้งปวงได้ การวิจารณ์ในที่นี้จึงเป็นการสกัดเอาความยิ่งใหญ่ออกมาจากตัวงานสร้างสรรค์อันหลากหลาย เพื่อนำมาเป็นฐานให้แก่การสร้างพลังทางปัญญา ซึ่งในขั้นสุดยอดได้กลายเป็นธรรมะไปแล้ว หากแต่มิใช่ธรรมะที่เป็นคำสอนในระบบธรรมดาสามัญเช่นที่เรารู้จักกัน แต่เป็นการใช้อารมณ์ความรู้สึกที่ศิลปะ

สามารถดลใจให้เกิดได้ไปเป็นกระแสจิตซึ่งอาจปลุกสัญชาตญาณใฝ่ดีให้แก่มวลมนุษย์ได้ ในแง่นี้ เราจึงอาจสรุปได้ว่า จุดหมายปลายทางของหลักการศิลปะส่องทางให้แก่กันและการวิจารณ์ส่องทางให้แก่กัน จึงมิใช่เป็นแต่เพียงความเข้าใจและความชื่นชมที่มีต่อศิลปะเท่านั้น หากแต่เป็นเรื่องของพลังทางปัญญา ที่จะเป็นเครื่องประกันความอยู่รอดของมนุษยชาติ

Criticism as an Intellectual Force in Contemporary Society

Summary Report of a Research Project

by Chetana Nagavajara
Project Leader

Under the Aegis of the Thailand Research Fund (TRF)

รายงานผลการวิจัยในโครงการ *"การวิจารณ์ในฐานะพลังทางปัญญาของสังคมร่วมสมัย"* ซึ่งได้รับการตีพิมพ์เผยแพร่เป็นชุด รวม 6 เล่ม คือ

1. **พลังการวิจารณ์: บทสังเคราะห์งานวิจัย / Criticism as an Intellectual Force : Summary Report**
2. พลังการวิจารณ์ : วรรณศิลป์
3. พลังการวิจารณ์ : ทัศนศิลป์
4. พลังการวิจารณ์ : ศิลปะการละคร
5. พลังการวิจารณ์ : สังคีตศิลป์
6. พลังการวิจารณ์ : รวมบทวิจารณ์ร่วมสมัย

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SUMMARY REPORT

OF

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

"CRITICISM AS AN INTELLECTUAL FORCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY"

(UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE THAILAND RESEARCH FUND [TRF])

1. BACKGROUND

It has often been said that criticism may not represent the strength of Thai culture. The implication is that the paucity of criticism in the artistic domain reflects the absence of a critical attitude to life and society and that the current economic crisis is symptomatic of this weakness. Scholars are reluctant to accept such a hasty conclusion and are wont to maintain that criticism in Thailand is an activity that is practised informally in intimate circles and is neither widely publicized nor codified as in some other societies. In other words, criticism as part of a *written culture* has yet to be developed in order to add strength to the traditional oral culture.

Be that as it may, it is evident that in the age of globalization the time has come for us to view criticism as an intellectual force that can propel contemporary Thai society to a higher degree of self-assurance necessary for survival in our competitive world. Criticism

of the arts can pave the way for building up a critical acumen expected of members of a modern society.

That there is a need to intensify and accelerate critical activities within Thai society has long been felt. It cannot be denied that, in terms of the volume of criticism, certain critical domains may have been taking the lead, such as literary and film criticism, whereas drama, music, and visual arts may deserve more dynamic critical responses. On the whole, both the media and academia have yet to prove their mettle as an arena of constructive criticism. Besides, it is commonly agreed that quality remains a major problem.

The time is now appropriate for concrete actions in the form of a *research project*. We need to know where the strengths and weaknesses lie, and we need to find ways and means to fill the gap by learning from the rich experiences of some other societies. At the same time, practical developmental measures will have to be undertaken to build up our critical potential by such activities as regular well-planned workshops involving creative artists, practising critics, resource persons (both Thai and foreign) as well as interested members of the public.

A three-year research project entitled "Criticism as an Intellectual Force in Contemporary Society" was thus launched in January 1999, taking the form of *research and development*, whereby scholarly investigation and practical application were to enrich each other.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. Build up a body of knowledge related to criticism and

critical methods drawn from the experiences of Thailand and selected foreign countries in the fields of literature, visual arts, drama and music, leading towards interart poetics based on the principle of "mutual illumination of the arts" ;

2.2. Develop critical skills for the following groups of people:

2.2.1. Scholars/academics;

2.2.2. Practising critics;

2.2.3. Members of the media:

2.2.4. General public;

2.2.5. Graduate students;

2.3. Promote networks of critics, creative artists and the general public at the personal and institutional levels;

2.4. Create possibilities for the criticism of the arts to reinforce the intellectual and critical culture of contemporary Thai society.

3. METHODOLOGIES

3.1. Investigation and appraisal of documentary sources;

3.2. Interviewing of scholars, critics, creative artists, theoreticians and other interested persons;

3.3. Teaching experiments in the criticism of the various arts at the undergraduate and graduate levels;

3.4. Initiating research projects for graduate students in cooperation with various institutions;

3.5. Workshops in criticism based on commissioned works, experiments and model performances/exhibitions;

3.6. Promotion of critical activities in collaboration with the

. various media.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOME

4.1. Research reports in 4 different critical fields, namely literature, visual arts, drama and music, together with a summary report containing theoretical conclusions pointing the way to an interart synthesis;

4.2. Anthologies of criticism in the 4 different fields with commentaries (and translations in the case of foreign criticism);

4.3. Selected critical writings from workshops;

4.4. Graduate theses;

4.5. Critics with practical experience and theoretical foundation (including academics, professional critics, representatives of the media and other interested persons);

4.6. Networks of individuals and institutions involved in promoting criticism;

4.7. Various forms of critical activities with possible impact on society.

5. RESEARCHERS

A network of researchers from various institutions collaborated with the core research team consisting of the following:

5.1. Chetana Nagavajara, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University (Project Leader);

5.2. Ruenruthai Sujjapun, Faculty of Humanities, Ramkamhaeng University (Researcher in Literary Criticism);

5.3. Chakapan Vilasineekul, Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University (Researcher in Visual Arts Criticism);

5.4. Parichat Jungwiwattanaporn, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Sri Nakarinwirot University (Researcher in Dramatic Criticism);

5.5. Rangsiphan Khaengkhan, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Thammasat University (Researcher in Music Criticism);

5.6. Korakoch Attaviriyanupap, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University (Assistant to the Project Leader).

6. COMMUNITY, CONVIVIALITY AND PERSISTENT ORALITY

Readers of the present summary report will soon discover that certain themes keep recurring in the various sections, and an impression of repetitiveness may be unavoidable. It appears as though the researchers are becoming extremely concerned about the difficulty in fulfilling the main research objective, that is to investigate whether and how criticism in Thailand can assume the role of a public activity and partake of a modern *written culture*. Indeed, their anxiety does reflect a state of affair that may need to be remedied. Nevertheless, what they have found may not be altogether a helpless and hapless situation in which a critical culture is totally absent. Their findings point unequivocally in the direction that *oral culture* of the old Siam remains so persistent that it is not appropriate to gauge the strengths of criticism in contemporary Thailand exclusively with the usual categories drawn from written culture. The unwillingness to express

one's opinion in writing, the preference on the part of practising artists for verbal critical communication, the highly sophisticated forms of "non-verbal criticism", such as those adopted in traditional Thai music, all these phenomena are symptoms of a deep-rooted oral culture.

It might be worthwhile to cast a look back to the traditional way of living among the Thai. The arts were originally community-based, whereby producers/creators and consumers/recipients belonged to the same community, and the dividing line between the two groups was deliberately unclear. Bertolt Brecht, in his theoretical musings about the small and the big "Pedagogy" that would obliterate the demarcation line between performers and public, was thinking of a practice that was perhaps already the hallmark of community-based Thai culture. If conviviality was the mode of maintaining the integrity of the community, criticism was a *built-in* quality control mechanism which enabled members of the community to exercise critical judgements on one another in a kind of intimate communication, verbal as well as non-verbal. (The non-verbal modes will be explained under the sections on "Music Criticism" and "Theoretical Implications" of this report.) There was no need to "publicize" criticism, nor to codify it, as criticism was a way of life. The best way for a folk singer to "criticize" his singer colleague was to get up and "out-sing" the latter. The same could apply to a folk dancer who would express his critical stance by way of "out-dancing" a colleague. No ill feeling was thus created, since everything followed the rules of the game in a spirit of conviviality.

To codify criticism as an intellectual legacy, to publicize criticism for the benefit of the general public, to make criticism part

of an educational "system", all these are of recent date, and inevitably inspired by Western models. Even the very notion of a "public" in the sense generally accepted today must have been alien to our community-based culture. Modern society, with its strong sense of "public" transparency, must, of necessity, view overt criticism as a public virtue, and overt criticism is best expressed in written form, thus committing those who criticize to a "public" responsibility. Whatever be the strength of our traditional oral culture, Thai society of today stands to benefit from such overt mode of criticism as well. And such a challenge cannot restrict itself to the criticism of the arts alone, for the inculcation of a truly critical culture must become an all-pervasive societal force.

But there was little time to master the intricacies of written culture, propped up by the print media. There was no time for the "acquired" written culture to mature. The all too "uncritical" adoption of the latest information and communication technology has turned the media into an instrument of publicity, advertisement and political propaganda. The critical arena is characterized by hasty judgements and unbridled "criticism". Criticism of the arts, which requires deep reflection and expressive linguistic power, naturally falls into disarray, for to indulge in "criticism" in the way that politics has done would only result in superficiality, and the arts are too precious to be treated in that manner. Many connoisseurs have thus refrained from written criticism and taken refuge in the time-consecrated oral culture. To them, the advance made by technology-driven media may not represent a quantum leap, but a plunge into the abyss.

If this is the real situation, the present research is faced with

a "missionary" challenge. It has to work with whatever documentary evidence available in order to reconstruct an intellectual base for the future development of criticism. That it has been possible at all to produce the *Anthologies of Criticism* in line with the objectives set out in the project is certainly a boon. But the research findings would have been incomplete without inputs from verbal communications collected from interviews. The *developmental* activities undertaken by the researchers may not have achieved entirely satisfactory results, the constraints being culture-based. As will become apparent in Sections 10 and 11, the media and academia could have been more dynamic in promoting criticism. In the final analysis, the research does not yield results that pertain directly only to the domain of the arts, but gives a broader picture as to the strengths and weaknesses of Thai society as well. It certainly is not desirable to pitch the oral and the written traditions against each other in a dichotomy, but to find a more conducive framework in which the two can enhance and enrich each other. In Section 16 on "Theoretical Implications", we shall have suggestions to make as to possible future actions.

7. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR AREAS: LITERARY, (VISUAL) ART, DRAMATIC AND MUSIC CRITICISM

The four areas under investigation, namely literary, (visual) art, theatre and music criticism, have been selected with definite aims in mind. It was the intention of the researchers to devote time and energy to those areas of the arts which may not enjoy great popularity among the contemporary public, but which merit serious attention on

account of their cultural riches and artistic seriousness. Thus, we have opted for theatre criticism rather than film criticism, because contemporary drama needs a lifeline, not necessarily in terms of material support, but also by way of critical appraisal which can point to its strengths as well as weaknesses. Likewise, in the field of music, we have deliberately addressed traditional Thai music and Western classical music, although the audience for these musical arts is small. But both areas offer rich material for serious studies, though the corpus of written criticism in Thailand may be limited. As the project also covers a *developmental* part, the researchers in these areas have tried to initiate certain development activities, such as commissioning new works by Thai writers, visual artists, theatre directors and composers, organizing workshops on criticism, interacting with foreign experts and writing criticism themselves. As for the visual arts, this is an area where remarkable innovations have taken place on the creative side, and Thai artists have been actively participating in the international artistic movement. It is therefore a challenging task to investigate how criticism can be an active partner to such endeavour. In the field of literature, a previous research project "Poetry as an Intellectual Force in Contemporary Thai Society: Experiences from Thai, English, American, French and German Literatures" has confirmed that works of great merit are still being produced in Thailand which could enter into a "dialogue" with Western literatures[1]. It may be worthwhile to

[1] Chetana Nagavajara : "Imaginärer Dialog. Die zeitgenössische thailändische Lyrik und ihre westlichen Gesprächspartner". In : *Das Gedichte behauptet sein Recht. Festschrift für Walter Gebhard zum 65. Geburtstag.* Bern : Peter Lang, 2001, pp. 263-276.

gauge the potential of literary criticism in responding to the call to make both literature and criticism an intellectual force in contemporary society.

The conduct of research in the respective fields shows that there is a degree of comparability among the four areas as well as divergences. What is comparable is first and foremost the issue concerning Thai culture being as yet an oral culture, and that criticism has a long way to go to turn itself into a pillar of written culture. Significant criticism is made and lost forever, because it is never written down and takes place in private circles. Some creative artists themselves expressly profess that they prefer people to criticize their works in private and that they have benefited from such a mode of criticism in improving their own performance. Written criticism as part of a *public* culture is thus not well received by many creative artists, including, strangely enough, those who have enjoyed training in the West. There is consequently a very small corpus of written criticism in certain areas, such as music and theatre. The researchers have had to rely on *interviews* to supplement what can be found in terms of written evidence. In many cases, these verbal communications are just as illuminating as written criticism, and in some cases even more so.

With regard to the availability of written data, this may vary from area to area, but it cannot be assumed that the volume of materials gathered is a guarantee of intellectual strength of a particular critical field. *Literary criticism* in Thailand may have a relatively longer history than other types of criticism, but the

researchers are hesitant to come to the conclusion that this is an area in which criticism has proved to be a distinctive intellectual force in our society. Nevertheless, it has been possible to fill the *Anthology of Literary Criticism* mostly with contributions from Thailand, since there is simply a great deal to choose from.

The relative liveliness of *art criticism* seems to reflect the vivacity of the creative sector in Thailand itself, and the opportunity for Thai artists to participate in international movements has a bearing also on the international character of art criticism, in the sense that contributions from Thai critics are in no way parochial or provincial, for most of them are conscious of what is going on in the international scene. The *Anthology of Art Criticism* is a good mix of Thai and foreign (including Asian and ASEAN) inputs.

Drama is a problematic field. The little that exists in terms of *dramatic criticism* addresses mostly Western-style drama: criticism of traditional and folk drama is scarce indeed. The paucity of criticism is indicative of the problem facing both the practical as well as academic sides of dramatic arts. Drama departments set up within the past 30 years have yet to set a clear goal whether to function as training schools for professional actors or as academic institutions, and trying to make the best of both worlds has resulted in weaknesses on both scores. Criticism does not figure in the curriculum, and dramatic criticism of quality is, more often than not, produced by "amateurs" (mainly teachers of literature!) who enjoy going to the theatre and write criticism out of pleasure. It has thus been necessary to draw a great deal from Western sources for the *Anthology of Dramatic*

Criticism, the result being an anthology for Thai readers that presents an ideal image of what criticism could be or should be.

As for *music criticism*, a strange phenomenon has emerged, particularly with regard to criticism of Thai classical music. The researchers have discovered that by delving into the roots of Thai music, a deep structure of Thai culture has been identified that can explain other cultural phenomena as well. Paradoxically, the majority of the *theoretical* propositions made in this research emanate from the area of traditional Thai music, although in terms of written criticism, this is certainly an underdeveloped field. With regard to criticism of Western classical music, it cannot be denied that the readership may be small, but what has been produced by Thai critics may not altogether be insignificant, for they do address larger issues than just reviewing musical performances, and tackle problems of real import such as the role of the arts in a society which is becoming more and more materialistic. The *Anthology of Music Criticism* is also enriched by contributions from foreign critics, selected mostly for their role model.

As **appendices** to the present report, we have selected 8 articles from the 4 Anthologies which are almost exclusively written by Thai critics and for which English translations have been provided.

8. GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING CRITICAL WORKS FOR INCLUSION IN THE ANTHOLOGIES

As the *Anthologies of Criticism* in the 4 areas, together with commentaries will constitute the major part of the research findings

which can serve as a base for further actions, the researchers have adopted a set of guidelines to ensure that works selected for the Anthologies will be endowed with a certain degree of quality. They are not a *priori* criteria but have been derived from the actual reading experience of the researchers. Below are the *Guidelines*:

8.1 The researchers shall adhere, as far as possible to the following definitions as adopted in the project document:

8.1.1 CRITICISM: Expressed opinion concerning works of art, their context and/or other related factors with a view to creating an understanding and a consciousness of the value of the individual works as well as art in general; and expressed viewpoints concerning the relationship between art on the one hand, and life and society on the other;

8.1.2 INTELLECTUAL FORCE: Knowledge and thoughts that constitute an understanding of man's creativity as well as factors that enable this creative urge to sustain society and human kind;

8.2 It is desirable that greater weight should be given to works of criticism devoted to works of art produced in Thailand *(whether written in Thai or foreign languages)*. Criticism written in a foreign language has to be translated into Thai;

8.3 Works of criticism to be included in the Anthologies need not take the form of self-contained pieces of writing and may be excerpted from various modes of writings on art, including transcriptions of interviews. In other words, form

does not count as much as content;

8.4 The Anthologies should give sufficient emphasis to criticism of works of art;

8.5 Attention should also be given to critical works dealing with contexts (related to culture, society, artistic community, biographies of artists, background, historical dimensions, the impact of art on society, etc.);

8.6 The Anthologies should include critical writings dealing with theoretical, philosophical and aesthetic aspects of art that cut across national, linguistic and temporal boundaries;

8.7 The Anthologies should include critical writings which address weaknesses of certain works of art or certain types of art, including the causes of these weaknesses. Such negative criticism should suggest constructive solutions that can substantiate the respective critic's "bonne foi";

8.8. There should be critical contributions that stress the furtherance of the intellectual force through *written culture*;

8.9. There should be some contributions that demonstrate changes brought about by technology, or contemporary modes of production that can also prove to be constructive;

8.10. The Anthologies should be able to confirm the awareness of human values and the role of the arts in upholding these values.

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANTHOLOGIES IN THE FOUR AREAS

Below are the summaries provided by the respective researchers.

9.1. LITERARY CRITICISM

9.1.1. Summary of Research Findings

Literary criticism in its earliest form was part of an oral culture practised by creative writers themselves, and it was only about a hundred years ago that criticism in written form appeared in newspapers and magazines, paving the way for the novel function of literary critics as intermediaries between the writers and the reading public. Education has played an important role in turning criticism from a purely subjective activity into an intellectual discipline strengthened through contacts with Western as well as Eastern literary theories. Manuals of literary criticism by Thai scholars, emerging after the advent of democracy in 1932, such as those by Prince Wan Waitayakorn, Wit Siwasiriyanond and Phraya Anuman Rajathon, (which are still read today), have lent credibility to literary criticism, with university students in the 1930's acting as pioneers, while newspapers and magazines of this period gave sufficient space to criticism. Although most of these pioneers had been exposed to Western education, they were conscious of the need to address a Thai readership. It can be said that, in comparison with other artistic sectors, literary criticism has been characterized by greater coverage, continuity and longevity. The rise of literary criticism has resulted in a division of responsibilities between creative writers and critics, with the solid base of reading experience and critical acumen being considered as the latter's chief qualities. A new critical culture tolerates differences of opinion and forsters criticism of criticism, whereby

controversies, resulting from writers and critics not recognizing their respective roles, flare up occasionally, but these do not prove to be irreconcilable.

The crisis besetting literary criticism at present may be due partly to the economic break-down, with a number of literary magazines having to cease publication, while others have to cut down on space originally devoted to criticism or turning literary criticism to mere general reporting on the literary market. It can be said that the media (including the print media) on the whole are giving less importance to criticism. The crisis is aggravated by the general trend towards dwindling reading habits, especially among the young, for if they still read at all, their reading does not include serious literature or criticism, for which the literary market has very little room. A phenomenon also discernible is the paucity of criticism of real quality in the print media, and this deficit may be attributable to a weakening demand-supply relationship, a narrowing down of the reading experience or even a lack of experience on the part of those who have to function as critics. The researchers in literary criticism are willing to admit that, in spite of the immense volume of materials gathered, it has been difficult to select works for the *Anthology* which deserve the appellation of "intellectual force".

9.1.2. The Anthology

The researchers in literary criticism have selected 50 works considered to be marked by "an intellectual force" and have given commentaries on them. The period covered

the period from 1937 to 2001. They represent a vast variety of forms, intellectual trends and modes of presentation. Certain works attempt to serve as a bridge between the experience of the writer and that of the reader, while others aim at interpreting and elucidating the author's thinking by way of methodologies derived from various disciplines. Some seek to suggest the direction literature should take or to remind the writer of his social and political environment as well as to draw attention to the role of the reader and the critic. These critical works do not give a definitive answer to any literary issue, but strive to promote a "continuity of reflections". In this sense, criticism that is endowed with an intellectual force has a role to play in society, a role that can be said to be comparable to that of creative literature.

9.2. (VISUAL) ART CRITICISM

9.2.1. Summary of Research Findings

The founding of modern Thai art and of the major educational institution responsible for training a new generation of Thai artists was also the starting point of criticism in the visual arts. Consequently, criticism has more or less remained in the hands of practising artists. This may have been due to the necessity of making modern art accessible to a larger public. The situation has resulted in the belief (whether justifiable or unjustifiable) that creative artists alone are the connoisseurs of modern art. This has

yet to be confirmed. That criticism has inevitably become the handmaiden of creative artists has proved to be an impediment to progress towards liberalizing the artistic community. How can criticism thrive on the basis of such a lack of equilibrium between the productive and the recipient sectors of the artistic community?

The deficit is also on the side of education. The weakness of such an academic discipline as art history has also resulted in the impoverishment of criticism. The various seminars and workshops hitherto organized by the research project have more than confirmed that the majority of participants (including art students) possesses very limited basic skills in criticism, because they have not received any formal training. In this respect, the Anthology might serve as a help in the future.

The role of the media cannot be underestimated. Although the Thai media are in a privileged position in enjoying a great measure of freedom (when compared to the fate of the media in our neighbouring countries), critics have not been able to capitalize on this freedom, since managers and editors do not pay much attention to publishing criticism of real quality, and worse still, in times of economic crisis, the space for art criticism has been drastically cut. To be able to substantiate the claim for criticism as an intellectual force in contemporary society, the researchers have had to rely on other printed sources such as exhibition catalogues,

prefaces to art books and academic journals.

9.2.2. The Anthology

As for the 50 articles and critical writings selected for comment by the researchers, these are not meant to serve as a history of contemporary art or a brief history of contemporary criticism. This is so because the aim of the research is not to emphasize the historical impact of these writings, but to single out the intellectual force inherent in the individual critical works selected. Whatever general conclusions the reader may be able glean from the Anthology regarding traditional Thai art, aesthetic considerations, artistic techniques or anthropological and sociological insights, these are merely by-products.

On the whole, it can be said that the Anthology gives an approximate overall image of the evolution of modern Thai art, including its strengths and weaknesses. Certain issues are brought to the fore and the debates arising out of these issues reflect clearly the intellectual force that underlines contemporary Thai criticism, be these controversies about Buddhist art, traditional Thai art, Surrealist trends, the use of technology and commercialism.

It has been necessary to supplement the works of Thai critics with those from other cultures in order to give a clearer picture of certain aspects of art criticism. The question of social, political and cultural environment has

been given due weight, and critical views expressed by those outside the proper visual arts circle have also been taken into consideration.

9.3. DRAMATIC CRITICISM

9.3.1. Summary of Research Findings

Dramatic criticism in Thailand is a concomitant characteristic of cultural, social and political conditions of the country. Prior to the advent of democracy in 1932, the monarch and the nobility were practitioners of dramatic arts as well as their critics, and the oral mode prevailed. The little that was written down was either in the form of personal memoirs or private letters. The same could be said of the judgements and pronouncements of the leading teachers, which were never codified. The early years of democracy were, alas, usurped by a dictatorial tendency that also had a direct bearing on the performing arts, for the powers that be were bent on prescribing practices derivative of the West and proscribing traditional performing arts as an artistic backwater. There was little room for criticism.

The change of government in 1959 ushered in a renaissance of the print media which benefited criticism (in spite of political repression, especially under the guise of anti-communist activities). Reports on traditional performances appeared in leading newspapers and magazines. Although such "reports" could not be considered as full-

fledged criticism, they paved the way for later critical activities that took off after the "Student Revolution" of 1973, which also proved to be the heyday of Western-style theatre. It has to be observed that dramatic criticism was sustained by amateurs with no formal training whose sensitivity and intellectual prowess were much in evidence. From 1977 onwards, university drama departments began to create an impact on society with their regular performances of Western-type dramas, and criticism responded accordingly. Unfortunately, the new interest in Western-style drama resulted in a marked neglect of traditional and indigenous performing arts.

Compared with the criticism of the visual arts which remains in the hands of experts or creative artists themselves, theatre criticism is at present mainly practised by regular columnists responsible for "art and culture" or "entertainment" pages in newspapers and magazines. These columnists have had no training either in the practice or the history of dramatic arts and hence are not in a position to contribute to the development of dramatic criticism. Criticism of quality usually comes from amateurs, especially literary critics and scholars, who write only occasionally and thus are not able to provide continuity. Now that consumerism has become the pillar of contemporary Thai society, the cinema has accordingly won over the public formerly at home in the theatre, and film criticism has more or less taken over from dramatic criticism

in the media. The gap between the theatre and the public is widening, and theatre criticism has had to content itself with addressing a small circle of die-hards.

9.3.2. The Anthology

It must be admitted that, although the number of articles published in the print media within the past 10 years or so has increased, they, more often than not, take the form of reporting or publicity rather than criticism as such. Newspapers and magazines do not give sufficient space to serious criticism, which often has been relegated to the "entertainment" section. It has been necessary to supplement the corpus of critical works constituting the Anthology with articles by experts drawn from foreign sources, Western as well as Eastern, many of which can serve as good models of criticism, offering both insights into dramatic arts as well as marked by philosophical profundity.

The 50 contributions possess a wide variety forms: some are criticisms of actual performances, others are interviews, lectures or even philosophical essays. The individual analyses and commentaries will explain why these contributions merit their place in the Anthology. It must be emphasized that the present research does not aim at presenting a historical account of criticism, but at substantiating the hypothesis that criticism can be an intellectual force in contemporary society. It will be noticed that the

individual contributions originate from different cultural contexts, different disciplines and different frames of mind. The experiences of the individual critics are reflected upon and transformed into major issues or concepts that can transmit important messages to the audience, reading public as well as practitioners of the theatre beyond their original spatial and temporal boundaries.

9.4. MUSIC CRITICISM

9.4.1. Summary of Research Findings

It has been possible, on the basis of the research results, to reach the conclusion that criticism can, up to a certain extent, be an intellectual force in society. This force may manifest itself in various forms, but it has not yet reached a large public, although there may be signs of improvement, as may be witnessed from various means of communication, be these written, oral or conveyed through the Internet. Nevertheless, a number of constraints peculiar to Thai society do persist, such as respect for seniority and tendency to resort to covert criticism, although it must be admitted that criticism is a potential that can be developed. As things stand, this potential rests with individuals and is part of an oral culture, which has yet to be turned into a written culture. Besides, there are too few public performances to constitute a solid base of criticism, and whatever criticism is being produced does not quite cover the variety of musi-

cal performances now being offered.

Our contact with Western music and its cultural environment has made us realize that music can be organized and invested with a system supported by a firm body of knowledge. Musical education, formal and informal, reaching out to a large public is well developed in the West. This educational aspect of music has gone to create a critical public, which, in turn, strengthens music criticism. The practice of Western music in Thailand may appear a strange phenomenon, for musicians with little and even defective training can "rise to the occasion", if properly guided. This is the common opinion aired by many Western conductors or soloists who have been invited to work in Thailand during the past hundred years. In certain sectors, such as brass and marching bands, actively promoted at the secondary school level, Thai youngsters have distinguished themselves on the international scene. Recording technology has also helped spread Western music, and criticism of recorded music may be just as dynamic as criticism of real performances. As can be seen in the Anthology, criticism of Western music, although read by a small public, does not lack substance.

The immediate challenge facing Thai music lovers then is not primarily to accelerate the process of instituting criticism in written form but rather to promote the appreciation and deepen the understanding of Thai music. The Anthology can thus contribute towards strengthening the understanding

for music as well as serving as a model of a critical approach to music. In the long run, it should prove the point that criticism is possible and desirable.

It cannot be said that contact with Western music has always resulted in a turning away from traditional Thai roots. The fate of Thai classical music is linked with a more profound social transformation which is part and parcel of the process of Westernization and the onslaught of the global entertainment business. The media could have been instrumental in promoting appreciation for music as well as providing an arena for meaningful criticism, but this, unfortunately, is not happening. The other three areas are also in the same predicament.

In spite of multifarious limitations, the researchers have been able to detect certain traits in Thai musical culture that can explain both the essence of Thai music as well as the ethos of Thai culture as such. The theoretical implication arising out of the concepts of "*ranad thum* (second xylophone) culture" and "music criticizing music" will be taken up in Section 16 of the present summary.

9.4.2. The Anthology

The Anthology consisting of 50 contributions related to Thai as well as Western classical music is marked by a great variety both in form and content. Critical articles, reviews, interviews, letters, and memoirs constitute the

collection. Criticism of traditional Thai music must necessarily address social contexts and deal with the crisis besetting Thai classical music and the reasons for its loss of popularity. Solutions are also offered, including a call for modernization efforts to enable the contemporary public to appreciate our traditional musical heritage as well as concrete suggestions for innovations. Some critics go so far as to demand a "rebellion" in Thai musical circles which should be receptive to contemporary problems and intent upon serving society and the general public, a new responsibility transcending the traditional function of providing entertainment for the elite.

Criticism of Western classical music, both by Thai and foreign critics, performs two functions at the same time, namely, interpreting the works as well as evaluating the performances. Criticism often bears witness to a rich experience on the part of the critics, who are in a position to go beyond the domain of music as such in order to link music with social ideals or to elevate criticism to the level of aesthetics. The task of Thai critics is a challenging one, since they have to campaign for the survival of classical music in a society deluged with commercial, technology-driven entertainment of all kinds. That they frequently have to direct their criticism at the "context" rather than the "text" of music is understandable. Thus, economic factors, management problems and issues concerning education

enter into the discussion.

The Anthology represents the efforts on the part of the researchers to benefit from a vast spectrum of musical experiences that should serve as an intellectual force which should help secure for "classical" music, both Thai and Western, its rightful place in contemporary Thai society.

10. PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM (FOR THAILAND)

Initially, the researchers had no intention of proposing criteria or general principles related to criticism. However, participants at various meetings, seminars and workshops maintained that the educational value of such an enterprise should outweigh whatever inhibitions or reservations the researchers themselves might have. What follows here *can be taken for granted in some societies*, but for contemporary Thailand, it is felt to be needed. Nevertheless, the researchers would like to emphasize that they are merely offering *general remarks related to criticism* which are not to be taken as anything akin to a *normative poetics*. In formulating these remarks, the researchers have tried to adhere to the Guidelines set out under Section 8 above. The remarks can be classified into 4 categories.

10.1 Art and Works of Art

Many critics are prepared to admit that criticism is a *secondary* activity, that is to say, its main function is to express views on art and works of art. In other words criticism is not entirely an independent discourse. That is

why its starting point is often the consideration of a work of art, which may extend to a critical comparison of a number of art works. This, in turn, may lead to an aesthetic viewpoint concerning art in general. It is expected that the critic must have an adequate understanding of composition, technique and creative process. Though not necessarily a creative artist, the critic should know enough about the creative act.

As regards *interpretation*, the critic must know how to relate human experience embedded in the work of art to his own experience in order to arrive at a certain conclusion on the meaning of the work. A good critic knows how to identify the leading concept implicit in the work of art and to elaborate on this concept in his criticism.

The next step is the most difficult, namely that of *evaluation*, that may address the work itself, the artist or other factors related to its creation. There may be various approaches to evaluation: aesthetic, intellectual, moral, or a combination of approaches. Common sense will not suffice; the critic may have to reach out to other disciplines, such as aesthetics, history, philosophy and ethics.

10.2 Context and Other Related Factors

The critic cannot afford to concentrate solely on the actual work of art but must also draw on *contextual* knowledge related to history, culture, society, including the artist's background. The method known as *positivism*, much

maligned in recent times, can still prove to be of value, if the critic does not go in search of factual data for their own sake but uses them to bring about a better understanding of the art works. The present research has amply demonstrated that criticism in Thailand is still far from ideal, because academic disciplines related to the various arts are too weak even to put positivist knowledge at the service of criticism. In summary, we can say that a good critic must possess both critical sensibility as well as solid knowledge of his field. To be able to immerse oneself in a "positivist" discipline need not blunt sensibility and receptivity. The old Thai saying about "Knowing too much is counter-productive" has often been misused, and certainly does not apply to criticism.

10.3 Reception and Recipients

The critic is a representative of the recipients of works of art, who seeks to provide a certain kind of "quality control". A good recipient knows how to use his imagination to empathize with the work of art. He reads the mind of the artist, but this does not mean that the intention of the creator coincides perfectly with the interpretation of the recipient. The critic does more than an ordinary recipient in the sense that he does not merely think *along* with the work of art, but also think *on* and think *against* it, for he should know how to put to good use his vast experience of other works of art. What matters just as much is his ability to

communicate with other people that may include the general public, his fellow critics, practising artists, and, last but not least the creator of the work under discussion. The impact on creative artists might induce greater change in the artistic circle than that on the general public.

The notion of the *public* may have to be subdivided into the public for works of art and that for criticism, although in many cases, the two do merge, especially with regard to contemporary art. In other cases, they may constitute two different groups because critics often address works of art to which some members of the public have no direct access, such as in the case of criticism of foreign works or those from older periods (although the advent of technology may have bridged the gap by way of good-quality reproductions or recordings.) It is necessary that a critic has his public in mind. Only critics with experience are in a position to address various groups of recipients.

The research has confirmed one important point, namely that good criticism serves also the function of *public education*. It is true that public education can also be catered for by direct exposure to the works of art, but in many instances, it is difficult to receive directly the message conveyed by the artists themselves. The critics, therefore, can perform the role of an intermediary who can adjust the "wavelengths" between artists and public. Criticism as a secondary discourse renders service through extrapolation,

elucidation and clarification, whereby the experience immanent in the work of art is turned into an intellectual force in society by way of the critic's solicitation of critical response from the public. He must know how to challenge or incite the public to a critical reaction.

It can be seen that the main objective of the research project on strengthening a critical culture by turning criticism into an intellectual force for our society is a very demanding task. Criticism must, therefore, be a comprehensive activity, embracing the work of art and its context, education, dissemination, management and promotion. At the same time constructive criticism demands a fair measure of moral courage that enables it to rise to the level of a moral conscience to society. Starting from assessing a work of art, criticism often aspires to become a discourse on life and society. Philosophical aspiration is thus characteristic of criticism.

10.4 The Critical Act

Although the present research emphasizes the oral roots of Thai critical culture, it does not deny recent developments in Thai society that claim to be a continuous process of democratic maturation, whereby public spirit and transparency in public affairs are to become the hallmark of a new society. In this respect, criticism must assume a public role. The critic is thus expected to "publicize" his opinion and assume full responsibility for what he expresses in public.

As a matter of fact, traditional Thai society knew of such public spirit, as may be witnessed from the Stone Inscriptions of Wat Pho (our "first university in stones") which offers a model of how the intellectual property of the people was codified and given back to the people as "public domain" property. With the legacy of the Stone Inscriptions of Wat Pho in mind, it should not be too difficult for contemporary Thai society to emulate its ancestors in public spirit. In other words, criticism imbibes the wisdom proffered by works of art, reflects upon it and transmits it to the public through a secondary discourse that aims to perpetuate wisdom and aesthetic experience. If this is the underlying principle, the question of professionalism can be taken for granted, for a critic's task is not to expel weaker artists from the artistic domain, but rather to make constructive suggestions as to how they can improve themselves and secure a working place in the competitive world of today. The critic must find the middle path between subjectivity and objectivity, that is to say, be sensitive to the value of works of art and at the same time be able to secure a certain degree of detachment in order to rationalize his own aesthetic experience. The ability to express himself well is a prerequisite. He must know how to praise in a way that will propel the artist to greater artistic heights, and not induce arrogance. He must know how to censure so that the artist will become conscious of his own deficiencies and

try to do better. The critic is not there to preach, but to make suggestions in a spirit of collegiality. Many of the critical contributions taken up in the Anthologies can testify that such criticism is possible.

Participants at the various seminars and workshops have demanded clarification as to the uses of *theory*. The researchers have found that critics with sufficient experience often know how to apply appropriate theories to support their interpretation and evaluation of art and works of art. It is not desirable to set up *a priori* theoretical frameworks and start "pigeonholing" works of art. What the present research does emphasize for the benefit of Thai critical circles is the need to steer away from a facile espousal of fashionable theoretic trends and to look for theoretical implications inherent in the works of art and artistic practices themselves. The proposed "theories from the native soil" are but examples of how theories can be derived from our own artistic experiences and environment.

Another dimension of Thai artistic life that merits serious attention is the concept of "mutual illumination of the arts" which is now to be complemented by that of "mutual illumination of criticisms". These concepts can be substantiated by concrete evidence drawn from Thai culture. The critic must be alert to what is going on in his own environment as well as what is going on elsewhere. The present research tries to bring home the point that Thailand has the

critical culture of its own which, upon closer scrutiny, shows up a number of commonalties that enable it to enter into a dialogue with other critical cultures. (See Section 18 on "International Dimensions.") We can perhaps indulge in a general observation to the effect that "Be yourself is a pre-condition of going global!"

11. THE MEDIA

The aim of the present research project is to find out to what extent criticism partakes of a *written culture*, and if it does not, how to make it function as a public activity. It goes without saying that the media, especially the print media, must be instrumental in this process. The research results are in this respect not altogether encouraging. In recent years, the print media have been giving less and less space to criticism, and many magazines and journals supportive of criticism of the arts have, out of financial reasons, had to cease publication. Yet it cannot be denied that some that have survived are running a thriving business, feeding on advertisement, political factionalism and sensational news. These print media give little importance to art and culture, and criticism is accorded even less significance. Those that still give some space to art and culture either relegate these to the "entertainment" section or admit only of the form of mere reportage, or have to "jazz up" their content, all this in the name of "accessibility" to a large public. An interview with a distinguished British scholar and critic in 2001 revealed that serious criticism of the arts was also on the wane in Britain, and that only one national daily newspaper

gave ample space to criticism and employed critics on a permanent basis. Even the respectable, time-consecrated "Feuilleton" section in the German-language press has had to reduce space as well. But the most honest verdict on the predicament comes from an article in the journal *American Theatre* in its September 2001 issue: "America's Mega-Media Establishment Is Ignoring the Arts. And It's Time for Cultural Leaders to Retaliate." This is perhaps not the kind of consolation that Thai researchers need!

Thai society operates more by the "exception" rather than by the "rule", and there are groups of people who pay no attention to the market force and remain devoted to art and culture. The researchers have benefited from the assistance of some magazines and newspapers in offering regular space for our critical contributions.

The advent of "Communications" as an academic discipline in Thai universities has produced a new breed of all-round reporters and columnists for the Thai press, but they are overworked and lack sufficient knowledge of the specific fields to be able to write criticism competently. Art and culture pages in Thai newspapers are occupied by these jacks-of-all-trades, some of whom guard their own territories with possessive fervour. Criticism produced by the researchers in the present project is accepted only by a limited number of magazines and newspapers. There are, of course, exceptions in the form of contributions invited from either distinguished amateurs (in the etymological sense of the word) or well-known scholars. Quality criticism is thus an exception to the rule, and these odd pieces, however illuminating they may be, do not constitute a

sufficiently solid base for criticism. The *Anthologies of Criticism* in the 4 fields feed mostly on these exceptions.

The voice and visual media do not fare better. It is true that criticism on television is financially not viable and difficult to manage. At one time, radio was still a hope, but that has changed in the meantime. With the global conquest of the competitive market economy, criticism is naturally losing its foothold, since it cannot compete as a market force. A distinguished Thai musician (who had been honoured with the title of "National Artist") recently complained that her radio programme on classical music, originally scheduled for 6.00 to 7.00 a.m. on Sundays, had now been removed altogether. Thailand's media have grown up with the global market and have had too limited experience as publicly funded institutions which promote works of quality and a critical culture.

The new media, especially the Internet, may offer new possibilities for those interested in the arts to express their opinion. The researchers have taken this into consideration but have to admit that the lively exchanges of views sometimes overstep the bounds of propriety and cannot be taken as serious criticism governed by a sense of responsibility towards the public.

The emergence in recent years of hand-made volumes of poetry and small magazines with limited circulation, containing serious criticism, simply demonstrates that an artistic culture in the age of globalization lies in the hands of a few die-hards. A small group of undergraduates and recent graduates recently launched a literary magazine on a shoe-string budget, depending largely on

subscribers, and there criticism of the arts figures prominently. If criticism cannot become a "public" institution at present, at least it remains a privilege sustained by a happy (or unhappy?) few!

12. ACADEMIA

Without realizing it, Thai academia may have formed an alliance with Thai media in becoming one of the two major institutions not sufficiently supportive of criticism. Workshop participants, both students and university teachers alike, have repeatedly confirmed that academia is no nurturing ground for criticism and that even the most basic skills and the most fundamental manuals of criticism are not available in the formal education system. This may be an exaggeration, for in actual practice, particularly in disciplines like fine arts and dramatic arts, practical training does involve critical activities in the form of teachers criticizing students' works or students criticizing each other's works. Nevertheless, it is true that in most cases, these spontaneous acts of criticism do not constitute themselves into a body of knowledge with a solid theoretical framework that can be further imparted as a "discipline". The glaring example is that of the lack of coordination between the *fine arts* and *art history*, with the latter taking little or no notice of what is being produced in terms of contemporary art. A Thai professor of art history recently made it quite explicit that (his brand of) art history aims at finding conclusive answers through analysis of art and artifacts of the past, since the fluidity and changeability in contemporary art movements do not lend themselves to a reliable scholarly analysis. It is worth noting that even

in their study of works from the past, most Thai art historians have adhered too much to the positivist methods. It is no wonder that with such an educational philosophy, criticism cannot arise out of the field of art history, the result being that many practising artists in Thailand have to engage in criticism themselves.

The problem with *dramatic arts* may be different, because theatre studies as an academic discipline (comparable to art history) barely exists. A professor of traditional Thai drama admitted, at a recent seminar, that since there is little or no research into traditional Thai drama (the imparting of knowledge being exclusively based on an intimate teacher-pupil relationship and never written down), it is extremely difficult for academics to reconstruct traditional Thai dramaturgy. Drama departments which have been established in the past few decades are almost entirely oriented towards Western drama and have yet to make up their mind whether to be a school for actors or an academic institution. With the market force being the overriding consideration, they have more or less acquiesced in the "demand pull" by training future actors for television studios. The *academic* side of the enterprise, (which could have provided an underpinning for criticism,) has yet to take off, and research barely exists.

Music is a territory that has engendered great creative achievements, and as mentioned under the section "Theoretical Implications", to understand Thai music is to grasp the essence of Thai culture. Yet the world of traditional music, in spite of social and cultural changes, has remained a community-based culture, whereby there is no clear dividing line between artists and public. And with

a dwindling public drawn towards media-driven pop and rock, traditional music has become the prerogative of connoisseurs, mostly of performers, whether professional or amateur. Criticism of traditional music is still regarded as an alien element, for connoisseurs know how to criticize each other (in intimate circles) and the art of "non-verbal criticism" has developed to such a level of sophistication that "music can criticize music" (as described under the section "Theoretical Implications"). Musicology and music history pertaining to traditional Thai music have yet to be organized. How can music criticism thrive without the solid base of an academic discipline? Needless to say that serious scholarship propped up by criticism is bound to show up deficiencies that call for remedy. According to a Western professor of music who has done much to promote Thai classical music abroad, the guardians of Thai music at all levels have been far too self-defensive.

The field of Western classical music offers ample food for thought. In Thailand more criticism is being written on Western music than on Thai music, simply because a strong critical tradition is concomitant with Western-type music-making. The recording business has rendered the international public a valuable service in providing programme notes of considerable critical seriousness, and Thai lovers of Western classical music benefit from this "written culture" as well. Although a number of Thai academics have enjoyed a good training in the West (some having reached the doctoral level), musicology and musical studies with a distinct character of their own are not yet born. Critics of classical music are mostly amateurs with

no solid formal training and concentrate their efforts mainly on creating an understanding and appreciation for works of value and on winning over a public for these great cultural achievements of the West. All this is happening without support from academia!

The predicament of *literary criticism* is hard to explain. Although literary study (on the basis of Thai as well as Western literatures) is almost as old as Thai higher education itself, it cannot be said that academia has contributed much towards strengthening literary criticism. A discipline that is predominantly academic, remote from the practical world of creative artists, is a departure from the traditional Thai model of community-based conviviality. Without being able to generate our own system of concepts and theories through real contact with practising artists, borrowing from the West has become an all too easy solution. A thoroughly Westernized literary study can hardly lend strength to a literary criticism that has to cope with the ups and downs of the literary scene. Whatever has been achieved is due to individual efforts without much "institutional" support.

The inherent weaknesses besetting the four academic disciplines in Thai academia speak for the frailty of the Thai *humanities* in general, a field that has alienated itself from its cultural roots. Although Thai researchers are under no obligation to follow "post-colonial" doctrines, we must be honest enough to admit that both in terms of substance and methodology, our academic disciplines related to the arts have not even progressed from the imitative level to the eclectic! Many of our academics have followed Western

scholarship, espoused Western Orientalism and often dismiss indigenous scholarship as parochial or worse still, as impregnated with nationalism (which has become a dirty word in the age of globalization.) The proposed "theories from the native soil" came rather late to remedy the situation.

As for research, the absence of serious research into the various arts as well as into the criticism of those arts may account for the current plight of academic studies in those areas. In some sectors such as modern drama, graduate studies have not yet been initiated, and research is almost non-existent. In other areas in which graduate programmes are being offered, there is a paucity of research on criticism. Our research project made regular announcements offering support for graduate theses, and during the three-year duration of the project, only one scholarship could be granted. There is still much to be done to strengthen academia in this respect.

13. WORKSHOPS

The original intention of organizing workshops in the 4 areas was to enable participants to engage in the practice of writing criticism based on direct contact with works of art. To enliven the atmosphere of the workshops, new works were commissioned, and the artists took up the commission with utmost seriousness, producing works of quality without paying attention to the pitiable honoraria offered by the research project (out of public money). Young artists made their débuts at our workshops, and interacted well with workshop participants. The Annual Conferences provided an opportunity for

participants from the 4 areas to interact, thus reinforcing the guiding principles of the research project in promoting "mutual illumination of the arts" and "mutual illumination of criticisms". The process of socialization was effective, but the "writing" component of the workshops was not altogether successful, as the majority of participants either lacked writing skills or were reluctant to commit themselves to written criticism. (This problem may not necessarily be peculiar to Thailand. The Assistant to the Project Director had an opportunity to audit a very well-organized workshop on Music Criticism in Dresden, Germany, in April 2001, at which only 2 "active" participants enrolled for the "writing" part of the enterprise!) These workshops were also attended by students, both undergraduate and graduate, and it appeared that students had less inhibition in experimenting with criticism. Incentives offered by the organizers in terms of prizes in criticism could not change the situation, and winners were almost exclusively (graduate) students. It would appear that the students were attracted to these workshops for the simple reason that they offered them a respite from drab classroom situations.

It has also been possible to organize workshops with foreign experts as resource persons. These proved to be most valuable, since experiences from other cultures either confirmed those of Thailand or were of an entirely different nature that set Thai participants thinking about the pros and cons of learning from others. To cite concrete examples, a scholar from Asia confirmed the validity of the efforts on the part of the researchers to construct theories "from the native soil", and a theatre director from Europe gave a warning as to how

unbridled and irresponsible criticism could stifle creativity on the part of artists and become a destructive force.

One by-product of these workshops was the effect produced on the participating artists themselves. Most of them reacted favourably, not only to the various criticisms expressed on their respective works, but also to the desirability and viability of criticism as an institution. One particular case is worth mentioning: a distinguished writer came to a workshop on literary of criticism full of prejudices against the futility of criticism, but changed his attitude within a matter of 24 hours and left the workshop a committed friend of criticism!

Within the framework of a *research* project, it has not been possible to organize a well-structured series of workshops with a considerable sense of direction and continuity. The small successes that have been registered may contribute towards making criticism an instrument of socialization. As for the overall objective of turning criticism into the public domain in order to serve as an intellectual force of society, it is still too early to indulge in a conclusive statement.

14. NETWORKING

Fully conscious of our own limitations in making use of the media in creating an impact on the masses, the project has been concentrating its effort on promoting relationships on a "face-to-face" basis. So far roughly 900 people have been involved in the various activities organized by the project, such as annual conferences, seminars and workshops. The *Annual Conference* took the form of an academic seminar *cum* art workshop *cum* festival, whereby commissioned

works by Thai artists from the 4 areas were presented for criticism by the participants. The annual events drew hundreds of people, whereas smaller workshops on specific areas (as described above) were of a more specialized nature, including the *writing* component. It can be said that the project has been fairly successful in creating a sense of conviviality among artists, scholars, critics, teachers, students and friends of the arts, who can interact with each other through a common "critical" agenda. These activities were evaluated by the participants themselves through descriptive questionnaires, and constructive suggestions as to desirable actions to be taken in the future usually emerged. Repeatedly, the demands from a great number of participants could not readily be met under the framework of the present research project, since these included such activities as regular training courses in criticism and the writing of manuals of criticism (which *under normal circumstances* should have been the responsibility of academic institutions!) A research project, in spite of its provision *for developmental activities,* is in no position to usurp the function of academia.

It has to be admitted that little success has been achieved in fostering a healthy relationship with two major public institutions, namely the media and the university. The former has other preoccupations, as described under the section "Media" above. Very few members of the media have attended our conferences and workshops, and if they do attend, it is certainly not for the entire duration. However, certain print media have been cooperative in publicizing our activities, but such cooperations do not contribute towards increasing the critical competence of their own staff. It cannot be denied that the research

proposal was a little too optimistic about the role of the media. As for the university, the cooperation has been more of a bureaucratic nature, whereby each university allows its staff members to attend the various conferences and workshops, and in many cases pays for the expenses involved. The initiative comes mainly from the individual university teachers who usually bring along their students who in turn thoroughly enjoy their "off-campus" intellectual excursions. A relationship of an "institutional" kind takes the form of the university making its premises available for these activities at a very favourable rate. The only cooperation with substantive inputs from a university has been with a private university, which encouraged its art departments to organize the second Annual Conference in 2000 jointly with our project.

Yet it cannot be said that this "networking" based on personal relationship is devoid of intellectual impact. The encounters provided by the research project have strengthened a sense of cohesion among like-minded people and those with common interests. A notable example was the creation of a literary magazine by a group of young writers, critics and students, with contributions from our "alumni". It is also worth mentioning that the prizes for criticism given at one of our workshops have proved to be an encouragement to the winners to go on writing criticism.

What the project can do is to act as an intermediary or a centre of information. Our *newsletters* are published 3-4 times a year, giving mainly information of past activities and announcing up-coming activities. With no professional competence in publicity work, they are meant to be a loosely-structured organ for keeping the

network alive. But the mailing list is expanding, and the number of "alumni" coming back to participate in subsequent activities is encouraging. The same can be said of our *Website* (www.thaicritic.com), which is not yet quite up to professional standard.

All in all, it has to be said that in conformity with our discovery that Thai society is still very much an "oral" community-based culture, the networking promoted by the research project inevitably remains committed to human relations, and less media-oriented or media-driven.

15. THE RESEARCHERS AS CRITICS

Most of our researchers, including the project leader, had written criticism prior to the launching of the project in January 1999, and have since continued to function as critics. That we have been able to report on the infrastructure and the conduct of the Thai media is due to our experience with the media. A question arose at the beginning of the research as to whether it would be appropriate to include contributions from our own researchers in the Anthologies. In view of the dearth of criticism in some areas, a compromise was reached, whereby criticism by the researchers prior to January 1999 could be taken up in the Anthologies, as long as these were not the works of the respective area specialists themselves. In our regular six-month reports submitted to our sponsor, the Thailand Research Fund (TRF), critical articles have also been submitted for consideration, but without any evaluative comment. In the meantime, an external "reader" has been requested to assess these contributions. In her

estimation, the researchers have succeeded in producing works of criticism that can contribute towards making criticism an intellectual force in society. Besides, by working together as a team, they have achieved a certain measure of intellectual cross-fertilization and their collective work substantiates the principle of "mutual illumination of criticisms."

It may be appropriate for the researchers at this juncture to indulge in a little self-explanation. As an interdisciplinary group working together for three years, certain common "agenda" may be a discernible, although they do not represent a conscious strategy. The situation of criticism being what it is, we have to give information and introduce the reading public to certain works of quality, Thai and foreign. Inevitably, we write critical reviews of works of art that appear in Thailand and feel that it is necessary at times to engage in evaluative criticism.

In other words, we are on the receptive side and react to whatever comes up. In this respect, we do not hesitate to give adverse criticism to works of poor or lesser quality, including foreign works, and a recent article on the exhibition of works by a famous German artist, sloppily curated and giving false impressions of the real things, provoked a thorough demystification by our researcher in the visual arts. The same can be said of local productions: a recent Thai musical of dubious quality, backed up by a muti-million baht publicity campaign, had to be exposed for what it was worth.

Conversely, works of merit, often neglected for want publicity, were evaluated as such, and a thorough clarification was given to the

public as to why they should merit serious attention. In a way, our group is bent on protecting the interests of the public in an age of consumerism.

It is, therefore, necessary to espouse "contextual" criticism as well. A cultural environment conducive to the creation of works of art of real quality has to be identified, and warning signs against phoney values have also to be given. If there is an ideal shared by the researchers, it is that great art must be made accessible to the people and should not remain a prerogative of the few. With this in mind, we are occasionally compelled to touch on the issues of promotion and management of art as well. Experiences from other countries have proved to be beneficial to our endeavours.

Our contacts with the media have not always been smooth-sailing. One issue is of particular concern: the print media are ready to publish contributions by those members of our research team who are already well established, and tend to shun new-comers. Thus it has been necessary for senior members to advise junior members, and in a number of fortunate cases, contributions from our young research assistants could be "premièred". A number of friends and well-wishers have insisted that as a follow-up to the present research, either a new journal of criticism should appear on the scene or support to small magazines should be encouraged. Our reaction is fairly straightforward: *The spirit is willing, but the cash is weak!*

16. MUTUAL ILLUMINATION OF THE ARTS

Thai culture, being traditionally community-based, with

various craftsmen and artisans living and working together, must have naturally engendered a mutual illumination of the arts. As already pointed out on an earlier occasion[2], versatility has been one of the hallmarks of this convivial culture. (A recent campaign, launched by the Thai Government in 2001, to promote tourism by way of identifying "one craft" to "one district" is based on an ignorance of Thai social norms.). If criticism has arisen from such an environment and may have taken other forms (say, verse repartee or "music criticizing music") than the written mode, then the interaction among the various spheres must have been a natural process. In other words, the cross-fertilization among the arts, which favours not only their mutual illumination but also versatility on the part of creative artists, inevitably calls for a "transgeneric" critical competence. Expressed in modern terminology, traditional Thai culture is conducive to the development of critical interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary interrelationship between the arts. As we shall see, the contemporary scene needs just as much such a "versatile competence".

The constitution of the research team with artists, scholars and critics from the aforementioned 4 areas can be taken as an extension of traditional Thai community-based structures into the field of research. There occurs "mutual illumination" of 3 kinds, namely that between the practitioners of the various arts, that between the scholars/critics of the various arts, and that between practitioners and scholars/

[2] Chetana Nagavajara "Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste in der thailändischen Kultur" (1992), in : Chetana Nagavajara. : *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Kulturen.* Chiang Mai : Silkworm Books, 1999, pp. 55-57.

critics. The opportunity to work together for an extensive period of 3 years is a process of self-education based on a *cross-disciplinary* and *inter-generic* relationship that helps to strengthen a sense of communal cohesion and sustained dialogues. As already mentioned under section 14 "The Researchers as Critics", a shared sense of direction has emerged.

It may be worthwhile to look at concrete examples. The researcher in literary criticism maintains that through contact with the visual arts and art criticism, she is now paying greater attention to grasping the main concept of a work, trying to imbibe its message in the same way as an onlooker of a work in the visual arts. The researcher in (visual) art criticism, who has long felt that the narcissistic self-aggrandizement of some artists has distorted the real value of the art work, believes that the art circle will greatly benefit from knowledge of literary criticism, such as the theory on "the death of the author" as propounded by Roland Barthes. For her part, the researcher in dramatic arts has become more conscious of the "languages" of the respective art forms and at the same time has come to appreciate the virtue of the "indeterminacy of meaning" (again originated in the domain of literary criticism) as a means of involving the audience to participate in the production of meaning, thereby making the theatre an arena for constructive collaboration between the artists and the public. As for music criticism, the researcher believes that he has derived benefit from the criticism of poetry, whereby a detailed analysis of a poem should only follow the total impression gained by the reader: Music criticism can best function in the same way. It cannot be denied that

the theoretical proposition concerning "non-verbal criticism" by way of "music criticizing music" has inspired theoretical thinking in other fields too. The researcher in literary criticism is now becoming aware of the potential of developing a theory on "parody as criticism". There can be no end to such mutual enrichment, and it is to be hoped that continuous critical interactions of this kind can prove to be an intellectual force in society.

On the practical side, the researchers have had opportunities to engage in some forms of "fieldwork" by engaging in evaluative criticism. A much-publicized Thai "grand opera", supposedly based on a gem of Thai literature (by King Rama VI), turned out to be an illiterate's reading of the literary masterpiece, camouflaged with all machinations of contemporary show business and enveloped in grandiose sound of Hollywood film music: it had to be exposed as such. Another Thai "musical", a stunning financial success, was no more than a concoction made up of ingredients from Broadway and the West End with no originality of its own, and had also to be subjected to an honest critical evaluation, based on the knowledge of various arts.

On the other hand, an experience of a unique kind could come from a work of "chamber" dimensions that required utmost interpretative ability. In a workshop-like atmosphere, Frederic Rzewski's *De profundis*, based on Oscar Wilde's work, was performed on 10 December 1999 by an American pianist, and was probably the best illustration of the principle of mutual illumination of the arts, a one-man show that required pianistic skills of a very high order,

recitation technique comparable to that of a classical actor and acting and miming ability to represent a state of mind close to mental derangement. Versatility required of the performer became at the same time a tall order for the critic who should be knowledgeable in literature, music and the performing arts and also possess a high degree of sensitivity to be able to grasp the various components of the work as a totality. An experience of this kind benefits research in the sense that it does not only confirm the hypothesis about the mutual illumination of the arts and the mutual illumination of criticisms, but also serves as a reminder that practical work constitutes an important part of research in the arts and the humanities as well.

Our preoccupation with the practicality of the mutual illumination of the arts has been further enriched by exposure to theoretical debates, but these debates drew from practical experience as well. A lecture given by a Professor of Music from the Hochschule für Musik in Leipzig on 17 February 2000 on the relationship between music and poetry was based on his own teaching experience: his Asian pupils with exceptional talent and astounding technique could never grasp the essence of occidental music unless and until they had mastered the German language up to the point of feeling the pulse of German poetry. That the "language" of poetry underlines the "language" of music could be substantiated by the traditional structure of Western higher education itself. Such a contact with the Western tradition was of immense value, and by way of an analogy, the Project Leader has demonstrated that to be able to appreciate a particular art form, say, traditional sculpture (the specific example

being wood-carving depicting a forest scene), it is necessary to be familiar with a particular convention in Thai literature, and that the "rhythm" of sculpture echoes the "rhythm" of a particular verse form. In this case, mutual illumination of criticisms is grounded in a mutual illumination of the arts and further enriched by a mutual illumination of cultures. We are back to the "community" as the basic unit of traditional culture. Are the phenomena of mutual illumination of the arts in the contemporary world still tied to the notion of community?

It is at this point that the *media* should enter into our discussion. The Project Leader has earlier studied how the media interact among themselves and interact with traditional art forms. Specific mention was made of the interaction between television drama and the novel in Thailand.[3] But it is now necessary to approach the media on a broader scale than the case study of television drama. For this purpose, *MODEL I* has been constructed. It can be seen that there exist *internal* interactions within each of the 3 spheres, namely, mutual illumination of the arts, mutual illumination of criticisms and mutual illumination of the media. As for *external* interactions, those between the arts and criticisms are intense, whereas those between the media on the one hand and the arts and criticism on the other are marked by an imbalance, with the media overpowering the other two sectors and receiving little impetus from the latter. The influences of the media, represented by one ever-expanding powerful beam, can cut across the two other spheres or even *bypass* them to reach the public.

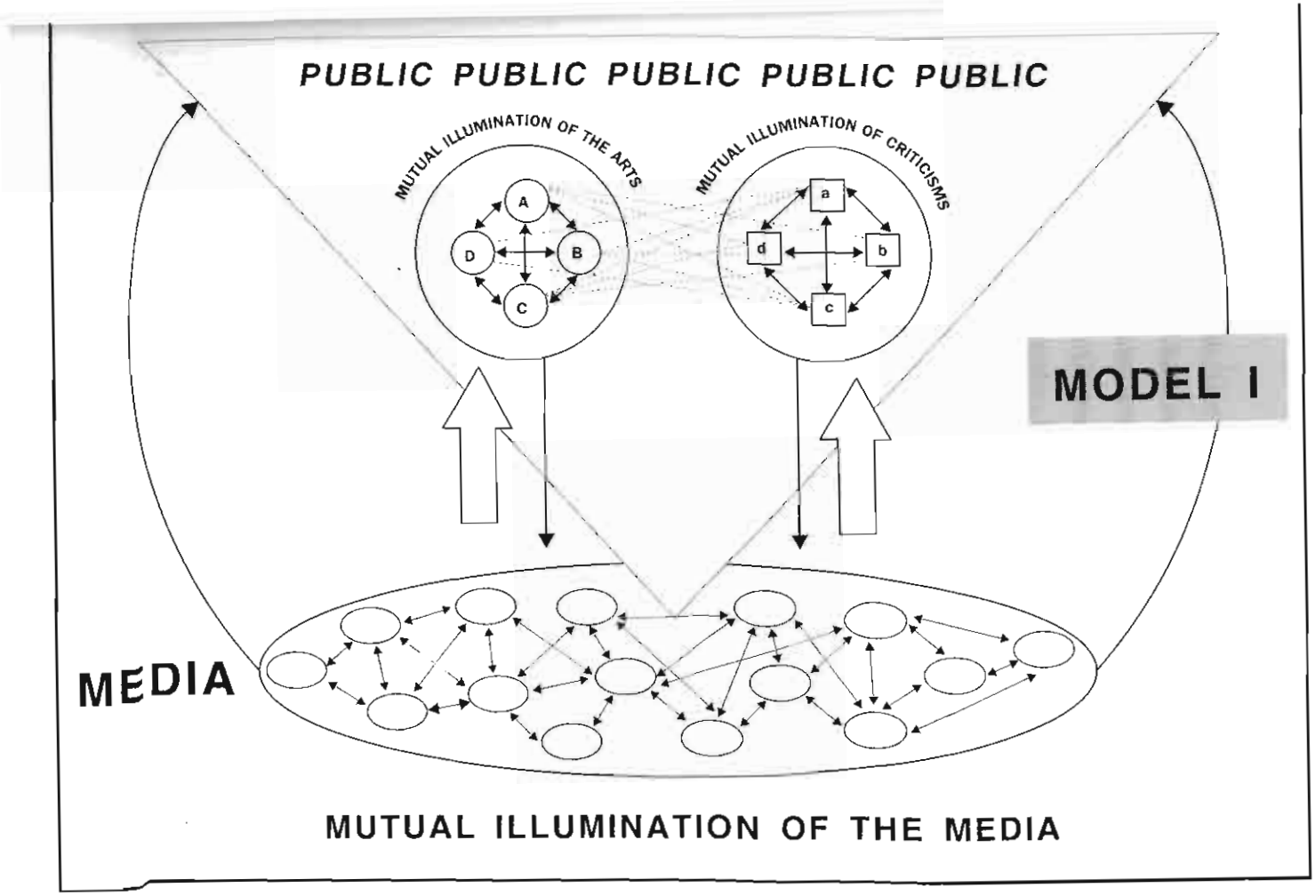
The implications are obvious: in our contemporary society the

[3] Chetana Nagavajara, op.cit., pp. 64 - 69.

media are in a position to inundate the arts and criticisms and submerge them in order to reach out directly to the public. It would be unfair to arrive at a hasty conclusion that the media are not conducive to artistic creativity: the achievements of, say, photography, cinema and media art would counter such an assumption. The point is that when the media constitute themselves into art, they can become constructive; things tend to get out of hand *when the media only mediate.* We all know the lapses of contemporary media and cannot help regretting their immense potential of becoming an intellectual force of society. Thailand is a special case. We have not had the good fortune of participating in a gradual and continuous expansion of the media. We have, all of a sudden, been "taken over". The notion of content and substance has been lost. Starting off with reproducibility (which could have been a powerful instrument of public education) and passing through massification, the media in our country have, more or less, ended up as instruments of commercialization and political propaganda. The most effective remedy might be to infuse the media with great art and at the same time to instil the spirit of criticism into them. Expressed in terms of *MODEL I,* it will be desirable to have Sector 3 (media) interact more intensively with Sector 1 (art) and Sector 2 (criticism), with the proviso that the flow be redirected, that is to say, moving from top to bottom. But this may be just wishful thinking!

17. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In dealing with theoretical issues related to the arts in Thailand, it must be clarified from the outset that a theoretical study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can never take the form of a "textual" discipline analyzing a vast corpus of theoretical texts. Our theoretical considerations, more often than not, do not express themselves as an independent discourse, nor do they aim at profound abstraction. The practitioners of the arts themselves are torch-bearers of certain critical and theoretical directions *implicit* in the actual practice itself. One should therefore speak of theoretical implications that have to be abstracted from the art works themselves. It falls upon modern scholars to delve into the practice of Thai art, reconstruct theories and put them in written form that is understandable and communicable to non-practitioners and the larger public.

In other words, deriving these theories "from the native soil" will constitute a body of knowledge which helps us to understand our own artistic achievements and thereby preserve and further develop those cultural legacies that can propel contemporary Thai society to even greater artistic heights. The assumption here is that theory and practice are mutually enriching. Where theory is totally absent, artists have to grope their way up a dark passage which might lead nowhere. Witness the recent revival of traditional Thai painting: highly talented artists could have achieved more, had scholars (and especially art historians) done their job in describing characteristics of traditional art as well as formulating certain theoretical conclusions. The artists would have known where to "connect" or where to "take off". The same could be said of music. Recents attempts to modernize Thai classical music seem to have landed in a dead end (after the death of the two great masters who were instrumental in the endeavour),

because the practitioners, with no theoretical foundation, depend too much on flashes of insight and histrionic displays of virtuosity to please the contemporary public (that has long been alienated from its cultural roots.) Here too, serious theoretical analysis could have helped connect the old with the new.

A number of theoretical "discoveries" based on the observation and analysis of traditional Thai art and culture are outlined in *Appendix II*, being a lecture originally in French given by the Project Leader at a seminar for university teachers of French from Asia, and will not be repeated in detail in this summary. (A Thai version of the lecture has been published in a journal, and an English version is attached to the present summary.) It was gratifying to note that a number of participants from Asia verbally confirmed to the speaker that many of the theories propounded could explain their indigenous arts too. A potential for expanding a theoretical study based on Thai culture to a *transnational* coverage might not altogether be impossible. (The Project Leader in his earlier paper "An Aesthetics of Discontinuity : Contemporary Thai Drama and its Western Connection" (1990)[4] demonstrates that a "home-based theory" originating in Thailand can explain Western theatrical practices as well.) The only glaring limitation to these attempts at theory-building is its preponderant dependence on case studies of *traditional* art, as though the researchers are in need of a vantage point from which to examine phenomena, art works and practices that have, so to speak,

[4] In : Chetana Nagavajara : *Comparative Literature from a Thai Perspective.* Bangkok : Chulalongkorn University Press 1996, pp. 237 - 246.

been ossified for the benefit of critical and scholarly scrutiny! Few experiments have been made with contemporary culture, for its constant fluidity and volatility often frustrate analysis. We have ventured a little into the sphere of the media, as already presented under Section 15 "Mutual Illumination of the Arts", but the results are still inconclusive. The proposition that the media corrupt themselves when they perform a "mediating" function still needs to be worked out through a more extended and thorough research. At the same time, the supposition that the media are at their constructive best when they constitute themselves into art may not have universal validity. These theoretical issues merit further investigation.

The most promising theoretical discovery has to do with the realization that criticism is not an exclusively verbal activity. "Non-verbal criticism" is probably not the prerogative of any particular culture, but Thai researchers naturally draw their conclusion from observing Thai culture. As with the theory of *"ranad thum"* (second xylophone) culture, generated from an analysis of traditional Thai orchestral practice whereby the master directs his orchestra from an apparently subordinate position, traditional Thai music offers other points of interest that can explain not only musical practices, but also ways of life as well. Thai musicians are allowed a certain measure of freedom within a general structural framework of a performance and have to function both as performers and composers at the same time. When two orchestras are pitched against each other in a contest (called "prachan" in Thai), they observe each other very closely and make criticism on their rival by way of responding musically to certain

musical structures, turns or passages, whereby criticism becomes a vehicle for outdoing or outclassing their opponent. These musicians can compose *extempore*, and there occur instances, in which one orchestra simply admits the superiority of the other orchestra, and after congratulating its rival with a homage-paying coda, packs up the instruments and goes home. It is true that the concept of "criticism" in this context does not correspond exactly to the usual connotation. It is, however, not peculiar only to Thai culture. Igor Strawinsky spoke of his "criticism" of classical composers in his own compositions of the neo-classical type.[5]

It is therefore not true that Thai artists cannot accept "criticism", but those who "criticize" must possess a high degree of competence and artistic prowess that commands respect even from their rivals, not to say from the audience. Unfortunately a certain framework is necessary and the rules of the game must be established and accepted by all. But great art at present, alas, remains the privilege of a few die-hards (and the audience naturally consists of die-hards too), while the majority of the public has already lost the feel for its intricacies and sophistication.

It is therefore the responsibility of critics and scholars to describe, explain and codify these practices such that they can be understandable to a larger public, and at the same time enable contemporary musicians to continue the great tradition while breaking new ground.

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[5] Donald Mitchell : *The Language of Modern Music*. London : Faber and Faber 1993 (First Edition 1963), p.98

Theory is then not intellectual gymnastics or lofty abstractions that are self-generating and not supportive of artistic practice. The experience of the researchers has been that it is worthwhile to turn *implicit* theories into *explicit theoretical formulations.* In this respect, there is much to be said in favour of a *written culture* that seeks to record cultural legacies for this benefit of posterity. In the age of technology, more can be done to prop these theories with concrete examples retrieved with the most effective means. Criticism can lead to discovery, and discovery can lead to theory that seeks to perpetuates the essence of a culture.

18. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

The efforts made by the researchers to go back to the oral roots of Thai critical culture do not necessarily preclude an appreciation of written culture. If that had been the case, it would not have been possible to produce the four Anthologies at all. Print culture may have originated in the West. It has benefited the entire world, and we are not to deny the immense intellectual legacy transmitted through written culture. As has been demonstrated in Section 7 above, we aspire towards entering into a dialogue with other cultures.

All the four Anthologies contain contributions from foreign sources, translated and commented on by the researchers. The amount of inputs from abroad may vary from one to the other. It must be admitted that in those societies with a solid written culture, criticism as a public activity has had a long history and has rendered great service to the arts as a safeguard of quality and at times as a voice of

conscience to society. We stand to benefit from these great traditions, while remaining conscious of the potential of our own oral culture. The Anthologies more than amply demonstrate that criticism of real quality can cut across geographical and temporal boundaries.

Most of the researchers have been exposed to foreign critical cultures either through formal education, or participation in various critical activities or study visits both to Western and Asian countries. One important aspect of these international contacts has been the opportunity to experience directly great works of art in foreign countries. Intimate knowledge of the arts is thus enhanced by knowledge of criticism and it will be noticed that such knowledge is supportive of the writing of criticism as well. Positive aspects of foreign critical cultures may not be difficult to identify. By the same token, it is important that we learn from the mistakes of other cultures. In an interview with one of our researchers, a distinguished Western music critic maintained that he had felt a compulsion to expose to the public the various machinations which had been going on within the "business" side of music, because quality suffers as a result of business strategems. Adverse criticism can render good service to society as well.

As for foreign resource persons who have to taken part in the various activities of the research project, they have brought with them vast experience which sometimes can serve as a warning for the benefit of those with more limited critical experience. For example, a Western drama expert warns against over-enthusiasm with criticism as a matter of principle. He has known artists, especially young artists,

crushed by unfair and unkind criticism, who never recovered. Another instance worth mentioning is a word of caution coming from a Western specialist in literary theory that in Western circles, the danger of indulging in "literary theory without literature" is very serious too.

Believing that criticism has its supranational validity, the researchers arranged for the preliminary research results to be validated by colleagues from abroad. The first draft of the present Summary Report was written for this purpose. A number of foreign colleagues have made their comments in writing; one colleague managed to attend a Consultative Meeting in Bangkok, 23-25 October 2001, and had intensive discussion with the researchers and other Thai advisers. It could be said that the final report of the research project had gone through a process of "international" scrutiny before being presented to the final Annual Conference, 1-2 December 2001. When the results of the research were submitted to the sponsor, the Thailand Research Fund, in early January 2002, they had been validated nationally and internationally. Some of the recommendations for further action stemmed from suggestions coming from external resource persons. When we speak of international dimensions in the context of the present research, we are reporting from actual experience.

19. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

The following recommendations are meant to remedy certain deficiencies as well as to build on the existing strengths and the momentum gained during the conduct of the research.

19.1 It might be desirable to consider expanding the original

coverage of 4 areas to include other areas or sub-areas of criticism that deserve serious study.

19.2 Financial support should be given to small magazines already active in criticism. Appropriate criteria for support should be established, in the form of prizes or awards.

19.3 A new journal of criticism could be launched in order to fill the gap left by the print media and to provide a forum for experienced critics as well as new talents (such as those who have successfully participated in the various workshops). The journal should steer the middle course between an academic journal and a popular magazine.

19.4 Collections of critical articles should be published, which may include contributions newly commissioned or those worthy of being reprinted. An editor should be appointed, to be responsible for selecting the appropriate contributions, writing a critical introduction and making suitable annotations.

19.5 Workshops in criticism should be organized, lasting, say, one week at the minimum or constituting a continuous series of weekend sessions, with ample time for practicum and writing practice. There should be an overall plan for each area, covering a period of 2-3 years. The practice of commissioning new works from Thai artists for specific workshops should also be continued.

19.6 In response to the need expressed by a great number of conference and workshop participants, manuals of criticism

should be written (based on the findings of the present research and the *Anthologies*), whereby sufficient opportunities for "trial runs" with various groups of learners and users should be provided.

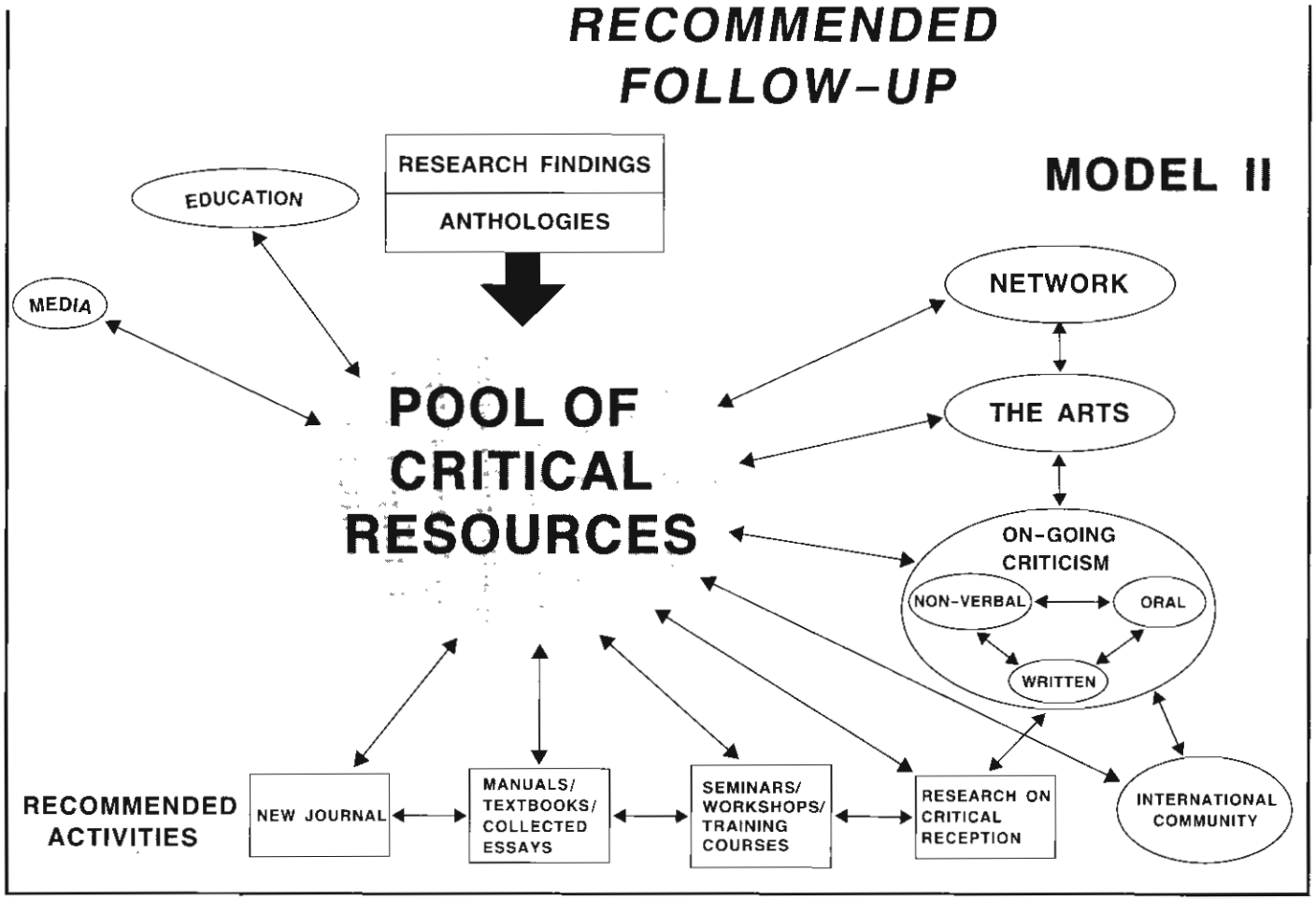
19.7 Curricular reforms might be initiated with specific institutions willing to engage in experiments. Our conclusion is that the humanities can greatly benefit from close collaboration with the arts. Joint curricula in the form of double majors, combining a creative discipline with an academic one, should be encouraged.

19.8 "Home-based" theories generated by the present research should be further elaborated and tested for their applicability, both in Thai and non-Thai contexts.

19.9 As a form of international exchange, cross-cultural workshops should be organized. For this purpose, parts of the Anthologies and the research results should be translated (into English).

19.10 The reception of criticism by the Thai public has yet to be researched. Case studies should be initiated. These could begin as graduate theses. Qualitative methods should be used.

In order to provide clarity on the inter-connectedness between the recommended follow-up and the research findings together with other determining factors, *MODEL II* has been constructed. It will be seen that the various follow-up areas of action recommended are the natural outgrowth of the research, but at the same time link up with


RECOMMENDED FOLLOW-UP
MODEL II
RESEARCH FINDINGS
ANTHOLOGIES
EDUCATION
MEDIA
NETWORK
THE ARTS
POOL OF CRITICAL RESOURCES
ON-GOING CRITICISM
NON-VERBAL
ORAL
WRITTEN
RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES
NEW JOURNAL
MANUALS/ TEXTBOOKS/ COLLECTED ESSAYS
SEMINARS/ WORKSHOPS/ TRAINING COURSES
RESEARCH ON CRITICAL RECEPTION
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

existing activities. A question may be raised as to whether these (follow-up) activities could proceed without inputs from the research. The answer would simply be that the research can *facilitate* further actions, which can benefit from three preliminary steps provided by the research. *First*, the research has identified the strengths and weaknesses of Thai critical culture, (the physical remoteness of the two areas, media and education, as represented in the *MODEL II*, being symptomatic of the problem). *Secondly*, it has identified and created a pool of critical resources that can give direction to further development and contribute towards strengthening Thai critical culture. *Thirdly*, a visual representation expressed by way of a *MODEL II* should bring out clearly the unity of the critical enterprise, with all the constituent elements interacting with one another in both centripetal and centrifugal manners.

20. CONCLUSION

That criticism constitutes a integral part of a *written culture* cannot be taken for granted in contemporary Thai society. Criticism of real import is still being practised *orally* in artistic circles and accepted as the preferred mode of communication by the practitioners themselves. Be that as it may, there is an urgent need to codify knowledge and wisdom related to criticism and to create a cultural environment in which a larger public can benefit from the critical culture, which today remains within the domain of select individuals. The *developmental activities*, undertaken by a small group of researchers, could so far only serve as experiments which point the way to the future.

It must be admitted that some of the objectives set out in the research project could not be satisfactorily fulfilled, especially those that involved participation from the media and educational institutions. As far as the media are concerned, the present economic crisis has aggravated the situation: whereas critical activities on the social and especially on the political front are exceedingly dynamic, criticism of the arts has been relegated to the periphery and not accorded its rightful place. Academia, too, has achieved little in providing a nurturing ground for critics who could perform the function of intermediaries between the arts and the public, the representative disciplines, namely, literary studies, art history, theatre studies and musicology, being either too remote from, or not sufficiently supportive of, the contemporary world of action. In our recommendations, we have addressed issues related to the media as well as academia.

In spite of such drawbacks, it has been possible for the researchers to glean from a large corpus of materials works of criticism that merit to be included in the Anthologies of the four areas, with the major part of the inputs coming from Thailand, supplemented by those from foreign sources as necessary. The amount of contributions by Thai critics may vary from one area to another, but it can be said that there exists in Thailand a small group of serious-minded critics and scholars deeply conscious of the role of criticism as a vehicle for judicious evaluation and as a voice of conscience to society. At the same time, we have been able to attract young talents (including graduate and undergraduate students) to our various activities. We have found them to be intellectually alert, receptive to new ideas and

articulate. With appropriate guidance, they can mature into able and responsible critics. What is needed is a forum for them to express themselves (in public).

There is no denying that the arts in traditional Thai society were a way of life and that a critical spirit was a "built-in" element in Thai culture that expressed itself also in "non-verbal" form. Mutual illumination of the arts enriched this community-based culture, and mutual illumination of criticisms was a natural consequence of this cultural foundation. The advent of technology-driven media brought with it new experiences in the production, dissemination and reception of the arts, and the notions of "community" and "public" have acquired new dimensions. Reproducibility and massification have affected standards at the creative end and tastes at the receiving end. We have demonstrated in *MODEL I* that unless and until the media intensify their interaction with the time consecrated field of the "mutual illumination of the arts" and the constructive force of the "mutual illumination of criticisms", the public will be left out in an intellectual void. In other words, the proposed interaction can become a potent instrument of public education, and criticism thrives best as part of public education. The social dimensions of education cannot be stressed too strongly. In the final analysis, we can only set our hopes on education as a continuous process of self-realization and self-betterment.

But to be able to educate ourselves, we must first know ourselves. This research project has certainly contributed towards self-knowledge, enriched by knowledge of others. Those theoretical issues

brought up in the research are not a speculative exercise, but an analysis of the deep structure of Thai culture that should help us to understand ourselves better. Criticism in Thailand, if it aspires to become an intellectual force of society, must be grounded on the knowledge of our own cultural roots and the consciousness of subsequent developments.

The question remains as to whether Thai society has reached the stage where criticism naturally functions as an intellectual force. The researchers must honestly answer that they have not been able to make that kind of assertive statement. Instead, they have discovered that there exists in Thai culture a deep-rooted *potential* that can turn criticism into an intellectual force of society. Those people who have been involved in various capacities in the present research project prefer to look at criticism as a *process*, perhaps a self-educational process commensurate with a contemporary culture which is dynamic enough to benefit from its own roots as well as open to constructive changes. In that sense, the little success that the researchers may claim for themselves will not be an epoch-making discovery, but a well-grounded appeal for a consciousness that criticism can and should function as an intellectual force of society. The question as to whether criticism of the arts can strengthen a critical attitude to life can only be answered by way of specific examples, as demonstrated in the Anthologies. The researchers have at least identified the strengths and weaknesses that should constitute a firm basis for an unending educational process towards a critical culture. For their own part, they have put themselves at the centre of the experiment and have come to

realize that this is no time for a "cultural revolution", but rather a time for the cohesion of individual efforts. It is time to pluralize the Voltairian dictum and turn it into an intellectual force, and not to be content with stoic resignation: "Il faut cultiver **nos** jardins!" (Let us cultivate our gardens.)[6]

Chetana Nagavajara,
Project Leader

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[6] The author would like to express his deepest thanks for the advice given by Prof. Eberhard Lämmert(Berlin), Mr.Ernst Schürmann(Munich), Prof. Vridhagiri Ganeshan(Hyderabad) and Prof. Stephan Parker(Manchester), who kindly read the first draft of the present Summary Report.

APPENDIX I

THE ANTHOLOGIES IN LITERARY, VISUAL ART, THEATRE AND MUSIC CRITICISM

8 critical articles with commentaries [2 from each area]
(English translations by Theera Nuchpiam)

The Elusive Enemy : An Aspect of Contemporary Thai Literature

Chetana Nagavajara

[The earlier part of this article is a synopsis of an academic seminar on "100 Years of the Thai Novel". The works included in its analytical purview are those which Nitaya Masavisuth, in her introduction to *Thai PEN Anthology: Short Stories and Poems of Social Consciousness*, called 'literary works of social consciousness'. In this section, the critic noted that the authors of these works belonged to the 20-30 age group. They gained their potent experience of modern Thai history of the 1973-1976 period, either as participants in the making of the history of that period, or as its witnesses.]

Problems of social justice or injustice, according to Nitaya Masavisuth, represent the dominant theme of literary works of social consciousness. These problems are created by members of society themselves. In philosophical terms, we may say that mankind is responsible for its own predicament. Modern Thai literary works direct

their attention to these problems with a view to uncovering social mechanisms and systems of relationship between individuals, groups and institutions that have brought them about. Nitaya has also noted that the main characters in these modern works are people without any social status, ordinary folks who are always in a position to be exploited - those who remain passive, those who are consistently on the receiving end of social action. But who are the actors, the enemies of the people? This is a crucial problem for contemporary literary literature since the enemy's identity remains unclear. The people's enemies have not fully revealed themselves and hence remain unidentifiable. Alternatively, we may say that the enemy always remains elusive. The problem is probably not one of the inability of the writers to analytically delve into the essence of social pathology. The problem confronting these writers has more to do with literary creativity. Problems and issues in today's world and in contemporary Thai society are too complicated to be adequately understood in black-and-white representation. The good guy-bad guy dialectic or antagonism might be outmoded as a writing scheme. In many cases, the charm of contemporary literary works lies in their indetermination or hidden meaning. The author did not want to impose any message on the reader, but rather wanted the latter to reflect and, in so doing, find their own answer. The identity of the people's enemy was left deliberately vague, the author's expectation being that readers in a democratic society are sophisticated enough to adjust their focus and thereby arrive at a clearer picture on their own.

We can take, as an example, Nikom Rayawa's works. His

novels are highly stimulating, particularly for their lack of any straightforward message. These works were written in a manner that encourages the reader's private interpretation. Even their titles pose an intriguing challenge. In *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu) (1983) we still cannot come to any conclusive answer even after reading through it as to what the monitor lizard represents and what the 'rotten bough' (khop phu) signifies. The creature makes an appearance in the opening scene, to reappear only once at the end of the novel. The scene depicting Somkhid chasing the lizard is more exciting than those familiar police car chases in detective films. The entire story is that of a lawless society where influential groups of individuals harass and intimidate the people who engage in lawful occupations. Even though the identity of the 'people's enemy' is not clearly presented in the text, the reader can complete the picture by supplying the missing pieces from his or her own store of experiences. From our knowledge of the common people's belief about monitor lizards, we might have to interpret that the author wants to punish the people's enemy by identifying him with a kind of reptile. (He is polite enough not to mention the common local name for the kind of lizard that devours animal corpses, just as contemporary poet Angkarn Kalayanapong strongly criticizes Thai society by calling it 'Thailan' without a 'd' ['lan' is a southern local term for this kind of lizard]). But why did the author opt for an episode, in the last scene, that seems to contradict that interpretation? In this episode, Somkhid, in tumbling down from a broken main bough of a tree, avoided hurting himself by holding onto the lizard's tail and in doing this "felt some

affinity with the reptile, as if such an attachment had been developed through long acquaintance". (p. 357) And why did Somkid try to prevent Pra-wing from firing a shot at it and, failing this, why couldn't he help murmuring, "It was not there?" (p. 359) Was the gun an ineffective means of eliminating monitor lizards? The reader is no less puzzled than the other characters in the story, as evident in the dialogue between Sanong and Pra-wing:

"What did he mean, by saying that it wasn't there?"

"Forget it. He might have been too frightened". (p. 360)

When a man comes in contact with a monitor lizard and feels some affinity towards it, the implication might be that the people and their enemy are of the same stock. Literary works of social consciousness have an affinity with those of philosophical reflexivity. Where actually are the wrong doers, who could be brought to justice, since they and we are of the same background? It seems that literary works simply serve to pinpoint what is an issue without providing any clear-cut answer. Moreover, with the problems created by mankind itself becoming apparently insurmountable, the authors of these works occasionally resort to providing pictures of natural scenes that seem at that time to have flashed into their minds. This is an interesting writing technique, in as much as such occasional interruptions as "high hills" and "the white waterfall tumbling down in bubbly stream" (pp. 327, 348, 364) seem unrelated to the flow of the story. From one point of view, *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu) seems quite ambitious as an artistic work. At times the author could not help expressing this artistic ambition. For instance,

when Bung, seeing Somkid holding onto the lizard's tail, said to uncle Teng, "This is the picture I really want to paint, uncle, the picture we just saw" (p. 358), a novel on the elusive enemy was in effect transformed into a literary work of high visual quality,similar to that found in painting. In saying this, however, we should not conclude that the social message from this novel has been covered up by philosophical contemplation and artistic sophistication. We must not forget that literary works are neither didactic nor propagandistic in nature. The raising of social consciousness can be most effective through artistic means. Indeed, there is no better way of changing people's minds than by capturing their imagination with their aesthetic sensibilities.

Nikom Rayawa's exploration of the meaning of life in his writing is not just a one-shot affair. His short stories in the *Man on the Tree* (khon bon ton mai) anthology (1984) still rely on symbols to stimulate readers to find further meaning for themselves. However, the work that marks an apparent shift in his style is *High Bank, Heavy Logs* (taling sung, sung nak) (December 1984). This novel follows a somewhat straightforward plot, though the narrative technique has been modified to allow for alteration in the sequence of events. Compared with *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu), Nikom's latest work was not intended to rouse the reader's emotion with extraneous events. The writing style is that of 'monologue intérieur'. The outside world is held constant, while man himself is held responsible for change. The status of "the people" has still not improved, and the identity of their enemy remains

nebulous. To identify a local godfather, who makes a profit from an exchange of a wooden elephant for a real one, as the people's enemy might not be fair. The disaster that befell Kam Ngai and his family has not apparently resulted from blatant social injustice. Kam Ngai's "attachment to, and unity with, his elephant" (p. 165) certainly differs from the affinity Somkid experienced with the monitor lizard. Here not all social problems are overlooked, but *High Bank, Heavy Logs* (taling sung, sung nak) has transformed them into issues of metaphysical contemplation.

> "We all were born and die only once, but what lies between birth and death must be sought on our own. In fact, here is embodied something that must be shared-hardship, happiness, goodness, badness, hunger, food sufficiency-but each of us tends to compete for only the good, but not the bad, side of the dichotomies". (p. 166)

The author's writing style seems to have changed in *High Bank Heavy Logs* (taling sung, sung nak). At times the novel appears more poetic than a narrative of this genre usually is; at times it sounds like a philosophy book, or it is didactic in tone. Reading it as a narrative, the reader will tend to find this novel less interesting than *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu). Moreover, the use of symbols is so intensive that some readers might get bored with it. In terms of raising social consciousness, we must admit that to elevate a literary work to the status of metaphysical contemplation is to let the people's enemy elude them. This is because metaphysics

looks at man and his world from such a prodigious height that it cannot make fine, black-and-white distinctions in the affairs of the world.

The critic's intention in discussing Nikom Rayawa's works in some detail here is to indicate that the literature of social consciousness has not stagnated in the post-1976 period. But their development may in a way be regarded as increasingly 'serene'. That is, it involves analyzing social problems from a philosophical point of view. Social violence and cruelty of life remain the narrative's quintessential feature, but the literary art has transformed violent and cruel acts into *philosophical cruelty*.

[What follows is a critical view on the works of Chart Kobchiti, Khamman Konkai, Khomtuan Khanthanu, "Varanangki", Assiri Dhammachote, Kamphoon Buntawee, and Suchit Wongthes].

Is it possible that the people's true enemy is probably not to be found in the form of individual human beings or groups of individuals? Is he rather in the values and beliefs, which have dominated the people for so long that they cannot see where the essence of human beings lies? "Lao Kam Hom" (Khamsing Srinawk) raised the issue of superstitious beliefs and their adverse impact on Thai society in some of his short stories in his *The Sky Is No Barrier* anthology. In the critic's opinion, the work that launches a direct assault on the core of this problem is perhaps Assiri Dhammachote's short story *And the Grass Is Trampled*, published in his *Khunthong, You will Return at Dawn* collection. In this story, very close friends such as Hern and Nag had to engage in deadly conflict because their "bosses", who were

real brothers, became enemies in their rivalry for inherited wealth. The death of Hern and Nag actually liberated them from such slavish adherence to a tradition that is not rooted in any humanistic principle. Senseless loyalty to their bosses becomes an ethic among bandits that men of younger generations must reject. Hern and Nag were ready to die in return for the liberation of their children from such an ethic. The enemy in the form of superstitious beliefs is far more powerful than the one in the shape of individual human beings. Assiri Dhammachote has pointed out the way to the future to his contemporaries. To defeat the enemy involves not so much a struggle on the individual or social level as the use of wisdom to overcome human ignorance. Our duty is to educate our children not to repeat the mistakes of their fathers' generation.

Finally, tracking the elusive enemy in the literature of social consciousness in present-day Thailand is thus comparable to a marathon run with no fixed distance. It might not be fair to say that this is the failure of modern Thai literature. The value of literary works is totally unrelated to the reliability and validity of the social science. Literary works that make an emotional impact on the reader might not have any immediate practical value. The works that are not accurate in their assessment of the immediate social situations might be highly valuable as pieces of literary art. Take, as an example, Naowarat Pongpaibun's poem, *Pleng Klom Puan* (Lullaby for my Friend)(1975):

Let's move along, though the path remains dark and long

Let's serve as candles guiding along the path, though we burn ourselves out

Let's cross our arms and fight fearlessly
The bell will toll, when our friends fall
When a shot is fired, we will move forward in a wide front
To uphold the people's resolve to win *Mere Movement* (piang khwam kluan wai, p. 51).

We must understand that the social function of literature might not be to solve practical social problems, or to change human behaviour in the short term. Their function is rather to enlighten people through emotional impact. In other words, bringing justice to the people is perhaps not the primary task of literature as creative art. Thai contemporary literary works have all along served to raise the conscience about what is socially right and wrong. As readers we could be content with that. In raising the issue about people's enemy becoming elusive here, the intention is to encourage a debate on the extent to which Thai literary tradition could still be regarded as featuring a type of friend-enemy, actor-recipient of action, or people-their enemy antagonism. The answer we have drawn from the analysis of literary works of social consciousness does not seem to point clearly to that kind of dialectic. This leads us to a reconsideration of literary works of the past to gain a clearer insight. If, for instance, we ask ourselves whether we have a hatred for the Burmese viceroy in the epic *Taleng Phai*, who in the story was the enemy of the kingdom, the possible answer is most probably in the negative. We are most likely to feel instead sympathetic towards this character. Why did the author create a work that encourages such a feeling? Another example is *Ramakien*, the Thai version of *Ramayana*. The original version of ancient India's

Ramayana features a struggle between good and evil. In *Ramakien*, however, Thotsakan, who was supposed to represent evil, has for so long in the minds of Thai readers, edged out Rama as the main character. Does this mean that the Thais' mind-sets are not receptive to the conception of global and social problems in dialectical terms? Can we verify, in any concrete manner, that it is Buddhism that has shaped the Thai character in this way? These insoluble puzzles are extremely useful for more effective reading to gain an in-depth understanding. The elusive enemy may still be around, perhaps in our own hearts and minds. That is why a man and a monitor lizard could be said to "feel some strong affinity", as the author of *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* has perceptively suggested.

(Chetana Nagavajara. "The Elusive Enemy: An Aspect of Contemporary Thai Literature", from *The Endless Path of Critical Culture*. Bangkok: Tienwan Publishing House, 1987.)

Translated by *Theera Nuchpiam*

Analysis

The above critical essay was a paper presented to the academic conference on "100 Years of the Thai Novel" on 30 July-1 August 1986, at Silpakorn University Auditorium, Bangkok, and was first published in the August 1986 issue of *Thanon Nangsue*. The paper gave rise to the development of a strong critical and intellectual force in Thai literary circles at that time. The intellectual momentum has sustained itself by providing an impetus to literary activities among the younger generations of both writers and critics well into the present time (as evident in the interviews given by writers, literary critics, and academics, to this research team on literary criticism). The essay critically analyzed many contemporary literary works from a comparative vantage point. The analysis covers novels, short stories, and poetry with a view to gaining insights for theoretical generalizations.

The contemporary Thai literary works taken up in the article

are those of the 'social consciousness' category. They were written by young people who shared the eventful experience of a critical period in Thai political history. The time span runs from the [pre-'14 October'] phase symbolised by the "Then I am here in search of meaning" [a line in Vitayakorn Chiangkul's poem] attitude to the 14 October 1973-6 October 1976 period. Most of the works reviewed were created in the post-1976 period. These include Nikom Rayawa's *The Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu), *Man on the Tree* (khon bon ton mai) short story collection, and *High Bank, Heavy Logs* (taling sung, sung nak); Chati Kobchiti's *Dead End, Judgement*, and *A Knife for Everyone* short story anthology; Khamman Konkai's *The Provincia Teacher*; Khomtuan Khanthanu's *Consciousness of a Rebel* and *Drama on a Vast Arena*; Assiri Dhammachote's *Khuntong, You will Return at Dawn*; Kamphoon Buntawee's *A Child of the Northeast*; and Suchit Wongthes's *Sebha* "Street Hawkers Threatened by Floods". The works taken up for criticism are all forceful in their presentation of sophisticated ideas and truly outstanding as contemporary literary works. Here only the section on Nikom Rayawa in the essay is presented as an example of how these works were critically assessed.

The critic conclusively asserted that literary works of social consciousness centre around social injustice. The authors succeeded in awakening in the reader a feeling of sadness and sympathy for the people who were subjected to oppressive exploitation. They nevertheless did not clearly point out who the enemy of these people was. The critic employed the concept of 'elusive enemy' to figuratively

explain this situation. That is, the contemporary literary works neither definitely defined who the people's enemy was, nor elaborated on how he was dealt with. The critic did not regard this failure to provide a clear identification of the people's enemy as detracting from the value of these works; it rather pointed to a theoretical implication for literary studies relating to the 'ambiguity of meaning' and 'hidden meaning'. He stressed that the failure had nothing to do with the authors' lack of competence in creatively presenting their messages. The crux of the matter is rather that, with problems in contemporary society growing more and more complicated, the representation of the good guy and the bad guy in a black-and-white picture is an outmoded literary technique. The new generation of writers did not want to impose their ideas on the reader; they instead expected the latter to reflect and then come to his or her own interpretation. The reader, in other words, would adjust his or her own interpretation until the picture of the people's enemy came into focus. Here the critic clearly indicated that the wisdom of the receiver of the message is as important as that of the sender of the message. Even though the literary works of social consciousness had a limited audience, the latter's intellectual sophistication and receptivity are comparable to those of the authors of these works. For this reason, the works should have some significant contributions to the development of an intellectual social force. This realisation led to a literary theoretical proposition relating to the idea of an aesthetics of reception, which he had explained in detail in some of his previous articles and other academic papers. Applying this theory to the works of the new generations of Thai authors, the critic

came to the conclusion that some of the authors deliberately left an intellectual gap in their works for the reader to fill up. Any intellectual and/or emotional excitement to be gained from reading these texts depends upon the extent to which the reader relies on his or her own imagination and prior experience to complete the authors' seemingly incomplete menage. It would also be legitimate for the reader to go beyond the authors in his or her own imagination and contemplation.

In addition, the critic assessed contemporary literature in terms of its elevation from literary works of social consciousness to those of philosophical and metaphysical reflection. In their perception of life in the world involving hardship and happiness, goodness and badness, the right and the wrong, etc, it might not be possible to declare explicitly who the people's enemy is. The failure or reluctance to do so would have the important effect of making the reader realize that the people's enemy is none other than the common folks like all of us. Taking The *Monitor Lizard and the Rotten Bough* (takuad kab khop phu) as an example, the critic pointed out that "when a man comes in contact with a monitor lizard and feels some affinity towards it, the implication might be that the people and their enemy are of the same stock...where actually are the wrong-doers who could be brought to justice, since they and we are one of a kind?" This literary mode might also convince us of the possible presence of the people's enemy just in our own hearts and minds, in the form, as beautifully demonstrated in Assiri Dhammachote's short stories *"Night Fall on the Waterway"* and *"And the Grass Is Trampled"*, of greed and ignorance. With the transformation of literary works of social consciousness into those of philosophical

reflection, the people's enemy eludes us.

This critical essay also proposed what function literature should take. The author did not expect that literary works would contribute to social change; and neither did he insist on literary works providing society with solutions to its problems. He instead looked into the role of contemporary literature in stimulating ideas and raising consciousness - in posing questions encouraging reflection rather than supplying answers, preaching, or adjudicating. As he observed, "the social function of literary works might not be to solve practical social problems, or to change human behaviour in the short term. Their function is rather to serve as guidance with the appropriate impressions they make on the people". Hence, letting the enemy of the people get away with impunity is not tantamount to the failure of contemporary literary works; as creative works of literary art serving to urge social consciousness, they also provide the reader with some pleasure.

Another significant issue raised by the critic involves the artistic value of literary works, which should not be neglected by writers. Certain works feature violence as their central theme, but their authors might be able to present it in rather acerbic terms; some other works might be valuable as a documentation of social reality, but here again the authors could not dispense with aesthetic considerations. This is because literary works that could in the first place impress the reader would as a consequence encourage his or her reflection that could further develop into a conscience of what is socially right or wrong. Such a conscience has of course its applicability in society too.

The last point made by the author in this article concerns the reluctance of the new generation of writers to present their works of social consciousness in a clearly dialectical manner. There is nothing new about this tendency; it involves 'literary symbolism' that already existed in ancient Thai literature, and that has left the audience as much sympathetic to "bad guys" like Khun Chang, the Burmese viceroy, Thotsakan, etc, as they are capable of admiring the merits of their adversaries. The critic has left unanswered a major question whether a traditional Thai mind-set is not conducive to seeing global and social problems in dialectical terms. And is this intellectual proclivity a product of Buddhist teaching? The critic might not want to answer these questions, but he none the less pointed out that an attempt to solve them would enable us to achieve a more thorough reading and really in-depth understanding of literary texts. The views expressed by the critic might seem critical of the literary works of social consciousness, especially in so far as they allow the people's enemy to elude us, and because they still have some presentational weaknesses and unclear ethical ideas. However, in his overall perspective, this critic has succeeded in significantly widening the reader's worldview and providing the writers of this new generation with much impetus, particularly by linking, in no pedantic manner, the conclusions he derived from reading their texts to some literary theories. In addition, he found highly credible defence for certain weaknesses of these texts, especially with regard to the 'elusive enemy' issue.

This critical analysis is different from most other literary criticisms, in that it is a critique of a number of contemporary literary

works rather than a single piece of writing. It is a critical assessment from a truly broad perspective, and this has enabled the critic to draw persuasive conclusions from the works selected for their specific relevance to the points he raised. The conclusions are thus highly convicing while remaining open to other evaluations. In raising the 'elusive enemy' issue, in particular, the reviewer kindled a new enthusiasm in literary criticism that persisted for a long time, thus giving a crucial impetus to creative work by both authors and literary critics.

By *Ruenruthai Sujjapun*
Translated by *Theera Nuchpiam*

The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes

In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: *"This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility."* Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing "literary" ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.

No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is

narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. The sense of this phenomenon, however, has varied; in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' - the mastery of the narrative code - may possibly be admired but never his 'genius'. The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'. It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author. The *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us.

Though the sway of the Author remains powerful (the new criticism has often done no more than consolidate it), it goes without saying that certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it. In France, Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner. For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'. Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader). Valéry, encumbered by a psychology of the Ego, considerably diluted Mallarmé's theory but, his taste for classicism leading him to turn to the lessons of rhetoric, he never stopped calling into question and deriding the Author; he stressed the linguistic and, as it were, 'hazardous' nature of his activity, and throughout his prose works he militated in favour of the essentially verbal condition of literature, in the face of which all recourse to the writer's interiority seemed to him pure superstition. Proust himself, despite the apparently psychological character of what are called his *analyses*, was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilization, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is *going to write* (the young man in the novel-but, in fact, how old is he and who is he? -wants to write but cannot; the novel ends when writing

at last becomes possible), Proust gave modern writing its epic. By a radical reversal, instead of putting his life into his novel, as is so often maintained, he made of his very life a work for which his own book was the model; so that it is clear to us that Charlus does not imitate Montesquiou but that Montesquiou-in his anecdotal, historical reality - is no more than a secondary fragment, derived from Charlus. Lastly, to go no further than this prehistory of modernity, Surrealism, though unable to accord language a supreme place (language being system and the aim of the movement being, romantically, a direct subversion of codes - itself moreover illusory: a code cannot be destroyed, only 'played off'), contributed to the desacrilization of the image of the Author by ceaselessly recommending the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning (the famous surrealist 'jolt'), by entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible what the head itself is unaware of (automatic writing), by accepting the principle and the experience of several people writing together. Leaving aside literature itself (such distinctions really becoming invalid), linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, *just as I* is nothing other than the instance saying: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.

The removal of the Author (one could talk here with Brecht of a veritable 'distancing', the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage) is not merely a historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or-which is the same thing-the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent). The temporality is different. The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. The fact is (or, it follows) that *writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered-something like the *I declare* of kings or the *I sing* of very ancient poets. Having buried the Author, the modern scriptor can thus no longer believe, as according to the pathetic view of his predecessors, that this hand is too slow for his thought or passion and that consequently, making a