

POPULAR LITERATURE IN THAILAND*

by

Jacqueline de Fels

During the centuries when Siamese literature was confined to the narrow circle of the Court, which distributed praise and assured success, popular literature existed outside the palace and was spread orally. In the past, the written and the oral have respectively characterized literature proper and popular literature. Nowadays the same contrast is no longer relevant. The number of literates in Thailand increases daily and an evolution in literature, especially in popular literature, has been a direct consequence.

With respect to traditional literature, a distinction has been made between that stemming from the palace and that from outside. Today a different distinction is necessary; on one hand, one has a bookstore where the customer goes with the intention of finding and selecting a book, and on the other, one has an anonymous sales stand where reading matter is displayed, often alongside a hundred other items. From one to ten baht one can purchase humour, horror, gun shots, love, and infallible recipes for happiness in all sorts of publications more or less illustrated, in various shapes and sizes, generally printed on coarse paper and hastily bound, with glossy covers meant to summarize in a gawdy way what the reader will find inside. The colourful image before the idea is the principal criterion which will guide the buyer. Here we shall limit our concern to such low-priced editions and shall not touch on oral literature, hoping that it will be preserved thanks to the modern recording techniques (though one should note in passing that numerous tales and legends have been transcribed or adapted by a number of contemporary authors). We shall consider what is written popular literature in contemporary Thailand, to whom it is directed and what can be expected of it.

* This is a modified version in English of a paper given at a colloquium at the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, Paris, in July 1973 and takes no account of events since that date.

Religious literature is to a certain extent popular and mention should be made of the booklets offered for sale at temples or places of pilgrimage. Priced at one or two baht, they confer merit on those who acquire them, which explains why they are bought rather than read. However, this is not the case for the magic formulae which used to be transmitted orally. This conjectural literature is now spread in printed form and is thus available to people who are caught by modern life rhythm and can no longer go through frequent consultations with the brahmins or the monks. This explains why some brahmins and monks have in recent years published digests which sell for four or five baht. The great brahmin Phuwanath¹ in his *Katha Maha Niyom* lays down well-defined formulae and rites: "Every single person, according to the magic power he holds within himself, can", says he, "obtain a good result, or no result at all". The monk Phiman Outtamayan who published 108 formulae in *Khatha Maha Mont Roy Pet*, acknowledges that formulae coming directly from the Buddha are difficult to find; there might be errors due to faulty memory, but in his opinion, what matters is to believe; "Success goes only to those who believe". With the help of this type of booklet, the formulae of incantation will not all be lost and will continue to be published in spite of the fact that the authors reserve their copyright. Other publications such as those of the monk Buddhadhāsa come out against these conjectural manuals. There are also, of course, numerous issues of the Jātakas; these previous lives of the Buddha are printed for children and for adults in all possible forms including comic strips such as *Sang Thong* (The Golden Conch) in the daily newspaper *Thai Rath*. In this can be seen one of the heroes, King Samont, using a walkie-talkie to give orders to his troops: this is a concrete example of the gift of assimilation of the Thais who continue to adapt the same subjects and characters throughout the centuries.

Though popular literature evolves with the modern world, it continues to use the same elements as before: magic, the notion of the Karma, ghosts and spirits (these *phi* are akin to the Burmese *nai* and the Khmer *neak ta*). By themselves the titles of these works confirm this

1) see Appendix wherein the romanized names, titles and words are given in Thai in order of appearance in the text.

fact to us: "The Ghosts' Graveyard", "The Evil-Spirit-Inner Force", "The Great Tiger Prince" endowed with superhuman power, heir of the *Roma Wisaya* the kingdom which retained the *yantras* to make men of magic or robots. Even in a humourous serial *Phon, Nikorn, Kim Nguan* (The Pals), the author P. Intharapalit uses these supernatural means. In "A Visit to Hell," which reminds us of the legend of *Phra Malay*, the "Pals" ask a monk endowed with secret powers to liberate them from their bodies and let them visit hell; frightened by what they see there, they decide to behave better when they return to their bodies. In "The Battle of the Giants," a scientist administers an experimental magic potion to the statues of the guardian giants of Wat Phra Keo and Wat Arun. Brought back to life, these guardian giants immediately resume their legendary fight. Compelled to put an end to their combat, the scientist then gives life to the concrete Buddha of the Wat Inthrawihan who runs to the battlefield and calms down the protagonists.

P. Intharapalit, who was already writing before World War II, mixes in his famous serial "The Pals" the imagined with the real which might be an international event such as the Korean War or local happenings. Even though he has never visited the west, which he knows chiefly through the cinema, he continues to use traditional supernatural themes while transforming the setting and adopting western styles. Thus in "Kidnapping", one has in an American-style drama, a representative social milieu, with criticism of a Chinese indulging in conspicuous consumption and complete with kidnapped children, ransoms, fist-fights, and car chases. In "The Invulnerable One", an injection giving the strength of fifty elephants (like Popeye's spinach) allows one of the "Pals" to take revenge on an Australian wrestling champion in the surroundings of a night club. In "The Hermit of the Sacred Mountain", a "Pal" is aboard a plane that crashes in the jungle; this gives the author the chance to introduce traditional beliefs concerning the forest. Along with this the adventures of a gang of counterfeiters are elaborated; they make use of the radio, police come from the city and journalists seek out interviews. These entertaining stories already contain practically all the different types of literature which are offered to Thai readers these days, namely detective stories, love stories, science fiction and humourous tales.

But this literature, known as *hao samong* (easy on the brain), requires from its readers a knowledge of the language corresponding to about seven years of studies, whereas compulsory schooling which has been in existence for just over fifty years and lasted four years has but recently been extended to seven years. The most recent (1960) UNESCO figure giving the percentage of literate Thais was 67.7%, a percentage which is probably higher now. In 1970, 1,913 books were published in Thai but what was the proportion of works belonging to popular literature?... As one can guess, this type of literature is put within reach of the public mostly by the daily press. Again according to UNESCO statistics, there were, in 1970-1971, 35 daily newspapers, 32 weeklies and 314 other periodicals.

Next to the regular features in newspapers, reviews and magazines, one often finds one or several serials: it is in this form that authors generally have their works published for the first time. If successful the serial story may continue from issue to issue for as long as can be sustained by both the creative mind of the writer and the interest shown by the readers. Sometimes the serial story suddenly disappears from the review before the outcome of the plot is revealed. Published immediately afterwards in book form (and this time of course with the ending) this book is guaranteed a good sale. Similarly, mention should be made of the free distribution of books containing two stories presented at each end, each with its own cover, with numerous blank pages interrupting the action at the most critical moments and each lacking a conclusion. Eager readers will end up buying the completed stories. These methods seem to be applied more particularly to the spy or detective stories, the audience for which is still quite small.

These types of stories require a particular way of thinking which, in the end, eludes the average Thai reader. They would like to know the outcome well before the end. In their minds one kills, one kills naturally, one has a reason to kill. One does it oneself, or pays somebody else to do it; it costs a small sum of money, or a very large amount, depending not upon the difficulty of the act itself, but rather upon the importance of the individual to be killed. If the person to be killed seems insignificant 300 baht will do the job. Life is simple, the

police complicated. The detective story does not enjoy in Thailand the extraordinary success that it has known for a long time in the west. However one is astounded at the number of authors from the police. In this connection a lecturer at a Bangkok university said to me: "I think that their profession allows them to see diverse categories of people every day. Thus their daily life is the source of their novels or short stories. At any rate, they are accustomed to writing because they draw up reports about those who are brought to the police station". For these authors, a long chain of criminal activities ending up with the discovery of the guilty ones—the very definition of the detective story—is not essential. The psychology of the characters in their sociological context is the basic strength behind the narratives which are not police and detective stories, but stories actually lived by the police, as in the works of Manat Satyarak "Written with a Revolver", "Eight Bursts of Gun-fire", "The Third Bullet", "When You Hear the 5th Gunshot". The titles may be delusive, and in the preface to another of his works "The Rifles Can Speak", writes that "the reader will feel a sense of appeasement rather than excitement".

The works of Likhit Watanapakorn are basically centered around all the aspects of corruption, even the corruption of the *phi*, the spirits. In "Corruption with the Tongue", the chapter titles accurately sum up the intention of the author: "Corruption Plans", "The Animal-Hearted Man", "Corruption of the *Phi*", "Deceitful Words", "One must be honest", the author says, "to be a policeman". In "Hundred Stories of Corruption", told in an entertaining style, the author depicts human beings who are dishonest all their lives, in accordance with the verses of Sunthon Phu which compose the opening quotation in the work:

"...Even the climbing plant which clings and winds
Is less crooked than the heart of man!..."

Before serving in the police force, Ko Bangkok had written humorous short stories and then a long narrative he himself qualifies as heavy which was published in serial form in the review *Khun Ying*. Formerly a student of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University, he is currently working in the north-east, where he was born. He recently published *Dong Yen*, which relates his personal experiences when face to face with the political problems of this region.

The police officer Pakorn Pinchaliao inserts himself in the stories that he recounts. He published late in 1969 a group of short stories about a crime of passion, a strange assassination and the fears of an old sailor who himself frightens other people. Since then he has only written for magazines. In March 1973, ten short stories so published were gathered together in one book "Far from the Target", among which was *Ay Het*: arrested for robbery, a poor young man from the north is pitied by a policeman, the author, who gives him some money so that he can survive. In trouble during a flood, this policeman hears a voice coming from the sky; it is the young man who rushes to rescue him. Two months later, during a scuffle, the young man dies. The particular relentlessness which the police officer Pakorn Pinchaliao displays in searching for the murderer surprises those around him.

Of all these police-writers, the most famous is probably Pracha Phunwiwat. He also began his career as an author with serial stories which were published later on in books sold for 5-6 baht. Taking advantage of his success, he also published books sold at a higher price (30-40 baht) which sometimes contain stories signed by other authors whose names by themselves would not guarantee a large sale. Many of his works have been filmed and their titles remind one of old silent movies: "The Great Bachelor King", "No-legged Heart", "The Dog that Fell in the John". In "So You Finally Made It", Pracha Phunwiwat satirically depicts medical doctors who in order to make money want to settle down in the United States. In fact this characteristic is not confined to doctors, but also nurses and architects among others attempt to establish themselves in America for a better life.

It is around this same idea that Narong Rith wrote *The Kiss of Death*; a Thai inspector who works in the USA seeks the American wife of one of his compatriots. This publication with its tantalizing cover—a man embracing a practically nude girl in his arms surrounded by three other girls in suggestive poses—belongs to the vast number of books with provocative covers which prove that the contents depend less on creativity than on efficient marketing.

Traditionally Siamese literature is marked by a certain eroticism, but the *fan waan* (sweet dream) has now lost its genuine nature. Whereas the words used to reflect images, today the symbols are replaced by realistic descriptions and pornography invades popular literature. Thai authorities fight against this tendency. An illustrated periodical *Rawn* (Hot) has been banned, as have been the reviews *Chai Chop Sanuk* (Boys Like To Have Fun) and *Senasarn* intended for the army. The photo story is no longer allowed to be published after having enjoyed a big success in numerous weeklies, notably *Phap Dara* (Stars Illustrated). In late 1972 it became impossible to find in very frequented public places such as railway stations and long distance bus terminals books dealing with sex. The small shopkeepers are tired of stocking dangerous pornographic publications. However type-written books or books run off without a printer's or editor's name such as the *Niyay Bon Tieng Nawn* (Legends on a Bed) are still being sold clandestinely. They have enticing titles: "How to Make Love Successfully", "How to Find Happiness on a Bed", and being pseudo-scientific works with more or less evocative covers are not an easy prey for the censors.

Some erotic novels however bring interesting elements to the study of social evolution. Thus Ram Narakorn depicts a young Thai girl during the period of the American military presence. She lives in an apartment, drinks beer, eats hot dogs. She made money off her charm; as a revenge, she wants to get a man whom she would pay. This aspect of woman is an obsession of Ram Narakorn who is also the author of "Women Like To Have Fun". Society is described but it is particularly criticised as in "Madame and Her Lovers", where during a card game in which big sums of money change hands, high society women talk only about love and corruption that have involved them and the young men they paid to entertain them. Another example of this erotic literature with social overtones is "The Rich Girl and Her loves", by Nari Nari-sakorn: a nobleman from northern Thailand dies, a victim of the sexual appetite of his wife; as a widow, she then gives herself to various lovers (which produces many detailed descriptive scenes) and even ends up by raping a man!

Many novels about love are erotic, even pornographic, but we can of course find many sugary love novels. Their theme and vocabulary seem less elaborate than in the love stories sold for about 40 baht which are sometimes a thousand pages long, such as those of renowned authors like Yakhop, May Muong Deum, Chao Champi, Riem Eng or Suwanni Sukhonta. Popular love stories hold a major place in the magazines. Thai people, by nature gay and scoffing, prefer sad love stories, the tear-jerker serial stories, the literature of sensitive souls. A woman, Keo Kanlaya, makes up love letters referring to all kinds of circumstances, and is a haven of hope for desperate people, those with broken hearts and lonely persons. From the readers of the periodical which publishes these letters she requested replies, and the best answers would win a prize in this original contest. Unfortunately the collection of Keo Kanlaya's love letters which appeared in book form does not contain the winning answers which might have been masterpieces of popular literature.

Although Thai like sad love stories, their mocking and ironic temperament produces zest and gaiety which are exemplified in the *Phleng Luk Thung*. These comic satires, originating in the country and not the capital city which they criticize, along with its administration and mores, are presented in song form. Phaybun Butkhan and Sriphey Chayphra have won fame through this very particular way of expressing popular thought, which is the direct heir of oral literature. Music, as in all songs, is of course the major element, but the ideas and the words are so important here that they are published in short anthologies which enjoy great success. Always inclined to laugh, a Thai is fond of a joke. Mention will only be made here of the comic strips with or without captions and the collections of funny stories which most often draw their substance from true ribaldry. Let us cite for example "Laughter Sale", by a former Navy officer who writes under the pen name of Samnao Hiriotappa, and "The Bachelors Market", by Kowith Sitlayan. Achin Panchaphan, a writer very well known for his sociological studies concerning mines and miners, has adapted amusing anecdotes of foreign origin, mostly American and Russian,

Translated works of foreign authors undeniably comprise a sizeable amount of the publications printed in Thailand today. However, it is doubtful if we are still dealing with the field of popular literature when it relates to adaptations of American novels sold for a price which merely covers the printing cost (3 to 5 baht) by the American Information Service. They are attempts at genuine popularization perhaps, but for the moment the Thai consider that such works require one to *khit maak* (think a lot) which is looked down upon rather than praised. However some translations are appreciated, especially in the field of children's books, instructive manuals and science fiction; the last is beginning to enjoy a certain success, thanks to films, particularly American and Japanese, which are shown on television. The press also depends on foreign inspiration to some extent notably in publications concerning fashion, the home, sports and children's magazines. Thus the adventures of Tintin and Milou have been published in the *Wira Tharm*, the review of the Assumption Commerce College. If the translations of occidental works appear to be a relative novelty, stories of Chinese origin are still written and re-written in Thai. A specialist in this field, W. Na Muang Lung is the author of about twenty adaptations. However it is mostly in comic strips that the deeds of the Chinese heroes are related, even though the comic strips compete with motion pictures which can better vivify such subjects. In *Kamlang Phay-Nay* (Inner Force), a mere glance strikes down a powerful warrior and one slash of a sword crushes opponents. An amusing turnabout worthy of notice is that the success of these films is so great that their screenplays are now the basis for numerous publications of similar inspiration.

While many comic strips deal with stories about ghosts, there are also plenty of low-priced books on this subject. Phray Damkeung wrote at least twenty works of this kind relying upon folk beliefs such as the spirit of a woman who died during pregnancy. They also contain female *Phi* having sexual relations with men, coming to announce catastrophes, take revenge, or prepare philtres for the living. The works of S. Ngeun Yuong reflect similar beliefs. The preface to one of his books begins: "Before each story one must salute the spirits. I bow down with

my ten fingers and ask the spirits of all directions to bring me inspiration so that I write ghost stories in which the reader will feel excitement and experience fear on every page”.

Magic also plays a role that cannot be disregarded in the swash-buckling novels; they may be works of pure imagination such as those by Lopburi in which a nineteen year old invulnerable general marries the daughter of a goddess, or works referring, often vaguely, to actual historic events. In one such work, “Prince Kawila”, tigers speak to men. Voluntarily writing in the style of the *Phongsawadan* (annals), the author, Sanguon Chotisukkkharat, without the diligence of an historian, relates events in their chronology instead of describing feelings. But ordinary Thai enjoy reading these pages, magnifying the nation’s heroes and bringing to mind the moments of glory in the wars won against the Burmese invaders.

Narong Chanruong concerns himself with other battles, the search for a new type of victory in today’s Thailand. Coolie, employee and labourer, seeking shelter wherever possible, Narong Chanruong has come across all sorts of men, those who live overwhelmed by misfortune and those whose happiness makes others envious. He hates and he loved this humanity, and by describing it he has enjoyed success. He left the slums but he did not forget what he lived through, as in “These Slums that I Love”, “The Charm of the Slums”. In order to attract readers, Narong Chanruong sometimes resorts to eroticism (in, for example, “The Nails that Tease the Flesh”), which is not the case of three authors who may be considered as the most representative of a certain kind of popular literature: Rong Wongsawarn, Khanchay Bunpan, Suchit Wongthet. The covers of their books (sold for 5-7 baht) are void of crude publicity and this is a good indication of their contents.

One of these works “That Dirty Fly I Love”, was written by Rong Wongsawarn, a forty year old bachelor with developed artistic tastes, who returned from the United States full of ideas and experiences. Published in the weekly *Siam Rath* before appearing in book form in 1971, this narrative centres around a fly which sometimes personifies the author and sometimes a friend, but which most often represents society.

In a very personal, coarse style on the verge of vulgarity and playing on words, Rong Wongsawarn attacks the society of his country, taking his arguments from his own experience in the west, "the uncivilized other side of the world". Using the gimmick of being a fly permits the author to write a harsh satire of political life, scientific progress and mores: "To celebrate the New Year, the fly suggests a recipe for a cocktail: some gin plus two drops of a Chinaman's urine... but if you prefer a sweet cocktail, then take the urine of a government minister because these people eat so much that they get diabetes." Rong Wongsawarn wonders if he did not make a mistake in choosing a fly as a friend. Yet the fly got him out of the dirt, that very fly which carries it around. At first overly optimistic, he becomes pessimistic while seeking the truth. He asks himself if he wants to end up by committing suicide but hesitates at the thought that hell might refuse him. Typical of the same author's work are "On the Road of the Adolescent", "The Thorns of the Flower", "The Rust of Bangkok", "Under the Concrete Stilts".

It is hard to separate Suchit Wongthet from Khanchay Bunpan. They finished secondary school together, entered the School of Archaeology in Silpakorn University together, published their first works together, printing approximately 500 copies that they sold themselves. Poems about separation and folklore, their first attempts showed a sufficiently original character to make the authors the best disciples of the well-known poet Angkhan Kalyanaphong. But contrary to the latter who yearns for the past, Suchit Wongthet and Khanchay Bunpan seem sensitive only to contemporary society and its behaviour; this stand alone qualifies them as significant contributors to the field of popular literature, quite apart from the cheapness of their books.

Their styles however separate them. Whereas Khanchay Bunpan is full of humour and writes in a very modern way, Suchit Wongthet confines himself to descriptions in which he calls forth the harmony of words. Suchit is a musician who puts into his language all the nuances, softness and daintiness which the music of his country contains. A royalist, a faithful lover of one woman, fond of nature, he cannot but rise up against the superficial progress which corrupts traditions and

mores, and he revolts against society which has been perverted by western culture. His poems reveal a spirit which is more satirical than romantic, this feature being still more evident in his prose works such as "The Oyster on the Jade Plate", which deals with Thai music, *Khun Det* about the destruction of archaeological sites, and "The Young Men Bored by the Sacred Books", which deals with problems at the university; In "Such Could be Man", a professor, instead of conscientiously explaining a text, criticizes an idea, giving the students the right to think for themselves without imposing on them his own way of thinking. This may represent in Thailand a new way of teaching, but the author doubts if the teachers will renounce their infallibility and if the students will agree to think for themselves. This summary could mislead us into believing that we are getting further and further away from popular literature, but one should remember that each year Thailand's universities are open to a wider segment of society. "Such Could be Man" would not have been written if a middle class were not currently being born in Thailand.

Khanchay Bunpan, in a more concise style, sacrificing grammar for sensation and impression, shares a similar bitterness about present day Thai society and attacks the indifferent morality of the monks as well as lay persons, corruption, the glorification of passing trifles and students who do not study anything. Khanchay imposes contemporary reality on to classic themes. His prose works, like his poetry, emphasize the vanity of life. Why be born in a world invaded by desire and suffering? In the allegorical narrative "Reaching the Other Bank...Doubt Remains", the author compares life to the flow of water. "Where does life lead to? Where can hope be found? What can the future hold? Everywhere there is but nonsense and absurdity". Under a layer of considerable humour, each word has its weight and contains an idea; proof of this can be found in many of his writings: "Face to Face", "Throw Off the Masks", "Flee", "The Leaves of Latania Behind the Pulpit". Mention should also be made alongside these two leaders of the names of Withyakorn Chiengkun, Santi Sawetwimon, Thanong, Niphon Chitrakarm, Anut Aphaphirom, Suchat Sawatsri and Sathien Chanthimathorn, who count among the new school of young writers.

The fact that the works of such authors are deliberately sold in low-priced editions leads us to be optimistic about the interest in popular literature in Thailand today. Newly literate people can only read what is within their reach. That is why they are offered the heroes they love, the beliefs they respect and, alas, all kinds of writing in which banality, extravagance, obscenity and smut are to be found. This type of writing lacks any inspiration and is without the minimum of genius necessary to establish a genuine literature. But there are authors who are witnesses of the historical moment, of the movement of social classes, at a time when Thai society is altering all the more rapidly as it was more confined to a strict traditionalist framework. Responding to a new need, to a state of mind in which there is a rapid development in political consciousness, popular literature is slowly becoming national literature. History can give this literature its experience, Buddhism its thought, nature its images. The type of popular literature which does not respond to strictly commercial goals may then be compared to the so-called scholarly literature.

Playing an important part in the transformation of thought, popular literature modifies the modes of expression. The oral now becomes written; what used to be a language that is heard is today a language that is read. In order to recover part of the expressivity that intonation, gestures and facial expressions no longer render, the dialogue when set down on paper and fixed is forced to use tricks. Words are sometimes intentionally distorted in their spelling, the vowels shortened or lengthened. So, for example, *maa* "to come, come" transformed into [mā?] denotes an impatient order and the exclamation *měe* would express a feeling of surprise all the greater as it is supported by a longer vowel *měeee*. Quotation marks, indications of ellipsis, exclamations and question marks imported from the western punctuation underline the rhythm of the dialogues. Expressions in male company and personal pronouns such as *kuu* or *mu'ŋ*, looked down upon as vulgar, become part of the writing which endeavours to be realistic, true, life-like and in a word "spoken". A similar tendency is perceptible in the dialogues between women. Associations of words considered unusual in the Thai language create numerous neologisms. After having been written, then read, these

neologisms are used in everyday language, especially by young people. This modification of vocabulary goes along with the adoption of numerous words of foreign origin, for the most part English. One no longer says *phótcanaanúkrom* but *dictionary*, or even *dik* and *mai kheε* ("I don't care") replaces sometimes the lovely *mai pen rai* ("what does it matter").

If there is a rupture with the rules of poetic tradition, an innate taste for picturesque words and harmonious sounds guarantees that modern Thai authors remain sensitive to form. It is gratifying to note that the popular literature market reveals constant improvement.

One should always remember that it is through the press that a new author can achieve recognition and that it is in the press that a work is often published for the first time in the form of a serial story or short story. It is interesting to note that during the past decade the number of copies of daily newspapers printed increased from 286,000 to 849,000 and that periodicals have also developed in a spectacular way. The authors of serial stories are sometimes looked down upon by intellectuals as "Writers of Foul Water", and earn an average of 300 to 500 baht for each episode. Some of these authors, such as Pracha Phunwiwat, the "author of golden lines", are said to make 8 baht per line, or in other words, more than twice as much as their colleagues. They are relatively low-paid in general and take advantage of a success which risks being ephemeral; consequently it is easy to understand why they spin out their stories for almost a year, quite often reaching 100 or even 200 episodes. Writing under various pseudonyms and in different reviews, these authors hope to sell their rights for a radio, television or movie adaptation and of course for publication in book form. Such a publication would bring them an average of around 3,000 baht, but, because of a lack of official statistics concerning publications, such a figure cannot be ascertained with certainty.

About 5,000 copies of a book are usually printed. Reprints are exceptional. 10,000 copies normally seems to be a maximum for any popular book. However, most unusually Rong Wongkawarn's "Under the Concrete Stilts", reached 20,000 copies in two editions. The average printing of erotic books is 5,000, for ghost stories 3,000 but 1,000 or even

500 copies are not uncommon printings in popular literature. Some authors take it upon themselves to print and distribute their own works, thus perhaps assuring themselves of a more substantial income; as in many other parts of the world, in Thailand the publisher appears to be in control of the situation. It is said that some fix the sale price of a book according to its thickness and a solid cardboard cover and thick paper will cause the selling price of the book to be set at approximately thirty baht. This is likely to be lowered to half-price and after bargaining the same book will probably be sold for only ten baht.

Under these conditions what then are the frontiers of the low-priced book?

Low-priced books of popular literature are still for many people a costly purchase particularly for the peasant who finds time and inclination to read only during the dry season, taxi drivers, women hawkers and others. Mention should be made of the repeated contention that women are said to read more than men. Book-lending systems are on the rise; some book-sellers, for 1 *salung* (25 stangs) allow one to read a book in their shop; the sale of second-hand books spreads reading among the least favoured strata of the population.

But at this same time, transistor radios are swarming in the most remote rural areas and, following the radio, television is penetrating daily life. The vitality of the image, the dynamism of sound are increasing at a time when education is providing greater masses with the ability to read. In the evolution of these media of communication, does not Thailand risk skipping the reading stage, considering the growing importance of technology wherein the audio-visual language tends to prevail over writing?

APPENDIX

The great brahmin Phuwanaath	มหาพรตมหาบัณฑิต
<i>Khatha Maha Niyom</i>	คาถา มหา นิยม
Phiman Outtamayan	พินมุตตะมายน
<i>Khatha Maha Mont Roy Pet</i>	คาถา มหา มนต์ รอย เปต
Buddhadhāsa	พุทธทาสเถลิง
<i>Sang Thong</i>	สังข์ทอง
<i>Thai Rath</i>	ไทยรัฐ
King Samont	กษัตริย์สมนต์
<i>phi nat neak ta</i>	ผีน้ำเน่า
"The Ghosts' Graveyard"	ภูเขาศีรษะ
"The Evil-Spirit-Inner Force"	ผีร้าย ศาสตร์ภายใน
"The Great Tiger-Prince"	จอมพญากษัตริย์
<i>Roma Wisaya</i>	โรมะวิสัย
<i>yantras</i>	ยันตร์
<i>Phon, Nikorn, Kim Nguon</i>	พจน นิกอร์ คิมนวกวน
P. Intharapalit	ป. อินทรปาไลต์
"A Visit to Hell"	ตอลวิญญาน
<i>Phra Malay</i>	พระมาลัย
"The Battle of the Giants"	ศึกถศว
Wat Phra Keo	วัดพระแก้ว
Wat Arun	วัดอรุณ
Wat Intharawiharn	วัดอินทรวิหาร
"Kidnapping"	ชิงชิงโมมเต็ก
"The Invulnerable"	มนษย์กาฬสิทธิ์
"The Hermit of the Sacred Mountain"	เจ้าพ่อเขาหลวง
<i>bao samong</i>	เบาสอมง
Manat Satyarak	มนัส สัตยารักษ์
"Written with a Revolver"	เขียนด้วยปืน

"Eight Bursts of Gun Fire"	แปดแฉก
"The Third Bullet"	กระสุนนัดที่ ๓
"When You Hear the 5th Gunshot"	เสียงปืนนัดที่ ๕
"The Rifles Can Speak"	ปืนพูดได้
Likhit Watanapakorn	พ.ต.ต. ลิขิต วัฒนปกรณ์
"Corruption with the Tongue"	โกงด้วยลิ้น
"Corruption Plans"	แผนโกง
"The Animal-Hearted Man"	คนใจสัตว์
"Corruption of the <i>Phi</i> "	โกงผี
"Deceitful Words"	หลอกลมวง
"Hundred Stories of Corruption"	ร้อยโกง
Sunthon Phu	สุนทรภู่
"... Even the climbing plant which clings and winds Is less crooked than the heart of man! ..."	"... ถึงเถาวัลย์พันเกี่ยวที่เลี้ยวรด ก็ไม่คดเหมือนหนึ่งในน้ำใจคน..."
<i>Ko Bangkok</i>	โก๋ บางกอก
<i>Khun Ying</i>	คุณหญิง
<i>Dong Yen</i>	ดงเย็น
Pakorn Pinchaliao	ปากรู้ ปิ่นเฉลียว
"Far from the Target"	ไกลปืนเที่ยง
<i>Ay Het</i>	ไอ้แฮด
Pracha Phunwivat	พ.ต.ต. ประชา พุนวิวัฒน์
"The Great Bachelor King"	มหाराชโสด
"No-legged Heart"	หัวใจไม่มีตีน
"The Dog that Fell in the John"	หมาตกส้วม
"So You Finally Made It"	เสร็จจนได้หน้า
Narong Rith	ณรงค์ฤทธิ์
"The Kiss of Death"	จูบมรณะ
<i>fan waan</i>	ฟันหวาน
<i>Rawn</i>	ร้อน

<i>Chai Chop Sanuk</i>	ชายชอบสนุก
<i>Senasarn</i>	เสนาสาร
<i>Phap Dara</i>	ภาพดารา
"Legends on a Bed"	นิยายบนเตียงนอน
"Methods to Succeed in Love"	กลเม็ด การเฟื่องสาว
"How to Find Happiness on a Bed"	วิธหาคความสุขบนเตียงนอน
Ram Narakorn	รัมน์ นรากร
"Women Like to Have Fun"	ผู้หญิงชอบสนุก
"Madame and Her Lovers"	คุณนายเล่นชู้
"The Rich Girl and her Loves"	เศรษฐินีเฟื่องสาว
Nari Narisakorn	นรี นริสากร
Yakhob	ยาชอบ
May Muong Deum	ไม้เมืองเดิม
Chao Champi	เจ้าจ่าปี
Riem Eng	เรียมเอง
Suwanni Sukhonta	สุวรรณิ สุตคนธา
Keo Kanlaya	แก้วกัลยา
"Love Letters"	จดหมายรัก
<i>Phleng Luk Thung</i>	เพลงลูกทุ่ง
Phaybun Butkhan	ไพบูลย์ บุตรขัน
Sriphey Chayphra	ศรีไพร ไชยพระ
"Laughter Sale"	ขายหัวเราะ
Samnao Hiriotappa	สำเนา หิริโอดัปปะ
"The Bachelors Market"	ตลาดชายโสด
Kowith Sitlayan	โกวิท สัตถายัน
Achin Panchaphan	อาจินต์ ปัญจพรรค์
<i>khit maak</i>	คิดมาก
Tintin and Milou	แตงแตงและมิลู
<i>Wira Tharm</i>	วีระธรรม
W. Na Muong Lung	ว. ณ เมืองลุง

<i>Kamlang Phay-Nay</i>	กำลังภายใน
Phray Damkeung	พราญ ดำเกิง
S. Ngeun Yuong	ส. เงินยวง
Lopburi	ลพบุรี
"Prince Kawila"	พระเจ้ากาวิละ
<i>Phongsawadan</i>	พงศาวดาร
Sanguon Chotisukkharat	สงวน โชติสุขรัตน์
Narong Chanruong	ณรงค์ จันทร์เรือง
"These Slums that I Love"	สลัมที่รัก
"The Charm of the Slums"	เสน่ห์สลัม
"The Nails that Tease the Flesh"	เล็บหยอกเนื้อ
Rong Wongsawarn	รงค์ วงศ์สวรรค์
Khanchay Bunpan	ขรรค์ชัย บุนปาน
Suchit Wongthet	สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ
"That Dirty Fly I Love"	ไอ้แมลงวันี่รัก
<i>Siam Rath</i>	สยามรัฐ
"On the Road of the Adolescent"	บนถนนของความเป็นหนุ่ม
"The Thorns of the Flowers"	หนามดอกไม้
"The Rust of Bangkok"	สนิมกรุงเทพฯ
"Under the Concrete Stilts"	ใต้ถุนอาคารกรวด
Angkhan Kalyanaphong	อังคาร กล้ายางพงส์
"The Oyster of the Jade Plate"	มุกหอมบนจานหยก
<i>Khun Det</i>	คุณเดช
"The Young Men Bored by the Sacred Books"	หนุ่มหน่ายคัมภีร์
"Such Could Be Man"	มนุษย์ก็เป็นอย่างนี้ได้
"Reaching the Other Bank . . . Doubt Remains"	เมื่อถึงฝั่งก็ยังมีแคลง
"Face to Face"	ข้างประสานงา
"Throw Off the Masks"	โจนถอดหัว

"Flee"	หนี
"The Leaves of Latania Behind the Pulpit"	ใบลานหลังธรรมาสน์
Withyakorn Chiengkun	วิथाการ เชียงกุล
Santi Sawetwimon	สันติ เสวตวิมล
Thanong	ทะนง
Nipon Chitrakarm	นิพนธ์ จิตรกรรม
Anut Aphaphirom	อนุช อภาภิรมย์
Suchat Sawatsri	สุชาติ สวัสดิศรี
Sathiern Chantimathorn	เสถียร จันทิมาธร
<i>maa</i>	มา
<i>má ?</i>	มะ
<i>měe</i>	เหมย
[<i>měeee</i>]	แะ แหม...
<i>kuu</i>	กู
<i>mu'η</i>	มุง
<i>phótcaaanúkrom</i>	พจนานุกรม
<i>mâi khee</i>	ไม่แคร์
<i>mâi pen rai</i>	ไม่เป็นไร
Writers of Foul Water	ผู้เขียนน้ำเน่า
"The author of golden-lines"	นักเขียนบรรทัดทอง