

Article

Postmodernity in Thomas Pynchon's "Entropy" and Suchit Wongthed's "Getting Drunk Abroad"

JAMERBSIN Pongadisorn

Abstract

In this paper I explore postmodernity in Thailand and America by basing the comparison on socioeconomic conditions and then fleshing out this comparison with a reading of the two short stories mentioned in the title of the paper. This paper progresses from relatively well-researched topics to lesser studied topics to finally gaps in the literature, that is from postmodern American literature to the history of the book in Thailand to Suchit Wongthed's short story "Getting Drunk Abroad". Thomas Pynchon is placed in the context of postmodern American literature, and then Thai modernity and postmodernity are contrasted via examples in Thai literature and film. Thai and American postmodernity are linked via a global socioeconomic condition based on consumption rather than production. For the purposes of this paper that is the definition of postmodernity. Examples from Thai studies are provided for what this socioeconomic condition is like for one who has to live it; one example — Thai volunteers to the Vietnam War — establishes one historical link between Thai and American postmodernity in a two-way relationship. All of this so far forms the foundations of the paper. Suchit Wongthed is then introduced as a Thai author who exists inside this two-way relationship, having lived one year near Cornell University (Pynchon's alma mater) where he met Thai students sent by the Thai government so that they could come back and develop Thailand socioeconomically. Suchit is placed in the context of the history of the book in Thailand as a required context for the reader as he is not well-known outside of Thailand. Furthermore, the history of the book in Thailand has not been much developed yet. Building on all of this, the two short stories are compared to put a face to the name of postmodernity, revealing two authors writing about the same problem with different artistic styles.

Introduction

The temperature outside must have gone down to thirty degrees Fahrenheit — below the freezing point — because I could see snowflakes drifting past the window ... while at the same time some Thai student in Los Angeles was drawing his gun and shooting into the ceiling of a bowling alley in Hollywood.

— Suchit Wongthed, *Getting Drunk Abroad* [1, pp. 193-4]

... she moved swiftly to the window before Callisto could speak; tore away the drapes and smashed out the glass with two exquisite hands which came away bleeding and glistening with splinters ... 37 degrees Fahrenheit should prevail both outside and inside, and forever ...

— Thomas Pynchon, *Entropy* [2, p. 98]

This paper explores postmodernity in America and in Thailand by comparing the short stories “Entropy” by Thomas Pynchon and “Getting Drunk Abroad” by Suchit Wongthed. For the purposes of this paper, I define postmodernity based on socioeconomic conditions. These conditions are established from secondary sources and serve as a foundation for the comparison of the short stories. Building on that base, the comparison adds to the existing discussion of postmodernity, moving from the well-researched theme of postmodernity in America and Thomas Pynchon to the relatively obscure Suchit Wongthed’s “Getting Drunk Abroad” and the not quite complete study of postmodernity in Thailand. I show the similarities and connections between “Getting Drunk Abroad” and “Entropy” in order to incorporate the Thai story into the current understanding of postmodernity.

Pynchonian Postmodernity; American Postmodern Literature: Literature Review

We shall start by defining Pynchonian postmodernity, since much has already been written about this, whereas almost nothing has been written about Suchit Wongthed and postmodernity or even Suchit Wongthed in general. I shall start with what we know as a springboard to what we do not know.

First, we must deal with the elephant in the room: Pynchon studies already form a very large body of work. Probably bigger than an elephant. If one searches online, Google Scholar returns 18,900 results for “pynchon” while JSTOR returns 7,706 results for the same term. Let us see what happens when we search “Suchit Wongthed”: JSTOR returns

exactly two results, and one of them is actually only his name, and the other one is a paper about his younger brother [51]: Phaibun Wongthed [ไพบุลย์ วงษ์เทศ] [51, p. 9], while Google Scholar returns seven results. This looks like a gap in the literature.

The abundance of scholarship on Pynchon, now so enormous that to be a complete Pynchon scholar, one must learn many things, one of them being the Japanese language. This despite Pynchon's works being originally written in English. According to Aso Takashi, there exists an entire field of Japanese Pynchon studies [19, p. 251]. A whole book just about Pynchon and covering everything up to *Mason & Dixon* came out in 2001 entirely in Japanese [19, p. 252]. I have not been able to find an English translation. The book tried to find one unifying theme for all of Pynchon's novels, although Aso argued that the book in fact merely tried to fit all of Pynchon's writings into a theme which the critic already had in mind. Be that as it may, attempting to find a theme that connects all of Pynchon's work beyond the fact that Pynchon wrote all of it — just him, he alone wrote it all, with all the selves, identities, sanities, and insanities he has — is quite an impressive feat considering that one reading offered in literary studies classifies Pynchon as writing "maximalist novels" [20]. As Stefano Ercolino puts it:

After World War II, when the ideological apparatus of modernity inexorably collapsed under the blows of history, a certain brand of postmodern literature remained stubbornly anchored to the encyclopedic and universalizing dream of modernism. [20, p. 28]

Paradoxically, that Japanese book about Pynchon writes about Pynchon in the same way that Pynchon writes about history. The maximalist and universalizing dream. We can find an example of such a "universalizing dream" in Tsukumizu's science fiction manga *Shōjo Shūmatsu Ryokō [Girl's Last Tour]* (2014-2018): Humanity has almost become extinct. Fewer than ten humans remain anywhere in the solar system. Whoever remains, reproduction is not possible, or even desirable. All that remains is a sprawling cityscape, all automated and functioning at an impressive technological level, and all devoid of life because of the laughable level of spiritual progress. One man travels alone on a motorcycle making a complete map of the whole city. That the map is impressively complete is as clear as its utter pointlessness. Given that large body of research entirely in Japanese about Pynchon, perhaps it makes sense that this manga supporting character and Pynchon can be seen as pursuing similar goals.

Pynchon is loved by scholars and scholarly people. Perhaps it only makes sense that scholars or scholarly people would be most comfortable with reading a work that seems almost like non-fiction, almost like a scholarly work. The sheer scale of Pynchon studies

serves as a secure bedrock for studying the obscure short story of Suchit Wongthed.

Now we have a feel for Pynchon studies, or as people in the field call it the “Pyndustry” [21, p. 1], the basic idea of his writing, the next thing we can do is to put him into the context of American literature.

America at that time, just after the Second World War ended, was a huge country waking up to its big potential. The matter of American postmodern fiction is again, quite big. Well, since we are talking about Pynchon, everything is going to be big, including the word “big”, so we had better get used to it. Anyway, the whole context and background ranged from Cervantes to Manifest Destiny to Cold War surveillance to even the CIA promoting American experimental art as a tool to fight the Cold War [22]. One key aspect of this is that there is a statistically significant number of both readers and writers who received the chance to pursue higher education because of the G.I. Bill. In addition, creative writing and literary studies in general became professionalized [22, p. 18].

And now the question can be reversed: where does American postmodern fiction fit into Pynchon? As strange as this question seems, it actually makes a lot of sense. Indeed, according to Brian McHale, rather than the question of whether Pynchon is a postmodern writer or not, the reality is that because Pynchon wrote all that he wrote, there was a need to come up with a theory to explain what he wrote in the first place, and that theory is literary postmodernism. It is not a question of what is so postmodern about Pynchon, but rather that Pynchon is postmodern literature, that he created it [34, p. 97].

His full name is Thomas Ruggles Pynchon Jr. He was born in 1937. He came from Long Island, New York. His writings were first published in his high school newspaper. He received his university education at Cornell University, and during that period he also spent two years in the US Navy, from 1955 to 1957, which meant that he was there during the Suez Crisis of 1956. He was serving on the destroyer USS *Hank*. As for the content of his education, in 1953 he was an engineering physics major, in 1954 he was an arts and sciences major, and finally in 1957 he was an English major and would graduate as an English major in 1959. In Cornell Pynchon studied literature with Vladimir Nabokov, who — according to Mark McGurl [25, pp. 4-5]— never updated his syllabus, and never took interest in any of his students as individuals. In 1960 he started work as a technical writer at Boeing in Seattle and would work there for two years. Pynchon published “Entropy” in spring 1960 in the *Kenyon Review* [23, p. 218] [24] [25, p. 5].

We now turn to postmodernity in Thailand.

Postmodernity in Thailand

First, we begin at the present to get an idea of contemporary Thai postmodernity. Like cave divers, we should attach guidelines firmly at the entrance of the cave before venturing into the sunken cave, lest we get lost and run out of air [13].

In *Citizen Dog* (2004), a Thai magical realist film directed by Wisit Sasanatieng and based on a surrealist Thai novel of the same name, which won the Best Visual Effects award in the Suphannahong National Film Awards of that year, there are various subplots that show no obvious connection. A chain-smoking talking Teddy Bear. A grandmother who reincarnates as a common house gecko. A finger gone in an industrial mishap at a fish cannery only to come back randomly in a can of fish and immediately reconnect. A literal mountain of plastic bottles that becomes a new park for the denizens of Bangkok to relax in. Time dilation occurring at non-relativistic speeds as the protagonist discovers that, while he was living in Bangkok, his family back in the countryside had not aged even one minute, life in the countryside being just slow life [3, pp. 76-107]. Things in this movie seem to function, flow, happen, that is, the standards of reality, and so on, are similar to the hyper-intellectual, yet Looney Tunes logic of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* [8], especially the music.

Whether *Citizen Dog* is a Thai postmodern film or a Thai metamodern film is up for debate. "... bright surfaces, intertextuality, knowingness, referentiality, and nostalgia for past forms, genres and styles." [4, p. 143] — Val Hill thus captures the general characteristics of postmodern cinema for a reference work. *Citizen Dog* does sound like that. But so does almost everything around us now. Be that as it may, everything in postmodernism is up for debate since even the definition of postmodernism is disputed, as Gary Aylesworth puts it aptly in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism" [6]. In the United States Armed Forces, sometimes new recruits are hazed by being forced to look for items that do not exist, like glow rod batteries. Glow rods are sticks that glow in the dark by means of a chemical reaction and hence do not require electricity from batteries. However, some new glow rods are reuseable through relying on batteries and so the new recruits sometimes surprise their seniors. In a similar way, metamodernism seems to be emerging — is more easily defined, and does not cause as much headache. Specifically, sincerity in metamodernism [5] seems abundant in *Citizen Dog*, especially in the central plotline of a love story that survives all these incomprehensible subplots.

Be that as it may, the point is not a debate about the postmodern vs. the metamodern/post-postmodern, but rather that the cultural landscape in Thailand is no longer defined by modernism. It might seem a particularly obvious point to make, yet we should be

careful in applying concepts from abroad to Thailand. As Justin Thomas McDaniel learned from many years of fieldwork in Thailand, the details, instead of supporting any theories, often overwhelm them. So much so that he argues in support of “thin description” [17, p. 10]. An experience can be without cognitive meaning, and just be an experience. In particular, some Buddhist experiences in Thailand are intentionally designed to be so ... — to use his exact words, (they are) “... implicitly transcendent of meaning” [17, p. 13].

To highlight *Citizen Dog*'s lack of modernism, we will look at one definition of modernity in Thailand.

In Natrada Somsith's doctoral dissertation, *Modernity in Malai Chupinij*, modernity is defined in a Siamized way as concerning an epistemology based on the scientific method; on a conception of liberty that values humans as individuals in a modern society rather than any previous traditional definitions; on participation in a nation-state based on representative democracy; on concern about issues such as technological modernity and urbanization, and development of the hinterlands in line with the modern capital city while still retaining traditional values [7, p. 5]. Previous works studying modernity focused on intellectuals and elites in Thailand [7, pp. 36-41] while Natrada focuses on Malai Chupinij, an influential Thai journalist and novelist in the 1920s, and hence there is a possibility of this description of modernity being applicable to most people in Thailand too [7, p. 264]. However, this is not a study of the readers of his work but what his works say, so caution is advised in generalizing this to the whole of Thai society, past and present. Anyhow, we can see from this example that *Citizen Dog* is probably not a modernist text based on Thai literary standards. We might not know exactly what is in the brain of each and every one of the Thai people who has read/watched Malai Chupinij and/or *Citizen Dog* throughout space and time. Yet we know from literary studies and film studies what kind of general rules and expectations these works are supposed to follow as they exist in this or that genre, this or that movement in Thailand.

With this we establish that something in the vein of maybe postmodernity or metamodernism/post-postmodernity has existed in Thailand, at least since 2004, at least among the people who made or decided to watch the film *Citizen Dog*. Being a capitalist enterprise, a film being made implies that at least a statistically significant segment of the population is being targeted in hopes of a return on investment and profit. So, it is unlikely that postmodernity is limited to just a few people in the case of *Citizen Dog*. Just to clarify, *Citizen Dog* was not an art film shown in only two theatres, it was a “normal” film [3]. EuropaCorp distributed the film to theatres worldwide in 2004 [10]. EuropaCorp is founded by none other than Luc Besson, the famous French director [11].

Next, to get a more concrete look at postmodernity, let us look more closely at everyday life in Thailand. The socioeconomic conditions.

Defining Postmodernity: Socioeconomic Conditions

While discussing postmodernity in the abstract is fraught with metaphysical perils, the economic reality associated with the time when what is called postmodernity is often said to be taking place, is much easier to talk about. One of the key aspects of postmodernity (for the West in general) according to Nigel Watson is that: "... our experiences are now rooted in the processes of consumption rather than production" [9, p. 64]. That is, rather than growing rice, building houses, welding steel plates on ocean-going ships, and so on, the idea of what life is now consists of all our material possessions and the physical state of our bodies in terms of attractiveness. Factories move away to poorer countries as shopping malls and brand names move in. People aspire to become managers instead of laborers of any kind, skilled or unskilled. Whatever the case in the wider world, this is especially true for and resonates with the Thai experience of postmodernity, as we can see from Rubkwan's doctoral dissertation, *Performing Happiness in Neoliberal Thailand* [12]. Instead of building something that we can touch and call our own, our modern lives in Thailand consist of building identities and selves that can be marketed in the workplace and in relationships, fueled by social media.

Consumerism and Postmodernity in Thailand

Using insights from performance studies, Rubkwan unpacks the many layers of these concretely fruitless constructions. She paints a grim picture of generations of children (including herself) who know only three places growing up: home, school, and the shopping mall. With the family car as perhaps a fourth place. Religion, history, traditions, ideals, legacy, none of these matter. All that matters is good grades leading to more expensive gifts from parents, leading to lucrative employment, leading to disposable income, leading to a significant way of buying happiness in contemporary Thai society. That is, buying food and drinks that cost more than the minimum wage, then taking pictures of these consumables and posting them on social media. One of her case studies is the Japanese style dessert café *After You*. Rubkwan shows that even when the military took over the government, they focused less on draconian measures and more on public relations in a form reminiscent of brand communication. They released many pop songs on public television with catchy tunes singing about returning happiness to the people, complete with music videos fitting for MTV [12].

Common sense would raise alarms — hold on, is Thailand not a Buddhist country? "Consuming" seems hardly congruent with the humble and austere teachings of Buddhism — where are the transcendental values?

A full discussion about the consumerist nature of contemporary Thai Buddhism would require at least one or two academically published books that only academic libraries could afford to buy [15].

However, a good place to start is the infamous Buddhist prosperity, millenarian, and fundamentalist movement, *Dhammakāya* [14, pp. 37-58] [15] [47, pp. 30-114]. To oversimplify, the movement is something like Scientology but Buddhist. Its members are conspicuously wealthy, and much of it derives from multi-level marketing (pyramid selling) proselytizing. *Dhammakāya* facilities have gigantic structures that dwarf any Buddhist structures except maybe the Angkor Wat, while 200,000 adherents congregating is not unusual for them. Despite their potentially un-Buddhist way of raising funds, at least academically speaking, their teaching is within the bounds of Theravada Buddhism (broadly construed). Many have tried and failed to denounce them, and recently the Sangha Supreme Council failed to defrock the founder of the movement, while the government failed to arrest the founder for embezzlement; the story is far from over as no one has seen the founder since this happened [48]. *Dhammakāya* is a complex case that is illustrative of the role that Buddhism plays in Thai society and what might happen when the socioeconomic reality of postmodernity meets Buddhism.

Any description of Buddhism in Thailand must not overlook the world of Buddhist amulets [16]. Originally meant as a sort of spiritual vault, created in case Buddhism is lost and all the monks die, these representations of the Buddha in clay form were buried in Buddhist temple walls to inspire people to become Buddhists again in case of an apocalypse. However, the pressures of colonialization made Thais feel that that time had already arrived and people broke down the walls and took the amulets as objects to protect themselves magically in the now. The Second World War further reinforced this practice to the level of bandits and police chiefs wielding such relics in grand gunfights, believing that they could block bullets during the period of strife that ensued after the Second World War ended. When people were struggling to make ends meet everywhere [16, pp. 191-4], these objects commanded a hefty price, and the sale of these objects make up a significant part of the Thai economy [16, p. 184]. For example, in 2002, one was sold for 600,000 US Dollars [16, p. 179]. Demand for these amulets rises as the situation gets worse.

Finally, we look at an unusual source of postmodernity, or at least the aspect of consumption. In his book, *In Buddha's Company* [18], Richard A. Ruth interviewed many veterans and consulted archival sources in Thailand to keep alive the memories of the Thai volunteers to the Vietnam War effort. Ruth learned that, in complete contrast to America, very many men from Thailand volunteered to be sent to Vietnam. It was seen as a chance to travel abroad and gain some experience. Many of them hailed from the poorer north-east region, a region of Thailand just a little bigger than England and Wales, containing

around 22 million. Most of them speak a dialect of Laos as their first language, but a significant minority speaks a dialect of Khmer — all learned Thai in school whether they liked it or not. It is a region with a complex history [45, pp. 46-79] [46, pp. 24-40]. The volunteers were used to the hard life and familiar with the climate and landscape and they adapted quickly to Vietnam. They were fascinated by the state of American postmodern production and consumption: a wounded soldier, even nearly dying, could be saved in minutes by a helicopter.

On a more mundane level, there were refrigerators, radios, and beers in aluminum cans. They had always thought that beers came in big glass bottles to be shared with everyone, but now they could see aluminum cans that each individual could enjoy without having to share them with anyone. After surviving the war, they would bring this American individualism and consumption back to rural Thailand, often quite literally with refrigerators and radios. An officer even brought back an entire helicopter. In turn, they would teach the American GIs how to be calm in the Thai Buddhist way, how to feel safe by wearing Buddhist amulets, how to chill by smoking marijuana, and this would contribute to the counterculture movement back in the United States indirectly.

Linking American and Thai Postmodernity

We can see here that postmodernity might be difficult to define philosophically. However, in terms of socioeconomic reality it is quite clear. Thailand and the West are in a similar reality. In addition, from the case of the Vietnam War, it seems clear that there are historical connections between Thailand and America in terms of postmodernity.

Suchit Wongthed's life story reveals more points of historical connection between America and Thailand.

Suchit Wongthed and Ithaca, NY

Suchit Wongthed [สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ] was born in 1945 in Prachinburi province, eastern Thailand, which has rail access to Bangkok. He started publishing while he was in his penultimate year of high school in the prestigious *Siam Rath* [สยามรัฐ] newspaper, an article criticizing the Ministry of Education's official textbooks [29, p. 603]. In 1964 he got into Silpakorn University, Thailand's first arts university, where he majored in archaeology and it took him six years to graduate. While there he was active in writing and journalism [26]. He is also known for his poetry, especially political verse [27, p. 24]. Here is a writing sample for his poetry, a *sepha* [เสภา] a traditional Thai form of storytelling via chanting verses:

Water is infested with sperm and
gonorrhoea;
Water polluted by the sins of man;
Poisons washed down from empty
Talks in Parliament;
And tears shed by us, vagabond balladiers.
—Suchit Wongthed. *Sepha on the Deluge That Swamps a Street Vendor*,
Bangkok: Chao Phraya Press, 1983, p. 17. (in Thai),
translated by Chetana Nagavajara [28, p. 84]

After graduation in 1970 he worked at the prestigious *Siam Rath* newspaper, and after a year he asked his boss, His Excellency Kukrit Pramoj, the Thai politician who played the prime minister in *The Ugly American* (1963), for a year's leave so he could do research in America and visit his girlfriend, Rani Chiandisotaphon [รานี ฉัยรดิษฐอรุณ] [29, p. 611]. Half of the air fare was paid for by two army officers of the Thailand's Tank Division Radio Station, and half was paid by Kukrit Pramoj. In late April 1971, he arrived in America, where he would spend most of his time near Cornell University in Ithaca, New York where his girlfriend was doing her master's degree in anthropology. It was then that he got married to her. Today she is known as Prani Wongthed [ปราณี วงษ์เทศ], a scholar known for gender studies in Thailand [30] [26] [31].

Suchit returned home in April 1972, having spent exactly one year in New York [29, p. 611] [32].

While near Cornell, Suchit wrote a lot about his experiences and published what he wrote in Thailand in real time [26]. One of those stories is "Getting Drunk Abroad" [เมานักเรียนนอก] (1972). He made friends with Thai students studying there [31], and probably this short story is based on that experience.

From what we have established so far, we can see that Thomas Pynchon and Suchit Wongthed are physically linked via Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. At least in space, if not in time.

The Book in Thailand

Now we will discuss briefly the history of the book in Thailand so that we can understand Suchit's story better and put it into perspective.

Starting with the most important detail: aliteracy rates. Or, do people actually read in Thailand? Duncan McCargo might be the one who put this in the most succinct way in the year 2000: "Despite its claimed literacy rate of 93.8 per cent, Thailand is largely a soci-

ety of non-readers." [33, p. 29]. What does this mean?

A common fact in Thai studies is the dearth of documentary evidence, especially books. Some would argue that the humid tropical conditions destroyed them [35, pp. 177-8]. Others would argue that such evidence was lacking because they were never produced in the first place. Veidlinger argued, based on the physical conditions of surviving manuscripts, that if there is no increase in the level of damage as the age of the manuscripts increases, then the more likely explanation is that there is a dearth of surviving manuscripts because there was a dearth of production [49, pp. 56-7]. More importantly, the media culture has been a complex interaction between orality and the written word, where it is not clear where one ends and the other begins, so that it matters more to consider how texts are *used* rather than how many texts survived and what is written in them; although it is clear orality carries more weight, this orality needs the written word to reach full potential [49, pp. 19, 96, 117, 129, 142, 199] [50, p. 222]. For instance, in the 18th-century Ayutthaya Kingdom, a city-state that is an ancestor of the modern Thai nation-state, singing was used heavily in everyday life as a form of communication, whether for greetings or challenging wits, or learning new knowledge, so much so that the missionaries turned Christian doctrine into songs in hopes of attracting more followers [36, p. 16]. The Pali Canon (Buddhist Bible) might not play much of a role as books to be read in Buddhism in Thailand today except among the intellectual elites [50, p. 220]. Yet these books do legitimize Theravada Buddhists as people who accept these books [49, p. 19], and they can do this even if they are never read [50, p. 6-7]. Unofficial notebooks were read frequently, but without monks who kept the oral tradition alive those notes would not make much sense: such is a hint to *reading* in the Thai context.

Such an understanding of *reading* breathes life into the dry numbers of statistics. The Statistical Office of Thailand in 2018 [37] reports that, in summary, 21.2 per cent of Thais do not read books at all, while 25.2 per cent of these do not read because they do not want to. Which seems to be a big improvement from the year 2000 as witnessed by Duncan McCargo.

This explains Suchit's ability in a very specific form of poetry. It fits perfectly in that twilight between reading and speaking for Thais.

The oldest evidence available of printed Thai is from 1828 in *A Grammar of the Thai or Siamese Language*, printed at the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta, India, composed by Captain James Low from England [29, p. 33]. The first novel written by a Thai person in Thai that is not based on any existing work in the European format of fiction but with Thai content and sensibilities appeared in 1915 [38, p. 70]. The Publisher's Association of Thailand started in 1960 [29, p. 435]. By 1961 the nature of the Thai book market has reached such a point of development that the fact that it was possible to see what readers'

demands were and thus find a way to cater to that demand more efficiently was apparent to those who knew the market, and that this was obvious enough to secure funding from creditors. So it was that the paperback boom started in Thailand with the publisher Praphansarn [29, p. 606]. It was an age where the biggest publisher was based in the most popular area for hanging out in Bangkok, Siam [29, p. 608].

Such was the book world in which Suchit's "Getting Drunk Abroad" appeared. It was the relatively happy and free few years before the people's revolution of 1973; it was the few years of celebration and then foreboding doom and then the turning point of the October 6, 1976 massacre and the start of the full-scale communist insurgency and the exodus to the jungles of the university students and leftists. But that is a story for another day [44].

Differently Similar

That should now be enough context, background, and preparation for comparing the two short stories, "Getting Drunk Abroad" and "Entropy".

"Entropy" was first published in the *Kenyon Review* in 1960. This publication has published many of the authors that would become household names in American literature [39]. It was also the first Pynchon story to be translated into Japanese, issued in 1973 [19, p. 251]. I have not been able to find a Thai translation.

"Getting Drunk Abroad" was first published in the *Sangkhomsatprithat* [สังคมศาสตร์ปริทัศน์] in February 1972 [40]. *Sangkhomsatprithat* means *Social Sciences Review*. It is an important and influential periodical for the thought of the Thai intellectuals in the 1970s [41, p. 159]. An English translation is available in *Modern Thai Literature: With an Ethnographic Interpretation* [1].

I will now lay down on the table both stories and then compare them.

"Entropy"

"Entropy" is told in the third person, focusing on Meatball and Callisto.

Most if not all elements in "Entropy" were intentionally put there by Pynchon, and have a meaning, an immanent cognitive meaning. Especially all the character names.

"Entropy" is about two house-parties going on at the same time in the same apartment building in Washington D.C. in early February 1957 [2, p. 82]. One is happening at Meatball Mulligan's, and the other at Callisto's. Meatball's apartment is a typical apartment that has been pushed to lease-breaking limits because of a party that is entering its 40th hour [2, p. 81] when the story starts. Callisto's apartment has been converted into a hermetically sealed greenhouse, with the environment inside maintained at a constant re-

gardless of the world outside [2, p. 83].

All kinds of guests, all kinds of psychotropic substances, all kinds of activities happen in Meatball's place. Tequila, cannabis, Heidseck and benzedrine. The place is cracking at the seams, especially the refrigerator, and the people in there are at the breaking point of either exhaustion or psychotic rage. Meanwhile in Callisto's there are only Callisto and Aubade and the activity inside consists of philosophical and scientific discussions about the laws of thermodynamics, the fate of the universe, and the fate of a sick bird they are taking care of. They never leave this hermetically sealed room that took seven years to make [2, p. 83]. Callisto is a middle-aged man trying to fight against the heat-death of human culture in terms of thermodynamics while Aubade is a half-French, half-Vietnamese woman from the French protectorate of Annam. According to Mark McGurl, Pynchon's understanding of thermodynamics as it is applied to human societies is possibly inspired by Norbert Wiener, father of cybernetics [25, p. 193]. Like Callisto, and Wiener, Pynchon struggled to deal with the socioeconomic implications of thermodynamics, and he explored this topic further in *The Crying of Lot 49* [25, pp. 192-4].

Downstairs Meatball also talks about fundamental concepts in science in an excessively casual manner with friends and passersby, bringing up thermodynamics, cybernetics, and kinematics, too, as a friend tells a story of someone throwing a *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* at his face but missing [2, p. 89]. Eventually a breaking point is reached for both apartments. In Callisto's case, apparently as much as he understands science, he does not know that the human body temperature is on average 7 to 8 Celsius lower than a typical bird's. So, the bird dies of hypothermia it seems, although this is not spelled out explicitly in the story [42, p. 22]. Aubade breaks the hermetically sealed room with her two hands. Before that, left to their own devices, everyone and everything in Meatball's apartment is breaking down, almost like Callisto's monologue about entropy working in cultural systems. Meatball figures he could either hide in the closet until it all works itself out or go and attend to each and everyone and everything one by one. He chooses to attend to everyone and everything, and everything just works out perfectly, almost as though he has violated the laws of thermodynamics, just as if he was Maxwell's demon [43, p. 160]. He preserves his party from absolute chaos all by himself inside his apartment without any external energy or help. So goes the textbook approach to reading this story. This is a story so often taught in creative writing workshops and reprinted in textbooks as the structure of the story is revealed to the reader like a clock without a cover [43, p. 160].

Much has already been written about Pynchon and "Entropy". Let us instead here save our space for Suchit Wongthed and the fresh topic of his short story that has not really been studied before in terms of postmodern literature.

“Getting Drunk Abroad” [เมานักเรียนนอก]

The title is a good translation; however, a more literal reading would be, “getting intoxicated on foreign students.” Here เม้า [mao] means to get high/intoxicated on something and นักเรียนนอก [nakriannok], literally ‘outside students’, in other words foreign students. And this reading of the title makes sense because what was driving the protagonist crazy was not any substance he consumed but the discussion with the foreign students from Thailand.

The story is told in the first person. Most of the material of this story is a conversation, with only a little bit of description. It is very difficult to paraphrase this story because it is basically a tape recording of an actual drinking session of Thai students abroad. No part feels abnormal. The way of speaking under the influence in Thai is captured too perfectly. Since this short story is quite obscure and not easily accessible, I will paraphrase it all in this paper. In addition — the paraphrasing will help with the Thai context that might be missed by people not familiar with Thai culture — and add to the previous English translation.

All the characters, including the protagonist, only have initials as names, but these are the initials of the Thai alphabet, in alphabetical order. We only know the name of the protagonist near the end of the story as Mr. K. Mr. Human. Like A for Ant, B for Bird in English, each Thai letter has an associated imagery. This story is basically the Ballad of Mr. Human. It is never mentioned what gender each character is, but the pronouns and speech patterns indicate they are all Thai men.

The choice to use the Thai alphabet results in the protagonist having the initials often used for water buffalo because a spelling reform removed the one often used to spell human but left the one for water buffalo for all purposes. K [ค] is his actual initial, while K [ก] is what he is stuck with, both in his imagined life and to us readers. Perhaps a way to hint at the humor is that the Thai initial he is stuck with looks smooth-brained. Of course, in Thai, water buffalo means idiot. Because this story was published before computer typesetting, it was impossible to type his name with the true character. The humor became graphic too as there is a character in this story with the initial for water buffalo, and coincidentally the printing was smudged in the original magazine, so even the official translator misread it as someone else [40, p. 75] [1, p. 192]. ค and ก signifies the same “k” sound — such seemingly redundant letters were meant to represent sounds that exists in Sanskrit or Pali but not in Thai — to make it clear that words with such spelling are loanwords from Sanskrit or Pali [53, p. 125].

The story opens in the middle of the conversation. Mr. G [ก] (chicken) expresses disgust about people who go to work abroad yet now feels sympathy as he sees no

gainful employment in Thailand. Mr. Kh [๗] (egg) says Thailand is knee deep in it. What he said next was self-righteous claptrap, K thought.

At this point, K the protagonist talks to the reader as if the reader is there with him. He speaks in simple and casual language. He uses the most casual pronoun for a man ฦ [goo]. He likes the cheapest wine and the cheapest cigarettes because they taste like the stuff at home. He tells us that the "seminar" is in session again, that they are all civil servants who got scholarships to do a doctorate here in "America-city," as he calls it in the traditional way, with two more years until graduation. One or two of them are here on their own funds. He has heard this claptrap from Bangkok to New York City to Chicago. Yet he did not dare protest for although they might not be right, they are not wrong either.

There is no description or explanation but it is assumed that everyone is sitting on the floor in a circle with plates of food in the middle of the circle and bottles of alcoholic drinks, the traditional way to drink in Thailand. This explains why it is so hard for K to escape this conversation. Also, he is the one with his back to the wall.

Because maybe K is getting drunk, he quips that we should sell Thailand to America. They ignore him.

G said that H [๘] (owl) has just got an engineering degree but did not return home because he wanted enough money for a car, a house, and some money to lend in Bangkok.

G said that the civil servant's salary in Thailand is too low, and connections and nepotism are too important in Thailand, and so there is no way H can afford a car.

K thought to himself how American cheap beer makes him vomit, whiskey disagrees with him, and he hypothesizes that the cheap American wine tastes like the legal moonshine back home. The word "hypothesize" makes him philosophize about the imaginary constructs and the absolute truths in Thai Buddhism.

Mr. Ngo [๙] (snake) says Thailand's economic problems are not fixed because it is easy to find rich people in Thailand but hard to find rich people who are brave enough to invest.

Mr. Kh [๗] says that Thais are brave but they do not want to pay bribes.

Mr. Ngo [๙] says that Thais are so cowardly that they cannot pay bribes.

Mr. Kh [๗] says you are making Thais used to corruption.

Mr. Ngo [๙] says business is impossible without corruption in Thailand, and foreign investors understand this, so they succeed.

Mr. K [๑] (Mr. Water Buffalo, not the protagonist, Mr. Human) agrees with Mr. Ngo [๙] and gives the example of Dusit county. Mr. Human says that from then the can of worms that is the Thai civil servant system and local administration opened up.

Mr. Human looks out the window. He sees the snow. He thinks about the Thai students in New York City, who are probably talking about the corrupt Thai election, in Chicago, about how the criminals invade Thai citizens more than the criminals of New York and Chicago combined. In San Francisco, they talk about the decadence of the higher class and the bloodthirsty teenagers, and maybe as he speaks there is a Thai student shooting the ceiling of a Los Angeles bowling alley.

Mr. Human is sick and tired of all of this. He thinks that Thailand is some kind of apocalyptic twilight zone. Disgusting and terrifying like how he imagined communists and communist countries when he was a kid.

Mr. G [๗] says that the problem in Thailand is of the class struggle. The solution must start with the middle class.

Mr. Water Buffalo asks G to clarify and be more specific.

Mr. G [๗] says “chain reaction”.

Mr. Human could not take it anymore when G said all of Thailand’s problems can be solved by a chain reaction. Or is it gear reaction? in the class system, and Mr. Human just told them in one monologue that they are part of the problem. All of them.

This part was very hard to translate, and the official translators suggest [1, p. 194] that maybe the “chain reaction” was meant to be gibberish. ปฏิกิริยา [patikiriya] is easy enough, a reaction, but ๗ [si] is the teeth of the gear in a machine, the spoke of the wheel, or the teeth in a mouth, individually counted. These two words I have never seen brought together before. The official translators came up with something completely different “contraposition” [1, p. 194]. When K hears this, he imagines all the village headmen and the city mayor just disappearing as though a satellite feed got cut off so maybe it was a way of getting around uttering the word “revolution”, suggested the official translators. I think from the way K imagines it, it is more like a nuclear chain reaction. It makes more sense that if G thinks all of Thailand’s complicated problems can be fixed just by one small change from the middle class that will cause a chain reaction that solves all of Thailand’s problem, this would anger K to the extreme.

K went on a tirade calling everyone out for caring more about their own material comfort than their own country. That they are so privileged with education and status that they do not have to really fear any repercussions.

“But then you know perfectly well already, don’t you, that one of the main reasons there is so little progress in the country is because educated people will never go outside of Bangkok to work.” [1, p. 197]. This part is especially memorable because very broadly speaking it predicted the communist insurgency to come, and then later the red shirts vs. yellow shirts era of recent history.

K concludes that G is right, the problem comes from the middle class. But everyone

overcomplicates everything. It is actually simple. All of them in this drinking circle, the middle class — have not much to fear with their education and stable government jobs — their higher education makes them overthink and overcomplicate everything. There is no problem. The only problem is that they are all too cowardly to do anything. Their advanced education — instead of providing them with solutions to Thailand's problems — gives them excuses to not do anything about it. No, it is too complicated, thought the PhDs. For K, Thailand is not too complicated; *They* are too complicated.

Similarly Different

Now I will list all the features that I think are similar between the two stories and why.

The clearest similarity I see is how the characters in both stories are mostly, if not all, people who are either highly educated or learned, yet they all seem to struggle to use that knowledge to deal with their own life and society. And that in the end it is some kind of unsophisticated gut instinct that saves the day. The clearest example in "Entropy" is Callisto, seemingly the most knowledgeable or intelligent character. He is the one who ultimately fails in saving the bird. While Meatball solves the problem in the end with the simple act of, well, just getting up and talking to everyone. Just being human. Meatball has two choices, hide in the closet, or talk to everyone, Mr. K, too, either speaks up, or lets the claptrap continue.

On the essential level, both stories are clearly about parties, specifically the kind only university students can go to.

In both stories the characters deal with an existential threat. In "Entropy", it is the seemingly inevitable march to death and decay of entropy and the laws of thermodynamics eventually leading to the heat death of the universe. In "Getting Drunk Abroad" ... it is Thailand. In both cases there are characters who try to avoid the threat with sophisticated knowledge and fail miserably. Callisto with the bird, and entropy in general, and whoever said "contraposition" in "Getting Drunk Abroad".

Both stories take place at someone's house while the weather outside is dreadful. The Fahrenheit numbers are quite similar, in the 30s. This might be because of Pynchon and Suchit's connection to Cornell University which famously has weather like that [52].

Both stories take place in America.

Both stories have people who do not have actual human names. "Entropy" characters have intentional meanings to their names [43, p. 160], while *Getting Drunk Abroad's* characters are as replaceable as a set of letters in the printing press.

Low culture and high knowledge characters. Meatball. K and his cheap wine and cigarettes and his way of speaking.

Both Callisto and K are afraid of something that is not from traditional culture. Callisto is afraid of the heat-death of human culture, so it is difficult for him to keep his voice firm [2, p. 88-9]. K used to be afraid of communism, communists, or communist countries as though they were the devil [40, p. 76]. K also expressed fear of the absolute truth in Buddhism, that if he saw it, maybe he would not be able to see the imaginary truth of everyday life ever again [40, p. 75-6]. The official translation is not exact enough so here goes, referring to one of the occasions he tries to escape the drinking circle by meditating:

Whiskey and me have never mixed well. And American beer, even though it's way way weaker than Thai beer until it tastes like water. But I feel chugging the American beer in a can, every time either I throw up or get wasted — so I only fancy the bad bad wine, I imagine it's like white rum or the 56 proof legal moonshine — “imagine” — huh, this word is such music to human ears, because everything in this world is imaginary, but I still never saw the transcendental truth even though there is some rumor that it can exist on earth. I most want to see it. But I'm afraid once I see the transcendental truth, I will never get to see imaginary truths again, even though I know transcendental truth will be way more happy than imaginary truth. But I'm not sure — you could even say I am quite skeptical. If I screw up and see transcendental truth and I'm not amused, then, can I go back to looking at imaginary truth?

The postmodern condition in terms of socioeconomic condition is one of a life of consumption, not production. Modern education prepares the likes of Callisto, Meatball; K and G, for knowledge work, not the production of tangible objects. It teaches them to think about abstract problems, like entropy or class struggle. However, in both stories the characters learn from life in the postmodern world the pitfalls of knowledge, and the value of a life rooted in everyday concrete reality: the common sense rooted in such a life.

Conclusion

Following Justin Thomas McDaniel's idea about “thin description” in studying Thailand, and looking at Thai postmodernity today, looking at Pynchon studies, looking at the two short stories, and, most importantly, not forgetting that postmodernism is elusive of definition, there are some postmodern features in “Getting Drunk Abroad”. And finally, the most fitting test of all is that I think K from “Getting Drunk Abroad” would surely have a

great time at Meatball's party, I think that would constitute a "thin description" way of deciding if the two stories are similar or not, and exploring the postmodern condition: Linking Thai and American postmodernity.

Considering the way of writing of Pynchon, and Suchit, Pynchon holds on to a universalizing encyclopedic tradition, while the ballad-ness of Suchit's short story is characteristic of his Thai poetic tradition, both ways of writing encounter the same problem of postmodernity, and end up at the same conclusion of the forgotten value of a simple, concrete kind of life.

Pynchon might be basically writing an encyclopedia, and Suchit might be basically singing a ballad, yet they are both dealing with the same reality, and presenting the same solution, at least in these two short stories.

Bibliography (Numeric, in Order of Consultation)

1. Suchit Wongthed. 1987. "Getting Drunk Abroad." In *Modern Thai Literature: With an Ethnographic Interpretation*, edited by Herbert H. Phillips, Likhit Dhiravegin, and Amnuaycaj Patipat, translated by Vinita Atmiyanandana Lawler, 189-98. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
2. Pynchon, Thomas. [1960] 2000. "Entropy." In *Slow Learner: Early Stories*, Vintage ed., 81-98. London: Vintage.
3. Sivich Hongjindakes ศิววิช หงษ์จินดาเกศ. 2013. "Chaknawaniyai Su Phapyon Chak Phapyon Su Nwaniyai Kranisueksaphapyonrueang Mankhra Lae Fathalaichon จากนวนิยายสู่ภาพยนตร์ จากภาพยนตร์สู่นวนิยาย: กรณีศึกษาภาพยนตร์เรื่อง 'หมานคร' และ 'ฟ้าทะลายโจร' [From a Novel to a Film, from a Film to a Novel: A Case Study of the Films 'Citizen Dog' and 'Tears of the Black Tiger']." MA diss., Bangkok: Silpakorn University. https://sure.su.ac.th/xmlui/handle/123456789/13359?attempt=2&&offset=74&src=%2Fxmlui%2Fhandle%2F123456789%2F37%2Fbrowse%3Frpp%3D20%26order%3DASC%26sort_by%3D1%26etal%3D-1%26type%3Dtitle%26starts_with%3D%25E0%25B8%2586&browseOffset=78&locale-attribute=th
4. Hill, Val. [1998] 2011. "Postmodernism and Cinema." In *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Stuart Sim, 3rd ed., 143-55. New York, NY: Routledge.
5. Akker, Robin van den, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen, eds. 2017. *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
6. Aylesworth, Gary, "Postmodernism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/postmodernism/>>
7. Natrada Somsith ณัชรดา สมสิทธิ์. 2021. "Phawasamaimai Nai Wankamk Hong Malai Chuphinit ภาวะสมัยใหม่ในวรรณกรรมของมาลัย ชูพินิจ Modernity in Malai Chupinij's Literary Works." PhD Diss., Hat Yai: Prince of Songkla University. <https://kb.psu.ac.th/psukb/handle/2016/17955>
8. Pynchon, Thomas. 1973. *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York, NY: Viking.
9. Watson, Nigel. [1998] 2011. "Postmodernism and Lifestyles." In *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Stuart Sim, 3rd ed., 62-72. New York, NY: Routledge.

10. "Mah Nakorn (2004) - Company Credits - IMDb." n.d. Internet Movie Database. Accessed April 4, 2024. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0444778/companycredits/>
11. "Corporate Website." n.d. EuropaCorp. Accessed April 4, 2024. <https://www.europacorp.com/corporate/>
12. Rubkwan Thammaboosadee. 2019. "Performing Happiness in Neoliberal Thailand: Performances of Happiness in Everyday Life in Bangkok." PhD Diss., Coventry: The University of Warwick. <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/151127>
13. Stanton, Rick. 2022. *Aquanaut The Inside Story of the Thai Cave Rescue: A Life Beneath the Surface*. New York, NY: Pegasus.
14. Taylor, Jim. 2008. *Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand: The Religiosity of Urban Space*. Farnham: Ashgate.
15. Pattana Kitiarsa. 2008. "Buddha Phanit: Thailand's Prosperity Religion and Its Commodifying Tactics." In *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, edited by Pattana Kitiarsa, 120-43. Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy. New York, NY: Routledge.
16. Chalong Soontravanich. 2013. "The Regionalization of Local Buddhist Saints: Amulets, Crime and Violence in Post-World War II Thai Society." *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 28(2): 179-215.
17. McDaniel, Justin Thomas. 2021. *Wayward Distractions: Ornament, Emotion, Zombies and the Study of Buddhism in Thailand*. Kyoto-CSEAS Series on Asian Studies 24. Singapore: NUS Press.
18. Ruth, Richard A. 2011. In *Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War*. Southeast Asia: Politics, Meaning, and Memory. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
19. Aso, Takashi. 2001 "Breaking Through Pynchon Studies in Japan." *Pynchon Notes*, no. 46-49: 251-59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.16995/pn.108>
20. Ercolino, Stefano. 2014. *The Maximalist Novel: From Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow to Roberto Bolano's 2666*. London: Bloomsbury.
21. Dalsgaard, Inger H., Luc Herman, and Brian McHale. 2011. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, edited by Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale, 1-8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
22. Eburne, Jonathan P. 2017. "Postmodern Precursors." In *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern American Fiction*, edited by Paula Geyh, 9-27. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316216514>
23. Miller, John. 2018. "Thomas Pynchon." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 382: Twenty-First-Century American Novelists, Third Series*, edited by George Parker Anderson, 217-35. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale.
24. Kraft, John M. 2011. "Chronology of Pynchon's Life and Work." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, edited by Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale, x-xii. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
25. McGurl, Mark. 2009. *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
26. Praphansarn. 2020. "Suchit Wongthet Nampakka Thongboem Bandan สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ นามปากกาทองเบิ้ม บ้านด่าน [Suchit Wongthet, Pen Name: BigGold of the Frontier]." Praphansarn. 2020. https://www.praphansarn.com/ทำเนียบนักประพันธ์ในประเทศไทย/19/สุจิตต์_วงษ์เทศ

27. Nagavajara, Chetana. 1994. "Literature in Thai Life: Reflections of a Native." *South East Asia Research* 2 (1): 12-52.
28. Nagavajara, Chetana. 1998. "The Conciliatory Rebels: Aspects of Contemporary Thai Literature." *Manusya: Journal of Humanities* 1 (1): 72-87. <https://doi.org/10.1163/26659077-00101006>
29. Khanathamnganprawatkanphimnaiprathetthai คณะทำงานประวัติการพิมพ์ในประเทศไทย The History of Printing in Thailand Working Committee. [2006] 2022. *Sayamphimphakan Prawatsatkanphimnaiprathetthai สยามพิมพ์การ: ประวัติศาสตร์การพิมพ์ในประเทศไทย [Siamese Printing Affairs: A History of Printing in Thailand]*. Edited by Suchit Wongthed สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ. 2nd ed. Bangkok: Matichon.
30. Khanchai Bunpan ขรรค์ชัย บุนปาน and Suchit Wongthed สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ. 2023. "Rakthan Munchuea Haeng Metin Suchit Wongthet Ma Titnasutsapda รากฐาน มูลเชื้อ แห่ง เมตอิน USA สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ - มติชนสุดสัปดาห์ [The Roots and Origins of Made In USA by Suchit Wongthet - Matichon Weekly]." *Matichon Weekly*, November 11, 2023, sec. Special page. https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article_724359
31. Suchit Wongthed สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ. 2023. "Khamtham Khamtop Chak Met in Suchit Wongthet คำถาม คำตอบ จากเมต อิน U.S.A. สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ [Q&A Session for Made In USA]." *Matichon Weekly*, November 30, 2023, sec. Special page. https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article_727203
32. Suchit Wongthed สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ. 2024. "Amla Nioyok Suchit Wongthet Wonkhuen Omok Buaban อ่าลา นีวยอริก สุจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ หวนคืน อ้อมอก บัวบาน [Goodbye New York, Suchit Wongthet Back to Home Sweet Home]." *Matichon Weekly*, April 4, 2024, sec. Special page. https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article_756408
33. McCargo, Duncan. 2000. *Politics and the Press in Thailand: Media Machinations*. Routledge Research in South East Asia. London: Routledge.
34. McHale, Brian. 2011. "Pynchon's Postmodernism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, edited by Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale, 97-111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
35. Saowanit Chunlawong เสาวณิต จุลวงษ์. 2014. "Prawatsat Niphon Wannakhadi Thai Waduai Kan Sang Lae Salai Khwam Pen Thai ประวัติศาสตร์นิพนธ์วรรณคดีไทย: ว่าด้วยการสร้างและสลายความเป็นไทย [Historiography of Thai Literature: On the Construction and De(Con)struction of Thainess]." *Wansan Prawatsat Thamsat วารสารประวัติศาสตร์วรรณคดี* 1(2): 163-200. <https://doi.org/10.14456/thammasat-history.2014.10>
36. Duangmon Chitchamnonng ดวมมน จิตรจํานงค์. 1997. *Khunkha Lae Laksanaden Khong Wankhadithaisamairatnakosinthotonton คุณค่าและลักษณะเด่นของวรรณคดีไทยสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น [The Value and Distinctive Characteristics of Early-Rattanakosin Era Thai Literature]*. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.
37. Social Statistics Division, National Statistical Office. 2020. "Kan Samruat Kan An Khong Prachakon Pho so 2561 การสำรวจการอ่านของประชากร พ.ศ. 2561 [The 2018 Survey of Reading Habits]." Bangkok: National Statistical Office. <http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014/DocLib13/%E0%B8%94%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A1/%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%82%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%8D%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%87%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%8A%E0%B>

- 8%B2%E0%B8%A2/%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%AD%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B7%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%82%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3/2561/full_report_61.pdf
38. Kosit Tiptiempong. 2012. "A Study of the Thai Political Novel from the 1980s to the 2000s: Temporal Trends and Discourse." Monograph 62. Waseda University Monograph. Tokyo: Waseda University.
 39. "Writing at Kenyon." n.d. Kenyon College. Accessed April 5, 2024. <https://www.kenyon.edu/academics/writing-at-kenyon/>
 40. Suchit Wongthed สจิตต์ วงษ์เทศ. 1972. "Maonakriannok เมานักเรียนนอก [Getting Intoxicated on Foreign Students]." Edited by Suchati Sawatsi สุชาติ สวัสดิ์ศรี. *Sangkhamatprithat สังคมศาสตร์ปริทัศน์* 10(2): 74-79.
 41. Thonphra Triratsakunchai ทนพร ตริรัตน์สกุลชัย 2018. Kanrapruwankamyipun khong panyachonthai nai wansansangkhamatprithat การรับรู้วรรณกรรมญี่ปุ่นของปัญญาชนไทย ในวารสารสังคมศาสตร์ปริทัศน์ [The Reception of Japanese Literature by Thai Intellectuals in the Journal sansangkhamatprithat]. *Wansanphasa lae watnotronma mahawityalaimahidon วารสารภาษาและวัฒนธรรม มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล* 37(1): 159-181. <https://harrrt.in.th/handle/123456789/3197>
 42. Herman, Luc. 2011. "Early Pynchon." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, edited by Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale, 19-29. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 43. Dalsgaard, Inger H. 2011. "Science and Technology." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon*, edited by Inger H. Dalsgaard, Luc Herman, and Brian McHale, 156-67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 44. Pongadisorn Jamerbsin. 2020. "Darkest Day: The Oct 6, 1976 Massacre In Bangkok, Thailand." *The Komaba Times*, May 20, 2020, sec. Perspectives. <https://www.komabatimes.com/post/darkest-day-the-oct-6-1976-massacre-in-bangkok-thailand>
 45. Baker, Chris, and Pasuk Phongpaichit. [2009] 2013. *A History of Thailand*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 46. Ivarsson, Søren. 2008. *Creating Laos: The Making of a Lao Space between Indochina and Siam, 1860-1945*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series 112. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
 47. Mackenzie, Rory. 2007. *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke*. Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism. London: Routledge.
 48. Gluckman, Ron. 2021. "Documentary Gives Thais Rare Glimpse into Controversial Sect." *Nikkei Asia*, June 9, 2021, sec. Life. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Life/Documentary-gives-Thais-rare-glimpse-into-controversial-sect>
 49. Veidlinger, Daniel M. 2006. *Spreading the Dhamma: Writing, Orality, and Textual Transmission in Buddhist Northern Thailand*. Southeast Asia — Politics, Meaning, and Memory. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
 50. McDaniel, Justin Thomas. 2008. *Gathering Leaves & Lifting Words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand*. Critical Dialogues in Southeast Asian Studies. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
 51. Nagavajara, Chetana. 1991. "Parody as Translation: The Case of Phaibun Wongthed."

Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 6(2): 1-16.

52. K., Jessica. 2023. "What I Enjoy About a Cornell Winter." Cornell Office of Undergraduate Admissions. June 28, 2023. <https://admissions.cornell.edu/community/blog/what-i-enjoy-about-a-cornell-winter>
53. Hudak, Thomas John. 1986. "Spelling Reforms of Field Marshall Pibulsongkram." *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 3(1): 123-33.