

Rewriting Patriarchal Discourses in the Five Selected Articles of Sor-Jed's *Beep-Sew-Hua-Chang*, an Online Thai Star and Celeb Gossip Column

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Abstract—*Beep-Sew-Hua-Chang* is a popular star and celebrity gossip column written by Sor-Jed, a pseudonymous writer who is famous among Thai internet users for her/his weekly satirical writings in *Manager Online Newspaper*. Sor-Jed's articles notably provide a space for diversity of gender and sexuality; however, s/he has reproduced many patriarchal discourses, which affectedly suppressed the self-agency of individuals, especially women and the sexual marginalized. Significantly, the sexual discourses created by Sor-Jed are mainly aimed for the profit of media business on the internet, and Sor-Jed's standpoint on working as a columnist who wildly told sexual stories to Thai society made her/his status in profession ambiguous and contradictory. This paper aims to analyze the production and meaning of sexual discourses in Sor-Jed's writings, which cause the aforementioned effect, from five selected articles of hers/his that were published from the middle to the end of 2011, which are also the last five pieces of work s/he contributed online.

Index Terms—Online star and celeb gossip column, patriarchy, sexual discourse, Sor-Jed.

I. INTRODUCTION

Star and celebrity gossip columns in print media have attracted great attention from Thai readers for decades. At the turn of the millennium, in 2001, to be precise, the internet, as a common media in daily life of Thai people, provided a corner in cyberspace for one of those columns to make a debut. It was *Beep-Sew*, a critical star and celebrity gossip column published weekly in the entertainment section of *Manager Online*, one of the most popular online newspaper in Thailand. The column was written by Sor-Jed, a pseudonym of a mysterious writer whose real identity has not been revealed to this day. Her/his wildly satirical writing style attracted a great number of middle class urban readers. *Beep-Sew* had sequentially entertained readers until 2006, and, after the coup d'état in September of the same year, had been in hiatus for two years, because the contents in some articles tended to attack the privacy of the people who were impliedly referred to by Sor-Jed, and some of them even threatened her/him to stop publishing the column [1]. Once it returned, the column's name was changed to *Beep-Sew-Hua-Chang*, and its range of targets, originally only stars and celebrities, began to include some local politicians due to the contemporary political turmoil within

the nation. By the end of 2012, the column at last stopped publishing online, then was altered to be a part of the on-sale fortnightly printing magazine, whose all contents are about gossips on stars and celebrities.

The phenomenon created by Sor-Jed's gossip column was reflected on the number of up-to-ten-thousands viewers per week [1]. S/he drew readers' interests with her/his wildly outspoken writing style by using colloquial words, slangs and proverbs in a harshly exposing manner. The targets of gossips were stars and celebrities whose sexual lives had been a big focus for Sor-Jed, who, criticized and condemned their sexual acts which did not conform to heteronormativity and values closely related to patriarchy. Sexual life is considered a secret most stars and celebrities hide away from the public to keep respectably desirable looks in order that they could charm people in a society which is under the influence of accepted norms and values, and also to maintain their social and/or professional status in a show business and society which cherish image and fame. The column's name, *Beep-Sew*, which literally means squeezing a pimple out of one's skin, signifies making a disclosure of the undesirable parts or taboos of those people's sexual life. In many people's perspectives, a pimple, a clogged pore with pus caused by dirt, is an undesirable thing on one's face, and needs to be eliminated by squeezing out. Squeezing a pimple out, resulting in sting pain and itching, signifies Sor-Jed's harshly wild writing style which helps capturing readers' interests. Hence, the new name of this column, *Beep-Sew-Hua-Chang*, or, literally, squeezing a large pimple out, signifies how Sor-Jed made a more profoundly disclosure in a more harshly and satirically outspoken manner, which gathered more favors from the readers, and that naturally increased the number of sponsors for the media.

Sor-Jed's gossip column essentially provided a space in cyberspace for the diversity of gender and sexuality that partly affirmed the variety of social spaces for the sexual marginalized, which is considered a new popular trend, in contemporary Thai society. However, sexual discourses created by Sor-Jed, under the influence of heteronormativity, mostly turned out to be reproducing patriarchal discourses, causing disempowerment and suppression to individuals, especially women and the sexual marginalized. As a modernly sensational media, Sor-Jed's gossip column, more or less, played an outstanding role on confining readers to the myths of sexuality. Thus, in the context of this paper's analyzing, it is vital to make a disclosure and a discussion on

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such discourses created by Sor-Jed.

II. THE ACADEMIC RESEARCHES ON SOR-JED'S GOSSIP COLUMN RELATING TO THE STUDY IN THIS CONTEXT

The issue of sexual discourse in Sor-Jed's gossip column has not distinctly been studied in the academic field. Two of the most important academic researches relating to the subject of this paper were ones conducted by Kanokkul Changpant [2] and Saowalak Patchimapirom [3]. They fundamentally provide the understandings on the media through which Sor-Jed's writings were contributed, and also the content in her/his gossip column that had a big impact on its readers and the whole society.

In Kanokkul's 2005 BA research, *Language Usage, Writing Style and Content in Sor-Jed's Articles*, she concluded that the articles written by Sor-Jed presented the narratives about negative sides of people in Thai entertainment business and high society. Those narratives were categorized by their outstanding issues into 4 topics: a) the badness and negative behaviors performed by female stars and celebrities, which were classified into five sub-groups: a1) trading bodies with fame and popularity, a2) drugs and alcohol addiction, a3) having sexual affairs with more than one person, a4) beauty surgery, a5) prostitution, b) the badness, the negative behaviors and the homosexual affairs performed by male stars and celebrities, which were also classified into five sub-groups: b1) trading bodies with fame and popularity, b2) drugs and alcohol addiction, b3) having sexual affairs with more than one person in some certain period of time, b4) having homosexual affairs in the roles of gay, *toot*, or *katoey*, (the latter two are Thai gender terms for male homosexuals), or having bisexual affairs in the role of a *sua-bai* (Thai gender term for male bisexuals), b5) taking advantage from women for one's own living, c) belief in Buddhist teaching on Karma, d) praising and displaying pride of Sor-Jed her/himself on her/his goodness relating to Buddhist Karma, and also discourses on goodness according to Buddhist way of life, including how s/he regularly supported monogamy. Frequently, in her/his articles, Sor-Jed clearly expressed her/his detestation on behaviors which could be grouped into topics a) and b) that are mentioned above. Homosexual affairs were opposed by Sor-Jed as well, and s/he was very proud of her/himself on performing the role of a revealer who disclosed negative sides of stars and celebrities. Sor-Jed's principle on making such a disclosure was to support goodness in society.

In conducting a study on 55 articles of Sor-Jed published from July 2002 to January 2005, Kanokkul added that the internet, through which Sor-Jed's writings were contributed, was the two-ways-communication media that provided space for writers, or news reporters in some cases, and readers to express their perspectives with freedom at a high level. In many ways, the media with such qualification partly rendered Sor-Jed, who had never revealed her/his real self to the public, a mysterious writer, and that naturally attracted a great number of readers to catch up her/his weekly gossips. Sor-Jed's gossip column also fashioned the contribution on gossip column in other media, such as print magazines, with a unique writing technique in making references to the

gossiped persons by calling them with obvious nicknames, which most readers would know about, instead of using initials in places of their first names, as conventionally employed by most gossip columns in contemporary print newspapers.

Form, Content and Ethical Issues Relating to the "Beep-Sew" Gossip Column by Sor-Jed in Manager Online Newspaper is a thesis conducted by Saowalak for her MA in the same academic year with Kanokkul's research. She made discussion on the similar subjects detailed in Kanokkul's thesis, namely writing form and style, contents, and the internet, the only accessible media for viewing the column, in the timeframe ranging from July 2002 to September 2004. In addition, Saowalak made arguments, based on Sor-Jed's critical writings, on the ethics of Thai journalist, the ethics of Thai webmaster, and the law in the context of reporting gossip news on the internet in relation to such ethical issues.

In those two researches, most contents in Sor-Jed's gossip column, especially sexuality, were discussed informatively, rather than criticized. While Kanokkul focused on the classification of such stated issues to highlight Sor-Jed's perspectives in the timeframe of her study, Saowalak raised sexuality issues to discuss in the context of ethics as mentioned above. Unfortunately, most discussions on sexuality in those researches ultimately confined individuals to patriarchy which causes disempowerment and suppression to individuals, especially women and the sexual marginalized. I, the author of this paper, thus, hope this paper could be a fulfillment to both researches by making a discussion on sexual discourses created in Sor-Jed's gossip column. The objects of my study are five articles selected from Sor-Jed's *Beep-Sew-Hua-Chang* published online from the middle to the end of 2011, the period of time that the column was contributed online, and that was beyond the study timeframe of the two above-mentioned researches. Besides, what comprises the contents of the five articles written by Sor-Jed selected for this paper is the diversity of gender and sexuality, which partly reflects an interest in such an issue in contemporary Thai society.

This paper aims to analyze sexual discourses created by Sor-Jed in the online newspaper which became a stunning phenomenon in Thai society. As Judy Delin [4] pointed out that discourse was "... 'a way of speaking about something', or an ideological standpoint from which a subject is addressed", the meaning of discourse, in this sense takes an interest in the perspective of the individual who created it, which has a potential on re/producing some certain values and ideologies to society via, in this context, the media, which is related to Donald Matheson's [5] suggestion that media discourse is all the language we find used in the media. That differentiates it from text, which refers only to the words or symbols, and from linguistics' traditional conception of language as sets of rules such as grammar and phonology. But discourse is also often used by social researchers, following Foucault, to talk of the power of language to shape society and culture. Discourse in this sense is about the way statements link up with other statements to make up a discursive formation.

In addition, Matheson [5] explained that a discursive formation is the accumulated and interlinked statements

about a topic, which between them comprise a particular way of talking and thinking that shapes how we understand the topic, and which sets the term for more statements on the topic. The term, then, describes how repeated language use constructs social realities.

The above quotations provide repeated language use and the power of language, two essential tools for examining sexual discourses created from Sor-Jed's perspectives, which, more or less, effect the readers in ways of instructing or emphasizing them about social norms and some certain values, and also binding the myth of such discourses unto their very lives as if it were, in many ways, the ultimate truth [6].

III. SOR-JED, THE RENOWNED STAR AND CELEBRITY GOSSIP COLUMNIST IN THAI CYBER WORLD

As mentioned earlier, Sor-Jed is a pseudonymous writer, and s/he has never disclosed her/his real identity to the public. There are some interviews with Sor-Jed on the media, but they cannot be used for the confirmation of her/his real self. The interview conducted online by Atthasit Muanmard [1] for *Positioning Magazine* equivocated that the character of Sor-Jed was reproduced from the person behind this notorious pseudonym: an inquisitively straightforward woman in 45 with slightly curly hair, round bosoms, slim figure, good health, fresh look, good education, good taste, great sense of black humor, and a harshly sharp tongue. It is also stated that Sor-Jed was a wife of a foreign diplomat, and the name Sor-Jed was derived from the domestic position of the person who played the important role in the late-1990s mysterious crime, the wife of the seventh son of the wealthy Thai-Chinese family running a well-known seasoning business. *Sor*, in Thai, literally means a daughter-in-law in a Thai-Chinese family, and *Jed* is Thai word for seven. Therefore, *Sor-Jed*, in this context, means 'daughter-in-law number seven', which is classified by her husband's birth order in a Thai-Chinese family. The interview revealed that Sor-Jed hunted for stories to make gossips by herself, with help from 3-5 assistants. The sources of stories were, for examples, young barflies and young ladies who did sex works for unearned income, and each of them would receive 80 dollars from Sor-Jed in exchange for secretive information of the gossip targets. Sor-Jed's gossip, in general, was composed of 70% fact and 30% fantasy, and aimed to serve the public's curiosities on secret lives of stars and celebrities.

The information above, however, cannot be used to confirm Sor-Jed's identity in reality. The identity and social status of this columnist are thus ambiguous. Moreover, Sor-Jed's standpoint on working as a writer on the issue of sexuality seems contradictory. While, in the gossip column, Sor-Jed contributed her/his notions on sexuality in a commanding and controlling manner with the aim of evaluation under the influence of the norms s/he adopted in the role of social protector, s/he had violated a strong taboo in Thai society. A lot of people in this country consider talking about sexuality in public improper or prohibited in some ways [7], but Sor-Jed had talked on such an issue openly and recklessly. As a result, Sor-Jed played an important role in

the cyber world as a provider of a space for the contribution of sexuality with the politics of its own as a cultural issue, and as a drive of interaction among individuals in society.

However, it is essential to realize that a talk on sexuality in this context was contributed through the ambiguous voice of Sor-Jed, and was contributed under the condition of media business. Sexual life of stars and celebrities has money value of its own, and it could increase the number of readers for this online newspaper, and also the volume of commercial advertisements. That was agreeable with Sor-Jed's answer in the interview. The newspaper executive assigned her/him to create this column to draw as much attention from the readers as s/he could, and as a result, the newspaper website got a privilege to be included in the list of 10 most popular sites [1]. Sexual discourses in Sor-Jed's gossip column, despite being contributed in striking contents and style, were supposed to be the discourses that repaid the sexual ideologies favored by society to get acceptances from readers in general, which, consequently, drew attentions and loyalties from media sponsors. By these factors, it can be initially summarized that sexual discourses in Sor-Jed's gossip column were created to meet consumerism, and they, in certain ways, were one of those discourses for commerce in the globalized age.

IV. SEXUAL DISCOURSES IN SOR-JED'S GOSSIP COLUMN

From the contents of five selected articles in Sor-Jed's gossip column, which are "*Bak-Hum-Noi*"-*Baa-Bong & "Gang-Nom-Plom"*-*Kee-Ya* [8] (or, as translated in English, a northeastern young man who were crazily addicted to marihuana & the gang of girly junkies with artificial bosoms), "*Pra-Ek-Nar-King-Kong*"-*Faad-Ee-Tua-Tid-AIDS* [9] (or, in English, "King Kong-faced lead actor" had sex with a whore with HIV), *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng* [10] (or, in English, a glowing cock), "*Nang-Ek*"-*Nar-Mai-Eye-Hai-Pua-Kae-Quak-Yoo-Nai-Pub* [11] (or, in English, the unashamed "young actress" who let her aged husband caress inside her body in a pub), and "*Pra-Ek-Naa-Yao*"-*Ja-Riew-Wai-Tam-Laaek* [12] (or, in English, "Longed-faced lead actor" who was horny like a cock frequently hungry for intercourses), when considered in the context of sexual discourses as this paper intends to, it is clearly seen that those Sor-Jed's articles contributed sexual discourses in three major dimensions.

In the first dimension, Sor-Jed saluted heteronormativity, which, in Thai society, adhered to the value of "good girl" and "bad girl [13], [14]." Such a value was raised in the cases of, for example, the unashamed actress in the title name of "*Nang-Ek*"-*Nar-Mai-Eye-Hai-Pua-Kae-Quark-Yoo-Nai-Pub* who performed a sexual activity with her husband in a pub, an actress who enjoyed her life with sex dates and was condemned for such behavior in *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng*, and a female politician who was commented on her botox face along with her bad performance on social duty in "*Pra-Ek-Nar-King-Kong*"-*Faad-Ee-Tua-Tid-AIDS*. Sor-Jed, thus, devalued sexual activities of the sexual marginalized as dirtiness and deviation, as in the case of the longed-faced actor in "*Pra-Ek-Naa-Yao*"-*Ja-Riew-Wai-Tam-Laaek*, who was blamed for his horniness from the ability of having intercourses with both female vaginas and male rectums, or,

as Sor-Jed called, a tank of excrement.

In the second dimension, Sor-Jed gave importance to intercourse as a priority in sexuality of individuals, and that made her/him pay not enough attention to other kinds of sexual acts. In most articles, intercourse, which closely embroils with male sexuality [15], was mentioned in connection with capacity to reproduce, and words or phrases which connote a sexual intercourse were used in those articles, such as “Tee-Mor” in “*Pra-Ek-Nar-King-Kong*”-*Faad-Ee-Tua-Tid-AIDS* and “Pee” in *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng*, which are Thai slangs for fucking. Similarly, in *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng*, there is a phrase “*Nam-Taek-Laew-Yaaek-Taang*,” which means a situation in which two people go their own way after having sex (“*Nam-Taek*,” a Thai slang for having orgasm after intercourse) without keeping in touch or forming a relationship thereafter, and in “*Bak-Hum-Noi*”-*Baa-Bong* & “*Gang-Nom-Plom*”-*Kee-Ya*, a phrase “*Doeon-Taaeng-Taang-Pee*,” which means getting fucked all the year by one’s husband, could be found. In Sor-Jed’s perspective, sexual pleasure from an intercourse is naturally brought about by sexual organs, and they are often referred to in her/his articles by slang words, for examples, “*Hoy*,” literally a shell in Thai, and a female vagina in Thai slang, appears in the last paragraph of “*Bak-Hum-Noi*”-*Baa-Bong* & “*Gang-Nom-Plom*”-*Kee-Ya*, and “*Kra-Poo*”, a slang for a male genital, shows up in the title of one article, *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng*.

As a result from placing importance on sexual intercourse, Sor-Jed, in many ways, placed women in the status of sex object and sex victim, evidently expressed in *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng* via the phrase “*Ta-Luang-Pak-Mod-Look*,” which connotes an intercourse performed by a strongly long penis in a very harshly horny manner embedded in the image literally produced by the meaning of referred phrase, fiercely breaking through the mouth of uterus (“*Ta-Luang*” means breaking through something harshly, “*Pak*”, in this context, means the entrance or the mouth of “*Mod-Look*,” and “*Mod-Look*” means a uterus) and in “*Nang-Ek*”-*Nar-Mai-Eye-Hai-Pua-Kae-Quark-Yoo-Nai-Pub* via the phrase “*Yeb-Hai-Mun-Hoob*”, which, connotes the condition of a vagina (“*Mun*” is generally a pronoun equivalent to English “*it*,” but in this context, it is implied to be a vagina) that is in need of mending (“*Yeb*,” or sewing) due to being frequently penetrated in the past until it became ruined (“*Hoob*,” or being shut or caved in).

Significantly, in Sor-Jed’s perspective, woman’s capacity of sexuality was evaluated by the slimness of her body, the tightness of her vagina, and having beauty surgery, especially botox injection and breast implantation, whereas s/he placed man in the status of a sex machine whose capacity of sexuality is evaluated by his age, his penis size and complexion, as reflected by the article named *Kra-Puu-Ruang-Saeng*, or a glowing cock. “*Kra-Puu*,” or penis, of, in this context, the horny young handsome actor looked so brightly fair that it glowed shinningly in the dark room for having sex fun. Moreover, Sor-Jed evaluated man’s capacity of sexuality from the energy in performing sexual activities, including sex performance techniques, which,

were stated, for examples, in “*Nang-Ek*”-*Nar-Mai-Eye-Hai-Pua-Kae-Quark-Yoo-Nai-Pub* via an imaginary slang “*Ling-Oom-Taeng*”. The slang literally means a monkey (“*Ling*”) carries (“*Oom*”) a watermelon (“*Taeng*”). It connotes a sportive gesture of sexual activity, a dangerous one capable of putting a male’s backbone and knee joints at risk, due to Sukamol Vipaweepollakul and Somkid Lawangkoon [16], which needs a male to stand up straight strongly and firmly carry his female partner who has intercourse with to enjoy challengingly sensual fun.

In the last but not least dimension, Sor-Jed contributed a discourse on sexuality which stigmatized a certain group of people in the social hierarchy of healthiness due to being infected with HIV or AIDS, as in the case of the female prostitute or “*Ee-Tua*” in “*Pra-Ek-Nar-King-Kong*”-*Faad-Ee-Tua-Tid-AIDS*, who was mentioned as a sex object the King-Kong-faced actor enjoyed for his sexual pleasure, and as a cause of putting him at risk on having infected with HIV. Nevertheless, according to Sor-Jed, it was not her profession as a prostitute that created a social class problem with the famous handsome actor, who was fascinated with her sex service and even admitted to the society about his preference for finding pleasure with sex workers over finding himself a companion, but it was her symptom of HIV infection or “*Tid-AIDS*” which made her flee from him. Sor-Jed used the phrase “*Tid-AIDS*” to cast blame upon stars and celebrities who enjoyed a lot of sex dates, despite safe practices with condoms, which partly conformed to heteronormative reproduction. Sex workers, in Sor-Jed’s perspective on the stated case, seemed to be a group that pertained to risky sexuality.

Sexual discourses as discussed above were contributed under the influence of heteronormativity, and they, in many ways, reproduced patriarchal discourses, which helped emphasizing and carrying on the ideology of patriarchy. Those discourses implied Sor-Jed’s hidden agenda on creating the bargaining power consciously, in the role of an inspector and a protector of society, to make judgment on people in entertainment business and high society who placed themselves in the status of, as sarcastically mentioned in Sor-Jed’s interview, gods and goddesses [17], by exposing their secretive sexual behaviors which gave a respond to patriarchy. On such an agenda naturally lies the politics of profession for the construction of power circuit in media field and for the popularity among readers to reach business goal aimed by Sor-Jed and her/his organization.

V. CONCLUSION

The star and celebrity gossip column written by Sor-Jed created a striking phenomenon in Thai cyber world. Sor-Jed reported the diversity of gender and sexuality in contemporary society, and provided a space in cyberspace for making a discussion on sexuality publicly and politically. As a person in the academic field of gender and sexuality studies, I realize that sexual discourses contributed in Sor-Jed’s

articles, in the context of my study, have a great impact on the society. Unfortunately, those sexual discourses, in many ways, emphasize heterosexuality, which appraises male dominance [18], and reproduce patriarchal discourses that tend to convince individuals to embrace them as preferable norms, and construct some stereotypical sexual values relating to phallocentrism, which affected the sense of individualistic identity, especially women and the sexual marginalized, and, more or less, confine individuals to the myth of patriarchy. In addition, those discourses potentially create the social hierarchy for individual classified by her or his sexuality. Essentially, sexual discourses in Sor-Jed's gossip column were partly contributed to meet consumerism, and for the profit of online media business.

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