

The Yaoi Phenomenon in Thailand and Fan/Industry Interaction

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This article aims to explore *yaoi* phenomenon in Thailand particularly during the 2010s at the height of the industry involvement with *yaoi* fandom. The article draws on Paul Booth's (2015) study of fan/industry interaction to expand existing scholarship on *yaoi* phenomenon in Thailand which tends to focus on textual readings linking back to the Japanese cultural origin, ethnographic research, and the aspect of queer cultural politics. The study also draws attention to GMMTV Company Limited, a key player in expanding the *yaoi* industry in Thailand and growing the fandom of Thai *yaoi* stars in different countries in Asia. The article discusses the way GMMTV expands *yaoi* industry through connections with the local book industry as well as its own star and music making divisions. It pays close attention to fan/industry interactions rooted in the industry-led mimetic practices inspired by *yaoi* fan culture. These practices include the act of "shipping" (pairing *yaoi* couples) through what fans referred to as Official Promotional Videos (OPVs) and television shows. The article then discusses the way GMMTV employs fan nostalgia to create memory-driven activities. The highly commercialized industry-led fan meeting also offers an interesting site to explore fan/industry interactions where fan-led practices were reenacted by the industry yet consumed by fans themselves.

Keywords: fandom, fan/industry interaction, *yaoi*, Boys' love (BL), Thai popular culture

Introduction

In the beginning of the 2010s, visitors exploring university campuses in different parts of Thailand or travelling around Bangkok by sky train were likely to encounter pictures of "cute boy" couples.¹ Cute boys include beautiful young male celebrities featured in various publicity campaigns, advertisements, and television commercials. The products they endorsed ranges from lip balm, ice cream, and skin color correcting cream to instant noodles and sausages (e.g., KA Lip Balm Care and Cornetto Black Hojicha ice cream). The expansive use of these stars in advertising resonates with the craze of "cute boys" in everyday media culture throughout the country. The trend coexists with the growing awareness of LGBTQ culture in the Thai public domain² and has a strong root in the *yaoi* subculture which has since become industrialized. The cute boy celebrities in Thailand are referred to

by many names. On social media sites, other common terms used include “Cute Boys,” “Sexy Boys,” or “Cool Boys.” These fan sites display the spirit of young male homoeroticism inspired by yaoi phenomenon grounded in the Japanese popular cultural context.

The expansion of young male homoeroticism in the name of yaoi phenomenon in Thailand has given birth to literary festivals, new publishing houses, television series, YouTube channels, and several fan practices (e.g., EverY Publishing, Deep Publishing, and Rose Publishing). This article thus hopes to explicate the entanglement between yaoi culture, the fandom, and the industrialization of the phenomenon particularly during the defining years of the 2010s. Framed by fan studies approaches, the article relies on Paul Booth’s (2015) analysis of fan/industry interaction. To build the dialogue between the scholarship on yaoi in the Anglophone world and the yaoi phenomenon in Thailand and across Asia, the article provides some background on yaoi culture widely studied in the Japanese context before moving on to related scholarship, the Thai context, and the analysis.

The youthful appearance of cute boys in the Thai media resonates with the *bishōnen* culture in Japan. This cultural influence gradually emerged in the 1990s with the influx of Japanese popular culture (J-Pop). The phenomenon in Thailand is also shaped by the “flower boys (*konomimam*) syndrome” (Kwon, 2016, pp. 1570-1571) emerging since the late 1990s in Korea and imported to Thailand in 2000s with the Korean Wave (also called *Hallyu*) and the trans-Asian popular culture. Despite these pan-Asian pop culture influences, the most common description of fan practices has been framed under the generic Japanese term “yaoi” and closely developed through fan writing culture similar to the Japanese origin. The abbreviated form “y” (*wai* in Thai) is often preferred.

In Japan, the genesis of the term “yaoi” can be traced back to the 1980s (Mizoguchi, 2003). At one time a self-derogatory term used among writers and the reading public, yaoi is an acronym for the Japanese phrases *yama nashi* [no climax], *ochi nashi* [no punch line], and *imi nashi* [no meaning]. Apart from its lack of standard aesthetic quality, yaoi is also connected to the Japanese slang connoting anal sex. Hence, the term suggests elements of pornographic content parodying the characters of popular animation shows or other texts (Camper, 2006, pp. 24-26; Mizoguchi, 2003, p. 50; Turner, 2018, p. 459). The romantic relationship in yaoi is usually compared to top-bottom roles in male homosexual partnership. In yaoi texts, top (or dominant) is called *seme* and bottom (or submissive) is called *uke* (Wood, 2006). The seme/uke trope is also linked to the roles of an attacker and a receiver in Japanese martial arts (Turner, 2016; 2018). Conventionally, the trope is represented in the media through physical attributes of the male

couple. The seme tends to be older, taller, and more masculine (or less androgynous) than uke. These characteristics are evident in yaoi *manga* and *anime* but were not widely adopted by gay media in the Anglo-American world. In the Thai context, the seme/uke trope has been widely employed by fans to describe the yaoi stars, based on their personas.

In the Japanese context, there is a potential entanglement between yaoi and other related terms. Prior to the emergence of the term yaoi, the *shōjo manga* [girl comics] was the genre portraying male characters through the androgynous body. These girl comics were regarded as a “prototype” of the yaoi genre since the 1970s (Pagliassotti, Nagaike, & McHarry, 2013, p. 1). Another relevant term is *bōizu rabu* [Boys’ Love/BL] which is widely received in the Anglo-American world. Boys’ love is particularly used in the industry context referring to manga and/or anime which are available in bookshops and convenience stores. In these market circulations, the obscene visual content may be censored, blurred out, or airbrushed (Camper, 2006, p. 25; Turner, 2016, p. 13).

The term yaoi has become widely used in the 1980s when the *ani-paro* [anime-parody] was growing. At the time, Japanese women were rewriting male characters in popular texts with added homoerotic tone. Hence, the yaoi phenomenon was intertwined with fan culture, particularly in relation to ani-paro productions by amateurs (Pagliassotti, Nagaike, & McHarry, 2013, p. 2). As yaoi was expanding, there was also a subgenre of the writing called *dōjinshi* or *yaoi dōjinshi* which focuses on appropriating characters from popular texts. Instead of the commercial bookshops, this subgenre was circulated among fans through networks of manga or comic conventions (Turner, 2016, p. 14) and in self-published fan magazines (Mizoguchi, 2003). Despite different channels of circulation, the terms Boys’ Love or BL and yaoi are sometimes used interchangeably.

In this article, the term yaoi covers both commercial and noncommercial productions. In the Thai context, yaoi has been used to refer to various kinds of textual productions from manga, anime, original fiction, fan fiction, fan art, fan texts, commercials, films, television series, and television adaptations. This broader context also includes both amateur writings and materials sold by professional publishers (Pagliassotti, Nagaike, & McHarry, 2013, p. 2). Particularly as an umbrella term, yaoi denotes textual quality as well as ways of reading leading to the spirit of “parody” or playful appropriation by its creators and fans.

The creation of yaoi culture in Thailand can be traced back to the 1990s. An earlier account on the phenomenon focuses on female readers appreciating the intimacy between male characters in *cartoon phuchai* [shōnen manga/boys’ comics] with Thai translation (Nainapat, 2017). Yaoi

did not take off on a large scale until the Internet era in the 2000s. At the time, female readers of *cartoon phuying* or *cartoon tawan* (shōjo manga/girls' comics) shifted their interests to another genre called *cartoon naew boys' love*—BL (or today's *cartoon y*). As known among Thai readers, the mainstream content of the BL manga circulated in the early 2000s was quite “obscene” in the eyes of Thai authorities. Back in the day, BL or yaoi culture was an urban subculture. The yaoi content used to be sourced from the Siam Square area, particularly in some big department stores where BL manga were secretly accessible to buy or to rent (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, pp. 81-85). The growth of yaoi media was disrupted by the Thai authorities from time to time since they were labelled as *sue lamok* [obscene media] (“Chap cartoon gay ran moddam klang siam nakrian ying mo plai lukkha lak!”, 2007; Jiararattanakul, 2007). By the late 2000s, the yaoi fan community moved to digital platforms particularly through websites and message boards. The state's monitoring practices could not stop the success of the yaoi culture online. The popularity also expanded to mainstream media particularly via television shows and blockbuster films in a short span of time.

The spirit of yaoi adopted from Japan is well-maintained in the Thai context both on- and off-line through the spirit of playful appropriation. The most prominent fan practice is to create male-male couple based on existing singers, stars, and idols. The male couples, generated by fans, can be broadly referred to as *khu-y* [yaoi couples].³ In the context of Thai fandom, the practice of reimagining male homoerotic intimacy is referred to as *long ruea* [boarding the boat], *phai ruea*, and *jaew ruea* [rowing the boat]. Resonating with the English term “ship/shipping” which is a shorter version of “relationship,” Thai fans further play with the meaning of “ship” as a boat. When used in the fandom context, yaoi couples are described as being in the same boat and the “ship” is tentatively deployed as a trope to write about the yaoi couple or as referred to as *khu-y* or *khu ship*. The act of coupling is referred to by Thai fans as *khu 'gine*—a shorter form of “imagine” as well. *Khu 'gine* can be both heterosexual and homosexual (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, pp. 114-120). This practice is more commonly referred to as slash/slashing in the Anglophone world. The term yaoi, or shortly referred to as *y* [*wai*], has also been used to describe the collective selves of female fans known as *sao-y* (in Thai). To be *sao-y* is to appreciate same-sex male couples in writings, screen cultures, and other cultural productions.

In Japan, yaoi fans are referred to as *yaoi chan* (Galbraith, 2009, p. 239) or by a more pejorative term—*fujōshi* which literally means “rotten girls.” The term “*fujōshi*” is widely used as the female equivalent of the male *otaku* (obsessive fan or nerd). The yaoi fans in the Japanese context prefer referring to themselves as *fujōshi* as a way to reclaim their collective identity

(McLelland & Welker, 2015, p. 13) while the term *sao-y* is loosely employed among Thai yaoi fans to assert sense of community. However, unlike *fujōshi* in Japanese, the term *sao-y* does not convey an offensive denotation.

As indicated through the use of yaoi or cute boy celebrities and stars in extensive marketing campaigns, the dramatic craze of yaoi culture in Thailand can be measured by the increasing numbers of yaoi couple and yaoi series channeled on television and digital platforms. The sign of growth can be traced back to 2015 when there were only five television series containing yaoi content. The number jumped to 26 in 2016; 34 in 2017; 20 in 2018; and up to 25 in 2019 including those in production during the time of this writing (YRelation, 2019; “Thai BL Dramas,” 2019).⁴ The growth of yaoi content in screen cultures was parallel with the number of books and newly established publishers solely promoted yaoi fiction. Reaching a wide range of audiences, yaoi fiction has also been made available in e-book format on several online platforms. Following the success of a fan-organized yaoi book fair in the latter half of 2000s, in 2009 the official Thailand’s Y Book Fair was launched under the collaboration between yaoi writers and readers (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, p. 83).⁵ This growing accessibility indicates the industrialization of yaoi culture in Thailand beyond the textual “shipping” practices among fans. There are various contributing factors and players in the fan/industry interaction that makes yaoi becomes a national and transnational phenomenon (Rueang fin fin khong khu gine sai wai, 2017; Y-Culture, 2017). The following section introduces some of the key moments that lead to the industrialization of yaoi culture and highlights the gap in literature on yaoi fandom for unpacking the industrial side of engagement.

The Rise of Yaoi Culture and Its Subsequent Scholarship

In 2004, a reality show named *Academy Fantasia* (AF) produced by the cable TV provider called TrueVisions boosted *khu ’gine* or *khu-y* culture. The show has supplied yaoi couples to the Thai entertainment industry. Aof/Boy, Nat/Tol, and Tao/Kacha are examples of the cute boy pairs shipped by yaoi fans. The term *y* or *wai* was subsequently used as a modifier to a wide range of products for example, *cartoon y* (yaoi manga and anime), *nang-y* (yaoi films), and *lakhon-y* (yaoi series). The state of being yaoi-ish can be called as *khwam-y*. Amidst the yaoi craze, some of the couples were selected specifically for the yaoi concert called “AF Ver’ ’Gine Fin Concert” in 2016. The model of *khu ’gine* generated by fans were adopted by other concert organizers and has since been used in other singing contests. Following the success of the AF concert, the singing contest run by the Exact Company (a subset of the GMM Grammy Company) and the KPN Awards are the two

exemplary examples of the yaoi couples' showcases in the music industry and on the Thai screen (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, pp. 125-127).

Apart from the music industry, the growth of yaoi content was also fostered through cinema by the introduction to *Rak haeng Siam* [Love of Siam] (Chookiat Sakveerakul, 2007). *Love of Siam* has been categorized as the first yaoi piece in Thai film cycle (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, p. 130; Vespada, 2017, p. 271). The film started what scholars referred to as *vernacular queerness* in the Thai context (Farmer, 2011, p. 87). The positioning of *Love of Siam* as a yaoi cultural product may be challenged by other themes presented in the film including coming-of-age, family problems, heteronormativity, and religion. Nevertheless, the film successfully utilized the youthful beauty of male protagonists to attract yaoi fans. The film also displays an extended kiss scene of a same-sex couple which was quite controversial at the time. As most of the cast were new stars, the attraction of audiences who went to see the film repetitively in the cinema could be due to the yaoi quality of the film and the growing interest in yaoi fandom (Lertwichayaroj, 2017, pp. 130-131).

From 2007 onward, the interest in yaoi content was intertwined with the Korean Wave. One of the fans' practices was to pair or ship certain boy band members through fan fiction. A particularly interesting case was of the band Dong Bang Shin Ki (DBSK or TVXQ). This boy band enjoyed its phenomenal trans-Asian success in South Korea, Japan, and Thailand around 2008. Owing to such success, Thai young writers started their fan fiction based on the romanticized relationship among the band members (Prasannam, 2008). The fictions were circulated on the widely used digital platforms: Dek-D.com and www.tvxq-dreamland.com (Salingcarlnont, 2009, p. 62). Following the growth via online communities, fans initiated gathering at certain places to exchange their products and experiences (Suwannapisit, 2009, p. 128).⁶

Apart from the rise of K-wave and the growing trend of gay representation in Thai cinema after *Love of Siam*, the yaoi phenomenon in Thailand in the 2000s also coincided with the discussion of gay problems on Thai screen. Since the launch of the now defunct People's Constitution in 1997, Thailand has experience a period of diversity on screen. Film and television have become the spaces to present gay identities and to problematize stereotypical images (Pongpanit, 2011; Naksing & Taiphapoon, 2013; Wongmoung & Srikulwong, 2016). Under this climate, GMM Grammy, one of the biggest entertainment companies in Thailand launched its television section with a variety of contents including the yaoi ones.

While the setup of GMM television kingdom was new, the company has been fostering gay couple content via different collaborations. Exact

Company and Scenario Company (merged into The One Enterprise Company Limited in 2014), under the umbrella of GMM Grammy (Kojiw & Sotanasathien, 2015) can be positioned as pioneer producers of refashioned gay couple content on television. Prior to the setup of GMM television, the company also produced *Club Friday the Series* (since 2012) which echoed with some previous products by Exact Company (e.g., *Phrung ni ko rak theo* [I Still Love You Tomorrow] [2009], starring Anuchyd Sapanphong and Phachara Thammon).⁷

A number of scholars have proposed that the first complete Thai yaoi television series is *Love Sick the Series* (2014) screened on Channel 9 run by the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand—MCOT (Baudinette, 2019; Singhakowinta, 2017; Vespada, 2017). *Love Sick the Series*, produced by MIDDLE MAN MEDIA Co. Ltd. and MR. BIG PICTURE Co. Ltd., was adapted from an original yaoi novel titled *Love Sick chunlamun num kangkeng namngoen* [Love Sick: The Chaotic Lives of Blue Shorts Guys] by INDRYTIMES. The plot deals with love lives among high school students featuring both heterosexual and homosexual couples. The significance of *Love Sick the Series* is that it was adapted from a yaoi novel written in Thai targeting Thai yaoi fans. The novel was serialized between 2007 and 2010. It was well received over its serialization period. Once the novel was completed, its hard copy was published three times without an official publisher or distributor (Sriprasong & Satararужи, 2016, p. 80). The grand success of *Love Sick* as a series, as measured by 3,753,178 views on YouTube and its 300,176 followers on the official Facebook page of the series (as of 9 October 2019), opened the gate to other adaptations of Thai yaoi novels on the screen. Following the footsteps of *Love Sick the Series*, subsequent adaptations engaged more in transmedia productions (e.g., *Make It Right the Series* [2016-2017], *2 Moons the Series* [2017] and *Love by Chance the Series* [2018]). Even though none of the listed series were produced by the GMMTV, *2 Moons the Series* and *Love by Chance the Series* were screened on ONE and GMM 25—the television network under the GMM Grammy Company. Arguably, it was not until the era of GMM screen expansion in 2012 onward that the television industry fully embraced the yaoi content.⁸

With the success of *Love Sick the Series* and growth of yaoi phenomenon, the scholarship on yaoi culture in Thailand began to emerge. The first wave of studies focused on the realms of narrative and textual analysis. Previous works have explored the story of “bitter” gay lives in the television series which was reciprocated in Thai cinema. This type of narratives is a product of previous gay representation accumulated in the Thai cultural circuit since the 1980s (Pongpanit, 2011, pp.119-120). *Love of Siam* was seen as a turning

point when the image of gay in Thai screen culture began to be pluralized (Naksing & Taiphapoon, 2013; Wongmoung & Srikulwong, 2016).

A pioneer research which began exploring yaoi fans emerged in 2005 from communication studies. Thantip Srisuta (2005) analyzed yaoi manga contents and readers' behaviors through interviews. The method was subsequently adopted by other researchers exploring on the culture surrounding yaoi manga. Positioned yaoi fan culture as part of youth subculture, the majority of these early works paid attention to the aspect of sexuality and the construction of yaoi fan's identity, which required the negotiation with Thai social values (Jiararattanakul, 2007; Jindalert, 2009; Upanigkit, 2010). Reciprocally, the notion of youth culture within yaoi culture was linked to research on K-Pop fans in Thailand. The collection of data via interview and ethnographic work was subsequently extended to digital platforms. Within the online context, the following set of works highlight virtual interactions among fans and their activities on the internet including writing fan fiction with the yaoi narrative elements (Kijthamchet, 2018; Salingcarlont, 2009; Suwannapisit, 2008).

Henry Jenkins's (2013) scholarship on fandom belatedly inspired some subsequent research on Thai yaoi culture in transmedia platforms. Saksorn Sriprasong and Kullathip Satararuji (2016) studied *Love Sick the Series* through the notions of transmedia storytelling, fans' participation, and the intertextual relationship between the source text and adapted texts. In the late 2010s, Thai scholarship, framed by the Foucauldian views, also shed light upon yaoi series where the sexuality issues and the commoditization of yaoi culture were underlined. *Love Sick the Series* (2014-2015) and *Make It Right the Series* (2016-2017) were the common case studies (Singhakowinta, 2017). Alongside these different ways of exploring yaoi culture, there continue to be works by literary scholars exploring various series through textual analysis (Prasannam, 2008; Watanatup, 2013; Sujjapun, 2017; Vespada, 2017a).

The lack of engagement between literary studies and fan studies is evident in the Thai context as there are limited scholars from media and cultural studies, and academics exploring yaoi fandom are mostly from two distinct fields of literary and communication studies. The latter largely paid attention to music and sport fans instead of yaoi texts. Interestingly while Henry Jenkins's (2013) notable work on "textual poaching" was introduced in Thai language by a communication studies scholar (Kaewthep, 2012), the ideas were not adopted by the scholarship on yaoi phenomenon until the breakthrough of yaoi culture in popular culture in 2010s.

A more recent work by Thomas Baudinette (2019) which points to the boom of yaoi culture in Thailand offers an interesting transmedia and

transnational viewpoint. Contextualizing within a branch of Japanese popular culture in Asia, Baudinette explores *Love Sick the Series* by highlighting Japanese elements and features of the text. Through textual analysis, Baudinette argues that *Love Sick the Series* (2014)—the yaoi production at the transition to “yaoi Boom” (Lam, 2010) in Thailand—offers a new genre of Thai television drama/series (*lakhon* in Thai) as it manifested its own specific narrative grammar.

From Baudinette’s (2019) interpretation, the series did not fail to perpetuate the privilege of heteronormativity although it represented a female protagonist called Pang “to reveal how audiences of *Love Sick* are trained to consume the *lakhon* in ways that mimic the typical consumers of Japanese BL” (p. 117). Pang thus “operates as a stand-in for the viewer” (p. 127). Baudinette offered an interesting observation on certain textual elements such as the “*fujōshi* gaze” found in the series which could be linked to the Japanese context of embodying the pleasure of seeing and pairing yaoi couples. Nevertheless, limited connections were made on how the aesthetic convention is related to the preexisting literary convention of Thai yaoi novel. It is also important to highlight how *Love Sick the Series* emerged at the time of extended industrialization of yaoi culture in the Thai media and many of the audiences have begun developing their own Thai-style “yaoi gaze.”

Before the launch of *Love Sick the Series* (Songyos Sugmakanan, 2013), there was a key moment of yaoi cultural expansion through *Hormones the Series* produced by Nadao Bangkok—a production company under the network of GMM Grammy. *Hormones the Series* presents a romantic relationship between two members of the school’s marching band. The series portrays a female character indulged by her yaoi gaze whenever she notices the intimacy between those cute boys. The girl transforms her gaze into a fiction with illustration on the online platform. The narrative code acknowledges the existence of sao-y and their culture among other sexualities. Moreover, *Hormones the Series* expanded the issues of yaoi couples and their gender ambiguity in its following seasons during 2014-2015. Ultimately, the culture of sao-y and their fan practices blended with the key content of *Hormones the Series* (since its season 1). The practices were repeated in *Love Sick the Series* entailed by the rise of yaoi phenomenon of the 2010s when yaoi fan culture has been integrated into creating content on page and screen. In the 2010s, the yaoi contents crafted from yaoi culture are produced, circulated and commoditized for fans. Those fans are, presumably, acquainted with yaoi culture. This is when the interrelationship between fan and the industry has come to the fore. With

the rise of companies such as GMMTV, there remains the gap in research that explores the role of the company in shaping yaoi culture.

Orawan Vichayawannakul's research (2016) provides a starting point in exploring yaoi in the Thai book industry. As a yaoi writer herself, Vichayawannakul explores the interrelationship between publishers and the cycle of yaoi writers from Bourdieusian perspectives. The research findings highlight the accumulation of "capital" among selected writers. The work sheds light on the way Thai yaoi writers have to wrestle with the industry in terms of recognition, benefits, and participation in book fairs and with their patriarchal families. To explain what has happened in Thailand during what I refer to as the "yaoi Boom," borrowing Lam's (2010) term, of the 2010s, it is important to consider the interplay between fans and industry.

In my earlier work I have found that sao-y had a tendency to comply with the industry. While sao-y themselves were poaching the texts produced under the name of the company, they purchased the company's production poached from fan culture (Prasannam, 2018). Here culture is not merely a site of struggle; it is likewise a site of negotiation and dialogue (Booth, 2015, p. 1). Using my earlier work as a start-off point, the rest of the paper explores the role of GMMTV Company Limited as a key player in industrializing yaoi content in Thailand.⁹ Along with exploring how the company created links between book culture, screen industry, and star-making business, I also explore how GMMTV is involved with the yaoi fan culture through what Paul Booth (2015) referred to as "fan/industry interaction."

Industry Intervention:

GMMTV in Collaboration with the Book Industry

GMMTV Company Limited (formerly called Grammy Television Company) was founded in 1995. It was conceived under the umbrella of one of the biggest entertainment company in Thailand—GMM Grammy (Kojiw & Sotanasathien, 2015). Since its inception, the company produced a famous sit-com series titled *Sam num sam mum* [Three Brothers] (1995-1998) starring famous singers under the contract of GMM Grammy. The company adopted a business model of combining star making, music, and television together (Kojiw & Sotanasathien, 2015). Since the beginning of the "Digital TV Era" in Thailand in 2014, GMM Grammy launched its two prominent television channels: GMM25 and ONE. These two platforms broadcast content created by GMMTV teams and other potential smaller studios. The two channels aim to target "teenagers and people of new generations who are concerned about taste, active lifestyle and open for possible creative ideas" (GMM Grammy Annual Report, 2016, p. 63). The company hopes to be positioned as a complex content provider producing

and inventing innovation in music, film, television drama, television series, edutainment, commercial media, and artists. It also aims to be an investor, organizer, and distributor of “content” in the entertainment business through the combination of different forms of technology (GMM Grammy Annual Report, 2018, p. 55). To achieve such goals, GMMTV, under the lead of GMM Grammy, pioneered a new tradition of television adaptation in 2015. Previously, the television adaptation of the novel in Thailand tends to cling on the works of female writers concerning domestic lives or fantasy world (Vespada, 2017b).¹⁰ GMMTV instead selected some works originally published on Dek-D.com—the website for online literary communities in Thai language (Sujjapun, 2017).

Not long before the “yaoi Boom,” GMMTV collaborated with Jamsai Publishing which groomed writers from the online literary cycle (see Dek-D.com and thaiboyslove.com). Though, underappreciated by mainstream literary historiography in Thailand, Jamsai Publishing has established its own school of romance called *niyai Jamsai* [Jamsai’s novel] similar to Harlequin Romance—the generic category named after the publishing house. *Niyai Jamsai* targets various groups of (mostly female) readers from teenagers to young, early-career women (Moolekakaon, 2008). It also employs popular songs as an intertext touching upon different aspects of Thai youth culture (Moolekakaon, 2008, pp. 114–115). In 2015, GMMTV adapted a novel series called *Rak na pet ngo* [Ugly Duckling] written by Jamsai writers. In the same year, the series called *Kiss the Series*, adapted from Hideko_Sunshine’s *Natural Kiss yai saen di kho yok hua jai duang ni hai num witsawa* [Natural Kiss: Saendi Who Gives Her Heart to an Engineering Student], was aired. The series recounts a *yaoi* couple as minor characters. This show was the starting point for GMMTV in bridging *yaoi* contents in book industry and screen culture.

As Marianne Martens (2019) remarked in her study on popular fiction’s fandom: “Genre is both a construct and a marketing tool” (p. 1); it is not surprising to see *yaoi* fans of book industry consuming *yaoi* texts on television particularly those they used to read in a form of novel before. In 2015, after the achievement of *niyai Jamsai* in television culture, Jamsai Publishing developed *yaoi* literary market by establishing its sub-publishing house called EverY. The strategy of EverY was to seek out popular pieces (typically from the online platforms) or famous writers to reassure the commercial success (Vichayawannakul, 2016, p. 188). GMMTV has been using the *yaoi* texts published by these two publishers as materials for its *yaoi* television adaptations.

Along with the remarkable success of *yaoi* genre, GMMTV decided to produce its complete *yaoi* series called *SOTUS the Series* (Phadung

Samajarn, 2016). The series was adapted from yaoi novel first publicized on Dek-D.com. The source text of the series titled *Phi wak tau rai kap nai pi nueng* [The Hazer and the Fresher]¹¹ was written in 2013 by BitterSweet (pseudonym). On Dek-D.com, the novel was read 1,757,985 times (as of 9 October 2019). The series features the relationship between Athit (Krist-Perawat Sangpotirat) in uke role and Kongphop (Singto-Prachaya Ruangroj) in seme role in the context of university life. Following this initial project, GMMTV followed up with the sequel called *SOTUS S the Series*.

This sequel extends the context of the university life to a work place. The story follows Athit's life as a rookie in a company and Kongphop's role as a head hazer. Highly contextualized within Thai work culture, the screenplay of this sequel was developed by the author of the original novel and GMMTV team. Following the premier in December 2017, the novel version was also published.

Within these growing adapted series, the yaoi culture which was rooted in the sphere of literary creation was dictated by the television industry. At the time, the yaoi novel was also written to serve media fans. In other words, *SOTUS S* can be categorized as novelization. The authorial role of BitterSweet who was involved in the production of these two series (Deepattana, 2017) bended toward the television industry: from a novelist to a novelizer or a coscreenwriter. GMMTV also created a spin-off production of *SOTUS the Series*, recounting the episode when Kongphop has to leave Athit for his postgraduate studies in China. This extended version was included in *OurSkyy the Series* launched in 2018 along with other series starring GMMTV's yaoi couples. The success of the series gave birth to *SOTUS* the novel in Chinese translation which had been distributed in Chinese-speaking world. The circulation of these books is to maintain the memory of the series alongside Krist/Singto's fan meetings in several regions of China (2017), in Taiwan (March and September 2018) and in Singapore (July 2018) respectively.

The intervention of GMMTV in the book industry can also be observed from the space of textual production and book distribution. As mentioned earlier, GMMTV produced the well-received *Kiss the Series* (Chatkaew Susiwa, 2016) with their own yaoi stars. The series is adapted from a Jamsai's novel by Hideko_Sunshine (pseudonym). The same writer subsequently published a novel called *Blue Kiss* (Wirachit Thongchila, 2017) with EverY—a subpublishing house of Jamsai Publishing. From its origin, the project was regarded as a spin-off of *Kiss Me the Series*. The yaoi protagonists from *Blue Kiss* were later included in the followed up *Kiss Me Again the Series* (2018). The stars of these texts are GMMTV's yaoi couple Pete (Tay-Tawan Vihokratana) in seme role and Kao (New-Thitipoom Techaapaikhun) in

uke role. *Blue Kiss* the novel was distributed to booksellers across Thailand before the series' premier. It was also relaunched at the 46th National Book Fair and 16th Bangkok International Book Fair between 30 March and 8 April 2018. Engaging with the literary event, GMMTV's Tay/New yaoi couple appeared at EverY's booth for the book relaunch event.

The novel version of *Blue Kiss* uses the figures of manga protagonists to pursue the convention of the yaoi couple. The writer's talk at the book fair provided some background that the novel was formed through her creation along with the inspiration from GMMTV. The presence of the yaoi stars by GMMTV at the event points to the way the fair has shifted its space from a fan site that provides "readers with access to authors they love" (Martens, 2019, p. 61) as well as the readers' exposure to the publishers to a transmedia space. With the star power, the literary fan sites were shifted to become a broader yaoi fan site where fans can interact with the yaoi couple they love. At the event, Tay/New also played a game allowing them to perform intimate acts. This includes a Pocky Game or *Pepero* Game in which the couple has to eat a small piece of bread stick from both ends, which allows them to reenact the kissing scene from the series. The venue was decorated by both GMMTV's and EverY's logos, further conveying the collaboration between two types of industry.

The journey of Hideko_Sunshine's novel from paper to screen and star products above is similar to the case of BitterSweet's *SOTUS Franchise*. Tay/New couple's spin-off activities were included alongside *OurSkyy the Series* (2018). In 2019, Hideko_Sunshine published another novel with EverY called *Dark Blue Kiss*. The publication of the novel resonated with the success of *Kiss Me Again the Series*. GMMTV also purchased this follow-up novel for their adaptation. With the stable yaoi fans, GMMTV left out all the straight couples from the main plot. The series was launched in October 2019 around the same time as Thailand's 24th Book Expo. With this particular book fair, the writer's talk was moved from the EverY's booth to the main stage of the venue, and was broadcasted live on the official Facebook page of the organizer. Tay/New also appeared at the event talking about their developed roles in the series.

It is evident through these examples that the yaoi novels have been the source of GMMTV's yaoi content since the rise of the phenomenon in 2014. It is also important to highlight that the interrelationship between GMMTV and the book industry is directly interacted with the shared fandom.

The sequels and the spin-off productions, by the collaborative practices of yaoi writers and GMMTV, indicate that they seek to maintain the memory of their yaoi couples among the fans. These practices generated subsequent fan fiction, fan art, and fan videos. To some extent GMMTV's practices can

be seen as celebrating and manipulating fans' desires (Booth, 2015). This interaction resonates with Paul Booth's exploration of the way "[fans and the industry pursue] nostalgia and novelty in digital fandom" (2015, p. 6). The following sections look further into specific fan/industry interactions and the use of memory to maintain the yaoi boom.

Fan/Industry Interaction through the Practice of "Shipping"

As mentioned earlier, a key aspect of yaoi fan culture in the Thai context is "shipping"¹² or an act of pairing characters/stars from existing media content then reimagining the romantic relationship among them. Shipping is a foundation of yaoi particularly the *dōjinshi* sub-genre. Chiang (2016) shared her observation on yaoi (or BL) imagination among *fujōshi* (sao-y in Thai):

In other words, what makes *fujōshi* a *fujōshi* is not just the fact that a *fujōshi* reads, writes and watches BL-related products, or participates in BL conventions; rather, it is the making of BL in daily life that makes a *fujōshi* a *fujōshi*. That is to say, BL pairing is important in shaping what *fujōshi* is. (Chiang, p. 234)

The creation of fan texts, as a part of sao-y identity construction, is similar to the act of slashing found in the Anglophone media culture. In the Thai context, the act of shipping can be found in fan art, fan fiction, and the OPV: the latter has been quite well-received since the popularity of the Korean Wave (e.g., OPVs based on BTS, EXO, and GOT7). The term "OPV" is potentially derived from Official Promotion Video or Other People's Video. The irony of the term when used among fans is that OPV is often not official content. OPV is one of the most popular forms of fan texts; it is normally consumed through YouTube. The length of OPV can vary depending on original songs or music. Short OPVs can also be channelled on Instagram. The materials for OPV are clips from the series, fan meeting activities, events, story and live chats through social network websites such as Facebook and Instagram. The OPV recreates stories among the protagonists from television series and the stars. Fans can reimagine the relationship among their admired stars. OPVs are the "floor" for characters who fail to win the protagonists' hearts but are then embraced by fans. They are also a "playground" for unexpected relationships among the characters and the stars. The significant narrative techniques of OPVs are endorsed by the selection of music, well-edited compilation of visual texts and speech acts of the characters, the stars as well as what they performed on social media.

The OPV has a lot in common with fan fiction as it manipulates the source text: the shifts of point of views and the storylines. Like the fan fiction, the OPV “is in conversation not only with the source text but usually also with other stories in the fandom and the discussion that permeate the community” (Busse, 2017, p. 51). This describes how the OPV is produced and consumed by fans. The OPV initiates fans’ gathering on digital platforms as fans can leave comments supporting the creator or the recoded version of the series. The OPV is also consumed as a key element of actual fans’ gathering, and it is potentially used as fan projects dedicated to the stars. Two major OPV channel featuring Thai yaoi series on YouTube are Hwaazabii (since 2015) and ATKP (since 2017). Both channels generously provide English subtitle for international fans.

Significantly, the OPV is the first form of industry-generated “shipping” adopted by GMMTV after it was widely used by fans for shipping. Following the popularity of OPV among fans, GMMTV appropriates and parodies (Booth, 2015) OPV culture and generates content back to its own followers. This situation provides an interesting case by which to explore fan/industry interaction.

The first case appeared on YouTube on 30 June 2017 when *Water Boyy the Series* was aired. The song remediated in the industry-created OPV is *Than fai kao* [An Old Flame] of Thongchai McIntyre. Thongchai McIntyre is one of the most iconic pop stars in Thailand who has been GMM Grammy’s artist since 1987. The OPV describes the feeling of the uke character of the series when he was coping with the return of his seme’s ex-girlfriend. GMMTV specifically categorized the clip as an OPV. One key difference between industry-made and fan-made OPVs is fan’s OPV may blind or eliminate logos of the channels and the company to remain “unofficial” while GMMTV asserts the “official” quality despite the borrowed grammar of the unofficial. After the launch of the first industry-made OPV, the admin of the fan-run ATKP YouTube Channel producing OPV left an interesting comment: “GMM has produced even an OPV? We’d better quit.” Fans then became aware of the fact that their OPV culture had thus been appropriated.

The following OPVs released by GMMTV were based on other series combined with the songs in the company’s catalogue: *SOTUS S the Series* (song: *Phuhchai khon ni kamlang mot raeng* [This Man Is about to Fall Down] of Pongsak Rattanapong), *Kiss Me Again* (song: *Ya tham yang ni mai wa kap khrai khaojai mai* [You Don’t Do This To Anyone, Do You?]) made a connection to GMM’s top singer Thongchai McIntyre) *Theory of Love* (song: *Man koet arai kap huajai* [What Happened to My Heart?]) drew on the song by another GMM singer Sukrit Wisetkaew). These OPVs were published before the ending of certain series to enhance their popularity and keeping

the series in conversation. The songs in the OPVs also allow the company to remind fans of their music history. Most of selected songs are from pop music genre.

What is particularly interesting about these OPVs is how GMMTV remediated the grammar of the OPV produced by fan communities. A particularly obvious example is related to the series *Theory of Love* (Nattaphol Mongkolsawat, 2019) which incorporates the live performance of the yaoi stars Off-Jumpol Adulkittiporn/Gun-Atthaphan Phunsawat singing the same song at the industry-led fan meet event in Taipei (20-22 July 2019). The selected part of the performance for the OPV draws attention to Off's gentle eyes on Gun. The gazing gesture has been regarded by fans as a prophecy of the happy ending of the series aired after the concert on 17 August 2019. The creation of this OPV is exemplary of the blurred boundary between the yaoi couple in the series and performed stars under the industry-run event. Fans positively reacted to this OPV, and the content has been shared among fans after the series ended.

The act of shipping recreated by GMMTV has also been extended from the OPV to other types of content and event. There are several television shows produced by GMMTV for yaoi stars: *Off-Gun Fun Night* (first published 12 November 2017); *TayNew Meal Date* (first published on 30 November 2018); *Friend.Ship with Krist-Singto* (premiered on 15 July 2019).¹³ Although the contents of these shows vary, they all present “shipping” as a spectacle. The camera work and editing of the shows particularly visualize and underline the intimacy among the couples. There are captured moments and decorative pinky memes on the screen when sweet moments occur. These are accentuated elements highlight the company's recognition of the grammar of fan texts. Through these shows, the media producers have become the “shippers” themselves. Performing as a shipper has also gradually become a code of conduct among masters of ceremonies of the industry-led shows and events where yaoi couples are staged. In these occasions, the MCs “ship” the stars to indulge their audiences. Shipping can be practiced through games or verbal teasing leading to physical intimacy or the “skinship” among yaoi stars. Often the MCs also encourage the stars to tell secrets or exclusive experiences that used to be left off-screen.

A particularly distinctive act of industry shipping as a spectacle can be found during the GMMTV's official yaoi fan meet in 2017 called “Y I Love You Fan Party.” There is a voice-over before the show with image of a ship in the pink ocean on the screen. The voice says:

Welcome to GMMTV cruise. We will show you around Y Ocean. Our crews are exceptionally well-trained. The cruise

does not provide life jackets as we can assure that you will never fall into the water. In case of emergency as *yaoi* hormone kicks in, you are allowed to scream as loud as you can. (Panichraksapong et al., 2017, 00:53 mins)

Significantly, through the investment of the company, the event reached out to wider audiences. A Chinese interpreter was provided for fans flying from Chinese-speaking countries although the event was run in Thai with local jokes made on the stage. After the event, recorded episodes were remediated on several online platforms both official and unofficial ones.¹⁴

Apart from the theme of ship and shipping, the structure of the event also had a lot in common with unofficial meetings run by fans. These included the screening of clips from the series, reenactments of important scenes from the series by *yaoi* stars and star interviews. The interviews highlighted the stars' current projects and the expanding fan base in the region. The event was highly commercial and industrialized, but it was also engaged by fans as evident in the participation in competitive ticketing. The work mentioned on the stage could be mapped with the products sold by GMMTV, GMM Grammy Company and their business partners such as photo books, television shows, forthcoming series, and stickers for LINE application on mobile phones.

Switching different *yaoi* couples was another part of the shows. The activity was called *ruea phi* [ghost ship] in Thai which initiated further possibilities for *yaoi* couples on screen. In terms of its star industry, GMMTV has groomed certain sets of actors who can be alternatively paired in their television series and other related shows. *Reua phi* also encouraged fans to assert the suitability of their admired couples through fan texts which were acknowledged by the industry. *Ruea phi* could also be regarded as pilot projects of new-paired couples while it asserted the fans' preference of the same couples.

One interesting element of the "Y I Love You Fan Party" running across their activities was how the company sought to revive the fan network through the commemoration of past series' achievements. This aspect helps reaffirm the future possibility of *yaoi* industry by GMMTV and explicate the importance of memory in the process of *yaoi* industrialization.

The Uses of Memory

As previously mentioned that prior to the production of books, fan meet events and television shows starring *yaoi* couples, GMMTV focused on producing television series. In all of these activities the uses of memory were employed as a mode of communication within the fan/industry interaction

to emphasize the shared culture. In GMMTV's seminal television series *SOTUS the Series* and its sequel *SOTUS S the Series*, the storylines facilitate the act of recollection as it presents friendship during and after university life which is the period of collective memory among target audiences.

When looking closely at the formation of *SOTUS the Series*, we can also see the way the series stimulate fan nostalgia by paying homage to the former GMMTV yaoi couple. The original sound track of the series is *Khwan lap nai jai* [The Secrets in Our Hearts] performed by Gun-Achirawich Saliwattana and Amp-Phurikulkrit Chusakdiskulwibul or as referred to by fans through the couple name "Gun-Achi/Amp." The two stars used to play "khu 'gine" role in *Room Alone the Series* (2014).¹⁵

Commemorating the bond between fans and yaoi culture rooted in the literary tradition, *SOTUS S the Series* pays further homage to yaoi fan culture by visualizing the last page of *SOTUS S* the novel written by BitterSweet which was published after the development of the series' screenplay. Additionally, the special episode of the series also visualizes the interview with Kongphop and Athit from the novel. The face of BitterSweet—the author—was also included in this episode.

As the *SOTUS Franchise* had its own online fans before the serial adaptations, the memory of the text was there before being commemorated by the series. In this case, the media producer played the role of a textual commemorator that used to be played by fans (Hills & Garde-Hansen, 2017). The series was placed as a platform for reenacting the pleasure of reading as well as the pleasure of yaoi imagination that fans were invited to pursue in GMMTV's media production. By paying homage to yaoi fan culture rooted in online literary context, GMMTV eased the confrontational sentiment potentially implanted by integrating fan culture and yaoi culture into the heightened commercialism of the company.

The use of memory as part of fan/industry interaction found in GMMTV products resonate with the practice discussed by Paul Booth (2015). Borrowing the term "mimetic fandom" from Matt Hills (as cited by Booth, 2015, p, 18), Booth proposed a more inclusive definition of the term to incorporate "an area of nostalgic continuity, a remembrance of crucial elements from the past" (p. 18). In addition to textual homage, the company also sought to incorporate fan reenactments as part of their engagement with fans. The process of reenactment is particularly interesting as it was the practice popularized among fans. Fan reenactment has been discussed by Barbara Klinger (2011) as a mode of commemorative practice that helps showcase and archive specific films in cultural memory.

For GMMTV, reenactment is adopted as a way to create fan interactions. There are different levels of reenactment from inviting stars to perform

certain familiar soundtracks that create connections across different TV series to reenacting specific moments in the series. At the “Y I Love You Fan Party” in 2017, the two stars who recorded the original soundtracks of *SOTUS the Series* Gun-Achi/Amp were invited to perform on the stage. They sang *SOTUS the Series* original soundtrack and the iconic *Rak mai mi ngueankhai/Unconditional Love* with a featuring by White-Nawat Phumphothingam. This latter song is the original soundtrack of *Love Sick the Series Season 2* (2015) in which White-Nawat played some role. This particular song plays an important part in fan memories as the original version was composed and performed by Nat Sakdatorn and Tol-Vonthongchai Intarawat (Nat/Tol)—the legendary yaoi couple from the singing contest and reality show called the Academy Fantasia since 2007.

The uses of memory and nostalgia were adopted throughout the show in 2017. The event ended with a compilation of photos from fan-led fan meetings. The photos were projected on the screen provided by GMMTV. This particular moment was framed as the industry’s acknowledgement of the fan network and the fan support. Included in this final part was a session for yaoi stars to express their grateful feelings toward their fans. Repetitively, the key point during this emotional final session was to declare their imperfection and their failed attempts to be perfect. Rooted in the rhetorical humility of Thai artists (Siripattananuntakul, 2012, p. 67), the episode had a function to gain support from fans by apologizing for any disappointment based on the recognition of life’s imperfection. The session provoked an emotional ending bringing the stars and fans to tears before the last curtain was falling.

The memory of the texts shared and exchanged between fans and GMMTV in many of its activities including the events discussed above is highly referential. Only fans can understand the references or the intertextual connections. By identifying such connections, fans can maintain their fan identity and revisit their past experiences of their own fan culture. What GMMTV implemented may be framed as the “affective connection” discussed by Booth (2015). Explaining that fan nostalgia can extend beyond “a historic memory,” Booth notes that it is also about “the affective connection between an imagined ideal fan text and the initial experiences of the fan” (p. 19).

The uses of memory were further emphasized in 2018, when GMMTV launched “*SOTUS the Memories Live on Stage*.” The show was filled with an array of character reenactments from the series namely the hazers, the freshers, the relationship of minor couples, and the elaborate kiss scene between Krist/Singto. Extending from the focus on the text, Kris/Singto also narrated their personal memories when they met at the university before

being cast for the roles. The closing session of the event was a compilation of old photos from the series mixed with the song *Ja dai mai luem kan/Never Forget Us* (originally performed by Thongchai McIntyre—GMM Grammy's long-established singer previously mentioned).¹⁶

This particular industry-led fan meet event follows the format of the highly successful event inaugurated in 2017 with the thanking session that acknowledge fan participations. In this session a special music video was screened. This music video is called *Theo tham hai chan chok di/You Have Made Me Feel Lucky* sung by Kris/Singto aired in May 2017 on YouTube. The music video was made in Thai and Chinese to acknowledge the support from yaoi fans in Thailand and beyond. Fans were acknowledged through images of them gathering waving red roses and singing along the song. Through this music video screened at an industry-led fan met event, fans are included within different layers of content produced by the industry targeting fans themselves.

As of 2019, GMMTV continued to incorporate fan memory as part of their fan/industry interactions. In the “Y I Love You Fan Party 2019: Ha-Y,” the event began with images of intimate moments on screen with the voice over: “All these touching moments have brought these couples to join force on Ha-Y Island. [...] And they are about to make you islanders feel the love again” (Panichraksapong et al., 2019, 02:28 mins). This opening session articulated the importance of the memory of the text in setting up the fan/industry gathering. This event also acknowledged the contribution of the fandom online. The example was when the organizer showed the pictures related to the hashtag #poca generated by fans on the screen (#poca is derived from polar bear and orca—Tay/New's favorite animals/totems). The memory used was a mixture of memory of the series and of the yaoi stars themselves. This example reveals the current mode of fan/industry interaction on and off screen.

The pursuit of fan memory and objects which blurred the line between yaoi stars in the real life and in the series was later employed for the new series. The end product could be found in *OurSkyy the Series*, produced as a special sequel celebrating yaoi production of GMMTV. Launched in the late of 2018, *OurSkyy the Series* gained wide popularity among Thai and trans-Asian fans. In the Pick/Rome episode (starring Off/Gun), the series used photo frames as props in the set. The framed photos were of GMMTV's yaoi stars—Off/Gun. The same technique was also replayed in Athit/Kongphop episodes (starring Kirst/Singto). In another series, *Theory of Love*, Off/Gun photos are also foregrounded in the proposal scene. In these sequences, the repetitive use of pictorial memory of the yaoi couples are tied to the act of

shipping which is now appropriated by the industry as a promotion of the star products.

Similar to several GMMTV's shows, the original soundtrack of *OurSkyy the Series* was *Sia dai* [I Wish I Could Turn Back Time], a persistent track originally performed by GMM Grammy's singer Thongchai McIntyre. The persistent reference to Thongchai McIntyre is an interesting case of intergenerational fandom and stardom. Peter Jackson (2006) describes Thongchai as "the deliberately ambiguous, ever-youthful and never married [...] known by his nickname Bird [...] [Bird] remains as popular as ever by style-surfing and a David Bowie-like capacity for constant self-reinvention" (p. 559). Thongchai McIntyre has been the legend of GMM Grammy and of the Thai music industry since the 1980s. To replay his song in the GMMTV's fan meet events was to extend the story of yaoi culture to broader Thai popular culture memory. At the same time, it can be regarded as the move to celebrate the legacy of GMM Grammy Company as an establishment. As pop music has grown by the replay through different types of media (Bennett & Rogers, 2016, pp. 41-42); its presence matters to the mainstreaming of yaoi culture as a part of the broader Thai popular culture under the fan/industry interaction. To replay or to restage the old pop songs can be equivalent to the reenactment. In the age of media convergence, GMMTV's reenactments could be viewed as a space for fans to explore their "affective connection" to their admired yaoi stars and their own experiences of media consumption.

Conclusion

When considering the broader yaoi phenomenon, it is evident that the current state of affairs is driven by the industry to maintain its popularity. The fan/industry practices boosted by the company have turned to be the mainstream rhetoric of yaoi cultural events in Thailand. By far the rhetoric has been adopted by other entertainment companies. An exemplary example is *Reminders the Series* (2019), a sequel to *Love Sick the Series* and *Love by Chance the Series*. As part of this project, a fan event called "Reminders: Because We Miss You" was organized in April 2019. A couple from the film *Love of Siam* (Pchy/Mario) was invited to perform on the stage. They sang the iconic original sound track of the film which refreshed the legacy of yaoi culture in Thailand. As previously mentioned, *Love of Siam* was not widely (or officially) categorized as yaoi product until the rise of yaoi phenomenon led by the industry in the 2010s. In this event, the film was incorporated back into the yaoi cultural memory to create another layer of fan/industry interaction through the act of "shipping" and the uses of memory.

Some other interesting cases of yaoi products are those funded by Chinese companies. In Chinese-speaking countries, there is a growing trend in producing yaoi web-series. However, in China, the content has to be circulated via underground digital channels as homosexual relationships go against the rules of Chinese authorities. Consequently, the imported Thai yaoi series were well-embraced by Chinese fans after the wave of Thai dramas and stars since the late 2000s. Some Thai yaoi series were cofunded by Chinese investors. The yaoi series shot in Thailand to date include *Seng ped* [What the Duck the Series] (2017-2018) and *Love by Chance the Series* (2018). The first example was produced by Jinloe Media Work Co. Ltd. The studio and other connected companies also dealt with tourism business in Thailand, which has been fostering fan tour activities to shooting locations. The latter series was funded by Handsome Entertainment Company and GS Entertainment. These two Chinese companies were seeking to boost Thai star industry in China through yaoi products, which could also be marketed in other countries in Asia and beyond. The growing groups of fans outside Asia include the South American markets. These instances further highlight the way fan culture was used by the business sectors despite its previous practices by fan communities. With these continuous fan/industry interactions, there is a large room to grow future research both empirical and theoretically dedicated ones.

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Notes

¹ The term "cute boy" in this context was used for the first time by Chula Cute Boy Facebook fan page established in September 2012 by a group of Chulalongkorn University current students and alumni. The page expanded its space to Instagram in November 2013.

² Apart from the presence in popular culture, in 2019, Thailand has LGBTQ representatives in the parliament for the first time.

³ Yaoi is significantly different from gay cultural production as it does not identify itself with mainstream gay culture, and the majority of its fans are heterosexual women (Camper, 2006, p. 26).

⁴ The data collected from the website Mydramalist.com and the Facebook fan page called Y Relation (9 October 2019). The number in 2018 and 2019 decreased from 2017 because yaoi television and web series from the Chinese-speaking world were also well-received among Thai audiences. They are highly marketed and offer new viewing experiences to Thai yaoi fans while a huge population of Chinese-speaking fans would rather appreciate Thai yaoi culture. Such exchange should be regarded as the trans-Asian phenomenon.

⁵ See the scholarship on yaoi-related book fairs beyond Thailand in Lam (2010).

⁶ On the 31 August 2008, I joined an activity called "Korean Fiction and Cover ~Reconnect~" in Bangkok. Fans were gathering at the event, although it was not simple to categorize them as fans of specific stars or fans of yaoi culture in general. There were an array of booths selling fans' products including yaoi media and publications. These materials provide many clips from the concerts and television shows featuring Korean male stars and their intimacy which was a perfect material for yaoi fans to fantasize their relationship. The stars themselves were also aware of this practice and engaged in providing the sought after intimacy, which has been referred to as "fan service".

⁷ Anuchyd Sapanphong had his debut as an actor when he played protagonist in *Sipha kham*

duean sipet/Mekong Full Moon Party (dir. Jira Maligool, 2002). Anuchyd Sapanphong used to work as a choreographer while Phachara Thammon was known of his participation in *The Star* singing contest. After the success of the series Anuchyd Sapanphong became more engaged with gay and yaoi in the Thai screen culture.

⁸ The screen expansion refers to a business network of GMM Grammy in the Thai screen culture and beyond. There are many companies, business units, television channels and studios affiliated with the company: One HD 31, GMM 25, GMMTV Co., Ltd, GDH 559 (formerly known as GTH), Atime Media, and so on.

⁹ The data discussed in the following sections were collected from GMMTV products concerning yaoi culture including DVDs and photo books and the official channels of GMMTV on YouTube.com called www.youtube.com/user/GMMTVSPOTLIKE. The collection of data was conducted between 9 October 2017 and 9 October 2019.

¹⁰ Some important canonical names are Krissana Asokesin, Kingchat, Kaewkao and Piyaporn Sakkasem.

¹¹ Traditionally, the hazers or *pi wak* in Thai are selected from senior university students. They aim at imposing discipline and respectfulness to the first year students during the beginning of the first semester.

¹² "Shipping" here is used as slang. The term is related to ship, boat, or marine transportations. Here it does not necessarily stand for logistic practices.

¹³ Without a doubt, the way *Friend.Ship* is spelt refers to the act of shipping.

¹⁴ The act of shipping is originated by games played at fan meet events particularly those reenacting kissing scene from the series. Two common games are Pocky (or *pepero*) Game and Paper Bite Game. Its basic rule is to bite a biscuit stick until the players' faces are close enough: for instance, biting until the Pocky stick turns two centimeter-long. The Paper Bite Game is to move sheets of paper from another player's mouth or body. While the games are on, fans are cheering and taking photos and clips. The intimate moments are normally remediated in a form of clips on YouTube and other platforms.

¹⁵ Gun-Achi also performs the original soundtrack of other yaoi series: *Make it Right the Series* (2016) and *A ti khong phom /Cause you're my boy* (2018), for example.

¹⁶ During the show other two songs of Thongchai McIntyre were performed as well: *Boomerang* and *Jap mue kan wai/Let's Hold Each Other's Hands*.

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