

place in the natural world. For her approach to Marilyn Dumont's poetry, Relke adopts a critical strategy that links the oppressions of race and gender as a means of "unearthing" the incisive critical commentary integral to Dumont's poetry. Relke's methodology of linking oppressions both broadens commentary on the works and models an ecocritical practice, which is replicable and applicable to the work of many other Canadian women writers. Indeed, Relke invites an overall reconsideration of Canadian critical approaches to the representation of nature within a wide variety of cultural products.

Relke's *Greenwor(l)ds* opens the door to a lively and important discussion of the place of ecocriticism in interpreting and recovering Canadian women's poetry. More generally, *Greenwor(l)ds* works to legitimize ecocriticism - a field that has defined itself almost entirely in terms of American literature - as a critical discourse in Canada.

Anne Milne
McMaster University

Sex and Borders: Gender, National Identity, and Prostitution Policy in Thailand. Leslie Ann Jeffrey. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002; 224 pages; ISBN 0-7748-0873; \$27.95 (paper).

This recent book by political scientist Leslie Jeffrey argues that national identity is globally constructed and fundamentally gendered by using the symbol of the prostitute in Thailand as her case study. She makes a very convincing argument that Thai prostitution policy has essentially been constructed around different (historical) representations of the prostitute and of the Thai government's changing ideals of masculinity and femininity, rather than for the good of the prostitute herself. She does a wonderful job illustrating the problems for prostitute women of this gendered and global construction.

The book is filled with fascinating detail and history, much of which can't be addressed in a short review: the romanticism of the peasantry and the use of the peasant woman in particular as a symbol of national identity, the role of elite women

in identity formation and how women make use of tradition in order to access more social and political power, the changing role of men and the government and media's concerted efforts to "change" men, how the government depends on the sex trade and condemns it at the same time, the role of the American military in the development of sex tourism, and the very recent disciplining of the peasant woman as consumer.

Thailand's struggle between modernity and tradition is shown to be at the expense of women's autonomy and related more to women as the bearers and reproducers of custom and tradition than any coherency of policy. Even the most recent 1996 prostitution law, according to Jeffrey's analysis, had much more to do with the state's desire to appear to be modern and in step with the international community than with the actual desires of prostitute women or their advocates.

Jeffrey argues that the policy choices of the government are determined by whether prostitutes are seen as criminals, consumers, backward peasants or victims. And many times, the politics of representation is determined by the vagaries of constructing a national identity that is both in sync with Western nations and at the same time distinct from Western power. For instance, Jeffrey shows how Phibun in the 1930s eliminated polygamy to "modernize" Thailand, in order to become "civilized" and a full member of the international community, and how this led to increased prostitution. Increased prostitution then became associated with the West and consequently the next leaders tried to reject Western values in favour of more "traditional" Thai values, ignoring the continuing rise of prostitution. According to Jeffrey, this enabled the government to emphasize the "evil foreigners" and sex tourists rather than deal with the fact that most clients of Thai prostitutes are Thai men. This is not dealt with in any detail by Jeffrey because her main arguments have to do with the construction of national identity in relation to Western imperialism, but the heavy use of prostitutes by local men (the normalization of male sexual need) must be seen as a factor in the rise of sex tourism in Thailand, as it is in other parts of Southeast Asia.

Much of Jeffrey's analysis rings true from my own research in the Philippines. Though the historical and religious contexts are obviously very

different, the similarities of prostitution policy, the impact of the Americans in the rise of military prostitution and subsequently sex tourism, and the effect on the prostitutes themselves make for a sobering read. Advocates in most Southeast Asian nations, regardless of their different ideologies about prostitution, and whether they want it to be abolished or not, believe that the best system for the women would be a decriminalized system. To date, only a few countries in the world have actually implemented such a system that would free prostitute women from police coercion and from the double bind of working in an illegal industry while being regulated by the government, as they are in both the Philippines and in Thailand. Jeffrey ends by proposing just such a decriminalized system that would care more for workers' rights than the construction of national identity. Her book is a timely, interesting and well-documented study of the impact of Western (neo) imperialism on the construction of different prostitution policies (and on the lives of real prostitute women). She shows how far we are from actually establishing such a decriminalized system, partly because of Western hegemony and partly because of a lack of concern about those most affected by actual policy.

Meredith Ralston
Mount Saint Vincent University