

experience that is not 'real sex'. The rethinking of a possibility of clients' collusive position in dancers' script subversion and emancipation might actually be a new starting point for the reflection on the politics of sex(ualised) work.

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### **Sex tourism, marginal people and liminalities**

Chris Ryan and Michael C. Hall; Routledge, London, 2001, ISBN: 0-415-19510-1, £19.99 (Pbk), 0-415-19509-8, £75.00 (Hbk)

*Sex tourism* is based on some interesting theoretical arguments that are presented in the preface. The authors acknowledge that in tourism studies – their field of research – the role of sex is almost ignored. They turn to feminist political and theoretical contributions in order to develop a model of research open to accounts of sex workers and to the authors' (and the reader's) own self-reflection. The project critiques the too-simple definitions of sex tourism used by Western media and law – as well as by many Western political activists – that situate sex tourism 'over there', in a different (Third) world, in which poverty and patriarchal culture on the one hand, and pedophilia and violent instincts on the other, provide a self-containing explanation which depoliticizes the debate. The authors address the contradictions that sex work for tourists create in the societies in which it is practiced. Sex tourism is often simultaneously repressed and promoted by the state. The book tries to place sex tourism, and trafficking in sex tourism, within larger social settings (Chapter 6) and within military and economic global trends (Chapter 7).

Chris Ryan and Michael Hall explicitly define their point of view as that of New Zealanders – their country of residence and work – and refer mainly to New Zealand, Australia and South-East Asia, with a few references to British academic literature. They rely upon relationships with informants involved in the industry as workers and clients, with members of the gay community, and upon their own reflective processes. They repeatedly state their intention of being as clear as possible as far as their own political involvement and personal investments in the subject is concerned. The authors go as far as to admit the pleasurable nature of their scopophilic desire for informants and for the sex tourist's world. However, the connection between this position and the theoretical framework they propose is not fully worked out. Some central points of their argument are also questionable. For example, while they recognize that sex workers are not victims of some fated necessity, but are oppressed by a series of specific conditions that can and should be changed without taking the

elimination of their job as an aim, these unfortunately come across as personal opinions rather than worked-out positions sustained throughout the book.

The authors maintain that there are similarities, on the one hand, between the tourist and the prostitute and, on the other hand, between the tourist and the prostitution client. Both these are important to the extent that they help us to regard prostitution not as something unique in society, but rather as an activity sharing features with other social and symbolic activities.

The idea of de-differentiating the prostitute and the tourist, both understood as occupying liminal spaces in contemporary society, is carried on through the analysis of identity in a socio-psychological frame (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). While this does not emerge as being a very productive argument, the comparison between the tourist and the prostitute client leads to more specific conclusions. For instance, the same motivations for taking a holiday, it is argued, also emerge as relevant in visiting a sex worker. In the tourist industry what is sold is often a mixture of assault on and confirmation of sexual and relational identity – the tourist is already a potential sex tourist. Interesting examples are taken from travel companies' advertising campaigns. They show the construction of a holiday as a dense space for relational and sexual experiences.

Contemporary forms of holidays and contemporary forms of prostitution are considered within the tradition of social spaces of licentiousness – spaces that constitute some sort of 'safe' assaults on the normal order. The authors offer an historical overview, paying interesting attention to colonial representations, in order to reveal the attitudes on both sides of the relationship between tourists and women in the destination countries.

On the whole, a number of interesting suggestions emerge from the book but they are not fully carried through. This is particularly regrettable in the debate on sex work which is already quite confused, to the political disadvantage of the workers.

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**The most beautiful girl in the world: beauty pageants and national identity**

Sarah Banet-Weiser; University of California Press, California, USA, 1999, ISBN: 0-520-21789-6  
£32.50, 0-520-21791-8, £12.95 (Pbk)

In *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity*, Sarah Banet-Weiser argues that the beauty pageant is a central site for ideologies of gendered citizenship and racialized national subjectivity. Primarily focusing on the annual Miss America pageant, Banet-Weiser's monograph is an important