

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

Thailand's successful sex trade has been portrayed in several media, especially in literature, including various English novels, where the image of Thai female sex workers is negatively described. To demonstrate such conceptualized portrayal, in this independent study, three English contemporary novels mainly discussing the women in this particular group are selected: Christopher G. Moore's *A Killing Smile* (1991), David Young's *Fast Eddie's Lucky A-Go-Go 7* (2004) and Stephen Leather's *Private Dancer* (2005). The discussion will consider two aspects: it is Western Orientalism and how prostitution in Thailand can be explained based on this concept.

Orientalized image of Thai female sex workers

Edward W. Said (1987) provides a striking idea of a hegemony relationship between European countries, mostly colonizers in the eighteenth century, and the countries of the East by employing the terms "the Occident" and "the Orient". He says that during colonial times, "the Occident" consists of colonizing countries like France and the United Kingdom. But today the United States of America is one which occupies that place - "the Occident" - and has become obsessed with the idea of superiority through civilization, therefore pushing "the Orient" into an inferior position, as thought to be living on an unequal footing. Orientalism, he explains is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to the Europe; it is also the place of European's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most

recurring images of the Other" (1). Said suggests that media and of course literature help internalizing or Orientalizing the concept of "the Other".

One interesting aspect of Said's Orientalism is "Oriental sex", which he describes as an escape from the metropolitan sex of the West where strict social systems restricts a person not to prefer sexual intercourse other than with his or her own partner. To maintain one's social status, a person needs to be aware of several elements relating to propriety, he writes "Sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort." The fact is that during the colonial time, the East was viewed as a part of the world where one could solve all one's sexual problems. Such attitudes consequently emphasizes the idea of "Oriental sex" as an unchained sexual relationship and a prejudice of inferiority, requiring no necessary social circumstances or responsibilities, rarely found in the Western world (190).

It also seems to me that the "Oriental sex" emphasizing the concept of submissive "other women" has been attached to the female sex workers of Thailand since the American "Rest and Recreation" or R&R during the Vietnam War. As a result, today Thailand's sex oriented tourism is growing. It draws several male visitors from different countries, and the male-female ratio of visitors, can be a significant indicator: the United States of American 30,797: 25,194, Germany 26,737: 16,948, United Kingdom 33,152: 25,269 and Australia 18,371: 16,734 (<http://www2.tat.or.th>). In response to the demand of sex oriented tourism, the availability of sexual business is variously categorized from go-go bars, beer bars, blowjob bars and private member clubs, including freelance prostitution (<http://www.en.wikipedia.org>). The study of Dr. Nitet Tinnakul reports that during 1999 and 2002, there were more than 2 million women in their adulthood in this business because they wanted to improve their financial status. He also points out that there is a rising tendency among Thai women of turning into this occupation (<http://www.nationamultimedia.com>).

The image of Thai female sex workers as reflected in the three English contemporary novels is considered containing an Orientalized aspect where hegemony between the Western male customers and Thai women in prostitution is portrayed. The superior cultural power is exemplified by words like “a world traveler” and “Napoleon”, which are used to describe those Western males who daringly value a challenge to explore the sex paradise of Thailand while the titles like “stockboy” and “the saints” are reserved for those who do not long for such company (Young, 264-265).

Generally, the images of Thai female sex workers and Western women characters are found to be different. In terms of the physical appearance, though three Western women characters namely, Haley (Young, 2004), Sarah Baring and Kelly Swan (Moore, 1991) are attractive, the Western males tend to attract to the unfamiliar exotic Thai bargirls.

Throughout the three novels, Asian tan skin is brought up many times as a desirable characteristic, especially as it emphasizes the exotic beauty. Young describes his passionate feelings towards the tan-skinned working lady: “Ray always thought she looked most beautiful when she was sleeping. Especially now with her pug nose and slightly parted lips. Her skin was golden against the white of the pillow case and her long, orange brown hair lay fanned out, revealing the lovely curve of her neck...” (108).

The three novelists further state that long dark hair is the most popular feature in forming a concept of Oriental women and suggest it as an essential part of Oriental charm, causing the Western man to fall in love. They discuss the long hair as erotic and the dark hair, from natural black to brown, as reflecting “a madness of brown flesh and black hair” (Young, 82). In *Private Dancer*, the dancing lady’s long black hair impresses Pete, a bar newcomer who after a while becomes drawn into a perplexing love relationship. Pete says “I don’t know if it was love at first

sight, but it was pretty damn close. She has the longest hair I'd ever seen, jet black and almost down to her waist..." (Leather, 9).

Apart from tan skin and long black hair, small stature is another character of the working ladies, especially with regard to what is considered "cute". Consequently, the words "little" or "small" are often attached to the characters. For example, a bar working lady "Noi" is called "little Noi" (Moore, 79), and is referred to as "pretty little thing" and "cute little thing" (Leather, 201; 206). Also, a small bargirl named Wan is described as "a little ball of sunshine" and "She was small and thin with eyes like a Japanese cartoon" (Young, 252-253). All of these indicate a certain stereotype.

In an interview with sex workers in Chiang Mai's beer bars, they agree that the three major features of beautiful tan skin, long dark hair, and small stature are the most typical appearances best attracting Western bar customers. However, most customers prefer good-looking women with friendliness and hospitality.

One minor detail of the Orientalized image of sex workers of Thailand which the novelists all agree is the women's naturally orderly teeth creating an impressive smile, as it is portrayed in *Private Dancer*, "Almost all the girls you see in the bars have perfect teeth. They never seem to go to the dentist either. It must be the diet. No proceeded sugar or the fact that they eat lots of fruit" (Young, 132).

Youth is seen as an especially enticing quality of the Thai female bar workers. This counts for a preference for younger women among male Western visitors to Thailand. In *A Killing Smile* when Moore depicts a bargirl called Noi talking about a twenty-four year old Western woman she meets, the foreign woman is considered too old and does not match general Western's man type. She says "She no good

anymore. *Farang*^{*} want young girl. Sixteen, seventeen, maybe twenty". A middle-aged American man, Dan, has changed a taste for women over the years spent in major sex attractions of Thailand. He sees Western women in a new light and calls Sue, an average American woman and a mother of four children, an "old meat" and "forty-year-old sweathog" though his pal swears to her sexiness (Moore, 81, 119-120).

The authors do not limit the youthful characteristic to the physical alone, but also to the childlike behaviors. As a consequence, some sex workers in their twenties remain appealing. Age and innocence make foreign bar visitors become protective of them. In *Private Dancer*, Pete feels attracted to Joy's innocent childishness and become fond of watching over her, he says, "She looked so cute, so childlike, that I just wanted to gather her up in my arms and protect her from the world that had forced her to sell her body" (Leather, 20-23). In the same way, Moore illustrates a frightened bar worker requiring protection and comfort from fear of thunder, Moore writes, "Bunny curled up like a baby against my shoulder, shaking, and hiding her face beneath her long, black hair" (151).

The writers further regard the women as sex object with sexual appeal and great inferiority as shown in several extreme sex shows. In this way, the sex workers lose their dignity through the many sexual gestures which arouse sexual desire in the brightness of spotlight. Meanwhile, the visiting men occupy superior power with their faces and bodies in the darkness.

In the mass dancing show, usually the last show of each night, Leather describes the leftover bargirls trying their final chance to allure bar visitors as "a hell

* The word 'farang' is originally adopted from 'français' and refers to those French visitors, regarded as the first Europeans formally connected with Thailand, however it is used nowadays for citing all people with white Caucasian appearance (William and Dean, 1981: 44-45).

of sight” and “a cattle market”, where it is clear that the women are degraded as farm animals (68). Moore shares feelings on the practice of bar providing “list of ladies” and their numbers on a whiteboard in a dehumanizing way, “Number 27 had been sold like pork bellies.” Also, sex shows force women to do bizarre acts such as pulling plastic flowers from the woman’s part. “Pussy Open Bottle Show” and “Pussy Drink Coke Show” are degrading presentations of women reducing them to sex machines (Young, 56) (Moore, 95-96). Even sexual intercourse between men and lesbians are arranged on stage where the working women are portrayed as an inferior creature rendering men’s sexual fantasy.

Moore demonstrates an unequal position of power between the Western male clients and female sex providers engaging in a special oral sex service in a “skull bar.” He shows the bar ladies’ unpleasant work condition of kneeling and avoiding the cigarettes’ ash falling on her head in contrast to the Western male clients who are enjoying the service comfortably on a leather seat (200-201).

In general, it is also found that the three authors portray Oriental provincialism as another quality of an Orientalized image when sex workers are thought to be uncivilized and unfamiliar with urban Western lifestyle. The writers mention that most of the women are from the rural areas of Thailand especially many provincial parts in the Northeast or “Isarn”. They migrate to the capital city of Thailand, Bangkok, and also to the second largest city and an international major tourist attraction of the North, Chiang Mai. This seems to be true according to my interview conducted in Chiang Mai red light areas. ‘Sa’ (unreal name), a bargirl whose original home is Surin, a province in the Northeast, says that 90 percent of Thai female sex workers working in Chiang Mai are from the Northeastern part of Thailand.

Moore puts the women’s provincialism with their unsophisticated and passive attitudes. In the story, Snow hopes that his simple urban magic tricks personifying himself as the villagers’ Godman will easily become successful in exploiting the

virgin female villagers of the peaceful Lahu communities in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai (65-70).

With regard to lack of experience of Western custom, Moore points out the ladies' unfamiliarity with Western standard toilet use, which bothers the Western characters. Moore uses the word "floor-pisser" for a bargirl who does not learn to use a Western-style sit-down toilet and constantly urinates on a room floor right after making love. The author claims this as culturally normal for people in underdeveloped areas of Thailand (59-60). In Riche's bar, bargirls always dump stained used toilet paper into a toilet basket, instead of flushing it down. The behavior annoys Riche, the bar owner, so he tries to educate them but the training scheme never succeeds. Finally, Riche jocosely creates a story of Jerry's Ghost, an effective scheme about a disembodied spirit whose anger can be easily turned on soon after witnessing such dirt in the basket (182-183). Also, a bargirl named Noi becomes frightened on the first time she sits on a bidet and imagines it a Western style of sexual toy. This shows her restricted understanding on the particular issue (83-84).

The writers describe Thai women in the sex industry as passive, which is usually stressed by the activeness of Western women characters. While Thai women in the sex trade are hampered by a carefree character, Western women possess a strong determination to achieve their goals. Moore depicts such ambitious Western women through Sarah Baring, who is a successful working woman and dedicates her one million dollars insurance money to funding Tuttle's Language School (144-146). The difference between Thai and Western women can also be observed by the way they cope with conflicts. In general, Thai sex workers never raise their voice or talk back. When someone urinates on a sex worker's clothes, Moore portrays her incredible calmness: "The girls tend to not to get overly stressed. Not like your average American women who have been known to maul a man who forgets to put down the toilet seat" (60).

In sexual activities, the authors depict the participation of Thai bar ladies and Western women in a completely different way. Leather describes sex with Joy as “It was too passive.” (14). Moore portrays one Thai bargirl as too conservative by refusing a sex toy in bed, even though it is a tool she uses regularly in her exotic stage performances. He suggests that Western women would have accepted the toy because they are more open-minded to any new ideas that would increase their sexual pleasure. He supports the idea through the character of Sarah, a Western woman who finds no difficulty in making a request in her sex game in order to reach the maximum satisfaction (1-2; 43-44).

The Orientalized image of sex worker could be a result of artistic presentation of earlier Western males. A good example is Paul Gauguin who provides the Occidental attitude through his paintings. The artist escaped from civilized France in 1886 to the underdeveloped Brittany of the West Indies and Oceania (colonies of France) and admitted that, “I love Brittany. I find a wildness and a primitiveness there. When my wooden shoes ring out its granite soil, I hear the muffled, dull, and powerful note I am looking for in my painting” (Gowing, 236).

In the painting “Ea Haere la Oe” 1893 (Where are You Going?), Gauguin portrays an image of a young, calm, primitive woman in the center, surrounded by a tropical setting. Gauguin uses three other women as a backdrop in the gentle scene. None of the four directly confront the viewer. Out of the three novels, Young’s description of the working ladies who make an impression on two Western male characters Ray and Tommy. The scene by the swimming pool at Dr. Brent’s house conveys a similar mood in Gauguin’s “Ea Haere la Oe”. Young writes “She had long hair, still wet from a shower or swim, and wore a colorful sarong wrapped around her waist. A bikini covered her top half. The girl’s eyebrows were heavy and dark and came within a half inch of actually meeting. She had the most exotic face Ray had ever seen. He couldn’t take his eyes off her as she set the glasses upon the table and filled them with iced lemonade. The girl smiled, bowed, and walked into the house” (117). Later, a group of fifteen brown-skinned ladies join the fun

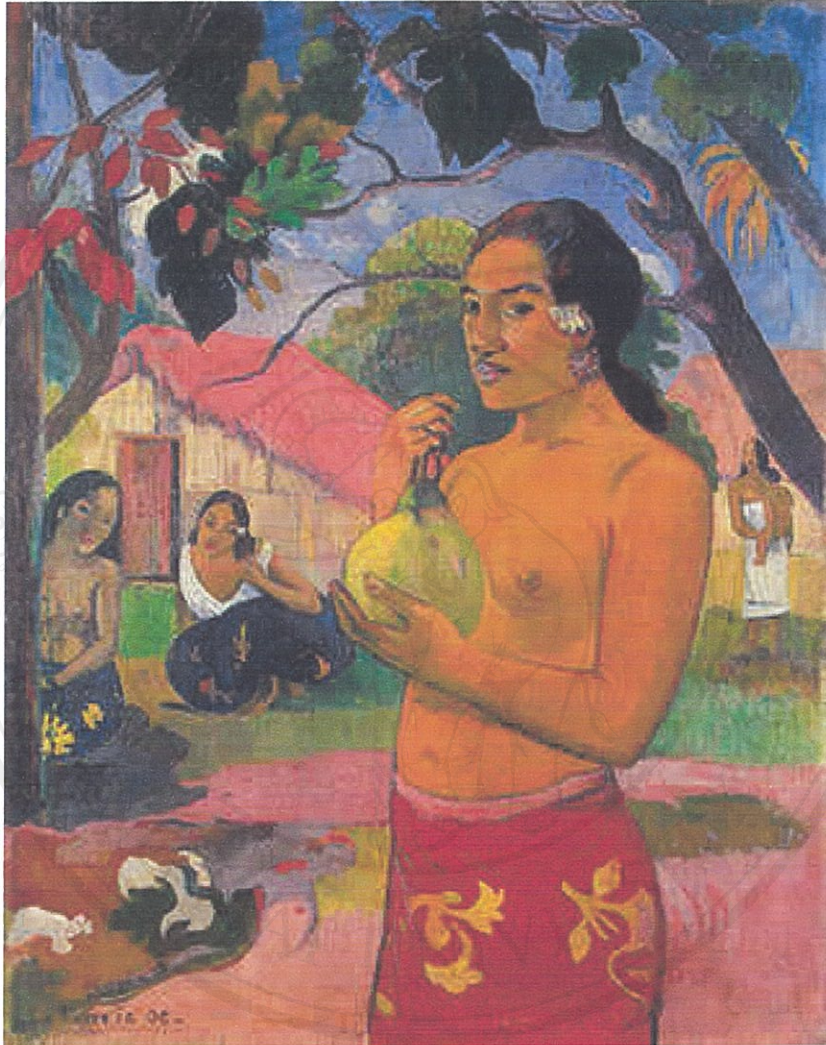
and festive gathering by the pool, creating a pleasant sight that conveys the illusion of a tropical paradise.

Both Gauguin and Young describe an Orientalized image when they represent the typical image of long black hair, bushy black eyebrows, beautiful tan skin, including a little cloth of indigenous art sarong. Also, they reflect the same the qualities of passivity and inferiority of a serving lady. Gauguin paints a plum lady holding a coconut in her hands, representing the primitive hospitality. Young depicts the beautiful woman who gently provides glasses of lemonade to the Western male characters.

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Paul Gauguin

"Ea Haere la Oe" 1893 (Where Are You Going?)

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Negative image of Thai female sex workers

There are several negative qualities of Thai female sex workers illustrated in the three selected novels. The major undesirable characteristics are being consumerist and vulnerable.

The three novelists are in agreement concerning the consumerist values by usually demonstrating the sex workers laying claim to the foreign bar visitors' money and property. In doing so, the bargirls create an illusion of love as a means to obtain a close relationship. By the time the cross-cultural partnership reaches this point, the bar ladies gradually invent several lies and schemes. Leather mentions such plans including the use of basic psychology in treating the clients differently depending on their needs, keeping the foreign man's photograph in her wallet, calling him during the daytime, crying when they say goodbye, regularly repeating a script of love and employing the "Khmer" language to lay plots against the Western men (114-116 240-241).

In cases where the Western men go back to their homelands, Leather and Moore show that writing a letter becomes the simplest way to continue this false long-distance love relationship. The bar ladies usually cooperate with a scribe or a writing assistant, who probably is a Thai or a long term expatriate with competent English writing skill. This person becomes an essential part of such relationship by taking responsibility for the letter content and designing the messages to maximize the possibility of the money being sent back to the pretended girlfriends. Moore describes Old Bill as such a scribe character. He is an aging bar customer who knows what the Western men want to hear and formulates the typical words expressing love and care for the ladies to be copied in their own handwriting or just to be signed (75-77).

The three novelists point out the Thai female sex workers' consumerist ambitions especially in relation to fabricating a tragic image of Western male

customers. From mild to severe cases, the scenarios are a broken heart, a hurtful feeling, great financial loss and physical pain and even death. The most typical and destructive scheme is often having a male Westerner buy a property, usually a house in her name or her relative's name, and later laying claim to possession. Another standard deceitful behavior is to run away with the men's money. Thai male partners who share the consumerist value are often involved throughout the scamming plots.

The writers suggest that a love relationship with Thai women in sex business rarely becomes successful because of their excessive money-mindedness. Moore writes that "There isn't a Thai woman who can't turn over a house and land anywhere in the Kingdom in less than seventy two hours" (100-103). Also, Leather portrays "There isn't a Thai bargirl alive who can't turn around a piece of land or a property within forty-eight hours" (24). These similar statements emphasize the incomparable ability of sex workers in Thailand for professionally turning properties into money swiftly. However, Moore states "Thai woman", accusing them of sharing such unreliability.

The obsession with consumerism among Thai women in sexual services originates from their own home, where the poor living condition leads people to require unlimited financial assistance which Leather labels "economic rape" (20-21). From a sociological perspective, Thailand's inadequacy in terms of economic equality has been shown as the major factor that pushes poor Thai women into the sexual services. A study shows that 60% of Thai sex workers agree that poverty is the primary motivating factor when entering the sex trade (Limananda, 22) Niwat Suwanphatthana conducted his study in Phayao province and discovered that in the last forty years, poverty has become a major reason for daughters of poor rural families to enter prostitution. This is a result of inefficient national economic plans which cause agricultural producers to lose their profits, leading to economic failure. Consequently, the poor villagers consider money and properties their face, pride and happiness and tend to compete in possessing such items. Daughters have been given

the responsibility as breadwinners especially by entering prostitution, and the villagers consider the sex trade an acceptable profession. Therefore, the former “agricultural society” has been re-defined “prostitution society”. This is in the increase partly due to the loss of traditional belief of “phi phu njaa” or “ancestor guardian spirits”, the moral fabric which used to guarantee the community’s moral strength (Suwanphatthana, 79-102).

Leather seems to agree that consumerism causes an ideology of material possessions which is influential in Thailand’s sex industry. He cites the example of “Swiss Village” where most families have a high expectation on their daughters for entering the sex market in Switzerland. This originally started with one young woman who proved that becoming a prostitute abroad could effectively improve her family’s financial status. Throughout the years, human trafficking to Switzerland has become the most profitable business for poor village girls and they have established an agency to take care of the process of training young innocent girls into sophisticated ladies. The villagers have learned to live with a more materialistic society, where houses and cars are more in demand (208-209).

Sittirak discusses materialism and consumerism in Thailand from the point of view of Neo-colonialism which makes Thai people become obsessed with consumer values and misinterpret them as an achievement of civilization. The consumerist value further encourages a shameless attitude towards prostitution because it involves the family’s economic improvement. It also causes older sisters to pass on the value to the younger ones (Sittirak, 112).

The way female family members are forced to take a step into prostitution in a consumer culture matches what happens in *Fast Eddie’s Lucky 7 A-Go-Go*, where Noon and Pim, two out of seven daughters of a poor rural family occupy the same profession. The older sister, Noom starts a bar job earlier in Pattaya and becomes a consultant for Pim, particularly on how to take financial advantages of a rich customer (126-127). In *Private Dancer*, Mon, Sunan, and Joy, the only three female

members of the family gradually emigrate to work in Bangkok's red light areas. The three sisters also earn ten percent commission from bringing village ladies into the bar business. The village girls include their step-sister Dit and female cousins Ning, Moo, and Wandee all are tempted by materialistic desires (245-249, 262-263).

Apart from poverty and Neo-colonialism, patriarchal attitude in Thailand is regarded as leading Thai women into prostitution and consumerist attitudes among Thai female sex workers. Under Thailand's patriarchy, the three authors show that the working ladies are brought up under male control when they are made to fully accept their male dominated fate which subjugates them to unequal gender opportunities and maltreatments. The patriarchal power is demonstrated by different treatments between the genders and domestic sexual and physical violence. This also includes the burden of prostitution for the sake of families' economic status which sometimes misleads the ladies into becoming deceitful persons, taking financial advantage of their customers.

In *Gender Learning, and Trafficking*, Westtebe states that patriarchy usually has its roots in poor rural Thai families. It legitimizes gender inequality, where men receive a superior life standard while the women are doomed to "subordination." This begins in childhood when young male members are assigned to fewer household jobs. Also, their education and financial support are always considered more important. On the other hand, the females are obligated to household responsibilities and restricted from family funding, including education. With poor access to equal education, they are limited in terms of job alternatives and consider sexual service a standard career.

In *Fast Eddie's Lucky 7 A-Go-Go*, Young portrays a typical patriarchal set-up in Pim's poor Isarn family. He shows that, Book, the youngest and the family's chief priority receives financial support from his seven sisters. Book becomes the only family member who pursues a respectable job working as a police officer, a lawful honorable job the family takes pride in. Meanwhile, the daughters are forced

to work in the rice field to support Book's schooling and are further restricted in terms of educational opportunity. Without proper educational background Pim and Noom only finish their sixth grade education and end up in the prostitution of Bangkok and Pattaya. The other five daughters are engaged in low-paid work.

In his novel, Leather illustrates the patriarchy oppression toward Thai female sex workers in the form of domestic sexual assault when the male family members, namely a father and a brother, perform the abuse, exploiting the daughters and sisters. Leather suggests bar ladies generally experience sex as young as the age of thirteen and describes it as a common affair: "I mean, they're peasants, they see the animals doing it around them and it's a case of monkey see, monkey do. Sex for them is as natural as eating or shitting" (306). Joy, her older sister Mon, and her step-daughter Dit are sexually abused by Joy's father. At the age of fourteen, Joy lost her virginity to her father's carnal desire because she is afraid that he would severely beat her up, like he once did Sunan, the only daughter who refuses him. Joy's brother is another male family member who takes sexual advantage of her and Dit. He also makes some profit by inviting his friends to sleep with the girls. Leather says he "Practically ran a brothel out of the house" (264-265).

Apart from domestic sexual abuse, physical violence is another form of male abuse Thai female sex workers become familiar with. This is evidenced from Joy's statement, "That's what men do to women", after her Thai private partner Park brutally attacks her. Joy witnesses male exploitation in many aspects: father to mother, and her brothers in law to her sisters. She also has experienced physical abuse by her father, her school teachers, her brothers, and her boyfriend, Park (331).

Moore provides a view of Thai patriarchal society in relations to Thailand's deep-rooted religion Buddhism, in particular to "Karma" concept. Moore discusses that a serious sinful action causes a person to be reborn as a female prostitute, giving oral services to old foreign customers at a skull bar. In Karma cycle of birth, "Top billing is birth as an upper-class Thai male. From there, it is a rapid fall down the

mountain slope. At the base of the mountain are the women. No one wants to come back a woman in Thailand; not even the women want to rebirth as a woman" (205).

It is true that patriarchy has been long established in Thailand and oppressed female population could be witnessed. Yet, Moore suggests that there is patriarchy in Buddhism providing gender bias against Thai female sex workers and Thai women in general, which is opposed to Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr's statement on the law of Karma that, "There is no discrimination whatsoever with regard to race, sex, social status, or religious beliefs" (120).

As to Moore's statement that "No one wants to come back a woman in Thailand; not even the women want to rebirth as a woman" (205), as a Buddhist Thai woman, I would be more than happy to be reborn as a woman and do not hold any expectation for the next life. This is because of my belief of the Buddhist doctrine of "non-self" or "Anatta" which considers a person on a soul level, not for their physical limitation. It stimulates a person to become a 'thinker' who is practical in coping with the universal rule of change (Plamintr, 128-130). Keeping in mind of the fact of impermanence, I view future gender or life as an insignificant issue.

In addition, Moore discusses that Thai men are afraid of sin caused by commercial sex purchase, so they never appear as a sex customer at the skull bar (204-205). With regard to this point, it can be argued that Thai men are not less interested in purchasing commercial sex than Western men. Statistics have shown that they are the majority group of clients. Moreover, buying sex services has long been established as an acceptable habit among Thais (Sittirak, 101).

The three novelists also present the women with a great degree of vulnerability, which can be categorized in three ways: mental problem, low education, and being stigmatized with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Westebbe discusses the state of being vulnerable among Thai female sex workers: "Many reported

feelings of helplessness, depression of apathy and were unable to take any action to change their situation, particularly when they felt themselves to be alone” (165). The emotional depression mentioned can be linked to the representations of the authors which often illustrate Thai bargirls’ sadness from being trapped in prostitution. For example, Moore states: “As Susan looked around the room she saw the same billboard message in the eye of every one of the girls, ‘Rescue me. Save me. Pull me back to safety.’ The same flashing through the hot tropical night. Each time they looked at Andrew, they wore their girlhood expression of innocence, play, and hope...” (231-239).

The novels also portray bar ladies’ vulnerability associated with low self-esteem. In this aspect, sex workers become unaware of self-potentiality and lack enthusiasm or vision in going through other life challenges. Moore presents a bargirl who wishes to see herself as a successful business woman, but becomes too restless to follow her calling. As years pass, she disappointedly stops living the dream and continuously offers sexual services to foreign men. Her distress is shown in her speech: “‘the only import/export company I’m ever gonna have is here.’ She moved my hand between her legs. ‘Make love with farang. That’s all I can do. Maybe I have another four years and then no one take me. Then what I do, Tuttle? Who gonna look after me then? Who’s gonna remember me?’ ” (28-30). In a similar way, Young describes a bargirl named Ann who turns down her educational opportunity, despite her being a bright person, “She stopped believing in herself. She wanted an easy road to happiness” (133, 302-305, 332).

Another significant factor noted is the inability to get away from the sex trade. The writers describe sex workers who seem to be contented with their marriage life abroad but often seek a chance to visit the bar scenes once in a while in order to return to their previous career. This brings some excitement back to their lives after a long period of being a housewife. Some sex workers who have experienced an unsuccessful marriage to Western clients also return to the old environment.

In *A Killing Smile*, Lek is a former bar lady who has a happily married life in Rhode Island and a stable job in a cannery factory. However, this wife and mother sometimes makes a visit to HQ bar, her former work place, to look for a man to share a short-time pleasure with. This is the way she relieves her old memory without a concern for money (116-118). The Tommy's is a group of former sex workers, who are mostly in their forties living a married life in different foreign lands. Nevertheless, the charm of the nights never fades from their memories, so they make a return for a short-time holiday and become occasional bargirls, "You can take the girl out of HQ but you can't take the HQ [HQ is the name of a bar] out of the termite" (116).

Leather describes the returning to prostitution especially after they fail in marriage life abroad in a quite similar manner that, "You can take the girl out of the bar, but you can't take the bar out of the girl." He describes the behavior as a syndrome, "They like to be wanted. It's aphrodisiac. It's power. It's a feeling they never get from a husband and a family, and it's something they miss. Something they need" (227-228, 306-307, 351-352).

Besides, Moore points out the repetition of sex business in daughters of bargirls who are likely to adopt their mothers' occupation. This emphasizes the no-alternative life of women in the business: that once a woman decides to join the night life, the rest of her life tends to keep going through the cycle. Even when she becomes a mother, the lady can hardly provide her daughter with a better life opportunity but the career which has endlessly run through generations. For instance, Asanee, Fawn, and Lek, the outcome of a short-time relationship between Thai female bar ladies and Western male clients tragically adopt their mothers' career. Moore suggests that a man who has sexual intercourse with both the mother and the daughter is considered "second generation *hard-core*". This is an awful position Tuttle almost faces when he is about to force his mixed-blood daughter Asanee into his bed (25, 152-163).

The three writers also portray bar ladies turning to drugs such as cigarettes, amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, ecstasy, E and heroin. These drugs are used for different purposes, such as reducing fear, anxiety and embarrassment energizing and adding more excitement to the night shift. With these advantages, Leather suggests most bar owners encourage the drug supplies. He writes about Damien, a bargirl employer who allows the bargirls to take amphetamine to reduce the fear of the big size of Western clients' sexual organs. Damien also welcomes his bargirls' use of dreadful drugs like heroin. He accepts the use as long as there is no injection leaving a mark which can reduce the price for sex (335-336).

Self-mutilation among Thai women in prostitution is described in these works, in which cutting one's own wrists is the most typical practice. However, it is done not with the aim to take one's life but to protest against the social oppression such as patriarchal influence, being treated as a sexual product, and racial discrimination against Thai-African American sex workers. In *Private Dancer*, Joy first learns to express her depression by cutting her wrists after her mother's death and becomes more skillful in the technique. Joy also once attempts to hang herself. The writer explains the occurrence as stemming from the influence of Thailand's patriarchy which has always oppressed women, considered them living in a less powerful position to men. Male family members sometimes take advantage of the women with physical and sexual violence. In an unequal partnership with Thai men, the men often ignore the importance of safe sex. Consequently, some women have to endure pregnancy, where it is regarded as a woman's responsibility to take care of the unexpected child. In this way, bargirls easily become despondent and turn to self-mutilation (40-41, 298-333). When women are forced into prostitution, they are reduced to sex objects where their value can be only measured by their beauty. In Young's novel, Pim fails in attracting Ray and blames it on her unattractive appearance. She expresses her self-aborrence by cutting her wrist (130). Moore portrays bargirls' self-destructive habits through feeling alienated caused by discrimination against dark skin, especially African-looking sex workers. He describes a Thai-African American named Lek as usually unburdening her

inferiority complex by cutting her wrists in front of bar people without the intention of making it fatal (88).

The lack of proper education is another vulnerable character of Thai female sex workers in the three novels, where the writers indicate that their high rate of illiteracy and basic schooling level cause them problems in communication both in Thai and English and lead them to suffer the prejudice of being regarded as inferior women. Khowadhana describes poor access to education of Thai female sex workers as a consequence of gender inequality in Thailand. In this regard, she considers that different treatments of the sexes limit Thai women socially and restricts their formal education. Consequently, they become unskilled and rarely pursue respectable jobs. Under high pressure to support poor families, sex business becomes a common occupation because of its higher pay compared to other jobs. The limited educational background can be precisely observed in the study of female sex workers in Chiang Mai and Sungai Kolock, which shows that 22% are illiterate and in general, they spend only four to five years in school (Lemanada: 21).

Moore describes Thai bargirls' failure in Thai communication. He mentions a situation in which a bar owner gives up a simple scheme of putting up a Thai sign requesting his bargirl employees not to leave used toilet paper in the basket. This is because only half of his bar employees can read Thai. Instead, he creates a nonsensical ghost story to deal with the problem (184). Leather reflects on misunderstanding in English conversation when Joy mistakably thinks that Pete asks her to make an overseas call and pay the expensive price in stead of calling him by using a reverse call charge service (94).

The three novelists provide an outline of bargirls' ill English usage in bar situations called 'bar talk', which replete with English grammar mistakes, incorrect intonation and the skipping of Thai words, including the Thai style of calling oneself by the nicknames. The presentation of "bar talk" stresses the working ladies' uneducated background as inferior to their educated male customers. Young

mentions that “bar talk” can bring listeners into doubt concerning meanings and illustrates this by way of the example of two English word pairs: ‘shy’ as ‘ashamed’ and ‘hangry’ as ‘angry’ (77, 96). Moore recommends bar customers to learn the “bar talk” in order to approach the girls properly and not to spoil the pleasure of the night. Dan is a Western man who improves his communication skill to match the “local expression”, making the ladies become more at ease with him than with other men who use standard English (123-124).

Moore points out the sex workers’ limited education in a degrading way by derogatively referring to them as “a parrot handed down through hundreds of short-term owners”. This occurs when a Western client called Snow makes an amusing joke on the bargirls’ limited English skills. The man has always enjoyed teaching funny and obscene sentences to new non-speaking English sex workers who are likely to remember new English phrases and therefore embarrass themselves in front of customers through a repetition of usage (111-112).

Poor interpersonal communication stemming from ignorance and lack of formal education leads some Western characters to show compassion to Thai female sex workers. The Westerners aim at educating the workers in hope of rescuing them from the sex market. However, the efforts could be seen as emphasizing the bar women’s vulnerability. For instance, in *Fast Eddie’s Lucky 7 A-Go-Go*, during his fifteen years in the bar business, Eddie, an experienced bar owner, has been keen in handing the indigenous women a second chance, by encouraging them to look forward to a respectable career and walking out of this way of life at any possible time (Young, 244-245). Young further illustrates another man with similar compassion, Dr. Brent, a man who used to live a lusty life running a personal harem abundant with different Thai gorgeous former sex workers. After more than ten years living a role as the King of the house, the former successful American doctor is diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Then, he comes to the second stage of life, the role of educator and an opportunity supplier in his personal project called ‘a training center for life’. This is an educational foundation which empowers the women to rely on

themselves economically and confidently in a new life away from the sex trade. The project receives serious cooperation from some remarkable and experienced assistants such as a former maid from Alabama and a Thai professor from the University of Chiang Mai. Throughout his mansion, educational functions were constructed such as Home Economic Rooms and a computer lab with a huge television (120, 132-134, 300-301).

In Moore's book, Robert Tuttle, a former hard core customer founds an English language school for the underprivileged Thai women working in bars, including half-Western sex workers. This change in his life occurs when he discovers Asanee, his eighteen years old Thai-American bargirl daughter who is suffering from her in-between position because of her peculiar, European looking. Also, without educational aid from Bun, her former bargirl mother, Asanee falls into two contrasting positions of a part-time pole dancer and a political science undergraduate student. There are also other half-Western half-Thai ladies called "Amerasians" or "*look kreung*" (166, 179) in the bar business who are considered a social minority because of their different features and their restricted educational opportunities. Consequently, in the school, fifty percent of the sixty-four students are half-American sex workers. The school is scuppered by ill-operated planning and having bar customers who lack experience as teachers (170, 229).

Moore further tells how Sarah Baring, Tuttle's ex-girlfriend and UCLA professor, offers Asanee a short-term training as a professor's assistant, during the time she is sent to visit her American family in Los Angeles. This provides Asanee a chance to improve her English. Meanwhile, a mother-daughter-like relationship grows, especially in so far as Asanee draws Sarah back to a closely normal life after years of heroin abuse. Sarah slowly develops a great sympathy for Asanee and other working women. When she discovers that her death can mean more than sorrow but also financial support for those at Tuttle's school, she writes a suicide letter before a car accident scene to dedicate 1 million dollar insurance to the non-profit educational organization (146).

The last negative quality of the female sex workers as portrayed in the novels is the stigma of being a source of sexual transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Moore describes a sexually transmitted disease called "Bangkok Nightshade" or "gory rash" as one of the danger of paid sex in Thailand. He describes the disease as unknown in England so when the teenage sex tourist of Thailand Crosby goes home with the syndrome, he takes a long time to convince the doctors to prescribe particular medication for it as he had it earlier (197-198).

Moore discusses the stigma of HIV/AIDS through the character of a thirty-five year-old male expatriate from Liverpool named Jimmy. The man was never concerned about sexual protection over a ten years period he has gone through sexual intercourse with more than two hundred female sex workers and heterosexual men or *katoeys*: woman-alike gay men. Apart from Gonorrhoea, he is also infected with HIV/AIDS and eventually dies. Leather says that when Thai female sex workers become infected with HIV/AIDS, they usually become the subject of discrimination. As a consequence, they must keep this as a secret. Some stop the bar job and return home, and seek suicide as a solution. Mon, Joy's sister, is depicted in this awful condition. She decides to hang herself, leaving her little daughter to her aging father (126-127, 130-131, 139-140, 150, 174-176).

The report of WHO shows that the HIV/AIDS epidemic started during 1980s among addicts injecting drugs and people in sex services. The spread kept rising until in 1989 when 44% of sex providers were reported infected HIV/AIDS. Later, the enforcing of condom use is recognized in 1997 as effective in reducing numbers of HIV/AIDS infected among sex workers to 7% in Bangkok and 20% in rural areas. The reputation of Thailand's sex tourism with regard to HIV/AIDS should be diminished by these statistics.

In Chiang Mai's beer bars, the selected bargirl interviewees are well aware of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They always insist on customers using two condoms each time which is a golden rule well-known among the bar workers. Nevertheless,

some condoms are low-quality and can easily break. For this reason, one bargirl becomes infected with HIV/AIDS though she still keeps going out with customers. Meanwhile, the co-workers do not show any prejudice against her but rather deal with it with sympathy.



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