

Projects of Humanitarianism:

Sex Trafficking and Migration in the Twenty-First Century United States

by

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## List of Abbreviations

APNSW	The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers
CATW	Coalition against Trafficking in Women
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women
HSTC	Human Smuggling Trafficking Center
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IJM	International Justice Missions
ILO	International Labour Organization
INS	The Immigration and Naturalization Services
NMCI	National MultiCultural Institute
NPIC	The Non-Profit Industrial Complex
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
TIP	Trafficking in Persons Report

TVPA	Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
U.S. AID	United States Agency for International Development

## Abstract

*Projects of Humanitarianism* examines the contemporary mobilization of cultural forms to alert the public about the traffic of women into the sex industry. By way of critical readings of a contemporary archive of cultural texts used for anti-trafficking activism -- including testimonies, photographs, documentary and narrative films, training manuals, and anti-trafficking events -- I investigate the multi-institutional formation of U.S. anti-trafficking activism and its transnational circulation to Romania and Moldova. Feminist scholars have critiqued U.S. anti-trafficking campaigns for their misleading emphasis on sexual exploitation and conflation of trafficking and prostitution. My project takes these important studies a step further by tracing the emergence in the culture industry of a humanitarian approach to gender justice that reinforces neoliberal formations of power.

This dissertation proposes the concept of *humanitarian entertainment* to theorize the intersection of the culture industry and the ethics of humanitarianism. Humanitarian entertainment is a cultural and economic practice that draws on historical discourses of gender vulnerability and takes entertainment as a resource for humanitarian interventions. The testimonial genre is central to the articulation of a humanitarian approach to women's trafficking premised on notions of suffering and trauma -- an aspect addressed

in Chapter I in my analysis of photographic and video testimonies featured in the work of photojournalist Mimi Chakarova. Chapter II focuses on Marco Kreuzpainter's narrative film *Trade* (2007) and Christian Duguay's television docudrama *Human Trafficking* (2005), tracing the filmic process that transforms anti-trafficking humanitarianism into the cinematic performance of nationalist anxieties about insecure borders. The documentary series *Destinies and Destinations*, broadcast in Moldova with U.S. AID funding, transforms the process of social documentation, Chapter III argues, into a form of anti-trafficking activism that conforms to the neoliberal logic of entrepreneurship and market liberalization. Finally, Chapter IV turns to anti-trafficking training manuals and theorizes the transnational articulation of juridical and humanitarian expertise about women's migration. Humanitarian care for trafficking survivors, this chapter demonstrates, becomes a mode of governing migrant workers' mobility.

*Projects of Humanitarianism* reveals the multiple ways in which anti-trafficking interventions inscribe the politics of women's migration into managed projects of humanitarian care and public compassion.

## Introduction

### Humanitarian Entertainment and the Work of Sentiments

In 2009, the UK-based Helen Bamber Foundation embarked on a transnational artistic project, called *Journey*, described by its producers as an activist venture designed to bring “the reality of the sex trafficking industry to the forefront of social consciousness and empower people to take action.”<sup>1</sup> The street installation, the result of collaborations among British and U.S. artists, film producers, and actors, including the British actress Emma Thompson, is an itinerant exhibit, whose activist and cultural force resides in a transnational alliance that promises to chart the journeys of trafficked women. Thompson herself gave interviews and talked about the preparatory process of the exhibit, emphasizing collaborations between artists and Elena Varga, the Moldovan woman upon whose true story of trafficking and sexual exploitation the installation is purportedly based. *Journey’s* “world tour against human trafficking” includes London, Madrid, The

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Bamber Foundation is a UK-based human rights organization founded in 2005 and addressing human rights issues such as human trafficking, rape, and torture. Named after Helen Bamber, an Amnesty International member and the founder of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, the Foundation has recently enlisted the help of British actress Emma Thompson to address and make public the crime of sex trafficking.

Hague, and New York. Arriving in New York City's Washington Square in November 2009, the exhibition consists of seven containers, each marking a different stage in Elena's supposed journey to the West: Hope, Journey, Uniform, Bedroom/Workplace, Customer, Stigma, and Resurrection. Container after container invites visitors on an empathetic tour that begins with Elena's hopeful desire to migrate (symbolized by the container labeled Hope and Journey) and progresses through her enslavement to tell the story of her ultimate liberation (captured in the container Resurrection). The container labeled "Bedroom," for example, recreates the pain of sexual exploitation and slavery aurally, visually, and through smell in an attempt to trigger the public's visceral response to the crime of trafficking (and prostitution) and to make bodily abjection immediate to the senses. Another container, entitled Customer, designed by playwright Simon Stephens and photographer James Ostrer, displays a series of pornographic pictures of fictive johns, including dialogues with them, in an attempt to answer questions about the johns' backgrounds, lifestyles, and reasons for visiting prostitutes (Quiet Storm Films).



Fig. 1.1 Street view, *Journey*, New York City, November 2009  
(Helen Bamber Foundation website)

One part of the installation catches the eye in particular. A graffiti-like image painted on one of the exhibit containers shows a woman's legs chained to a metal bed.

The image is striking in its mobilization of typical symbols of sexual captivity: a dark small room, sheets ruffled on the bed, the rugged metal frame, the large chain shackled to the woman's ankle, an open door in the background, and behind it the only light in an otherwise dark and ominous space. Arrested in the doorway, a man in silhouette, one step forward as if in the process of entering the room or perhaps leaving the room, seems ready to shut the door locked behind him. The door is a dead end, a barred exit, a beckoning sign of freedom, stopped short by the ineluctability of the chains, the bed, and the confining room. The image captures the message of the exhibit, highlighting the ominous threat of what *Journey's* producers call sexual slavery. At the same time, the painting incorporates visually the major rhetorical elements that make up the discourse on the traffic in women in the United States and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In its highly sexualized representation of captivity, the graffiti image tells a story of migration that has defined the anti-trafficking movement since the white slave trade arose at the turn of the twentieth-century: a young migrant woman leaves her native land only to be tricked into prostitution in the United States or elsewhere, her sexual exploitation and emotional abuse representing a testimony to the violence and inhumanity of the sex trade. This is exactly how Emma Thompson relates the story of the nineteen-year old Elena Varga:

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<sup>2</sup>Eroticism also pervades the image: the purplish high-heeled brash shoes, the woman's chained ankles in the foreground, the dark-blue walls, the bed, all signify a space at the borderline between danger and erotic desire. The pictorial signs waver between the erotic of danger and the danger of eroticism, while the visual narrative itself marks the impossibility of a straightforward representation: is this to be a story of "sex trafficking" or a playful S/M scene? The eroticism of the picture undermines the straightforward dialectics of captivity and freedom that *Journey* in particular and anti-trafficking activism in general embrace publicly, while highlighting the ambiguity and the representational volatility that always already marks the modern project of sexuality. Last but not least, this double vision that defines anti-trafficking activism in general underlines the close affinity between humanitarian discourses of trafficking and pornography.



A woman in the market came up to her [Elena] and invited her home, then offered to get her a nice job as a doctor's receptionist in London. She told Elena that she'd be able to save money, send it back home, and go back to school, so Elena handed over her passport and ended up in London six weeks later, only to be told that she owed them 50,000 British pounds (\$82,900) to pay for her journey to the U.K. and that she would have to earn that money by working as a prostitute. (Stepanek)

This is the typical narrative of the traffic in women in the twenty-first century, a story disseminated globally through film and music, quoted endlessly in the mass media, and, most recently, rendered in art. The woman in the painting corresponds to the melodramatic figure of the trafficked woman populating contemporary trafficking discourses, a gendered prototype of violence and trauma transcending nationality, race, ethnicity, and class and identified only by her pure vulnerability.



Fig. 1.2 Graffiti, *Journey*, New York City 2009  
(Helen Bamber Foundation website)

Yet the exhibit *Journey*, besides making public the typical trafficking narrative, also signals a widespread phenomenon in the twenty-first century: the use of culture as a resource for humanitarian interventions in general and for anti-trafficking

humanitarianism in particular. The transnational circulation of the exhibit throughout the western world proves the central role that cultural forms play in the fight against the traffic in women. Just as in the case of *Journey*, cultural works are mobilized for educational purposes in order to alert the public about the traffic in women and to move this public into action. More than ever, in the twenty-first century, culture serves as a medium for change and public persuasion. Furthermore, in its entanglement with economic conditions of production and consumption, culture is deeply embroiled in the transnational circuits of commodities, functioning as a social and economic resource. *Projects of Humanitarianism* examines this cultural phenomenon by interrogating the socio-economic process that makes the culture industry central to the so-called “war against sex trafficking.”

According to George Yúdice, culture is mobilized in our century at different levels of society, both nationally and transnationally, “used as an attraction for capital development and tourism, as the prime motor of the culture industries and as an inexhaustible kindling of new industries dependent on intellectual property” (3-4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In a famous study on *The Expediency of Culture* (2003), scholar George Yúdice draws attention to the renewed socio-political role of cultural works in the twenty-first century. Yúdice emphasizes especially the newly-acquired status of culture as an expedient, a role that has come to “displace and absorb other understandings of culture” (1). For Yúdice, culture is a social and economic resource, what he refers to as “the expediency of culture,” a formulation that enables him to avoid the usual binary opposition that posits culture as either a form of resistance or ideology in a consumerist society. The expediency of culture brings to mind the notion of performativity, whereby actors mobilize cultural resources not solely for instrumental purposes (such as for economic ends) but also as ethical practices in the case of communities or groups (Yúdice 28). This understanding of culture blurs distinctions between high and mass culture at the same time that it foregrounds the numerous national and global, institutional and group-based negotiations and regulations that define the production and circulation of cultural forms. By embracing this definition of culture, Yúdice refuses a simply optimistic view of

Moreover, the “epochal transformation of culture into resource” presupposes both the pursuit of social justice by wielding cultural resources and the “penetration of capital logic into the as-yet-uncolonized recesses of life” (24). In the last decade, a growing number of similar studies has attended to the increasing public role of culture, a phenomenon that Yúdice called the “cultural ethos” and Fredric Jameson labeled “the cultural logic.” In his famous postmodernist manifesto, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” Jameson identifies the last part of the twentieth century with “an explosion” of culture, that is, “a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself -- can be said to have become ‘cultural’” (48). Cultural studies scholars Néstor García Canclini, Jeremy Rifkin, and Toby Miller, among others, point out emerging realignments between cultural aesthetics and political practices, the pervasive ways in which cultural works and forms infuse, sustain, collude with, and manipulate power in the twenty-first century.

This dissertation takes as its focus the process by which culture – defined broadly in Jameson’s terms as “populist rhetoric” and aesthetics – becomes a resource and instrument in engendering a humanitarian ethics, especially for anti-trafficking activism. I theorize the particular convergence of entertainment and humanitarian ethics, a cultural phenomenon that I refer to as *humanitarian entertainment*. The term *humanitarian entertainment* refers to a wide spectrum of cultural forms and productions, from film and memoir to video art and journalism, produced and disseminated on major television channels, at theaters, and across the World Wide Web. These cultural productions

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cultural resources and qualifies the deeply pessimistic perception of cultural commodification.

function as entertainment in the name of humanitarianism and translate humanitarianism into the spirit of entertainment. They take the form of celebrity-hosted events, benefit concerts, charity funding, anti-trafficking educational toolkits, and promotional campaigns. This dissertation traces the emergence of humanitarian entertainment as a practice that mobilizes humanitarian sentiments of compassion and draws on historical discourses of sexual vulnerability. Humanitarian entertainment, I argue, is a highly gendered and racialized cultural process that depends on neoliberal markets for its circulation and social impact.<sup>4</sup>

Let me note here that, in this study, I depart in my use of humanitarianism from its traditional definition as an organized and politically neutral international intervention used to save civilians in times of wars and natural disasters. I understand humanitarianism as a particular orientation toward politics and gender justice, rooted in sentimentalism, moral values, and the sovereignty of human life (Fassin, “Heart of Humaneness” 269). Didier Fassin’s brief but comprehensive definition of humanitarianism is central to this study. “Humanitarian government,” Fassin maintains, “can be defined, in the widest sense, as the introduction of moral sentiments into the political sphere” (“Heart of Humaneness” 269). This definition draws on the Foucauldian notion of government to understand humanitarianism not solely as a particular type of intervention but also as a modality of government, a mode of approaching social problems and of envisioning political solutions. The humanitarian logic, which seems to dominate political life in the present, brings sentimentalism and compassion into the

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<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian entertainment does not exist in isolation from neoliberal capitalist conditions of production and consumption. Rather, as I will show, it is deeply imbricated in the material transformations defining neoliberal capitalism.

realm of formal politics. Viewed from this perspective, “the purview of the humanitarian should not be restricted to extreme and remote situations – war zones, refugee camps, famines, epidemics, and disasters” (Fassin, “Heart of Humaneness” 269). Rather, humanitarianism also

relates to the reality closer to home of the treatment of the poor, immigrants, abused women, children affected by poverty – in short, all those categories constituted in terms of “vulnerability,” which is set in opposition to the affirmation of what Hannah Arendt calls the ‘human condition.’ (269)

I define humanitarianism as an episteme -- that is, a system of thought and knowledge -- that emerges at the intersection of several overlapping discursive registers: the moral order of compassion and the cultural circulation of narratives of suffering; the juridical system of law enforcement and border control; feminist discourses on gender violence and development; and neoliberal understandings of women’s emancipation. Last but not least, humanitarianism is not apolitical. On the contrary, it presupposes a particular form of politics and a “new repertoire for public action at both the international and local levels.” Humanitarianism is constitutive of contemporary politics, while reformulating “what is at stake in politics” (Fassin, “Heart of Humaneness” 274).

The increasing embrace of humanitarianism as the only valid approach to trafficking informs the types of responses that we envision and put into practice to combat what is known as the traffic in women. The humanitarian approach to trafficking eclipses the kinds of gender activism that eschew sentimentalism and do not take humaneness and humanity for granted.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As I define it in this dissertation, humanitarianism is a form of government that takes “humanity” as its “effective category” (Feldman and Ticktin 3). From this perspective, regulations, policies, different types of knowledges, human rights interventions, and

## Culture as Resource

Ever since human trafficking, and specifically the traffic in women, gained global attention, activists have been quick to draw on the cultural resources at hand to reach the public and to encourage action. The belief in the political force of culture defines the U.S. Department of State's approach to human trafficking. The U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 (TVPA) stipulates the important role that both domestic and international media should play in anti-trafficking prevention campaigns. According to this anti-trafficking legislation,

The President shall establish and carry out programs that support the production of television and radio programs, including documentaries, to inform vulnerable populations overseas of the dangers of trafficking, and to increase awareness of the public in countries of destination regarding the slave-like practices and other human rights abuses involved in trafficking . . . . (Section 3.d)

Following these recommendations, U.S.AID funded screenings of the television series *Human Trafficking* at several locations in Romania and in other Eastern European countries. The series *Human Trafficking*, the result of collaborations among the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Amnesty International, and women's television channel Lifetime, tells the story of a Czech woman smuggled into the U.S., trapped in prostitution, and killed by the Russian mafia.<sup>6</sup> The U.S.AID outreach campaigns in

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numberless rescue missions are executed in the name of humanity, or, more specifically, in the name of human vulnerability. It is important to point out that, as Fassin contends, humanitarianism becomes a way of thinking, of relating to others, and of conceiving violence in today's modern world. It is a modality of understanding ourselves and our place in the world of nations, against the inhumanity of others (Feldman and Ticktin 7). Humanitarianism also presupposes a clear-cut distinction between the humanity of victims and the inhumanity of perpetrators. For more on humanitarianism, see Fassin (2008) and Liisa Malkki (1994).

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter II for my discussion of the movie.

Albania also funded the production of the radio soap opera *Pine Street*, relating the story of Martha, a young Albanian, deceived by her boyfriend Roni into a life of prostitution in Italy. Arben Papadhopulli, the director of the USAID-sponsored radio soap opera, explains that, “A soap opera can really contribute to solving problems of trafficking. While it cannot replace prosecutors, police, or the courts, it remains a medium for raising awareness and for eliminating trafficking” (“Success Story”). Prompted by the same impulse to bank on the resourcefulness of culture, the U.S. Department of State honored writer and producer Guy Jacobson and actress Adi Ezroni as “Global Heroes” for their work on the feature movie *Holly* (2006). The film, part of *The K-11 Project, a Priority Films* production, was shot throughout South East Asia and tells the story of a young Cambodian girl sold into prostitution by her parents. *Holly* premiered at the United Nations headquarters in November 2007, gaining sponsorship from the famous LexisNexis Corporation. Concerning the sponsorship, LexisNexis believes that

*Holly creates a unique opportunity to forge art with activism, thus providing a powerful vehicle for LexisNexis to implement the tenets of their core philosophy. As a global company that does business throughout the world, LexisNexis is committed to promoting the rule of law—an accessible, independent and transparent legal system. (“The K-11 Project,” emphasis mine)*

Likewise, in the world of music, the U.S. musician Justin Dillon made his contribution to the war on trafficking by embarking on a charity campaign not long after his return from a tour throughout Russia. While on tour in Russia, he allegedly became aware of Russian women’s keen desires to immigrate to the west at all costs. On returning to the United States, Dillon organized a series of anti-trafficking benefit concerts and tried his hand at filming the documentary *Call+Response* (2008). *Call+Response* features benefit concerts, under the signature of Cold War Kids,

Matisyahu, Imogen Heap, and Talib Kwel, including interviews on human trafficking with former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright as well as actresses Daryl Hannah, Julia Ormond, and Ashley Judd.<sup>7</sup>

The centrality of culture in anti-trafficking campaigns gives rise to the phenomenon that I call *humanitarian entertainment*, defined by the convergence of humanitarian compassion and the neoliberal politics of consumption. Humanitarian entertainment refers to the advancement of political claims by way of the culture industry. It marks the rise of politics from within the cultural and economic realms of cinema, television shows, art, and music. As suggested above, activists mobilize cultural works to produce accurate representations of trafficking and to paint a dramatic picture of trafficking victims' experiences. Musicians, movie directors and producers, as well as show-business celebrities, work in tandem with anti-trafficking organizations and federal agencies to educate the public and raise awareness about the traffic in women. Such cultural representations -- stories about victims and their experiences of trafficking -- circulate around the world in the name of women's rights, taking the form of cautionary tales, warning signs, and promises that justice will be served. These campaigns work emotionally to compel western audiences to embark on charitable and humanitarian actions and to educate young women in developing countries about the risks of migration. It should be noted that, even though dramatized as thrillers or melodramas, all these productions claim a strong link to reality. In other words, most of these productions

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<sup>7</sup> The role of cultural works in anti-trafficking campaigns is recognized at global levels as well. The United Nations encourages the use of culture to bring awareness and to alert the public about women's trafficking. Article 9 of the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (2000) specifically recommends that "States Parties shall endeavor to undertake measures such as research, information and mass media campaigns and social and economic initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons" (III.9.2).



function as docudramas, as fictionalized representations of reality, dramatic and sentimental stories allegedly based on trafficked women's real experiences.

Benefit concerts, television series and shows, documentaries, Hollywood movies, and Oprah Winfrey's talk shows, in addition to the digital blogosphere, exploit the cultural aura of Hollywood celebrities, deploy visual sensationalism, and ultimately manage to reconfigure the boundaries of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism, usually associated with the works of diplomats, NGO representatives, and heads of state, surfaces now as the prerogative of Hollywood stars, musicians, and TV show-hosts -- an amalgam of political activism and show business. Nicole Kidman and Mira Sorvino emerged recently as Goodwill ambassadors for USAID and Amnesty International, respectively, for their work on gender violence and the traffic in women. At the anti-trafficking National Planning Meeting to Eliminate Demand for Commercial Sex, participants, social workers, researchers, and government officials insisted on taping "celebrity power' to use major stars' influence to encourage public engagement" (National Planning Meeting 11). It follows that, even as anti-trafficking humanitarian discourses and practices find expression in the culture industry, the public life of celebrities also gets redefined as humanitarian. Cultural representations of women's trafficking -- disseminated nationally and transnationally -- transform gender justice into celebrity-driven performances of compassion. Such works of culture shape public perceptions of women's migration and mold responses to what has been called "modern day slavery." Culture works through stories, and such stories organize multifarious practices and incidents of migration into sentimental (and for that matter persuasive) narratives about captivity and freedom. I will come back to the work of narration, central to anti-trafficking activism, but let me note at

this point that cultural representations of trafficking, despite their widespread celebration as multicultural and democratic works of humanitarianism, reflect engrained racial and ethnic stereotypes as well as global structural inequities. Power imbalances are especially obvious when considering the funding of these campaigns. The U.S. government is the largest sponsor of anti-trafficking cultural campaigns worldwide. In 2003, for instance, the U.S. Department of State allocated \$91 million dollars to anti-trafficking campaigns, in addition to various other grants to nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (Soderlund 76). In 2009, the U.S. Government provided \$84 million in international assistance in over eighty countries (Attorney General's Annual Report 50). Between 2001 and 2008, the United States has channeled about \$528 million into anti-trafficking assistance overseas. USAID alone has provided \$123.1 million in assistance to more than 70 countries in the time period mentioned above ("Trafficking in Persons," USAID Women in Development). Under the current administration, the United States provides funding for 140 anti-trafficking programs in 70 countries, according to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ("Remarks on the Release of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Trafficking in Persons Report").<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that the traffic in women is not the most prevalent form of human trafficking, U.S. governmental and nongovernmental organizations focus almost exclusively on "sex trafficking," turning what could be a movement for migrant women's rights into a continuous struggle to abolish prostitution in the United States and make it illegal in countries where it is legal. The U.S. government has thus become famous as an anti-prostitution government and as the global watchdog in the fight against the traffic in women. Through the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* (TIP), first issued in 2001, the U.S. Department of State attempts to control and to shape other states' anti-trafficking legislation. TIP acts globally to monitor trafficking legislation by ensuring that all countries comply and work to curb trafficking at local and global levels. The U.S. trafficking report ranks countries in three tiers -- in addition to a Tier 2 Watch list -- according to their progress in combating trafficking, with third-tier countries (the least efficient in combating trafficking) facing U.S. economic sanctions.

Scholars have attributed the increasing convergence of cultural aesthetics and political praxis to various factors, including civil rights movements (and the subsequent embrace of identity politics) and the rise of migration trends. For Toby Miller and George Yúdice, among others, the contemporary politics of culture, sometimes called cultural citizenship, reflects the contemporary duality of culture as a site where both group identity is being produced and cultural objects and practices are being marketed and consumed (as in the case of tourism and indigenous art). Following Toby Miller, the advent of cultural citizenship is in great part the effect of transnational mobility prompted by globalization and neoliberal deregulation. Given the late twentieth-century diverse trends of immigration, Miller explains, traditional citizenship is increasingly a matter of “cultural belonging and material inequality” (54). Yúdice sees cultural citizenship as the effect of a social logic that increasingly constructs citizenship “along the lines of group needs, desires, and imaginaries” even as the market and the media mediate such cultural identities. Drawing on Iris Young, Yúdice argues that group-based politics represents a departure from the “individual-based tradition of citizenship-rights” (165).<sup>9</sup> Notably, struggles for social justice and recognition cannot be fully grasped without considering how “the capitalist welfare state, the media, and the market translate the interpretation of

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<sup>9</sup> While Yúdice’s and other scholars’ diagnosis of the turn to cultural identity in politics might be valid, it should be mentioned that culture often functions as a code for race. Culture as the basis for difference is more often than not associated with racialized marginalized groups in the U.S. and marks the alterity of non-western countries. It is but rare that culture, as a group identity, is associated with the majority Anglo-Saxon population in the United States or with the global north. Pace Yúdice and Young, then, the “individual-based tradition of citizenship rights” is not extinct but only the prerogative of some, coexisting with cultural politics. For more on the use of culture to signal racial difference, see Rey Chow’s *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002); Wendy Brown’s *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (2008); and Denise Ferreira Da Silva’s *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007), among many others.

people's needs into legal, administrative, therapeutic, and imagistic terms, thus reformulating the political reality of those interpretations" (Yúdice 165). In neoliberalism, then, the politics of culture rests on "the convergence of citizenship and consumption" (167). The struggles for economic and political rights depend increasingly on cultural representations, while "democracy itself advances through spectacle, style, and consumption" (Yúdice 166; 168).

In the case of anti-trafficking activism, the turn to culture takes two major political forms. It presents a means of self-representation for groups otherwise marginalized or absent in the mainstream; and it serves as a site for representing others, as in the case of the anti-trafficking campaigns described above. In the second situation, anti-trafficking activists mobilize cultural resources in the name of victims (the trafficked women) who are allegedly unable to represent themselves. Humanitarians, in this case, intervene to bear witness to and spread the word against violations that can only be recreated in the aftermath by way of textual and audiovisual representations -- and about which survivors can speak only through mediators such as artists, musicians, and writers.

Perhaps, the exemplar of this kind of cultural politics is the U.S. director and producer Michael Corey Davis who uses his filmmaking art to depict the pain of purportedly powerless trafficked women, who are defined by their inability to speak for themselves. In 2007, Davis directed and produced the documentary *Cargo: Innocence Lost* and the short *Svetlana's Journey*, the latter allegedly the true story of a twelve-year-old Bulgarian sold into prostitution by her stepparents. In 2005, *Svetlana's Journey* won the Hollywood Film Festival for Best Short Subject and the HD Film Festival for Best

Dramatic Short. The movies became part of the *Human Trafficking 101- The Presenter's Kit*, a human trafficking educational kit designed for law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities. In 2008, Davis founded the anti-trafficking NGO Artists United for Social Justice, which works closely with U.S. anti-trafficking NGOs like the California-based *Captive Daughters* and purports to function “beneath the umbrella of human rights.” Assuming that trafficked women have no access to public sphere and no public voice, Davis and his collaborators speak out against the tragedy of trafficking on behalf of its “speechless victims.” Didier Fassin claims that testimony in the name of those who suffer, but who are visible only by way of snippets of narratives or solely as archetypal figures, is central to contemporary humanitarianism--to the extent that “the prolixity of humanitarianism increases in parallel to the silence of the survivor,” a point I will develop in the following chapter (“The Humanitarian Politics” 537).

Humanitarian entertainment emerges, in this case, as an enactment of benevolence on behalf of silenced victims.

Of course, there are moments when the so-called victims or survivors talk back, although they might not fit the sanitized image of the victim circulated by anti-trafficking humanitarians. Sex Worker groups in Eastern Europe and the Global South use the same cultural forms of film and music video but in order to challenge anti-trafficking humanitarianism and to undermine its victimization narratives. The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), for instance, employs video, photography, and promotional materials to articulate social justice in opposition to anti-trafficking activism and from within its own geopolitical location. Recently, APNSW created the musical video “Bad

Rehab,” a denunciation of brothel raids and the rescue industry, with specific focus on the Somaly Mam’s shelters in Cambodia. The Cambodian Somaly Mam, herself trafficked into prostitution at twelve and author of the memoir *The Road of Lost Innocence* (2009), written with Nicholas Kristof, is recognized in the west and at the UN as one of the most prominent anti-trafficking activists. The Somaly Mam Foundation is a non-profit that provides shelters, training, and education for “rescued” prostitutes. The APNSW’s clip exposes the non-profit industrial complex, especially the ways in which the Somaly Mam foundation keeps sex workers confined to shelters against their will. To the background music of Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance” and parodying the lyrics of Gaga’s song, APNSW’s “Bad Rehab” juxtaposes images of starvation, violence, and confinement in Somaly Mam’s shelters and in prisons using shots of luxurious Somaly Mam anti-trafficking charity events. These images of violence and confinement are accompanied by lyrics such as “Somalia, I want my life back” and “You can’t keep me/ You, bad, rehab.”

In another campaign, APNSW made T-shirts that read: “Don’t talk to me about sewing machines. Talk to me about workers’ rights.” In both campaigns, sex workers mobilize the language of rehab only to reinvest it with their own struggles as workers and women living in deeply racialized and inequitable local and global economies. Most significantly, the second campaign re-channels the trafficking conversation into debates about labor exploitation, in the process recognizing sex work as a legitimate part of the labor sector.

Last but not least, in the U.S., at the San Francisco Sex Worker Film and Arts Festival, Courtney Trouble and Scarlot Harlot premiered the music video “Burnout.” “Burnout”

emphasizes workers' rights to just and safe work, taking the focus away from sexuality and victimization:

It's just like anything else, it's just a job/ but we've got the guts to profit off our own skin./ They won't acknowledge us until we own enough to control it. /They won't respect us until we give them no other choice. (Sex Workers' Rights Music Video)



Fig. 1.3 Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers poster, APNSW Web

Culture represents, then, a resourceful public space of conflicting interests and clashing ideologies. Cultural resources are mobilized by large constituencies despite existent inequities and uneven power relations. At the same time, the constellation of private and public interests involved in the production of anti-trafficking cultural campaigns signals important socio-political transformations in the definition and enactment of gender justice. These cultural productions recoup older strands of sentimentalism and produce a form of entertainment that promises to engender public empathy for trafficked victims and trafficking survivors. Last but not least, a central

component of the cultural form of humanitarianism described here is its integration into current neoliberal capitalist processes of consumption, a phenomenon that I will discuss in the last part of this chapter.

### The Work of Sentiments

Humanitarian entertainment is neither a genre nor a cultural style. Rather, it represents a cultural process that entails a co-constitutive relation between humanitarianism and entertainment. In the highly mediated and digitized realm of culture, humanitarian entertainment emerges in today's neoliberal society as an amalgam of public sentiments and emotions for victims of trafficking. The culture of entertainment is redefined as a culture of humanitarianism at the same time that humanitarianism morphs into a public spectacle of compassion. Exploited children, alleged victims of human trafficking in the so-called developing world, as well as women caught between stark poverty and trafficking rings populate television screens and magazine's front-pages -- characters in a macabre and sensational performance of pain and vulnerability. This humanitarian spectacle appeals to U.S. compassionate citizens who connect with the victimized others both in their desire to be swashbuckling saviors and their deepest fears that they themselves could become victims.<sup>10</sup> Sentimentality is central to this spectacular

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<sup>10</sup> See especially the many editorials, talk shows, and reports that insist on the fact that young U.S. women and girls are trafficked into prostitution. The rhetoric of imminent danger affecting U.S. women is reflected in the usual reference to human trafficking as happening "in your own backyard." In 2006, ABC News broke the story of U.S. girls and young women abducted from their own driveway and trafficked into the underworld of prostitution. At the time, the story was meant to shock U.S. audiences, familiar with widespread accounts of Eastern European and Asian women trafficked into prostitution but little exposed to so-called domestic trafficking. The ABC reporter also maintains that



and performative process. Cultural representation – offering testimony about the suffering of victims– becomes in itself an emotional process that promises to enlighten the public and to persuade them to act. Public narratives of suffering set in motion the work of sentiments.

Theorists of humanitarianism and sentimentality have for a very long time defined the ways in which sentimental narratives produce compassion and turn citizens into caring representatives of wounded humanity. Sentiments, according to these theories, are vital to the formation of a harmonious human community. In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith imagined the eighteenth-century version of the culture of moral feeling, extolling sentimental stories for their contribution to humanitarian publics. Smith associates sentimentalism with the formation of a civic space infused with values of sympathy and empathy for humanity in times of hardship and misery. In Smith’s words,

By the imagination, we place ourselves in his [the victim’s] situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception. (4)

Following the same humanist tradition, Richard Rorty promotes in our century what he likes to call “sad and sentimental stories,” which have been invaluable, he believes, in reconfiguring the way we relate to those who are different from us. We should leave the “foundationalism” of reason behind, Rorty enjoins, and instead embrace sentiments and

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sex-trafficking victims are no longer runaways or abandoned kids, but all belong to “what would be considered good families” (Teen Girls’ Stories).

emotions as part of a larger pedagogical and ethical process whose goal is to “expand the reference of the terms ‘our kind of people’ and ‘people like us.’” (123). We should “concentrate our energies on manipulating sentiments, on sentimental education,” an ethical orientation that, according to Rorty, has already engendered sensitive citizens, easily moved to action by sad and sentimental stories (122).

In line with these theoretical accounts of sentimentalism, cultural representations of trafficking become mediators in an affective process that engenders civic subjects who feel for others and, most significantly, *feel* humanitarian. Aesthetic and emotional identifications result in feelings of ethical responsibility; the aesthetics of cultural forms morphs into civic formations of humanitarianism whose foundational reliance on sentimental narratives is supposed to break down the gulf between us and them. Narrative, then, as an outburst of sentimental language leads to humanitarianism as an expansion of what David Hollinger once called the “circle of the we” (Laqueur, “Morning, Pity, and the Work of Narrative” 32). Yet the work of sentiments has so much potential precisely because it assumes the “human” as the sovereign entity and the prototype of universality. Sentimental humanitarianism presupposes the human being who possesses speech and can tell stories and whose very narrative attests to the essence of being human and humane. From this perspective, sentimentality is less a story about empathy and universal harmony. Rather, sentimentality is more a practice of power that, while premised on a universal notion of humanity, entails entrenched differentiations between the human and the inhuman, between humanity and its peripheral others.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Feldman and Ticktin believe that humanity “is linked to sentiments not only of sympathy and compassion but also of fear and insecurity” (5).

Sentimentality, as a narrative about humaneness, obscures the power relations pervading its very articulation.<sup>12</sup>

Humanitarian entertainment, in its reliance on the production and consumption of sentimental stories of suffering, is the effect of racialized and gendered structures of power that posit western humanitarians as benevolent saviors of migrant women. In turn, the mobilization of migrant women's suffering as the source of public sentimentalism engenders new formations of power. The explicit distinction between suffering victims of trafficking, on the one hand, and undocumented migrants and sex workers, on the other hand -- the latter groups envisioned within a penal discourse of crime control -- exposes the universality allegedly defining anti-trafficking humanitarianism. The racial and gendered bias underlining anti-trafficking sentimentalism stands out in the different discourses prompted by migrant women's sexual presence within the borders of the U.S. nation-state. While undocumented migrant women are repeatedly referred to as cunning "mothers" who threaten to bear more "alien" children and drain national resources, trafficked women have entered the national imaginary as daughter-figures, remarkable in their sexual innocence and purity and in need of state protection.<sup>13</sup> Of note too is that the immigrant mother is coded as a woman of color, mostly Mexican, while the immigrant daughter always appears as the naïve Eastern European woman, duped by the glamour of

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<sup>12</sup> Notably, as Thomas Laqueur shows in "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," humanitarian stories of compassion first emerge at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the form of graphic autopsy reports. This only confirms my argument that the emergence of sentimentality is closely related to the articulation during Enlightenment of the human as a scientific and moral entity.

<sup>13</sup> I would like to thank Judy Tzu-Chun Wu for bringing this point to my attention.

the west.<sup>14</sup>

Not all sentimental stories attract public attention or invite humanitarian feelings; nor do all stories prompt humanitarian interventions. Most of the time, as the current rhetoric on human trafficking suggests, it is women, and only the endangered sexuality of some women, who become focal points in sentimental narratives. White women's tribulations -- especially their sexual exploitation at the hands of thugs, terrorists, and traffickers -- have incited historically both public anxiety and outrage, leading to civic interventions by humanitarian and purity movements.<sup>15</sup> In the case of anti-trafficking humanitarianism, migrant women become humanitarian subjects in a transnational movement that, by and large, is led and organized by upper-middle class white women. What I am suggesting here, then, is that anti-trafficking sentimentalism and its melodramatic stories also work as technologies of power. "Sad and sentimental stories," to use Rorty's phrase, are forms of representation that posit some people as observers (usually western white men and women) and many others (most of the time women in the developing countries) as receivers of the humanitarian gaze.

The sentimental figure of the innocent trafficked woman appears today in music, film, and literature, as suggested by the numerous cultural works that take the trafficked

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<sup>14</sup> This gendered and racialized construction of migrant women reveals in fact the entrenched patriarchal value system at work in both anti-immigration and anti-trafficking campaigns. Whereas the anti-immigration and anti-trafficking lobbies are different at first sight (the second being a humanitarian movement), anti-trafficking feminists unwittingly reinforce patriarchal and anti-immigration positions. Elsewhere in this dissertation, I argue that anti-prostitution policies such as "End Demand," which punishes johns and offers rehabilitation for prostitutes, follow a patriarchal approach to sexuality, according to which women appear as sexually passive victims whose protection from male lust requires the state to intervene. See Chapter II for more on the anti-immigration and patriarchal views underwriting anti-trafficking campaigns.

<sup>15</sup> The so-called white slave trade at the turn of the twentieth century is a case in point.

and so-called “prostituted” woman as a subject of public compassion. The figure of the pure young woman, exploited by ruthless traffickers, is central to the 2009 collaboration between the rock group The Killers and the MTV Foundation. This humanitarian partnership resulted in the musical video “Goodnight, Travel Well,” a response to what the group members describe as “this tragic form of modern-day slavery,” that is, the traffic in women and children. The video, part of the group’s third album *Day & Age*, combines visuals of women abused at the hands of traffickers with lyrics that tell of despair and hopelessness. The video begins with a woman approaching a man, not an unlikely allusion to the usual love scenes in popular culture. Soon after the initial encounter, however, flashbacks in the video expose a deeper dramatic truth about women kept under lock, beaten, and forced into prostitution by a fierce-looking trafficker/pimp and his female accomplice. A series of shots shows a money transaction between two pimps, followed by the unlocking of a door, and the forceful sale of the woman whom viewers recognize from the beginning of the video. In another shot, viewers get a glimpse of a locked bare cell where several women sit on the floor despondently. By the end of the clip, we find out that the smiling woman at the beginning of the video is a trafficked victim and that what looked like a date is sexual slavery. The lyrics punctuate the gloomy atmosphere of the visuals: “The unknown distance to the gray beyond/ Stares back at my grieving frame/ To cast my shadow by the holy sun/ My spirit moans with sacred pain.” Juxtaposing what seems to be a relatively innocent date with the violence of sex trafficking, the video producers use music and visuals to alert the public about women’s suffering, articulating a humanitarian approach to gender justice. Warning viewers that, “some things cost more than you realize,” the musical video engages audiences not with

argumentation and statistics, but with emotions and dramatic visuals, offering a sentimental story about women's vulnerability and suffering.



Fig. 1.4 Stills from The Killers' music video "Goodnight, Travel Well," MTV Exit. Web

Funded by MTV Foundation, U.S.AID, and UNICEF, "Goodnight, Travel Well" aired throughout Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. A UNICEF press release at the time of the video's launch anticipated that the song would reach more than 500 million households in 168 countries ("Music Video"). The video turns entertainment into a humanitarian discourse on women's suffering and aims to bring together a humanitarian spectatorship in the name of trafficked women's rights. As in similar cultural productions created for anti-trafficking campaign actions, emotions become instrumental in making concrete and immediate the distant suffering of female migrant women. And, because, as Shirley Samuels argues, sentimentality "exposes the body," that is, it acts through

“differential embodiments” and “in conjunction with the body and what it embodies,” the video focuses on the foreign body of the migrant woman as metaphor for the violence of trafficking and as the archetype of vulnerability. The universality of humanity – always at the core of sentimental narratives -- translates into the gendered and racialized figure of the migrant woman. Moreover, the figure of the trafficked woman, itself part of a long series of sexualized images of courtesans, prostitutes, geishas, and sexual slaves, makes meaningful and forceful viewers’ audio-visual engagement with the song. Danger and eroticism blend in the video to produce the titillating figure of the trafficked woman both as vulnerable victim and erotic figure.

Current anti-trafficking cultural works draw on centuries-old discourses of women’s sexuality and white slave trade, taking this time migrant women’s bodies as representational sites of human suffering. In a recent study, Jo Doezema traces current anxieties about migrant women’s sexuality to the early twentieth century white slave trade, contending that the image of the naïve “white slave” has reemerged in contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns. Judith Walkowitz also discusses the emergence of the sexually vulnerable young woman in nineteenth century England following political lobbying by a coalition made up of anti-prostitution feminists and social purity groups. These groups, Walkowitz shows, portrayed prostitutes in sentimental and melodramatic terms as fallen daughters and sisters and as victims of male vice. The figure of the naïve sexual slave, this time in nineteenth century Argentina, Donna Guy brilliantly demonstrates, has functioned historically as a metaphor for national threat and has been repeatedly associated with foreign women. Prostitutes at that time, just as today, prompted both feelings of fear and of pity. According to Sophie Day,

In their anatomy of slavery, stories circulating today contain the same mythic elements of abduction, deception, violence, and dishonour as those produced a hundred years ago. Victims share the same outsider status and they are represented as property. They are usually stolen forcibly and transplanted as strangers, with no kin: nothing and no one mitigates the force exercised by their masters. They remain trapped forever. (823)

These studies demonstrate the ways in which current sentimental stories of migration draw on a long series of gendered narratives of sexual captivity. As a contemporary practice, humanitarian entertainment mobilizes this imagery, infusing it with contemporary anxieties. Humanitarian sentimentalism, it also follows, does not record trauma randomly as it occurs; it selects its sites of intervention, it values some subjects, and it relegates others to silence or marginality.<sup>16</sup> As Mika Aaltola puts it so eloquently, “Some bodies are more strongly rooted in the political imaginary. They contain a gallery of striking memory images” (3). Some bodies easily stir us to compassion, or fear, or hatred, for they are always already part of a longer iconographic history. As the music clip above suggests, one of these bodies is that of the smuggled or “sex trafficked” woman, the female prostitute, depicted as victim of patriarchal violence and sexual trauma. The space this bodily figuration inhabits is that of the brothel. Indeed, of the array of visual representations of sexual violence, it is telling that the figure of the naïve young woman, captive of pimps and traffickers, has continued to dominate the popular imagination throughout the centuries. Consider that, in today’s anti-trafficking campaigns, just as in the turn of the century movement against the white slave trade, the typical visual metaphor for prostitution and trafficking is that of a woman chained or locked behind bars. Current forms of sentimentality in humanitarian entertainment derive

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<sup>16</sup> Consider, for instance, that, as mentioned before, the current pouring of public concern and humanitarian affection toward trafficked women fails to account for the social discrimination of undocumented migrants as well as agricultural and domestic workers.



from a pictorial history that turns women's sexuality -- and especially migrant women's sexuality -- into an object of compassion, fear, and entertainment.



Fig. 1.5 Cover Image: Ernest Bell's *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls or War on the White Slave Trade* (1910)

The trope of the young white woman behind bars is central to contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns of activism.



Fig. 1.6 Anti-Trafficking Campaign in the Baltic States: “You Will Be Sold like a Doll” International Organization of Migration, 2002; From: Nordic Gender Institute. Web



1.7 Awareness poster, “Don’t Be Fooled” anti-trafficking campaign, Department of Homeland Security, July 2010: “I prayed to God that he would help me leave my country and the devil heard me.” Note the anti-immigration rhetoric of the poster.

## Marketing Sentimentality

The work of sentiments is not only a cultural process but also an integral part of the political economy of neoliberal capitalism. Sentiments circulate through markets and partake of the neoliberal market economy, while the neoliberal logic infuses the culture of humanitarianism. Sentimental stories of trafficking are themselves commodities whose circulation is ensured by a community of global consumers. At the same time, humanitarian narratives of trafficking create a culture of humanitarianism dependent on and deeply imbricated in the material conditions of neoliberal capitalism.

In their reliance on culture as a source of activism, filmmakers, singers, artists, and Hollywood stars recreate the ethics of humanitarianism as a cultural process that brings together artists and prospective audiences as participants in rights-based campaigns to save trafficked women. Humanitarian interventions to address the traffic in women turn into public sentimental spectacles that posit cultural producers as spokespersons for victims unable to speak for themselves and as entertainers whose lives and works converge with humanitarian principles. Humanitarian entertainment has reached wide popularity precisely because it targets audiences both as consumers (of mass culture and charity-driven products) and as citizens. Toby Miller insists on the co-constitutive nature of the consumer and the citizen in neoliberal capitalism. “Adopting the tenets of the consumer,” Miller believes, “the citizen becomes a desirous, self-actualizing subject who still conforms to general patterns of *controlled* behavior. Adopting the tenets of the citizen, the consumer becomes self-limiting, self-controlling subject who still conforms to general patterns of *purchasing* behavior” (Miller 30, emphasis in the original). Humanitarian entertainment becomes a form of intervention in

the realm of gender politics, its success and coherence resting precisely on the double hinge of the citizen-consumer. The spectacle of humanitarianism produces anti-trafficking activism as an urgent call to a sexual crisis, the solution to which rests on viewers' awareness and involvement as both civic participants and ethical consumers. In 2004, for instance, MTV Europe and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) joined forces to produce MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking), an anti-trafficking campaign targeting Eastern Europe, Asia Pacific, and South Asia. The campaign features consciousness-raising documentaries and short films narrated by celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, the *Alley McBeal* and *Charlie's Angels* star Lucy Liu, former Miss Universe Lara Dutta of India, and Danish fashion model Helena Christensen, among many others. According to the promotional ad, MTV EXIT is a campaign about civic rights – “about our rights as human beings to choose where we live, where we work, who our friends are, and who we love.” Acting on behalf of “hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world” who “have had these basic human rights taken away,” the producers enjoin viewers to watch and listen to MTV as well as to practice wise consumerism. Under the banner “As consumers we have the power to make a choice,” MTV Exit urges audiences to exercise their consumer rights and to “make sure that supply chains are free of trafficked and forced labour.” Choice becomes the link that conjoins the citizen and the consumer, at the same time enabling the citizen-humanitarian.

While humanitarian entertainment is not unprecedented and, indeed, the movie industry has a rather long history of philanthropy and activist interventions, contemporary

forms of humanitarian entertainment take a peculiar form in neoliberalism.<sup>17</sup> As the above examples show, neoliberal U.S., humanitarian entertainment becomes in the twenty-first century ancillary to non-governmental and governmental bureaucratic practices and discourses. The turn to markets and the rejection of big government in neoliberalism have resulted in an increasing reliance on nongovernmental and grassroots organizations, and last but not least cultural resources, to elicit citizens' contributions to national and transnational humanitarian projects. As a consequence, neoliberal humanitarianism requires "NGOs' competition over institutional and private funds to enable their missions" (Fadlalla 214). ). Moreover, the decline of the welfare state (already at its minimum in the United States) has triggered the refashioning of humanitarian discourses in such a way as to enable popular contributions in the form of individual donations and volunteerism. Humanitarian entertainment functions through an economy of exchange, enabled by what appears to be an impartial ethics of compassion. Anti-trafficking humanitarianism is premised on personal exchanges of services between individuals and groups positioned unevenly in the public sphere: humanitarians and survivors, cultural producers and audiences; social workers and clients. Consumerism is expanded, thus, to incorporate not only viewers' consumption of humanitarian images

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<sup>17</sup> The early twentieth-century saw the emergence of a spate of anti-trafficking movies. *Traffic in Souls* (1913), D.W. Griffith's *The Fatal Hour*, and later on in the century Michael Ritchie's *Prime Cut* (1972) and Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), are but few of the cinematic works dedicated to the issue. However, as I show in this chapter and dissertation, what differentiates these early productions from twenty-first century popular humanitarian projects is both the scope of contemporary humanitarian entertainment and the current partnership between state institutions and the entertainment industry. Last but not least, contemporary humanitarian entertainment is inextricably linked with consumption patterns to the extent that investing in the right type of cultural projects becomes in itself a form of activism. For more on anti-trafficking popular culture in the early-twentieth century, see Frederik K. Grittner's *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology, and American Law* (1990).

and products but also survivors' positioning in the field as clients for nongovernmental institutions.

The logic of the market expands to determine and shape gender-based activist approaches formerly considered outside market expertise. In this sense, anti-trafficking cultural forms reinforce understandings of gender justice based on the neoliberal logic that renders viewers (in their roles of prospective humanitarians) not only as consumers but also as entrepreneurs of humanitarian projects.<sup>18</sup> The “neoliberalization of compassion,” a phrase Amal Hassan Fadalla uses to define the market-driven privatization of social and humanitarian services, transforms citizens into private investors in humanitarian causes. Humanitarian discourses in mass media and popular culture borrow the language of market exchange, with consumers constructed and contracted as humanitarian enterprisers who can either create their own humanitarian organizations or join an already-existing one. In the case of anti-trafficking humanitarianism, for example, U.S. citizens find themselves subjects in a humanitarian exchange process: in exchange for contributing money and time, the fledgling humanitarians can prove their civic and humanitarian merit, a swap enforced by insignia, buttons, and other ephemera that donors receive to attest to their accomplished humanity. On the movie *Trade*'s website the viewers are encouraged to “get involved” by joining or starting a local anti-trafficking group, buying products manufactured by trafficking

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<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere in the dissertation, I discuss what Michel Foucault called *homo oeconomicus*, the neoliberal subject who is governed according to market principles. In the *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault believes that the neoliberal government “is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, into what could be called the formative power of society” (*The Birth* 148). However, Foucault warns, this does not entail a society of uniform consumption, but the multiplication and diversification of enterprises (149).

victims, and donating to organizations that work to free victims of human trafficking. Similarly, the producers of *Holly* enjoin audiences to create a screening event for corporations and universities. Following the same humanitarian urge, the producers of *Call +Response* ask audiences to “fund their [anti-trafficking victims’] freedom” and thus “join their story.” More interestingly, in the neoliberal spirit of private enterprise, the movie website takes its audiences to the Emancipation Network, a group of anti-trafficking NGOs. With the help of private donations, the Emancipation Network funds the Destiny program in Calcutta, India, that offers microloans to trafficking survivors to start their own businesses. According to the Emancipation Network’s website, these microloans help provide survivors with “sustainable income,” while offering them “a new identity” (“Sex Slavery: The Emancipation Network”). Humanitarian entertainment, then, appeals to the consumer of culture in her individual role as citizen of a cosmopolitan community but makes the humanitarian message more palatable by donning it in the entrepreneurial language of voluntary and private exchanges on the free humanitarian markets of NGOs. This particular blend of humanitarianism -- neoliberal entrepreneurship and individualistic takes on civic responsibility -- produces both trafficking survivors and their saviors in conformity with the neoliberal logic that capitalizes on individualism and personal responsibility. This entrepreneurial form of gender justice requires individuals to fend for themselves and shoulder the burden of social services, even as it ignores, and indeed bolsters, structural inequities deepened by neoliberal policies. At the same time, the convergence of consumerist desires and humanitarian sensibilities ushers in a new approach to the political, in which economic disparities and political problems are reconfigured as issues that can be addressed

culturally by listening to the right kind of music, watching the appropriate film or television show, or showing the right types of feelings.

The culture of humanitarianism is deeply imbricated in the material forces of neoliberal capitalism in many other ways. Besides the absorption of humanitarianism into a market-oriented ethics, the very production and circulation of humanitarian entertainment depends on neoliberal forms of power and interests. First, humanitarian works of culture reinforce institutional structures that are in themselves conducive to violence and responsible for migrant women's exploitation. Well-funded collaborations among the U.S. Department of State, law enforcement, nonprofits, and feminists result in interventions that convey neoliberal agendas. An instance of this is feminists' recourse to law enforcement and immigration control for anti-trafficking prevention projects. The reliance on the police as the solution to the violence against women betrays a neoliberal approach to social problems, according to which the police state must be called upon in alleged "states of emergency." Several anti-trafficking projects, including Lifetime's television series *Human Trafficking*, draw on the expertise of ICE agents to air what is touted as an accurate view of trafficking. In addition, a series of live incognito videos shot in brothels, as proof of so-called sexual slavery, are themselves made possible by the presence of law enforcement and by the disproportionate financial power of the U.S. government. International Justice Mission (IJM) is one of the many anti-trafficking groups that receives funding from the U.S. Department of State to combat human trafficking in the world. The IJM team raids brothels in Cambodian cities in search of so-called "victims of trafficking." In 2004, one of the raids, filmed with a hidden digital camera and entitled *Children for Sale*, became a televised spectacle for U.S. audiences as



an MSNBC Dateline program. The MSNBC/IJM short is often cited as proof of the epidemic of trafficking (Soderlund 65).<sup>19</sup>

Multinational corporations have also entered the playing field as anti-trafficking humanitarians. Private foundations such as LexisNexis and businesses such as Pepsi U.S.A. and Delta Airlines have emerged as supporters of anti-trafficking campaigns. As part of its “Funded Idea” program, Pepsi sponsored a small “She Shall Go Free” anti-trafficking group in Los Angeles, while LexisNexis funded Priority Films’ *Holly* (2006) and *Red Light* (2010). In an ironic and humorous change of language, corporations have learnt to re-brand their transactions as humanitarian. For instance, in 2009, in collaboration with the group ECPAT International, the Body Shop, launched the new product Soft Hands Kind Heart Hand Cream and the “Stop Sex-Trafficking Bag for Life.” According to the company’s ad, the proceeds from the sales go to support human trafficking, especially the Somaly Mam Foundation in Cambodia, an organization that has been under strong criticism for its unjustified confinement of sex workers. Of course, the point here is not that creams or bags should not be sold and purchased for right causes but, rather, that these humanitarian transactions obscure the existence of uneven global markets and structures of power. Global inequality could never be addressed through consumption and entrepreneurship, especially given the lack of attention to the racial and gendered divisions of global labor. Moreover, it is important to remember that corporations are themselves havens for economic exploitation in their support of neoliberal free trade and in their constant search for cheap labor and an ever-expanding

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<sup>19</sup> Notably, according to the Nonprofit Organization Lookup database, IJM’s revenues are approximately \$23 millions per year.

consumer base. From this perspective, this entrepreneurial impetus that defines humanitarian entertainment is ineffective and inequitable. First, this approach rests on the unchecked control of countries (such as the U.S.) that have the economic and military power to set the terms and conditions of the anti-trafficking agenda. Second, interventions such as the ones described above create a political environment in line with the neoliberal framework rather than against neoliberal capitalism. Gender justice, in this case, becomes nothing more than opportunistic, albeit well-intentioned, calls to accommodate the fight against women’s violence within the terms of neoliberal capitalism.



Fig. 1.8 Body Shop, “Stop sex-trafficking” Bag for Life, ECPAT. Web  
Fig. 1.9 Body Shop, Soft Hands Kind Heart Cream, ECPAT. Web

Humanitarian entertainment, as a contemporary cultural phenomenon, is by and large a U.S.-made product shipped throughout the world. The celebrity-driven culture of

humanitarianism rests on the widespread economy of neocapitalist consumption. At the same time, in its accommodation of the neoliberal capitalist logic, humanitarian entertainment reinforces the very structural inequities that prompt many women to migrate and enter sex work in the first place. This market-driven approach rests on public and private interests that are themselves responsible for violent anti-immigration backlashes and global economic deprivation. As a form of entertainment aired in the name of gender justice, humanitarian entertainment obscures the weave of forces underwriting its conditions of possibility at the same time that it dons the sentimental garb of humanitarianism.

#### Dissertation Overview

Each chapter of this dissertation revolves around a particular cultural work of anti-trafficking activism in order to delineate the political economy underlining the national and transnational circulation of cultural forms of activism, their institutional dissemination, and global consumption.

Chapter I examines the testimonial genre and the structures of power that underpin its popularity in anti-trafficking campaigns. Perceived as providing direct access to women's trauma, photographic and video testimony promises to redeem women's suffering and recover their humanity. Yet, in anti-trafficking activism, testimony becomes a site of contestation, with the photojournalists striving to fit women's story into the melodrama of gender vulnerability. In their emphasis on personal responsibility and their erasure of migrant women's political and economic dispossession in neoliberal capitalism, audiovisual testimonies reinforce the very forms of social inequity that they

aim to expose. As my analysis of photojournalist Mimi Chakarova's work makes clear, the drive to testify about suffering, integral to humanitarian entertainment, recuperates the disciplinary urge to scrutinize and control.

The social docudrama shares some of the evidentiary force of video testimony. The stated scope of the docudrama is that of identifying social issues, educating audiences and providing solutions. While the appeal to emotions is constitutive of the testimonial genre, the films produced for anti-trafficking campaigns draw on docudrama conventions to offer true-to-life reconstructions of "sex trafficking." The two movies I examine in Chapter II -- Marco Kreuzpaintner's *Trade* (2007) and Christian Duguay's *Human Trafficking* (2005) -- use personal dramas to illustrate the broader social problem of the traffic in women and to make a humanitarian statement about women's sexual exploitation. Yet both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* recuperate law enforcement discourses on trafficking, accommodating a penal anti-immigration approach to the traffic in women. The films demonstrate how compassion for trafficked women's rights presupposes a strict distinction between worthy trafficking victims and unworthy undocumented immigrants.

Whereas the above films dramatize allegedly real events to persuade audiences, numerous filmmakers, journalists, and anti-trafficking activists mobilize the documentary form to design anti-trafficking campaigns. By far the most interesting documentaries are those produced by nonprofits with the clear purpose of warning people against trafficking and educating women at risk about the impending dangers of migration. Such cultural moments are especially remarkable when their reach is transnational. Chapter III takes a look at a USAID-funded documentary series broadcast in Moldova as part of the

nonprofit Winrock's anti-trafficking campaign New Perspectives for Women. The documentary series that I examine there, while functioning under the transnational expertise of U.S.AID and the nonprofit sector, departs from the law enforcement paradigm characteristic of other anti-trafficking forms. Rather than understanding migrant women as victims subject to the law, the films envision them as developing entrepreneurs. The documentaries promote, thus, market liberalization as central to anti-trafficking interventions, making the neoliberal rhetoric of free markets central to the humanitarian ethics of anti-trafficking activism.

Sentimental narratives about trafficking victims gain official support and legitimacy when translated into the positivist language of training literature. Despite its apparent discontinuity with the other genres discussed in this dissertation, training manuals offer an opportunity to reflect on continuities between the popular rhetoric on human trafficking and the formal language of humanitarian expertise and law enforcement. Part of a long series of how-to materials, the manuals discussed in Chapter IV instruct on the forms, causes, and subjects of human trafficking even as they use the voice of authority to justify the surveillance of migrant women. The ethics of humanitarian care is central to this training literature. In this sense, care becomes a form of government that brings migrant women's bodies under state surveillance. This chapter shows that in neoliberalism the state remains central, and in fact it is bolstered by the perceived crisis of women's trafficking.

Bringing together diverse genres and cultural works, *Projects of Humanitarianism* examines the cultural articulation of anti-trafficking activism. At the same time, this study considers the political and economic values that such cultural

productions acquire and in turn produce as they travel across different locations and various geopolitical interests. The main goal of *Projects of Humanitarianism* is to trace anti-trafficking activism not only as a cultural project of narration but also as a political economic undertaking, that is, as an activist project that emerges at the intersection of cultural aesthetics, humanitarian compassion, and neoliberal economics.

## Chapter I

### Bearing Witness: Testimonial Snapshots of Sex Trafficking

Standing in front of a full auditorium at Columbia University during an anti-trafficking event on September 2009, Nicholas Kristof reminisced about his anti-trafficking activism in Southeast Asia. As a *New York Times* investigative journalist and self-proclaimed humanitarian, Kristof saw it as his duty to testify about the dehumanization of women and girls in the sex trade. As he does in numerous editorials, once more Kristof made a point of speaking for those trafficked women and girls who, in their trauma and extreme suffering, cannot bear witness to their own tragedy. After providing long tales about poverty, suffering, and exploitation, Kristof displayed a close-up photograph of Long Pross, a Thai prostitute, her eye gouged out by her pimp. The young woman's scarred face, according to Kristof, should make skeptics in the audience reconsider their indifference to the traffic in women. Following his talk, an assortment of images showing Long Pross's injury turned up on blogs and online anti-trafficking websites. Framed in close-ups or medium shots, Pross appears in these online posts either by herself or accompanied by Hillary Clinton, various state dignitaries, and anti-

trafficking activists. A caption runs under each of these pictures: “Long Pross, Trafficking Victim.”<sup>1</sup>

Long Pross’s portrait, posted all over the World Wide Web, circulates as a marker of violence, a pressing call for anti-trafficking actions, and a commentary on migrant women’s irreversible trauma. Her portrait justifies the work of anti-trafficking humanitarians, part of a larger visual regime that has coalesced around the traffic in women in the last decade or so. Visual representations of trafficked women inform, testify to gender atrocities, and publicize the suffering of migrant women across a wide community of world humanitarians. Such visuals incorporate what Sandra Matthews and Laura Wexler call scopic, instrumental, and iconic modalities of looking. Scopic looking is akin to the gaze whereby the looker gains mastery and control over the scene and acquires knowledge. In this case, the practice of viewing allegedly leads to knowledge (Matthews and Wexler xv). Instrumental looking, according to Matthews and Wexler, “serves the needs of the viewer” in that it is informational, while iconic looking works to bring together viewers as a community, producing a “collective sense” of belonging (xv). In anti-trafficking activism, visual representations combine the scopic, iconic, and instrumental practices of viewing in order to produce knowledge about migrant workers, move viewers into action, and constitute a community of humanitarians. Anti-trafficking humanitarianism materializes at the meeting point of looking practices and documentary testimonies of migration.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Among blogs that feature Long Pross’s story, see “HG’s World,” “Hope of the Sold” and “Empower Cambodia.”

<sup>2</sup> I borrow “documentary testimonies” from Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker. Sarkar and Walker use the concept to define a wide variety of audiovisual testimonies -- “from unedited video recordings to documentary films, from one-on-one reminiscences to site-



This chapter examines audiovisual testimonies by and about trafficking survivors. My principal focus is the work of Mimi Chakarova, a Bulgarian American photojournalist and one of the most vocal anti-trafficking activists, who has spent years interviewing and photographing Moldovan trafficked women.<sup>3</sup> In Chakarova's first work on sex trafficking, the photo essay *The Price of Sex* (2005), women's stories of trauma emerge at the intersection of the photographic, the aural, and the textual.<sup>4</sup> Her later short *Dubai: Night Secrets* (2007) draws on the genre of investigative documentary to put migrant women in front of the camera, while her multimedia project *The Price of Sex: Women Speak* (2009), co-produced with the Center for Investigative Reporting, uses the video format to make public a limited number of migrant women's oral histories. Both her photography and her interviews with what she refers to as "trafficked women"

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specific public presentations and perambulations." (1). Following Sarkar and Walker, documentary testimonies are "moving testimonies," that is, they include "the faces and voices that emanate from close or distant locations; the sounds and images that animate our ubiquitous screens; the archives we establish and the histories we resuscitate" (5). The documentary testimonies are "the new assemblages that compel us to bear witness, move us to anger or tears, and possibly mobilize us to action for social justice" (5).

<sup>3</sup> Chakarova began her investigative reporting on eastern European sex trafficking in 2002, working on the issue for seven years, as she herself proudly ascertains in an interview. Since then, she claims she has interviewed up to fifty trafficked women. Most recently, in collaboration with the Center for Investigative Reporting at Berkeley, Chakarova created the website [thepriceofsex.org](http://thepriceofsex.org), an online forum featuring trafficked women's stories and her own anti-sex trafficking work. Her intent, as she herself declares, is to take these stories to rural areas in eastern Europe where women are most vulnerable to trafficking ("Chakarova's Price of Sex").

<sup>4</sup> Chakarova's photographic essay, *The Price of Sex*, was first published as a digital photo essay in 2005. An abridged version was aired on PBS in 2007 under the name of *Moldova: The Price of Sex*. My analysis in this chapter is based on both the original version *The Price of Sex* and the slightly-changed PBS version *Moldova: the Price of Sex*. The latter includes Chakarova's commentary and her reflections on the process of collecting women's testimonials and making them public. Chakarova also created the project *Trafficked Women Speak*, an archive of testimonies by trafficked women. This year, Chakarova's first feature-length documentary on the traffic in women, entitled *The Price of Sex*, premiered at the Sarasota Film Festival. She was awarded the 2011 Nestor Almendros Award for courage in filmmaking.

function as sociological documents and audiovisual testimonies. They are stories that aim, in their circulation across a community of viewers, to bring into the limelight the obscure lives of low-income women from Moldovan villages. In both cases, the photographic and video testimonies of suffering advance the political recognition of migrant women. To be recognized publicly, however, migrant women must testify before the camera about their adversities. Women's entitlement to human rights protection is dependent not only on bearing witness but on bearing witness as a suffering victim and according to certain expectations of what suffering is. The humanitarian impulse to document and bear witness converges, I argue, with the desire to scrutinize migrant women's stories and accommodate them within a predictable paradigm of suffering.

### The Price of Visibility

At the 2009 Momentum Foundation conference, Chakarova came on stage, in her role of witness and humanitarian, to testify to the "sexual slavery" plaguing Eastern Europe in the aftermath of communism. During her talk, Chakarova offered her audience a narrative of her own life, explicitly relating her own immigration experience to that of eastern European trafficked women. "This is a very personal project for me," Chakarova explained, discussing her research on trafficking and adding that, as a native of Bulgaria, she shares with trafficked women the experience of having lived through a bankrupt political and economic system in eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Her emphasis on her bond with

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<sup>5</sup> Echoing sentiments pervading her first anti-trafficking project *The Price of Sex*, she wondered out loud what might have happened to her had she not emigrated to the United States in her teens. Elsewhere, Chakarova reflects that, "If I had stayed in the country where I was born, I probably would have been one of them [the trafficked women]" (*Moldova: The Price of Sex*).

trafficked women, based on both shared knowledge (personal experience of the communist regime and of the immigration process) and regional ties (her identity as a Bulgarian), enables Chakarova to correlate her tough life as an immigrant in Baltimore with the trafficked women's own experiences of migration. The emotional ties supposedly connecting the photojournalist with her interviewees promote the former as the legitimate spokesperson for the latter. Chakarova appears, thus, as the appropriate witness who has both the experience and the authority to make women's testimonies public and to testify in the name of those migrant women who have not lived to tell their own stories.

Giorgio Agamben traces the contemporary concept of "witness" to the Latin *testis*, the person who testifies about someone else's experiences, the witness who "in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties is in the position of a third party" (17). The other word for "witness" in Latin is *superstes*, a word that denotes the survivor, the one who testifies about events experienced first hand (Agamben 17). Didier Fassin contends that in contemporary society, the two figures (that of *testis* and *superstes*) become blurred and the *testis* comes to supersede the *superstes* (the survivor). In our media-saturated age, the *testis*, the one who did not experience violence but is in the position to talk about someone else's tragedy, represents the main and sometimes only testifying actor (536-37). Therefore, the witness who emerges in today's humanitarianism is not "the witness who has experienced the tragedy, but the one who assists the victims" (537).

Chakarova borrows the affective language of sentimentalism and becomes herself a *testis* -- a witnessing subject and a humanitarian artist who is not only privy to women's trauma by virtue of her work but who can also identify with her interviewees based on

her immigrant identity. In this sense, her visual work reflects another phenomenon whereby the *testis*, the testifying third person, is a legitimate witness based not on knowledge but on her shared identity with survivors. The *testis* becomes, then, the *superstes* by way of a process of cultural identification, a practice that erases the power relations always underpinning the unsurpassable gulf between the observer and the survivor. In addition, the journalist's camera functions as the medium through which deeply hidden secrets in women's lives surface, revealing traumatic truths that otherwise, Chakarova implies, could not be told. As she explains her trajectory,

I started this investigation on sex trafficking nearly six years ago. I wanted to understand the reason why so many women of my generation were sold into prostitution against their will. I was also determined to show the faces of these women through my photos and record the stories they rarely live to tell. ("Sex Trafficking: How It Works")

In another interview, she reiterates her sense of kinship with the trafficked women she interviews:

I grew up in a village; I migrated abroad as well; my family struggled with some of the same challenges of poverty that others faced. It was my obligation to return and expose something that many chose to ignore or were too afraid to acknowledge as a post-communist plague in our society. (Gonzales)

The survivor and the one who testifies in her name appear as related in their experiences: the former defined by the trauma of trafficking, the latter having lived under the impending threat of trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The current proliferation of testimonies, both those of survivors and those recounted by third parties, prompted Annette Wieviorka to call our contemporary time "the era of the witness" (*l'ère de témoin*). The turn to multimedia narratives ensures the popularity of such testimonies, enabling the wide dissemination of emotional stories of trafficking, some recounted by survivors themselves, others brought to light by humanitarian photojournalists like Chakarova. Referring to the current surge of televised personal testimonies, Dominique Mehl talks about "the television of intimacy," that is, media-

Chakarova's trafficking projects function as visuals of intimacy, to adopt Dominique Mehl's phrase. They are culturally mediated sentimental narratives of trafficking disseminated online and on television for humanitarian purposes. The testimonies she features in her work are part and parcel of an investigative process that revolves around migrant women, urging them to speak, to share their stories of suffering, and to testify to the cruelty of trafficking. Her suggestively titled multimedia project *The Price of Sex: Women Speak* is a collection of such testimonies that bring women's personal lives into public attention. Each testimony is part of an audiovisual collage that weaves together women's accounts of migration, photography, and Chakarova's third-person narrative. One of the video testimonies presents the story of Aurica, a migrant woman, repatriated to Moldova. The video begins by identifying her first of all as a woman and as a mother: her name written in capital letters on a blank screen is followed immediately by a mid shot of her and her toddler. Following these representational markers, a fragment of Aurica's own testimony – written in white against a black screen – gives viewers a glimpse of her life: "I left Moldova at 18 because I didn't have enough money to survive." Subsequent slides of Aurica's baby and old family photographs are interrupted by Chakarova's written commentary: "Aurica was sold into sex slavery in Antalya, Turkey. One night her pimp, Bilent, was driving her and another woman to a

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disseminated personal stories whose emotional force resides precisely in bringing the personal into public focus (Wiewiorka 97). The television of intimacy "puts experience on display and it privileges showing," favoring particular formal elements, such as close-up shots and hand-held cameras (142). In the words of Mehl, "the director is on the lookout for body language that may betray feelings or emotions. Looks, gestures, hands, are so many offerings to the technicians. In the programs of intimacy, the eye of the camera tracks the eye of the witness" (Wiewiorka 142).

client's home. He was stopped by the police." After this, Aurica's voice is heard for the first time telling the story of police corruption in Turkey. The above transition from Aurica's initial description of her experience as a story of migration ("I left Moldova . . .") to Chakarova's narration of Aurica's migration as a case of sexual slavery ("Aurica was sold into sex slavery") is notable. The first-person survivor's testimony is supplanted by the photojournalist's third-person omniscient tone. Aurica's personal story slides into the standard melodrama of the so-called "sexual slavery," a predictable story with which both Chakarova and the public can easily sympathize. The rest of the video continues to fragment Aurica's testimony, interspersing it between Chakarova's commentary and old family photographs. When on camera, Aurica appears in close up, the camera focusing on her eyes as if to reveal her hidden suffering.

Another testimony featured in this digital archive of testimonies focuses on Corina. The video begins with the written précis of Corina's migrational experiences:

Corina was first trafficked at the age of 14. She was sold into prostitution in five different countries. Corina spent the last seven years in Kosovo. She was repatriated to Moldova in a wheelchair. After fifteen years of working in prostitution, she returned with everything she owned in a bag.

This rundown, not unlike that in a police report, sets the tone of the interview to come. Immediately following this third-person introduction, we hear Chakarova's voice asking Corina, "When you would say you experienced violence for the first time in your life?" To this, Corina's response comes promptly: "At 13, I was raped." Chakarova inquires further: "and your father?" "My father always drank a lot," Corina replies, adding that,

Now he's dead, but I don't know when he died. I don't remember where I was when I called home and they told me he was dead. The only thing I have from my father is that I look more like his side of the family . . . and I love books, like him. Parents are not to blame.

Corina seems very comfortable talking about her experiences, at times making jokes. But we learn little about her reasons for and means of immigration, except for Chakarova's initial attempt to label Corina's immigration as trafficking. Instead, Chakarova is interested in making Corina talk about her childhood and her potentially abusive father, suggesting a causal link between Corina's involvement in prostitution and her neglect as a child.<sup>7</sup> Similar to the case of Aurica, Chakarova seeks to contain Corina's story and frame it as a case of trafficking. Yet Corina resists the redefinition of her identity, challenging the interviewer's attempt to turn her life into a trafficking melodrama:

Corina: As they say in Russian, 'Hope dies last.' While a person is alive he needs something to hope for. That's really how it is. When a person does not hope, there is no point in living.

Chakarova: What do you hope for?

Corina: Well, I hope to get better, to walk normal again. [referring to her injury from an accident]

Corina takes control of her narrative and defines her situation in terms of hope and resilience. Refusing to be defined solely with regard to her identity as a "repatriated prostitute," she responds to Chakarova's charged question of "what do you hope for" by foregrounding not sexual violence but her daily physical condition. She deflects the discussion away from the usual talk of trauma and violence towards the less dramatic conversation about comfort and well-being.

The documentary testimonies described above shed light on the politics of representation and knowledge production. They reflect the power relations that enable

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<sup>7</sup> This is not an unusual approach. Numerous psychological studies of prostitution resort to women's childhood trauma to explain their choices. See especially Andrea Dworkin and Melissa Farley for this psychoanalytical take on prostitution. Needless to say, this approach pathologizes women and fails to understand the socio-economics of their decisions.

only some stories to be told and condition the shape of women's confessions. Chakarova controls women's stories and contains any information that might disrupt the smooth understanding of women's migration as trauma. She frames and labels diverse stories of migration as trafficking incidents, even though the women themselves do not refer to or understand their experiences as such.<sup>8</sup> The politics of representation at the core of Chakarova's work evince what Griselda Pollock calls "the conditions of visibility," that is, the ways in which "certain people, places, things, enter into spaces of representation, which spaces . . . they enter" and to what effect. (13). Chakarova identifies women as "trafficked" even before they begin to tell their stories. While women's stories speak of labor exploitation and the absence of immigrants' rights, Chakarova subsumes these diverse and complex issues under the category of trafficking. By way of captions, photographs, and commentaries, she construes women's migration as a series of traumatic experiences even as she renders her own interventions as necessary for women's healing process to begin.

The search for coherence is central to the multimedia testimonies incorporated in Chakarova's work, which is why, when confronted with migrant women who snub her trafficking insinuations, Chakarova must reinvent a melodramatic narrative. This is most obvious in her 2007 undercover investigative video *Dubai Night Secrets*. The testimonies that Chakarova gathers during her undercover investigation in nightclubs in Dubai are all the more forceful as witnessing documents because of their extemporaneousness.

Moreover, the use of *cinéma vérité* techniques, such as hand-held camera and hidden

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<sup>8</sup> The redefinition of women's migration as trafficking is not unique to audiovisual testimonials. In my chapter on anti-trafficking manuals, I show how this constant attempt to subsume diverse experiences under the legal concept of "human trafficking" is indispensable to the success of the anti-trafficking training literature.



mikes, add to the emotional impact of the Dubai video. In Dubai, visiting nightclubs under the guise of a sex worker in hopes of discovering trafficked women, Chakarova finds herself face to face with migrant sex workers who claim to enjoy their work. Baffled, Chakarova must admit that, “the women’s faces I saw in the bathroom [in a nightclub in Dubai], from China, Ghana, Ethiopia, Morocco, Uzbekistan, these were not the broken spirits I expected to meet.” Instead, to Chakarova’s puzzlement, Dubai’s sex workers refer to themselves as “business women” (*Dubai: Night Secrets*). The women in Dubai do not describe their lives in terms of absolute freedom of choice or total captivity at the hands of traffickers and pimps.<sup>9</sup> Instead, they talk about work satisfaction, hopes for romance, flexible work hours, and easy money, employing the usual rhetoric used to describe any type of wage labor. Faced with unpredictable confessions, Chakarova explains away the women’s decisions to become sex workers as lack of choice, naïveté, and hypnotization at the sight of Dubai’s wealth. At the end of an interview with Maria, a forty-seven year old sex-worker, who confesses that she came to Dubai to find her soul mate -- “because it’s beautiful here” and “there are a lot of nice stories” -- Chakarova must give up and admit that “no matter what I said she [Maria] insisted she had not been forced.” Perhaps, this is why, in Chakarova’s subsequent anti-trafficking projects, Dubai

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<sup>9</sup> The dichotomy of freedom and captivity underwrites the current debate in anti-trafficking activism. From this perspective, women’s presence in the sex industry is narrated as either free choice or imprisonment, with no attention to the gray areas characterizing women’s labor migration. The women in Dubai point out the impossibility of defining migration in simple terms of freedom or coercion. For a critique of this binary opposition, see Laura Agustín’s *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets, and the Sex Industry* (2007).

remains the experience that cannot be fully represented, the story that refuses its insertion into the coherent story of gender violence, exploitation, and sex trafficking.<sup>10</sup>

When considered together, the divergent testimonies featured in Chakarova's work reflect the complex and wide diversity of migrational experiences. Most importantly, however, Chakarova's response to these dissimilar testimonies sheds light on the very process of bearing witness. It shows that trafficking testimonies are constructed narratives, contingent on social circumstances, filming conventions, and the photojournalist's own approach. Testimonies, despite their political potential, end up serving ideological purposes most of the time. In the particular case discussed here, the erasure of women's migrational experiences in Dubai exposes Chakarova's painstaking attempt to construct a uniform discourse of suffering and psychic trauma. As a consequence, diverse and complex migrational experiences are codified as melodramatic narratives of trafficking. "Testimonies, particularly when they are produced as part of a larger cultural movement," Wieviorka contends, "express the discourse or discourses valued by society at the moment the witnesses tell their stories as much as they render an individual story" (xii). Testimonies are intimate stories and, as a consequence, are heavily inflected by the ways in which the storyteller looks back on various moments and assesses them as success or failure (138). In addition, as Shoshana Felman, and Sarkar

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<sup>10</sup> At the Momentum conference, Chakarova still can't bring herself to talk about her interviews with sex workers in Dubai, choosing instead to dwell on the trauma of trafficking. When speaking publicly about her interviews with migrant women, she only makes quick mention of sex workers' stories by dismissing them as "false consciousness" or the result of superstitions. For instance, she explains away Nigerian sex-workers' recurrent refusals to be rescued by NGO teams in Greece as rooted in traditional beliefs about voodoo curses. Note how, in this case, economic analyses of work migration are replaced by cultural explanations, such as ideology, cultural bias, or, as in the case above, women's fear of voodoo curses.

and Walker rightly point out, testimonies surface when a certain situation is not clear, in times when judgment is in crisis and when “truth and its supporting materials” lose their authority (Felman 6; Sarkar and Walker 7). Chakarova’s testimonial videos promise to bring order to what appears as a temporary epistemic confusion, circulating as proof of sex trafficking. Yet, in the case of trafficking, women’s testimonies attain public recognition only to the extent that they fit the standard trafficking narrative, which is premised on clear-cut distinctions between naïve girls and evil traffickers and on uncomplicated notions of freedom and agency.<sup>11</sup> When rendered as simple and predictable stories of trafficking, testimonies of migration prompt audiences to sympathize with women’s tragedies.

Chakarova’s struggle to homogenize women’s divergent testimonies puts into question the very designation of “trafficked woman,” pointing out the epistemic violence inherent in naming and the elusive identity of the trafficked woman. To a certain extent, Chakarova’s projects suggest that there is not much in a name. From this perspective, it is precisely the audiovisual medium that keeps intact the illusion of naming. As James Young suggests, “a survivor’s memories are necessarily unified and organized [at least] twice-over in video testimony: once in the speaker’s narrative and again in the narrative movement created in the medium itself” (158). Thus, the filmed testimony does not consist in the presentation of events. Rather, the aim of the testimony is “to document both the witness as he makes his testimony and the understanding and meaning of events generated in the activity of testimony itself” (159). When managed within the medium of

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<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Clifford Bob shows that grassroots struggles must adopt a particular language and tell recognizable stories to be internationally visible. Likewise, trafficking testimonies follow a particular storyline, one premised on sentimental approaches to trafficking and strict legal-medical concepts of trauma.

the video and informed by current stereotypes of sexual violence, these testimonies reinforce legal and medical taxonomies that dictate migrant women's lives. Despite the desire to humanize migrant women, Chakarova participates in the process of fixing women's stories within the focus of the recording camera and the inescapable power of the name.

### Snapshots of Sexual Slavery

Similar to the above audiovisual testimonies, which show the effort to accommodate women's stories within legal and psychological discourses of trafficking, Chakarova's photo essay *The Price of Sex* brings women's trauma to public attention. This time, however, the medium of photography works to capture not women's voices but their bodies, faces, and living surroundings in ways that imprint the violence of migration on women's corporeality. The surfaces of photographs and of women's bodies bear the mark of violence and testify to women's victimization. Whereas in video testimonies the secret violence of migration is revealed through the process of storytelling, in *The Price of Sex* photography captures women's stories of migration. In this case, women's public recognition depends on their full exposure before the photographer's camera as suffering subjects. *The Price of Sex*, unlike the audiovisual testimonies, foregrounds Chakarova's role as *testis*, as the mediator and the witness whose testimony ensures women's admission into the political community of right-bearing subjects.

*The Price of Sex* is a documentary project that weaves together photography, text, and sound in order to re-create a realistic picture of the sex trade and its toll on Moldovan

women, many of whom were repatriated to Moldova after years of work in brothels and on the streets of Dubai and Istanbul. To produce this photo essay, Chakarova spent years visiting and talking with alleged trafficking survivors in Moldovan villages. She recorded women's stories of migration, prostitution, and survival. She also interviewed social workers to get a better sense of the extension of the trade and its causes. The result is a photographic compilation, whose emotional force rests on its alleged representational accuracy as well as its promise to touch the hearts of viewers and prod them into action.

The twenty-minute photo essay commences with a picturesque image of a green meadow, followed by the words of Rima, one of the migrant women, written in large font against a black background. "When I was little," the caption reads, "my mother told me that when it rains and the sun comes out a prostitute gives birth. The sun is the child. The rain drops, the tears of the mother." The caption is then followed by statistical information: "over 200,000 Moldovan girls and women have been trafficked abroad." Interposed between the two captions and framing them are two photographs of what we are led to believe is a trafficked woman: the first is a close-up of the upper half of her face, the camera fixed on her empty stare; the second medium close-up captures her back, her face to the wall, head bent down as if in distress or shame. This interplay of image and text at the beginning of the photo essay sets up Chakarova's overall approach to women's testimonies. The beginning juxtaposes stereotypical visuals of the abashed female figure with the symbol of regeneration and the prospect of a new life ushered in by childbirth. Moreover, the incorporation of official expertise in the form of trafficking statistics attempts to reconfigure and integrate women's varied narratives of migration and prostitution into a bureaucratic coherent discourse on women's trafficking. The

pictures and the accompanying text signify from the very beginning the trauma of trafficking and the hope of healing and rehabilitation. At the same time, the silent female figure, whose face we glimpse only in fragments and whose story we guess from her turned back, gains shape and form through an amalgam of sound, text, and close-ups. Her story reaches the public not directly through her words but indirectly by way of symbolic depictions of pain and trauma: her turned back, her bend-down head, her face to the wall. From the very beginning, then, Chakarova's photo essay gains meaning and coherence only because she edits out women's voices to accommodate mainstream discourses about the traffic in women. Unlike her video testimonies, the photographed woman is literally voiceless, her story of migration being related only through the artistic blend of image and text. The snapshots in this slide function as markers of the victim's humanity even as they link her humanity to victimization.

The visual construction of migrant women's stories as trafficking case studies is evident in Chakarova's manipulation of statistics. Questioned on the sources of her data (especially her claim that "over 200,000 Moldovan girls and women have been trafficked abroad"), Chakarova points to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) statistics. But she qualifies her response by adding that the number she cites also "includes girls and women who've been trafficked for labor, exploited as maids and factory workers and so on" (Interview with Cunningham). Her misrepresentation of statistical data, evident in her use of general human trafficking statistics to present the

particular case of women's trafficking into the sex sector, points out the various ways in which photographic testimonies are constructed.<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 2.1 Mimi Chakarova, *The Price of Sex*  
From Mimi Chakarova: documentary photography. Web

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<sup>12</sup> As with all trafficking statistics, the numbers Chakarova gives in *The Price of Sex* are hard to trace. During my research, I could not find any such statistics in publications and reports compiled by IOM. In a 2009 publication, IOM addresses the fraught issue of trafficking statistics by pointing out that,

It is impossible to give a total number. The full scale of trafficking from/in Moldova remains unknown as many victims are not identified in the destination countries or in Moldova due to changes in trends in trafficking, fear of stigmatization, low level of self identification, limited knowledge of human rights/trafficking issues, as well as the inability or unwillingness of some victims to report their trafficking experiences to the authorities. One indication of the extent of the trafficking phenomenon in Moldova is the total number of those assisted as victims of trafficking by IOM Chisinau. *From 2000 to 2008, this number is 2,443 persons.* Added to this number, there have been 1,016 children of victims, 50 stranded migrants and 1,674 cases at risk of being trafficked for a total number of 5,183 persons who have been assisted by IOM Moldova from 2000-2008. ("Frequently Asked Questions" 3, emphasis mine)



Fig. 2.2 Mimi Chakarova, *The Price of Sex*  
From Mimi Chakarova: documentary photography. Web

Chakarova's photo essay intersperses women's pictures with fragments of survivors' testimonies. Snippets of testimonies, printed on a blank screen, function as explanations for the pictures preceding or following them. For example, a brief excerpt from Rima's testimony towards the end of the essay captures her life before migration: "My mother died when I was 11. I married at 16. He beat me and threw me out in the streets." In another instance, Vika's written words recount her experience in a brothel: "My youngest client was 12. His father brought him to the brothel. My oldest was 83, what else can I tell you?" In yet another case, an anonymous woman's words appear to testify about women's irrecoverable trauma: "They give us a lot of pills at the shelter, most of us can't sleep at night so they give us pills to forget." Aiming to render women's stories immediate, the bits and pieces of testimonies add authenticity to Chakarova's photographs. At the same time, interspersed as they are among an array of landscape



shots, women's portraits, and Chakarova's own written commentaries, the fragmented testimonies draw attention to the overall absence of women's voices. The collage of third person narrative, text, and photography completely reframes women's stories, incorporating them into a broader emotional narrative about trafficking, trauma, and recovered humanity.

The recurrent tone of the photography is that of despondency, despair, and existential futility: young women engaged in a hopeless process of bodily and mental healing; mothers tending to their returned daughters, standing above the hearth cooking meager meals and unaware of their daughters' trauma; and voice-overs of anonymous Russian men, perhaps pimps, perhaps johns. The trafficked women seem to be involved in an endless healing process, gaining back their lost humanity because and through Chakarova's storytelling capacity. The photographic project highlights psychic trauma, with only a few pictures depicting physical injuries, especially the scars left by wrist-cuts. In general, women's sad postures become symbols of the mental and physical trauma and trafficking. Deep silences (rendered visually in women's half-turned faces, their tragic and empty looks, or close-up shots of women's turned backs) become suggestions of unspoken traumas. As Chakarova admits,

I didn't include photographs that revealed too much of their [trafficked women's] bodies or marks on them, such as cigarette burns and abrasions. I did not want any of them to be perceived as sexual objects or as victims. *I was interested in their eyes and the deep emptiness caused by their trauma.* I wanted people to see how young they are, yet how much they've seen. (Interview with Cunningham, emphasis mine)

The photographs function as outer reflections of women's inner trauma. They document suffering and promise recovery. As artistic endeavor, photography turns women's lives into an affective work of art; it brings together viewers because of its aesthetic power,

while managing knowledge within its visual frame.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, however, the very practice of capturing women's lives and stories with a camera raises issues of representational politics and ethics. Asked about the sensitive issue of photographing "trafficked women," Chakarova acknowledges that,

Using a camera is often a great curse. As soon as the girls see it, they close up. I see it in their eyes. Most turn away immediately. The only way to gain trust is to give people the opportunity to form an opinion of whether they should tell you their stories. . . . Before introducing the camera, I spent hours talking to them, walking around in their space, looking at family photos, listening to music on the radio, chatting about the dreams and aspirations they had when they were younger. By the time I asked for a photo, I knew their pain and my boundaries. What I received in return is a piece of their indignation and sadness. (Cunningham)

Photography serves as testimony, but as Chakarova details above, the photographic testimony represents more than the polished photo essay. Instead, the documentary testimony is a long process that involves gaining trust and intimately inserting herself in women's lives. This trust, alongside her linguistic skills in Russian and her identification as a Bulgarian immigrant in the United States, promotes Chakarova's work as an accurate representation of Eastern European women's experiences of violence. Given her self-positioning as a trustful immigrant subject, Chakarova obscures the power relations that underpin her work. The process of documentation, which entails the power of the photojournalist to prod into women's lives, urging them to confess and let themselves be photographed, appears as smooth and unproblematic.

Obscuring power relations between the photographer and the photographed, the documentary and artistic medium of photography promises direct access to women's

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<sup>13</sup> Chakarova herself argues that photographs of women and their daily surroundings appeal to her audiences because the beauty of photographic art can draw viewers in and facilitate the educational work ("Awakening Consciousness").

personal experiences even as it risks turning women's lives into a standard and predictable narrative of sexual violence and migration. In *The Price of Sex*, Chakarova must negotiate the contentious line between women's personal stories and the universal trafficking paradigm these stories stand for. On the one hand, just as in the case of her video work, photography promises to individualize the anonymous group of trafficked women by offering portraiture as the solution. Her photographs aim to humanize the repatriated Moldovan women, foregrounding personal stories and individual struggles. As Chakarova herself confesses, she wants to show her viewers that these women "are real people, with real problems" ("Moldova: The Price of Sex"). The fragments of written testimonies add to the individualizing power of the photographs. On the other hand, the photojournalist incorporates complex personal stories into an almost clinical discourse about trauma and rehabilitation. In this sense, the photo essay reconfigures women's testimonies as rhetorical parts in the typical teleological story of trafficking, flattening women's complex negotiations and expunging any contradictory narratives. The use of formal elements, such as close-up shots and the resort to captioning rather than to women's voices, undermines the political potential of the project. The intermingling of women's portraits with landscape shots and promotional anti-trafficking images further exposes the power dynamics that underwrite the relation between the photographer and the photographed. One picture that Chakarova incorporates in her photo essay, amidst women's portraits, is that of a graffiti borrowed from an anti-trafficking campaign. The graffiti, intensely colored in shades of red, draws on the idea of the puppet show to convey women's manipulation and abuse at the hands of male traffickers and pimps. The image shows several lifeless female bodies controlled by the hands of men, just as in a

puppet show. A fragment of Russian text, reproduced in capitals, associates the trade particularly with Russian men, reinforcing stereotypical trafficking discourses about ruthless Russian traffickers.



Fig. 2.3 Chakarova, *The Price of Sex*; Mimi Chakarova: documentary photography. Web

The graffiti renders human trafficking in Manichean terms that pit naïve women against greedy traffickers, capturing a trafficking discourse long criticized by scholars and activists.<sup>14</sup> When interposed among women’s photographs, this stereotypical representation of trafficking undermines the testimonial function of the project and turns particulars in women’s lives into conventional melodramatic elements. In addition, this imagery once more links women’s political recognition as subjects of rights with their

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<sup>14</sup> Among scholars who have discussed the problematic simplification of human trafficking narratives, please see Rutvica Andrijasevic (2007); Sealing Cheng (2005); and Kamala Kempadoo (2005), to mention but a few.

absolute victimization, leading to the paradoxical erasure of those migrant women who cannot or do not choose to showcase their suffering. This misrecognition at the heart of Chakarova's photo essay defines migrant women's rights relative to their trauma.

In its entirety, Chakarova's photography in the *Price of Sex* constitutes a scopic regime of looking in that it promotes "stances for viewing that are closely aligned with power relations in society" (Matthews and Wexler 20). Especially, in its documentary role, her photographic work underlines the privileged status of the photographer and her audiences. This is especially obvious in the case of those shots that draw on the genre of the ethnographic documentary to capture women's daily lives amidst their families, in their villages of origin. In her desire to get to the root of the trafficking phenomenon, Chakarova documents the poverty under which women live. Yet the few random stills that record women's poverty become marginal annotations to the photographic project and do little to capture women's lives in neoliberal capitalism. One shot, for instance, aims to inform viewers about the meager resources that women and their families have in Moldova. The picture, drawing on the tradition of still-lives, shows several bowls and items of food on a table. The photograph is taken from above and is dimly lit. The only faint light coming sideways through a window falls on the group of dishes in the middle. The caption accompanying this picture informs that,

Moldova is now the poorest country in Europe. Its villages have been devastated by corruption and economic duress since the collapse of communism. This is a typical homemade breakfast for a family of six.

Another picture captures the usual communist urban landscape, gray blocks towering ominously in the horizon. This causal narrative of poverty and trafficking, constructed mainly through visuals, lends a voyeuristic feel to the entire photo essay.

Ethnographic details such as what women eat and what they wear –meant to capture women’s dismaying social conditions – integrate women’s personal stories of migration into the objectifying realm of ethnographic photography.



Fig. 2.4 Chakarova, *The Price of Sex*  
Mimi Chakarova: documentary photography. Web



Fig. 2.5 Chakarova, *The Price of Sex*  
Mimi Chakarova: documentary photography. Web

The editors of *Working Images* (2004) contend that ethnographic photography or what they call visual anthropology represents the use of the visual “as a documenting tool, as a form of interrogation, a way of knowing/seeing and representation” (Pink et al 2). This type of visual documentation tends to objectify the subjects represented and validate the photographer’s/artist’s approaches rather than that of the subjects depicted (2). In *The Price of Sex*, photographic representations of trafficked women and their environments serve as ethnographic knowledge. They offer expertise about unfamiliar subjects and, in their visual rendition of hidden details about women’s lives, they construe the documenting process as a practice of pleasure: the pleasure of knowing and gazing at distant and usually inaccessible places and subjects. Such pictorial documentation positions both Chakarova and her audiences as distant observers of women’s intimate lives. The art of photography becomes, in this case, an epistemic

process that produces knowledge about migrant women and offers assessments about migration, subsuming women's lives into a scopic regime of looking.

In one interview for the *F8Magazine*, Chakarova expresses her faith in the power of photography to capture women's true essence and most hidden secrets:

For me, photography has always been like music. They're one and the same. When you look through the viewfinder, at someone's face, for that split moment you feel a connection, a depth into someone's being, you are completely disengaged from the rest of the world, even when surrounded by danger and chaos. It's a higher state of mind. . . . *So what drives me to take photos is the idea that a single fraction of a second has the ability to reveal a truth deeper than any written word. Photography is immediate and instinctual. I can't imagine doing anything else with my life.* ("Awakening Consciousness," emphasis mine)

Chakarova's faith in the truth made possible by photography defines her overall artistic approach. The visual appears in the above statement as the transparent source of knowledge and as a creative process that brings to surface women's deep secrets. The photographer's camera functions as an ethnographic instrument that records and documents.<sup>15</sup> Most significantly, the belief in the capacity of the camera to unearth long-held secrets transpires in Chakarova's overall focus on a utopian age of innocence that the camera can expose and that she finds in women's childhood and family photographs. Thus, interwoven with landscape shots and portraits, *The Price of Sex* also comprises family photographs. Such family archives, displayed side by side with present-day portraits, betray the photographer's search for a coherent and pure narrative of humanity, freed from the violence of trafficking. Pictures of children, striking in their blissful innocence, are juxtaposed with close-ups of jaded trafficked women. A trafficked

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<sup>15</sup> Brian Winston, referring this time to the filming camera, likens the public trust in the camera with the positivist belief in scientific measurement, a tendency that he traces back to the "long history of pictorial representation as a mode of scientific evidence" (37).



woman, returned to her village, holds for the camera an old sepia photograph depicting her as a child, flanked by her parents. The sepia washed-out colors of the photograph, encapsulated within the much larger frame of Chakarova's shot, symbolize a break between an innocent past and a troubled present. In another picture, a trafficked young woman poses alongside a baby in a stroller, a domestic scene meant to allude to a fleeting moment of regained innocence. The photographer turns to these women's childhood, as the private and asexual time where she can find their lost purity and also recover some of their humanity. At the same time, old family and childhood photographs recreate women's life stories according to a new chronology, whereby their migration appears as a temporal break, marking the tainted moment of knowledge from the pure age of childhood innocence.<sup>16</sup>

This dialectics of knowledge and innocence is central to the coherence of Chakarova's photo essay. The Moldovan trafficked women, captured in Chakarova's photography, carry the burden of knowing too much: they must publicly recount, embody, and at the same time privately guard the secret knowledge of their trauma and shame. In the PBS discussion of her work, Chakarova declares that, in her photographic project on Moldova, she wants to underline the mothers' ignorance of their daughters' mishaps abroad, to focus on the very idea of not knowing and "keeping secrets" because of shame ("Moldova: The Price of Sex"). As Chakarova puts it,

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<sup>16</sup> In *Dubai: Night Secrets*, faced with women who threaten the cohesiveness of her trafficking discourses, Chakarova turns to their childhood again, as the private and asexual time where she can find these women's lost purity and recover some of their humanity. In her interview with Tania, a Ukrainian sex worker, Chakarova reacts to Tania's matter-of-factness by asking, "What did you want to become when you were little?"

The relationship I wanted to talk about [in *The Price of Sex*] is not knowing, keeping secrets. Most of these women never tell their families and their loved ones the truth of what happened to them, because of shame, fear of being dishonored, because having been a prostitute is probably the worst thing that you could be in this life time. Because you would bring so much shame to your family . . . people are so unwilling to talk about what happened to them. This is why I included Olesia's story. Her mom, Maria, had no idea what had happened to her girl, she had no idea that Olesia came home pregnant and she had to go to a nearby clinic to get an abortion. She had no idea about the things that she had gone through, how many clients she had to service . . . It's something that Olesia told me about and warned before taking me to her village.

The necessity of keeping secrets and not making known defines the trafficked women's relationship with their mothers and with the public at large. At the same time, however, the need to know and make visible is at the center of Chakarova's photo essay. The photographer's camera functions as a source of knowledge even as it channels and shapes the types of information made public. Probing into trafficked women's secrets and intimate feelings, despite women's desire to conceal parts of their lives, becomes the motor and rationale of Chakarova's photo essay. Given this paradoxical stance and in order to preserve the illusion of visual authenticity and accuracy, Chakarova must present herself as both the keeper of women's shameful secrets and their public messenger. This tension -- between women's urgent need to keep their experiences hidden and what Chakarova sees as her pressing duty to make their secrets public -- is integral to the photo essay. This paradox is not only an epistemic question but also a matter of ethics. When scrutinized, Chakarova's desire to make visible what should remain hidden triggers once more questions about the artist's location relative to the photographed women. In fact, the centrality of Chakarova, as photographer, narrator, and communicator of women's testimonies, remains hidden in the *Price of Sex*. Both the presence of the photographer and of her camera is erased, creating the illusion of unmediated, transparent access to

women's present knowledge and past times of innocence. The trafficked woman emerges as subject of rights at the end of a process of photographic representation that perceives photography as an incursion into the depths of women's humanity.

### Human Subjects, Humanitarian Stories

Let me come back full circle to the image with which I began this chapter, the photograph and story of Long Pross. Pross's picture, like Chakarova's archive of testimonies, draws on the visual medium to alert viewers about the trafficking crisis. At the same time, such visuals rely on humanitarian values of compassion to steer audiences into action. Their political and humanitarian appeal rests on the belief that, local articulations notwithstanding, there is a shared humanity to which everyone, despite individual and group identities, should be entitled. In this case, photographic and video testimonies are said to transform trafficking survivors into universal subjects of human rights, that is, to endow them with the universality integral to human beings and rescue them from the particulars of their own existence.

Yet the politics of humanism subtending audiovisual testimonies conceals uneven power relations, obscuring the fact that one's economic status and ethno-racial identity conditions one's standing as a subject of rights. The public focus on the suffering trafficked subject and on her allegedly lost humanity hides from sight the fact that humanity has never been a recognizable prerogative of economic migrants. For instance, in the European Union, Moldovan migrants in particular and Eastern European migrants in general represent a class of migratory subjects who lack rights and political recognition. Their immigrant status in western European societies is characterized by

their “deportability.” Deportability represents the “protracted possibility” of deportation that overshadows the existence of labor migrants in Europe and throughout the world (Peutz and de Genova 14). This fluid differentiation between deportable migrants and citizens works to govern populations both within and outside borders according to their human worth. Such entrenched discriminations end up defining migrants not as political subjects with inalienable rights but as human subjects who must continuously prove that they deserve rights.

In the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt warns about what she calls the “perplexities” of human rights. In her view, rights are not the prerequisite of the universal subject. On the contrary, the subject of rights is the citizen, the individual whose identity is clearly bound to the territorial space of a nation-state. Referring to the abstraction of human rights, Arendt argues that, paradoxically, “the man [sic] who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which makes it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man” (300). In other words, human rights are the rights of those who lost membership in all other groups and communities and become recognizable only by way of being a suffering human being. Human rights are “the rights of those who are only human beings, who have no more property left than the property of being human” (Rancière 298). This articulation of the paradox underwriting the regime of human rights is especially manifest in Chakarova’s collage of photographic and visual testimonies. The representational practice integral to her work foregrounds vulnerability as essential to migrant women’s recognition as subjects of rights. Moreover, anti-trafficking humanitarianism coalesces as a regime of audiovisual representations that takes testimony as the ultimate authentic sign of women’s suffering. Testimony marks a zone

of misrecognition, whereby migrant women gain political identity only as humanitarian subjects and only when they share their suffering publicly. Photographic and video testimonies produce vulnerability as a pre-condition for migrant women's political representation. In other words, to enter the arena of political representation, migrant women must showcase and prove their sexual vulnerability; to gain rights, they must first assent to their injured identity. It follows that the humanitarian approach to the traffic in women is itself the effect of structural inequities that posit migrant women as confessional subjects, subjects that must publicly share their suffering to receive rights. Testimony becomes in this case the public confession of those who have no other way to prove their humanity but by putting their suffering on display.<sup>17</sup>

The trafficked woman must always appear as either forcefully abused or naïvely submitting herself to abuse, but always injured and traumatized in order to preserve intact the cohesiveness and legitimacy of the humanitarian discourse on trafficking. As Chakarova's humanitarian projects suggest, outside the performativity of abjection, the trafficked woman cannot possess coherent social meaning. As Sarkar and Walker insist,

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<sup>17</sup> It is telling that the U.S. Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) stipulates that, of all migrant sex workers in police custody, only "severe victims of trafficking" should be entitled to social protections and only if they testify in court against their traffickers. According to TVPA, the term "severe forms of trafficking" means:

- (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Sec 103.8

Suffering becomes, thus, the sole marker of migrant women's humanity.

drawing on Julia Kristeva, abjection is integral to testimonies of suffering for they foreground ““what human life and culture must exclude in order to sustain themselves”” (6). Testimonies of trafficking constitute the injured subjects that they seek to redeem--paradoxical subjects whose very entitlement to humanity is premised precisely on their perceived incapacity to practice or embody their humanity. The politics of humanitarian compassion works in such cases first to exclude trafficked women from the narrative of humanity and then to represent their humanity as recoverable. At the same time, as mentioned before, the appeal to a humanity that can be salvaged from the hands of traffickers obscures the logic of humanism, according to which some may be recognized as human by virtue of their national belonging and economic status, while others must prove their humanity, cast as they are at the margins of the global regime of neoliberal capitalism.

Most significantly, however, the proliferation of testimonies of suffering in anti-trafficking activism characterizes the politics of gender in neoliberalism. Chakarova’s work signifies the increasing reliance on dramatic personal narratives to attain social justice. The embrace of testimonies as the unmediated access to women’s experiences, despite their cultural and contextual contingency, reflects a deeper tendency in contemporary politics, namely the reliance on the humanitarian language of compassion to respond to and solve social and gender inequities. Following Didier Fassin, this approach expresses social violence in terms of trauma (“The Humanitarian Politics” 532).<sup>18</sup> As mobilized in Chakarova’s work, the testimonial genre turns structural inequity

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<sup>18</sup> Referring to the broader transformation of social movements in the twenty-first century, Didier Fassin muses that,

into personal responsibility, a phenomenon that is specific to neoliberal capitalism, as Lisa Duggan, among others, have pointed out.<sup>19</sup> The collage of testimonies and photographs featured in Chakarova's work obscure power relations and social inequities while turning poverty and migration into personal mishaps in an allegedly fair and free global economy. Moreover, the traffic in women appears as the effect of private issues such as nonfunctional families, pathological childhoods, and naïve decisions. Chakarova frames women's stories of migration in terms of moral personal values (for instance, her misrecognition of sex workers and refusal to see them as legitimate migrant workers) and cultural failure (such as Moldovan women's purported inability to cope with capitalist markets because of growing up in the "communist bubble").

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Where previously the language evoked in defending oppressed peoples was that of revolution, current usage favors the vocabulary of psychology to sensitize the world to their misfortune. Yesterday we denounced imperialist domination; today we reveal its psychic traces. Not so long ago we glorified the resistance of populations; we henceforth scrutinize the resilience of individuals. Of course, traditional criticism of oppression has not disappeared, and in fact it is often reformulated in terms of human rights. Similarly, geostrategic analysis has not merely been replaced by psychotherapeutic intervention. To talk of suffering in order to speak about domination is to do morals and politics with new words. (532)

Pace Fassin, this new focus on personal suffering and trauma does not represent simply a different type of politics. The emphasis on trauma rather than on structures of domination shapes the ways in which injustices are publicly understood. Furthermore, the embrace of dramatic narratives of trafficking also determines how interventions are envisioned and who will be the subjects of those interventions.

<sup>19</sup> Following Duggan, if corporate wealth is credited to the magic of the markets, on the cultural and social fronts, structural inequities are explained away as personal failures and responsibilities. The neoliberal mantra of "free markets," Duggan concludes, only helps to bolster the libertarian discourse of the self-possessed and self-determined privatized subject. As such, privatization and personal responsibility become neoliberalism's key terms that "define the central intersection between the culture of neoliberalism and its economic vision, in the U.S. and abroad" (Duggan 12). Privatization and personal responsibility pervade contemporary policy debates, "joining economic goals with cultural values while obscuring the identity politics and upwardly redistributive impetus of neoliberalism" (14).

Despite their political force, migrant women's testimonies do not work to expose labor exploitation and discrimination. Nor do they address global economic inequalities that generate a pool of cheap and unprotected migrant labor. Rather, these video testimonies work to raise public compassion and unwittingly reinforce the very power structures that situate photojournalists like Chakarova as the privileged observers and spokespersons for migrant women. The promotion of Chakarova's multimedia digital project *The Price of Sex: Women Speak* is suggestive in this sense. The digital project enjoins viewers to raise funds in order to alleviate women's poverty. Chakarova advises viewers that,

Your help and involvement do make a difference. In countries where the average monthly income is less than \$200, a donation as small as \$25 or \$50 can assure [sic] a family in need food and basic living supplies. Most of the women you see in the film and multimedia stories are physically broken and need medical assistance. Most have children whose education you can support.

This call for charity betrays the traditional role of survivors' testimonies, which has been that of bringing awareness and prompting social transformations. Instead, Chakarova turns women's stories into an opportunity for charity, which, beyond its aid for a limited number of repatriated migrants, does not address local and global forms power.

Rather than being political actors in a project of their own making, migrant women become suffering receivers of humanity. What appears as the political space, created through testimonies, where migrant women can share their stories, gets reconfigured as a humanitarian realm of compassion. At the same time, the move to the personal and emotional ensures the solidification of a compassionate and unequal bond between humanitarian photojournalists and trafficked women. The politics of compassion, precisely by virtue of its reliance on personal emotions and the universality



of humanity, promotes the personal as the solution to political crises, losing sight of systemic social suffering and its violent mass effects. The emotional performativity of humanity in these testimonies functions at the discursive level to solidify public humanitarian ethics, on the one hand, and to give coherence to the concept of “sex trafficking,” on the other hand. The figure of the foreign trafficked woman emerges as the homogeneous effect of these emotional entanglements.

## Chapter II

### Cinematic Re-Constructions of Human Trafficking

On September 19, 2007, the UN headquarters in New York City hosted the benefit premiere of *Trade*, an anti-trafficking feature-length narrative film, produced in the U.S. with a German director and an international cast. The movie, directed by Marco Kreuzpainter, was the first anti-trafficking film to be screened at the United Nations in an event co-hosted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the film distribution company Roadside Attractions, and the human rights organization Equality Now (“UN Hosts World Premiere”). Made on a small budget and grossing a bit over \$1 million worldwide, *Trade* is mostly used in national and transnational anti-trafficking campaigns to educate and raise awareness about the traffic in women (Box Office Mojo 2007).<sup>1</sup> In its expressed commitment to the anti-trafficking cause and its claims to authenticity, *Trade* purports to

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<sup>1</sup> *Trade* also premiered in Europe on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2007 as part of the EU campaign against human trafficking. In Australia, screenings were funded by the Christian international developmental organization *World Vision* and the Australian anti-trafficking program *Don't Trade Lives*. The film won the Hessian “Cinema for Peace Award” and the Bernhard Wicki Film Award, the latter conferred on filmmakers who emphasize human rights issues in their works.

exceed the limitations of a fictional Hollywood movie and flaunts itself as an artistic project dedicated to gender justice.<sup>2</sup>

*Trade* is far from unique in anti-trafficking activism. Only a few years before *Trade*'s premiere at the United Nations, the women's channel *Lifetime* was partnering with Amnesty International and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to create the four-hour television series *Human Trafficking* (2005) about Eastern European women trafficked for prostitution into the United States. Written by Agatha Dominik, a Polish screenwriter living in the U.S. and casting Mira Sorvino as a rookie ICE agent, the movie aims to raise awareness about the plight of women's trafficking. As with the movie *Trade*, anti-trafficking activism becomes the rationale behind the production and circulation of the television series. Both the series' producers and the cast mobilize the language of women's rights to publicize *Human Trafficking* as a docudrama, a film whose power rests precisely in its reliance on true events.<sup>3</sup>

In their commitment to the anti-trafficking cause and their embrace of realism, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* mark the increasing reliance by activists on cinematography to run anti-trafficking campaigns and to rally public support for the anti-

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<sup>2</sup> On the movie's official website, audiences are encouraged to "get involved" in the global fight against trafficking by exposing "the truth about modern-day slavery," joining or creating an anti-trafficking local organization, calling elected representatives, buying products made by survivors, and, last but not least, by donating to anti-trafficking groups. The producers also pledged to donate five percent of the first month's sales to the UN Vienna-based Office on Drugs and Crime.

<sup>3</sup> In an interview on *Tavis Smiley Show*, Sorvino cannot emphasize enough that *Human Trafficking* is

a pretty darn good picture of what happens, and . . . you know, we had it vetted by the ICE people, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement people, and by Amnesty, they both read the script and they said 'This is dead-on accurate. This is really right.' (Sorvino)

trafficking movement.<sup>4</sup> During the premiere of *Trade* at the UN in 2007, for example, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the film producers for their endeavor and proclaimed the United Nations as the best venue to “bring together Governments, civil society, the media and the film industry” and as an excellent platform “to raise awareness and call for action” (“Speech by United Nations Secretary-General”).

Envisioning *Trade* as a groundbreaking example in the movie industry that will “lend a new meaning to ‘lights, camera, action,’” Ban Ki-moon hoped audiences would “feel compelled to take action,” and “join local, national and international efforts to defend the victims, to bring those responsible to justice, and to help protect the vulnerable in the future” (“Speech”).

In this chapter, I examine the articulation of a humanitarian approach to the traffic in women through docudrama, focusing especially on the blend of realist and melodramatic elements characterizing anti-trafficking films. Both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* gain their reputation as activist films because they are produced in the realist tradition of docudrama and rely on collaborations with governmental and nongovernmental institutions. At the same time, however, besides recreating the events

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<sup>4</sup> For more examples of recent anti-trafficking films, see Michael Cory Davis’s *Svetlana’s Journey* (USA, 2004), Guy Moshe’s *Holly* (USA, 2006), Pierre Morel’s *Taken* (USA/France 2008), Po-Chih Leong’s *Out of Reach* (USA/Poland, 2004), and David Yates’s *Sex Traffic* (UK/Canada, 2004), to mention but a few titles. That cinema plays a key role in anti-trafficking campaigns is suggested by the numerous honors and awards conferred on film producers for their contribution to the global fight against trafficking. One such example is writer and producer Guy Jacobson and actress Adi Ezroni who were recently named Global Heroes by the Bush administration for their work on *Holly* and honored in the 2008 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report. Moreover, in 2007 and 2008, Taiwan welcomed an anti-trafficking film festival. The festival, organized by the Taiwanese nonprofit The Garden of Hope Foundation, MTV Exit, and the American Institute in Taiwan, features screenings and discussions about human trafficking (Torchin 230).

“as they really happened,” the two movies discussed here, like the vast majority of anti-trafficking films, make affect central to their work of persuasion. Anti-trafficking humanitarianism emerges as the effect of a series of filmic and rhetorical elements, such as the incorporation of official expertise on trafficking, explicit claims of activism, and the films’ use of melodramatic tropes to turn distant viewers into compassionate humanitarians. As my close reading of the films will show, to achieve emotional force, the films connect the traffic in women with immigration and black slavery, turning the main heroines’ mishaps into a social commentary on the threat of undocumented migration.

In my examination of these docudramas, I do not intend to prove or disprove their claims about trafficking. Instead, I am interested in tracing the textual and filmic practices that enable the films to function as activist documents and as exact depictions of real life experiences. What tropes, visual and textual strategies do the films use to dramatize a purportedly real event and make it palatable to audiences? What understandings of migration do they put forth and how do they construe the violence against women in the twenty-first century?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I draw especially on Steven Lipkin’s discussion of the performative function of the docudrama. In his examination of the historical docudrama, Lipkin argues that the docudrama should be viewed as a performative genre, that is, a form that, in its re-creation of events, puts forth interpretations of events. Docudrama, as a hybrid genre, does not offer events but understandings of particular events (14). Lipkin suggests that, in the case of the docudrama,

“the key question becomes, not ‘was this what happened?’ so much as, in what way(s) does performance in docudrama allow us to understand the significant people and events of the past? What is there in its modeling, its strategies of re-creation, that brings the past to life affording some new understanding of it for a viewer in the present? . . . What does its performance of the past do? (14-15)

## Cinematic Reconstructions

Marco Kreuzpaintner's *Trade* (2007) and Christian Duguay's *Lifetime* miniseries *Human Trafficking* (2005) draw on conventional understandings of human trafficking in order to mobilize the public against what is often referred to as "modern-day slavery." The two movies foreground the traffic in women as the most common form of human trafficking, while recounting the typical story of women's sexual enslavement and subsequent liberation. To validate their takes on the traffic in women, the movie producers draw heavily on governmental reports, media accounts, and legal expertise. *Human Trafficking* is the result of collaborations between the non-profit sector and the Department of Homeland Security, whereas *Trade*'s plotline is based on journalist Peter Landesman's *New York Times* editorials on the traffic in women.

Both films rely on tropes of sexual vulnerability and on graphic visuals of suffering, weaving together statistical data about trafficking with emotionally charged allusions to women's sexual slavery. Women's suffering becomes a pervasive trope that surfaces in the films' promotional materials. For example, *Human Trafficking* is advertised as a film about "young girls" who are "bought and sold" everyday, while the film's motto is "Innocence Lost, Justice Found." (*Human Trafficking: An Educational Guide for Viewers*). Both films depict "innocence" as a characteristic intrinsic to women. Consequently, trafficking is defined as women's loss of innocence, the film reinforcing traditional notions of female sexual purity and male lust.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The trope of female innocence is central to anti-trafficking films in general and is present in both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking*. The discourse of innocence was also prevalent during the white slave trade. See also Judith Walkowitz's genealogical examination of feminist prostitution campaigns in nineteenth century England, already mentioned in the Introduction. Walkowitz demonstrates that the initial attempt by

Produced and premiered at a distance of approximately two years, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* are strikingly similar in the stories they tell -- evidence of the few similar journalistic and governmental sources on which such movies rely. The film producers promote their movies as activist productions, setting them against the typical Hollywood drama and in line with the socially-committed genre of docudrama. The films purport to inform, educate, and proffer solutions to the global crisis of human trafficking. Marco Kreuzpaintner, the director of *Trade*, reminisces that he joined the project because he wanted to do “a character piece with a strong political background” (“Preliminary Production Notes 6). Realism is central to the films’ claims of anti-trafficking activism.<sup>7</sup>

*Trade* begins in Mexico City, with Adriana (Paulina Gaitan) celebrating her thirteenth birthday in what appears to be a poor neighborhood and no less destitute mother-headed household. Not long after the movie begins, the audience witnesses the complete set of clichés about Mexico and the global South: poverty, single mothers, Mexican and Russian mafias striking deals unhindered, corrupt cops, and robbers threatening American tourists at every corner. Adriana’s story in Mexico intertwines with the destiny of Veronica (Alicja Bachleda), a Polish young mother who, poverty-stricken

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feminists to oppose the state’s regulation of prostitution relied on similar arguments about innate female virtue and male vice. Such restrictive gender-based arguments encouraged the emergence of the new man, the hero and the protector of pure women, capable of restraining his sexual drive and crusading to save and protect daughters and mothers.

<sup>7</sup> I use realism here in its basic meaning to denote “a mode of representation that, at the formal level, aims at verisimilitude (or mimesis)” (Hallem and Marshment xii). This understanding of realism also alludes to the Foucauldian notion of truth and “truth making,” that is, the aesthetic and discursive practices that render a particular discourse at a certain time as the norm. In this chapter, I examine the two films with an eye to the formal elements and rhetorical strategies that lend the films an aura of realism and authenticity.

in a post-communist regime, gets lured into illegally migrating to the U.S. via Mexico, but finds herself caught in the vicious circle of trafficking. Veronica flies to Mexico City and once there, in line with the conventional trafficking story, her traffickers confiscate her passport and force her to cross the U.S.-Mexico border to Texas. Back in Mexico City, Adriana is abducted by the Russian mafia and trafficked to New Jersey to be auctioned online. Veronica and Adriana meet and bond on their forced journey to New Jersey. The rest of the plot follows Jorge (Cesar Ramos), Adriana's brother, and Ray (Kevin Kline), a retired Texan cop and dissatisfied spouse in a childless marriage, in their quest for Adriana. The movie ends, like all bad-guys good-cops movies, with the traffickers punished by the long arm of the U.S. law and Adriana delivered back to her mother in Mexico City. The only casualty in the movie is Veronica, who kills herself on the way to New Jersey.

Following a similar but more ambitious plot, the television miniseries *Human Trafficking* takes its audiences around the world, from New Jersey, New York City, and Washington DC to Manila, Prague, and a small provincial town in Ukraine. The film straddles the fine line between entertainment and humanitarianism. Like *Trade*, *Human Trafficking* relies heavily on stereotypical perceptions about Western agents and Eastern victims in order to draw attention to the havoc that human trafficking wreaks on women and children all over the world. What *Human Trafficking* brings new to the stage is the U.S. mother whose daughter, Annie Gray, is kidnapped by traffickers while the family vacations in Manila. The movie then makes it clear from the very beginning that trafficking impacts U.S. citizens and their children as much as migrants. A parallel plotline follows the Czech single mother Helena Votrubova (Isabelle Blais) and the



Ukrainian sixteen-year old Nadia (Laurence Leboueuf), who bond during their forced trip to New Jersey to be trafficked into the sex industry. The above mother-child dyad is supplemented by a third female figure, Kate Morozov (Mira Sorvino), a second-generation Russian-American and an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, whose tenacity and perspicacity, in stark relief with the trafficked women's vulnerability, guide her to expose the trafficking ring and to save the trafficked women. Kate's boss, Bill Meehan (Donald Sutherland), completes the familial picture in his authoritative fatherly role presiding both over Kate, his subaltern, and the Eastern European victims. The movie follows the two separate plotlines, of the American girl abducted in Manila and the Eastern European women trafficked to the U.S., only to bring the two stories together in the figure of Sergei Karpovich (Robert Carlyle), the other strong male figure and the head of sex-trafficking rings in Manila, the U.S., and all over Eastern Europe. Helena, the Czech mother, disappears halfway through the movie, killed by a vindictive Russian sniper, while the U.S. law enforcement carries the day and saves the trafficked women.

When considered side by side, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* stand out not only because of their expressed humanitarian stance against the traffic in women or because they chronicle the by now predictable story of migrant women's sexual slavery. The two films are particularly remarkable in their search of authenticity and in their attempt to present larger socio-political issues through personal mishaps. As the director of *Trade* confesses, the goal was to eschew big political statements and focus on victims' intimate experiences:

The danger of this kind of movie is that you can lose yourself in the complications and set-up of the big subject matter of sex-trafficking,

which spans several countries in our movie. So my focus was just to stay with my characters and really put them under an emotional microscope. (Preliminary Production Notes” 8)

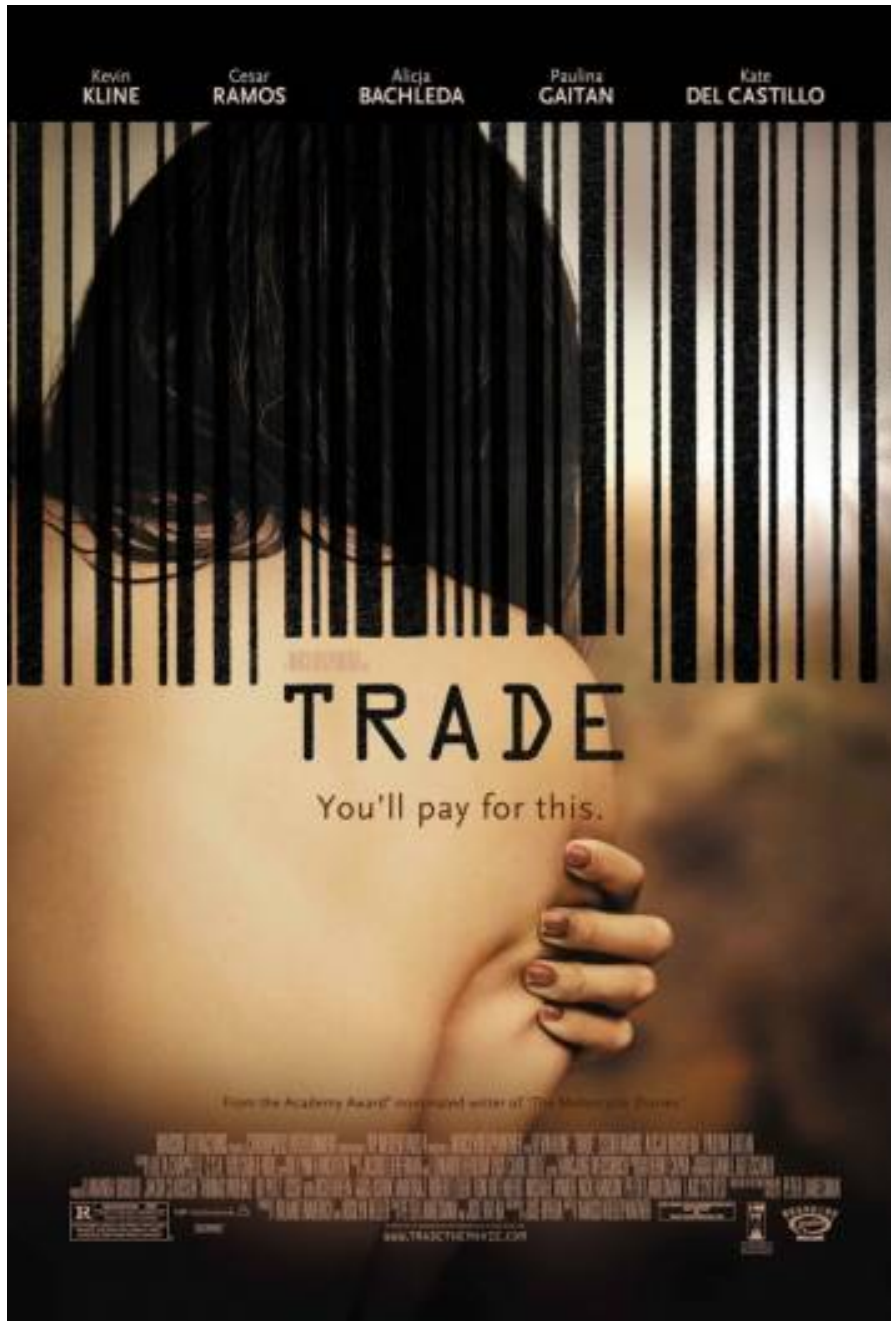


Fig. 3.1 *Trade*, Promotional movie poster, Lionsgate. Web.



Fig. 3.2 *Trade*, Promotional movie poster, Lionsgate

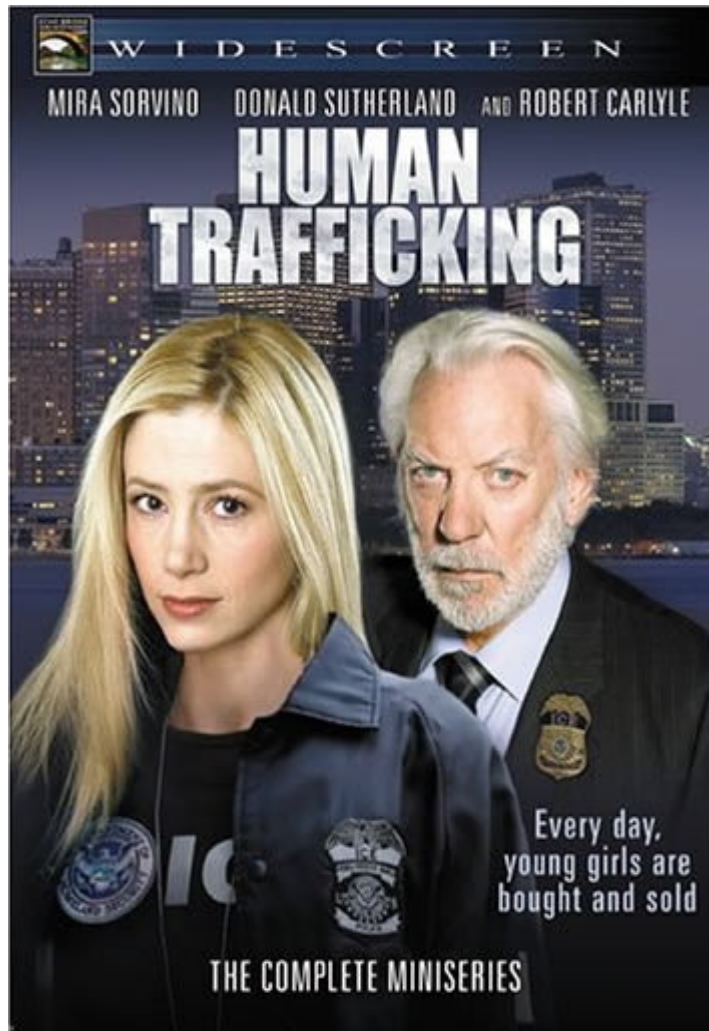


Fig 3.3 *Human Trafficking* Promotional movie poster, Lifetime

The idea behind both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking*, then, is to create credible melodramatic stories by zooming in on women's personal tragedies. At the same time, these personal stories are touted as realistic representations of the larger trafficking phenomenon that the movies aim to reconstruct. In effect, to convince audiences about the tragedy of trafficking, the producers must combine the educational spirit of the documentary with the melodramatic and thriller-like elements of Hollywood movies. They must use personal dramas to convey the broad social implications of the trafficking phenomenon. Therefore, the genre of docudrama, in its blend of the social documentary

and drama, becomes pivotal to anti-trafficking film activism.

Tom Hoffer and Richard Nelson define docudrama as “a television re-creation based on fact even though it relies on dialogue, actors, sets, and costumes to re-create an earlier event” (65). Docudramas “may provide realism,” but “the events portrayed are created and restructured (i.e. they are events that have occurred solely for the purposes of mediated communication)” (Hoffer and Nelson 65). Derek Paget surmises that docudrama represents the “individualizing of issues through social-realism techniques,” a filmic genre that, according to Paget, lacks analytical rigor, displaces social criticism, and urges spectators to “‘taste’ issues touristically” (50). As Jerry Kuehl also points out, dramadocs or docudramas “are stories based on real events but crippled by their lack of reality. *They can never portray real events because, if they did, there would be no need for them*” (122, emphasis mine). Rather than a realistic portrayal of reality, docudrama offers a partial take on a given social issue. Interviews with specialists, the use of reports and editorials, as well as filmic techniques function to offer a partial perspective on a specific social issue and to “advocate a moral truth in its re-presentation of the actual people (Lipkin 13). In fact, producers’ zeal to prove a film’s realism obscures the work of persuasion central to the genre, the painstaking creative process that lends films the impression of reality. As Steven Lipkin points out,

The overall thrust of docudrama is neither exposition nor logical argumentation, but persuasion. Docudrama exists to create conviction. Docudrama strives to persuade us to believe that what occurred happened much as we see it on the screen. (ix)

The need to establish an undisputed link between representation and reality also defines the anti-trafficking productions under discussion here. As mentioned above, *Human Trafficking* relies on legal expertise to offer an exact picture of trafficking

operations, whereas *Trade* originates in a series of *New York Times* editorials on the traffic in women and children. A popular editorial that inspired the film is Peter Landesman's "The Girls Next Door," also the original name of the film, later to be changed to *Trade*.<sup>8</sup> In this article, Landesman follows the U.S. Mexico cross-border trade in children and women from Mexico and Eastern Europe. The editorial tells the story of four Mexican teenage girls kept captive by their traffickers in a New Jersey house, in what Landesman describes as the typical neighborhood, with "American flags [fluttering] from porches and windows" (Landesman 1).<sup>9</sup> Landesman's reports on the traffic in women caught the attention of feminist Gloria Steinem, who introduced Landesman to film producers and planted the first seeds of the anti-trafficking project *Trade*. Landesman ended up writing the story for the movie, while screenwriter Jose Rivera traveled to Mexico to do first-hand research for the script. Some of the places Rivera visited, including some of the women he met, were incorporated into the final version of *Trade*. For instance, while visiting a shelter in Mexico City, Rivera met a twelve-year old trafficking survivor who became the model for Adriana, the character in the film who is kidnapped by the Russian mafia to be sold on the internet ("Preliminary Production Notes" 5). The use of Landesman's editorials to produce *Trade* evinces the typical reliance of docudrama on newspaper headlines, what Paget calls "the tabloid tendency" in docudrama. Lipkin sees this dramatization of news headlines as pivotal to the success of any docudrama and refers to it as "rootability," that is, the origination of the film's plotline in current news, the need that a film's storyline follow current events (57).

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<sup>8</sup> "The Girls Next Door" was particularly popular and won the Best Foreign Reporting on Human Rights Issues by the Overseas Press Club ("Preliminary Production Notes" 4).

<sup>9</sup> Landesman's editorial gained instant fame, and, in 2005, his story became part of James Elroy's collection of *The Best American Crime Writing*.

Rootability is, according to Lipkin, the major factor that ensures the credibility of a plot and its perception as “true to life” (57).<sup>10</sup>

In the same search for realism, *Trade*'s producers also employed a variety of filming techniques specific to *cinéma vérité*. For example, the film was shot almost exclusively with handheld camera, while the producers avoided the overuse of special lights and set-ups in order to “give the scenes the look and feeling of reality” (“Preliminary Production Notes” 8). To make acts and conversations look impromptu, the director also encouraged the actors to improvise:

Often I like to rehearse more the character's background and situations than particular scenes. Sometimes I wouldn't say 'cut' at the end of a shot in order just to let things happen out of a situation written in the script. And sometimes those moments were the most interesting of all. (8)

In addition, the producers paid particular attention to shooting locations, aware that, “authenticity could only be achieved by shooting entirely on location” (8). In actuality, despite acknowledging the importance of location, *Trade*'s producers picked up easily accessible locations that they then transformed to resemble the geography of the film. Thus, a particular scene in the film set in Poland was shot in Mexico City, in an area that, according to the director, “features huge socialist-era buildings and vast stretches of concrete.” In addition, “to mimic a snow landscape of Veronica's home town in Poland,” a square in Mexico City was covered in sea salt (8). Scenes in El Paso and New Jersey were shot in New Mexico, New Jersey, and New York City.

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<sup>10</sup> The need to turn headlines into plots led to the creation of a database of potential news stories, a service business that ensures movie directors' and producers' access to these journalistic stories (Lipkin 58). As Lipkin rightly points out, the cataloguing of headlines imposes a particular understanding of the news, which in turn informs the ways in which movie producers will approach the stories.

Several scenes in *Trade* seem lifted out of a documentary, giving the movie the feel of cinéma vérité. One particular shot takes viewers into the office of the New Jersey city police where one officer reels off statistical and factual information on global trafficking networks, while another scene at the U.S. Mexico border recreates the daily border control routine. Kreuzpaintner explains the great attention to realistic details that went into creating every scene, including the crew's resolution to shoot in La Merced barrio in Mexico City, in spite warnings of its dangerous "gangs":

The colors and smells of La Merced, the dogs and chickens and wall drawings and all the rhythms of the street – you cannot recreate this, and it would be wrong to try. Everyone is affected by this place, and our idea is that everyone will absorb and reflect this feeling. ("Preliminary Production Notes" 11)

Despite continuous attempts to recreate real events and places, including the incorporation of human trafficking statistics at the end of the film, far too many sequences and shots in the movie betray the construction of the filmic narrative. Most damaging to the film's credibility, journalists published rebuttals to the trafficking stories on which *Trade* is based. Jack Shafer from *Slate* revealed inconsistencies, false statistics, and anecdotal moments in Landesman's editorials, questioning their veracity. Shafer called attention to Landesman's "hysterical inflation of a small number of proven sex-slave cases" ("The Times Magazine").<sup>11</sup> Many film reviewers hailed *Trade* as a

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<sup>11</sup>Shafer's articles in *Slate* exposing Landesman's sensationalist account of trafficking triggered a series of public exchanges between Landesman and Shafer. Shafer wrote in one of his articles that, "Landesman's supporting evidence is vague. Where it is not vague, it is anecdotal. Where it is anecdotal, it is often anonymous, too. And where it is not anecdotal or vague it is suspicious and slippery" (For more see:

<http://www.slate.com/id/2094646/fr/nyt/>)

Following skepticism from readers and journalists, the New York Times republished a revised version of Landesman's "The Girls Next Door." Revisions included changes in



“humanistic” story, “full of heartbreaking insights” (O’Connell). The *Entertainment Weekly* declared *Trade* to be an exposé of how the new globalized industry of sex trafficking really works, it’s a disquieting, eye-opening bulletin” (“Fact sheet”). Some film critics, however, viewed *Trade*’s reliance on Landesman’s lurid account of trafficking as tainting the film’s realism (O’Connell). One critic opined that,

*Trade's* details are far too lurid to feel convincing. It's all seemingly too bad to be true, from a sinister cornfield that serves as a makeshift pedophile motel to child sex slaves being sold online to the highest bidder, like tea cozies on eBay” (Rabin).

Another review dubbed the film a “disaster” when it comes to its realism and representational ethics (Koresky).

The dispute about the movie’s authenticity reveals the contentious process of truth-making that turns filmic representations into documents of reality: the careful recording of evidence, details, and facts, but especially the controversial use of sensational material and emotionally-charged moments. Most importantly, the constant debate about what represents real evidence and who is in the position to use that evidence reflects the constant negotiations integral to the production and circulation of anti-trafficking films in general. The directors’ minute development of credible plots is suggestive of the general attempt in anti-trafficking activism to render coherent what are most of the time incoherent and at times inconsistent facts of migration. Anti-trafficking campaigns gain emotional force through causal stories of trafficking that can convince audiences of the urgency to act and donate money. As the productions of *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* prove, expertise is central to lending institutional authority to works

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statistics, the inclusion of references, and the retraction of stories published in the original essay. See Landesman, “The Girls Next Door,” 25 January 2004.

of entertainment. The blend of official expertise and heart-breaking stories serves to turn women's migration into a trafficking crisis and to validate this crisis as a legitimate target of activist investment.

The need to move, shock, and at the same time justify sensational depictions of women's migration is perhaps nowhere else better exemplified than in the television docudrama *Human Trafficking*. If *Trade* relies primarily on journalistic expertise to confront moviegoers with the reality of trafficking, *Human Trafficking* goes even further by turning for advice and guidance to law enforcement and border control officials. Aired on October 25 2005 as part of *Lifetime*'s "End Violence Against Women" campaign, the television docudrama has been screened for educational purposes and as part of anti-trafficking training sessions at U.S. embassies throughout Eastern Europe.<sup>12</sup> In promotional publications and interviews, the series' producers highlight the authenticity of the stories, referencing particularly close collaborations with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and with several anti-trafficking organizations such as the Polaris Project and the evangelical nonprofit International Justice Mission to "ensure that the stories you see are as accurate, relevant, and realistic as possible" ("Human Trafficking"). In a promotional interview on the day the film premiered on Lifetime, Sorvino foregrounds the film's authenticity. Asked "how true to life the movie is," Sorvino replies:

It was vetted by the ICE and by Amnesty International. I'm the

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<sup>12</sup> In a statement released before the series' premiere, Lifetime expressed plans to use the film to support anti-trafficking legislation, including the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005. The Act aims to "address the abuse of foreign women by U.S. men they meet through international marriage brokers" ("Human Trafficking Lead Release" 4). Lifetime also arranged for campus screenings of the docudrama throughout the United States.

spokeswoman for their Stop Violence Against Women campaign. We're creating an [sic] downloadable educational tool kit on this issue. This project is an ideal way to marry my activist interests and my acting work. We're doing a screening on Capitol Hill to talk to lawmakers about anti-trafficking legislation. (Rudolph)

Another interview, entitled “Mira Sorvino: Actress, Family-Woman, Activist,” establishes direct links between Sorvino’s character in *Human Trafficking* and the actress’s first-hand experience with victims of trafficking:

I’ve worked on it [human trafficking] not just at the time of the movie’s release, but I’m also involved with a group in California called the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, as well as the work that I’ve done for Amnesty International. (Hay)

The Lifetime interview adds to the realism that *Human Trafficking* purports to stand for by portraying Sorvino as the everyday mom and “family woman,” the ordinary mother who, just as the many Lifetime female fans, attempts to balance work and motherhood. The interview draws connections between Sorvino’s protagonist in the movie who fights for the liberation of trafficked women, Sorvino, the mother and the activist, and the general public. *Relatability*, Lipkin contends, is a central property in docudrama, corroborating its truth-making claims (59-61). Relatability “means that a viewer perceives a character to be ‘just like me’ in circumstances ‘that could happen to me’” (Lipkin 59). Relatability is central to the storyline of *Human Trafficking*, as I will show later but, in the interview above, relatability works to construe the actors themselves as civic models, as socially-committed ordinary persons to whom each and everyone in the audience can relate.

Motivated by the same desire for accuracy and authenticity, as part of the movie’s promotion, the *Lifetime* team also published an eight-page *Educational Guide for Viewers* that, besides publicizing the movie under the banner “Innocence Lost, Justice Found,”

comprises information on source and destination countries, gives definitions of trafficking, traffickers, and their victims, while also advising the public on ways to “recognize a trafficking victim.” Under the rubric “Who Are Human Traffickers?” viewers find out that human traffickers are “organized criminals” and “unscrupulous employers in factories and farms who use fraud and deception to force victims to work in inhumane conditions.” Last but not least, the leaflet also informs audiences that human traffickers are also “men who lure ‘mail order brides’ into their homes, only to physically, mentally, and sexually abuse them” (“Human Trafficking”). The *Lifetime* brochure ends with a “Discussion Guide,” consisting of questions such as “Were you surprised to see women trafficked into the United States? Under what types of conditions do you think trafficking victims live?” (*Human Trafficking: An Educational Guide for Viewers*). Published as an appendix to the film, the guide turns the entertainment of cinema into an educational moment. It works to transform the movie’s plot from a fictional story into a document meant to instruct and educate.

*Lifetime* further corroborates the movie’s true-to-life storyline with online promotional materials, including a section on “Three True Tales From Human-Trafficking Survivors,” featuring testimonials of trafficked women. The same promotional webpage was updated in 2007 to include “In the Field With a Real ICE Agent,” a first-hand account of human trafficking from ICE Supervisory Special Agent Anthony Scandiffio. Scandiffio’s exposition of trafficking begins by establishing his credibility and vast experience in the field and continues with statistics and factual information, such as the complex organization of trafficking operations, which are run, according to Scandiffio, as modeling agencies or beauty parlors (“In the Field”). Like

*Trade* and many other anti-trafficking films, *Human Trafficking* presents itself as an unmediated truthful picture of the seamy trafficking world -- whence the producers' endeavor to showcase "real ICE agents" and real victims of trafficking to corroborate the film's plotline. And just as in Kreuzpaintner's film, several scenes in the television docudrama use documentary-like filming techniques to give the impression of extemporaneity. At times, the film mimics the informational tone of the documentary, as suggested by one particular scene towards the end of the movie. In it, the two ICE agents, played by Sorvino and Sutherland, hold a press conference following the ICE raid that exposes Sergei Karpovich's international trafficking ring. With the ICE seal plaque in the background, Sorvino reels off technical data about traffickers and their victims. The camera zooms in on her, while cuts take viewers in and out of the conference room to various trafficking sites. Placed at the end of the film and interspersed among technical data on trafficking, the re-creation of the ICE press conference foregrounds the film's realism, integrating the fictional events of the film in the broader official discourse on human trafficking. The film ends in the same documentary mode, with a list of trafficking statistics. "Approximately 800,000 people," viewers are informed, "are trafficked annually across international borders. After the illegal sale of drugs and weapons, the most profitable criminal business is human trafficking." This information, placed at the end, frames the film as primarily an educational resource and at a safe distance from fictional Hollywood dramas.



Fig. 3.4



Fig 3.5

Fig 3.4 and 3.5

Stills from the television docudrama *Human Trafficking*, Dir. Christian Duguay  
Donald Sutherland and Mira Sorvino playing ICE agents Bill Meehan and Kate Morozov  
From: CBS Entertainment

As docudramas produced in the name of gender justice, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* must prove their accuracy -- whence the directors' emphasis on the authenticity of characters, storylines, and places. Yet, ironically, the films must dramatize accurate and authentic representations of a migrational phenomenon that, because of its illegality, has yet to be known and understood. The producers, then, must render authentic the contested reality of trafficking, rely on dubious statistics, and at times portray events that have yet to be confirmed, as suggested by the controversy about Landesman's trafficking accounts and subsequently about the movie *Trade*. Filmmakers must offer a cohesive story out of bits and pieces of contradictory facts and information, and create a realistic production out of facts that lack clarity, visibility, and even credibility with some audiences. This contradiction lies at the core of all anti-trafficking films, prompting producers to resort to rhetorical and narrative strategies in order to make human trafficking a palpable reality. One of these narrative techniques, as I will show below, consists in drawing associations between the traffic in women and histories of black slavery and of border control in the United States.

#### Dramas of Humanitarianism

The two films examined here feature stories whose main goal is to educate and persuade audiences about the tragedy of human trafficking. Accordingly, besides providing allegedly accurate representations of the traffic in women, the film producers also draw on the genre of melodrama, making affect central to the reality of the films. The heroines' personal mishaps, their daily emotional upheaval and, for the most part, their final death, become dramatic moments meant to bring the crime of trafficking close

to the daily lives of audiences. Drama gives emotional force to the documentary claims of anti-trafficking films. The focus on the personal and the emotional has persuasive power, making audiences sympathize and relate with trafficked women, following the model “she was just like us until” (Lipkin 66).<sup>13</sup> The “she was just like us” paradigm validates the films as authentic recreations of human trafficking even as it brings would-be humanitarians together in the fight against trafficking. The mother and the daughter -- in jeopardy and in need of justice -- are iconic melodramatic figures that prompt humanitarian feelings of compassion. In these films, the woman in jeopardy represents a rhetorical strategy that connects the fictional character in front of the camera with the person in front of the screen.

Yet, there is more to the affective work of these films. The emphasis on the personal is not only meant to turn public indifference into humanitarian compassion and make the plot credible. Docudrama doesn’t function only at this personal level. Rather, besides personal “relatability” (to use Lipkin’s term again), the films attain realism and dramatic power by resorting to a series of iconic associations meant to activate public memories of past and present events. Accordingly, human trafficking is depicted as the modern-day re-instantiation of Black slavery, while the violence of trafficking is traced back to the lurking threat of undocumented immigration. This incorporation of personal dramas within larger socio-historical structures brings the alleged realism of docudrama in close proximity with the moral sentimentalism of melodrama. Such assemblages of

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<sup>13</sup> Lipkin does not theorize the gendered aspect of this melodramatic trope. As suggested in other chapters, empathy with victims of trafficking works selectively. The “she was just like us” trope is successful particularly when the victim is a white, educated woman, and usually of a young age.



past and present events articulate the films' anti-trafficking activism as primarily an affective process.

*Trade* brings together black slavery and Mexican undocumented migration in a discursive slippage that is meant to identify the two as equally harmful to national integrity. On the movie's promotional website, human trafficking is depicted as encroaching on long-standing U.S. values, and hence as an exploitative practice antithetical to everything that the U.S. nation-state stands for:

The practice of slavery in the U.S. is something most people think ended with the 13th Amendment in 1865, but in recent years *it has returned in an even more virulent form. Fueled by the collapse of the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries*, new technologies like the internet, and *sieve-like borders*, the traffic in human beings has become an epidemic of colossal dimensions. Many people in this country push this atrocity out of their minds, believing that it only occurs in *faraway countries* like Thailand, Cambodia, the Ukraine and Bosnia. *The truth is that the United States has become a large-scale importer of sex slaves.* (emphasis mine)

The above phrasing works at different rhetorical levels first to conflate human trafficking with the traffic in women, then to equate modern trafficking with black slavery, and ultimately to trace the presence of trafficking, in its slave-like and nationally embarrassing form, to the "sieve-like borders" of the nation. What connects vulnerable women and unprotected borders is the dark shadow of exploitable work (ironically enough, the very essence of capitalism) and the frailty of the U.S. nation-state in an age of globalization.<sup>14</sup>

In *Human Trafficking*, the trope of black slavery also serves to foreground the

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<sup>14</sup> It is not hard to notice the misreading of the U.S. racial history in the above promo, from the producers' omission to acknowledge the dramatic failure of the 1856 emancipation act, which they invoke as a watershed of the U.S. democracy, to the assumption that modern-day slavery has "returned in an even more virulent form," a gesture that works to downplay the history of black slavery.

enormity of present-day human trafficking. In the film, Mira Sorvino's character, an ICE agent, expounds on the ICE continuous fight against human trafficking by offering as an example the abolitionist work of Abraham Lincoln. Besides foregrounding black slavery as a referent for human trafficking, her speech in the film -- inspired from the Department of State's anti-trafficking publications -- also draws direct connections between human trafficking and the damaging effects of globalization, such as the spread of Russian criminal influence throughout the world:

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln and the U.S. Congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution which states, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States. No sensible person believes that slavery could happen in the 21st century, far less on our shores. We couldn't be more wrong. Slave traffickers around the world have rediscovered how profitable it is to buy and sell people. Each one of these girls could be your sister, or your best friend or, as Annie Gray showed us, your daughter. . . . Human trafficking has emerged as a tragic whiplash of the economic transition that has occurred over the past several years in eastern Europe. . . . no matter how difficult our battle is, it is vitally important that law enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, ICE, that we all keep working together as a team to battle these ruthless criminals.

In using the image of black slavery, the films are in step with current anti-trafficking discourses that bank on historical events of slavery and abolitionism to convey the embarrassment and abnormality of human trafficking in a country where slavery has been officially abolished.<sup>15</sup> The framing of the films in terms of slavery returned also

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<sup>15</sup> Many anti-trafficking activists refer to human trafficking by the name of "modern day slavery" and call themselves "modern abolitionists." Not For Sale is such a non-profit, whose members define their work as neo-abolitionist. Their online promotional campaign makes this stance clear: "Not For Sale equips and mobilizes smart activists to deploy innovative solutions to *re-abolish* slavery in their own backwards and across the globe. *Together we can end slavery in our lifetime*" ("About Not For Sale," emphasis in the original). Anti-trafficking activists also argue repeatedly that the number of people enslaved today is much higher than the number of people forcefully relocated during the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. In a *National Geographic* editorial on human trafficking,

results in a highly emotional account of women's trafficking, whereby migrant women's lot is shown to be as bad as, if not worse than, that of black slaves. Moreover, histories of slavery strike a deep and guilty chord with most audiences in the United States -- whence the movies' insistent reminders of the slave-like conditions of trafficked women. The appropriation of the black slavery trope functions to legitimate the movies' humanitarian projects and confirm its realistic representations. Yet the simplistic racial conflation that subsumes black slavery under modern-day trafficking proves once more that humanitarianism often depends on de-racialized and ahistorical conceptions of humanity to appeal to its audiences and potential donors. *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* neutralize racial differences and collapse them into a notion of universal vulnerability, even as they reference slavery as the spectrum continuously haunting the legal liberties of white citizenship. The present analogy with slavery works to depoliticize both slavery and women's migration by supplanting a historically specific and rigorous analysis of twenty-first century migration with dramatically effective but vague associations with black slavery. Thus, just as the historical context of black slavery is glossed over, the socio-political circumstances defining women's migration are obscured to the extent that the evil of trafficking appears in the films as a "monolithic social power" defined by "its random, arbitrarily murderous exercise" (Lipkin 10).

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journalist Andrew Cockburn writes that, "There are more slaves today than were seized from Africa in four centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The modern commerce in humans rivals illegal drug trafficking in its global reach – and in the destruction of lives." Self-proclaimed "full-time abolitionist" Amanda Kloer writes in a blog entry that there are "ten times more slaves now than at the peak of Trans-Atlantic Trade." Kloer's discussion of human trafficking also features an old photograph of a slave ship, an image that reflects the author's attempt to associate visually modern slaves' plight with the conditions of African slaves. The films use, then, a discourse widespread in the anti-trafficking activist community and an easily recognizable cue of exploitation. This adds to their purported authenticity and dramatic power.

The filmic dramatization of women's migration establishes, thus, superficial links among distinct elements: human trafficking and slavery; migrant women's sexual bodies and African slaves' overexploited bodies; traffickers' surreptitious infiltration of the national space and undocumented immigrants' assault on U.S. borders. The films "reopen past associations" that work emotionally to align some subjects and bodies against others (Ahmed 120). The result is a humanitarian approach to women's trafficking suffused with anxieties about the damaging effects that slavery, undocumented immigrants, and traffickers have on the national homeland. One of the movie *Trade*'s promotional posters, for instance, conveys the message of the nation under attack. The poster, a movie still of a road in Mexico leading to the U.S. border, features the ominous headline "When Human Trafficking Hits Home."<sup>16</sup>

Identified as successors of black slaves, the women in the two movies end up as properties of always someone else -- of pimps, traffickers, husbands, of brothers, and fathers. They are endlessly endangered and, as a result, in continuous need of protection. The two domestic realms -- of the home and of the homeland -- are brought together in the figure of the vulnerable trafficked woman, the "could-be-one-of-you" mother or

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<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, the film incorporates governmental and nongovernmental discourses that associate human trafficking (and especially the traffic in women) with lax immigration policies and terrorism. Many activists refer to human trafficking as the crime "in your own backyard," pointing out the danger human trafficking poses to the ordinary U.S. home and to the national homeland. In a report funded by the Department of Justice and authored by women's studies professors Janice Raymond and Donna Hughes, trafficking is directly related to unregulated immigration. The authors cite a San Francisco police officer who relates the trafficking problem in San Francisco with the city's sanctuary status for immigrants (53). The authors of the report recommend that, "immigration and law enforcement agencies worldwide should coordinate efforts. A computerized database to share information would be helpful, not only at the international level, but at the local level as well. There should be some way of tracking U.S. men who travel to the same or different countries and return to the United States with serial foreign fiancés or wives" (95).

daughter. In *Human Trafficking*, the traffic in migrant women is shown to affect U.S. daughters, as suggested by the abduction of Annie Gray, the American girl. In *Trade*, the traffic in women and the porousness of the U.S.-Mexico border appear to have direct nefarious implications for women. In interviews, discussing her part in *Human Trafficking*, Mira Sorvino uses the film as an educational moment to point out the pervasive danger posed by traffickers/abductors to families in the United States. Appealing to parents to be “very, very careful with their daughters” and offering the docudrama as an example of hidden sexual predators lurking everywhere, Sorvino declares that,

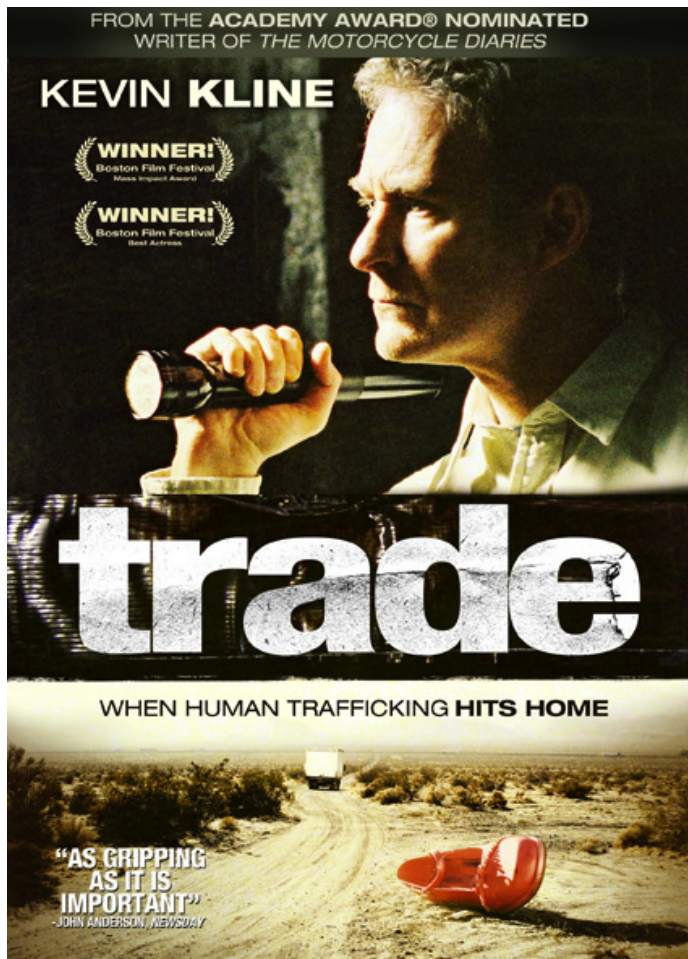
I don't ever want to let her [Sorvino's daughter] walk, when she can walk, she's gonna always be accompanied, you know. It's just such a dangerous world out there for girls and, you know, children at this stage, there seems to be so much - so much pedophilia and abduction taking place.  
(Interview, Tavis Smiley Show)

The films' activism relies on this constant elision between threatened homeland and jeopardized mothers and daughters.<sup>17</sup> Anti-trafficking humanitarianism emerges, thus, as a result of a protectionist nationalist impulse, while the fight against trafficking is rendered in the films as a continuous confrontation between men of different social and racial backgrounds. This is especially clear when considering the easiness with which

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<sup>17</sup> In their identification of the national space with female bodies, the two films, like the majority of anti-trafficking discourses, conceal the racialized and gendered construction of the nation-state. At the same time, they negate “what is historical and contingent about both woman and nation,” rendering the two in natural harmony (Alarcón et al 13). The films discussed here rest for their coherence on the gendered (and racial) construction of women's bodies. See, Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias's *Woman-Nation-State* (1989) and Yuval's *Gender and Nation* for an analysis of the interconnection between women's bodies and the nation-state.

neo-abolitionism and the humanitarian protection of women from traffickers turn into the urgency to protect borders against traffickers and the Russian mafia.<sup>18</sup>



3.6 *Trade* promotional poster, Lionsgate

*Trade* signifies this overwhelming feeling of national threat by resorting to wide-angle shots of the U.S. and Mexican sides of the border. The movie's opening credits usher in an aerial view of Mexico City and its surroundings. Towering from above, like an omnipotent god's eye, the camera moves quickly and registers the busy Mexican city

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<sup>18</sup> The association of trafficking with the Eastern European (especially Russian) and Mexican threat is prevalent in popular discourses on trafficking. Peter Landesman, whose account of trafficking inspired the film *Trade*, chronicles the Mexican-Russian partnership in his trafficking editorials. In his words, "Mexican pimps have learnt a lot from Eastern European traffickers" (10).

and the barren hilly landscape surrounding it. Bird's eye views of the city alternate with close-ups of streets, people, and historical places in the city. The camera zips back and forth between aerial and close-up shots of the city only to fleetingly settle on the Mexican parliament, the national flag, and daily street activities. In light of the rest of the movie, the opening scene constitutes a cinematic and highly racialized highlight of Mexico's different geography and politics vis-à-vis the U.S. normative space. The aerial shots also preface the later visual representations of the contentious U.S.- Mexico border, a space that becomes a synecdoche for Mexico's unruly geography, especially when set against the film's shots of neat U.S. suburban neighborhoods. Throughout the movie, the camera focuses obsessively and lingers on closed and open spaces in Mexico and the U.S.: a narrow dark street in Mexico City populated by prostitutes and pimps, the open space of the border crossed by undocumented immigrants daily, the dirty basement of an abandoned house in Juarez where traffickers hide their victims before transferring them across the border, the deportation center in Texas, an orderly New Jersey neighborhood. These are spaces and places that foreground the representational politics of the movie and help to carve out a moral geography of humanitarianism, which, in turn, frames the traffic in women as an issue of border defense and national sovereignty.<sup>19</sup>

The sexual exploitation of women is superimposed on the geography of Mexico, as suggested by one of the movie's characters, a female pimp who, although born in the U.S. and a U.S. citizen herself, carries the stigma of growing up on the Mexican side.

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (1997). Shapiro contends that the official mapping of the world reflects a moral geography fraught with beliefs about self and other, security zones and threatening regions (16). He defines the moral geography underlining the dominant political map as "a set of silent ethical assertions that preorganize explicit ethicopolitical discourses" (16).

Sold by her drug-addicted mother to the Russian traffickers in Mexico at the age of three, Carlie returns to the U.S. to traffic women herself. Mexican immigration, personified in Carlie's illicit and perverted persona, appears as a clandestine infiltration that affects innocent children, daughters and their mothers, and, in the end, the U.S. nation-state by the return of its lost women. Similarly, the trafficked Mexican girl and the young Polish mother become symbols of a national and transnational femininity, under attack by the new coalition of Mexican and Russian mafias whose entrepreneurial prowess spreads to endanger national mothers and daughters as well. *Trade's* social justice agenda, therefore, weaves together women's rights rhetoric with national anxieties about borders. The film's anti-trafficking intent translates as an ominous commentary on the epidemic expansion of Russian trafficking rings all over the world and especially into the U.S. As one of the characters in the movie, a law enforcement agent, declares, "Even if they [the Russian mafia] are located in Mexico, their operation is all over the U.S. and all over everyone of the continents."<sup>20</sup>

The same conflation between unprotected women and unsecured borders is clearly at work in *Human Trafficking*. In the television series, the Russian mob, in its unscrupulousness and viciousness, stands for human and moral collapse. Indeed, even the controversial sex-tourism in Asian countries becomes associated in the movie with the

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<sup>20</sup> Of note here is the reactivation of cold war themes in anti-trafficking films. The cold war threat becomes sexualized in such films, being identified with the image of Russian sexual predators. In this, the movie follows a long national history of fantasizing foreignness as sexual predation, a process that translates at a figurative level in the well-known perception that foreigners violate the core values of the nation by their very presence. Certain racial and ethnic groups have always functioned in the U.S. national imaginary as sexually depraved. In his discussion of national moral panics, Roger Lancaster lays out the interrelation between the red scare and homophobia. Lancaster reminds us of the "homosexual purges" enacted by McCarthyism (46). The communist others, as Lancaster indicates, signal a type of excessive, abnormal sexuality.



Russian mob and the collapse of the USSR.<sup>21</sup> In the movie, the capo of the global trafficking network, Sergei Karpovich, is a cruel unflinching Russian man who controls sex rings in Manila, all over the U.S., and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the Russian American officer in *Human Trafficking* embodies herself the trauma of belonging to a Russian immigrant family by being sexually abused as a child by her inebriated Russian uncle Sasha--whence her empathy with the Eastern European trafficked women, themselves victims at the hands of Russian pimps. At the polar opposite of the ruthless Russian mobsters are the Eastern European women, themselves victims of the USSR communist regime and of its succeeding mafiosos. In this, *Human Trafficking*, more than *Trade*, functions as an allegorical performance of post-Cold War U.S. nationalism. Saving the Eastern European women from the Russian mob becomes a cathartic reassertion of a triumphant U.S. capitalism, whose democratic legal apparatus reaches safely now the second world as well.<sup>22</sup>

In the same post-cold war spirit, *Human Trafficking* suggests an intimate connection between the fight against human trafficking and the war on terror. Unlike the Russian and Mexican mafias in *Trade*, whose main center of action is the Mexican border, in *Human Trafficking*, the Russian mafia is omnipresent, has no one sole base of

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<sup>21</sup> This is striking given the U.S. military presence in these countries.

<sup>22</sup> Most importantly, by insisting on the Russian propensity to turn women into consumable goods, both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* lose from sight the flipside of neoliberal capitalism, the multinationals' global exploitation of cheap gendered and racialized labor. In their overemphasis on the traffic in women, the films construct yet another false binary between multinational organizations and organized crime, between labor exploitation in the maquilas and brothel work. The movies further overlook the sexual abuse and violence perpetrated routinely by the U.S. border patrol on undocumented women, a type of gendered and racial violence that, unlike the trafficking cases deplored by movie producers and NGOs, rarely if ever make it into the daily news.

operation, and attacks from everywhere, just like the terrorists themselves. For example, the U.S. father in Manila, when faced with the disappearance of his daughter, reasons, echoing the prevalent discourse on terror: “It’s terrorists, isn’t it? They are targeting us at random.” From the beginning, the movie sets a clear parallel between the Russian trafficker in women and the militant terrorist, transforming humanitarian interventions into nativist calls for national protection. The pervasive presence of the Russian trafficker/terrorist, infiltrating every aspect of domestic life, is further suggested in the words of another character in the movie, Ellen, a director for the NGO *Stop Trafficking International*, who articulates the paramount fears of the terrorist/child molester/trafficker: “This could be your neighbor, your dentist, your accountant. Heaven forbid, a member of your own family.” Ellen embodies the quintessential U.S. humanitarian globetrotter who relocates to Manila to expose trafficking rings and rescue trafficking victims. In what appears as a corrupt Filipino system, the U.S. anti-trafficking organization surfaces as the only legal and civil organism that can efficiently bring into the open the trafficking schemes. Her warning about the pervasiveness of promiscuous sexuality holds an uncanny resemblance to widespread discourses on the permeating nature of terrorist networks. Hints to the interconnections between Russian pimps and Arab terrorists emerge again toward the end of the movie, when Annie and the young Filipina girls are about to be shipped to Saudi Arabia, into the sex industry there.

Under attack at the hands of traffickers and pimps, the innocent woman in *Human Trafficking* becomes a narrative prop that lends both realism and emotional intensity to the film. At the beginning of the movie, the ICE agent Kate Mozorov reels off the punch line underwriting the trafficked women’s stories, what is otherwise a ubiquitous discourse

in mass media and legislation: “An innocent young girl, trafficked across American borders, sold as sex-slave and murdered.” Migrant women’s innocence and the disastrous corollaries of their migration portray human trafficking in melodramatic terms of “justice found, innocence lost,” as the film’s motto emphasizes.<sup>23</sup> Yet while vulnerability is central to the melodramatic thread of the series, some bodies become more valuable than others in the economy of humanitarianism. That this is the case becomes clear in the first minutes of the show when Kate, in reference to the dead body of an Eastern European young girl, points out: “She’s not a prostitute. She’s the third dead girl from Eastern Europe in a couple of months. No ID, no family trace.” The clear-cut distinction that the movie’s main protagonist makes from the start between prostitutes and trafficked women situates the story of the movie in a long line of anti-trafficking humanitarian discourses that discard sex-workers’ exploitation as irrelevant to human rights concerns. Moreover, the salience of the Eastern European’s dead body works to align public sympathy with only certain types of violence, while disengaging attention from the living oversexed body of the prostitute. The result is that, while lack of family trace and nominal identity turns the Eastern European into a rightful posthumous victim, the absence of the prostitute in the film makes the latter an illegitimate presence within national borders. As a mere rhetorical trace, an absent presence brought to life by the movie script and then quickly silenced, the figure of the sex-worker exposes the film’s melodramatic

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<sup>23</sup> In sharp relief to Kate, whose deep humanitarian sentiments turn her into an adamant and vocal justice seeker, the spate of Russian, Ukrainian, and Czech trafficked women is terrorized by the Russian mafia into speechlessness and inaction. One particular scene foregrounds the representational politics of the film. In it, Kate, ready to start off on her undercover mail-bride mission, works on her mien that, according to her brother, effuses too much confidence and hence betrays her Americanness. Accordingly, Kate corrects her looks to express utter shyness and naiveté, a change sanctioned by her American brother who exclaims of the masquerade admiringly: “That’s a Russian bride to be.”

reconstruction of women's migration by drawing attention to personages and events obscured during filmic dramatization.

Racial distinctions are also central to the film's humanitarian message. In this sense, it might not be accidental that the movie's denouement brings redemption only for certain trafficked subjects. The rescue of Annie Gray, the U.S. kidnapped girl, along with that of the Eastern European women, parallels the murder, halfway through the movie, of the only protagonist of color, a nine-year old Filipina, sold into prostitution by her indigent parents. The Filipina's murder, as opposed to the crimes against other trafficked victims, is never punished or investigated, and remains the sole story that lacks a proper resolution in the movie. Moreover, the Filipino trafficked children in the movie are never named or identified -- an amorphous cluster of indistinguishable terrified faces -- presented in stark opposition with the U.S. kidnapped girl, whose composure and shrewdness, even when abused by traffickers, make her a resilient victim.<sup>24</sup>

In similar ways, *Trade* builds its melodramatic story on the representation of a multiracial palette of vulnerable female bodies. The storyline revolves around a long series of mother-figures from the raped Polish mother to the absent drug-addicted U.S. mother. Represented as straying from their motherly vocations and punished as a consequence, the raped and failed mothers convey a moralistic message about

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<sup>24</sup> The failed cinematic gesture to examine the presence of racialized exploited bodies within today's global economy accounts for a more general refusal to read the present-day trafficking of Eastern European women in relation to and against the long-standing sexualization of women of color in the U.S. More significantly, by depicting poor Filipina's sexual exploitation as an exceptionally modern phenomenon, the movie overlooks the U.S. colonial history in the Philippines. In the end, the figure of the sexually abused Filipino child, although meant as a critique of sex tourism and of its primarily Western customers, becomes a simple narrative prop for the other stories in the film.

heteronormative familial values and the necessity of restoring the family unit. One such aggrieved mother in the movie, the Polish Veronica, commits suicide while trafficked by her Mexican smuggler to New Jersey, a reminder that any attempt to step out of normative motherhood, whether through illegal migration or risk-taking, is punishable. Veronica's death underlines the impossibility of motherhood outside domesticity. The absence of the mother figure haunts the movie from then on, and Veronica's disappearance gives way to a long commentary on failed motherhood. Ray's wife, the barren white woman, and Ray's lover -- the latter significantly absent throughout the movie -- are the other two female characters whose impossible motherhood punctuates the moral message of the movie. The story capitalizes on perverted motherhood to deliver its punchline on moral corruption, trafficking being represented in the movie as one symptom of a generalized form of troubled morals that enable mothers to sell daughters, female pimps to act out motherhood in the desire to ensnare children, and sex work to thrive alongside drug trade. *Trade* turns, thus, a socio-economic issue such as women's migration into a tale about moral corruption.<sup>25</sup> Following the logic of the movie, Veronica's suicide has the double role of sanitizing the national space by punishing failed motherhood and re-asserting the nation as incongruent with deviant sexuality.

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<sup>25</sup> This focus on morality and on the personal is in accord with the treatment of stories and characters in docudrama. Following Lipkin, just as in the case of melodrama, docudrama

places domestic settings and familial imagery within the context of larger social systems revealed in the narrative as powerful and corrupt, repressive to the point of hellishness. . . . While the actuality the work re-creates may show the exercise of right and wrong thrown into jeopardy, the treatment of actual people, incidents, and events in the docudrama ultimately allows a literal moral "refamiliarization," a restoration of a moral system in the universe. (Lipkin 5)

This conventional imagery of pure vulnerable women is enabled by the presence of strong male figures in the film. This is especially suggested by the double move of the story, whose ending brings to completion two parallel ventures, Jorge and Ray's quest for and rescue of Adriana, and Ray's search for Carlie, his long-lost daughter, now herself a trafficker and pimp. In a cinematic move, not at odds with the overall project of the movie, Ray and Jorge's humanitarian mission comes to signify a rite of passage to fatherhood and manhood respectively.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, their journey of passage reinscribes the male bond as protective and crucial to mothers and daughters. Of note here is also that, while the two male protagonists' journey helps to connect and liberate them in different ways, Veronica and Adriana are denied any lasting empowering female solidarity: once Veronica kills herself, Adriana is left to depend on male guardianship for her salvation. Most importantly, the two men's accomplishment as paternal guardians depends on the construction of the female characters as vulnerable victims.

In ways that depart markedly from the Lifetime television series, *Trade* draws on the neoliberal rhetoric of multiculturalism, to envision the ideal multicultural family, brought together not by bloodline but by disinterested solidarity in the fight against human trafficking. According to Lisa Duggan, U.S. neoliberal multiculturalism espouses "a stripped-down, nonredistributive form of 'equality' designed for global consumption . . . and compatible with continued upward redistribution of resources" (xii). Accordingly, categories of race, gender, and sexuality organize the social even as the relations that

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<sup>26</sup> *Trade*'s director admits to envisioning the relationship between Jorge and Ray as a father-son bond. Cesar Ramos, the actor who plays Jorge, also admits that, "in Ray, Jorge finds the father he never had. At the end of the movie, he really loves Ray ("Preliminary Production Notes" 9).

connect and give meaning to these concepts become invisible (Duggan 3). In effect, the movie *Trade* promotes what Minoo Moallem and Iain Boal have called “multicultural nationalism,” a phenomenon that is the effect of tensions between an abstract and universal notion of citizenship, which “systematically produces sexualized, gendered, and racialized bodies,” and increasing calls for recognition by minorities (245).<sup>27</sup>

In its support of democratic inclusion (already suggested by its multilingual cast and diverse geographical locations), *Trade* embraces the language of national multiculturalism. The U.S. American father, the Mexican son and daughter, and the Polish mother become in the movie members of a transnational familial imaginary, threatened by the Russian and Mexican trafficking mafia. Yet, despite its pluralistic bend, in its concern with national borders, the film re-inscribes the U.S. nation-state as key to global humanitarianism. And, in spite of its projection of a post-cold war global imaginary, the movie’s multicultural project fails in its insistence on national sovereignty and border control. Ray, the former representative of law enforcement, remains the main protagonist, while the rest of the characters fade in the background as either needy victims or simple aids. In line with official neoliberal policies, the multicultural society envisioned by *Trade* is one of “optimization of systems of difference” and toleration rather than exclusion of difference (Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* 259).

Multiculturalism is domesticated and brought closer to audience’s homes as a way to facilitate empathy with and compassion for the trafficking victims. Moreover, as depicted

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<sup>27</sup> Like Duggan, Moallem and Boal emphasize the cooptation of a multicultural rhetoric – what they call “recuperative multiculturalism” -- by the state and its management as a smooth and cohesive discourse of emancipation. “A recuperative multiculturalism dissimulates,” they argue, “the reality of economic inequality, political and institutional discrimination, and cultural exclusion, which cuts across the basic social divisions of gender, race, and class” (255).

in the film, multiculturalism becomes an exclusively male achievement, with the female characters rendered as mere subjects of exchange in a cross-cultural dialogue. After all, the bi-cultural encounter between Ray and Jorge is made possible by Veronica and Adriana's vulnerability.

*Trade* ends on the note of deserving fatherhood and motherhood, with Jorge back in Mexico City, knifing Vadim, the Russian pimp, apparently his sister's abductor and himself a father and husband. The camera zooms in for a final close-up of Jorge's face to capture the resolute expression of the ultimate defender of vulnerable women. To its credit, the movie might be said to draw attention to the vicious circle of violence that ends up victimizing Vadim's own child and perhaps to qualify the existing binary between victim and perpetrator. Yet the potential modulation of the final scene is unconvincing. In stark contrast to Ray's redemption as father and husband, Vadim's fatherhood is not to be saved or, for that matter, even recognized as fertile. In effect, Vadim's absence throughout the movie is suggestive of his absence from the familial national imaginary. He comes on stage only at the end to die at the avenging hands of Jorge. Whereas pimping might be itself inextricable from violence and exploitation, what stands out in this final scene is the exoneration of the institution of the family from histories of violence and abuse. Moreover, the final unlawful act in the movie, Jorge's murder of Vadim, gains almost redeeming moral connotations in light of the setting and Vadim's threatening presence. The closing scene of the murder brings to a close a moral drama that locates the root cause of trafficking in the perverted environment of the Mexican border and within economies marginal to the formal neoliberal economy.



## Docudramas of Activism

The two films examined in this chapter exemplify the role of film, and most specifically of docudrama, in educational campaigns against the traffic in women.

Drawing on a long tradition of realism in cinema, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* foreground personal heart-breaking dramas as cinematic referents for larger social and historical phenomena such as women's contemporary migration, post-cold war terrorism, and the Atlantic slave trade. In their attempt to corral a series of past and present images and cultural tropes to create an accurate depiction of the traffic in women, the films function as historical documents and as cinematic records of trafficking. Realism emerges at the conjunction of docudrama's documentary impulse and melodrama's emotional particulars.

While *Trade* is made for the big screen and *Human Trafficking* is a television miniseries, they both promote similar understandings of trafficking, premised on gendered and racialized notions of victims and perpetrators. Most significantly, as suggested in this chapter, the films also shape anti-trafficking activism by foregrounding some issues at the expense of others. For instance, both films focus exclusively on the traffic of women into prostitution -- with little to no mention of labor exploitation -- while envisioning the "victim" as a personage defined only by her gender. Race and nationality are obscured in the focus on universal vulnerability. Moreover, the films also rely on simplistic and stereotypical typologies (from the ruthless male trafficker to the naïve and pure trafficked woman), making moral judgments central to the unfolding of the plot. In effect, the films' successful activism depends on the dramatization of social issues as moral questions. The emotional intensity of the films results from the presentation of

human trafficking as an attack on personal and national morals. And, just as with all nationalist discourses, the woman in jeopardy becomes the metaphor and the rhetorical prop that gives credence and urgency to cinematic reconstructions of human trafficking.

Both *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* have been incredibly successful with anti-trafficking activist campaigns, although they have drawn criticism from film critics outside the anti-trafficking community. For instance, the U.S. Department of State partnered with Lifetime to disseminate *Human Trafficking* to embassies throughout the world, as detailed in the 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report. In addition, both films are listed as anti-trafficking resources on numerous NGO websites and human trafficking manuals for journalists and law enforcement personnel.<sup>28</sup> Listed as anti-trafficking resources and screened at anti-trafficking events throughout the world, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* recoup the anti-trafficking discourses of the day. Most significantly, these films, just as the anti-trafficking cinema in general, shape anti-trafficking discourses in their widespread circulation and emotional appeal to diverse audiences. The films not only promote a particular view of women's migration, defined by sexual violence and trauma, but they also offer solutions to human trafficking that rely extensively on law enforcement and the erasure of significant forms of violence against migrant women in general. Serving as activist interventions in the name of women's rights, *Trade* and *Human Trafficking* contribute to the transnational articulation of anti-trafficking humanitarianism.

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<sup>28</sup> See for example the *Human Trafficking Manual for Journalists*, published by the Serbian anti-trafficking network ASTRA.

### Chapter III

#### Documenting to Prevent:

#### The Social Documentary and the Fight against Sex Trafficking

In 2004, the Arkansas-based organization Winrock International, a global development agency funded in 1985 by former governor of Arkansas Winthrop Rockefeller, won a USAID grant of approximately four million dollars to initiate an anti-trafficking prevention program in the Republic of Moldova. Winrock used the grant to spearhead a new anti-trafficking program in Moldova, called New Perspectives for Women. The four-year program, also known as The Moldova Anti-Trafficking Initiative, combines gender development programs, such as vocational training and microloans for women, with anti-trafficking media campaigns. Specifically, New Perspectives for Women targets young Moldovan women, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, who are economically disadvantaged, lack education, and live in rural areas. The program's designers share the belief that the majority of human trafficking cases are those of women forced into prostitution and that most of the victims are young, uneducated, and come from rural isolated areas. According to the project's developers,

“New Perspectives for Women was designed to reduce the criminal trade in human beings in Moldova through a comprehensive set of anti-trafficking activities, with a particular focus on addressing the economic roots of trafficking and improving access for young women and girls to employment within Moldova” (Winrock International 2).

Winrock International entered the social and political scene in Moldova in the wake of 1989, a time characterized by the proliferation of gender development nonprofits.<sup>1</sup> In 2007, Winrock Intl. received an award from the Swiss foundation Argidius to initiate a gender development project in Moldova entitled Women’s Micro-Enterprise Development Activity (WMEDA). The project helped women to begin their own businesses by providing training and in-kind equipment. Yet Winrock’s anti-trafficking program New Perspectives for Women has been by far the most popular. The project aims to develop “independent, self-sufficient young women and girls through psycho-social training in extracurricular educational activities” (Winrock International 2). Because of alleged causal links between gender discrimination and trafficking, Winrock’s anti-trafficking activities focus especially on leadership training and psychological assistance. In the former case, training sessions teach young women and girls about gender discrimination, sexual exploitation, and women’s rights. According to the final Winrock report on anti-trafficking implementations in Moldova, during training seminars held between 2005 and 2008, participants learnt how to build “leadership skills that

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<sup>1</sup> The group, an international non-profit with a working capital of fifty million dollars, obtains its donations from foundations such as Bill & Melinda Gates as well as Ford Foundation, Shell, and World Coca Cola Foundation. Running under the motto “Empowering the disadvantaged, increasing economic opportunity, and sustaining natural resources,” Winrock has developed a wide variety of projects worldwide, such as educational programs in sub-Saharan Africa and environmental sustainability in Bangladesh.

helped them address these problems [of discrimination] and educate their peers” (3). In the latter instance of psychological assistance, women consult Winrock psychologists who make diagnosis and offer further referrals when necessary. According to the same report, between 2005 and 2008, women’s diagnoses were entered into a database, which then “made it possible to classify psychological problems . . . enabling in-depth analysis of individual and broader trends associated with victims and at-risk women” (3).

Notably, the project’s designers do not address migrant men’s and women’s exploitation in the agricultural and service sectors. Instead, in its exclusive focus on women forced into prostitution, New Perspective for Women follows a three-pronged approach: it tackles domestic violence (the assumption being that women in violent households are more prone to immigrating and hence easy prays to traffickers); it develops strategies for achieving gender equality in the belief that inequality and discrimination generate conditions for trafficking; and it implements programs for women’s economic empowerment, in the form of vocational training and micro-lending opportunities in order to encourage women to embark on entrepreneurial careers at home. Anti-trafficking activities include trafficking prevention training, building up support groups in the community, and consultations on a wide variety of legal and economic problems, especially as they pertain to women’s migration. New Perspectives has also designed outreach programs, such as regional support centers, a hotline, and an anti-trafficking website (Winrock International 3-8). The project ended in 2008, but by its end date, several mini-projects had already taken shape, including modules such as the “Economic Empowerment Program,” “Introductory Trainings in Leadership and Entrepreneurship,” prevention programs on “Domestic Violence,” as well as training

sessions on “Gender Equality and Personal Leadership,” the last aimed at increasing women’s self-confidence and self-esteem. During this time, the project’s developers also worked with media outlets to spread the word about the traffic in women. The result of the media outreach was the television and radio documentary series *Destine si Destinatii* (*Destinies and Destinations*), first produced in December 2005 and broadcast in Moldova since November 2006 and internationally since January 2007.

In this chapter, I examine Winrock’s anti-trafficking program New Perspectives for Women, focusing specifically on the use of the documentary genre to raise public awareness about the traffic in women. Especially, the focus of this chapter is the anti-trafficking documentary series *Destinies and Destinations*. The documentary genre, historically the realist medium for public advocacy, nation building, and for producing what Michael Renov calls social consent, becomes the major educational channel for Winrock’s anti-trafficking campaigns in Moldova.<sup>2</sup> In its educational role, *Destinies and Destinations* does more than present events and offer solutions to what is perceived as the local and global crisis of women’s trafficking. Instead, the television series aim to mould ideal female citizens even as it proffers expertise on the traffic in women. The documentaries examined in this chapter convey and instill a set of civic values and modalities of gender in accord with the ethos of neoliberal capitalism, while drawing on and reinforcing normative gender roles. The alleged realism of *Destinies and*

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<sup>2</sup> The classic documentary genre is traditionally associated with the works of the famous Soviet documentarian Dziga Vertov and the British John Grierson. John Grierson is the first to have actually used the name “documentary” in 1926 to refer to Robert Flaherty’s Polynesian film *Moana: A Romance of the Golden Age*. In his review of Flaherty’s film, Grierson mentions casually that, “Moana, being a visual account of events in the life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value” (Kahana 5). The term “Griersonian documentary” reflects the ideal of accurate representation usually associated with the documentary genre.

*Destinations* promotes a form of anti-trafficking activism that equates women's freedom with market freedom and turns economic problems into personal pathologies that demand personal solutions. From this perspective, the films document diverse events in women's postsocialist lives and produce what I call "market feminism." Market feminism refers to the entrenched belief that markets can deliver women's prosperity, freedom, and equality. Market feminism is the core philosophy of gender developmental programs in neoliberalism, since women's emancipation is increasingly equated with their participation in free markets. Following the broader developmental principles adopted by Winrock, *Destinies and Destinations* envisions solutions to women's trafficking premised on private entrepreneurship.

*Destinies and Destinations* is especially significant as a cultural document because, more than other cultural forms examined in this dissertation, it offers perhaps the clearest example of the ways in which neoliberal institutional policies and cultural works of activism converge. The humanitarian approach promoted by these documentary series not only colludes with state institutional interests and sustains neoliberal values, but it conceals global structures of power underpinning the institutional and financial power of western non-profits like Winrock. In this context, the genre of the documentary itself, in its promise of authenticity and freedom from distortion, intersects with the ethos of neoliberal capitalism, the latter touted as unbounded access to free markets. The naturalness and transparency said to define the markets find reflection in the classic documentary's promise to represent accurately the reality created by such markets. Like the laws of markets conducive to social and economic freedoms, the aesthetic laws of the

documentary genre (in its Griersonian format) promise pure knowledge, untainted by the filmmaker's biased interventions.

My interest lies not only in the close-reading of this documentary series, but especially in tracing the role of these cinematic projects – linked as they are to institutional authority and human rights claims -- in sustaining humanitarian approaches to gender justice. My use of humanitarianism in this chapter, like in the rest of my dissertation, signals a particular approach to social problems, a mode of social intervention informed by moral compassionate approaches to social and economic problems.

#### The Non-Profit Sector and Market Feminism

*Destinies and Destinations*, alongside Winrock's anti-trafficking programs in Moldova in general, reflects a strong belief in the liberal civil society, common with international nonprofits in the region. Most significantly, Winrock's developmental rationale draws its force from the neoliberal tenet of market liberalization, especially the usual equation of the freedom of the markets with democratic government. These neoliberal ideals have flourished in postsocialist Moldova and have led to particular understandings of gender justice. Before turning to the actual documentary series, let me dwell for a while on the role of nonprofits in Moldova and the socio-political context that defines and inflects Winrock's anti-trafficking activities.

Perhaps the best neoliberal articulation of gender development in the region comes, not surprisingly, from the World Bank. In 1999, the World Bank held a convention on women's status in Eastern Europe and Central Asia entitled *Making the*



*Transition Work for Women in Europe and Central Asia*. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit of World Bank published the conference papers under the same name. The authors deplore discrimination and gender inequality in the former communist block, dismissing the widespread belief that women had significant political representation during communism. Instead, the conference participants find encouraging the proliferation of western non-profits in the region, a factor that contributes, they believe, to raising Eastern European women's standards of living. Not surprisingly given the World Bank's ideology, the publication also reflects policy-makers' faith in privatization and free markets. Ludmila Zavadskaya, currently a director of the Gender Law Program of the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative, sees the World Bank convention as vital to establishing new directions and principles in the development of the region:

We have gathered at this conference to try to learn which way we should now go and how we should get there. Each country has its own experiences, problems, and tasks. But, we are united by a common task: *we are building a new society based on freedom and equal opportunity for everybody. We are building a free market economy.*" (8, emphasis mine)

That the World Bank itself is concerned about women's lives is ironic to say the least since its own policies, including structural adjustments and the aggressive privatization of the economy, are responsible for the decline in women's living standards in the region (Ghodsee 734).

The World Bank's principles also characterize the bevy of western groups (including the non-profit Winrock International) that have flooded Eastern European markets following the demise of communism. In the wake of 1989, having severed its geographical and political ties with the collapsing Soviet Empire, Moldova set off on the

road to a free market economy. The so-called market miracle proved fatal for the country, and like in the rest of Eastern Europe, unchecked liberalization put an end to the social services of the former socialist state. The privatization of the economy went hand in hand with the push for a strong civil society, under the guidance of international governments and organizations. Since the fall of the legendary iron curtain, an increasing number of western organizations in Moldova and in the region have initiated gender development programs. For instance, the U.S.AID funded teams of Western consultants to conduct gender assessments and implement “gender action plans” (Ghodsee 731). In 2009, several western governments, the United Nations, and non-profits such as Winrock came together to plan, implement, and promote “Gender Equality in National Development Policies and Programmes in Moldova.” Finally, the American Bar Association (ABA) works to disseminate knowledge about women’s rights in Moldova. Under the “rule of law” initiative, ABA runs training sessions on women’s rights and compiles reports to assess gender equality in the country. ABA also collaborates with Winrock and is featured in one of the *Destinies and Destinations* television programs. Citing a UNDP report, Kristen Ghodsee captures the situation in the region very well. “Billions of dollars have been lent and spent in aid to develop ‘democratic institutions’ and ‘free markets,’” she explains. “Yet only Poland’s and Slovenia’s citizens enjoyed a higher standard of living in 2000 than they did in 1989 when the socialist experiment ended” (728).

The large number of western non-profits, private foundations, government and non-governmental groups in the region, including Winrock, operate based on the neoliberal premise that the liberalization of markets will automatically trigger the democratization of post-communist societies. As Aiwha Ong, among many others, have

pointed out, there is a constant conflation of the “subordination to the ‘dictatorship’ of global markets” with “the spread of democracy,” to the extent that states that resist the international neoliberal agenda are brandished as “anti-human rights” (94). U.S.AID representatives in Moldova have been vocal about the need to develop a strong civil society and a business environment outside state’s regulatory powers, initiatives that U.S.AID has undertaken either indirectly by funding projects such as *Destinies and Destinations*, or by way of direct involvement. In 2004, USAID “worked with” the Moldovan parliament to liberalize local markets. With U.S.AID funding and with counseling from U.S. economists, the Moldovan government drafted and passed legislation that makes illegal any state regulations and restrictions on multinational investors. The Guillotine Law, as the legislation was dubbed, was approved in 2006 and represents, according to U.S.AID,

a revolutionary law that cuts ineffective business regulations that impede investment and enterprise development. The legislation also restricts the government from conducting abusive state inspections and controls in the private sector.

Igor Dodon, Moldova’s Vice Minister of Economy and Commerce at the time, commented following the passage of the law that, “We want the laws and only the laws, not governmental or ministerial decisions, but laws to clearly trace the limits the public authorities have when regulating business activity” (“Parliament Passes Pro-Business Law”).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A year after the non-interventionist legislation was approved, the Moldovan parliament passed Law 208-XVI, which transformed entirely the licensing process for small entrepreneurs. Following this law, small entrepreneurs were forbidden to operate unless they met space and equipment standards similar to that of large businesses and corporations. Businesses that operated in small spaces, with but few employees, or in street kiosks had to be closed. What is important to note here is the paradox at the very

The neoliberal rhetoric, pervading the work and initiative of both governmental and non-governmental groups in the region, has affected women disproportionately. Because women tend to run small family businesses or work in low-paid jobs in the service sector, the support for multinational corporations obvious in the above bill results in women's loss of income and rights. In effect, in their final report, Winrock social workers acknowledge that, while they offered employment and entrepreneurial training to a high number of women, employment for women at risk of trafficking did not rise (the so-called "target group") nor were women much less likely to immigrate (Winrock International 21). In the same report, discussing Winrock's entrepreneurial training, social workers point out the systemic power imbalance that characterizes local markets, although they never offer a wide critique of such inequalities:

As [women's small] businesses grow, they are more likely to appear on the radar screen of competitors, government authorities and other individuals and organizations that may legitimately or illegitimately choose to challenge the new business. In many cases, this requires a response from the business either to improve and scale up operations, or to abandon them. (28)

The turn to a highly privatized society and economy, promoted by U.S.AID and non-profits such as Winrock, has also engendered the formation of new subjectivities and new forms of sociality (Bridger and Pine 8). Non-profits contribute to the redefinition of politics and social responsibilities in the region to a great extent. Political action based on class analysis -- otherwise common during communism -- is fading away in the face of

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heart of neoliberalism that Foucault underlines in the *Birth of Biopolitics*, namely that the state must retain its role of intervening in the works of the market to ensure alleged market freedom. In this case, the Moldovan law stipulates the principles under which the markets must work; the space created for business is hardly a space of non-intervention since the law must always produce and shape the market conditions conducive to successful investment.

western developmental discourses that privilege interventions premised on cultural and essentialist forms of gender differences.<sup>4</sup> Following western gender interventions, Moldovan women must acquire a new language of social transformation; they must embrace new ways of understanding and relating to their own gendered and classed identities, and they must learn to re-articulate their struggles for better lives in the neoliberal language of cost and profit. All these transformations signal the gradual coalescence in Eastern Europe of what I call here “market feminism” and which I defined earlier as the strong faith in the capacity of markets to deliver gender justice. According to this philosophy, women in former communist countries lack the entrepreneurial spirit that would make them successful. Accordingly, to attain equality, women must inhabit a new subjectivity, that of the feminist entrepreneurial, valuing markets and even welcoming neoliberal policies.

Yet these newly acquired subjectivities are most of the time at odds with the class consciousness that still dominates Eastern European societies in general since economic equality is still seen as the most valuable political objective around which both men and women organize. This is one of the reasons why gender development projects and anti-trafficking campaigns such as those run by Winrock are perceived in the region as elitist,

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<sup>4</sup> From this point of view, one can notice here the “culturalization of politics,” a phenomenon that Wendy Brown associates with neoliberal politics. The culturalization of politics reflects the tendency to explain political conflicts and economic inequities by way of cultural traits. This means first positing culture as a homogeneous essence and second attributing particular events to particular cultural traits, such as when terrorism becomes associated with Arab culture. For more, see Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (2008). The culturalization of politics is central to the work of non-profits in Moldova and throughout Eastern Europe, as suggested by the fact that the traffic in women is understood as an effect of the cultural naïveté characterizing post-communist nations.

a western import, and unable to lead to radical changes.<sup>5</sup> Considering that most regional organizations that call themselves “feminist” are western non-profits – funded by U.S.AID or private foundations such as Ford or the Soros Open Society – there is little wonder that most women dismiss feminism as unsuitable for and even detrimental to their daily struggles against the neoliberal system. With little knowledge of the region’s history and socio-economic context, gender development groups have imposed from above western models of gender development, producing what Kristen Ghodsee terms “feminism by design.” As Julie Hemment and Janine Wedel have also noticed, the majority of Eastern European women feels alienated from the non-profit sector, while service providers, almost always local and foreign elites, fail to connect to the problems of low-income rural women.

Neoliberal capitalism, besides reconfiguring the relationship between markets and the state, has also triggered the expansion of the non-profit sector, at times referred to as “the third sector.”<sup>6</sup> According to the neoliberal paradigm, the well-functioning of any society rests on achieving a balance between the state, the markets, and the civil society. Yet, as Michel Foucault reminds us, in neoliberalism, the civil society, allegedly the independent forum of public debate and resistance, is itself part of the neoliberal state and

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<sup>5</sup> Feminist scholars such as Kristen Ghodsee and Julie Hemment, among others, have made the same argument. According to Ghodsee,

Western feminists imported the paradigm of “gender first” without really understanding the significance of the historical struggle between Eastern and Western women over the primacy of class or gender as the appropriate category of analysis. Their research and project proposals merely had this analytical preference built into them as the hegemonic and commonsense way of thinking about women’s lives in times of great social, political, or economic upheaval. (733)

<sup>6</sup> See especially *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, edited by Incite: Women of Color against Violence, for a thorough examination of the link between neoliberalism and the non-profit sector.

its forms of power. This is in accord with the neoliberal doctrine since, in neoliberalism, “the area covered by the economy embraces the entirety of human action to the extent that this is characterized by the allocation of scant resources for competing goals” (Lemke 197). The *homo economicus* replaces the political and civic person, while economic principles and values are expanded to fit all areas of human life, from the management of crime to the notion of human development.<sup>7</sup> “By encoding the social domain as a form of the economic domain,” Thomas Lemke argues, “cost-benefit calculations and market criteria can be applied to decision-making processes within the family, married life, professional life, etc” (200). The gender development programs put forward by Winrock Intl, including their television series *Destinies and Destinations*, are suggestive in this sense. As already shown, women’s empowerment is defined in entrepreneurial terms, according to which, the women, while clients to their non-profit service providers, emerge as entrepreneurs on the free markets of capitalism. At the same time, the process of migration appears as an entrepreneurial venture, where migrant women take risks, invest, and calculate their benefits. According to this new approach, choice becomes central to any discourse on migration and gender violence: the choice to invest your time and money in the process of migration, and in some cases risk your life. This is the message of one of the episodes on trafficking in the *Destinies and Destinations* series. It is, after all, we are told “the choice of people themselves if they want to follow a trafficker or if they don’t want to” (“Traficul de fiinte umane”). Because the social workers at Winrock Intl perceive women’s migration in purely neoliberal terms of cost-profit and supply-demand, the belief is that, by curbing women’s job demands at

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<sup>7</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*

the local level, they will automatically diminish and ultimately eliminate the “supply” of women for traffickers. Yet, this approach does not address the dependence of Moldova’s economy on global markets and ignores non-economic factors that determine women’s migration.

Seen from this perspective, the non-profit sector is not only complicit with neoliberal capitalism, but it is part and parcel of the neoliberal logic of government. At the same time, the increasing role of the non-profit sector betrays the neoliberal vision of development, whereby non-profits take on the function of the state and become providers of social services, at a time when public services are under attack (Hemment 217). Dylan Rodriguez defines the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) as “a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (23).<sup>8</sup> Following Julie Hemment, the non-profit sector is “a professionalized realm of NGOs, inaccessible to most local groups and compromised by its links to a neoliberal vision of development” (215). They have redefined social services in economic terms of cost and profit,<sup>9</sup> working to legitimize neoliberal market policies and rationalize the slashing of social services (Hemment 222). According to Rodriguez, one major consequence of the ascendance of the NPIC is the institutionalization of dissent, whereby activists are funneled into “the hierarchical rituals and restrictive professionalism of discrete campaigns, think tanks, and organizations,

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<sup>8</sup> Following Rodriguez, the NPIC in the United States is directly connected with the Prison Industrial Complex. Whereas the Prison Industrial Complex perpetuates blatantly racist policies and regulations, the NPIC continues racist policies under the guise of the liberal and allegedly Left-leaning non-profit ideology.

<sup>9</sup> I thank Brigitte Marti for this insight.



outside of which it is usually difficult to organize a critical mass of political movement . . .” (26). In its new social function, the non-profit sector becomes a new governing force in society. It functions to shape the political and social life, redirect political activism into acts of reform, and deflect radical anti-capitalist movements (Rodriguez 23). It follows that, rather than challenging neoliberal policies, non-profits like Winrock join the state and the business community in promoting neoliberal capitalism. They placate political discontent by promoting reform and re-training for working-class women facing economic inequity as well as by prescribing psychotherapeutic approaches to social violence.

As my analysis of *Destinies and Destinations* will show, anti-trafficking campaigns discourage women’s grass roots organizing for economic rights and cross-generational solidarities, advancing individualistic, entrepreneurial, and self-sufficient activities. This became especially clear in 2008, when the Business Patent Law was passed in the Moldovan parliament. The new legislation, supposedly intended to raise the national Moldovan economy to European standards, imposes restrictive regulations on small entrepreneurs (many of them women), pushing many of them to close off their businesses. The passed legislation triggered a series of large protests in various Moldovan cities. Winrock representatives and social workers responded to these protests by tackling the legal changes in a *Destinies and Destinations* episode. The episode draws on the genre of the reportage to create the impression of impartial broadcasting. Interviews with protesters and governmental officials, interspersed with images from protests, introduce antithetical perspectives and expand on the effects the law will have on small farmers and entrepreneurs. Yet, not long after its beginning, the episode turns into an instruction to

the public on how to best adapt to the new regulations and weather the changes. A bureaucratic discourse about registration and application forms takes over what appears to be at first an expression of public disaffection. Against these bureaucratic lessons, public discontent stands out as a misunderstanding, an abnormality with regard to which Winrock's team intervenes to assess and redress.<sup>10</sup> As this episode proves, non-profits temper radical struggles—rooted in a socialist tradition in the region -- against neoliberal unjust policies.

Relative to these larger projects to deregulate markets and open them for multinational corporations, the promise of entrepreneurship for local women espoused by Winrock is ironic to say the least. On the one hand, such humanitarian interventions, in the form of vocational training, business seminars, and media productions, promote only a superficial engagement with social problems and thus, preclude radical critiques of global geopolitics. On the other hand, it is only by positing democracy and free markets as synonymous and by promoting both as “a set of practices devoid of the violence of capital's imperialisms,” to use Jacqui Alexander's phrase, that non-profits can promote markets as conducive to women's economic and civic emancipation (185). The non-profit industrial complex in general is one example of the cooption of feminist projects by the neoliberal state. It is, indeed, one paradigm of what cultural critic Susan Koshy referred to as the close linkage between trade and human rights pervading world politics following the collapse of the communist block. These interventions promote a market-

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<sup>10</sup> Yet, the few women interviewed in the film, expose the contradiction running throughout the non-profit rhetoric of gender development when they link neoliberal policies and women's migration. “They wonder why women want to immigrate,” one woman, a small entrepreneur declares, “I cannot buy the advanced cash registers they require [referring to one of the regulations]. I don't have that much money.”

based feminism and prop up the very neoliberal economic policies that are responsible in the first place for women's loss of jobs, poverty, and migration.

#### Documents of Anti-Trafficking Activism

The radio and television series *Destinies and Destinations* came into existence as a result of a U.S.AID grant and a close collaboration between Winrock Intl. and the nongovernmental media organization Independent Journalism Center in Moldova. Additional funding from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and U.S.AID ensured the duplication and distribution of the series. The films came out in monthly episodes, with one new television episode and two new radio broadcasts produced and broadcast every month. According to a U.S.AID report, over 100,000 viewers across the country watched *Destinies and Destinations*, in addition to people in Western Europe and the Middle East, where the documentaries were broadcast for the Moldovan diaspora. The television series won two years in a row, in 2006 and 2007, the first prize in the Human Rights Gala, a ceremony conducted jointly by the United Nations and the Moldovan Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. The same U.S.AID report quotes the producers on the success of the documentaries. Some viewers, according to the series' producers "have come to our office requesting further information, while others have shared their experience of working abroad." Following the same U.S.AID report,

The radio audience has expressed their interest mostly by telephone. One young lady who called said she had experienced some of the situations described in *Destinies and Destinations* herself. She inquired about the telephone number of Winrock International and, as far as we know, took part in one of the activities (training courses) held by this organization later on. (Winrock International 23)

According to the same report, many radio and television directors requested the continuation of the broadcast beyond its final date in 2008.<sup>11</sup>

Drawing on the tradition of the expository documentary, *Destinies and Destinations* aims to alert the public and especially young women about the risks of migration.<sup>12</sup> The series consists of short episodes, produced in the realist vein of the classic documentary. Each episode expounds on postsocialist transformations in Moldova, chiefly with regard to women's social and economic status, and offer suggestions for gender development projects. Only one episode becomes an exception and uses the genre of docudrama to tell the story of Natasha, a seventeen-year old from a low income rural family, who avoids being trafficked abroad at the last moment. This episode, "Traficul de fiinte umane: O perspectiva daneza" ("A Danish Perspective on Trafficking"), the only film in the series directed by a Danish director, dramatizes the life of what the film producers believe is "the prototype of potential victims," the poor and misinformed rural young woman. For emotional force, this episode experiments with diverse filmic techniques, such as close-up shots, narrative embedment, and cuts to produce juxtapositions. The rest of the episodes, however, follow the traditional genre of exposition, presenting, informing, guiding, and instructing audiences. Classic voice-over

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<sup>11</sup> In the same report to U.S.AID, Winrock representatives estimate that approximately 100,000 viewers watch the broadcast on Moldova One. In addition, at least as many have been reached by other national channels (22).

<sup>12</sup> Following Bill Nichols, the expository documentary addresses viewers directly even as images "serve as illustration or counterpoint." Nichols continues,

The commentator's argument serves as the textual dominant, moving the text forward in service of its persuasive needs. . . . The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgment. This mode supports the impulse towards generalization handsomely since the voice-over commentary can readily extrapolate from the particular instances offered on the image track. (34-35)

techniques and nonsynchronous sound define most episodes, while several expert discourses align within the cinematic space of the documentary to expound on the risk of women's migration in the twenty-first century. Legal experts link illegality with human trafficking; economic specialists advise on the entrepreneurial potential in Moldova; and a bevy of anti-trafficking activists debate ways to alert women to the dangers of migration. The cacophony of voices that council, teach, sympathize, and offer alternatives for women's future represents the authority of expertise. At the same time, the voice-over pervading the style of *Destinies and Destinations* "endorses the tradition of disembodied universalized knowledge," becoming attached "to bodies that represent not personal witness, but institutional authority in anthropomorphic form" (Nichols 89-90). Moreover, as in the case of most realist social documentaries, the romanticization of women -- both as they suffer and overcome hardships -- supplants thorough social analysis, creating what Brian Winston has called "victim documentaries."<sup>13</sup>

Each episode represents an exposé on particular socio-economic issues conducive to human trafficking, from lack of economic opportunities and education to underdeveloped rural areas, violent families, and parentless and especially motherless, children. The belief is that economic opportunity is central to combating women's

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<sup>13</sup> In *Claiming the Real* (1995), Brian Winston offers a history of the realist Griersonian documentary by arguing that, while rooted in the radical politics of realism and naturalism, this filmic representation lost its radical edge in the late 1930s. Following Winston, later realist documentaries, produced in the Griersonian tradition, revolve around the social victim:

In essence, the worker now became a social victim and the films became what might be called 'victim documentaries'. The victim documentary is the Griersonians' most potent legacy. Social victims are the realist documentary's staple subject into the present. (40)

The depoliticization of the realist documentary also defines the documentary series *Destinies and Destinations*.

migration and the ensuing trafficking incidents:

Economic opportunity can be effectively incorporated within broader services for at-risk groups. In Moldova, Winrock International—partnering with Moldovan NGOs and with USAID funding—set up regional centers that combined job skills, job search preparation and technical training with legal assistance and counseling for trafficking victims most at risk. More than 25,000 women received services at the centers, and the initiative was expanded to reach nearly 10,000 women in rural areas through mobile units. (*Combating Trafficking in Persons* 11)

Yet economic and social problems are rendered personal, construed as instances of misjudgment and mishaps, caused by women’s lack of resolution and poor choice-making, such as decisions to migrate rather than invest or work on local markets in Moldova. The producers’ goal is both to inform young women about the dangers of migration and to promote alternatives to migration by publicizing the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities created by U.S.AID and Winrock. In this sense, the documentary shorts, besides bringing the traffic in women to public attention, also promote the philanthropic and humanitarian work of U.S.AID and its groups on the ground.

In addition, volunteering, rather than depending on state services and resources, emerges as the personal responsibility of each and every Moldovan youth. In the spirit of humanitarian work, the documentaries enjoin Moldovan young people to become themselves volunteers by taking control over the till-then state-administered social programs. For example, one documentary short, “Cine sunt voluntarii?” (Who Are the Volunteers?), introduces viewers to the work of Peace Corp volunteers in Moldova in an attempt to convince them of their own duty to volunteer and provide for their less fortunate fellow citizens. The episode begins with a set of questions about the role and practices of volunteering. “Who are the volunteers?” begins the voice-over. “What is the

role of volunteering in our modern society?” and “How can you help others and help yourself at the same time?” continues the speaker. The documentary proceeds to answer these questions by lauding the volunteering tradition, absent from the former socialist country, but slowly taking root with the help of international non-profits. “In your country, you make the difference,” reads a sign in one of the anti-trafficking volunteering centers showcased on the program, ironically a banner reminiscent of the nationalist rhetoric of the communist state. “Being a volunteer,” the reporter concludes, “means aspiring to the noblest values of humanity: liberty, security, justice, opportunity, and peace.” Volunteering becomes, then, an ethic in itself, the mark of civic accomplishment and of democracy, whereby one learns to fend for oneself (and teach others about self-responsibility) rather than make demands on the state. Unlike the communist rhetoric where volunteering used to supplement state-provided social services, the neoliberal system promoted by the films replaces state support with volunteering. The increased popularity of volunteering in a country like Moldova coexists with the expansion of neoliberal policies and the waning of social services. Katharyne Mitchell and Jennifer Wolch, among others, have theorized the gradual substitution of state services with volunteering actions, the replacement of state clerks with volunteers. Following Wolch, “the voluntary sector has in effect become a *shadow state*: that is, a para-state apparatus with collective service responsibilities previously shouldered by the public sector, administered outside traditional democratic politics, but yet controlled in both formal and informal ways by the state” (201). The volunteering spirit, at the center of the documentaries, offers a glimpse of the logic of neoliberalism, reflecting one of the institutional forms by which neoliberal ideologies become enshrined in contemporary

societies. In addition, the “shadow state” converges with what I called here “market feminism” because both are premised on the neoliberal principles of personal responsibility and privatization. Just as volunteering becomes a form of governing subjects and populations according to the ideal of civic and personal responsibility, market feminism promotes women as patriotic entrepreneurs who fend for themselves and their families by contributing to the free-market economy. As such, market feminist and the “shadow state” are two major pillars of the neoliberal political system.

*Destinies and Destinations* promotes the belief that the traffic in women will decrease if women pursue alternative employment and entrepreneurship in Moldova. According to the organization’s web promotion,

Winrock Moldova pursues the economic empowerment of young people and tries to raise awareness on the dangers emigration may entail. It tries to create opportunities in Moldova by providing job search and entrepreneurship trainings, and assistance with starting businesses.

One of the recurring themes, therefore, in *Destinies and Destinations* is women’s potential for success in Moldova, especially at a time when, the producers imply, free markets offer unlimited democratic opportunities for those who persevere. This is how the authors of the anthology *We Write Because We Want to Inform and Prevent*, a collection of essays published as part of Winrock’s anti-trafficking program and written by the journalists who produced *Destinies and Destinations*, frame immigration:

Acum cațiva ani, consideram că cei care pleacă la munci peste hotare sunt partea cea mai harnică, cea mai activă a populației, eroii care nu pot șede cu mainile in san. Acum, cred invers. Cei care răman acasă și nu se imprăștie bezmetic prin lume sunt adevărații eroi. Pentru că este un adevărat eroism să-ți găsești rostul acasă, lucrând pentru prosperarea ta și a țării. In pofida realităților vitrege din patria ta, in ciuda condițiilor extreme in care ești nevoit să trăiești. (Centrul Independent de Jurnalism



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The nationalist language that defines this passage might be surprising in the twenty-first century, a century celebrated for its globalizing force and anti-statist spirit. In this statement, anti-trafficking prevention fades into nationalism and patriotic responsibility; the neoliberal rhetoric of personal responsibility and industriousness functions to occlude structural inequities, the increased transnational mobility of financial capital, and the militarization of borders. Moreover, the rhetoric targets women as responsible for bolstering familial and national values at a time of moral dissipation. Like *Destinies and Destinations*, this collection of fictional and non-fictional writings calls on women to be the vanguard of society at times of crisis even as it renders them particularly vulnerable to the new globalizing forces. Violence appears as inherent to women's migration even as nationalism becomes women's duty to stay behind as mothers, wives, and small entrepreneurs. In this collection, "we wanted," the editors explain, to "confront our female readers with the nightmares of migration from which, once awakened, they can relish the mere fact of being home, in the midst of their families . . ." (Centrul Independent de Jurnalism 7).<sup>15</sup> The figure of the woman -- the mother and the daughter, sexually

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<sup>14</sup> "A few years ago, the belief was that those migrating for work abroad form the industrious and energetic section of the population, the heroes who cannot stay put and wait for success to come. Yet the real heroes are those that remain in the country and refuse to scatter aimlessly throughout the world. Indeed, true heroism means to find your destiny in your own country, working for your own nation's prosperity, despite numberless hardships and privation." All translations from Romanian are mine unless mentioned otherwise.

<sup>15</sup> "Prin articolele publicate in cadrul concursului menționat in această plachetă, am vrut să le provocăm cititoarelor niște coșmaruri, din care să se trezească și să se bucure că sunt acasă, in sanul familiei, langă cei dragi" (7).

vulnerable, yet responsible for the well-being of the family and the future of the nation -- is indispensable rhetorically and conceptually in ensuring the logical unfolding of this argument. Traditionally, nationalist rhetoric construes migration as a threat to the purity of the nation. Yet, in the above endeavor to discourage women's migration, emigration becomes the other factor that endangers the normative familial space of the nation. Thus, staying behind becomes a national duty especially for women, a form of patriotism in itself. At the same time, the family is touted as the pillar of the Moldovan nation, the natural entity (like the market) that is both threatened by globalization and that, when recovered in its essential value, can stymie the unraveling of the nation-state. Gender emancipation and anti-trafficking activism arise as a nationalist project that finds expression in the neoliberal mantra of economic investment on free markets and the heteronormativity of the nuclear family.

A. Aneesh, among others, has theorized the conflicting interests at the heart of any capitalist nation-state. According to Aneesh,

Nationalist discourse, based on a logic of total closure, is almost always opposed to immigration in general, imagining the nation as a closed body that must defend its organic purity against foreign elements. Capitalist discourse, on the other hand, almost always encourages immigration, for it ensures an adequate reserve of skilled and unskilled labor while keeping wages at a profitable level. (153-54)

*Destinies and Destinations* betrays the same tension between nationalism and free-market capitalism, this time with regard to Moldova's high emigration trends. The documentaries, like so many of the cultural texts that shore up -- many times unwittingly -- the neoliberal economic project, must also cover up the neoliberal capitalist debacle, reflected especially in the high number of low-income Moldovan families and individuals displaced by structural adjustment policies implemented by World Bank and IMF. The

mass migration from Moldova prompted by the privatization of state functions, loss of jobs, and the slashing of social services has also intensified the disintegration of Moldovan families, a fact deplored both by the Moldovan government and the documentary series examined here. Yet the films do not link migration patterns and social transformations with neoliberal policies because that would contradict not only the U.S.AID ideology but also the reformist spirit of Winrock, the non-profit behind this anti-trafficking project. Instead, the figure of the woman becomes the rhetorical slight-of-hand that, when celebrated and called upon as the good citizen-mother and the disciplinary small entrepreneur, can conceal both the unrealistic expectations placed on free markets and the inherent tension between the nationalist creed in nation-building and the neoliberal mantra of global mobility and flexibility. A *Destinies and Destinations* episode on “Work Abroad: Myths and Realities,” for instance, betrays anxieties about declining heteronormative values even as it pinpoints Moldovans’ out-migration as the cause of this decline, avoiding any mention of underlying economic policies. And, while one can only be critical of the heteronormativity underwriting the filmic message, it is also important to note, nonetheless, the constant eschewal of anti-capitalist criticism in the film and in anti-trafficking campaigns at large. Instead, *Destinies and Destinations* emphasizes personal solutions to socio-economic inequalities, and especially women’s personal responsibility as both builders of the nation and nurturers of the future generation. “Work Abroad” deplores the increasing emigration trends and warns about the deleterious impacts these migrations have on Moldova’s economic and social potential. The reporter travels to a community of Moldovan immigrants in Padova, Italy in order to

offer a realistic image of immigrants' lives in a foreign country. Following migrants to church service on Sundays and filming diverse gatherings and festivities, the reporter reminds viewers that, although the immigrants might celebrate and look serene, the emotional consequences of their immigration are immeasurable. In another episode, suggestively entitled "Consequences of Immigration: The Impact on Children Left Behind," the documentary frames migration through children's eyes, documenting the high number of children growing up without parents, and especially without mothers. Interspersed between sociological studies and interviews with psychologists are the reporter's commentaries on children's loneliness and their stymied emotional growth and progress. Yet another episode on "A Danish Perspective on Trafficking" renders the decision to immigrate a matter of personal attitude towards success by insisting that courage means remaining in one's country and taking opportunity of market liberalization and the process of democratization. As already mentioned, in this last episode, the producers employ the genre of docudrama to tell the story of a seventeen-year old young woman, Natasha, who wishes to migrate but avoids a disastrous trafficking situation at the last moment by deciding to stay home and enroll in vocational training classes offered by U.S.AID and Winrock.

Not unlike other anti-trafficking productions, Winrock's documentary series constructs women as inherently vulnerable, naïve, and in need of state and public support. The rationale behind the anti-trafficking project is to aid specifically young women who, while tempted to migrate for a better life in the west, have little knowledge of migration, economic opportunities, or legal support. As one Winrock publication on women's rights

presents the issue:

Young women are especially vulnerable because of a high global demand for women to enslave in sexual exploitation [sic], as well as a lack of experience of young women in gauging fraudulent job offers or understanding how to protect themselves if they end up in a dangerous situation abroad. (Winrock International, Women's Micro-Enterprise 3)

Women's inherent vulnerability and inexperience, taken for granted in Winrock's anti-trafficking projects, constitutes gender justice in general and anti-trafficking campaigns in particular as a humanitarian project whose coherence rests on exposing women's vulnerability and designing interventions into women's life choices. The Winrock project produces vulnerability as a condition always already meaningful relative to women, even as it defines women as political subjects by virtue of their vulnerability. One of the *Destinies and Destinations* episodes begins its segment on women's trafficking with a collage of images about the violence of human trafficking. Interwoven with these images are interviews with service providers and victims' testimonials. One shot reconstitutes women's abuse at the hands of traffickers, while at another time, the producers recreate the drama of trafficking in a slow-motion shot of a woman, pulling at the bars of her brothel window, her face covered by her long hair ("Trafficking in Persons"). In both cases, women's vulnerability is produced visually as object of public consumption and legal intervention at the same time that trafficking cases are presented as warnings for migrants to be.<sup>16</sup> In *Destinies and Destinations*, vulnerability becomes an identity in itself

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<sup>16</sup> An aspect that cannot be emphasized enough is the way in which the anti-trafficking rhetoric has turned into an anti-immigration discourse that advises low-income women against migrating. Winrock's approach in *Destinies and Destinations* is not unique and, as I showed in my other chapters, it is in line with U.S. legal and popular discourses on the traffic in women.

and is perceived as the cause attributed to women's entrapment into forced prostitution.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 4.1 Still from “Trafficking in Persons,” *Destinies and Destinations*

The violence of trafficking gains meaning in opposition to the freedom of markets, the latter seen as the solution to women's trafficking and the source of emancipation. To the above bleak immigration stories, the filmmakers counterpose accounts of women's entrepreneurial success in Moldova. Shorts such as “Developing Leadership in Women,” “New Opportunities for a Decent Living at Home,” “How to Start a Business,” “The Business Woman,” “Building Women's Leadership Skills,” and “From Poverty to Success” all introduce viewers to the rewards of small entrepreneurship and the importance of acquiring business and managerial skills. From this perspective, beyond their anti-trafficking agenda, the films are especially significant as cultural and

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<sup>17</sup> To receive legal recognition and protection in the United States, migrant women must prove that they suffered severe forms of trafficking and show signs of physical injury or/and trauma. This is what Wendy Brown, among others, called the “paradox of human rights,” namely that “rights that entail some specification of our suffering, injury, or inequality lock us into the identity defined by our subordination” (Brown, “Suffering” 423).

historical documents since they mark the turn to the neoliberal ethic in postsocialist Moldova. Over and over again, the documentaries reiterate the belief in markets as the miracle solution to women's poverty and discrimination. When taking responsibility for their own destinies and embarking on small local businesses such as knitting, sewing, cosmetics sales, or beauty salons, the documentaries inform their viewers, women surpass any social discrimination and income disparities. Thus the episodes unfold predictably from conflict building to conflict resolution, with the markets touted as key to women's freedom. One episode, for instance, defines the businesswoman as "the woman who has decided to take her destiny in her own hands. She distinguishes herself among other women in her tenacity, self-assertion, independence, and her resolve to succeed." And, later on, we find out that "women who succeed in business can be recognized by their demeanor and their speaking and acting manners. They have the appearance of a self-accomplished woman" ("Femeia de afaceri"). Entrepreneurship becomes a physical characteristic, imprinted on women's bodies and visible in their socialization, a healthy condition defined against the pathology of the migrant who works for wages abroad. The mother and the businesswoman converge to produce the feminine counterpart of the male entrepreneur. In stark opposition to visuals and shots of trafficked women – the latter shown behind bars, injured at the hands of trafficking, crying and begging for their lives - - the businesswoman is depicted in executive suits and at work in small local offices, always smiling and relaxed. Embracing an essentialist understanding of gender, the producers unwittingly recoup the neoliberal rhetoric on women's labor. Because of their natural skills, patience, and nimble fingers, one reporter argues, knitting is a feminine

occupation and only women can and should turn it into a source of profit.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars of liberalism and neoliberalism, from Aihwa Ong to Nikolas Rose, have exposed the ways in which neoliberal government is defined by the turn to entrepreneurialism and management. Rose, for example, argues that in neoliberalism (what he calls advanced liberalism), freedom and choice become ways of governing. Neoliberal rule seeks to “degovernmentalize the State” by de-linking the authority of expertise from state institutions and linking authority to a “market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand” (Rose, *Powers of 41*). Under these circumstances, citizens themselves are no longer understood primarily as citizens of a social community, but as “individual citizens,” as “subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfillment,” even as freedom and choice are shaped and regulated by a variety of invisible factors (41). Entrepreneurialism becomes in this context the free-market opportunity that defines the neoliberal self-accomplished subject. Yet what my research shows is that, some individual choices are still constructed in nationalist terms and that gender plays a central role in defining the types of entrepreneurial opportunities envisioned. As the documentaries above suggest, women’s entrepreneurial activities are defined as small-scale and always linked to nationalist local

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<sup>18</sup> See “Femeia de afaceri” (“The Business Woman”). This economic gendered discourse is not far removed from the rhetoric mobilized by the communist regime in the region before 1989. Women’s emancipation during communism gave rise to the figure of the working mother, the woman who, while still working side by side in building socialism, had to fulfill her duty as mother and housekeeper. Some western feminist scholars refer to this as the “double burden” of women in the former communist countries of East Central Europe. This is a problematic understanding of Eastern European feminisms that erases multiple forms of gender discrimination and exploitation in capitalism. The documentary in case leaves intact the problematic conflation of the woman with the traditional nuclear family, a move strikingly at odds with Winrock’s overall scope of promoting “new perspective for women.”



goals of bolstering the nuclear family. Women's entrepreneurial success is defined locally. Their transnational mobility is discouraged as damaging to their native country, leading to decrease in natality rates and to the reduction of national labor force. If the Moldovan woman is the emerging neoliberal entrepreneurial subject, she is a local version of her global multinational, mostly male, counterparts. The freedom of the market conceals deep divisions alongside gender, race, and class lines. Most significantly, the entrepreneurial neoliberal citizen, while replacing the traditional liberal subject, preserves the internal incoherence of the former socio-political construct.

In *Destinies and Destinations*, anti-trafficking humanitarianism takes shape at the intersection of discourses on gender equality and business management. The language of sentimentalism and compassion, at the core of most anti-trafficking cultural works, disappears here only to be replaced by the didactic discourse of business expertise. In this sense, *Destinies and Destinations* has much in common with the anti-trafficking manuals of the following chapter as they instruct and produce knowledge about migrant women. In their instructional form and scope, they perform humanitarian care as indispensable to women's emancipation even as they redefine humanitarianism as inextricably linked to business expertise. The film engages directly women as agents -- albeit at risk and threatened by trafficking groups -- and as prospective local entrepreneurs. At the same time, the producers depart from the law enforcement paradigm that dominates most anti-trafficking discourses, while still remaining squarely within a neoliberal understanding of social justice and reform. They envision the trafficked woman and the woman at risk as prospective entrepreneurial subjects within a political economic environment ruled by market competition and investment. If the trafficked woman in law enforcement

discourses is the victim in need of protection, even at the cost of her liberties, the entrepreneurial woman of *Destinies and Destinations* is the subject that organizes her life in terms of cost and profit, always attuned to the works of the market. In that sense, Winrock and the documentaries it produces promote women's prevention rather than protection, with prevention envisioned as acquirement of business skills.

In addition, as mentioned briefly, the films express the very paradox of today's neoliberal socio-economic agenda whereby the ideal of entrepreneurialism does not supersede traditional gender roles but reinforces them. The gender politics of the films, and, in effect, of the entire USAID anti-trafficking project *New Perspectives for Women*, is clear in this sense: women's roles as mothers should be central to any anti-trafficking and gender developmental programs. In *Destinies and Destinations*, a plethora of cultural symbols, commentaries, and camera frames identify women repeatedly with the nation, the land, and with small rural communities. The figure of the child -- the future of the nation (fragile in its youth and dependent on the nurturing qualities of the mother-entrepreneur) -- adds to the heteronormative message of the documentaries. In the episode "Femeia de afaceri" ("The Business Woman"), after praising the social status of the businesswoman, the voice-over adds that, "a woman is truly successful only when she can combine her business status with her motherhood. A woman can be a business lady, can take care of her family and be a good mother." The episode then unfolds to tell the happy story of a mother and business woman, Oxana, who expresses her resolution to stay in her country and take care of her family. Shots show Oxana in her newly-opened store, while the camera follows her to school where her daughter is waiting for her. "A woman," the voice-over continues, "has the natural resources to achieve everything she

wants in her own country. We can state that soon we will have entire dynasties of female entrepreneurs.”

If anti-trafficking humanitarianism emerges in the documentary as the effect of practical appraisals and calculations of women’s economic possibilities, the visual apparatus of the documentary coheres around affective attachments to a set of values, such as motherhood. Emotions permeate the visual fabric of the documentary: lonely migrants and traumatized trafficked women; distressed children growing up with single parents or grandparents; enthusiastic entrepreneurs; proud volunteers; and people nostalgic for a past where migration was minimal. Emotionally charged visuals, such as black-and-white shots of trains leaving the station, become metonyms for immigrants’ displacement, loneliness, and alienation. In “Work Abroad,” the medium-long shot of a train departing the station adds to the emotional intensity of the message, preceded as it is by close-ups of people waving good-bye and parting with dear ones. Filmic cuts also produce emotional juxtapositions. The same episode “Work Abroad” begins by juxtaposing archival footage from communist propaganda (picturesque natural landscapes, rustic places, and plants bustling with workers) with present-day crowded railway stations, points of departure for migrants. The dialectical juxtaposition of the two sets of shots splits the narrative of the film spatially and temporally: a moment of “then” versus the “now” of the present, a national space of past security side by side with the vacuum surrounding the contemporary nation-state. While rejecting the communist utopia, the film retains and transforms the nationalist message of communism, a reflection of the ways in which the nationalist project spans different political ideologies.

This dialectics dissolves within the frame of the camera shot, pointing towards the triumph of neoliberal capitalism.

*Destinies and Destinations* designs ways to fight the traffic in women from within the professionalized realm of the non-profit sector even as it envisions entrepreneurialism as the means to stop women's migration and combat trafficking. The television series documents both the work of the non-profit in implementing services and the effects these activities have on women's lives. Alternating between voice-overs, interviews with service providers, and victims' testimonials, the films incorporate the alleged victims of trafficking within the extensive networks of non-profits, volunteering societies, state institutions, and, last but not least media forums. Especially, in their reflection on the role of the media in combating women's trafficking, the producers foreground their own role in anti-trafficking activism. The reflexive mode works to legitimate and authenticate the films' particular approach to trafficking. This self-referentiality transforms the filming process itself into an act of documenting and interpreting the social transition in Moldova.



4.2 Still from "Work Abroad," train leaving the station, *Destinies and Destinations*

## Documentary Practices of Trafficking

The television series *Destinies and Destinations*, together with the gender development projects put forward by Winrock International, are significant as cultural and historical documents since they offer a window into the so-called transitional moment in Moldova and the forms anti-trafficking interventions envisioned by U.S. nonprofits. At the same time, the films also reflect the emergence of new modalities of gender justice, informed by the logic of neoliberal capitalism. They record changes in women's lives, document political economic transformations, and offer solutions to the violence of trafficking. The films are social projects that produce expertise about women's lives in postsocialism and intervene to prevent the violence of trafficking. Yet, most significantly perhaps, the documentary series represent what Arturo Escobar, the famous critic of international developmental policies, called "documentary practices," that is, those developmental discourses that do not only record the social but also produce and disseminate new meanings and understandings of the social. According to Escobar, an efficient appraisal of development should begin with a critical look at the discursive construction of the developmental apparatus itself. "Turning the apparatus itself into an anthropological object," Escobar posits, "presupposes both an analysis of the documentary practices of the institutions in case (promotional brochures, records, annual reports, websites) and an understanding of the effects that such textual representations have on people's conceptions and lives" (107). In line with Escobar's enjoyment, part of my own goal in this chapter has been to turn the visual apparatus of these documentaries into an object of interrogation and critical inquiry.

The documentary practices under examination here construe post-communist

sociality as a violently gendered process, with the traffic in women as the epitome of this transitional violence. Accordingly, the films design and promote new approaches to anti-trafficking activism, premised on a neoliberal politics of gender justice whereby entrepreneurialism and markets provide the peaceful solutions to the post-communist turmoil of trafficking. As shown, the ideal subject that emerges from these cinematic documentations is the entrepreneurial woman whose own freedom and independence rest on her acquisition of managerial skills. The documentaries, then, do not only inform the public about the risks of trafficking and migration, but they actually produce and mold new civic subjectivities and modalities of gender: the flexible, business-savvy, perseverant woman-citizen. In the process, the films create a new social hierarchy based on managerial and entrepreneurial skills, while promoting social interactions premised on a business code.

Sharing its etymological roots with the noun “document,” the documentary has been perceived, at least in its early beginnings, as the genre of observation, fact-recording, and of education. Not surprisingly, the genre of the documentary has been mobilized in colonial projects and later on as state propaganda in post-war developmental projects to record life in the colonies and justify colonial intervention and western developmental programs.<sup>19</sup> Emphasizing both the ideal of instruction (from the Lat. *docere*: to teach) and the concept of proof or evidence (a meaning derived from Middle French), the act of documenting with a camera can be best described as “a practice of knowledge” (Kahana 317). In his account of the etymology and conceptual history of the

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<sup>19</sup> In *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (2008), Peter J Bloom offers an insightful history of French documentaries in the inter-war years, discussing their role in legitimizing colonial occupation.

documentary, Philip Rosen contends that,

In the evolution of the idea of document, the connection of authenticity and authority goes beyond etymological kinship. The authority of documenting was first drawn from the power implicit in its denotations, that is, warning, admonishing, or teaching; it then became an evidentiary element in an argument or rhetoric; and currently, within a semantic history that seems linked to film, this authority can exceed even its mode of inscription, as a claim that achieves the authority of the real itself. (67)

Steeped in such semantic and visual histories, the documentary has proven to be the best medium for both nationalist propaganda and radical critiques. In both cases, the documentary has functioned as the tool for producing identification with the nation, class constituencies, or popular movements (Kahana 37). The institutional authority of the non-profit sector (associated with the act of educating and aiding) and the transparency said to characterize the aesthetics of the classic social documentary merge to produce the films discussed here as a sign of political economic transformation, that is, as the medium that both enables and reflects change. The aesthetics of documentation in the case of *Destinies and Destinations* promises to bring about the materiality of a new form of postsocialist neoliberal government. As documentary practices invested with the authority and cultural capital of the non-profit system, the Winrock films seek to transform sociality at the same time that they make the alleged transparent process of film documentation central to the postsocialist society.<sup>20</sup>

As filmic documents that record the violence of migration and advocate for

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<sup>20</sup> In his examination of the New Deal social documentary, Jonathan Kahana argues that the social documentaries at the time represented a mode of governing through the abstraction of visuals and sounds. The state-funded documentaries, Kahana believes, aimed to rethink and reconfigure the U.S. public sphere and to bring into being the collective subject of the U.S. nation-state. The classic documentary genre studied by Kahana proffers more than instructions. It becomes instead a link between state institutions and the public.

neoliberal change, *Destinies and Destinations* also creates archives of the present. The films function at two levels: to capture the present as an actuality that needs experts' intervention and to construe this actuality as a series of dynamic changes ushering in the neoliberal society. One episode begins with the voice-over summing up the role and scope of the films:

Throughout these years, under the name of *Destinies and Destination*, we have tackled multiple social aspects such as migration, human trafficking, gender justice, and many other social phenomena defining the Moldovan society at the beginning of this millennium. In the same spirit, we brought you solutions, new perspectives and opportunities for those in difficulty, or for those wrestling with the decision to immigrate or not.<sup>21</sup>

In their role as documents of the present, the films adopt expert authority to produce knowledge and envision interventions. Most significantly, however, they become themselves reflections on the role of the media in the transition to the neoliberal political economy. In the above statement, the "we" identifying the narrator and film producers sets itself in opposition to the "Moldovan society" for which solutions and new perspectives are envisioned. At the same time, the "we" also marks a broader collectivity --of journalists, filmmakers, and mass media producers -- called upon to shape, guide, and record the transformations of the new millennium. This self-referential relationship of the filmic medium with its audiences turns the purely instructional role of *Destinies and Destinations* into an aesthetic project. This aesthetic and political project of documentation relies for its cohesion on the phenomenon known as the traffic in women. Indeed, central to the authority of these documentary practices is the violent figure of the trafficked woman. The camera-led regime of documentation coalesces around the figures

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<sup>21</sup> Translated from Romanian, from "Migratia si impactul ei asupra familiei," *Destinies and Destinations* (The Impact of Migration on the Family Structure).



of the woman at risk and the “trafficked victim,” defined now in relation to the preventive functions of the markets and the psychotherapeutic rehabilitation industry. The films present the traffic in women as the identifying factor of the transition to neoliberal capitalism, as both the effect of this transition and the phenomenon around which disparate transitional elements cohere and become meaningful. The transformational promise of the documentary genre rests on the continuous reference to trafficking victims and migrant women as a group of subjects whose desires and experiences appear unfit for neoliberal principles of competition and self-responsibility.

As documentary practices, originating from within the professionalized space of non-profits to combat the traffic in women, *Destinies and Destinations* eclipses the power structures that underpin their circulation and educational value. According to Escobar, institutions are significant in shaping the world we live in, especially because of their “bureaucratic and textual mechanisms” that organize and structure the “actuality of a given situation and present it as facts, the way things are” (107). As shown in this chapter, the non-profit sector reflects entrenched power dynamics and advances neoliberal values of justice. Not surprisingly, Escobar alludes to the work of cinema to show how these structuring factors underpinning civil society institutions become invisible:

These structuring procedures must be made invisible for the operation to be successful, in the same way that in cinema all marks of enunciation (the director’s work, the acting, the point of view of the camera, and so on) must be effaced to create the impression of reality that characterizes it (107).

The documentary series discussed here function, then, as social documents that record actuality, produce facts, and conceal the structuring factors of their own existence and

circulation.

The recourse to the documentary as a genre of observation and persuasion and as the medium of transformation brings the abstraction of politics and economics close to the daily lives of each and everyone. Relying on interviews, evidentiary information such as surveys and governmental data, as well as filming techniques like hand-held camera and voice-over narratives, cuts and juxtapositions, the films transform documentation into an aesthetic genre that personalizes politics and makes every viewer responsible for the failure of the social fabric. At the same time, as suggested in this chapter, by giving concrete forms to state abstractions, by offering guidelines and instructions to what appears as the chaos and violence of postsocialism, the films recreate another form of gender government in the name of freedom. They promote a new gender order premised on the neoliberal political economy. The documentary practices of anti-trafficking activism promoted by Winrock enact gender justice as a political and aesthetic process that promises to end in the neoliberal spaces of the market and the civil society. Camera-based documentation becomes the means to achieve gender justice and combat trafficking; it aims to document, advocate, and educate through documentary aesthetics.

## Chapter IV

### Neoliberal Expertise and the Government of Care

A U.S. Department of Defense refresher course on human trafficking begins one of its modules by pointing out to its prospective trainees that, “You have the possibility to create positive change. The following presentation will show you how.” The training modules target U.S. military forces stationed abroad in an attempt to make them aware of human trafficking (and especially the traffic in women) and warn the personnel against patronizing red light districts on penalty of discharge and imprisonment. There is nothing unique about this training document – one of many authored by the U.S. government in the last two decades -- except that the above statement captures well the relationship between knowledge-making and social intervention at the heart of most anti-trafficking manuals. The training in question offers knowledge and, with it, the promise of social change; it promises expertise and the authority that always comes with it. At the same time, it makes instruction a means of shaping individuals’ actions (in this case, the practices of the military personnel). Indeed, the above statement posits a smooth correspondence between what we know and how we act, between professional

knowledge and true impact. It instructs even as it transforms social conduct.

But there is more to this otherwise banal training prompt. A discourse analyst can begin to decipher the network of uneven power relations that undergirds and gives performative force to the above statement. The statement announces and anticipates the voice of state authority. Nicolas Rose calls this web of entangling powers inherent in linguistic acts a “regime of enunciation.” An analysis of the regime of enunciation concerns not the meaning of a word or text but rather the ways in which “a word or a book functions in connection with other things,” as well as “the surfaces, networks, and circuits around which it [the text] flows, the affects and passions that it mobilizes and through which it mobilizes (Rose, *Powers of Freedom* 29).<sup>1</sup> Rose defines expertise as “authority [integral to liberal government] arising out of a claim to a true and positive knowledge of humans, to neutrality, and to efficacy” (“Government, Authority” 284). According to him, in neoliberalism or what he calls “advanced liberalism,” “expertise is detached from the political and bureaucratic apparatus, operating within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability, and consumer demand” (“Government, Authority” 285).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Following Rose, a regime of enunciation is “an agonistic field, traversed by conflicts over who can speak, according to what criteria of truth, from what places, authorized in what ways, through what media machines, utilizing what forms of rhetoric, symbolism, persuasion, sanctions, or seduction” (*Powers of Freedom* 29).

<sup>2</sup> In “Government, Authority, and Expertise in Advanced Liberalism” (1993), Rose discusses differences between “liberal government” and “advanced liberal government.” In the former case, the state invests authority in experts and shapes expert knowledge from afar – it rules through expert knowledge and it becomes “dependent upon devices (schooling, the domesticated family, the lunatic asylum, the reformatory prison) that promise to create individuals who . . . will govern themselves, master themselves, care for themselves” (291). By contrast, advanced liberalism disarticulates state authority from expertise, while “the relations between citizens and experts are not organized and regulated through compulsion but through acts of choice.” (296). Chico’s manual on

This meditation on knowledge and power is appropriate for opening this chapter whose goal is precisely that of examining the rhetoric and power relations that enable and are in turn enabled by anti-trafficking instructional discourses. This chapter is thus an analysis of the educational genre itself, but it is also an attempt to understand the ways in which different types of expertise come together in training literature to produce a professional regime of enunciation about human trafficking. If my earlier chapters showed how photojournalism and popular culture in general contribute to and indeed produce knowledge about human trafficking in the form of what I call “humanitarian entertainment,” this chapter has as its focus the types of knowledge constituted and circulated through anti-trafficking training literature. Designed to educate not only those directly implicated in the anti-trafficking fight – from service providers, social workers and medical providers to law enforcement and investigative journalists – but also the public at large, these manuals have become crucial in mainstreaming knowledge about trafficking and shaping anti-trafficking interventions. Anti-trafficking manuals are particularly interesting documents in their educational function and their conversion of sociological, medical, and legal knowledge into instructions to be redeployed on the ground. In the process, training materials produce expertise about trafficking, that is, they carve out a field that takes undocumented immigrants and trafficking networks as objects of inquiry.

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*Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* reflects this types of neoliberal expertise in its direct appeal to anti-trafficking agencies as “consumers” and its non-governmental authority. For more on the transformations of the liberal state and its branching out into multiple and differentiated technologies of government, see Aihwa Ong’s *Neoliberalism as Exception* (2006). In *The Birth of Biopolitics* (reprint, 2010), Foucault also discusses the neoliberal state and the diversification and invention of new forms of government such as the civil society. Also, see Rose (1999), among many others.

My specific focus will be on the “expert authority” of two anti-trafficking manuals. The *Best Practice: Law Enforcement Manual for Fighting against Trafficking of Human Beings* (2003) is a law enforcement training manual published with financial support from U.S.AID and developed as a result of a joint project between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).<sup>3</sup> The manual, consisting of the Trainer’s and User’s books, was officially launched in 2003 at Vienna as part of a Comprehensive Anti-trafficking Training Strategy for South-East Europe. *Best Practice* is an investigative guide written originally in English and, subsequently translated into thirteen Southeast European languages.<sup>4</sup> According to Rodger Garner, the USAID mission director for Romania and Soknan Han Jung, Romania’s UNDP representative, the manual aims to present best strategies to combat human trafficking, while its main focus is on “the security and welfare of the victims of trafficking” and its commitment to a “‘victim first’ human rights philosophy” (Introduction XI).

The second manual examined in this chapter, Laura Shipler Chico’s *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking: Multicultural Case Studies* (2009), is a training guide for service providers produced under the auspices of the U.S. non-profit National MultiCultural Institute (NMCI). *Assisting Survivors* is typical of a multitude of training documents whose explicitly stated concern is the well-being and rehabilitation of

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<sup>3</sup> ICMPD is an international organization, headquartered in Vienna and made up of twelve European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. The group seeks to collaborate on immigration policies and border control.

<sup>4</sup> The beneficiary countries of the project are Albania, Bosnia - Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia - Montenegro (including UN Administered Territory of Kosovo), FYR of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine.

survivors of trafficking.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is also highly atypical in that, rather than emphasizing the usual techniques of rehabilitation, *Assisting Survivors* foregrounds cultural competence, and more precisely *multicultural* competence, as key to survivors' recovery. Therefore, the manual is a how-to guide for service providers, law enforcement, and all others who "may come into direct contact with survivors of trafficking, and it also claims to target professionals who work in the realm of "anti-trafficking research, policy analysis, and political advocacy" (2). *Assisting Survivors* aims to instruct these providers about cultural diversity and difference (and the attending "cultural shock" phenomenon that may mark migrant women's arrival to a new culture), as well as the setbacks that can ensue from mundane culture-based misunderstandings.

The two manuals are strikingly different in their scope and their target readership. Yet, when brought together, they enable a productive examination of the two theoretical extremes that frame anti-trafficking approaches and have become institutionalized in the United States: the penal system of law enforcement and crime control, on the one hand, and the culture of humanitarianism with the idealized victim as its main object of investigation, on the other hand. In the former case, criminal investigative expertise provides the epistemological foundation that constitutes a transnational community of police forces; in the latter situation, cultural expertise is key to envisioning a multicultural collective of rescued victims. Both manuals, however, presuppose a homogeneous category of traumatized subjects (both retrospectively constituted and projected into the

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, The Salvation Army's *Recognizing and Serving Victims of Human Trafficking* (2006); the handbook for domestic and sexual violence advocates entitled *Handbook on Human Trafficking* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2004); *Understanding Victims' Mindsets*, published by the Department of Health and Human Resources; and *South Asian Resource Book on Livelihood Options for Survivors of Trafficking and Other Forms of Violence* (2009).

future as subjects of rights) and posit narratives of causality (between women's sexuality and gender vulnerability, between poverty and human trafficking).

I chose these two manuals because of their origin in different sources of authority: *Best Practices* comes from law enforcement and takes the law as its point of reference; Chico's book is produced by a nonprofit and references multiculturalism as an appropriate anti-trafficking resource. My reading of these two training materials foregrounds the social and institutional forces that enable the production and circulation of knowledge about the trafficking in women within and across national boundaries. The manuals rely on and forge "disciplinary connectivities," a phrase I use to designate the transnational web of connections established among various types of expertise (legal, social work, cultural competence, criminal investigation), institutional authorities (the U.S. state, USAID, UNDP, and Southeast European legal forces), and various social actors that come together to produce the manual. I intend both to flesh out discursive formations mobilized, put to work, and constituted in such instructional guides as well as to trace disciplinary connectivities that training discourses make possible as they emerge and circulate across juridical and humanitarian traditions.<sup>6</sup> A close reading of these two anti-trafficking manuals suggests a proliferation of services, transnational institutions and

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<sup>6</sup> My use of *disciplinary connectivities* brings together Michel Foucault's understanding of disciplinary power, as power that works through social and scientific discourses to guide the behavior of a population, and Inderpal Grewal's definition of transnational connectivities as diverse transnational networks and connections (juridical, cultural, and humanitarian) that, in turn, constitute "subjects, technologies, and ethical practices" (3). Grewal, for instance, examines various transnational cultural practices and entities (such as Hollywood) that produce the American dream as a transnational ideal, which in turn inspires a wide array of migrant subjectivities and practices. The concept of *disciplinary connectivities* refers to those transnational practices that engender new and hybrid subjectivities. In the case of these manuals, gender is central to the articulation of connectivities among a variety of international institutions.



social actors that emerge alongside the state and that act both on behalf of the state but also outside its perimeter. At the same time, however, in an age celebrated for its advance beyond the nation-state, these manuals betray a deep statist investment in the daily lives of those citizens signaled out by their gender, social status, and race.

Finally, a caveat: I do not suggest a complete and simple correspondence between the discursive realm of such manuals and the actual implementation of their instructions and guidelines.<sup>7</sup> However, a look at guidelines and instructions reveal dominant assumptions about sex trafficking, the role of the law, and the identity of victims. Training manuals are but one form of governmental and non-governmental discursive practices that work to constitute the crime of sex trafficking in its current shape and form, as well as imagine types of interventions against it. As such, instructional discourses can shed light on the ways in which various U.S. state and non-state institutions and juridical actors interpret social problems and envision optimal interventions into the field of the social. By examining such discourses we can begin to understand the logic that underlines anti-trafficking interventions, humanitarianism, and ultimately the rhetorical force of instructional genres.

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<sup>7</sup> Many times, manual writers claim the successful translation of the manuals' guidelines into anti-trafficking interventions and credit manuals for effective anti-trafficking campaigns. For instance, the USAID-UNDP *Best Practice Law Enforcement Manual* (2003) has been hailed by authors and contributors as the legal tool that has guaranteed subsequent trafficking prosecutions, among which the famous Romanian-Turkish police operation, dubbed Flash Hotel after a brothel in Istanbul:

The tips and techniques described in *The Best Practice: Law Enforcement Manual for Fighting Against Trafficking in Human Beings* enabled the Romanian law enforcement officers investigating and prosecuting the Flash Hotel crime to build an effective case against the suspects, resulting in justice being done and the liberation of the victims. (Anti-trafficking Manual Gives Romanian and Turkish Police Ammunition to Catch and Prosecute Offenders")

## On Anti-Trafficking Instructional Discourses

Feminist and legal scholars have investigated anti-trafficking campaigns from the perspective of popular culture productions and in terms of national and international anti-trafficking legislative texts, providing invaluable critiques of dominant anti-trafficking discourses in the U.S. and abroad.<sup>8</sup> For example, feminist scholars have offered ingenious readings of U.S. anti-trafficking laws and statutes in order to point out the punitive aspect of U.S. and UN anti-trafficking interventions, premised as they are on crime control and law enforcement. Nandita Sharma argues that anti-trafficking discourses play right into states' anti-immigration rhetoric, offering national justifications for tight border controls. Samarajit Jana also examines anti-trafficking discourses in order to point out the global commitment to law enforcement. Similarly, a report drafted by the anti-trafficking NGO Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) assesses legal efforts by five governments, including the U.S., only to conclude that “the priority for governments around the world in their efforts to stop human trafficking has been to arrest, prosecute and punish traffickers, rather than to protect the human rights of people who have been trafficked” (Global Alliance 1).

The growing scholarship on trafficking notwithstanding, to date no scholar has endeavored an analysis of anti-trafficking manuals, instructional brochures, and textbooks. Instead, the focus, when not on popular culture, has been on legislative interventions as suggested above, in a theoretical move that makes the law and rights discourses in general central to any understanding of anti-trafficking approaches. Yet this

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<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Sealing Cheng on investigative journalism (2005), Gretchen Soderlund on media accounts of trafficking (2005); Kay Warren (2007) on the UN Protocol; and Anna Carline and Zoe Pearson (2007) on anti-trafficking international law.

theoretical trend ignores the significance of anti-trafficking manuals as knowledge-making documents and as important cultural resources that can offer insights into modes of discursive intervention that are only tangential to the legislative and popular fields. Even when instructional materials originate with some legal state institutions (as they often do), the type and form of discourse (educational and instructional) reinscribe the injunction of the law into an epistemological context differently located vis-à-vis state and legal discourses. In their investment in knowledge-production, manuals and textbooks index, I contend, connections among “systems of subjugation on the one hand [the law], and the apparatuses of knowledge on the other,” functioning in the liminal space between the two (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 34). It is this peculiar type of instructional discourse that should be examined in its specific emergence, the forms it takes, knowledges it references and constitutes anew, and the discursive practices to which it contributes.

Contemporary instructional discourses are central to modern western societies. Although present during early times in the form of guides of conduct for high royal dignitaries and their heirs, manuals and instructional guides have achieved new fame and popularity during the Enlightenment. Jeremy Daniel Kaye argues that “how-to” manuals are closely related to the advent of modern capitalism. According to Kaye, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century United States, manuals offer guidelines for success, enabling the formation of the self-made capitalist man. By way of these self-help books (Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* being among the earliest), the modern subject emerges as the self-fashioning responsible citizen. According to Slavoj Žižek, the modern individual “experiences himself as a universal agent” who relies on “how-to-do-it

manuals” even “in his most spontaneous activities” (Kaye 7).<sup>9</sup> Contemporary manuals for entrepreneurs and managers originate in these earlier versions of self-help manuals, with the responsible citizen replaced by the flexible and cosmopolitan entrepreneur. In her analysis of global management manuals, Susan Roberts argues that management manuals represent, at a discursive level, technologies of power. Such manuals are part of a neoliberal practice that restructure the global as “the domain of capital, in a simplified representation of the world that seems to cast most persons, places, and institutions into unambiguous and largely reactive roles” (3). Roberts theorizes such management manuals as part and parcel of the neoliberal market-based economy that also gives rise to the field of *global strategic management*. Similarly, Aihwa Ong and Nigel Thrift have looked at training literature to find the ways in which neoliberal civic ethics circulates transnationally. According to Ong, the neoliberal values of freedom, neoliberal market rationality, and self-possessive individualism travel globally through management manuals even as such neoliberal prescriptions meet resistance and find themselves transformed by local practices. These studies, among others, elicit ways in which the self has been the focus of an entire literature of government and management throughout modernity. The anti-trafficking manuals examined in this chapter are themselves part of this modern self-help tradition, I argue. Such manuals are not only central to anti-trafficking activism, but, just like the “how to” books depicted above, they also aim to sketch out guidelines of conduct and intervention for police forces and anti-trafficking activists. At the same time, these manuals also enable the rise of a penal-humanitarian discourse on trafficking victims and perpetrators.

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<sup>9</sup> Notably, just as in early periods, the capitalist subject envisioned by self-help books at the beginning is the white man.

“How-to” anti-trafficking books are integral to a broad discursive formation that constitutes human trafficking as an object of research and modern expertise. In their instructional form, they bring together a community of professionals and students, transforming in the process largely heterogeneous anti-trafficking interventions into a field of knowledge unified around certain presuppositions, norms, regulations, and strategies of intervention. Instructional discourses compete, collide, and relate with other public narratives about human trafficking, but their centrality in the anti-trafficking community rests on their peculiar relationship with the social sciences and, more generally, on their pedagogical value. They draw on a set of knowledges only to produce an epistemology whose truth-value is given by multiple discursive practices, institutional authority, and empirical data. As the authors of the USAID-UNDP’s *Best Practice* manual make clear, the manual was “developed in cooperation with 13 countries in the region,” and “it incorporates the knowledge of top world experts on anti-trafficking” (Holmes, *User’s Manual*).

The political and cultural import of these documents stems from the long tradition of instructional and educational books, coupled with their practical, realist, and clearly defined objectives and recommendations. Anti-trafficking instructional discourses produce knowledge and, as Foucault advised, any form of knowledge can become connected to power and when it is so, it “not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true” (*Discipline and Punishment* 27). To produce knowledge about human trafficking, anti-trafficking manuals draw on long-held assumptions about migration, women’s sexuality, and gender vulnerabilities, as well as national/territorial insecurities in the face of market liberalization and mass migration. In

the process, training materials produce a series of classifications and causal relationships between geopolitical locations, poverty, migration, and sexual vulnerabilities. For instance, a training brochure for health care providers authored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, advises doctors and nurses about the typical “victim of trafficking.” “Victims of trafficking,” health care providers are told, bear physical and psychological marks such as “bruises, marks, or other signs of physical abuse and torture”; they show signs of “substance abuse or addictions” and suffer from “psychological trauma, including depression, stress-related disorders, disorientation, confusion, phobias, and panic attacks” (*Look Beneath the Surface*). Another instructional brochure published by the non-profit Vital Voices identifies the victim as a person that shows “evidence of being controlled”; lacks “identification such as passport or visa”; he/she does not speak English; and he/she is characterized by “an inability to move or leave a job.” In general, a particular type of gendered subject, always at risk and the effect of traumatic migrational experiences, underpins the educational literature on trafficking. Simultaneously, at the opposite pole, the trafficker, usually thought of as male, emerges as the origin of violence and local/global insecurity.

This type of knowledge about ideal victims, traffickers, and trafficking situations, transcribed in manuals as instructions and recommendations, also frames anti-trafficking interventions on the ground. In turn, instructional knowledge gains public validity precisely because of its alleged reliance on field research and empirical data. Thus, in their positivism, manuals gain disciplinary leverage. They establish taxonomies that enable public and legal interventions in certain migrational practices, while obscuring other experiences as outside legal and humanitarian care. For instance, all manuals make

the distinction between human trafficking and smuggling, the latter seen as an illegal activity that should render undocumented migrants' transgression punishable. "It is vitally important for the reader to be able to make the distinction between trafficking in human beings and people smuggling," the authors of the Best Practice insist in the introduction to the manual (XI). In addition, undocumented migrants are considered criminals unless they can prove they have been victims of trafficking. Similarly, the traffic in women occupies center stage in the training literature, with labor exploitation but seldom mentioned despite its prevalence. Consequently, in its endorsement of some migrational practices and subjects only, the educational literature on human trafficking gives legitimacy to a wide range of juridical interventions against those migrants who do not qualify as trafficked, and helps to produce an ethical area of humanitarian concern for those who fit the paradigm of victimhood, usually young women and children in the sex industry. In addition, enforced distinctions between trafficking and smuggling dovetail with the broader emphasis on policing and banning migrants' mobility rather than on ensuring their rights and protection.

Authored by legal and medical experts, service providers, and social workers, the "how-to" of anti-trafficking manuals gains normative power precisely because of this disciplinary legacy, transforming specialized knowledges into practical information. For example, Chico's *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* draws on theories of cultural competence, studies by social workers on victim assistance, human resources management, and even structural analyses of drama. The manual transforms these distinct types of expertise into simplified bullet-point documents about the best strategies for assisting victims of human trafficking. Moreover, the impetus to investigate and protect

women's sexuality becomes central to the consolidation of an educational transnational community comprised of lawmakers, service providers, psychotherapists, health care providers, and a variety of activists. Thus, instructional discourses on the prevention of human trafficking surface from within an entanglement of diverse institutional discourses: state anxiety over territorial security and border enforcement, service providers' guidelines on victim protection, psychotherapists' prescriptions on trauma management, law enforcement concern with apprehension, and, last but not least, victims' own contradictory testimonials offered as case studies. The variety of discourses comes together to give coherence to victims' stories and insert them into a larger developmental narrative of rescue and rehabilitation.

Cohesion is the main element in such narratives; contradictions, irregularities, and inconsistencies are expurgated, smoothed over to fit the educational goals of the materials. Such inconsistencies emerge in instructional narratives only to be explained away through rationalizations offered by psychotherapeutic or other medical disciplines. One particular example is the convergence of multiple disciplinary discourses to explain the disjunction between dominant trafficking narratives and victims' own testimonials. Most training manuals warn trainees about victims' contradictory confessions as well as their refusal to cooperate and acknowledge their exploitation. According to the instructions for health care providers, published by the Department of Health and Human Services,

Many victims do not self-identify as victims. They also do not see themselves as people who are homeless or drug addicts who rely on shelters or assistance. [Although they may suffer exploitation] victims may not appear to need social services because they have a place to live, food to eat, medical care and what they think is a paying job. ("The Mindset of a Human Trafficking Victim")



Despite this, the document instructs, providers should “look beneath the surface,” and understand that this refusal is part of a “victim’s mindset.” During an anti-trafficking training session I attended at an NGO headquarters in New York City in December 2009, one of our trainers that day explained to us that many victims of trafficking do not recognize their situation as a case of human trafficking. According to her, less than one percent of their clients identify as “trafficked.” Such misidentifications, the trainer advised us, spring directly from subjects’ traumatic experiences that lead to amnesia and time distortions. Sometimes this inconsistency is attributed to survivors’ lack of knowledge about the human trafficking phenomenon. Whether migrants refuse the label because of trauma or because of the label’s discursive paucity and inability to capture their experiences is less significant. What is important for the purpose of the present analysis is the wide network of disciplines that shapes the contemporary phenomenon known as sex trafficking and that, within the discursive space of the manuals, helps to synchronize divergent stories of migration with the disciplinary narratives of psychiatry and trauma-management, enabling the constitution of the subject-victim of sex trafficking. In fact, like in many other humanitarian situations, trauma becomes the medical and humanitarian narrative that ensures the manuals’ cohesiveness and efficiently obscures survivors’ voices, desires, and intentions. The instructors’ endeavor to create a coherent public discourse on the traffic in women is further reflected in the gendering process at the core of these manuals. In their construction of victims as mostly female and traffickers as always male, the manuals legitimate penal interventions to

punish male perpetrators in the name of women's sexual vulnerability.<sup>10</sup>

On a macro level, the manuals' location within a larger discursive tradition of professional documents aimed at teaching, regulating, and guiding the conduct of individuals (what Michel Foucault called government or the "conduct of conduct") wins them special public legitimacy. As genres of training and instruction, manuals occupy a prominent place in western liberal societies. They possess authority and have legitimacy by virtue of their classification and association with a set of expert discourses that, in their educational positivist function, cannot be wrong or duplicitous. Written as injunctions against crimes and guidelines promising to usher in a world without crimes, anti-trafficking manuals have the authority that educational materials always have, that of instructing, setting up norms, and offering solutions, all in the exact language of empiricism. At the same time, it is their capacity to be reused, recirculated and resignified, that gives anti-trafficking manuals their cultural value and promises their success. This is evident in the ways in which a particular manual, once written for a particular institutional agenda or community, travels across space and sometimes time only to be adapted and reused. *The South Asian Resource Book* produced by the South Asian Regional Initiative, with USAID funding, is but one example of the citationality of instructional discourses. The resource book aims to offer practical entrepreneurial solutions for survivors of trafficking. Although produced originally with a specific population and geographical area in mind (South Asia), the book, according to the

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<sup>10</sup> As I have shown in my other chapters (see especially the Introduction), the trafficked woman is one of the many sexualized female figures that emerge at various times in history to signify social crises. One of these female figures – a protagonist in social discourses of sexual danger and impurity as well as a predecessor of today's trafficked woman-- is the white sex slave of the early twentieth century.

USAID office in Washington DC, proved so successful that it became quickly an instructional guide for the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) (“Case Study”). The manual’s own recommendations establishes and encourages their resignification:

With appropriate modifications and adaptations, [the resource book] could be used as a guide for organizations, government units, and corporate businesses who assist survivors in their rehabilitation and reintegration. (*South Asian Resource Book 1*)

In their national and transnational circulation, anti-trafficking instructional discourses make possible disciplinary connectivities among diverse governmental and non-governmental anti-trafficking organizations, institutional and disciplinary discourses, and national legal systems. They operate as “translators” among various institutions, organizations, and service providers. To be sure, norms, classifications, and regulations gain meaning and political force in a society only through a process of what Rose calls “translation” that enables connections between the objectives of state authorities and the multitude of groups, organizations, and individuals that are the subjects of government (Rose, *Powers of Freedom* 48). Translation is precisely what happens when, for instance, state discourses on human trafficking become integrated in manuals and even transformed by the expert discourses of NGOs, international organizations, social providers, doctors, and what can be generally termed humanitarians. At other times, experts’ discourses become “translated” for the public at large in some training manuals. Translation processes are integral to neoliberal rule and they rely on expertise as the force that aligns “political aims and strategies of experts (Rose, *The Powers of Freedom* 49).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rose points out that translation processes rarely “operate without disruption.” Yet, when they do, “the autonomy of the subjects and targets of government is not a threat: autonomy can be allied with, and aligned with, such objectives as economic success,

Instructional discourses are part of this process of social translation and, through the translation of expertise, they forge communities of educators and specialists who in turn ensure the implementation of training strategies and recommendations.

#### Transnational Best Practices of Law Enforcement

“Trafficking in human beings represents a multi-faceted challenge,” begins the anti-trafficking manual *Best Practice: Law Enforcement Manual for Fighting against Trafficking of Human Beings* (2003). Its authors explain that, “profits from human trafficking, drug smuggling, and other criminal activities fuel the underground economy, contribute to the spread of corruption, undermine law and order, and may finance international terrorism.” Also referred to as the *Regional Anti-Trafficking Best Practice Manual*, *Best Practice* is funded by U.S.AID (the Europe and Eurasia office) and developed through collaboration and cooperation between USAID Romania, UNDP teams, and thirteen countries in the region.<sup>12</sup> Foregrounding teaching and training, *Best Practice* aims to educate law enforcement officers about how to “handle victims’ special needs and deal with [victims] sensitively,” as well as provide victims with appropriate support (“Anti-trafficking Manual”). The manual consists of the Trainer’s and User’s books, each divided in three main parts: the “Best Practice” part consisting of seven sections; Legislative Compendium, a review of major national and international anti-trafficking legislation, consisting of two sections; and the Contact Directory, a country-

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national population policy, conceptions of the desirability of education and training and the like” (50). The proliferation of anti-trafficking experts, many of them aligned with state interests, proves Rose’s point about liberal and neoliberal rule.

<sup>12</sup> The manual originated in the USAID-funded Project ROM/01/009 carried out between November 2001 and January 2004.

by-country contact directory of law enforcement and partnering agencies (Introduction VIII). *Best Practice* is, to cite Annelise Riles's definition of documents, "an artifact of modern knowledge." Like most forms of modern knowledge, the manual stems from a specialized field of institutional bureaucracy (the penal system and developmental agencies), originates in particular authorial figures, and embodies a form of power. Referred to as "a Bible for police officers" and "a state-of-the-art tool," *Best Practice* distinguishes itself, in its educational role, as a pragmatic and targeted positivist approach to human trafficking ("Minutes"). Its knowledge has been successfully incorporated into anti-trafficking interventions and practices, as suggested by the already-mentioned Romanian-Turkish anti-trafficking police operation dubbed Flash Hotel.

In preparation for the manual, questionnaires were distributed to all partnering governments in Southeast Europe to obtain information about local legislative practices and about local histories of anti-trafficking interventions. For effective and accurate information questions were disseminated via nongovernmental groups, nonprofits, and governmental organizations. Subsequent to the manual's drafting, representatives from USAID Romania, the U.S. Embassy, and from UNDP Romania, as well as prosecutors, immigration and human resources officials from various Southeast European countries, gathered in Sinaia, Romania to discuss the implementation of the manual and other related issues of police training. During the meeting, representatives decided to integrate the manual as obligatory training for the police throughout Southeast Europe ("Minutes"). In addition, the manual's writers agreed that,

the Manual should provide that information needed to facilitate the cooperation at national and regional levels for (1) better victim treatment and (2) better action against traffickers. It was also agreed that under no circumstances should this Manual be transformed into a report on the

existing situation in the beneficiary countries. Instead, *the Manual should become a powerful tool in the hand of practitioners.* (Introduction VIII, emphasis mine)<sup>13</sup>

The instructional discourse of the manual targets border police officers, “police units with responsibility for investigating such [human trafficking] crimes (particularly specialized counter-trafficking task forces),” and prosecutors. The manual’s guidelines rely on “what has been proven to work in previous investigations in many other jurisdictions” and comply “with the current international and humanitarian standards applicable to this type of criminal investigation” (Introduction XIII). Despite its stated commitment to humanitarian ethics, the manual provides techniques for exposing and capturing trafficking rings as well as advice for officers and prosecutors about gaining victims’ confidence and collaboration. As Terry Lord, legal advisor at the U.S. embassy in Bucharest, acknowledged at a roundtable discussion on the manual, “From a prosecutor’s the [sic] perspective, the most important thing is to obtain convictions and to use all the available provisions of national legislation to convict and stop the traffickers” (“Minutes”). That the manual is heavily inflected by a penal approach to human trafficking is suggested by the main “experts” who put their signature on its final version: Paul Holmes, an international expert in anti-trafficking police operations and a veteran with the New Scotland Yard police service; Maria Velikonja, an attorney and, at the time, an FBI Supervisory Special Agent and legal advisor to the counterterrorism division, as well as counsel to the FBI Undercover Operations Review Committee; and Maria Magdalena Radulescu, a business manager and human resources trainer, with expertise in

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<sup>13</sup> The questionnaire revolved around aspects of national jurisdiction, the form of the investigative process, the existence of an anti-trafficking task force, and the structure of the prosecutor’s offices in each of the thirteen participant countries.

corporate strategies and human capital management.

The *Best Practice* guide comes on the heels of numerous U.S. governmental and nongovernmental projects in Southeastern Europe to develop civil society and address women's rights and the rights of ethnic minorities in the region. By the time the traffic in women was rising to the status of a crisis that required international attention, the U.S. government, through U.S.AID funding, and a bevy of U.S. non-profits and NGOs had long set up home in the region and authored a variety of programs on gender development. One has only to look at a few examples to get a sense of the typical developmental politics underlining these programs. Governmental and nongovernmental groups, private foundations, as well as nonprofits, among which Winrock International, the by now defunct American Romanian Partnership, and the Peace Corps Romania, have all put forward gender development projects in response to what they perceive as the absence of women's rights in the country. For example, the U.S. nonprofit American-Romanian Partnership for Gender Equality, relates the organizers' first impulse to start working on gender equality in Romania:

According to a 2002 United Nations survey, 45 percent of Romanian women have been verbally abused, 30 percent physically abused, and 7 percent sexually abused. . . . Americans visiting Romania in the early 21st century see bright women pursuing advanced degrees and capable women protesting domestic abuse yet in casual conversations hear people say things like: "abused women are asking for it by dressing and acting provocatively." "Homosexuals are freaks who need to keep their disgusting secret to themselves." "It's all right to beat your wife as long as you don't leave any marks."

As the statement above suggests, groups like these view lack of training and gender education as the main problem underlining sexism and homophobia in the region. As such, they proceed to invest in training sessions for the youth, "know your rights"

brochures for women, and other know-how booklets on successful entrepreneurial women. The belief behind these training initiatives is that the region is short on gender activists and especially, when such activists exist, they lack the training and expertise to deal effectively with complicated issues like gender violence and sex trafficking. These programs, then, aim to provide the expertise and put in place a legal and civil system to address these shortcomings. In the same spirit, the American Bar Association launched several training programs on gender development in Southeast Europe, among which a series of round tables in Moldova on domestic violence and a publication of the *Know Your Rights* brochure (2007) for young Moldovan women. Alongside gender development programs, the U.S. government, via agencies like USAID and the American Bar Association (ABA), also invests increasingly in police training in the region.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as Andaluna Borcila and Anca Rosu, among others, have argued and as suggested in the previous chapter, such nongovernmental discourses continue a cold war discourse with little attention to the socio-economic situation of the region and in complete ignorance of local women's movements on the ground. These groups rely on the by now trite East-West dichotomy to justify both western nongovernmental presence in the region and gender violence. According to Alexander Maxwell, the East-West dichotomy, however

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<sup>14</sup> To this date, the U.S. Department of State continues to funnel monies into anti-trafficking educational programs and law enforcement training sessions. Immediately following the end of Cold War, the U.S. Department of State launched the U.S. Support of Eastern Europe Democracy Act (SEED), a developmental program designed to encourage market liberalization in the region, to promote civil society, and to decrease government intervention. The program ended in 2008, but portions of the SEED funding were consistently used for anti-trafficking programs, especially police training. In 2002, SEED funding was used to fund the anti-trafficking intervention Operation Mirage in Romania that, according to the public version of the evaluation report, resulted in the apprehension of "463 identified victims of trafficking." The Operation benefited from the active participation of FBI and of what was formerly known as the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS).



unfounded and artificial, is a powerful rhetorical and political construction that has been “institutionalized as a political and cultural form” and works as a “classificatory scheme and cognitive frame” (29).

Relative to these developmental discourses, practices, and transformations, the expertise of the *Best Practice* manual depends on the excision of the casualties of neoliberalism and the foregrounding of the rule of law. More than ever, the truth-production of the manual is predicated on a common understanding that crime control and civic education are central to the region’s successful transition to democracy. Located within this plurality of U.S.-sponsored gender discourses, but also void of any economic concerns, *Best Practices* draws on already-established expertise to carve out and constitute its own documentary tradition. The very conception of the manual, therefore, is embedded in the history of western development that, in particular, has come to define the relationship between the United States and the “emerging democracies” of Southeastern Europe. Like U.S. developmental programs, the manual in case designates a lack of knowledge, a malfunctioning of the legal system that it proposes to address. And, similar to other interventions on gender violence and human trafficking, it foregrounds the need to educate Southeastern European police forces, specialized in fighting human trafficking, about the democratic spirit of human rights, care and respect for victims, and professional integrity. The organizers of ABA’s Rule of the Law initiative in the region make clear the urgent need to educate and expose legal professional and crime specialists in the region to “effective judicial ethics regimes,” by aiding them to reform “legislation and legal institutions,” improve “law schools to better prepare tomorrow's legal professionals,” and to build a “rule of law culture” by educating the public about legal

rights and responsibilities” (Rule of Law Initiative). The authors go on to affirm that, the “ABA Rule of Law Initiative believes that rule of law promotion is the most effective long-term antidote to the pressing problems facing the world community today, including poverty, economic stagnation, and conflict.” The *Best Practice* manual gains political significance and rhetorical force because of and within this entangled network of other documentary practices. Its final success depends on a shared transnational knowledge about the regime of rights and a common understanding about the central role of law enforcement in today’s globalized world.

Situated squarely in the terrain of law enforcement and gender development, the manual also foregrounds, in the spirit of neoliberalism, human capital and the management of crime according to the logic of markets.<sup>15</sup> In the manual, trafficking is perceived as a market of supply and demand. Indeed, the language of economy, of profit and demand underlining the business of human trafficking, appears throughout the manual. From the very beginning, the manual defines trafficking as “the fastest-growing business of organized crime” (*User’s Guide*, Introduction, VII). Elsewhere, trainees are told that, “organized criminal networks have taken control of this economic ‘supply and

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<sup>15</sup>In the *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault defines neoliberalism as a mode of governing that, among other things, relies on two “types of programming” and of governing, namely the theory of “human capital” and “the analysis of criminality and delinquency” (219). The two types are brought together in the sphere of economic analysis and productivity. The innovation of capital and its productivity, Foucault argues, come to be translated as investment in the human capital, to the extent that realms of life, otherwise not associated with economics, are now appraised, evaluated, and modified in terms of market economy and according to an economic grid (240). The economic form of the market functions, then, “as a principle of decipherment of social relationships and individual behavior.” (243). The result is the production of a law enforcement apparatus that perceives criminality in economic terms and targets not so much the criminal but rather the “market milieu in which the individual makes his supply of crime and encounters a positive or negative demand” (259). In other words, Foucault shows how in neoliberalism the logic of the market expands to reach the penal sphere of law enforcement and crime control.

demand' situation to traffic and exploit the victims in order to generate enormous profits for themselves" (User's Manual; Critical Concepts 3). The manual becomes itself an investment in human capital in so far as it contributes to the shaping of legal subjects' training and education and it evaluates and sets out norms for the victims' and traffickers' prospective rehabilitation and return to society. The management of the migrant woman as victim converges with the control of the trafficker as criminal. Psychotherapy and shelter-creation work side-by-side to ensure the management of the poor and migrant. As a result, the penal-managerial system imagined by the anti-trafficking interventionist model in the manual promotes confinement and restriction of freedom both for traffickers and their victims. The prison and the shelter, envisioned as global neoliberal strategies of human management, underwrite the instructional rhetoric of the manual.

In the manual, the traffic in women is depicted as a global criminal transgression against national borders caused by transnational crime cartels, whereas its root-causes are seen as local and restricted to certain nations only. The organized crime trafficking is so successful, the authors believe, because of the high global demand for sexual services and cheap labor. "Organized human trafficking" is an epidemic that, once it "[gains] foothold within a state, it will undergo rapid growth and will pose a series of strategic risks to the stability and future of a State," among which "destabilization of existing sex and labor markets," economic and demographic destabilization, and "growth and diversification of organized crime" (*User's Manual*, "The Critical Concepts" 3). Consequently, the same normative developmental perception of geopolitics that characterizes official immigration debates and undergirds anti-immigration legislation functions as a guiding principle in the manual's interventionist approach to human trafficking. Alongside an already-stated

strict dichotomy between female victims and male perpetrators, the distinction between three general geographical areas (sending, transitional and receiving countries), said to characterize the trafficking process, organizes the manual's facts, statistics, and recommendations. According to the manual,

Within the origin countries, a seemingly endless supply of victims remain (*sic*) available for exploitation. Within the destination countries, constantly growing sex markets maintain a seemingly endless demand for the services of the victims. Organized criminal networks have taken control of this economic 'supply and demand' situation to traffic and exploit the victims in order to generate enormous profits for themselves. (User's Manual; Critical Concepts 3)

The logic of demand and supply of prostitution shapes the interventions of the manual, with irregular migration also perceived as a criminal activity, differing in degree and scope from trafficking in human beings.

Dedicated to producing a general mode of intervention and bringing together diverse legal and humanitarian techniques, *Best Practice* follows in the tradition of instructional textbooks, a "how to" knowledge-based guide that claims to offer a comprehensive picture of the human trafficking phenomenon and to be able to sketch out the typology of the traffickers ("resourceful, cunning and ruthless individuals") and of the trafficking victims identified as women and children with few viable options in life (User's Manual, Critical Concepts 4; 7). The traffic in persons is presented in the manual as a social crisis posing "risks for human beings" and "strategic risks for a state in terms of stability and the future" (Trainer's Manual 7). The authors also identify a "trafficking methodology" that defines the mechanisms of the trafficking process globally, traffickers' strategies and their modes of operation. Trafficking, thus, gains the shape of a social practice and the status of a science, whose precise technologies of operation and

development can be defined, measured, and combated on its own terms. In this sense, the manual produces and reinforces a coherent scientific discourse on trafficking, obscuring the messiness of migration on the ground and the far from stable and at times contradictory choices migrants make during their migration. As I showed at the beginning of the chapter, these choices, because they do not fit the clear-cut distinctions and causal descriptions said to characterize human trafficking, are ruled out as inconsistencies and symptoms of trauma.

The attempt to present a positivist description of the trafficking phenomenon, free from inconsistencies, is also reflected in the normative gender roles defining the manual's overall educational approach. Clarifications of grammatical usage at the beginning of the guide point out the authors' decisions to treat victims of trafficking as female and traffickers as male for "grammatical ease," despite evidence to the contrary in actual practices, as the authors themselves acknowledge (Trainer's Manual 6). Moreover, the focus of the manual is explicitly that of trafficking of women into the sex industry, perceived as by far the most severe form of trafficking in the region and as causing "the most damage to [its] victims" (User's Manual, "The Victim" 7). "It not only makes sense to concentrate on this form of the crime [sex trafficking]," the authors begin their incursion, "because it is the largest sector, but also because it provides the most complex challenges in respect of (sic) the victims of the crime. *It is young women and girls that are the most prevalent type of victims and they require highly specialized responses from law enforcement officers and prosecutors*" (Introduction, emphasis mine XI).

The singling out of women and girls for special investigative attention and protection, in line with gender development projects, brings the manual's predominantly

judicial-punitive approach in close relation with an uneven humanitarian politics of care. The training guide, then, constitutes trafficked women as a distinct group, in their victimhood and trauma, at the convergence of judicial interventions and discourses of vulnerability and care. Therefore, migrant women as victims of sex trafficking are incorporated into the law not as autonomous subjects of rights, but as subject-effects of a juridical-humanitarian discourse, where the rule of law merges with humanitarian concerns about gendered vulnerability. As envisioned by the manual's instructions, trafficked women distinguish themselves from other victims in the eye of the law by irremediable trauma. A strict developmental paradigm underlies the rationale of the *Best Practice* manual according to which perceived victims follow a predictable trajectory of rehabilitation marked by trauma and other psycho-physiological effects of violence:

The majority of trafficked victims that are identified within the SEE [Southeast European] region are subsequently diagnosed as suffering from a serious medical condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – PTSD – or more commonly and simply referred to as ‘trauma’. This condition seriously damages, often irreversibly, the psychological health and quality of life of its victims. (User's Manual, “The Victim” 9)

Most significantly, both traffickers and migrant women are envisioned as individual subjects whose respective social identity takes form and shape in relation to law enforcement and punitive strategies of state security. Starting from the premise that, trafficked victims “may never recover from the physical, sexual and psychological damage that they have suffered,” the authors of the manual go on to distinguish the traumatized victims of trafficking -- trauma here being the litmus test of victims' legality -- from undocumented migrants, defined by the law by their illegitimacy and because they are guilty of illegal border trespassing and document forging (User's Manual, “The Investigative Principles 7; 6). The training modules classify, constitute and solidify

categorizes of legitimacy and illegitimacy in the name of state sovereignty and victims' well being. Gender, in this case, gives substance to these judicial categories and interventions. Understood as a liability, gender becomes a fixed category that exposes some women to vulnerability and puts them under the protection and care of the law and psychotherapeutic disciplines. The instructional discourse of the manual, thus, situates migrant women in an economy of humanitarian significations that admits of no gray areas and gives them a restricted choice between "undocumented alien" and legal victim, between the prison and the shelter. From this perspective, legal scholar Jayashri Srikantiah's compelling critique of the "iconic victim" in judicial discourses is apt. According to Srikantiah, only those migrant women who can prove their lack of volition and demonstrate their total submission to traffickers become deserving of legal protection and social benefits.<sup>16</sup>

The educational discourse of the manual exceeds its training scope and becomes part of a broader set of knowledges about forced migration, state sovereignty, and women's sexual vulnerability. Its discourse betrays the centrality of law enforcement in undocumented migration, following in the steps of recurrent statist approaches to "irregular migration," even as it constitutes new methods and organizational bodies to address human trafficking as a particular form of irregular migration. The manual ties together long histories of strict border control and a present concern with women's rights; at the same time, it envisions novel penal technologies and authorizes new regulatory

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<sup>16</sup> This obligation to prove legal worthiness is not restricted to anti-trafficking interventions. Inderpa Grewal in *Transnational America* makes a somewhat similar argument about the power effects of the U.S. refugee law. She shows how popular assumptions about third-world women as exploited and as victims of domestic violence influence court rulings in asylum cases, to the extent that women who do not prove the gender-violence paradigm are denied asylum.

institutions. For instance, following the completion of the manual, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) joined UNDP to produce a training package that combines the specialized training of the Best Practice manual with ICMPD's own educational program for NGOs and non-specialized police forces.

Despite their documentary form and specialized educational scope, the training modules are also “necessarily interactive,” dependent for their success on a wide range of responses, possibly unpredictable, many times oppositional to the scope of the manual (Brenneis 42). In the *Best Practice* manual, the classificatory grid that differentiates undocumented migrants from victims of human trafficking is open to misuse and misinterpretation, a concern that appears in the manual itself and in subsequent roundtable discussions on the manual. The far from stable distinction between legal migrant victim and illegal migrant surfaces over and over again in the manual, compelling speakers at the meeting in Sinaia to stress repeatedly the difference between a “trafficked person and an illegal migrant (recognize the victim status of the former)” (“Minutes”). Moreover, in its educational function, the manual itself is amenable to misuse by trainers; that is why, the authors have also included a set of pedagogical recommendations about the right use of the manual and the teaching process in general. This only shows that training manuals are special types of modern documents in that, unlike other documents, they are self-reflexive and inclusive of meta-narratives about their rationale and about the writing process itself. The Trainer's guide in the *Best Practice* manual represents just such a self-referential exposition on the structure of the manual, its uses, and best training techniques. Drawing on educational psychology, the Trainer's guidebook ends with a list of “principles of adult learning,” such as “the



individual must be motivated to learn,” “Methods should be varied (to suit different styles & ages etc.),” and “time must be allowed and transfer the learning” (Trainer’s Manual 37).

As a training tool, the *Best Practice* bridges different national communities and legislative traditions, producing a transnational judicial-humanitarian community of police investigators and law-enforcement officers. Its injunctions enable transnational circuits of knowledge and information about human trafficking. In its multilingual and international form, the manual becomes a transnational “tactical thinking,” meant to match “the international characteristics of the criminals” (Introduction XIII). As suggested here, this transnational expert discourse owes its authority not only to its enunciation by law enforcement but especially to its foundational constitution in accord with USAID and UNDP authoritative narratives of gender development. To be sure, the present manual draws significantly on broader expert discourses about gender development proliferating at large throughout Southeast Europe post-1989. If nothing else, the peculiar conditions enabling the appearance of such a training material (from funding mechanisms to modes of dissemination) demonstrates that centralization in Eastern Europe made way for a plurality of modes of government, new “devices to exercise authority,” and for “other modes of guidance which seek to inform and shape decisions of the newly freed subjects (Rose 284).

#### Anti-trafficking Lessons in Cultural Competence

The *Best Practice* manual is a highly specialized document that establishes a transnational community of law enforcement in Southeastern Europe, working to

establish strategic coordination among border control and police forces. As I suggested, the manual is representative of and contributes to a crime-control approach to human trafficking. Concerned first and foremost with criminals' apprehension and conviction, anti-trafficking manuals express interest in victims' protection but only to the extent that victims can potentially become witnesses and help in the prosecution of traffickers. I would like here, however, to turn to a type of instructional discourse found at the opposite pole, namely to the training literature on survivors' assistance and rehabilitation and most specifically to the most recent example of Laura Shipler Chico's *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking: Multicultural Case Studies* (2009).

Written and compiled by Laura Shipler Chico, a social worker and trainer in "cross cultural communication, peace building, and trauma recovery," and produced under the auspices of the National MultiCultural Institute (a private non-profit organization in Washington DC), the manual, as its title suggests, defines its scope squarely within an ethics of care, and for that matter an ethics of multicultural care (Chico v). Its training modules consist of a series of fictional case studies, "based on true stories and on real dilemmas faced in the field." The handbook is organized in six main chapters according to major themes, among which "Identifying Victims," "Invisible Chains: Why Do They Stay?," "Interviewing Survivors: Getting the Truth," and "Working with Interpreters" (1). The featured stories reflect quandaries from the field arising because of "cultural belief systems" that set apart care providers from survivors. Unlike its law-enforcement counterpart, Chico's multicultural guide takes into account a wide range of trafficking cases, from child trafficking and labor trafficking to the traffic in women into the sex industry. The manual also covers a wide geographical area,

offering accounts of African children enslaved in the United States, Eastern European men forced into U.S. construction work, and women from Asia and Latin America forced into prostitution. *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* is clearly more capacious than the *Best Practice* manual in its approach and understanding of trafficking. This transpires not only in its broader definition of traffickers to include informal actors, besides the usual international rings, but also, as suggested above, in its identification of trafficked persons with women and men of various ages, occupations, and levels of education.

If the rule of law, in its institutional and rhetorical force, lends validity to the *Best Practice* manual examined above, *Assisting Survivors* draws heavily on managerial expertise and the field of human resources to tackle multiculturalism and diversity. Its institutional support comes not from a governmental or intragovernmental body, as in the police-training manual, but from a non-profit organization, the National MultiCultural Institute (NMCI), defined precisely by its distance from government and its non-political commitment to cultural diversity. The manual draws for its expertise on a wide range of professional authorities from health care providers, social workers, prosecutors, and criminal investigators to interpreters and shelter staff. Expertise here emerges from all-encompassing claims about cultural difference. Culture, as in cultural competence and cultural awareness, becomes the reified concept that promises to parse out trafficking cases and lead to their final denouement. If, in *Best Practice*, law was the promise to a post-conflict and post-crime society, here culture becomes the entity that, when grasped in its complexity and difference, can reveal the truth and offer solutions about human trafficking. Thus, the multicultural guide makes it its goal to train providers, law enforcement personnel, and advocates into cultural competence, because if they “are

provided with the necessary awareness, knowledge, and skills, they may have an increased opportunity to prevent the trafficking of human beings and to help survivors navigate their way from victim-hood to recovery” (Chico 6). Caring for victims, then, becomes caring for their cultures. This leads to an unwitting collapse and reduction of the individual onto an abstract notion of culture to the extent that individual trafficking situations are construed as being determined by and reflecting cultural specificity. Worth noting is that both race and nationality recede in the background and disappear in this focus on culture. Gender itself as an analytical concept becomes significant only in so far as it indexes larger cultural assumptions about gender roles within certain cultures. If the differentiated management of regional subjects (either as traffickers, victims, or the so-called irregular migrants) gives coherence to the *Best Practice* manual, the management of cultural differences dominates the scope of *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking*. The *culture of law* in the former case becomes *the law of culture* in the latter, both deployed in order to produce expertise about human trafficking.

*Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* came out of the National MultiCultural Institute (NMCI). Founded in 1983, during the Reagan era of social conservatism, the Institute prides itself for being “one of the first organizations to have recognized the nation's need for new services, knowledge, and skills in the growing field of multiculturalism and diversity” (NMCI website). The Institute gets his funding from foundations, individuals, and private corporations, while some of their trainees come from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Justice (Office for Victims of Crime), UNDP, and World Bank. According to the Institute’s website, the scope of the Institute is to educate U.S. citizens about the new multicultural environment of the

country by helping individuals and organizations “gain the skills necessary to seamlessly integrate effective diversity and inclusion practices into their organizational culture” (NMCI website). To this end, they organize workshops and conferences for companies and various NGOs on professional development and the management of diversity, and publish a series of training materials, among which *Teaching Skills and Cultural Competency: A Guide for Trainers* (2004) and *Designing and Implementing a Diversity Initiative: A Guide for Organizational Culture Change* (2009). In a world in which, as the NMCI website informs, by 2050 the white non-Hispanic population will lose ground in the face of Hispanics and other people of color, the Institute sees it as its role to offer expertise on multiculturalism. At the same time, the Institute’s expertise reflects the proliferation of non-state expertise during neoliberalism, what Rose called “the de-governmentalization of the state,” the production of networks of expertise justified by market competition: in this particular case “multicultural training” becomes not a civic obligation but a market strategy.

The multicultural manual is the product of this particular institutional neoliberal discourse and, as a consequence, it makes a multiculturalist perspective central to any successful anti-trafficking intervention. It draws for its understanding of culture on NMCI’s own standard definition, and renders culture as being “the way individuals learn to interpret, give meaning to, and function in the world based on the shared values, beliefs, history, traditions, standards, language, behavioral norms, and communication styles of the communities with which one identifies” (Chico 3). Cultural differences may include perceptions of law enforcement, “differing concepts of power and authority,” distinct perceptions of time, destiny, as well as gender roles (3). Interestingly enough,

although the author avoids referring to specific nationalities and ethnicities, except in the case studies themselves, culture becomes a euphemism for traditional “backward” societies, to which victims of trafficking are assumed to belong, while the multicultural instruction of the manual appears as a series of technical guidelines for U.S. professionals about how to deal with foreignness. At many points in the manual, the discourse on cultural difference takes on racialized forms as when the manual advises that many victims are from “situations of conflict or extreme poverty” and “being deported can seem worse than even the most horrendous conditions [in the U.S.] (4). At another time, the manual’s author warns service providers that, many victims come from “unstable situations in which law enforcement authorities threaten and violate human rights rather than uphold them,” which explains the natural fear that victims may have of the police (4). These assumptions about survivors’ social background intersect with cultural beliefs about their predisposition to think in terms of hierarchical “unhealthy power relations” as opposed to more egalitarian relations between victims and providers. In addition, many victims, readers are informed, come from “fluid cultures,” which will impact their own notions of time and even the way they retell their trafficking story (Chico 5). The manual works, then, with essentialized and ahistorical notions of culture and produces expertise through the management of cultural differences and of the populations embodying these differences.

In the introduction to their essay collection on *Mapping Multiculturalism*, Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield argue that, “driven by the imperative of global competition and changing demographics,” “diversity management” arrived on the corporate scene to help business get beyond race and gender (6). Accordingly, the mantra

of cultural diversity, as used by twenty-first century institutions, “dehistoricizes culture, race, and gender in order to offer management itself as the instrument for organizing difference” (6-7). Similarly, Jon Cruz sees multiculturalism as a reflection of neoliberal policies whereby cultural diversity becomes a “surface promise” that treats difference superficially and in cultural non-materialist terms at a time when the global expansion of capital deepens social inequalities (32). To be sure, in the last decades or so, multiculturalism has become the object of study in marketing and human resources departments leading to an entire field of research in cultural competence, with its own experts, knowledge, and methodologies. From intercultural presses and radio shows to multicultural workshops and institutions, a web of professionals emerges to organize, define, and manage foreignness.

Embedded in this discursive tradition, *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* references classical studies on intercultural empathy such as M.J. Bennett’s “Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity” (1993) and L.R. Kohl’s famous guide for travelers abroad *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* (1986). For its own definition and approach to cultural competence, the manual builds on the Bennett model of cultural competence, while also referencing Terry Cross’s model.<sup>17</sup> Human Resources Management is another field of expertise that inflects the manual’s take on cultural difference. One human resource study referenced in the manual is Loden and

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<sup>17</sup> Co-founder and director of the Intercultural Communication Institute in Portland, Oregon, Milton Bennett generated a stage-based model of cultural competency according to which one moves from ethnocentrism (and its respective states of cultural Denial, Defense, and Minimization) to ethnorelativism (manifested through cultural Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration) (Chico 108). Terry Cross’s cultural competence continuum suggests a developmental trajectory from cultural destructiveness (where differences are seen as problems) to advanced cultural competence (cultural differences are valued) through intermediary stages such as cultural incapacity and cultural pre-competence.

Rosener's guide *Workforce America! : Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource* (1990), a study about how to "manage diversity" in a company at a historical moment in the United States characterized by racial diversity.

In order to address cultural in-competence and its devastating influence on the recovery process of trafficking survivors, Chico resorts to three conceptual frameworks, borrowed from fields as diverse as criminal justice, international relations, and international transaction theory. The first framework, taken from a 1998 publication on cultural difference sponsored by the Department of Justice, addresses victims' and providers' respective belief systems, such as gender roles, shame, taboo, conceptions of privacy, role of the family in the victims' case, and stereotypes and lack of "cross-cultural communication skills" on the part of providers (Chico 6).<sup>18</sup> The Cultural Values Continuum represents the second conceptual framework in the manual, this time drawn from Kohl's *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, while the third and last one is "The Power Triangle," an adaptation from S Karpman's article "Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis."<sup>19</sup> To these cultural-belief systems, the manual establishes a list of "clues for identifying victims of trafficking." Some of these hints include "submissive, fearful or depressed demeanor," "little or no pay for labor," "evidence of being controlled," and last

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<sup>18</sup> As this list shows and as suggested before, survivors' existence is assumed to be governed by shame, taboo, and family-oriented lives, values that are viewed as traditional and incompatible with modernity. Notably, the general reference to gender roles -- presumed to deter communication between survivor and service provider -- always appears as part of the survivors' cultural belief system and it becomes a coded phrase for traditional gender roles.

<sup>19</sup> The Cultural Values Continuum paradigm relies on a dualistic set of cultural values such as fixed vs. fluid time, informal vs. formal behavior, equality vs. hierarchy, individual vs. collective, and universalistic vs. particularistic (Chico 8). The Power Triangle model relies on the assumption that "in situations of oppression, exploitation, and violence, there are clear victims and abusers" (Chico 8). The power triangle reflects the power dynamics among rescuer, victim, and abuser (9).



but not least recent arrival from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, or India (120). It is obvious that the above examples are far from clear and could apply to any recent legal immigrant, undocumented immigrant, or for that matter U.S. citizen. But, just as in the case of cultural assumptions, such means of identifications are highly racialized and work to single out certain populations for specialists' observation and intervention.

*Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* relies on existent studies of multiculturalism and cultural competence across a variety of professional fields. It applies this knowledge to human trafficking situations, producing subjects of research who are identified in their trauma and cultural legacy. Such a guide, like in the case of the *Best Practice* manual, constitutes its own objects of research and intervention. Multicultural training becomes in itself a process of truth-making and knowledge-production about human trafficking. And, just as in the case of the *Best Practice*, Chico's manual puts forward simplistic understandings of trafficking victims, defined solely with regard to their relation to legal and humanitarian interventions. Both manuals, then, turn the humanitarian expertise of care into a form of managing and governing those perceived as outsiders to the nation-state.

### The Professionalization of Care

The two manuals I chose to examine here are a strange pair. The former is transnational in its scope and representative of U.S. developmental funding projects in Southeastern Europe, while the latter offers a multicultural perspective on human trafficking. In addition, one manual specifically addresses law enforcement as a transnational community of activists, whereas the other targets U.S. health, community,

and other service providers, besides law enforcement personnel. And, finally, the first example can be viewed as the product of the pluralization of truth-making, in that knowledge is the result of a collaboration among various law enforcement and developmental agencies, as compared to the second single-authored manual that draws on earlier U.S. expertise on cultural competence to produce guidelines for domestic anti-trafficking activists. Yet the two manuals, a few years apart, meet in their production of a field of expertise on human trafficking whose authority lies in an approach that blends, in different forms, the rule of law with the care for victims and their cultures. In both cases, the instructional discourses and the expertise they embody produce truth about the trafficking phenomenon. This expertise and truth-claims are justified in the language of care -- care for the victims but also for society at large, seen as endangered at the hand of traffickers. This expertise on humanitarian care (what could be called the professionalization of care) becomes the engine for an epistemological process that ends up turning trafficking and its actors into objects of research. I use care here especially to point out the power relations that underline the writing and subsequent practical application of the two manuals' instructions.

Michel Foucault and the post-Foucauldian scholars of governmentality have theorized the ways in which, in a society at a certain point in time, unsettling and unfamiliar behaviors and situations are turned into general problems that then invite several practical responses and solutions. Foucault calls this process "problematization," that is, the "transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response" ("Problematics" 421). Problematization is central to the production of expertise, namely to the formulation of a

set of fixed methodologies and strategic responses to social problems. The manuals discussed in this chapter reflect the problematization of a series of diverse and complex migrational practices, perceived as outside legality and grouped under the phenomenon of human trafficking. Yet, fluid and divergent migratory practices belie the strict taxonomies constituted through these instructional discourses. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, many immigrants do not identify with the trafficking narrative, putting into question its coherence. During the training session I attended in New York City in 2009, the trainer herself expressed frustration at the paucity of the taxonomy, confessing that many immigrants (especially men, as well as women in domestic work) fall through the cracks of the legal and humanitarian systems because they do not fit the “victim” profile -- that of a naïve and utterly helpless woman coming from a traditional culture and enslaved in the sex industry.

What is significant about these two manuals in particular and about similar training manuals in general, however, is that, in their problematization of irregular migration, they constitute an entire field of knowledge premised on an ethics of care. Indeed, it is my contention that the two manuals discussed here circulate and are deployed not merely as expert knowledge but *precisely as expertise that enacts care for the victims of trafficking*. In this remarkable interconnection between knowledge and care, the truth produced by these instructional discourses gains validity not only through its epistemic value, but especially in its promise to care for victims. My reading of the problematization of trafficking -- as rule of law dispensed in the name of care -- shows that knowledge about trafficking emerges in various forms and from spaces that might be only tangential to the rule of law yet all the more forceful in the injunction to care. To be

sure, such an approach demonstrates that anti-trafficking instructional discourses operate to classify and regulate subjects through a process of truth-production, but also through an affective attachment to the object and subjects of research. As a form of power and deeply imbricated with other forms of power relations (from legal institutions to aid agencies), these manuals' legal and multicultural expertise gains legitimacy as an ethics of care, whether care here entails concern for victims' well being, respect/tolerance for their culture, or -- an aspect especially obvious in the law enforcement manual -- international anxieties about the socio-economic instability caused by trafficking rings.

This blend of legal and humanitarian discourses of care is particularly striking in the *Best Practice* manual. As its authors emphasize from the very beginning, the manual reflects a "human rights philosophy" and complies with "current international and humanitarian standards applicable to this type of criminal investigation" (Holmes, "Trainer's Manual" 4-5). This care for the victims, the authors clarify, is "not only a case of compliance with international standards on human rights but it also brings tangible benefits for law enforcement officers -- in effect, a 'win-win' situation" (11). To be sure, *Best Practice* betrays a predominant approach to law as ethics, that is, the translation of law as care for the minds and bodies of trafficking victims and the rendition of punitive practices against traffickers as praxis of care for their victims. Similarly, *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking* embraces multiculturalism as a politics of care at the same time that it foregrounds the urgent need for coordination between law enforcement and service providers, between legal competence and cultural competence. Like the law enforcement manual, then, care for victims becomes the way to both ensure victims' safety and rehabilitation and the break-up of trafficking rings. Misunderstandings

between survivors and providers can hinder attempts to expose trafficking operations and “create unnecessary barriers to discovering the truth” (Chico 5).

At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out the disciplinary connectivities that anti-trafficking instructional discourses forge among different state institutions, aid agencies, and a variety of social actors. My contention is that care becomes the conceptual paradigm that makes possible the harmonization and coordination of multiple areas of expertise around the trafficking phenomenon and its victims. This linking of professionalization with an ethics of care enables connectivities across national, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries. Yet the same concern with victims’ welfare transforms various areas of expertise into areas of regulation of migrants’ mobility and employment. Consider the already mentioned recommendations about how to identify victims of trafficking presented in *Assisting Survivors of Human Trafficking*. Building on guidelines already existent in the anti-trafficking community, Chico produces a list of clues for victim identification that belie the manual’s initial commitment to victim assistance. The recommendations urge doctors, the police, priests, and other citizens to basically look for foreigners (recent arrivals from Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia), observe their ability to communicate in English, “move or leave job,” as well as tell on victims’ employment and housing conditions (Chico 120). The screening questions suggested by the manual include inquiries about possession of passports and other documents, number of work hours, and the process of migration itself. This example shows the ways in which an ethics of care becomes a disciplinary practice -- deployed across disciplines and by the civil society at large -- that ends up curtailing the human rights of large populations, and that especially affects migrants’ free movement.

Care itself becomes a mode of governing -- an observation that Rose first made in regard to freedom -- that makes visible and produces knowledge about some “cultures,” subjects’ physical or psychological features, and deportments.<sup>20</sup>

The professionalization of care, reflected in these manuals, demonstrates that expertise about human trafficking emerges from in-between the indeterminate realms of legal injunctions and humanitarian care, between citizens’ abeyance in front of the law and the humanitarian duty to care. The discursive force of this educational genre, just as in the case of all narratives examined in this dissertation, consists precisely in this knowledge-oriented discourse, its existence on an epistemological level at which the rough violence of the law blurs and recedes into the emotional realm of “care” Indeed, these manuals exist and function under the rule of expertise and in its name even as they carry this type of expert knowledge into the terrain of humanitarian care. This particular straddling of different registers endows anti-trafficking manuals of the types examined here with the truth-making claims of science and positivism, the legitimacy of the law, and the urgency of humanitarianism.

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<sup>20</sup> See Rose, *Powers of Freedom* (1999). In *Biopolitics*, Foucault argues that the emergence of the civil society and the proliferation of expertise are neoliberal formations that should not be seen as entirely detached from the regulatory apparatuses of the state but arising from within the government of the liberal state.

## Conclusion The Work of Critique

*“What they need is a union.” (“Hot Shots,” *The Wire*)*

*Are you striking? Why? Under what conditions do you work? What kind of tools do you have to confront situations that seem unjust to you? . . . (Colectivo Precarias a la Deriva, “A Very Careful Strike”)*

The first citation opening this conclusion is from David Simon’s HBO television series *The Wire*, a docudrama that portrays the underground drug scene in inner city Baltimore. In Season Two, Baltimore homicide detectives, while tracking a drug smuggling network, happen upon a port container with thirteen dead women, most of whom, they decide, are from Eastern Europe. While meeting with the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to discuss the murders, detective Bunk and officer Russell learn that there are 50,000 undocumented girls working in the United States. “They need a whole new agency to police’em,” exclaims Bunk in amazement. “What they need is a union,” replies Russell.

The second passage comes from Precarias a la Deriva, a research and activist project in Madrid, Spain. The group came to life in 2002 during a union strike in Madrid.

Some women at the strike decided to organize and confront the unwillingness of union organizers to recognize the work of migrant women, of domestic and sex workers, in short, “the kind of fragmented, informal, invisible work” that most women do in neoliberal capitalism. This is how the founders of the Precarias a la Deriva describe the initial organizing steps:

Faced with a mobilization which did not represent the kind of fragmented, informal, invisible work that we do – our jobs were neither taken into consideration by the unions that called the strike nor effected by the legislation that provoked it – a group of women decided to spend the day of the strike wandering the city together, transforming the classic picket line into a picket survey: talking to women about their work and their days. *Are you striking? Why? Under what conditions do you work? What kind of tools do you have to confront situations that seem unjust to you?...* (Precarias a la deriva, “A Very Careful Strike,” emphasis in the original)

Following their wanderings (*derivas*) through the city, in search of women with diverse work and life experiences, activists decided to organize their group around the concept of *precariousness*, foregrounding the uncertainty of women’s lives and work in neoliberal capitalism.

The above cultural moments are striking in their beautiful and concise commentary on labor, migration, and gender in neoliberal capitalism. They offer an alternative to the anti-trafficking narratives that I examine in this dissertation, foregrounding not humanitarian rhetoric but female workers’ diverse experiences as a mobile and cheap labor force in neoliberal capitalism. The first reference from *The Wire* transforms the neoliberal practice of policing vulnerable bodies into an act of political organizing by migrant women themselves. The union represents, in this case, an open-ended form of resistance against the fragmenting and alienating forces of neoliberal capitalism. Officer Russell’s statement, “What they need is a union,” ushers in a novel



understanding of migrant work by drawing attention to a political imaginary where one kind of organization, the migrant workers' union, replaces another type of organization, the border police. This brief statement brings the illegality usually defining migrant work into close proximity with the legality of organized labor. In the second case, the Precarias collective eschews easy labels such as "sex trafficked," "smuggled," "prostitute," and "undocumented." Instead, the group proposes the chameleonic concept of *precariousness*, the fundamental condition of neoliberalism that affects some women more than others, and that defines not only the work place or the home but, most significantly, the "metropolitan territory we navigate every day, with its billboards and shopping centers, fast-food that tastes like air and every variety of useless contracts" (Precarias a la Deriva, "Adrift" 159). The notion of *precariousness* makes possible new ways of perceiving and acting on the relationship between women, work, and migration. The political economy and the culture of neoliberalism come together, then, in the concept of *precariousness*. Last but not least, both cultural moments offer a critique of mainstream approaches to work and migration, suggesting deep disconnections between actions undertaken in the name of migrant women's rights and the needs structuring women's lives on the ground.

Anti-trafficking activism reflects well this disconnection between activist rhetoric and interventions and migrant women's experiences. Women's stories of migration are managed and contained to fit legal discourses of human trafficking. Such discourses are then used to police and to control women's work choices and means of migration, with no attention to material conditions in neoliberal capitalism. Yet what happens if scholars take heed of the marginal status that defines migrant women in general, rather than

emphasizing “sex trafficking,” in the exploitative spaces of the factory, the maquila, and the border? What if, instead of passionate arguments about the violence of prostitution, feminists turn their attention to the every-day violence that compounds migrant women’s lives and marks the racialized and gendered status of the latter in labor markets? Such an approach would acknowledge migrant women’s sexual exploitation as an effect of their social and economic positioning in the multinational capitalist economy. Most significantly, this alternative would place sex work on a continuum with other gendered and racialized forms of precarious labor in capitalism, avoiding a simplified binary between victims and brainwashed “prostituted women” (as neo abolitionists refer to sex workers).

Feminists Eileen Boris and Rhacel Parreñas, among others, have theorized the expansion of the service sector and the commercialization of care in the twenty-first century. Parreñas and Boris contextualize women’s migration into the sex industry by theorizing sex work as one type of what they call “intimate labors,” that is, labor activities such as “bodily and household upkeep, personal and family maintenance, and sexual contact or liaison” (Parrenas and Boris 2). According to these scholars, intimate labor constitutes a major part of the neoliberal global economy, and it employs mostly women. This focus on labor migration rather than on “sex trafficking,” however, does not simply amount to an understanding of women as agents. In effect, the feminist debate about the appropriate identification of migrant women as either victims or agents, while significant, has obscured the ways in which migrant workers’ voices are continuously erased both by state institutions and the nonprofit industrial sector. This explains why migrant women themselves define their experiences as part of the risk-taking process of

migration and not as human trafficking. Many social workers, activists, and public officials continue to insist on using the narrow terminology of “sex trafficking,” explaining away women’s divergent stories as the effects of trauma and fear.

Sexuality represents an important site where gender difference and ethnic profiling emerge. As scholars Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú, among others, have indicated, sexuality represents a realm constantly under policing and a source of anxiety at national borders. Sexuality produces illegality and distinguishes between legitimate migrant victims and “guilty sex workers” (Luibhéid and Anderson).<sup>1</sup> This clear-cut distinction between deserving and non-deserving women underpins immigration policies and anti-trafficking campaigns in the United States. Migrant sex workers or women under suspicion of being involved in the sex industry are barred from entering the United States and, if arrested while in the country, face deportation unless they can prove that they are victims of “severe forms of trafficking.” The threat of impending deportation and harassment by the border patrol exposes migrant workers (most of them undocumented) to violence, making them less likely to report abuse. To quote Rutvica Andrijasevic,

Sexuality, in its intersection with race, is key to understanding the complexity of new dynamics of exclusion and how apparently ‘liberal’ solutions might have ‘illiberal’ consequences, such as the tightening of admission requirements, restrictive residency and work regulations and the exclusion of migrants from social citizenship. (391)

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<sup>1</sup> At the same time that humanitarian campaigns have expanded to address trafficked women’s plight, migrant women (and some men) are subjected to rape and sexual abuse at the border and in detention centers everywhere, as Eithne Luibheid, among others, points out. This form of suffering, however, rarely makes it in the news or becomes the focus of photojournalism. On sexual violence at the U.S. Mexico border, see especially Falcón, Sylvanna, “ ‘National Security’ and the Violation of Women: Militarized Border Rape at the US-Mexico Border,” in *color of violence: the incite! anthology*. South End Press, 2006.

Trafficking practices and discourses produce expertise, which in turn becomes central to regulating migrant women's mobility by distinguishing between undeserving "illegals" and exceptional victims of trafficking. The latter, in their alleged vulnerability to sexual exploitation, become visible only in relation to the injunction of the law and the compassion of humanitarian care.

Women and most recently children figure as discursive tropes of vulnerability that, when mobilized, produce the imminence of the trafficking crisis. This crisis invites what Michel Foucault called a new regime of supervision of sexuality.<sup>2</sup> According to Foucault, the new regime of supervision of sexuality defines "a society of dangers with, on the one side, those who are in danger, and, on the other, those who are dangerous." Sexuality, in this case, will no longer be a behavior regulated by precise prohibitions. Instead, it will be "a kind of roaming danger, a sort of omnipresent phantom . . . a threat in all social relations, in all relations between members of different age groups, in all relations between individuals" (281). *Projects of Humanitarianism* theorizes the production of a penal and humanitarian system that takes migrant women's sexualized bodies as foci of scrutiny and control. Humanitarian care (as in care for victims of trafficking) becomes a trope that pervades anti-trafficking literature. But care also functions as a form of government, carving out a gendered group (the compliant receivers of care) whose identity is irreversibly linked to sexual vulnerability and suffering.

In addition, the anti-trafficking activist campaigns examined in this dissertation betray heteronormative ideals of gender and sexuality. The so-called "sexual slavery"

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<sup>2</sup> In an interview in the late 1970s, Foucault surmised that we are on the threshold of a new penal and legislative system whose function "is not so much to punish offenses against these general laws concerning decency, as to protect populations and parts of populations regarded as particularly vulnerable" ("Sexual Morality and the Law" 276).

narratives envision the nuclear family and the heterosexual couple as loci of freedom and non-violence (as opposed to the violence of commercial sexuality). Even more obvious is the invisibility of transgender and gay sex workers in these narratives. In fact, the very concept of sex trafficking betrays a heteronormative vision of the social. The U.S. state's and activists' insistence on a concept of sex trafficking, distinct from labor trafficking, suggests a deep commitment to keeping sexuality as a separate sacred realm that needs close monitoring and disciplining. Of note is that the National Organization of Women, the New York chapter, lobbied the state of New York for an anti-trafficking law that makes a clear distinction between "sex trafficking" and "labor trafficking," with the former punishable by up to twenty-five years in prison and the latter by up to only seven years ("Human Trafficking FAQ's").<sup>3</sup> The rescue from "sexual slavery" is usually narrated as women's return to society either as mothers, wives, and/or workers in typically traditional female jobs (as sewers, maquiladora workers, hairdressers, etc). The surveillance of migrant women's sexuality also produces new norms and boundaries around sexuality, as suggested by the recent public focus on the sociality of massage parlors, acupuncture centers, and health spas, the practices and sites of which are rendered hostile to the intimacy of heterosexual love and conducive to sex trafficking. The same is true of the increasing state scrutiny of marriages that rely on dating sites, in short of all those relationships that do not conform to the traditional notion of marriage.

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<sup>3</sup> The Division of Criminal Justice Services of the New York state touts the New York anti-trafficking law as the most comprehensive in the country, adding that the law "is designed to attack the 'supply' side of human trafficking by creating two new crimes – sex trafficking and labor trafficking. It gives prosecutors the ability to bring charges against purveyors of so-called 'prostitution tourism.' New York's law also targets demand by eliminating the distinction between trafficking and prostitution. It increases the penalty for patronizing a prostitute from three months in jail to up to a year" (<http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/pio/humantrafficking/humantrafficking.htm>).

Ironically, then, activist movements for women's emancipation produce novel abnormalities as objects of investigation, contributing to an ever-stricter reformulation of heterosexuality and anti-immigration policies.

The insistence on human trafficking (and on sexual exploitation for that matter) rather than on labor exploitation – followed by the usual call for the abolition of prostitution as opposed to the enforcement of labor rights – backfires and produces new forms of control and rights violations. Most significantly, however, the emphasis on women's sexuality does little to address the crux of the matter: the precarious conditions under which migrant workers live in countries of destination, their disposability and deportability. The concept of *precariousness* represents an important political tool in the fight for migrant workers' rights, as the work of the activist group Precarias a la deriva suggests. Precariousness is pivotal to understanding migrant women's social position in neoliberal capitalism because it names both the conditions of neoliberalism and the new subjects these conditions enable. Precariousness points to the political economy of neoliberalism, being as it is the direct effect of the global expansion of multinational capital and of the widespread insecurity this expansion generates. It is precariousness, I contend, that defines women's work and migration in the twenty-first century and not trafficking. Additionally, precariousness refers to the flexibility and increased mobility that neoliberal capitalism forces upon individuals and populations, the necessity to move continuously, to be adaptable, and to accept risky and temporary work. Far from a new condition, precariousness expands to engulf new sectors of society. As the feminists from Precarias contend,

What is new is the process by which this [the condition of precariousness] is expanding to include more and more social sectors, not in a uniform

manner (it would be difficult to draw a rigid or precise line between the ‘precarious’ and the ‘guaranteed’ parts of the population) but such that the tendency is generalized. Thus we prefer to talk *not about a state of precariousness but about ‘precarization’ as a process which effects* [sic] *the whole of society, with devastating consequences for social bonds.* (Precarias a la deriva, “A Very Careful Strike,” emphasis mine)

The focus on the precariousness and uncertainty of migrant women’s daily lives can represent one way of approaching migrant women’s exploitation at the hands not only of pimps and traffickers but especially at the hands of the border patrol, the police, multinationals, and maquila supervisors.

In Mimi Chakarova’s audiovisual narratives, for example, women’s trials and tribulations as undocumented migrants in Turkey and Europe -- subsumed by Chakarova under the rhetoric of “sex trafficking” -- evidence the increasing precariousness characterizing workers’ lives in neoliberal capitalism, the absence of rights and entitlements defining their status globally. Understood as part and parcel of precarious work and living conditions under capitalism, women’s labor and sexual exploitation during migration, as well as their choice to migrate into the sex industry, appear as effects of a series of socio-economic factors: neoliberal privatization, market liberalization, militarization, the unregulated inflow of foreign capital in post Communist countries, and, last but not least, the high global demand for cheap unprotected labor. Rather than being victims of sex trafficking, the women interviewed by Chakarova are only several examples in the growing collectivity of precarious subjects of neoliberalism. Likewise, the anti-trafficking work of the non-profit Winrock International in Moldova – best reflected in the documentary series *Destinies and Destinations* – erases the conditions of precariousness defining women’s lives in the neoliberal Moldovan state. The producers of *Destinies and Destinations* focus exclusively on women’s personal vulnerabilities

rather than on the social vulnerabilities characterizing their status in Moldova. In effect, the cultural works examined in this dissertation, when read with the concept of precariousness in mind, expose the concept of “sex trafficking” as unfit to represent the broad material conditions affecting migrant women in the twenty-first century.

### The Work of Critique

The impetus behind this project is to use critique as an analytical strategy in the hope of triggering novel questions and opening up avenues for alternative approaches in the study of trafficking and migration, thereby disentangling migrant women’s lives and work from the epistemic violence of anti-trafficking humanitarianism. According to Michel Foucault, critique is an ethical attitude, “a movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects on power and question power on its effects on truth” (“What Is Critique? 47). Critique “would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth” (47). For Foucault, critique is a type of analytics that addresses the multiple relationships between power and knowledge, the links that can “be identified between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge . . . such that a given element of knowledge takes on the effects of power in a given system” (59). The work of critique also presupposes a particular understanding of power, one that is positive, productive, and most visible in its operation,

at its extremities, at its outer limits at the point where it becomes capillary . . . in its most regional forms and institutions, and especially at the points where this power transgresses the rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques. (Foucault *Society Must Be Defended* 29)



The work of critique sheds light on the links between knowledge and power, revealing the socio-economic structures that enable the formation and circulation of the anti-trafficking humanitarian rhetoric. Critique provides the analytical tools to interrogate the system of values underpinning anti-trafficking activism and the public fascination with the suffering trafficked woman. Anti-trafficking humanitarianism unfolds through and as narration, promoting a selective set of melodramatic stories of migration and suggesting a limited set of remedies. The traffic in women is a discursive phenomenon, first and foremost, constructed and construed through discourse and as discourse. Critique represents an appropriate way to understand and debunk this melodramatic discourse, and to gesture toward alternative accounts of labor migration under neoliberal capitalism.

However, the desire to mobilize critique as a tool of investigation and research has its own complications. Although touted for its capacity to expose power, the work of critique recuperates at times the very forms of power that it seeks to reveal. The critique of mainstream anti-trafficking discourses around which this study revolves may re-objectify migrant women. Critique might also end up erasing the possibility of resistance integral to migrant women's encounter with anti-trafficking activists. Aware of these problems, I gesture in this dissertation towards those moments when the discourse of power fails, when the projects of humanitarianism, meant to pinpoint migrant women as either victims or deportable immigrants, come undone and lose coherence. For instance, I draw on my experience gained during the anti-trafficking training session at Safe Horizon in New York City to show incoherencies in anti-trafficking discourses – incoherencies ranging from expert attempts to produce stable taxonomies of migration (which

nonetheless fail in their explanatory force and threaten the cohesiveness of anti-trafficking interventions) to the unsuccessful attempts of humanitarians to contain women's testimonies of migration.

A focus on critique also determines the methodology of this dissertation, including the decision not to include interviews with migrant women in the sex industry. This decision stems from the desire to avoid re-inscribing the lives of migrant women into the redundant rhetoric of trafficking. Interviews with migrant sex workers would recuperate, I believe, the trafficking debates critiqued in this study, reinforcing the strong connection between trafficking and prostitution posited by U.S. neoabolitionists. Moreover, there is an absence of migrant sex workers' voices in public culture in general and anti-trafficking activism in particular. In those cases when migrant sex workers do decide to speak up, access to their stories is constrained and conditioned by law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations. For these reasons, this study draws attention instead to the force of U.S. activist discourses in an attempt to debunk their mystifying force and negative impact on women's migration and work both in the United States and abroad. Such official documents -- although presenting but one side of a multifaceted story -- are significant because of their influence and because they demonstrate how humanitarian discourses, despite lack of evidence, can gain traction and effect change. This project contributes, then, to studies of humanitarianism by inquiring into the cultural practices that articulate anti-trafficking activism as an ethics of care.

*Projects of Humanitarianism* puts under the microscope the weave of cultural, political, and economic discourses integral to the popularity of the concept of "sex trafficking," critiquing humanitarian feelings of pity and compassion; the urgency to

control crime and enforce the police state; anxieties about border porousness and undocumented migration; fears of sexual and social impurity; and the desire to promote gender development in line with the neoliberal mantras of market liberalization and entrepreneurship. The phenomenon of humanitarian entertainment points to significant ways in which contemporary culture is central to political projects and colludes with neoliberal structures of power. Moreover, the examination of women's trafficking in the context of migration studies broadens analyses of human trafficking by drawing attention to the socio-economics of women's migration. From this perspective, this study traces the ways in which cultural discourses *become* power, are attached to power and invested in power -- institutionalized, circulated, mobilized, and disseminated across a variety of national and international anti-trafficking interests. *Projects of Humanitarianism* is inspired by and unfolds in anticipation of the open-ended possibilities prompted by critique, magnifying for view those moments when law loses its repressive injunctions and becomes cultural consent and humanitarian care, the latter no less normative than the former.

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