

The background of the book cover is a detailed engraving. It depicts a man and a woman in a highly dramatic and intimate pose. The man is leaning over the woman, his head buried in her neck. The woman is reclining, her body arched, with her head tilted back and eyes closed. Her torso is exposed, showing a small, dark, jagged mark on her upper abdomen. They are partially covered by a heavy, draped fabric that creates deep folds and highlights. The overall style is reminiscent of 19th-century academic art or engraving, with fine lines and cross-hatching for shading.

SEX SLAVES AND DISCOURSE MASTERS

THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRAFFICKING

JO DOEZEMA

About the Author

Jo Doezema holds a PhD from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. She is a member of the Paulo Longo Research Initiative, which works shaping new directions in sex work research and policy, and has been involved in advocacy and research on sex worker rights for two decades. Her research interests include sex work and human rights, feminism, masculinities and trafficking. In developing her research, Jo has worked closely with sex worker rights organizations around the world. She is the co-editor of *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance and Redefinition*.

SEX SLAVES AND
DISCOURSE MASTERS
The Construction of Trafficking

Jo Doezema



Zed Books
LONDON & NEW YORK

Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking was first published in 2010 by Zed Books Ltd, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK and Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA

www.zedbooks.co.uk

Copyright © Jo Doezema 2010.

The right of Jo Doezema to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988



Designed and typeset in Dante by Kate Kirkwood

Index by John Barker

Cover designed by www.alice-marwick.co.uk

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe,
Chippenham and Eastbourne

Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of St Martin's Press, LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of Zed Books Ltd.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data available

ISBN 978 1 84813 413 3 hb

ISBN 978 1 84813 414 0 pb

ISBN 978 1 84813 415 7 eb

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF ACRONYMS	vii
Introduction: Positioning trafficking in women	1
1 White slavery and trafficking as political myth	30
2 The construction of innocence and the spectre of chaos	49
3 Metaphorical innocence: white slavery in America	74
4 'Prevent, protect and punish'	106
5 Now you see her, now you don't: consent, sex workers and the Human Rights Caucus	145
6 Towards a reinscription of myth	170
NOTES	177
PRIMARY SOURCES	196
WORKS CITED	201
INDEX	210

Acknowledgements

This book was inspired by the work of the wonderful sex workers and sex worker rights activists that I have worked with throughout the years, and especially my former colleagues at the Network of Sex Work Projects. I would also like to thank the members of the Human Rights Caucus, with whom I shared an intense and exciting political experience.

Andrea Cornwall and Anne-Marie Goetz were a constant source of support throughout the process of writing this book. They challenged me and inspired me, encouraging me continually to push myself and my analysis. They continued to believe in me, even when I doubted myself.

My research would not have been possible without the financial support of the ESCR. In particular, I would like to thank Chris Read for his understanding and support.

I would also like to thank Matt Gaw for his excellent editing of the book.

At the Institute of Development Studies, Naomi Hussain provided loads of laughter and insightful comments on my writing. Marc Fiedrich, from our first shared coffee through to the final paragraph, has been a constant source of help and inspiration. Kath Pasteur provided a much-needed refuge. Dom Furlong, Charlie Severs, Jen Leavy and Susie Jolly kept reminding me that there was life outside the book.

Also at the Institute of Development Studies, Sue Ong, Julia Brown and Angela Dowman helped me unfailingly and always with a smile to sort out the often bewildering administrative matters. Chris Stevens gave excellent support as the Director of Graduate Programmes.

Ruth Mackenzie showed enormous patience throughout, and her encouragement never flagged. I could not have completed the book without the deep love and support of my parents, David and Carolyn Doezema, who believed in me when times were the hardest.

Finally, I give my deepest thanks to my partner Peter Spencer, who saw me through the wilderness years.

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMBAR	Asociacion de Mujeres para el Bienestar y Ayuda Reciproca (Association of Women for Welfare and Mutual Help), Venezuela
APNSW	Asia-Pacific Network of Sex Workers
AWHRC	Asian Women's Human Rights Council
CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CD Acts	Contagious Diseases Acts
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CHANGE	Center for Health and Gender Equity
COIN	Centro de Orientacion e Investigacion Integral
COYOTE	Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics
DMSC	Durnar Mahila Samanwaya Committee
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
GSN	Global Survival Network
HRC	Human Rights Caucus
HRLG	Human Rights Law Group
ICPR	International Charter for Prostitute's Rights
IJM	International Justice Mission
ILO	International Labour Organization
IGO	inter-governmental organization
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IUSW	International Union of Sex Workers
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIS	Newly Independent States
NSWP	The Network of Sex Work Projects
NVA	National Vigilance Association

ACRONYMS

OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PATH	Programme for Appropriate Technologies in Health
PEPFAR	US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SANGRAM	Sampeda Maheen Mahila Sanstha
STD	sexually transmitted disease
STV	Stichting Tegen Vrouwenhandel
TAMPEP	Transnational IDS/STD Prevention Among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act, US
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UK NSWP	United Kingdom Network of Sex Work Projects
WHISPER	Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt

Introduction: Positioning trafficking in women

What is trafficking in women? After reading personal narratives of trafficking victims as reported in newspapers (see Boxes 1, 2 and 3 below) the answer to the question may seem obvious.¹ While the average newspaper reader is unlikely to be familiar with the sources of the quoted statistics and the politics of the groups that produce the reports, the picture painted by such stories (which are only three examples out of thousands produced over the past decade) seems fairly clear: trafficking in women means young women and girls being transported and forced into prostitution. Accounts such as these, with their graphic accounts of violence, heart-rending first-person testimonies, and ominous warnings of the increasing nature of the problem, paint a picture that disturbs and distresses readers and creates a sense of urgency that 'something must be done' to solve what is taken as a global problem of alarming dimensions. I borrow my tone from the accounts themselves, which rely on idiomatic, emotive language to engage the reader.

In such reports, an image of the 'typical' trafficking victim becomes evident. Even in these few examples, we can see an emphasis on certain words and phrases: 'young', 'naïve', 'beauty', 'better life', 'lured, deceived and forced into prostitution'. These words show us the youth and beauty of the victims, their desperate economic plight, their lack of knowledge of the fate that awaits them, and their transformation from hopeful to hopeless, from 'naïve' to 'hardened', as the 'life on the streets' takes its toll. The image of the traffickers also emerges: shadowy syndicates, mysterious ladies who glide and tempt, brutal eastern Europeans and rapacious Africans – all lying in wait to prey upon the naïve and innocent young girl. If my tone sounds melodramatic, it is deliberately so. The above accounts, as is explored in Chapters 2 and 3, borrow their structure from melodramatic narrative. They tell a familiar tale of the loss of female virtue, the essence of nineteenth-

Box 1 • 'Italy's sex slaves'

Young women from Africa and Eastern Europe are lured to Italy with the promise of good jobs and a new life. But when they get there they are beaten, raped and forced into prostitution ... Most of the girls we talk to – a group of Libyans, a dark-haired Romanian with a scarred face, a young mother from the Ukraine – didn't come here to be prostitutes. They thought they were coming to Italy to make money working in a hair salon, a bar or as an au pair. But the people who made those promises and smuggled them into the country took away their passports and forced them to work the streets instead. The immigrants, most who barely speak Italian, usually work 12-hour shifts, engaging in quick sexual encounters in clients' cars or behind bushes by the road. Most have pimps who monitor their every move by cell phone. Some are brought to their places on the streets blindfolded, so they won't know the route home in case they try to escape. They're locked up during the day, beaten if they don't work hard enough, and rarely see any of the money they earn ...

At one desolate corner, we stop and let a Nigerian, Marika, into the van ... She's wearing a miniskirt that barely covers her bottom, gold eye-shadow, a ratty pair of high-heeled black boots, long fake black braids, and a top that reveals most of her breasts. Marika complains that there isn't much work this evening, because there are too many police in the area (while prostitution on the streets is legal in Italy, the girls get hassled anyway). She's worried because she still owes \$15,000 to the people who brought her here, even though she's already paid them \$40,000 – at about \$5 per five-minute trick. 'Two more years,' she tells me wearily, 'and I can do some other kind of work.' It may be longer, though, if her recent luck holds up – she was robbed a few days before at gunpoint by a client who took all her money.

'When I came here,' she says, 'I thought I was getting a job at a supermarket.' She rolls her eyes at her childish naïveté – she was 19 then, and now she's a much older, harder 21. But at least, she tells me, she doesn't have the problems the Albanian women on the street have. 'The Albanian women are raped by their pimps, but not the Africans,' she tells me in her broken Italian. 'The Albanians hit them. All I have to do is pay back my debt.' (*Salon*, August 2003)²

century penny-dreadful seduction stories (Haag 1999; Walkowitz 1992) recast for a contemporary audience. A young girl falls into the hands of malevolent men or tainted women, consequently losing her (sexual) innocence. Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, these popular accounts combine salaciousness with moral righteousness – causing in the reader a discomfiting but also pleasurable mix of outrage and titillation.

Present-day concerns with prostitution and trafficking in women find a historical precedent in the campaigns against ‘white slavery’ that occurred at

Box 2 • ‘Human trafficking: charming girls and greedy merchants!’

Trafficking in girls and women has easily become the modern parallel to the Atlantic slave trade. ... Pretty Osaro was in the 200 level class in a prominent university when she lost her father in a car accident in 1999. Thereafter things became so difficult that she had to leave the university and take up a job as a cashier in a supermarket in Benin City to help with the upkeep of the family. One fateful afternoon, precisely 2 March 2000, an expensively dressed lady of Osaro’s age glided into the supermarket clutching a mobile phone. She turned out to be Ogechi, Osaro’s childhood friend, with whom she had lost contact for years, and who now claimed to work as a model in Italy. She promised to link Osaro with a friend who would facilitate her movement to Italy where she would work and earn big money.

Ogechi kept her promise and a week later Osaro’s passport and visa were ready. In Italy her travelling papers were seized, and she was thereafter sold like a chattel to a ‘madam’ who forced her to sleep with different men. She was however caught one day while on her way from the hospital where she had gone for treatment by the Italian Police, and she was repatriated back to the country along with some [other] Nigerian girls.

Like Osaro, thousands of women and girls are being lured and coerced from the developing countries and also eastern Europe, to Italy, Spain, Paris, Zurich etc. every year, to engage in prostitution. Conservative estimates put the number of women and girls smuggled each year into the sex trade in Europe at over a million worldwide. This is twice the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) estimated 500,000 for 1995. (*The Daily Trust*, Abuja, January 2002)

Box 3 • 'Filipinas end up as fun girls in South Korea'

They are called 'juicy girls', a back-handed compliment to their youth and beauty. But the local slang for Filipino 'entertainers' in Songjan City barely masks the harsh fates of the young, hopeful women who end up captives of a white slavery syndicate. Their plight has sparked tensions among Korean bar owners in Songjan, and Filipino-American servicemen, who are suspected of having helped in the escape of some sex slaves ... Maxi works in an area reminiscent of Fields Avenue, once the red-light district of Angeles City, when American troops were still stationed in Clark Air Base.

Living hell

Maxi and colleagues dance naked for customers and provide sexual favors. For \$200, they will perform all imaginable sex acts for clients. They only get 30 percent of the fee, what their Hajuma or Mama San calls their 'commission.' ... Philippine and Korean officials say there is little they can do in the absence of a law against human trafficking ... Korean officials curtly deny the existence of white slavery despite charges raised by Seoul-based religious and civic groups. (*Manila Times*, January 2002)

the turn of the twentieth century. 'White slavery' refers to the supposed traffic in women and girls for the purposes of prostitution, primarily between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries. Prominent feminists, including Josephine Butler and Catherine MacKinnon, have played a central role in both past and present campaigns (Walkowitz 1980; Doezema 2000). Typical white slavery narratives involved the abduction of European women for prostitution in South America, Africa or 'the Orient' by 'foreigners'. In the campaigns that started in the early 1980s, the focus was originally on the 'traffic' from Latin America and Asia to western Europe. Thus, the geographical direction of the 'traffic' has changed. Yet the rhetoric accompanying today's campaigns against trafficking in women is strikingly similar to that used by the anti-white-slavery activists. Then as now, the paradigmatic image is that of a young and naïve innocent (assumed to be female) lured or deceived by evil traffickers (assumed to be usually male) into a life of horrifying sexual degradation from which escape is virtually impossible.

Defining trafficking in women

Trafficking is not a discursively neutral terrain, unwritten and unblemished, upon which facts and responses can simply be attached. Even a recognition that disputes over the meaning of trafficking involve politics and ideology does not go far enough: it still leaves intact the idea that trafficking can be defined satisfactorily if political will, clear thinking and practicality prevail. The 'white slave'/'victim of trafficking' is immediately recognizable in her role as subject of melodramatic narrative. However, as I argue in this book, she proves more elusive when, wrested from her narrative context, she becomes the subject of social scientific enquiry. The phenomenon of trafficking, like the trafficking victim herself, somehow resists or deflects definition and quantification. For, despite widespread agreement among both NGOs and governments regarding the prevalence and severity of 'trafficking', problems of definition and quantification have continually hampered anti-trafficking efforts.

How then are we to define trafficking in women? Definitions abound. Often, they are accompanied by calls for better definitions that appeal to the 'real' situation – the need for a definition that will more accurately reflect what is *really* going on.³ When activism around the topic of trafficking began in the late 1980s, very little research on the subject existed. Trafficking was mainly the preserve of feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which were focused on front-line care and on lobbying governments. As their lobbying efforts became more successful in eliciting public concern (and funding), opportunities for research grew. The concern with trafficking has led to a large amount of new research, much of it encouraged by governments worried about not only their international reputation, but also their restive native populations grouching about the floods of illegals washing on to national shores.

Despite the increase in research, it is still difficult to quantify trafficking. A report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) examines the problems around the lack of statistical evidence, stating, 'It is almost axiomatic for papers reviewing trafficking to lament the huge lack of statistics and to call for research to fill the many *lacunae*' (IOM 2000: 30). Indeed, the lack of statistical evidence is mentioned in nearly all of the reports, papers and statements I have reviewed. This does not, however, lead to the degree of caution that might be expected. While acknowledging the difficulty of putting hard and fast numbers to trafficking, most reports go on to quote large numbers without any indication of what they are actually referring to:

'The lack of hard data, combined with the fact that many commentators on trafficking repeat estimates derived from interviews with officials, means that many of the statistics quoted are in (often large) round numbers, are uncheckable and are frequently reiterated' (IOM 2000: 31).

While making this valuable point, the IOM itself provides a telling example of the carelessness with which statistics on trafficking are treated.

'500,000 in Western Europe alone'

CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] and the NIS [Newly Independent States] now constitute the fastest growing source for trafficked women and girls for the sex industry. A US Government source has conservatively estimated that more than 175,000 women and girls are trafficked from CEE and the NIS each year. In 1995, IOM estimated the number at 500,000 annually to Western Europe alone. (OSCE 1999: 7)

How are we to interpret the number 500,000 that is cited in this quotation? In the context in which it is presented, it would seem to have to be a misprint, as 500,000 is much larger than the total of 175,000 trafficked women mentioned earlier in the paragraph. The number itself is not directly referenced, but a list of resources at the end of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) report mentions a 1995 IOM report (IOM 1995). The number 500,000 does not appear anywhere in this report. Given that it seems so obviously a misprint, it would be tempting to dismiss it. However, this number is mentioned repeatedly when trafficking in Europe is being discussed. The number 500,000 has gone on to live a life of its own in newspaper reports, for example: 'It is estimated that around 500,000 women have been beaten or drugged into submission by pimps working in Europe's biggest organized crime gang' (*Daily Mirror*, Dublin, 4 July 2000).

I checked all possible sources to track down the basis for the figure of '500,000', reviewing IOM publications and writing and phoning the IOM in Geneva and in Brussels. I was unable to find any material indicating how the IOM arrived at this number. One official in Geneva suggested that the number had been cited in a presentation by an IOM official at a meeting of the European Parliament, and had been picked up by journalists there. I was unable to confirm this.

Most reports on trafficking tend to assume that estimates of trafficking are too low, rather than too high: 'Despite the lack of concrete statistical data, experts in the field agree that it is a growing (and evolving) phenomenon' (OSCE 1999: 5). One of the reasons most often given for the lack of evidence on trafficking is that it is a 'hidden' phenomenon, taking place in the 'underworld', and that victims of trafficking are too afraid of reprisals to

report to the police. Another reason given is the lack of specific legislation relating to trafficking, so that figures for complaints, arrests and convictions are very difficult to obtain. While this may be the case, the lack of reliable evidence of trafficking has done little to diminish anxieties around the issue.

Weitzer's (2007) review of trafficking statistics found that 'there are no reliable statistics on the magnitude of trafficking' (p. 455) and quotes the Bangkok office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as suggesting that most statistics in circulation were 'false' or 'spurious' (p. 455). One problem in attempting to glean anything meaningful from trafficking statistics is that it is rarely clear exactly what is being measured. As the newspaper reports cited in Boxes 1–3 show, the term 'trafficking' is anything but unambiguous, and can refer to a number of different situations. The IOM report is one of many that notes that trafficking is often confused with 'smuggling' or with illegal migration (IOM 2000).⁴ This is confirmed in a highly influential report on international trafficking by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW).⁵ The authors note that 'when statistics are available, they usually refer to the number of migrant or domestic sex workers, rather than cases of trafficking' (Wijers and Lin 1997: 15).

As Guy (1991) records, statistics on 'white slavery' to Buenos Aires a century ago were based on the numbers and nationalities of registered prostitutes. In a striking parallel, a Global Survival Network (GSN) report of 1997 uses the rise in numbers of Russian and eastern European women in the sex industry in western Europe and the USA as evidence of trafficking. But even figures on the number of sex workers are not to be trusted: Kempadoo notes the extreme variations in estimates of numbers of prostitutes in Asia – estimates for the city of Bombay alone range from 100,000 to 600,000. As she remarks: 'To any conscientious social scientist, such discrepancies should be cause for extreme suspicion of the reliability of the research, yet when it comes to sex work and prostitution, few eyebrows are raised and the figures are easily bandied about without question' (1998a: 15).

The problem of collapsing trafficking into 'illegal migration' or 'migrant prostitution' is compounded by the fact that when official statistics on trafficking exist, they are most often compiled by police and ministries of justice. Some countries have no laws on trafficking; others, such as Austria, include *any* transportation of a woman across a border under trafficking (IOM 2000). What does appear to be clear is that the number of migrant sex workers is increasing throughout the world (Mak 1996; TAMPEP 1999; Brussa 1999, Agustín 2008, Kempadoo 2005). In Europe, sex workers are on

the move from eastern to western Europe and from one country to another within these areas. Sex workers from Europe, Asia and Latin America hope to better their earnings in the US, the Middle East, and affluent Asian countries. It is very tempting in this situation to see trafficking where the only certain element is migration.⁶

Even when authors are admirably clear about what they consider trafficking to be, numbers are used that may not conform to their chosen definition. A 1999 OSCE report contains a very clear definition of trafficking, that stresses the elements of coercion and forced labour (OSCE 1999). It states that trafficking involves men as well as women and children, and that it can occur for purposes other than forced prostitution. However, when numbers are counted again, this is done in a manner that gives the impression that most of the women are trafficked for prostitution:

Every year, millions of men, women and children are trafficked worldwide into conditions amounting to slavery. Among these, many thousands are young women and girls lured, abducted, or sold into forced prostitution and other forms of sexual servitude ... In 1997, an estimated 175,000 women and girls were trafficked from Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States alone. (OSCE 1999: 3)

The placing of the second sentence in the quoted paragraph gives the impression that these 175,000 women 'trafficked' have all been trafficked for prostitution. Moreover, it is impossible to tell how this number was arrived at, and on what sort of evidence it is based.

Significantly, there are emerging indications that it is sex workers, rather than 'coerced innocents' that form the majority of this 'traffic'. GAATW, whose report is based for a large part on responses of organizations that work directly with 'trafficking victims', found that the majority of trafficking cases involve women who know they are going to work in the sex industry, but are lied to about the conditions they will work under, such as the amount of money they will receive, or the amount of debt they will have to repay (Wijers and Lin 1997: 99). The report's authors also conclude that abduction for purposes of trafficking into the sex industry is rare (p. 99). GSN (1997) relates the testimonies of a number of women who had been sex workers before their migration and who were lied to about working conditions, rather than the nature of the work. Research by the Foundation for Women in Thailand concluded that the largest group of Thai migrants working in the sex industry in Japan had previously worked in the sex industry in Bangkok (Skrobanek 1997). Watenabe (Watenabe 1998), who

worked as a bar girl herself in Japan in the course of her research into Thai women migrating to the Japanese sex industry, found that the majority of Thai sex workers she interviewed were aware of the nature of the work on offer before they came to Japan. Other research, such as that by Brockett and Murray (1994) in Australia, Anarfi (1998) in Ghana, Kempadoo (1998b) in the Caribbean, Centro de Orientacion e Investigacion Integral (COIN 1994) in the Dominican Republic, TAMPEP in Europe (Brussa 1999), Gülçür and Ilkcaracan (2002) in Turkey, Blanchet (2002) in Saudi Arabia, India, Nepal and Bangladesh, Pearson (2002) in England, Italy, Thailand and the USA, Agustín (2005, 2006, 2008) in Europe and Mai (2009) in the UK, indicates that women seeking to migrate are not so easily 'duped' or 'deceived', and are often aware that most jobs on offer are in the sex industry.

Myth and consent

In this book, I argue that a turn (and return) to the unfashionable conceptual apparatus of 'myth' and 'ideology' provides the most satisfactory explanation of these evidential problems. Taking my inspiration from historians of white slavery, I fit myth to the maiden. I bring the mythical subject of trafficking in women into focus through applying a 'genealogical' lens, one that considers the historical circumstances of the trafficked women's production (Haag 1999). This involves delving into historical accounts of 'white slavery', critically examining the figure of the 'white slave' as she existed in popular and political imagination in the first half of the twentieth century. It involves incorporating the insights of this examination into the consideration of the contemporary subject of 'trafficking in women'. This excavation takes place in the analytical territory of 'myth'. The process of 'unearthing' the 'trafficked woman' through exhuming the buried images of the white slave is central to this book.

This book is structured around two key concepts: myth and consent. I will not, thus, be looking at the image of the 'white slave' or her modern-day counterpart, the 'trafficking victim', and contrasting it with the 'reality' of prostitutes' lives, as though this image were simply a matter of ill-informed representation. Nor will I be attempting to 'uncover the meaning' of myths of 'white slavery' or 'trafficking' as a metaphorical or allegorical correspondence. Instead, I approach the arena of debates around white slavery and trafficking as the effects of *discourse*. In approaching 'trafficking in women' as a discourse, I am concerned with how certain definitions of the problem become dominant, with whose knowledge is accepted and whose sidelined,

and with the social practices involved in constructing and legitimating knowledge: in short, I am concerned with the relationship between power and knowledge. This research uses the concepts of myth and ideology to interrogate the knowledges (truth claims) – both empirical and theoretical – about ‘trafficking in women’ through a genealogical examination of the historical circumstances of their production. The research is concerned with, in Hajer’s words, ‘the ways in which certain problems are represented, differences are played out, and social coalitions on specific meanings somehow emerge’ (Hajer 1995: 44).

Hajer notes that, ‘It has become almost a platitude to characterize public problems as socially constructed’ (1995: 42). Nonetheless, most research into trafficking eschews a social constructionist approach in favour of a positivist approach. By far the majority of research on trafficking in women is concerned with documenting and explaining the ‘phenomenon’ of trafficking itself: it attempts to establish who is being trafficked, who is doing the trafficking, how it is happening, why it is happening, and what can be done. This research can be helpful in correcting assumptions and misunderstandings about ‘trafficking in women’, and can serve as a basis for creating policy that will better protect the human rights of migrant (sex) workers.

However, an approach that seeks to establish the ‘facts’ about trafficking, valuable as it may be, leaves unanswered the questions of how these ‘facts’ will be interpreted and which interpretations will come to be accepted as legitimate knowledge. To answer this, we need to look at the effect of power on knowledge: the way in which social power is exercised in knowledge creation, and the ways in which representations of people and problems are used to legitimate knowledge. Foucault (1975 [1991]) suggests that we abandon the idea that knowledge can exist where power is absent:

We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, *nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations* ... In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. (pp. 27–8, emphasis added)

Even social constructionist research that focuses more directly on power, such as feminist research, tends to look at power relations only in so far as they are seen to cause the ‘real practices’ of ‘trafficking in women’. Thus

trafficking is characterized as the result of women's sexual subordination (Barry 1979; 1995) and/or women's economic subordination as well as the result of inequitable development and 'globalization' (e.g. Sassen 2002; Outshoorn 1998; Wijers and Lin 1997; Lazaridis 2001). Of course, power relations – gendered, economic, class-based – do impact on migration for the sex industry, and are worthy of investigation. However, what is missing in these accounts is a critical examination of the power involved in producing knowledge about 'trafficking in women' and the ways in which dominant constructions of the issue emerge and are incorporated into policy. What remains to be investigated are the relationships among those who shape meanings of 'trafficking in women' and between these 'discourse masters' and the object of their concern: the 'sex slaves'.

METHODOLOGY, MYTH AND MEANING

When I first came across the notion of white slavery as a myth, when researching my MA thesis, it seemed to me to be the perfect concept through which to explore the productions of meaning around trafficking.⁷ The notion of trafficking in women as myth seemed to apply so aptly to the dissonances between my own experiences, the experiences I knew from other sex worker rights activists, and the way that sex work was being portrayed in 'trafficking in women' discourses. Its immediate appeal lay in the idea that what was being said was a distortion of what was 'really happening'. In my MA thesis, I argued that 'trafficking in women' was a contemporary manifestation of what historians characterized as the myth of 'white slavery'. Accounts of trafficking, I argued, consistently coupled their arguments for protection of innocent women with narrative elements that undermined women's agency and amplified the threat of migration. I am not the first to note the similarities between campaigns and narratives of 'white slavery' and 'trafficking' (see Chapkis 1997 and Murray 1998); indeed my own research direction was heavily influenced by discussion with sex worker rights advocates. Our concern with these similarities was mainly activist, rather than academic. Much more so than anti-trafficking activists, sex worker advocates were aware of the political legacy of white slavery and its long-reaching effects on the lives of sex workers today.

My interpretation of trafficking in this MA research relied on a concept of myth that consisted of two elements: first, that of myth as a distortion of the truth (trafficking 'hid' what was really occurring in terms of migration of sex workers) and, second, that of myth as a metaphor, a way of explaining a complicated and threatening reality (trafficking narratives as stories that

encoded, for example, fear of women's sexuality). While this dualistic interpretation of myth allowed me to explore trafficking discourses in a way that involved questioning otherwise accepted meanings, it was unsatisfactory for a number of reasons, which I have sought to resolve in this book. In summary, my key discomfort with this interpretation of myth is that it depends on a static, reified and a historical notion of 'consent' in attempting to 'disprove' the myth of white slavery/trafficking.

This insight was facilitated through my discovery of the work of historian Pamela Haag (1999). In her fascinating study of sexual consent and its relationship to American liberalism, Haag devotes a section to white slavery. She explores it as a 'dominant idiom' of sexual violence. Haag offers a corrective to the ahistorical approach to myth, as she explains:

My approach here is not to question, as other historians have done, whether white slavery was 'true' or functionally a myth, an expression of the notorious sexual queasiness and inability on the part of the middle class to envision women as agents or to see how women might have exercised 'choice'. *Such a question assumes that coercion or 'sexual slavery' has a fixed meaning – that if women were not literally taken or physically restrained then white slavery was a distortion of situations that were not 'really' coercive as we understand that term. Yet white slavery was as real or as true as other definitions of coercion or consent, given that these terms acquire substantive meanings in historical context.* (p. 64, emphasis added)

Haag's observation points to the ways in which the 'truth' of white slavery was related to the concepts of consent that informed it. At the Trafficking Protocol negotiations in Vienna that led to the signing in 2000 of the UN Protocol to Suppress, Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (hereafter, the Trafficking Protocol), as explained below, the definition of trafficking became completely dependent on interpretations of the idea of women's consent in relation to prostitution. These debates, like those around white slavery, were entered into by different social groups whose ideological struggle was articulated through 'consent', as displayed in discourses of trafficking.

The perspectives of another theorist, Ernesto Laclau (1990; 1997), helped me give needed depth to the idea of myth as a metaphor. Two parts of Laclau's analysis of myth and ideology proved particularly illuminating: first, his concept of myth as the metaphor for an ideal society and, second, his concept of myth as a necessary part of any society. Throughout this book, I have sought to braid Haag's insights about the construction of 'consent' with Laclau's insights regarding myth as an inevitable part of social struggle. In contrast to a reading of myth which sees it as powerful because

it can provide a singular, simple explanation of reality, this combined theoretical perspective suggests that white slavery/trafficking is a powerful myth, not because it unifies or crystallizes different perceptions of consent, but precisely because it can, and does, accommodate and provide a powerful vehicle for the advancement of varied and even opposing ideologies, including opposing feminist ideologies.

Chapter 1 takes the ideas of myth and ideology as its central focus. It sets out the theoretical context for my exploration of 'trafficking in women' as myth, through bringing together the work of 'white slavery' historians and putting these in critical conversation with theorists of myth and ideology. Theories of political myth are reviewed, through which the notion of ideology emerges as a key concept for an understanding of myth. The chapter draws on Laclau and Eagleton to illustrate how 'ideology' can help in understanding the power and persistence of the myth of white slavery/trafficking. The chapter uses the exploration of political myth and ideology to interrogate the basis of the truth claims of white slavery and trafficking narratives, setting out the limitations of a purely empirical approach to the subject of 'trafficking in women'.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on a historical exploration of the myth of white slavery, analysing it in the context of myth as set out in Chapter 1. These chapters lay the groundwork for an examination of the parallels in the narratives of white slavery and trafficking. They are close readings of historical accounts of white slavery. As this Introduction began by showing present-day narratives of trafficking, so the analysis of these two chapters is based on popular narratives of white slavery. At the same time, the analysis continues to put the various historians of white slavery in conversation with each other, and subjects them to the developing theoretical framework of myth and ideology. The aim of the analysis is to set out a framework for exploring trafficking in women as a myth, historicizing current debates.

Chapter 2 explores the myth of white slavery as it appeared in Britain. Looking at the works of the feminist Josephine Butler and the journalist William T. Stead, the chapter examines the function of narrative in the context of myth. It demonstrates the ways in which narrative contributes to the 'real seemingness' of myth, making it appear as a description of reality. It explores the way in which the figure of the white slave was constructed as an innocent victim, in opposition to the willing whore, complicit in her own downfall. The notion of consent runs through these conceptions of the victim/whore, marking the dividing line between those deserving of rescue and those deserving condemnation. The chapter explores how

discourses of white slavery, and the ideas of consent they contained, also worked within larger discourses of class and empire. Throughout the analysis, parallels are signposted between the manoeuvrings of consent in white slavery discourses and in contemporary discourses of trafficking.

Chapter 3 moves to examination of the myth of white slavery in the United States, setting the concept of 'metaphor' as central. The chapter critically investigates the idea, used by many historians, of white slavery as a 'metaphor' for social anxieties caused by rapid processes of social change. It suggests that a more satisfactory concept of metaphor is achieved through taking account of Laclau's ideas of myth as the model of an ideal society. Drawing on a variety of narratives of white slavery, the chapter investigates how differing notions of consent were articulated through differing interpretations of what white slavery 'really' was. Discourses of race and nation and their relationship to the myth of trafficking are explored, and implications for current discourses of trafficking are indicated.

The second half of this book takes the concepts and analysis presented in the discussion of the myth of white slavery as a theoretical template through which to view discourses of trafficking in women. Myth, metaphor, ideology and narrative are employed to address the knotty questions of how NGOs and states have tried to define trafficking. My experiences as a lobbyist in Vienna during the Trafficking Protocol negotiations form the basis of the analysis in this section.

Chapter 4 begins with an examination of early twentieth-century international agreements on white slavery, tracking the ways in which the notion of consent was used in these early agreements. The lexical threads of consent are pulled through to the Vienna negotiations, showing how the distinction between the 'victim' and the 'willing whore' shaped NGO and state responses in Vienna. In particular, the chapter examines the ways in which the 'suffering body' of the prostitute informed the neo-abolitionist lobby headed by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) in Vienna. I argue that CATW's abolitionist feminist arguments about the nature of prostitution were refracted by those of states that sought to close borders and limit human rights protections for 'trafficking victims'.

Chapter 5 combines a close analysis of the relationships between sex workers and anti-trafficking activists in the Human Rights Caucus with an examination of the development of the definition of trafficking in persons at the Vienna negotiations. It returns in depth to the questions set out in the early part of this Introduction around the complicated relationships between feminism, sex worker rights, and the need to define trafficking in