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Violating the Body Politic: Corporeal Representation and Sex Trafficking in UK Newspapers

1) Introduction

> Promised a better life with a decent job in a far-off country. Then drugged, raped and beaten by their captors. Kept in servitude in anonymous flats until totally submissive to the will of their masters. And, finally, used as tools of the sex trade.
>
> from *The Daily Mail*, February 14, 2007

> She is one of thousands of vulnerable young girls who have been trafficked to Britain in the past few years from Eastern Europe, beaten, raped and coerced into a life of sexual slavery.
>
> from *The Sunday Telegraph*, November 13, 2005

Discourses of sex-trafficking obscure the complex structural, social and economic aspects of women's migration including the possibility that 'trafficked women' may be migrant (sex) workers, creating a narrative of legitimate victimhood, which can have serious repercussions for women who have been exploited, but whose stories do not conform to the mythic 'white slavery' pattern. The quotes above are just two examples of the horror story narrated in most newspaper coverage of human trafficking. They contain a number of component parts which on the one hand emphasise innocence (youth, vulnerability, deception, coercion), and on the other introduce a subtle eroticism. In this dissertation I will explore to what extent sex-trafficking discourse (by studying national newspaper coverage) is cultural response to anxiety about unstable borders and insecure national identity. Beginning with the UK's reaction to globalisation, mass immigration and EU expansion, I give some examples of what seems to be a crisis of boundaries revealed through newspaper coverage which uses imagery of invasion, saturation and "porous borders". These representations of 'the immigration problem' can fruitfully be read as assaults on the 'body politic', expressing fears of infection, disintegration and collapse. I will consider human trafficking for sexual exploitation in the context of migration, prostitution, and the relationship between gender and nation, but also consider how corporeal metaphor, such as the notion of the body politic, may be used to illuminate our understanding of the interrelationship between prostitution, immigration and trafficking.

There are many available definitions of "human trafficking", although the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) has developed the following definition from a human rights perspective:

> All acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within and across borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion (including the use or threat of force or the abuse of authority) or debt

> bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive), in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery like conditions, in a community, other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original deception, coercion or debt bondage. (GAATW, 2001: 33)

In this dissertation, following Jacqueline Berman's lead, I will primarily use the term 'sex-trafficking' because I am looking exclusively at women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. That is, I am excluding men, children (although obviously it is not a clear division) and women trafficked for labour exploitation, e.g. as factory or agricultural workers. It is also important to recognise that there are a multitude of different routes into exploitation – some women are literally abducted from their home countries and transported as prisoners. Others will be assisted by traffickers in the belief that they will be working in jobs outside the sex trade (nannies or waitresses are common examples). Many women who are sexually exploited in the UK will have been assisted by traffickers but have decided voluntarily to work in the UK sex industry. These women tend to have been misled about the exact conditions of their work, and can be just as viciously exploited as the women who think they will be an au pair.

I will also look briefly at the impact that the popular discourse of sex-trafficking impacts on women's freedom and safety, through its influence on ant-trafficking legislation and policy-making. In her discussion of US anti-trafficking law, Wendy Chapkis provides an excellent summary of three ways in which the law constructs divisions between legitimate and illegitimate claims to victimhood, and uses this to secure national borders:

> First, it relies on a repressive moral panic about "sexual slavery" created through slippery statistics and sliding definitions. Second, despite offering symbolic support to the notion that all prostitution is sexual slavery, the law carefully differentiates between "innocent" and "guilty" prostitutes and provides support only to the innocent. And third, by making assistance to even "deserving" victims contingent on their willingness to assist authorities in the prosecution of traffickers, the legislation further seals… borders against penetration by "undeserving" economic migrants. (Chapkis, 2003: 924-5)

The UK, like the US, tends to see tighter border controls as the way to effectively combat human trafficking, but many campaigners and experts argue that this actually increases the chances that women will seek illegal channels into the country, which will leave them more open to exploitation. This is just one of many examples which introduce doubt that protection of women is the highest priority of decision-makers, and reveals a deep-seated fear of the foreigner within and without national borders.

2) Research

Over the last few years, there has been a clearly perceptible rise in the number of stories about human trafficking, particularly of women for sexual exploitation. I haven't attempted a comprehensive consideration, either of the existing research or non-print news media, or over a period of longer than two years. However, as human trafficking for sexual exploitation has only recently become a subject for academic consideration, there are limited materials available for study, and my initial attempt to compile a reading list was initially hampered by the fact that no materials in the library database had yet been categorised under "human trafficking" or "sex trafficking". There are, however, substantial bodies of research and criticism relating to prostitution and migration, and by mining these categories I was able to uncover plenty of relevant work.

Deciding the most fruitful approach to this research has also been difficult. I wanted to make use of the close reading, formal freedom and theoretical emphasis offered by a cultural studies approach, but I was also interested in the greater objectivity and more obvious utility of a piece of social research. The final work is a manner of hybrid, as I have anchored my thinking about the cultural representation of trafficking in a consideration of the political and legislative context, and tested my assumptions about media coverage by using a content analysis technique.

The meat of this dissertation is my synthesis of a number of secondary sources who have illuminated the discourse around sex trafficking. However, inspired by Jo Doezema and Jacqueline Berman, neither of whom have looked specifically at the UK press, I wanted to include a critical reading of media coverage which would help me identify themes and explore the part of corporeal representation in news coverage of immigration and human trafficking. In order to introduce a sliver of objectivity to the research, I used a content analysis technique to code my sample and test some of my assumptions.

I decided to restrict my sample to national newspapers for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are much more accessible and convenient to study than other forms of news media, for example radio and television coverage. Even internet news items are unreliable, as they can be removed suddenly, or re-organised, whereas newspapers are stored accessibly in the online LexisNexis archive, or in microfiche form in libraries. The medium also helps with analysis, as close reading is possible with a written text, which would need to be taken from a transcript of radio and television. Transcripts are often subject to a leakage of meaning, as they are removed from their original medium and are sometimes inaccurate. Features in newspapers accessed online will not always have the graphics or pictures they were printed with, but microfiche captures the article exactly as the audience would have read it.

Newspaper circulation figures, and the clearly segmented public readership, give a very clear idea of who is reading what, and a general idea of the newspapers' sphere of influence. When studying any medium it is important to know their target audience, but this is especially obvious in the case of *The Guardian* or *The Daily Mail*, for example. Despite the decline in newspaper readership due to the spread of internet and television news services, they are still a very influential strand of the mass media, read by politicians and civil servants (and their press officers) and ensuring an excellent platform for raising awareness simultaneously with people in power and people on the street. In part because of this, and their long history as an information sources, they have a traditional information role that has not yet been surpassed by the internet in terms of authority. It is commonly considered (whether or not this is the case) newspaper coverage is more reliable than internet content.

This method is far from scientific, as the results are not be an impartial picture of word-use in coverage of human trafficking, they are a measure of the degree to which the sample supports my assumptions, which are in turn based upon similar studies from European and American newspapers. For example, I have decided in advance what broad themes I am looking for, which individual words will point to the presence of that theme, and what the confirmation of the presence of that theme will mean in a broader context. I am also making an implicit assumption that the meanings of the words I choose can be intersubjectively agreed. That is, whether another reader would agree with the choices and interpret the findings in the same way.

Using the Lexis Nexis online database of newspaper coverage I searched for "human trafficking" and "sex" together, between September 15 2005 and September 15 2007 in the following major national newspapers:

- The Daily and Sunday Telegraph
- Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday
- The Daily Star and Sunday Star
- The Express and The Sunday Express
- Financial Times
- The Guardian
- The Independent and Independent on Sunday
- Independent on Sunday
- The Mirror and The Sunday Mirror
- The News of the World
- The Observer
- The People
- The Sun
- The Times & Sunday Times

The search yielded 442 entries. To refine the list, and eliminate articles with just a fleeting mention of the topic (in, for example, the extensive coverage of the ongoing Madeleine McCann case) I filtered out all results with a relevance score below 70% for "human trafficking", leaving 362 articles. I then skim-read the articles, and removed book reviews and TV listings, and all articles referring solely to trafficking in children, not women. This left me with a final sample of 316 articles. Of which:

72% (229) referred to “sex slave(s)” or “sex slavery”
68% (216) used the word “girl” to describe the trafficked women.
59% (185) described the women as “young”
59% (182) featured one of more of: kidnap(ped), abduct(ed), lure(d), trick(ed), dupe(d)
and 42% (133) mentioned “Eastern Europe(an)”

3) Migration

a. Context

In order to understand the storm of public concern around sex trafficking, it is crucial to note the context of both increasing globalisation and the expansion of the European community to include ex-Soviet Union countries such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Globalisation, particularly the rise of international mass media and the internet, has radically altered our perception of the world and the distances between nations and cultures.

A key theme, which has emerged in recent political party manifestos and as a popular topic for debate, is the notion of "Britishness". What does it mean to be British? The blurring of the boundaries of 'traditional' British culture with European countries and particularly America has been widely documented, and is cited as a contributing factor to a 'national identity crisis' in the UK, as "Bit by bit the forging of a federated Europe… erodes the sense of a specifically national identity." (Brinker-Gabler, 1997: 5) One of the pillars of 'British' national identity is the myth of a unified ethnic group, which remains unaltered from the Anglo-Saxons to the present day. This has never existed, and certainly does not exist now.

Our apparent inability to recognise ourselves as a multicultural nation has become increasingly fragile in face of the increase in immigration caused by access to affordable international travel, and the opening of borders with European countries. This has serious ramifications for migrant communities settling in the UK, and other European countries: "Because European nations have not understood themselves as countries of immigration, immigrants are represented as 'foreigners.' In 'Fortress Europe,' the immanent 'foreign' has become the immigrant / migrant within the borders of the nation." (Brinker-Gabler, 1997: 7) The migrant has become the 'enemy within' and subject of sometimes frenzied xenophobic and racist attack, with the migrant criminal (as rapist, paedophile or trafficker) taking on the status of a "folk devil". This fear of migrant criminality is informed by the widening global gap between rich and poor and the prosperity of the West, as Jo Doezema identifies a growing feeling that 'the community' is under threat by "the importation of new cultural norms through immigration" and also "from hordes of 'economic migrants' out to grab what they can." (Doezema, 2000)

Berman links this sense of unease and insecurity to "much of the hysteria over sex-trafficking", noting that it "coincides with the integration and expansion of the EU after 1992." Since 2004 the 'hysteria' has intensified as the further expansion of the EU has led to dramatically increased numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe. Berman suggests that "the combined upheavals of the end of communism in Europe, EU integration and expansion and 'globalization' have created the perception

of a shift in historically, politically and culturally putative definitions of citizen and non-citizen, sameness and difference, familiar and foreign, inside and outside." (Berman, 2003: 50-51) The uncertainty created by the unsettling of traditional definitions and categories can be read as a type of "crisis of boundaries", expressed through anxiety about permeable borders and the integrity of the body politic, leading to a national obsession with legitimate and illegitimate foreign bodies. It is "in the wake of this sense of crisis" that a "'discourse of sex-trafficking' has emerged." (Berman, 2003: 39) I will begin my consideration of the 'discourse of sex-trafficking' by looking more closely at the modern-day British 'body politic'.

b. Nations and bodies

> 'Borders' must be mapped not simply on a geographic terrain, but also in the minds and on the bodies of the inhabitants of that geography. Without this deeper inscription, a line on a map is meaningless. (Jeffrey, ??: xx)

The trope of the 'body politic' is most often associated with Hobbes' Leviathan, which – in common with many other treatise from the Middle Ages onwards – elaborates of the idea of the Sovereign as the 'head' of the State, and the people as the 'body'. Grosz points out that "the correspondence between the body and the body politic is more or less exact and codified", although there have been plenty of variations and elaborations, for example, "the law has been compared to the body's nerves; the military to its arms, commerce to its legs and stomach, and so on…" Grosz disrupts this harmonious analogy with a subversive question: "What, one might ask, takes on the metaphoric function of the genitals in the body politic? What kind of genitals are they? Does the body politic have a sex?" (Grosz, 1995: 106)

Pointing to the "implicitly masculine coding of the body politic, which… uses the male to represent the human" (Grosz, 1995: 106) is just one criticism of an out-dated and fanciful metaphorical model for a political system. Even in the 17thC when Hobbes was writing, the ordered, cohesive, hierarchical state was a dream, and not a reality, as court politics, warring factions, corruption and the influence of the ruling class have never allowed power to run smoothly from sovereign to subject. Grosz criticises the mis-match between the notion of a stable and concrete body and the reality of state processes:

> The statist representation of the body politic presumes an organised cohesive, integrated body, regulated by reason, as its ideal model. Such a model seems to problematize this cohesive understanding of the ordered body, and to produce instead a deranged body-image, a body frantic to be linked to and part of the network of flows, a body depleted, abandoned, and derelict insofar as it is cast outside these nets. (Grosz, 1995: 107)

A country cannot realistically sustain an image of itself of a body entire, sealed and separate from the countries surrounding it, as overt and submerged channels and routes link it with the rest of the world. Goods, information, intelligence and culture are exchanged daily across a multitude of transnational networks. In the modern global economy the nation state could not survive without these connections and links. This has particular relevance in the case of Britain and Europe, as the UK still considers itself in some way separate from the continent, often speculated to be due to our status as an island nation: the physical barrier has been strongly imprinted on our society and culture, although it is not clear where Britain's long imperial history would fit in. This feeds into the crisis of boundaries that characterises current discourses around national identity, and has become epitomised by the right wing press standing aghast at the country's "porous borders".

Grosz is also questioning the notion of an "organised cohesive, integrated body" and argues that the body is only given unity and cohesiveness "through the psychical and social inscription of the body's surface." She explains that the body is in fact "indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities that require social triggering". (Grosz, 1995: 104) The socially constructed body may not fit with Hobbes' vision of the body politic, but it is an effective way of figuring the nation today, which attempts to mark out a national identity through difference. What is part of the body politic is constituted by what is not.

Both Elizabeth Grosz and Joanna Zylinska explicitly link notions of the body politic with border anxiety, and the need to identify and regulate the bodies of its subjects; "its demand for identification and documentation relentlessly records and categorizes..." (Grosz, 1995: 107) Zylinksa echoes this point, and situates it within a "bio-politics of immigration" which is "performative in the sense of the term used by Butler; through the probing of human bodies, a boundary between legitimate and illegitimate members of the community is established." This process depends on an existing system that "classifies some bodies as 'genuine' and others (be it emaciated bodies of refugees squashed in lorries in which they have been smuggled to the 'West', or confined to the leaky Tampa ship hopelessly hovering off the shores of Australia) as 'bogus'." Zylinska suggests that "technology is mobilized to probe and scan the bare life of those wanting to penetrate the healthy body politic: through the use of fingerprinting, iris recognition and scanners in lorries travelling, for example, across the English Channel, the presence and legitimacy of 'asylum seekers' can be determined and fixed." (Zylinska, 2004: 526)

The key image that Zylinska identifies in her discussion of the "biopolitics of immigration" is the parasitic relationship with an otherwise healthy body politic, the "host community", or that of an invasion or infection. (Zylinska, 2004: 526) This is the language that occurs again and again in tabloid newspaper coverage of the 'immigration problem'. Sometimes directly, sometimes subtly, the image

that is evoked is of a host body overcome by a virus, invasion, or the strain of additional dependency on life-giving systems.

Saturation, influx and flood are the most regularly repeated features of immigration coverage, taking on almost comic proportions of hysteria in *The Daily Mail*: “The non-stop and unstoppable movement of Eastern European immigrants to Britain” [1] forms a “tidal wave of poorly skilled workers”, a veritable “INVASION OF IMMIGRANTS” [2] (their caps). The newspaper coverage seems to articulate a panic about an infrastructure bursting at the seams, or an immune system overwhelmed: “immigration has swollen Britain's population” and “we have no mechanisms for absorbing such a mix of people… Migrants are now arriving at very nearly one every minute. We cannot possibly integrate people into our society at such a pace...”[3] We are told that after 600,000 new arrivals in 2004, “the system was in chaos.”[4]

In addition to this imagery of a system that is swamped to the point of failure, there is the more direct correlation with disease, infection and sickness. Here are two of the most striking examples I found from recent years:

> “The thousands of infected immigrants who are arriving in Britain each year are doubling the rate of HIV, trebling the rate of TB, and increasing twentyfold the rate of hepatitis B. All of these are life-threatening diseases which could be, and in some cases have been, passed on to the host community.” (Browne, 2003: 12)

> “…many of these would-be visitors are HIV positive… not only would our already crumbling health service face yet more calls upon its limited resources but, inevitably, the disease itself would continue to spread… This Government has already presided over the near collapse of border controls in this country, causing social unrest, to say nothing of allowing dangerous men to these shores. Now a potential health risk is on the horizon.”[5]

It becomes unclear whether the disease is borne by the migrants, or the infection is immigration itself. In this light the “porous borders” of the UK take on a new, more visceral meaning. Although, as Brinker-Gabler says, “‘citizens’ create the ‘foreigner within’ as a scapegoat for disaffection, instability, poverty – all that is wrong with the imagined community” (Brinkler-Gabler, 1997: 8) that is, our domestic social problems are lain at the feet of an ‘Other’ within the community, there is also a very distinctive preoccupation with borders, boundaries and loss of control. The true fear is about who

[1] Bob Graham and Steve Doughty, *The Daily Mail*, December 30, 2006
[2] Graham Grant, *The Daily Mail*, December 29, 2006
[3] Andrew Green, *The Daily Mail*, April 21, 2007
[4] Bob Graham and Steve Doughty, *The Daily Mail*, December 30, 2006
[5] Leader column, *Sunday Express*, August 20, 2006

– or what – is getting in. In his consideration of Britain's ambiguous relationship with Europe, Philip Jenkins points out that many social problems that stimulated moral panics in the late 1980s and early1990s "such as serial murder, paedophilia, and child pornography" were seen as "dangerous importations" from Europe. Britain's increasing involvement in the European community created a "sense of exposure to foreign menaces that had hitherto been excluded, a point neatly symbolised by periodic panics over the threatened introduction of rabies from France or Belgium." (Jenkins, 1992: 30) To this I would add the BSE crisis, which was frequently said to have its origins on the continent.

c. Women, nation and migration

> Nationalism is "…constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse, and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power." (McLintock, 1993: 63)

> "Little sleeping beauty; Life for an immigrant rapist allowed to settle in Britain."[6]

Women play a very specific role in relation to nationalism and nationality, whether as citizens, migrant workers or illegal immigrants. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias in their influential work *Woman-Nation-State* identify several major ways in which women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes. Of these, the most relevant to the discourse of sex-trafficking is that women are the "reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups" and "signifiers of ethnic/national differences… a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories." (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989: 7)

The ways in which nationalist discourses are gendered are complex, but often feature the "historical positioning of women as mythologized symbols of the nation (as Marianne of France; Britannia; Mother Russia, Matka Polka and Mother Serbia…)" (Berman, 2003: 60) Particularly in times of national instability or conflict, rather than an implied male 'body politic', the nation is figured as a female body that must be defended from ravishment: "A defeated nation lies prostrate before its conqueror, the body impregnated by and with the enemy." However, Brinker-Gabler describes a surrendered nation in masculine terms: "in times of national trauma, the nation is a masculine body sapped of its lifeblood, corrupted by contaminating influences, weakened, stripped of its independence and autonomy, emasculated. In such times, threats to healthiness and purity of the body politic are identified with the 'foreign' or 'alien' within." (Brinker-Gabler, 1997: 15) This vivid image of the weakened, corrupted body politic links up directly with the image of disease and infection currently used to describe the immigrant 'invasion' of Britain.

[6] Headline of a news story about a Polish immigrant jailed for raping and beating a 25 year old woman, after breaking into her house while she slept. James Mills, *The Daily Mail*, November 29, 2005

Although women carry a heavy symbolic weight in discourses of national identity and ethnicity, they are often “excluded from direct action as national citizens” and “subsumed symbolically into the national body politics as its boundary and metaphoric limit: Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearer of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency.” (McLintock, 1993: 62) Or trans-national agency, for that matter. Women’s bodies are intimately bound up with the processes of state and nationalist discourse. Jeffrey argues that “the regulation of women’s bodies is an integral part of inscribing national/ethnic identities”, as women are “both the literal and figurative reproducers of the race (through biological reproduction and cultural reproduction, respectively)”. (Jeffrey, xx)

Although the ‘immigrant problem’ in the UK and its attendant threat to the body politic are frequently figured as male (or as Grosz pointed out above, male in substitution for the human) immigration flows to Europe are “on average slightly less than 50% female.” (Monzini, 2005: 58) Women migrate for diverse reasons. The model of female family migration following mass male labour migration eclipses the figure of the “active female migrant” (Kofman, 1999: 286) This is evident in British newspaper coverage, in which female migrants are not represented other than as victims of trafficking. Although neutral and female-dominated professions, such as factory work, kitchen assistants and care workers are mentioned occasionally, most articles use men as case studies, and the most popular examples of industries which have been ‘invaded’ by immigrants are traditionally male-dominated, such as construction workers, delivery men, plumbers, and electricians. Chapkis summarises this division, as trafficking victims are “described as vulnerable women and children forced from the safety of their home / homelands into gross sexual exploitation” in contrast with “economic migrants who are understood to be men who have wilfully violated national borders for individual gain.” (Chapkis, 2003: 924)

There are also vast numbers of women who cross international borders to work in the sex industry abroad, in fact, “half the women prostituting themselves in Europe are immigrants” (Monzini, 2005: 34) A proportion of these are victims of trafficking and coercion, but estimates vary, and of course some women who go abroad independently may gradually be inserted into the circuits of intensive exploitation. In spite of the numbers of women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation, and it is clear that at least some in this category have been literally kidnapped, there is a lot of evidence that women are almost as likely to be active economic migrants as men. In Belgium, a study showed that in 59% of cases, the trafficking recruiter approached the victim, but in 22% of cases, the victim approached the recruiter. (Monzini, 2005: 75) This has nothing to do with consent to be exploited, but everything to do with an attempt to improve their situation through emigration. Wendy Chapkis quotes a 1994 interview with Licia Brussa, director of the migrant prostitute project TAMPEP in Amsterdam: "The thing is, the women in general are absolutely not interested in being defined as victims. Even

those like Eastern European women who certainly qualify. Even when we can guarantee that if they submit a complaint against a trafficker or a pimp that they'll be given a shelter address, a temporary residency permit, and a welfare check, that doesn't address their real need. Their real need is to make money in any way they can." (Chapkis, 2003: 932)

4) Prostitution

Jeffrey explains that a full understanding of the current situation of sex-trafficking will not be possible until we acknowledge it's shared territory with discourses of prostitution and immigration. We must "recognize that prostitution is a symbolic terrain deeply embedded within gender and national constructions at precisely the point where the two identities intersect." (Jeffrey, xxiii) Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is intimately bound up with sexuality and nationality.

Prostitution is an unsettling concept for many because it "challenges an often assumed human desire to protect personal boundaries and guard body integrity." (Sharp, 2000: 287) But it also carries with it centuries of assumptions, expectations and attempts to control women's sexuality. There is a large body of criticism which suggests that the prostitute is a uniquely subversive subject position, which has historically been supremely disruptive of patriarchal discourses. The very word appears tainted: "It is the subject that no one wants to talk about. It makes politicians feel uneasy and it makes parents everywhere shudder. That subject is prostitution."[7] Fears of victimisation from women who have survived trafficking and sexual exploitation are not framed in terms of discrimination but of shame. Paul Goggins explains "You can't blame them for being scared of going home and ashamed of having been a prostitute."[8]

Although the varied forms of prostitution are largely unseen in the UK (the sex trade encompasses women working on the street, in brothels, saunas and massage parlours, escorts, dancers, hotels, and over the internet) there have been two large UK probability sample surveys of men aged 16-44 which asked about buying sex (Johnson et al, 1994 and Johnson et al, 2001). Whilst the numbers doubled over the ten year period, the actual numbers paying for sex remain a minority. In 2000, one in 29 men admitted buying sex, rising to one in 11 in London where the largest sex markets are concentrated (Ward et al, 2005). According to Paola Monzini, there has been "exponential growth in the number of women working for cheap rates in mass sectors of the market" across Europe. These women are "mostly newcomers not integrated into the host country and nearly always lacking residence permits." (Monzini, 2005: 37)

[7] Heather Ramsay, *The Mirror*, October 5, 2005
[8] Paul Goggins quoted in *The Mirror*, January 5, 2006

The numbers of foreign women working in UK prostitution have increased dramatically: the POPPY Project mapping report 'Sex in the City' (2004) shows evidence of 'off street' prostitution in all of the 33 London boroughs, with an estimated 80% of non British nationals working in brothels, saunas and massage parlours. 25% of the women mapped working in London's off-street sex industry were from Eastern Europe, 13% were from South East Asia, 12% from Western Europe and 2% from Africa. However, the majority of the women working in on-street prostitution are African Caribbean, British (both Black and white) or Irish. Substance misuse is a significant issue for women selling sex on the street.

Kelly documents this change: "in 1995 Balkan women were almost non-existent in [Central London], they now make up some 80% of the total" and claims that "a majority of these have been trafficked." (Kelly, 2000: 11 in Monzini, 2005: 51) The exact proportions are impossible to find, but Dutch police estimate 90% of female East-Central European prostitutes are brought there by traffickers. (Monzini, 2005: 51) 'Sex in the City' (2004) also points out that prostitution 'review' website PunterNet makes many references to women or agencies giving false information about where women are from, for example not acknowledging when women are from particular Eastern European countries, or from Thailand, two well-known areas of origin for trafficking in women:

> "Absolutely beautiful slim smiling blonde girl, says she's Swedish, more likely Latvia Lithuania Estonia - why are these girls ashamed of their country of origin, I'd prefer a Latvian to a Swede any day."
>
> "Gorgeous petite dark skinned Asian lady from "Singapore" but more likely Thailand. Very friendly girl. Normal massage followed by great oral." (POPPY Project, 2004: 18)

However, at a 1999 Home Office seminar, workers from health projects estimated that 5% of women working in the sex industry in London were trafficked. (Kelly, L. and Regan, L., 2000: 20) The real explosion of stories about sex-trafficking in the media has occurred since 2002, and this coverage, although it may be lurid and misleading has had an important impact on awareness of the problem.

Paola Monzini shows that it is not clear what the best approach to prostitution may be to protect women being sexually exploited. In countries where it is totally illegal, systems of exploitation benefit from the existing covert operations and "murky atmosphere." Monzini, 2005: 138) In places like Germany and the Netherlands, which take a regulatory approach to the sex trade, laws to protect women only apply to prostitutes with legal residence in the EU, so that migrant women from non-European countries "form a huge underground market". Monzini adds that in this model "one always finds two systems side by side; a 'healthy', controlled one, charging high prices, and a much cheaper

illegal one, invisible and totally uncontrolled, where the worst forms of exploitation are practised." (Monzini, 2005: 139-140)

The UK takes a broadly abolitionist stance, with initiatives such as tolerance zones, and a claim that the law is to protect women. Monzini points out that often, "the main objective is to contain prostitution (especially in relation to problems of public order and morality): that is, to defend the state more than to defend individuals that prostitute themselves." (Monzini, 2005: 140) This view is certainly borne out in newspaper coverage of Government proposal that women could work together in twos or threes in licensed brothels, to increase their safety. Despite the hysteria surrounding sex-trafficking at the time of this Govt proposal, the main focus of criticism was on potential problems with "nuisance neighbours" bringing the wrong "sort" of people to the neighbourhood.

Drawing on the work of experts and campaigners, Government figures and media coverage, there seems to be a great deal of confusion of the categories of migrant prostitution and human trafficking. As Wendy Chapkis points out, "conflation of migrant abuse, trafficking, and sex slavery is a common rhetorical device in anti-trafficking discourse." (Chapkis, 2003: 926) Critics suggest that it is as much the uniquely unsettling nature of international prostitution as moral outrage over the treatment of women which has stimulated what could be described as a 'moral panic' in the discourse of sex-trafficking.

From a sociological viewpoint, the panic may have its roots in the 'convergence' of two disruptive subject positions: prostitute and immigrant. As we have seen from the figures above, there is an undeniable overlap of the two categories, and the intensity of concern around 'sex-trafficking' may stem from their combined impact. "Convergence occurs" Hall explains, "when two or more activities are linked in the process of signification as to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them." The example he gives is 'student hooliganism'. For both components, their "stereotypical characteristics are already part of socially available knowledge." Put simply, prostitution is a domestic 'nuisance', but an international 'crisis', although one that can only be represented through a rigid narrative which establishes innocence. As Hall explains, "the net effect is amplification, not in the real events being described but in their threat potential for society." (Hall et al, 1978: 223) This can be seen in the rise of discourse around sex-trafficking, but also in the coverage itself, as the estimated numbers of women trafficked rise and rise. The victims become younger, the abuse more horrific.

We have already mentioned the problematic identity of the migrant, the 'foreigner within'. Jeffrey identifies a similar status for the prostitute. As the sexuality of women "can mark the very borders of the nation-state – its purity, the purity of the nation; its defilement, the defilement of the nation." In this context, "all women's sexuality can be viewed as at risk of 'foreign invasion,'" and the prostitute appears as a liminal figure as she seems "to seek out such invasion." (Jeffrey, xxii) Similarly to the

immigrant, “she is the internal ‘other’ that threatens the purity of the nation. The rise of the prostitute, in this formation, signals the loss of control over female sexuality and, therefore, is a harbinger of the disintegration of national culture and identity.” (Jeffrey, xxii) The active female migrant prostitute presents a tremendous symbolic threat to national integrity, as Berman points out “sex-trafficking discourses read foreign prostitutes — a category that conflates trafficked women, economic migrants and migrant sex workers — as a threat to the nation.” (Berman, 2003: 62) And yet without her the European sex industry would go bust.

The criteria of legitimate and illegitimate bodies, Zylinska’s “biopolitics of immigration” seems to be the key to containing or suppressing this threat. Illegal status brings harsh penalties, as “these women have violated sovereign state borders; as white and female and prostitutes, they equally transgress a European moral order in which women’s sexuality plays a pivotal role.” (Berman, 2003: 60) This view sheds light on the key themes of sex-trafficking discourses: women are strenuously shown to be innocent, and to have been passively transported across borders. The solution to their plight, the ‘happy ending’ of each individual story is deportation, through which they are restored to their proper place, no matter how dangerous it is, or how much they have risked to escape it.

It makes no sense to attempt to disentangle prostitution from sex trafficking. As Monzini points out, “it has become an economic system perfectly integrated into the wider circuit of prostitution.” (Monzini, 2005: 156) Equally the problematic common ground cannot be reduced to a simple story of innocent victims, nor one of guilty whores. The categories of ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’ themselves are meaningless constructions based on expectations of control over women’s sexuality, but the symbiotic relationship of media and public opinion depend heavily on them for the moral ‘kick’ in their coverage. The question of innocence or guilt hangs largely on the issue of consent, which Chapkis points out, has been a central problem in all discussions of prostitution. “Are all sex workers "victims," including those who consciously enter the trade? Are only those who are forced into prostitution "innocent" when faced with abuse?” (Chapkis, 2003: 928) What is often missing from discussions around the issue of consent, particularly with regards to human trafficking and the violation of national borders is a recognition that the brutal treatment meted out to women who are sexually exploited is a violation of their fundamental human rights, however they came to be in that position. “Depicting all sex workers as slaves only travesties the myriad, different experiences of sex work around the world. At the same time it theoretically confuses social *agency* and identity with social *context*.” (McLintock, 2003: 10)

Lisborg helpfully points out that, rather than a yes/no question, there is “…a continuum from voluntary prostitution to direct trafficking in women and forced migration.” (Lisborg, Anders, ??: 101) Jo Doezema similarly calls for discussion to move beyond the voluntary / forced dichotomy, but without labelling all women working in prostitution as victims of male violence. However, it remains

unclear the exact numbers of women who are caught in systems of sexual exploitation. What is clear is that a significant number would like help to escape, and not merely a plane ticket.

5) Sex trafficking

Because of the covert nature of human trafficking, its illegality and underground channels, a clear idea of the number of women who have been trafficked into Europe or the UK is almost impossible to discern. This uncertainty of scale is compounded by a wide variety of definitions of what exactly constitutes 'human trafficking', or 'sex trafficking'. As Wendy Chapkis explains: "In some accounts, all undocumented migrants assisted in their transit across national borders are counted as having been trafficked. In others, "trafficking" refers exclusively to victims of sexual slavery. In some instances, all migrant sex workers are defined as trafficking victims regardless of consent and conditions of labor; in still others, abusive conditions of employment or deceptive recruitment practices in the sex trade are emphasized." (Chapkis, 2003: 926) Chapkis highlights the confusion around the issue of consent and voluntary prostitution. As we have already seen, migrant women working in the sex trade are frequently included under the umbrella of 'victims of trafficking'. This is misleading not only in terms of estimated numbers, but also in terms of public perception of prostitution, in which 'voluntary' workers are seldom construed as victims. McLintock argues that "depicting all sex workers as slaves… theoretically confuses social *agency* and identity with social *context*" (McLintock, 2003: 10) by denying migrant women agency.

The most widely used definition in official documents and academic resources is that outlined in the 'Palermo' Protocol, in which "trafficking in persons" is taken to mean "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs." The subparagraph which follows this definition explains that any consent given by a trafficking victim is rendered meaningless if it is in combination with any of the above forms of coercion.

Like the definition above, most official materials focus of the recruitment side of trafficking (rather than, for example, the exploitation end) as it seems to be at the core of the definition. How women come to be exploited, not the ways in which they are. In 2003 the Home Office outlined five common patterns of recruitment of women into trafficking for sexual exploitation:

1. Complete coercion through abduction or kidnapping
2. Deception by offers of employment with no sex industry connotations
3. Deception through offers of marriage
4. Deception through offers of employment in entertainment, dancing etc
5. Deception about the conditions in which the women will undertake prostitution work

Weijers and Lap-Chew (1997: 99) in the GAATW report on human trafficking for sexual exploitation conclude that outright kidnap or abduction is very rare, and that the most common of these different forms of recruitment is deception about the conditions of sex work, particularly in countries with a legalized sex industry, such as the Netherlands and Germany. The shock that women receive is not always that they will be degraded prostitution but that they won't be receiving the benefits they have been promised, such as the ability to choose their clients, insist on safe sex or keep their earnings. For example, a trafficked woman interviewed by POPPY reported that "many of the women she worked with knew they were coming to work in the sex industry, but believed they would be independent, and did not know they would be held in debt bondage." (Dickson, 2003: 23)

The US State Dept estimates that 800,000 – 900,000 people are trafficked each year throughout the world, and 2-4 million people are trafficked within their national frontiers (Monzini, 2005: 50). The staggering figure for national trafficking (movement and exploitation within a country) is frequently quoted but seldom commented on, even though it far outstrips any figures suggested for international trafficking, which receives by far the most media coverage and political attention. This could be an example of the 'boundary crisis' and anxiety about national identity that afflicts the media in Western Europe.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that 500,000 women were trafficked into the EU in 1995, and other estimates suggest that, in 1990-1998, more than 253,000 women and girls were trafficked into the sex industry of the then 12 EU countries. Although the numbers of women working in prostitution is not a reliable guide to the number of women who have been trafficked, it is striking that the overall number of women in prostitution in these countries has grown to more than half a million. In Vienna, Austria, almost 70% of prostituted women come from Eastern Europe, and there are about 15,000 Russian and Eastern European women in Germany's red-light districts. (UNESCE, 2004)

In the region of South Eastern Europe, comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, 90% of foreign women in the sex business are alleged victims of trafficking, 10% to 15% of these women and girls are under the age of 18 years. The majority of victims are recruited in Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. The

women and girls are often initially trafficked on the local market. They are being moved from one place to another and after a while sold abroad. (HWWA, 2004)

As far as the UK is concerned - and it is only in recent years that human trafficking has been popularly understood as an issue on our doorstep, rather than something happening elsewhere – it was estimated in 2000 that up to 1,420 women per year are trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. (CWASU, Kelly and Regan, 2000). The figure was based solely on reported cases, and trafficking in people is understood by the police and by organisations that work with victims to be increasing exponentially. A Home Office report published in May said that about 4,000 trafficked women were thought to be in Britain for prostitution at any one time.

In December 2000, the UK signed the UN convention against transnational organized crime and the amendment, called the Palermo Protocol, describing how to prevent, to fight and how to punish human trafficking. The Palermo Protocol is an international agreement signed by 148 countries. These countries pledge to collaborate in the improvement of women's and children's life situations, in order to make them less vulnerable to exploitation. Improving legislation, educational efforts, social efforts and reducing poverty are all examples of strategies for fighting trafficking.

Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation was first criminalised in the UK under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Trafficking for other forms of exploitation became an offence in 2005 with the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004. However, as Richards points out "the recent criminalisation of trafficking in the UK does not specifically state measures to be undertaken to assist and protect victims." (Richards et al, 2006)

Offered in part as a remedy to this, the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking was published on Friday 23rd March 2007, the same day the United Kingdom signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, two years after it was opened for signatures. Campaigners and critics in the media speculated that the reason for the delay (in contrast to the UK's unswerving support of the Palermo Protocol) was the fact that the Convention stipulated a 30-day recovery period for victims of trafficking. Amid mounting criticism in 2006, Sandra Richards of the POPPY Project wrote that "the Home Office has been reluctant to offer such complementary protection due to their concerns that this could be a "pull factor" for women to access the UK." (Richards et al, 2006)

Campaigning groups such as Amnesty International UK, POPPY and End Violence Against Women are now calling for the UK to ratify the Convention, and implement the highest standards for all victims of trafficking (not only victims of sex trafficking). Research and best practice across the EU supports their call for a 90 day reflection period, rather than the minimum 30 days stated in the

convention, a 6 month renewable residency permit not only dependent on cooperation in prosecution, and appropriate support and accommodation with specialist providers to deal with victim needs. The sanctuary provided by a grant of asylum is an important part of combating trafficking in two ways: "First, it prevents the risk of repeat trafficking by not returning the victim to her country of origin. Second, it affords her the opportunity for a period of security, recovery and rehabilitation in the UK." (Richards et al, 2006) Currently the POPPY Project is the only dedicated safe house providing specialist support for victims of trafficking in London: it has 25 places.

6) White Slavery

"SEX SLAVE EPIDEMIC GRIPS BRITAIN"

This headline, from the *Daily Star*, October 13, 2005, is just one of many similar headlines from UK newspapers on the topic of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The primary discourse around sex trafficking has become one of moral outrage, of fear, xenophobia and titillation. Jacqueline Berman lists the components of the template news story, with reference to European and American media: "…accounts detail in emotive, graphic and titillating language crimes of trickery, kidnapping, physical and sexual violence and forced prostitution perpetrated against young, white women as they clandestinely and illegally cross state borders." (Berman, 2003: 40)

In the last few years, this story has been repeated and repeated, with minor changes and adaptions, but the key elements are almost always present. Newspapers frequently describe crimes as "unthinkable", "indescribable", "horrific" and in one instance "too vile to mention" (REF), and yet stories of 'sex slavery' have become a tabloid staple, becoming ever more lurid. Berman quotes Michel Foucault in her essay, and suggests there is a 'discursive verbosity' around human trafficking in the media. (Berman, 2003: 38) However, the effect is not limited to stories about trafficking: studies have shown a "high degree of selectivity" and a tendency for newspapers to "over-report" crimes involving sex. (Ditton and Duffy, 1983: 161)

There are several forms in which coverage of human trafficking occurs. The first is in straight news reportage (which tends to be clustered around police raids of brothels, releases of new statistics and research, or daring exposes of international sex rings). Then there are lengthy features about sex trafficking, which tend to feature interviews and case studies. Finally there are a number of comment pieces, which tend to focus on the 'root' of the problem, which is either loose border controls or the ubiquity of the sex industry, depending on whom you ask.

Jo Doezema compares the explosion of media coverage, dominated by a single narrative of deception and innocence, to the Victorian “white slavery” panic of the 1880s, identifying a number of similar themes in the media coverage, particularly the emphasis on the victim’s ‘innocence’, which she interprets as a device to make a distinction between legitimate victims and ‘guilty victims’: prostitutes. Doezema writes: “Only by removing all responsibility for her own condition from the prostitute could she be constructed as a victim… As with white slavery, 'innocence' is established in a number of ways: through stressing the 'victims' lack of knowledge of or unwillingness to accede to her fate; her youth -- equated with sexual unawareness and thus purity; and/or her poverty.” (Doezema, 2000: 33)

The publishing of a feature on "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" in the Pall Mall Gazette in 1885 is often credited as the birth of scandal journalism, and the similarity with today’s tabloid newspaper coverage is striking. Judith Walkowitz describes the ‘Maiden Tribute’: “In prurient detail, it documented the sale of "five pound" virgins to aristocratic old rakes, graphically describing the way, according to Gorham, the "daughters of the people" had been "snared, trapped and outraged either when under the influence of drugs or after prolonged struggle in a locked room"” (Walkowitz, 1980: 127) Below, gathered from my study of UK national newspapers between September 2005 and September 2007, are just a few examples of the traits that Doezema highlights, which appear in the 1880s and today.

The most obviously emphasised characteristic of the media victims is youth. In virtually all the coverage the age of the woman is stated, and case studies of teenagers place the age right at the start of the article. The few cases in which the woman was over 21 (the oldest was 36) stated the age in later paragraphs. My analysis of a sample of 316 articles (which excluded those focused on trafficking in children) showed that 68% (216) used the word “girl” to describe the trafficked women, and 59% (185) described the women as “young”. An undercover Sun journalist is “offered a pretty 18-year-old called Linda.” Her pimp “revealed she had lined up three sisters, aged 14, 15, and 17, whom she would like to traffic to Britain into the sex trade.”[9]

This example from the Sunday Express opens the article with the age of the victim: “Dana was just 15 when she was brought to Britain on the promise of a summer job selling ice creams in London's Hyde Park, but she ended up becoming a sex slave, forced to have sex with 50 men a week.”[10] Dana’s youth is emphasised by the childlike associations of ‘ice cream’ and her “summer job”, strongly evocative of school. Even “London’s Hyde Park” has a suggestion of a summer holiday. The journalist gleefully sets up a shocking contrast with her following enslavement.

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[9] Daniel Jones, *The People*, January 21, 2007
[10] Andrea Perry, *Sunday Express*, June 4, 2006

Part of the importance of emphasising the youth of the victims is the implication of their innocence. This is part of establishing their difference from women working voluntarily in prostitution: “desperately poor, deceived or abducted, drugged or beaten into compliance, with a blameless sexual past, she cannot have 'chosen' to be a prostitute.” (Doezema, 2000) But it is also a way of marking them out from illegal immigrants, who are treated with extreme hostility by the tabloid press. As Wendy Chapkis points out: “Innocence becomes a key element in separating the violated from violators” (Chapkis, 2003: 930) Plenty of articles in the sample described the women explicitly as innocent: “innocent women like Maria”[11], “innocents…abducted into slavery”[12]. However many others conjure the idea of innocence through stressing vulnerability, naivety and terror, in combination with youth. One of the most visually striking is a description of two “girls” like "frightened rabbits.”[13] Other articles make very direct reference to their victims sexual inexperience as a way to hammer home their moral purity and by implication their ‘deserving’ status: “Until then I'd never even seen stockings before... I was being told I would have to do things with strangers that I had never done with anyone but my husband.”[14] Similarly, before “pretty Erica”, a “20 year-old brunette” fell into the hands of “evil Albanian pimps” we are informed that she had “slept with only two men.”[15] A “16 year-old… virgin was forced to service dozens of punters a week.”[16]

Doezema highlights a subtle racism in the description of trafficking victims. Although a significant number of women are trafficked from Africa and South Asia, all but a tiny fraction of case studies and examples are Eastern European. Of the articles studied in the sample, 42% (133) mentioned “Eastern Europe(an)”. Most victims of trafficking are from Eastern Europe, but the endless list of Marias, Erica, Natashas, and Francescas are also a way to create a titillating image of suffering that is threaded with traces of colonial discourses, in which virginal white women are left thrillingly at the mercy of swarthy foreigners. A “tiny terrified blonde”[17] in the hands of an Albanian pimp. This is another typical example from *The Sun*: “MARIA sat shivering on the mattress where she had been forced to have sex with countless men. The redhead was being sold early this year to an undercover Sun reporter like an animal at a market by mobsters in Romania.”[18] Another journalist writes: “Back then the women for sale were mostly South Asian, Filipinas and Thai… But these new girls were blonde… And very young. Clearly export models from Eastern Europe had flooded the market, forcing up the quality.”[19]

[11] Oliver Harvey, *The Sun*, November 2, 2006
[12] Anon, *The Sun*, January 18, 2006
[13] Detective Constable Andy Justice, quoted in *The Mirror*, October 19, 2005
[14] Caroline Palmer, *The Sun*, November 16, 2005
[15] Jane Atkinson, *The News of the World*, August 26, 2006
[16] James Wickham, *The Star*, December 2, 2005
[17] Daniel Jones, *The People*, October 15, 2007
[18] Oliver Harvey, *The Sun*, November 2, 2006
[19] Janice Turner, *The Times*, December 3, 2005

There are also instances of journalists contrasting this modern form of slavery with the Transatlantic slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries. Denis MacShane insultingly writes: "We are facing a new slave trade, whose victims are tortured, terrified East European girls rather than Africans."[20] In fact the "new slave trade" includes large numbers of African women, but they are conveniently erased from the narrative.

Doezema also correctly identifies a narrative pattern of kidnap and deception, which, as we have seen above, negates the complex experiences and situations of trafficked women, many of whom are not simply snatched from their hometown. 59% (182) articles in the sample featured one or more of: kidnap(ped), abduct(ed), lure(d), trick(ed), dupe(d). Virtually all describe rapes, beatings, threats and other forms of coercion, and women are uniformly said to have been brought to Britain, with no admission of agency in their migration. The examples are endless: "They have been kidnapped, raped and abused before being exported"[21], "Women… are targeted by criminals who take them away from their home country and force them to work,"[22] "the tide of eastern European women being brought into Britain"[23], "duped into coming to Britain on the false promise of jobs as nannies or waitresses only to be forced into sex and brutality."[24] One example gives away its unease about women on the move, talking about vile "plots to ferry women into Britain"[25] as if they were inanimate cargo.

Only one article in 316 analysed mentioned national as well as international trafficking, although many reproduced the US Dept of State estimate of 2-4 million people that this effects. The focus stayed very firmly on women being dragged across international borders, supporting the idea that coverage of human trafficking is helping to articulate a British 'boundary crisis'. As Berman writes, "…the announced concern over the exploitation of women is haunted by a more visceral concern about border violations." (Berman, 2003: 42)

Berman also points out that the 'whiteness' of the victims of trafficking is in stark contrast with the emphatic foreign-ness of the traffickers: "The racial 'otherness' of these criminals adds to a sense of fear and panic over 'criminal networks' overrunning Europe and destroying, with lawlessness and immorality, 'our' (white) way of life." (Berman, 2003: 54) Newspapers covering trafficking convictions never fail to alert the readers to the traffickers' nationality or migrant status: "Ilir Barjami, a 25-year-old Kosovan", "Albanian Xhevahir Pisha", "Macedonian Shaban Maka…The illegal

[20] Denis MacShane, writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, January 3, 2006
[21] Campaigner Geraldine Rowley quoted in *The Daily Mail*, February 14, 2007
[22] Anon, *The Sun*, January 18, 2006
[23] David Harrison, *The Sunday Telegraph*, November 27, 2005
[24] Marie Woolf, Sophie Goodchild and Tom Anderson, *The Independent on Sunday*, October 9, 2005
[25] Tosin Sulaiman, *The Times*, September 28, 2005

immigrant has been told he will be deported on his release."[26] Another is "Lithuanian Emiljan Beqirat, 18 - who had been granted asylum to stay in the UK - was jailed for 16 years."[27]

The 'criminal networks' that Berman mentions are also present in the form of "Ultra-violent Albanian gangs"[28] and in one case, of a "Ruthless gang of Albanian brothers"[29], their brotherhood is emphasised, evoking fears of 'uncivilised' kinship structures, or a perverse form of 'family business'.

7) Analysis

There examples above bear out Doezema's thesis, that the core elements of the 19th Century 'white slavery' panic – youth, innocence, whiteness, border crossings and foreign criminals - are being repeated in today's coverage of sex-trafficking. The actual incidence of kidnap and sexual slavery in the 1880s have since been subject to scrutiny, and historians have highlighted the discrepancy between the reformers' view and the reality of prostitution, observing that

> the evidence of widespread involuntary prostitution of British girls in London and abroad is slim. During the 1870s and 1880s, officials and reformers were able to uncover a small traffic in women between Britain and the continent, although the women enticed into licensed brothels in Antwerp and Brussels were by no means the young innocents depicted in the sensational stories. Similarly, there undoubtedly were some child prostitutes on the streets of London, Liverpool, and elsewhere; most of these young girls were not victims of false entrapment, as the vignettes in the "Maiden Tribute" would suggest. (Walkowitz, 1980: 127)

Doezema argues that this too is a feature of modern 'white slavery' stories, although she takes pains to stress that she is not questioning that trafficking for sexual exploitation does occur, she questions the extent of conformity to the familiar narrative. The repetition of "the discursive foundations of 'white slavery'" for her suggests that "while incidents reported in accounts of 'trafficking' may be 'true', they may be at the same time mythical, to the extent that the events are (re)constructed in such a way as to conform to the framework established by the myth." (Doezema, 2000) This form of 'reconstruction' is certainly evident from closer reading of some of the articles, as aspects of the story are omitted or repositioned to maximise conformity to the 'white slavery' template.

For example, a recent headline in the Sunday Express screams "Influx of sex slaves hits UK". We are told that the Home Office is "struggling to cope with an influx of women immigrants who are being

[26] Andrea Perry, *Sunday Express*, June 4, 2006
[27] Lucy Thornton and Andy Lines, *The Mirror*, October 19, 2005
[28] Neil Chandler, *Sunday Star*, April 9, 2006
[29] James Wickham, *The Star*, December 2, 2005

forced into prostitution". However, several lines down we find the kernel of news the article has grown from: "Home Office figures about to be published will claim that 4,000 new foreign women join the UK sex trade every year."[30] The categories of migrant women working in the UK sex trade and victims of sex trafficking are collapsed into one without any word of explanation. In fact it is unknown how many of these women have been forced into prostitution. It is unlikely to be 100%. Berman summarizes the situation: "by constructing all migrant East European sex workers as a group of innocents in need of the protection of — but also deportation from — the state, these discourses work to affirm the place of the state in maintaining sovereign borders and quelling the anxiety created by European integration and globalization." (Berman, 2003: 50) "Rescue" and "remove", "protect" and "deport" are key terms the proximity of which illuminate the confusion in representations of human trafficking.

There is nothing new about the idea that newspaper coverage may have misrepresented a story or situation. The question is why the elements that constitute the 'white slavery' myth are continually emphasised. Doezema again looks for the context of the 1880s panic, and highlights the symbolic significance of women's sexuality:

> While the discourse on white slavery ostensibly was about the protection of women from (male) violence, to a large extent, the welfare of the 'white slaves' was peripheral to the discourse. A supposed threat to women's safety served as a marker of and metaphor for other fears, among them fear of women's growing independence, the breakdown of the family, and loss of national identity through the influx of immigrants. (Doezema, 2000)

Arguably the context is very similar to our own, particularly the final point, as explored above. The 'white slavery' narrative is a dramatisation of Britain's own anxieties about community integrity and national identity. Women, as the symbolic markers of national and ethnic difference, must be protected (read: controlled). However, for the moral panic over the brutal sexual exploitation of women to co-exist with a reasonably tolerant attitude to prostitution (embodied in the UK's abolitionist approach to policy) and a fear of overwhelming immigration, cultural representation must go to extraordinary lengths to establish distinctions and make the representational system cohere. Such as the difference between 'innocent' and 'guilty' women working in prostitution, and 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' foreign bodies.

Certainly my sample of newspaper coverage showed many journalists making an explicit connection between sex trafficking and the expansion of European Union, and the concerns of 'invasion' by immigrants that has become associated with it in the popular press: "The admission to the EU of Bulgaria and Romania means that we have even more porous borders with Belarus, the Ukraine and

[30] Michael Knapp, *Sunday Express*, May 6, 2007

Moldova, countries that are the source of many of the victims."[31] It is possible to read a subtext into this example, from David Davis MP. Eastern European countries are the source of the victims of sex-trafficking in that they are their countries of origin. In Doezema's reading of such coverage the anxiety created by extending the European community is also the source of the symbolic 'innocent' victims.

As an example of how pervasive the hastily erected categories of 'innocent victim', 'immigrant' and 'prostitute' are, despite their instability, Denise Marshall, who is director of the POPPY Project is quoted in an article saying: "These girls are victims but are too often dismissed as prostitutes and illegal immigrants."[32] The POPPY Project are experts in the field, and recognise in their research that the women most often in need of help fit into all three of these categories, which Denise Marshall seems to represent in this interview as a zero-sum game, although it appears her intention is to dissolve the categories.

A prime example of the fragility of these distinctions and the incoherence of the 'white slavery' story is found in this excerpt from an article in *The Guardian*, following widespread coverage of a daring raid on a brothel, in which were found 19 women of varying nationalities (including some women from Japan although they were described in some pieces simply as "Eastern European") who were being essentially kept prisoner. This piece appeared in *The Guardian* in the following week: "Six women who were rescued by police from a brothel during a high-profile operation last week… were due to be removed from the UK by immigration today..."[33] The women had their expulsion deferred following pressure from campaigners, but the juxtaposition of "rescued" with "removed" is very striking. Out of 19 women found, 6 were illegal immigrants who didn't say they had been trafficked. In under a week they were being sent 'home', despite having been held prisoner in a brothel surrounded by an electric fence for weeks or maybe months. The penalties are clearly very harsh for women that do not conform to the stereotypical 'innocent victim'.

The narrow path picked out by media coverage of sex-trafficking, veering between innocent and guilty, legitimate and illegitimate is echoed elsewhere in the discourse of trafficking. The Palermo Protocol is the most widely used definition of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, and as Monzini points out, it emphasises the "recruitment" rather than the "exploitation" phase, betraying an underlying focus on international border transgression, and the issue of how women came to be exploited. (Monzini, 2005: 50) This is the case in other areas of work to combat trafficking: "at an international level, the greatest energies are devoted to the issues of transport and enslavement" rather than the exploitation which occurs in destination countries. (Monzini, 2005: 157)

[31] David Davis MP, quoted in *The Daily Mail*, January 4, 2007
[32] Denise Marshall, Director of the Poppy Project, quoted in *The Sunday Telegraph*, November 13, 2005
[33] Audrey Gillan and Julie Bindel, *The Guardian*, October 5, 2005

In other areas of official anti-trafficking initiatives the story is the same. The Government-funded UK Human Trafficking Centre has a Frequently Asked Questions section on its website, and the second FAQ is “Do only prostitutes end up in trafficking rings?” The question itself contains the implication that prostitutes have somehow ‘asked for it’, and the “only” contains a subtle assumption that it will be more serious if other groups of women are involved. The answer bends over backwards to distinguish ‘prostitutes’ from innocent women:

> Many people think that all women who are trafficked are prostitutes. People also think prostitution is a glamorous life of romance, silk stockings and money. But the reality is far removed from this. Most women who are trafficked are forced into prostitution against their will. They are beaten, raped and abused. They go abroad based on false promises of good jobs and economic opportunities, often out of ambition to earn money and make a better life for their children and family. Some women go to escape abusive husbands. Some lack the education they need to find a good job. Others are professionals who can’t find work in their chosen profession. They are accountants, nurses and teachers. They are people just like you.

Although the answer does - in a way - explain that no, it is not only women already working in prostitution that are victims of trafficking, there are different routes into exploitation and that women have diverse reasons for wishing to migrate, the overwhelming impression is of someone trying to establish innocence. The value of this narrative for anti-trafficking campaigning and awareness-raising is clear, just as it was for Josephine Butler in the 1880s. It is easier to win sympathy for a cause if you can demonstrate easily that assistance is given to deserving victims. However there is a fine balance between strategic use of certain cases and myth-making which may be more harmful in the long run.

8) Problems. Why does this matter?

The tight focus on boundary violation and involuntary prostitution reduces a complex range of experiences and situations to one narrative, and creates a set of criteria for legitimate victimhood which excludes large numbers of migrant women working in the sex industry. Monzini points out that the women most heavily exploited by criminals have not all been kidnapped and raped: “their trajectory is often structurally more complex, so much so that it may at first appear contradictory, or hard to understand, for those who continue to think in terms of innocents brutally turned into ‘fallen women’.” Monzini, 2005: 71) Doezema agrees that “women who knowingly migrate to work in the sex industry and may encounter exploitation and abuse, are not considered to have a legitimate claim to the same sorts of human rights protections demanded for 'trafficking victims'” (Doezema, 2000) Sliding statistics and differing definitions make it difficult to know the number of women who fall into this category – according to the figures quoted above it could be that anywhere between 10% and 95%

of migrant women working in prostitution in Europe do not fit the 'white slavery' model, and as such are refused protection of their human rights.

Alarmingly, trafficking court cases often consider the sexual history and alleged character of the woman to determine the level of injury. For example, in Germany, "the penalty for trafficking is reduced when a the woman knew she was going to be a prostitute or is deemed 'not far from being a prostitute.' Other countries, including Columbia, Uganda, Canada, Japan, and Brazil have similar provisions (Weijers and Lap-Chew 1997: 128-130). When cases of trafficking are brought to court, defence lawyers attempt to discredit the victim by focusing on her sexual history, just as they do in rape trials in which the victims' "chastity status will determine the severity of the crime." Doezema's condemnation of "human rights organizations and bodies in the United Nations" that "seem content to let governments trample on the rights of sex workers as long as the morals of "innocent" women are protected" (Doezema, 1998: 46) recalls the infamous media treatment and police response to the Yorkshire Ripper murders in 1970s Britain, which virtually announced that the murder of a prostitute was less serious than the murder of a 'normal' woman.

Chapkis is in agreement with Doezema that "the law neither empowers most migrant prostitutes by protecting their rights as workers nor offers any assistance to the majority of abused sex workers interested in leaving the trade." (Chapkis, 2003: 929) They are a threat to a healthy body politic, and so horrifying as to be unrepresentable outside the 'white slavery' fairy tale. Sandra Dickson of the POPPY Project recognises the impact of the stereotype on the lives of real women:

> There is a need for training on the effective identification of trafficked women. Although POPPY have worked with women who fit the stereotype of a young Eastern European victim of kidnapping by an organised gang who is chained to a bed and regularly beaten, the reality for many trafficked women is more complex and less extreme. This should not mean that women are not able to access services when their human rights have been abused, as the law in the United Kingdom allows us to work with a wider range of women than the stereotypical trafficking victim. (Dickson, 2003: 50)

Another problem caused by the widespread use of the 'white slavery' myth is the way it feeds into anti-trafficking legislation, which, as we have seen, focuses strongly on returning trafficked women an illegal immigrants to their countries of origin, and not on protecting women. In effect this criminalises much of women's migration, and tighter border controls actually increase the likelihood that women will be trafficked and exploited. If the official routes are closed, then women (and men) will use illegal channels to cross international borders.

An example from my sample newspaper coverage illustrates the emphasis on restoring women to their rightful place in their own countries. It is the only 'happy ending' permitted in the discourse of sex-trafficking: "Police who recently staged a weeklong watch at Gatwick Airport spotted at least one woman a day suspected of being brought in for prostitution. They were given a warning for their own protection. Two had come from Lithuania on the promise of catering work. They got straight back on flights home."[34] As Jo Doezema points out, the 'white slavery' narrative in human trafficking is "ostensibly about protecting women, yet the underlying moral concerns are with controlling them." (Doezema, 2000)

Berman argues that treating human trafficking exclusively as a crime enables the State to demonstrate its efficacy in patrolling borders, repatriating illegals and punishing evil foreign criminals, in order to assuage the anxiety caused by globalisation and the expanding EU. Sex-trafficking discourses "reframe border transgression and immigration as cases of crime and kidnapping exclusively; relieve immigration of its most anxious and threatening attributes" in particular the unsettling spectre of the migrant prostitute. By extending the barriers faced by those who seek to move, the state "renders immigration more dangerous and costly to women while not necessarily hindering their movement nor capturing the traffickers who have committed crimes." (Berman, 2003: 43) The 'white slavery' myth in sex-trafficking discourses becomes a way to problematize immigration and justify anti-immigration policies, creating a "moral imperative to stop the flow of undocumented workers regardless of their desire to immigrate." (Chapkis, 2003: 926) The knock-on effect of this impacts on all immigrants, who are often received with hostility in their host country, and are given little incentive to integrate.

The attempt to nullify or contain the immigrant threat to the body politic which helps drive the repetition of the 'white slavery' myth exacerbates the anxiety and obsession with boundaries and national identity, creating widespread hysteria about criminal gangs who are "…violating the sovereign bodies of these women and the sovereign spaces of the nation-state." (Berman, 2003: 41) The focus on women increases the panic as Berman points out: "When women cease to maintain and in fact transgress the very borders they have been historically and discursively compelled to uphold, the veracity of and anxiety around boundaries becomes all the more acute." (Berman, 2003: 61) Moral panic is the bread and butter of many newspapers (*The Daily Mail* in particular has a reputation for outrage and fear-inducing tales of the evil among us) and although it is informed by public opinion it does little to dispel damaging stereotypes. As Walby explains: "The bringing together of media images and reality is a pernicious process, for it is rarely the case that the media recognise the inaccuracies of their images and hasten to correct any misrepresentations." (Walby et al, 1983: 95) The more the myth of 'white slavery' is repeated the more fixed it becomes in the minds of the readership, and because of its tone of moral outrage and proclaimed objective of protecting women it becomes difficult to

[34] Paul Malley, *Daily Star*, April 22, 2006

criticise. Deviating from the standard narrative, or questioning its validity can lead to accusations ranging from misogyny to ignorance and unpatriotic beliefs.

By conjuring a moral panic based on a discourse of innocence, border violations and kidnap, the media and the Government fail to engage with the risks and problems surrounding 'domestic' prostitution. This means that women working in prostitution continue to be failed by a State that does not offer them protection, but it also impedes progress in combating trafficking for sexual exploitation. Monzini criticises the "reticent behaviour" of international organisations, in which "the discussion of trafficking tries to skate around the difficult issue of prostitution." She argues persuasively that these forms of exploitation "could be better fought within their relevant framework – that is, the framework of prostitution." (Monzini, 2005: 157)

Accusing the media of hypocrisy is hardly original, or effective, but their important awareness-raising function around human trafficking is seriously undermined through the titillating descriptions of sexual violence which are commonplace in the tabloid press. Through carefully worded articles containing details and scenarios which are so common in pornography and erotica that they are familiar to mainstream audiences, newspapers are "presenting a popular sexual fantasy in a culturally acceptable manner" (Doezema, 2000) Because this appears in the guise of moral outrage they make a mockery of their own condemnation of criminals and their "vile" acts. Needless, voyeuristic erotic detail, such as a pimp ordering a girl to "reveal her 34C boobs"[35] or the description of "…lingerie-clad Francesca" watching "with dread as the man took off his clothes" occurring in the same breath as contempt for the "punters" who make use of these women makes for especially queasy reading. The readers derive a sexual frisson from the situation, but can remain morally superior to the men who actually went out and bought the woman's body. Trafficking victims embody the "erotic-pathetic" (Murray 1998: 60) and the vividly drawn abuse scenario has many superficial similarities with common fetishised power-play of slave and master, not to mention extreme versions of traditional gender relations.

While it is important for a culture to allow safe and consensual expression of diverse sexualities, recognise the sexual allure of taboo and acknowledge that it is impossible to fully police your own or anyone else's sexual fantasies, titillating coverage of real abuse blurs the lines between reality and fantasy. This is especially dangerous given that a significant proportion of the readership will visit prostitutes, and may well encounter women who have been trafficked. A recent study about men buying sex in East London found that a number of men believed that the women they visited gained sexual pleasure from them in addition to money. Julia O'Connell Davidson (1998) suggests that this 'fiction of mutuality' is a way in which men justify buying sex: if women are enjoying paid sex and apparently benefiting then there can be nothing wrong with the idea or the practice. (CWASU, 2007:

[35] Daniel Jones, *The People*, January 21, 2007

23) This shows that some "punters" already have difficulty distinguishing between genuine pleasure and simulated pleasure (that they have paid for), or are unwilling to acknowledge the difference.

Sex-trafficking will continue as long as there is high demand, and erotic use of the 'white slavery' myth sends confusing messages about sexual play and abuse. However it also reduces the likelihood that men – who are in the prime position to assist women, help service-providers identify them, and help police track down traffickers and pimps - will be able to correctly identify a victim of trafficking. Kelly et al point out that "men's capacity to choose and act has rarely been the subject of critical scrutiny. Responses of men in this sample showed that [some] simply presumed that so long as there was no incontrovertible, visible evidence of force, women were on an equal footing with them." (CWASU, 2007: 24) An example of this – and the fact that punters are aware of sex-trafficking – is highlighted in POPPY's report on the sex trade in London, which includes some illuminating excerpts from prostitute 'review' website, PunterNet: 'this flat is as good as anywhere - the girls here are well established pros and not East European sex slaves like in many of the other places.'[36] The flat he was recommending was a flat in which two of the trafficked women housed by the POPPY Project worked for four and two years respectively. They were both in this flat in the time period this was written.

Other entries on PunterNet show clearly that sometimes when men can tell when a woman has been coerced, they don't feel any obligation to take action:

> The girl was a robot - felt sorry for her kept thinking why is she doing this?... stripped then gave me 10 mins of hand job while looking the other way and jumping when I tried to touch her - she lay down trying to cover her tits… eventually I asked her to turn over, she said "dont understand english" so I gave up and we went back to the hand job - wanted her to get messy at least - when i came she desperately tried to point it away from herself and jumped up as if electrocuted. Why does she do it? I probably can guess - stick to the places I know next time.[37]

The POPPY Project report "Sex in the City" shows that it cannot be assumed or expected that the majority of punters will suddenly care that the women they are buying sex from are probably unhappy providing sexual services, so relying on men who buy sex to 'rescue' women in the sex industry could well be unsafe for women. (Dickson, 2004: 53)

The ubiquitous use of the phrase "sex slave" in the media to describe women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation – and 72% of articles in my sample contained it - has the effect of trivialising the issue, or reducing its emotional impact. The phrase is common in pornography and erotica, but it is also used frequently in mainstream culture, as a code for something a bit kinky, or a bit naughty. It has

[36] Quote from http://www.PunterNet.com/frs/fr_view.php?recnum=11021
[37] Quote from http://www.PunterNet.com/frs/fr_view.php?recnum=36412

more associations for the general public with the fluffy handcuffs that can be bought in any gift shop than with prostitution or bonded labour.

Other representational problems include the perpetuation of the age-old madonna / whore dichotomy, in which “'innocent girls' need protecting, 'bad women' who chose prostitution deserve all they get.” (Doezema, 2000) The template of ‘white slavery’ is also inherently racist, as African or Asian victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation make up just a tiny fraction of cases represented, although they are also present in large numbers. Looking at the number of articles and words per article in news coverage of two similar incidents captured in my newspaper sample gave this ‘invisibility’ very clear expression. In October 2005 19 women were ‘rescued’ from a prison-like brothel, most of whom were Eastern European. This story generated a total of 4047 words of new coverage in the newspapers I looked at. In May 2006, another 19 women were rescued in the same way from similar conditions, but these women were all from Malaysia, and this story received just 739 words of coverage. In addition to this the ‘white slavery’ myth revives another ancient stereotype as women are depicted solely as passive victims while instead “it is the criminals who are agentized and active perpetrators” (Berman, 2003: 41)

9) Conclusion

> Feminists should look critically at legislation… which relies heavily on narratives of female powerlessness and childlike sexual vulnerability. Certainly no one should be forced to trade sex or safety to survive. The relevant social response, however, demands more open borders, not bigger fences… Addressing the abuses of women working in and outside of the sex industry requires an acknowledgment that women can consent to both economically motivated migration and to sex. The possibility of that consent, however, should never be used to excuse violation: There are no guilty victims. (Chapkis, 2003: 935)

By studying a sample of UK national newspaper coverage I was able to confirm Jo Doezema’s thesis about the revival of the discursive foundations of the ‘white slavery’ myth and identify the ways that the ubiquity of the story and its features has created a narrative of legitimate victimhood which excludes active migrant women working in prostitution. Because of this, discourses of sex-trafficking obscure the complex structural, social and economic aspects of women’s migration, and nullify the threat to the integrity of the body politic represented both by the figure of the foreign female prostitute, and the invading male immigrant. The use of corporeal metaphor to describe this assault on the healthy body politic by unwanted ‘foreign bodies’ is widespread, and effective at inducing the kind of xenophobic hysteria which boosts the *Daily Mail*’s circulation figures. But I also set out to consider how the notion of the body politic could be used to illuminate our understanding of the

interrelationship between prostitution, immigration and trafficking, and perhaps act as an alternative model for sex-trafficking discourse.

Rather than the mythic narrative of innocence, kidnap and violation of borders, it is possible to figure the UK sex industry as a sexual "circulatory system" within the body politic, an existing circuit of underground networks and channels around which British and migrant women move and are moved. As Monzini points out, even within national borders, women working in prostitution "tend to live in a state of perpetual motion … the organization of their activity may involve constant movement between various towns and countries." (Monzini, 2005: 37) This model, in which sex trafficking could be construed as a form of metaphorical 'intravenous injection', allows for a realistic blurring of the boundaries between 'prostitute' and 'trafficking victim', recognises the multiple routes and flows into and out of exploitation, and does not force a division between migration, prostitution and trafficking. It presents a workable picture of the way that women working in prostitution voluntarily and those that are victims of coercion can coexist in the same system without both categories being collapsed into one. It also takes away the relentless focus on border transgressions and acknowledges the internal processes which often lead to the exploitation of women. The UK Government must realise that their efforts to help trafficking victims will be severely limited unless they begin to consider the protection of all women working in prostitution, and recognise that this includes British women as well as legal and illegal migrant women, and women who do fit the bill of 'innocent victims'.

The above quote from Wendy Chapkis forms an apt conclusion to my research, especially as she recognises that sex-trafficking discourses bring together feminist and right-wing campaigners on unstable ground. As a feminist, I think it is important to critically evaluate the representation of sex trafficking and how it is used, and balance the need for emotional impact with further exploitation of women. Establishing 'innocence' might help appeal to wavering supporters, but it is crucial to remember, as Chapkis says, "there are no guilty victims".

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