

**TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN
AND THE POLITICS OF MOBILITY IN EUROPE**

**HANDEL IN VROUWEN
EN DE POLITIEK VAN MOBILITEIT IN EUROPA**

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Utrecht
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus, Prof. dr. W. H. Gispen
ingevolge het besluit van het College voor Promoties
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op 17 november 2004 des middags te 12.45 uur

door

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geboren op 31 juli 1972 te Rijeka, Kroatië

FACULTEIT DER LETTEREN

Promotor: Prof. dr. Rosi Braidotti (Universiteit Utrecht)

This dissertation was financially supported by:

Open Society Institute, Budapest
Central European University Supplementary Grant, 1998

Open Society Institute, New York
Global Supplementary Grant, 2001, 2002

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Bonn
Short Term Research Grant, 2002

Karel Frederik Stichting, Fonds voor studie en bijzondere noden, Utrecht
Subsidie, 2002

Stichting Internationale Informatie en Communicatie, den Haag
Subsidie, 2002

Onderzoeksinstituut Geschiedenis en Cultuur, Letteren Faculteit, Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht
International PhD Scholarship, 2003, 2004

Acknowledgements

I have been told many times that writing a dissertation is a solitary occupation, a one-person show. Yet, if it were not for a number of people who generously shared their knowledge and time with me, I could not have written this PhD. First and foremost, I am thankful to the women who took part in this study and whose lives gave shape to this dissertation. I am especially grateful that they shared with me their stories, since these are the stories they were trying to forget.

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Rosi Braidotti, whose guidance and wisdom helped me to shape my material and look for the right theoretical tools. Her ability to identify the discontinuities in my writing continuously challenged my thinking; her critical passion and intellectual humour encouraged me to keep pushing the boundaries of my work. If it were not for her insightful comments, parts of this dissertation would have been quite unreadable. And, if it were not for her creative drive and immense generosity, the introductory chapter would have remained scattered. I would also like to thank all of my colleagues at Women's Studies graduate seminars in Utrecht and especially Rosemarie Buikema, Gloria Wekker, and Sarah Bracke. In and out the seminars they offered precious comments and insightful directions that helped me to navigate the intricacies of feminist theory. I am grateful to Rosemarie Buikema and Gloria Wekker who have read parts of an earlier version of this manuscript and helped me sharpen my ideas and critical tools. Sarah Bracke was my constant intellectual companion on this PhD journey. We started our PhDs together and finished them together. We supported and encouraged each other. And we shared the political passion for feminism as an oppositional project. I owe a great deal to Sarah's friendship and her critical intellectual and political wit. From the Women's Studies staff, I wish to thank Trude Oorschot for always being on the other side of the line, whether phone or email, and coming to my help whenever needed.

This study was deeply influenced by writings of Sandro Mezzadra and Julia O'Connell Davidson. Their work on migration, labour and sex work was a source of constant inspiration that allowed me to develop my theoretical and methodological tools. I was extremely lucky to have them as close and careful readers of my work. Sandro Mezzadra read all of my chapters when still in the draft form and understood, way before I did, where my PhD was going and what I was trying to say. Whether staying in Bologna, Buenos Aires or New York, he always made time to answer my inquiries and discuss my thoughts. In the midst of political meetings in Paris and Belgrade, he generously made space to meet me, and comment on the rewritten version of my chapter on migration and globalization. If it were not for his guidance, parts of this dissertation would still be inside me, wrestling to be released. Julia O'Connell Davidson helped me to make sense of prostitution. Her comments on the previous version of Chapter 3, and the bibliographical indications she gave me were crucial in guiding me through the feminist debate on prostitution. I owe great affection to Julia O'Connell Davidson for coming to my intellectual rescue when I was out and nearly down. Her encouragement and support helped me to carry on in the final stage of the dissertation.

Many other people have followed this dissertation and helped me to develop my ideas. I would like to thank Elspeth Guild and Nirmal Puwar for having read part of the manuscript and provided insightful comments. I wish also to thank scholars with whom I discussed my ideas at various stages of this dissertation, in particular Joanna Regulska, Avtar Brah, Marina Calloni and Bridget Anderson. I profited

greatly from the four months period I spent as a visiting scholar at International Women's University (*ifu*) in Hanover in 2000. Being part of the Project Area *Migration*, and leading the working group on 'Trafficking in women' helped me to develop my ideas at the initial stage of the PhD. I am also thankful for the invitations to present parts of this dissertation in various academic and artistic settings, and for the comments I received at Faculty of Communication Sciences, Genua University in 2000; NOISE European Summer School in Women's Studies in 2001 and 2002; Seminar *Beyond Contract? Borders, Bodies and Bonds*, University of Oxford in 2002; 'EuroSummit' Conference at *City of Women* Festival, Ljubljana in 2002; NEWR Workshop on Trafficking, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, University of Amsterdam in 2003; and Faculty of Political Sciences, Bologna University in 2004.

I received support from different institutions in various stages of this project: *Open Society Institute* financed the beginning years of this dissertation and *Onderzoeksinstituut Geschiedenis en Cultuur* the last ones. When at one point, in the midst of my dissertation, I was without funding, Paul Herfs from Utrecht University's *International Relations Office* took it upon himself to help me. I thank him for getting me the subsidies from *Karel Frederik Stichting* and *Stichting Internationale Informatie en Communicatie*. The grant I received from *DAAD* was crucial for my research in Germany. I also wish to thank OGC PhD coordinators Martine de Vos and Yolanda Rodriguez for their support and encouragement.

Many people from close and far jumped in when needed. I thank Simona and Paolo in Bologna for hosting me during my fieldwork; in Utrecht Chunghan took care of me while I was writing; I am grateful to everyone who helped in transcription of the interviews doing it for small money or for free; in particular I want to thank Tania Suspitsina in Ann Arbor who transcribed and translated the interview I conducted in Russian; I thank Sara Ahmed for coming to my help when libraries failed and for sending me as attachments all of her essays I needed for Chapter 5; when I had no access to the university library Ingrid Hoofd from far away Singapore downloaded the essays I needed and sent them via email; I am immensely thankful to all the friends who put time and energy into correcting my English and in particular to Diana Anders in Berkeley, Elena Basile in Toronto, Jennifer Petzen and Carla MacDougall in Berlin, Rebecca Nash in London, and Dont Rhine in LA. I also want to thank Manuela Bojadzijeve from *Kanak Attak* and Julia Carrington from *Open Society Justice Initiative* for letting me take time off from the research projects we are working on together so that I could finish this dissertation.

I started the writing process two years ago when I moved to Berlin. In Berlin I met a bunch of wonderful and special people who shared political and scholarly engagement with me, encouraged my work, and took care of me while I was writing. Most importantly, they make me dance and made me laugh. Of late, their favourite remark was: 'Finish that damn thing!' For all-around the clock support I thank the Kreuzberg *posse*, and in particular Esra Erdem, Berenice Hernandez Hernandez, Carma Lüdtkke, Heike Pisch, Tülin Duman, Fatma Tut, Eva Reichelt, PG Macioti and Kate. We all danced together to the music of Seda Guerses, Branka Letic, Neset Özevin, and Ipek Ipekcioglu. Thank you all. You make Kreuzberg such a special and precious place for me. You gave me a 'community' and a 'home'.

In Utrecht, Dragana Okolic and Felix Bettonvil were my 'home'. They opened their house to me and let me know that they are 'there', always. There is no greater gift. My parents and my brother back in Rijeka were of immense emotional support during all of these years. They are my true fortune.

The last person to be mentioned in the acknowledgments tends, more often than not, to be the one you wanted to mention first. Bettina Knaup was there for me in the most difficult periods, always making them bearable. Her care, her sense for beauty, and her love for good food brought me great joy. For her constant encouragement and trust in my abilities, I am immensely thankful.

Rutvica Andrijasevic
Utrecht, 26 August 2004

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Introduction: Issues and Perspectives

This dissertation examines the topic of ‘trafficking’ in women for the sex sector in Europe. The term trafficking is usually intended to signify transportation of persons by means of coercion or deception into exploitative and slavery-like conditions.¹ I approach the theme of trafficking from the perspective of women from ‘eastern’² Europe ‘trafficked’ into street prostitution to ‘western’³ Europe. Taking as its starting point the accounts of women who have reached Italy through trafficking networks, this dissertation critically assesses the conceptualisation of trafficking in the fields of current academic and political discourses. In particular, my work engages and challenges the categories of ‘victim’ and ‘organized crime’ as the main analytic framework within which trafficking is commonly discussed and researched. I propose instead to approach trafficking from the perspective of migration. Examining trafficking from the migration perspective allows, as I show in this dissertation, to broaden the interpretative framework as to propose a more nuanced analysis able to account for the complexities of the trafficking process.

Despite that fact that feminist migration scholarship has included trafficking under the heading of ‘sex related migration’ (Anthias 2000: 27), there is very little academic debate among feminist scholars on the status of ‘trafficked’ eastern European women as migrants. Among the studies from the feminist migration perspective, existing works include articles by Leyla Gülçür and Pinar İlkkaracan (2002), Gabriella Lazaridis (2001), and Lorenza Malucelli (2001). These works are country specific and discuss the situations of ‘trafficked’ women in Turkey, Greece

¹ While people might be trafficked for purposes of domestic work, prostitution, entertainment industry, agriculture, and construction work, the focus of my work is exclusively on trafficking for the sex sector. The inverted commas are used to indicate my criticism of term trafficking, which I develop in this thesis. In order not to burden the text with too many inverted commas and repetitions, from this point onwards trafficking for prostitution will appear simply as trafficking and without inverted commas.

² I use the terms eastern and western Europe to indicate distinct geo-political areas. I put them in inverted commas and do not capitalize the terms in order not to perpetuate images of two static blocks. In the post-1989 era, and especially at the moment of the European Union (EU) enlargement, this conceptualisation would be erroneous. From here on, western and eastern Europe will be used without inverted commas.

³ By ‘western Europe’ I mean the Europe of Schengen. The Europe of Schengen is comprised of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

and Italy respectively. I will provide an extensive overview of the relevant scholarship in each chapter.

My study –as I discuss in more detail in section 4 of this chapter— is based on fieldwork undertaken in Bologna between September 1999 and January 2000, with a group of twenty-five migrant women who arrived in Italy through trafficking networks, and have worked as street prostitutes under different degrees of confinement and in conditions of economic exploitation by one or more third parties. The respondents were aged between eighteen to twenty-five, and originated from various eastern European non-European Union (EU) candidate countries. Among the larger group of twenty-five women, I selected fifteen to conduct unstructured in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in Italian, Croatian and Russian. At the time of the interviews, none of the respondents still worked as street prostitute and all were struggling with questions pertaining to their new life arrangements – such as whether to return home or stay in Italy. Italy presents a unique field of study on this topic, since, together with Belgium, Italy is the only EU state to include in its immigration laws a specific clause that allows for social protection and legalization of trafficking victims. By investigating separately on the one hand the ways in which women came to trafficking and their journeys from countries of origin to Italy (i.e. the recruitment and travel phase of trafficking) and, on the other, the living and working conditions of third party controlled street prostitution, my study disputes the view of women as victims duped and coerced into trafficking. It points instead to the fact that entering trafficking networks was informed by women’s desire and demand for mobility; namely, by their migratory projects. I want to emphasize the extent to which issues of pursuit of social, financial and affective mobility play a role in the serious thinking and planning that my respondents put into migrating. In viewing ‘trafficked’ women as migrants and not as ‘victims’, my work brings to the fore women’s agency in the trafficking process. Moreover, by drawing attention to the agency of women, my analysis illustrates the ways in which women are constituted as gendered migrant subjects in the process of migration and prostitution. The question of ‘agency’ will therefore be crucial to my general thesis. This emphasis will bring me to clash with some of the established feminist positions of both trafficking and prostitution, notably the extent to which they stress the victim status of ‘trafficked’ women and the violence to which they are subjected. It is not my intention to deny the violence or the hardship involved in the trafficking issue, but rather to set it in a larger context, which will help me to do justice to the complexities involved in the case.

Examining trafficking from the vantage point of women’s lives also highlights the obstacles women encounter in the realization of their migratory projects. My analysis of women’s journeys and of the conditions that sustain their confinement in third party controlled prostitution attempts to illustrate the impact that mechanism of

control of migrants' mobility have on the lives of 'trafficked' women. In this respect, I investigate the ways in which border and immigration regimes create the conditions for existence of trafficking and for exploitation of women's labour in prostitution. I want to try to demonstrate the hypothesis that women's struggles to achieve mobility, whether in terms of labour, geographical, or social mobility are obscured by current conceptualisation of 'trafficked' women as victims. Trafficking rhetoric and the category of the victim stabilize, I argue, the changes brought by 'eastern' European women's migration. At the same time, they 'normalize' divisions and exclusion produced by the European Union's border and migration regimes. By mapping the struggles surrounding the issue of mobility, my work argues for a link between trafficking and the current redefinition of European spaces and peoples. Far from being a simple narrative of criminals and victims, my work will show that trafficking is a complex construction articulated across material and symbolic terrains. Hence, this dissertation documents, explores and examines the ways in which the representation of trafficking along the criminal-victim nexus is implicated in sanctioning the membership in the European community and consequently in establishing the material and symbolic boundaries of the European citizenship in the making.

Consequently, instead of adopting the general term 'trafficking in human beings' as in the legal definition of trafficking, my work makes use of the term 'trafficking in women' not simply because the vast majority of trafficked people are women (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997) but because, as feminist scholars have shown, the words 'human' and 'woman' are not interchangeable. In fact, the expression 'human trafficking' performs a conceptual collapsing which overlooks the dissymmetry of gender relations and the specificity of migrant women's experiences. From this perspective, my work will show, trafficking emerges as part of the gendered political economy of migration in Europe.

Developing a Methodology

In order to investigate the complexity of trafficking across discursive and material terrains, in this dissertation I develop a methodology that rests on two main discursive categories: women's narratives and representation analysis.

Women's Narratives. Women's narratives and their subjectivities constitute the very basis of this dissertation. As such, this dissertation has a strong empirical grounding: it is embedded in, and organized around, the narratives of women 'trafficked' from various states of eastern Europe to Italy. Even though trafficking of women from

eastern Europe to various EU states has now come under the attention of the media, policy makers and scholars, women's accounts are rarely featured as a valuable knowledge source about trafficking. Women's narratives become, in my work, the basis for a re-conceptualization of the phenomenon known as 'trafficking'. They offer insights into how women come to trafficking networks and how their labour in prostitution is managed within those networks. Consequently, women's accounts provided me with the lead and direction in 'unpacking' the current trafficking rhetoric. In proposing to (re)think trafficking from accounts of women's lives, I draw upon feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory intervenes into the realm of knowledge production and proposes to take women's lives as a starting point for observations and theory. Looking at the world from the perspective of women's lives, according to Sandra Harding (1991), generates new insights into the complexity of the social world and thus functions as a critique of dominant knowledge claims. Standpoint epistemologies engage and alter the conceptual schemes upon which the dominant knowledge claims are based. In this respect, thinking from women's lives as regards to trafficking entails a methodological and epistemological endeavour where redefining trafficking goes hand in hand with establishing women's lives as a knowledge-generating source on matters of trafficking.

Such a methodological project does not represent mere reflections on women's experiences or testimonial recording of women's voices. Rather, it approaches women's narratives as a site for investigating production of subject. My study illustrates that women are not simply victims of traffickers or oppressed by larger structural forces. Rather, they are constituted as subjects within this process. Understanding such a claim calls for a short introduction to a Foucauldian notion of the subject. Although subjects are constituted and shaped by external forces, far from being simply oppressive this process is also generative. In fact, the ways in which women respond to and negotiate the effects external forces produce on their lives may offer means of agency and empowerment in their everyday lives. Power operates, as Foucault writes, as 'an action upon action' (1983: 220) and therefore needs to be understood as a double structure of potestas and potentia. This is a non-dialectical mode, meaning that the same event/experience can reverse – or unfold – into different effects of subjectivization. For example, tightening of immigration regulations and reduction of legal channels of migration, in combination with economic interest of third parties who organize 'illegal' migration, consign women to the sectors of economy where they are then exploited. Migrant women thus suffer and experience the effects of economic exploitation and social marginalization. However, they also resist the larger structural forces by responding to, and negotiating the conditions of their oppression. For example, they establish relationships with Italian men or pursue legalization as a way of changing their status, achieving social inclusion, and gaining

social and legal mobility. Women's active desire to improve their social-economic situation, a great capacity to love (family, children, friends, men), a vision for their future, entrepreneurial spirit, relatively high earning capability, intelligence in reading and understanding institutional practices and constraints, smart use of rules and regulations, street-wise approach to finding right and useful contacts, and physical courage and endurance is what I identify as agency in this dissertation. The term agency is not characteristic of a Foucauldian subject but is here borrowed from the Frankfurt School and from Anglo-American moral theory. Contrary to the concept of women as 'victims' where the workings of larger structural forces are seen exclusively as oppressive, 'agency' allows identifying the ways in which women intervene against the ways in which structural inequalities shape their daily lives. In her reflection on agency, Lata Mani argues the following:

The discourse of women as victims has been invaluable to feminism in pointing to the systematic character of gender domination. But if not employed with care, or in conjunction with a dynamic concept of agency, it leaves us with reductive representations of women as primarily beings who are passive and acted upon ... [It is important] to engage simultaneously with women's systematic subordination and the ways in which they negotiate oppressive, even determining, social conditions ... [and to begin] from conviction that structures of domination are best understood if we can grasp how we remain agents even in the moments in which we are being intimately, viciously oppressed (in Andermahr et al 2000: 14).

In pointing to the need to take women's agency into account, my analysis aims at highlighting 'trafficking' as a process of subject formation. It is possible to account for this process, and therefore also for women's experience of 'trafficking', only by documenting women's construction as subjects in relation to both oppressive and generative workings of power.

However, the forms of resistance that migrant women deploy to counter structural or institutional power, do not necessarily abolish inequalities but may also re-install and intensify hierarchies among women. For example, as I will illustrate in Chapter 4, in pursuing social inclusion through disavowing prostitution, migrant women recuperate the binary opposition between 'whores' and 'proper' women, and consequently identify other women with the former category and themselves with the latter. This, I argue, is not an example of false consciousness but rather points to what Judith Butler calls the 'bind of agency' (1997), namely a simultaneous 'resistance' and 'recuperation' of power. Recognizing that women 'recuperate' power and re-create hierarchies among women does not mean delegitimising the feminist political agenda. Instead, it means making space for complexities and contradictions constitutive of the process of subject formation and consequently complex feminist

thinking on the matters of trafficking. Returning to the above-discussed example, women's recuperation of the 'whore' – 'proper' woman dualism indicates that the subject cannot be completely removed from the processes of its construction, namely that women are inevitably positioned within, and position themselves in relation to, the discursive binary structure of prostitution that identifies women either as victims or whores. Yet, in the effort to make sense of their experience women constantly negotiate the two positions and, in the process of doing so, re-arrange the category of femininity. On the one hand, this means that –as I indicated above— that power is both disabling and enabling. On the other, this example illustrates that even though bound by the discursive structures that constituted them, subjects also exceed and thus re-shape these structures. This complex and contradictory process of subject formation is what I identify as the process of subjectivization in this dissertation. By insisting on viewing 'trafficking' as a process of subject formation and examining the agency 'trafficked' women enact, my aim is not to elect 'trafficked' women to the position of feminist heroines. Rather, I want to extend the scholarly analysis of trafficking beyond the discussion that positions women as victims or agents on the basis whether they have been forced or have 'chosen' prostitution. By doing so, I wish to bring to the fore the ways in which women's gendered selves are (re)constituted in the process of prostitution and migration. While subject level of analysis has not yet been applied to the study of trafficking, my work suggests that this type of approach may engender new insights into trafficking in general and 'trafficked' women's lives in particular.

Representation analysis. It is hardly possible to understand the effects of current trafficking policies and rhetoric without examining trafficking at the level of representation. In Chapter 5, I scrutinize the representation of trafficking in International Organization for Migration's (IOM) counter-trafficking campaigns in eastern Europe. IOM is one of the most important actors in developing information campaigns on trafficking Europe-wide, as well as in advising governments how to counter trafficking. To this end, I use semiotic analysis as the main methodological tool. Starting in late 1990s, IOM has launched a number of counter-trafficking campaigns all across eastern European space, the region of departure and transit of trafficked women. The campaigns are meant to warn potential women migrants about the dangers of migration and prostitution and empower them to make informed choices concerning work and travel. To this end, the campaigns resort to victimizing images of female bodies. Focusing on the visual images of these campaigns, I will show that these campaigns do not simply give information about trafficking but rather produce a very specific representation and meaning of trafficking. This meaning is produced by representational strategies that construct victimizing images of women's bodies and

render these bodies passive objects of male violence and gaze. This representation, as I will show, reinstalls traditional representations of 'eastern European' women's femininity. Looking at the representation of trafficked women's bodies is crucial, I argue, in understanding the ways in which the current portrayal of trafficked women enacts a discursive containment that hinders trafficked women's agency and subjectivity.

Representation of women as victims, as my work suggests, needs to be understood in relation to the issue of citizenship and belonging in the frame of the EU. I will show how these issues relate by paying attention to the process of racialisation, namely by looking at the ways in which 'whiteness' of eastern European women is emphasized repeatedly (Berman 2003). This construction positions eastern European women as racially indistinguishable from 'European' women (i.e. they are also 'white') while, at the same time, it differentiates them from their European counterparts by identifying trafficked women as victims of patriarchal social relations. I will discuss how such a construction is integral to the construction of the dominant identity of those who are in the charge of excluding them, and therefore implicated in sanctioning entitlement in the European community.

This dissertation, as the plurality of above described methodological approaches suggests, offers a cartography of trafficking. A cartography, Rosi Braidotti writes, is a 'theoretically-based and politically-informed reading of the present' (2002: 2). The cartographic approach elaborated by Braidotti is adopted here as a main methodological strategy due to its ability to provide 'both exegetical tools and creative theoretical alternatives' (ibid.). Such an approach allows for an innovative and original reading of trafficking. In my work, the apparently solid rhetoric of trafficking articulated around victim-criminal binary gets unpacked through a plurality of methodological and theoretical approaches. Once the complexity of trafficking as both a lived 'reality' and discursive construction is established, the criminal-victim binary becomes too narrow to comprehend trafficking in its multiple aspects. Once the interpretative framework within which understanding trafficking is broadened, the issue of trafficking emerges as inseparably linked to the process of defining the borders of belonging and citizenship in the enlarged European community. In this changing landscape, mobility emerges as a key concept with which to examine the undergoing social, political and symbolic re-organization of the European space. Institutional practices aimed at containing/controlling migrants (labour) mobility on the one hand, and migrant women's subjective claims for, and struggles to achieve labour and social mobility on the other, bring to the fore the tensions within the category of European citizenship. In fact, as I will argue in this dissertation, my work suggests that European citizenship in the making is being shaped through a constant

interaction and conflict between institutional codification of citizenship and migrant women's practices of citizenship. Far from being simply a juridical formulation or an institution, citizenship is –as migrant women's lives indicate— a social practice and as such it is shaped through/by social struggle. In order to identify these dynamics, I develop new methodological and theoretical framework able to account adequately for complexity and changes taking place in Europe today. Trafficking, in my analysis becomes a site where it is possible to observe the struggle over European citizenship as it accompanies the formation of the 'new' Europe.

Fieldwork Considerations and Interviews

Given the empirical grounding of my dissertation, I devote the next two sections to the description of my work in the field and to the identification of the target group.

My research is grounded in unstructured open-ended interviews I conducted in Bologna (Italy) between September 1999 and January 2000. Over a decade, the city has housed several innovative projects on trafficking, such as the outreach street project *Moonlight*, and *Progetto Delta*, the latter focused on social protection and/or voluntary repatriation of trafficking victims. During the five-month period, I was hosted by Women's Shelter⁴ in Bologna –part of the *Progetto Delta*—where I worked as a 'social worker'⁵ in the project assisting migrant women who arrived in Italy via trafficking networks and worked in street prostitution. Working as a consultant was not new to me. I had, in fact, worked in the very same project during the years 1995 and 1996, the period when I first become interested in the topic of trafficking. Returning to work in a Women's Shelter as a consultant allowed me, on the one hand, to finance my fieldwork and, on the other hand, to return to the institutional context I was already familiar with. Most importantly, it provided me with access to migrant women from eastern Europe who have exited prostitution and were hosted by the

⁴ The full name in Italian is *Casa delle donne per non subire violenza*. I am grateful to Elsa Antonioni for all the inspiration and support during my fieldwork months.

⁵ The English term 'social worker' does not quite convey the meaning of the Italian word 'operatrice'. In the social sphere, 'operatore/operatrice' is usually a flexible and precarious worker who does not have a 'classical' formation of a social worker but instead a shorter theoretical formation and practical training for a particular type of work. During my undergraduate university years I spent at the University of Trieste (Italy), I have trained as 'operatrice' at the facilities of the ex-psychiatric hospital in Trieste –known for their struggle for the closure of the hospitals, reform of the psychiatric system and affiliation to Franco Basaglia's teachings. The training I received in Trieste opened doors for me in terms of the jobs I was offered which allowed me earn enough to cover my living expenses and complete my studies in Modern European Literatures. I worked in a day-care center for women with psychiatric problems, did home assistance for women with post-partum depression, accompanied young girls to see their parents during the prison visits, worked in refugee camps in Croatia during the conflict years, and then worked in Bologna's women's shelter on a project aimed at assisting women who have reached Italy though trafficking networks and have worked in street prostitution under the control of third parties.

Shelter while deciding whether to return to their countries of origin or stay in Italy. Since some of the women had been with the Shelter for several months when I met them, working in the shelter meant having the possibility to follow their process of legalization and their struggles in finding employment during and after legalization procedure. Having conducted interviews in the period following women's exit from street prostitution, and being present while they were taking part in the program of social protection or/and were struggling to arrange housing or work, offered insight into the processes the respondents engaged and negotiated upon exiting street prostitution. In this way, I could access data that allowed me to move beyond discussion on exploitation of prostitution in regards to trafficking commonly found on scholarship on trafficking, and advance an analysis of the process of constitution of women's subjectivities.

During the fieldwork, I collected accounts of twenty-five migrant women and conducted unstructured in-depth interviews with fifteen of them. In the in-depth interviews, which consisted of unstructured open-ended questions about the life history of subjects, women tell their stories about migration, work in street prostitution, community relations and settlement in Italy. All of the interviews were taped, fully transcribed and ranged from one-and-a-half to three hours in length. The difference between total numbers of women spoken to and finally interviewed is due to a number of factors. If, after having exited the third party controlled street prostitution, migrant women decided to return to their countries of origin, there was materially no time to conduct an interview with them. Most of their days were then occupied by police interrogation, medical checks and arrangement of travel documents. Language often represented a barrier in conducting interviews since I needed to arrange for a translator from Russian, Rumanian or Moldavian. The lack of time and the difficulty of communicating also made it difficult to establish a relationship of trust with a number of women and thus limited the number of in-depth interviews I did. Given these factors, the fifteen interviews were conducted with two groups of women. First, with women who, after exiting street prostitution and before returning home, stayed in Italy for several weeks. Second, with women who decided to stay in Italy and were busy arranging their permanence. This longer span of time allowed me to build a relationship of trust with women and conduct the interviews in Italian spoken by most of the respondents who were planning to stay in Italy. Having more time also gave me the possibility to arrange for a translator when necessary.⁶

Interviewing migrant women several months after they exited prostitution represented an advantage in terms of language and in having insight into the ways the respondents negotiated their permanence in Italy. However, it also constituted a

⁶ Out of fifteen interviews, I conducted one in Croatian, one in Russian and the rest in Italian.

considerable difficulty when it came to inquiring about their work in street prostitution whether under the control of a third party or independent. The respondents were reluctant to recall and/or speak of street work and stressed that this is a part of their life they would like to forget. The difficulty of gathering narratives of women who do sex work was recorded by other researchers as well, as for example Lorraine Nencel (2000) who, in her research on prostitution in Peru, undertook a year of participant observation without being able to conduct any interviews. Women she encountered during her fieldwork were not willing to speak in an interview situation about sex work in order not to be reminded of ‘what [they are] and what [they] do’ (112). As far as trafficking is concerned, interviewing women in the sex industry is particularly difficult since migrant women often work in situations of control and confinement imposed upon them by third parties. In fact, until recently interviews with trafficked women –except in two-sentence-short testimonial format—did not feature among the scholarly literature on trafficking in Europe.

The difficulty of gathering women’s narratives while they worked in street prostitution and the limited results consisting of short conversations (cfr. Corso and Landi 1998), meant that researchers opted for approaching migrant women once they have left prostitution. Even then, the access to women who have exited trafficking systems might be quite complicated since mediated by the NGOs, or the police running the facilities where women are located. This situation can result in paradoxical and methodologically quite problematic situations. For example, when the Stichting Tegen Vrouwenhandel (STV),⁷ the main (feminist) NGO working on assisting trafficked victims and the sole organisation with centralised data on trafficked women in the Netherlands stepped out from a major EU sponsored study on trafficking in women, the two researchers were faced with a lack of data and impossibility to access the target group (cfr. Hopkins and Nijboer 2003, Payoke et al 2003). In order to conduct the study, the researchers resorted to the police channels and gained access to five so-called ‘reception centres’ where victims of trafficking, along with other undocumented migrants, were detained. This resulted in a paradoxical situation in which, while residing at the detention centres for ‘illegals’ and awaiting the decision whether they will be allowed to stay in Holland or deported to their countries of origin, undocumented migrant women trafficked to the Netherlands were interviewed in regards to the ways they have reached the country. This fieldwork situation is methodologically problematic because if the women had failed to present themselves as victims of severe exploitation and in need of state protection, they could have jeopardized their already slim chances of being granted the right to stay in the Netherlands as trafficking victims.

⁷ The English translation of the name is The Foundation Against Trafficking in Women. The Foundation is based in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

As in other research situations where studies were based on interviews with ‘trafficked’ women (cfr. Carchedi at al 2000, Maluccelli 2001, Payoke at al. 2003), my access to the respondents was mediated by an NGO, namely by Bologna Women’s Shelter. While working at the shelter provided me with ‘access’ the group of women I wished to interview, it also imposed limits to my work especially when it came to conducting in-depth interviews. Working as a ‘social worker’ at the Shelter meant that at times I would conduct intake talks with migrant women who had just exited third party controlled prostitution. This meant reconstructing with them the story of how they reached Italy, discussing whether they preferred to return home or remain in Italy, looking into the possibilities of realizing the option they preferred, and finally arranging the formalities concerning their housing for the necessary period of time. Having done the intake talk with me, some women were puzzled and did not immediately understand the purpose of doing yet another interview. Additionally, the double role of a social worker and a researcher was on one occasion a ground for confusion that transformed a situation of a ‘fieldwork-interview’ into a ‘social worker-consultation’ session.

In order to reduce as much as possible the confusion of roles, I decided not to do in-depth interviews with women with whom I did intake talks. I also limited the intake talks to the initial period of my fieldwork during which I familiarized myself with the landscape in which women moved (i.e. their points of reference) and the vocabulary they used. For example, the respondents rarely –if ever–used the word ‘prostitute’. Instead, they would refer to prostitution as ‘the street’, ‘work’, or ‘hmm’. During the initial months, I learned to understand migrant women’s vocabulary when it came to prostitution and was careful not to impose my own. How women saw themselves in relation to prostitution determined my choice of terminology. Since women went to great efforts to distance themselves from prostitution, I felt it would be inappropriate to name them sex workers. When it comes to naming of type of work women performed, I do not differentiate between prostitution and sex work and use both terms to indicate a labouring activity which involves an exchange of sexual services for money or other goods or services.

Learning the vocabulary women used meant devoting large spaces to participant-observation. This entailed visiting the apartment in which the women were accommodated on daily basis;⁸ participating in women’s daily activities such as shopping, cooking, informal chats; assisting them in looking for a job and handing the matters with foreigners’ police; helping out with Italian language in particular when something needed to be put in written form; babysitting when necessary; hanging out

⁸ The spaces of the Shelter were differentiated between the office space (where one would do intake talks) and the apartment (which location was secret due to matters of safety) where a number of women were living for longer or shorter period of time.

in bars from time to time; and, finally, being a source of information (and curiosity) with regards to immigration procedures concerning travelling and working in EU countries other than Italy. In order to diversify the sample of women and not to interview only those women accommodated in the Shelter, I used the so-called snowball method and approached women who were in the past assisted legally by the Shelter but never lived in its facility, as well as those women who were not assisted by the Shelter in any way.

Being unfamiliar with the spaces of prostitution, I spoke with experts and well as with the outreach unit (Unità di strada) in order to understand better how the zones of prostitution are organized in the city. I visited some of the facilities, such as hotels, in which migrant women lived while working in street prostitution, and the bars where they gathered in between shifts. I tried to visit the Calderara Residence, a large private six floor-housing complex on the outskirts of the city of Bologna where most of the respondents lived while in street prostitution. I was however discouraged after having heard of a Moldavian translator who worked for an anti-trafficking NGO and whom the foreigners' police suspected of being connected to the trafficking networks. While I regarded this story to be a 'city-legend', I nevertheless felt 'vulnerable' due to my immigration status,⁹ and opted for not venturing into spaces under constant police control. As to safeguard the safety and privacy of the respondents, all the names have been altered and the dates on the legal documents, which could facilitate respondents' identifications, have been omitted.

These interviews constitute, on the one hand, a rich and multifaceted source of data in regards to the processes of migration and labour organization within the trafficking system. On the other, they generate insights into the ways in which women are constituted as subjects during these processes. My dissertation offers a new reading of 'trafficking' which moves beyond the debate of victimhood and criminality, and looks at how women's gendered selves are (re)constituted in the process of migration.

Characteristics of the sample

The fifteen migrant women with whom I conducted in-depth interviews were aged between eighteen and twenty-five. My data concurs with other studies, which indicate that migrant women from eastern European space who have arrived to the EU via

⁹ I am a Croatian citizen residing currently in the Netherlands. Since my residence permit expired during my fieldwork and the procedure to renew it usually lasts several months, I was in the ambiguous legal space where my immigration status was suspended until my new permit was granted and legality conferred upon me.

trafficking systems are not poorly educated. They often have completed high school, vocational education and at times have a university education (Payoke et al 2003, Calderone et al 2000). Whether the respondents were working or not prior to their migration was contingent upon their age. Prior to migrating, the respondents who just finished vocational or high school were looking for a job and experiencing difficulty in finding one. Others, seven of them, were employed or worked in the informal sector before arriving to Italy but the money they earned did not suffice to cover their expenses and make a decent living (cfr. Hopkin and Nijboer 2003).

The respondents originated from the following countries, Croatia, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia. The common characteristic of these states is that they are not (yet) part of the EU enlargement process. Within the current EU integration framework, residents of these countries are defined as third country nationals and their geographic/spatial and labour mobility is severely restricted by current EU immigration and labour regulations. All of the respondents interviewed reached Italy via trafficking networks. However, this does not mean that all of them entered 'trafficking' systems in the same way or travelled the same routes. Since women's entrance into trafficking systems and modes of travel to Italy differed, I have differentiated the sample as to include respondents who migrated via individuals or agencies, those who were and were not in possession of a valid visa, and those who travelled to Italy via Southern-Eastern route¹⁰ as well as those who arrived via the Northern-Eastern route¹¹ (cfr. Orfano 2003: 170). I have also paid attention to interview women who entered trafficking networks more than once. This was sometimes due to being apprehended by the border police during the journey or deported after they have reached Italy and returned to their countries of origins. Some respondents returned from Italy on their own accord and later re-entered trafficking networks as to reach Italy again. Included in the sample are women who travelled with (six respondents) or without valid documents (nine respondents), and at their own (one respondent) or third party's expenses (fourteen respondents), brought to the fore the ways in which material and legal immigration apparatus fosters the legal, economic and physical vulnerability of migrants.

Upon their arrival to Italy, all of the respondents were confined to street prostitution and their labour controlled by one or more third parties. As to have a more thorough picture of the working condition in street prostitution, the sample includes women who have remained in third party controlled prostitution for quite a short period of time (five respondents); those who were controlled for a longer

¹⁰ Southern-Eastern route leads across the South East Europe, then Albania and finally across the Apulia coast.

¹¹ Northern-Eastern route leads across Central Europe, then Slovenia and finally across the Friuli-Venezia Giulia border.

period¹² (five respondents)¹³; women who –when the third parties got arrested— stayed in street prostitution and worked on their own (two respondents); and finally those who exited third party controlled prostitution and re-entered prostitution afterwards as to work independently (three respondents). Paying attention to the length of stay in prostitution consented an analysis of the type of relationships migrant women established in prostitution (for e.g. with third parties, ‘clients’, police and with other migrant women), the conditions of confinement within prostitution, and the resources women generated within the existing conditions of confinement.

The choice of respondents additionally paid attention to include those women who have decided to return to their countries of origin upon exiting street sex work (three respondents)¹⁴ as well as those who opted for remaining in Italy (twelve respondents). Among the latter group, I took into consideration the time factor and interviewed women who had been living in Italy for a period varying between five and fifteen months. This differentiation made it possible, on the one hand, to explore the ways in which women dealt with the stigma surrounding prostitution while pursuing social acceptance in the country of settlement. On the other hand, it permitted me to examine how the respondents dealt with the process of legalization and social protection devised for victims of trafficking. Having interviewed a number of women who had already obtained the permit to stay in Italy indicated the type of jobs and labour contracts available for migrant women who have exited sex work upon completing the legalization procedure.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that at the time of the interviews, all of the respondents had already exited prostitution. Given the fact that my evidence, as well as other currently existing studies on ‘trafficked’ women in Europe are limited to this specific category of migrant women, it is difficult to know to which degree my results are representative of the larger population of trafficked women, or whether they are specific for a group of subjects who have already left prostitution. In order to establish relevance of my data for a broader population of migrant women in prostitution, I have cross-referenced my results with studies on non-migrant street prostitution. Interestingly enough, up to now no study on trafficking for the sex industry has compared the situation of ‘trafficked’ women to that of third party controlled non-migrant women in street prostitution. My results point to the parallels between two situations and therefore question the presumed exceptionality of ‘trafficked’ women’s conditions in street prostitution.

¹² With a longer period, I intend a time span varying between three to five months.

¹³ A minimum of two weeks.

¹⁴ I substantiated these data with ten informal conversations with migrant women who decided to return home upon leaving third party controlled prostitution. Due to the timing and language limitations however, I did not have the possibility to conduct in-depth interviews with these women.

The Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation investigates trafficking for commercial sex sector from the perspective of (migrant) women's lives. As such, the choice of privileging (migrant) women's lives as a basis for knowledge production is reflected in the organization of the book. Rather than starting with a theoretical chapter, as of habit when writing a dissertation, I begin with three empirical chapters (Chapter 2, 3 and 4) based on women's narratives. Women's accounts constitute thus the point of departure of my inquiry and the ground for interrogating the adequacy of the current conceptualisation of trafficking.

In chapters two and three I analyse the two phases constitutive of the trafficking process. Chapter 2 examines questions related to the recruitment and travel phase of trafficking and takes issue with the notions of deception, coercion and force as distinctive elements of the trafficking process. In bringing into focus the travel from the departure to destination country and the episodes of the border crossing, my analysis interrogates the criminalization approach to trafficking and examines the effects of the EU's immigration regulations on women's lives.

In Chapter 3, I investigate the conditions of control and confinement in street prostitution in Italy. My analysis differentiates between control exercised by third parties and economic and political structural forces that sustain migrant women's control. I further discuss the relationships and resources women generated in order to regain their mobility and exit the conditions of confinement.

Taking as its starting point the feminist debate whether women are to be viewed as victims coerced into trafficking or agents who 'choose' sex work, Chapter 4 points to the limitations of such a perspective and proposes to re-think migration and prostitution as processes of subject's construction. This entails leaving space for the contradictions in women's narratives to emerge, and investigating how women's claims to both victimhood and agency relate to stigmatised migrant subjects' pursuit of social and legal inclusion.

In Chapter 5, my focus shifts from the country of destination to the countries of departure of women. After having illustrated in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, women's desire for geographical mobility and social inclusion, I turn to the counter trafficking campaigns launched by IOM across eastern Europe and investigate the representation of trafficking put forth in these campaigns. I examine IOM's representation of female bodies and discuss how representational strategies deployed in the campaigns discourage women's mobility and confine eastern European women to stereotypical rendering of femininity.

Theoretical elaboration as regards to trafficking constitutes the last chapter of my dissertation. Embedding my findings within a larger body of scholarship on globalization, labour and migration, Chapter 6 suggests to view trafficking as a site where anxieties about changing European landscape and contentions over entitlement to the European citizenship are played out.

While the chapters can be read separately from each other since each chapter is structured around a specific theme and grounded in the theme-related body of scholarship, this does not mean that they are detached from each other. On the contrary, I intended them to be read together to elicit the degree to which the category of trafficking is inadequate in accounting for the complexity of women's migratory experiences and of the current social-political transformations in Europe. In order to do justice to these complexities, my work sets aside the static victim-criminal binary and focuses rather on processes: the process of migration, the process of subjectivisation and the process of formation of European citizenship. By doing so, I wish to build links between different problem areas and scholarly debates that are commonly not brought together in current studies on trafficking.

Investigating trafficking from the perspective of migration allows me to do precisely this: to move in-between different bodies of scholarship and constituted debates, broaden the analytical framework within which trafficking is usually examined, and develop a methodological and theoretical tools able to render the complexity of trafficking. Parallel to my moving in-between different debates and bodies of scholarship, the audience I wish to reach with this dissertation is multiple. My dissertation addresses various communities both inside and outside academia such as interdisciplinary migration specialists, sociologists, political scientists, and policy scholars. However, my primary audience are women's studies scholars and the feminist community. I also harbour the hope that the respondents whose words inspired my work will find my modest contribution relevant and useful.

Projects of Autonomy as Projects of Migration

‘Non domandarci perché siamo qui.
Chiedici invece come siamo arrivate.’¹⁵

1. Introduction

In their analysis of media representations of trafficking, scholars have pointed out that trafficking is commonly addressed as a problem of organized crime employing representations organized along a victim–criminal binary. The latter portrays women as innocent, young and unaware victims and traffickers as (male) criminals who coerce and deceive women into illegal migration and prostitution (Andrijasevic 2003, Berman 2003, Doezema 1999, Sharma 2003, Stenvoll 2002, Sutdhibhasilp 2002). In the press, the alarm surrounding trafficking is intensified by allusions to its magnitude:

We will call them Olga and Natasha. Their story equals the stories of many other girls from the East who came to Italy blinded by a work promise, and then forced into prostitution by a pimp, a man of no scruples. As soon as they got off the bus that brought them illegally from Moldova to Italy, they were taken over by Rimi, an Albanian.¹⁶

Next to portraying these women’s story¹⁷ in terms of being duped into trafficking and coerced into prostitution, this newspaper clip makes use of the *topoi* of collective deception and dispersal as to place these women’s chronicles along numerous other stories of the same kind, and consequently to imply the existence of wide-scale ‘east’

¹⁵ ‘Do not ask us why are we here, ask us rather how we got here.’ This is the phrase with which the respondents greeted me during one of our first meetings. This chapter, as the two following chapters, are introduced by respondents’ quotes. In this specific case, I kept the quotes in Italian.

¹⁶ “Le chiameremo Olga and Natascia. La loro storia è uguale a quella di tante altre ragazze venute dall’Est con il miraggio di un lavoro e poi costrette a prostituirsi da magnaccia senza scrupoli. Moldave, appena scese dal pullman che le porta clandestine in Italia vengono prese in consegna dall’albanese Rimi” (*Il Resto del Carlino*, 18 July 1999).

¹⁷ In the later sections of this chapter, I will return to this newspaper clip since it concerns two respondents whose accounts of migration I will be analysing.

– ‘west’ Europe trafficking for the sex industry. Such inference to the magnitude of trafficking, and an emphasis on the deceptive and coercive nature of a contract between migrant women and third parties, are not characteristic exclusively of the press. The tropes of ‘waves’ of trafficked women and of trafficked women as ‘victims’ are also deployed by a number of feminist scholars.

While Koser and Lutz (1998: 3) stress the unavailability of reliable data on female migrants trafficked illegally for the purpose of prostitution, other scholars (Caldwell et al. 1999, Lazaridis 2001: 70) rely on questionable statistical data provided by governmental and non-governmental bodies wherein numbers diverge by hundreds of thousands.¹⁸ The vagueness and ambiguity of these figures foster accounts of trafficking from eastern Europe that speak of it in terms of an ‘explosive increase’ (Molina and Janssen 1998:16) that has reached ‘epidemic proportions’ (UN in Pickup 1998:44). Such alarmist portrayals not only inflate the statistics to produce an imagery of invasion but obscure the relationship between trafficking and the juridico-material creation of borders. Furthermore, they conflate trafficking with (organized) crime thus hindering our understanding of how women come to trafficking. These accounts of trafficking become complicit with governments’ agenda in combating ‘illegal’ migration and settlement. The governments of the European Union (EU) member states have predominantly associated trafficking with ‘illegal’ migration from ‘third’ countries and with organized crime. In this respect, the implementation of the border protection scheme has been endorsed by the EU governments as a pivotal measure: ‘Better management of the Union’s external border controls will help in the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration networks and the trafficking in human beings’ (Presidency Conclusions Leaken European Council, No. 42). Next to strengthening of the border controls, the EU governments counter trafficking by tightening of visa policies, and prosecuting the third parties who facilitate migrants’ undocumented entry or stay in the EU (van Doorninck and Wijers 2002).

The term trafficking, usually intended to signify the transportation of persons by means of coercion or deception into exploitative and slavery-like conditions, is often used in ways that collapse a wide range of operations. These involve, firstly, the recruitment and transportation of women from their country of origin to the destination country and, secondly, the living and working conditions upon arrival. As

¹⁸ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 700,000 women and children are trafficked per year across the globe while United Nations (UN) sources oscillate between two (IMADR in McDonald, Moore, Timoshkina 2000: 1) and four million people (Ram 2000: 2). As far as trafficking of women from eastern Europe into EU is concerned, some EU sources report on 500,000 women (Ram 2000: 2) while others estimate between 200,000 and 500,000, a number that rounds up the presence of women from eastern Europe as well as Latin America, Africa and Asia (Molina and Janssen 1998: 16).

Wijers and Lap-Chew demonstrate (1997), a woman might find herself in slavery-like conditions marked by violence and/or threat of violence, confiscation of legal documents, and no freedom of movement. As a consequence of being transported to a foreign country, she might also be recruited without coercion and may or may not find herself in forced-labour conditions.

In this chapter my analysis focuses on the recruitment and transportation phase of trafficking. It is my intention to interrogate through such a focus the criminalization approach to trafficking and illustrate the ways in which the material and juridical immigration apparatus exacerbates the legal, economic and physical vulnerability of trafficked women. By bringing into focus the relationship between migrant women and third party organizers of ‘trafficking’ as well as the complex conditions and desires that impel women to migrate, my analysis sheds light on different – often overlooked – aspects of trafficking and points to a gap between the respondents’ accounts of migration and the dominant rhetoric of trafficking. This discrepancy becomes apparent when scrutinizing, on the one hand, respondents’ rendering of their lives prior to migration and, on the other, the ways in which they entered trafficking networks and reached Italy. Migrant women’s accounts of trafficking –in particular of its initial recruitment and transportation phase—challenge the narratives of victimization and criminality as constitutive of trafficking and point to the need to take issues with the accepted notions of deception, coercion and force commonly perceived as constitutive of the trafficking process.

In this respect, I begin by tackling questions relative to the travel and recruitment process, and investigating ways the respondents attained spatial and labour mobility. Consequently, as I argue in this chapter, the juridico-material formation of borders and its impact on migrants’ lives constitutes a crucial element to be considered in the analysis of the trafficked women’s accounts of migration. In doing so, my work brings to the fore the ways in which borders may have unintended consequences such as the proliferation of trafficking. Finally, I discuss how privileging the narratives of victimhood and criminality as regards to trafficking deflects from the possibility to identify the plethora of motives which inform respondents’ migratory project, and thus seriously limits our understanding of trafficking as a migratory system.

2. Trafficking Systems

The United Nations’ Trafficking Protocol –the main internationally accepted definition of trafficking— identifies deception, coercion and use of force as the key

means of transporting migrants into exploitative and/or slavery-like conditions.¹⁹ In the following sections, I look at respondents' previous migratory experience, examine the channels of recruitment into trafficking, and interrogate the notion of deception. Reviewing the accounts of migrant women, we see a consistent analysis that disputes a clear demarcation between voluntary and involuntary processes of migration, and the subsequent inclusion of trafficking in the latter category.

Migratory Histories

The conceptualization of the trafficking in terms of recruitment by means of deception, coercion and force conveys the impression of women's abrupt and unexpected abduction on the part of a third party. This characterization comes close to the idea, dear to the press, of inexperienced and naïve women being kidnapped by the traffickers. Yet, respondents' narratives, especially in regards to their migratory experiences and the span of time that preceded their departures, convey quite a different picture.

Respondents' accounts show that before entering trafficking systems and arriving in Italy, a number of them had already undertaken other forms of labour migration abroad. Among those women lacking personal migration experience prior to moving to Italy, migration was nevertheless part of the collective landscape since they knew other women who migrated to work in restaurants, to do domestic and/or sex work. Most of the respondents had already migrated at least once prior to their arrival to Italy. Some, like Larisa and Kateryna, experienced an unsuccessful attempt of undocumented migration, followed by detention and deportation. Once deported – Larisa from Hungary and Kateryna from Austria—they were returned home, the place from where they started off and where they did not want to be in the first place. As Larisa puts it: 'After I returned home I didn't know what to do next ... all of those problems where there again'.²⁰ In the summer of 1999, approximately a year after her first unsuccessful attempt of migration, Larisa departed for Italy and arrived there two months later. The other respondent, Kateryna, who left Romania for the first time in

¹⁹ The full definition of trafficking is as follows: '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'. [Http://www.odccp.org/crime_cicp_convention.html#final](http://www.odccp.org/crime_cicp_convention.html#final). From here on I will refer to United Nations' *Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* simply as the UN Protocol.

²⁰ "Tornata a casa non sapevo cosa fare più in avanti ... tutti quelli problemi di nuovo."

the winter of 1997, set on a second journey to Italy in autumn of 1998. The respondents, Oksana, Ester and Marisa went to Italy twice, returning home between the two migratory experiences. These respondents worked in third party controlled street prostitution in Italy before returning to their countries of origin. Eventually, each of women went back to Italy. Another respondent –Tatiana—returned to take care of her terminally ill father and upon his death set off to Italy again.

Among the respondents, some had previously lived and worked in countries other than Italy. Eugenia, for example, migrated from Romania to Serbia where she found work as a waitress in a restaurant. Oksana migrated from Ukraine to Romania for seasonal agriculture work. A number of respondents worked in the entertainment sector or alternated entertainment work with petty trade. Maja, Ana and Oksana worked in a cabaret before migrating to Italy. For some of them cabaret work primary entailed dancing, while for others it included both dancing and occasional sex work. Maja, for example, in her search for work left Russia and came to Ukraine where her mother lived. Once in Ukraine she departed for Lebanon where she worked as a cabaret dancer on a three-months contract basis. Oksana and Ana both worked in a cabaret in Serbia where employment agents proposed that the women switch to sex work in Italy. While Oksana relocated directly for Italy, Ana arrived a couple of months later having first returned home to Moldova. Another respondent, Snezana, undertook several trips from Moldova to Turkey in order to buy and sell goods at the market. During one of these trips she met a young Turkish man whom she subsequently married. After four years in Turkey, Snezana returned to Moldova. Approximately a year later, she accepted an invitation to Italy for entertainment work in a nightclub.

Studies on trafficking rarely pay attention to the amount of time that passes between the moments when women first contact a third party and the actual moment of departure. When studies take this aspect of the recruitment process into consideration, the results indicate a period of one week or less between initial contact with a third party and when the woman actually leaves. Studies such as Isabella Orfano's use this data as evidence of the organizational capabilities and swift functioning of trafficking networks (2003: 199). My results present only one case that supports such a claim. In example of Ivana, there was less than a week gap between when she was first approached by a third party and her decision to accept the offer. The specificity of Ivana's example is that it constitutes the only account that conforms to the trafficking definition in terms of transportation of persons by means of coercion or deception into slavery-like conditions. In this case, the third party imposed a quick departure in order to manipulate the respondent easier and keep up the deception concerning the nature of the work.

For other respondents, the process of deciding whether or not to leave lasted considerably longer. In the case of Liudmila, Sasha and Ioanna, the decision to leave involved a process lasting between six months and a year. To offer an example, it took Liudmila six months to decide whether she wanted to do sex work as a condition for migrating to Italy. Sasha took approximately the same amount of time to decide her departure. First, she contacted an agency arranging visas and work abroad. The agency offered her cabaret work in Japan. Shortly before departing for Japan, Sasha consulted with a group of women recently back from working in Italy. While the stories she heard produced doubts about working abroad, one of the women who returned from Italy convinced Sasha that Italy was a good place to work, better, in fact, than a place like Ukraine. Following this episode Sasha decided to migrate to Italy for sex work taking some additional time to arrange her first intercourse, so as to know—as she put it—‘what these things are like’. For Ioanna, the process of deciding took about a year. Initially, when another respondent suggested they leave together to work in a cabaret in Serbia, she refused. A year later, the same friend asked her again whether she would consider leaving to Italy for street sex work. The respondent decided to migrate for sex work and during the months preceding the departure inquired about sex work practices and started learning Italian so as to be able to orientate herself once in Italy.

Trafficking, in contrast to ‘voluntary’ forms of migration, is conceptualised as an involuntary and non-consensual migration. The emphasis on force and deception sets trafficking apart from other forms of migration and conceives of trafficking in terms of the manipulations practiced by third parties. Respondents’ accounts of their migratory histories and the span of time that preceded their decision to migrate contest the distinctiveness of trafficking operations, and posit instead migration to Italy comparable to other forms of labour migration. Respondents’ migration to Italy, like other forms of voluntary migration, was not an abrupt and third party’s orchestrated act. Rather it evolved out of the respondents’ social-economic context and individual needs/desires.

Channels of Recruitment into Trafficking

Recent scholarship on trafficking demonstrated a wide range of opinions about the role of organized crime (Caldwell *at al.* 1999, Salt and Stein 1997, Shannon 1999). Some scholars argue that descriptions of traffickers as part of organized criminal networks contribute to the sensationalism and aliment the anxieties about the Russian Mafia (Finckenauer 2001, Stenvoll 2002). Studies of the methods and channels of recruitment into trafficking for the sex industry --even though still scarce-- illustrate

that the narrative of the kidnapping of women usually privileged by the media is more the exception than the rule (Maluccelli 2001, UNICEF et al. 2002: 7).²¹ Moreover, researchers dispute the myth of the existence of a globally organized criminal trafficking network and show that trafficking networks vary in size, aims, organizational capabilities and services offered (Kyle and Dale 2001, Pastore et al. 1999, Payoko et al. 2003)

My research supports the findings that kidnapping is not a common recruitment practice.²² Among the twenty-five respondents in my study, only one woman, Ivana, was deceived about type of the work and coerced into migration to Italy. A man and a woman approached Ivana while she worked in a neighbourhood bar in the suburbs of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. The couple offered her a job as a waitress in Switzerland. After Ivana and her husband met with the couple to arrange the travel details, they agreed for the departure to take place the following day. On the day of departure, Ivana arrived at the couple's house and was told she would be going to Italy and not to Switzerland. They also told her that in Italy her job will be to collect money from other women working in street prostitution. When Ivana refused, the male trafficker kicked her in the eye and threatened her with further violence. After being kept in a third party's apartment for some days in order to make the new travel arrangements, Ivana was brought to Italy against her will.

In a pattern that conforms to the internationally accepted UN Protocol's definition of trafficking, the respondent was approached directly by the recruiters at her workplace, deceived about the type of work she would be expected to perform abroad, coerced into leaving for Italy by the use of physical violence and finally worked under highly exploitative conditions in street prostitution for the same third party who recruited her in her country of origin. In conformity with the trafficking definition, the respondent did not consent to migrating to Italy but it was a third party instead who recruited and transported her to Italy with the intent to exploit the respondent's labour in prostitution.

While Ivana's account of her arrival in Italy corresponds to the UN Protocol's classification of trafficking, other respondents' stories do not fit the same definition. Respondents' accounts of how they got in touch with the recruiters and who these were challenge the perspective of those (feminist) scholars who see migrant women as

²¹ By investigating the recruitment practices according to the place of origin of migrant women, these studies have concluded that methods of recruitment vary with respect to nationality of the recruiters, and that some trafficking systems such as the one present in Albania are characterized by a greater use of violence than others as the one in Moldova or Ukraine for example. Some studies confute these conclusions, as for example, the data collected by the Bologna's outreach unit which has recorded that in the last years an increased number of Albanian women asks Albanian men to accompany them to Italy in order to protect them while working in street prostitution (Calderone et al 2000).

²² With the term recruitment studies on trafficking usually intend the person who 'first proposed or imposed the travel abroad to the victim by means of fraudulent or open offer' (Orfano 2003: 196).

‘deceived and trafficked *by the sex industry*’ (emphasis mine; Phizacklea 1998: 31). Additionally, such account complicate the view of trafficking as the outcome of third parties’ organized and intentional action. My data indicates that often the first contact with those who informed the respondents of the possibility to work abroad or proposed that they migrate for work (whether sex work or not) took place within the respondents’ network of acquaintances, namely their female friends. Moreover, the respondents often initiated the first contact with agents/recruiters by asking their female acquaintances if they knew of people who could organize their trip abroad and find work for them. In fact, my data points to the fact that the first circulation of information occurred between respondents and other young women who had already migrated, or were themselves acquainted with others who were working abroad. Following this initial exchange of information, respondents were usually referred to an individual or an agency which provided the services the women were looking for.

An example of this pattern emerges from the accounts of Larisa and Liudmila from Moldova, both of whom wanted to reach Italy where they had female friends who themselves arrived in Italy through trafficking systems, and had worked for some time in street prostitution. These friends, who were living in Italy for several years already, promised to assist the respondents in looking for a ‘normal’ job²³ in the event they would decide to come to Italy. Liudmila’s friend in Italy sent her money for a visa. However, she found no agency at that moment able to arrange an Italian visa for her.²⁴ After some time, Liudmila’s friend put her in contact with a person who could help her reach Italy on condition that she agreed to work in prostitution: ‘She called me another time and told me: “I’ll give you the phone number of a man who will help you to come to Italy”. “But, to work on the street”, she said. So, later ... I called, I left and I came here to Italy.’²⁵ In the same way, Larisa’s friend in Italy put her in contact with a male person who agreed to take her to Italy. Without being charged any transportation fee, the respondent was promised that she would reach Italy in ten days. Prior to departure, she was inserted in a group of four young women who were all about to leave to Italy, among them was a friend of Larisa’s returning to Italy for the third time.

As Liudmila and Larisa’s accounts show, the individuals on whose assistance the respondents relied in order to reach Italy were not the ones who passed them the initial information, and were also not the same individuals who kept them in

²³ I quote here respondents’ as to refer to work other than sex work. All of the respondents in fact distinguish between prostitution and other forms of work to which they refer as ‘normal’ work. The significance of this differentiation will be discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁴ The reasons for this impossibility will be discussed at the later stage of this chapter in section (II) *legality and trafficking*.

²⁵ “Lei mi ha chiamato un’altra volta e mi ha detto: ‘Ti do il numero di telefono di un uomo che ti aiuta a venire in Italia.’ Ha detto, ‘però, a lavorare in strada’. Così, poi ... ho chiamato, sono partita, e sono venuta qua in Italia.”

confinement and exploited their labour in street prostitution upon arriving in Italy. Moreover, in order to gain initial information about migrating abroad respondents made use of their circle of acquaintances rather than being approached by a person unknown to them and then coerced into migrating.

The account of Oksana is instructive here. Contrary to Liudmila and Larisa, Oksana was contacted by a ‘recruiter’ previously unknown to her and asked whether she would be interested in leaving Ukraine and going to work in a night club in Serbia. In my interview with her, Oksana described this encounter in terms of a proposition rather than an imposition from the side of the recruiter. The respondent’s description of the methods by means of which she was on several occasions recruited for labour abroad offers an example of the variety of actors involved in the ‘recruitment’ process. Her account also illustrates the ways in which a migrant woman who has acquired knowledge about labour migration passes that information onto others, proposing that a friend of hers join for the next journey to Italy. During a ride home in a taxi, Oksana started a conversation with the driver about the difficult economic situation in Ukraine. Both she and the driver complained about the lack of jobs. After a while, the driver asked if Oksana knew of women who would be interested in working abroad at a nightclub in Serbia. They exchanged phone numbers in case the respondent would think of anyone who might be interested in such an offer. Some months later the taxi driver phoned the respondent to ask her again whether she knew of any women willing to leave and work abroad. The respondent recounts the event in the following words:

[He:] ‘So Oksana, are there any girls who want to go abroad?’
I say ‘No, there are not’.
[He:] ‘And you, what do you think? And did you find a job?’
I say ‘No, nothing. Nothing changed. Everything has worsened.’
Then he told me: ‘If you would like to leave ...’
[She:] ‘I don’t know. I have to think about it.’
[He:] ‘For how long do you need to think?’
[She:] ‘I don’t know. About two weeks’.²⁶

When the respondent decided to leave Ukraine some weeks later together with a female friend who also decided to go and work in Serbia, they phoned the taxi driver and he put them in contact with a woman running an agency. The woman explained to them about the nightclub work in Serbia, handled their travelling arrangements and accompanied Oksana, her friend and some other women to Novi Sad in Northern

²⁶ [Lui]“Allora, Oksana, non ci sono delle ragazze [per andare all'estero]?”; Dico, “Non ci sono.”; [Lui] “E tu, cosa pensi? E tu, hai trovato lavoro?”; Dico, “No, zero. Non è cambiato niente. E’ tutto peggiorato.” Allora lui mi ha detto “Se tu vuoi andare...?”; [Lei] “Non lo so. Devo pensare”; [Lui] “Quanto devi pensare?”; [Lei] “Non lo so. Due settimane. Così.”

Serbia. After two weeks of work in the nightclub, the third party who managed Oksana's work in the nightclub suggested that she goes to Italy for sex work. The respondent accepted and was transported to Italy. After having fulfilled a three-month contract, she returned to Ukraine. Some months later, a female friend of hers with whom Oksana worked together in street prostitution phoned her from Bologna and asked whether she would like to return to Bologna and work together. While deciding if she should leave or not, Oksana asked another friend of hers, Ioanna, to join her. In order to buy the bus tickets, Oksana borrowed the necessary money from the Albanian boyfriend of the woman who originally invited Oksana to Bologna. After an agency arranged the visas and the tickets were purchased, Oksana and Ioanna –named Olga and Natasha in the newspaper clipping mentioned in the introduction to this chapter— departed Ukraine for Italy. Upon arriving to Bologna, both women came to prostitute for the Albanian who lent them the money for the bus fare.

One can see from the complex stories of the respondents, the important role of the agencies in trafficking networks. These agencies, as research has shown, are differently organized, vary in size and in the services offered. Some agencies specialize in facilitating travel, others in employment or both (Anderson and Phizaklea 1997, Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003, Pastore et al 1999). My results concur with these findings and point to the fact that while some respondents contacted agencies in order to arrange their visa and/or travel to Italy, others turned to agencies so as to assist them in finding work. Contact with the agencies occurred by word of mouth, or by direct contact: namely, the respondents got in touch with an agency after reading an advertisement for work abroad in a local paper. As the following example from Ana's account illustrates, agencies arrange and profit from organizing the movement of migrants as well as acting as intermediaries between migrants and third parties who recruit women specifically for sex work in Italy.

The respondent, living in Moldova, initially contacted an agency because she wanted to leave for Moscow and work as a prostitute there. She was however discouraged by a female friend of hers who told her that the Moscow police would probably arrest her immediately upon her arrival, and that going to Moscow in the middle of the Russian Winter was a bad idea anyway. Lacking an alternative solution, the respondent settled for Moscow and went to an agency to inquire once more about her options:

I went to see her [the woman working at the agency] and there was a person, a man, who brings girls to Italy. But back then I did not know it. I immediately asked her 'How is it going with my leaving for Moscow?' and she told me that a woman should be coming from Moscow to meet me and talk to me. I asked when and she told me that the woman did not arrive yet but that she should be here in two weeks. That man, as soon as he saw me, he told me: 'Why do you

want to leave for Moscow? Why can't you go to Italy? You look good, very good'. You know, I glanced at him and I told him 'I have no documents' and he said 'That's no problem, I'll get them for you'. 'Then, OK', [I said]. You know, I felt happy. I went back to my friend and I told her all, because you know, he said he will take her too.²⁷

The episode recounted by the respondent points to the difficulty in separating clearly between informal networks and formal agencies or (individual) private recruiters when investigating the way in which women accessed trafficking systems. At the same time Ana negotiated her departure to Italy, she also arranged for her female friend to make the trip. As in a number of other respondents' accounts, Ana relied on informal network comprised of friends or acquaintances. This network constituted the initial link in the 'chain of facilitation' which at later stages included a number of other actors such as sub-agents, document facilitators, employment agencies and/or travel agents (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003).²⁸

If, on the one hand, trafficking is a 'multi-billion dollar industry' run by organized criminal networks as claimed by Ram (2000: 1), it is also an integral part of the local and informal economies of various eastern European countries. Through such networks, a variety of individuals supplement their income through contacts and clients.²⁹ The majority of respondents did not portray their initial contact with individual recruiters or agencies as abusive. Rather, the majority of women referred to recruitment agents in a manner similar to Oksana's, namely as those who 'help girls to find a job in a foreign country'. Consequently, respondents' accounts of how they accessed trafficking systems problematize the view of trafficking exclusively as a form of forced migration as maintained by the UN Trafficking Protocol. Informal networks, individual recruiters and agencies among others all intervene at different stages of the trafficking process, often having no interest in controlling and/or exploiting migrants' labour but instead profit from the recruitment and movement of person. This profile assembled from the respondents' accounts calls into question

²⁷ "Sono andata da lei e c'era una persona, un uomo, uno che porta le ragazze in Italia. Ma io allora non lo sapevo. Io ho cominciato subito a chiedere a lei "Come va con andata per Mosca?" e lei mi risponde che una donna dovrebbe venire da Mosca a vedermi e a parlarmi. Le ho chiesto quando e lei ha detto che quella donna non ancora è arrivata e che dovrebbe arrivare fra due settimane. Quell'uomo, quando mi ha visto, subito mi ha detto "Ma perché tu vuoi andare a Mosca? Perché tu non puoi andare a Italia? Tu vai bene, benissimo". Sai, l'ho guardato di striscio e gli ho detto "Non ho i documenti", e lui dice "Non ci sono problemi, te li faccio io". Allora, va bene. Sai, così, ero felice. Sono tornata dalla mia amica e l'ho detto anche a lei, perché sai, lui ha detto che prende anche lei."

²⁸ Usually, people with whom women establish the initial contact are not those who await them upon arrival. At times there is some kind of collaboration between the parties, at times there is none. The former is more likely to occur when a woman has no money on her own but contracts a debt towards those who provide her with a visa (or passport at times) and/or organize the transportation to Italy. The latter is the case when a woman owns a sum of money large enough to pay an agency, which secures her a visa and the transportation to Italy. For a similar categorization see Maluccelli (2001: 52).

²⁹ Next to the example of the taxi driver, the respondents pointed also to restaurant owners or housewives as those who facilitated their contacts with travel and employment agencies.

characterizations of trafficking as the outcome of third parties' organised and intentional action to profit from migrant women's labour in prostitution.

Problematizing the Notion of Deception

In order for the 'recruitment' process to be considered trafficking, the third party needs to carry out some kind of deceit as regards to the promises made to the migrants. In the debate surrounding trafficking for the sex industry, a debate which has seen the direct involvement of large number of feminists, the discussion has evolved around the actual nature of deceit. In current feminist discourse, the deception is framed either about the nature of the job awaiting the women upon arrival to the destination country, or whether they knew they would be working in prostitution. Framing trafficking from this perspective means reproducing once again the longstanding conflict among feminists on the matter of prostitution.³⁰ The emphasis on the notion of deceit (into prostitution) allows 'abolitionist' feminists to reclaim their view of prostitution as violence against women grounded in patriarchal domination over the female body and female sexuality (Jeffreys 1997, Kelly 2003, Leidholdt 1999, Raymond 2002).

However, the spectre of deception can also have a countervailing use. For sex workers rights' activists such analysis presents an opportunity to bring sex work back to the international agenda and advance the struggle for recognition of prostitution as a form of labour. Despite the apparent usefulness of a deception analysis, there are significant dangers. By arguing coercion and deceit function as the dominant conditions, activists risk depicting all migrant women as victims of trafficking. How then does the misrepresentation account for the fact that many undertake sex work migration? A discourse based on an analysis of deception, in the end, penalizes women for the choices they have made, or denies them agency entirely. They are seen only as victims to be punished for their status as undocumented labour and/or migration (Adams 2003, Doezema 1998, Murray 1998).

The issue of whether migrant women have or have not been deceived by third parties into the sex industry has been taken up by a number of activist and researchers. A number of studies show that a considerable percentage of women from eastern Europe who came to the EU, Canada or Turkey through trafficking systems agreed to work in sex industry but were unaware of the living and working conditions waiting for them in the destination country (Gülçür and İlkaracan 2002, Maluccelli 2001, McDonald at al. 2000, Orfano 2002, Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). While my findings

³⁰ An overview of the feminist debate on trafficking and prostitution is developed in the Introduction to Chapter 3.

point in the same direction, my data also suggests that when the emphasis is put on deception (or lack of it) as regards to sex work in particular, one's analysis of the trafficking process remains caught in the web of moral arguments surrounding prostitution. Unaccounted for in that analysis are the terms of employment relations migrants have (or have not) themselves negotiated with third parties. Privileging the question of deceit in relation to prostitution tells us little about the agreement reached (or not) between the parties concerning specific living and working arrangements.

It is obvious that respondents in my research like Eugenia, Ester, Tatiana, and Ivana who were promised jobs as waitresses or domestic workers, and were then inserted into the sex industry, had not been informed about the terms of their employment in sex work.³¹ However, neither did those respondents who agreed to a sex work contract know the details of the contract itself. We can look at the account of Kateryna for an illustration. Having accepted her lover's offer to migrate from Romania to Italy and work there as a prostitute, Kateryna was not aware of the conditions in which she would be working. Specificities about long hours, the large number of clients and the constant control by a third party or by peers were all kept from her. Reflecting on her decision to go to Italy, Kateryna recalled:

He [the boyfriend] told me what my job will be and I thought that's fine since it won't be written on my forehead what I've done. I decided to go for a year because he promised me half of the amount I would make while working as a prostitute. I thought that after a year I'll have quite some money. Then I could return home, finish my studies and make something better out of my life. But the whole thing turned out more complicated than I thought.

Knowing little about the specificities of the setting of her new job, Kateryna agreed to a one-year contract and a fifty-fifty wage arrangement.

A vagueness concerning the terms of employment also characterizes the accounts of those respondents who related that they knew everything in advance about sex work. Oksana, who was about to return to Italy for the second time, described to her friend Ioanna her previous experience of street prostitution. She asked if Ioanna wished to join her (see the newspaper clip on Olga and Natasha in the introduction which tells the story of the same respondents with emphasis on deception into prostitution). In my interview with her, Ioanna described arriving in Bologna for sex work: 'I came to Italy and I knew all about it – what to tell to the clients, what to do, where to go – I knew it all.' However, a closer analysis of the respondents' narrative shows that by 'I knew it all' Ioanna meant that Oksana described how the monetary

³¹ They were however also not informed about the terms of the work in a restaurant or in private houses, the two sectors which rely to a large extent upon flexible and malleable migrant labour both trafficked and not (cfr. Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003).

‘exchange’ between a prostitute and client works. This was explained with an explicit conversation in which Ioanna was told that she would be working in street prostitution.³² In this way, Oksana equipped Ioanna with information she herself did not have the first time she went to Italy for sex work. Oksana, as a number of other respondents who entered into the sex work contract with third parties thought that they would be working indoors (cabaret or night club) rather than in street prostitution. Even though Oksana shared with Ioanna her previous experience of street sex work, and they negotiated the pay and the length of the stay, none of them knew that they would be required to surrender most of their earnings to the third party and prostitute under the conditions of confinement which made it difficult to step out of the contract:

We came here but we did not think that we would be working for someone. We thought that she [third party’s girlfriend and a friend of Oksana] would look for a place [on the street] for us. [We thought that] she would find us a place. It is OK to work for a month for someone as to return the money he gave us. We would work in order to pay back the expenses, for the help he gave us in coming here. We thought that ... we would be on our own and ... not working for someone else who is always around.³³

The fact that the respondents consented to sex work represented no guarantee whatsoever that upon their arrival in Italy they would be able to work independently of a third party and retain their earnings. As a consequence of guarantee regarding their pay, as well as the pressing control exercised (often through threats or a use of violence) by the third party, the respondents interrupted their ‘contract’ with the third party and left street prostitution altogether.

Concurring with another study on trafficking for street work in Italy, my results suggest that migrant women who arrived in Italy through trafficking networks and were prostituting under the control of one or more third party, left third party controlled prostitution. The women made this decision not because of the job content but rather due to the violence and economic exploitation that characterizes third party run migrant street prostitution (cfr. Malucelli 2001: 57). My study also points out

³² However, it is not clear to what extent Oksana related to Ioanna the negative aspects of working under third party’s control. In fact, the research has found out that it is quite common that the migrants pretend towards their family and friends back home that they ‘made it’ abroad, namely that they depict their experience only in positive terms and conceal the conditions under which they are employed since this would spoil the image others have of them as successful migrants (cfr. Skrobanek 1997: 26, Parreñas 2001: 102).

³³ “Siamo venute qui però, abbiamo pensato che se lei [la ragazza del magnaccia] viene qui e trova un posto, non è che lavoriamo per qualcuno. Lei trova un posto e va bene se un mese lavoriamo per qualcuno. Un mese per tornare i soldi che lui ha mandato. Lavoriamo per tornare le spese, per aiuto che ci ha dato per venire qua. Abbiamo pensato così, che l’amica che sta in Italia ci chiama e che stiamo da sole. Nessuno che mi stia sempre dietro: quello che c’è, c’è, quello che non c’è, non c’è.”

that for some respondents the interruption of the sex work contact was not contingent upon the deception as regards to living and working conditions. They were less interested in the earning potential of prostitution, but used the sex work contact instead as a means of reaching Italy. A quote from Ana's interview illustrates this arrangement best:

He said his name was Renzo. He explained everything to me: how we are supposed to work, how much money we get –ten percent of all the money is for us—, how we'll get in trouble if we make a mistake. See, he was trying to scare us. But me, you know, I was thinking 'Just get me to Italy'. To everything he would say I would reply "Yes, yes, yes" and hoped he would choose me for Italy. Once in Italy, I've have taken care of it all by myself.

For Ana, prostitution is imagined as a transitory phase of her migratory project by which to create different resources for herself. Hence, as demonstrated in Ana's account, entering the trafficking system and consenting to prostitute was merely a means to an end.

While some degree of deception about the working conditions in the destination country characterized all of the respondents' accounts of how they entered trafficking networks, a narrow focus typical of the feminist trafficking debate on whether women consent or not to prostitution hinders our understanding of the exploitative labour relations in street sex work. Anderson and O'Connell Davidson (2003) argue that the concept of deception as put forth by the trafficking definition leaves open questions about the extent of deception needed in terms of job content, rates of pay, working practices, work rate, and length of the contract among others in order to qualify as a 'victim of trafficking'. If according to the UN Protocol, a case of trafficking takes place when a person by means of deception has been recruited and transported by a third party into exploitative working conditions so as to profit from his/her labour, then the ambiguity lies with the notion of deception itself.

The vagueness of the notion of deception, in combination with force, coercion and exploitation as core/distinctive components of trafficking establish an oversimplified and ultimately erroneous demarcation between voluntary and involuntary processes of migration. This is particularly important since violence, coercion, deception and exploitation occur also in voluntary and legally regulated systems of migration and employment. Moreover, as my data has suggested, the fact that the definition of trafficking presupposes an interrelation between deception and subsequent exploitation of migrants on the part of traffickers conflates the range of interests third parties might have in supplying vague information concerning the working contract. Contrary to the UN Protocol interpretation of trafficking, third parties might profit from migrants' recruitment or travel rather than from their labour.

Uncritical linking of deception and labour exploitation ultimately criminalizes a wide variety of actors who take part in different stages of the trafficking process.

3. The Difference Borders Make

Feminist scholars of migration, like Anthias and Lazaridis (2000) have accurately challenged mainstream migration theory. At the centre of such theories is the fantasy of the idea migrant family with a male figure upon whom the woman depends economically and in the organization of the migration project. Countering this fantasy, Anthias and Lazaridis emphasize the role of women as ‘active agents’ in international migration (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000: 12). However, they, as a number of other feminist scholars of migration, also undermine the complexity and accuracy of the situation when they associate trafficking with undocumented migration, thus perpetrating the narrative of women’s victimhood (cfr. Phizacklea 1996, Kofman at al. 2000). Phizacklea, for example, writes that ‘trafficked women are often deceived and coerced into illegal migration’ (1998: 31). Orsini-Jones and Gattullo, who have examined the issue of women’s migration and trafficking in Italy and in Bologna in particular, observe that migrant women ‘are part of the very sad “slave trade” flourishing across Europe’ (2000: 128). These feminist scholars characterization of women within the trafficking networks is far from seeing them as ‘active agents’ or examining the degree of agency women exercise in the trafficking process. By recuperating certain aspects of the dominant discourse on trafficking and portraying it uncritically in terms of either ‘illegal’ migration and organized crime, these scholars ignore the multiplicity of modes women enter into trafficking. When we ask specific questions about the experience of migration, a different sort of picture emerges. These questions include: In which way and with whom did women cross the border and reach their destination? Were they undocumented or did they possess passports and visas? If they were in possession of a visa, how did they obtain it and for how long were those visas valid? By failing to ask detailed questions like this, feminist migration scholars fail to interrogate the ways in which the current EU’s border and visa regimes affect ‘trafficked’ women’s lives.

Risk of violence and vulnerability during undocumented migration

In the respondents’ accounts, having or not having a visa is linked to the ways the women crossed the border and to the duration of time required for the crossing. The difference between documented and undocumented border-crossings is most apparent

in the narratives of those women who were ‘trafficked’ to Italy twice: first on foot without a visa and a second time by bus with tourist visas purchased by a (travel) agency. When the respondents crossed the borders undocumented on foot, in a truck or by boat, descriptions of the journey constitute a central element of the migration narrative and include detailed descriptions of events and actors involved. In her account, Oksana recalls the number and names of travellers, the weather conditions when they crossed the Slovenian-Italian border, the vegetation of the landscape and even the conditions of the ground they walked on. When the same respondents returned to Italy for a second time with a valid visa, they travelled by plane or bus, crossing the international borders quickly and smoothly. In stark contrast to the first crossing narratives, accounts of the ‘legal’ crossing offer few details about the journey. We can attribute the disparity between descriptions of undocumented and documented forms of travel to the degree of danger or risk the respondents underwent during the former experience. The fear of being caught by the border-police, of being sexually abused by traffickers, of contracting a disease or an illness during prolonged travel, of having little or no control over the terms of the travel and therefore being dependent on the traffickers, all of these produce a highly traumatic experience whose details are impressed in respondents’ memory.

Respondents’ accounts suggest that the use of force or violence during the recruitment and travel phase of the trafficking process is an exception rather than a rule. The accounts also point to the fact that the longer the undocumented travel became, the more the respondents were exposed to threats of abuse or sexual violence from agents and more likely they were to contract a disease or/and develop a dependency on alcohol or drugs. Moreover, entering trafficking systems without any initial capital to pay for the cost of the travel meant contracting a debt with the agents. As the journeys got longer and the amount of debt increased, respondents also become increasingly vulnerable to violence and labour exploitation during the journey.

Larisa’s story exemplifies vulnerability induced by debt-migration. After being deported from Hungary, Larisa contacted another agent in Moldova. With the agent’s promise that she would reach Italy in ten days, Larisa set off for a journey that lasted two months, taking her across the Balkans. Reconstructing the respondent’s travel route, it emerges that each undocumented border crossing had a monetary value. Larisa contracted a debt at each border that she could not cross at official border posts because she was not in possession of a visa. To pay back these debts, Larisa took short-term jobs working in cabarets at different points of the journey. Starting her travel in Moldova and needing no visa to enter Romania, Larisa first crossed the Moldavian-Romanian border without being exposed to any type of

abuse.³⁴ At the border between Romania and the FR of Yugoslavia, the group with which the respondent travelled stopped at the banks of the river Danube. Being transported to the other side of the river and thus crossing into Serbia entailed being passed against payment from one agent to the other, and being able to continue the journey only once the payment had taken place: ‘People would come with a ferry, they would look at us and if they would like us, they would take us ... They would pay money and you went’.³⁵ The consequence of this transaction was that the respondent contracted a debt towards the person who paid money for her and that that person acquired power over her by means of this monetary transaction. Larisa comments on this power disparity with the following words: ‘One feels like a dog. You cannot say anything because he paid money for you. There’s nothing to be done. It’s ugly.’³⁶

In order to pay back the debt, amounting to 750 EUR, the respondent had to work in a cabaret in Serbia in a situation characterized by a total lack of control over her earnings. The vulnerability brought on by the situation of ‘illegality’ and debt bestowed power on the third party and enabled the latter to gain control over and achieve profit from exploiting Larisa’s labour. Moreover, the situation considerably reduced the respondent’s chances to negotiate the amount of time spent in the cabaret and the amount of money to be paid ‘back’. Continuing her travel towards Italy via Albania meant undergoing a similar process once again: this time a 21 years old Albanian man attained power over her by imposing on her unprotected intercourse. In order to go through this period, Larisa made heavy use of liquor and was in a permanent state of drunken stupor. When confiding her desperation to a female friend of hers with whom she travelled, the friend told her to persevere because she heard that their travel to Italy was to be organized within a week. Shortly afterwards the respondent undertook a one week boat journey that took her from Albania to Italy where she was met by the very same third party who had power over her in Albania. Based on the debt the respondent contracted in order to reach Italy, the Albanian man continued to exercise power over the respondent by controlling and profiting from her labour in street prostitution. As the above example show, prolonged periods of travel caused by the respondent’s undocumented status and migration-debt, enforces dependency on third parties in order to continue the travel. This dependency increases the woman’s vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

³⁴ However, due to EU’s border and regimes which with the EU enlargement have been expanded further east, Romania is about to change its visa policy and introduce visa requirements for citizens of Moldova.

³⁵ “Veniva gente con il traghetto ... ci guardavano e se piacevi ti prendevano ... Pagavano dei soldi, e ciao”.

³⁶ “Ti senti come un cane. Non puoi dire niente perché lui ha dato i soldi per te. Non c’è niente da fare. E’ brutto.”

In addition to being vulnerable to the abuse of traffickers, undocumented status also puts the migrants at risk of detection by the border police and the abuse that usually accompanies undocumented migrants' apprehensions (FFM 1998, Andreas and Snyder 2000). An example comes from Kateryna who, intercepted by the border police when crossing undocumented into Austria, related the violence of interrogation and incarceration she went through:

We were undergoing an interrogation: "What car brought you here? What was your destination? Who are you? Who brought you here?" We would give the first information that crossed our mind and they would see that we are making it up. I was tired; my eyes were closing constantly. I am a smoker and I ran out of cigarettes. The inspector looked at me and she asked me: "Do you smoke?" I said yes, and she asked me if I would like a cigarette. When I answered yes, she said: "Then, what is the colour of the car that brought you here?" After the whole days of interrogation, the police brought us to a cell at midnight and they even handcuffed my friend.

Following the arrest, the respondent was detained in prison for three weeks until the unit which arrested her obtained funds from the Ministry to cover the costs of her deportation to Romania, namely the costs of the train ticket to the Hungarian-Romanian border.³⁷ Deportation bars a migrant from utilizing formal migration channels in the future, which in Kateryna's case meant she would not be able to obtain a Schengen visa. Therefore, deportation increased the respondent's dependency on trafficking networks to reach Italy and exposed her once again to the risk of abuse that migrants encounter during undocumented travel and/or arrival at their destination. For all the respondents entering Italy via the trafficking system constituted a means of travel and a mode of migration. My data thus suggests that border controls that aim at suppressing trafficking and hampering the 'illegal' circulation of people increase the involvement of trafficking enterprises and produce situations of greater vulnerability for migrants (cfr. Skrobanek et al. 1997: 20-22)

(II) legality and Trafficking

Contrary to the idea that women are always forced or coerced by traffickers into illegal migration, some respondents tell of how they were only able to realize their plans to leave for Italy with the help of traffickers. A striking example comes from Liudmila, who hired an agency to buy her visa and organize the trip to Italy. Yet, due

³⁷ The train ticket for the remaining 300 km that separated the respondent from her town of residence was paid with the money given to the respondent as a present by a Pakistani male (undocumented) migrant detained in the same prison.

to the instability in the region caused by NATO's bombing of Serbia, the agency in Moldova was not able to carry out this otherwise routine operation.³⁸ After months of waiting for the situation to improve, Liudmila finally decided to contact a trafficker who brought her to Italy in four days under the condition that she works in prostitution. For some respondents it took longer to reach Italy because the border police intercepted the group with which they travelled. Kateryna, whose travel started in Romania, recounts her unsuccessful attempt to cross the Hungarian-Austrian border:

It was 11 pm when they left me in the forest. It was really dark –it was September—it was a crazy darkness and it started to rain. I walked by my guide, the one who knew the path, but forgot it. I walked from 11pm until 8 in the morning and it was a nightmare. When I think back on it, I don't know how I did it. I was tired, and I was covered in mud because I fell down. It is like walking on the ground you do not know, where it is dark, rainy, there are holes filled with mud that you do not see. I felt many times, I was totally dirty, covered in mud, it was humid and I said 'I am giving up'. I was so tired that I was walking on all four. I could not stand straight any longer. It was 3 girls with the guide. I said 'I have to do it, I have to, I have to.' I always thought that I had to do it, that I have to reach the destination, I could not stay here in the middle of the forest. I don't know, at one point, at 8 am, it was becoming light; we were not reaching the point where the car was waiting for us. I could not walk any longer and the guide said 'I'm going and if the car is there, I'll come back to pick you up.' He left and I fell asleep on the ground. After the night of walking, I could not keep my eyes open any longer. And the other girls were pulling me 'No, you cannot sleep here, wake up otherwise you will get a lung infection' and they forced me to get up. The muscles on my legs were not holding me anymore. He was not coming back and we couldn't stay there, we were hungry and thirsty. When we came out of the forest, we started walking the same road he did. Slowly, slowly and we'll get there [we thought]. At 8 am we passed by a small village, there must have been only 4 houses there, and someone who got up early saw us from the window and called the police. They got me.³⁹

³⁸ The respondents report that an agency charges between 360 and 500 US Dollars, depending on the country of departure, for a visa and a bus ticket to Italy. Just for orientation, those respondents who worked as schoolteachers or secretaries in Moldova or Ukraine, earned between 20 and 30 US Dollars per month.

³⁹ "Mi hanno scaricata alle undici di notte nella foresta che c'era un buio --era settembre -- un buio pazzesco e ha cominciato a piovere. Ho camminato ma la guida che sa il tragitto se l'ha dimenticato. [...] Ho camminato dalle undici di notte fino alle otto di mattina ed è stato un incubo. A pensarci adesso non so come c'è l'abbia fatta. Ero stanca, ero piena di fango perché ero caduta. E' come camminare su un campo che non conosci, dove è buio, piove, ci sono dei buchi che non vedi. [...] Ero caduta tante di quelle volte, ero sporchissima, piena di fango, un umido e dicevo "non ce la faccio più". Ero così stanca che camminavo a quattro zampe. Non potevo più stare in piedi. Eravamo tre ragazze con la guida. Dico: "Ma lo devo fare, lo devo fare, lo devo fare." Pensavo sempre che lo devo fare, devo arrivare, non posso rimanere qui in mezzo alla foresta. Non so, a un certo punto, alle otto di mattina, si faceva la luce, non arrivavamo più al punto dove ci aspettava la macchina. Noi non ce la facevamo più a camminare e lui [la guida] ha detto: "io vado, e se la macchina è lì, vengo e vi prendo anche voi." Lui è andato e io mi sono addormentata per terra. [...] Non stavo più con gli occhi aperti

Far from describing the situation of coercion into involuntary migration, in the above quote Kateryna positions herself as an active participant in the project of migration. Her account draws attention to a determination to succeed in crossing the border and to the wilful aspect of that action.

For Kateryna, the unsuccessful crossing resulted in deportation from Austria. For Larisa, also apprehended by the border police, the arrest meant prohibition of entry into Hungary. A few weeks later each of the respondents embarked upon another crossing via a different route. Larisa arrived in Italy from Albania by boat, while Kateryna crossed the Slovenian-Italian border on foot. Kateryna comments on her second journey: ‘I was scared of being caught and sent back home. Because if they [the border police] would have caught me I would have had to do it all over again.’ Many narratives are punctuated by remarks that reveal the women’s awareness of the necessity to cross the borders secretly. Kateryna continues: ‘Some girls travel hidden in the back of a truck. They take sleeping pills in order not to do anything and not to eat at all. They take sleeping pills and sleep during the entire journey.’

Not all respondents arrived in Italy undocumented; traffickers provided some women with the necessary travel documents. Realizing that she would have to cross the border on foot because her traffickers were not in the first instance willing to spend money to buy her a visa, Snezana refused to leave until she successfully negotiated a visa and a bus ride to Italy. Another respondent, Tatiana, flew from Moscow to Rome with a fifteen-day tourist visa bought for her by two Russian women working as prostitutes in Italy. Oksana and Ioanna (Olga and Natasha newspaper clipping mentioned in the introduction to this chapter) reached Italy in two days having travelled by bus. However, contrary to the newspaper claims, the two women did not enter Italy undocumented. Working through an agency, they bought short-term visas with money borrowed from a third party. This money covered the costs of the visa, travel from Ukraine to Poland, a night in a hotel in Warsaw and a bus ticket to Bologna. Even though it was quite difficult, if not impossible, to travel undocumented with a regular international bus line across Europe, media coverage of their case described the two women as ‘illegal’. The conflation of trafficking with undocumented migration sustains and strengthens the representation of trafficking as a form of illegal migration. It relies on an over-simplified distinction between ‘illegal’ and ‘legal’ migration. In my research, a number of respondents entered Italy with a

dopo la notte di cammino. E le ragazze mi tiravano: “No, non puoi dormire qui, svegliati se no prendi la polmonite,” e mi facevano stare in piedi. I muscoli dei piedi non mi tenevano più. Lui non tornava e noi non potevamo stare là, avevamo fame e sete. Quando siamo uscite abbiamo preso anche noi la strada che ha preso lui. Intanto piano, piano, che arriviamo. Alle otto di mattina abbiamo passato un paesino piccolo, che saranno quattro case in croce e uno che era mattutino ci ha viste dalla finestra e ha chiamato la polizia. E mi hanno presa.”

valid visa but became undocumented after having overstayed the length of the granted visa.

As my data indicates, it is extremely problematic to endorse a model which positions trafficking as a form of illegal migration in opposition to legally approved modes of migration. Trafficking may have legal elements such as legally obtained visas. Conversely, legal migratory processes may involve illegal components like requests for high fees advanced by the agencies or even illegal payments asked by Consulates. Moreover, within the Italian legal system that classifies migrants in terms of non-citizens (Dal Lago 1999), a category constructed on social and political removal, being illegal is grounds for detention and deportation. Hence, the fear of being caught by the police and returned to the point of departure enhanced respondents' dependency on the third parties and once in Italy, contributed to their conditions of confinement.

Dependency on the trafficking agents in order to reach Italy was (also) due to the current migration regimes which in the last years considerably reduced the access to formal EU migratory channels for certain groups of people. In fact, none of the respondents qualified for a Schengen visa which would have authorized them to enter to Italy at an official border post and with 'regular' means of transportation. Being granted a tourist Schengen visa requires a considerable number of documents that the respondents were not able to provide. These include: a passport, proof of the purpose of the visit namely an invitation letter (from an Italian citizen), a return ticket, confirmation of accommodation, evidence of sufficient funds, evidence of medical insurance, and a letter from the employer (or school) certifying a labour contract or school enrollment. Most of the respondents could have fulfilled one, maximum two of the above requirements since none of them knew a person who could have guaranteed for them or could provide evidence of sufficient funds to finance their stay in Italy. Moreover, a visa applicant is requested to present him/herself in person, which required additional funding especially when the visa granting Consulate was not where respondents lived but at times as far off as a neighbouring state. Not only is being granted a visa a long, troublesome and expensive process as different NGO sources report, but Consulates often render the process willingly more difficult by establishing a number of rules and/or procedures that make it extremely difficult for some groups of people to obtain visas (Apap 2001).

An example of the difficulty to obtain official permission to enter into Italy through a Consulate is well illustrated by Svjeta's account. Svjeta arrived in Italy from Ukraine through a trafficking system, exited the third party controlled prostitution, pressed charges against the 'traffickers' and was granted a residence and work permit in Italy on the basis of Art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998 especially intended for

victims of trafficking.⁴⁰ In Winter 1999/00, the respondent went back to the Ukraine to visit her daughter and husband with whom she had had little contact over the past years. Shortly before returning to Italy, the husband confiscated her Italian residence permit in order to make it impossible for her to return to Italy. Having no means of convincing him to give the document back, Svjeta travelled to the Italian Consulate in Budapest⁴¹ with the purpose of obtaining a copy of the permit and consequently a visa to re-enter Italy. However, once she arrived at the Consulate, explained that she has lost her residence permit and asked the Consulate employees to assist her in returning to Italy, she was told that she could not return to Italy and her request for a visa was not granted. Following the refusal the respondent contacted the Women's Shelter in Bologna that has followed—according to Art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998—Svjeta's process of social integration in Italy and represented the respondent's legal guarantor. The Woman's Shelter intervened by calling the Consulate, an operation that took considerable time since it was extremely difficult to reach the person handling the respondent's case, and upon the Consulate's request sent a letter of guarantee for the respondent and the copy of respondent's residence permit. The Consulate replied that those documents were not sufficient to grant an entry visa for Italy. At this point the Woman's Shelter asked the Head of the Foreigners Police in Bologna to intervene who sent an additional letter of guarantee and confirmed the authenticity of the respondent's residence permit. Once more, the Consulate replied that these documents were insufficient, and requested for the Head of the Foreigners Police to call in person, and only then granted the respondent an entry visa.

Next to illustrating the difficulties women might encounter when attempting to obtain a visa on their own, this episode points to the costs involved in such an operation. The respondent had to cover her travel costs from Ukraine to Hungary as well as the costs of the hotel on several occasions. Moreover, since the whole procedure took more than four weeks, the respondent considerably overstayed the time she had taken off from her job and was consequently fired. Even though third party organizers of trafficking charge more than the official Consulate's visa rates,⁴² the respondents knew that they were not likely to obtain a visa without contacts and a large sum of money. If arranging a visa is not cheap and easy, as Anderson and O'Connell Davidson's research on the demand for trafficked migrants' labour shows

⁴⁰ Article 18 of L. n. 40/1998 of the Italian Immigration Law is quite unique in that it allows persons trafficked to Italy, whose lives would be endangered if returned home, to stay in Italy and obtain a residence and a work permit on the condition that they agree to leave prostitution and participate in a social-protection program.

⁴¹ At that time there was no visa granting Italian consulate in Ukraine.

⁴² This might not be always true. Many people coming from Serbia to the Netherlands in the period immediately following the NATO bombing and sanctions, reported that the Austrian Consulate in Belgrade, at that time the only Consulate of a Schengen member state to be present in Belgrade, charged 1500 EUR for a three months tourist Schengen visa.

(2003), migrants will not be able to access (even when available) the formal governmental migratory channels. Instead, as my data suggests, migrants will resort to irregular channels that in turn take advantage of migrants' legal vulnerability whether by charging higher costs for travel and documents or profiting from their labour at various points of the trafficking process. Hence, far from preventing trafficking, stricter immigration controls have unintended consequences such as serving the economic interests of third parties by increasing the amount of migrants' debt and raising the level of control third parties exercise over migrants. Quite paradoxically then, restrictive immigration regulations that aim at suppressing trafficking and hampering the illegal movements of people work in favour of third party organizers of trafficking, whether individuals and agencies, because they become a kind of supplementary migration system or even an alternative to the EU regulated migration.

4. Projects of Migration, Projects of Autonomy

When not being portrayed as victims of traffickers' deceit with intention to channel them –by use of violence—into sexual slavery, women from eastern Europe in the sex industry in industrialized Western States are described as victims of pressing poverty, which impelled them to abandon their countries of origin. In her analysis of how sex-trafficking is constructed and operates as a discourse, Doezema (1999) elicited that the recurrent incidence of the term poverty in relation to trafficking functions as a rhetorical device which locates migrant women in prostitution as innocent victims and secures the victim/villain binary. Moreover, privileging poverty as the factor that drives women into migrating puts forth, on the one hand, the structural processes that determine migratory flows typical of the macro-approach to migration, and on the other hand employs the classic push-pull migration model that, dependent on neoclassical economic theory, sees migration as a rational economic action (Anthias 2000). Instead of understanding poverty merely in terms of economic deprivation, my scrutiny of when and how the respondents' spoke of poverty points to the role the notion of poverty played in respondents' formation as subjects. By shifting the attention away from the push-pull model as regards to trafficking, my approach makes visible the presence of women's migratory projects –usually foreclosed by the concept of victimhood—as well as the plethora of factors and desires that informed these projects.

Poverty

When asked what brought them to Italy, the motivation respondents most frequently put forth is that of poverty. Reference to poverty and economic hardship typically open most of the respondents' life accounts. Poverty, as in Ioanna's narrative is used to describe a situation in which the income of the family barely sufficed for the basic needs such as food and housing: 'You know, back home we are not that well off. Back home me and my mum worked at the market but the money we would earn was hardly enough to buy food.'⁴³ Poverty is also used to describe the difficult living conditions such as, in Ester's narrative, not having running water in the house or, in Kateryna's story, having to go to school always in the same pair of torn shoes, the only one she had. The description of economic hardship is also used to refer to the situation of not being compensated for the work done. To give an example, Ana recounted how while working in a meat factory she did not get any wage but instead received some meat to take home. This situation went on for a couple of months until the factory went bankrupt and then all the workers lost their jobs.

The recurrence of the theme of poverty put forward as the main reason for deciding to look for job opportunities abroad is too significant to overlook. While the situation of economic lack and/or necessity was a concrete fact that characterized women's lives prior to migration and needs to be acknowledged as such, my study also suggests that due to its recurrent position at the very beginning of respondents' narratives, the topic of poverty is best referred to as an isotropy which plays a crucial role in the respondents' construction of the self and allows us to examine migration – in its overlap with prostitution—as a part of the process of subjectivity.

The scrutiny of the isotropy of poverty in relation to the life stories at large elicits a correlation between theme of poverty and that of prostitution. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, the motif of poverty serves as a way for the respondents to disavow sex work as part of their migratory project and/or reduce the possibility of being identified as a prostitute by others.⁴⁴ The fact that this operation of distancing takes place at the very start of respondents' narratives serves a double function. By establishing an objective situation of economic need as a primary factor for migrating and by dismissing the doubt whether to identify the respondent with someone who enters prostitution for pleasure and financial greed, the act of distancing sets the discursive frame centred on economic need. Once established, this allows respondents to recuperate it at different points and thus dis-identify from being prostitutes throughout their narratives.

⁴³ "Sai, a casa, non è che stiamo tanto bene. Io a casa ho lavorato al mercato, lavorato con mia mamma però i soldi che guadagnavamo bastavano solo per mangiare"

⁴⁴ I examine the complexity of this construction in detail in Chapter 4.

Along these lines, respondents distinguish between the desire to possess money—characteristic of prostitutes—and the need to earn money, namely the situation they relate to their own experience of migration. Moreover, the respondents always underscore that they did not intend to keep the money for themselves but that they were doing it for someone else such as their parents, sisters, or children. At the discursive level, the affirmation of economic necessity often occurs through other characters like police officers or clients. An example comes from the way in which Marisa relates the talk she had with a police officer when he offered to assist her to solve the complicated situation she was in following the murder of a friend of hers: ‘How can you help me? After I have pressed charges and told you everything, you’ll buy me a ticket and send me home. Look, I have a daughter back home!’⁴⁵ Throughout the story, financial need reaffirms time and time again that the respondent is not a prostitute. By commenting—as they usually do—that they would not be in Italy now if the situation would have been better in their home countries, the respondents resist the ‘whore stigma’ (Pheterson 1993). However, by doing so they at the same time foster the narrative which sees their migratory projects as determined by poverty rather than as a pursuit of financial independence, an ‘escape route’ from patriarchal structures (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000: 7), a search for (emotional) autonomy from the family and a desire for mobility.

Lack of Employment Opportunities and the Search for Economic Improvement

Prior to their departure for Italy, some respondents attended high school or university, some had a job, and some worked and studied at the same time. My data indicates that the minority of respondents had only elementary education while most finished high school, some type of professional school (for e.g. for medical nurses) or even attended university. This concurs with results from other studies that point to the relatively high level of education of eastern European women in the sex industry (cfr. Orfano 2003). Moreover, as other researchers observe as well, before migrating women were engaged—whether in formal or informal sector—in a variety of occupations such as factory work, petty trade, office work, nursing or teaching (Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002, Hopkins and Nijboer 2003, Orfano 2003).

Being without work per se was therefore not a motivation, researchers point out, for migrating. Rather, the impossibility of making ends meet even with a job and the lack of future prospects were among the factors that informed women’s migratory projects. Respondents quite often speak of their feeling of impossibility such as Maja

⁴⁵ “Come mi puoi aiutare? Io faccio la denuncia, ti dico tutto quanto e dopo tu mi compri il biglietto e mi mandi a casa. Guarda che io ho una bambina a casa!”

who said, ‘Looking for jobs at home was useless.’ Alternatively, they refer to the lack of opportunities at home⁴⁶ as for example Ana, who talked about the difficulty of achieving anything in Moldova: ‘In our country one doesn’t manage to do things. One never finds money to do anything; One doesn’t manage to do anything at all.’⁴⁷ Sasha, who at the time was studying at the university in the capital of Ukraine, speaks of her desire to improve her financial situation: ‘I have wanted to find some kind of work, some money for a long time. I couldn’t stay there any longer: there was no money, no work, and I wanted to conclude my studies too’.⁴⁸ While desiring to change her situation, the respondent also had doubts whether she would be able to improve her financial situation sufficiently by migrating to Japan for cabaret work. The confirmation that in any place there are more opportunities than in Ukraine comes to the respondent from a group of women who just returned from Italy and who told the respondent that any place is better than home: ‘Do not worry. No place is worse than here’.⁴⁹

The lack of employment opportunities as well as future prospects brought up for some respondents feelings of frustration and anger. Oksana described this state with the following words: ‘Before coming to Italy I was always filled with anger. I was so nervous! Always ... [I asked myself] why was I born, where’ll I find work, how’ll we survive, how’ll we get by?’⁵⁰ The situation of frustration was also due to pressure⁵¹ to look for employment some respondents experienced from their families. Oksana, who at the time was living with her mother, referred to it this way: ‘Back home there was a situation of crisis: ‘I needed to pay for the electricity, the phone ... I was always nervous, like a beast. I did not know what to do, where to go. Additionally, my aunt –the sister of my mother-- would stop by and she kept telling me ‘You are not working! You are doing nothing!’’⁵²

Some other respondents do not frame the need for employment in terms of social expectations but, rather, stress their awareness of the difficult economic

⁴⁶ This situation, in Maja’s view, affects in particular women from lower social classes since, she explains, young women from middle or upper classes are more likely to find a job or continue with the education.

⁴⁷ “[...] da noi non riesci, non riesci; non trovi mai i soldi per fare una cosa, non riesci a fare niente.”

⁴⁸ “E’ da tanto tempo che volevo trovare qualche lavoro, qualche soldo, perché non potevo stare lì [in Ucraina]: non ci sono soldi, non c’è lavoro e volevo anche finire di studiare.”

⁴⁹ “Stai tranquilla. Peggio di qua, là non trovi.”

⁵⁰ “Prima di venire in Italia ero sempre con la rabbia addosso. Quanto stavo nervosa! Sempre ... perché mi fanno fatto nascere, cosa faccio io, dove vado, dove trovo lavoro, come facciamo a vivere, cosa faremo in avanti?”

⁵¹ Those respondents who come from economically quite stable families, such as Liudmila, were not pressured by their relatives or parents to find a job in the same measures as respondents from working class families.

⁵² “A casa mia c’era proprio la crisi: devo pagare la luce, telefono ... Io ero sempre nervosa, come una bestia. Non sapevo cosa fare, dove andare. In più veniva la sorella di mia madre e mi diceva sempre ‘Tu non lavori! Tu non fai niente!’”

situation of their families coupled with an understanding of the need to earn some money somehow and be economically self-sufficient. Ana, who had been a guest at her grandmother's house after the fight with her mother, spoke of this awareness: '[In my grandmother's household] everyone has children, everyone has little money, they do not work, those who work earn nothing. I am a grown up person, I cannot allow myself [to be maintained by them]. I myself do not approve of it either. It is better for me if I leave'.⁵³ Ioanna speaks of that desire to leave and of the willingness to take the risk in realizing it: 'I thought, "I'm leaving no matter what might happen. There's nothing to do here!"'⁵⁴ Hence, far from being pushed by pressing poverty, respondents' narratives suggest that the lack of employment opportunities and/or future prospects, the desire for economic improvement and/or independence from the family, and search for alternative resources all informed respondents' migration projects (cfr. Corso and Trifirò 2003: 28).

Intra-family Violence

Respondents' decision to migrate was at times also influenced by non-economic factors such as intra-family violence including wife beating, sexual harassment, rape and/or incest. While some respondents spoke of sexual molesting at the workplace and their dismissal from work subsequent to having turned down the employer, a large number of respondents recount intra-family violence that most often took the form of wife-beating and at times that of (attempted) incest. An example is offered in Kateryna's narrative who described her family situation in terms of constant intra-family abuse. Her mother divorced the abusive father when Kateryna was six years old, and remarried another violent man who also –as the mother's previous husband—molested the respondent sexually. Another respondent, Ester, was caught in a family situation full of physical violence and abuse: the father physically abused the mother and occasionally beat up the respondent as well. The father made all major decisions about the household and disobeying him resulted in violence. The violence reached its peak when the father threatened the mother and two sisters with a firearm in order to impose absolute obedience. While Ester identified strongly with her mother, she was also frustrated by her mother's lack of initiative and her inability to leave her husband. In an emotionally loaded description of her parents, Ester told of how back then she hated them both and expressed the need to separate herself from the mother: 'I think

⁵³ "[a casa di mia nonna] tutti hanno dei bambini, hanno pochi soldi, non lavorano, chi lavora ma lo stesso non ha i soldi. Io sono grande, questa cosa [essere mantenuta da loro] non posso, non mi permetto neanche io. Per me è meglio che vado via."

⁵⁴ "Ho pensato, 'Vado.' Succede quello che succede, qui non c'è niente da fare!"

of my mother who is alone now [after the father has died], but there are also some neighbours and other people to keep her company. I had to leave sooner or later to live a life of my own. I could not always stay with her. There have been periods when I ran away [because] I wanted to leave the house'.⁵⁵

While mentioning the episodes of violence here and there, the respondents always quickly glossed over them and never connected them explicitly –as they did in case of poverty—to their migratory projects. Or, as in Ester's account of violence above, the respondents were more likely to speak in their life narratives of how the father was abusing the mother, than of the abuse they themselves had experienced.⁵⁶ My scrutiny of respondents' narratives suggests that this absence was due not only to the difficulty of talking about acts of abuse or the indifference towards them because considered so common and therefore a side issue (IHF 2000), but also to the fact that bringing up the family abuse (when relevant) in a more consistent manner would have disrupted the respondents' perception of themselves as active agents. Not bringing to the fore the episodes of violence that informed their migration project, and that often – as feminist scholars have pointed out—influence women's decision to migrate in general (Kofman at all 2000) means resisting the dominant public perception of 'trafficked' women as victims. The category of the 'victim' effaces women's desires for mobility, their determination to undertake a 'solo migration project' (Anthias 2000: 20), and their being an essential source of family support (cfr. Corso and Trifirò 2003, Malucelli 2001).

Projects of Autonomy from the Family

The disappointment felt towards and/or disagreement with parents, lack of respect, humiliation or a feeling of not being wanted all contributed to respondents' wish of separation from the family, their desire for autonomy and their search for ways of realizing it. An illustration comes from Ivana's account. Ivana accepted the offer to work abroad, hoping to earn enough money to support her two children and husband. That money would allow them to move out of his parents' flat where they had no space of their own and were fully dependent on his parents' moods. There they were constantly belittled: she for not being a good mother and he for not having a steady job. Ivana interpreted this unfriendliness as a sign of both families' disapproval of

⁵⁵ "Io penso a mia mamma che è rimasta da sola, però lì ci sono anche altre persone e i vicini che stanno con lei. Alla fine prima o poi dovevo andare a farmi la mia vita. Non potevo stare sempre con lei. Ci sono stati dei periodi quando sono scappata via, volevo andare via da casa."

⁵⁶ This specificity of caught my attention because through the period of extended fieldwork I got to know the respondents quite well, and was acquainted with episodes of violence they experienced but did not introduced during the 'official' situation of taped interview.

their marriage due to the fact that she comes from a Catholic Croatian family and her husband from a Muslim Bosnian background. Ivana and her husband looked at the short-term labour migration abroad as a way of improving their financial situation, which would also have allowed them to move out of his family's apartment and rent a flat on their own. In this way, they hoped to escape the family pressure of being in a mixed marriage and live a more independent, and less humiliating life.

Other respondents also expressed a desire for autonomy from the family, usually communicated through episodes of disappointment towards one or both of their parents. In Oksana, Kateryna, Ivana and Snezana's narratives the father is portrayed as a drunkard and/or as an absent and abusive figure. Oksana is deeply disappointed that her father was drinking and was not able to provide for her or the family. Snezana recounted the story of being abandoned, together with her four siblings, by the mother who left since she could not stand any longer her husband's abuse. Snezana's own relationship with her father is nothing else but a series of abuses of various kinds. Another respondent, Kateryna, has no relationship with her father, and is disappointed with him because he is a drunkard. Next to being ashamed of the father, not wanting to be associated with him and avoiding him, the respondent wished—at the same time—for a caring relationship with the father. Her need of being taken care of was not compensated by the mother who did not give her much attention or time:

She married and remarried, and took me with her but I was there like a baggage would be. She never came to school, she never asked if I had eaten or not, never ever. Even when I went to the high school all the kids would come with their mothers who would ask the secretary how to do things. ... she was not interested in my life, what I was or was not doing. If I would be absent for two days my mother would not even notice my absence. This was not because she did not love me but because she was like that.⁵⁷

As Kateryna perceives herself as a burden for her mother, another respondent, Ana, describes her relationship with her mother in a similar manner. The respondent's parents accused her of stealing money from the house where they lived together and threw her out of the house. She spent some time with the grandmother and then returned home. When recounting, the respondent's narrative lingers on the description of the event that occurred upon her return home:

⁵⁷ “Lei si è sposata e risposata e mi prendeva con lei però ero lì come un bagaglio. Non veniva mai a scuola, non mi chiedeva se hai mangiato o non hai mangiato, mai, mai. E anche quando sono entrata al liceo, cioè tutti i bambini andavano con le madri che si interessavano in segretaria, come si fa, come non si fa. [...] non si interessava lei di mia vita, che faccio, che non faccio. Se mancavo due giorni mia madre non sentiva neanche la mia mancanza. Non è perché non mi amava, ma perché lei era così.”

I came back home and I thought that maybe they have realized what they did to me. Then mother and father told me ‘Why did you come back? Why did you not stay where you were?’ You know, when it is winter and you don’t have a dress except the one you are wearing ... I also had a bladder infection back then, I was bleeding. When they told me those things, I felt a pain in my heart. My grandmother is the person I loved most in my life and I know that she loves me too. But do you know what is the ugliest thing? I understood that they didn’t need me. The mother, do you believe me, told me straight in my face, told me this ‘I do not care for you. You earn your money where you want and the way you want!’⁵⁸

In the respondent’s narrative, this episode --recounted by means of direct speech and comparison-- is invested with the connotation of the breaking point from the family. A staccato effect is achieved using the direct speech to report on her mother’s words and its effect makes the respondent’s claim of veracity of her words (and position) stronger. The comparison contrasts love of the mother and that of the grandmother, and concludes that the latter is the only one who ever truly loved her. As to identify parents’ rejection with a painful wound, the respondent compares sickness, blood and hurt on the one hand, and pain caused by parent’s refusal on the other.

As the above examples illustrate, respondents’ migratory projects are not only invested by the pursuit of economic improvement for themselves and/or their families, but also by the desire for transformation of familiar ties. To these young women migration offered the opportunity to resist some of the constraints that impacted their lives. Influenced by situation of familiar indifference or conflict, respondents’ migratory projects aimed at achieving autonomy from the family and aspired at gaining the latter’s recognition and respect. Hence, respondents’ willingness to take the risk and migrate needs to be seen also as a desire for transformation of affective bonds and simultaneously as a search for (social) inclusion.

Ruptures and a Search for Alternative Life Projects

Relationship or marriage break-ups and a desire for a new male partner also played a role in respondents’ migratory projects. While a number of respondents –Liudmila, Marisa, Lia, and Oksana—were at one point engaged or married, none of these

⁵⁸ “Sono arrivata a casa e ho pensato che forse loro si sono resi conto di che cosa mi avevano fatto. Allora la madre e il padre hanno detto “Ma perché sei tornata? Perché non stai là dove sei stata prima?” Sai, quando è l’inverno e non hai un vestito tranne quello che porti addosso; in quel tempo ho preso la cistite, con sangue. E quando mi hanno detto così mi ha fatto male il cuore. Mia nonna è la persona a cui ho voluto più bene in questa vita, anche lei so che mi vuole bene. ... Ma sai qual è la cosa più brutta? Io ho capito che loro davvero non hanno bisogno di me. La madre, tu mi credi, mi ha detto in faccia, mi ha detto così “Non mi frega per niente. Fai i soldi come vuoi e dove vuoi”.

arrangements was still in place at the moment of respondents' departure for Italy.⁵⁹ Marisa, Lia and Liudmila got married when 18 years old and got divorced a year or two later. Not long before leaving to work abroad, Oksana was engaged and expected to marry. Yet, the marriage was suddenly cancelled and her fiancé married another woman. In her description of why she left for Italy, Oksana established a causal relation between the break-up and her leaving Ukraine for sex work:

Six months after my boyfriend left me ... but me ... you know what I think? For example ... yes ... before I was always angry, I started really to hate him ... it is his fault that ... if he wouldn't have left me I could've been his wife. I could've been together with him; I could've not left to work on the street.

The respondent suggests that a break-up and being without a man affected her decision to leave for work in a nightclub in Yugoslavia first and for sex work in Italy later. This also seems to be confirmed by the fact that once the respondent returned from Italy, she stayed for a while and then, because unsuccessful in her attempt to find a husband, left again. Next to a break-up, a desire for a new and/or better relationship—as for Liudmila and Marisa, both divorced—played a role in respondents' migratory projects. Liudmila told of a female friend of hers who left for Italy and found a man with whom she is happy. Liudmila spoke of her own desire to meet the right person: 'I also wanted to meet the right person; the right person to be together with'.⁶⁰

Next to affective ruptures, interrupted (university) education influenced respondents' migratory projects as well. Sasha, who was studying economics, studied and worked at the same time. Yet, at one point she could not get a job any longer and faced a financially difficult situation. At the same time, the respondent was assessing her future as an economist in Ukraine and decided that in order to make a career she needed to learn English. Similarly, Liudmila also started a university education but at one point, the family's financial situation worsened and her father did not have the money to finance her education further. Faced with financial difficulty, both Liudmila and Sasha interrupted their education and looked for a job in Ukraine and Moldova respectively. As the money they earned—25 US Dollars per month approximately—was insufficient to cover their living and studying costs both of the respondents opted for labour migration abroad as a way of earning money and hence continuing their university studies.

⁵⁹ This is not valid for Ivana who was married at the time she reached Italy. However, her account differs greatly from other respondents' accounts since she was trafficked to Italy in the sense intended by the UN trafficking Protocol, namely by use of force and deception and thus it is impossible to view the respondent as active agent and her departure for Italy as her migratory project. This however, does not exclude the fact that the respondent did look at migration with a favourable eye as a way of improving her economic situation and opening up new opportunities.

⁶⁰ "Pure io volevo conoscere una persona, una persona giusta per stare insieme."

Affective ruptures not linked strictly to a boyfriend or husband but to another referential figure, such as a teacher, and in combination with interrupted education also affected some respondents' lives prior to migration. Kateryna, who had nearly no relationship to her mother or father was encouraged in her education and by extension in her life, by her high school teacher. The respondent was one of the most brilliant students in the school and won the Romanian national championship in a chemistry contest. Yet, due to problems in her family she could not at one point concentrate on school any longer, and often entered into direct conflict situations with other students or teachers. Once the respondent lost the support of her favourite teacher and dropped drastically in her school performance from excellent to poor, she decided to interrupt her education. Her self-esteem vanished and she sunk into apathy:

I was really stuck in Romania. Mentally I felt like being in a hole from which I couldn't come out any more. Because if you think of another girl with the same problems as I had, she could've made it even there but me, I was feeling down, no, I did not want anything any longer, I was depressed, depressed, depressed, and all the things I'd see --even school and friends-- made me feel more down, and I didn't want to see them any more at all. And I was thinking only of running away; I was dreaming of running away. I didn't know precisely if I wanted to leave but I said to myself 'This life cannot continue like this, one cannot live like this.' Slowly the depression inside me was growing and I said 'A moment will arrive when I'll give up'.⁶¹

For Kateryna, migration becomes a way of breaking away from the hopeless situation she had sunk into. She departs from Romania in order to break away from her depressive state caused by her humiliation in school and past violence at home: 'I wanted to start my life all over again in a place where no one knew me or things about me. I wanted to create a new image of myself.' Another respondent, Larisa, echoed the statement of the respondent above when she framed her leaving Moldova in terms of a hope for a different future --'I ... came to Italy in order to change my life'⁶²-- and said that one has to take her life into her own hands because if one waits for things to change, one ends up being fifty years old and achieving nothing: 'Who are you? You are no one. A zero.'⁶³

⁶¹ "In Romania ero proprio bloccata. Mi sentivo in un buco che non ce la facevo più a uscire fuori, ma proprio mentalmente, non so. Perché se pensi, un'altra ragazza che aveva gli stessi problemi miei alla fine poteva riuscire anche lì, però io ero, cioè ero giù, no, non volevo più niente, ero depressa, depressa, depressa, e ogni cosa che vedevo, anche la scuola, gli amici, mi mandavano più, più in giù, non volevo più vederli, niente, niente. E pensavo solo a scappare, a scappare, cioè sognavo di andare via. Non sapevo proprio se voglio andar via però ho detto "Questa vita avanti non può andare così, non si può vivere così." Piano, piano quella depressione cresceva e ho detto "Ci sarà un punto che non so se c'è la farò".

⁶² "Io ... sono venuta qua [in Italia] per ... cambiare la mia vita."

⁶³ "Chi sei tu? Tu sei niente. Zero."

As my data points out, respondents' migratory projects were informed by an overlap of economic and non-economic factors such as the search for economic improvement, the search for labour opportunities abroad, an escape from intra-family violence, a desire for a transformation of affective bonds, the pursuit of recognition and respect, and finally the demand for (social) inclusion. Throughout the autobiographical narratives migration emerges as a project meant to lead one out of the situation characterized by lack of employment, lost self-esteem, family abuse, interrupted education and a general sense of life stagnation. Entering trafficking systems in order to realize one's migratory project is therefore related to women's desire to (re)conquer their material/financial and affective mobility. These results confirm the findings, based also on biographical narratives, which elicit the inappropriateness of the term 'victims' to depict the condition of migrant women in trafficking and demonstrate that women are rarely kidnapped or coerced into migrating but that instead women rely on trafficking networks in order to be able to realize their migration projects (Corso and Trifirò 2003, Malucelli 2001, Sutdhibhasilp 2002). To consign the complexity of women's desires and projects to the narrative of victimhood means effacing women's immediate struggles against the ways in which structural inequalities shape their lives, and precluding our understanding of trafficking as an alternative migratory system for those who have no access to formal cross-border migratory channels.

5. Conclusion

When trafficking is defined in terms of involuntary migration and organized crime, the implications are that 'trafficked' women are perceived as victims of a non-consensual process of migration and 'traffickers' as criminals who recruit and move the victims in order to profit from their labour. This definition of trafficking relies moreover on a quite vague notion of deception as to indicate that the victim has been misled as regards to the nature and terms of the employment 'contract' prior to migration. Characterization of trafficking in terms of coercion and deception establishes an oversimplified differentiation between consensual and non-consensual processes of migration and criminalizes a variety of operations and actors involved in trafficking systems.

My investigation of the recruitment practices and travel operations constitutive of the initial phase of trafficking suggested, on the one hand, that the use of force to persuade women to migrate is an exception rather than a rule, and on the other, that rather than being approached by unfamiliar 'traffickers', the respondents learned first about the possibility of work abroad through informal networks and most commonly through female friends of theirs who have worked abroad themselves. Following the

first exchange of information, respondents referred to individual recruiters or agencies in order to contract travel and employment abroad. By eliciting the variety of operations and actors who intervened at different stages of the trafficking process, respondents' accounts show that recruiting agents often had no interest in profiting from the exploitation of women's labour upon their arrival to destination but instead realized economic gain through the recruitment or/and movement of migrants. My data problematizes the interpretation that sees trafficking necessarily as the result of third parties' intentional and organized operation of recruitment and transportation geared towards profiting from the exploitation of migrant women's labour in prostitution.

The criminalization approach to trafficking adopted by the governments in order to combat organized crime and the 'illegal' movement of people prioritizes the enforcement of border and visa regimes and the tightening of immigration regulations. Instead of preventing trafficking, this approach has come unintended consequences such as enhancing 'trafficked' women's vulnerability to violence and exploitation. When formal avenues of migration are inaccessible to them, women turn to irregular channels. In fact, for a number of interviewees, entering Italy via trafficking systems was a means of travel and migration. Irregular migratory channel in turn take advantage of migrants' vulnerability caused by their undocumented status and by the debt they contract in order to be able to undertake the travel. Stricter border controls and more restrictive immigration regulations thus do not protect migrants from abuse but rather make them dependent upon third parties as to facilitate their migration and travel across international borders. Border and visa regimes foster migrants' vulnerability to violence and exploitation during the travel. Thus, restrictive immigration regulations that aim at suppressing trafficking criminalize the mobility of certain groups of people and paradoxically leave ample space for profiteering and the abuse of migrants.

Finally, respondents' narratives of the recruitment and travel phase of trafficking make evident that there is an urgent need of attention to the nuances of how trafficking is lived and negotiated on the one hand, and represented and institutionalized on the other. The frame of organized crime within which trafficking is usually positioned and examined, consigns migrant women to the position of victims and forecloses the possibility for stories of women's migration to emerge (Berman 2003). My investigation of respondents' narratives demonstrates that there is a direct relationship between women's entering into trafficking systems and their search for ways in which to realize their migratory projects. Informed by both economic and non-economic factors, women's migratory projects looked at trafficking as a means of achieving economic improvement and creating new life opportunities. As an escape route from an environment with scarce opportunities and

a pursuit of social inclusion, migration-via-trafficking systems resembles other forms of women's transnational migration. It therefore urges feminist (migration) scholars to take issue with the notions of coercion and deception and of migrant women as victims of organized crime. This shift of perspective would allow us to move away from the conceptualisation of migrant women as duped into trafficking and bring to the fore the complexity of desires and projects migrant women articulate in their demand of social and material mobility via trafficking systems.

Third Party Controlled Street Prostitution and the Conditions of Confinement

Non c'è libertà: sei in Italia però non sei in Italia.
Cosa vedi? Solo la strada e ... basta.⁶⁴

1. Introduction

With the entry into force on 25th December 2003 of the United Nations' *Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, an international agreement has been reached as regards the definition of trafficking. The process which resulted in trafficking being defined as a transportation of persons by means of coercion or deception into exploitative and slavery-like conditions, was subject –among others—to intense feminist anti-trafficking NGOs' lobbying and contentions. Different arguments were lined up between those feminists who argue for prostitution being recognized as a legitimate labour and those who see prostitution as a violation of women's human rights. These two positions divided the feminist anti-trafficking NGOs into two 'blocks'; the former is known as the Human Rights Caucus⁶⁵ and the latter as the International Human Rights Network.⁶⁶

The Human Rights Caucus, together with sex workers rights' advocates, argued for trafficking to be detached from its exclusive link to prostitution and instead viewed within a larger framework of labour right abuses. Sex work is positioned

⁶⁴ 'There is no freedom: you are in Italy but at the same time you are not. What does one see? Only the street ... and nothing else.'

⁶⁵ The Human Rights Caucus is the umbrella for following groups: GAATW – Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women/Thailand; IHRLG - International Human Rights Law Group/USA; STV- the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women/The Netherlands; NSWP – Network of Sex Work Projects/UK and USA; Asian Women Human Rights Council/Philippines and India; La Strada/Czech Republic, Poland and Ukraine; Fundación Esperanza/Columbia, The Netherlands, Spain; Nab Ying/Germany; Foundation for Women/Thailand and KOK – Network Against Trafficking in Women and Violence in the Migration Process/Germany (Doezema 2001: 33).

⁶⁶ International Human Rights Network gathers among others: CATW – the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women/USA, Asia Pacific, Africa, Latin America and Australia; MAPP – the Movement for the Abolition of Pornography and Prostitution/France; EWL – the European Women's Lobby; FIDH – the International Federation of Human Rights; Equality Now/USA; the International Abolitionist Federation and Women's Front/Norway; AFEM – the Association des Femmes de l'Europe Meridionale and Article I/France (Raymond 2002: 494).

along other forms of globalized low-wage labour, such as work in agriculture or garment industry, and viewed as a matter of concern when it presents elements of labour abuse as for instance forced labour, slavery or servitude (Doezema 2001, Saunders 2000). Since this framework posits prostitution as a form of paid work and as a voluntary contractual exchange between adults, GAATW distinguishes between women who chose to enter prostitution and those who were forced into it and thus sets apart ‘voluntary’ from ‘forced’ prostitution. In relation to both recruitment process and labour conditions, force and deception are seen as necessary conditions for a situation of trafficking to take place (Derks 2000). The distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution might be read in terms of recognition of the right to self-determination of sex workers and thus a success of sex workers’ organizations in displacing the abolitionist discourse of International Human Rights Network and the CATW, which define all prostitution invariably as forced. However, as Murray (1998) and Doezema (1998) from NSWP point out, the dichotomy between ‘coerced’ and ‘non-coerced’ migration for prostitution led to a polarization. Non-coerced form subsumes children and innocent victims under the category of ‘forced’ prostitution, recognizes the violation of women’s and children’s human rights, and thus their need of protection. Sex work migration is included under the category ‘free’ prostitution, for which there are no international agreements to safeguard sex workers from human rights abuses. The research has shown indeed that the rights of migrant sex workers who find themselves in exploitative work conditions are not protected by the UN Trafficking Protocol (Sutdhibhasilp 2002). In their criticism of voluntary/forced binary Murray (1998) and Doezema (1998: 41-42) argue further that this binary opposition did not disrupt old stereotypes and moral judgements about prostitution but rather displaced them upon ‘coerced’ prostitution. At the same time it ‘racialized’ the two categories: the free/voluntary prostitute is the Western sex worker capable of self determination (whether or not to sell sexual services); and the coerced/forced victim is the passive and exploited Third World sex worker. Since this dichotomy creates false divisions between sex workers and reinforces abuses of their rights, sex workers’ rights activists refer to it in terms of ‘neo-regulationist’ model, thus advocating to jettison free/forced dichotomy all together and adopting instead a perspective which privileges the labour conditions and labour rights of sex workers (cfr. Doezema 2002).⁶⁷

The separation between ‘coerced’ and ‘non-coerced’ prostitution is a problematic one also for the International Human Rights Network but for quite

⁶⁷ In Europe, Sexwork Initiative Group the Netherlands (SIGN) has recently launched the appeal entitled “Sexworkers in Europe Unite”. The appeal aims at developing a Europe-wide initiative in order to put sex workers rights back on the international agenda and challenge the existing ideas and policies on trafficking by putting forth a debate about labour migration and rights. Given the historical and political relevance of the initiative, the appeal is reproduced entirely in the Annex 1.

different reasons than those advanced by the NSW. CATW, the leading organization within the International Human Rights Network, argues that all prostitution is coerced since prostitution equals the embodiment of male oppression and dominance. The founder of the CATW, Kathleen Barry, describes prostitution as follows: 'I am taking prostitution as the model, the most extreme and most crystallized form of all sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation is a political condition, the foundation of women's subordination and the base from which discrimination against women is constructed and enhanced' (1995:11). Since prostitution is part of patriarchal domination over female sexuality and its existence affects negatively all women by consolidating men's rights of access to women's bodies, for CATW the notion of self determination or consent makes little sense in relation to prostitution (cfr. Leidholdt 1999). In fact, given that from this perspective prostitution equals sexual slavery, no woman can consent freely to her own exploitation. Thus, in order to put an end to violence against women prostitution needs to be abolished. In the debate surrounding the UN Trafficking Protocol, the lobbying efforts of the International Human Rights Network concentrated greatly on the notion of consent and argued for adopting a definition of trafficking which is not contingent upon woman's consent. The line of reasoning was that this would take off the burden of proof from the victims, place it on the exploiters, and thus avoid the risk of legal discrimination between deserving and undeserving victims (Raymond 2002: 494). While the argument concerning the burden of proof and the differentiation between victims is an extremely interesting and valid one, its potential is limited by an understanding of prostitution exclusively as violence against women that results in the impossibility of separating trafficking from prostitution (cfr. Raymond 2002, Jeffreys 1997). It also makes it impossible to conceptualise trafficking outside of a narrow frame of patriarchal domination which neatly posits 'men' as oppressors of 'women', and sex as a tool by means of which this power is exercised.⁶⁸

Feminist conflict around the issue of trafficking and especially the concepts of sexual slavery, objectification, labour, consent, and choice arise from long-standing feminist disputes over the meaning of prostitution. The 'abolitionist' and the sex workers activists' positions on trafficking are part of a larger contention between radical feminists and prostitution rights advocates, the latter of which are allied with sex-radicals. Radical feminists regard the selling of the body in prostitution as the selling of the self. They therefore characterize prostitution as a self-estranging activity

⁶⁸ The lobbying efforts of the CATW have been partly successful since the UN Trafficking Protocol states that for the trafficking to take place no consent of the victim is necessary. However, at the same time, the Protocol does make explicit reference to prostitution and sexual exploitation by including violation of human rights and exploitation of labour of those persons trafficked into sectors other than sex industry. As Anderson and O'Connell Davidson argue, this stance of the UN Protocol can be read as taking a neutral position on 'the prostitution debate' (2003).

‘destructive of woman’s humanity’ that carries grave psychological consequences for women (Barry 1995: 32). Since prostitution corresponds to the sexual (ab)use of a woman’s body, and sexuality is understood as inherently private/intimate and not separable from the self (Pateman 1988), a woman’s selling of her sexuality, i.e. the self, to a male client is an act of the objectification of a woman’s body.⁶⁹ In prostitution, a man’s use of a woman for his own pleasure transforms the woman into an object and, by extension, reinforces the patriarchal structure of domination (MacKinnon 1989). Given the fact that feminist radicals see men’s sexuality as violent/dominant and functional to maintaining patriarchal power, they associate prostitution with marriage and the act of buying sex to rape and incest (Barry 1995, Jeffreys 1997). This reading of prostitution and men-women relations reduces women’s sexuality to an expression of male dominance, imprisons sex workers (and all other women too) within a system of engulfing patriarchal oppression, and leaves no space for any form of agency that prostitutes might wield. This is best illustrated by the following quote by Andrea Dworkin: ‘In the male system, women are sex; sex is the whore. ... Using her is using pornography. ... Being her is being pornography’ (quoted in Zatz 1997: 292).⁷⁰ In fact, being of the female gender means being a product of man’s desire and, as such, indivisible from patriarchal exploitation and domination (Pateman 1998). In order to end the objectification, commodification and exploitation of women and their sexuality, radical feminists support measures to penalize sex buyers, criminalize all forms of third party involvement in prostitution, and ultimately eradicate prostitution all together.

Sex worker rights advocates and sex-radicals have responded to the view of the prostitute as a completely passive victim by arguing that what is sold in prostitution is not a body but a service, and that what a clients pays for is the prostitute’s time and not indiscriminate access to/use of her body (Corso and Landi 1998). In order to counter the stigmatisation and victimization of prostitutes, sex worker rights advocates have jettisoned the term ‘prostitute’ and adopted instead the

⁶⁹ In order to better comprehend radical feminist intervention within the prostitution debate, it important to contextualize it shortly within the genealogy of that debate. As Zatz (1997) points out, radical feminists’ important contribution was to emphasize that prostitution does involve sex and relate it further to the organization of gender and sexuality. By bringing to the fore the issue of sex and sexuality, radical feminists were responding to the Marxist feminist for whom selling of sexual service is a form of alienation taking place through exploitative relations of appropriated labour. At the same time they were building on the position of liberal feminism and especially on the relationship between the body, property, and labour. A critical reading of liberal concept of property in the person and prostitution and the way it conceals relations of power and dependence is offered by Brace and O’Connell Davidson (1996) and O’Connell Davidson (2002). For a critical analysis from a Marxist feminist perspective of radical feminists’ position on prostitution as well as their reading of Marx see van der Veen (2001) and (2000).

⁷⁰ The debate over pornography was at the core of so-called ‘sex wars’ among Anglo-American feminists which became publicly visible at the Barnard Sexuality Conference in 1982 and took place throughout the 1980s. For an overview of the debate and the main actors involved see Tong (1989: 112-126).

term 'sex worker' with the intent of underscoring that prostitution is an income-generating activity, i.e. a form of labour and not an identity (Alexander 1997; Pheterson 1996). The re-articulation of sex work in terms of labour aimed to displace radical feminists claims of prostitution as violence against women, women as passive recipients of men's violence, and the equation of self and body. This re-articulation also counters theories which regard prostitution in terms of the psycho- or socio-pathological deviance of individual women (Pheterson 1993). Situating prostitution as work allowed sex workers to point out the similarities between sex work and other types of labour and re-focuses the attention onto the struggle for improving sex workers' rights and working conditions. Re-valorizing prostitution as work went hand in hand with contesting claims that prostitution is invariably and always forced, and emphasizing instead that women choose sex work out of economic need and/or the feeling of control it gives them over sexual interactions and sex buyers (Delacoste and Alexander 1988). Part of the re-signification of prostitution was also an interpretation of sex workers as healers who perform emotional labour, or as creative practitioners whose goal it is to produce an empowering women-controlled sexuality by liberating it from the monogamous male script (Bell 1994, Chapkis 1997).

Scholars have pointed out that the alliance between sex worker rights advocates and sex radicals⁷¹ was based upon their shared criticisms of sexuality and the self as the unified essence of an individual (van der Veen 2001: 35), dismissal of sexuality as 'an ahistorical natural urge', and its interpretation in terms of a historical and cultural construction (Zatz 1997: 293). Sex radicals associated prostitutes with other oppressed sexual minorities and emphasized the challenge prostitution represents for normative heterosexual sexuality (*ibid.*). This position has been criticized for the celebratory mode it assumes in relation to the selling of sexual labour as a way of resisting gender inequalities (O'Connell Davidson 2002: 87), and for glancing over the fact that the vast majority of prostitutes enter sex work in order to earn money and not 'because sex for money turns them on' (Zatz 1997: 293). Sex worker rights advocates counter these arguments by claiming that celebratory strategies are crucial in challenging again and again the dominant cultural representation and moral codes surrounding prostitution, and in creating a healing 'counterculture of alternative meaning' (Nagle 2002: 1179).⁷² For sex worker rights' advocates this project is intrinsically linked to dislocating social stigma ascribed to

⁷¹ Among others see Califia (1994), Nestle (1987), and Rubin (1984).

⁷² In her criticism of O'Connell Davidson (1998) and Weitzers's (2000) works, Jill Nagle explains in the following terms the importance of the celebratory dimension: '... sex-industry-positive feminist writing ... reflects and creates a counterculture of alternative meaning in which feminist whores can trade sex for money, develop ongoing relationship with clients, and maintain their social aliveness and health. To deny the power of this whore counterculture ... it is to implicitly deny the power of, for example, queer-, Afro-, and Judeocentric countercultures to generate self-love and healing and to fashion new meanings within oppressive circumstances' (2002: 1179).

prostitution. Stigmatisation limits prostitutes' chances of lessening dependency upon third parties, improving working conditions, and achieving a greater degree of financial independence. Criminalization of prostitution increases in turn clients' and police violence against prostitutes. Both sustain the oppressive and exploitative labour relations in sex work.

The feminist debate on trafficking raises questions of power and agency in prostitution. By defining women as victims of third parties' coercive action, the term 'trafficking' implies that third parties appropriate and 'own' power during all stages of the trafficking process. Since, within this framework, traffickers are represented as wielding consolidated and homogeneous domination over the women they exploit, women become objects of trafficking 'transactions' and thus literally devoid of agency. In order to bring the issue of agency back into the trafficking debate, sex worker rights advocates have placed emphasis on the self-determination of women to engage in sex work. These efforts have (indirectly) encouraged a differentiation of free and forced migration for prostitution, and the characterization of non-western women as victims of trafficking. In their communication during the negotiation process over the trafficking definition, the Human Rights Caucus stated that 'if no one is forcing [the woman] to engage in [illicit activity such as prostitution], then trafficking does not exist' (Human Rights Caucus quoted in Doezema 2002: 2).

My analysis of respondents' different routes into prostitution, different forms of 'employment' relations with third parties, and different means of exiting prostitution sit uneasily with positions that all too easily posit the notions of consent and force as the basis for separating free and forced prostitution, and equating trafficking with the latter. This binary opposition is problematic because it conceptually ties migration to trafficking. Because trafficking stands for forced migration and subsequent forced labour in the sex sector (or other industries/services), non-migrant Western women are excluded from the category of trafficking. Within the discourse of trafficking, forced prostitution is equivalent to forced migrant prostitution. Next to upholding the dichotomy 'Western' sex workers versus 'trafficked' migrant women (Doezema 1998, 2001; Kempadoo 1998), this equation – as I will show in this chapter—conceals the similarities that characterize migrant and non-migrant women's experience of third party controlled street prostitution. Moreover, it hinders the resources migrant women generate and the agency they enact despite exploitative labour conditions and various forms of abuse that often accompany street work. The complexity of relations regulating prostitution becomes visible when third parties are not positioned as primary sources of oppression but rather as one among many factors which determine the degree of migrant women's

unfreedom⁷³ in prostitution. Broadening the analysis from an exclusive focus on third parties to a multi-layered ‘condition of confinement’ means, to use Julia O’Connell Davidson’s words, examining the ‘conditions that prevent exit from prostitution through the use of physical restraint, physical violence or the threat thereof, or through the threat of other non-economic sanctions, such as imprisonment or deportation’ (1998: 29).⁷⁴ In order to investigate the conditions of confinement respondents experienced and the ‘idiom of power’⁷⁵ through which these conditions were organized (and negotiated), my work adopts a model proposed by Orlando Patterson (1982) who differentiates between personalistic and materialistic idioms of power. Following Marx, Patterson shows how in the personalistic idiom, power is direct, transparent, and its unequal distribution and personal dependencies⁷⁶ are acknowledged openly. This type of power is at the same time accompanied by attempts to humanize power relations through social strategies such as fictive kinship, clientship and asymmetrical gift exchanges (18). While in personalistic modes of power no party involved ever loses sight of the existing dissymmetry of power, in the materialistic idiom --characteristic of capitalist production-- relations of dependence are disguised to conceal unequal labour relations and capital circulation (1982: 19).

The distinction between these two idioms of power, as I shall discuss in the two following sections of this chapter, points to the shortfalls of positions advanced by radical feminists, which view third parties as the main source of dominance and power over migrant women in prostitution. While my data suggest that third parties exercise a personalistic mode of power, they also point to the fact that this type of power relation is reinforced by immigration and labour regulations and economic pressure/need, which in turn increase women’s dependency on the third party organizer of prostitution and radically reduce migrants’ social and labour mobility. Thus, I argue that in order to understand the condition of confinement as well as the limits of migrant women’s mobility, one must pay attention to the materialistic idiom of power. Rather than reducing prostitution to violence against women, my analysis relies on an approach developed by Julia O’Connell Davidson, who addresses prostitution in terms of a social practice embedded in ‘a particular set of social

⁷³ The term ‘unfreedom’ is deployed in the work of Julia O’Connell Davidson (1998). I find it useful in order to exit the notions of coercion and instead refocus the analysis of prostitution upon the notion of constraints.

⁷⁴ In her definition of ‘conditions of confinement’, O’Connell Davidson draws upon the work of Truong (1990).

⁷⁵ By ‘idiom of power’ Patterson indicates ‘the principal way in which the power is immediately interpreted in socially and cognitively acceptable terms ... by those who wield it and by the members of their community’ (1982: 18).

⁷⁶ Personal dependence stands here for relations in which individuals are directly dependent on others while usually at the same time have others dependent on them (1983: 18).

relations which produce a series of variable and interlocking constraints upon [subjects'] action' (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 18).

The distinction between control exercised by third parties, and economic and political structural forces which constrained respondents' physical and social mobility, is used as a framework within which to examine the ways in which migrant women in prostitution oppose, resist, negotiate, or fail to negotiate the limits of those constraints. Sections four and five of this chapter foreground relationships migrant women established and resources they generated while in prostitution. These sections examine the ways in which these relationships and resources enabled women to exit their situations of unfreedom or street prostitution all together. The reductive discourse of trafficked women as passive victims of forced prostitution is thus substituted by an analysis of migrant women as agents who, although constrained by structures of domination and idioms of power, engage with, negotiate and modify oppressive social conditions in order to intervene against structural inequalities which shape their lives in prostitution.

2. Personalistic forms of constraint and control

When asked to describe their experiences when arriving in Italy, the respondents spoke of having been shocked when confronted with street prostitution, the difficulty of coping with the social and spatial confinement prostitution entailed, and the forms of control exercised over them by third parties. Starting from respondents' accounts of entry into street prostitution, this section investigates the means by which third parties constrained the respondents' mobility and controlled their performance in prostitution in order to appropriate the earnings and maximize the economic gain generated by the women's labour.

Entry into street prostitution as a moment of shock

In their narratives, the respondents allocated significant time to describing their moment of arrival at the destination, their introduction to prostitution, and their first days on the street.⁷⁷ All of them dedicate quite elaborate narrative space to stories of entry into street prostitution and speak of it in terms of an initial moment of shock.

⁷⁷ The significance ascribed to starting work on the street is most apparent in the narratives of respondents who left—and then later returned—to the sex industry. These respondents gave much more space to a description of street prostitution when narrating the first, rather than the second, entrance into sex work. In fact, accounts of re-engagement in prostitution is nearly glossed over and, when

The description of this initial situation of shock is present in the narratives of all respondents, independent of whether or not they consented to street prostitution at the moment of departure. It might appear as a contradiction that even those respondents who agreed to a prostitution contract experienced shock upon their arrival. The causes of shock are manifold. One had to do with the fact that, when in existence, the prostitution ‘contract’ between a third party and a respondent was quite vague. This ‘contract’, agreed to between the parties at the moment of departure for Italy, was always verbal and did not specify living nor working conditions—such as the amount of working hours or the work rate. What was made explicit was the length of the ‘contract’—usually three months—and the payment, amounting to 10% of the earnings. This corresponded approximately to 1.000/1.200 EUR per month.⁷⁸ A second cause of shock can be explained through images of prostitution. When asked how she imagined prostitution before coming to Italy, Ioanna replied: ‘Like in a movie’.⁷⁹ Other respondents did not entertain romantic images of prostitution, but since many did not expect to work in street prostitution but rather in a bar and prostitute occasionally to round up their earnings, they were desperate for being in street prostitution. However, even when a respondent knew she would be working in street prostitution, it was quite a challenge to imagine oneself actually on the street. With the exception of Ioanna who states in her narrative, ‘I went and stood in the middle of the street’⁸⁰ in an affirmative and self confident manner, respondents spoke of a feeling of displacement. Oksana’s narrative offers an example of the confusion she went through when arriving at ‘her’ workplace for the first time:

I knew I was supposed to stay outside but did not know where or how. I went there together with Sonia. I said: ‘Come on, lets go. We’ll find the place. I started walking [along the street]. [There were some houses there and I

referred to, it is not to describe the moment of entrance into sex work but to point out violence or some other disturbing episode which occurred while working. The importance respondents --who moved in and out of prostitution-- ascribed to the first entry and introduction to street prostitution by the thus resembles accounts of those respondents whose engagement in prostitution was limited to only one continuous period.

⁷⁸ Since only two of the respondents stayed the entire length of three months with the same third party (some respondents left street prostitution earlier or got deported by the police; some third parties left or were arrested), and one of them received the sum agreed upon and the other did not, my data does not provide me with sufficient information about the degree to which third parties respected payment agreements. The records collected by an outreach unit active in Bologna on migrant women from fSU and Romania confirm my findings with reference to the length of the contract and specify further that at the end of the three months women can choose whether to collect the 10% of their total earnings or stay ten days longer and work for themselves (Calderone et al: 2000).

⁷⁹ While Ioanna does not specify which movie, the image she entertained is best described in terms of a glamorous prostitute.

⁸⁰ “Mi sono messa in mezzo alla strada.”

thought that] perhaps we need to enter some of the doors. Then, at the end, I said: ‘No, Sonia, number 24 is here. We must stay here!’⁸¹

What Oksana describes in terms of confusion and surprise, another respondent, Marisa, narrates in terms of trauma and disorientation. Her feeling of powerlessness was enhanced by the fact that she did not speak any Italian. Furthermore, starting to sex work was traumatic because of the objectification it entailed:

I started to work on the second day. I did not know the language, nothing. I felt bad. We were not used to staying like in a window-shop; the client comes, looks at you, goes and fucks you... I felt betrayed because I was selling myself for money. I could only see the street. ... I was selling my body for money, for money that I could not keep. I gave all the money to the pimp.⁸²

The combination of surprise effect, shock, guilt, disorientation and constant pressure from a third party resulted, for some respondents, in a sensation of not being able to cope and wanting to run away. Ester describes this situation with the following words: ‘For two-three days I wanted to run away. I would start crying and say no, that I cannot do it.’⁸³ In respondents’ narratives, the description of the initial period of shock is followed by a phase of resignation finding ways to cope with the situation. For Natascha, getting used to the confinement of street prostitution meant giving herself up to depression: ‘You know [after a week] I got used to coming and going, but I did not want to think of anything. I thought that for me life has ended... I did not care at all.’⁸⁴ For Maja, it was a moment of shock followed by inevitable adaptation: ‘I had a shock. The first time and it was on the road... I couldn’t see anything but those cars... It was a shock. It was indescribable. But then when I got adapted...I got used to it, of course.’ The quotes from the respondents point to yet another, crucial, element which contributed to characterization of street prostitution encountered as shocking. The sentence by Marisa (see above) ‘I could only see the street’ and Maja ‘I couldn’t see anything but those cars’ are also mirrored in Liudmila’s description of the first days

⁸¹ “Io lo sapevo che devo stare fuori, ma come fare? Sono andata con Sonia. Ho detto: ‘Dai, andiamo, troviamo’. Ho cominciato a camminare. ‘Forse dobbiamo entrare in qualche porta, non lo so? Poi, alla fine dico: ‘No Sonia, guarda qui è il venticinque. Dobbiamo, allora, stare qua?!’”

⁸² “Il secondo giorno ho cominciato a lavorare. Non conoscevo la lingua, niente. Sono stata male. Noi non eravamo abituate a stare come stare in vetrina, [il cliente] viene, ti guarda, va, ti scopa. Mi sentivo tradita. Mi sentivo così male che ... non lo so. ... Mi sentivo tradita perché io mi vendevo per i soldi. Io vedevo solamente la strada... Io vendevo il mio corpo per dei soldi, per i soldi che non rimanevano miei. Li davo tutti al magnaccio.”

⁸³ “Sono stata due-tre giorni che volevo scappare. Ho cominciato a piangere e a dire di no, non riuscivo.”

⁸⁴ “Sai, [dopo una settimana] mi ero abituata ad andare e venire però non volevo pensare a niente. Pensavo che per me la vita era finita. ... Non mi fregava niente.”

on the street: ‘There is no freedom: you are in Italy but at the same time you are not. What does one see? Only the street of Borgo Panigale and Calderara, nothing else.’⁸⁵

The spatial immobility and social isolation that respondents experienced upon their arrival contrasts starkly with expectations they entertained prior to leaving for Italy. The decision to leave their home countries and seek agents who would allow them to realize their migratory projects was informed by the women’s desire for mobility and autonomy from their families. In fact, as I illustrated in the previous chapter, entering trafficking systems for all, and consenting to prostitute (if necessary) for some, was part of respondents’ migratory project. It meant on the one hand that they would leave stagnant life situations while, on the other hand, become open to new economic and social opportunities. The physical and social isolation imposed on them by third parties collided with the women’s migratory expectations and goals; far from being able to realize their projects of mobility and autonomy, the respondents had to deal with the fact that their movements and human interactions were newly confined to the narrow spaces of prostitution.

Studies on street work have pointed out that the feeling of being trapped in/by prostitution is not unique to migrant women but is rather typical of third party controlled street prostitution. In her study of prostitution in MidCity, Joanna Phoenix (1999) discusses how, for the white non-migrant English women she interviewed, prostitution was initially perceived as a way to escape particular men or a life on welfare and to leave instead independent lives. Yet, due to economic exploitation, physical violence and retaliations typical of the ‘practice of poncing’, intended as an institutional practice of prostitution⁸⁶ and defined by Phoenix interviewees as the ‘financial exploitation of women who engage in prostitution’ (1999: 116), prostitution did not translate into the opening of possibilities and options but, rather, into a trap which prevented women from living autonomous lives. For Phoenix’s interviewees poncing meant being trapped into prostitution and accepting the idea of prostitution as a trap that could not be escaped. These feelings of entrapment and resignation mirror the descriptions of immobility expressed the respondents in my study. As in Phoenix’s study, the feeling of entrapment was an effect of constraints imposed on respondents’ mobility by third parties, and of the violence third parties used to control respondents’ performance in prostitution. These strategies of control were usually established immediately upon arrival in Italy and during the initial period of prostitution. The data suggests that third parties are more likely to be physically present and enforce control during the first days of the women’s arrival. The first days

⁸⁵ “Non c’è libertà: sei in Italia però non sei in Italia. Cosa vedi? Solo la strada di Borgo Panigale e Calderara, basta.”

⁸⁶ Phoenix’s work distinguishes the individual actions of particular men from the ‘practice of poncing’ identified as an institutional practice of prostitution.

in prostitution were the moment when power hierarchies were made clear. Marisa, after she was told what she was required to do, for whom and how, understood that she was momentarily not in the position to negotiate her situation: 'I remained silent; I could not say much. I just arrived to Italy and he could do with me whatever he pleased. I remained silent.'⁸⁷ The moment of shock and disorientation enhanced by the feeling of immobility, and followed by the period of adaptation and resignation, all work in favour of third parties. It was exactly during this initial moment of confusion that third parties set in motion a number of strategies aimed to establish control over the respondents.

Physical Violence and the Threat Thereof

From the respondents' narratives emerges that the threat of violence is the predominant form of control third parties used to secure power over the women. This does not mean that the threat of violence remains only a threat. On the contrary, in a number of situations a concrete episode of violence occurred. For example, Ioanna and Oksana had five-month working agreements with an Albanian man. The two respondents lived in a hotel in the centre of Bologna and prostituted on the nearby 'viali'. Contrary to the majority of respondents, they enjoyed relative freedom of movement. They did not see the third party on a daily basis; he came to the hotel once a week to collect money. After ten days of prostitution, it became clear that the third party had a different image of the prostitution contract than did the respondents. He dogged them on their way to and from the street, he objected to their going to dinner with clients, and claimed that they did not earn enough. After threatening the respondents with physical violence, he used physical violence first against one and then against the other respondent, causing concussion to one of them. He also threatened to shoot the same respondent in the legs.

The threats were not limited to direct physical violence but also took the form of intimidations that threatened the respondents' basic needs, such as sustenance. For example, a way for third parties to establish and maintain power over the respondents was by threatening to deprive them of food. Some respondents, like Marisa, were frightened by this treatment while others, usually those who had had previous experience working in the sex industry, like Maja who worked in a cabaret in Lebanon, took it as a 'normal' dynamic: 'Of course, they shouted and screamed, 'What is this? If there is no work [no clients], you'll work twenty-four hours a day, and won't eat.' In principle, every one is like that.' Third parties also quite often

⁸⁷ "Io sono stata zitta, non potevo dire tanto. Ero appena venuta in Italia e lui poteva fare cosa voleva con me. Sono stata zitta."

threatened respondents with physical violence. For example, when Larisa tried to make a phone call to a friend with the intention of asking her to help her run away, the third party told her: ‘Try to phone one more time and I will break your head’⁸⁸. Another respondent, Ivana, was hit heavily by the third party on the head causing hearing damage when she refused to prostitute. From then onwards, these third parties did not use other physical violence to manage the respondents but maintained control, for example over Ivana, with the constant threat of violence. A female pimp would tell the respondent how violent her male partner/pimp is and what he had already did to other women under his control; at the same time, the male pimp would tell similar stories about his female partner. After a respondent was introduced to the ‘rules of the game’, those third parties in the position of power were less present while the maintenance of the control was handed to others, usually women organizers of prostitution. These would be women who have been brought to Italy by the same or other third parties and have worked previously as prostitutes. They were the one who maintained control on the street, at times working themselves as prostitutes.

Although episodes of violence did occur, especially during respondents’ initial period in street prostitution, my data suggest that the threat of violence was more common than violence itself. Women were threatened directly by third parties who controlled them, or they feared violence after experiencing it and observing it in their surroundings. Yet, a number of respondents did not experience physical violence directly from third parties. They were aware that women around them did experience violence and felt that the same might happen to them.

My data concur with the body of research on ‘practices of poncing’ as regards migrant women’s prostitution in Italy. This research has shown that third parties usually increase their use of violence or threaten violence at the moment of the women’s arrival to prostitution in order to gain control over labour and assert control and power (Carchedi 2003: 130-131, Malucelli 2001: 50-51). Yet, it is important to observe that physical violence and threats are not characteristic exclusively of migrant women’s street prostitution but rather of third party controlled street work in general. Researchers have demonstrated that, contrary to sex work off street (such as in saunas or clubs), third party controlled street prostitution is characterized by a high degree of violence (McKeganey and Barnard 1996, O’Neill 2001, Phoenix 1999). When one compares these studies with studies of trafficking, it emerges that the use of violence or threats of violence in migrant women’s third party controlled street prostitution is comparable to non-migrant street prostitution under a pimp’s control. Thus, rather than being a peculiar characteristic of trafficking, third party use of (threat of)

⁸⁸ “Prova a chiamare un’altra volta e ti spacco la testa.”

violence to establish control and command over prostitutes appears to be a typical feature of ‘practices of poncing’ in general.

Non-Violent Forms of Control

Third party regulated street prostitution does not necessarily involve (physical) violence but may rely on surveillance and control of women’s mobility as a way of establishing power over women and their labour (O’Neill 2001, Phoenix 1999)⁸⁹. Moreover, when it comes to ‘trafficking’, an initially abusive bond between third parties and women is transformed in time to give space to a less violent and more consensual relationship between the parties which nevertheless remains geared towards women’s financial exploitation (Carchedi 2003, Malucelli 2001).

Third parties controlled respondents’ mobility by organizing their housing situation such that the respondents shared the living space with the third parties or with other women working for them. The respondents’ accommodation varied from a hotel room or private house/apartment, to a large private six-floor housing complex on the outskirts of the city of Bologna known as the Calderara Residence. Those respondents placed in a hotel usually shared a room with a peer worker or with the ‘pimp’. For those respondents who shared a room with a peer worker this meant that they could rest after a night of work and claim that space as theirs. For other respondents, like Larisa and Ivana, who lived in the same room as ‘their’ pimps, sharing the same space meant being additionally exposed to third party’s control or/and requests. In Ivana’s case, living with a third party, a woman, entailed being constantly exposed to attempts to achieve *tout court* obedience over the respondent through verbal threats of violence. For Larisa, whose pimp was a man, sharing accommodation with the third party involved handling his sexual advances/claims:

[He] ‘I waited for you because I want to make love to you’

[She] ‘You are not normal. I am on the street until 5 o’clock in the morning and afterwards you want to make love. You are not normal.’⁹⁰

Larisa tried to manage the situation by offering the third party 25 EUR, the standard prostitution fee for sexual services in a car, in order for him to leave her alone and instead go to the street and have intercourse with another woman. However, he would

⁸⁹ Third parties also used a system of fines and prices –indicated by Patterson as one of characteristics of personalistic idiom of power-- in order to maintain control over the respondent. For a discussion of the system of fines and prices see section *Bonds with the third party/parties* of this chapter.

⁹⁰ [Lui] “Io ti ho aspettato perché voglio fare l’amore.” [Lei] “Tu non sei normale. Io sto fino alle 5 di mattina in strada e tu dopo vuoi far l’amore. Tu non sei normale”.

refuse saying that he is in love with her and that he desires her only. Hence, for Larisa, living with the third party meant ongoing negotiations regarding sexual access to her person. At times, she was successful; at others, she was not.

Other respondents lived in private apartments/houses with a group of their peers and third parties. Those apartments were usually quite distant from the place on the street where respondents worked. In order to reach ‘their’ place on the street, they travelled together in a group by train or a third party drove them there. Travelling with other women or a third party resulted in direct or indirect control of respondents’ movement and actions. Those respondents who lived in the Residence and prostituted in the area not far away faced a very similar situation. They were allowed to move only in-between the Residence and the street, and were forbidden to socialize with clients and women working for other third parties. Natascha describes it like this: ‘One goes out to the street each night but cannot even go for a stroll, or in a bar to drink something.’⁹¹ The control over respondents’ mobility was achieved through immediate physical presence of the third parties, as when they drove past or stood on the street not far away from the respondents. Or through mobile phones when they were away. In fact, since most of the respondents were provided with mobile phones third parties used mobile phones to check on the respondents’ location and working schedule.

My discussion of the forms of constraint might have given the impression that the respondents were under constant surveillance and control. Yet, as the following example of mobile phones illustrates, the idea/notion of *tout court* control is misleading and thus nothing more than an impression. Since third parties equipped women with mobile phones this allowed the third parties to call and check the situation on the street without really being anywhere near the location. He/she knew which women were working for him/her, and left the impression of being in the proximity. Here is an example from Oksana’s story:

He phones and asks: ‘So, where are you? Who is with you now?’

Me: ‘This and that person.’

He: ‘Do not lie to me! You are alone now, aren’t you?’

He would drive his car around and see everything.⁹²

Other respondents describe a similar sensation of being controlled. What is characteristic about all of the stories is that one was never sure if the third party was really there or if he/she was simply checking the situation from far away. I refer to

⁹¹ “Esci tutte le sere in strada, non puoi andare neanche in giro, in un bar, a bere qualcosa. Sempre stai lì, sempre vai dopo alla Residence, non puoi neanche uscire.”

⁹² “Lui mi chiama, e dice ‘Allora, dove stai? Chi sta adesso con te?’ Io dico: ‘Vikam, Dikam, Lala, di qua e di là’. Lui: ‘Non dirmi bugie! Tu sei da sola, è vero?’ Lui gira e vede tutto.”

this in terms of ‘the illusion of control’ because, as my data points out, third parties were often actually not present physically (cfr. Corso and Landi 1998). They instead surveilled the women through mobile phones or other prostitutes.

Indeed, third parties relied on women themselves to inform them about the whereabouts of others. An example comes from the narrative of Ester who describes distrustful relationships with the women who worked for the same third parties: ‘One fears saying anything because if you tell one of the other girls that you have money she will tell it to the pimp. There was a kind of jealousy among us. One feared oneself. You did not know ... you slept in the same bed but still you were scared of her.’⁹³ In a similar manner, another respondent describes the situation of jealousy and competition within the group of other migrant women she was living and working with:

The pimp would not be there next to you to hear what you are saying. The problem was that the other girls would listen to your conversations and would tell him that you do not do this, you do not do that, or that you refused a client because he is ugly or old. Among the girls, the one who would make most money, namely the one who cheated the best, the one who was the toughest, the strongest ... in order to be the pimp’s favourite, she would show that she is better than the others. This was totally wrong because the pimp would not pay any of us: not the one who did a lot or the one who did little.⁹⁴

Kateryna’s description of the surveillance points to the ways in which control was enacted by women she lived and worked with, rather than directly by the third party--through maintenance of the system of control based on suspicion and competition among women. Research on independent street sex work as well as sex work in clubs has shown that women are often in competition or suspicious of each other, that friendships between them are transitory, and that at times they also assault each other physically (McKeganey and Barnard 1996, Nencel 2000). The fabrication and investment into heterosexual emotional dependence can be seen as part of the ‘practice of poncing’. Triggered by women’s economic needs and by the competition and mistrust among women in sex work, the ‘institution of prostitution’ (Phoenix 1999) favours individualism and averts sex workers’ collective organizing.

⁹³ “Hai paura di dire qualcosa perché se io dico a qualcuna che ho dei soldi, lei dice [al magnaccia]... C’era una specie di invidia fra di noi. Avevi paura di te stessa. Non sapevi Dormivi con lei nel letto però avevi paura di lei.”

⁹⁴ “Il magnaccio non stava lì con te, a sentire quello che dici. Il problema era che le altre ragazze sentivano quello che dicevi e andavano a dirlo: “Te non fai questo, te non fai quello”, oppure che rifiuti un cliente perché non ti piace perché è brutto, o vecchio. Fra le ragazze, quella che faceva più soldi, cioè che ingannava di più, che era la più, più, più dura, più forte, cioè lo faceva per far vedere al magnaccio che lei è più buona delle altre per entrare nelle sue grazie; Questo era una cosa sbagliatissima perché, insomma, non pagava nessuna, né te che hai fatto molto, né l’altra che ha fatto poco.”

Condition of Confinement and Economic Exploitation

In addition to the forms of constraint described above, the mobility and interaction of the respondents among themselves and with the clients was also regulated by the working schedule, working rate, and various degrees of economic pressure. The working rate consisted of approximately twelve clients⁹⁵ per shift and, in the case of third parties' controlled street work, the shifts were always eight-hour night-shift. Third parties attempted to limit women's encounters with clients to fifteen minutes during which time it was expected that client and prostitute drove to a parking area, exchanged the sexual service and then drove back to the street. Imposing time-limits on interactions between women and clients aimed at facilitating the surveillance of the former. For third party it was easier to control respondents' movements once they were back standing on the street. Limiting the physical movement and social interaction among women as well as between women and the clients aimed at preventing the flow of information between the parties since information could enable women to exit the situation of confinement. Maja puts it in the following manner:

When the girl comes for the first time and experiences a shock like I did, nobody tells her anything. If only someone...some girls went to a bar and there were girls who ran away sitting in that bar and they suggested, 'Run away, they will never give you your wages, it is all illegal, so to speak'. These are ways of accessing information, of course, if you go to the bar and see the girl who ran away there, sitting with her friend. But in principle, this gossip never reaches the Residence.

An excerpt from Kateryna's interview points to the fact that she was aware of the potential offered by social interaction with clients: 'We could not go out with the clients and go and eat something together, not even during the day, because the pimp said that we would talk, that the client would tell you things and that you would suddenly wake up and leave. They could not allow this to happen'⁹⁶. As this quote summarizes so well, third parties attempt to limit the interaction between women and clients since it is likely to offer the migrant women insight into the world they are

⁹⁵ The working rate varies between ten and fifteen clients per working shift, depending on the ability of respondents to negotiate lower working rate. However, in reality, the working rate was not regulated by the number of clients but by the amount of money one had to earn per shift. Respondents were expected to earn between 600.000 lit (approximately 300 EUR) and 700.000 lit (approximately 350 EUR) per shift with a fee for car service amounting to 50.000 lit (approximately 25 EUR). The respondents could thus lower their working rate in case the clients paid them more than the standard fee.

⁹⁶ "Noi non potevamo uscire fuori con i clienti e andare a mangiare, neanche di giorno, perché dice [la magnaccia] che parlate, che lui [il cliente] ti dice delle cose, che ti svegli e a un certo punto te ne vai, cioè, che loro non se lo potevano permettere."

prohibited from inhabiting and into the human and social reality they are kept away from.

Realizing what they are denied would, as Kateryna puts it, make the respondents 'wake up' and leave. It is obvious that in the case that a prostitute leaves, the third party will possess one less source of earnings. A quote from Marisa's narrative addresses this subject:

They [pimps] fear to lose them. They do not care how much money they get but how much they do not get. This is why they are scared to lose the girls. One [of the female pimps I knew] had three girls and two of them left. Do you know how much she cried because of it? A friend of mine had a problem and she wanted to make some money in order to buy a flat, a house. When she was left with only one girl, she started to cry and said: 'What do I do with one girl only? I must immediately buy other girls.'⁹⁷

As both Kateryna and Marisa's quotes indicate, third parties exercise control on migrant women's mobility in prostitution since they are scared to 'lose' their labour force and therefore their source of income.⁹⁸ Using a variety of strategies and control, whether through use of force or not, third parties aimed at profiting from women's labour and generating the most profit in the shortest time span possible. From the examination of the 'contract' between the third parties and respondents, it emerges that the third parties' goal—independent of whether they are male or female—was to achieving a maximum profit by controlling the rate of prostitute-client exchanges, and making sure that prostitutes surrender all of their earnings, or to put it differently, that they keep as little money as possible. Third parties, my analysis suggests, make use of migrant labour because this population is driven by economic need, is unfamiliar with the surroundings, and does not master the language spoken in the destination country.

Keeping in mind that respondents serviced a large number of clients per night⁹⁹ and that those interactions are for the most part out of a third party's reach, it is simply an illusion that a third party might be able to fully control women's social interaction. By gathering information and observing the 'rules' of the game, the respondents created resources which enabled them to exit third party controlled prostitution and work independently, or quit sex work all together. Exploiting migrant

⁹⁷ "Loro [magnaccia] hanno paura per loro che le perdano. Loro non guardano quanti soldi prendono, ma guardano quanti soldi perdono. Per questo hanno paura di perdere le ragazze. Una amica mia aveva tre ragazze e due sono andate via. Lo sai come lei ha pianto? Lei aveva un problema e voleva fare un po' di soldi per prendere un appartamento, una casa. Quando è rimasta solo con una ragazza si è messa a piangere e ha detto: "Che cosa faccio io con una? Devo comperare altre e subito."

⁹⁸ This raises questions about the profit third parties make and what is necessary to achieve the desired profit. Unfortunately, I do not have precise data to advance a hypothesis on this nor did I come across research that attempted this type of calculation.

⁹⁹ All of the clients were Italian men, but some of them spoke languages (such as Russian, English or German) with which respondents were familiar.

women's labour in prostitution carries the risk that migrants will get acquainted with the local situation both in terms of learning how the system works and how to take some advantage of it themselves. Hence, third parties manipulated the initial moment of shock respondents experienced when confronted for the first time with street prostitution, restrained women's social interaction and physical mobility, and fabricated situation of (emotional) dependence. All of these were geared towards appropriating and maximizing the earnings generated by women's labour in prostitution.

3. Materialistic Forms of Power/Domination

Materialistic forms of domination, in the combination with personalistic power exercised by the third parties, constituted the 'condition of confinement' that prevented respondents' exit from prostitution (O'Connell Davidson 1998). My examination of the materialistic idiom of power, as regards prostitution, brings to the fore the economic and legal constraints which facilitated, created and sustained the state of confinement. In this respect, I illustrate the degree of financial need among respondents, debt bondage, and immigration and labour regulations as elements that consigned respondents to prostitution and further restrained their social and physical mobility.

Economic Need/Pressure

The desire to improve one's own as well as family's economic situation emerged in Chapter 2 as one of the fundamental features of respondents' migratory project. Yet, instead of being a motor for achieving mobility or autonomy, economic need or pressure can also posit grounds for immobility, especially when they bound a respondent to a third party. An example comes from the narratives of two sisters, Ester and Tatiana. The first time Ester arrived in Italy, she learned that the nursing job she was promised was a fake. After a couple of weeks, she ran away from third party controlled street prostitution and returned to Moldova. Some months later, she and her sister set on a new journey to Italy with the promise of domestic work. Instead, they ended up in prostitution near Bologna. While the first time on the street was a great shock to Ester, the second time she was more familiar with the environment and kept observing the third parties: how they moved, whom they met. She kept at a distance from them, did not engage with them, and planned her and her sister's escape. Unfortunately, her plans to run away failed. Her father got very sick and her mother

relied on her to send money home for medications and hospitalization. When she first learned of her father's illness, Ester tried to persuade the third party to let her and her sister go home. The third party did not accommodate her request but decided to let one of the sisters, Tatiana, go, and to keep the other one, Ester. Ester found herself in a situation of great economic pressure: on the one hand, it was made clear to her that she had to pay back her and her sister's debt; on the other hand, her mother kept on pressuring her to send money home. Ester described the experience in this way:

I would do everything possible to send money home. They [my mum and sister] called me when I would not [call them]. There were moments when I could not take any money because ... and then my mum would phone me; she called me to help her. To make her sleep at night I would from time to time even send her 50.000 lit paying the transfer taxes on the top. Because my farther needed medicines urgently the very same day. I would also ask the clients: 'Can you give me something? Give me 100.000 lit. Then I would divide it: 50.000 for me and 50.000 for the pimps. At home, they needed money from one day to the other. When phoning home and talking with my mum, I fought back my tears. I would talk to her and fought back my tears in order not to cry.¹⁰⁰

In Ester's case then, the condition of confinement which prevented her from exiting prostitution was constituted by great economic pressure from both the third party to pay back her debt, and from her own family, to help out financially in an emergency. Actually, since during her first time in Italy Ester left third party controlled prostitution, this indicates that the economic need rather than the debt constituted the main form of compulsion to stay in prostitution. While Ester had to surrender all of her earnings to third parties, sex work also permitted her to have access to cash, some of which she would keep without the third party's knowledge and then send home to her mother.¹⁰¹

The necessity for money did not have to be interwoven with the debt in order to constitute a strong financial need, but as Ana's narrative illustrates, it could have been driven by one's basic survival needs. Shortly upon her arrival to Italy, made possible though entering a sex work 'contract' with a third party, Ana left her exploitative situation with the help of a client. Following her exit from prostitution she was hosted by two religious institutions: she was kicked out of the first one on the

¹⁰⁰ "Io facevo tutto il possibile per mandare qualcosa [a casa]. Quando non mandavo mi chiamavano. Sono stati dei casi che non riuscivo a prendere dei soldi perché ... poi mi chiamava mia mamma, mi chiamava per aiutarla. Io ogni tanto, per farle chiudere gli occhi, mandavo anche cinquanta pagando anche le tasse [di trasferimento soldi]. Perché servivano delle medicine quel giorno urgente. Chiedevo anche ai clienti: 'Puoi darmi qualcosa?' 'Dammi 100.000' e allora dividevo 50.000 per me e 50.000 per loro [magnaccia]. [A casa] i soldi servivano da oggi a domani. Quando chiamavo a casa e parlavo con mia madre tenevo duro. Parlavo con lei e tenevo duro per non piangere."

¹⁰¹ This could have been the standard prostitution fee (50.000 lit – approximately 25 EUR) or the tip that the client would leave her.

accusation of having had sexual intercourse¹⁰² and left the second one because she felt it was like a prison. However, walking out of there put her a difficult situation. First, she was vulnerable to deportation if stopped by the police and, second, she had no place to live and no money for food. Ana left the second religious institution where she stayed after a Moldavian woman offered her an apartment for 25 EUR per day. To make sure that Ana pays the rent, the woman posed the condition that Ana returns to do sex work. Earnings other than 25 EUR were for Ana to keep:

She came to me and immediately she asked in Italian ‘Where do you come from?’ ‘From Moldova’ [I answered] and from there on I started talking in Moldavian. We chatted and I said ‘Look, I feel ill at ease here: I do not know what am I doing here’ and she answered ‘I can help you with the flat but then you need to go back to the street. You can work for yourself but you need to pay 50.000 lit a day for the flat’. So, I had no other choice because I knew that if I stayed there nothing would happen. I had to do something, do you understand? I thought, maybe I will be lucky this time. And so, I stayed [in the flat], I lived there. I worked for myself: when I wanted I went to work and when no, I did not. I would work only during the night for three to four hours, not more. That was enough to pay for food and for some clothes. In the meantime I always tried to meet people.¹⁰³

Returning to sex work was for Ana at the same time the continuation and postponement of her migration project. Having no other economic prospects, she opted for prostitution and thus postponed her plans to stay in Italy and support herself through something other than sex work. However, even though she needed to suspend her project momentarily she, at the same time, was determined to carry it on and did so by attempting to get to know as many clients as possible who could help her find alternative work (‘I always tried to meet people’).

Returning to sex work could also have been motivated by a pre-determined financial goal. Sasha, upon her arrival to Italy, prostituted shortly for a third party who, after a couple of days, got arrested. She and other migrant women who had worked for the third party moved into his apartment, kept on prostituting and

¹⁰² She was not accused of having had sex with someone in particular, but ‘just’ of having had sex and was therefore expelled from the institution. The accusations were made by an employee who saw a condom cover in Ana’s garbage can. Even though she explained that having had nothing else, she used the condom to tie up her hair together in a knot, she was expelled from the institution on the basis of being immoral. This example points to the persistent stigmatization of women who engage in sex work.

¹⁰³ “Lei è arrivata da me e subito lei mi ha chiesto in italiano “Da dove sei?”, “Da Moldavia” e lì ho cominciato a parlare in moldavo, e così abbiamo parlato e io ho detto “Guarda che sto male di qua, non so cosa faccio”, lei mi ha detto “Sai che ti posso aiutare con l’appartamento solo che tu torni in strada, però lavori per te, solo che paghi l’appartamento cinquantamila al giorno.” Allora io non avevo un’altra scelta perché io ho visto che se io sto di là non succederà niente, io devo fare qualcosa, capito? Dico, forse questa volta davvero, sai, avrò fortuna; e così sono stata di là, ho abitato là, ho lavorato per me, quando volevo andavo, quando no, no; lavoravo di notte, solo di notte, tre, quattro ore non di più; mi bastavano per pagare, per mangiare, per un po’ di vestiti; e sempre cercavo a fare delle conoscenze.”

organized to pay the rent. Her experience of independent prostitution occurred some time later. This is how she referred to it: I went to work when I needed money to send home, to eat. Later a love relationship started and when I became pregnant I went to work again.¹⁰⁴ The father of her son, an Italian man, left her when she refused to have an abortion. Faced with the situation of having no man to support her and having no money or place to live on her own, the respondent opted for prostitution. She organized her work to make as much money in as little time as possible, working each night from 9 pm until 5-6 am. In addition, she managed to save rent for an indoor working space because a friend had been allowing her to use her apartment. After three months, Sasha put aside 6.000 EUR, the amount she considered necessary to maintain her and her child for a while, and then ended prostitution all together.

Economic pressure from families and the respondents' own need to secure basic income are reasons that tied migrant women to third party controlled prostitution. These economic pressures also incited some respondents to return to sex and work independent of third parties. In this respect, the stories of migrant women resemble the accounts of non-migrant women in street prostitution since in both cases 'women prostitute to make money' (McKeganey and Barnard 1996). While some scholars of trafficking point out that third parties did not allow women to keep any money, my data suggests that some respondents were paid an agreed sum at the end of a three month contract period. Others managed to gain money through tips from the clients, by hiding a part of the earnings from third parties, or by being given by the third party a sum of money to send home. The amount of money respondents obtained differed greatly, but prostitution nevertheless represented a way of earning money for women under third party control as well as for those who worked independently.

Debt bondage

Trafficking in women for the purpose of exploiting their labour in prostitution has most commonly been referred to in terms of 'sexual slavery'. Different sources, whether radical feminist (Leidholdt 1999, Moroli and Sibona 1999, Raymond 2002), journalistic (cfr. Berman 2003, cfr. Doezema 1999) or scientific (Caldwell et al 1999) use the expression sexual slavery to indicate the conditions of debt bondage and illegal confinement to which trafficked women in prostitution are subjected. Those studies argue that the debt is the foundation on which the women are economically exploited and leaves them 'obligated indefinitely to their employers' (emphasis mine; Caldwell et al 1999: 63). It is further argued that the debt obligation is 'the norm in

¹⁰⁴ "Sono andata a lavorare quando avevo bisogno di soldi per mandare a casa, per mangiare. Dopo è cominciata una storia d'amore e dopo quando sono rimasta incinta sono tornata di nuovo a lavorare."

the world of traffickers and their victims' (*ibid.*) by means of which third parties transform a woman into a 'prisoner of debt bondage' and acquire ownership over her person (Shannon 1999: 123).

The above characterization of debt bondage as an enterprise which secures ownership over a woman in prostitution for an indefinite period of time has been disputed by a number of studies of indoors (i.e. club) sex work conducted in Australia, Canada, Germany and Japan which have shown that debt bondage is limited to the period of the repayment. Once the debt has been settled, these research shows, the women were able to keep their income (Meaker 2002, Phongpaichit 1999, Ratanaloan Mix 2002, Sutdhibhasipl 2002). Moreover, while all of the research concurs that debt-bonded prostitution leaves migrants vulnerable to exploitation, researchers have been able to examine the different economic logic upholding the debt bondage system by contextualizing the various systems of debt bondage within the local economies (Kyle and Dale 2001, Phongpaichit 1999).¹⁰⁵

However, as my analysis points out, placing an emphasis on the debt can also lead to an 'illusion of similitude' and thus fail to take sufficient account of the different kinds of social relations prostitution involves. As Alan Knight pointed out in his historical study of debt bondage in Latin America, 'the mere fact of debt, which is the overt feature of debt peonage, may ... create an illusory similitude among forms of labour which differ radically in respect of subjective conditions/perceptions and objective social implications' (1988: 103). In this respect, respondents' experiences differ greatly from systems of indenture that are sometimes used to recruit migrant sex workers in South East Asia (cfr. Kyle and Dale 2001, Phongpaichit 1999).

As I have shown in the previous chapter, in order to reach Italy, the respondents' contracted the debt with the traffickers and the amount of this debt, at least in part, was directly linked to the price of travel and (at times) providing the respondents with necessary travel documents.¹⁰⁶ While existing literature on debt-bonded prostitution has shown that the presence of debt binds women to third parties for a determinate period of time, it is interesting to note that, in their narratives, the respondents rarely made any reference to debt at all. An exception was those respondents, such as Ioanna and Oksana, who borrowed the exact amount of money to pay for the travel and the visa to Italy, and who were aware that they had to pay back this loan. Other respondents did not refer to the obligation to repay the contracted

¹⁰⁵ In Chapter 6, I return to the discussion of debt bondage, slavery and globalization.

¹⁰⁶ On the basis of data gathered it is impossible to establish if there is a correspondence between travel, accommodation and visa costs on the one hand, and the total amount of the debt on the other. The respondents were usually informed that they have been 'bought' for a sum varying between 2.000.000 and 5.000.000 lit (approximately 1.000 to 2.500 EUR), but they were not informed about the exact breakdown of the expenses. It is certain that travel, accommodation and visa costs made up a part of the debt, but it is unclear what other fees/interests might be added on top of it.

debt. While it might seem that debt is an important factor in enhancing the conditions of confinement, most of the respondents did not attribute a prominent role to the debt in their narratives, nor interpret it as something that prevented them from exiting the situation of confinement. I am not arguing that the debt played no role at all but simply pointing out that respondents were not too worried about whether they would be able to settle the debt or not and, by extension, did not perceive themselves as 'bound' to a third party by that debt.

Here is an example from Larisa's narrative. After a long journey through the Balkans, Larisa was 'bought' by a young Albanian man age twenty-one and brought to Italy to prostitute. She was aware that he invested money in her and in this way made it possible for her to come to Italy. However, this did not prevent her from running away from him after two weeks. In her running away she was helped by a girl-friend originating from the same town as Larisa, who worked previously as a sex worker, and stayed in Italy once exiting sex work. Without Larisa's pimp knowing, the friend picked her up from the street and struck a deal with Larisa who, from that moment on, worked for her. After a month in prostitution, the respondent did not manage to keep any money for herself; all of her earnings were spent to pay for a hotel room, food, and the fee for the third party. Having not earned anything, the respondent was not motivated to work any longer but instead decided to quit. When commenting on this episode Larisa remarked that the woman was stupid: 'She was stupid, but really stupid because she took me from the street. I came to Italy alone, so to say: she paid no money for me.'¹⁰⁷ Larisa suggests that the third party had no costs involved in bringing her to Italy and that they could have divided the earnings more equally.¹⁰⁸

When telling her story, an interesting reversal takes place: Larisa omits the fact that she was 'bought' and brought to Italy by an Albanian man and says instead that she 'arrived on her own, so to say'. The 'so to say' phrase constitutes the point at which the story is altered. What are the reasons for this narrative reversal? Viewed within the complexity of the respondent's entire narrative, this shift indicates Larisa's migration project. She is aware that her arrival in Italy was made possible by the third party from Albania. At the same time, she frames it within her own struggle to leave Moldova and reach Italy. The third party is someone who does constrain her, but he is also perceived as a means by which she has reached the desired destination. Whereas he might think that he advanced funds, she sees the debt as his own personal risk. Other respondents expressed similar views toward the 'traffickers'. Traffickers are

¹⁰⁷ "Lei era scema, ma scema davvero, perché lei mi aveva presa [dalla strada]. Diciamo che sono venuta da sola, lei non ha dato i soldi per me o simile."

¹⁰⁸ The third party settled a 70%-30% deal with Larisa: 70% for the third party and 30% for the Larisa. However, since Larisa made little money during that month (i.e. 2000 EUR in one month) the deal was revised in order for Larisa to be able to cover food and accommodation expenses.

seen as a means to an end. The fact that some respondents perceived third party as instrumental did not reverse the power hierarchy between the respondents and third parties. Yet, it does point to the need to research more closely the nature of the debt in so called debt-bonded prostitution and examine the type of debt, and the circumstances that constitute a ‘condition of confinement’.

Unlike the more formal systems of indenture used to recruit migrant sex workers in South East Asia for example, the respondents did not know the amount of money through which the third parties had acquired power over them. The amount of the debt was rarely specified to respondents. As some scholars argue, the fact that a third party debits a certain sum to the migrants in a non-transparent way facilitates the third party’s economic exploitation. This is because the indebted never knows how much debt she has managed to pay back and how much is still left to settle (cfr. Bales 2000, Carchedi 2003).¹⁰⁹

However, my data suggest that another interpretation of the situation is also possible: the lack of transparency and exact specification of debt might also work in the women’s favour since the elusiveness surrounding the debt can diminish the importance ascribed to it and thus the pressure on the debtor by the lender. Ioanna and Oksana’s narratives support this interpretation: the two respondents were not debited a certain amount of money but took on a loan, the amount of which was specified upon departure from the Ukraine and later redeemed through sex work in Italy. This suggests a different valuation of ‘loan’ and ‘debt’. Contrary to arguments made in other studies on debt-bonded prostitution, these examples suggest that some women in street prostitution rescind the verbal ‘contract’ by exiting sex work. Therefore, the existence of the debt needs not in itself constitute a condition of confinement. Respondents’ narratives also indicate that for third parties, the possibility of ‘holding’ a woman (Bales 2000) for a certain period of time in order to exploit her labour, appropriate the earnings, and maximize the economic gain is more relevant and more profitable than the repayment of the debt *per se* (cfr. Carchedi 2003: 18).

The Role of the State

Restrictive EU visa and immigration regulations do not stop migration but rather increase the number of undocumented migrants (Collinson 1994). Moreover, as I have shown in the previous chapters, restrictive regulations add to the cost of journeys and

¹⁰⁹ My data also leads me to believe that no clear specification of the debt was made to the respondents because it was already calculated into the work rate and earnings the respondents were requested to surrender. This calculation also included, the risk that the prostitute might decide to leave/run away, be deported, or simply not render enough.

raise migrants' dependency on agencies or individuals who organized their travel. In fact, none of the respondents arranged their migration on their own. Some borrowed from a third party to pay their visa and travel costs and then organized the travel; others were loaned an imprecise sum of money for passport, visa, or transportation and relied on third parties to organise their travel. Having to rely on agencies or individuals for their travel to Italy made respondents dependent upon third parties. Travelling undocumented further increased respondents' vulnerability due to danger of being caught by the border-police, of being sexually abused by traffickers, of contracting a disease or an illness during prolonged travel, or of having little or no control over the terms of the travel.

The dependency of migrant women upon third parties did not cease at the border since, in addition to travel arrangements, respondents relied on third parties to ensure them jobs upon arrival in Italy. Whether they agreed to domestic/care or entertainment work –which later turned out to be fake—or to sex work, all of the respondents made work arrangements with and via third parties rather than with state-sanctioned migration officials (embassies/consulates responsible for distributing work visas). None of the respondents would have qualified for a work visa¹¹⁰ which is contingent upon having an employer in the county of destination who must apply for the permit on the behalf of the worker.¹¹¹ Thus, immigration and labour regulations channelled the respondents into the informal sector and, by extension, prostitution. Like domestic labour, prostitution is one of the few informal options available to undocumented migrant women (Anderson 2000). Most public attention is usually directed towards the exploitation of migrant women in prostitution, but research has shown that both sex and domestic sectors are poorly regulated market segments characterized by abusive and exploitative labour relations (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003).

Migration and labour regulations affected respondents' lives in Italy in a number of ways. Because prostitution is not considered work in Italy, it is not covered by labour legislation. Thus 'legal' immigration status cannot be acquired by means of independent earnings within the sex trade.¹¹² As the accounts of Ana and Sasha in the section on *Economic Need/Pressure* have illustrated, respondents often moved back

¹¹⁰ Next to the application being a lengthy and expensive process, one other considerations need to be given. Third parties are often themselves undocumented migrants without residency rights and thus have no right to guarantee for someone else's visa.

¹¹¹ It is, however, possible to obtain a working visa for entertainment work in clubs. While this arrangement provides a woman with legal immigration status, it does not lessen her dependency on the employer; it binds her to the employer since her right of residency is dependent upon the employer's willingness to prolong her contract. Moreover this type of visa does not allow the holder to leave entertainment work for some other type of employment (Carchedi 2003: 138, Biemann 2002: 85).

¹¹² Moreover, she could not receive a working visa for autonomous work in prostitution since, according to the Right of Establishment under the European Agreements, third countries' nationals are excluded from the right to self employment (Guild 1996).

into sex work when faced with economic necessity. Sex work undoubtedly generates cash. It is also one of the few, if not only, profit-generating activities available to undocumented migrants. Being undocumented, i.e. without legal right of residency, limited respondents' access to work other than prostitution and reinforced third party control over them. As I illustrated in Chapter 2, not all of the respondents entered Italy in a clandestine manner: some had short-term tourist visas, usually valid for a week. However, all of the respondents who entered on a permit overstayed the visa period allotted to them and consequently became undocumented.

Research has show that it is common for migrant women, who have arrived and prostituted in Italy within trafficking systems, to be arrested, sent to detention centres for undocumented migrants until their identity is asserted, and then deported (Anti-Slavery International 2002, Sossi 2002). For those respondents who have received a deportation order,¹¹³ or have been deported, this implied the impossibility of later obtaining an entry visa for Italy or any other Schengen member state. The respondents associated deportation with the act of having their passports stamped. Be it in the embassy or at a border crossing, the respondent would immediately be identifiable as a former 'illegal', be refused a visa or denied entry into Schengen territory.¹¹⁴ The fear of deportation prevented respondents, similar to other migrants in exploitative labour conditions, from seeking help from the police (Sutdhibhasilp 2002, Wijers 1998). The police were the last resource respondents considered; they were contacted only when all other options failed. For example, after having run away from their third party, Kateryna and Daniela tried to stayed in Italy and convince the third party to return Daniela's passport to her. When all of their attempts to stay in Italy and get hold of the passport failed, and the respondents did now know what to do next, they went to the police and accepted the fact that they would get deported:

This situation cannot go on like this. I cannot return home because I have no money, but you don't even have a passport. They [the police] will stop you at the border and you will be in loads of trouble. So, what shall we do? We cannot even go back home! ... I knew one could press charges, but I had no idea that one could get a permit to stay. I knew nothing of it. What I knew is that if I go to the police to press charges, they will ship me back home.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ One can receive a deportation order i.e. an order to leave the country without being physically removed from the territory of the state. While in this way the person can remain in the country, at the same time it is extremely hard if not impossible for her to legalize her status at any later stage.

¹¹⁴ The Italian Immigration Law has recently been revised since the Government found it to be too permissive. A new clause, which considers illegal entry into Italy a criminal offence was introduced. Accordingly, if an illegal person re-enters Italy after deportation, she/he could be punished with six months to one year of prison. If the same person enters illegally for the third time, imprisonment will vary between one to four years.

¹¹⁵ Questa situazione non può andare avanti. Adesso non posso neanche tornare a casa perché io ho i soldi da pagare, ma te non hai neanche il passaporto. Ti fermano alla frontiera e hai un sacco di problemi. Cioè, cosa facciamo? Neanche a casa non possiamo tornare! ... Sapevo che puoi denunciare

The fear and reality of deportation prevented respondents from seeking police assistance in exiting exploitation, enhanced migrants' dependency on the third parties, and contributed greatly to conditions of confinement.

Being undocumented rendered respondents vulnerable to other forms of abuse too. For example, since undocumented migrants are not allowed to open bank accounts, the respondents had to keep their earnings with them and thus were vulnerable to the violence of clients who attempted to steal their money, or third parties who discovered that all earnings had not been surrendered to them. Being charged an exorbitant rent fee was also the consequence of being undocumented. For example in the Calderara residence, the amount of rent depended on the renter's immigration status: migrants with documents would pay 800.000 lit., but undocumented migrants had to pay 1.600.000 per month for the same space. Undocumented migrants can hardly rent living spaces on their own and thus have to rely on informal networks which, in turn, profit from migrant vulnerabilities. Traffickers, as Anti-Slavery International reports put it, 'manipulate the isolation and vulnerability of trafficked persons and use and exploit current legal systems, especially the migration laws, to further marginalize and exploit trafficked persons' (2002: 43). However, the decisions that third parties make concerning labour practices depend upon particular legal contexts. Through a combination of restrictive residency and labour regulations, the state increases migrants' vulnerability and dependence on a third party, restrains migrant women's social and labour mobility, and consequently reinforces the personalistic idiom of power facilitating third party exploitation of migrant women's labour in prostitution (cfr. Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003: 29). In fact, as Blackburn demonstrated in his historical study of different forms of slavery, state 'support' is a crucial element in maintaining conditions of enslavement and allowing third parties to uphold their domination (1988: 278).

4. Resources generated while in prostitution

This section discuss the type of resources the respondents generated while in prostitution which later enabled them to exit sex work. In the previous sections I illustrated the conditions of confinement that characterized a number of respondents' accounts of prostitution and pointed out that physical violence marked their initial period in prostitution and that, as time passed by, the 'illusion of control' replaced

però non sapevo che ti danno il permesso, non sapevo niente. Sapevo che se vado a far la denuncia mi manderanno a casa.

initial episodes of physical abuse. Moreover, since third parties quite often profited from the services of a group of prostitutes that might be as large as eight women, it was impossible for them to be physically present at all times, keep constant control, or prevent interaction among prostitutes and between prostitutes and clients. These factors allowed respondents to create a limited space in which to generate a number of resources, such as the negotiations they entered into with third parties themselves, police, other prostitutes and clients. I borrow the term ‘bond’ from O’Connell Davidson (1998) to refer to these relationships and point to the ways in which they are embedded in asymmetrical power relations.

Bonds with the third party/parties

Third party organizers of prostitution are not a homogeneous category and do not adopt the same approach to conducting ‘business.’ While the scholarship on trafficking rarely specifies the gender of the third parties, my data suggests that people profiting from trafficking are both men and women, and that even though present at all stages of trafficking, female ‘traffickers’ predominantly run the operations prior and following the travel—namely by recruiting women, organizing transportation, and controlling respondents’ performance in prostitution (cfr. Hopkins and Nijboer 2003).¹¹⁶ Whether male or female,¹¹⁷ all the third parties established an exploitative ‘contract’ with the respondents.

The narrative of Oksana offers a good illustration of the contracts made between third parties and respondents. Oksana was part of a large group of women from various eastern Europe countries who entered into a (verbal) prostitution ‘contact’ with two Yugoslav men. The men never used any physical force against Oksana or, for that matter, the rest of the group, but relied instead upon a system of fines and rewards typical of the personalistic idiom of power. The set work rate per night was 15 clients.¹¹⁸ If the respondent managed to sell sex to twenty clients per night, she received a piece of golden jewellery as a present. When the respondent made a mistake that caused problems to the functioning of the whole group, she was

¹¹⁶ In one case, a female third party also negotiated financial transactions comparable to the ‘selling’ and ‘buying’ of potential prostitutes.

¹¹⁷ Often, those women who took part in exploiting the respondents were between nineteen and thirty years old, and were once themselves ‘trafficked’.

¹¹⁸ While this might appear as a high quota, a research on independent street work in a working class neighbourhood of Lima found that that sex workers ‘had’ approximately fifteen clients per (day) shift (Nencel 2000). The same research has shown that the number of clients per shift was proportional to class relations: in a ‘higher’ class setting, sex workers charged more and thus earned more, even though they ‘had’ fewer clients per shift.

publicly fined.¹¹⁹ This kind of non-violent, though manipulative bond with the third party allowed the third party to generate high earnings and the respondent to earn 3600 USD during a three-month period.

Contrary to the example above, there are a number of respondents who experienced exploitation in combination with a high level of violence. Ioanna entered into a prostitution ‘contract’ with a third party thinking of it as of an employment arrangement. However, the pimp had a different idea. The lack of fulfilment of the terms of the contract from his side and the abuse of physical force were the elements that resulted in Ioanna’s breaking off of the contract. Ioanna explains it like this: ‘In my life no one ever hit me. If I work for a person and if I bring him quite some money, I do not want that that person to hit me. It is not that this person needs to hug me. It is enough if I am given a place to sleep and food to eat. But he must not hit me.’¹²⁰ The exploitative and violent nature of the bond with the third party encouraged the respondent to exit the condition of confinement after twenty days of sex work.

Another respondent, Kateryna, entertained a quite different relationship with the pimp she prostituted for. Kateryna was recruited into trafficking by her male Romanian lover. He brought her to Italy where another female (ex) lover of his supervised respondents’ work in prostitution. This overlap of (ex) lovers caused various scenes of jealousy and at times violent conflict between the two women. It finally resulted in a quite atypical arrangement; contrary to the treatment reserved to five other women under her control, the female third party did not impose the same type of confinement on Kateryna as she did on other women. Instead, she allowed Kateryna to engage in social interaction with clients and to see them off the street. In addition, she did not confiscate Kateryna’s passport as it is common in situations of trafficking, and thus indirectly allowed—perhaps invited—Kateryna to leave.

That the nature of the bond between respondents and third parties might also represent a resource for sex workers is further illustrated by Marisa’s narrative. Upon her arrival to Italy, Marisa was ‘sold’ to a nineteen-year-old woman from Moldova who was in relationship with a male third party.¹²¹ The respondent realized that the male and the female pimp were involved in an abusive relationship, and that the woman was secretly stealing money from the man. She also found out that the female pimp wanted to leave the ‘business’ and was planning to ‘sell’ her to someone else. In

¹¹⁹ Quote: “Mi ha fatto la multa.”

¹²⁰ “Nella mia vita, non mi ha mai picchiato nessuno. Se io lavoro per una persona e gli porto mica pochi soldi, allora non voglio che lui mi picchi. Non è che quella persona mi devi abbracciare. Mi basta che mi dia da mangiare e da dormire. Però, non mi deve picchiare.”

¹²¹ The respondents described the male third party as being a Moroccan but since she referred to all men who were non-white as Moroccans, it is impossible to determine precisely the third party’s ethnicity. This consideration is relevant because research has shown that different ethnic networks control women in different ways (cfr. Carchedi 2003: 134).

exchange for her freedom, Marisa revealed to the woman where the male pimp was hiding drugs money. This exchange made it possible for the female third party to leave with 20.000 EUR in cash and for Marisa to exit the condition of confinement and prostitute on her own.

As the above examples illustrate, while representing an asymmetrical power relation, the bond between the third parties and the respondents is not simply oppressive, as abolitionist feminists claim. It does not neatly follow a master versus object model, in which individual men subject women to tout court command and violence. The fact that migrant women exploit other migrant women in prostitution puts that model in question, and highlights the need to pay attention to the specificity and complexity of bonds between parties involved in prostitution. Shifting the attention from exclusive emphasis on violence against women in prostitution typical of the scholarship on trafficking (cfr. Hopkins and Nijboer 2003), allows us to investigate the bond between third parties and migrant women in terms of resources potentially available for exiting prostitution and/or changing one's status and working independently.

Bonds with the police

The predominant attitude of respondents towards the police is that of mistrust. The feeling of mistrust is first and foremost connected to the fear of deportation and, therefore, an inability to return to Italy. Third party organizers of prostitution took advantage of these very real worries: respondents were told not to trust the police because the police will return them home without any earnings. While these warnings can be interpreted as manipulation by third parties, as I illustrated in the section 3 of this chapter, the respondents were indeed undocumented and faced the danger of deportation. Moreover, because legal information was not circulated or available to the respondents, none of them knew that a special clause in Italian immigration law protects 'victims' of trafficking. A respondent, Ana, recalls the moment when she was kidnapped from the street by a client she had met previously and explains why she did not ask for help:

He brought me by force to his place. But why [didn't I react]? Because if I screamed I feared the police. Why did I not press charges? Because I was scared of the police: I did not know the law and I was scared that if I go to them they will send me back home to Moldavia.¹²²

¹²² "Lui mi ha portato a casa sua con la forza. Ma perché? Perché se urlavo avevo paura della polizia. Perché non avevo fatto la denuncia? Perché io avevo paura della polizia perché non conoscevo le leggi e avevo paura che se vado da loro, loro mi manderanno a casa in Moldova."

As this quote points out, illegal status and a fear of deportation made the respondent vulnerable to client's violence. In fact, following the kidnapping, the client brought the respondent to his home, raped her, and kept her in captivity for some weeks.

While it is highly probable that third parties manipulated respondents' fears of deportation, it is also important to highlight the fact that the respondents were very aware of their pimps fear of police apprehension.¹²³ In case of arrest, all of the respondents were instructed to say that they work independently because, while prostitution is legal in Italy, the systematic organization of prostitution by third parties' is not. Any contact with police was viewed with suspicion. In one instance when a client physically abused Ester, the police, who happened to be on the spot, encouraged her to come to the police station and to make a written report. When Ester returned from the police station, she was greeted with suspicion both by her peers and pimps. Similarly, following the murder of a friend and peer worker, Marisa was approached and questioned by the police. When she returned home, she found that someone has ransacked her apartment. She speculated that other prostitutes had done this because they believed she had collaborated with the police and therefore 'sold out'.

Some respondents established fruitful relationships with the police. This was usually the case when respondents felt especially endangered in prostitution. The narratives of Ioanna, Oksana and Marisa speak to this. Ioanna and Oksana worked for a 'pimp' and Marisa worked independently, but all three found themselves in life-threatening situations caused, on the one hand, by threats from traffickers and, on the other, by risks posed by involvement with the police.¹²⁴ For these respondents, collaborating with the police resulted both in pressing charges against third parties but also in returning to prostitute and helping the police catch the 'trafficker' in the act of collecting their earnings. In exchange for collaboration with the police to allow for the framing and apprehension of 'traffickers', the respondents were offered (and negotiated) the option of staying in Italy and legalizing their status.

Contrary to research arguing that police violence represents the main threat to sex workers in some countries¹²⁵ (Pattanaik 2002), my data suggest that respondents were not scared of direct police violence, but instead feared deportation. They thus viewed the police with mistrust and did not ask them for help or information. Once a bond of trust was established, relations with the police could be mutually beneficial.

¹²³ For example, when a respondent threatened the third party with pressing charges against him, she was severely beaten.

¹²⁴ Ioanna and Oksana have pressed charges against the 'pimps', and the police approached Marisa following a murder.

¹²⁵ Pattanaik refers to Cambodia, Bangladesh and India.

Police offered respondents a way to legalize their immigration status and/or exit the condition of confinement in prostitution.

Relationship with other prostitutes

Research on relationships between women in street prostitution has shown that these relationships are both 'communal and competitive, friendly and fractions' (McKaganey and Barnard 1996: 27-29; cfr. Nencel 2000). In section 2 of this chapter, I addressed some of the dynamics among respondents and have pointed out that third parties manipulated feeling of mistrust, jealousy and competition that respondents felt towards each other. This manipulation strengthened third party control over the sex workers. Yet, my results also concur with other studies of street prostitution which point to the 'communal' aspect of these relationships, especially when it came to the introduction of safety/survival strategies on the street, safe sex practices, and minimizing risk of clients' violence. This information was only available from fellow prostitutes. Only one respondent (Marisa) indicated that she was instructed by a third party about how to sell and practice safe sex. Other respondents entered prostitution without having been given any instructions except how to recognize different banknotes and pronounce 'cento' and 'cinquanta'.¹²⁶ A respondent, Maja, described her arrival to the street and pointed out that 'her' female pimp gave her no indications whatsoever:

She [the pimp] didn't tell us anything. The girls were saying that the clients may take girls to [bad] places and that one has to use her strength and not just to sit in a car and look at him. To write down the license plate. When he locks you in a car and begins to threaten you in a car or something like that, how to stop the car, where the stick shift is, how to open the door, different kinds of getting away from him, how to hurt him. But the boss doesn't give that information, the girls say that.

The information passed between women on matters of safety are at the heart of 'communal' relationships between women in third party controlled street prostitution, and were crucial to the safety and health of the women involved. Being part of a large group of women working for the same third party gave rise to competitiveness and mistrust between women but was also central to their well-being.

The absence of this kind of 'communal' support seriously endangered woman's health and safety. A respondent who was exploited by a couple provides one

¹²⁶ 'Cento' was the price of the sexual service in a room and 'cinquanta' in the car. The prices are in Italian liras and correspond approximately to 50 and 25 EUR respectively.

example. Ivana experienced a condition of confinement that was maintained through the constant threat of violence. She had no contact with other prostitutes working up or down the street from her, and had received scarce instructions from the female ‘pimp’ about prostitute-client interaction. Moreover, the female third party told the respondent that she did not need to worry about condoms because it is a common practice not to use them. Ivana took what the third party said for granted. There are at least three explanations for why Ivana trusted the pimp. First, she was totally unfamiliar with the work of prostitution.¹²⁷ Second, she was unfamiliar with her surroundings and, even though she wanted to go to the pharmacy and buy some condoms, she did not know where the pharmacy was. Third, the respondent knew that the female third party previously worked as a prostitute herself and might have believed that she was experienced in the matter of how things work on the street. Since Ivana was the only one working for this third party and was kept separate from other prostitutes working nearby, she had no alternative sources of information. One might think that the clients would provide this information, but this was not the case. The clients asked her simply if she was healthy and then proceeded to buy sexual services from her.¹²⁸ When the third party left for some days to arrange the arrival of a new migrant woman from Russia, she left control over Ivana to another woman who had worked for her in the past. Acquiring some mobility, the respondent was finally able to have a conversation with two Russian prostitutes working next to her on the street. During that conversation, she learned that others use condoms and that the work rate imposed on her was exorbitantly high.¹²⁹ Having learned about the working conditions of the respondent, the two Russian prostitutes told her that she should press charges with the police and accompanied Ivana to the police station.

In addition to these ‘communal’ relationships, strong friendships were another important resource for women in prostitution. Oksana and Ioanna’s narratives offer examples of this. The two respondents come from the same village in Ukraine and

¹²⁷ The respondent’s narrative also suggests that, even though she has 2 children, she is quite sexually unaware. For example, the respondent stated that it was quite improbable that she could get a STD because the vast majority of her clients were married.

¹²⁸ Paradoxically, the respondent said that the clients appeared to be much more scared of catching flu and they would not ‘go with her’ if she was coughing. The fact that some clients purchase unprotected sexual services is explained by O’Connell Davidson as the ‘eroticization of risk’: ‘For such men it is clearly not enough to play the internal game of risk with fantasized dangers. To experience excitement and a subsequent sense of triumph and mastery, these men need to pit themselves against real world dangers, against people and events that are truly outside their control’ (1998:155). O’Connell Davidson demonstrates that different clients derive different degrees of excitement from this kind of risk. She points out that her interpretation concerns particularly Western men who are regularly exposed to public health campaigns about the importance of safe sex, and the danger of AIDS and STDs.

¹²⁹ The fact that the respondent was isolated and feared further violence allowed the pimp to extract an extremely high amount of labour and profit from it. Initially, the respondent was instructed to sell sex to 14 clients per night. Later, she was pushed to raise the number to twenty. After she succeeded in selling sex to twenty clients, the pimp requested that she prostitute for a minimum twenty clients per night.

were friends for quite a while before coming to Italy together. The third party manipulated this friendship and used to threaten Oksana with violence by saying that he would beat Ioanna up if Oksana did not earn more. In this way, he pressured Oksana to feel responsible for both of them and also for the violence he might use against Ioanna. While at times the friendship between the respondents was a source of vulnerability, it was at the same time also a great resource because it helped them take care and support each other—a dynamic quite uncommon in street prostitution (McKaganey and Barnard 1996, Nencel 2000). Ioanna puts it like this: ‘Here is not our home; we are in a foreign land. There is only she and I. If we do not help each other no one else will.’¹³⁰ Thus, while competitiveness and jealousy were quite common among prostitutes they did not preclude communal and friendly relationships which, while grounded in a sense of shared danger or foreign status, were crucial to the respondents’ health and safety.

*Bonds between Clients and Respondents or Mistaking Power for Generosity*¹³¹

When investigating trafficking and its intersection with prostitution, it is quite common for researchers to emphasize exclusively a third party’s physical or sexual abuse of migrant women. This perspective enforces the cultural stereotype of a female prostitute as a victim of a coercive male pimp (Faugier and Sargeant 1997) and ignores the fact that the threat of violence is not exclusive to third party – prostitute relations but also permeates prostitute – clients interactions. Studies of street prostitution have shown that street workers are at most risk among all sex workers, and that violence by clients is widespread in street prostitution (Alexander 1996, Corso and Landi 1998, McKegany and Barnard 1996, Phoenix 1999, Scambler and Scambler 1997). Name-calling, physical assault (beating and gun assault), rape and murder are ‘commonplace’ and ‘represent the backdrop to the women’s work’ (McKegany and Barnard 1996: 70-72).

The respondents provided descriptions of violence by clients and described strategies to minimize risks. These strategies were similar to those in other studies of non-migrant street prostitution. Here is an example from Ester’s narrative:

There was this one guy with a hat. I went into the car and he has his hand close to the hat. I was immediately suspicious. He was asking me: ‘Where is your working-place?’ And then: ‘Lets go somewhere else.’ And I told him ‘Turn right here’ and he kept on going straight and I realized that something is

¹³⁰ “Qui non è casa nostra; siamo in una paese straniero. Siamo solo io e lei. Se una non aiuta l’altra, non ci aiuta nessun altro.”

¹³¹ I borrow the expression ‘mistaking power for generosity’ from O’Connell Davidson (1998).

wrong. I grabbed his hand that was to take the hat and there was a knife hidden underneath. I took the knife and said: ‘You bring me back immediately or I will kill you’ I was scared but I did not know it; I was stronger than him. ‘Will you take me back?’ He took me back. He: ‘Are you nuts? I used this knife at my work. I just came from work.’ She: ‘Yeaaahhh, to work! And you keep it here; you need to put it in the boot, why did you keep it here?’¹³²

As is clear from the quote that the respondent acted promptly and prevented what might have been an assault or robbery. The client might have envisioned a sexual game in which the knife would serve as a prop, but when a client already holds a knife, it does not seem the best moment to find out if he is interested in playing out a ‘knife-fantasy’. Leaving aside the fantasies of control and submission over a prostitute’s person that some clients entertain, respondents’ account of sex work stress the high level of fear and anxiousness which daily accompany street prostitution.

The respondents spoke of constant danger one faces in street work, such as being physically abused or even murdered,¹³³ and therefore stressed that the potential of violence by clients is always present. However, they also called attention to the fact that the bond with (some) clients constituted an emotional and/or financial resource. Or, in the words of the respondents, some clients helped them. Bonds with clients were not established during the first week of prostitution since, as I illustrate in the second section of this chapter, the initial period on the street was usually one during which the respondents were most closely controlled by third parties. However, when they dispelled the myth of the third party’s constant presence,¹³⁴ some respondents started slowly to ‘take time off’ from prostitution and did things other than sex with clients. Different respondents tell of other episodes: some went home with the clients, cooked, and watched TV; some went and visited the city centre or were taken to the funfair; others were taken out for dinner. This time, ‘stolen’ from prostitution-time, is what I call ‘doing normality’.

I view ‘doing normality’ as a ‘making out strategy’ (O’Neill 2001) since it allowed the respondents to leave (momentarily) the enclosed world of prostitution and

¹³² “C’era uno col cappello, sono salita in macchina e lui teneva a mano vicino al capello. Ho subito sospettato di lui. Mi diceva “Quando vai a lavorare dov’è il tuo posto?”. Dice, “Dai andiamo da un’altra parte”. Io gli dico “Vai a destra”, lui tira dritto, e vedo che c’è qualcosa che non va. Gli ho preso la mano con la quale stava per prendere il cappello – dentro c’era il coltello. Ho preso il coltello e dico “O mi porti subito indietro o ti ammazzo!”. Avevo paura però non facevo vedere che avevo paura; io ero più forte di lui. “Mi porti indietro?!” Mi ha portato indietro. [lui:] “Ma sei scema? Con questo coltello ho lavorato! Sono stato a lavorare”. [lei] “Siiii, a lavorare! Lo tiene qua, lo devi mettere nel baule, perché lo hai messo qua?”

¹³³ Interestingly, only one of the respondents framed her fear of ‘traffickers’ in those terms. The rest of the informants were scared of physical violence but did not frame it in terms of being scared for their lives.

¹³⁴ At times, the moment of this realization was linked to an episode of physical abuse. When a peer worker got beaten up and robbed by a client, Sasha realized that the ‘pimp’ was not actually ‘there’: if he had been there and controlling them he would have seen what was happening and protected her friend.

enter and gain information about those worlds they were surrounded by but did not inhabit. Moreover, 'doing normality' was pivotal to maintaining a coherent self since it offered the respondents a way in which to separate their personal selves from their work selves, and consequently to construct themselves as not-prostitutes and prostitution as a temporary occupation.¹³⁵ In the literature on sex work, this type of separation is referred to as 'social management of a stigmatized identity' (McKegany and Barnard 1996: 82). This indicates a strategy sex workers use to separate sex work from their 'private' lives. Still, there was a price to pay for 'doing normality'. Since respondents prostituted and lived in spaces controlled by third parties, these 'excursions' were possible only during their working shifts. Respondents had to ensure that clients paid for the time they spent together because they were required to surrender a certain amount of money per shift to the third party.¹³⁶ At times, clients would give respondents a larger sum of money that covered or even exceeded the cost of time they spent together. Respondents' bond with 'regular' clients,¹³⁷ at times involving the selling of sex and at times 'doing normality', usually generated a steady flow of money.

It was not uncommon for clients to help out the respondents financially, whether with larger or smaller sums. For example, when Kateryna included a client in her plan to leave the street, he took it upon himself to orchestrate the financial part of it:

About 2 am, a client came and I told him: 'Look, I want to leave'. Actually, I said 'How much will you pay me for an hour?' I explained the situation a little to him and he told me 'Look, if you come with me to the hotel I'll give you 200 EUR'. I said 'Oh, OK.' I stayed for an hour. Then we spoke about how to do things since he was enthusiastic [about my plan to leave]. He was an oldie. OK, he did nothing because he couldn't, but he would still visit us to be in the company of young girls. This guy was enthusiastic and said 'Here, I have 250 EUR with me and I'll give it all to you. Later I'll give you other 250 but I need to go to the cash dispenser first. And I said 'Oh, OK'. Then he went to the cash dispenser, gave me 500, bought me the train ticket and took me to the train station and there we [Kateryna and another respondent] took the train to Turin.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ I elaborate on this in the next chapter.

¹³⁶ Being unable to fulfill the requirement might have had no consequences whatsoever, but most of the time it meant longer working hours, a fine, violent repercussions, and/or threats of abuse.

¹³⁷ Anderson and O'Connell Davidson distinguish between 'situational' and 'habitual' prostitute users (2003).

¹³⁸ "Verso le due di notte, c'era un cliente e io ho detto: "Guarda, io voglio andar via". Cioè, ho detto: "Quanto in più mi paghi per un'ora?" Gli ho spiegato un po' la situazione e lui mi fa: "Guarda che se vieni un'ora con me nel albergo ti do quattrocento". Ho detto: "Oh, va bene." Sono stata un'ora. Dopo abbiamo parlato come fare le cose perché lui era entusiasta [del mio piano di lasciare la strada]; era un vecchietto. [...] Va be', non faceva niente perché non poteva, però veniva per stare in compagnia delle ragazze giovani. E questo ora era entusiastico, e fa: "Guarda, ho con me solo cinquecento e te li do tutti. Dopo [...] ti do fino a un milione, cioè ti do altri cinquecento però devo fare il bancomat". Io ho

This episode¹³⁹ suggests that the prostitutes are not only abused and robbed by the clients but that there are also clients who ‘help’ them to improve or change their status. However, viewing these kind of client acts simply in terms of generosity would overlook the asymmetrical power relations characteristic of the client-prostitute bond and therefore mistake power for generosity. The clients, all male, white, Italian nationals, and employed were in far more stable social and economic positions than the respondents, who were women, ethnically marked as ‘Others’, undocumented, engaged in a stigmatized activity and living in conditions of confinement. Hence, the clients’ gender, citizenship and class put them in a privileged position when compared to the respondents and endowed them with power to either ‘help’ or harm the respondents.

What, then, are we to make of a client who, after being phoned by a respondent in trouble, took it upon himself to convince the third party to hand the respondent’s passport over to him? Or of the clients who instructed respondents not to surrender all of their earnings to the third party; who kept ‘in safety’ a part of respondents’ earnings or opened a bank account and deposited respondents’ earnings on it?¹⁴⁰ Are the clients who ‘helped’ the respondents to exit third party controlled prostitution to be seen as simply wanting to partake in the respondents’ ‘adventure’ of ‘escaping’ from exploitation? Or is their generosity linked in much more complex ways to the construction of the clients gender and racial selves?

As an answer to these questions, I suggest that for these clients the excitement did not derive so much from the hiring of a prostitute, but from accessing the private sphere of a prostitute’s life and playing an active role in it. By choosing the respondents as objects for their benefit meant opting for migrant women under third party control, namely so-called ‘trafficked’ women. My data suggests that those clients who ‘helped’ women were not simple passers by but were habitual users of

detto: “Oh, va bene”. [...] Dopo è andato a fare il bancomat, mi ha dato un milione, mi ha comprato il biglietto per il treno, mi ha portato nella stazione e abbiamo [con un'altra: io e lei] preso il treno per Torino.”

¹³⁹ The interesting aspect of this quote lays in the way in which the respondent objectifies the client: the narrative is framed in a way to depict him as old and asexual, and to suggest that it is Kateryna who was doing him a favour (and not vice versa). Yet, the plot is a quite different one: she needed money in order to leave prostitution that night, he proposed her to go to a hotel room, he suggested the amount of money, gave her extra money, took the respondent and a peer worker to the train station, and bought them tickets to Turin. The implications of objectifications of clients and its meaning in relation to respondents’ gender identity will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁰ For example, during her first day on the street, Snezana had as a client a taxi driver with whom she first established a ‘habitual’ sexual relation, and later they become lovers. He instructed her not to give all the earnings to the third party but instead to keep a part for herself. She would make a note all of the money she gave him, and he would then put it on his bank account.

prostitutes and had previously assisted other women in similar situations.¹⁴¹ Moreover, these clients preferred women from eastern Europe: some preferred women of a specific national identity, Russian for example, while others were interested in eastern European women in general. Clients' preference for the respondents is therefore closely related to respondents' 'Otherness' and vulnerability to a condition of confinement. 'Helping' and/or 'saving' 'victims of trafficking' affirmed Italian men's power in terms of class, race, and gender (cfr. Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003).¹⁴²

Making use of a prostitute is therefore closely linked to the construction of masculine identity. As studies on clients who engage with racially 'Other' prostitutes has shown, 'buying sex' from socially, politically and economically disadvantaged women and who experience conditions of confinement is closely linked to Western notion of masculine honour intended as the capacity to harm or help others (Brace and O'Connell Davidson 1996, O'Connell Davidson 2003). In their study of clients in Italy, Corso and Landi asked clients if they buy sex from 'trafficked' women and one of them replied: 'Of course I do. In fact, I feel gratified afterwards because I certainly treat them better than many others [clients]. I give them a bit more money than they ask for and this way I help them'¹⁴³ (1998: 80). Given the unequal power relations between clients and respondents, clients hold the power either to harm or help the respondents. While the prostitute – client bond represented a resource for respondents to exit third party controlled prostitution, it is important to keep in mind that the possibility for clients to act as a resource, and offer (financial) assistance to the respondents, is grounded in economic, racialized and gendered inequalities that characterize that bond.

5. Leaving street prostitution

In their investigation of the 'trafficked women' population in Italy, Candia and Carchedi (2001) point out that a considerable number of women affirm that they left a condition of confinement through their own efforts. This information came as a surprise to the authors since research on trafficking does not address how relationships between third parties and migrant women offers the space for

¹⁴¹ A number of clients who facilitated respondents' exit from prostitution became later (or before) their boyfriends, but kept on buying sex from other prostitutes, and assisted them in leaving prostitution.

¹⁴² My data point to the fact that clients were familiar with the mainstream representation of migrant women in prostitution in terms of helpless victims. In fact, during the fieldwork I learned of clients who 'helped' respondents exactly because they identified them with portraits of young, fragile, and helpless women dominant in the mass media discourse in Italy.

¹⁴³ "Certo che ci vado, anzi mi sento gratificato di esserci andato, le tratto sicuramente meglio di tanti altri, do un po' di più di quello che mi chiedono, così le aiuto"

negotiation between parties, as well as for establishing of other relationships which make it possible for women to interrupt the prostitution 'contract' (2001: 113). This section adds another layer in understanding the resources that permitted the respondents to leave third party controlled prostitution. I address the importance of material resources, respondents' beliefs about gender and the 'crisis moment' as elements/events which triggered exit from third party controlled street prostitution.

Material Resources

In order to leave prostitution, the respondents needed to balance 'personalistic forms of power' and 'materialistic forms of domination'. At the same time they needed to create resources, whether relational or material, which would allow them at least minimal security upon leaving prostitution. The respondents were very much aware that their chance of exiting third party controlled prostitution was contingent upon having alternative living space and economic resources, as well as being able to achieve a legal immigration status. A respondent, Kateryna, frames this in a clear and concise way when describing a conversation she had with clients who advised her to leave street prostitution:

They would come and tell me: 'But you have to change; you don't feel good here'. And I would reply 'Will you help me to change? If I leave, will you help me to find a job, a house, to get documents? Will you help me to get out?' Then they would step back. I said, 'I also know the things you are telling me; why do you bother me if you know that there is nothing you can do.' I also know what is good and what is bad but it is not the same thing to know and to be able to do what one wishes for.¹⁴⁴

This excerpt testifies to the respondent's awareness of her condition: in order to leave prostitution she had to arrange where to live and how to maintain herself. Additionally, if she was to inhabit a social space other than prostitution, she needed to legalize her immigration status.

The issue of money played a crucial role in women's staying in or leaving prostitution. Ioanna puts it like this:

A client of mine, a university professor, would tell me 'If you want, leave all of this and come to study at the university!' So, I should go and study!? They

¹⁴⁴ "Stavano lì ed iniziavano: "Ma tu, devi cambiare, che non stai bene qui [per strada]". E io dicevo: "Mi aiuti tu a cambiare? Se vado via, mi aiuti tu a trovare un lavoro, una casa, a farmi i documenti? Mi aiuti tu a uscire?" Allora si ritiravano. Dico, anch'io so quello che mi dici te; che stai lì a rompermi se sai che non puoi far niente. Anch'io so quello che è bene e quello che è male, ma non è la stessa cosa a sapere e a poter fare quello che vuoi."

need money at home. I worked to make things a little better because at home we had no bread to eat.¹⁴⁵

In fact, having money as much as not having it affected respondents' moving in and out of sex work. For some respondents, money was one of the resources that allowed them to leave prostitution. Marisa, Snezana and Sasha were first exploited by a third party and later worked on their own. Each of them had a financial goal in mind such as buying a house back home, or earning a determined sum of money to send home or to have/maintain a child. Once that goal was met, they left sex work. For others, the lack of payment agreed upon with the third parties, and the uncertainty of whether they would ever collect that money, was the primary reason for leaving prostitution. For example, when a respondent who was in prostitution for a month was not given an agreed upon payment at the end of the month, she concluded that if she was not getting anything out of it her project of short-term prostitution made little sense. The respondent decided to leave but was afraid to do so alone and looked for an accomplice. She convinced another respondent, who had just arrived to Italy and was controlled by the same third party, that staying in prostitution was a waste of time since she will never get any money from the third party. Some days later they finished their shifts, kept the money, asked a client to give them a lift to the city centre and left prostitution.

When the respondents did not manage to secure the necessary resources on their own they relied on clients to 'help' them out. In fact, many respondents established a privileged relationship with a 'habitual' client and made sure that he provided for them. The following excerpt from Natascha's narrative shows her preoccupations concerning a client's trustworthiness:

While working on the street I met a guy. He was in love, he wanted to help me. He said 'I will help you. Leave this place, I want to help you. We will make the documents, we will make all'. I did not know him; I wanted to know if he was telling me the truth or not. Perhaps after being with me he will send me away. So, I waited a little. I wanted to get to know him better. I met him on the first, no, second day I arrived. So, he would come for me every evening. I decided to leave and one day I left. I disappeared. I took my clothes, the passport, everything.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ "Un mio cliente, un professore del università, mi diceva: 'Se vuoi, lascia questo tutto e vieni a studiare all'università!'. Vado a studiare, allora? A casa hanno bisogno di soldi. [Lavoro] per rimettere un po' a posto [la cose]. Perché a casa stavamo senza pane."

¹⁴⁶ "Quando lavoravo in strada ho conosciuto uno. Lui era innamorato, mi voleva aiutare. Ha detto "Ti aiuto. Vai via di qua, ti voglio aiutare. Facciamo i documenti, facciamo tutto." Io non lo conoscevo; io volevo sapere se mi diceva la verità o meno. Magari dopo sta insieme a me e poi mi manda via. Allora, ho aspettato un po'. Volevo conoscerlo. L'ho conosciuto il primo giorno, no, il secondo giorno che sono stata qua. Allora, così, veniva tutte le sere da me. Io ho deciso che vado via e un giorno sono andata via. Sparita. Ho preso i vestiti, il passaporto, tutto."

Leaving prostitution is a decision for which one must calculate the risk of things going wrong. Therefore, in order to reduce the risk, Sasha took the time to get to know this client who kept on telling her that he loved her, and that he wanted to help her.

In the above instance, the respondent carefully calculated client's affections. For another respondent, a client's affections were beginning of a relationship of deep trust and mutual interest:

If it hadn't been for that person, if I hadn't complained to him, hadn't cried on his shoulder, so to speak ... I told him: 'I don't want to work on strada, I didn't come here to work on strada' ... He said: 'No, no. It shouldn't be this way that one doesn't want to work and [still] has to work. It is abnormal for people to do that'. He said: 'If you want, you can leave because, I can take you as a client' [...] In principle, he took me off the road, bought me clothes and shoes ... Of course, I couldn't show up anywhere the way I looked ... He bought me clothes and shoes and since that day ...

And since that day, a client became Maja's lover, and they engaged in a four month long affair. He provided for her financially and bought her clothes and food. Since he was married and with children, he could not bring her home but accommodated her in a hotel where she stayed for three months. Hence, as this and other excerpts show, leaving street prostitution depended on respondents' ability to secure money and housing on their own, or to establish a relationship with a client who took it upon himself to provide these material resources for the respondent.

Breaking point – Crisis moment

In respondents' accounts, leaving prostitution was preceded by an episode of shock or some kind of radical change to which I refer as the 'breaking point' referred to as a 'crisis moment'.¹⁴⁷ The narratives of a number of respondents offer an insight into what I mean by 'breaking point'. In Nataliya's narrative, the crisis moment corresponded to the trauma she experienced as a consequence of a client's brutal beating of her best friend and peer, Zora. In a quite detailed and painful rendering of that episode, the respondent spoke of a solid and important friendship she had with Zora with whom she came from Ukraine to work together in prostitution in Italy. Their bond was one of the major resources during that period: they supported each other emotionally and took care of each other on the street. One evening they had a

¹⁴⁷ I thank Julia O'Connell Davidson for this hint.

fight and Nataliya did not write down Zora client's car-plate number.¹⁴⁸ Some time later, Zora returned, on foot, to the place where Sasha was, with her face disfigured and bleeding so badly that the respondent did not recognize her, got scared, started screaming, and shouted at her to stay away. When the police arrived, they started vomiting at the sight in front of their eyes. Zora was taken to the hospital, and after a long period of hospitalization, her face was readjusted through plastic surgery. After she recovered completely, she left Italy for Ukraine, and broke off the friendship with Sasha. Consequently, Sasha stopped working in street prostitution.

In Marisa's narrative, the breaking point coincided with the murder of a friend of hers with whom she arrived in Italy and who was controlled by the same third party. After the third parties who controlled them fled from Italy--one because she took a considerable sum of money from the other, and the other because he was scared of the revenge of those to whom he now owned the money--Marisa and her friend remained in sex work and shared the same apartment. Although Marisa managed to negotiate her own freedom from the fleeting third party, her friend was bonded to another third party. She became involved with selling drugs and after she incurred a large debt, she attempted to pay it off by 'stealing' prostitutes from the street and 'selling' them to third parties. After a while, Marisa's friend was found murdered and her body half burned in a park close to where Marisa worked. Since it was well known in the prostitution network that the two of them were friends, Marisa was scared that those who killed her friend might harm her too. At the same time, she was aware that the police would open an investigation and feared that they might suspect her of being involved in the murder. As a way out of this situation, Marisa opted for collaboration with the police, negotiated the legalization of her immigration status, and left sex work.

While for the two cases above, the leaving of prostitution can literally be interpreted as a survival strategy. The following example introduces death not as life threatening but as a 'liberatory' moment that opened the possibility for the respondent to run away from the situation of exploitation. I am referring here to the narrative of Ester, the respondent who was under strong economic pressure from home because her father was severely sick, and her family needed the money in order to pay for medicine and hospitalization. Eventually, the father died after a couple of months. Ester was sad and felt guilty for not being present at the funeral, but at the same time she was relieved because the reason that bounded her to a third party vanished:

After [his death] I had nothing to loose; I couldn't return home because my father passed away, and I thought 'I'll try to run away'. So, I ran away. I remember when my father passed away; he died on the 30th of April, and ten

¹⁴⁸ This is a common strategy among the sex workers to reduce the risk of clients' violence.

days later I ran away. I did my best. [I thought] come what may. I did things slowly; it took me all these days to run away because I wasn't managing to take with me all what I had. I didn't have much but more or less I took with me all of my clothes.¹⁴⁹

Ester father's death made it possible for Ester to run away from an exploitative and violent third party. Accordingly, other data point to episodes of brutal physical violence, murder or death as 'breaking moments,' which played a crucial role in respondents' interruption of prostitution 'contract'. However, I maintain that these moments, however brutal or painful, were alone not enough to set off the process that led respondents out of third party controlled prostitution. For example, Ester's leaving went hand in hand with her boyfriend's promise to provide her and her sister with accommodation and money upon her leaving prostitution. Hence, the crisis moment did not offer enough strength on its own for respondents to interrupt the prostitution 'contact'. It needed to be connected to the accumulation of other financial and emotional resources that, once combined, allowed respondents to exit prostitution.

Beliefs about Femininity

My study has identified prostitutes' beliefs about femininity, an issue to which studies of trafficking pay scarce attention, as an important incentive for leaving sex work. Returning to the above quote in which Maja tells of the encounter with clients who 'helped' her exit from the third party controlled prostitution, and shifting the terms of analysis from emphasis on material aspects of this bond to its affective dimension, it becomes apparent that this bond was grounded in trust the respondent felt towards the client. However, since the respondent and the client hardly knew each other, the basis of this trust needs to be investigated. How did the feeling of trust emerge and gain strength?

The key sentence that allows for an understanding of dynamics between the parties is the following one pronounced by the client: 'No, no. It shouldn't be this way that one doesn't want to work and [still] she has to work. It is abnormal people who do that'. This could mean that it is abnormal that the third party forced unwilling women into prostitution, or that it is abnormal people who accepted to do something

¹⁴⁹ "Dopo, non avevo niente da perdere: a casa non riuscivo a tornare perché mio padre era morto, penso: "Provo a scappare via!" E allora sono scappata! [...] Mi ricordo quando mio padre è morto, lui è morto in aprile, 30 aprile e dopo dieci giorni sono scappata via da loro. C'è l'ho messa tutta, in fondo. Succeda quel che succeda [...]. Piano piano, cioè prima di [scappare], ci ho messo questi giorni perché non riuscivo a portare quello che avevo. Cioè, non avevo tanto di vestiti però più o meno li ho portati via."

against their will, but the significance remains the same. What is communicated is an acknowledgment that the respondent did not ‘choose’ to work on the street, and therefore is not a prostitute. By phrasing it in this manner, the client disassociated Maja from sex work, and thus confirmed her as a person rather than a ‘whore’. By extension, Maja was positioned not as a participant in an ‘abnormal’ sphere but instead as entitled to inhabit ‘normality’.

Respondents’ own self-representation of themselves as not-prostitutes played a crucial role in leaving sex work which in turn strengthened their perception of themselves as ‘normal’ women. In this regard, an interesting quote comes from Liudmila, who agreed to come to Italy as a prostitute but decided not to reveal this detail to her ex-client, now boyfriend:

I never told him about this thing. I only told him that it is not my fault if I am working on the street; I was brought. He also saw that I left the street, that I did not stay.¹⁵⁰

The fact that the respondent framed leaving prostitution in these terms upheld the idea of ‘trafficking’ in terms of deception and coercion into prostitution, and the representation of migrant women as victims of third parties. However, this operation was indispensable if the respondent was to see herself as not *really* a prostitute. Moreover, if she was to maintain her sense of self as not-prostitute she had to leave prostitution because, as she put it, she was ‘working’ together with ‘all those shitty people there [on the street]. Good people cannot be found there, only the Moroccans and all those ...’¹⁵¹ Hence, if Liudmila was to maintain self-respect and the image of herself as a special and capable person she had to leave street prostitution because ‘good’ people are not to be found ‘on the streets’.

Snezana’s narrative combines aspects of the two examples discussed above. On the one hand, she let her ‘habitual’ client believe she was in prostitution because controlled by her abusive Moldavian boyfriend back home. On the other, the bond with the client confirmed her as not-prostitute:

I told him ‘Massimo, I am sorry, I have a boyfriend in Moldova. He said ‘This is not for you. My love, this is not for you. He knows what are you doing here and he phones you to tell you to bring him the money’. I would have never imagined that Massimo would have told me these words. When this boyfriend of mine phoned from Moldova, Massimo changed the chip of my mobile

¹⁵⁰ “Mai gli ho parlato di questa cosa. Ho solo detto che sono venuta non per colpa mia a lavorare lì in strada, mi hanno portato ... Lui pure ha visto che sono andata via, che non stavo lì.”

¹⁵¹ “Con quella gente di merda che sta lì. La gente brava non ci sta, solo i marocchini o tutti coloro che ...”

phone. He told me ‘This is an ugly/bad boy. Forget him. You are not made for this. I will help you.’¹⁵²

Massimo made the respondent his project and she let him: he instructed her in how to keep a part of her earnings, he opened a bank account for her, she kept the evidence of money sent home, she saved money for herself, and he told her when it was time to leave prostitution. She found an apartment in the city centre for herself, he signed the contract, she put in part of the money, and he put the rest. This arrangement created a situation of emotional and material dependency on the client, who managed both Snezana’s emotional life and financial situation.

The above examples point to the significance of ‘romantic’ heterosexual relations for the (self) construction of respondents as not *really* prostitutes. The description of the bond between clients and respondents in terms of a ‘romance’ came up in several narratives. Larisa, for example, described falling in love with a ‘passer by’ and leaving prostitution with words that carry a touch of romance: ‘I left so suddenly ... like in Celentano’s song, so suddenly.’¹⁵³ She could leave prostitution because she, as she put it, felt the necessary inner strength to do so. Yet, as the respondent explained further, this inner strength is given only to those who are not *really* prostitutes. By making a distinction between ‘when you are a whore inside’ and ‘when you are on the street,’¹⁵⁴ Larisa imagined herself as part of the latter category and hence able to fall in love, engage in the affair, be welcomed at her boyfriend’s house, and finally to leave prostitution.¹⁵⁵

In some respondents’ accounts, establishing a ‘romantic’ and ‘trustworthy’ relationship with a client was made possible by the lack of a commercial sexual transaction: ‘I trusted him because at the beginning he asked me nothing but instead gave me, we talked, and he gave me money. It went on like this for more than three months.’¹⁵⁶ The absence of a ‘sexual’ component is reinforced by the description that Ester provided of her first encounter with the client:

¹⁵² “Io gli ho detto: ‘Massimo, mi dispiace, io ho un ragazzo in Moldavia.’ Lui mi fa: ‘Questo [la prostituzione] non fa per te. Amore ti dico, questo non è per te. Lui [il fidanzato in Moldavia] sa che questo è il tuo lavoro e ti telefona per portare i soldi.’ Io non mi sono mai immaginata che Massimo mi avrebbe detto queste parole. Quando mi ha telefonato questo mio ragazzo dalla Moldavia, Massimo ha cambiato la scheda del mio telefono. Mi ha detto: ‘Questo è un brutto ragazzo. Dimenticalo. Questo non fa per te. Ti aiuto io’.”

¹⁵³ “Sono andata via così, d’improvviso... come in una canzone di Adriano Celentano; così, d’improvviso.” Adriano Celentano is an Italian pop singer.

¹⁵⁴ “Quando sei una puttana dentro” and “Quando sei in strada”.

¹⁵⁵ What were the values and beliefs about femininity and heterosexual relationship that informed respondents’ construction of themselves as not really prostitutes will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁶ “Mi sono fidata perché dall’inizio non mi ha chiesto niente e mi ha dato, abbiamo parlato, mi ha dato dei soldi e così è andato avanti per tre mesi”.

I was crying on the street when I met him. I was on the sidewalk, he stopped the car, and I was drinking a Coke. He stopped the car, asked me something, my head was bowed, and I was crying. He stepped out of the car and asked me ‘What happened? Come on, I’ll do you no harm. Come on. Come for a ride.’¹⁵⁷

In the respondent’s account, the encounter with this client, who in time became her boyfriend and who helped her both with money and housing once the respondent left third party’s controlled prostitution, is rendered outside of the sphere of prostitution. The respondent was standing on the street, with a coke in her hand, with her head low, crying, when the client who was passing by, saw her crying, stopped the car, stepped out of the car (not the usual practice when approaching a prostitute), approached her, and invited her for a ride. In this way, by omitting explicit reference to the situation of prostitution and locating the encounter outside the realm of sexual work, the respondent frames the episode as to project an image of a romantic encounter.

The role heterosexual ‘romantic’ relationships played in women’s self-representation has been addressed by different studies. Looking at non-migrant prostitution, scholars have pointed out that women in sex work differentiate between whores and non-whore as a way of rejecting social identification as a prostitute. Achieved though disavowal, this separation is reliant upon woman’s recognition as a not prostitute within a heterosexual ‘romantic’ relationship (Nencel 2000). Because it downplayed the commercial basis of the sexual transaction whether through ‘romance’ or ‘doing normality’ or both, I view respondents’ self-representation as not really prostitutes not simply in terms of a ‘coping strategy’ (O’Neill 2001: 88). Instead, I interpret it as a dynamic central to the construction of migrant woman’s gendered self which strengthened respondents’ perception of themselves as ‘normal’ women, and thus constituted an important incentive for leaving sex work.

6. Conclusion

The condition of ‘trafficked’ women in third party controlled prostitution is commonly identified as unique and exceptional due to the high level of abuse and violence that third parties use to keep women in prostitution. My investigation has shown that neither are control and abuse migrant women experience unique to ‘trafficking’, nor can ‘traffickers’ be identified as the only source of dominance and power over migrant women in prostitution. In order to have and maintain control over

¹⁵⁷ “Quando l’ho conosciuto io piangevo in strada. Ero sul marciapiede, lui si è fermato, avevo una coca-cola che bevevo. Si è fermato, mi ha chiesto qualcosa, io ero con la testa in giù e piangevo. Lui è uscito dalla macchina mi ha chiesto: ‘Cosa e’ successo? Dai, che non ti faccio niente. Dai. vieni a fare un giro’”.

women they exploit, third parties deploy a series of violent and not-violent forms of control, all geared towards maximizing the economic gain generated by women's labour. This situation, however, cannot be identified as specific to 'trafficking'. Rather, as I have shown through a number of comparisons with studies of non-migrant prostitution, it is characteristic of third party controlled street prostitution in general. The particularity of the situation of confinement experienced by migrant women lies in the overlap produced by the control exercised by third parties and the control Italian state exercises over (undocumented) migrants. The fear of deportation and the impossibility to access other forms of earning, due to limits imposed by residency and employment laws, play a crucial role in confining migrant women to prostitution. These factors increase women's dependency on third party and thus reinforce third party's control over women.

While being critical of the term 'sexual slavery', my investigation suggests that the concept of 'slavery' that differentiates between personalistic and materialistic idioms of power, as the one developed by Orlando Patterson, is useful in examining the complexity of relations regulating third party controlled migrant prostitution. Differentiating between various actors and conditions that confine migrant women to third party controlled street prostitution brings to the fore the ways in which migrant women resist and negotiate, or fail to negotiate, the limits of those constraints. Moreover, it permits to identify the set of resources that women generated in order to gain mobility and mitigate the conditions of confinement. The variety of relationships women established (with third parties, the police, the clients, and other prostitutes) and of resources women engendered (financial, affective and material), enabled them to exit third party controlled prostitution and work independently, or to exit street work all together. The concepts that imply, such as 'sexual slavery', that women are objects of third party's trafficking 'transactions' conceal the degree of agency women exercise despite exploitative labour conditions and various forms of abuse that accompany third party controlled street prostitution. Police or clients' active intervention are thus not indispensable preconditions if women are to exit third party controlled street prostitution. Seemingly insignificant factors, such as women's beliefs about femininity, can also trigger the decision to leave prostitution.

Finally, my analysis of the complexity of factors that uphold migrant women's confinement in street prostitution suggests that legalizing prostitution, the strategy advocated by sex workers rights' activists, is alone not enough to transform the condition of confinement. A change of immigration regulations, in particular concerning residency and employment is necessary if women's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation is to be considerably lessened, and migrant women permitted to seek other forms of earning.

The Pursuit of Inclusion: 'Victims', 'Whores' and 'Women'

‘La puttana. Questa parola mi fa paura.’¹⁵⁸

1. Introduction

In studies about women trafficked for the sex industry, there are disagreements concerning how to appropriately define this category of women: should they be seen as victims of crime, both when it comes to non-consensual migration and labour exploitation? Or should they instead be seen as labour migrants and therefore as migrant sex workers who entered sex work on their own consent? In order to address these questions, the studies engage –as my two previous chapters— with the ways in which coercion, deception and force might be constitutive of trafficking in regards to recruitment and travel, as well as with working conditions upon arrival. By investigating the incidence of violence, abuse, and exploitation in the trafficking process, studies of trafficking explore the possibility, form, and degree of the trafficked women’s agency. At the same time they examine to which degree are women victims and therefore ‘objects’ of a crime (cfr. Anti-Slavery International 2002, Candia et al 2001, McDonald et al 2000, Payoke et al 2003, Skrobanek et al 1997). These studies offer important insights into structural determinants of trafficking as well as into the interplay between structure and agency (once the agency or degree thereof has been established) in women’s lives (cfr. Gülçür and İlkaracan 2002, Psimmenos 2001). However, I want to argue that these analytical approaches fail to consider and identify the construction of migrant subjects within the social processes of migration and prostitution. To examine trafficking as a site of subject formation, as I set out to do in this chapter, requires us to shift the terms of analysis from viewing gender as a cause of migration and to investigate how women’s gendered selves are (re)constituted in the process of migration. To look at social processes from the perspective of the subject allows us to identify what subject

¹⁵⁸ ‘The whore. I fear this word.’

positions are available to ‘trafficked’ women. Additionally, this perspective enables us to identify the ways in which women respond to ‘dislocations’ produced by the structural locations they inhabit, and the ways in which their efforts to oppose these dislocations constitute the process of their formation as gendered subjects (Parreñas 2001).

The relevance of this analytical shift for our investigation of trafficking has preliminarily been addressed in Chapters 2 and 3, and in particular in the sections *Intra-Family Violence* and *Poverty* (Chapter 2) and *Subjective Beliefs about Womanhood* (Chapter 3). In Chapter 2, I argued that the desire for escaping intra-family violence and achieving economic improvement were among the factors that informed respondents’ migratory projects, and that entering trafficking systems therefore represented for some respondents an ‘escape route’ from oppressive (patriarchal) structures. However, my analysis has also showed that in their narratives the respondents systematically glossed over the episodes of violence they were subjected to so as not to undermine their self-presentation as active agents. In this way they countered the dominant public view that represented them merely as victims of third parties’ manipulations and hence effaced their migratory projects.

Moreover, whereas the respondents presented poverty as the main reason for migrating abroad, my investigation of the recurrence of the motif of poverty in their narratives has shown that giving primacy to poverty enabled the respondents to take distance from sex work migration and hence also from being perceived as prostitutes. In Chapter 3, I have further discussed respondents’ perception of themselves as not *really* prostitutes. This was achieved by framing their relationships with clients in terms of a ‘romance’ and by ‘doing normality’ (cooking, shopping, watching TV, going for dinner or to a funfair). Both of these dynamics were among the elements that triggered respondents’ exit from street prostitution. Following the line that studies of prostitution commonly take, one can interpret the acts of ‘romanticization’ and ‘doing normality’ in terms of survival strategies which allow prostitutes to separate their identity from their working selves (McKaganey and Barnard 1996, O’Neill and Barberet 2000, O’Neill 2001). I, on the other hand, have suggested to view the downplaying of the commercial basis of the sexual transaction, and by extension of respondents’ self-perception as ‘not prostitutes’, as a reflection of respondents’ subjective beliefs about femininity.

Looking at social processes and relations in migration and prostitution from the perspective of the subject leaves us then with a major contradiction as regards to women’s self presentation: the very same respondents who, when it came to their histories of family abuse, underscored their active role in carrying out their projects of migration downplayed these efforts once their involvement in sex work was brought into the discussion. These tensions, as they emerge from women’s narratives, are at

the centre of this chapter. My analysis will show that these contradictions are part of respondents' self-presentation. I will also illustrate that they are produced by, and a response to, the locations the respondents occupied within their communities of origin on the one hand, and Italy as country of migration on the other.

The structural location that the respondents inhabited once in Italy is best described in terms of social and legal marginality. Contrary to respondents' expectations when entering trafficking systems, such as improvement of their economic situation, creation of new opportunities for themselves, and transformation of affective bonds as to gain parents' respect and recognition, all of them were faced with a situation of immobility in third party controlled street prostitution. This condition of confinement, imposed by third parties' in attempts to appropriate the respondents' earnings and maximize economic gain, and enforced by the state' restrictive immigration and labour regulations, extremely reduced the spatial mobility of the respondents. Upon exiting prostitution, the respondents significantly increased the range of their movement. However, they nevertheless remained confined within highly restrictive spatial and social coordinates due to their status as undocumented migrants –in itself a ground for detention and deportation— and the moral stigma accompanying those who have worked in prostitution. The respondents, whose migratory projects were informed by the search for social inclusion, had to deal with the fact that being 'illegal' and having worked in sex industry actually resulted in their exclusion from the societal texture. Hence, 'illegality' and stigma rendered their pursuit of economic improvement and social recognition extremely difficult.

In this chapter I will examine the different ways in which respondents negotiated their location in relation to the family and/or community of origin and country of arrival, and discuss how their responses were both enabled, and limited by, the social representation and legal schemes pertaining to trafficking and its 'victims'. In doing so, I will look at interviewees' responses, focusing on how they figure their social and legal marginality, and how they deal with the impact of objectification and stigma during and after the time they spent in street prostitution. The social and symbolic norms ascribed to femininity are adopted in the last section of this chapter as the main analytical grid. This will allow me, first, to elicit the ways in which respondents negotiated the various contradictions imposed upon them by discursive regimes and juridical norms regulating migrant women's entitlement to rights and protection in the political community. And second, to bring to the fore how the shifts that the respondents took in order to attain social acceptance and inclusion engendered their constitution as subjects.

By looking at migration and prostitution as processes of subjectivization, my analysis points to the interpretative limits of the dominant approach to trafficking which concerns itself primarily with the violence incurred by women and harm they

suffered. In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate that understanding the complexity and production of the narrative of victimhood¹⁵⁹, is contingent upon considering the fact that normative narratives are not simply imposed upon subjects but are rather implicated in the very construction of subjectivity. These narratives thus, as I argue in this chapter, also need to be examined in relation to the appeal they hold for stigmatised migrant subjects who pursue social and legal inclusion.

2. The Whore Stigma

The respondents set off from their counties of origin in order to create new opportunities for themselves and to achieve social mobility. Upon their arrival to Italy and confinement with the third party controlled street prostitution, they were faced with a situation of immobility. Not only were they spatially confined but were also faced with specific forms of confinement caused by their work in prostitution. In addition to the limits the third parties imposed on respondents' movement, inhabiting the 'space' of prostitution meant being exposed to objectification and stigmatisation. The fear of social (and symbolic) exclusion, due to their work in the sex industry, accompanied the respondents also after they have exited prostitution.

Prostitution and Objectification

During a commercial sexual transaction, a prostitute is paid for performing a variety of sexual acts. This act of payment removes social constraints and obligations between the parties that are normally constitutive of a non-commercial sexual relationship. In addition, payment disavows the prostitute of being acknowledged as 'a full human subject' and, since paying her 'to be a person who is not a person', a client constructs the prostitute as an object within a commercial sexual exchange (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 133). Hence, as the scholarship on prostitution points out, for the clients, the attraction of commercial sex lays in the limited and unemotional nature of contact, the absence of the commitment, and the possibility to evade the obligations and responsibilities towards the prostitute (Corso and Landi 1998, McKageney and Barnard 1996: 52, O'Connell Davidson 1998: 134, O'Neill 2001).

¹⁵⁹ While being a dominant representation of trafficking both in scholarly and policy circles, the narrative of victimhood has also been criticized by a number of feminists (cfr. Andrijasevic 2003, Berman 2003, Corso and Trifirò 2003, Doezema 2001, Malucelli 2001, Sharma 2003, Sutdhibhasilp 2002).

The uneasiness and the pain involved in being viewed as a sexualized object instead of a subject with her own history and needs was addressed by the respondents on several accounts. One respondent –Ester—described various episodes in which, when in a car with a client (and at times his wife too) and feeling miserable, crying and asking for his help, he pretended not hear her and continued to demand the sexual service. Another respondent –Marisa— notes that when one is seen as a whore, men treat you without respect, position you exclusively within the sphere of prostitution, and do not include you in their everyday life and/or social networks: ‘You cannot talk or go out with anyone without being treated as a whore. He does not take you seriously. He speaks to you as to a whore. Then, he goes home and you stay alone’.¹⁶⁰ When reflecting on her experience of street work, Kateryna parallels the accounts of other two respondents when she differentiates between being perceived by men as a prostitute –a sexualized object— and a person whose subjecthood has been recognized and acknowledged:

When you’re on the street, you’re there and the one who looks at you knows that he can fuck you if he has the money. When the clients arrive they look at you as an object: move here, move there. They don’t look at you as a woman with her character and her personality. One looks at you exactly as an object, a doll; if he wants you, he takes you. He doesn’t ask you what do you think, doesn’t want to know your opinion about something, won’t start debating politics with you. But when he looks at you from the other angle meaning as a person, as a character, and he sees the things you want and don’t want, then it is different because he sees you differently knowing what you have done, meaning who you have been. It’s more difficult to have a relationship, even a non sexual one, when he sees you as a person with your problems.¹⁶¹

In rendering the difference between a commercial sexual contact and a non-commercial bond, the respondent underscored that objectification entailed the operation –enhanced by the position of clients’ (economic) power – of reducing the complexities of one’s personhood to that of a controllable sexualized object.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in order to gain control over the transactions with clients and to counter the objectification, respondents engaged in

¹⁶⁰ “Non puoi parlare nessuno, non puoi andare fuori con nessuno perché lui ti parla come ad una puttana. [Un uomo] non ti prende sul serio. Ti parla così come ad una puttana. E dopo lui va a casa e tu rimani da sola.”

¹⁶¹ “Quando sei in strada, sei lì e quando uno ti guarda sa che ti può scopare se ha dei soldi. I clienti, quando vengono, ti guardano come un oggetto: spostati lì, spostati là. Non ti guardano come una donna: con il suo carattere e la sua personalità. Uno ti guarda proprio come un oggetto, una bambola, e se ti vuole ti prende. Non è che ti chiede che cosa pensi e le tue opinioni di tale cosa oppure che ci si mette a parlare di politica. Ma quando ti guarda da quell’altro verso, come persona, come carattere, e vede le cose che vuoi e che non vuoi, allora è diverso perché ti guarda da un altro punto di vista sapendo quello che hai fatto, cioè quello che eri. Vedendoti come persona, con i tuoi problemi, è più difficile avere un rapporto, anche un rapporto sessuale senza una base sentimentale.”

‘doing normality’ with their habitual clients. Additionally, the respondents’ construction of the bond they entertained with future boyfriends in terms of a romantic relationship points to their yearning to (re)enter the sphere of social acceptability and ‘normality’, as opposed to social refusal and ‘deviance’. As I illustrated in Chapter 3, the respondents depicted their first encounter with the future boyfriends in dreamy and idealistic tones or framed it in terms of an instinct, employing a narrative of love at first sight. Maja’s offers an example:

And then he drives over and asks, ‘How much?’ I am sitting on a guardrail and I looked at him and said, ‘A hundred in a camera, and fifty in a car.’ He looked at me and said, ‘Let’s go.’ And he told me, ‘So many cars has passed by and you didn’t get into any of them and then, suddenly, you get into my car.’ I told him, it was like an instinct: I had to go and get into that car.

This rendering of the first encounter with the future boyfriend closely resembles Oksana’s description of her first encounter with her future boyfriend. Shortly before the respondent met her current partner, she split her evening meal – a sandwich—with her best friend Ioanna. With half sandwich in the hand she was standing on the street when a car stopped and she got in. According to the respondent, as soon as they looked into each others’ eyes, she felt an immediate feeling of trust and offered him half of her half-sandwich. Both accounts romanticize the encounter, and describe them in terms of a non-commercial sexual romance (in particular when referring to trust and instinct). They therefore move it outside the sphere of prostitution¹⁶² and into a romantic relationship among ‘equal’ partners, as Oksana’s offer of her half-sandwich symbolically conveys. When the respondents depicted the encounter with the future partner in terms of a ‘romance’, they disclosed their yearnings for men to see a ‘woman behind a prostitute’ and for avoiding objectification intrinsic to commercial sexual transactions.

In concurrence with other studies on street prostitution, my data points out that another way for the respondents to counter their objectification was to belittle the clients, especially when it came to their appearance (cfr. Nencel 2000: 205). Yet another means of doing this was to distance themselves emotionally from the clients or even objectify and depersonalize them by focusing on the money (cfr. McKeganey and Barnard 1996: 87). Kateryna, for example, recalls how she viewed the clients:

After a while of doing this job -- tricking men and taking their money – this way of doing becomes a part of you, a habit. When you look at a man, you look at him from head to toe and immediately you think what he’ll be able to

¹⁶² Maja, for example, was not available for any client.

offer you. You think only in terms of what gain he might or might not bring you. It becomes a way of thinking.¹⁶³

Contrary to men's objectification of the respondents', the women's depersonalizing clients did not involve the sexual objectification of men. Rather, this depersonalization was informed by concerns about economic gains. This in itself reflected the asymmetrical positioning of migrant women in relation to their Italian clients. The clients, due to their gender, citizenship, and economic power, were in a situation of power in relation to the respondents. The respondents, in fact, viewed the Italian clients, as sources of financial support (in cash or kind). However, the clients also represented a possibility for the respondents to counter their objectification by distancing themselves from the sphere of commercial sexual transactions and access the mundane social sphere and its rituals.

The Fear of (Lasting) Stigmatization

Sexualized objectification of women in prostitution goes hand in hand with moral stigmatization. The 'whore stigma', whose effects and ramifications have been discussed by scholars of prostitution, establishes a differentiation between decent and indecent, chaste and unchaste, worthy and unworthy women (Pheterson 1993, Scambler 1997). In this symbolic organization, the latter attributes become the other of the norm/'proper' femininity and are associated with the prostitute. The 'whore stigma' demarcates the separation between 'deviant' and 'normal' femininity and carries a large range of legal and social consequences for those characterized as 'whores'. This results in different degrees of symbolic and material expulsion from the political community.

The fear of the 'whore stigma' and of its consequences permeates respondents' narratives. This is made visible from the fact that most of respondents decided not to disclose their involvement in sex work to their friends, family and partners. Those respondents who met their partners while in prostitution, and continued a relationship with them after ceasing to do sex work, preferred not to discuss the matter further. In my data, there is one example of a respondent who addressed the matter of sex work migration with her partner in an explicit manner:

¹⁶³ "Facendo questo lavoro, a ingannare gli uomini per dirla così, e a prendere loro i soldi, dopo un po' di tempo che lo fai ti entra [dentro] e [diventa] un'abitudine. Quando guardi un uomo: lo guardi dalla testa ai piedi e subito pensi che cosa potrà darti. Pensi agli interessi che hai oppure non hai verso di lui. Diventa un modo di pensare."

To have a relationship with a man without telling him about my past and letting him know me only as I am today, even though he might feel gratify exactly because he does not know, would however mean for me keeping this relationship unsatisfactory.¹⁶⁴

For Kateryna, countering the ‘whore stigma’ implied exposing both her strengths and weaknesses to her partner. This openness about her work in prostitution was seen as a necessary condition for her relationship to gain in strength and develop.

Kateryna, who legalized her immigration status after several years of living in Italy, found accommodation in a shared flat, a job and established a long-term relationship with an ex-client of hers, reached a certain amount of stability. In contrast, most of the respondents were in a much more precarious legal, working, and living situations are preferred not to discuss the matter of sex work migration with their partners. When speaking of prostitution to their partners, they were ambiguous about the terms of the labour ‘contract’ they entered with third parties or maintained that they have been trafficked, namely coerced into migration and sex work. Liudmila offers an example: ‘I never told him about it. I simply told him that it’s not my fault that I am here ... [I told him] I was brought here. I told him things this way and according to me, I did the right choice.’¹⁶⁵ In this quote Liudmila emphasizes that not telling her Italian partner (ex-client) that she could migrate to Italy only on the condition to work in prostitution, was ‘the right choice’. By framing it in this manner, Liudmila expresses the fear that her partner would not understand her reasons and instead of seeing her as someone who ended up in prostitution forcefully, would perceive her as a woman who has ‘chosen’ prostitution on her own accord and thus as a ‘whore’.

Another respondent discussed the consequences of such a classification. In an imaginary conversation between a woman who was involved in sex work and a man she was engaged with, Maja speculated about how a man would react if a woman was to tell him about prostitution: ‘If she told him [about prostitution], he might say, ‘I don’t need you like this. I can find another one who didn’t work on the road.’’ The stigmatization and social condemnation following a disclosure of a woman’s work in prostitution, almost always means that having a ‘serious’ relationship or getting married are no longer possible. The respondents feared the consequences of the ‘whore stigma’ that classifies women as either ‘innocent’ women or ‘guilty whores’. Ana addressed the matter in the following manner:

¹⁶⁴ “Avere una relazione con un uomo senza che io parli del mio passato e che mi conosce solo come sono adesso, magari lui, non sapendo, si sentirà molto appagato da me, ma per me rimarrà sempre una relazione superficiale.”

¹⁶⁵ “Mai gli ho parlato di questa cosa, ho solo detto che sono venuta non per colpa ... mi hanno portato. Io ho fatto così e secondo me ho fatto bene.”

There are people in Italy and everywhere else that say ‘You whore’. They want to be with you for a while in order to fuck you and then they leave. Even if they like me they will not marry me because the marriage is something else, something more. See, I say to myself, ‘OK. Things [arrival to Italy and prostitution] went this way when I was 20 years old, but I want to live. It is not my fault, I am young and never in my life did I harm someone or did something bad to a person.’¹⁶⁶

Ana criticized the moral stigma attached to prostitution as well as the fact that those women who are labeled ‘whores’ lose the respect and social status men accord to non-prostitutes. Moreover, she disapproved of the social representations of prostitution, which characterize women as delinquents and result in lasting stigma.

The stigma does not affect women’s lives only while in prostitution but accompanies them afterwards and can be brought up at any later stage in their lives. For this reason, those respondents who established relationships with Italian men (not ex-clients) after having left prostitution, preferred not to disclose this part of their lives to the boyfriends. The fear of possible stigmatization emerged in a recollection of a conversation between the respondent and her new boyfriend, whom she met in a factory where they both worked. On one occasion, the respondent asked her boyfriend if he knew those women on the streets. After he told Marisa of being a client himself, she asked him:

‘Excuse me, you were together with that girl and if you liked it, why did you not go with her the second time? Can you not fall in love with her? He tells me ‘Not even ones have I thought of staying together with a person who works on the street. Even if I would meet her somewhere else and she tells me she has worked on the street, I would feel bitterness. She is not a person I am looking for.’¹⁶⁷

In this conversation, whether imaginary or real, we can recognize respondent’s own situation, her fear of stigmatization and objectification, and the consequent negation of the position she has so far acquired in Italian society. As the above quotes illustrate, the fear of stigma and social condemnation characterized respondents’ lives even after having left sex work. It is no coincidence then that during one of the group discussions organized during the fieldwork, all of the respondents agreed that it is not

¹⁶⁶ “Ci sono delle persone, in Italia e dappertutto, che dicono “Ah, puttana”. Vogliono stare un po’ di tempo con te per scoparti e dopo vanno via e anche se piaccio a loro non mi sposeranno perché il matrimonio è un’altra cosa, qualcosa di più. E allora dico, va bene, è successo così a vent’anni, però io voglio vivere; non è colpa mia, sono giovane, mai nella mia vita ho fatto del male o qualcosa di brutto a qualcuno”.

¹⁶⁷ “Ma scusa, tu sei stato con quella ragazza, e se ti è piaciuto, perché non sei andato una seconda volta da lei? Non ti puoi innamorare di lei?” Lui mi fa: “Mai una volta ho pensato di stare insieme con una persona che lavora in strada. Anche se la incontro da qualche altra parte, e lei mi dice che ha lavorato per strada, mi viene un amaro. Lei non è quella persona che sto cercando.”

important how long one has worked in prostitution, since one has worked as a prostitute and can be reproached at anytime.

In addition to being concerned about how to manage their affective relationships, the respondents also feared public disclosure and stigmatization. As a study pointed out, it is not uncommon for a woman that is blond and presumed to be Russian, to be suspected of being a prostitute and harassed verbally or physically. Sometimes, these women are even detained by the police (Gülçür and İlkaracan 2002). Moreover, in some countries such as Turkey, Israel, England and the US, the name Natasha has become a synonym for a prostitute and is used as a common denigrating label for all women from the eastern European region, whether they are sex workers or not. While Gülçür and İlkaracan do not include Italy in their list of countries where the term Natasha has gained discursive currency, respondents' accounts of their daily life in Bologna show that, whether due to one's physical appearance or a way of dressing, they too have been affected by the discourse that conflates women from former Russian states with prostitutes. A respondent, Snezana, spoke for example about a public gathering on Bologna's central square where a priest, Don Benzi, gave a speech on trafficking and where women he 'saved' from prostitution delivered testimonies. While listening to the women's stories, a man from the audience standing next to Snezana, looked at her, and grabbed her by her arm. He then told her, it is her turn to give a testimony. He explained that, just by looking at her, he can tell that she is not an Italian and that she has worked in prostitution.

In order to avoid the possibility of exposure, some respondents avoided speaking in their mother tongues in public and used Italian instead. Some broke contacts with other women with whom they previously worked on the street and who, upon leaving sex work, remained in Italy too. Others were extremely careful about the way they dressed, especially since the dress code in its intersection with being a migrant woman sufficed to label one as a prostitute. Sasha, for example, stopped wearing short skirts in order not to attract people's attention and to avoid potential stigmatization:

You know, when I go and work I dress normally. If you dress a skirt or something similar they look at you immediately. The Italians are like this. If you know that it is like this, that you are a foreigner and that they can look at you, then please—for your own good—dress differently. Try to dress in a way so they do not look at you immediately. Then, once Oksana was here and Mauro [a friend] was waiting outside for me. Oksana was going to work at the grandmother's of whom she was taking care. He does not know Oksana and he

tells me ‘Do you see this blond [girl] over there? One can see that she is a whore’. It was he who told me this.¹⁶⁸

Sasha, who had left street work several years ago, and who at the time of the interview, had an employment contract as a sanitarian, voiced her fears of being recognized as a foreigner and, by extension, as a (ex) prostitute. Whether this conversation took place in exactly this form or not is not of real importance for the current investigation. What is important is that through an Italian male the respondent communicated the impact on her of the existing discursive conflation of women from former Russia with prostitutes. The fact that an Italian man articulated the words further validated Sasha’s anxiety about societal refusal, and displayed the respondent’s awareness of how power relations operate and whose words count in conferring social acceptance. Since objectification and the fear of stigmatization impacted respondents’ lives both during and after leaving sex work, they were constantly confronted with, and had to balance the fact that being labeled a ‘whore’ would confine them within the narrow designation of ‘the prostitute’, and would therefore jeopardize their migratory projects by undermining their hardy-earned, but still precarious social acceptance.

3. Countries of Origin: Maintaining the Boundaries of the Gender and Sexuality

Having worked in prostitution for a shorter or a longer period of time implied a recurring threat of stigmatization for the respondents. It also meant societal exclusion in case of respondents’ involvement in sex work became public. Whether they stayed in Italy or whether they returned to their countries of birth the respondents had to negotiate the boundaries of inclusion within these communities.

Silence as a Tacit Agreement

In her analysis of the relationship between imaginary communities and prostitution, O’Connell Davidson (1998) highlights the political dimension of sexuality, and its investment in creation and maintenance of communities as well as in safeguarding the

¹⁶⁸ “Sai, per andare a lavorare mi vesto con i vestiti normali. Se tu ti metti un vestito o qualcosa ti guardano subito [male]. Gli Italiani sono così. Se tu lo sai che è così che sei straniera e che ti possono guardare, ti prego per il tuo bene vestiti in un modo un po’ diverso. Cerca di vestirti in modo che non ti guardino subito. Poi Oksana è passata una volta e Mauro [a friend] mi aspettava fuori. Oksana stava per andare a lavorare dalla nonna a cui badava. Lui non conosce Oksana e mi dice: “Vedi questa bionda qua? Si vede, lei è una puttana.” E’ lui che mi ha detto questo.”

hierarchies within those communities along the lines of class, ‘race’, gender, age and social status. Those people who break the boundaries of a specific sexual community –such as prostitutes— are excluded from enjoying the full citizen’s rights, become ‘outsiders’, and are prevented from returning to their communities.

Building on the discussion of the community and its boundaries, my data shows that those who worked in sex industry did not necessarily have to foreclose the possibility of retaining their position as a member of a given community. This was achieved on the condition that involvement in prostitution was kept secret. Keeping prostitution secret was possible due to the tacit agreement between members of a community not to acknowledge prostitution explicitly. When telling of her community of origin, a respondent –Sasha—explained that in her hometown in the Ukraine, a vast number of young women migrated abroad to work in prostitution.¹⁶⁹ She remarked that it is know within her community that women work in prostitution, but that no one talks about it. According to her, it is better that way.¹⁷⁰ A similar observation can be made about all of the interviews: for the most part, those respondents who returned home, as well as those who stayed in Italy, decided not to tell their families of their work in prostitution. In order to understand this better, I would like to give an example. Imagine a small city where for nearly a decade a large population of young women has been travelling abroad to work in prostitution. Some of then have returned and brought money home, and some have sent money home. Those who have brought money home presented their earnings in cash and usually accompanied it with presents for all. Someone’s return from a foreign country is often a cause for celebration for the whole family. Extended families come together and celebrate the woman who has just returned. Her family is proud of her and she is seen as a model for other young people in that family or community. If it were made explicit that the money had been earned through prostitution, or that the young women has worked as a prostitute, the esteem would be substituted by shame. Respondents’ narratives indicate that even though women’s migration for labour in sex industry has been occurring in the countries of eastern Europe and fSU for about a decade, and some of the respondents have travelled in and out of their communities as to work in sex industry or knew of other women who did, migrant women, their families and communities all maintained silence as regards to sex work migration.

In order to keep prostitution secret, some of them avoided contact with other women from their home community whom they did not consider close friends. Others sent home the photos of themselves in front of a famous monument or a shop that

¹⁶⁹ A similar statement is made in IOM-Ukraine movie *Prey of Silence* (2001). The movie, financed by the European Commission through the *TACIS* Program is part of the IOM’s counter-trafficking information campaign in Ukraine that has been viewed on national TV as a six-part documentary serial. I address IOM’s counter-trafficking campaigns in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁰ “E’ meglio che non se ne parli”.

portrayed them as part of everyday ‘normality’. For this very reason, the respondents preferred to ‘transit’ trafficking¹⁷¹ and search for solutions which would enable them to carry on their migratory projects on their own terms rather than being returned home with a deportation order by the foreigners’ police or an NGO. Being deported – especially if following a police roundup—meant returning from abroad quite suddenly and usually without any money. If a respondent managed to put aside some money or deposit it in a bank, she was unable to access that money in case of a police arrest and subsequent deportation, and would suffer an economic loss. Moreover, given the fact that the contracts between third parties and the respondents were usually for three-months period, being deported ahead of time meant that the respondent would not receive the payment. Being returned to their countries of departure prematurely or empty-handed implied that ‘something’ went wrong. This something was most likely to be interpreted by the communities of origin as evidence of a respondent’s involvement in prostitution.

The tacit agreement of silence between the respondents, their families, and other community members put the respondents in a precarious position, which could easily slip from their being members of a given community to becoming ‘outcasts’ if respondents’ work in prostitution became public. An example comes from Larisa’s account who, upon her arrival to Italy, prostituted under the control of an Albanian man and was then ‘picked up’ from the street by a female friend of hers with whom she entered a subsequent prostitution contract. When Larisa went to the police to press charges against the Albanian third party, her female friend got scared that the respondent would press charges against her too. She therefore left Italy and returned to the city in Moldova, where she and the respondent came from. She then made public that Larisa has worked as a prostitute in Italy. The respondent interpreted this as a sign that the woman feared that her unexpected return to the hometown after many years in Italy would be interpreted as related to prostitution. Hence, in order to remove all doubt she offloaded the potential stigma onto the respondent. For Larisa, having been publicly denounced as a prostitute meant that she could not return to her home community because ‘her reputation had been ruined’. She thus decided to remain in Italy where no one knew her and where she did not need to worry about being deemed as a prostitute.¹⁷² The respondent considered having been exposed as a prostitute an offence of such a magnitude that, in order to redress the damage, she decided to press charges against her female friend. This friend, along with her husband, was charged with exploitation of prostitution.

¹⁷¹ I am here using the terms I heard John Davis use during the *Metropolis* conference in Rotterdam in 2000. Since then, I have not come across this term in any written essay on trafficking.

¹⁷² I am paraphrasing here the respondents’ sentence: “Qui non mi conosce nessuno e sto tranquilla.”

On those rare occasions that the respondents decided to make explicit that they had worked in prostitution, they did so by telling it to the family member closest to them and then relied on him/her not to tell the larger community. For example, Ivana, who decided to return home to Croatia after having exited third party controlled prostitution and had pressed charges against her exploiter, told her husband that she had worked in prostitution. However, she decided not to tell him how many clients she was with during those twenty days. In the end, she opted for the number five, omitting approximately 390 other encounters with clients. This decision was informed by the respondent's fear that her husband would refuse her once he knew the real number. She was afraid he would be disgusted by her, and would not want to touch her any longer because she might have been 'contaminated'. Once she told the husband about her work in street prostitution, she and he decided not to say anything about it to any other family member, since they feared the social consequences of such a disclosure. They agreed that his father would surely force them to divorce and call her a whore. Additionally, the respondent was convinced that her own father would also call her a whore, and accuse her of being just like her mother, who cheated on him. He would therefore rationalize that the mother deserved all the beatings he gave her. As this example shows, making prostitution explicit even to the person closest to the respondent, entailed simultaneously negotiating a respondent's own position in relation to her husband and their common position as a couple towards a larger social setting. Both of these instances point to the fear of rejection and punishment reserved for those whose behaviour has deviated from societal gender and sexual norms.

Among the respondents who settled in Italy, it was highly uncommon to reveal their work in prostitution to a family member in their country of origin. The geographical distance, remittances and short visits home accompanied with presents for the whole family made it possible to avoid suspicion around the type of the work the respondents performed in Italy. My data present an exception to this rule and illustrate which conditions made it possible to disclose information about her prostitution work. To summarize briefly, Kateryna accepted her (much older) male lover's proposal to come to Italy and work in prostitution. This decision was informed by her passionate and desperate desire to change her life, namely improve her economic situation, relieve her depression, and achieve emotional autonomy from her mother. After having spent five months in third party controlled street prostitution and achieved very minimal economic gain, the respondent decided to leave prostitution and attempt to search for opportunities somewhere else. The situation of exit was followed by a period in which the respondent created her resources anew: she obtained a residence and work permit, got a job as an apprentice hairdresser, and found a room in a shared flat. During the year in Italy, she told her mother that she

worked in prostitution. From the respondent's narrative, one can see that this disclosure was possible because of the shift that occurred in the roles between the respondent and her mother. The respondent, having gained the control over her life and her own self-esteem, was now the one who took care of the mother's economic needs, who was divorced and had no source of income. Economic and emotional stability the respondent gained endowed her with new authority. She was now the one to financially and emotionally take care of the mother. She stated in her interview: 'I need to look after her and take care of things'.¹⁷³ Thus, the reversal of authority in the mother-daughter relationship, economic security and emotional stability, along with settling in Italy and weakening of contact to the community of origin, made it possible for the respondent to break the silence surrounding sex work migration and tell her mother about it. However, this episode represents an exception in my overall study. In this way my research confirms the findings of other scholars who showed that both migrant and non-migrant women in various geographical region tend not to speak of their work in prostitution to their families, as to avoid potential stigmatization and rejection (Nencel 2000, Skrobanek et al 1997).

Mother-Daughter Relationships

Kateryna's account is, as I described above, an exception. Other respondents decided not to bring up the topic of prostitution with their mothers or other members of the family. They preferred to keep prostitution secret in order not to make mothers worry or hurt. When asked whether she has considered telling her mother that she has worked in sex work, Sasha replied in the following way:

I don't want to tell. What's the need of hurting her? I don't want to hurt her ... why? It's not that I am scared of telling her. She'd feel bad but would understand. But she'd be left with a pain similar to a scar.¹⁷⁴

Even though Sasha thought that her mother might understand her reasons, she still preferred not to raise the issue of sex work migration. Not speaking of it is certainly grounded in respondents' concern for their mothers, but also in their own feeling of shame, accompanied by their slippage from the realm of 'normality' and consequent exclusion from the family. Marisa's words speak to this:

¹⁷³ "La devo seguire, vedere come va e come non va."

¹⁷⁴ "Non voglio dire, perché le devo fare del male? Non le voglio fare del male ... perché? Non è che ho paura di dire. Lei rimane male però lo capisce. Però le rimane un dolore dentro come una cicatrice."

When I went back home, I was ashamed to saying anything. All the time I was laying to my mother. I didn't tell her that I was there [on the street]. If I'd told her that I've worked on the street she'd felt really bad. She raised me differently. It's better if no one knows ... I don't have the courage and I don't want, I don't want to tell. I'd feel bad. They would feel bad [the parents]. For them I would be a whore and not a daughter with a strong family as I am now. It is better it stays a secret of mine, without telling it to anyone else.¹⁷⁵

This quote illustrates some of the investments that inform the practices of upholding silence on the topic of sex work migration. The respondent, who filtered the matter through her position as a daughter, pointed to the pain that the knowledge of prostitution would cause her mother. She moreover stressed that disclosure of prostitution would bring about her loss of self-respect, her position as a 'good' daughter, and the image of belonging to a functional and strong nuclear family.

In the above quote, the phrase 'She raised me differently' re-echoes other respondents' accounts about why they found it impossible to talk of sex work migration with their mothers. Ester, for example, tried to imagine the situation if her mother would find out that her two daughters, Ester and Tatiana, worked as prostitutes in Italy. She concluded that their mother would interpret this situation as a reflection of her failure as a mother because she was not able to offer them more emotionally and materially. Another respondent put herself in the place of her mother and described the negative impact she thought the disclosure of sex work would have:

I could never tell this to my mother because I am scared she would shout at me, hate me, kick me out of the house. Later she would feel bad because the things went the way they went, because I have worked on the street, made this money, bought this furniture. ... No, I never thought of telling her because she would feel really, really bad. She would start thinking that she as a mother could not offer me anything and that this is why I left and found this money, this job.¹⁷⁶

As Oksana frames it, telling of ones work in prostitution would result in immediate punishment and exclusion and it would raise questions about her mother's failure to raise her daughter 'properly', according to the socially approved and sanctioned

¹⁷⁵ "Quando sono andata a casa mia, mi vergognavo di parlare. Tutto il tempo dicevo bugie alla madre. Non le ho detto che sto là [in strada]. Se le dico che ho lavorato in strada lei starebbe molto male. Lei mi ha cresciuto in un modo diverso. Meglio che non lo sappia nessuno. ... Mi manca il coraggio e non voglio, non voglio dire [che ho lavorato per strada]. Sto male io. Stanno male loro [i genitori]. Sarei una puttana per loro e non una figlia come lo sono ora con una famiglia normale, una famiglia forte. Meglio che rimanga un mio segreto, senza dirlo a nessuno."

¹⁷⁶ "Non potrei mai dire questo a mia madre perché ho paura che lei mi sgridi, mi odi, mi butta fuori di casa. Dopo lei sta male perché le cose sono andate in questo modo, perché io sono andata a lavorare in strada, perché ho fatto questi soldi, comprato questi mobili, capito? ... No, io non pensavo mai di dire questo perché lo so che lei starebbe malissimo. Comincerebbe a pensare che lei come madre non mi poteva dare niente e che per questo io sono andata e ho trovato questi soldi, questo lavoro."

norms of femininity. Respondents' accounts of their relationship with their mothers and of the silence surrounding sex work migration, demonstrate that the overseeing of the sexual codes and gendered boundaries of the communities was left for the women to maintain. One of the earlier studies on trafficking and community reaction to the disclosure of prostitution showed that once the researchers raised the issue of prostitution, and the community got acquainted with the fact that young women from their community worked in prostitution abroad, various members of the community – especially mothers migrant women—were angry at this disclosure. The stigmatization that resulted from this episode compelled migrant women to remain silent about their experiences abroad or even to leave their home communities in order to live elsewhere else (Skrobanek et al. 1997: 82). Similarly, my data points out that when their taking part in sex work was publicly denounced, some respondents such as Marisa, thought that disappearing for a while until the situation got calmer, was the best solution.¹⁷⁷ Others, like Larisa, saw lying about her migratory project and stressing that she was coerced into prostitution the best option. For the respondents, keeping prostitution secret meant avoiding punishment and/or judgment that would result from making their involvement in sex work migration public and creating space that allowed them to maintain their position as members of a community. Respondents, their families, and the large community's silence about young women's sex work migration might therefore be understood as a tacit agreement. This permitted women to return to their home communities and the latter to maintain – at least apparently— the existing gender and sexual arrangements.

My findings raise the question what might be the (unintended) consequence of those campaigns which aim at informing women about the dangers of undocumented labour migration by making explicit that women's migration abroad leads to prostitution. A respondent's narrative exemplifies this. Having escaped third party controlled street prostitution in Italy and having returned to Moldova, the respondent rather than telling her mother that she was deceived into prostitution, told her mother that she worked in domestic labour. The mother told her that she knows that she is lying since she watches TV and knows that Moldavian women work as prostitutes in Italy. The mother then pressured Ester so much that she could not bear mother's suspicion any longer and decided, together with her younger sister, to leave for Italy once more. As this example shows, making prostitution publicly known in order to

¹⁷⁷ The term 'disappear' is commonly used in counter-trafficking campaign in order to indicate all those women who went abroad and of whom any track has been lost. These campaigns imply or at times state explicitly that these disappearances are caused by the traffickers who kidnap or even murder migrant women. I am not questioning that these brutal and criminal acts happen and that the perpetrators should be severely punished in the court of law, but I am suggesting to think though the fact that stigma and social judgments on prostitution play a part in rupturing migrant women's relationships to their home communities and that 'disappearing', as the respondent suggests might at time be a way of coping with societal exclusion caused by disclosure of woman's work in prostitution.

prevent trafficking might actually foster the greater stigmatisation of prostitution and might exclude young women from their communities.

My findings also point to respondents' awareness that a disclosure of prostitution would not affect them alone but would have consequences for their families too. Within the community's socio-symbolic order, a prostitute would bring shame not only upon her mother, signalling the mother's incapability of fulfilling her mother duties, but also upon the entire family. Thus, the sexual conventions and gender roles are tacitly maintained between two generations of women: mothers and daughters. Mothers thus not only police the boundaries of the sexual community, but also stretch those very boundaries by not bringing up the issue of prostitution with their daughters. The silence surrounding sex work migration certainly fosters the misinformation about working and living conditions migrant women commonly encounter in a foreign country. However, it is of key importance to note that my data suggests that this dynamic allows the respondents to contravene the communities' sexual boundaries and yet still return to those communities without being labeled as outcasts. Moreover, the tacit agreement of silence permits the respondents' families to enjoy the remittances the respondents send, and improve their social standing through having a family member abroad who succeeded in her migratory project. Hence, while I believe that it is crucial to give women tools for migrating in a safer way, my data also suggest that it is important to consider the possible drawbacks of counter trafficking campaigns since they disregard the communities' unspoken knowledge about sex work migration and contravene a tacit rule of keeping silent about prostitution.¹⁷⁸ As a result, this can trigger migrant women's exclusion rather than inclusion, in addition to ruptures in family bonds and societal texture in women's communities of origin.

4. Italy, the Country of Migration: Paradoxes of Inclusion

Having achieved a certain degree of mobility upon exiting third party controlled prostitution, those respondents who opted for staying in Italy needed to contend with both with stigmatization surrounding prostitution and prejudice towards women from eastern Europe and former Russia. Moreover, in addition to their undocumented immigration status, being identified as a 'whore' (meaning a 'willing' prostitute rather than an 'innocent' victim of organized criminal networks), implied losing entitlement to state protection and to the social and legal inclusion. The latter were offered by the stay and work permits granted to the victims of trafficking. This section

¹⁷⁸ Counter trafficking campaigns in women's countries of origin are the topic of the next chapter.

illustrates how respondents' relationship with their (white) Italian boyfriends and attainment of the permit of residence played a crucial role in respondents' pursuit of social inclusion in Italy. I further discuss the concessions women made, in particular in relation to the narrative of victimhood, in order to achieve social and legal acceptance.

Some Men are Worth More than Other

Contrary to the communities of origin where respondents' involvement in prostitution is managed by means of a tacit agreement of silence about sex work, in the country of migration respondents' work in prostitution is acknowledged within women's relationships with their Italian boyfriends. Some of the respondents entered into relationships with their boyfriends while still working in prostitution. This often resulted in respondents' leaving of prostitution. With others, they met though former 'clients' at a later stage after already having left prostitution. Contrary to the situation in their countries of origin, having worked in prostitution did not automatically exclude the respondents from the social texture in Italy. It was in fact common for the respondent to be introduced to their partner's family and for the family to know of women's past in prostitution. A number of respondents lived with the partners and their parents, and were introduced to the partners' children.¹⁷⁹ This constituted the crucial difference between respondents' relationships with members of their communities of origin and with men with whom a number of them established relationships in Italy, especially after leaving prostitution. While towards their families nearly all of the respondents opted for not addressing the issue of prostitution, in Italy the fact that they dated Italian men who were acquainted with respondents' work in prostitution left some space for respondents to include their experience of prostitution in their accounts of migration.

Yet, these relationships were not devoid of stigmatization and respondents' work in the sex industry could easily preclude them access to the institutions of 'proper' femininity such as the marriage and the motherhood. 'Doing normality', construing the encounters with the boyfriends in terms of a 'romance', and upholding the story of being deceived into migration and sex work, were all ways for the respondents to negotiate their social inclusion in Italy. This meant, at the same time, negotiating the boundaries of social roles and norms upholding 'proper' femininity. The emphasis the respondents placed on the importance of marriage or the 'romantic' aspect of their relationships with Italian boyfriends, could lead one to believe that they

¹⁷⁹ Some of the married Italian men informed their wives of their affairs with the respondents.

were very eager to marry or that they were engaged in blissfully romantic relationships. However, when asked specifically whether they would marry their boyfriends or if they were in love with them, the respondents' answers conveyed quite a different picture. For example, Marisa, who after each date with her new boyfriend beamed with happiness and saw herself as getting closer to marriage, was more wary of marriage when asked if she desired to marry him:

For me marriage already happened once. I don't want to do it a second time ... in order to marry I've to think through it really well. We can live together for a while without being married. We can do many things without marring. For now, I don't want to marry.¹⁸⁰

As the last sentence illustrates, Marisa did not exclude marriage, but neither did she embrace it in an easy and unproblematic way. On the contrary, she stated that she prefers to look for arrangements alternative to marriage.

Similarity, with regard to respondents' relationships with their Italian boyfriends, the depictions of these encounters in terms of a 'romance' did not match their responses when asked whether they are in love with them. In fact, all of the respondents except Kateryna –whose relationship I discussed earlier— said that they were not in love with their boyfriends, but rather, they are together with them out of habit. The common term used in respondents' narratives to describe their feeling towards the boyfriends was: 'I am fond of him'.¹⁸¹ Thus, although the respondents represented their first encounters with their partners in a romanticized manner, they spoke of their relationships in much sober terms. Ester, for example, phrased it in the following way:

I'm fond of him [and] I'm fine with it. Now I'm used to him because when I go somewhere I don't pay attention to other men at all ... Listen, I don't think I'll find someone better than him. I won't send to hell a person who cares about me! [He'd tell me] 'Who do you think you are!?' I took you from the street and you treat me like this?!' We don't fight; we are calm.¹⁸²

When reflecting upon their current relationship, the respondents were much aware of the affective limits of their relationships. They weighted up the intensity of their emotional investment against feelings of being cared for and accepted emotionally

¹⁸⁰ "Per me il matrimonio c'è già stato una volta. La seconda volta non lo voglio fare. ... Per fare il matrimonio devo pensare bene. Possiamo vivere insieme senza matrimonio per un po' di tempo. Possiamo fare tante cose insieme senza sposarci. Per ora non mi voglio sposare."

¹⁸¹ 'Gli voglio bene'.

¹⁸² "Io gli voglio bene, sto bene così. Adesso sono abituata a lui perché quando vado in giro proprio non guardo [altri uomini] ... Ma, guarda, penso che meglio di lui non troverò nessuno. Una persona che mi vuole bene non la mando a quel paese! Dice, ma chi sei tu?! Ti ho presa dalla strada e mi tratti così! Noi non litighiamo, siamo tranquilli."

and socially. In this sense, the respondents' narratives present an acknowledgment of the disparity between the romanticized image of relationships and marriage on the one hand, and the more realistic considerations of these arrangements on the other. However, if we do not prioritise the apparent contradictions but rather pay attention to what is attained by both desiring and dismissing marriage as an option, and inciting romance while accepting it as unrealistic, then it becomes apparent that both situations function as a way for the respondents to position themselves as non-prostitutes and to allow them to access the social acceptance usually denied to prostitutes. Hence, whether part of the respondents' self-representation or as a socially visible and recognizable bond, the relationship with an Italian man authorized respondents' societal recognition and acceptance.

The fact that nationality (of men) matters for achieving social inclusion is best made visible in the following classification Oksana offered when describing with whom she would and would not be together:

I would never be together with an Albanian: I don't like their kind. With a black man, no way! Yugoslav men are all pimps or thieves. Russians, no: I don't want to because our men think only of vodka and spending money. I don't know any Americans but I could give it a thought. But now I am in Italy and therefore I am together with Italians.¹⁸³

Though this view is very pragmatic ('I am in Italy and therefore I am together with Italians'), the quote proposes a very clear hierarchy of masculinity on the basis of nationality. Not all of the intersections of nationality and masculinity are given the same value. In these kinds of classifications for example, men from a national background or from communities positioned as ethnically 'Other' within Italian society, are looked upon or depicted as unsuitable, while others (such as Italians or Americans) are desirable and acceptable. This hierarchical ordering of masculinities according to an economic and racialized scale of privileges and power exemplifies the importance respondents ascribed to the relationship with Italian men. Accordingly, for those respondents who stayed in Italy, the relationship with Italian men constituted one of the central points of reference in their lives. It played a crucial role in enabling the respondents to have certain degree of financial security –due to the partners monetary power— while it also helped them to avoid social exclusion and stigmatisation reserved for (other) migrant prostitutes.

¹⁸³ "Con un albanese non ci starei, non mi piace questa razza; con un nero, no!; Jugoslavi sono tutti o magnaccia o ladri; Russi: no, non voglio perché i nostri uomini pensano solo a vodka e a spendere soldi; degli americani non li conosco ma ci potrei pensare; ma ora sono in Italia e allora sto con gli italiani."

An illustration of how the intervention of Italian men played a crucial role in securing benefits and avoiding social and economic marginalization is offered in Sasha's narrative of giving birth. She had been in Italy for three years at the time of the interview and described her choice to remain in Italy as a succession of obstacles. The biggest, she said, occurred while being in a hospital in Bologna about to give birth. Sasha had left prostitution, had a relationship with an ex-client of hers, got pregnant, and decided to have a child. When her boyfriend heard about the pregnancy, he said he was not ready for it and left her. In order to keep and provide for the child, Sasha went back to prostitution. She worked independently for a number of months until she earned enough money to provide for her and for a child, and then left prostitution again. When she arrived at the hospital, she realized that the social worker wanted to take her child away. The doctors and social workers asked her whether she had money to support herself and the child. They inquired into how she earned that money, to which she replied that it is not their business. They asked her further what she would do when she runs out of money. She told them she would go home and take the child with her. While commenting on the behaviour of hospital's doctors and social assistants, Sasha explained that she was treated this way because she was an 'illegal' foreigner suspected of being a prostitute. If she was to keep her child, she said, she needed to prove that she had a place to live and a lot of Italian friends. Sasha stressed this latter point twice: 'That's what is important. Your friends must be Italian. If they are foreigners, it's of no use.' Hence, Sasha asked all of her male friends to come and visit her and to bring other Italian friends along. Some of them arrived with their mothers. Sasha said that this was of crucial because then the doctors could see her in the company of older Italian women and heard them speak Italian.

Sasha's account of her hospitalization brings to the fore the role of institutions in policing the social roles and norms ascribed to women. It also explicates who is and who is not entitled to social and political protection. Moreover, the way Sasha handled the matter clearly reflects her understanding of the precarious position migrant sex workers occupy in Italian society. Sasha's struggle for belonging and entitlement to rights was won by proving financial resources, mastering the Italian language, and displaying her integration within Italian society by means of significant social bonds. The fact that Sasha thought of, and made use of, Italian men and older Italian women in order to avoid possible repercussions and to have access to social benefits, testifies to her awareness of the need for a migrant woman former prostitute to have strong social bonds with subjects entitled to social and political citizenship. It was no coincidence that Sasha did not invite any of the Russian, Moldavian or Ukrainian female friends of hers with whom she worked together in street prostitution to the hospital. The respondents relationships with Italian men thus not only countered the moral stigma reserved for 'whores', and positioned the respondents as 'not really'

prostitutes, but also mitigated the burden of ‘illegality’ and non-belonging. This constituted, as my data points out, a crucial vehicle for respondents’ social affirmation and acceptance.

Permit of Stay and Legal Venues of Inclusion

In addition to having relationships with Italian men, my data indicates that being granted a residence permit represented for the respondents the second key means of achieving inclusion in the new society. As I shortly explained in the section *(Il)legality and Trafficking* in Chapter 3, Italy has a unique clause, Article 18 of the Immigration Law, Law 286 of 1998¹⁸⁴. Other European countries have no such clause. It provides victims of severe exploitation who are in danger as a result of escaping from an exploitative situation and whose lives would be endangered if returned home, with a renewable six-months residence and work permit. Art. 18, devised especially for women trafficked into the sex industry but applicable to all migrants in situations of abuse or severe exploitation, is granted on the condition that the applicant leaves prostitution and enters a program of social assistance and reintegration run by various community projects and NGO’s. The specificity and uniqueness of Art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998 on the European level is due to the fact that it grants a residence and work permits, and is officially not tied to a person’s willingness to take part in legal proceeding against the traffickers. However, as the experience of various NGOs has shown, in reality, it is quite exceptional to be granted the Art. 18 residence permit without having pressed charges and testified against the third parties (Anti-Slavery International 2002: 144).

While I recognize the importance of legal measures that protect victims, I am wary of the ways in which Article 18 institutionalizes and essentializes the rhetoric of victimization in so far as it requires that applicants leave prostitution. This disqualifies the possibility that for some women, prostitution might be part of their migratory projects and establishes a normative narrative of victimhood grounded in very particular forms and patterns of violence. For example, Oksana explained that, when pressing charges against the traffickers, and in order to be able to apply for a residence permit granted to victims of trafficking, she included a false statement saying that, due to the threats made on her by third party, returning home would constitute a threat to her safety.¹⁸⁵ When the threat of violence upon returning home or the danger of traffickers’ retaliation was not clearly discernible from a woman’s story,

¹⁸⁴ Usually referred to as art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998.

¹⁸⁵ This strategy was not thought of by the respondent herself but it was suggested to her by the male immigration officer who was handling her case.

immigration officials did not accept her claim to stay in Italy. In Sasha's case, for example, her request for a residence permit on the basis of Article 18 was rejected by the authorities, and justified as follows: 'Currently, there are no concrete dangers for the safety of the claimant, which would be caused by the claimant's attempt to escape organizations that exploit prostitution.'¹⁸⁶ In this way, the current legal conceptualization of trafficking not only disqualifies women's agency by establishing a normative narrative grounded in forced migration, coercion into prostitution, and economic exploitation, but also penalizes those women who fall out of the established norm. By refusing them access to Article 18, they are unable to legalize their status, and might be deported. My data thus suggests that presenting oneself as a victim is indeed indispensable if an undocumented migrant woman is to use the legal immigration apparatus to her advantage and obtain the right to remain in Italy.¹⁸⁷

The attainment of the Art. 18 residency permit is contingent not only upon woman's disavowal of her migratory project and her willingness—at least informally—to press charges against the traffickers, but also her adherence to a program of social protection and reintegration. Built on a concept of victimhood, these programs do not often acknowledge the agency of women whether in regard to the efforts they make in reaching Italy, or the relationships they established and resources they generated while in prostitution. Moreover, and especially if they are of religious nature, they are likely to be geared towards re-education of 'victims', thus once more interpreting prostitution as an attribute of a person and effacing the fact that sex work might be part—whether as a means of attaining mobility or economic gain—of women's migratory projects. When the aims are to protect women from traffickers, assist them in the process of social integration, and re-educate them are combined, these are likely to result in the situation of dependency, social isolation, and surveillance. These conditions are very close to the situation of control women endured while working in third party controlled prostitution (Maluccelli 2001: 78). Moreover, research has further indicated that it is likely for a situation of conflict to arise and for women to leave the projects of social protection when the waiting times for being granted a residency permit are too long (Cespi in Muluccelli 2001: 65).

While my data concurs with these findings, it also suggests that women's leaving certain types of projects had to do with the fact that the institutional protection-integration-re/education approach is at times in conflict with women's desire for mobility, and their subjective beliefs about sexuality and femininity as vehicles of social inclusion. Accounts of three respondents who 'run away' from three

¹⁸⁶ The exact reference to the document is withheld to protect the anonymity of the informant.

¹⁸⁷ While in the past immigration officials have raised the doubt as regards to misuse of the Art. 18 residency permit, namely that women might take advantage of it and apply for the permit in great amounts, this speculation has been refuted by the data showing a highly contained number of applications for Art. 18 permit (Anti-Slavery International 2002)

different types of religious institutions illustrate this point best. Ana, Liudmila, and Oksana, after having left prostitution, were accommodated and assisted for a brief period of time by various religious institutions from which each of them ran away in less than a week. Oksana and Liudmila stayed a couple of days, but were soon tired of the social isolation (the institutes were situated outside of the city and on the countryside), strictly imposed discipline, prohibition on smoking, not being able to meet their boyfriends or go to McDonalds. Due to the limits imposed by these institutions upon women's social and spatial mobility, the respondents experienced them as an obstacle in realizing their migratory projects. Women 'stay there idle, and the time goes by'¹⁸⁸, said Ana, and explained that she had to leave the institute since she could not just stay there and waste her time doing nothing. 'Only losers stay there', commented Liudmila while describing --in a manner that resembled her account of leaving street prostitution-- how she secretly arranged to have her boyfriend pick her up at a specific hour in front of the institute and drive her away.

As my data shows, the respondents did not conform to the requirements of Art. 18 social protection programs when the rules imposed on them were in stark contrast with their search for economic improvement, desire to create new opportunities for themselves, and desire to have access to global consumer goods symbolized by the reference made to McDonalds' hamburgers and french-fries. However, in the women's refusal of imposed immobility, they were not simply resisting the institutional effacement of their migratory projects and their reduction to the status of trafficking victims. Keeping in mind some of the results I presented earlier, it was not uncommon for the respondents themselves to embrace the motif of victimhood in relationship to their boyfriends, institutions, or journalists¹⁸⁹ since within the 'discursive structure of prostitution' organized around the binary victim-whore, identifying with the victim entailed being acknowledged as not a prostitute (Stenvoll 2002). Institutional negation of the respondents' agency in their migratory projects – whether they did or did not include sex work—was thus not in opposition to respondents' self-representations. Instead, it positioned them as not *really* prostitutes. In fact, when discussing why some of their acquaintances were not granted the Art. 18 residence permit, the respondents did not question the immigration procedure, but rather understood the fact that these women did not receive permits as meaning they probably did not deserve them. Marisa, for example, told that having been granted a residence permit made her feel 'very clean in her heart'.¹⁹⁰ Hence, the respondents

¹⁸⁸ "Stanno li senza far niente e il tempo passa."

¹⁸⁹ Oksana and Ioanna in their interviews with a journalist who was interested in writing about them and their stories, both embraced the notion of victimhood.

¹⁹⁰ Marisa: "Mi sento molto pulita, nel cuore."

interpreted being granted an Art. 18 residence permit as a reward for being not prostitutes.¹⁹¹

Even though the religious institutions did not recognize respondents' migratory agency, this fact alone did not suffice bringing about the respondents' decision to leave these institutions. Keeping in mind that economic improvement and the pursuit of social inclusion were among the key factors that informed respondents' migratory projects, the imposition of immobility upon the respondents and the prohibition to entertain affective/sexual relationships with their boyfriends should also be examined as reasons for the respondents' leaving religious institutions. While for the respondents the residence permit took away the stigma of prostitution and offered them the possibility of entering the labour market, it could not lead to an immediate financial improvement or provide them with cash to send to their families back home, as their Italian boyfriends could offer them. 'The difference between men and women is that while men give you money, women ask you for it', said Marisa and clarified the importance respondents' relationships with Italian men played in securing a certain degree of financial security.

It should be emphasised that what is at stake in these relationships is more than just 'money'. Religious institutes, with their rules and mores (such as early wake-ups, plain food, simple dress, daily prayers, smoking and sex prohibitions) not only aimed at disciplining women's behaviour but also at suppressing of their sexuality. Once they have exited sex work, the respondents gained social mobility and acceptance through their relationships with Italian men. These relationships also, as I pointed out earlier, played a crucial role in respondents' self-representation as non prostitutes. However, distancing oneself from prostitution did not entail a disavowal of sexuality or of sexual difference. Rather, through their relationships with Italian men, the respondents resisted the 'whore stigma' by positioning themselves within the category of (white) femininity, which they recuperated and appropriated simultaneously. This multiple and rather ambiguous relationship with the category of femininity constitutes the very site of the construction of the subject. Hence, projects aimed at suppressing women's sexual agency are likely to be met with hostility by women. A quote from the feminist philosopher Sandra L. Bartky is helpful to illustrate this point: 'Any political project which aims to dismantle the machinery that turns a female body into feminine one may well be apprehended by a woman as something that threatens her at best with desexualization, at worst with outright annihilation' (1998: 24). Hence, in addition to (and at times as an alternative to) the residence permit, respondents' relationship with Italian men constituted the second avenue for respondents'

¹⁹¹ Interpreting the residence permit as a reward resembles state's view on the permit. The state 'rewards' women with residence permit for contributing to police's fight against organized criminality and for accepting a 'proper' woman's role (Maluccelli 2001: 65).

achieving inclusion in Italy. Yet, as I have showed, the process of gaining social acceptance is not a straightforward one and it compelled the respondents to constantly negotiate between accommodating certain representation (such as the one of victimhood), and countering others (such as those that threatened their embodied subjectivities).

5. Conflicting Views: Force, Money, Sex and Prostitution

In their pursuit of social inclusion regulated by discursive regimes and juridical norms, the interviewees positioned themselves in relation to the dominant narrative on trafficking which identified them as either victims or whores. Within this discursive binary structure of prostitution, the respondents worked against the ‘whore stigma’ and recuperated instead the narrative of victimhood. Being legally recognized as a victim granted the respondents entitlement to rights and protection in the political community. In their attempts to negotiate subject positions considered incompatible in the social representation of the trafficked victim (such as that of the prostitute and the mother), the respondents maintained the dominant binary between ‘whores’ and ‘normal’ women. In this section, I examine the mechanisms the respondents enacted in order to negotiate these divergent subject positions, and the role normative femininity played in their claims to social acceptance and inclusion.

‘Force’ vs. Greed

The scholarship on migration and on prostitution has shown that women who migrate and those who enter prostitution, whether they are migrants or not, do so in order to improve their and their families financial situation and thus achieve mobility from the situation of immobility that characterised their lives prior to prostitution¹⁹², migration¹⁹³, or sex work migration¹⁹⁴. In accordance with the existing studies, my data has shown that, informed by the impossibility of making the ends meet with the job women had in their countries of origin, and lacking a satisfactory future with employment prospects, respondents’ migratory projects were also geared towards their own and their families’ economic improvement.

¹⁹² See McKeganey and Barnard (1996), Nencel (2000), and O’Connell Davidson (1998).

¹⁹³ See Antias and Lazaridis (2000) and Kofman at al (2000).

¹⁹⁴ Corso and Trifirò (2003), Kempadoo and Doezema (1998), Sharma (2003), Skrobanek at al (1997), and Thorbek and Pattanaik (2002).

The respondents expressed their economic need by framing it in terms of 'being forced' into labour migration abroad. The notion of force is not new to my analysis. In fact, 'force' is one of the key components of the UN definition of trafficking and is seen as a necessary condition for trafficking to take place. The UN Protocol classifies thus trafficking as an involuntary and non-consensual process of migration. Yet, contrary to the use of term 'force' in the official trafficking definition, the respondents did not refer to 'force' to indicate that third party had coerced them into labour migration abroad. Rather, they did so to communicate the economic pressures or economic need. It is crucial to pay attention to this divergent use of the term 'force' and not to conflate it with 'force' in the customary understanding of trafficking. This allows us to understand the role the reference to 'force' plays in respondents' narratives. The emphasis on 'being forced' into labour migration discursively functions in the same way as the motif of poverty. Namely, it allows the respondents to draw attention once again to the fact that their migration was informed by economic necessity and thus distances them from the social representation of the prostitute.

This operation of distancing resulted from the respondents' recurring emphasis on the fact that the money they earned through sex work was not for themselves but rather for their parents or children. For example, Ester and Kateryna emphasized that they were sending money to their respective mothers, Ivana to her husband, and Marisa to her daughter. Additionally, the respondents downplayed the importance of money and underscored that they were not interested in earning 'big' money. This is how Marisa talked about money:

For me, money is not important. Today you can have one million and tomorrow you spend it ... it is enough that I have money for my daughter, for paying the rent, for doing shopping, for keeping the child ... I bought an apartment for myself because one never knows what might happen tomorrow. So, if I return to Moldova there is an apartment waiting for me there.¹⁹⁵

Marisa distanced herself from the financial gain she achieved in sex work by saying that money is of no importance to her and stressed the 'fleeting' quality of it. However, at the same time she stated that she bought a flat for herself and thus revealed the satisfaction in her financial achievement. The respondent, who has bought an apartment in Moldova, brought 5,000.00 USD home during her first visit and proudly displayed to her friends the envelop with 3,000.00 EUR in cash that she

¹⁹⁵ Per me i soldi non sono importanti. Oggi puoi avere un milione e domani lo spendi. ... basta che abbia i soldi per mia figlia, per pagare l'affitto, per fare la spesa, per tenere la bambina Ho comprato l'appartamento per me, perché non si sa mai quello che può succedere in avanti. Così, se ritorno in Moldavia lo so che c'è l'appartamento che mi aspetta.

received as a Christmas present from an ex-client of hers. Although the money she earned while working independently in prostitution allowed her to improve her family's economic situation and to achieve a certain degree of economic stability for herself, the respondent remarked that she was satisfied with the minimum amount needed to cover her and her child's needs. In this way, the respondent minimized the economic gain and was able to present herself as a modest person who had worked in prostitution for the well being of her daughter.

The demarcation between those women who work in sex work for economic gain and those who are on the street due to the economic necessity is present in other respondents' accounts too. For example, Maja spoke of those women who work in sex work as greedy:

It seems to me that if the girl is young she will have time for everything. One can't buy everything at once. Slowly, slowly, everything comes with time. To have an apartment and a car when one is 20 years old...I can't imagine that... I wouldn't do it all at once, fast. Because money doesn't go anywhere, it doesn't run away, so to speak. I would do it slower.

Maja, who expected to work in a cabaret as she did in Lebanon but instead ended up in third party controlled street prostitution once she came to Italy, explained that she would not do sex work because she is not interested in earning money the quick way at the age of twenty. The respondent specified that, for the moment, 400 USD –the amount she earned in Lebanon after three months of working in a cabaret—sufficed for her and her family. The respondent perceived women who stayed in sex work as those eager to accumulate money:

This job... you can catch a disease, it snows and it rains and you are staying there... just to earn enough to pay for the hotel or buy something to eat. In principle, I don't understand these people. Perhaps, they don't like it but they think, 'Today I don't have any money but tomorrow I can earn some more'. Depending on the money. It seems to me that they are these sort of people... they destroy their lives at twenty or twenty five [for money]. Perhaps, there are girls who work for the sake of their children... I don't know.

Maja, stressing that the earnings from sex work sufficed to cover ones daily expenses but not much more, asserted that the cost of being on the street is not worth the gain. Women who remained on the street were those who, by being greedy for material goods inappropriate for their age, favoured money over their health and well-being. Hence, in the respondent's accounts being greedy for money, desiring to possess and accumulate consumer goods, and prioritising one's own needs over the needs of one's

family, all function as lines of differentiation between prostitutes and not-prostitutes and position the respondents as belonging to the latter group.

An example from Ester's narrative illustrates best the mechanism through which the respondents disavowed prostitution, as her account combines the aspects from the examples discussed above. The respondent deployed the binary distinction between 'force' and greed in order to distinguish between prostitutes and not-prostitutes, while at the same time identifying prostitutes as those whose main concern is themselves rather than their families. These types of women spend their earnings on themselves.

I see the girls that aren't forced to work [on the street] but they do it all the same. Maybe they need to. There are persons who go to clean the toilets: they don't do this thing [prostitution] and it's still a job... They [the girls on the streets] intend to make money and enjoy it for 2-3 days. When they spent it they go out again. Perhaps, I do not want to judge, they are those who got the chance to work on their own, earn some money and leave. They desire to do something good and they do it in this way, they earn the money ... But, you know, it is easy to go out on the street and stay for an hour instead of working and sweating that money... If she saw something she can afford it because tomorrow she is back on the street to earn more.¹⁹⁶

In the first sentence of the quote, Ester differentiates between those women who are like the respondent herself and those who are not 'forced' into sex work. This demarcation is further reinforced by respondent's remark that those women who are not 'forced' into sex work but are still on the streets, are driven by the desire to buy consumer goods. They work for a while and then spend, then work again and spend again. The respondent labels this kind of prostitution 'easy'. She contrasts it with her own situation: She was 'forced' into street prostitution because her family depends on her financially to pay for her father's medicine and hospitalization. She is thus on the street to do a good deed ('do something good') and this is a 'tough' job. So defined opposition consented the respondent to perceive herself as not-prostitute and thus different from those women who are after 'easy money'.¹⁹⁷

While the disavowal of prostitution constitutes the main discursive structure and meaning of the above quote, the interval (i.e. an opening) present within the quote

¹⁹⁶ "Io vedo delle ragazze che non sono costrette a lavorare [in strada] però vanno a lavorare. Forse hanno bisogno. Ci sono delle persone che vanno a fare le pulizie dei cessi: però non fai questa cosa ed è sempre un lavoro. ... Loro [che stanno in strada] hanno intenzione di fare dei soldi e goderseli due tre giorni. Quando li hanno finiti escono di nuovo. Forse sono, non dico niente, forse sono quelle che hanno avuto la possibilità di lavorare da sole, guadagnare qualche soldo e andare via. Hanno voglia fare qualcosa di buono e fanno così, guadagnano dei soldi... Ma sai, è facile uscire sulla strada e starci un'ora Però a lavorare e a sudare quelli soldi ... Se ha visto qualcosa se lo può permettere perché domani va sulla strada e guadagna di nuovo."

¹⁹⁷ 'Easy money' is a popular perception of monies earned in prostitution (O'Connell Davidson 1998: 129).

suggests that the process of disavowal is not a linear one. Instead, it is a process ridden with contradictions. In the above quote, this is best visible during a moment of what I call suspended judgment. The sentence, ‘There are persons who go to clean the toilets: they don’t do this thing [prostitution] and it’s still a job,’ expresses respondent’s negative and quite moralistic judgment towards prostitution. Some sentences later, in order to answer the question why one would work in prostitution when not forced, Ester points out that women who do so do it because they are eager for money. However, in between these two affirmations, the respondent expresses a doubt: ‘Perhaps, I do not want to judge, they are those who got the chance to work on their own, earn some money and leave. They desire to do something good and they do it in this way, they earn the money...’ This voicing of a doubt is possible, I suggest, exactly because there is a momentary suspension of moral judgment best captured by ‘I do not want to judge’.¹⁹⁸ The doubt opens space for the respondent to reflect upon other women on the street. Ester shortly considers that those other women might be working independently from a third party, have some kind of project of their own and perhaps ‘desire to do something good’ too. While one might think that this would lead the respondent to consider her own status or even to think about the similarities between herself and other migrant women’s situations, this was not the case. As soon as the interval has come to an end, the judgment mode took over once again, this time even sharper than at the opening of the paragraph: ‘But, you know, it is easy to go out on the street and stay for an hour instead of working and sweating that money...’ In this way the respondent shut out the doubt and sealed off the operation with disavowal.

My data suggests that, in order not to misunderstand the meaning respondents’ ascribed to ‘being forced’ into prostitution, it is necessary to pay attention to the function ‘force’ plays in migrant women’s narratives. Respondents’ disavowal of prostitution is contingent upon their ‘being forced’ into prostitution, due to their own and their families’ economic necessity. While, as Marisa put it, ‘whores are those women who sell themselves for money’, the respondents’ positioned themselves as not-prostitutes because their work in prostitution was informed by the economic responsibility they had towards their families (parents and children) rather than greed for money and material goods typical of prostitutes. Keeping in mind that all of the respondents have worked in prostitution for a certain amount of time, some under third party control and others independently, and have achieved or hoped to achieve some kind of economic gain from sex work, it becomes apparent that the motif of ‘force’ women deployed drew upon the social imaginary of trafficking. This enabled the respondents to negotiate the tensions that arose from attempts to reconcile their

¹⁹⁸ A very similar mechanism is present also in the above quote by Maja who says ‘Perhaps, there are girls who work for the sake of their children... I don’t know’.

own experience of sex work migration and social and moral values ascribed to prostitution.

I am a Moral Person, I am a Mother and Therefore I am Not a Prostitute

The tensions that arose from respondents' efforts to negotiate different subject positions become all the more visible when we pay attention to the motif of force in relation to sexuality and more precisely sexual pleasure. In the respondents' narratives, the discussion of sexual pleasure in prostitution is commonly contrasted to that of 'force', understood as economic or some other kind of necessity.

Ana's narrative offers an example of this discursive framing when recounting an episode that occurred shortly after she had left third party controlled street prostitution. On that occasion, a receptionist at a hostel for undocumented migrants run by a religious organization threw her out because he suspected her of having had sexual intercourse with one of the male guests. Ana explained the receptionist's decision by saying that he threw her out because he perceived her as a prostitute. She further commented that his impression of her was wrong because the fact that she had worked on the street had nothing to do with her being a prostitute:

It doesn't matter that I've worked on the street. I didn't do it because I liked it. I did it because I was forced... When one really wants to do this thing, then it is a sin, but when I chose it [thinking] it is enough that I'm in Italy and once there, I'll then take care of it all by myself ... [then it is different].¹⁹⁹

The respondent stressed that she was 'forced' into prostitution, meaning that she, who 'just' wanted to 'get to Italy', had no other option of reaching the desired destination except by entering the trafficking system and sex work. Consenting to prostitution as a means to an end is contrasted to entering prostitution because one derives erotic pleasure from it.

The same dynamic is present in other respondents' accounts. Kateryna, for example, proposed a similar distinction. When she spoke of a woman, Daniela, with whom she ran away from a third party under whose control they have worked for several months, the respondent underscored the difference between her own and Daniela's reasons for leaving street prostitution. Whereas she left because she did not like prostitution, Daniela left because she was afraid of not being financially compensated. Quite interestingly, the respondent did not refer to the other woman's

¹⁹⁹ "Non centra che ho lavorato in strada. Non l'ho fatto perché mi piaceva. L'ho fatto perché ero forzata ... adesso quando uno vuole fare davvero questa cosa è un peccato, ma quando io ho scelto questo [pensando] basta che vivo in Italia e dopo ci penso io [allora è diverso]."

situation in terms of their similar conditions, nor did she acknowledge their reasons for leaving prostitution. Instead, their commonalities, such as very concrete labour conditions and the reality of not being paid, were left out of the respondent's interpretative framework. Primacy was assigned rather to 'liking' or not 'liking' of prostitution, which in turn allowed her to disengage herself from prostitution and not think of herself as a prostitute. In this way, Kateryna's understanding of why one exits prostitution come very close to Liudmila's comment that leaving or not leaving prostitution is a matter of individual decision. To paraphrase Liudmila, those who want to leave the street leave and those who stay do so because they like money and sex.

By representing themselves as modest and chaste persons, the respondents resisted the social representation of the prostitute as a greedy, promiscuous, and unworthy woman (cfr. Scambler 1997). They searched for ways to counter the material and symbolic exclusion linked to positioning a prostitute as a social outcast. Liudmila, when recounting how she felt while working in street prostitution, voiced the fear of this exclusion:

[When I was on the street] some days I thought that I'll never find a person who will fall in love with me... that I'll not be able to have a family and children.²⁰⁰

In order to counter the fears that having worked in prostitution would mark them as 'fallen women' and to secure inclusion within institutions of femininity, throughout their narratives the respondents called attention to subject positions such as the mother and wife. This is most apparent in Ivana's narrative. She stressed how faithful she has always been to her husband and how, when younger, she never changed boyfriends and would introduce her parents to the only one she was with. In doing so, she positioned herself as chaste and by extension as a proper wife. Marisa, on the other hand, foregrounded her role as a mother and stressed that she was in prostitution in order to support her child. However, the respondent's child never became clearly discernable in her narrative. At times the child was a son, other times the child was a daughter, and from time to time the child was not one but many. The fact that the child is never made 'real', but retained a discursive quality, indicates the symbolic authority motherhood yields in removing the stigma of prostitution and locating the respondent within a socially recognized woman's role.

However, the mechanisms of disavowal are not stable and balancing different subject positions is not a straightforward, but is rather a contradictory process. This

²⁰⁰ “[Quando ero per strada], alcuni giorni pensavo che non troverò una persona che si innamora, ... che non potrò più fare la famiglia e i bambini”

can be observed, for example, in Ioanna's account. The respondent, recalling a conversation she had with the adolescent daughter of her Italian boyfriend, recounted how the daughter, who knew that she has worked on the street, used to ask her questions about 'it' from time to time. The respondent described her engagement in this conversation with the following words:

I told her [about it] as to make her understand, so that she doesn't think wrong about it. So that she does not think that we came here because we like this. If I would like this, I could also find it at home.²⁰¹

Thus, in order to assure her partner's daughter that she is not a 'whore' and in order to defend herself from the 'whore stigma', the respondent emphasized that her arrival to Italy was part of her migratory project rather than a reflection of her desire for sexual pleasure. When reflecting upon the period of time she spent in third party controlled prostitution, the respondent recuperated the familiar dichotomy force-pleasure and put forward a more complex and unstable account of prostitution:

I was wearing my skirt down so that my stockings wouldn't show. I kept the stockings always up. I never stood like this [with the mini-skirt up so that one could see the stockings]. During the Summer some girls are naked. That's not a way to do things. If she dresses like this, it means this isn't her job. I'm a little bit moralistic person. From time to time, when I go out, I like taking a look at the way girls are dressed. I feel sorry for them because if they were financially doing well at home they wouldn't be here. If she is half naked it means there is no work and she has to do like this. Other times I think that if she dresses like this, she is certainly a whore. At times I don't know.²⁰²

This quote can be divided into two parts. In the first part (which ends with 'I'm a little bit moralistic person') the respondent recalled the period when she worked in street prostitution, described two ways of being dressed, and labelled one as the proper and the other as improper way. The proper way of dressing (with the skirt not too high up) is opposed to being 'half' dressed or even naked. The woman who displayed the 'improper' way of dressing is described as the one for whom prostitution is not work: 'If she dresses like this, it means this isn't her job'. At this point, the following question arises: if a woman 'half' dressed standing on the street 'selling sex' was not

²⁰¹ "Io le racconto. Così, per metterla a posto, che lei non pensi male. Che non pensi che siamo venute qua perché ci piace questo. Io lo trovo a casa se mi piace questo."

²⁰² "Io portavo la gonna giù, in modo che non si vedano le autoreggenti. E le autoreggenti le tenevo sempre su. Non stavo mai così [con la gonna in su in modo che si vedano le calze]. Ci sono delle ragazze che d'estate stanno nude. Non si fa così. Se lei sta così, vuol dire che quello non è il suo lavoro. Io sono una persona un po' moralista. Ogni tanto, quando esco, mi piace vedere come sono vestite le ragazze. Mi dispiace per loro perché se loro stavano bene a casa non venivano qui. Se lei sta mezza nuda, vuol dire che non c'è lavoro e si deve mettere così. Ogni tanto penso che se lei sta così, questa è sicuramente una puttana. E ogni tanto non lo so."

doing it in order to earn money, why was she then on the street? The respondent offered an answer to this question when saying that 'she is certainly a whore'. By identifying this woman as a 'whore', the respondent whose way of dressing differed from the other woman's ('I kept the stockings always up'), depicted herself as a properly dressed one and thus not a 'whore'. Within this discursive framework, the dress –I suggest—becomes the visible marker of difference between the 'real' prostitutes and the not-prostitutes.

The above quote highlights the fact that for someone who has herself worked in street prostitution, a clear-cut binary distinction between prostitutes and not-prostitutes, as well as a straightforward identification with the latter group is difficult to maintain. This is most recognizable not only in the last sentence of the above quote, but also in the sentence about woman as 'half' dressed: '... it means there is no work and she has to do like this'. This phrase explicitly signals respondent's doubt regarding the previously articulated differentiation. The respondent thus expressed a doubt about whether the women she identified as 'whores' due to their attire may be obliged to wear their clothes in a certain manner in order to attract sporadic clients. The ambiguity of the respondent's positioning in relation to prostitution becomes further evident when Ioanna recounted that, from time to time, when she went out, she did a round to see what the women working in street prostitution were wearing. As the respondent explained the later stage in her narrative, she had a habit of going to the areas where streets prostitution took place and approached the migrant women in order to talk to them. She also, to paraphrase the respondent, gave them advice about sex work. During these moments Ioanna never revealed that she herself had worked in third party controlled street prostitution. When those women asked how come she knew certain things about sex work, she replied that she knew through hearsay. As Ioanna's narrative illustrates, the tension appears then as an interplay of continuous processes of both disavowal and acknowledgment of prostitution.

The process of acceptance is most noticeable in the respondent's positioning herself as the one in the 'know' and thus as a professional. From this perspective the respondent's observation about improper ways of dressing assumes an additional interpretative dimension. As prostitution scholars have pointed out, among street prostitutes professionalism is conveyed by having regard for one's own appearance as well as by refusing the possibility of stimulation and pleasure from clients (Corso and Landi 1998, McKeganey and Barnard 1996). Within the framework of Ioanna's narrative, the remarks about her own proper appearance and the distance she took from sexual pleasure can then be read as claims of professionalism. This counters both the dominant perspective of eastern European women as victims of criminal organizations and the absence of professional recognition from the side of Italian sex workers (cfr. Corso and Landi 1998: 213-17). Since the discursive structure of

prostitution is organized around and limited to the binary of the ‘whore’ versus ‘proper’ woman (i.e. a mother, wife or a virgin) or ‘victim’ when it comes to trafficking, the respondents inevitably were faced with contradictions when moving in between different discursive territories and when claiming divergent subject positions. I therefore suggest that we view women’s disavowal of prostitution (as a means of countering the ‘whore stigma’) and their simultaneous acknowledgment of sex work migration (as to resist the narrative of victimhood), as examples of the ways the respondent governed instances deemed incompatible in the dominant imaginary of trafficking.

Examining the ways in which the respondents negotiated various fragmentations and contradictions imposed upon them by discursive regimes pertaining to trafficking and prostitution have show us that migrant women disavow prostitution in order to counter the ‘whore stigma’ and gain social and legal inclusion. Yet, my analysis has also suggested that, in order to gain acceptance as well as entitlement to rights and protection in the political community, the respondents appropriated the binary distinction between ‘whores’ and ‘proper’ women and positioned themselves in the latter category. By doing so, they represented themselves as modest and chaste in contrast to ‘whores’ whom they depicted as promiscuous, and greedy for money and consumer goods. Moreover, they claimed for themselves the positions of mother and wife that they did not grant to *real* prostitutes. In this respect, the ways in which migrant women dealt with the ‘whore stigma’ resembled the accounts of migrant eastern European women in locations other than Italy as well as non migrant women in street and off street prostitution.

The studies of sex work migration in Canada and Turkey have documented eastern European women’s desire not to be seen as, and treated like prostitutes (cfr. Gülçür and İlkaracan 2002, McDonald at al 2000). Other studies of non-migrant women’s street prostitution in England and street as well as club prostitution in Peru have shown that none of the women interviewed during the research identified as a prostitute (McKeganey and Barnard 1996, Nencel 2000). Moreover, Lorraine Nencel’s study –one of the few studies which makes use of life narratives in order to look at the prostitution as a process of subject’s formation—remarked that the women she interviewed defined themselves as non ‘whores’ because they were mothers²⁰³ and virtuous. These women identified other prostitutes as ‘whores’ due to their lascivious and promiscuous nature (2000: 172). Hence, by positioning themselves in conformity with ‘proper’ feminine roles and behaviour and by disavowing prostitution, migrant

²⁰³ As regards to motherhood, Nencel observed the very same mechanism that was deployed by the women I interviewed: while women positioned themselves as mothers especially during the introductory talks, the child disappeared shortly later from their narratives and appeared again when necessary to define them as not whores (2000: 181).

and non migrant women alike, as Nencel puts it, work ‘against the symbol of the whore in the construct of the prostitute’ (2000: 221).

These kind of negotiations on the level of identity and the imaginary might be considered as symptomatic for a ‘false consciousness’, understood in terms of a disavowal of ‘the reality’. Such a notion, however, remains largely inadequate to account for the respondents’ subjectivity, I would argue, as it relies on problematic approaches to the formation of both social reality and subjectivities. Critiques on classic (Marxian) notions of ideology have undermined a ‘negative’ notion of ideology that rests on the assumption of a ‘non-distorted’ vision on reality (cfr. Foucault 1980, Hall 1996). False consciousness assumes ‘an empiricist relation of the subject to knowledge, namely that the real world indelibly imprints its meanings and interests directly into our consciousness. We have only to look to discover its truths. And if we cannot see them, then it must be because there is a cloud of unknowing that obscures the unilateral truth of the real’²⁰⁴ Instead, poststructuralist accounts of subjectivity have further elaborated upon the notion of ‘the imaginary’, understood, following Althusser’s classic formulation, as the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. The imaginary, in other words, refers to a set of socially mediated practices which function as the unstable and contingent anchoring points for identifications and for identity formation (Braidotti 2002). Subjectivity hence emerges, as Braidotti argues, as a choreography of entitlements, prohibitions, desires and controls which constitute the socio-symbolic field (ibid.). The ‘whore’ versus ‘proper’ women binary in the respondents’ narratives, I would argue, is a case of negotiation with a dominant socio-symbolic order with the purpose of carving out an identity, and more specifically a mode of femininity, that accounts for the desires, contradictions, choices, constraints and instances of coercion which mark the respondents’ lives.

By countering the ‘whore stigma’, women working in street prostitution²⁰⁵ recuperated not only the differentiation between ‘proper’ women and ‘whores’, but also maintained the representation of the ‘whore’ as a psychological attribute of a woman. While the upholding of the ‘whore stigma’ by women in prostitution points to the coercive and disciplining impact of normative femininity, it also illustrates its particular appeal for stigmatised migrant subjects for whom ‘falling out’ of the category of ‘proper’ femininity entails social and legal exclusion. The impact of normative femininity is therefore both disciplining and enabling (Braidotti 2002), and it is exactly through the constant negotiation between the two that migrant women re-

²⁰⁴ Hall quoted in Larrain (1996) ‘Stuart Hall and the Marxist concept of ideology.’ In: David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.) *Stuart Hall. Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. p. 52.

²⁰⁵ Scambler identified that popular images and stereotypes such as being amoral, conspicuously vulgar, helpless and hopeless victim of abusers, are largely concentrated on street sex workers (Scambler 1997: 105).

adjust the category of femininity, showing that femininity is a set of interactions that women act out –often in the contradictory manner—across different discursive and juridical terrains. My results thus point to the inadequacy of the binary distinction between (non-consensual and innocent) victims that upholds the definition of trafficking.

6. Conclusion

Contemporary discursive structures of prostitution and legal schemes pertaining to trafficking engender, institutionalise, and establish the binary distinction between ‘whores’ and ‘victims’. This oppositional classification entails social and territorial exclusion for those women identified as ‘whores’, and entitlement to the state protection for ‘victims’ of trafficking. For migrant women who have entered trafficking systems in order to realize their migratory projects, having worked in street prostitution (whether under the control of a third party or independently) required continuous negotiation between their communities of origin and the country of settlement in order not to incur punishment for having transgressed the boundaries of ‘proper’ femininity.

As a way of avoiding social exclusion and stigmatisation upon their (temporary) return to their communities in their countries of origin, the respondents most often decided not to disclose their involvement in prostitution to their families. My investigation of mother-daughter relationship has illustrated that the silence surrounding prostitution was further maintained by the respondents’ mothers who, by not bringing up the issue of prostitution with their daughters, policed the sexual codes and gendered boundaries of the communities. Respondents, their families, as well as communities’ silence around sex work migration needs to be understood as a tacit agreement which allow young women to return to those communities without being labelled outcasts. At the same time silence permits respondents’ families to improve their financial position by means of presents in cash or kind the respondents sent home, as well as their social status due to respect reserved for those families whose members have successfully migrated abroad.

When they exited street prostitution in Italy, migrant women were confronted with the fact that their undocumented immigration status, the ‘whore’ stigma as well as the prejudice towards women from eastern Europe and former Soviet Union, represented an obstacle in achieving their migratory projects and social inclusion. Through their relationships with Italian men, most of whom ex-clients, the respondents’ countered their confinement within marginal societal spaces and de facto territorial exclusion of the undocumented sex workers/migrants. Due to their gender,

citizenship, and economic power, Italian men enjoyed a position of material and symbolic privilege which alleviated the respondents' burden of 'illegality' and alienation. For the respondents, the relationships with Italian men thus represented a crucial vehicle for their social affirmation and acceptance. Moreover, contrary to the communities of origin where prostitution was kept secret, the fact that the Italian men who knew of their work in prostitution nevertheless established relationships with them, was of crucial importance in respondents' self-representation as not-prostitutes. Upon exiting prostitution, the respondents' relationship with Italian men permitted, I suggest, their societal recognition and acceptance and, by extension, also their further pursuit of social and economic mobility.

In addition to relationship with an Italian man, the residence permit constituted the second key means of achieving inclusion into the society of migration for the respondents. Devised for the victims of severe exploitation in prostitution and whose lives would be endangered if returned home, the Art. 18 residence permit (i.e. Art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998) is granted to trafficking victims on the condition that they leave sex work, report the 'traffickers' to the police, and join a social assistance/reintegration program run by various community projects and NGOs. Grounded in the logic of victimhood, legal schemes pertaining to trafficking require women to renounce their migratory projects and position themselves as 'victims' of a third party's manipulation and exploitation. While this imposition might seem paradoxical taking into consideration the efforts and expectations the respondents have invested in relation to their migratory projects, my analysis has shown that women accommodated and appropriated the category of victimhood both in relation to their boyfriends and the State. This accommodation relieved women of the 'whore stigma', mitigated their anxiety of societal refusal, and conferred them social acceptance. Most importantly, positioning themselves as 'victims' permitted the respondents to disavow prostitution and claim socially affirmed woman's roles such as those of mother and/or wife.

In their disavowal of prostitution and their pursuit of social inclusion, the respondents recuperated a number of stereotypes that are part of the social representation of prostitution. The respondents maintained the binary opposition between 'whores' and 'proper' women by identifying the former category as greedy and amoral and the latter —of which themselves are part— as chaste and responsible mothers or/and daughters. My results therefore suggest that studies of trafficking need to take into consideration the appeal the category of victimhood holds for stigmatised migrant subjects in pursuit of social and legal inclusion. However, my analysis has also shown that the process of negotiating the boundaries of social roles and norms pertaining to femininity are far from being straightforward, and are instead marked by contradictions. Hence, when it came to their migratory projects as well as sex work, the respondents both disavowed and acknowledged them in their efforts to remain

loyal to a set of selves that are not compatible with the dominant narrative of trafficking. Yet, migrant women's efforts to negotiate different positions are commonly not considered by scholars of trafficking precisely because they are mapped along the 'victim'/'whore' binary. In this respect, I suggest that the category of the 'victim' effaces women's subjectivities and therefore their agency, namely the ways in which migrant women re-arrange the category of femininity. Far from being a case of false consciousness, this is an active endeavour and process that gives women a sense of location (i.e. where they are at/who they are) and direction (i.e. where they are heading to/who they want to become). Migrant women, I argue, are constituted as embodied subject in the process of migration and settlement, and while mediating between discursive constructions and institutional regulations pertaining to trafficking, prostitution and femininity.

The Spectacle of Misery: Gender, Images and Belonging in Anti-trafficking Campaigns

1. Introduction

Starting in late 1990s, a number of counter-trafficking campaigns were launched all across the eastern European space, the region of departure and transit of trafficked women. These campaigns, referred to as ‘awareness raising and information campaigns’, are largely conceptualised and realized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).²⁰⁶ The campaigns aim at raising awareness about trafficking in women by addressing both the general audience as well as selected target groups such as young women potential victims of trafficking, policy makers, law enforcement officers and relevant public officials.²⁰⁷ The distribution formats of the campaigns are various and include indoor and outdoor posters (on the buses and billboards),²⁰⁸ leaflets, brochures, flyers, ‘boomerang’ post cards, stickers, pocket-calendars and fact-sheets. Radio and TV advertisements or a documentary film also accompany some of the campaigns.²⁰⁹ IOM’s counter-trafficking work is one among the seven IOM’s main areas of intervention in the field of so-called ‘migration management’, which constitutes the main objective of IOM’s work.²¹⁰ As an intergovernmental agency, IOM collaborates closely with national governments as well as supranational bodies such as the European Commission (EC), the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and various branches of the United Nations (UN) in developing counter-trafficking programmes Europe-wide. The last ‘European Conference on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings’ that took

²⁰⁶ The first campaigns were carried out in Romania in 1992-96 and Albania in 1992-95 (IOM 2000: 1).

²⁰⁷ See *Brussels Declaration on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings* (p. 7). <http://www.belgium.iom.int/STOPConference/Conference%20Papers/brudeclaration.pdf>

²⁰⁸ In the Baltic States, 508 posters have been displayed at the bus stops and 21 at large billboards. For more information see www.focus-on-trafficking.net, in particular sections ‘about the project’ and ‘information campaign’.

²⁰⁹ For example, IOM in Lithuania has produced a documentary called *Women Sold into Slavery*, IOM in Ukraine a movie entitled *Prey of Silence* and IOM Moldova a documentary *She*.

²¹⁰ See IOM’s web page http://www.iom.int/en/who/main_mission.shtml

place in Brussels in September 2002 offered the best example of the significance of IOM's role in Europe. The conference, entitled *A Global Challenge for the 21st Century*, was in fact held under the auspices of the IOM and the EC and aimed at setting the agenda for European anti-trafficking policies.

In this chapter I examine IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns in the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), Czech Republic, Moldova, Ukraine, Kosova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the one in the Czech Republic being realized first (1998/9) and the one in the Baltic States last (2002).²¹¹ The selection of the campaigns follows IOM's classification and differentiation between 'empowerment' and 'emergency' campaigns. In the words of Ms. Laurentiu Ciobanica, IOM's Head of Mass Information, 'empowerment' and 'emergency' campaigns are quite different since 'they use all together a different set of media and messages with related imaginary'.²¹² 'Empowerment' campaigns, such as the one in Czech Republic are those that 'focus on active contribution and choice of women', and emergency campaigns --as the one in the Baltic States-- 'warn' women about the danger of trafficking. Contrary to Ciobanica's statement, my analysis of the images used in the campaigns in the Czech Republic and the Baltic States will show that there is no substantial difference between the two types of campaigns. Paying attention to the inter-textuality of IOM campaigns, I will illustrate that they deploy similar representational practices both on the level of visual and textual address, that these are repeated from one site of representation to another, and that they form a very specific regime of representation of trafficking. In order to illustrate my claims about accumulation and circulation of meaning in IOM's representation of trafficking, I will present additional examples from campaigns in Ukraine and Moldova.

The decision not to reproduce a neat correspondence between the location of the campaigns and the countries of departure of women I have interviewed is grounded in the interpretative strategy which, by expanding the analysis to a different type of campaigns across eastern European space, aims at mapping the central elements that re/appear in IOM's counter-trafficking work. Moreover, an investigation of IOM's re/presentational techniques on a larger scale elicits more adequately the ways in which IOM's trafficking imaginary discloses as well as addresses the anxiety about the transformation of European political community and its boundaries. Starting from IOM's campaign in the Czech Republic, where a detailed investigation into construction of images is used to identify a number of representational strategies and

²¹¹ The images I use in this chapter were obtained with courtesy of IOM offices in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I would like to thank all of the offices for their assistance and for generously sending me all the material I requested.

²¹² Posted on the *Stop-traffic Mailing List*, Vol. 1 #744, on 13 December 2002. The mail is a response of Ann Jordan's observation that the IOM campaign in the Baltic States is 'demeaning and sensationalistic'.

elements common to various IOM campaigns, my analysis will question the campaigns' ability to reach young women potential migrants as their primary target audience and the possibility to empower these women to make an informed choice concerning their labour migration abroad.

My analysis will show that IOM's intended production of victimizing images of female bodies as a way of illustrating the exploitation and violence intrinsic to trafficking and prostitution can hardly be seen as empowering women. By representing women's bodies as entrapped, wounded and silenced, the campaigns restage the familiar scenario where female bodies are passive objects of male violence. I will also argue that the techniques used in the production of victimizing images frame woman's body as an eroticised voyeuristic spectacle, thus raising the question whether IOM's campaigns can actually reach young women as their main target audience. The capturing of women's bodies within traditional representations of femininity goes hand in hand, I suggest, with a rhetoric that seeks to discourage woman's labour mobility and instead immobilizes female bodies within the spaces of the home and the nation. As I elaborate in section four of the chapter, the dangers of labour migration abroad are conveyed through images that, by associating men with Mafia, fuel the production of fear of the Mafia's expansion westwards and fosters common assumptions of criminalization of eastern European societies in the post 1989 period. Finally, by identifying the construction of femininity and masculinity of eastern European nationals in manners that are highly symbolic and stereotypical, my work brings to the fore the link between mobility and citizenship and suggests to look at the IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns as a site of contention over boundaries and membership in the European community.

2. Narrativ(izing) en-closures and Visual(izing) Entrapments

In 1999, in collaboration with La Strada, a non-governmental women's organization, IOM realized in the Czech Republic a large-scale counter-trafficking campaign.²¹³ The campaign was featured in the form of TV spots, posters, 'boomerang' postcards, and information leaflets distributed in restaurants and trains.²¹⁴ The campaign,

²¹³ In April 2003, during the *Workshop on Trafficking in Persons* organized by the Network for European Women's Rights (NEWR) in Amsterdam, I presented the preliminary findings of my analysis of the La Strada/IOM's counter trafficking campaign in the Czech Republic. On that occasion, the representative of La Strada remarked that the NGO had little influence in conceptualising of the campaign and that its realization was determined nearly exclusively by the IOM. While this remark points to the unequal partnership between La Strada and IOM and raises the issue of authorship, I will nevertheless refer to the campaign as a joint La Strada/IOM campaign since the material realized by the campaigns officially carries the logo of both organizations.

²¹⁴ See http://www.ecn.cz/lastrada/czechia/index_en.html

carrying the number of the help-line run by La Strada, was designed as a mean to inform potential women migrants on the issue of trafficking, and to offer advice regarding travel and work abroad. Accordingly, it was characterized by the IOM as an empowerment campaign (Ciobanica 2002).²¹⁵ The campaign is centred around four images that display four types among some of the most common employment possibilities for migrant women within the informal labour market: entertainment industry (Figure 1), care (Figure 2), waitressing (Figure 3) and fashion/modelling work (Figure 4).

The four kinds of female migration have each their own image and each image is structured along the same lines. The field is split vertically into two equal halves: the left side is occupied by a photograph of a woman, and the right by a three-part text written in the first person addressing the reader directly. Underneath the text is the phone number of La Strada help-line (in yellow), the logo of the IOM and the names of the funders.²¹⁶ Both halves are realized in black and white tonalities. Additionally, a yellow rectangle is centred in the upper part of the frame and it encloses a text which is an imitation of a job advertisement and which contains a work description—for example ‘Trustworthy agency offering women good work abroad’ (Figure 3)—and a phone number (0600.000 000) for calling in and obtaining more information. This mode of spatial organization is crucial for the production of meaning. The three main frames – the photograph on the left, the texts on the right and the ad in the upper centre — invite the reader to follow and participate in the circular flow of meaning attained through the arrangement of shapes, colours and texts.

²¹⁵ This characterization is offered by L. Ciobanica, the Head of IOM’s Mass Information, as a response to A. Jordan’s critical remarks concerning the IOM’s counter-trafficking campaign in the Baltic countries. The exchange took place on the *Stop-Traffic* mailing list and it is reproduced here entirely in Annex 1.

²¹⁶ The listed funding institutions are: the US Government, the Ministry of Education and Youth Czech Republic, the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The general work of La Strada CR is funded prevalently by the European Union PHARE/TACIS Programme; http://www.ecn.cz/lastrada/czechia/index_en.html

it could never happen to you?’ (Figure 4).²¹⁷ The headlines are followed by a much longer text written in a smaller letter type. This text is centred on a character – an I who narrates her story of migration in the first-person and is followed by the comment in which the character warns the reader about the dangers of migration and suggests how to migrate in a safe way. An example is offered by figure 3: ‘I have been trying to get out for a long time, but I don’t think I’ll ever succeed. Now I know that before travelling like that you have to be extremely aware. Don’t trust anyone you haven’t known for a long time and arrange everything yourself.’ This third block of text is printed in the same character type as the longer text above it but at the same time, it is distinguished from it by use of bold type lettering. This use of various styles and fonts visually associates the headline with the paragraph in bold, and at the same time marks the difference between the former two and the paragraph in the middle. Such a visualizing of textual organization points to a precise shift in narration. In fact, the paragraph in the middle, framed in between the headline and the closing paragraph in bold, is a retrospective parenthesis enclosing a first person narration through which the story unfolds. In the past tense, each of the four characters tells of the desire to migrate and work abroad, the contact with an agency or individual arranging migration, the deception upon arrival to destination, and finally the coercion into prostitution.

After the pause, marked by extra space between the second and the third paragraph as well as the switch from the normal to the bold letter type, the story resumes but without any advancement of the dieresis. The use of a pause to signal the absence of progression and the framing of the retrospective parenthesis convey a situation of narrative and personal immobility in which characters find themselves. In fact, when we reconstruct the individual plots it emerges that the narrative progression stops once the event of forced prostitution is introduced. For example, in figure 4 the character Monika tells of how she answered an ad in the newspaper for working as a model abroad. After a short course the agency sent her for a shooting for a fashion magazine abroad which upon arrival to destination turned out to be a pornographic movie. It follows: ‘Men took turns on me like a conveyor belt. They watched me closely, I couldn’t escape’. This narrative framing is not typical of Monica’s story only but it recurs in all four visuals. In figure 1, the character Anna says: ‘They took all my documents, drugged me and forced me to work as a prostitute...I will probably never finish school’. What we see here is that the introduction of the theme of forced prostitution abruptly interrupts characters’ narrative of hopeful migration. This narrative strategy suggests that for the four female characters forced prostitution represent the end-stop on their narrative migratory journeys.

²¹⁷ I thank Rebecca Nash for her translation of the campaign’s texts into English.

Black and white photographs of female figures on the left side of the visuals echo the situation of (narrative) entrapment of female characters presented on the right side of the four visuals. The state of confinement is rendered visually through the organization of the setting and the figures within it, and is enhanced by the drama effect partly achieved through the use of black and white photography, and partly through a distortion, namely the elongation of the images. The combination of the vertical format and the elongation produces the effect of 'squeezing' intended here as a strategy through which the images are framed by the text in order to achieve 'a degree of closure of meaning' (Cronin 2000: 80). Within the economy of La Strada/IOM visuals, the closure of meaning corresponds to the enclosure of female characters within forced prostitution, the situation dramatically rendered through staging as well as through the use of black and white photography.

A closer look at the composition of setting and photographic techniques drawn on illustrates this point well.²¹⁸ In the image n.1, next to the use of black and white, the drama effect is achieved by the use of a rather grainy film –a slower speed film— that enhances the impression of a worn-out environment and a degrading activity taking place within it. The appearance of squalor is accomplished by using the keyhole-perspective²¹⁹ and narrowing and directing the gaze in a voyeuristic manner to a woman figure whose light skin tone contrasts and separates her from the dark and run down background. The voyeuristic element is strengthened through positioning the figure slightly off-centre in a way that her bottom becomes the centre of the gaze: a spectator's eye is very dynamically led along the diagonal line –her right leg— which stretches from the centre bottom up to the bottom as the focal point of the composition. The woman's dynamic movement on entering into the darkened space is completed by the curve of her left arm propped up against the white doorway on her way in. Her head has already almost completely disappeared in the shabby-looking room, and thus keeps her anonymous. The narrow, dark and squalid environment she is about to enter is not the space that invites the viewer to follow her nor the space one would like to be in.

In the image n.2 the subject is again off-centre and standing to the left in a symmetric pose with both hands covering her face.²²⁰ The use of the depth of field keeps the subject solely in focus while still allowing enough information about the setting; the set shows the end of a tunnel stretching to the right behind the girl and seemingly lit by a car's headlights. The staging of car's headlights acquires meaning when the image is read in combination with the text on the right side of the visual:

²¹⁸ I wish to thank Natascha Unkart for taking time, looking at the photographs and explaining me technicalities of their composition.

²¹⁹ Keyhole-perspective is historically associated with Degas' voyeuristic ballerina-images.

²²⁰ The fact that her clothes are wet adds an extra dramatic tone to the composition and could be read as if she has been crying or perhaps running (away).

upon her arrival to Italy, Veronika was picked up by a couple in a fancy car and taken to a brothel. The tunnel thus becomes a metaphor for entrapment and a no-way out situation, especially when read according to the saying 'there is a light at the end of the tunnel'. However, for this female character the lights at the end of the tunnel do not lead to an improvement of her situation but instead into a situation of confinement. The composition of the image then is organized in such a way as to preclude any prospect of escape.

The no-way out situation is repeated in the image n. 3, achieved by placing the female figure in a dead centre, and underscored by the corner forming a triangular shape around her body. The use of the wide-angle lens and the light strengthens the impression of immobility even further: on the right side of the woman's body one can notice a kind of 'unprofessional' looking shadow caused by the light coming from the left. This kind of light suggests daylight and when read together with the narrated story within the textual frame on the right side of the visual, it supports character's account of being locked up in a private home. In this way, the visual representation perfectly matches the situation as conveyed in the textual account on the right: 'I have been trying to get out for a long time, but I don't think I'll ever succeed.'

Instead of portraying enclosure within highly delimited spatial coordinates as in the images 1, 2 and 3, the image n. 4 delivers an equally dramatic situation realized instead through the fabrication of the state of immobile suspension. The impression of suspension is best understood by examining the setting and in particular, the fact that it is impossible to really understand the character's distance from the ground, the effect achieved by cutting off the ground on which the character is standing. The state of suspension is further emphasised by the female figure's gaze, which is pensively directed downwards. This pose, in combination with the absence of a visible ground, points at a certain dangerous height and possibly the character's wondering whether she should dare leap. Yet, she is unable to jump because a hook is keeping her in place and thus preventing her from doing so. Read in combination with the story on the right side of the visual, the image conveys the idea that for this young woman, trapped in the world of hard porn and forced prostitution, escape is not even a remote possibility: 'They watched me closely, I couldn't escape.' However, instead of reading the jump as a leap towards freedom, it is possible to read the same movement as a jump into death, i.e. suicide. The interpretation along the lines of suicide gains weight when we refer to the story within the textual frame in which for the first and only time within the La Strada/IOM visual series is introduced the notion of the soul: 'In the pictures they covered up my body's scratches and bruises. But how can I conceal the scars on my soul?' Standing commonly for the 'essence' of ones' being, the (wounded) soul impels an understanding of prostitution not merely as a form of physical violence, but also as a type of violence that shatters one's very personhood

and from which there is ultimately no recovery. The situation of immobile suspension in the sex industry deprives this young female character even of the most desperate and ultimate escape into suicide, or to phrase it differently, it takes away the control not only over one's life but also over one's death.

The comprehension of photographic images relays then on the narrative of (unsuccessful) migration in the adjacent vertical frame. Viewed separately from the narratives the photographs are quite ambiguous; for example, the figure 2 could be seen as a girl who has escaped rain and has finally reached a dry spot, and figure 4 as a girl talking on the cell-phone. Each image has a number of potential meanings but through the conjunction of text and image, a specific meaning of the image is being anchored by words. As Stuart Hall illustrated in his analysis of representational practices, 'two discourses – the discourse of written language and the discourse of photography — are required to produce and 'fix' the meaning' (1997: 228). As a result of the interplay between the textual and visual, La Strada/IOM's counter-trafficking campaign confines the theme of migration to the realm of forced prostitution. The narrative style, its technique and the voices used in its articulation are combined with the photographic shooting techniques (keyhole-perspective and dead-centre) and the composition of props and setting (tunnel or hook) as to fabricate the situation of characters' entrapment within highly restricted narrative and visual spaces. The characters' enclosure, standing on the level of content for the impossibility of exit from forced prostitution, is strengthened additionally through the choice of black and white photography, the distortion/elongation of female bodies and the vertical format of the visuals so as to convey the impression of immobility. The meaning is thus articulated between the text and the image, and fixed in a way to translate the most common (and available) forms of women's migration into a narrative where migration does not bring mobility and change for the better but instead involves deception and coercion into the situation of prostitution where (young, white and unaware) female bodies are stabilized as passive recipients of violence.

3. A Possible Reality and an Impossible Empowerment

In the La Strada/IOM sequence, the flow of meaning achieved through the exchange between the textual and visual frames is further sustained by an alternation between different temporalities of the story. Framed between the heading and the paragraph in bold is the story narrated in the past tense in which the character-I recounts the course of events that led into forced prostitution abroad. The use of the first name (Anna, Veronika, Marta and Monika), the progressive plot, the 'I' form and the past tense of

narration all imply that the text is a personal narrative and therefore a ‘factual’ narration of the woman whose name introduces it.²²¹ The use of photography engages the factual aspect further. As critics in cultural studies and semiotics have demonstrated, the photography, especially in its black and white format, has been used to lay claims to an unmediated representation of reality and as such often presented –especially in the press—as a proof of authenticity (Hall 1997, Taylor 1991). Within the economy of La Strada/IOM campaign, the use of personal narratives and of black and white photography impels the reading of the visuals as those documenting the ‘reality’ of women’s migration.

However, it is necessary to recall that all of the photographs have been distorted and that the use of specific lens and shooting techniques, perspective, lights and props reveal a staged setting. In fact, the distortion of the photographs and staging of the composition explicitly point to highly constructed visuals, undermine the status of factuality and produce a feeling of surreal aesthetics. This manipulation does not challenge the process of fixing the meaning per se, but it dismisses the photographs’ documentary format, installs the impression of unrealism and opens up the possibility to view the photography as an image of impending reality. Taking these aspects into consideration, I suggest that in La Strada/IOM series the production of meaning (of trafficking) takes place exactly in the interplay between testimonial/documentary aspect of authenticity and its fictive fabrication, resulting ultimately in the production of a possible reality.

Examining the alter(n)ation between the factual and the fictional at another point in the visuals clarifies the function that possible reality plays within La Strada/IOM sequence. When we turn our attention to the yellow rectangle in the upper part of the visuals – which is a fictive manipulations of the job ads advertising work abroad – we notice that the yellow colour of the rectangle draws attention to the same colouring of La Strada’s logo and of its hotline number positioned within the vertical frame on the right and immediately below the character’s story of trafficking. While the phone number in the rectangular box on the top displays a non-existent number (for e.g. 0600.000 000) suggesting that the advertisement is not a reliable source of information, the phone number next to La Strada name appears ‘real’ (02.57 31 31 32) not only due to the working days and times displayed, but also because of the number combination and the recognizable prefix which stands for that of the city of Prague, Czech Republic’s capital.²²²

²²¹ On the inter-textual level, the use of female characters’ stories as ‘factual’ narratives is a recurrent strategy used in a vast number of number of IOM anti-trafficking campaigns across east European space .

²²² Additional credibility to the La Strada number is given by the IOM logo that appears immediately underneath it.

The position of La Strada's phone number in relation to the female characters' narratives is another crucial aspect in creating authenticity. By appearing immediately below the characters' stories of deception and coercion, La Strada info-line appeals to the audience as to call the info-line and collect information before migrating abroad. With the right information then –so the message goes – women would be able to make informed choices and the situation of forced prostitution could be avoided. For example, Monika who is kept forcefully in hard porn business addresses the readers in the following way: 'I am sorry that I didn't know it earlier – just one phone call could have told me everything I needed to know. Don't you forget it!' [emphasis mine]. All of the four female characters relate how they were deceived into forced prostitution and warn the audience that this might happen to them too but also that this danger might be avoided by calling La Strada info-line which will provide them with information about how to migrate safely. The position of La Strada info-line immediately after the characters' direct appeal to the audience, the correspondence of colour and paragraph alignment, and the use of isotropy in the phone number's graphic arrangement create the impression of transparency and credibility. Thanks to this arrangement, La Strada appears as a reliable and 'real' source of information while the job advertisement is marked as unreliable and 'fake'. The fabrication of a possible reality and the production of credibility are thus best understood as techniques by means of which La Strada/IOM campaign aims at warning young women about the risks of (independent female) labour migration²²³ and empower them through access to appropriate information.

Aimed at empowering women, La Strada/IOM campaign constructs and makes use of victimizing images in order to foster women's active contribution and choice (Ciobanica 2002). However, if we turn to the large body of feminist scholarship and particularly feminist work on the issues of women's representation, what might appear as a straightforward strategy of empowerment becomes a quite controversial and even a badly chosen practice. The term empowerment has always been a crucial concept for feminism and its meaning is most commonly associated to the concept of agency, particularly with regards to enabling women to 'become actors in the world on their own term' (Andermaht et al 2000: 13). An essential step towards empowerment passes through the recognition of women's experience as the source of (feminist) knowledge, and the unravelling and unfolding of female-feminist genealogies and their recognition as counter-memories. In order for this political transformation to be achieved, feminists stress the importance of developing critiques of existing definitions and representation of Woman as Other, re-signifying the sign Woman as to affirm the positivity of sexual difference, exposing the assumptions

²²³ In two cases, the characters' stories explicitly refer to Italy and Germany.

about gender (and sex), challenging the misrepresentations and stereotypes of women in images, and revising (art) history through a critical analysis of the representations of racialized and sexualised women's bodies (Fusco 2001, Reckitt and Phelan 2001, Rogoff 2000). For feminist scholars and artists, (political) empowerment—in terms of entitlement practices—is therefore intrinsically linked to challenging stereotyping as a dominant representational practice through appropriation of negative images, their inscription with new trans-coded meanings (Hall 1997)²²⁴ and a struggle to find new forms of representation for (racialized) female subjects.

With these considerations in mind, it is quite difficult to conclude that La Strada/IOM's textual and visual scripts empower women. When taking a closer look at the issues of voice, one of the pivotal means for articulation of women's subjectivity, we notice a discrepancy between the framed narrative and the paragraph in bold succeeding it. While in the framed narrative the characters recount the events that lead them into forced prostitution, in the following paragraph each character speaks in the present tense, for example 'I don't want this to happen to you, for it not to happen at all' (Figure 1) or 'Don't trust anyone you haven't known for a long time, and arrange everything yourself' (Figure 3). The combination of a proper name, the 'I' form of narration, and the pronoun 'you' in the textual address, collapses the distance between the characters and the (implied) audience, and draws the latter into a space of internal empathy with the character and her experience of migration and forced prostitution. The operation of shrinking the space between characters and readers permits the narrative entry of La Strada in the role of a rescuer. The identificatory shrinking is constructed through the introduction of a reflexive mode through which the character comments on her past actions and wishes for the others not to repeat her same mistakes. An example of this mode is offered by the following quote (Figure 1): 'I thought that if I had a contract in my hand I would be okay. Now I know that I should have gotten a lot more information. If you want to work abroad call people who will advise you on what to do'. However, since the plot does not progress after the event of forced prostitution, the text in bold --even though it is uttered in the present tense-- does not constitute a simple and linear moment of memory exactly because the female bodies and voices are entrapped within previously described textual and visual frames. If confined within the situations from which there is no way out, female characters are not the ones warning and advising the audience and therefore they cannot be conceptualised as speaking subjects. Instead, in an act of narrative manipulation that dispossesses female characters of their subjectivities, female voices are being appropriated in order to give credibility to the La Strada/IOM project and fictional testimonials used to assign victimhood and endorse a politics of

²²⁴ For example, this can be done by reversing the stereotypes, producing 'positive' images or contesting the representation itself from within (Hall 1997).

salvation (cfr. Puwar 2003). The shortening of distance between the speaker and audience has an additional effect. It creates and segments the target group by anchoring it in a (young) female body. In first instance it articulates the targeted audience in terms of gender and age. Secondly, it marks the target group in terms of income --women in labour positions with higher income and are less likely to migrate in search of work in domestic or entertainment sector-- and nationality, meaning that the campaigns do not address for example, a female Dutch exchange student in Estonia but instead Estonian nationals. The operation of establishing a target audience is achieved through the segmentation of the market according to gender, age, income and nationality. The target group is thus not simply out there but it is actively produced in the process of marketing the victims.

The four images here discussed do not re-signify dominant representational practices nor do they propose new forms of representation for women. Quite the contrary, they deploy techniques that frame women's body in a voyeuristic manner and lock it into an (im)position of immobility. In this way, the La Strada/IOM series conveys images of unhappy, desperate and suicidal women and consequently re-installs the stereotypical rendering of feminine bodies in terms of passive objects of violence. Moreover, by highlighting the innocence and unwillingness of these young white female bodies, La Strada/IOM re-proposes the conventional rhetoric of many counter-trafficking campaigns. This image, as Jo Doezema has shown in her analysis of trafficking in women's media imaginary, is centred upon 'the paradigmatic image ... of a young and naïve innocent lured or deceived by evil traffickers into a life of sordid horror from which escape is nearly impossible' (1999: 2). By setting a straightforward demarcation between forced and voluntary prostitution and by extension blameless/uninformed victims and sex workers, La Strada/IOM series recuperates the rationale Madonna-whore derived from Eve-Virgin Mary dichotomy, one of the 'classical' repertoires of Western culture (Bronfen 1992), used throughout history to police women's behaviour, sexuality and access to rights.

In La Strada/IOM counter-trafficking campaign the audience is warned that third parties are likely to deceive women and that the most common and available forms of informal women's labour migration lead inevitably into prostitution. Even though Anna arranged working as a dancer abroad through her own contacts, Veronika contacted a family who was looking for an au-pair through a newspaper ad, Marta was offered a job in a restaurant through an acquaintance, and Monika reacted to a newspaper ad placed by a modelling agency, the type of arrangement made little difference since all of the four characters ended up entrapped in a situation of forced prostitution. Since all the available migration venues seem to lead coerced prostitution characterized here by total deprivation of freedom, La Strada/IOM campaign suggests that the safest option is to remain home. Thus, instead of empowering women into

entering migration, the series is best described as discouraging informal labour migration and advising staying at home as the safest option for young women.²²⁵ Once again, the campaign places images of women within the traditional representation of womanhood, which positions women outside of the labour market i.e. production, and inside the realm of home thus relegating women to the reproduction within the private sphere. Consequently, La Strada/IOM series is sustained by, and in turn further maintains, the binary logic where private domesticity, associated with femininity and constructed in opposition to public labour (associated with masculinity), upholds the idealization of home as a place devoid of conflict, danger and exploitation. Home can indeed be a place of nurture and care, but as feminist scholars and activists have shown (Corrin 1996, Radford *et al.* 1996, Pizzey 1974), and my analysis in Chapter 2 has illustrated, it is also a site of violence and various forms of oppressive social practices. In fact, for a number of respondents interviewed in Chapter 2, home –whether one’s parents’ house or one’s own—was made unsafe by wife battering, family violence and incest, or generally by the oppressive environment, as the case in Ester’s and Tatiana’s stories of a patriarchal household with its accompanying repressive disciplinary regime.

The association of labour migration abroad with exploitation further confirms the de-problematizing of home in the La Strada/IOM campaign (cfr. Sharma 2003). Yet, as my interviews have shown through Liudmila’s description of the power her boss maintained over her or Ana’s illustration of her factory work, situations of abuse and labour exploitation are common at ‘home’ as well. Moreover, conceptualising irregular women’s migration as an unavoidable path into forced prostitution, the campaign not only labels all sex work as a situation of captivity and of lack of agency but also effaces the fact that sex work is, next to the domestic/care work the most common job venue and source of income for women from non-European states

²²⁵ This very same message is communicated by the documentary movie *Prey of Silence*. The movie, financed by the European Commission through the *Tacis* Program and commissioned by the IOM to their Ukraine partners (Interviews-Ukraine) is part of the counter-trafficking information campaign in Ukraine, and has been viewed on national TV as a six-part documentary serial (each episode is 30 min long). The motivations and aims behind the campaign are those common with other similar IOM projects namely ‘to present to the public what realities, risks and actual consequences of trafficking are, by exploring the stories of Ukraine women who were enticed to go abroad, but where ultimately caught by the oppressive web of trafficking’ (quoted from the cover of the video). While there is unfortunately no space to go into the analysis of the movie here, it is important to highlight the novelty of this project. The movie *Prey of Silence* has a double aim; on the one hand it warns women about the dangers of labour migration abroad, and on the other it invites the women who are already abroad to return ‘home’. Interestingly, this invitation is uttered by state functionaries conveying the message that Ukraine women are a crucial resource for Ukraine State that is inviting them to return to their homeland. The intervention of the state in this campaign draws immediate attention to the relationship between women and the nation and especially, as Yuval-Davis (1997) pointed out, to the role women hold in reproduction and cultural construction of nations. When viewed in relation to the issue of trafficking, the link gender-nation assumes clear connotations of national honour and ultimately of gendered construction of politics and citizenship.

migrating irregularly to the EU (cfr. Anderson and Phizacklea 1997, Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003). Accordingly, the La Strada/IOM campaign leaves out explicit reference to sex work migration,²²⁶ which implies that a number of migrant women I have interviewed and particularly those who stipulated the contract with the third parties for sex work, are not included nor addressed by this campaign. Rather than empowering migrant women, La Strada/IOM campaign's rhetorical construction of victimizing images, dispossession of women's narrative voice and idealization of home, de facto seeks to legitimate a particular arrangement of patriarchal social relations and contain the changes brought about by women's mobility.

4. Vanishing Masculinities, or, Exit Trafficking, Enter Migration

Within the discursive economy of trafficking the narrative of (women's) victimhood is interwoven with, and contingent upon the narrative of criminality. The representation of trafficking relies on an extremely simplistic and stereotypical dualism, which sets apart young, naïve and innocent victims from malevolent traffickers who lure the former into migration abroad – the implication of course is that migration automatically leads to prostitution. In La Strada/IOM series, the role of third parties (i.e. traffickers), rather than being physically presented or implied within the visual frame of representation – except in Figure 2 –, was instead conveyed by the characters' stories. This narrative arrangement produces the representation of trafficking along the victim-criminal binary.

More recent IOM counter-trafficking campaigns retain the binary victim-criminal but with a number of modifications. In the main image of the IOM's campaign launched in Ukraine in 1998 (Figure 5), the audience is presented with the contours of a gigantic male figure holding a cage with a woman figure within it in his right hand and money (US Dollars) in his left. The headline framing the image and fixing its meaning relates the following: 'Do you want to trade your dignity, your freedom and your health for a cage?' In the IOM's counter-trafficking campaign in Moldova in 2001 (Figure 7), the main image portrays a female figure passed from one hand –visually characterized as male—to another male hand in exchange of money (US Dollars again). Next to the conclusion that US Dollars are the main 'hard' exchange currency in the two countries, the visuals imply the link between traffickers and crime since in both cases masculinity is marked by the display of cash, golden

²²⁶ It might be argued that prostitution is included implicitly through the image of the woman working as a dancer in the entertainment industry. However, dancing in a bar does not necessarily mean that one works as a prostitute. In fact, scholars researching the sex work have argued that various types of commercial sexual services need to be differentiated in order to avoid sweeping generalizations and have a better understanding of differences between various types of sex work (Weitzer 2000: 3-7).

chain bracelet and signet ring²²⁷, the typical visual codes denoting mafia or pimp figures. While this signification is quite strongly marked in the IOM Moldova's visual, the image of the Ukraine campaign deploys a more flexible signifier. In fact, the contours of the gigantic male figure can be 'filled' with differently signified masculinities not tied to the territory of departure but instead vague enough to transcend a fixed geographical location. Accordingly, it is no coincidence that the IOM mission in Italy chose the very same image for their campaign of repatriation for trafficked victims.²²⁸

Following IOM counter-trafficking campaigns retain the formula that equates traffickers with criminals but do so through different signifiers. In the IOM's counter-trafficking campaign, which took place between October 2001 and October 2002 in the Baltic States, the main image is a so-called 'concept-image' (Sipaviciene 2002). It is composed of the textual address 'You will be sold like a doll' and portrays a female body, half clothed, pierced by hooks and suspended mid-air (Figure 8). The series uses the vertically hanging female body as the main concept-image, but variations on the theme are also employed, displaying, for example, the same female body in a crouched position (Figure 9), or simply body-parts such as hanging legs (Figure 10). The hooks and ropes that pierce the inanimate female body/skin and keep it suspended lead the eye of the viewer outside of the visible frame, and hint at the presence of a third party absent from the visual frame who controls its movements and has absolute control over it. Contrary to the campaigns in Ukraine and Moldova described above, what is not specified in the Baltic States IOM's series is the gender of the trafficker(s). In fact, the representation of trafficker(s) as visibly male has been substituted by a genderless peril signalled by hooks and cords. A quite similar substitution has taken place also in the later IOM's campaign in Ukraine in year 2001 (Figure 6), where the gigantic male silhouette has been substituted by the image of an enormous spider. The spider, signalling here the danger of trafficking, has captured a naked female body in its web and is ascending towards it. As in the IOM's campaign in the Baltic States, one of the most recent IOM's counter trafficking campaigns in eastern Europe,²²⁹ so in IOM's latest campaign in Ukraine the traffickers are rendered through signifiers that convey the idea of danger for, and control over, female bodies. However, they are no longer visibly depicted as male.

²²⁷ The IOM Ukraine visual presents the same elements, unfortunately not visible due to bad reproduction of the image.

²²⁸ Instead of the headline 'Do you want to trade your dignity, your freedom and your health for a cage?' as in the Ukraine campaign, the Italian leaflet used the headline 'Tornare a casa è possibile ora' [Now it is possible to return home].

²²⁹ After the campaign in the Baltic States, IOM launched in Croatia its up-to-date latest campaign between March 2003 and October 2003. As IOM's latest campaign in Ukraine and the one in Baltic States, the one in Croatia does not convey the danger of trafficking by using male figures as signifiers.



Image 5



Image 6

A clue for understanding the shift from clearly detectable male figures to more abstract elements in representation of traffickers is offered by IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns themselves. Next to the image discussed above (Figure 7), the IOM campaign in Moldova consists also of a booklet containing comic strips, recounting the story of a young woman who is deceived into working abroad by a female neighbour and then 'sold' several times before arriving at a brothel in Bosnia. As the plot and the characters in the narrative suggest, third parties involved in trafficking are diverse and are comprised of both men and women. The main concept-image of the IOM campaign in Moldova, which suggests that the 'trade' of women takes place between men, is thus in contradiction with the rest of the story narrated in the booklet. If IOM's campaigns were to represent adequately the fact that third parties are both men and women, as many researches on trafficking suggest (Maluccelli 2001, Hopkins and Nijboer 2003) and my data in Chapter 3 confirm, then the rendering of the variety of third parties needed other metaphors which would avoid the visual collapsing of traffickers with men. The concept of the spider web and the hooks and ropes serve this purpose well. Using the concept of the spider web, the IOM's campaign in Ukraine represents trafficking in terms of a genderless and all-encompassing threat; the naked female figure, with her back turned to the viewer finds itself squeezed between two newspaper ads²³⁰ and entangled in the spider web. The dangers of trafficking are rendered through the interplay of the textual address here conveyed by the heading 'The Web Of Trafficking' and the footing 'Ignorance Kills', and by the visual imprisonment of a woman's body in the spider web with an

²³⁰ On the level of intertextuality, the newspaper ads refer us back to the ads in La Strada/IOM campaign (Figures 1-4).

enormous spider preying on her. Similarly to the spider web, also the IOM's series in the Baltic States leaves the traffickers' gender unmarked, and makes use of the hooks and cords instead to convey the image of an anonymous and pervasive danger.

Male hands, my analysis suggests, have been substituted by new depersonalised images in order to denote traffickers as an overarching and less immediately recognizable network. An example of this operation can be found in the leaflet produced by the IOM in the Baltic States, which offers advice to women who consider labour migration abroad. Under the headline 'Lies and reality about job abroad' one can read the 'lie', 'Traffickers always look like criminals, you can recognize them by appearance,' followed by the 'reality': 'This is not true. You can meet various traffickers. **Some of them will not resemble criminals at all** [bold in original]. On the contrary, they may look very decent and reliable. They may have nice family, children, even a daughter –like you'.²³¹ This quote illustrates well the operation of portraying traffickers as a not immediately recognizable danger: they do not look like the imaginary stereotypical 'Mafioso', however, as signalled by the use of the verb 'resemble', they are criminals nonetheless.²³² Thus, I argue that by abandoning the heavy golden jewellery and cash in men's hands as symbols of mafia, and proposing instead the spider web and hooks and cords as signifiers for an impersonal but capillary system of control over female bodies, the recent IOM campaigns uncouple the concept of traffickers from its narrow identification with 'Mafiosi' and/or pimps and consequently imply a quite ample characterization of eastern European nationals as traffickers. While IOM's intent is to warn women about possible (hidden) dangers, the representational practices and concepts used to convey this message constitute fertile ground for myth making and stereotyping. In fact, they foster common assumptions about large scale criminalization of eastern European societies in the post 1989 period and fuel the fear of a westward expansion of criminal networks (cfr. Berman 2003, Bort 2000, Stenvoll 2002).



Image 7

²³¹ <http://www.focus-on-trafficking.net/inside.php?ln=en&page=advice>

²³² Another similar example comes from the IOM Ukraine campaign *Ignorance Kills* where under the heading 'Who are the traffickers?' one can read the following answer: 'Traffickers are of both sexes, of different nationalities, and often appear sympathetic and respectable on the surface'.

Keeping in mind that the heavy golden jewellery and ‘hard’ currency are also attributes for pimps, the absence of the pimping male figure from the image, and the consequent (visual) disentanglement of the trafficker figure from the one of the pimp, results in the omission of prostitution from the representational frame. While IOM’s campaigns in the Czech Republic, Moldova and Ukraine include explicit reference to (forced) prostitution and/or trafficking, either through a textual address as in La Strada/IOM campaign and the later IOM’s campaign in Ukraine (‘The Web of Trafficking’) or through a visual address as in the IOM’s campaign in Moldova and earlier Ukraine campaign (bracelet, ring and US Dollars), the concept-image of the campaign in the Baltic States avoids any of these referents. In fact, its textual caption ‘Do not trust easy money abroad. You will be sold like a doll’ does not make either implicit or explicit reference to prostitution or trafficking. It is possible to argue that even though this type of reference is not clearly stated, the texts that accompany the visual image accompanied by a text, such as for example in brochures or flyers, discuss trafficking explicitly in terms of the plot of deception and coercion into prostitution abroad. However, the campaign is also made of outdoor and indoor posters, postcards and other materials that are not accompanied by additional textual captions, except for the one quoted above, which in any case illustrates well that the IOM’s series was conceptualised as to achieve its strongest impact when standing on its own. The visual representation, even though it is artistically quite an elaborate shot, is ‘simple’ and direct in its address. Set on the dark blue background, the light invests the subject from both sides, illuminating the woman’s skin in a way that makes it beautifully contrast with the blue of the background. The simplicity and directness is enhanced by the use of complementary colours (blue green and red orange), which produce a dynamic effect when put together. This colour scheme does not overload the picture with too much perceptive input and keeps the attention of the viewer focused on the human puppet.

The directness of the visual and textual addresses enable a signifying transaction where women’s labour migration abroad (‘Do not trust easy money abroad’) is matched with slavery (‘You will be sold like a doll’), intended as the commercial trade in humans and subsequent total loss of freedom.²³³ The situation of

²³³ Slavery appears as integral part of textual address in IOM campaigns in both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). In the former, one can read ‘You pay for a night-She pays with her life. Forced prostitution-Slavery: There is no Choice’, and in the latter, ‘Trade in People Trafficking; Modern Day Slavery’. Unfortunately, there is no space here to go into an analysis of these two campaigns, but it is important to underscore that these campaigns address a different audience from the campaigns I analyse in the body of this chapter, namely the users of prostitution in the countries of destination – thus their explicit use of the term slavery. On the inter-textual level, it is interesting to notice that the IOM campaign in the BiH uses exactly the same combination of colours (yellow, white and black) as La Strada/IOM campaign. When it comes to the narrated story, the BiH flyer is a compilation of already encountered texts: a tagline is nearly the same as in the Kosovo campaign (‘She might be paying for it for the rest of her life’); the narrative section entitled ‘How are women usually recruited?’

captivity is strengthened by the absence of the info-line as a visible referent. If the other campaigns suggested that women could avoid situations of forced prostitution by calling IOM's info-line, the absence of the phone number in the Baltic States' campaign upholds a discursive construction that precludes any possibility of exit for female migrants from the (inevitable) condition of slavery. A similar line of reasoning is found also within the campaign's flyers. The answer to the question 'Considering an offer to work abroad?' illustrates this point well: 'We do not want to discourage you – your trip can be successful and interesting. Unfortunately, there are many cases when people do not bring any fortune or good impressions from the foreign country, but rather find themselves in a situation of slavery abroad'²³⁴. Instead of going for 'easy money' the leaflet suggests that women obtain work permits and visas before going to work abroad. In spite of its best intentions, this consideration does not take into account that, as my and other researches have demonstrated, due to the current restrictive EU's immigration and labour policies it is extremely difficult to obtain working visas for young women from Third Countries as well as EU Candidate States²³⁵ without major financial backup (Parreñas 2001, Phizacklea and Anderson 1997). Moreover, the IOM's campaign does not consider that it is precisely the tightening up of immigration control and restrictive labour laws in the destination countries that create the conditions for proliferation of trafficking and labour exploitation (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003, Sassen 2002). By uncoupling trafficking from prostitution while at the same time associating informal women's migration with slavery, I suggest that the IOM's campaign in the Baltic States points to a manifest shift from counter trafficking to counter migration discourse that specifically targets, and seeks to discourage, irregular women's migration.

5. Female Body as a Spectacle

Female bodies (and their representation) are at the very core of all IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns and of the struggle surrounding the definition of trafficking. As I have shown in my analysis of a number of selected examples, female bodies are

corresponds nearly completely to the text in IOM's Ukraine campaign *Ignorance Kills*; and the testimony of a trafficked woman is partly taken from the figure 2 in La Strada/IOM campaign. The fact that a number of elements reappear in various IOM counter-trafficking campaigns across eastern European space points to the presence of a quite specific IOM's trafficking iconography.

²³⁴ <http://www.focus-on-trafficking.net/inside.php?ln=en&page=advice>

²³⁵ Even through in 2004 the EU Candidates will become EU Members this does not entitle them to the possibility to take up employment freely in the EU. Scholars point out that the 'new citizens' do not gain much since they are already for a while do not require a visa to enter Schengen territory. On the contrary, for them apply the same immigration regulations as for Third Countries nationals and their entitlement to labour mobility will be delayed for a period going from two up to seven years after accession (Mezzadra and Rigo 2003).

repeatedly represented as entrapped in narrow spaces (Figure 1-4), in a cage (Figure 5), in a spider web (Figure 6) and in a trafficker's grip (Figure 7). Female bodies are immobilized and dispossessed of the gaze and the voice as the main instruments of subjectivity. Female figures never look towards the audience: their heads are usually bended in a way that their hair falls over their faces, or they stand with their back turned towards the viewers. Female characters rarely speak and when they do, as in La Strada/IOM campaign, their 'I-s' are incorporated within the wider frame of discourse of the campaign's authors, so as to lend this latter its aura of authenticity. The muting of female characters is directly related to representing them as victims whose bodies have been violated and are, once again, in need of guidance and protection. Silent, passive and objectified bodies remain therefore crucial for the articulation of the politics of salvation.

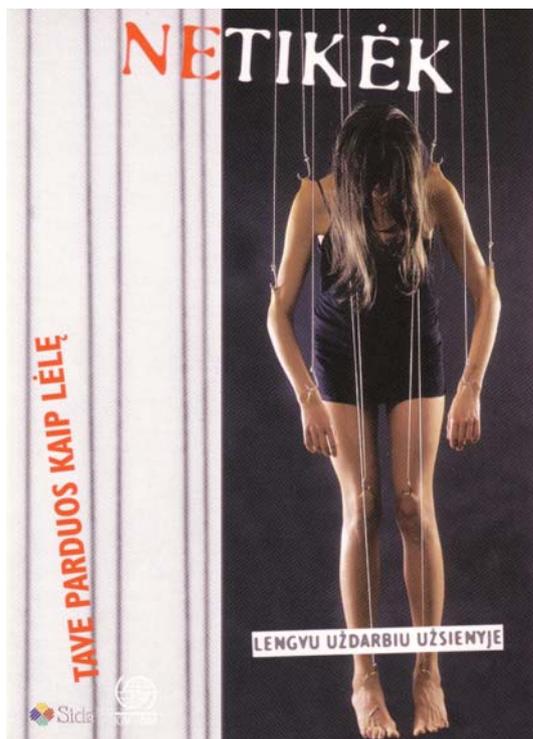


Image 8

The construction of east European women as victims resorts to the visual metaphor of the doll as a privileged signifier to convey the condition of abuse and exploitation enforced by the traffickers, and of deprivation of freedom and (complete) lack of agency that it entails. Beautiful, white and young, albeit inanimate and mute, female bodies have been visually rendered as dolls in the visuals from campaigns in

Ukraine (Figure 6) and Moldova's (Figure 7). The Baltic States' campaign (Figure 8-10) adopts the figure of the doll both in its visual and textual address thus rendering it explicit. The half naked, hanged and pierced body of the 'human-marionette' is used as the main concept-image of the IOM's counter-trafficking campaign in the Baltic States (Sipaviciene 2002). Next to its visual characterization, the two textual captures enhance the representation of women's figure as a doll: 'Do not trust easy money abroad' and 'You will be sold like a doll'. These literally squeeze the body and fix its representation to the referent of the doll.

The capture of the female figure within the trope of the doll was intended as such by the campaign authors in order to convey the lived experience of trafficked women. In response to criticism that the concept of the 'human marionette' is demeaning and sensationalistic, advanced by Ann Jordan, the Director of the Initiative Against Trafficking in Persons of the International Human Rights Law Group, the Head of IOM's Mass Communication explains that the image has been chosen since it best reflects the actual material conditions of trafficking and their consequence for women: 'Women get beaten, raped, drugged; they are ruthlessly exploited and live in slave-like conditions handcuffed to beds in squalid enclosures. Some never live to tell their stories because they are killed or take their own lives in desperation.... most trafficked women find themselves treated as slaves with no control of their lives whatsoever. This is the idea we wanted to convey.'²³⁶ In order to represent the reality of trafficked women's lives, the authors have opted for quite specific metaphors: 'The nakedness was meant to show the helplessness and vulnerability of trafficked women. The hooks were visual metaphors used to convey an essential aspect of trafficking, namely the manipulation and exploitation to which trafficked women are subjected.' The nakedness and the hooks, and the chain of semantic associations attached to them, function as visual synecdoches of the women's actual experience as such. In other words, the conceptualisation of the 'human marionette' is grounded in a project that assumes a straightforward relationship between the reality of women's experiences and its representation.

Feminist artists and scholars alike have addressed the problematic nature of equating and conflating the visual images of women and the experience of embodiment (Reckitt and Phelan 2001). Feminists have both differentiated and recognized the distance between 'woman as representation' and 'woman as experience'. Woman as representation commonly referred to as 'Woman' is a signifier bound by a symbolic order that positions 'her' as Man's irrational Other, identified with the body and emotion, devoid of consciousness and confined to immanence (Braidotti 1994). Feminist interventions have further challenged the

²³⁶ This quote is taken from the email of Ms. Jordan to Ms. Ciobanica as it appeared on the *Stop-Traffic* mailing list. See Annex 2.

nature/culture binary – mapped along body/mind distinction – and have asserted an epistemological project grounded in a politics of location and situated knowledge, aimed at eroding the universalism and neutrality of Western thought. Woman as a historical being and as a subject of social relations is not to be confused, feminists argue, with Woman who is ‘purely a representation, a positionality within the phallic model of desire and signification’ (De Lauretis 1987: 20). To approach the feminine body in the IOM’s campaigns as a symbolic space questions an unproblematic understanding of the metaphor as a figure of similarity. It is possible to consider metaphor as a relationship of abridged similarity. However, as Anne Cronin explains in her work on gender, images and advertising, the metaphor at the same time points to the mediated relationship between the signifier and the referent, and actually increases the distance between the ‘factual’ and the ‘fictional’: ‘Our access to the “real” is mediated ... by the “detour” of metaphor. In reaching out for the “real” through metaphor, we are paradoxically held at distance from it’ (2000: 88). Hence, the nakedness, the cords and hooks as metaphors do not so much convey the resemblance between ‘woman as experience’ and ‘woman as representation’. Rather, they display the distance between them and repeatedly transform women into Woman, an operation that ties woman to her specific place as a bearer of meaning in the symbolic order (cfr. Mulvey 2003: 44).



Image 9



Image 10

As my analysis shown, IOM’s campaigns resort to signifiers such as passivity, absence of voice and domesticity, best understood in terms of the chain of signifiers. These, by being activated at different points of the campaign(s), impel a representation of eastern European women (and men) in manners that are highly symbolic and stereotypical. This representation, as my investigation in previous

chapters has shown, is inadequate to convey the complexity and contradictions of women's lived reality. By representing women as dolls in particular, IOM's campaigns repeatedly reduce women to 'Woman', thus rendering their actions and desires more controllable and less threatening. The representation of women as dolls is part of the patriarchal repertoire of Western culture²³⁷, a type of 'culture-text' which permeates both high and low culture (arts, literature, pop music ecc.) and is invoked time and time again in order to confine the threat of female subjectivity (Meijer 2002). Exactly because the figuration of woman-as-doll is such a deeply rooted trope, when it is inscribed on a feminine body with the apparent intention of highlighting victimization, such as IOM campaigns purport to do, there emerge a number of unintended and paradoxical results.

The construction of victimizing images relies on displaying half-naked, mute and immobile female bodies deprived of the look. Since the 'eye' sanctions the subjectivity of the looking 'I', these bodies are excluded from the position of a subject and are gazed at.²³⁸ The process of looking without being seen in which the passive and violated female bodies cannot return the gaze, has been identified by feminist scholars in cinema studies especially with male voyeurism and female exhibitionism (De Lauretis 1987, Mulvey 2003). The voyeuristic aspect is common to most of IOM's visuals not only due to the recurrent display of a woman's body as the object of the gaze (Figure 8-10), but it is also achieved through specific framing techniques in photography such as the use of a wide-angle lens (La Strada/IOM Figure 3) or the 'keyhole-perspective' (La Strada/IOM Figure 1), which enhance viewers position as voyeurs. Moreover, an additional aspect to the representation of these female bodies surfaces when we are reminded that these images reference not just victims of trafficking but also (and perhaps above all) of forced prostitution. Making use of semiotic and psychoanalytic perspectives, feminist and cultural studies scholars have

²³⁷ With Western I mean here Judeo-Christian culture.

²³⁸ It is perhaps interesting to note that the only female image that is portrayed looking directly into the camera appeared in the IOM campaign in Kosova. However, the presence of a woman's look is not an indication of her being a subject. On the contrary, the fact that her look is framed in a way to present her as a veiled woman actually returns her to an objectified position. The woman's face is framed so that two thick frames—one on the top and the bottom—leave visible only her eyes while covering in black the rest of her face. Additionally, the contours of her eyes are painted black, the make-up usually associated with Muslim women. This image in which the woman is restricted by the veil and voyeuristically gazed at is framed by the word 'slavery', which ultimately produces an orientalist image of the passive female. The representation of trafficked women in terms of an Oriental Other is quite puzzling since the women 'trafficked' to Kosova come mostly from eastern European countries that in no way can be associated with Muslim religion. However, the region of Kosova has claimed for itself and has been assigned the designation of Muslim territory. Thus, this example from IOM's counter-trafficking campaign in Kosova highlights the fact that bodies are geographically marked and calls for future research on IOM's work in a way that would approach the body as a site of projected national identities. For an extremely interesting analysis along these lines albeit not directly related to trafficking, see the work of Irit Rogoff about the production of female bodies and the State of Israel (2000:144-170), and of Dubravka Zarkov on the fabrication of female bodies (and ethnicity) and its intersection with nationalist projects during the war in Former Yugoslavia (1999).

shown that there is a sexual element in looking at another person as object and in deriving pleasure from it.²³⁹ As Stuart Hall puts it in his discussions on Freud and eroticisation of the gaze, 'Looking is often driven by an unacknowledged search for illicit pleasure and a desire which cannot be fulfilled' (1997: 268). Building on this discussion, I suggest to interpret female bodies in IOM's visuals not as neutral objects, but as a sexual(lized) objects that are shaped by unacknowledged (or perhaps unconscious) perception of (forced) prostitution as erotic.

Displays of the feminine body as a spectacle, in their overlap with voyeurism, point to the ways in which fantasy is inscribed in representation. The concept-image where the operation is best discernable is that of the 'human-marionette'. A mute, inert and scarred female body—a victimized body—stands here for the epitome of objectification: it is a body put on display, a body to be gazed at. Yet, at the same time an operation of displacement is enacted in this image. The presence of hooks that pierce the body displaces the gaze from the body to the skin and allows the viewer to continue looking while simultaneously disavowing the sexual nature of the gaze. Displacement here operates in terms of a transferral of meaning; the scarred skin, only a part of body, functions as a metonymy for the battered/victimized body. This substitution of a part for a whole is characteristic of the practice of fetishism which, as Hall points out, is closely linked to disavowal as a 'strategy by means of which a powerful fascination of desire is both indulged and at the same time denied' (1997: 267). The female body of the 'human-marionette' acquires its significance for the viewer, I argue, exactly through this oscillation between desire and denial that combines in an ambiguous manner the fascination/eroticisation of prostitution through skin fetishism and its simultaneous refutation by means of skin-ruptures. The visible production of femininity seems to be intrinsically bound—through representational strategies of victimization and eroticisation—to the female body as spectacle.

Voyeurism, eroticisation and fetishistic fascination raise furthermore the issue of the audience. In other words, if IOM's campaigns aim at reaching young women migrants in an effort to empower them to make informed choices, but at the same time engage male viewers as voyeurs of the exhibited female object, then it is quite unlikely that these campaigns will appeal to a female audience. Hence, the strategies of victimization are problematic to say the least. Instead of empowering women and actively contributing to the creation of new images of femininity at a time of political and symbolic reorganization of the eastern European space, IOM campaigns resort to (a chain of) signifiers and repertoires which reinstall stereotypes about women from eastern Europe as mute but beautiful inanimate bodies, and constrict women within the highly confining and disabling order of 'Woman' as eroticised representation.

²³⁹ Laura Mulvey has termed the pleasure in looking 'scopophilia' (2003 : 46).

6. *Telos*, Death and Citizenship

Fetishistic fascination with the skin is grounded in the practice of substitution where the skin, a portion of the body stands in for the 'subject' as a whole and is assumed to disclose the truth about that very subject. In this respect, the concept-image of human-marionette displays an inert female body, suspended by a number of ropes and hanging in the mid-air. Yet, the body is not floating nor is 'it' being hanged by one main cord (as in execution style with a cord around the neck). Instead, it is hanging by the skin where a number of hooks, similar to large fishing hooks, pierce and pull it, thus playing with its elasticity and conveying the impression of a lifeless female body. The skin, as feminist theorization on the skin has pointed out, is the site where the materialization of the body metonymically conveys the truth about the subject (Ahmed and Stacey 2001). The process of fetishising which substitutes one for a whole also ascribes to the skin the testimonial function through which skin is transformed into voice (*ibid.*). Yet, the skin does not only bear testimony but it also does so within a temporal frame: skin 'speaks' and it remembers (Deutscher 2001, Prosser 2001). The capture 'You will be sold like a doll' mobilizes the future as the instance in which the scarred skin will keep its marks since scarred testimonies are accumulated and carried by the skin as traces of passed experiences which can be recollected in the future too. As the female character Monika in *La Strada*/IOM figure 4 reminds us, even when the marks of prostitution are no longer visible to the viewer, the 'true' 'inner' self remains nevertheless scarred: 'In the picture they covered up my body's scratches and bruises. But how can I conceal the scars on my soul?' Within the economy of IOM's campaigns then, the assaulted and damaged skin on women's body bears a testimony of pain, violence and abuse, and signals a subject whose self has being indelibly wounded as a result of encounters with other bodies during migration.

The production of an assaulted female body through scarring of the skin brings to the fore questions of subject formation. As a number of feminist scholars have pointed out, skin does not simply disclose the 'truth' about the 'subject' but due to its being an 'outer' layer of the body it also functions as a 'boundary-object', which separates the self from the other (Ahmed and Stacey 2001) or as a 'threshold' of access to other(s) (Irigaray 1993). Sara Ahmed's concept of skin as animated border renders this point well:

These various constructions of the skin position skin as a *telos* (determining the 'development' of the subject), as constituting the limits and boundaries of

the subject, and as a record or reflection of the subject's experiences through which we can establish the 'truth' of the subject's well-Being. The skin, here, enables us to measure the 'truth' and 'health' of the subject precisely insofar as it forms a barrier between the subject and what is beyond or outside it (1998: 32).

Skin, read as the 'border' that protects the body from 'external' other(s), requires constant care in order for it to remain intact. As Ahmed (1998) points out in her analysis of contemporary cosmetic discourse, the duty to care for the skin falls particularly on women. A well-protected skin is recognizable by its being 'unmarked' and the absence of ruptures is a sign of the value of a woman's body and her femininity. Building on the argument that in European societies the maintenance of the value of femininity is contingent upon the self-policing of one's own bodily boundaries, I suggest that the skin breakages on the female body in the IOM campaign in the Baltic States mark 'her' as *incapable* of self-surveillance and that this failure *devaluates* 'her' femininity. In relation to the image of the hanged body in particular, but also of the imprisoned female bodies in IOM's campaigns at large, an entrapped female body points to 'her' *inability* to make a 'proper' choice. Not only was 'she' not able to distinguish between a 'real' and 'fake' job offer ('Do not trust easy money abroad!'), but 'she' also failed to follow the guidelines specified in the IOM flyers that instruct 'her' what phone number to call, and what precautions to take in order to manage her migration project safely. To put it in the words of the IOM campaign in Ukraine (Figure 6), 'Ignorance Kill[ed] [her]!'.

Skin as threshold of access suggests that skin both separates and connects the self with other(s). In a dialectic relationship then, the skin touches and is touched by others. Within the economy of IOM's campaigns, the encounter with a foreign element assumes a variety of meanings. When the migratory aspect is brought to the fore, then wounded skin indicates violent/violating encounters with peoples of different national and cultural identities 'she' came across during her migratory journey. Yet, within the framework of trafficking, the encounter with other(s) is not only about contact with foreign other(s) in terms of culture or nationality but it is especially about the sexual nature of that exposure. The skin ruptures on/of female body signify then, I argue, that the contact has taken place and that the other has been let in (or has let himself in). Scarred skin is a testimony of that sexual encounter as an indelible mark which devaluates 'her' femininity. Exactly because the skin is characterized, as Sara Ahmed puts it, by 'the constitutive possibility of a seeping between one and an-other', because it is supposed to keep the 'outside' from becoming 'inside' and 'inside' from becoming 'outside', it is best understood as a 'site of social crisis and instability' (1998: 36). What is literally represented in IOM's campaign in Baltic States, namely the violated female body, 'seeps' through (and

exceeds) its representation as to reveal a sense of anxiety over the boundaries of a political community being modified by women's migration, economic 'transition' and European integration.

For the threat of insecurity to be contained, the feminine Other which constantly disrupts the categories of difference needs to be restrained. The hooks and ropes (Figure 8-10) perform exactly that function: they keep the female body in place and turn 'her' from the subversive sign into the sign of the subversive, so as to re-establish the binary opposition between self and other, and recuperate the hierarchical order in which 'she' is brought under control in the act of capturing her as 'Woman' (cfr. Bronfen 1992: 189). This operation of fixing the feminine in a static figure is characteristic of all IOM's campaigns here examined²⁴⁰ but best visible and most developed is the image of 'human-marionette' from the Baltic States' campaign. The trope of the hook, already present in the Figure 4 of La Strada/IOM campaign as to signify prostitution as a situation of captivity with the implied idea of suicide/death, reappears in IOM's campaign in the Baltic States, but here it loses the indirectness that characterized it previously. This time the idea of a hanged female body is not implied but instead directly conveyed by numerous hooks that keep the body suspended mid-air. The position of the head, arms, hands, legs and feet all serve to convey the image of a trafficked woman as an inanimate object. This construction becomes even more evident in the Figure 10 where the exclusive focalisation on the woman's legs and feet prompt the reading of the female body as a dead body.

As for the trope of the doll so the representation of dead feminine body is part of the common image repertoire of Western culture. In her book on death, femininity and the aesthetic, Elisabeth Bronfen shows that the coupling of femininity and death is a popular and constant theme in literature and painting from the Age of Sensibility to the Modern period (1992: 60). Exactly because the images of feminine death are so familiar and so excessively obvious, explains Bronfen, they often escape observation. This is even more so because what is actually negotiated over the representation of dead feminine body is not visible. In fact, both death and femininity are privileged tropes through which culture represses (and articulates) its knowledge of death as well as its desire for immutability. In the representation of death, the existence of death is acknowledged and repressed at the same time precisely because it occurs as an image and is as such confined to the realm of representation, and because it affects someone else's body thus confirming the viewers as living.²⁴¹ The feminine as a sign that

²⁴⁰ In other IOM's campaigns, the cage (Figure 5), the spider-web (Figure 6) and male hands (Figure 7) all perform the function of containment and stabilization of woman as a subversive sign.

²⁴¹ Bronfen's analysis of the relationship between images of death and viewers calls into question, once again, the likelihood of IOM's campaign in Baltic States to reach young women potential migrants as its targeted audience. Even if we disregard for the moment that the campaign appeals to the male audience by positioning the female body as the eroticised object of the male gaze, the fact that it resorts

destabilizes the symbolic register, becomes in death a static figure that signifies Otherness in a stable manner. The sacrificed feminine body, Bronfen elaborates, is a site where the struggle over the re-affirmation of boundaries between self and other and of a threatened order is negotiated: 'Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfirmed or secured, whether because the sacrifice of the virtuous, innocent woman serves a social critique and transformation or because the sacrifice of a dangerous woman re-establishes an order that is momentarily suspended due to her presence' (1992: 181). The woman's dead body therefore indicates both a moment of anxiety about the instability of a political community and simultaneously produces this latter's stabilization, as a way of preserving the illusion of control and security. For the (fantasy of) social order to be re-established, woman is killed symbolically, her subjectivity effaced and turned into a stereotype.

The investigation of skin as a boundary object and a threshold of access to other(s), and of feminine death as a mode of re-affirming the threatened order sheds light on how the representation of hanged and captive women's bodies in IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns addresses the crisis of the European political community. Wounded and violated female bodies as central tropes in IOM's campaigns disclose a number of anxieties about the economic and political transformations in the eastern European space, as well as about European integration and contentions surrounding belonging and citizenship in the enlarged European community. The ambivalence and crisis over boundaries is represented by a porous woman's body. If the integrity of the political community is to be regained and its boundaries preserved a female body, as my analysis suggests, needs to be secured (by hooks and ropes) into a fixed posture and stable sign. Hence, the recourse to the trope of the doll or entrapped feminine body reduces, on the one hand, women to the sign 'Woman' and, on the other, hints at the desire to restore a familiar and ordered world. Moreover, the collapsing of body and sexuality with femininity makes use and reinforces the binary opposition which, by associating once again femininity with emotions and the body and masculinity with mind and reason, constitutes the basis for women's exclusion from the sphere of citizenship. IOM's campaigns relegate women to the status of 'beneficiaries' (Fraser in Cronin 2000:106) of counter-trafficking services rather than recognizing them as subjects endowed with, and constituted through, the capacity to act. By depicting migrant women as violated victims and

to an inanimate woman's body as a means of warning female audience about the dangers of migration is quite a tricky strategy precisely because it relays upon the process of identification between the viewer and the viewed object. In fact, the campaign opted for the image of a female body whose age can be approximated as between twenty and thirty, which, as my data show, corresponds roughly to the age of the women involved in trafficking. However, as Bronfen's work suggests, since the images of death remain inevitably confined to someone else's body, IOM's warning is more likely to set into play mechanisms of disidentification than identification with the represented object, and thus attain little success in reaching the desired female audience.

exaggerating the perils of migration, IOM's campaigns discourage women's (labour) mobility and suggest staying at home as the safest option for women. The stabilizing of current transformations within the European community through the capturing of women within 'Woman' go than hand in hand with restricting women's social and labour mobility. Instead of extending citizenship rights as IOM's campaigns claim to do, I argue that counter-trafficking campaigns enact a (discursive) containment that limits the possibilities for creating new images of female subjectivity at a time of deep social and symbolic re-organization of the European space, thus holding in place and out of citizenship the bodies of eastern European women.

6. Conclusion: Management of Bodies

Across the eastern European space, IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns resort to the construction of victimizing images of female bodies as a way of warning potential women migrants about the dangers of migration abroad, and empowering them to make informed choices concerning work and travel. Depersonalised masculine figures or figurative images such as spider webs, cages or hooks and ropes are used to portray traffickers as criminals and signal the hazards of irregular women's labour migration. Rather than constituting a tool of empowerment for women, my analysis points out that IOM's rendering of trafficking is a highly gendered type of contemporary fiction which re/produces stereotypical re/presentation of femininity and masculinity in relation to nationals from various eastern European States. My work further suggests that the narratives of victimhood and criminality are constitutive elements of IOM's regime of representation of trafficking that discloses the crisis of the European political community as well as the dissymmetry of power relations in the enlarged Europe.

The white feminine body, the image at the very core of IOM's campaigns, constitutes a privileged space where conflicts around symbolic order and citizenship/belonging are translated into a visible representational frame (Lionnet 1995: 127). The construction of victimizing images relies on artistic/visual techniques and narrative strategies that uphold the production of 'Woman' in terms of the domestic, passive and sexual. Female characters are muted or dispossessed of the speaking voice, and of an active gaze; their bodies are squeezed and captured by a rhetoric which positions them exclusively as victims. The construction of victimhood is additionally achieved by attributes such as youth and innocence, and further strengthened by the characterization of the bodies as white. While it is certainly true that eastern European women are 'white', the construction of victimhood relies on exaggerating the attributes of whiteness such as in figure number four of La

Strada/IOM campaign where angelic innocence is pivotal to the process of 'racialization' of trafficked victim (Berman 2003). The production of victimhood is thus, as my work points out, contingent upon the 'en-gendering' of bodies as female and their 'racializing' as white.

Victimhood, innocence and whiteness all feed into rescue fantasies and sustain the politics of salvation that promotes the private sphere as the safest location for women. Since in IOM's regime of representation the most common types of women's informal labour migration inevitably lead into slavery and forced prostitution, my analysis suggests that IOM's campaigns discourage women's (labour) migration and aim at controlling women's mobility and sexuality by depicting (movement) abroad in terms of a threat and by extension encouraging the perception of home as safe. Given that 'home' is portrayed as devoid of danger and thus also of prostitution, IOM's campaigns equate women's place with their sexuality and attempt to regulate the latter by placing women within the familiar space heterosexual domesticity (cfr. Pollock 1998: 81-82). Yet, resorting to 'Woman' as institution/representation quite paradoxically shows that the control of female sexuality goes hand in hand with its eroticisation. The display of suffering but beautiful victims positions the woman's body as the object of (male) gaze and mobilizes erotic ways of looking that disclose a voyeuristic eroticisation and fetishist fascination with a severed/captive female body. The representation of violence is thus itself violent since it confirms stereotypes about eastern European women as beautiful (passive) victims, severs the body from its materiality and from the historical context in which trafficking occurs, equates the feminine with the eroticised object and finally confines women within the highly disabling symbolic register of 'Woman' as to maintain a certain imaginary social order.

Anxieties about the changing European landscape – visible also through representational strategies that encourage large-scale criminalization of eastern European societies and induce the production of fear – are stabilized by means of a discursive and visual containment that holds the eastern European woman within coordinates of 'her' national territory. The technology of gender –the term advanced by de Lauretis to indicate the techniques and discursive practices by means of which gender is constructed and violence en-gendered (1987: 38)— put forth by IOM's counter trafficking campaigns exposes the struggle over the control of women's bodies, sexuality and labour mobility as they accompany the processes of economic 'transition' and integration in the enlarged Europe. Finally, the regime of representation set up by IOM's counter trafficking campaigns across the eastern European space entraps women within highly restricted spatial and symbolic coordinates leaving however a strand of mobility open since it is IOM itself that represents women's way away from forced prostitution. It is quite paradoxically over

her violated body that IOM attains its credibility and expertise in combating trafficking and assisting its victims.

Unpacking Trafficking: Labour, Mobility and European Citizenship

[Trafficking] is violent criminals distorting and preventing the notion of migration. [Trafficking] is ... something dark, frightening and ugly.
Helga Konrad, OSCE²⁴²

1. Introduction

Gender matters to capital. Whether they speak of ‘feminization of migration’ (Castles and Miler 1993), ‘feminization the international labour force’ (Parreñas 2001) or ‘feminization of survival’ (Sassen 2000), scholars make use of these terms to show the gendered implications of global restructuring. This chapter explores, based on the results presented in the previous chapters, the macrostructural determinants of trafficking. Macrolevel approach situates trafficking within the context of transnational migration and global transformation of labour markets. It illustrates the structural processes that shape patterns of migration and employment in both ‘transition’ and industrialized ‘western’ countries. Within this analytical framework, trafficking processes in Europe emerge, I argue, as part of the ‘gendered political economy of migration’ (Parreñas 2001: 61).

To develop a macrolevel approach to trafficking, I draw from scholarship that discusses the restructuring of the labour markets in eastern Europe in relation to processes of economic globalization. Scholars concur that in the countries of eastern Europe, trafficking of women for the sex industry emerged in the context of ‘transition’ from a planned economy to a market economy. Economic restructuring, integral to globalization and EU integration, brought about women’s unemployment and underemployment as well as the deterioration of their social rights. Transformation of labour markers pressured women to move into ‘informal’ sectors or to migrate in order to find alternative means of attaining income. The ‘feminization of

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migration', namely the increased presence of women in transnational migration, is accompanied by a 'feminization of the international labour force'. Discussing the effects of economic restructuring globally, scholars point out that next to affecting 'transitional' and 'developing' economies, economic reconstitution resulted also in a growing demand for low-wage women's labour in industrialized countries' domestic and sex-related service sectors (Campani in Psimmenos 2000: 85, Parreñas 2001).

Women's migration and the demand for low-paid women's labour in industrialized nations go hand in hand with control over labour mobility. Building my analysis on the studies that investigate restrictions of people's mobility in relation to the capitalist mode of production, I identify border, immigration, and labour regulations as mechanisms of control of migrants' mobility. My analysis brings to the fore the formation of the external EU border as well as the proliferation of borders and other models of migration control across eastern Europe. These mechanisms of control, part of the EU's unification and integration process, create conditions for emergence and proliferation of trafficking. Political obstacles to free movement produce 'irregular' migration and generate dependence on third parties in the process of migration. Moreover, immigration and labour regulations in industrialized nations impede migrants' independent access to employment and facilitate conditions of exploitation and confinement in sex work.

The simultaneous mobility of the labour force and its confinement might appear at first glance as two incompatible tendencies. Yet, these contradictory pulls have been identified as intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production and its functioning. Scholars have emphasized the importance of the discontinuities in the processes of globalization. Bringing contradiction to the fore is central because it challenges the narrative of a linear and progressive advancement of neo-liberal capitalism put forth by a large body of globalization scholarship. Paying attention to the contradictions in the process of globalization allows for its re-articulation by making visible processes of subjectivization and social struggles (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, Mezzadra and Pertillo 2000). Along these lines, Sandro Mezzadra suggests to view instances of migration as subjective 'lines of escape' from conditions of social and economic impoverishment (2001). Building on this discussion, I interpret women's migratory projects, their exit from third party controlled prostitution, and their continuous negotiation of legal and symbolic registers that confine them to the category of the victim as such 'lines of escape'. In my analysis, women's desire for, and demand of, mobility become indicative of the conflicts that arise from attempts to control and confine migration.

Migrant women's struggles to achieve mobility and the ways in which these push the boundaries of citizenship remained concealed by the dominant rhetoric of trafficking organized around victims-criminals binary. When attention is paid to the

tensions and contentions surrounding trafficking, as I do in this chapter, trafficking emerges as a site of struggle over 'race' and gender order in Europe and ultimately over European citizenship. Descriptions of trafficking in terms of 'something dark, frightening and ugly' as the one advanced by Helga Konrad (2002: 32), are read within my interpretative framework as anxieties about the changing European landscape (economic restructuring, EU enlargement and crisis of state sovereignty) and issues of entitlement in the European community. By relating it to the complexity of current economic, social, and political transformations, this chapter aims to demystify trafficking and elicit the role sex-trafficking discourse and policies play in legitimating and upholding new hierarchies in Europe. In addition, building on migrant women's practices of citizenship as described in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, my analysis shows that far from being simply a matter of institutional discretion, European citizenship is being defined through a constant interaction and conflict between institutional codification of citizenship and migrant women's practices of citizenship.

2. Eastern European Countries in the Context of 'Transition'

Saskia Sassen distinguishes three transnational 'circuits' that have grown out and further expanded as a consequence of global economic restructuring: trafficking for the sex industry, cross border-migration, and development of various types of formal and informal labour market (2000). The term 'counter-geography' is used to signal circuits that are a central part of global economic processes even though they often operate outside of the established trade agreements. These circuits are identified as 'counter-geographies' of globalization due to their growth in importance as profit-making activities. For the actors partaking in these global circuits, (migrant) women, agents/contractors and the governments of departure countries of migrants, they represent 'alternative global circuits for making a living, earning a profit and securing government revenue' (2000: 523). Sassen indicates that these alternative circuits rely for the biggest part on women's labour: '... households and whole communities are increasingly dependent on women for their survival... governments too are dependent on their earnings as well as enterprises where profit making exists at the margins of the 'licit' economy' (506). These circuits and the centrality of women within them constitute a 'new political-economic reality' referred to as 'feminization of survival' (505).

As Sassen shows, the emergence and growth of these alternative circuits are linked to reorganization of economic structures. As far as eastern European countries are concerned, economic restructuring entails the transition from a planned to market

economy and the subsequent liberalization of trade. The latter trend involves the movement of capital from industrial centres to the ‘transition’ countries and creation of export processing zones (EPZs), namely ‘industrial zones with special incentives set up to attract foreign investors, in which imported materials undergo some degree of processing before being (re-)exported again’ (ILO 2002: 1). While EPZs take different forms such as free trade zones, special economic zones, bonded warehouses, free ports, and *maquiladoras*, free trade zones are the most common form EPZs take in eastern Europe (ibid.). EPZs exist in different countries in eastern Europe and fSU, as for example in Lithuania and Ukraine, and have become one of the major features of the labour market in ‘transition’ countries such as Czech Republic and Hungary where exports from EPZs account for a up sizeable portion (up to 80%) of their merchandise exports (ILO 2002: 3). Setting up of free trade zones and consequent economic restructuring overlaps, scholars point out, with the process of European integration.²⁴³ This implies that implementation of institutional and free-market oriented economic reforms in various countries of eastern Europe constitute crucial EU integration criteria and set the schedule of these countries EU’ candidacy (Iverkovic 2003).²⁴⁴

Women’s labour, especially in reproductive or low-paid industrial sector in national economies, is pivotal for the restructuring of capitalist production on the European level. Processes of economic reorganization, as feminist scholars have shown, have gendered implications. Studies have pointed out that transnational corporations are able to maintain low wages for male workers in EPZs by relying on largely unmonetized women’s reproductive labour and subsistence farming.²⁴⁵ Additionally, EPZs are also one of the major sources of formal sector employment for women (ILO 2002). In fact, manufacturing production, textile, and electronic industries in free trade zones rely predominantly on women’s labour. By employing (young) low-paid workers and prohibiting unionizing, firms secure competitive prices on re-imported goods for the Western countries where the capital originated. While this type of employment relies on the exploitation of women’s labour, it is important to point out that this employment arrangement is contradictory for women, since it

²⁴³ These are Central European Free-Trade Association (ex. Visegrad Group) which includes Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia; then the cluster of three Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A South East Europe (SEE) free trade zone is to be set up following the bilateral free-trade treaties with EU. In the SEE cluster, the two accession Candidates –Romania and Bulgaria-- have already signed bilateral free-trade agreements with EU in the field of manufactures and to a lesser degree agriculture (Iverkovic 2003: 11).

²⁴⁴ In relation to EU integration process and post 1989 ‘dis-integration’ of some states in eastern Europe, Iverkovic argues that political fragmentation of Soviet and Central East European political space was the precondition of its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The reorganization of eastern European region was dictated by the globalization process that required ‘remodeled state-entities [which] fit better into the readjusted international division of labour’ (Iverkovic 2003: 9).

²⁴⁵ This literature is too large to be addressed here. For a useful overview of this body of texts, coming especially from development studies see among others Adam 2002, Sassen 2000, Visvanathan 1997.

also creates avenues for 'young women to enter the formal economy at better wages than in agriculture and domestic service' (ILO 2002: 4). However, ILO also indicates that men workers substitute women labourers as soon as the nature of the employment evolves and the technology input becomes higher (ibid.). In this respect, women's labour in EPZs remains restricted to low-skill and low-prospect sectors.

Moreover, the policies for loans and Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs) that accompany the process of transition have enhanced inequalities between industrialized and 'transition' countries and prompted feminist scholars to label this situation as 'economic colonialism' (Adam 2002). What is meant with this term can best be understood if we look at the function of the SAPs. Aid and loans passed to the transition countries are tied to a number of conditions that maintain and deepen the inequalities between industrialized nations and aid recipients. This occurs through establishing trade conditions that limit the exports of recipient states to one type of cash crop while at the same time obliging them to import goods from the industrial lender country. This trend is accompanied by the elimination of import quotas, the lowering of recipient country's import tariffs, and the devaluations of currency as to make the export more attractive for the lender countries. The pressure to be competitive results in the reduction of spending on welfare, food, and agriculture subsidies in recipient countries as well as in cuts in health care and education (Adam 2002: 12). Hence, transition from a socialist and/or communist state to a market-oriented economy involves transforming the role of the state and limiting its protective functions. As a general trend, this shift has resulted in the decline of industries oriented towards national and local markets, the growth of unemployment, and a general worsening of living conditions in the countries of 'transition'.

3. Economic Transition and its Effects on Women in eastern Europe

Feminist scholars are careful to underscore that studies about the impact of economic restructuring on women in transition must pay attention to regional differences such as country's 'specific social and economic constellations, cultural traditions, state constitutions and degree of national dependence' (Becker-Schmidt 2002: 8). Yet, scholars concur that, as a general trend, women's socio-economic and political conditions across eastern Europe have worsened. Moreover, scholars also agree that as a result of the hierarchical gender arrangements, which position women and men differently within the society and labour market capitalist restructuring has affected women more severely than men. Since eastern European space is comprised of new EU member states as well as the non Candidate states, and the first are affected by EU's equal opportunities policies, one might think that women in Candidate states are

better off than in countries that are not part of the EU integration process. Current scholarship that investigates women and gender in transition disproves this assumption.

The primacy EU gives to its economic agenda, and the impact this has on the status of women in new EU member states has been critically addressed by feminist studies on the integration process. A recent comparative study on the EU's gendered integration policies in three Candidate states –Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia— negatively evaluated the current EU approaches in these countries (Regulska 2001). The research indicates a number of positive effects of EU gender related policies, such as highlighting the previously invisible discrimination and violence against women, putting pressure on governmental institutions to make changes, and increasing gender awareness among public officials and citizens. However, due to EU's main focus on equal opportunities and reconciliation of family and work as well as its reluctance to move beyond the labour and market spheres, the research indicates that EU policies are likely not to achieve their goal. Given that the gender-related agenda is set by the EU and that its experiences serve as norms and standards, the EU's policies run the risk of being rejected by women in the new Member States, especially because they are seen as irrelevant to their own national needs/agendas. Other empirical work on accession countries such as Hungary and Poland for example, similarly points to the deterioration of social and economic benefits for women as a consequence of the process of European integration (Koncs 2002, Roman 2001, Siemienska 2002).

Research project on women in transition economies, completed by International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF 2000) confirms these findings. The research examined the status of women in 29 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the former Soviet Union (fSU). In what follows, I pay special attention to two issues discussed in the IHF report –education and labour—as they were the elements that most often appeared in the narratives of women I interviewed. One of the consequences of the transition to market economies in the countries from which the respondents came from is the interruption of girls and women's education. The dismantling of public education resulted in the reduction of education benefits, which had disastrous repercussions for women and girls. Due to a high level of economic crisis and increased poverty, women present a high level of dropouts from school, especially in fSU where the state abandoned control over compulsory education. In Moldova, girls' education has been affected both on primary as well as university levels, and the number of female students has greatly decreased. In Romania, for example, the difficulties created in the transition process resulted in high dropout rates in post-high schools. In Serbia, women have been moving out of education and into 'informal' economy (IHF 2000).

When it comes to the transformation of labour market, the IHF Report points out increased levels of women's poverty and unemployment. For example, while since 1997 women's unemployment in Romania is equal to that of men (18-20%), due to their labour positions in sectors subject to economic restructuring, women still represent a more vulnerable group (2000: 350). In Moldova, a state where 80% of population lives in poverty, the economic crisis caused by restructuring and privatization disproportionately affected women. Women's unemployment dramatically increased due to the economic restructuring and reduction of personal in low-income light industries employing mostly women (80-85%). In comparison to 1994, when the rate of women's unemployment was 8.9%, in 1998 the rate increased to 17.8% for women and 10.2% for men (IHF 2000: 314). In the Ukraine, a high level of underemployment is typical for women's labour: women are highly educated, but the level of education does not correspond to employment requirements. Due to deep socio-economic crisis, women's employment rate has been declining constantly since 1995, far below men's unemployment rates. Some 3 million people lost jobs in 1997 due to the closing of production lines and have received no money for wages. Consequently, one-third of the entire population profits from unofficial employment and has moved from informal employment, so-called 'shadow economies'. Women are the majority of population forced onto the streets and into selling and buying goods in the marketplace. Young women under the age of 30 are the most vulnerable in this situation and they amount to 44.3% of total number of unemployed women in the Ukraine (IHF 2000: 476).

Looking at education and labour is fundamental in efforts to comprehend the life stories of the respondents within the context of the socio-economic transition. The respondents, aged between twenty and thirty, belong to the first generation of young women who have been raised and educated in eastern European and FSU countries during the 'transition' period from socialism/communism to a neo-liberal market economy. My analysis in Chapter 2, in the section entitled *Projects of Migration, Projects of Autonomy*, identified economic hardship, lack of employment opportunities and the search for economic improvement as some of the elements that informed respondents' migratory projects. A number of respondents such as Ester and Maja for example, could not find any employment upon completing their high school or professional school. Ester, who completed a professional school for nurses, eventually earned some money by small-scale buying and selling of goods. Some, like Kateryna, dropped out of high school in the attempt to secure some income for their families. Those like Liudmila and Sasha, who were studying at the university, found that a part time job did not suffice to cover the increase of educational and living costs.

For others who worked in low-wage sectors, the impact of economic restructuring entailed loss of salary and eventually unemployment. Ana, for example, worked in a meat factory that was closed to economic failure and paid workers' in meat as opposed to paying them wages. Ana attempted different strategies in order to get cash, such as falsifying medical prescription and telling the factory director that she needed cash for medicines. Since none of her attempts yielded any results, she decided to leave the factory. Depending on their age, economic background, and existing state of employment, different respondents were affected differently by processes of economic restructuring. All of them faced increased economic hardship, a lack of employment opportunities as well as a lack of future work prospects. Therefore, women's chances of being economically self-sufficient decreased. As my data shows, in concurrence with other scholarship, transition from a socialist/communist state-centralized to a market-oriented economy resulted in the deterioration of women's socio-economic conditions. Young women had a particularly difficult time finding initial employment, improving their economic situation, and gaining independence from the family.

4. Female Migration and the Mechanisms of Confinement of Mobility

The rise of unemployment and underemployment has pressured women to find alternative means of income. A study in Romania showed that women from cities have moved in great numbers into agricultural subsistence sectors (Roman 2001). Moreover, large numbers of women across the region have entered the 'grey' economy, especially so-called 'suitcase' industry (i.e. buying and selling goods at the market). Scholars also point to the increased presence of women in sex work across the region (IHF 2000: 541, Scully 2001: 94).²⁴⁶ While these forms of labour occur within national territories, it is quite common for them to take place across national borders too (Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002, Wessely 2002).

My reconstruction of migration histories on the base of the respondents' narratives in Chapter 2 indicated that, before entering the trafficking systems and sex work, a number of women already undertook various forms of labour migration abroad. Some of them, like Maja or Ana, migrated to Cyprus or Serbia to work in the entertainment sector. Others were taking part in so-called 'mixed' economy. Snezana, for example, combined petty trade—which involved buying goods in Turkey and selling them in Moldova—with entertainment work while passing through Istanbul.

²⁴⁶ One note of caution is appropriate in this case. From the data presented it is not clear whether women's involvement in sex work increased or whether the sex sector recently became visible and came to the attention of researchers and media alike.

Others, as in the case of Oksana, occasionally migrated with a family member from Ukraine to Romania for seasonal agriculture work. Those women who did not migrate for work abroad were familiar with others who left for Italy, Japan, or the USA to work in restaurants, do domestic or sex work. Thus, for those respondents who did not leave, labour migration was nevertheless part of their collective histories.

In accordance with the structural approach to migration, my data identify the transition to a market economy and its impact on women as factors that informed women's migration. However, my results also point to the limits of the structural approach in so far as it does not recognize subjective instances of migration, nor the non-economic factors constitutive of women's migration. An example of the limits of the structural approach to migration can be examined in relation to the episode of interruption of education I presented in Chapter 2, section *Ruptures and a Search for Alternative Life Projects*. Kateryna dropped out of school due to her families' economic hardship and in order to take over a part of the family's economic burden. The situation was exacerbated by her mother's loss of work and consequent prolonged unemployment. From the above description, it is clear that Kateryna left school in order to find a job. However, Kateryna left school due to non-economic reasons too. Among those reasons were: the feeling of shame due to her family's poverty and her father's alcoholism, and anger at her mother's incapacity to leave the circle of domestic violence, obtain a job, and take care of Kateryna. Moreover, Kateryna's decision to leave school was prompted by her disappointment in herself when she went from being one of the best students in the nation to one of the worst in her class.

For Kateryna, as for other respondents, migrating abroad corresponded to the desire to escape oppressive economic situations and look for alternative ways of making a living. At the same time, women's migration was triggered by their desire for autonomy from their families, pursuit of recognition and respect, and search for ways of escaping a general sense of life stagnation. My data concur thus only in part with those readings, such as Sassen's, that interpret trafficking as related to, and prompted by, free-market reforms and subsequent increase in gendered social inequalities. The attention my work pays to women's projects of autonomy and their demands for mobility brings into focus the subjective instances that inform contemporary women's migration usually overlooked by macro-analysis of migratory flows (cfr. Mezzadra 2001: 52).

Women's migration is restrained by a set of mechanisms and regulations such as strict border and visa controls. The intensification of border controls, in particular of the external borders of the EU, has been seen as compensation for the abolishment

of the internal borders between Schengen states²⁴⁷ and the formation of an area of free circulation for EU citizens (Turnbull 1999). Lifting of the internal borders of the EU meant a simultaneous relocation of control to the EU's external borders and the creation of what has been dubbed 'fortress Europe'. EU Policies and practices on matters of migration have created, in Étienne Balibar's words, a 'double regime of the circulation of people' (Balibar in Simoncini 2000: 32). This kind of policies facilitate and encourage the labour mobility of the EU citizens, while simultaneously restricting the mobility of 'Third Country' nationals. The EU enlargement process, especially when it comes to border control and visa restrictions, has transformed this double regime into multiple regimes of differentiated degrees of mobility among the EU, EU Candidates, and the non-Candidate states.

As a condition for integration, the EU Candidate states were required to apply Schengen-type border and visa regulations towards the non-Candidates. Hence, the Czech Republic included Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus in their proposal for new visa policies (Bort 2000: 6). Other measures, such as the 'Safe Third Country' rule, further restricted migrants' mobility (Dietrich 2000: 123). For example, Safe Third Countries such as Poland introduced EU-like asylum regulations that enable Polish authorities to deport undocumented migrants from Polish territory to the detention camps in Ukraine and Belarus (FFM 1998: 6).²⁴⁸ These operations shifted the responsibility for border protection and interception of undocumented migration from the EU to EU Candidates, and turned the latter into a kind of 'buffer zone', or into the EU's new migration 'gatekeepers' (Andreas 2000). Critical scholars and policy makers have pointed out that the aforementioned practices seriously endanger the stability of geopolitical relations in eastern Europe and might yield detrimental results for the EU as a whole. This is due to the fact that the strict application of the Schengen border and visa regimes undermines the freedom of movement of persons between CEE and fSU achieved in the post-1989 period, and creates new power-hierarchies within the eastern European region (Apap 2001). In this respect, I argue that subsuming of trafficking under the heading of organized crime legitimates the intensification of mechanism of control over eastern European's (labour) mobility on the one hand, and on the other, it normalizes the formation of a new 'hierarchical order of relationships' in enlarged Europe (Rigo 2004: 22). This is most visible if we focus on the issue of labour mobility. Becoming EU members does not entitle the nationals of the new eastern European EU member states to the same labour privileges granted to the

²⁴⁷ Today Schengen area is comprised of: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

²⁴⁸ Additionally, EU Candidates are also expected to sign re-admission agreements, amend their Aliens' Law and the strengthen (or introduce) laws against human trafficking. For a brilliant analysis of the transformation of the Alien Law in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria in the context of the EU enlargement and constitutionalisation of European citizenship see Rigo (2004).

citizens from ‘core’ EU countries. In fact, the freedom of nationals of the new EU member states to take up employment anywhere in the EU is being delayed for a period between two to seven years after accession. Scholars refer to this type of selective citizenship as ‘partial-citizenship’ (Mezzadra and Rigo 2003). However, nationals of non-Candidate states –the states from which the respondents come from—are entitled to an even lesser degree of (labour) movement and their mobility is heavily restrained by existing visa regimes.

My results illustrate the consequences of heightened border control on women’s lives. To this end, it is crucial to reiterate that all respondents came from the countries that are situated on the outside of the eastern EU border and whose citizens’ mobility is heavily restricted. As I have illustrated in Chapter 2, when respondents – such as Liudmila—failed to obtain visas or arrange passports on their own, due to lack of contacts or cash, they relied on third parties. The latter would then provide women with necessary travel documents and/or organize the travel, and thus made it possible for women to reach Italy. Since some respondents had a visa for Italy and some did not, and those who did not became ‘illegal’ in Italy once their visas expired, my result indicate that it is extremely problematic to endorse trafficking as a form of illegal migration, in opposition to legally approved modes of migration. Trafficking might have legal elements, such as legally obtained visas, while legal migratory processes might involve illegal components, like requests for high fees advanced by the agencies or even illegal payments charged by Consulates. Hence, as my data suggests, separating ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ forms of migration and subsuming trafficking under the latter --as the current definition of trafficking advanced by the UN Protocol does— overshadows the fact that tightening immigration regulations has reduced legal channels of migration. In contemporary times, illegality has become a structural characteristic of migratory flows (Mezzadra 2001: 78).

The arrangements women entered with third parties in order to reach Italy exposed them, however, to the danger of sexual/physical abuse by third parties, or to detention and interrogation by the border police if captured during their border crossing. Having little or no control over the terms of the journey meant that it were the interests of the third parties that determined the women’s travel routes and the length of travel (cfr. Koslowski 2001). The proliferation of border controls and the introduction of new visa policies also raises the costs of travel (cfr. Parreñas 2001, Phizacklea and Anderson 1997, Sutdhibhasilp 2002).²⁴⁹ For example, for women travelling from Moldova or Ukraine without valid travel documents, this meant that each border crossing from the country of origin to Italy and across the Balkans

²⁴⁹ Parreñas shows that the fee that agencies charged for assisting migrants with undocumented migration from Phillipinas into Italy doubled to U.S.\$ 8000 in the 1990s when Italy joined Schengen and strengthened the control at its external borders (2001).

organized by third parties came with a cost. In other words, each segment of the journey was ascribed a monetary value which the respondents, having no financial means to pay, were required to pay off through sex-work at various locations during the journey. At times, repaying of travel costs for the previous segment and arranging for the next segment of the journey entailed being passed against payment from one agent to the other. In the trafficking literature this operation is commonly referred to as being 'sold' (Global Survival Network 1997, Kelly 2002: 31-32). Hence, my work suggests that stricter immigration controls adopted to curb trafficking increase the costs of 'doing business' (Salt and Stein 1997), raise the value of migrants' as (labour) 'commodities' (Kyle and Dale 2001), and ultimately serve the economic interests of third parties. By extension, they increase the level of control that third parties can exercise over migrants, both during the journey and upon the arrival to their destinations (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003). Thus, quite paradoxically, increased control over migrants' mobility is likely not to curb transnational crime, but rather heighten the involvement of organized crime, due to the increased profit from trafficking activities (Finckenauer 2001, Koslowski 2001: 351).²⁵⁰

While scholars disagree about the involvement of transnational criminal organizations in trafficking and some prefer to talk of the 'crime that is organized' rather than of the 'organized crime',²⁵¹ (cfr. Caldwell *at al.* 1999, Finckenauer 2001, Salt and Stein 1997, Shannon 1999), my data suggest that 'trafficking' activities have become an integral part of the local and informal economies across eastern Europe in the period of economic 'transition'. This is, however, not distinctive of 'trafficking' for the sex industry. On the contrary, feminist researchers indicate that women who migrated to work in informal economies, whether in domestic or sex sectors, rely on agencies or individual travel organizers in order to undertake their journeys and arrive at the destination (Anderson and Phizacklea 1997, Sharma 2003, Sutdhibasilp 2002). Keeping in mind the contraction of legal migration channels to countries of the EU and the limitations presented by the existing short-term seasonal migration schemas,²⁵² I propose to rethink the role of 'traffickers' in a way that reflects the interconnection between economic restructuring, migration, and labour. This means re-conceptualising 'trafficking' as exclusively organized crime and moving towards a framework that examines third parties as an extension, or even replacement of labour recruiters (Kyle and Dale 2001: 52). In the context of restricted labour mobility and

²⁵⁰ Data indicates that organized criminal organizations were initially not involved with trafficking but that trafficking took place instead via migrants' network type of structure (IOM in Turnbull 1999: 192).

²⁵¹ Crime that is organized stands for 'amorphous collectors of individuals [...] who come together around a particular criminal opportunity. They exploit that opportunity and then drift apart' (Finckenauer 2001: 168).

²⁵² These schemas, usually for agriculture or construction work are oriented towards male migrants (Kofman 1999: 282).

increased demand for ‘unskilled’ migrant labour in countries with advanced capitalist economies, third party organizers of ‘trafficking’ have become an alternative to legally sanctioned systems of migration.

5. The Delocalization of Border Control

As scholars have remarked on several occasions, and as my research has confirmed, border controls and visa-regimes do not prevent people from moving from their countries of origin nor from reaching the EU (Mezzadra and Rigo 2003, Bigo 2003, Andreas and Snyder 2000). Rather, enhanced border controls raise the costs, duration, and danger of migration. They increase the undocumented modes of travel, involvement of criminal networks, and profit for third parties. They do not, however, put a stop to peoples crossing into the EU. While some scholars talk of a ‘war’ in order to describe the conflict taking place on Europe’s external borders and the human costs²⁵³ it entails (Mezzadra and Rigo 2003), others prefer to downplay borders importance because they do not constitute an impenetrable barrier and cannot be controlled comprehensively (Bigo 2003, Andreas and Snyder 2000). Hence, the idea that states entertain about fully policed borders is nothing more than a ‘myth’ (Anderson 2000: 25) and an ‘illusion of control’ (Bigo 2003). The importance ascribed to borders needs to be understood instead, as Didier Bigo argues, in relation to the important psychological function they are playing western European societies (2000). They are meant to provide a feeling of security and to impel a sense of belonging to the political community for citizens (Snyder 2000).²⁵⁴ Borders’ symbolic role is therefore intrinsically connected to their juridico-material formation and functioning as ‘filters’ in channelling wanted from unwanted migratory flows (Andreas 2000: 4).

While borders fulfil a number of functions, it is also important to highlight that borders have recently undergone major transformations. In fact, borders in Europe have been increasingly delocalised. This means that the control, once located at the borders, is now exercised by a variety of means and in a variety of locations so much so that scholars talk of a ‘virtual border’ (Freudenstein 2001) and ‘indeterminate

²⁵³ United for Intercultural Action, a Dutch based European network against nationalism, racism and fascism, has counted more than 3000 deaths of migrants as a result of border policing, detention and deportation policies, and carrier sanctions. These numbers concern only those migrants who have been identified. Hence, the ‘real’ numbers are unknown.

²⁵⁴ EU Governments seem quite aware of the matter. A communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the European Parliament states: ‘The conclusion of the European Council [of Leaken in December 2001] reminds us that coherent, effective common management of the external borders of the member states of the Union will boost security and the citizen’s sense of belonging to a shared area and destiny’ (COM(2002) 233: 2).

zones' (Bigo 2003). These include among others, Schengen Information System (SIS),²⁵⁵ consulates' computerization, common EU visa and asylum policies, bilateral 'readmission' agreements between the EU and third countries for return of migrants, 'Safe Third Country' rule,²⁵⁶ and penalties on airline companies so-called carriers' sanctions²⁵⁷. Presence of detention centres for undocumented migrants both inside and outside the EU is another example of delocalisation of control over migration.²⁵⁸ Hence, new *loci* of control are being created that remove control from national borders and extend it both inwards and outwards the EU' formal eastern border (Dietrich 2000, Bigo 2003). The authority over entry and stay within the state territory --functions traditionally pertaining to the state-- are being partially relocated to supranational actors, such as the EU, or to a variety of private non-state actors like transportation companies.²⁵⁹

Control over migrants' mobility is hence enforced through both material and administrative means. The UN Trafficking Protocol proposes similar provisions under the heading of 'preventive' measures. The third part of the UN Protocol, namely the Articles 9 through 13, recommends the following measures to combat trafficking: 'control of legitimacy and validity of travel documents, enhancement of border controls, and training and intensification of cooperation between law enforcement, immigration officials and other relevant authorities'. These measures correspond to the ones advanced by the EU to prevent undocumented migration. These are also the same measures that channel women into trafficking systems and produce conditions that permit migrant women's abuse and exploitation. Given these considerations it is quite surprising that until now scholars have advanced the UN Protocol as a model of human rights protection (cfr. Apap and Medved 2003, Hopkins and Nijboer 2003, HRW 2002).²⁶⁰ Feminist discussions around the UN Protocol have rather focused on the notions of coercion, deception and consent as regards to prostitution (Augustin

²⁵⁵ SIS is a EU wide computer system that provides the databases of Schengen countries with information about rejected asylum seekers, criminal aliens and other 'undesirables'.

²⁵⁶ This rule allows the EU to deport migrants and asylum seekers to the first country outside the EU defined as Safe.

²⁵⁷ The state impose to the carriers the duty to control the identity of the passengers, and penalizes the carriers in case they facilitate the transportation of undocumented migrants.

²⁵⁸ For an analysis of detention centers as forms of contemporary lagers see Sossi (2002). For further debate on detention centers see Hayter (2003), Il Manifesto Dossier (March 2003), Mezzadra and Neilson (2003), and Pajnik, Lesjak-Tusek and Gregorcic (2001).

²⁵⁹ This mechanism of control is enhanced through imposition of penalties or sanctions on private actors who facilitate migrants' undocumented entry or employment in the EU (Dietrich 2000, FFM 1998, Guild 2003).

²⁶⁰ The UN Trafficking Protocol as a model of human rights protection has been often contrasted to the EU' provisions on trafficking identified as privileging the criminalization approach to trafficking (Guild 2003, Turnbull 1999). However, the UN Trafficking Protocol is a law enforcement instrument rather than a human rights instrument. This is best visible from the fact that it adopts a language of enforcement and mandate when it comes to law enforcement provisions, and a 'weak' language when it comes to human rights and victim assistance (Jordan 2002).

2001, Doezema 2002, Raymond 2002). Keeping in mind that the UN Trafficking Protocol situates trafficking within the organized crime framework, I suggest viewing the Protocol as one of the instruments by means of which the regulation of migration is extended beyond the state borders and into new control fronts.

The link between attempts to curb trafficking and the extension of forms of control over migrants' mobility can be further observed in International Organization for Migration's (IOM) counter-trafficking campaigns. IOM's campaigns, as I have illustrated in Chapter 5, resort to victimizing images of female bodies in order to warn potential women migrants about the dangers of migration and prostitution, and in order to empower them to make informed choices concerning work and travel abroad. Rather than constituting a tool of empowerment for women, my analysis has shown that IOM's campaigns, by rendering of trafficked women's bodies as entrapped, wounded and/or ruptured, discourage eastern European women's informal (labour) migration. IOM's representation of movement abroad in terms of a danger and their subsequent idealization of home, advises staying at home as the safest option for young women. The control of migrants' mobility is not unique to IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns. Instead, it is a central component of a number of IOM's programmes across eastern Europe. IOM assists EU governments in 'repatriation' of irregular migrants,²⁶¹ assesses the functioning of EU border-regimes in the region,²⁶² manages detention centres for undocumented migrants, and intercepts 'illegal' migration from the non-EU candidate states into the accession countries, as well as from accession countries into the EU.²⁶³ All of these projects interfere with migrants' mobility whether through discouraging it (e.g. counter-trafficking campaigns), curbing it (e.g. interception, deportation), or 'containing' it (e.g. arbitrary detention, border-regimes).²⁶⁴ Thus, when examined within the larger framework of IOM's work, IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns emerge as part of IOM's overall intervention into controlling undocumented migration. I suggest that, contrary to IOM's claims of

²⁶¹ As in case of *REAN Programme* developed to return migrants from South Caucasian states, the Russian Federation, the Ukraine and Belarus who have been refused entry into the Netherlands or had their claim for asylum rejected.

²⁶² See for example the Project '*Border Service, Assessment and Strategic Development*' (BSSD) in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYOM).

²⁶³ In Romania, IOM is preparing 2 projects along the following lines; One is called *Pilot Project on Illegal Migration to EU Applicant States for the Purpose of Employment* and is concerned with "combating illegal migration for the purpose of employment in EU Applicant States", and the other is *Information Campaign Against Illegal Migration to EU Member States* and aims at "reducing illegal migration from EU Applicant Countries to EU Member States". <http://www.un.ro/iom.html> (consulted on 04.04.2003).

²⁶⁴ Recently, groups as various as British Refugee Council (England), Agista, Noborder (Germany), de Fabel van de illegaal (The Netherlands), Tavolo migranti (Italy), La Strada (Poland), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have initiated a debate about IOM, and argued that IOM pursues a control approach instead of rights-based approach to migration.

protecting migrants' rights,²⁶⁵ a number of IOM's projects across east Europe overlaps with and augments previously discussed EU migration and border policies.

While it is possible to perceive IOM as yet another actor in the general extension of state control over migration, my work raises questions about whether it is more appropriate to consider IOM a 'new global power player' (Sassen 1996). Since IOM plays a crucial role in the 'management' of borders and of entry into a state's territory –operations traditionally pertaining to the nation-state— my work proposes to consider IOM as a new global actor that has emerged out of the crisis of state sovereignty and out of the modifications of the global economy.²⁶⁶ Simultaneously, IOM is playing a crucial role in processes of their transformation through the systematic management of migratory movements. This understanding of IOM, I believe, is crucial for both scholars and policymakers concerned with trafficking. While a more elaborate investigation of IOM's work is beyond the scope of current analysis²⁶⁷, it seems to me that an effective scholarly scrutiny as well as policy interventions in a changing political landscape will depend on the development of analytic frameworks better able to grasp the current transformations of sovereign power in Europe.

Scholars disagree on whether the delegation of control to private and supranational actors will enable the EU to control their borders more effectively or whether it is simply a matter of dereliction of duty on the part of the state (Koslowski 2001, Lahav and Guiraudon 2001). While the efficiency of the EU coordinated border control remains an open question, my investigation of women's experiences of border crossing shows that the current proliferation and intensification of border controls across eastern European space enhance women's vulnerability to abuse, and power third parties hold over migrants. However, my work also suggest that an exclusive focus on borders risks glossing over the transformation of mechanisms of control and the identification of new actors and forms by means of which the confinement of migrants' mobility takes place. The UN Protocol and IOM's counter-trafficking campaigns are examples of these (new) forms of control that restrain migrants' movement. In this respect, both the UN Protocol and the IOM counter trafficking campaigns can be identified as what the immigration officials call 'border

²⁶⁵ http://www.iom.int/en/who/main_mission.shtml

²⁶⁶ Saskia Sassen argues that the process of economic globalization brings about transformation of the state sovereignty and a subsequent re-allocation of certain components of sovereign power onto private and supranational actors, especially when it comes to matters of migration (1998: 15).

²⁶⁷ I investigate the role of IOM in major detail in my new research project entitled *Managing Migrants' Mobility in Central and Eastern Europe – A Policy Analysis of International Organization for Migration's Practices*, financed by Open Society Institute, International Policy Fellowship program in Budapest.

management model²⁶⁸ or ‘actors-in-the-chain approach’.²⁶⁹ These models are concerned less with apprehending migrants at the border than with interdicting migration at the very beginning (i.e. the country of departure) or during the travel. Authorized by the claims to combat organized crime and prevent trafficking, the UN Protocol and IOM’s campaigns extend the control of migration far beyond the actual EU border, and intervene in limiting migrants’ mobility along the travel itinerary or even –as in case of IOM’s counter trafficking campaigns— in the countries of origin of migrants before the actual migration takes place. Yet, as I have pointed earlier, visa and border regimes do not stop migrants from moving or entering the EU but rather produce ‘irregular’ migration and enhance third party’s control over migrants. Mechanism of migration control, I suggest, consign migrants upon their arrival to the destination to sectors of economy where there is demand for undocumented migrant labour and channel them into a juridical apparatus that identifies them as non-citizens. Thus, the effects of borders do not merely extend outwards to sanction new partitions across east Europe but they also extend inwards the EU as they establish the conditions for hierarchization of access to labour and citizenship (Dal Lago and Mezzadra 2002: 148).

6. Slavery and Trafficked Women’s Labour in the Sex Sector

Due to the dominance of the term ‘sexual slavery’ when discussing the situation ‘trafficked’ women face in the sex sector, the hierarchical organization of access to labour in the destination countries is often not considered in debates on trafficking. The prominence given to the adjective ‘sexual’ when discussing trafficking, hinders the coming about and upholding of the conditions of confinement in third party controlled prostitution. It also obscures the complexity of work arrangements and negotiations taking place between migrant women and third party organizers of prostitution. When the term sexual slavery gets disengaged from its heightened attention to the attribute ‘sexual’, and the ‘global moral panic’ (Altman 2001, Kyle and Koslowski 2001) it generates is set apart, the terms ‘slavery’ or ‘slavery-like practices’ are extremely useful when examining the labour conditions in third party controlled street prostitution and when looking at ways in which these are related to the current transformation of labour relations.

²⁶⁸ This expression was used by Elisabeth Tromp, Director General of the Canadian Enforcement Branch of Citizenship and Immigration during the workshop held at the Metropolis conference in Rotterdam in 2001.

²⁶⁹ During the same workshop at the Metropolis conference in Rotterdam (2001), Dr. Christian Klos from the EC’s DG Justice and Home Affairs, Unit A/2 – Immigration and Asylum, used this term to describe EU’s comprehensive approach to ‘illegal’ migration.

Scholarship on trafficking has pointed out that trafficked women often face ‘slavery-like conditions’ (i.e. violence and/or threat of violence, confiscation of legal documents, no freedom of movement) upon their arrival to the destination country. They also noted that women might be attracted to prostitution with false promises, and that their conditions of enslavement are at times strengthened by the debt they own to third parties (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). This characterization of trafficking overlaps with two forms of slavery identified by Kevin Bales in his work on new form of slavery in the global economy: contract slavery and debt bondage (1999, 2000). Contract slavery, predominant in Southeast Asia, Brazil, some Arab states and parts of South Asia, is a type of slavery in which (written) contracts are used as a guarantee of employment and through which a person is tricked into slavery where she/he is under threat of violence, has no freedom of movement, and is paid nothing. Debt-bondage, common in South Asia, bounds a person into slavery through a debt which is not lessened though slave’s labour and that was originally contracted through a loan of money (2000: 463).

Contrary to arguments made in other studies on debt-bonded prostitution, my investigation of the relationship between the debt –contracted in order to cover transportation and immigration costs (visas and passports)— and respondents’ confinement in third party controlled street prostitution, showed that the debt alone did not suffice to keep the respondents confined. My data also suggests that the respondents did not ascribe particular weight to the debt. They did not considered to be ‘bound’ by the debt, but instead regarded it as a risk of the trade which concerned traffickers alone. As I argued in Chapter 3, a possible reason of this quite different value ascribed to the debt could be explained by the fact that the respondents usually did not take loans from third party organizers of trafficking. Instead, the latter debited a certain sum to the respondents in a way that lacked any transparency. As Bales points out, the situation of non-transparency might work in favour of the lender and further trap the debtor, but it might also –as I just suggested— diminish the importance ascribed to the debt and its function as a bond that bounds the debtor to the lender.²⁷⁰ Respondents’ narratives indicated that in order to maximize their economic gain, third parties tended to constrain women’s mobility and appropriate their earnings for a limited duration rather than binding the respondents by means of debt for an indeterminate period.

In order to comprehend how indentured labour comes about and is maintained, it is necessary to leave behind perceptions of slavery as the permanent ownership of people or, as I illustrated in my analysis of IOM campaigns in Chapter 5, as a life-

²⁷⁰ Another reason is that the respondents indeed faces different living and working conditions upon arrival from those initially promised and considered this as violation of the stipulated contract and thus felt all together less bound to the initial contract.

permanent state that excludes any possibility of leaving. Scholarship on ‘new’ forms of slavery suggests that in contemporary times, slavery is not about ‘slave-owning’ but rather about ‘slave-holding’ (Bales 2000). While in the past, the slaveholder asserted his legal ownership of a slave, and slavery was of long duration, today’s new forms of slavery are not grounded in assertion of property.²⁷¹ Contemporary slavery is transitional, with people falling in and out of slavery (ibid.). In this respect, the fact that slaves are no longer a capital investment points to the link between the emergency of ‘new’ slavery and transformations in the global economy.²⁷² Slaves, Bales explains, are ‘disposable inputs into production [that] mimic the world economy by shifting away from ownership and fixed assets management, and concentrating instead on control and use of resources or processes’ (Bales 2000: 475). Hence, contemporary slavery emerges not simply as an outcome of economic globalization but rather as constitutive part of the globalization process that needs to be understood in relation to the transformations of labour conditions and in relations in the global economy.

The study I have undertaken in Chapter 3 on respondents’ living and working conditions, and on their relationship to third parties, differs from slavery as defined by Bales. Contrary to slavery intended as ‘complete control of a person for economic exploitation by violence or the threat of violence’ (Bales 2000: 462), my data shows that third parties did not have ‘complete’ control over respondents’ movement, labour and income. My findings thus concur with the body of research that indicates varying degrees of exploitation and earnings among trafficked women in prostitution (Thorbeck and Pattanaik 2002). Depending on the conditions of confinement in third party controlled prostitution, the amount of money the respondents earned and their families’ economic needs, the respondents provided their families with goods or cash. By covering everyday costs, education and housing, these remittances eased the economic hardship of women’s families in their communities of origin. For example, Ester endured extreme conditions of exploitation (such as total deprivation of earnings as well as third party’s physical violence) because staying in prostitution allowed her to get hold of money, secretly passed to her by clients, her family urgently needed to pay for her fathers’ hospitalisation. Some of the respondents provided financially for

²⁷¹ The main point of reference when discussing the matters of slavery in the UN Slavery Convention signed in 1926. The Convention defines slavery as ‘the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the right of ownership are exercised’ (<http://www.hri.ca/uninfo/treaties/28.shtml>). The major concern behind 1926 Convention was that of state slavery to which the workers from the colonies were subjected. The discussion on the ‘new’ forms regards private slavery rather than state slavery. I thank Elspeth Guild for this clarification.

²⁷² Bales argues that today slavery has re-emerged due to increase of world population, social and economic changes in developing countries namely further impoverishment of the poor majority and shift from subsistence to cash-crop agriculture, weakening of state controlled economies, and government corruption in developing countries (2000).

their children or sisters; others furnished their parents' houses with modern household appliances or bought flats for themselves back home. Moreover, the remittances migrant women sent to their countries of origin provided these states with cash and generated a flow of foreign currency into their economies (cfr. Sassen 2000, Kempadoo and Doezema 1998:16).²⁷³ Hence, the degree of mobility, the amount of labour extracted, and money earned differed greatly from respondent to respondent, and depended on working conditions set by third parties, on living arrangements and on the type of relationships respondents' developed while working in prostitution. My data questions the generalized use of the term 'slavery' to describe the living and working conditions. However, I retain the expression 'slavery-like employment practices' since it best conveys the conditions of confinement and abuse under which exploitation of migrant women's labour in third party controlled street prostitution comes about.

One additional consideration emerges from my results in relation to labour arrangements. Bridget Anderson and Julia O'Connell Davidson have classified trafficked women's labour in the sex industry as 'unfree' in contrast to 'free' migrant labour due to the conditions of confinement and the degree of exploitation that regulate it (2003). Similarly, Bales identification of 'slave holding' as the key characteristic of new slavery is grounded in the differentiation he establishes between slavery and 'free' labour. While these distinctions are useful to identify the power abuse and exploitation within trafficking systems, I believe they are also misleading because they propose a clear-cut differentiation between 'free' and 'unfree' migrant labour. With global economic restructuring accompanied by restrictions imposed on workers' mobility from 'developing' and/or 'transitional' economies, it is evident that labour is subjected to ever greater levels of control and abuse globally (Kyle and Dale 2001: 52). Moreover, even when not directly under the control of third parties, undocumented migrants in industrialized nations suffer such a degree of control and labour abuse from employers' that their situation resembles that which is usually associated with 'unfree' labour. In this respect, my data questions whether scholarly analysis of the arrangements regulating migrant women's labour in third party controlled street prostitution should better be considered in relation to the current transformations of labour relations and respective restraints imposed upon migrants'

²⁷³ Concerning the issue of remittances, Sassen argues that since the remittances alleviate the economic hardship of a part of developing countries' population and generate an influx of foreign currency, the states have little interest in combating trafficking (Sassen 2000). Along this line, it would be interesting to explore if some of the states of eastern Europe export the bodies and labour of their citizens to solicit remittances, as is the case with Filipina women in transnational domestic sector, or commercialize women's bodies in order to attract foreign currency, as does the state of Thailand. These considerations call for an analysis that would reflect on the narrowing of distinction between the flows of goods, bodies and labour in current capitalist configurations (cfr. Parreñas 2001).

(labour) mobility, rather than identifying trafficking as the epitome of ‘unfree’ labour or of the ‘new’ slave trade.

7. The State, the Clients and the Demand for Trafficked Women’s Labour

Investigating trafficking from the perspective of globalization and labour brings to the fore the intersection between industrial and sexual markets²⁷⁴ and examines the sex sector not as a side effect of the ‘formal’ labour market, but rather as a structural part of the global economy (Biemann 1999, Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). Global processes, to quote Biemann, ‘address women directly in their sexuality’ (2002: 76). Yet, in addition to being sexualised these processes are also racialized. This dynamic is best visible if we shift the attention from third parties to the role of clients and the state in constructing the demand for trafficked women’s labour. An example of the role race and gender play in constructing the demand for sex workers can be observed in the phenomenon called ‘white slave trade’ considered a precedent of today’s trafficking.

A study of ‘white slave trade’, a phenomenon that took place in the second half of the 19th century and that entailed movement of white European and North American women to East Asia and South America, pointed to the role clients’ demand played in creating the ‘traffic in sexual labour’ (Scully 2001). The demand was triggered by three moments of mobilization and migration of large numbers of single males. One, the abolition of slavery prompted the recruitment of the non-white, indentured labour predominantly from Asia, with the aim of replacing the labour of African slaves in the extractive industries (diamond and gold mining) and in large construction projects. Two, the establishment of commerce within colonial territories brought about the emergence of wealthy native urban elites in Western imperial enclaves of Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, and New Delhi. Consequently, the impoverishment of rural population through colonial economies triggered peasants’ migration into the cities, into colonial armies, or into indentured migratory labour in extractive and construction industries. Three, the colonial opportunities, new frontiers and colossal construction projects set off the large-scale, long-distance migration of single, wealth-seeking men from Europe and North America to American West, Australia, South Africa, Hong Kong and federated Malay States (Scully 2001: 77).

The consequence of these large-scale male migrations generated demand for international sex workers, enlarged regional sex work migration, and increased native

²⁷⁴ I am using the term in the plural as to indicate that there is not a single market but rather segmented and differentiated markets that vary within regional and national contexts (see Anderson and O’Connell Davidson 2003).

prostitution. Indentured labourers preferred women of their own race or ethnicity, and 'host' societies kept white women off limits for non-Western men. The demand was racialized to such an extent that race, ethnicity, and nationality set women's market value, and determined their access to a selected group of men, usually of the same race or caste (*ibid.*). Studies of the 'white slave trade' show that the term 'white slave trade' was erroneous, since during its initial phase (1840-1880), women who took part in it were not slaves, but rather sex workers from North America and western Europe. These women, due to their race and nationality, enjoyed a privileged social status and had substantial control over their working conditions (Doezema 1999). Due to the widening of economic inequalities between core and peripheral regions, and to subsequent wage differentials, in the later phase (1880-1940) white women's sex-work migration was replaced by low-cost labour performed by native women in more exploitative working arrangements (Scully 2001).

Clients' desire for cheap and racially or nationally 'Other' sex workers was found to influence also the demand for trafficked women's labour in contemporary times (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003). However, Anderson and O'Connell Davidson's study indicates that neither the demand for cheap and vulnerable sex workers, nor the demand for particular racial/national groups suffices to create conditions for trafficking of that particular group of women. For trafficking to take place, the two scholars argue, the demand needs to occur in correspondence with:

structural pressures on persons of the sexualized group to migrate; political and economic obstacles to free movement, generating dependence on third parties in the process of migration; [and/or] obstacles to independent earning within the sex trade, generating dependence on third parties to assist in starting up as a sex worker, and/or to protect migrant sex workers from arrest and deportation (2003: 24).

Emergence of trafficking is then contingent on a set of economic, social and political factors and it is mediated by residency and employment regulations in the destination states. The decisions that third parties make concerning labour arrangements are determined by the context in which they take place: 'If, through a combination of action and inaction, the state strengthens the hand of third parties and weakens the bargaining power of sex workers, it helps to construct an environment within which it is possible and worthwhile to exploit trafficked persons' sexual services' (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003: 29). Hence, the EU states, far from being the passive recipients where the abuse and exploitation of migrant women in street prostitution

takes place, are complicit in creating the conditions that permit to the third parties to exploit and profit from trafficked migrants labour.²⁷⁵

My work on the effects of immigration laws on the life of migrant women in prostitution Chapter 3 concurs with the body of research which indicates that restrictive immigration and labour laws force migrant women into a relationship of dependency on a third party (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003, Kale and Dale 2001, Sutdhibhasilp 2002). The fear of deportation often prevented respondents from seeking police assistance in leaving third party controlled street prostitution and consequently heightened women's vulnerability and confinement. Stricter immigration laws also raised the cost of doing business and pushed third parties to exercise greater control over trafficked women's labour and mobility. Moreover, my data shows that because sex work was one of the few profitable activities available to undocumented migrant women, when faced with economic necessity the respondents temporarily moved back into sex work. Hence, the restrictive residency and labour regulations restrain migrant women's social and labour mobility and furthermore channel them into the informal sector, and consequently also into prostitution. In many EU countries sex work is not covered by labour legislation and where it is covered (like in the Netherlands), different labour regulations apply for EU and non-EU citizens, making it extremely difficult for the latter to get employed or even to rent an indoor-working space, if they are undocumented. Within 'informal' as well as 'formal' economies, slavery-like employment practices grown where legal, institutional and social conditions permit. This is particularly the case, as Anderson and O'Connell Davidson (2003) demonstrate, for economic sectors that are illegal/informal or poorly regulated, and where regulatory controls are difficult to enforce. In fact, trafficked persons are commonly employed in the lowest level of the employment hierarchy, usually referred to as 'poor work'.

The research on domestic work in Europe found that in a number of European countries migrant domestic workers see prostitution as the only other employment option available to them (Anderson and Phizaklea 1997). Similarly, my own findings suggest that the mobility of migrant women who exit sex work is limited to the low-wage sector and mostly to domestic or cleaning work. Those respondents who left sex work, settled in Italy, and obtained residence permits through the program of social

²⁷⁵ In fact, rather than being collected by third parties alone, moneys gained from trafficked women's labour go to various actors in both 'informal' and 'formal' economy: a large part of moneys stay with third parties, but some are used to pay off as a means of avoiding police harassment, and some for hotel expenses or other accommodation arrangements, usually twice as expensive for undocumented migrants (Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002). In their study of eastern European migrant workers in prostitution in Turkey, Gülçür and İlkkaracan found out that the police have partly taken over the traditional role of the 'pimps' by collecting a percentage of women's profits. In this way, they argue the state is indirectly placed in the role of the pimp since the percentage collected from women constitutes the 'extra' salary for police officers (2002: 417).

protection devised for victims of trafficking, entered the so-called 'poor work'. They found work as domestic workers in private households, cleaners in the public sector, as nurses, waitresses, assistant hairdressers, and temporary factory workers. Even though all of the respondents preferred this type of work to prostitution, due to the low-status nature of these jobs the respondents did not see them, along with prostitution, as 'real' employment but as a temporary remedy. The restricted labour mobility the respondents experienced is strengthened by the social devaluation of domestic and caring work. In industrialized western countries domestic workers, usually quite highly educated and from a relatively high status in their home communities, experience the decline of their social and occupational status (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, Parreñas 2001).²⁷⁶

In addition to restraining women's mobility while in prostitution, immigration regulations continue to do so also after women have exited prostitution and taken other types of work. Those respondents who legalized their status in Italy through other channels rather than Art. 18 D.Lgs 286/1998, experienced a high degree of dependency on the employer. Immigration status binds migrants to a specific employer and/or type of employment, or in the case for Spain, even to a specific geographic area in which the labour is to be performed. While these schemes defer from one European country to another, there is a tendency to progress towards a system in which residence permit is contingent upon a work permit. This means that breaking of the contract with a given employer has direct repercussions on the persons' residence permit (Mezzadra and Rigo 2003). The hierarchization of access to labour and citizenship is strengthened by racialized social arrangements. For example, Bridget Anderson and Annie Phizacklea have shown that due to low-waged work's gendered and racialized coding even those migrant domestic workers who have a legal status or EU citizenship experience difficulties with moving out of domestic work and finding higher-wage employment (1997).²⁷⁷ Employment and immigration

²⁷⁶ In regard to domestic work, Parreñas' study (2001) has shown that the underemployment of Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles is embedded and supported by a 'three-tier transfer of reproductive labour' model. The international transfer of caretaking --a distinct form of gendered international division of labour-- is a system that relieves class-privileged women from their household work. By doing so, it eases their entrance into the labour market and enhances their occupational mobility. Class-privileged women in industrialized western societies transfer their reproductive work load upon migrant women, and migrant women in turn hire other poorer women as domestic workers for their families in the Philippines. The existence of a similar three-tier system has been identified also in Berlin where Polish women who perform domestic labour in Germany employ Ukrainian women to work in their homes back in Poland (Anderson and Phizacklea 1997).

²⁷⁷ In their research on domestic work in Europe (Greece, Spain, Italy, France and Germany), Anderson and Phizacklea concluded that all across Europe, the domestic and care sectors are growing and have come to represent the largest single area of female employment for Third country nationals. Across Europe, women's country of origin, skin colour and legal status were found to be at the core of labour and payment hierarchies in domestic work. This means that employers do not hire a 'person' but a particular nationality with a specific 'type of personality' identified according to general racist stereotypes such as 'dirty', 'lazy', or 'docile' (Anderson and Phizacklea 1997: 11). The authors have

regulations in advanced capitalist countries and hierarchical social arrangements along the axes of race, class, gender, and citizenship relegate (undocumented) migrant women to low-wage service work and thus to situations of extremely limited economic, social and political mobility.²⁷⁸ My data highlights the fact that trafficked migrant women who have exited sex work (whether third party controlled or independent), and subsequently entered waged work, constitute a pool of cheap, flexible, precarious labourers (cfr. Candia and Carchedi 2001).

Examining trafficking from the ‘demand-side’ illustrates that trafficking is connected to global processes of economic reorganization and indicates that the demand for trafficked women’s labour is part of the economic order grounded in the feminization and racialization of the labour force. When migrant women’s bodies and labour are taken into account, it becomes evident that the economies of industrialized nations rely on differentiated degrees of inclusion of (undocumented) ‘migrants’ and ‘citizens’ in the labour market. Moreover, current settlement regulations restrict rights to residency and employment of third country nationals and relegate migrants to ‘partial citizenship’ (Parreñas 2001) and to the status of ‘non-persons’, due to the loss of their civic and political rights (Dal Lago 1999).²⁷⁹ We see that this order, defined by Yann Moulier Boutang as ‘ordre salarial bridé’ (2000), is produced by the immigration and labour regulations that the state applies to migrants, and upheld by racial and gender hierarchies.²⁸⁰ State intervention has increased migrants’ vulnerability and dependence on the employer or a third party organizer of prostitution, restrained migrant workers to ‘poor work’, and drastically minimized their social and labour mobility. Migrant women, after achieving mobility from ‘immobility’/stasis that characterized their lives prior to migration, and later from conditions of exploitation in third party organized prostitution, confront limited possibilities for improving their social, labour or legal status.²⁸¹

found that generally speaking, women from the Sub-Saharan Africa and Sri Lanka were the least paid. However, in a number of countries and depending on the historical and political context, east European women were in a similar situation. This was particularly the case for Albanian women in Greece and Ukrainian women in Germany. Migrant women’s location in the domestic sector is thus determined by a system of inequalities based on ‘race’, class and citizenship.

²⁷⁸ A recent study in Italy has shown that in some factories in northern Italy, big factories use the ‘global salary’ as a way to pay migrants the wages paid in their own countries, while giving them at the same time social salary contributions. This information was communicated via email from Paola Rudan to Kanak Attak on 5 August 2003.

²⁷⁹ Migrants’ immobility is enhanced, as Dal Lago has illustrated in his study of Italy, though a double juridical system which distinguishes between citizens and non-citizens and subsumes migrants under the latter category (1999).

²⁸⁰ Etienne Balibar uses the term ‘European apartheid’ to describe a system of racial relationships in Europe embedded in regulation of migrants’ position. This system, Balibar suggests, is becoming one of the pillars of Europe’s material constitution (2004).

²⁸¹ Given these ‘structural’ limitations, it comes as no surprise that it is through relationships with an Italian men that migrant women search for alternative paths towards social and legal mobility.

8. Boundary crises and its stabilization

In her groundbreaking essay on the relationship between sex-trafficking and European integration, Jacqueline Berman points to the fact that sex-trafficking discourses allow the state to stabilize the control over political community through immigration and citizenship laws (2003). Sex-trafficking discourses, Berman suggests, need to be understood as an ‘act of statecraft’ that ‘seeks to reinstate the boundaries and necessity of the state’ at the moment when globalization has put state sovereignty in crisis (2003: 59). I agree with Berman concerning the necessity of re-examine the role of the state in contemporary political landscapes, especially in relation to the scholarship that emphasizes the weakening and loss of importance of the state due to processes of globalization. However, my research suggests that the importance of current sex-trafficking discourses and policies lay not so much with the state itself, but rather in the role these discourses play in linking the issue of mobility to that of European citizenship. The freedom to move, as I have illustrated in the previous sections, has become one of the pivotal factors in reorganizing societies and labour markets, and in producing new gendered and racialized social hierarchies in Europe (Bauman 1998). That these processes of social and political reorganization are not devoid of conflict becomes apparent when we examine the representation of those female bodies positioned as ‘Other’. As feminist scholars demonstrated, migrant women’s bodies are sites where struggles over belonging and citizenship are played out on both institutional and discursive levels (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis 1995; Yuval-Davis 1997). ‘Trafficking’, I maintain, is a site of such struggles in contemporary Europe.²⁸²

Trafficking in women from eastern European territories to the countries of the EU emerged in the context of crisis and transformation of the state and its sovereignty. In fact, trafficking gained particular momentum in the post-1989 years when the Berlin Wall fell, Russia relaxed visa policies to facilitate the travel of its citizens, and countries of eastern Europe got involved in a series of economic transitions and ‘political revolutions’ (Wolff 1994). For the EU itself, this is the period of considerable changes in terms of its unification, integration and re-articulation of European identity, belonging, and citizenship. It has been noted that the anxieties about globalization and the processes of European integration are closely related to the emergence of local nationalisms and regionalisms across Europe (Koser and Lutz 1998). Scholars have identified ‘the migrant’ as a figuration onto which

²⁸² In her research on ‘white slave trade’ in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Scully showed that white slave trade emerged at the moment of major global reorganization and emerging new global order characterized by ‘rapid and uneven internationalization, weakening of community ties, unstable great power relationships’ (2001: 74).

macrosocial fears are projected (Simoncini 2001).²⁸³ For example, even though the raise of unemployment has little to do with migrants' presence but it rather caused by transformation of economic and labour relations, in the industrialized European nations migrants have been used as scapegoats for the raising unemployment. Moreover, as feminist scholars have shown, due to its indelible otherness migrants' presence is integral to a particular construction of Europe as Christian and White --the attributes that establish and sanction the basis for membership in the European community (Anthias 2000, Lutz 1997).

The way in which whiteness is implicated in sanctioning entitlement in the European community can be observed through the racialization of trafficked women (Berman 2003). As I have discussed in Chapter 5, trafficking discourse marks again and again the 'whiteness' of women trafficked from eastern Europe. Whiteness is emphasized directly through the characterization of women as blond or blue-eyed, but also indirectly through discursive positioning of these women as innocent victims. A perfect example of the construction of whiteness in relation to innocence and victimhood, is the image from IOM's counter-trafficking campaign in Czech Republic I have discussed in the previous chapter. In this specific case, the boundaries of innocence are pushed up to fragile 'angelic innocence'. Such construction of whiteness positions eastern European women as racially indistinguishable from 'European' women. However, their status as victims serves at the same time, to differentiate them from their European counterparts (cfr. Berman 2003). In fact, they are portrayed as exploited victims of violent men, usually from their own patriarchal culture, and as less capable of making autonomous and informed choices (Andrijasevic 2003, Stenvoll 2002). Thus, trafficked eastern European women occupy an ambiguous position between inclusion and exclusion or between being European but not quite.²⁸⁴ While this ambiguity signals the precariousness of the current constructions of Europe and Europeans, it also constitutes the ground for removal -- though detention and deportation--of east European trafficked victims since not (yet) 'really' European.

Female body is a site where control of racial and gender hierarchies and control of geographical territories meet. As I have demonstrated in my analysis of

²⁸³ For example, in Russia, the image of 'New Russian Woman' had been singled out as a trope though which is it possible to observe young peoples' difficulty in dealing with state-socialist past, uncertainty about the future, and their identification anxieties pertaining to shifting female and male gender roles (Oushakine 2001).

²⁸⁴ These discursive positionings of eastern European women goes hand in hand with paradoxical construction of eastern Europe as 'Europe but not Europe'. The characterization of eastern Europe is due to its two-fold construction. Eastern Europe has been defined, on the one hand, a in opposition to western Europe, and on the other, as different from the Orient. In fact, the idea of eastern Europe has evolved as Larry Wolff illustrates, as 'an intellectual project of demi-orientalization', namely a project located in the intermediary geographical and cultural space between western Europe and the Orient (Wolff 1994: 7).

IOM counter-trafficking campaigns, bodies of trafficked women are represented as entrapped, wounded, and hanged. These representations suggest that trafficked women's bodies portrayed as indelibly assaulted and scarred, have been wounded as a result of encounters with other bodies during prostitution and migration. By exaggerating the perils of migration, counter- trafficking campaigns and policies aim at disciplining women's sexuality. Accordingly, my research in Chapter 3 on legal schemas for victims of trafficking has shown that respondents needed to give up sex-work if they were to obtain the residence permit and be included in programs of integration into Italian society. Thus, the state requires migrant women to renounce sex work and re-enter 'proper' female roles if they are to be accepted as members of a political community. The control over women's sexuality goes hand in hand with control of women's mobility. It is possible to observe the control of women's mobility through the emphasis campaigns put in deception and slavery. Through rhetorical devices such as stressing the deceptiveness of job offers abroad within the informal economy, or associating migration with slavery and crime, the campaigns suggest that state-regulated migration is not only devoid of exploitation but is also within young women's reach. By doing so, the campaigns discourage women's informal labour migration and symbolically restrain women's bodies to the private sphere, and thus to reproductive labour.

Just when labour mobility is encouraged across the EU and when it has become one of the key attributes to describe European community and its citizens, trafficking discourses discourage the mobility of women from eastern Europe. Hence, my work suggests, at the moment of social and symbolic reorganization of Europe as a whole, the concept of trafficking in women enacts a discursive containment that posits eastern European women as eroticised victims and limits the possibilities for creation of new images of female subjectivity. Sex-trafficking discourses show, I argue, that although eastern Europe as such ceased to exist in 1989, the idea of Eastern Europe as 'Europe but not Europe' is deeply rooted in European history and culture, and signals a discursive reservoir which is drawn upon to perpetuate exclusion, justify disparity, and uphold distinctions between Europe and its Others (Wolff 1994). While globalization and integration are changing employment patterns in Europe and as women in eastern Europe are asserting through migration their 'right to exit' the objective conditions that impoverish their lives (Mezzadra 2001), sex-trafficking discourses disclose the anxieties that accompany these transformation and attempt their stabilization through a gendered framework. Women's bodies are, once again, a site where the anxieties about changing European landscape are played out and where it is possible to detect a yearning for a return to a familiar and reassuring race and gender order.

However, my analysis of trafficking does not simply underscore discursive and institutional practices which shape the boundaries of European citizenship in the making. Women's projects of migration, their claims to mobility, and their demands for social inclusion are all practices of citizenship. These practices indicate that far from being articulated only by institutions, European citizenship is a terrain of struggle where migrant women's practices of citizenship and its institutional codification meet. Migrant women's migratory projects defy the material and juridical borders set up to confining the mobility of non-EU citizens. Women's claims for inclusion within the social fabric in the county of migration urge the abolition of those policies that criminalize their mobility and practices –whether discursive or material—that shape and inform their social, economic and symbolic confinement. Whether pursued by accommodating or resisting the narrative of victimhood, trafficked women's demands for social and legal inclusion expose and defy the gendered and racialized boundaries of citizenship which fail to recognize them as subjects endowed with, and constituted through, the capacity to act. Their constant negotiation of social and symbolic norms ascribed to femininity as well as of material borders that sanction the entry in the European political community disputes institutional boundaries of the EU citizenship. At the same time, however, they also indicate that the whole of these practices, whether enacted by migrants or implemented by institutions, are constitutive of citizenship as a site of social conflict and struggle. Viewed within this interpretative framework, 'trafficking' emerges as deeply implicated in the construction of gender and racial order in Europe and in the redefinition of its citizenship.

9. Conclusion

Conceptualizing trafficking in women for the sex industry as a criminal activity or sexual slavery fails to do justice to the complexity of current economic, social, and political transformations and to the role women play in these processes. Terms such as 'sexual slavery' and 'organized crime' limit the understanding of 'trafficking' to men's violence against women, whether within migratory process or prostitution. These overtly simplistic conceptions obscure the fact that current EU immigration and labour regulations impede migrants' mobility and independent access to employment. Moreover, these terms fail to consider the ways in which employment and residency laws in the EU facilitate conditions of exploitation and confinement of migrant women in sex work or other forms of 'poor work'.

When the terms of analysis are shifted from organized crime and sexual slavery to migration, policies and campaigns to counter trafficking, emerge as part of

those measures aimed at administrating access to European citizenship. Women's migratory experiences show the role borders play in producing 'irregular' migration, constructing segmented labour force, and consequently establishing the conditions for hierarchization of access to labour and citizenship in the EU. Borders, whether in the forms of material obstacles or of administrative measures, become a method of government by means of which EU attempts to define the boundaries of the new European citizenship (cfr. Rigo 2004).

At the same time, women's practices of citizenship point to the fact that citizenship is a terrain of contention and struggle. Rather than constituting simply the object of law or the objective migrants strive to reach, as migrant women's lives indicate, citizenship is a 'social practice' that contests the institutional and symbolic boundaries of citizenship (Lister 1997). Thus, while trafficking policies and campaigns intervene to 'stabilize' –through a stereotypical symbolic register—the changes triggered by the feminization of migration, and to 'normalize' the hierarchies produced by migration control regimes, migrant women practices challenge these attempts of material and symbolical confinement. These conflicts are rendered invisible by the dominant rhetoric of trafficking articulated along criminal-victim dichotomy. Thus, instead of shifting the definition of trafficking from coercion, forced migration, and abduction towards deception, voluntary migration, and facilitation of cross-border travel as argued by Chantavanich (2003), my work is in unison with those scholars who propose to abandon the current definition of trafficking all together (cfr. Doezema 1999, Wijers and van Doorninck 2002). The development of new definitions and terminology focusing on the abuse in migratory processes and in labour relations is necessary if we are to account for women's experiences of international migration. While the focus on the freedom of movement and the labour law protections would deprive some institutions and individuals of their fantasies of 'rescuing' trafficked victims, these measures –in combination with the opening of the legal channels for migration and employment— would help to decrease migrant women's vulnerability and their dependence on third parties, and would expand their entitlement to rights. This interpretative move is necessary, I maintain, since the term 'trafficking' is embedded within the discursive logic of victimization and criminality. This logic leaves little space for re-articulating the phenomenon known as 'trafficking' without becoming implicated in the normalization of new hierarchies and inequalities in Europe.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have examined the issue of trafficking in women from ‘eastern’ to ‘western’ Europe for the sex industry. Drawing on the accounts of the women who have been ‘trafficked’ to Italy and have worked in third party controlled prostitution, I have assessed the current conceptualisation of trafficking along ‘victim’-‘criminal’ binary and showed its inadequacy. Approaching trafficking from the perspective of migration, I have attempted to broaden and deepen the theoretical and methodological framework in order to do justice to the complexities of trafficking. In doing so, my analysis of trafficking has moves in-between and across a number of scholarly debates and discursive areas.

Academic considerations

Most of the feminist scholarship on trafficking has been articulated from the perspective of violence against women, advanced by ‘abolitionist’ feminists, or from the perspective of sex work developed by sex workers rights scholars and activists. These bodies of literature constitute an important axis of reference for my work and they have received ample attention in Chapter 3. Much as I relied on and profited from the feminist literature on the sex industry, I entertain a rather critical relationship to it. My reason being that that the bulk on studies on trafficking either implicitly assume or explicitly produce the vision of ‘trafficked’ women as victims, which I challenged in this dissertation. In feminist literature written from the ‘abolitionist’ viewpoint, trafficking is identified with sexual exploitation and violence against women. This body of literature focuses on abusive and exploitative practices traffickers employ in order to enslave women in prostitution and places emphasis on prostitution as the embodiment of patriarchal oppression and domination (cfr. Barry 1995, Leidholdt 1999, Raymond 2002). Within this framework of analysis, prostitution is interpreted as sexual slavery and migrant women as passive victims of men’s violence and exploitation. By extension, clients, traffickers (both understood exclusively as male), and patriarchal social relations in women’s countries of origin are seen as principal causes of trafficking. Women’s forced recruitment, deception and sale handed by traffickers are interpreted as emblematic of patriarchal social order that governs gender arrangements in women’s countries of origins. Trafficking

becomes, thus, a matter of supply and demand: it is brought about by low status of women and sustained by clients' demand for prostitution (Jeffreys 1997).²⁸⁵

Abolitionist feminist interpretation of trafficking and prostitution are countered by the literature written from sex workers' rights perspective. These scholars argue that the attention given to trafficking is a momentary 'hype', and that trafficking is present in much lesser degree than it is commonly assumed (Murray 1998). This body of scholarship argues that definitions that identify trafficking as a form of patriarchal exploitation and domination conflate all migrant women working in prostitution with victims and efface the fact that many of the migrant women in prostitution are migrant sex workers (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998, Thorbek and Pattanaik 2002). Sex workers' rights feminists stress agency of migrant sex workers and propose to see them as 'entrepreneurs in an economic sense', namely as women who 'take risks and invest in order to earn good money' (Thorbek 2002: 3). This body of scholarship thus shifts the terms of analysis from sexual exploitation to labour abuses in sex work and, rather than calling on the state to penalize the customers and third parties, it points out that repressive measures impose heightened police control upon sex workers and enhance their vulnerability to exploitation. This scholarship also condemns the distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' prostitution for two reasons. First, it creates divisions between sex workers (for e.g. it reproduces the whore/madonna dichotomy). Second, it mistakes abuses of sex workers' rights for examples of forced prostitution. From this viewpoint the distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' prostitution, and the weight given to victimhood are identified as mechanisms that abuse sex workers' rights (Doezema 1998).

While it is certainly true that for feminists, as Liz Kelly (2003) stated, trafficking has become an arena to re-visit long-standing debates about prostitution, it is equally important not to dismiss the feminist debate on the basis of its predictability. The interesting aspect of this controversy around trafficking is precisely that it illustrates the limits of current feminist interpretations of trafficking developed around the 'victim' versus 'agent' dichotomy in relation to prostitution. My position comes close to that of sex workers' rights perspective and this is why I have included in Annex 1 the declaration of European sex workers' rights activists. This does not mean that I embrace this position uncritically, however. My aim in this dissertation was to adapt this controversial debate to the specific requirements of the problem of trafficking. I have argued that by framing trafficking in terms of 'force' or 'choice' regarding sex work, both feminist stances focus on the issue of prostitution *alias* sex

²⁸⁵ As to illustrate the linearity of feminist abolitionist thinking, I quote here Sheila Jeffreys: 'It is prostitution which creates trafficking, rather than the other way around. If nothing is done to decrease the demand from men to use prostituted women, then the demand will be supplied by means which include trafficking' (1997: 338).

work and gloss over the migration ‘component’ or, to put it differently, ignore the ‘migrant’ in ‘migrant sex worker.’ In choosing to emphasize the migration part of sex work migration, my intention was not to underestimate the specific problems, issues or indeed the pathos of foreign women working in the sex market in the European Union. I rather aimed at exploring in a more precise, and hence broader manner, the web of issues involved in the social and symbolic position of ‘trafficked’ women. This meant that I looked for a set of ‘missing links’ between different discursive domains, problem areas and constituted debates. I drew different connections, for instance between labour migration and sex work. Not in order to flatly deny all differences between these two, but as to highlight the specific problems encountered by subjects who happen to be situated ‘in-between’ these two areas. I addressed directly the discomfort, but also the surprising modes of agency displayed by female subjects who fall in-between problematic social categories. Instead of assigning them, *de jure* or *de facto* to the category of ‘victim of trafficking’ or ‘sex-worker’, I focused instead on their position as migrants and based my analysis on the specific status this position entailed.

By approaching trafficking from the perspective of migration, my work shifted the emphasis from issues of ‘force’ or ‘choice’ in relation to prostitution, and proposed instead to examine the factors that channel and confine women in prostitution. In several bodies of literature on trafficking, these factors are commonly associated with patriarchal social arrangements and organized criminal networks. In the scholarship that investigates the global dimension of trafficking, criminal organizations are identified as those responsible for the abuses in the process of migration (cfr. Bruinsma and Meershoek 1999, Shannon 1999, Williams 1999). Criminal organizations are also typically seen as enslaving women in prostitution by means of force or debt-bondage (cfr. Caldwell et al 1999). The emphasis on the suffering of the women involved in what goes by the name of ‘trafficking’ can be understood in the light of some statistical/empirical evidence we have of the violence and hardship these women encounter in their quest for access to the European (sex) labour market. As such, it is both morally and humanely praiseworthy. My dissertation did not aim to either deny or underplay the suffering and pain included by women involved in trafficking. My aim was rather to both broaden and deepen the framework of reference by which these elements of hardship can be understood and analysed. I argued that too unique an emphasis on the sex-traffic part of the problem – with the related attention to the standard repertoire of women’s oppression including the role of men’s violence – obscures the broader picture. This broader picture comes into view when trafficking is examined from the perspective of migration. Migration perspective extended the discussion of organized crime and victimization as to include issues of labour participation, as well as even more complex problems of citizenship

and belonging in the frame of the EU. Rather than privileging the issue of violence and/or exploitation exercised by third parties in the sex industry, my approach joins a quite recent scholarship on trafficking which questions the taken for granted correlation between trafficking and organized crime. It proposed instead to investigate the ways in which EU border and migration regimes channel and confine migrant women in third party controlled prostitution, fostering thus their legal, economic and physical vulnerability (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003, Berman 2003, Sharma 2003, Sutdhibhasilp 2002).

In order to broaden the interpretative framework on trafficking, I relied on several bodies of literature. Scholarship on labour, citizenship and migration coming out of social and political theory constituted a constant point of reference in my work. This scholarship allowed me to articulate the link between 'trafficking' and the process of constitution of European Union and European citizenship. As this body of work points out, the process of formation of the new enlarged Europe is contingent upon the control of (labour) mobility of non-EU nationals. The control of mobility is implemented outwards the EU through border and visa regimes, and inwards the EU by means of residency and employment regulations. Borders and immigration regulation have thus a double effect; on the one hand, they create a system of differentiated (labour) mobility among the EU, the Candidate, and the non-Candidate states that gives rise to new power-hierarchies in Europe. On the other, they establish the hierarchization of access to labour and citizenship in the EU and consequently consign migrants to sectors of economy where there is demand for undocumented migrant labour and to a juridical apparatus that identifies them as non-citizens (Andreas and Snyder 2000, Bigo 2003, Dal Lago 1999, Mezzadra 2001, Rigo 2004). Relying on this body of scholarship, I brought to the fore the political and legal formation of the enlarged EU and its borders, and illustrated the ways in which border regimes—created through material and juridical means of controlling the movement of people—create the conditions for the existence and proliferation of trafficking. At the same time, by paying attention the situation migrant women experience in third party controlled prostitution in Italy, I showed that immigration regulations greatly restrict women's spatial and labour mobility, making them dependable on third parties organizers of prostitution, and in turn uphold women's confinement in prostitution.

In my analysis of working conditions migrant women faced in third party controlled street prostitution, I distanced myself from the term 'sexual slavery', commonly used to indicate that third parties yield *tout court* control over women and to imply sexual abuses present in this relationship. I brought into focus the means and strategies by which third parties constrain women's spatial mobility and control their performance in street prostitution, and showed that third parties do not yield complete control over women and that the terms of third party-woman's relationship are subject

to negotiation. My study also indicated that the strategies and means of control third parties employ are geared not towards establishing sexual domination over women, but rather towards appropriating women earnings and maximizing—in the shortest time span possible—the economic gain generated by their labour. Once I examined the relationship between third parties and women in all its complexity, it became evident that the control and power third parties yield over migrant women is facilitated and enhanced by restrictive residency and employment regulations. Through a combination of these, the state restrains migrant women's social and labour mobility, and increases their vulnerability and dependence on a third party. The state, namely its immigration regulations, played thus a crucial role in upholding the conditions that permit women's exploitation. As a consequence, I argued, immigration regulations produce a sexually and racially segmented labour force restrained in its social and labour mobility and its access to citizenship.

I suggested to shift the terms of analysis from organized crime and men's violence against women to issues of borders and immigration regulations as to highlight how trafficking comes about and how women's confinement and exploitation in third party controlled prostitution is sustained. The implications of this analytic shift for my work were twofold. First, it allowed me to move away from that perspective which sees the countries of eastern Europe—due to the crises caused by the economic transition and patriarchal social relations—as the main producers of crime and trafficking, and to (re)allocate the responsibility for persistence of trafficking onto the EU member states. Second, it permitted me to point out that the arrangements regulating migrant women's labour in third party controlled street prostitution are not unique to the sex sector. Rather, due to the racialized and sexualised nature of processes of global restructuring and restrictive immigration policies, (migrant) labour in general is being subjected to ever-greater levels of control and abuse globally. I argued accordingly that the arrangements in third party controlled street prostitution, whether identified with slavery or not, need to be considered in relation to the transformations of labour conditions and relations in the global economy. In establishing the link between trafficking and the racialization of the labour force, I relied on theories on gender and globalization. Feminist scholars of globalization have pointed out that economic restructuring in eastern Europe and a 'transition' from a planned to market economy has resulted in 'feminization of migration', accompanied at the same time by a 'feminization of the international labour force' (Parreñas 2001, Sassen 2002; 2000; 1996). Next to affecting 'transitional' economies, economic reconstitution resulted also in a growing demand for low-wage women's labour in industrialized countries' domestic and sex-related sectors. Due to low-waged work's gendered and racialized coding, migrant women

experience difficulty in moving to other sectors, and constitute (even) upon leaving prostitution a pool of cheap and flexible workers.

When highlighting the factors that confine migrant women to the sex sector, my work examined the ways in which women's position along the axes of race and citizenship in the countries of migration situated them within hierarchical social arrangements that permitted and upheld their exploitation. This means that my interpretative framework did not focus strictly on gender but also on racial relations, and in doing so made use of the intersectional model that sees racism and sexism as intrinsically interwoven. In using the intersectional approach, I grounded my work in the body of theory produced by Black and 'Third' World feminists that challenge the notion of universal women's oppression and show that oppression is contingent upon the location subjects occupy as regards to race, class, gender, sexuality and nation/citizenship (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, Grewal and Kaplan 1994, Lorde 1984, Mohanty 2003, Sandoval 2000). Along these lines, my analysis of trafficking took distance from the term 'sex slavery' which implies that the demand from trafficked women in the sex sector is embedded in patriarchal social relations. In doing so, I built upon Bridget Anderson and Julia O'Connell Davidson's study entitled *Needs and Desires: Is there a Demand for 'Trafficked' Persons?* (2003). The two scholars criticise the position –commonly assumed by abolitionist feminists— which posits men's demand for sexual services as a key factor in fuelling sex-trafficking, and instead show that the demand for trafficked women's labour in the sex sector is both sexualised and racialized. Within the framework of my own work, this implied an analysis of the ways in which clients' demand for racially 'Other' women is functional in confirming Italian men's power in terms of class, race, and gender and thus in upholding hierarchical social arrangements. It also showed that third parties do not make use of migrant women in prostitution simply because women but instead because their status as undocumented migrants makes them cheap and vulnerable labour force.

Yet, the boundaries of citizenship are both material and symbolic. In my analysis in Chapter 4 of counter-trafficking campaigns across eastern Europe, I illustrated how the representation of women's bodies on the one hand, and traffickers on the other, reinstall highly stereotypical images of eastern European nationals. By representing women's bodies as entrapped and wounded, counter-trafficking campaigns capture bodies of eastern European women within traditional representations of femininity which portray them as passive object of men's violence and imply that the private domestic sphere is the safest place for women. Men, on the other hand, were represented as Mafiosi. This representation, whether explicit or implicit, fosters the common assumption of criminalization of eastern European societies and the fear of Mafia expansion westwards. I relied on Post-colonial feminist

theory as to look into the ways in which the representations of sex-trafficking create a normative narrative of trafficking embedded in victim-criminal dualism and consequently perpetuate discursive violence through the rhetoric of victimization and criminalization. This theoretical approach was particularly useful for examining the ways in which trafficking rhetoric establishes a hierarchical opposition between 'western' and 'eastern' Europe. The operation of locating the official discourse on sex-trafficking within east-west European frame was an important tool in showing the discursive power and exclusion operating through it. In order to discuss the specificity of 'east'-'west' European arrangements I drew upon Larry Wolff's (1994) and Marina Todorova's (1997) historical studies. Keeping in mind the specificity of 'east'-'west' European arrangements, I relied on post-colonial feminist theory as to illustrate the discursive production of meaning in representation of trafficking and highlighted the process of 'othering' operating through it. In this respect, post-colonial scholarship allowed me to highlight the production and social currency of meanings.

Shifting the terms of analysis of trafficking from violence and organized crime to migration and labour creates an additional, and crucial, theoretical opening. This opening allows for stories of women's migration to emerge. Women's stories of migration challenge those perspectives that see them as duped into 'illegal' migration and prostitution by third parties. Moreover, they show the limits of structural macro-approach to migration that identifies economic factors as the factors that 'push' women into migrating. Migration, in the macro-approach, is triggered merely by the effects and needs of neoliberal capitalism. Migrants are, once again, denied the position of active social subjects in current processes of global restructuring. Women's stories of migration challenged the perspectives that see them as duped by third parties or shuffled around by neoliberalism. Instead, women's stories indicated that women rely on third parties in order to carry out their migratory projects. They also pointed out that economic factors do play a considerate role in their projects of migration. However, they were not the only factors to inform women's migratory projects. Women's migratory projects are best understood, I suggested, as desires and demands for mobility. This might be labour, social or affective mobility. Respondents' migratory projects were informed by their desire to achieve economic improvement and create new life opportunities. They also represented escape routes from situations of intra-family violence, and means of achieving autonomy from the family or (re)gaining self or parents' recognition and respect. Last, by not least, women embarked on the migratory projects hoping to meet 'the right' man abroad. To consign the complexity of women's desires and projects to the category of the 'victim', would mean to conceal women's resistance against the structural inequalities and their struggle for transforming their lives.

The multiple ways in which migrant women resist, counter, negotiate, or fail to negotiate the economic, social, and political structural forces that constrain them is impossible to grasp through the category of the 'victim'. As with the 'organized crime', so with the term 'trafficked victim', the complexities of the process commonly known as trafficking are collapsed into a narrative of forced migration and sex slavery. As David Kyle and John Dale put it in their essay on smuggling, the categories of 'organized crime' and 'victims' 'cover up more than they reveal, simplify more than they illuminate' (2001: 29). Hence, privileging the criminal-victim dichotomy results in analytical oversimplification and theoretical impoverishment with regard to trafficking. This concerns scholars and policy makers alike since understanding trafficking outside of the criminal-victim dichotomy may lead to more appropriate policy solutions.

The representations of trafficking founded on the category the 'victim' certainly do fail to meet the 'reality' of women's lives. Moreover, by immobilizing women's bodies within the boundaries of traditional femininity, this representation effaces women's struggles against social, political and legal confinement. It also conceals the fact that migrant women's struggles to conquer mobility actually are demands for, and practices of, citizenship. These practices challenge both the physical and symbolic immobility imposed upon migrant women by juridical codifications that uphold citizenship as an institution. Women's narratives of 'trafficking' urged me to come up with figurations other than 'organized crime' and 'victims' if I was to account for changes in today's Europe. Given the fact that I view the category of 'trafficking' as misleading in grasping the complexity of current political subjectivities and socio-political transformations, it seems to me that scholars urgently need to come up with, as Rosi Braidotti writes in her essay on European citizenship, 'social imaginaries that adequately reflect the social realities which we are already experiencing' (2001: 10).

To this end, I suggest jettisoning the category of 'trafficking'. The category of 'trafficking' is entrenched in the discursive logic of victimization and criminality that normalizes the hierarchization of citizenship and reinstalls stereotypical representations of femininity in relation to 'eastern European' women. I propose to leave behind old schemas, and risk taking chances by exploring new analytical methodological and theoretical paths. The concept of mobility, as I have shown in this dissertation, offers precisely the possibility to critique outdated paradigms and to take up challenges posed by migrant women's lives. My work refrained from putting forward another (reassuring) unitary category as a replacement for 'trafficking'. Instead, it laid out various interpretative leads organized around the issues of migration and labour. I hope that these leads will open up possibilities to articulate new figurations of political subjectivities, to look away from the current institutional

coding of European citizenships and, taking migrant women's lives as the starting point, to look towards citizenship as a social practice.

Policy considerations

Contrary to the academia where the scholarly writing on trafficking remains scarce, the sphere of policy making has hosted the bulk of the debate and research on trafficking. For this reason, my dissertation engaged and dialogued with the policy field. Moreover, during the conferences I have attended so far, I have testified a gap between academics and policy makers, accompanied often with the enormous difficulty to speak across the fields. While being situated in the academia, my dissertation addressed also the policy-making community in the attempt to bridge the gap between the policy and academia and in the hope that my scholarly work can contribute in developing more appropriate policy solutions.

In this very moment, a large number of anti-trafficking policies and programmes are taking place throughout Europe. These include campaigns for prevention and information about trafficking and programmes for re-integration and support of victims. In order to counter the European Union's prioritising of prosecution of traffickers instead of protection of victims, various scholars and NGOs have engaged in efforts to redress the balance in favour of the latter. While these efforts are crucial in enlarging legal channels for protecting and supporting the victims of trafficking, they present serious political and theoretical limitations due to their reliance on the categories of 'victim' and 'organized crime'. These categories are mutually constitutive and produce an overriding nexus that hides the complexity of the trafficking process.

The framing of trafficking along 'victim'-'organized crime' binary converges with the United Nations' (UN) characterization of trafficking. The UN Protocol, developed by the UN Crime Commission as a supplement to the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, situates trafficking firmly in the context of organized crime. The *UN Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* defines trafficking an involuntary transportation of persons, by means of coercion or deception, into exploitative and slavery-like conditions. The UN Protocol distinguishes between smuggling of migrants and trafficking in people. Smuggling stands for voluntary and consensual form of migration in which the smuggler's role is restricted to facilitation of irregular border crossing. Trafficking, on the other hand, implies involuntary and non-consensual process where traffickers recruit and transport a person with the purpose of exploiting his/her labour on destination. The two definitions rely thus on a neat separation between voluntary and

consensual (i.e. smuggling), and involuntary and non-consensual (i.e. trafficking) process of migration (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003)²⁸⁶. Adopted in November 2000 and entered into force in December 2003, the UN Protocol has become the main working definition of trafficking for scholars and policy makers alike.

My investigation of the trafficking process engaged directly the UN definition of trafficking in as much as it examined the two 'phases' of trafficking. First, I scrutinized the recruitment and transportation of women from their departure to the destination country (Chapter 2). Second, I investigated women's living and working conditions in third party controlled street prostitution in Italy (Chapter 3). By differentiating between the two phases and analysing them separately, my study indicates that deception, force and coercion –the pillars of the UN trafficking definition—do not render the process of recruitment and travel women experienced. Moreover, examining the recruitment and travel process separately from living and working conditions in prostitution, I found that it can not be generalized that third parties recruit women with the intent to exploit their labour upon destination. Trafficked women are therefore not necessarily 'deceived and trafficked by the sex industry' (emphasis mine; Phizacklea 1998: 31), and trafficking need not be the outcome of third parties' organized and intentional action.

My enquiry into the trafficking process led me to address critically the convergence that governments and some NGOs establish between trafficking, 'illegal' migration and crime. Trafficking is identified as a distinct form of 'illegal' (and involuntary) movement of people run by the transnational criminal networks. This characterization of trafficking obscures the relationship between undocumented forms of migration and the Europe-wide practices of migration control. Italy presented a unique field of study on this topic, since it only recently became a destination country, thus shifting from being traditionally a country of emigration to a country of immigration. Having been viewed by other EU states as a locus of permeable borders that allows a relatively easy flow of undocumented migration into the EU, Italy, in recent years, has progressively increased the control over its borders, in particular of its coastline. The endorsement of these measures is grounded in common understanding of trafficking as a form of 'illegal' and involuntary movement of

²⁸⁶ A number of feminist scholars have remarked that the distinction between trafficking and smuggling as drafted by the two UN Protocols is underpinned by a biased model of gender relations which conceives of men as agents—capable of making a decision to migrate and enter an engagement with 'smugglers'—and of women as objects of traffickers' deception and coercion into forced/involuntary migration. Even though, as Anderson and O'Connell-Davidson (2003) remark, there is no empirical evidence to substantiate these claims, it is commonly assumed that men are being smuggled while women are trafficked. The fact that the UN Protocol categorizes adult women and children together as groups in need of special protection is seen as further evidence of disqualification of women's agency (Agustin 2002, Doezema 1999).

people run by the transnational criminal networks. Yet, women's accounts of the recruitment and travel phase of trafficking suggested that such understanding of the trafficking process overlooks the role EU states play in producing 'illegality' and in creating the market for profiteering from the movement of people. At the same time, women's accounts of third party controlled street prostitution in Italy raised the question concerning the role restrictive residency and labour regulations play in maintaining women's confinement and exploitation in prostitution. A close analysis of current trafficking policies from the perspective of women's lives urged me to examine the role immigration regulations play in permitting and upholding trafficking.

While recognizing the importance of measures to protect victims, such as the Article 18 of L. n. 40/1998 of the Italian Immigration Law, my analysis of the in Chapter 3 raised questions about these measures' drawbacks. I suggested that legal instruments to protect victims establish a normative narrative of victimhood grounded in very particular forms and patterns of violence that in turn penalize women who fall out of the established norm by denying them protection and rights allocated to 'proper' victims. Moreover, grounded in the category of the 'victim', current legal conceptualisations of trafficking disqualify women's agency by establishing a normative narrative of forced migration, coercion into prostitution, and economic exploitation. In its questioning of victim-criminal binary and in diverging from the UN definition of trafficking and (occasionally) overlapping with smuggling, my study problematized the neat demarcation between consensual and non-consensual processes of migration, and consequently of the very basis upon which the current trafficking definition is developed.

In arguing along these lines, I have positioned my research work beyond the thresholds of academia, way into society. As I stated in my introduction, and repeated throughout the different chapters, this dissertation was written with the aim to further the cause of feminism as an oppositional but also prepositional project capable of illuminating our understanding of power relations with great awareness of structural injustices and domination, but also with the determination to inspire alternative ways of knowledge and forms of action. To this end, I believe that feminist scholars should take the lead in making academic research more socially relevant. In today's world, scholars should, in my opinion, not be afraid of becoming more involved in both policy-making and social activism.

ANNEX 1

Sexworkers in Europe Unite

This letter is to invite you to participate in a common project to put sex workers rights back on the international agenda

Sex workers in Europe are facing difficult times. The rights of sex workers are endangered by anti-prostitution laws and the European anti-migration policies, often justified as ‘anti-trafficking’ measures. In many European countries evidence of the current neo-conservative spirit can be found in new anti-prostitution measures and policies, such as in France and Italy. The Swedish law that criminalizes clients has grave implications for the working conditions of sex workers. Even in the Netherlands despite the recent legalisation of the sex industry, the political focus is not on improving the position of sex workers but on regulating and controlling the industry and keeping migrants out of the country.

We think it is high time sexworkers from all over Europe get together to unite, to strengthen networks and to find allies in the struggle for rights, to challenge existing ideas and policies on sex work and trafficking and to set up a strategy to put sex workers rights back on the international agenda.

Who are we?

We are a loose network of Dutch sex workers’ rights activists, both sex workers and non-sex workers called SIGN (Sexwork Initiative Group the Netherlands). Some of us were actively involved in the first two international whore congresses in 1985 and 1986 held in Amsterdam and Brussels. All of us have worked for many years on the issue of (migrant) sex workers’ rights. In 2000 and 2001 we organised an expert meeting and a public debate in the Netherlands. The main goal of these meetings was to revive the debate on sex work and to put sex workers’ rights back on the agenda of our politicians, policy makers, feminists and activists.

Our ideas

We believe that the European trafficking debate needs to be transformed into a debate on labour migration and rights. Therefore, in our point of view, sex workers all over Europe need to unite and seek new allies from human rights, labour and migrants' rights organisations. Together we can challenge existing ideas and policies on sex work and trafficking and set up a new debate in which sex workers (organisations) play the lead role.

It is our dream that all of this leads up to a **European conference on Sex work, Human Rights, Labour Rights and Migration** where sexworkers, human rights activists, labour organisations and politicians can exchange ideas in an open discussion in which the rights of sex workers are the starting point. This strong alliance can work on strategies to change laws and to have a human rights perspective adopted in all the European measures against trafficking.

But first things first. Sex workers from all over Europe should get together.

Would you like to join a meeting with sexworkers from all over Europe to discuss the current situation in the different European countries in order to develop appropriate responses to the increasing repression against sex workers and set up strategies to challenge the trafficking debate?

We would love to organise a **European Sex Workers Meeting** next spring (2004) but as a small group we are not able to do this alone, we need help to organise everything and to find the money to do so.

Would you (or your organisation) be interested to participate in the organisation of this very important meeting?

We sent this 'invitation' to all the sex workers organisations and allies in Europe we know. The list is included, let us know if there are any sex workers organisations missing on this list or if you know individual sex workers who need to be involved.

Please send your ideas, responses and recommendations. There is a special mailing list for this purpose. You can subscribe to this list by sending an email to:

majordomo@cytag.nl, write in the header: subscribe sign.

We welcome your ideas to this initiative and are looking forward to your responses.

In solidarity,

SIGN

Christy ten Broeke, Political activist

Licia Brussa, TAMPEP International Foundation

Marieke van Doorninck Mr.A. de Graaf Foundation, institute for prostitution issues

Martine Groen, psychotherapist, first chair of De Rode Draad

Marie Louise Janssen, Belle van Zuylen Institute

Mariska Majoor, founder Prostitution Information Centre (PIC)

Marjan Sax, founder Mama Cash

Krystine Strugoveca, Activist

Petra Timmerman, Maggies, Toronto Prostitutes' Community Service Project

Jacqueline Waterman, Prostitution Information Centre (PIC)

Marjan Wijers, Clara Wichmann Institute, expert centre on women and law

List of organisations that have been contacted

Lefö, Austria

Payoke, Belgium

Roskos bez Rizika, Czech Republic

Pro Centret, Denmark

Salli, Finland

Pro-tukipiste, Finland

P.A.S.T.T., France

Autres Regards, France

Cabiria, France

Amnesty for Women, Germany

HYDRA, Germany

Madonna, Germany

Kassandra, Germany

High Lights, Germany

Hurenselbsthilfe, Germany

Act up, Greece

KEGE, Greece

Association of Interests for Hungarian sexworkers, Hungary

Comitato per I Diritti Civili delle Prostitute, Italy

Dropin, Luxembourg
European Network of Male Prostitution, the Netherlands
Prostitution Information Centre, the Netherlands
PION, Norway
De Rode Draad, The Netherlands
Pro-Sentret, Norway
TADA, Poland
ARAS, Romania
C.A. Odysseus, Slovakia
Colectivo Hetira, Spain
LICIT-Barcelona, Spain
ROPP, Spain
ROSEA, Sweden
Aspasie, Switzerland
L'association 'Fleur de Pavé', Switzerland
International Sex Workers Union, UK
Network of Sex Work Projects, UK
UK Network of Sexwork Projects, UK
SCOT PEP, UK
Alla Belyakova, Ukraine

Background information

Recently debates about sex work and trafficking in human beings figure high on the political agenda. On both the national and international level, states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations have generated a multitude of conferences, policy measures, and projects. Examples of recent initiatives are the Protocol on Trafficking Human Beings adopted by the United Nations in 2000 and the Framework Decision on Trafficking adopted by the European Council in 2002. There have also been several international conferences, including one organised by the European Parliament and the International Organisation of Migration. What is striking in all these decision-making processes and meetings is that (migrant) sex workers were hardly if at all involved.

Although trafficking is recognised as a gross violation of human rights, the debate rarely focuses on the interests of trafficked persons and the protection of their human rights. On the contrary, when trafficking is discussed it is within the framework of combating organised crime and illegal migration. In order to fight trafficking many

European countries have implemented repressive measures designed to prevent women from migrating for sex work. Rather than preventing trafficking and related abuses these measures are discriminatory and actually encourage the practice of trafficking. By closing legal avenues of migration and work, would-be migrating (sex) workers are increasingly dependent on those who control the illegal routes.

The present international debate on trafficking not only impacts on the day-to-day lives of (migrant) sex workers but also shapes ideas and images about sex work. This discussion focuses on the conventional idea that (migrant) sex workers are victims. Politicians strategically use stories of ‘innocent’ victims being forced to prostitute themselves to legitimise repressive anti-migration and anti-prostitution policies. Images of ‘innocent’ victims of forced prostitution deny these women their power to make choices and in no way adequately represent the needs and realities of migrant sex workers, including those who may work under exploitive or coercive conditions. This one-sided debate has forced the issue of sex worker rights into the background.

The rights of sexworkers are not only endangered by the trafficking debate and European anti-migration policies. In many European countries evidence of the current neo-conservative spirit can be found in new anti-prostitution measures and policies, such as in France and Italy. The Swedish law that criminalizes clients has grave implications for the working conditions of sexworkers. Even in the Netherlands despite the recent legalization of the sex industry, the political focus is not on improving the position of sex workers but on regulating and controlling the industry and keeping migrants out of the country.

We demand that sex workers’ rights be put (back) on the international agenda. The trafficking debate should be about sex work in relation to human rights, labour rights and migration, and sexworkers (organisations) must play a lead role.

Aims

- to put sex workers’ rights back on the international agenda
- to transform the trafficking debate into a debate on labour migration and rights
- to analyse the current situation in the different European countries in order to develop appropriate responses to the increasing repression against sex workers
- to build alliances with international labour, human rights and migrants’ rights organisations and insist they include sex workers’ rights on their agenda
- to create a political forum for sex workers and pro-sex workers’ rights organisations in West, Central and East Europe.

ANNEX 2

Response of Ms. Ciobanica, Head of the IOM Mass Information to Ann Jordan from Human Rights Law Group, posted on the Stop-traffic mailing list

Date: Fri, 13 Dec 2002 13:00:03 -0500
From: stop-traffic-request@friends-partners.org
Subject: Stop-traffic digest, Vol 1 #744

2. RE: new IOM website on trafficking in the Baltic (CIOBANICA Laurentiu)

Message: 2

From: CIOBANICA Laurentiu <lciobanica@iom.int>
To: "stop-traffic@friends-partners.org" <stop-traffic@friends-partners.org>
Cc: "Annj@HRLawgroup.org" <Annj@HRLawgroup.org>, "jennycast@sbcglobal.net" <jennycast@sbcglobal.net>, "dwarden@earthlink.net" <dwarden@earthlink.net>
Subject: RE: [Stop-traffic] new IOM website on trafficking in the Baltic
Date: Fri, 13 Dec 2002 13:01:00 +0100
Reply-To: stop-traffic@friends-partners.org

Dear Ms Jordan,

Thank you for your message of concern about IOM's use of certain images in its counter-trafficking materials. Feedback and comments like yours are very important and help us better judge the focus and the content of the materials we use in our information campaigns. As a matter of general principle, we strive to consult with as many key players and partners as possible in both the governmental and non-governmental realm so as to ensure representativity and balance in our methods and messages. That is why we take your comments seriously, and will consider your suggestions carefully.

Nonetheless, I feel that your message does not fully take into account some very specific circumstances of counter-trafficking communication work and misrepresents our institutional intentions and purposes. I will therefore try to explain these.

1. As an organization mandated to uphold the dignity and well-being of migrants, we take protection of migrants' rights very seriously. In recent times, women have become a distinct and more significant part of international migration flows. As a result, IOM has given particular attention to women and the broad range of political, social and cultural rights and needs in connection with mobility, including specific institutional policies that give full attention to gender issues.

In turn, this has translated into numerous IOM projects and activities specifically designed for women. These projects provide women with choices, support and empowerment. They are proof of our commitment to the cause of women and our determination not only to recognise them as "people that have rights and make choices" but also to ensure that they know their rights and can make informed choices.

2. You say that trafficked women are full-rights human beings, and we agree entirely. However trafficking is not just a matter of misfortune in meeting some "bad characters" along the way. The reality is that trafficking is a very serious business. It is right to be concerned with "images that sensationalise and demean" but trafficking does much more than that.

Women get beaten, raped, drugged; they are ruthlessly exploited and live in slave-like conditions handcuffed to beds in squalid enclosures. Some never live to tell their stories because they are killed or take their own lives in desperation. This is why it is so important to warn, and point out very clearly the dangers and consequences. A certain degree of visual and literal bluntness is required. Public attention must be drawn to a serious issue that concerns society on the whole, not just a few unfortunate individuals; and through this, pressure applied to people in authority at both local and national levels, who remain complacent or unconcerned. Our experience shows us that a tepid discourse gets a tepid response. This is to nobody's advantage. We need to be sure of results.

3. We do not condone visual violence or offensive materials. Quite the contrary. In the particular case you have mentioned, that of women hanging by hooks, there was reasoning behind the use of such images. The nakedness was meant to show the helplessness and vulnerability of trafficked women. The hooks were visual metaphors used to convey an essential aspect of trafficking, namely the manipulation and exploitation to which trafficked women are subjected.

No, women are not objects or puppets, as you rightly point out. Nor were "nudity" and "sexuality" used for their own sake, although they are part of the trafficking equation. But most trafficked women find themselves treated as slaves with no control of their lives whatsoever. This is the idea we wanted to convey. There cannot be too much talk of choice or empowerment when you are sold, beaten, raped or killed.

We believe our images are quite innocuous compared to the actual experiences of trafficked women, and we consciously eschew more explicit imagery. It is our firm belief that any further softening of the visuals would result in a bland, ineffective outreach effort. This is not the way to deal with certain of the more pressing aspects of trafficking.

4. The message and the imagery we use in our campaign materials are the result of a long and often painstaking co-ordination process with project partners: government entities, media experts and, most importantly, some of the most dynamic and representative counter-trafficking NGOs in countries where we are assisting victims. The materials we have put out enjoy the full support of our partners.

Moreover, they are based on extensive audience research both prior to their design and after, tested on representative audience samples. The reaction of these groups of young women has been a deciding factor in our choice of designs and messages.

You or I may not agree with some of their preferences and reactions. But we have to take them into consideration, and these were the messages and images to which audiences responded and which have brought the point home. We have received no comment from these almost exclusively feminine audiences; nor from our project partners, for that matter, as to their demeaning and sensationalistic character.

Nevertheless, the images used throughout the campaign were meant for a different, more restricted audience than that of general users of the Internet world-wide. Inevitably in the case of such a large audience, these pictures have not been understood in context and may have caused offence. We regret this and have decided to replace them with less offensive visuals or use no pictures at all.

5. There is and always will be a certain bluntness to all mass-media work. These are, by their very nature, crude instruments. For the more complex messages and issues, and also to give target audiences the possibility to voice their own concerns and provide feedback, we found other channels to be more appropriate.

Direct contacts, Q & A sessions, social networking, training and interactive events are some of the mechanisms we have used. We make it a point of every campaign to achieve a balance between the inherently cruder mass-media and the more direct, but balanced mechanisms of direct interaction through which we can discuss some of the finer, more complex issues related to trafficking.

IOM also establishes shelters for women victims of trafficking to protect them and provide them with medical, social, psychological and legal assistance during their stay in the shelter. If they decide to return to their country of origin, IOM provides return services and reintegration support in their home country.

Are you also aware of our work in this area?

6. Finally, I would also like to point out the need for different tools and messages at different times along the communication/education continuum and in different countries or regions. There is a time for warning and a time for more in-depth education and empowerment. Depending on the country and funding availability, we have run so-called empowerment campaigns in some countries that focus on the active contribution and choice of women as far as combating trafficking is concerned. These use an altogether different set of media and messages with related imagery.

Our campaigns in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria are such examples, of which you may not be aware. From this perspective, the campaign and the materials used in the Baltic States, which we regarded more as an emergency situation are just one instrument of many others, and are not necessarily the most representative.

We are always willing to learn, and thank you for taking the time to comment on our efforts in this most critical and sensitive area of migration work. I hope the above information gives a more complete picture of our activities, and allays any lingering concern about their intention and effect. I am at your disposal for any further information or clarifications you may require on our objectives, policies, work and experience.

Sincerely,

Laurentiu CIOBANICA

Head, Mass Information

-----Original Message-----

From: Ann Jordan [<mailto:Annj@HRLawgroup.org>]

Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2002 5:25 PM

To: 'stop-traffic@friends-partners.org'

Subject: RE: [Stop-traffic] new IOM website on trafficking in the Baltic

The graphics in this website are demeaning and sensationalistic – they portray women as lifeless puppets with hooks in their skin!!! Why do these and other materials about women trafficked into forced sex work so often portray women as inanimate objects. Trafficked women are full human beings who, unfortunately, have met some very bad characters who committed numerous crimes against them and violated their most basic human rights. They are not puppets.

Materials dealing with women who are trafficked into forced domestic work or men who are trafficked into forced agricultural labor are never sensationalized, or sexualized in this manner. So, why do IOM and others (including the UN) continue preparing materials that sensationalize and sexualize human slavery in the sex industry?

IOM needs to pull these pictures and replace them with other images, or no images.

Ann Jordan

-----Original Message-----

From: ASAM [<mailto:asam@ixir.com>]

Sent: Friday, September 27, 2002 1:25 AM

To: refugee-infonet-tr; stop-traffic@friends-partners.org

Subject: [Stop-traffic] new IOM website on trafficking in the Baltic

*****excerpted from www.iom.int <<http://www.iom.int>> *****

A new IOM Website focusing on human trafficking in the Baltic region launches this week. www.focus-on-trafficking.net <<http://www.focus-on-trafficking.net>>, which appears in English, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian, is part of IOM's ongoing anti-trafficking information campaign in the Baltics and is funded by SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

The site is designed for a wide range of users - not only people at risk from human trafficking, but also specialists working in the areas of counter-trafficking, human rights and gender issues, as well as the media.

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Samenvatting

In deze dissertatie heb ik onderzoek gedaan naar de handel in vrouwen van ‘Oost’ naar ‘West’ Europa voor de seksindustrie. Op basis van vijftientig diepte-interviews die ik hield in Italië met vrouwen die ‘verhandeld’ zijn en gewerkt hebben in de door derden beheerste prostitutie, heb ik kritisch gekeken naar de huidige voorstelling van vrouwenhandel op basis van het begrippenpaar ‘slachtoffer’-‘crimineel’. Door vrouwenhandel te benaderen vanuit een migratieperspectief, toon ik dat de categorieën van ‘slachtoffer’ en ‘georganiseerde criminaliteit’ verregaande politieke en theoretische problemen opleveren bij het wetenschappelijk onderzoeken van vrouwenhandel, omdat ze een nexus produceren die de complexiteit van het proces van vrouwenhandel maskeert. Het was mijn doel in deze dissertatie het bestaande analytische bereik te verbreden en geschikter theoretische kaders voor het onderzoek naar vrouwenhandel te ontwikkelen. Met als uitgangspunt het begrip ‘mobiliteit’ als organiserend principe, betoog ik dat er een verband is tussen handel in mensen en de herdefiniëring van de Europese ruimte en van de mensen die daar deel van (kunnen) uitmaken, die op dit moment gaande is. Hiertoe documenteert en onderzoekt deze dissertatie de manieren waarop de representatie van vrouwenhandel langs de lijnen van de crimineel-slachtoffer tegenstelling geïmpliceerd is in het sanctioneren van het lidmaatschap van de Europese gemeenschap en in het vaststellen van de materiele en symbolische grenzen van Europees burgerschap ‘in de maak’.

Mijn benadering bij het interpreteren concentreerde zich niet op geweld tegen vrouwen, wat veruit – met name ook onder feministen – het meest gebruikte analytische kader is bij onderzoek naar vrouwenhandel. In plaats daarvan stelde ik voor vrouwenhandel voor de sekssector te onderzoeken vanuit het perspectief van arbeidsmigratie. De implicaties van deze analytische verschuiving waren tweeledig. Ten eerste gaf dit de mogelijkheid om afstand te nemen van het perspectief dat de Oost-Europese landen – met als oorzaak de crisis die ontstaan is door de economische transitie, gecombineerd met patriarchale sociale relaties – ziet als de belangrijkste producenten van criminaliteit en handel in mensen, en te kijken naar de verantwoordelijkheid van de lidstaten van de Europese Unie in het voortbestaan van vrouwenhandel. Mijn analyse van de fases van rekrutering en de reis voorafgaand aan de aankomst van de vrouwen in Italië, wijst erop dat stringenter grens- en visa-regimes misbruik in het migratieproces met zich meebrengen. Wanneer van overheidswege bestaande migratiekanalen niet toegankelijk waren, wendden vrouwen zich tot netwerken voor vrouwenhandel. Echter, het zich verlaten op bemiddelaars als organisatoren van de eigen ‘illegale’ reis, bracht het verlies van zeggenschap over het vervoersmiddel, de route en de lengte van de reis met zich mee, en stelde vrouwen bloot aan het gevaar van seksueel, fysiek en ander misbruik gedurende de reis.

Ten tweede toont de benadering van vrouwenhandel vanuit het perspectief van migratie en arbeid hoe inadequaate de term ‘seksuele slavernij’ – een veelgebruikte term in het beschrijven van de omstandigheden van vrouwen in de door derde partijen gecontroleerde straatprostitutie – is. De term suggereert dat de beheersing van en controle over vrouwen door deze ‘derde partijen’ volledig is. Door licht te werpen op de middelen en strategieën waarmee derde partijen controle uitoefenen over de mobiliteit van vrouwen en hun optreden in de straatprostitutie, laat mijn werk zien dat

de controle van deze derde partijen over de vrouwen niet volledig is en dat de relatie tussen derde partij en vrouwen onderwerp van onderhandeling is. Mijn studie wees er ook op dat de manieren waarop derde partijen hun controle over vrouwen uitoefenen niet gericht is op het seksueel domineren van vrouwen, zoals gesuggereerd wordt met de term 'seksuele slavernij', maar gericht is op het toe-eigenen van de inkomsten van vrouwen en het maximaliseren van economisch gewin uit het werk van de vrouwen. Door het onderzoeken van de relatie tussen derde partijen en vrouwen in al hun complexiteit, werd zichtbaar dat de controle en macht die derde partijen kunnen uitoefenen over migrantenvrouwen in de hand gewerkt en gefaciliteerd wordt door restrictieve verblijfs- en arbeidsregulering. Door de combinatie van deze reguleringen beperkt de staat de sociale en arbeidsmobiliteit van migrantenvrouwen en vergroot zij hun kwetsbaarheid en hun afhankelijkheid van een derde partij. In dit opzicht stelt mijn werk dat de manier waarop de arbeid van migrantenvrouwen in de door derden beheerste straatprostitutie gereguleerd is, niet uniek is voor de sekssector. Eerder, betoog ik, is het zo dat door de restrictieve verblijfs- en arbeidsregulering, in combinatie met geracialiseerde en geseksualiseerde processen van mondiale herstructurering, migrantenarbeid in het algemeen onderwerp is van groeiende controle en misbruik wereldwijd. Van daaruit stel ik voor de omstandigheden in de door derden gecontroleerde straatprostitutie - geassocieerd met slavernij of niet - te onderzoeken in relatie tot de transformatie van arbeidsomstandigheden en mondiale economische relaties.

Het verschuiven van het analytische kader waarbinnen vrouwenhandel bekeken wordt creëert een toegevoegde, en cruciale, theoretische opening. Deze opening schept ruimte voor vrouwen om de verhalen van hun migratie te vertellen. De migratieverhalen van vrouwen vormen een uitdaging voor het perspectief dat hen voorstelt als gedupeerd door derde partijen en willoos overgeleverd aan de bewegingen van het neoliberalisme. Het laatste is typisch voor de macro-structurele benadering van migratie die economische factoren ziet als de factoren die vrouwen 'duwen' richting migratie. In plaats daarvan toonden de verhalen van vrouwen dat zij zich verlieten op derde partijen met als doel het volbrengen van hun eigen migratieprojecten. De verhalen gaven aan dat economische factoren een aanzienlijke rol speelden in hun migratieprojecten, maar dat dit niet de enige factoren van belang waren. De migratieprojecten van vrouwen kunnen gezien worden als het verlangen naar en het opeisen van mobiliteit, op het vlak van arbeid, het sociale, of het affectieve vlak. Terwijl de migratieprojecten van mijn respondenten gestuurd werden door hun verlangen naar economische verbetering en naar het creëren van nieuwe en betere levensomstandigheden, representeerden ze tegelijk vluchtroutes weg van geweld binnen de familie; een manier om onafhankelijkheid (van de familie) te creëren, of om erkenning en respect voor zichzelf of de familie te (her)winnen. Tenslotte, en niet in de laatste plaats, begonnen vrouwen aan hun migratietraject in de hoop 'de juiste' man te ontmoeten in het buitenland. Dus, mijn werk wees erop dat de complexiteit van de verlangens en projecten van vrouwen niet gevat kan worden binnen de categorie 'slachtoffer'; deze noemer laat geen ruimte voor, en ontkent, het verzet dat vrouwen bieden tegen structurele ongelijkheid en hun strijd voor het transformeren van hun leven.

De theoretische uitdagingen waar de levens van migrantenvrouwen mij voor stelden, leidden me tot het kritisch bekijken van die representaties die 'Oost-Europese' vrouwen vastleggen in de categorie van 'slachtoffer', zoals de anti-vrouwenhandel

campagnes van de Internationale Organisatie voor Migratie (IOM). Deze campagnes verlaten zich in hun beeldvorming op het slachtofferen van vrouwenlichamen als manier om vrouwen te informeren over de gevaren van arbeidsmigratie. Mijn analyse toonde echter aan dat deze strategieën van representatie onbedoelde negatieve effecten kunnen hebben. Door vrouwenlichamen te ontdoen van een eigen blik en stem, herhalen de IOM campagnes het stereotype scenario waarin vrouwenlichamen het passieve object zijn van de mannelijke blik en van mannelijk geweld. In de IOM campagnes wordt het mooie, lijdende lichaam een schouwspel van ellende en voyeurisme dat de lichamen van ‘Oost-Europese’ vrouwen gevangen houdt in de representatie van traditionele vrouwelijkheid. Het vangen van vrouwenlichamen in traditionele representaties van vrouwelijkheid gaat hand in hand met een retoriek die arbeidsmobiliteit van vrouwen wil ontmoedigen en in plaats daarvan vrouwenlichamen immobiel maakt en vastlegt in de ruimtes van het thuis en de natie, en dus binnen de ‘private’ reproductieve sfeer en buiten de arbeidsmarkt, is mijn conclusie na analyse. Op deze manier stabiliseren de retoriek rond vrouwenhandel en de categorie van het ‘slachtoffer’ de veranderingen die de migratie van ‘Oost-Europese’ vrouwen teweegbrengen. Tegelijkertijd ‘normaliseren’ ze de differentiatie en uitsluiting die geproduceerd worden door de grens- en migratieregimes van de Europese Unie. Gezien binnen dit kader is vrouwenhandel een impliciet en intrinsiek onderdeel van de gegenderde en geracialiseerde orde in Europa die bepalend is in de herdefinitie van Europees burgerschap. Daarom beschrijft mijn werk vrouwenhandel, in plaats van als een eenvoudig verhaal van criminelen en slachtoffers, als een complexe constructie die vorm krijgt doorheen verschillende materiele en symbolische terreinen.

Het is niet simpelweg zo, betoog ik in mijn dissertatie, dat de representaties van vrouwenhandel die gestoeld zijn op de categorie van ‘slachtoffer’, falen de ‘werkelijkheid’ van de levens van de vrouwen om wie het gaat te beschrijven. Door het immobiel maken van vrouwenlichamen binnen de grenzen van traditionele vrouwelijkheid, cijferen deze representaties de strijd van vrouwen tegen sociale, politieke en wettelijke beperkingen weg. Op deze manier verbloemen ze het feit dat de strijd van migrantenvrouwen om het verkrijgen van mobiliteit staat voor het opeisen, het praktiseren, van burgerschap. Het is om die reden dat ik betoog dat de categorie van ‘vrouwenhandel’ misleidend is als het aankomt op het bevatten van de complexiteit van hedendaagse politieke subjectiviteiten en de sociaal-politieke transformaties waarmee het proces van Europese uitbreiding gepaard gaat. Aan de andere kant stel ik dat onderzoekers, willen ze rekenschap geven van de veranderingen die gaande zijn in het Europa van vandaag, moeten komen met andere figuraties dan die van ‘georganiseerde criminaliteit’ en ‘slachtoffer’. Om hiertoe te komen is het naar mijn mening noodzakelijk om het begrip ‘vrouwenhandel’ overboord te gooien, omdat dit begrip verankerd is in de discursieve logica van slachtoffer en criminaliteit, die stereotype representaties van vrouwelijkheid in relatie tot Oost-Europese vrouwen inzet en bekrachtigt, en het aanbrenge van hiërarchieën in burgerschap normaliseert. Ik stel voor om oude analytische kaders te verlaten en het aan te durven gebruik te maken van nieuwe analytische methodes, en andere theoretische paden te bewandelen. Het concept van ‘mobiliteit’ biedt, in deze context, precies die mogelijkheid om achterhaalde paradigma’s te bekritisieren en om de uitdagingen waarvoor de levens van migrantenvrouwen ons stellen, aan te nemen.