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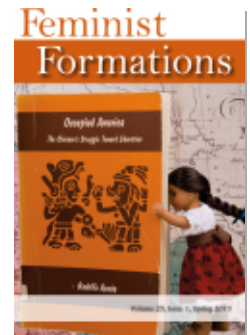
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Slave Hunters, Brothel Busters, and Feminist Interventions: Investigative Journalists as Anti-Sex-Trafficking Humanitarians

Roxana Galusca

The article elaborates a critique of current anti-trafficking humanitarianism as it takes form and shape in U.S. investigative journalism. In particular, it focuses on what is called here, following Foucault, the formation of a “popular regime of truth” about sex trafficking, tracing its cultural emergence in nineteenth-century muckraking journalism, its formation and circulation in the twenty-first century, and its current imbrications with U.S. governmental discourses and policies. This regime of truth in investigative journalism, it contends, congeals at the intersection of journalists’ affective attachments to women’s bodily abjection on the one hand and humanitarian fantasies on the other. The article makes use of feminist film theory and transnational feminist scholarship to show the ways in which the journalistic “truth” about sex trafficking relies on journalists’ investment in visual and discursive tropes of excessive emotions, as well as on libidinal attachments to vulnerable bodies. To this end, it offers a close reading of an undercover journalistic operation in Cambodia led by investigative journalist Aaron Cohen. It concludes with an analysis of official U.S. anti-trafficking policies abroad in order to show how current journalistic truth-making claims about sex trafficking enter foreign politics and have a considerable impact on sex workers in the non-Western world.

Keywords: humanitarianism / investigative journalism / popular regime of truth / radical feminism / sex trafficking / transnational feminism

On September 21, 2009, the Veritas Forum, a Christian student group, launched a human-trafficking event in New York City, suggestively titled “Fighting Modern-Day Slavery: Two Activists Share Stories from the Trenches.” The evening featured investigative journalist Nicholas Kristof, famous for his brothel-busting operations in Southeast Asia, and Kaign Christy, director of operations for Southeast Asia at International Justice Mission. Recently returned from China, with a co-authored monograph on women’s rights fresh off the press, Kristof took the floor to recount his adventures among corrupt law enforcement in Southeast Asia, peppering his speech with stories of rape and violations of women’s rights. Moving smoothly from China to India and Cambodia, national geographies and histories all but ignored in the heat of his oration, he began narrating melodramatic tales of rescue and redemption, while displaying for the public photographs of young Chinese girls saved from poverty by his own charity, women disfigured by pimps and permanently scarred by sexual slavery, and others beaming in the wake of restored freedom. A close-up shot of a Chinese woman disfigured by her pimp ended his presentation, a demonstration for the public of the urgency to intervene and save third world women.

Only two months later, another anti-trafficking event, “A Conversation among Men about Sex Trafficking” (2009), sponsored this time by the anti-trafficking NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), would restage the investigative enthusiasm of anti-trafficking humanitarians. This time, the four featured speakers, all men of different ages, talked at length about their endeavors to stop the traffic in women, insisting at the same time on the need to end men’s demand for prostitution—an approach not surprising, given CATW’s anti-prostitution stance. Unlike in the case of the Veritas gathering, however, during the CATW event, speakers approached the issue of sex trafficking obliquely by focusing instead on male sexuality. They spoke at length about restraining male sexuality and teaching young girls to protect themselves against male lust, or what Norma Ramos, the executive director of CATW, called “pornofication”—that is, “the fusing of erotic pleasure with the control of women.” The evening’s hero was investigative journalist Aaron Cohen. Ramos introduced Cohen as a hero who puts his life on the line to save “prostituted women and girls” throughout the world. Cohen, in his turn, smiled proudly and cracked jokes about his slave-hunting career and the absence of a girlfriend in his life because, he admitted, who would want to date a man who spends his nights in brothels with beautiful women. A tall, muscular guy, formerly in the air force and now a freelance investigative journalist, Cohen seemed particularly attracted to the moniker “slave hunter.” During his talk, he waxed dramatic as he railed against sex-work supporters who, “like hyenas” he told his audiences, grab the big share of governmental funding, reaping the rewards that should rightfully go to CATW, the “lioness” of the women’s movement.¹ His voice rose in passion as he explained that sex work is an aberration, that women are “prostituted,” victims of male vice. He confessed to meeting

such women in brothels throughout the world and concluded that they have a victim mentality and are not free-thinking individuals.

I chose to begin this article with the above description of the anti-trafficking events I attended in New York City because, to my mind, they index a peculiar moment in U.S. gender activism. Indeed, the two events bespeak the concurrent forceful resurgence of anti-prostitution feminism and anti-sex-trafficking activism at a time when capacious gender-based policies are shunned in favor of narrow approaches to gender violence and sexuality, or, to be more precise, in favor of a simplistic narrative that equates sex, especially in its commercial form, with patriarchal violence.² At first glance, these events might suggest a revival of the sex wars of the 1980s, only this time with anti-prostitution feminists spurred and newly energized by the alleged immensity of the global trafficking of women for forced prostitution.³ Yet, what I find striking about the anti-trafficking events that introduce this article is less the resurgence of the anti-prostitution feminist faction than the centrality of investigative journalism in both cases. Even as nonprofit organizations and NGOs push for stricter anti-trafficking legislation, an increasing number of wealthy journalists, mostly men, have begun to set off on independent rescue missions throughout Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe to restore freedom to prostitutes, whom they describe as victims trapped in brothels. Successors of a long U.S. history of muckraking and exposé journalism, today's investigative journalists, savvy slave hunters like Cohen, Kristof, Victor Malarek, and Peter Landesman, rely on melodramatic visual exposés and hidden camera recordings of women in brothels to bring to light and denounce publicly what they often refer to as "sexual slavery."⁴

In this article, I trace the present-day constitution of a realm of expertise about women's migration out of journalistic discourses and practices. I theorize the ways in which twenty-first-century U.S. investigative journalism produces what I call, following Michel Foucault's work ([1976]2000) on discourse and power, a "popular regime of truth," characterized by specific visual tropes and narrative genres. According to Foucault, a regime of truth refers to the types of statements and discourses perceived in a society as being true; the mechanisms that produce and propagate truth narratives, even as they make possible the distinction between true and false statements; "the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth"; and, last but not least, the status of those who are celebrated as truth-bearers (131). What I call the popular regime of truth defines the bevy of discourses, stories, and, in short, popular expertise about trafficked women produced mainly, but not only, through the visual media of film, photography, hidden camera recordings, and video clips. This regime of journalistic truth coheres as a result of norms—including organizational structures—that shape journalistic practices, discourses, and epistemic paradigms according to which journalism "recognizes itself and is recognized" as modern epistemology (Osborne 1998, 26). In addition, the ways in which journalists frame events—from camera angle and soundtrack to word choice and narrative

genres—are equally critical in producing meaning. These framing devices, based on subjective choices made by journalists and “prescribed by technology, ethical codes, [and] market conditions,” work to transform an event into a true and authentic story and, finally, into a form of expertise (McNair 2005, 31).

This article, therefore, represents an excursion into the narrativizing process itself, with an eye to the visual and semantic elements that endow disparate events with meaningful coherence and sociopolitical significance. To this end, my approach is multidimensional, as I move among several discursive registers—journalistic, political, historical—and temporalities. In this spirit, I aim both to make immediate some of the history of investigative journalism and to trace the ways in which present-day journalistic discourses about women’s migration travel across cultural genres and institutional discourses, inflecting and seeping into the anti-trafficking policies of the U.S. nation-state.

While the participation of investigative journalists in the articulation of gender violence and exploitation as “social problems” might not be unwelcome, my present critical intervention is triggered by some troublesome implications of such rescue sprees, not least of which is the construction of sex workers’ and poor migrant women’s identities as inextricably tied to gender violence and physical and psychological trauma.⁵ Such journalistic representations have monopolized the public discourse on human trafficking, while migrant women and sex workers have still to be heard on the issue. In addition, in their exclusive focus on prostitution at the expense of an approach to the precariousness of migrant labor in general, sensational stories about the trafficking of women have misrepresented the migrational process as a narrative of sexual trauma. According to Kamala Kempadoo (2005), the U.S. anti-trafficking movement focuses mostly on women’s trafficking in the underground sex industry, despite the fact that most of the trafficking occurs in the hospitality, manufacturing, and service industries (xvii). This disproportionate attention to women’s sex trafficking has resulted in curtailments of migrant women’s rights in many parts of the world, such as the one in Cambodia, recounted by feminist activist Melissa Ditmore, where, under pressure from the United States, Cambodia outlawed prostitution in February 2008.⁶ Similarly, the same misguided conflation between trafficking and prostitution has had serious effects on AIDS prevention programs. Most notably, the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), established under George W. Bush in 2003, requires all organizations that receive PEPFAR funding to oppose prostitution and trafficking, which are both seen as equally oppressive. This policy, also known as the “Anti-Prostitution Pledge” (PEPFAR Watch.org 2002–2011), has had negative effects, many times putting an end to AIDS prevention programs geared toward sex workers.⁷

Truth, Affect, and the Traffic in Women

In his famous *New York Times* editorial “The Girls Next Door” (2004), which in 2007 was turned into a movie called *Trade* (directed by Marco Kreuzpaintner), Landesman calls the trade in women “an epidemic.” “The traffickers’ harvest is innocence,” Landesman recounts:

When I first visited Santo Tomas, in late September, I found 150 young women walking a slow-motion parabola among 300 or 400 men. It was a balmy night, and the air was heavy with the smell of barbecue and gasoline. Two dead dogs were splayed over the curb just beyond where the girls struck casual poses in stilettos and spray-on-tight neon vinyl and satin or skimpy leopard-patterned outfits. Some of the girls looked as young as 12. Their faces betrayed no emotion.

Landesman’s story is the standard investigative tale, whereby the journalist inserts him-/herself into the narrative to give the impression of immediacy and verisimilitude. The first-person narrative makes the journalist not only a public hero for confronting social evils and risking his life for the public truth, but it also brings renewed credence to the melodramatic tale of trafficking and migration, after the model of “I was there and witnessed it myself.” In the above story, the realism of the witnessing and testifying *I* meets the third-person melodrama of the prostitutes, the anonymous many that we know only in their pain and as objects of male lust; the rational male subject situates himself as the omniscient narrator and the originator of truth about women’s prostitution, migration, and sexual perils in border towns. The production of truth claims, as the above example suggests, is a complex process whereby empirical claims, based on journalistic investigations and witnessing, draw on emotionally charged imagery of sexual exploitation and commodification. Gendered images, such as women walking a slow-motion parabola, the skimpy outfits half-covering their bodies, and the crowd of sex-crazed men, function to produce a lurid discourse about women’s prostitution on the border—a discourse that circulates across various cultural registers and contributes to the assumed truth of sex trafficking.⁸

Foucault ([1976]2000) once argued that truth is “a thing of this world” and is “linked in a circular relation with systems of power”; that is, it is both the effect of power relations and it induces “effects of power” (131, 132). There is a battle surrounding truth, Foucault contends, notably around discourse and the rules that ultimately decide the true from the false (132). Most significantly, there are different forms that truth can take—from ethical conduct and scientific truth to “the forms of truth that animate the humanities”—which, in turn “presuppose . . . different ways of telling the truth, and different functions for truth itself” (Osborne 1998, 25). In this sense, truth is strongly, though not exclusively, related to the practices, research, and investigations of those disciplines said to offer the truth about the world, science being the most obvious

example (26). Journalism itself, especially in its investigative function, has won its interdisciplinary status as central to modern practices of truth telling, and it is thus foundational to any social reform.

At the same time, however, like all regimes of truth, the journalistic truth about sex trafficking is both strategic and affective. To be sure, the power struggle around truth is not only a matter of strategic calculations by various social and political actors. Notably, the politics of truth are also about public seduction, affective attachments to certain truth values, and the allegoric embodiment of these truth values in particular bodies. The body of the prostitute functions in journalistic accounts as the figuration of sexual exploitation. The simple mention of the prostitute invokes melodramatic and moralistic stories about exploited and exploitable female bodies. Landesman's account of trafficking, discussed above, reflects this particular allegorization of the prostitute's body: the image of women's bodies moving in a circle, vulnerable to customers' gazes, functions as a form of affect that gives coherence and public currency to the story of human trafficking.

The two anti-trafficking events with which I opened this article also indicate the strategic and affective entanglements that underpin the enunciation and struggle for and around truth in anti-trafficking activist circles. For example, speakers at the CATW event used metaphors like "hyenas" to describe pro-sex-work factions and "lioness" to convey the courageous work of anti-prostitution feminists, suggesting anti-prostitution commitments that originate not only in realistic political assessments per se, but especially in emotional reactions to what was perceived at the meeting as the sexual violence inherent in the sex industry. Moreover, Cohen's confession in his memoir that he feels responsibility "for an extended family of trafficking victims all over the world" (2009, 15) is suggestive of the blurred lines between gender justice and family romance, between the legal quest for truth and the heterosexual investment in truth. Cohen's use of the family trope to define his quests reflects ideals of family and normative sexuality underpinning his rhetoric and investigative ventures. Notably, his statement above alludes to the figure of the patriarch, the protector of an extended family of vulnerable women. Similarly, the images of injured and maimed third world women displayed by Kristof during his talk in New York City speak of the same truth-making process whose coherence depends on emotional presentations of pain and suffering. In this last case, the journalistic regime of truth is premised on emotion-filled representations of third world women, whose alleged powerlessness and sexual vulnerability, depicted live on camera or imprinted as an after-image in photographs, become central to an emotional discourse on truth, rescue, and gender emancipation.

Affect is central, therefore, to the production and circulation of the journalistic regime of truth about sex trafficking, even as affective attachments themselves form and take shape following the promulgation of journalistic discourses across multiple geopolitical and discursive realms. Thus, journalistic

stories of trafficking not only become dramatized in films, as suggested by Landesman's editorial, but they become part of national and transnational anti-trafficking activist campaigns, as demonstrated by the events recounted at the beginning of this article. During recurrent processes of narrating, debating, and demonstrating the alleged truth about migrant women's prostitution, the so-called sex trafficking emerges as an emotional trigger that unites and divides groups along ideological lines.⁹ This only shows that, as Sara Ahmed contends, emotions "work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation" (2004, 120).

Emotions circulate, bring people together and against others, and produce truth discourses: anti-prostitution activists clash with sex workers' advocates, while both mobilize journalistic stories to justify some interventions at the expense of others. Ahmed also argues that emotions "move sideways" through "sticky associations" between signs and objects, as well as "backward, by reopening past associations" and enabling associations with past events and figures (*ibid.*). The affective truth of anti-trafficking campaigns not only aligns people around a set of humanitarian objectives—the traffic of women and children, understood differently depending on the activist group involved—and subjects—migrant women and prostitutes—but it also ensures this sticking together retrospectively by mobilizing historical debates on women's sexual purity and prostitution, such as the notorious white-slave trade.

For example, today, anti-prostitution feminists appeal to the criminalization of prostitution in the 1949 United Nations anti-trafficking convention to justify their own demands for a global anti-trafficking convention that regards all forms of prostitution as trafficking. Thus, in "The 'Natasha' Trade: Transnational Sex Trafficking" (2001), Donna Hughes defines women's trafficking as occurring whenever a woman is involved in the sex industry, irrespective of whether coercion is involved, a definition she credits to the 1949 UN convention. According to Hughes, this definition of trafficking "is consistent with the 1949 United Nations convention," and it provides a comprehensive view of trafficking, not available in today's "narrower definitions of trafficking" (9). Similarly, current investigative journalists are themselves heirs to a long history of early-twentieth-century muckraking journalism, as investigative journalism was derisively called in the Progressive era. Thus, contemporary journalists reenact in different forms and under remarkably different historical conditions the stories of white slavery that their earlier predecessors helped bring to public attention. Before I move to contemporary journalistic narratives of trafficking, let me offer below a brief historical overview of the discourses and practices that preface today's concerns with trafficking and that bind affectively contemporary journalists to a longer history of truth produced through journalism.

From Muckraking to Investigative Journalism

In *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice* (2000), Hugo de Burgh identifies the investigative journalist as a man or woman “whose profession it is to discover the truth and to identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available” (9). Investigative journalists, according to him, function as a moral police; they appeal to moral standards shared by a particular society, “policing the boundaries between order and deviance” (15). Embracing a social-constructivist perspective, Mojca Pajnik (2010) emphasizes journalists’ construction of reality, insisting on the centrality of narrative frames that “organize and shape our understanding of reality, producing truth meaning within discourse and giving resonance to particular images” of traffickers and trafficked victims (46). Yet, investigative journalism always has an aura of objectivity, despite this moralistic stance. Indeed, “the social location of the journalist is rarely if ever questioned,” whereas “the interaction between journalists and their sources” is generally perceived as neutral, truthful, and unproblematic (Cheng 2008, 12). This belief in the truth of journalistic discourses reflects what Michael Renov calls, in his examination of the documentary genre, the public faith in “the film of fact,” the belief that “the realm of information and exposition” forms an unmediated replica of reality, despite the fact that any evidentiary or documentary text makes use of “constructive devices known to fiction,” such as specific narrative frames or, in the case of video, camera shots and angles, as well as soundtrack (1993a, 6; 1993b, 13).

Investigative journalism in the United States has had a long oppositional history of denouncing government corruption, even as, in general, investigative journalists shy away from thorough analyses of capitalism and from offering radical solutions to social problems, according to Robert Miraldi (1990). In particular, the investigation of women’s forced prostitution is by no means unique to twenty-first-century journalism, as scholars Jo Doezema (2010) and Gretchen Soderlund (2002), among others, have demonstrated. In effect, the muckraking journalist is credited with originally bringing the issue of sex trafficking and prostitution into public focus. U.S. journalists at the time strove to expose the connections between sexual depravity and sexual slavery, between the state sanction of women’s prostitution and the forced prostitution of what were thought of as naïve white U.S. and European peasant girls. Journalists’ sex-trafficking stories at the time contributed to the passage of a series of anti-trafficking legislation and culminated with the notorious Mann Act (1910).¹⁰

Reputed muckrakers like George Kibbe Turner and S. S. McClure made waves in 1909 with their disclosures of the sexual slavery of European women brought to the United States and sold into vice by procurers. Unlike contemporary journalists, however, Turner and McClure found the roots of the white-slave trade in the corruption of city life, the spread of European vices into the United States, and the dissipation of domestic familial morals. Not unlike

today's investigative journalists, the original muckrakers touted themselves as the saviors of miserable women trapped in lives of vice. In his editorial for *McClure's Magazine* titled "The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Centre of the White Slave Trade of the World, under Tammany Hall" (1909), Turner cited governmental surveys to present a melodramatic and no less erotic picture about "the procuring business in the United States" (58). "No more melancholy feature was discovered," he surmised, than that "of the little Italian peasant girls, taken from various dens, where they lay, shivering and afraid, under the lighted candles and crucifixes in their bedrooms" (*ibid.*).

Long before his American counterparts, British journalist W. T. Stead shocked his compatriots by investigating London's traffic in girls in his four-installment story of the "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" (1885). Reputedly, Stead tried and managed to buy a young virgin girl in one of London's slave markets. Relating his adventures through the "maze of London brotheldom" and among the "lost souls, the vast host of London prostitutes, whose numbers no man can compute," Stead presented his audiences with a melodramatic story about the complete ruin of pure young girls tricked and sold into prostitution (2). Drawing on the ancient legend of the Cretan Labyrinth, according to which, following a military defeat, the Athenian polis would send, every nine years, seven maidens and seven young men to be sacrificed to the Minotaur as tribute to King Minos, Stead concluded that "this very night in London, and every night, year in and year out, not seven maidens only, but many times seven . . . will be offered up as the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon. Maidens they were when this morning dawned, but to-night their ruin will be accomplished" (*ibid.*). Stead's narrative reads as a classic melodramatic tale, with influences from the literature of urban exploration, late-Victorian pornography and fantasy, the Gothic fairy tale, and detective stories (Doezema 2010, 63). The mix of urban explorations and detective storytelling becomes especially clear in Stead's detailed description of his investigations. Accompanied by "two or three coadjutors," he spends four weeks investigating "the London Inferno" (2). It is in this "underworld" that "for days and nights" he suffers "the penalties inflicted upon the lost souls in the Moslem hell, for I seemed to have to drink of the purulent matter that flows from the bodies of the damned" (3).¹¹

While contemporary investigative journalism continues the legacy of early-twentieth-century muckraking, it differs from its earlier counterpart in, among many other things, its use of media—especially with the advent of digital technologies—and the framing of women's trafficking relative to the transnational discourse of human rights. Women's trafficking is understood as being first and foremost an issue of women's human rights. Unlike in the case of the white-slave trade, when women's virtue was central to the debates, today's activists mobilize the language of injury and rights to justify a wide range of anti-trafficking interventions, in the process also eliding the distinction between

women and children.¹² Moreover, unlike early muckrakers, who were mostly reliant upon print media, contemporary investigative journalists employ new media technologies to produce visual narratives of sex trafficking, most of them in the form of live coverage of red-light districts. The printed word has given way to digital narratives nowadays, with the camera as the guarantor of unmediated documentation, the “tool of observation,” and the “impartial and unobtrusive observer capturing the sight and sound of real life” (Winston 1993, 44).

Digital technology—in the form of mobile phones, handheld cameras, hidden microphones, and synch portable equipment—has made contemporary investigative journalism a filmed evidentiary discourse, a “signifying practice” to cite Stuart Hall (1997), that produces knowledge and meaning through documentation and positivist recordings of data. The belief in the unmediated and objective knowledge produced by the journalist’s camera attaches new meanings to the old muckraking profession by turning journalists into documentarians and re-signifies the camera as the scientific observational tool (Winston 1993, 37). It is as if once the camera begins rolling, truth surfaces, though only to be encoded electronically in its exact and unique form. Or, as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1993) astutely notes, many times on the documentarian’s camera, truth and meaning become equated with each other despite the fact that “what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than *a* meaning” (92; emphasis in original).

Tales of Rescue

Investigative journalist Cohen has gained national and international fame for his anti-trafficking exploits and brothel raids in Phnom Penh’s red-light district in Cambodia, as well as in Nicaragua, Colombia, and Ecuador. His anti-trafficking work departs from that of his predecessors less in his discourse and more in the fact that he carries around a hidden camera (embedded in his watch) on which he captures clandestine activities in red-light districts around the world. Cohen has recorded his decade-long anti-trafficking activism in his memoir *Slave Hunter: One Man’s Global Quest to Free Victims of Human Trafficking* (2009). He also signed a contract with CNN to produce, together with Leif Coorlim, the documentary *Innocence for Sale* (2010), aired as part of CNN’s series *World’s Untold Stories*. This documentary, winner of the Cine Golden Eagle Award in the investigative series, features Cohen during one of his undercover operations in a Cambodian brothel and includes live footage from his brothel raids. The short film exposes sex trafficking in Cambodia revolving specifically around Cohen’s exploits to save several young girls whom he depicts as “trapped in brothels.” As the story unfolds, we witness Cohen going from brothel to brothel in search of trafficking victims, taking girls to shelters, reflecting on Cambodia’s political and moral corruption, and expounding on his own investigative mission.

Cohen's discourses and anti-trafficking ventures are certainly not unique today, when an increasing number of visual productions purport to expose the "plight of trafficking." After all, in the same investigative spirit, the journalists from the Institute for War and Peace Reporting went to Bucharest, Romania, to uncover the trafficking in children. To their dismay, days later they were out of luck, having to acknowledge that "on videotape, Bucharest [is] just another illegal version of Amsterdam's famous red-light district. We tried to find cab drivers who would offer underage girls, but they all said this was too tricky" (Radu 2003). Perseverant in their search, the reporters finally find Diana, a "mentally retarded girl," in the words of one of the reporters, whom they manage to buy from her alleged trafficker for \$400 and take to a trafficked women's shelter. Journalist Mimi Chakarova also traveled to Dubai to catch live on camera migrant women trafficked into prostitution. Her short film *Dubai: Night Secrets* (2007), broadcast on PBS's *Frontline/World*, captures the journalist's disbelief when faced not with trafficked women, but with women in the sex sector who refer to themselves as "business women."¹³

Yet, among all these visual productions Cohen's *Innocence for Sale* is unique, in that it offers an occasion to inquire about the visual conventions of such undercover operations. His documentary represents a reflection on the step-by-step production of evidentiary information on women's trafficking through hidden-camera recordings. The filming process itself turns into a celebration and endorsement of the truth made possible by investigative journalism.

One particular clip is significant in this respect. The scene occurs toward the beginning of the film, right after Cohen has introduced his viewers to the fundamentals of an undercover brothel raid. Following his instructive preamble, viewers experience live the suspense of such operations. The handheld camera pans from the ground up as Cohen, his stout figure shot from behind, moves with determination toward the entrance of what will soon prove to be a brothel. At this point, a young Cambodian man intercepts the filming team, protesting Cohen's attempt to enter the brothel and arguing with him. During this time the camera takes in the entrance to the brothel, only to circle back and fix for a while on the figure of the young Cambodian who, half-naked and one hand raised, attempts both to hide his face from the camera and to halt Cohen—to no avail. The camera lingers on the man's nakedness while Cohen is heard saying, in broken English, "Wanna go jail?" "Why jail?" the young man retorts. "Human trafficking," Cohen's voice resonates dramatically. During this short altercation Cohen's face remains hidden from the camera, his voice prevailing over what otherwise appears to be a peaceful and quiet place. In contrast, the camera lingers on the half-naked body of the young Cambodian, his angry shouts becoming more and more incomprehensible. The visual framing of the Cambodian man—his face blurred, his half-naked body first shot in close-up, and then the camera moving away as we hear his incomprehensible

shouts—makes him a racialized symbol of the abjection and sexual perversion that Cohen purports to expose and expunge.

This racialized depiction is especially evident when considered against Cohen's appearance in the scene immediately following. Here, Cohen, cozily settled at a table and fully facing the camera, places the unfolding brothel bust into perspective. "This is very serious business," he explains. "It is very dangerous to do this work in Cambodia because the mafia will kill you." Suspense, threats of death, and the potentiality of a horror to come frame the brothel bust and, most importantly, the investigative practice, incorporating the investigation into a narrative of heroism and terror. The suspenseful buildup to the bust blends into soft-core porn, as the film jump-cuts back to the scene of the raid. This time, the camera shows Cohen as he barges into the red-lit lounge of the brothel, where women, seated on the floor, chat and rest. A hidden camera on him, Cohen bursts in with a "Hello, hello," triggering women's screams and shouts of fear and protest, after which his voice is heard again, this time comforting them with "It's okay, it's okay!"

In the scene described above, the motion of the hidden camera follows Cohen's movements and, as a result, viewers are able to see only from Cohen's perspective, constrained by his camera angle. In contrast, the women's frightened and random movements, caught live on camera, are registered in detail. As the women scatter away in a state of confusion, the blurry camera image exposes for the viewer the inside of the brothel, a free tour for the voyeuristic eye of the public, but this time without the stigma always associated with visitors and workers in such places. Sociologist Elizabeth Bernstein (2010) captures the essence of this voyeuristic practice in her reference to U.S. evangelical women's rescue missions in Cambodian brothels. According to Bernstein, "the embrace of the third world trafficking victim as a modern cause" enables evangelical women "to engage directly in a sex-saturated culture without becoming 'contaminated' by it; it provides an opportunity to commune with third world 'bad girls' while remaining first world 'good girls'" (63). Likewise, Cohen's camera takes in and exposes the inside of a place that is out of reach for spectators, even as it lures them into a titillating sexual encounter that they can indulge in without the fear of stigma. Peeking over the shoulder of the journalist, as viewers, we are aware of and know what the women to be "saved" cannot know yet, a spectatorial privilege further reinforced by our complicity in the voyeuristic pleasure produced by focused camera shots on prostituted bodies that matter only in their illegality and fear. Privy to this exotic space and its occupants, viewers participate, alongside the filmmaker, in the process of producing public meaning out of the images captured by the camera.

The realism that purportedly characterizes this brothel scene frames Cohen's subsequent exploits in the film and helps to establish its authenticity. Filming conventions reminiscent of *cinéma vérité*—long takes of streets in

Cambodia interspersed with impromptu shots of people, all framed by Cohen's commentary on his rescue missions and the filming process—turn the film into a visual discourse that emerges at the intersection of documentary, detective fiction, and eroticism, the last suggested by the erotic innuendoes that define Cohen's relationship with the women he allegedly rescues. According to Brian Winston (1993), *cinéma vérité* presupposes that the truth is guaranteed, "because we, the audience, could observe them [the documentarians] apparently in the act of observing" (50). The allegedly raw material Cohen offers and discusses for his viewers on camera constructs the filming act as a process of observation and data collection, giving it the scientific accuracy associated with the regime of truth. As he moves from brothel to brothel accompanied by his camera, Cohen provides details on the process. "We're in our car right now. We're on our way to the first location," he informs viewers, inviting them to actively participate in the investigation, beyond mere spectatorship. Comments like this also render Cohen as a simple observer with no knowledge of what is to come, recording impromptu events and, like his viewers, discovering everything anew. Despite the fact that the live footage and his commentaries would have been edited in the making of the documentary, the overlap of footage and narration functions to portray the film as truthful discourse.

The various discursive strands in the film cohere around the eroticism usually associated with prostitutes in brothels as the focus of both spectatorial pity and curiosity. Images of women in brothels, captured live on Cohen's camera and displayed for television viewers, turn the film into a performative act that racializes the body of the prostitute at the same time that it constitutes gender as the marker of eroticism and sexual vulnerability. The erotic innuendoes integral to these encounters between journalists-turned-humanitarians and sex workers transpire not only in visual representations per se, but also in the actual interaction between journalists and prostitutes. Not surprisingly, in some cases, the initial encounter and interaction between the journalist and the prostitute are made possible, if not by a sexual exchange, at least by the intentionality of such an exchange. Kristof himself admits that "the only way to have access to the girls is to appear to be a customer. So I put out the word that I wanted to meet young girls and stayed at the seedy \$8-a-night Phnom Pich Guest House, and a woman who is a pimp soon brought Srey Neth to my room" ("Girls for Sale" 2004c). Likewise, in Cohen's *Innocence for Sale* (2010), eroticism unexpectedly breaks through the seamless humanitarian discourse when, on finding himself in a hotel room with a "karaoke girl," Cohen is heard exclaiming "Oh, she's so shy!" Cohen's remark becomes especially flirtatious when counterposed against the young woman's silence and anxious bearing. Moreover, his confession in *Slave Hunter* (2009) that he sometimes has to make out with women in brothels to distract the pimp is suggestive of the erotic exchange that becomes integral to the interactions between humanitarian journalists and alleged victims:

The reality is this: I get close to the women I meet on the job. This might mean that they end up sitting on my lap or hanging on my neck while we're talking in a karaoke bar. Some of them have even stayed overnight in my hotel room—which definitely goes against official rules. I have cuddled and even kissed a few of these women. . . . It's a struggle to remain detached. I try and conjure up the image of Ulysses, begging to be tied to the mast in order to resist the Sirens' calls and keep his ship clear from the rocks. (166)

This confession is striking in its use of patriarchal images that recall Ulysses' manly adventures and sexual abstinence. The "rescued" women appear as irresistible temptations, belying Cohen's attempt throughout his memoir to portray them as naïve children forced into sexuality by malevolent men. Their rapacious (yet unconscious?) sexuality is compounded by what Cohen believes to be their life's aspiration to be "saved" by becoming an American's girlfriend" (ibid.).

Yet, not surprisingly, the encounter between Cohen and the Cambodian women, just as in the case of many other similar encounters, loses its sexual connotations when packaged as humanitarian work. The journalist's humanitarianism, enacted live in this scene, is premised entirely on the excessive fear and emotion of the prostitutes, whose bodies are exposed to the camera in their excessive fear and emotion. At the same time, the fine line between erotic encounter and humanitarian work renders these bodies as both vulnerable—thus in need of protection—and highly sexualized. In the end, women in brothels become stand-ins for social and economic problems; they are what Minh-ha calls

the silent common people [who] are constantly summoned to signify the real world. They are the fundamental referent of the social; hence it suffices to point the camera at them, to show their (industrialized) poverty, or to contextualize and package their unfamiliar life-styles for the ever-buying and donating general audience "back here," in order to enter the sanctified realm of the morally right. (1993, 97)

Framed as narratives of excessive suffering, rescue, and sexual temptation, journalistic investigations of the types described above constitute filmed undercover operations in a popular discourse of truth whose coherence depends on the centrality of the prostitute as prototype of pity and erotic attraction.

Conclusion

Journalistic discourses on women's prostitution not only continue and contribute to a disciplinary discourse on women's sexuality, but they also become inscribed within a broader humanitarian politics that brings together governmental and nongovernmental organizations in what is often called the "global fight against sex slavery." This humanitarian politics coheres both nationally in the United

States and transnationally under U.S. leadership to produce a global regime of sex regulation targeting sex workers in developing countries and, more generally, poor migrant women. Diverse regimes of signification and knowledge-production—journalistic, governmental, and humanitarian—come together to produce a transnational regime of expertise and control on migrant women.

As shown in this article, in their circulation across cultural and national borders, journalistic discourses shore up anti-trafficking approaches that marginalize important voices in the global anti-trafficking fight. Recurrent pre-conceptions about sex workers' exploitation and ideological confusion—what anti-prostitution feminists call prostitutes' "false consciousness," that is, prostitutes' inability to perceive their own exploitation—have foreclosed significant alliances between anti-trafficking activists and sex workers. Instead, as already suggested here, many anti-prostitution feminists and journalists have preferred to join hands with evangelicals, despite the fact that the latter are hardly known as supporters of feminist issues. Activists at the Sex Workers Project (2005, 2006), part of the Urban Justice Center in New York City, among many others, have repeatedly emphasized that sex workers are "potential allies" in the fight against women's trafficking and especially that "workers and clients in the sex industry have assisted trafficked sex workers in escaping coercive situations" (9). Yet, this alliance between anti-trafficking activists and sex workers is absent from journalistic discourses; instead, most journalists and anti-prostitution feminists prefer to see prostitutes as always already exploited and exploitable, always rescuable though never able to rescue themselves or others—in short, as lacking the capacity for political action.

While this melodramatic anti-prostitution rhetoric might not have originated with investigative journalists, more and more often numerous investigative journalists and anti-prostitution feminists collude with policy makers in the enforcement of anti-prostitution regulations both within and outside U.S. borders, on behalf of an ethically dubious war on sex trafficking. Most of the time, journalists' investigative practices, despite their problematic implications, are regarded by state officials as acts of heroism and as feminist interventions to save the typical "victim of trafficking"—a label that, when applied to foreign women and children, serves an ideological function and silences all critics. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has been especially vocal in her praise of Kristof's service to women's rights, as exemplified during her confirmation hearings.¹⁴ Likewise, a USAID report by Malcolm McPherson, *Developing Human Capacities in Poor Countries* (2005), relies on information extracted from Kristof's *New York Times* editorials as proof of the sexual slavery of women and children in Southeast Asia. For his part, Cohen has served as the American Bar Association's field operative and consultant in Ecuador, where he collected data on the prevalence of sex trafficking in the country and the actors involved, which were then used in the U.S. Department of State's assessment of Ecuador. Despite the obvious anti-prostitution bias characterizing

these journalists' work, their investigations function as proof of the existence of women's trafficking.

Although my intention in this article is to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, I would like to end by gesturing toward an alternative inclusionary anti-trafficking politics. First and foremost, my contention is that an anti-trafficking movement whose own coherence depends on the exclusion of sex workers' and migrant workers' voices, both within and outside the United States, cannot even begin to address the complexities of women's migration and work in the twenty-first century. Second, the overuse of labels like "sex-trafficked victim" and "prostituted women" does nothing to enlighten us as to the migrational processes and work practices that mark migrant women's lives. Such labels function not only to position some women outside of Western liberal narratives of autonomy and self-determination, but their expanding authority has also engendered and sustained a state of exception around women's migration and sexuality, leading to an alleged global crisis that legitimates a bevy of state interventions despite their repressive effects. Ironically, anti-prostitution activists have called upon the state to intervene and censure public forums purportedly conducive of sex trafficking, such as the recent craigslist scandal demonstrates.¹⁵

From an analytical perspective, as this article demonstrates, our task as feminists is to trace the institutional and noninstitutional—local and translocal—circulation of mainstream anti-trafficking discourses, their affinity with other discourses, their investment in normative forms of sexuality, and the convergence of the apparently benevolent humanitarian rhetoric of trafficking with repressive forms of government. Such an analysis reveals anti-trafficking discourses and practices as not simply humanitarian and thus outside formal politics and power, as we are usually made to believe; instead, when scrutinized, anti-trafficking discourses appear to be always already imbricated with institutional and noninstitutional forms of power, as well as wielding and producing new effects of power.

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Notes

1. Cohen's affirmation about anti-trafficking funding is misleading at best. In fact, the George W. Bush administration funded exclusively evangelical and feminist-abolitionist anti-trafficking groups. Bush is also notorious for signing the "Anti-Prostitution

Pledge” in 2003, a piece of legislation that denies AIDS and anti-trafficking funds to NGOs that work with sex workers (PEPFAR Watch.org 2002–11). According to Gretchen Soderlund (2002), the Department of Justice under John Ashcroft “has spent an average of 100 million dollars a year to fight trafficking domestically and internationally, a sum that overshadows any other individual nation’s contributions to similar efforts” (67). It is also unclear what particular pro-sex-work groups Cohen has in mind in this case. Most probably, his attacks are directed at the international anti-trafficking organization Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) and other anti-trafficking groups supportive of adult sex workers’ rights. GAATW, which is headquartered in Thailand but operates throughout the world, is known for an approach to the trafficking of women that is informed by human and sex workers’ rights. The ideological conflict between CATW and GAATW gained particular momentum in 2000 at the United Nations during the drafting of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking Against Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*. At the meeting, the abolitionists from CATW clashed with human rights organizations, including GAATW, over the proper definition of “trafficking.” While CATW thought that all forms of prostitution should be deemed trafficking, activists from GAATW emphasized adult women’s choices to enter the sex industry. For more on this, see Janet Halley et al., “From the International to the Local in Feminist Legal Responses to Rape, Prostitution/Sex Work, and Sex Trafficking: Four Studies in Contemporary Governance Feminism” (2006).

The resurgence of human trafficking as a central cause in feminist activism has led to the rearticulation of old feminist debates on prostitution and pornography, to the extent that anti-trafficking activists vie over the proper definition of “the trafficking in women,” or the so-called sex trafficking. Feminists, legal scholars, and sex workers’ activists like Laura Augustín (2007), Jo Doezema (2010), Kamala Kempadoo, Jyoti Sanghera, and Bandana Pattanaik (2005), and Penelope Saunders (2005), among many others, espouse a view of trafficking that acknowledges the possibility of noncoercion in prostitution, disarticulating sex trafficking from adult women’s decisions to engage in sex work. In contrast, the so-called neo-abolitionists, anti-prostitution feminists like Kathleen L. Barry (1984, 1996), Donna M. Hughes (2000, 2001), and Catharine A. MacKinnon (1993) conflate trafficking and prostitution, because, according to these scholars, commercial sex is inherently violent, coercive, harmful, and the utmost expression of patriarchal violence. Therefore, for feminists like Hughes and MacKinnon, the abolition of prostitution represents the only viable strategy in the fight against human trafficking. According to Hughes, prostitution “is not the world’s oldest profession, as it is commonly said, although it is probably one of the world’s oldest forms of men’s violence against women and girls. . . . Prostitution is abuse and exploitation of women and girls that results from structural inequality between women and men on a world scale. Prostitution commodifies women and girls and markets their bodies for whatever acts men have sexualized and want to buy” (2000). In MacKinnon’s words, in prostitution “women are tortured through repeated rape and in all the more conventionally recognized ways. Women are prostituted precisely in order to be degraded and subjected to cruel and brutal treatment without human limits” (1993, 13).

2. Throughout this article, I use “anti-prostitution feminism” to refer to scholars and feminists who oppose prostitution on all grounds. Most of these feminists are active

in CATW. As I use it in this article, “anti-sex-trafficking activism” denotes those anti-trafficking interventions that target women solely in prostitution and espouse an anti-prostitution stance. In addition, I use both “sex worker” and “prostitute” throughout to refer to women working in the sex industry. “Sex worker” is the label preferred by sex workers’ activists and allies, because it underscores the idea of work and eschews the stigma and guilt that “prostitute” historically carries. I use the latter only to emphasize the stigma associated with the practice by the discourses analyzed here.

3. Citing high numbers of trafficked women and children has become one rhetorical strategy used to express the threat of trafficking worldwide, despite the lack of accurate statistics. In her introduction to a 2002 CATW report titled *A Comparative Study of Women Trafficked in the Migration Process*, Janice G. Raymond calls trafficking in human beings a “global business that affects all countries and reaps enormous profits for traffickers” (1). While acknowledging that statistics are hard to come by, are not always accurate, and differ from one report to another, Raymond nonetheless offers statistical data as proof of the seriousness of human trafficking. She cites sociologist Pino Arlacchi’s study, according to which “trafficking is a 5–7 billion U.S. dollar operation annually” (ibid.). In addition, Raymond contends that “millions of women worldwide are trafficked into the sex industry” (1). “It has been estimated,” she posits, citing an investigative journalist, that “at least 8,000 Nigerian women have been trafficked into street prostitution in Italy. Another 5,000 Albanian, Moldavian, and Ukrainian women have also been trafficked into Italy where they are made to prostitute out of rooms, apartments, small hotels, massage parlors and even exclusive clubs” (ibid.). Yet, scholars and international organizations have repeatedly proven these numbers to be false. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Bangkok office, trafficking statistics circulated in media and scholarship are “false” or “spurious”: “When it comes to statistics, trafficking of girls and women is one of several highly emotive issues which seem to overwhelm critical faculties” (qtd. in Weitzer 2007, 455–56).

4. Nikolas Kristof especially has gained his journalistic and humanitarian fame following his many editorials in the *New York Times*, in which he describes his rescue missions in Cambodia and China. See in particular his editorials “Stopping the Traffickers” (2004a), “Loss of Innocence” (2004b), and “Girls for Sale” (2004c). For other examples of journalistic anti-trafficking discourses and practices, see Mimi Chakarova’s multimedia project *Moldova: The Price of Sex* (2005), Aaron Cohen’s memoir *Slave Hunter: One Man’s Global Quest to Free Victims of Human Trafficking* (2009), Peter Landesman’s “The Girls Next Door” (2004), Victor Malarek’s *The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade* (2005), and E. Benjamin Skinner’s *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery* (2008). While this article revolves around the so-called slave hunters (anti-prostitution advocates that go on rescue missions to save prostitutes), there are some journalists, less vocal and constantly marginalized in media, who are critical of Kristof and others. See, for instance, *Slate* critic Jack Shafer (2004, 2005a, 2005b) and journalist Noy Thrupkaew (2009). My focus is, however, on the dominant discourse in investigative journalism, because of its impact on the current understanding of migration and sex work.

5. See the numerous editorials by Kristof and other journalists cited above that elide distinctions between sex work and sex trafficking, with both viewed as resulting

in women's utter exploitation. For example, in her *Moldova* (2005), Chakarova relies on visuals of bodily injury and sexual vulnerability to signify Moldovan women's experiences of migration and prostitution. Women's sexual vulnerability is central to political discourses as well. During his 2003 speech at the United Nations, George W. Bush waxed lyrical as he reminded his audiences that trafficked women "see little of life before they see the very worst of life, an underworld of brutality and lonely fear" (Bush, qtd. in Soderlund 2002, 77). The reduction of human trafficking to women's sexual exploitation, and of women's labor migration to women's migration for sex, has become widespread both in popular and political discourses. Such conflation reduces migrant women's diverse experiences to sexual exploitation and trauma. For a general though far from comprehensive view of the ethical implications of using popular media to bring about social change, see William Brown and Arvind Singhal's "Ethical Considerations of Promoting Prosocial Messages through the Popular Media" (1993).

6. The Cambodian anti-prostitution law, greeted by the U.S. government as a step forward in the fight for women's rights, has led, according to observers, to the unlawful arrest and displacement of women working in karaoke clubs, bars, and brothels. Moreover, many of these establishments have not closed but gone underground, to the detriment of women's safety. As a result of this policy, many AIDS prevention programs targeting sex workers have ended, in part because of sex workers' fears of making themselves known in order to receive condoms and prevention kits (Ditmore 2008).

7. For more on this, see PEPFAR Watch at <<http://www.pepfarwatch.org>>.

8. Landesman's editorial became the focus of much praise, but also of considerable debate. Dissenting voices were marginalized in the media, however. Fellow journalists noted that his story was an exaggeration and far cry from the reality of migration. See Shafer's 2004 *Slate* column and his "Sex Slaves, Revisited" (2005b), in addition to the exchanges between him and Landesman, "Landesman vs. Shafer: The Sex Slave Author and His Critic" (2005a). Yet, somehow, the few critiques did not blemish Landesman's reputation and his story went on to become a film and gain full recognition by the UN anti-trafficking project. On September 19, 2007, the UN headquarters in New York City hosted the benefit premiere of *Trade*, the movie based on Landesman's "The Girls Next Door" (2004). The movie is touted as a "true story of trafficking" and has circulated since then as part of anti-trafficking campaigns throughout the world.

9. Surprising anti-trafficking coalitions between feminists and evangelical Christians are perfect examples of the ways in which emotional investments in the anti-prostitution cause works to minimize other ideological differences. It might come as no surprise, then, that an anti-prostitution advocate like Hughes finds only laudatory words for the Bush regime. George W. Bush will remain in history as pro-feminist, Hughes muses, since "as a true advocate for women's freedom and human rights, he has done more for women and girls than any other president" (Hughes, qtd. in Weitzer 2007, 450).

10. The White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910, known as the Mann Act after its sponsor, Congressman James Robert Mann, made the interstate transportation of women a punishable offense. The act became a moralizing and political tool in the hands of state officials, who used it to discourage interracial relationships and to intimidate political activists. Among the individuals prosecuted through the act was Charles Chaplin, who was targeted for his radical politics. According to David J. Langum (2007), Congress enacted the Mann Act to respond specifically to the social crisis provoked by

the white-slave trade, but the statute “used words that could be read as including even totally noncommercial, boyfriend-girlfriend travel, if done for a purpose the federal judiciary might deem immoral” (4). For more on this, see Langum’s *Crossing over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* (2007).

11. Stead’s revelations in the *Pall Mall Gazette* attracted worldwide attention, and, according to the author himself, were reprinted even by “the purest journals of the great American republic” (Walkowitz 1992, 82). The depravity and misery portrayed in Stead’s account led to a surge of upheavals, from grassroots vigilance committees attacking theaters and dance halls to “police crackdowns on solicitation and brothel keeping in the metropolis and the major provincial cities” (83). A rally against white slavery was convened in Hyde Park following Stead’s revelations. Feminists, workingmen’s associations, and social-purity reformers joined together to lobby that the age of consent be raised to age 16 (Doezema 2010, 61).

12. The abstract language of rights makes it easy for those involved in anti-trafficking campaigns to justify a wide range of practices in the name of women’s human rights, from raiding brothels, placing prostitutes in shelters, to shutting down businesses that are only remotely associated with the sex industry. See, for instance, the recent shutting down of the craigslist erotic-services section following anti-prostitution advocates’ claims that it was a peril to women’s and children’s rights. The organization The Rebecca Project for Human Rights (2011) circulated a letter, purportedly written by two girls trafficked on craigslist. The letter, addressed to Craig Newmark and Jim Buckmaster (craigslist’s founder and CEO, respectively), posits the termination of the adult section on craigslist as a matter of saving children and protecting their rights. “Saving even one child is worth it,” the letter reads. “It could have been us.” The organization also declares on its website that “[t]his is not about censorship or prostitution. It’s about human rights. More than 100 thousand [sic] underage American girls are being sexually trafficked in the United States right now, a crime in progress that must be stopped.” In this case, the invocation of children’s rights and their safety legitimates censorship, even as the emotional image of children tapped into prostitution obscures the issue of adult women’s own rights to expression.

13. For some other representations of sex trafficking in documentary film or as live footage, see Michael Davis’s *Cargo: Innocence Lost* (2008) and *Svetlana’s Journey* (2004); Gillian Caldwell’s *Bought and Sold: An Investigative Documentary about the International Trade in Women* (2009); and Justin Dillon’s *Call+Response* (2008). For television broadcasts of anti-trafficking undercover operations, see Chakarova’s *Moldova* (2005) and *Dubai* (2007), both aired on PBS’s *Frontline/World*.

14. Questioned by Senator Barbara Boxer on her stand on women’s rights in the third world, Clinton acknowledged reading Kristof’s *New York Times* columns and being moved to action: “I’ve also read closely Nick Kristof’s articles, in the last months and especially the last weeks, the young women that he has both rescued from prostitution, and met, who have been enslaved and abused, tortured in every way—physically, emotionally, morally—and I take very seriously the function of the State Department to lead our government through the Office on Human Trafficking, to do all that we can to end this modern form of slavery” (2009).

15. Historically, censorship laws have worked to discriminate against women. The Comstock Act, enacted in the United States in 1873, censured the publication and

circulation of obscene materials, but it also included as obscene the sale of birth-control information and devices, including the dissemination of information about abortion. The belief was that the separation of sexuality and reproduction would encourage women to prostitute and thus become victims of patriarchal control (Walkowitz 1983, 429). The law was struck down only in the late 1960s. It is thus ironic that anti-prostitution feminists push today for the same types of regulations that have been proven to work against women's interests.

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