

July 2012

## “We all like to think we’ve saved somebody:” Sex Trafficking in Literature

Donna M. Bickford

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Bickford, Donna M. (2012). “We all like to think we’ve saved somebody:” Sex Trafficking in Literature. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(3), 127-136.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss3/9>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

## **“We all like to think we’ve saved somebody:” Sex Trafficking in Literature**

By Donna M. Bickford<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This essay considers the potential impact of sex trafficking narratives and their relationship to public perception and social change efforts. It fuses literary criticism and cultural analysis to discuss multiple genres of texts, including mainstream news media reports and two categories of novels about sex trafficking. Finally, it argues for the power of narrative to catalyze and influence actions designed to eradicate sex trafficking.

*Keywords:* Sex trafficking, agency, representational strategies

### **Introduction**

Human trafficking is a criminal activity and a human rights violation that is receiving increased attention from policy makers and the general public. Although there are few reliable statistics about the prevalence of human trafficking (which includes both forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation), the statistics that are routinely cited indicate a problem of substantial magnitude. According to the 2012 US Trafficking in Persons Report issued by the US Department of State, between 20.9--27 million people around the world are ensnared in situations of forced labor, human trafficking or slavery, (terms that are generally used interchangeably).<sup>1</sup> The 2012 TIP report, referencing an earlier report from the International Labour Organization,<sup>2</sup> notes that a majority of these individuals (55%) are women.<sup>3</sup> The report also notes that the majority of human trafficking cases involve forced labor.<sup>4</sup> Although sex trafficking occurs less frequently than forced labor (an observation not intended to minimize the need to eradicate both forms), it receives a disproportionate amount of public attention. The ways in which sex trafficking is represented in media and literature influence how the issue is understood and what responses are made imaginable.

This essay considers the potential impact of sex trafficking narratives and their relationship to public perception and social change efforts. It fuses literary criticism and cultural analysis to discuss multiple genres of texts, including mainstream news media reports and two categories of novels about sex trafficking. Finally, it argues for the power of narrative to catalyze and influence actions designed to eradicate sex trafficking.

### **Coverage in news media: presence and absence**

An exploratory study by journalism professors Anne Johnston and Barbara Friedman examines how major US newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, covered the issue of sex trafficking over a two-year span (2006-8).<sup>5</sup> Their analysis finds that the most common frame employed in this coverage is that of crime (37%), with politics or legislation the next most common.<sup>6</sup> Johnston and Friedman note the absences in coverage as well, pointing out that there is little attention given to understanding trafficking in the context of global human rights, or of exploring the conditions that create or increase vulnerability. This has an impact on the interpretive

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Director, Office for Undergraduate Research University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
220 Graham Memorial, CB2800 Chapel Hill, NC 27599-2800 919-843-7790 [dbickford@unc.edu](mailto:dbickford@unc.edu)

schemas available for the general public to utilize in order to understand and work to address the issue of sex trafficking.

Another gap is that we seldom hear the voices of survivors in this coverage. That makes sense in some ways, given, among other things, the need to insure safety for survivors and to avoid retraumatization. It also potentially helps interrupt tendencies to voyeuristic sensationalism. But, when we do hear the voices of survivors in news articles on trafficking, the focus is often limited to the survivor narrative – what happened to them, and how it happened.<sup>7</sup> We rarely hear survivor voices included in public conversations about solutions for eradicating trafficking.<sup>8</sup> Bridget Anderson and Rutvica Andrijasevic point out that too often survivors are “not seen as political subjects, but rather as objects of intervention,” a perspective that is reinforced by much media coverage.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, survivor narratives are important in expanding our knowledge and educating us about the mechanics of trafficking. As Gloria Steinem points out, “these twenty-first-century slave narratives force us to recognize the reality of slavery.”<sup>10</sup> We need to face the horror, exploitation, and violence of trafficking and its impacts on victims. Yet Kinohi Nishikawa sounds a note of caution about a reliance on the rhetoric of victimization: “efforts to ascribe individualized pathos onto trafficked women obscure the structural conditions that have made trafficking such a vexing problem in our contemporary moment.”<sup>11</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that having space to recount their story can contribute to the process of healing and recovery for survivors and that they have the right to narrate and frame their experiences in whatever way(s) they choose. But Nishikawa’s observation encourages consideration of what is missing if the victim’s story is the primary/only focus. It is worthy of note in this context that a focus limited to the survivor’s experience means we pay little attention to the perpetrators and to the issue of demand.

### **Sex Trafficking in Novels**

Representational strategies in literature, as in media, offer frames that inform how we think about and wrestle with complex issues; these have impact and symbolic power. Johnston and Friedman’s work on news media made me curious about how sex trafficking was represented in literary texts. Are there consistent frames in novels? Do they differ from the frames in media coverage and, if so, how? As with news coverage, our cultural products reflect an emphasis on sex trafficking. Documentary films on the topic are plentiful, mainstream Hollywood films increasingly so, and survivor narratives are available.<sup>12</sup> Portrayals of sex trafficking in novels, however, have been a more recent development.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Sex Trafficking in Novels: Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement*

Many novels that do include sex trafficking employ a criminal justice/law enforcement lens, similar to the media coverage examined by Friedman and Johnston. Examples include Stieg Larsson’s *The Girl who Played with Fire*, Linda Fairstein’s *Hell Gate*, and *Burn* by Nevada Barr, among others.<sup>14</sup>

One example of the criminal justice frame is Magdalen Nabb’s *Vita Nuova*,<sup>15</sup> a police procedural. In this novel, sex trafficking surfaces in the context of a murder being investigated by the protagonist, Marshal Guarnaccia. Journalism also plays a necessary

role when Roberto Nesti, a reporter for *The Nazione*, provides Guarnaccia with crucial background information. For example, it turns out that although the father of the murdered woman (Paoletti) has no criminal record, he does have a history of pimping, among other unsavory activities.

The actual trafficking mechanisms include strategies routinely employed by traffickers. Paoletti runs a staffing agency and uses it as a cover for bringing in women from other countries and forcing them into prostitution (69).<sup>16</sup> He places just enough clients in legitimate jobs to stay under the radar. He owns the Emperor, a nightclub which offers strippers and lap dancing, as well as a very upscale, discreet hotel nearby where male buyers can bring the women they pay to use. The women live upstairs in the hotel, under the supervision of a caretaker. Paoletti keeps all the women's identification papers and uses his bouncers to "season" them (106) when they arrive.<sup>17</sup> There is corruption in the police system; the prosecutor assigned to the murder case is a silent partner in Paoletti's business.<sup>18</sup> The marshal in charge of the area where these businesses are located has been pressured into silence.

Nabb challenges facile judgments about commercial sex work as, in addition to the trafficked women and children, there are female characters who assert they are engaged in the work voluntarily. Maddalena, a Rumanian who first immigrated to work as a pole dancer at the Emperor under contract and fulfilled the terms of that contract, now works on a freelance basis with an agent who gets her "safe, well-paid gigs" (93), and is planning to return home and finish her university degree in economics (93). Maddalena sees prostitution as "an honest transaction," in contrast to the way in which she judges married women. She says, "Look around you at the women in here with their lifted faces and Vuitton handbags—all paid for by hubby while they're screwing his best friend. The difference between them and me is that their transactions are dishonest" (94).

Maddalena is the conduit to Cristina and five others who are "sex slaves," brought in by Paoletti from Eastern Europe (94). In the context of hearing Cristina's story, Guarnaccia discovers there are also two children involved, one about 8 and one about 12, who are forced to service clients. Initially Guarnaccia interviews Cristina in order to help solve his murder case; Nesti's prime interest is in reporting a splashy news story. Guarnaccia acknowledges that "Cristina was nobody's priority" (115), but "now that he knew about the children, it was different" (115). This statement is quite remarkable as it, on one hand, acknowledges the horror of children being trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation and, on the other hand, seems to discount Cristina's identical situation, a reaction that is unfortunately not uncommon when discussing adult women who are prostituted.

In Nabb's novel, in addition to contrasting voluntary prostitution and trafficking, a comparison is made between the trafficked children and local gypsy children. While Guarnaccia is investigating the murder and working to shut down the trafficking operation, another precinct is investigating the death of two gypsy children who died in a fire that was clearly set intentionally and is identified as arson. The mayor holds a press conference to denounce the crime; Guarnaccia's captain notes that the mayor is not particularly interested in the death of the gypsy children, but in how he can leverage the situation for his political future (52). When Guarnaccia becomes aware of the trafficked children, he thinks of what they must be feeling, "locked in a room, abused and frightened to death" (150), but he also remembers the gypsy kids "who only became

important when their small, incinerated bodies . . . became a political football” (150). This is a fairly powerful indictment of a system and public attitudes which can be mobilized to help certain victims of trauma and violence – here trafficked children -- but not others who are made to seem less worthy unless attention to their situation benefits those in power.

Although there are a number of complicated twists and turns in the plot, eventually the murder is solved. The club is raided and the trafficked children are taken to a safe house. Paoletti dies from what appears to be a stroke, which means he is not brought to justice – as his wife points out, he gets away with it (259). And, an unnamed girl, presumed to be Cristina, is found dead in the river.

As Nabb’s novel presents the police raid on the club as a successful result, one conclusion to which a reader is guided is that law enforcement is, at least in large part, the solution to the problem of sex trafficking. However, Nabb also portrays the complicity and corruptness of some representatives of law enforcement, which works against narrative closure. Unfortunately, this novel reinforces a model of personal heroics; no one was paying any attention to the situation of the trafficked women and girls prior to Guarnaccia’s involvement. It is Guarnaccia whose persistence, stubbornness and personal drive to address the situation eventually shuts down the trafficking operation.<sup>19</sup> This speaks to something I hear from law enforcement officers themselves when they note the importance of having colleagues who are personally dedicated to ending trafficking in order to successfully address this crime. As an anti-human trafficking advocate, I understand the importance of passionate commitment. However, I find myself profoundly uneasy at the idea that we have to rely on the personal interests and passions of law enforcement, rather than on their professional responsibility to enforce the law.<sup>20</sup>

### *Sex Trafficking in Novels: Exploitation, Agency and Voice*

Nabb’s novel is representative of many novels that see sex trafficking through a frame of criminal justice. Some novels, though, take a different approach, one that is more victim-centered. These novels give voice to trafficking victims in ways that highlight their agency and empowerment, responding to portrayals of victims as passive. Two in this genre are Patricia McCormick’s award-winning young adult novel *Sold* (2006)<sup>21</sup> and James Levine’s *The Blue Notebook* (2009).<sup>22, 23</sup> Both feature minor victims of sex trafficking as their protagonists, girls who have been forced into commercial sexual exploitation. One is trafficked from Nepal to India and one is trafficked within India. The novels share many characteristics in addition to geographic location. Both illuminate the multiple factors that make individuals and communities vulnerable to trafficking, including poverty and systemic gender discrimination. Fraud, deception, and familial complicity are present as part of the actual methods of trafficking in each novel.

The novels are written in the first-person so we hear the stories of the trafficking victims in their own voices. This is noteworthy. In the majority of current conversations about trafficking, people talk for and about survivors but the voices of survivors themselves are absent or not included in any meaningful way. As Ashley Dawson notes, a narrative strategy which puts us in the mind of the trafficked girl challenges images of trafficking victims which “perpetuate stereotypical notions of gendered helplessness.”<sup>24</sup> Rather than portraying trafficked people simply as object, passive victims, McCormick

and Levine offer girls who create spaces - admittedly small - within which to assert their own individuality, who build connections with others, and who strategically implement coping strategies as a way to survive physically, mentally, and emotionally. These are determined attempts to exist with some kind of internal intactness.

In the face of treatment which de-individualizes and dehumanizes them, turning them into objects and receptacles, one of the ways the girls assert agency is by insistently claiming their identity. In *The Blue Notebook*, Batuk is taken to a luxury hotel to service a rich man's son in order to "teach him how to be a husband" (141). She observes that she is referred to as "your toy," "your dolly," "the little bitch," but never by her name -- Batuk. When other prostituted women are brought to join the party, Batuk comments that, they, like her, "are not introduced by name" (175), noting that sometimes she feels like she's "lost her name. . . [and] become an anonymous unit" (176). One small intervention she makes when she finds herself cleaning up in the bathroom with one of the other girls is to introduce herself: "My name is Batuk" (192). Later when she is in the hospital after being tortured, a senior doctor asks her name and responds "Batuk, that is a lovely name," another affirmation of her as an individual (193).

In *Sold*, the story begins with Lakshmi's life with her family in a village in the hills. After she is sold into bondage, her pimp Mumatz repeatedly refers to her as an "ignorant hill girl" (106). Towards the end of the novel, when Mumatz again calls her a "stupid little hill girl" (260), Lakshmi defiantly owns that identity: "a little hill girl. . . Which is, still, what I am" (260). Thus, despite all that was done to her, her core sense of self remains strong and constant.

Literacy serves as a space of survival and a coping mechanism as Lakshmi and Batuk both write of their experiences, creating space for their own thoughts and feelings to take precedence and be acknowledged. These first-person narratives are sharply observant and consistently self-aware. Because literacy is rare among the poorest and most vulnerable, the novels explain how the protagonists acquired this skill. Prior to being trafficked, Batuk learned to read and write at a missionary's medical clinic, where she was taken after she contracted tuberculosis (70). After a kind nurse begins the process of teaching her to read, the priest there, Father Matthew, notes her interest and determination and arranges for a skilled reading teacher.

Lakshmi had some minimal schooling in her home village, but she becomes more fully literate in the brothel when Harish – the son of another prostituted woman – sees her looking at his picture book. He offers to give her a reading lesson the next day, tomorrow, which leads Lakshmi to realize, "how long it has been since a tomorrow meant anything to me" (163). The first sentences Harish teaches her are also an assertion of self and individuality: "My name is Lakshmi. I am from Nepal. I am thirteen" (165).

The girls both reflect on their (necessary) responses to their changed circumstances and the techniques they employ to stay alive and maintain some sense of selfhood and personal integrity. Lakshmi observes the constantly altering codes of appropriate behavior in her chapter titles. One entitled "Everything I Need to Know" contains the life lessons her mother, Ama, teaches her at her first menstruation (15). When her father takes her to the city to sell her, we learn the "City Rules" (30). In the brothel, the lesson is updated: "Everything I Need to Know *Now*" (141, emphasis added).

When Batuk is first raped to break her in, she observes that "I had entered Gahil's house as a soft glob of warm clay. I would leave there a hardened useful vessel" (37).

Then later, “I had been rewired from the girl who had entered this house just two days before into a new Batuk” (90). One aspect of that transformation is her recognition “that my existence was in my hands alone” (90). Another is awareness of the power of her own inner space. After her first rape, Batuk thinks, “he may have taken my light and extinguished it, but now within me can hide an army of whispering syllables, rhythms, and sounds” (58), again asserting a small, but existent, sphere of control.

Other coping strategies require dissociation from the realities of their existence. Lakshmi describes the things you hear when you service a customer – a zipper, a shoe being removed, the horns in the street. “But,” she says, “if you are lucky, if you work hard at it, you hear nothing” (127). Or, “Sometimes, I pretend that what goes on at night when the customers are here is not something that is happening to me” (157). She demonstrates resistance in other ways as well – refusing to cry when she is beaten, and staying focused on her goal of paying off her alleged debt and returning home (not knowing that the goal is intentionally made unattainable). She cherishes the few moments of human connection and intimacy: her lessons with Harish; her friendship with one of the other girls, Shahanna; her conversations with the tea boy; even once a customer who wants to hold her after he uses her: “I could feel myself, my true self, give in to the simple pleasure of being held” (176).

Batuk practices dissociation as well, noting that “with habituation I gained greater skill at releasing myself to the upper air” (98). She, too, builds a friendship -- with Puneet, a boy who is prostituted -- and joins others in making fun of their pimp, Mamaki, calling her Hippopotamus behind her back and telling jokes about her. Batuk also refrains from crying when she is beaten, taking advantage of a skill she developed earlier in her life, “my ability to reside within myself” (12).

Batuk inhabits a rich fantasy life as a coping mechanism. She creates imaginary worlds playing make believe with Puneet, and her narrative is interspersed with poems, dreams, fairy tales and fables, as well as imagined conversations with a tree and a stuffed tiger; these are all interventions that help her in some ways transcend the reality in which she’s trapped. And, lest the products of her imagination cause the reader to question her sanity, Batuk explains. “I am not deranged.” (12). She recognizes, though, that insanity might offer a protective mechanism. “I am not deranged, but there are countless days I wish I were” (13).

For all their similarities, in their endings, the stories diverge. When the brothel where Lakshmi is kept is raided and she is liberated, she speaks to the police and the advocates accompanying them using the sentences Harish taught her: “My name is Lakshmi. I am from Nepal. I am thirteen” (263). One of things Ama included in her lessons to Lakshmi is that “Simply to endure is to triumph” (16). This becomes true at the end of *Sold*. Lakshmi did endure and is freed. The physical torture inflicted on Batuk was unendurable; her story ends as she lies dying in a hospital.

### **Trauma, narrative, visibility and social change**

Why should we acknowledge, or what are the effects of acknowledging, agency in relation to experiences of trauma? I do not want to be heard as minimizing or sanitizing the violation of human rights that is trafficking. The fact that in these novels the protagonists are represented in ways that give them individuality, humanity and agency should not and does not detract from the horrors and violence faced by trafficking victims

and survivors. But, it *is* to note that, although most trafficking victims come from positions of very little societal privilege, they are not without some agency. This should be meaningful as we think more fully about what narratives are made available and how they might influence prevention and intervention efforts. Are there ways in which these narratives of agency could intervene in or reshape cultural discourses on human trafficking?

These accounts, even in fictional form, are difficult to hear. In Dawson's essay, he suggests that one of the challenges to writing novels about human trafficking is that we don't have adequate literary forms to represent these experiences.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, in other words, the novel as genre falls short. The structures of these two narratives speak to this point. Levine uses multiple narrative styles, including two children's stories he says he originally wrote for his own children,<sup>26</sup> possibly reflecting the difficulties in fully conveying the realities of sex trafficking victims in more conventional formats. In her review of *Sold*, Jen Robinson describes its vignettes as poems which offer "a snapshot of some aspect of Lakshmi's life, but at just enough of a remove to make it bearable to read about."<sup>27</sup> In a Q&A section on McCormick's own webpage, she discusses her choice of genre, noting that "vignettes seemed to be the right way to tell a story that is inherently so fractured."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the differences in how the topic is treated, all three of these novels help us think about the ways in which victims and survivors of sex trafficking are represented, how their stories are told, and which narratives have cultural currency. Mary Crawford's recent book on sex trafficking in south Asia deliberates about this as well. Crawford asks:

"Whose voices are heard when sex trafficking is being defined and described? The question is not trivial, because power is a central component of sex trafficking. . . . Whose accounts are authorized and supported, and whose are marginalized and subjugated?"<sup>29</sup>

She goes on to discuss what she calls the "formulaic" (117) nature of many survivor narratives published in Nepal – and I would say elsewhere, too -- narratives which portray a young, innocent girl seeking a better life duped by someone she trusts (admittedly the case in Levine's and McCormick's novels as well). Crawford is not disputing that this chain of events occurs, as indeed it does, but points out that the consistent reproduction of this particular narrative can lead – and has led -- to proposed solutions based on "protectionism" (120), resulting in efforts to limit the physical mobility of women and girls purportedly to keep them "safe," with little regard for the conditions that might have led them to leave their home in the first place. She also notes the use of these narratives in fundraising efforts by non-profit organizations, intentional decisions often made in response to research that finds "people are more willing to offer help in response to information about a specific individual than in response to information about a group or class of people, even though the latter illustrates the scope of a social problem" (122).<sup>30</sup> It's not that these stories aren't true, not that they're not tragic and not that they don't evoke a response, but their deployment is also not unproblematic. The successful use of these survivor narratives in fundraising requires the construction of a "wholly blameless" victim and one who is seen as "deserving of help" (122).



This apparent need for a perfect victim explains the spotlight on minor victims of sex trafficking in these novels and is echoed by recent strengthened attention to the sex trafficking of minors<sup>31</sup> in the US. Who could disagree that the sex trafficking of minors is a horrible crime and needs to be stopped? But so does the trafficking of anyone. This specific focus on minor victims of sex trafficking mirrors the societal desire for an uncomplicated victim as described by Crawford – one who is easy to identify and recognize *as* a victim (as is anyone engaged in commercial sexual activity under the age of 18 according to both US law and international human trafficking protocols).<sup>32</sup>

An approach to ending human trafficking which focuses only on the victim is unnecessarily limited and ignores root causes. Although gender inequality and poverty are some of the factors that create vulnerability to human trafficking in communities and individuals, the root cause of trafficking is demand – in the case of labor trafficking, the demand for cheap labor to produce cheap goods or provide cheap services and, in the case of sex trafficking, the demand for bodies and orifices to purchase for sexual activity. It is striking that we have so few narrative accounts, in novels or in news coverage, dealing with the role of demand in causing and perpetuating sex trafficking. The men (primarily) who buy the bodies of women and children are virtually invisible, and we see no consequences for them as a result of their behavior. In both *Sold* and *The Blue Notebook*, the customers are portrayed as an incessant parade of men to be serviced – few are described, most are nameless. This is how it seems to Lakshmi and Batuk – and such distancing is no doubt another necessary coping mechanism. However, this strategy fails to make the buyers and users real or present to the reader and creates no accountability for their actions.

And yet, simply demonizing buyers – or the traffickers themselves – is not a particularly useful strategy. Characterizing traffickers as evil villains may, as Bridget Anderson noted at a 2009 London conference, be an accurate observation, but it is unlikely to lead to the systemic and structural changes necessary to end trafficking.<sup>33</sup> It is unrealistic to imagine a plan to end sex trafficking solely by focusing on the individuals and groups who are facilitating the supply, or who are themselves the supply. Such a strategy ignores not just the driving force of demand, but all the societal structures and attitudes that make trafficking possible.

Our lack of willingness to confront our own role – as individuals, communities and nations -- lets us avoid a larger question: how do we change a global culture that sees bodies, and especially the bodies of women and children, as disposable commodities and infinitely substitutable? In some small way, these novels help create space for that discussion. The stories the novels tell and the ways they are told -- as with media coverage of human trafficking -- have an impact on our public consciousness and the context of our actions. It's not that there is a direct cause and effect between these stories and any actions we take, individually or communally, in response to the social issues represented therein. But they can illuminate gaps in our understanding of the issue and gaps in our societal response. These novels can generate empathy and outrage, and they provide information, perspectives and analyses that can lead to a commitment to make change.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*. June 2012, 7, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Available here: [http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/Informationresources/ILOPublications/WCMS\\_182004/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/Informationresources/ILOPublications/WCMS_182004/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Friedman and Anne Johnston, "Framing the Public Debate on the Global Sex Trade," Sex Trafficking Mini-Symposium, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, September 14, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See also Girish J. Gulati, "News Frames and Story Triggers in the Media's Coverage of Human Trafficking," *Human Rights Review*. Published online: 24 November 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Kristof's periodic coverage of sex trafficking in his New York Times column is a good example of this.

<sup>8</sup> There are exceptions. GEMS in New York and CAST-LA in California are two service providers who build an advocacy component into their holistic approach to healing and recovery. Their clients' voices are, at times, included in media coverage and clients who wish to have a more public presence are provided training and support.

<sup>9</sup> Bridget Anderson and Rutvica Andrijasevic, "Sex, slaves and citizens: the politics of anti-trafficking." *Soundings* 40 (2008): 143.

<sup>10</sup> Gloria Steinem, "Foreword," In *Enslaved: True Stories of Modern Day Slavery*, eds. Jesse Sage and Liora Kasten (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), x.

<sup>11</sup> Kinohi Nishikawa, "Trafficking and Victimization: The Politics of Responsibility in *Lilja 4-Ever*," Sex Trafficking Mini-Symposium, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, September 14, 2009: 3.

<sup>12</sup> The Polaris Project maintains a list of books and DVDs at [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org) as does the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking at [www.combathumantrafficking.org](http://www.combathumantrafficking.org).

<sup>13</sup> In the first literary analysis I've seen of any of these novels, Ashley Dawson locates such works within literatures of migration and displacement. He describes them as "a form of cargo culture, an aesthetics of people who have been turned into illegal but nonetheless highly profitable cargo" (180). "Cargo Culture: Literature in an Age of Mass Displacement." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 38.1&2 (2010): 178-193.

<sup>14</sup> Nevada Barr, *Burn* (New York: Minotaur Books, 2010); Linda Fairstein, *Hell Gate* (New York: Dutton, 2010); Stieg Larsson, *The Girl who Played with Fire*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Magdalen Nabb, *Vita Nuova* (New York: Soho Press, 2008). Further citations appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>16</sup> The majority of these criminal justice-focused novels involve international sex trafficking.

<sup>17</sup> "Seasoning," sometime also referred to as "grooming," generally entails being raped multiple times, or subjected to other forms of physical and psychological violence, until a victim agrees to cooperate.

<sup>18</sup> In most of the novels I've seen, law enforcement officers are either indifferent, complicit, or actively (corruptly) involved in the trafficking.

<sup>19</sup> Guarnaccia himself points out that, "we all like to think we've saved somebody" (192).

<sup>20</sup> Thanks to retired Lieutenant John Vanek, among others, whose generous willingness to engage in these conversations was invaluable to me in my work as a literary scholar and anti-human trafficking advocate.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia McCormick, *Sold* (New York: Hyperion, 2006); further citations appear parenthetically in the text. It was a National Book Award finalist, Quill Award Winner, and one of the ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults.

<sup>22</sup> James Levine, *The Blue Notebook* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010); further citations appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>23</sup> Two other examples: Chris Albani, *Becoming Abigail* (New York: Akashic, 2006); Chika Unigwe, *On Black Sisters' Streets*, (London: Random House, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Ashley Dawson, "Cargo Culture: Literature in an Age of Mass Displacement," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 38: 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 188.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>26</sup> James Levine, *James A Levine on The Blue Notebook* [<http://www.bfkbooks.com/interviews/james-a-levine-on-the-blue-notebook>] Accessed 9.21.2010.

<sup>27</sup> Jen Robinson, *Sold by Patricia McCormick* [[http://jkrbooks.typepad.com/blog/2006/11/sold\\_patricia\\_m.html](http://jkrbooks.typepad.com/blog/2006/11/sold_patricia_m.html)] Accessed 9.21.2010.

<sup>28</sup> Patricia McCormick, Interview, [[http://www.pattymccormick.com/index.php?mode=objectlist&section\\_id=115&object\\_id=152](http://www.pattymccormick.com/index.php?mode=objectlist&section_id=115&object_id=152)] Accessed 9.21.2010.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Crawford, *Sex Trafficking in South Asia: Telling Maya's Story* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Further citations appear parenthetically in the text.

<sup>30</sup> This again speaks to the impact and deployment of the survivor narrative, discussed earlier.

<sup>31</sup> Or what some refer to as CSEC (commercial sexual exploitation of children).

<sup>32</sup> *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (also known as the Palermo Protocol), Resolution 55/25, November 15, 2000; *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000*, Pub. L. 106-386, 114 Stat. 1466, October 28, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Bridget Anderson, "Human Trafficking: A Persistent Problem?" International Migration and Human Trafficking Conference, London, England, February 3, 2009.