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Sallie Yea

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## **‘Shades of grey’: spaces in and beyond trafficking for Thai Women involved in commercial sexual labour in Sydney and Singapore**

Sallie Yea\*

*Department of Geography, National University of Singapore, 1 Arts Link, Kent Ridge, Singapore, 117570*

In this article I explore the migration trajectories of some Thai women trafficked internationally for commercial sexual exploitation, suggesting that many figuratively ‘cross the border’ between coerced and consensual existence in volatile migrant sex industries during the course of their migration experiences, thus complicating debates around the notion of choice in ‘sex’ trafficking. In exploring these women’s transitions I seek to understand why women who had either never previously been sex workers or who were sex workers operating without duress, but who were then trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation remain in, or re-enter volatile forms of migrant sex work at a later point under voluntary arrangements. In answering this question I focus on the temporal and spatial aspects of individual women’s experiences in migrant sex industries drawing in detail on the narratives of two Thai women trafficked to Sydney, Australia and Singapore. I make some suggestions about methodologies used in trafficking research that can assist in bringing to light some of these complex time–space dimensions of women’s experiences through their shifting positions in commercial sexual labour. The article also reflects on the implications of these women’s trajectories for the ‘prostitution debate’ as it relates to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation by suggesting that many trafficked women occupy ambiguous or in-between positions in migrant sex industries, neither easily distinguishable by the label of victim of trafficking or migrant sex worker.

**Keywords:** sex trafficking; commercial sexual labour; methodologies; migration trajectories; Thailand

### **Introduction**

I think seeing them as victims creates a lot of sympathy and therefore people find it easier to accept. If I say that I have been forced into prostitution, people say, oh, poor thing, let’s help her, she is in a really bad situation. But if somebody says I choose to become a prostitute that’s very difficult to accept or to understand. Why would you choose to become a prostitute? So many times it’s framed in this either/or debate. Either you are a victim or you are an agent. Either you have chosen to be a sex worker or you have been forced into prostitution. And I think there are such large grey areas in between. (Pattanaik, cited in Biemann 2002, 80)

In this article I wish to advance discussions about the complexity and fluidity of the positions and projects of individual migrant women deployed to perform commercial sexual labour (CSL)<sup>1</sup> abroad. I focus on Thai women who were initially trafficked into CSL – and were therefore in situations of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) – but then re-entered the sex industry under more voluntary (although not necessarily better) arrangements. I ask: why do women who were sex-trafficked at one point in their

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\*Email: [sallieiao@gmail.com](mailto:sallieiao@gmail.com)

migration perform CSL consensually and under very similar conditions at another (later) point, within the trafficking destination? And, how are these transformations constituted spatially? In answering these questions I specifically wish to draw attention to 'in-between experiences' in migrant CSL that may not easily and clearly lead some women to be situated as either forced (trafficked for CSE) or voluntary (autonomous sex workers) and which act to position some women much more ambiguously than suggested by the forced/voluntary binary that often underpins this debate. These positionings reflect complexities around the notion of choice that Pattanaik (cited in Biemann 2002) has labelled as 'shades of grey'. The constitution of these shades through space and over time is worth exploring not only for their import into debates about choice in entering migrant sex industries and performing CSL, but also for their potential to elicit at what points different interventions may have been useful in supporting these women.

Postcolonial arguments for destabilising binary oppositions are useful in framing discussion in this article. For Bhabha (1990), the first term in any binary will always dominate the second. In the context of the prostitution debate, a postcolonial lens can assist in exposing how those advocating prostitution as 'force' help to constitute counterpositions advocating 'free will'. We can see this clearly in the way prostitution was debated within the United Nations 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking, Especially, Women and Girls' (hereafter the Trafficking Protocol; United Nations 2000). During the process of drafting the Protocol, the terminology around prostitution proved the most difficult to resolve precisely because of these disagreements around choice.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the position on voluntary prostitution emerged out of a prior dominant conceptualisation of all prostitution as forced and therefore compromising women's rights, as in the abolitionist perspective. This 'derivative discourse' (Hirschman 1991), I suggest, has led to a narrowing of meaning of voluntary prostitution (sex work). By destabilising these oppositional frames – in this case by taking a closer look at some women's actual migration trajectories and positions in CSL – we can see the ways in which these two positions 'can be understood to interact, transgress and transform each other in much more complex ways than traditional binary oppositions can allow' (Bhabha 1990, 210) thus giving rise to the idea of 'in-betweenness' of positions.

Several recent studies have attempted to either critically review (Doezema 2000; Peach 2008) or disrupt (Law 2000; Nencel 2001; Andrijasevic 2003; Sandy 2007) the sex worker versus abolitionist binary concerning choice in CSL. These studies focus on the 'constrained choice' (Sandy 2007) that derives from the meshing of structural factors, personal desires and negotiated agency that propel women to CSL in migration contexts. Although these studies offer useful directions for research on CSL in migration, individual women's experiences over time and within and beyond spaces of trafficking are still largely excluded from these discussions, despite the fact that we know women's choices are not made as one-off decisions or at only one point in their migration trajectories (for example, Hildson and Giridharan 2008). Thus, when Psimmenos (2000, 86, emphasis added) wrote of trafficked Albanian women in Greece's sex industry that, 'Questions about the nature of the sex industry and the work activity itself, as well as *women's life experiences of marginalised social spaces*, are left unanswered', she raised an important geographical challenge for researchers to engage with the spaces and contexts of trafficking and women's negotiations of these.

I begin by briefly elucidating some useful directions in geography concerning the marginal spaces of sex work that help frame the discussion in this article, before outlining some methodological and ethical issues. This is followed by a brief overview of the trafficking of Thai women for CSE to Australia and Singapore. I then introduce the

trafficking scenarios of Nit and Porn (both pseudonyms chosen by the women), whose experiences inform much of the subsequent discussion. The main part of the article explores the ways in which their experiences of trafficking and post-trafficking lead them back into CSL under different (voluntary) arrangements focusing especially on the particular geographies in and beyond trafficking, which lead to these decisions. I reflect on what these stories mean for the ‘prostitution debate’ as it relates to notions of choice in sex trafficking.

Whilst acknowledging its considerable shortcomings (see, for example, O’Connell Davidson and Anderson 2006) I follow the definition of human trafficking laid out in the Trafficking Protocol since this definition has provided the basis for crafting legislation and other responses to human trafficking in the countries that figure in this article’s discussion. This much-cited definition states that human trafficking can occur in six forms, including trafficking for CSE, and involves three elements: recruitment (means); movement/transportation (mode); and, exploitation at the destination (purpose).

### Spaces of control and marginalisation in sex trafficking

By focusing on migrant Thai women in CSL who cannot easily be located within the forced/voluntary binary of the prostitution debate, I attempt to tease out some of the circumstances that lead to their initial trafficking from those that lead them back to the sex industry at a later point. I make two suggestions in this regard. First, the space of trafficking acts to *normalise* women to volatile forms of migrant sex work. Second, CSL often *becomes* the best available option as women constantly re-evaluate their positions within the fluid contexts of both transnational migration and returning home post-exit. Peach (2008, 247–8) suggests that an adequate account of sex trafficking, ‘must understand their [trafficked women’s] lives within the context of the networks of relationships through which their identities have been shaped and by virtue of which they have come to their present surroundings’. In this vein, this article attempts to extend understandings of *both* sex trafficking and migrant sex work by examining the migration trajectories of victims<sup>3</sup> themselves and how, for some women, these shift and alter over time and largely as a result of their experiences in and beyond trafficking. Such a focus entails discussion of a rather neglected subject in sex trafficking, that is, the *geographies* of trafficking, in helping craft these trajectories, constraining choices and shifting positions.

Drawing on the seminal work of Sibley (1995) on geographies of marginalisation, Hubbard (1998) has suggested that street prostitutes in the United Kingdom are ‘Othered’ in ways that assign them to particular marginal places in the city, namely red-light districts. It is his observation that, ‘the placement of prostitutes in these settings clearly does much to inform conceptions and constructions of the status of prostitutes, *as well as shaping prostitutes self-identities*’ (61, emphasis added). Hubbard recognises that, for prostitutes in marginalised spaces like red-light districts, their self-understandings often derive from their physical location in spaces where they are marked as immoral, deviant and dirty as well as their limited ability to move outside these spaces. Hart (1995, cited in Hubbard 1998) also finds this true for Mexican female prostitutes who assign an identity to the barrios where they work, but whose own identities are also influenced by their location in these places. The mutual implication of spaces of sex work and the construction of ‘the prostitute identity’ are thus established in geography.

Despite this work in the mid-1990s, geographers have rarely attended to the issues raised by Hubbard and Hart in more recent scholarship concerning sex work (for an exception, see Law 2000). This is even more so for trafficking into CSL. Trafficking would certainly provide a heightened context for the formation of prostitute identities and

subjectivities amongst migrant women since their location in brothels and red-light districts is far more spatially circumscribed than the women discussed in either Hart's or Hubbard's work – something Abdullah (2005) also found for Bangladeshi migrant construction workers in Singapore. Drawing on Foucault (Foucault 1977, 228) Abdullah has characterised the construction site where these men are deployed in as a:

[T]otal institution whose, various working mechanisms . . . such as daily routines, work/living arrangements and paucity of leisure activities, illustrate that such disciplined working conditions, which concomitantly bind and reinforce their exclusion . . . make Bangladeshi workers directly cognizant of their *Other-ed* position in Singapore. (emphasis in original)

Of late there has also been considerable interest amongst geographers in Foucault's work on surveillance and bodily discipline and the spatialities of panoptic processes, particularly in prison environments (Dirsuweit 1999; van Hoven and Sibley 2008). Yet the study by Abdullah (2005) reveals that transnational labour migrants are often subject to similar forms of control and containment, which perpetuates their exclusion from and in the migrant destination (and sometimes after they return home). Whilst such processes often reflect the anxieties of receiving states about migrant workers and the need for employers to maintain effective and 'docile' workers, for victims of human trafficking such tactics help not just to maintain (and contain) a complicit prostitute subject, but also to help *create* one.

The presence of these types of exclusions and restrictions for women who are trafficked abroad into CSL has also been noted. Psimmenos (2000, 81, emphasis added) describes a 'human landscape' of trafficking for CSE characterised by:

[T]he transfer of women across borders, to their work in providing sexual services, their placement in *exclusionary spatial settings*, and networks that reproduce and culturally maintain those settings. These processes both interconnect female migration across borders and at the same time fragment their identities and cultural presence in the particular social environment.

Psimmenos's observations about trafficked Albanian women in Greece arguably also hold for Thai women in Singapore and Sydney, as will be demonstrated below.

Further, when trafficked women exit the sex industry they often remain vulnerable and marginal, particularly in transnational destinations (Yea 2004), but also after returning to their home country. In attempting to uncover the 'micromovements' of Filipina entertainers in Japan, Faier (Faier 2008, 644, drawing on Coutin 2005), for instance, posits the importance of 'clandestine spaces' meaning 'territorial gaps in the nation-state occupied by those who are physically within its borders yet legally considered outside it'. Characterising these spaces according to the constraints imposed by illegality, fear, disillusionment and often concrete concerns about money and health allows us to gain greater insight into how trafficked Thai women in the transnational destinations of Singapore and Sydney are further marginalised even after they leave such situations and, as we will see, can provide the context in which decisions are made to re-enter vulnerable and volatile forms of sex work in the destination country.

### **Approach, methods, participants, ethics . . .**

This article draws on two separate studies of trafficking for CSE in Australia and Singapore. I chose to draw in detail on the narratives of two Thai women, Porn and Nit, deployed in these different destinations simply to convey some of the commonalities Thai women encounter in trafficking to destination countries (particularly relatively affluent ones such as Australia and Singapore; see also Gulcur and Ilkcaracan 2002 for a comparative case in the European context) and in women's normalisation<sup>4</sup> of CSL over

time in such contexts. In this I am guided by the work of Agustin (Agustin 2004; 2007, 98) in which she moves between different contexts of migrant sex work to explore a range of sites and experiences within them to illustrate the ‘variety, complexity and ambiguity of most migrant women’s projects’.

Porn (30 years old) was trafficked to Sydney, Australia from Bangkok in 1998 and participated in a qualitative study of Thai women trafficked for CSE to Sydney in 2005 (see Yea and Burn 2010). Nit (23 years old) is a participant in a qualitative study of women and girls trafficked for CSE to Singapore carried out from 2009 to present, including Thai women and women of other nationalities (see Yea 2009). Both the studies involved participants sharing their experiences through an in-depth narrative interview. Porn was also involved in focus group discussions that were adopted as an additional method for the Australian research.<sup>5</sup> The focus group discussions (two were held and Porn participated in both) focused on the issue of support, post-exit trajectories and where the women felt improvements could be made in both non-governmental organisation (NGO) and governmental responses. Therefore, potentially distressing and highly personal issues of sexual and other abuse during trafficking were not discussed in a group context, as I deemed it an inappropriate forum for these kinds of disclosures.

Time–space (longitudinal) studies, multi-sited ethnographies and life stories are important ways of gaining a better understanding of trafficked women’s circumstances and motivations for entry and re-entry into migrant CSL. Though the difficulties of conducting research with trafficked persons, who constitute ‘hidden populations’ that are increasingly well recognised (Brennan 2005), a few studies have nonetheless successfully adopted these methods and, in doing so, contributed important insights into the understandings of a range of forms of human trafficking (for example, Bastia 2005; Lisborg and Plambech 2009). In this vein, life story interviews were conducted with Porn and Nit, as well as another 13 Thai participants (nine in Sydney and four in Singapore) in which we discussed family, relationships, education and work, as well as their desires, aspirations and disappointments in all of these areas. We focused most intensely on the period of their current migration and the circumstances of their deployment(s) in the sex industry as well as upon exiting. I encouraged each woman to talk about her life story in a narrative way, beginning with her childhood and with me asking, prompting or probing questions where it seemed appropriate.

In my interactions with all the participants in both the studies I tried to keep in mind the advice given by Lather (1991, cited in Gatenby and Humphries 2000, 100) against the ‘imposition and reification on the part of the researcher’, in which, ‘in the name of emancipation, researchers impose meanings on situations rather than constructing meaning through negotiation with research participants’. This was clearly relevant to my research in which the ‘prostitution debate’ continually emerged to cajole me towards ‘proving’ the sex worker or abolitionist stance, thus acting to unwittingly position me as supporting one or the other view. I had to remain highly reflexive in negotiating such pressures, a task achieved primarily through almost daily writings in a research diary.

Ethically, each study followed the guidelines laid out by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2003) for conducting research with trafficked women and girls. The Australian NGO, Project Respect (2003) acted as a support organisation for the Australian study. In Singapore Nit was met and interviewed at the NGO HOME’s (Humanitarian Organisation for Migrant Economics) shelter for migrant women workers. Forming these relationship was in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO 2003) recommendation that researchers engage in arrangements with support organisations when conducting research with trafficked women to provide assistance and advice where needed. This is important given that trafficked women are often in extremely volatile and vulnerable situations both

during and after exiting trafficking situations and I, as a researcher, could not attend to some of their complex needs, including immigration advice and health concerns. Apart from organisational backup, I was aware that many sex trafficked women derived greater support from their peers and friends who had gone through similar experiences than from organisations ostensibly oriented towards supporting their needs (see Brunovskis and Surtees 2007). In both the studies I interviewed women and participated in their lives in contexts where they were easily able to refer to friends and confidants.

### **Trafficked Thai women in Singapore and Sydney**

Here I provide a brief background on the modus operandi of international trafficking of Thai women and the growing recognition of Australia and Singapore as significant destinations for Thai women in the sex industry, including those who are trafficked. Thailand has acquired the rather notorious status of being an ‘epicentre’ for human trafficking, and trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, particularly within the Asian region. This is because, unlike many of its Southeast Asian neighbours, Thailand holds the unique status of being a major source, transit *and* destination country for human trafficking activities (United States Department of State 2009). A decade ago much research on this subject for Thailand focused on the international trafficking of young women to Japan (Caouette and Saito 1999; Human Rights Watch 2000) and to a lesser extent Europe (Lisborg 2002; Ruenkaew 2002), and the dynamics of the burgeoning Thai sex industry/sex tourism sector of which internal trafficking of Thai women and girls comprised a numerically indeterminate subset (Phongpaichit 1985; Bishop and Robinson 1998). More recently, and in line with the growing recognition of Thailand as a destination country for trafficked persons (both within the sex industry and in other sectors), the orientation has shifted to documenting the trafficking of foreign women and girls (and even more recently men and boys) into Thailand from neighbouring countries, including Burma, Lao PDR and Cambodia (for example, Burke and Ducci 2005) as well as critical examinations of Thailand’s anti-trafficking initiatives (for example, Jayagupta 2009).

Some international NGOs and the Thai government nonetheless still echo earlier concerns about the international trafficking of Thai women into migrant sex industries abroad (Skrobanek Siriporn, pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2009) although corresponding in-depth research still appears to be lacking with the general perception that Thai migrant sex workers are, by and large, voluntary and autonomous sex workers and therefore beyond the purview of the anti-trafficking framework (as in Watenabe 1998). The persistence and diffusion of this view need to be emphasised since it represents a discursive shift that, in part, strengthens sex worker rights perspectives concerning perceptions of Thai women who travel to Singapore and Australia for sex work.

In Australia human trafficking entered into the domain of public discussion and government policy in 2003 when the Melbourne-based NGO Project Respect (2003) released a report that documented more than 300 cases of human trafficking in a range of sectors, but primarily the sex industry, in Australia. This resulted in Australia being named for the first time in the US State Department’s annual trafficking report in 2004 (United States Department of State 2004). Australia remains a country listed in the report.

Despite protestations of numerous sex worker rights groups in Australia to the effect that Thai women are voluntary workers who chose to migrate to Australia for sex work (mainly entering on tourist visas), there is considerable evidence of trafficking. In Sydney the ten women who participated in my study were variously trafficked to Australia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although they were all originally from the north of Thailand

(Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai and Isan provinces), their recruitment had taken place in Bangkok, where they had all migrated for education and employment opportunities.

Porn's experiences of recruitment and deployment in a Sydney brothel (see below) are illustrative of the other participants as well as those who were generally deceived about the type of work they were to perform (most were told waitressing or work in a restaurant, and the rest were told that they would be hostessing in a bar) and/or conditions of that work (including freedom of movement and association, hours to be worked, conditions under which clients were to be received and so on). Universal to these women's experiences was the existence of a very substantial debt (up to AU\$38,000), which effectively bonded them to their employment situations for periods of up to twelve months – a situation commonly referred to as being 'under contract'. The debt was the key factor contributing to the dilution of their control over various aspects of the migration process. For all these participants the debt was only revealed to them after they had arrived in Australia. It was then that they were made aware that they would need to work in a brothel to pay it off.<sup>6</sup> For example, another participant, Pim (36 years), stated:

After I arrived in Sydney my contract was explained. I was told that I had to see 700 customers to pay off my contract – three months in Sydney and four months in Melbourne. In Thailand I was told I would be doing massage, which was my job in the sports centre in Bangkok.

Similarly, May (28 years) told me:

I had to see 500 customers for 30 minutes each and one customer equalled AU\$100. I am supposed to get AU\$40 of that but it all goes to the agent. In the one year I worked I never got any money and then I ran away.

Unlike Australia, which has responded to its repeated listing in the Annual US Trafficking in Persons Report since 2004 with several policy measures and new legislation to cover trafficking-related offences, Singapore, despite being ranked as a 'Tier Two' country (meaning it has a substantial trafficking problem and is not in making a concerted effort to remedy it) in the last two years along with some of its poorer neighbours, Cambodia, Lao and Indonesia, remains resilient to accusations of human trafficking. This is despite the regular appearance of stories of Thai 'sex slaves' in the Singapore and regional media (for example, Fry 2008; Nopporn 2009). Consequently, Singapore continues to pursue a '3-D' (detect, detain, deport) approach to migrant women and girls detected working in the sex industry (see Yea 2009). This is particularly pertinent in understanding Nit's trajectory (and arguably compounding her vulnerability) since, as we shall see below, the clandestine nature of her deployment in 'jungle prostitution' in Singapore necessitated by frequent though unpredictable police raids and immigration checks rendered her even further marginalised.

Nit and the other Thai women I interviewed in Singapore were all deployed in jungle prostitution which is an illegal form of prostitution – being both unlicensed and unregulated – that occurs in the numerous state jungle/park areas of Singapore, normally in proximity to migrant worker dormitories in areas such as Woodlands and Bukit Batok (see Kitiarsa 2008 for further description).<sup>7</sup> The conditions of jungle prostitution are extremely poor compared with those of almost any other sex work in Singapore; the 'brothel' itself consists of dirty mattresses placed on the ground with only a piece of tarp to conceal the goings on inside. Women must pay half of their earnings to the pimp who runs the makeshift brothel in exchange for his protection (from the police, from 'bad' customers and for the space at the brothel) and for the supply of condoms, whilst if the woman enlists the assistance of an agent to facilitate her travel to Singapore (including arranging documents, advising about stories to tell immigration officers at the border and even supplying 'rented' money to deflect suspicions by immigration authorities that



she intends to work in Singapore) she must also repay this cost upon arrival. As another participant, Sai (23 years), stated, 'I had to pay, pay, pay, when I started working. All my money went to the guy who ran the brothel. The amount I paid was more than four times what I was told by my agent in Bangkok'. Whilst Jo (21 years) said:

The brothel was a dump and then the owner would drive us girls back and forth from the apartment he rented to the place we saw customers. I wanted to leave but he told me that I needed to pay the debt first and so I'm just going between brothel and apartment every day. Nowhere else.

Thus, despite some differences in the recruitment process, the types of establishments in which women are deployed in Singapore and Sydney, as well as the respective government responses to evidence of trafficking for CSE, there are commonalities in Thai women's trafficking to these two destinations. These include the existence of a debt bonding women to sex work, various forms of deception in the recruitment process, unsafe conditions in performing sex work in the destination and, as we shall see below, various processes, often violent, that normalise women to their migration/sex work situations and leave them vulnerable upon their attempt to exit the industry.

### Migration trajectories of Nit and Porn

In this section, I focus on the stories of Nit and Porn in migrant CSL including their experiences of trafficking, exiting the sex industry and then re-entering it. Whilst their experiences are individual, there are some key points around which their narratives intersect. Through relating their stories I wish to explore how their relationship(s) to migrant/trafficked CSL emerged and changed through time and space. Considering these geographies allows us to reflect on how their trajectories speak to the debate about choice in performing CSL.

Porn arrived in Australia from Thailand in 1998 at the age of 22. Before her departure from Bangkok she was told she would be 'working in a karaoke bar, sitting with and entertaining customers with drinks and dancing'. Although she was not given an exact figure she was told that both the money and the work would be very good. Porn was from a large family in the Northern Isan region of Thailand, which has been traditionally located as a major source area for recruitment of women and girls to work in Thailand's booming sex sector. As another mouth to feed in a household of already stretched resources, and with the prospect of being a contributor rather than a burden to her family, Porn decided to travel to Bangkok at the age of 17 to look for factory work. In Bangkok Porn did indeed find work in a factory and then in a restaurant as a waitress. Although taking a job as a waitress was a step up financially from factory work, she still only earned TB1500 per month, plus the occasional tips from customers. It was difficult for Porn to support herself in Bangkok and send money home on a regular basis and she began thinking about how else she might be able to earn money. Fortunately for Porn (or so she thought), it was one of her regular customers in the restaurant who told her about the possibility of working in Australia. Porn recounted the customer's advice and the process by which she subsequently came to Sydney:

He told me, 'You can have a better job there. My brother is in Australia. I can organise everything for you if you like and then you can just go'. He asked me many, many times when he came to the restaurant. Each week he would come and eat at the restaurant three or four times and each time he would ask me again. Finally, after a few months of this I decided to accept [his offer]. There were two other girls on the plane with me coming over. The guy's brother picked us three up from the airport but then he took the other two girls to a hotel and I don't know what happened to them after that. I was taken by the brother to a house and was left there for three days. The door was locked the whole time so I started to get a bit worried

and scared. His wife was there watching me the whole time. The wife just kept saying to me that after a few days they would get a job for me. Then the guy took me to the shop [brothel] and told me that I needed to see customers.

In a scenario that is extremely common in the circumstances of women trafficked for CSE to Australia, Porn had to pay off a migration debt formalised in a ‘contract’ by seeing a certain number of customers at the brothel. For Porn this was 500 customers without payment. Although it took her six months to pay off this contract, her boss at the brothel then told her that she had to stay there for another six months – one year in total – despite having paid off her contract. When the year passed Porn sought help from one of her regular customers to leave the brothel, fearing that another arbitrary timeline might be imposed to keep her at the brothel even longer. Early one morning, before any of the other women had awoken Porn’s customer came to pick her up. He took her to a shared house in the outlying Sydney suburb of Cabramatta where he had rented a room for her. She stayed there for six months doing nothing but, ‘hiding to keep myself safe [from the owner of the brothel she escaped from]’. She then decided to return to prostitution but in a different brothel in Sydney.

When I first met Nit she was staying at a shelter for migrant women workers in Singapore’s East Coast. Nit had been to Singapore three times previously for sex work, staying for around a month each time (which was the period of her tourist visa’s validity) and on the fourth visit was caught by the police in a raid of the jungle brothel where she was deployed. Nit had migrated to Bangkok several years before as a working student at the age of 15. She initially worked in a hardware store but her earnings were limited so, like Porn, she looked for a better paying job after two years and found one as a waitress in a karaoke bar. The pay was better but some of her colleagues were going out with customers for sex and, as she recalled, ‘There was a lot of peer pressure from the other waitresses. In the end I thought, if they can make money so easy like that, why not me?’ This was Nit’s entry into sex work in Bangkok, where she remained for another one and a half years. After splitting with her partner she decided to follow some of her friends to Hat Yai in the southern Thai province of Songkhla where she also worked as a hostess, going out with customers for sex, and from there decided to try to go to Singapore for sex work, on the advice of one of her friends. She enlisted the help of an agent in Hat Yai who deceived her about the working conditions and remuneration for sex work in Singapore. She recounted:

He said I would be working in a high class brothel and I would be earning big money. I had to pay him for all my costs, but according to the money I calculated that I would be able to make from my work in Singapore the sum he proposed seemed very small. He rented money for me at the border [Thai–Malaysia] and then we took a bus all the way to JB [Johor Bharu]. From there we entered Singapore and he took me to the jungle brothel. My eyes were very wide with surprise. This wasn’t the kind of place he told me I’d be working. It was dirty and the customers were migrant workers who no way could pay like SGD 100 a shot [sexual servicing]. I also found out that I had to see 100 customers before I got any money. I would have to work really hard to make any money at all before my time was up. I felt sick.

Although Nit did not experience any deception about the fact that she was to be engaged in sex work in Singapore and despite the fact that she herself sought out an agent to help her enter Singapore, she was nonetheless trafficked in the sense that her movement was assisted by an agent who deceived her about multiple aspects of her deployment and placed her in a situation where she was not free to leave. After her first stint Nit returned to the southern border area of Thailand and considered her options. She could not go back to Bangkok because of a range of personal problems (including a stepfather who was violent towards her mother), and neither did she wish to remain in Hat Yai because of a problematic relationship with an ex-boyfriend. She made another trip to Singapore not long after.

### Spaces in and beyond sex trafficking

Porn's and Nit's experiences illustrate some of the most common elements of Thai women trafficked for CSE to Sydney and Singapore, both amongst those I encountered in my research and those whose stories were recounted to me by consular officials, NGO workers and other participants in my respective studies. Both Porn and Nit undertook CSL under voluntary, albeit volatile arrangements at some point in their migration trajectories, despite also having been trafficked into not dissimilar arrangements at another point. It is therefore important to ask; what were the factors and circumstances – both within sites of trafficking and after exiting – that lead to this change in their positions in prostitution from coercion to consent over time? And – reflecting on the answers to this question – can such choices formed in the context of transformations during prior experiences of involuntary CSL, then be equated with the exercise of free will to (re)enter the sex industry?

### *Spaces of trafficking – tactics of isolation, confinement, surveillance, punishment and discipline*

Hwang and Bedford (2003, 2004) have described the often complex psychological changes from shock and resistance to resignation and loss of hope, and finally to acceptance (normalisation) which they suggest many women and girls in Taiwan undergo upon first entering the sex industry.<sup>8</sup> The Thai women trafficked for CSE in my research also underwent enormous emotional and attitudinal changes over time and within the specific sites of trafficking (the jungle brothel and the 'shop'). In these spaces they experienced various degrees of isolation, removal of freedom (of movement and association), surveillance, and threats of punishment and abuse from their respective bosses, as well as degrading conditions for performing sex work.

Both Nit and Porn were banned from holding cell phones – thus making communication with anyone outside the brothels (except customers) almost impossible. Porn was also under constant surveillance for the first six months after she arrived in Sydney:

Every afternoon the manager would come to the apartment where we were living. He would unlock the door and then accompany us down to the van and drive us to the shop [brothel]. When it was time to go home – usually like three or four in the morning – he would drive us back to the apartment and lock the door behind us after we got in. That was the pattern every day. I never went out without him [manager] or the boss being with me.

On Nit's first trip to Singapore she did not go anywhere except the jungle brothel and the apartment where she and the other women stayed. The boss would ferry them back and forth. Nit recounted that if any of the women wanted to go out to the Golden Mile complex, a popular 'hangout' for Thai migrants in Singapore, they would be watched by their boss. As she said, 'I could not move freely at that time. I wanted to ask some of the hairdressers [at Golden Mile] about other places to work in Singapore but the boss, he's always watching me so [I] cannot'.

Imposition of a debt, usually arbitrarily imposed and inflated, is another important tactic by which women are commonly kept in situations of CSE. Porn found herself in a situation of serious debt bondage in Sydney receiving no income for the first six months she was deployed in the brothel. The debt worked to keep Porn in CSE in two ways: first, it left her without any money that could have provided her with a means to run away or negotiate her freedom; and, second, it proved to be a highly effective mechanism for encouraging her to see more customers so that she could ostensibly become debt free – and therefore in a position to earn money to send back to her mother in Thailand – more quickly. To further normalise Porn and some of the other women I interviewed in Sydney

into sex work, some of the bosses created what is known amongst the women as a ‘free day’ which means that a woman can ‘chose’ to see customers on her one day off a month and keep some of the money she earns from the clients on that day. For Porn this was AU\$10 per customer. She agreed to do this because she had no money to buy anything, let alone send money home and ‘besides, I’m already there. I am already going with men for no money so why refuse to go with them for some money?’ Nit was also only able to make money after her debt was paid off. She had to service 100 customers for free before she could earn money. As she said:

If I come with the help of an agent I have to sleep with 100 customers for free before I can make any money for myself. If I arrange things for myself and come on my own I have to sleep with 50 customers for free before I make any money. Each customer pays SGD20 and I get half. I had to sleep with eight or ten men every night to have money before I leave Singapore.

These figures caused Nit incredible anxiety and she decided that it was infinitely better to go to Singapore by herself than to sleep with an extra 50 customers for no reason.

Both Nit and Porn had their passports and other documents, including Porn’s air ticket, held by their bosses. As Porn said, ‘I am scared to run away because I have no passport and my boss said that if the police catch me they will put me in prison because I am illegal here [in Australia]’. Similarly, Nit remarked that her boss asked for her passport as ‘safekeeping’ whilst she was in Singapore and that he would give it back to her when she was due to leave. She related that all the women’s passports were kept locked in a drawer in the bosses’ office in the apartment where the women were staying.

The sites to which Porn and Nit were trafficked and the tactics used by their bosses to exploit them in and through these spaces supplied the conditions for their gradual normalisation of CSL. The fact that Porn was not used to performing CSL, especially under the extreme conditions that she found herself in upon arrival in Sydney and imposed isolation within the confines of the apartment and brothel became an important part of the normalisation process. For Nit, who was already a sex worker, migration debt and lack of documentation led her to a sense of resignation about the appalling conditions in which she was to perform sex work and the much reduced remuneration that it was to bring.

### *Spaces beyond trafficking – hiding, evading and recovering*

Both Porn and Nit exited their respective trafficking situations through their own independent agency by running away (in Porn’s case) and finishing the contract (in Nit’s case). At this point both women recalled the overwhelming sense of relief that they felt. As Porn, for example, reflected on the time when her ex-customer collected her to leave: ‘When we drove away from the shop I started crying and couldn’t stop. I just let out everything that was building up inside. It was the biggest relief driving away from that place’. However, for Porn this was soon replaced by hardship and disillusionment with her new circumstances, primarily expressed as financial, emotional and relational difficulties. Porn found herself an ‘unlawful non-citizen’ in a country where she could not speak the language, had no real sense of her location as her geographical sensibilities were so limited by restrictions on her freedom of movement whilst at the brothel, and with no source of income or social support. As she said:

Every time I went to buy something at the shop I would get stress. What if some policeman saw me? I don’t think I look like I belong here and I’m sure that a trained policeman could see that on my face. I hated going out, but I hated staying in the house as well ... just thinking all the time and waiting for something to change.

Compounding these concerns, Porn was also deeply depressed after she ran away because of a termination of pregnancy that had been imposed on her by her boss when she was 'working'. Porn, like all the other participants in the Sydney research, talked at length and in extraordinarily detailed ways about a key common anxiety they experienced in their trafficking situations; that is, customers breaking or refusing to wear condoms during intercourse. Trafficked women in the sex industry in Australia are often in the worst situations regarding conditions of sex work since, as another participant, Jo puts it:

If we refuse a customer or if we argue when they don't want to wear condom we get in big trouble from the boss – like a fine or some threats. We cannot refuse. I had experience of customers hitting me because I wanted him to put [on] the condom and he didn't want.

Unfortunately for Porn one such incident resulted in pregnancy, although she is unsure which customer she had fallen pregnant to. Not only was she forced to have an abortion, but she was also made to pay back the costs her boss outlaid for the procedure. Although she is not sure herself, she thinks this may be why he told her she had to extend her contract for an additional six months. In any case the termination left Porn feeling emotionally insecure; her isolation in the house in Cabramatta did not dilute these feelings but only gave her more time to think about all that had happened to her in 'the shop' in Sydney.

The next phase of Porn's and Nit's migration trajectories was marked by a voluntary return to CSL; a decision intimately tied to each woman's experiences in the context of what happened in the marginal spaces they came to occupy in and beyond trafficking, both in Sydney for Porn and back in Thailand for Nit. Once Porn escaped from the brothel to which she was trafficked in Sydney she remained extremely vulnerable with no money (her ex-customer paid her rent in the shared house), no job, extremely limited freedom of movement as an unlawful non-citizen in Australia and constant fear of being found by her ex-boss with all the ramifications that it would bring (such as physical punishment). After a few months of living in these 'clandestine spaces', one of her other ex-customers, a man from Laos, told her about another brothel where he thought she could 'get work' undetected. After reflecting on her situation, Porn decided to go with the Laotian man to the brothel, a brothel that was, in fact, also notorious for receiving trafficked women. Porn stayed there and worked for two years, leaving in 2001. She remains in prostitution in a different brothel in Sydney to this day although she now has her legal status restored with the issuance of a resident's visa (which the Australian government has recently begun issuing for trafficked women who could 'prove' their cases).

Nit did not remain in Singapore after her one-month contract ended. She returned to southern Thailand and rested; one month of eight to ten customers per night had taken its toll on her emotional and physical health. She did not want to remain in southern Thailand though as she had split with her boyfriend (an ex-customer) there. Nor did she wish to return to Bangkok as her stepfather had been physically abusive towards her mother and she felt very sad, but also incapable of preventing the abuse from continuing. It was thus a combination of her personal circumstances back in Thailand and her newly acquired awareness of how to enter Singapore for jungle prostitution without the help of an agent that led her back to Singapore three more times. She stated frankly, 'I thought, the customers are quick and I only have to stay one month. If I go on my own I can make more money. It's okay for me now because I know I can endure it'. Being unable to leave and consequently being resigned to 'seeing it out' on Nit's first trip had normalised her to performing sex work under these adverse conditions, conditions that she could not previously have imagined nor accepted voluntarily.

*In-between spaces and shades of grey*

How do Porn's and Nit's trajectories in migrant sex industries speak to disagreements over choice in the prostitution debate? Foremost their migration paths suggest that some women cannot be easily situated as either voluntary or forced therefore pointing to a 'messy reality' (Doezema 2000) of fluidity, ambiguity and in-betweenness of positions of migrant women in CSL. In other words, the commonalities in their experiences revolve around the ways in which simple dichotomies around choice in performing CSL break down. The trafficking experiences of Nit and Porn illustrate the way women can gradually become normalised to their situations over time and in the context of the venues to which they are deployed and the clandestine and exclusionary spaces they inhabit after they exit trafficking. For both Porn and Nit the brothel provided a space of control, isolation and surveillance, coupled with the circulation of threats, fines and punishments from their bosses. In this situation both women knew it was almost impossible to leave without considerable risks to both themselves and others (such as their peers or families). Added to this, both women were denied income which worked to induce them into performing CSL; to pay off debts quickly and to earn some tips so they could at least have a little income. They both held out for the time when their contracts would be completed and they would be free to leave these situations of CSE. Weighing up their choices in these contexts, these two women submitted to CSL with a view to their exploitative situations coming to an end at some foreseeable point in the future; a hope that was both fuelled and then dashed in Porn's case.

Neither Porn nor Nit re-entered CSL in ways that were markedly different from their earlier trafficking experiences, apart from having their freedom of movement and place of work restored and not being tricked about the nature or conditions of their work. Porn was able to earn some money from prostitution in a way that was not possible for her when she was under contract in Sydney. However, because the brothel she moved to after her initial trafficking was run by an individual previously known to have been involved in trafficking women to Australia, Porn was again not in a position to negotiate basic rights in performing CSL, including selecting clients or refusing particular services (such as performing oral sex or sex without a condom). Because her new boss knew she was residing in Australia unlawfully her income was not commensurate with legally residing sex workers and her ability to negotiate conditions of her work was severely limited by this situation.

For Nit the only difference in her subsequent visits to Singapore for sex work was the lack of involvement of an agent and a greater degree of freedom. She could therefore ostensibly make more money, but only by going to the same pimp or brothel owner with whom she already had established a connection during her trafficking ordeal. The conditions of sex work, vulnerabilities around clients and police and immigration raids, as well as the deduction of half her salary by her pimp for 'protection', were the same. She suffered the same health problems as during her initial visit and she reflected: 'I am very sensitive to KY Jelly. I have to go and see a doctor in Thailand regularly and take a rest between trips [to Singapore] ... I can't see more than ten customers a night in Singapore, but they are quick so okay'. Nit would not have entertained the prospect of going to Singapore under such conditions previously as she could earn more money in sex work in Thailand, but ultimately came to the decision to keep making these trips because she could rest and recover through seeking medical treatment when she returned to Thailand. In short, these two women experienced gradual exposure to increasingly poor conditions and duties in CSL over time, notwithstanding their re-entry as voluntary sex workers.

## Conclusion

In this article I have disrupted the derivative position of the sex worker rights perspective within the debate over choice in trafficking for CSE. In fact, both positions within this debate are often reduced to their most simplistic and easily locatable expressions; the empowered sex worker and the hapless sex slave. Following Bhabha (1990) I have suggested that in the context of this binary the sex worker rights perspective has defined itself against and in relation to arguments around force, therefore leaving little room to manoeuvre with regard to conceptualising what is voluntary and how consensual (re)entry into CSL might come about for some individual women who also have had experiences of being trafficked. By exploring the migration trajectories of Porn and Nit in Sydney and Singapore, respectively, I proposed that some individual migrant women figuratively ‘cross the border’ between coerced (trafficked) and consensual (voluntary) deployment in CSL during their migration trajectories notwithstanding whether or not they had been sex workers previously. I have argued that these complicated temporal aspects of women’s experiences point to their different positionings over the course of their migration trajectories. In this sense some migrant women in CSL can be seen as *both* victims of sex trafficking *and* voluntary sex workers, depending on the point at which their situations come to be known and documented – by researchers, police, NGOs or immigration authorities (or indeed by researchers). Their experiences are illustrative of many of the Thai women in my research in Sydney and Singapore and which act at once to complicate and disrupt the binaries inherent in the forced prostitution/sex worker rights debate as it relates to notions of ‘choice’ in sex trafficking.

Despite the increasing number of studies available that document ‘victims’ circumstances during sex trafficking, virtually none critically explore the changes that women routinely undergo during and after the period they are trafficked – both the mundane and the episodic – and the implications these changes can have on their post-trafficking trajectories. Where attention is given to these aspects of a trafficked woman’s experience it is often framed within discourses of psycho-social rehabilitation as part of the ‘victim’s recovery process’. Changes in self-understanding and attitudes that occur when women are deployed in trafficking situations are, nonetheless, of critical importance in comprehending women’s post-trafficking trajectories and supporting their needs.

Women such as Nit and Porn do not necessarily perceive their re-entry into CSL as presenting a situation in which they are acting as empowered voluntary sex workers, but rather they operate under notions of ‘constrained choice’ (see Sandy 2007). In this case the constraints they operate under derive not just from poverty, family pressures or the various other factors that have been put forward to explain ‘Third World women’s’ migration decisions, but also from their trafficking experiences themselves. An important part of the discussion in this article involved exploring the ways in which geographies of constrained choice of migrant women in CSL matter. These could usefully be further explored in relation to other contexts of migrant sex work.

This article also offers some reflections on counter-trafficking interventions concerning CSL. In particular, the labelling of any particular migrant woman in CSL – as trafficked or not – normally rests on an interpretation of her position at a *particular moment* in her migration trajectory and life story. The extrapolation of this moment to represent the entirety of her experience, motivations and circumstances, is unhelpful in understanding the complexities of that woman’s experiences. Both Porn and Nit underwent complex emotional and situational changes throughout their respective migrant prostitution trajectories, such that focusing on any part of their experiences in isolation would not give a reasonable understanding of their

positions. For example, focusing only on the point when they re-entered CSL voluntarily might lead some sex worker rights advocates to refute any claim that these women were hapless victims of trafficking in favour of a view of them as autonomous sex workers. Similarly, locating these women only as sex trafficking victims might represent an accurate portrayal of their positions at one point (for Porn her initial entry to any sex work and for Nit her initial entry to migrant sex work) but this begs the question of why these women remained in or re-entered prostitution at a later point. The answer to this question has enormous relevance to counter-trafficking interventions focused on protecting and enhancing the rights of trafficked persons, particularly concerning prevention, outreach, exit and recovery, and for sex worker rights interventions that are well beyond the scope of this article but should be given serious consideration by those involved in anti-trafficking work.

Finally, I suggest some possible methods and approaches to assist in revealing these ambiguities and fluidities. Conducting in-depth research with sex-trafficked women is extremely difficult and poses enormous challenges to those interested in understanding their lives. The inability to move beyond essentialist images of sex-trafficked women as passive victims and sex slaves or to celebrate them as empowered sex worker agents often results because of the particular approaches that are adopted in the research process. The importance of considering *time* (migration trajectories and life histories) as well as *space* (bars, clubs, brothels, shelters and contexts of hiding, surviving, recovering) in understanding these women's trajectories brings to light how some trafficked women undergo figurative border crossings within migrant CSL. Trafficking can therefore be a prelude or precipitating factor to voluntary entry into migrant sex industries, though often under conditions not dissimilar to trafficking. Time-space (longitudinal) studies, life stories and multi-sited ethnography are therefore valuable methodological tools that can be used to conduct research with women trafficked for CSE. Finally, longer term, in-depth research can help break down some of the stereotypical representations that have emerged to frame women in debates on trafficking, such as the sex worker-abolitionist debate about prostitution. This opens the way for both more considered and responsive ways of understanding and supporting the rights and respecting the agency of these women.

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### Notes

1. I use the terms commercial sexual labour (CSL) and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) throughout this article in preference to 'prostitution' or 'sex work' because these latter two terms imply a specific stance towards activities or jobs that involve selling one's body for sex (see Kempadoo 2004, 59). I do not wish to position myself – or be positioned – in relation to this debate as my purpose is to explore a specific type of experience in trafficking for CSL rather than to make a case for one or other of these arguments.
2. The fundamental importance to sex worker rights perspectives is the view that if a woman 'chooses' to take up CSL her choice should be respected and efforts should be made to ensure safe and fair working conditions (hence the conceptualisation of sex work as a legitimate form of work and interventions to support their rights based on this view). This is a position that



anti-prostitution or abolitionist feminists do not accept, instead arguing that no woman in prostitution would actively chose to be there. Regarding sex trafficking specifically, abolitionists tend to focus on the victimisation, exploitation and coercion by third parties that women experience and on the lack of choice or agency for victims. The latter have waged vigorous campaigns invoking the experiences of those who easily and unproblematically fall within this trafficked 'sex slave' framework. From this disagreement around choice the distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' prostitution has emerged (Doezema 2000). This distinction has allowed us to conceptualise sex work, 'as a labour practice based on women's autonomous use of their own bodies as a source of income' (Gulcur and Ilkkaracan 2002, 412).

3. There is considerable controversy around the use of the term 'victim' in feminist geography to describe women who have been sex trafficked (see, for example, Hildson and Giridharan 2008, 616–17). Criticism centres on the implied passivity and lack of agency ascribed to women by this term. However, I deliberately chose to use the term 'victim' to describe the status of the women in this article and employ an understanding of the term that has been laid out by Brunovski and Surtees (Brunovskis and Surtees 2007, 26) where, 'from a human rights framework, the term "victim" is important as it designates the violation experienced and the necessity of responsibility and redress ... "victim" denotes someone who has been the victim of a crime and does not refer to the person's agency or any other characteristics'. In line with this understanding I also posit that a victim of trafficking may exercise agency in a range of ways (such as in the decision to migrate or in working to reduce their exploitation in ways that may not necessarily be tied to their exit from trafficking situations and so on) but that they are still subjects of exploitation, abuse and crime. There is no inherent reason why victims of the crime of trafficking for CSE cannot exercise agency in these situations, albeit often in limited or hidden ways.
4. Normalisation in this context refers to the gradual process by which women trafficked into CSL come to accept prostitution as a livelihood option and personal identity (see Hwang and Bedford 2004 for further discussion of the psychology of normalisation).
5. In Sydney most of the participants in my study were met through a snowballing technique and many of the women who participated knew each other either casually or as close friends already. This made the inclusion of focus group discussions a more realistic possibility since the women were able to come together in a supportive environment along with others whom they were already familiar with.
6. I did hear of several other women – either through participants or organizations supporting trafficked women in Australia – that they had come across cases of women who knew about the debt and agreed to it whilst still in Thailand. As none of these women participated in my study it was difficult to verify this or ascertain other aspects of their recruitment and migration to Australia.
7. Apart from jungle prostitution, Thai women in Singapore's sex industry are also located in Geylang prostitution district in brothels specialising in Thai women.
8. According to Hwang and Bedford (2004, 142) 'Four main stages of adaptation in attitudes were identified: resistance, development of interpersonal connections, self-injury and loss of hope, and acceptance of prostitution'.

### Notes on contributor

Sallie Yea is a visiting fellow in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. She is currently conducting research on the trafficking of women and girls for commercial sexual exploitation into Singapore, and on the construction of anti-trafficking responses and the impact of these on trafficked persons also focusing on Southeast Asia. She has published numerous articles on issues of sexuality, migration and human trafficking in journals such as *International Migration*, *Women's Studies International Forum* and *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*. Her first monograph, *Untrafficked* is due to be published with University of Hawaii Press.

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## ABSTRACT TRANSLATIONS

### ‘Matices’: espacios en y más allá del tráfico para las mujeres tailandesas que practican el trabajo sexual comercial en Sidney y Singapur

En este artículo analizo las trayectorias de migración de algunas mujeres tailandesas traficadas internacionalmente para su explotación sexual comercial, sugiriendo que muchas ‘cruzan la frontera’, en forma figurativa, entre la existencia forzada y consensual en las volátiles industrias del sexo de inmigrantes durante el curso de sus experiencias de migración, y, por lo tanto, complejizando los debates alrededor de la noción de elección en el tráfico de ‘sexo’. Explorando las transiciones de estas mujeres busco comprender por qué las que nunca habían sido trabajadoras sexuales previamente o las que lo fueron sin coerción pero que luego fueron traficadas para la explotación sexual comercial, permanecen o entran nuevamente en formas volátiles de trabajo sexual inmigrante más tarde, bajo arreglos voluntarios. Respondiendo esta pregunta me centro sobre los aspectos temporales y espaciales de las experiencias de las mujeres individuales en las industrias de sexo de inmigrantes, basándome en el análisis detallado de las narrativas de dos mujeres tailandesas traficadas a Sidney, Australia y Singapur respectivamente. Hago algunas sugerencias sobre las metodologías utilizadas en la investigación del tráfico que pueden ayudar a echar luz sobre estas complejas dimensiones del tiempo-espacio de las experiencias de las mujeres a través de sus cambiantes posiciones en el trabajo sexual comercial. El artículo también reflexiona sobre las implicancias de estas trayectorias de las mujeres para el ‘debate de la prostitución’ en su relación con el tráfico para la explotación sexual comercial, al sugerir que muchas mujeres traficadas ocupan posiciones ambiguas o intermedias en las industrias sexuales de inmigrantes, ni fácilmente distinguibles por medio de la etiqueta de víctima del tráfico ni la de trabajadora sexual inmigrante.

**Palabras claves:** tráfico sexual; trabajo sexual comercial; metodologías; trayectorias de migración; Tailandia

### 「灰度梯阶」：在雪梨与新加坡从事商业性工作的泰国女性涉入及超脱人口贩运 之空间

本文考察部分遭受国际人口贩运以进行商业性剥削的泰国女性的迁徙轨迹，提出许多人在迁移的经验历程中，在瞬息万变的迁徙性产业中象征性地「跨越」遭受强迫与出于自愿的「边界」，藉此复杂化「性」贩运中关乎「选择」概念的辩论。透过探索这些女性的转变，我试图理解这些过往从未从事性工作、或并非受到胁迫从事 性工作的女性，在遭受人口贩运以进行商业性剥削之后，为何日后仍出于自愿地维持或再次进入无常的迁徙性工作之列。为了回答上述问题，我将运用两位分别被贩运至澳洲雪梨和新加坡的泰国女性的详尽叙事，聚焦这些女性在迁徙性产业中的个人亲身经历的时空面向。我将对人口贩运研究所运用的方法论提出建议，该建议可协助揭露随着这些女性在商业性劳动中变动的境况，其所经历的复杂时空面向的一部分。本文亦将藉由以下主张反思与商业性剥削的人口贩运有关的「召妓辩论」(prostitution debate) 中，这些女性轨迹所隐含的意涵：许多遭受贩运的女性在迁徙性产业中占据介乎其间、模棱两可的位置，因而无法轻易将其标签化为人口贩运的受害者或是迁徙性工作者。

**关键词：**性贩运、商业性劳动、方法论、迁徙轨迹、泰国