

greatest contribution by telescoping his vision of the Moscow-based “ethnic avant-garde” outward, through the Cold War, past the “now-defunct Soviet center” (179), and into the present day. His “new optics” (with another nod to Benjamin) brings to light lost connections and exposes, with scrupulous caution, the redeemable lessons of an irredeemable past.

BORIS DRALYUK

University of St Andrews, Scotland

Economies of Violence: Transnational Feminism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking. By Jennifer Suchland. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. xiv, 260 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$24.00 paper, \$95.00 hard bound.

In December 2004, I sat down with staff at the International Organization for Migration—Moldova to discuss the effectiveness of their counter-trafficking campaigns. As part of the “three Ps” (prosecution, protection and prevention) approach to ending trafficking touted by the United States and the United Nations, the IOM-Moldova office had developed a campaign called “Smart Migration.” During the summer of 2004, they loaded up flashy pamphlets, the film *Lilja 4-ever* (a 2002 drama about a young former socialist woman trafficked to Europe), and a crew of youth volunteers into a new Mercedes van to travel the countryside, spreading information about the dangers of trafficking for young women.¹ “How did Moldovans respond?” I asked. Sighing, discouraged, the IOM staff member replied that people were mostly impressed by the Mercedes and inquired about jobs at the IOM. They wondered how the youth working for the IOM had the time and money to volunteer, and why the IOM did not use their funds to help create jobs that paid instead of buying a new minivan. Implicit in this criticism was that the lack of jobs at home caused young women to go abroad in the first place.

In a fascinating and important new book, *Economies of Violence*, Jennifer Suchland explains how it came to be that counter-trafficking programs ignore these valid material concerns. Sharpening this critique, the book examines how such programs also overlook the connection of sex trafficking to the functioning of the global economy. Suchland argues convincingly that ultimately, this is a problem of conceptualization. The IOM, like the US and UN policymakers she details in the book, do not see trafficking as part of the risks people take to seek work abroad—as an issue, primarily, of dire economic dislocation and precarity. Instead, they position it primarily as a result of criminals perpetrating sexual violence against individual women. This has direct consequences for how policymakers propose to solve trafficking through the “three Ps”—targeting transnational networks for prosecution, protecting victims of trafficking from further exploitation, and preventing women from being trafficked in the first place through information campaigns. While not discount-

1. *Lilja 4-ever*. Directed by Lukas Moodysson. Sweden/Russia: Sonnet Films, 2002

ing the importance of prosecution, Suchland argues that this focus ultimately diverts attention from properly envisioning and stemming the problem. She points out that the “carceral approach” does not target, nor even recognize, the everyday structural and systemic economic violence that prompts migration from former socialist states—a feature common to migration worldwide. In deconstructing this approach, Suchland’s work is part of an effort to trod new ground in analysis of trafficking. Her deployment of a wide-range of cutting-edge scholarship on feminist activism, socialism and the “transition,” and her rich detailing of the Russian case adds vital and particular dimension to this project. What is new here is Suchland’s examination of how the carceral approach frames trafficking as an “aberration of capitalism,” when in fact, it is part and parcel of the global economic order.

According to Suchland, a genealogy of the carceral approach can be traced through exploring the links between two histories: women’s rights advocacy and postsocialism. She tackles these in turn, discussing “The Global” in Part I and “The Local” in Part II. With remarkable cogency, she offers a blow-by-blow account of post-World War II UN agendas and recent US legislative meetings, focusing most on the UN Decade for Women (1975–85) and the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). In Part I, she analyzes how global women’s rights advocacy became centered on the issue of “violence against women”—on combating physical and psychological violence toward individual women. This development placed new debates over how to respond to trafficking in the 1990s within the contest between feminists seeking the abolition of prostitution and those advocating for sex-worker rights. Suchland is a reliable guide to the “sex wars,” offering a nuanced and deeply contextualized description. She persuasively demonstrates how this location of the problem of trafficking made issues of consent and agency primary to identifying and aiding victims, while the structural conditions of trafficking were featured only as a backdrop to the discussion. According to Suchland, when this definition of trafficking as a particular form of violence coincided with the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the onslaught of a “fourth wave” of trafficking from eastern to western Europe, the result was a wider panic over trafficking and the politicization of the issue. This panic was based on perceptions that educated white women were being trafficked in alarmingly high numbers (even if, as she points out, these numbers were unsubstantiated) and a focus on exceptional cases. Suchland smartly utilizes critiques of “transition,” to understand this panic as coming from a view of the former Soviet Union as wrought by mafia activity (framed as a “pathology of socialism” rather than caused by “shock therapy” capitalism). Thus, trafficking was deemed a problem of transnational criminal networks. As a direct result, the “anti-trafficking apparatus” prioritized “a prosecutorial response to postsocialist trafficking” (7) that became enshrined in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000) and the US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, or TVPA (2000).

This framing was not a foregone conclusion—there were different views of trafficking at the UN, and part of what is so interesting about this book is Suchland’s careful tracing of these alternatives. For instance, she explores the

efforts on the part of the global south to link women's rights issues to structural critiques of economic development, colonialism, and neoimperialism. In this framework, sex trafficking is seen as emerging from the increased reliance on the leisure industry and tourism for economic development in Asia, Latin America, and Africa—and then in Russia and eastern Europe. A solution to trafficking that admitted as much could have focused, Suchland suggests, on the global political economy. Yet, these voices lost out to the carceral approach. Suchland's analysis really shines when going deep to unearth hidden histories like these. This is especially evident in her sophisticated take on the complexity of women's rights in Russia from socialist to postsocialist times.

The second part of the book deepens our understanding of how actually existing socialist and postsocialist experience with capitalism was largely ignored, and shows how this impacted counter-trafficking efforts. Here, Suchland examines the particularity of the postsocialist case to make an important critique of transnational feminism. The story of the disconnect of postsocialist women's concerns from Beijing in 1995—evident in their “statement from a non-region”—is a good read. It reveals clearly how the global women's rights agenda to combat “violence against women” was written without the voices of postsocialist women and under the influence of the triumphalist narrative of capitalism's victory over socialism. Feminist activists in Beijing ignored the disastrous effects of “transition” and the particular form of shock therapy capitalism took, but they also ignored the fact that postsocialist states had been neoliberalizing and democratizing, albeit in different form, well before 1989. The conditions of women's status in Russia were similarly elided. Suchland describes how *perestroika* held a neotraditionalist bent when it came to gender roles, leading to a decline in women's status in Russia, the sexualization of femininity, and the commodification of female sexuality. Attentiveness to these socialist and postsocialist experiences at Beijing could have led to understanding that sex trafficking is intimately connected to the spread of neoliberal capitalism.

Interestingly, it is not that economics is *not* talked about in relation to trafficking, it is just that a particular kind of economism informs the discussion. In Part III, one of the most groundbreaking parts of the book, Suchland shows how an appeal to individual rational economic action emerges as an addendum to the carceral approach for both neoabolitionists and sex worker advocates alike. Here, she criticizes recent popular and activist arguments that targeting the profits of trafficking and the consumer demand for prostitutes could stop the abuses of trafficking. She also evaluates claims that entrepreneurship trainings and public education will empower young women to avoid trafficking, pointing out that: “This assumption suggests that trafficking is a result of bad decision-making and focuses on transforming individuals rather than structures” (183); it “perpetuates the myth that individuals alone can alter economies of violence” (186).

How then to move beyond the carceral approach? Admirably, Suchland aims to put this new theoretical positioning to work in better practices of counter-trafficking. She concludes the book with a recommendation to move from the “three Ps” to “three Rs”—rights, research, and responsibility. This means a focus on community-defined human and labor rights and more re-

search on the links between migration, political economy, gender, and race, so that local voices, long peripheralized, can “trickle up” to inform policy. And finally, it means responsibility—the anti-trafficking industry needs to re-prioritize to focus on combating poverty and on coalition building with other migrants and laborers who are victimized by globalization. These are clearly better solutions than the carceral approach.

Yet, even with such a trenchant critique of the carceral approach as this book provides, at times, I still found myself asking, how will this reprioritization happen? Why does the carceral framework remain so entrenched? Why are the alternatives disregarded? Suchland interestingly dismisses one reason—Nancy Fraser’s generalization that identity politics has displaced redistribution politics—as irrelevant to the case of postsocialist Russia. Then what? Others have attempted an answer. The anthropologist Pardis Mahdavi argues that US TVPA (Trafficking Victims Protection Act) tier system (which places countries into three tiers according to their success at the three Ps) creates diplomatic and material consequences for states that do not comply.² Thus, trafficking discourse and policy is a useful tool for wider American political power, especially in the Middle East. Jacqueline Berman argues that trafficking discourse empowers European Union statecraft in a time when it is in question.³ And in the US, we see how counter-trafficking creates effective alliances between liberals, conservatives, and evangelicals. Pointing out the connection of trafficking discourse to other power structures outside the post-socialist world could have provided even more support for Suchland’s weighty analysis of how the carceral approach came to be, and widened its relevance. I am certain scholars and activists will appreciate Suchland’s examination here of “postsocialism as an actor in, and not just a receiver of, global forces” (85). But surely, it is equally important to show how other global contexts are important to think about when it comes to the postsocialist case. This is not to try to subsume postsocialism within the west (“developed nations”) or the south (“developing nations”) in our analyses, a common mistake which Suchland rightly takes to task, but to fully see its particularity in relation to them.

How we handle postsocialist particularity can affect our critiques of counter-trafficking in another way too. Some of Suchland’s most interesting analysis stems from her lengthy fieldwork on sexual harassment in Russia. She is very careful to repeat throughout the book that the overwhelming majority of her data regards Russia, even though she is also talking about postsocialism broadly. Yet, the Russian experience with trafficking is more particular than she represents it here, and thus this generalization poses problems. For instance, because her analysis relies heavily on the example of trafficking from Russia to Europe, traffickers in her scenario are deemed to be from the Russian mafia, and thus co-ethnics with their victims. Yet, in other analyses of trafficking (see, for instance, Berman and Mahdavi),

2. Pardis Mahdavi, *Gridlock: Labor, Migration, and Trafficking in Dubai* (Stanford, 2011).

3. Jacqueline Berman, “(Un)Popular Strangers and Crises (Un)Bounded: Discourses of Sex-Trafficking, the European Political Community, and the Panicked State of the Modern State,” *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 1 (March 2003): 37–86.

traffickers are racialized as “dark” and “ethnic” Balkan or Middle Eastern, whereas the trafficked women are “white.” This imagery has consequences for understanding the criminalization of trafficking, which in some instances is clearly about keeping ethnic “others” out of Europe, and so intersects with the politics of security and the power of the European Union. Even mention of the connection between trafficking discourses in different contexts, and the way this discourse can work to legitimate other politics, could have shown the political expediency of the carceral framework, and help explain why it remains so popular.

These points should not take away from the fact that Suchland makes great strides for our understanding of counter-trafficking with her genealogical analysis. She rallies a remarkable amount of critical scholarship—ethnographic, sociological, feminist, cultural geographic, poststructuralist economic, postsocialist, and Slavic and eastern European studies—and the book would be of immense interest to scholars in these fields. This book is a deep well from which to draw multiple and complex discussions. It would thus be an excellent assignment for an upper-level undergraduate or graduate course as well. Whether or not you engage in research or practice of counter-trafficking in postsocialist states, Suchland’s dissection of the “carceral approach” is key to understanding not only this problem and its solutions, but also many others.

LEYLA J. KEOUGH
Hampshire College