



Aesthetic Whistle-Blowers: The Importance and Limitations of Art and Media in Addressing Human Trafficking

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Abstract

As academic research focused on human trafficking garners more public attention, art-focused responses to human trafficking are on the rise. Film, theatre, public art installments, and popular television shows bring human trafficking to light in both positive and negative ways. Works of literature in the past such as Hannah More's antislavery poetry in the late eighteenth century and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's writing in the twentieth century disrupted the status quo. Their work influenced multiple levels of society, including government policy and practice, in regard to the transatlantic slave trade as well as the horrors of enslavement and forced labor in the Gulag system in the USSR, respectively. Can contemporary works of art do for human trafficking what More's and Solzhenitsyn's work did in their day? First, this chapter will examine how writers can influence public perception by alerting readers to the complexity and nature of human trafficking to serve as "aesthetic whistle-blowers" and will highlight

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literary works that have sounded the alarm. Secondly, it will explore some of the pitfalls or ways that literature can be unhelpful to antislavery efforts. This chapter therefore considers how world literature positions itself to alert audiences to the realities of trafficking in order to help build social and political will necessary to address human trafficking.

Keywords

Aesthetics · Literary forensics · Art · Human trafficking

Introduction

The movement of legal professionals, law enforcement, social workers, government agencies, activists, and scholars – to name but a few – committed to combatting human trafficking is global in nature. Academic articles rarely include the artist at the “knowledge-creating table” (Lundy and McGovern 2008: 280) of representatives who contribute to the noble goal to “examine the nature, extent and complexity” (Winterdyk et al. 2012: 3) of trafficking in persons (TIP) .. The criticism, typically leveled at the artist, suggests “poor methodology and questionable data, so that the [audience] is caught up emotionally with the story and is not applying a critical eye to the data or the analysis” (D’Estree 2012: 81). The primary focus of this chapter is to highlight that literature that takes up human trafficking need not conduct a precise, data-point analysis. As scholars in the field of transitional justice have identified, the national trove of literature and other art forms that emerge “in the wake of [injustices]... show that art, not constrained by literal truth, can generate new opportunities for empathetic understanding and solidarity” (Milton 2018). Artists cast a wide net, a net that can capture the imagination of the heart and uniquely compel and mobilize individuals who otherwise would not know about issues like human trafficking in ways that are useful for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to achieve their goals. With specific focus on literature that emerges from real trafficking incidents that stretch back to the transatlantic slave trade of the eighteenth century, this chapter considers how world literature positions itself to alert audiences to the realities of trafficking in order to help build social and political will necessary to address human trafficking. By uncovering the illicit and harmful nature of human trafficking, writers of such literature serve as aesthetic whistle-blowers.

Literary Roots to the Original Abolition Movement

While the contemporary media landscape is constantly evolving and new technologies emerge to disrupt established forms, this chapter is concerned with the particular place of literature in the enterprise of addressing human trafficking. Indeed, there are various forms of media through which artists employ stories to influence audiences with both sentimental appeal and calls to action to the

antislavery agenda, forms that include but are not limited to film and television, graphic novels and comics, web series, and social media. The contemporary abolitionist movement has conjured up various figures from history in order to retrace the steps toward the monumental goal to end slavery in order to learn from the successes of the past. Close study of the original abolition movement which worked in earnest during the eighteenth and nineteenth century to campaign for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade produces many examples of artists who used their craft in particular ways to mobilize social action. Among the era's leading poets such as William Cowper, William Wordsworth, Mary Robinson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge who "wrote poems, informed by the rhetorical conventions of sentimentality, animadverting on the slave trade" (Menely 2013: 49), Hannah More addressed the social evil of slavery with an argument that inherent human value not only transcends nations, but race. Aware that other scholars conclude that More's legacy falls short of a politically liberal and feminist agenda, this section is concerned less with labels and tropes for More and instead examines More's literary abolitionism through her innovative publishing tactics and attentiveness to the human toll of the injustice of slavery. More's work advanced the social conversation about enslavement and the slave trade in important ways that can enrich abolitionist writing strategies today.

As the modern abolition movement sets its aim to see an end to contemporary slavery, which binds some 40.3 million people within its cruel grasp (Global Slavery Index 2018), More stands as a fascinating figure in the history of the movement for her contribution to the work of abolition through writing. More's didactic literary contributions marked a moment in which numerous social, cultural, and religious factors began to converge by 1788 to "bring about one of the most remarkable changes. . . in human history" (Stott 2003: 88), that is, the beginning of the end of the transatlantic slave trade. Adam Hochschild observes numerous social and literary factors that converged to contribute to this historical tipping point. First, in 1787 Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, an African living in London, published his book *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* which went through three printings in 1787. This text questioned the morality of slavery and praised the efforts of abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson who were becoming familiar to the public. Second, a group of activists in Manchester gathered 10,000 names on an antislavery petition to Parliament and urged more petitions across Britain. Third, the former slave ship captain turned minister John Newton, who until then had been publicly silent about his experiences over the Middle Passage, raised his voice at long last. Fourth, African voices began to be heard in London debating societies and also published letters against slavery in newspapers. Finally, the public was responding to the abolition movement's disruption with antislavery sentiment so that more than 100 petitions had been signed by between 60,000 and 100,000 people demanding abolition or reform of the slave trade (Hochschild 2005).

"Something new and subversive was making its first appearance: the systematic mobilization of public opinion across the class spectrum" (Hochschild 2005: 138), and it was at this moment, in 1788, that More was at the pinnacle of her social and

literary fame (Jones 1952). Before she wrote her first abolition poem, More already demonstrated enthusiasm for the cause, “urging her friends. . . to taboo the use of West Indian sugar in their tea. She carried about with her a copy of Clarkson’s famous plan of an African slave ship, and showed it to interested and horrified guests at evening parties” (Jones 1952: 84). The famous diagram of the slave ship *Brookes* was circulated widely among the British public and jolted the nation with a sense of the unjust treatment of slaves. The diagram depicts the *Brookes* with 292 slaves on the lower decks and 130 stowed underneath shelves in an area not high enough for a grown man to stand. The drawing, which More relied on as a visual aide to convince peers for the cause of abolition, helped Britons consider, likely for the first time, the horrific plight of slaves transported in chains over the Atlantic:

packed in rows, each with less floor space than would be taken by a coffin, on a deck dimly lit by a swinging lantern or two at night and forever lurching up and down over the waves. . . jammed for months into a vessel less than one hundred feet long. (Hochschild 2005: 309)

The abolition movement felt an urgency before William Wilberforce was to present a bill that would bind Parliament to “consider the slave trade” in 1788 so as to galvanize public sentiment with a “last-minute demonstration” they considered “imperative” (Jones 1952: 84). Hannah More wrote the poem *Slavery* as both an emotional appeal and intellectual argument targeted at the reading public in order to convince them to stand against the injustice of slavery at a critical societal moment. The early abolitionists’ ability to use multiple forms of media was persuasive.

More’s poem hinges on her insistence that she speaks not of “fictitious ills” but “living anguish” like that experienced by slaves on ships such as the *Brookes* (More 1788). Her poetical exploration of the condition of slaves brings to life the diagram that Clarkson, More, and other abolitionists used to shock the British public and reveals that the written word can compel the human spirit in ways images cannot. As Percy Shelley famously wrote, poets “are the. . . mirrors of the gigantic shadows, which futurity casts upon the present. . . the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (1891: 46). Literature can foresee the moves society must make to become more just, like the abolition of slavery in Britain. What More and her colleagues foresaw decades before the legal machinery of the nation recognized, described as *Slavery*’s climax, was the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade:

The giant dies! no more his frown appals,
The chain untouch’d, drops off; the fetter falls.
Astonish’d echo tells the vocal shore,
Oppression’s fall’n, and Slavery is no more! (1788: 287–290)

More’s “poetry was essentially a medium of teaching and information” (Demers 1996: 48) in a world bombarded with information and political opinion more accessible than ever. The presses that printed the newspapers and penny tracts in More’s day were to the eighteenth-century world of ideas what Twitter is to the contemporary world: a platform through which ideas were not only weaponized but

could pass quickly, titillate, convince, attract, and repel. Elite critics deplored the “promiscuous mixing” of ideas that the proliferation of the presses encouraged, which allowed for “unrestrained argument” so that “class differences were forgotten” (Hochschild 2005: 218). More’s ability to adapt writing to new publishing formats disrupting the literary landscape serves as an example to writers who take up the cause of abolition in the present. Hannah More seized the opportunity to reach new audiences through different publishing avenues newly available, and her multipronged approach impacted the newly literate and middle class with literature that included abolitionist themes (Myers 1986). Such tactics are useful models for writers today who create stories for traditional literary forms such as the essay or novel or who write for other forms like theatre, film, television, and social media.

As the abolitionist efforts of 1788 and beyond captured the public’s imagination, through the consequential publication of *Slavery*, More became one of the figures through which the abolition movement interfaced with the public. More published *The Sorrows of Yamba or The Negro Woman’s Lamentation* (1797) as part of her *Cheap Repository* project, a signal that sentimental poetry truly did influence the social conversation around slavery in important ways. The success of the *Cheap Repository* by 1797 was immense, having sold millions of copies and read far and wide. Through this format, More had found a publishing avenue that directly addressed readers, and it was a large and voracious audience. It also generated critics. Some of More’s contemporaries who wrote proslavery propaganda under pseudonyms in *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, the most widely read publication of the late 1780s, derided More along with other abolitionist writers as “tender-hearted poetesses” (Carey 2013: 90). While the majority of antislavery poems were, in fact, written by men, the essayists were attempting to demonstrate that abolitionist writing was “feminine, domestic, private, and emotion-centred discourse whereas the arguments in favour of the continuance of slavery were based on real facts understood in the . . . public world of commerce” (Carey 2013: 92). The critique of antislavery poetry began in earnest in March of 1788, the month after the release of More’s *Slavery* when the reviewers’ position “shifted” from favorable to unfavorable. Carey notes that from March 1788 onward, “every abolitionist tract or poem is harshly reviewed [in *Gentlemen’s Magazine*] while proslavery texts are portrayed in glowing terms,” a signal More was touching a tender spot of the body politic (Carey 2013: 88).

The graphic imagery More employs in *The Sorrows of Yamba* emphasizes the narrator’s shattered intimacies – a family torn apart, a whip mangling her flesh, and food forced down her throat – as white hands mark and penetrate black bodies (1797: 12–16). The imagery in the poem jars the senses to great effect. If anything, More did not react to the criticism leveled at herself and the abolitionist poets that grew loud a month after *Slavery* was published in 1788 with a literary pivot away from the criticism that antislavery poetry is unserious sentiment. Instead she dug in her literary heels with *Yamba* and claimed the literary space. More maintained a political argument by giving slavery a human face and voice. In *Yamba*, More is most concerned with the real-life anguish of women and men torn from each other as free people, forced from their homelife in chains. She was also cautious about the

way the artfulness of her verse aroused sentiment, aware that it can become the reader's end, not the means by which the reader decides upon social action, such as boycotting sugar or putting public pressure on government. If the sentiment the literary work generated yielded no social action, in More's own words, the poem "will not be worth a straw" (qtd. in Jones 1952: 84).

More disdained creating art that addresses human trafficking to merely evoke emotion. More's critique of poetry as sentiment only is akin to what Tobias Menely identifies as two potential pitfalls of literary sympathy widely noted in contemporary criticism:

[First] it is unable to effect a meaningful substitution between the witness and the victim (it fails to constitute an identification, to alter interest), and [second] the passions it creates in the witness do not lead to ameliorative activity on behalf of the victim (it fails to compel action). (Menely 2013: 49)

Hannah More, in her abolitionist writing, serves as an example to the contemporary artist who aims to use their medium to address human trafficking. The sentimental address and emotional appeal to an audience is but one aspect of the antislavery project. More's awareness that emotion alone will not achieve political goals but must be leveraged to galvanize political action is a helpful example from the history of abolitionist writing.

Literature's Ability to Influence Memory

When coupled with the power literature holds to evoke and influence emotion for the purposes of influencing social action, its potential to influence and reshape memory is also noteworthy. Cynthia E. Milton notes that while perpetrators of injustice typically use silence as a way to avoid accountability, the Peruvian military's efforts to use various art forms to alter the public conversation about injustice suggests literature can be used perniciously. The military's use of literature to "shift public opinion, debate and memories about the nation's violent recent past" is a "tactical cultural campaign" utilized to "shift public opinion, debate, and memories" (Milton 2018). Their intervention to sway public opinion in Peru problematizes art's potential for impact when co-opted to mask truth, historical fact, or evidence. A tier-two country on the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (2017), Peru presents an interesting example of a nation in transition toward justice, in which certain populations are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for both labor and for sex.

Although Peru has transitioned into open democracy after conflict that took place in the 1980s and 1990s between the military and Shining Path militants, the terrorist group continues to coerce adults and children into forced labor in "agriculture, cultivating or transporting illicit narcotics, and domestic servitude" (US Department of State 2017: par 16). Furthermore, Peruvians of all ages are trafficked for labor to other South American countries and to the United States, while migrants from

countries as far as China and Senegal are trafficked through Peru to Brazil for both sex and labor trafficking. Lessons from the public hearings gleaned from Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that took place between 2001 and 2003 are relevant. While the TRC's official report detailed that some 69,000 people died or disappeared at the hands of militant and government security forces, the official process staffed by more than 200 people with a budget of US \$11 million underscores the limitations of public institutions to adequately account for the toll in human life (Skaar et al. 2005). Resources are finite as are the reaches of the justice enterprise.

While the Peruvian military has utilized artistic endeavors to shift the national narrative that emerged after the TRC, artists and scholars have also expanded on the commission's findings to argue for "broadening the definition of the testimonial to include various forms of artistic production as documentary evidence" for crimes such as those perpetrated against individuals by traffickers and crimes committed on a mass scale such as the human rights violations in Peru (Milton 2014: 1). If literature has the power to influence memory and public opinion in a variety of ways, then it is incumbent upon artists to wield literature with an awareness that stories do more than merely arouse or produce delightful sensations. Art for art's sake falls short of its social and political potential to transform. However, when artists push beyond mere aesthetics, new possibilities emerge.

Aesthetic Whistle-Blowing: Solzhenitsyn

Zinaida Miller underscores a danger inherent in the failure to use imagination in scholarly methodological pursuits. Without self-reflection, practitioners of justice can become stagnant through the repeated use of practices that worked in the past and become fixated on a "standard set of debates that employ a familiar list of terms [which]. . . create a series of assumptions often left unspoken" (Miller 2008: 275). Practitioners and scholars in the anti-trafficking field ought to "defamiliarize" (Abrams 1999: 103) certain notions and practices so as to remain relevant and effective. Literature can help the field of anti-trafficking practitioners accomplish this task. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, both as an artist and as a survivor of Stalin's brutal system of forced labor, is a unique case study in this regard. His literary work embodies a way artists can rupture the tropes commonly used to understand the status quo. Arrested in 1945 after serving his country on the front lines in World War II as an artillery officer, he was imprisoned in a detention camp for eight years because of his writing: letters sent to a school friend that included "disrespectful remarks about Stalin" (Fredrikson 2006: par 3). After nearly a decade of imprisonment, during which he worked hard labor as a miner, a foundry man, and a bricklayer, he was exiled for life from his country and sent to Kazakhstan. His writing life was a life of subversion, his authorship secretive. That the writer and his work survived the Gulag defies logic. The sheer danger of writing, the bold act of putting words down secretly on the page, meant any moment could be a moment of discovery and therefore death in Stalin's totalitarian state. "While in some contexts

survivors may shape silence into a modality” (Shaw and Waldorf 2010: 13) to avoid further trauma, Solzhenitsyn’s truth-telling is an instructive example of aesthetic whistle-blowing.

Reflecting on the reason he helped Solzhenitsyn smuggle the Nobel Lecture out of the Soviet Union so it could be read in his absence (due to exile) when the Nobel Prize in Literature was granted to Solzhenitsyn in 1970, Swedish journalist Stig Fredrikson recounts that he acted because Solzhenitsyn “was so isolated, so persecuted. He was leading a one man struggle against an overwhelming enemy with the enormous resources of the totalitarian state in its determination to silence him” (2006: par 14). For the same reason, the journalist used spy-like statecraft to later smuggle the author’s other writings so they could be read and released in the West. The hand-off of material from artist to a practitioner in another profession mobilized toward a unified goal is a useful example of how addressing trafficking can be an interdisciplinary exercise, bolstered by the artist.

The above anecdote, which emerges from the brutality of Stalin’s USSR, added together with Solzhenitsyn’s exile, his subsequent life in hiding, and his second exile to the West in 1974 (where he lived until the fall of the Soviet Union) serves as a case study in how the totalitarian state can strip rights from the individual to silence and censor the artist’s voice. For Solzhenitsyn, the beauty of literature and the resonance of the aesthetic practice did not sustain him in his enslavement. Rather, it was the truth of events committed at the hand of an enslaving regime that compelled him to recount the brutal realities of life for victims behind the Iron Curtain, based on his own experience and the “evidence from more than 200 people” (Fredrikson 2006: par 22), in order to give voice to so many silenced screams.

Solzhenitsyn’s literary act of truth-telling represents a tipping point of sorts, both personally as a writer and in the international discourse about the evils of the Soviet regime. His intervention helped to create a “line to separate the past from the present, and [reconcile] the past” (Olsen et al. 2010: 131). His disruption of the macro narrative of a social evil with a personal micro narrative highlights what Susan Dwyer defines as the “range” of reconciliations, in which reconciliation “has both forward and backward-looking dimensions” (2003: 93–94). Solzhenitsyn himself was unsure about when, if ever, to publicly connect his name to his literary voice and in 1961 offered *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* for the world, literary critics, and the government to digest:

Such an emergence seemed, then, to me, and not without reason, to be very risky because it might lead to the loss of my manuscripts, and to my own destruction. . . .The printing of my work was, however, stopped almost immediately and the authorities stopped both my plays and (in 1964) the novel, *The First Circle*, which, in 1965, was seized together with my papers from the past years. During these months it seemed to me that I had committed an unpardonable mistake by revealing my work prematurely and that because of this I should not be able to carry it to a conclusion. (Nobel Prizes and Laureates 2014: par 6)

Solzhenitsyn’s risk to testify to the world during ongoing conflict, to tell the truth through literature before the conflict in his nation was “over” and before democratic institutions or processes on which the justice enterprise typically depends, suggests

literature need not only give a post-mortem account of injustice or serve simply as a historiographic account. Literature can serve as an *inception point* to disrupt or jolt the social narrative to prefigure the painstaking processes on which the infrastructure of securing justice for victims depends. Literature has the potential to achieve the very purposes the anti-trafficking enterprise seeks: “the goals of repairing human dignity, healing individuals, and mending societies after the trauma” (Minow 2000: 236).

Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is an “example of the experience of a single representative victim” that emerged from the Soviet Union’s force-labor system (Galchinsky 2014: 259). Artists who seek to represent victims and survivors of trafficking can take note of how Solzhenitsyn summons the memory of the others entrapped in the Gulag who did not survive. He both testifies and laments the loss of the beauty, truth, and goodness, voices silenced, words stolen, and lives lost:

I have climbed not three or four makeshift steps, but hundreds and even thousands of them; unyielding, precipitous, frozen steps, leading out of the darkness and cold where it was my fate to survive, while others - perhaps with a greater gift and stronger than I - have perished. . . . Those who fell into that abyss already bearing a literary name are at least known, but how many were never recognized, never once mentioned in public? And virtually no one managed to return. A whole national literature remained there, cast into oblivion not only without a grave, but without even underclothes, naked, with a number tagged on to its toe. (Solzhenitsyn 1970: 3.1)

The passage reveals the double tragedy and injustice done to a nation as tyranny killed not only the artist but also the nation’s art. Galchinsky locates the potential for a nation, especially perpetrators of gross injustice, to regain humanity and heal wounds after a period of abuse and violation, through the process of testimony and lament. While lament’s primary functions are to grieve and memorialize, “the mode is more than a device for mourning. In lament, the expression of *grief* often serves as a platform for the expression of *grievances*” (Galchinsky 2014: 261).

Contemporary Refugee Literatures: Oral Storytelling

Refugees’ accounts of trauma in Southeast Asia through poetic songs exemplify how the literature of lament can collide with social action. The Rohingya are particularly vulnerable to trafficking throughout Southeast Asia (Tenaganita 2008). Firsthand accounts of Rohingya refugees who fled to Malaysia to escape political violence in Myanmar, their disputed homeland, to seek asylum and safety in Malaysia, shed light on this vulnerability. Because Malaysia is not a signatory of the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention (UN Treaty 2015), if caught by authorities, such refugees are deported from Malaysia, oftentimes only to fall prey to crime syndicates of human traffickers at the border who extort them, demanding exorbitant fees. Individuals who cannot pay are trafficked and often forced to work on fishing boats on Thai seas (Hurlbut and Kooman 2010). Malaysian nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs) collaborated in 2010 to conduct interviews with such refugees hiding in urban centers and jungles in order to collect their stories. Their narratives were shared, although individual names and certain details were altered or creatively reimaged in order to protect the identity of the real-life subjects. Because they lived in hiding and were vulnerable to arrest, detention, and deportation, the whistleblowers requested anonymity. The publication was circulated widely in Penang State to raise awareness about the realities of trafficking in Malaysia. It also mobilized education and health professionals to assist victims of trafficking. Sales of the book generated revenue to support medical teams to visit trafficking victims in government detention in order to address pressing health needs. Funds from the book also helped to establish a school for the children of trafficking survivors who, as refugees, had no access to education (Hurlbut et al. 2016). While a legal team worked with various detainees to secure their release from detention and return to their homelands, the literary work of the NGOs, based on testimony from trafficking survivors, supported the victims, while they waited for their case to be adjudicated in court.

The work of scholars in the field who have documented and translated Rohingya *tarana* (sung poems) also uncovers other important literary moments that can be useful to anti-trafficking practitioners and mark nodes in the complicated matrix of data collection. Rohingya refugees who have been denied access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) displacement camp in Bangladesh preserve memories of home and of crimes committed against them through oral storytelling. While illiterate, these refugees establish community and retain cultural identity through shared stories that are artifacts of trauma and “indicators of oppressions” (Farzana 2011: 231). The *tarana* of such refugees, who fled and continue to flee the ongoing campaign of violence committed against them by the government of Myanmar, serve as a fascinating example of how grief can express grievance among populations vulnerable to human trafficking, even when there is no law enforcement or judicial apparatus in place to address obvious crimes.

As the United Nations has described the systemic violence against the Rohingya people as “ethnic cleansing” (Associated Press 2017) and global intervention tries to stop genocide, Rohingya voices emerge from the conflict in lament. These *tarana* encode refugee bodies that have been “abused and abjected, dehumanized and marginalized” (Galchinsky 2014: 260) for clandestine purposes like labor and sex trafficking. Whether testimonial accounts or fictional recreations, stories are a way to navigate beyond trauma and to creatively sound an alarm. Viet Thanh Nguyen asserts that victims of state-inflicted violence that leave individuals vulnerable to further trauma, including trafficking, have “no belonging except [their] stories” (2017: 7) and puts forward the importance of recognition as a key to memory in order to underscore the therapeutic potential of story for the survivor of human rights abuses to come to terms with trauma. For this reason, if bad actors appropriate literature in order to reconstruct victims’ narratives, as in the case of Peru’s military disinformation campaign, there is a danger that, when used in such ways, literature has the potential to reshape narratives and re-traumatize victims of human trafficking.

Artists: Complicit Agents of Justice or Injustice

Nguyen invokes Solzhenitsyn to highlight the inherent capacity of individuals to do damage to others and cautions that “the line dividing between good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being” (qtd. in Nguyen 2016: 72). Drawing from the Vietnam War, Nguyen points to that conflict to highlight how “contemporary war is a bureaucratic and capitalistic enterprise that requires its bored clerks, soulless administrators, ignorant taxpayers, contradictory priests, and encouraging families” (Nguyen 2016: 230). The fact that average citizens in America purchased refrigerators from Dow Chemical, supporting the same corporation that developed Agent Orange, the chemical substance that was used by the military complex to kill countless citizens, highlights “a pervasive system of complicity” (Nguyen 2016: 230). The system of complicity is not relegated to the past. As the US State Department notes, billions of dollars “flood the formal marketplace, corrupt the global economy, and taint purchases made by unwitting consumers. Long and complex supply chains that cross multiple borders and rely on an array of sub-contractors impede traceability and make it challenging to verify that the goods and services bought and sold every day are untouched by modern-day slaves” (US Department of State 2015: par 3).

Artists, then, are implicated as well, an alarm Solzhenitsyn also sounds in his clarion call to the artists of the world, when he asserts that:

a writer is not the detached judge of his compatriots and contemporaries, he is an accomplice to all the evil committed in his native land or by his countrymen. And if the tanks of his fatherland have flooded the asphalt of a foreign capital with blood, then the brown spots have slapped against the face of the writer forever. (Solzhenitsyn 1970: 6.9)

Truth is central to the telling of any story, useful to the anti-trafficking movement whether through the flourish of literature or through nonliterary accounts of injustice. If writers and artists can be complicit in the violation of human trafficking then it follows that they are also complicit in processes of eradicating trafficking in its various forms. If the blood of victims splatters the face of writer’s because of the weaponized actions of their respective nation-state or a corrupted global economy, what can art do to stop violence like trafficking? If, as Solzhenitsyn asserts, violence is “necessarily interwoven with falsehood,” the artist’s weapon is the truth. By employing truth in literature, artists and writers can conquer falsehood and disarm violent actors.

Legal processes are limited in their ability to account for the conditions that create injustice in the first place so that although “forensic truth” is uncovered, other features of truth like “why the crimes happened, the political strategy behind them, the social and cultural dynamics enabling them, and the effects on the victims and society. . . are not captured” (Skaar et al. 2005: 27). Literature has the capacity to go to and inhabit these aspects of the truth and embody and imagine them to portray a more comprehensive understanding, weaving together a multiplicity of factors

beyond what a criminal trial addressing trafficking can produce, due to the temporal limitations of the judiciary.

The clandestine nature of trafficking combined with the fact that combating TIP is often viewed as a criminal justice problem, typically places focus on traffickers instead of victims (Ćopić 2012) ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors of trafficking are not frequently heard. Literature's importance in the anti-trafficking enterprise, then, comes to the fore. Solzhenitsyn asserts that it "transfers the whole weight of an unfamiliar, lifelong experience with all its burdens, its colours, its sap of life; it recreates in the flesh an unknown experience and allows us to possess it as our own" (Solzhenitsyn 1970: 5.2). Like the witness speaking at a trial, sharing testimony about a trafficking incident – whether witnessed or experienced and survived – advances a process that restores dignity to individuals who have been violated in unthinkable ways (Minow 2000). Literature also conveys truths that would never otherwise be heard. Susan Dwyer reminds us that "human lives are led narratively" and that individuals inevitably seek coherent, stable narratives (2003: 96–97). Any disruption to such narratives, like violations and personal traumas that occur to trafficking victims, must be reconciled and stabilized, a process that occurs through telling, reconstructing, and retelling stories.

Desmond Tutu recognized that through the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, rebuilding society and reintegrating traumatized individuals "requires more than physical, legislative, and judicial acts, but cultural and emotional acts" (qtd. in Galchinsky 2014: 261). In order to advance the judicial process beyond legal and socioeconomic considerations into the cultural realm as a tactic that can equip victims, literature is a part of the necessary widening of the "space for 'justice'" so that victims can "finally taste the fruits of justice in their daily lives" (Mani 2008: 265). Through truthful renditions and accounts of harms, literature serves as a preventative measure that both testifies to injustices and recognizes the capacity of the individual to commit trafficking crimes even as the narrative, however beautifully or artfully conveyed, captures the imagination of the heart. Literature conveys:

condensed experience from one land to another so that . . .one nation learn correctly and concisely the true history of another with such strength of recognition and painful awareness as it had itself experienced the same, and thus might it be spared from repeating the same cruel mistakes. (Solzhenitsyn 1970: 7.6)

Truth-Telling in Our Times

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* explores the human toll of the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. Not only did the redrawn maps uproot different ethnic groups, displacing some 12 million people almost overnight; as riots swept the population, women were forced into sex slavery en masse (Sidhwa 2006). As Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs fought, rape was utilized as a tactic to break

the bonds of community. The violation of women's bodies marks a violation of the nation-state itself. "Social cohesion" cracked (Quinn 2009: 183). Lenny, the young female protagonist, observes the "fallen women" who are hidden in Lahore in temporary safe houses as the government attempts to relocate them to safe communities, ideally with their families. The novel poses important questions about how literature can serve as a witness to crimes on such a scale in which perpetrators are never brought to justice, but victims are forever changed.

As an adult, recalling the events she witnessed firsthand, the reader understands that Lenny is an unreliable witness at best, when she challenges her own perception of the terrible events that took place, during which women are forced into the sex trade. What took place over a matter of days, she remembers as being drawn out over multiple months: "in my memory it is branded over an inordinate length of time: memory demands poetic license" (Sidhwa 2006: 149). The fact that victims and witnesses do not remember events perfectly is problematic. How dependable is testimony or story if the empirical or forensic accuracy of such accounts can always already be put into question? Minow answers the question, noting that through a "process of truth-telling, mourning, taking action and fighting back, and reconnecting with others, even individuals who have been severely traumatized by totalitarian control over a prolonged period can recover" and that this recovery can also include "learning to recover memories" (2000: 242).

The therapeutic nature of truth-telling and recovering memory is essential for survivors of human trafficking crimes. The place of the victim and survivor's voice in literature, then, has great significance. Yet how can a writer do justice to the experience of victims or survivors through fiction, and furthermore, is a literary account of historical harms an exercise in appropriation, another injustice heaped onto the mound of physical and psychological trauma? Sidhwa models a way to include the survivor's voice in her narrative through Ranna's account of the vicious attack by Sikhs on Muslim villages as former friends and neighbors drive them off their land in violent raids and women become especially vulnerable to enslavement:

Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. . . . He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies. Someone fell on him, drenching him in blood. (Sidhwa 2006: 213)

Scholars have noted that in order to successfully eliminate the conditions that produce criminal behavior depends on "achieving an emotional catharsis in the community of victims and acceptance of blame by the perpetrators" (Snyder and Vinjamuri 2008: 392). Sidhwa opens up space in her novel for such emotional catharsis as she recounts the historical anecdote in a different narrative voice, as a "listener," inserting Ranna's story as a separate narrative within an otherwise consistent narrative style. In the acknowledgments at the novel's end, Sidhwa thanks "Rana [*sic*] Khan for sharing with me his childhood experiences at the time of Partition" and notes that he "still bears the deep crescent-shaped scar on the back of his head and innumerable other scars" (Sidhwa 2006: 291). The gesture of acknowledgement by the author herself indicates not only that victims' stories must be told

and that they require their own space with their own way to be told but also exemplifies ways that survivor stories can be handled by writers of literature and other artists, with sensitivity and appropriate contextualization.

Conclusion

Ultimately, for justice to occur it cannot lead, it must follow (Snyder and Vinjamuri 2008). For the greater culture to be aware of the extent of the crimes of human trafficking in all its forms, least of all for justice to be secured for victims, the crime of human trafficking must first be named and acknowledged, and justice itself must be *imagined*. The steps that precede the legal steps toward justice are imaginative, even poetic, a narrative of possibility. Aesthetic whistle-blowers, through literature, can sustain the complicated and comprehensive exercise of the anti-trafficking movement throughout its process. The beginning point of addressing human trafficking, then, is the sound of a whistle-blowing: a story that announces important truths and imagines the end goal of justice itself.

This essay has explored the legacy of specific writers who wrote against various forms of human trafficking at particular historical moments to remind contemporary artists who take up abolition in their work of some aspects of the literary inheritance of abolitionist work. The ways these artists make appeals to sentiment through various aesthetic strategies, how they considered the dissemination of antislavery writing to be both a moral and artistic responsibility, and how these artists judiciously handled the depiction of trafficking survivors can be instructive. For artists, it is critically important to recognize that emotional appeals can fail to lead to social action and, worse, can be exploited in order to alter memory or erase criminal acts. However, truthful accounts of events and cathartic representations of trafficking in literature can instigate social action and support the enterprise of addressing human trafficking.

The work of scholars, social workers, policymakers, law enforcement professionals, and other practitioners working to address TIP has many goals that include but are not limited to instituting national and international law, bolstering law enforcement's ability to identify and respond to human trafficking, building coalitions, and supporting victims. The work from these respective fields utilizes many different methods to achieve these goals. Solzhenitsyn reminds us that art and specifically literature:

possess a wonderful ability: beyond distinctions of language, custom, social structure, they can convey the life experience of one whole nation to another. To an inexperienced nation they can convey a harsh national trial lasting many decades, at best sparing an entire nation from a superfluous, or mistaken, or even disastrous course, thereby curtailing the meanderings of human history. (Solzhenitsyn 1970: 5.3)

Literature has certain strengths and much to offer anti-trafficking strategies. Along with other arts, literature can envision, sustain, and course correct the souls committed to the challenging and multifaceted goal of eradicating human trafficking.

Summary

The primary focus of this chapter is to demonstrate that when artists take up human trafficking, it need not be to conduct a precise, data-point analysis. As scholars have identified, art forms that emerge from the midst of grave injustices like human trafficking can convey important truths without being limited to literal truth in ways that can support victims and the cause of justice. As such, artists can uniquely compel and mobilize individuals who otherwise would not know about issues like human trafficking in ways that are useful for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to achieve their goals. This essay considers how world literature positions itself to alert audiences to the realities of trafficking in order to help build social and political will necessary to address human trafficking. With attention to specific antislavery writers from the past who serve as models for contemporary artists, the chapter highlights the ways these historical artists made appeals to sentiment through literature, how they considered antislavery writing to be both a moral and artistic responsibility, and how these artists employed the testimony of trafficking survivors to serve as aesthetic whistle-blowers. This essay was developed from Kooman's coursework and research as a MA candidate (2018) at Western University in English Literature and Transitional Justice.

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