

Prostitution— Power Relations between Space and Gender

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The paper takes a sociological look at the social construction of red-light districts and sex work in Vienna (Austria) and Frankfurt (Germany). By analyzing the organization of perceptions, glances, and corresponding body technologies on the one hand and common strategies of spatio-social control on the other hand, we reconstruct the production of the field as materially and symbolically separated from “normal” everyday life. As a devaluated “space of the other,” it is intertwined with the (re)production of gender orders.

By turns glittering and erotic, tragic and destructive, sexwork is rooted in large-scale industry and small-scale trade. As in many other women’s professions, including e.g. speech therapy, homeopathy, beauty culture, training is not government-regulated and women themselves usually have to foot the bill. Another aspect that links prostitutes with hairdressers, nurses, and salesgirls is body-related activity and emotional work. Sexwork is surrounded by a world of images—and largely unexplored. There is no classic technical narrative on prostitution that could serve as orientation for practitioners or a subject of study for scholars. What we find instead are endless mythological depictions ranging from the supposed glamour of the red-light milieu to the plight of wretchedly exploited women; on the one hand these depictions provide no orientational knowledge of the field, and on the other hand they present highly disparate technical findings that resist any attempts to weave them into a coherent body of expert knowledge. While sexworkers, pimps, social workers, and police officers are very knowledgeable in the field of prostitution, this knowledge is contradictory and broken up into different strands of the narra-

tive. With the same self-assurance, some sexworkers speak of sexuality fulfilled in the course of work (e.g. Domentat 2003), while others, on talk shows, note that things are getting bad “when you start to feel anything.” While police officers in one department underline the important role played in prostitution by the traffic in human beings, a different department, or a street worker, may report on biographies marked by voluntary migration. Sometimes prostitution is described as a filthy, degrading, dangerous trade, sometimes it is depicted as self-determined work pursued to gain a living.

There appears to be no agreement in society—in the sense of scholarly findings—on the world of prostitution. If there is in most social fields a dominant narrative that serves, among other things, to guide the perceptions of the persons involved, what we can observe in the red-light milieu breaks down into numberless truths that exist, unmediated, side by side.

In the midst of this complex of contradictory and yet well-documented expert opinions and evidence, we will, in what follows, attempt a change of perspective, not focusing on sociopolitical, criminological, or legal issues of the kind typical of today’s research narratives on sexwork but analyzing, ethnographically, the spaces and places of prostitution. These will serve as the empirical base for a reconstruction of the gender-specific arrangements typical of sexwork. The present paper centers on the findings of three months of research conducted at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) in Vienna. The paper is furthermore based on a research project (DFG) on “The Effective Structure of Space and Gender: the Example of Prostitution in Frankfurt on the Main.” Apart from evaluations of observations and documents, both projects are based on expert interviews with prostitutes, social workers and police officers, affected neighbors, and legal practitioners. We will concentrate on space-related strategies that use regimes of gazing and social control to create identity and to produce spaces of the Other.

The organization of gazing in Vienna

Flying into Vienna, posters announce to the new arrival what the town has in store for her. The first picture: Welcome in Schönbrunn. Vienna is known for its emperors and kings, famed for its empresses Sisi and Maria Theresia. It was the latter who had prostitution banned throughout Austria. The poster likewise makes reference to the zoo as an idyllic setting for children and as a trove of nature imagines. The second poster is devoted to art. Vienna successfully markets itself as a stronghold of the arts. Now it must be music’s turn, we think. “Wine, woman, and song,” as the guidebook puts it. But “woman” comes only after Schönbrunn and Giorgione.

When you leave the arrivals section, you can't miss the "Babylon's" attempts to woo customers, old and new. Babylon, symbolic of mankind's attempt to approach God, and its failure, stands for the birth of diversity no less than for the lack of ability to understand it. Women on the poster welcome us, all of them white-skinned, and all of them clad in innocently white undergarments. Angels, creatures without gender and sexuality! And yet—the lascivious posture of the ladies seated on red satin seem suggestive of something. But of what? We think of a musical theater, of a movie poster. Who would have thought that Vienna's noble brothel would advertise here at the airport? Only those in the know. The poster must be meant as a welcome to the regular customer. And be geared to inducing a certain recognition effect in the newcomer: Even at the airport there can be no doubt: in Vienna prostitution is everywhere, but it's decent, not at all conspicuous. The game of hide-and-seek is taken to perfection in Vienna.

In Vienna there is no world-famous red-light district like that in St. Pauli in Hamburg, and Vienna does not welcome its visitors with a sea of whorehouses like Frankfurt on the Main. True, in Vienna, too, there are the bars along the Gürtel, the "Belt," Vienna's main drag, close to the Westbahnhof and the streetwalker district just behind it, but these two sex-miles are more or less inconspicuous, at least compared with the massive presence of an official red-light district. In Vienna the visitor will not find a red-light district.

On the ground: exploring the Belt

We start out with the brothels along the Belt. Today, the spatial arrangement is heterogeneous. The buildings around the subway station house are scene bars, small booths where kebab is sold; and the alleyways are punctuated, at more or less regular intervals, by bars illuminated in red. Both the façades and the advertising are designed to give off stereotyped signals. The lips, the champagne glass, the high-heeled shoe. Again and again! There is music in the air. And there are women standing in front of some of the bars. All with white skin, black getup, and red lips. Somehow they have all managed to be blond on this evening. Sometimes you see women sitting in shop windows.

They don't move. Their legs are stretched upward, their heads tossed back. They seem relaxed, and very attractive. It's still early in the evening. There are hardly any male customers to be seen. Coming in from the dusky light outside, we are overwhelmed by the darkness inside. We can hardly make out the arrangements. Visibility is reduced to a minimum. But there is an odor of sweetish perfume in the air. We were told by the feminist counseling centers that you have to ask the owner or the barmaid whether you can speak to the women there. One of us walks up to a woman. For her, deciding which one to

speak to is just as intuitive as the conduct of customers is always reported to be. Customers approach these women, and they in turn signal their readiness to respond openly. The women are not simply passively chosen. They use glances, poises to express sympathy or rejection. Many customers are—like us in this situation—very insecure. We are glad for the signals given by the women. Street workers tell stories about the concerns of a good number of sexworkers who are not often approached by men. For the most part—social workers report—women who despise their own activity have more trouble acquiring customers than women who think highly of, or are at least tolerant of, sexuality, their trade, or their own body. So we approach the women whose gaze we interpret as curiosity and frankness.

What we are in here is an arrangement deliberately staged as “another, a different world.” It’s oppressively hot. Otherwise the women would be cold, lightly dressed as they are. The dominant colors are red and black. We speak with the sexworker about a concern allegedly often addressed by women, namely about men. She tells us that men—at least those who are not regulars—always first sit down at the bar—and seek to survey the room. They often prefer to remain on their safe seat at the bar and have the women shown to them there—without having to walk through the room, exposing themselves to the gaze of the others. They prefer to gaze themselves. The barmaid helps out. “Come on, show yourselves!” is a call frequently to be heard. This allows the man to gaze and chose.

Change of focus

Men don’t want to be seen. Christine Howe, who worked for many years with the now-defunct prostitute project Agisra e.V., reports: “We also do street work, and when you see how men start out by looking around before entering a brothel, you get the impression that their space-related threshold fear is also an endopsychic fear. When, on the other hand, you observe them leaving the brothel, sometimes even falling out the door and having to seek orientation, sometimes even walking off in the wrong direction, then it almost seems as though they had just stepped over the threshold between two completely different worlds” (Howe, quoted after Domentat 2003: 93f.). As one social worker reports, taking a photo in the red-light district is like switching on the light. We have often heard—slightly amused—insiders report that men tend to look around before entering such a bar to make sure nobody is watching them. A brothel operator reports that many men hardly even have the courage to look these women straight in the eye.

As with any social encounter, the culture of the gaze is the essential element here that defines the opening of the encounter. The basic rule is that it is

the women—not the men—who have to show themselves. That is, they stage a showing that veils their own gaze, giving the men a greater sense of security. One essential component of this enactment is to seem to cede the voyeuristic gaze to the man.

Studies on film theory and picture interpretation (for a summary, cf. Mathes 2001: 105; Hentschel 2001) suggest that practicing a scientifically detached viewing e.g. of paintings is an approach used to produce and reproduce the cultural construction of heterosexuality. The picture based on perspective creates the impression of depth and thus of spatiality before the eyes of the beholder, a spatiality which is further reinforced by the moving pictures served up in the cinema. “The commercial film aims, by employing inconspicuous cutting and camera techniques, to create the impression of a continuous, homogenous picture space and to place the observer in a panoramic position” (Hentschel 2001: 153). The fact that spaces have traditionally been imagined as women (resp. women’s bodies) (cf. Löw 2001: 115ff. for more information) gives rise to a cultural association between spaces viewed and female bodies. As literary criticism has frequently noted, this overlapping of spatial fantasies and female bodies (cf. Weigel 1990; Kubitz-Kramer 1995) ties the perspective-minded voyeuristic gaze, which dissects without being seen, into a genderized and genderizing context. In the absolutist notion of space, the open picture space is experienced as something like the promise of a tendered and open female body, and at the same time described as the womb with its promise of security (Colomina 1997) and of lust (Weigel 1990; Hentschel 2001). Against the background of a dual-gender, heterosexual matrix, two potentially contrary positions become manifest: that of the male gaze and that of the female as the object gazed upon.

Some brothel/bar operators manage to make optimal use of the potentials of the world of the picture and the film. The social constellation inside a bar, devised as it is to having women show themselves, places the man in a panoramic position. The women before his eyes move as if they were in a film—and these are women who are willing to keep the promise of the open female body, and who, using, say, makeup and wigs, shape their body in conformity with stereotyped images of femininity. The picture space is also reenacted through the arrangement of the show windows. Women place themselves in the window frame in such a way as to blur the difference between endless pictures of iniquitous women and a concrete bodily presence. The women become the picture. One thing that is typical here is that establishments that do not advertise by placing women in their windows often replace them with a picture. In astonishing monotony, the typical Viennese façade will feature a champagne glass and a high-heeled shoe as symbols of prostitution. While the high-heeled shoe may be read as a fetish, the champagne glass suggests, to the pornographic gaze, the male organism. The popping cork, the spurting cham-

pagne are commonly staged as a symbol for male ejaculation and orgasm. The glass, with its triangular form resting on the stem, is designed to receive the champagne, with its associations of ejaculate. This sets the stage for the inoffensive champagne glass on the façade to tell its tale of promise and well-being.

The organization of social control in Frankfurt

For tourists coming to Frankfurt on the Main (especially lonely business travelers looking for a little relaxation), the “Essential City Guide,” available in hotels, recommends a visit to various prostitution areas. Under the headline “Adult Entertainment” there are two pages describing brothels, Eros centers, strip clubs, and sex shops (Essential City Guide Frankfurt, Jan./Feb. 2005: 28–29). Nearly all of them can be found in a very small area of the town, located near the main railway station, named the “Frankfurter Bahnhofsviertel.” The area is described as “one of the largest red light districts in the world” and visitors to Frankfurt are informed that they need not worry, since as prostitution is “completely legal” and quite common in Germany.

But at the same time, prostitution is a controversial topic in Germany. As well as being seen as “abnormal” and “immoral,” it also still carries the stigma of a sexual taboo (cf. e.g. Laskowski 1997: 80). Although the reality of prostitution is an open secret, it is deliberately kept under cover in the grey area on the social fringe of urban life. Despite being legal—in principle—the need for specific controls is expressed again and again. This is especially so in Frankfurt: according to encyclopedias on the subject, there is hardly another German city as restrictive in its attitude toward prostitution (Feige 2003: 240). And this is confirmed in interviews with brothel owners, for example, who have the impression of being “overwhelmed by a stream of never-ending rules and regulations.”

The main political steering mechanism is the so called “Sperrgebietsverordnung” (which roughly translates as: Restricted Area Decree or Law). There are such regulations in many German cities; they serve to restrict and concentrate prostitution to certain areas, and especially to keep it away from family neighborhoods and places of worship. In this way “Sperrgebietsverordnungen,” or “restricted area decrees,” are officially intended to protect young people and maintain public decency.

But restricted area decrees, which have been introduced by local authorities as a reaction to a phenomenon that is seen as problematic, also play an active part in producing it. The way they do this is by producing spatial pat-

terms of social structure, which—in particular—stabilize gender relations¹. This will be explained in what follows.

“Restricted area decrees” define those parts of the cities where either special or all forms of prostitution are allowed or forbidden. Absolutely restricted areas in Frankfurt—where prostitution is completely banned—are the districts of “Sachsenhausen” and the “Bahnhofsviertel.” However, in this “Bahnhofsviertel” there is a small area with numerous buildings, separate though close to each other, which are permitted to operate as brothels. The Bahnhofsviertel therefore is in a paradoxical situation—produced by the “Sperrgebietsverordnung” itself. On the one hand it is an absolutely restricted area where no prostitution is allowed at all. On the other it is a clearly visible and well established red-light district. Apart from some rather unattractive—and for this reason hardly used—areas, brothel prostitution is also tolerated in two very small districts. In nearly all other parts of the city it is forbidden to practice prostitution on public streets, paths, in squares and public parks, in prostitute accommodations, or in similar facilities. However, one thing that is tolerated is discreet apartment or flat prostitution.

In the following, the specific effects of the “Sperrgebietsverordnung” in the urban structure will be illustrated by two examples: First, there is brothel prostitution in the few tolerance zones, and especially in the “Bahnhofsviertel.” With 1200–1500 women working in this sector, this is—even if only by number—by far the most important type of prostitution in Frankfurt. Second, we have flat or apartment prostitution, which is the other main form of prostitution in Frankfurt with about 500 to 700 working women, spread all over the town.

Brothel prostitution in the “Bahnhofsviertel”— a red-light district in the centre of the restricted area for prostitution

Despite being—in principle—defined as a restricted area, the “Bahnhofsviertel” is the center of brothel prostitution in Frankfurt (Molloy 1992: 55)² because it includes numerous brothel-oriented exceptions. The term “brothel” is used here to indicate “Laufhäuser,” which may be roughly translated as “running-through-” or “drop-in-houses” where the “working girls rent small rooms for the day or just for a few hours” (Essential City Guide). Potential male cli-

1 For the basic analytical model see Ruhne 2003.

2 You will find brothel or “running-through-house” prostitution in Frankfurt/M. mainly in the Bahnhofsviertel with a capacity of 650 rooms/ beds in total. On average a house has between 30 to 60 rooms, but the capacity can rise to 180 rooms per brothel.

ents walk in without any restriction and can wander through the halls and corridors of the building, passing closed or open doors, where the female tenants of the rooms present themselves and their services to the customers in the apartment doorways.

As one prostitute explained in an interview, the reputation of a brothel is mainly spread by word of mouth and “fuelled” by its popularity. In this sense an effective public presentation of the business is very important for its profitability. So, in addition to ads in city guides or on the Internet, the house façades are covered with attention-grabbing advertisements. Façades with red hearts, symbolized women’s bodies, or huge painted notice boards with “Eros Centre,” “Sexy Land,” “Erotic Shop,” or “Erotic Bar” attract the attention of potential customers, while doormen and styled women in the entrance hall try to entice them in. Buildings “work” with artful stagings, with show-window dummies, day and night, conveying to the outside, in various poses, what must be supposed to be happening inside.

In addition to the public visibility of every single “running-through-house,” the brothels are concentrated within the tolerance zone in a relatively small area mainly around the Mosel-, Taunus-, and Elbestrasse. These three streets are where the big brothels are located and where most of the sex industry is to be found in Frankfurt. Even during the day you can’t overlook this, despite the fact that the area is broken up by shops, cafés, and fast-food outlets. Paraphrases like “shining red heart district,” which were used again and again in interviews, point to the “Bahnhofsviertel” as an area in the city where the sex trade is concentrated and—as a result of this concentration—is highly visible.

And the eye-catching properties of prostitution in the Bahnhofsviertel are intensified especially at night, when the “red hearts” really shine: Light chains, flashing illuminations, pink neon signs in windows, and so on leave one in no doubt about the kind and extent of business on offer there.

Apartment prostitution in Frankfurt—a discreet form of prostitution

In Frankfurt the prostitute working in an individual flat or apartment is another important but less high-profile form of the sex trade. Its discreet and nearly private character is explicitly required by the local authority: “Apartment prostitution” is only allowed when the flat is, in reality, equipped and used for daily living. Occasionally, this may be controlled by the local authority, and nothing is permitted that would enable outsiders (including the neighbors) to be able to recognize that the accommodation is being used for the purpose of prostitution. This means that any form of advertising on the outside of the apartment is strictly forbidden. The working women advertise their

services in newspapers or on the Internet, for example. Potential clients phone first, and an appointment may be arranged.

The discreet, private, and intimate character of this type of prostitution distinguishes it from brothel prostitution. But this is not only a marketing strategy that might be of interest to the client and the prostitute, it is also related to the rules of the local authorities and the way legal and illegal actions are defined. Apartment prostitution is legal only if it mimics the bourgeois environment and becomes invisible (as prostitution).

So, although apartment prostitution—in contrast to brothel prostitution—is spread over the whole city, political regulation nevertheless aims at exclusion. As Phil Hubbard notes, the “social marginalisation of prostitutes is reflected in their spatial isolation and exclusion” (Hubbard 1998b: 270); but, as we have seen, the exclusion and marginalization may be quite different in kind. While brothel prostitution is kept away from the other parts of the city by concentrating it in specially defined areas, apartment prostitution “disappears” by being adapted to a “respectable” lifestyle.

The (re)production of prostitution as a “space of the other” through social control mechanisms

Social control mechanisms have specific effects on the social and geographic distribution of the field. Political strategies have—in this sense—an important influence on steering “placing-” or “spacing-processes” (Löw 2001), which we mark as the main factors in the construction and constitution of space. But as factors that construct and constitute space, they also create a specific “synthesis” (Löw 2001), that is, special perceptions of the activity of prostitution. The required adaptation to the respectable bourgeois lifestyle of the surrounding neighborhood in apartment prostitution means—if it is done to the standards set by the controlling authority—that it is no longer recognizable from the outside. On the one hand this is because it happens behind closed doors, on the other because of its nearly perfect adaptation to its supposedly respectable surroundings. As a side effect of their successful control policy, even local authorities have very little information on apartment prostitution.

In the case of the brothel prostitution in the “Bahnhofsviertel,” prostitution is kept away from other parts of the city by concentrating it in small well-defined areas of tolerance. On the back of the “restricted area policy,” prostitution here establishes itself as a high-profile and exposed “space of the other,” which defines the public image of the whole field, especially because of the invisibility and low profile of the much more “normal” apartment prostitution.

But the perception of prostitution in the Bahnhofsviertel—which in this way has a strong impact on the common perception of prostitution—is, in addition, highly influenced by processes of spatial synthesis combined with effects of social stigma. As an example, the close proximity between legal and illegal forms of prostitution may be cited. Legal brothel prostitution in the Bahnhofsviertel is situated very close to illegal street prostitution, where mainly female drug addicts work. Drug-related street prostitution in the Bahnhofsviertel is tolerated by the city authorities. They argue that with their limited resources they would not be able to prevent this from happening anyway. But for this reason both forms of prostitution share the same space in the city: On the streets it is hardly possible to distinguish systematically between legal and illegal (drug-related) prostitution. Therefore the publicly known and clearly visible—but illegal—street prostitution in the Bahnhofsviertel underlines the basic image of the area not only as a “red-light district,” but also as a “problematic red-light district.” Furthermore, the clearly visible measures taken to prevent dangers in the Bahnhofsviertel—for example a strong street presence of police and regulating bodies—does not always improve the sense of security. Instead it marks out and symbolizes a feeling of insecurity, regardless of the real level of danger. In this way it confirms the construction of a socially problematic space of the other. Prostitution is included in this because it is located in this area of the city.

Conclusions

Comparing Vienna with Frankfurt on the Main, we find in Frankfurt that many stagings are more clearly addressed to specific milieus. Here, distinction is the principle behind the designs. Here we find façade designs that include flowerboxes and fir sprigs that remind the observer of Christmas family idylls, and yet red lamps, supported by red ribbons in the fir sprigs, clearly indicate what the building contains. A clearly observable threshold enactment points unmistakably to the building’s acquired public character as a brothel. Vienna lacks a “place of the Other” that is at once visible for all and familiar to every child. Vienna has many scattered places of the Other that together form a space of their own that refer to and complement one another. In Vienna people still tell the story of Kaiser Joseph II, who, asked to lift the ban on brothels, is said to have responded: “What, brothels? All I’d have to do is build a big roof over the whole of Vienna...” (Anwander/Neudecker 1999: 67).

So it is that the structure of the trade reproduces itself at the city level. The game of hide-and-seek, a favorite of modern society, is perfected in sex-work. Both social workers and customers report again and again on the “other

world” that they encounter in relevant bars. Many of them have trouble describing this other world. In interviews they refer to it as “mysterious” or note that “it’s the clandestine that shapes the atmosphere.” If they are to survive, secrets may not be allowed to become public. In the field of prostitution male customers and sexworkers/“clandestine prostitutes” work hand in hand in preserving the secretive, mysterious. Women who are not part of paid sexwork are simply members of the bothersome public. Prostitution reverses the middle-class logic that assigns women to the private sphere: It opens up a subcultural field of public female “bodies” (the prostitutes) and a public “sphere,” which is represented by “middle-class” women.

But what is it that is enacted here as a secret meant to be kept? Male sexuality? Sexuality in general? Male insecurity? Few studies have been written on male customers. And these are mostly based on reports of prostitutes, not on what customers themselves have to say (Girtler 1990: 143ff.; Bilitewski et al. 1994/1991). There is little founded information available on the films—including films of different types—in which men set out to play the leading role by setting foot in a brothel. It is a striking fact that (surprisingly) many elements of the love film crop up in the world of anonymous sex. “Ring the bell and step into bliss,” announces one sign on the door of a Vienna brothel. Others place little hearts and arrows in clearly visible spots of the entryway, or use neon signs blinking out the call “Love me.”

In a forthcoming interview study, Sabine Grenz (2004) shows how important it is for many men not to be nagged by the sense that “it” is all done for the money. And if it still feels that way, these men tend to believe that they have simply not paid enough. Despite this explicitly “the more expensive, the more genuine” logic, many men are convinced that their favorite whore is really happy to see them in person; that a domina is a woman who really likes to deal out blows; or that “certain reactions” show them that there are “things” that “you just can’t put on” (original quote from Grenz 2004: 7). The ideal of the private relationship, Grenz notes, assumes an unadulterated form in prostitution: an exchange based on give and take. “In Germany over one million men avail themselves daily of the services [provided by prostitutes]” (Deutscher Bundestag 2001: 4; cf. also Laskowski 1997: 80). The Berlin Hydra prostitute project even estimates that every day up to 1.5 million men make use of the services of prostitutes (see Mitrovic 2002: 70). In Vienna alone, every night some 15,000 men are reported to look up sexworkers.

In this connection, the definitions of prostitution typically offered by the social sciences may be “summed up as ‘sex for money’ with various modifications” (Laskowski 1997: 46). Accordingly, prostitutes are referred to as persons or “individuals who receive payment (whether financial or otherwise) for sexual services” (Hubbard 1998b: 269). Only a sound consumer research would be able to determine whether or not this definition does not more than

oversimplify the field of prostitution. It is likely that in the end no secrets will be revealed; instead, the enactment of the secret opens up the possibility to step across a threshold. Nothing happens on the other side that is not concealed by the one side as well, but the enactment of an “other side” opens up fantasy spaces, shifts in the staging and practices of desire. Furthermore, it is precisely the enactment of the male and the female as its object—a far more fragile experience in everyday life—that is used to learn and practice a basic social structure that serves to stabilize power relations, as it were, despite the fragility of everyday experience. The examples of Vienna and Frankfurt have shown us that prostitution is a very exclusive and excluded social field. The background of the exclusion of prostitution is that this is a field seen as abnormal, immoral, and potentially dangerous. The “restricted area decree” of Frankfurt, for example, illustrates this by aiming to protect young people and “public morals.”

Practices of separating off prostitution—as we know them today—assumed more and more importance in European cities in the 18th and especially the 19th centuries and they aimed—as spatially oriented control strategies—from the very beginning to exclude immoral, stigmatized prostitution from the morality of developing bourgeois everyday life. The exclusion of prostitution was strongly connected with the general separation and exclusion of sexuality as bodily experiences in everyday life, which was established at the same time. However, this separation manifested marked sex-specific differences: in the context of bourgeois gender structures, the dichotomous concepts of “male” and “female” limited the sexuality of “respectable” women to the monogamous intimacy of marriage, while the bourgeois men experienced two opposite types of love and sexuality: On the one hand there was the spiritual love of the bourgeois woman, who had to be more or less passive and without any desire (Schulte 1984: 154), and on the other hand there was the convention of prostitudinal sexuality as a “valve” (Schulte 1984: 151).

Both forms are divided into different areas of social life. By using measures of social control—in much the same way as perceptions, glances, and corresponding body technologies, for example—prostitution is, as we have seen, constructed as a “space of the other,” where deviant and “abnormal” forms of heterosexual relationships—like actively courting women or “insecure” men—are excluded and hidden. In this way the social construction of prostitution is included in social structures like gender relations. The “space of the other” protects and stabilizes the recognition of a strictly divided concept of opposite sexes, with the “moral” and “respectable” bourgeois lifestyle defined as “normal.” Perception and placing practices, material and symbolic arrangements, forms of social control, and boundaries etc. have been used to ensure the reproduction of social patterns of order and to stabilize (gender-) specific constructions of identity.

But the processes of exclusion are by no means restricted only to the gender regime, they produce “the other” in different variants. In sharp contrast to an increasingly self-determined picture of women, even in prostitution we today find images and reports of ill-treated, battered, raped, bound, alien female bodies that—far from being merely “victims of circumstances”—often also assume the character of a symbol of threats to the nation. Under the influence of unfocused globalization anxieties, traditional power relations of the “national project” nowadays appear to be up for renegotiation. Threats from diseases like Aids, for example, and feelings of guilt regarding the North’s and the West’s exploitation of the South and the East being negotiated in terms of a foreign and alien “migrant identity” that is at the same time marginalized. In this context the field of prostitution shows us that demarcations of social order can change and that the “wardens of social order” change along with those they are in charge of.

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