

STANDING ON FALKLAND ROAD, SITTING IN AMERICA:
MARY ELLEN MARK'S REPRESENTATION OF THE INDIAN OTHER

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DEDICATION

As with any pursuit I have ever undertaken in my life, whether academic or professional, my parents Zoe and Charles Lance have provided constant support, for which I thank them sincerely. And to my dear friend Maggie Berglund, thank you for believing I could actually get this thing done. I did it.

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STANDING ON FALKLAND ROAD, SITTING IN AMERICA:
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the documentary photographic book *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* by American photographer Mary Ellen Mark to identify the specific ways Mark both undermines and reinforces the dominant representations of the Indian Other in contemporary American documentary photography. By considering the photographic reality, the intersection of gazes, and a woman's way of seeing, this study employs ethnographic content analysis, textual analysis, and interview to support the argument that Mark's gender is instrumental in allowing her to undermine those dominant representations. This study makes a contribution to the scholarship on representations of the Indian Other and the role gender plays in American documentary photography.

PREFACE

I first lived in South Asia when I participated in the University of Wisconsin's College Year in Nepal program as an undergraduate in 1998-1999. After that initial ten months living in Kathmandu and traveling throughout the subcontinent, I returned a second time, to live in Nepal again from 2001 to 2003. Though I never visited Mumbai, I was able to travel fairly extensively in India, visiting Kolkata, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong in West Bengal, Varanasi and Delhi in Uttar Pradesh, and various cities in Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Goa. Living in South Asia for all of this time made me more aware of gender than I ever had been growing up in the United States, and I began to think more about various manifestations of gender performance in South Asia.

I was awarded a U.S. Student Fulbright Fellowship to return to Nepal again in 2008-09 to work on a documentary photography project on beauty and body image among young Nepali women, and it was during this time I was first introduced to Mary Ellen Mark's *Falkland Road*. I was just a few months into my project, and my advisor Carroll Dunham began pulling photography books off her shelves to show me how other photographers address gender and South Asia in their work. I remember the first time I looked at the cover photograph of *Falkland Road* and flipped through the pages, cringing at the stark images. I then looked through a more recent book addressing the sex trade in South Asia, *Fallen Angels*, and I noticed some clear differences. Where *Fallen Angels* romanticized the sex workers, *Falkland Road* was matter of fact, and where *Fallen Angels* appeared to pity their subjects, *Falkland Road* empowered them.

It was that final thought that kept me returning to Mark's work. Did she, in fact, empower them through her photography? Is that even possible? If she did, what techniques did she use to do that? Did the fact that she was a woman affect the type of work she produced, compared to male photographers? In order to answer these questions, I had to dive into the cultural studies literature on representation, the feminist theory literature on a woman's way of seeing and the male gaze, and the literature of photojournalism and documentary photography on technique and practice. I was informed by all of those approaches as I completed this research, and what follows is an attempt to integrate those bodies of thought into this analysis of *Falkland Road*.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Against a dirty cement wall, thirteen-year-old Putla glares out from the full-color photograph on the cover of Mary Ellen Mark's *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* (Fig. 1). Putla's forearms are crossed at her waist, covered with small round scars. Her red fingernail polish is chipped like the blue wall she stands in front of, an ornate beaded necklace hangs crooked from her neck,

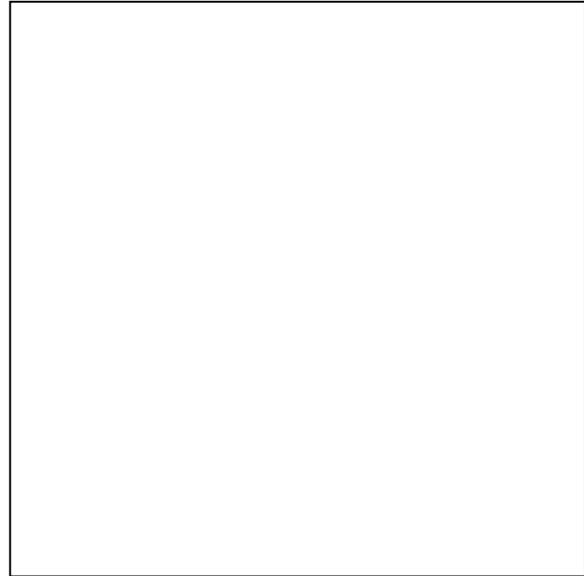


Figure 1. The cover of *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* (1981).

and her jaw is crisply set. Advancing the tradition of the forebears of documentary photography, Jacob Riis and Walker Evans, Mark has placed her subject's portrait squarely in the center of the cover, Putla's *kohl*-rimmed gaze meeting the viewers' gaze head-on. Riis did this on the cover of his documentary classic *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) with a pre-adolescent girl sitting on a stoop with a toddler in her arms, and Evans did the same with his and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) by placing Floyd Burroughs, shot from the chest up, in his tattered work shirt and overalls on their cover. On Mark's cover, though, it is not just the addition of rich Ektachrome color that is arresting. Putla's breasts are bare. Mark sets an unmistakable tone for her portrayal of sex work in India; it is a gritty and scarred world for the women and *hijras*

that inhabit it and the men that visit it. Putla's expression dares Mark and by extension, the viewer, to come in from the outside and see the sex industry for what it is.

Mary Ellen Mark is considered by many to be a photographer of exquisite ability, experience and insight, documenting subjects on the margins of society: in this case, the *hijras*—eunuchs—and women living and working in Bombay's notorious red light district of Falkland Road. Taken over a four-month period during the winter of 1978-79 and originally intended for publication in the American *GEO* magazine, Mark's photographs from Falkland Road were ultimately considered too graphic for that audience and were instead published in *GEO*'s partner publication, the German newsmagazine *Stern*, in 1979. Two years later, in 1981, Mark published the full-length book *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* that is under consideration here. The text was reprinted in 2005 by the German publishing house Steidl.

Mark was the first photographer to publish a book on this subject that would reach a wide audience and show Americans something they not only did not have firsthand knowledge of, but also likely never would. Mark introduced Americans to these "others," imbued the subjects with a sense of spirit and humanity, and framed how viewers would think about the people whose faces are found on the pages she published for decades to come.

Purpose of Study

This study intends, in part, to examine the horizon of understanding of American audiences in 1981. What did the Indian Other look like to American audiences of news and feature magazines? What context did popular news and feature magazines provide

for readers of *Falkland Road*? How does *Falkland Road* fit into that context and provide a visual intervention in the discourse about sex work and human trafficking? Did Mary Ellen Mark's photography provide an original view of this "othered" country and its inhabitants, or did the photography in *Falkland Road* merely reiterate the dominant representations Americans would have been accustomed to at that time? Is Mark able to subvert the dominant representations of the Indian Other in American photojournalism or does she merely reinforce the visual tropes of her contemporaries?

Further, this study takes into account the idea of photographic reality, and it is in this sense—the photograph *becoming* the real through representation—that documentary photography presents an important case for study. Documentary photography, as a genre of photojournalism that moves beyond strict visual reportage, seeks to inform not only the intellect, but additionally seeks to "inform the emotions" (Stott, 1973, p. 12) and reveal a condition (Denton, 2005). Stott further develops the purpose of documentary photographs to

increase our knowledge of public facts, but sharpen it with feeling; put us in touch with the perennial human spirit, but show it struggling in a particular social context at a specific historical moment. They sensitize our intellect (or educate our emotions) about actual life. (Stott, 1973, p. 18)

Given the power of documentary photography and the sensitive subject matter at hand, it is important to discuss how Mark's gender allowed the project to be realized in the way that it did. As a woman whose gender allowed her access to spaces that would have been restricted to men, such as the rooms where the sex workers and clients engaged in sex acts, Mark offers a heretofore unseen female photographer's perspective into the lives of sex workers. Though Mark herself stops short of distinguishing between a male

vision and a female vision, she does say that she thinks it is easier for women to work in situations like that on Falkland Road.

I think it's harder for a guy to get in. I really do. That kind of intimacy for a man would be very, very difficult.... Because of the gender. I think [the sex workers] identified with me more because I was a woman. I just do. I think a man could do a different kind of ... Bellocq was a man. [Bellocq's photographs are] beautiful portraits of prostitutes, but it's a different kind of photograph, you know? (Mark, 2011a)

Whether Mark believes she possesses a particular female gaze that she brings to her photography, there is no question that on Falkland Road and in *Falkland Road*, she has entered into a domain exclusive to male spectatorship and consumption, and her womanhood does in fact underlie the most fundamental element of a long-term documentary project—access.

I didn't have the run of the entire block, but when [the madams] knew me, I had total access. And I still believe in total access and that's how I operate. That's, to me, the key to everything I've ever done is access. (Mark, 2011a)

Though on many levels on Falkland Road, Mark was an obvious outsider (an Ivy League-educated Westerner that spoke no Hindi and had complete freedom of movement), on one critical level, she was an insider. As a foreign woman documenting the world of commodified sex wherein she is neither seller nor purchaser of the available product, Mark is able to adopt a unique female gaze, and I argue here that it is Mark's female gaze afforded by her insider status as a woman that offers an alternative to many of the dominant visual representations of the Indian Other at the time. This is particularly notable in a photojournalistic field that was 30 years ago, and remains today, dominated by male photographers (Bethune, 1984; Pasternack & Martin, 1985; Graulich, 2005).

Justification

The implications of this study are important for several reasons. First, while a review of the popular press reveals that Mary Ellen Mark is a groundbreaking female photographer (Rosenblum, 2000), a thorough review of scholarly literature has revealed a complete lack of scholarship on either the photographer or her work. This study makes a necessary contribution to scholarship on one of the most important American female photographers of the 20th century. Second, although only the original text is under consideration here, that *Falkland Road* was reprinted in 2005, 24 years after it was first published, certainly speaks to its continued relevance to the discourse surrounding the sex trade and human trafficking, particularly when those issues, along with HIV/AIDS, are receiving increased global attention. For that reason, as well, this study makes an important contribution to scholarly understanding of the visual discourse around these issues. Finally, an examination of Mark's technique and how her images both reinforce and undermine dominant representations is valuable not only for visual scholars, but also for visual practitioners.

Organization of Study

The literature review provided in chapter two first provides some necessary historical and biographical context for the reader to best understand *Falkland Road*, the place, and Mary Ellen Mark, the photographer. It also explores the concepts of the photographic reality, visual representation of the Other, the intersection of gazes, and how long-form documentary photography projects like this one fit into the broader realm

of visual journalism. The chapter outlines the specific research questions that this study answers, and outlines the theoretical framework that allows it to do so.

Chapter three outlines the qualitative methodological approach to this study and a justification for the use of each method in answering the research questions. Also included in this chapter are brief discussions of the methodological validity and limitations.

Chapter four engages in an internal discussion of *Falkland Road*, by explaining the implementation of the qualitative content analysis of all of the images from the text and exploring the results. Which are the prominent themes that rise to the surface? What patterns exist that might be invisible to a casual viewer? How do the prominent technical aspects of the photographs, the recurring aesthetic themes, the dominant environments in which the subjects are photographed, the manner the subjects are treated within each image, and the manner each image is treated within the book create meaning within each image? And within the book project as a whole? This content analysis provides the basis for selecting five images, each representing a notable interaction of the prominent themes for in-depth textual analysis, which is also found within this chapter.

Chapter five engages in an external discussion of *Falkland Road* within the context of the dominant photography of India found in contemporary American news and feature magazines. This chapter relates the previous in-depth visual analysis to the dominant representations in American visual culture and include a discussion of the specific ways that Mark undermines and reinforces those dominant representations. This chapter also includes further discussion of the way Mark's gender influenced her work and how her gender is an agent of undermining those dominant representations. Data

collected from two in-person interviews with Mark are also incorporated into this discussion.

The sixth and final chapter presents the conclusions of the study, drawing connections between the data and analysis presented in the previous chapters, and using this as a case study that illustrates the purpose of documentary photography. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the study, as well as the implications not only for visual scholars and practitioners, but also for the sex workers themselves. If this documentary photography text was intended as an intervention in the discourse on the sex trade in India, how has the material reality of sex workers changed in the nearly 30 years since *Falkland Road* was first published?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Background

Falkland Road

At its heart, documentary photography must tell a story, and Mark's *Falkland Road* tells the story of sex workers in Bombay, now known as Mumbai. In an oft-cited investigative report on India's sex trade that appeared in *The Nation* in 1996, journalist Robert Friedman describes the 1.2 square miles of slum that make up Falkland Road as "an area as vast as Manhattan's Central Park [where] tens of thousands of young women in brightly colored saris are displayed in row after row of zoo-like animal cages" (p. 12). The Falkland Road red light district stretches beyond just the eponymous street in South Central Bombay, is just a quick walk from two different train stations, and can be reached by over 25 municipal bus routes, making access to these sewage-soaked narrow lanes easy for city residents in search of a quick trick.

The 1999 U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices on India estimated 2.3 million women and girls worked in India's sex trade, with between 100,000 and 200,000 women working as prostitutes in Mumbai alone (U.S. Department of State, 1999). In his investigative report that predates the State Department's recordkeeping by three years, Friedman estimated the number of sex workers across India to be much higher, putting the figure at 10 million (1996, p. 12). Ninety percent of these

women are believed to have begun working in the forced sex trade as minors.¹ More often than not, these women have little status in Indian society, coming from the lower castes and families in poverty, or they are trafficked in from neighboring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh. The women and girls that feature in Mark's story are as young as 12 years old, and a 26-year-old madam, aged beyond her youth, could pass for 40 (Mark, 1981, p. 15). Although none of these girls or women is likely to have chosen sex work and this life on Falkland Road, they tap into a deep well of survival daily to come to terms with their experience. Mark quotes Saroja, a Falkland Road madam: "Given the choice, I would have rather stayed in my village. But if I had stayed there, I would never have known what I had missed" (Mark, 1981, p. 49).

An important construct to define in a discussion of prostitutes is that of gender. A number of the prostitutes on Falkland Road are *hijras*, which in 1981 was a concept best translated into English with the word "transvestite," the word Mark uses to describe *hijras* in her text. (In 2011, however, a more contemporary and accurate English-language conceptualization of a *hijra* would be a transgendered or intersex person.) On the Indian subcontinent, *hijras*, while certainly forced to live on the margins of society, have been recognized as a distinct third gender outside of the binary male/female gender conceptions prevalent in the West. But because they often assume female dress and identities, they are more likely to be marginalized alongside women, though they truly channel a third gender empowerment in their personas. The *hijras* are exhibitionists,

¹ While these data are from nearly 20 years after *Falkland Road* was published, they come from the earliest published report by the U.S. Department of State available. These precise numbers may not be extrapolated to 1981, but they provide a clear indication of the size of the sex trade in India.

larger than life in public, wild and unruly, always in search of a spectacle to make. They are known to arrive uninvited at the homes of newborns, seeking payment in return for a promise that they will not curse the children. Their clientele tend to be homosexual, rather than heterosexual, men. While the outward dressed appearance of a *hijra* leans toward female, their spirit channels a more raw and more masculine power. When Mark first arrived on Falkland Road and was struggling to make contacts and gain access to the brothel interiors, the *hijras* were among the first to seek her out. “It is in their nature to be exhibitionistic; seduced by the sight of me pacing up and down with my camera, they

ultimately came out and asked to be photographed” (Mark, 1981, p. 13).



Figure 2. “A madam of one of the more expensive houses with her girls.” (Mark, 1981, p. 31)

The madam, whether *hijra* or female, is the true matriarch of each of these brothels, and as the most respected figure in each household, she is empowered both to bless the girls each evening before work, and to hold the

girls’ purse strings. While she only keeps 50 percent of each girl’s take, the madam has the power if not to set the prices for sex, then to beat her girls for selling her body for too little money, or to pimp her girls out to a rich Arab that might be passing by and willing to pay for several days with one girl (Mark, 1981, p. 11). A madam generally will not sleep with a customer herself, and in spite of her role as captor, she still looks after her girls protectively, and the girls respect her authority, whether out of a manifestation of

Stockholm Syndrome or because that is their best course of action in looking out for their own self-interest.

One of the first images we see of a madam with her girls illustrates this dynamic. Pulabai, the madam, looks directly into the camera lens, as do the five girls pictured with her (*Fig. 2*). Pulabai sits on the bed as though on a throne, and the girls immediately adjacent to her lean in and drape their arms on Pulabai's lap, who reciprocates the intimate gesture. Beyond simply illustrating an intimate moment, Mark's image here imitates the most common religious icons of the benevolent and well-loved elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesh. Like Ganesh, Pulabai's corpulent body spills out across the bed on which she perches, and she sits with one leg tucked under her and one bare foot pointed in front. Unlike Ganesh, however, who holds offerings of *mithai* and lotus flowers in his outstretched arms, Pulabai offers up her girls. When we see Pulabai later in the text, she is showing off the next generation, an infant daughter of one of her girls (Mark, 1981, p. 101).

While the women working in these brothels on Falkland Road do compete for the business of the same customers, that does not prevent them from creating strong community bonds. Most of the women in the sex trade are there against their will, sold by relatives or neighbors to opportunistic brothel owners, though some women are born into the community in which they will work as prostitutes. Regardless of the circumstances that have driven these women into these unlikely communities, once they are there, the women around them are the last vestige of family they will ever experience, and the bonds between them are strong. "These girls only have one another," Mark writes. "They form close friendships and are very protective of each other" (Mark, 1981, p. 12). Mark

captures moments of the women sharing intimacies: the young woman Shanta embracing Lalita from behind (p. 68), the madam Saroja braiding one of her girls' hair (p. 65), an image featuring two young girls dressed in the same red school uniform, arms around one another's shoulders, bathed in natural light, appearing forlorn as they gaze out of the right side of the frame (p. 107). Mark shows us one of her younger subjects, Asha, posing with a close friend behind a two-dimensional car in a photo studio. "Mumtaz and I are best friends. We are sisters. We have exchanged blood" (p. 93).

Mary Ellen Mark: A Groundbreaker

Mary Ellen Mark is often heralded as one of America's great documentary photographers, held in esteem alongside luminaries like W. Eugene Smith, Diane Arbus, and Dorothea Lange. Though she studied painting and art history as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, Mark only moved into photojournalism when, as a master's student, she joined Penn's Annenberg School for Communication. After completing her graduate work, Mark studied in Turkey on a Fulbright fellowship and completed her first extended overseas sojourn. Mark kicked off her career as a still photographer on film sets, and it was on the set of Milos Forman's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in an Oregon mental hospital that she developed a friendship with the hospital director, Dean Brooks, who gave her access to photograph in the women's unit, which led to the project *Ward 81* (Mark, 2011a).

Now age 70 and based in a SoHo studio in New York City, Mark still travels extensively, makes photographs and teaches workshops. Although she continues to take commercial and editorial assignments, including many celebrity portraits, her most well-

known and highly regard projects are reflective of her documentary storytelling roots: *Ward 81* (photographed in 1976, published in 1979); *Streetwise*, about homeless youth in Seattle, which is also a film she coproduced with Martin Bell (photographed and published in 1983); and *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* (photographed in 1978-79, published in 1981).

Mark's photographs are particularly noteworthy for her explorations of gender, subject agency and space, and she has written that shooting in the maximum-security women's ward at the Oregon State Hospital was transformative in how she considered confined space. Her subsequent projects, including *Falkland Road*, "have concentrated on a small group of people who live in a clearly defined area. This provides me an anchor allowing me to return day after day to explore the group and to intimately document their rituals, customs and lives" (Mark, 1999, p. 147).

In intimately documenting the lives of the sex workers on Falkland Road, Mark walked a fine line between being participant and observer:

In a sense, I think I was a participant, because they knew I was there. A participant is when you're part of what's going on. An observer is like a street photographer that just catches. And I mean, I was both in this.
(Mark, 2011a)

Becoming involved in close contact with her subjects is essential to Mark's documentary style, and she argues that it allows her to better show what these sex workers *did* rather than just what they *were*, as a portrait-driven project might have. "It's not just about prostitutes in India, it's about women selling their bodies and what it's like to sell your body" (Mark, 2011a). Mark needed to establish trust with the brothel madams to be able to return day after day with cameras, lenses, strobe lights, and a young male Indian

assistant who interpreted Hindi for her, and if she violated that trust, her access would be cut off. She insists, though that the girls she photographed were not coerced into participating in her photographs: “I never said to the madam, ‘Tell her to do that.’ That wasn’t the relationship. They wouldn’t have done it” (Mark, 2011a).

And while many documentary photographers, from Jacob Riis to Donna Ferrato, are driven to create social change, Mark declines to identify herself as a political photographer, instead labeling herself curious. “I’m not naïve enough to think I’m going to cause social change. Things are what they are. And certainly not in India” (Mark, 2011a). Instead, Mark insists her goal was for viewers of her photographs to empathize with the sex workers, to feel for them, just as Stott defines documentary photography as a method for informing emotion. And despite criticism that her work is exploitive and focuses too much on the negative aspects of the Third World to inspire empathy, Mark contends those criticisms are misguided, especially in a world where this type of sexual slavery continues to thrive.

I don’t think it’s negative. I mean ... I love these women. I thought they were incredible. I thought this was shining light on a way of life that exists all over the world. It’s not a way of life that I would choose, but it’s a way of life. I think that it’s important to look at it, and say, ‘Wow, this is not negative about the women.’ They have no choice, but it interests me. So what are we supposed to do? Are we just supposed to photograph the rich and famous? Is that what we’re supposed to look at? (Mark, 2011b)

A Woman’s Way of Seeing

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, that Mark is a woman photographing in brothels is notable for several reasons, the most important being that as a woman she was more accepted by her photography subjects in the brothels than a man would have

been, which in turn led to ease of access and the ability to photograph in intimate situations. But, as a woman, did Mark necessarily make different pictures than a male photographer in that situation would have? Second-wave feminist writers would argue the answer to that question is “yes,” for reasons that certain knowledge can only derive from a place of oppression, that women have internalized the intuition and empathy prescribed by their ideal gender typology, and that female artists explore their sexuality through their art. Mark conceived of the *Falkland Road* project at the height of the second-wave feminist movement, and for that reason it is relevant to consider those arguments here.

First, epistemic privilege builds on the ideas articulated by Merton (1972) on the role of an insider or an outsider in epistemology, the basic argument of feminist epistemology, that

our concrete embodiments as members of a specific class, race, and gender, as well as our concrete historical situations necessarily play significant roles in our perspective on the world, ... [that] no point of view is ‘neutral’ because no one exists unembedded in the world. (Narayan, 2010, p. 336)

This then raises the possibility that there are “critical insights being generated by oppression” (p. 336), that a woman would only know certain things because she is in a dominated social position in relation to men. This suggests that as a woman, Mark would possess a woman’s way of seeing to provide insight into the circumstances of the sex workers she photographed. It is important to note here, however, that Mark is both an insider and an outsider in these brothels. She is a woman of course, but she is also an Ivy League-educated First World white woman working with a severely marginalized population from whom she differs on two critical axes—economic autonomy on both an

individual level and a global level. Regardless, growing up in the post-war U.S., Mark would have been subject to oppression as a woman, under which a woman's way of seeing could be attributed to certain knowledge derived from that experience.

Second, in a culture that expects a woman to be emotional and intuitive as a counter to a rational-thinking man, a woman can be expected to develop those faculties under societal pressure. This, too, would influence the way a woman looks at the world, and consequently through her camera lens. Tucker argues this is why the overwhelming majority of women photographers work in the subfields that deal primarily with people, such as portraitists, journalists, and documentarians (1973, p. 3).

Tucker develops this argument further, stating that a woman's way of seeing emerges specifically at the point at which she consciously confronts her own sexuality: "The degree to which being a woman may influence a photographer's work is dependent upon the extent to which she uses her art to confront her existence as a woman" (Tucker, 1973, p. 4). And that is exactly what Mark is doing here. By focusing a project on women locked in a ward in a mental hospital, or women locked in brothels in Bombay, she is exploring a manifestation of womanhood that she explicitly is not, precisely *because* that is what she is not. So by confronting the lives and existences of women whose experiences differ so vastly from her own, she is confronting not only what womanhood means for those women, but also what womanhood means for herself. So the exploration of sexuality through a photographic study of sex workers acts as an exploration of Mark's own sexuality, which also engenders a woman's way of seeing.

Documentary Photography and Visual Journalism

Documentary photography is best explicated as a subgenre of visual journalism wherein the photographer is more committed to intimacy than immediacy, and depth rather than breadth in the photographic stories that she tells. Though documentary photography is often closely associated with projects in the Farm Security Administration tradition that address social ills and needs for reform, that need not always be the case. Monthly and weekly newsmagazines such as *Life*, *Look*, *GEO*, and *National Geographic* have been popular venues for documentary photography throughout the 20th century, showing the stories of rural healthcare providers, urban young professionals, and cultural rituals from foreign countries. And of course, photography books like the one under consideration here are also common outlets for documentary photography.

A TIME-LIFE book on the subject distinguishes documentary photography from news photography by not just recording an event, but one with significance that transcends that immediate photograph. "... The documentary photograph tells us something important about our world—and in the best examples, makes us think about the world in a new way" (Korn, 1972, p. 7). Newhall echoes this sentiment, arguing that the power of documentary photographs is in their ability "not only to inform us, but to move us" (1982, p. 142). Documentary photographers achieve these goals primarily by spending copious amounts of time with their subjects, building close relationships with them, and in many regards, crossing the line from strict observer to quasi-participant, much the way an ethnographer would engage in participant observation. The reality, then, that a documentary photographer presents to a viewer can diverge from the reality

provided by the news photographer, in part because of the organizational routines and production norms of the medium in which it is produced.

Photographic Reality

Images contained within photographic books become cultural artifacts, both for the worlds the viewer knows and the worlds that will remain outside of his firsthand consciousness. Mark Neumann explains in his analysis of the politics of documentary photography that "...photograph books function by augmenting a visual reality. They invent, produce, and circulate an enlarged vision of the world" (1988, p. 46). Photograph books can provide both the world we want access to but are unable to reach for lack of time or resources, and the world we may not want firsthand access to because it is dangerous or socially undesirable. While the viewer gains access to the unknown world to get to know it better, however, he is simultaneously desensitized to what he sees through the process of cognitive dissonance that arises in making the unknown known.

As Susan Sontag explains in her collection of essays, *On Photography*, the camera brings the unfamiliar into close range and conversely, can set the familiar out of reach (1978, p. 167). In quoting Richard Avedon, Sontag further develops the notion that photography provides the opportunity to know someone. "The pictures have a reality for me that the people don't," Avedon said. "It is through the photographs that I know them" (p. 121). By rendering a person and a reality static on the pages of a book, a photograph can be slowly examined and then left on a table or a shelf, pondered, and then returned to and reexamined. The viewer can return again and again to this photograph, this static interpretation of reality. Through that process, any firsthand knowledge or emotion

reflected in the image is stripped away, replaced by the image alone. If the photograph captures an unfamiliar reality and introduces the only orientation to it that we have ever known, then the effect strengthens, and that image is imprinted even more so as reality.

Sontag considers this effect in photographs with difficult subject matter.

The feeling of being exempt from calamity stimulates interest in looking at painful pictures, and looking at them suggests and strengthens the feeling that one is exempt. Partly because one is “here,” and not “there,” and partly it is the character of inevitability that all events acquire when they are transmuted into images. In the real world, something *is* happening and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen that way. (emphasis original, p. 167)

When the viewer accesses this unknown world through luxuriously printed photograph books, and he sees a moment in time immortalized, he often has no baseline for comparison, no way to comprehend the two-dimensional reality of the book in the context of the three-dimensional reality in which we live and breathe. It must be established that there is nothing objectively real about documentary photography. There is no capital-T-Truth to be captured; it is a subjective endeavor that engenders possession. As Sontag explains, a photograph differs from a painting in its representation of reality only in that it contains a “material vestige of its subject” (1978, p. 154). There is a fragment of something so real in a photographic image that it is easy to confuse a documentary photograph with reality, but a viewer must remain conscious of the fact that “photographic realism can be—is more and more—defined not as what is ‘really’ there but as what I ‘really’ perceive” (p. 120). Photography becomes a process with many actors: it is first the photographer’s job to perceive and interpret reality with her camera, on behalf of the viewer, and then hand it over to the viewer, who then perceives and interprets for himself. This analysis of Mary Ellen Mark’s photographs is firmly rooted in

this notion – that the reality presented in each image is restricted by interpretation on two levels, that of the photographer and that of the viewer.

Visual Representation of the Other

One of the primary points of entry for the visually represented Other in American visual culture is through the flagship publication of the National Geographic Society, *National Geographic*. In an exhaustive content analysis of the magazine's content, Lutz and Collins (1993) identify the enduring representations of the Othered peoples that have been featured within the magazine's pages over its storied existence. The themes they uncover are indicative of the overarching representations of the Other in American visual culture and warrant some discussion here.

The majority of photographs Lutz and Collins examined featured men, while only about a quarter featured all or mostly women (1993, p. 107). Perhaps in part due to lack of access to communities of women by male photographers, this overrepresentation of male figures can also be attributed to an androcentrism in beliefs about cultural production, and the authors argue that cultural practices are defined by men, while things natural are represented by women. The depiction not just of women, but of women's *bodies* deserves special mention here, and Lutz and Collins note the cultural practice of viewing these bodies specifically in the context of *National Geographic*: "The widely shared cultural experience of viewing women's bodies in the magazine draws on and acculturates the audience's ideas about race, gender and sexuality, with the marked subcategory in each case being black, female and the unrepressed" (p. 115). Children are most often featured alone or in groups, that is, not among or with adults, leading them to

be romanticized in their childhood. Further, representations in *National Geographic* tend to focus on cultures and civilizations deemed to be “people without history” (p. 108), their recent contact with the West indicating their first experience of change and modernity. Prior to meeting the West, these representations claim, these cultures were merely primitive and uncivilized, surely unworthy of consideration. Finally, Lutz and Collins discuss an “evolutionary ladder of societies” that appears in the magazine, wherein Africa lies at the bottom, Asia in the middle, and the West, on top, leading the evolutionary charge to modernity and civilization (p. 117).

Lutz and Collins’ work is notable to consider here because the publication they examine, *National Geographic*, is one of the foremost venues for photographs from foreign locales, and provides a baseline for understanding representation of the Other in an American context. The Other is highly exoticized in *National Geographic*, for the Exotic Other holds the allure of not just an unknown world, but an undiscovered world, offering the viewer a first look at something their friends and neighbors will not be privy to. Lutz and Collins further contend that by turning the Exotic Other into a spectacle to be looked upon and consumed, their very existence is questioned. “One of the effects of the emphasis on spectacle is to discredit the significance of the foreign, even to create a sense of its fictitiousness” (1993, p. 90). By stripping away at the veracity of the experience of the foreign, characterizing the Other as exotic strips away their humanity, objectifies them, and deems them no longer worthy of the viewer’s empathy. Once the Exotic Other is objectified, he becomes something fit for consumption, but only enjoyed by those who exist above him in a hierarchy, whether based on race, class, or world systems hierarchy.

Of course, visual scholars have also considered visual representations of the Third World outside of the pages on *National Geographic* and in publications that are known less for their documentary photography and more for their news photojournalism. And the literature reveals many similarities in representations in monthly pictorial magazines and photography more likely to exhibited in a daily news context. In an empirical study of photographic coverage in four elite daily U.S. newspapers, Langton (1991) found the majority of images of Third World countries were coded as “sensational” or in the “Military/War” category (p. 102). Kim and Smith (2005) found in their analysis of 60 years of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs, that the majority of international photographs that win the contest depict “tragedies, wars, and other disasters of human existence” (p. 320). In a similar analysis of thematic representations of award-winning photographs from the Pictures of the Year International contest, Greenwood and Smith (2007) found that while there was no correlation between the individual geographic regions and the theme presented, on the whole, “the world outside the United States is visually framed for the audience as a world of violence and hardship” (p. 97).

The Intersection of Gazes

Lutz and Collins (1993) incorporate theories of the gaze from Lacan, Foucault, and Bhabha in their exhaustive analysis of the intersection of gazes in *National Geographic*, to understand how Western audiences interact with images of the Exotic Other. Rather than questioning the authenticity of the images in their consideration of *National Geographic*, Lutz and Collins consider the “imaginative spaces” in which non-Westerners exist in Western minds, alongside the cognitive taxonomy employed to

organize them. How do images shape that space and how do they compel the reader to empathize and identify with the subject?

We are further concerned with the *varieties* of identification that may be evoked. Does the identification rely on static humanistic principles that assert universal sameness across boundaries of race, class, gender, language, and politics, or on a progressive humanism that seeks to understand and historicize the differences that separate interconnected human beings? (p. 3)

Lacan's concept of the gaze reached beyond the act of simply viewing another, but established a "model for the potential effects of looking" (as cited in Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 190), incorporating the baggage a viewer brings to the table when they engage in looking. Lacan's gaze is elusive, "something distinct from the eye of the beholder and from simple vision: it is that 'something [which] slips ... and is always to some degree eluded in it [vision];' it is 'the lack'" (p. 190). Bhabha articulates the problems, in a colonial context, of seeing oneself reflected in another's gaze. "The subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational" (as cited in Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 191). The photograph, then, "is a site at which this identification and the conflict of maintaining a stereotypic view of difference occurs" (p. 191). Foucault's gaze is a normalizing one, "a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (as cited in Lutz and Collins, p. 192).

In a comprehensive examination of Mary Ellen Mark's photography in *Falkland Road*, we must establish the multitude of gazes that intersect in an image to construct its meaning, and by extension, its social context. Lutz and Collins establish a seven-part

typology of gazes, of which the two most significant will be considered here. The first is the photographer's gaze, which is defined as the actual perspective through the viewfinder and defines most of the technical and compositional aspects of the image, from depth of field, to the distance from the subject, to the framing.

The second gaze to consider is the non-Western subject's gaze, defined as the gaze of the subject(s) of the photograph, and Lutz and Collins argue this to be the most significant gaze because "it is how and where the Other looks that most determines the differences in the message a photograph can give about intercultural relations" (1993, p. 197). The subject's gaze must further be delineated into a sub-typology, organized by where the subject is looking.

When the subject looks directly into the camera, we must assume the subject's awareness of the photographer, and by extension, the reader. What this direct gaze means, however, has been subject to some disagreement. Is a direct gaze confrontational and consequently able to deprive the photographer and reader the opportunity of voyeurism? Or does the direct gaze communicate having assented to examination? Lutz and Collins' findings in their content analysis of National *Geographic* can help us answer that debate. They write, "those who are culturally defined as weak—women, children, people of color, the poor, the tribal rather than the modern, those without technology—are more likely to face the camera, the more powerful to be represented looking elsewhere" (1993, p. 199). In light of those findings, that typically weaker societal players are more likely to engage in a direct gaze, we can interpret that to mean their power is again relinquished, their agency deprived of them when they look directly into the camera: "To look out at the viewer, then, would appear to represent not a

confrontation between the West and the rest, but the accessibility of the other” (p. 200).

Lutz and Collins find further support for their argument in Tagg’s concept of the “code of social inferiority” (p. 200), wherein a direct gaze into the camera is class-coded action.

The direct gaze is associated with mug shots of criminals, while higher-class individuals are more likely to be viewed looking away from the camera.



Figure 3. “Exposing a stool pigeon for the Gestapo in a displaced persons camp.”
(Photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1945.)

If not looking directly at the camera, the subject can look at someone or something else that also appears within the frame, which often defines relationships for the viewer. Are the subjects looking at one another with love, with contempt, with familiarity, with suspicion? This gaze that

occurs among subjects within a frame can be a powerful cue for the reader. Without even the addition of a caption explaining the identity of a female Gestapo informer posing as a refugee in a camp in post-war Germany in Henri Cartier-Bresson’s “Exposing a stool pigeon for the Gestapo in a displaced persons camp” (*Fig. 3*), the reader interprets the sea of spectators, the female refugee poised to strike the informer, and the judge all staring at the informer in the left of the frame with obvious contempt, and easily appropriates that same contempt in her judgment of the informer.

Further, the non-Western subject’s gaze can point outward from the frame, denoting a “dreamy, vacant, absent-minded person, or a forward-looking, future-oriented, and determined one” (Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 202). And of course, the subject of any

photograph can be looking at nothing at all, either by virtue of being unseen, masked, or lost in a crowd of other people.

Research Questions

If, as Denton purports, documentary photography “[has] long been entwined with producing knowledge and understanding” (2005, p. 406), and is defined, in part, as the process of revealing a condition (p. 405), then a detailed scholarly examination of Mark’s pioneering text, heretofore unrealized, is warranted. The subject presented in *Falkland Road* is considered deviant by American society. The American viewers of these photographs are incredibly unlikely to deeply relate to Mark’s subjects, for they are the Other, and it is for this reason that an examination of Mark’s humanizing technique as a photographer is valuable for both scholars and practitioners of documentary photography.

The literature reviewed thus far leads us to consider multiple facets of *Falkland Road*, but the scope of this study will be limited to the following research questions:

- RQ1:** What are the dominant visual representations of the Indian Other in Mary Ellen Mark’s 1981 text *Falkland Road*?
- RQ2:** What are the dominant visual representations of the Indian Other in the leading photojournalism publications between 1978 and 1983?
- RQ3:** In what ways does *Falkland Road* reinforce those dominant visual representations? In what ways does *Falkland Road* undermine those dominant representations?

When we consider the dominant visual representations, the most frequently occurring visual characterizations of the region and topic in question, we are guided by Morgan’s definition (2005): “What images, acts of seeing, and attendant intellectual, emotional, and perceptual sensibilities do to build, maintain, or transform the worlds in

which people live” (p. 33). Though Rogoff’s definition of visual culture (in Mirzoeff, 2002) ultimately incorporates the “entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another” (p. 24), that definition is strongly grounded in the visual: “At one level, we certainly focus on the centrality of vision and the visual world in producing meanings, establishing and maintaining aesthetic values, gender stereotypes and power relations within culture” (p. 24).

Theoretical Framework

While this study seeks to answer those research questions by addressing a woman’s way of seeing, the photographic reality, the visual representation of the Other, and the intersection of gazes, several additional visual theories will provide further insight into the text under consideration.

Theory of Visual Rhetoric

Deriving from the study of symbols in communication, visual rhetoric encompasses similar ideas as verbal discourse rhetoric, that humans “may influence each other’s thinking and behavior through the strategic use of symbols” (Ehninger cited in Foss, 2005, p. 141). When “human experiences ... are spatially oriented, nonlinear, multidimensional, and dynamic,” Foss elaborates, they “often can be communicated only through visual imagery or other nondiscursive symbols. To understand and articulate such experiences require attention to these kinds of symbols” (Foss p. 143). The application of visual rhetoric theory will open the door of the visual analysis of *Falkland Road* by helping tease out the dominant symbolic representations in American visual

culture, but more importantly, the materiality they refer to. This theory also offers insight into understanding the representations in *Falkland Road* and what they mean. In the application of visual rhetorical theory, we will consider the photographer's voice as the primary agent of intent, assuming

that each aspect of the picture was intentionally selected in order to try to get someone else to think, feel, or something. To that end, the rhetor [photographer, here] will select from among a range of options the tone, color, perspective, moment, subject matter, and so on that he or she feels is most likely to have the desired effect among the intended audience. (Kenney, 2005, p. 154)

Cultural Studies Theory

While visual rhetoric theory begins by identifying symbols and referents in visual imagery, cultural studies theories builds on that by helping the analyst understand the specific ways meaning is constructed from the symbolic. What makes cultural studies theory particularly useful here is its assumption of polysemy, or the "multiplicity of meaning" (O'Donnell, 2005, p. 525). Different people can read a text in different ways, as there is no singular meaning attached to it. Working with this assumption precludes a reception analysis and legitimates the scholarly relevance of a single researcher completing a textual analysis. Cultural studies theory is also crucial to understanding the power relations that determine who or what is represented in the first place, and by whom or by what, which will address, in part, what is revealed by the fact that a woman in a male-dominated field was the first person to produce a long-form text on such a marginalized population as sex workers in India. Finally, Stuart Hall's notion of articulation, contained within cultural studies theory, incorporates the context in which the meaning of a message exists and is created, which is particularly useful when we

consider how *Falkland Road* fits into the context of late 1970s and early 1980s photojournalism and documentary photography.

Aesthetics Theory

Aesthetics theory will be applied here as a methodological tool to understand visual rhetoric and meaning construction within the images. Aesthetics is both “a way to operationalize vision” (Denton,2005, p. 406), and a way to understand the power relationship between documentary photographer and documentary subject by considering technical aspects such as color, light, composition, focal length of the camera lens, and distance from photographer to subject. The aesthetics of the images at hand are integral to understanding their symbolic meaning and the construction of representation contained within.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Goals

The primary goal of this study is to compare Mark's representations of the Indian Other in *Falkland Road* to the dominant contemporary American representations of the Indian Other within the same time period that Mark was working on her project and publishing her book. First, it is necessary to determine what the dominant representations are of the Indian Other are in Mark's text. Second, this study will determine the dominant visual representations of the Indian Other in contemporary color documentary photography. Then this study asks in what ways does Mark reinforce these representations? And in what ways does she undermine them?

This study employs four methodologies in addressing these research questions. First, this study engages in an ethnographic content analysis of the images in *Falkland Road* to identify patterns in the 65 published images and the major thematic areas of representation. Second, this study undertakes an in-depth textual analysis of photographs from *Falkland Road* representative of the primary thematic areas determined by the content analysis alongside a textual analysis of photographic essays that appeared in one weekly newsmagazine and two popular monthly magazines at the same time. Third, the researcher conducted two in-person semi-structured interviews with Mark. Fourth, this study uses a document analysis of various published interviews with Mark, first-person written texts that appear within her photography publications, and other published critiques of her work by art and photography scholars.

Data Selection

In order to determine the dominant representations of the Indian Other in American visual media contemporary to the publication of *Falkland Road*, a dating scheme of 1978 to 1983 was established. Mark traveled to India several times throughout the 1970s, and made all of the published photographs over the late fall and early winter of 1978-1979. The book was published in 1981, and Mark's photographs from this project were exhibited in four gallery shows in the U.S. and England throughout 1981 and 1982 (maryellenmark.com). Therefore, this five-year period in the late 1970s and early 1980s is an appropriate period in which to investigate the dominant contemporary representations of the Indian Other made by other photographers working and publishing at the same time as Mark. Though one could argue a five-year period is somewhat limited, it is an appropriate scope of comparison for this research project. Further, because this study is interested in contemporary representations of then-modern India, archival and historical photography was excluded from the scope of comparison.

After determining the dating scheme, a search of weekly and monthly American magazines that carried color photography was conducted in several online databases to determine which popular publications from that time period were digitally indexed. A list of five magazines was established: *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *National Geographic*, and *GEO*. (*GEO* was also a relevant publication to examine, because they commissioned Mark's work on *Falkland Road*, though they opted to publish her photographs in their sister German publication *Stern*.) In order to find relevant articles, separate searches using the keywords "India," "sex," "sex trade," "prostitute," and "prostitution" were conducted. The latter four words were also each paired with the

search term “India,” but no search results were found. The majority of search results came from the term “India.” Because images, whether illustrations or photographs, are not often indexed in digital databases (if they are at all, it is likely just the caption), the search results not only did not reliably indicate whether a photograph accompanied a story, but also full-text digital search results did not include any images.

In order to overcome the unreliability of image results in digital full-text search results, the original hard-copy periodicals were examined. A list of any story that featured the search term “India,” whether or not an image was indicated, was compared to the original magazines to determine if images did in fact accompany the articles. Few of the articles appearing in *TIME* and *Newsweek* carried more than one image with any one article about India, and that image was exclusively illustrative of the article, and did not carry any visual narrative independent of the news event pictured. (Examples include a photograph of Prince Charles visiting the Taj Mahal, a cow lying down in the middle of traffic in Delhi, and several portraits of then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.) Four articles in the *The New York Times Magazine* that featured the search term “India” contained more photographs alongside the stories than the single images in the other weekly magazines. Two of those four featured archival photographs of Mohandas Gandhi’s friend Mirabehn, and of Raj-era vintage photographs. They were excluded because they contained archival and historical images. A third story featured two black-and-white images of Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta and one color cover photograph illustrating an eight-page story about the Nobel Prize winner. This story was excluded because, though the color photograph was in color, the rest of the images ran in black and white. The fourth and final story was a cover story about, again, then-Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi, and featured a color cover photograph and four color photographs in the interior of the magazine to illustrate a seven-page story.

The monthly periodicals *National Geographic* and *GEO* returned more diverse results. In the five-year period, *National Geographic* ran two extensive visual stories about India. The first was a cover story titled “Ladakh—The Last Shangri-La,” and the second was a 15-color-photograph essay titled “Bombay, the Other India.” *GEO* was even more prolific in their photographic coverage of contemporary India in this time period, and a manual search of all monthly issues from its premiere issue in 1979 through the end of 1984 when it ceased publishing in the American market, returned seven extensive color photo essays about various parts of India, from the Sikh population in the Punjab to *kathakali* dancers in Kerala, all but one photographed by male photographers. That one story photographed by a woman, was in fact photographed by Mark herself, and therefore will be excluded from this comparative analysis. Interestingly, just one month after *National Geographic* published their July 1981 photo essay about Bombay, *GEO* published a similar photo essay titled “Bombay: Refuge to All, Home to None” in August 1981.

Based on this method for data selection, when this study moves into considering the dominant color photographic representations of the contemporary Indian Other in Chapter 5, a total of nine stories will be examined for comparison: one from *The New York Times Magazine*, two from *National Geographic*, and six that appeared in *GEO*. (See Appendix A for the complete list, including publication dates.)

Ethnographic Content Analysis

First, an ethnographic content analysis of the 65 photographs that appear in *Falkland Road* was conducted to determine the dominant cultural, technical and aesthetic themes. Content analysis is a useful quantitative tool for counting the recurrence of certain elements within a text (Stokes, 2003, p. 56), such as the number of images that feature women exclusively, that characterize the subject as an exotic other, that feature a subject with a direct gaze into the camera, or that use artificial or natural light, for example. The *ethnographic* content analysis moves one step beyond simply counting the recurrence of factors, but also incorporates reflexivity and the interaction between the researcher and the data by stressing “*constant discovery* and *constant comparison* of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances” (Altheide, 1996, p. 16, emphasis original).

While many visual scholars have undertaken strictly quantitative content analyses of photographs that mandate images fit into exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories (Langton, 1991; Hagaman, 1993; Kim and Smith, 2005; Greenwood and Smith, 2007; Kim and Kelly, 2008), visual scholars have also employed a qualitative approach based on the constant comparative method (Greenwood and Smith, 2009), which is not dissimilar from the ethnographic content analysis employed here. The constant comparative method for qualitative research is designed, in part, to marry the benefits of a systematic coding scheme in quantitative inquiry with the theory-generating possibilities of inductive reasoning (Glaser, 1965). That said, Glaser hastens to point out that

depending as it still does on the skills and sensitivities of the analyst, the constant comparative method is *not* designed (as methods of quantitative analysis are) to guarantee that two analysts working independently with the same data will achieve the same results; it *is* designed to allow, with discipline, for some of the vagueness and flexibility which aid the creative generation of theory. (p. 438, emphasis original)

The primary difference between Glaser's constant comparative method and Altheide's ethnographic content analytic method lies primarily in the reflexivity of the researcher, as mentioned above. When "document analysis is conceptualized as fieldwork" (Altheide, 1996, p. 14) inquiry is not only guided by the interaction of the researcher, but in fact, the inquiry depends on it in a manner analogous to participant observation in ethnographic fieldwork.

Informed by coding protocols employed by other visual scholars (Kim & Kelly, 2008; Chang, 1996; Hagaman, 1993), an initial coding protocol was established and tested on several individual photographs that were the unit of analysis for this study. As per Altheide's method of ethnographic content analysis (1996, p. 26-27), this initial coding protocol was then revised and refined over several iterations that incorporated all 65 images from the text at hand. Ultimately, a coding protocol of 20 items was devised that further elaborates upon each of the following categories: the photographic conventions employed in the image, the environment in which the photograph was taken, the individual subjects in the photographs, and whether any information additional to the image itself, such as a caption, is presented. An analysis of these elements helps define the representations and meaning in *Falkland Road*. (For the complete codebook, see Appendix B.) The protocol is as follows:

Photographic conventions employed in each image.

1. **The shot distance.** This determines whether the photograph is a scene-setting shot, wherein the point of the image is the place rather than the people, a medium-distance shot that focuses more on the subject within their environment, a close-up that highlights a specific subject, or a detail that illustrates a specific trait of the subject or a place from a very close distance. The shot distance is significant in considering how close Mark is to her subjects and what sort of access she would have needed to obtain a particular photograph.
2. **The physical perspective of the photographer.** This category determines where the photographer is in relation to the subject. Was she taking the image from a place above her subject, at the same level, or from below? The perspective of the photographer in relation to the subject is significant because according to social perspective theory (Lester, 2011, p. 39), taking a photograph from a significantly higher physical perspective than the subject exhibits a sense of power over the subject, while placing the subject in a higher position relative to the photographer displays the power of the subject.
3. **The likely focal length of the lens.** This item identifies the likely lens used by the photographer, a wide-angle, a mid-length, or a zoom lens. This is significant because it is another indication of where the photographer was in relation to the subjects. If she used a wide-angle lens, Mark would have had to be very close to her subjects, and they would have been very aware of her presence. If she used a zoom lens, the converse would be true, that her subjects might not have known the photograph was being taken. A mid-length lens also indicates that the subjects would have been aware

- of Mark, but this does not necessarily indicate physical closeness or intimacy with the subject. Further, as the focal length of the lens can be a way of “organizing space in different ways, to capture more or less detail, while also possibly magnifying emotion” (Denton, 2005, p. 406).
4. **Is the image posed or an action shot.** This item asks whether the image was a posed portrait, wherein a very specific act of performance on behalf of the subject is occurring for the photographer, or whether it captures some action of the subjects’ lives already in progress, with little overt performance assumed for the photographer.
 5. **The source of light.** This item determines the kind of light used in each image, whether the photographer used available light (defined as the light that already exists within the scene), or added artificial light through the use of a strobe flash, which is notable because it implies additional control the photographer had over the image she made. The source of light was considered in conjunction with the following item that considers the quality of light.
 6. **The quality of light.** Lighting is one of the primary aesthetic elements in a photograph. First, the lighting in an image allows elements within it to be seen or remain unseen. Second, the quality of light shapes the viewer’s perception of the image in that “it is the nature of the lighting which establishes, in essence, the intensity of the experience for people” (Berger, 1989, p. 51). The quality of light can be divided into two categories, flat and chiaroscuro, the former recognized by strong, even light throughout the image with little shadowing, and the latter recognized by uneven light that produces strong areas of light alongside strong areas of shadow. Flat light typically connotes rationality and knowledge (p. 50) and efficiency and

cleanliness (Zettl, 2005, p. 369), whereas chiaroscuro lighting, according to Berger conveys powerful emotion (p. 50), and is described by Zettl as highly dramatic (p. 368).

7. **The dominant hue of the image.** This category determines the primary color tone, or hue, exhibited in each image. Mark preferred to shoot the project with black and white film, but she was unable to find a publication to finance the work because of their preference to publish color photography. So that Mark shot this project in color in the first place is significant.

I love black and white, but this was a challenge, color, and in a way, I think it gave it another dimension, color. Because color was so much a part of the way the women decorated themselves, and it was really part of who they were, so it allowed me to see something else. Color is wonderful. (Mark, 2011a)

Warm tones such as reds, pinks, and oranges, convey tension and passion, while cool tones, such as blues and purples, can impart calmness or a sense of distance or lack of emotional intimacy. So the primary hue Mark chooses for any picture is an additional cue, alongside the quality of light, for the viewer to perceive emotion.

8. **Orientation of the image.** Is the image a horizontal or a vertical shot? Because we see the world horizontally, horizontal images are considered a more natural way to depict the world, while vertical images create tension.

The environment in which the photograph is taken.

9. **Placement of subjects.** This category determines whether the image depicts the subject(s) in an interior, exterior, or liminal space. This is significant because of the highly gendered nature of public and private space not only in India at this time

period, but also in the brothels. Images depicting the subjects in interior spaces assume a sex worker belongs to the space, while images depicting subjects' liminality create tension by depicting them on the threshold of an interior and an exterior space. That is, liminality depicts a sense of movement between a world to which the sex worker is typically confined and the outside world from which she is likely to be restricted.

10. **Location of subjects.** What is the specific location of the subjects in the image? A preponderance of images taken inside the brothels, as opposed to other public spaces, indicates how much of the subjects' lives occur in that location. Photographs taken in public places other than the brothel would also indicate freedom for the sex workers that are usually confined to the brothels in which they work.
11. **Sense of enclosure.** This item identifies whether there is a sense, within the image, of freedom of movement of the subject. For example, is the subject in a room with bars on windows or doors? The presence of closed doors and windows, or the absence of open doors or windows would contribute to the sense of enclosure and servitude and the lack of freedom of movement.
12. **Insider/Outsider.** Is Mark necessarily an insider or an outsider in the scene she photographs through the action of making the picture? For example, if the subject is with a client, that would indicate her outsider status at that moment. Conversely, if the subjects are sitting together in a room putting their make-up on, Mark would not necessarily be considered an outsider at that moment, considering her statements that she felt accepted by the sex workers she photographed.

The subjects of the images.

13. **Number of subjects.** This simply determines the number of subjects with recognizable faces depicted in the images. Noting the number of recognizable subjects in an image speaks to the overall intimacy Mark sought to portray in the text, and also her familiarity with her subjects.
14. **Inclusion of client.** It is useful to indicate whether the sex worker is photographed with a client for several reasons. First, it is indicative of Mark's insider/outsider status at the time the photograph was taken. Second, the proportion of photographs that include clients indicates the significance of other aspects of the prostitutes' lives to the overall narrative. That is, does Mark primarily portray these women engaged in their sex work, or does include portrayals of other parts of their lives as well?
15. **Gender.** Determining the gender of the subjects is essential in answering one of this projects overall research questions of how gender is represented in this body of work. How often does Mark include women, men, *hijras*, and children in her photographs?
16. **Age.** In how many images does Mark include the age of her subjects in accompanying caption information? Where age is mentioned, it is especially significant to consider the ages of the girls who work in the brothels.
17. **Nakedness.** This item determines whether any of the subjects is naked or topless. The presentation of Third World women in these states contributes to their representation of the exotic other, primarily because white women presented in the same way would be considered pornographic. As Lutz and Collins describe of naked pictures of primarily black women in the pages of *National Geographic*, their naked portrayal conforms to dominant ideas about the excessive sexuality of non-whites and clothing

as a marker of higher evolution and civilization (1993, p. 172). This item is key when determining the ways in which Mark undermines and reinforces dominant representations of the Indian other.

18. **Names.** Determining whether a subject is named in an accompanying caption indicates not only the closeness to her subjects in first knowing the name, but also the salience of identifying individuals. A subject's name both humanizes the subject for the viewer by providing an identity, and promotes the prominence of particular individuals by identifying recurring characters that appear in the text.
19. **Gaze.** Arguably the visual cue most telling of power dynamics within an image, as well as most telling of the power dynamics between the subject and photographer, the gaze of the subjects indicates, in many ways, the most essential meaning of an image. As explained above, the intersection of the gazes of the subjects defines the relationships for the viewer, and a direct gaze into the photographer's camera can either act as a cue for social inferiority, or preempt voyeurism and be a means to empower the photographic subject.

Additional information.

20. **Caption.** The presence or absence of a caption indicates whether the photographer felt she needed to supply additional information about the image, or if she preferred the image to be read by the viewer on its own. Additional analysis considers Barthes' characterization of a caption as either making some piece of the image explicit or projecting an altogether new meaning onto it. In doing so, does the "text load the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination" (Barthes, 1977, p. 26)?

Textual Analysis

Second, a textual analysis of visual elements of five selected photographs in *Falkland Road* is used to understanding the visual rhetoric in Mark's body of work and how that creates meaning for the American reader in the context of the contemporary dominant visual culture. While this textual analysis will to some degree be comparative, as a comparison is necessary to determine how Mark undermines and reinforces the dominant visual culture of the time, the comparative portion of analysis will be secondary to considering *Falkland Road* as a text that stands on its own. The content and visual analyses taken together will provide critical support to understanding how Mark's voice as a woman acts as an agent in undermining and reinforcing dominant representations.

Interview

Third, an in-person interview with Mary Ellen Mark, along with a close reading of already published first-person accounts by her, will be useful for their ability to provide clarification, detail, depth, and further anecdotes to explain Mark's approach to her photography. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with Mark in person at her New York City studio. Each interview was one hour in length, and the interviews were both recorded and transcribed. As the purpose of the interview was to understand her intentions and approach at the time she was photographing in the brothels on Falkland Road, the scope of the interview was primarily limited to that time period. (See Appendix C for the interview guide.) It is important to note here that the interview with Mark serves to provide contextual background information about the photographer herself and her working style. The interview is not intended to validate or invalidate the researcher's

findings, but rather to understand Mark's intent when she was making the images that appear in *Falkland Road*.

Additional Analysis

Finally, a reading and analysis of other interviews she has given and first-person written texts (introductions, afterwards, etc.) within her photography collections, along with critiques that appear in academic journals and popular media texts, complements the overall analysis and provide an important context in which to understand Mark's photography. First-person written statements from *Falkland Road* (Knopf, 1981, and Steidl, 2005), *The Photo Essay: Photographs by Mary Ellen Mark* (Smithsonian, 1990), *Mary Ellen Mark: American odyssey, 1963-1999* (Aperture, 1999), an interview published in the *Bulletin* of the American Society of Media Photographers in January 1991, and the video recording *Mary Ellen Mark: The Searching Eye* (Media Loft, 1992), were analyzed for statements about her approach to this specific work, as well as statements about how she photographs subjects in marginalized social positions, and how she photographs in India.

Overall, this mixed methodology will provide the most holistic approach to understanding the text *Falkland Road*, following in the tradition of media production scholar James Curran, who often employs a mixed methodology, such as textual analysis combined with interview, to explore the relationship between a media producer's intent and actual outcome, that provide "illuminating" results (Stokes, 2003, p. 96).

Validity

The methodology employed here offers validity and reliability in several ways. First, the simultaneous use of content analysis, document analysis, textual analysis and interview employs methodological triangulation that increases both the reliability and construct validity of the findings in determining Mark's feminist approach. Second, the use of five images for in-depth visual analysis is an example of data triangulation that offers multiple examples of data to answer the research questions at hand. Third, theoretical triangulation is achieved by applying multiple visual theories to the examination of *Falkland Road*, including the theory of visual rhetoric (Foss, 2005), cultural studies theory (O'Donnell, 2005 and Slack, 1996), aesthetics theory (Zettl, 2005), feminist theory (Narayan, 2010), and the intersection of gazes (Lutz and Collins, 1993).

Limitations

While the holistic methodological approach and application of multiple visual theories provides an appropriate replicable template for other visual scholars in future studies of the work of other documentary photographers, methodological limitations inherent to textual and visual analysis, however, do persist in the design of this study. A textual or visual analysis is subjective and places a heavy burden on the researcher to articulate the case well, lest it be considered a failure.

CHAPTER 4: CONSIDERING THE TEXT

Now that the methodological approach has been outlined, a detailed analysis of the text *Falkland Road* is offered to address the first research question posed in this study: What are the dominant visual representations of the Indian Other in Mary Ellen Mark's 1981 text *Falkland Road*? Using the method of ethnographic content analysis, all 65 images in the 1981 edition of *Falkland Road* were first analyzed to identify the prominent technical aspects of the photographs, the recurring aesthetic themes, the dominant environments in which the subjects are photographed, how the subjects are treated within each image, and what sort of additional information about each image is offered. As the ethnographic content analysis methodology indicates, this type of coding is intended not to be reductive in transforming a thoroughly meaning-rich qualitative endeavor like documentary photography into a series of 1's and 0's, but instead to "allow discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection and protection against an unconscious search through the [text] for only those which confirm one's initial sense of what the photos say or do" (Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 89).

After engaging in an itemized discussion of the categorical analysis of the 65 images from the text, a detailed textual analysis of five images that are representative of the major themes that arise from the ethnographic content analysis will be undertaken to identify the dominant representations of the Indian Other in *Falkland Road*. This will lead to a discussion in the following chapter of the ways in which Mark's representations both undermine and reinforce certain aspects of representations of those same topics in the contemporary American popular magazine press.

Results of Ethnographic Content Analysis

Table 1:
Technical attributes of photographic composition

	Shot Distance	Number of Images	Percent of Total
1	Environmental scene setter	5	8
2	Medium distance	34	52
3	Close-up	26	40
4	Detail	0	0
	Photographer perspective	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Below	9	14
2	Neutral	32	49
3	Above	24	37
	Focal length of the lens	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Wide-angle	38	58
2	Medium	25	39
3	Zoom	2	3
	Type of action	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Posed	29	45
2	Action	36	55
	Source of Light	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Available light only	26	40
2	Artificial light	39	60
	Quality of Light	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Flat light	28	43
2	Chiaroscuro light	37	57
	Dominant hue	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Primarily warm tones	26	40
2	Primarily cool tones	39	60
	Orientation	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Horizontal	56	86
2	Vertical	9	14

Engaging in this thorough and methodical analysis allowed for several enlightening observations to become clear. On the whole, though, Mark's work in the *Falkland Road* project is very evocative of the American documentary photographic tradition, which, in the words of Roy Stryker, should convey "not only what a place or thing or person *looks* like, but it must also tell the audience what it would *feel* like to be an actual witness to the scene" (Stott, 1973, p. 29). A pattern of use of photographic conventions that would make a reader feel like she was witness to the scene was found to be evident.

First, the overwhelming majority of images were either medium-distance (52%) or close-up (40%) shots, with only 5 of 65 images (8%) serving as environmental scene-setting images. Interestingly, Mark doesn't include any detail shots in the text. Similar proportions of photographs were shot with a medium-distance lens (39%) as a wide-angle lens (58%), and only 2 of 65 images (3%) were shot with a zoom lens, suggesting Mark was very much involved with her subjects when she was photographing them, and not making pictures of them unaware of her presence. This also speaks to the unfettered access she had to her subjects. As a standard practice to grasp visual context and gain access to situations, many photographers will begin by shooting from far away with a zoom lens, and then move in closer to their subjects and switch to using wider-angle lenses. Mark, on the other hand, did the opposite:

The last pictures I took on Falkland Road were with the long lens. I borrowed a lens from a friend of mine, and I went into a building across the street and took these pictures, because I wanted, kind of, a view of the activities on the street. I couldn't have done that in the beginning. If they'd caught me, they would have been furious. But they knew I was there. They didn't care. (Mark, 2011a)

Eschewing what most photographers would have done in that situation, Mark's actions here indicate her being in conversation with her subjects, concerned with their responses to her movement in and around the Falkland Road brothels, aside from simply maintaining access. Additionally, the predominance of images using medium- and wide-angle lenses provides greater opportunity to emphasize individuals and present recurring characters that would remain recognizable throughout the narrative, and magnify the emotion in each image.

Similarly, comparable numbers of images captured posed action (45%) and spontaneous action (55%), implying that the photographer allowed a variety of situations to unfold around her with minimal interaction as much as she interacted with her subjects one-on-one for portraiture. This is indicative of the role Mark saw herself in, both participant and observer (Mark, 2011a). Further, this suggests that Mark's subjects were aware of and comfortable with her presence.

The data from the ethnographic content analysis regarding the physical perspective of Mark return some interesting results. Of 65 images, 32 were taken from a neutral perspective. That is, 49% of the images were taken from roughly eye level with the subjects, suggesting the photographer intended neither to convey overt power or powerlessness in these images. Of the remaining half of the images, nine were taken from below the subject (14%) and 24 from above (37%). In the images taken from below the eye level of the subject, Mark imbues a sense of power into her subjects, literally looking up to them. Conversely, in the images taken from above, Mark retains the power in the photographer-subject dynamic. In these images, the subject will appear smaller than life-sized and the viewer needs to look down to make eye contact, elevating both

photographer and viewer to a plane above the reality experienced within each image, removing them from it. Overall, though, Mark does this fewer than 40 percent of the images. Most of the 65 images in the text (63%), taken from either below eye-level of the subject or from a neutral perspective, also act to help the viewer feel what is happening within in the image, not removing the viewer from the reality, but in fact injecting the viewer into it. In this way, Mark attempts to place the viewer and subject on an equal plane without displaying an overtly consistent power over the photographs' subjects.

The remaining technical aspects of the photographs that were considered in this analysis included the orientation of the images, the dominant hue, and the course and quality of light. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of images (86%) reflect a horizontal orientation (56 of 65 images) rather than a vertical orientation (14 of 65 images). Because we tend to naturally see the world horizontally rather than vertically, perhaps here Mark is portraying a matter-of-factness to the images to say, "Indeed, this is what life is like." The dominant hue of the images tended to be cool tones rather than warm tones, and this is due in large part to the walls, doors and window frames of the brothels being painted blue or green. In 39 of 65 images (60%), the dominant hue was a cool color, and in 26 of 65 images (40%), the dominant hue was a warm color. At times, it was difficult to determine the dominant hue because so many images contained more black and neutral gray tones with pops of warm color provided by the subjects' clothing.

The source and quality of light roughly correlated with one another. Of 65 images, 26 relied on available light (40%), and 39 relied on artificial light (60%). Twenty-eight images (43%) displayed flat light, and 37 images (57%) displayed chiaroscuro light with extreme differences between light and shadow. As Mark indicated

in interviews (2011a, 2011b), the lighting conditions in the brothels were difficult at best, often only lit with single fluorescent bulbs, and interiors often had no window access, so it is not surprising that the majority of images employed artificial strobe light. Using a strobe flash the way Mark did more often than not created high levels of contrast between lights and shadows in the images, and this chiaroscuro lighting more effectively portrayed emotion and drama than did images employing flat lighting. This drama is achieved by pairing areas in an image where detail can be read and known easily with areas of dark shadow wherein some mystery of the unknown lies.

Table 2:
The environment of the photographs

	Placement of subjects	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Interior	49	75
2	Exterior	3	5
3	Liminal	13	20
	Location	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Brothel	59	91
2	Public	6	9
	Sense of confinement	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Enclosed	52	80
2	Free	11	17
3	Unclear	2	3
	Insider/Outsider	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Insider	50	77
2	Outsider	15	23

Now that we have considered the technical aspects of the images from *Falkland Road*, it is fitting to consider the context in which these photographs were taken and the context each photograph attempts to convey. The data gathered that speak to the

environment of the photographs reveal some interesting tendencies in Mark's photography. One of the main themes of Mark's work is gendered space, so it is particularly interesting to see how she treats that in a project on India, where public and private space is uniquely gendered.

First, only a small minority of the images (5%) portrays exterior locations, with most portraying interior locations (75%), and a small handful (20%) portraying subjects in a place of liminality. Further, of the 65 images, only six images (9%) portray public spaces, and 59 images (91%) are taken inside the brothels. Where the subjects are portrayed in public places, they are primarily in the Olympia Café, a common hangout for the street prostitutes, and where they are portrayed in a liminal space, it is on the thresholds or doorsteps or cages of the brothels advertising their business. The sex workers do not exist in public spaces, though they are of course on display to the men who can more freely navigate the public space. And even this private space of the brothels is heavily commodified, a commercial space where the sex workers sell their bodies. Though at that time in India women primarily existed in private spaces, and men in the public spaces, the sex workers are deprived even of that exclusively private space. Despite that, it is a space they are confined to, and 52 of 65 images (80%) portray a strict sense of confinement, denoted by bars, closed windows and doors, or lack of open windows or doors. Only 11 of 65 images (17%) portray some sense of freedom of movement, while two of the 65 images (3%) were unclear.

Considering Mark's status as an insider or outsider is not simply a consideration of the access provided her gender, though that certainly influences it. As a woman, she is neither viewed as a potential customer of the sex workers, nor as a physical threat, and

Mark had significant privileged access to aspects of Falkland Road residents' lives that a male photographer would not, including their bathing and makeup rituals. Even so, as discussed previously, Mark is not a complete insider. Mark is not Indian, but more importantly, she is not a sex worker. Mark is a free woman; the sex workers are not. She exists in a liminal space of her own, at times an insider, but at times also very much an outsider, though unlike the usual outsiders that come into these women's lives—the men that come in every day and night as customers. Mark further points out that being an unmarried woman worked in her favor.

Saroja never asked me anything personal. No one did. They wanted to know only my age, why I didn't wear a brassiere, and why I wasn't married. I think the reason I was finally accepted was that I was single—alone in the world as they were. One madam told me, “We are sisters. You and I are fated for the same life. Every night I say my prayers and I sleep alone.” (Mark, 1981, p. 17)

A clear example of Mark's achieved Insider status is displayed in how she is cared for during a police raid. After a Nepali madam has hidden her under a bed until the police leave, Mark writes, “I felt very safe under her bed; safe and protected and accepted” (p. 16).

To determine, then, Mark's role as insider or outsider in any given image, one must consider each situation on its own. Could anybody with a camera have reasonably had access to the scene, or would the photographer needed to rely on her relationship with the subjects to be in a position to take a particular image? The majority of the images (77%) belongs to the latter category, and depended on Mark's insider status. Conversely, a minority of images (23%) could have been taken by any outsider, including photographs taken outside of the brothels and in the Olympia Café. That 50 of 65 images

reflected insider status speaks strongly to the necessity of Mark's gender to be able to make the images that she did and provides further support that as a woman, Mark was able to construct a photographic text that would be very distinct from the work being done at the same time by other practicing photographers, the majority of whom were male.

Table 3:

The subjects of the images

	Number of subjects	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	1	18	28
2	2	25	38.5
3	3	4	6
4	4	6	9
5	5 or more	12	18.5
	Inclusion of client	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	With a client	15	23
2	Without a client	50	77
	Gender of subjects	Number of people	Percent of 151 Total Recognizable Faces
1	Female	99	65
2	Male	26	17
3	Hijra	16	11
4	Infant/Child	10	7
	Age	Number of people	Percent of 151 Total Recognizable Subjects
1	Indicated in caption	6	4
2	Not indicated in caption	145	96
	Nakedness	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Naked	16	25
2	Clothed	49	75
	Named	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	All subjects named	13	20
2	No subjects named	42	65
3	Both named and unnamed subjects	10	15
	Gaze	Number of images	Percent of Total
1	Female direct gaze	23	35
2	Female indirect gaze	27	42
3	Male direct gaze	9	14
4	Male indirect gaze	8	12
5	<i>Hijra</i> direct gaze	2	3
6	<i>Hijra</i> indirect gaze	10	15
7	Unclear	9	14

Ultimately, it is the subjects of these images that are under examination here to determine the nature of the representations of the Indian Other in this text, and the following items specifically considered traits of the photography subjects: the number of subjects in an image, whether a client was present in the image, the gender of the subjects, their age, whether they are portrayed in any state of nakedness, whether they are named, and the gaze of the subjects.

Of the 65 images that appear in *Falkland Road*, 43 feature two or fewer subjects (66.5%), 10 images (15%) feature three or four subjects, and 12 images (18.5%) feature five or more subjects. The fewer people in each image, the more intimacy and closeness Mark is able to portray. Because over 80% of the images feature four or fewer subjects, the book as a whole is able to convey more intimacy and provide the viewer with a greater real feeling for what the environment is like and who the subjects of the images are. If the majority of the images instead had shown large groups, the viewer would have been left with little idea of the individual stories Mark seeks to tell.

Despite that this is a photographic text entirely about sex workers, only 15 of the 65 images (23%) feature sex workers with their clients. Most of the images (77%) portray the subjects engaged in activities other than servicing clients. This is notable for several reasons. First, that Mark had any access at all to her subjects while they were with clients is remarkable. To be present when the sex workers were engaged in explicit sexual acts with their clients speaks to the most intimate access a photographer in that situation could have. It also suggests that the male clients were not threatened by Mark, though they likely would have been in the presence of a white male photographer. But by focusing so much on the aspects of these women's lives beyond their sex work, Mark is careful to

show that these women are equal to more than just their occupation. Ironically, a less intimate portrait of sex workers would have likely depicted sex workers engaged only in sex work, and not in the multiple other aspects of their lives, including bathing, eating, sleeping, and spending time with friends, for it is the latter activities, in their very ordinariness that provide a more intimate depiction of life anywhere.

Gender and age were best quantified not by the number of images, but by the number of recognizable faces, because each image often contained more than one person. In all 65 images, 151 recognizable faces were counted, and any scenes of crowds wherein the faces were smaller than a dime or unrecognizable, those individuals were not included. Of 151 people in the text, 99 were women (65%), 26 were male (17%), 16 were *hijra* (11%), and 10 were infants or children (7%). It is not surprising to find the majority of subjects included were women, but it is notable that Mark chose to include not only female sex workers, but the transgendered *hijra* sex workers as well. Only six subjects of 151 recognizable subjects are identified by age. Two boys are identified as four and eight years old, one man is identified as 100 years old, and of the female sex workers identified by age, one is 12, two are 13, and one is 15. Otherwise the age of the sex workers is unknown and must be inferred from text that appears in the book other than the specific captions that accompany the individual images.

In a photographic work about sex workers that in fact features a naked girl on the cover, only 16 of the 65 images (25%) featured subjects naked or topless. Most of the pictures (75%) showed no nakedness or toplessness. This fact goes far to illustrate the degree to which Mark captured day-to-day living of her subjects apart from the time they spent with paying customers. This also belies the perhaps instinctive tendency to assume

that a photography book about sex workers would be made up primarily of illicit images. Further, by not focusing exclusively on the overt or excessive sexuality of the sex workers, Mark portrays her subjects as multi-faceted individuals who experience pieces of a life beyond being paid to have sex.

In most of the images (65%), Mark does not explicitly name her subjects in the caption, and only in 20% of the images does she name all of the subjects. An additional 15% of the images include both named and unnamed subjects. That said, after careful study of the text, an astute reader would be able to recognize the same characters appearing in multiple images, even if they are not explicitly named each time. Regardless, images were counted as including a named subject only if the subject's name appeared explicitly in a caption accompanying any image.

The gaze of the subjects was another difficult attribute to quantify in each image, and this aspect of the photography will be dealt with in more depth in the following textual analysis. Because each image contained multiple subjects, and the gaze of the subjects within any one image could vary, the subject gaze here was quantified by its presence, and multiple gazes could be counted in a single image. Of 65 total images, 23 images included women with a direct gaze (35%), and 27 included women with an indirect gaze (43%). Similar numbers of images included male direct gazes (9 images, 14%) as male indirect gazes (8 images, 12%). Of images including *hijras*, however, only two images featured *hijras* looking directly at the camera (3%), and these two photographs were of the same individual, Champa. Ten images (15%) included *hijras* looking indirectly away from the camera. Of the total number of 65 images, nine images (14%) were unclear, in that the subjects' eyes were closed or not visible, or the images

included crowds or larger numbers of subjects that were unaware of the camera. If the indirect gaze is read as controlling one's own agency, and the direct gaze as relinquishing it, then one could argue that Mark seeks to empower her female subjects by including more images of females with indirect gazes than direct gazes. However, in many of the images, the indirect female gaze is looking at a male client or in another way suggesting subservience, so it is best to consider the gaze on a case-by-case basis, which will be conducted in the following textual analysis.

Table 4:
Captions accompanying the images

	Captioned Images	Number of images	Percent Total
1	Captioned	55	85
2	Not captioned	10	15

The final category of consideration in the ethnographic content analysis was whether images carried a caption. Of 65 images, 55 images (85%) were accompanied by a caption, and only 10 images (15%) were not captioned. This suggests Mark felt the need to provide verbal context to the majority of the images, rather than allow them to stand alone. The captions often are used to indicate whether a sex worker is a *hijra* or a Nepali woman trafficked in from a neighboring country. Mark also uses captions to insert quotes from her subjects that provide some explanation for what is occurring in an image. On the whole, though, the captions are minimal, of five lines or fewer, and do not act to overburden the images.

Textual Analysis

The ethnographic content analysis completed above is useful in identifying overall patterns in *Falkland Road* as a whole, but it cannot stand alone without additional in-depth examination of the images on an individual level. To take the examination of *Falkland Road* to the next level, a textual analysis of several images is included here. Clearly, an in-depth textual analysis of all 65 images included in the text is beyond the scope of this project. The author has chosen five images to discuss in further detail. These images are included here because of their expressive power and compositional elements.

“Putla, a thirteen-year-old prostitute, comes from a small village.”

Introduced on the cover of *Falkland Road*, and seen again in one of the final images of the text, is 13-year-old Putla, sold into prostitution when she was age 12 by her mother, who needed money to support the family (See *Fig. 1*). Despite that nakedness is shown in the minority of images in the text, when Mark does choose to put it on display, it is not with timidity. By choosing this photograph, Mark not only doesn't shy away from displaying female and male nakedness, she throws it on her cover of *Falkland Road* so the reader knows exactly what he or she is getting into. In American publishing, books and magazines that feature naked women on the cover are wrapped in black plastic and held behind store counters, but this book would be found in the photography section of any bookstore. Before even opening the book, the reader is presented with the notion of the exotic, for if nakedness is not wrapped in black plastic, then it must be the Exotic Other, an object of exotic curiosity.

This photograph, then, offers an interesting case to consider, because while Mark makes Putla an object of exotic curiosity, she simultaneously plays a trick on the viewer by engaging in a direct gaze with Putla's steel gaze. Despite that the direct, head-on gaze that Putla exhibits here is often read as a code for social inferiority and as granting access of the foreign body to the viewer, it is argued here that Putla's direct gaze can instead be read as a confrontational gesture. There is no pretense of not engaging with the subject when she looks directly into the eye of the photographer and the viewer; it is simply not possible. The direct gaze can be unsettling, especially when it is the direct gaze of the Exotic Other. This individual that is not personally known, from a world of which there is no first-hand knowledge, looks the viewer directly in the eye. Putla does not look away, rather she holds her gaze indefinitely. But it is the viewer who is forced to look away. Much like a canine battle of dominance, the subject that holds her gaze the longest by looking directly into the camera holds the power over the reader. Putla has made a choice to be photographed here, likely one of the few choices she has had complete control over since she came to the brothel. By assenting to be photographed in this way, Putla does preempt a voyeuristic response by the reader. Further, Mark's insider status as a woman also facilitates this result, as Putla is not posing for a potential customer, but sharing her nakedness with another woman.

**Twelve-year-old Lata lying in bed
(uncaptioned)**

This horizontal image of Lata is the first we see inside the pages of the book, on the left-hand page



opposite the title page. The twin-sized bed she lies on occupies the entirety of

Figure 4. Uncaptioned. (Mark, 1981, p. 4)

the room it is in, surrounded by grimy, turquoise-green walls. At first glance, aside from the latched and shuttered window at the top of the frame, there appears to be no egress from the room, but upon closer examination, the viewer can make out a door with a sliding bolt on the left-hand side, next to a pile of stubbed-out cigarette butts. Lata lies on twisted on her side on the bed, naked from the waist up, wearing a green and black printed skirt, a beaded necklace, metal anklets, and a cuff bracelet on her right wrist. Her toenails and fingernails are painted red, as are her lips. Thick *khol* rings her eyes, and a dark-colored *bindi* dots the center of her forehead. Her body is positioned laterally in the frame, and her face appears at a 90-degree angle from the standard orientation of the book. Her right arm bends at the elbow, and her posed right hand is cupped at an angle near her right ear. Her feet rest on perpendicular walls, toes flexed. Lata's eyes stare directly into the camera, though her face is relatively expressionless. Mark shoots this image from above with a wide-angle lens and a strobe flash.

Regarding space and captivity, this image tells the story of a girl who appears to have no way into and no way out of her current situation, and this image is included here

for analysis because it illustrates the tension of gendered space the sex workers on Falkland Road live in daily. She simply exists in a limbo of being suspended in this dirty green room, and by extension, in her current situation as a sex worker. The confinement in which she works and lives is unquestionable and speaks to the eternal quality of Lata's subjectivity. Her body position is twisted and disordered, offering a visual metaphor for the abnormality that will follow throughout the rest of the book. Mark shoots this image from above, and by assuming that position, she wields power over Lata, making her appear much smaller than the walls that surround her. This is also an effect of the wide-angle lens that Mark is using, which distorts the elements that appear on the edges of the frame, making them seem more stretched out than they actually are. That effect also causes the viewer's eye to go directly to Lata's figure in the center of the frame, which is an equally powerful visual technique to focus the viewer's attention on the primary subject.

Lata's disordered body position also acts to dehumanize her here. If the viewer wanted to make substantive eye contact with her, she would have to turn the book 90 degrees clockwise. Without doing that, Lata is objectified, her form becoming merely a tangle of bent elbows and knees and bare breasts and red lips. This dehumanization has an additional, if somewhat contradictory, effect of desexualizing Lata. Despite the fact that her bare breasts are at the very center of the frame, they are just one more item in this tangle of body parts. For them to be sexualized, it seems that they would need to appear in their natural order, that is, below the face of the subject, from the viewer's perspective.

The precise manner in which Lata has tilted her right hand at the side of her head is reminiscent of a highly sexualized pose that women and girls may strike, cocking their

head to one side, jutting their chests out. Along with her flexed toes, Lata appears poised for action, inviting the viewer to sexually engage with her at that moment. Is she asking Mark to engage with her in that way when the photograph is being taken? Where did Mark even come from, the viewer might wonder. Has she climbed over a wall? Stood on a ladder? The uncertainty of Mark's position in taking the photograph contributes to an omniscient voice-of-god photographic persona from the very first image in the book. Mark is literally above it all, looking down on this girl.

These first two images provide a contrast in how Mark employs the direct gaze among her female subjects, and the meaning that can be derived from each. Putla appears empowered by the direct gaze, but Lata appears subservient. The primary difference in how the gaze can be read in each image lies in the perspective of Mark. In photographing Putla, Mark is at eye-level with her subject, but with Lata, Mark shoots from a point high above. Additionally, the use of a medium-distance lens, here a 35mm, in taking Putla's photograph, mimics how the human eye would naturally perceive the same situation. Conversely, as discussed above, the wide-angle lens used to shoot Lata distorts what it sees and paints the girl as much smaller than life. That these two images appear in succession at the beginning of the book also serves as an indication of the contradictions present in Mark's work. Yes, the visual tools Mark employ in her photography overwhelmingly empower the women that appear in her images, but there are outliers, and the image of Lata stands as a stark example of one.

“Cages on Falkland Road at night”



Figure 5. “Cages on Falkland Road at night.” (Mark, 1981, p. 19)

A distinctive feature of the Falkland Road red light district in Bombay, and one that underscores the gruesome element of captivity in the lives of the sex workers is the cages on the ground floors. On Bombay streets, there is

little demarcation between the public sphere of a building and the street that it lies on.

There are no sidewalks, just a few steps up to a threshold. Very little separates those walking along the streets and those housed inside, save for the steel bars lining the windows and doors.

Mark introduces the landscape of the cages early in the text,

immediately after the introduction, to show the viewer the place in which everything to come occurs. This image holds a lot of information that is best served by a large spread,

but the expanse the image requires belies the confinement that is the essence of its

meaning. By surrounding the image with negative space on the page, and absent an image on the opposite page, Mark creates the tension that is needed to convey that confinement.

This exterior image is lit by candles on the street and lights from within the buildings. It appears as though there is also light from streetlamps, as they cast shadows of the open window shutters onto the walls of the buildings. Mark has taken this image

from above, likely from the second floor of a building across the street, and she uses a slow shutter speed, probably 1/30 of a second, which captures movement of figures who are walking, but does not blur the figures of people standing relatively still, effectively communicating the static nature of the lives of the caged women. The people outside the cages, primarily men in the opening image, can move about freely, while the women inside them are restricted to standing still, preening to prepare for the evening, or already on display.

The ragpicker with three women on the threshold (uncaptioned)

As we move further into the text, an image appears that employs masterful use of chiaroscuro. This is primarily an image of disembodied legs, bare from the waist down in tight black shorts, floating



Figure 6. Uncaptioned. (Mark, 1981, p. 48)

out of the darkness. The only face we see is of a young ragpicker boy with a cigarette. This image provides one of the best examples of the principles of photograph reality and highlight the differences between what the photographer has chosen to show and the reality of the scene. Leaving the women in dark shadow accomplishes many things. First,

the women standing on the threshold of the brothel remain faceless, an apt metaphor for the role these women play to the public who would also be looking in from the street as Mark does here. Second, Mark conveys mystery and drama by hiding their faces, and strengthens the message that these women exist purely for their sexuality by choosing to show only their legs in full light. The tension of the chiaroscuro is met with the tension provided by the liminality of the women's position here. One woman's foot is slightly tucked over the threshold of the doorframe, teasing a passer-by: Will she remain where she is, or is she tempted to come out to the street to meet a customer? The tension of the woman's own position is also emphasized here. Two of the women do not dare to step beyond the threshold behind which they are confined, but the third dares to cross it, ever so slightly.

This image is also particularly interesting in considering the photographic reality. Do we see what the ragpicker sees? How does the reality that Mark captures differ from the boy's? Because the camera can only read the information that exists above a threshold of light sensitivity determined by the Mark's choice of film, aperture and shutter speed, the photographic reality we see is of these disembodied legs. The camera could not capture the visual information held within the shadows, but the boy's eyes, and Mark's, would automatically adjust to see beyond the threshold of light the camera can see. Mark interprets the reality of that street scene by consciously choosing to focus on the disembodied legs as objects, further demonstrating the objectification of Falkland Road's women.

Male client with *bidi* and two girls (uncaptioned)

The final image of which to provide a detailed examination is one of the more startling of the 65 images that appear in the text. As indicated above, roughly equal numbers of images feature men engaging in an indirect gaze as a direct gaze. In this image, a male customer sits on a bed with two girls, and Mark's strobe flash is reflected off of the glossy blue paint of the wall. Mark has likely used a 35mm lens to avoid the distortion that would be present with a wider lens. The man's left hand cups the breast of the girl closest to him, and his other arm is draped over the second girl's shoulder. Only the man, *bidi* (hand-rolled cigarette) hanging from his mouth, gazes directly into the camera. The girl in the center of the frame, whose breast is being cupped, tilts her head softly and gazes down and off to the side, indicating submission, but also a sense of vacancy. The young woman appears to have removed herself emotionally from this scene, relinquishing control to the man with the direct gaze who is happy to take control.

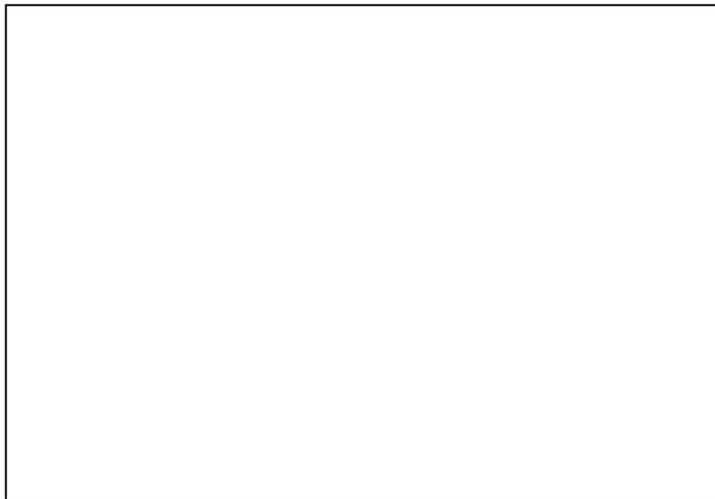


Figure 7. Uncaptioned. (Mark, 1981, p. 79)

The presence of the second giggling girl again illustrates the complex world of Falkland Road. Where one prostitute in this picture appears forlorn and resigned, the other looks to be having fun and enjoying herself. As Mark

has illustrated in across 65 images in the text, things are as much *this* as they are *that*. The

direct gaze both empowers and subjects. The liminality both hints at a world outside the brothels, but also reinforces the girls' confinement to them. The photographer is both an insider and an outsider. The photographs both show Mark's perception of photographic reality and offer up a text from which the reader can interpret her own version. All of that said, however, the dominant message and themes found in this text convey intimacy, closeness, and humanity that would not have been achieved were it not for the access to the brothels Mark had as a woman.

Now that this in-depth analysis of *Falkland Road* is complete, this study moves on to considering the text in comparison to dominant representations of the Indian Other that appeared in American magazines at the same time.

CHAPTER 5: CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT

The preceding discussion provided an in-depth analysis of Mary Ellen Mark's *Falkland Road*, considering how technical photographic conventions, photographic reality, and the intersection of gazes create meaning in the representation of the Indian Other. Theories of visual rhetoric and visual aesthetics provided the tools to tease out and articulate Mark's representations of the Indian Other, and this study now turns to cultural studies theory and the feminist theory of epistemic privilege to compare the text *Falkland Road* to nine color photographic representations of India in issues of three magazines published 1978-1984. This comparison details the specific ways Mark simultaneously undermines and reinforces the dominant representations of the Indian Other in American color magazine photography and provides support for the argument that the access Mark, as a woman, had to her subjects allowed her to present an alternative to the dominant representations of the Indian Other. Additionally, this chapter addresses that because *Falkland Road* was the first photographic project to examine the sex trade in India, Mark made a significant contribution to the visual vocabulary.

As described above, nine color photographic essays appearing in *National Geographic*, *GEO*, and *The New York Times Magazine* from 1978 to 1984 will be used for comparison. The color photographs that appeared in *National Geographic* and *GEO* can be described as photo stories, or photo essays, in that the photographs drove the coverage, though they all appeared with accompanying text-based stories. Additionally, each photo story, with the exception of the *GEO* piece on Jaipur, was shot exclusively by one photographer who received a byline alongside the author of the article. The

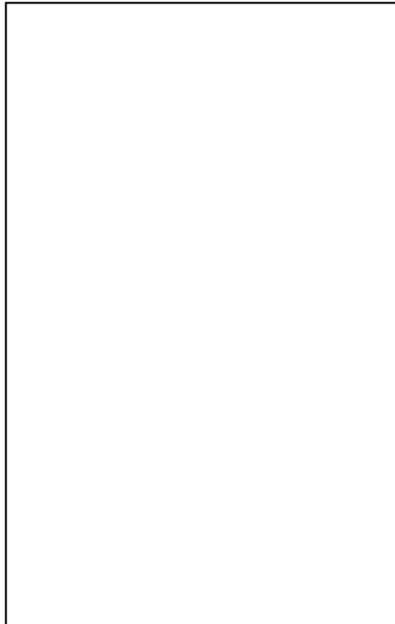
photographs that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, however, were secondary to the seven-page story they accompanied, and can be considered so because the five photographs were shot by different photographers who, rather than receiving photo bylines, received only small-type photo credits alongside each image.

Dominant Representations of the Indian Other

The examination of these nine photographic representations reveals several themes, including a claim to authenticity, a sense of tradition, religiosity, and extreme population density. The discussion of the dominant representations of the Indian Other begins with the cover story “Indira’s Return: Personality and Power in India” by Michael T. Kaufman from the March 23, 1980 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. Though the photographs here are intended primarily to illustrate the article they accompany and not stand alone, they still convey two main themes that surface throughout this examination—authenticity, tradition, and population crowding. A photograph of Indira Gandhi addressing a crowd at a political rally spans the opening two pages of the spread, wherein the people in the crowd fill the majority of the background space. Further, the photograph is printed as a full bleed, which conveys the idea that the crowds extend beyond the pages they are printed on. In another image, Gandhi is photographed with folk dancers dressed in traditional costume, and in the cover photograph, the security guards that flank her wear turbans and carry swords. All of these images suggest a dominant representation of the Indian Other that includes authenticity, tradition, and crowding.

Moving from the news photography in *The New York Times Magazine* and into the documentary and feature photography of the monthly glossy periodicals *National*

Geographic and *GEO*, the portrayals of authenticity, tradition, religiosity, and population density continue. First, in a March 1978 cover story from *National Geographic* titled “Ladakh—The Last Shangri-la,” all of the Ladakhis are shown exclusively in traditional



clothing, and their daily activities are portrayed as specific and unique to that culture, so that the photographs act as an all-inclusive Ladakhi show and tell, reinforcing the notion that an entire culture from an exotic foreign land can be reduced to a handful of striking color images. The woman who appears on the cover of the issue (*Fig. 8*) wears an elaborate turquoise headpiece and heavy turquoise and coral jewelry. Despite that this jewelry would typically only be worn on special occasions, it is presented here as emblematic of “a robust people [that] embellish their frugal lives with

Figure 8. *National Geographic*, March 1978.

rich endowments of faith” (Abercrombie, 1978, p. 332). While the photographs of Ladakh portray neither overt religiosity nor immense crowding—Ladakh is India’s most remote and barren state, high in the Himalayas—they clearly support a dominant representation of authentic tradition untinged by modernity.

Photo stories in this “show and tell” vein are particularly apparent in *GEO*. Though this magazine ceased publication five short years after being introduced in 1979 with the promise to “put you on the scene and take you behind the scenes to bring you new views of our world” (Randolph, 1979), India proved to be a popular topic, featured in seven photo stories in that time. Three of these stories are particularly illustrative of a

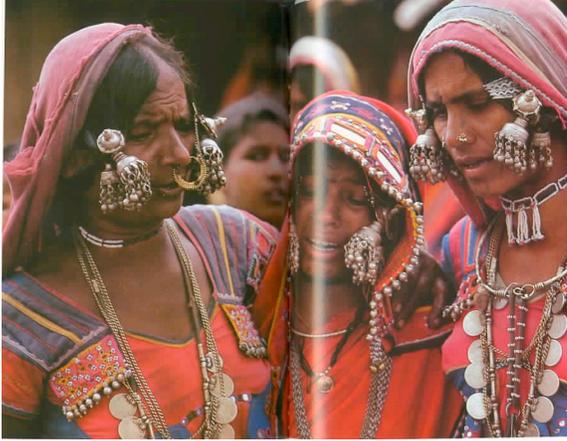


Figure 9. “The bride ritually laments her departure from her home village” (Isaac, *GEO*, May 1983, p. 86-87).

claim to authenticity and tradition. In the 18 images in “Dance from the Edge of India,” from the June 1981 issue highlighting the *kathakali* dance tradition of the southern state of Kerala, the closest

hint of modernity is found in a photograph of a dancer taking a cigarette break before

a performance, though he is still adorned in the traditional makeup required for the dance. John Issac’s photographs in the story titled “The Gypsies Who Never Left Home” from the May 1983 issue depict only ritual and tradition, from “a girl [who] makes bread in her mud hut” (p. 85) to four photographs from a Banjara wedding. The Indians here are also exclusively shown wearing traditional dress, in this case bright red skirts and shawls and heavy silver jewelry (*Fig. 9*). They are also exclusively depicted barefoot. In “The Sikhs: Ferocity and Faith” from the February 1984 issue, we again see not only tradition and ritual depicted, but also immense population density in a photograph depicting a religious festival and another depicting the construction of a temple. The photographer Raghu Rai also introduces what has since become a cliché tourist



Figure 10. “The majority of Sikhs live in the Indian state of Punjab, where agricultural prosperity has helped the country avoid widespread starvation.” (Rai, *GEO*, February 1984, p. 42).

photograph from anywhere in Asia—multiple passengers seated on a motorcycle, including at least one child, none wearing helmets, and always shot from a moving car on the highway. Here, Rai’s picture shows two men on the motorbike with a child perched on the gas tank in front (*Fig. 10*). The man in the rear wears a *dhoti* with no shirt, and judging from his long beard and the staff he carries, he is a *sadhu*, or a Hindu holy man. Again, these representations tend toward authenticity, tradition, population density, religiosity, and the juxtaposition between tradition and modernity.



Figure 11. “To help control crowds waiting to buy tickets at the movie theaters in the poorest quarters of Bombay, iron cages have been installed along the sidewalks.” (Fischbeck, *GEO*, May 1980, p. 40).

Two additional stories from *GEO* focus not on Indian ethnic groups or ancient artistic traditions, but instead on cities. The first, from the May 1980 issue focuses entirely on the Bollywood film industry, and features primarily photographs taken on the sets of various film productions.

A striking photograph from this photo

story is one of the few not taken on a film set, but on the Bombay streets, wherein men stand caged in a queue on a sidewalk (*Fig. 11*). The caption explains these cages were installed for crowd control in the queues to buy movie tickets in “the poorest quarters of Bombay” (Fischbeck, p. 40). The remaining images primarily portray a heavily stylized and opulent film industry that is divorced from the reality starkly portrayed in an image on page 41 of children in a slum standing below a billboard advertising a film. In another portrait of a city, “Jaipur: City of the Sun,” from the December 1984 issue, the

impersonality of tourist photography is prominent. None of the individuals pictured here are named, but instead referred to as archetypes preceded by the definite article: *the* hotel guard, *the* boy in traditional turban, *the* women who sell flowers. This characterization, accompanied by photographs in which four out of five subjects appear unaware of the camera, convey extractive photography. That is, the photographer likely shot from far away with a zoom lens, refrained from interacting with the subjects, and *took* the photograph.

One conventional photograph that is introduced in “Jaipur: City of the Sun” is the tight headshot, wherein little more than the subject’s face, and in this case, turban, are included in the cropped image. Here, the tight headshot is of an unnamed hotel guard wearing a striped turban and sporting a handlebar moustache (December, 1984, p. 38). Though he looks directly into the camera, that he is essentially a bodiless floating head renders his direct gaze unnerving and more similar to the mugshots of accessibility Lutz and Collins describe than the humanizing direct gaze in Mark’s photography. This tight headshot is also found in “The Sikhs: Ferocity of Faith” (February, 1984, p. 39), and again it is of a turbaned, mustachioed man staring intently into the camera.

The two final photo stories to consider here in constructing the dominant representation of the Indian Other reflect an interesting coincidence. In the monthly magazines *National Geographic* and *GEO*, Bombay appeared to be a hot topic in 1981. *National Geographic* published a story “Bombay, the Other India,” with photographs by Raghur Singh, in July 1981, and *GEO* published their pictorial on the city, “Bombay: Refuge to All, Home to None,” with photographs by Bruno Barbey, just one month later, in August 1981. That these two stories were published in the same year as *Falkland Road*

suggests Bombay was a city on the American conscience at that time, and as such, provide a particularly relevant point of comparison for Mark's work.

In the *National Geographic* story, the photographer presents scenes from around the metropolis that focus on the population density, the grueling commute, the rising middle class, the artistic class, the poor who sleep on the streets, housing conditions, Bollywood, the classical arts, the street arts, education, religion, and the ubiquitous picture of the monsoon rains. Most of the images of women are in private spaces, such as homes, dance studios, or at work in Bollywood. In the images that capture distinctly public spaces—public transportation, outdoor religious events, watching a street performer—are primarily men. One exception is an image of women window-shopping with their daughters outside an upscale sari emporium. There is no mention of sex work or prostitution in the photographs or in the accompanying article.



Figure 12. "...Many of the women come from the city of Mysore in Southern India, where temple prostitutes are known as *devadasi*—"slaves of the god" (Barbey, *GEO*, August 1981, p. 68-69).

The *GEO* story is virtually identical, with images of the masses engaged in religious worship, extreme population density, poverty that forces people to sleep on the streets, a grueling commute, art, Bollywood, and commerce.

One significant difference, however, is the inclusion of a

photograph from Falkland Road (*Fig. 12*). Perhaps it is unfair to the photographer Barbey to criticize his Falkland Road image too heavily after having engaged in such a detailed examination of Mary Ellen Mark's work, but the photograph fails in many respects. First, he has taken the photograph from across the street from where the women in his image stand, and he has used a telephoto lens to compress the sense of the distance from which he has taken the photograph. Second, the women appear unaware of his presence, suggesting he took the photograph without their permission, and if Mark's initial experiences on Falkland Road are any indication, and was likely harassed for having taken the photograph. Third, the women in Barbey's photograph simply appear, and are not engaged in any real activity. The three women lean against doorframes in a state of appearing available to potential customers. The caption that accompanies the photograph is also misleading. Barbey writes, "Many of the women come from the city of Mysore in southern India, where temple prostitutes are known as *devadasi*—'slaves of the god'" (Barbey, 1981, p. 69). Investigative research into the sex trade cited above indicates that in fact, most of the women in Bombay's sex trade come from Nepal, Bangladesh, and rural parts of India, not from Mysore. Further, by mentioning the *devadasis*, Barbey conflates the modern sexual slavery that dominates Falkland Road with an ancient religious tradition that came to incorporate certain aspects of prostitution during British colonial rule. In doing so, Barbey presents prostitution in Bombay as part of the natural order of Indian life, an ancient tradition authentic in its religious roots, as misguided as it is patently incorrect.

The dominant representation of the Indian Other found in the magazines discussed above can be summarized here as one that make a claim of authenticity, that can keep an ancient tradition, and one that often portrays crowds and masses of humanity. American visual culture in this time frame offered a limited view of India and a virtually nonexistent view of the sex trade. Aside from the political story about then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, most of the remaining photographic representations read like impersonal travelogues that are reductionist in their characterizations not only of India's rich ethnic and cultural diversity, but also in India's relationship with development and modernity. On the whole, the representations of India found in these images tell a very limited story of a culture and political system and society and only one story hints at the sex trade. It is important to remember here that *GEO* had originally commissioned Mark's work on Falkland Road, but opted out of publishing the photographs in its American publication. After carefully surveying other depictions of India in its pages, it comes as no surprise that *GEO* decided not to run Mark's story. Though the official explanation *GEO* provided to Mark was that they felt the images were too graphic for American readers, this analysis suggests the complexity Mark explores in the totality of her book would not have been well served by having condensed it into an 8- to 10-image story.

Reinforcing and Undermining the Dominant Representations of the Indian Other Population Density

As discussed above, one of the dominant themes of the Indian Other in contemporary magazine portrayals is crowds and urban population density. Several

photographs from the above-mentioned stories featured full-bleed photographs of large crowds, including a three-page foldout spread of Hindu worshippers on Chowpatty Beach in Bombay (Barbey, 1981). In stark contrast to that, very few of Mark's photographs portray crowds of any kind. Only 12 of 65 images (18.5%) feature five or more people in one frame, and only two of those are exterior street scenes that hint at that kind of urban crowding (Table 3). The remaining 81.5% of the photographs feature four or fewer subjects in one frame, and this illustrates Mark's approach to tell the story of 100,000 sex workers in India by focusing on individuals rather than crowds. While the living and working quarters shown from Falkland Road are certainly cramped, they show an alternative side to India's largest city—there is actually room enough to stand up, sit down, and hold one's arms out without touching another person.

Authenticity, Tradition and Religiosity

While the dominant representations of the Indian Other found throughout the examination of magazines above shows repeated depictions of authentic India, traditional India, and overt mass displays of religiosity, Mark almost entirely ignores these aspects. Not a single subject in any of the 65 photographs is dressed in any sort of “traditional” dress beyond a sari, a *salwar kameez*, or blouse and petticoat that is the standard, everyday dress for Indian women. Many of the women wear Western clothes, like blouses and skirts, and a few of the *hijras* wear even more modern clothing like sequined dresses or tank dresses. Similarly, there is nothing in Mark's text, visual or verbal, that makes a claim of authenticity or authentic Indian-ness, the way many of the photographs from *National Geographic* and *GEO* do. Finally, the only hints of religion found within

Falkland Road can be described in just two of the 65 images. In one image, a religious shrine can be seen in the background of an image of two women resting in the afternoon (Mark, 1981, p. 45), and in the other, a small handful of women are shown engaging in a weekly ritual fire *puja* (p. 69).

The Gaze

On average, each of the photo stories from *National Geographic* and *GEO* featured just one photograph with the direct gaze of the subject, and the story on Indira Gandhi from *The New York Times Magazine* features no images with a direct gaze. Compared that with *Falkland Road*, wherein 35% of the images feature a direct female gaze, 14% feature a male direct gaze, and 3% feature a *hijra* direct gaze (Table 3). These figures are counterintuitive to the dominant meaning of the direct gaze described by Lutz and Collins (1993). They argue that weak societal players are more likely to be featured looking directly into the camera, and while that is of course true of these sex workers, it is argued here that this does not equate to relinquishing power and a deprivation of agency. The sex workers featured in *Falkland Road* have long since been deprived of any agency they may have been born into the world with and relinquished their power against their will, so by staring down the photographer and the viewer, the female subjects of Mark's photographs engage in an act of reclaiming their agency and power.

Further, Lutz and Collins argue that the direct gaze grants accessibility to the viewer by assenting to be examined. Ironically, it is the in-depth treatment of *Falkland Road* by Mary Ellen Mark that, in comparison to the dominant representations, contains the greatest frequency of the direct gaze and is simultaneously the least voyeuristic.

Through the access to the brothels Mark gained as a woman, she was able to build relationships with her subjects and create an intimate visual narrative of sex work on Falkland Road. When the viewer knows the photographic subject's name, reads in accompanying captions of their parents having sold them to a madam, and sees as many images of the sex workers engaging in friendship as in servicing clients, he or she is incapable of engaging in voyeuristic surveillance. Conversely, in the superficial photo essays of the Indian Other that appear in *National Geographic* and *GEO*, the low incidence of the direct gaze is actually indicative of significant distance between the photographer and his subjects, and it is that distance that encourages voyeurism and consumption far more than does the direct gaze of Mark's sex workers.

Gendered Space

A main theme in Mark's lifetime body of work is gendered space, so it is particularly interesting to understand how she treats that in a project on India, where spaces are more segregated by gender at that time than they were in the U.S. The image "Cages on Falkland Road at Night" (*Fig. 5*) is a pointed example of how she represents gendered space in India—women do not exist in public space, however, they are on display to the men in the public space. As discussed in the previous chapter, 75% of the images in *Falkland Road* are taken in interior locations, 91% are taken inside the brothels, and 80% depict a sense of confinement (Table 2). Mark's treatment of gendered space is not markedly different from how gendered space is portrayed *National Geographic* and *GEO* magazines: Men move freely in public spaces—on the streets, on transit, at religious festivals—while women are confined to private, interior spaces.

Coupled with suggestions of confinement in 52 of the 65 images (80%), Mark's photographs strongly reinforce the notion that sex workers in India, and women by extension, are not able to move about freely. While that may be an obvious concept now that discussion of human trafficking and trafficking within the sex trade has entered the public discourse, in 1981, that was not the case, and Mark drove home an important point: sex workers have little to no freedom of movement. So while Mark reinforces ideas of gendered space in India, in doing so in a text about the sex trade, she directly undermines the only previous mention of Falkland Road in documentary photography that attempted to conflate the Bombay sex trade with an ancient religious tradition that would make it appear it is a part of the natural order of Indian culture. Through both the photography and the accompanying text and captions, Mark in no way hides or glosses over the reality of the sex trade that brought each woman into the brothels on Falkland Road.

Another image discussed in the previous chapter of the ragpicker on the street (*Fig. 6*), further illustrates the gendered space of Falkland Road. The young boy moves freely on the street, but the women are positioned just at or slightly beyond the threshold of the brothel. This photograph also illustrates classic male activity juxtaposed with the classic female passivity (Berger, 1977), more so than ever because of the disembodiment of the female legs floating out from the underexposed shadows of the brothel interior. This image is also reminiscent of Barby's Falkland Road image from *GEO* (*Fig. 12*) in that both images express liminality and women lined up, on display, for sale. The women in these images do not exist entirely within the private sphere or the public sphere. The sex workers' private sphere—the brothel—is a commercial space. The sex workers have

neither a private space strictly separate and distinct from their work life, but neither are they able to have free reign in the public space. The depth of Mark's project allowed her to visually articulate that important part of the lives of sex workers, and it is a depth that was only allowed because she is a woman.

Finally, consider the photograph of the brothel madam with her girls (*Fig. 2*) that operate to establish a private narrative for the women. Because this space is so highly gendered, it would take a woman to get past the threshold and gain access to these interior spaces. So while Mark established a sense of rigidly gendered space, she also shows the viewer what happens in that restricted space and illustrates the complexity of the sex trade in a way that has not been done before. In this image, for example, the closeness of the relationship between a madam and her brothel girls is depicted that really belies the master-slave relationship. The women here share a physical intimacy, and this does not, on first glance, appear to be a picture of exploitation. More than anything, this image appears to depict family. So here Mark undermines the dominant representations of the Indian Other in the most effective way. She refuses to portray the sex trade as a perfunctory story that relies on the natural order of things to explain its presence. Mark illustrates the complexity of this story by showing that life is like *this*—this is a slave trade—but also, it is like *that*—these women form family bonds despite the conditions under which they all arrived here. Mark undermines the dominant form of storytelling—of providing these quick and easily digestible visuals—by showing the immense contradictions of brothel life, and this is something only a woman could have done.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: SUBVERTING THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATIONS

The study of Mary Ellen Mark's *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* and its comparisons to dominant representations of the Indian Other in color magazine photographs was presented here to fill several gaps in the literature. First, there appears to be an absence of any scholarly examination of Mark's work, which is both surprising and unfortunate given her status as one of America's most renowned female photographers. Second, a thorough examination of popular visual representations of either India or the sex trade is also absent from the scholarly literature. Finally, this study addresses a gap in relevant literature concerning the role of gender in documentary photographic work and provides evidence to support the plausible argument that a photographer's gender can play a significant role in undermining dominant representations of a foreign land and culture.

This study engaged in ethnographic content analysis, textual analysis, and interview to identify the ways that Mark's *Falkland Road* project both undermined and reinforced dominant visual representations of the Indian Other in contemporary documentary photography, and successfully argued that the access Mark had to the brothels of Falkland Road as a woman allowed her to present an intimate, emotional portrait of sex workers that, despite presenting some similarities to other photographers' work in India, largely eschewed dominant representations of claims to authenticity, protecting tradition, and teeming population densities across the Indian subcontinent. In contrast to that, Mark's photographs, through photographic technique such as using

almost exclusively wide- and middle-distance lenses, dramatic chiaroscuro lighting, and a physical perspective that empowered her subjects; through extensive personal access to her subjects; through a dynamic storytelling voice that illustrated multiple aspects of the sex workers' lives beyond simply their sex work; and through a unique twist on the presumed accessibility to a subject provided by a direct gaze, avoid the exotic cliché of the Indian Other entrenched in tradition and engaged in an awkward relationship with modernity. The subjects of Mark's photographs are shown instead having a cigarette break while overlooking the street below, taking an afternoon nap, preparing for the evening's clients with makeup, and of course, engaged in sex acts with clients. While some of Mark's photographs do indicate religiosity, as in one image of the girls in one house engaging in a fire ritual, the ritual itself is secondary to the larger narrative of the life of these prostitutes.

The practical implications of this research should not be underestimated. Though newspaper and magazine photography reach wider audiences than do documentary photographic books like *Falkland Road*, photographic books are widely used pedagogical tools in photojournalism programs around the country that train the next generation of documentary and news photographers. A study that examines visual representations of different peoples can be a useful tool for teaching ethics and visual literacy to photojournalists and helping them understand how different photographic techniques and aesthetic choices convey particular meanings that will be widely read the same way by American audiences.

Additionally, this is the first major discussion of the Indian sex trade in long-form American journalism, introducing the topic to Americans through the two photographic

books (the original from 1981 and the reprint from 2005) and gallery exhibitions on both the East and West Coasts. This particular portrayal of gendered space also has implications for how Americans would have thought of women in India, reinforcing the dominant representation that women in India at that time largely remained within interior and private spaces. This implies a disenfranchisement from the public sphere and democratic practice, because without the ability, by and large, to roam freely in the public space, Indian women would not be able to participate.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Though significant in its attempt to fill the gaps in the scholarly literature described above, this study is an initial attempt to understand representations of the Indian Other in photography and was limited to a small handful of magazine publications as a basis for comparison. Future scholars of visual communication, cultural studies, and South Asian studies would do well to expand analysis beyond the three magazines included here and into the wider world of weekly newsmagazines. That said, one of the primary obstacles for visual scholars is the absence of images indexed in databases, leading to tedious and laborious searches through hard-copy back issues of publications that often make this kind of research untenable. Alternatively, visual scholars could turn to archives provided by organizations like Pictures of the Year International to examine how representations of the Indian Other have evolved, as well as to investigate coverage of human trafficking and sexual slavery worldwide. In the 30 years since Mark worked on Falkland Road, many other photographers have explored similar marginalized populations in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. A worthy subject for future research

would be a comparison of Mark's work and subsequent photographers' work to identify the specific ways she may have influenced those that have come after her.

An additional limitation to this study is one inherent in the methodology of textual analysis—relying exclusively on the interpretation of one scholar to understand how meaning is created from a text. Although that interpretation is of course guided by well-founded theoretical assumptions, textual analysis is never able to measure the reception of a text beyond the individual researcher examining it. For that reason, a content and textual analysis like the one undertaken here is best paired with a reception analysis of the same text to arrive at the most complete understanding of a complex project like *Falkland Road*. Additionally, while the limited production analysis provided by two one-hour interviews with the photographer provided valuable insight into Mark's intent, it was limited by the time of the photographer and the resources of the researcher. Future research based on additional interviews with Mark, as well as with the editors she worked with at Magnum Photo Agency and Knopf and Steidl publishing houses, and an examination of diaries Mark kept during the time she worked on the project, would yield further useful knowledge about the project. Researchers interested in taking this on would be advised not to wait, in part due to Mark's advancing age.

Documentary Photography and Social Change

Documentary photography is an important subgenre within the wide field of visual journalism, often credited with creating or spurring social change by bringing significant attention to issues that are both ignored in the daily news press and best treated with in-depth coverage of not only informational, but also emotional impact.

Though Mark says that she never intended to create social change (Mark, 2011a), and that it is difficult to show a causal link between the publication of a photography book and any change in the material reality of the 2 million-plus sex workers in India, there is no doubt that Mark generated significant awareness of the sex trade and the lives of sex workers upon the publication of *Falkland Road* and the accompanying exhibitions of that body of work in the United States and England.

In an exhaustive search of popular weekly and monthly newsmagazines from 1978 to 1983 (or from 1979 to 1984 in the case of *GEO*) that returned a modest number of stories about India, the only hint of the sex trade was found in one photograph of Falkland Road's sex workers, all of whom remain unidentified in an exterior image taken from the street. It was not until a global focus on the AIDS epidemic in the 1990s took hold that worldwide media began discussing the sex trade in India, and it was around that same time that NGOs began reaching out to the communities of sex workers in Bombay and Calcutta.² Prior to that, the sex trade remained largely absent from the international public discourse. Despite subsequent increased attention to the social problem of sexual slavery, U.S. State Department reports from 2011 indicate that the Indian government is not in full compliance with the minimum standards outlined by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. And that the U.S. government began publishing an annual report on human trafficking in 2001 indicates its significance as a

² In the case of Bombay, these NGO representatives were only allowed access to the mafia-controlled red light districts if they promised only to deliver HIV/AIDS education, and not discuss social issues and turn a blind eye to child prostitution (Friedman, 1996).

social issue, though the likelihood of an annual government report effecting significant change in the material reality of trafficked persons is debatable.

As a photographer, as a documentarian, and as a social commentator, Mark was clearly ahead of her time, directing focus to an issue that, once ignored, would in less than 30 years' time become the subject of an Academy Award-winning documentary film (*Born Into Brothels*, 2004) and bring the issue of sex trafficking in India to a wider American audience. Additionally, the reprinting of her *Falkland Road* book by Steidl in 2005 speaks to the continued relevance of the work.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF MAGAZINES USED FOR COMPARATIVE STUDY

- “Ladakh—The Last Shangri-la,” by Thomas J. Abercrombie. *National Geographic*, March 1978, pp. 332-360.
- “Indira’s Return: Personality and Power in India,” by Michael T. Kaufman. *The New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 1980, pp. 40-43, 60, 64-69.
- “Hindu Hollywood,” story by Denis Boyles, photographs by Frank Fischbeck. *GEO*, May 1980, pp. 34-50.
- “Dance from the Edge of India,” story by Joseph Mago, photographs by Dilip Mehta. *GEO*, June 1981, pp. 40-59.
- “Bombay, the Other India,” story by John Scofield, photographs by Raghubir Singh. *National Geographic*, July 1981, pp. 104-127.
- “Bombay: Refuge to All, Home to None,” story by Shiva Naipul, photographs by Bruno Barbey. *GEO*, August 1981, pp. 58-81.
- “The Gypsies Who Never Left Home,” story by B. P. Menon, photographs by John Isaac. *GEO*, May 1983, pp. 82-89, 106.
- “The Sikhs: Ferocity and Faith,” story by Michael T. Kaufman, photographs by Raghu Rai. *GEO*, February 1984, pp. 32-43, 100.
- “Jaipur: City of the Sun,” story by Geoffrey C. Ward, photographs uncredited. *GEO*, December 1984, pp. 36-46, 94.

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Photographic conventions employed in each image.

1. Shot distance.
 - 1 = Environmental scene-setter
 - 2 = Medium-distance
 - 3 = Close-up
 - 4 = Detail
2. Physical perspective of the photographer.
 - 1 = Below
 - 2 = Neutral
 - 3 = Above
3. Focal length of the lens.
 - 1 = Wide-angle (17-22mm)
 - 2 = Middle-length (24-50mm)
 - 3 = Zoom (85mm+)
4. Is the image posed or is it an action shot?
 - 1 = Posed
 - 2 = Action
5. Source of light.
 - 1 = Natural light only
 - 2 = Addition of artificial light
6. Quality of light.
 - 1 = Flat lighting
 - 2 = Chiaroscuro lighting
7. Dominant hue of the image.
 - 1 = Warm
 - 2 = Cool
8. Orientation of the image.
 - 1 = Horizontal
 - 2 = Vertical

The environment in which the photograph is taken.

9. Placement of subjects.
 - 1 = Interior
 - 2 = Exterior
 - 3 = Liminal
10. Location of subjects.
 - 1 = Brothel
 - 2 = Public place
11. Sense of enclosure.

- 1 = Enclosed
- 2 = Free
- 12. Insider/Outsider
 - 1 = Insider
 - 2 = Outsider

The subjects of the images.

- 13. Number of subjects.
 - 1 = 1
 - 2 = 2
 - 3 = 3
 - 4 = 4
 - 5 = 5 or more
- 14. Inclusion of client.
 - 1 = Yes
 - 2 = No
- 15. Gender.
 - M = Male
 - F = Female
 - H = *Hijra*
 - B = Baby/Child
- 16. Age.
 - Record the age given, or an approximation.
- 17. Nakedness/toplessness.
 - 1 = Yes
 - 2 = No
- 18. Names.
 - 1 = Yes
 - 2 = No
 - 3 = Both named and unnamed.
- 19. Gaze.
 - Open-ended

Additional Information

- 20. Caption.
 - 1 = Yes
 - 2 = No

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview location: Mary Ellen Mark's SoHo Studio in New York City
April 12 and 13, 2011

Questions about gear, etc ...

- Which camera?
- Which lenses?
- Which flash?
- Which film and why? Were many photographers working in color film for long projects like this at that time? Previous project was B/W, why color for this one? Also, transparency film?
- How many rolls were shot on the entire project?
- Did you wait to return to the US before developing anything, or did you have a running edit while you were still in Bombay?

Questions about background on project ...

- How much time had you spent in India?
- What was the very first understanding you had of Falkland Road and the sex trade?
- How deep was your cultural knowledge at the time?
- What language did you speak with the subjects of the book? Hindi? Marathi? English? What languages did they speak?
- I read in one article or another that you don't believe in the idea of a woman's way of seeing. Do I understand that correctly? Do you believe you had anything to add to this project specifically because you are a woman? Do you believe that a man working in that situation would have had the same access as you?

Questions about goals of the project ...

- What part of the conversation about the third world sex trade did you want to have when you began taking the pictures?
- What part of the conversation do you think you ended up having at that time the book was published?
- What was your intent? Was it to change things?
- Did you look to any other photographers that worked for social reform for inspiration on this project?
- What do you think the impact has been on other photographers?
- What words would you use to describe the voice of your project?
- What sort of criticism and praise did you receive at the time the book was published?
- How did women respond?

- How did Indians respond?
- Can you please talk a little bit about exhibitions of this body of work and the impact of that specifically?
- How would you describe American visual culture in the early 1980s? How did you see your book fitting into that at that time?
- How much have things changed about the issue in the past 30 years?

Questions about specific themes in the book ...

- Can you talk a little bit about the idea of gendered space on Falkland Road? This is a theme you examine in much of your work, what about it compels you to explore it visually?
- I'd like to discuss issues of power between you and your subjects. How would you describe the power dynamics between you and your subjects and how did you navigate them?
- Did you feel that you empowered your subjects in any way with the photographs you made? Are you ever concerned with the exploitative aspect of photography with a marginalized community like this one? How do you navigate that?

Making the book ...

- Can you recount for me the conversation with the editors at Geo when you returned your images to them and they decided not to publish your photographs?
- How did you feel about that at the time? Now?
- Do you have copies of how the story appeared in Stern?
- I understand the woman who edited the book was Joan Lifton. Can you talk about your working relationship with her, in terms of how much control you had in the editing and sequencing of the images?
- Was your vision realized through the relationship with your editor?
- What was your working relationship with Knopf like? Can you describe their response to the project?

Following Up ...

- Who else would be good to talk to about this project?
- Are there any specific resources you would suggest that I look at?

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT OF APRIL 12, 2011 INTERVIEW

Interview with Mary Ellen Mark
April 12, 2011
New York, New York

LL: What my thesis is looking at is understanding, understanding, um, how your book and how your project really introduced the idea of the sex trade in India into the visual culture at the time? That's how I'm seeing it.

MEM: Right, right, right ...

LL: Because I'm not seeing that there's anything else happening at the time.

MEM: I'm not sure it's the first time that a project was done on the sex trade ...

LL: Yeah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about because I'm primarily looking at mass-market news journalism.

MEM: I think there were other things done around the same time and I was really (very?) careful about this project when I did it, I mean, I have, I'm very careful about who reproduces it and I haven't allowed it to be used out of context or anything because it can be very easily misunderstood, so, but I know that there were other projects done on it, and it seems like there were a lot of films done, you know, a number of films done on the subject. I think Mira Nair made a film ...

LL: Salaam Bombay

MEM: So there were films that touched on the same subject, and I don't think it could have been done now, because I think this was done before we were all linked by the Internet. And it was also done before cable television, which again, linked everybody. So it was, it was, uh, and it was done before AIDS was such a ... AIDS existed then but people didn't really know about AIDS as much, so India wasn't hiding AIDS as much. I mean, I think, before they were very shy because there was so much AIDS in India. One of my students, Dayanita Singh, also did, after that, did some work there. Soon after that, on Falkland Road. But I think it was harder for her maybe in the sense because already AIDS was known. But she didn't do this, it was different with what she does. This was more of an in-depth look at this, this, maybe this tiny little culture (garbled) (that existed in this particular area?)

LL: So one of the first things I want to understand is your orientation to it. I know you spent some time India on and off for a longer period of time prior to working specifically on this book.

MEM: No, no, when I went to India for the first time was like ten years prior to this. I, someone took me there, and I thought, I was really stunned by it because it was so blatant, and I thought I'd like to go back and really examine it. And finally I found someone to send me. I mean, I had to find someone to finance it because I knew that I'd have to spend a lot of time there. And it was at a time when you could, I mean now you could never say, "Oh, I'm going to go and do a story on prostitutes here and there." But, you know, I was thinking also there was a documentary made called Salaam, no, not Salaam Bombay, um, Salaam Bombay was a narrative film. There was a documentary made not so long ago, maybe ten years ago, in Calcutta on ...

LL: Born Into Brothels

MEM: Yeah, Born Into Brothels ... (garbled) in my book ...

LL: Yeah, well that's a really interesting project. But, how much time then had you spent in India, all said and done, prior to working on this project.

MEM: I'd gone a couple of times a year for ten years. I mean, I love India, it's an incredibly country. It was much easier to try and go there at that time. It's become, well, it's becoming very expensive now. And it's more difficult now. And it's also more difficult to find financing to do a project like that.

LL: Absolutely. So I'm curious about then your cultural understanding of India at the time you were working on the project and what language you were speaking...

MEM: The thing is, is that I don't speak Hindi. I never learned Hindi or any, I mean there's so many languages in India. But I worked at that time with a young cameraman, he became a cinematographer, as an assistant, and I worked with him during the day. At night when I was there, I was there alone, because it was hard to bring a man in there at night. And then he translated for me. But, English is like a second language there, but not so much in the brothel area, because the women are very poor, but among the middle class, everyone speaks English.

LL: So then when you were with the assistant then, he was with you in the brothels during the ..

MEM: In the brothels during the day.

LL: Okay, so there were two of you then?

MEM: Two of us.

LL: When you were working during the day...

MEM: Yeah, yeah ...

LL: Okay, so I just have a couple nuts and bolts type questions. What camera were you shooting with?

MEM: I shot with Leica, a lot with a Leica, and I shot with a Nikon.

LL: Both 35mm?

MEM: It was all 35mm. And a very simple flash unit. I used. And I shot chrome. It's all in chrome. Either Kodachrome or Ektachrome.

LL: And what different lenses were you using?

MEM: Well, I used mainly wide lenses. I used lenses ranging from 35, let's say, to 24. In that range. Everything was in that range.

LL: Yeah, that's what ...

MEM: Maybe a 21 once in a while, but mainly 24 to 35.

LL: And you were shooting all prime lenses?

MEM: All prime lenses.

LL: How many ... oh, question about the film, your previous long-term project, immediately prior, was Ward 81, is that right?

MEM: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, it was.

LL: So, and that was shot in black and white, so what went into your decision to shoot color with ...

MEM: I couldn't find financing to do it in black and white. But you know, in the end, I'm really glad I did it in color, although I continue to work in black and white. When I went back to India I did a project on Mother Theresa and I did one on circuses there. I did one on street performers also, but that was a very short project that was in color but, and I have throughout the years continued to work (in them?). I love black and white, but this was a challenge, color, and in a way, I think it gave it another dimension, color. Because color was so much a part of the way the women decorated themselves, and it was really part of who they

were, so it allowed me to see something else. Color is wonderful. It has more technical problems, but chrome was so beautiful. I do not, I still shoot, I'm still an analog photographer. I have not switched to digital. I'm not going to.

LL: Good for you. I'm glad to hear that actually.

MEM: Yeah, I love analog. I love the whole process of it when I XXXX? over prints. I shoot Polaroid also. So I'm remaining that way, so ... It was a challenge to work in color. And it was a challenge to shoot chrome, because chrome is [unintelligible].

LL: Yeah, you're working in horrible lighting conditions.

MEM: Well, I worked with flash, by the way. And sometimes not flash, depending on what the light was. But I, now I use flash a lot outside, but I hadn't at that time I hadn't started doing that.

LL: And what was the entirety of the body of work? How many rolls did you shoot?

MEM: I shot ... I still have boxes of chrome in storage. I shot hundreds of rolls of film. I shot a lot of film. And in that time it was also before 9/11, it was before these sort of terrible scrutiny that we had to go through in airports. I would give people that passed through Bombay, I would give them sacks of film to carry back for me. So you know it was like, yeah, if you ever do that now, you just would never want to go through that now, you'd have to beg not to have your film x-rayed.

LL: So you were passing the film off to be processed here while you were still in India?

MEM: While I was still in India. So I didn't see anything until I came home.

LL: So tell me a little bit more about the financing. It was through GEO?

MEM: It was through, originally it was through GEO. Which was owned by [publisher's name] which was Stern. They owned it. And when they saw the pictures they were afraid to run them. So Stern ran them. Stern Corporation financed it. And I mean, in those days, people would give you they would pay for a three month living someplace and doing it. That was something that would be. It was sort of like, the only magazine that does that now is Geographic. You know.

LL: And how had this story been pitched?

MEM: Well, I tried for years. You know, I really wanted to do a story on this community in Bombay of prostitutes on Falkland Road, and people would say, yeah, yeah ... and once someone said oh yeah, David Bailey wants to do that. And I thought

he's not going to do the same thing I'm gonna do. And you know and um finally I, they said, okay. And they finally said okay. And so I thought to myself, am I really going to get that ... actually a couple days before I left I had a dream of something that ... actually, the dream came true. It was myself like talking to some transvestites on Falkland Road and a similar situation happened, and I thought I am going to be able to get this. You know I didn't want to make it like, I knew, prostitutes have been photographed before, and there are fantastic pictures, but I didn't want to make it like a portrait. I wanted to make it like more telling intimate, I wanted to show what they did. You know, I though [unintelligible] how we haven't seen them before [?] and you'd seen incredible beautiful portraits of prostitutes. I'm not sure if I were doing it again now if I would be interested in doing it in large format and portraits, but then I wanted to show what they did. And it was really it was also, a lot of the work I've done, it's not just about prostitutes in India, it's about women selling their bodies, and what's it like to sell your body. So it was you know, and I thought, here is a community where I'll really be able to show that, because they're so open about it. Immediately they would be open about it. About showing what they do. It wasn't this sort of shame attached to it. Everything was so, in India, there's tight class structures. They are who they are. So they don't mind showing who they are. You know? Well, it's like when I first went in there, I remember seeing this girl, some of the girls who are independent. They had secrets that they never told me. Like they never told me how they got the girls. I mean, they're not stupid, these women. They're very cagey and smart. They knew that it was illegal, how they got the girls. I know that sometimes families sold them, because I saw that happen. But I know also that there were agents that came and sold them. But they didn't talk about that. Because they knew that was illegal. But there were some girls that were also independent and worked on the streets. And I couldn't quite understand why there were independent and why others weren't. Why others were owned by madams and some weren't. And some of the independent girls, I thought, maybe I could find them a job working for a friend. A friend of mine, you know, working in a house. And they said to me, this is India, the other servants would know what they did, and they would treat them horribly. That's why that film Born Into Brothels, I knew what she was doing would never work. And I thought that was very naïve of her not to really, she took this girl and put her in a boarding school, and the other kids would be horrible to her. Everyone knows in India, they know who you are. They know your caste, they know your class, they know what you did. I don't know how, but it's some sort of ... Have you been to India?

LL: Yes, and I also lived in Nepal for several years.

MEM: It's a mysterious thing, they just look at you and they know where you're from. I don't know how they do it, it's just strange. When I did the circus, I ran into the same sort of situation. Because we were going to go back and photograph a wedding of one of the girls that was owned by the circus, we were going to photograph that, and he lied to us, and he wouldn't let us know when it was, and I

know why, it was because he was afraid we would tell the family that she was marrying what she did before, and that's very low, to be a circus performer. It's just very strange, it's just very strange place, it's a different culture. Anyway ... there were things that I found out and there were things that I never found out.

LL: So I wanted to ask you again a little bit more about what was, what stories about the sex trade were being told at that time.

MEM: But you know, I didn't know.

LL: You didn't know?

MEM: No. I'm not an academic person at all. I'm very emotional person. I was just I was curious what what was it like to have to sell ... because I don't think these people would necessarily do this out of their will. They were bought. And it was very different from the circus. Because the circus was another story, but maybe the same because in a sense they were rented by their families. But they became performers. Because some of them loved doing it. This was something, I think they *loved* doing it, but in a way, they had nice clothes, they had a place to sleep. They had a better life than they had before, living in horrible poverty and beaten probably by their father and mother or whatever. So it was really difficult. It's a dilemma for me, why, which is better? But I don't, you know, I- it's a mystery. I'm still puzzled. You know. It's something I wanna do. I went to see Saroja, the woman that really helped me, the madam a year or so later. I found her. She wasn't on Falkland Road anymore and she looked thin and terrible and it was still before AIDS, and I always wondered if she had AIDS.

LL: So when you were working on the project, again you've said you wanted to show it was like for these women who had to sell their bodies. Were you inspired by the other photographers who worked on social change? The social change photographers?

MEM: I can't say I was. I'm not like a political person. I'm curious. And I'm a woman. And I guess I'm always looking at women's issues. [unintelligible] I don't, I'm not naïve enough to think that I'm going to cause social change. Things are what they are. And certainly not in India. I look at other things. I looked at abortion there. I never published those pictures, because I'm for abortion. I believe in it, in the right to choice. And those pictures were horrifying. And I was afraid if I put those pictures in a book, it would cause harm in the wrong way. So I never published those. But I I guess I do pictures I wanted people to care about prostitutes. I wanted people to feel for them. I mean, I really, those girls were so touching. They were children. [pause] They never cried. They were never, like, this was what they did. I don't know how much ... I think they'd seen very unhappy lives. Maybe this to them was better. [pause] It was like a community, it

was like a school. Like a boarding school. Not in a good way, but you know what I mean. Like a girls' school.

LL: Yeah, there's the one image of the madam sitting on the bed with the pink sari with—

MEM: —with all the girls around her. That was slightly above them. That was not on Falkland Road. But a street like a mile away. Another street. And she was a little bit wealthier, but we went to see her also, a couple years later. She looked awful. She was thin, and she had sores all over her body. I mean, I hated to think that you know ... but she was, you know ... But they were like her girls. She owned them. But in the circus, the trainer owned the girls, too.

LL: With that image, when you talk about the community of the boarding school, when I read that image, I see a family bond ...

MEM: It was like a family bond. It was a family bond. It was. Because these girls never had a family. They got pregnant and, if they did have a child the madam would take the child, would take care of the child.

LL: What would that relationship be like? She would take care of the child while the woman was working, or did she sort of become the mother?

MEM: Sometime the children grew up in the brothels.

LL: Right. But as far as the relationship the madam would have with one of her girls' children?

MEM: [unintelligible] What I saw, I mean, the madam had favorite girls and girls who were best friends, and then she had some girls that she didn't like. That misbehaved or that were disrespected. It was an incredible experience. And this young guy translated for me. Because they didn't speak any English.

LUNCH AND COFFEE ARRIVE

LL: What words would you use to describe the voice of your photographs?

MEM: I mean, intimacy. Um, soul. I mean, I was always interested in what I did that kind of social, close contact with people, social documentary, I was almost always interested in getting as close to people as I possibly could. To tell their story.

LL: Can you talk a little bit more about how you achieved that closeness?

MEM: Just by spending time. Just by spending time.

LL: Some of the images, I mean, clearly, people had to know you were there.

MEM: Absolutely. You know, when I teach, there are two types of photography, photographers. An observer and a participant. In a sense, I think I was a participant, because they knew I was there. A participant is someone when the subjects, when you're part of what's going on. An observer is like a street photographer that just catches. And I mean, I was both in this. Because I shot on the street also. So both.

LL: And some of the images where you have the women with clients. What was the interaction like between you and the client?

MEM: Those pictures I took after I'd been there already two months. And they were clients who were continual clients. And they knew me. They were sort of part of the whole situation there.

LL: And what was your sense of how they viewed you as a woman in that situation?

MEM: I really don't know. I mean ... I think they just accepted the fact that here I was documenting this particular world. Remember, it was before people knew about media. It was the late 70s, 1979, I think it would be much harder to do it today. People are so aware of media. I think it would have been harder for a man. Much harder.

LL: Was there any sort of feeling, like did they react to you like they were threatened by you in any way?

MEM: No. Never. Once the police came and they hid me. Because I was always afraid of the police. I was afraid I would be caught and questioned by the government. Because this was India, India is so much [unintelligible]. I never had to pay them off or anything. We ignored each other.

LL: That's pretty lucky.

MEM: Lucky. Very lucky. I mean, There were also transvestites that sold their bodies too. And you know, it was just the right time to be there. It was really strange.

LL: So I wanted to understand better, I guess, the, when the project was not published in GEO, and you then went to Knopf for the book, again, were you pitching that story to Knopf?

MEM: I went to Knopf after it was published in Stern. I worked with this fantastic editor there, and I actually thought I was going to be working with her again on this new book I'm doing, which didn't work out. But she's wonderful.

LL: Is this Joan Lifton?

MEM: No, Joan Lifton helped me edit. Joan Lifton was at Magnum. I was at Magnum when I did this. And Joan Lifton helped me edit this. And she's a really good editor, a fantastic editor. She's a friend of mine, she's a fantastic editor. She helped me edit the original, because there were hundreds of slides, hundreds ... and then to Vicky Wilson at Knopf. Vicky Wilson, she's an editor there. She's really smart, she's great. She's really great. And that's you know she immediately wanted it and I think [unintelligible] might have been the editor-in-chief. And they took it right away. And then it was republished. It was reprinted by Steidl a couple years ago.

LL: Right, and that's the version, the original is hard to come by, so that's the copy I have is the reprint. Although I'm really trying to focus on the original book. and the dating in the early 80s. Can you describe a little bit more, the relationship with Joan Lifton with editing.

MEM: Joan Lifton is just an incredible editor. She's just really ... she just went through it. She went through the slides and really helped me. Because there's just so many, I still find slides from there. I mean, I have boxes, I still need to pull down and look at for things that I missed. I'm sure I missed some things. She helped me, she just went through them With me and helped me pick the pictures that were the best pictures.

LL: So when it came to sequencing, and deciding to put P.U. on the cover and all of that ...

MEM: I think it was a combination of Joan and ... I mean, I think Joan had ideas for that but I think that Vicky was also, Vicky is really intelligent. Do you know her? She really is. She's amazing. I thought we were going to do the prom book together, but it didn't work out. She's amazing.

LL: So at that point, did it become a collaboration?

MEM: You hope that you work with an editor ... I've done a lot of books and at its best it's a collaboration, and sometimes it's not. But I think with Vicky it was definitely a collaboration. She's incredibly smart and she's just, and with Joan it was a collaboration, and with Vicky, I mean, I was really lucky with both people. Because they're both really good at what they do. I haven't always been that lucky at putting books together.

LL: And then can you talk a little bit about the exhibitions when you exhibited this work and how widespread that was and what was that timing?

MEM: I exhibited that work at Stelling[?] Graphics, and then I exhibited in London and one set of the prints was stolen. I'm hoping they'll turn up. They were stolen in London.

LL: In transit?

MEM: No, they were stolen in the gallery. I exhibited at this Olympus Gallery in London, one set is still missing today. A whole set of Cibachrome prints, now they're worth a lot of money and they're missing. I'm hoping they'll turn up sometime at an auction or something.

LL: What's your speculation on what happened?

MEM: Someone took them who was connected with the show, but I don't know who. It's just terrible. But at that time, you know, you're young and you're really passive about stuff like that.

LL: And Stelling Graphics is here in New York?

MEM: That was a gallery. It doesn't exist anymore. It was a Claudio Castelli [?] gallery with Claudio Castelli, and he had a big gallery. She did the graphics.

LL: And how long was each of those shows?

MEM: It would have been about four weeks. I took a lot of flak for this because at that time, some feminists wrote some terrible things about me.

LL: Tell me more.

MEM: I remember this one woman, I mean, god, she really went at me. I forget who it was. Of all things for a feminist to write it, I was surprised. I forget who it was. You know how it goes, some people hate you and some people love you. And it was just some woman who wrote this terrible review about me. About, you know, it's amazing because, what's amazing is that today, we were looking at this. When you asked to see the magazine, we pulled it out yesterday and no one would ever publish that today. You know, when you think of the times, it was published in the late 70s, early 80s. You wouldn't see magazine covering something like that today. It was way ahead of its time in a way, Or are we so far behind today?

LL: And why do you think the photographs wouldn't be published today?

MEM: In a magazine? Because we're so prudish now. We've gone backwards that way. You know? It could be published in a book, but in a general magazine, very unlikely.

LL: Can you tell me a little bit more about the response, like you mentioned that you received some criticism from feminists. What was the nature of that?

MEM: It was the feminists. I forget ... it was just, you know, it was the fact that—I don't know, that it was exploitive, that it was ... often people say, when they see documentary work, they say, they love to say it's exploitive. Most people say it's exploitive. They feel that it's something they could never themselves get close to or do. I'll give you an example. I had a student, you I know I teach in Mexico. He did a series of pictures of a young girl, um, 12-year-old girl, she's selling—I found the girl for her, actually, she was amazing—a young girl, the photographer was in her 20s and this girl is 12 and she sells scarves in the [unintelligible] and she went home with her and they live with—it's incredible, they're so poor—and they live on the plains. They must have done something, they've been isolated. They're like gypsies that have been thrown out of the community. And she has these pictures of the girl, and the girl, she's 12 and she's very sensual, and this one picture, she has nothing on top and she's holding a candle—it's beautiful, the picture. And there's other pictures of her lying in bed—they're just beautiful pictures. And the teacher called this 27-year-old woman a pedophile, and I thought that is so shocking, that is so terrible to do to this young photographer. It will thwart her, it will make her afraid to get close. She was shocked, she said what other women have photographed young women. So I went yesterday and I made a whole ... on the Internet, I made a whole list of people that photograph young girls, and I said, "Show her this." But it's just, I don't know, obviously I look at the teacher's work, and it's not work that I like, she photographs albinos, I don't know, what more can I say? People that can't really get intimately close to people often will accuse others of being ... you know, it's easy to photograph an albino, but to get so close to people and to really show the personal moments, who they are and what they're like, it's just another way of working, and the people that can't do that don't understand how you do it or they're threatened by it. I've heard that so many times, so that was the kind of criticism. You know, I still get that kind of criticism for my work. I mean, it's like if you're not a fine artist if you do documentary work. You know, you do, you get the rough end of the deal. I don't care, I'm glad I do the documentary work. That's the kind of work that interests me.

LL: At the time, what was the praise of the project like? How were people taking note of it? Were they taking note of it on an aesthetic level, on a social change level?

MEM: People are taking more note of it on an aesthetic level now. Now they're taking note of it on an aesthetic level. Documentary photography it always takes, it's always taken third place to you know [unintelligible], you know, it has. I think it's totally wrong, but I think that great photographs are great photographs. It doesn't matter if it's conceptual, documentary or whatever. If it's powerful, it's powerful. But you know because it doesn't maybe decorate the den quite as well ... people

think ... I don't know ... It's been recognized more now. Aesthetically. But I did it show a way of life and to so people can experience what I experienced.

LL: I read somewhere, I found some of the old news stories from the time when this project came out. And you had said you didn't believe in the idea of a woman's way of seeing. Did I understand that correctly?

MEM: I think it's easier for women to get into situations like this. But I don't think that women are better photographers than men. I think that ... I can't look at a picture and say, oh that was taken by a woman or that was taken by a man. Maybe that's what I meant. I think of male photographers that are wonderful, and I think of female photographers that are wonderful. I think there are certain things that are more suited ... that are easier for a woman, certain things that perhaps are easier for a man. Certainly on the level of something like this it's easier. You look at Ward 81, I went into a woman's ward. I think it would have been easier for a man to go into a man's ward. But I don't think there's a difference between a female vision and a male vision. I don't agree with that. I think there are men that are very sensitive and have a wonderful vision and women that are very sensitive and have a wonderful vision. That's probably what I meant, but when I started it was kind of ... there have always been female photographers, I mean Dorothea Lange was way before me and Margaret Bourke White, Mary Press Walcott, so many women before me. But now there's many many more. But when I started, I think you're always given a rough deal as a woman anyway. It's harder being a woman in the professional world. It is. There's no question about that. How old are you?

LL: I'm 33.

MEM: You're still young. Wait, you'll see, it's harder. (laughs)

LL: Yeah, I'm aware of things.

MEM: Yeah, it *is* harder.

LL: So what when the book was published I 1981, how did you see did you see more attention being paid to the issue in the wake of that, or was it ...

MEM: Also, a lot of things being done like that afterwards. Maybe that's more attention. I mean, I saw *Salaam Bombay* was made, and there were other photographers that did projects on prostitutes. Not just in India, but in other places. Not just because I did, but because they saw it and they thought, I can try that in Tokyo, I could try that in Mexico, or whatever. So I saw things like that, and even now, like *Born Into Brothels*. I saw things like that and I don't know whether that was really social change. Because, you know what happened is that, you know the whole AIDS issue came soon after that, and then you saw a lot of stories about AIDS in India.

LL: One thing that I think is really interesting about it is, especially in the past 10-15 years, there's been a much greater understanding of human trafficking and the relation between that and the sex trade. And also fueled in part by AIDS, which was happening at the same time. So the issue that you covered 30 years ago is more a part of the public conversation than it was then, and so I'm curious then, about the reprint and the decision to reprint the book in 2005. How did that come about?

MEM: Well, because you know, Steidl does a lot of books and reprints and he wanted to reprint this book. It was really hard to find, and he wanted to reprint it his way and differently. He reprinted it from cibachrome prints. which is a different printing process which is richer and deeper than the original book.

LL: Yeah, and I did get a copy of the original book from the library and there's an amazing difference between them.

MEM: And we added a few pictures to the book. That's why, I think. It wasn't like a political decision, it was more of a creative decision on his part.

LL: So when you look back then do you, are you aware of the addition to the conversation about the sex trade? That your book had?

MEM: I don't know if it was because of my book. A lot of things happened. I think it's more because of AIDS definitely. When the book came out I had a big show at Nan Bersky (?) gallery, and we printed a big dye transfer portfolio that exists somewhere. It became more serious as art, but I'm not sure I did it to be seen as art. I did it to make great photographs, bottom line with everything I do. whether it's about mother Theresa or it's about twins. I try to make great photographs. That's the bottom line. I want to make iconic images, and they're hard to make. I try to make a few of everything. I don't think it's because ... I think I'm glad I did this. I'm proud of this work. I don't think this work caused so much ... I think it was much more AIDS, the horror of what AIDS was and the fact that it was spread by sex, having sex, or the whole business of drugs and sex and the horror of it. I think the whole that's what made this big push, finding it more about trafficking.

LL: You mentioned that you had a big show, I'm sorry, what was the name of the gallery?

MEM: Mary Ann Bowsky (?)

LL: And how long was that show?

MEM: It was a month. It was a couple years ago, it was when the book came out. When did the book come out? Was it 2005? It's now six years ago, wow. Time flies.

LL: So part of my research I went back and I looked at, I mentioned I'm interested in the mass market press at the time, and I looked at issues of Geo and National Geographic and a few other magazines as well. Specifically those two, and National Geographic in July 1981 published a big picture story on Bombay, and Geo did the following month. And so I was looking at those two stories and comparing them and the different elements of storytelling, and the Geo story had an image from Falkland Road, but the Geographic story did not. So that would have been in August 1981, so after your work there. Do you know about that? Do you remember that story? It seemed to me, thinking about it, and thinking about the timing, that the GEO editors would have wanted, having commissioned your work, I think they would have wanted to include a picture of that in their story of Bombay. and National Geographic didn't. Do you have any sense of that?

MEM: So one was more involved than the other, you mean?

LL: The picture from Falkland Road was nothing. It was nothing like yours.

MEM: No, it wasn't expressive. Just standing on the street with some girls.

LL: They do not look at all to be aware of the photographer's presence.

MEM: Yeah, it was a long lens ...I'll tell you what was interesting about Falkland Road, now that you talk about long lens. I, when I, the last, I use a wide lens. They're aware of me. The last pictures I took on Falkland Road were with the long lens. I borrowed a long lens from a friend of mine. And I went into a building across the street and took these pictures. Because I wanted kind of a view of the activities on the street. I couldn't have done that in the beginning. If they'd caught me, they would have been furious. But they knew I was there, they didn't care.

LL: That's interesting. It seems like it's often the opposite. You sort of start out and move inward. But you started inward and moved out.

MEM: Yeah, mmm-hmm. Yeah, that's interesting. You know, I don't think, I think they just probably didn't have any good pictures. Geographic would have done the same. I don't think one was more involved than the other. I think Geographic's done some amazing stories, they have some incredible photographers, they do. And I think it's just a question of they didn't have a good picture from there. Or maybe I'd already done it, and they didn't want to ... (laughs)

LL: I mean, because it seems like it is part of the story of Bombay.

MEM: It is, it's still there. People go there. Tourists go there now. (laughs) If I did anything, I made it a big tourist attraction. (laughs) Also, there was this writer, she wrote this book. I can't remember her name. She writes about Nepal.

LL: The Land of No Right Angles? Is that the one?

MEM: What's her name? She writes about being in Nepal. Is it fiction or is it non-fiction?

LL: If it's the same book, it's fiction, and it's based on things in Nepal and a woman gets trafficked ...

MEM: Right, and she goes to see her, I thought that was influenced by my pictures, but it's sort of half-true. I met the wrotier, and her husband's a writer, too.

LL: Yeah, I know some of the thinly veiled characters from the time that I lived in Kathmandu. Which is fascinating.

MEM: She writes about prostitutes. About a girl coming up from Nepal.

LL: So what did you talk to her about?

MEM: I met her because I met ... actually it was an interesting book. I read it a long time ago. It's called the ... Land of No Right Angles? Yeah, and her husband lives in San Francisco and wrote this book about his family that was fascinating.

LL: I can't think of either of their names ...

MEM: I'll google it, I'll figure it out. I met them in New York.

LL: So what did think of it?

MEM: Well, I read it, and then I had lunch with her. I thought it was a really interesting book. She lived in Nepal, but it's fiction, sort of.

LL: Thinly veiled.

MEM: Yeah. About a guy that's hanging out there, sort of a hippie guy?

LL: Ian Baker is actually who it is. (laughs)

MEM: She's about your age, more or less.

LL: She's probably a little bit older than I am.

MEM: By about a few years, like maybe she's 36 or something.

LL: Yeah, sounds right.

MEM: I've got the name. But I thought that was influence, you know when she describes the madam and the girls.

LL: Do you see a direct influence in other photographers' work, or other ...

MEM: Well, there was a guy, I hired, there was a guy that photographed in Bangladesh. A guy, he had a show in San Francisco, and he really put down my work. This was some years ago. And I always thought he was bitter because he couldn't get in. I think it's harder for a guy to get in. I really do. That kind of intimacy for a man would be very very difficult. I do.

LL: Simply because of the gender?

MEM: Because of the gender. I think they identified with me more because I was a woman. I just do. I think a man could do a different kind of ... Bellock (?) was a man, they're beautiful portraits of prostitutes, but it's a different kind of photograph. You know? It is, it's different. With the circus, it was the same thing. It was back, going back into the tents, and cause they're mainly females that are rented or sold by their families, also a lot from Nepal. Because the farmers are so poor and the circus, the trainers paid them. And the fact that I could go back when they're changing and sleeping, I think it would be harder for a man. It's a rather prudish society. Even though they're prostitutes, it's a prudish society.

LL: There are a couple themes that have come up, and one that I'm curious about is gender and space on Falkland Road and how space is delineated by gender and what it's like, the brothels are both home and workplace for these women and they don't have freedom of movement. I mean, you write in your introduction a lot about how they often didn't leave ever the brothels.

MEM: And the beds were curtains ... they lived and worked in that space. And everything happened on the bed. Combing hair, makeup, everything, sleep, sex. And I wasn't allowed, I could only stay until 1 in the morning and then I had to leave because after 1 the all night customers come in and they had all night and they paid more, and (unintelligible) and so I had to leave then. Everything happens in the little passageway. It was amazing how tidy they were, too. Extra tidy.

LL: And then did some of the women, you spent some time in the café.

MEM: The Olympia Café, yes. Yeah, those were the independent women. The other women weren't allowed to go down there.

LL: How would you describe the differences between independent women and the other women?

MEM: Well, they were much freer. Some of them were very sad sometimes. I mean, one of my favorite pictures is of a woman, a young young woman who is in tears there. They slept on the streets sometimes. I never understood why they weren't owned by somebody. They could have just come off the streets. Probably that's why. They grew up on the street. They were more freer. And they would go. It was an innocent café. They had Indian music and film music and tea. No alcohol. And I used to go, I used to eat my meals on that street. I'd go, there was really good Indian food restaurant down the street, and I'd just leave everything, my cameras and everything, and just go down the street, and nothing was ever touched.

LL: So there was a great trust then?

MEM: Yeah, they were very protective. Sometimes they cooked for me and the food was great. And I used to smoked a lot. And I realized I stopped smoking. It's one of my many periods where I stopped smoking and I started smoking beedis again, because they were all smoking beedis instead of cigarettes.

LL: And so what was it like photographing in the café versus in the brothels?

MEM: It was pretty open. It was open everywhere. The big test was one afternoon I went into a brothel and they were all sleeping and I started taking pictures of them sleeping. I felt free enough to do that. I was not afraid they were going to wake up and scream at me. There were a few houses that I knew. I didn't have the run of the entire block, but when they knew me, I had total access. And I still believe in total access and that's how I operate. That's, to me, the key to everything I've ever done is access. Yeah, even when my work is doing portraits, like with the twins, I feel like I have to have access to people, you know.

LL: You mentioned, you write in the introduction to the book that it was really the hijras that sort of your entry point.

MEM: They let me in first. Well, they let me in first because they're show-offs. They couldn't resist the camera. They let me in first. But then my big break was this one woman Saroja. They were watching me on the street for a long time, and when I came in, well the first night I went into the building and actually walked into a brothel, and they screamed and they made a big fuss and threw me out, but then I came in the next day because I thought if I don't come back then it's like they won. So then she invited me in, and that was my turning point.

LL: And when you say you'd been there for a while by that point ...

MEM: Couple weeks. I also worked in, but I came back, I went for like ten days to Jodhpur to photograph the singing girls because that was interesting also, but it's something different. That's more hidden in a way. They sing and dance for me, but they are prostitutes. But it's ... more hidden because they sing and dance.

LL: Why is it more hidden?

MEM: It's not like this you make a deal and the guy comes and sleeps with you. It's like you sing and dance. It's more of a ... it's another tradition.

LL: With more subtlety?

MEM: It's more subtle. You could probably get into it, but I realized it's not the same thing. But I love Jodhpur. Have you been to Jodhpur?

LL: I haven't.

MEM: It's fantastic, you should go there, it's beautiful. It's my favorite part of Rajasthan. I don't like, I mean, the other places are so touristy. This is touristy, too, but it's massive, so it's less so. It's beautiful.

LL: And when was the last time you were back on Falkland Road?

MEM: I haven't been back for a while. Because I haven't been in Bombay for a while. I was there in Bombay a couple years ago. Two or three years ago. But it's very different. I don't know anyone there anymore. Nobody. I'd go back again. I mean, I go back I go to the Olympia Café, but I don't know a soul.

LL: When you were back, I think it's in an afterword in the 2005 edition, you talk about going back and trying to find some people and then showing them the book.

MEM: Yeah, that's when I found Saroja.

LL: And what was her reaction?

MEM: I gave her the book, and we think oh my god, but this is her life. This is the lives of these women, and this is normal to them, this the work they do is normal to them. But I'm sure she's not living anymore. I'm sure most of them aren't. It's interesting, I love going back there, I just made, when I made Ward 81, my access was this guy named Dr. Dean Brooks. And I just made contact with him again. He's 95 now, but I chatted with him yesterday. He sounds like a young man and he was telling me stories about the women and what happened to them and everything. and it was very interesting. I like hearing, but I will definitely go back when I go back to India. I'll go back to Olympia Café. I mean, I think it would be

difficult to walk in the brothels without having someone with me. I don't know what I'd find there or you know I mean if someone came in with me I would go, or if I knew someone there. But it's all so changed. I think it's run by pimps now much more than. It made it easier, it was really controlled by women when I was there, totally. There were no male pimps involved at all.

LL: And how about drugs? Were there a lot of drugs being done at that time?

MEM: No. Not that I saw. I mean, some people were stoned. I think they were smoking hash. But, not like crack or like anything like that. I didn't see heroin or things like that. I'm sure that it must have been there. with some people, but it wasn't so evident. It was pretty innocent in a way. It was the right time. I mean, I think everything shifted after a while. I saw a lot of Arab customers there. They wouldn't let me photograph them. (laughs)

LL: I would almost assume that today there would be a much greater presence of different drugs.

MEM: Probably. Of course, it's probably more having to do with money, having more money and I don't know, though. It looks pretty much the same. A couple years ago I went it looked pretty much the same. It was amazing, come to think of it. I took the girls out one day. We went to a street fair. We rode the rides and everything. It was really fun. I took a picture of myself with them. It was great. That was a special treat, because usually madams don't let the girls out. They run away.

LL: So how was it that they allowed you to take them?

MEM: It was nice, we had a great time. Went on the rides, had our picture taken. It was really nice.

LL: So they trusted ...

MEM: She trusted me, she trusted me. Trust is really important. I really cared about her, she was a wonderful person. She had a terrible life. They all had such hard lives.

LL: Maybe this is a good stopping point.

MEM: Great. We'll continue tomorrow.

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPT OF APRIL 13, 2011 INTERVIEW

Interview with Mary Ellen Mark
April 13, 2011
New York, New York

LL: Again, I appreciate your time.

MEM: That's okay.

LL: And I enjoyed listening to your lecture today.

MEM: Oh, thanks... the students were very nice. Actually, two students came up afterwards. They were, they might have gone to film, they were likely video students, but they said they loved Streetwise and I don't know if you ever saw Streetwise ...

LL: I did.

MEM: And they named their cat Tiny. I thought that was funny. (laughs)

LL: I remember what struck me about Streetwise was how just how beautiful it was.

MEM: It was shot on film. Film is better than video. No question. Martin shot it. I wouldn't know how to shoot film.

LL: So there were a couple of particular questions I wanted to ask. And I wanted to go through and look at some of the pictures with you.

MEM: Yeah, that's fine.

LL: Because I'm really curious to hear more about some of the images. I was curious ... something that you said today, to the students, you said "You have to be who you are when you're shooting." So I wanted to ask you who you are in that situation.

MEM: Um, myself. I mean, I think you can't come on like you're some, you just have to be your normal self. I do believe you have to take control in all situations. You can't be intimidated by people. You know who they are. You have to take control and you have to be yourself. I mean you can't put on any act, play act. And I've seen photographers do that and it's obnoxious. I've seen them take on a certain posture, um, it's, I can't watch it, it's repulsive. You know, actually some men when they're photographing women. I find it really horrible.

LL: How do you mean?

MEM: You know, being really seductive. I don't know ... I just think you have to be your natural self and be ... you know, ask what you want what you need and be straightforward, and I mean that I think that's what I was with these women and I didn't treat them any differently than I treated the people in Prom, the girls in Prom. She said to me, actually, when I photographed her, she said, she asked me how old I was and she said, oh, I hope you'll still be alive when I run for president. [referring to a girl from the Prom project] (laughs) She meant it, too.

LL: She's a great character.

MEM: She went to Princeton, she's going to Princeton.

LL: There was something else that you had said today that I thought was interesting. You're more interested in making single images and less so in the picture story.

MEM: Definitely.

LL: Can you tell me why?

MEM: It's very different. Constructing a picture story is something very particular, and I think at the University of Missouri they're very interested in constructing a picture story. I'm not, that doesn't interest me. I mean, what you mean, a beginning, middle and end. And I don't think like that. I never did think like that. I mean, I'm always thinking, maybe that's why I'm more of a portrait photographer, because I'm always thinking of a single image that's going to be, going to try to be iconic. And they're very hard to make – iconic pictures. But they've got to be memorable. They've got to stand by themselves. They don't have to be always portraits, but you don't need the picture of the man walking down the road. I mean, I think the classic photo essayist in a sense was W. Gene Smith. But he did manage to make some amazingly iconic pictures also. He was able to do both. You know.

LL: So what do you do then, what's your process like when you are shooting and thinking about the single image and you're putting a project together.

MEM: I just think that making single images and then putting them together and they'll string together and work. I never think ... like I'm sure the way Smith worked it was almost like he was making a film and he was more of a director. Like in Country Doctor, he asked him to walk down the road and he was telling him what to do, definitely. I see something and I just take it. It's more like looking for that image that will make the great image rather than thinking, although in the [X] family, I knew I wanted the picture of them in the car. I knew that was a single image that would work. Rather than photographing him driving the car, whatever,

I knew it was a single portrait in the car, and I was right. I almost saw it before I took it. You know. It's just another way of thinking. I think Smith was a great photographer though. This is a picture, he's very much more of a story teller than I am. I think Gene Richards is a great storyteller, too. They really kind of teach storytelling more at the University of Missouri. You know.

LL: So then you really think about constructing the narrative with pieces you already have.

MEM: With pieces, that just stand together. Like, someone like Sally Mann, I really love her images. Or like Garcia de la XXXXX, do you know her? She's a Mexican photographer and she's really wonderful. Garciela Iturbide, I think. She's Mexican photographer. I love her work. It's very beautiful, it's very lyrical. I love lyrical pictures.

LL: You mentioned her shooting more of a picture story then?

MEM: She's not a storyteller, no. She did a book on [place name], I can never pronounce it, which is this place in Mexico with this painter whose work I love is from, And the men are, if a family doesn't have a girl, the last son is raised as a woman, it's the tradition in that town. They're like transvestities, they're raised as a woman. In this town. It's a strange tradition

LL: So I assume that's because there needs to be a daughter in the family?

MEM: There needs to be a daughter in the family.

LL: So now I guess I wanted to ask a few more questions about the book. Did you ever understand what the response to this book was in India? Did you ...

MEM: It was strange in India. Some people loved it in India. I think the young generation really loved it. The older, some of the older generation was infuriated, but you know it's hard to second guess India, because even with the circus, I remember I had, after I did the circus book, I did it with this girl, she was like maybe a bit younger, and she made a remark like she thought I made, I was making, making a remark about making this one photograph of these two dwarfs in monkey costumes and she thought I was making a remark that Indians look like monkeys. It's like, the furthest thing from my mind. They're very sensitive, the Indians, especially the upper class Indians, they're incredibly sensitive about how they're viewed, so you can't ... it's hard in India. So I'd say the upper class older people really didn't like it. I was afraid I was going to be banned from India. And I you know, I wasn't. Because what had happened is that Louis Malle's film had come out – did you see his film? – Louis Malle made a series of documentaries, they were actually very good, about India. Martin, do you know how many films Louis made about India? It was a bunch of them, wasn't it? [Martin responds off tape.] It

was more, I think. But you can learn about Calcutta, but he was banned from India for a while.

MB: The BBC was banned from India.

MEM: Yeah, they're very conscious of handheld films. They're very good, aren't they, Martin? [Martin again off tape.] Yeah, they're very good, you should see them. You'd probably like them, since you love India. They were powerful, particularly the time they were made. And he was banned from India. The government. India's still tricky now, to do a film there you need all these permissions and you know so it's [unintelligible] but it's notorious now the book's notorious. It's still notorious there. But they didn't ban me.

LL: So as far as ... prostitution exists, people know it exists but they don't like to talk about it.

MEM: Of course it exists all over the world.

LL: Thinking of the Indian context, so was that, that you were so up front about it all ...

MEM: Maybe because I was so up front about it all. Maybe because I was so up front about it. They don't like to talk about it. They like to ignore it, I think. It was blatant before, it was blatant.

LL: I thought it was interesting, you mentioned yesterday that Dayanita Singh was one of your students?

MEM: Do you know her?

LL: I'm familiar with her work.

MEM: She went in a whole other direction, totally. I was surprised. I was ... disappointed. You know, she ... this is off the record ... I'll tell you this ...

STOP TAPE FOR A FEW MINUTES

MEM: ...a bad rap. It is, because people don't think that because it, if photographs have content, therefore they're not art. I think it's because it's harder to hang a photograph with content on the wall.

LL: So I'm curious how you would describe the line between art and ... welll, you mentioned the potential for fine art photography to not have a soul. So, how do you ...

MEM: I don't know how you draw the line. I think it's different, because if you look at portraits like by Frederick Summer or people like that, they're vintage portraits, they're worth a lot of money. You know, some of those are powerful. They're beautiful. They're powerful. Or even now with the W. Gene Smith pictures, very tough, probably would sell for a lot of money. Or Cartier Bresson. But not as much as some you know some obscure Czechoslovakian photographer that photographed a vase with some flowers in it that was so-called art. It's just because content is something that they don't want to hang on their walls as much. It's very weird. You know, it is. It seems to be the case.

LL: The reason I brought up Dayantia Singh was, I read an interview with her and I guess when she went into a different direction with her work, she started photographing the upper class.

MEM: Then, she, that was good. I thought that was really good. But she doesn't do that anymore.

LL: Right. But I remember ...

MEM: It's now chairs and more kind of conceptual. My feeling about conceptual is that you can't you can't say, okay I'm just going to be conceptual. It was to really be in your blood. You know, people that are good conceptual artists that you know think that way. You can't just say because that sells I'm going to be a conceptualist. I mean I thought her photographing of the upper classes was good because she is part of that. She's a princess. So she could get into those homes. To a point where one, she worked for me several times when I was working in India. I would hire her to be like a producer on things, and like, she was actually able to like penetrate these upper class people because her voice even changed. She is one of them. So she was an enormous help and she was great with the circus. She helped me, you know she was very smart. And she helped me a lot. You know, so those pictures I thought that was really great to do that because you don't see that that much and not everyone can get access to them.

LL: Well, and something she had said in an interview I've read with her was that she thought that there was too much of India that was being presented in photography was the negative pieces.

MEM: See, but that ... I don't think she really felt that way. I think that's just talk.

LL: So how would you feel—

MEM: —because she also did these photographs of a hijra. She spent a long time with a hijra. I don't think she thought that. I think that's just ... I think the reason she did that is that she had access to it and it was a really interesting way of looking at another way of looking at Indian culture. I told her to do that. I saw photographs

that her mother did. Her mother had been a photographer and it was really interesting the photographs of Dayanita and the family. When they were young. And I said, you should do that. She photographed, you know, the wealthy and ... but no, she's really gone to another direction now that is far far from that, which is not as human.

LL: As far as the criticism that is also exists elsewhere that there's too much focus on the negative parts of a place like India or the Third World ...

INTERRUPTED BY TALK BETWEEN ASSISTANT AND MEM

LL: Focusing on the negative and that's a criticism of a lot of photography of the Third World, that it focuses too much on the negative. What do you think about that? —

MEM: —No, no—

LL: —What's your response to that?

MEM: I don't think it's negative, I mean I think it's, for me, I love these women. I thought they were incredible. I thought this was shining a way of life that exists all over the world. It's a way, it's not a way of life that I would choose but it's a way of life, I think that it's important to look at it, and say wow, this is it's not negative about the women. They have no choice, but um, it interests me. So what are we supposed to do? Are we just supposed to photograph the rich and famous? Is that what we're supposed to look at? That's what we're only seeing now anyway. I mean, here we only see the negative. We see war and destruction. I'm not putting war photographers down, I think it's very hard to do that. I wouldn't want to do that. I never wanted to do that. Um, but I mean don't have the courage to do it and I don't like that adrenaline rush and I tried it when I was young and hated it and it's just not what I'm meant to do. So all we look at is war and the tsunami and the earthquake and horrible things and movie stars. And I just think we have to look at every side of life and I chose to photograph that side of life. I mean I think the circuses are not the underbelly of the society I mean it's a form of entertainment. And it's interesting. You know. I think people that criticize that are people that cannot face the things are harder to face and look at. It's an excuse. You know, it is. So do you think [CAN'T HEAR NAME] shouldn't have told the story of his drug addiction because it's hard to look at? You know, I think that it's good that he told those stories.

LL: And I think some of the criticism is along the lines that you specifically looking at the Third World, that's all we see—

MEM: —that's all we see in this world. There've been incredible stories told in this world, in the States, about poverty. It's terrible, about crime and about, and do you know Donna Ferrato's work?

LL: Absolutely.

MEM: I think that work is amazing. I don't know how she got it, she's like really amazing to me. I mean, that's, I'm so glad she did that. That's incredible, that work.

LL: When you were working on this project over the three months, how emotionally, how did you deal with what you were seeing?

MEM: Well I became very attached to the women. I mean I'm very great. I mean, every day, I couldn't wait to see them. It was great. It was hard to leave, but you know this is what I do. I go and spend time with people and get attached to them and leave them. So I'm used to that, you know.

LL: As far as the situation, you know, the first time I ever saw this project and looked at the photographs, it's difficult. It's difficult to look through them. To look at these pictures for the first time and the second time and beyond. So throughout the course—

MEM: —Did you see it when you were a young girl?

LL: I saw it for the first time, no, probably five or six years ago.

MEM: Were you shocked?

LL: Yeah. Not because I didn't know, not because of the unfamiliarity with—

MEM: —What were you shocked by, the pictures of them having sex?

LL: No, it's just difficult to look at these pictures. It's difficult to look and know that this is a 13-year-old girl that, even though I knew well before that that this happened, this is how it is—

MEM: —yeah, yeah, yeah—

LL: —they get trafficked out of Nepal. I'm very aware of all that. But to look at the images and to look in this young girl's eyes, it's difficult—

MEM: —yeah, yeah—

LL: So my question is when you were working on the project, what emotionally, how were you able to deal with the sort of the kind of the horror of the situation? How do you interact with that?

MEM: I've seen things much more horrible. Yeah. I mean, but what I saw in Calcutta was much more horrible, people so sick and young, young people. People dying. That was horrible.

LL: You were working on the story—

MEM: —On the home for the dying. It was horrible. It was a way of life for these girls and it's, I don't personalize it that much. I mean, you're, you don't. I mean, if you did, you couldn't do this work. I think I couldn't photograph war because I couldn't watch the moment of people being shot. That moment of death would terrify me. But there's something about this that I was able to watch it. I don't know, it's just. You think you could go witness a war and people getting killed?

LL: I don't think I could. No.

MEM: Yeah. There's some people that stand over bodies and take their picture, and I mean, I couldn't do that. I mean, they're good at it. I don't put them down for it. I think it's amazing that they could do it and someone has to do it. And you know, I couldn't do it. And I'm sure people say that about me. How I could it. But you know, it wasn't that it was. It was like a way of life and everyday way of life and things went on and customers would come and they would leave and it was a job ad you know ...

LL: So the cover image of Putla.

MEM: Putla

LL: Can you explain the process to decide to put that image on the cover?

MEM: Well, I just thought that was a strong portrait of her. She's so young. Her arms are so beaten up and she has such a beautiful face.

LL: And in this situation was she acting freely or acting under the direction of her madam to pose for you?

MEM: No, she had just seen a customer, and she was there and I just took her picture. I took a few frames. She had the necklace on, and the necklace was very important. This sort of fake gold necklace. The madams never ... the girls did freely what they would do. They were never acting under orders to take the pictures. My relationship was with the girls and with the madams but the madams, I never said to the madam, tell her to do that. That wasn't the relationship. They wouldn't have done it. I mean, my relationship was based on a relationship with everybody. If I had used the madam as my boss, I could never, the girls would have hated me. You know.

LL: What about this image ...

MEM: It was a very young girl, and I wanted a picture of her. She was the youngest girl there. She was beautiful. I don't think she was actually working yet. They had just gotten her. She was beautiful.

LL: And how did this picture come to be? Did you ask her to lie on the bed? Was she—
—

MEM: —She was sitting on the bed with another girl actually, there's a picture actually of her and another girl, and I said let me just take you alone, and she just laid down. I was walking along a walkway. It was probably the same walkway where I took the other couple having sex above. It's kind of a gritty picture.

LL: So which are, oh, I actually have a question about the blue, this blue picture. I had a hard time telling, are these hijras?

MEM: No, they're girls.

LL: Those are girls? Okay.

MEM: Yeah, those are girls. This is the last picture I took, the one from across the street.

LL: Okay.

MEM: I mean, you could never, I could never be like a ... I had to have a friendship going with the girls and with the madam. I could never act like I was their boss. You know.

LL: Which images are your favorites?

MEM: Well, it's, I like the one of Putla. I like the one of the girl lying down. I like this one.

MEM: I like this one. This was the girl that was, she never actually, the family came and took her back. She never completed her initiation you know. They teach them to put makeup on and dress and everything. She had like pockmarks on her face and in the village she was told that the goddess of small pox, told the parents that the goddess of small pox was going to punish them.

MEM: I like this picture.

LL: The girl crying?

MEM: Yeah ...

LL: Yeah, you showed that one today.

MEM: Yeah.

LL: And what about that iamge?

MEM: I just saw her crying there. I like this one, in the café.

LL: And this one was not in the original book?

MEM: It's not, and neither is that one.

LL: So why did you add them there?

MEM: I found them in this. Like Saroja.

LL: The woman in the purple blouse?

MEM: Yes. I like this picture.

LL: Yeah, tell me—

MEM: —I was talking to Saroja and there was Kumla, I think it was Kumla. Yeah, she pulled up the curtain just to speak to us, and then this hand reached in. I got the picture, it was amazing.

LL: And there's another picture with the curtain. It's toward the end with the girl with the beads in her mouth?

MEM: Oh, I like that picture. I found that later too, I just found it. I like the curtain. I thought it was great, the curtain is funny. It's so ironic with the baby curtain.

LL: And I love this portrait. The look on her face.

MEM: I know ... and the curtain is ironic. Cat and bird and elephant. It's in Englihs, too. F is for flowers, C is for cat. G is for giraffe. It's just, ironic. I love irony in pictures. I'm always looking for that.

LL: Tell me about this picture then.

MEM: I don't even remember this. It was just on the street. The streets. I was just on the streets shooting, like this or this, and I remember this one, I used to give this woman every day, the beggar woman and I aksed someone to tell me what happened to her. But Saroja and Kumla, that was her favorite girl.

LL: And I think the quote that accompanies that reads that she never knows what she would have been missing.

MEM: She never knew what she would have missed.

LL: Is that a sentiment you heard from a lot of women then? THE idea that I'd rather be at home in my village but I'm—

MEM: —Yeah, I think they don't know. Life was horrible in the village and in way they think they have clothes and a watch and jewelry and all those things, but then the life's very hard there, too.

LL: And this image we just looked at of the woman breast feeding, it's toward the end. It was actually the closing image of the first edition. The woman is wearing green or yellow sari...this woman.

MEM: She's a woman that had a baby. Sometimes the prostitutes would have babies.

LL: Is there any reason that, or what was the reason that you'd chosen to close the original edition with that image?

MEM: Maybe, I don't know why, maybe to think, you know, life goes on.

LL: And she, if I'm not mistaken, is pictured earlier with Champa? Is that right?

MEM: I'm not sure it's her. I think you're mistaking someone else.

LL: Am I? Okay.

MEM: That's the only time I photographed her.

LL: Is that not the same woman?

MEM: Might be her. I didn't even notice that. Yeah, it is her.

LL: I was just trying to understand the—

MEM: —well, in the homes of transvestites, there were sometimes women, too.

LL: Okay, okay. And Champa was the madam, is that right? Cause he bought his own ...

MEM: Yeah, he was a male prostitute madam. He was a transvestite madam.

LL: So then he would have had girls in his brothel?

MEM: He could have girls, but maybe she was, she could be also a prostitute just in his brothel. A female prostitute. A mixture, it's complex.

LL: Yeah, so you also talked today about the children.

MEM: Yeah ...

LL: Tell me more ...

MEM: Well, I photographed also, this is Mari. I loved Mari. I remember one time when Saroja and Mari, I have the pictures, but they didn't make sense. They're still pictures. He was always just this little boy. He was about 4 or 5. He was adorable. And he was always around, he was a child of one of the prostitutes, and she, and at one point, she pretended she was dead, Saroja, and he was crying and crying and crying and she goes, "Ahhh, I'm dead." And he would cry and cry and cry. He was adorable. There he is, he's adorable. And he probably is a mean old pimp now, I don't know what he's doing. It was a long time ago.

LL: And so, what about this picture?

MEM: Customer.

LL: And was he with both of the women?

MEM: He's just showing off.

LL: Okay.... let's see, there was ... another one I was interested in ... were they any images, and again a question of control that you had in the process, but where you weren't that crazy about but where you, they needed to be—

MEM: —No, no, I made all the choices. I chose those in the book. I mean, there are images that I favor, but I chose. This is another one, I have a soft point for dogs. That's what this one is. So sweet, this puppy.

LL: So you, on both editions, had the final say?

MEM: Yeah. I did. I did. Usually with books, I do. I mean, we're trying to work out what we're going to do with this book, so we'll see. [She is referring to PROM book.] With magazines, you don't have control like that.

LL: So how, do you feel like you, was this your objective in any way, or do you feel like you accomplished this—empowering the women in any way?

MEM: It was my objective to have people care. To be more sympathetic towards them. If that's empowering them, yes. I don't know how you can really empower them. I think they've been so beaten down by society that, but to make them human beings. That was my objective. TO have people feel they're beautiful, it's so sad they have to live. She's beautiful, Putla is beautiful. Life's not fair. You know that, right?

LL: So do you feel that there are any ways that you didn't succeed?

MEM: Well, you can always, I always feel like if I did it now, it would be different, it would be better, but I'm not sure it would be. Because I don't think I've had the access now I have. I don't think I would. I think it would be tougher to get that kind of access now. I do.

LL: Do you, so when you think back, and you say I could do this better, I could do that better, if I were doing it now, is there anything that you did, that comes in vogue that you would not have done?

MEM: No. I know too much technically now. I think the technique I know would have gotten in the way. I think the fact that I wasn't as technical helped, because I could be more spontaneous in the shooting that I did. So I think it was the right time to do the book.

LL: So when you were shooting flash in these photos, was it handheld?

MEM: Sometimes handheld, sometimes on the camera. Yeah. I'd be tempted to use medium format now, all these things, but that the fact that it's all 35 and it's all a very simple form of flash was good.

LL: And so the lighting that was in here, the available light in the interiors—

MEM: —that's available light. Anything outside's ... I use flash outside now a lot.

LL: But are these lights fluorescent?

MEM: Fluorescent.

LL: Is there, when you were in the brothels, did they tend to be—

MEM: —I used fluorescent film for these. You know, it's a different type of film for chrome. In negative film, it's different. For chrome, it's a different type of film.

LL: So the available light in the brothels, did that tend to be—

MEM: —there was no available light. The only available light in the brothels is when they're near the windows. Some of the pictures in the brothels are available light. When there's just enough, and then I would use ektachrome, which I had an ektachrome 400. I actually, was it 64 or 400? That's, that might even be kodachrome, because they're right at the window. So that's available light.

LL: So do you tend to shoot with two cameras? Two camera bodies?

MEM: I had, like, two bodies. I probably had two different kinds of film. So that was a long time ago, I don't remember exactly. There's another one with Putla at the window at the dresser. That's with Ektachrome. That's available light.

LL: So the lighting that was—

MEM: —Very simple.

LL: In the brothels, was there no light at all?

MEM: No light. No light at all, and a lot of it was at night, so there was no light.

LL: Okay, so there would they use candles, would they ...

MEM: Oh, there was low light. They have light. but it wasn't, I'm using chrome film. It's slow and there wasn't enough light, and I don't like to push film. I never liked to push film.

LL: Yeah, okay. And what about, you talk a little bit about the makeup, right, and you said that—

MEM: —That was a big deal. The whole process. Like for years after when I went back to India, I would go and buy like these, on Houston Street, I'd buy like makeups and perfume and everything and just drop them all off, they loved that, on Falkland Road. Makeup's a big deal, and perfume.

LL: And the whitening.

MEM: Because their skin color, light skin is a big deal. That's why the girls from Nepal are so popular, because their skin color is lighter. They're considered more beautiful.

LL: And I noticed, there are some images of the Nepali girls, but those don't—

MEM: —They even try to make their skin lighter. Yeah.

LL: But they don't end up being main characters in the book? Is there any reason for that?

MEM: There was more Indian girls. But there were a lot of Nepali girls. I think it's cause my closer contacts were with the Indian madams. I wasn't as close with the Nepali madams, although I was friendly, but usually the Nepali girls and Nepali madams.

LL: Okay.

MEM: Or the Indian girls might have a, the Indian madams might have a couple Nepali girls, but the majority of the Nepali girls went with Nepali madams.

LL: So you have quite a few pictures of these two together. I think there's three images, maybe.

MEM: Really?

LL: I think so.

MEM: Huh, that was a new picture. I don't remember him, actually.

LL: And, let's see, Muni is her name?

MEM: Munni. She was 15.

LL: And you also said there would be regular male customers and that's often—

MEM: —they would come again and again.

LL: Right, and so would this have been—

MEM: —yeah, maybe that was her regular male customer.

LL: Because I think this is them again, judging by the shirt.

MEM: It doesn't look like her feet, though. These are huge feet. This looks like two transvestites to me. Look at the hair on the legs and everything. Never thought of that. I don't think that's him. Hmm, maybe you're right. Look, she's wearing different ... wait, there's the white pants. Maybe it is. Boy, does she have big feet for a little girl. (laughs)

LL: So what was up with this school uniform?

MEM: That's (unintelligible) NATURAL LIGHT?

LL: The uniform. There are a few different pictures—

MEM: —oh, they just got the dress, it's not really a, maybe someone made it.

LL: They dressed the same?

MEM: I guess they're good friends, they dress the same.

LL: And the last picture I want to specifically ask about is the studio portrait of the two girls.

MEM: Oh, in the car?

LL: Yeah, that's such a sweet picture.

MEM: Well, because that was the local place to take pictures. I even have pictures of myself with the madams in that car.

LL: And, so where—

MEM: —that's natural light, too.

LL: This is the one you were talking about before?

MEM: Yeah. That's a (unintelligible)

LL: How often do you find yourself looking through your past work?

MEM: I haven't looked at it at all, I don't even like having to do this. I don't. (NOT SURE THAT'S WHAT SHE'S SAYING) I remember every picture I ever took, though. Just about. I place myself back there. I can't find it. I knew it wasn't in there.

LL: Let's see, is there anything else about the project that you think about that hasn't come up in the conversation?

MEM: No, just really happy I had the luck and the opportunity to do it. I have no regrets at all about it, and I'm really happy I had the chance to do it. It was an incredible experience through and through, and I think about the women all the time. Not a day goes by that I don't think about what they're doing or how many of them are still alive or how many of them died of AIDS. Yeah, what they might look like today. You know, most of the people that you shoot stay with you, little ghosts that sit in your brain. ... Here it is. Dubai. It was like they all loved the Arabs, because they had more money. That was the dream customer. See, they're kids, they're just having fun, you know. These were independent girls. Of course, they could never

go into the studio. This is the one I asked about. Trying to see if I could get her a job like in India, you know. That's why when I saw that movie what was so disturbing, I was amazed that she went that far without really investigating it. Because it didn't work. The girl went to, I found out afterwards it's not going to work. Of course it's not going to work. And the family wants her back. It's not auspicious, they were trying to be polite. But they don't want to give up their daughter, you know. No one does, you know.

LL: Yeah, I feel like we've covered all the issues.

MEM: And you can always call me. Or email me if there's anything. TO follow up. You're welcome to.

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