The previous chapter has shown that the formulation of desecuritizing, emancipatory and ethical strategies to unmake security leads to a theoretical and practical impasse. The representations of victims of trafficking proposed by the humanitarian discourses, the representation of suffering and continuous insecurity that trafficked women experience do not fulfil the requirements of knowledge. Are trafficked women non-dangerous? The specification of non-danger is essential to all three strategies. Moreover, theoretically, it remains unclear how desecuritization, emancipation or ethics could unmake the exceptional and the extraordinary practices that security entails. Anti-trafficking NGOs have been unable to challenge the imaginary of the border and its liminal position as a boundary between the security of the community inside and the insecurity that comes from outside. Returning women to their home country remains the main strategy to which other practices need to be adjusted.

A holistic approach to human trafficking, as promoted by many NGOs, connects the representations of victimhood to strategies of prevention which include voluntary repatriation. Trafficked women are to be rescued only to be later on returned home, ‘humanely’ deported even against their manifest wishes.1 The rights of trafficked women do not entail a more democratized security, but have pernicious effects upon other subjects (prostitutes or asylum seekers, for example). The ethical approach that places pity at the heart of a different discourse of trafficking engages with representations of the potentially dangerous trafficked women. Women, however, need to be assessed as non-dangerous; detailed knowledge about them is required to support the premise that humanitarian NGOs and activists try to promote. Unmaking security needs therefore to consider how the knowledge about who trafficked
women and the relation to what they do and who they say they are relates to the imaginary and symbolic practices of security.

This chapter will explore how anti-trafficking NGOs create representations of who trafficked women are consonant with the practices of security. What does the representation of who they are mean for unmaking security? I have shown that desecuritization, emancipation and ethics are unable to specify the abject other as undubitably non-dangerous. If security is a process of ordering social problems, of governing ‘problematicizations’, it does so by attempting to conduct the conduct of people. Michel Foucault has called this social dispositif of governing social problems by working upon the actions of the people involved ‘governmentality’. I have already defined governmentality as the description/representation of social problems and interventions to remedy them. Governing human trafficking through representations and interventions (or rationalities and technologies, as Foucault calls them) needs a third element, that of agency. Women’s agency does not only encounter these representations of who they are and how they should conduct themselves, but can radically contest or definitely confirm the knowledge and practices deployed. A dispositif of security attempts to affect behaviour and construct forms of ordered agency and subjectivity in the population to be governed, as part of the social problem identified. The abjectifying effects of security are thus a form of ordering agency, taming subjectivity and excluding those who are irremediably ‘disordered’.

Analysing security as ‘governmental’ is not new in IR. Bigo (1996; 2002), Campbell (1992), Dillon (1995b), Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero (2008, forthcoming); Der Derian (1992), Huysmans (2004a; 2006), for example, have used concepts from Foucault’s work on governmentality, to creatively explore security practices. In a governmental approach, representations of social problems can be thought of as a permanent incentive for interventions that will tackle these problems. If problematization refers mainly to representations and interventions to manage human trafficking, these representations and interventions are deployed in relation to a subject to be governed. The concept of a dispositif of security captures these three main lines: power, knowledge and subjectivity. Representations and interventions are deployed according to a game of power, the mobilization of knowledge and the constitution of subjects. The concept of dispositif captures the dynamics of a problematization that is inscribed in the real and the effects that this inscription causes. The deployment of a dispositif depends on the knowledge about who trafficked women are. Resistance is at the heart of the notion