5 The Power of Metaphor and Appropriation (1870–1881)

The established narrative around "white slavery" has been until now that the British journalist Alfred Stace Dyer was tipped off by an anonymous friend about a British woman trapped in a brothel in Brussels. Having allegedly gone there in 1879, Dyer is subsequently said to have uncovered and reported on the "slave traffic in English girls to the continent".[315] His letters to the British Foreign Minister as well as his journalistic publications are understood to have put so much pressure on the government that they were forced to convene a Select Committee of the House of Lords which sat over several months in 1880. The previous chapter has shaken this British-centric narrative.

Instead, two cultural transfers around "white slavery" have been pointed to, one regarding the adaptation of the language of white slavery as it was imported to Britain from Switzerland to speak about prostitution. The other being in relation to gendered anti-slavery laws transferred from the Americas to Europe vis-à-vis the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which served migration, territorial, and population control more so than it prevented or protected against gender-based exploitation.

This chapter and the following provide an in-depth analysis of these two transfers which goes beyond their mere description or simply looking at the relationships of the actors who enabled them. In order to do so, knowledge on "white slavery's" incubational period of conceptual development (1866–1881) is unpacked. This knowledge, however, continues to impact present-day understandings of human trafficking in transnational and gendered ways.[316]

As a contemporary concept, "human trafficking" is different to any conceptional idea of slave trafficking that existed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Distinguished conceptually in meaning and practice, a shift took place in the European mind at the end of the nineteenth century: namely, that the idea of slavery became increasingly understood in popular culture as related to migration and the sale of sex, all the while ongoing practices of enslavement such as the so-called "coolie trade" cognitively fizzled away.

From the position of someone living today, it is possible to look back into the sources and the historiography to notice a shift in the conceptual history of human trafficking emerging out of late nineteenth-century media and legal dis-

315 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*.
316 See chapter one.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111432106-005

courses. Since this period and up until now, discursive shifts took place which are still to be found in the UN language since the 2000s. This conception of human trafficking is highly gendered and wrapped in the language of criminality and slavery, with concerns relating to underworld networks of men tricking innocent naïve girls to migrate abroad and then forcing them to sell sex. Empirical-based evidence of the such is weak in the historical literature as well as within the works of sociologists and anthropologists in the field of trafficking studies. This is, however, by far not the same as saying that sexual and gender-based exploitation does not take place upon, or post the migratory journey.

Scholars looking in the past and the present struggle to perfectly match the discourses on "white slavery" or "human trafficking" with any cases that can be found in the complexity of historical or contemporary practice.[317] Yet, there are elements of misogynistic violence to be found in every patriarchal society, irrespective of migratory or indigenous genealogy. Exploitation indeed takes place, but in case-based examination, vocabularies like "forced migration", "rape", "violence", and "coercion" require contextualisation that, in the end, never sum up to perfectly match a discourse of trafficking as it is presented and repeated in the media.

The problem with the concept of "human trafficking" in today's terms is that, historically, it never had any place-based meaning in what was referred to as "white slavery" back then. Rather, the concept and its meaning developed transnationally after the metaphor of "white slavery" circulated among a small transnational group of aspiring or elite actors for whom it proved useful to their varying (and at times competing) agendas.

Since the late 1860s, "white slavery" has been defined through discursive repetition and the standardisation of a loose narrative, but it was never defined around the description of a specific case, for which the vocabulary then proved useful for describing the same phenomenon elsewhere. Rather, an idea of "white slavery" had been imagined by particular Europeans, but it was the sensationalism of this idea that provided its success and resulted in its adaptation in multiple transnational contexts.

Michel Espagne points out how "concepts do not have a genealogy exclusively connected to a single linguistic zone. Rather, their meaning is also the result of displacement" which then demands "adaptation and linguistic enrichment".[318] The meaning of "white slavery", which still informs anti-trafficking laws around

317 There is a mass of literature. For a recent study of contemporary discourses by someone who worked for many years in anti-trafficking campaigning, see Emily Kenway, *The Truth About Modern Slavery* (London: Pluto Press, 2021). For the historiography, see chapter one.
318 Espagne, 'Comparison and Transfer: A Question of Method', 35.

the world today, did not develop anywhere in particular nor in reflection of any one particular practice; rather it emerged among and along the works of a number of transnational actors. Thus, scholarly research and understanding needs to take these entanglements into account, which begins with the acknowledgement that no "white slave" is to be found in the late nineteenth century. This is not to say that subaltern white women in migrant contexts never experienced sexual or gender-based violence and exploitation. However, when this occurred it was not because of their skin-colour or an inheritable status as a slave. The physical violence perpetrated upon women's bodies by men in the name of power needs to be distinguished from the symbolism and appropriation of violence perpetrated upon *our* women's bodies by *othered* men in the name of power.

In order to try and make sense of the conceptual complexities behind the history of "white slavery", I have had to be somewhat inventive methodologically and in my approach. Having, in the previous chapter, outlined the relationship between the major actors behind the transfer of the "white slavery" metaphor in the British context, the set of sources required to deepen this analysis thus, in the style of a micro-historian, remains small. The main intention here is to show how a metaphor, which was intended to critique state practices, congealed into a concept through popular discourse. The sources predominantly worked with include a report by the Parisian Police Prefect Charles-Jérôme Lecour and two works by Valérie de Gasparin, namely her 1867 travelogue *À Constantinople* as well as her open letter targeted at members of the French Réveil Movement in 1870.[319] Then there is the work of Pastor Théodore Borel and the translated version of his work by Joseph Edmondson, which transformed Gasparin's metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" (trade in white women) into a first person witness narrative about the innerworkings of the *real* thing.[320] Finally, there is the renowned work of Alfred Stace Dyer and the minutes of the Select Committee, which Dyer had allegedly pressured into convening.[321] The 1877 work *La traite des blanches* by F. Tacussel

319 Gasparin, *À Constantinople*; Valérie de Gasparin, 'La lèpre sociale, tract contre la prostitution ("traite des blanches") et les maisons de tolérance', 1870; Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1870*.

320 Théodore Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le droit et la moralité publique', in *L'état et la moralité publique: une question sociale, Par T. Borel et D.S.* (Neuchâtel: Bureau du Bulletin Continental, 1876), 3–30; Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva.*

321 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*; Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix' (London: HMSO, 1881).

has been included for cross-analysis and contextualisation but has itself as a source not been as thoroughly dealt with.[322]

The authors of these works form a small group of elite Europeans, who had taken a metaphor, which as a result of their efforts and energy solidified overtime into a concept. That the meaning of "white slavery" was elusive to these actors did not matter, because the association of ideas which it conjured up together proved to be a popular sensation among Europeans, servicing the goal of drawing the attention of the populous. The authors' use of a metaphor and idea of "white slavery" had been a misappropriation and racial inversion of transatlantic slavery. This misuse of pain, trauma, and history subsequently had the, perhaps unintended, outcome of producing confusion and entanglement in the minds and memories of white Europeans at the turn of the twentieth century. Ultimately, the emerging concept of "white slavery" fashioned a kind of European amnesia, alongside a preoccupation with a new problem, perceived to be more urgent under the global condition. Expressed with this earnestness, "white slavery" produced categories for and stories about European subalterns, which, circulating in dispersed global contexts, enabled a conceptual transformation and which, in its totality, had formed from the initial release and pollination of transnational and gendered meanings.

5.1 As a Metaphor congeals into a Concept over time

The established narrative that the "white slavery" metaphor came from a Victor Hugo letter in 1870 has now been revised. Instead the role of Valérie de Gasparin, an almost completely unknown women in the English historiography, shall be moved to the centre of the stage.[323] The same year, 1870, that Hugo had written his letter to the Ladies' Protest in Britain, the Parisian Chief of Police Lecour and Valérie de Gasparin had also published their works concerning the topic of state-

322 This is because I could not find any bibliographic information on Tacussel, which thereby prevented me from being able to contextualise the author and his work in the same way that was possible for the sources selected. Thus, there is still research to be done. F. Tacussel, *La traite des blanches* (Paris: J. Bonhoure et Cie, 1877).

323 Within the scholarly literature on late nineteenth-century prostitution, Christine Machiels is the only historian to have picked up the name of Valérie de Gasparin. She however mistakenly refers to her as "Catherine" and cites her letter *La lépre sociale* as having been published in 1874, as opposed to 1870. See Machiels, *Les féminismes et la prostitution (1860–1960)*, 49. For contextualisation of Gasparin's letter, see Ennis, 'Narrating "White Slavery" in and out of Fiction, 1854–1880'.

regulated prostitution.[324] Even if only the exact date (20 March) is known for when Hugo sent his letter to the "Ladies' Protest", through logic of reasoning, it would appear as though Hugo, Gasparin and others wrote their letters in reaction to Lecour's publication.

At the beginning of his almost 400-paged book, Lecour stated that, despite him being the head of the first division of the Parisian police prefecture, his arguments and positions were those of his own. Even if ostensibly not publishing from his professional role, unsurprisingly his findings as a whole supported the continuation of state structures such as the *police des moeurs* in the name of public health.

In his legitimation of state regulation, Lecour gave himself the authority to judge women's beauty, while at the same time not exerting any sympathy toward women who sold sex. Nevertheless, like the British medical researchers William Acton and Michael Ryan, he understood that the reason why women turned to prostitution was a need for money, coupled with a lack of alternative employment options.[325] These arguments stood in contrast to anti-regulationists, all of whom used a moral framing to argue against the system.

Lecour acknowledged the critiques of state regulation on moral grounds, but saw it as impossible to entirely repress prostitution and thus defended the system in the interest of public health.[326] Like Parent-Duchâtelet half a century before him, Lecour's work took into account the different ways in which some women who sold sex had been exploited by families, garment renters, and landlords.[327] Then, in one tiny section of his large book, he mentions that, in some rare cases, pimps had attracted women from the country side to Paris under the false promise of been given positions as teachers. These victims of deceit were then said to have been coerced into brothels; their status as young vulnerable orphans leaving them with little option, as they had no support networks for redress.[328]

Chapters six and seven show how this idea was incorrectly cited and transformed in the subsequent years and in other contexts, whereby the meaning became entangled with the notion of Jewish-run *bureaux de placement*. For now, however, it is necessary to understand how this undoubtable fact of rare, though nevertheless real, cases of coercion in France became entangled with the lan-

324 Gasparin, 'La lèpre sociale'; C. J. Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1871*, Deuxième Édition (Paris: Libraire de la Faculté de Médecine, 1872).

325 Lecour, *La Prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1871*, 242–48.

326 Lecour, 158.

327 Lecour, 157–202.

328 Lecour, 202.

guage of "white slavery", which transformed a rural-urban migration phenomenon into a concept on a transnational scale.

Lecour's book was published in three editions, all by the same publisher, but with the content of each edition having been updated with new data and findings. The first edition was published in 1870 and examined prostitution in Paris and London between 1789–1870; the second in 1872, focusing on the years 1789–1871; the third in 1882, still looking at the same topic in the same cities but for the years 1789–1877.[329] Advocates of state regulation had already been exchanging knowledge between Paris and London since the 1830s.[330] The roots of state regulation, as opposed to toleration, can be traced to revolutionary France, but this system was adapted over the course of the nineteenth century elsewhere outside of the French Empire.

Britain implemented its own version of state regulation in Singapore in 1855, however, in the 1860s, these Contagious Diseases Acts were implemented in some form in the British metropole as well. To which a protest movement in Britain quickly culminated in reaction. Thus, more or less simultaneous to the publication of the first edition of Lecour's book in defence of state regulation in France, a discourse in attack of it was coming to the fore in Britain.

At the same time, bourgeoisie figures of literary European society such as Valérie de Gasparin and Victor Hugo began writing letters of support from the continent to their colleagues across the channel who were leading a local British cause. That same year, and around the same time, Gasparin published her 1870 pamphlet *La lèpre sociale, tract contre la prostitution ("traite des blanches") et les maisons de tolérance.* In this, she called on the French Réveil movement to take up metaphorical arms against the continental system of regulated prostitution. Given the topic and timing, it could be assumed that she did so in outrage and reaction to the publication of Lecour's book, which was a defence of state regulation. It could, however, also be assumed that she took inspiration from Britain and sought to make a similar attack on regulation in France. The telling of history can have many versions.

Whatever it was that caused her to react, Madame de Gasparin employed the term "*la traite des blanches*" in her 1870 call, so as to develop a set of arguments against the system of state-regulated prostitution in France. She uttered a battle cry by employing a sophisticated use of language, intertwined with her historical and social knowledge of anti-slavery abolition. Giving clear reference to the Ré-

329 Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1870*; Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1871*; C. J. Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789–1877* (Paris: Asselin, 1882).

330 See chapter two.

veil movement's growth in French-speaking Europe starting around 1820, she discursively tied their identity to the abolitionist outcomes of the First Great Awakening in Britain and the North American colonies in the eighteenth century.[331] Her central argument was that these movements had borne their fruit with the abolition of slavery, but that it was now time for the French Réveil movement to bear its fruit with the abolition of *"la traite des blanches*". With this she was metaphorically connoting the legitimate and known trade in most continental European urban centres, in which brothels owners (almost exclusively women) carried out their business in an inter-brothel trade as well as hiring young new recruits.[332]

In writing about "white slavery" discourses in France and the French Empire in the early twentieth century, Elisa Camiscioli poignantly notes that the terms "white slave trade" and "abolitionism" are "deeply inflicted with racial meaning".[333] Looking at the letter from Gasparin, this also holds just as true for discourses in the late nineteenth century in respect to racialised notions of the "Christian" and the "Turk".

Arguing that the slave trade may have been suppressed and slavery abolished in Britain and North America, Valérie de Gasparin metaphorically claimed that through this legitimised brothel trade, there were "slave markets in human flesh and souls open in the great cities of Europe's civilised Christian countries".[334] The Comtesse did not, however, elaborate further on how this trade worked, where these markets were to be found nor what they may have looked like. Writing in 1870, her use of "*la traite des blanches*" appears, rather, as a clever way of drawing attention to a moral problem such as state-regulated prostitution with the intention of reinvigorating the spirit of a then deteriorating French Réveil movement.

In the name of her new cause, Gasparin did not, however, stop at discursively entangling older knowledge of slave trade abolitionism and the regulatory laws of the Napoleonic Code; she also sketched out the problem through comparison in light of growing imperial and orientalist knowledge about the harem. Using a

331 The protestant Réveil movement, which had begun in 1818 in the Netherlands and Switzerland, quickly also became established in the rest of French-speaking Europe reaching its height by the early 1840s. See Émile G. Léonard, *Histoire générale du protestantisme*, vol. 3, *Déclin et renouveau (XVIII^{e}–XX^{e} siècle)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964); Raoul Stéphan, *Histoire du protestantisme français* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1961).

332 For historical background, see chapter 2.

333 See Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2009), 105.

334 Gasparin, 'La lèpre sociale'.

kind of self-irony and sarcasm, Gasparin put Europe on a par with the "Turk" in terms of the harem slave trade and the Napoleonic system of state regulation.

> We cry *haro* on the Turk, because the Turk raids slaves to populate his harem; yet, we the civilised, we the Christian; we tolerate, we maintain, we protect the capturing of the daughters of the people, their sale and purchase, to garnish our legal harems, which are more vile, more abject, a thousand times more depraved than that of the gangrene which has attracted the contempt of the whole world, namely the Turkish harem![335]

Gasparin was a member of the European elite, who had been trained in orientalism, abolitionism, and a commitment to European values of European freedom. In her work, she produced knowledge to these ends throughout her lifetime. Neither I nor anyone can ever know what occurred cognitively in Gasparin's mind, which allowed these associations to be brought together. She was, however, incredibly well-educated and lived in Paris in her youth, where she engaged in its literary and artistic circles. There is little doubt that she stood in front of the great orientalist works of Ingres, Delacroix, and Powers, or that she had read Byron's *The Corsair* during her time there. I would also be surprised if she hadn't at some point had a copy of Balzac's *Les Petits Bourgeois* and Moléri's *La traite des blanches* in her hand after her return to Switzerland, following the revolution of 1848. In fact, I would assume that her metaphor *"la traite des blanches"* came from one of these two sources.[336]

Over the course of the nineteenth century and for most of the twentieth century as well, elite European minds consumed knowledge of the "Turkish harem" through accounts which had been produced by European observers and scholars;[337] The notion of a slave trade supplying beauties to the sultan would not have been unfamiliar to a French Réveil audience in 1870. The particularities of this European imaginary had been produced and reproduced through the literary and visual arts since the early nineteenth century. The published travelogues of

335 Gasparin.

336 For analysis and contextualisation of these cultural works, see chapters 2 and 3.

337 For details on this orientalist knowledge production, see chapter 3. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars such as Judith Tucker and Ehud Toledano, among others, began to unravel this established knowledge by looking beyond the accounts of European observers to rather engage directly with Ottoman sources, see Ehud R. Toledano, 'Shemsigul: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo', in *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, ed. by Edmund Burke III (Society and Culture in the Modern Middle East) (London/New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993), 59–74; Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For a more recent work on the role of lower-status women in the harem and their relations post manumission to the Ottoman Imperial Court, which also provides access to the current state of the art, see Betül Ipsirli Argit, *Life after the Harem: Female Palace Slaves, Patronage, and the Imperial Ottoman Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

elites upon their return from tours to the "Orient" were yet another equally important source for this orientalist knowledge.

At the time of writing *La lèpre sociale,* Gasparin's gendered understanding of female enslavement was strongly informed by orientalism, not only as a consumer of such knowledge, but also as a (re)producer, who had by then already published two travelogues of her own.[338] As pointed out by Natascha Ueckmann, the analytical category of gender, the role of women's travel literature, and their participation in the formation of orientalist ideas has largely been trivialised and overlooked in the deconstructive historiography.[339] The need for such distinction has, however, long been recognised by Ottoman-source scholars such as Ehud Toledano, who pointed out how the travel accounts of European women, who were allowed to enter the harem, often romanticised it, while its unknowability to western male travellers typically led to the production of fantasy.[340]

On 23 July 1866, Madame de Gasparin and her husband departed on their second trip to the "Orient". Crossing Vienna and heading down the Danube, they arrived in Istanbul on 7 August that year. Throughout the travelogue, the Comtesse provides *factual* statements about harem life; it was but on only a single occasion that she was granted entry to one on 22 August, after Lord and Lady Bulwer managed to make the arrangements with Kâmil Pasha. Having been denied entry on previous requests to other harems, the Comtesse was relieved to finally be able to fulfil her dreams of seeing one of their interiors.[341]

A number of scholars have already examined Madame de Gasparin's depiction of the harem. While Michèle Bokobza provides some description, she does not engage in any contextualisation or analysis of Comtesse's written thoughts, her historical impact or surroundings.[342] Sarga Moussa and Natascha Ueckmann have gone to this interpretative and analytical level, though their conclusions produce somewhat competing perspectives.

Moussa acknowledges that it can never really be known if the Comtesse's reports were based on fact or fiction. That said, he is, nevertheless, convinced of some sort of obtainable truth in her descriptions. In support of this, he argues that her perception as a woman gave a more honest and less orientalist account, than those of male observers who could only fantasise about the harem from the

338 Gasparin, *Journal d'un voyage au Levant* (3 Vol.): *I: La Grece, II: L'Egypte et la Nubie, III: Le désert et la Syrie*; Gasparin, *À Constantinople*.

339 Ueckmann, *Frauen und Orientalismus*, 19–20.

340 Toledano, 'Shemsigul: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo', 66.

341 Gasparin, *À Constantinople*, 327.

342 Bokobza, *Madame la Comtesse de Gasparin*, 127–40.

outside.[343] Conversely, Ueckmann argues that travelling women who opened up the doors to the harem through their descriptions may have indeed in one sense transgressed social boundaries, but they did so based on a sense of superiority, both as *enlightened* Christians and in the belief that they had the *correct* gender to speak about "women's issues". Blinded by privilege, Ueckmann points out how these elite European women neither questioned their right to explore other cultures, nor self-reflected on the benefits colonialism had already offered them in the very means of being able to travel.[344]

While Moussa suggests that the Comtesse's work can, in itself, be seen as an act of resistance in that her position as narrator gave voice to the women of the "Orient", Ueckmann rather argues that the Comtesse's very position of a travelling observer of the female *other* provided her with a sense of empowerment and the identity of an emancipated European woman.[345] Riddled with and reproducing the orientalist and racist knowledge of her class and time, I would have to agree with Ueckmann, that Gasparin's work tells us something about an elitist and privileged European female perspective, but nothing about life in the harem.

Three years after publishing her travelogue, the Comtesse drew on her first-hand orientalist knowledge to hold a mirror up to Europe and say that if the "French system" of state regulation were to be compared with that of the "Turkish harem", then "we the civilised; we the Christian" are not quite what "we" once had held "ourselves" up to be. Abolitionism, be it of slave trading or state regulation, was being framed by Gasparin as a defining character of a true Christian European society.

While the content of the Comtesse's pamphlet suggests it was targeted at protestant Réveil movement members, with whom herself and her husband were well connected, my knowledge does not extend to knowing where it circulated, nor how many copies were published. Perhaps it was not only a booklet, but also published in the Parisian and Genevan protestant press; perhaps she sent copies to the trusted statesmen and friends they had met the previous years while on their travels and tour.

In 1870, the Comtesse's metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" was a weapon intended to attack the state system of regulated prostitution. This metaphor was like capsule made out of language which contained varying colonial and imperial notions that discursively related to both the transatlantic slave trade and the role of women in an Ottoman harem. This knowledge capsule was as if a seed had

343 Moussa, 'Tristes harems', 5–7.

344 Ueckmann, *Frauen und Orientalismus*, 228–29.

345 Moussa, 'Tristes harems', 12; Ueckmann, *Frauen und Orientalismus*, 94–95.

been planted from which a new transnational concept of "white slavery" was soon to grow. This occurred as the result of a cultural transfer taking place in the years following; a cultural transfer that I could identify thanks to a footnote provided by the translator of Théodore Borel's work.[346]

With his manuscript finished in 1875 and published in 1876, the Geneva-based pastor Borel had failed to properly cite the Comtesse as his source of the language of "*la traite des blanches*". He had, however, taken her metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" and turned it into a more substantive concept of a *real* phenomenon of coercive, transnational inter-brothel trading. His description of which relied upon the cultural trope of the immoral and corrupting *entremetteuse* known in the Francophone world. Without any sarcasm or sense of metaphor, Borel told the subscribers to the *Bulletin Continental* that there *is* a "*traite des blanches*" being carried out across Christian and civilised Europe.

Borel maintained that his account was based on his study of state-regulated prostitution in different countries. He did not, however, provide any reference for this study. At the same time, from an analytical perspective, Borel's account can be easily questioned as a historical record of *facts* due to endless inconsistencies, its anecdotal style and its heavy reliance on misogynistic gendering; not to mention that he simply took a metaphor and turned it into a *real* thing. Nevertheless, treated as a historically produced source, it tells much about the social and political concerns of the day as well as the sensational power of misappropriated and racially-inverted slavery.

Going further than Gasparin's political call to action ever did, Borel's claims were about a *real* "white slave trade", which he declared was "just as vast and even more odious than that which enslaved people from Africa and brought them across the Atlantic".[347] His clearly fabricated account of who operated this slave trade presents a mix of knowledge on the old European trope of the procuresses corrupting female youth and a new notion of girls being lured abroad after having sought jobs through *bureaux de placement.*

Starting to take form in the 1860s, *agences* or *bureaux de placement* were a newly emerging institution in many European urbanities.[348] They sought to connect the unemployed, those who would then sell their labour, to employers who

346 We know that Valérie de Gasparin served as a central inspiration to Borel, as his vague reference to a Swiss woman is given her full name in the English version of his pamphlet, which was translated by Joseph Edmondson and published that same year. Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva.*

347 Borel, 'Maisons de Tolérance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 5.

348 See Benjamin Jung, 'Le placement public à Paris: de la bienfaisance à la lutte contre le chômage (1880–1910)', *Revue d'histoire de La Protection Sociale* 7 (2014): 81–101; Benjamin Jung, 'Appa-

would then buy it. Other than also being a go-between service, it is not to my knowledge that these institutions had any formal relation with third party actors, such as "pimps" and "madams", who were involved in the sale of sex. It was, however, in late nineteenth-century Paris that the intermediary figure of the procuress in European history and memory started to become cognitively entangled with the newly forming social institution of the municipal job office or commercial placement agency.

Borel's account of "white slavery" draws together both old and new knowledge to warn young girls of the dangers should they dare go out on the streets alone; in summary and amid the perils of the late nineteenth-century European world, these girls risked being procured by *entremetteuses* who lurked around working-class urban spaces and modern migratory transit points. Through their use of telegraph networks for communication and trains and steamships for transport, these procuresses of Borel's *non-fictional* account were said to regularly escort girls abroad, making a quick profit from their sale into brothels before returning once again for new business. This entire system allegedly worked by first luring the girls with luxury and then either obtaining their birth certificates from indifferent parents, faking the documentation or simply asking corrupt police to turn a blind eye. Once abroad, the girls were then, according to Borel, trapped in brothels and held there either by the fear of violence or the fear of public shame.

While adamant about the vastness of this corrupt underworld, claiming it to be larger than the transatlantic slave trade, Borel produced generalised rather than place-specific knowledge. It would, however, appear that only he, based on his unreferenced study, had access to the specifics of this knowledge, since – he claimed – every single case of "white slavery" unfortunately goes undiscovered during police or medical checks as the madams were sure to keep them hidden away, separating them out from the majority of women who had willingly entered the brothel. Thus, he concluded, the victims of this underworld system remained forever invisible, because, should these girls ever become diseased, thus requiring medical attention, or were their families to look for them, the madams simply evaded such exposure by "exporting them on in the horse trade of human livestock".[349]

While speaking about an enmeshment of an old inter-brothel trade, which had been transformed by nineteenth-century state regulation, Gasparin's meta-

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rieur et marchand de travail: le bureau de placement à Paris au tournant du XX^{e} siècle', *Open Edition Journals* 127, no. 1 (2017).

349 Borel, 'Maisons de tolérance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 11: "C'est le maquignonnage du bétail humain."

phor in 1870 had also already encompassed entangled notions of the transatlantic slave trade as well as a comparison with the "Turkish harem". Through a process of metamorphosis and transfer, that same metaphor had by 1876 started to congeal into a concept of modernity in a changing world; this concept was, however, not yet populist, but spoke to a particular European mind, whose privileged position had the knowledge and eyes to perceive the global condition. While formulating a critique of state-regulated prostitution had been the target of Gasparin and Borel, neither their foundational efforts nor those later to come against "white slavery" would do much to destabilise this "French system" over the subsequent decades.

With the privilege of hindsight, I have looked back at how the efforts of Gasparin and Borel contributed to historical change. While they did nothing to weaken the state structure, their biggest impact was their contribution to the conceptual development of "white slavery" in its incubational period, which thus produced a shift in the meaning of human trafficking in terms of how it is thought of today.

As outlined in chapter four, Borel's account reached a particular audience, namely those who were subscribers to the Federation's *Bulletin Continental.* Its salacious sensationalism wrapped in sexual morality and the language of "white slavery" was quickly gobbled up by the Federation's British membership, so that Josephine Butler demanded its immediate translation. It was the translated version of Borel's work which reached broader audiences and which taught the publicist Alfred Stace Dyer about the populist power of a misappropriated, gendered, and racially-inverted notion of transnational slave trafficking.

The translator, Joseph Edmondson, generally stayed true to Borel's words and intended meaning. He did, however, slip in a number of changes to arguments and factual claims, such as adding the involvement of male clients in the traffic and altering the scale of the "white slave trade", which he rather *corrected* as having been undoubtedly smaller "than that which depopulated Africa", but with "a more odious character, since it is carried on in the midst of Christian and civilised nations".[350] Furthermore, he expressed doubts at Borel's assertion of majority volunteerism in prostitution, with which he anticipated debates in Britain on the question of choice which were soon to come.

> [. . .] on the Continent the so-called *voluntary* signature is enforced by threats and cajolery on the part of the brothel keepers. In England this coercive operation is performed by the special Police employed under the CD Acts . . . [351]

350 Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva*, 6.
351 Edmondson, 10–11 (emphasis original).

Edmondson's translation was published that same year by the Dyer Brothers of London in 1876 under the title "THE WHITE SLAVERY OF EUROPE: from the French of Pastor T. Borel, *of the Geneva* Refuge" (emphasis original). With distribution reaching beyond the "new abolitionist" audience, now available for a broader British public at an affordable 3 penny price, the English readership was exposed to a newly solidifying concept of "white slavery", with its multiple meanings all latched on in some way to a loose notion of fraudulent transnational migration for commercial sex.

5.2 A Campaign Metaphor, the News, and Appropriation

While *Gazettes* had been around as a means for power to communicate with the public since the sixteenth century, sociologist Jean Chalaby presents theoretical arguments for understanding Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century as the time and place when the profession of journalism emerged as a result of global discourse distribution technologies and changing market economies. With these developments begining in the 1850s, Chalaby points specifically to the series of 1885 "white slavery" reports published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by William T. Stead as the birthing point of sensational journalism.[352] Within my timeframe, however, I wish to draw detailed attention to the work of the publicist Alfred Stace Dyer, who had in the later 1870s prepared the ground upon which this discourse could be grown.

As previously mentioned, Dyer had claimed to have been tipped off by an anonymous friend in September 1879, who in turn claimed that an English girl was confined in a Brussels brothel. Maintaining that this information compelled him to help the girl, Dyer said he then travelled to Brussels and allegedly, upon investigation, became the first to uncover this underworld of trafficking in English girls. According to his account and the Official British state record, Dyer's letters and publications, following this "discovery", had mounted so much pressure on the British government, that the Foreign Affairs Office was compelled to convene a Select Committee of the House of Lords to further look into the matter.

From Dyer's report, there is no hint as to who his anonymous informant could have been. I am, however, rather confident that he would have known about "white slavery" from a number of 1876 sources before he was tipped off in 1879 or "uncovered" it in 1880. These would have included the original version of Borel's account, the translation by Edmondson, as well as the "warning" issued by

352 Jean K. Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), 141–48.

Consul Henry Barron in *The Times* which had been reprinted in full as a footnote in the translated version of Borel report, which Dyer's company had published in 1876. Presenting himself as the first hero to have investigated the problem, however, Dyer conveniently omitted any subtle or explicit reference back to these publications.

More so than the works of Borel and Barron, Dyer's reports created a media storm, with reprints appearing in the *Birmingham Daily Post* and the *Liverpool Post* on 3 January 1880 and in the *New York Times* a week and a half later on 18 January.[353] There are, however, likely historical and individual reasons for this. Not only did Dyer have the advantage of being a publicist with the skillset which goes along with it, he was also, by virtue of his birth, located in London at a time when the speed at which Reuters news was sent and received through the city was steadily increasing.[354]

Given this circulation of knowledge, I assume that Dyer had been the public's main source of knowledge on "white slavery" prior to the Select Committee. At the same time, however, it would be logical to presume that the state knew more than the public did or that, at the very least, it would have had a more informed and curious set of questions. While the former is true (i.e. that the state knew more than the public), the latter, as it turns out, was not the case (i.e. that the state did not ask questions out of curiosity).

Although the Select Committee of the British House of Lords had sat on several occasions over the summer of 1880, it did not occur to any of its educated and experienced elites to simply ask Dyer who it was that had tipped him off or who he suspected it could have been. Just as puzzling, the Select Committee apparently forgot to invite (the possibly Belgian citizen) Théodore Borel or the British Consul in Brussels Henry Barron to the stand, even though these two men were the first to have drawn the British public's attention to the *real*, not metaphorical, problem of "white slavery" in 1876.

In fact, when Dyer stepped into the witness stand of the Select Committee in July 1881, he said he went to Brussels in February 1880, but that his first "acquaintance with the subject was in September 1879". The chairman, however, quickly steered him away from the topic, interrupting to say he "will not trouble [him] to go back to that; we will pursue the history of particular cases".[355] Perhaps

353 Rachael Claire Attwood, 'Vice Beyond the Pale: Representing "White Slavery" in Britain c.1880–1912' (London: UCL Press, 2012), 48.

354 Gordon M. Winder, 'London's Global Reach? Reuters News and Network, 1865, 1881, and 1914', *Journal of World History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 274.

355 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 99.

the British government knew more than the British public, but they were certainly not curious to ask critical questions like these.

There are inconsistencies internally and in comparison, within or between Borel (1876), Dyer (1879/1880), and the British Select Committee of 1881, which are dissected over the coming chapters. Despite these, however, the power of a particular story has endured until today, which pertains to networks of illegal underground non-state actors coercing young (white) females into prostitution abroad, while the conclusion is always a call for increased state migration controls to ensure their protection.

Beginning in the 1870s, a new concept called "white slavery" began to emerge transnationally, though over the course of the twentieth century it would switch names to the "traffic in women and children" or most recently "human trafficking". While I cannot capture all its facets and am thus only examining its incubational period (1866–1881), there is more than enough material to show how a metaphor applied by reform movements and women's campaigners in critique of the state in fact congealed through popular discourse into a concept which in the end served, rather than targeted, the power of the state.

In the late eighteenth century, abolitionist ideas had begun to call the justifiable existence of slavery into question on a globally connected stage.[356] These discourses produced oppositional concepts of "slavery" versus "freedom" – a binary which, for example, the Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies is now trying move beyond. In the nineteenth-century context, however, the stronghold of this dualism had resulted in "slavery" becoming more or less metaphorically denotable for almost all that was seen as unjust or evil by the liberal European mind.[357]

The metaphor of "white slavery" had not come to Josephine Butler via Victor Hugo, but was rather a transfer to Britain from Valérie de Gasparin via Théodore Borel, Joseph Edmondson, and Alfred Stace Dyer. While Hugo had also used the racialised metaphor of "l'esclavage des femmes blanches", it was not the same as "*la traite des blanches*", the term which served as the linguistic equivalent of "white slavery" in relation to prostitution at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, when Butler used a slavery metaphor in 1870 to speak about prostitution in London, she did not use a racialised version as had Hugo and Gasparin that same year.

A strict chronology of events indicates that Victor Hugo sent his letter of support to Josephine Butler on 20 March 1870. On 28 March, a report of her speech

356 See Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848*.
357 Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, 21.

given on 10 March in Birmingham was published in the weekly circular *The Shield*. This article quoted Mrs. Butler who had stated that "it is generally said that prostitutes are lost to shame. Many years' experience has shown me that every variety of characters exist among them. There are those of fourteen or fifteen years of age, comparatively innocent, sold into slavery – poor children, who know but little evil [. . .] a slave trade is carried out in London!"[358]

This was not the first time that Butler had used the slavery metaphor. In fact, in looking at her earlier use of such language in comparison to, say, Dyer, it helps with understanding the difference between analogy and metaphor, but also to grasp slavery's power when infused with a nationalist sentiment. In 1868, a year before Josephine Butler had gotten involved with the issue of prostitution on a campaign level (having carried out refuge work for years before that), she published a booklet in which she drew an analogy between slaves and women to make a point about education. She compared how slaveholders had denied slaves education out of fear that intellectual emancipation would result in them no longer providing service, in the same way that society feared providing women with education lest it result in them no longer fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers. Rhetorically asking if "labour [is] demoralised because slaves are free?", Butler argued that those who fear women will not do their duty are simply blind to the power of nature and "how deeply the maternal character is rooted in almost all women".[359]

Two years later, in 1870, Butler once again drew upon the language of slavery in relation to prostitution, this time declaring: "A slave trade is carried out in London! Girls of twelve years of age are bought and sold, and lodged in houses of ill-fame."[360] When Butler compared the lack of education of slaves to the lack of education of women, she did so as an analogy which likens two things to make a point. When she said that there *is* a slave trade in London, it was a metaphor making a more direct comparison. It was, however, Gasparin's metaphor which, by coincidence and contingency, inspired Borel to write a narrative account of "*la traite des blanches*", which would soon prove the power of populism in Britain as it combined elements capable of capturing nineteenth-century imaginations.

I outlined how the metaphor of "*la traite de blanches*" had initially come out of a literary tradition to speak about issues of marriage, women, and class, which had begun with Honoré de Balzac in the 1850s and was then subsequently ex-

358 Unknown, 'Meeting of Ladies: Speech Given by Josephine E. Butler to the Women's Meeting, Lecture Theatre of the Midland Institute, Birmingham, Thursday 10 March 1870'.

359 Josephine Butler, *The Education and Employment of Women* (London: MacMillian and Co., 1868), 16–17.

360 Unknown, 'Meeting of Ladies: Speech Given by Josephine E. Butler', 78.

panded on by Hippolyte Jules Demolière in the 1860s. I have also shown how the metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" as a means of critiquing the system of state-regulated prostitution had come from Valérie de Gasparin, not Victor Hugo, who had used the similar but not the same term *"l'esclavage des femmes blanches"* (enslavement of white women). Madame de Gasparin was closely involved in Parisian literary circles up until the 1848 revolution and had herself a talent for writing that earned her great respect within them.[361] Thus, it might be assumed with a degree of confidence that she had borrowed or subconsciously inherited the term "*la traite des blanches*" from Balzac or Demolière.

"*La traite des blanches*" in its form used by Gasparin had been, as it also was for Balzac and Demolière, an appropriated and racially inverted notion of the transatlantic slave trade. Gasparin had used it as campaign rhetoric in the hope of igniting its power as metaphor. In 1877, an ally of hers, F. Tacussel, took up the metaphor as part of this same campaign and placed it as his book's title. He opened by crediting Gasparin's call to action in 1870 as having been the first to put the question before public opinion and that it was thanks to her subsequent efforts along with her husband's that "France saw petitions for the repression of prostitution arriving in its Chamber".[362]

Dedicated to the Comtesse's late husband, Agénor de Gasparin, Tacussel's book was a contribution to the effort and campaign against France's state regulation. The difference between Tacussel's work of 1877 and those of Borel and Dyer in 1876 and 1880 was that for the former "*la traite des blanches*" was still a metaphor, whereby for the latter it was a signifier for the conceptualisation of a *real* thing.

Tacussel had pointed to the simultaneity between William Wilberforce (1759–1833) having managed to obtain parliamentary suppression of "*la traite des noirs*" (trade in Blacks) in England, while France was in the midst of implementing "legalised prostitution" and with it the birth of a "new industry, "*la traite des blanches*".[363] That Tacussel placed *"la traite des blanches"* in italics but not "*la traite des noirs*" suggests that his usage, like Gasparin, was consciously metaphorical. He did not really believe that legalised prostitution was comparable to the European trade in enslaved Africans, but he was of the conviction, as were the Gasparins, that it was just as much the duty of conscious Christians to have it abolished.

Language is, however, a prickly thing, and holding onto it long enough to describe its form is far from easy. Having congealed within a few years into a con-

361 Smith, 'De Frederick Douglass à Madame de Gasparin: métamorphoses du récit de l'esclave', 79.

362 Tacussel, *La traite des blanches*, 9.

363 Tacussel, 5–6.

cept, the metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" did not for long service its original critique. "White slavery" was quickly commandeered and recalibrated so as to reinforce, rather than weaken, the strategies of the state.[364]

In Britain in 1870, Josephine Butler had herself used the slavery metaphor to speak about prostitution, as members of the Ladies National Association had read Hugo's racialised term "l'esclavage des femmes blanches". Perhaps they had even also read Gasparin's call to action against the metaphorical "*la traite des blanches*". These expressions were part of the semiotics of slavery in nineteenth-century argument formulation. It was, however, only in 1876 in Britain that the real commercial and discursive power became apparent, not in the form of "slavery" as analogy or even "white slavery" as metaphor, but of racially inversed transatlantic slavery as *fact* describing a *real* European underworld of transnational crime.

In September 1880, Dyer had written and published his pamphlet which sold nearly 5000 copies, with 8000 having been printed in addition for distribution among repeal associations. However, 10,000 copies of a shorter version had already been in circulation the month previous, while a request from the Quaker Association for a revised version of Borel's pamphlet was to be issued at the same time.[365] By 1885, Dyer had sold thousands upon thousands of his own pamphlet to the masses for only two pence, which was by then already in its ninth edition. In the space of a decade or so, "white slavery", the metaphorical critique of state regulation, had become "white slavery", the story of an English girl in a Belgium brothel who had ended up "as much a slave as ever was a negro upon Virginian soil".[366]

For the European mind of 1880, a concept of a *real* "white slave trade" was well under formation which was not only an appropriation of abolitionist language and strategy and the symbol of gender-based violence on white women's body, it was a radical misappropriation of the history and pain endured by enslaved people from Africa over the previous five centuries.

5.3 Sensationalism and the Pollination of Meanings

Michel Espagne appeals for the non-linguistic study of translation. As he points out an approach to doing so is by analysing how, in the process of conceptual develop-

364 For full discussion, see chapters six and seven.

365 Attwood, 'Vice Beyond the Pale', 53.

366 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 7.

ment, transfers tend to metamorphose into being within a transnational space, more so than they get transported across it.[367] Not far from this theoretical explanation, Judith Butler draws attention to how "metaphors lose their metaphoricity as they congeal through time into concepts".[368] I have identified 1866–1881 as the incubational period of conceptual development of "white slavery", for it was during these years that the metamorphosis process took place which transformed a metaphor into a fully-fledged transnational and gendered concept.

The metaphor of "white slavery" had had numerous functions in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the French literary world in the mid-nineteenth century, the specific metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" then came into circulation being used to address a series of gendered issues related to women's social position in marriage and prostitution. In 1870, following the campaign call by Valérie de Gasparin, this metaphor had firmly entered the incubational period of conceptual development. The meanings that would later inform this concept had, however, emerged in dispersed places at different times, some even before the metaphor had been uttered by Gasparin. There are varying strands which became entangled in the concept of "white slavery" since 1866, which will be discussed in chapters six and seven. These largely relate to a legal transfer taking place between the United States and Britain in 1866 and to the change in the meaning of the German term "*Mädchenhandel*" (trade in girls) in 1868. For now, however, I outline how Gasparin's metaphor caught on in 1870 and Borel propelled it into its metamorphosis process.

By examining this emerging concept of "white slavery" during its incubational period, it becomes clear that it was not one singular or definable thing. Rather "white slavery" was a series of issues and agendas which were packaged in a particularly successful cultural tale. The idea or trope of a "white slave" had an orientalist history in Britain and France since the early nineteenth century. Elements of this orientalism surely remained in the minds of some educated and elite Europeans, who had been exposed to the "scientific" and cultural works which informed its development. In the late nineteenth century, however, the "white slave" also became known to the broader European populous. To this audience, she was no longer the Greek or Circassian captive of the Turk; she was understood as the lost daughter of the English, the Swiss, the German, the Dutch, the Austrian, or the French.

367 Michel Espagne, 'La notion de transfert culturel', *Revue Sciences/Lettres*, no. 1 (2013), https://doi.org/10.4000/rsl.219.

368 Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, xxii.

The details known and told to any given populous depended on the context. Even with only examining the sources from the incubational period of conceptual development, it became apparent that the meaning of "white slavery" was highly adaptable, slipping and coiling as it was bounced back and forth. Cultural knowledge of the problem thus differed slightly between time and place. While the metaphor had been put on the table by Gasparin, the substantive and descriptive meanings for the populous had been predominantly contributed to via a transfer running back through Dyer in 1880 to Borel/Edmondson/Barron in 1876 and then perhaps to some rare readers of Lecour's work in 1870.

It was through these works that the notions of trickery and coercion came to be associated with female migration. They presented narratives and examples of procuresses and foreign men using telegraph networks and *bureaux de placement* to deceive young naïve female migrants. An intersectional lens aids here in understanding how "white slavery" was employed to express different fears and agendas with its varying categories of difference (gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationhood) for the description of those framed as "migrant" and "trafficker".

In 1883, during the third annual conference of the Federation, Henri Minod († 1935) indicated the role of *bureaux de placement* within the organisation of the "white slave trade". In support of this claim, he cited the work and findings of Police Chief Lecour, who in 1870 had written a book which legitimised the system of state-regulated prostitution. I, however, failed to find any mention of the *bureaux de placement* anywhere in any of the three editions of Lecour's study.[369] He had, however, written about some rare but serious cases of male pimps, who tricked young girls, mostly orphans, into moving from the countryside to Paris, having convinced them with false promises of a good job.[370]

There is no reason to doubt that there were cases of young girls in nineteenth-century France, who fell for the fancy words of some strange male, who, thereafter, profited from their coerced sale of sex in Paris. No doubt there were similar cases in other European geographies and in other periods. History is, however, most fascinating in how it entangles itself as social process and as the telling

369 There are three editions of Lecours work. I have most thoroughly read the second edition from 1872 and made digital and ocular searches of the other two. There was definitely no match up with the page number referenced by Minod. See Henri Minod, 'Condamnation de la maison de tolérance', in *Fédération britannique continentale et générale pour l'abolition de la prostitution spécialement envisagée comme institution légale ou toléree, Troisième Congrès international, compte rendu officiel des travaux du congrès* (Neuchâtel: Secretétariat Général de la Fédération, 1883), 132.

370 Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1871*, 202.

of narratives;[371] how events occur, are told, become exaggerated, and ultimately, impact the outcome of other events.

In the 1870s, as anti-regulationists or moral reformists in Britain and French-speaking Europe were beginning to organise internationally, Lecour's report was brought to their attention. It's possible to imagine a scenario in which someone like Yves Guyot, the anti-regulationist and journalist reporting on police corruption in Paris, had picked up on the report and circulated it around the membership of the Federation.[372] It could then also have well been that one attentive reader spotted the paragraph about these rare, though nonetheless real, cases of trickery, which brought anti-regulationists to jump on the fact, after which it became embroidered within their discursive strategy to strengthen their arguments against state-regulated prostitution.

In 1876, Théodore Borel produced the first substantive written account of how the "white slave traffic" operated. For this, he relied upon the knowledge of two culprits. The first being an old continental stock figure of the procuress, who had at least been around since the early modern period; the other was a new arrival in Borel's time, namely the *bureau de placement.* He had, however, not mentioned the trickery of pimps on the French countryside. By 1880, the idea of the fraudulent French fancy man had become central to knowledge on "white slavery" through Alfred Stace Dyer's *Narrative of Facts,* while he also retained the role of the continental *bureaux de placement.*

Whether in practice or not, the narratives of Borel and Dyer made a historical relation between the *bureaux de placement* and third-party actors in the sale of sex. This constructed relation then got carried forth in the passage of time and historicised back by those who later wrote about the organisation of the "white slave trade". While Borel in 1876 had tied older knowledge of the continental procuress to the emerging employment offices, Dyer had then in 1880 linked them to the figure of the continental male trafficker.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the continental procuress became visible in high culture and through the law.[373] This *othered* stock figure of Europe transitioned into the trafficker through cultural transfers which ran through the French- and English-language works of Borel and Dyer. The observation of this metamorphosis in Germanic Europe has already been made by Peter Becker, who pointed out how the "*Kupplerin*" (female, intermediary, procuress) had long borne the burden of blame for the corruption of innocent girls. He points out

371 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past; Power and the Production of History*, 13.

372 For more on Yves Guyot, see chapter seven.

373 See chapter three.

how the category, role and social meaning of the "*Kupplerin*" was then gradually replaced by the "*Mädchenhändler*" (male, intermediary, trafficker/trader in girls*)* toward the close of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Becker indicates how this semantic development also shifted the meaning of "*Frauen- und Mädchenhandel*" (*trade in girls and women)*, which had previously denoted the legitimated exchange or trade between brothels, but which thereafter became understood as an issue of crime related to recruitment and procurement for prostitution.[374]

In looking more closely at the stock figure of the *entremetteuse* that featured throughout Borel's account of "*la traite des blanches*", I came to understand this figure as on a par with the "*Kupplerin*" of the Germanic world. In her Ph.D., Rachel Attwood had referred to the English translation of Borel's pamphlet in comparison to Dyers, pointing out that while Dyer had focused exclusively on male traffickers, Borel had highlighted female culprits. Attwood framed this discrepancy as an oversight on the part of Dyer, illustrating how Butler had once, in an 1881 publication, acknowledged the role of a nurse involved in a doping case.[375] Dyer and Borel, however, only provided isolated anecdotal cases to make a general claim about transnational networks. Thus, given that the same gender transition occurred for this stock figure in the Germanic world and then between the French and English contexts, I would disagree with Attwood's suggestion that Dyer made an oversight. Rather, I see little sense in trying to deduce any *facts* about the gender of traffickers from two non-comprehensive and internally contradictory accounts.

Examined as a gendered and transnational cultural transfer, "white slavery", can perhaps be better understood as a conscious import into the British context, where the idea of the white female slave resonated with Victorians, but the notion of a local old English women corrupting youth did not. This makes sense in light of Judith Walkowitz's research on London in the same period when middle-class women's rights campaigners were preoccupied with fears of stranger danger, the threat of the unknown man and the risk of being mistaken for a "common whore".[376] As these women moved out into public spaces, demanding more

374 See Becker, *Verderbnis und Entartung*.

375 Attwood, 'Vice Beyond the Pale', 78; Josephine Butler, '"A Letter to the Mothers of England: Commended Also to the Attention of Fathers, Ministers of Religion, and Legislators", April 1881', in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, 5 vols, ed. by Jane Jordon and Ingrid Sharp, vol. 4: *Child Prostitution and the Age of Consent* (New York/London: Routledge, 2004).

376 Walkowitz examines the specific emergence of street harassment by "anonymous strange pests" as part of new class conflicts and struggles over ownership of public spaces. Simultaneous

freedom, rights, and responsibility, they at the same time demanded that this not negatively affect their privilege and the respect they bore over the lower classes.

In contrast to the version of "white slavery" which developed in Britain from 1880, nearly all the actors of Borel's brutal system of trafficking were female; the Madame, her under-mistress, the enslaved girls, and the procuress. Of the characters who were portrayed as evil, only one man was mentioned, who was said to have been hired to chase down two girls, who had made a rare attempt to escape. In a hero's narrative reliant on erotic descriptions of breathlessness, sweat, and dust, a good policeman was then said to have saved the girls, escorting them back to their homeland, while arresting the bully, condemning him for attempting "in broad daylight on our republican soil, to renew the atrocities of slavery for too long the opprobrium of America".[377]

Class, gender, and nationhood were incredibly important knowledge orders for the categorisation of actors within the accounts of "white slavery" given by Borel and Dyer. In contrast to Borel's explicit blame of women, be they female procuresses preying in working class areas or working-class girls being too foolish, greedy and immoral to say no, Dyer's traffickers were depicted as foreign fancy men from the continent, who came to England to find brothel supplies. While in Francophone Europe the role of the *entremetteuse* continued to have significance, the figure of the foreign, deceptive male in Britain of the 1870s had far more cultural hold.[378]

The works of Borel and Dyer as well as the translation by Edmondson were all campaign strategies, aimed to attack the system of state-regulated prostitution in Britain and in French-speaking Europe. Medical proponents of these state systems (such as Parent-Duchâtelet, Michael Ryan, William Acton, and C. J. Lecour)

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to middle class women beginning to use streets alone, London was emerging as a so-called pleasure capital on a par with Paris around 1870: all the while new media trends of reporting street harassment reinforced "good" women's fears of being mistaken for "bad" ones, see Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London', *Representations* 62 (1998): 1–30. Elsewhere, she has also took note of the function of gender in shifting cultural narratives, pointing out how in the melodrama of her memoirs, Josephine Butler depicted no female villains, while presenting herself as being pure but not defenceless. Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992), 91.

377 Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 13.

378 The same old theme of a greedy mother selling her daughter to a procuress, which is mentioned in Lecour and hinted at in Borel, also crops up in Xavier de Montépin's 1877 novel *La traite des blanches.* For more context and analysis, see Ennis, 'Narrating "White Slavery" in and out of Fiction, 1854–1880'; Xavier de Montépin, *Confession d'une bohême VI: La traite des blanches* (Paris: A. Degorge-Cadot Libraire-Éditeur, 1877).

had all in some way or another highlighted economics as the sole reason for women entering prostitution, with overcrowding and domestic abuse being other contributing factors. To counter this position, the concept of "white slavery" provided moral campaigners with an argument based on the notion of force, innocence, and enslavement. This allowed a critique in economic terms to be avoided, while a response to gender-based exploitation and violence in the family was overridden by exploitation as it occurred at the hands of non-state non-familiar third parties.[379]

Even if pointing to structural rather than moral factors behind the sale of sex, proponents of state regulation were no more concerned with liberating women from such deprivation or violence. These men of state and science were concerned with understanding what kinds of people ended up selling sex, so that at the expense of some of their freedoms, the spread of disease among the general population might be controlled. By contrast, anti-regulationist moralists wished to relieve women selling sex under state regulation, but they believed that the rightful and safest place for lost girls was to return them to their families or to put them in a church-run home. They did not concern themselves with sexual abuse in church or familiar homes, rather their moralism was served well by the figure of the non-state go-between.

Pimps and procuresses of the underworld and the employment agencies of the newly emerging social structures, all functioned as an important element of how "white slavery" was narrated and historicised. Many sources on into the twentieth century participated in the writing of history. Henri Minod's lecture in 1883 during the third annual conference of the Federation is one of the earliest accounts I have come across that looked back at how a movement against "white slavery" and state regulation began to emerge. In terms of the role of the non-state third parties involved, he pointed to the *bureaux de placement*.

A trained geographer and attune with the culture of science of the time, Minod substantiated his knowledge production and history writing with a footnote which referenced the work of Parisian Chief of Police Lecour.[380] There are three editions of Lecour's work, the 1882 edition having been referenced. I have most thoroughly read the second edition from 1872, while making digital and ocular searches of the other two. There was, in any case, no match up with the page number referenced by Minod. Of the sources I found, the first to draw a relation-

379 The only place where this argument was highlighted is in the novel by Moléri. Moléri, *La Traite des blanches*. For more details, see chapter 2 and Ennis, 'Narrating "White Slavery" in and out of Fiction, 1854–1880'.

380 Minod, 'Condamnation de la maison de tolérance', 132; Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789–1877*, 137.

ship between the *bureaux de placement* and the organisation of sold sex was *maisons de tolérance* by Pastor Théodore Borel.

Not only did Borel blame the go-between *entremetteuse* for the innerworkings of "*la traite des blanches*", he identified a second third-party culprit, namely the *bureaux de placement.* He argued that, despite the police surveillance and court trials, these employment agencies "under the pretence of an honest and lucrative job, send girls abroad without support and without any recommendation."[381] He then elaborated that the owners of these offices knew very well what they are about, though in some cases they were ignorant of the trade being exercised by those who connected "servants with situations".[382] Edmondson's translation into English is generally faithful to Borel's work. He did, however, place an insightful footnote elucidating how girls were being sent abroad without money or recommendations, reproducing, in its entirety, an article published in *Times* on 3 February 1876 by the British Consul Barron in Brussels.

Barron's text was short and outlined how girls were being fooled by procuresses, having been drawn to them by the novelty of going abroad, as a result of abandonment by the theatre, or for want and temptation. The solution which he proposed to this problem was to publicly warn girls not to accept any agent without investigation by presumably consuls such as himself and a written agreement from the employer that he would fund the return journey should the engagement by terminated. Barron did not mention *bureaux de placement*, but the blame Borel hung on them the months prior was the same kind of phraseology coming from the Belgium based diplomat.

Around the same time, Borel (a possible Belgium citizen based in Geneva as a protestant pastor) and Barron (an employee of the British state based in Brussels) constructed a working relationship between procuresses and gendered patterns of labour migration. Where procuresses had been the old culprit of innocent corruption in a bygone European culture, the *bureaux de placement* symbolised a new non-state, non-church institution in emergence under the global condition. The procuress had long been a shady figure on the edge of society interfering with other powers' regulation of the poor. Like her, employment agencies were infringing on these same structures and space which the church and state sought to dominate.

Like Borel, Barron relies on a sexist prejudice that girls' stupidity and uncontrolled desires were the reasons for them being tricked into going abroad. The main blame, however, hung on third-parties working outside the realms of the

381 Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le Droit et la moralité publique', 5–6.
382 Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva*, 7.

church and the state. Upon arrival in Britain, the corrupting figure remained the strange and not-to-be-trusted go-between. It was, however in the churing of meaning that happens with a cultural transfer, not the continental procuress who disembarked on the British shore, but rather a foreign fancy man working in correlation with *bureaux de placement*. Likewise, the reasons given as to why girls came into contact with their exploiters shifted from their own immorality or curiosity to their naivety and innocence, which were detected by calculating culprits.

In Dyer's *Narrative of Facts* from 1880, some information on two anecdotal cases is provided; the first, an English "prostitute" who Dyer claimed to have met in a brothel while visiting Brussels in 1879 on his undercover mission to expose the "slave trade"; the second being a case which initially inspired him to go to Brussels, after he had been tipped off about a 19-year-old girl working in a brothel there who had claimed she had been abducted. The names are not given in Dyer's account, and the identity of these individuals remains elusive. The first case will be returned to later, but the second case Dyer provided in his account relates to the transfer of knowledge on the role of non-state non-church third parties in the organisation of the sale of sex.

According to the statements that Dyer gave when he took the witness stand of the Select Committee on 26 July 1881, the real name of the girl in the second case might have been Adeline Tanner, though it could also have possibly been Emily Anne Barnett or Ellen Newland.[383] Thus, I will refer to her as Tanner-Barnett-Newland.

According to his published account, Dyer claimed that he had visited Tanner-Barnett-Newland in a hospital in Brussels along with the wife of a pastor Anet. This claim, however, is contradicted by his statement given to the Select Committee in 1881 when he said that he had first met Tanner-Barnett-Newland after she had returned to England and that he had sent Anet along with others to find and visit the girl. Knowledge of the case differed depending on the audience.

The Select Committee had been a highly elitist affair, the minutes from which would only have been made available to a select few. While knowing neither her

383 There are several conflicting accounts between the names mentioned at different points throughout the Select Committee and details provided by Dyer in his *Narrative of Facts.* Dyer had published a letter which was claimed to have been written by the girl herself, her real name was not mentioned, but it was indicated that she was given the false name Ellen Cordon to register in the brothel. During the proceedings of the Select Committee it is established that she did not write this letter herself. Nevertheless, the letter provides the details of one case, but these details reflect elements in relation to Emily Adeline Tanner, Anne Barnett, and Ellen Newland. Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*; Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 38; 99–100.

real nor fake name, a large number of the British public could have heard or read about the second case through the circulation of Dyer's *Narrative of Facts.* In this account, Tanner-Barnett-Newland is quoted as saying that she was being kept in the hospital to "prevent her becoming a witness against the infamous slave trade of which she was a victim".[384]

After Tanner-Barnett-Newland completed her time in the clinic, it was then expected that she would be put in prison for a number of months after having been sentenced in Belgium for registering in a brothel under a false name. Allegedly, she thus told Dyer that if she could instead be returned safely to England, she would commit to disposing all of the details of her experience. Out of fear that she might disappear from the hospital where she was being kept, Dyer published in 1880 that he had given her his card in 1879 so that she might stay in contact. This claim was intended to vouch for him having received a letter from Tanner-Barnett-Newland thereafter, in which she allegedly detailed her own story and he allegedly quoted it in full without edit.

According to the letter published in Dyer's account, Tanner-Barnett-Newland had stated that she had read Dyer's article which had been published in the *The Christian* and that her letter was to serve as confirmation of his story. The letter stated that she had no doubts that the British public would believe that "this horrible traffic exists". She then said that if she ever made it back to England to tell her story, she would let everyone know how she had been an "innocent child" before departing and that she would fight any fear of being branded a fallen woman. Resolute, Dyer quoted her to have written that "by God's help I will prove to them that I have been sinned against, not sinned. I cannot express my feelings on this slavery. [. . .] that innocent girls should be brought over here under false pretences, by men that get their living by it, and sold to the highest bidder of the keepers of the houses."[385]

According to the letter, Tanner-Barnett-Newland had stated she had been the daughter of a commercial traveller and had thus grown up in luxury until she was orphaned at sixteen, which left her with no other option than to work as a domestic servant. This class background could explain the elegance of her letter and writing style. However, even if she had been a daughter of the poverty classes, it would also have been very possible that a girl in London in 1880 was literate. Nevertheless, bourgeois orphan or not, her aptitude for using the language of anti-regulationists is striking.

384 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 18.
385 Dyer, 20.

In her letter, Tanner-Barnett-Newland indirectly spoke to the British public, telling that her downfall came in autumn 1879 when she met a man Julie (presumably in London), who invited her for wine, to which she "innocently and foolishly assented".[386] Julie then asked her if she would like to go to Paris. Prior to leaving, she went with Julie to a café where they met with a fancy and fascinating Frenchman. The two men were then said to have given her more intoxicating liquors.

According to the allegedly self-written letter, Tanner-Barnett-Newland made the point that she could only speak with the French man through translation by Julie. The language barrier was, however, apparently no obstacle for making quick proposals, for the French man took such a fancy to her, that he offered her his hand in marriage.[387] All the while, he immediately reassured her that she need not haste with her response, rather proposing that she first accompany him to Paris to see his grand house; should she be satisfied with her future home, she could consent; otherwise she could return back to England.

Tanner-Barnett-Newland explained that due to the alcohol she agreed to think about it. That night she then stayed at Julie's place, where his wife prepared her a room. When she woke the next morning, she was served gin before breakfast and thereafter introduced to other friends by Julie's wife. Although having tried to slip away on several occasions, the girl said that her will was weak and she continued drinking the brandy as her glass was constantly refilled. Stupid with drink by evening, she was semi-conscious en route to the continent, during which she slept most of the journey.

When she awoke from her state of intoxication, Tanner-Barnett-Newland said she was shocked to learn from a fellow passenger that they were on the boat to Brussels, not Paris.[388] Upon arrival, they entered a house and she was sent straight to bed; though she was not yet aware that she was staying in a brothel. The next day when she woke up, she was threatened that if the officials were to find out her real identity, she would be heavily punished for coming to the country, thus she must officially declare herself to be 21 years of age and that her name was Ellen Cordon. Accordingly, she was then supplied with a fitting birth certificate to match her story, after which she was given a paper to sign by some

386 Dyer, 23.

387 Cultural knowledge about the trick of the false promise of marriage had had a long history in London since the late sixteenth century. Accounts of the marriage trick from the Elizabethan period at times depicted those who ended up in prostitution as blameless, while in other cases, it was seen as a result of their gluttony. See Griffiths, 'The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London', 50.

388 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 23–24.

state officials with whom she was unable to speak with due to the language barrier.

The idea of being foreign in a foreign place and having been brought there by foreign men was an important element in Dyer's construction of "white slavery". The language barrier in particular sets the scene on several occasions so as to substantiate the girl's naivety, innocence, and helplessness. Some of the witness statements given during the Select Committee of 1881 suggest that a girl, perhaps called Tanner, or Barnett, or Newland, did not write the letter published by Dyer but that it had been written for her. Time and context are very flexible and interchange in Dyer's *Narrative of Facts.* Whether he is recounting his steps, invented or not, as an investigative journalist, or whether an exploited girl is given narrative agency to talk about her migration journey through his mediation, the shifting times, subjects, and contexts service the main point of his text, which was to make a critique of medical examinations conducted under state regulation and to argue the need for girls to be protected from this moral double standard.[389]

Typical of the routine of registering a woman in a continental brothel in the nineteenth century, Tanner-Barnett-Newland's age and identity were confirmed after which she was "subjected to a medical violation by the official doctor". Dyer as speaker in the *Narrative of Facts* said that during the medical examination, she was then confirmed to have been a virgin. In the letter by Tanner-Barnett-Newland embedded in Dyer's *Narrative of Facts*, the doctor had discovered a medical defect in that the smallness of her person prevented him from carrying out the examination and would thus prevent her from being able to have sexual intercourse. This did not, however, stop the doctor from letting her "remain in this den of infamy to be subject to treatment worse than that of a slave, for whilst here, not only was all liberty taken from me, but I was the helpless victim of every outrage and brutality that heatless profligates, in their unrestrained and unnatural lust, chose to inflict upon me".

Based on my knowledge from the sources and the historical literature, there is little doubt in my mind that the conditions of forced registration and forced medical checks in a misogynistic European culture rarely, if ever, made continental brothels a desired place to be. Long hours and no rest were surely met with the violence that Tanner-Barnett-Newland's voice in Dyer's *Narrative of Facts* was reported to experience by clients. That abused bodies were left with abscesses and minds pushed to the brink of madness certainly sounds like plausible violations of women. The character descriptions, however, framing the Tanner-

389 For more details on the arguments of British anti-regulationists on the moral double standard, see chapter 2.

Barnett-Newland case functioned to strip her of any agency, so that her choices and actions within the given moral economy could under no circumstances be interpreted as having been assertive or having at any rational level consented to the migration journey.

According to the published letter, Tanner-Barnett-Newland's will was described as weak and her mind naïve. This resulted in her passively becoming embroiled in a plot against her, which was aided by alcoholic substances and French charm. The doctor examined her, to which she was declared a virgin, while it was also declared that a medical condition made her genitalia unsuited for intercourse. In terms of narrative function, both arguments about her character and traits were an important defence to the integrity of complete innocence, which needed to be an essential factor in any convincing account of "white slavery".

Around the 15 November 1879, Tanner-Barnett-Newland had been sent to hospital for treatment where she was detained for six months even though she didn't have a venereal disease. Detailing the examinations as having been crueller than anything she had been subjected to in the brothels, Tanner-Barnett-Newland spoke through Dyer's account of the doctors having repeatedly torn and cut "away my living flesh, inflicting upon me agonies I can never describe, besides the intolerable shame"; and all without having even been provided with chloroform for the pain.[390]

There is little cause to doubt that there were girls who experienced coercion on their migrant journey; that under the influence of intoxicating substances situations arose which might otherwise have not; that those who sold sex regularly experienced sexual violence at the hands of their clients and that there were cases of experimentation and cruelty carried out by doctors within the system of state-regulated prostitution. These historical experiences are, however, not out there to be obtained; they have been lost in the individuals own trauma, through the silencing mechanisms of society; they didn't survive the filters of appropriating parties who rehashed these stories for their own agendas, converting them into constructed cases which better matched the publics sensational and moral needs in order to be heard.

In terms of historical structure, all women, though some more than others, were disadvantaged by their gender in nineteenth-century Britain and, of course, anywhere else where society was patriarchal in structure. Knowledge of this vulnerability, however, not only gave power to those men who exploited or abused bodies through gender in the physical world: knowledge of these vulnerabilities produced through gender also gave power to agendas which appropriated this

390 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 26–27.

knowledge for argument formulation when calling for actions to be taken in the name of women's protection. Just as exploitation is a historical fact, so is its appropriation in narrative.

The letter which Tanner-Barnett-Newland had allegedly written was published in full by Dyer in 1880. During the proceedings of the Select Committee, however, the possibility opens up that while Adeline Tanner existed as a person, the details of her case published in the *Narrative of Facts* were for the most part an invention. In the witness stand on 12 July 1881, Belgium-based vice-Consul Jeffes stated in relation to the case that "I do not think the details of her story were true; in my opinion she invented many which were not correct, or had them invented for her." When asked by Lord Braye "what was the object in inventing the story of her persecution?", Mr. Jeffes responded "It was the wish of certain people, I suppose, to make a sensational thing out of certain facts, and a great deal must have been put into her mouth."[391]

When Lord Penzance questioned Dyer on 26 July 1881, he brought up the discrepancy between Dyer's claims and the believes of Mr. Jeffes, asking "are you aware that the vice consul, who has given evidence before this Committee, saw the girl several times whilst she was in the hospital [. . .] and that she never told him anything of the kind?" Dyer responded "I believe he stated so" to which the chairman followed up asking "was this declaration that is before us written by the girl herself, or written for her?" As it turned out there were two versions, neither of which were the work of the girl alone.

The first version of "the girl's story" had been written by the girl "with verbal alterations by [Dyer's] wife". The second was a statement presented during the Brussels trials which had been "compiled from her information by Mr. James Porter, a barrister-at-law". The chairman asked "I am not wrong in saying, I suppose, that this could not have been written by the girl herself?" "Not in that form" responded Dyer.[392]

I have spoken of statements allegedly made by a girl with whom Dyer had contact. However, the state record makes it perfectly clear that the more appropriate phrasing might be a statement constructed for a girl by Alfred Stace Dyer, his wife, James Porter, perhaps others, or a combination of all of these parties. Nevertheless, this means of producing evidence did not prove an issue for the legitimation of the Select Committee with its goal of producing a legislative bill. The standards of the state also took no issue with Tanner-Barnett-Newland seemingly

391 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 38.

392 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 106–7.

not having written the letter herself, contrary to the way it had been presented elsewhere. No Select Committee member took issue with the fact that Dyer lied to the British public. Rather, Lord Aberdare simply rounded up the session on 26 July 1881 with constructed questions which led to the conclusion that this was a legitimate means of having produced the Tanner-Barnett-Newland girls' statement, "in the same form that declarations are made by the parties in a suit", in that lawyers are provided with information and they then "supply the language". Dyer admitted and agreed that yes indeed, that was it, the girl's statement had been "drawn up to be signed."[393]

More so than telling anything about the lives or experiences of real individuals who sold sex abroad in the 1870s, the anecdotal cases presented by Borel and Dyer give insight into socio-political cultural contexts in which particular narrative versions of "white slavery" strived. This consequently also points out the incongruities and consistencies between French- and English-speaking anti-regulationists agendas; at the same time that it shows that the state did not feel threatened by these critiques nor did it wish to attack them based on the lack of evidence.

In chapters six and seven, I show that the appearance of non-state actors driving the discourse on "white slavery" in fact serviced the state's power, in that the knowledge of such a problem logically compelled abolitionist European states to respond. The narrative elements behind these non-state critiques, however, also diverged, and in the typical nature of transfers, they were shifted and adapted in specific ways depending on context.

In his translation of Borel's work, Edmondson had introduced the role of the male client, which had not appeared in the original text. Edmondson blamed these men for the demand which perpetuated the traffic. The Dyer Brothers published this translation at some point in, presumably, late 1876. Around three years later, Dyer received the tip-off from an anonymous colleague in Belgium about a case of "white slavery" which involved a British girl trapped in a brothel, thus compelling him to carry out his investigations.

In the publication of his *Narrative of Facts*, Dyer claimed to have embarked on an investigative trip to Brussels in late 1879 along with the Quaker banker George Gillet. As previously outlined, there are inconsistencies between his publication and the statement he gave before the Select Committee in 1881 as to where and when he met Tanner-Barnett-Newland. This is also the case with the claims about when he travelled to Brussels, as in his response as a witness in front of the Select Committee he stated that he went to Brussels for the first and only time

393 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 106–7.

in February 1880. While it is possible that he had lied in the witness stand in 1881, I would think it more likely that while writing the *Narrative of Facts* he felt it more strategic and convincing for the sake of argument and dramatic effect to invent having gone to Brussels as a hero in late 1879, the imaginative journey of which he would then recount to the British public. Dyer did, however, make an actual trip to Brussels some months after having published the first edition. In the time between the imagined and the actual trips, political steps toward establishing a British campaign against the "white slave trade" had been taken.

Upon their imaginary return from Belgium in 1879, Dyer reported in his *Narrative of Facts* that himself and George Gillet set up the *London Committee for the purpose of exposing and suppressing the existing traffic in English, Scotch, and Irish Girls*, along with the chamberlain of London Benjamin Scott, R. Cope Morgan, Septimius R. Scott, Mary Steward, Mary H. L. Bunting, E. Philip Batin, T. L. Boyde, and W. M. Payne. Self-titled the "Memorialists", their first collective action was to send a petition to the British foreign secretary, the Earl of Grandville, in August 1880, in which they maintained that "there exists a systematic abduction, to Brussels and elsewhere on the Continent, of girls who are British subjects".[394] Their letter was published in full and included in Dyer's *Narrative of Facts*.

Gender and nationhood played an important role in the presentation of "white slavery" in the publications which came out of Geneva and London, nevertheless the details on these categories of difference shifted in either context. In comparison to Borel's networked procuresses, who were presumably from the locality in question but structurally *othered* within it, the culprits of the alleged traffic in girls from the British Isles were foreign fancy "men of respectable exterior", who came to England to trick girls into migrating; after which they would sell them on as supplies for rich male clients, who were willing "to pay a poor man's annual wage" just to "violate a terrified and helpless virgin".[395]

While Borel had had no issue with blaming girls and their gluttony as the reason why they ended up in "white slavery", Dyer and the "Memorialists" sought to protect young British girls from any blame. In order to do so, they argued that the ignorance of these girls in language and customs was the cause of their coerced

394 London Committee (for the purpose of exposing and suppressing the existing traffic in English, Scotch, and Irish Girls for the purpose of Foreign Prostitution), 'Memorial to the Foreign Secretary', in *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts by Alfred S. Dyer* (London: Dyer Brothers, 1880), 35.

395 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 3–7; London Committee (for the purpose of exposing and suppressing the existing traffic in English, Scotch, and Irish Girls for the purpose of Foreign Prostitution), 'Memorial to the Foreign Secretary', 35.

registration with the *police des moeurs* using false documentation. In Dyer's example of the Tanner-Barnett-Newland case, her naivety and ignorance framed every step of her downfall. Never at any point did she really make a choice, whether in terms of how she came in contact with Julie and the French fellow, how she ended up moving abroad, or how she legally consented to being registered in a brothel.

In England, "white slavery" brewed in a nationalism which blamed *foreign* men and their utilisation of charm and intoxicating liquids as the corrupter of *our* innocent girls, who were seen as in need of either protection from leaving the country or provision for their safe passage back *home.* By contrast, in Switzerland and across French-speaking Europe, "white slavery" was understood as being run by networks of clever old spinsters in tune with new technology and who preyed on girls too greedy to do anything for their own good.

A heightened paternalism in the story of "white slavery" is consecutive throughout Dyer's account. There is never a falter in the argument that *our* girls need to be brought home and prevented from leaving, so as to protect them from *foreign* men.[396] While Borel's work was imbued in misogynistic blame, he also slipped away from this in certain moments to rather operationalise the notion of female youthfulness and foreignness when it came to arguing for their return back *home.* In fact, despite shifting categories of difference around the gender and nationhood of the traffickers, when it came to constructing the phenomenon as a transnational *problem* concerning migration abroad, many commonalities can be found between both texts. The context in which the authors placed themselves was the influencing factor in the selection of categories of difference.

Borel was writing from Geneva, the place in which he lived and ran a refuge for prostitutes. Through his work, he surely encountered many young girls who engaged in the sale of sex. In his account, he reported that most girls had ended up in this condition on a voluntary basis, having given in to their desires and greed. According to him, however, there were also some rare and invisible cases which involved girls who were secretly exported from place to place in "the horse trade of human livestock".[397] His construction of "white slavery" in this context was being related to the historical knowledge of the trade between brothels under the system of tolerated and then state-regulated prostitution. In order to explain how the girls ended up in this "white slave trade", he drew, perhaps subconsciously, on the old continental trope of the corrupting procuress and the

396 Rachel Attwood has also discussed the patriarchal nationalism in Dyer's reports. Rachel Attwood, 'Lock Up Your Daughters! Male Activists, "Patriotic Domesticity" and the Fight Against Sex Trafficking in England, 1880–1912', *Gender & History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 611–27.

397 Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 11.

gluttonous girl. The problem of "white slavery" was, however, something unique to his time under the global condition: it thus also required explanation of its newness and transnational character.

Borel's "white slaves" were not the majority of girls who were engaged in the sale of sex: the fact that "white slaves" represented a minority of those on the books sits in contradiction to his claim that the "white slave traffic" was "just as vast and even more odious than that which enslaved people from Africa and brought them across the Atlantic".[398] Edmondson did not agree with Borel's claim to majority volunteerism and Dyer removed it completely by presenting a world in which all English girls abroad had been innocent at each moment upon the path of their journey.

Dyer did not witness "white slavery" in England, though the "traffic" was said to find it's supplies there, which the author then followed geographically as they were brought to the continent. Writing in the imaginary experience of having returned from Belgium, he recalled witnessing how girls from his homeland had been brought abroad and registered in continental brothels. Whether completely fabricated or based on some elements of experience, the truth of Borel's and Dyer's accounts does not matter. They played with knowledge of gender, class, nationhood, and migration in white contexts, which communicated the workings of the global condition to different kinds of European publics. The reading populous did not come to understand women's experiences of abuse through "white slavery"; what they learned was to fear migration, technology, and the emergence of new economic and social structures in their day.

Both authors outlined the logic of market demand as being a factor in how third parties thrived to organise and supply in a system where a type of labour was legal or not abolished. For this, they highlighted the role of the *bureaux de placement* in doing the translation or legitimation work between a corrupt transnational underworld and the structures of regular society. The mixing of who was to blame and how the system of "white slavery" allegedly worked, however, reveals many contradictory claims in their accounts.

During the 1860s and 1870s, *bureaux* or *agences de placement* had started to emerge in European municipalities as a way of helping the unemployed seek employment. Borel's and Dyer's accounts feature the notion that these institutions had been involved in the forging of birth certificates to allow foreign girls under the age of 21 to be registered in continental brothels. In the anecdotal case offered up by Borel, the two girls in question were not in their country of birth, though it would seem they could speak the local language. Their foreignness nevertheless

398 Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 5.

functioned to illustrate their vulnerability as a result of being away from their home.

Borel argued that the *bureaux de placement* had facilitated their exploitation, even if these institutions were not always fully aware of where the girls would end up. To this end, Dyer also selected a story of an unnamed girl, who was a lady's maid in Ireland until the age of seventeen, after which she went to Brussels to take up a similar position. A few months later, she then decided to move to France to join a friend but couldn't get work and thus returned to Brussels, where she applied for a situation through a job agency: "In her friendless condition, this fellow contrived to seduce her, and then forwarded her to a licensed house of prostitution in Antwerp."[399] The contradiction of this story lies in its contrast to his broader claims about "white slavery" victims, who never at any point exercised any choice or agency upon their journeys to where they ended up; The Irish lady's maid, by contrast, choose on several occasions to move, but ended up in a situation that she presumably did not wish to be in.

Themes around the migration of unmarried women, the falsification of documentation, police corruption and complacency, dept bondage and the fear of shame and violence are common to Borel's and Dyer's accounts. While these non-fictional narratives reveal little to nothing about the lived experiences of migrant women who sold sex under exploitative conditions, these sources nevertheless provide insight into the fears of men, like these authors, who were sensing great change happening around them.

Dyer had originally been of a working-class background, but had, as an adult, scaled the social ladder having gotten involved in the publishing industry. Borel was neither from an upper-class background. Both of these men seem to have taken advantage of the new possibilities for social mobility by offering up their sensationalist skills in service of an elitist, non-state transnational network. Translators between the classes, these men told the members of the Federation and the general French and English reading publics about the innerworkings of the underworld – a space members of the elite could never claim nor wish to know.

Borel's and Dyer's depictions of suspect urban spaces, the padded rooms inside of brothels, cunning traffickers and madams operating across borders could be juxtaposed against the legitimated transnational networks of morally integral privileged subjects such as Josephine Butler or Valérie de Gasparin. Borel and Dyer were allying themselves with such elites, while appropriating the subaltern experience on their behalf. These aspiring men came to know the global condi-

399 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 29.

tion through their work with the Federation. They travelled across Europe and made use of new technologies which enabled communication, knowledge distribution, and the maintenance of a networks. Their narratives reveal most patently their deep concern that there were illegitimate networks of the underworld, which might also have been doing the same.

Anecdotal cases depicted graphic details of the abuse inflicted upon young white girls. Broad unsubstantiated claims were, however, used to blame traffickers and madams, alleged to be working at high speed across borders with *bureaux de placement* and corrupt police, through their use of new telegraph technology, steam ships, and trains. While Dyer's account logically put more emphasis on the role of ships in "trafficking" girls from England to the continent; trains and train stations were particularly important to Borel's description of spaces within which these underworld networks operated and thrived.

As part of the infrastructure of and between urban space, train stations were described in Borel's account as the places where procuresses watched out for weak minded girls, while trains were the means by which they transported them. In fact, Borel, writing in 1875, even placed himself and his experience in a train within his account of events so as to loosely relate to the existence of "white slavery" in which he recalled having overheard the following conversation.

Two men were having a chat, in which one told the other that he had no family of his own, thus whenever he wanted to entertain a friend he simply invited him to join at a brothel. While Borel had blamed girls' greediness for why those voluntarily selling sex ended up so doing, he relieved these clients of any responsibility by framing their state of bachelorhood as making them victims of their own desires in a system that offered them this alternative. This claim not only stood in contrast to the blame on the role of clients as it was later framed by Edmondson and Dyer, it also diverged in tone from his moral condemnation of working-class girls selling sex for not having resisted luxury.

Borel's recollection of his experience on a train was intended to remind the reader of the centrality this mode of transport had come to play under the global condition of mobility, and how conversations in this public space reflected shifting moral norms; norms which had a dark side linked to an underworld of interactions happening and being operated and organised through the same vessel they were travelling in, though in the low-class carriages.

Recounting his journey on this train to Lyon some weeks before the war in Germany (presumably implying the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871), Borel wished to give evidence for the ease at which men used brothels; the spaces within which "white slavery" could potentially be found. His point was that society had come far in normalising the brothel, that men felt comfortable discussing it on a public train. In his view, the morals of society needed to be changed.

"White slavery" was this moral strategy, because who could for one moment justify their moral support of state-regulated prostitution, if it was concealing a secret underworld of gendered and racially-inverted trafficking in a post-abolitionist Europe.

Class and gender conflicts amid changing urban space need to be considered in how the concept of "white slavery" emerged. Without this framing, the alternative agendas which were packaged in anti-trafficking agendas are easily overlooked. Just prior to the emergence of the "white slavery" metaphor in relation to migratory prostitution, the British Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts had begun critiquing the practices of forced medical checks and their infringement on civil liberties as well as the moral double standard which subjected women (those who typically sold sex) but not men (those who typically bought it) to these practices. In response, the advocate of state regulation, William Acton, had asked the members of the Ladies Protest why they, as wealthy elites, didn't start hiring single mothers as servants if they wished to prevent prostitution. The Ladies Protest rebutted his suggestion with a dismissing joke.[400]

Class and gender conflicts shaped the campaigns of these elite women. In the 1870s, they campaigned for women's rights on the one hand. On the other hand, they emphasized their role as mothers of the nation, who had a duty to protect vulnerable youth by introducing compulsory education and raising the age of consent.

In 1875, the age of consent changed in Britain from 12 to 13, amending an 1861 law which had its roots back in the thirteenth century.[401] At the time, a new concept of childhood was in emergence in 1870s and 1880s Britain, with the legal definition of the age of consent being reinvented in the name of protecting childhood innocence, as opposed to its much older function of denying female subjects decision making power over their own sexuality.[402] This redefining was being done by those elite women and men organising against the CD Acts.

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400 Jordon and Sharp, *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, 2: The Ladies Appeal and Protest: 53.

401 For a comprehensive overview of legal changes and practice in British laws around the age of consent between 1875 and 1900 as well as how these shifts were informed by middle-class assumptions of working class life, see Laura Lammasniemi, '"Precocious Girls": Age of Consent, Class and Family in Late Nineteenth-Century England', *Law and History Review* 38, no. 1 (2020): 241–66.

402 Deborah Gorham outlines the fussiness of Victorian ideology around childhood and innocence and how this created havoc amid late nineteenth-century questions of extra-marital sex. She links this to a concept of childhood that was emerging in Britain in the 1870s and 1880s amid a new legal system regarding child labour laws, the idea of juvenile delinquency, and the notion

The CD Acts and the law on the age of consent had had no prior relation until they became discursively entangled in the anti-"white slavery" agenda. This occurred after a transfer to Britain on "white slavery" had taken place. Given that the agitations in relation to the CD Acts were building momentum in the early 1870s, it is possible to imagine that the legal change around the age of consent in 1875 may have caught the attention of elites in Britain, who were already morally outraged at the government.

Assuming this is what created the stimulus for a new, though discursively related cause, it is then possible to re-evaluate the collaboration between Josephine Butler and the fundamentalist Quaker and sensationalist journalist Alfred Stace Dyer. Rather than seeing it in terms of them having had any concern about a trade between brothels on the continent, their collaborative relationship and campaign strategies can be understood in terms of them wishing to change the age of consent laws in Victorian Britain.

Asked by the Committees chairman Earl Cairns about when he first gained "personal knowledge of any cases of young girls being taken to Brussels for the purpose of prostitution", Dyer responded that it was "in September 1879".[403] Cairns didn't, however, allow him time to elaborate on how he came to know about it, but rather quickly intervened that "I will not trouble you to go back to that; we will pursue the history of particular cases."[404] With that he asked about the case of Ellen Newland, to which Dyer responded "yes. It was the end of September 1879 that I heard that girl was confined in a licensed brothel in Brussels, and I at once had Pastor Anet of Brussels, and two or three other persons, communicated with, and after some search, they found the girl in the hospital for venereal diseases; and on the 24th December 1879, she returned to England at the expense of some of my friends. I met her in London, when she told me her story."[405]

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of compulsory schooling. Deborah Gorham, 'The "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" Re-Examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 3 (1978): 353–79.

403 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 99.

404 For the details of how the Jurist Alexis Splingard tipped off Alfred Stace Dyer, see Christine Machiels, 'Pour "l'affranchissement des blanches", contre la prostitution réglementée: la Société de Moralité Publique de Belgique (1875–1908)', in *Du sordide au mythe: L'affaire de la traite des blanches (Bruxelles, 1880)*, ed. by Jean-Michel Chaumont and Christine Machiels (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2009), 136–37.

405 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 99.

A few months after the "Memorialists" had written to the Foreign Secretary Granville, the chief magistrate of the metropolitan police, James Ingham, received a commissions rogatory from Brussels, requesting evidence be provided regarding a case of an underaged British girl in a Belgium brothel.[406] Around this time, in late 1880, Judge Snagge was appointed by Granville to conduct an independent investigation, and one of his first assignments was to go to Brussels to observe the brothel trials that were about to begin.

In the historical literature and the established British narrative, Dyer's letter writing to Granville and "repeated allegations in the press" in the late 1870s is claimed to be the reason why the British government was pressured to appoint Judge Snagge to investigate the claims.[407] The chronology is, however, often full of inconsistencies on when Dyer and the state came to know about "white slavery" and why things occurred at particular moments, such as Snagge's appointment. While another issue in the literature is in terms of the consensus that the Belgium scandal and the Select Committee were pivotal moments in the history of "white slavery"; yet neither of these events have been given comprehensive examination in relation to the other, the groundwork for which I intend to set.

Otherwise known as the Belgium trials, these legal procedures took place between December 1880 and April 1881 and are said to have been an outcome of Dyer's journalism in late 1879/early 1880.[408] Although Snagge commenced his investigation around the time the trials began, the outcomes of the trials were still pending when he completed his report for the British government. On 30 May 1881, the

406 London Committee (for the purpose of exposing and suppressing the existing traffic in English, Scotch, and Irish Girls for the purpose of Foreign Prostitution), 'Memorial to the Foreign Secretary'. Underaged would have indicated below the age of 21. For more on the Code Pénal which defined the minimum legal age to work in a brothel, see Ennis, 'Narrating "White Slavery" in and out of Fiction, 1854–1880'.

407 Select Committee of the House of Lords, 'Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls', 116.

408 The most comprehensive examination of the Belgium Trials exists is an edited volume by Jean-Michel Chaumont and Christine Machiels. While this collection provides many insights and perspectives based on material that has not yet been examined, the issue, as with other works which examine "white slavery" in a national framework, is that this contained perspective fails to see the contradictions between the narratives told in different national archives. "White slavery" was perceived and presented as a transnational problem requiring transnational solutions which resulted in transnational interstate cooperation: thus, historical research into the matter needs to reflect this scope. See Chaumont and Machiels, eds., *Du sordide au mythe*. Chaumont has also written on the Brussels Affair from the police perspective, however it is not clear what primary material he used to produce this knowledge and it would not appear that he engaged with the court records, see Chaumont, 'The White Slave Trade Affair (1880–1881): A Scandal Specific to Brussels?'

House of Lords in Britain had called for a Select Committee to be appointed to deal with the question of the "traffic". On 14 June, 13 members were appointed.

There are two reasons why the Select Committee, which met in mid-July 1881, did not have knowledge of the final outcomes and decisions of the Belgium trials. Firstly, because they relied solely on Snagge's report for knowledge of this event. Secondly, because Snagge concluded his report before the trials came to an end, which meant that details of the outcomes were not included on the official British record, although, in terms of chronology, this should have been easily possible.[409]

Despite the fact that the so-called Brussels scandal is so prominent in the subconscious knowledge of the "white slavery" historiography, little is known about its role in and relationship to British events. Based on the Select Committee minutes, I have been able to establish that a commissions rogatory was sent in 1879 from Brussels to the London Metropolitan Police. This was then followed by Snagge being sent to observe the first two weeks of the trials which started in December 1880. The rest was apparently not deemed essential knowledge to understanding the innerworkings of the "systematic" "traffic" that Dyer had claimed to have uncovered.

Dyer's account of the problem of the "traffic" nevertheless provided the British public with a two-fold solution; on the one hand, he called for the criminalisation of the taking of girls abroad for the purposes of prostitution which reflected the statist trends of the period.[410] The other solution he advocated for, as did Butler, was the raising of the age of consent in Britain from 13 to 21, as it was understood to have been in other countries. This was, however, based on an erroneous misunderstanding on their part.

In Britain, the age of consent up until 1875 was 12 regardless of marital status, while at the same time section 49 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act supplemented the 1875 law, making provisions which raised the age of consent to 21 to protect girls from procurement and grooming using "false pretences" or "false representations". Following Dyer's publication in which he had claimed English girls to be disproportionately represented as a migrant group in Brussels brothels, Butler thereafter constructed a related argument. She maintained that due to the age of consent which is far lower in Britain than in other countries, the keepers of brothels on the continent rested assured that they would at least not be running the risk of being prosecuted under British law, even if it was considered

409 T. W. Snagge, 'Appendix A. PAPER Hand in by Mr. T. W. Snagge: Report of T. W. Snagge. Esq., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law, on the Alleged Traffic in English Girls for Immoral Purposes in Foreign Towns', in *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Law Relating to the Protection of Young Girls*, 1881, 126.

410 See chapters six and seven.

under Belgium law to be an offence to have minors of any nationality in Belgium brothels.[411] This argument had also been presented to the "Memorialists" in their letter to the Foreign Secretary in which they noted, that due to the discrepancy in age of consent laws between Britain and the Continent, the traffickers are free to abuse them to their advantage.[412]

On several accounts, Butlers and others claim was, legally speaking, untrue. Whether the law really protected vulnerable young women is another matter, but the legal age of consent in Britain was the same as on the continent, and the laws in Britain, as under the Napoleonic Code, already had clear provisions for punishing the procurement and grooming of minors. Nevertheless, "white slavery" as a semantic strategy allowed British members of the Federation to push their national agenda of raising the age of consent with the aid of fears about transnational spaces and female migration.

"White slavery" was not one clearly definable, tangible, or measurable thing. A populist and sensational notion, it had the protention to pollinate meanings. Depending on the geographical context and the class background of the author, it spoke of a whole host of often contradictory issues regarding migration control, *bureaux de placement*, document forgery, the use of new communication and transport technologies, women's rights, forced medical checks, the age of consent, and so on.

Through popular discourse the metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*" was able to congeal over time into a gendered and transnational concept of "white slavery". Although detailed analysis can help frame the opaqueness of this newly emerging concept, the idea nevertheless spoke with clarity to a late nineteenth-century popular European readership. "White slavery", however ambiguous, had a cognitive impact on how Europeans read and interpreted their interactions and observations in everyday reality. Under the global condition it came to reflect new fears about the dangers of increasing migration and the risks upon such a journey. It, however, also meant that these meanings gained a certain precedence in abolitionist discourses which pushed the history of transatlantic slavery into the background, as popular concerns of "white slavery" came forth.

411 Josephine Butler, '"The Modern Slave Trade", Letter to the Editor of the Shield', 1 May 1880, pp. 63–5, in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, ed. by Jane Jordan and Ingrid Sharp, 5 vols (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), vol. 4: Child Prostitution and the Age of Consent, 20–24.

412 London Committee (for the purpose of exposing and suppressing the existing traffic in English, Scotch, and Irish Girls for the purpose of Foreign Prostitution), 'Memorial to the Foreign Secretary', 35.

5.4 Misappropriation and Amnesia

Historians Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda have made an innovative attempt to understand migration in a gender differentiated way for the period before the introduction of railways. In order to do so, they examined data available for Paris in the 1790s based on the identity card and military records of men as well as the arrest and registration records for prostitutes. For the latter, they relied heavily on the work of Parent-Duchâtelet. They found that prior to the railways, women were far less mobile than men due to their limited employment opportunities. By the 1850s, however, railways had connected most major cities with Paris and, with this development, the gendered difference in mobility had almost completely disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century.[413] In looking at the relationship between migration and women, Kelly and Ó Gráda summarised all of the reasons that Parent-Duchâtelet gave for prostitution, while critiquing him for having overlooked trafficking as a cause.[414] This critique is, however, anachronistic; the concept of "white slavery" with its specific connotation to prostitution is today referred to as "trafficking", but this concept had not yet developed historically at the time when Parent-Duchâtelet was writing.

Understanding the incubational period (1866–1881) of conceptional development behind "white slavery" not only has an important impact on how the differences between the pasts of those who sold sex are described; it also affects how the histories of people who were colonised and enslaved by European powers are remembered and told. Trafficking in Parent-Duchâtelet's time still denoted the European slave trade in people from Africa. Hence, anachronistic uses of "trafficking" in reference to the sale of sex give indication of confusion in our present as to how the past is described; however, it also suggests how in the present of actors of the past, the changing substance of a concept was at the same time a process of forgetting the past. Arguably, the more "trafficking" is associated in one's present with exploitation for the sale of sex, the less the immediate association is with the history of European enslavement practices. The more "white slave trafficking" became a concept known to the European populous of the late nineteenth century, the less a past and present of trafficking in Black bodies was part of their consciousness. Words after all carry meanings and collective memories, but they can also lose them.

413 Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Gravity and Migration before Railways: Evidence from Parisian Prostitutes and Revolutionaries', *SSRN*, 2018, 4–10, http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3197928.
414 Kelly and Ó Gráda, 8.

New meanings of "slavery" and "trafficking" in the concept of "white slave trafficking" or "white slavery" was a complicated process, gathered from multiple sources with morality as the overtone. Anti-regulationists likely took up and exaggerated Lecour's observation of rare cases of pimps who attracted vulnerable girls to Paris on the promise of good jobs.[415] Lecour had published his works in the 1870s, and it could well be that the transport developments and shifting gendered migration patterns the mid-nineteenth century had indeed opened up new possibilities for exploitation of the vulnerable and the poor. At the same time, however, it is important to consider the impact that media technologies and sensationalism had on lower class European populations, who were increasingly literate and craved sensationalism.

Like those of Valérie de Gasparin and Josephine Butler, the audiences of Borel (1876) and Edmondson (1876) were well situated, as most of them were members of the European transnational elite. Dyer's work from 1880, however, was made available to the masses, with the account of his colleague W. T. Stead in 1885 having then turned "white slavery" into a truly global sensation.[416] Whether speaking to rule makers at the state level or the masses at home, the tone was always a moral one, addressing several issues simultaneously, but in one way or another also appealing to the humanitarianism of anti-regulation by arguing that the *maisons tolerées* to be found on the continent were being supplied through a brutal system of trading in young women. Having emerged out of Valérie de Gasparin's strategic use of a metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*", the anti-regulationist problem had from the beginning been a moral one, and a far cry from an economic critique regarding structural inequality.

The moral discomfort of anti-regulationists became increasingly based on the idea of young working-class women selling sex. What was even more so disturbing to them and what made the idea into a populist sensation was the notion that they were doing so to service *foreign* men. However, these discourses by and large missed the main reason why women sold sex, namely to generate some form of income for themselves or their families. Even if done under coercive circumstances, the underlying cause was still economics.

In some cases, "white slavery" may have been weaponised as a critique of gendered inequality, but it was at the same time part of certain types of actors' fears and perceptions of shifting social, economic, and class structures under the global condition. The city was presented as a danger to young unmarried work-

415 Lecour, *La prostitution à Paris et à Londres 1789–1871*, 202.

416 For details on Stead and his impact on journalism, see Laurel Brake et al., eds., *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary* (London: The British Library, 2012); Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*; Stead, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'.

ing-class women, where modern technology and modes of transportation facilitated their disappearance. This idea of white women being taken from their place of birth by networks of traffickers relied on a serious misappropriation of experiences. Third parties who facilitated female poverty migration were conceptually and semantically put on a par with traffickers of the transatlantic slave trade; while the women they escorted, coerced or not, simultaneously became synonymous and antonymous to the Black slave.

As highlighted throughout this book and much of the literature from critical trafficking studies, there is rarely a case to be found that perfectly fits sensational discourses on "white slavery" or "sex trafficking". In the conceptual development of "white slavery", the late nineteenth-century theft of enslaved knowledge, experience, and history not only continues to impact the treatment of sex workers today, it also delays or draws attention away from the depth of the apology still owed in reparations and words to descendants of the enslaved and the colonised.

Any use of the term or concept of "white slavery" historically has had to rely on a cognitive notion of European colonial "Black slavery". Given the history of abolitionism since the late eighteenth century and developments in European scientific knowledge prior to that, racialised conceptions of slavery spoke to particular knowledge reservoirs of elite French- and English-speaking Europeans and their descendants. The campaign metaphor of "*la traite des blanches*", as it had been applied by Gasparin, bore a mix of meanings reliant on orientalism and a misappropriation and racial inversion of the slave trade in people from Africa.

A comrade of Gasparin, Théodore Borel, cannot be said to have borrowed her metaphor, so much as he took it and turned it into a claim of a *real* "white slave trade", which he maintained was worse and larger than that which had "enslaved people from Africa".[417] This put an even more exacerbated spin on what had already been a misappropriation by Gasparin and Balzac, Moléri, and Rops and Draner before: a spin, which I contend, would over time help lead to a European amnesia toward its own brutalising past, while at the same time reconceptualising what it meant to speak about a "traffic in human beings" – namely to blame non-state third parties, as opposed to states.

The foundations for an international agenda against a non-metaphorical but claimed to be real "white slavery" were marked when Borel's translator, Joseph Edmondson, used his preface to discursively entangle elitist European knowledge of eighteenth-century slavery and abolitionism together with the British CD Acts and the "French System". Acknowledging the non-existence of continental-style licensed brothels in England, Edmondson used his editorial note to argue the sim-

417 Borel, 'Maisons de tolerance devant le droit et la moralité publique', 5.

ilarities in these regulatory systems, in how they gave police special powers to register prostitutes and that, in memory of the "abhorrence of negro slavery", abolitionists across Europe must once again revive "old and noble [. . .] revolts against the traffic in human beings".[418] In this historical moment of a cultural transfer, a new fight against a different but misappropriated notion of "human trafficking" had thus been born.

Contingency in history matters, and should Josephine Butler and Alfred Stace Dyer not have lived in London at the particular time of new publishing and communication possibilities, or should they not have had their precise skillsets, "white slavery" may never have become a *real* thing in the European mind. Referencing Butler's writing about the children she had come across as young as twelve, Dyer wrote that "it is beyond doubt that a large and well organised traffic exists in supplying licensed houses of debauchery on the Continent of Europe with English girls, young, good-looking, and whenever possible, innocent and virtuous, for these can be sold for the most money."[419] Notwithstanding their factual unreliability, the anecdotal cases and claims of Dyer had not even featured anyone under the age of nineteen. In the name of elitist agendas such as a raising the age of consent, not only had the experiences of Black slaves been misappropriated through the use of language, so too had those of the young European female poverty classes.

Here no comparison is, nor should it be, drawn between the experiences of rape and exploitation faced by women in varying European, colonial, or plantation contexts. On the contrary, I wish to point to how the construction of "white slavery" at the end of the nineteenth century relied on this kind of comparative and entangled knowledge – rather than it having had anything to do with the lives and experiences of real people.

In terms of historical impact, as opposed to intention, these elite or upwardly mobile Europeans such as Butler, Borel, Dyer, Edmondson, and Gasparin did not achieve much to aid or make visible the violent and exploitative experiences of women anywhere, in any differentiated context. What their campaigns did do in the conceptual sense was permit the European mind of the late nineteenth century to look away from their colonialist present and to forget their slave-trading *past*. All the while moralist concerns were refocused on a new problem which concerned the abolitionist heart to rather offer up their efforts in the name of the nation's own innocent female subjects in need of protection from foreign non-state third parties.

418 Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva*, 5.
419 Dyer, *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts*, 30.

5.5 Conclusion

Despite their big claims, historical actors like Borel, Dyer, and the "Memorialists" highlighted that the underworld nature of "white slavery" was the major barrier to providing proof and catching culprits. Matching discourses to practices of either "white slavery" back then, or "trafficking, especially in women and children" today, continuously proves difficult for scholars. This is not only because historical actors made unsubstantiated claims, but also because the concept inherited from the nineteenth century never had a place-based meaning, but was rather developed on a transnational level through a metaphor and idea, that proved useful to different actors seeking to achieve different goals. The established narrative within the historical literature that claims Alfred Stace Dyer uncovered the traffic can no longer be substantiated.

A small number of non-state actors engaged in moral reform movements and women's rights campaigns in France and Britain, whose works were essential to how the meaning behind "white slavery" accrued on a transnational and intertextual level within cross-linguistic and translation processes. "White slavery", the metaphor, was weaponised by non-state actors in critique of state practices. Out of this process, this metaphor congealed into a concept through popular discourse regarding a moral problem amid third-party non-state actors.

Stemming from a misappropriation and racial inversion of transatlantic slavery, an entanglement of knowledge and memories arguably contributed to a kind of European amnesia, by which the populous became preoccupied with a new, more urgent problem. Rare cases of migration and prostitution based on false pretences are undoubtedly historical facts. Sensational claims that put this history on a par with the extent in the European trade in enslaved people from Africa is, however, highly problematic for the remembering and retelling of history.

Grossly exaggerating the experiences of some European subalterns in the name of making a moral critique, the economics of why all women sold sex were completely omitted from these big claims made through a few anecdotal cases. While the accounts of "white slavery" by Borel and Dyer are entirely unreliable and filled with inconsistent claims, they nevertheless reveal much about the authors specific historical context under the global condition as well as the national, social, and political concerns of the day.

In the French language context, the culprits of the underworld had almost all been female, while most who ended up in the brothel had been described as victims of their desire and own lack of self-control. Upon translation into the British context, the role of male clients was introduced in the description of the problem, while the categories of difference were shifted for the "traffickers", transforming them from an old local procuress to new foreign fancy men. At the core of the

problem in both European contexts were matters of migration, urban dangers, *bureaux de placement*, document forgery, and corruption.

The metaphorical use of "*la traite des blanches*" had initially been weaponised against the continental system of state regulation and the associated brothel trade. As the British version of regulation did not have the same system of *maisons de tolérance*, the concept of "white slavery" was reinvented not only in critique of the moral double standard behind medical checks, but also as a strategy to push for the raising of the age of consent. In the 1860s, when Josephine Butler among others began campaigns in the name of women's rights, they did not initially have questions of a transnational brothel trade on their agenda. It was only after Borel showed them the strategic semantic power of "white slavery" that the concept was discursively churned in their favour.

Gasparin and Butler had been members of the European elite who misappropriated the problems of subalterns in legitimation of their own upper-class women's cause. It was, however, the work of Borel and Dyer which translated this agenda for the lower class populous. Although a trope of the "white slave" had been around since the orientalism of the early nineteenth century, this had been knowledge privy to the educated upper classes.

By the late nineteenth century, the "white slave" was no longer a Greek or Circassian, but had become the daughter of *our* French or English nation. With change occurring under the global condition in terms of class, space, and gender, the migration of poor young unmarried women defined an ultimate European upper-class and often male fear. In the populist mindset, *our* girls needed to be protected, brought or kept at home, so as to, on the one hand, ensure that new technologies and modes of transportation did not facilitate their disappearance; on the other, keeping them under control would restrain the nation within the borders of the nation.

This conceptual development was not of some pre-calculated intention. The pollination of meanings emerged because of the historically situated success of the "white slavery" metaphor. Having once been an orientalist trope of high culture, the concept came to be about a *real* "trafficker" and "white slave" when it was sold in the right way to the right audience. Amid the spatial and hierarchical changes occurring under the global condition, "white slavery" not only captured a spectrum of minds engaged in class struggle, it offered commercial potential to an informed and opportune publicist.

The populist message and reception of Dyer's take on "white slavery" had been made possible in a time and place when journalism was emerging as a profession alongside increased literacy and when London was technologically connected with the broader world. At the same time that elites could hold onto their moral integrity as abolitionists, the masses could also now engage in the national-

ist moral politics of the day. With different knowledge orders from past and present packed under one populist concept, other processes were also being entangled it the meaning of "white slavery". These were not limited to non-state actors critiquing the state, but simultaneously included the active engagement of actors from the state who constructed "white slavery" to their own ends as a legitimation for international legal and police cooperation and migration control.