

6 Knowledge of “White Slavery” and a Shifting Legal Dogma (1866–1880)

Within the historical literature on migration control, there are hints at new practices of inclusion and exclusion emerging in the 1870s. However, the source analysis and deeper discussion of this historiography tends to begin after 1880, at a point in time when state practices were already clearly visible. The fact is that seeds of a shifting legal dogma around the migration of women can be found creeping in incrementally since the late 1860s. Thus, it is in this chapter that I explore how this legal knowledge was transferred around different geographies in the 1860s and 1870s, all the while it was being packaged for the public in the language of anti-slavery.

In its gendered and transnational form since the 1870s, the language of “white slavery” predominately appeared as a moral concern regarding regulated brothels and the age of consent. This is visible from the perspective of non-state actors in Britain and French-speaking Europe. By looking from another angle and shifting the focus, the involvement of a handful of Austro-Hungarian and British state actors begin to appear in the picture from the later 1860s. In this light, “white slavery” was not only about abolishing an inter-brothel trade and raising the age of consent, it was first and foremost about hindering the transnational movement of working-class women by using gendered and racialised mechanisms.

Sold to different kinds of publics as a need to protect young unmarried white women from urban dangers, “white slavery” was not only a moral problem, but also a legal one, whose solutions were framed as migration control, international police cooperation, and international law. Retracing back this legal transfer began with a footnote in the translation of Joseph Edmondson, which led me to look at the British diplomat Henry Barron, who prior to his service in Brussels had been in the Ottoman region. Knowing from the secondary literature that there were one or two Austro-Hungarian diplomats who were also the first to draw attention to the “white slave traffic” out of Eastern Europe toward Alexandria, Cairo, and Buenos Aires in the 1870s, it appears that Istanbul-based European statesmen must have known something that others did not.

Although it is largely overlooked in the historical literature on migration control, a shifting legal dogma can be observed since the end of the mid-1860s, whereby legislation and new state practices were incrementally introduced in different geographies so as to gain control over non-state actors who facilitated the migration of women. There are a number of scholars who have identified this process in California and then federally in the US between 1866 and 1875. I suggest

that this knowledge was transferred to Europe via the Austro-Hungarian Empire at some point around 1868.

In the nineteenth century, gendered discourses and legal practice around anti-slavery did not all work in the same way in divergent contexts. Before any assumption is made of a relationship between gendered anti-slavery rhetoric and legal practice, careful reflection of desired constellations of labour and reproductive populations is needed for any particular time and place. The mechanisms of European imperialism need differentiation between, for example, mid-nineteenth-century slave trading across the Indian Ocean under the name of “free coolie labour”, efforts against girl child trafficking in China and South-East Asia as well as legislation and practices in white and white settler societies to prevent “slave trafficking” in women and girls.

Looking at the circulation of knowledge among non-state actors, a transnational transfer and development in historical conceptual meaning can be seen to have taken place between French- and English-speaking Europe in 1876. The German linguistic equivalent of “white slavery”, namely “*Mädchenhandel*” (trade in girls) was, however, already garnering a new transnational meaning since the late 1860s via the campaigns of a number of state actors. This suggests that the metaphor of “white slavery” at some point slipped out of the hands of those critiquing the state to rather work in service of it. Alternatively, perhaps the concept of “white slavery” never completely belonged to non-state actors in the first place.

Locating “white slavery” in legal practice and categories since the late 1860s contributes to “new imperial history” and the historiography on migration control in terms of how the migration of Jews out of Eastern Europe informed this conceptual development. As with the previous chapter, the sources were found by retracing back upon a specific cultural transfer; this time in terms of states legitimising legal change. In a microhistorical sense, certain names were “followed”, while also using a fine-toothed comb to identify contradictions within and between the sources. The main historical characters who cropped up are the diplomats to the Ottoman Empire Hoffer von Hoffenfels, Carl Ritter von Sax, and Henry Barron, along with their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs Gyula Andrassy and the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury. Furthermore, figures such as the German Colonial Director Albrecht Wilhelm Sellin and the German painter Berthold Woltze played important roles in conveying knowledge of “white slavery” and the need for state control to the public.⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ As did the French novelist Xavier de Montépin with his 1877 novel *La traite des blanches*. This novel is not examined here. For details, see Ennis, ‘Narrating “White Slavery” in and out of Fiction, 1854–1880’.

The established British-centric narrative of the historical literature has already been challenged by showing how “white slavery” was transferred to Britain through the Dyer Brothers publishing company in 1876, as opposed to its owner Alfred Stace Dyer having uncovered it in 1879/1880. Continuing in this spirit, a second part of the established narrative is collapsed, namely the claim that it was Dyer’s writings that pressured the British government to respond to the problem of “white slavery”, having thus made Britain the first state to address the transnational trafficking for commercial sex. In contradiction of this, my sources show that the construction of “white slavery” or “anti-slave trafficking for sex” was already on state agendas since the later 1860s, and that this knowledge likely came to Europe from the Americas.

In addition to delving further into the sources already used in chapter five, several reports on a “*Mädchenhandel*” which were circulating in the Austro-Hungarian and German press since the late 1860s are integrated here; as are an oil-on-canvas work by Berhold Woltze and three diplomatic letters from Hoffer and Sax to Andrassy. As a result of looking at the transfer of knowledge between a variety of sources, it becomes clear that the concept of “white slavery” was not only a product of abolitionists, the media, and the arts, but that its foundations were built by a number of statesmen.

Over the course of the 1880s and on into the twentieth century, states established mechanisms of gathering data and building archives which recorded the phenomenon of “white slave trafficking”: The police archives in Vienna are the most dense. For scholars who have taken a more transnational or imperial perspective, the alleged “Jewishness” of the problem presented itself quite centrally in their archives.⁴²¹

⁴²¹ This scholarship is large and would require detailed discussion regarding those who have (unintentionally) reinforced the anti-Semitic framing of this history, and those who have taken a deconstructive approach, such as the many works of the past two decades. For reasons of space and because it does not impact my findings, I have decided to omit this discussion. For the literature which examines Jewish history and “white slavery” in one way or the other, see Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople, 1854–1922*; Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice*; Gartner, ‘Anglo-Jewry and the Jewish International Traffic in Prostitution, 1885–1914’; Lloyd P. Gartner, ‘East European Jewish Migration: Germany and Britain’, in *Two Nations: British and German Jews in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Michael Brenner, Rainer Liedtke, and David Rechter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 117–34; Jakubczak, ‘The Issue of Jew’ Participation in White Slavery’; Aleksandra Jakubczak, *Polacy, Żydzi i Mit Handlu Komietami* [Poles, Jews and the Myth of Trafficking in Women] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2020); Paul Knepper, ‘British Jews and the Racialisation of Crime in the Age of Empire’, *British Journal of Criminology* 47, no. 1 (2007): 67–79; Lara Marks, ‘Jewish Women and Jewish Prostitution in the East End of London’, *Jewish Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1987): 6–10; Roos, ‘Eine dunkle Seite des Auswanderungsge-

I have already refuted the suggestions made by Rifat Bali, Edward Bristow, and Malte Fuhrmann that there is evidence of a Jewish "white slave traffic" toward the Ottoman Empire since the 1860s. I did so by critiquing their own lack of source analysis, while alternatively suggesting that, from the mid-1860s, there was an emerging idea of the "white slave" in the Turkish market starting with the French cultural works of Jean-Léon Gérôme; which in itself was a continuity, extension and development of older representations from earlier in the nineteenth century. What Gérôme introduced was the depiction of the "white slave" up for sale in the "Turkish slave market", as opposed to her previous setting in the Turkish harem.

Several scholars who focus on geographies other than Britain nevertheless end up reinforcing a British-centric narrative of protagonists from the Isles as having been the first to uncover or produce discourse on "white slavery".⁴²² This is principally due to three reasons: Firstly, the acceptance of claims of the likes of Bristow to be true, i.e. that a Jewish organised "white slave trafficking" began in the 1860s. Secondly, by assuming it as correct that protagonists from Britain were the first to uncover or produce discourse on the problem beginning around 1880. Thirdly, by using a period after 1880 as the departure point for their narratives due to the abundance of archives that are available to historians from then on. Thus, teasing out the silences starts by asking why it was that states suddenly began filling up their archives with documents placed under which particular categories.

Within the British-centric literature, the emphasis on the "Jewishness" of the French/foreign "white slave trafficker" is seldom explicit, though it does appear somewhat subtly in the state sources; Xavier Klyberg being the main case named within the evidence given to the 1881 Select Committee. The alleged "Jewishness" of the problem comes with no discretion when looking at "white slavery" in East-

schäfts"; Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*; Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914* (New York: Longman Inc., 1982); Charles Van Onselen, 'Jewish Marginality in the Atlantic World: Organised Crime in the Era of the Great Migrations, 1880–1914', *South African Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (2000): 96–137; Charles Van Onselen, 'Jewish Police Informers in the Atlantic World, 1880–1914', *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007): 119–44; Charles Van Onselen, *The Fox and The Files: The World of Joseph Silver, Racketeer & Psychopath* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007); Vyleta, *Crime, Jews and News*; Wingfield, 'Destination: Alexandria, Buenos Aires, Constantinople'; Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria*; Yarfitz, *Impure Migration*.

⁴²² For example, see Francesca Biancani, *Sex Work in Colonial Egypt: Women, Modernity and The Global Economy*; Gartner, 'East European Jewish Migration: Germany and Britain', 148; Roos, 'Eine dunkle Seite des Auswanderungsgeschäfts', 40; Van Onselen, 'Jewish Marginality in the Atlantic World'; Vyleta, *Crime, Jews and News*, 57–58.

ern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and South America. Several historical matters are, however, at play here, which have become discursively entangled in the European mind and memory.

That the migration of Jews out of Eastern Europe began to increase significantly from the 1880s is often without reflection assumed to be a logical indicator that there must have been an increase in “trafficking”. That westward migration out of Eastern Europe and migration toward the Suez Canal region out of South Eastern Europe began in the 1860s is likewise naïvely accepted as the logical starting point for “white slavery”. However, geopolitics, economy, territory, and war should not be forgotten as factors in recalling how it is that this period is recalled.

The labour dynamics changed around the Suez Canal region in 1864, which thereafter attracted migrants from the Middle East and South Eastern Europe. Edward Bristow has pointed to the opening of the Suez Canal as the occasion when “Europe’s peripatetic pimps and prostitutes” could extend their trade to Asia and Africa.⁴²³ This hypothesis has also been taken up by a number of other scholars, though no sources nor secondary literature were provided in support of it.⁴²⁴ I would like to pitch an alternative hypothesis, namely that it was the documentation of female migration which rose after the opening of the canal, and that through a historical lens informed by discourses on a trafficking for brothel prostitution, this shift in data collection has led to the assumption of a global expansion of a brothel trade in real historical time and space.

A globally shifting legal dogma on population and territory control began to take place in the later 1860s. This took the form of legal transfers between the British Empire, the United States, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire which controlled movement and settlement through categorisation based on gender and race. I would contend that several factors bridged the historical process with recollection and historical narrative. Firstly, it appears likely that there was a matter-of-fact expansion of distances upon which women migrated to sell sex in the 1860s, such as migrants from Hong Kong moving to California, or Eastern Europeans heading to set up and work in cafés and brothels along the construction sites of the Suez Canal. Secondly, I assume knowledge of these developments quickly circulated among diplomats, as did the knowledge of how this knowledge proved useful in an abolitionist and sexually conservative moral economy for the state management of the global condition; bluntly said, by simply packaging state

⁴²³ Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice*, 191.

⁴²⁴ For example, see David M. Pomfret, “Child Slavery” in British and French Far-Eastern Colonies 1880–1945’, *Past and Present* 201 (2008): 316; Ashwini Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xix.

migration control in a gendered anti-slave trafficking rhetoric. Thirdly, I am convinced that in the logic of the state and discursive legal practice, legitimising the hinderance of women’s migration, would have required the public’s knowledge and proof of the problem; thus, documentary evidence had to be provided and produced.

Several scholars have anachronistically relied on sources created after 1880 to claim that a “white slave trade” toward the Ottoman Empire began in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴²⁵ These same kinds of issues also crop up in the chronology of events known for “white slavery” within the literature concerned with South America, though some authors show more awareness of the distinction between narrative making and historical process than others. Edward Bristow, at the base of the literature, again needs pointing out for his anachronism, this time with regards to this claim that 1870 was the year when Jewish traffickers opened up the road to Buenos Aires, which he substantiates with a source from 1909.⁴²⁶

6.1 Media Reports on “White Slave Trafficking” before 1880

The concept of “white slavery” became known to the English from 1876, after it had been transferred out of “*la traite des blanches*” (trade in white women) of francophone Europe. By the 1880s, “*Mädchenhandel*” had too joined as a linguistic equivalent. The depths of meaning for this German term, however, were not modern, but stemmed back to a time before European colonialism. Nevertheless, its character changed in the late nineteenth century, when it befriended the modern and racialised terms “white slavery” and “*la traite des blanches*”.

“*Mädchen-*” or “*Frauenhandel*” (trade in girls or women) had long signified the sale to and between brothels in German-speaking Europe; a practice which had been tolerated since the late medieval period. However, the terms meanings were blurry, with crossover having long born what might have otherwise been

⁴²⁵ See chapter four.

⁴²⁶ Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice*, 69. Scholars such as Keely Stautter-Halsted and Mir Yarfitz have been incredibly important and inspirational to me. Therefore, I do not want to place them in the same box as Bristow. Nevertheless, similar issues crop up in that Mir Yarfitz, who gave no reference for the claim that 16 pimps were arrested in Buenos Aires upon arrival in the 1860s and 1870s. Then while Stautter-Halsted is careful not to make any claim that there was a matter-of-fact commercial sex trade to the “new world” in the 1860s, she notes that this was “reportedly” said by someone in 1927. Simply stating this fact of narrative production does not, however, reveal anything about historical change, be it in terms of discourse or process. If anything, it perhaps tells something about a person in 1927 and how they used and produced history of the nineteenth century. Stautter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain*, 127; Yarfitz, *Impure Migration*, 108.

understood as matchmaking for marriage. As pointed out by Peter Becker, it was only in the late nineteenth century that the meaning of “*Mädchenhandel*” became entangled with the notion of “*Kupplerei*” (matchmaking) so that it came to imply the idea of corruption, recruitment, and procurement.⁴²⁷

The earliest nineteenth-century newspaper article on a “*Mädchenhandel*”, which I found in the German-language press, was an 1848 report in the *Leipziger Zeitung*. In it, an unnamed author reported on demands which had been made to the Minister of Interior requesting that he put an end “to the shameful *Mädchenhandel* that has been going on for years on the Prussian-Russian border”.⁴²⁸ Such reports were, however, incredibly rare, with decades possibly passing on the chronology of newspaper records before another report on the matter cropped up. What was significant about this report, as with those few which appeared in later decades, was that moral compasses seemed to start turning once the long tolerated domestic practice started taking place across borders.

Looking at the digitalised Austrian newspaper archives, almost a decade on the chronology would pass before another report appeared on the topic. It was in 1856 that a dispatch was reported to have been sent by “Colonel Hodges, British Consul in Hamburg, to the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, stating that the outrageous trafficking in girls between Hull, London, and Hamburg, to which a recent police case has drawn public attention, is unfortunately an indisputable fact” and that a call had been made to the police authorities of London “to take measures against this impure business”.⁴²⁹ Assuming there to have been some substance behind the claims which shaped this media produced fact, there are several historical possibilities, at least two of which, seem plausible.

Firstly, it may well have been that, over the course of the nineteenth century, the structures of an old localised inter-brothel trade had started to take on a longer-distance, cross-border character. Alternatively, it could also have been that these long-distance patterns had already been in place but that, in a Europe of growing national sentiments, they suddenly became a moral concern to be reported on. Some kind of combination of both is of course also on the table; global structures around mobility and nation building were changing in the nineteenth century, but so too were the structures of perception and distributing knowledge on the same.

After the 1858 report of a brothel trade across the North Sea, I did not find another report in Austrian newspapers for eight years of scans; the next being

⁴²⁷ See Becker, *Verderbnis und Entartung*.

⁴²⁸ Anonymous, ‘Berlin’, *Leipziger Zeitung*, 18 April 1848, 109th edition.

⁴²⁹ Anonymous, ‘Parlaments-Verhandlungen vom 4. April’, *Wiener Zeitung* 81 (8 April 1858).

published in the *Fremden-Blatt* in February 1866. This time, however, a very different meaning was given to “*Mädchenhandel*”, as it was used to describe a British colonial context, as opposed to a continental European one. According to the article, a Colonel Evan was said to have raised concerns regarding an ongoing “custom” among indigenous communities in Meywar, in which local girls were still subject to being purchased from their parents to be brought to the mountains of British Colonial India.⁴³⁰

Slavery had been abolished in the British colonies in 1833. It is, however, established knowledge that the abolition of slavery serviced European empires thereafter, whereby they justified their continued colonial expansion upon the notion that Europeans were saving the children of the colonised from their local rulers and from Asian practices.⁴³¹ The report in the *Fremden-Blatt* in 1866 on the moral problem of an indigenous “*Mädchenhandel*” fell in line with the imperialism that abolitionist discourse enabled. The circulation of this kind of knowledge between empires was typical of the European media structures of the day.

According to the short 140-word article, which had been presumably sent to the *Fremden-Blatt* by telegram through Reuters, the *Homeward Mail* had reported that the “sale of young girls to Meywar in India was still taking place”. I could not find any matching article in the *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East* for early 1866. The only possibly related report happened to be published on the same day, having been taken as an extract from the *Bombay Gazette* and entitled “Superstition in Rajpootana”, in which a “slave girl” was said to have escaped from a murder scene which had been motivated by “superstition”.⁴³² Not knowing the original English content, it can nevertheless be said that the translation of this knowledge for a German readership produced a redefinition of “*Mädchenhandel*”, which thereafter came to also have meaning in a colonial context, though it had previously only bore significance in continental Europe. This would appear as the moment when “*Mädchenhandel*” became entangled with a European colonial anti-slave trading discourse.

After the 1866 report, a silence of two and a half years appears on the chronology of the Austrian press with regard to a “*Mädchenhandel*” in any context, colonial or European. But then suddenly, in 1868, the frequency of circulation and reporting on a “*Mädchenhandel*” rapidly increased. The first case of a new trans-

⁴³⁰ Anonymous, ‘*Mädchenhandel*’, *Fremden-Blatt*, 26 February 1866, 55th edition.

⁴³¹ Julia Martinez, ‘Mapping the Trafficking in Women across Colonial Southeast Asia, 1600s–1930s’, *Journal of Global Slavery*, no. 1 (2016): 231; Pomfret, “Child Slavery” in British and French Far-Eastern Colonies 1880–1945’, 184.

⁴³² Anonymous, ‘Superstition in Rajpootana’, *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 27 February 1866.

imperial problem was reported after a Maria Zellinek was found to have been procuring prostitutes and arranging for their migration to Alexandria.⁴³³ Unlike the reports of a “*Mädchenhandel*” across the Russian-Prussian border or the North Sea, the moral problem was becoming a legal one with the culprit being a concrete, specifically named, and ostensibly Jewish individual. Not even a month later, reports began emerging that agents were recruiting young girls, obtaining the consent of their parents and then arranging for their migration upon the Hungarian Lloyd.⁴³⁴ By mid-October 1869, a correspondence appeared in the *Neue Freie Presse* in which Jews were accused of explicit involvement in this new trans-imperial brothel trade.⁴³⁵

With such a scandal brewing which concerned Austro-Hungarian subjects in the Ottoman vassal state of Egypt, it can be assumed that the head of the embassy’s passport office in Istanbul, Maximilian Hoffer von Hoffenfels (1834–1901), was well aware of the matter. Likewise, it can be expected of such an Austrian diplomat that it was part of his duties to keep himself informed about diplomatic news which had been published in Austrian newspapers, such as the report about Colonel Evan and his concern over the customary “*Mädchenhandel*” in India.

Austrian diplomat Hoffer had worked at the Istanbul embassy from 1856 to 1870 and would have been based in the Ottoman capital in 1866 at the time that Valérie de Gasparin and her husband made their tour. I did not come across a connection that links the Gasparins to the Austrian embassy, but they were well connected and drew on the support of the British diplomatic friend Henry Bulwer to gain entrance to a Turkish harem. I do, however, assume that a trained orientalist like Hoffer would have been informed of the 1866 orientalist works of Gérôme and Gasparin. Of course, a mere presumption, I seek only to make transparent what I imagine could have been the cognitive knowledge order of Hoffer between 1866 and 1869, when the meaning of “*Mädchenhandel*” not only became imbedded in a colonial anti-slave trading gendered rhetoric, but when it also became tied to an orientalist notion of white women in the harem, which was at the same time given a new twist of being a system operated by Eastern European Jews.

433 Anonymous, ‘Mädchenexport [Orig. Ver.]’, *Neues Fremden-Blatt (Morgenblatt)*, 8 September 1868, 247th edition, sec. Aus dem Gerichtssaale, 5.

434 Anonymous, ‘Dem “Ung. Lloyd” geht aus Wien folgende Benachrichtigung über einen neu-entdeckten schmerzlichen Mädchenhandel zu’, *Tagespost (Abendblatt)*, 29 September 1868, 223rd edition, sec. Vermischte Tagesnachrichten, 12–13.

435 Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. October. [Orig. Corr.] Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprozesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’, *Neue Freie Presse (Morgenblatt)*, 19 October 1869, 1848th edition, sec. Inland, 4.

In 1870, the Comtesse de Gasparin issued her call to the Réveil movement demanding that they lead a cause for the abolition of state-regulated prostitution. Here she used the term “*la traite des blanches*” and compared it to the orientalist imagery of slave trading to the Turkish harem. Curiously, similar phraseology, though not necessarily the content and facts, appeared in an anonymous correspondence which was republished in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse* in late 1869.⁴³⁶ The anonymous author argued that there had already been a ministerial decree issued against “the trafficking of girls to the Orient” but that this was “completely ineffective, because the export trade is based on the “great” domestic trade in female human flesh”. Here the author argued that the several century-old inter-brothel trade to be found throughout Europe was now beginning to lose its characteristic of a “domestic trade”. Concerned with how it was becoming an international export phenomenon, the author noted that based on their own consultation of police registers in southern and eastern Hungary, the cities of “Cluj-Napoca, Oradea and Arad” would appear to be “the main places of production and intermediate trade” toward the “Orient”, thus the author issued the demand for the “domestic trade” to be “blocked at the source” and “kept at bay”.⁴³⁷

Gasparin did not speak about a trade toward the “Orient”, but she compared the idea of this trade in the orientalist European mind to the fact of a regulated or tolerated inter-brothel trade in continental Europe. Nevertheless, the anonymous author in 1869, Gasparin in 1870, and Borel in 1876, all spoke about the sale of sex through the language and imagery of “slave trading” in “human flesh”. This may have been a mere coincidence of history – part of the abolitionist discursive trends of the century, nevertheless it is noteworthy that the authors were based in a time and place in which for the first time the idea of a transnational inter-brothel trade was problematised so as to argue that any girls tempted to migrate might best be met with measures to keep them at home. Not only this, but it was Austria-Hungary and Switzerland which became the first European contexts in which the legal definition of “trafficking for commercial purposes” began to be formulated in 1877 and 1878 respectively. This legislating was, however, preceded by several years of development behind the cultural and legal meaning of a transnational “*Mädchenhandel*”.

Between 1869 and the early 1870s, the once long accepted European practice of an inter-brothel trade started to become morally contested in a period when technological and transport developments were beginning to enable poverty migration

⁴³⁶ Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. October. [Orig. Corr.] Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprozesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’.

⁴³⁷ Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. October. [Orig. Corr.] Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprozesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’.

for sale of sex to expand out onto vaster distances. Already in February 1870, the first court case trying to deal with this new problem was reported to have taken place in the royal free city of Arad (Romania), where a Georg Radulovic and his “pale skinned” wife were said to have been arrested in Temesvar train station while trying to travel on with two non-relatives he had hired “as girls for everything” to work at his “newly built café”.⁴³⁸ It was not mentioned where his café was located, nor that any form of force was used, but news of the alleged trade thereafter went increasingly into circulation, with reports often conflating brothel trading and matchmaking for marriage, while the message frequently carried anti-liberal and anti-Semitic undertones.⁴³⁹

In June 1871, the *Grazer Zeitung* republished a “*Mädchenhandel*” report that had appeared in the *Bozen Zeitung* earlier that April.⁴⁴⁰ It had been reported that an elegantly dressed and well-mannered “Polish cavalier” had “succeeded in persuading two young girls” using all kinds of false promises “to travel with him” to Lviv (Lemberg) and then on to Iași (Jassy) with the intention of “selling them on to Turkey”.⁴⁴¹ This ordeal had supposedly resulted in the “intervention of the Austrian Consul, who lent them his protection”. The 1871 article reported that “steps had already been taken to have the two unfortunate girls transported back to their homeland”.⁴⁴²

Not only does this show that the notion of repatriation had been there several years before Borel or Barren proposed it as a solution to the problem of “*la traite des blanches*” in 1876, it also indicates that long before Dyer described his foreign fancy man, the figure of a well-dressed stranger using trickery to convince young girls to migrate had also already been there in the Austrian press.

In the early 1870s, reports continued in intervals, but the frequency steadily grew over the years which substantiated the idea of a shady underworld in the minds of the Austrian readership. While a Maria Zellinek had been reported in 1868, the subsequent culprits of the international “*Mädchenhandel*” were mobile

438 Anonymous, ‘Zur Überwachung des Mädchenhandels’, *Die Presse*, 4 February 1870, 34th edition.

439 For example, see Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, *Neue Freie Presse (Morgenblatt)*, 6 February 1870, 1954th edition; Anonymous, ‘Randglossen’, *Wiener Kirchenzeitung*, 17 June 1871, 24th edition, 376; Jos. Scheicher, ‘Unterhaltendes und Mehrendes. Priester und Pfaffe’, *Volksblatt*, Oktober 1873, 128th edition, 9–10.

440 Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, *Grazer Zeitung (Morgenblatt)*, 14 June 1871, 154th edition.

441 Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, *Grazer Zeitung (Morgenblatt)*, 14 June 1871, 154th edition. It is perhaps worth noting that Arad was one of the nodes of the alleged trade which was mentioned by the anonymous author in 1869. Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. Oktober. [Orig. Corr.] Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprocesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’.

442 Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, 14 June 1871.

intermediary men, whose victims were young, beautiful girls taken from their homeland. Dyer was thus certainly not the first to uncover this alleged transnational and gendered phenomenon.

In 1873, the readers of the *Linzer Volksblatt* via the Hungarian newspaper *Hon* were informed about the “appalling trade in unfortunate “Szekler” girls”, which was purportedly being carried out “from Transylvania by unscrupulous scoundrels to the countries of Turkey and the Orient in general.”⁴⁴³ With a phraseology that could be closely linked to the later 1876 work of Borel, the article continued that “under false pretences” these “young, beautiful girls” were said to be “persuaded to accept service somewhere in a city in Turkey or Egypt”, but were then always “delivered as lost creatures to the harems or to inns and coffee houses or to other houses of commercial fornication”. It was reported that “143 such girls were snatched from the clutches of such brutes at the customs office in Gorizia alone and subsequently sent back to their homeland”. As with the accounts of Borel (1876) and Dyer (1880), this anonymous author told the readers of the struggles of the lone-male hero trying to battle this sly, agile, and interconnected underworld; the “director of the customs office” in Gorizia “is a good, brave man who tries to put a stop to these monsters with all due care”, however if he “makes too much fuss, [the “*Mädchenhändler*” (traffickers)] take their girls on a different road, where the border guards don’t bother with such trivialities”.⁴⁴⁴

From the second half of 1873, a silence seems to have once again fallen on the matter of a “*Mädchenhandel*” in the Austrian Press until in February 1875, when a circular was published by the Hungarian Minister of Interior (Gyula Szapáry), in which he noted he had received many reports “from varying sources” that there was a “trade in Hungarian and Romanian girls from Transylvania to Constantinople and Alexandria”.⁴⁴⁵ He had been informed that “innkeepers in bad repute” in the Ottoman Empire were “hiring girls as waitresses and cashiers”, but then instead forcing them to “carry on a shameful trade” once they had them under their power. With this statement, the Minister of Interior wished to draw the public’s attention to their “strict observance of the decrees made by my predecessor (Vilmos Tóth) [. . .] on this matter”. The claims of a “*Mädchenhandel*” he had read were thus rebutted by arguing that “even if [young girls] go to Romania or even further to the Orient at the request of acquaintances or relatives”, they are only

⁴⁴³ Anonymous, ‘Etwas für die liberalen Tugendhelden’, *Beilage zum Linzer Volksblatt*, 1 June 1873, 126th edition, 5.

⁴⁴⁴ Anonymous, ‘Etwas für die liberalen Tugendhelden’.

⁴⁴⁵ Anonymous, ‘Gegen den Mädchenhandel’, (*Neuigkeits*) *Welt Blatt*, 12 February 1875, 35th edition, 7.

ever granted permission to leave should the “imperial and royal consulate in question consider the offers made to the girls to be truly trustworthy” and that the border authorities prevent the emigration of any girls to the Danube principalities who are not in possession of a passport.⁴⁴⁶

There was clearly debate between the press and different parties of the Austrian state on the plausibility of such a trade toward the Orient. Despite these state provisions which were purported to prevent a transnational “*Mädchenhandel*”, news of the alleged trade to Egypt via Trieste continued to spread, as did the geographical span associated with the knowledge of it. On 26 August 1875, a report was published in Buenos Aires which claimed that although the “intervention of the Hungarian Ministry” has recently put a stop to “the *Mädchenhandel* from Hungary and Austria via Trieste to Egypt”, the trade had simply changed routes and was now being carried out toward “Buenos-Ayres, Montevideo and Rio-Janeiro” with such frequency that “on every French steamship arriving from Marseilles, 25–30 girls [were being] brought here and bought by unscrupulous people for the houses of prostitution in which the unfortunate victims have to atone for their ignorance and carelessness.”⁴⁴⁷

Within the historical literature, authors such as Bristow and Hyam take these geographies of “white slavery” for granted by reproducing statist knowledge based on anachronistic claims made within League of Nations reports and other turn of the twentieth century state sources.⁴⁴⁸ If, however, a closer look is taken at the language formulations in this article from October 1875, the anonymous author was clearly well-informed and, at the time of writing, based in the South American region. Not only did they have a broad knowledge of geography and migration patterns, they knew case details of three alleged “agents” of this trade, “E. in Oedenburg and H. and W. in Trieste”, who were busy “compiling the “transports” with such efficiency that depending on demand “20 to 30 girls can be made ready for departure to Marseille on a 10 to 14-day basis.”⁴⁴⁹

While in February 1875 the Hungarian Minister of Interior had denied the possibility of such a trade, stating that only girls with passports and trustworthy

⁴⁴⁶ Anonymous, ‘Gegen den Mädchenhandel’.

⁴⁴⁷ Reproduced/republished in: Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, *Tetschner Anzeiger*, 16 October 1875, 83rd edition.

⁴⁴⁸ See Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice*; Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience*, 145–47.

⁴⁴⁹ Report of event republished in: Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, 16 October 1875, 4. With slightly different formulations but more or less the exact same content an anonymous correspondence from Brixental dated 14 November 1875 was published on 19 November in *Neue Tiroler*. Anonymous, ‘Aus dem Brixentale, 14. November’, *Neue Tiroler Stimmen für Gott, Kaiser und Vaterland*, 19 November 1875, 265th edition.

employment could depart, this report of the trade to South America some months later claimed that these “*Mädchenhändler*” got around the system by obtaining “passports from the local consuls [. . .] by depositing 10 Francs and having two witnesses certify that the persons concerned [were indeed] Austrians and Hungarians”.⁴⁵⁰ Somewhat anticipating an accusation of state corruption, the anonymous author writing from South America was careful to make it explicit that these “*Mädchenhändler*” of course had no collaborative connection within the consuls. The readership of this article was to clearly understand that this new phenomenon was an entirely non-state operation and that the problem was that young women, who were not legitimately considered Austrians or Hungarians, were managing to travel on such documentation.

Reporting on the profitability of the “*Mädchenhandel*” for those behind its organisation, the anonymous author then stated that they were of the hope that their “publication of the facts” about this “branch of the latest slave trade” would “suffice to induce the Hungarian Ministry to intervene vigorously, so that this stain may at last be erased from the Hungarian name”.⁴⁵¹ Two weeks later, in early November 1875, an unnamed “friend of” the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* who had “lived a long time in the Orient” wrote to the paper stating that “for some time now, news has been circulating in the daily papers about a large-scale trafficking in girls to Buenos-Ayres in South America or Alexandria in Egypt or elsewhere”.⁴⁵²

Sounding much like the geographic and ethnographic knowledge of a European diplomat, the author reported that “in Alexandria there is a whole society recruited mainly from Armenians, Greeks, Malthusians and Polish Jews, who traffic girls on a large scale to provide the houses of prostitution in Cairo, Aden, Tripoli and Tantah with the necessary number of priestesses of Venus vulgivaga”.⁴⁵³ The anonymous friend of the paper then continued to report that this “organisation” was purported to have a “large army of agents at its disposal, some of whom live in the large cities of the European continent, but mainly in the most important cities of Galicia, Hungary, Bukovina and Romania”, with some who remain mobile the whole year round. The organisation was reported to have had “three main collection points in Europe”, namely Trieste, Genoa, and Naples,

450 Anonymous, ‘*Mädchenhandel*’, 16 October 1875, 4.

451 Anonymous, 4.

452 Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht des “*Illustr. Wiener Extrablatt*”), *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 8 November 1875, No. 309, 4. Jahrgang, 5th edition.

453 Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht des “*Illustr. Wiener Extrablatt*”).

“where the girls [were] brought from all parts of Central Europe to be sent from there by ship to Alexandria.”⁴⁵⁴

Allegedly, these girls had been lured away from their parents by enticing princely promises, but then ended up in the houses of prostitution, followed by a life on the “narrow, old and dirty streets of the old town”. This anonymous author who used to live in the “Orient”, but who no longer did, then stated that it was “not uncommon for such unfortunate creatures to be [subsequently] dragged [half-ruined from the streets of Alexandria] as far as the interior of Africa or Arabia” so as to “serve anew as a medium for satisfying the lust of rich Muslims”. Gradually coming to a close, the author stated that it was no irregular occurrence that “many a girl whose cradle was in Krakow or Lemberg [then found their] grave in Morocco or Nubia”.⁴⁵⁵

From these media reports circulating in the Austrian press, I have induced that someone like a well-trained orientalist, passport officer, and diplomat such as Hoffer von Hoffenfels probably read the 1866 report about “*Mädchenhandel*” among indigenous communities in British Colonial India. At the same time, from his post in the Ottoman Empire, he would most certainly have known about an alleged Jewish trafficking in girls from the Dual Monarchy to Egypt which suddenly began to be reported on in 1868. From the circulating reports thereafter, it is alleged that this trade was suppressed in Egypt in the early 1870s, but that the route of the trade then simply changed, thereafter heading toward Buenos Aires. Sensational reports need have little to do with the experiences of the subalterns they speak about, but it is highly curious that in exact chronological and geographical terms, the alleged “*Mädchenhandel*” run by a Jewish underworld mirrored the movements of one Austrian diplomat in particular, namely Maximilian Hoffer von Hoffenfels, who continued his service to the Austro-Hungarian Empire from Buenos Aires after finishing up his duty in Istanbul. That then poses the bold question if it was not he was the anonymous author of such media reports.

6.2 State “Evidence” of “White Slave Trafficking” before 1880

On 27 November 1875, Consul Carl Ritter von Sax (1837–1919), head of the Austro-Hungarian consulate in Cairo, wrote to the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gyula Graf Andrassy in Vienna. Sax communicated that an article had re-

⁴⁵⁴ Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht des “Illustr. Wiener Extra-blatt”)

⁴⁵⁵ Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht des “Illustr. Wiener Extra-blatt”)

cently been republished in the *Fremden Blatt* from an unnamed Hungarian Newspaper’s section on “*Mädchenhandelnachrichten*” (News on the trafficking in girls).⁴⁵⁶ Sax claimed that the anonymous sender had attacked him personally and the consulate in Cairo more generally, for “not having taken the trouble to investigate the often vigorously criticised matter of the import of girls” from Austria and Hungary and for “not having done anything about their outrageous haggling”.⁴⁵⁷

A brothel trade was spoken of, but nowhere was coercion implied. Sax defended himself in his letter to Andrassy, saying that, contrary to the accusations, he was very much concerned about any neglected girls engaged in prostitution, while also being troubled by the limits of the law to address the issues of their importation. Allegedly uneasy with the allegations, he reported he had immediately entrusted his colleague Richard Ritter von Franceschi based in Alexandria with the task of conducting a “thorough and exhaustive investigation into the conditions generally criticised in the note in question and specifically into the case referred to”.⁴⁵⁸

In his 1875 report to Andrassy, Sax showed some empathy toward the possibility of force, the findings of Sax and Franceschi, however, suggested that the accusations were unfounded. According to Sax, the results of Franceschi’s investigation showed that the “importation of underage girls via Trieste with the ships of the Austro-Hungarian Lloyd for prostitution purposes in Egypt has decreased significantly in the course of the last four years, insofar as this purpose could be proven at all”.

The women of “Austro-Hungarian nationality” who had come to Egypt via ship were “all over the age of majority”, were all in possession of “properly issued passports” and had generally previously served as registered or clandestine prostitutes or were otherwise of the “servant class” from Istria, Gorizia, and Sudetenland. The report concerned undesired migrants with the correct documentation, rather than people who had not wanted to migrate. Irrespective of whether they were selling sex or not, Sax stated that “no law is able to control the immigration

⁴⁵⁶ The translation of “*Mädchenhandelnachrichten*” is not straightforward as the term “*Mädchenhandel*” was, at the time, not yet the linguistic equivalent for “*la traite des blanches*”, “white slavery”, or “white slave trafficking”. The literal translation for “*Mädchenhandelnachrichten*” would be “news on the trade in girls”.

⁴⁵⁷ Carl Ritter von Sax, ‘Carl Ritter von Sax to Andrassy, Cairo’, 27 November 1875, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA) HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46, Sicherheit/Prostitution.

⁴⁵⁸ Sax, ‘Carl Ritter von Sax to Andrassy, Cairo’, 27 November 1875.

of persons of these categories and any prohibitive measure appears ineffective, even unlawful”.⁴⁵⁹

In his letter to Andrásy, Sax then proceeded to detail several cases of specific individual women who had been named in the *Fremden Blatt* as victims of a “*Mädchenhandel*”. According to his report, these claims turned out to be entirely unsubstantiated. The women named were said to have migrated and were selling sex of their own free will, and they had made it clear that they did not wish to return to their points of departure. Sax therefore requested that Andrásy have an “official notification denying this completely untrue comment be published in the *Fremden-Blatt* and in the unspecified Hungarian newspaper”.⁴⁶⁰

Indeed, in the weeks before Sax wrote to Andrásy a series of anonymous accusations of a “*Mädchenhandel*” in Austrian girls to the Ottoman Empire and South America were reported between 16 October and 19 November in the *Tetschner Anzeiger*, the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, and the *Welt Blatt*.⁴⁶¹ These reports all contained highly technical details, specific geographic knowledge, and complex conceptions of space. This kind of information on an alleged international trade could only have come from very high-ranking officials. Thus, this media campaign informing the public about a “*Mädchenhandel*” could possibly have been driven by diplomats themselves. Should this take on history have resonated in substance, this would then suggest that diplomats like Maximilian Hoffer von Hoffenfels or Carl Ritter von Sax could have been behind the accusations in the press, while at the same time denying the claims to their senior in the Foreign Office.

In late autumn 1875, Andrásy would have read the news reports in Vienna and thereafter the letter from Sax. Five weeks after the post arriving from Egypt, he received a second letter from Argentina regarding the same news scandal of a “*Mädchenhandel*”. This time the letter was sent from his consul Hoffer von Hoffenfels from his post in Buenos Aires, where he served between 1872 and 1879. Hoffer, Sax, and Franceschi had all studied around the same time at the k. k. Akademie für Orientalische Sprachen (Oriental Academy) in Vienna in the 1850s and were intermittently engaged as consuls of the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s and 1870s. In the mid-1870s, they all reported in some shape or form to Vienna on the matter of a “*Mädchenhandel*”.

⁴⁵⁹ Sax, ‘Carl Ritter von Sax to Andrásy, Cairo’, 27 November 1875.

⁴⁶⁰ Sax, ‘Carl Ritter von Sax to Andrásy, Cairo’, 27 November 1875.

⁴⁶¹ Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, 16 October 1875, 4; Anonymous, ‘Sechs verkaufte Mädchen und ein aufgesessener Sachse’, *Neuigkeits Welt Blatt*, 26 October 1875, 248th edition, 7; Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht Des “Illustr. Wiener Extrablatt”)’; Anonymous, ‘Aus dem Brixentale, 14. November’.

At the top of his letter of January of 1876 sent from Buenos Aires to the Foreign Ministry in Vienna, Hoffer indicated that a copy of his report (presumably the letter he was writing) was being simultaneously sent to the consul in Istanbul.⁴⁶² This indicates that these diplomats were also communicating independently with each other, without always first seeking approval in Vienna. The contents of Hoffer’s letter to Vienna concerned an anonymous response to an article that he had recently been published in the *Wiener Neue Freie Presse*, in which the opportunity was taken to report on an alleged coercive “*Mädchenhandel*” from the Eastern half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to South America.

Writing to his authority in Vienna, Hoffer wished to first give Andrassy his private and professional, as opposed to his official, account of events. He began by stating that he had immediately conducted investigations into the accusations of a coercive “*Mädchenhandel*”, but that they had turned out to be completely unsubstantiated. This being the same conclusion that Sax had communicated with Andrassy regarding the Egyptian cases a month or so earlier.⁴⁶³ The two letters from both diplomats indicated independently of each other that the investigations into the specific cases named in the media involved girls who were old enough to legally sell sex; who had themselves said they had migrated willingly; and who had known the trade that they would engage in advance of departing. The girls involved in these cases were also said to have declined offers to be returned back to where they came from. A further commonality to these letters was that Sax and Hoffer acknowledged that there was nevertheless a problem with a “servant class” of migrants arriving towards South America and the Ottoman Empire; which they as diplomats felt helpless to prevent it in legal terms. Hoffer, however, shared with Andrassy his take on the causes of the situation, while at the same time communicating his diplomatic solution.

462 Gustav Freiherr von Schreiner (1851–1905) was consul of Cairo at the time before being relocated to Iasi in 1876, Galati in 1877, and Constantinople in 1880. Franz Stockinger (1848–1906) was very briefly consul in Constantinople in mid-1875 before being transferred to London. In May 1875, Rüdiger Freiherr von Biegeleben was transferred to Constantinople until he was thereafter transferred on to Dresden in 1878. From September 1875, Guido Freiherr Call-Rosenburg von und zu Kulmbach was vice consul in Constantinople. These are merely some hints for further research. For extensive details, see Deusch, *Die effektiven Konsuln Österreich (-Ungarns)*.

463 Hoffer does not say where he had the results published and his chronology of media reports presented to Andrassy does not match up with my chronology of media reports to be found in the Austrian digitalised archives. I could not find the results of any such investigation in any of the papers, though it can be presumed from the letter that he was referring to the *Neue Freie Presse* as this is where he says the accusations of a “*Mädchenhandel*” to La Plata were initially published. This claim, however, neither matched up with my findings. The only place I found such claims were in Anonymous, ‘*Mädchenhandel*’, 16 October 1875.

Claiming to have feared the damage the reports may have caused to the Empire’s good name, Hoffer said he had thus published his findings in response, though he did not give clear reference as to where. According to his letter, the outcomes of the investigations he had allegedly conducted, showed that there were indeed some girls from the “Eastern half” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who were engaged in an “dishonourable trade”. These girls, however, he said, “all exceeded the age of consent by several years and had declared with the consul before leaving the knowledge of the purpose of their travel to the la Plata States and what trade they would be engaged in”. Furthermore, he reported that, following the investigations, representatives of the Imperial and the Royal Missions had, nevertheless, offered to arrange for their return, but the girls in Buenos Aires, like those in Egypt, had refused. Hoffer thus told Andrassy that “one cannot speak of a *“Mädchenhandel”*, insofar as this is to be understood as the luring of innocent, inexperienced girls” but that they did “belong to the bad immigration which, unfortunately, in recent years, has tended to flow into La Plata”.⁴⁶⁴

Explaining to Andrassy how the region had become “a popular refuge of the immigrant community”, he noted one reason as due to the measures introduced in the United States “to stop women of a dissolute lifestyle from entering their territory”; while the other cause he gave for this worsening “deplorable state of affairs” was a combination of the “Argentine government [having] cancelled the only treaty on the extradition of fugitive criminals that it had with royal Italy”, at the same time that they decided to drop all “police supervision of the immigration ships coming from Europe” in an attempt to attract desirable working migrants from across the Atlantic. Thus, Hoffer wrote, it was no surprise that “prostitutes, among other elements” now “prefer to take the road to La Plata”; and that “as long as the Argentinian Statesmen remain dominated by this tendency, nothing will be able to change this regrettable fact.”⁴⁶⁵

Although Hoffer had clearly communicated that the media accusations of a *“Mädchenhandel”* had, in the coercive sense, no truth to them, he boldly indicated his plan to Andrassy about having the Empire use the scandal as a legitimising opportunity for cracking down on undesirable migration to Argentina in the future. He stated, “that in Europe, and especially at the ports of embarkation, a barrier could be put upon this impure desire to travel to La Plata, by means of having the passenger lists of the emigrant ships destined there from Genoa, Marseilles and Bordeaux checked by the port and police authorities in due time before

⁴⁶⁴ Hoffer, ‘Bericht Hoffers aus Buenos Aires an das k.u.k. Ministerium des Äußern’, 12 January 1876.

⁴⁶⁵ Hoffer.

each day of departure”, thus allowing “any passengers deemed suspicious to be stopped”.⁴⁶⁶

Fully confident that these port and police authorities would cooperate, Hoffer nevertheless made it understood in his letter that, in diplomatic terms, it goes without saying that he would play ignorant of any interventions being made by the French and Italian authorities, or at any of the imperial and royal consular ports. As a follow-up step to his plan, he then advised Andrassy to contact the police and port authorities in Trieste regarding a possible case of an individual called Adolf Weißmann, who he claimed had come to the attention of the authorities in 1871 after having travelled from Calcutta to Europe with a passport issued by the Neulybian authorities at Fort William.⁴⁶⁷

Having been said to have used this passport to obtain an English residence permit and then later an English passport, Weißmann had allegedly travelled from Europe to La Plata so as to facilitate the migration of Julia Fodor aged 23 from M[*illegible*], Mola Stina aged 21 from G[*illegible*], Valga Ellis aged 20 from Belgrade, Ethel Elangmeyer aged 21 from Groß[*illegible*], Laura Les aged 18 from Fünfkirchen. Suggesting that this man was still travelling around doing this kind of business, Hoffer purported that his last known movement was in December 1875, after he had departed from Argentina with the French steamer “Niger” of the Bordeaux Line. Assumed to be travelling in possession of a British passport, Hoffer told Andrassy that the man in question was in actual fact thought to be an “Isrealite from the Danubian principalities”.⁴⁶⁸

At the time of writing to Andrassy in 1876, Hoffer alleged to recall the details of the Weißmann case from five years previous, when the suspect had come to the attention of the authorities during his diplomatic service in Constantinople. Claiming that the archives there would have more information on the case, it thus becomes clear why Hoffer had simultaneously sent a copy of his letter to the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in the Ottoman capital.

Alleging he was recalling from memory, the diplomat in Buenos Aires shared specific details such as Weißmann having used the Suez Canal to reach the English possessions of the East Indies. He then insisted he would leave it up to the Austro-Hungarian authorities to commence a full investigation so as to ensure that “his disgraceful handiwork could be put to rest”. In bringing his letter to a close, Hoffer told Andrassy that he had already taken the liberty of informing the English envoy of the Weißmann case, but that the official story of this denuncia-

⁴⁶⁶ Hoffer.

⁴⁶⁷ Hoffer.

⁴⁶⁸ Hoffer.

tion will be that it came from two notorious brothel keepers of German nationality in La Plata, rather than from himself.⁴⁶⁹

Further research would be needed to establish who the English envoy was and if it could have been Henry Barron, who had previously served in Istanbul before Brussels, where he became the first English man to report on “white slavery”. In any case, what is clear is that rather than a real-world trafficking toward Asia and Africa having expanded with the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal, Hoffer’s letter from 1876 seems like the moment that the two became discursively associated. Case evidence for anything else for the early 1870s is just far too weak.

I have already established from the media reports circulating at the time of the alleged Weißmann case, that a court case related to the new idea of a “*Mädchenhandel*” was said to have taken place in Arad in 1870. Then, in 1871, there was news that two girls were stopped in Jassy and repatriated after it was discovered that a “Polish Cavalier” was attempting to escort them to Constantinople. I inquired in the Vienna archives but they found no record of an Adolf Weißmann case. Thus, in chronological terms so far, the only case evidence of an underworld of trafficking following the opening of the Suez Canal are these two sensational and undetailed media reports, along with Hoffer’s alleged memory of Weißmann, for which he was perfectly prepared to construct a lie for the public, saying that the knowledge came from two “German bawds” in South America in 1876.

Two months after Hoffer wrote to Andrassy, details of the Weißmann case began to appear in the Austrian press. According to the report from the courtroom presented in *Die Presse*, Weißmann had been arrested close to Arad in February 1876, only a few weeks after Hoffer had told Andrassy about the case. Details of the process were then presented in the report which “shed a bright light on the workings of this shameful trafficking in human beings and on the excesses of a social cancer”.⁴⁷⁰ The outcome of the court case was, however, not made clear.

Three months later, the Austrian public was reminded of Weißmann, when, on 18 June 1876, news about the “*Internationaler Mädchenhandel*” once again appeared. This time it was framed that, despite the frequent complaints and irrespective of “how much the Vienna police have turned their attention to this branch of criminal culture, all efforts to track down the dark on-goings of these girl snatchers [. . .] have so far been unsuccessful”. The data that had been re-

⁴⁶⁹ Hoffer.

⁴⁷⁰ Anonymous, ‘Pest, 24. März (Mädchenhandel.)’, *Die Presse. Abendblatt*, 27 March 1876, 85th edition, 4.

ceived by the police regarding a case of Adolf Weißmann who connected Vienna and Buenos Aires were described as nothing other than “terrifying”.⁴⁷¹

The article continued to describe the “trafficker”, alleging he had persuaded “seven young Austrian women” to “travel with him to South America by enticing them with promises”. On the ship, Weißmann was alleged to have “sold the four most beautiful ones for 95,000 marks, the other three were sold in Buenos Aires for 60,000.” The paper could only speculate what happened thereafter to these “poor creatures”, but the police report indicated that after Weißmann had sold his “weiße Slavinnen” (white slaves), he returned to “Europe, namely Austria once again in order to obtain new goods”.⁴⁷² Two days later, an article appeared in the *Neuigkeits Welt Blatt* which contained much the same formulation and sentences, only that this time Weißmann was explicitly named as being a Hungarian Jew.⁴⁷³

The year 1876 not only pinned down the moment when “white slavery” became the English linguistic equivalent for a newly forming transnational and gendered concept of the French “*la traite des blanches*”, it was also the temporal marker of “*weiße Slavinnen*” in the Germanic world becoming synonymous with being victims of a Jewish-run “*Mädchenhandel*”. Thus, the media reporting of Weißmann could be understood as an early example of anti-Semitic language which constructed Jewish people as a group using one case, while othering them as a “social cancer”.

Fitting into a chronology of European patterns of modern anti-Jewish racism, the Weißmann case is far from anything of a substantive concrete example of “white slavery”. According to the anonymous newspaper reports, Weißmann was said to have been arrested around June 1876. This was five months after Hoffer had described the case to Andrassy in January that same year. The state knowledge, as produced by Hoffer in his letter, placed the Weißmann case in the period around 1870/1871, the same time that sensational media discourses were circulating about a “Polish Cavalier”. I have found no record or paper trail that is not a retrospective claim. Should I thus use the logic of Western police investigations and the rationale of European science, one could conclude that Hoffer might possibly have invented the case.

Irrespective of whether alleged cases were recounted retrospectively by statesmen or in real-time by the media, a chronology of facts produced about

471 Anonymous, ‘Internationaler Mädchenhandel’, *Fremden-Blatt (Morgenblatt)*, 18 June 1876, 166th edition, 4.

472 Anonymous, ‘Internationaler Mädchenhandel’.

473 Anonymous, ‘Ein ungarischer Jude als Mädchenhandler’, *Neuigkeits Welt Blatt*, 20 June 1876, 140th edition, 4.

“white slavery” dried up between 1871 and 1874. There were claims of Hoffer from the mid-1870s regarding the latter 1860s–1871 and then there were media sources reporting on alleged events in the mid-1870s. For Britain, there was also some discourse emerging retrospectively about the year 1874.

The historian Mary Ann Irwin indicates that the British Home Office had already been monitoring a small group of girls known to be travelling abroad for brothel work in 1874. Referencing *Consul Wodehouse to Marquis [sic] Salisbury, “Correspondence” 12 January 1874*, she stated that Wodehouse wrote about a procurer, by the name of Klyberg, who was said to have recently been convicted for transporting English minors to French brothels. Irwin was herself then confused when she observed a sudden change in the British Foreign Office’s official position regarding trafficking in late 1876.

According to her research, the French Consul Hotham had received a complaint from an English woman in October 1876, claiming that her sister was being held against her will at a brothel in Omar. Hotham, Irwin says, thereafter wrote to the local authorities to which he received the response that “the girl in question came to France with full knowledge of her destination,” and that “she does not want to return to England at present”.⁴⁷⁴ To Irwin’s surprise, the authorities in France repatriated the girls some days later anyway, claiming that they were happy to return.⁴⁷⁵ Irwin did not provide any archival names or catalogue numbers, while at the same time my archival research failed to turn them up. The only place that I found reference to such letters was in the 1881 Report of the Select Committee.

In 1881, the Select Committee invited witnesses of high authority, whose discourse provides snippets of evidence of “white slavery” for 1874–1877, though no reproduction of these original correspondences were included in their report. In 1880, as part of the preparations for the Select Committee, the then British Foreign Secretary Granville appointed Barrister Thomas William Snagge to conduct a so-called independent investigation into the “traffic”.⁴⁷⁶ The first assignment given to Snagge was to go to Brussels to observe the beginning of the brothel trials

474 Irwin, “White Slavery” As Metaphor’. Para 26.

475 Irwin references a letter from Consul Hotham to Earl Derby (12–15 October 1876). Though with no specific details.

476 The 2nd Earl of Granville was the Foreign Secretary until February 1874, and would have been serving once again as Foreign Secretary at the time of the Select Committees sitting in 1881. According to Edward Bristow, Snagge had been recommended by Howard Vincent. Bristow did not provide references as to how he knows this, thus corroboration was not possible. Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 89.

going on there. The report, which resulted from his investigation, was annexed in full to the Select Committee’s minutes, while he had also been the first person called to the witness stand in 1881 and questioned for evidence.

Within Snagge’s report there was at times a contradictory chronology of how the British Government came to know about “white slavery”. Firstly, he indicated that in 1874 a person by the name of Wodehouse (presumably a consul) had written to Granville about a *placeur* (usher) called Klyberg. Later in his report, however, Snagge references another, or perhaps the same, correspondence from 1874; this time a letter sent to Consul Gratten in Antwerp. This letter was, according to Snagge, then forwarded to the Metropolitan Police and thereafter to the British Home Office before it entered his hands, though it is not stated clearly that he actually saw the real thing.⁴⁷⁷

I have not found the original letter mentioned by Snagge, but it bears some similarity with Irwin’s *Consul Wodehouse to Marquis [sic] Salisbury*, “correspondence” 12 January 1874, which she quotes as having claimed “it is notorious that the only girls of tender age to be found in these [brothels] [. . .] are English and Belgium subjects”.⁴⁷⁸ This suggests that Irwin had at least consulted an original letter, while I only have Consul Hotham’s answers in the witness stand of the Select Committee to rely on.

Consul Hotham was called forth as a witness on 12 July 1881 during the Select Committee’s third sitting. After his identity and occupation were established, the Marquess of Salisbury immediately asked: “[H]ave any cases of girls being brought over fraudulently or against their will, for immoral purposes, been brought to your knowledge at Calais?” The answer to which raises serious doubts about the claims to the existence of a “systematic traffic”:

No, none whatever. [. . .] during my long residence at Calais of 22 years, there have only been two cases, and both of those cases rather tend to show that it was a false charge. On one occasion, in 1874, a girl’s sister wrote me personally, and said that her sister had been entrapped into one of these houses and detained against her will, so I sent to the police, and the police, accompanied by the owner of the house, a man, and the girl came before me and I questioned her, and, to my surprise, she immediately said it was quite a mistake, as she had no intention of going home, I there and then offered her a free passage [. . .] to enable her to go to England; she said she would rather not go, as she was very comfortable where she was. [. . .] There was no idea of injured innocence there. The other case was in the autumn of 1876, a case in which the Society for the Suppression of Vice communicated with the Foreign Office on the subject of two girls [. . .] who were in a brothel at St. Omer; I was instructed by the Foreign Office to obtain their release. I wrote to the *Sous Préfet*, and two

477 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’, 131–40.

478 Irwin, “White Slavery” As Metaphor’. Para 26.

days afterwards the two girls appeared at my house alone, without any policeman. I questioned them, and it was clear that they were two of the lowest class from London. [. . .] They said they had been there for six months; that they had been well treated, and had nothing to complain of, but they were very anxious to get home, and I believe that their complaint, whoever it reached in the first instance, was entirely because they had got tired of living abroad, and wanted to return to London. I furnished them with the means of getting to London. I gave them orders to go by boat, and they left that night. I telegraphed to the father of the girl who gave me the address, to say she was coming; but I never had a word in reply. Those are the only cases I have had.⁴⁷⁹

Consul Hotham’s memory could have been rusty – perhaps he was lying – yet I see no reason to think so. It seems plausible that there were cases of girls traveling to the continent; they may have sold sex in London and then thought it worthwhile to try doing so elsewhere. It’s credible to think that they at times stayed abroad and, given the means, would have returned to the city and language realm that they knew best. Different cases of English girls selling sex abroad crop up in the Select Committee minutes, none, however, fit the descriptions of “white slave trafficking” which had been circulating in the media. With several sittings spread out over four weeks, only one alleged case of a “trafficker” is named.

While it is not clear exactly how the British state came to know about an alleged *placeur* by the name of Klyberg, on 30 September 1876, it would seem that the British Minister “immediately requested Mr. Vice Consul Maltby to take the necessary steps without a moment’s delay” to follow up the case of two girls alleged to have been entrapped in a brothel in Rotterdam. The vice consul “immediately communicated with the city police and succeeded in liberating the two girls”; “dispatching them to London on the 8th instant”. Then, according to Snagge’s report, “in January 1877 the police at the Hague, while searching a house in which an English girl had been placed by Klyberg, found six letters in his handwriting addressed to the proprietor”.⁴⁸⁰

“In March of the same year Klyberg was then arrested at Antwerp, and charged with having borne a false name”, which led to him doing a “term of imprisonment in that city”. According to Snagge, two English birth certificates for girls over 21 had been found on his person when he was taken into custody. Nev-

⁴⁷⁹ 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’, 45.

⁴⁸⁰ Quoted in: 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’, 118.

ertheless, his conviction was based on document forgery, not trafficking. “Search was made in different houses of ill-fame at Antwerp, and several more letters in the handwriting of Klyberg, addressed from London to the keepers of those houses, came into the hands of the police authorities, by whom they were then handed to the English Consul.”⁴⁸¹ Seven of these letters were then translated for reproduction in Snagge’s report to the British Select Committee of 1881, the first of which says it all, when, on 10 April 1876, Klyberg allegedly wrote from London to “My dear Xavier”:⁴⁸²

Now let us speak of the business. As I have not seen you since my last journey, when I placed that English girl at Brussels whom you would not venture to take for your Number 4, because she could not write so as to make a formal request to be placed in a gay house [*maison de société*], as this affair of the white girls [*affaire des blanches*] had occurred, and you were afraid of the police; now that this affair is forgotten, and since that time several English girls of all ages have come to Antwerp, all of whom have been accepted, the police authorities cannot refuse you any more than others.⁴⁸³

I am perfectly clear about my scholarly responsibility to writing non-fiction. There have, however, on a number of occasions been moments that I felt like I was reading it in my sources. If the presumably real person called or travelling under the name of Xavier Klyberg had indeed made a living as a cross-border brothel go-between, questions nevertheless hang over whether he really could have written the original French version of these letters, and if he did, what he might have been referring to with the term “*affaires des blanches*”. How could he, a self-employed servant of the poverty classes, have had such vocabulary in April 1876 to describe his vocation as a “*placeur*” before the metaphor and concept of “white slavery” had even entered popular circulation in Belgium and Britain around 1880? And would he, a Jew of the latter nineteenth century, really have used such a racial indicator of whiteness to have described Christian woman who sold sex?

⁴⁸¹ Snagge, ‘Appendix A.’

⁴⁸² Snagge claimed that the seven letters were handwritten by Klyberg. Klyberg’s first name, according to the 1881 Select Committee report, was Xavier. The content of this first letter would give the impression that it was written from a brothel owner to a “*placeur*”, who was also called and addressed as Xavier. Whatever the truth of the letter, it was likely a mistaken claim on the part of Snagge that all letters were written by Klyberg. It would appear that some were allegedly written to him.

⁴⁸³ Reproduced in: Snagge, 118. For a reproduction and translation of eight letters, see Snagge, 118–20.

Klybergs letter had allegedly been handed over by a Madame in March 1877 after having been found lying around in her brothel. It is once again curious how reference to this kind of evidence made it into the paper trail of the Select Committee, but that somehow, despite all the well-informed consuls, state lawyers, and chiefs of police called to the witness stand in 1881, not one of them recalled the anonymous author in the Austrian press whom I believe was Consul Hoffer von Hoffenfels, nor Consul Henry Barron in Brussels nor Pastor Théodore Borel in Geneva as having been the first in 1876 to publicly describe this new problem of “white slavery” in German-, English- and French-speaking Europe.

Reports of a “*Mädchenhandel*” began in or about Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Argentina, Belgium, Britain, and Switzerland were discursively embroiled in this problem in the mid-1870s with “white slavery” and “*la traite des blanches*” becoming linguistic equivalents. It would appear that 1877 is the year that the Netherlands became engulfed in the conceptual development.

In 1877, the same year that Klyberg’s letters had been allegedly found in The Hague, British inspector of criminal investigations in Paddington, Daniel Morgan, was instructed to look into a case while he was coincidentally in Holland on other business. Having taken the witness stand in 1881, he was asked by the Marquess of Salisbury if “you believe there are girls induced to leave England by artifice to become prostitutes on the Continent?” Morgan responded: “I have one case in point, but she was not a chaste girl when she left; she was a young girl, not 17 years of age”. Salisbury intervened: “Was she induced to go from her home by temptations and then to become a prostitute on the Continent?”. Morgan added:

I could not go so far as to say that. The case I speak of is this. I happened to be in Holland in October 1877, on business, and I was directed by the commissioners to make inquiries as to the complaint of a girl being detained in a brothel in Rotterdam, contrary to her will, and I succeeded in finding her, and she told me her history [. . .] I found she was there under a fictitious name, not her own, and I claimed her. I told the police officials that I should take her to England [. . .] she told me her story, which was this, that she was born [. . .] in the neighbourhood of Soho, and that when she was 14 years of age she was in the habit of going to the Alhambra, and she formed an acquaintance [. . .] and was seduced, but that she had not become a real prostitute until she met a man of the name of Klyberg. I took Klyberg over there at that time, and he was convicted and sentenced to nine months imprisonment for a similar offence, and I brought the girl back with me.

Then the Marquess of Salisbury followed up “on what ground was she induced to go over?” “She was given to understand that it was to a house of ill fame that she was going.” – “She was not induced to go over by any artifice?” “No; but she was

deceived in this way, that when she got there she found that she had not the liberty that she had in this country, and that she was confined to the house.”⁴⁸⁴

In late 1877, the British police inspector Morgan had arrested Klyberg on foreign Dutch soil, implying that there was some form of international police cooperation.⁴⁸⁵ The grounds upon which he was convicted in The Hague were not, however, made clear. In March that same year Klyberg had been arrested and charged for bearing a fake name.

Morgan’s statement is confirmation of what is already known in the historical literature on nineteenth-century prostitution, namely that, in comparison to Britain, life in a *maison close* severely restricted women’s freedom.⁴⁸⁶ Klyberg may not have been fooling young girls into travelling under false pretences, but it indeed seems plausible that he, on several occasions, escorted girls from Britain to the continent, connecting them with madams there. It also seems likely from what we know of continental brothels, that these girls could well have been negatively surprised at the conditions under which they were expected to work. However, the details do not match up with the established notion of coercion: single cases of Jewish “traffickers” do not amount, in any shape or form, to a systematic “white slave traffic” run by a Jewish underworld.

A man known by the name of Klyberg undoubtedly traversed with young girls back and forth across the channel and had the knowledge of a go-between of the edges of formal society. This knowledge surely included bureaucratic and co-ordination skills, such as communicating about the needs of individual brothels or other employers, recruiting young girls, organising or falsifying birth certificates, booking travel tickets and translating along the journey. That the likes of Klyberg sought a fee for their services in a capitalist economy is no surprise.

These kinds of figures were surely out there in a nineteenth century of shifting social structures and changing possibilities of mobility; they surely emerged gradually out of a social need and economic rational, which connected those seeking to sell sex for income with those who provided the spaces in which the exchange could be carried out. Undoubtedly, this role is what later became associ-

⁴⁸⁴ 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’, 88–89.

⁴⁸⁵ There is a conflict in the sources on the exact place of arrest. According to Snagges report it had been Antwerp, while according to Morgan’s statements during the Select Committee it is implied that he was arrested in Rotterdam.

⁴⁸⁶ Restrained by a system of compulsory police registration and medical checks and confined to Brothels under the Penal Code, it would seem that women who sold sex on the continent indeed had less freedom than those doing the same on the streets or in brothels in England. For more on the continental system of state-regulated prostitution, see chapter three.

ated with the category “trafficker”. It is, however, the semantic relationship, which had been drawn through comparative to transatlantic slavery, that needs to be radically reformulated when speaking about the history of go-betweens in the sale of sex.

In and for the 1870s, British and Austria-Hungarian statesmen were starting to make great claims about a transnational and gendered problem of “white slavery”. The case evidence is, however, very sparse. Georg Radulovic and his wife may well have escorted girls in 1870 toward the Ottoman Empire, when they were stopped with two non-relatives. Reports of the “Polish Cavalier” of 1871 are almost too farcical to be read as anything other than entertainment for the masses. Then it is not even clear whether Weißmann existed as a historical figure in the early 1870s, or if he was an invention of a diplomat like Hoffer around 1875. As the decade proceeded, reports of the problem increased, though not necessarily the plausibility.

In the months between the initial report of a “*Mädchenhandel*” to South America on 16 October 1875 and Hoffer’s letter to Andrassy sent in January 1876, several descriptions of trafficking cases began to appear in the Austrian press. These included a reproduction of evidence from a Viennese mother, who had naively entrusted her daughters with a Jewish woman to bring them to Cairo,⁴⁸⁷ a report of six young girls from Bohemia having been found crying as they were transported by three men on a train from Dresden toward the Hamburg port, and the subsequent capture, but eventual escape, of one of the “clever” culprits.⁴⁸⁸ Then there is a silence in my chronology of cases until Klyberg’s arrest in the Netherlands in 1877 and once again thereafter until 5 December 1878, when the Austrian Consul Sax wrote to the Foreign Affairs Minister Andrassy from Adrianople.

While having conducted an investigation in Egypt into the media’s claims in 1875 and having been thereafter convinced of their untruth, Sax’s correspondence from 1878 took a very different tone. This time, Sax wrote a short and matter-of-fact report to Andrassy about a “*Mädchenhandel*” case, which concerned a 19-year girl Aloysia Béke from Sávár in Hungary. He reported that Béke had been brought to Constantinople via Trieste and Bologna by an unknown man on the premise of a job “as an inn cashier for the Rosenbergs in Adrianople”. This reportedly being an extended branch of their local brothel business in Zcaracz, Galicia.⁴⁸⁹ Having

⁴⁸⁷ Anonymous, ‘Zum Mortara-Fall in Wien (Originalbericht des ‘Ill.Wr. Extrablatt’.)’, 19 October 1875, 290th edition, 5.

⁴⁸⁸ Anonymous, ‘Sechs verkaufte Mädchen und ein aufgesessener Sachse’, 11.

⁴⁸⁹ Carl Ritter von Sax, ‘Sax (Consul) to Andrassy, Andrianople’, 5 December 1878, ÖStA HHStA MdÄ AR 52 46 Prostitution 14, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv.

instead ended up in a brothel in the Ottoman capital, Béke purportedly told the consul that while she “did not wish to return to her father”, she “would like to go back to her fatherland”, should the means be provided to her. Thus, Sax informed Andrassy, that the local brothel of Haim Rosenberg had been fined 5 pols imperials or 4 ½ gulden; enough to cover the “travel expenses” incurred by the consul-ate who had arranged for her “return back *home*”.⁴⁹⁰

There is little reason to doubt that there was not a real person by the name of Aloysia Béke, who was repatriated back to Hungary from Istanbul and that a brothel owner there called Haim Rosenberg was footed with the bill for the travel costs. Sax, I would presume, was just reporting on the success of a new legal provision in Hungary, which allowed the state to deal with facilitators of migration for the sale of sex. It would seem that in the space of two years, state structures to this end had rapidly taken their form. Hoffer had in early 1876 communicated his plans to Andrassy of how migrations across and out of Austria-Hungary could be brought under control. By 1878, there is indication that a new law and its accompanying state practices had already started to impact the lives of certain categories of Europeans living, moving through, and working in particular localities.

6.3 Shifting Legal Dogma

Between the mid-1860s and latter-1870s, it would appear that knowledge could have been circulating between statesmen in nativist California, British imperial Southeast Asia, and Austro-Hungarian diplomats on how a gendered version of anti-slavery rhetoric could service the barring of entrances and exits of particular racialised groups in the process of fastening state borders. I have come to this observation by bringing the findings of different scholarly works into conversation with each other, but also by conducting source analysis and following the physical movement of one Austrian diplomat in particular.

In his letter to Andrassy, Consul Hoffer had named one of the reasons for an increase in undesired migration toward Argentina as having been a “new law” in the “advanced American republic of the North” which “bared the entry of women of a licentious lifestyle into its territory, while holding the beneficiaries of immigrant ships accountable for violations of the prohibition”.⁴⁹¹ Hoffer was surely referring to the US Page Act of 1875, a piece of federal legislation which had been

⁴⁹⁰ Sax.

⁴⁹¹ Hoffer, ‘Bericht Hoffers aus Buenos Aires an das k.u.k. Ministerium des Äußern’, 12 January 1876.

introduced as a means of restricting the immigration of Chinese women under the mask of anti-slavery morality.⁴⁹²

Two years after Hoffer sent his letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, a law of 1878 seceded the Hungarian Criminal Code of 1852, which had previously regulated a whole array of offences related to procuring. Among other provisions, this new law included a clause which made it punishable to “entice a person entrusted in one’s care into commercial fornication, to resist police regulation of prostitution and to transport a person abroad for the purpose of commercial fornication”.⁴⁹³ Here, in one sentence, the criminal act of transnational “trafficking” was created in law, though the category (trafficker) and their action (trafficking) were yet to earn their name.

Laws pertaining to the punishment of procurement and the grooming of minors can be found in the Napoleonic Code and even earlier.⁴⁹⁴ There were also provisions to return foreign *insoumis* (rebellious children) to their parents or the state authorities. What was new here in the Hungarian Code was the criminalisation of taking a person “abroad for the purpose of commercial fornication”. In other words, the act of assisting with transnational migration for the sale of sex. Not only did this new law allow for the punishment of someone like Haim Rosenberg, irrespective of the consent of someone like Aloysia Béke, the legal formulation simultaneously dodged any criticism by anti-regulationists who had embraced the concept of “white slavery” as a critique of state-regulated prostitution.⁴⁹⁵ Under the 1878 law, regulated prostitution and anti-trafficking policy became, in fact, highly compatible concepts. Not only was any person who regularly or occasionally sold sex legally obliged to register with the police as a “prostitute”, anyone who helped facilitate their cross-border migration to do so could be convicted as a yet-to-become legal category of “trafficker”.

It is clear that Hoffer had knowledge of a “new law” in the United States, which legitimised the exclusion of certain categories of people wishing to cross its borders. It is also evident from his letter to Andrassy that he saw an opportunity in a “*Mädchenhandel*” media scandal which could be used to legitimise the implementation of passport controls around the Mediterranean so as to hinder the de-

492 For comprehensive historical context and legal analysis, see Sucheng Chan, ‘The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870–1943’, in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882–1943*, ed. by Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 74–149; Ming M. Zhu, ‘The Page Act of 1875: In the Name of Morality’, *Legal History Workshop*, 2010, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1577213>.

493 Lauben, *Weißer Markt: Frauenhandel und Völkerrecht*, 29–30.

494 See chapter two.

495 See chapter three.

parture and entry of certain groups and categories of people. Thus, it is a plausible possibility of history that the Hungarian law of 1878 was a legal transfer of the American law of 1875 via Hoffer. It is, however, also conceivable that the American law of 1875 and the Hungarian law of 1878 were part of a shifting transnational and gendered legal dogma around migration and its control in the later nineteenth century.

The historiography on migration control gives hints of new patterns beginning to emerge in the 1870s, but empirical analysis tends to begin in the 1880s: a point in time when new laws and practices were visibly in place. I contend that these emerging new patterns first showed their face through a transnational and trans-imperial entanglement of legal and moral concepts and practices, which were rooted in a number of coincidental, geographically dispersed, and initially unrelated events in 1866.

In the summer of 1866, the Swiss citizen Valérie de Gasparin had departed on her second tour to the “Orient”, four years before she started her campaign against the “French system”. During her trip, she spent a number of weeks in Istanbul, the city where Hoffer von Hoffenfels was serving at the time as head of the passport department for the Austrian embassy. Although Gasparin was in contact with diplomats, such as the British consul Bulwer, there is no necessity for the narrative to assume that she had met Hoffer. Nevertheless, as a trained orientalist and high-ranking diplomat, I would assume his awareness of two things. Firstly, that he had seen or been informed of an 1866 telegraphed article in the Austria press regarding a Colonel Evan’s concern about a “*Mädchenhandel*” among indigenous communities in British Colonial India. Secondly, that he had familiarised himself with Valérie de Gasparin’s name and her orientalist work, *À Constantinople*, she having been the wife of a highly important French statesman in exile.⁴⁹⁶

In 1866, amid growing complaints about Chinese prostitution, a law had been passed in California to suppress “Chinese Houses of Ill Fame”. While this resulted in Chinese brothels being confined to certain demarcated urban spaces, it did nothing to hinder the numbers of women arriving from China, many of whom presumably thereafter sold or continued to sell sex. As this “public nuisance” continued to grow, a second Act was passed on 18 March 1870 to “Prevent the Kidnapping and Importation of Mongolian, Chinese, and Japanese Females, for Criminal or Demoralizing Purposes”. Rather than suppressing the sale of sex within the state, the law of 1870 was intended to prevent further arrivals by making it illegal to bring Asian women by land or sea into the state, unless it could be proved that

496 Anonymous, ‘*Mädchenhandel*’, 26 February 1866; Gasparin, *À Constantinople*.

they had come voluntarily and were of “correct habits and good character”.⁴⁹⁷ If anti-slave traffic rhetoric legitimised European colonialism in mid-nineteenth-century Asia, then a warped version of it simultaneously or subsequently serviced race and gender-based migration control in America.

Hoffer had told Andrassy in 1876 that under the “new law” in America, the beneficiaries of ships were legally responsible for ensuring that “women of immoral behaviour were denied entry to their territory”.⁴⁹⁸ The 1870 Act in California had targeted ship captains with a fine of one to five thousand dollars or a period of imprisonment if they were in violation of the law. During the year preceding the Act, Chinese women from Hong Kong had been arriving in large numbers, which had led lawmakers in the State of California to adopt a resolution asking the US Secretary of State to have the US ambassador ask the British government for their support in curbing the traffic. Sucheng Chan’s research suggests that this was never done: I am, however, not quite as sure.⁴⁹⁹

The British had taken possession of Hong Kong in 1841, with an Anti-Slavery Ordinance having been passed in 1844. While Britain extended its anti-slavery laws to its new possession, the practice of *Mui Tsai* was viewed differently and continued to be permitted.⁵⁰⁰ If the American Executive Office, as according to Chan’s research, apparently did not act on the request of its Californian lawmakers in 1870, then it is curious that that same year, the British Attorney General and Chief Justice of Hong Kong, John Smale, began challenging the exception that was being made for *Mui Tsai* and called for it to be considered illegal kidnapping, purchasing, and trafficking in girls.⁵⁰¹ Of note is the fact that this was the

497 Chan, ‘The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870–1943’, 97–98.

498 Hoffer, ‘Bericht Hoffers aus Buenos Aires an das k. u. k. Ministerium des Äußern’, 12 January 1876.

499 Chan, ‘The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870–1943’, 98.

500 Mònica Ginés-Blasi is a historian and sinologist, based at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. I have taken my definitions in full from footnote 8 of her article, in which she states that *Mui Tsai* were girls owned by a family, not their own, whom they worked for as domestic servants until their owners disposed of them as they saw fit, such as through marriage. This was different to *Sanpo Tsai*, who were little girls brought up in a family of their future husband until they reached the age of being married. Then, finally, *Pipa Tsai* were female musicians owned by an older woman or pimp, who also provided sexual services, as a practice in which girls were brought/given away elsewhere to work as domestic servants. See Mònica Ginés-Blasi, ‘The International Trafficking of Chinese Children and Its Conflicting Legalities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Treaty-Port China’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 2022, 18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2022.2079976>.

501 Martínez, ‘Mapping the Trafficking in Women across Colonial Southeast Asia, 1600s–1930s’, 234.

same language or concept as the Californian law, but from the perspective of the migratory point of departure.

In 1870, when California targeted migrants from Hong Kong by declaring it illegal to bring “Mongolian, Chinese and Japanese Females” into the state without proof of volunteerism and good moral repour, a British statesman on the other side of the Pacific had started framing *Mui Tsai* in Hong Kong as being on a par with slave trafficking. The 1870 Act in California had functioned in a kind of reverse logic of innocent until proven guilty, whereby racialised women arriving at its coast and borders were categorised as “slave” until proven otherwise.

From the Californian state perspective, if “free migrants” could rather be deemed “slaves” on account of their race, then repatriating them in a post-slave trade abolitionist world would, in the moral logic of a white settler society or European empire, have been the right thing to do. At the same time, if those who had facilitated their migration could be deemed as “slave traffickers”, then fining them would cover the costs of cleaning up the injustice which the good white state or European empire had been morally compelled to do.

Following the implementation of the 1870 Law, Asian migrants in California used their obligatory participation in court procedures to challenge the legal attempt at their exclusion in the disguise of anti-slavery. Their resistance and accounts in the courtroom which contradicted the laws assumption led to it being declared unconstitutional in 1874 on several grounds. Firstly, because it was not in the state’s right to exclude foreigners apart from in self-defence. Secondly, because it was in violation of the 1868 Burlingame Treaty between China and the United States which guaranteed the right to free immigration. Thirdly, it was declared a violation of the fourth amendment which guaranteed due process and equal protection under the law.⁵⁰²

Although there was a brief change of tune around Asian migration to California, the reversal did not last for long. On 3 March 1875, the Page Act, called after Congressman Horance F. Page of California, was made into federal American law, forbidding the entry of Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian contract labourers as well as women, for the purposes of prostitution and felons. While scholars such as Adam Mc Keown have given detailed attraction to the American Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1881, 1884, and 1888 and their role in newly emerging practices of migration control, the Page Act of 1875 and the Californian Act of 1870, both of which paved the way, have been largely overlooked.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Chan, ‘The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870–1943’, 101–2.

⁵⁰³ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

I would contend that there is much room for further research into how the concept of slavery in the legal sense served population control in a post-slave trade abolition world, though in a differentiated way, depending on whether it was a colony or white settler society. Mònica Ginés-Biasi has shown how, in the mid-nineteenth century, Spanish efforts were being made to import Chinese women to Cuba so that they would establish families with the men who had already been brought there as part of the “coolie trade”. Shipments of women and children were, however, often organised by Portuguese settlers in Ningbo (China), though using British vessels. Amid strong anti-slavery sentiments in Britain, the British authorities feared that British nationals may have been involved in this illegal trade, thus leading to investigations such as the *Inglewood* case. The historiography on British efforts against “child slavery” typically begins in the 1870s with the calls for a colonial crackdown on *Mui Tsai*. Ginés-Biasi, however, suggests that the 1852 *Inglewood* inquiry pushes this historiography back some twenty years.⁵⁰⁴ I, however, contend that these are two different things, though more research is needed.

If it is correct that John Smale’s call for redefining *Mui Tsai* in British Hong Kong in 1870 was a reaction to the wishes of Californian lawmakers, then the primary motivations could be said to have related to migration control and a favour to colleagues; rather than, the protection of the British imperial name, should they have been accused of continued involvement with slave trading. It was from a conversation with Ginés-Biasi, that I learned that slave trading such as the “coolie trade” continued after abolition, though through a legal discourse and categorisation of free migration. This is what got me thinking about the relationship between the point of destination and the rhetoric of slave trafficking or free labour migration.⁵⁰⁵

The uncoerced poverty migration of Asians to the United States or of Eastern European Jews to the Ottoman Empire and Argentina in the 1860s and 1870s started to be hindered by state interventions in this period; interventions which sought to put a stop to a gendered and transnational “slave trafficking”. It would seem careful differentiation around race and terms of law would be needed to clearly understand the patterns of exclusion or forced mobility within or to colonies, European states, and white settler societies.

In the *Inglewood* case, as highlighted by Ginés-Biasi, the Spanish wanted Asian indentured labourers to establish families in their Cuban colony. This was a very different desired population constellation than in California, a white settler

504 Ginés-Biasi, ‘The International Trafficking of Chinese Children’.

505 Mònica Ginés-Biasi and I had lunch in Bonn, Germany, on 12 May 2022.

society, where they wished to prevent Asian unions at the risk of community building and long-term settlement in a place, where there was nevertheless a desire for cheap, short-term male labour.

In pointing out how this rhetoric of Asian slavery and European abolitionism operated to legitimise “new imperialism” in South East Asia, Julia Martínez argues that a distinction is needed between two phenomena: on the one hand, the slave trade across the region, which up until the late nineteenth century had provided wives, servants, prostitutes, and concubines; on the other, the “modern phenomenon” of traffic in women for brothel prostitution, which emerged around 1870 and was destined elsewhere than a colony.⁵⁰⁶ I completely agree, but with one caveat: that the latter not be assumed to have been entirely coercive, even if in every likelihood, violence and exploitation were entangled in this experience within a capitalist and patriarchal system. This “modern phenomenon” rather calls for contextualisation in how the state, in this period, began operationalising abolitionist discourse and law against alleged brothel trafficking, in the name of racist exclusion and gendered migration control.

Slavery had only recently been abolished in the United States in 1865. Not even a year later, abolitionist rhetoric and law serviced Asian exclusion practices in its new post-gold rush state. Knowledge of using abolitionism for migration control seems to have gone into circulation via Britain thereafter. Jessica Pliley perhaps correctly argues that the discourse around “yellow slavery” had provided the basis for the US movement against “white slavery” in the early twentieth century.⁵⁰⁷ However, this I would debate was not such a straightforward linear process. The development did not simply play out within a US container, but had a rather zigidy-zagidy shape, which was entangled and messy, as is typical of a transnational cultural transfer.

While media reports on a “*Mädchenhandel*” in British India and the east of Austria-Hungary can be found for the late 1860s, around 1870 – after Californian lawmakers expressed their wish for British support in preventing the continued migration of women from Hong Kong – new patterns and discourses for controlling migration and populations via gendered anti-trafficking policy and practice began to emerge in different geographies. In California, in Hong Kong, and around the Hungarian-Romania border in circa 1870; then in the United States, Britain, Belgium, Hungary, Swiss Cantons, Singapore, and Egypt between 1874 and 1878; finally, in Argentina and Brazil between 1879 and 1880.

⁵⁰⁶ Martínez, ‘Mapping the Trafficking in Women across Colonial Southeast Asia, 1600s–1930s’, 234.

⁵⁰⁷ Pliley, *Policing Sexuality: The Mann Act and the Making of the FBI*, 41.

Keely Stauter-Halsted provides an interesting argument that a shift in categorisation took place around border-crossing activities after a brothel fair in the 1850s, though she notes that the terminology of “trafficking” was only introduced following an 1864 decree in Hungary, followed by an 1867 decree regarding Hungarians living in Egypt. The issue here is again with anachronistic source claims, as she drew this knowledge from Alain Corbin (1990) who himself was relying on Paul Appleton’s doctoral thesis (1903), who in turn was referencing a report presented by Madame Malwi Fuchs, the Hungarian delegate sent to the 1902 International Conference for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic held in Frankfurt am Main.⁵⁰⁸ Perhaps Madame Fuchs was right in her claim, but this would require differentiated reflection on the meaning of “*Mädchenhandel*” as a legitimated inter-brothel trade up until the late 1860s, and then as an illegitimate coercive Jewish underworld from around 1869 on. In order to do so, a recap is needed on the chronology of discourse and in terms of practices of migration for the late 1860s to mid-1870s, but also with the addition of discourses that emerged thereafter in Prussia on Jewish “*Mädchenhändler*”.

In 1869, an anonymous media report first suggested that the law in the Austro-Hungarian Empire was insufficient to deal with a “*Mädchenhandel*” heading toward the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁹ Then, in 1875, the Minister for Interior Szapáry published a media report in which he stated that his predecessor Tóth had introduced the required law.⁵¹⁰ Given Tóth’s years of service, this suggests that somewhere between 1871 and 1873 a legal shift around the facilitation of transnational migration for the sale of sex may have taken place.

In terms of the movements of people, in 1864, after Isma’il Pasha had taken power in Egypt, labour migration from Europe and the Middle East flourished around the new urban centres emerging along the Suez Canal’s construction sites. Trade run by brothel keepers had been regulated in Egypt from around 1865, and foreign brothelkeepers could well have moved there to set up business in a legitimate way. Lucia Caminati, for example, has found a source example from 1866 which indicates that an Italian women called Maddalena Orfei, who

⁵⁰⁸ Paul Appleton, ‘La traite des blanches’ (Thèse pour le Doctorat, Lyon, Université de Lyon – Faculté de Droit, 1903), 103; Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 277–78; Malwi Fuchs, ‘Bericht über Ungarn’, in *Bericht über den II. Internationalen Kongress zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels zu Frankfurt a.M. am 8. und 9. Oktober 1902. Herausgegeben Vom Deutschen Nationalkomitee* (Berlin: Bernhard Paul, 1903), 63–71; Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain*, 122.

⁵⁰⁹ Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. October. [Orig. Corr.] Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprozesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’, *Neue Freie Presse (Morgenblatt)*, 19 October 1869, 1848th edition, sec. Inland, 4.

⁵¹⁰ Anonymous, ‘Gegen den Mädchenhandel’, (*Neuigkeits*) *Welt Blatt*, 12 February 1875, 35th edition, 7.

had previously run a brothel in the Ottoman capital, then moved to Egypt with the intention of establishing her business in Cairo and Alexandria, after she had been expelled from Istanbul “for having promoted serious disorders against public quiet”.⁵¹¹ Definitions are, however, always a delicate game, and historical concepts don’t stop developing as they travel through transnational and transimperial contexts.

The alleged and reported efforts of someone like Maddalena Orfei would confirm the idea of a transimperial brothel trade or at least long-distance migration to set up a brothel business elsewhere. This, in the German-speaking world at the time, would have been most logically referred to as “*Mädchenhandel*”. This is, however, not the same as notions of “white slave trafficking” that were being made anachronistically in sources from the turn of the twentieth century and which, from the late 1860s till the turn of the twentieth century, would have been called a “*Mädchenhandel*”.

The meaning of “*Mädchenhandel*” was shifting in the 1860s and 1870s, predominantly in terms of shifting patterns of Jewish migration, which were being described in circulating anti-Semitic reports in the Austrian press as a Jewish run “*Mädchenhandel*” in an underworld stretching out of Eastern Europe, down the African continent, and across the Atlantic. The first reported legal figure to substantiate this phenomenon, was the arrest of Georg Radulovic, a “trafficker” crossing the Romanian border in 1870, assumed to be on his way to the Ottoman Empire and likely the Suez Canal region.

European and Middle Eastern migrants had been heading to Egypt since 1864. When disputes arose among Egyptians and foreigners in this period, they were initially typically dealt with through the consular courts, which left Egyptians at a disadvantage due to the weakness of their diplomacy. In 1867, Nubar Pasha, a politician who served under Khedive Isma’il Pasha and the British occupation thereafter, had begun pursuing the idea of mixed courts as a means of gaining more power for Egyptians in such disputes. Diplomatic negotiations for the mixed courts, however, took time, so that they were only put into practice in 1876.⁵¹²

During this period, state reforms were already being pursued as part of a broader Egyptian attempt to strengthen and centralise its legal system in line with European norms. In 1876, that same year that the mixed-courts came into

⁵¹¹ Lucia Carminati, “She Will Eat Your Shirt”: Foreign Migrant Women as Brothel Keepers in Port Said and along the Suez Canal, 1880–1914, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 30, no. 2 (2021): 163.

⁵¹² Nathan J. Brown, ‘The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 33–34.

place, people with dual nationality in Egypt were starting to be investigated.⁵¹³ The diplomatic negotiations around the mix-courts resulted in a number of concessions being made. Most importantly here, was the fact that the consular courts retained power over criminal cases involving foreigners, while the mixed courts would only be used for dealing with civil and commercial disputes. I do not have the knowledge of how this correlated with developments in the broader Ottoman Empire during and after the so-called First Constitutional Era (1876–1878), however for Egypt, a case of “*Mädchenhandel*” would surely have been argued as criminal, as opposed to commercial or civil.

If, as it was claimed in the Austrian media, there were coordinated efforts to crack down on the alleged coerced “*Mädchenhandel*” from Hungary to Egypt from the mid-1870s, then that would have been deemed a criminal matter for the consular courts. It may then also be relevant for further research that the clause of differentiating the power of the mixed courts in criminal cases in effect limited rather than strengthened the position of Egypt and Egyptians.⁵¹⁴ That British occupation was possible in 1882 and that Gavin Murray-Miller contends the implementation of migration controls aided this process, leads to a strong suspicion based on the findings here that the seemingly coordinated efforts between Austrian and British diplomats on the matter of “white slavery” bore historical significance.⁵¹⁵ After all, it was the geographies of these diplomats, namely the Ottoman Empire, South America, and Belgium, which were incrementally embroiled in the “traffic” as destinations.

The geographic movements of an anonymous author behind the circulating media reports from and on Egypt and South America perfectly matched the movements of Hoffer von Hoffenfels, who served in Buenos Aires between 1872 and 1879, after relocating from his post in the Ottoman Empire. Toward the end of his stay, but before he moved on to be Resident Minister at the courts of China, Japan, and Siam and Consul General in Shanghai, it was reported by the German Colonial Director Albrecht Wilhelm Sellin that thirteen alleged Jewish “traffickers” had been prevented from disembarking a ship at Buenos Aires and a further twenty-three had been convicted by the police authorities in Brazil.

Sellin’s article, entitled “*Der Handel mit deutschen Mädchen nach Brasilien*” (The trade in German girls to Brazil) had been published in February 1880, in the third issue of Otto Glagau’s anti-Semitic journal *Der Kulturkämpfer*. At the time of writing, Sellin had just moved to Leipzig, having returned from Brazil, where he

⁵¹³ Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*, 91.

⁵¹⁴ Brown, ‘The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt’, 36.

⁵¹⁵ Murray-Miller, ‘Empire Unbound’.

had served as colonial director of a German-speaking settlement since some point in the 1870s. Glagau, the editor of *Der Kulturkämpfer* had, however, decided to obscure Sellin's identity by using only his initials: A.W.S. Colonie-Director a.D. Sellin's article opened with an introductory note from Glagau in which he stated that "the Leipzig papers dare not print Sellin's piece. As one might assume, we are less fearful."⁵¹⁶ Sellin's article fit well into an anti-Semitic culture which Glagau was in the midst and at the head of sculpting in an environment that was well fuelled for the fire.⁵¹⁷

At the time of Glagau's publication of Sellin's article, changing Jewish migration patterns would have been felt or read about in Germany, particularly in cities in the east. As is understood, Galicia at the time served as one of the main exit ports for Eastern European Jews, who then in large numbers would have been known to move through Leipzig and Dresden, as part of their migration path elsewhere.⁵¹⁸ Sellin's article used highly sensational language, which placed explicit blame on Jewish men for the entrapment of innocent German girls, who he claimed were being forcibly brought to Brazil. In support of this accusation, he listed thirteen names of alleged "traffickers", who were said to have been prevented from disembarking the "Equateur" steamer at Buenos Aires in October 1879.⁵¹⁹ Sellin then added that the Brazilian government had more recently (sometime between October 1879 and February 1880) convicted a further 23 Jews in an attempt to "crack down on the 'Mädchenhandel'".⁵²⁰ Assuming there is some substance to these claims, it would appear that in the space of a number of years South America

⁵¹⁶ Sellin, 'Der Handel mit deutschen Mädchen nach Brasilien'.

⁵¹⁷ Otto Glagau was a Berlin journalist, who held the German Jewish population responsible for the economic crash of 1873. Since the 1860s, Glagau had been trying to get his anti-Semitic critique out through different cultural channels, such as the theatre. The crash of 1873 enabled him, however, to politically instrumentalise his beliefs: his journal *Der Kulturkämpfer* (published 1880–1888) serviced this agenda. For a thorough analysis and contextualisation of *Der Kulturkämpfer* and of Otto Glagau, see Daniela Weiland, *Otto Glagau und 'Der Kulturkämpfer': Zur Entstehung des modernen Antisemitismus im frühen Kaiserreich*, Dokumente – Texte – Materialien Veröffentlicht vom Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin 53 (Berlin: Metropol, 2004).

⁵¹⁸ For more details on the difference in mobility between Eastern European Jews and German Jews in these cities during the period, see Peter Pulzer, 'Introduction', in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, ed. by Steven M. Lowenstein, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Peter Pulzer, and Monika Richarz, vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1–6; Monika Richarz, 'Demographic Developments', *ibid.*, 7–34.

⁵¹⁹ Interestingly, Victor Mirelman noted that the year 1879 was significant for talk in the media about Jewish trafficking in Buenos Aires. Victor A. Mirelman, 'The Jewish Community Versus Crime: The Case of White Slavery in Buenos Aires', *Jewish Social Studies* 46, no. 2 (1984): 145–68.

⁵²⁰ Sellin, 'Der Handel mit deutschen Mädchen nach Brasilien'.

was dealing with a “*Mädchenhandel*” using migration control mechanisms, as Hoffer had proposed.

In 1876, Austrian Foreign Minister Andrassy had received word from Hoffer that “while the public morality has grown in North America in recent times, quite the opposite has been happening here”. The Argentinian Republic, he reported, had become a favourite refuge “of the riffraff” and that “this deplorable state of affairs has worsened”.⁵²¹ Having then declared to this authority that that media claims of a “*Mädchenhandel*” were a fabrication, Hoffer was just as self-assured that the idea of a gendered and transnational “traffic” operated by Eastern European Jews would service the implementation of controls, starting with the maritime ports of departure providing access around to the Mediterranean Sea.

Over the course of the 1870s, there was a shifting legal dogma which targeted the transnational “traffic” in white girls, which had been legitimised by circulating reports on a “*Mädchenhandel*” in the Austrian press since the late 1860s. The fining of Haim Rosenberg and the arrest or repatriation of several Jewish men in South America would indicate that legal practice was impacting the lives of particular individuals. In the space between the state producing law and that of subalterns being regulated by it, was a knowing public who obtained their knowledge from the media as well as the yields of high and low culture.

6.4 Presenting “White Slavery” to the European Public

As outlined above, in April 1871, a sensational figure of the “Polish Cavalier” appeared in the news consumed by an Austrian reading public. A local paper in Bolzano, South Tyrol, first reported on this smartly dressed man of good etiquette, who had allegedly used all kinds of false promises to convince two young girls to travel with him to Lemberg and then on Jassy, though his real intentions were to sell them on to Turkey. Reported on a few months later in a newspaper in Graz, it was said that the Austrian consul had intervened to offer his protection and have the girls returned back home.⁵²² It would then seem that this figure was possibly transferred from the knowledge of the masses into the realm of high culture, when, in 1874, the German artist and professor at the Weimar Art School, Berthold Woltze (1829–1896), painted a work he called *Der lästige Kavalier*, which in English is typically translated as *The Irritating Gentleman* (see figure 8).

⁵²¹ Hoffer, ‘Bericht Hoffers aus Buenos Aires an das k.u.k. Ministerium des Äußern’, 12 January 1876.

⁵²² Anonymous, ‘Mädchenhandel’, 14 June 1871.



Figure 8: Berthold Woltze, *Der lästige Kavalier* (1874).

I have Jan Süselbeck and Hans-Joachim Hahn to thank for making me aware of Woltze’s painting through their paper presentation at a conference on *Antisemitism and Sexuality Reconsidered* in December 2021 organised by the Berlin Centre for Research on Antisemitism. In the #MeToo era, Woltze’s painting had been picked up and almost gained meme status as a representation of women and girls’ daily experiences of harassment by random men. Süselbeck and Hahn had been inspired to present a paper on the topic, following a Twitter post by @Töchter der Zeit, who had started a discussion on the platform, calling for a reaction by historians to the historical decontextualisation of this work.⁵²³

Töchter der Zeit points out how, to a public in the mid-1870s, it would have been clear that this image was a depiction of an orphaned young girl travelling

⁵²³ The thread post by *Töchter der Zeit* can be read here even without a Twitter account: Töchter der Zeit, ‘Twitter Thread’, 7 September 2021, accessed 16 October 2024, <https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1435189883258163201.html>.

with the coffin of a parent in a third-class train carriage.⁵²⁴ In the form of an oil-on-canvas, the painting would have been first seen by an elite population. Then, after having received a large number of reviews, it was brought to a larger audience after being published on the cover page of the ‘illustrated women’s magazine’ *Der Bazar*.⁵²⁵

The intentions of Woltze and his *lästiger Kavalier* can only be probed at while possibly placing the work in the anticatholic culture in Prussia at the time, or perhaps amid the growing anti-Semitism of the period. Interesting to note is the similarities between diplomatic discourses, Woltze’s cavalier, and that of the “Polish cavalier”, which circulated in the Austrian press in 1871.

From the mid-1870s, diplomatic claims emerged about Jewish men of respectable exterior, who were allegedly tricking vulnerable girls with false promises of marriage or good situations. This was also reflected in the circulating reports of a “Polish Cavalier”, who, given the character title, could either have been implied as Jewish or Catholic. Either way, Woltze’s oil-on-canvas image fits the depictions of a well-dressed and well-spoken man with bad intentions, who may then in the imaginary have intended to trick such a vulnerable girl into travelling with him before selling her onto a brothel in the Ottoman Empire.

Woltze’s painting depicted a young girl travelling alone, whose vulnerability was emphasised through her status of an orphan in a third-class carriage. *Töchter der Zeit* noted that when the painting was first publicly presented at the 1874 Academic Art Exhibition in Berlin, it had initially been given the title *In’s feindliche Leben* but that it was, at some unknown point later, renamed *Der lästige Kavalier*. The original title could perhaps be translated as something like *Into a hostile world*, while its meaning would have related generally to all kinds of trouble that a young girl could have gotten into when out there on her own.

The change in title, as suggested by *Töchter der Zeit*, may have been to shift the viewers focus away from the mourning girl, and onto the irritating dandy man hanging over her shoulder.⁵²⁶ *Der lästige Kavalier*, meaning *The Irritating Gentleman*, indeed put emphasis on the social role of the man in the middle of the image. Could he have been in the midst of offering the girl the opportunity to migrate on with him, while the man in the background possibly symbolised the ignorant everyday bystander, who without knowledge of “white slavery” would have been naïve to it going on right under their nose?

524 *Töchter der Zeit*.

525 *Töchter der Zeit*.

526 *Töchter der Zeit*.

Töchter der Zeit suggests that the change in title may have been at the hands of the art market. I contend, that it could, however, also have been under the influence of politics or someone who had commissioned the work as a legitimization for state intervention into the lives of poor people making their way from one place to another.

People were already on the move out of Eastern Europe before states started intervening and blocking their paths. Nevertheless, historical process blends with historical narrative at the crossroads where authorities need the legitimization of the people in order to hold onto power in the absence of violence.⁵²⁷ Woltze’s painting reassured different kinds of publics that it was for their sake and the sake of the “nation’s lost daughters”, that the state would have to intervene non-violently through systems of regulation upon modern paths of mobility.

In its original genre-painting form, which hung in the Academic Art Exhibition in Berlin, the message was primarily intended for the educated and privileged classes. The image can not only be seen as legitimising the state’s intervention into the mobility paths of the lower classes in the name of protecting poor white orphans, the message also implied that the state control of movement would simultaneously guarantee a social stability among the classes via the repression of illegitimate social mobility. Woltze’s image was, however, not only consumed by elites, but it was also reproduced in print form on the cover of a magazine for the female masses.

Making it to the cover page of the ‘illustrated women’s magazine’, *Der Bazar*, in 1874, the messages of the image also arrived at a reading populous of German-speaking white women.⁵²⁸ From a particular angle, this could be seen as preparing them for a forthcoming period of state-sponsored security and protection in their name via passport and border controls. In this sense, the nation was conceived as needing the state, thus, should the reader of the magazine ever be stopped by the authorities in transit, they were to rest assured that it was merely for their own protection and that of their fellow female subjects.

People living in Europe in the 1870s were witnessing great changes happening around them; politically and socially, men saw women of different classes beginning to enter spaces beyond the home; technologically, the means and speed of communication were shifting, with the telegraph shrinking time and space as well as the industrialised lithograph being able to satisfy the desires of an ever

⁵²⁷ The idea of the blurred lines between historical process and narrative is taken from Michel-Rolph Trouillot. The idea of states or groups having power and then the presence of violence indicating they are losing it stems from Hannah Arendt. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1879); Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

⁵²⁸ *Töchter der Zeit*.

growing reading public; in terms of transport, sinking ticket prices and rising wages increasingly made trains and ships a means of movement beyond those of the privileged classes. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century it would have been next to impossible to conceive of an unmarried woman independently migrating to earn money, this was no longer the case come the end of it.

The likes of Théodore Borel’s work in Switzerland blamed poor girls for their own downfall, by emphasising their superficial desires and their temptation by the fruits of modernity. Comparatively, the construct of “white slavery” in the British context, via the works of Edmondson and Dyer, could possibly be understood as an attempt to defend young working-class women by presenting them through a streamlined victim narrative based on naivety. Despite these discrepancies on moral blame, from Borel to Woltze, then later through Edmondson and Dyer, there was a shared message which patronised young unmarried working-class women and their families as being incapable of making sensible decisions for themselves. Rather, from the state’s perspective, laws around the age of consent and approved migration were argued for, which would require interventionist measures to keep non-state networks out and to keep young unmarried working-class girls at home.

6.5 Conclusion

In 1876, “white slavery” became the linguistic equivalent of a new transnational and gendered concept previously in formation under the metaphor of “*la traite des blanches*”. This entanglement of meaning, which formed across transnational space was, however, simultaneously rooted in discursive and practice-based developments around the “*Mädchenhandel*” undergoing redefinition in the German-speaking world. In comparison to “*la traite des blanches*” and “white slavery”, which were only comprehensible in a world after eighteenth-century abolitionism, “*Mädchenhandel*” had older early modern historical roots of distinct, but discursively related meaning to that of its new linguistic equivalents of the late nineteenth century.

Marc Bloch once wrote that “to the great despair of historians, men [sic] fail to change their vocabulary every time they change their customs”.⁵²⁹ If this had only been the case with “*Mädchenhandel*”, it would have already been challenge enough to make sense of what had changed in terms of custom in the 1860s and 1870s and what had remained the same. The known practice of a “*Mädchenhan-*

⁵²⁹ Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, 28.

del", which could be perhaps otherwise described as an inter-brothel trade, not only changed in terms of its expansion out onto transnational space, but this very transgression of borders, by the third parties and women involved, shifted meaning to the point where it lost its legitimacy in discursive terms.

After Isma'il Pasha took power in Egypt in 1864, the distances and geographies of an inter-brothel trade began to change. This was part of a broader pattern of migrants from Europe and the Middle East, who had started to move to the Suez Canal region to either earn money on its construction sites, or by providing gastronomic and entertainment services to the workers. On the way to these growing urban centres, some practices of the previously localised "*Mädchenhandel*" surely changed across the long distances, amid the cultural exchange and upon the new horizons. Empirically, from my sources, these details cannot be known.

What I have, however, been able to capture was the transformation of the meaning of "*Mädchenhandel*", and the impact that this had in Europe. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, verbal and geographic motifs with varying degrees of anti-Semitic and sexually moralised messaging began to simmer and be consumed by Austrian and Prussian society. Knowledge of an old term and social practice had been borrowed and twisted, forming a new transnational and gendered concept of a coercive "*Mädchenhandel*", which was by then playing out upon expanded space, while being given an anti-slave trading twist.

The 1868 reports about Maria Zelinek operating a "*Mädchenhandel*" to Alexandria perhaps gave some narrative to the process of a long legitimised localised inter-brothel trade expanding spatially across national and imperial borders. Comparatively, the "Polish Cavalier" of 1871 or Woltze's *Der lästige Kavalier* of 1874 were subtly *othered* men capturing the vulnerable white daughters of the nation. This illegitimate "*Mädchenhändler*" was ostensibly alone, but operated in an underworld of networked Jewish men, who were well-dressed but up to no good. Probably a combination of process and perception, transnational space was presented as posing a threat to the "natural order of things", namely the established class, gender, and racial hierarchies that had been established upon Europe's first colonial period.

People, indeed, moved vast distances to contribute to the building of the urban centres around the Suez Canal region after 1864. Some, without doubt, did so to either sell sex or to facilitate the sale thereof. The social role of a go-between who knew the markings of the path is not unimaginable. That some might have been Jews from Eastern Europe is also not impossible. However, the sources I have looked at clearly indicate that the claim of some large scale coordinated and coerced traffic in white women at the hands of Jewish networks was not only a successful sensational tale in anti-Semitic times, it was a story seemingly perpetu-

ated by a handful of state actors from some point on the bridge between 1869 and 1870.

I would contest on all grounds any claims within the historical literature that the Suez Canal opened up a “white slave traffic” to Asia and Africa. There had been a tolerated and regulated trade to the Ottoman Empire since 1865, at least a year before the canal had been complete, and up to four years before it had been officially opened. Careful differentiation needs to be made on two terms. Firstly, with regard to empirical practices to and in the region in the late 1860s; secondly, in how particular state actors began to historicise on the topic from the mid-1870s on.

In 1876, Austrian diplomat Hoffer von Hoffenfels told the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrassy a transparent lie. He instructed his governmental authority to officially buy into the case of an Adolf Weißmann, who was historicised for official discourse as having in 1871 used the Suez Canal as a gateway to the East Indies for his traffic. Thus, in 1876, the first contemporary history had been written about a Jewish man who operated a “*Mädchenhandel*” upon the Suez Canal. This history had a discursive and media substantiated context; reports of a “Polish Cavalier” had circulated in the press that same year in 1871. Thus, for a reading public, the perception of this new transnational and gendered phenomenon fell into non-fiction. Not only because anyone with memory of the “Polish Cavalier” reports could corroborate the claim as having had a referent in the recent past, but also because readers of the *Bazar* would have known what the King of Prussia had seen with his own eyes, namely Woltze’s depiction of exactly how and where the “*Mädchenhandel*” operates.

Hoffer’s letter is the first state account or comment on what soon thereafter came to be known as “white slavery”. There is no good reason to give any sense of authenticity to the alleged Weißmann case. The other “trafficker” of the early 1870s, who was officially depicted by the state, was Xavier Klyberg. Of unknown origin, Klyberg was allegedly operating between Britain and French-speaking Europe, while Weißmann was alleged to have been from the Danubian region though travelling on a British passport and trafficking from Eastern Europe to the Ottoman Empire and then South America. The evidence in both of these cases is very shaky when looked at with a critical eye, and clear lies were told in these cases on the part of the Austrian and the British states. Both were, however, ostensibly intended to be understood as Jewish men, and both tell a lot about how diplomats used history and how discourse and the collection of documentary evidence in archives can be operationalised as a legitimising force.

From the late 1860s, anonymous reports had started circulating in the Austrian press which increasingly contained unrestrained anti-Semitic accusations. Many of these reports were also built using language and knowledge that only a

diplomat like Hoffer would have had. It is curious that his own individual migration pattern as a diplomat from Istanbul to Buenos Aires perfectly reflected the media claims between 1871 and 1874 that the trade from the East to the Ottoman Empire had been repressed, but then the traffic changed direction, thereafter heading toward South America. Thus, I contend that the idea of a coerced transnational and networked trade to the Ottoman Empire since the 1860s was an anachronistic claim and a diplomatic lie.

Starting in 1870, a shifting legal dogma around “slavery” and “migration” began to emerge in different geographies in specific gendered and racialised ways. Statesmen in California and Hong Kong were shifting the meaning of slavery with respect to Asian women, in such a way that it enabled the expansion of imperial and national territorial control. Around the same time, a similar public discourse and legal dogma in the Dual Monarchy was framing a “*Mädchenhandel*” or “*weiße Sklaverei*” to Ottoman territories as a coercive transnational phenomenon run by Jews and thus in need of state intervention.

The US Federal Page Act was passed in 1875; then in Hungary, a law in 1878 enabled the simultaneous regulation of prostitution, while making it perfectly compatible with anti-trafficking policy. If it is true that the 1870 metaphor of “*la traite des blanches*” had been weaponised by Valérie de Gasparin as a critique of the state, by 1878, if not beforehand, it had been commandeered in service of it. After the legal abolition of slavery, the legal concept of (anti-) slavery aided the Western state in different ways depending on whether it was applied to a colony or a white or white settler society. While a slave trade or “coolie trade” continued to plantation economies under the cover of “free labour migration”, “slavery” served in other geographies as a legitimisation for repatriation, arrests, and the implementation of territorial controls. Left to explore is how this shifting legal dogma and the entanglement of actors so far discussed give hint that the emerging territorialisation processes of implementing passport controls were not only legitimised in a gendered and racialised discourse, but that they, in practice, helped facilitate the territorial shifts in the Balkans and North Africa in and around the 1878 Congress of Berlin.