

8 Towards A Conclusion

Over the course of the early to mid-1870s, the terms “*Mädchenhandel*” or “*weiße Sklaverei*”, “*la traite des blanches*” and “white slavery” or “white slave trafficking” became linguistic equivalents. These terms or this concept came to possess a new meaning which related to the transnational sale of sex. However, as opposed to having been a phenomenon with substance in reality which reflected the sensational claims it was surrounded by, “white slavery” was far more so part of a shifting legal dogma on mobility control and international police cooperation, whereby volunteerism and coercion were categorised depending on race and gender-based desirability, all the while sensational emphasis was often put on the involvement of Jewish go-betweens in its organisation.

In 1869, an anonymous author had written of the “*Mädchenhandel*” as having previously been a “domestic trade” between brothels which suddenly turned into an “export trade” in “female human flesh” out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁶¹⁵ The following year, in 1870, Swiss philanthropist Valérie de Gasparin used similar language regarding the trade in female flesh in her description of what she metaphorically referred to as “*la traite des blanches*”.⁶¹⁶ She called upon the French Réveil movement to position themselves against the system of state-regulated prostitution, which she argued was the cause of an export trade. In 1875, an anonymous author, whom I believe was Habsburg Consul Hoffer von Hoffenfels, claimed to the Austrian reading public that “traffickers” were undermining the system of getting passports from local consuls by simply paying the fee and organising two witnesses who confirmed the girls were Austrian or Hungarian. This author then anticipated potential accusations of state corruption by immediately defending consuls, declaring them innocent and powerless against this trickery.⁶¹⁷ This implied the innocence of state actors and the need for improved state standards and consular controls of migrants and the go-betweens who assisted them.

A year later and inspired by Gasparin, Pastor Théodore Borel published an 1876 sensationalist non-fictional narrative which claimed to reveal the workings of “*la traite des blanches*”.⁶¹⁸ This was then translated that same year for a British

⁶¹⁵ Anonymous, ‘Pest, 17. October. [Orig. Corr.] (Der Weiberaufstand in Alt-Ofen. Schwurgerichte und Pressprozesse. Ultramontane Logik. Mädchenhandel’.

⁶¹⁶ Valérie de Gasparin, ‘La Lèpre sociale, tract contre la prostitution (“traite des blanches”) et les maisons de tolérance’, 1870.

⁶¹⁷ Anonymous, ‘Der Mädchenhandel nach dem Orient (Orig. Bericht des “Illustr. Wiener Extrablatt”.’

⁶¹⁸ Borel, ‘Maisons de tolérance devant le droit et la moralité publique’.

audience using the language of “white slavery”.⁶¹⁹ Around the same time, Consul von Hoffenfels wrote the Foreign Minister Gyula Andrassy from his post in Buenos Aires. He communicated that the ongoing media accusations of a coerced “*Mädchenhandel*” out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were false, but that they could nevertheless be used to legitimise the implementation of consular controls around the Mediterranean Sea so as to hinder undesired migration. Hoffer provided Andrassy with a prime case example of a “trafficker” that could be used in official discourse, namely that of Adolf Weißmann, whom he described as a Danubian Jew travelling on a fake or illegitimate British passport. Andrassy was also informed by Hoffer that this information had already been communicated with a British consular colleague.

Using the Weißmann case, Hoffer constructed a legal and logistical problem for the state, whose solution would be the implementation of mechanisms for the legal categorisation, criminalisation, or repatriation of people, namely Jews, who either facilitated the movement of others or migrated themselves using documentation which had been declared illegitimate.⁶²⁰ While yet to be put into practice, this declared the potential of state power on two levels. Firstly, it reinforced the legitimacy of the state to produce documentation. Secondly, it further gave the state the authority to categorise the people it came into contact with, while creating the mechanisms for deciding who was to be included or excluded from the privileges of a particular national citizenship.

Regulating the subjects of empire and state who were involved in the sale of sex had been nothing entirely new at the end of the nineteenth century, but this was an additional development in terms of migratory journeys and go-betweens. Ever since the 1790s, the figure of the prostitute had been regulated in law and state practice through the creation of very rigid categories which were applied to women who regularly or occasionally sold sex. This categorisation of some women as prostitutes empowered the state, enabling it to have sexual and medical control. Such categorising continued into the late nineteenth century, but its function began to change in how the media and the law also enabled and legitimised the beginnings of modern border controls and international police cooperation.

In the 1870s, a new concept of “white slavery” emerged about which much noise was being made. Newspaper claims circulated, for example, about the speed at which Adolf Weißmann moved back and forth between Galicia, Constan-

⁶¹⁹ Edmondson, *The White Slavery of Europe. From the French of Pastor Borel of Geneva*, 1876.

⁶²⁰ Hoffer, ‘Bericht Hoffers aus Buenos Aires an das k.u.k. Ministerium des Äußern’, 12 January 1876.

tinople, and Buenos Aires. These claims were not only sensational, they were, for the period, geographically and technologically impossible. Nevertheless, under the global condition, Europeans were increasingly learning of and fantasizing about the connectedness and smallness of the world around them.

Media narratives and cultural imagery on “white slavery” enabled Europeans to conceive of underworlds inhabited by migratory (Jewish) go-betweens who were zipping back and forth at rapid speed across the globe, operating a trade in white girls via modern transport and telegraph technology. Although such sensational claims were impossibilities, it was made conceptually possible through media and political campaigns.⁶²¹ The observation of these conceptual developments, alongside incremental changes in border practices in the name of combating this alleged phenomenon, not only contributes to the historiography on “white slavery”, it so too does to that on modern migration control.

The historiography on migration control generally hints at new practices of exclusion and inclusion beginning in the 1870s, yet there is little discussion of how or what. Rather, the springboard for further conversation tends to start in the 1880s, at a point in time when state structures had already become visible. Though there is room for further examination, this book shows how the categories of “migrant” and “trafficker” began to be produced as part of a series of legal shifts and practices which took place in the 1870s under the guise of “anti-(white) slavery”. These developments, I contend, formed the basis or precursor to the control mechanisms found in the 1880s.

Like with the historiography on migration control, the historiography on “white slavery” is predominantly reliant on sources produced after the 1880s; a point in time when states and organisations had already begun filling their archives with substantiating evidence of this new transnational phenomenon. Several historians have, however, pointed out that the roots of the “traffic” lie in the 1860s, following the opening of the Suez Canal. I have addressed an issue of anachronism within this literature, as most sources used in support of this claim were produced at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, in seeking to understand the incubational period of conceptual development behind “white slavery”, I have concentrated on sources which were created between 1866 and 1881.

This timeframe came from the sources which showed the gradual emergence of a new concept that drew a relation between the transnational sale of sex and contemporary patterns of migration. Increasing in frequency in the 1870s, sensa-

⁶²¹ Inspiration was taken from *Silencing the Past* by Michel-Rolph Trouillot in which he wrote about how the Haitian Revolution was impossible because it was inconceivable before it happened. The production of narrative in its aftermath nevertheless made it a possibility of history even if historians by and large participated in its silencing. See Trouillot, 96.

tional concerns had begun circulating which often explicitly or implicitly pointed to the involvement of Jewish men and women as go-betweens in the facilitation of white women's sale of sex abroad. As these discourses first developed regarding the movements of people out of Eastern Europe toward the Ottoman Empire, broader political developments of the period in these regions were too taken into consideration.

Given these discursive entanglements, I had set out to understand how the historical categorisation of "migrant" and "trafficker" came about; how "white slavery" related historically to anti-Semitic developments of the period; and how the emergence of "white slavery" between 1866 and 1881 related to the approaching period of "new imperialism" at the end of the nineteenth century. To varying degrees, I have been able to address these questions, though not systematically due to the fact that their answers are tightly interwoven and that the findings in this book are merely the beginning of new conversations on how the history of late nineteenth-century "white slavery" legitimised European imperial projects and nation state building.

The first step to dealing with these questions was a detailed examination of the secondary literature on "white slavery" on the one hand, combined with a deconstruction of the historical racialised and gendered meanings of "white slavery" on the other. It was, however, in combination with source analysis that I was able to collapse two parts of a British-centric established narrative within the historiography on "white slavery".

Firstly, until now, it has been claimed that British journalist Alfred Stace Dyer was the first person to have exposed the problem of "white slavery" in 1880, when he published on the matter. This is then said to have put pressure on the British government, making them the first state to react in the form of the Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1881. This take on a chronology is not correct. State actors from the Austro-Hungarian Empire were, in fact, the first in Europe to concern themselves with the issue of transnational migration for the sale of sex under the terms "*Mädchenhandel*" or "*weiße Sklaverei*" from at least the mid-1870s; while it was the Austrian Consul Hoffer von Hoffenfels who informed a British colleague (likely Consul Henry Barron) on the matter in 1875.

The second part of the British-centric narrative within the historiography which has been collapsed is the claim that British philanthropist Josephine Butler was the first to create an international campaign against state-regulated prostitution and "white slavery". In terms of chronology this cannot be correct and in terms of narrative it is more complicated. Before Butler embarked on her continental tour in 1874/75, Swiss philanthropist Valérie de Gasparin had already made an 1870 call within the French Réveil movement for them to take up a position against state regulation and its trade in women, which she expressed through

the metaphor of “*la traite des blanches*”. Then inspired by Gasparin’s letter and metaphor, her Swiss-based colleague Pastor Théodore Borel wrote his narrative report in 1876, which was translated for a British audience that same year, resulting in “white slavery” and “*la traite des blanches*” becoming linguistic equivalents. It was through Borel’s writing and its subsequent translation that Butler, Dyer, and a broader British audience came to know about “white slavery”.

Since the 1880s, knowledge production on “white slavery” has been discursively related to campaigns against state-regulated prostitution by historical actors and subsequently by historians. It has, however, been overlooked in the historiography that, in terms of state practices, regulation continued alongside newly emerging state mechanisms for cracking down on “white slavery”. Thus, it is a repeated mistake to assume that a fight against “white slavery” was part of the fight against state regulation. Rather, as this book suggests, “anti-white slavery” and state regulation were part of the same state mechanisms to control particular populaces. The latter targeting women who sold sex throughout European Empires, while the former developed to target go-betweens in the sale of sex, with discourses indicating the initial development as having taken place in Switzerland, Hungary, Ottoman Egypt, Brazil, and Argentina since the 1870s.

Already in the 1860s, for example, a form of regulation had been introduced in the Suez Canal region, though the system was only expanded throughout Egypt in 1882 as part of British occupation.⁶²² In Argentina, regulated and medically supervised bordellos opened in 1875.⁶²³ There is a common assumption in the historiography and in contemporary discourse, that legalised prostitution logically attracts migrants who wish or are forced to sell sex. The question, which is not asked, is the degree to which these systems facilitated the easier observation, categorisation, data- and knowledge production on a particular group, thus making them appear in statistics as more socially prominent in comparison to the general populace. Thus, it is for further research to answer whether regulation after 1870 in fact facilitated trafficking or if it did not rather facilitate the production of data on trafficking.

Prior to the 1870s and in monolingual European contexts, the go-betweens or facilitators of movement for the purposes of prostitution had been known in popular and legal discourses as “*placeurs*”, “*procuresses*”, “*Kupplerinnen*”, “*Mädchenhändler*”, “*Entremetteuses*”, etc. Conceptually, however, these metamorphosed into the figure of the “trafficker” through discourse and practice from

622 Carminati, “She Will Eat Your Shirt”: Foreign Migrant Women as Brothel Keepers in Port Said and along the Suez Canal, 1880–1914”, 172.

623 Donna J. Guy, “White Slavery,” Citizenship and Nationality in Argentina’, in Parker et al., eds., *Nationalisms & Sexualities*, 205.

around 1866. Starting in California, but soon being transferred elsewhere such as Switzerland and Hungary, laws were introduced which targeted migrants who sold sex and those who facilitated this trade. It would appear that these laws, from the beginning and on into the twentieth century, were neither about rape and violence prevention nor giving psychological or economic support for vulnerable women; rather, they targeted and categorised the go-between of the migration journey as well as those migrants who, from a state perspective, were undesired.

Through practices and discourses around this new shifting legal dogma, the notion of third parties involved in the organisation of commercial sex in Europe began to be conceptually entangled with the notion of third parties involved in colonial and plantation-based slave trading. This was merely semantics. Knowledge was circulating in the 1870s between particular statesmen and diplomats, such as Hoffer von Hoffenfels and Henry Barron, who saw an opportunity in framing undesired migration as “slave trading”: they living and working in a historical period, when slave trading had been abolished and when European colonial powers had claimed the authority to ensure that its abolition was implemented. History tells, however, that coerced labour continued.

Just as some people were categorised as “free labour migrants” even though they had been coerced to colonies under conditions of enslavement, some *undesirables* voluntarily heading abroad were categorised, controlled, detained, and/or returned for being “slaves” or “slave traffickers”. With this shifting legal dogma on migration control being entangled with the semantics of slavery in the late nineteenth century, a new politics of power was produced through category making for control.

The historical categorisation of “white slave”, “migrant”, or “trafficker” was, in the 1870s, not to be found as an explicit statement or a box ticked on a form to describe a person crossing a border. Rather, the “white slave”, the “migrant”, and the “trafficker” emerged in this period as part of both a legal and cognitive process. These categories were not (yet) defined by the law: rather, these figures emerged historically through the gradual criminalisation of particular actions, which could be paired with particular practices, behaviours, and interactions at territorial borders.

From the beginning of its conceptual development, crack downs on gendered “trafficking” were never about rights, protection, or economic support; the solutions were provided for through the logic of the law, which in text and in practice translated into repatriations, imprisonment, or fines. Documenting these nevertheless meant filling state and police archives, which, from the historian’s view, leaves a trail in the archives for a history of “white slave trafficking” after the incubational period (1866–1881). The question is then how to capture the process

and spaces of action between what state bureaucracy produced as proof of a phenomenon on the one hand, and what subalterns lived and experienced on the other.

Actors like Belgian scholar Émile Louis Victor de Laveleye and British Colonel Sir Charles Edward Howard Vincent advocated for the implementation of certain types of state structures. The former metaphorically used the term “white slavery” to call for the implementation of international law, while the latter was the first proponent of international police cooperation to combat that same alleged phenomenon. More empirical research would be needed, but the state structures at points of transit which had become clearly visible in the 1880s had presumably been built as physical structures over the course of the 1870s. These structures demanded documentation, which provided evidence of cases of undesirable people on the move as well as some form of legitimated confirmation for the sensational claims about “white slavery”, forgery, and trickery that was circulating in popular culture, even if in an exaggerated form.

There is no doubt that there were at times cases of trickery and deceit used by third parties to convince young women to move, after which they could very possibly have unwillingly ended up selling sex. There was after all circulation of knowledge in the period of how a few orphaned girls from the countryside had been given false promises of good jobs in Paris.⁶²⁴ It would, however, seem that knowledge of these kinds of practices were dislocated and blown out of proportion to make the global claim in the later nineteenth century that a Jewish underworld of systematic trafficking in white girls was being run through *bureaux de placement* and mutual-aid organisations.

Cases of alleged “traffickers” and “white slaves” in the 1870s such as Xavier Klyberg, Adolf Weißmann, the Polish Cavalier, the Rosenbergs, Georg Radulovic, Aloysia Béke, or Adeline Tanner could have been, and surely were, based in some way on non-fictional historical actors. There were without doubt figures of the past likable to these who experienced or carried out violence, sexual abuse, and acts of exploitation. However, there are two issues with all of these first cases of “white slavery”: on the one hand, there are the endless inconsistencies to be found based on cross-source examination and chronology. On the other, there is no clear route to knowledge on subaltern migrants prior to their categorisation; the very act of which was a misappropriation and remoulding by elites trying to sell their own (though not necessarily interconnected) agendas.

Although the sources make claim to original letters written by these “traffickers” and “white slaves”, the letters are not in the archives and the claims in the

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

sources are easily collapsed. None of these actors of an allegedly new global phenomenon ever spoke for themselves. Rather, they were carved out as figures of history in the construction of a type, which served argumentative purposes on the part of (proxy) state actors or non-state elite.

From the 1880s, evidence of coerced migration was produced systematically by state institutions as a result of border control mechanisms and the collection of documents in police archives. For the period prior to this, when different transnational actors began to concern themselves with coerced migration for the sale of sex, I could not find anything that could be considered convincing evidence of transnational “white slavery”. I have, however, found indication that a number of diplomats and other actors pushed a global claim of a “white slave trade” in the name of legitimising migration controls. This leads to two paradoxes: firstly, in how the emergence of border controls globally after 1880 would have created the conditions by which those who wanted to move became even more so reliant on go-between and lay-expert knowledge to do so. Secondly, in how the particular practice of facilitating movement became an underground activity only after it had been constructed in terms of illegality or immorality.

It can be assumed that the shifting legal dogma and state practices around migration control changed little in terms of people’s desire to move. Humans have after all always moved, but a crime, such as illegitimate migration or the illegitimate facilitation of it, is a normative concept. The moment when profiling, categorisation, and border practices began producing particular figures who were deemed criminal, the proof of the problem was provided through the very same act of making or documenting them as undesired and illegitimate “migrants” and “traffickers”. These new state practices made these figures tangible, identifiable, countable, and observable to the law and the state; in other words, in as far as criminality at the border was revealed, knowledge of it was produced.

Beginning in the late 1860s, reports emerged in the Austrian press which arguably had an anti-Semitic message in how they explicitly accused Eastern European Jews of procuring white girls toward the Ottoman Empire. Non-state actors began organising different groups into moral frames, but the state was even quicker with producing mechanisms for legal categorisation. This book shows how “white slavery” legitimised the implementation of (extra-territorial) European inter-state structures (i.e. passport controls, international law, and standards of police cooperation) toward elites and the broader populace. These mechanisms of territorial control not only resulted in arrests, fines, and repatriations, they were arguably, though further research is needed, part of the ground work for the “new imperialism” to come.

Patterns of migration in the period were matter-of-fact changing. Poor people from Southern and Eastern Europe had, for example, begun moving toward the

Suez Canal region after Isma'il Pasha's liberation of the labour force in 1864. These people logically maintained and built their networks, businesses, and relations, which contributed to the urbanisation processes around the canal. These patterns of new arrivals, who simply used their agency to organise and try to improve their lives, is what I assume brought them to the attention of consuls such as Hoffer, Sax, and Barron in the Ottoman Empire.

Exploration of how processes at borders in fact unfolded and fed into statist structures from and just before the 1880s is a topic for another book. However, from my examination of circulating media reports, diplomatic correspondences, and state records, there is enough evidence to give indication that emerging territorialisation practices and a shifting legal dogma around migration control were not only legitimised through a gendered and racialised discourse of "white slavery", but that in practice, these changes took shape as part of their broader political context, such as in the Balkans and North Africa around the time of the 1878 Congress of Berlin.

The gendered and racialised figures of the "white slave" and *her* "trafficker" had begun to take form in the context of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, which was followed by an economic crash in 1873 and the Russian-Turkish War between 1875 and 1878. The territorial disputes of the 1870s and the building of new nation states had been intimately entangled in the migration and refugee crisis in Eastern Europe since the 1860s. The European environment for Jewish newcomers was hostile, and the presentation of "white slavery" to different kinds of western European publics, between the late 1860s and 1881, enabled the legitimisation and codification of new laws and state practices against individuals who facilitated the migration of unmarried women (for the purposes of prostitution). These legal changes can be first seen in Swiss cantons and in Hungary in the latter 1870s, however, this was not simply a new invention or part of the spirit of the times. Rather, these legal developments were part of a knowledge transfer within the semantics of slavery that came from California, where new practices had been implemented in 1866 to prevent the inward migration of Chinese women under the name of "anti-slave trafficking".

Using a cultural transfer and microhistorical approach, I have situated the knowledge and the varying points of entangled meaning which informed the global claim about "white slavery". This led to a network of around twenty elite actors being identified, who were at times loosely and at times tightly connected. While these people and their connections to events facilitated the development of the concept of "white slavery", the central narrative here is based on the circulation of ideas and discourse amid this network. As a result, varying political and moral agendas became entangled in the concept of "white slavery" such as the raising of the age of consent, implementing migration controls, and increasing

the power of the police, all the while it was done through the appropriation and racial inversion of the transatlantic slave trade both in terms of metaphor and imagery.

As a typical product of historical transfers, the concept of “white slavery” did not emerge in one place or linguistic zone, neither did it refer to one particular place-based practice: rather, its meaning was formed transnationally. This history to the concept explains the cause of many debates and research problems when one thinks of the phenomenon of “white slavery” or “human trafficking” since the 1870s and thereafter goes to try and find it in practice. Such an attempt will always be a futile task because something with transnational meaning will never be found as a perfect match in one particular place or case. Rather dappled elements of exploitation, sexual violence, (semi-)voluntary, (semi-)coerced migration, traumatisation, trickery, violence, and victimisation may be found; though always filtered through the voice of the state or other elitist organisations and actors who produced discourse with particular, though perhaps unknowable intentions as well as with particular knowable historical outcomes.

There is a semantic problem when speaking about different practices, in different contexts and times using the same terms such as “modern slavery” and “human trafficking”, which in today’s meaning came from late nineteenth-century “white slavery”. The concept of “white slavery” had emerged out of its incubational period (1866–1881) and continued to congeal, appearing in the signifier of “human trafficking” today. This signifier is highly flexible and can be applied to many non-historically related practices in many a diverged and distant context. However, whether “white slavery” then or “human trafficking” now, these terms bear within them an inherent Eurocentrism that has served and continues to serve regimes of migration control.

Even though there was no definable practice by the name of “white slavery”, the impact of “white slavery” was far more than just being discursive. Categories of people and spaces were constructed, controlled, and reinforced at or beyond borders, out of concerns for preventing or combatting such an alleged phenomenon. Under the conditions of new laws and practices around borders, the mere act of certain people moving produced the side effect of “criminals” and “migrants” being categorised and becoming known; just as real individuals, often Jews, were detained, repatriated, profiled, and patrolled.

Since the late nineteenth century, the state and other institutional actors have produced knowledge on what it is, or was, to be a “migrant” or a “trafficker”; these categories were not, however, the result of abject self-identification. With my sources, I could not attempt to grasp the world of Jewish people who ran hotels, bars, and cafés; I could not know how these individuals involved in this economy might have described themselves and their relations. My findings do,

however, suggest a state-centric development, by which the possibility of knowing about the existence of such subalterns only became apparent through their categorisation and description by the arts, the media, the state, the law, and elites.

In the media and in state records, documentation of “white slavery” began in the late 1860s, but it exploded from the 1880s. Noise of exploited “white slaves” and exploitative “traffickers” began to fill state archives, popular novels, and newspaper headlines across Europe. This relayed back and bounced off cognitive knowledge of the real world under the global condition. Just as the processes of space becoming territory can be analysed, the media and state records provide the possibility to understand how certain categories of people were produced, which turned abject individuals into conceivable and knowable subjects of the state. Knowing the process by which subalterns became categorised, is, however, not on a par with knowing their experience of the process.

The construction of the underworld figures involved in this alleged global phenomenon were essential to the conceptual development of “white slavery” in the mind of the European public, which learned about these alleged characters and their *wrongdoings*. Over the same period that the early unsubstantiated cases of “traffickers” and “white slaves” functioned to legitimise the implementation of new state practices in face of a European populous, subalterns on the move began to be confronted at different geographic nodes of transition with these newly emerging state structures. Given the particular emphasis put on the involvement of Jewish people in the organisation of this alleged and unsubstantiated global phenomenon, perhaps it could be argued that anti-Semitism served as an effective way implementing territorial control. Under the fears of the late nineteenth-century global condition, the European populous accepted, without hesitation, state interference into their lives at transit points and state interference into not-yet-colonies: all, as they bought into a concept of “white slavery”, that these actions were in the name of protecting the nation’s daughters and bringing them back *home*.

