

ROUNDTABLE

## Anti-Christ in Egypt: Sexual Danger, Race, and Crime in a Narrative of Imperial Crisis

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For a long time, women's crime has been quite a no-go area for feminist thinkers. With the lesser frequency of female crime seemingly encouraging quantitative-minded criminologists to dismiss a gendered approach as altogether irrelevant, theories of crime, in fact, have been mostly written by and tested on men. The emergence of a feminist perspective in criminology pluralized and decentered the disciplinary epistemology with important outcomes.<sup>1</sup> On one side, it paved the way for the investigation of the distinctive ways in which individuals socialized as women commit crimes, deconstructing the die-hard stereotype of female criminals' abnormality, that is, the idea that female offenders deviate from a female standard of nondelinquency. On the other, quoting Loraine Gelsthorpe, feminist criminology "has not only developed a critique of accumulated wisdom about female offenders and victims, but has illuminated institutionalized sexism within criminological theory, policy and practice."<sup>2</sup> Feminism has stimulated the production of criminological knowledge both empirically and theoretically. As far as empirical studies are concerned, historian Philippa Levine, in a seminal piece on prostitution, crime, and empire, remarked that prostitution, erroneously conceived as a quintessentially female crime, constituted an important exception to the unquestioned association of crime and masculinity, resulting in the neglect of serious gendered analysis of crime.<sup>3</sup> Here the criminalization of commercial sex can be explained by the fact that prostitution is considered to defy the very norm at the core of the power gender system, that female sexuality has to be kept monogamous, reproductive, and conjugal to service the patriarchal social order. As Levine argues, prostitution "offers the prospect not only of women defined by their sexual nature but also of a more threatening vision of women actively putting that sexuality to work for their own benefit."<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, the agency of women exchanging sex for money promiscuously outside of wedlock has been conceptualized in two different apparently paradoxical ways: women prostitute themselves either because they are abnormal, so they act out of their deviancy, or because they are forced to do so, so they act under coercion. Completely lost to these split understandings, juxtaposing blame and compassion, was obviously the meaning of women's agency and rationality, especially when these were inscribed within a logic of survival and subsistence.

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the feminist turn in criminology over the past thirty years see Kimberley J. Cook, "Has Criminology Awakened from its 'Androcentric Slumber'?" *Feminist Criminology* 11, no. 4 (2016): 342–44.

<sup>2</sup> Loraine Gelsthorpe, "Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Crime: Making Women Count," *Criminal Justice Matters* 53 (2003): 8–9.

<sup>3</sup> Philippa Levine, "The White Slave Trade and the British Empire," in *Crime, Gender, and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecution*, ed. Louis A. Knafla (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 133–46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

The marginality of working class women to historiography and the difficulties, both empirical and epistemological, with trying to write them back in as historical agents have been discussed widely.<sup>5</sup> In the absence of unmediated prostitutes' firsthand testimonies, what we are dealing with are mostly representations and narrations. Yet, although recognizing their metaphorical nature, such widespread and reiterated images came to shape some very real social orders and structures of power, both at home and in the empire. Prostitution, in particular, "took on new meanings and representations when the ground shifted from 'metropolis' to 'colony,'" writes Levine.<sup>6</sup> My contribution here builds on her insights about the ways in which European women active as sex workers in the empire became a dense referent for the articulation of an increasingly unstable imperial self. I focus on discourses of gendered crime as an index of mounting colonial anxieties in a specific imperial setting, colonial Egypt, to investigate how the global moral panic known as "white slavery" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries exposed a very peculiar tension in the nexus between notions of womanhood and agency at the core of the social understanding of prostitution; how this mapped onto the colonial space—in fact, how the definition of issues of women's autonomy and agency became particularly salient in the colonial context as civilizational marker; and how it was dramatically reconfigured in times of imperial crisis. To do so I look at various colonial sources to show how notions of sex, race, gender, and crime powerfully shaped ideas about erosion of the status quo, both in the metropolis and the colony. These reflections also invite new ways of thinking about women's crimes, by comparing the agency assigned to female characters in the context of such narratives of imperial crisis with the empirical sources at our disposal, thus complicating the debate about the role assigned to European prostitution in the context of the British Empire.

Starting from the last quarter of the 19th century, a shift in dominant narratives about sexual danger and crime, especially as it pertained to the agency of women involved in sex work, took place globally. As Julia Laité discussed in a superlative study on pimping and human traffic, "pimps and traffickers were . . . increasingly seen as the chief cause of prostitution, in contrast to older feminist critiques which articulated prostitution as part of a wider system of gender exploitation underpinned by the uncontrolled sexual appetites of all men."<sup>7</sup> The older feminist critiques Laité refers to constituted one facet of a more complex and highly ambivalent public discourse on the causes of female prostitution, organized mostly around a paradoxical binary of deviancy and victimization, as previously described. Beginning in the 1840s, a voluminous corpus of literature was devoted to the investigation of the motives for women's "descent," temporary or otherwise, into prostitution, as well as sex workers' backgrounds and sociological profiles. Building on French physician Parent Du Châtelet's work, William Acton challenged the received stereotype of prostitutes' downward spiral, arguing that sex work constituted an ordinary temporary survival strategy for working class women before reintegration among the respectable poor.<sup>8</sup> Others saw prostitutes as a specific category of women defined by biological traits, doomed to early consumption and death.<sup>9</sup> What these conflicting views had in common was the perceived necessity to circumscribe, quantify, and control prostitution for considerations of public health, order, and morality. British regulationists, whose efforts culminated in the promulgation of the

<sup>5</sup> Francesca Biancani, *Sex Work in Colonial Egypt: Women, Modernity and the Global Economy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 12–17.

<sup>6</sup> Levine, *White Slave Trade*, 133.

<sup>7</sup> Julia Laité, "Traffickers and Pimps in the Era of White Slavery," *Past and Present* 237, no. 1 (2017): 237.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandre Parent du Châtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris, considérée sous le rapport de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration: ouvrage appuyé de documents statistiques puisés dans les archives de la Préfecture de police*, 2 vols. (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1836); William Acton, *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns, with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils* (London: John Churchill, 1870).

<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the various British regulationists' takes on prostitution, see Catherine Lee, *Policing Prostitution, 1856–1886: Deviance, Surveillance and Morality* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012).

Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869, considered prostitution a “necessary evil”; they removed prostitutes from their working class communities and stamped them as morally dangerous women and carriers of venereal disease to be spatially contained, medically inspected, and removed from the eyes of respectable people. In 1886, a mixed front of middle class social purity reformers, feminists, and anti-elitist radical members of the working class mounted a successful repeal campaign, bringing to an end what they considered as the active condoning of immoral practices by the state and the ongoing victimization of wretched, helpless girls. The press provided a formidable arena for the circulation of abolitionist ideas. In 1885, “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” a six-part series about children’s prostitution written by W. T. Stead, *Pall Mall Gazette* editorialist and a leading figure of the purity movement, epitomized the emergence of a new genre of sensationalistic journalism, skillfully exploiting the reading public’s penchant for scandals and racy topics to articulate a pointed critique of crumbling social morality.<sup>10</sup> Inflaming public opinion, the “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” case effectively compelled the government to pass the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885), which raised the age of consent to sixteen and fueled a number of national and international civil society groups lobbying for moral regeneration and correction of vice.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, the notion of “white slavery” was remolded and came to play a very central role in the specular construction of both the metropolitan and the colonial order, well beyond the empirical evidence of international sex traffic. As Cecily Devereux put it, it was an imperial construct that “can be seen to have emerged in the context of fiercely contested imperial expansion at the end of the 19th century, and to function more compellingly as an index of fears about the condition of dominant races and about gender and mobility than as sign of a real—or at least really widespread—traffic in young white girls.”<sup>12</sup> What I am interested in tracking here are the discursive shifts in the representation of European sex workers in one of the major spots for white prostitution in the empire, that is, Egypt, a British imperial bridgehead and a country known for “the large demand for women and girls of all nationalities for prostitution,” to show how the changing elaboration of sex worker’s autonomy and agency reflected the evolving anxieties of colonizers about the stability of the imperial order.<sup>13</sup>

Egypt’s economic boom in the late 19th century attracted thousands of European subsistence migrants, especially from southern and eastern Europe, among them hundreds of women to whom sex work proved to be a survival strategy. Although contemporary observers acknowledged the existence of a complex and ramified global network of procurers smuggling and distributing women to the world’s four corners, up until the first decade of the 20th century commentaries about the women involved in the trade seldom spoke of them primarily as victims.<sup>14</sup> European sex workers in Egypt were depicted as social outcasts actively transgressing bourgeois notions of decorum and as living examples of working

<sup>10</sup> In the series, W. T. Stead staged a scoop by pretending to be an affluent man interested in buying himself a thirteen-year-old virgin, Eliza Armstrong, to exploit her sexually. The ease by which he was able to locate the girl and conclude the transaction stood as indication of the indescribably poor state of morals in British society. See “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 30 July 1885. Primary source published with commentary in W. T. Stead, *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon: The Report of the Secret Commission* (Lambertville, NJ: True Bill Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Rachael Attwood, “Stopping the Traffic: The National Vigilance Association and the International Fight Against the ‘White Slave’ Trade,” *Women’s History Review* 24, no. 3 (2015): 325–50.

<sup>12</sup> Cecile Devereux, “The Maiden Tribute and the Rise of the White Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The Making of an Imperial Construct,” *Victorian Review* 26, no. 2 (2000): 2. For the shifting meanings of white slavery and its transition from the semantic sphere of radical labor rights and capitalist critique to a moral panic about trafficked women see Biancani, *Sex Work*, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Women’s Library, London School of Economics (hereafter WL), 4/IBS/6/033 FL 133, *The International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, Its Work in Egypt* (Cairo: Nile Mission Press, 1902), 3.

<sup>14</sup> WL, 4/IBS/6/033, “Report on the Traffic in Women, 1905,” 1906, b Mme Tsykalas from Alexandria, with an abstract of a report from Lord Cromer.

class unruliness. Yet they also were portrayed as shrewd and self-conscious professionals. As Cairo City Police Chief Russell Pasha wrote in his memoir, *Egyptian Service*, the Wish al-Birka, the district of foreign prostitution, was full of “European women of all breeds and races *other than the British*, . . . of the third class category for whom Marseilles had no further use and who would eventually be passed on to Bombay and the Far-East markets.”<sup>15</sup> Although it was conceded that some of these women could have been tricked into prostitution by ruthless procurers, most commentators took pains to describe the effrontery and impudence of women hardened by years spent in the trade. In pages filled with a mix of fascination and repulsion, travel writer Douglas Sladen talked of “fantastically robed Juliet”(s) leaning over the balconies of the red light district: “as the street, in spite of its glare, it is not well lighted, you cannot see how displeasing they are.”<sup>16</sup> These “brazen women, lost of all womanly feelings, lost to all shame and often perverted by a sexual lunacy into sexual monomaniacs” would hang “from their windows almost in the nude, smoking, cursing, screeching like fiends or laughing like mocking devils.”<sup>17</sup> The contrast with local sex workers was stark. According to Russell Pasha, the Cairo area for native prostitution, the Wass‘a, looked “like a zoo, with its painted harlots sitting like beasts of prey behind the iron grilles of their ground-floor brothels.”<sup>18</sup> Again Sladen described these women of various shades of brown standing motionless and mute in their windows, half-women and half-animals.<sup>19</sup> Although it was noted that most of these women were voluntary sex workers, this did not make them “agents” in any way; on the contrary it gave credit to the idea that subject races were backward and primitive and, as such, totally devoid of any moral standard. European sex workers, instead, could have been displeasing and obnoxious to the extreme and yet, as Russell Pasha maintained, “they were still Europeans and yet not fallen so low” as local sex workers.<sup>20</sup> Such difference, with its implicit acknowledgment of a form of agency, albeit non-benign and socially disruptive, resulted from the colonial authorities’ need to prioritize the racial element over any other consideration to uphold the fiction of racial superiority undergirding the extractive policies of colonial power. A racialized regime of sex work regulation was put in place whereby racial diversity translated into different juridical status and regulation for native and foreign women under the purview of the Capitulations.<sup>21</sup>

Sex workers were restricted to distinct topographies and were registered and subject to weekly anti-VD medical screenings. Native women reported to the local police station, and if found diseased were barred from work and confined to a lock-hospital, a hospital that specialized in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, until recovery. Foreign prostitutes could be examined by private physicians. If ill, they were expected to abstain from work, notify their consuls, and seek treatment privately. Clearly very few women, if any, complied with these regulations; they mostly obtained forged certificates from complacent doctors or went underground. As Egyptian regulationism basically applied to native prostitutes only because of the extraterritoriality and immunity rights granted to foreign residents by the Capitulations, the system remained in place longer than in other imperial locations. Compulsory medical checkups and mandatory confinement in a lock-hospital for treatment never applied to foreign women, with a brief exception during World War I, when a European “Bureau de Moeurs” and a dedicated lock-hospital in the predominantly Coptic area of Shubra were opened as part of a major “purification campaign” under martial law in 1915. At that time, a “pragmatic approach” to regulation advocated by military authorities

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service, 1902-1946* (London: J. Murray, 1949), 179, emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Sladen, *Oriental Cairo: The City of the Arabian Nights* (London: J. B. Lippincott/Hurst and Blackett, 1911), 60.

<sup>17</sup> W. N. Willis, *Anti-Christ in Egypt* (London: Anglo-Eastern, 1914), 40.

<sup>18</sup> Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service*, 179.

<sup>19</sup> Sladen, *Oriental Cairo*, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service*, 179.

<sup>21</sup> On the Capitulations, see James Whidden, *Egypt: British Colony, Imperial Capital* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2017), ch. 2.

to shore up the efficiency of the belligerent troops prevailed, amid many complaints by staunch abolitionists, both local and imperial. Consuls grudgingly agreed to the measure, provided it was temporary, as they saw it as a breach to the privileges that capitulatory subjects in Egypt enjoyed. Although the British introduced sex work regulation out of concerns for colonial biopolitical governance, colonial racial taxonomies made it unattainable. At the same time, the ongoing patrolling of slippery normative boundaries and transgressive subjectivities was vital to the reproduction of imperial power in a sort of model we might call homeostatic.

Starting around the turn of the 20th century this pattern was called into question by both imperial and local advocates of abolitionism.<sup>22</sup> Abolitionism entered the political agenda of Egyptian nationalists as a rearticulation of metropolitan notions of patriotic purification. Prostitution, gambling, alcohol consumption, and drug addiction were all seen as imported Western social ills to be actively combated to regenerate the Egyptian nation and reach full political emancipation from the British. The emerging printing press provided a vibrant area for the graphic depiction of spreading vice and crime and debates about the virtuous Egyptian nation.<sup>23</sup> Also, the pages of the daily English press in Egypt were rife with crime coverage, especially cases related to the underworld of prostitution, pimping, and the international trafficking of women.<sup>24</sup> A major shift in the representation of women involved in sex work was the replacement of the bawdy, irreverent, and dangerous seasoned prostitute by the tricked naive victim-girl. Tales of white slavery and sexual exploitation of white Christian girls in the sinful Orient, as exemplified by Australian author W. N. Willis, whose analysis will provide the focus of the remaining part of my contribution, circulated widely, marking the emergence of a textual space where the idea of imperial crises was articulated via images of gender, sex, and crime.

W. N. Willis (1856–1922) was a rather picaresque character himself. Born in county Mudgee in New South Wales, he managed a number of different business activities in retail and publishing before being elected to the Australian Legislative Assembly in 1880. He left Australia for Singapore in 1909 to escape criminal charges for fraud and conspiracy and then established himself in London, where he opened a publishing house, the Anglo-Eastern Company, which specialized in pulp fiction and cheap pornography.<sup>25</sup> His firsthand knowledge of the underworld in disparate imperial settings surely provided him with useful materials for his disingenuous crusade against women's traffic and Levantinism, that is, the fear of physical and moral degeneration of the Western dominant races due to their decreased capacity to impose their values and norms throughout the empire.<sup>26</sup> On 13 August 1913, Willis, noted as a "prominent author" and "an enthusiastic politician with strong imperialist and democratic ideas," released an interview to the English-language Egyptian daily, the *Egyptian Gazette*, in which he reflected on the preservation of national virtues, the strength of the empire, and the lamentable state of morals in British-controlled Egypt: "A wise monarch, King George V, has sent the following message to the people: the foundations of national glory are based in the homes of people. They will only remain unshaken if the family life of our race and nation is strong, simple, and pure. . . . Rome and Babylon neglected the moral lives of their peoples and where are they today?"<sup>27</sup> This

<sup>22</sup> See Biancani, *Sex Work*, ch. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the "Purification of Cairo" series in the *Egyptian Gazette*, 10 July 1913, 3; 14 July 1913, 3; 13 August 1913.

<sup>25</sup> For Willis's biography, see J. A. Arnold and J. Doig, "William Nicholas Willis, Père, Fils and Family and the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company," *Script & Print* 39, no. 4 (2015): 197–220. His White Slavery series included titles such as *Why Girls Go Wrong* (1913), *Western Men with Eastern Morals* (1913), and *White Slaves in a Piccadilly Flat* (1915).

<sup>26</sup> About the genesis of the term "Levantinism" and the evolution from its negative colonial connotation to its contemporary reconfiguration, see Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of the Separatist Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), ch. 2.

<sup>27</sup> "Egypt's Morals. Prominent Author Interviewed. A Scathing Indictment," *Egyptian Gazette*, 13 August 1913.

interview introduced the political and eugenic themes at the core of *Anti-Christ in Egypt*, a moral purity pamphlet Willis published the following year, and a strong indictment of the Capitulations, seen as safe conduct for any kind of illicit and immoral activity in the country, white slavery in particular, and a threat to the British civilizing and evangelical mission. Most of the book reads as a tirade against European prostitution in Egypt and the pernicious role played by capitulatory jurisdiction in perpetuating it. Most of Cairene prostitution was in fact in the hands of powerful networks of pimps with close-knit connections within their national consulates. As national consuls were determined to defend their sovereignty from unwanted British intervention they ended up protecting criminals at the expense of public morality and order. Very much like W. T. Stead's "Maiden Tribute," which clearly constitutes a direct source of inspiration for *Anti-Christ* both stylistically and structurally, Willis's pedagogical and political aims are all evident. The text becomes a site of public indoctrination in which images of sexual danger and young girls' victimization are used to summon up an expanding public of middle and lower class readers in favor of an anti-elitist populist political project.<sup>28</sup> The civic duty of the committed social reformer-cum-writer is then to inform, educate, and elicit public response by presenting facts through the use of narrative conventions central to some very popular genres, such as melodrama, literature of urban exploration, late Victorian pornography, and investigative journalism. This is particularly evident in the episode of the author's encounter with a young innocent victim of the "White Slave Trade" he happens to meet at the headquarters of Cairo city police right after her fortuitous rescue: "One of Christ's lambs, her little baby face was an emblem of innocence and purity of mind. . . it was a pitiable sight to see that child of Christ sitting within the huge police building at Cairo."<sup>29</sup> The girl, "a veritable God's messenger," came from Jerusalem where she used to lead a very poor life with her widowed mother. One day they were approached by a dark-faced woman "coming from Goshen," the biblical name for Egypt, who proposed to buy her for forty pieces of gold.<sup>30</sup> Enticed by the money, the girl's mother eventually gave up her child and the woman trafficker swiftly left for Cairo where the girl was kept as a captive until the meeting with her new master: "what actually took place in the ante-room to hell is not clear, for at any reference to her entry into the room tears filled the child's beautiful large eyes, her little mouth quivered and her speech was incoherent."<sup>31</sup> The girl desperately invoked the name of God by the local name Allah until, "as though by miracle," a native policeman passing by heard her cries and saved her.

The story of the victimized child was framed in multiple ways. It reflected a legacy of popular melodrama, it drew on detective fiction and investigative journalism, it hinted at late Victorian pornography in the section evoking the torments of the girl, and used fairy-tale imagery in the description of the dark-faced woman villain, before shifting the role onto an undescribed Egyptian Bey epitomizing everything despotic and lascivious about the Orient. What is particularly interesting about Willis's narrative is that the source materials he fictionalized actually belonged to a court case arousing a great deal of interest in the press in summer of 1913, the Nazifa Bint Omar case.<sup>32</sup> The legal file revolved around the alleged abduction of a girl, Nazifa, bought by a notorious human trafficker, the Zanzibari Raya Bint Hamid, in Damascus, where Nazifa had been employed in an Ottoman household after leaving her village in the Anatolian region of Malatya. The initial charge of sexual

<sup>28</sup> See Rachael Attwood, "Vice Beyond the Pale: Representing White Slavery in Britain, 1880–1912" (PhD diss., University College London, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Willis, *Anti-Christ*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> About skin color, racialization, crime, and the creation of "barbaric" social villains, see Nefertiti Takla, "Barbaric Women, Race and the Colonization of Gender in Interwar Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 3 (2021), 387–405.

<sup>31</sup> Willis, *Anti-Christ*, 88.

<sup>32</sup> "The White Slave Trade Market: Zanzibari Woman Arrested," *Egyptian Gazette*, 14 August 1913, 3; 15 August 1913, 3; "The Raya-Nazifa Case," *Egyptian Gazette*, 8 September 1913.

slavery was changed to abduction when it became evident that no sexual abuse had ever taken place. The Levantine setting (Damascus/Jerusalem), the racial characterization of the procuress standing in stark contrast with the implied whiteness of the victim, the transactional theme: all these elements seem to corroborate the hypothesis that Willis's anecdote is a fictional elaboration of Raya and Nazifa's case.

Yet, in my view, the discrepancies are even more telling, as they point to some all-important rhetorical strategies. From the consular case and the hearing proceedings, we learn that Nazifa was a Muslim of Turkish background who could pass as white Caucasian or a Circassian, explaining Raya's commercial interest in her as a *sirriya*, that is a concubine for affluent Egyptian patrons.<sup>33</sup> This probably supported Willis's association between the racial trait and religious affiliation. Willis's child was not British, but she hailed from the Holy Sepulchre no less. The evocation of readers' empathy relied on a familiarizing technique, the conflation of whiteness and Christianity, so that the child came to embody the need to safeguard the foundational values of the empire, of which the Gospel was paramount. Also, a peculiar configuration of gender, age, labor, and scarcity was totally obliterated in the process. From the archival sources we learn that the real Nazifa had left her paternal house after her mother died and her father remarried to a woman she did not get along with. She had been taken in as a servant by a local family when her father relinquished every right over her for a period of fifteen years in return for money. She was then taken to Damascus where she worked for another household for three years before being transacted again.<sup>34</sup> Far from the Manichaean clash between good and evil in Willis's evangelist narrative, the story behind Nazifa's case belonged to a world far removed from bourgeois narratives of moral and social decadence, a world where childhood was commodified and made profitable like anything else in the endless quest of poor families for survival, and a world in which children might not question the prospect of being removed from kinfolk if this meant a shelter and some means of subsistence.

Aptly dramatized and adapted, a legal case of juvenile abduction between Ottoman Syria and Egypt morphed into a cautionary tale about the erosion of the empire due to capitulatory legislation, the looming degeneration of the imperial order, and the dangers of Levantinism. The colonial dimension of the white slave trade echoed domestic political turmoil, pointedly the emergence of a radical populist front of purity activists using a paternalist idiom of national domesticity to articulate a strong critique of the old elitist liberal order.<sup>35</sup> The victimization theme, the need to control and protect the "daughters of the Nation," gained ground as it justified new forms of control whose markers were gendered (women must be controlled and protected) and racialized (white women must be protected as they are the repository of racial purity). These cautionary tales used the colony as a backdrop because the colonial order was based on the ongoing reproduction of difference. The preservation of besieged ontologies of racial superiority also was integral to the reproduction of the social order in the metropolis. When this became unstable, the stories of victimized women in the Orient became particularly ubiquitous, with sexual danger and crime standing as powerful metaphors of political disorder.

**Supplementary Material.** To view the supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743822000071>

<sup>33</sup> National Archives of the UK (TNA), FO 841/132, "Statement of Kamil Ibn Ali al-Hamamiyyeh, barber, Ottoman subject, Haret al-Ward, given to Dragoman Meshakha," 22 August 1913.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> See Rachael Attwood, "Lock Up Your Daughters! Male Activists, 'Patriotic Domesticity,' and the Fight against Sex Trafficking in England, 1880–1912," *Gender & History* 27, no. 3 (2015): 611–27.

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