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Abstract

My project consists of both historically-inspired poetry based on the lives of prostitutes who entertained at the Everleigh Club in Chicago between the years 1900 and 1911 and an introductory essay supplying research into the history of the time and area in order to better set the scene for the poetry. The Everleigh Club was an upscale brothel opened during years when the war against vice was beginning to pick up speed in the United States. The essay portion of my project follows the years in which the club was open, tracing efforts to disband vice that fought in the name of religion, social purity, and protection from white slavers. The white slavery scare that peaked in the United States around 1910 is dismissed by many historians as mere hysteria, yet the scare was used as a tool by many reformers to gain public enthusiasm and support for the destruction of vice. My research serves as a way to describe the history of reform, and reintroduce the white slavery scare, however dramatic, as important to the history of reform and women's rights. The poetry serves as a method of pulling the prostitute out of its archetypal role as an object in literature, supplying these women with an often neglected voice.