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**TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT**

**CARNAL ȘI MERCANTIL ÎN LITERATURILE**  
**ANGLO-SAXONĂ, FRANCEZĂ ȘI ROMÂNĂ.**  
**1830-1950/ CARNAL AND MERCANTILE IN**  
**ANGLO-SAXON, FRENCH, AND ROMANIAN**  
**LITERATURES. 1830-1950**

**ABSTRACT**

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## Abstract

This research – entitled *Carnal and Mercantile in the Anglo-Saxon, French, and Romanian Literatures. 1830-1950* – represents an attempt to reiterate and explore the literary image of the female prostitute within three cultural spaces; subsequently, I also investigate the link between these typologies and the adjacent context – cultural, economic, social etc. Thus, my research addresses the subject of prostitution from a largely comparative perspective, also benefiting from the contribution of another field, such as cultural studies – I firmly believe that this type of investigation cannot have the proper results if it is strictly dominated by a literary perspective.

The aim of this study is to identify and subsequently explore the particularities, the methods, the narrative forms and visions employed by the seven authors within this body of text in respect to the image of the female prostitute. The objectives of the thesis refer both to the critical reception of these works and authors, as well as highlighting their innovative elements – to what extent these authors have reiterated the common clichés and superstitions of the time, to what extent they have shown their adhesion to the aspect of prostitution or, on the contrary, in what degree they have disapproved of the manner in which the phenomenon of prostitution has been treated (and, implicitly, the person involved in the trade).

The manner in which I conceived this research project follows, therefore, the main patterns that I have found to be extremely important in regard to the image of female prostitutes – the woman as a victim, the woman as a sexual star, and the image of alterity, in this particular aspect, concentrating on the image of Jewish female prostitutes. As I have mentioned, certain conceptual clarifications and a constant appeal to cultural contexts are necessary elements when it comes to reiterate this image, thus, my approach encompasses a theoretical perspective on prostitution, as well as on the condition of women involved in this sexual trade.

The first chapter of this thesis aims precisely to describe the condition of prostituted women, their status, the male hegemony involved in this phenomenon, the methods of fighting, the practices, the cultural, social and economic dimensions.

The second chapter is pursuing a typology of victimization – analyzing the works of Charles Dickens, Émile Zola și G. M. Zamfirescu –, and, at the same time, resorting to a few elements which, in the literature of prostitution, are considered to be part of a larger context

that favors (or implies at one point or another) the mercantilization of the female body, such as: poverty, the environment these women live in, male violence, different types of addiction, social brutality towards these women, machist visions, demonetization of female sex. Clearly, certain ambiguities or dissonances in respect to narrative voice do exist in all of these cases, the image of the prostitute women being a fluctuating one; however, some of the elements reiterated above as risk factors are found in each of the analyzed novels, therefore, this spectrum of victimization encompasses the feminine characters of the above mentioned novels.

The third chapter of this approach investigates the image of the prostitute woman as a sexual being, for whom sex is not a necessity, a last resort, but rather a vocation, a deliberate choice. Although I do not believe personally in the myth of the *happy-hooker*, I have reiterated the narrative idea behind these images, even if the interpretation (personal interpretation) of these visions does not coincide with the paradigm drawn by the investigated authors.

The third image is circumscribed by the spectrum of alterity, since, throughout a cultural history, sensuality and eroticism have been superfluous in relation to exotism and its adjacent images – Jewish, Gypsy, Asian, Black women etc. Given that the time devoted to this literary analysis would not have allowed me to focus on multiple subjects, reiterating a vast spectrum of images concerning alterity, I have chosen to focus only on the image of the Jewish woman as it is portrayed by two authors, a Romanian one, and a French one –Mateiu I. Caragiale and Marcel Proust.

**Key Words:** *Female body, prostitution, fiction, social, poverty.*