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(Abstract)

**THE IMAGE OF THE PROSTITUTES BY
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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	8
0.1 Problematics and objectives	9
0.2 Methodology.....	10
0.3 Corpus	11
0.4 Structure	13

FIRST PART

CURRENT SITUATION, CONTEXTUAL APPROACH AND VISUAL ARTS

INTRODUCTION	17
I. In the wake of the mysterious subject of prostitution	18
1. Definitions of the word prostitution	18
2. Body and sexuality - violation of the ban	21
3. The state of research and fundamental studies	25
4. Witch, hysterical, prostitute - the origins of female marginality	31
II. Context and perspective	43
1. The rise of capitalism and the development of capital	43
2. Sexual morality and bourgeois hypocrisy	48
3. Reglementarism and clandestinity	58
III. The artistic figure of the prostitute	73
1. Prostitute - the emblematic figure in the visual arts	73
2. Prohibition and scandal	79
3. The impact of painting on literature	82
PARTIAL CONCLUSION	87

PART TWO
POSTURES AND IMPOSTURES

INTRODUCTION	89
I. Image and perception	90
1. The status of the prostitute.....	90
2. The typology of the prostitute	95
3. Respecting morality, hiding debauchery	99
4. Prostitute under the pen	103
II. Avatars of the prostitute	114
1. The social victim	114
2. Boule de Suif - dedication and patriotic feeling	123
3. Fatal woman, maternal woman	127
4. Prostitute in search of identity	130
5. Under the influence of violence	139
III. Complexity and heterogeneity	147
1. The construction of the image of the public girl	147
2. The relationship between writer and character	148
PARTIAL CONCLUSION	157

PART THREE
THE LANGUAGE OF SEDUCTION

INTRODUCTION	159
I. To provoke through the body, to seduce through the word	160
1. Dress Code	160
2. Body language - distance and proximity	165
II. Seduction by word	170
1. Names and connotations	170
2. Sexuality and nutrition	174

3. Eroticism and bestiality	176
III. Body and language under duress	180
1. The duality of language -prostitute and the writer	180
2. Figures of seduction	183
PARTIAL CONCLUSION	192
GENERAL CONCLUSION	193
ANNEXES	198
INDEX OF TERMS.....	209
INDEX OF NAMES	211
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	214

Abstract

Key Words: Prostitution, interdiction, sexuality, body, marginality, reglementarism, seduction, taboo, morality, debauchery

Introduction

The prostitute has been found for centuries at the cross of desire and contempt. Its existence calls into question the relationship between attraction and sin, between need and prohibition, simultaneously opening the way to question the construction of its image. The public girl is guilty, she uses her body in the exercise of her profession, and the man is happy. Founding herself abandoned in a temporary happiness, she immediately sees herself abandoned and alone. Monitored or clandestine, her attraction ends when society judges her actions and blames her for her shameful actions. The subject of prostitution is thus a surprising taboo. This enigmatic aspect is closely related to social thinking, specific to each century, and prostitution is a major social problem.

Current situation

Prostitution is a real and powerful episode, especially in the nineteenth century, when society, literature and art focus on this theme and adopt it as a central theme. We have noticed, however, that the sociological critique of the phenomenon of prostitution is the one that takes the lead,

and the literary approaches remain at a secondary level. The subject of prostitution has been known as "the oldest profession in the world." This topic has been treated in a way that is too general, cliché. However, it would be interesting to take a more specific look at the phenomenon of prostitution. The dialectic of the center and the margin reveals two complementary notions essential for evoking the relations between individuals and the social body, institutions and mentalities. The two opposite central and marginal terms are operative in the literary approach if we consider the change of perspective: the prostitute woman, doomed to social marginality, acquires a central place and occupies the central stage. This idea is found at the three authors we study: Maupassant, Rachilde and Lemonnier. The three authors have different statuses in terms of recognition and influence of their works. If in time Rachilde and Lemonnier remain in the shadows and their status changes from canon to margin, on the other hand, their works reveal the opposite. In this sense, the protagonists (prostitutes) no longer occupy a marginal place, but rather a central one. Moreover, critical studies on this topic highlight the same problem of marginality when we note that the subject is much more in-depth in the social field than in the literature. The current state of the issue and critical studies make a significant contribution to the examination of the center and the margin in terms of the status of the writer, as well as the public girl.

Objectives

We propose a study of the image of the public girl at the end of the 19th century as well as the examination of the social perspective on the prostitute through artistic and literary works. In this sense, we want to highlight the central role of the prostitute at that time through the image of the prostitutes, a heterogeneous image, unexpected, different from the one that society has implemented over time. In this sense, we consider it important to demonstrate the complexity of the public girl in literary and artistic productions, as well as its cultural representation located at the center of the issue. In addition, our interest is to analyze the extent to which the artists managed to faithfully represent his portrait or what was their perspective in this direction. On the other hand, the change of perspective that places the prostitute at a central level in artistic productions has aroused our interest in analyzing the dialectic of the center and the margin, the problem of social exclusion, and a deeper knowledge of the subject of prostitution.

Methodology

Our project is based on the need to find appropriate critical tools, as we will consult different cultural areas, each with its own principles. We offer a thematic and comparative analysis. In this way, we will try to approach the subject and follow the text-character relationship, the central-marginal dialectic and the construction of the image of the public girl. Thus, we will not hesitate to turn to literary history, to texts written even before the end of the 19th century. To the same extent, we will borrow the structuralist and analogical method to highlight social, artistic and literary determinations. We also aim to establish the specificities and interferences of cultural fields such as sociology, art, literature that simultaneously share the subject of prostitution.

Corpus

We focused our study mainly on the works of three authors: Guy de Maupassant, Rachilde and Camille Lemonnier. From a literary point of view, our research has led us to the short stories: *Boule de Suif*, *La maison Tellier*, *Yvette*, *Mademoiselle Fifi* by Guy de Maupassant, the novel *Monsieur Vénus* by Rachilde, the novels *Madame Lupar* and *Nos Flamands*, the short stories *L'homme qui tue les femmes* and *L'enfant du Crapaud* by Belgian writer Camille Lemonnier. On the other hand, because our analysis will focus on sociology, art and literature, we will also analyze the subject of prostitution using the laws and regulations of the nineteenth century. Historical and sociological studies carried out by specialists such as Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, Louis Fiaux, *Les maisons des tolérances. Leur fermeture* as well as Dr. Hippolyte Mireur (of Marseille), *La Syphilis et la prostitution dans leurs rapports avec l'hygiène, la morale et la loi*, are fundamental sources for our analysis. Likewise, the choice of painting seems to us an important aspect that supports our approach, let's not forget that Lemonnier also asserted himself as an art critic. Painters such as Édouard Manet, Henri-Toulouse Lautrec, Edgar Degas paid our attention and were largely inspired by the theme. In addition to painting, the image of the prostitute is also represented in the drawing, by Rops or Degas.

Structure

The structure of our thesis consists of three parts. First part: Current situation, contextual approach and visual arts, second part: Positions and taxes and third part: The language of seduction.

The first part: The current situation, contextual approach and visual arts is structured in three chapters: Following the mysterious subject of prostitution, Context and perspective and artistic figure of the public girl and is dedicated to a panoramic view of the topic and research that was conducted.

The first chapter, In the wake of the mysterious subject of prostitution, includes four subchapters. First, we identified the definitions and meanings of the word prostitution in order to see how to interpret its role and significance socially, in artistic and literary analysis. We then addressed the issue of body and sexuality in the context of prostitution, integrable and complementary aspects. Society forges its values and principles on the body and sexuality, protects its members and advocates for their health. Through the subject of sexuality, artists demonstrated their originality and demonstrated their courage to step out of the realm of stereotyping in an era that condemned sexuality and the subject of prostitution, especially if it was revealed in public.

We were also interested in the state of fundamental and current research and studies of the problem so far, which would allow us to prepare an analysis of the topicality of the topic of prostitution. We then approached the subject of female marginality; from witch to hysterical to prostitute. Admired for her physique and blamed because of her practices, she is admired and blamed, which proves her dualism: good and evil coexist and appear during her actions or her relationships with society. Her dualism is revealed both in art where the beautiful and charming woman has her diabolical role in Rops and Manet painting her next to the black cat, and in literary works in the case of Maupassant who considers her mysterious and charming at the same time.

In the second chapter we analyzed the context and perspective of prostitution and highlighted the growth of capitalism and the development of capital that favored the cultural, architectural and tourist explosion. This expansion of joy culminated in the tendency to vice, contrary to

what society promoted at the time: morality and good manners, the essential elements for an ideal society. This leads us to the analysis of social values such as bourgeois morality and state measures against prostitution, including regulation. Man must take care of his physical needs in a hidden way in order to maintain morality. Vital vice and love are practiced as long as the man is satisfied and contributes to social development, hence the bourgeois hypocrisy that tolerates prostitution, but blames it and considers it a disgraceful profession, a problem debated by critics. We also analyzed regulation, the model that preserved social morality by registering public girls in tolerance houses and by regular hygienic and sanitary control. At the same time, we emphasize the fall of the reglementarist project through the emergence of the underground

The third chapter of the first part will focus on the emblematic figure of the prostitute in the visual arts. She represents the muse of artists through the positions and sets at Manet, Lautrec, Degas, Rops. We will continue our research with an examination of the prohibition and scandal surrounding the phenomenon of prostitution and works of art that embarrass the public through visual exhibitionism: *Le Déjeuner sur herbe*, *Olympia*, *Nana* by Édouard Manet. At the same time, this type of conflict is a common point in all cultural fields, including literature. We also focus on the relationship between painting and literature and their mutual influence on the subject of prostitution.

The second part: "Postures and impostures", expands the references on the dominant image of the public girl. In the first chapter, *Image and Perceptions*, we will focus on the status of the prostitute and the perception of the subject in society, art and literature. This perspective will lead us to a classification of the features of the prostitute that will help us understand her avatars. From the obedient girl at Maupassant to the bold girl at Rachilde, she goes through all the states of body and soul. We will try to demonstrate his physical and mental qualities, in relation to men and society as a whole. However, despite this complexity of features, she is doomed, undermined by setbacks. Between seduction and abandonment, in these human relationships she has episodic and transient relationships. Taboo subjects such as prostitution, although a major and topical issue, had to be hidden and kept at a secondary level in order to preserve morality, a basic principle for the society of the time. The prostitute cannot be integrated into society as a member; her marginality is revealed by the newspapers that dedicate her only a small part. However, through the prism of Maupassant, Rachilde and Lemonnier, the public girl is represented in all its complexity

In the second chapter, *Avatars of the Prostitute*, we will analyze the dominant features of the prostitute in the three authors: Maupassant, Rachilde, Lemonnier. Always looking for identity because of her precarious situation, she is discredited as a social member anchored in reality, but she is loved by her phantasmagoric sexuality. There is a double image of the prostitute that is constructed: tangible image (real) and phantasmagoric image (sexual). In addition to this duality, the writers demonstrated the complexity of her image through the multitude of traits she possesses: patriotic, heroine, maternal, fatal woman. Each writer considered almost all typologies of the prostitute and used the motive of the social victim, bourgeois hypocrisy, the search for identity, murder and fatality. The features of the prostitute appear as the story unfolds and contribute to her portrayal in unexpected ways. Although the prostitute embodies the symbol of sexuality, she also possesses human features: she cries, laughs, asks questions and fights for her defense. At the same time, she has antithetical traits that make her so special: fatal and maternal, innocent and criminal, heroine and submissive.

Finally, the third chapter will demonstrate its complexity and heterogeneity through all the features we have highlighted. The construction of the public girl in the three writers is revealed by the similar themes and sources of inspiration, but what is different is the attitude, the style, the way of presenting the subject, in short the literary aesthetics of each author. Finally, there is a close relationship between the writer and his character through his personal past, childhood, personal life, social experience, censorship that determine the literary product of the authors, more or less pronounced in each of them.

The third part, "The Language of Seduction", offers the analysis of prostitution from a verbal, behavioral and sartorial point of view. The prostitute provokes with the body and seduces with words. These aspects will be reflected through gestures and facial expressions, as well as through clothes and accessories. Another aspect that will be treated, the non-verbal language used by the public girl in her relationship with the man, reveals the discreet approach to the client, but through recognized signs, such as body posture or extravagant makeup. It also seduces with its word, its name and vocabulary having different connotations. There is a close relationship between food and sexuality, eroticism and bestiality. Through her indirect language, the prostitute dominates the man, the body language being her main instrument of seduction. The body and the language under constraint reveal the duality of language, that of the public girl, and of the writer is in a mirror relationship, both emphasizing the concepts and

daily life of the century. On the one hand, the language and lexical fields of the prostitute define her status, behavior, way of acting, identity and relationship with others, while the language of writers balances the connection between prostitute speech in society, social conventions, subjectivity and the writer's perspective. The taboo is highlighted by censorship and also illustrates that the language of the prostitute had to be hidden from the public eye, while that of the writers had to be manifested in writing, but in a neat way. This fact also reflects the relationship between center and marginality. Likewise, the story of each novelist is unique, because each uses a specific style, which gives the originality of the speech and the construction of the character of the prostitute in the context of seduction

Conclusion

Prostitution, the body and sexuality occupy a central place and become main themes in sociology, painting, drawing, literature, the only ones that allow the transgression of the taboo. In addition, the dialectic of the canon and the margin completes the figure of the public girl in a context in which she represents both social exclusion and cultural brilliance.

From the social victim to the heroine, from the patriotic to the nun through the fatal and maternal woman, in search of the identity that ends with the violent and murderous woman, the public girl is represented in all her complexity. The literary works of the writers of our corpus mark a heterogeneous image of the prostitute.

Finally, we discover that mystery and illusion intertwine with the real existence of prostitution, and the language of seduction illustrates the relationship between reality and the imaginary.

Extensions

The issue of prostitution therefore includes references to marginalization, social exclusion, sexual exploitation of minors and the drug market. It also opens new avenues of research on gender studies, behavioral studies (transgenic), diseases (AIDS) and the body. In this sense, our approach can be a starting point for a more developed analysis of what hides the fin de siècle spirit in anticipation of other answers. To answer, we only need to look at previous centuries to better understand the causes and consequences, especially towards the nineteenth century, a period of great social, cultural and aesthetic changes.