

ABSTRACT

Subject to this degree work is the character of prostitutes in French society in the 19th century reflected in eight selected works of French authors of the time.

In the first part of my thesis the history of prostitution from “religious prostitution” in ancient Greece to its “golden age” in France in the 19th century is described. The decay of moral principles in the post-Revolutionary period (as a result of religious and social taboos collapse) causes a great spread of prostitution and venereal diseases. Because of these reasons it was necessary to take the legalizing and organizing precautions – the French System.

The second part of this work takes addresses the different (romantic and naturalistic) representations of the character of the prostitute in the literature of the 19th century. The representative of the romantic interpretation of the courtesan who is driven to sin due to poverty (the myth of the “fallen angel” redeemed by pure love) is Honoré de Balzac and his novel “The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans”. The opposite pole to the romantic interpretation of prostitutes is a naturalistic beast which chooses the oldest profession herself as a means of executing social revenge.

In this second, analytical, part of this work the comparison of both of these kinds is made.

Key words: prostitution, redemption of prostitute, Balzac, Zola, Romanticism,
Naturalism.