

On Prostitution and Prostitutes in the 19th and 20th Centuries Newspapers. A Romanian View

Fănel Teodorașcu¹

Abstract: In this article we will focus on *prostitution*, as it was presented in some of the Romanian newspapers and magazines which were published either between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, or in the interwar period. Our research is motivated by the fact that, during the last years, the necessity of legalizing the “charged love” (“*amorul tarifăt*”, an expression that was coined by Pamfil Șeicaru) has constantly been under the Romanian public eye. Some political parties even tackled this issue during their electoral campaigns. Mention must be made that, in order to complete our paper, we have resorted to both articles published in newspapers and magazines, and to biblical texts, *treatises on social medicine*, law textbooks, *memoirs* of certain journalists, anthologies of proverbs and sayings, etc.

Keywords: the history of press; mass media; prostitution; journalism; venereal diseases

1. The Causes of Female Prostitution

Over time, numerous books or articles have been dedicated to prostitution. Many articles on prostitution can be found on the electronic versions of history magazines, for example. Only the texts we have identified have gathered hundreds of thousands of views. Such texts can be read on the electronic pages of some newspapers, but also on the website of some televisions. Among the relevant volumes that talk about prostitution, we mention the following: *Prostituția între cuceritori și plătitori/ Prostitution between conquerors and payers* (coord. Adrian Majuru), *Istoria prostituției/ History of prostitution* (volumes I and II) (by Mircea Bălan) and *Casele de toleranță între 1830 și 1930/ Houses of tolerance between 1830 and 1930. Daily Life in Closed Houses, 1830-1930/ La vie quotidienne dans les maisons closes*,

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., Galati, 800654, Romania, Tel.: +40372361102, Corresponding author: teodorascu.fanel@univ-danubius.ro.

1830-1930 (by Laure Adler). Equally interesting are the works that, although they do not have prostitution as a central element, bring to the readers' attention interesting theories about the place occupied by the issue of trade in "sexual services" in human societies. Among them, we highlight two books: *Minciunile convenționale ale civilizației noastre/ The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization* (by Max Nordau) and *Femeia în prezent, trecut și viitor/ Woman in the Past, Present and Future* (by A. Bebel).

There were many those who spoke about the causes of female prostitution. The Romanian press of the past ages paid special attention to the "issue of prostitution". The approaches of the editors/ reporters were very different. If for some "prostitution" was the result of the thirst for rapid enrichment of a part of Romanian society, for others "trade in sexual services" had its origins in the miserable conditions in which most Romanians lived? However, some doctors claimed that, in Romania, prostitution was not the result of the poverty in which many Romanians lived, but of the desire of some women to have a luxurious life without having to work for it.¹ In fact, in a social medical treatise G. Banu pointed out that in Romanian society in the first half of the twentieth century, women's prostitution could not be attributed to a "single etiological factor." Specifically, women's prostitution was the result of a combination of "endogenous elements", derived "from the individual constitution and certain hereditary predispositions", with "very important exogenous or ambient factors" (Banu, 1944, pp. 508-509). G. Banu also pointed out that, if "one can speak of certain endogenous factors", they manifest in prostitutes, in many cases, "in the form of a real work phobia" (Banu, 1944, pp. 511).

Taking into account the large number of women who practiced prostitution, in our opinion, it can be said that many Romanian men resorted to sexual services offered by "love priestesses" (Șeicaru, 2002, p. 41). In 1902, 670 prostitutes² were registered in Bucharest alone. The figures referring to children born to syphilitic mothers, until the end of the 19th century, also support the idea that prostitutes in Romania did not lack customers (Ionescu, 18 April, 1903, p. 2). The most wanted prostitutes were the very young ones (Țăranu, 21 mai 1920, pp. 2-3). Some newspapers talked about 12-year-old girls who were taken to prostitution houses by their parents.³ It must be said,

¹*** "Prostituțiunea. O scrisoarea a d-lui medic comunal d-r Luca/ Prostitution. A letter from the communal doctor, Dr. Luca", in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no 4930, 22 April 1903, p. 1.

²*** "Starea sanitară a Capitalei/ The sanitary condition of the Capital in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, night edition, 18 April 1903, p. 2.

³*** "Prostituțiunea. O scrisoarea a d-lui medic comunal d-r Luca/ Prostitution. A letter from the communal doctor, Dr. Luca", in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4930, 22 April 1903, p. 1.

however, that Romanian prostitutes between the ages of 25 and 28 were in great demand in Egypt and China¹.

In a 1925 article in *Society of Tomorrow/ Societatea de mâine*, prostitution was described as “an open wound in the body of society and the state.” The great fault of prostitution was that it caused the danger posed by sexually transmitted diseases to reach “frightening proportions” (Stanca, 1925, p. 571). The text also specified the measures by which the authorities could prevent prostitution. Among these measures we mention the following: “equal rights to men for women”, “the pregnant girl to be married by the seducer”, “the violation of virginity to be declared a crime and to be punished” etc. (Stanca, 1925, p. 572). The author of the quoted article asked the authorities to protect the prostitute, by taking care of her health, and to save her “from the exploiting hand of the master” (Stanca, 1925, p. 574). In an article published in the *Journal of Social Hygiene/ Revista de igienă socială* and republished in the *Municipal Gazette* it showed that, until 1937, “women were hospitalized in a 60-bed ward at the Filantropia. Hospital. Often the sick were placed in pairs in a bed, and the chronic (chronic ulcer) and difficult-to-cure were released unhealed” (Pătrășcanu, 1939, p. 2). In 1939, 3,000 women who were practicing prostitution were registered in Bucharest. Of these, only 1000 were seen by a doctor on a regular basis (Pătrășcanu, 1939, p. 1).

Journalists have repeatedly called on the authorities to take measures to resolve the issue of *prostitution* (Ionescu, 1903, p. 2). From the desire to solve the problems caused by prostitution, the authorities regulated the “trade in sexual services”. The unrest caused by this problem did not exist only in Romania.² The journalists also talked in their articles about citizens’ initiatives in other countries that aimed to get young girls out of the clutches of pimps.

Both prostitutes and those who kept brothels were considered in their communities a kind of lower class citizens. This was the reason why many of the women who prostituted themselves did not want to be registered in the register of prostitutes. For example, the factory worker who “sold” herself in order to live, to the one who had the money to pay her received the label of *immoral woman*. But the morals of the Romanians were “elastic” and “relative”. Nothing bad happened to a “high or middle class” lady who offered “physical grace” to the rich man who could give her

¹ R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 2.

² *** “Traficanții de carne vie/ Human flesh traffickers”, in *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration*, year VI, no. 40, 26 September 1934, p. 6.

“expensive grooming products”, when her secret was revealed by an indiscreet person. This woman was not considered a prostitute, and her place in the “good world” did not suffer. The issue of “moral variety” was discussed in an article published in *Illustrated Reality/ Realitatea ilustrată* in March 1927¹. For some men, all women practiced prostitution in one way or another. We mention here the “drunkard” in “The Officer with the Basque beret/ Ofițerul cu bereta bască” (Șeicaru, 2002, pp. 38-48) who told a “night bird” that both the “sidewalk muses” and the “distinguished ones who sigh at symphonic concerts” want from men who are “idiots” one thing: “payment” (Șeicaru, 2002, pp. 43-44).

2. Everything is for Sale, Especially Women

Men or women who wanted to have a good reputation could not be seen around a woman of light morals. However, even high school students knew where to find a brothel. At the end of the 19th century, brothels were a common presence on the streets of Bucharest. In a paper about the *old Bucharest*, talking about the year 1871, C. Bacalbașa showed that, near the high school “Sf. Sava”, in the courtyard of a cafe often visited by students, was also installed a prostitution house run by a woman, very well known in the past, called Pupăza or Pica. The school authority never intervened to stop students from attending this place.” (Bacalbașa, 1927, p. 60). References to the times when prostitution houses were allowed to exist in the vicinity of schools can also be found in other sources (Pas, 1928, p. 2). In the interwar period, prostitutes even had entry in the Royal Palace. Pamfil Șeicaru’s text mentioned above shows how, after nightfall, King Carol II went to “whores” (Șeicaru, 2002, pp. 41-47).

Going to “whores” was a common pastime for many of the men of those times. In a work on the Bucharest of the mid-nineteenth century, it is shown that the “noble world of men in Bucharest” waited until midnight to invade the “Mimi garden”, which was *the arena of subordinate courtesans*. In the same source it is shown that, in Bucharest, the parties started “at the time when the ghosts appear” and they degenerated, most of the times, “into real orgies”. Prostitutes could be found, it is shown in the same work, “in any part of the city, on every street, in every restaurant, bathroom and hotel” (Potra, 1941, p. 13). The main cause of prostitution, it is also shown in the cited work, was the lack of consistency in the education received,

¹*** “Variațiile moralei/ Variations in morality”, in *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration*, year I, no. 8, 27 March 1927, p. 2.

especially by girls. (Potra, 1941, p. 14). References to the large number of prostitutes in Bucharest are also found in a paper published in the early twentieth century. Here are presented, among others, the results of a “research” conducted by one of the readers of the newspaper *Adevărul/The Truth*:

“The man started to publish, one morning, an announcement with the following content:” I offer a help of 60 lei per month, to a young, pretty lady, etc. “adding about what kind of work he asks for in return, and immediately received in response 153 offers. Then, our statistician, gathering his papers, conscientiously cataloging the various offers, hurried to divide them into categories and disclosed to us how many widows, married women, wives of civil servants, soldiers, butchers and how many virgins are among these 153 of young and pretty ladies, who replied that they would be amateurs of 60 lei per month. The natural conclusion of this statistical study, you guessed it “Misery and Prostitution” (Rosetti, 1904, pp. 5-6).

However, the “fun” was not the same for all Romanians. The provincial, whose life was “uniform” and “monotonous,” created “certain ridiculous or harmful amusements.” Every week, he went with his whole family “to the coffee shop or brewery”. The provincials with a higher social situation had “another familiar, much more intelligent pastime.” They gathered in “salons”, where they gave way to “flirting and cards playing”¹. The “superior social class “, which also includes the rich, from cities with a “cosmopolitan atmosphere” encourages and practices “the dubious fun of music halls”².

The Romanian says that “money is the eye of the devil” (Zanne, 1900, p. 32), and the Bible states that “love of silver is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). It has also been said, however, that money “opens the gates of Heaven” and gives man “a name”³. The latter saying, somehow explains the saying that “the money in the bag” is the “best relative” (Zanne, 1900, p. 506). The thirst for enrichment made the mother sell her daughter to men who were willing to pay the price she asked, the brother to gladly give his sister to that person who could pay a hundred *lei* for her, and the policeman to change from a defender of law into a pimp. An article published in September 1911 showed that everyone was ruled by the “evil genius”, who is always “young and rigorous”. In the opinion of the author of this article, there is no

¹*** “Distracții familiare/ Family fun”, in *Realitatea ilustrată/ Illustrated reality*, year I, no. 16, 22 May 1927, p. 2.

²*** “Tot distracții nevinovate/ Still innocent fun”, in *Realitatea ilustrată/ Illustrated reality*, year I, no. 14, 1927, p. 2.

³ See (Dimitrescu, 1891, p. 94)

man “who is not possessed by any vice.” Romanian society was all the more prone to “metallic temptations”, as it was “made up of such fragile natures”. These natures sought “by any means, even springing from the dirtiest procedures, to shine in luxury.” To make money, everyone steals, cheats and lie. Money is important because it can turn anyone into a *human being* (Mohor, 1911, p. 2).

On April 18, 1903, the front page of the newspaper *Adevărul/The Truth* announced the arrest of a gang of pimps from Bucharest. The sensational of this business was represented by the fact that the girls recruited by the pimps from Bucharest were exploited in brothels outside the country. The story from *Adevărul/The Truth* presents in detail both the organization of the network of pimps and the manner in which it acted. The text also shows how some women were transformed from “goods” into exploiters. The gang of pimps operated for several years, raising impressive sums of money from prostitution. The success of the gang seems to have been due, in particular, to the fact that two of its members were former secret police agents in the Capital. The case of the pimp gang from Bucharest came to the attention of the Bucharest authorities following a denunciation addressed by an Egyptian citizen to the Minister of Interior: “A few days ago, a certain Nae Constantinescu from Alexandria (Egypt) addressed a denunciation to the Interior Minister, showing that an individual, Moritz Gold, who 20 years ago was in the service of the Capital’s police, as a secret agent, is currently operating a large human trafficking in Cairo and Alexandria, that has branches in Bucharest and that he procures especially girls from Romania for the Arab men”¹. The complaint stated that the pimp Rozina Iscovici, who was one of Moritz Gold’s mistresses, was in Bucharest at that time to find, lure and transport young girls to Egypt. The pimp had entered the country with the help of a fake passport named Betti Adolf Feldman. The correspondence between Moritz Gold and Rozina Iscovici was addressed to Simon Gold, who was the pimp’s brother. Simon Gold ran a pub on Calea Văcărești. From the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Nae Constantinescu’s complaint was addressed to the prefect of Bucharest, who commissioned Romulus Voinescu, who was the chief inspector of Security, with the investigation of the entire business:

“Mr. Voinescu immediately made a raid in Calea Văcărești at Simion Gold’s and confiscated an entire correspondence addressed to a woman named Hanală Blank, Gold’s niece. From this correspondence it resulted first of all that Gold had a gang of pimps in the Capital, which were in charge of the sale and export of girls, it was

¹ R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 2.

done with respect to commercial forms, meaning: with a clear and precise correspondence and even with records in which the orders of the girls and the amounts collected were written. From the confiscated correspondence it also results that a dangerous pimp who was the lead author of the operations namely Zissu Ionescu from Egalitatii Street no.14 , was also once among the secret police agents and who, within 15 years, managed to make a fortune of about 150,000 *lei*, with this productive but miserable job”¹.

After reading all the letters confiscated from the members of the gang of pimps, Romulus Voinescu ordered the arrest of the following people: Hanală Blank, Zisu Ionescu, Rozina Iscovici, Solomon Volfthal and Iancu Wechsler (also called Schlesinger). Among those listed above, Rozina Iscovici is the one who explained to the police how the gang operates:

“Pimp Rozina stated that she has been in Bucharest for 3 weeks and that she has been living in Egypt for 5 months. She is from Brăila and was lured by a certain individual David, currently in Shanghai, China. After living for 2 weeks in cohabitation with him, David went to Cairo and sold her to Moritz Gold, where he was already cohabiting with two women from Romania, including one named Emilia. Rozina also said that Gold had a brothel in Cairo and after that, one in Alexandria, that he exploited her and his mistresses, and that he collected all the money. Proxenetă also stated that Gold was in Bucharest last year, that he spent a lot of money here, leading a luxurious and full of orgies life, that he was in negotiations to buy the Concordia hotel and that he had on him checks worth 600,000 lei. He left Bucharest for Alexandria with two girls and Emilia. One of the girls was blonde, but she had a wig and false teeth and was 25 years old. Another had brown hair, 28 years old and her name was Ety Hanse. The latter was sold by her own brothers, some tailors, for 100 lei, but without them knowing that their sister was being bought for a brothel”².

Details of the manner in which the gang worked were also found in the correspondence confiscated by investigators from Zissu Ionescu:

“A bastard wrote the following lines to Ionescu:” Wretched snake! I had a happy love. I would have lived a carefree life, but you seduced me like a wretched man and after using my youth and naivety, you sold me, in a vile way, to another wretched

¹ R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 2.

² R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 2.

man. Now I struggle and I pray to God, in every moment, that all lightning may fall on your head and torment you, as tormented and miserable is my life. Cursed be your days, filthy and vile creature. May your bones rot in prison, you man without law”¹.

Gold’s girl seekers had clear tasks. They had to leave Bucharest for Alexandria as soon as they found “one piece of good cargo”². The report also showed that the gang of pimps from Bucharest also included people from the entourage of some judges. Moritz Gold, who was apparently one of Egypt’s most skilled pimps, made a fortune during the Chinese Boxer Rebellion. Unable to enter China during the fighting, he set up a “floating brothel”, which was visited by many European officers. Each of the prostitutes who sold their services on this “floating brothel” made “a daily gain of nearly 1,000 lei”³. In the next edition of *Adevărul/The Truth*, the reporters of the already mentioned publication expressed their hope that this whole story would result in the appearance of “female society” in Romania, aimed at combating *procuring*⁴.

In the publications of that time, news about clandestine prostitution houses⁵ or about alleged partnerships between police officers and procurers⁶ could easily be found. Pimp gangs forcing women into prostitution were not a feature of our country. Other countries also faced such problems. For example, in May 1905, from Berlin, the newspapers in Bucharest received the news that in Warsaw several citizens decided to do justice into their own hands because, for a year, a gang of thieves and pimps terrorized the city. The gang, which had a certain Surovici as its leader, did not back down from any villainy: “The population was extremely terrified; merchants paid real taxes for fear of bloody revenge; workers’ wages were extorted near factory gates; young girls were raped or dragged into brothels. In addition, the gang in question was providing espionage services to the police that is why they have been left unpunished so far.”⁷ But the luck of Surovitch’s gang changed after its members

¹ R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, pp. 2-3.

² R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 3.

³ R.A., “Arestarea unei bande de proxeneți/ Arrest of a gang of pimps”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4926, 18 April 1903, p. 3.

⁴ E.D.F., “Proxenetism...”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 4927, 19 April, 1903, p. 1.

⁵*** “Fapte diverse/Diverse acts”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVIII-lea, no. 6077, 21 July, 1906, pp. 2-3.

⁶ ***“Scandalul din str. Cantemir/The Scandal on Cantemir Str.”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVIII-lea, no. 6038, 11 June, 1906, p. 2.

⁷ *** “Originea tulburărilor din Varșovia/ The origin of the Warsaw unrest”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year al XVIII-lea, no. 5662, 16 May 1905, p. 3.

dragged into a prostitution house the fiancée of a Jewish butcher: “A number of Jewish workers decided to help themselves, they entered the head of the Surovici gang, whom they killed with clubs and devastated the brothels and the guests.”¹ A very interesting report on the operation of international networks of human trafficking was published in September 1934 in a magazine, *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration*. The quoted text also talks about the “adventure” that a young seamstress from Cairo went through, who thought that by prostituting herself she would get rich.²

3. Between Suicide and Prostitution

In 1914, the author of a report published in *Universul literar* brought to the readers’ attention the need to establish in Romania a “society for the protection of young girls”, following an English model discovered by him during a trip from Bucharest to Jerusalem: “In Alexandria, entering the harbor, the first thing that struck me was the presence of an old Englishwoman on board. The Englishwoman wore a metal badge on her chest: she was the representative of a society for the protection of young girls. This society, which operates in Alexandria, is run by elite ladies and aims to procure jobs for girls left without support and keep them out of the way to perish. This society also extends its activity to foreign girls, thrown on these distant shores, by the whirlwind of life. Thus, whenever a foreign ship arrives in port, a delegate of the company comes on board, searches, and investigates whether there is a young girl who needs the support of the society” (Mestugean, 1914, p. 6). The quoted author emphasizes that the text from *Universul literar* was not the first time he discussed the “worrying proportions” that prostitution had reached in Bucharest at that time: “In this respect, we have published in *Universul* an article in which we show the need to set up a society for the protection of lost girls, which today, without any support, at a critical moment of their lives, all they have left is to choose between suicide and prostitution” (Mestugean, 1914, p. 7).

In 1934, one of the reporters of the magazine *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration*, using the story of an 18-year-old girl, who, being away from home and without money, was crying on a bench in “Carol Park”, brought to the readers’

¹ *** “Originea tulburărilor din Varșovia/ The origin of the Warsaw unrest”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year al XVIII-lea, no. 5662, 16 May 1905, p. 3.

²*** “Traficanții de carne vie/ Human flesh traffickers”, in *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration*, year VI, no. 40, 26 September 1934, p. 6.

attention the activity of Amicele Tinerelor Fete/Friends of Young Girls Association, which was under the high patronage of ASR Princess Elena. The report entitled “Protection of young girls /Protecția tinerelor fete” was richly illustrated and occupied almost the entire page 4 of the October 24 issue of the magazine already mentioned. In the text, the author highlighted the efforts that the ladies who managed the “Home of the Friends of Young Girls /Căminul Amicelor Tinerelor Fete” and the “Shelter of Young Girls/Casa de adăpost a Tinerelor Fete” made so that the institutions they represented could carry out their activity in the best conditions. What caught our attention in particular is the surprise with which the reporter seems to discover a fact known then by everyone that in Bucharest there were girls, many in number, coming from all over the country out of the desire to find a good service, who had to live in inhumane conditions. Heartless employers and pimps who abuse defenseless girls are not missing from the report.¹ We also learn from the text that one of the “friends” was constantly at the train station to look for “awkward girls”.

But the report also contains a strangeness. In the same paragraph in which he says that “any young girl without support finds full accommodation” at the “Home of the Friends of Young Girls”, the author states that this “accommodation” costs 30 lei per day. The “Home for the Friends of Young Girls” also had several “luxury” rooms, the price of one being 60 lei per day. The strangeness we are referring to is the very existence of the word “luxury” in a report about young girls who wandered the streets of Bucharest, because they had no money to buy a train ticket that could take them back to their families. From another publication we find that the “Friends of Young Girls” Association had the capacity to transform some “elements difficult to educate” into “elements of productive work”, having at its disposal “limited material means”.

Prostitution was a problem not only in Bucharest (Pajură & Giurescu, 1933, pp. 74-75; 79). In an article published in 1938, in *Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crișana*, the municipal official Nicolae I. Fischer, who had the merit of setting up a maids’ house in Timișoara, showed how the young peasant girls came to be exploited in the city.

“Almost in all regions of the country, the poor population, often unable to live easily in the village, shows a tendency to immigrate to the city. In this sense, regarding what interests us, that is the girls who are looking for an existence in the city, they are mostly recruited from the poor families of the villages. Some come to town to

¹ Lc. “Protecția tinerelor fete/ Protecting young girls”, in *Ilustrațiunea română/Romanian illustration* year VI, no. 44, 24 October 1934, p. 4.

earn money for their dowries, then return to the country, where they intend to start families. Others, who have no connection to the village, come to the city to create a new life. Most of them, due to lack of specialization, can do nothing but enter the service as simple maids. (...) The girl leaves the village, most of the time, without contacting the communal authority. Poverty and stupidity urge her to this, first of all, and then, eventually, the advice of a friend, who had lived in the city until then, who may have been lucky. An unforeseen danger lurks right from the beginning, in the train, where she is exposed by her naivety. When she arrives at the train station, traps are set in her way from all sides and only luck can save her. Here, when the train arrives, the chaff of society wander around, waiting for their prey, which then they exploit in the most varied forms. Pocket thugs, vagrants, “pimps”, hotel porters, ill-famed women, housekeepers turn into “savior angels” for the naive peasant girl” (Fischer, 1938, pp. 21-22).

According to the quoted author, throughout the country there were “over 100,000” maids, who were both young girls and elderly women. The latter came “from the most varied social categories: peasants, laborers, war widows, retirees, impoverished intellectuals, etc.” The lack of “organization of maids” meant that any maid was in danger of falling prey to prostitution. The transformation of maids into prostitutes was detrimental, as Nicolae I. Fischer also pointed out, for the good of the whole society (Fischer, 1938, p. 21). The quoted author even indicates the main places of temptation and perdition that young peasant girls should have avoided: “night bars”, “dubious hotels”, and “private bathrooms”. In the places indicated by the author, “prostitution was practiced under different labels, the employed maids are destined, imperceptibly, to reach the ranks of prostitutes.” It happened quite often that the maid’s virginity was sold by her employer to the one who was willing to pay the asking price. From here it was only a step for the young peasant woman to officially become a prostitute. Nicolae I. Fischer also indicates a danger that the young girl from the country had to avoid when she arrived in the city: the ruthless employer. (Fischer, 1938, p. 23).

The newspapers of the times we refer to in this paper contain numerous stories about girls or young women who have suffered sexual abuse. Such a case of sexual abuse, which took place in the autumn of 1907, had in its center Paraschiva, a girl from the Transylvanian village Vladeni, and Horațiu Cazzavillan, who was part of the management of the newspaper *Universul*. The newspaper *Adevărul/The Truth*, of course, gave special importance to this issue. The two publications were rivals, a situation underlined, by the way, by those who claimed that the whole story was

exaggerated by the journalists from *Adevărul/The Truth*, the purpose of the latter being to increase the circulation of their publication at the expense of Horațiu Cazzavillan. We will continue to play an excerpt from the article announcing the “monstrous rape” on Povernei Street, no. 34:

“A fact of outrageous bestiality, which has not happened in the Capital for a long time, was committed a few days ago in Povernei Street. An innocent child, one of those whom the fight against misery causes to be lost in the world in order to earn her living in an honest way, fell victim to an old and shameless satyr, Horațiu Cazzavillan, the director of the administration of the newspaper “*Universul/The Universe*” and Virgiliu Dărăscu’s business partner. The odious satyr, taking advantage of the fact that the child was employed in the service of his house, waited for the moment when his wife was abroad, pounced on the girl and raped her. After the dirty act was committed, the satyr Horațiu Cazzavillan, in order to hide the fact and shut the mouth of the poor child, promised her money, giving her hope that he would find a man to marry her, and that he would make her dowries, etc.”¹

The case came to the attention of the public after Paraschiva tried to end her life by drinking a bottle of ammonia. Being a minor, the economist of the hospital where the girl was hospitalized reported the incident to the police. Days in a row, news and reports about this business were published in *Adevărul/The Truth*. From a report published here we find out the reason why the young Paraschiva tried to commit suicide:

“In our village, a girl who gives her virginity, first of all, can no longer get married. Then, as soon as they find out about it, a hostile demonstration is made against her by everyone in the village and no one talks to her anymore. If the mother of the bastard girl who committed this act dares to ever go out with her daughter who is no longer a virgin, the whole village whistles and swears whenever they meet her. Also, girls who have committed acts of this nature are no longer accepted at any dance in the village and they must leave the village immediately. And if it was heard in the village that any girl would have been guilty of the same guilt elsewhere which is the

¹*** “Satirul de la «Universul». Horațiu Cazzavillan, tovarășul lui Virgil Dărăscu, acuzat de un viol monstruos. Victima pe moarte la spitalul de copii/ The satire from the "Universe". Horațiu Cazzavillan, Virgil Dărăscu's companion, accused of a monstrous rape. The dying victim at the children's hospital”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XIX, no 6535, 3 November 1907, p. 2.

case of Paraschiva, she cannot return to her village, because the same manifestation is made to her.”¹

Finally, in the issue of 19 November 1907, the newspaper *Adevărul/The Truth* announced that Cazzavillan “the satyr” had been fired from *Universul*. The same source also showed that Horațiu Cazzavillan “was forced to give up his part in the management of *Universul* to the society of the staff of this newspaper, and he, as soon as he escapes from justice, is determined to flee the country.”² It has to be said that there were also publications that dressed Horatiu Cazzavillan in the clothes of a victim. In an article in *Furnica/The Ant*, the journalists from *Adevărul/The Truth* were accused of dishonoring Horațiu Cazzavillan only for revenge on the newspaper *Universul*, which accused them of “betrayal of the homeland”³. Even, some law enforcement officers also abused defenseless women. In October 1903, for example, an article in the newspaper *Adevărul/The Truth* showed how Commissioner Iovan took advantage of his position in order to rape prostitute Blanche⁴.

4. The Genesis of Prostitution

The whore, understood as the unmarried woman who has sex with married men, existed even in the first human communities, as shown in a paper that brings together the proverbs of Romanians. So Moș Adam had several children, girls and boys. But there were more girls than boys. For this reason, when the boys chose their wives, a girl was left alone. On her father’s advice, the girl without a man began to wander “from place to place,” as do “the whores of today.” After Moș Adam’s girl without luck in love, other girls did the same, thus filling the world with whores (Zanne, 1900, p. 230). According to Max Nordau, man and woman can have two kinds of connections. The first kind is that of mutual attraction, which has breeding as its target. The second kind of connection is the one whose main goal is the satisfaction of selfishness. The connections of the first kind are both justified and moral, and those of the second kind fall into what is known as prostitution. (Nordau, p. 318)

¹Tis. “Violul din strada povernei”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year al XIX-lea, no. 6540, 8 November 1907, p. 2.

²*** “Izgonirea satirului Cazzavillan/ The expulsion of the satire Cazzavillan”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year al XIX-lea, no. 6551, 19 noiembrie 1907, p. 3.

³Coco, “Satirul de la «Universul»/ The satire from the “Universe”, in *Furnica/The Ant*, year IV, no. 166, 15 November 1907, p. 2.

⁴Rep., “Procesul comisarului Iovan/ Commissioner Iovan's trial”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVI, no. 5105, nigh edition, 15 October 1903, p. 3.

According to A. Bebel, prostitution has as its source the idea that *the man is superior to the woman* (Bebel, 1907, pp. 27-28). According to the quoted author, the woman “was a slave even before” slaves “existed.” She, the woman, “*is the first human being to endure subjugation*” (Bebel, 1907, p. 14). If it lasts several generations in a row, bondage becomes a habit, with heredity and education playing an important role in the process. Thus, the woman came to consider herself inferior to the man and it would be difficult for anyone to convince her that the reality is different (Bebel, 1907, pp. 13-14). The same source also shows that *prostitution* is an indispensable social institution for the bourgeois world. Regardless of the epochs or countries they come from, men believe that prostitution is “a privilege” that they have obtained “by right”: “If marriage depicts one part of the sex life of the bourgeois world, prostitution depicts the other. The first is the front of the coin, the second is the back. When a man does not find satisfaction in marriage, he often resorts to prostitution, and so does one who, for one reason or another, does not want to marry.” (Bebel, 1907, pp. 156-157). Over the years, numerous normative acts regarding the conditions in which a woman from Romania could practice prostitution were issued. But we will discuss only a few of them.

5. “Public Woman” at 16 Years of Age

In a regulation on how, starting with July 1867, the local authorities in Bucharest supervised the activity of both prostitution houses and women who practiced prostitution, interesting data are provided. For example, the minimum age a woman/girl had to be in order to be a “legal” prostitute was 16 years of age. In order to become a “public woman”, she first had to be registered in the local register of “public women”. Registration was done for both unmarried and married women. After registration, the prostitute received a card (ID), which contained information about the owner (name and surname, class of prostitutes, age, description, address, etc.). Depending on the case, the final deletion of a woman from the “public women’s register” was done in several stages, which could last from 6 months up to 1 year. The regulation we are referring to also established what a “house of prostitution” (*brothel or maison de passe*) (Bujoreanu, 1873, p. 957) is and set out the conditions under which such a “house” could operate (Bujoreanu, 1873, pp. 958- 959. Both brothels and prostitutes were divided into 4 class. *Public women* and women who ran “prostitution establishments” were required to help cover the expenses incurred by local authorities in supervising prostitution. The financial contribution was

determined according to the class to which the prostitutes/ brothels belonged (Bujoreanu, 1873, p. 959).

Prostitutes, even if they were in their own homes, were not allowed to show themselves at the windows, which they always kept covered with curtains. Also, the right of prostitutes to appear in public places was limited (Bujoreanu, 1873, p. 960). Despite the measures taken by the authorities against *clandestine* prostitution, it continued to exist. Numerous examples of this can be found in the newspapers of those times.¹ In *Anuarul statistic al oraşului Bucureşti pe anul 1896 /The Statistical Yearbook of Bucharest for 1896* it showed that “clandestine prostitution is widespread, while regulated and supervised prostitution is very small.”² At the beginning of the twentieth century brothels were no longer divided into four classes, but only into two. Following investigations by the people responsible for monitoring prostitution, women who were considered too weak to support life in brothels were sent to work as maids. However, most of the prostitutes worked outside the prostitution houses.³ Discussions regarding the organization of the prostitution watch activity that were carried out within the Council of Hygiene and Public Sanitation of the Capital/ Consiliului de Igienă și Salubritate Publică al Capitalei can be followed in *Monitorul Comunal -Organ Oficial al Primăriei Oraşului Bucureşti*⁴.

In a paper published in 1901, I. Felix showed that prostitution existed in Romania in ancient times, appearing in official documents since the 17th century. In the next century, the mentioned author also points out, there are works talking about the existence of syphilis in Romanians, the disease being brought to Romanian territories by foreign armies (Felix, 1901, p. 271). According to the same source, the most important event in *the history of prostitution* is represented by “woman’s entry in industrial life”, which led to the “weakening of family ties.” (Felix, 1901, p. 326).

¹ See *** “Fapte diverse/Diverse Facts”, in *Adevărul/The Truth*, year XVIII-lea, no. 6077, 21 July, 1906, pp. 2-3.

² *Anuarul statistic al oraşului Bucureşti pe anul 1896/ The statistical yearbook of the city of Bucharest for the year 1896*, 1898, p. 406.

³*** “Serviciul de priveghere al prostituatelor/ Prostitute watch service”, in *Darea de seamă pe timpul de la 1 ianuarie 1898 până la 30 septembrie 1902 prezentată Consiliului comunal în şedinţa de la 19 October 1902 de către d-l primar Ioan Procopie Dumitrescu/ The report for the period from January 1, 1898 to September 30, 1902 presented to the Communal Council in the meeting of October 19, 1902 by Mr. Mayor Ioan Procopie Dumitrescu*, Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice “Carol Göbl”, 1902, pp. 300-301.

⁴** “Consiliul de Igienă și Salubritate Publică al Capitalei – Şedinţa de la 11 februarie 1914/ Council of Hygiene and Public Sanitation of the Capital - Meeting of February 11, 1914”, in *Monitorul Comunal - Organ Oficial al Primăriei Oraşului Bucureşti/ Communal Monitor - Official Body of the Bucharest City Hall*, year XXVIII, no. 10, 9 March 1914, pp. 205-211.

In 1930, brothels were outlawed. An article in November 1930 criticized the law abolishing brothels. According to the author of this article, the closure of brothels did more harm than good. By driving prostitutes out into the streets, in fact, the necessary conditions were created to increase the speed of the spread of venereal diseases (Vrăbiescu, 1930, pp. 1-2).

In another article, published in 1931, in the newspaper from Cluj, Chemarea, the authorities were asked to fight with bravely in order to solve the complicated problem of prostitution. The text also shows that the woman is wrongly considered the only culprit for the existence of prostitution. The author of the article emphasizes that without *men* prostitution would no longer be possible. The text advocated “the abolition of legal prostitution” and called for the introduction of a “rigorous regime for clandestine prostitution, to which both sexes should be subjected” (Vasiu, 1931, p. 2).

The Regulation for the fight against venereal diseases/Regulamentul pentru combaterea bolilor venerice of March 9, 1933 stated that the “operation of brothels” was prohibited, and those who violated this provision, by continuing to hold brothels, risked being fined between 5,000 lei and 100,000 lei. Recidivists could face up to six months in prison. *The regulation* also provided for new conditions under which *trade in sexual services* could still be practiced. For example, prostitutes were required to go to *official doctors* at least twice a week for a medical examination (Hamangiu, 1934, pp. 76-78). However, the new regulations will not solve many of the problems caused by the *trade in sexual services*.¹ Here is what was shown about this in an article published in 1939:

“In the implementation of the law (since 1930), all existing brothels were closed. The former pensioners of these brothels filled the streets of Bucharest. Prostitutes did not show up for the check-up visit until they were so seriously ill that they could no longer practice their profession. The doctor’s authority without the cooperation of the police was almost non-existent. In the face of this state of affairs and the numerous cases of attack on good morals, the Police Prefecture, from which we have these data, was forced to find a practical solution. The only possible resort was the authorization of furnished rooms for tolerance houses. The police resumed their role as collaborators of the health service, which also created the triage dispensary attached to the morals brigade” (Pătrășcanu, 1939, p. 1).

¹*** *Activitatea Prefecturii Poliției Municipiului București pe anul 1937/The activity of the Bucharest Police Headquarters for the year 1937*, Bucharest, 1938, p. 25.

However, the wealthy clients of the rendez-vous houses (Adler, 2004, pp. 157-159) were hunted down by clandestine prostitutes, who used the “studio” with a call system” (Pătrășcanu, 1939, pp. 1-2). The years following the interwar era would bring other changes to the way prostitution could be done in Romania. A regulation to combat sexually transmitted diseases of October 1943 stated that *prostitute* was “a woman who procures material benefits from sexual intercourse, which she practices for this purpose with various men.” Prostitution could be practiced both in the homes of prostitutes and in the houses of tolerance, which were under the leadership of an employer. In addition to the legalization of brothels, the 1943 regulation also contained other interesting provisions. For example, the legal minimum age for prostitution was 21. Now prostitutes were allowed to enter a restaurant, but they were not allowed to stay in it longer than they needed to eat. With regard to the owners of tolerance houses, it must be said that they were obliged to take some measures aimed at the welfare of the prostitutes for whom they were responsible¹.

6. Conclusions

Despite numerous efforts by the authorities, *prostitution* proved to be an impossible force to control². Among the explanations for this situation could be the fact that, according to some Romanians, *prostitution* was allowed by *church laws*, and the parable of the “sinful woman” (Ioan 8: 3-11) was indicated, in a pamphlet entitled *Social Pathology / Patologie socială*, as evidence in this regard. Proponents of this idea forgot, however, that “God will judge the fornicators” (Evrei 13: 4). Only after the “communist regime” was installed in Romania did the way of life of the

¹*** “Regulament pentru combaterea bolilor venerice/ Regulation for the control of venereal diseases” (from 18 October 1943), in *Monitorul Oficial* al Regatului României, partea I-a/Official Monitor of the Kingdom of Romania, part I., year CXI, no. 246, 20 October 1943, pp. 24-32.

²*** “Au fost închise mai multe case de toleranță/ Several houses of tolerance have been closed”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year VIII, no. 403, 17 December 1939, p. 6; *** “Alte case de prostituție vor fi închise/ Other brothels will be closed”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year VIII, no. 404, 24 December 1939, p. 6; *** “Prostituție clandestine/ Clandestine prostitution”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year X, no. 467, 13 April 1941, p. 4; *** “Combaterea prostituției și maladiilor veneriene/Combating prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year XI, no. 546, 8 November 1942, p. 4; *** “Ofensiva contra prostituției clandestine/ Offensive against clandestine prostitution”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year XII, no. 566, 11 April 1943, p. 4; *** “Case de prostituție închise/ Closed brothels”, in *Gazeta municipală/ Municipal Gazette*, year XII, no. 590, 3 October 1943, p. 4.

prostitutes change, as they were forced to embrace the “communist morality” (Bălan, 2006, p. 258).

References

- *** (1898). *Anuarul statistic al oraşului Bucuresti pe anul 1896/ The statistical yearbook of the city of Bucharest for the year 1896*. Bucharest: Tipografia Curţii Regale F. Göbl Fii.
- *** (1902). *Darea de seamă pe timpul de la 1 ianuarie 1898 până la 30 septembrie 1902 prezentată Consiliului comunal în şedinţa de la 19 octombrie 1902 de către d-l primar Ioan Procopie Dumitrescu/The report for the period from January 1, 1898 to September 30, 1902 presented to the Communal Council in the meeting of October 19, 1902 by Mr. Mayor Ioan Procopie Dumitrescu*. Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice “Carol Göbl”.
- *** (1938). *Activitatea Prefecturii Poliţiei Municipiului Bucuresti pe anul 1937/ The activity of the Bucharest Police Headquarters for 1937*. Bucharest.
- *** (1943). *Monitorul Oficial al Regatului României, partea I-a/ Official Monitor of the Kingdom of Romania, part I, year CXI, no. 246, 20 October*.
- *** (March, 1914) *Monitorul Comunal - Organ Oficial al Primăriei Oraşului Bucuresti/ Communal Monitor - Official Body of the Bucharest City Hall, year XXVIII, no. 9; 10; 12; 23*.
- Adler, Laure (2004). *Casele de toleranţă între 1830 şi 1930. Viaţa cotidiană/ Tolerance houses between 1830 and 1930. Everyday life*. Bucharest: Ed. Corint.
- Bacalbaşa, C. (1927). *Bucurestii de altădată. Vol. 1 - 1871-1884/Bucharest of the past. Vol. 1 - 1871-1884*. Bucharest: Ed. Ziarului “Universul” S.A.
- Bălan, Mircea (2006). *Istoria prostituţiei/ History of prostitution, vol. II, 2nd edition*. Timisoara: Ed. Eurostampa.
- Banu, G. (1944). *Tratat de medicină socială (Volumul IV) - Tuberculoza, bolile venerice/ Treaty on Social Medicine (Volume IV) - Tuberculosis, venereal diseases*. Bucharest: Ed. Casa Şcoalelor.
- Bebel, A. *Femeia în prezent, trecut şi viitor. Traducere din limba germană/ The woman in the present, past and future*. Translation from German language. Bucharest: Ed. Librăriei Carol Müller.
- Bujoreanu, Ioan, M. (1873). *Colecţiune de legiurile României vechi şi noi câte s-au promulgat până la finele anului 1870/ Collection of the laws of old and new Romania that were promulgated until the end of 1870*. Bucharest: Noua Tipografie a Laboratorilor Români.
- Felix, I. (1901). *Istoria igienei în România în secolul al XIX-lea şi starea de la începutul secolului al XX-lea. Partea I. Întâiul memoriu. Şedinţa de la 2 februarie 1901/ The history of hygiene in Romania in the 19th century and the state at the beginning of the 20th century. Part I. The first memorandum. Meeting of February 2, 1901. Analele Academiei Române, Seria II – Tomul XXIII. 1900-1901. Memoriile secţiunii ştiinţifice/ Annals of the Romanian Academy, Series II - Volume XXIII. 1900-1901. Memoirs of the scientific section*. Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice Carol Göbl.

Hamangiu, C. (1934). *Codul general al României. Legi uzuale. Vol. XXI – 1933/ General Code of Romania. Usual laws. Vol. XXI - 1933*. Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală.

Nordau, Max. *Minciunile convenționale ale civilizației noastre/ The conventional lies of our civilization*. Traducere din limba germană de/ Translated from german language by B. Marian și M. Negru. Bucharest: Ed. Librăriei Leon Alcalay.

Pajură, C. & Giurescu, D. T. *Istoricul orașului Turnu-Severin (1833-1933)/The history of the city of Turnu-Severin (1833-1933)*. Bucharest: Tipografia "Tiparul Românesc".

Potra, George (1941). *Bucuresti la mijlocul secolului XIX. Impresiile germanului W. Derblich/ The history of the city of Turnu-Severin (1833-1933)*. Bucharest: Tipografia ziarului "Universul".

Rosetti, D. R. Max (1904). *Între Capșa și Palat. Impresiile unui trecător/ Between Capsa and the Palace. Impressions of a passer-by*. Bucharest: Minerva Institut de arte grafice și editură.

Șeicaru, Pamfil (2002). *Scrieri - Vol. 2/ Writings - Vol. 2*. Bucharest: Ed. Victor Frunză.

Zanne, Iuliu A. (1900). *Proverbele românilor din România, Basarabia, Bucovina, Ungaria, Istria și Macedonia/ The proverbs of the Romanians from Romania, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Hungary, Istria and Macedonia* (vol. V și vol. VIII). Bucharest: Ed. Librăriei Socecu & Comp.

Arhiva publicației *Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crișana* pe anul 1938/ Archive of the publication *Journal of Social Institute Banat-Crișana* for 1938.

Arhiva publicației *Universul literar* pe anul 1914/ Archive of the publication *Literary Universe* for the year 1914.

Arhiva revistei *Furnica* pe anii 1907 & 1920/ Archive of the *The Ant* magazine for the years 1907 & 1920.

Arhiva revistei *Generația nouă* pe anul 1891/ Archive of the *New Generation* magazine for 1891.

Arhiva revistei *Ilustrațiunea română* pe anul 1934/ Archive of the *Romanian illustration* for 1934.

Arhiva revistei *Moda nouă ilustrată* pe anul 1911/ Archive of the magazine *New fashion illustrated* for 1911.

Arhiva revistei *Realitatea ilustrată* pe anii 1927 & 1928/ Archive of the magazine *Illustrated Reality* for the years 1927 & 1928.

Arhiva revistei *Societatea de mâine* pe anul 1925/ The archive of the *Society of Tomorrow* magazine for 1925.

Arhiva ziarului *Adevărul* pe anii 1903; 1905; 1906; 1907 & 1930/ The archive of *The Truth* newspaper for the years 1903; 1905 1906; 1907 & 1930.

Arhiva ziarului *Chemarea tinerimii române* pe anul 1931/ Archive of the newspaper *The call of the Romanian youth* for 1931.

Arhiva ziarului *Gazeta municipală* pe anii 1939; 1941; 1942 & 1943/ Archive of the newspaper *Municipal Gazette* for the years 1939; 1941; 1942 & 1943.