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CEZAR PETRESCU AND THE TIMES HE LIVED IN

SUMMARY OF THE PH.D. THESIS

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Cezar Petrescu started to write in a time when the Romanian literature was trying to find its own way in the great European culture. The end of the First World War and the formation of Greater Romania triggered deep transformation and renewals in the Romanian society. Literature was also marked by novelty but especially by the desire to be synchronized with the European literatures. It is a period of profound creative effervescence when the Romanian novel starts to rise and develop, the writing improves and the national literature evolves.

Our study's goal is to capture different expressions of the inter-war Romanian society reflected in the Cezar Petrescu's prose, from the cultural studies' perspective. With a rich and varied thematic literary creation, we considered appropriate to bring into our coevals' attention his personality and especially less known aspects of his literary activity. Considering a varied literary corpus and a real gallery of characters that render very different human type, we proposed a new approach of the literary work based on the theoretical and practical support given by the cultural studies.

The study is structured into five chapters that can be divided in two big sections: the first one is theoretical and the second one is based on literary research.

The theoretical part is integrated to the **First Chapter - "What do Cultural Studies mean ? "** and intends to clarify and establish connections between literature and the field of the cultural studies.

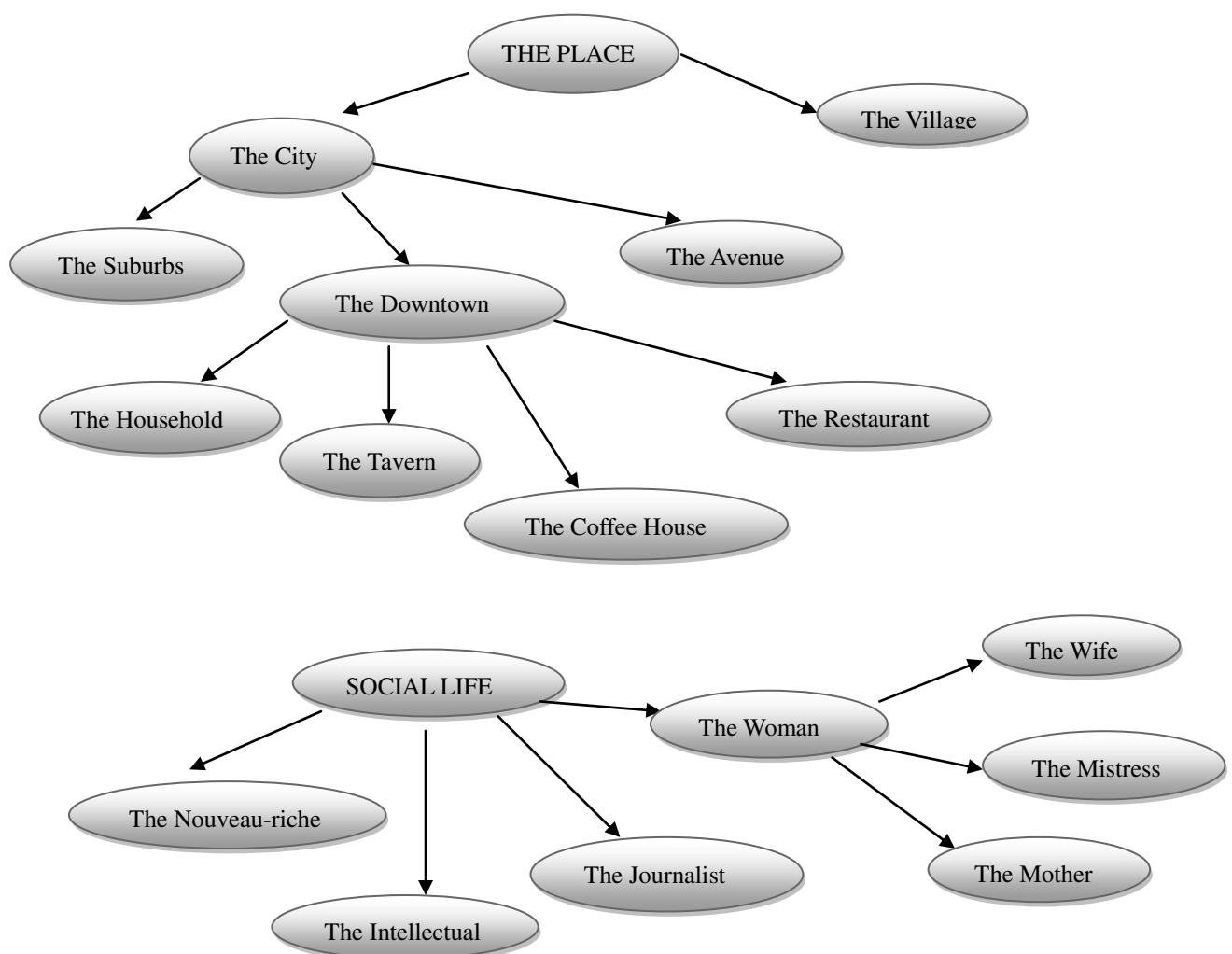
1.1. Literature and Cultural Studies

The American professor, Jonathan Culler, in his new "Literary theory" determines that the last decade brought a reorientation, restructuring and invigorating of the literary studies. The literary theory had a major influence in this change, as theory is seen as a group of "representative practices". Thus, this new field of the cultural studies became an interdisciplinary, complex and hard to define domain. Professor Culler considers that cultural studies and literary theory coexist and work together: "theory is «the theory» and

cultural studies «the practice». Cultural studies represent theory put into practice”¹.

The purpose of cultural studies is to grasp the cultural mechanisms, especially in the modern world: how the cultural productions work and in which way are built and organized independent and group cultural identities in a world of varied communities, state power, mass-media industry and multinational corporations. Basically, “cultural studies include literary studies, investigating literature as a specific cultural practice.”²

Following the structuralism pattern, the life and culture of a society in a certain age, reflected into a literary work, can be watched from different angles, divided on different levels as it is showed below:



¹ Culler, Jonathan – *Teoria literară*, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucureşti, 2003, p.52

² Ibidem



In order to better understand the position and role of the cultural studies we realized a definition of the concept.

1.2. What do Cultural Studies mean ?

In Harold Bloom's opinion "cultural studies didn't gain the academics' respect yet"³. In his work, "The Western Canon", he submits that "what are now called departments of English will be renamed departments of Cultural Studies where Batman comics, Mormon theme parks, television, music and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordworth and Wallace Stevens"⁴.

It's easy to notice that cultural studies became an interesting and "fashionable" research field. This is why some researchers are quite skeptic and ironic about it, considering it's another trendy teach - and - learn method that wants to replace the traditional educational methods. Progressive theorists support and promote the cultural studies because, according to them, culture has become a study object, seen as a general research theme, replacing society. In the academic environment cultural studies belong to social sciences, art and humanities, but also to the fields of science and technology.

Considering cultural studies as a language game we notice a clear difference between the study of culture and the cultural studies. Even if culture is studied in large geographical space and institutions, this is not a part of the cultural studies. These were defined by Tim Hall⁵ as "a cluster or a formation of ideas, images and practices which provide with ways of talking about a certain theme, social activity or institutional place in

³ Brooker, Will – *Teach Yourself Cultural Studies*, NTC Publishing Group, 1999, p.1

⁴ Ibidem

⁵ Tim Hall is a lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Gloucestershire, based in Cheltenham.

the society, together with the forms of knowledge and behavior connected to it"⁶.

Cultural studies set out as a new field, an intellectual project continuously developing itself and it becomes therefore very difficult for some theorists to include it in a certain field of study.

Being spread in very different ranges of activities, cultural studies are defined by Social Sciences professor Tony Bennett as "an interdisciplinary field which can selectively attract perspectives from different fields in order to analyze the relationships between culture and power. (...) Cultural studies observe all those practices, institutions and classifications that inspire a population with certain values, beliefs, capabilities, routines of life and forms of behavior."⁷

The author launches the idea of a strong connection between reality, with its own rules, and morality, with the directions in people's attitude and mindset. The social and especially the political part can use these elements in order to change behaviors and rules, values and notions.

1.3. Characteristics of the Cultural Studies

Although the domain of Cultural Studies is hard to define, this doesn't mean it can study anything. Cultural Studies examine cultural practices and their connections with the political power; analyze social and political circumstances and the culture regarded as object and place of a certain action. It also focuses on the evaluation of the modern society.

1.4. Cultural Studies - Historical Evolution

For a better understanding of the place and role of the cultural studies one must follow their historical evolution.

1.4.1. Initiators of Cultural Studies

Among the initiators of the cultural studies Matthew Arnolds stands out through

⁶ Barker, Chris – *Cultural Studies. Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications Ltd., London, 2000, p.6

⁷ Idem, p.7

his paperwork "Culture and Anarchy" (1869) built on the principle that "society heads toward anarchy and only culture can save it"⁸. In order to sustain this statement he brings out arguments, polemics and satire.

Another writer that influenced the evolution of cultural studies was Frank Raymond "F.R" Leavis, which in his paperwork "Culture and Environment" (1993) written together with his colleague and former student, Denys Thompson, sees culture and society as two very different elements. The first one is some kind of Mount Olympus where one can find the great creators: Shakespeare, Dante, Jane Austin but not James Joyce and Virginia Woolf while the second one seems to be the cheap kitsch of modern life. This book can be considered a Cultural Studies guidebook whose purpose is to teach the reader to take a critical look at the texts and artifacts of the contemporary culture. His approach is new for his time: he asked his students to imagine "what would a Martian think about our civilization if he had only a newspaper to help him form an opinion"⁹.

Unlike many professors that teach nowadays the Cultural Studies, Leavis disregarded the modern culture and asked his students to have knowledge of advertising or journalism just to determine them to understand the strident elements of the new culture, so that they will be able to resist it.

1.4.2. The Founders of Cultural Studies

In Jonathan Culler's opinion, the modern cultural studies have a double origin. The first one comes from the French Structuralism of the 1960's that "treats culture (including literature) as a series of practices whose rules and conventions must be described"¹⁰. In his book, "Mythologies" (1957), he makes "short «interpretations» of some cultural activities such as professional fighting and advertising for cars and washing powder to mythical cultural objects like French wine and Einstein's brain"¹¹. Barthes tries to decode the myths' meaning reaching distant historical sources proving that what nowadays it's

⁸ Ibidem

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ Culler, Jonathan – *Teoria literară*, Editura Cartea Românească, Bucureşti, 2003, p.53

¹¹ Ibidem

considered to be natural, normal, it was created by accident.

The other source of the cultural studies is the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) of the University of Birmingham, founded in 1964, where it was used for the first time the term of "cultural studies". In 1972 the centre published the first edition of "Working Papers on Cultural Studies" in order to "define and to fill a space "putting the cultural studies on the intellectual map"¹².

The founders of this theory were Richard Hoggart (n. 1918), Raymond Henry Williams (1921 - 1988), Edward Palmer Thompson (1924 - 1993) and Stuart Hall (n. 1933). They were all part of the working class and they were focused on the question of "culture" in the British society after the Second World War. The society was going through a period of recovery both material and spiritual when Great Britain was being invaded by the "popular American culture" which deeply influenced the public mindset. These intellectuals considered vital to sustain the simple people's culture, that of the new working class, which was competing with the culture of the higher classes.

Throughout the ages this concept evolved, spread in the entire world and started to analyze all kinds of culture: superior culture, subculture, public and popular cultures, mass culture, youth culture, fashion culture, black culture, postmodern culture, postcolonial culture, etc. Being such a vast domain, cultural studies endorse theories and methods from anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, literary criticism, art theory, musicology, philosophy, political science. The domain of cultural studies borrows what is necessary from every discipline and adapts it to its own goal.

1.4.3. Other contributions

Although some people consider that Roland Barthes and John Berger don't have much in common with the cultural studies (Barthes is often missing from this field's history writings, while Berges is mentioned very rarely) there are some aspects that can make one consider that these two open a remarkable path to follow into this field. Their paperworks

¹² Sardar, Ziauddin; Van Loon, Borin, *Câte ceva despre Studii culturale*, Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucureşti, 2001, p. 26

- "Mythologies" (1957) written by Barthes and "Ways of seeing" (1972) by Berger - continue Raymond William's approach which is the study of modern, popular texts. "What these two have in common is the intention of analyzing the visual language of the contemporary culture. Through this in-depth study they intend to present the ideological senses of modern advertising, photographies from magazines and journalism"¹³.

1.5. Cultural studies - present and perspectives

The progress of the society and the development of mass-media led to the internationalization of the cultural studies, discipline that first appeared in Great Britain. Although its evolution is remarkable and the domain's complexity has increased one cannot think of it yet as a discipline but as a group of intellectual interests which has the advantage of borrowing methods and sets of tools from many different subjects. If it became a discipline, it would lose its freshness and it would convert itself in a subject similar to anthropology, social sciences or psychology. If one considers cultural studies as a group of convergent or divergent intellectual interests, which reflect power in all of its features, they will definitely have a positive evolution. The only way cultural studies can stay committed to their initial pledge is for them to remain an authentic dissident movement, in all possible forms.

CHAPTER II - CEZAR PETRESCU - CRITICAL RECEPTION

Being a very good observer of the society he lived in, Cezar Petrescu began its writing activity in a time when historical, social and political disorders were preponderate. He was considered to be a fierce and impassioned journalist and a realistic writer as many of his novels were inspired by true facts or social realities. That is why he thought that the writer should capture the realities of the when society he lives in because he can't ignore its problems, struggles and adversities.

In this chapter I described the way the novelist's work and personality were received by the critics.

¹³ Brooker, Will – *Teach Yourself Cultural Studies*, NTC Publishing Group, 1999, p.41

According to Al. Piru's statement "it doesn't seem that the critics have a definite opinion when it comes to Cezar Petrescu, a writer with a fruitful literary career extended on more than four decades"¹⁴. Since his market value surpassed the one imposed by the literary criticism many of his contemporaries envied him and understated the quality of his literary creation. One person who constantly insisted on this matter was G. Calinescu and the ones that followed continued his "campaign" with a few exceptions. Very interesting opinions were expressed by Eugen Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, Tudor Vianu, Pompiliu Constantinescu, Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, Camil Petrescu, Ion Bianu, Felix Aderca, Scarlat Struțeanu, Al. Philippide, Nicolae Steinhardt, Perpessicius, Ion Bălu, Horia Stancu, Mihai Gafită and others. In the "Arta prozatorilor români" when comparing Ionel Teodoreanu and Cezar Petrescu's novels, Tudor Vianu notices the merit of the latter: "this space is very much enlarged in Cezar Petrescu's writings: he analyses his characters by getting inside of them and also by observing them from the outside"¹⁵. The essayist admits the role played by the prose writer in the building of the Romanian model of our literature as "one of the author who contributed to the contemporary flourishing of the novel" being "without a doubt the one that had the largest observation field"¹⁶. He was considered to be the only one to create such a complex description of the society of that time. He claims that although his analysis is vast and inspired by many situations and emotional reactions, he doesn't get deeper into their interior. It's a journalist's analysis that remains inside some general limits although the reader could feel that there are deeper and newer layers. Later on, Alex. Stefanescu is more outspoken about his reception in the "History of the Contemporary Romanian Literature 1941 - 2000". He seriously criticized him for concessions made in favor of the political regime installed after 1940, as suggested by his editor and exegete, Mihai Gafita. Nicolae Manolescu expressed his opinion about Cezar Petrescu in his work "Critical History of the Romanian Literature - 5 centuries of literature". He considered him to be the most prodigious of the popular novelists in the interwar period, valued his vast literary culture and the journalistic style notable in all of

¹⁴ Cezar Petrescu, azi, în „Cezar Petrescu, Opere”, vol.I, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti 1985, p. VII

¹⁵ Vianu, Tudor, *Arta prozatorilor români*, Editura 100+1 Gramar, Bucureşti, 2002, p.293

¹⁶ Ibidem

his novels but also the ability to "manufacture" his writings in order to make them seem authentic.

CHAPTER III – CEZAR PETRESCU – PAR LUI – MÊME

This chapter aims to uncover Cezar Petrescu's personality as both man and writer as seen from his own perspective, based on confessions recorded in the written media of his time or in letters exchanged by members of his family, especially his sisters. In his various interviews, the writer depicted the beginnings of his writing career and secrets of the writing process, also expressing his opinion on the role and place of the writer in the period of time between the two World Wars, an era marked by severe social, political, but mostly cultural restlessness. Petrescu used to say that the writer has a determinant role in the evolution of the society and thus is bound to become part of it; although not directly and actively involved politically, "an artist is a citizen of his country, and an artist's life is the life of his times. He is influenced or he himself influences the rhythm of the political and social life"¹⁷. Referring to critics, Cezar Petrescu openly affirmed that "they come from the ones who failed because of writing bad and impossible to read novels"¹⁸, and emphasizes on "the need to see, not to observe, the gift to catch what the camera cannot capture on film - that small still defining detail; that something synthetically valuable that characterizes a person or a context."¹⁹ He is discontent with opinions made public by many critics of his time, who seemed dedicated to speak only about what his writings lacked for, never admitting his talent or giving him credit for his work, on the contrary, considering it entirely nothing more than waste of paper.

When the communism came, Petrescu changed his artistic creed declared a few years earlier and let him carried away by ideology changes, demagogic, and cultural non-values. Letters exchanged with his sisters show us a man crushed from the inside, disappointed by all these changes and accepting compromises. In a discussion with Henri Zalis in 1953 he

¹⁷ Frumușeanu, Victor, *De vorbă cu d. Cezar Petrescu*, în *Dreptatea*, an III, nr. 380, din 16 ianuarie 1929, p.2

¹⁸ *Creator, creație și ... creațuri*, conferință ținută la Ateneul Român în 17 aprilie 1943, publicată în *Mauscriptum*, nr. 4 (5), 1971, p.123

¹⁹ Ibidem

declared: "It is now more than ever that I know I wonderfully failed in the project. I am not looking for explanations for my failure. I only know that I failed to channel my talent, I wasted it"²⁰. He was most obviously exaggerating. His writings were the result of his inner self telling him that his voice would be heard; and it really was heard. His greatest disappointment came from his failing to complete his grand project, better said from his failing in the promise made to his own people whom he always guided towards the discovery of authentic Romanian values. He let himself carried away but his success to the public and forgot about literary values. The writer was perfectly aware of his talent, the easiness with which he managed to express thoughts, to find or create topics for his books; but such talent would have given him a total different status in the eyes of those coming after him should quality, and not quantity, have prevailed when talking about his writings .

CHAPTER IV - LIFE IN THE INTERWAR CITY

Migration toward the city was an interesting issue for Cezar Petrescu because it wasn't an easy thing to do trying to create a future in an unknown city, especially after the war. Reading his paperwork I noticed that the feeling of uprooting and estrangement from home (village, town) dominates many of his characters. The idea that "land alienation is damaging"²¹ stands out from the facts and situations presented to the readers.

This chapter includes some subchapters and describes the rural and urban universe of the interwar period as it is presented in some of Cezar Petrescu's novels: "Calea Victoriei", „Duminica orbului”, „Carlton”, „Cheia visurilor”, Adăpostul Sobolia”, „Apostol”, „Greta Garbo”, „Plecăt fără adresă”, „Oraș patriarhal”, „Miss România”.

4.1. A few comments on the theme, rural and urban universe

The realities captured in Cezar Petrescu's novels are inspired from the life in the territory and the capital city. He borrowed aspects from life in the villages which had already

²⁰ Zalis, Henri, *Un mare scriitor în penumbră*, în *Universul cărții*, an I, nr. 6, iunie 1991, p.3

²¹ Stancu, Horia – *Cezar Petrescu*, București, 1957, p.7

started the urbanization process, thanks to the soil resources. Sometimes in the same novel the action toggles from one environment to another, from one place to another and when the author wants for the reader to know better the character, he takes the action abroad - "Greta Garbo". He directed his attention to the village because this was the starting point for many of his characters. It's the modest, yet healthy, environment where these were formed until teenage years. The writer considers that the village is the healthy environment while the city alters the human morality, perverting the individual.

4.2. The province and the capital city

Referring to the environment where the novelist's characters live we captured the two sides of the city: the province and the capital city, the edges and the centre. Life in the provincial city is only apparently peaceful, it asks you to adapt to it so you can resist, it doesn't allow one to blend in easily. The characters that move from the capital city to live in smaller, more peaceful cities, crave for the rush of the metropolis and tend toward monotony. The lack of major activities, the ordinary everyday routine, the absence of kindness and understanding from part of the others and also an unstable psyche are the factors that many times generate the provincial failure, the feeling of alienation, solitude, isolation. Cezar Petrescu's novels offer plenty of examples: Adina Buhuș („Oraș patriarhal”), Ștefan Sântion, tatăl lui Adrian Sântion („Plecăt fără adresă”), Alina Gabor („Greta Garbo”).

The other side of the city - the capital - finds itself a special place in Cezar Petrescu's novels, being always present in his extended writings: "Calea Victoriei”, „Duminica orbului”, „Carlton”, „Adăpostul Sobolia”, even in „Oraș patriarhal”.

4.2.1. Bucharest as it is seen by other

This chapter presents another side of the capital city, as foreign travelers see it - diplomats, writers - who visited it. Many of them noticed the upsurge of the city to go from being known as "Bucur's citadel" to being a "French metropolis". After spending quite a while in Romania as a French diplomat, Paul Morand appreciated people's hospitality, the charm of the places, the beauty and elegance of the ladies and the

modernization and the capital's orientation toward the Occident.

4.3. "The killing capital"

While foreign people saw the glowing side of the capital because they weren't expecting to find a modern metropolis in the Eastern part of Europe, the local writers and the ones who came to Bucharest hoping for their dreams to come true saw a place which broke destinies and ruined souls. The city "kills" feelings, dreams, hopes, makes destinies crumble and attracts death. We focused on the following novels: "Calea Victoriei", „Duminica orbului”, „Cheia visurilor”, „Carlton” and „Adăpostul Sobolia”. The author informs the readers about many true facts about the existence and life in Bucharest using the character of Prince Anton Musat in "Calea Victoriei". He warns Ion Ozun, the poet who later on became also a journalist and who had just arrived in the Capital city that in order to better perceive the opinions of the connoisseurs of the big city first you must understand its charm "as it was before its of modernization and westernization"²². He claims also that Bucharest is closer to the Orient than it is from the Occident and in order to understand its people and conditions one has to go back to Caragea's and Constantin Moruzi's ages. His argument is that there, in those times, lie "the roots of today's conditions, bad habits and tradition, all that is good and bad, all that life has given us and what it has taken away from us. Westernization is only the sheen: it changed the Mogosoaia Bridge into Calea Victoriei"²³. In this chapter we present the impact it had on the Lipan's ("Calea Victoriei") their moving to Bucharest: for Ana it meant entertainment and upper class people, for Costea the university, for Sabina it was the agitation and fair, while for the last-born, Nellu, the capital was a fabulous garage which included absolutely all types of vehicles. This way we capture the internal metamorphosis of the characters while some of them experience delight, others disappointment or spiritual fall. Even the young writer who came from the province dreaming of professional achievement experiences disappointment because he must accept compromises in order to survive in the great city. For other characters returning to the capital city triggers the reopening of

²² Petrescu, Cezar – *Calea Victoriei. Duminica orbului*, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucureşti, 1967, p.57

²³ Ibidem

older deep wounds. This happens to the young couple in the novel "Dumineca Orbului" - Gina Alimanescu and Sergiu Miclaus. Their destiny together with the lack of faith from part of their families and friends, ruins them and makes them to return to the province city, considered to be the place where the soul heals.

4.4. Calea Victoriei - the path toward glow or decay

Calea Victoriei - symbolic structure for the country's metropolis, the core full of meaning of the heart of Bucharest - whelmed the writer and journalist Cezar Petrescu. In all of his novels where the action takes place in the Capital city of moves from a smaller town to Bucharest, Calea Victoriei becomes a "character" on which others depend. There is a metaphor of Prince Anton Musat that draws our attention: "this tape-worm-like street, twisted and prolonged, wriggling, wrung and mongrel where everybody flutters such a twisted and prolonged, wriggling, wrung and mongrel life"²⁴. In Ioana's Parvulescu's book, Calea Victoriei of the interwar Bucharest is "the city's main artery. It's the street of the fashionable, elegant people. It's the place where twice a day, at noon and in the evening, the people of Bucharest go out for a stroll. The place where you show-off, where you meet your acquaintances and you learn the gossip of the day, you close business deals and, especially, you meet new people"²⁵. Here is where the dreams come true and destinies fade away.

4.5. The Tavern. The Coffee House. The Restaurant.

Here is another facet of the capital - the place where the characters hide away from the bustle and noise of the city, entering a different world. No matter if these are luxury or slum places, they help one forget. Inside these establishments political strategies and journalistic campaigns are planned, one plots or destroys.

4.6. A place to live

According to their rank or social position, Cezar Petrescu creates luxurious homes,

²⁴ Petrescu, Cezar – *Calea Victoriei. Dumineca orbului*, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucureşti, 1967, p.61

²⁵ Pârvulescu, Ioana – *Întoarcere în Bucureştiul interbelic*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2007, pp.114-115

imposing houses and crowded attics. The inside of the houses reflects the characters' soul - Gica Elefterescu, the ministry, owns an imposing house, "the front of the house didn't face the road" and between the house and the street there was a "vast lawn with a fringe of flowers and shrubs, miniature roses. The lawn was separated from the transients by a copper and iron grill fence with pointed spear-shaped iron bars"²⁶. As they became wealthier, his characters changed their lifestyle. The author notices this and describes it in its writings offering the readers the possibility to have a full picture of the character, of the change of their perception on life.

4.7. The Underground

We presented another facet of the Capital city that Cezar Petrescu definitely knew and that subtly appears throughout his paperwork. It's the nightlife in the city: in taverns, cabaret, cheap hotels or on the street. The chic and elegant ladies are replaced by pale women with bags under their eyes. Of uncertain moral ground and forced to live on the streets or in cheap night bars, they join unknown men willing to have fun.

CHAPTER V - HUMAN CONDITION

Cesar Petrescu's work also shows people's inner reaction to social realities. Some of his heroes lose their internal equilibrium and embrace collapse. Praising the writer's value, Perpessicius described Petrescu as "one of the most sensitive witnesses of his time, continuously tempted by problems, truly aiming to paint us the human comedy of our lives"²⁷.

5.1. Human destiny

This section brings into attention the fact that an important role in the evolution of Petrescu's characters' destiny is played by places they leave in: rural areas irremediably touched by urbanization, small provincial towns, and metropolises. Some of the heroes

²⁶ Petrescu, Cezar - *Calea Victoriei. Dumineca Orbului*, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucureşti, 1967, p.298

²⁷ Perpessicius – Mențiuni critice, vol III, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1971, p.189

adapt quickly, others do it with difficulty, and others fail in such attempt; for others, their entire existence falls under the sign of the unexpected. Good examples in this respect are the novels “*Carlton*” and “*Adăpostul Sobolia*” which show how people’s destinies get ruined by earthquakes or wars.

5.2 La femme – an eternal mystery

We showed the important role women play in Petrescu’s novels. Elena Lipan and her daughters - Ana and Sabina – from ”*Calea Victoriei*”, Luminița Vardaru from ”*Întunecare*”, Adina Buhuș from ”*Oraș patriarchal*”, Baby Năgară from ”*Cheia Visurilor*”, Lavinia Madu and Antoaneta from ”*Adăpostul Sobolia*” are just few examples of feminine characters “X-rayed” by the author. Many of them are vital to the evolution of the novel, sometimes even deciding the fate of other heroes in the book. Such are: Alina Gabor from ”*Greta Garbo*”, and Margareta Căuș from ”*Miss Romania*”.

Another feature of Petrescu’s feminine universe is his characters’ interest in fashion. In autumn, when the inhabitants of the capital “poor” out of their houses invading the streets, graceful paced women wearing seasonable outfits closely evaluate each other’s hat lines or soft furs. The writer depicts details in clothing: “dresses were one finger shorter, and hats had three finger shorter brims.”²⁸ That autumn, hats looked like tiny little baskets “their bottoms facing upwards and their handles reaching downwards on the forehead, crossing over the nose, ears and eyebrows”²⁹. Same interest in fashion is to be found in Camil Petrescu, Cezar’s almost “comrade”.

5.3 The journalist

This section brings into attention the condition of the interwar journalist, starting from the idea that Petrescu himself created this character based on his personal experience as a journalist. Various types of journalists are to be found in his novels: some are eager to objectively depict reality, carrying for their own moral verticality; others are obedient to the political power and write articles on command. A representative character is Ion Ozun

²⁸ Petrescu, Cezar - *Calea Victoriei. Dumineca Orbului*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1967, p.42

²⁹ Ibidem

from "Calea Victoriei", a young poet eager to be embraced by the public, who arrives in Bucharest with the same train magistrate Lipan's family is traveling by. Once in Bucharest, the young man experiences moments of profound despair when understanding that no one intends to help him, not even the friend who found him a room at chir Panaioti, in a attic on Calea Victoriei Street, and who secretly tries to steal the little money Ozun had when coming to town. After useless attempts to find a job in several editorial offices, hopeless postponements, despair, hunger and cold make Ozun address the novelist Teofil Steriu – a notorious cultural personality – and not back down until telling him his story. His boldness serves him well, as Steriu decides to actually give the guy a helping hand and recommends Ozun to the press, thus securing the young man ascent and turning him into a notorious and feared journalist. Other journalist figures are the ones of Mirel Alcaz from "Calea Victoriei", Iorgu Hortolomeu and Lucian Potolea from "Cheia Visurilor", and the unscrupulous Filip Filipovici from "Miss Romania" in whose opinion "the public swallows whatever they are given to ingest!"

5.4 The intellectual

This section brings into the spotlight the intellectual's condition within the interwar society, the transformations such personality undergoes under the influence of the social environment it lives in. We presented the teacher in "Apostol" who sincerely cares for the welfare of the community he belongs to. Every intellectual figure in Cezar Petrescu's novels is unique. None of them are spared by the inevitable downfall, but their reactions are different. Despite the fact that Petrescu's intellectuals consider themselves to have reached a desirable financial or social status all of them are living pictures of the defeat and failure. They withdraw in their inner worlds, dissimulate happiness, become more and more skeptic and find relief only between the walls of their private rooms when sitting at their writing tables.

5.5 The nouveau-riche and the corrupt - conquerors and defeated

This section focuses on the desire to achieve different justified or not so justified goals, and on the ascending and the falling of destinies. Paul Năgară from "Cheia

visurilor" is one of Petrescu's characters initially dominated by his thirst for quick and easy money making whose financial power grows simultaneously with the development of the enterprises. But it is this much too easy social climbing that makes Paul change his attitude towards other representatives of the class he becomes part of and for whom riches come from exploiting factories or banks. Step by step along the novel Paul realizes the true purpose of life and decides to retire into the country, away from the tumult of the city.

A special category in Petrescu's writings is that of conquerors and defeated. Constantin Lipan sees himself as a conqueror when in the small provincial town where he works as a magistrate, but once he reaches the capital he comes face to face to his professional downfall. Not only that he finds it impossible to maintain his moral verticality in his relation with the minister Elefterescu, but his family life is heavily affected. Sergiu Miclăuș and Gina Alimănescu return to Bucharest after two years of absence, completely healed on the inside and turned into winners. Still, once in the capital, a series of events bring both of them back down to the level of the defeated: Gina once again falls for the lover who abandoned her two years before, Sergiu returns to gambling. Analyzing Petrescu's defeated we find that all of them share a common trait – when reaching the top they find themselves alone and lose their inner balance, and it is barely at this point they understand how unhappy they are.

5.6. The politicians

Petrescu illustrates the bad habits of this special social category. Being an extremely fervent journalist, the writer does not hesitate to criticize the politicians of his time both in media and his novels, creating them realistic portraits. The political fauna is the omnipresent character of all Petrescu's writings. Life in the capital is presented as extremely demanding for the individual, as it is here that business and politics are tailored. The analysis the writer makes on the political and financial society of Bucharest who disputes oil exploitation without caring for the misery of the ordinary people resembles a laboratory scientific research. Politicians are afraid of bankers, oil magnates and other industrialists because they are aware of the latter's power to change the fate and career of the first, so they allow themselves to be blackmailed and accept compromise.

Such an example is the minister Elefterescu who is blackmailed by the banker Iorgu Hagi-Iordan because of the fake papers used in order to obtain his property, and who in his turn blackmails his employee, Constantin Lipan, forcing him to close Iordan's case.

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