HYBRID SPACES IN THE MODERN CITY: DUBLIN AND BUCHAREST IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at looking at two centres of modernity, seen in space, time and metaphorical representation, in the early twentieth century as illustrated by the Irish writer James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) and the Romanian novelist Cezar Petrescu in *Calea Victoriei* ["Victory Avenue"], published in 1929. The analysis is based on recent research that has entangled the representation of space in cultural and fictional texts with the geographic spaces of the respective historical periods, the reason being that, since time and space are not to be severed, nor are history or geography. The theoretical approach to the analysis draws on views on space as a philosophical category and as a trope of modernity (Heidegger, Lefebvre, Foucault, de Certeau) from geocritical perspectives (Westphal, Tally) which focus on fictional representations of urban spaces that lead to the creation of cognitive maps cartographed by human activities. The two cities under scrutiny (Dublin and Bucharest) reveal striking similarities, never discussed before, in envisaging modernity as a site of conflict between a nostalgic, rustic, nineteenth-century and the dynamic process of constructing a local identity of place connected to history and politics. Moreover, one important point that connects the two cities despite the geographical distance between them is the rise of modernity as a paradigm shift from the spiritual to the commercial, from an artisan-minded space to an industrial one, generally, from the feudal system to a capital-based society, which actually means the shift, I argue, from agrarian domination to urbanization.

Keywords: space, place, geocriticism, modernity, urbanization

INTRODUCTION

Following the views on space as a philosophical category and as a trope of modernity (Heidegger, Lefebvre, Foucault, de Certeau), space has been given a more complex meaning by geographers, philosophers, linguists and literary critics. The complexity of meaning comes from the levels at which space is analyzed. At one level, there is the geographical distinction between ‘space' and ‘place'; at another, there is the opposition between psychic space (the inner space of the mind) and social space (the outer space of the surrounding reality). The distinction between ‘space' and ‘place', however, also concerns the category of deixis and the dialectics of ‘building', dwelling, versus ‘being', existing. The former (the deictic category) refers to concrete spatial location and orientation points.
(ex. ‘here’ – ‘there’, ‘rear’ – ‘front’, ‘up’ – ‘down’) while the latter (the oppositional pair) concerns the sense of **becoming** or ‘dwelling’ which involves the sense of **being**. [1] However we refer to ‘space’, it cannot exist outside the society who produces it, therefore, ‘space’ inherently becomes ‘social’. [2]

In contrast to the linguists’ analysis of deixis in discourse [3], Michel Foucault has introduced the term ‘heterotopia’ to counter-act real space and its coordinates. [4] Heterotopia functions, therefore, as a space of illusion, compensatory of the real, representing what it lacks. The view according to which space is dynamic, whereas place is static has been further exploited by de Certeau in his distinction between ‘map’, the identification of place, therefore static, and ‘tour’, the actualization of space, therefore dynamic. [5]

The various readings of space entailing as many meanings have led to a more complex interpretation of the spatial co-ordinates in modernist discourse. More recent research has entangled the representation of space in cultural texts with geographic spaces in certain historical periods, the reason being that, since time and space are not to be severed, nor are history or geography. Therefore, terms like “spatial metaphors” and mapping, (de)territorialisation, or (re)location, may operate in theoretical discourses at the expense of analyzing material spaces. Andrew Thacker, for example, has been concerned with the analysis of “metaphorical spaces that try to make sense of the material spaces” [6], which he has applied to the historical period of modernity and to the cultural discourse of modernism. In his study, *Moving through Modernity* (Space and Geography in Modernism, 2003), he introduces the term “geographies of modernism” by means of which he discusses space both as material and as metaphorical [6]. According to the linguists’ analysis of space and time deixis, metaphorical and mythical spaces would qualify as non-deictic, irrespective of the kind of discourse they are to be found in (oral, written, literary). [3] Culturally speaking, however, space becomes a more complex concept when distinction is made between the “representation of space” and “representational spaces,” both involving the social dimension [2] or when “spatial forms” and “social space” interact in what may be called “textual space” [6].

As recent research on time, space, geography and history has argued (Carter, Ross, Soja), we cannot separate time from space or history from geography. Similarly, we cannot discuss Modernism only in terms of temporality at the expense of the geographical and social spaces of modernity. The urban theorist whose view on the city has been very productive lately, Edward Soja, distinguishes between three kinds of space that emerged in the modern city and manifested completely in the postmodern metropolis: the real city (Firstspace), the imagined city (Secondspace) both offering incomplete perspectives on cityspace, and the real and imagined city (Thirdspace). The last category that completes the first two is described as “a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual” lived space, “a locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency”. [7] Looking at the city from the Thirdspace perspective, the deictic categories melt into each other, because we not only touch upon the spatial, social and historical dimensions of both the individual and the collectivities, but we are offered a multitude of individual and collective stories to explore, which in their turn reveal deeper insightful views
on the city and its inhabitants. The third kind of space (Thirdspace) offers an infinite number of stories and perspectives on the city, all of them subjective, yet all of them grounded on reality. There is little distinction between the stories of city individuals and communities and the fictional stories about the city. Soja’s approach to cityspace is crucial in his attempt to discuss the postindustrial, highly technologized city as a symbiosis of constructive and destructive energies living together ("synekism") or as a hybrid space including both wild and inhabited areas, also productive of opposing energies. [7] Soja has an economic, cultural and human-geographic approach to the city, which he supports with urban policies and figures. He offers the geographer’s view on cityspace which we find translated into fiction in the postmodernist writers’ reading of the city.

Drawing on Soja, Bertrand Westphal introduces the term “geocriticism,” in 2007, by means of which place and space, whether psychic or social, present or past, here or there, are analyzed in their interconnection in both fictional and non-fictional representations of urban spaces, thus leading to the possibility of creating a cognitive map cartographed by human activities. As Westphal describes it, geocriticism “probes the human spaces that the mimetic arts arrange through, and in, texts, the image, and cultural interactions related to them” [8]. In other words, Westphal proposes a geo-cultural way of reading spaces, whether real, imaginary or both, which builds on transgressivity (with its deterritorialization and reterritorialization components), on referentiality and on imagology. Transgressivity is obviously connected to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of territorialization as a fluid representation of space with “retractable limits or membranes, intermediary or even neutralized zones, and energy reserves of annexes” [9]. In such cases, transgressivity undermines the deictic pairs ‘here’ and ‘there’ and reverses ‘this’ with ‘that’, even ‘now’ with ‘then’. Unpredictable or diluted by disorder, Deleuzian territory is rhizomatic, meaning that it does no longer have a fixed, linear contour, instead it “passes between things, between points”, as it belongs to a “smooth space” [10]. Therefore, a territory rendered incessantly mobile will have an ephemeral demarcation and will be subject to both de- and re-territorialization forces. Transgression will thus turn into trangressivity [11], one of the major elements of geocritical analysis.

Returning to the first stages of the modern city, it is interesting to see how pre-modernity and modernity co-exist, how the deictic categories melt into each other in fictional, individual stories, how the colonial and post-colonial systems subvert the ‘now’ and ‘then’ opposition and how de-territorialization and relocation forces lead to transgressivity and hybridity. This article aims at looking at two modern cities in the early twentieth century, seen in space, time and metaphorical representation, as illustrated by the Irish writer James Joyce and the Romanian novelist Cezar Petrescu in Ulysses and Calea Victoriei [“Victory Avenue”], respectively. While Ulysses (1922) explores space, place and modernity in Dublin, “Victory Avenue” (1929) illustrates the rise of modernity in Bucharest during the same period of time. In deictic terms, these two sites of modernity are placed in the two margins of Europe: “here” (the East) and “there” (the West) if we look at them from Eastern Europe and the other way round, if we perceive them from Ireland. In cultural terms, the two cities reveal huge similarities in representing
modernity as a site of conflict between a nostalgic, rustic, nineteenth-century and the dynamic process of constructing a local identity of place connected to history and politics in the early twentieth century. Moreover, one important point that connects the two cities despite the geographical distance between them is the rise of modernity as a paradigm shift from the spiritual to the commercial, from an artisan-minded space to an industrial one, generally, from the feudal system to a capital-based society, which actually means the shift from an agrarian dominated social system to urbanization.

HYBRID SPACES OF MODERNITY

In the following analysis, I will explore the spatial and historical coordinates of modernity as illustrated by the two texts. The first part of the article concerns the analysis of the relationship between place and space and between past and present in the early twentieth century Dublin and Bucharest. The analysis aims at foregrounding the grey zone in which modernity meets tradition and creates nostalgic thoughts.

The first episode under scrutiny in Joyce’s Ulysses is ‘Hades’. In it, Leopold Bloom is travelling to the cemetery by carriage, when he notices from the window a “pointsman’s back” straightening itself upright after changing the tram track manually to another direction [12]. Bloom thinks that the worker’s job is dull and pointless and wonders why nobody has invented something more automatic. But then, he thinks, the pointsman would lose his job, though “another fellow would get a job making the new invention” [12]. Bloom is aware of the changing times, he obviously does not reject modernity, but he is too much rooted in tradition to accept it easily. He sees modernity as being subversive rather than useful. In another episode, ‘Ithaca’, Bloom is again faced with the modernity of transport and imagines a new tramline scheme to improve the transport of cattle across the city from the cattle market to the railway station:

by connecting the Cattle Market (north Circular road and Prussia street) with the quays (Sheriff street, lower and East Wall), parallel with the Link line railway laid (in conjunction with Great Southern and Western railway line), between the cattle park, Liffey junction, and terminus of Midland Great Western railway. [13]

Though, apparently, Bloom looks like a modern man, the tramline scheme he designs in his mind is rather thought to connect the modernizing present to the rural past of the city than to solve the cattle transport problem in Dublin. Using a tramline to carry cattle would push the up-and-coming modernity to weird, if not absurd, uses.

Throughout the entire novel, Dublin is described as a provincial city, bearing the emblem of colonialism, as a peripheral region would be connected to the core city of the empire. Modernity, which in the novel is illustrated mainly by modern transport, looks awkward and does not seem to fit in the Irish people’s way of life. The relation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ still creates a lot of tension while looking rather like “two competing chronologies” [14] than like a peaceful acceptance of each other. Modernity in Dublin in the early 1920s gives one the impression of having been imposed upon the traditional life of the people, rather than having been freely accepted. Although the trams in Ulysses are described as representing “the ve-
licity of modern life” [13], they obviously co-exist with the images of an older, provincial, somewhat rural Ireland, traceable in the city’s everyday life.

An interesting example to this effect is another passage of the ‘Hades’ episode, in which the carriage transporting Bloom and his friends to the cemetery to attend a funeral suddenly stops. Bloom sees then... a divided drove of branded cattle passing the windows, lowing, slouching by on padded hoofs, whisking their tails slowly on their clotted bony croups. Outside them and through them ran raddled sheep bleating with fear. [12]

The scene looks rural rather than suitable for a modern city. Cattle in the novel are symbolically associated with Ireland itself (e.g. the milk which the Irishwoman brings to the Martello tower in the first episode) and were at the time the major export product. Yet, cattle passing on one of the principal roads of the city reveals that ‘modernity’ is in its beginnings and that Dublin, often referred to as the second city of the Empire after London, is still a provincial town. Cattle impeding the traffic in the city may also be read as revealing the co-existence of two conflicting opposites of city space, the archaic and the modern, which actually generates a hybrid space of two distinct chronotopes, a melting of ‘then’ and ‘now’ into a hybrid present. The description of the Joycean space as a hybrid chronotope, a mixture of tradition and modernity, is the result of Ireland’s uneven economic development at the time as well as of its specific position on the margins of the British Empire [15].

The ‘Hades’ episode is also singled out in the novel as the one in which Bloom is not on foot. Throughout most of the excerpt, he is driven in a carriage. This gives Bloom the opportunity, and the privilege, to see Dublin from the inside, from a transitory, moving space that may be read as heterotopic. In other words, Bloom sees the ‘modern’ face of Dublin (the tramtrack and the pointsman) from a passive, ‘traditional’ perspective, enhanced by the fact that he looks at it from the closed space of a coach in its way to the cemetery where he was going to attend the funeral. The cemetery, a classic example of heterotopia, the coach and the tram, the coachman and the pointsman are the ingredients of a hybrid space in which ‘then’ and ‘now,’ like death and life, are two distinct chronologies seen as melting into each other rather than in striking opposition.

In Cezar Petrescu’s “Victory Avenue,” Bucharest, metonymically represented by the avenue which runs through the city from north to south, is described as a road so crowded with people who were walking and displaying their rich garments that motorcars could hardly move among them. Walking through the crowd, the narrator feels completely lonely and defaced in this strange and nameless world, “crossing passers-by he had never seen before and never will in this life – thousands and thousands of faces of the same nameless person” [16]. The comparison between a provincial town where everybody knows everybody else and the capital city, in which an individual is utterly lonely, unknown and easy to get lost in the crowd, underlines the feeling that modernity

1 Victory Avenue (or Victory Road) is the oldest central boulevards in Bucharest. It was built in the 17th century on the road which connected Brasov to Bucharest and the Danube, used mainly to transport goods. As was customary at the time, it was covered with wooden trunks and called Podul Mogosoaia (Mogosoaia Wooden Road) in 1692. After the Independence war (1877) it was cobbled and renamed: Victory Avenue.

2 All the quotes from the novel are my translation into English.
brings alienation and anxiety “as unbearable as the endless sand dunes in deserts like Sahara, Gobi or Kalahara, because there’s no loneliness more fierce than the loneliness in the middle of a crowd” [16].

In his thorough analysis of the crowd, Gustave Le Bon (1895) describes it as a multitude characterized by the “levelling” of the individuals to the degree of mediocrity, but also having an individual mind of its own [17]. Thus, the crowd may manifest as impulsive, irritable, unreasonable, prone to exaggerating sentiments, as well as like a mass of undistinguishable faces. Le Bon distinguishes between the individual, the crowd and the “crowd-man” the term he creates in reference to the distinct component parts of the crowd [17]. In his description of the crowd on Calea Victoriei, Petrescu isolates the narrator, a crowd-man, from the crowd thus endowing the crowd with some of the features that Le Bon describes, among which, mediocrity and vulgarity. However, Petrescu’s ‘crowd’ is not ready yet to manifest itself, stand up against the establishment and change history as Le Bon prophesied in his famous The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (1895) [17]. Petrescu’s crowd is a multitude who either stroll at leisure along the main Bucharest avenue or move hastily as they carry country products to sell on the city markets. Part of the crowd is made of townspeople, part of it is peasants. Victory Avenue becomes the space shared by the two classes that formed the Romanian society at the time: the wealthy aristocrats and tradesmen on the one side and the poor peasants on the other.

Modernism has been described as intensifying the awareness that the individual and the crowd-man are separate entities and that the two modes of being cannot converge into one mode. The individual in the modern city at the early twentieth century is the stroller, the \textit{flâneur}. While the stroller perceives the city through his own consciousness, paying attention to the smells, the colors and the unknown passers-by, the crowd-man is either the individual who identifies himself with the crowd or the individual who gets lost in the crowd. The latter type cannot escape feeling alienated and lonely, one of the common psychological manifestations of the individual unaccustomed with the complex sensitive offerings of the modern city. Interestingly, the stroller is usually referred to as gendered and identified with a young male, because female \textit{flâneuse} were much less frequent, since unaccompanied women were rarely seen in the streets on a regular basis.

I argue that the narrator in Calea Victoriei is a \textit{flâneur}, not a crowd-man. He observes the people in the crowd, examines their behaviour, attitude and clothing and passes judgements. A provincial man, the narrator is both fascinated with, and frightened by, the “new look” of Bucharest. The real charm of the city, according to the Bucharesters he meets, existed before its superficial modernization and westernization, because the city had always been seen to be closer to the Orient than to the Occident [18]. The exact time when modernization began is actually specified in a comparison between the present, the nineteen-twenties, and the past, forty years before the time of the narrative, which means the end of the nineteenth century.

Occidentalization is only a luster [says one of the characters, a Prince]; it has turned Mogosoaia Wood Road to Victory Avenue…. What else? Compare what was then with what is now! ... In the past, a folk band played serenades to Chera Duduca. Chera Duduca still exists, but
now the serenade sounds different and it is no longer played by a folk band. And names like Arghira, Rozalinda, Kalmuca have been replaced with Dolly, Renée, Mary and Nina. [18]

Place and space, present and past melt into each other when the name of a street or of a person is changed. The new cartography, still imbued with the past, reveals the existence of a new form that hides the same old content. The places have changed names, the customs may have changed, yet the people are still the same even if they dress differently to follow the western fashion or have purchased expensive cars ("Rolls Royce, Buicks and Packard") [18] to replace their former carts and carriages. According to Petrescu, modernization means, first of all, vanity and snobbery because what had changed was the form, not the content. Like Dublin, Bucharest is described as a hybrid space in which the ‘old’ and ‘new’ intermingle and as a chronotope of modernity that features the lustre of the ‘new’, behind which the ‘old’ is still pregnant.

One of the characters of the novel, Prince Musat, muses on the new modern world not as a world that had suffered real changes, but as a world that resembles the wheel of fortune: “We go in circle in the same world. The difference is that some people go up and other people go down; yet all have changed their demeanour and fashion” [18]. While forty years before (during the 1880s), the ladies went shopping to Mogosoaia Wood Road to find silk and jewels brought from Turkey, now, in the 1920s, they go to the same place to purchase material which bears French labels, indicative of the place the products had been bought from: Rue de la Paix, Faubourg St. Honoré, Avenue de l’Opéra [18].

Bucharest, which presents a new façade, a new form, but does not show any substantial, deep change in content, becomes a hybrid space of modernity, mixing the past with the present, the country with the city. While Dublin still feels the colonial traits of the Empire, Bucharest is still indebted to the Turkish colonial system. Like Dublin, it can be looked at as the capital city of a peripheral province that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Dubliners, who, according to Joyce, still have mixed feelings about the British colonialists, the Bucharesters, it seems, have ceased looking at the East as their model and started appropriating the West in fashion and habits. Hybridity in Bucharest does not concern only the deixis of time, but also that of space, thus creating a fascinating zone in which East and West meet, crushing, almost eradicating the genuine features of the local.

METAPHORICAL SPACES OF MODERNITY

Modernity in Dublin and Bucharest is represented both symbolically and metaphorically in the two novels under discussion. In Joyce’s Ulysses, the site, which may be geographically considered to be the heart of Dublin, is the place around Nelson’s Pillar. Besides the fact that an early twentieth century advert for the Dublin United Tramways Company has a picture of Nelson’s column with the caption: ‘The Nelson Pillar, the Centre of Dublin Tramway System’ [19], the ‘Aeolus’ episode starts with a short passage describing the tram system from Nelson’s column, as follows:
Before Nelson’s pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskeagh, Rathgar and Terenure, Palmerston Park and upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold’s Cross. The hoarse Dublin United Tramway Company’s timekeeper bawled them off.

Rathgar and Terenure!
– Come on, Sandymount Green!

Right and left parallel clanging ringing a doubledecker and a singledeck moved from their railheads, swerved to the down line, glided parallel. [19]

Joyce very carefully enumerates the stops in the tram circuit which starts in front of Nelson’s pillar. The place-names mentioned in the passage, each representing a ‘spatial story’, map the city supporting and being supported by the tour discourse. With the enumeration of the stops, the tour description brings to the mind the history of each particular place through its mere mention. The geographical map is thus completed by the history of each location that exists on it; in its turn, place-history intermingles with people’s stories forming a complex cartography of cityspace (or Thirdspace, as Soja would call it [7]). According to Michel de Certeau, however, place-names create a semantical order of cityspace, “operating chronological arrangements and historical justifications.” Yet, they “detach themselves from the places they were supposed to define and serve as imaginary meeting points on itineraries which, as metaphors, they determine for reasons that are foreign to their original value.” [20] Thus, place-names may become metaphors for a certain space and be charged with diverse meanings, some held ‘in suspension’ and some deferred from their original value. If we read Nelson’s Pillar as a spatial metaphor for Dublin, then it forms, together with the place names, a map of the city which, not only mingles real space with human lives and their stories, but it also overlaps imperial British history on Irish colonial one.

Since the pillar was, at the time, the start and the terminus of the tram lines in the city, both the monument and the space it occupies could be read as a symbolic representation of modernity (the heart of the tramway system) and as a metaphorical representation of the colonial price paid for this modernity: the pillar is a print of the Empire on its colony, a vigilant eye and a pin in the heart of the city [21]. The pillar does not stand only for the victory against Napoleon’s attempt to create a new empire to which he might have eventually annexed Britain, but it also symbolizes the everlasting English power and becomes a warning to those who may wish to rise against it. Therefore, the original meaning of the pillar (commemoration of Nelson’s victories) is held in suspension, while new meanings are foregrounded. These new meanings support and are supported by the cartographical placement of the column and by the historical and political tension it produces as regards the colonial relation to the British Empire, which it clearly represents.

Paradoxically, Nelson’s pillar was erected in central Dublin in 1908-1909 by public subscription much before the worldwide famous Nelson’s column was built in Trafalgar Square in London. The pillar was decorated with the names and dates of Nelson’s victories and offers, from its top, a beautiful panorama of Dublin and its surroundings. The statue, on the other side,
bears the basic meaning of representing the admiral and the symbolical meaning of illustrating the English army’s victory over Napoleon’s fleet that led to the French Emperor’s final defeat. However, it represents a victory of the British Empire whose centre was London. The building of the commemorative pillar in Dublin and its placement in the centre of the city show, on the one hand, that Dublin was still part of the empire and reveals, on the other, the tension between the basic historical and political value of the pillar and the new historical and political values which it has acquired in the Dublin space. At narrative level, Joyce’s mentioning the pillar in the ‘Aeolus’ episode is equally important: placed in the middle of the busy, apparently chaotic, atmosphere of the metropolis, it is charged with extra political meaning. As a symbol of the English power, Nelson’s pillar illustrates what Foucault describes as “the relations of power-knowledge” [4]. Therefore, the fact that the column is mentioned at the beginning and end of the episode as the starting and closing point of the tram circuit may be read, metaphorically, as a panopticon, as the English rulers’ surveillance ‘eye’ on oppressed Dublin.

The constant, noisy movement of the trams is paralleled by the walking rhetoric of the characters, while both are transferred into the flux of modern life. In ‘Lestrygonians’, for example, while crossing the front of Trinity College, Bloom notices the incessant movement of the trams: “Trams passed one another, ingoing, outgoing, clanging. Useless words. Things go the same; day after day; squads of police marching out, back: trams in, out.” [22] The dynamism of modern life seems to move from geographical space to the space of Bloom’s mind that perceives it like a never-ending flow whose shape and size constantly change. The result is an internalized city space which corresponds to the real, actual space of the city, but sums up the relations between the inside and the outside, between interior consciousness and exterior space, between symbolical places and metaphorical spaces, and between personal and national identity.


No one is anything.

This is the very worst hour of the day. Vitality. Dull, gloomy: hate this hour. Feel as if I had been eaten and spewed. [22]

To Joyce, the city is a dynamic interrelation between buildings, the space between them, people, history, memory in a flux that represents life. As the passage above is a wonderful description of the city through Bloom’s consciousness, it follows that the stream of consciousness is nothing else but the stream of life which in its turn is demolished, built and rebuilt by the city itself. In this constant flux, modernity intermingles with life and consciousness devouring them as fast as it devours space. The status of modernity in Ulysses is paradoxical: the more it grows into life (by devouring the space reminiscent of tradition and the past), the more nostalgic
of the cannibalized space the consciousness seems to become. Modernity without freedom, whether individual or national, is obviously anachronistic in Joyce’s text.

In Petrescu’s *Calea Victoriei*, the chrono-tupe of modernity in its metaphorical representation is, obviously, the avenue that gave the novel its title. Unlike Nelson’s Pillar, which stands for a pin thrust in the heart of Dublin, yet represents both modernity and colonialism, *Calea Victoriei* symbolises the heart and spine of Bucharest in which the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, the ‘genuine’ and the ‘fake’ intermingle to create a city that raises contradictory feelings: love and hate. To the outsiders, the characters who had never been to Bucharest, the city takes the form of their imagination grounded on what they read, told or heard. It is “either a Babylon of perdition or an enchanting oriental Paris,” [23] according to each character’s wish, dream, and expectation. To the insiders, those who were living in Bucharest and witnessed its transformation from a small oriental town into a budding metropolis, the city was both lovable and hateful. It was lovable because it combined the old, genuine charm of an oriental city with a shallow modernity imported from the west: the automobile, fashionable clothes and the latest kinds of popular entertainment (music, dance, motion pictures); it was also hateful because this modernity was only a lustre, covering, unsuccessfully, the vices and manners of the people who were displaying an attachment to the west and its values but behaved in a less educated, less refined way.

Travelling by the modern means of transport, the automobile, in the company of a real Bucharestian, the narrator creates a map of the city from one of its suburban area, Baneasa, to the centre located on Calea Victoriei:

The automobile swerved in front of Minovici Villa, joining the other cars driving on the two lanes, all new and shiny, all large and expensive, like a new car exhibition, like a vanity contest. Some cars were going to Baneasa, others were coming from Baneasa. The bells from the villa tower were chiming clearly in the autumn air. [18]

The cars coming from Baneasa were heading to Mogosoaia Bridge and Victorie Avenue, described by the Bucharestian as: “this tape worm of a long-oblong, crooked, curved, twisted, crossed street on which people show off their equally crooked, sinuous, twisted, ill-crossed lives” [18]. The crooked avenue is the witness of the destinies of people from all the walks of life, because that was the place on which rich and poor, tradesmen and peasants, artisans and gypsies would walk every day, with or without purpose. That was also the place where everybody would gather on the country’s national day or on the celebration of St. George, the country’s patron saint at the time. [18] But, the sinuous form of the avenue stands for the crooked life of the people living in the capital city, as if the people were unable to live a straight life on a crooked street. As a metaphorical representation of modernity, through the interaction of spatial forms with social space [2], *Calea Victoriei* becomes a textual space, whose map is fictionally and metaphorically cartographed by human lives. Interestingly, they are so diverse, that the Bucharestians have developed opposing feelings towards the city they inhabit: they hate the vices but love the town, they complain about the absence of monuments and of a specific architectural style, but they cannot live elsewhere. The love and hate relationship with the
lived-in space of the city, especially with the central thorough-fare that had grown as by-streets of the two sides of Victory Avenue is compared to a worm who cannot leave the place it has already ruined because it “loves the putrefaction in which it was born” [18]. It looks as if such a crooked spine can hardly hold a healthy body.

In another passage of the novel, Victory Avenue is compared to a tree with the root in Lipscani (the place where the avenue actually ends) and the many branches (the side-streets) growing towards the centre of the city and forming its crown. [24] As on the side-streets one can find banks, exchange offices, retail shops, and expensive shops – that is money and wealth [24], the tree stem, which connects the branches among themselves, provides the sap that keeps the tree alive and, though it, the city spine: Victory Avenue. The tree, like the road, is crooked, but if anybody cut it down, the city would certainly collapse. It is this hybrid space that keeps the city alive and the financial vein that keeps it modern.

CONCLUSION

Although Bucharest and Dublin are situated at a distance from each other and have developed quite differently throughout history, they show common features in their struggle to rise to modernity. Both show the signs of the still existing countryside (the cattle in the middle of Dublin, the peasants roaming on the streets of Bucharest). Both have been or still are part of an empire and the traces of colonialism are heavily felt. Lying, at least metaphorically, under the vigilant eye of the panopticon (Nelson's Pillar), Dublin’s reaction to colonialism is mainly through the rise of nationalism, a pregnant manifestation throughout the novel. Bucharest, on the other hand, is still struggling to get rid of colonial habits while trying hard to straighten its spine (both literally and metaphorically) on its way to modernity.

REFERENCES


