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climbing. One year later, Blaier's *The Unfinished House* (worth quoting mainly for having launched one of the future stars of the Romanian screen and stage, the highly sensitive Valeria Seciu) discreetly and lyrically described the tormenting stages of a couple's separation, the wasted love and the disenchantment of a girl betrayed in her dreams. But the true breach into topical films devoted to the younger generation was due to Blaier's feverish *Mornings of a Sensible Youth* (1966). Its hero — an adolescent at the age of "breath-taking stunts" and of seeking one's own identity, in conflict with everyone, from his own family (very honourable workers at that) to his fellows on the building-site where he has taken a job, as a demonstrative gesture after failing to enter the University, actually at loggerheads with himself — inaugurated in the Romanian cinema a long gallery of youngsters at the age when feelings — be it enthusiasm, disappointment, joy, sorrow — burn at the same red-hot temperature; the superb age of convictions defended at all costs but also the age of wrong steps that may irreversibly doom one's life. After *Then Came the Legend* (1970) — a delicate story of loneliness and of love sacrificed on the altar of professional duties by a man and a woman long beyond their prime — Blaier returned to the world of youth with the pungent *Picture Postcards with Wild Flowers* (1975), for which he also wrote the script, drawing upon an actual fact; forced by her married lover to get an illegal abortion under sordid circumstances, a young girl dies and the midwife's daughter — innocent witness of the tragedy — commits suicide. Blaier forcefully pleads for male responsibility towards women as well as for more humaneness of the relationships within a world increasingly indifferent and ever more deeply concerned in immediate material profits. Revealing an unexpected proclivity for social lampoons by sharply portraying, with an entomologist's acuteness, the fauna of small suburban profiteers and racketeers — he has offered not only one of the most daring domestic contemporary films, but also his strongest approach to the genre. One year later he reached the climax of his whole career with the parable *Through the Ashes of the Empire* — a screen version with deep philosophical connotations of a novel by Zaharia Stancu (1902—1974). The tribulations of a teen-ager and a swindler crossing the Balkan peninsula scorched by the raging first World War, on their way home after having

escaped from a German train of prisoners, became in Blaier's approach a subtle, complex, disturbing meditation on the very human condition. At a first level war itself appears as a quasi-ontological curse — borne with mute resignation by the civilian population or assumed with bitter hatred by the groups of guerillas. At a second level it works as an acid-test revealing characters, from individuals up to a nation.

Although Lucian Bratu (b. 1924) had inaugurated with his *Tudor* the series of "national epic", unexpectedly enough he has subsequently focussed exclusively on contemporary arguments. *This Charming Girl*, *Through Dusky Ways*, *The Town seen from Above* and *The Bride on the Train* may stand as a genuine tetralogy dedicated to "the condition of woman". Each of them finds out in "ordinary" lives of "ordinary" characters the drama of this "ordinariness" spread like a layer of glue upon the fate of sensitive beings who attempt some short-lived escape. In *This Charming Girl* (1967), the urge for adventure of the heroine (impersonated by an explosive pop music star, Margareta Pislaru) breaks out equally from her desperate attempt to become an actress and from her exhibitionist love affairs, no matter how. *Through Dusky Ways* (1972) discloses the haunted existence of a petty typist, divorced and bringing up her two children, her petty but regular defeats recorded day after day along her road in the semi-obscure of life, in that grey area between happiness and unhappiness, between fulfilment and failure, the deplorable vanishing of a last romance promptly and brutally crushed by the selfishness of those around her. In the leading part, a melancholy Margareta Pogonat sketched with accuracy one of the most credible feminine characters on the Romanian screen. Lucian Bratu also entrusted her with the difficult part of the woman-mayor in *The Town seen from Above* (1975), intended, though not entirely achieved, as a close-up on the responsibilities and loneliness of a woman who has to overcome the prejudices of her misogynous collaborators. Last but not least, *The Bride on the Train* (1980, script by D. R. Popescu) pinpoints the psychology of the young ones at the age of crucial questions, with undisguised sympathy. This time a waitress' heart is torn between a hard-working and commonsensical crane operator and his former fellow worker who had given up the routine of every morning checking-in in favour