

Research Article

Two Theatrical Paradigms: Communism and Post-December Reality. Tendencies in the Evolution of the Present Day Theatrical Phenomenon

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Abstract: [My paper focuses on the theatrical phenomenon during the communist and post-communist period in Romania, by performing a contrastive analysis between the communist patterns and the new developments in modern theater, which occurred after the revolution of 1989. My interests in this analysis are related to the influence of censorship and to the evolution of theatrical thinking, undergoing a process of ideological relief, with extensive reference to the contemporary theater manifestations. In what the modern influences on Romanian dramaturgy are concerned, I am interested in linking the European theatrical developments with the Romanian ones, and discovering whether the relation is mimetic or inspirational. My project goes beyond the theoretical approach of the above mentioned phenomenon, by highlighting the status of directors and actors in modern theater and addressing issues related to the performance in itself, with its constraints and moments of bliss.]

Keywords: [The key words of this thesis are: theatre, performance, text, paradigm, communism, post-communism, ideology, totalitarianism, realism, socialist, censorship, censor, spectator, show, theatrical performance institutions, Romanian theatre model, repertory theatre, canon, traditional, mentality, aesthetic, new theatre, new generation, contemporary dramaturgy, contemporary playwright, writer-playwright, director- playwright , actor- playwright , theatre critic-playwright, statute, actuality, themes, alternative theatre, independent theatre, British theatrical model, theatre current in-yer-face, blood and sperm, brutalists, harsh language, violence, shock, drama, tangaProject, theatrical enterprise, consumerism.]

Introduction

Argument

The present thesis stems out of the desire to analyze certain changes that the Romanian theatre has underwent in the past few decades, transformations associated both with the political regime change and with the influx of western theatrical paradigms. The motivation for this endeavor lies in my experience as an actor, avid reader and passionate theatre spectator.

Detecting that the analysis of the course of dramaturgy after 1989, corroborated with a contrasting approach of communist and post-communist drama, have thus far occupied a modest position in what concerns the preoccupation of theatre exegetes, we have decided to dedicate an ample study to communist and post-December theatrical avatars.

We are especially interested in the transition from the rigors of dogma and the tyranny of censorship to the sudden desire of burning all the previously built bridges (canon, conventions, clichés, etc.), as well as in assessing whether or not the revival of the post-'89 Romanian theatre is devoid of substance, a mimetic model assimilation.

It is not our intention to capture the details of almost an entire century of dramaturgy, with all its turbulences and nuances, sparks and disappointments, revelations and breakdowns, but to highlight certain key aspects of this period. Since we do not wish to set forth a socio-political x-ray of the respective period, we will instead point out the most important influences on the evolution of literature, emphasizing the way in which theatrical undertaking has been shaped when in contact with historical windings.

The thesis also focuses on the necessity of re-theatricalizing drama, a widely debated topic in the past sixty years, but also the necessity of re-theatricalizing the Romanian dramatic play, an equally stringent, yet less approached topic.

Meeting these challenges is even more difficult since the communist period immortalized life in stereotypical patterns, robbing it of its vitality and spontaneity, turning theatrical art into a substanceless truth. Thus, on a background of esthetic sterility determined by the difficulty of bringing an honest text to the stage, the number of dramatists decreased drastically, mirroring the fact that communist drama rejected and perverted reality.

The year 1989 meant an equally unfavorable positioning of drama. A subject to variability and continuous form negotiation, dramaturgy was now seeking new reference frames and forms of expression. Under the influence of the newly acquired freedom of thought, drama shaped itself either as an 'elitist' form of art – for the theatres which could afford such a status, benefiting by subventions, or as a commercial-sensational hybrid, a strain for those that still hoped to finance

themselves. Taking over slang language as a programmatic instrument and a new inventory of themes adapted to a consumption society, the new generation of dramatists tried to redimension the Romanian theatrical art.

Post-December pursuits imply a repositioning in relation with western theatrical paradigms, an aspect we have focused on along the course of these pages. In order to study the new relation between Romanian dramaturgy and western tendencies, we have chosen a detailed analysis of the British theatrical paradigm, which sets forth an example of fresh, authentic, and diverse pattern, in tune with societal changes. Moreover, the analysis of this model is justified by the fact that many Romanian playwrights choose to study in London where they implicitly absorb mentalities and paradigms.

Apart from the diachronic approach we have presented above, the thesis concomitantly relies on identifying the way in which the old and the new, conformity and rebelliousness, simulation and life manage to coexist in the newly shaped drama. We have thus wondered to what degree have communist mentalities held on, how did the relationship between the theatrical act and the audience modify once freedom of speech was gained, to what point can we still talk about censorship (even if not an ideological one) or the way in which the new, original dramatic text is picked up by the radar of dramaturgy.

This critical floundering is drawn up against the awareness that the battle for dramaturgy (or, as Alecsandri put it, for the 'national repertoire') continues to the present day, especially within the context of the major esthetic mutations cast loose after 1989.

Methodology and Thesis Structure

The present paper's keywords are: *theatre, stage play, text, paradigm, communism, post-December reality, ideology, totalitarianism, socialist realism, censorship, censor, spectator, performance, performance institution, Romanian theatrical paradigm, repertory theatre, canon, traditionality, mentality, esthetics, the new theatre, the new generation, contemporary dramaturgy, contemporary playwright, dramatist-playwright, dramatist-director, dramatist-actor, dramatist-theatre critic, status, actuality, thematic ensemble, alternative theatre, independent theatre, British theatrical paradigm, in-yer-face theatrical movement, blood and sperm, brutalists, rough language, violence, shock, dramAcum, tangaProject, theatrical undertaking, consumerism*. Given the vastness of the subject and the debate over the two theatrical paradigms (communism and post-December reality), as well as the influence of the British theatrical paradigm, we have structured the present thesis in conformity with a well defined plan layered on three chapters.

Our first course of research - *ASPECTS OF THE POST-WAR ROMANIAN THEATRE. 1948-1989* - deals with certain aspects of ambiguity reflective of this period, by highlighting the ideological influences which have penetrated the theatrical milieu, as well as the playwrights' freedom of manifestation. Given that ideological pressure and censorship were determinant elements in what concerns the destiny of the Romanian theatre evolution, the first part of this chapter is

dedicated to the reenactment of the ideological censorship mechanism in theatre and implicitly, its forms of resistance. Furthermore, the present research plans to identify and describe the thematic mutations inflicted upon dramatic literature by ideological rigors. Starting with the variations generated by state interference in the artistic act, a periodization of the autochthonous dramatic phenomenon has been made: the first Sovietization wave theatre, with its thematic slogans, followed by the ideological 'unfreezing' period which marks the first post-war theatrical revival in the context of certain openness to cultural Europe. The third stage covers a 'cultural mini-revolution' demanded by the higher echelons of the single-party; it is characterized by a new set of interdictions and implicitly, cultural survival strategies.

In order to emphasize the theatrical reaction to the totalitarian regime we have assessed the plays and playwrights representative for the post-war period, indicating specific themes and means of stylistic expressiveness.

Once we have established an objective image of Romania's authentic dramaturgy in 1989, the year that marked the fall of the communist regime, we will move on to the following chapter entitled *CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN THEATRE AFTER 1990*. It is our purpose to identify the transformations underwent by the Romanian contemporary theatre after 1989, its redefining and restructuring following its emancipation from communist restrictions. The first step is the precise identification of the Romanian theatre's condition in 1989, at the fall of the communist regime. The beginning of the chapter thus revolves around the following notions: the performance institution and the new economic challenges, developing theatrical infrastructure – independent companies, the internationality of the '90s and the fever of cultural exchanges, the influence of creative unions, the repertoire during the transition period, the symptoms of the Romanian dramaturgy after the change of the totalitarian regime. Next, our attention focuses on determining the reasons for the identity crisis characterizing Romanian theatre and implicitly, the artist, in the first post-December decade. We have thus focused on the impact generated by the elimination of political restrictions from the national theatrical phenomenon and the reflux resulted from confronting a new reality characterized by constant movement and change, where truth needs not be occulted for the decoding of the spectator's imaginary realm. Once the coordinates of this crisis have been traced, we have focused on the obstacles encountered by dramatists in their attempt to suggest new directions and artistic approaches, by analyzing the centralized Romanian theatrical paradigm and the mentalities inherited from the former regime. Concurrently, we have thus discussed the relation between the Theatre and the State, illustrating the benefits of this rapport along with its perils.

The following sector of analysis is reserved to Romanian contemporary dramatic literature. We have started by assessing some of the most important projects in the revival of the authentic national dramaturgy, in order to establish their impact on the Romanian theatrical milieu. We are also dealing with the professional relation between the Romanian dramatist and the theatrical undertaking in light of the necessity to renegotiate the position of the playwright in relation to his/her own work and the final artistic result – the performance. Some

Romanian dramatists remain prisoners of a mentality denoting a certain personal myth arrogance: by considering themselves writers and therefore creators of a text telling its own story, they do not find it necessary to put in the extra effort that would become a determining element in what concerns the success of the performance to be staged. We are thus stating the fact that the dramatic play is nowadays absorbent of the *work in progress* concept, representing merely a part of the complex theatrical performance mechanism. The focus then switches to established dramatists, preoccupied with the continuity of the authentic theatrical phenomenon, as well as with the specific features of texts attempting to establish an authentic connection to a world which is historically reforming itself. From this point of view, we have operated with a selection criterion that includes plays which somehow systemize the multitude of texts, uneven in substance and value, considering the acclaim they received at the time of their writing. According to this approach, we have examined texts awarded as the Year's Best Plays by UNITER, those which managed to capture the attention and receive the recognition of the guild and were chosen for either stage performance or radio drama adaptation. According to the above mentioned criterion, we have intensely focused on those plays which are part of a constant and assumed dramatic activity, as is the case of Dumitru Solomon and Iosif Naghiu. A special place is held by Matei Vişniec, to whom we have dedicated an ampler study. Along with his winning play at UNITER, we chose to discuss other texts written by the playwright after 1989. The exception is justified by Matei Vişniec's vast and generally acclaimed dramatic activity, a playwright whose works have frequently been staged and to whom theatre festivals have been dedicated, in light of the international recognition of his talent and vision.

After establishing the dramatists who managed to adapt to the change of paradigm, it has been our purpose to discover the new playwrights who demonstrated the necessary qualities in order to be validated as dramatists, along with their capacity to create a theatrical movement powerful enough to literally influence Romanian theatre. All the branches of the Romanian theatre, namely stage direction, acting, theatre criticism and dramaturgy aided its revival. Hence, based on these parameters, we have operated a classification of esthetic directions assumed by the national dramaturgy and performance. From this perspective we have analyzed the specificity of the writings belonging to the four types of dramatists, operating with a text selection based on the above mentioned criterion.

In the third chapter, entitled THE BRITISH DRAMA PATTERN, we have highlighted the influence of the *in-yer-face* movement and the Royal Court playwriting workshops in London on Romanian theatre. To begin with, we have illustrated the philosophy of the Royal Court Theatre in what concerns the relation between the playwright and the theatrical undertaking by analyzing the *work in progress* concept. The next step has been a short inventory of the brutalist theatre history, in light of the similarities and differences characterizing the Romanian theatre. It is important to mention that the comparative approach of the two theatrical models starts from a few basic premises. Firstly, the similar freedom of speech conditions have led to an intense dramaturgic, stage reaction and secondly, the similarities are

regarded in the context of the British paradigm influence over the new generation of dramatists after 1989. Analyzing the defining features reflected by the works of the young British brutalists is backed up by numerous exemplifications. The final stage consists in highlighting the influence of the *in-yer-face* movement on the young Romanian dramatists in light of the violence and the necessity of a rougher theatrical language, characteristic to this movement. In order to accentuate the way in which Romanian playwrights saw fit to adapt the literary speech to the new social realities conveyed by the British paradigm, we have selected three national dramatists who attended the courses of the Royal Court Theatre: Ştefan Peca, Saviana Stănescu and Gianina Cărbunariu.

In the last recapitulative chapter of the thesis, FINAL CONCLUSIONS, we have pointed out a series of observations resulted from our analysis of the two theatrical paradigms and the position of the Romanian theatre and dramaturgy in the European context. Thus, it will be possible to determine if Romanian drama is entering a new stage of evolution, one in which it will be able to reform its theatrical system so as to keep up with the innovations and challenges brought about by free access to information.

Aspects of the Romanian Post-War Theatre 1948-1989

Methodological Preamble

It is the primary aim of the present chapter to provide a supplementary contribution to the documentation and approach of what concerns the Romanian post-December theatrical phenomenon, seen as a reaction to communist dramaturgy, affected by the censorship of the totalitarian regime.

The present chapter does not set out to convey a complete monograph of Romanian dramaturgy between 1948 and 1989. It is neither an attempt to prospect or chronologically describe the Romanian theatrical phenomenon within the above mentioned timeframe. The nucleus of the analysis set forth by the other chapters consists in the attempt to capture certain aspects reflecting the ambiguity of the respective age, by means of pattern analysis that will illustrate the ideological influences which have penetrated the theatrical environment as well as the dramatists' freedom of manifestation. Choosing such patterns is conditioned by different methods and criteria, which in turn are determined by the object of analysis and by the highly nuanced chronology, despite the continuity of the political regime. In light of this argument it is necessary to review the ideological and political aspects which have generated certain stands in representing reality and subsequently reflecting it in theatre.

The first half of this chapter examines the ideological censorship apparatus inflicted on the theatre and implicitly, the opposition to it. The re-enactment is oriented towards highlighting the specificity of prohibitive means coordinated by the totalitarian system and applied to the theatrical production by (documentarily) realigning the mandatory layout of the theatrical performance. Furthermore, the research aims to discover the strategies used by dramatists to resist this violent interference. We intend to evaluate the degree to which value preservation and the configuration of a

theatrical art, able to oppose the ideological clichés of the age, has been successful. The *red thread* of the chapter is the constant attempt to identify the ways in which the complicated censorship mechanism intercrossed with the survival of the Romanian theatre.

The end of this analysis sets out to convey an objective image of the authentic Romanian dramaturgy in 1989, the moment which marked the fall of the communist regime. An assessment of the plays and playwrights representative of this period, with the indication of specific themes and favorite stylistic expressive means, is meant to outline the reaction expressed in dramaturgy to the totalitarian regime. An essential element in decoding the subtle meaning of those moments of crisis and confusion that characterize the beginning of the post-December theatre is the relationship between the theatre and state power.

Ideological Censorship in the Romanian Theatre. The Beginnings

Despite the fact that 'Romania's subordination plans had been set out between the warsⁱ, the year 1948 brought about the materialization of these plans through the official coming to power of the Romanian Communist Party (*Partidul Comunist Român*, or PCR), which, with the support and protection of the Soviet Union and Stalin himself, intensified its offence and installed an absolute control over public life, exerting a terror which brought Romania to its knees. Meanwhile, after the establishment of the People's Republic, the peace treaty between the USSR and Romania was ratified in a manner that favored the occupant party, being replaced with the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperationⁱⁱ, signed on the 4th of February 1948, a treaty which legalized the country's political and ideological servitude, aside from its economic and military one, thus strengthening the influence of the newly installed totalitarian regime.

For totalitarian systems, organization is a synonym for militarizationⁱⁱⁱ, and so, within the society reforming process, the single-party applied drastic measures characterized by forceful and widely spread actions that culminated in the detention and even suppressing of unreformable elements.

The Political and Historical Context

The political landscape started to change radically beginning with July 26th 1946. It was then that during the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee meeting, Vasile Luca^{iv} uncompromisingly announced the directive according to which all historical parties were to be suppressed. The National Peasants' Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc* or PNT) was hence dissolved on July 14th 1947 after the Tămădău frame up^v. The Romanian Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat Român*, or PSD) lost its identity, merging with The Romanian Communist Party on February 21st -23rd 1948, thus becoming The Romanian Workers' Party (*Partidul Muncitoresc Român*, or PMR). Through this union the number of PMR members increased considerably and the party set itself up as Romania's single-party which gradually managed to annihilate the other political formations and imprison their leaders.

Concomitantly with the elimination of political adversaries, important legislative changes were made to allow the functioning of a dictatorial regime. The Constitution^{vi} was redefined according to the communist doctrine (April 14th 1948), guaranteeing a societal organization that would mirror the soviet model based on centrality and totalitarianism. Accordingly, on June 11th 1948, all major means of production, soil and subsoil resources were nationalized^{vii}. When it came to exerting absolute control over the individual and the country, the Party left nothing to chance, not even the freedom of the spirit - Religion and The Church went under state administration according to the new Law of Religious Denominations, promulgated August 4th 1948^{viii}. By widening its influence over yet another sector of civil society, the activists sought to annihilate this important source of resistance opposing Sovietization. The entire legislative ensemble was modified so that coercion would become official.

The setting up of military tribunals, especially The General Directorate for the Security of the People (*Direcția Generală a Securității Poporului*, or DGSP) following the pattern of soviet political police NKVD, set up by the 221/ August 30th 1948^{ix} Decree marked the beginning of an era ruled by terror. The old administrative system underwent a fundamental ideological restructuring. All public sectors, be it justice, industry, the army, the banking system or the police turned into militia, were purged with no exception.

Concomitantly, an avalanche of illegal arrests^x, made up trials or legal abuses was initiated, even culminating with executions at times. Following a notable campaign of arrests in the March and May of 1947, representatives of The National Resistance Movement^{xi} were caught and imprisoned in the cellars of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; other 3000 arrests were made on the night of 14-15 May, targeting mainly members of the former Iron Guard movement. In July, a new wave of arrests was pointed towards former police officers. Further abusive methods followed: illegal confiscation of goods, forced evacuations or the suppression of political liberties for those in favor of freedom of speech.

Under the pretense of democratization, the Romanian civil society was entirely confiscated. The force of the communist mechanism basically consisted in a series of kneeling and alluring tactics, combining intimidation and socio-professional marginalization, blackmail and jail threat, etc.. These unorthodox methods were blended with a tireless ideological struggle striving for indoctrination and a so-called political 'reform'. The Party (note that name designation was not even necessary) is to the state what the heart is to the human organism. The heartbeats are inherently related to the existence of every cell. The Party's decisions are inherently related to the life of every individual. There is no domain where they are inapplicable', stated Romanian painter Irina Deșliu^{xii}.

Culture as a Communist Propaganda Tool

The interest of the communist party in culture was undeniable. After its brutal ascension to the political stage and its arbitrary access to power, it urgently needed legitimation and the cultural propaganda mechanism was meant to serve that

precise purpose. In order to exert complete control, the party needed to be in charge of the ministry, where the majority was held by the social-democrats. After a strategy of political scheming, the latter were co-opted by the single party, only to be later eliminated^{xiii}.

The national cultural arena became particularly appealing to the Party, as a means of conveying a twofold offensive: it threatened and seduced at the same time, all the while favoring corruption.

1948 marked the beginning of a campaign dedicated to eradicating the past. Holding the political monopoly, the party thus decided to start a violent war against the old Romanian civilization. 'Romania's entire cultural structure is dynamited^{xiv}, declared Romanian literary historian Liviu Malița. Communist abusive methods go as far as to dissolve the Romanian Academy, renaming it the Romanian People's Republic Academy and excluding from among its members internationally acclaimed personalities like Ion Petrovici, Gh. I. Brătianu, Lucian Blaga, who are replaced by indoctrinated party activists. Numerous cultural institutions that 'pumped the state dry spreading the fascist, reactionary poison^{xv} are disbanded (starting with the Royal Cultural Foundation) and in their place, 'a network of progressive cultural institutions, athenaeums and community cultural centers' is created. The old administration boards are now run by the party's loyal emissaries. Libraries undergo a massive political purging process and the freedom of the Romanian press is completely annihilated. Those intellectuals whose convictions contradicted the ones imposed by the party are thrown in jail, while writers and journalists are even sentenced to death. In order to consolidate the success of the ideological product there is an emphasis on discrediting and renouncing all values, by prohibiting the dissemination of 'everything which is of utmost importance, be it still alive or immortalized, from Blaga to Voiculescu, from Noica to Mircea Vulcănescu^{xvi}.

Mircea Eliade notices that 'for the first time in its history, the Romanian people is dealing not only with an exceptionally powerful adversary, but with one determined enough to resort to all means in order to spiritually and culturally tear us to pieces and eventually, assimilate us^{xvii}. Writers are asked to go beyond a superficial political adherence and merge their personality with the identity of the party: 'Public political adherence must be followed by a private intimate adhesion, until it profoundly rallies to the proletariat's world view and helps fight and modify social class balance...' ^{xviii}. Formal adhesions are rejected and punished as the end purpose is the complete monopolization of the Romanian cultural life. 'The process of artistic ideological clarification is triumphantly expanding^{xix} and in the end, both the past and the present are annihilated, making room for an unpromising new beginning.

Party Literature and Ideology. Thematic Dogmatization

Conditioned by the Sovietization system, Romania had to eliminate all internal fascist traces and simultaneously popularize the victorious Allies. The concept of 'socialist realism', a literary standard imposed by the totalitarian party, stirs a great deal of controversy in the epoch. The definitions in use at the time are mostly ambiguous and encapsulated in general phrasings and common literary exemplifications,

accompanied by the writer's proof of respecting the guidelines. The concept is essentially defined by what it is not, namely anything which is not forbidden or criticized, no matter its artistic value.

Generally, socialist realism is advanced as a plan of conservative instructions, through which the firm belief that Marxist-Leninist poetics are subordinated to an adapted mimesis so as to guarantee the efficiency of its propagandistic and educational purposes is constantly reconfirmed.

Literature thus loses one of its most important functions, that of discovering and substantiating ideas and universal stances of human existence. It no longer functions as an experiment or an advancement vehicle, but instead turns into a socialist propaganda engine. On the other hand, the entire national literary heritage must go through the Marxist-Leninist filter in order to be considered truly valuable. Throughout his/her literary endeavor, the writer, still in search of his/her ideological maturity, 'profits by' the soviet support, conveyed by the already validated USSR models. In one of his articles, Aurel Baranga gives thanks for the Leninist teaching which 'opened his eyes with its light^{xx}. So does Mihai Beniuc in *The Party's Guideline for the Writer (Îndrumarea partidului pentru scriitor)*^{xxi} or Demostene Botez at the Bucharest Party Conference in February 1964. With its repetitive quality, the literary guideline protocol will remain unchanged throughout the years.

The press^{xxii} of the epoch also mirrors literary pressures, as reflected by Alexandru Talex's *The Example of the Soviet Writers (Exemplul scriitorilor sovietici in Jurnalul de dimineață*, year 6, no. 29, 15.12.1944). Ion Biberi announces *The Eve of a New Literary Era (O nouă eră literară începe in Timpul*, year 8, no. 2732, 25.12.1944) and in his article, entitled *What Can We Learn (Ce putem învăța*, in *Contemporanul*, no. 59, 7.11.1947), George Călinescu speaks about the advantages of the influence exerted by socialist literature. Shortly after, some titles clarify the relation between the two cultures: *Soviet Literature, Our Friend and Teacher (Literatura sovietică, prietena și învățătoarea noastră* in *Scînteia tineretului*, no. 131, 6.9.1949) or *Ideology, The Artist's Main Concern (Ideologia, problema de bază a artistului)*^{xxiii}. Young Romanian writers get advice from their soviet correspondents along the pages of *The Young Writer (Tînărul scriitor)* magazine. On the other hand, literary pressures also work backwards, generating public stands against everything that is considered inconvenient, as reflected by the ARO Cinema incident^{xxiv}, a strategy later speculated by activists when censoring Lucian Pintilie's adaptation of Gogol's *The Government Inspector (or Revizor)*.

The eternal Marxist-Leninist doctrine holds the absolute, sacred truth and, in virtue of its laws and regulations, it entitles the single-party to eliminate any useless element considered unscientific or subversive, all the while claiming that whatever is non-defining of it has no artistic value either and is subject to criticism and banning.

'For literature, devotion to the party is the certification of its verity, artistic quality and social influence. We should not shy away from updating party themes and issues to literature^{xxv}, Nicolae Moraru encourages. To begin with, it is only the

shaping doctrine that has artistic personality along with the approved writers who borrow it, and then in time, personality is given by certain genres and literary styles, deprived, however, of originality. Finally, a reversed proportional relation of the two artistic elements will emerge: through his/her personality the writer will be the one guaranteeing socialist teachings.

By means of coercion, the totalitarian party decides and asserts its own prefabricated truth, establishing the literate's reference to it. The writer's freedom of manifestation is conditioned by his/her faithful and constant observance of the sacred text and any digression from it calls for repentance and harsh self-critical evaluation. The end purpose is a complete and unconditional identification with the absolute truth. An interesting aspect however is that artistic coercion most times generates simulation.

One of the extreme tactics used by the single-party to accelerate ideological 'leveling' is the deliberate cancelling of any difference between the ideological text and the literary one, even if the former is scientific in nature. Creating a socialist literature is in alignment with Leninist slogans – *Down with the non-party literates! Down with the superhuman literates! Literature must become a part of the proletarian cause!* – so that, in the end, it 'becomes a part of the general proletarian cause, the <wheel and screw> of a grand and unique social-democratic mechanism, activated by the conscious avant-garde of the proletariat. The literary question must become an integrant part of the organized, planned and unitary work of the social-democratic party'^{xxvi}.

Trying to answer the question of whether ideology can be created through art or not, George Călinescu warns against the confusion hovering over the two terms, stating that the properties of art remain immutable: 'We are not operating with a theoretical distinction between direct ideology and that conveyed by artistic fiction. Both cases point to socialist ideology. But there are differences in what concerns the means of conveyance. The ideologist shouts: let us increase the production.

The painter portrays people striking anvil with the hammer [...] Art as ideology is a false expression [...] Art is not ideology because it does not make use of ideas, but of sounds, feelings and colors'^{xxvii}. Călinescu is nevertheless considered a bourgeois critic apparently converted to Marxism and his arguments are quickly discarded by J. Popper in two of his articles, where the latter claims literature is pure ideology, not something created 'in the spirit of ideology'^{xxviii}.

Publicly reconfirming doctrine monopoly soon turned into a habit and even into a mandatory task for all party members and especially active writers. The protocol for these manifestations will remain unchanged until the fall of the communist regime, independent of the adjustments made within the party's administrative board. Subordinating literature to totalitarian ideology also remained unchanged throughout the communist regime. The only accepted modifications concerned allowing the writers to manifest their subordination in any manner and style proven functional to fit this purpose. Writers whose artistic personality had been shaped before the party homologation are forced to go through

a process of reconfiguring their artistic vision, which further translates into minimizing the quality of their previous works of art in order to show the later positive impact and evolution of their work after it has benefited from the party's support.

The main postulated idea is that the Marxist-Leninist doctrine offers a better understanding of the world, giving the writer an opportunity to reach higher values through his/her conformism. Savin Bratu is one of those writers who commend such a progress: 'In literature, social realism is capable of reaching the supreme artistic understanding of contemporary social reality, particularly because it is guided by the proletarian Marxist-Leninist party, particularly because it has become an integrant part of that unique and great intelligence leading society towards communism, on account of its objective laws of development. The party spirit is thus an essential and absolute condition for artistic knowledge'^{xxix}.

Literature's subordination to state doctrine, built on the Marxist – Leninist concept of two antagonizing political cultures stirred a series of reactions among literates: 'There is no capitalist art and proletarian art. Art is either good or bad, just as there aren't two ethics, only what is ethical and what is not'^{xxx}, states *Liberalul (The Liberal)* daily paper.

Along the following decades, the regulation process is refined. In the 60s, most inconvenient books are eluded; the *Scânteia* communist newspapers abandon their articles infused with ideological instructions while the less influential literary and cultural magazines take over commentaries concerning the literary and ideological qualities that a work of art should possess. The so-called cultural revolution desired by Nicolae Ceaușescu, as reflected by the well known July 1971 Theses, only managed to reinstate the guidance protocol with its measures of eliminating 'errors', though the anticipated changes were barely noticeable in the literary climate. Overall, the ideological guidance reflects the degree of freedom that the artist is allowed in order to actually serve his/her own purposes. Great variations are noticeable in this respect. One of the interesting aspects of the epoch is the focus on the literate, reflecting the party's intention to manipulate the latter for propaganda purposes. The literate's activity is limited by the obligation to deal with imposed themes which are to be treated strictly according to preset formulas. Thus, the writer, the literate is turned into a humble executor of political commands. The relationship between The Party and The Artist is compromised by the former's perversity of inviting the latter to contemplate reality in order to understand his contemporaries and to offer solutions for their problems. However, this invitation is actually completely insincere and useless, for the solutions are already known and set by the party and the artist is merely given a chance to repeat current patterns. Additionally, the party permanently asks the writers (using diverse means and threats) to provide concrete evidence of their activism, proofs of their absolute loyalty.

In order to exemplify some of the favorite stereotypes related to activism and demanded by the regime we have chosen an excerpt from the editorial titled *The Quinquennium, Our Law of Life and Creation! (Cincinalul, legea noastră de viață și creație!)*: 'What have I done today to praise the work and the fight of the working man who animates the quinquennium?

What have I done today to open his eyes and strengthen his vigilance against the class enemy? What have I contributed today to the strengthening of his creative work, of his determination to preserve peace?'^{xxxix}. Another specific feature of the artist's political engagement is that his/her work is always subject to review and examination. Writers who do not display a clear interest in stringent political issues are targeted here and warned that isolation is not an alternative.

The post-war writer is regarded in a social context, where fighting the class enemy brings about the nation's progress. A writer's party spirit is understood as 'the conceiving of a work of art which exerts a certain effect on the public, influencing it towards social progress – that is to say, towards creative work, the distinction of good and evil, friend and foe...' ^{xxxix}.

Ideological rigors also extended over soon to be published works. Every manuscript handed over to a state publishing house underwent a censoring process, closely assisted by 'specialists'. Hence, we are hereby pointing to the writer's self-censorship. To begin with, the writer approximated what was allowed and what might be rejected, knowing that all throughout the editorial process, further emendations would follow. The author was thereby the initial object of pre-censorship, not the manuscript. The latter also failed to escape a subjective evaluation, depending on the author's political status: demands were much lenient, of course, in the case of politically devoted writers. Verifying the manuscript also involved confronting it with certain classified lists and indices which often times resulted in changing politically interpretable meanings, eliminating elusive terms or even entire chapters considered unallowable. Vigilance was heightened in the case of problematic political works which were analyzed by several anonymous, external reviewers. When they wanted to turn down the publishing of such a text, the editors called on much more dogmatic reviewers, or even some of the writer's opponents. The same procedure was followed in order to validate manuscripts.

Given that the author was in charge of pre-censorship and the publishing house handled the censoring process, it was up to the literary critics and sometimes even the readers to censor the works post factum. They could write anonymous articles or letters, signaling any political discrepancies, sufficient to exclude a manuscript from the public circuit.

We have only highlighted here the editorial mechanism of handling manuscripts, having left out the specifics of particular cases. By extension, the same procedure applied to the press.

Under the communist regime, literature's main mission is no longer artistic, but political. It aims to educate the literate population towards performing state directed tasks and to illustrate the achievements of the new ideology manifested in all fields – artistic, social or economic. Dogmatic themes are defining for Marxist propaganda.

Thematism, consisting in Marxist-Leninist teachings turned into party policy, is prioritized to problematics. The party considers that any literary approach breaking loose from totalitarian dogmatism is either a distortion or a corruption of the ideological message. Intimist artistic approaches are to be avoided, as the end purpose is suppressing the artist's

individual cogitation, which could otherwise detect the shortcomings of a substanceless literature and thereby reject it.

Under these conditions, writers suspected of having bourgeois views do their best in avoiding to explore reality and rather moderately focus on political issues or the fight of the new society for progress. By willingly or involuntarily isolating themselves from social contact, they instead choose to focus on study cases, exceptions or problematizations.

Striving to renew the national literary climate, activists initiate various campaigns to subordinate reality to convenient thematics. They concomitantly disavow bourgeois thematics and suggest new themes – quite general, initially – pertaining to past political conflicts and The Second World War. Contrary to expectations however, the strategies used to replace previous themes with new ones are not as efficient as expected: even notable, devoted writers shy away from implementing the new literary themes, preferring to leave the task to young amateurs.

No one seems interested to bring contemporary themes to the readers' attention, by portraying communist cellars and the shortcomings of a world affected by hunger, poverty, misery, terror or abuse. Any initiative of this sort, even a schematic one, is condemned for the author's naturalist and negativistic view which 'distorts' reality. On the other hand, those works which barely illustrate naturalness are considered much too schematic.

The pressing demand for a new thematics rather points to a lack of interest, be it specific, general or detailed. At the Second Congress held by the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR), Gheorghiu-Dej castigates the writers: 'Literature cannot be isolated from the permanent interests of the working class. Our country has no use for literates who are politically unengaged or those who pretend to be sleeping in an ivory tower. For its continuous progress, our country needs active, engaged writers'^{xxxix}. Later on, Nicolae Ceaușescu remonstrates with the literates for their lack of interest in the new themes: 'We keep waiting for the writers to come up with something, but I see they keep us waiting. A ballet on this theme of co-operativization, a play to depict the village of the past, [...] and all the uneasiness related to co-operativization'^{xxxix}.

Considering that literature is intermingled with ideology, it is understandable why the literary failures of acknowledged writers are justified in light of their efficiency in conveying the political message. Most 'side slips' have to do with maintaining a bourgeois mentality. The new literature also suffers from the impact of foreign influences over socialist teachings which prevent the writers from efficiently implementing the sacred dogma. Nevertheless, failure holds an important place in the complex propaganda mechanism, allowing and demanding party guidance. Through failure, the Party not only maintains, but cultivates suspicions related to the writers' ability to conform to the literary-ideological requirements laid off by the single-party in order to consolidate the authors' subordination.

When it comes to works claiming the superior level of obeying social commands, dogmatizing the theme becomes a qualitative criterion. Holding the monopoly, the single-party can make any assertions to support the so-called superiority of the new literature, even if, in reality, its literary products are rather poor or flawed, partly due to the fact that devoted writers do not credit other types of writing.

Overall, some of the themes favored by socialist realism are: fighting the decadence of the old world, illustrating the present only through the lens of social progress, showing political mutations or socialist competition in the work field. The end of 1948 marks a literary downfall: many of the established writers' works disappear while new themes take over national literature.

Throughout time, thematic obsessions demonstrating devotion to the party will remain a priority for the officials in charge of party propaganda. Concurrently, various nuances appear and themes are redefined, denoting a tendency to disqualify the esthetically sacred socialist teachings, which were previously untouchable.

The official literary themes of the working class can be found in the 1950 directive^{xxxv} forwarded by the Writers' Union to every branch in the country: a) the consolidation of the working class, b) reinforcing the alliance with the working peasantry, c) intensifying the fight for peace by cultivating hate against the war-inciting imperialism, d) socialist industrialization, e) outperforming the State Plan, f) the new work attitude of the new man, g) socialist competitions, h) the great constructions: the Canal, the Electrification, i) increasing productivity, j) the fight for more coal and petrol, k) emergence of collective farms, l) stimulating children's literature, m) the school, the army, the women, the youth, the intellectuals, n) creative attendance to festive celebrations – the 6th of March, the 8th of March (Women's Day), the 18th of March (The Paris Commune), the 1st and 9th of May, June 11th (1848 and the Nationalization of industrial units), August 23rd, 'The Spark' day, October 2nd (International Day of the Fight for Peace), November 7th, the 5th, 13th, 21st and 30th of December.

The impact of Stalin's death on March the 5th 1953 generates a certain relaxation in what concerns the relationship between the USSR and subordinate countries. Consequently, up to 1957, Romania also goes through a period of relaxation and its culture flourishes during this time. The peaceful climate encourages cultural exchanges with western countries, introducing the Romanian public to important theatrical, choreographic or musical performances. In 1956, the editorial space enriches with an interesting volume of *Universal Literature Studies (Studii de literatură universală)* followed by the publishing of a series of volumes with the same title, starting with 1960. An elaborate collection titled *The Classics of Universal Literature (Clasicii literaturii universale)* publishes authors like Homer, Virgil, Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Molière, Corneille, Goethe, Schiller and various translations appear in print within *The Library for All (Biblioteca pentru toți)* collection.

Concomitantly, the activists who seek to accelerate the production of dogmatic works try to rectify the way writers

relate to theme, as an artistic notion. Hence, the poor representation of the new literature is not only a consequence of imposed themes, but of their scarcity: the attention mainly focuses on agrarian and historical themes treated in a schematic manner. In their defense, writers claim that it is precisely their lack of freedom in what concerns thematic options that generates such a literary sterility. Nevertheless, it is the writers who are blamed and not the officially imposed thematic mannerism. Still, communist attempts to rectify the way thematics is understood will prove inefficient in producing satisfactory literary works.

Theatre and State Power

In what concerns the relationship of the theatre with state power, the Romanian Communist Party^{xxxvi} emulates the Leninist model to the letter, implementing it since its instatement at the head of the country. Wanting to invent a tradition, 'this party without legitimacy'^{xxxvii} unscrupulously credits itself with actions or initiatives which were never its own. For instance, in a report^{xxxviii} drawn up in 1949 by Nicolae Moraru, the general secretary of the Ministry for the Arts and Information, the single-party is assigned a considerable influence over the inter-war period (non-existent in reality), despite the lack of such efficient means of political pressure. This is possible however, 'because whoever holds a position in the political hierarchy is a Marxist who knows everything and needs no professional or cultural knowledge; anything she/he undertakes or communicates is a cultural act and a high rank professional activity'^{xxxix}. Literature is also restructured. Barbu Lăzăreanu points to the Russian influence noticeable in Ion Creangă's short story, *Ivan Turbincă*^{xl}. Falsely pretending to act in the name of the majority (which it fails to consult as a matter of fact), the totalitarian party abusively claims the right to evaluate and most importantly, to evaluate mankind's entire cultural and political thinking.

The party's special interest in theatre is relatively recent and strictly politically motivated. PCR's fight to gain control over the Romanian theatre only started after August 23rd 1944, its main objective being part of the plan to gain absolute state control, a plan coordinated and supervised by the Soviets.

In the same report mentioned earlier and presented to Minister Eduard Mezincescu and all the theatre managers in the country attending the general conference, Nicolae Moraru^{xli} commends PCR's Central Committee for the support offered to the Romanian theatre by the Propaganda and Agitation Department. This support is also reinforced by the 'wise' guidance provided in the first post-war years by Comrades Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, whose directives are so thoroughly implemented by Iosif Chișinevschi^{xlii}. The nature of this so-called support remains ambiguous, as there are no clear specifications in this respect. Iosif Chișinevschi's involvement in 'supporting' the Romanian theatre is analyzed by the *Tismăneanu Report*^{xliii}: 'he was an outright intriguer, an opportunist whose slavish submissiveness flattered his superiors'. On the other hand, 'he was vindictive and despotic with his subordinates'. The same report claims 'he was a perfect image of Stalinism', 'unconditionally devoted to the USSR'. As secretary in charge of culture and propaganda, 'he spoke Romanian with syntax slips and a noticeable foreign accent'.

Despite Moscow's support throughout this period (1944-1947), The Romanian Communist Party fails to gain the complete totalitarian control it was striving for and would only reach in 1948. It essentially lacks the means of implementing the socialist dogma. Nevertheless, Nicolae Moraru considers important steps have been made: the founding of The People's Theatre (Teatrul Poporului) – 'focusing on propaganda and agitation'^{xliiv}, the subordination of The Municipal Theatre (Teatrul Municipal), the opening of two new theatres, (Army and Giulești Theatres) and the Uranus auditorium, seen as 'an aiding element' for The People's Theatre activity or the long-expected taking-over of The Theatres' General Directorate from the Ministry for the Arts and Information, etc.. The methods used to secure these victories are also mentioned: repertoire constraints, tax policies or confiscating auditoriums in order to force actors performing for private theatres to migrate towards state controlled institutions.

The above mentioned 'victories' and measures are however incapable of 'reforming' Romanian culture and drama. Most notable actors continue to perform in private theatres and The National Theatre maintains its inter-war artistic profile.

As the theatrical milieu was refusing to conform, it was high time to implement a radical executive program that would transform the Romanian theatre, from a commercial, 'decadent' institution into an instrument of socialist education for all classes.

Theatre and the State Structures for Political and Ideological Censorship

The fundament of this program is censorship, the party's main instrument used to convert the theatre into a genuine propaganda tool.

The entire Romanian cultural arena is seized by means of this control strategy, inherited from the old dictatorial regimes. If the first list of banned publications^{xliv} released March 1945 is rather 'modest', the one in July 1946^{xlvi} contains approximately 2000 titles of Romanian, Hungarian, French, German, or Italian books and publications (a 156-page brochure released by the Ministry for Information). The third list, dated May 1948 and published by the Publishing and Control Service, under the Literary Directorate of the Ministry for the Arts is 'enriched' with other 6 000 titles (amounting to a total of 8000 titles) and informing that it was far from being finalized.

Works of important writers, such as Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, I.L.Caragiale, Lucian Blaga are sent to the index. In his journal, writer Pericle Martinescu notices that 'all Romanian writers, starting with Eminescu and continuing with those who barely manage to squeeze their names in the newspapers and magazines dedicated to the middle class, along with all foreign writers [...] are banned. And those who are given the freedom to write and publish go through so much chicanery, controlling and censorship, that it is no wonder that the autumn of 1948 found no original Romanian books in the progressive shop windows of the happy and free Romanian People's Republic'^{xlvii}.

In order to function in the literary world and to avoid official banning, even the writers who are accepted by the system must give up those elements of their artistry which are not in alignment with the party's program. Established literary figures are checked on and sanctioned at every level of their work, starting with their 'view on life' and ending with their literary style. We can thus have a better understanding of the campaigns to ban great inter-war writers still alive: they are repudiated not only because of their non-Marxist world and art views, but also because strong personalities are hard to regiment. There are numerous writers who approve of the social tendencies, but who refuse to apply the imposed thesism which corrupts art. By simulating a democratic setting, the party asks the writers to reflect their convictions in their works on one condition: the latter should stay true to the spirit of the epoch. Consequently, remarkable figures such as playwright Camil Petrescu will restrain from ample literary manifestations.

Accepting that censorship is necessary and invoking classic principles, Mihai Beniuc only asks for 'a literary control in the sense of promoting superior literary works, both in what concerns the quality of language and the ideas and attitudes expressed' together with 'the banning of those works which have spread confusion and have supported anti-democratic tendencies in the country'^{xlviii}. The censorship of the epoch however goes beyond the classic crossing out of the text, as activists choose to implement interpretations which are not subject to any official restrictions. Therefore, theatre critic Alice Voinescu stops writing for The Royal Foundations Magazine arguing that 'whatever you write is censored. I would understand if they crossed out parts of the text. But instead they add, distort and compromise the text'^{xlix}. Soon enough, censorship comes to know many layers: it is either suppressive or preventive, but always the main tool of the party which constantly tries to blend art and ideology together, up to the point where they become one.

In 1948 new measures are taken to exert control over the Romanian theatrical phenomenon. The Ministry for the Arts and Information takes over the functions and duties of the former Ministry of Propaganda, including the theatre and its related activities. On one hand, the ministry is subordinated to the Council of Ministers and on the other hand to PMR's Central Committee through the Propaganda and Agitation Department (mimicking the Agiprop model first imposed by Lenin in 1917). A 'supreme and infallible authority'¹ governs all these structures – the party's general secretary, whose decisional power is almost unlimited. PMR's Central Committee together with its press control organs play an important role in directing literature and the arts. Its Literature and Arts Bureau advances suggestions and directives, fully supervises the domain, receives indications, reports and information from every central or regional department in the country. The department and its bureau are run by ideologists activating in the party's decisional-executive group entitled The Political Bureau (Biroul Politic). Initially, the policy is drawn by Iosif Chişinevschi, Leonte Răutu, Miron Constantinescu and external counselors, known as mentors of literature and political commissars: Traian Şelmaru, Nicolae Moraru, Nestor Ignat, Mihai Novicov, I. Vitner, Sergiu Fărcăşan, etc. The department closely and efficiently

collaborates with a special state security department, its competences mirroring the soviet model.

Through the politicization of institutions meant to gain complete control over state administration, the party places 'devoted soldiers' in key positions: Arts minister Ion Pas (novelist, translator, member of the Romanian Writers' Society and president of the Radio Broadcasting Company) is replaced by Octavian Livezeanu^{li}, whose position will be taken over by Eduard Mezincescu^{liii} after only one year. On June 9th 1948, three new members are appointed at the head of the Arts and Information Department: Nicolae Moraru, general secretary of the department, authorized to sign on behalf of the minister, Petre Iosif^{liiii}, manager in charge with running the Literature Department (later manager of The Literature School) and Marcel Breslașu^{liv}, manager in charge with running the Artistic Teaching Department. The ministry has the important task of selecting a group of professionals from among communist supporters, to supervise the entire theatrical activity and repertoire in Romania.

Hence, there are two organisms performing these tasks for the Ministry of the Arts and Information: The Superior Council for Dramatic Literature and Music Productions and The Theatres' General Directorate.

The Superior Council for Dramatic Literature and Music Productions (founded in virtue of Law 265/1947^{lv}) mainly aims 'to encourage a repertoire closely connected to our people's turmoil, to eliminate harmful plays and to mobilize and strengthen the trust in fellow men'^{lvi}. Among its first members we recall N. Kirișescu (general manager of the theatres), Zaharia Stancu (writer, general manager of The National Theatre of Bucharest), Ion Biberi (manager of the directorate in charge with Letters and Popular Artistic Manifestations), Sică Alexandrescu (theatre manager), Al. Kirișescu (dramatist) and Traian Șelmaru (theatre critic). Referring to the Council's membership, Simion Alterescu notes that 'the majority of its members draw their inspiration from the healthy ideology of the working class' and 'when analyzing the theatrical phenomenon in light of our historical reality', 'they identify the deep roots of any deficiency, they distinguish harmful trends and offer constructive solutions'^{lvii}.

Therefore, the responsibility of promoting Romanian drama, be it authentic, soviet or closer to that of other popular democracies belonged to this leadership forum.

The second organism in charge of controlling the theatre, subordinated to the Ministry for the Arts and Information is The Theatres' General Directorate, established according to the 3015/1945 Law^{lviii}. Its attributions, redefined by the 62/1948 Decree^{lix} are to 'a) guide and to supervise the artistic and administrative activities of all National Theatres, all theatres subsidized by the state, as well as all private theatres and theatre companies, settled or mobile, b) to authorize auditoriums, settled theatre companies, tours, as well as their repertoire, c) to authorize theatre agencies, d) to guide associations, foundations and institutions running theatrical activities.'

Despite the fact that the attributions of these two institutions are almost identical, the relationship between them is not clearly delineated, firstly because they were created by

different laws and secondly, due to the fact that ambiguity is most times programmatic.

After studying the mechanisms of soviet power, Vladimir Konstantinovich Bukovsky (one of the most famous anti-soviet dissidents, author and political activist) determined that their functioning was based on the doubling principle^{lx}. Organizing censorship on various layers was a result of criteria proliferation and one of the party's important control instruments. In this manner, 'the revolutionary vigilance'- as they called it in the epoch - is maintained in light of this dual mechanism, which allows the monitoring of any activity and maintaining a continuous state of alert. Both the dramatic text and the theatrical performance go through two different stages, where they observe and suspect each other. Authorized institutions function by being related to one another: censorship, editorial units, all the means of reproducing and distributing the text. Imposing a new literature is unconceivable without monitoring devices and means of sanctioning any 'deviation'.

As the title suggests, The Superior Council for Dramatic Literature monitors the dramatic texts that are to be included in repertoires, while The Theatres' Directorate deals with a broader mission, that of organizing and supervising all theatrical activities in the country. Both institutions fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry, the vice-minister, and the ministry's general secretary.

In order to fully control all theatrical performances, The Theatres' Directorate relies on two essential criteria: the geographic one (aiming to cover the country's entire territory) and that of adapting censorship to the specifics of the theatrical performance (which includes crossing out portions of text to fit the ideology, but also frequently examining the performances and the institutions running theatrical activities).

Consequently, the Ministry establishes various departments and organisms, with different responsibilities:

- The department for national theatres and theatres subsidized by the state or the township where they activate
- The department for the authorization and guidance of theatres and theatrical companies (private, settled, or on road shows)
- The department for the perusal of dramatic texts forwarded by theatres and variety theatre companies (this department also includes a Repertoire Bureau, in charge of elaborating, approving and monitoring Romanian theatrical repertoires)
- The department in charge with theatrical performances for children.

A Reading Committee - whose members are delegated by the Theatres' Directorate - handles the procedure of analyzing and approving dramatic texts. The Directorate's influence is remarkable and reflected in the general inspectors' tasks who directly monitor and coordinate the theatrical movement in the capital and all the country's regions, which often meant

having honorary delegates attend premieres, approving the Reading Committee's proposals, drawing the theatres' repertoire profile, etc..

The Reading Committee

As the title suggests, the members of the committee have the obligation to read, but also to thoroughly research the texts forwarded to them and to help the Repertoire Bureau by recommending plays useful for stage performance, as stipulated in document no.4183/ October 15th 1948^{lxv}, signed by Aurel Baranga (general inspector of the Theatres' Directorate, shortly replaced by Simion Alterescu on October 28th 1948). According to decision no. 1578^{lxvi}, signed May 29th 1948 by Minister Octavian Livezeanu, the list of members includes the following: Sergiu Dumitrescu, Svetlana Marosin, Mihail Davidoglu, Nina Cassian, Geo Dumitrescu, Petru Comănescu, Mircea Florentin, Horia Deleanu, Florin Tornea, Mihail Raicu, Dinu Negreanu, Lelia Rudașcu and Cleopatra Dumitrescu. New colleagues soon join the first lecturers: Cleopatra [Nella] Stroescu, Oana Postelnicu, Gabriel Florea, Lucia Roman, Lia Serebreniciuc, Radu Miron and the manager of the National Theatre in Cluj is named president.

Despite the subordination of the Theatres' Directorate' general manager (Ion Aurel Maican), the Reading Committee, which functions as a consultative organization of specialists, enjoys a certain degree of autonomy. Except for the secretary, the members' activity is initially honorary, as they are not the employees of the Ministry. Later on, some of them - Nina Cassian, Mircea Florentin, Simion Alterescu, Horia Deleanu and Florin Tornea- are remunerated a fixed monthly salary of 5,000 lei at the request of Aurel Baranga, who is both the general inspector of the Theatres and secretary of The Reading Committee. Such a request is motivated by practical reasons, like the increase of the work volume (the more theatres appear, the more vigilant state authorities should be when perusing dramatic texts), but also by ideological reasons, assuring leadership forums that these lecturers' activity consisted not only in reading, but also in an intense research. According to claim no. 4183/ October 13th 1948 - 'lecturers will not settle with reading the plays forwarded to them by the secretary of the Reading Committee, but they will search the classic or the modern Romanian repertoire, as well as universal literature for those plays which correspond from an ideological and artistic point of view and are able to enrich the Romanian theatrical repertoire'^{lxviii}.

As far as the other lecturers are concerned, the same Ion Aurel Maican and Aurel Baranga suggest that they be remunerated according to the number of perused texts. The lecturer cashes a *reading fee* for the manuscripts and texts (s)he has perused, either from the author or from the institution wanting to stage the respective play. According to claim no. 33 610/February 17th 1948, the ministry establishes the value of the fee: 'For the reading of a play, settled theatres in Bucharest will pay a 2,000 (two thousand) lei fee, mobile theatre companies – a fee of 1,500 lei, artist unions – 1,000 lei and for the consultative reading of a play forwarded by its author or translator – a fee of 500 lei will be paid'^{lxiv}. Critic Liviu Malița's research later revealed various documents from the Archives of The Arts Ministry confirming such a practice. An example would be

address no. 2777^{lxv}, dated October 8th 1948 and forwarded by the Theatres' Directorate to the National Theatre in Craiova.

Once the Ministry remunerates the political and ideological censoring of the theatre, censorship tends to become both an abuse and a privilege. Paradoxically, literature and literary life are corrupted by the authors themselves and by those holding leadership positions within different committees and boards or even within The Writers' Union. Obtained by means of political compromises, these positions guaranteed a certain superiority over the other guild colleagues, apart from significant payments and not lastly, the validation of the writers' own works.

In time, however, the Reading Committee's activity is disrupted by disputes, internal competition for privileged positions and the lack of compatibility in what concerns the points of view of its members –some are more tolerant, some are unreasonably exacting. The repeated attempts to reorganize and perfect the Committee's activity, to eliminate subjectivity -'a political flaw of the epoch'^{lxvi}, to harmonize the lecturers' points of view and to secure vigilance determine deputy-manager Mihail Raicu to solicit a meeting with General Secretary N. Moraru. As a result, the lecturers' tasks thicken and multiply considerably.

The vigilance of the Committee's members extends over areas where they previously had no direct influence, like radio drama. Mihail Davidoglu points out that 'some of the plays come with poor translations or staging, which works against their desired purpose'^{lxvii}. He consequently makes suggestions to improve the Radio's activity, like hiring a group of specialists to work exclusively for the Radio: they would attend meetings with the representatives of the Reading Committee and correct any apprised breaches or nonconformities. The dramatist offers solutions for the case in which his recommendations are rejected, namely, expanding the influence of the Reading Committee over radio dramas and in the case of those plays which are considered to be in inconformity – their banning.

The Party leaves nothing to chance when it comes to translations either, as occasional translators are replaced by homologated playwrights. In this instance we can deduce that the interest in promoting professionals in fact mirrors the desire to strengthen monitoring devices, by engaging a small number of professionals who are easier to control.

Behind its neutral title, the Reading Committee in fact acts as an inquisitorial institution in relation to the texts and their authors. The lecturers are the emissaries of the Party in charge with maintaining the ideological 'purity' of dramatic texts. To become a member of this surveillance institution is a true opportunity, also considering the leverage it offers over fellow colleagues. All of these lecturers invest time and energy and they are highly receptive when it comes to performing ideological tasks. Some are enthusiastic about it, while others, more pragmatic, see it as a step forward in their career.

Nevertheless, this authentic source of power conveyed by the censor status comes with a price: the eternal frustration caused by the uncertainty that the ideological line imposed by the Party (and imprecisely defined by it) is faithfully observed. The fear of making mistakes will dominate these lecturers'

activity. It is also the determining factor of many of their side slips or excesses.

The Theatres' General Directorate

The Theatres' General Directorate directly handles the monitoring of the theatrical movement in the country, a responsibility assigned to General Inspectors Dinu Negreanu, Petru Comarnescu, Ion Massoff and inspectors George Popa, Geo Dumitrescu and Radu Miron. They are in charge of authorizing theatres, censoring and approving performances, watching performances before they go on tour. In the counties, theatre inspectors are helped by cultural counselors and by honorary representatives or employees of the Arts Ministry. Sometimes, colleagues from the Music Directorate help out.

Despite the hard work of this institution, according to the report forwarded by inspector Lia Serebreniciu^{lxxviii}, its efficiency is far from satisfactory. The collaboration with the Music Directorate inspectors is difficult, as the latter consider previewing performances and field work to be optional tasks, in spite of the frequent notifications they receive from The Theatres' Directorate.

The collaboration with the provinces reflects this organizational syncope as well. Almost every show must be previewed and approved by the inspectors in the territory. They have to watch every show three times during the rehearsals: once at the beginning, a second time when the performance is coming together, and a third time during the general rehearsals, when 'both the interpretation and the play can suffer modifications'^{lxxix}.

On more than one occasion, many of the Ministry's delegates are absent from production meetings or premiers in the provinces, a breach of duty which is repeatedly signaled by the zealous representatives in the territory, who are aware of just how important *production meetings* are in infusing theatrical performances with political influence. The purpose of a production meeting is to establish the degree to which a dramatic text waiting to be staged can have a political utility. Hence, such a meeting concerns all the departments involved in organizing a stage performance. Censorship is even more justified, covering not only the dramatic text, but also the performance. A production meeting usually had to be attended by the director, the author (if his presence was possible), the actors, the management of the theatre, theatre critics and members of the board designated by the Artists, Writers and Journalists' Union. The first production meeting^{lxx} was held at the Bucharest National Theatre on Friday, January 17th 1948, during the rehearsals for Gogol's *Marriage*, directed by Victor Bumbăști.

The press of the epoch speaks about the utility of this procedure in a couple of lines, reiterating that 'art is ideology; the artist must be engaged so that ideology serves him. [...] Art must only serve the ideology of the working class'. Moreover, 'those named either by professional organizations or by the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR) to guide the artists and help them in their work strive to bring art [...] to the same level with our nation's economic and political achievements'^{lxxi}.

As arduously as the Ministry's representatives tried to conform to the Party's ever changing and often times imprecise requirements, there were still side slips and desynchronizations. Despite its deficiencies, the system managed to work. In a relatively short period of time, a control reflex was created and the idea that both the author and the work of art had to be censored was accepted as valid.

The Press of the Communist Party. A Post-Censorship Instrument

Censorship does not end with the publishing of a play or a show's premiere. Even if it complies with the Party's doctrinarian requirements, this only represents the end of the first censoring stage. The 'trust certificate' can be revoked at any time and new restrictions can be formulated.

The second censoring stage begins with the distribution of the cultural product and the response it receives. The role of 'the supreme guide book for artistic texts'^{lxxii} is now played by the communist press (*Scînteia*) and cultural journals and magazines (*Rampa*, *Flacăra*, *Contemporanul*, *Viața Românească*, *Tînărul scriitor* and later *Luceafărul*, *Iașul literar*, *Scrisul bănățean*, *Gazeta literară*, *Tribuna*, *Caiete critice*, *Steaua*).

1. *Scînteia* (*The Spark*), the inquisitorial organ of PMR's Central Committee is the superior forum to which all the other publications are subordinated. It evaluates the accuracy of the censorship applied to dramatic texts and performances (as demanded by the totalitarian doctrine), it identifies previously unspotted 'heresies' and it enforces normative changes in the act of censorship.

A consequence of this gazette's omnipotence is that it establishes the official literary classification. Permanently looking for concrete evidence to show the victory of the 'new literature', the party leaders and the cultural ones use this main press organ to establish – from a political point of view, of course - the hierarchy of artistic values. For propaganda purposes, they point out the works stemmed out from the new literature, works of art written by the very literates in charge of the organization. This socialist literary ranking imposed by the leading forums reflects the Party's homologated literary standards. To be included in such a classification equals having one's fame confirmed and *Scînteia* is the one forum that ultimately validates this ranking, especially when the classification is drawn up by one of the few critics with a special ideological mandate.

Camil Petrescu's *Bălcescu* and Mircea Ștefănescu's *The Gypsies' Rhapsody* are two plays considered, among others, 'veritable literary events' of 1948 in one of *Scînteia*'s editorials titled *Towards a New Momentum of Literary Creation* (*Spre un nou avânt al creației literare*)^{lxxiii}. According to the indications they receive in *Scînteia*'s editorials, playwrights are forced to rewrite their plays and directors are suggested to reorganize their shows in order to avoid being banned. The terror inspired by the newspaper is similar to that invented by the Party. Judging by its prerogatives^{lxxiv}, we can deduce that *Scînteia* played the part

of a guard protecting the ideological purity of the entire Romanian press.

The case of *Flacăra* (*The Flame*) and *Rampa* (*The Ramp*) magazines^{lxxv}, which panicked the entire Executive Committee of The Artists, Writers and Journalists' Union with their front-page illustration (featuring drawings by M. H. Maxy^{lxxvi}) is a concrete example of manifestations meant to reconfirm the artists' and the journalists' devotion to the Party. Public meetings – typical for the times - organized to condemn the two magazines were in fact substanceless ritual acts addressed to those who were already convinced or maybe only interested in miming conviction.

Scînteia displays a constant and consistent regulation of ideological anomalies in art. One by one, a series of articles^{lxxvii} draw attention to the necessity of realism in art and the need to fight off decadent trends. Any circumstance in which the writer's cooperation proves exemplary is speculated by the official press organ for propaganda purposes. The discussions organized by the Communist Party on the 19th and 25th of June 1947^{lxxviii} concerning Mihail Davidoglu's play, *The Man from Ceatal - Omul din Ceatal* (meetings attended by Zaharia Stancu, Horia Liman, Valentin Silvestru, Simion Alterescu, Traian Şelmaru, Al. Kirişescu and published in the pages of *Scînteia*) paint the image of a propaganda show put on by writers who are devoted to the Party: the playwright thanks the audience and the Party, without whom the play wouldn't have come to life. The same is the case of Al. Kirişescu and his drama *Michelangelo*. Those who make ideological suggestions pertaining to the work (and accepted by the author) are: N.D. Cocea, Zaharia Stancu, Ion Popescu-Puțuri, Ion Călugăru, Saşa Pană, Mihail Roller, Dumitru Corbea, Florica Şelmaru, Aurel Baranga, Silvian Iosifescu, Simion Alterescu, Al. Jar, Alfred Mendelsohn, Mihail Davidoglu.

Concurrently, *Scînteia* offers printing space to writers willing to express their gratitude for the useful Marxist-Leninist teachings printed in the pages of the newspaper, but also for the possibility to receive literary criticism from the public opinion. Mihail Davidoglu confesses to the public in an article suggestively titled *What have I learned about my new play after talking to the mineworkers?*^{lxxix} and gives thanks for the ideological and artistic observations made by the mineworkers about the play depicting their life. His conversation with the mineworkers also allows Davidoglu to reiterate his convictions and devotion to the Party.

With the publishing of the article entitled *More principledness in treating art and literature! (Mai multă principialitate în tratarea problemelor artei și literaturii!)* in *Scînteia* (issue no.1177, dated July 15th 1948), the true ideological indicator of the year is established.

Flacăra magazine is again castigated by the Party for the sin of having published a series of articles^{lxxx}, plays and poems, which treat the 2nd Plenary Resolution of PMR's Central Committee much too lightly or for presenting erroneous political theories. The measures taken against the magazine announce a harsher ideological and political monitoring. The penitence that *Flacăra* magazine has to endure does not stop with it permanently having to reaffirm its adhesion and

devotion to the Party. In the following period, more and more people give themselves up in front of a confused and frightened public. While editors effortlessly dodge the standards of a minimum and public professional deontology in the name of a so-called party principledness, which annihilates their professional conscience, they even sign captious articles directed at their own magazine. Submissive and willing to do anything, *Flacăra* repeatedly tries to demonstrate that it can value and use the Party's help and guidance.

Scînteia sometimes goes beyond ideology and art editorials and channels on publishing play or performance reviews. Party activists, disguised as theatre reviewers – through their dreaded 'footnotes' – successfully clarify which plays and performances are on the right ideological track.

When it comes to staging the classics, the Party recommends that the directors highlight the progressive values of the text which can immediately be identified in present reality, thus avoiding any confusion and diminishing the text's symbolic power. The end purpose is for the artist to illustrate only the Party's sacred dogma in his work.

If the accusations, objections and exposures formulated by other publications are not usually followed by repercussions, the critique of this particular press organ weighs heavy: most often, individual punitive measures or general guidance campaigns accompany *Scînteia*'s criticism. Its ideas and verdicts are quoted by the critics and entire articles are reproduced in other newspapers or magazines. With its strict control over the literary scene, *Scînteia* transforms the press into an even more atrocious censorship instrument.

2. Only a few cultural publications are in charge with theatre criticism. They are closely monitored and censored however and they mimic the pattern dictated by *Scînteia*. The reviewer's main obligation is to master the Marxist-Leninist ideology and to implement the Party's directives to the theatre field, a course of action which eventually led to the disqualification of the entire theatre-related press.

Theatre criticism is the mechanism through which the passing from proper censorship to post-censorship is done. The censor is always seconded by another colleague who is often times more radical than the first and harsher in condemning previously unspotted errors.

Many times, press campaigns can endanger or even ruin a show's chances to be performed in front of the audience. The investigation initiated by the Ministry for the Arts and Information^{lxxxi} concerning Mircea Ştefănescu's much acclaimed play, *The Small Inferno (Micul infern)*, staged at Teatrul Mic (The Small Theatre) is an eloquent example.

The unconditional promoting of party ideology reaches insanely exaggerated levels when some performances are harshly criticized by the very people who had authorized their texts.

3. Diligent ministry employees invent new ways of influencing the public and the artistic product:

public meetings to comment performances or post-performance discussions meant to clarify a show's ideological line.

Another form of censorship is the censor's ironic duality in approving satirical texts and performances about the west, while being extremely lenient towards communist or soviet works. Other types of censorship include: cases of censorship when the reviewer willingly omits or chooses to ignore certain elements, scheduling performances according to extra-theatrical criteria (for instance, political ones), controlled preferential circulation, etc.. These forms of censorship, which are too nuanced to analyze in the present study, have represented, through their subtlety, serious impediments in promoting esthetic criteria outside of the political area and have hence allowed a stricter monitoring of the Romanian theatre, permanently subjected to political pressure.

In 1948, censorship fluctuates, especially due to the fact that criteria changes quite rapidly.

Romanian Dramaturgy after the Second World War

The post-war Romanian dramaturgy announces a 'burst of creativity among our writers', observes theatre historian Mircea Ghițescu in his study^{lxxxii}. The year 1940 marks the emergence of two absolute premieres – Mihail Sebastian's *Steaua fără nume* [*The Star without a Name*] and George Ciprian's *Capul de rățoi* [*The Drake's Head*]. Despite this positive premise, Romanian literature suffers immensely with the premature loss of some of its most prominent figures like G.M. Zamfirescu in 1939, Liviu Rebreanu in 1944, Mihail Sebastian (fatal accident, as Mircea Ghițulescu claims), Victor Ion Popa in 1946 and Eugen Lovinescu in 1943. The famous director Soare Z. Soare passes away at the age of 50 and Ion Sava, who enthusiastically revolutionized stage directing dies in 1947. It can easily be assumed that their passing, towards the end of the war and during the first post-war years, robbed Romanian literature of a powerful 'defense' against the difficult period that was to follow. From among those who were still alive, the 'new literature' could choose its serfs. On the other hand, the silence of some of the great survivors, like Lucian Blaga, Camil Petrescu, George Ciprian – a generation of writers whose creative maturity manifested fatally in a time of social and cultural hardships – contributed to this combination of circumstances.

Valeriu Râpeanu however notices that '1944 finds Romanian dramaturgy in an acute crisis [...] the epoch's great dramatists come to know the decline of their work and outlive themselves through plays which barely recall – maybe within isolated scenes or lines – the peaks of their opus'^{lxxxiii}. The literary critic denounces a qualitative and not quantitative drop of these works, pointing out, for instance, that Mihail Sorbul had ended his very short creative period with the two plays – *Dezertorul* [*The Deserter*]- 1917 and *Letopiseșii* [*The Chronicles*]- 1918. Out of whatever followed, only *Coriolan Secundus* (1920) could indulgently be taken into consideration. Moreover, Victor Eftimiu's plays – *Omul care a văzut moartea* [*The Man Who Saw Death*], *Ringala* and *Marele duhovnic* [*The Great Confessor*] had been written before 1933. With the 1935 premiere of *Idolul și Ion Anapoda* [*The Idol and Topsy-turvy Ion*], George Mihail-Zamfirescu's

career starts to wane. Alexandru Kirițescu's creative peak ends with *Borgia* (performed in 1936); his success with *Nunta din Perugia*, 1947 [*The Wedding in Perugia*] - written a decade later- is insufficient for a truly notable revival. Camil Petrescu's fundamental plays - *Jocul ielelor* [*The Fairies' Dance*], *Suflete tari* [*Strong Souls*], *Danton* and *Act venetian* [*Venetian Act*] were all written before 1930, while those that followed, respectively *Mioara*, *Iată femeia pe care o iubesc* [*Mioara, Here Is the Woman I Love*], *Professor dr. Omu* did not constitute literary products representative of him. In what concerns Tudor Mușatescu, he too had written *Titanic vals* [*Titanic Waltz*] and *Escu* by 1934 and George Ciprian – *Omul cu mârțoaga* [*The Man with the Nag*] in 1929. Victor Ion Popa wrote *Mușcata din fereastră* [*The Geranium in the Window*] *Ciuta* [*The Hind*], *Take, Ianke and Cadâr* by 1933, while *Răzbunarea suflerului* [*The Prompter's Revenge*] didn't bring the expected insurrection. Valeriu Râpeanu ends his argumentation with 'an exceptional literary personality' - Lucian Blaga – who writes eight of his ten plays between 1920 and 1934, 'which remain the essential contribution of his work on this land', referring of course to *Zamolxe* [*Zalmoxis*], *Tulburarea apelor*, [*Turbid Waters*], *Daria Ivanca*, *Înviere* [*Resurrection*], *Meșterul Manole* [*Master Manole*], *Cruciada copiilor* [*The Children's Crusade*] and *Avram Iancu*.

The opinions of the two critics seem to start from the same premise, but end with different conclusions. Mircea Ghițulescu agrees that established writers such as Al. Kirițescu, Tudor Mușatescu, Mircea Ștefănescu and Ion Luca, who were ever present on the playbills of the theatres between 1945 and 1950, only managed to ensure a certain continuity of spirit in developing a 'tame' dramaturgy. He argues pointing to Aurel Baranga's lyrical comedies which follow the vaudeville post-war literary pattern, adapted however to the thematic imperative of the times, or to Horia Lovinescu's 'idea-dramas' inspired by Camil Petrescu's plays, although the critic understands that this unablensness is a consequence of social changes. 'Even so, survivors remained untouched by propagandistic enthusiasm, they remained representative for a literary taste which was to become vetust as a consequence of social changes'^{lxxxiv}.

On the other hand, Valeriu Râpeanu considers that 'those who came after 1944 belonged to another class of literary expression, a characteristic reflected in many of these plays' theatrical quality^{lxxxv}. Therefore, the number of plays representative of Romanian dramaturgy dropped significantly after 1935, with few exceptions, such as Tudor Mușatescu's *Visul unei nopți de iarnă* [*A Winter Night's Dream*] or G. Ciprian's *Capul de rățoi* [*The Drake's Head*]. Lucian Blaga's *Anton Pann*, Camil Petrescu's *Bălcescu*, Al. Kirițescu's *Nunta din Perugia* [*The Wedding in Perugia*] and Mircea Ștefănescu's *Matei Millo* remain landmarks of a journey, but the following generations ratified the enthusiasm of these premieres, considering them landmarks of contemporary, post-war Romanian dramaturgy', he adds.

The literary historian identifies the cause of this crisis characterizing Romanian drama in 1944 in 'this premature incapacity of established dramatists to renew themselves, to go beyond the limit of three or maximum four works of superior quality'^{lxxxvi}, as well as their 'inability to outgrow the times when they first formed their ideological and spiritual

beliefs or their inability to reflect other spiritual and moral dissatisfactions except for those which had made an impression on them during their adolescence or early youth'. Even in the case of exceptions, the critic considers that 'the dramatists' temporary revival [...] did not mark a relaunching but, on the contrary, a return to the problematics of their most creatively fertile period'. Therefore, even if some dramatists managed to make a comeback after a considerable amount of time (the average being a decade), all social, moral and ideological data pinpoint these playwrights to a certain period which is representative of their writing structure and which continue it, without disagreeing with it. Râpeanu exemplifies with plays like *Bălcescu* – 'falling under the same category with *Strong Souls*, *The Fairies Dance* and *Danton*'^{lxxxvii}, plays which dwell on the intellectual's drama – or Kirişescu's *The Wedding in Perugia* (1947) and *Michelangelo* (1948), continuing the Renaissance trilogy started with *Borgia*. With his 1944 *Arca lui Noe* [*Noah's Ark*] and his 1945 *Anton Pann*, Lucian Blaga enters 'a historical and proto-historical world, representative of his creative maturity'^{lxxxviii}. These works however mark an ending, not a beginning, concludes Valeriu Râpeanu, later supported by Ov. S. Crohmăniceanu who stated in *Luceafărul* magazine that 'contemporary literature lacks the glow of the inter-war literature'^{lxxxix}.

In reality, the established dramatists' 'incapacity' to adapt to the paradigm demanded and imposed by the communist ideology constitutes a form of protest and resistance against the much trumpeted new literature. The dramatists' refusal to align to the themes of social realism – a movement officialized in the statute of The Writers' Union which 'sets itself to ensure that writers employ the method of social realism in their works'^{xc} – is due to the fact that these playwrights had formed their literary personalities in the spirit of western values during the inter-war period. Forced to exist in a literary environment in which open imitation provides the 'new writer' with originality, prestige and identity, these dramatists look for subjects and themes which can go through the single-party's ideological filter.

The Theatre at the Beginning of Communism

In 1948, Romanian theatre and dramaturgy are part of a propaganda mechanism controlled by the Communist Party (PCR). The propagandistic, theoretical and festive presentation of the victorious socialist culture - untouched by any crisis - paints a picture of eternal blossoming and escalation before this culture even existed. We are witnessing a loud parody of success, in which each and every one is forced to ardently declare their enthusiasm and victories against the feared, yet imprecisely defined 'class enemy'. The press gives insurance in what regards the theatre's correct positioning in relation to ideology and the birth of 'the New Man', while official reports^{xc} struggle to keep track of the victories obtained.

Most private theatres are disbanded, the People's Theatres are transformed into state theatres and the newly founded Workers' Theatres come to support amateur art forms^{xcii}.

The theatrical activity is systematically planned by the Party which organizes and strategically places theatres in every urban center, imposing the centralized theatre system.

Mimicking the desire to build a national cultural network, the Party's actual intention is to propagate its ideology more efficiently. The communists understand to solve problems like the staging of inadequate plays (i.e. not in compliance with the pattern of social realism) from previous theatrical seasons or the actors' swagger by means of standardization. The tours of private theatre companies often suffer restrictions^{xciii}, while the Ministry almost without exception allows state troupes to go on road shows. According to officials, the efficiency of the theatres reaches remarkable records^{xciv}. The socialist reform touches every aspect of the theatrical industry. Simion Alterescu presents the tasks of the new dramaturgy: shaping class conflict, renouncing the old individualist, subjective, asocial, psychological themes or those apparently 'neutral' plays and instead, assuming the task to carefully analyze social reality in order to create a political theatre. The repertoire is highly influenced by the ideology of the working class and it mostly consists of soviet plays, progressive, anti-bourgeoisie western literature or classical universal dramaturgy plays. Theatre criticism also contributes to changing the artistic mentality through its Marxist-Leninist method.

All of these victories, meant to intensify the process of clarifying communist ideology, are possible due to the constant pressure put on the Romanian theatre by PMR's Central Committee, through its Propaganda and Agitation Department and not lastly, through its main communist press organ – *Scînteia*.

In the Party's understanding, the theatre now hosts 'an incredibly new public'. Al. Kirişescu reinforces the belief: 'Instead of a narrow and vicious clique, another audience is called to celebrate the spirit [...] – the great mass of the working people, state employees and those in the public sector, intellectuals and freelancers with limited incomes, students, soldiers...'^{xcv}.

In other words, the Party considers that all of these perfecting processes will launch the national theatre and in a relatively short amount of time they will convert the expositive, 'bourgeois' and anti-progressive theatre into a political, socialist one, able to transform society.

In reality, celebrating and trying to impose this nonexistent success masks a lack of remarkable results. For the moment, the Party's desire to convert art and the artist is failing. A thorough investigation^{xcvi} of Romanian art shows that success does not exceed expectation.

Romanian art somehow momentarily manages not to yield to socialist clichés. The foreman – the representative hero for the communist ideology cannot yet penetrate the field of poetry. In prose, naturalist, psychological or individualist works are criticized and modernism is seen as bourgeois decadence. In music, the question of pure art and the primacy of substance over form is left unanswered. Composers and performers fail to understand the Marxist concept of freedom in art and refuse the so-called constructive criticism which does not promote subjective involvement. Plastic arts are in turn unsuccessful in realistically and authentically portraying workers in factories and building sites. Plastic artists disappoint through their rigid

formalism and their inability to illustrate working men in heroic, emblematic postures.

Although the 1947-1948 theatrical season was subject to some constraint, in the first communist year, Romanian theatre is very much similar to the inter-war one. Traditional formulas coexisted in a hybrid sort of harmony with the fresh communist innovations^{xcvii}, observes Liviu Malița.

It seems that the Party is only pleased with the National Theatre of Bucharest; the rest, whether they are state subsidized or private theatres, stage commercial, inartistic, imperialistic and decadent plays. Hybrid formulas trying to blend the old taste with communist demands only keep the Romanian theatre in a stage of siege. Romanian art is not the only one criticized, but also the lack of vigilance displayed by the state's control organs, both in the capital and the provinces. As far as the Party is concerned, the reason for which Romanian dramaturgy is not excelling is the scarcity of writers interested in approaching the class conflict reality, while many still prefer ill-suited themes. Activist critics believe that Romanian drama is deprived of a healthy core because of western mentalities which make the implementation of the Marxist-Leninist ideology impossible. Pirandello, Claudel, Cocteau, Wedekind or the Russian writers before the revolution are considered to be a negative influence of western decadence which affects drama.

Even if dramatic literature starts to display some desired socialist features, 'there are only a few signs that Romanian dramaturgy is prepared to renounce its bourgeois spirit, its <insincerely-free> literature, as Lenin used to call individualistic literature^{xcviii}, complains Simion Alterescu. Writers still prefer to approach individualistic, psychological themes, which are inconclusive for the masses, isolate and inexpressive cases turning the writers' works of art into 'a social hindrance'. The same Simion Alterescu is displeased with the fact that there is no interest in dramatic writers: 'there isn't a work of art that speaks of our epoch's great conflicts. There are numerous plays ratified by different reading committees which are twice dramatic, for they contain all the elements which enable us to determine that our dramaturgy has yet a step to climb for our country to truly develop. There is no talk of class conflict in these plays, no portrayal of the new man and work, at best, is presented as a means in its own^{xcix}. Recalling a group of the young generation (namely poets Mihai Beniuc, Nicolae Labiș, novelists Dan Deșliu, Petre Dumitru or Eugen Barbu), including, among others, playwrights Ana Novak and Aurel Baranga, political theoretician Ghiță Ionescu observes: 'They had written gross propagandistic works, mocking the former regime and glorifying the present, denigrating the capitalist West and adulating the soviet East. [...] And even so, the regime was not satisfied. The works of the new writers, complying with the Party's demands, failed to display enough interest in the accomplishments of the new socialist state. The Party continued to pressure them in their choice of themes'^c.

Since the writer's creativity is strictly conditioned by the irreconcilable antithesis between the old and the new, the means of spreading out ideology and esthetics are quite limited: the old/new esthetics serves the old/new ideology. Any blending of the two notions is only nuanced by

diversifying esthetics, which is now seen as a performance or a competence. An important aspect of socialist literatures is the perverse capacity of the political content to modify the traditional meaning of esthetics to the point where it can ultimately exclude or jeer it altogether when it no longer serves the purpose of this political content. The Party wants to create a new typology of literates, whose artistic calling or writing talent isn't actually necessary, as long as they precisely understand the way politics should influence culture.

The new writer's competence resides in his capacity to adapt his literary discourse to the norms of the socialist doctrine and vice versa, without any personal interpretations. Thus, the purpose is to constantly 'regiment' strong artistic personalities through various strategies, while favoring mediocre writers in the meantime, those who gladly accept to conform in order for their works to be evaluated as positive, despite their mediocrity. Imposing this 'artistic leveling' often times generates reactions of rejection and it is only possible by means of threats, intimidation, blackmail or violence. Wavering between the fear of having each of their paragraphs censored and their incapacity to artistically approach a present marked by confusing taboos, writers see no other alternative than to take refuge in the past or to satirize bourgeois life.

The dramatist's position is extremely delicate: the past is considered a disturbing literary theme due to its retrograde, anti-progressive mentality, while the sin of satirizing the bourgeoisie lies within the idealization of themes specific for bourgeois life. Although the writer is given complete freedom to hyperbolize class conflict for the sake of social progress, his overall freedom is gradually limited. Almost any literary initiative generates a reaction of rejection, either because it opts for neutrality, because it engages in anti-(non-)communist perspectives, or because it exalts freedom, which the officials understand as the implicit affirmation of a lack of freedom. In time, the writers' confusion increases, especially when they realize that their servility is as inefficient, artistically speaking, as their opposition: both options generate ephemeral texts. Duplicity, on the other hand, proves to be more productive: many writers conform when it comes to simple, journalistic texts, in verse or prose, which become a sort of visa for the publishing of truly artistic works.

Most authors wait for the wave of interdictions to pass: 'Chasing eternal themes reminiscent of Plato's philosophy is chasing a chimera [...] those who adore eternal themes are in reality fearsome of the present. Having to protect their interests – presently threatened by social transformations, they try to take refuge in the past, waiting for a future that would resemble it'^{ci}.

The arguments set forth by the propaganda do not seem convincing, even if the invitation to get hired is doubled by the threat of wiping out those who refuse to get hired. Florin Tornea disappointedly observes that 'Romanian dramaturgy is still a *dramaturgy of argumentation*, not one to illustrate the new reality yet'. It 'fails to reach more than the margins of today's reality, in that it is neither specific, nor essential – therefore significant. [...] The theatre of the new born man hasn't been written yet'^{cii}. Discomfited, Mihail Raicu adds: 'We haven't passed beyond the phase of *ascertainable dramatic literature*. The revolutionary view of the future is still an objective on the list'^{ciii}.

The tireless critics devoted to the Party fear to admit the failure of this strategy to convert the theatre and instead blame the writers for their momentary inability to identify art with propaganda. The imprecisely formulated evaluation criteria used by dramatic reviewers only enable and maintain these poor creative performances and the chaos hovering over the Romanian theatre.

The Repertoire of the First Year of Communism

The crisis characterizing national dramaturgy extends over the politics of the repertoire. The Ministry for the Arts wishes to implement a repertoire which substantiates class conflict, the new born socialist hero, progressive ideas and so forth. In this spirit, it structures a set of mandatory elements, which need specific rectifications: a national, soviet, classically Russian, western-progressive or classic universal repertoire.

For the politically impure repertoire of the 1948 theatrical season, it is the Reading Committee taking the blame. The absence of Romanian plays from the theatres' playbills will remain acute in the following season as well. Out of almost 100 premieres in 1948, only 8 are Romanian: Mihail Sebastian's *Insula* [*The Island*]-completed by Mircea Şeptilici, Ionel Țăranu's *Serafim* [*Seraph*], Alexandru Kiriţescu's *Michelangelo*, Radu Miron's *Trenuri de plăcere* [*Pleasure Trains*] Mircea Ştefănescu's *Micul infern* [*The Small Inferno*], Alexandru Şahighian's *Pensiunea doamnei Stamate* [*Mrs. Stamate's Boarding House*], Tudor Şoimaru's *Când înfloresc anemonele* [*When Anemones Bloom*] and Ionel Lăzăroneanu's *Moştenirea lui Toma Ghinju (1% fatal)* [*Toma Ghinju's Inheritance (1% fatal)*]. Along with the plays' scarcity, Simion Alterescu deplors their quality and ideological deficit: "The eight Romanian plays staged in the past season have demonstrated how far our dramatists are from our contemporary problems and how close they are to the bourgeois world view and mentality, characteristic for the theatre of the past"^{civ}.

The element truly responsible for the state of Romanian dramaturgy – that is, the censorship with its insistent demand for contemporary dramas – is of course never mentioned. Even the presence of the few soviet plays^{cv} performed in the 1948 season is looked upon with suspicion and considered an ostentatious staging meant to camouflage the promotion of decadent writers, apparently declared 'harmless'.

In order to survive these difficult conditions, the theatres can only resort to two compromises: reconsidering the classics or turning to adaptations, solutions partially accepted by the Party and only allowed under strict supervision.

From the propaganda point of view, reinterpreting classic Romanian or universal dramaturgy is understood as Marxism-Leninism being able to assume and progressively transform the values of the past. In reality, these plays are only accepted to compensate for the lack of a contemporary dramaturgy which hasn't emerged yet, despite the fact it benefits from the premises of an alert development.

As far as the Party is concerned, the reevaluation of masterpieces, like those of Sophocles, Aristophanes, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Shakespeare, Moliere, Schiller, etc., reveals

the inhibitive nature of these works, considered unhelpful due to their modest ideological content, an impediment for the new dramaturgy. Recuperating the great classics, a selective and critical process depending on where the play is situated on the time scale, is more relaxed the older the play is. The prestige of the work's value and the prestige of the past are the ones which save texts from the perils of strict censorship. When it comes to Romanian dramaturgy, the period of the great classics and that of 1948 are given the most clemency. Caragiale is absolved of any political obligation, for 'in his formation period, before 1870, there were no means to foresee the revolutionary methods that were to ensure a recovery in the days of the proletarian victory'^{cvi}.

The first theatrical season of the Romanian People's Republic (1948/1949) brings Caragiale's *O scrisoare pierdută* [*A Lost Letter*] to the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest^{cvi}. Seen as a political and literary manifest, the event is interpreted as a proof of Marxist-Leninist understanding of the cultural tradition representing the interests of the people.

In what concerns inter-war or contemporary authors, censorship makes no concessions. The smallest breach of the totalitarian regime dogmas leads to these authors being accused of revolutionary 'blindness', a practice which allows the public representation of only four inter-war plays^{cvi}.

Adaptations are looked upon with suspicion as well. Interpreted as embarrassing compilations from a political point of view, they are disconsidered for their 'lack of adhesion to the ideology of the working class and the Party', demonstrating 'an ostentatious conformation to the requirements of the time, [but] not an identification with them. The mania, this fashion of progressive scrape ups does not express a change of attitude, of ideological orientation, but a stubbornness to remain to what used to be the sad fame of the emptiness and rottenness of the bourgeois art'^{cix}. They are thus exposed as hostile actions which allow theatre managers to introduce in their repertoire plays forcefully adapted to the Party's thematic, through the paste up method. To Party activists, contemporary adaptations of western themes constitute the clear evidence of the compromise made by the Romanian dramatists lured by this 'recipe' of false progress. Mircea Ştefănescu's *The Small Inferno*, Tudor Şoimaru's *When Anemones Bloom*, and Al. Kiriţescu's *Lampagiul de seară* [*Evening Lamplighter*] are used as illustrative examples in Florin Tornea's article – *Repertoriul și dramaturgia românească de azi* [*The Contemporary Repertoire and Romanian Dramaturgy*], published in *Rampa* magazine.

For the moment, adaptations are condoned due to circumstantial needs. Additionally, they are the proof of the dramatists' limited, hence unsatisfactory efforts to align their artistic discourse to the progressive vision imposed by the Party.

As far as the activists are concerned, the '47-'48 theatrical season held multiple ideological deficiencies because of the indecisiveness of theatre managers in choosing contemporary plays. It seems managers are found responsible for the hesitations and imprecision of the repertoires forwarded to the Ministry of the Arts for approval, with annotations like 'two proletarian plays', 'an original play', or 'a play by Mircea

Ștefănescu', 'two farces recommended by the Theatres' Directorate'^{cx}.

Detecting the public's lack of interest towards contemporary dramaturgy and wanting to avoid the disaster of empty auditoriums, theatre managers knowingly and intentionally go against the Party's directives, choosing classic or historical plays to ensure box-office success. Their solution entails critical reactions from their superiors and it is understood as a blamable act of revolt. The panic instilled among theatre managers, forced to defend themselves against aberrant accusations when presenting their repertoires in front of the Superior Council for the Arts and Dramatic Literature is understandable. To avoid harsh consequences, one had to be labeled as lacking critical spirit.

In the following period, the ideologically eclectic character of the repertoire is revised through a categorical action meant to stop any harmful western influences and redirect dramaturgy towards the soviet model, seen as the only worthy one to emulate. Imposing the Russian pattern as standard went beyond the boundaries of dramaturgy when the history of sciences was rewritten for the educated population, so that the latter would discover that 'nothing was ever invented by someone who wasn't a Russian. Accordingly, it was not Marconi, but Popov who invented the first radio, microbiology developed in Russia, not France, etc.'^{cxii}. Marian Popa ironically notes: 'Everything was invented [...] in the Soviet Union - the radio, the telegraph, the telephone, the racket, the bicycle, the printing press, the plane, the tank, the tractor -, that which wasn't discovered there does not exist or is merely an invention of rotten western imperialism'^{cxiii}. These lessons have to be repeated servilely, which comes against the creed of genuine intellectuals, threatened to be marginalized or thrown in jail unless they comply.

The Actor, the Director, and the 'New Art'

In the eyes of the Party, the 1947-1948 theatrical season is sinful from the staging point of view: even in the case of soviet plays, there are numerous staging mistakes, while in the case of other plays, the staging does great disservice to the text by derailing from its meaning. The critics of the time blame Romanian directing for preserving old tendencies that supply formalist stagings, which in turn diminish the text's ideological attributes, attenuate the meanings or affect the play's dramatic value.

The director's obligation is to ideologically update the text, eliminate the 'bourgeois mold' when necessary and assume responsibility for the ideological and professional quality of the actors, as well as for the entire fate of the theatre. A contemporary adaptation which has benefited from a real reconsideration is *The Lost Letter (Scrisoarea pierdută)*, performed at the National Theatre of Bucharest. Simion Alterescu appreciates the 'deepness of its realism' and the 'the profundity of its critical vision', which make the spectator assist to a 'live representation of the bourgeoisie-landowners coalition', not a 'foul-mouths' comedy', but one in which 'heroes claim their just socialist positions'^{cxiii}.

It seems that despite the constant support offered by translated soviet plays and aggressive propaganda, Party activists are not

very satisfied with the theatre directing. As directors are unaccustomed to theatrical realism, they cannot abandon stage naturalism, so they are often accused of maintaining formalist tendencies and abstract forms, which are difficult to grasp by the working class.

The Public and Its Relationship to 'The New Theatre'

When it comes to educating the new public, things do not look promising either. The inspectors from the Theatres' Direction often raise warning signals about the public's low attendance or even absence from contemporary performances. Although there are enough initiatives to fill the auditoriums (union strategies to bring the workers to the theatre), the new public, so often invoked, who is meant to be the main recipient of the theatrical act is more than disinterested. The irony is that the workers, the intended substitute for the traditional bourgeois public are not preoccupied with the theatre created about and for them.

The dramatic critics in charge with the propaganda find the regular presence of the bourgeois public in the auditoriums an obstacle in reforming mentalities. In the opinion of the officials, the bourgeois public defiles the theatre, while the rare presence of the working class makes it sacred.

The inability to completely influence and control the public's way of thinking, subordinating it to communist dogmas, incites feelings of anger and frustration among socialist leaders, who prefer to isolate the spectator when the latter's conscience cannot be neutralized.

As an overall result, the first year of Romanian communism is unsatisfying. Art, in its entirety, does not manage to keep up with the new social, political and economical changes of the times and the theatre hinders from aligning to the present-day demands, both in what concerns the esthetics of directing a performance and the performing method. Most times, the theatre insufficiently mirrors the revolutionary spirit of the class struggle, demanded in order for a new Romanian society to develop.

Resistance Strategies

Towards the end of 1947, Romania is actively involved in the process of imposing Bolshevism (in Romanian – 'comunizare') according to Donald Catchlove^{cxiv}. An assessment of the year 1948 presents us with 'two ideological Romanias'^{cxv}, torn apart by contradiction and chaos at all levels – one, triumphantly declared as serving the proletariat, but capable of anything to serve its own purposes, the other – terrified, humiliated and coerced to total submission.

Mid 1948 marks the moment in which the mono-cultural revolution is shaped in such a way that the autochthonous cultural scene begins to be more to the Party's liking. Cultural or artistic manifestations now respect a common criterion: the standardizing of the ideas and style. The liberty of the press is eliminated, cinemas become propaganda instruments broadcasting soviet programs, while theatrical institutions bring forth soviet plays. Western music goes through the ideological filter of the Party and is forbidden, while books in libraries and bookstores are politically expurgated. This entire

mono-culture is permanently adapted and reconfigured according to the level of understanding Marxist-Leninist principles or to the population's openness to the process of ideological formation.

The tense political climate allows the following surviving options – unconditional surrender or annihilation. The passivity of the West, who wants a separation of the spheres of influence and implicitly, the placing of Eastern Europe in an area of political dependence with Russia, strengthens the communist hegemony which is open to no form of protest.

The resistance phenomenon is isolated and often times doomed to failure due to the surveillance and persecution apparatus which brings any attempt to make a stand to a naught. Criticism brings about incarceration or isolation. Internal resistance continually encounters intimidation and repression techniques, thus becoming impossible and ultimately, futile. The efficiency of the Party's repression mechanism determines a lack of ample actions in what concerns the population, however dissatisfied the latter might have been. Mass arrests often based on aberrant accusations constitute a sufficiently credible argument. Then, the internal terror, the continuous threat of the U.S.S.R, but also the passivity of the West determines silence and resignation, at a cultural level as well. 'Terror had a similar impact on the young and the old, but the youth felt it more dramatically because of the implication it had at a behavioral and ideative level. This tough treatment turned young people into silent, introverted and cheerless individuals, impenetrable not only for foreign visitors, but for their parents, teachers and friends'^{cxvi}, says politologist Ghiță Ionescu.

And even so, during the first year of communism 'the Party's area of influence and state control were not all-embracing; because of a certain type of pluralism, the Party's mechanism did not control all the mouthpieces'^{cxvii}. Artists and writers still manifest a certain type of insubordination. Initially, all of their reactions towards the censorship's new direction are old, liberal reflexes, mainly determined by the decisions of the 'adversary'. Generally speaking, cultural opposition will come to know various forms, in most cases combining resistance and dissidence. The cultural resistance was defined by 'a reaction of self-defense, of saving the spiritual identity, initiated by the Romanian cultural elite...', by actions 'started from within cultural milieus, destined for society in its entirety, with the purpose of infusing courage and hope into it', by 'gestures of resistance or refusal which had to be public, with the protagonists consciously and deliberately taking upon themselves the risk of defying the regime and the ensuing consequences'^{cxviii}. In what concerns the compromise made by the elites of the epoch by accepting collaborationism, it can easily be identified by reversing the aforementioned traits.

The year 1948 represented the debut for perfecting the monitoring and coercion apparatus by the totalitarian power. Compared to what was to follow, the true communist terror was in its early days. 1948 nevertheless remains a permissive year, for the declarations of the Communist Party did not inspire power, being rather pale. The efforts put in by socialist leaders in order to gain a positive, supportive attitude from the citizens 'were constantly undermined by the internal resistance

and the masked forms of sabotage reflected at all the levels of the system'^{cxix}. The fragility of socialism started with the system of 'centralized planning', claims anthropologist Katherine Verdery.

By studying official documents, we can deduce two types of resistance to the communist 'road-roller': a direct, obvious opposition or veiled forms of opposition. Apart from some official documents of the epoch implying that there was an uncontrollable resistance, there were also various confessions of those who managed to escape the universe of communist terror confirming this reality. In an attempt to catch the essence of the Romanian spirit of rebellion, Donald Catchlove said: 'Romania has created the reputation of being Eastern Europe's enfant terrible, a country with a paradoxical mix of weakness and power'^{cxx}.

The much talked about class struggle is either suppressed or irrepressible. The resolution of the June 1948 Plenum held by the Central Committee of The Workers' Party (PMR) claims that 'class struggle knows various and continually sharper forms', with Mihail Novicov detailing: 'there have been and there still are forms of resistance, because the influence of the bourgeois ideology is yet to be eliminated from the mentality of the working people and because the class enemy speculates these remainders on a daily basis in order to produce situations and attitudes which serve it'^{cxxi}.

In the press, *Scînteia* reproaches the lack of vigilance and the severe ideological errors of the main cultural magazines of the time, *Flacăra* and *Rampa* leading to serious deviations from the dogma, in its furious article entitled *Mai multă principialitate în tratarea problemelor artei și literaturii!* [*More Principledness in Dealing with the Problems of Art and Literature!*].

The stated accusations do not remain unanswered and shortly after, *Flacăra's* editorial office session is held^{cxxii}, during which editors try to get even with one another and several pleas to release the tension of the literary climate are expressed, showing a previously undisclosed discontent even among Party devotees. Some do not agree with the method of command from within the magazine, which blocks any critical or self-critical observation in the staff meetings. During the session, Vladimir Colin points out that there are discrepancies between the management of the magazine and the editorial staff: 'the former had a proper ideological training, while the latter were more proficient in matters of art, a fact which was not taken into account'. Accordingly, he suggests that 'it would be better if these comrades, who are better trained ideologically, consulted the other comrades who are proficient in the matters of art'. The imperative of guiding the writers was justified by the fact that they were considered incapable of deciding the literary and ideological necessities imposed by the proletarian cause on their own, however important these writers were in the mechanism of this cause. Consequently, this guiding represented a crucial aspect in what concerned the message that the Party wanted to convey to the masses: literature was run by the party and for the people. The guiding consisted of an entire arsenal of manifestations, some of them most diverse, like constructive action, commanded action, retrieval and eliminatory-punitive action.

Nina Cassian deplors the fate of the artist who is forced to respond without hesitation to the orders of the leading communist forums, considering that the lack of freedom of speech and persecuting the artist creates an inferiority complex capable of paralyzing any creative potential. The writer proposes a productive cooperation between the creators and the superior forums in order to eliminate the fear of criticism.

Showing courage, novelist Cezar Petrescu answers *Scînteia*'s famous article^{cxixiii}, expressing his lack of conviction in what regards the 'brotherly help' offered by the people of art, thus causing the indignation of Paul Georgescu. The manifest firstly denounces the Party's inopportune interference, by 'harshly reprimanding a part of the authors, journalists, critics or regimented lecturers for some of their lapses and heresies'; secondly, the illegitimacy of the decision to ask of the latter 'to revise their own work, according to the given requirements'. Cezar Petrescu invokes the natural argument of the necessity to make the distinction between a journalist and a writer. The former can be expected to make 'adjustments' or 'redactions', as he works with ideas mainly, which 'have ceased to be harmless since 1914', but the writer must be 'left alone'. Without freedom, his role to society becomes useless. This ideological pampering policy and this official interference in the act of creation is ironized by the proser, who ends his article with the recommendation that the writer be left in peace: 'Let's let him write. How? His creative instinct alone will dictate that, along with his human conscience of a man in service of labor'^{cxixiv}.

The accusatory article in *Scînteia* also causes George Călinescu to react: in the 691st number of *Națiunea* he publishes a text entitled *Agitația culturală* [*The Cultural Agitation*]. This time, the critical tone used is somewhat milder. The writer points out that it would be a big mistake to completely ignore the complex problematics of the bourgeois ideology at a cultural level. By maintaining the dialogue with this thematic, 'the complexity of the spirit is kept alive by agitating the minds and the insinuation of the simplicity presupposed by the progressive ideology at a cultural level is annihilated'^{cxixv}.

In answer to these two timid public stands, a media execution is set in motion. Paul Georgescu is designated to formulate a reply against Cezar Petrescu^{cxixvi}, whom he accuses of being misinformed in what concerns the scolded writers, vexedly pointing out to him that it was not 'the journalists, the critics, the lecturers or the writers who were <<scolded>>, but certain bodies of the Party'. What is ignored here is the fact that strictly speaking, *Flacăra* is not a body of the Party, but of the U.S.A.S.Z. (Uniunea Sindicatelor Artistilor, Scriitorilor și Ziaristilor - The Artists' Writers' Journalists' Union League). Consequently, all of the author's arguments are invalidated by misinformation from the very beginning.

The debate of ideas is replaced with a flat discourse, but one abounding in false indignations concerning the fact that The Romanian Workers' Party (PMR) is not 'some association in which people are regimented', as Cezar Petrescu thought, but one where membership is a real honor, and not a shame. Petrescu is also reproached for the boldness of accusing Party members who think in a stiff, soldierly way and are 'scolded'

for 'heresies', knowing that 'the very party of the working class [...] is an adamant enemy of any sort of dogma. Isn't it clear that the terms <<heresies>> and <<scolded>> used here are out of place? The work method of the PMR is not [this fatherly] scolding, but criticism and self-criticism, and consequently, conviction and not <<the adjustment to given requirements>>, as Mr. Petrescu claims, is the case here'. The most important problem raised by Cezar Petrescu, that of 'the freedom of creation' is considered useless for discussion, a chapter fully clarified in Lenin's article^{cxixvii}, *Party Organization and Party Literature*, and the matter is therefore easily disposed of. After an ample display of the ideological defects present in Petrescu's work, Paul Georgescu's peroration culminates with a warning meant to discourage a future reply.

Writer and literary critic George Călinescu receives the apparently indulgent answer of Petru Dumitriu: 'From these lines we can see the attempt of professor Călinescu to adopt the progressive position, to take part in the ideological fight against the capitalist reaction. But this tendency of his thought does not prevent him from facing serious confusions [...], characteristic for his ideological position. It needs to be profoundly refuted'^{cxixviii}. Petru Dumitriu's counterargument proves to be a general and formal one, since it does not specify the confusions which hamper George Călinescu's just ideological repositioning. As in the case of Paul Georgescu, the final sentence is the one that counts.

Regarding the lack of substance characteristic to the communist style, both in the written and oral forms of the ideopolitical language, intentionally rejecting solid arguments with the purpose of masking the reduction of ideas, Dan A. Lăzărescu notices the phenomenon^{cxixix} as early as 1946.

What is important to remember here is the fact that in 1948, disapprovals concerning sentences and commands given to artists could still be expressed in the press, an aspect which would change radically in the years to come. Later, during the 'unfrosting' period, anything could come out of these confrontations: the work would either be forbidden or modified, the writer would either maintain his position – stated or not, or he would sincerely or formally accept the opinion of the officials. If problems weren't solved, it was agreed that other discussions on the matter would be necessary, at a superior level or even national. These usually did not take place.

Another document giving proof of the timid objections raised is the 28th record of proceedings of the Reading Committee Session held on November 15th, 1948^{cxixxx}, in which several accusations are formulated against this organism. Some dramatists deny and refuse to acknowledge the role of the Committee and they even call in question the utility and help provided to Romanian dramaturgy. One of the reports of lecturer Lia Serebreniciu, a member of this disputed institution, accuses some of the neighborhood theater inspectors in the Ministry of the Arts and Information of opinion libertinism.

Theatre made no exception from the natural attempts to demand the right to free existence. Apparently, dramatists show an unhoped for will to cooperate. According to the

testimony of Zaharia Stancu, the manager of the Reading Committee at the Bucharest National Theatre, out of over a hundred plays signed by professional writers, established authors or amateurs, only three got to see the limelight. The dissatisfaction reactions coming from those rejected are more than justified: 'But I am an established dramatic writer! I used to be successful! I was a glory of the Romanian theatre! I still consider myself to be one! What are you doing with me?'^{cxxxii}. Additionally, we can deduce that, at least to a small degree, the selection was due to the artistic exigency and almost entirely to the incapacity (or the refusal) of the 'old' dramatists to align their creations to the new, Realist-Socialist canons desired by the Party.

The general disapproving attitude is brought forth by *Rampa*, which criticizes 'the hesitation of most dramatic writers, whenever they are shown that their duty is to leave the facile terrain of formalist theatre and concentrate on real life'^{cxxxiii}. The low interest manifested by Romanian dramatists in choosing themes about class conflict, or their wangling from the problematic assiduously indicated by the Party, causes dissatisfaction on the activists' side.

The cases of the authors who actually make efforts to write the way socialist dogma dictates are quite rare in 1948. Such an example is the young Romanian dramatist Ionel Lazaroneanu who earns the appreciation of critic Valentin Silvestru for the arduousness of 'giving a work which is valid from the point of view of our actuality, whose subject concerns Romanian realities [...]'^{cxxxiii}. This identification of literature with ideology determined an almost organic repulsion of the Romanian people against the totalitarian regime. For the moment, the development of progressive literature is stagnating. The inability to adapt to new commandments or the refusal to do so is manifested by the established generation of dramatist as well as by the young debutants.

Objections also come along from stage directors who raise the question of losing the freedom of creation when obliged to take into account the ideas recommended during the production sessions. The formal answers^{cxxxiv} given by the press of the time reveals attempts of opposition coming from among stage play creators.

The actors feel threatened by the new dramaturgy which has little to offer and in which they are forced to play, convinced they would not achieve professional prestige in these unexciting plays. Historian Liviu Malița notices that rare occasions do come along, like Schiller's *Intrigue and Love* or Zaharia Bârsan's *Trandafirii Roșii* [*The Red Roses*], two of the few authorized bourgeois plays, which start genuine fights, intrigues and hostilities over winning a role in the distribution.

For the Party activist, the most worrisome form of resistance is the duplicitous attitude of stage managers. These are politically controlled obedient clerks turned into party activists, with the task of executing the tasks received from the superior forums in the most exact manner. In reality, things are completely different. Managers not only manifest a lack of consistency in obeying orders, but most times, they become combative, especially when it comes to drawing out

the repertoire. The tendency to verify and to obtain notices from the reading committees for those plays which are ideologically confuse is interpreted by the censors as a proof of not aligning to party policy. Neither when it comes to regional managers, the Party can't say it has earned its completely dedicated adepts. Most of them use the advantage of being some distance away from the capital and the lack of possibilities for an organized control in order to run their repertoire in a certain climate of freedom.

This duplicity practice is finally decoded^{cxxxv} by the infatigable vigilance of journalist Alexandru Mălin, who considers the strategy used in the show *A murit...Bubi!* [*Bubi ...died!*] by Tudor Mușatescu and staged by Ion Iancovescu at the Maria Filotti Theatre – questionable.

Using propaganda texts inserted in the hall program of the performance, the director flaunts an excessive display of adhesion to the party in order to gain freedom of speech for his show.

Duplicity is not a sporadic or isolated phenomenon to be ignored. Trying to find the explanations that would justify why 'the mentality and the technique of the so-called modernist methods still prevail with our creators'^{cxxxvi}, Nicolae Moraru analyzes the contradiction between 'the artist's progressive political attitude and his creation' and finds out that the 'modernist' bourgeois schools that practice a bourgeois artistic education are also responsible for this phenomenon. Many times, resistance through duplicity led to political opportunism, something absolutely intolerable for the party which considered that miming conformism was an act of sabotage.

The public's behavior was also a reason of serious concern for the officials of the epoch. The persistent attempts to reform the public clash with the resistant attitude displayed by both categories of public – the bourgeois and the working one. Auditoriums are still filled by the old bourgeois public, while the working one is still establishing itself. The new dramaturgy, ordered and abusively imposed by the party, basically fails to appeal to either of the two categories. It seems that one of the most efficient forms of resistance to the pressure of propaganda was put up by the public which avoided ideological performances, thus ensuring a natural selection of the repertoire.

The actions of disproof, scarce and barely sketched, were never organized, as they were uncompromisingly suppressed from the early stages. Most of them stemmed out of the desire to survive artistically and they were certainly not conceived as forms of political opposition. The phenomenon of public opposition almost did not exist in 1948. All those who were considered a threat for the communist system had already been thrown in jail^{cxxxvii}, while those who were still tolerated couldn't make a move as they were constantly monitored. There were cases – few, to be fair – where recantation was expressed clearly and knowingly.

In the world of the theatre, such is the case of actress Alice Voinescu, exposed for her 'adamantly decadent position and the outspoken escapist conceptions she promotes'^{cxxxviii}. The same applies for actress Magda Tîlvan^{cxxxix} in Cluj, accused of practicing 'theosophy', only because she refused to embrace

the new ideological and artistic principles. She also disavowed the socialist-realist acting method practiced by the actors of the time and finally, declared herself completely against the propaganda which eulogized progressive dramaturgy.

The cultural and mental shock, together with the natural incapacity to adjust instantaneously represented the basic nucleus for the resources of the resistance. The writer's or the artist's reflex gesture to protect his work when threatened by the communist dogma was the basis of all these involuntary forms of resistance and not the assumed intention to oppose the totalitarian system. A part of the Romanian intellectual elite which was still under the influence of western values – with its trust in dialogue and democracy – chose the path of compromise, hoping that it would be able to reform the Stalinist system from the inside, so as to obtain the acceptance of its works and of a different way of thinking. This hope carefully nurtured by the party's lying propaganda would prove to be a grand illusion in the end.

Lacking a form of organization, the opposition in the world of the theatre proved inefficient and only managed to give consistency to the triumph so demonstratively displayed by the PMR. Even if, for the moment, compromise gains ground in the detriment of resistance, protests continue to exist one way or another during the communist nightmare. Since a legal manifestation of an anti-Party opposition was impossible, exile would take over this mission. Every defeat would prove to be provisory and certainly not definitive.

The Impact of the First Year of Communism on the Romanian Theatrical Phenomenon

At the moment of its emergence, in 1944, socialist literature does not have a remarkable force of attraction and there is a possibility to formulate criticism against it, without the fear of retaliation. With the change of the political regime, the monopoly over any kind of manifestation pertaining to artistic creation will be held by this literature, which, starting with 1948, imposes soviet models conceived in the ideological laboratories of the Russian writers, adepts of social realism, whose main objective is to unify all the artistic creations by limiting the freedom of expression.

An important aspect worthy of being mentioned is the fact that the beginnings of totalitarianism still allowed forms of insubordination. Ambiguous and incoherent, like the party soliciting it, the new dramaturgy had to be imposed, as no genuine playwright wanted to identify with it. The natural reaction of rejecting an imposed art, one lacking legitimacy and authenticity, despite the constant support given by the U.S.S.R., proves the fact that the Romanian theatre was not ready to embrace the communist dogmas anytime soon. This type of reaction did nothing else than to determine radical measures, consolidating PCR's offensive in organizing an absolute control over public life, by means of a terror that modern Romania hadn't seen or experienced before, however accustomed it was to dictatorships. The next step consists in dislocating culture by means of persistent attacks directed against renowned writers, with a censorship that decides what authors can be published and not lastly, by throwing

dissidents or whoever was only suspected of adversity against the regime in jail.

The Romanian literary scene suffers important mutations as a cause of the permanent pressure inflicted upon artistic personalities. Dramatic authors, for instance, develop numerous strategies to ensure their literary survival in an environment which proves hostile to authentic creation and which forces them to compromise in exchange for being printed or for being allowed the stage performance of their less dogmatic texts. Stylistically, dramatists try to attenuate the upcoming criticism from party activists as much as possible, given the latter's dissatisfaction with the anti-progressive tendencies of the works which systematically refuse to completely obey to clichés.

Despite all concessions, the campaigns to model literature and implicitly, dramaturgy, will manifest with a devastating force, sanctioning with vigilance any deviation from the dictated norm. Furthermore, in most cases, the moderators of the new literature and those homologating the creations are mediocre opportunists, who insolently demand that the writers comply.

An important role in the abusive distortion of the Romanian dramatic heritage through the defiance and repudiation of the valuable works of the past, lacking the beneficial influence of soviet literature, was held by *Scînteia*, the main propaganda organ of the single party.

Most of the writers targeted by the corrective and punitive editorials of this publication, written as ideological discourses, coarse and lacking in nuance, defend themselves by using suggestion, allusive language, means which gradually become the most frequent form of dissidence used in the literary milieu. The effect of the measures used by party activists in the field of Romanian literature leads to the development of a trench literature. Many times, the quality of the works written in that period is confused with the degree of circumvention from the imposed doctrine. Deprived of the freedom of speech due to the elimination of the individualizing aesthetic condition, dramatists see themselves forced to consume their creative energy by exhaustingly looking for efficient solutions to keep a balance between their personal artistic creed and the pattern of a demanded, identifiable art, often by means of language coding. The themes of interest for the large audience were considered decadent or bourgeois, making even more difficult the transition from an art built on a healthy foundation, vouched by the talent and efforts of truly important creators to a sterile art, deficient in themes and means of expression.

From the above-mentioned observations we can easily infer that there are two important directions debated in this chapter: one – trying to determine the reasons for which such a dramatic literature was written and the other – aiming to sum up the means of survival used during this very confusing period.

The “unfrozen” drama

Stalin's death (March 5, 1953) – a character one would take for communism itself – entails a period of relaxation of restrictions imposed in the Soviet bloc. The beginning of the Soviet literary thaw seems to expand over the Romanian literary area including its dramaturgy. This loosening up

allows for a diversification of the domestic repertory at that time, starting with domestic classic plays ranging from Hașdeu to Caragiale, universal plays from Shakespeare to Calderón de la Barca, Russian and Soviet plays, as well as plays by G.B. Shaw, Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Miller (works that voiced criticism to the society).

Original dramaturgy is more and more encouraged, even if its motivations are ideological, but that allows the emergence of a dramaturgy that is not subject to and does not serve the socialist doctrine. The dramaturgy status is actually not bad at all, if you consider the number of authors and plays. "The current repertory of our theatre houses is rich and much more diverse than it was a few years ago. Instead of 3-4 Romanian plays, regularly appearing on the repertory of all theatre houses, now their managers have the possibility to choose from a great number of plays..."^{cxli}. They stage or publish Aurel Baranga (*Mielul turbat* [*The enraged lamb*], 1953; *Întro noapte de vară* [*A summer night*], 1953, become *Recolta de aur* [*The golden harvest*], 1957; *Arcul de triumf* [*Arch of triumph*], 1954; *Rețeta fericirii sau despre ceea ce nu se vorbește* [*Recipe of happiness or about what is not talked about*], 1955; *Siciliana* [*Sicilian*], 1961; *Adam și Eva* [*Adam and Eve*], 1961; *Fii cuminte, Cristofor!* [*Beware, Cristofor!*], 1963), Mihail Davidoglu (*Schimbul de onoare* [*Exchange of honor*], 1953; *De trei ori ca la brigadă* [*Three times like at the brigade*], 1953; *Inima vitează* [*Braveheart*], 1955; *Orașul în flăcări* [*City in flames*], 1955; *Horia*, 1956; *Noi, cei fără de moarte* [*We, the immortal ones*], 1956; *Nemaipomenita furtună* [*Unseen storm*], 1957; *Șoimul* [*Falcon*], 1958; *Urișul din câmpie* [*The giant in the plain*], 1960; *Trandafirul negru* [*Black rose*], 1962), Lucia Demetrius (*Arborele geneologic* [*Genealogical tree*], 1957; *Vlaicu și feciorii lui* [*Vlaicu and his sons*], 1959), Victor Eftimiu (*Răscoale* [*Riots*], 1956; *Până Lesnea Rusalim*, 1956; *Doctor Faust vrăjitor* [*Doctor Faust the wizard*], 1957; *Alegeri, Școala nouă, Mandatul, Testamentul, Halatul alb* [*Choices, New school, Warrant, The Will, The white robe*], 1959), Paul Everac (*Ion Vodă cel Cumplit* [*John the Terrible*], 1953; *Meșterul Manole* [*Master Manole*], 1958; *Este vinovată Corina?* [*Is Corina Guilty?*], 1964), Alexandru Kirițescu (*Un musafir iubit* [*A beloved guest*], 1953), Mircea Ștefănescu (*Patriotica Română* [*Romanian Patriot*], 1955; *O piesă cu dragoste* [*A play with love*], 1955; *Cuza Vodă* [*Cuza the ruler*], 1959; *Procesul d-lui Caragiale* [*Mr. Caragiale's Trial*], 1962; *Eminescu*, 1964) etc.

Starting from the above-mentioned information^{cxli}, which we may add up the list of the big absentees to, we could make a few essential remarks. Acknowledged playwrights go on with their activity over this new stage of the communist regime. The literary activity of big personalities like Camil Petrescu, Vasile Voiculescu or Lucian Blaga gets as moderate as it can be. Some of the drama writers like Al. Kirițescu, Tudor Mușatescu, Mircea Ștefănescu, Victor Eftimiu or Mihail Sorbul write, most of the time, works without a too great importance or festive texts for some of the professional theatre houses. Among them, there are also drama writers who simply do not give up their calling and thus continue to write, despite their being treated with indifference by both theatre house managers and editors, as it is the case of Ion Luca or Radu Stanca. The artist is granted more and more freedom, but this freedom does not go too much beyond the limits set by the

party. As the subsidies granted to the state-owned theatre houses rely on propaganda, and not cultural-artistic grounds, with the quality of the shows being of little interest, the writing is motivated, to a great extent, by the pecuniary and the political aspect whereby one may prove the sympathy towards the totalitarian party doctrine. Roughly speaking, drama preserves, over this period of time, the profile of an institution obliged to answer to social-political orders, and whose propaganda objective was to educate and mold masses.

From the dramaturgy point of view, the struggle over works that would illustrate the victories of socialism goes on. They organize many public debates and meetings of the drama section from the Writers Trade Union, as well as meetings among representatives of the Ministry of Culture and theatre people, in order to identify and correct ideological flaws. These consultations, as recorded in the articles^{cxlii} published by *Scînteia*, point out to several aspects requiring urgent "fixing": there is a small number of contemporary plays that tackle current topics of interest, while the existing ones do not satisfy the audience as they lack boldness in addressing issues, especially the communist profile, quite often presented as lacking vigor. Aware of the writer's duty to address current issues, Horia Lovinescu criticizes, the uselessness of those discussions' repetitive character in an article published by the *Teatrul* magazine: "When this known truth is resumed in the guild magazines, in long articles where each sentence actually reproduces the content of the previous one; when during long discussions – whether in the columns of those magazines, or during the so-called "working" meetings – each and every speaker resumes and tries to prove what everyone already knows, you cannot but have the ridiculous feeling of going around in circles, on and on"^{cxliii}. *Scînteia*, however, continues, in the words^{cxliv} of Andrei Băleanu, to ask theatre people to have more courage. Excessive repetition of such pieces of advice led to the outlining of a theatre incompatible with the new drama offers where artists were supposed to make tremendous efforts in order to save conformist texts in the show. On the other hand, this uninterrupted creative labor also brought about surprising results: the poor quality of the performance of the conformist play on stage, to which adds up the very low degree of permissiveness granted to the non-conformist one, determined real, genuine artistic performances. On such occasions, some of the greatest and most important directors, actors and scenographers of Romania emerged.

The inflation of contemporary texts leads, though, to the emergence of theatre and drama related studies. "What is needed is literary history research, and the serious spirit such studies started being drawn up in lately is a certain victory"^{cxlv}, said the same Horia Lovinescu. Thus, besides numerous publications containing drama chronicles, in 1956, *Teatrul* magazine came into being, which comprised a section called *Calendar* encompassing news from all over the drama world, thanks to which domestic theatre people could get in contact with the world drama phenomenon. Playwrights start to expose and present their opinions on the very field of activity they work in. They debate upon domestic and universal drama phenomena and personalities. Horia Deleanu addresses *Aspecte din dramaturgia lui Gorki* (*Aspects from Gorki's dramaturgy*) (1954), *Triumful lui Goldoni* (*Goldoni's triumph*), (1957), *Orașe și teatre. Germania, Italia '57* (*Cities*

and theatres. Germany, Italy '57) (1958), *Puncte de reper în dramaturgia occidentală contemporană (Milestones in contemporary Western dramaturgy)* (1962), *Istoria teatrului universal contemporan (History of contemporary universal theatre)* (1963), while B. Elvin deals with *Teatrul lui Mihail Sebastian (Mihail Sebastian's Plays)* (1955) and A. P. Cehov (1960). Ioan Massoff writes *Teatrul românesc – privire istorică (Romanian drama – historic overview)*, I, (1961), *Eminescu și teatrul (Eminescu and the theatre)* (1964), and the historian V. Mândra, *Însemnări despre literatură și teatru (Notes on literature and drama)* (1958), Dumitru Solomon debates *Problematica intelectualului în opera lui Camil Petrescu (The intellectual's status in Camil Petrescu's work)* (1958) and so on.

As far as (stage) direction is concerned, Liviu Ciulei and Toni Gheorghiu suggest a “re-dramatization”^{cxlvi} of the theatre show, a process that first manifests itself in the staging conceptions of these two, later joined by Tody Constantinescu, encompassing in the long run the whole stage creation unit. Therefore, one may notice a predilection for popular theatre, with great meaning, often approached by the perspective of public debates. Stylistically speaking, the direction aesthetics tends toward a certain type of stage poetry, by using metaphor, symbol or hyperbola. Great caliber directors like Liviu Ciulei, David Esrig, Radu Penciulescu, Lucian Giurchescu, Valeriu Moisescu, Marietta Sadova, Dinu Cernescu or Sorana Coroamă focus on the attempt to amplify and diversify the actor's expressivity, by different methods, so that the actor finally becomes the most important figure from the structure of some “total” performances.

Themes and Representative Drama Authors

Thematic ideological demands are still in force. Some playwrights choose history, in order to avoid current events, triggering discontent reactions from activists. Horia Lovinescu answers them once again: “The blaming that the literature we call historic is a real ‘escape’ into the past is – in the case of valuable works - absurd”^{cxlvii}. And yet, in certain situations, addressing history is conventional. Mircea Ștefănescu tries to bring the figure of the great poet Mihai Eminescu on stage in one of his plays, but, in Călin Căliman's opinion, fails to artistically transform the documentary material: “Mircea Ștefănescu leaves too much room in his play to gross results of the documentary research and, in doing so, the instances of life being caught look simplified”^{cxlviii}. The lack of originality imputed to the author can also be connected to the need to comply with sociological studies of the time, dedicated to the great national poet, in order to avoid a prospective rejection of the play.

Propaganda obsessions fall under the area of competence of checked writers and those who proved to have a courageous attitude. The range of themes pertains especially to the illegal activity carried out by the communist party before, during the war, on the August 23, 1944 episode, and the first struggles for the establishment and setting up of the democrat-popular power. In many of these plays, protagonists are intellectuals or artists whose confrontation with some political-social events provides the representation of the whole allowed theme set. *Anii negrii (Bleak years)* derived from the review of the play *Pentru fericirea poporului (For the people's happiness)*, 1951) and *Iarba rea (Bad Grass)*, 1949, also reviewed in 1953) by

Aurel Baranga and Nicolae Moraru bring audacious communist fighters together with traitors, for the first time, on the domestic stages; *Arcul de triumf (Arch of triumph)* also evokes games of heroism, opportunism and treason of the party in the context of the act from August 23, 1944. Even if his literary beginnings identify him as an author subjugated to the communist ideology, Aurel Baranga lifts up the “ordered literature” patterns to the rank of innovation, according to historian Mircea Ghițulescu, who reminds us that his techniques were taken over by Lucia Demetrius in *Vlaicu și feciorii lui (Vlaicu and his sons)*. Once turned toward comedy, Baranga would later on prove his skills, knowing how to “wipe the Stalinist dust off his pages”^{cxlix}.

Some writers like Mihail Davidoglu and Lucia Demetrius turn drama, even unintentionally, into a barometer of literary-artistic norms and liberties of the second post-war decade, which reflects the subordination attitude of the opportunist writer willing to demonstrate his adhesion to the party policy by all means. The series of ideologically “enslaved” works and plays begins with plays that illustrate, for starters, the antitheses of the class clashes, with a subsequent gradual enhancement of the militant side. Industrial life is another theme that becomes one of the authorities' preferences, and Mihail Davidoglu is one of the authors drawn into the prestige of the thematic chart premise. In fact, what he does is to go on with his already begun activity, with plays like *Platforma neagră (Black Platform)*, leading to a work that would come to prove “the document of a defeat, as the author places himself in the paradoxical situation to copy-paste a dramaturgy whose clichés were due to him, to a great extent”^{cl}. Paul Everac also makes his entry into the dramaturgy of socialist industrialization, thanks to his play *Ferestre deschise (Open windows)*. He preserves the features of the propaganda literature: optimistic ending, good hero-bad hero typology, predictability of closures, etc.

The peasant theme is approached by Lucia Demetrius in *Vlaicu și feciorii săi (Vlaicu and his sons)*. The story of collectivization and the reserves of the countryman named Vlaicu forced by his three sons and the community's opinion into accepting the collectivist doctrine, illustrates the last party theses offered to villages: struggles against kulaks shift to the mentality level, where they debate upon positive, yet different and even contrary ideas, with reference to the economic growth of collective agricultural households and agricultural “twinning”.

At first sight, plays focusing on political, ethic and social contemporary debates are stereotyped. Dramatic tension relies on summary and decisive class clashes: disintegrating and recomposing families, emphasizing conflicts between generations, but not belonging to the same positive social class, like in others' case. This time, Lucia Demetrius takes a different approach, just like Horia Lovinescu, being one of the few writers of her time to succeed in harmoniously combining imposed themes and aesthetic conscience. Besides the thesis-idyll plays which authorities like, she attenuates the importance of the class clashes a great deal in her most important plays, paying attention to genealogy and inheritance (*Ferestre deschise [Open windows]*, 1956; *Arborele genealogic [Genealogical Tree]*, 1957) and treating the theme related to the historic shock derived from the clash between

the old value system and the socialist revolution in a “realist-critical” manner, à la Ibsen. In *Cumpăna [Balance]* (1949), she manages to “skip” the heroic and eulogistic style characteristic of the era, motivating the drama of the main character, Mircea Vadu, by an intricate construction of characters’ psychology.

Just like Mihail Davidoglu, but being more successful, Lucia Demetrius tries to reposition herself from a creation point of view after 1965, substituting traditional means she had worked with till then with some modern formulas. In *God’s Garden*, the theme she addresses is the very literary creation process. The main character is the author herself who, by an exercise of imagination, oneirically outlines the other characters. *Perpetuum mobile* (1972) provides the author’s pretext to suggest versions of mankind, which may lead the world to bliss or perdition, on the background of a cyclically self-regenerating paradise. The work toward the end of her career shows us an author preoccupied with the fate of the planet, of the mankind who negotiates new forms of world existence at a literary level.

The idea theatre finds in the former manager of the *Nottara* Theatre House, Horia Lovinescu, a prolific author who chooses to immortalize the era, avoiding stonewalling and illustrating the struggle between idealism and materialism by the conflict between two totally opposite attitudes: a passive, contemplative one, and an active one, engaged in the existence turmoil. As part of a rather limited category of playwrights who, in the 1960’s, opted for a theatre of the thinking, and not of imitation, Horia Lovinescu uses *family chronicles* – which Petru Dumitriu was reminding of – in order to evoke the “idealism-materialism” philosophical controversy transformed into ideological struggle. In *Citadela sfărâmată (Broken Citadel, 1955)*, which depicts the dismantling of the inter-war Romania’s order, and, later on, in *Patima fără sfârșit (Endless passion, 1977)*, which depicts the fall of the Habsburg feudalism, the author presents versions of the historic and political involvement, using the theoretical integration method that rules out adaptation deprived of substance. The central characters outline as exceptional, as their actions are motivated by movements of the conscience that makes their deeds legitimate.

The author continues the tradition of family plays with *Surorile Boga (The Boga Sisters, 1958)* conceived as a reply to Cehov’s comedy, *Three Sisters*. The play’s plot takes place between 1943 and 1946 in a traditional province and, similar to Cehov’s characters, the three sisters are presented as beings with broken dreams. Although close to some more famous patterns, the drama presents the existence of the three women differently determined by the victorious communism.

Horia Lovinescu proposes a different type of engagement than the political one by means of the so-called “plays of engagement”, in which problematic characters (Matei and Petru from *Broken Citadel* or Mereuță from *The Boga Sisters*) try to find philosophically transferable balance at a social and political level, and face the ideologically “prefabricated” characters (Grandma, Pavel Golea from *The Boga Sisters*).

Another aspect of Lovinescu’s creation worth mentioning is the transition from objectively addressed traditional drama to

the confessional one, written in the first person: *Febre, Și eu am fost în Arcadia, Patima fără sfârșit, Autobiografie (Fevers, I’ve been to Arcadia too, Endless passion, Autobiography)*. Dramatic confession implies a certain degree of authenticity from the author, which is doable only if the author identifies with the confessing character, which, in Lovinescu’s work, acquires tones of total commitment. *Fevers* presents the update of the tormented existence of Dr. Toma Dărăscu who decides to let go of the comfort of a scientific career in Bucharest for a unique professional experience in a fishermen village from the Danube Delta. There, besides epidemics and the secular obscurantism, he also has to face and cope with the adultery of his wife, who proves to be a weak and shallow social character. The play essentially remains a “melodramatic story” whose thematic support is secured by the “social background of the revolutionary transformation of the villages from the Danube Delta in pages that can hardly be separated from the propaganda coverage”^{cli}. The theme of the play *Și eu am fost în Arcadia (I’ve been to Arcadia too)* is addressed from the perspective of metaphysical meanings. In this play, death is the catalyst of the assessment and clarification of fundamental motivations of Hans Cojocaru, the protagonist’s life. The moral dilemma undergone by the main character from *Autobiografie (Autobiography)* represents the pretext for an existential retrospective of a science man who mixes up science in social life and the other way round, even when his research institute does not need it. *Patima fără sfârșit (Endless passion)* evokes, through the four Dumșa generations, tensions and contradictory relations between the individual and the family, as well as between the individual and the society.

“The artist’s presence in current events is not a dogmatic imperative, but a condition of the aesthetic creation, which the artist cannot escape from. Willy-nilly, he is a witness to his time...”^{clii} said Horia Lovinescu, who decided to treat current events as a pamphlet. The play *O casă onorabilă (An honorable house)* depicts the moral and almost pathological degradation of some characters which stand for the newly formed class engaged in abject debauchery.

The *positive, good hero* figure – a stereotype of the proletariat-cult literature – is heralded in *Al patrulea anotimp (The Fourth Season)*. The communist Elefterescu killed by Hitler’s supporters would become, after his death, a myth, sustained also by the efforts made by his wife and his mother-in-law. The two women do not act out of conviction, but out of pure speculation. Bringing to the fore the fake attachment of Elefterescu’s family to the myth of the communist guy killed while on duty, the author points out to the fact that there are also impostors among those who are declared devoted to the party. The playwright seems to indirectly criticize the flaws and shortcomings of an apparently accepted doctrine, which, in reality, fathers duplicity.

The series of plays that address current issues and events continues with *Hanul de la răscruce (The inn at the crossroads)* which combats “the psychosis of the war and the atomic hysteria”^{cliii}. The play’s plot takes place in a closed, secluded space, which actually evokes a kind of *theatrum mundi* involving many characters representing “symbols of some ideological types”^{cliv} which make up a mankind at a micro scale. Called upon to answer for the misfortunate fate of

the world, emptied by an extra-terrestrial civilization, this play's heroes proved to be carriers of some moral diseases that actually provide grounds for that desolation. The play was criticized when it came out, not so much because of the innovating drama formula at that time, but rather because of the failure to resolve the conflict by suspending the ending.

Creativity is another theme that brought about the playwright's interest. In *Omul care și-a pierdut omenia* (*The man who lost his kindness*), vexed by the appetite for sacrifice, he enhances the myth of Master Manole, so as to prove the precariousness of any human action that does not rely on the harmonization between reason and humanity: Manole, the builder of the Moon Tower (a name that can be clarified by symbology), is the *superman* artist endowed with all the creativity features, fascinated by his own construction. Once again, characters are tackled from the symbol perspective: the efforts made by the master are squandered by Elonam (which is actually the protagonist's name spelt/pronounced backwards), a vicious character, full of negative attributes, essentially an antinomy construction of Manole.

Paradisul (*The Paradise*) is an obvious political allegory that presents polemical intentions with regard to the vision of a utopic world, where mankind is threatened by humanoid robots. The dogma imposed into Paradise is all fresh and interesting and supposes mandatory bliss, a totalitarian dictate implemented by means of a complex repression apparatus; the means remind us of the ones used by the totalitarian system. In this case as well, one may use, to some good, decoding, in order to signal a polemical answer against totalitarianism. The series of allegorical and parabolic abstractions evolves with *Jocul vieții și al morții în deșertul de cenușă* (*"The game of life and death in the ashes desert"*), a tragic comedy depicting an apocalyptic world. Lovinescu updates biblical myths in a space gradually swallowed by a symbolic ashes desert, which reduces irretrievably the space where man can still be a man. Characters are transformed into archetypes – Father, Cain, Abel, except for Ana, the only woman in the world, who remains a human being in her entirety.

Leaving aside the realistic and parabolic plays, the author also tries techniques fusion. This category includes one of the works that made him famous, namely *Moartea unui artist* (*"Death of an artist"*), which made it to school books and which essentially represents an aesthetic essay debating the issue of the art meaning. The playwright considers that artistic ideals have to be connected to the era they occur in. There again we come across this antinomy type construction between art considered individualistic and art as an expression of the crowd's hopes, as illustrated by the sculptors family, Manole and Vlad Crudu. The acknowledged artist Manole Crudu is a representation of the genius creator, a kind of rebel Renaissance spirit, who has to face the anxiety of modern existence, on top of the death's phantasm. The play is not necessarily structured, as it is impregnated with folklore symbols. *Ultima cursă* (*"Last race"*) also presents the author's tossing between the traditional play and the nonconformist drama formulas after 1900. Even if the starting point of the play is sports, the play may be regarded rather as a debate concerning the generation clash and the individual's

(inner) conflict, as he has to face his own biological, social and moral boundaries.

His literary journey from *Citadela sfărâmată* (*"Broken citadel"*) to *Al patrulea anotimp* (*"The fourth season"*), marked by questions concerning creation and the creator, (*Moartea unui artist, Omul care și-a pierdut omenia* [*"Death of an artist, The man who lost his kindness"*]), the fate of the planet and of the human being (*Hanul de la răscruce, Jocul vieții și al morții în deșertul de cenușă* [*The inn at the crossroads, The game of life and death in the ashes desert*]) goes from the descriptive approach to the critical analysis of engagement. What is common though to almost all the categories of plays is the addressing of mankind and of what is human. The hypothesis of man jeopardized by the "automation" of behaviors up to standardization is present in most of the plays.

Paul Everac is another playwright who had a prodigious activity at this stage, but mostly in terms of quantity. Benefiting from Mihail Davidoglu's example as far as the industrial theme goes (*Cetatea de foc* [*"The fire fortress"*]), Lucia Demetrius' experience of a socialist transformation of agriculture, the ridiculing of bureaucratic ordeals from Aurel Baranga's work or the family drama doubled by objective moral evaluations by Horia Lovinescu, Paul Everac wants to establish his dramaturgy as a reply to the previous stage, while remaining connected to that – to the extent in which any dispute is dependent on the subject matter it disputes.

Poarta (*"The Door"*) is the debut play that updates the theme of the rural frustration due to the private propriety, based on some passionate and severe people with reactions not really justified, from the logic point of view, when it comes to accepting and rejecting the agriculture collectivization. He continues to answer to the "social order" with his play *Ferestre deschise* (*"Open windows"*) (its action takes place in an iron and steel plant, and involves many characters), *Ochiul albastru* (*"The blue eye"*) (which is a portrayal of the hydro plant from Bicaz, also involving a lot of characters), *Explozie întârziată* (*"Delayed explosion"*), and *Ștafeta nevăzută* (*"The unseen relay"*).

At the beginning, the author complies with the matrix imposed at that time by the Soviets, related to the representatives of the working class, sympathizers of the unique party: "The dramatic heroes, whose role models are members of the great Communist Party of the Soviet Union, are molded from a special clay"^{clv}, following that, later on, they would distance themselves from the model of a party devotee. The positive figure of the communist hero is put into a critical perspective by the author in *Simple coincidențe* (*Simple coincidences*), by the trade union activist Vlăsceanu (played by the great actor George Constantin) who is "assigned" human weaknesses, so as to nuance his human profile. He neglects his family and the education of his only son, thus moving off, verisimilarly enough, from the communist hero template. The play is a debate around family responsibility and communist morals. Many other plays follow, with theme and sometimes modulation variations: *Descoperirea* (*Discovery*) 1959, *Costache și viața interioară* (*Costache and the inner life*) 1962, *Om de lângă tine* (*The man next to you*) 1963, *O întâlnire neobișnuită* (*An unusual*

encounter) 1964, *Tezaurul (Thesaurus)* 1965, *Iancu de la Hălmaşiu (Iancu from Hălmaşiu)* 1966, *Patimi (Passions)* 1967, *Ana* 1969, *Camera de dincolo (The room over there)* 1970, *Un fluture pe lampă (A butterfly on the lamp)* 1974 (a drama depicting Romanian emigrants downgraded in the West), *Martorul cu păreri proprii (The witness having his own opinions)* 1982. Most plays over that period of time preserve the characteristics of the propaganda literature, despite the author's efforts to adapt the era's ideological patterns to an artistic good taste tolerable in a literary landscape distorted by the obsessions of socialist realism.

On the whole, the innovations brought by the drama productions of relaxation are criticized or rejected, but possible. Stylistic variety ranges from minor interventions of the mythological, fantastic, and allegorical elements, up to a tensed and somber structural expressionism, tempting even for Mihail Davidoglu in *Uriaşul din câmpie (The giant in the plain)* or Horia Lovinescu. Connotative conventions are accepted, provided they do not oppose the ideals of the sovereign socialism.

Despite the development of a dramaturgy serving the totalitarian doctrine, the Party continues to express its discontent with qualitative deficiencies: "Quite often, conflicts and heroes belonging to our current times are palely and narrowly pictured against the level that the labor man moved up to - from a moral, cultural, political, human point of view. Quite often, what seems to be new, contemporary, in dramaturgy and performances, is, virtually, old or only formally new"^{clvi}. Where drama texts would "fail" to meet ideological requirements, activists would rely on the directors' ingenuity to provide them with real value: "It is the role of the direction to generally orient and steer the performance, so that the communist's figure truly fills up the stage, and thus visibly and convincingly exceeds the other characters"^{clvii}.

Monitoring evolves as well. Thus, on the 3rd of July, 1962, *The Theatres' Council* (whose appointed chairman was Radu Beligan) was founded in Bucharest, a council subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, which was supposed to supervise performances produced throughout the country. One year after its establishment, the plenary meeting of this institution noticed that the guidance proved beneficial, since theatre houses paid special attention to the national repertory: out of the 255 premieres achieved during that season, "137 Romanian plays were staged: 109 were contemporary plays, 18 plays dated from in-between the two wars and 10 classic plays; thus, the Romanian plays accounted for around 55% of the total number of the premieres"^{clviii}.

The July 1971 Theses

After Gheorghiu-Dej passed away on March 19, 1965, the Communist Committee, during their plenary meeting on March 22, designated the young activist Nicolae Ceauşescu, thus confirming the forecast made by Ghiţă Ionescu, specialist in political issues^{clix}. Thus the last period of domination of the communist regime known as the "Nicolae Ceauşescu Era" or "The Golden Era" starts, between 1965 and 1989. The Romanian political leader has considerably left his print on the Romanian society, at all levels – social, administrative, but especially the intellectual-artistic one, due to the veneration

phenomenon, known by the name of "the personality cult" triggered once the *The July 1971 Theses* were issued. Designed as a set of new rules of the socialist dogma, which was to repair deficiencies in the political, education and cultural field – by triggering an alleged "cultural mini-revolution", the *Theses* are, in fact, the internal way to protect the regime, by state isolation. At the cultural-artistic level, one proposes the same destructive proliferation of the cliché, especially in the literature area. But the new regulations and orders did not generate the expected, hoped for effects and results, because they were essentially updates of Marx's and Lenin's principles from the socialism's early days. Roughly speaking, the domestic cultural landscape remained the same, also due to a partial or formal enforcement of those principles by the writers who took advantage, as much as they could, of the relaxation time during the "thawing" period, so as to express themselves according to their own vision on art and the world. They would continue to defy and challenge official indications, even if they declared themselves to be loyal to the principles sustained by those theses. The liberties artists take are due also to hesitations of the public institutions, which are tasked with the cultural-artistic reformation, when it comes to the just, correct enforcement of the theses in question, since the ordered measures already followed the pattern of current ideological activities. The serious consequences of the *Theses* would especially reflect at the material level, given the considerable cut in the budget for culture and education, an economically motivated decrease. The impact on the editorial system and the cultural-artistic publications is huge.

The campaigns dedicated to the translation of some major Greek and Latin playwrights or representative works from the Japanese drama, as well as contemporary texts, continued during that period of time. Prefaces to these volumes include comments that are not exempt from some totally unjustified exaggerations in relation to the work's value.

New publications add up to the editorial space in the field of drama; we are talking about publications edited by numerous theatre houses, which sometimes use the hall programs, in order to put forward certain points of view. Drama chronicles remain an ideological derivate, thus condemning itself to disqualification. Most of it being made up of opportunists and amateurs, criticism functions on two coordinates: plays/works are either extremely and groundlessly praised, or very abruptly, harshly criticized. Rarely does one make honest remarks on the positive aspects of a stage performance, which take into account material, psychological and political impediments. Opinions and ideas about drama start coming also from actors and directors, but the ones belonging to drama authors stand out. Drama authors speak in a very personal manner about the drama phenomenon and its characteristics. Going beyond the implicit note of subjectivity of these confessions, one may notice that those respective texts contribute to the decoding of meanings of a cultural important phenomenon and of an era that left Romania full of scars.

As far as direction goes, the publication of the documents dated July 5-7, 1971, marks a new wave of interdictions^{clx}. The abrupt removal of D.R. Popescu's play, *Pisica în noaptea Anului Nou (Cat in the New Year's Eve)* from the repertory, and especially the forbidding of the representation with

Gogol's *Reviser* directed by Lucian Pintilie, at *Bulandra* Theatre House in the fall of 1972, virtually oppose the whole institution of the Romanian drama to the communist power. In the public eyes, out of all the forms of art that exist in Romania, this privileged position will provide drama with a fine presence, respect and also influence on the formation of opinion trends.

The Theatre, Dramatic Literature and Playwrights

Officially and festively, the text and the dramatic performance enjoy convenient, positive evaluations. 'It is true that in the past years [...] our playwrights have been valuably productive, which has not only stimulated the interest of young directors, but has led to a genuine cohesion between the writing table and the stage, a cohesion altogether favorable for the Romanian theatre^{clxi}. In reality, however, the opinions concerning the theatre remain negative. Peasants complain that the interest in simple plays has faded, especially those plays evoking rural themes: 'I skim over the newspapers, I read the reviews and I realize that there are almost no brisk, picturesque, appealing performances, ones that would entail simple intrigues, lots of music or topics related to rural life^{clxii}. The dramatists themselves criticize: 'Too many made-up problems, too many lymphatic metaphors, too much trivial poetry, too much juvenile intellectualism, too many symbols and too little observation of life...^{clxiii}.

Answering the ideological demands of the *Theses*, Virgil Munteanu sends out a call to return to the contemporaries: 'Why don't you re-stage a play written in the past years? [...] What do we still remember about *Vlaicu și feciorii lui* [*Vlaicu and His Sons*] or about *Rețeta fericirii* [*Recipe for Happiness*]...?^{clxiv}. He continues by pointing out 'the serious deficiencies^{clxv} of the poor qualitative content (ideological, of course) of several performances and plays, for which theatre employees are responsible. But the real culprits for the problems of the theatre continue to be the censors, the ministry clerks, some of them setting themselves up as dramatists in virtue of the specific positions they occupy, or dramatists becoming clerks due to their mediocrity, the cautious theatre managers and not lastly, the theatres' and the plays' lack of autonomy.

From among the old guard dramatists, it is only Aurel Baranga who managed to adapt and to become successful. 'Baranga is played on four of the Bucharest stages, with permanent box-office performances^{clxvi}. Considered an 'evangelist of humor^{clxvii}, his virtue consisted in heaving dealt with the present, firstly by writing standard, social realist comedies, then by changing his public points of view according to the freedom he was officially granted. The sources of conflict often stem from intra- (inter-)familial and professional plots, as his comedies can be ranked according to the thematic accent in the domestic or institutional environment. The series of his conjugal comedies is opened by *Siciliana* and *Adam și Eva* [*Adam and Eve*], but the one worthy of being mentioned is *Fii cuminte, Cristofor!* [*Cristofor, behave!*].

Travesti falls out of Aurel Baranga's stage pattern, as this time, the playwright prefers to theatricalize life and

relationships in a Pirandellian note: everything is consumed inside the universe of the theatre.

Mielul turbat [*The Mad Lamb*] opens the series of satirical farces, with the author later insisting with *Sfântul Mitică Blajinu* [*Saint Mitică The Gentle*], which has the merit of bringing to light not only the demagogy with its political clichés, but also some of society's negative aspects, such as the lack of food, poverty or the fascination with the West. With *Opinia publică* [*The Public Opinion*], Baranga takes on some risks of conjuncture in order to write a comical pamphlet in an acrimonious note. In order to prevent any possible objection from the surveillance apparatus, the author turns to an ambiguous construction of satire by drawing on the Pirandellian convention of engaging reality and theatre performance through confusion – theatre within the theatre.

Within this satirical cycle consisting of four social satires, 'the atrocious farce' titled *Interesul general* [*General Interest*] is the satire of a nomenclature pathologically damaged by the fear of losing the reign and the official privileges.

The work of 'the most important comedy writer during the post-war epoch^{clxviii} can be considered a repertory full of established procedures used to create humor. Aurel Baranga remains 'an iconic figure for the situation of the playwright in relation to politics and propaganda', becoming 'a paradigm of *acceptability* when it comes to dramatic themes and language^{clxix}.

The tendencies of the theatre of the absurd also stand out during the epoch, a style of theatre preferred by a multitude of national and international writers. In the soviet space, the theatre of the absurd becomes a form of opposition, usually satirical, directed against the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which sometimes aims to demonstrate the archetypal irrelevance of the East-West political antinomy. In time, authors turn to the famous themes of the absurd, or to themes subject to becoming absurd from the history of humanity. Surrealism is, among other things, the reaction of certain scholars against a culture which has falsified the human being, forcing it to assume an extraneous identity.

The predecessor of the meaningful literature of the absurd is Gellu Naum, a writer coming from the field of poetry. The author stands out 'with the voluptuousness with which he places his lines in spectacular constructions^{clxx}. Few in number, his plays – *Ceasornicăria Tauss* [*Tauss Watchmaker's*], *Poate Eleonora...* [*Eleonora, Perhaps...*] and *Insula* [*The Island*] – will have a notable influence on Matei Vișniec's dramaturgy or on Horia Gârbea's texts.

Gheorghe Astaloș is yet another poet turning to the theatrical avant-garde, who practices a theatre of subversive accents. It can be said that during this period, the theatre is surprisingly appealing to poets and protesters. A theatre innovator with his theory of the pluridimensionality of the theatre^{clxxi} (the Floral-Spatial Theatre), proposing a surprising and novel space for the stage performance, Astaloș is part of the writers' generation (along with Marin Sorescu, Teodor Mazilu, D.R. Popescu, Iosif Naghiu), launching a genuine literary rebelliousness in the 70s and 80s. His plays deal with various

topics, starting with the global condemnation of militarism (*Vin soldații / Here Come the Soldiers*), to a small summary of the history of the theatre (*Ceainăria de argint / The Silver Tea House*), and culminating with the parable of freedom in *Song pentru Annamaria [Song for Annamaria]*, a text which will be rewritten once Astaloș moves to Paris and titled *Ce ne facem fără Willi? [What Are We To Do Without Willi?]*.

The remonstrative parable is also preferred by Romulus Guga, whose dramatic works are quite rare, but intense in their reflection on the crisis of humanism characterizing the epoch. The vision of his work is fundamentally poetic, in the sense that the lyric, the epic and the dramatic borrow attributes from one another in the most natural way, along with their literary means of configuration, in order to communicate intuitions, states of mind, ideas, major and ultimately unifying spiritual meanings. In accordance with his aesthetic creed that 'a good dramatist or a good man of the theatre'^{clxxii} should 'walk the steps of studying the theatre, within the theatre', the author uses the *theatrum mundi* recipe, asking his characters to learn the lesson of the human nature inside closed spaces, carefully overseen by external factors, thus offering them the exponential value of the essential humanity. For Romulus Guga, the crisis of humanism is expanded from the individual to the society, culminating with the humankind, understood as a planetary community.

The thematic inventory varies from the inertia of existence as reflected in *Moartea domnului Platfus [The Death of Mr. Flatfoot]*, in which the characters of the play suffer from flatfoot, with an anamnesis listing platitude, indifference, selfishness, renouncing memory, alienation from the essence, the idleness of the spirit in what concerns the 'need for options'^{clxxiii} experienced by characters with surprising destinies, forced to perform in a closed, perspective-lacking environment (the waiting room of a train station), as in *Speranța nu moare în zori [Hope Does Not Die at Dawn]*. Under the pretext of family dramas, the author proposes an interrogation of totalitarianism in *Noaptea cabotinelor [The Night of the Ham Actors]*. The object of the investigation is 'family, with the decomposing and the recomposing of its relationships, an x-ray of mentalities and behaviors, in the lights and shadows of history, on the brink of, or in the whirlpool of sociohistorical transformations'^{clxxiv}. The theme was not novel, but it would become 'original in composition'. *Evul mediu întâmplător [The Coincidental Middle Ages]* and *Amurgul burghez [The Bourgeois Dusk]* are the author's literary protest against the threat man poses to man. The first play is set in an institution, where the patients are asked to star in a play about a soldier who renounces the military code rendered absolute by the others, because of his love for Gloria. The offence is punished with a death sentence, by hanging this individual who is astray from the stiff fanatics. In the end, the world of these committed patients (the actors) will prove even crueler than the illusory one from the play, since there is no rebellious man to be executed, as all of them are completely indoctrinated and 'trained'. The second play presents the same individual, with no special qualities, cynically manipulated by his own wife this time, as she insistently asks him to commit suicide in order to cash in the insurance money. He dies in the end, after a series of humiliations and tortures. The metaphoric code of the drama reveals not the death of a simple man, but that of the entire

human species. The characters do not have remarkable features; they are prototypes of the essential man, the simple, generic man, sending out an image of the humankind as unhappy, mocked and guilty because of its own nature.

The originality of Romulus Guga's writing, stemming out of prose, consists in a constant evaluation of the world's chances to harmoniously survive through the same patterns of humanity which characterize his entire work. In the theatre, Guga saw the art of learning the alphabet of the world at a collective level.

Another dramatist who had an important say in the dynamics of the Romanian theatre is Dumitru Solomon. He creates unexpected dramatic situations, counting on the 'normal-abnormal' dichotomy, casually developing the absurd conflict and valorizing the category of the insignificant.

In his debut volume, Dumitru Solomon's theatre of the absurd deals with the conflicts between parents and children, contrasting the world of childhood with that of adulthood (*Neînțelegerea / The Misunderstanding, Ignoranții/ The Ignorants, Coșmar [Nightmare]*), achieving comical effects from the superiority ascribed to the former. The plays draw their substance from the portrayal of this 'age of difficult questions'.

The thematic range covers antimilitarist parables like *Generalul [The General]* or *Inamicii [The Enemies]*, the problematics of couplehood (*Insomnie / Insomnia*) or the portrait of the party activist, seen from the point of view of the discrepancies between fanaticism and the devotion in serving the communist cause, as portrayed in *Convorbirile tovarășului Alexandru [Comrade Alexandru's Conversations]*.

Nevertheless, the texts which have established Dumitru Solomon are the three philosophical dramas inspired by Socrates, Plato and Diogenes. They are neither historical reenactments or staged biographies, but rather historical pretexts to problematize the notions of freedom, spirit and social option: *Socrate, Platon, Diogene Căinele [Socrates, Plato, Diogenes the Dog]*. As a matter of fact, the author himself disavows the philosophical note: 'it is mainly about [...] the relationship between the individual and society, about man's freedom and false freedom, about loneliness and solidarity. There is no talk of philosophy!'^{clxxv}. The series of philosophical and scientific celebrities continues with *Arma secretă a lui Arhimede /Archimede's Secret Weapon* (a comedy of pacifist implications), then with *Soldatul și filosoful / The Soldier and the Philosopher* (later titled *Elogiul nebuniei/ A Eulogy for Madness*), speaking of Erasmus of Rotterdam and the drama of thinking that philosophy can change the world's corrupt structure. In the play *Noțiunea de fericire [The Notion of Happiness]* the author invents Tudor Damian, a philosopher who works on a treaty about the state mentioned in the title. In the end, the happiness professor will prove to be the unhappiest amongst his fellow men.

The relationships chosen to be analyzed by the dramatist explore the social and private lives of certain individuals defined by a speculative manner of thinking, as well as by other options. The illustrated conflicts are based on the tense and unstable relationship between the spirit and pragmatic

determination, between hazard and natural urge, both at an individual and at a societal scale.

Even when the author leaves the territory of the theatre of the absurd behind, going for 'the public success [...] of the pseudo-detective farce'^{clxxvi}, as is the case of *Fata Morgana*, the speculative-metaphoric method is still practiced. Being a text which lends itself to numerous interpretations, one staging was sanctioned and banned^{clxxvii}.

Another representative personality of the theatrical avant-garde is Iosif Naghiu, for whom the true value of the theatre lies in its power of allusion. That is why his theatre of situations based on various recipes, mostly developed between the parable and Chekhovian realism, lacks in finalities, leaving the problematization, the interpretations and the conclusions to the spectator.

Some texts – *Autostop [Hitchhike]*, *Week-end, Misterul Agamemnon [The Agamemnon Mystery]*, *Hotel Corona* – debate over the problem of human existence, from the perspective of the relationship between the intellectual and the political context, revealing the negative stereotypes and the war psychosis. The philosophical problem of freedom is explored in the drama *Întunericul [The Darkness]*, which later became famous under the title *Gluga pe ochi [The Hood Over the Eyes]*, after the performance directed by Valeriu Moisescu at the Bulandra Theatre, banned after just 60 representations, only to be made an example of at the beginning of the cultural mini-revolution desired by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Following a blackout, some thieves aggressively invade the personal and professional space of a writer and the policeman in charge of the case proves incapable to intervene, for in key moments his hood falls over his eyes. The play subtly advances commentaries on the communist totalitarianism which turns everyone into victims: '...these aggressor-thieves [...] are victims in their turn. So is the policeman – a victim of his own limitations, forced to execute in a mechanical manner, forbidden to think for himself'^{clxxviii}.

Fereastra [The Window], focusing on the condition of the witness, turns to a new thematic channel. The play is easier to understand if correlated with *Domnul Telescop [Mr. Telescope]* or *Suntem gata să murim dacă ne garantați că rămânem în viață [We Are Ready to Die if You Guarantee We Will Stay Alive]*, developing the parable in *Fereastra*.

Absența [The Absence] is a remake of an overly used theme, that of the people punished by the communist regime and rehabilitated after 1970. The playwright tries to go beyond the rehabilitation literature, so popular in the 70s and 80s, being instead more preoccupied with examining the subtle and complex psychologies than with stressing the political aspects of the respective phenomenon.

Among other options, Iosif Naghiu closely resembles Dumitru Solomon in what concerns his psychological dramas which discuss cases of consciousness in their psychological depth, as they are revealed in various contexts: an industrial one (*Frunzele amăgitoare neputinți/ The Leaves of the Deceptive Incapacity*), in a mining background (*Valiza cu fluturi/ The Suitcase with Butterflies*), or in the context of an imminent volcano eruption (*Barca e plină/ The Boat is Full*).

The comedy theatre was another particularity of the epoch. Among modern and contemporary comedy playwrights Tudor Popescu, Ion Băieșu and Teodor Mazilu stand out.

Tudor Popescu's name becomes famous in the world of the theatre with the premiere of his show – *Băiatul cu floarea [The Boy with the Flower]* at the Ion Creangă Theatre in Bucharest in 1978. The play speaks about 'the integration or the reintegration into society, the work force and life of some young people who had been drifting for some time'^{clxxix}. The text respects the thematic conventions of the time, with a subject focusing on problematic teens who are to be reeducated through work in the harsh conditions of a construction site. It seems like the literary bet is won, since 'the author avoids schematism and beaten tracks'^{clxxx}, trying to better explore the psychology of the protagonists' rehabilitation process.

From a thematic point of view, some comedies follow Aurel Baranga's line, as is the case of *Omul nu-i supus mașinii [Man Does Not Submit to the Machine]*, which presents the world of the bureaucratic bustle in which different candidates eager to ascend the social ladder are reminiscent of *Interesul general [The General Interest]*. A possible decoding of the text can easily reveal an analogy with the opportunism and the hierarchal alienation prevalent in the epoch. Another aspect explored by the dramatist and representative of the epoch is given by the obituary written at the death of one of the characters who used to be a manager, a pretext which unleashes a competition of superlatives similar to the encomiastic press praising the Ceaușescus. The same procedure of laudatory logorrhea is exemplified in 'comrade Frâncu's' case in *Paradis de ocazie [Occasional Paradise]*.

The subject of *Concurs de frumusețe [Beauty Contest]* reveals the combinations and intrigues woven around a canine competition from a small country town, where the grand prize has to go to the comrade enjoying local support. This is a good opportunity for the dramatist to attack the current vices of the new class of political activists characterized by servility, dishonesty, vanity, in other words, negative features which used to be associated to the bourgeois-landlord past or to the West. There are references to the distortion of the democratic values which had been made much matter of, to the imposture and incompetence in the administrative apparatus, or to the intercession and abuse of power. The 'delicate' subject could not have passed unnoticed in the epoch, irritating the political authorities in the capital right around the time of the premiere. The show managed to avoid being banned, but its public was carefully selected at the premiere, then it suffered a couple of modifications up to the point of a premature abandonment.

The author is also tempted by plays of atmosphere, which have no references or criticism directed against the totalitarian regime. *Un suflet romantic [A Romantic Soul]* tells the story of three men of different professions who Dionysiacally spend their holiday at a board and lodging in the mountains, wasting their time with football auditions and obsessive football fans' controversies. The text portrays a world which is guilty not so much of monotony, but of a lack of spiritual activity or horizons of any sort.

In Tudor Popescu's theatre the emphasis falls on the crisis of humanity and on the attempt of configuration, with a certain dose of didacticism outlining a model of conduct worthy of being pursued in the fight against the aggressiveness of the quantitative man.

Ion Băieșu is the dramatist who brings the contemporary suburb to the stages of the theatres. He is the scriptwriter of the first sitcom broadcasted by the Romanian television – *Iubirea e un lucru mare* [*Love Is a Grand Thing*], with the two protagonists, Tanța and Costel (memorably played by actors Coca Andronescu and Octavian Cotescu). In most of the cases, Băieșu's heroes and subjects come from a petty, Caragialian world, seen from the perspective of the echoes that the political and economic measures had on it. Its people are naives, who believe they can be more than they are, and consequently demonstrate that with a rather limited series of options and efforts. This 'gallery' of Băieșu's petty individuals consists of intrigants, informers, charlatans, adulterers, impostors, tricksters, cohabitants, administrators, merrymakers, intellectuals and artists. With Ion Băieșu, tragedy comes from portraying the 'new type of petty suburbanite', consciously engaged in the negative society he lives in, but choosing to live above it.

The theme of bureaucracy is explored in the play *În căutarea sensului pierdut* [*In Search of the Lost Meaning*], with a close-up on a slapstick world: The Boxer, The Crippled, The Virgin and The Spy gain a hearing with The Almighty, a superior instance with divine attributes, in order to learn from the most authorized source what the meaning of life is. After cooling their heels and a series of delays caused by the Principal Secretary, those who solicited the hearing find out there is no Almighty and that behind the divine door there is nothing but an 'absolute abyss'. This farce-like resolution, indicating the lack of an ordering principle to get the world out of chaos, is correlated with the comic exasperation in confronting events without finality and questions without answers. Furthermore, the meaning of the play can be interpreted as a metaphor for the encomiastic pettiness of the Ceaușescu era.

From the series of comedies placed in the modern suburbs – that of the neighborhoods made of blocks of flats – *Preșul* [*The Doormat*] and *Alibi* stand out. The former presents an apartment building vice-president who develops intricate strategies to track down the individual who uses his apartment doormat. Soon, his measures become exaggerated and reach caricatural dimensions: he asks for an attorney, a photographer to catch the culprit in the act, while the hero waits to shoot his transgressor. Written in the same key, *Alibi* has a much more bitter rather than tragic layer to it, as the author sets himself to bring malformed moral structures to the stage, characteristic to present day reality, with an entire arsenal of wicked measures put in the service of petty ideals. Therefore, Băieșu proves quite resourceful in creating talented schemers, with a wide range and ingenuity for small stakes. Generally, his theatre resembles the popular one, sharing a common vision with Teodor Mazilu in what concerns the modern suburb and its paradoxical typologies.

Out of his parables, we should mention *Dresoarea de fantome* [*The Ghost Trainer*], with which the author turns to the theatre of the absurd in order to touch a generous subject: the totalization allegory. A travel agency which owns a haunted castle hires a specialist (a woman) to train the ghosts in it. The task of the trainer is to turn the ghosts into servants, singers and dancers, with a fluency in foreign languages and a sense of humor. In order to ensure the success of the project any means are acceptable – from torture to emotional persuasiveness. Most frequently, Ion Băieșu alternates comedy and drama within the same play. *Iertarea* [*Forgiveness*], 'a discreet and nuanced plea against the direct interference in the life of the solitary man'^{clxxxix}, illustrates the drama of a neurotic individual, a victim of a political error and the efforts of the woman who turned him in to get his forgiveness. The conflict is based on the heroine's qualms of conscience, carefully nuanced by the dramatist.

How else could a comedy writer approach the drama of death but through a game that would loosen up the subject without cancelling the intensity of its depth? Suspected of adultery by her own family, the heroine in *Jocul* [*The Game*] will deliberately prolong the suspicion hovering over her in order to mask, in fact, the sufferings of an incurable disease. In the end, the disclosure offers the pretext for redemption, as the heroine 'leaves' the house with a Doctor symbolizing the shadow of death.

We can say that Ion Băieșu's dramaturgy focuses on a bizarre, usually absurd casuistry, although not necessarily uncommon. In most cases, his plays crystallize themselves around incredible events, in which heroes with surprising, schizoid psychologies are involved.

With him being 'a master of the short story genre'^{clxxxii}, Teodor Mazilu's theatre appeared in a context where it was inherently tied to ideology, satirizing the absurdity characteristic of the totalitarian regime and managing to win the public's sympathy and complicity. It is at this level that the transfer of ideas ironically takes place and the hilarity effect is achieved with characters of respectable profile and position - that is, only theoretically. His heroes are: 'sentimental crooks, conservative, insincere characters, parasites preoccupied with the philosophy of contemplation, fools who believe in the utility of foolishness, individuals with an exaggerated ego of hatred, angels with a record, learned scoundrels who are proud of their misdeeds'^{clxxxiii}. Apart from the satirical accent, Teodor Mazilu's dramaturgy deals with the problem of mediocrity as a general limit of the human being, and that is why his plays portray almost the same world from the same perspective: *Proștii sub clar de lună* / *The Fools Under the Moonlight* (directed by Lucian Pintilie at the Bulandra Theatre in 1963 and banned by the authorities of the time^{clxxxiv}), *Tandrețe și abjecție* [*Tenderness and Abjection*], *Treziți-vă în fiecare dimineață!* [*Wake Up Each Morning!*], *Inundația* [*The Flood*], *Don Juan moare ca toți ceilalți* [*Don Juan Dies Just Like Everyone Else*], *Frumos e în septembrie la Veneția* [*How Beautiful Is Venice in September*], *Împăiați-vă iubii!* [*Stuff Your Lovers!*], *Mobilă și durere* [*Furniture and Pain*], *Acești nebuni fățarnici* [*These Hypocritical Lunatics*] and others.

Teodor Mazilu proves to be a writer tied to the shapes and themes of a distinctive moral and artistic structure. He counts on the construction of human typologies living the shady ambiguity of a condemnable lifestyle. Actually, he systemizes the theory of the spotted man, which appeared shortly after Stalin's death, through his heroes who become the symbols of an epoch characterized by the instability of the two notions - imposture and authenticity, determined by the politics of revolutionary pretences imposed by the single party with the purpose of creating a common behavior. These are people who discover an alternative to an insincere environment (analogic to the socialist one), not through resistance and correction, but through a special reasoning, lacking traditional values though, but coherent and meaningful within the moral system created by Mazilu.

The themes speculated by Teodor Mazilu agreed with the social realities of the time: the flunkeyism, the superficiality, the charlatanism, women of easy virtue, the falsity, the opportunism, the lie, the formalism, the hypocrisy. The dramatic conflict which usually takes place between two characters highlights the positive in the negative through reversed reasoning: 'If I buy a man, it is his merit that he allows himself to be sold and not my immorality for putting the money on the table'^{clxxxv}.

The character of Gherman in *Somnoroasa aventură* [*The Drowsy Adventure*] feels the need to portray himself as 'beautiful in his own eyes and in the eyes of others'^{clxxxvi}, setting himself up as a serious gentleman, full of qualities, while in reality he is nothing but a pathetic sentimental crook, incapable of fulfilling young Gabriela's dream of being kidnapped because he falls asleep during the event. Gherman's chronic double is Gogu, from *Proștii sub clar de lună* [*The Fools Under the Moonlight*], an embezzler, a '40 year old slyboots'^{clxxxvii} caught between Ortansa and Clementina's argument, the 'satanic woman' versus 'the lachrymose' one, who both agree to blame Emilian, an implausibly honest auditor. The gallery of characters who are part of Teodor Mazilu's satirical meditations continues with Iordache in *Acești nebuni fățarnici* [*These Hypocritical Lunatics*], 'a man who wants to party well and die in his sleep'^{clxxxviii}. He is also a powerful contrast between essence and appearance, since he poses as women's eternal victim, while in reality he is a corrupt man who enjoys the company of the knaves he hires at the office. In *Mobilă și durere* [*Furniture and Pain*] the conflict engages two co-operative managers, Sile and Paul, who compete against each other on a professional and emotional level, parading their integrity.

Other times, in absence of some clear reference frames, the positive-negative vectors suffer a hilarious inversion: one suffers out of too much prosperity, while shortage brings about happiness. The manifestations are bizarre to say the least: those who have no character praise its lacking, and those who do have it recant it. Such is the case of Maximilian in *Treziți-vă în fiecare dimineață!* [*Wake Up Each Morning!*]: 'What do I have in common with my character? Nothing... What do I have in common with myself? Nothing...'^{clxxxix}. Mediocrity generates mediocrity – that is why Emil in *Inundația* [*The Flood*] asks Olga to renounce her exclusively cultural lifestyle: 'Still, you should get a little rest, knit a sock,

tell fortunes from coffee. Some mediocrity would not hurt you, maybe even a little bit of boorishness'^{cx}.

Another distinctive feature of Mazilu's characters is their preoccupation with the problematic of insincerity as with the humanization of socio-economic crimes: 'How many shady combinations have I got into, and still, the smell of lilac moves me like back in the days when I was an honest man'^{cxci}, reveals Gogu.

Teodor Mazilu's literature is remarkable and unique in the literary and socio-political context it manifested, but not through its technical formulas, but through the existential-performative exploration it puts forth. Mirroring imposture and its repercussions on the human being, juggling with reality and illusion, offering stylized models of his own negativity or complexity, the author tenaciously and intuitively improves on his offer, the same way as Caragiale. Finding humanity in negativity and extracting naturalness out of artificiality are qualities which turn his work into a milestone for posterity.

D. R. Popescu also occupies a central position in the Romanian literary and theatrical milieu, both due to the complexity of the subjects he approaches and the stylistic diversity of his mises en scène.

He makes his debut as a proser and he will remain faithful to this genre throughout his entire career, as his dramatic texts are merely a development of prose towards dialogue. 'I am reading a dramatist who is a proser - and I discover a poet'^{cxcii}, said Constantin Parascivescu pointing to the richness of meanings stemming out of the lines created by the prolific dramatist. Furthermore, through its amplexness, depth and complexity, the dramatic work of D.R. Popescu is a revelation for the culture in which it is born. Many of its thematic variations allude to the Romanian Stalinist decade, but the theme prevailing the writer's entire work is the truth. D.R. Popescu's work sets out to bring the truth to light, in an epoch in which the lie is raised to the level of state reason during the proletkultist and the Ceaușescu years. The author is not interested in the appearances, fixations or restrictions imposed by the rules of the time, and that is why his heroes abide to the calling of telling the truth at any cost, reminding of 'the angry young men' of the 60s' British theatre.

Stylistically, his early dramaturgy revolves around the sphere of the absurd; later, during his most powerful creative period (70s-90s), his work will settle in a unique surrealist area. D.R. Popescu presents ethical, universally human truths, refusing a mimetic attitude. This way, he manages to bypass social realism, a formula which otherwise conditioned the public appearance of most writers those times.

The thematic investigations of Stalinist crimes are abstracted as moral-political allegories in *O pasăre dintr-o altă zi / A Bird From Another Day* (with characters Anișoara and Guguștiuc reminding of Ana Pauker and Stalin), or *Pisica în noaptea Anului Nou / The Cat On New Year's Eve* (presenting the drama of Tudor's murder, similar to the killing of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the Stalinist dissident, in the 1950s). The meditation on good and evil is permanently fueled by the hypothesis of murder and consistently reiterated, signaling the

amazement with which we regard an evil that manifests itself this way.

Another thematic obsession traversing Popescu's work is the enigma of death, of the biological being's inevitable ending analyzed from all perspectives. It is almost an apology of death, for only after one's passing, the Human Being as an entity fulfills the destiny of its existence. The final moment of life has a powerful quality in D.R. Popescu's dramaturgy, becoming a conscious target as it can be observed in *Paznicul de la depozitul de nisip* [*The Watchman at the Sand Warehouse*], *Rugăciune pentru un disk-jockey* [*Prayer for a Disk-Jockey*], *Bătrânul Vișan* [*Old Vișan*], *Robespierre*, *Balconul* [*The Balcony*], *Piticul din grădina de vară* [*The Dwarf in the Summer Garden*] or *Rezervația de pelicani* [*The Pelican Reservation*]. An interesting variation of death from the perspective of the irreversible passing of time can be found in *Maimuța nudă sau Războiul de la 8 la 10* [*The Naked Monkey or The War from 8 to 10*]. What is of interest this time is the slow psychological death, the progressive cadaverization.

The diversity of the themes approached continues with the drama of the pregnant heroine in *Piticul din grădina de vară* [*The Dwarf in the Summer Garden*], whose death sentence for subversive political activity is postponed until the birth of the baby. The author uses this pretext to analyze the woman's (the simple man's) strength of character while facing the atrocities and tortures she is subjected to. This typology of drama is intensely colored and will be taken over and developed in the dramatic novel titled *Studiul osteologic al unui schelet de cal dintr-un mormânt avar din Transilvania* [*The Osteological Study of a Horse Skeleton from an Avar Grave in Transylvania*], whose subject deals with the post-war historic trials (war crimes, nationalization, collectivization, de-Stalinization, etc.), in an attempt to identify their repercussions on the individual and society. Once more, at the heart of the events there is a woman fiercely struggling to survive. A meditation on the Romanian destiny, *The Osteological Study...* coagulates its symbolic meanings around the idea of the Romanian resistance against the excesses of history. The theme of the simple man's power to endure and persevere in an unequal fight against the wretchedness of life can also be found in *Visul sau Damenvals* [*The Dream or Damen-vals*], through the drama of the lame laundrywoman, Silvia, whose existence, cut short by herself in the end, is wasted in an insalubrious basement.

A 'point of reference in dramaturgy'^{exciii} is the play *Acești îngeri triști* [*These Sad Angels*] which, on the background of present day reality, deals with the theme of the youth caught in a conflict of dignity, presented in a non-idyllic manner, contrary to the propaganda literature of the time. The young people symbolize regeneration, purity and the perpetual moral rebirth. The two characters of an almost teenage freshness, Ion and Silvia gradually get to know each other and manage to do the same with those with whom they are in conflict. These two symbolic figures contrast Marcu's cowardly character or Cristescu's petty approach. Although the protagonists sometimes go off the right track themselves and are no strangers to disappointment and deceitfulness, they maintain the hope of future fulfillment and aspire to a sort of heaven on

earth which they never stop searching for. In this extremely lyrical play, the heroes' voices speak of hope, altruism, truth and stability. Another play whose subject is taken out from the socio-political reality is *Balconul sau Clătițe cu urdă și mărar* [*The Balcony or Pancakes with Soft Cottage Cheese and Dill*], describing some individuals' conscience crisis (among them, a superintendent of construction even), people who had spent their youth believing in the communist ideals and fighting for them, but who, at a certain point, betrayed them out of opportunism or convenience.

Along the same lines of debunking propagandistic literary clichés, this time - the construction site and the work environment, *Hoțul de vulturi* [*The Eagle Thief*] continues the problematic of moral conduct which involves a dialectic of good and evil. The nonconformist typology walking the stage - from charlatan, thief or loose woman to the professional fanatic enhances the play with complexity and credibility. George is the 'human model for the construction site'^{exciv} who, like Prometheus, will sacrifice himself for the 'illumination' of the many, thus condemning himself to solitude. *Pasărea Shakespeare* [*The Shakespeare Bird*] is a play about the moral maladies of a family which will push teenager Irina to commit suicide. The author exposes the family environment for what it is, turning it into a vile space, from which death is the only salvation. He will use the same background in *Pisica în noaptea Anului Nou* [*The Cat on New Year's Eve*], where a father, a victim of the arbitrary condemnations during the early period of the popular democracy, returns to his family after a twenty year absence right on New Year's Eve, costumed as Moș Gerilă (*Old Man Frosty*). The reactions of the dinner guests after the 'mystification' is settled define each person's moral quality. *Ca frunza dudului din rai* [*Like the Mulberry Leaf in Heaven*] is yet another text which, in its turn, paints the image of an improper family universe invaded by the demons of malice. Around Marghioala's character (a sort of Medeea) a web of lies and existential falsity is woven, which will only be conquered in the end. Although capable to see the truth, the female character goes through a labyrinthine structure impregnated with dissembling terror and faces a Minotaur with many heads. The symbolism of the grubby environment which stains its occupants is developed in *Luminile Paradisului* [*The Lights of Paradise*], this time in the world of science. The laboratory where the action takes place is set on a sty, where one of the scientists (turned into a pig) will eventually be thrown.

The parable, a particularity of D.R. Popescu's work, can best be observed in *Cezar, măscăriciul piraților sau Capcana sau Cine îndrăznește să verifice dacă împăratul are chelie falsă* [*Caesar, the Pirates' Buffoon or The Trap or Who Dares to Check if the Emperor is Faking His Baldness*] and in *Dirijorul* [*The Conductor*]. The first play illustrates Caesar's rise and fall in a burlesque key, while *Dirijorul* [*The Conductor*] shows the way in which mediocrity, deceitfulness and a questionable morality can triumph through murder. A conductor is murdered by one of his possible successors because he refuses to accept a tip. At the same time, with the metaphor of 'the orchestra' who is supposed to play according to a text written beforehand, thus discovering its 'total and dramatic subordination'^{excvi}, the author brings forth a criticism against the aggressiveness of the political system through which the socialist doctrine was forced upon the population.

'Ambiguity is the specific mark of this dramaturgy, [...] because it reflects the ambiguity of life'^{cxvii}, said Constantin Paraschivescu with regards to D.R. Popescu's theatre. Hence, although Popescu's work alludes to real persons and events taken from a certain socio-political context, they are channeled on a metaphorical path which gives them artistic depth and substance. Reality evades from the denotative sphere and enters a symbolic and imaginative labyrinth. 'In theatre, he is more connected to the abstract, [...], he makes subtle philosophical and moral analyses, [...], he draws up a realist painting of the implications of his times in a more allegorical and rule-free manner...'^{cxviii}, says the same Constantin Paraschivescu.

D.R. Popescu's novel and surprising style, tenaciously maintained by the writer, generated another sort of spectacle which invited to an interpretation of meanings and symbols, depending on dialogues and situations.

Marin Sorescu is another great Romanian dramatist who draws the attention of the autochthonous world of the theatre in the 70s. His theatre develops concomitantly with his poetry, as the latter reshapes the forms of the former with its specific means: 'Sorescu's theatre tears the hobble and breaks free with it back to poetry, where it came from to begin with'^{cxviii}. His first stage success – *Iona* – is directed by the young Andrei Șerban and enjoys the flawless interpretation of none other than George Constantin. 'At the moment of its staging – 1968 – the show represented the pure image of the theatrical metaphor. The argument was clear: what couldn't be said directly had to be visually and artistically captured in a coded manner'^{cxix}, a directing strategy which didn't manage to prevent the show from being banned however. Inspired by the biblical myth of the man swallowed by a fish, the drama of *Iona*, the fisherman, tells the story of 'the adventure of captivity (and of freedom, by opposition), which is, it seems, an adventure of knowledge'^{cc}. Build up as a dialogue between *Iona* and his double, the play reveals the character's fear of silence, his need to communicate in a world of solitude: 'I wanted to write something about a lonely, an incredibly lonely man'^{cci}, the author himself discloses. Therefore, the nucleus of the play focuses on the metaphor of the fish: captured in the stomach of a giant whale, *Iona* goes through a complex process of self-discovery, during which he learns one of the existential paradoxes of the human condition, according to which man is hunted down, but he is also a hunter, meant to live in a permanent state of captivity, be it his own life's, his family's or society's, etc.. Forcefully exiled in a space of absolute solitude, the hero does not lose the desire to communicate with the others, demonstrating an uncontrollable thirst for the freedom of speech and action, persistently preoccupying himself with the matter of human solidarity and finding the self. The drama of knowledge – *Iona* is followed by the drama of faith, of doubt – *Paracliserul* [*The Sexton*], another one character, monologue-play (apart from the sexton, there is also a deaf watchman in the play, but he is more inferred to than actually present). Once again, the acting space is simplified – a recently built cathedral (symbolizing the world), where, like in the case of expressionist theatre, a generically named character, the Sexton, tries to blacken with the smoke of a candle the much too new and much too white slab stones and arches of a cathedral deserted by the believers in a century of moral and religious decadence. Along the

course of three scenes synonym with three life stages, the hero does only that, accompanying his action with existential questions which are sometimes profound, other times ironic, regarding life, death, solitude and time. After he finishes his candles, he completes his task by setting his clothes on fire and thus becoming a human stake. There is a mythical layer to this parable as well, that of Master Builder Manole, to whom the author entrusts contemporary elements, suggesting a modern resolution. The Sexton will not sacrifice his wife, like Manole, but he will choose self-sacrifice instead, and not necessarily in order to ensure the durability of the construction, but rather out of the desire to give it authenticity.

Together with the two abovementioned plays, *Matca* [*The River Bed*] will be the last constitutive element in the dramatic trilogy suggestively titled *Setea muntelui de sare* [*The Thirst of the Salt Mountain*]. The metaphor in the title of the trilogy expresses the thirst for knowledge, as well as the desire to discover the truth in all its purity, two methods through which the human being can rise above the absurdity of life. *Matca* [*The River Bed*] is 'a poem about the awareness of the continuity of life'^{ccii}, where the solution is biological continuity pursued at all costs. The action is restricted to the space of a peasant's house surrounded by waters from all corners, where a young woman, Irina, gives birth, while her father dies by her side. Isolated from the world, the two have a profound dialogue about life and death. When the water level raises very much, the young mother climbs her father's coffin and lifts her child above her head, in a desperate attempt to at least save him. In a suggestive ending, death saves life, and the 'lifting' of the newborn is paid by his mother's diving into the waters of a flood reminiscent of the primordial one. The particularity of the trilogy's mythical layer is also present in *Matca*, as the author reenacts the biblical myth of the Flood in modern terms.

Marin Sorescu is another dramatist who demonstrates ingenuity and courage when it comes to topics inspired from the national history, but he detaches himself from the tendency to mystify this domain, which would have been customary in the epoch. Even if the plays *Răceala* [*A Cold*] and *A treia țepă* [*The Third Stake*] refer to precise moments in history, namely Mehmed II's campaign in Wallachia and Vlad Țepeș' rule, the author allows himself a great artistic freedom and at the same time, he tones down the parable. In the first play, the core of the conflict is the fight between Mehmed II and a symbolic Vlad Țepeș who doesn't feature as a character, but who is ubiquitous, suggesting the fact that he is the national consciousness. The personality of the Wallachian ruler takes legendary proportions compared to that of the despotic, blood-thirsty Mehmed, for whose amusement a company of actors trapped in a cage endlessly perform the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium. Although the sultan simulates scholarly preoccupations and he announces that he meditates on reorganizing the Ottoman society, in reality, his camp is in a state of crisis for which the leader himself is to blame. At opposite poles, in Vlad Țepeș' camp, there is an atmosphere of courage, patriotism and self-sacrifice, understood as a natural acceptance of a tragic destiny. Death in exchange for protecting one's country is seen as 'a simple cold', which suggests the idea that for the Romanian people the habit of dying in a simple manner had been passed on from generation to generation. *A treia țepă* [*The Third Stake*]

is the tragicomic sequel to *Răceala* [A Cold], where the image of the leader is again antithetically debated within the dynamics of the two characters, Mehmed II and Vlad Țepeș. The symbolic element of the three stakes sets the stage for the action. A Romanian and a Turk (a janissary born Romanian) are impaled on two of the stakes and they make bitter comments about their times, while the third stake still awaits its sufferer. Once more, Vlad Țepeș is portrayed as a ruler with infinite resources in the political and administrative organization of the state: he builds fortresses, administers justice, sets the idle and the feeble on fire together with the Ottoman Porte's tribute collectors, he is imprisoned at Buda, but manages to escape and regains hold of the reins of the country, but this time he returns more unforgiving towards himself. After he wipes the country clean of the moral and social rottenness, the ruler exerts his power with an infernal lucidity in assessing himself, and decides he is the one to be impaled on 'the third stake'. Aware that his destiny has no alternative, as it is impossible to renounce the role he had willingly taken upon himself, the third stake which was destined for Mehmed (who desecrates the country, then leaves unhampered) becomes Țepeș' apotheosis, like a lucid and natural condemnation.

Pluta meduzei [Medusa's Raft] and *Există nervi* [There Are Nerves] are two less cited plays, although they stand out through their violent sarcasm directed against the civilization of the 20th century and through an energetic dramatic expressiveness. The first play starts from the metaphor of humanity's unsuccessful soar and its modest possibilities in this direction, which can eventually be translated as a failure of technologization. *Există nervi* [There Are Nerves] heavily draws on wordplay: 'the play is a pun from beginning to end'^{cciii}. The conversation between Ion and Alin, his guest, taking place in the former's studio apartment is interrupted by the ill-timed arrival of a stranger, The Professor, who takes up his quarters at Ion's studio, confusing it with a train compartment. The mysterious character wants to solve the problem of nerves and hot temper at a global scale, developing a theory of calmness which should be encouraged by means of self-suggestion. The irony is that the 'emissary of interior peace' himself inspires an indescribable fear to those around him as he seems to write down all the less conformist remarks, forcing the others to admit, with a nonchalance and a serenity typical for communist propaganda, that the train only moves 'forward'.

Casa evantai [The Fan House] is the cheerful and sad story of a man seen 'at his place', in his small and mediocre day to day existence. That is, a monochromic existence: no aspirations, no horizon, no perspectives in sight. But man can open up like a fan, revealing new facets of his banal and tormented existence. Inspired by the immediate reality, by the everyday insipid life of a man troubled by the questions of self-knowledge, the play describes 'an inferno of identities'^{cciv}.

Vărul Shakespeare [Cousin Shakespeare] is a response play where the driving force is Sorescu's typical irony directed against the Ceaușescu dictatorship. In *Luptător pe două fronturi* [Fighter on Two Fronts], Marin Sorescu proposes a different take on history, as the fighter mentioned in the title develops a particular dialectic. The human being is seen as

continuously fighting on the fields of history, in an eternal struggle to discover and give meaning to its existence, particularly in a context in which the lack of meaning is a general rule. The character is a rebel against the irreversible passing of time.

What stands out in Sorescu's theatre is the familiarity with which the gravest of themes are treated (the thirst for knowledge, death, creation, faith or human existence, be it absurd or not), as they are situated in common contexts. Another particularity is the humorous manner in which he parodies seemingly untouchable models and especially, his determination to find a meaning even when the meanings of this world and the one beyond seem to have disappeared.

A special case is that of Matei Vișniec's theatre of the absurd, a dramatist who makes his debut at the beginning of the eighth decade (he emigrates to France in 1987) and whose success will coincide with the revival of the contemporary Romanian dramaturgy after 1990. His debut works are often banned because of their content and their anti-totalitarian message, but they enjoy circulation in an unofficial milieu. In these plays, the reevaluation of the techniques characteristic of the absurd is an important sign of the dramatist's reaction towards the pressure to conform preached by the ideology of the single party. In his plays, one can detect influences from Samuel Becket or Eugène Ionesco's theatre of the absurd, only they are subtly filtered by a writer who had the ambition and power to creatively delimit himself from them and to establish himself as an author who has a distinctive mark given by his ability to create an entire structure of means to escape the traditional theatrical rigors. The thematic inventory corresponds with the one already launched by the writers representative for the movement of the absurd (waiting seen as an event, fear, closed spaces, the crisis of language, seclusion, alienation, etc.), but the dramatist addresses it from surprising angles and approaches which open the way for new possibilities of theatric exploitation. The nucleus of Vișniec's theatre is the contemporary man and his behavior in society. Unlike his predecessors, the author takes man out of the sphere of the generic and rehumanizes him. The characters and the situations they perform in represent the most eloquent expression of the questions and struggles experienced by the contemporary man.

Sufleorul fricii [The Prompter of Fear] presents a world in which fear becomes an indestructible constant, a defining state of the human being. Man lives in a space of uncertainty from which there is no escape and he is manipulated by forces unknown to him and which he can't avoid. The theme of the play offers the pretext for a debate on human existence during the terror of the totalitarian regime. *Bine, mamă, da' ăștia povestesc în actu' doi ce se-ntâmplă în actu'ntâi* [But, Mom, They're Telling Us in Act Two What Happened in Act One] is a parody of the theatre in which the two protagonists, Bruno and Grubi, want to unravel the mystery of an enigmatic landfill from which a divine music is heard from time to time, accompanied by a discharge of crystalline water. Soon, the action of the play becomes 'a rebellion on the edge of a pit'^{ccv}, where the heroes ardently call into question the appearances of the real world which produce genuine psychoses. The characters' inability to distinguish reality from appearance in the last part of the play creates the obsession of a universal

plot of no precise direction. The pit becomes an extraordinary character who threatens to completely swallow up the real world. The text's metaphorical meanings have been interpreted as subversive by the communist officials, and that is why the play could only be staged after the fall of the regime in December 1989.

In *Spectatorul condamnat la moarte* [*The Spectator Sentenced to Death*] the roles and the circumstances are reversed: the spectator, the one who is normally supposed to be the judge or the accuser becomes the accused. Under the pretence of a trial where the only paying spectator is judged, the play is 'a bitter and virtuous recovery of memory for the <staged trials>, famous unhealed wounds in the history of communism'^{ccvi}. The paradoxical dramatic situations continue in *Artur osânditul* [*Arthur The Condemned*]: the executioners ask the victim to condone their torturer actions and fraternize with them. As a matter of fact, the torturers in Matei Vişniec's plays do not have a special status, they can easily become victims. In the one-act play entitled *Caii la fereastră* [*Horses at the Window*], the author brings up the theme of war and its destructive effects on man, both psychologically and physically. The characters do not have generic names, as they are exponential: The Son, The Father and The Husband. Called to serve their nation under different pretexts, they will die in vain and without glory. The uselessness and the grotesque of the war are observed through the perspective of the victims who innocently lose their lives. Death is devoid of heroism and simply remains stupid and senseless. The play *Şi cu violoncelul ce facem?* [*What Shall We Do with the Cello?*] features elements of the absurd and presents three characters in a waiting room, a typical post-Beckett state. The characters are unaware of the reason for which they are waiting; for them, the situation is a *modus vivendi*. In this state of latency, they are harassed by a cellist who imperturbably continues his exercise. The symbolism in Matei Vişniec's text is transparent: life is the waiting room and the music is art. Thus, the message of the play is the death of art, because, in the end, the three characters kill the cellist. The metaphor of the man who suppresses art, being irritated even by its presence, indicates a state of cruel brutalization and desensitization brought about by the oppression of the regime, but also the exile of art in the context of a humanity less and less interested in this noble form of expression.

With *Trei nopți cu Madox* [*Three Nights with Madox*], a play first sketched in Bucharest in 1985 then finished in Paris and *Ușa* [*The Door*], the author concludes the thematic variation of life seen as an antechamber of death. In the first play, five characters living in a city by the sea meet a bizarre individual, about whom they infer, after several discussions, that he has the gift of ubiquity. Madox, the mysterious character, manages to change their perspective up to the point where they finally decide to kill him, learning that he is planning to leave. Interestingly enough, as they try to commit the murder, the five hear voices in the room where Madox is and have the revelation that the voices are theirs. Thus, they manage to be both in the exterior and in the interior of the room, which confirms the fact that the odd man has succeeded in lending them his gift. In the second play, the characters tormented in their wait for death (in front of a door which doesn't seem to open) are The Girl, The Soldier and The Artist. Fear unites them, but the solution of going in together, hand in hand, is

not feasible, because the door is narrow and each of them has to go in alone. This preference for the symbolism of the waiting room indicates the fact that the world itself is a complex structure, made of many rooms of this sort, and the reason of the waiting itself is alienation which finally founders into extinction. The socio-political critique is debated in general terms in the play *Țara lui Gufi* [*Gufi's Land*]. The author uses an allegory to present a people of blind men led by an unscrupulous dictator. The counterpoint given by the specific names - Lulu, Bubi, Marțașița, Macabril, Țonțonel, Firfircă - further highlights the atrocities and the status of annihilation prepared for this fatuous country. 'Gufi's Land' is the country of the blind ruled by a seeing man, Gufi, around whom a blind clown, Lulu, revolves. The subjects are forced by their sovereign not to see, as the latter declares his seemingly noble intention to spare them the disappointment. In order to constrain the population of the country into going blind, Gufi intervenes in homogenizing the chromatics of the society: he abolishes colors and covers the mural paintings in the palace with a sallow plaster. The text seems to 'come out of a children's play, due to the miniature universe of perspective'^{ccvii}, but in fact, it hides the representation of a frightening dictatorship, which Romania came to know and live intensely. *Angajare de clovn / Old Clown Wanted* (written in 1987), the last play written by the author before leaving Romania, speaks about the human condition and its false survival strategies. Three old artists, Nicollo, Fillipo and Peppino, come to a hiring contest for the position of an old clown. Initially, their reunion is a happy moment, but rivalry soon replaces the compliments they pay each other, leaving their weaknesses and invalidities masked by a false joy at plain sight. The clowns prove to be the perfect victims of human alienation through their incapacity to intervene in their own destiny. The contest's sinister resolution- the winner is hired only to die later - accentuates the drama of the man destined for failure: 'That's life, when you get to that point when you're only good to be thrown to the garbage, you better throw yourself to the garbage'^{ccviii}, concludes one of the characters. The Clown is a character typical for Vişniec's plays, appearing in different guises under the *crying-laughing* binomial. It is Vişniec's tool in parodying the theatre, the world, it accentuates or brings lyricism, but most of all, it channels our attention to the themes.

Matei Vişniec's Romanian creative stage develops under the canopy of a special type of absurd, individualized by the author, where irony becomes the only way to socially and culturally survive an oppressive system: 'Laughter was a form of cultural and even political resistance. Laughing at the ones who governed us was an attempt to preserve integrity. In my plays, I make use of black humor and delirium. I sometimes try to demonstrate that we have lived a type of historical absurd, which needs to be correlated with the theatre of the absurd'^{ccix}.

Other worth mentioning dramatists who were active between 1970 and 1989 are: Radu F. Alexandru - the author of a slightly dramaturgical, schematic theatre of situations, interlaced with mottos, Ecaterina Oproiu - debating the problematics of couples, I.D.Sârbu - whose dramaturgy is mostly subordinated to party requirements, Mircea Radu Iacoban - whose comic dissolves into grave tonalities, Paul Cornel Chitic - preoccupied with the social realm, turning his dramaturgy into a poetics of protest, corrupted however by the

socialist theories, Virgil Tănase – with his accentuated taste for the psychological realism inspired by Ibsen, and Mircea M. Ionescu – who tries to expose, as far as freedom of speech allows it, the moral gangrene of the communist nomenclature.

The July Theses envisioned Romania's re-Stalinization, which in reality proved to be a failure, as indicated by the plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee^{ccx} held in the summer of 1977 and resumed at Managalia in 1983, which concluded that culture could no longer be totally subordinated to politics, as Nicolae Ceaușescu would have hoped. Even so, the moment marks the cleavage of the literary world into writers who are willing to implement the Theses and praise them (either out of conviction or opportunism) and those who publicly disavow them.

In 1977, censorship as an institution is abolished, but the banning phenomenon proper continues, as censorship transforms itself into more imprecise, but nevertheless efficient means of surveillance. In the specificity of the theatre, censorship was looking for a more complicated track, including both the textual level and the proper staging. The apparently harmless lines which went unnoticed at the reading of the text and got to be published became illicit when uttered on stage by the actor, which brought on the mutilation of the text or ultimately, its banning.

The final stage stands out through a relativization of meanings combined with the use of a double code. This tense game between expression and its intention determines the officials to look for a sort of legitimacy, as they pretend to approve innovation, while the dramatist apparently respects the convention in order to insert his own aesthetic or political subtext. The appreciation for the integrity of assuming a political point of view or for the artistic success is in this case substituted for the admiration towards the writer's resourcefulness in coding his messages.

In the context of this oscillation between cultural frosting and defrosting generated by the political variations of the communist party, the dramatists and the people of the theatre speculated the moments of ideological relaxation to their advantage.

Conclusions

During the whole process of communism propaganda within the Romanian society, art and especially literature benefited from a great deal of attention, becoming a real cultural-propagandistic priority to the State. Culture, thanks to its privileged status due to the psychological-social molding possibilities it provided, favored the setting up of a climate appropriate for the emergence of playwrights, but, paradoxically, less for drama works. Although the main objective was to standardize theatre productions, which were supposed to become subordinated to political criteria, bold works and plays facing the imposed patterns continued to exist behind closed doors. Officially, the promoted pattern was the Soviet one, which equaled a certain artistic limitation. Imitation was obvious both in terms of text and political background. This set of circumstances favors the emergence of a generation of "clerks devoted to the State", who make good use of what is closer to them, current life, with a large

and apparently endless range of current topics: the image of the new man, preoccupied with major State problems, the tormented life inside the Party or the meetings they would never miss.

Hostility towards the new trends was displayed either by a downright opposition or by a duplicity attitude. Originally, those who held the Power were afraid of literates, and not of their works, but subsequently this position was reversed, their work being considered more dangerous than their author, as its circulation provided a pretty disturbing coverage. Numerous writers just disappeared from the scene, at the beginning of this political stage (a repeatable phenomenon after December 1989), being victims to social misfitting to the new system. As time went by, the schizoid relation between Power and artists has been formalized, thus making room for another danger quickly clutching society, and especially the individual, and that danger was corruption.

The communist literature promotion principles determined the emergence of a sterile literature lacking continuity, from one generation to another, because of misfitting the always changing reality. Although many writers were truly talented, they had the misfortune to be restricted by imposed rigors, so that they could not externalize their individuality, being forced, especially in the last decade of the totalitarian regime, to sing endless praises to the Great Ruler of the country, and create laudatory works for *Cântarea României* (translator's note: "Praising Romania", which was a festival of socialist culture and education, made up of various cultural events during the communist regime). And yet, over that period of time, they allowed for some formal variations of the ideological dogma that would subsequently father a drama literature that would actually represent a viable reply to the official one.

The aesthetic criterion for appraising literary works was replaced by the political one; the importance of real writers refusing to be enlisted was minimized in favor of some mediocre writers willing to serve the political interests of the moment.

The unique party made systematic efforts by means of its control bodies, so as to standardize the domestic and foreign repertory, thus wanting to prevent any attempt to form a parallel drama culture. The Soviet literature "flooded" in, characterized by a strong revolutionary spirit, which claimed to be the single worth following model. In parallel with that, another spirit manifested, namely the protection of the Romanian repertory, the favorite theme being history and the reflection of the mystified reality. Only great shows, great performances, which were truly successful thanks to a magnificent directing vision, showed, in a subtle way, that reality was totally different if you looked beyond appearances.

In other words, vital circuits of the Romanian drama were considerably atrophied; only direction could make, every now and then, critical views on reality visible.

The so-called proletariat cult era proved to be very troubled from a cultural point of view, pretty agitated, one might add, either because of domestic political factors, or because of external factors, dictated by the Soviet Union. Numerous

campaigns of ideological cleansing are initiated, by the introduction of censorship, which played an essential role in the selection and promotion of drama works at that time. In the beginning, some writers are drawn into Marxist ideals, voluntarily integrating into social, political and cultural structures, being animated by the idea that beneficial effects of a possible reform would show up, as they were easier to achieve from the inside. Skeptics understood though that it was just a compromise that they were eventually forced to accept, as it was the only way to secure the cultural link between generations.

The '50s paradoxically bring along an artistic "impoverishment", in the sense that previous works were denied or forbidden without being replaced by something that would represent a step forward into the Romanian cultural evolution. The unity and unicity of the party's political program made many writers resign to the situation; writers who were, at the time, entering a cone of shadow, assuming their new status, in the early age of socialism, as they were not considered literates. However, toward the end of its age, they would claim their rights, having the courage to state who they were, as political arrest posed no longer a threat. Those who had the courage to openly oppose the system during Ceausescu's regime risked only to be obliged to take part in some tensed interrogations, followed by exile.

Freedom of speech becomes a formal right that writers and playwrights will benefit from only under the terms imposed by authorities. In other words, they are allowed only varied forms of discontent, from irony to indifference, as long as they keep away from subversive actions.

The issuance of *The July 1971 Theses* gave the signal of a re-intensification of culture molding and constraining, determining the emergence of some defense reflexes that combined literary strategies and drama games using the "drama within a drama" techniques. The drama space was still conditioned from a political and ideological point of view, forcing drama authors into different kinds of concessions in exchange of their not being included in the category of unwanted playwrights, chased away from stages. One could also start to feel the presence of writers who try to break the patterns by certain text strategies, writers imposing themselves thanks to their diverse style: Horia Lovinescu, Gellu Naum, Romulus Guga, Iosif Naghiu, Dumitru Solomon, Marin Sorescu, D.R. Popescu, Ion Băieșu, Teodor Mazilu or Tudor Popescu.

It is extremely difficult to father objective assessments or considerations regarding this particular era, because one should take into account the moral element, at a time when the writer's verticality was highly appreciated.

Drama got successful again in the '70s-'80s, when writers expanded their range of themes, while simultaneously developing a reaction of contradiction towards the socialist ideology. They undertook that role, although they were often bound to face the rigidity and the hostilities of the system. Diversity is the hallmark providing that historic period with identity. The literary and artistic message became enciphered, and the encryption access code was accessible only to the connoisseurs – readers and audience.

We are witnesses to a daring, bold thematic migration, we could say, as there is a decrease of literary interest in mockery of cultural myths, desacralization of history by the insult to the standardized models of the historic drama, the grotesque of the situations, in favor of a theme range that emphasizes the violence and the ridiculousness of everyday life, exacerbating its abuses manifested in all fields (social, cultural and political). Comedies will exploit especially the tolerance showed to villains by society, who ostentatiously and proudly "display" their ill-doing. Other forms of dramaturgy expression shirking from the forced dogmatism include the parable and the metaphor that often favor comments on a contemporary reality unwilling to accept the public disapproval. Multiple endings technique was also used, being, in fact, one of drama authors' preferences, next to the other previous two. Even if, at least in theory, every playwright has the liberty to choose the expression mode he/she finds to be most adequate to him/her, essentially that expression mode still manifests within the boundaries of the subordination dictated by the ideological rigors and norms that may undergo certain variations. The drama environment turned into good account any opportunity it got to enrich drama and art productions, which managed to fill up an empty space existing at that time, making possible even the imposing of some subsequently acknowledged values.

The political regime change in 1989 is not the only cause of disorientation of drama manifestations, early after December 1989. The cultural strategy imposed by communism triggered the development of a parallel paradigm, simultaneously with the outlining of some attitudes gradually marked by the cultural creation and its cultural coverage. Individual approach of the drama creator crystalized in time, without anyone being able to establish precisely how much of that new strategy is compromised, how much faith and how much trust there is in the success of the second culture. At the end of the day, every author is a cultural product of his/her era, incapable of fully shirking from cultural themes, concerns and directions. What remains to be seen is whether the parable, the grotesque allegory or the parody will still be of interest, in terms of performance, after 1990 or if those were mere effects of circumstances.

CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN THEATRE AFTER 1990

Methodological Preamble

The chapter herein aims at granting, first of all, a large room to the Romanian drama – the transformations it has undergone after 1989 and, finally, the positioning of the new dramaturgy on the international drama scene. When we refer to the new dramaturgy, a concept that may sound pretty vague, we will have to somehow establish the boundaries of this undertaking. Thus, when we say "new dramaturgy", we refer to the texts written after '90, in a freedom regime, "presence values carriers"^{ccxi} as explained by Alina Nelega in her study, characterized by social themes, characters with a biography (especially young characters) and by a language freed from traditional rigors. In the above-mentioned category, we will group the novelty elements that gradually make their way to the drama after December 1989, reflecting the trends of the European drama, as well as the accelerated social-cultural

changes, as illustrated by the dramaturgy written after the Revolution.

The emphasizing of the peculiarity of the Romanian dramaturgy after '89 does not involve, in the work herein, a simple and excessively ambitious data gathering on different plays or an inventory of more or less relevant names. We chose only those texts providing representative elements (the exact, punctual criteria being used will be detailed at the right time) for our undertaking to be coherent, thus preventing the reader from drawing up unclear conclusions because of a too large and unsorted working material.

While trying to avoid too persistently invoking the new generation and the more or less passionate dialogue with traditional dogma, and falling into the passion of non-differentiated enthusiasm or sterile skepticism, we will mainly focus on the redefinition and restructuring of the domestic drama after its being set free from communist restrictions; we will at all times bear in mind that dramaturgy is the literary area that is the easiest one to connect to reality, thanks to its dynamic nature and its aspiration to catch life in cues. This undertaking implies some risks too, considering that there are few case studies or compared studies that address this topic.

Moreover, documentary information underlying such a project is partial and disparate, while the group manifestos indicating the teleology of the drama phenomenon are pretty rare. In return, there are many chronicles, confessions, interviews or subjective testimonies which, once gathered and filtered, may provide an overview that is to be redone like a puzzle.

Facing this difficulty in establishing the right criteria and milestones, we chose, on one hand, to reduce the number of drama texts we will be referring to, opting for those that can eloquently exemplify new drama trends and formulas. On the other hand, in terms of criticism, we took into account contributions of playwrights like Alina Nelega^{ccxii}, inspired systematizations and hierarchizations performed by the literary historian Mircea Ghițulescu^{ccxiii}, as well as the opinions of drama critics Miruna Runcan^{ccxiv} and Marian Popescu^{ccv}, some of the few who dedicated to the study of this period of time, from a social-cultural perspective.

From Miruna Runcan, I retained a controversial, yet extremely useful concept for our analysis, namely the concept of the Romanian drama unique model, which appeared in the post-war period. As per her arguments, this paradigm follows the centralized performance of drama institutions/theatre houses (The National Theatre House) and is associated to the preference for stage performance, to the detriment of the literary text. Marian Popescu also discusses about a canon of dramaturgic speech, identifying a specific paradigm – an approach consistent with the opinion stated in the work herein.

The two above-mentioned critics have the merit of lucidly sustaining not just an “accompanying critic”^{ccxvi}, as George Banu calls it, but also a fine analysis of defining elements for the condition and status of the contemporary Romanian drama. Starting from the drama show, they spot aspects that become leit-motifs of the new dramaturgy, emphasizing

synopses of synchronization and adequacy to contemporaneity of the plays being staged.

The stake of this undertaking based on the above-mentioned truncated sources is to investigate and see to what extent we can really talk about a unitary drama model after December 1989. Does the Romanian dramaturgy manage to get rid of the heavy and awkward load of the communist patterns? Do they rapidly assimilate drama influence likely to outline a personal identity of the Romanian dramaturgy or is it a mere mirror reflecting the great European drama patterns? Can one talk about liberation of drama? How viable is the contemporary drama pattern in the context of the centralized pattern inherited and perpetuated for decades?

These are only some, yet most important questions we will try to answer (in this paper). In this chapter, we will carry on with a study, a naturally consistent and coherent study, which will focus on the post-December paradigm changes, looked upon within a given context, after the analysis – it is true, very quickly made – of general drama features in the communist era, which is eloquent in the context of the intention to discover coherence and the survival way for the drama peculiarity, under the action of history's whims. In this respect, I tackled, more in-depth, the British drama model, which had the biggest impact on the tendency of sometimes ostentatious liberation from the “belts” of the dogmatic, linguistic and traditional performances.

The softness we have to tackle the undertaking in this chapter with relates to the fact that a clear and transparent identification of directions in the Romanian drama or dramaturgy is almost impossible, taking into account that any criticism obstinately avoids syntheses and research, limiting though to punctual comments concerning certain performances and plays, without detaching the red thread that unites one text to another. In this context, the efforts to rate dramaturgy after December 1989, which we undertook, will be marked by the difficulty to understand what was not commented upon or too little analyzed at the time, having the vision we have today.

Another important aspect of this chapter refers to the crisis of the Romanian performance phenomenon perception, stirred by its interpretation as a tribute to the traditional drama enterprise. Conclusions regarding the “good health” of the institutionalized drama system and the glorification of excellence in the Romanian drama prove to be consequences of the vision that the season or the event-performance are unique points of reference for measuring the validity of the Romanian dramaturgy formula.

In the end of this argument, we wish to mention that our intention in this respect is to prove the need to accept the fact that the drama enterprise is made up of writing, directing, show/performance and criticism, which are inseparable elements that make up an interdependent whole. The fragmentary vision on that may impact the just interpretation of the drama development contemporary context. Subsequently, we will analyze also the extent to which Romanian drama managed to adapt to the new model beautifully illustrated by Western paradigms and especially by the British one.

In 1990, when the whole Romanian society entered the “blender” of new changes, the Romanian drama was trying to overcome the self-silence reflex that had been enforced upon it. Slowly but surely, drama lost its interest in the once faithful audience. The street and everything else that was going on out there, in the open space of the city, the magic of the TV screen and the gossip, the scandals in the tabloid media became the new point of attraction for everyone, righteously making the stage “servants” drift apart: actors, playwrights, directors.

After the “social explosion”^{ccxvii}, which was the Revolution in December 1989, the Romanian drama was comprehended by a euphoria-like confusion. The social revolution did not generate, as probably expected, a revolution in drama as well, at least not during the first years of freedom. A theme re-orientation, a different and more bold vision that would polemicize with the past, but at the same time the concern for the preservation of authentic, genuine drama values till then – that is the “business card” of the drama in the ‘90s.

After 1989, directors^{ccxviii} who focused their attention on the development of the authentic Romanian drama, thus opting for the testing and researching of current life theatricality, showed up again. Language regained its right to truly belong and be a part of reality, the right to investigate, with no deliberate dissimulation, the contemporary world, which were all rights cut by the “blade” of the ideological censorship. It found its freedom of speech again, it resumed the right to be “biting”, “harsh”, “uncensored”, even if its reception was and still is nuanced. “Delivery (giving birth) is a difficult physical act”^{ccxix}, to quote one of the outstanding figures of the criticism after December 1989, as if guessing the difficulties the “rebirth” of the contemporary dramaturgy would come across; as incredible as it might seem, it was undermined by the same people who should have supported it (theatre houses managers, directors, drama critics, and others). In 2012, in Romania, direction projects based on contemporary Romanian texts fathered real battles before they made it onto the stage, under the spotlight. There are theatre house managers who take such an initiative very simply, limiting to negotiate the number of “cool cues” in a text, considering them inadequate for the “sacred space” of the stage. Fortunately, there are also public theatre houses that understood the importance of supporting original drama literature, like Teatrul (Theatre House) *Foarte Mic* in Bucharest, Teatrul *Toma Caragiu* in Ploiești, and the National Theater in Târgu Mureș or the National Theater *Mihai Eminescu* in Timișoara. The independent theatre houses like *Green Hours* or *ACT* are the ones that truly make the difference in terms of sustaining contemporary dramaturgy.

This is the moment when one can notice that the old formulas co-exist, either in peace or war, with the new ones, thus creating a model of hesitation and controversy. Under the circumstances, we have to notice though the increased adaptability of drama in relation with other literary formulas, which mould and reflect best the needs of a society in continuous and hallucinating change.

The 1989 Moment. The condition of the Romanian theatre

The year 1990 starts in a climate of unease for the new democratic society from Romania. A highly paid for transition

is born out of the totalitarianism ashes: unemployment, inflation, and social inequality. The social pot of the new reality “stirs” inter-ethnic violence in Târgu-Mureș, in March, the University Square phenomenon and the miners’ protests; these are events whose impact, amplified by the mass-media, emphasizes the confusion felt by everybody. Reverberations created by these events reflect also on drama; for now, the show given by the Romanian society replaces the show on stage. It is time for television and politics (after having been reduced to mere simulacra for quite some time) to take the fore into the public life of Romania, being serious competition for drama^{ccxx} which is striving to keep up the pace with the dazzling rhythm of the social turmoil.

Right in the middle of this historic commotion, Drama manages to be a spiritual power in the Romanian society. Drama people did not let themselves be overwhelmed by the turmoil of events, and, despite all odds and difficulties, proved their usefulness and importance. That is why it did not come as a surprise that, in many places, the first local exponents of provisional leadership in Romania were actors or directors. “Even if by means of representation, drama had its moment of glory: it took part in the ‘0’ moment of the new Romanian history, and that seemed to close and prefigure an intense relation: the relation between drama and politics in the Romanian world”^{ccxxi}.

Consequently, even if drama is no longer “that public place where critical opinions can be heard”^{ccxxii}, actors and writers remain the “protagonists of the Revolution script”, and use the TV screen to convey the message of the Victory of the Revolution dated December 22, 1989. Judging by the association of the presence of the two personalities with the importance of this historical moment, it seems only natural for the Actor (Ion Caramitru) and the Poet (Mircea Dinescu) who had announced the revolution to be chosen leaders of the creations unions^{ccxxiii} that came into being at that time. We witness a phenomenon of “mutual contamination between politics and drama”^{ccxxiv}, in which many drama people will join political structures of the power or will opt for its other form, namely media notoriety, becoming TV shows broadcasters or TV shows producers.

The change in paradigm takes the privileged position it used to have during the communist regime away from drama. Recently gained freedom of speech cancels the need for a ciphered message, since the audience no longer needs metaphors to understand reality. A consequence of this fact is the division of the audience that once had a unitary character, due to the complicity nature generated by the frond artistic act. Drama people notice, in stupor, that they are no longer “public carriers of the general opinion”^{ccxxv} and that the power of influence they used to have, not a long time ago, gradually vanishes. Fueled also by the lack of a clear vision on the ruling politicians’ future, the crisis of the drama phenomenon makes artists “mind their art”^{ccxxvi} (except for those who opt for direct action in politics or mass-media), focusing on specific aspects related to creation, remaining “deaf and blind to what was going on around them”. While present is for now avoided, the search for new points of reference is more and more oriented toward the inter-war cultural period, known for its cultural and literary effervescence or toward the present of Western countries.

The Facelift of the Performance Institution

The drama institution enters a profound crisis period, a crisis generated by the political events after December 1989. Nobody seems to be interested in what is staged and played, nobody wants to open the doors to theatre rooms, and the tickets offices are left almost untouched, even on the occasion of premieres. Backstage, the situation becomes even more serious, as managers generate a wave of forced retirements and resignations, misusing office, while the only option actors are left is to go and work for a different theatre house. The atmosphere is governed by chaos, amplified by inner conflicts of culture people, eaten away by personal interests, which brings serious prejudice to the Romanian culture. The solution represented by the appointment of some goodwill intellectuals in key management positions is not enough to change the tormented destiny of institutions, quite on the contrary; outstanding personalities like Romulus Vulpescu appointed at Teatrul *Mic*, Șerban Foarță at the National Theatre House in Timișoara, Mihai Ursachi at the National Theatre House in Iași, Lucian Giurgescu at the Comedy Theatre House will get these institutions bankrupt – institutions that had known reverberating success before the 1989 Revolution. The answer to the question asked by critic Marian Popescu may help us find an explanation to this phenomenon: “What kind of drama institution did candidates to the job of manager feel they were prepared for? Was it the same type of institution existing since the ‘60s or the one that was about to go onto the path of change, which was absolutely necessary to do at that time? Yet one knows that human motivations are different than the previously mentioned idea.”^{ccxxxvii} In a newly created economic and political context, the job of theatre house manager became something new, something that had to be learned. The natural evolution of the society toward the Western direction determines an aesthetic re-dimensioning of the program, but also the need to have and carry out a managerial activity which is often “tempered” by the old, former legislation, opposite to the total liberty promoted by the institutions autonomy. The hybrid legal framework works according to two categories of laws: the socialist ones and the capitalist ones. “Romanian drama is now the ground of a visible confrontation between economic rules and laws, and the laws regulating art”^{ccxxxviii}, and the lack of a law regulating sponsorship and the copyright limited the freedom of action, since prospective subsidies from the private sector could not be accessed.

Silviu Purcărete, the manager of the *Bulandra* Theatre House, sustains the need to grant subsidies to the public theatre houses and opts for the existence of a permanent theatre team, but does not rule out the idea of actors’ competition, thus promoting the good quality of drama, and not the mediocrity encouraged by the employment security.^{ccxxxix}

The model of the over-dimensioned administrations and fixed bands (crews) where remuneration is done by criteria that are rather bureaucratic than artistic is fined by some drama people who draw the attention upon the fact that one will not be able to truly establish a framework adequate for the development of a future generation of actors, as long as the principle of “seniority in art”^{ccxxx} is in place and works.

Changes^{ccxxxi} determined by the reform are slow because drama people are afraid to take responsibility for prospective consequences, among which: want of social security, imminence of unemployment, over-population of drama institutions. The first minister of culture at that time, Andrei Pleșu, very lucidly stated: “As far as I am concerned, I agree that the governmental strategy should leave the cultural institutions at the end, in terms of the reform. Only in a well regulated society from the legal and financial point of view can the passage of culture to a “market” regime be done without victims”^{ccxxxii}. The attempt to make labor contracts more flexible, in the sense of limiting the contractual duration or the possibility to collaborate with actors from other institutions as well, perceived and understood as an exchange of experience, creates aversion and mistrust. A concrete example is *Theatrum Mundi* (the first cultural projects theatre) where manager Corina Șuteu has to face vehement oppositions from former employees of the “Ion Vasilescu” Theatre House, while she only wanted to promote the project system, as an element of novelty.

Legislative ambiguity reflected, as it was naturally expected to, into the art field as well. One noticed that “staging plays and working in the drama field today in Romania seems to be, to so many people, a difficult thing to achieve, more difficult than before Ceaușescu’s”^{ccxxxiii} fall. The drama movement after December 1989 is tormented by numerous inner conflicts of the managers, dismissals or resignations “dictated” by the new system. There are also happy situations, like the case of the National Theatre House from Bucharest, which has remarkable successes starting with director Andrei Șerban’s return. *Trilogia antică* (*Ancient trilogy*) brings spectators back, the audience shows interest in this masterpiece, turning it into a symbol of art and civic dignity. “Șerban’s trilogy is considered to be the rebirth of the Romanian drama after 1989.”^{ccxxxiv} Other three masterpieces, namely *Ubu Rex cu scene din Macbeth* (*Ubu Rex with scenes from Macbeth*), *Titus Andronicus* (an acclaimed drama hit)^{ccxxxv}, and *Phaedra* make Craiova the new capital of the Romanian drama^{ccxxxvi}. Emil Boroghină’s managerial skills appreciated twice by the awarding of the critics’ prize for the best director stand for an international business card for the National Theatre House from Craiova. “The glory period of the Theatre House from Craiova in early ‘90s, and the Shakespeare Festival are linked to the name of Emil Boroghină.”^{ccxxxvii}

Tormented by numerous managerial dissensions, the National Theatre House from Cluj found its balance when Dorel Vișan was appointed manager; Dorel Vișan, taking advantage of the 25 years of experience with the same team, managed to re-organize it and mobilize it to the benefit of culture. Director Mihai Mănuțiu started a fruitful collaboration with the drama team “enriched” with fresh graduates eager for acknowledgement, including Theodor Cristian Popescu, Anca Bradu, and Tudor Chirilă. During a confession he made later on, Mihai Mănuțiu talked about this communication based on transmission of energy from director to the actor and back, which became a “form of existence outside the theatre too, which relies on a form of sacrifice; the only form of sacrifice that has ever been available to me”^{ccxxxviii}, as he stated.

Mihai Gingulescu and Vlad Rădescu, managers of the Theatre House from Târgu Mureș, choosing director Victor Ioan Frunză and scenographer Adriana Grand proved to be good omen, as they bring back success thanks to the performances from the Romanian and the Hungarian sections, after ten years since “the anthological *Cherry Orchard* staged [...] in Târgu Mureș by Gheorghe Harag.”^{ccxxxix}

Besides the national theatre houses, there are also other theatre houses preoccupied with their own image promoted thanks to the revival of resources. Although *Bulandra* had undergone a terrible period during the manager “mandate” of Ion Caramitru, Silviu Purcărete and Virgil Ogașanu, because of the temporary loss of audience, the team’s discontent or even managerial mistakes, the Theatre House manages to overcome it thanks to premieres launched and personalities having left their print there, namely Liviu Ciulei, Cătălina Buzoianu, and Alexandru Darie. Including *Bulandra* in the Union of Theatre Houses from Europe marks the moment of a well-deserved international recognition.^{ccxi} *Odeon* as well rejoiced its lost prestige again, under the management of Vlad Mugur and Alexandru Dabija, thanks to these three exceptional plays: *Liar*^{ccxli} by Carlo Goldoni (directed by Vlad Mugur), *They put cuffs to flowers*^{ccxlii} by Fernando Arrabal (directed by Alexander Hausvater) and *Richard III*^{ccxliii} by William Shakespeare (directed by Mihai Mănuțiu).

The ambition to overcome its status and come out of the local anonymity, with a view to joining the national platform with many premieres, performances from the Romanian repertory, a collaboration with young directors, initiating drama manifestations and acts - these are a few elements that characterize managers of (drama) institutions from the country, out of whom it is worth mentioning Adrian Lupu from Galați, Ovidiu Cornea from Arad, Mihai Rogojinski from Botoșani, George Motoi from Brăila. Their efforts were crowned by the success they expected and hoped for.

Other institutions try to draw attention upon major festivals: *Atelier (Workshop)*, *Teatru-Imagine (Drama-Photography)*, *Zilele Shakespeare (Shakespeare Days)*, and *Festivalul de Teatru Contemporan (The Contemporary Drama Festival)*. This is the case of theatre houses from Brașov, Satu-Mare, and Sf. Gheorghe. Unfortunately, their example is not followed by too many institutions; there are enough subsidized theatre houses on the verge of survival, with teams that have an old mentality, that are rigid, misfit to the new tendencies, left with no audience, in eternal and painful carelessness. “There were theatre houses in the country that could not justify their existence given the lack of shows and performances. There were theatre houses that simply could not afford to hire directors. There were directors who were undergoing a creation crisis.”^{ccxliv}

Efforts made in the fight against corruption, as well as the subversive character of drama have always and to a great extent defined the artists’ competitive spirit, especially toward the end of the communist dictatorship. “Even under tough conditions, the Romanian drama managed to produce remarkable performances and great creations, as [...] oppression stimulates people!”^{ccxlv} The reflex of survival under harsh conditions, a reflex developed by the Romanian drama, helps it find quite often the necessary resources to

exist, artistically speaking, in early ‘90s, having had to overcome economic difficulties after December 1989.

Development of the theatrical infrastructure. Emergence of new state theatres houses and new private theatre companies

After 1990, efforts made by drama people to find the right solutions for a constant development of the Romanian drama, this time under precarious economic conditions, continue. The market economy laws make “a part of the culture and art institutions [...] work as private institutions”^{ccxlvii}, including theatre houses. Besides these alternatives, the Ministry of Culture establishes a theatre of cultural projects – *Theatrum Mundi* – conceived after the Western cultural centers model. Its main objective was to stimulate and promote originality in various manners (dance, drama, reading shows, creation workshops, co-productions, intercultural exchanges with foreign countries, etc.). Collaboration with the *Bush* Theatre House, thanks to a Workshop and a creation studio, proves beneficial and good omen, from the very beginning, drawing in other cultural partners including *British Council*, *The French Cultural Institute*, *The Romanian Cultural Foundation*, *The Odeon Theatre House*, *The National Theatre House from Tîrgu-Mureș*, *The National Theatre House Bucharest, A.T.F. (The Drama and Movie Academy, at that time; in the meantime, it became U.N.A.T.C.)*. Despite all this, the objective they were after was not attained, as Corina Șuteu, the manager of the theatre house, had to work with the same team that was taken over from the *Ion Vasilescu* Theatre House, which adds up to another obstacle: the want of an appropriate rehearsal space. Successes were acknowledged only by specialists, but not appreciated by the large audience that the plays were actually meant for. To give you a few examples of performances, we hereby would like to mention *Teatrul descompus (Decomposed drama)* by Matei Vișniec, *Journey to Jerusalem* by Roy Mc Gregory, a co-production with British artists, *Demonstrația (Demonstration)* by Marcel Tohatan, dancing performances in collaboration with French ballet dancers, *Big game* and *The angel’s leap*. The tensed atmosphere climaxed with the replacement of manager Corina Șuteu with critic Ion Cocora, whom everybody had high expectations from.

And yet, the energetic manager does not give up the idea, and, despite the “failure doubled by the opacity encountered while trying to achieve an institutional restructuring”^{ccxlviii}, she chooses the path of “exile” to Dijon^{ccxlviii}, where she will manage a theatre house manager training, which is called *Ecumest*.^{ccxlix}

Mihai Mălaimare, the spiritual father of the *Masca (Mask)* Theatre House, breaks the patterns by the non-conventional theatre formula, which carries out in open, every day, even corny, commonplace spaces like parks, school, streets, but also by means of novel, original expression forms, which provide a full, quick success, that is the gesture theatre, the pantomime and body language theatre; *The Masca* Theatre House was actually the only institution of the kind at that time in Romania. Plays like *Medievale, Mantaua, Clovnii, A murit moartea, măi! (Medieval, Cloak, Clowns, Death died, dude)* were very much appreciated by the audience.

Romanian artists become more and more interested in opening to a new type of audience, which they wish to draw again to the theatre that they had stopped visiting right after December 1989. Consequently, not only actors, but also some directors^{ccl} are intensely concerned about reinventing the performance space, so as to be able to set in place new relations with spectators.

After 1990, the institutionalized structures are, for the first time, competed against by private companies that aim at standing for a real alternative. The *Levant* Theatre House is such an example whereby they try to find new drama formulas and unconventional spaces meant to get the spectator out of his/her passive condition as a mere viewer or observer, thanks to the tireless efforts made by its initiator, Valeria Seciu. Performances like *Ultima noapte a lui Socrate (Socrates' last night)* by Ștefan Tanev, played in the Protocol hall from the Palace of former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, and *Pelican*, after August Strindberg, staged in a warehouse belonging to *Dalles* are only a few attempts of the kind. *Pelican* is the spearhead of creations by the *Levant*, thanks to its nominations for six categories of the UNITER awards and the participation in the Sitges festival (in 1996). This institution's activity continues in the "burnt hall" of the National Art Museum, i.e. the former Royal Library – a space literally marked by the fire of events in December 1989, with the rehearsals for *Fecioara și moartea (The Virgin and death)* by Ariel Dorfman. The show directed by Cristian Hadjiculea, starring George Constantin in the leading role, was performed at the Great Hall of the *Nottara* Theatre House. This is the drama event that the great actor George Constantin's career unfortunately ended with.

The last project from the category of activities carried out by *Levant* belongs to the young: an Austrian director together with four young actors work on a drama-choreography show based on a Romanian script, a contemporary text called *Doamna Bovary sunt ceilalți (Madame Bovary are the others)* by Horia Gârbea. "The show did not have the expected echo; it looked more like an experience rather than an achievement for the audience"^{ccli}, one of its protagonists confesses in an interview. Unfortunately, this was the moment when creative enthusiasm was replaced by the fatigue accumulated over six years of hard work and persistent efforts, and the *Levant* Theatre is left with no energy and thus ends its activity in 1996. The ending of this institution and its projects lead us to the following conclusions: an independent project in Romania lasts for as long as its leader is willing to invest time and energy for its performance; but when the leader gives it up, the organization loses its only, single point of support and, subsequently, is gone.

Another private initiative is the *Art-Inter Odeon* Foundation, which subsequently turned into *ACT* Theatre – the first independent drama space in Bucharest. The arbitrary decision to dismiss director Alexandru Dabija from the management of *Odeon* makes him look for new solutions to go on with his artistic excellence program initiated as a public theatre house manager. Together with a steering committee made up of Marcel Iureș (chairman), Mihai Mănuțiu, Doina Levintza, Radu Amzulescu and Traian Petrescu, former director Dabija fights against the institutional "lethargy", by probing the creative possibilities that the independent sector can offer^{cclii}.

Understanding that independence at that respective time can only belong to those who undertake responsibility, the creative core of the Foundation states that "the most important goal [...] is to set up a theatre hall where the performance should be protected from any pressure from "outside", thus providing the next generations of artists and spectators with a free and high class theatre."^{ccliii} One may say that the goal was fully attained, judging by Alina Nelega's opinions on the activity of the Theatre *ACT* – "paradoxically, it is the only one managing the experiment, the alternative.

The debut project of the *Art-Inter Odeon* presented during the British Festival in Bucharest is the show "Alie-nation" by Roderick Stewart, directed by Scott Johnston, then continuing with a co-production in collaboration with the National Theatre from Cluj, *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot, directed by Mihai Mănuțiu, also presented during the British tour.

The example that a first-class group of artists offered by this initiative called *Art-Inter Odeon* was one meant to prove that the alternative works on an independent ground: "If we look back, I believe that the *Odeon* moment had a crucial importance in the development of the independent drama phenomenon from our country. Whether they were aware or not of the exemplary value of that moment, drama people who felt the need for an alternative to the institutionalized system realized that they could not make it inside the system, but only *independently* from it or, where there was a will for "emancipation", *in partnership* with it."^{ccliv}

In time, *ACT* was the host of a different genre of artistic events, not only drama, becoming an open space for concerts, workshops and book launches, transforming, in the long run, into an independent cultural center.

Despite all these initiatives, "in Romania, the trend to suggest alternatives to the unique model in place, to induce, therefore, other ways of drama – not other stylistical variants of producing a show – could only manifest somehow "against nature", meaning inside the standard drama institution."^{cclv} Most efforts made by the drama people in order to lay the basis of an alternative drama theatre were but "a few shy attempts mainly due to some theatre groups established, most of the time, around some young directors"^{cclvi}, with the generated reverberations being visible much later. The emergence of the much wanted alternative to the public system, legitimated by private companies also brought about some unwanted yet visible effects: betting on easy money and the maintenance of the popularity quota of some actors, several foreign really feeble texts saw the footlights.

The international 90's. Cultural exchanges. Cultural flow. The Romanian theatre addresses to the world

Bilingual theatres emerge, favoring the opening to the West after December 1989, thanks to the collaboration with artists from abroad. This is how they aimed at promoting Romania beyond its national borders, by means of art. The validation of the Romanian drama culture in the Western space starts with the projects initiated by the Drama Union from Romania, in

the person of Ion Caramitru: “Seeding a Network”^{cclvii}, with the British theatre, and “Printemps de la liberté”, with the French one.^{cclviii} Cultural traffic intensifies thanks to the collaboration relations with Western theatres, which UNITER cultivates, as the body focusing on the accomplishment or facilitating of actions concerning the mutual training of young artists, as well as different tours, meant to bring the Romanian culture back onto the West’s attention.

The “Seeding a Network” Program is governed by international cooperation and has a special importance in the dynamization of the exchange of ideas and the building up of direct collaboration with the British theatre. At the same time, it marks the debut of a long series of initiatives that highlighted the national dimension of the domestic, local drama movement. The fruit of this international dialogue include the establishment of the *Act* theatre – the first alternative and independent theatre from Bucharest.

“Spring of Liberty” is the result of the first official visit Ion Caramitru paid to France, whereby he suggested the establishment of a Romanian-French theatre based on the model of cultural exchanges from the inter-war period. An interesting exchange of experience profiled, in the sense that the French female director Sophie Loukachevsky was about to make a show with Romanian actors, based on a French text, while the Romanian director Alexandru Tocilescu was tasked to set up a show with French actors, based on a Romanian text. The direction of this project (the French party admits only a temporary structure, and not an institution) lay with critic Cristina Dumitrescu. Facing a Romanian society still in the confusion of transition, Sophie Loukachevsky wanted to make a show that would challenge the audience to reflect upon the social-political “earthquake” that had brought about the physiognomy of the nation at that respective time. The French director opted for a collage of texts taken from major authors like Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Claudel, and Luigi Pirandello, grouped under the title *Six characters in search of...* Her directing undertaking had no echo in Romania, but, in return, she made it in the French-speaking world: in Montréal, Québec, Limoges, Paris, Strasbourg, Geneva, Orléans, Avignon etc. The meritorious retort by the Romanian party belonged to director Alexandru Tocilescu and scenographer Dan Jitianu, for the show “*On mourira jamais*” (We will never die) by Matei Vișniec. Staged with the collaboration of a band of French clowns (*Les Macloma la Le rond point*), the show was presented with great success in a tour in Paris. Their collaboration ended once the third project was accomplished, the one involving also drama people from the French Canada, with the Romanian party being caught, against its will, in-between the intercultural dissensions between France and another French-speaking area. After the withdrawal of the French party from the project, the two protagonists, Oana Pellea and Sandu Mihai Gruia, decided to undertake the responsibility for it and continue with the show on their own, succeeding in making it a real hit^{cclix}, “because it is a show made to charm the audience, to catch it in the net of the drama magic. And it has been doing so for 12 years now...”^{cclx}

The series of bilingual dramas continues with the Romanian-Irish one, coordinated, in the beginning, by critic Marian Popescu, who mentions that “this is not an institution we are

talking about, but cooperation and cultural exchange between Romania and Ireland.”^{cclxi} Its early projects include the show called *Ceausescu’s ear*^{cclxii}, a production of UNITER, *Mic Theatre* (only three performances) and *Old Museum* from Belfast. In this case too, performances in Ireland outnumbered those in Romania, thus proving that, sometimes, the audience abroad can be more receptive than the national audience.

Under the management of Alexa Visarion, The Romanian-American Theatre called *Eugene O’Neill* drew people’s attention by two outstanding performances directed by the talented Adrian Pintea. Putting his whole trust in young actors, they achieved the results they were hoping for with the plays *Fool for love* by Sam Shepard, and *Orpheus Descending* by Tennessee Williams, from 1995, both played in English. Even if those staged choreographic and musical productions brought a note of diversity to the Bucharest drama “picture”, they did not manage to make a true statement into the American cultural area. The year 1996 marked the emergence of a different project – *The buried child* by Sam Shepard at *Bulandra* – directed by Cătălina Buzoianu, also based on an exclusively Romanian participation, just like the first two.

The main goal underlying the establishment of these bilingual drama institutions is to create a collaboration framework between Romanian and foreign drama people, which would generate a cultural traffic that the Romanian drama area was deprived of during the communist regime. The establishment of international relations gradually moved inside public theatre houses, which take advantage of the created infrastructure and decide to exclusively exploit it. This is the time when numerous Romanian public theatre houses explore the possibilities offered by international partnerships. Soon, results show, and sometimes they are terrific, as it is the case of the National Theatre House from Craiova, enjoying a great deal of success abroad, having more seasons during which performances abroad outnumber the ones in the country. Another example is the “NOROC (Good Luck) Program [...] the most long-lasting, amplest, most coherent and fertile international project that the Romanian drama was involved in after 1990”^{cclxiii}, born out of the idea of a Romanian-British drama exchange. Gradually, under the coordination of Neil Wallace, it turned into a platform for the exploitation of some major, outstanding Romanian shows, making possible “international acknowledgement of many Romanian actors and directors.”^{cclxiv}

The conclusion from the aforementioned facts is that, after December 1989, drama developed, the theatre crews number grew, and so did the initiatives that attained the goal and had the success they were hoping for. Re-dimensioning repertory and promoted formulas entails a new vision from the theatre management, which is yet required more flexibility for the sake and to the benefit of art.

Creation Unions – a new reformation system in theatre

Some drama people’s desire “to change something” in the drama area after December 1989 fathered the first professional drama organization after December 1989, on February 10, 1990. Originally called the Romanian Drama Union, and then the Drama Union from Romania, the goal they set was to “favor and stimulate drama creation by remaking the European relations of the Romanian drama and

to protect the rights of the Romanian drama people.”^{cclxv} Although it is not subsidized, UNITER works thanks to some projects and programs that launched it among the main promoters of Romanian drama values. Its activity developed on several directions: a publishing house – UNITEXT^{cclxvi}, a bi-monthly publication – *Semnal teatral (Theatre signal)*^{cclxvii}, an artistic agency – UNISTAR; the Romanian critics section of ACIT-UNITER. Also, it coordinates the activity of the *Inoportun* Theatre House, the Romanian-French Theatre House, and the Romanian-Irish Theatre House; it subsidizes staged productions; annually, it grants the *UNITER Gala Awards* and *The Award for the best play of the year*. Its initiatives have even aimed at education by drama; what is illustrative in this respect is UNIPROF, a project aimed at the improved training of young journalists, Art School – for abandoned children from orphanages for children under school age and school aged children, “Drugging-Rehab” – aimed at marginal social groups from prisons and asylums, “Alternatives” – supplementing the training of young actors by means of less used methods in the education system, and the “First step” primarily aimed at the higher, improved training of professionals from theatre houses thanks to internships in the UK and other countries.

Immediately after its establishment, UNITER draws up a text called *Status of the drama man*, which marks the first “signal” of any creation Union that would draw the attention upon the condition of the Romanian culture (sector) at that time^{cclxviii}, whose results was fundamental: the drama man acquires the status of a creator. Thanks to the vote of the provisional parliament (former CPUN – National Union Provisional Council), the drama activity is officially acknowledged as one of creation, benefitting from a new remuneration grid, similar to the one in the higher education system. Its priority projects include the organization of a non-concealed trade union^{cclxix} of drama people (people working in drama).

Beyond its merits at the national level, the Union was also an open door to other countries – “a merit that no one is denying today”^{cclxxx} – facilitating numerous collaborations, tours or training and internships.

Eventually, the balance of UNITER is impacted by the numerous personal interests of its managers or employees, which often transforms the stage into a pride fight arena, causing serious damage to its public image. Paradoxically, the Union that wanted to provide a new activity system in drama was conceived based on a formal organization model consistent with Soviet structures: “The Union set off on the wrong foot – as its vice-president himself put it – in terms of its structure, with the four sections (actors, directors, scenographers, critics), each section with a bureau, each bureau with a secretary or chairman [...] following [...] the creation unions Soviet model.”^{cclxxxi} Thus, the first conflictual situation was born when its structure was changed by the dismantling of its sections, under the motivation of financial inefficiency and modernization of its activity by starting a project-based work. Valentin Silvestru – chairman of the Critic Section, and Valeriu Moisescu – chairman of the Direction Section, are reluctant about the idea of change^{cclxxii}, considering the respective measure as an abuse, an attack against democracy, a form of power in the hand of a small group. This fact led to the withdrawal of a part of the critics

from the Union, and the establishment of two sections of the Drama Critics International Association from Romania: one with the Drama XXI Foundation, and another one with UNITER. Relations between the Ministry of Culture and UNITER were also impacted to the detriment of culture, getting as far as the withdrawal of the Union, in 1992, from the organizers of the *I.L. Caragiale National Festival*^{cclxxiii}. Existing dissensions deprived the audience from festivals, drama performances, and meetings with artists. With regard to the prolongation of this tension, one may notice that “after 1991, culture related policies recorded an increased tendency to politicize culture, which had also an impact on the Romanian drama. Developments, decisions or stage events were at the mercy of those in power”^{cclxxiv} more than once. Despite calls for calm and lucidity, with a view to solving problems, the relation between the two institutions was often troubled by disputes^{cclxxv} between chairman Ion Caramitru and the managing bodies from the Ministry.

Challenged by some and sustained by others, the UNITER phenomenon is an inspiration to the Hungarian artists who decide, as of February 1994, to establish the Hungarian Drama Union from Romania, whose chosen leader and chairman is actor Attila Gáspárik.

The Repertoire under the sun of transition

Andrei Șerban’s directing undertaking – namely the show *Ancient Trilogi* from the National Theatre in Bucharest – marks the moment when one can notice difficulties in terms of getting a new spirit onto the Romanian stage. Starting with administrative organization, with the hereditary structures of the communist regime and continuing with options related to the repertory, one could observe how freedom of speech hit again a convulsive reality, after the censorship period, reality that undergoes itself a process of re-structuring.

It becomes difficult to redefine something or one’s self in the context of this radical change, which reflects in drama: posters show signs of ambivalence, oscillating between mortification and regeneration, parable and allusive language are harshly incriminated, with or without judgement, and one talks about the need to outline a direct, violent drama illustrating heterogeneity and toughness of the street show or the mass-media metamorphoses. Moreover, there show up directors who underline and emphasize how important it is to get drama out of the theatre halls: “We may even talk about the street show – as director Sorana Coroamă-Stanca suggests. Shouldn’t drama get down in the street and markets, just as it happened back in the Middle Ages?”^{cclxxvi}

An interesting aspect of this period is vehement criticism against formulas promoted during the communist regime, as they were considered obsolete and of no interest to the present. Performances of the kind are rare and without too much impact, as it is the case of the trilogy *Goi în fața destinului (Naked in front of the destiny)* written by Tudor Popescu and staged by Cristian Ioviță at *Theatrum Mundi*, which did not have the success they had hoped for, not so appreciated by either the critics or the audience. What is worth noticing is the statement made by Victor Ernest Mașek, the manager of the *Nottara* Theatre, regarding the staging of such topics: “We are not detached enough, at a historic and emotional level, so as to truly give substance to our

undertaking related to man's existential status under dictatorship, so as to make them valid and stir the interest of people who had to put up with it, as well as people from everywhere.^{”cclxxvii}

New topics come to add up to the range of themes addressed in these plays, topics from everyday life, but which had been forbidden by the former regime, like sex, violence, homosexuality, and lesbianism. “After the idea of retrieval, another idea just as manifest was and still is, to a certain extent, the temptation of what used to be forbidden. Author, plays, language, nudity etc. The fact that this temptation has rather been under the sign of exhibitionism than art has, in many cases, did leave some marks.^{”cclxxviii} They promote a “gastronomic drama”, as Brecht put it, “spiced up” with vulgar, erotic scenes, or crude and ridiculous humor; contemporaneity is addressed in a suburb or shallow manner. These “keys^{”cclxxix} that suppose, in the stage directors’ opinion, a quick box office success, compromise the genuine valuable texts from the universal repertory. The same idea is reiterated by Alina Nelega in her study: “It is true that, miming novelty, other theatre houses too inserted farces or boulevard plays in their repertory, which were more consistent with commercial drama.^{”cclxxx}

From the perspective of the above-mentioned facts, and the sociological interpretation of the text, we could recall here Paul Cornea’s remark: “Drama emerges [...] as a necessary expression of the vast and quick movement toward modernization^{”cclxxxi}; this phenomenon generates, after 1989, a double consequence – drama is adapted to the public taste for entertainment, while the audience is adapted to a certain idea of drama. “Direction has changed, and now drama is determined to come to the audience^{”cclxxxii}, and this phenomenon has to be looked at and understood from the perspective of the drama role in the newly created society, and the relation between drama and the audience after December 1989.

At the first edition of the *I.L. Caragiale Festival*, what shocks us is the discrepancy in terms of value between the *Ancient Trilogya*^{cclxxxiii} and the other performances in the program, which participate with no prior selection; these respective plays were soon criticized, as they would jeopardize the genuine artistic values. “One of the concerns brought about by direction and drama today, in the Romanian theatre, is the image whereby direction disfavors text (play or fiction, if we talk about adaptations).^{”cclxxxiv} There are many professional theatres that do not strike off quality and avoid this kind of repertory, following, in return, the success model of the *Ancient Trilogya*.

Making constant efforts, the Romanian theatre (representatives) manage to find the necessary resources to overcome the ludicrous aesthetics of the December 1989 transition, surviving thanks to value, talent and optimism: “a crisis of forms cannot exist as long as there are artists out there who have something to say, something to convey about this world.^{”cclxxxv}

At a strictly aesthetic level, we notice the perpetuation of the same patterns as before 1989. The playwright Alina Nelega wrote down in her study that only two major, important performances^{cclxxxvi}, both for their aesthetic and civic value

have been produced after 1989, but that “they were mere milestones in the individual destiny of artists-directors, without generating serious mutations in the performance aesthetics or in the Romanian drama culture, for that matter.^{”cclxxxvii}

The Romanian stage director continues to prefer the classic work “granted the status of natural object”, as it provides “more freedom to meanings^{”cclxxxviii}. From this point of view, the reflection of universal drama into the domestic repertory may be seen from the perspective of understanding and interpreting classic texts turned into outstanding drama events^{cclxxxix}: *Trilogia antică (Ancient Trilogy)* by Andrei Șerban, *Titus Andronicus, Ubu rex cu scene din Macbeth (Ubu rex with scenes from Macbeth or Phaedra)* directed by Silviu Purcărete, *Visul unei nopți de vară (Midsummer Night’s Dream)* directed by Liviu Ciulei, *Richard al III-lea (Richard III)* produced by Mihai Mănușiu, *Pescărușul (The Gull)* directed by Cătălina Buzoianu, *Trei surori (Three Sisters)* in Alexandru Darie’s vision, or *Mincinosul (Liar)* directed by Vlad Mugar.

As a challenge, new drama areas are tackled: *Trupa pe Butoaie (Band on barrels)* and *Masca* Theatre House have the courage to come up with bold initiatives, which the audience likes. Next to Andrei Șerban and Silviu Purcărete, who bet, and do not fail, on ancient drama, get appraisals; just as successful were directors who stage fiction like *Satyricon* by Gaius Petronius, *Decameron* by Boccaccio or *Birds gathering* by Farrid Udin Attar.

One of the characteristics of drama after December 1989, in terms of the repertory, is the tackling of works written by authors who were forbidden during the communist regime. Performance halls, saturated with the obligation to stage plays consistent with the “social order”, prefer Western texts instead, given the free circulation of drama related information. Even under such circumstances, repertory adopted by theatre managers remain “subject” to old habits, which is explainable under the conditions of the newly created economy, namely to use the successful initiative of a theatre house in terms of imposing a contemporary foreign play as an “ice-breaker”. The motivations for such choices relying on managerial reasons (intention to remove all risks) would generate, from an artistic point of view, the “repertory contagion” phenomenon analyzed by critic Oltița Cîntec, in which “the same author or text [...] is staged at very short intervals of time, during the same season, in several theatre houses.^{”ccxc} Consequently, European dramaturgy of the past few decades, not to mention the American one or the one from different continents, gets to be known only partially on the Romanian stages also after 1990. However, there are staged plays that strive to recover from the huge handicap created by the isolation caused by the totalitarian regime, like, for example: *Marat-Sade* by Peter Weiss (directed by Țino Geirun at the National Theatre House from Târgu Mureș), *They put cuffs to flowers* by Fernando Arrabal (directed by Alexander Hausvater at *Odeon* Theatre House), *Ghetto* by Geshou Shobol (directed by Victor Ioan Frunză at the National Theatre in Bucharest), *Self-murderer* by Nikolai Robertovici Erdman (directed by Cornel Mihalache at the *Nottara* Theatre in Bucharest and *Mihai Eminescu* Theatre in Botoșani, directed by Ion Bordeianu), *Merlin or the desert country* by Tankred Dorst (directed by Cătălina Buzoianu at

the *Bulandra* National Theatre), *Flight* by Mihail Bulgakov (directed by Ion Mânzatu at the Public Theatre House in Arad and the *Comedy* Theatre House, directed by Cătălina Buzoianu), *Ubu rex with scenes from Macbeth* by Alfred Jarry (directed by Silviu Purcărete at the National Theatre from Craiova), *Fools for love* by Sam Shepard (directed by Adrian Pintea, The *Romanian-American* Theatre) etc. And yet, “betting much on the card of direction, the Romanian drama risks losing the little dowry of the original play worth watching, whether they are written by authors launched in the ‘60s or by new-comers like Alina Mungiu, Horia Gârbea, Vlad Zografi, Ștefan Zîher, Gabriel Bădică and others.”^{ccxcxi}

In the first years after 1990, Romanian drama flees from the past, taking refuge in the classic repertory, so as to be consistent with contemporary events after December 1989. The classic play remains the artistic platform that the Romanian director practices his/her creative potential on, being reluctant when it comes to working on other drama literary “materials”, such as dramatizations or scripts specially written for drama. As for the dominant organizational culture of the Romanian drama, critic Oltița Cîntec notices that “its axis is immediate, directly commensurable success, which everybody strives to attain.”^{ccxcii} Subsequently, the reasons underlying this phenomenon relate also to the guarantee of success from the glory illicitly borrowed from the value of the masterpiece in question, in case artistic performance is missing, “as the physiognomy of the Romanian drama expression is still characterized by a certain way to stage dramas, by stimulating rather the *success culture* than the *culture success*.”^{ccxciii} Attempts to renew the drama repertory, by tackling new texts or new performance formulas likely to enrich the domestic drama experience are missing also due to the Romanian direction school, which very rarely if ever promotes direct approach of current events. “Even today, we still believe that to be a classic of modern times, as authors like Beckett and Ionesco or directors like Brook or Strehler are often characterized, becomes the attribute of *active modernism* from the show point of view. And of course we forget or still do not know that the present of direct experience plays a significant role in the concept of “modernism” in drama. *Or Romanian drama today flees from this present*”^{ccxciv} as Marian Popescu stated. It is proven that, for starters, the Romanian drama shuts down within itself and is not ready yet to have an open relation with the present.

At the aesthetic level, show innovations are pretty modest. In her study *The Romanian Drama Pattern*, Miruna Runcan writes about the lack of avant-garde^{ccxcv} from the Romanian theatre, which has been identifiable ever since the inter-war period. Her idea is sustained by other critics who are of the opinion that “the last attempt to search for a new road toward the dramatization of the stage picture”^{ccxcvi} was recorded back in the ‘60s, and its outcome is “a long journey into the Aesop-like language limited to a completely manufactured vocabulary.” Judging by the evolution of the Romanian drama, the theories of these two critics seem to be still valid today, with a few amendments.

A great part of the difficulties the Romanian drama was facing, and which were hard to assess at the time, were rooted into the communist past. As it was difficult to establish back then what parts were worth saving, as well as the lack of a

“drawer dramaturgy” make Alina Nelega claim out loud the recovery attempts are virtually “impossible, letting aside the fact that it would also be useless (which has never been an argument for fake recoveries).”^{ccxcvii} The question on everyone’s lips was: “How to break away from the past?” but that did not provide a valid answer, at least not in the early ‘90s. All attempts meant to cast light on what was there in the past, in order to determine a possible configuration of the future, generated contradictory opinions on the matter. “Ethical, aesthetic, ideological and professional relativism would face ethical, aesthetic, ideological or professional radicalism, sometimes one being mistaken for another or one overlapping another”^{ccxcviii}, as Liviu Malița commented upon the “convulsions” of the drama emergence after December 1989.

Even if trends in drama manifested isolated in the ‘90s, the main idea being that of retrieval, its beneficial influence translated, first of all, into the return of some important Romanian directors to Romania, like Andrei Șerban, Lucian Giurchescu, Vlad Mugur, Iulian Visa, Liviu Ciulei, Alexandru Colpacci, Radu Dinulescu, Adrian Lupu. They secured the continuity of the Romanian theatre development, thanks to their creations.

Romanian dramaturgy after the fall of the communist regime. The beginnings

While the foreign dramaturgy enjoys a privileged place in the Romanian repertory, the domestic, national plays are rarely among the preferences of drama institutions. Contemporary dramaturgy did not win the vote of confidence from active directors, which it very much needed. They would treat the contemporary text with great reluctance, despite the fact that there were drama writers whose works were translated and internationally acknowledged. “I was not interested in the Romanian text, for various reasons, some of them related to that culture of rebellion, which isolates the individual. I could not establish significant contacts with it, although I wanted to”^{ccxcix}, director Dragoș Galgoțiu confessed. The topic concerning the Romanian dramaturgy and the reaction of theatres with regard to the inclusion of the Romanian plays into the repertory would still bring about harsh statements after December 1989. The stimulation of new playwrights, of those who would talk about what was going on in the Romanian society was a mere wish, and nothing more.

In early ‘90s, as a reflex of old times, (drama) directors, theater managers and leadership bodies from the Ministry of Culture develop a “contrast reaction”^{ccc} – as playwright Dumitru Solomon sees it – which manifests by rejecting the national, domestic text, although “the West wants to get to know our contemporary dramaturgy as well”, the same writer admits. Instead of initiatives that should have supported the development of the Romanian original dramaturgy – the establishment of a documentation center, the translation of Romanian plays into international circulation languages, substantial subsidies for performances based on Romanian texts – a state of palsy settles in.

Beyond all that, in that social-political mess, the Romanian contemporary text is, paradoxically, subject to censorship. Artist Leopoldina Bălănuță is one of the voices deploring the

phenomenon under the newly created conditions of freedom: “There is this miracle occurring in December, we play in two big Romanian performances, in *Dimineața pierdută* (*Lost morning*) at *Bulandra* and in *Amurgul burghez* (*Bourgeois sunset*) at *Teatrul Mic* (Small Theatre House). Right after the revolution, they were removed from the poster, with no explanation. I am told that they are obsolete!”^{cccii} The same thing happens to *Vărul Shakespeare* (*Cousin Shakespeare*) by Marin Sorescu, with Ilie Gheorghe in the leading role, directed by Mircea Cornișteanu at the National Theatre from Craiova. Following a rigid system intoxicated with interdictions, the artist’s freedom of speech was threatened again, only this time it was due to a mentality inhibited by ethical preconceptions regarding drama performance. The case^{ccciii} of public reactions generated by the atmosphere created around the preparation of the show at *Odeon ...they put cuffs to flowers* by Fernando Arrabal, and directed by Alexander Hausvater, is relevant in this respect. The opportunists of the moment decide upon the validity of art products, as censors used to do.

The explosion of new talents in drama and a new revitalizing repertory did not occur, although managers, literary secretaries and directors were then free to take their own decisions, which allows them to promote many original success aspects. Latent opposition between generations (the ’60s-’70s vs. the ’80s-’90s) favors upfront statements like: “I am sorry, but, let aside essay and poetry, the literature condition before ’89 was terribly mediocre.”^{ccciii} Critic Ion Bogdan Lefter is of the opinion that “except for Matei Vișniec, the other playwrights with a calling ... do not have the echo they deserve on stage.”^{ccciv}

Literature critics too seem to be disappointed by the drama heritage: “out of everything that has been written in the past 25 years, according to Laurențiu Ulici, what will stand the test of time is less than 1%.”^{cccv} Sometimes, motivation seems to be diplomatic in nature, as critic Eugen Simion put it: “The play becomes a show that is judged upon depending on the director, actor, and scenography. There are people out there with more expertise than us, namely drama chronicle writers, to judge this phenomenon emerging around drama.”^{cccv}

The most vehement, passionate conflict emerged between playwrights and directors, “because the Romanian drama today is led by directors” (as managers and creators of performances)^{cccvii} as Tudor Popescu notices. Stage directors no longer want to stage Romanian plays, as they are no longer an attraction for the audience, irrespective of the value they have. “A Romanian play, even if it is brilliant, is perceived with more difficulty than a play that made it to the international repertory. These particular plays take the director backstage; now, in this rush of being promoted and acknowledged, nobody has time anymore for apostolate”^{cccviii} the famous playwright concludes. Some of the playwrights, like Horia Gârbea, for instance, accuse^{cccix} also the lack of criteria with regard to the repertory selection made by certain theatre managers, as well as the convenience of directors enclosed in a practice of “copy-paste” of the already settled in aesthetic canon.

Disturbed by these accusations, directors, followed by literature critics, demand that artistic hierarchy is given back

its value: “Drama people want to make shows that will bring them success, Silviu Purcărete says. If the Romanian playwright fails to be included in the equation, I think it is first of all his/her fault.”^{cccix} Director Mihai Mănuțiu proves to be a partisan of the above-mentioned idea: “When there is enough vitality and enough creativity in our dramaturgy, directors from everywhere will rush to it, to stage it.”^{cccxi} Cătălina Buzoianu is another director from that period who confesses that “before 1989, fiction was stronger, although we had very good playwrights back then as well.”^{cccxi}

This “allergy” to the contemporary Romanian text also comes from the misfitting of the topic to the drama speech. One may notice that, although “the monster in the labyrinth was killed, the mental form generated by the construction of the totalitarian labyrinth in Romania has survived ever since, after 1989.”^{cccxi} Consequently, more playwrights remain enclosed in this optics of relating to the drama topic. The new generation of writers enjoys the freedom of speech, having the possibility to write without any social or political constraints and without fear of censorship, unlike the previous generation represented by important names like Marin Sorescu, Dumitru Solomon, Iosif Naghiu or D.R. Popescu. But, just like the latter, new playwrights write about a contemporary event occurred subsequent to the change of the political regime, which they treat just like their predecessors, by taking over the “slogans” of the time, which are not fundamentally different from those of the former regime, causing the same reaction: they are either for it or against it.

In the ’90s, dramaturgy is “under attack” by a multitude of points of view; there are virulent statements or disagreements and disputes sometimes turned into aggressiveness or threats. Current events are often rendered by harsh, raw touches, which is illustrative of the fact that freedom of speech is pretty chaotically perceived. Drama seems to evolve, mainly on two directions: re-use of the past, by means of parables, or inspiration from the present, in the form of comedy or drama with a pinch of criticism.

Attempts to reintegrate the Romanian text into the repertory gather several playwrights: Ecaterina Oproiu, D.R. Popescu, Tudor Popescu, Marin Sorescu, Mihai Ispirescu and Pavel Everac, who decide to make up the group called “*Dragon*” (from the phrase “chased away playwrights”). The group^{cccxiv} emerged as a reaction to the trend in the domestic drama environment to keep writers who used to stand for the real values in drama during the communist regime away from stage. Under the management of Paul Everac, the group tried to draw public attention with some polemical published texts, and even some staged plays financially supported by its own members. Although today this group seems odd, as there were five persons with no strong, aesthetic or personal previous connection, at that time there seemed to be serious justification for the undertaking in question. For Marin Sorescu’s career, membership to this group, doubled by the weak results from his political activity as a minister of culture during Văcăroiu’s governing, turned out to be a wrong movement that would get him off the radar of Romanian staging.

Unfortunately, Marin Sorescu’s association with this group, just like his subsequent performance as minister of culture

during Văcăroiu's mandate, weighed a lot, and caused the fall of his exceptional drama work into apparent oblivion.

Once this group emerged, in the professional environment they started discussing a bill that would oblige theatres to have Romanian plays in half of their repertory. The administrative constraint suggested as a solution – “one of the most ungraceful and often with a political load phenomena”^{cccxcv} – regarding the obligation to stage Romanian plays was not consistent with the unanimous opinion of the decision-makers in that respect. “Politicizing the cultural act is a disease with totalitarian roots, while keeping the Romanian drama in a partisan of state control system only perpetuates the political sector's predisposition for interference”^{cccxcvi}, critic Oltița Cîntec warned us. That is why old habits implying political adhesions in return for some advantages, and artistic and material goods were still there. Political sympathies or antipathies, whether of directors, theatre managers, or affiliation of some acknowledged playwrights with structures of the newly installed power in Romania, would sometimes dictate the commissioning of some Romanian texts in the repertories of certain theatre houses. Some critics challenge the abundance of Matei Vișniec's plays on the Romanian stages; he is a playwright who in 1996, gets published in two volumes by Cartea Românească (publishing house) and is dedicated a whole festival at the National Theatre in Timișoara. “Undoubtedly a talented, gifted writer, but not in all his writings, Matei Vișniec, like other Romanian writers settled down abroad before (or even after) 1989 is interested in his presence in the culture of his home country. Naturally, the risk of inflation is not excluded!”^{cccxcvii} On the other hand, his criticism softens the case of plays by Marin Sorescu or D.R. Popescu, whose quite frequent presence in the repertories of some theatres could have brought about suspicions and discussions.

On the troubled background of the social and political scenery after 1989, the “boldness” to write drama becomes a courageous act that many just do not undertake, as it supposes, first of all, adaptation to the new reality, and Marin Sorescu does not hesitate to express his concern in that respect: “this is a matter that occurs not only in drama, but in the whole literature. This is the confrontation between the Romanian writer and the universal writer, between the Romanian playwright and all the great playwrights of the world.”^{cccxcviii}

Drama and the crisis of the beginning. Artistic act and creator's identity crisis. The necessity for a new language

The practice of cultural survival during the totalitarian regime no longer finds its points of reference, so as to continue to exist under the newly created social conditions. Artists just have to face the new reality, a permanently moving and transforming reality, made up almost exclusively of conflicts and protests, where truth no longer needs “blanketing”, in order to be decoded by the spectator's imagination. As Seumas Milne remarked, “Ceaușescu's death took away its protesting role^{cccxcix} from the theatre.” Reverberations of this phenomenon translate into the loss of the allusive code of communication with the audience, based – as per habit – on the metalanguage made up of intonations, gestures – all of them modifiable so that they convey the message of a

rebellion put down before it even started, by means of self-censorship. As drama critic Cristina Modreanu noticed, the practice of subliminal, subversive messages, along the years, educated an audience used to “reading between the lines”, and “once the communication channel built-up over the years was lost, drama lost its audience.”^{cccxxx} The theatre was sheltering and feeding a unique type of communication, born out of a context that, once gone, took the whole para-verbal and metalinguistic communication with it. This is the very reason why we attend “a divorce from the spectators in the early years after '90”^{cccxxxi} who are now “fascinated by the public life show”, and you don't need any filter to grasp that. The “traffic” direction had changed, and drama was determined to come to the audience (and not the other way around). The regaining the new audience, as well as the indispensable redefinition/re-adaptation to the new reality took a long time.

For then, drama seemed to have entered some kind of a *culture crisis*. “Five years later after the dismantling of the censorship apparatus, one could notice only the beginning of a crisis”^{cccxxii} as critic Marian Popescu remarked. The word “crisis” started to gradually insinuate, repeat and impose itself. The crisis state of drama, of drama culture in general could not be pulled down. The pessimism of so many theatre people, critics, actors, directors, which accompanied the transition that the Romanian drama was undergoing, is elegantly counteracted by the great actor Marcel Iureș, urging his fellows to act with articulation and dynamism: “Drama feeds on crisis; creation's condition is crisis, stumbling, helplessness. The effort to get up from your knees is the condition of art. Art is not a trampoline or a race track that we nicely and slowly take off from. No! Art equals a great deal of hard work.”^{cccxxiii}

Therefore, an important part of this labor was to find a new language. During dictatorship, drama was forced to come up with strategies to pull down and overcome the vigilant mechanisms of censorship, by inserting allusions to reality into the text (this phenomenon is synonym with cheating the authorities^{cccxxiv} as critic and playwright Mihaela Michailov sees it), thus becoming a “metaphoric”, allusive theatre. Language was censored, because authorities were after leveling language, and that is why any declination from the politically imposed norms was harshly sanctioned. Recalling the ideological enlisting of artists during the unfortunate period of totalitarianism, philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu synthetizes, in an interview, the boundaries of permissiveness in terms of freedom of speech: “They only had two options: either align, make the deal and get into the game proposed by those in power, sell their consciousness, sell their writing, painting, music, theatre, or turn that (deal) down and try to work underground at the level of cultural traditional forms, and thus survive.”^{cccxxv} Subsequently, theatre turned into a mechanism for the ideas circulation, an attribute that made it significant in the preservation of spectators' living spirit.

Analyzing the goal and importance of drama in the Romanian society, Cristina Dumitrescu notices that drama, after December 1989, had to set new objectives: “Before, society was just paralyzed and, subsequently, theatre was active, it was an oasis of dynamism. Now society is very active, and theatre should become a place for contemplation and meditation at the same time. Theatre will have to teach the

individual how to respect his/her capacity to think for himself/herself.”^{ccccxxvi} Guessing that, most of the active directors at that time, and some actors too, plead for the reinvention of language and the redefinition of the communication with the audience:

Alexandru Dabija – “because of censorship, my type of drama thinking was too sophisticated, full of signs, references – in the area of that mysterious dialogue with the audience. Performances, shows were “filled up” with more than it was needed. Once this barrier was gone, I reduced it and made for a simpler drama form, with direct, clearer forms, without too many ambiguities, which I had always wanted, but which wasn’t in fashion before. This was a perfectly conscious movement.”^{ccccxxvii}

“I do not say that I dislike the metaphorical and allegorical style of theatre that my generation and I used to make. I like to see it, sometimes I even love it, but I cannot stage it anymore.”^{ccccxxviii}

Mircea Cornișteanu – “We just had the feeling and we were convinced that we were doing the right thing with regard to Sorescu’s play [*Cousin Shakespeare* staged at the National Theatre in Craiova]. When the events occurred [the 1989 revolution] we interrupted our activity for three weeks. When we resumed it, what used to seem serious to me didn’t, anymore. We were trying to squeeze in a labyrinth that was no longer there. Because of that, our addresses became unknown; our expeditions did not make it to the destination anymore, as our addresses had been changed.”^{ccccxxix}

Mihai Măniuțiu – “We must find a way to exist, which will prove our vitality. I no longer believe in metaphors and allusions, as I said. I think we all need to undergo, at some point, a period of denudation. [...] I am not for a theatre that has to be encrypted on three-four levels. I am for a theatre that almost anyone understands.”^{ccccxxx}

Victor Ioan Frunză – “These decades of communism generated something worse especially in our minds, in everyone’s minds. Maybe this is precisely why I am dreaming of performances having a very wide range of representation, even geographically speaking, as I see theatre as a means to shake, transform, and solve mentality issues or even social diseases... [...] It seems to me that the stage we are all at is one that needs remodeling from all angles, a rethinking of the drama language as such. [...] I think things are to be redefined. [...] Rethinking means, and relations between drama and the world, even relations between theatre as an institution and the city it is in...”^{ccccxxxi}

Tompa Gabor – “I think we are in the situation where we are looking for a language, which goes for poetry too, but also for drama itself, but stage has acquired a certain kind of form stability, unlike literature, the word, which is in full confrontation with such a world, and its very quick changes. Generally, century ends are not appropriate for the birth of new modalities, of fundamental and original works...”^{ccccxxxii}

Valeriu Moisescu – “Freedom is tougher than constraint; under constraint, you can still come up with excuses (censorship, caution, concessions), while in freedom talent

expresses itself or not, man places himself at his own level and takes the chance.”^{ccccxxxiii}

Andrei Șerban – “What is paradoxical is that everything that happened, everything that accumulated cannot be capitalized anymore. I do have the feeling that we must start from scratches. How? I don’t know. What I know though is that we must absolutely do something. That is why I accepted the office of Manager of the National Theatre House.”^{ccccxxxiv}

Lucian Giurcescu – “I am convinced that allusive theatre will no longer be able to exist, as nobody is interested in that anymore. A certain type of metaphoric theatre dies as well, so we need to rethink the metaphor, we need to rethink the form of expression, and this is a difficulty all the directors having worked abroad encounter.”^{ccccxxxv}

Silviu Purcărete “cautiously penetrates the unknown world of the next millennium.”^{ccccxxxvi} From an aesthetic point of view, he “definitely opts for a choir-like theatre, a team theatre, fed by the great myths of mankind and a drainless imaging inventiveness. His spectacular language trespasses linguistic barriers, so that *Phaedra* (1993), *Danaidele* (1995) and *Orestia* (1997) [...] come to be identified, at international festivals, with a new creativity mode of the Romanian theatre.”^{ccccxxxvii}

Dragoș Galgoțiu – “The drama performance is an immediate answer to the world we are living in and the way in which we are living in this world. [...] an important drama text is always a compact universe, which encompasses the world into its whole. As theatre is not, for me, a mere poetical expression, it is rather a tool facilitating my clearing my relations with the world. That’s why I need drama, that’s why I do it. My relation with the world is in movement, in the making, and that is why my relation with drama changes in time. [...] I need to dismantle the text, to open it up like a fruit, letting it breathe in its less visible, apparently less important areas, but which reveal its essence and magical content.”^{ccccxxxviii}

Liviu Ciulei – “My style is continuously changing, so as to adjust and connect to what is happening in the world.”^{ccccxxxix}

Actor Victor Rebengiuc notices too that “the message, the tone changed completely. We all had a message during the dictatorship and there was a kind of conspiracy with the audience who reacted immediately when there was criticism in relation with the socialist society. The audience understood and that made us all happy. Now there isn’t much of criticism; it would be difficult to criticize a particular politician in a play now. We could criticize Ceaușescu, and this has nothing to do with censorship, we just were on the same side; there were many of us, and only a few of them, on the other side. Now the world is divided and a critical message can hardly find its way out and make an echo.”^{ccccxl}

Directors still try and, in most cases, they succeed to redefine, from the performance point of view, relations with current life and events, often making outstanding drama events. Most of them have recently returned to their country, to cultivate the Western mentality related to the building up and staging of successful shows (quite often for exportation). Their original staging propositions investigate a certain type of dramaturgy,

of unusual theatricality for the domestic drama scenery, corroborated with a new working strategy meant to lead the actor toward willingness and performance, as well as a reconfiguration of a new relation with the stage area. There profiles a new type of reaction to the new reality, which manifests in the complete loss of motivation for the artistic act, simultaneously with this undertaking. Going from the complex theatre mechanism that used to exist until December 1989, theatre ends up, under the new conditions, being placed on the outskirts of general interest, being reduced to a mere “small wheel in the system”.^{cccxi} Theatre people, among whom directors, actors, scenographers and some critics and playwrights dissipated a lot of creative energy into endless tormenting whereby they aimed at configuring an operating alternative to the doublespeak of the totalitarianism propaganda. The reward for that endeavor always came from the audience, who would gladly answer to any performance “invitation” generating complicity, every time the resemblance of stage, lines or scenography, with representative elements of the party activists, emphasized a critical conscience, capable of casting light on the instability of the system. From a cultural point of view, theatre has been the only living element, where direct contact was possible, public contact between society and political cues; that is why drama creation, and the artistic act, in general, had acquired, during the totalitarian regime, a “serious, historic, heroic” dimension.^{cccxlii}

Finding a new role of drama in the social mechanism of current life was a toilsome road, heavily felt by the fellowship and also by the audience. That is why there are so many artists who cannot manage to keep up with everything that stands for the new contemporaneity and choose, for a while, silence (a solution practiced also during the former regime). This is the case of director Alexa Visarion who, for a while, gave up his creator tools, feeling the need for a detachment that would provide him with a new artistic motivation: “... it seemed too little for me to do art using this climate full of slag. A shock occurred inside me, a division between what theatre meant, so as to live through it, and what theatre is now, so as to matter.”^{cccxlili} Fever of searches for the recalibrated artistic truth is accompanied by failure of some outstanding drama/stage personalities. An example in this respect is director Lucian Giurchescu, newly returned to Romania, who took over the management of the Comedy Theatre House, which he had succeeded to transform, before 1989, in a point of reference in the domestic drama area, a performance that is shadowed by some internal disputes and issues, which, eventually, ruin the working atmosphere inside the institution. “As a director, he longer found his lost rhythm, and his management between 1990 and 1994 was rather a failure. The team of the Comedy Theatre used to be different than the one Giurchescu left before settling down in Denmark, they used to have other goals, other ambitions and even Giurchescu himself used to be different”^{cccxliv}, drama critic Mircea Morariu declared. Many stage managers fall for this passion of “excess and useless extravagance”^{cccxliv} when they adapt their staging vision to current events, making use of the freedom of speech up to a “misbalance in the big mechanism, with thousands of signs, spread like an octopus over the spectator”, as it happens with *O scrisoare pierdută* (*Lost Letter*) played at the National Theatre and directed by the famous Alexandru Tocilescu. Just how deceiving are paths to authenticity and how easy it is to make an error is proved also

by Victor Ioan Frunză’s experience. After the remarkable success of *Ghetto* by Joshua Sobol, directed at the National Theatre from Bucharest, he offers the audience a heavy performance, with a huge cast and a grandiose scenography – *Tamerlan the Great* by Christopher Marlowe, regarded mostly as a “game of history”^{cccxlvi} and less as the metaphor of “the human being faced with the will to make others obey”, which was the creation team’s intention. Although they wanted it to be a super production, the show complies with the recipe of “successful” staging dating from the socialist era: a big team of actors, sumptuous and polychromatic scenography, intense use of the stage technique of the Big Hall from the Theatre, showing, once more, that artists only knew one way – compliant with the traditional aesthetic pattern – to create valid drama events.

“The crisis of culture” is decodable, therefore, from the perspective of the artistic, creative act losing the significant importance it used to have in the process of *spiritual survival*^{cccxlvi} in a society strangled and crippled by an ideology meant to equalize consciences and annul the freedom of the spirit. The loss of this quality validated in time goes together with the loss of a whole system based on language, on a certain technique to approach characters or the situation on stage. The change of paradigm and the need to simplify form is felt without exception by all major stage managers who undergo a search for a new stage language meant to get them close to the spectator again. If before 1989 the efforts made by people working in the drama field were directed toward blanketing the stage performance, this time they aim at dismantling the stage performance and directly probing current events. They feel the need to have a “new breeze” bringing along a vision capable of changing the entire drama system, by promoting innovations, by giving an impulse to actors and directors, and by supporting the contemporary dramaturgy by means of different strategies, in order to make them become a cultural emblem.

Looking back, the change of content occurred in the Romanian theatre after December 1989 on several coordinates: the revolution of themes in dramaturgy, corroborated with new acting areas and a new drama language. The framework in which art manifests itself has its own characteristics, generating different kinds of impact, when it comes to the public theatre system or, as the case may be, when it implies alternative and/or independent areas.

“The culture crisis” becomes a topic constantly debated in the domestic theatre field. Miruna Runcan analyzes the phenomenon from multiple perspectives: managerial, institutional, trade union, information and circulation, texts, assessment and people, reaching the conclusion that “the Romanian stage [...] is one of the most violent examples of the fact that the power of creation is, at least for the moment, far from undertaking a crisis. On the other hand, all the social components that should work together to support the power of creation are in a coma...”^{cccxlvi} leaving the area of rigors imposed by censorship, theatre was stepping on a new ground demanding a new set of rules based on the principle of competition and efficiency. Fear of change best defines the beginning of the newly formed free society. “The New Theatre”^{cccxlvi} still cannot find the strength to become a “sign of some changing times”, as it lacks a vision related to the

concept of national culture, and remains enclosed, shut down in the old frameworks. From this point of view, one can understand the whole concept of “culture crisis” as a refusal of change, of what is new. “Do we need so much the *old*, so that there is no room left for the *new*?”^{cccl} People from the domestic drama sector start wondering. One should not leave out the fact that adjustment to a world that reconfigures itself constantly and in which today’s points of reference are no longer valid tomorrow is a difficult and complicated procedure. Even if the new times imposed inevitable transformations of the Romanian theatre system, it connects to the new tendencies, most of the time, just half way, continuing to proliferate the former structures of the closed circuit. One may notice that “the Romanian theatre is still stuck in the obsolete structure of its performance institutions, in the inertia and the bureaucratic mentality that bring about enormous difficulties to drama creators.”^{cccli}

The Romanian drama pattern. The repertory theatre – the legacy of the ‘Closed Circuit Theatre’ Unique Model

“The performance of Romanian theatres, as they are all repertory theatres, follows the same pattern of centralism, having deep effects on the level of creativity admitted at the time.”^{ccclii} Thus, the public theatre in Romania was and still is structured according to the Soviet model, namely *repertory theatre*, whose purpose was to educate public tastes by emphasizing the aesthetic-ideological value of plays. The profile of such an institution is represented by that of the single centralized pattern of national theatre, understood and perceived in the domestic cultural area as “an artistic expression, a standard of a national cultural phenomenon”, which symbolizes “language as a spiritual idiom” and provides “a precise idea of what is considered to be of major interest in the era”^{cccliii}, thanks to the original repertory.

Contemplated from this perspective, the phenomenon justifies the big number of national theatre houses from Romania (seven): in Bucharest, Craiova, Cluj, Timișoara, Iași, Târgu Mureș (with the two sections – Romanian and Hungarian) and Sibiu (having a Romanian and a German section); we may add up the Hungarian Public Theatre House from Cluj, which belongs to the category of national theatre house, as it is directly subsidized by the Ministry of Culture.

This unique circuit, which somehow relieved drama productions from the burden of sales, is envied by the Western countries, because it provides the possibility to keep the same show during several seasons, benefitting from the financial support of the State. It also reflects a domestic, national mentality according to which the cultural act is conceived in a centralized mode, which made Miruna Runcan proclaim this pattern “the Romanian drama pattern”.^{cccliv} In her vision, the State plays the role of manager of arts, without whom the Romanian theatre wouldn’t have existed.^{ccclv} The same analysis of the relation between the State and the Theatre is done also by critic Marian Popescu, also from a “fatherly” perspective, considering that, after 1990, “the State can no longer fully play the role of *baby-sitter*”^{ccclvi} and that Drama must pass its maturity exam, by finding other ways to exist financially. The network of state-owned theatre houses, which includes the county performance institutions, drama institutions, which are subsidized this time by local

authorities, is defined “by a unique feature, namely that it is a repertory theatre.”^{ccclvii} As for the cultivated artistic platform, this is well outlined, implying a permanent crew of actors and stage technicians who carry out their activity in glamorous offices, situated downtown and very visible in the cities where they are in.

Despite its bourgeois valences^{ccclviii} that it displays, this drama pattern has paradoxically been validated during the communist regime. How was it possible to tolerate such a drama formula in an era when the notion of bourgeois entailed serious repercussions from the unique party activists? Easy. The system provided them with numerous advantages, which made them very easy to manipulate. As it was a repertory theatre, these plays would enter the circuit of approval or ideological censorship, before being publicly presented; actors, given their status of public employees, became financially dependent on the new socialist state and, most importantly, given the central position of theatre in the public space, they could use it as a propaganda tool for the socialist regime.

The mechanism of financial support of the Romanian theatre created by the communist state would entail its interference, as it went with the territory, by establishing the ideological-cultural direction that a theatre had to follow. After 1990, Drama has supported the same type of interventions, relating also to financial aspects. “Like maybe nowhere else in the art zone, in the drama sector there was this determined desire to request a certain direction (to be followed), a certain type of performance, as a result of an unsigned ‘protocol’.”^{ccclix} The configuration of the relation between State/Money and Theatre/Artist was and still is, in Romania, based on the latter’s compulsoriness to please the former, so that it/he can exist. It is no secret that even nowadays, quite often, the credit accountant acts like a barometer of the artistic quality of drama events, taking the liberty to judge and “validate” the artistic act without having real competences in this respect.

From the organizational point of view, according to Miruna Runcan, the Romanian single drama pattern observes “the solid bases of the socialist enterprise”^{ccclx}, having a “fixed layout made up of the artistic and the technical personnel” (with the latter sometimes outnumbering the former) and which “produces a smaller or bigger number of performances during a season.” This type of organization allows drama production to carry on over long periods of time (months or even years) and comprise a large number of artists. Last but not least a show can be kept over several seasons also depending on the audience’s or festivals’ requests.

After 1989, the Romanian society is “reset” at all levels, including the economic level, which triggers a critical situation for drama institutions. Suddenly, people working in this field (drama) find themselves in the impossibility to cope with governmental policies related to the transition to a market economy. In the context of the new economic-administrative aspects demanded by transition to a competition like economy, theatres were forced to come up with economic and artistic survival solutions, for the first time, despite the fact that they were not ready to accept that reality, psychologically speaking. But, in the first decade after December 1989, drama was still determined to depend on the

State subsidies; “the liberalization” of the whole drama system was still a mere wish. The first artists who tried to get out of the post-communist numbness were the movie makers, who tried to re-organize cinema with a view to obtaining the independence required by the market economy. The Romanian drama remained the ground of an obvious conflict between laws of art and economic laws. The State’s lack of cultural vision, other than the centralist-national one, contributed to the harshness of that conflict.

Another reason why that restructuring was delayed is related to the fear of most drama people who identify theatre with that single pattern, and think that any “renovation” initiative would “irreversibly” destroy its “structure.”^{ccclxi} For most of them^{ccclxii}, giving up subsidies is the first step toward the decline of the show institution and the destruction of social security, which a fixed income and a secure pension can give you. If you take into account the scarce way in which the State understands to manage^{ccclxiii} the cultural act in Romania, from certain angles, artists’ lack of trust in the creation of an alternative to efficiently compete against the single pattern becomes justified.

The kind of “traditionalist” mentality, which validated a single type of drama, the State (managed) one, in repertory system, which proliferated the type of “fatherly” relation between theatre and society, would come to significantly influence the Romanian theatre between 1990 and 1999.

The performance aesthetic model remained loyal to the same staging canon of the psychological realism, which enjoyed success during the communist regime. Some of the young creators’ generation’s representatives do not consider that they have things in common with the traditional formulas, and that is why they do not see themselves in this style of doing drama. Alina Nelega, for example, launches quite a virulent attack, against old aesthetics, still being promoted, claiming out loud that “*Stanislavski is a dead man.*”^{ccclxiv} The idea is reiterated on the occasion of other publications^{ccclxv}, which is a sign that young creators want and are ready to try something else. Stuck in the paradigms that no longer define them and justify the existence in the newly created social contexts, the contemporary theatre act loses the intensity of the “magic” it used to exert upon young people from drama. Miruna Runcan also studies the Romanian stage pattern^{ccclxvi} but does not totally agree to her passionate colleague, considering that this is functional as long as it is “supported by a number of talents (and individual stylistics)”^{ccclxvii}, but admits that “it cannot last forever, without getting worn-out and, especially, without gradually eroding the nature of the communication relation between theatre and audience.” One may notice that the performance aesthetics keeps the valence of the proposed staging/directing canon (imposed in the ‘60s) by Liviu Ciulei by the vector of “re-dramatization.”^{ccclxviii} Once communism seized power, and socialist realism “climbed” in art, the modernization project started by director Ion Sava in 1945 is interrupted in the domestic culture, including theatre. It is resumed at the beginning of the sixth decade, simultaneously with the so-called movement of “re-dramatization of theatre” sustained by Liviu Ciulei, which, originally, referred only to scenography. The concept relies on the desire to answer back to the sterile naturalism that was practiced at that time. Drama had become a mere imitation of reality. “Unfortunately, the naturalism emerged in our theatre background was and

partially still is the outcome of such a captivity of reality. [...] Out of the desire to obtain a work “as realistic as possible”, many scenographers spent months and months to study a play, to stage it and capture its entire, multiple, exact details.”^{ccclxix} The great stage manager would draw his craft fellows’ attention that drama is not life, but its transfiguration: “In the art of drama, the desire to expose and show everything creates a boundary to the spectator’s possibility to imagine things. The artist’s craft resides, to a great extent, in the ability to suggest things using one element, protecting the whole, letting it to spectators’ contemplating power.”^{ccclxx} Initiated by aesthetic reasons, this aesthetic pattern was to become the only one capable of ensuring a “normality” of the drama creation during the communist regime. Most directors who adopt this canon practice it especially on the dramaturgical support provided by “great classic works”, as they are “by excellence, open, [...] endless, both in terms of their contemporary message and their related reasons, themes, myths, and have to be always probed with a fresh glance upon them.”^{ccclxxi} The classic repertory is more accepted during a totalitarian regime, as it is not considered dangerous, because of the big distance in time, which the approached topics and issues had in relation with the socialist reality. Aware of the characteristics of this genre of drama material, many artists used them to their benefit, in order to create a complex mechanism^{ccclxxii} whereby the truth could be told without being suppressed by the vigilant eye of censorship, yet understood by the spectators.

Together with the classic work, considered to be an echelon of excellent value, with a debatable time validity and an official building (with grandiose architecture, often situated downtown), almost the only drama area capable of validating a drama experience of the highest level in the conscience of most spectators, the Romanian theatre makes up a “closed cultural pattern”, thanks to the “unique circuit” it proposes. Overall, this represents a theatre and administrative matrix applicable nationwide, similar to the concept nowadays of brands like McDonald’s and which reproduces the same type of theatre, irrespective of the venue and audience. “The Romanian drama almost exclusively expresses itself by the performance institutions called theatre houses”^{ccclxxiii}, and this type of mentality made “the idea of public place of social-cultural destination” be “compromised, annihilated during the previous decades.” Thus, any drama manifestation occurred in a different area – alternative, independent or underground – other than the one that belongs to the centralized network, does not get the audience’s full “acknowledgement”, being considered rather an experiment than a drama event. This is also illustrated by the type of organization of the Theatre National Festival: an official section special for the public institutions, and one *off*^{ccclxxiv}, which comprises performances by independent or alternative theatres, as they were not integrated in the same hierarchy of values before 2004^{ccclxxv}. Subsequently, the artistic alternative to the State-owned theatre gets this kind of treatment in the first decade of drama after December 1989. Another case illustrative of the lack of openness as far as the acceptance of the cultural act outside the “unique circuit” is concerned is the show directed and performed by Florin Piersic jr., “*Sex, Drugs & Rock'n'Roll*”. This show is nominated at the category *Best actor*, but not for *Best performance*, on the grounds that “it puzzles the criteria of the drama world”^{ccclxxvi} and that a one-man show, one-

protagonist performance, created and performed in a bar, is “impossible to be placed on the same scales” with serious artistic events presented in public, State-owned theatres. Old mentalities continued to keep the hermeticism of the unique circuit, whose guarantee of performance and international acknowledgement has been consolidated throughout the years, taking *defensive*^{ccclxxvii} action against any alternative.

From the financial equation perspective, the cultural policy of crediting only one drama pattern seriously influences the Romanian theatre environment after December 1989. They preserve the practice of investment directed mainly toward State-owned theatre institutions, making the development of a theatre circuit open to experiment^{ccclxxviii} almost impossible. Subsequently, it is the institution that is subsidized, and not the project, with managers often using those resources for investments adjacent to the cultural act – expenses related to maintenance, utilities, restoration of the (theatre) buildings and halls. Having secure subsidies, irrespective of the quality of the cultural product, many theatre managers do not hesitate to approve the staging of some performances “quite often not even second hand class, competing – when they are not staged by Vlad Mugar – with tele-robingo show.”^{ccclxxix} Thus, next to a loaded personnel list^{ccclxxx} and the lack of a coherent mechanism whereby the one who manages public money may be held liable, in case of artistic failures, that type of management led to the inculcation of the concept according to which State-owned theatres “eat away” funds for nothing.

Private sponsors aren't too open either to independent initiatives, preferring, most of the time, to have their names associated with culture acts made official by the single circuit and which guarantee “seriousness”. In such situations, the words of the great playwright Caragiale sound like an echo over time: “Good theatre is not the one that produces good plays, but which makes plays well.” Even if theatre had to be treated as a “public service, at the discretion of the community's spiritual needs”^{ccclxxxi}, needing sponsorships from the private environment, to be able to develop other forms of existence than the closed type, excessive centralization by the Ministry's action had the prolonged effect of paralyzing the initiative to change or even block it during the first decade after December 1989.

With a cultural policy that encourages and continues to support the single circuit, the domestic theatre environment does not have the data adequate for initiating drama adventures^{ccclxxxii} on their own. Despite the increasing number of young graduates from drama higher education system and the fact that the State-owned theatres could employ but a small part of them, the alternative zone is not taken “by storm” by the new wave of actors and stage managers.

In the relationship with the audience, the subsidized State-owned theatres apply the principle underlying the whole organization of the Romanian theatre activity in the past two decades: mass education of the population, and not some particular type of audience. Working by inertia, “many of these drama institutions do not make any special efforts to really get to know their audience”^{ccclxxxiii}, which is in fact a huge disservice regarding the need to maintain the audience's interest in their artistic products.

For Miruna Runcan, in such a system, the show is often accompanied by some classroom master^{ccclxxxiv} type of criticism, being analyzed through the filter of the traditional staging canon; evaluation is done depending on the degree of aesthetic approach, while artists' ideas or attitude in relation with drama remain in the background. The type of criticism generated by the closed theatre pattern is rather the *support*^{ccclxxxv} type than the *direction* type, which leads to a certain kind of scholastic assessment based on appraisals and scores, which maintained the stagnation^{ccclxxxvi} of the Romanian theatre development.

She admits that, in Romania, there is rather “performance chronicle than drama criticism”^{ccclxxxvii}, laying emphasis especially on the potential of the text to be represented, classic in general, and the symbolic, metaphoric over dimensioning of meanings. Subsequently, the validity of a staged performance is appreciated through the relation it keeps with the signs inherited from the traditional staging reference system. In most cases, criticism is done with some kind of detachment^{ccclxxxviii}, without getting involved, having an abstract nature, somehow elite-like, perceiving the stage act through a concept of universality of the world, often anachronic.

Faced with all the difficulties that change generated, the theatre community originally manifests a “self-protecting tendency, often met in society and other culture areas, according to which the 45 years of communism/25 years under Ceausescu's dictatorship could not just be wiped off, so as to start all over again.”^{ccclxxxix} The defense reflex of theatre and the apparent impossibility to overcome the obstacles imposed by the retrograde mentality could be explained by the fact that it was still looking back to the period of glory of modernism, refusing to give its vote of confidence to the capacity of contemporary authors to talk about current events, with the same intensity and craft as its predecessors. The reverberating success certain Romanian performances/plays had abroad were yet another strong argument meant to cover up the existing (at that time) chaos: “Triumphalism proves once again to be the favorite refuge when we are to look the reality of a cultural phenomenon in the face.”^{cccc}

From this point of view, the period after 1989 was one marked by constant searches, noticeable especially in the drama world. That was the period when commotion caused by internal convulsions in the theatre houses, where conservatory groups hit the avant-garde ones, was seriously impacting the creation process and the evolution of the Romanian drama toward *the new*. There were, however, devoted and open-minded drama people, critics, actors, scenographers, who made tremendous efforts to change the mentality that destroyed creativity in drama. Despite all the efforts made, there are also cases in which the situation seems to have remained unchanged, even to these days.

Cultural policies. Projects and strategies for supporting original Romanian dramaturgy

Critic Marian Popescu is among the first drama people who propose, in 1991, a project aimed at reviving the domestic drama “breath”, by the contest “*best play of the year*” during

the UNITER Awards Gala. The first winner is the play *Angajare de clovn (Clown engagement)*, by Matei Vişniec, an author retrieved in the early '90s by the Romanian literature and stage, thanks to the plays staged by director Nicolae Scarlat. The contest becomes a constant and counts important names of the new dramaturgy among its winners big, such as: Saviana Stănescu, Radu Macrinici, Petre Barbu, Alina Nelega, Alina Mungiu, Dumitru Crudu, Ștefan Caraman and others. But, as it usually happens in a society which is in a transition that mixes up values, the credibility of the contest gradually decreases because of a more or less subjective jury: "after a promising start, the contest juries, pretty famous actually, more and more surprisingly award prizes to new and old authors, in a confusing mixture of values."^{ccccxi}

Also, the efforts made by the critic to support or facilitate the stage performance, and not just the editorial materialization of these awards prove useless, eventually, as the relevant institutions do not seem drawn in the idea of inserting contemporary plays in their repertoires, not even some contest award winning plays, and directors are reluctant when it comes to this genre of texts. "Although, let's be serious, one cannot talk about real grounds for this kind of reluctance, as long as the new dramaturgy, not just the Romanian dramaturgy, is completely missing from the repertoires of subsidized theatres from Romania"^{ccccxii}, as playwright Alina Nelega accuses. Given the sustained activity of the theatre critic Victor Scoradeț, the Youth Theatre from Piatra Neamț becomes an exception. His efforts to draw up a base of new, international texts meant to enrich the repertory offer, were also supported by Dan Borcia's^{ccccxiii} managerial strategy oriented toward the new, but also the willingness of a team of young actors and, last but not least, the taste for experiment of directors-collaborators. The concept of *new* is constantly changing under the influence of contemporary reality, which is why the preoccupations of the drama institutions to find and understand the new are rather mimed, because "they inserted boudoir farces or boulevard plays in their repertory, which are more adequate to commercial drama."^{ccccxiv} Under the circumstances, contemporary plays search for alternatives, in order to exist. Just as it happened to the theatre avant-garde in the United Kingdom, when the first texts of the "young savages" came up in small theatre houses or different alternative spaces, an appropriate development environment for the Romanian contemporary text proves to be also the restricted, non-conventional, underground space. From the perspective of the first alternatives, contemporary theatre becomes a retort to the drama institutions favoring classic plays to the detriment of new texts. The ACT Theatre is the first independent, project-dedicated theatre from Romania, which exists only thanks to the efforts and passion of his founder, actor Marcel Iureș. This institution's undertaking is joined by other theatres – *Levant*, *Masca*, whose character is not entirely private (as stated) as they benefit also from the financial support provided by the Ministry of Culture and/or the Capital.

"Theatre is an expensive entertainment"^{ccccxv} Alexandru Dabija confessed, the General Manager of the *Odeon* Theatre House. Starting from the above-mentioned statement and continuing with the inventory of all the financial difficulties theatre was facing after December 1989, the reluctance of the theatre institutions manifested in relation with the innovations

proposed by the young generation of playwrights seems justified. They were accusing the lack of privately-owned theatres, which would fill in that niche of *the new*, of experiment, as well as (the want of) a middle class, still inexistent in Romania at that time, which would financially support that alternative. Managers of repertory theatres were afraid of the risks they could face when managing performances based on new texts: the disaster of an empty performance hall, plus the danger of having to cope with a scandal brought about by a performance that does not meet the expectations of authorities financing that respective production. Subsequently, censoring the drama performance acquires new forms identifiable in the self-censoring of theatre managers who turn down certain projects for fear they might disturb or bother certain categories of audience or certain groups with power of decision in terms of the activity carried out by that respective institution. The freedom of speech gained in the early '90s generated a paradoxical phenomenon: in a climate in which restrictions were (at least apparently) gone, the theatre experiment, discouraged during socialism, as it stood for a "deviation" from the ideological-cultural direction imposed by the Party, still manifests with no vigor, for fear it might disturb or shock. One prefers productions based on the classic repertory, because it is validated in time, and not new texts, whose receptivity among the crowd and critics is not yet checked.

Continuing the enumeration of the series of "resuscitation projects", as Alina Nelega calls them in her study, one should also mention the *Camil Petrescu* dramaturgy contest organized by the Ministry of Culture. The project fails in terms of producing shows based on award winning texts, as it happened with the texts rewarded by UNITER (the section called – *Play of the year*). The exception in that case were the performances *Dumnezeu binecuvîntează America (God blesses America)* by Petre Barbu and staged by Atila Vizauer in 1998 at *Theatrum Mundi* and *Întoarcerea lui Espinoza (Espinoza's return)* by Radu Macrinici, staged at the Theatre where the author also held the office of General Manager – *Andrei Mureșanu* Theatre from Sfîntu-Gheorghe and Anca-Maria Colțeanu at the Hungarian Theatre House from Timișoara.

In 1992-1993, while striving to transform *Theatrum Mundi* into a project theatre (based on new texts), the founder and manager Corina Șuteu tried to organize, with the support of the *Bush* Theatre from London, a series of drama writing workshops, the commissioning of some texts consistent with the repertory related need at that time, as well as a few staged representations at the Writers Union House. Efforts made with a view to triggering interest of drama directors and theatre people on a certain style of work with the text, which would become a tradition later on in Romania, just as it happens in Europe, proved useless again.

Another short-life dramaturgy contest (it had only one edition) was the one initiated by Vlad Rădescu, one of the managers from the National Theatre in Târgu Mureș. That project is worth mentioning, and not just for the winner^{ccccxvi} of the edition, but especially for the gain of having discovered a young playwright, back then at his first play, rewarded only with the 3rd prize; his name is Radu Macrinici, and today he is one of the most important playwrights.

The fever of contests^{cccxcvii} meant to stimulate the writing of contemporary texts encompasses almost the entire country, but does not manage to change too much the mentality of theatre managers in terms of their (prospective) opting for a new text. We notice, once again, the contribution of the Youth Theatre from Piatra Neamț to the support of young hopes, as it is the case of Nina Țințar, discovered by drama critics at a local literary contest, whose play *Ubu și Milena (Ubu and Milena)* saw the spotlights first on the Moldovan stage.

Efforts to relaunch the Romanian dramaturgy and shows did not have a common denominator, but, unfortunately, there formed small groups that tried to save the prestige of the drama institution, even on a low budget. Then, the lack of collaboration and communication between artists maintained the turmoil climate in the Romanian drama, often determining the sudden disappearance of many personal initiatives.

Editorial strategies to refresh the domestic drama climate by new (foreign or Romanian) texts, despite some serious efforts, do not bring about significant changes in the evolution of the original dramaturgy. A step forward to normality is taken by the magazine *Teatrul Azi*^{cccxcviii}, by publishing, every now and then, new authors, besides the specialized articles. That example is followed by other publishing houses like “Cartea Românească” or the specialized publishing house UNITEXT – where, due to the persistent efforts made by Marian Popescu and Elena Popescu, the new text became constantly published, together with other important theatre books, and benefits from a promotion framework. It is worth mentioning other collections as well, meant to facilitate the pathway of the contemporary text toward the stage – the GODOT collection of “All” publishing house, which benefited a long time from the guidance of the great educator and theatre man C.C. Buricea-Mlinarci^{cccxcix} and the Impossible Theatre Library, which published both dramaturgy and books on the drama theory.

A project thought for and oriented toward the benefit of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy development, which managed to constantly exist till these days, is the project carried out by the *Radu Stanca* Theatre House from Sibiu, under the guidance of the tireless manager Constantin Chiriac. Ever since 1996, despite a somehow disorganized selection,^{cd} the section for domestic drama literature has generated several reading-shows, and various bilingual (Romanian-English or Romanian-French) publications of Romanian but also foreign (American or Canadian) plays. Among the published plays, there are some that received the UNITER award, during the contest for *best play* or the winners of the *Camil Petrescu* award given by the Ministry of Culture. Even if the text selection can be “accused” of subjectivity, this project remains important thanks to the free distribution of these anthologies, which usually contain very good translations, despite the fact that they are unsigned and unpaid. Thus, we notice one more shortcoming of the drama system, when it comes to actually paying artists and writers for their work. Failure to pay for the copyright was still another unsolved issue in many institutions of the kind from Romania.

Another initiative that keeps on working since 1990 to these days translates into the promotion of the new drama text by

the Radio Theatre Department from the National Radio public network – Radio Romania. Just as expected in an abulic society lacking healthy cultural bench-marks, the selection has not always observed some well-defined value criteria in terms of the play broadcasting, but the big number of works from the repertory excuses the choice made, because, at the end of the day, radio is not a criticizing court. Horia Gârbea and Vlad Zografi are only two of the playwrights who had their debut in this program. Although considered a “Cinderella” of the Romanian drama, with people often ignoring its importance or power of influence in the domestic cultural area, for over a decade now, radio drama has constantly brought its contribution to the formation and development of a “national repertory” worth appreciating; it is an effort that deserves all our consideration.

Mihai Eminescu National Theatre House from Chișinău has outstanding merits for being the only cultural institution willing to promote the contemporary dramaturgy written in the Republic of Moldova, after the influence of the former Soviet Union was gone, and this was thanks to a *Contemporary Dramaturgy Workshop – ADC*. And yet, preoccupations in this respect remained sporadic and incomplete. However, even if the activity of the workshop had some syncope, the project is worth mentioning, for the support it provided to the development of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy (as it could be done under transitions circumstances). The first *Workshop* was initiated by actor and director Mihai Fusu from the *Luceafărul* Theatre House in Chișinău, in 1996, which later on became a constant at the *Mihai Eminescu* Theatre House. The plays analyzed during the *Workshop* reflected the variety of tackled models, depending on the target group, emphasizing also the authors’ efforts to get the audience’s attention, whether at the emotional or philosophical level, or to shock by unexpected elements. Discussions and readings point out to different styles corresponding to the diverse individualities of the authors. They even had the chance to attend a few rehearsals, thus checking the performance potential of their own texts. The drama chronicle writer Mirela Nedelcu-Patureanu, present at another important drama event^{cdi}, at the opposite geographic but not conceptual pole, noted: “I found there the confirmation that, in Romania, and beyond the river of Prut, people write extremely feverishly and precisely, often with talent and an obvious appetite for grasping “reality as it is”, a phrase that reminds us of sad times, but willingly undertaken, and with other motivations.”^{cdii}

Just like in the case of other projects, *The Dramaturgy Workshop* aims to establish a direct relation between playwrights and directors, provide transparency in actions, but especially show openness to all new-comers, encouraging and helping them to set in place an efficient communication and collaboration with directors, for the substantiation of the texts in question. Reality contradicts these desiderata a bit, because the staging of the selected plays (in the rare situations this happens) takes place on the stage of the Small Hall of the Theatre House. Unfortunately, the original Basarabian dramaturgy is not frequently in the area of interest of the most important national theatre house.

So the efficiency of the *Dramaturgy Workshop* from Chișinău can be measured only after, on the stage of the National

Theatre House, they start to more often stage the best plays of the domestic playwrights, discussed during working sessions, and prove to be a real “box office”.

We attach a great importance to the dramaturgy contest from the *Romanian Dramaturgy Festival* of the National Theatre from Timișoara, as it provided exclusiveness to contemporary dramaturgy, after its establishment in 1980, over four editions (1980, 1983, 1985, and 1987). After an eight-year break, it resumes its activity in 1995, and expands its vision, by including the whole Romanian drama offer in its area of interest, represented on national or Western stages, thus becoming an international festival. The year 2006 marks a new restructuring of the *Romanian Dramaturgy Festival* in three sections: the main section – dedicated exclusively to professional theatres; the *Avant-garde* section and a section for the youth theatre, which encourages initiatives and experiments by both professionals and students troupes. The main feature of this project remains the stubbornness of organizers to request original texts from all writers and playwrights, on an annual basis.

And yet, one may notice certain skids too. In a festival dedicated to playwrights and moreover to the most recent dramaturgy “on the market”, as suggested by its very name, there “slipped in” some plays from the communist regime, as it is the case of the *Opinia publică (Public opinion)* by Aurel Baranga, directed by Theodor Cristian Popescu, labelled by the critic Doru Mareș as “a useless object, a demonstration of the failure, at the very best, of proletarian cult type texts to overcome their own limits.”^{cdiii} At the same time, even if “it is not one (festival) set on being very original, but one that reinforced a very simple, yet more valuable coherence concept in time: [...] an event dedicated to local and contemporary dramaturgy, as well as specific languages for the staging of a new text”^{cdiv}, the festival proposes performances that advance the idea of “re-education by art”, like the project *Casa Poporului (Peoples' House)* achieved by the director and playwright Bogdan Georgescu, together with a team of professional and amateur actors, prisoners at the Craiova Penitentiary.

One of the most visible changes in the Romanian drama area in terms of development and encouragement of the domestic dramaturgy is the “dramAcum” movement (*translator's note: this is a pun; acum = now; drama now*). Established as a group that aims at following a clear, preset direction, dramAcum comes to answer to the need to renew the repertory with plays that talk about changes that occurred after 1989. The group made up of young drama people, namely directors, actors, playwrights and scenographers, determined one of the most effervescent movements that have ever animated the Romanian drama area after 2000. The generated effects are not just the appearance of new texts in the repertoires of various theatres from the country and abroad, but especially results visible in the establishment of an independent drama infrastructure, which didn't exist before 1989.

As for the renewal by text, it focused on the British drama model^{cdv}, being directly influenced by it, due to the residences hosted by the Royal Court Theatre from London, which most of those who are involved in “dramAcum” benefited from (i.e.

Andreea Vălean, Gianina Cărbunariu, Peca Ștefan etc). Together with other playwrights, who are not involved directly in the “dramAcum” project, but cultivate this movement's values, they believe in a theatre of the moment, which probes current life and the very essence of human condition, without fearing what they are to find in-depth. The young artists' creation strategy is to discover reality with all its faces, the taste for what is concrete, getting all that through the grid of biographical data and the individual's data. “An urban theatre is a theatre of social dialogue, a theatre that, before discovering the world in the classics' texts, discovers the world in its reality: with its language spoken today, with the type of behavior man has nowadays, with his way of defining himself vs. his fellows, and his methods to solve extreme situations or corny, everyday life situations”^{cdvi} professor Nicolae Manda, one of the initiators of the “dramAcum” project explains. Subsequently, the practiced theatre is a criticism theatre, sometimes with violent touches, populated by contemporary characters, especially young people, where the main theme is conflict between generations, understood and perceived as a conflict between mentalities, conceptions, social and political practices.

Most of these young drama people understand the artistic act as a living body, a structure that builds up in time, in relation with other participating elements, and not as a complete work. In fact, direct work with actors is the creation matrix of these texts, which, in most cases, are conceived depending on the *emploi* of certain actors. The plays often capitalize biographies, personal stories of their creators or simple, various happenings and episodes from everyday life. There are also playwrights from this category who give up, at least in theory, the idea of getting their texts published, because they do not perceive them as literary existences or because they do not agree to the notion of finished or inflexible form of the play. Thus, this type of plays gained ground after 2000, being supported also by the State-owned institutions like Teatrul Mic (the *Small Theatre House*) and *Odeon*. Peca Ștefan from *Green Hours* and Gianina Cărbunariu from Teatrul Foarte Mic (the *Very Small Theatre*) detach in terms of outstanding performances. Even if it stands out as a dramaturgy written by directors, step by step there makes room the one performed by playwrights who make out of writing a declaration of faith, the eloquent example in this respect being Peca Ștefan, who formed his style thanks to a scholarship he obtained in America; after he returned to his country, he was asked to write upon order.

Among others, “dramAcum” inspired another initiative group called “tangaProject”, which undertook the establishment of a community theatre with an appraisable consistence. The clear mission of this group is to force the receptivity of a certain public share that, otherwise, wouldn't have come to see a play at the Theatre. Its founding members, namely Miruna Dinu, Bogdan Georgescu, Vera Ion, Ioana Păun and David Schwartz, are either playwrights or directors or actors. With this project, they set their minds on the development and exploitation of new types of drama or dramaturgy, and also the education of marginal communities, by drama, relying on the social awareness function of this art that takes discipline and team work. In other words, the street and the drama stage are mutually influenced, with the young wanting to educate people by drama. To them, drama is another form of

communication, and the artist is meant to be a social mediator. At first sight, one may notice that most of these revival projects belong either to drama critics or drama directors or playwrights who try to renew the expression of the Romanian stage. In reality, the much wanted alliance of theatre managers with playwrights is yet to come into being, despite the efforts made by phenomena like Dramafest, dramAcum or the UNITER contest.

The playwright and his relation with theatrical undertaking. The necessity for a new drama status

With maybe a few exceptions, the Romanian cultural space did not allow the original play to be included in the set of values consolidated by national culture, just as it happened in other cultural areas where the original play acted as an *active cultural operator*.^{cdvii} With an old and less performing structure, a misfortunate consequence of a system compromised by the communist ideology, the drama institution of the '90s did not provide the framework for a prospective efficient development of the relation between playwright and drama. From this point of view, the drama creator will always remain an outsider, in the first decade after December 1989, as the State refused to grant him/her the "administrative status of clerk"^{cdviii} either by convenience or unskillfulness or lack of a cultural vision. An example in this respect is the lack of a legal (coherent and performing) framework in the Romanian drama in the 1990s, which would allow for the employment of a playwright as a resident, with a view to his/her writing a play. "I do not know to what extent the recently [1996] published *Law of the copyright and its related rights*, supposing it will be adopted by Theatre houses, has the potential to change for the better the playwright's precarious condition in relation with the drama institution"^{cdix}, one of the most active critics was wondering, knowing that, in the situation of registering a new, original play, in the repertory of a Theatre house, the signing of a contract with that respective playwright was not exactly a top priority for the institution in question. Expanding upon this idea, the same thing happened to translators. Following the long labor and the countless interpretations suffered by that law till present, the lack of confidence of the critic in the efficiency of this bill that should have harmonized general legislative principles with the needs of the drama art seems justified. Such issues were solved much easier during the communist regime, being regulated by a single institution, namely the General Directorate for Theatres. Although, after the 1989 revolution, many literary agencies or organizations came up in the Romanian drama scenery, which were dealing with the representation of drama authors and translators' copyright, they did not manage to facilitate and make truly efficient the relations with the relevant institutions. The difficulty of negotiating a dynamic working relation between the two partners became almost a mission impossible in a system whose obsolete mentality – a direct consequence of the cultural greenhouse effect imposed by the communist regime – did not take that very seriously. Even some major directors like^{cdx} Tompa Gabor admit that the training in art before 1989 made him repudiate the importance of the role held by the professional writer in the drama enterprise and that it was necessary to have a contact with the Western model, to understand the need for this new type of collaboration. The Romanian director wanted to free the performance from the

domination of literature, for it to have more "freedom of movement", and that is why he/she looked for his/her own language, which left the writer out.

The drama writer himself/herself had to recalibrate his/her position in relation with the stage. Out of a desire to defend the sacrality of texts, a tendency condemned by certain directors^{cdxi}, playwrights trained during the communist regime continued to preserve a seniority type of relation with the stage, not accepting a dialogue with its professionals and thus remaining, from a certain point of view, captives of the same inefficient promotion system of their own works. That distance keeping attitude was also due to a contemporary staging practice that set a certain type of relation between director and playwright, often translatable in the intervention direction, i.e. when the director intervenes in the theatre text, providing an original re-interpretation, or in the creation, where the director remodels the literary text, as he/she wishes, the text being used as a pretext to convey the director's own message to the spectators. "The Romanian playwright has a certain anxiety about the director's intervention, just as it always happens when "the other" takes care of what you created. A possible civilizing of the writer-director relation was systematically, programmatically obstructed during the censorship era."^{cdxii} Subsequently, the Romanian drama writer prefers the expression direction, where the director tries to transpose his/her ideas as faithfully as possible, while remaining in background, willing to postpone the performance of the play until the appearance of the stage manager willing to accept those working conditions. The issue with the freedom of interpretation allowed by the drama text has raised and is still raising big controversies between playwrights and directors, as some writers consider it a conscious or involuntary betrayal from the honesty, genuineness of drama interpretation.

What is certain is that, beyond all these misunderstandings and the lack of synchronization, the original Romanian dramaturgy was still suffering from the lack of stage representation. The refusal^{cdxiii} of directors often had to do with the modest quality of texts, but especially the lack of "dramatization" of the text, which is the raw creation material they were used to work with, the one that would allow operating aesthetic mutations at the level of performance or language. That is why many of them adopt the practice of being also the writer (or should we say text adaptor), preferring to change the text themselves, depending on the message they want to convey. So, 40 years later, people talk again about "re-dramatization", only this time the aimed drama creation sector is no longer the staging, acting or scenography one, but the Romanian dramaturgy, the drama text.

It is known that dramaturgy exists in close correlation with the drama show; it cannot be looked upon otherwise. The difference between a literary text and a drama text resides in the substitution of reading with stage reading. Some playwrights are the prisoners of a mentality that denotes arrogance of their own myth, considering themselves *writers*, and this is as much as saying that their work speaks for itself, and they do not need to make any additional efforts to become a determining element with regard to the success of the future performance. We may notice that "what is written today in

Romania for 'theatre' denotes, to a low extent, the professionalization of writing for stage representation", because "the one who writes often maintains himself/herself in the condition he/she considers to be unique, the one of literature writer."^{cdxiv} Hence, maybe another reason for the much acclaimed crisis of contemporary texts in the first decade after December 1989.

Connotations of playwrights' "refusal" to change their vision about their role in the drama performance process are to be found in the socialist era^{cdxv}, when theatres would ask for writers, and no effort was needed for contemporary texts to be staged (naturally the ones coming from the political and propaganda system). Add to all that the significant importance and weight held by the direction part^{cdxvi} in terms of influencing the audience's conscience all along the recently overcome era. "If words, literature and dramaturgy could be censored by the Newspeak special grammar (the so-called doublespeak), the special nature of the stage image was the real nightmare of the recently imposed ideology. It often escaped multiple imprisonments in the sophisticated labyrinth built-up by this political extremism."^{cdxvii} In a drama climate suffocated by political restrictions and constraints, where the only area allowing side skids was the classics', graciously reinterpreted and adapted by directors in memorable shows, the contemporary Romanian dramaturgy often fails the ideological exam, being denied the representation (and at the same time visibility/popularity), thus remaining rather an escort of the domestic drama evolution than a defining element. "One might say, as stated before, that in the Romanian culture history it is a 'shortcoming', this precarious relief of the value of drama as text"^{cdxviii}, Marian Popescu stated.

The direction changed after 1989 and the playwright has to give up his "convenient" position provided by the ivory tower, and approach drama, so as to be able to connect itself to the exact pulse of the new requirements, thus building up a special working relation with the director/actor. During the first years of freedom, the domestic show art knows no such limitations. The one writing drama was not actively involved in the production of a show; he/she considered his/her job done when he/she would write down the last sentence in his/her working room, which is why, on stage, there would come up different inadequacies of the Romanian drama texts. They still kept the old mentality according to which drama was considered pure literature^{cdxix}, and the potential for being represented was ignored, the focus being on the metaphoric, symbolic over dimensioning of meaning. Writing for drama kept its exclusivist character, from a definitive perspective, which, at that time, prevented the drama and the playwright from initiating a real dialogue that would provide the optimal version of a text underlying the performance. Six years after the fall of the totalitarian regime, the Romanian critics were deploring the condition of the Romanian drama, noticing, worrisome, that "the desire to consolidate and develop the written drama culture was almost null."^{cdxx}

The disappearance of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy from the priorities chart of the drama after December 1989 was determined by multiple factors. The imposed socialist realism played an essential role during the communist era, because, although there were valuable playwrights, they did

not create a dramaturgy powerful enough to stand the test of time, because of political constraints or the replacement of artistic criteria with ideological criteria, and also because of the obstacles they had to overcome, to see the spotlights. Under those circumstances, the number of staged plays diminished a lot, just like the number of professional writers, with only a few still active in 1989. Room was made for a new generation that would enrich the drama repertory inspired from the updated reality.

The fear of the new is the main obstacle that needed to be overcome, so as to have continuity between generations, in art. Culture people, writers, artists, a category which had been granted a great deal of trust, remained in "frozen" Romania, preserving the favors obtained after the compromises made during the former regime. The drama realm, deformed after a long exposure to an ideology treatment, could offer nothing but "the paradigm of a communication deficiency."^{cdxxi}

Subsequently, the playwright image had to be built up; certain initiatives like UNITER, later on dramAcum, tangaProject, ACT Theatre or Dramafest started working in that respect, so that the writer-stage relation enters a normal context, one of value and competitiveness. After 2000, when the young generation of playwrights emerged, the drama writer became part and parcel of the stage process, and his/her activity continued beyond the last sentence ending the script. The text came to be a living body, which underwent multiple changes due to factors participating in the stage process: hall acoustics, setting, music, sound and, most importantly, the actor and his/her possibilities to utter a retort or another. The drama writer becomes a *playwright* in a much broader acceptance of the word, as often theorized in the Western drama science. These days, drama functions according to the "work in progress" concept, being just a part of the great gear of the drama performance.

Dramatists Trying to Adapt to Paradigm Changes. Those Who Continue To Write. Old Guard Dramatists

The start moment of the "free" drama in Romania was "a minuet, a fixed, musical form, where only the grace and intelligence of some dancers shine next to the endeavor of others to pose right."^{cdxxii} In other words, the remains of the old centralized system where the principle of competition aimed at seniority in labor, and not quality of the work, could be seen everywhere in the Romanian drama environment. Censorship was replaced with self-censorship by the opportunists of the moment who had all the reasons in the world for things to stay the way they were. Thus, for starters, drama displays inflexibility, preferring to take refuge in the old show aesthetics, which acknowledged and validated it, making the emergence of new forms of expression very difficult. The lack, in the artistic program, of drama experiments, of bold staging propositions came to add up to all the economic, administrative and repertory related difficulties the Romania drama was facing: "... the Romanian drama did not even speculate as much as 5% of the chance for research and stage experiment, for prospecting other modes of expressivity that would dare the existence of a different circuit, a great caliber and high artistic value circuit."^{cdxxiii} The inexistence of a theatre alternative to the institutionalized network that would uncover other paths of drama science or a

domestic, local well-defined dramaturgy that would provide answers to the questions asked by a society that was striving to be coherent, following the loss of an imposed system of reference only amplified the drift the Romanian drama was in. The invasion of festivals that seemed to encompass the country did not succeed to provide valid solutions for getting out of that deadlock.

Beyond all that, the existence of a fundamental dilemma was stirring the art world: although they felt the stringent need to have a domestic repertory, no one seemed to know the way to get it acknowledged and promoted.

Before 1989, to playwrights, writing was more related to the issue of the ideologically supervised public access, for which they were using a series of strategies (analyzed along this study). Once the control mechanism was gone in 1989, the destiny of these writers implied issues of a different nature. After theatres were persistently, years in a row, summoned by the single party to include the domestic (socialist) text into their repertoires, the first reflex of the drama community after December 1989 is to leave playwrights acknowledged before 1989 somewhere in a cone of shadow. Under freedom conditions, drama becomes interested in what used to be forbidden (i.e. Western works) and less in the contemporary drama offer. Dumitru Solomon still tries to explain this phenomenon: "Because they (directors) were forced for so long to stage Romanian plays (they even had a quota they had to comply with), but had no access instead to foreign contemporary plays; because of either censorship or financial reasons. Now they are discovering the possibility to stage classic plays in a modern vision, hence the rush into plays by Chekov, Shakespeare, and the ancient tragedy writers."^{cdxxiv}

The handiest answer^{cdxxv} that the Romanian playwright found to the issues raised by drama people's refusal to consider national plays came from those who had held important offices in the structure of the former regime. The solution, with a slight political scent, that they proposed, namely the legal constraining of theatres to include contemporary Romanian texts up to a certain quota, reminded of the former regime practices. Despite the fact that they will not get a positive feedback, such initiatives will continue to be considered a cure^{cdxxvi} for the recovery of the original drama creation. In a period of confusion and uncertainty, coalitions between playwrights who had no previous connections, either stylistical-aesthetic or personal ones, become possible. The most obvious case of the kind was the association between Marin Sorescu and Paul Everac, a writer with a declared literary-political status.

The struggle for the development of the national dramaturgy is also supported by the return to their home country of immigrating writers like Matei Vişniec, George Astaloş, Mircea M. Ionescu, Ştefan Haralamb, and others.

Besides the difficulties that the Romanian drama writer has to cope with, there came up another one, a major one related to the purpose of his/her work. Practicing a certain type of writing, reflected in theme limitation and enciphered language, a heritage from the communist regime, no longer finds its justification under freedom conditions. Paradoxically, freedom of speech does not favor the emergence of new topics

or new drama formulas, and the playwright faces difficulties when he/she has to provide solutions to the turmoil of a society in a spiritual drift, as triggered by the disappearance of the former imposed points of reference. Aware of the social dimension of drama, playwright Dumitru Solomon stated: "I think it is wise to preserve a cautious openness to any type of drama, whether conventional or unconventional, judging it not according to its form, but rather by its force, with which it sends out the cry or whisper of man, by its capacity to melt something from the granite of our selfishness, and to remind us of our belonging to the human species, more important maybe than belonging to a race, a nation, an ethnic group or a family."^{cdxxvii}

Despite these obstacles, in a disloyal competition system with some Western plays whose merit is the mere fact of having been forbidden before, several playwrights try to secure the continuity of the original drama. But who are the playwrights who continue to write in a context in which the Romanian drama writer and his/her work are considered "incompatible" with the new current life, and try to wipe off the dust left by the socialist ideology on their spirit? Who are those who continue to learn the alphabet of the European culture for themselves and for the others, with the belief (based on nothing firm) that, in the near future, something will happen and their small effort will play again an important part in the Romanian culture? In the field of dramaturgy, what were they like, those people who tried an adaptation strategy, meaning a real connection to a world undergoing a historic reform process?

In order to illustrate the continuity of the Romanian dramaturgy phenomenon, and to identify its representatives who continue to write and whose plays continue to be staged, we sought for a selection criterion of the plays, which would somehow systematize the multitude of unequal texts in terms of value and substance, also taking into account the appraisal they benefited from when they were written. Starting from this angle and given this approach, we will review the texts considered to be the best plays of the year in the contest organized by UNITER, those plays that managed to draw the fellows' acknowledgement and appraisal, and which were represented either on stage, or over the radio. As per this criterion, we will pay extra attention to those plays that are part of a constant and undertaken drama activity.

This is the reason why we will not linger too long on Alina Mungiu, for instance, the winner of the 1992 award with her first play, *Evangelistii (Evangelists)*. Although the text brought about a lot of controversy, given its subject matter suggesting a bold reinterpretation of some Christian myths, this aspect is not relevant in this context, taking into account that we are interested in identifying those defining elements to drama after December 1989, and less the circumstantial conflicts. Moreover, this play is not part of a drama work in itself, with its author abandoning for good the drama-literature field after a second attempt to write drama, i.e. *Moartea lui Ariel (Ariel's death)* (1997).

Another special case is Matei Vişniec, to whom we decided to grant more analysis room. Besides his winning play at UNITER, we opted for the discussion and debate of yet other texts written by this playwright after 1989. This exception is

justified by the rich and generally appraised drama activity of Matei Vişniec, a drama writer whose work has been staged many times, who had drama festivals dedicated to, and whose talent and vision have been internationally acknowledged.

In compliance with the chosen reference, our analysis does not have the ambition to approach all the drama creations after December 1989, but to offer an overview on those plays that enjoyed public acknowledgement and which the drama community, with the good things and the bad things we may attach to it, accredited as valid drama writing formulas.

Dumitru Solomon

Dumitru Solomon (14 December 1932, Galați – 10 February 2003, Bucharest), a Philology graduate, was a fiction writer, a playwright, an essay writer and a drama chronicle writer. He also carried out an editorial activity that was related to *Gazeta literară* (Literary gazette), where he worked till 1962, and then, until 1964, he was the Department Head of *Luceașărul*. Starting with 1990, he worked as an editor-in-chief of the drama magazine *Teatrul* (Theatre), which became *Teatrul azi* (Theatre today) after 1989, where he remained until the publication in question was dissolved in 1998, when the Ministry of Culture withdrew its financial support. After that, he was appointed general manager of the magazine *Scena* (Stage), published between 1998 and 2001 by Media Pro media trust.

“The critic playwright and the playwright critic”^{cdxxxviii}, as he would be classified by the drama magazine *Yorick* due to the nature of his activity, he published lots of articles, literary chronicles and drama chronicles in *Gazeta literară*, *Viața românească*, *Contemporanul*, *România literară*, *Teatrul* (*Teatrul azi*), *Cinema*, *Noul Cinema*, *Rampa* etc.

He had close professional ties with cinema as well; he held the office of art director at a movie house back in 1964 until 1972, and then scenario reader between 1972 and 1989. Starting with the ‘90s, he taught the course *Dramaturgy notions* at the Drama and Movie National Academy, as a lecturer.

The period after December 1989 made the author open up more to the influences of the avant-garde theatre, his drama becoming more experimentalist, and closer to the postmodern drama. His plays have been translated in the main European circulation languages, and played in theatres from Romania and the whole Europe, ever since before 1989.

He was awarded several prizes including the award of the “I.L. Caragiale” Romanian Academy, the award of the Writers Union from Bucharest, the award of the Romanian Humorists and, the one with the greatest relevance for the study herein, the UNITER Award, in 1996, for *Repetabila scenă a balconului* (*The repeatable scene of the balcony*), designated the best Romanian play in 1995.

Dumitru Solomon is one of the acknowledged playwrights before 1989, who strive to keep up with the drama current status and development, continuing to be a constant presence on stage^{cdxxxix} in the first decade after December 1989. In fact, the author declares himself an alternative playwright: “I have written alternative drama all my life. I have not written

conventional drama, the traditional genre. It is true, I have written farces too: *Fata morgana*, and comedies, but generally speaking, from the short plays I was writing back in the ‘60s, till *The repeatable scene of the balcony*, I cannot say I fit the traditional pattern category.”^{cdxxx}

In *The repeatable scene of the balcony*, the author makes use of the famous scene from the universal dramaturgy, namely the scene of the balcony from *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, to create the pretext of a political satire till exhaustion. The theme of the play, i.e. intrusion of reality into fiction, is based on a very simple structure: two young people, *Romeo and Juliet*, wish to reduplicate the well-known scene of the balcony; it’s just two characters names simply A and B, thus reduced to structural functions, occupy the balcony the whole time, which becomes, in turn, Mussolini’s balcony, the place of the fascist leader, the Central Committee Balcony, the tribune where dictator Ceausescu was applauded and cheered and from where he was making his cheap promises to the terrorized and starving people, or the University Balcony, which, in the coming days after the Revolution in December 1989, brought about many more or less ephemeral idols of the masses. Thus, in the play, the balcony becomes an area of immediate and spectacular acknowledgement, a symbol of an ad-hoc tribune, from whose height speakers launch their ideas. Starting from Shakespeare with *Romeo and Juliet* till the Romanian revolution, the balcony scene becomes a leitmotif suggesting the want of direct contact between those up there and those down there. “It is precisely this detachment and autonomy of the balcony that allows its re-use and ‘seizure’ by indecisive political people shouting love declarations out to the masses.”^{cdxxxii}

Although, originally, the author’s intention is to use this metaphor, to talk about the Romanian society in the ‘90s, it proves that, in Alina Nelega’s acceptance, the play is “rather allusive than metaphoric.”^{cdxxxiii} Even so, the playwright spontaneously catches imitation, automatism and the palsy of the real contemporary society. The joy of the two lovers’ meeting, the joy of hope, of the noble feeling that is love, easily transforms into a place of delirium and manipulation, which the domestic society, used to ideological rigor of the totalitarian regime, mentally recognizes at once. The author does not hesitate to speculate the contemporaneity dose that the topic of the Shakespearean play may provide, without annulling its universality. “The parody hypertext is not after invalidating the hypo text (the Shakespearean tragedy); this one has been used as a vehicle of social satire, as an ideal standard against which deviations and anomalies are measured.”^{cdxxxiv} The playwright easily maneuvers the two levels: fiction and reality, keeping only one single difference between them, namely the love story between *Romeo and Juliet*. The tough realism insertion operated by the writer by the balcony scene, “a common place of dictatorship and love”^{cdxxxv}, comes to amplify the differences between the two worlds, a fictitious one where man is capable of noble feelings, and a real world where man can turn into a tyrant, unscrupulously manipulating the mind and the soul of the gullible people. Love and tyranny are two forms of manipulation, but with different motivations and manifestation forms, as the author seems to be telling us by this play.

At a metaphorical level, the stair stands for the link between the bottom and upstairs, and its stairs indicate the trajectory of conscience, as a political satire element. Difference between up and down does not reside in height, but in the moral doctrine, a fact proven also by the character who is left behind in his ascension to the balcony, because of his guilty conscience. In this context, the balcony delimitates two eternal typologies, making up a symbolic scene where those lacking scruples and greedy of power show up to manifest themselves, those who take the stand, helped by the tough oblivion that “spectators” suffer from. Shakespeare’s characters (Romeo, Juliet, the nanny) get lost in this crowd of demagogues, suffering from an existential crisis caused by the shaking of the very foundation they had built their dreams on. The stake is that the ones crossing the political stage vanish in anonymity, being interchangeable, i.e. the “falling stars”^{cdxxxv} that “fall” in a history repeating itself, while fictitious characters stand up the test of time. Thus, real and fictitious reverse their valences, with the confrontation carrying out between the deceiving palpable element and the liberating art, with its ludic force. The play ends in a moralizing tone, with Dumitru Solomon providing, on this occasion, a solution for us to get away from the reality hell: love.

According to the same analysis made by Alina Nelega, “insertions from Shakespeare and the real-illusory mixture do not raise the text to the quality and subtlety level of Solomon’s plays from his youth.”^{cdxxxvi} The extremely low average of stage representations of this play (and all of them outside the drama circuit from the capital) seems to confirm her statement and also the precariousness of a topic predisposed to inevitable growing out of fashion; there was a staging directed by Alexandru Tocilescu at the *Sică Alexandrescu* Theatre House from Braşov, in 1996, one at *Tinamar* Theatre from Mangalia, in 2004, by Constantin Ştefănescu and the last one in 2008, made with a team of amateurs, at *ATIR – Ion Raţiu Drama Workshop*, stage manager: Ovidiu Cosac.

Iosif Naghiu

In literature historian Mircea Ghiţulescu’s opinion, Iosif Naghiu (11 March 1932, Bucharest – 8 November 2003, Bucharest) stands out as an “avant-garde playwright”^{cdxxxvii} who develops a “challenging drama” on Mrozek’s direction, “whose essence is challenge itself.” He made his debut with poetry and short dramas in the *Luceafărul* magazine in 1959 and his first publication was the verse volume *Fear of birds* in 1968, after which he exclusively dedicated himself to drama literature. He collaborated with *Gazeta literară* (literary gazette), *România literară* (Literary Romania), *Tribuna* (Tribune/Stand), *Teatrul* (Theatre), *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), and so on. Two of his plays had already been staged, namely *Celuloid și Absența* (Celluloid and Absence) – on the stage of some theatre houses from Bucharest, when the volume *Autostop* (Hitchhiking) (1969) set him as a powerful playwright. One of the texts comprised in that collection, namely the play *Întunericul* (Darkness) (played in Bucharest under the title *Gluga pe ochi* [Hood on the eyes]), brought him, for a moment, to the fore of cultural events at that time, being forbidden in 1971, subsequent to ample action triggered by the communist regime aiming at the cultural mini-revolution that Ceauşescu wanted. That particular moment

marked, in the playwright’s career, the beginning of a wave of his works being forbidden, and just like Dumitru Solomon, he became very rarely demanded on the Romanian stages. His next play, *In one night only*, staged in 1973 and published in 1975, was granted the award of the Writers Association from Bucharest. In the series *Teatru comentat* (“Commented drama”) by the “Eminescu” publishing house, he was edited the volume *Misterul Agamemnon* (*The Agamemnon Mystery*), for which he received the Award of the Writers Union, in 1981, a volume that comprises a representative selection of his drama production and the critical comments made on that. The attempt to stage the play giving the title to that anthology failed.

Yet Iosif Naghiu continued to write drama; in 1993, he received two important awards: The Writers Union Award for his collection *Execuția nu va fi amânată* (*The execution will not be postponed*) and the UNITER Award for the *best Romanian play* of the year 1993, for *Spitalul special* (*Special hospital*). The play got also the UNITER Award for *TV Drama*, during the 1995-1996 season, and was staged at the following theatre houses: *George Bacovia* in Bacău, in 1994, *Csiky Gergely* in Sfântu Gheorghe, in 1996, *Maria Filotti* in Brăila, in 1997, and *Ion Luca Caragiale*, Bucharest, in 2010. After 1990, Iosif Naghiu’s dramaturgy started probing events and life of the contemporary Romanian society, catching diverse states of the “post-revolution” man. *Celula poetului disparut* (*The gone poet’s cell*) opened up a trilogy debating upon the above-mentioned issue, bringing to the fore the psychological drama of the man who couldn’t find himself in the prolonged transition after December 1989. Immediately after the Revolution, a dissident poet visited the jail where he had been imprisoned for a long time, willing to re-discover that place. There, he met the guard who watched him during his detention. That was also an encounter with the world of law breakers and felons, after 1989, also marking a moment of important reflection upon the themes of his poetry, which, under the new context, no one was interested in. The trilogy continued with *Special hospital*, a debate on the attempt to cure the “world” by a forced co-habitation of victims and their tormentors (a phenomenon that the Romanian society was intensely living at that time), and ended with *Celula poetului disparut* (*Ventilation*), a text where we see the writer turned over night in a small professional of the political side. “This is a world impossible to judge, each has his/her own truth, and his/her own great tragedy”^{cdxxxviii}, Mircea Ghiţulescu said about those disputes of the playwright in relation with the events occurred in December 1989. The drama writer Iosif Naghiu was one of the first playwrights to anticipate, as early as 1992 (when he wrote the play) the evolution of the Romanian society after December 1989.

Stylistically speaking, some texts remind us of the previous decade’s manners, like *Special hospital*, rewarded in 1993. The play is an X-ray of the way in which the new Power was forming in the symbolic area of a medical institution, translated into a “tragedy-comedy of the world like a hospital where impostors pose as healers, and truth is manipulated by terrorist, occult mechanisms. The leading character, the wounded revolution man, emerges as an ironic commentator of his own failure [...] while the hospital manager emerges as obsessed with the idea of unconditional reconciliation between those who put up the revolution, and those who tried

to suppress it.”^{cdxxxix} The story is based on the attempt by manager Burlacu to heal the world by a paradoxical victims’ joining their aggressors, threatened by female doctor Deseară who wants to split them, but ends up being investigated and raped by Dr. Burlacu, Dr. Păun and Cpt. Suciu, thus ending up a victim herself. Recalling the obsession for supervision typical of the former regime, the female doctor Deseară is constantly stalked by Captain Suciu, being suspected from day one of subversive actions, suspicions confirmed when she is caught exposing a red sock and an orange sock on her balcony. The play ends in a general fight, with the exception of Dr. Burlacu and Cpt. Suciu dealing, naturally, with the recording of events, while Pițu (the revolution victim) loses again a tooth, just as it happens every time he takes part in a confrontation. “What’s best? To take part in the revolution and lose your teeth or to utter an impeccable speech from the stand? To meditate toothless, isn’t that a philosophy of life? Is it or isn’t it so anymore?”^{cdxli} The author wonders in an attempt to separate moral roles in a society that was making appeal to the citizens’ civic conscience: actors vs. demagogues.

Hence, texts written less than three years after December 1989 stand out as a metaphor of the society after 1989, where the revolutionary figure stands for a lost cause, while the aggressor becomes a kind of a hero. In order to illustrate this situation, Naghiu puts the victim and the terrorist in the same ward, both being subject to an experiment residing in the enforcement of some manipulation strategies resulting in a kind of brainwashing. Subsequent to this experiment, characters no longer know if they are good or bad. Perceiving life as a sanatorium where healers are a source of continuous confusion, the playwright seems to be drawing an alarm signal in relation with the destiny of the Romanian society and the (real) intentions of those who were supposed to “heal” it from the wounds caused by its repeated exposure to the “shocks” of the communist regime. The intelligent and intuitive writer understands how deceiving gained freedom can be, which is why he illustrates his idea by approaching a “hot” topic for that time, which is not ignored by the drama community from Romania.

And yet, as time passes by, as the portrayed historic moment “settles down”, the play can no longer raise the audience’s reaction, which would recommend it for staging. “A good part of the texts written after 1989 risk being suffocated by journalism, by current life and events, so agilely wrapped up before”^{cdxli} literature historian Mircea Ghițulescu sensed, proving to be “too quickly gone” as “they are written too shortly after the events, to have clarity”. The play called *Special hospital* is tough, and, by writing, enforces over realistic representations that pile up decisions regarding the destiny of the revolution man and of the terrorist, erotic moments, violence, all making up a “trivial delirium, that poetry turned its face away from.”^{cdxlii} And yet, the metaphoric wrapping of the meeting between Pițu and Lăutaru, which takes place in a bizarre hospital, does not save the conflict from being a simplistic one. The author seems to have “hurried”^{cdxliii}, as Alina Nelega put it, because “the story is too little focused on any topic” and implies “half outlined characters, whose motivations remain obscure.” Cpt. Suciu, for example, remains a pretty confusing representation of the authority, in the long run. Surrealism is heavily decanted in the story texture, because passages from realistic situations to

fictitious situations are pretty sudden, making it hard to grasp. Pițu and Lăutaru shift from the real level to the fiction one. Subsequently, the meanings of this drama texture become “hard to access”^{cdxliiv} for the spectator, since they are “very well hidden by the author’s apparent surrealist exercise”. Even if, by extension, the play can be read also as a metaphor of the modern world, today, where victims are often forced to co-habit and even fraternize with those who used to be their torturers, the association with Romanian reality will always be the handiest one. The text’s potential to talk about how deceiving freedom can be, in an universal context, is “sabotaged”, in the domestic drama space, by the very system of reference the topic proposes, thus preventing a non-contextualized reception. In addition to that, the playwright’s intellectual style develops, in this case, a writing with surrealistic touches, where the metaphors and parables it relies on, to direct its ideas to the hard core of the philosophic argument scares a lot of directors. Just like in the case of Dumitru Solomon’s play, *The repeatable scene of the balcony*, the (already exhausted by the mass-media) topic does not stir the curiosity of directors too often; when it does – take for instance the last staging at the National Theatre House in Bucharest, the outcome cannot hide away its having grown “old”^{cdxlv}.

Matei Vișniec

Matei Vișniec (born of January 29, 1956, in Rădăuți, Suceava county) studied history and philosophy at the University of Bucharest between 1976 and 1980; during that time, he became one of the founders-members of the *Cenaclul de Luni (Monday Circle)*, a “kind of Academy of writing and initiation in dialogue. [...] a form of cultural resistance, of freedom, of carefreeness”^{cdxlvi}, led by Professor Nicolae Manolescu.

He officially made his debut as a writer as early as high school, more exactly in October 1972, with a series of poems published in the *Luceafărul* magazine; in 1980, after winning a contest organized by the “Albatros” publishing house, he was published his first volume (of verses) called *La noapte va ninge* (“It will snow tonight”). Over a decade (1977-1987) he wrote eight plays in two and three acts, approximately twenty short plays and a few movie scripts. Noticing that his work was systematically rejected by the authorities in the Culture field, he copied them, at his own expenses, and then made them circulate in the cultural and artistic environments. In 1984, after the publication of another two volumes of verses, he became a member of the Writers Union. In October 1987, while he was in Paris, he applied for political asylum, which was granted to him in November; later on, he got the job of journalist for RFI (Radio France International). He attended intensive French classes, he visited theatre houses in Paris, and took care of the translation of his plays into French, determined to dedicate himself to drama. Starting with 1992, he has written his plays directly in French, and he has attended rehearsals and premieres, both in France and in other countries. He would often return to Romania, to the same purpose, where his dramaturgy is enthusiastically acknowledged, after the fall of the communist censorship in 1989. The activity of “the most important representative of the post-absurd current, Matei Vișniec or ‘the ace in the sleeve’ of Romanian drama”^{cdxlvii} has an impressive record: dramas played in over 20 countries, some of them at big theater

houses from Europe, like, for instance, *Rond-Point* from Paris, *Stary* from Krakow, the Royal Theatre from Stockholm, the National Theatre from Istanbul or *Piccolo* from Milan. Around 30 of his plays written in French are published by French world-known publishing houses like Actes Sud-Papiers, L'Harmattan, Lansman, Crater, Espace d'un Instant, L'œil du Prince. His plays are staged worldwide, starting with the Republic of Moldova, and ending with the United States or Japan.

In Romania, many of his plays are staged in professional theatres, at the radio, on TV; he attends numerous festivals; some of these festivals are even dedicated to him, like the festival in 1996, from the National Theatre in Timisoara. He is brought back to the attention of the domestic drama community right after 1989, after winning the UNITER contest in 1991, with his last play before leaving his home country, i.e. *Angajare de clown (Clown engagement)* and thanks to his plays being staged by director Nicolae Scarlat, and not only. Practically, after 1990, there was an explosion of his drama plays, which had been written over 15 years ago. Looking at things from this perspective, we may say that Matei Vişniec is probably the only “drawer playwright” that Romania has. In fact, the author himself confirms it: “After 1990, my drama was discovered. I had written a lot, and I was keeping lots of plays in the drawer. Those plays had not been staged, they were circulating, and I was spreading them over to various directors.”^{cdxlviii}

As contemporary drama loses its literary dimension, in the new context, often being reduced to the status of performance, Matei Vişniec's plays, sometimes destined for reading^{cdxlix}, and not staging, are overlooked, from this point of view. For the Romanian stage managers, used to this practice of “metamorphosing” the director speech, the performance potential of Vişniec's dramaturgy prevails over its literary formula. Drama literature by Vişniec, even if conceived at a “compromised” historic time, gets the vote of confidence of the Romanian direction, because it offers “themes and motives, recurring obsessions of several Romanian playwrights from a younger generation”^{cdl}, with the author proving an “appetite for the ramification of the experiment in the drama writing, also at the language level.” In a drama climate providing a modest drama offer for that time, it does not come as a surprise that Vişniec's texts triggered a real hysteria of staging, making director Victor Ioan Frunză express his concern related to prospective dangers that may derive from this: “When you don't have much to stage, this may lead to excess, such as the exhaustive approach of a playwright, exhausting his resources, in a total lack of reasoning. This is what happens now to Matei Vişniec, whom we are simply killing, by staging his plays like that. And he is actually a very good writer.”^{cdli} In the late '90s, the author entered a cone of shadow; with the new generation of directors like Radu Afrim, Geanina Cărbunariu, Ana Mărgineanu, he is rediscovered again, which only confirms his dramaturgy value, even after the fall of the communist regime.

From the dramaturgy point of view, after 1990, Matei Vişniec's availability to bring to the fore the critical issues of the contemporary world fathers new drama products that keep him in the *pole position* of the Romanian drama community.

After having explored the great themes of the absurd, taking over and particularizing literary procedures and formulas, from the masters of this aesthetic category, namely Beckett, Ionesco and others, by mid-decade after December 1989, the playwright's preoccupation for the text's virtuosity and technique diminishes, while he becomes more receptive to the drama of the world he lives in, and undertakes the artistic risk of representing it in new aesthetic ways. Thus, he manages to change the coordinates of the contemporary dramaturgy in general, developing a more offensive theatre to win over the audience, which people cannot help noticing. Starting with his plays *Teatrul descompus*, *Femeia ca un câmp de luptă sau Despre sexul femeii - câmp de luptă în războiul din Bosnia*, *Frumoasa călătorie a urşilor panda povestită de un saxofonist care avea o iubită la Frankfurt*, *Istoria comunismului povestită pentru bolnavii mintal*, *Negustorul de timp (Decomposed drama, Woman as a battlefield or About woman's gender – battlefield in the war in Bosnia, The beautiful journey of the panda bears told by a saxophone player who had a girl in Frankfurt, History of communism told for the mentally challenged, The time trader)* and others, we notice a turning point in the author's work. He no longer positions his plays on the coordinates of allusive atemporality, specific for parable, as he used to, and operates an incursion into the current world, which he tries to understand, by probing the present in-depth. He starts by essentializing the standard situations enforced by the absurd drama speech, focusing on the humanist message that texts convey, and less on the plot or their drama potential in itself. The goal changes: the author no longer seeks for his drama to convince, but to touch the audience, putting his whole ammunition to the benefit of attaining this noble cause. Aesthetic emotion no longer comes out of the well-built conflict, but out of this plea for preserving humanity in a consumption society whose tendency is to standardize and negatively influence the individual. In Matei Vişniec's opinion, old ideologies are not gone, but replaced by more seductive forms; to him, the fall of communism, tackled in his play *Istoria comunismului povestită pentru bolnavii mintal (History of communism told for the mentally challenged)* and not only did not mean giving up attempts to manipulate man.

Playwright Vişniec has to win a lot from journalist Vişniec, because, subsequent to his activity at RFI (Radio France International), thanks to which he has access to a database standing for a huge raw material that he sometimes picks up his topics from, he writes plays based on actual facts, with a painful and tragic subject matter, humanized by the way in which he treats his characters. *Woman as a battlefield* or *About woman's gender – battlefield in the war in Bosnia* illustrate the drama of a Bosniac woman called Dora, traumatized by a rape during the war, supported throughout her recovery process by the kindness and willingness of the American Kate. The drama emerging from the text is a special one, because it talks about the atrocities of the war that tore former Yugoslavia apart, when people simply gave up their identity and became the mere representatives or exponents of an ethnic group, transforming women in tools for revenge. The core of the story is focused or built up around the encounter between the two women and their destiny, Dora and Kate; the former, a young woman from Bosnia, is the victim of a rape subsequent to which she gets pregnant, and the latter is a psychiatrist from Boston. During the former's

psychological recovery, the two women come to know and influence each other, so much so Dora's trauma gets into Kate's being. The story of the two protagonists has a special, universal sensitivity, as their suffering exceeds the framework of a local war, no matter how terrible that might have been (rape, as a psychological technique for humiliation and intimidation in the armed conflicts, is also found in Libya^{cdlii}). By confronting Kate's pain with Dora's, the playwright manages to universalize the topic, opposing a woman who has no past to one who feels history (and lives it), by placing the right to live to the center vs. the killing terror. By these two leading characters, the reader/spectator discovers the "Balkanism" phenomenon, so blasphemed in the South-Eastern Europe peninsula, which actually occurs everywhere, is not isolated and insinuates everywhere as a state of mind. Subsequently, the horrors occurred in this part of the world are not to be blamed on people's "backwardness" or hot temper, but on the infamous rules of the war, which do not change depending on the geographical area. This play is the alarm bell rung by the author with regard to the "error and horror"^{cdliii} that is war, something that should not be forgotten, because this nightmare can repeat itself at any time anywhere in the world.

From the language point of view, we notice a return to monologue, in an attempt by the author to overcome the limits of the absurd speech. Language is gaining back the part of main tool for inter-human acquaintance, as, in the long run, the two heroines, Dora and Kate, come to listen and mark each other's existence. "Lonely people or voices of lonely people, Vişniec's heroes discover, in the monologue, the unique chance to get their revenge"^{cdliv}, in Mircea Ghiţulescu's opinion.

The theme of war and its horrors is brought back into discussion in the play *Hotel Europa Complet (Full Hotel Europe)*. This time, the perception angle is different, aiming, beyond the borders' issue, at interethnic conflicts and the capitalist "trading" of death, the terrible tragedy of the refugees returning to their deserted and burnt homes, who are left only one consolation: to find the remains of the beloved ones now gone, of their children, to be able to bury them and mourn after them. This postmodern reinterpretation of Antigona's tragedy is the story "of a mother who cannot cry because she doesn't have a body to cry over. Her child's body is nowhere to be found and she needs something physical to cry over, a piece of it, a bone, something, a boot, she is even ready to cry over a shirt if she knew that belonged to her child."^{cdlv} As, during this creation period, Vişniec's characters acquire more and more contour, they become credible, they start to really exist; characters from *Full Hotel Europe* are alive, unlike the marionettes of the absurd, and they need palpable things, with a clear identity, and not illusions, to be able to cope with real suffering. Mourning becomes the last hope of man who wants to find his peace in a world destroyed by the war, but, in the amalgam of the joint graves, the dead lose their faces and their identity, and can be "traded off" to grieving mothers for some money. On the background of sorrow and despair, a father is looking for his son killed by his very brother-in-law; a daughter who sold her body in the West is coming back home, looking totally unrecognizable to her close ones, and a guard meets them with a speech full of contempt, whereby he blames them for having returned home,

and for not being aware of the dignity to have a country and a border paid for with blood. All these elements together create the image of a story in which the cry turns into silence, with everything looking frozen in pain.

After all, the play is the story of an alienated world, Europe, built up on the ashes of those who died in the Bosniac conflicts. The playwright condemns, by his characters, the capitalism erected on corpse trafficking, on the mean habit of forgetting, of continuing naturally, of living as if nothing had ever happened. Beyond the tragedy of the refugees' family, the writer projects into the reader/spectator's conscience the real dimension of war, for which there are no guilty people, but only victims, since any aggressor can turn into a victim.

The decomposed drama brings back to our attention an often approached theme in Vişniec's dramaturgy, namely the schizoid humanity generated by the individual's alienation from others and himself/herself. Conceived as a series of monologues and dialogues that "want to be text architecture elements for a module-type drama"^{cdlvi}, the text provides the performance with the possibility to "change its image from one night to another, in case the director (or the actors) reorganize the text modules on the occasion of each performance", the author himself explains. These *drama modules* are the product of a combining game, just like a special puzzle, in which each piece has its own value even taken separately, but also included in a combination or on the overall picture. Under the circumstances, the stake of the game can be truly exciting if you are to discover that one common element capable of recomposing the original object, turning it into the *primary drama play*. The starting point is often the paradoxical premise that the playwright develops until he runs out of all possible meanings.

At the very heart of his obsessions, the writer places the contemporary *Man*^{cdlvii}, exploring his failure to find his inner peace, despite his limitless potential, doomed to live in an era of telecommunications, where all he wants is to be able to communicate with his fellows, as we learn from the *Omul cu cercul (Man with the circle)*: "If I want to be alone, I stop, I take the chalk out of my pocket and draw a circle around me. I am sheltered inside this circle. When I am inside the circle, nobody can or has the right to talk to me or approach me."^{cdlviii} The circle is the option to be lonely, as empathy is no longer a habit, a need, but a source of fear. Shutting down in a circle is a form of clausturation practiced by all of Vişniec's characters. Failing to find someone or something that would vibrate in his rhythm and direction, the individual starts to shut down in his own circle; there, he finds a place just to himself, an universe within which he feels accepted, a space the others do not have access to, thus coming to believe he can no longer develop in the so-called reality, which has become now more and more foreign to him. Slowly, slowly, there insinuates addiction to the circle, due to the multiple possibilities the circle can provide: peace, security, meditation, and self-knowledge. Silence becomes a cure for death too, as we learn from the *Omul care vorbeşte în şoaptă (Man who whispers)*. In this play, the function of language is just dismantled. One can avoid communication only by clausturation: "Since we have all lived secluded in our homes, the scourge has taken a step backward."^{cdlix} But in time, "solitude" which has become so familiar to us is no longer enough and turns into despair or

even death. With Matei Vişniec, abstractization by disappearance into the void equals suicide.

Damnation of the individual to solitude is not the only unhappiness hypostasis. The author introduces us to the man treated as if he were a garbage bin (*Omul care vorbeşte în şoaptă* [*The garbage bin man*]), the man who recommends, in the most serene possible way, relaxation by brainwashing (*Voci în întuneric* [*Voices in the dark*]), the man decomposed by doubling one's self (*Omul în oglindă* [*Man in the mirror*]), by destruction/self-destruction (*Omul cu mărul, Mâncătorul de carne, Dresorul* [*Man with an apple, Meat eater, Trainer*]), then by means of language (the triptych *Nebuna liniştită - Nebuna febrilă - Nebuna lucidă* [*The quite crazy woman - the feverish crazy woman - the lucid crazy woman*]), the man who puts up with the absurd persistence of some investigators (*Man with a single wing*) and the list doesn't end here. Angels are also impacted by degradation in *Femeia ţintă şi cei zece amanţi* (*Woman target and the ten lovers*). Angel-like characteristics are distorted by the grossly thickened features of some homeless, lazy, uneducated people walking around all day long with a hangover, while over day they just kill their time near the garbage bins.

The puzzle outlining the picture of the contemporary man in *Decomposed drama* is, actually, made up of the final elements of his tragic condition. The modular structure of the text provides either the director or the reader, as the reader is also a kind of director, with the possibility to re-compose the "decomposed" mask of man today in various ways, starting from these elements.

Frumoasa călătorie a urşilor panda povestită de un saxofonist care avea o iubită la Frankfurt (*The beautiful journey of the panda bears told by a saxophone player who had a girl in Frankfurt*) is the author's attempt to approach a love story "realistically, almost in the boulevard drama style", stirred by the "idea of a love story that begins like that, with a man waking up in the morning and discovering a beautiful, strange woman in his bed."^{cdlx} But, throughout the creation process, discontent with the realist register of the play development, and constrained on top of that by the impossibility to play with a rich vocabulary, because he did not speak French very well, he opts for a different kind of stylistic experience, subsequent to which he manages to reach some rigor of expression. Characters use short sentences, and the emphasis is on the "inner value of the word and the drama curve, even the richness of unsaid words, sometimes, the capitalization of silence, the exacerbation of mystery, the capitalization of pure sound and pure word coming out of the grammar case."^{cdlxi}

The story told by Vişniec, absurd and full of humor as it is, has all the data of a classic love story, with the only difference that the two young people simply meet in the man's bed. After an ambiguous night, apparently spent in alcohol vapor, music and Bacovia poetry, they can't even remember how they got there, or if they got intimate, but decide to start a relationship, for which they set a rule: they will only spend nine nights together, and then she is out of the picture for good. Their love is consumed during those nine nights, which slowly pass by, but seem to last a lifetime. "Nine nights can be nine lives!" one of the characters says, during which time they remake the usual love ritual between a man and a woman.

They get to know each other, they discover their own being's depths, their own feelings, they mutually offer (one's self) to each other, they start doing things together, then they have an argument and they isolate from each other.

The author graciously manages to update an apparently "drained" topic by willingly abandoning the well-known stereotype and delicately moving toward an allegorical expression, which fathers an outstanding parable about life and death, crossed by a special drama shiver. The stages of accumulations by the two lovers lead to "their desire to become one and vanish into love, which, during the nine nights, takes absolute proportions of the dissolution into void."^{cdlxii} The crossing over does not lack poetry, since the void takes the shape of a young, beautiful lady who accompanies our hero in his fascinating and mysterious journey to eternity and who gives her nights of subline love. In Vişniec's work, love and happiness reside in a physical inexistence form.

From the language point of view, in *The beautiful journey of the panda bears told by a saxophone player who had a girl in Frankfurt*, we notice a communication issue. In the beginning, the two young people start to understand each other by uttering the "a" vowel only; in the long run, they reach the ultimate form of communication, by complete dematerialization. Eventually, the two lovers are but two voices: „*Her*: it's strange that we can still communicate. We should have only one voice from now on. *Him*: We will eventually get there."^{cdlxiii}

Negustorul de timp (*The time trader*), the playwright's longest play, is a true poem on passing away or, better yet, living in death. The fundamental theme is one often encountered in the Romanian literature, i.e. man facing death. But this playwright's vision is different: the leading character, Liviu Dorneanu (an *alter ego* of the author), lives at the very border of life and death, and has the chance to sell his time out. In total confusion, he gives in to the financial temptation and seals the deal, without realizing what he's missing and especially what the "merchandise" he is selling will serve for. Toward the end of the play, he learns that time is sold back for the resurrection of the missing persons, only on a short-term, this time. He also comes to enjoy this privilege for 24 hours, which he does not know how to use, "consuming" it in the corniest way possible. Having a very well mastered drama structure, the play reveals the author's amazing capacity to "build in magic, which is about the only chance one has to glimpse the cosmic outlines of life."^{cdlxiv} During the journey toward death, dreams overlap reality, in a mixture of intense feelings and reactions, which the protagonist faced with the great mystery of death experiences. Vişniec hides a splendid representation of "human time", as the author calls it, in this interesting reflection and debate on life and death with confession-like subtle touches; a time that can be measured.

The author's resentments against the former totalitarian system translate into a play loaded with political electricity, which invites Western people to meditate upon the utopia form called communism. *History of communism told for the mentally challenged* is a virulent satire, a story of the intellectual who forgives but won't forget, as the author himself puts it: "I think it is important to recall what we have

been through, as it is equally important that we tell our kids who do not know what communism is what we had to go through. It is important to not forget, even if we are obliged to forgive.”^{cdlxv} The print left by the communism experience makes the author take a stand and express himself as a human being and as an artist via a play that analyzes the failed experiment of the fantasy project related to a perfect world, i.e. communism, which he depicts and reflects in the metaphor of a mental disorders hospital where, paradoxically, crazy people are free and normal people become the crazy ones.

Just as in the other cases, place is clearly defined, as the plot takes place in a hospital from Moscow. The Soviet Writers Union sends Iuri Petrovski over there (inspired by the figure of writer Daniil Harms^{cdlxvi}), a proletarian-cult writer rewarded by Stalin for his valuable cultural achievements, having the mission to administer the communist propaganda like a “medicine” among mentally challenged people there, so as to cure them. Apparently meaningless, this task has a very logical explanation: since the socialism project is impossible to achieve without man’s change, and literature and art “have an immense role in man’s transformation”^{cdlxvii}, it is only natural for a writer to contribute to the healing of mentally challenged people, making them “enjoy the benefits of art and literature”, as Grigori, the hospital manager, put it. Using the basic principle of the communist doctrine, i.e. equality of people, the author overbids the absurd of the situation, going as far as (implying that) the mentally challenged people have the right to be indoctrinated by becoming tools of the system.

In *History of communism*, the playwright makes a case study wrapped in a metaphor, to dismantle and understand the brainwashing mechanism and the general enthusiasm caused by any social utopia. History of communism, as told by Iuri Petrovski, begins with the definition of “utopia” as “this new country where no one will ever be able to get anyone in deep shit.”^{cdlxviii} The play continues in this style all along; cues are fun, but at the same time filled with the sadness of old times, before the fall of communism. The ideology lesson does not aim solely at the adhesion, but especially the mode of loving Stalinism and the Party. On this background of emotional indoctrination, Katia Ezova rapes writer Yuri Petrovski, extremely turned on by the fact that she learned that he had shaken Stalin’s hand. She justifies her erotic excesses by the mystical love she has for the Soviet leader, saying while sobbing that she wants to sleep with anyone who “met Stalin.”^{cdlxix}

The place, a “wanna-be” medical facility, resonates with the deviations that are born within the hospital walls, with a world of shadows, where the abnormal becomes normal. For those staying there, that is the concrete world, a space limited to the dimensions of a laboratory, a melting pot where the perfidious maneuvers of manipulation invented by the higher layers of the Communist Party mix up with the idolatry of some indoctrinated people with no scruples, from which comes out a substance that alienates consciences, and which is called *utopia*. Even after the death of communism, there will long remain the feeling of it, and this seems to be the message of the play.

Although he tackles communism, a “used-up”^{cdlxx} topic for some and out of the interest area of the contemporary

spectator, Matei Vişniec’s message goes beyond that, as it does not only tell a story about communism and the disasters of that era, but aims at the planet utopias that may hide under a different name, as it is the case of capitalism nowadays. Essentially, the playwright seems to change almost nothing, but merely illustrates the drama of a reality that, so many times, is more terrible than fiction and also the pervert potential of language to transfigure it all. The communism topic, addressed from the perspective of the intellectual, is also found in the play *Richard al III-lea se interzice sau Scene din viața lui Meyerhold (Richard III is forbidden or Scenes from Meyerhold’s life)*, only this time the author’s interest goes beyond the persecution of the artist in totalitarianism, analyzing the condition of the artist who becomes an “involuntary martyr”.^{cdlxxi} This is a text that starts from the artistic creed theme and its annihilation by extreme artistic means. The victim of Stalinist oppression and humiliation is the Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold himself, whose show is forbidden and he is sentenced to death. The *Richard III* performance, the play written by Shakespeare, is forbidden by censorship, because the artist dared pointing out to monstrous Stalin in the figure of bloody Richard. The theatre is shut down, and he is arrested and sentenced to death by shooting. Just like in the case of *Woman like a battlefield*, Vişniec starts from actual data when he “sues” the horrors of communism, so as to make an “X-ray” to fear before the oppressive, obtuse and violent system, as accurately as possible. The author’s intention is not to provide a drama documentary pertaining to the Stalinist crimes, in general, or the intrusion of power in disputes from the artistic environment, but to outline the individual’s turmoil, as he is burdened with ideological, psychological and in the end physical retaliation.

In Matei Vişniec’s drama, the militancy of the two plays, *History of communism told for the mentally challenged* and *Richard III is forbidden*, which literature historian Mircea Ghițulescu reminds us of in his study, is an invitation for the reader/spectator to meditate upon ignorance, pure violence or illiteracy, but especially on the frailty of human nature.

In *Mansardă la Paris cu vedere spre moarte (Attic in Paris sighting death)*, the playwright extrapolates the universe of Cioran-like ideas to that *raison d’être* (reason for being) in an attempt to talk about human frailty. The play brings to the reader/spectator’s attention real fragments from the life of the French writing Romanian philosopher, as the writer – suffering from Alzheimer, was recalling. The linear character that seems to define the biographical layout is avoided by Vişniec gathering pranks and bizarre happenings from Cioran’s life, which he structures per scenes and enriches with elements typical for the drama speech. *Attic in Paris sighting death* is not built like an inert document, although the text is full of quotes, with biography related facts gathered in an original fiction work. “It is worth noticing the author’s ability to transform everything in a character. And I mean everything: abstractions, hallucinations, dreams, nightmares, they all get the chance to say something”^{cdlxxii}, Mircea Ghițulescu notices. The drama undertaking performed by the writer translates into a transfer of actual facts and events into stage reality, a transfer that is accompanied by the sliding of meanings from the philosophical register to the drama register. The moment caught by Matei Vişniec is the one from

the end of Cioran's existence, namely his memory deterioration because of the Alzheimer's disease, and we know how precious memory was to this Great Spirit scholar. The text is a "subjective tribute to Cioran"^{cdlxxiii}, illustrative of the fatal destiny of a philosopher of great influence in the Western region. With *Mașinăria Cehov – Nina sau despre fragilitatea pescărușilor împăiați (The Chekov Machinery – Nina or about the frailty of stuffed gulls)*, Matei Vișniec brings back to the reader/spectator's attention an important writer of the Russian literature, whom he considers to be the actual creator^{cdlxxiv} of his own drama thinking. Before being plays, they are and will remain an open letter to Anton Pavlovich Chekov. Beyond the homage paid to the reformer of modern drama literature, thanks to the fictitious dialogue he has with him, the playwright points out and emphasizes a few ideas that stand for an argument to the intertextuality of his plays with famous plays by the above-mentioned writer. Vișniec discovers the theater of the absurd thanks to this Russian playwright: "I do want to say this upfront: I have never been so touched by the absurd (elements) in Ionesco, Beckett, Dürrenmatt or Pinter's plays, as I was touched by the absurdity in your plays, where the absurd pursuit of happiness highlights the very essence of human nature."^{cdlxxv}

The Chekov Machinery – Nina or about the frailty of stuffed gulls catch the *Cherry Orchard's* author's death, or, to be more precise, his last moments of life. There, Chekov meets his characters and the *atmosphere* that he created. Olga, Mașa, Irina, Ranevskaia, Uncle Vania, Lopahin, Treplev, Lvov, Bobik... come down from the books' pages to meet their creator. These are two Chekov style dramas in which the writer and his heroes make a destiny for themselves that is different from the universal one we know, with the emphasis lying on the continuation of the characters' existence after the author who invented them passed away, which is a form of actually extending his existence. "The 'clash' between various characters from Chekov's plays, their not at all tender or warm encounter with the man who created them stand for the very core and essence of *The Chekov Machinery*."^{cdlxxvi} The dialogue that starts up along the play among the Russian playwright's characters and him provides the curious reader with the possibility to learn "spicy" details related to the (plays) creation process. Trying to help his *creation*, namely Treplev, the passionate writer from *The Gull* who kills himself in the end, *the creator* Chekov gives him not only some advice but also the recipe for success in literature. Bobik, baby of Natașa from *Three Sisters*, once a grown-up, decides to become a building guard in *Chekov's House* in Yalta, and debates upon Russia's fate and its literature destiny in the 20th century, together with the playwright's spirit. We attend a lesson on a new drama style that mimics meta-textuality, relying on the idea of "drama via drama", by which the main characters live in a fictitious dimension. The characters in question are not just the mirror reflection of Chekov's characters, but also intransigent judges of their own creator. Lying on his dying bed, Chekov is surrounded by his own characters that "come to teach him how to die, but especially how to live."^{cdlxxvii}

Matei Vișniec is in "artistic relapse" because, in this case as well, he makes use of the same procedure of using the biographical data of an artistic personality who marks him, in order to develop a totally brand new work, where he manages

to insert a few of the themes he is obsessed with: waiting, fear and death. The works in which fascination with outstanding contemporary creators like Meyerhold, Cioran or Chekov exerted on Matei Vișniec, processed in the author's intimate creation lab and transposed in drama, are mimetic, without being servile, due to an in-depth knowledge of the hypo text. In most plays with intertextual insertion, the semantic structure is not similar to the one in the original text (the source one), characters are recreated, the context is updated, and the drama modalities being used are reinvented.

Matei Vișniec is undoubtedly the playwright with the most staged plays and one of the most translated writers in Romania. The drama he wrote after December 1989 reveals the effort to keep up with current events, and the capacity to adjust to a changing system of values. The playwright's texts, written after December 1989, differentiate from the theater of the absurd by the style characteristics, by connection to immediate reality and text poetry. Vișniec's shifting from poetry to drama kin to the absurd and to realist texts (*Despre sexul femeii ca un câmp de luptă în războiul din Bosnia [About woman's gender as a battlefield in the war in Bosnia]*) or biography texts (the plays about Chekov, Cioran, Meyerhold) give the impression that he is the author of a dramaturgy that cannot be "enclosed" in one shape. "The French language taught me to build better in drama"^{cdlxxviii}, Matei Vișniec confesses. Subsequently, the playwright's stylistical metamorphosis relies on very practical grounds. Determined to write his plays in French, he undergoes a process of poetical veiling of the retort, as the author himself states in an interview.^{cdlxxix}

Post-December Dramatists. The new generation

Arguments over the young Romanian playwrights' generation remain open after December 1989. Among the most frequently asked questions is the one related to the existence of some new writers who have the necessary skills to be validated as playwrights, as well as those related to their capacity to create a drama trend strong enough to truly influence the Romanian drama space. Over time, several authors have proved, by a non-conformist writing, that they can join the already acknowledged playwrights. Radu Macrinici, Saviana Stănescu, Alina Nelega, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Ștefan Caraman, Mihaela Michailov, Mihai Ignat and Gianina Cărbunariu are only a few of the playwrights who, despite all the obstacles the new text has to overcome in order to get on to stage, support by their work the revival of the domestic drama. "Help" comes from all the layers that make up the Romanian drama: directing, acting, drama critics and dramaturgy; depending on these parameters, one may operate a classification of the aesthetic directions approached by the domestic dramaturgy and stage art. Subsequently, four types of playwrights developed under the circumstances, directly or indirectly.

Playwrights-writers. The professional drama writer

The above-mentioned category is defined by those authors who lay the emphasis on the text's literary valences, being less interested in the potential or possibility to stage that respective text.

The first generation playwrights after the revolution in December 1989, who introduced a new language and other theme areas, come from among novelists or novelists-poets, like Saviana Stănescu, Alina Nelega, Ștefan Caraman, Radu Macrinici and Dumitru Crudu. Caught at a moment when the status of the Romanian playwright was devalued, and his/her drama offer was avoided or rejected, they stood out more like cultural individualities while trying to raise up the cultural standard by the drama products they had to offer, each using his/her own means and possibilities.

Combining writing with poetry is something that was done at all stages and periods of the Romanian literature (Vasile Alecsandri, Ion Minulescu, and Marin Sorescu). Nowadays, the conversion from poet to playwright comprises two basic manifestations: exploring one's double poet-playwright calling or radical and sudden change of one's literary identity. The famous Matei Vișniec, Mihai Ignat, Saviana Stănescu and Dumitru Crudu, each with his/her own particular approach, are examples in this respect.

Out of the playwrights-writers that matter, Radu Macrinici stands out as an author who "is undoubtedly guided by an insatiate curiosity and desire to relate to everything 'that is new' inside and also around him while refining himself in time."^{cdlxxxv} His business card indicates he is an extremely active drama man and an experienced playwright: literary secretary of the Theatre House from Baia Mare, manager of the *Andrei Mureșanu* Theatre House from Sf. Gheorghe in 1992-1998, manager of the already long-lasting International Drama Festival *Workshop* (the oldest international festival in Romania), creator of the Foundation *League for Theater*, creative writing teacher at the Brașov University and manager of the *Tower Theater* from Sighișoara; he holds many prizes and awards from various dramaturgy contests in Romania, and his plays are translated and presented on several international stages. Radu Macrinici is also the only Romanian playwright who achieved the performance of being a double winner of the contest for *best play of the year*, supported by UNITER, under the patronage of the Royal House of Romania, in 1997 with *T/Țara mea (T/My country)* and in 2009 with *Jack lunetistul (Jack the sniper)*. A graduate from the Letters School, he remains permanently in dialogue with the representative literature of his generation, being a "genuine 'transition' playwright, close to Matei Vișniec, also making somehow the 'passage' toward Saviana Stănescu, but with a pronounced novelistic component of textuality extraction that individualizes him."^{cdlxxxvi} His plays, when they are not polemical constructions catching Romania as the main core of rebellion, speak of a narrative drama where the clarity of the topic becomes more important than anything else. Texts like *Bibliotecarul, Povestea poveștilor, Regele unei țări ploioase, Evanghelia după Toma, Ping Body, Danssolitude, Îngerul electric, Mama Lolita, Această poveste nu va fi spusă niciodată, Alchimistul, T/Țara mea sau Jack lunetistul (Librarian, Story of stories, King of a rainy country, Gospel of Thomas, Ping Body, Danse-sollitude, Electric angel, Mother Lolita, This story will never be told, Alchemist, T/My country, Jack the sniper)* set an already forged maturity for the stage.

T/My country comes to the fore as a transparent analogy to the Romanian world "before" and "after" 1989. Just like other playwrights of the first decade after December 1989, Radu

Macrinici talks about Romania, being obsessed with identity, history, guilt and conscience, which become themes also in the literature written by his generation fellows, namely Petre Barbu (*Duelistul, Dumnezeu binecuvântează America [Fencer, God bless America]*), Saviana Stănescu (*Apocalipsa gonflabilă, Să epilăm spre Vest [Inflatable apocalypse, Let's shave to the West]*), Valentin Nicolau (*Dacă aș fi un înger [If I were an angel]*) and others. With the tools of contemporary drama, Radu Macrinici is the repository of memory, being one of the playwrights who do not write to express himself, but to exorcize his obsessions.

T/Țara mea is the manifesto of a child who judges the world he is living in and the deeds of the adults. Although the space and time coordinates are real, Romania after 1989, the text does not have the value of a documentary, because it is rather illustrative of a poem of monstrosity and cruelty. As a drama formula, the actual elements combine with the fantastic elements, while characters acquire symbolic values, with the fictitious world becoming a literary image of the grotesquely transfigured reality. By concealing reality into a symbol, Radu Macrinici emphasizes passage from childhood to maturity, perceived in the dramatic way of the confrontation with harsh reality, in the late '80s.

The play depicts the last year of Ceausescu's dictatorship from the perspective of a Romanian family made up of Him, Her and Him. The father, former tormentor, whose existence becomes pretty corny after the revolution in December 1989, undergoes the crisis of his parting from his former "job", and that with a guilty conscience. The new life style cannot completely exclude the other, and violent outbursts are replaced by release through language: "You are a sinister cow"^{cdlxxxvii} or "bloody slut". She is the other half of this morbid couple that eventually comes to kill the Blind man, a helpless character who lives in the basement of their block of flats, a symbol of the "blind-sighted" people, trodden by the communist "roller". Ela is the little girl intoxicated with "country love" teachings, who fully lives the disappointment of belonging to a country that cripples her childhood and which she wants to be separated from. The sudden growing up that Ela undergoes makes her bring serious accusations to Romania, sustained by a serious and sententious style deprived of any trace of childish naivety. She puts Romania to the wall and judges it with the seriousness of a mature person.

Radu Macrinici's play needs some "fine tuning", as the characters' identities are not fully outlined and "designed", while the violence of the spouses' relationship cannot be completely explained by the furious nature of the tormentor. Concerned with current issues and events and wanting to be at all times at pace with his era, Radu Macrinici sometimes glides on the slope of style abuse (heritage of the system it was formed in), which impacts the coherence of the suggested message.

And yet, the text wins thanks to its topic and its tough approach, by turning Romania into a character. For Macrinici, *My country* is, beyond a "slice" of reality with no make-up, the regret that others were "smart" and found a job in a different country, away from their home country lacking opportunities for the individual to be acknowledged. Hence the drama of the little girl who discovers, in numbness, that

Romania is a country that one must give up without regrets. And that hurts.

Jack the sniper, the second play rewarded by UNITER (in 2009) may be categorized as a postmodern love story treated in the *fantasy* key with tragedy-comedy touches. The entire action develops on the border between reality and fantasy, with the two levels engaging each other in a metaphoric-parabolic mixture hiding metaphysical meanings. The text reminds us a lot of a masterpiece by William Shakespeare, *Winter's Night's Tale*, it's just, in this situation, Radu Macrinici updates the universe of ghosts from the forests of the great British playwright, so as to oppose it to the modern world, thus revealing the great mysteries of human existence. The whole plot knits on several layers, each of them shaping the love story between Larisa, a former fairy who lives her life among humans, and the architect of a city in full expansion, which gradually swallows the forest that his own wife comes from. Raphael, the leader of the forest population, is against the chaotic development of the city; he is Larisa's father, and a kind of Che Guevara, who initiates an urban commando aiming at setting fire to the lying fantasy books, because "they spread around the idea that we are nothing but a bunch of freaks, some fantasy creatures, monsters born either to terrorize mankind or to serve it down on their knees"^{cdlxxxiii}, he states, revolted. Things get complicated for the architect when he learns that his wife, a former nymph, was killed by a tree that fell down, cut by the workers tasked with the city expansion. The fatality of the accident is not exactly a hazard, as the tree that kills her is her very nymph home. Subsequent to a transplant, Larisa's heart gets into another woman's heart who, thus, inherits all of the nymph's memories, but is loved by someone else, which brings about the jealousy of the husband who decides to take the law into his own hands, the Hollywood style: he becomes a lonely sniper, revengeful of the obsession for a nymph heart, as he considers that no one is entitled to love that heart but him. Re-humanization of the architect is possible only subsequent to another transplant, this time between two love rivals, made possible due to the power of Raphael's spirit, an operation that lets people believe the former two lovers will get united again, but probably in the after-world. The text contains all the ingredients of a complex story whose meaning can be deciphered only at the end, when the sniper meets Raphael.

A repetitive practice in Radu Macrinici's work is the insertion of novelistic references, an element we also notice in *Regele unei țări ploioase (The king of a rainy country)*, which he agilely juggles with, making them not seem meaningless or striking. What is illustrative and eloquent in this respect is the very first scene where the forest's spirits destroy the fantasy literature books, explicitly condemning authors like "Tolkien, Peter Beagle, Terry Pratchett, J.K. Rowling, Mary Stewart [...] besides, of course, Shakespeare"^{cdlxxxiv}, who is denied as a fantasy writer. Judging by the nature of such writing elements comprising hints or even nominations of some literary works and their authors, one notices that the author addresses not only a competent reader of the drama text, but also a cultivated one. Although at first sight Macrinici's text seems easy, it is full of metaphysical, symbolical and lyrical meanings, which not so accessible and make him somehow appropriate for reading, but less likely to be staged. "Radu Macrinici writes texts very close to literature, and I am of the

opinion that drama is a literary genre"^{cdlxxxv}, Alina Nelega says about his drama. The playwright easily shifts from plays upon words like "diastolic era; diastolic diaspora" to a development of sheer and tough literary play: "still-life by man's hand."^{cdlxxxvi}

Alina Nelega-Cadariu is the second author who belongs to this category of playwrights-writers, winner of the contest *Best play of the year* (2000) with the text *www.nonstop.ro*, generation fellow of Radu Macrinici. Her debut relates to fiction, but the drama quality of her stories makes her leave the literary field of epic constructions, eventually, for the drama ones. The author openly states her calling: "First of all, I am a drama author; this is how I define myself."^{cdlxxxvii} A Philology graduate, Alina Nelega started writing drama in 1992, with the play *Una cosa mentale*. One year later, she attended the drama workshop organized by the *Bush Theater* and *Theatrum Mundi*. Her debut on stage is due to Gavril Cadariu who directed the show based on the play *Nascendo* in 1996. The dialogue with writing professionals continued with her being a resident at the *Royal Court Theater* from London, in 1999, which led to the birth of the play *Poligraful (Polygraph)*. She is also the author of some text adaptations for children theatre, but also original plays: *Visul lui Moș Crăciun (Santa's Dream)* or *Musicians of Bremen*. Her most important project remains though the foundation *Dramafest* whose objective is to develop programs aimed at creating an adequate micro-climate for the new, fresh Romanian drama, which was translated into a festival with the same name. Despite her literary activities comprising writing and translating, Alina Nelega is not a very much staged and played playwright, but, just like Radu Macrinici, she is a "drama person" extremely present in everything related to the world of the Romanian stages(s); she stands out as one of the most interesting figures in the current drama culture from Romania. Besides monodrama, a genre that she successfully promotes in the contemporary drama – *Decalogul lui Hess, E-uri, Kamikaze: monoloage și monodrame pentru actori și actrițe (Hess' Decalogue, E-s, Kamikaze: monologues and monodramas for actors and actresses)*, by her drama texts, Alina Nelega actually writes down the chronicle of the Romanian transition over the last two decades after December 1989: *Nascendo, www.nonstop.ro, Amalia respiră adânc, Graffiti.Drimz (Nascendo, www.nonstop.ro, Amalia breathes deep, Graffiti.Drimz)*. Out of all these texts, the winner of the UNITER award (for the year 2000) is *www.nonstop.ro*, the one making the passage from "pretty novelistic"^{cdlxxxviii} plays typical for a debut, to plays that relate to a less mystified reality by writing. The play tackles a still taboo topic in our current society, namely transsexuality and gender change. The drama construction is made up of various situations in which the leading character faces personal problems, but especially prejudices of the surrounding people; in the end, we witness a confession of bigotry in contemporary society. The background of this story, i.e. a transvestite woman, is focused on the intersection of three worlds that completely differentiate one from the other: the communist era all gone now, but still proliferated by people like Vladimir Teodorescu, a retired officer, the world of virtual reality and environment and the angels' world, which are the new "modern supervisors" of the internet.

The author seems perfectly connected to the new sensitivity and communication media from the “computers era”, just like Saviana Stănescu, another playwright who follows this national tendency, of the cyber revolution in the contemporary Romanian drama literature, and whose play, *Inflatable apocalypse* is similar to www.nonstop.ro “not only in terms of form, but also in terms of topic.”^{cdlxxxix} The plot is also placed in a miserable Romania populated, in this case, by transsexuals, students trading corpses on the internet or former retired officers turned into beggars. In this case, the only ones who can get away from this terrestrial inferno are angels, which, by means of the internet, can go back to their cyber paradise, having the power to easily get from the real level into the surreal one: “Once upon a time, there was a guarding angel on the website /which fell via email directly into Labrador/he didn’t like it and resolutely left/to search for the entry back to paradise/and found it, that’s the crazy part/on [www nonstop](http://www.nonstop.ro) in Romania.”^{cdxc}

The two female writers of the new technological media, taken seriously exactly at the level where they can change the human being’s behavior, present their own vision on the contemporary domestic world taken by surprise by the information avalanche. While in Saviana Stănescu’s work the individual identity suffocated by the abundance of generally accepted social stereotypes herald the end of a virtual world, for Alina Nelega, a prospective getaway from the slough of a society that cancels individuality cannot be identified. Another distinctive aspect in Alina Nelega’s story is given by the bizarre combination of angels having identity issues and the internet having its own language. The author considers that the language characteristic of the virtual world indicates a peculiar way to think and interpret reality, while the angels’ role is to counter thresholds, passages, and to guard “all this imaginary treasure, which is the internet. [...] They navigate, control, rule and have their own life materialized in an entire mythology that only resumes our mental and emotional structures, whether aware or not.”^{cdxcii}

Moreover, she illustrates the transition from a time of restrictions and restraints to a time of consumption, where everything is for sale and everything can be bought. That is why angels are deprived of sacralization, profiling like some higher rank tools of the commercial mechanism, exponents of a new hierarchy of values, which does not take into account anything quantifiable from a pecuniary point of view. In such a context, the relation between reality and illusion is strongly ambiguous, supporting the credibility of this cruel and at the same time natural world, processing the powerful and long-lasting drama metaphor of life as a dream.

Alina Nelega has the merit not only to have made this interesting insertion of angels into everyday life, which fathers surprising and fascinating effects, but also to have the capacity to write credible cues, easy to place in each of the possible spectators’ life. Her concern with a stage language as close to everyday life as possible is a constant of this playwright’s writing style, who considers that word is the “primordial image source^{cdxcii} whose force “triggers imagination and casts a different light on other realities she discovers.”

The two playwrights rewarded with the UNITER prize for the best play of the year, as previously mentioned, are joined by Ștefan Caraman, who is also a playwright coming from the fiction area. His literary debut relates to the *Flacăra* magazine, where he publishes mostly fiction, some of them translating later on in his first editorial appearance called *Interviul Alina Nelega: „... cred în noblețea cuvântului”* (*Rocker soul*) (1996). Two years later, he makes his debut in drama with the play *Zapp*, while continuing to write fiction: *Sâmbătă după-amiaza la țară* (*Saturday afternoon in the countryside*) (1998), *Three missed starts* (1999), *Piano Man* (2000), *Stăpânul lumii* (*Master of the universe*) (2002). His acknowledgment is due to his dramas that have successfully been staged and played. From *Zapp*, *Epilog*, *Ocean Café*, *Morții și vii*, *M&M*, *Chat*, până la *Colonia îngerilor* (*Zapp*, *Epilogue*, *Ocean Café*, *The dead and the living*, *M&M*, *Chat*, to *Angels’ colony*) for which he received the UNITER award for *the best play of the year* 2005, Ștefan Caraman has constantly developed and still is.

His texts reveal topics displaying obsessions that take different shapes of the individual undergoing an existential definition process. Most conflicts involve heroes with simple destinies determined by selfishness, which fight for their own salvation, often hesitating between obedience and liberation, between the acceptance of defeat and the desire to continue to fight. Attempts to get away from the whirlpool of existence are driven by the impulse to take action, well concealed into the characters’ fibers, but which get consumed, most of the time, in an extremely direct language, scattered with curses; this is a practice that the author does not give up in any of his plays. “Caraman’s best plays interpret everyday life going beyond it, even with the risk of stretching the string of violence too much in vulgarity”^{cdxciii}, Alina Nelega writes in her study, also noticing that “language violence equals the situation violence (violence on children, in a paranoid remember, in *Începutul și sfârșitul* (*Beginning and end*) or necrophilia in *Morți și vii* (*The dead and the living*)). The “romantic” hero who observes the world and issues sentences is not to be found in Ștefan Caraman’s work, but is replaced by a kind of anti-hero, which is not governed by any preoccupation with any universal cause, but the desire to just live and enjoy beautiful moments in life, even if those moments are the last ones. He belongs to a universe where he sees himself as a mere pawn in an open conflict with the same universe, which can only lead to death or personal salvation. It is absolutely obvious that Ștefan Caraman has an appetite for adapting stage language to everyday spoken language, the kind of frank, blunt one, with his language constructions lacking figures of speech; the author prefers the new generation’s style to ‘call a spade a spade’. Ștefan Caraman stands out as a realistic writer full of irony, whose interest is oriented toward everyday life, toward catching reality with all its strong “ingredients” like rape, abuse, media violence, verbal violence, which he fathoms in his texts, in an attempt to discover their meaning, without giving in to the temptation to judge them.

Colonia îngerilor (*Angels’ colony*), the text rewarded by UNITER, was staged by Nona Ciobanu, at *Teatrul Mic* (Small theater) from Bucharest, in 2007, and Ovidiu Caița, at *Nord* (North) Theater from Satu Mare in 2008. The play is about the show of death, or to be more precise, about how the others

die. An after December 1989 entrepreneur opens up a restaurant called *Angels' colony*. His marketing strategy proves to be pretty macabre: counting on the fascination that death exerts on people, he chooses (to employ) ill people in terminal stages as waiters, who receive, upon employment, ragged angel wings and some angel names to match that, i.e. Gavrilă and Mihăiță (*translator's note: these are diminutives for Gabriel and Michael in Romanian*). The restaurant is visited by a clientele made up of very rich people, always on the lookout for sensational new stuff, willing to pay a lot of money to attend the performance of life and death put on by the patients whose life can end up at any given moment. Their special "angels" status entitles them to do anything that crosses their mind to their clients, even to verbally or physically abuse them, just like the clients, who pay money for it, have the right to abuse them as they please. In a lugubrious atmosphere, waiters receive tips consistent with their illness seriousness and depending on the number of days they have left to live. The climax of this grotesque show is reached when one of them passes away. The clients' insane, mad joy contrasts with the sad picture of waiters seeing their colleague on his last trip while they rip off his angel wings and tear apart all the money he got from his customers.

The love of the two angels for the new employee of the colony, namely a young woman suffering from leukemia, who sings beautifully, gives new meaning to the existence of those two and provides the story with a certain dose of sensitivity. Everything changes when the Old Man, one of the customers, just as much as in love, offers the girl the chance to leave that place and get cured. Incapable of overcoming their selfishness and scared of the perspective of a solitary death, the two strangle her. The significance of this murder is obvious, considering that the whole play relies on the angel-demon combination, mainly making use of the black humor. The question asked by this play, via this last gesture, seems to relate to the legitimacy of a crime perpetrated by people who already stand on the border with death. The text does not answer directly that question; however, it seems to imply disapproval based on moral grounds.

Despite the strange story, with multiple symbolic-philosophical valences, Caraman does not succeed in giving depth and profundity to the play, remaining in the ambiguous area of playing with limits, and clearly building up assertive retorts that sound implausible: "Sometimes you have to make sacrifices in life ... it's just you have to do it for someone worth it ... I am going to... I am going to talk to Boss and I am going to save Mihăiță..."^{cdxciv} the Girl says at some point. Some other times, situations seem forced, far-fetched, and so do retorts, as it is the case with this young female client who invites her partner to have sex: "Honey, let's go over to the privy; I can't take it anymore; I want you to fuck me"^{cdxcv}; it is very unlikely for the term "privy" to belong to the young generation's language. Some scenes where language violence predominates are uselessly prolonged. Such an example is the scene where the beautiful singer is abused by Boss, whose dimensions could have been considerably diminished without impacting its meaning in the text architecture.

Even if the basic idea is strikingly harsh, given the thesis it is set on and the inevitability of death, as illustrated by the text, one cannot deny that Ștefan Caraman also pours in some

strangely mirrored humanity, even a drop of hope. *Angels' colony* may be translated also as a metaphor of a world whose origins start from everyday reality; therefore this fatally populated space by incurable patients may be even Romania.

Another playwright-writer is Dumitru Crudu, an author lent to the Romanian drama not only from a different literary area, i.e. poetry, but also from a different geographical area, i.e. the Republic of Moldova. "We are dealing with a playwright who, although he comes from the poetry area, is focused, with his mind eyes, on the surrounding reality, on uncomfortable and sometimes ridiculous everyday life, which he exposes in his plays like bits and parts of poetry existence"^{cdxcvi}, Eugen Wohl notes. Playwright Dumitru Crudu is especially interested in social drama, in the documentary genre, approaching various current topics that mirror the most radical expression of everyday reality. Graduate from the Philology School, he stands out as an autobiography playwright, as he confesses himself in an argumentative text^{cdxcvii}, a preface to the volume *Alegerea lui Alexandru Suțo (Alexandru Suțo's Choice)*. The play that received the UNITER award, namely *Alexandru Suțo's Choice*, is a political, parody-like parable about the efforts made by those close to ruler Alexandru Suțo, in an attempt to hide his death, as he had passed away in the loo from his yard. As there was no one else to give them orders anymore, his subjects ceased any activity, but, scared by the perspective of losing their privileges, decided to hide his death during the elections. The author depicts the whole process of the servants' dehumanization by means of the absurd and grotesque comic manner.

This is not a genuine historical play, even if the text relies on an actual historic event occurred in Romania, on January 13, 1821, namely the death of the ruler of the Romanian Country, at that time, Alexandru Suțo, and the attempts of people close to him to hide it. The author's undertaking is not a documentary one, as it does not aim at a realistic remake of the era, but rather to extract and emphasize certain features similar to actuality. The political flavor of the text relates to the debate upon power and society, seen through the filter of the manipulation mechanism. Another identifiable intention of the author, at the text level, is the discovery of the totalitarian society's genesis. *Alexandru Suțo's Choice* is about manipulation and especially about the mechanism whereby genuine reality can be made up to serve some reprehensible goals.

Dumitru Crudu pleads for the fiction drama intermingling with a documentary one, with both forms leading to a drama formula called *Drama-Newspaper* by the author. The procedure reminds of the Verbatim Theater, which uses real events and real words transposed in a spectacular way, as his drama material. In the case of the Basarabian writer, the osmosis between reality and fiction is the key to bring reality on stage and be credible too. What makes this credible is the possibility to prove any of his stage fiction samples with historical facts. Thanks to this procedure, his writings acquire a stylistical coherence in the amplest sense possible and also certain dynamism.

Dumitru Crudu proves a productive writer, constantly preoccupied with the quality of his texts, which he reorders in new releases, under new titles. Even if the topics he addresses

are of utmost actuality in terms of addressed social issues, being interesting first of all due to their topic, his drama remains a perishable, circumstantial material, feeding on everyday life, on the crude, non-deposited event. Hence, maybe, his ceaseless concern with adapting the text, so as to maintain its artistic valences and the public interest.

Another playwright-writer ignored maybe for too long by the domestic drama sector is Mihai Ignat. Although he has been writing drama for quite some time (he received a nomination at the UNITER contest in 2001 with *Ro și Ju au picioarele reci [Ro and Ju have cold feet]*), his debut as a playwright took place in 2004 at Radio BBC London, with *Crize sau Încă o poveste de dragoste (Crises or yet another love story)*. The text has been staged multiple times, unlike the winner of the contest launched by UNITER, i.e. *Meserii și fundături (Trades and stalemates)*, which benefits from two staging: a reading-performance at the National Theater from Bucharest and an adaptation for radio drama.

Graduate from the Letters School, he begins with poetry, but he feels that drama can offer him more. The habit of concentrating multiple meanings in short sentences, typical for poetry, expands upon drama constructions. That is why his preferences for topics are often expressed by short retorts, which is actually a preference of many playwrights after December 1989. With a unique sense for “uncomfortable” comedy, he conceives human universes populated by credible characters who talk relatively normally, with the author avoiding the trap of a rhetorical, artificial and mechanical language. The playwright’s concern with simplification of the language, for easy reception, does not imply a decrease of quality to the level of inelegance or cheap effects, but a mere practice of easy writing not for critics or literature historians, but for the large audience out there.

His texts are situation plays, without any huge stake, with a simple and suggestive decor, with a limited number of characters made to act under crisis situations. Mihai Ignat practices an existentialist drama with “ordinary” people, which reveals the unstable character of human morale, without judging or condemning in any way. Clear and often harsh cues, with precise destination, serve the story on stage very well in terms of attaining some neuralgic points related to the identity of contemporary man, such as hypocrisy, self-sufficiency, vanity or ostentatious display of one’s social status.

In *best play of the year 2007*, “Trades and stalemates”, the drama scaffolding is secured by a “mixture of comedy and drama, scattered with absurd moments”^{cdxcviii} where the characters’ destiny is influenced by the absurd transition of the Romanian society. In the very center of the play, there are these two couples of friends, two of them over 50, and two young people, whose story carries out in a hall from a former socialist plant, which had been destroyed and robbed of stolen everything they could take. The plot alternatively reveals the four characters that influence each other, despite their meeting only at the end.

One of the topics addressed in “Trades and stalemates” is friendship. The relationship between the two young people gets cold when one of them falls in love with the Romanian

teacher at the evening classes. Subsequent to this passion, he changes his milestones and his vocabulary and, last but not least, his status. Metamorphosis entails the differentiation between the two buddies, generating tension that soon surfaces: “What the hell, dude, don’t you know to talk like normal people anymore? [...] Man, she screwed you up! Give up those evening classes; at your age, they only do you harm! Jesus, I thought you were cursing me”^{cdxcix} is the reaction of one of them. The elder ones have also a friendship that undergoes some endurance tests triggered by changes in their lives.

And yet, beyond the friendship topic, relations between characters are representative for the society after December 1989. Thus, although it tackles recipes belonging to the theater of the absurd, the play essentially remains a realistic one.

Another writer going from fiction to drama is Petre Barbu. Although his studies recommend him as an engineer, he has cultivated his passion for writing since university, when he makes his writing debut in the students’ magazine *Orientations (Galați)*. In 1993, he makes his editorial debut with some fiction writings called *Tricoul portocaliu fără număr de concurs (The orange t-shirt with no contest number)*. He continues to write as a journalist and to publish stories in various magazines like *Amfiteatru, România literară, Echinox, Convorbiri literare, Luceafărul* etc. As a novel writer, what recommends him is his “exceptional power to decipher the dramatic coherence of life and death, in the apparent discontinuity of everyday life platitude.”^{cd}

Dumnezeu binecuvântează America (God blesses America) marks the author’s passage from short novels to novels, but also the winning of his debut contest (the novel section) launched by Nemira publishing house. The dramatization of the novel is the beginning of the literary-drama adventure of Petre Barbu. The play *God blesses America* is rewarded with the 1st prize of the drama contest *Camil Petrescu* organized by the Ministry of Culture, the 1997 edition, and is staged at *Theatrum Mundi* in Bucharest two years later, by Attila Vizauer. Proving to be a writer proficient in building up realistic characters and relevant retorts, Petre Barbu successfully cultivates drama as well, continuing to win prizes including the award of the UNITER for *the best play* of 2002 with *Tatăl nostru care ești în supermarket (Our father who art in the supermarket)*.

In terms of tackled themes, he is similar to Saviana Stănescu, being interested in probing new social realities dating from the transition period after December 1989. *Our father...* supplements the actuality drama of Petre Barbu who reveals the dimensions of the human drift and the contemporary world. That is why his heroes are inhabitants of a reality that forces the individual to find the necessary resources to cope with that rather than to actively intervene in its configuration.

At first sight, *Our father...* may seem like a family chronicle, but, essentially, it is more than that. This is a story where the stake is the separation from communism; therefore, the play stands for a death chronicle of communist symbols whose memory will never go away, as the author seems to convey to us. Demons from the past are still present even if things tend

to renew. The face of the society has changed; the grey depressing blocks of flats are now replaced by malls and hypermarkets, colorful casinos or banks expanding as far as the outskirts of the city. Streets are now populated by Jeeps and luxury cars whose price exceeds the price of a house. Capitalism has installed everywhere in the Romanian society, but to Radu Onica, the leading character, this system does not equal change, because it proves to be just another form of communism eventually. Yes, the political-economic regime is different, but people are the same. Politicians today are no different from the former first secretaries who were pulling the strings in the past, while the companies' managers act exactly like former activists.

In *Our father...* what is interesting is not necessarily the way in which emblems of the former regime disappear (the Food Complex/General Store, in this case), but rather the way in which people react faced with these changes. The post-communist generation described by Petre Barbu, made up of "lunatics" or "militia servants", repudiate the past and all its specific still existing elements. Just for fun, they destroy the Food Complex, which in fact stands for the past, which the former generation literally and figuratively still feeds on. This place is not lost to them, it does not deserve to be destroyed and forgotten. It stands for the place where they look for the necessary resources to cope with the present, and to understand a world where they do not find themselves, which they do not picture themselves in. People look for their points of reference and their faith in the most unusual places. "Everything that came up in the Complex is due to Radu's faith. Every time he splashed the lunatics, God gave him something from his memories."^{di} The Food Complex/Store transforms from a symbol in the leading character, because the whole plot of the play is focused around it. It has the power to provide food and shelter, but most importantly the chance to remake the connection with God, thus giving hope and faith to the people. Even if the things it has to offer are old, people are willing to accept them when they learn that, in fact, these are aids from the European Union. It is enough for a symbol to replace another, for people to continue to accept the "benefaction" provided by the State (any authority) without questioning their quality. For Radu, the Food Complex/Store is his chance to fix the contemporary society's injustice a little bit, by gifts of the past: "I distributed aids and thus I cured myself of hatred, envy and venom. You have no idea what it's like to give a piece of bread to your fellows, without asking for anything in return."^{dii} But the Complex and the nostalgia it triggers are not a salvation for everybody: "Radu spread the stinky smell of this corpse into every corner of the house and he speaks only about the food and the prices during Ceaușescu's time. That's why we make no progress like Americans or Germans, because there are too many nostalgic people like you out there! If only I could send you all to China!"^{diii} Roxana pours out her grief.

In a world where things change at a pace hard to assimilate, and today's references are no longer valid the next day, people become nostalgic about old times. "That's why I have this hatred inside me, you know? I used to be a good person; Bogdan can confirm that I never beat him. Poverty embittered me; poverty and these times that I don't understand ..."^{div} So, what has he got left when the past becomes a reason for lamentation, and the present depresses him by the mere fact

that it provides "as many chances as you wish, which are left outside, unless you capitalize them?"^{dv} Should he make up his own Romania, as he had never had the freedom to do before? Radu is going to speculate upon the chance to get rich, but decides to split all his benefits with others, in an attempt of salvation. The Complex gives him the possibility to preserve his dignity, without letting himself be bought in a society where everything is for sale: "Mr. Mitică, it's me, Radu Onica! [...] People say you used to be a militia man and that now you are doing business and buy them all. [...] Here's a bad news for you. I cannot be bought."^{dvi}

Reactions to the new social changes differ from one generation to another. While the father undergoes a moral identity crisis whereby he negotiates his relationship with God and the past, his son gets caught by the financial mechanism specific for capitalism, whereby he can become an authority himself. One of them searches for treasures of the after-world, while the other struggles hard for a privileged place in current reality: "Radu: [...] But the charity I gave people will get me closer to God and only then will Heaven open up for me. Bogdan: Bullshit! I couldn't care less about souls' salvation! I have responsibilities, father! I do business! I want power!"^{dvii} The Onica family is somehow illustrative of the drama lived by many families facing the new economic changes. Bogdan, the elder son, runs some commissions for Mitică, a former militia captain, who had become a businessman. Roxana, his stepmother, strives to look after her sick child from her first marriage, for which she does not have enough money, and therefore has to put up with Radu, the head of the family, who remains anchored in the memories related to the former regime, in his struggle against poverty.

The style in which the play is built up reveals "a culture of the script"^{dviii} noticed also in the other texts: *God blesses America*, *To the left of the Father or Fencer*. Short and concise retorts make it somehow similar to a movie. The author is after not only creating some cinema-like images, but also dividing the play more in sequences than in scenes, as well as permanently dynamizing the characters' existence, wishing in every moment something happens to them. This is why playwright Petre Barbu's plays "are rather written as movie scripts, where the character has a different dimension that he has in drama, the characterization speed is different, while the technical and expression possibilities slightly differ from the stage specific ones."^{dix}

A somehow special case is the playwright-writer Radu F. Alexandru, whose play *Labirint (Labyrinth)* was designated the winning play of the year 2010, during the contest initiated by UNITER. This is an acknowledged playwright, script writer and publicist, whose career goes back to the era of the former political regime. After December 1989, he has been intensely involved in the political life, while still finding time for writing, trying different changes of tone, topic, abandoning the political drama arena for some time and moderating his moral-civic touches present in many of his texts. Just like the other previously mentioned writers, he comes from a different field than the stage practice.

Labyrinth marks the return of Radu F. Alexandru, a long-distance playwright, holding several awards, who is now back to the attention of his fellows, but especially back on stage^{dx},

even if the play does not seem to rise up to the height of those that got him acknowledged: *O șansă pentru fiecare*, *Nimic despre Hamlet* or *Domnul Sisif* (*A chance for everyone*, *Nothing on Hamlet* or *Mr. Sisyphus*). *Labyrinth* is born out of the playwright's turmoil related to the family life and the relations between generations. With Radu F. Alexandru, the story, which raised the interest of many writers in time, becomes very personal, since the author pictures himself as the Storyteller from the very first scene. He does not place himself in such a role out of literary vanity; this comes from the accumulations of an intensely lived life that stimulates him talk about sensitive issues like the couple relations, the love between a man and his wife, extramarital escapades or the boredom of marriage. Two couples, two generations, parents and children are caught up in a labyrinth with no escape or, better said, in a vicious circle, which no one can break. Dan and Giulia are two young people who make up a bit problematic couple lacking experience. When she gets pregnant, they decide, upon his insistence, to get married, but they soon come realize that, in fact, they don't know each other and that they took the enthusiasm of the beginning for love, the mature and responsible kind of love. On the other hand, another couple, even more miserable till resignation, is represented by Dan's parents. The two spouses negotiate their relationship in full crisis, lucidly abandoning any attempt to ever find something in common and choking any feeling of tenderness. Dana's decision to get a divorce is the first signal of her attempt to break the circle of the relationship failure. Despite their common destiny, in the end, it is proven that everyone is alone with his/her own destiny.

The play's plot has clarity and tension up to now, although dialogues may seem too explanatory sometimes. The playwright probes with art the psychological depths of the two generations tormented by the same existential drama of the couple relationship failure, of the relationship with no future. Toward the end, the story skids on the slope of shallowness, acquiring soap opera touches, a relapse of the playwright that literature historian Mircea Ghițulescu notices too: "Stylistically speaking, Radu F. Alexandru sometimes places himself very close to the soap opera genre. [...] By soap opera we mean our everyday life made up of romance treason and devastating revenges."^{dx} Exits from the labyrinth of deceived feelings and unfulfilled desires are tactlessly managed, reaching a somehow implausible and artificial climax doubled by a far-fetched ending. In search of affection, Giulia, wife and mother out of an obligation, decides to become a lesbian, confessing her exotic love for a certain Frederique from the South America jungles to her own mother-in-law. The biographical-emotional luggage of the young girl (orphan of her mother; her father committed suicide in a hotel room, while she was next to him) could have been speculated much better in the scene between her and her father-in-law (a philosophy teacher), but the too novelistic retorts turn the discussion into a dry, quasi-philosophical argumentation. In the end, the teacher's suicide in a car crash makes the story even more confusing. In all that mess, the one who seemed to be the most rational and detached of all dies; a problem solving by the playwright, which seems the least credible and likely.

Radu F. Alexandru writes a realistic drama that has some value in it, where replies often show a certain kind of

naturalness, but also subtle wisdom. And yet, the topic and the manner of addressing it are quite debatable, and not just because the ending is confusing and exaggerated, but also because the efforts to cover up academic skids by corny, ordinary sentences are much too obvious. The play reveals too much of its author's level: an intelligent author, with a civilized, well controlled writing style, and yet lacking the stylistical tact of a playwright like Saviana Stănescu. As for the appeal to a rudimentary, gross language totally inconsistent with the general, intellectual tone of the text, this is explained not by the "liberation from inhibitions [...] and the idea to generate drama tension from strong words", as noticed by the same Mircea Ghițulescu in the case of the play *Saltimbancul* (*Jester*), when "conflicts get consumed in language strains not being sustained by some 'action men' the Aristotle style"^{dxii}, but by the author's desire to make his language accessible, so that large masses of people understand it.

Radu F. Alexandru's play has multiple emotional valences at the level of the text and dramas experienced by the four characters, unfortunately shadowed at times when the story slips on the assertive slope of the speech or when everyday expression is of no use to the play.

Saviana Stănescu is another UNITER award winning playwright-writer; she is the author of the 1999 play, *Apocalipsa gonflabilă* (*Inflatable apocalypse*), which is going to be addressed more in-depth in the last chapter of this study.

The playwright-drama critic

This category comprises the drama chronicle authors or the theoreticians in the field of performance arts (specialists in drama) who shift from drama criticism to dramaturgy and step on stage. The critical attitude they analyze an artistic act with expands on these writings. Subsequently, the practice of commenting upon a text or a performance makes the drama critic converted to dramaturgy notice the contextual relevance and the need for his/her writing undertaking. Speaking from the position of a connoisseur of drama, being informed about the moment's drama offer, as well as its impact on spectators, the choice of a text is never at random. Just like the other writers, he/she writes as frankly as possible about stories she is obsessed with, but the analysis of the performances helps him/her be more critical when writing a text.

One of the playwrights of this type is drama critic Mihaela Michailov. Graduate from the Letters School, University of Bucharest, having attended post-university studies on compared literature, and a MA program in drama writing at UNATC Bucharest (currently Ph. D. student at the same institution), Mihaela Michailov is the outcome of some specialism studies investigating theater areas with current active potential, which helped her develop her skills to think "the drama style". Her name can be associated with the projects "dramAcum" and "tangaProject", considering that she publishes articles in culture magazines from Romania, like *Suplimentul de cultură* (*the culture supplement*), *Noua Literatură* (*the new literature*), *aLititudini* (*aLititudes*), *Observatorul cultural* (*cultural observatory*), where she militates for the support and development of both (mentioned) projects. She also deals with the dramatization (adaptation for

drama) of texts for tangaProject; in 2006, she is among the winners of a dramaturgy scholarship from dramAcum, the 3rd edition, with the play *Mi-e frică (I am afraid)*. In 2007, she is rewarded by UNITER for the play *Romania Complex* designated the *best play of 2006*, produced one year later at the *Ion Sava Drama Research and Creation Center* from the National Theater House in Bucharest, and directed by Alexandra Badea.

The author looks back to the past, before probing the realities of the present, and this is why she attacks the topic of the Romanian communism 17 years after the Revolution in December 1989. Although diachronically, she tackles the subject, making *Complexul România (Romania Complex)* also a historic play aimed at remaking the history of shifting from the communist regime to the never-ending post-revolutionary transition from a fragmented scenes puzzle. There we have, on “display”, all the well-known clichés about communism and the traces it left behind; and yet, thanks to the modern writing alternating different sequences (a montage technique specific for cinema, often used in Western dramaturgy), the play renders the original meanings of these clichés, well-worn by the passage of time, refreshing them by a cynical post-revolutionary realism. “I felt the need to use two overlapping perspectives: one of children who believed in the perverse prefabricates of the communist ideology and another one of grown-ups who believed in silence as their only survival dogma”^{dxiii}, as the author confesses. She dismantles the bizarre mechanism of silence that perverted mentality and reduced the individual to the status of a mere enforcer of a standardization code. Subsequently, manipulation and inoculated fear legitimizing complicity, the fear to take action, to take a stand, are all aspects taken into account and debated by a playwright who was pulling an alarm signal with reference to a phenomenon for which there is apparently a sort of detachment, but which, in reality, is still present through some people who try to get away from the thinking mode “serving” the totalitarian era, and which others constantly generate. Communism, with all its swirls, defines us as a people and as individualities, because “people never forget clichés. Clichés is what helps them identify you”^{dxiv} is the statement made by the leading character of the play, Georgică. By attacking certain aspects of the social-political realities, the author wants the play to get a civic stake, which is why she chooses “*the triggering address* as a drama formula, in the sense that the protagonist tries to resuscitate the attitude potential in spectators.”^{dxv}

The text tells the story of Georgică and Mircică; two still unpervert naïve kids, who accept the brainwashing and standardization by the system, more exactly by education and propaganda. Childhood is the key whereby those two decode a monstrous dictatorship regime, coming soon to understand that the first thing you learn in order to survive in such a system is to keep lying. After the traumatizing experiences during the “golden era”, there comes the moment of the Revolution in 1989, when Mircică dies, and Georgică leaves his country and family, to immigrate to Canada. Woken up from the sleep of fake socialist promises, he is bound to undertake a past with half spoken truths, to better understand his present, but also to clarify his identity dilemma. “It is barely here that I understood what I truly am, mother: a complex of complexes. A complex of panic and

helplessness”^{dxvi}, he confesses to his mother. The new and much wanted democratic society does not bring along the liberation from automatism acquired in communism, from ceaseless fear, mistrust in others, the perverse duplicity or incapacity to want more and hope for more. The breakup occurs at a psychological level, and the flaws inherited from communism turn into national flaws: *Romania Complex* – the complex of fear and passiveness, as the author herself declares. The destiny of the two young people outlines the image of Romania after December 1989 in miniature: a country that keeps silent and dives into the darkness of oblivion. The 2000 Romania is helpless in undertaking its past with responsibility and feels its way with no serious point of reference in an ideological void, as protagonists Georgică and Mircică seem to say.

In this vast and nuanced process of communism that has often brought about the interest of national playwrights, drama has spoken so far about dictators, mentally challenged people, artists of the former regime and former staff of the Party, but *Romania Complex* tells the cynical story of reflexes and automatism generated by a traumatizing yet to overcome history. It’s the investigation of a condition of non-undertaken yet consciously ignored blockages, which manipulate the past and compromise the present.

The playwright-actor

A new wave of drama writers comes from the stage practitioners, namely actors. As, in the Romanian drama area, the drama act is a primacy of directors, while the actor often doesn’t have any say in the matter, some specialists in the performance arts want to remove this dependence and start to look for new forms of artistic expression in the literary field. They write a drama that differentiates from the drama written by professional playwrights, up to a certain extent. While the playwright writes for the generic actor most of the time, the actor’s drama undertaking gets so particular, that it becomes specific for his/her identity and the individual capacities he/she possesses. In most cases, parts are written for certain actors, depending on their “*emploi*”.

That is why such plays have certain peculiarities at the writing level, like the retorts’ fluidity and rhythm, the dialogue dosing, the simplicity of characters and their approach from the perspective of clearly directed actions. The scaffolding of the story often relies on a thinking aimed at accumulating situations with a drama potential that determines an arch-like drama construction. The writing manner of the playwright-actor bears the hallmark of the practitioner; therefore, he/she writes as if he/she were interpreting the characters he/she created, which makes actions and conflicts attentively built up. The experience of the specialist used to a direct relation to the play construction provides the drama text with more tension in terms of concrete actions accumulation.

The most active representatives of this category comprise Lia Bugnar, Mimi Brănescu, Ioan Peter and Gabriel Pintilei, names that generally relate to independent theaters or the “dramAcum” project. Out of them, the playwright-actor who has also been awarded the UNITER prize for the *best play* is Olga Delia Mateescu for her text *Capricii (Caprices)* (1996). Despite this award, and her seven published volumes of

drama, as well as her job, which is an advantage in itself, thanks to the contact with different directors and drama people, the drama written by this playwright does not easily find its place on the Romanian stages.

“*Caprices*” is part of a *Trilogie a înșelării (Trilogy of deception)*, which marks the author’s literary and artistic growing up; the trilogy also includes *Fantoma de la Coventry (Phantom at the Coventry)* and *Casa de înșelăciuni (The deceptions house)*. “*Caprices* remains a reference text thanks to the encompassing vision and the theatricality of situations”^{dxvii}, where Olga Delia Mateescu dramatizes her own turmoil and fear “which she invests in constant obsessions, polished till the very notion of concept.” Despite the exclusively feminine composition of characters (there are only a few old men with no identity) and the feminine issues being debated, in her play description, the author states that it is “one of the most non-feminine works from dramaturgy.”^{dxviii} Characters are the archetype embodiment of femininity with its whole assembly of possible meanings and situations. They live in a matriarchal world organized on two significant coordinates, i.e. daily labor and authority that implies submission, symbolized by two defining spaces: a *Chores Room* and a *Hearing Room*. There, “standard” women work hard, each according to her skills and knowledge: they work at the sewing machine, they knit, they cook, they do the laundry, they wash the carpets, they plant different seeds, they take care of eggs being laid, and they pick up fluffs or prepare the alms gifts. The author portrays a closed universe from where it is impossible to escape, as we learn at the end of the play from the liaison woman. Salvation should have come from an egg, which is the original symbol of the beginning, but no chicken comes out of it, only all kinds of old creatures, who have already lived their life, or even another egg.

“*Trilogy of deception* contains the texts of a man deceived by reason, who releases it all out by accusing its limitations and consequences”^{dxix}, Mircea Ghițulescu notices, and that is why the manner whereby the absurd assimilates the surrealist association provides it with a certain meaning that belongs to an inner logic, which apparently motivates random actions of the characters that are carriers of some symbols, although individualized.

One can feel the influence of the practitioner starting with the precision of notes and indications, with a view to bringing along more clarity in understanding characters and actors’ assumption: “*the woman with thick legs* (smiles gently and speaks resigned, but firmly) / *the clutching woman* – (makes a grimace with a scientific nuance) [...] (lowers the voice) / *the woman with the bags* (a quick, helping person) / (terrified, speaks in conspiracy)”^{dx}. The single act play, “*Caprices*”, offers a reading full of surprises all along, starting with the ones provided by heroines and situations, and climaxing in the elegant modernity writing. Retorts are lively, full of fun, and characters seem to have come down from the stage, only to live a second life, within pages. We particularly notice “*the girl making cookies*”, due to her vast literary culture and the captivating way she spices her goodies with verses. “For instance, while baking, time passes by differently if I recite in my mind Poe’s Raven or Master Manole. I make very good Easter cakes when I recite “Manole”: soft, fluffy, yellow, oily. Not the wasps”^{dxxi}, she confesses to the other women.

In a drama where actors hold the big “slice”, the “generous” parts of the play, Olga Delia Mateescu tries to balance a drama literature dominated by masculinity and proposes a text where the center of attention is occupied by the Woman and the female issues.

The playwright-director

Actors are not the only stage practitioners who use their creative potential to practice other forms of artistic expression. Directors attack drama with lots of interest, out of their need to obtain an artistic product that would represent them completely; that “practical need to confirm imagination with the stage concreteness, to see your words turned into scenes.”^{dxix} The kind of artistic approach of the stage manager suppresses the difference between director and playwright. The procedure resides in removing the go-between, more exactly the drama writer, and has this one big advantage: it cancels prospective gaps or differences between the author’s vision and the director’s vision. “I am of the opinion that the best shows take place when the playwright is enrolled, so to speak, in the creation process”^{dxiii} playwright-director Gianina Cărbunariu firmly states.

The peculiarity of the creation mode of this type of playwright resides in the fact that he/she does not separate the text from the performance, considering the final image of the drama product to be, all along the working process. “The idea of performance precedes the text; I have always an idea related to the performance, and not the text”^{dxiv}, the same female director confesses. While the writer writes on paper, the director writes on air, or better yet “draws” the stage act, adjusting “colors” to the text, characters, conflict, décor, so that the final “picture” is complete. Thus, the evolution of a performance construction gains coherence and unity from the very beginning. With clear action, which unravels in the director’s imagination, with roles played by real actors, so as to provide the story with as much credibility as possible, the future play starts writing by itself. The practitioner, aware of the importance the actor has for the completion of a show, builds up characters living intensely not among pages of books, but on stage. “First of all, I am thinking of the cast; the actor’s presence is the most influential one”, Gianina Cărbunariu states. The playwright-director attaches a great deal of importance to this aspect, conceiving his/her characters depending on the capacity to undertake and interpret roles of actors he/she has worked with or wants to work with.

The most talented representatives of this category comprise Gianina Cărbunariu, with plays produced in Romania and abroad, like *Stop The Tempo* or *mady-baby.edu* (a.k.a. *Kebab*), Andreea Vălean with *Eu când vreau să fluier, fluier (When I want to whistle, I whistle)*, Vera Ion with *Vitamine (Vitamins)* and others. And yet, out of these, the only ones rewarded with the UNITER prize for the *best play* have been directors Kinkses Elemér for *Canalul (The Canal)* (2001), performed at the Public Theater House in Oradea and the *Ariel Theater House* in Târgu Mureș, and Cornel George Popa for *Viața mea sexuală (My sex life)* (2004) represented at the Radio Theater and the National Theater in Bucharest, directed by Sorin Militaru. These two were originally joined by director Ion Sapdaru with his play *Natură moartă cu nepot*

obez (Still-life with an obese grandson), but the text was disqualified for having infringed the rules stipulating the forbiddance to have any of the plays published before registration in the contest and before the jury deliberation stage.

Graduate from the Drama Institute in Târgu Mureș, Kincses Elemér is a drama man who experiences multiple valences of the artist, starting with the actor, then continuing with the stage manager and ending with the writer. His shows are inspired by reference authors like Sophocles, Shakespeare, Chekov, Racine, Goldoni, Schiller, Strindberg, Brecht, Gorki, Mazilu, Caragiale or Sorescu, and are played on all the important Romanian stages, but also abroad, in Hungary, Austria or former Yugoslavia. As a writer, besides drama, he shows interest in short novels or adaptation of famous texts for children for drama, like "Little Prince" by Antoine De Saint-Exupery. Out of his original drama creations, what stands out is *Zâmbetul lui Seneca* ("Seneca's Smile"), a text that debates upon the clash between intelligence and tyranny, inspired by *Diogene, câinele* ("Diogenes, the dog") by Dumitru Solomon, and the winner of the UNITER award for the best play of the year 2001, "The Canal".

With this last play, Kincses Elemér revisits the past, so as to bring the guilt complex back into discussion. "The Canal" begins in the terrorizing atmosphere of the communist camp established for the Danube-Black Sea Canal, back in the "obsessing decade". The whole assembly of elements used by the author provides the image of the Romanian Gulag. The framework is desolating and somber: a swamp where four white collars are forced into labor, an insalubrious barrack where one can hardly put up with the winter cold, the abuses of the illiterate guard or the pressure of the repeated attempts to convert them to communist dogma. But the most difficult thing to put up with is the suspicion of betrayal right in the middle of the prisoners.

The subject matter is not by far something new, as it has been analyzed, reinterpreted and consumed by many drama writers. In an attempt to update the communism topic, Kincses Elemér appeals to two novelty elements: tackling it from the perspective of an ethnic minority and the questioning and relativity nature of the good and evil concepts. That is why the story emphasizes the sorrows endured by Hungarian white collars in prisons, subject to just as many physical and moral humiliations as their Romanian fellows. The other peculiarity of the story is the implied relativity of the Manichaeism "good political prisoner" – "stupid and brutal torturer." The influence of the practitioner having considerable experience in the stage art may be identified at the level of the harmonious dosage of drama tension and accessibility of the text topic, obtained by the simple style whereby emphasis lies on the dialogue construction, and not stylistical artifices or ample descriptions, even when it comes to lyrical-philosophical passages. Verses by Hölderlin or Blaga and Latin prepositions mix up with the characters' dialogues; they enumerate names of constellations, they discuss about philosophy or theology, they bring Mendelssohn's concerts 'on stage'. The prisoners' intention is not to display their erudition, but to preserve their lucidity, dignity and human conscience unaltered and intact. The drama conflict is often born out of those moments when they practice resistance by culture, so as to counter the guard's

excesses. The torturer's verbal violence hits the victims' elegant and concise answers: "Baron: Allow me to observe... Guard: did you eat your shit? (Silence) One more word and you're going to eat up your shit! (Silence) We are leaving in 5. Go to the wood."^{dxxv} The group's "resistance" structure ruins when the suspicion of betrayal squeezes in the group's conscience. From that moment on, the play turns into an apologia of suspicion silently eating them up inside, and of mistrust reigning the world. The guard repeatedly and differently tries to corrupt Baron, one of the four dissident intellectuals, to "seal the deal" with the system. In exchange of his betrayal, he would have benefitted from favors that would have made his detention more bearable: double food ratio, boots which were absolutely necessary for the labor in the frozen swamps, a thick blanket or a volume of Hungarian poetry. But the Baron proves to be a man of character, and not a traitor. Not only does he refuse that pact with the devil, but he dismisses all those favors in front of the others, enduring pressure and stoically putting up with their accusations. Out of all the people who incriminate him, Alex, a former high school teacher, proves to be the toughest one. Situation gets out of hands when Melisa enters the stage, i.e. Baron's wife, whom the Hungarian nobleman hasn't seen in three years. The husband is subject to a real inquisition whereby he is asked to do an unusual sacrifice, in order to prove his innocence: he has to share his own wife with the other prisoners, just as he does with all his other goods, so that everybody stays equal and no other privilege intervenes between them. Out of tremendous love for her noble husband, rendered by Kincses Elemér in touching retorts, Melisa accepts to abide by the group's decision, but in reality she kills herself right before Alex is about to dishonor her, thus restoring "equality" among prisoners, while remaining faithful to her husband. The scene is the climax of the play, as regrets come too late, the evil has already been done, they cannot turn back time, hatred and mistrust have showed their monstrous faces, eventually leaving the Baron with no answer to the question, to comfort him: "And now, now what, guys? Who is the traitor here?"^{dxxvi}

A distinctive note in the play construction is the playwright's attempt to make the vision on the acknowledged typology of negative characters more objective. The guard is taken out of the pattern formalism made up only of negative features, due to his touching personal history, which emphasizes his human side. The torturer's modus operandi observes the behavioral clichés of communism: having started from a very low level, he wants to actively intervene in the community, but during the process he falls victim to a political option that he does not entirely understand, and which entails him in a weird war against the world. His wife leaves him, he is despised and ignored by his fellows; all these elements trigger confusion in the guard's mind and soul, as well as his reflex to respond with violence, in a destructive spirit. He is a mere tool at the disposal of an invisible, unnamed Power, he generically refers to as "them" or "the commander" or "the system".

The support point of the play and at the same time the reference system are represented by the female presence, and not just in terms of erotic-marital interest, but also as a moral point of reference. The heat and the devotion that Melisa brings along contrast with the story's bleak and harsh tones balance and soften the bitter taste experienced by the

reader/spectator. Thus, her retorts are true lyrical effusions: “I am where you are; my soul is your soul, my thoughts are your thoughts, my only non-traitor husband. My son, father, spouse ...”^{dxxvii} Such retorts have a stake, as Melisa is the one sacrificing herself for her husband, thus contributing to the sad ending of the story, reminding us of the tragedies endings, yet sieved through the filter of contemporaneity. On one hand, judging a man will always be an extremely delicate issue, as any conclusion proves, eventually, deprived of objectivity. On the other hand, the one being judged becomes, in this case, a tool of his desire to be “absolved” at all costs.

The bleak atmosphere of the “Canal” is virtually the background which the guilt complex is discussed upon, exceeding the borders of the ethnos. With this short play in only five pictures and with few yet emblematic characters, Kincses Elemér launches a debate that can only remain open and subject to interpretation.

My sex life marks the drama and cinema debut of director Cornel George Popa, who declares having written this special text in order to win the UNITER award for the *best play of 2004* (which actually happened). This is not the first rewarded literary experience of Cornel Popa; he was also rewarded in 1993 with the *Liviu Rebreanu* prize of the Writers’ Union for his debut with short stories collected in the volume *Fifty six flashes and other stuff*. The exercise of writing develops over a decade of journalist work, coming to write more books, in the long run, than there have been published.

As for his activity as a playwright, which sums up to a very limited number of plays, i.e. three (his debut play, *Țigara* (The Cigarette) and *Regii meduzelor* (The Jellyfish Kings), but only his debut play raises the interest of his work fellows, being chosen by Sorin Militaru for his directing proposition at the National Theater in Bucharest (2007).

The author, a journalist “by trade”, uses a frivolous and somehow challenging title, to raise the interest and curiosity of the spectator/reader. In reality, “My sex life” is a play totally contradicting its title, lacking completely gratuitous vulgarities and erotic simulations. The playwright-director places love and sex under the microscope, but addresses and tackles the story from the perspective of inner nudity, and not exterior, outside physical nudity. Characters suffer from loneliness; in their repeated attempts to fill up their inner void, they take refuge in a place of pleasures, namely in a sex shop. The store is visited by all kinds of people from everyday life, marked for good by personal failures: an old father (a former master-supervisor, nostalgic of the former regime and its advantages), a sex-shop owner, very successful among young ladies, an immature bodyguard (whose dream is to sell snowdrops in summertime) and a couple of “neighborhood dudes” who spice up the whole story with their colorful language. The reason why they come to the store is the warm presence of Dorina, a saleswoman of an almost angel-like kindness, who dedicates their time to anything but the recommendation of intimate personal use items, comforting clients and helping them chase their problems away. Caught in a hermetic world with opaque windows, having her own problems, like the raising of a child out of wedlock, Dorina takes over the turmoil of all her clients put down by alienation, who seem to look for comfort among those

shelves. Sex is the alleged antidote for anxiety, that carnal fulfillment liberating you from all your hidden frustrations. And yet, the road to that fulfillment feeling they aim at is love actually.

The shortcoming of the play resides in the schematic approach of some characters, as well as the savorless nature of some retorts that deprive certain moments of credibility. An example in this respect is the construction of the character called Costache, Dorina’s father, reduced to one single frustration that can be translated by the regret become obsession that the past was better. Dorina is also portrayed pretty simply, as the author’s intention is to suggest the typology of every woman. And yet some retorts make her somehow predictable and unappealing, except for some circumstances where she becomes touching, as her tone radically changes: “when two people make love, God is always there.”^{dxxviii} The most credible character proves to be the couple made up of Gelu and Mimi, because they are current and come from a world whose reality sounds credible on stage maybe also due to their frank language: “One might say you’re stupid, so buzz off!”^{dxxix}

As far as this play is concerned, Cornel George Popa did not limit his undertaking to the playwright activity; he decided to stage and direct his own play (an absolute premiere at the National Theater in Iași) and the homonymic movie, which shows the understanding of the drama act as one that needs to be accompanied by its creator all along its existence stages.

Conclusions

As the great playwright William Shakespeare put it, drama was and still is the mirror of life. During the first decade after December 1989, it turned out to be more of a mirror of the refusal of life. Romanian stages systematically refuse texts written by contemporary authors, and when they accept drama productions debating upon actuality, the impact of the reception is pretty unconvincing, as they lack credibility. Domestic plays are avoided in the first decade after December 1989 also because many of the texts are conceived for a certain type of drama area, the studio one, which was not much practiced at that time in Romania. Repertory enrichment also suffered from a low number of translations. Subsequently, renewal by texts had to wait, as there were few writers willing to probe contemporary life and events, in order to discover their fellows and era.

Moreover, most playwrights who truly had a calling, or occasional playwrights show a symptomatic need to return to the inter-war period, generally acknowledged as the most fertile period from a literary point of view, or to probe the present of Western countries.

In the context of an avalanche of projects aimed at reviving domestic dramaturgy, an avalanche of competitions dedicated to original drama plays, during festivals, and the dim role of the playwright in the drama (building) enterprise, it becomes almost impossible to outline some coherent directions of the Romanian drama. The evoked period is marked by experiments, by clumsy stylistical and thematic explorations and attempts to “renegotiate” the drama writer status.

And yet, as the change of regime gets rooted in the Romanian conscience, drama too gets closer to society, as a result of the playwrights' natural need to find some authentic topics. The approach of social issues is something characteristic especially of the second decade after December 1989, corroborated with the attempt to revitalize and regain public interest by re-inventing the performance space and by changing the relations with it.

The artist's need to artistically transpose current issues and everyday life related problems intensifies. Romania and its never-ending transition, identity confusion, separation from communism, the guilt complex, political manipulation, the generations clash, the death show, the contemporary world and the virtual space, feminism, transsexuality and gender change are only a few of the theme obsessions that outline the aesthetic program of the Romanian dramaturgy after December 1989. Authors invent a new form of tragedy, more exactly a "tragedy of actuality", which is defined by the disharmony of the contemporary world where "the lasting crisis of political management lets more and more people see the cracks in a co-existence pattern whose authority is more and more debatable."^{dxxx} Subsequently, the stage starts to show and illustrate everyday life with all its ingredients: corny, derisive, direct and uncontrolled language, and so on.

A drama infrastructure begins profiling, aimed at stimulating the emergence of new texts. *DramAcum* is one of the most important projects in this respect, as it develops a drama pattern connected to contemporary reality, in contradiction with the aesthetic traditional patterns that address a target audience passionate about less conventional approaches. This new paradigm results in the development of new modes of expression, calibrated by new means. There develops a preference for independent, underground drama areas, the studio type, which provides the actor with the possibility to get closer to the spectator, up to the removal of all the barriers enforced by the traditional pattern of the relation between the two of them. Thus, the actor becomes dangerous, inducing a state of discomfort and insecurity to the spectator, which is completely different from the one experienced in an "official" performance hall.

Another interesting aspect revealing from the analysis of the period after December 1989 implies that the new playwright is not mandatory, as one would expect, and doesn't belong to a typical milieu or environment that makes his/her orientation in writing predictable. We are dealing with journalists (Dumitru Crudu, Petre Barbu, Cornel George Popa), drama critics (Mihaela Michailov), fiction writers or poets (Radu Macrinici, Alina Nelega, Saviana Stănescu, Ștefan Caraman etc.). The common element connecting the texts written by these playwrights is mainly the conceiving mode, the writing mode, which subordinates to a dynamic concept of constant processing in relation with the other stage instances, especially actors. The drama text is no longer perceived as a work completed by the Romanian playwright, as it used to be during the communist regime, but rather as a living body, as a *work in progress*; this is a modern vision taken and adopted following the Western drama pattern, more precisely the British pattern.

After the dialogue with the world had been obviously compromised during the communist era by the single party and its cultural greenhouse policy, the artists who are convinced they have to re-learn to look at the West study the Western pattern, attempting more than a mere adjustment. This is the moment when the dramaturgy update starts and where ideas from the West are brought along by the young playwrights who study the art of drama writing over there. Even if the Romanian drama milieu, via some of its voices, showed some resistance, they gradually managed to change the general status quo a bit, determining the Romanian dramaturgy to lean toward Western patterns. The drama's mission to connect to reality does not fully materialize in the '90s, but becomes more visible in the second decade.

Texts with minimalist appearance, i.e. short retorts, few characters, modest décor, often comprise realistic elements: they refer to autobiography aspects, everyday life stories or personal stories lived by their creators. Most of the time, they stand out thanks to their lively, simple nature, which does not rule out certain complexity. While the "everyday life" peculiarity does not necessarily equal platitude, it stands for a reality filtered through the playwright's vision. Thus, texts of this type get freed from their status of isolated and insignificant experiment that translates life onto paper, with no nuance and no sense, profiling like plays with substance and genuine stake.

Subsequent to this overview on how the new generation of playwrights digested the challenge of a released world and how they synthesized and took over the Western paradigms, we must acknowledge once again the difficulty to categorize these Romanian drama undertakings, which do not make up a consistent and coherent picture directed toward an easily identifiable direction. And yet, in the apparent chaotic writing and staging of plays dating from the era after December 1989, we notice a few elements that give us reasons to believe in a gradual growing-up of the Romanian dramaturgy: the new generation is made up of more and more professionals who write texts addressing a large audience and which do not fall under the traditional configuration of drama. In this context, we have reasons to believe that the renewal of the Romanian drama will be accomplished by long and well directed efforts, which will lead to a drama having its own voice, anchored in Western trends, while remaining adapted to the Romanian reality and the audience's expectations.

THE BRITISH DRAMA PATTERN. THE INFLUENCE OF THE *IN-YER-FACE* DRAMA MOVEMENT AND THE DRAMA WRITING WORKSHOPS FROM THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE IN LONDON

Methodological Preamble

Observing that playwrights from Romania have tried, every time they could, to connect to the Western references since the communist era, this analysis emphasizes how they understood to liberate themselves from the communist load, after the system fell. The natural culture reflex to align to the set of European values, which became much more intense with the disappearance of the isolation enforced by the Iron Curtain, intensifies after December 1989 by a passionate search for a stage voice. The statement made by Saviana Stănescu^{dxxxi}

sustains the idea exposed in these pages, pertaining to the way in which the British drama pattern of the '90s and the philosophy of the Royal Court Theatre have been taken over, given the increasing interest in the valences of the marginal elements. All the frustrations and discharges triggered by the communist drama cumulated with the changing cultural context in continuous definition, father furious, violent, curtain-less drama voices.

Once the political conditioning is gone, young Romanian playwrights, their faces turned to the West, could access the drama writing workshops from the Royal Court Theatre, acquiring the skill to adjust their literary speech to the newly created social realities. The British drama writers' attempts and turmoil in the late '80s to bring the British drama back to the audience's attention influenced the Romanian playwrights in search of new drama formulas that would catch the audience and destroy the prejudices of traditional drama. The climate of freedom after December 1989 allowed for the emergence of a very direct type of drama, and of a dramaturgy whereby drama's relation with the society is just obvious.

In this context, we notice the fact that the allusion and implicitly the practice of frequently staging classics gradually lose ground, as more current issues are being addressed. After 1990, drama relates differently to society, going from being an efficient ideological manipulation tool directed by the "headquarters" to a form of art with commercial destination. This development shows an interesting parallelism with England, where the removal of censorship in 1968 triggered a similar process.

In the early '90s, the British drama dominated by socialist plays is "dynamited" by the emergence of a new trend nicknamed by the German critics "*theatre of blood and sperm*" and by the British, "*new brutalism*". Just like in Romania after December 1989, the new British drama avant-garde represented by a young generation of playwrights proposes a visceral drama, with a short and straight-to-the-point message. In the introduction to the volume "*In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*", Aleks Sierz wrote: "the generation of new British playwrights shocked the critics and the audience by the mixture of sex, violence and street poetry."^{dxxxii} Plays like *Trainspotting*, *Blasted* and *Shopping and Fucking* "are more than a mere collection of tactics to shock people: taken together, they stand for a consistent criticism on modern life, focusing on violence, maleness, the post-feminist myth and the futility of communism"^{dxxxiii}, as the author put it.

These similarities between the British and the Romanian drama are nuanced by the connotations censorship had in the case of the former. As John Elsom noticed^{dxxxiv}, the English censorship was an extension of the social code, of the so-called "class-system" and does not come from a political doctrine, as in the Romanian case, where the communist state re-orders the society structures so as to fulfill its totalitarian goals.

And yet, despite these social and political differences, censorship and the political factor did influence the British drama, and that thing happened also in the Romanian drama area. In both cases, the end of these influences is marked by increased dynamism and invigorated creativity, all triggering

an explosion of new plays that bring a new paradigm and a new mentality to the fore.

We have to mention that the comparative approach of the two drama patterns develops starting from some basic premises. First of all, similar conditions related to the freedom of speech led to a reaction intensely expressed at the drama and stage level. Irrespective of the concrete political conditions that marked the British and the Romanian society, censorship triggered the same effusion of liberation from rules, a mechanism that is illustrated not only in these two literatures.

Second, similarities are seen in the context of an obvious influence that the British unchaining" had on the new generation of playwrights after December 1989. It is no mystery that the British drama stood for a model and a constant source of inspiration. And yet, one has to analyze to what extent the Romanian reaction was a strictly mimetic one, and identify specific, original elements differentiating it from the followed model.

The Royal Court Theatre and Its Philosophy on The Playwright's Relationship with Theatrical Undertaking

In 1956, George Devine became the artistic director of the Royal Court and established the English Stage Company, with a view to staging recent British and foreign plays, besides classics. He wanted to create a drama of playwrights, which would discover new writers and produce serious contemporary plays, getting also involved in censorship related issues. Devine was the producer of John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger*, subsequently considered the starting point of British modern dramaturgy.

That openness to new forms of drama has been preserved, considering that the Royal Court has paid special attention to the development and production of plays from the international repertory. At present, there is a constant dialogue related to drama writing issues among playwrights interested in innovating, and specialists from Brazil, Cuba, France, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Palestine, Romania, Russia, Spain, Syria and Uganda. Many such projects are sustained by the British Council and, more recently, by the Genesis Foundation.

The Royal Court activity, focused on drama innovations, is extremely important, given its trial to encourage new plays and young playwrights having a fresh vision. The reverberating echo in the domestic drama space generated the emergence of two projects, namely *dramAcum* and *Tanga Project*, very important for the promotion and development of the Romanian drama text, encouragement of young authors and guidance of the audience toward a social, present, sharp drama.

The fall of communism brought the status of the Romanian playwright to the fore. After culture was discredited by the propaganda system, one felt the need to revive drama and to renegotiate the drama writer's role in the drama enterprise. The playwright, an outsider in the working relation during the communist regime, has to reposition himself/herself in the drama equation, crossing the road from the outskirts of the stage work to his/her acknowledgement as part of the drama process. Traditionally, the playwright is considered a text

writer whose involvement ends with the completion of the play, with the stage performance itself representing a totally different stage that only the director and the theater institution get involved in. During the former regime, "Romanian playwrights expected to be required, and no action was necessary to convince the Romanian drama to 'be in need' of their plays"^{dxxxv}, and this approach is partially maintained also after 1990. The working relation between the text writer and the one who intends to stage it ends with the former's agreement for the play to be staged.

In the British drama area, the playwright's role is differently outlined. Given the contractual regulations and the legislation pertaining to the copyright, the playwright is considered to be an important and determining element in the configuration of the future performance. This dynamic status is a consequence of the working relation between the writer and the director. The text is not considered a completed, achieved product, but is subject to change, subsequent to discussions held with the director and his/her collaborators. Although this working style is not to be perceived as a universal model or as an obligation of the playwright, it is certain that close collaboration leads to a text better adapted to the director's vision and, consequently, a more "together", coherent show, emphasizing mutual trust in the success of the artistic undertaking and enterprise.

The British drama paradigm stipulates three hypostases of the playwright: the professional drama writer, the director who thinks over the texts for his/her own show and the overall creation group including actors, directors and playwrights who collaborate for the completion of the text. In the last case, the drama writer can be a professional one or may hold that office, so as to support the issuance of the final release of the text within a theater.

Considering the three above-mentioned valences, the figure of the British playwright covers both the traditional role based on text, where the play's author does not get involved in the performance and does not adapt the dialogue according to punctual requirements for a specific staging, and the modern hypostasis specific for the Royal Court, which implies a dynamic writing process, with the completed product being the performance, and not the play. Thus, the status of the modern playwright implies a redefinition and a re-dimensioning of the traditional drama involvement, which "comes down" from the "book" on the "drama hall". Ceasing to be a mere name on a poster, which guarantees the performance, the drama writer of the contemporary world has to help the director and the actors "dress up" the text, making along some fine tuning, so that the match is perfect.

In opposition to the British vision on the drama enterprise, till 2000, the legal framework facilitating the outlining of such relations remains a mere desideratum. The want of laws pertaining to the copyright makes it impossible for theaters to employ playwrights willing to work together with the director on the text. Under the circumstances, the disinhibiting of the Romanian drama starts only after 2000, with the emergence of the dramAcum project, which is a domestic reply to George Devine's initiative. The project called "dramAcum" wants to promote and develop the Romanian plays, to encourage young playwrights, using the Royal Court as a model. In order to achieve all those desiderata, the project supports the

participation in the drama writing workshops held by the Londonese Theater, subsequently leading also to the emergence of the independent drama group called "tangaProject".

The need to refresh the topics and the stylistics of the drama text, as well as the need to review the role of drama in our society are matters of interest for the young generation of artists. If the '90s are marked by writers' attempts to give a literary definition of drama poetry, the 2000's are characterized not only by a complete clarification of the playwright's role, but especially by an upfront, unitary direction to sort out and clarify stage creation principles. Following the contact with the Royal Court philosophy, the young generation of writers grows more and more aware of the specialist status in the performance art, which the playwright has to hold. The drama play gradually gains the role of "drama backbone", an element that cannot exist or be conceived outside the performance, becoming a *work in progress* that undergoes changes depending on the requirements and dimensions of the show it has been written for. Following the working relation between the playwright and the drama enterprise practiced by the Royal Court Theater, domestic writers are more and more convinced that their presence in the stage area is more than necessary, so as to make the performance coherent. Under the circumstances, it is only natural for some playwrights to get involved in the process, playwrights who are either actors, connoisseurs of the stage rigor or directors who want their shows to be fully representative of themselves.

A Short History on the *in-yer-face theatre* movement

The British theater of the '70s, dominated almost entirely by the socialist playwrights, enters a decline zone, after the coming of Baroness Margaret Thatcher to power, which renegotiates the Power's relation with Drama, acknowledging and accepting it only as a part of England's traditions, and not at all as a critical institution. The cultural policy practiced by the Iron Lady brings about a genuine financial crisis to the British theaters. Wanting to create a climate that would stimulate and draw funds for art, she refuses to grant subsidies for the left-wing drama, and reduces or does not supplement enough public funds for the drama.

As a consequence, in early '80s, the Royal Shakespeare Company is bound to decrease the number of plays being staged annually, while the Royal National Theatre shuts down the Cottesloe^{dxxxvi} Hall for a considerable period of time. Cutting funds had a significant impact on smaller theaters, with many of the *fringe groups*^{dxxxvii} failing to keep up with the situation, and being forced to close down eventually.

All these budget cuts had a strong impact on the repertory policy too. Even the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre started preferring risk-free productions. Selections made by the theaters managers rarely if ever included new plays, debut plays or plays written by young authors. Their options would often favor the "well-made"^{dxxxviii} plays written by already acknowledged or experienced authors. An eloquent example in this respect is *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer, who had its premiere a few weeks after the appointment of Margaret Thatcher in her official

office and which proved to be the most successful play of the '80s. The only exception to this drama pattern seems to be playwright Caryl Churchill, who enjoyed unexpected success despite the feminist and anti-capitalist trends.

Musicals are also part of the "low risk plays". Another characteristic of the repertory policy in the '80s was the staging of a big number of such plays.

In its turn, the audience has also undergone some changes. In 1970, its taste was more or less oriented toward "left wing" plays, but in 1980, not only the audience, but also most voters became right-wing supporters. Therefore, we may assume that in the '80s the interest in socialist-didactical plays gradually decreased, making non-political plays like Shaffer's *Amadeus* for instance hold a central place in the audience's preferences. Once preferences changed, the spectators' average age increased too. One may infer from Mark Ravenhill's statement "when you look in the hall, you see a sea of white hair"^{dxxxix} that the '80s belonged to the middle-aged writers who were writing drama for a middle-aged audience.

This change shocked the socialist playwrights of the '70s. Suddenly, they were left with no audience. Eventually, some of them gave up writing, while others tried to soften their criticism against society and capitalism, making topics very general and abandoning the dogma.

Such attempts to adapt the drama speech to the new tendencies can be observed in the Romanian drama too after December 1989. The struggle against the idea of dogma, the desire to cross over the borders of a narrow well-established in time mentality in the very structure of our people's being has some similarities with the turmoil of the British writers. The decline of the British drama starting with 1980 can be associated with the one from the first decade after December 1989, when the domestic drama became less original and less experimental, because of excessive appeal to the classics' work.

Now coming back to the drama avant-garde from England, called "The New Brutalism" or "the Britpack"^{dxl}, we learn that its representatives surnamed by those times' chronicle writers "the young savages"^{dxli} managed to bring on stage the "Brit pop" culture and to father a new form of drama, namely the *theatre of blood and sperm*. Critics take note with interest of the verbal and physical atrocities present in those plays, and it seems that the freshly revived British theater is received with an almost unanimous enthusiasm. Benedict Nightingale, an important English critic, wrote in 1996: "Tom Stoppard once said that he had become a playwright due to the incredible commotion caused by John Osborne's play *Look back in anger*, realizing that drama is a place worth being in. We are witnessing a similar phenomenon [...]"^{dxlii}

Michael Billington, one of the most important British critics, bitterly noticed in 1991 that the English drama was in a "crisis situation" and that "the new dramaturgy no longer holds the central position it had in the past 35 years in the British theater."^{dxliii} As time passed by, he reconsidered his opinions related to the new drama wave: "I don't recall having been the witness to a more prolific period where there were so many young talented playwrights: what is even more interesting is

that they talk to the young people about their own generation."^{dxliv} Also, Billington radically changed his opinion about the play *Blasted* by Sarah Kane. After it had been originally considered a "puerile tosh"^{dxlv}, he eventually came to state that, in reality, it is a work of "moral seriousness"^{dxlvi}. The same thing goes for Charles Spencer from Daily Telegraph: "Well, I was wrong. [...] I still don't like her writings, but now I admire them."^{dxlvii} At that time, *Blasted* was fiercely attacked by the British press. The drama critic of the Daily Mail, Jack Tinker, wrote a review having the title "this disgusting feast of filth"^{dxlviii}. His reaction was shared by most critics, although none of them put it so harshly, but rather labelled the play as a "momentary work". There were some positive reactions as well, coming from playwrights like Martin Crimp, Harold Pinter, Caryl Churchill, who considered the play *Blasted* "rather a tender play."^{dxlix}

Radical plays of the new drama wave, which describe reality very directly, divide the British drama in two sides, i.e. defenders and denigrators of this controverted trend.

Peculiarities of the *in-er-face* theatre

At a first reading, these texts shock by their explicit sexual language (something unprecedented on the conservative British stages) and the abundance of works that refer to male and female anatomic parts, but "they are more than a collection of tactics meant to shock: taken together, they are substantial criticism to modern life, which focuses on matters like violence, masculinity, the post-feminist myth and the futility of the consumption culture"^{dxl}, as pointed out by Aleks Sierz, one of the analysts of this phenomenon. The new generation of British playwrights tries to take down the taboos remaining after the abolishment of censorship in 1968, by a mixture of sex, violence and street poetry. Here is an excerpt from the play *Penetrator* by Anthony Neilson, one of the first plays of "the young savages", which had its premiere in 1993, as a language sample from these works:

«VOICE-OVER: "Where are you going to?" she asked. Luck struck me. She barely had the legal age to hold a driving license, but she was cute, with big teats; the biggest and most perverse teats I have ever seen.

"The same place you are going to", I said.

[...]

I got into the car. My cock had lifted up like a bat in my jeans. I noticed her looking at it, while licking her slut lips. "But if I let you get in, you'll just have to return the favor", she added up, smiling.

[...]

Afterwards, to my surprise, she took off her T-shirt. Her nipples were like big, hard strawberries. "You like them?" she asked, pulling them, horny, till she came. "You, slut", I said. "You are really asking for it."

[...]

She lifted up her tiny skirt, letting me see her crack, opening up her lips like a frigging slut, while a thick pussy juice was coming down on her long feet. She was moaning with pleasure.

[...]

"Fuck me with your huge dick", she murmured.

[...]

I could see her butt's hole, all pink and narrow. "Fuck me hard", she gasped.
 "Fuck me till I scream with pleasure", she moaned.^{dii}

The shock effect of these plays is amplified by action, not just by language. Some of them (*Penetrator* by Neilson, *Fedra's Love* by Sarah Kane) even start with a masturbation act on stage, which lets people know that no other form of sex is a taboo after that: gay sex, straight sex, gay rape – anything is possible. In the play *Cleansed*^{diii} by young Sarah Kane, most characters are tortured, their arms, legs and sexual organs are cut, and their throats are cut too. In *Blasted*, the same playwright's play, a soldier rapes a journalist, and then he sucks his eyes out of his eyeholes (this is an actual scene, which Kane gathered from an aggression of a supporter on a police officer, on the occasion of a football game of Manchester United), after which he shoots a bullet in his head.

Despite the multiple controversies it triggered, being a momentary play for some, which will disappear just as quickly as it came up, and a rejuvenation and re-invention of the British drama for others, this fascinating and at the same time disgusting type of drama brought young people back to the drama halls.

Most authors are no older than 30 years old^{diiii} and, even if among them there are enough active female playwrights, the new generation tends to be dominated by men and concerned with masculinity. The specific feature of these works is masculinity, as men are usually the ones perpetrating verbal and physical violence. Despite that, the most controversial and shocking representative of the "young savages" is a woman: Sarah Kane, who committed suicide at only 28, after having brought excessive violence on London stages.

Most authors have been trained in the drama workshops organized by *Royal Court Theatre* and *Royal National Theatre*. Also, Royal Court is the theater where most of these plays had their debut, being played in a hall having only 84 seats. The other theaters interested in the new dramaturgy were *The Bush* and *The Gate*. One may infer from here that the development of the new dramaturgy, written by young, can be done in small areas (at least for starters), as it is the case of the *ACT Theater*, *Foarte Mic (Very small) Theater*, *LUNI (Monday) Theater from the Green Hours* or *Metropolis Theater*, which proved consistency in the domestic drama area, in terms of encouraging contemporary texts. The support shown to contemporary dramaturgy is more clearly undertaken in the case of independent theaters.

Even if these plays have some common points, they differ one from the other. Violence, forms of sex, licentious language and "masculinity" are not features applicable to the entire "wave". The unitary characteristic is given by a certain toughness, aggressiveness, desire to shock the audience and the fact that most characters in these works are young just like their authors or the audience they address to. Also, these plays seem to be pretty difficult to interpret too, which is consequently a challenge for critics and often fathers controversy.

The drama structure of plays that are representative for the new wave roughly complies with the same pattern. Quite often, we come across the same place unit, in plays like *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* or *Blasted*, where the plot entirely takes place in one single room. Most plays written by the "young savages" have few characters. The small number of characters together with the single place unit (a single type of simple décor) are indicative of "poor drama", in Grotowski's words^{dlii}, which is a consequence of the fact that the British drama after Thatcher's ruling allows only low budget productions.

Almost all the plays have only one story to tell. Only a few of them tell several stories, like *Shopping and F***ing*. The reason for that is mentioned in this play, in one of the character's retorts: "And I believe that, a long time ago, there used to be great stories. Stories so great, that you could have lived your whole life in one of them. The strong hands of gods and fate. Journey towards enlightenment. March of socialism. But they all died [...]"^{dlii} This character feverishly underlines that "we all need stories", even after the great stories died. Ravenhill's drama essentially denotes several stories, but the others focus on the more or less coherent narration of a single one.

Many plays start with an apparent calm scene, except for the ones in which characters are shown masturbating, but we may say that these scenes are "tame" compared to what comes next. The plot is subject to more and more intense shocks, often climaxing in a burst of extreme violence and brutality. Plays frequently end in at least one death, even if in *Penetrator* we are dealing only with the "death" of a plush teddy bear that is killed with a "knife that puts an end to violence"^{dlii} in an orgy of violence. Pretty bizarre, the powerful violent scene at the end is often followed by a totally opposite scene of idyllic peace. *Penetrator* and *Blasted* are two examples in this respect.

We may infer from all this that we are dealing with a conventional drama structure. Most of them rely on a more or less coherent story, which ends in a strong closure. Even if the main tendency is to provide the audience with more and more powerful shocks by intensifying violence, they have very few elements in common with Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, which wanted to remove the invisible barrier between stage and spectator, integrating him/her in the story. The plays brought into discussion are mimetic and maintain illusions, keeping the audience apart from the stage. They cannot be inserted in the category of "realistic" plays in the traditional sense of the word, but cannot be considered absurd plays either, despite the fact that some of them are strongly influenced by the early plays of Harold Pinter and Edward Bond.

Sexual violence used by authors is closely connected to the way in which the portrayed society sees sex. Libertinage and virtualization of sex taken in a broader meaning are defining aspects. In such a society freed from prejudices, people can have sex any time, any way. Everything is allowed, anything is possible. But it is precisely this lack of restrictions that makes the magic of the sexual intercourse vanish, thus generating dissatisfaction to most characters. As it results from the title of the play by Patrick Marber, *Closer*^{dlii}, everybody wants to be as close as possible to his/her partner,

but, as the intercourse becomes a routine, it loses intensity, it stops being “real”. That is why translation into Romanian can be deceiving. Of course, physical closeness during the intercourse can be interpreted as a *close* contact (*Closer*), but characters want more; they want to get under their partner’s skin, they want to feel what they feel, they want to experience the “reality” of their beloved one’s body and, at the same time, the “reality” of their own body. That is why they continue to change their partners, in a ceaseless pursuit that eventually remains unfulfilled.

Sex virtualization, the other characteristic of these works, is another form whereby characters try to get pleasure. In *Shopping and F***ing*, two of the characters make a lot of money from an erotic hotline. In *Phaedra’s Love*^{dlviii} by Sarah Kane, we see Phaedra giving her son Hippolytus a blowjob while he is watching TV. Tadge^{dlxix} from *Penetrator* by Neilson likes to watch video movies with violent sex scenes and then heartily talk about what he saw. We find the most illustrative scene of the kind in *Closer* by Marber. The two male characters talk online, while one of them pretends to be a woman. Often, in this play staging, one can see the two men in front of their computers, while one can read passages from their conversation on two big screens at the back of the stage:

«Dan: Well, we are talking on LONDON FUCK. Do you want to have sex?
 Larry: Yes. Describe yourself.
 Dan: Black hair. Vulgar mouth. Epic teats.
 Larry: Define epic.
 Dan: 36 DD.
 Larry: Nice butt?
 Dan: Why?
 Larry: ‘cause I want to know.
 Dan *smiles*.
 Larry: Ok.
 Dan: Well endowed?
 Larry: Very well endowed!
 Dan: O.K.! TAKE IT OUT!»^{dlx}

This sexual relation “consumed” online – one of the best actually from *Closer* – certainly gives the two men a certain type of “satisfaction”. Naturally, practicing online sex, they cannot be “closer” to their own body or the partner’s body, as they would like to. The rush for the retrieval of the body reality and the totality of senses does not stop here. Suicide attempts are also solutions that some characters without reservation appeal to.

Even if we do not agree to the methods characters make use of, which may often be considered perverse or shocking, we can understand that, in a world that transforms feelings in counterfeited and shallow vibes, the only salvation may be found in the retrieval of “genuine” reality and body. Mark Ravenhill draws the conclusion: “One can only experience maximum reality by suffering.”^{dlxi}

The previously discussed forms of violence are more or less connected to sex, but are not a general rule. For example, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*^{dlxii} by McDonagh, we are dealing with a type of violence that has to be understood differently from its previous forms. The play focuses on the seriously dysfunctional relation between Maureen Folan, a

daughter forced to look after her mother, an old selfish and manipulative lady. Maureen’s sisters escaped into marriage and family life, but Maureen, having a history of mental disorders, has to put up with the terror of captivity from her parents’ house. When the glim of a love story between Maureen and Pato, a construction worker, is put out by her mother, verbal violence between the two women degenerates. Maureen tortures her by scalding her with hot oil and eventually kills her. Even if these deeds are essentially condemnable, the author portrays the leading character both as a victim and as an aggressor, wanting to show that the only way to break this vicious circle of mutual aggression is by violence. The play is a mixture of black comedy, melodrama, awe and somber tragedy.

We come across the same phenomenon of violence generating violence in Sarah Kane’s play, *Blasted*. In this play, on the background of the civilian war burst out in England, a soldier enters a hotel room and rapes a journalist, after which he sucks his eyes out of his eyeholes. At some point, the soldier tells about the horrible atrocities perpetrated during that civilian war: “We entered a house right on the outskirts of the city. They had all run away, except for a little boy who was hiding in a corner. One of the others took him out. They flung him on the ground and shot him between his legs. I heard a cry in the basement. I got downstairs. There were three men and four women. I called the others. We immobilized the men, while I was fucking the women. The youngest one was twelve. She didn’t cry, she just lay there. I turned her with her face to the wall; then she cried. I forced her to clean me with her tongue. I closed my eyes and thought a bit, then shot their dad in the mouth. Her brothers yelled. I hanged them on the ceiling by their own testicles.”^{dlxiii}

But then he continues his story, telling what the other side did to his girlfriend, Col: “As for Col, they fucked her from behind. They cut her throat. They crippled her ears and nose, and then fixed them on the entry door.”^{dlxiv} The main idea deriving from all these examples is again that violence was perpetrated by both sides and that everybody is both a victim and an aggressor. This makes the attempt to find out which side is the “just” one impossible and irrelevant. When the play came up, critics saw in it a representation of violence, an allusion and a comment on the war in Bosnia carrying out at that time. What is important to emphasize is the fact that violence that is discussed about in the play is universal, as it could happen anywhere, as the play does not take the sides of either party, according to the journalist’s statement: “I do not know who the enemies are in this war.”^{dlxv}

All these aspects remind of the atrocities in “Lear” by Edward Bond, which are also perpetrated by both sides, without the play portraying one as being better than the other or the “just” side. Violence with Bond becomes a vicious circle, but, unlike Sarah Kane, he tries to present its causes as well. In a first instance, he sees the man as being good, transformed in a violent man by society, especially the capitalist one. When King Lear manages to climb the fortress walls, Bonds tends to portray the character in a desperate attempt to break this vicious circle of violence. Bond is certainly one of the drama models for Sarah Kane. And yet, despite that, her play is different: she provides no justification to that violence, but merely depicts it as a part of our contemporary world, and

doesn't try either to show a different way for people to get rid of this anomaly or provide a solution to create a better world.

This does not mean that these plays reject the idea of a better world, which is something we may infer from these two examples. Robbie, one of the young homosexuals in *Shopping and F***ing*, is given a few ecstasy pills to sell in a club. Unfortunately, he takes a few pills before leaving home, which get him so dizzy, that, once he reaches the club, he offers all the drugs for free. Eventually, he is cruelly beaten by a few guys for whom he had no more pills left. In that way, he tries for the first and last time to break the rules of a world dominated by money, completely giving up the idea of making profit, and wants just to make people around him happy, but ends up by being harshly punished by for this "infringement". Ravenhill's play is one of the few plays of young savages, which criticizes the capitalist system to a certain extent. We don't get to see an alternative to a world in which money can simply vanish, this time either. Not even Robbie's gesture, which is nothing but foolishness.

In Patrick Marber's play, "Closer", they refer a lot to the Postman's Park, a small cemetery in London, where they bury people who saved other people's lives. The character Jane is so impressed by that aspect, that she borrows the name of a girl buried over there, who sacrificed her own life to save three kids from a fire. It seems that she is the only character in the play aware of the existence of an alternative world to our world. Although she works in a striptease club, has occasional sexual relations and peeps on the carpet, when one of her partners does not pay enough attention to her, it seems that she is the only "pure" character in the play. But not even her is capable of entirely imitating her model and she dies, at the end of the play, almost foolishly, in a car crash, which may be seen or interpreted as a suicide.

From the above-mentioned facts, we may infer that escape from this vicious circle of violence, cruel capitalism and simulated, unauthentic sex is impossible, in the world depicted in these plays. However, there is one way out: death.

If we were to draw a few conclusions, we would notice that the discussed plays do not present big innovations in terms of form. Inspirations models comprise Edward Bond and Harold Pinter's early plays and, very significantly, also a few contemporary cult movies like *Pulp Fiction*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Sex, lies and videotape* or *Trainspotting* (which is originally a novel, then it was screened, and eventually turned into a play). Some of the authors acknowledged the influence of these movies combining sex and violence.

Most plays do not stand out thanks to the language. Beyond the obsession for four letter words, language in these plays is reductive and repetitive, and characters rarely differentiate by their use of language. We have to mention that the language used by Bond in his play *Saved* was also labeled as reductive, but the playwright replied by saying that the procedure was deliberate, as he wanted his characters from the lower class of society to speak as they do in real life. Young people are the ones who identify most with this type of language. Unlike Bond's or other '70s socialist of playwrights', the plays in the '90s do not convey a "message". And yet, they provide an "existentialist" analysis of the life style of young people from

that period, which may be shocking, but had an intensity that the British drama lacked after 1980.

The question on all the critics' mind at the time, just like in the case of texts written by young Romanian playwrights, was whether the "young savages" drama would last, despite the harsh language and the addressed topics, or whether it was just a "momentary work"? For some of them, most of these plays no longer represent current life, but, despite that, none can deny that they acted like a catalyst that convinced a promising number of young authors to write drama, just like "Look back in anger" did in the '50s, and which initiated a great drama production stage in a crisis period, managing to bring young people back to the theatre halls. After the vigorless time in the '80s, the British drama revitalized, becoming fresh and young again.

Influences of the *in-yer-face* drama trend on the mentality of the young Romanian playwrights generation. Violence and the need for a harsh language in drama, a characteristic of the *in-yer-face* drama

"The only influence at this time on the Romanian drama is the Royal Court Theatre"^{dxvi}, as playwright Saviana Stănescu says it loud and clear, and, as for its features, they refer first of all to the British "new wave" in mid '90s from last century, promoted by authors like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Nielson etc. Stylistically speaking, the young Romanian playwrights take over the practice of a language disinhibition, their texts often bringing about controversies related to vulgarity and the need to use such a language. "After 1989, word related restrictions fall down. This is something beneficial especially for drama where cruel language is abundantly used these days too, in order to emphasize the realism of the plot"^{dxvii}, as noticed by playwright Horia Gârbea. The drama reflex has always been to get away from any constraint and to exert its right to free speech. One of the natural consequences encountered in drama, subsequent to the disappearance of censorship forms, is the use of direct, tough, and violent language, besides the explosion of nudity and sex, violence, macabre elements and misery, all meant to catch reality in its nakedness. Even if it comes from a compensatory impetus in certain cases, this explosion becomes an indicator of complete freedom of artists taking their revenge, including revenge at the verbal level.

The first signs of the language liberalization that one can notice in the Romanian drama may be associated with the penetration of foreign plays in the domestic circuit. The texts of these plays from the universal repertory, which contained forbidden expressions and words on stage until 1989, send out the signal of some attempts to bring back to the audience's attention topics and a type of language that haven't been explored before in the Romanian drama, from a performance/play point of view. With reference to contemporary original drama, we may acknowledge that the change of language coincided with the emergence of a new generation of drama writers, the one after 2000, who was in contact with the philosophy of the school from the Royal Court and its drama writing workshops. As for the revolution of the contemporary dramaturgy visibility, some of them go even farther and lay the foundation of a project aiming at

developing the domestic dramaturgy suggestively called “dramAcum” (drama now/today).

In an attempt to write drama about/with young people, the new playwrights start using a language that is far too “colorful”, and sometimes even vulgar, in order to characterize their characters or the background they come from. The trend is to bring everyday language on stage, all make-up aside (something unprecedented on the Romanian stages), which would provide characters with truthfulness and naturalness, but also to shock the audience. The interesting question deriving from the analysis of this phenomenon is whether these theme-stylistical tendencies express only the imitation of the drama pattern of British brutalists or, on the contrary, if they truly brought a new “quality” to the Romanian contemporary drama?

The answer to this question may result from the analysis of some plays written by Romanian authors, residents of the Royal Court drama school.

Ștefan Peca

The first selected author is Ștefan Peca, a rising drama writer, on an upward path in the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy, a representative of the young generation, an option also justified by the winning of the “dramAcum” competition in 2002 with his plays *Punami* and *Ziua f...ă a lui Nils (Nil's f... day)*. Another argument contributing to the justification of this choice is the fact that his drama education includes a full one-year scholarship (2003-2004) at the New York University, where he studied dramatic writing, and his international residence at the Royal Court Theatre in London (2005).

At first sight, in terms of language, this author may easily be considered a continuator of the respective mentioned drama trend, at least with some plays. Let's analyze, from this point of view, the play *Nils's f... day*. The idea circulating around the text is that it emerges as a first virulent attack on conventional drama, but which, in reality, causes a “real earthquake in the Romanian drama, pretty soon ignored though”^{dlxviii}, as the author self-ironizes himself. And yet, Nils' story is not overlooked, and brings about the sympathy of some people considering it “the best obscene punk Romanian play”^{dlxix} and others' disgust precisely because of its vulgarity^{dlxx} emphasized from its very title, which leaves the impression of a “shallow and arrogant author.”^{dlxxi} If we were to force a comparison, we could, naturally keeping the proportions, associate the commotion created around the young playwright to the “real earthquake” triggered in the British drama world by the premiere of the *Blasted* performance by Sarah Kane. Of course, the revolution generated by the British event has a different trajectory than the domestic one.

Now coming back to Ștefan Peca's play, we have to mention that it had its premiere in July 2008, although it was written in 2002, before the internship at the Royal Court, during which time it underwent several changes until he came to the “best text and performance version”^{dlxxii}, as the author himself declares, which makes us infer that there were changes also depending on the drama writing philosophy at the Royal Court. The story is not a complicated one and transposes you

in a paranoia-apocalypse like atmosphere from the very beginning. Nils wakes up one day when everything goes wrong for him. Recently dumped by his girlfriend, he spends his morning with his best friend, Hans, who is just insensitive to the emotional drama experienced by the play's hero, being more concerned about “smoking a joint or injecting himself some drugs.”^{dlxxiii} There is no chance either for the love Nils feels for Heidi, one of his lesbian apartment mates, to ever grow into a relationship. Peca, the playwright paying for Nils' rent and his ultimate idol, doesn't seem to be more understanding either with regard to the misery he goes through. News broadcast by the media either doesn't seem to herald something good. The family's support lacks completely: Nils's mother, a former porn star, dies, and Pops, his elder brother, is a drug addict who desperately begs for a dose. In anger, Nils decides to teach him a lesson for the deplorable state he is in, and promises to give him a hundred dollars in exchange of a blow job. Pops agrees and Nils kills him with a baseball bat, realizing he cannot even change his own brother, let aside people around him. He ends up being shot by his best friend, upon the order of his own idol. The second sequence of the play portrays a perfect world. All the characters have undergone “improvements”, except for the female characters, which are schematically addressed by the author. This time, Pops is an outstanding professor, and Hans – a serious student. From two lesbian roommates, in the first part, Heidi and Lola transform into two frivolous school girls. Nils lets everybody down as he humbly accepts for Peca to pay for his rent, despite the fact that he calls him names. Nils is killed by the pizza delivery boy. The last picture shows us Nils as the contemporary man who accepts conformity. The job in a multinational company and his Armani suit, with everything that it implies, i.e. a monotonous and official life, these are all clichés of the corporate-like society that the author appeals to, in order to ironically illustrate the hypocrisy and the bondage generated by the capitalist system. The topic brings nothing new. There are many texts that denounce the consumerist culture, the existential void and alienation within contemporary civilization, but *Nils's fucked up day* finds a new, shocking way to tell this old story. Besides all that, the protest is accompanied by the conscious acceptance of the lack of any solution, as well as the total uselessness of the gesture itself.

The author suggests three versions of Nils' story with regard to the “path to enlightenment”^{dlxxiv} that one of the characters from *Shopping and F***ing* was reminding of. The three progressively shorter pictures of the play portray three alternative worlds and personalities, and transitions between sequences take place smoothly and naturally. In the first two, Nils “chooses to choose nothing, not even suicide”^{dlxxv}, a gesture that wants us to believe that he prefers freedom to official enslaving. But freedom comes with a price, and this is death brought about by his best friend, in the first version, and by a child, in the second one. In the last alternative proposed by the author for Nils' existence, he is programmed to accept his enrolment in a hypocrite, corporate style and consumerism society. The end of the play wants to stand for an answer to conformity: the character chooses to please most of the people and therefore accepts compromise, but not before a last attempt to change the world through magic. What is significant in this respect is the ironical speech at the end uttered by Nils who tries to make people better: “You are

putting on your impeccable suit and you realize that today is going to be the most beautiful day in your life [...] and that you, Nils, will be happy at last! Isn't that what you have always been looking for? Happiness? [...] You will fit perfectly in the society and you will be a role model!"^{dlxxvi} *Alternativ (Alternative)* seems to be the term for which the author makes a whole plea sometimes even promoted by himself, become a character in his own play, i.e. playwright Peca "who lived during genuine alternative generations."^{dlxxvii}

From a structure point of view, the play fits into *in-yer-face* drama pattern of the venue unity. The entire plot takes place in Nils' apartment, a place that is a total mess just like the characters, and consistent with the "apocalypse now" like atmosphere outside, where we can witness the city being devoured by dinosaurs. The author means to say that there is no "good" place to be in. Inside, the clock ticks the need to wake up, destroying Nils' day, the milk has gone bad and thus is bad for his stomach, while outside destruction lies ahead of him. A parody of the end of the world, somehow recalling the captivity of the main character from Sarah Kane's play, "Blasted", a character caught between two worlds out of which whatever he chooses will bring him destruction.

Nils' relation with the surrounding world and relations between characters represent the narrative lines of the above-mentioned drama. The high level of the "brutality speech" identifiable in the characters' relations reflects into language and gets down, of course, to licentious language. In fact, the play poster clearly states: "CAUTION! DELIBERATELY USED EXTREMELY EXPLICIT LANGUAGE. AND UNDERTAKEN. NO UNDER AGE AND EXTREMELY BASHFUL PEOPLE ALLOWED."^{dlxxviii} In this case, Peca's rebellious high school boy attitude, wanting to shock people even before the performance begins, may be related also to the way in which he understands to sell himself. Also, the beginning retort: "What the fuck? Fuck you, mother fucker, where the fuck are you?"^{dlxxix} lets people understand that no other vulgar expression retort after that is taboo; everything is allowed and becomes possible in terms of language. Obsessively repeated vulgar expressions almost become a punctuation mark in the text. By excessively using vulgar expressions, Peca tries a de-vulgarization of vulgarity. The shock effect of this play is significantly amplified by images at the beginning of the play, registered by the author in the instructions, which imply "monstrous drawings, violent scenes, a penis in erection, oral sex..."^{dlxxx}

As they often experience conflictual moments, characters lose their temper and curse like any other people. Although they are very good friends, like Nils and Hans, or even brothers, like Nils and Pops, they mutually curse each other and call each other names, and tell each other insults and vulgar things with a rage that often turns into aggressive gestures directed at their fellows and society, whether we talk about love, betrayal, violence or manipulation in its most "insidious" form. Although they are so aggressive, the author wants to show that Nils, Hans and Pops are victims themselves of a consumption oriented society, just like characters from the play *Shopping and F***ing* by Mark Ravenhill. The fact that especially men are the ones "responsible" for verbal and physical violence reminds us of a male feature typical for the British brutalists' drama works.

The relation between characters and their positioning in relation with the society comprise one of the most representative reasons for the drama of the "new brutality", i.e. rebellion against patterns imposed by the consumerist society. The series of specific themes is supplemented also by the violence specific for the young generation from big cities, drug addiction, homosexuality, prostitution and the challenging of a whole system of values based on the triviality of folk culture. And yet there are major differences between them. The main difference between British dramas of this (type of) sensitivity and *Nils's f... day* resides in the critical positioning toward society. While the Romanian author is rather pleased with brutal criticism of the contemporary world, the British "young savages" criticize brutality from the contemporary world. Speaking about young Ștefan Peca's plays, literature historian Mircea Ghițulescu notices that "we do not deal exactly with plays, but rather with manifestos. The difference is visible: this is not about psychologies, but ideologies, and Nils is no character, but a carrier of messages belonging to a new literature, and a new type of expressivity."^{dlxxxi} Under the circumstances, excessive use of tough, vulgar language may father the hypothesis that it could be a parody or, at best, the expression of intentional exaggeration (as resulted from the warning on the poster) that would emphasize even further the decadence of a society in decline, which brutally manipulates its fellows. The author uses aggressive language in his texts, to state his opinion on the way in which those using it see the world/reality, and less to generate psychologies, as it is the case of British playwrights. Peca's characters are young people, exponents of a post-communist generation revolted against a society that rules you out unless you comply with it. With Peca, tragism comes from failure to adapt or compromise, at the end. The text is written in the brutalist spirit of British playwrights, but fails to reflect the same literary value or boldness; instead it provides more a street language, which the author wants to turn into a style. Peca's characters "cannot utter a sentence that doesn't contain conventionally called obscene words. As there are few of them, dialogue becomes extremely monotonous."^{dlxxxii}

Exploring sexuality gives the author the possibility to speculate even more the tendency to shock (people) by intensifying deviating behaviors. "All four high school young people from Peca's play, namely Nils and Hans, Heidi and Lola, are versions of mankind's post sexual era. Girls love (other) girls, boys "suck" it and take drugs, they are in deep suffering, they have a *spleen*, as the English would put it, in late 19th century, which Peca involuntarily expresses by everything that he writes."^{dlxxxiii} Just as it happens in the case of young brutalists' works, the sexual libertinage used by the author is a consequence of the way in which the depicted society sees sex. The disinhibition of a society freed from prejudices, in which sex of all kinds takes the place of genuine feelings, generates characters' dissatisfaction, just like in the case of heroes from British texts. Nils is in love with Heidi, but she prefers Lola maybe also because "it is cool to be a lesbian"^{dlxxxiv}, and she "convinced herself to be a lesbian."

From the stylistical point of view, except for insulting language, the author's main intention is to express a far-fetched realism, by means of as much violence as possible. The playwright aspires to the same type of hyper-reality that

we find in the *theatre of blood and sperm*, only here we deal with the Romanian reality. Marginals are those who take the floor here. We see young people abandoned by a society that doesn't know to provide any kind of assistance and rejects any individual who does not fit the efficiency parameters of the plan created by capitalism. These are young people in an unhappy relationship, with a deviating sexuality, desperate to make some money or obtain drugs at any cost, in a disorganized society where most people who are not worth it have money, and those who live by the rules become a 'neglectable quantity'. The frailty of interhuman relations and the joining of poor-rich, love-indifference, fake-genuine antitheses provide a particular dimension to the drama construction frame.

Essentially, one may spot the British trend influences at the level of language, which implies excessive use of idioms and expressions that made their way to domestic stages with difficulty, with the author betting on the thirst for sensation(al) of contemporary amateurs of art. In the absence of a personal drama style, he looks for spectacular "patterns" as far as possible, and proposes outrageous scenes, in order to draw people in (to the theater hall), wanting to build up the reputation of an "inconvenient" playwright.

Saviana Stănescu

Young Peca is not the only playwright who prefers "strong" language on stage. Another important "converted" from poetry to drama, worldwide acknowledged writer, who declares her Western influences, is Saviana Stănescu. In fact, the author is among the first playwrights in Romania who get in contact with the workshops from the Royal Court.^{dlxxxv} Her settling down in the United States of America and the contact with the stringent drama conflict construction techniques, a predilection for social-political themes, as well as the sustained work of the text creator and the performance creator in a homogenous team, which is a practice typical for the Western pattern, singularized Saviana Stănescu's writing style. The play *Să epilăm spre Vest (Let's shave it to the West)*, which is written in a "totally different context compared to the Romanian drama context"^{dlxxxvi} makes the transition from the poetical-metaphorical drama style, practiced in *Proscrisa (Outcast)*, toward a style whose incisive and direct language reminds us of the British brutalists. The play premiere took place at "La MaMa" Theater in New York, directed by young Benjamin Mosse, where director Andrei Șerban also had his international directing debut. *Să epilăm spre Vest* develops a current theme for our contemporary society, namely immigration, addressed from the perspective of its two sides: exit from the squalid space, perceived as a salvation, and imprisonment in a different space, which proves to be an illusive paradise. Obsession for immigration and the identity crisis in a multicultural world become a defining theme for the work of this author who skillfully integrates the Romanian reality of the new society after December 1989 into the globalizing American context. Saviana Stănescu's text is a bitter-sweet story or rather a drama "powdered" with strong touches of the theater of the absurd, an "exorcizing attempt"^{dlxxxvii} by shaving demons from the past, as the author herself points it out. Briefly, this is Daniela's story, a girl who leaves Romania, recently freed from the communist regime, to get married in

the United States of America, hoping to find happiness over there. Characters are not really tragical, and the play is not an example of genuine contemporary tragedy, even if the author's intention was to explore a "great topic addressing the way in which collective traumas impact man, the fact that our small lives are determined by big hysterical and historical outbursts of the social and political sector"^{dlxxxviii}. It is mainly a drama of alienation and belongs to the gallery of plays in which characters become victims of their own naivety, as it is Robbie's case, the character from *Shopping and F***ing* by Mark Ravenhill, harshly punished for his naïve attempt to find happiness in an alternative world. Even if Daniela is young enough to not have fully suffered from the communist regime ordeals, she is deeply affected by its effects and the confusion of a society struggling to make the not at all easy transition from communism to capitalism. The young woman lives together with her mother and brother in a destitute apartment in Bucharest, striving to save her other brother from the peril entailed by his involvement in street manifestations aimed at overthrowing the current contemporary political regime. Under the circumstances, in theory, the only way out seems to be her leaving to the "promise land", i.e. the United States of America, to get married to a total stranger, but which implies, in fact, her being also sexually exploited, in the house of that unknown man.

In this case, the place unity becomes flexible, the heroine "commuting" from Romania to USA and back, in search of happiness, just like Jane/Alice, the female character from *Closer*, who leaves a place of suffering and disappointment, and dares crossing the ocean in a journey of hope and happiness, tragically ending in the long run. The spatial-geographical demarcation acquires importance for the dramatic conflict dimension, emphasizing the essential differences between the two worlds that Daniela has to choose from.

Să epilăm spre Vest (Let's shave it to the West) is "also a language play, not just a story play"^{dlxxxix}, as the author states, which is why she does not blush to use a language preferred by the young generation. This is why her text does not lack words like "ass", "fuck", "what the fuck" or other expressions like "work, eat, fuck, work, eat, fuck".^{dx} In this case, language provides characters and their background with credibility. "I am playing with stereotypes, with clichés, by means of my characters, precisely because, generally speaking, people perceive each other depending on stereotypes"^{dxci}, the author says, and language participates in their configuration: a poor and sexually abused immigrant, or the dictators' couple originating from Dracula's land.

While Peca wants to make a parody out of the violent/vulgar language, often giving in to the passion for gratuitousness, Saviana Stănescu "elegantly refuses gratuitousness in the text"^{dxcii}, even if she abides by the "recipe" of the young generation to write contemporary drama, and makes language serve the portrayal of a confused world lacking perspective and points of reference, which man wants to escape from, as Peca's character, Nils, wants, this time at the cost of alienation. The difference between Daniela and Nils is that she chooses action over passiveness, moving away from Nils' fatalist vision on the world. And yet, despite that, her attempt to break the vicious circle of suffering and misery, and get to a

better even illusory world, proves to be a lost cause eventually. Daniela fails to find happiness in either world: the man who was meant to become her husband dies crushed under the walls of the World Trade Center (an allusion to the famous 9/11) while her nightmares from the past still haunt her conscience, no matter what territory she is in. The play is essentially a perfect metaphor of the contemporary man's seclusion. Just as it happens in the world depicted in *Blasted*, *Shopping and F***ing* or *Closer*, escape becomes impossible, and the only allowed alternative becomes death or loneliness.

If Peca makes use of language, first of all, in order to shock the spectator, Saviana Stănescu uses the metaphor of the Absurd depicted by the image of the two dictators thirsty for blood, which suck the lifeblood out of Daniela, and other "Ceausescu style" hallucinations, laying emphasis on "certain wounds of the memory made to scream"^{dxci} haunting you in every corner of the world.

Playwright Saviana Stănescu identifies with character Daniela, but not in an autobiography sense, as Peca does. The author makes a confession: "There is a part of me in each and every character, up to a certain extent"^{dxci}, but in this case her identification is more related to her immigrant status and the turmoil she is struggling with, in her attempt to find her place between these two different worlds and cultures (West vs. East) feeling she doesn't completely belong to either of them. This is about the conflict of immigrants trying to find a new home, without being able to let the other one go for good. Even if the main theme, i.e. immigration, cannot be explicitly found in the panoply of the British brutalists themes, the text is written in their realistic spirit, addressing issues that young people have to deal with, namely escape from a society where they no longer find their place, and the attempt to find happiness in alternative "realities".

The play of 1999, UNITER award winning, i.e. *Apocalipsa gonflabilă* (Inflatable apocalypse) is another text that seems to have undergone the realist influences of the *in-yer-face* drama, less shocking in terms of language, but just as strong as drama intensity. The text is a satire on reality shows (which simply invaded Romania after December 1989), and on the media society that may "swallow up" man suffocated by a virtual reality that no longer finds its own identity. Just like with Peca, the text tends to parody clichés in the contemporary language. Just like in the case of the "young savages" plays, apocalypse takes place in only one place unity, i.e. an apartment in a communist block of flats, in fact a class II studio, which is grey, poverty-stricken and well-known to the Romanian reader/spectator. The problems protagonists have to face are, again, inherited from communism. This time, each character has a handicap, starting with Arti, who is the "story-teller", being at the center of the plot, just like Nils from Ștefan Peca's play. He is a deaf-dumb young man, forced to type at the computer with his legs, because of his arms diplegia, raised by a blind grandmother, a mother with a facial paresis and a shortened leg, which makes her helpless and incapable of walking more than 1 km per day, and a father immobilized in a wheelchair because of an accident. The hyper-reality dose present in Sarah Kane's work, which young Ștefan Peca aspires to, is efficiently adapted by Saviana Stănescu to the Romanian reality. Handicapped people in a society that proves incapable of providing them with a minimum

support, rather willing to reject any human being who does not fit the "new man" pattern created by the Party, homes where poverty and misery reign, being themselves perfect areas for the post-communist tragedy, which the despair to grasp objects previously forbidden by the totalitarian regime comes to add up to. Saviana Stănescu's play becomes emblematic for the tragedy people live after the communist era, thanks to the mélange of surrealism and extreme reality, an idea that also results from this excerpt from the (playwright's) instructions, obsessively repeated along the text, precisely to emphasize the characters' despair:

"Advertising break. Everybody stays still. Mother comes in, walking like a contestant at a beauty pageant, and stops in the middle of the room, with a large, professional smile on her lips.

Mother: My family needs a color TV set, and they will get it. Does your family need a color TV too? Stop sleeping on it. Register for "a suicide live". Your beloved ones are worth the sacrifice. You jump and you win. Call now!"^{dxci}

The tendency to shock borrowed from the British brutalists does not come from language, in this case, but from the mixture of absurd elements and extreme reality, well focused in the above-mentioned excerpt, which includes hyper reality ingredients typical for the *in-yer-face* drama. "The current times' reality was replaced by its advertising"^{dxci} and "the misery unity hides behind the spectacular opposition."^{dxci} That is why, in *Apocalipsa gonflabilă* (*Inflatable apocalypse*), the author promotes death, which became "the meaning of a world having too little meaning"^{dxci} in our contemporary society. Domestic comfort outclasses life, since apartments and color TV sets are exchanged for a human being's life. In a world in which a simple TV set is considered to be more precious than life itself, the human being loses all meanings, and death has no value anymore. Everything is for sale, and man falls prey to the passion for possession over material things lacking actual importance, coming to sacrifice for nothing at the end of the day. Man himself no longer values himself: "No, no, no, don't take away our TV set! Take anything else, but not the TV set; you cannot destroy us like that..."^{dxci} Arti's grandmother desperately cries out to the two agents who had come to investigate the mother's suicide, helped by her own family, in exchange of that TV set they won. Death generates death, and the remaining family members cannot enjoy the TV set they won for too long, as there isn't anyone left capable to go out and buy supplies, and the father decides to take his own life. It seems that the author took her inspiration from the play *Blasted*, which addresses the theme of death bringing about death with just as much detachment. Even if the topic is tackled by other means than the ones used by Sarah Kane, death is presented by both writers as a part of the contemporary society, whose tendency is to reduce the importance of this aspect of life up to vulgarization.

Just like in the case of Sarah Kane's heroes, people live their existence in a hell they cannot change, as they do not know its opposite, and, since they do not have a comparison term, they do not find the strength to fight against their own suffering. In Sarah Kane's plays, death is violent and dehumanizes the one causing it, while in Saviana Stănescu's plays, death is

deprived of value and transformed into a meaningless act. The particular and passionate death from *Blasted* is generalized, and deprived of meaning in *Apocalipsa gonflabilă (Inflatable apocalypse)* as its protagonists kill themselves just as easy as they would do it in a game on the computer.

The dangerous mixture of reality and virtual reality, and the escape to an alternative reality is another element specific for the “young savages” drama, that playwright Saviana Stănescu appeals to, but which she provides a totally different dimension to. In the version she proposes, people from the real world are even paid visits by people from the virtual world, as one can notice in the following excerpt: “Labila comes out through the monitor. She is dressed in worker overalls, under which she has an evening black dress. She adjusts her outfit during the monologue rendered below, and looks in all the mirrors or glasses in the room.

Labila: Hello. I’m a little bit late. Such fidgetiness today in Cyberspace. Chaos. Some individuals got involved in the process, a study commission or something, for the prevention or countering of Apocalypse C. The world has gone mad. Why study, why prevent, counter what? They stop you at the virtual street corner, they give you papers with “May Day”, at the restaurant they make you eat dishes with gravy and, what is more, you discover another message on the plate: “Save computers, save mankind!” I’m sick. Give me some olives. I can’t stand gravy.

Arti: Have we got any olives?

Ola: Give her some peanuts, maybe she won’t know the difference.

Labila: And this is still nothing. 10 minutes or 10 hours ago, they made me, yes made me take part in a round table. I was reproached I had no galactic citizen conscience, and that we would never enter the intergalactic society that way. Words. Conferences. (Arti gives her some peanuts) Thanks... They claim the virtual world cannot abandon her little sister, the real world ... Nonsense. Movies showing orphanages. Handicapped people. Disasters. You know, just to impress us. Horror! (crunching peanuts) I am only watching romance and comedy movies. And yet, I liked this beautiful clip with suicides. There were these people throwing off the blocks of flats; beautiful! You could see tensed, stretched bodies, best quality contemporary ballet, puff, crushing against the asphalt, and trash collectors would come to pack them up in blue plastic bags. I was rolling out with laughter. I came back two hours later. I was alone in the entire hall... (to Arti) Massage me a bit, dear, I’m still very tensed...

Ola: Maybe I won’t be needed anymore.

Labila: Let me tell you something ... (she holds her hand, Ola wants to get away, but doesn’t manage to). They caught me. They got me dressed in this filthy overall. And, guess what? They sent me to the low frequency lines, to rise up the morale of the electrons masses, which are allegedly going to be traumatized when the Apocalypse comes. There was such a craze out there! There were rallies. Strikes. Sparks. Short-circuits. “Down with the binary system!” But I’m boring you with these n-dimensional stories of mine. Here, in the tridimensional world, everything is simpler...

Ola: Life gets complex around here as well ...”^{dc}

Essentially, the attraction for virtual reality felt by the contemporary man is nothing but the translation of primordial man’s need for illusion. The alternative, even if illusory, plays an important role in the life of characters from the British drama of the ‘90s. In the contemporary society presented in these works, man projects multiple existences in a world that replaces reality, namely virtual reality, where everything is possible. In the case of Saviana Stănescu’s characters, experiences of this genre differ from the ones of the brutalist heroes. While they are satisfied with seeking only (most of the time sexual) pleasure, with Saviana Stănescu, the individual projects almost his/her entire existence in the virtual space. He frantically explores the relatively unlimited possibilities provided by the alternative world, blunting his senses and feelings in experiences that he can’t have in the real world: he loses and wins over lives with the easiness of a child’s game, he flirts or makes sex with no inhibitions, easily buys the things that he/she needs, he lives like a small God that masters time and space. The very inflatable woman used by his own father to chase away his loneliness comes down from the computer and becomes his lover and friend. Their relationship is normally carried out in the fictional reality beyond reality, as over there everything is possible: Arti overcomes his timidity and flirts with her, they get to know each other, they discover that they like each other, they tease each other, they are actually remaking the usual love ritual between a man and a woman. Captive of his own body that doesn’t help him, lacking the ability to talk, to hear or use his arms, he finds a refuge in virtual reality, helped by his computer that he writes with his legs at, which becomes more than a friend to him, namely a natural extension of his body. In his desolating seclusion, a foreigner to his own family that rejects him, he knows that his options are extremely limited and that his only chance is the virtual world. He has no other perspective because all his paths have been closed since the beginning of his life. He has been doomed, ever since he was born, to be part of a family with issues, which proves to be deprived of the necessary physical and psychological resources to help him. He is a culprit with no fault, a prisoner to his own invalidity, born in a totalitarian regime that excluded handicapped persons, as they did not fit the utopic prototype of the New Man. And yet, he wants to live despite all these shortcomings. Arti does not choose suicide, but in the end he dies choked with a piece of plastic originating from his virtual girlfriend. “In the ‘actual’ reality of fiction, they die because of greed, helplessness and misery.”^{dci}

Saviana Stănescu’s characters like to live, but they especially like to win. Unlike the defeated characters from the British brutalist drama, her heroes from the play *Apocalipsa gonflabilă (Inflatable apocalypse)* are not real victims, in the actual sense of the term, but they leave the life stage only after having won, as it is the case of Arti who lives in a virtual reality, “in the computer’s program, ‘consuming’ the ‘actual’ reality. Dead, alive or non-dead, Saviana Stănescu’s heroes are winners.”^{dci}

Gianina Cărbunariu

Another representative of the new generation of domestic playwrights, member and founder of the “dramAcum” project, resident of the drama writing workshops from the Royal Court, where the play *Kebab* (or *Mady.baby.edu* in the modified version of the play) was also staged, is the director and playwright Gianina Cărbunariu. She is also a promoter of the Romanian contemporary drama, abiding by the “team work” principle, applied to the playwright-director-actors, with a view to developing the text for the stage. The third text selected for the study herein is *Stop the Tempo* by the above-mentioned author, a text that triggered special interest both in the country and abroad, being translated in eight languages and staged by foreign directors (in France, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Ireland). “To me, she is one of the best and most talented drama writers. Her texts do not have any extra (as in useless) word, they are concise and clear, and they have a very good drama structure. Her characters are strongly built, and their movement is rigorously controlled. [...] Gianina has a powerful writing style. Behind her lines, one can sense a strong will”^{dciii}, according to Katrin Hiller’s statement, the director who staged *Stop the Tempo* for Volkstheater in 2008. It is worth mentioning that the four performances were all sold out. Considered by the Romanian critics one of the “most important texts for our emerging dramaturgy”^{dciv}, this play is a “manifesto of a revolted and deaf-angry generation” from the urban area in the early 2000. Hence, the presence in the show of some of Marius Ianuș’ poetry from *Manifestul anarchist* (*Anarchist manifesto*) and *Ursul din container* (*The bear in the container*): “I am connected/ to this glorious land/with blood claws/with a madman spasm”^{dcv} which come to emphasize more sharply the radicalism of the young generation’s despair.

The play *Stop the Tempo* staged by its very author at the *Luni (Monday) Theater from Green Hours*, which is a space dedicated to experiment, innovation and research, just like the Royal Court, is the story of three young people who feel prisoners in the world they live in. Maria is 27, she has three jobs, so as to live up to the consumerism level of her parents, she is not involved in any stable relationship, and she has no sex life, which is why she decides to date her gynecologist. Paula is 25, she quit her copywriter job, because she could no longer stand the falseness of the advertisements, and she lives the deception of her breaking up with her lesbian girlfriend who left her for a man. Rolando is 23, he is a “Richie Rich” guy, he works as a DJ, but he is not cool enough for the standards required by his generation fashion, which is why he strives to be even more “cool”. They are all connected to an existence consistent with the social rules, but which they all hate. The Romanian society recently freed from communism and abiding now by the Western values supposes a quick emphasizing of consumerism related elements and a change of the life style that becomes hallucinating (*push the tempo*). By systematically decoupling the power grid from clubs, supermarkets, theaters, the three characters intend to break the fast rhythm that leads to a meaningless life (*stop the tempo*). They accidentally meet and get to know each other, subsequent to a car crash, a situation that seems to be inspired from the play *Closer* by Patrick Marber, when two of the protagonists, Dan and Jane, meet also under the same unexpected circumstances. In both plays, the (car) accident is the violent event that stops the rhythm and triggers a change of perspective to its heroes, making them discover life but

especially each other. Consequences are different though: while Dan and Jane decide to stay together, living a beautiful love story, the three young people from *Stop the tempo* decide to take action together, united by their need to retrieve themselves and those alike. The opposition between connection and disconnection (this second option is the one suggested by the three young people) indicates the dramatism of choosing between to be in this world, blinded by the rapidity it evolves with, and to situate one’s self next to it, spectators and victim. The loss of hearing by one of the characters is illustrative of the fact that he becomes deaf to the society restrictions, searching for an appropriate rhythm, together with his fellows.

The utopic objective of the total disconnection is blown away when two of the protagonists are caught red-handed during a mission, their hands on the power grid, electrocuting themselves. The one who remains and who had the role to scream in the middle of the crowd, thus triggering panic, is doomed to wait for the emergence of the other two, so as to continue the dream of Romania’s total disconnection. “If Romania was connected to a big power board, I would simply set fire to it.”^{dcvi}

In terms of language, the play expresses “the freedom of a man who speaks in drama a language that we have to learn, in order to be able to recognize it.”^{dcvii} Subsequently, we come across the same language typical for the generation that the author represents: “shit”, “screw him, mother fucker”, “shove it up your ass”, “pussies”, “sluts”, “fuck”^{dcviii} The writer tries to shed characters of all forms of falseness, by means of language, and to build easily recognizable characters to the young generation. The author uses words to fix actions, words being nothing but a system used to fix situations and heroes’ states in the stage concrete frame. Therefore, expressions, idioms are not obscene, but only trivial, a token of the speaker’s linguistic incapacity to use a different register. Beyond idiomatic and reductionist expressions specific for the young generation, the language simplicity seems to be the author’s way to say that those people lack time assigned for personal development – “he’s running out of time”^{dcix}, Maria says in the end.

The play even begins with a “strong” word, which encompasses the whole life of the three young people from *Stop the Tempo*, a word that acquires simple and musical tones, being often repeated during the plot (the same procedure as the one that is used in Ștefan Peca’s play): *shit*. One of the girls has a *shitty* job, the other one quits her job from that *shitty* advertising world, and the young man from the group, the “Richie Rich” guy who thinks that everything is just a big *shit* gets carried away by the *shitty* imperative of “I must be cool”, I *must be* at whatever cost, I just must... Being sensational is no longer enough; the generation after December 1989 becomes dominated by “must”, therefore... they must be extra-cool.

In reality, we are not dealing with actual violent language, as it happens with the British plays, but rather a revolt expression of a generation that the eternal transition and imitation of the Western liberalism bring to exasperation, with an attitude of rebellion that instigates to anarchy, out of a radical despair.

Even if the apparent place unity changes – clubs, pubs, supermarkets, TV stations, everything is subordinated to one single main frame where it all happens, i.e. Romania, which is, in fact, the real heroine, this play being “its big and absolute show.”^{dx} This time, the young people do not want to escape from this space, but want to shave it from ground, to make room for a better one. Complicity full of revolt, an alliance against a stereotype life is born out of a total unexpected happening involving three young people. Three sad and tired lonely people, during their friendship, they find unexplainable happiness in a free, naïve gesture: disconnecting the world from the power supply, in exchange of a moment of darkness and quietness. *Stop the tempo* wants to say, as directly as possible, that the only alternative is compliance.

The “very direct, with a poetical force like a fist in the face”^{dx} text, a characterization that makes us think of the one made by Aleck Sierz to the *in-yer-face* theater, has no hard time to decipher metaphorical implications in the story of the three people who don’t know each other, but who decide to initiate a “crusade” of the world disconnection. Even if their gesture may be interpreted as a symbolical terrorist act, in reality this is something totally different, this is about the powerful urge to change something in the wrong development of the world. This is the time when the world refuses the rhythm imposed by others and decides to go back to the basic humanity that has been vitiated by the technological boom. One does feel the need for a fresh start in this world, symbolized by the gesture of these three young people whose existence does not entirely belong either to the communist era, or the capitalist era.

Two women and a man. Even if, despite the basic situation, Gianina Cărbunariu’s play is not about a love triangle, but about the state of mind of a generation, sexuality is a big issue that shouldn’t be overlooked. In this idea order, the three characters that meet by chance in a club from Bucharest are used to show the connotation of the intercourse, which has nothing to do with love anymore, or the expression of one’s feelings. Quite on the contrary, it is the answer to chronic boredom, which leads to seclusion and exhaustion instead of facilitating human closeness. Deprived of any poetry, demanding new peaks of bliss meant to compensate for the inner void, intercourse in Gianina Cărbunariu’s play fits the British contemporary drama text pattern (*Closer*, *Shopping and F***ing*, *Penetrator*). The random nature of sexual partners and the lack of emotional involvement are defining for a human action that is not even a consequence of instinct, but a socially and culturally conditioned reaction to an environment saturated with images of artificial and mechanized voluptuousness. Here is an excerpt for the sake of exemplification:

“Rolando: yes. This is how this whole thing started in the first place. Out of a stupidity. Thoughtlessly. Totally thoughtlessly. This is how I felt when I got out of Space. Here I am with two pussies that I will have to fuck all night long, as I promised. And, to be honest about it, I was in no mood for it, anymore. Maria: What have I got myself into? This was the first thought when I got out of Space. For once, I wanted to be damned, a girl with no inhibitions, who doesn’t say no to challenging

experiences, and I found myself with two strangers in the car. Two completely unknown yet extremely cool guys.

Paula: All night long. I’ll get laid with a guy and a chick. And none of them is my type. Such a bullshit!

Rolando: And I was imagining, just like in a maximum bullshit porn movie, how we will all three get laid.

Maria: Nonsense. Total nonsense. I was silently driving on Magheru Boulevard.

Maria: So I take a good look at him, through the rear-view mirror. And, damn, although he is 10 years younger, this type is his type. H’s just as cool as my gynecologist. Or it only seems to me that way. I’ll fuck a guy who looks like my gynecologist. Great!

Rolando: And I impassibly look out of the window. But I can still peep and see that the chick in front of me is spying on me through the rear-view mirror.

Paula: And I can only look at his sneakers. UK. Definitely UK. She’s got a pair like those. Only they’re unisex. Just like her, actually. I believe though that hers are more expensive. This is exactly what I am thinking of. She has got more expensive sneakers than him, the guy sitting next to me in the back of the car. I will have wild sex with this guy, and I am thinking of her. Her sneakers, to be more precise, made in the UK, where she left with her boyfriend, whom she had met in a club and for whom she had instantaneously fallen.

Rolando: And that chick next to me is staring at my feet, as if she wanted to see what brand my sneakers are. Fucking sluts, they are the type that wanders through clubs, to pick up cool guys like me. Ha, ha, ha!

Maria: Thank God for this music, thus we don’t have to talk.

Paula: It’s a good thing the music is on, what was there to talk about anyway?

Rolando: This music sucks! But it’s better this way...

Maria: There we go. They start taking off their clothes, without looking at each other. They touch without looking at each other. There’s no fun in all this! (To the other two) I thought we would have some fun! What the fuck is this?”^{dxii}

That moment proves to be extremely disappointing to all the three partners, who desperately try to feel something “real”, because there is nothing beyond sexual arousal, no kind of affection or emotional involvement, nothing to make them experience real, deep pleasure. “I am 23 and my life is already fucked up. And this is not because of the accident, but because I no longer find anything to give me a minimum of genuine pleasure. I am 23 and I haven’t done anything. And I don’t think I’ll ever do something that really pleases me”^{dxiii}, Rolando, the male character, says. Eventually, the car accident proves to be the only real thing with real consequences, from all their adventures. This rush for “authentic” reality, in the pile of counterfeited ads and feelings among so many extra cool guys^{dxiv} connected to a certain rhythm, other than the three characters’ rhythm, reminds us of the extreme trials of the brutalist heroes to feel pleasure by whatever means and at whatever cost, from self-flagellation to suicide. Even if the three young people’s tendencies cannot be classified as self-flagellation in the actual sense of the word, we may say that sex with unknown people fits the “revenge on one’s self”

category, after arousal is gone and discomfort (where applicable) settles in. Gianina Cărbunariu proposes an escape from an alienated world, where fake virtual communication replaces actual communication, an escalation of de-connection that acquires, in this case, the dimension of a symbol of the return to communication based on non-virtual, but human relations.

Beyond the influences of the drama writing school from the Royal Court, the most important thing in Gianina Cărbunariu's texts is the living element that lies behind some human beings exhausted by the history they are carrying in their back, a history that pushes the young generation toward rebellion (communist history, with Saviana Stănescu, or post-communist, in Ștefan Peca's case).

Conclusions

What draws attention with regard to the influences of the *in-ner-face theatre* trend on the contemporary Romanian dramaturgy, judging by the analyzed texts, is a certain type of lively "raw emotion", a kind of "visceral" nature of writing in addressing young people's issues in a new and direct way. The main idea deriving from the new texts is given by the revolt of the young generation, which may acquire diverse forms and which may be heard now thanks to its own language against society, something that was impossible (to do) in the past, during the communist regime. In order to express young people's uncensored turmoil, the authors belonging to the young generation appeal – sometimes in excess – to a "pattern of Romanian language that is specific for angry, mad people, overcome by language."^{dexv} This perspective implies the use of language as a means to define a human being freed from the belts of the conventional "rules", thus marking the refusal of doubletalk, as well as acknowledgement of the street reality. These rebels against conventions want to portray the world as it is, with its ugly, natural face, and the first and most significant sign of rebellion is the word "strong", which shocks and dares people.

And yet, some do not grant this literary good will presumption that places the obscene language of contemporary drama in the grey area of failure to express life otherwise. According to these opinions, vulgarity signals a lack of substance, compensated by a simplistic recipe that is successful among the audience whose thirst for sensational elements must be met.

Synthesizing the two opinions and freeing ourselves from the uncontrolled enthusiasm for the new forms of drama and the puritan and rigid approach, we consider that the new dramaturgy is still negotiating its limits and forms of expression. Using the successful patterns from the British drama, but being forced to adapt to the Romanian social and linguistic peculiarities, it still can't find its path. Thus, we can explain the deviations that co-exist with moments of real inspiration and we may say that, once this stage of material gathering is complete, the Romanian pure and tough drama may represent more than a forced replica, exceeding the early documentation stage with regard to post-communist language and man.

We believe that it is precisely this labor that may give us the best answer to the following question: is there anything left and what exactly, beyond the challenge caused by the "brutality speech" characteristic of the British drama? At first sight, no matter how strange, licentious, absurd, and even brutal characters' speech might seem, in the end you get the impression that these plays, just like other important plays from the Romanian drama, demolish the existing concepts of the post-communist society and the inter-generation conflict, providing answers to the young generation's unease. Almost everything that drama and spectators identify as new dramaturgy, with a few outstanding exceptions that get lost in the background noise, has at its very heart the problems, inadequacies and frustrations of young people turned into rebels burdened by love, failure, booze and drugs, by their very own disoriented pursuit, by cowardice, impetuous and naïve gestures that change drama into tragedy in a second. *Nils's fucked up day* is the story of five revolted young people; *Stop the tempo* presents the revolt of three adolescents against the compliance with the consumerist society, *Să epilăm spre Vest (Let's shave it to the West)* illustrates the drama related to the alienation of a young woman, in exchange of alleged happiness; *Apocalipsa gonflabilă (Inflatable apocalypse)* talks about the drama of a young man forced to isolate himself into the virtual world, because of his handicap.

This is the age of existential models, of rebellion and flight from home. "Everything that you experience/live must be transformed into drama"^{dexvi} seems to be the slogan of domestic playwrights, exponents of the young generation. And, since the mission of Drama is to put a mirror in front of the world (and make it look at it), texts are but a reflexion of the adolescent dominated by "must" and whose language is the reductionist and straightforward language heard in the street. He must be cool, he must make money, he must have a sex life, he must be happy whatever the price, and he must be a model citizen. He must (be that) because his parents, teachers or society says so. In *Ziua futută a lui Nils (Nils' fucked up day)* and *Stop the tempo*, negation rules. I "must not" becomes I do NOT do (it), I am NOT (this), and I do NOT want (to). I do not want to be a cool or model citizen, I do not want to have a relationship, I do not want to hold a certain social status – these are features of an apparently numb generation, as, in reality, this generation is as alive as it could be in all stereotypes related to love, betrayal or sorrow. These young people are revolted because they are born guilty and they will die guilty, without having ever known their fault. The exponents of the "after December 1989" generation suffer all the way till the end, whatever that end may be, but they don't have a precise fault. This is why characters' possibilities to choose do not comprise the option between two ways, but between two worlds where, paradoxically, existence seems impossible, because it is a wonderful, paradise like one, but lacks physical concreteness, while the latter is much too real. Texts do not tell stories with a high stake, but rely on the life experiences of some young authors, for whom contemporary works on man's happiness, emotions or identity crisis become the subject matter of free rephrasing, as there is no more taboo for them in any area, which is why all the difficult words from Romanian find plenty of room in them.

It seems, from the analysis that has been done, that Romanian playwrights do not write their texts, but the ones of a generation's method. The language's straightforwardness seems to be the most visible feature borrowed from the young brutalists. Thus, a new question is born: do these works reflect the state and concerns of the new dramaturgy, in general, or rather the young playwrights' preferences, influenced by the powerful British artists with radical-subjective visions? The tendency is that, once authors reach their artistic maturity, the desire typical for the *in-her-face* theater to shock by a language brought directly from the street and put into the mouth of actors diminishes in time, as they make use of other forms of expression as well. In the case of Ștefan Peca, for whom one might believe the story doesn't matter, but rather the expression form, the playwright somehow makes an exception from this rule with his play *The Sunshine Play* (2005). In this play, the author tries to dramatize a fact of life, but eventually comes to understand that life is no drama, but it may be dramatized, and this according to the texts in which he is present as a character too and according to his attempts to portray reality as faithfully as possible. Having settled down in the United State of America, Saviana Stănescu develops her career as a writer who, stylistically speaking, moves away from what she used to write in the '90s. She gives up parody-like exploring of expression forms, and her stories become more and more realistic and personal, managing to temper violent language, without altering the message or the stories' truth. Gianina Cărbunariu takes the next step with the play *Mady-baby.edu.* toward a drama characterized by a subversiveness that emerges from the overestimation of a reality that cultivates only the reflex of a fierce struggle for survival, that any trace of innocence and tolerance is missing from. She raises the social-critical stake of the new dramaturgy, by bringing misfits back to the fore, which, this time, give up Romania with no regrets. The text theme debates upon the issue of those who decide to leave for good and to build up a different identity in a better world, being convinced that it is impossible to live any longer in a confused and hostile Romania.

The above-mentioned elements point out to the fact that the young authors undertook and acknowledged the drama language need for development, not remaining prisoners of a violent, meaningless drama, constantly adapting the themes of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy. The fact that Gianina Cărbunariu's show, *Stop the Tempo*, was stopped when its authors reached the conclusion that the spectators no longer find themselves in the situations and attitudes displayed in it is another example that comes to prove authors do not necessarily insist upon being faithful to writing according to an often challenged method and that they are aware the methods used up to now in social-critical stake drama will eventually "grow old". The playwright's gesture to give up *Stop the tempo* does not mean the Romanian reality would have undergone drastic changes, but only that her writing belongs to audience related expectations and needs of another stage.

Another type of influence of the British drama pattern, which starts gaining ground in the Romanian drama area, remains the distinct working manner with the drama author, as a collaboration for the creation of a text for the show, and not for the paper. "When I write, I'm not thinking I have to write

a text, but that I have to make a show. Show comes before text, and I always have an idea related to the show, and not the text"^{dexvii}, Gianina Cărbunariu confesses about her artistic creed. The drama text is developed for the show/performance, by direct collaboration between the playwright and the director together with the actors and the entire creation team involved in the process, the stake being the creation of the script for the show, with its specific elements and its peculiarities, taking into account the whole time the cast and the context in which the show is to take place. This collaboration type is the working formula developed in the Romanian drama after 2000 by the groups "dramAcum" and "tangaProject", and is characterized by the playwright's direct involvement in the show creation process. Therefore, after 2000, the Romanian playwright, trained in the drama writing workshops from the Royal Court, no longer "tackles the play as mere literature, but as a part and parcel of the show – written to be played, sometimes developed for certain actors and with a particular director."^{dexviii} As the plays written by the young generation of playwrights make it to the State-owned theaters with difficulty, the only efficient solution to exist artistically speaking was to adopt this working method implying total support from actors and directors of the generation they belong to, being represented in unconventional stage areas.

Final Conclusions

Romanian drama whose key features we have tried to depict in this work has faced two major challenges during the second half of last century. Between 1945 and 1989, its legitimacy was argued in an artificial world built on the false ground of the ideological and political dictate, and one that was shyly and subversively aspiring to show the whole artistic truth on stage. The second confrontation takes place after 1989, between the reality of an era extinction, and the same artistic truth, this time openly immortalized, without any double code, for the audience after December 1989.

Although carried out on the background of different political and ideological regimes, the two periods of time are, as shown in these pages, similar thanks to the struggle principle that defines them – the eternal struggle and search between two worlds conditioning the Romanian drama. In the context of sociological and political changes, drama always tries to adapt, redefining its relation with the world and the means whereby it describes or rejects it. Crisis is its way of waking up from latency, signaling unease and generating cultural fertility at the same time.

Analyzing the post-war drama literature, we noticed the strategies meant to secure the survival of values in a totally marked by totalitarianism world. Subsequent to a first stage of "sovietization", an ideological meltdown occurs in the '60s-'70s, implying a certain openness toward a cultural Europe, marked by playwrights like Marin Sorescu, Dumitru Solomon, Teodor Mazilu and Iosif Naghiu, who write drama impregnated with meanings of the absurd. Over this period, significant playwrights emerge, as the ones mentioned above, plus others like D.R. Popescu, Romulus Guga and Horia Lovinescu, whose activity has continued since the '50s. This is also the time when a different relation with the drama text

and innovations in the performance art is credited, which becomes obvious by the acknowledgement of directors like Lucian Pintilie, David Esrig, Radu Penciulescu, Vlad Mugur, after the signal given by Liviu Ciulei thanks to the identification of an important tool of re-dramatization, i.e. suggestion.

Thus, drama, as a criticism and symbolic tool, acquires a special status, thanks to some shows staged by talented directors like Valeriu Moisescu, Lucian Giurgescu, Andrei Șerban, Silviu Purcărete, who join the above-mentioned '60s generation.

As Marian Popescu states, drama after the '90s inherits "performance related concepts nailed in the '60s"^{dexix}, trying though to align to the new reality of the consumerist society. T avant-garde forms from the performance art after December 1989 represent a reaction to a new dominating thinking and attitude. Although obsolete from an institutional point of view, the Romanian theater adapts to the new trends, in terms of repertory.

The Romanian dramaturgy after December 1989 has been marked by two stages: the first stage triggered by the '90s playwrights (Radu Macrinici, Alina Nelega, Alina Mungiu, Saviana Stănescu, Vlad Zografi, Horia Gârbea), preoccupied with denouncing the past, the attempt to re-discover the cultural identity and portray social reality, and a second stage marked by the texts of the 2000 generation, written by young people trained in liberty, sensitive and connected to what is new. And yet, besides the fact that it illustrates freedom of speech and lack of inhibitions, the plays of the new generation also stand out by shallowness, cultivating aesthetics of the immediate (effects) by texts inspired from everyday life, with a certain social stake, written in the language of contemporary spectators.

Thus there profile two attitudes born out of the need to retrieve and redefine the Romanian drama after '89, in relation with post-modernity. The concern of playwrights like Saviana Stănescu, Radu Macrinici or Ștefan Caraman with parable, play upon text, novelistic references is counter-balanced by the related "sins", by the revolt of the 2000 generation against the consumerist society – sparkling, yet poor from the point of view of textual strategies. The literature-like nature of plays written in the '90s, which "flirt" with the theater of the absurd (Matei Vișniec), the grotesque parody (Saviana Stănescu) or the parable (Radu Macrinici) combines with the assimilation of social and linguistic reality. The slang enthusiastically used by the '90s generation, in association with the above-mentioned literary procedures becomes, with playwrights asserted after 2000, a propaganda tool faithful to life they want to immortalize on stage.

In relation with these two drama stages, we notice the profiling of a breach in the drama audience, which gathers culture savvy spectators and also young spectators having an ingenuous perception, which only react to plays depicting what is immediately recognizable. The presence of this second category makes the new and young playwrights try to please the audience and not necessarily a particular aesthetic ideal, which leads to two major mutations that we emphasized in the pages of the paper herein.

First of all, we notice a come-back to the subject matter, to the approach of social themes, to the profiling of characters with a biography. Second, the role of the playwright is re-defined, the playwright being directly involved in the show, an aspect that was broadly discussed in the paper herein. In this respect, we underlined the changes within the traditional drama enterprise, dividing playwrights in the following categories: the playwright-writer (the professional drama writer), the playwright-drama critic, the playwright-actor and the playwright-director, and analyzing the extent to which these new formulas modify the drama paradigm.

In the context of international dramaturgy, we may draw the conclusion that the Romanian dramaturgy has had quite a fast rhythm of adjustment to the new reality, especially if we compare it to the literatures of other former communist countries from Eastern Europe. I chose to present the seduction force of the British drama pattern, besides the credit of being part of a great literature, because it has strongly influenced the Romanian dramaturgy after December 1989. Moreover, plenty of Romanian playwrights have been trained at the Royal Court, thus being in contact with the British perception on what the contemporary drama enterprise should be.

The analysis of the British pattern explores the way in which writers like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill or Anthony Nielson address a kind of new expressionism in contemporary tragedies about the human being's alienation in the context of consumerism. The gap related to the assimilation of such anxiety in the Romanian drama is determined by the fact that the Romanian consumerist society is quite recent. And yet, playwrights after 2000 align to the "brutalist" attitude in fashion in England, and some of them (like Ștefan Peca) even use it as a stylistical "whim", but without touching tragic strings like Sarah Kane. Domestic writers do not approach these strong touches, considering that they focus more on the retrieval of the cultural tradition during the controversial communist era.

In this paper, we debate upon the extent to which we are dealing with a new "form with no content" type phenomenon, something very difficult to judge given the tensed relation between identity in the making and borrowed identity.

As for the plays' topics, we may say that, roughly, young writers have fallen prey to mimetism, approaching themes still insufficiently illustrated by reality, and yet in fashion: drugs, murder with no motive, homosexuality. They have even come to represent composition clichés, signaling a theme blockage that may be overcome by promising playwrights like Gianina Cărbunariu, Saviana Stănescu, Ștefan Peca etc. Uninterested in post-modern kaleidoscope, in textualist play or allegory, the new generation of playwrights aims at a double focus expressivity: extremes or everyday life.

And yet, despite the tendency to imitate, we notice that there are some grains of originality that gradually develop and that are to become fertile, as expected, once criteria are set and the audience trained. In other words, we consider that the credit of the new generation of playwrights, which counter-balances their shortcomings and failures, overall resides in the courageous vision and the attempt to bring life on stage,

irrespective of its violence and brutality. Beyond these aspects, as certain frustrations related to the consumerist society are interiorized and changes brought about in the traditional drama enterprise mature, we believe that we will be able to read and watch plays in which the deaf rebellion will also have a core, and not just a voice.

Relating to the picture of the vast analyzed period, we could say that, if communist censorship determined easily identifiable characteristics of the drama phenomenon, dramaturgy after December 1989 is marked by the feeling of drifting apart. As stated in this paper, it is important to underline that the outcome of totalitarianism is strongly felt even after the liberation from the communist regime, and even in the work of the 2000 generation. This painful heritage doesn't necessarily have to be fiercely shaken, but accepted as an indispensable identity component and a possible source of originality for literature, in general.

The period after December 1989 in itself comprised a search for a drama voice, an exceptional directing creativity, an unprecedented increase of artistic forces, but also the confrontation with democracy and the consumerist society principles. This experience revealed the discrepancies of drama institutions, establishing new forms of control over the writer and his/her work. The ideological censorship trauma is replaced by the shadow of economic censorship, which drama people try to avoid.

Looking at the analyzed period on the whole, we consider that, in the direction of great historic-literary ironies, censorship is not gone, but it has simply changed its manifestation forms. Although uninstitutionalized, it has refined its strategies to subjugate public perception, hidden under the umbrella of illusory democracy.

Still, we express our belief that the drama phenomenon has the attributes of a privileged area, being protected by its mechanisms, and this to a great extent. In addition, the Romanian dramaturgy is now capable of managing the transformations and the traps of the era of free access to information. Our concern refers more to a constant cultural tendency, which will implicitly impact drama: the computer, technology and modern communications systems overthrow more and more violently cultural order, thus modifying man's identity and his spiritual needs.

Without wanting to uselessly skid to a lamentation over the contemporary world deprived of values, we consider that it is likely for drama to gradually turn into what culture is everywhere: a private business, a matter of a personal initiative, with all the benefits and dangers typical for any activity of our pluralist society. In this context, one may ask the question how the stage is going to succeed in portraying life, when the stimuli provided by reality, including virtual reality, will compete against drama, with a gradually emphasized force. But this is naturally a question for a future analysis.

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Vasile Luca- communist activist and politician, member of PCR's Central Committee Secretariate, vice president of the Council of Ministres and Romania's finance minister between November 7th 1947 and March 9th 1952. In May 1952 he was accused by the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR) Central Committee plenary of deviationism and anti-party activities and arrested August, the same year. See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasile_Luca.

The Tămădău frame up or The Tămădău Affair – a considerable number of the National Peasants' Party leaders were given the chance to flee Romania. At the Tămădău aerodrom however, communist authorities arrested the fugitives and prosecuted them for 'attempt to establish a government in exile'. It is believed that the entire affair was a set up organized by the Communist Party in order to justify the dissolving of PNT, which eventually took place. Among the Peasants' leaders arrested at Tămădău we can name Ion Mihalache, the party's vice president. See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%8Encenarea_de_la_T%C4%83m%C4%83d%C4%83u.

Constituția de la 1948 și efectele sale. See: <http://www.scribube.com/istorie/CONSTITUTIA-DE-LA-SI-EFECTELE-44716.php>.

Legea naționalizării din 1948. See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legea_na%C8%9Bionaliz%C4%83rii.

Religia în România. See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religia_%C3%AEn_Rom%C3%A2nia.

Departamentul Securității Statului (Department of State Security). See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departamentul_Securit%C4%83%C8%9Bii_Statului.

Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Rechizitoriul: Înscenari, arestarile din 14/15 Mai 1948 (cap-V)*, See: <http://www.universulromanesc.com/ginta/showthread.php?t=957>.

The name (Mișcarea Națională de Rezistență) was given by a group of officials convicted of espionage in a trial orchestrated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Among these officials there were great industrialists, university staff members, heads of the Romanian admiralty, prominent members of the extremist, right wing Iron Guard party.

Irina Deșliu, *Tinerii pictori mai au de învățat*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 28 (July 11th), in Liviu Malița, *Teatrul românesc sub cenzura comunistă*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 7.

For further details, see Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă: 1948-1953*, chapter *Impunerea controlului comunist asupra culturii. Aspecte instituționale*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 38-48.

- Liviu Malița, *Cenzura în teatru. Documente. 1948-1989*, Cluj-Napoca, Efes Publishing House, 2006, p. 7.
The following quotations cited without footnote are taken from Cristian Vasile, *op.cit.* pp.39-41.
Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 1133.
Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc, vol. I*, Bucharest, 1990, p. 143.
I. Felea, *Scriitorii români și literatura proletariană*, Libertatea, year 2, no. 358, October 22nd, 1945 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
Florin Tornea, *Necesitatea unei verificări sau poziția ideologică a doamnei Alice Voinescu*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 5, (February 1st) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
Aurel Baranga, *Ce-am învățat de la Lenin*, Scînteia, Sunday supplement, no. 1639, January 21st, 1950 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 359.
Ibidem.
The following cited articles are taken from Marian Popa, *op.cit.*, p.38.
Florin Tornea, *Rampa*, year 37, series 4, no. 130, May 16th 1948 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 307.
On March 1st 1945, *Scînteia* newspaper titles one of its articles *A Serious Sabotage Gesture at the ARO Cinema (Un grav gest de sabotaj la cinematograful ARO)* and recounts that during a rerun of *Lenin in October*, an 'important' scene was deliberately cut from the movie, causing 50 viewers to vehemently protest. To this day it is unclear whether there were more than 50 spectators in the viewing room, what scene was cut and how come the spectators knew about it. Nevertheless, this cinema - which also hosted one of General Rădulescu's press conferences - had seriously and clearly insulted the Soviet Union. See: Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
Nicolae Moraru, *Studii și eseuri. Spiritul de partid în literatură*, 1950, p. 32.
Lenin alături de noi, editorial, Teatrul Magazine, no. 5, year II, May 1957, p. 3.
George Călinescu, *Spre o critică literară marxist-leninistă*, Națiunea, year 3, no.567, 18.2.1948 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 308.
J. Popper, *Artă și ideologie*, Flacăra, year 1, no. 9, 29.2.1948 and *Ideologia și libertatea artei*, idem, no. 10, 7.3.1948 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 308.
Savin Bratu, *Contemporanul și vremea lui*, Editura De stat pentru literatură și artă, 1959, pp. 277-278.
Două culturi sau cultură și incultură?, Liberalul, year 2, no. 479, 26-28.9.1947 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 311.
Cincinalul, Flacăra editorial, no. 1/157, 6.1.1951 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
Lenin alături de noi editorial, Teatrul Magazine, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
Cassian Maria Spiridon, *Un congres al scriitorilor (I)*, Convorbiri literare, November, 2003.
Liviu Malița, *Ceașescu, critic literar. Stenograma vizitei tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu la Casa Scriitorului de la Mangalia de Nord (Neptun) - 4 august 1971*, Vremea Publishing House, 2007, p. 23.
Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 361.
Nicolae Ceaușescu renames the party at the 9th Communist Congress, in July 1965, after the absorption of The Social-Democratic Party and The Romanian Workers' Party .
Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
Nicolae Moraru, „Referat”: *Problema Teatrelor. Discuții la expunerea tov. Mihai Moraru, la 15 aprilie 1949*, The National Archives of Bucharest, Book Fund: The Ministry for the Arts and Information, 1373, File 15/1949 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p.9.
Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 306.
Barbu Lăzăreanu, *Ion Creangă*, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1947, p. 69.
Nicolae Moraru was an important party activist. Despite the fact that he had no advanced specialty studies, he held several important positions in the following fields: press, propaganda, literary and artistic guidance and control. He was copy editor at the *România liberă* newspaper (1944-1945), manager of *The Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company* (1945-1946), assistant to the chief of PCR'S Central Committee Propaganda Department (1946-1948), general manager of *Romania Liberă* radiostation (1946-1948), secretary of the Art Committee within PCR's Central Section of Political Education (1947), president of *The Journalists' Union* (1947), general secretary of The Art Ministry (1949-1950), editor in chief for *Viața românească* magazine (1950-1953), editor in chief at the Editorial Office for Foreign Publications (where he remained until his retirement in 1980).
Iosif Chișinevschi was an important communist activist who joined the party in 1928. In 1945 he became a member of PCR's Central Committee and in 1948 he started working for the Political Office. Between 1952 and 1955 he was PCR's secretary in charge of culture and propaganda (head of the Agiprop department). In 1954 he became vice president of the Council of Ministers (until October 3rd, 1955). See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iosif_Chi%C8%99inevschi.
See: http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iosif_Chi%C8%99inevschi.
Nicolae Moraru, „Referat”: *Problema ...*, in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10. The following citations in the present paragraph unaccompanied by footnotes are taken from the report hereby mentioned.
Mihai Ungheanu, *Holocaustul culturii românești. Ipoteze de sociologie literară (1944-1989)*, D.B.H Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 49.
Procesul comunismului, Represiunea împotriva culturii scrise, România liberă, July 15th, 2006.
Pericle Martinescu, *7 ani cât 70. Pagini de jurnal (1948-1954)*, Vitruviu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 85.
De vorbă cu d. Mihai Beniuc, Victoria, year 2, no. 202, 28.6.1945 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
Alice Voinescu, *Jurnal*, 25.11.1947, Albatros, 1997, p. 499.
Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
Octavian Livezeanu was minister of the arts and information (April 13th 1948 – May 23rd 1949) in the Petru Groza government and minister of the arts (May 23rd 1949- July 12th 1950) in the Groza - Gheorghiu-Dej government.

Eduard Mezincescu was the Romanian People's Republic representative of the Foreign Affairs Ministry who signed the protocol for the concession of Serpent Island together with the soviet representative N.P.Sutov on May 23rd 1948.

Petre Iosif was a communist activist and the literary manager of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.

Marcel Breslașu was a Romanian poet, fabler, composer and translator. During the communist regime, he held a series of leadership positions within different cultural or academic institutions: head of the teaching department within the Ministry for the Arts and Sciences, professor and chancellor of the 'Ion Luca Caragiale' Theatre Institute and secretary of the Writers' Union party organization..

Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

Mihail Raicu, *Teatrele din provincie în stagiunea 1947/48*, Rampa, series IV, year. 37 (1948), no. 136 (Sunday, June 27th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

Simion Alterescu, *Un an de răscruce în teatrul românesc*, Rampa, series IV, year. 37(1948), no. 136 (June 27th) in Liviu Malița, *Teatrele...*, *op. cit.*, p.18.

Liviu Malița, *Cenzura ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Ibidem, p. 60.

Vladimir Bukovsky, *Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Ethics&Public Policy Center Publishing, 1979, pp. 152-159.

Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, pag. 61.

Ibidem.

Ibidem, p. 62.

Liviu Malița, *Teatrul...*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

' We hereby inform you that we have received the amount of 10,000 (ten thousand) lei, representing the reading fee for the following plays:

- 'Born Yesterday' by G. Karson
- 'The Gypsies' Rhapsody' (Rapsodia țiganilor) by Mircea Ștefănescu
- 'A Glass of Water' by Eugene Scribe
- 'Blood Wedding' by Garcia Lorca
- 'Mrs. Stamate's Boarding House' (Pensiunea doamnei Stamate) by Al Șahighian.

We also send you the five receipts.

[Signing] Manager Mihail Raicu;
Head of Department M. Prisiceanu '

Ibidem, p. 22.

Record of proceedings no. 15 in The National Archives, Bucharest, Fund 1373, File 98/1948 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

Activity report for October 18th - November 1st 1948, Bucharest National Archives, Fund: Ministry for the Arts and Information 1373, File 96/1948, Signed Lia Sebreovicici. Detailed information on this report can be found in Liviu Malița, *Teatrul ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

Ibidem.

Ibidem, p. 29.

Lascăr Sebastian, *Are ori n' are libertate regizorul?* in *Contemporanul*, 1948, no. 96 (Friday, July 30th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Comisia Prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România (The Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania), *Raport final, Ideologie și teroare. Monopolul asupra vieții culturale*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 491.

Spre un nou avânt al creației literare, *Scînteia*, no. 1300, 12.12.1948 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

'There isn't a sector of our public life where Scînteia's words are inapplicable, admits Rampa. [...] Scînteia teaches us what vigilance and class intransigence is, it teaches us the proper way to expose the enemies and their criminal conspiracies, [...], Scînteia puts in the hands of the working men the Party's marvelous weapon, which is principledness. Its criticism knows no compromise or consideration; it is the Party's sharpest weapon - a sharp weapon in the fight for democracy; Scînteia helps artists to arm themselves properly, [...] day by day, it teaches them to expose enemies from underneath the most harmless disguises, it teaches them how to tear the hypocrisy mask from the hideous faces of imperialist agents , preaching <<art for art's sake>> ', Scînteia, editorial in *Flacăra*, I (1948), no. 38 (September 19th), in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Cristian Vasile, *Câteva reflecții privind evoluția artelor plastice în primul deceniu comunist, 1945-1953*, *Revista Arhivelor*, no. 1, 2008, p. 265.

After the exhibition organized by the Flacăra artistic group in the Dalles hall between the 11th and 25th of April 1948, M. H. Maxy is virulently attacked in the October 30th issue of Scînteia. The publication also vehemently criticizes Rampa and Flacăra magazines which published 'inadequate drawings' in their May1st issue. Although pertinent, the drawings are considered disrespectful by how formally they represented the working class. A warning was thus letting the artists know that not even an artist close to the Party was to be spared.

Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

Scînteia. Suplimentul de duminică, 6.7.1947 and *Scînteia. Suplimentul de duminică*, 1.9.1947 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

Ce-am învățat din discuția cu minerii despre noua mea piesă de teatru?, *Scînteia*, no. 1338, 30.1.1949 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

- Gabriel Catalan, *Teatrul și muzica în primii ani de comunism (I)*, The National Archives, Revista Arhivelor/Archives Review, no. 1, 2009, pp. 192-194.
- Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-43.
- Mircea Ghițulescu, *Istoria literaturii române. Dramaturgia*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 355-356.
- Valeriu Râpeanu, *O antologie a dramaturgiei românești 1944-1977. Volumul I. Teatrul de inspirație contemporană*, Editura Eminescu, Bucharest, 1978, p. 7.
- Mircea Ghițulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 357.
- Valeriu Râpeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- Ibidem, pp. 8-9.
- Ibidem.
- Ibidem, p.10.
- Luceașărul*, 24.12.1977 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 1138.
- Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 372.
- Raportul Direcției Teatrelor (The Theatres' Directorate Report) in *Dezbaterile Consiliului Superior al Literaturii Dramatice și Creației Muzicale (a doua reuniune)* in Flacăra, I (1948), no. 27 (July 4th) and *Expunerea tov. Nicolae Moraru, secretar general al Ministerului Artelor și Informațiilor (Statement of Comrade Nicolae Moraru, general secretary of the Ministry for the Arts and Information)* in Flacăra, I (1948), no. 28 (July 11th) in Liviu Malița, *Teatrul ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.
- In 1947, there were 14 private theatres and only 6 state theatres in Bucharest; in 1948, the number of theatres subsidized by the state exceeds that of private theatres, with a ratio of 12 to 10.
- In 1947, private theatres went on 47 road shows and at the beginning of 1948, out of the 12 troupes authorized to tour the country, only 2 belonged to private companies, while the others belonged to The National Theatre and The People's Theatres.
- According to the data presented in Ion Aurel Maican's report, during the 1947-1948 theatrical season 4,887 shows were performed in Bucharest and 5,592 in the provinces. The 107 plays performed in the capital had 1 918 293 spectators.
- Simion Alterescu, *Un an de răscruce în teatrul românesc* in Rampa, series IV, year. 37 (1948), no. 136 (June 27th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
- A series of articles admit the Party's failure in reforming the arts. They are presented in Liviu Malița, *Teatrul...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.
- Ibidem, p. 83.
- Simion Alterescu, *Câteva sarcini ale dramaturgiei noastre*, Contemporanul, 1948, no. 103 (Friday, September 17th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
- Ibidem, p. 85.
- Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania 1944-1962*, Amen House, London E.C.4, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 131, (t.m.).
- Marcel Breslașu, *Refugiul în problemele eterne*, Națiunea, year 2, no. 451, 26.9.1947 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
- Florin Tornea, *Pensiunea doamnei Stamate. Comedie în 3 acte* de Al. Șahighian, in Rampa, series IV, year 37(1948), no. 128 (Sunday, May2nd), in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 86
- Mihail Raicu, *Dramaturgia sovietică și teatrul românesc*, in *Viața Românească*, I (1948), no. 6 (November) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
- Simion Alterescu dedicates a triptych to the problem of actuality in Romanian drama: *Mai aproape de temele contemporaneității*, in Rampa, series IV, year. 37 (1948), no. 128 (Sunday, May2nd), page. 3, *Un an de răscruce în teatrul românesc*, in Rampa, no. 136 (June 27th), pages 1, 5 and *Dramaturgia autohtonă, problema No. 1 a teatrului românesc*, in Contemporanul, 1948, no. 102 (Friday, September 10th), pages 10- 11, in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 88. The quotations we have used are excerpts from these articles, which rather seem versions of the same text.
- We are referring to three plays performed in the 1947-1948 theatrical season, respectively Iliya Ehrenburg's *Lion In the Square* (Leul din piață), *For Those on the Sea (Pentru cei de pe mare)* by Boris Lavreniev and *A Day's Rest (O zi de odihnă)*.
- Barbu T. Campina, *La reluarea „Scrisorii Pierdute”*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 38 (September 19th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- <http://www.tnb.ro/index.php?page=istoric-tnb>.
- The plays staged in the 1947-1948 theatrical season were: Al. Kirițescu's *Gaițele [The Jays]*, Tudor Mușatescu's *Titanic vals [Titanic Waltz]*, G.M. Zamfirescu's *Ion Anapoda [Topsy-turvy Ion]* and Mircea Ștefanescu's *Veste bună [Good News]*.
- Florin Tornea, *Repertoriul și dramaturgia românească de azi*, Rampa, series IV, year. 37 (1948), no. 136 (June 27th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
- Barbu T. Campina, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- Traian Golea, *Romania beyond the limits of endurance – a desperate appeal to the free world*, Romanian Historical Studies, Miami Beach, Florida, 33139, U.S.A., 1988, p. 16.
- Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- Simion Alterescu, *O piesă regăsită: „O scrisoare pierdută”*, Contemporanul, 1948, no. 104 (Friday, September 24th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
- Donald Catchlove, *Romania's Ceausescu*, Abacus House, Speldhurst Road Tunbridge Wells, Kent, Abacus Press, 1972, p. 88.
- Toma Alexandra Monica, *Europa se plictisește*, dissertation paper, p. 52, available at the Library Study Hall at the Faculty of Letters, Galați, Romania.
- Ghiță Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- Alec Nove, *Stalinism and after*, George Allen&Unwin Ltd. Publishing, London, 1981, p. 49.
- Vasile Igna, introductory study to *Subteranele memoriei. Pagini din rezistența culturii din România. 1944-1954*, Universal Dalsi, 2001, p. 18.

- Katherine Verdery, *What was socialism, and what comes next?*, Princeton University Press, Chichester, West Sussex 1996, p. 20.
- Donald Catchlove, *op. cit.*, p. 13; (t.m.).
- Mihail Novicov, *Pentru înlăturarea schematismului în literatură*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 40 (October 3rd) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
- The proceedings of Flacăra's self-assessment editorial session dated July 20th, 1948, in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
- Cezar Petrescu, *Răspunderea scrisului – Între gazetărie și literatură*, Semnalul, year 10, no. 1872, August 3rd, 1948 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 97. All the following quotations unaccompanied by footnotes abide by the same source.
- Cezar Petrescu, *Răspunderea scrisului – Între gazetărie și literatură*, Semnalul, year 10, no. 1872, August 3rd, 1948, in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 327.
- George Călinescu, *Agitația culturală*, Națiunea, no. 691, 1948 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
- Paul Gerogescu, *D-I Cezar Petrescu și „imparțialitatea” problemelor scrisului*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 34 (August, 22nd) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 99. All the following quotations unaccompanied by footnotes belong to the same source.
- Critic Sami Damian analyzes Lenin's article in Cristian Sandache's study, *Literatură și propagandă în România lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, chapter: *Sami Damian și realismul socialist*, Editura Mica Valahie, Bucharest, p. 148-150.
- Petru Dumitriu, *Despre prețuirea istorică în prețuirea artei. Note la un articol al d-lui G. Călinescu*, Flacăra, („Costatări și clarificări”), I (1948), no. 31 (August, 1st) In Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
- "The protagonists of the totalitarian style only know how to do two things: to praise and to curse to orders. The only slight desire to have a critical discussion, to objectively clarify matters is impossible to them [...], culture is for these activist sages a useless accessory. What do they need conscience for if they have discovered the truth? [...]. Culture is thus replaced with invectives, and libraries – with two or three books in which, together with the rudiments of the totalitarian ideology, there is a wide range of curses against the classes considered repugnant to this ideology"- See Dan A. Lăzărescu, *Stilul totalitar*, Liberalul, year 1, no. 115, July 2nd, 1946, in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 306.
- Record of proceedings no.28 of the Reading Committee Session held November 15th, 1948, at the National Archives, Bucharest, Book fund: the Ministry of the Arts and Information, The Theatres' Direction 1373, File 98/1948, f. 309-313 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- Zaharia Stancu, *Sarcinile dramaturgiei noastre*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 26 (June, 27th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- G. H., *Care sunt conflictele dramatice ale societății noastre*, Rampa, series IV, year. 37 (1948), no. 130 (Sunday, May 16th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- Valentin Silvestru, *Despre diferențierile calitative între piesă și spectacol*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 34 (August 22nd) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
- Lascăr Sebastian, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- Alexandru Mălin, *Despre neutralizarea unor arme de luptă*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 51 (December 19th) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- Mihail Novicov, *Flacăra – un examen critic*, Viața Românească, I (1948), no. 1 (June) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- The situation in that period and the oppression inflicted on the authentic Romanian intellectual elite can be inferred from an ample document, were the names of those considered condemnable by the communist regime and those actually condemned are mentioned. The document is a synthesis memorandum elaborated by the former Securitate in 1968, titled *Scritorii arestați, condamnați sau pedepsiți administrativ* [Arrested, Condemned or Administratively Punished Writers]. The memo lists the names of 257 personalities; 15 of these writers, journalists, men of letters and scholars were arrested in 1948 alone. The list isn't, of course, complete. Professor Nicolae Mărgineanu for instance, who was arrested on April 14th 1948 and sentenced to 16 years of detention in what was called 'the Trial of the Great Finance' is not mentioned here. See: Dan Cătănuș (coordinator), *Intelectuali români în arhivele comunismului*, preface by academician Dan Berindei, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, pp. 398-459.
- Florin Tornea, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
- Sandu Zamfir, *Despre un teatru în care se practică «teosofia»*, Flacăra, I (1948), no. 21 (May 23rd) in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
- Margareta Bărbuță, *Scrisoare către un director de (Letter to a theatre house manager)*, Teatrul Magazine, issue 1, year I, April, 1956, p. 57.
- Mircea Ghițulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 353-709.
- Repertoriul original – în centrul atenției teatrelor (Original repertory – in the center of attention of the theatre houses)*, Scînteia, issue 3030, 21.7.1954 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 940.
- Horia Lovinescu, *Aripile cresc în văzduh (Wings grow in the air)*, Teatrul Magazine, issue 1, year I, 1956, p. 50.
- Andrei Băleanu, *Sugestii pentru lărgirea căutărilor creatoare în teatru (Suggestions for the extension of creative search in drama)*, Scînteia, issue 3701, 15.9.1956 in Marian Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 940.
- Horia Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- Ciulei, *Teatralizarea picturii de teatru (Dramatization of the drama painting)*, Teatrul Magazine, issue 2, year I, June, 1956, p. 52-56 and Toni Gheorghiu, *Regie și scenografie (Direction and scenography)*, Teatrul Magazine, issue 5, year I, October, 1956, p. 55-60.
- Horia Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- Călin Căliman, *Original plays in the season's repertory, Eminescu by Mircea Ștefănescu*, Teatrul Magazine, issue 7, year IX, July, 1964, p. 72.

- Mircea Ghițulescu, *Aurel Baranga și noua comedie (Aurel Baranga and the new comedy)*, op. cit., p. 370.
- Mircea Ghițulescu, *Un pionier al dramaturgiei socialiste: Mihail Davidoglu (A pioneer of the socialist dramaturgy: Mihail Davidoglu)*, op. cit., p. 365.
- Mircea Ghițulescu, *Umanistul clasic și manierist: Horia Lovinescu (The classic and mannerist humanist: Horia Lovinescu)*, op. cit., p. 390.
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- Ibidem.
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- Ileana Popovici, *D.R.P. – portret în perspectivă*, Teatrul Magazine, no. 1, year XV, January, 1970, p. 8.
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- Cristian Munteanu, Gavriil Pinte, Attila Vizauer, Claudiu Goga, Alina Nelega, Theo Herghelegiu, Tompa Gabor, Cristian Juncu, Alexandru Dabija, Ana Mărgineanu, Nicolae Scarlat, Geanina Cărbunariu, etc.
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- ”At least for some good months from now on, but bearing the related long-term consequences, drama would face the fierce competition (and sometimes be shadowed by) its current companions: politics and television”. Maria Ghitta, *Șocul eliberării. Teatrul în anul întâi (The shock of liberation. Drama in year one)*, in Liviu Malița (coord.) *Drama life during and after communism*, Cluj, Efes, 2006, p. 317.
- Ibidem, pp. 315-316.
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- The Writers’ Union and UNITER – Romanian Drama Union
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- ”...if the current legislation lets a theatre house manager build up its cultural profile by reforming its administrative structure and imposing a dynamic way to promote drama, he/she will let go of some of the non-performing actors, and the functioning formula of the theatre will also undergo some changes, as the “seniority in art” principle still works, with no discrimination. The status of a young actor, for instance, who creates leading roles in drama, a few years after his/her graduation, is not a happy one from this perspective”. Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
- “Why is it still preferred the umbrella of the state stipend? Motivations are identifiable in the sociologic, educational, civic, financial area: conservatism; resistance to change; fear of social effects of a competitive system; pressure from the trade union; lack of efficient social security frameworks; political interference; legislative instability and ambiguity; lack of long-term strategies. Free initiative, more flexible structures come second, in favor of a certain type of „stability”, which translates into limited financial resources, which come, even if not always on time”. Oltița Cîntec, *Hermeneutici teatrale (Drama hermeneutics)*, București, Editura Niculescu, 2010, p. 104.

Andrei Pleșu, *Reforma culturii – la urmă... Teatrul și revoluția (Culture reform – at the end... Drama and revolution)*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 2-3, 1993, p. 4.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p.79.

Ibidem, p. 77.

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Emil Boroghină, *A chapter of drama history: „Ubu Rex with scenes from Macbeth“, directed by Silviu Purcărete and the National Theatre House from Craiova at the International Festival in Edinburgh, 1991*, Theatre today, <http://www.teatrul-azi.ro/exezeze-documentari-tematic/%E2%80%9Eubu-rex-cu-scene-din-macbeth%E2%80%9C-regia-lui-silviu-purcarete-si-teatrul-na>

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p.107.

Miruna Runcan, *Five ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

Mircea Sorin Rusu, *Pescărușul - o reprezentație matematică (The Gull – a mathematic representation)*, Liternet, November 2004. <http://www.bulandra.ro/ro/ute.htm>

Alice Georgescu, *Trei spectacole importante pentru definirea teatrului românesc (Three important performances for the defining of the Romanian drama)*, Yorick, Drama weekly magazine, issue 114, 12 – 18 March, posted on November 30, 2011.

Miruna Runcan, *De la „...au pus cătușe florilor...” la „Telefonul, omeleta și televizorul”(From “...they out cuffs to flowers...” to “The telephone, the omelet and the TV set”)*, Yorick, Drama weekly magazine, issue 114, March 12 – 18, posted on November 28, 2011.

Ibidem.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Ibidem, p. 79.

Public expenses for social-cultural actions, <http://www.scritube.com/administratie/CHELTUIELILE-PUBLICHE-PENTRU-AC94669.php>

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

In 1995, Corina Șuteu became the leader of the MA Program on Cultural Management from the Commerce School in Dijon, initiating also the MA Program for South-Eastern Europe. Today, she is the manager of the Cultural Institute from New York.

“Established in 1998, the ECUMEST association defined itself, from the very beginning, as a cultural interface-organization, whose goal was to broke and accompany democratization (access) and democracy processes (diversity and participation), for the institutional emancipation of culture sector in Romania and Central-Eastern Europe”. Excerpt from the official website of the association: <http://www.ecumest.ro/ro/dn/viziune.html>.

“First of all, during this time, I was concerned with what I could call a reform or rethinking of the play space. This was one of my concerns, not the only one, but one of the most important ones. I open the brackets here: in this whole canonic-looking struggle, carried out now in the Romanian drama, as you can well notice, they circulate all kinds of elements seemingly attributes of modernity. You will never find among them concrete elements that can truly reform the art of performance; in my opinion, rethinking the performance space is one of these fundamental elements that can show us what drama will look like in the future”. Iulia Popovici, *Interviu cu Victor Ioan Frunză: „Gîndesc inovația teatrală ca pe ceva discret (Interview with Victor Ioan Frunză: “I am thinking drama innovation as something discreet”)*, Observator cultural (Cultural observatory), issue 197, December 2003.

Alice Manoiu, *Ada Navrot “Visez la... Cehov și la un copil, dar să nu mă spuneți la nimeni”(“I am dreaming of... Cehov and a baby, but don’t tell anyone”)*, Formula As, Lumea Românească, issue 419, year 2000.

“In *Odeon* I tried different things, I made different attempts. They all involved a dose of “let’s just get it done and get over it”, which, I think, existed after 1989 in all cultural areas. But few, very few would rush into doing it all every time – from moving a table to making up the repertory or putting up a tour. There has never been the idea of competences separation or the structuring of a normal performance system. We used this 3 year interval to make a statement. Conflicts at *Odeon* – just like conflicts at Național or *Bulandra* – I covered them all out of decency. After all, this is cultural billingsgate, which perfectly illustrates the idea of cultural province. I know the same happens in other regions, but that is hardly a consolation to me. Concerned about the drama promotion, I took part in this pampering of both artistic and managerial incompetence. Eventually, after 3 years, when I considered that drama made a statement and got promoted and after making up a very clear and solid, per month, per day project for the coming year, I tried to change the drama structure. [...] Certainly, we did make a statement, we had success, but, beneath it all, drama is rotten as a system, as a structure. I failed to overcome this genuinely Romanian phase of the leader: if the leader is gone, everything crumbles down. I wanted to create an institution that would work even in 3 and 15 years.” Alexandru Dabija quoted by Anca Măniuțiu, *Încercare de panoramare a fenomenului teatral independent din România. 1990-2005 în Liviu Malița (coord.), Viața teatrală în și după comunism (Attempt to overview the independent drama phenomenon in Romania. 1990-2005 in Liviu Malița (coord.), Drama life in and after communism)*, Cluj, Efes, 2006, pp. 403-404.

Art-Inter Odeon structure presentation, taken over by Anca Măniuțiu in *An attempt...*, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

Ibidem, p. 404.

Miruna Runcan, *Model ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Marian Popescu, *Scenele (Scenes...)*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

The Seeding a Network project, initiated in 1991 by the British Council, the National Theatre from London and London International Theatre Festival (LIFT) in partnership with UNITER (coordinator: critic Marian Popescu). Its pragmatic objective was to create a “new management formula”, a functional, working alternative to the heritage of the institutionalized network. *Seeding an Independent Theatre: 1996-2000. Note pentru o cultura a precedentului (Andreea Dumitru, Seeding an Independent Theatre: 1996-2000. Notes for a culture of the precedent)*, Magazine 22, 07.09.2007.

Carried out between March and June 1990, "the great road show of the French artists, called Printemps de la liberté, conceived as a friendly gesture by the French cultural and diplomatic officials to Romania, facilitated, in conjunction with the Romanian partners, the contact of the Romanian audience with some of the greatest actors and artists from France". Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, op. cit., p. 65. The tour brought artists like Antoine Vitez, Gérard Desarthe, Patrice Chéreau, Virgil Tănase, Robert Pinget, Joel Jouanneau, Raymond Cousse, Hélène Delavaut, Massimo Schuster, Elisabeth Macocco, and Peter Brook to Romania, who performed in Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj and Iași.

The show *Je m'en vais* (I'm leaving) was performed on the stages of the following theatre houses: *Mic (Small)*, *Foarte Mic (Very small)* and *Metropolis* and on international stages from France, Italy, Switzerland, etc.

Cristiana Gavrilă, *O scenă goală... Doi actori – Mă tot duc... (An empty stage... Two actors – I'm leaving)*, Liternet, March 2007.

Carmen Bărbulescu, *Romanian- theatres...*, Theatre today, issue 2-3, 1994, p.36.

The text and the direction were signed by Gerard Stembridge, and the cast included Peter Ballance, Mihai Bisericanu, Julie Hael, Oana Ioachim, Gara McKeown, and Dan Puric. The premiere took place on the stage of the *Mic (Small) theatre house from Bucharest*.

Source:

http://cimec.ro/SCRIPTS/TeatreNou/detalii_premiera_eng.asp?sq=410401119305&sq1=12&sq2=PURIC,%20DAN

Anca Mănuțiu, op. cit., p. 403.

Ibidem.

Marian Popescu, *The Mirror*, op. cit., p. 80.

Established by Marian Popescu, the publishing house is set on "the promotion of new dramas, in the country and abroad...". He also founds the "Semnal teatral" (Drama signal) magazine. Marian Popescu, *The Mirror*, op. cit., p. 226.

The magazine proves to be a useful tool for drama people, in early stages: "How often [...] directors or theatre houses managers call upon this type of plays that the "Semnal teatral" magazine presents as a synopsis, as well as the literary agent services provided by the UNITEXT publishing house shows the interest in what is new, but also the answer to the publishing house's "campaign" for the compliance with the copyright." Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 154.

Ibidem, p. 219.

"I did not believe and I did not support either the idea that UNITER could be a camouflaged trade union, as most of its members were and are employees in institutions subsidized from public money. Although it was not part of my tasks, I tried to determine the coagulation of a trade union structure, especially as far as actors were concerned. And I was not the only one. Yet, actors were not capable of getting organized, so that they could protect their own rights. Or the directors, for that matter." Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 217.

Ibidem, p. 224.

Ibidem, p. 218.

"The so-called conservatory group, that critic Valentin Silvestru and director Valeriu Moisescu were members of, took care of accrediting the idea that it was a conflict of persons. Only a few years later did they admit that, many of them, that they thought it were so. [...] Unfortunately, the critic, having a most uncommon energy, just like his animating spirit of so many initiatives in drama before 1989, could not put up anymore with the *idea of change*, reacted violently against it, his pride and ego prevailed before admitting the facts: censorship was history, just like the single model, single order, which he voluptuously practiced in the Romanian drama environment". Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 220.

Mircea Ghițulescu, Modernization of the idea of national culture, Literary communications, <http://convorbiri-literare.dntis.ro/GHITULESCUdec3.html>

Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 172.

Conflicts emerge also in 2004, when its chairman, Ion Caramitru, is accused of embezzlement. Source: *Cotidianul*, http://membres.multimania.fr/mariateslaru/piatra_neamt/printer.php?indice=1&id_print=272

Paul Cornel Chitic, *Ce se întâmplă în teatre? Teatrul românesc este în reflux ori stă la pîndă? Răspunde regiunea Sorana Coroamă-Stanca (What is going on in theatres? Is the Romanian drama backing off or watching? Director Sorana Coroamă-Stanca answers that)*, *Teatrul azi* (Theatre today), issue 2, year 1990, p. 9.

Paul Cornel Chitic, *What is going on in theatres? Is the Romanian drama backing off or watching? The manager of the Nottara Theatre House answers that, Victor Ernest Mașek*, *Teatrul azi* (Theatre today), issue 2, year 1990, p. 10.

Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 91.

"Is it truly obsolete, this classical or modern structure of drama, as it is homologated by the history of literature? Most professional directors say yes, it is, but most of the time, when asked to explain why, answers are vague and related rather to the worn-out authority relation over the art product, which separates them from drama authors." Miruna Runcan, *Modelul ... (Model ...)* op. cit., p. 74.

Alina Nelega, op. cit., p. 4.

Paul Cornea, *Teatrul publicului sau publicul teatrului? în Regula jocului (Theatre of the audience or audience of the theatre? In Rule of the game)*, Bucharest, Editura Eminescu (Eminescu Publishing House), series Syntheses, 1980, pp. 252-261.

Marian Popescu, op. cit., p. 116.

...when I had the honor to be next to Dana Dogaru, Gina Patrichi, George Constantin and others, in the jury of the first National Drama Festival in 1990, I thought we should give the award to the *Trilogy*, leaving room between the Great Prize that it was awarded, and the other ones. That is why we did not award the first prize." Mihai Mănuțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five ...* op. cit., p. 28.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

Tompa Gabor in Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

This is about the performances *Ubu-rege cu scene din Macbeth (Ubu-*rex with scenes from Macbeth*)* directed by Silviu Purcărete and staged at the National Theatre House from Craiova in 1990 and *Lecția (The Lesson)* directed by Mihai Măniuțiu and staged at the National Theatre House from Cluj.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Eugen Wohl, *Direcții în noua dramaturgie (Directions in the new dramaturgy)*, in Liviu Malița, *Life ..., op. cit.*, p. 327.

According to the investigation carried out by the Yorick magazine: *Best performances in the last two decades*, <http://yorick.ro/category/spectacolele-ultimelor-doua-decenii/>

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 149-150.

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Marian Popescu, *Nostalgia and the irreversible*, Dilema veche, http://arhiva.dilemaveche.ro/old/arhiva_dilema/V30/MarianP.htm

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

“In our Romania, the same type of drama has been practiced for almost one hundred years, the type defined under the cloak of dramatization, not stylistically, but aesthetically, or, more precisely, structurally; this is something to emphasize. Theatre avant-garde is almost absent. We do not generate trends; we don’t even “synchronize” with drama trends, over the whole inter-war period. Drama avant-garde in our country is or was represented by remakes of French and German “avant-garde” plays, having the direction notebook in front, or imported, subsequent to the historical accident of the migration of the Jewish theatre from Vilnius (The band from Vilna, as they were called), lying here for over ten years, and its direction pillars getting roots here temporarily. (...) In our unique model, a great show is a show with lots of people, with a parable construction, metaphoric setting, where we talk about man’s metaphysical condition, if possible based on the day-by-day translation of a fundamental myth, or Shakespeare. The mere fact of staging and directing a play by Shakespeare gets you on the big show set; and it has to be with a legitimate theatre house”, Iulia Popovici, *Divanul criticii de teatru (II). Interviu cu Miruna Runcan (The drama criticism sofa (II). Interview with Miruna Runcan)*, Observatorul cultural (Cultural observatory), issue 206, February 2004.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

Liviu Malița, *Life..., op. cit.*, p. 319.

Dragoș Galgoțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five ..., op. cit.*, p. 60.

Adrian Palcu, *Dialog inedit cu dramaturgul Dumitru SOLOMON: „Eu nu cred într-o criză de tip cultural” (Original dialogue with the playwright Dumitru Solomon: “I do not believe in a cultural crisis”)*, Convorbiri literare (Literary talks), February 2003.

Dezbateri: starea dramaturgiei românești contemporane. Răspunde actrița Leopoldina Bălănuță (Debate: status of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy. Actress Leopoldina Bălănuță answers that), Criticism notebooks, issue 5-6, year 1992, p. 59.

In the early ‘90s, in Romania, there were attempts to forbid Arrabal’s plays. It actually became anecdotic the attempt of a MP to stop the show ...*they put cuffs to flowers*. At the press conference, which took place before the series of performances of Arrabal’s play at *Odeon*, the theater manager, Alexandru Dabija, communicated “the warning” received by Florin Zamfirescu in the mail box of the theatre house. “The warning” comprised two quotes from the Constitution Bill pertaining to obscene manifestations going against good manners, and the punishment of those who produce them in public. “The MP’s gesture, as Marian Popescu states, involuntarily draws the attention upon the precariousness of our spiritual culture in terms of certain topics, themes or approaches of the artistic act, which drama provided few valid experiences about. The show ...*They put cuffs to flowers...* delivers such an experience for the first time”. Marian Popescu, *Dezbateri: starea dramaturgiei românești contemporane. Răspunde actrița Leopoldina Bălănuță (Scenes ...)*, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16.

Teatrul azi (Theatre today) investigation: *Ce se întâmplă cu dramaturgia națională? Ce spun dramaturgii? Răspunde dramaturgul Alina Mungiu: De ce nu avem un Kundera? (What is happening to national drama? What are playwrights saying? Playwright Alina Mungiu answers that: Why don’t we have a Kundera?)* Teatrul azi (Theatre today) issue 1-2-3, year 1993, p. 8.

Teatrul azi (Theatre today) investigation: *Unde sînt textele de teatru ale generațiilor ‘80 și ‘90. Răspunde criticul de teatru Ion Bogdan Lefter: Infiltrare în taberele adverse (Where are the drama texts of the ‘80s and the ‘90s generations? Drama critic Ion Bogdan Lefter answers: Infiltration into the adverse camps)*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 4, year 1990, p. 8.

Teatrul azi (Theatre today) investigation: *(How literary critics look upon the Romanian dramaturgy. Laurențiu Ulici answers that: I can tell you what the Romanian playwright can do)*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 7-8 year 1990, p. 16.

Dezbateri: starea dramaturgiei românești contemporane. Răspunde criticul literar Eugen Simion (Debate: status of the Romanian contemporary dramaturgy. Literary critic Eugen Simion answers that), “Criticism notebooks” issue 5-6, year 1992, p. 61.

Tudor Popescu, *Un ceva mai tare decît orice argument (Something stronger than any other argument...)* “Teatrul azi” (Theatre today) issue 1-2-3, year 1993, p. 5-6.

Ibidem.

“I noticed that writing drama is not very often followed by its staging. Although my plays have always been staged, I have never really had performances at a satisfactory level, or high material satisfactions, except for translations. Theatre houses chaotically choose what playwrights to stage, and they do it on non-professional criteria, impressions or connections. I do not have the energy to fight for the public acknowledgement of my plays; also I find it indecent to “beg”, to insist that my texts are at least read. [...]

good, interesting plays are being written, but directors and managers have their own vision on the text, a vision that suggests foreign texts to the audience, which translators or other promoters exert their influence on. Then, they prefer to stage for the 456th time *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Jays*, usually in flat, insipid visions, without anything innovative, rather than approaching a new text. I'm not saying there are no exceptions, but this is the general direction." Alina Boboc, *Interviu cu Horia Gârbea, „Profesia de scriitor are nevoie de recunoaștere“* (Interview with Horia Gârbea, "The job of writer needs to be acknowledged"), Cultural Bucharest, issue 15 / 28 October 2008.

Ancheta Teatrul azi: *ce spun creatorii de spectacol? Răspunde regizorul Silviu Purcărete: dramaturgul trebuie implicat în munca spectacolului* (Theater today investigation: *What are the performance creators saying? Director Silviu Purcărete answers that: the playwright has to be involved in the show/performance related work*), Teatrul azi (Theatre today) issue 1-2-3, year 1993, p. 8-9.

Mihai Mănuțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Alina Boboc, *An interview with Cătălina Buzoianu: All my life, I have been put into the avant-garde drawer*, cultural Bucharest, September 2008.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

"The members of the Dragon group, namely Ecaterina Oproiu, D.R.Popescu, Tudor Popescu, Marin Sorescu, Paul Everac, Mihai Ispirescu, place themselves into the vexed position of writers who accuse the Romanian drama of skidding from the normality ... of the Western drama where the original play is pretty present in repertories, deploring the fact that the Romanian stage does not require them anymore, as it used to. The group has Paul Everac as its "standard bearer", who, in a purely nationalist and anti-European spirit, persistently asks for the inclusion of drama values in the national repertory, by appeal to the Romanian playwright and the performance that would favor staging as it used to be ideologically supervised before 1989. This is a consequence of the enthusiasm which, at the social level, translates into anxiety, stupor, and indecision of a great part of the population that would feel much more comfortable if they did not have these issues." Marian Popescu, *Scenes....*, *op. cit.*, p. 177-178.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror....*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

Dezbateri: *starea dramaturgiei românești contemporane. Răspunde dramaturgul Marin Sorescu* (Debate: *status of Romanian contemporary dramaturgy. Playwright Marin Sorescu answers*), Criticism notebooks, issue 5-6, year 1992, p. 44.

Seumas Milne, *The Guardian*, 10 March 1990 in Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Irina Wolf, *Interviu cu jurnalistul și criticul de teatru Cristina Modreanu: „Avem idei geniale, dar nu știm ce să facem cu ele“* (Interview with the journalist and drama critic Cristina Modreanu: "We have brilliant ideas, but we don't know what to do with them"), Aurora magazine, 01.11.2008.

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Ghinea Nourăș Cristian, *De vorbă cu actorul Marcel Iureș despre teatrul contemporan* (Talking to actor Marcel Iureș about contemporary theatre), 2006-03-27,

<http://www.poezie.ro/index.php/article/173611/index.html>

Irina Wolf, *Teatrul contemporan românesc – tendințe, evoluții. În căutarea unui nou limbaj* (Romanian contemporary theatre – trends, evolutions. Looking for a new language), Aurora magazine, 30.12.2008.

Gabriel Liiceanu, *Teatrul contemporan românesc – tendințe, evoluții. În căutarea unui nou limbaj* (Strategies for cultural survival in communism), Liternet,

<http://destinatii.liternet.ro/articol/162/Gabriel-Liiceanu/Scoala-de-Vara-Sighet-ed-VII-Strategii-de-supravietuire-culturala-in-comunism.html>

Cristina Dumitrescu, *Libertatea de a gândi* (The freedom to think), Idem, year I, issue 1, p. 13 in Liviu Malița, *Life ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

Liviu Ornea, *Interviu cu regizorul Alexandru Dabija: Meseria: regizor de teatru* (Interview with director Alexandru Dabija: *Job title: drama director*), Cultural Observatory, issue 276, 22-28 July 2010.

"I do not say that I dislike the metaphorical and allegorical style of theatre that my generation and I used to make. I like to see it, sometimes I even love it, but I cannot stage it anymore". (t.m.), Miruna Runcan, C.C. Buricea-Mlinarcic, *Everyday life drama: an interdisciplinary project in progress*, Ekphrasis, Visual Anthropology Research and the Cinema of Reality, 1/2008, p. 77.

Mircea Cornișteanu, *Cuvîntul creatorului. Vărul Shakespeare de Marin Sorescu la Teatrul Național din Craiova* (Creator's Word. *Cousin Shakespeare by Marin Sorescu at the National Theatre from Craiova*), Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 2, year 1990, p. 44.

Mihai Mănuțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five....*, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28.

Victor Ioan Frunză in Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 39-42.

Tompa Gabor in Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 111-112.

Valeriu Moisescu, *Persistența memoriei* (Persistence of memory), București, Editura UNITEXT, 2007, p. 134.

Maria Ghitta, *Șocul eliberării. Teatrul în anul întâi* (Shock of liberation. *Theatre in the first year*) in Liviu Malița, *Life....*, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

Lucian Giurchescu, *Un teatru divers, nefanatic* (A diverse, non-fanatic theatre), conversation written down by Ion Parhon, in Idem, year I, issue 5 in Liviu Malița, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

Andreea Dumitru, *Does the "Romanian theatre model" still stand? Staging/directing between 1990 and 2005* in Liviu Malița (coordinator), *op. cit.*, p. 363.

Dragoș Galgoțiu in Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 57-59.

Liviu Ciulei in Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

A.L., *Interviu cu actorul Victor Rebengiuc: „Ar fi greu să-l critici pe Bănescu acum, într-o piesă. Pe Ceaușescu îl puteam critica”* (Interview with actor Victor Rebengiuc: “It would be difficult to criticize Bănescu at present, in a play. We could, however, criticize Ceaușescu back then”), *Capital*, 22 August 2011.

„If before 1989 I was looking at the world from inside theatre, after 1989 I have been looking at theatre from the outside world. I now regard it as a wheel in the system. To me, theatre before 1989 was itself an entire system”. Ion Caramitru in Marian Popescu, *The Stage And The Carnival, Romanian Theatre After Censorship*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2000, p. 85.

“... For me acting was a chance to survive and whatever I did was in the idea that theatre was an outpost of resistance. That's my view... Or at least that's what I intended the theatre I made to be... Lots of things were told through theatre, spaces of forbidden thinking were able to develop in it. My motivation in theatre was enormous and unbounded until 1989. After 1989 it started to fade away. [...] As long as the motivation was profound, related to the tormented and miserable history of pre '89, it gained a serious, historical and „heroic” dimension. It kept me awake, standing and coherent. After 1989 this motivation disappeared not only as a proper motivation but also as language, artistic technique and manner of approaching the character, the part, the play. It disappeared as a complex system of the theatrical act. I found myself uncovered and unmotivated.” Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 84-85.

Interviu cu regizorul Alexa Visarion (Interview with director Alexa Visarion), *Dilema* issue 12, 1993, p. 6.

Mircea Morariu, *Râzând de aparențe și esențe (Laughing at appearances and essences)*, *Revista Familia (The Family magazine)*, issue V, May, 2010, p. 129.

Marina Constantinescu, *Cronică dramatică: Aria scrisorii pierdute (Drama chronicle: the lost letter part)*, *România literară*, issue 40, year 1999.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 340-341.

“When you hear the word survival, you are thinking of something terrible; a man thrown away into the jungle, who must survive. Surviving is about barely coping with a mutilating, horrible context, which jeopardizes your life, so you must manage somehow and get to the shore. But here we are talking about cultural survival. What does that mean? That means in the context we lived in until 1990, which is called communism or socialism as it was called, there was a life threat to whom? Culture, spirit. What can mutilate the mind's world, what can mutilate the spirit in history? How can one mutilate the spirit at the level of the whole population, so that, in relation with this threat and this mutilation, one must say one survives? This thing mutilated the spirit in the 45 years our country lived under communism, and the seventy something years lived by Russians in the Soviet Union. This mutilation occurred by a very, very simple word called ideology.” Gabriel Liiceanu, *op. cit.*

Miruna Runcan, *Model ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Ibidem, p. 129.

Ibidem, p.101.

Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

Ibidem, p. 114.

Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*

“When I am talking about the establishment and performance of the single pattern, I rely my statement on the fact that the birth and development of the Romanian drama are almost not at all due to the free production and circulation of the show by a certain independent company “selling” what they believe the audience wants to see, and which, in their opinion, could bring a minimum profit; this is due to the State, seen as the father of art and its main and most important sponsor, who sees in the Big Theatre House (namely the National Theatre House, having a fixed repertory per season) a social tool for civic education and the increase of the community culture level.” Miruna Runcan *Instituții teatrale după 1989 (Drama institutions after 1989)* in Liviu Malița (coordinator), *op. cit.*, p. 376.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Ibidem, p.106-107

“To go to the theatre means, in the unwritten (and even shameful, undisclosable) codes: a) to have the means to do it (the necessary income), which shouldn't necessarily be saved; b) to become aware that you do have time for some entertainment, which you, just as others, do not consider dangerous and which confirms your social status; c) to cultivate the pleasure to see others and to be seen, thus interpreting a social part – which is real or just wanted – in a codified social circumstance; d) whether you understand it or not, whether you get or not some sort of personal joy, to get used to participating in the consumption of this double oriented social exchange: hall - hall; hall – stage.” Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

Ibidem, p. 56.

“... trade unions vehemently opposed the main changes brought by the new system, which, even if it does not set out institutional management strategies, at least tries to regulate certain directions and initiatives, making up the general legal framework for the performance of show and concert public institutions.” *Legea teatrelor – respinsă la promulgare (promulgation of the Theaters Laws – rejected)*, *Observatorul cultural*, issue 23, August 2004.

“... started at least three times, if not four times (as far as I know), and indefinitely postponed, sent back, blocked, re-assessed, the Law of theatre, a law that should regulate not the creation, but the labor in theatres, according to some contractual principles, in natural relations of demand and supply, does not exist and there is not much hope to see it too soon; for now governing authorities and bodies settle for the preparation of the “ground”, on photocopied papers called “orders” or “circular letters”, which, in theory, approve the free conception power of the manager, but do not provide him with any tool to actually accomplish those projects.” Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 56-57.

“*Stanislavski is a dead man*. He died a long time ago, with the birth of other stage readings than the ones related to psychological realism. His ghost is haunting the world theatre, sometimes with benefits, as other cultures, which are more flexible and have a better sight, re-interpreted, localized, adapted, appropriated and undertook him. There he usefully fathered and left some offspring, at Actors’ Studio, for instance. In our area, there is no room for other orientations and other approaches than the ones belonging to those who know how they used to play back then, in Stanislavski’s time, so what do I do? As I do not wear the same type of dresses as my grandma used to, I do not comb my hair like she used to, I do not associate the same meaning to the same words, why in the world should I look at theatre the way she used to? *Stanislavski is dead, man, and it stinks*”, Alina Nelega, *Agatha Christie, the pineal eye and the theatre or Stanislavski is dead, man...*, Alina Nelega, *Observator cultural*, issue 9/2000.

This is about *Ultim@ vrājitoare (Last witch)* signed by the same author, published by Editura Paralela 45 and Editura Liternet in 2007.

“At least for now, the drama pattern practiced and imposed by a long-time elaboration (but also by the absence of any serious competition alternative) could be described as follows:

1. Pre-existence, in relation with the given drama text, of a global idea - implicit or explicit, inner or exterior to that respective text.
2. Correlation, in the rhetoric of the stage speech, of at least three basic performance moments: the opening metaphor, the climax metaphor and the ending metaphor. (We could call this type of structure a *sylogistic structure*).
3. Preponderance, for rhythm reasons, of the metaphor image, working as a predicate, and/or event, in relation with the spoken material.
4. The preferential use of the intensive performance with actors and, rarely, a performance demonstrative in nature, with any energetic “derailment” or diversion inside the team, at the level of relations between partners of a stage or a stage related situation, in the very stylistics of their expression, causing a misbalance at the level of the whole, automatically being “penalized” by the spectator.
5. The spectator’s emotional-intelligent involvement in a large process of simultaneous decoding of multiple (minimum two) meaning levels. This pulsating contract stage/hall, hall/stage is based especially on similarity and identification relations, in terms of time (then/now), space (here/there) and of course psyche (he/I).
6. The use of the whole performance structure as an emotional stimulus, most of the time with a view to stimulating the production of new meanings or meaning perceived as new, which globally and more or less consciously occur and assimilate in the spectator.” Miruna Runcan, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

Ibidem, p. 104.

“Ciulei is the outstanding exponent of an international drama artistic trend, dating since early ‘60s, whereby *reinterpretation of the classics* becomes a sometimes desperate token of the preservation of the European spiritual heritage and that humanist culture that Europe doesn’t cease to claim, especially after the historic cycle change in the past decade. He has never fathered a flamboyant, shocking vision on the classical work, but rather an ineffable art of visual-cultural type seduction thanks to which for instance the issues in *Hamlet* become accessible and not esoteric, maybe mysterious, but not obscure.” Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

Banu, George, Michaela, Tonitza-Iordache, *Art of Drama*, București, Editura Nemira, 2004, pp. 390-391.

Liviu Ciulei, *Despre teatralitate, limbaj scenic, realism (About dramatization, stage language, and realism)*, *Observator cultural*, issue 274, June 2005.

Tompá Gabor in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

“The existence of only one single circuit of theatre life, represented by the network of subsidized professional drama institutions, determined a certain type of mentality enclosed by censorship and the lack or blocking of specialized information. This is the reason why the representation of the classics on stage (particularly Shakespeare, Caragiale, and Cehov) meant both a cultural attitude toward a unique context, totalitarian ideology, and a refuge disguising the defying of the system or despair in front of a seemingly never-ending nightmare of everyday life.” Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

Ibidem, p. 151.

Cristina Rusiecki, *Festivalul național de teatru. Un „tur de orizont“ asupra momentului teatral (The national theatre festival. An overview on drama)*, *Observator cultural*, issue 145, December 2002.

1. Valentin Dumitrescu, “*I.L. Caragiale*” *National Theatre Festival*, *Revista (Magazine) 22*, 7.11.2004.

Iulia Popovici, *Divanul criticii de teatru (II). Interviu cu Miruna Runcan (The theatre criticism sofa (II). Interview with Miruna Runcan)*, *Observator cultural*, issue 206, February 2004.

“Inertia and convenience have preserved for quite some time now a closed cultural pattern as far as the art of performance in our country is concerned. In fact, without making too big of a mistake, I could say that the Romanian cultural pattern [...] is a *defensive* type, lying on the “small” culture complex, a “small” circulation language, and so on. Exacerbating the value of Romanian cultural personalities, over and over again, who had, at some point, the chance to join a circuit of international acknowledgement is a fact worth considering. What happens next? The culture of performance, visibly stated and promoted in the ‘60s, is now a museum: it can be “visited”, one may learn things by “visiting” it, but what used to be there once living is no longer

alive for the current, contemporary “visitors”. The performance art in Romania should provide also another paradigm of the creativity-audience relation.” Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

“For the theatre of Eastern countries, given that it is a centralized economic system, the financing issue, the only question that mattered was “how much?” plus a budget equation that ruled out any trends outside the institutionalized framework. Perpetuated, this unique method of investing money in drama, by controlling it, discouraged the expected emergence of experimental movements, of drama research groups, and attempts to bring drama closer to the reality of a social climate.” Marian Popescu, *op. cit.* p. 86.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

“Drama institutions from Romania are run by managers or general managers, depending on the institutional complexity. Most often, they combine, both characteristics related to the *artistic* and the *administrative-economic* side of the institution in a way that proves to be more and more unproductive. Each manager is doubled, on the organizational chart, by a sales manager or a chief-accountant. There are institutions where there is also the office of *deputy general manager*, whose definition is different, depending on the circumstances. Add up to all that the existence of the *artistic manager* or *artistic counsellor* which has to do with the artistic profile of the institution in question, the repertory structure, and so on”, Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

Oltița Cîntec, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

“Nowadays, from the point of view of creativity, of public education, drama institution has no competition from any other performance system or network, similar to the one born out of the university environment or a fee initiative to make up drama groups researching and producing shows depending on sharp social side-slip or contradictory forces agitating the Romanian society today.” Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

Ibidem, p. 144.

Miruna Runcan, *Critica criticii de teatru în Modelul... (The criticism of drama criticism in Model...)*, *op. cit.*, p.133.

Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

“The unclearness of the drama transition in Romania was sometimes maintained or fueled by the relevant media outlining the contexts in which the confrontation between the old and the new, between conservatism and change was visible. The emergence overnight of so many drama chronicle writers lacking a drama culture acquired either by reading or attending drama performances contributed to the distortion of the status quo from the domestic theatre scenery.” Marian Popescu, *Mirror ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

“On one hand, analytical criticism is, in our country, just an exception buried in the pile of other information, therefore not a consistent and coherent presence; on the other hand, as far as the chronicle author is concerned, no one participates, no one suffers, and one can feel no joy or anxiety. One can feel apathy, which is contagious. That is why I am interested in a chronicle about myself, and not interested in one about somebody else. Since there is no participation of the chronicle author in general, as he does not participate in the process, you cannot take part in the theatre chronicle.” Mihai Mănușiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Maria Ghitta, *op. cit.*, in Liviu Malița, *Life...*, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Ibidem, p. 4.

Dan Borcia is dismissed from the office of General Manager in 2001. Among the invoked reasons, there was an expensive telephone bill (those were mandatory phone calls made in relation with the organization of the International Theatre Festival), as well as the policy regarding the repertory: “*shows of debatable quality, with some of them even encouraging vulgarity.*” More details on this topic in article *Studiu de caz... banal (Corny... case study)*, by Doru Mareș in “Observatorul cultural” (Cultural observatory), issue 78, 2001.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Liviu Ornea, *op. cit.*

It is about the debut in dramaturgy of journalist Alin Fumurescu with his play called *Buda sau Urma scapă turma (Loo or one scabbed sheep is enough to spoil the flock)*, directed by a young drama director from London. The play’s plot is very simple – a few people, of all kinds, die blocked in a public loo. Nobody gets alive from there, but everyone manages death in his/her own way. The play wanted to be a meditation on human condition in general, and of Romanians, in particular. Writing does not become a constant for the author, and, once he became a doctor, his literary activity came to an end.

Dramaturgy contests organized under the auspices of UNITER or the Ministry of Culture, besides the ones from Oradea, Târgu Mureș, Târgoviște or Râmnicu Vâlcea, regularly or occasionally consumed, only made the offer of new plays public, but could not impose them on the drama stage.

The magazine, for some quite some time, the only specialism magazine in Romania, changes its name after 1990 from *Teatrul* (Theatre Magazine) into *Teatrul azi* (Theatre today), as a first step in an attempt to adapt to the new changes occurred in the Romanian society. In the ‘90s, there were also the magazines “*Scena*” or “*UltimaT*”, and after 2000, the magazine *Man.in.fest*.

Playwright and specialist in drama from Cluj, Constantin Cristian (C.C.) Buricea Mlinarcic was a professor at the Drama and Television School from the *Babeș-Bolyai* University till 2009, when he passed away.

“At the beginning, the selection was done by critic Valentin Silvestru (1924-1997), ‘the head’ of the critics association from the Foundation Theatre XXI, which doubled the Romanian section of the International Association of Drama Critics – UNITER. The configuration of his selections was somehow opportunistic.” Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

It is about the *Romanian Dramaturgy Festival (FDR)*, held in Timișoara, 2011 edition.

Mirela Nedelcu-Patureanu, *Cum a traversat timpul halca de carne roșie a lui Antoine (How time crossed the red meat chunk of Antoine...)*, in *Observatorul cultural*, issue 575, May 2011.

Doru Mareș, *FEST-FDR – Gest civic (FEST-FDR – Civic gesture)*, *Observator cultural (Cultural observatory)*, issue 575, May 2011.

Iulia Popovici, *Timișoara, pe linie fizică și politică (Timișoara, at the physical and political level)*, *Observator cultural*, issue 575, May 2011.

Influence of the British theatre model is subject to a more detailed analysis in the last chapter of this study.

Nicolae Manda, *dramAcum (dramaNow concepts; acum = now) concepts*, *Teatrul azi (Theatre today)*, issue 9-10, year 2005, p. 127.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

Ibidem.

Ibidem, pp. 148-149.

“Before working abroad, I did not believe that the playwright’s work, in the German meaning of the term, i.e. a professional adaptor of the literary text to a drama performance or another, is truly necessary, because in Romania the director usually does that. But now I am convinced that not only this practice should be introduced, but we should also train specialists in the drama education system for this kind of work. Many of them could become very good quality playwrights, but not all of them, just the ones having a gift for it.” Tompa Gabor in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

“It is well known that the mere reading, in a loud voice, of a text by its author, is already a modification of his/her illusion about his/her own text. To condemn contemporary directions in virtue of an alleged single reading proves nothing but narrow-mindedness. To accuse directing creativity in relation with the alleged sanctification of the text is a big bullshit, as drama is the relative itself. It is the field where the relative defies the absolute. There isn’t anyone to decide upon the sanctification of the Shakespearian text or defend it in its name. To defend Shakespeare is as much as denying his temporal fluidity, denying Shakespeare’s own permanence. It is a criminal act and he who does that is a murderer. How can you possibly make from a word that means several things at the same time a word that only means one thing? A good word is the word which bursts out or makes an implosion.” Mihai Mănuțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

“There are so many playwrights who think, at some point, as Dabija says it, that if they write down some hyphens in a text, they will have drama out of fiction. This is a matter of theatricality. Some time ago, I was saying that a well-trained director, in a serious institute, is a good playwright. I mean that art of staging is by all means a combining art [...] The director can’t embrace some mediocre playwrights; the Romanian director, who is an elite director in a European context, cannot overlook mediocrity. When dramaturgy is not mediocre, he embraces it; he/she opens up a dialogue with it, a creative dialogue that is. There is so much fuss about this issue, totally unnaturally. When there is enough vitality and enough creativity in our dramaturgy, directors from everywhere will rush into it again, to stage it. Mihai Mănuțiu in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

“Romanian drama has to undergo, in the creation order, this fundamental experience whereby the drama becomes “drama literature.” If between 1945-1949, for instance, it fatally brought about the continuous erosion of the natural process of creation – censorship, with the propaganda and ideology system being a perturbing and creative factor, by cloning, fathering “fabrications”, but imposed an artificial, shallow professional relation between the one writing and the one(s) creating the stage work, at present, the lack of a professional status of the one who writes, of the playwright, is a difficulty that one can no longer answer to by invoking the Cinderella’s complex, but by undertaking in-depth a mutual knowing relation of what doing drama is all about.” Marian Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

“In the entire history of drama, from its beginnings till present, we may notice that the performance history does not equal drama literature history, as their paths are different on certain routes: they call each other, to one direction or another. They only meet a few times, in certain exceptional moments, in those special situations when drama literature and drama art coagulate in one person or group, school, very homogenous, almost peer-like. It is wrong to teach the history of drama literature within the same course as the history of performance, as this is totally different. [...] I say that one of the advantages of the Romanian direction school comes maybe from this kind of overlapping between the playwright work and the director work... But that doesn’t generate texts, while the playwright could...” Tompa Gabor in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.* pp. 111-112.

Marian Popescu, *op. cit.* p. 75.

Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

Since the peculiarity of the drama text theatricality prevails the literary one, it should be perceived as a schematic support, which a performance will build up on, considering all the participating elements – directors, actors, setting, music, sound, light and, of course, the audience. The reception of the drama text as a part of the whole that is the performance will always be done *hic et nunc* (here and now). The drama language is more difficult to decipher than the language of fiction or poetry, where the reading of a fragment can reveal valid information about the whole. By opposition, the reading of an act, of a single scene does not reveal the language category of the drama work, and it is necessary to read it all, to be able to draw conclusions regarding it. To be perceived as a support of the text literality, the drama language has to uncover the theatricality of the drama as a first rank conflictual agent.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

Ibidem, p. 102.

Marian Popescu, *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

Ibidem, p. 85.

Adrian Palcu, *op. cit.*.

See the Dragon Group Initiative to enforce by law the original Romanian play.

Ștefan Caraman, *Inițiativa Caraman - Pleoară pentru textul de teatru românesc contemporan (Caraman Initiative – Plea for the contemporary Romanian drama text)*, published on the website www.regizorcautpiesa.ro, <http://regizorcautpiesa.ro/stiri/Initiativa-Caraman-Pleoară-pentru-textul-de-teatru-românesc-contemporan-541.html>

Dumitru Solomon, *Cât de nou? (How new?) Teatrul azi (Theatre today)*, issue 8-9-10, year 1993, p. 3.

Dana Ionescu, *Yorick Drama Weekly Magazine*, issue 118, 9 – 15 April, 2009.

According to the documentation drawn up by critic Marian Popescu in his book *Scenes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 199-205.

Adrian Palcu, *op. cit.*

Carmen Pascu (Popescu), *Scriiturile diferenței. Intertextualitatea parodică în literatura română contemporană, Roluri, măști, simulacre, dubluri, clone (Difference writings. Parody intertextuality in the Romanian contemporary literature, Roles, masks, doubles, clones)*, Craiova, Editura Universitaria (publishing house), 2011, p. 221.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Carmen Pascu (Popescu), *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Dumitru Solomon, *The repeatable scene of the balcony, Drama*, București, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), Anthologies series, 1997, p. 285-302.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Absurdul bine temperat: Iosif Naghiu, Istoria... (Well tempered absurd: Iosif Naghiu, History...)*, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

Ibidem, p. 459.

Iosif Naghiu, *Special hospital*, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), 1994, p. 8.

Ibidem.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Iosif Naghiu la Național (Iosif Naghiu at the National Theatre House)*, *Luceafărul* magazine, issue 51, 2010.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

Ibidem.

Ibidem.

“It is somehow bizarre to have chosen this particular play for the repertory of the National Theatre House in Bucharest. Even if motivation is the desire to create a performance corpus of the Romanian theatre, written by the Romanians, and somehow intelligible to Romanians, it is difficult to overlook the obsolete air of the play and the performance related shortcomings, so as to consider exclusively the actors’ work. Even directing becomes tough to assess at its just value or non-value. There is no time left for reconsideration. Since Iosif Naghiu’s play received the appreciation of UNITER, the time during which Silviu Brucan prophesied the rebirth of the country was up; it’s been 20 years now since the Revolution, we had our share of privatizations & co., and the playwright passed away. Ever since, the *Special Hospital* has been the play of a year; now, after the heavy staging by Ștefan Iordănescu, it consolidates the obsolete glory, remaining the play of the year 1993, and only that. Under the aegis of “retrieval of contemporary classics”, it is somehow expected that the National Theatre House produces performances of this genre. Without the attributes given by a brilliant direction by Radu Beligan or Olga Tudorache, capable of preserving a performance for 12 years in a row (if the text is as it is), it is unlikely that a production like *Special hospital* still has a life after July 2011, when the current season shuts down its doors.” Veronica Plăcintescu, *Spitalul special: depășit de 17 ani și de stagiunile care vor fi să vină (Special hospital: outdated for 17 years also by the seasons to come)*, *Observatorul cultural (Cultural observatory)*, issue 548, 2010.

Ovidiu Șimonca, *Interviu cu Matei Vișniec: „O nouă generație de regizori descoperă piesele mele” (Interview with Matei Vișniec: “A new generation of directors discover my plays”)*, *Observatorul cultural*, issue 265, April 2005.

Alina Nelega, *Despre Matei Vișniec, Saviana Stănescu, Radu Macrinci... (About Matei Vișniec, Saviana Stănescu, Radu Macrinci...)*, *Observator cultural (Cultural observatory)*, issue 57, 2001.

1.1 Ovidiu Șimonca, *op. cit.*

“Matei Vișniec’s drama is more literature than drama. In principle, any performance in which one of his plays is staged (no matter how good the stage manager might be) lets people down. Actors who, given their weight, make the stage floor crack and whose voices come out from their mouths’ wet depths, are brutally concrete, which is incompatible with the abstract beauty of this drama creation. The retorts making up the play make one more excited if heard in one’s imagination than if heard for real.” Alex Ștefănescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane (1941-2000) (History of Romanian contemporary literature) (1941-2000)*, Bucharest, Editura Mașina de scris (The ‘Typewriter’ publishing house), 2005, p. 375.

Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*

Victor Ioan Frunză in Miruna Runcan, *Five...*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

Kelly Askin, *War crimes. When rape is a tool of war*, *Special to CNN*, 6 April 2011

Ovidiu Șimonca, *op. cit.*

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Visions...*, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

Ovidiu Șimonca, *op. cit.*

Matei Vișniec, the author’s note in *Omul-pubă sau Teatrul descompus (Man-garbage bin or Decomposed drama)*, Bucharest, Editura Cartea Românească (publishing house), 2nd edition, reviewed, 2006, p. 7.

Even if characters do not have a name and are called generically *Man*, they are not simplified just because they do not have a clear identity; the author defines them using the association with a term that synthesizes the individual: *Omul care vorbește în*

șoaptă, *Omul cu mărul, Omul cu cercul, Omul cu oglinda, Omul pubelă, Omul cu gândacul* (*The man who whispers, The man with the apple, The man with the circle, The man with the mirror, The man-garbage bin, The man with the bug*), and so forth.

Matei Vișniec, *The man with a circle*, in vol. *Man-garbage bin or Decomposed drama*, Bucharest, Editura Cartea Românească (publishing house), p. 11.

Matei Vișniec, *The man who whispers*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

Matei Vișniec, *Panda Bears*, vol. *The beautiful journey of the panda bears told by a saxophone player who had a girl in Frankfurt & The woman-target and the ten lovers*, Paralela 45, 2009, p. 148.

Ibidem, p. 149.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 524.

Matei Vișniec, *Bears ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Viziuni și Halucinații (Visions and hallucinations)*, Convorbiri literare (Literary talks), issue 4 (124), April 2006.

Matei Vișniec, *History of communism told for the mentally challenged*, Editura Paralela 45, 2007, p. 5.

“Harms was a typical example of a non-conformist, avant-garde writer, in Stalin era [...]; when I wrote *History of communism told for the mentally challenged*, I also thought of him and his manner of writing to overcome the multiple boundaries of censorship and self-censorship for that matter.”

Matei Vișniec, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Ibidem, p. 8.

Ibidem, p. 18.

Ibidem, p. 56.

The play was first staged in Romania, at the National Theater from Bucharest, under the direction of Florin Fătuțescu, who was also stage manager for the world premiere in 2000, in Los Angeles. The performance brought about contradictory reactions in the media and audience, being considered as “lacking the force of emotion, with the text failing to convince, in its attempt to philosophize and judge, with no drama consistency, a trial of communism done on the spot under the forced terms of the absurd.” Ileana Lucaciu, *History of communism told for the mentally challenged – “I.L. Caragiale” National Theatre. Talking in vain!* “România liberă” (Free Romania) dated December 6, 2007.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Visions ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

Ibidem, p. 519.

Matei Vișniec, in the author’s note from *Attic in Paris sighting death*, Editura Paralela 45 (publishing house), 2006, p. 66.

“This play is nothing like I have ever written so far, because it is a Chekov style play. Why did I write it? I wrote it to pay homage to a master. To me, Chekov is the real precursor of the absurd drama. Before the Beckett style “expectation”, I was marked by the “expectation” of the three sisters who won’t leave for Moscow. Chekov’s characters are like specters, given the way they talk without listening; the atmosphere becomes the leading character; all that and many other things, for me, were essential during the years when I was a mere apprentice on my way to become a writer, not to mention my fascination with some supporting characters from Chekov’s work, like the passenger from “Cherry orchid”, hiding both Estragon and Vladimir in him. These are some of the reasons, plus others that I cannot state, why I wrote this play about Chekov and the artist’s impossible death.” Matei Vișniec, *The Chekov Machinery by Matei Vișniec*, România literară (Literary Romania), issue 28, year 2001.

Matei Vișniec, *Letter to Chekov* in vol., *The Chekov Machinery, Nina or about the frailty of stuffed gulls*, Bucharest, Editura Humanitas (publishing house), 2008, p. 6.

Mircea Morariu, *Omagiu lui Cehov (Tribute to Chekov)*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 3-4, 2009, p. 269.

Matei Vișniec, *Letter ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Călin Ciobotari, *Interview with Matei Vișniec: “French taught me to build up better in drama”*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 3-4-5, year 2010, p. 81.

“...when I started writing in French, I realized how lucky I was, because, finally, I was no longer tired, I was no longer tempted by divagations. I had to be precise enough, to build up well a text in French, which is a very exact language unlike Romanian that may tempt you. Romanian tempts you with its great poetry and metaphors, thanks to all the subtleties Latin and Slavic origin words have, and sometimes even due to the fact that you can handle these two registers, while French is very precise. Often, when writing plays in French, I even set my mind on this kind of stylistic exercise: to succeed, with few words, to obtain multiple effects, precisely because French lends itself to this exercise, by clarity, limpidity, its iron grammar, and a certain poverty in terms of poetical phrases. Or, to do poetry under poverty conditions is to try to obtain troubling effects, using ordinary materials.” Dan Bocea, *Interview with Matei Vișniec: “It is my destiny to run between two languages and two cultures”* in *Adevărul literar și artistic* (Literary and artistic truth), November 2006.

Alina Nelega, *About Matei ...*, *op. cit.*

Ibidem.

Radu Macrinici, *Țara mea (My Country)*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), Romanian Playwrights Collection, 1998.

Radu Macrinici, *Jack the sniper*, scene 8, online text: <http://regizorcautpiesa.ro/piese-de-teatru-online/Jack-lunetistul-2063-6683.html>.

Ibidem.

Crenguța Manea, *Interviu Alina Nelega: „... cred în noblețea cuvântului” (Interview with Alina Nelega: “I believe in the nobility of word”)*, Teatrul azi (Theatre today), issue 10-11, year 2011, p. 75.

- Radu Macrinci, *Jack ...*, *op. cit.*
 Crenguța Manea, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
 Ibidem, p. 73.
 Eugen Wohl, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
 Alina Nelega, *www.nonstop.ro*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), 2000, p. 36.
 Iulia Popovici, *Interviu cu Alina Nelega-Cadariu, Imi venea usor sa scriu teatru "(I) [Interview cu Alina Nelega-Cadariu, It was easy for me to write drama "(I)]*, Observator cultural (Cultural observatory), issue 130, year 2002.
 Crenguța Manea, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
 Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
 Ștefan Caraman, *Colonia îngerilor (Angels Colony)*, a text available online on www.regizorcautpiesa.ro, <http://regizorcautpiesa.ro/piese/Colonia-ingerilor-902.html>, p. 18.
 Ibidem, p. 26.
 Eugen Wohl, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
 "I left poetry for drama; I even gave up poetry, to talk about me, my dramas and my expectations. In this respect, dramaturgy is more generous with me. Dramaturgy helps me discuss my biography. Or, in my opinion, writers today can only talk about themselves. Fiction has come down to biography. History has limited itself to individual history. If you ask me, you can only speak about history and politics from a biographical perspective. I was talking about the fact that my writing is a product of my biography." Dumitru Crudu, *Alegerea lui Alexandru Sufțo - cu un cuvânt lămuritor al autorului - Despre teatrul meu (Alexandru Sufțo's Choice, with some explanatory notes by the author - About my drama)*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), 2004. p. 111.
- Press release, UNITER Awards Gala 2007-2008, *Meserii și fundături*, de Mihai Ignat - piesa anului 2007 la UNITER (Trades and stalemates, by Mihai Ignat, the play of the year 2007 at UNITER), Liternet, <http://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/6654/Comunicat-de-presa/Meserii-si-fundaturi-de-Mihai-Ignat-piesa-anului-2007-la-UNITER.html>
 Mihai Ignat, *Trades and stalemates*, text available online on www.regizorcautpiesa.ro, <http://regizorcautpiesa.ro/piese-de-teatru-online/Meserii-si-fundaturi-2526-1242.html>
 Carmen Mușat in the preface to the short novels volume called *Până la capătul liniei (till the end of the line)* by Petre Barbu, Bucharest, Cartea Românească publishing house, 2012.
 Petre Barbu, *Our father who art in the supermarket*, Bucharest, Liternet publishing house, 2006, p. 50.
 Ibidem, p. 40.
 Ibidem, p. 42.
 Ibidem, p. 30.
 Ibidem, p. 19.
 Ibidem, p. 59.
 Ibidem, p. 57.
 Alina Nelega, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
 Ibidem
 Staged in 2011 at the *Metropolis* Theater from Bucharest, directed by Claudiu Goga under the title *Love Stories*.
 Mircea Ghițulescu, *Testul cinematografic: Radu F. Alexandru, Istoria... (The cinema test: Radu F. Alexandru, History...)* *op. cit.*, p. 583.
 Ibidem, p. 581.
 Adriana Gheorghe, *Mihaela Michailov despre Complexul Romania (Mihaela Michailov about Romania Complex): "I think we ask ourselves too few questions. That's why I wrote the play"*, Suplimentul de cultură (the culture supplement) issue 176, 26.04.2008.
 Mihaela Michailov, *Romania Complex*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), 2007, p. 37.
 Larisa Ionescu, *WORKSHOP / Mihaela Michailov: "My communism is something like that: homework done at the light of a lamp, the yellow thread for class commander, school registration number, bandeau, the surprises in the chewing gum package, the "Ladybug" cake..."*, Ziarul Financiar. The Sunday newspaper, July 21, 2009.
 Mihaela Michailov, *Romania Complex*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
 Mircea Ghițulescu, *Symbols of femininity – Olga Delia Mateescu, History...*, *op. cit.*, p. 746.
 Olga Delia Mateescu, *Caprices – description on author's personal website*, http://www.olgadeliamateescu.ro/capricii_piesa.html.
 Mircea Ghițulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 746.
 Olga Delia Mateescu, *Caprices*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), 1997, p. 5.
 Ibidem, p. 6.
 Crenguța Manea, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
 Gina Șerbănescu, *Interview with Gianina Cărbunariu: "I want to abolish separation between director and playwright"*, Dilema veche, January 2009.
 Ibidem.
 Kincses Elemér, *Canal*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), New Plays Collection, Romanian Playwrights Series, 2002, p. 56.
 Ibidem, p. 76.

Ibidem, p. 74.

Cornel George Popa, *My sex life*, Bucharest, Editura UNITEXT (publishing house), New Plays Series. Romanian Playwrights, 2005, p. 37.

Ibidem, p. 42.

Marian Popescu, *Teatrul lui Petre Barbu sau Reverii, coșmaruri și utopia (Petre Barbu's drama or Reveries, nightmares and utopia)*, Editura Liternet-Drama,

<http://editura.liternet.ro/carte/196/Petre-Barbu/Tatal-nostru-care-esti-in-supermarket.html>

“Currently, European drama is focused on dysfunctionalities, on marginal characters, on a certain type of extreme reality. East-Europeans are very much influenced by the Royal Court workshops, which, in the past two decades, has done precisely this, the so-called drama of the ‘80s-‘90s: Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, *In Yer Face Theatre*, *Sperm & Blood Theatre*, *The New Brutalists* – which we see proliferated by domestic versions with Romanian playwrights. [...] The Royal Court School combined with the social-political reality of each country, with the clash between generations, with the fact that finally they can portray a certain reality of the street, of youth, in the text, fathers an angry type of drama, not in the sense of *looking back in anger*, but *looking forward in anger*”. Ciprian Marinescu, *Interview with the playwright Saviana Stănescu: “East-European playwrights are very influenced by the Royal Court workshops”*, Art Act Magazin, issue 27, June 10, 2009.

Aleks Sierz, *In-yer-face theatre: British Drama Today*, London, Edited by Faber and Faber Limited, 2001, p. 5.

Ibidem.

John Elsom, *Cold War Theatre*, London, Publisher Routledge, 1992.

Marian Popescu, *Mirror...*, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

The Cotteslo, named after Lord Cottesloe, manager of the South Bank Board (the bank responsible for the building up of the National Theater in London), is the smallest and the most generous performance hall of the British National Theater, having a huge impact on the audience.

“*Neighborhood theaters*” is a term that makes the distinction between the mainstream zone and the other isolated, unwanted groups.

The term is used with the meaning of “sure, certain”, “obedient”, “traditional” work, having a guaranteed success with the audience”.

Nils Tabert, *Playspotting. Die Londoner Theaterszene der 90er*, Ed. Rowohlt Tb., 1998, p. 67.

Graham Saunders, *'Love me or kill me': Sarah Kane and the theatre of extremes*, Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 5.

Traducere: tinerii sălbatici. (t.m.)

This quote is taken from an article written by Benedict Nightingale, and published in *The Times* on May 1, 1996, called: *Ten with the Playwright Stuff*.

Michael Billington, *One Night Stands: a Critic's View of Modern British Theatre*, London, published by Nick Hern Books Limited, 1993, p. 360.

This quote is taken from an article written by Michael Billington, and published in *The Guardian (Guardian2 Supplement)* on March 13, 1996, called *Fabulous Five*.

Michael Billington's review of *Blasted*, *Blasted: a deeply moral and compassionate piece of theatre or simply a disgusting feast of filth?* The Guardian, 20.1.1995.

Simon Hattenstone, „A Sad Hurrah”, *The Guardian Weekend*, 1 July 2000, p. 26-34.

Charles Spencer for *Daily Telegraph*, quoted by Mirona Hărăbor in the article *Read till the end, Scena (Stage) magazine*, issue 8 (40), year IV, August, 2001, p. 47.

Jack Tinker's review of *Blasted*, *This disgusting piece of filth*, Daily Mail, January 18, 1995.

2. Graham Saunders, *'Love me ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre...*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Anthony Neilson, *Penetrator*, London, Methuen Drama A&C Black Publishers Ltd, 1998, p. 61.

The play was translated and staged in Romania under the tile *Purificare (Purification)*.

Martin Crimp and Irvine Welsh make an exception, as they are born in 1956 and 1958.

Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a poor theatre*, volume edited by the “*Camil Petrescu*” Cultural Foundation via Editura Cheiron (publishing house), with the support of the Polish Institute in Bucharest, 2009.

Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and F***ing*, London, Methuen Publishing Limited, 2001, p. 64.

Anthony Neilson, *Penetrator*, *op. cit.*, p. 101. (t.m.)

“near someone”, “close contact”. (t.m.)

Sarah Kane, *Blasted and Phaedra's Love (Modern Plays)*, London, Methuen Drama, 1996, p. 76.

Anthony Neilson, *Penetrator*, *op. cit.*, p. 115-116.

Patrick Marber, *Closer*, London, Methuen Drama A&C Black Publishers Ltd, 2007, pp. 25-27. (t.m.)

Nils Tabert, *op. cit.*, p. 71. (t.m.)

Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane and Other Plays*, UK, Publisher: Vintage, 1998.

Sarah Kane, *Blasted ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 40. (t.m.)

Ibidem, p. 45. (t.m.)

Ibidem, p. 38. (t.m.)

Cezar Paul-Bădescu, Saviana Stănescu: “*Sunt, de fapt, un străin global*” (*Actually I am a global stranger*), Adevărul, July 1, 2009.

Horia Gârbea, Însemnări: *Injurii, blesteme, sudalme (Notes: insults, curses, short words)*, published in România literară, no. 4, 2009.

Ștefan Peca about *Nils's f... day* on his personal website, <http://www.pecar.ro/BIO/cronologie.html>.

This statement is mentioned on the website <http://teatru.ubix.ro/detalii/cea-mai-obscena-piesa-de-teatru-punk-romaneasca-emigreaza> and on the website http://www.radiocultura.ro/arhiva_stiri/2011/septembrie/1.php.

Personal statistics show 274 times mentioning of the male sexual organ in *Nils' fucked up day* by Ștefan Peca.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *History...*, *op. cit.*, p. 772.

Cristian Alionte, *Interview with Ștefan Peca: I don't like and I don't believe in drawer playwrights*, published in Ziarul Financiar. Ziarul de duminică (the Sunday newspaper), September 12, 2008.

Ștefan Peca, *Nils's f... day*, text available online on the playwright's personal website, p. 5, <http://www.pecar.ro/index1.html>

Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 64. (t.m.)

Ștefan Peca, site oficial, *Piese/Catalog/Ziua f...ă a lui Nils (Plays/Catalogue/Nils' f... day)*, www.pecar.ro, <http://www.pecar.ro/index1.html>.

Ștefan Peca, *Ziua ... (the day...)*, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.

Ibidem, p. 14.

The warning was written on the performance poster presented in a premiere at the "Luni" (Monday) Theater from the *Green Hours*, *Luni Theater presents the play whose name cannot be uttered! Nils's f... day, the winner of the first edition of the "dramAcum" (2002), a show by Peca Ștefan*,

http://www.greenhours.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=157:ziua-futur-a-lui-nils&catid=65:arhiva-piese.

Ștefan Peca, *The day ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Ibidem.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *History ...*, *op. cit.*, pag. 770.

Horia Gârbea, *op. cit.*.

Mircea Ghițulescu, *Manifestele lui Peca Ștefan sau literatura în impas (Peca Ștefan's manifestos or literature in a deadlock)*, *Luceafărul de dimineață*, issue 12 / 9 February 2008.

Ștefan Peca, *The day ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

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