

The Formal Import and Theoretical Metabolization of the Postdramatic in the Romanian Context

Ioana TOLOARGĂ* 

Abstract: The article examines the importation and assimilation of the concept of postdramatic theatre into the Romanian theatrical landscape. The postdramatic, which emerged primarily in Lehmann's seminal book, was delayed in Romania due to the country's historical isolation during the communist era. The study traces the evolution of Romanian dramaturgy from pre-1989 influences to the 1990s and beyond, identifying a shift toward more socially and politically engaged playwrighting. The 2000s generation of playwrights embraced fragmented, collage-based texts and diverse theatrical forms, including documentary and political theatre. The article discusses the critical reception of the postdramatic paradigm in Romania, highlighting diverging views on its implications for narrative, character, and the role of the playwright. While some critics see postdramatic theatre as subversive, rejecting traditional story structures, others emphasize its continuity with past theatrical traditions. Ultimately, the article investigates how Romanian theorists and practitioners engage with postdramatic theory and its nuanced applications, questioning the legitimacy and utility of the term in the Romanian context, as well as its future.

Keywords: postdramatic theatre, Romanian theatre criticism, Romanian dramaturgy, text, performance.

* Researcher, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, ioana.toloarga@ubbcluj.ro



The Postdramatic – An Umbrella Concept

In the Romanian cultural context, the import of the postdramatic – as a theatrical aesthetic and a dramaturgical and performative formula only properly begins in the first years of the 21st century. This delay is due to a sense of cultural belatedness or lag, an aesthetic decentering in relation to dominant Western models, brought about by communism and the lack of contact with the countries located west of the Iron Curtain: “In the 20th century, the century of experimentation, the century of directing, we had no political theatre, no laboratories, and we lacked the courage to dream – except vaguely, in sketches, suffocated from birth by censorship and self-censorship.”¹

At the level of directorial practices, we can name a few key figures – at least: Liviu Ciulei, Lucian Pintilie, Cătălina Buzoianu, Andrei Șerban, Silviu Purcărete (included by Lehmann among postdramatic creators), and Mihai Măniuțiu. On the level of playwriting, the volume edited by Liviu Malița, *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* [*Don’t Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society*], addresses precisely the quantity and quality of Romanian dramaturgy under communism – its dogmatism and lack of accessibility (as well as the possibilities of rethinking or reclaiming it from a contemporary perspective).

The next generation, often referred to as the ‘90s generation, functioned more as a transitional buffer, organically continuing the flaws of pre-1989 dramaturgy and shaping the image of the “playwright as writer”, with canonical aspirations (but seldom staged). With key figures such as Alina Nelega (a theorist and playwright, professor in the Playwriting MA program at the University of Arts in Târgu-Mureș) and Nicolae Manda (professor of the directing program at UNATC), and through their initiatives – Dramfest and dramAcum – the 2000s generation of playwrights emerged, focused on the everyday, socially and politically engaged, activist in spirit.

¹ Alina Nelega, “De la teatrul literar la teatrul documentar. Dramaturgia românească între 1989 și 2019” (“From Literary Theatre to Documentary Theatre. Romanian Playwriting between 1989 and 2019”), in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* (*Don’t Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society*), ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 710.

From Andreea Vălean, Gianina Cărbunariu, Peca Ștefan, Bogdan Georgescu, Mihaela Michailov, Maria Manolescu, to Alexandra Pâzgu, Andreea Tănase, Alexa Băcanu, the Romanian dramaturgy of the 2000s and post-2000s is heterogeneous in both form and theme. Of course, common thematic lines can be observed: recurring topics such as migration, social inequality, education and state-citizen relations, history, revisiting socialism, transition, capitalism, community, and political or gender identity. These themes are also prominent in Romanian literature of the 2000s, which reflects similar concerns.

Stylistically, however, the situation is considerably more complex: we cannot speak of a unified direction, nor of clearly defined movements. There are predominantly fragmented texts, built through collage techniques, poetic texts, devised works that blend styles and narrative cores, reality and fiction, performance and theatricality, as well as more classical plays with dramatic structures. Epic theatre with Brechtian roots persists, as well as poetic theatre, documentary theatre (which only appears in Romania in the 2000s), and political theatre (which may take on any of the aforementioned stylistic forms). While drama continues to dominate in state theatres, the independent scene is the nucleus of the postdramatic laboratory and experimentation.

From collaborative creation, to the “onstage” or “rehearsal-room” playwright, to the playwright-as-writer (one who proposes texts or writes commissioned works to be staged), we find a diversity of roles, styles, and directions that require legitimacy and a unifying discourse – similar to the way literary currents, theoretical schools, or stylistic and generational classifications function in literature and cinema.

Thus, if we can speak of 2000s and post-2000s movements in literature (which include fracturism, minimalism, autofiction, objective prose of the transition period, the import of posthumanism, etc.) and the New Wave in cinema, then playwriting and performative practices likewise import and adopt the postdramatic (a term sometimes used interchangeably in contemporary discourse with the even less theorized and debated “post-postdramatic”). The lack of legitimacy caused by dramaturgy’s rupture from literature is, terminologically at least, “corrected” by the import of this concept.

Elinor Fuchs, a scholar of modern and postmodern theatre and professor at Yale University, believes that Lehmann's concept of the postdramatic needs to be reexamined. In a review-essay, she deconstructs his thesis concerning the replacement of the dramatic form with the postdramatic one – a radical vision for which, I believe, she partially misjudges him, given that Lehmann clearly states in his book that the postdramatic does not entail the disappearance of the text or of drama, with which its “twin” continues to coexist within the European theatrical space. Nevertheless, Fuchs' analysis is thought-provoking, and some of her critiques are well-founded. Starting from the question, “A decade and more after the publication of Lehmann's book, is the dramatic form closer to exhaustion?” and through a brief analysis of several neo-avant-garde American artists mentioned by Lehmann as supporting his thesis, Elinor Fuchs focuses on a few of those names, including Robert Wilson. According to her, Wilson's influence in Europe did not radically diminish the preference for drama. On the contrary, she argues that both in the American and European theatre scenes, there is a noticeable resurgence of interest in drama. Even Wilson, after fifteen years of exclusively staging his own symptomatically postdramatic works, returned to classic dramatic texts (with plot) – he staged *King Lear* (1985), then works by Ibsen, Strindberg, and others.

At the conclusion of her argument, Fuchs offers two possibilities: either Lehmann's formula is correct (drama and theatre have diverged, but there is no real or definitive shift from dramatic to postdramatic, merely an oscillation), or it is incorrect, based on a fragile and interpretable thesis. She leans toward the second option, arguing that the flaw in Lehmann's demonstration lies in undermining the very theoretical framework from which he draws – namely, Szondi's vision of drama – by positioning Brecht not as a revolutionary reformer of the Aristotelian model, but as a representative of classical dramaturgy:

“What Brecht achieved can no longer be understood one-sidedly as a revolutionary counter-design to tradition. In the light of the newest developments, it becomes increasingly apparent that, in a sense, the theory of epic theatre constituted a *renewal and completion of classical dramaturgy*. Brecht's theory contained a highly traditionalist thesis: the *fable (story)* remained the *sine qua non* for him. Yet from the point of

view of the fable, the decisive elements of the new theatre of the 1960s to the 1990s cannot be understood – nor even the textual forms of that theatre literature (Beckett, Handke, Strauss, Muller, Kane, etc.).”²

The essayist further highlights the fragility of Lehmann’s theory, due to its subjectivity:

“If Brecht was once viewed as radically other to the dramatic, and is now absorbed within it, a shift in perspective could also lessen the distance between drama and its departed twin, theater. Or rather, the two may display, over time, as perhaps suggested by my American examples of the return of narrative theater, a new rapprochement after the divide that Lehmann describes.”³

The weaknesses of this theory, the critiques it has received, and the gaps left by the author in the original text have created a context in which the term’s importation and assimilation into various theatre environments has been particularly loose. The first problem, then, is the theory itself – its ambiguities and internal contradictions. The second arises in its interpretation and application. Therefore, in the following part of my article, I will examine how the postdramatic – whether as terminology or as a dramaturgical/performance paradigm – enters the vocabulary of Romanian theorists and practitioners, what nuances, limits, and reframings it receives. I propose a survey of the Romanian critical and theoretical landscape to assess how postdramatic theatre has been received, imported, and metabolized.

A Survey of Divergent Critical Views Among Romanian Theorists and Practitioners Regarding the Postdramatic Paradigm

An important aspect that reveals the insufficient assimilation of the concept – or perhaps its inefficacy (due to its fragile theoretical grounding and the vagueness it implies) – is the dissonance of opinions among critics,

² Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, Translated and with an Introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 33.

³ Elinor Fuchs, “Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the ‘Fictive Cosmos’: A View from America.” *UDC 792(73)* (2000/2010): 69.

theorists, and theatre practitioners. I therefore propose a survey of several central perspectives within the Romanian theatrical establishment regarding the postdramatic.

Miriam Cuibus, actress at the “Lucian Blaga” National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca and acting professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Film in Cluj-Napoca, cites George Banu’s phrase “orphaned formulas” in reference to “postdramatic theatrical formulas” (as she further explains) in an essay on Romanian dramaturgy during the communist era (especially that of Gellu Naum). In another essay, also published in the volume *Să nu privești înapoi...*, she notes: “At present, it seems we are caught in the whirlwind of a great paradigm shift; the world is changing its mold and moving toward a vague, diffuse, imprecise destination. As a theatre person, I observe that the theatrical world is marked by the civilization of the image, by signs of postmodernism and postdramatic theatre, and by the harbingers of the posthuman.”⁴ From Naum’s texts – marked by performative avant-garde language – to the immediate present, the postdramatic is shown here to *migrate* across temporalities and to be associated with both postmodernism and posthumanism.

In the same direction leans the discourse of theatre critic Ion Cocora, whose take is somewhat more radical in underlining the deconstructive impulse that defines the postdramatic:

“Certainly, from the second half of the 20th century to the present, the theatrical act has undergone fundamental changes and unusual metamorphoses, also generating radical theoretical speculations (see: postdramatic theatre), whose subversion negates even the presence of ‘story’ and ‘character’ in a performance, going so far as to eliminate the playwright from the phenomenon.”⁵

⁴ Miriam Cuibus, [“Anchetă cu oameni de teatru” (“Survey with Theatre Professionals”)], in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* (*Don’t Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society*), ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 196.

⁵ Ion Cocora, [“Anchetă cu oameni de teatru” (“Survey with Theatre Professionals”)], in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* (*Don’t Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society*), ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 237.

According to Cocora, the postdramatic paradigm underpins this metamorphosis and is chiefly defined by its negating drive (despite the fact that Lehmann himself emphasizes that the postdramatic does not entail the disappearance of the text or of the playwright, but rather builds his entire argument around their reconfiguration).

Tompa Andrea, theatre critic and also professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Film in Cluj-Napoca, regards the postdramatic both as a contemporary paradigm and as a lens through which we also relate to the past – whether critically or in a spirit of recovery. She writes:

“Mainstream theatres in Hungary and Hungarian theatres in Romania engage with the past [prior to 1989] only through more recent plays or postdramatic texts. [...] The paradigmatic shift in the performing arts toward postdramatic theatre influences attitudes toward any text. The dramatic text is no longer the exclusive foundation of performed theatre. [...] Contemporary performance culture is not a culture of ‘well-made plays’ aspiring to canonization, but a critical and postdramatic one.”⁶

Her view draws a connection between postdramatic and postmodernism through their shared relationship with the past (either ironic or critical), hinting – implicitly – at techniques such as citation and pastiche as ways of engaging with previous texts. At the same time, the theorist highlights the dramaturg/ playwright-writer dichotomy (prevalent before '89 and still present in the 1990s) – a dramaturg / playwright understood as a socio-political agent, a practitioner operating outside the literary establishment. Between the lines, one can infer a potential problematization of the (necessary and desirable) rupture between theatre and literature, the latter being perceived as having ossified plays through its obsession with canonicity. This rupture is attributed to postdramatic culture, which alters the attitude toward the performance text and gives rise to a new kind of dramaturg/ playwright.

⁶ Andrea Tompa, [“Micro-anchetă: Dramaturgia maghiară în comunism” (“Micro-Survey: Hungarian Playwriting under Communism”)], in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society), ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 368-369.

Olivia Grecea, on the other hand – a director, theorist, and assistant professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Film – uses the postdramatic (sometimes alternating with “post-postdramatic,” depending on the theoretical framework she operates within) as a conceptual frame, a contemporary paradigm encompassing new forms of theatre, including devised theatre, which she analyzes. For instance, she discusses the notion of the dramaturge-at-stage – *écriture de plateau* – whose popularity she explains through its inclusion in the postdramatic paradigm: “Anne Monfort sees postdramatic writing as a form of writing that draws on a multitude of matrices – whether visual, choreographic, or transdisciplinary.”⁷ It is also evident that, for Grecea, the postdramatic remains relevant, given that the redefinition of theatre in the early 1990s seems to take place in relation to it: “The notions of postmodern theatre, postdramatic theatre, performance art, and performance shape a new paradigm of contemporary theatre, which we may call the performative theatre paradigm.”⁸ The postdramatic, through the democratization it proposes on all levels, would suggest “a type of performance that is – paradoxically – more accessible than dramatic performance, because the stage form excludes the possibility of a single message.”⁹

The most polarized and problematizing perspectives, however, are those of Miruna Runcan – critic and professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Film – and Alina Nelega. The former attributes the rupture between theatre and literature (or, more precisely, between stage practice – especially directing – and its contemporary dramaturgy) not to the concept of the postdramatic itself, but to the delayed import of postdramatic aesthetics (namely, of the formulas Lehmann labeled “postdramatic” decades after their initial emergence):

“If the distancing of theatrical performance from the tutelage of preexisting dramatic literature (hence the otherwise debatable concept of the ‘postdramatic’ introduced by Lehmann) was, throughout European-type cultures, a phenomenon that evolved naturally in the second half

⁷ Olivia Grecea, *Creația teatrală colectivă. Utopie, instrument și teatru politic (Collective Theatre-Making: Utopia, Method, and Political Theatre)* (Bucharest: Eikon, 2017), 126.

⁸ Olivia Grecea, 234.

⁹ Olivia Grecea, 207.

of the 20th century, nowhere did this distancing equate to the exclusion of dramatic literature from the stage – much less its exclusion from the field of literature itself. This ‘Romanian’ particularity was bound to provoke a reaction aimed at reinserting dramatic writing into the theatrical life of our country, and this reaction began to become visible, in various forms, after 2000.”¹⁰

The theorist underscores both the fragile nature of Lehmann’s concept and the double marginality of playwriting – an idea also highlighted by Liviu Malița: on the one hand, in relation to performance practices; on the other, in relation to literature (understood as prose and poetry). At the same time, the essayist describes the theatre movements of the 2000s and post-2000s as restorative efforts that respond to the growing gap between contemporary text and performance. However, the “reinsertion of dramatic writing” that Runcan speaks of does not necessarily imply a synchronous effort to return playwriting to the broader field of literature. She thus continues to problematize this second rupture, still unresolved:

“But what about the simple play, the classic play – simultaneously stageable and considered ‘heritage literature’? In this case, there are, at best, few and scattered responses in both theatre and literary criticism, since only very recently (that is, in the year of the pandemic) did somewhat coherent and coordinated debates begin to take shape around this topic – a sign that it should be approached seriously and cohesively in the years to come. From my perspective, the theatre text with dual valence – both stage-oriented and literary – has, in fact, never disappeared; rather, it has been continuously undervalued and marginalized by theatre institutions.”¹¹

¹⁰ Miruna Runcan, “Dramaturgia și datoriile (amânate ale) criticii de teatru” (“Playwriting and the (Postponed) Duties of Theatre Criticism”), in *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate* (*Don’t Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society*), ed. Liviu Malița (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 608.

¹¹ Miruna Runcan, 611.

Runcan believes that a researcher could find, in the last 30 years, plays that are perfectly stageable and do not lose their literary value because of this. She also proposes to rethink the tools of theatre criticism in relation to devised theatre and to the need of supporting the circulation of dramatic texts.

Alina Nelega, on the other hand, was one of the key promoters of the “divorce” between literature and dramaturgy at the end of the 1990s. Both the position of the writer-dramaturg and that of the “functionary” serving the ideas of a director – as “dramaturg-at-stage” – were, for her, undesirable options, but lacked alternatives in the immediate post-Revolution period. The latter is explained by the theorist as being “in the spirit of what, a few years later, would be identified and named by Lehmann in his book – relevant for 20th-century theatre – as ‘postdramatic theatre,’ meaning theatre after the play.”¹² Thus, one initial interpretation of the postdramatic is that it represents a paradigm specific to the last century. However, Nelega returns to this idea at the end of her essay, ultimately envisioning the theatre of the future as “postdramatic” and devoid of any authorial instance (whether that of the singular playwright or of the sovereign director):

“One could say that theatrical writing is becoming less and less literary and more and more documentary or performative, while the one(s) generating it form a synchronized team, tailored as needed to the performance as a singular object – artistic or otherwise. We could open here a discussion about the extent to which theatre is still art today – or the extent to which art can still be produced or generated in another way. Can we still speak of an author? How do we relate today to the dramatic author, in a context where plays continue to be written based on character, situation, and story – texts that border literature and share their ever-shrinking territory with political theatre, with collectivism and leftist ideologies that generate performances built around a consciously assumed authorial dispersal? What do we do with a living, invisible, ever-changing theatre – a theatre that is not only postdramatic but also post-directorial?”¹³

¹² Alina Nelega, 709.

¹³ Alina Nelega, 723.

We see that the perspective supported by Alina Nelega actually involves much broader issues that deserve to be addressed and pursued further. In relation to these analyses of the terminological use of the postdramatic, my research now aims to crystallize several fundamental problems raised by such a loose interpretation of postdrama.

Problematizations. From a (Vaguely) Legitimizing Concept to the 2000s Paradigm (The Dynamics of the Alternative Scene)

Thus, fractured by these local theoretical gaps, there are three major problems raised by the import and belated attempt to metabolize the postdramatic – an act of recovery in relation to the West.

a. On the one hand, we witness the simultaneous inclusion, for example, of both Silviu Purcărete (belonging to the 1980s generation) and Leta Popescu (from the 2000s generation) within the same postdramatic aesthetic/paradigm, which leads to the erasure of obvious generational boundaries – at least at the level of theatrical practice. Silviu Purcărete works exclusively with canonized texts, often with mythical overtones, which he transposes on stage in a mannerist fashion (a style/aesthetic that consecrated him and which became a template, and thus classicized within the national theatrical establishment), in state theatres and through grand productions. In contrast, Leta Popescu has been trained and has directed predominantly within the independent sector, works exclusively with contemporary texts, sometimes commissioned or devised (adaptations of contemporary prose and poetry, plays by 2000s playwrights, texts developed in theatrical laboratories, her own writings), and she is an activist, a political and critical voice. Looking at Lehmann's list of postdramatic features, through a subjective interpretation, both could seem postdramatic. Yet, in practice and upon closer analysis, the differences prove much greater than the similarities. So what does *postdramatic* still mean, then? Is it a Procrustean bed that can fit almost anything?

b. On the other hand, while at the European level, postdramatic theatre emerged in the 1960s-1970s, and in Romania manifested itself through Purcărete's productions in the 1980s and more fully from the 2000s onward – can it reasonably cover the entire period 1980–2023, over 40 years? Are we still in the postdramatic?

If we refer to Lehmann's own examples, such a broad timespan might seem possible: Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) created postdramatic performances, as did the group Gob Squad (a company founded in 1995, after Kantor's death). The latter held a workshop with the independent theatre *Reactor de Creație și Experiment* in Cluj in 2022 (whose productions are, as this connection suggests, but also based on a repertoire and performance analysis, postdramatic as well). The aesthetic specific to *Reactor* aligns with the postdramatic structures theorized by Lehmann, with a few exceptions: *Our Little Centennial* by Maria Manolescu, directed by Dragoș Alexandru Mușoiu; *All the Things Alois Took from Me*, by Cosmin Stănilă, directed by Andrei Măjeri, and others. Similarly, Cosmin Stănilă signs both the dramatic text, directed by Andrei Măjeri, and the dramaturgy of the devised performance *Part I. Love*, directed by Petro Ionescu.

Moreover, other texts by Maria Manolescu maintain a dramatic structure, such as *As Yourself*, while the latest text directed by Leta Popescu at the Cluj National Theatre – a revisitation of *The Taming of the Shrew* through an original, self-referential, and performative script that deconstructs the “fictive cosmos” of the stage and (re)problematizes the spectator-performance relationship in a metatheatrical manner – is clearly postdramatic. Alexandra Pâzgu, who assumes a poetic and formally postdramatic writing style (as evidenced by *Fluorescent Proteins* and *Supernovae*), nevertheless states that she is interested in how one can still construct narratives, how one can still tell stories today (so the focus remains on rethinking fabula – surely not in a classical-dramatic sense?). Can we then place her in a hybridized post-postdramatic space, which explores precisely these combinatory possibilities?

c. Last but not least, considering both the distinction that Lehmann operates with and the partial integration of the postdramatic into European postmodernism, one may ask: *Is Romanian theatre still postmodern, despite its thematic and aesthetic similarities with literature and cinema, which have already moved beyond postmodernism and clearly distanced themselves from it?*

Emerging paradigms in the literary field – such as intersectional feminism and gender studies, postcolonialism, ecocriticism, posthumanism and nonhumanism – also find areas of intersection with theatre (particularly with queer and intersectional community theatre, political theatre in all its forms, immersive theatre and installations, happenings, performance art, etc.).

Can these coexist with the postdramatic model? Does the postdramatic paradigm offer a discursive framework that allows space for these themes and aesthetic approaches? Examples such as Radu Afrim's production *The Heart and Other Meat-Based Dishes*, a stage adaptation of Dan Coman's volume, or (IN)VISIBLE by Leta Popescu, a collage of contemporary poetry, among many others, demonstrate the use of dramaturgical material with the same thematic and stylistic substance as contemporary Romanian literature. Thus, the theoretical or paradigmatic gap becomes more problematic.

The English translation of Lehmann's volume appeared in 2006, seven years after the first German edition, and only three years before the Romanian one. However, as Elinor Fuchs pointed out, American culture had not remained anchored in postdramatic aesthetics, but had instead evolved fluidly, oscillating naturally between the dramatic and the postdramatic.

The delayed integration of the postdramatic in the Romanian context is not necessarily due to the moment when the term itself – which retroactively legitimizes and unifies theatrical movements from 1960 to 1999 and anticipates later developments – enters the local theatrical vocabulary, but rather to a temporal gap in relation to European dramaturgical and performative practices. Its assimilation remains problematic, due to, on the one hand, the proven conceptual fragility and underlying vagueness of Lehmann's theory, as well as the incongruent views on what exactly constitutes the postdramatic, and, on the other hand, the lack of a proper discursive space to explore this paradigm. Nevertheless, theatre practitioners do employ the term, both as a means of legitimizing their work through a Western-validated theory and because experimental theatrical forms in the Romanian context are often of postdramatic lineage.

Faced with these challenges, and with the necessity of articulating a theoretical language for contemporary playwriting – where introducing another term, such as "postmodern theatre," would only further complicate the already fragile discursive framework – a clear definition of the Romanian postdramatic becomes imperative. What is and what is not postdramatic in Romania? My argument is that postdramatic theatre becomes operative in Romania only with the generation of playwrights emerging in the 2000s, and that it does not replace dramatic theatre but functions in parallel, at most as

a laboratory alternative to it. There is no actual dramatic/postdramatic rupture or final shift, but rather a short-circuiting of classicized models through increasingly assumed postdramatic forms.

In terms of periodizing the emergence of this new paradigm, what Lehmann identified as postdramatic in Romania – such as performances by Silviu Purcărete – or other productions from the 1980s in his vein, should, in my view, be seen at most as pre-postdramatic manifestations, where certain traits of the postdramatic appear mainly in the montage and directorial concept, not in the explicitly dramaturgical aspect. The text remains largely untouched, often classical or mythical in nature. In contrast, for the 2000s generation, the metamorphosis of the text often takes place simultaneously with that of the performance, within the rehearsal room, and is both structural and substantial. New texts written for the stage are frequently postdramatic from the outset.

Moreover, while I do not fully agree with philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto's view – quoted by Elinor Fuchs – that “unlike the fine arts, theatre is not progressive but oscillates historically between realism and various types of formalism”¹⁴, I believe that problematizing the postdramatic as a form, rather than a clearly defined paradigm is essential in the Romanian context. It is currently operative, often hybridized with the dramatic, but we may ask, following Elinor Fuchs: “Can we expect the return of the text at some point?... Can drama absorb postdrama and move forward?” “Has theatre, like art in Danto's framework, definitively abandoned representation – or will the dramatic reabsorb these detours and continue in a transformed form?”¹⁵ Have we moved beyond the postdramatic – or will we? And what could come next? The disappearance of the single creator, be it playwright or director, as Alina Nelega suggests? A hybrid, posthuman theatre?

¹⁴ Arthur Danto quoted in Elinor Fuchs, 71.

¹⁵ Elinor Fuchs, 71.

REFERENCES

- Cocora, Ion. ["Anchetă cu oameni de teatru" ("Survey with Theatre Professionals")]. In *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*, edited by Liviu Malița, 233-237. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.
- Cuibus, Miriam. ["Anchetă cu oameni de teatru" ("Survey with Theatre Professionals")]. In *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*, edited by Liviu Malița, 192-198. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.
- Fuchs, Elinor. "Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the 'Fictive Cosmos': A View from America." *UDC* 792(73), 2000/2010, 63-72.
- Grecea, Olivia. *Creația teatrală colectivă. Utopie, instrument și teatru politic (Collective Theatre-Making: Utopia, Method, and Political Theatre)*. Bucharest: Eikon, 2017.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Translated and with an Introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby. London & New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Malița, Liviu (ed.). *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.
- Nelega, Alina. "De la teatrul literar la teatrul documentar. Dramaturgia românească între 1989 și 2019" ("From Literary Theatre to Documentary Theatre. Romanian Playwriting between 1989 and 2019"). In *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*, edited by Liviu Malița, 708-723. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.
- Runcan, Miruna. "Dramaturgia și datoriile (amânate ale) criticii de teatru" ("Playwriting and the (Postponed) Duties of Theatre Criticism"). In *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*, edited by Liviu Malița, 605-611. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.
- Tompa, Andrea. ["Micro-anchetă: Dramaturgia maghiară în comunism" ("Micro-Survey: Hungarian Playwriting under Communism")]. In *Să nu privești înapoi. Comunism, dramaturgie, societate (Don't Look Back. Communism, Playwriting, Society)*, edited by Liviu Malița, 366-369. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022.

IOANA TOLOARGĂ is a playwright, theatre director, and researcher in Theatre Studies. Her research focuses on directions in contemporary Romanian playwriting, with particular attention to post-2000 dramaturgies. Her plays have been staged in both independent and institutional contexts, including Reactor Cluj, Teatrul Excelsior Bucharest, the National Theatre of Turda, Teatrul Dramatic „Fani Tardini” Galați, and Teatrul Luceafărul Iași. She has collaborated internationally, notably within the Campania Teatro Festival (Naples) and European performance projects. Her texts have been published in anthologies and volumes (LiterNet, Drama 5) and presented at festivals such as Apollo 111 Off-Stage and the Romanian National Theatre Festival. She has developed performative and multimedia installations, including *Remapping Memory*, based on the archive of the Turda National Theatre. As dramaturg and assistant director, she has worked with established Romanian theatre-makers such as Petro Ionescu, Raul Coldea, and Luana Hagi. She also publishes critical reviews and scholarly contributions to the Multimedia Dictionary of Romanian Theatre. Her academic and artistic practice explores the intersections between memory, identity, and contemporary performance.