

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA**  
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*In-yer-face Drama* or the phenomenology of a theatrical movement of  
exhibition,  
within the paradigmatic framework of communication with the emphasis on  
shock tactics (1990-2010)

**Doctoral thesis**

**Summary**

**Scientific Coordinator: Prof. univ. dr. Ion Vartic**

**PhD Candidate: Diana Mureșan (David)**

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**Keywords:**

in-yer-face theatre, contemporary drama, British theatre, Sarah Kane, postmodernism, cruelty, shock, violence, exhibition, nihilism

**Summary of the key parts of the work**

Over the past twenty-five years, dramaturgic and scenic practices have undergone unprecedented proliferation in Britain, with obvious and meaningful mutations, that have transformed this artistic environment, rather conservative in the previous decades, into one characterized by clear eclecticism. The primacy of the text, the quasi-monopoly of naturalism and "well-made plays" have been eroded by the new dramaturgy, but also by the spectacular hybrid formulas - *physical theatre*, *live art*, multimedia performance, theatre in non-traditional spaces (*site-specific theatre*) or immersive theatre.

As far as the dramaturgy of the 1990s is concerned, the references to the British scene are dominated by the term *in-yer-face*, a term introduced by Aleks Sierz, which has been validated and entered the theatrical vocabulary, while the work of the playwrights reunited under this name was, and continues to be the subject of intense controversy. The *in-yer-face* authors produce for the first time a fracture in the theatrical canon launched by *Look Back in Anger*, in what David Edgar believes is "the great project of British dramaturgy since 1956"<sup>1</sup>. The tradition of the political theatre, the great dramas-radiographs of the contemporary society, or the so-called "plays of the state of the nation" seem to be, in the nineties, more and more anachronistic and quickly move into a shadow cone, leaving the place free for personal histories or micro-narratives. This obvious turning point finds itself routed in the political developments at an

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<sup>1</sup> David Edgar, *Secret Lives*, The Guardian, 19 aprilie, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/19/theatre.artsfeatures>

international level - the collapse of the Communist bloc, the end of the Cold War and the often traumatic reconstruction of Europe - and the stagnation of the native politics, marked by a long governing of the Conservative Party. The decline of the political theatre or, better to say, its redefinition in *in-yer-face* drama, is also the result of a number of factors in which we can include globalization, consumerism, the exponential development of digital technology and communications, the decline of the traditional model of family, migration, exploration of new sexual and gender roles. The explicit political commentary, going up to the revolutionary utopias that we find in the dramaturgy after 1968 and until the end of the eighth decade, will be replaced by the *in-yer-face* generation with a not so obvious critical perspective aimed at the problems and the realities of the age. The '90 generation refuses to embrace one ideology or another. Moreover, it rejects the "correct" representation of some topics that are often considered delicate.

The first part of the paper outlines this political, social, cultural and theatrical context, in which the new dramaturgy flourished| is asserted. The course of this phenomenon is followed from its start to the decline phase at the end of the nineteenth decade, the defining characteristics that put it in an area of the experiment and, at the same time, in a radical opposition to previously established formulae. *In-yer-face* drama can be in the long tradition of European avant-garde theatre and, in this thesis we try to identify influences and connections with it.

During Thatcher's governance, between 1979 and 1990, the theatre, together with education, health and the local government, were underfunded. Another important aspect that defines the period is the politicization of the institutions which play a role in supporting and financing culture, first of all the Arts Council, the main authority that manages public funds. At the inauguration of the conservatives under Margaret Thatcher there is a major turning point in the philosophy of financing the arts. Through a general reduction in taxation and, implicitly, an increase in the private sector's incomes, they intended to stimulate the patronage and the private sponsorship, together with a reduction in the state's funding. The arts, like other domains, had to obey the laws of the market, so the theatres basically become enterprises having the rise in the sales of tickets as the main purpose. The repertoires are dominated by musicals, classical plays, adaptations of famous novels and contemporary plays that passed the test of success to the public in the previous years. At the end of the eighth decade, the British theatre seems to be exhausted by the struggle for survival. The conclusion of the Thatcher era can be summed up in what Peter

Hall said: "The saddest thing of all is that we must always justify that the arts should be subsidized. I thought the battle was over. We do not have to justify what we spend on education. I think we all live in the same world. The soul of this country, I believe, is in education, in its universities and in its art, in all its forms. And that is denied. I find this extremely worrying."<sup>2</sup>

Thatcher's ending of governing is perceived as a relief, and after a long period of stagnation, change seems to be possible. The famous phrase "there is no alternative"<sup>3</sup>, through which the "Iron Lady" accounted for her policies, remains in the history books. The young creators, Thatcher's "children", a generation that has lived under the auspices of eleven years of conservatism and famous British values, revolts itself breaking all the "rules" and demonstrates that there are alternatives. In this context, the cultural environment goes through a major revival, which reviewers start to call "rebirth." The first signal had already been given in the Fine Arts, with the widely discussed 1988 *Freeze* exhibition, which propels in the attention of the British audience, and then from outside the country, a generation of non-conformist artists, both in terms of themes and also in terms of shapes, materials or freedom in choosing and mixing media. The Fine Arts are joined by pop music, theatre, fashion design and a wave of new filmmakers, in order to form a cultural cocktail and the most fashionable export offer. In mass-media, the phenomenon becomes *Cool Britannia*, and here the ideas of new, fresh or refreshing will be associated with the idea of the nation.

During this cultural revolution, Tony Blair reforms the Labour Party, under the name of *New Labour* and having the support of a large part of the electorate, especially the youth, he wins the elections in 1997. One of the priorities of his program was to modernize the country and to redefine its image. A new, young, energetic and creative New England is being promoted. In this context, a coherent and unitary policy of stimulating the "creative industries" (including the performing arts), considered to be essential for increasing the competitiveness of the economy on the global market. The "creative industries" had an unexpected success, and the development programs for these areas have remained at the forefront of British policy since the late 1990s up to present, and what is more, the "model" has been exported to other countries. Although there was a much higher interest in arts, active strategies, focused on stimulating them and on

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<sup>2</sup> Apud D. Keith Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre. British Theatre and Drama in the Eighties*, Connecticut – London, Greenwood Press, 1999, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Thatcher apud Jonathan Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, p. 302.

encouraging entrepreneurship, as well as budget allocations superior to previous periods, the cultural policies emphasized the generation of economic value and the involvement of the private sector, rather than funding from public funds.

For the new dramaturgy, the decade begins in the midst of a crisis, which in the last years of the Thatcher government became chronic. The new plays are considered risky, so the new dramatists have few opportunities. Although shy at the beginning, the revival is being produced and playwrights such as Philip Ridley, Anthony Neilson, or Phyllis Nagy, succeed in attracting the public's interest and criticism through provocative plays, violent in language and images, but at the same time through an aesthetic that distances itself from the previous period. The turning point will be in the 1994 and 1995 theatrical season, when at the Royal Court, the main stage for the new drama, a number of young playwrights make their debut. An example is Sarah Kane with *Blasted*. Reviews of the performance appear on the front page of the newspapers and triggers the most virulent reactions, comparable as media impact with those created by John Osborne with *Look Back in Anger* in 1956, or Edward Bond with *Saved* in 1965. Beyond the controversies it has generated, *Blasted* remains one of the most original and powerful plays of the end of the millennium. It has had a major impact on British theatre and marks the beginning of a new era.

In a short period of time, other playwrights, including Joe Penhall, Mark Ravenhill, Jez Butterworth, and Martin McDonagh, penetrate the British scene and signal that a new generation reminding of the spirit of "angry young men" at the end of the 50s, has emerged. Although they are united by the same aesthetic and political concerns, they form a heterogeneous group without a common project. However, as the phenomenon grew, in the media and in literature, various names were circulated, through which they tried to delimit it, such as: "cool theatre", "new nihilists", "new brutalists" or "theatre of urban ennui". The most appropriate name was *in-yer-face*, which circulated in the theatrical vocabulary in the 1990s, but gained notoriety when Aleks Sierz published the first work focused on this new type of drama, in 2001

The plays of the 90s generation disturb, hurt, but fascinate at the same time. Extreme and intense, they often succeed in going beyond the sensational produced by sex or violence, already exploited in cinematography and, certainly, bring a vision of the world without concessions, deliberately exhibit the tares and dysfunctions, and apparently do not present a pleasant picture of the human being. At the same time, it becomes obvious that this drama forces

the norms and, by abolishing the boundaries between the representative and the non-representative, it presents a real artistic commitment, it runs the type of risk that goes beyond the simple act of provoking or, in other words, it interrogates and reinvents the aesthetics of the scenic art.

Even if it brings violence, calamity and cruelty on the stage, *in-yer-face* theatre does not exclude the existence of ethics and the emergence of the good. When it is valuable, it provides a regressive, analytical, and ultimately a therapeutic effect. To stimulate the mind of the spectator, you must first stimulate the body. It is the principle that Artaud states when he speaks about theatre as the only method in modern society through which, the body can be "awakened". Physical and emotional reactions trigger a release that will allow the individual to externalize what he repressed. The shock is meant to awaken the public's awareness, to generate attitudes and questions, to make it react to true reality, the one outside the scene, which is the metaphysical cruelty.

In order to determine the critical coordinates of this drama, we will analyze in a chapter the normative aspects of the literary and communication theories, as well as those related to the spectacular manifestations, having as a reference some obvious, even ostentatious features of the phenomenon, such as the emphasis on shock; shifting the focal point from the general to the specifics and the relationship between reality and fiction based on individual subjectivities (subconscious / oneiric); insular descriptions of some group specificities with unique language or language determinants; language specificity; social critique from a whole, as a determining factor, to the effect on a distinct and strongly nuanced individuality; direct communication of a tough reality, brutalism; exhibitionism and total display of affections; an attempt to reconfigure normality and abnormalities with fragile, sometimes imperceptible boundaries; redefining human limits and, consequently, the limits of tragic in relation to violence.

The playwrights of the 1990s bring the elements of social realism to the extreme in the construction of characters, which are thus universally valid metaphors. The characters are built from a series of existential discontinuities and confusions, thus becoming open characters, metaphors of the fragmented individual in the postmodern era. The elliptical and sequential structures, parallel or convergent, the abandonment of cause-effect linear evolutions, the lack of landmarks for the localization of action, and various space and time approaches can be found in these plays and can also be approached in close relation to postmodernism.

In the second part of the paper, the analysis of some texts representative for the phenomenon are included. The analysis of the *in-yer-face* plays, begins with a more recent one, which is emblematic for its form, on the one hand, but also as subject and writing, for the reconstruction or re-structuring attempt, which could define the period after post-dramatic and post-modernism respectively. We chose *The Author* because Tim Crouch also carries out a "review" of the "angry" authors who vlogged and broke the canons of censorship in the sixth decade, mainly by listing some horrors that were brought on the stage for the first time. But perhaps the most important thing is that frustrating realities are described under a hyper-realistic "magnifying glass" that have been put on stage over time, specifically, on the stage of the Royal Court - Theatre Upstairs, and particularly in the *in-yer-face* plays. This play is eloquent in that it describes, on the one hand, "how to do" theatre and, on the other hand, which are the major and controversial themes that were played at Royal Court, and how, once applauded, they were subjected to "complicity" and acceptance from the viewers. The play is innovative through its forum-theatre form, but it also discusses an evolution of *in-yer-face* drama and its direct effects on its creators. We do not believe that these creators of an extreme theatre are detached from their works, but on the contrary, the very exhibition of their experiences and the field of their exploration lead to a stronger accentuation of the crises they invoke. They talk about the realities of wars, the realities of incest and the realities of the British society, that the team is researching in order to perform a show. The artists go to special centers, visit an area of war, and approach the traumatized characters during their therapy, also becoming investigative journalists.

Philip Ridley is a playwright who comes from outside the theatre, he studied Fine Arts. His work is influenced by Gothic literature, pop culture, surrealistic films, comics and painting. His linguistic verve puts him alongside Joe Orton. His situations and characters bear certain reminiscences from Pinter's early plays, especially through defensive, unsafe characters, who respond violently to external dangers when they seem imminent. Generally speaking, Ridley sets up tensions by putting in opposition the active characters, apparently threatening, to the passive ones and sometimes uses the reversing power roles. His heroes are nostalgic, reject the present, also refuse the future, and try to reevaluate their past through the recurrent appeal to confession, but actually hide or change the truth; they build extravagant survival scenarios, infantile at times, which ultimately prove to be fragile and inefficient.



One of the defining qualities of Ridley's drama is his ability to build extremely powerful images, combining the fantasy with the bizarre and the reality. In the stories of the characters there are dramatic contrasts between delightful pictures and situations / actions that are under the sign of brutality and apocalypse. We can also find striking oppositions between the damaged places where the drama unfolds - abandoned rooms destroyed by fire – and the extravagant costumes and the elevated language of the characters. Ridley proposes a new aesthetics, dominated by the dark imagery, the macabre comic and the Baroque violence that leave visible traces in British drama at the end of the century. He also introduces gender and sexuality themes. A sexuality that triggers fears and obsessions, sometimes passive and anxious, other times active, dominant, leading to cruelty.

Martin Crimp is an author who cannot be fitted into a literary trend or a certain style. In fact, he rejected both the *in-yer-face* playwright "label" and also the association with postmodernism. "Postmodernism seems to me a mixture of bizarre contradictions and even injustices that are part of our culture, both locally and globally, while skepticism is certainly different, because it entails a moral attitude, not an ideological one, a belief that what you think may be right or wrong."<sup>4</sup>

His work is distinguished by severe dialogue, by emotional detachment and a rather gloomy vision of interpersonal relationships. From the collaboration that he had at the beginning of the nineteenth decade with the Royal Court, two of the most important shows of the period emerged: *The Treatment* and *Attempts on Her Life*.

*The Treatment* is a play which tackles issues such as media manipulation, the exploitation of women in the modern society, the relationship between art and entertainment. Anne, abused by her husband, decides to leave him and so she meets two producers who seem to be interested in her story. We are transposed into the world of the American film and we are witnessing the process of transforming a real story into a scenario that has the purpose to exploit the sensational at all costs. The real, cruel and disturbing violence is covered to become attractive and profitable, but ultimately free of charge. Crimp preserves the language in a symbolic and metaphorical, allusive and sometimes ironic area, but he will shock the public and

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Crimp *apud* Mirela Aragay (ed.), Pilar Zozaya, (ed.), *British Theatre of The 1990s. Interviews with Directors, Playwrights, Critics and Academics*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 60.

the critics through cruel, "untreated" replies. The text is built on a fragmented structure, functioning as a puzzle that gradually reveals itself.

*Attempts on Her Life* has been considered by the critics the most courageous play of the last twenty-five years, especially due to the originality of its structure. The action is placed in an unreal time and in an undefined world. Not only does the viewer have any idea where he is, but he does not even know who the characters are - they are transformed into voices - which are talking about someone who is never present. It is a "postmodern extravagance"<sup>5</sup>, a polyphonic text consisting of 17 parts that offers us the woman's deconstructed image in the era of globalization. She may be a terrorist or an artist who has turned her suicide attempts into a work of art or a tourist who photographed himself/herself in the pools of millionaires and in the miserable outskirts of a town or a woman who has lost her children in a civil war or even a little girl.

If Sarah Kane had not suffered from severe depression and if she had not committed suicide at 28, her plays would not have asked so acutely the biographical issue. Her characters are, most of the times, whispering voices emerging from a feverish imagination, fantasies, vague mime marks drawn from a crowd that does not get a contour, or characters caricatured with strong but inconstant personalities, of an extreme violence or, on the contrary, by a fragility that makes them "jarring" in relation to the outside environment. Her imagery is a largely imagistic one, but the images she creates are detailed and discrepant, creating photographic incongruities that make the stories impossible to be followed logically. The places where the depicted dramas take place are spaces of the characters inner lives that intertwine with inserts or photograms of reality. The language that Sarah Kane uses is also one of great extremes. She shifts unobtrusively from a poetic and comical mood of derision and sarcasm to a cruel, brutal, and grotesque one. We deal with real topographies of emotional imbalances, the topography of possible cruelty, but also stepping into the impossible and symbolic, all seen through the filter of an immense sensibility. The sensitivity taken to the extreme is a characteristic state that goes beyond actions or behaviors and erupts from the poetic verbalization of some experiences, illustrated outside the game, broken by the theatrical reality, which manifests itself in the desperate expectation of

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<sup>5</sup> Aleks Sierz, *In-yer-face Theatre. British Drama Today*, London, Faber and Faber, 2000, p. 33.

some inner adjustments of the being eager to come to the surface, to return invariably to the hostile environment that created it.

Sarah Kane cannot be considered an ordinary author. Her self is dissolved in her own works. The auctorial self dissolves in its own self, and the own self is dominant, most of the time, because her authentic experiences are in fact necessary for survival. The auctorial self is the double that tries to regulate the being through display and exteriorization. Kane's plays are difficult to assimilate because they make the viewer a container where the trauma is spilled, without an empathic exchange. The identification becomes impossible. Sarah Kane does not penetrate the fourth wall. On the contrary she dissolves it through the exposed intimacy. Her very lively aesthetic is placed by critics between the surrealist writing and the Elizabethan tragedy, but we would say that Sarah Kane mixes them up and does this demonstratively. The ironical character of her drama and the nostalgic hypostasis are in the great theme of the inability of the human being to break out of the violent circle and show a very urgent desire for real love. Love remains the constant of desire, but its getting out of the realm of reality is symptomatic.

Anthony Neilson doesn't consider himself to be part of a theatrical movement. He declined the *in-yer-face* label, which he considers inappropriate for him. He defines himself as experimental. Throughout his career, he has worked in collaborations, being permanently preoccupied with reception and with the process of working together with the actor, the set designer or the musician.

In *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, the dramatic triggers states of discomfort and anguish, the tragic, hand in hand with the violence and cruelty, stir up mercy, disgust and fear, and the comic would naturally involve the arousing of laughter. Laughter should be the easiest to achieve, because it is a state that can erupt spontaneously, including instances when we face negative situations if they are unpopular or surprising. The viewer, no matter in which state he is before a show, seeks to relax and nothing is more relaxing or healthier than a good laugh. Inside the pure and crystalline laughter lie the ironic component and sarcasm. Neilson's humor is fine and subtle, black and arrogant, quiet and calm. In his plays, they laugh at language, morality, excess or exaggeration, difficulties or anguish, murder or psychiatric pathologies, but especially at social groups.

Phyllis Nagy occupies a special place in the theatre of the 90s, although, reviewers often treated her work with reluctance. She attracts attention through the elegance of style, even

when it comes to slang, to the direct, frustrating language of the street. This preoccupation for the dialogues makes her plays receive rhythm and musicality, while the tone is both pleasant and cruel, biting. She often resorts to the comic books, but also builds up the bumpy, unpredictable, and sometimes weird psychologies. She is one of those playwrights who manages to overcome the British canon and allow themselves the freedom to explore new forms with each play. Through the elliptical, sinuous structures, the open end, sequencing, irony and fantasy, Nagy can be placed alongside Tom Stoppard or Martin Crimp in the postmodernist area.

Phyllis Nagy, through plays and scripts, speaks as a distinct voice that not only does not want to be part of any trend, but has a keen interest in psychoanalytic drama and in fluent, intelligible dialogue with references to the history of the social phenomenon, which polarized around the issue of homosexuality. In Nagy's work, the oneiric is one that expresses itself with great closeness to the context of reality and cuts itself off a thread of sentimentalism and interior sensitivity. This is what happens during the contouring of the trend, surrealism serves to extend the characters' experiences beyond reality, through the accents that their states oppose to the external environment. The plot in her plays is under the sign of temporal chaos, of inner feelings and of a lack of understanding between characters who, each in his own way pursues his purpose of exteriorizing disturbing emotions, without letting the relationships with the others affect them in their uniqueness. In her writing, there is cinematic sequencing within the plays and a very fine theatricality in film scripts.

Mark Ravenhill is a very prolific author who specialized in probing the evil, the anxiety that its awareness causes, or the death of the human, the disappearance of empathy and homosexual eroticism. For the young Ravenhill, the 1990s are marked by a strong struggle to overthrow any hypocrisy which tries to hide what for the outskirts of the city had become a way of life: prostitution, excess, perversity, abuse of marginalized youth, alcohol and drug use, addiction and the needs arising from it, the need to obliterate evil, and the numbness of any conscience forced to perceive the evil of the world with "eyes wide open," the gap between generations and consumerism. In Ravenhill's plays, violence, murder and suicide are almost a "trademark", which becomes the main subject of the television show. Beyond the emotional and psychological depths that their closeness involves, beyond the notoriety gained from the excess exploitation of mass-media of the phenomena resulting from them, an abrasion is being produced, an abrasion derived from the loss of the sense of reality. With the subconscious

penetration, the death of the self and the death of the human being are achieved. At the end of the decade, the author's preoccupation is marked by nostalgia for the mito-poetic origins of human gestures, by a glance at history and self-essence, by philosophy, and by the recovery of human's tragic areas marked by human alteration.

*In-yer-face* theatre is influenced by postmodernism, which gives it "a breach of freedom" and non-conformism, which goes to transgressing the norms to the limit of supportability. Its influences, as well as the manner in which it was influenced could be seen in all the spectacular manifestations that infused into various forms of art, including contemplative-visual art, music, television, video games, but most of all in cinema. Thus, in the last part of this thesis, we try out a projection outside of the *in-yer-face* phenomenon, following on the one hand the parallelism and the emergences with the cinematographic art of the ninth decade, and, on the other hand the reactions that it generates and the way it was assimilated in the drama of the new millennium.

As West End and Broadway are the opposites of experimental theatres, likewise the film is delineated in two directions, those of huge budget films, produced by large production houses and independent films with relatively limited budgets that afford themselves to get out of the commercial sphere and have a greater freedom of expression.

The nineties come after a period when the acting and the scripts are attributed to an exaggerated pathos with thicker tones, promoting rebellious, self-reliant, heroic and powerful characters that resemble "the angry young men" and who successfully cope with a life adapted to social differences, to conflicting battles with the rigidity of conventions or norms. *In-yer-face* sensitivity is found in Quentin Tarantino's screenplays, who is also exemplary in post-modern meta-narrative structures. The screenplay underlying *Reservoir Dogs* reminds us of Tim Crouch's writing, due to the dramatic construction of theatre within theatre, modeled. The film is a kind of thriller, unfolding in a "tragic climate" built on a structure close to the Elisabethan canon of "blood / revenge tragedy." Tarantino's screenplays truly capture the way in which a sick society gives the result of cruelty, and the media is an addictive accomplice. *Natural Born Killers*, directed by Oliver Stone, describes a couple of serial killers, Mickey and Mallory, who quickly gain their notoriety and superstar status in television and press. Discussing parental neglect, incest, violence in films and the media's appetite for extreme manifestations, conditioned

by its avid receptors, the plot is a "ballad" of two spirits that relate to their unique interest, that of unleashing violence in the most terrible way over those they come in contact with.

Guy Ritchie is certainly one of the most outstanding English directors who, in addition to his equally recognizable styling, perhaps like Woody Allen's, approaches a farcical comic that Neilson wants to achieve and causes true and contagious laughter. *Snatch* is a British-American co-production that drills deep into the outskirts of London, in criminal groups that carry out mafia activities in conjunction with those from America.

The influences from theatre to film and vice versa are very common, especially during the period we are discussing. Perhaps one of the most eloquent examples is *Trainspotting*, the film whose script was written based on Irvine Welsh's novel, by John Hodge, and the play by Harry Gibson. Both the film and the play were met with tremendous success. *Trainspotting* became a symbol of pop culture and of the nineties generation.

Sarah Kane wrote a short film screenplay, *Skin* that highlights the essential differences between two people in an aberrant couple who get to "devour" themselves in a bloody game. It's a dogmatic documentary about a neo-Nazi hooligan from southern London, and violence and racism are pretexts to show how searching for the "other" can lead to the destruction of the self.

In the UK, together with the increase in theatre funding, after 2000, the number of playwrights, new plays and themes increased considerably. The covered topics extend over a wide range of issues, from political themes to individual and intimate stories. The topics include terrorism, the effects of migration, post-colonialism, racial discrimination, segregated communities, and the impact of media on everyday life, the urban alienation, the outskirts of big cities and poverty, the collapse of traditional values and the redefining of the family concept. At the beginning of the millennium, the theatre is changing, and on the British stages the public is challenged to think, to ask, to become dynamic rather than to consume a political message. There is an increasing interest in new plays, contemporary in terms of language, form and content, in which viewers find themselves and which cause debate and controversy.

Non-conformism, the exposure to extreme emotions and nihilism, which were trademarks of *in-yer-face* generation playwrights, have left dramatic formulae that exploit directly the realities of the moment, such as the verbatim theatre. But echoes and influences of sensibility from the 1990s are present both to young writers who make their debut after 2000, and to the playwrights who have previously become known and who continue to explore new

and exciting themes. Philip Ridley, with *Mercury Fur*, a dystopia in which poetry and extreme brutality converge, triggers a wave of adverse reactions in the British press in 2005, comparable to that caused by *Blasted*. Mark Ravenhill, one of the most energetic contemporary playwrights, redefines his style on new directions with *The Cut* in 2006, reconfirming his interest for the theatrical adventure. Caryl Churchill, a sonorous female voice, who began her career in the '70s, continues to surprise with her extraordinary ability to reinvent dramatic forms.

Simon Stephens is a young playwright, whose plays have similarities with *in-yer-face* drama: violent slips, confused or impulsive sexuality, criminality, undefined spaces, such as hotel rooms, where the characters are consuming their failure and repressed desires. Dennis Kelly is another innovative, visceral and unpredictable playwright, who finds inspiration in the extreme aesthetics of the previous decade. His drama draws attention through its eclectic nature, through what is not shown and untold on stage, through the missing elements that could be points of stability in the lives of his vulnerable characters, seduced by danger and destructive experiences, characters carrying a genetic code similar to those in the works of Mark Ravenhill, Sarah Kane, or Anthony Neilson. Debbie Tucker Green's plays are a legacy of *in-yer-face drama*. Her plays have political accents, with marks of selfishness and nihilism, directly linked to the image of trauma and global violence.

The last chapter of the paper captures the way in which the *in-yer-face* theatre has been broadcast in our country. In the absence of some critical studies and translated volumes authors such as Sarah Kane, Anthony Neilson, Martin Crimp, or Tim Crouch are known in the Romanian cultural space exclusively through stage representations. The first author to enter the repertoire of the theatres is Sarah Kane, firstly with *4:48 Psychosis*, in 2004, at Act Theatre in Bucharest, directed by Tudor Țepeneag, then in 2006 on the stage of the National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca with *Cleansed*, directed by Andrei Șerban. 2006 seems to be an *annus horribilis* for the Romanian prudishness because Mihai Măniuțiu directs *Phaedra's Love* in Arad. There is an ad-hoc censorship set in, and the city hall tries to stop the show. In the 2008-2009 season, at the National Theatre in Cluj there was a week dedicated to Sarah Kane's drama, which included a series of conferences and debates, as well as the premiere of *Psychosis 4:48* in two different directorial visions directed by Mihai Măniuțiu and Răzvan Muresan. *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* was put on stage in 2010, at the Theatre in Baia Mare, by the director Răzvan Mureșan.

*In-yer-face* theatre abounds in violent scenes that show images of pain, degradation, irrational and destructiveness. It has probably received all the attributes related to extreme manifestations: rough, brutal, bloody, disgusting, terrifying, macabre, dirty, are just some of them. When violence is accompanied by an ideological message and by emotions, when it is associated with artistic and ethical values, it has the capacity to be more than a mimetic and free representation. It challenges norms and codes and confronts us with the new and the different. *In-yer-face* drama mirrors the uncomfortable image of reality, violence and human degradation, accentuated in the contemporary period by excessive overexposure, which allows the easy circulation and access and the proliferation of these manifestations. The shock to which it calls is intended to awaken the public's awareness, to generate attitudes and questions, to make it react to the reality outside the stage. The shock refuses its easy meanings, disturbs its habits and its expectations. This drama, like the one described by Artaud under the name of the Theatre of Cruelty, proposes a regressive, analytical, and ultimately therapeutic effect.

Even though *in-yer-face* was a short-lived phenomenon, it remains one of the most exciting chapters in the contemporary theatre and, undoubtedly, one of its most significant moments.



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