

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

International Conference on MYTH AND DRAMA: Contemporary Interpretations

Skopje, 29-30 November 2024



SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS UNIVERSITY IN SKOPJE (UKIM)

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Scope of the Conference
MYTH AND DRAMA:
Contemporary Interpretations
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Since their beginnings, myth and drama/theatre have been profoundly intertwined, and their dialogue opens up diverse and exciting creations and (re)interpretations. Myths have been the starting point of numerous dramatic texts and theatrical performances. The contemporary drama/theatre production, therefore, pleads for rereading and subverting of traditional myths and questions the need of creating new myths as a response to the challenges of the present-day world.

The aim of this interdisciplinary conference is to explore (historically and diachronically) the relations between the concepts of mythical thinking and dramatic/theatrical creativity, drawing upon methods and approaches from various fields and disciplines - from comparative literature to theater studies, aesthetics and semiotics, as well as the dramaturgy of old and new (re)tellings in drama/theatre.

Bearing in mind the variety and challenges related to the study of drama and theatre, we are presenting the following themes from which potential analogies can be drawn between myth and drama/theatre.¹

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¹ The authors are responsible for the contents of their abstracts and warrant that their abstract is original, has not been previously published, and has not been simultaneously submitted elsewhere. The views expressed in the abstracts in this publication are those of the individual authors.

Keynote lecture 1:

Svetlana Slapšak

Retired Professor of Anthropology of Ancient Worlds, Anthropology of Gender and Balkanology, Director of IBAMESC (Institute for Balkan and Mediterranean Studies and Culture), Ljubljana, Slovenia

Legacy of Arachne

Keywords: Arachne, textum, text, web, mythourgy, Euripides, Troades, myth as a metaphor for dramaturgy.

Abstract: Contemporary drama often uses ancient dramatic texts: I will only mention *Antigone* by Lenka Udovički with Rade Šerbedžija, *Cyclop* and *Thyestes* by Ilica Buljan. The main procedure is modernization (actualization), whereby the ancient text indirectly confirms the universality (or exceptional duration of meaning), or a new reading, which problematizes the history of the drama. In both cases, the theater critically addresses the theory and history of literature and the theory and history of theater. That is one of the demands Florence Dupont makes in her devastating deconstruction of what we commonly call Aristotle's theory of drama. As she convincingly shows, Roman popular theatre, together with plays for a highly educated audience of the domestic and perhaps reading type, lead to the thought of theater performed together with the audience, outside the theatre, post-dramatic theatre, etc. It is a theater that is not a *textum* (weave, text), a thread that meets a thread at right angles, an intertwining, but is much more like a *textum* (weave, text) performed by a spider. The spider's web has been a favorite visual representation of the thoughts of many philosophers. The myth of such weaving is the myth of Arachne, who challenged the goddess Athena to an embroidery competition: the goddess embroidered the "official" version of the life of the gods, Arachne embroidered a scandalous version, critical of the faults, sins and transgressions of the gods. Furious Athena hit her with a shuttle when she saw that her work was better, and Arachne hanged herself in shame. Athena then turned her into a spider.

The plot in the theater, a dramatic structure that is fundamentally changing today, certainly corresponds to a cobweb more than to weaving (text). Irregularity, improvisation, author's approach, theater as a phenomenon of life, performative diversity - all this metaphorically connects myth and drama. Can something of that be seen already in ancient drama? Certainly - say in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, a series of fragments about the fates of women in war. We could imagine the play in Gaza today. On the other hand, in the world of pop culture, we find the *Kaos* TV series, which, in Arachne's way, deals with the gods in an approximately circular plot that connects the myth and the present world. Philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis considered chaos to be ontogenetic: the ancient Greeks started from the creation of the world out of chaos. Without the obligation to believe in order, they could come up with democracy, which is constantly changing. Castoriadis had the idea of a collective imaginary: the origin and combination of elements of the imaginary can be traced in a kind of reverse semantic history of each element to a certain foundation, which can no longer be understood, which is initial and arational (Castoriadis neologism). The reduction process goes back, but it is not historical, nor is it a simplification. Perhaps the creators of *Kaos* have read Castoriadis after all, and even if they haven't, the interpretation is free, therefore chaotic. Ancient democracy had a series of codified valves for citizens to vent and insult everyone - metaphorically and periodically, during holidays/carnivals, theater festivals: because the theater is a key institution of democracy, of the collective imaginary. Such connections prove the need to introduce the term *mythourgy*, which connects performative practices, oral narration, participation and improvisation.

PANEL 1: MYTHS, LEGENDS AND HEROES (11:30 – 12:45)

Ivica Baković

Faculty of humanities and social sciences,
University of Zagreb, Croatia

South Slavic Faustus: the Faustian Myth and Dealing with the Past

Keywords: myth, drama, Faustus, South Slavic literatures, history, memory

Abstract: The paper will provide an overview and analysis of the Faustian myth in South Slavic drama literature with a special focus on dramatic/theatrical confrontation with the past. In almost all South Slavic literatures, there is a presence of the Faustian myth in different periods. In South Slavic dramatic literatures, especially from the beginning of the 1980s, one can find several realisations of this theme and motive (Blaga Dimitrova, Slobodan Šnajder, Vida Ognjenović, Mladen Srbinovski, Tanja Simic Berclaz), and almost all of them are linked with a specific dealing with the past. It seems that the actualization of the Faustian myth is related to certain traumatic cores in national history and collective memory. In the paper, this thesis will be presented on the example of the dramatic texts of the mentioned authors, as well as some other authors, in order to answer the question about the South Slavic Faustus (and Mephistopheles).

Milan Damjanoski

"Blaže Koneski" Faculty of Philology,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

The Faustus Myth as a Motif in English Drama

Keywords: Faust, Christopher Marlowe, myth, English drama

Abstract: The Faustus myth is one of the most striking and pervasive motifs in Western literature, a motif that has inspired some of the most famous writers and thinkers such as Goethe, Heine, Thomas Mann, Vaclav Havel and many others. The question of where the limits of knowledge are and the price to be paid if they are transgressed is a story related to the original sin and the bite of the apple in the Garden of Eden. It finds its strongest materialization in the myth of Doctor Faustus and his pact with the Devil. It has its origins in German folklore literature, but later it becomes a timeless global myth that has been embraced and often used in world literature and drama. In our paper, we want to show how this myth has its first stage appearance in English drama via one of the progenitors of Renaissance drama, Christopher Marlowe and his most famous work "The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus" (1604), which then became a template for future versions of this story in English, but also in world literature. Furthermore, we shall analyze how this motif is used to build upon the traditional morality plays and how the mythic structure itself allowed for the expansion and development of this religious genre. Finally, we will try to give a brief overview of the influence and presence of the Faust myth in English drama and literature.

Enisa Uspenski
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University of Arts in Belgrade

Ancient Roots of the Myth of the Beautiful Lady

Keywords: the myth of the beautiful lady, Plato, realistic novel, symbolist drama.

Abstract: In the introductory part, we will talk about the ancient roots of the myth of the beautiful lady, paying special attention to Plato's opposition of Aphrodite Urania and Aphrodite Pandemos. In the second part, we will talk about the echoes and transformations of the myth of Aphrodite in the classical drama (Racine) and realistic novels ("The Lady with Camellias" and "Madame Bovary"). Next, we will talk about the influence of the reincarnated myth of Aphrodite on the creation of a new myth about the beautiful lady by Vladimir Solovyov and F. M. Dostoevsky. In the third part of the work, we will talk about the sacralization and desacralization of the myth of the beautiful lady in the symbolist dramas of Slavic authors: Alexander Blok, Fedor Sologub, Stanislav Vyspyansky, Todor Manojlovich, Zhivoyin Vukadinovich. In the final part, we will point out the prospects for the development of myth in modern and postmodern drama.

Sofija Todorović
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University of Belgrade, Serbia

"Self-Mythicization" and the Lost Mediator in Thomas Bernhard's *Minetti*

Keywords: Thomas Bernhard's *Minetti*, "self-mythicization", self-perception, Shakespearean heroes, grotesque identification, mythical dimension, lost mediator

Abstract: The presentation examines the problem of "*self-mythicization*" in Thomas Bernhard's play *Minetti: Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man* (1976), a story of an ex-actor Minetti, who, having been expelled from the theatre in Lübeck, spends decades performing the role of Shakespeare's King Lear in front of a mirror, in the solitude of his sister's attic in Dinkelsbühl. The special attention is given to the analysis of the peculiar sympathetic identification that Minetti, a "de-throned" actor, establishes towards Shakespeare's de-throned heroes: King Lear and Prospero. We argue that the mentioned identification with the canonical literary heroes and narratives – shaped by tradition as certain *literary myths* – can be understood as a means of mythicizing one's own story; namely, universalizing its position up to reaching the mythical domain. The mythical dimension of Minetti's self-perception is, however, perceived as grotesquely tragicomic. The other focus of the presentation concerns proposing the reading of Bernhardt's play as a modern myth about the delusional artist, whose art of acting lost its fundamental element: *the audience*. In the terms of traditional mythical structure and Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological structuralism, the *absent audience* would function as the *lost mediator*. Minetti's silent "interlocutors" in the hotel lobby in Ostende and the mirror in Dinkelsbühl serve as a substitution for a real audience (and successful mediation). The aim of the paper is to show how both Minetti's self-mythicization mechanisms and the mentioned "false mediators" play a certain compensatory, yet never fully satisfactory role.

Lidija Kapuševska Drakulevska
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Reinterpretation of the Myth in Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*

Keywords: myth, drama, Goethe, ethics, humanism

Abstract: Goethe's verse play "Iphigenia in Tauris" (1787) is one of the most renowned dramatic adaptations and versions of the ancient myth, which boasts a long and rich tradition. This drama possesses both *historical* significance and *contemporary* relevance. Goethe's work is a reimagining of Euripides' ancient Greek tragedy "Iphigenia en Taurois". While Euripides' drama serves as a prototype, the great German author introduces innovations to the dramatic plot, providing his unique contribution to the wealth of variants (and variations) of the myth and its ancient treatment. The mythical premise in Goethe's play is replaced by a psychological one, through which the author envisions a kind of utopia for "pure humanity". Goethe worked on "Iphigenia in Tauris" intermittently over eight years, producing four versions of the play. He brought the manuscript with him on his Italian journey (1786-1788), finalizing it in Rome. The play marks Goethe's transition from the youthful and rebellious "*Sturm und Drang*" period to the mature and contemplative "*Weimarer Klassik*" movement. According to Goethe's contemporary Friedrich Schiller, "Iphigenia in Tauris" is a great poetic work, though it sacrifices scenic liveliness and visual correlate. Goethe's primary focus lies not in theatricality but in the ethical actions of the characters. His reinterpretation of the myth underscores the triumph of moral dignity and individual integrity across time and space. Consequently, Goethe's drama is both timeless and universal, while also deeply rooted in addition its historical context. It is no surprise that "Iphigenia in Tauris" is critically regarded as a "drama of human freedom".

PANEL 1': MYTH, DRAMA AND ANCIENT STUDIES (11:30 – 12:45)

Daniela Toševa
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Cretan Love Pathologies in Euripides

Key words: Euripides, pathological love, Hippolytus, Cretan mythology, Greek tragedy

Abstract: Euripides often presents unhappy women on stage who experience improper sexual unions or desires. Despite their love being considered pathological even by ancient standards, Euripides always allows these women to explain their actions and emotional states. This is a practice he uses with other women whose unhappiness has different backgrounds and produces different catastrophes. I will focus on the Cretan women and their pathological love experiences in two plays by Euripides: *Hippolytus* and *Cretans*, which involve two women - Phaedra and Pasiphaë respectively. Phaedra's lust, her sexual deviance, as well as the sexual deviance of Hippolytus, is generated by their foreign origin, as the text sometimes explicitly states. Their foreignness made them candidates for pathological love, a love that wasn't supposed to exist. Pasiphaë, Phaedra's mother, also has an unnatural desire towards, and eventually has sexual intercourse with, a bull. Both of them are represented as Athenian women, whose way of thinking is very much shaped by Athenian laws and morals.

By adding contemporaneity to the mythical story, Euripides atticizes the tragic plot and the characters. This paper aims to demonstrate the new treatment of a familiar story by exploring not only the plays and the fragments, but also the laws that shape their certain way of thinking.

Jordi Redondo
Universitat de València, Spain

Mythical trends in Euripides' *Hypsipyle*

Keywords: myth; gender; anthropological oppositions; religion; society.

Abstract: The tragedy *Hypsipyle*, written by Euripides in his latest period, was part of the trilogy also composed by the plays *Phoenician Women* and *Antiope*, that is to say, the protagonists were women, in all these cases. The mythical frame of the plot attracts our attention for the following reasons: first of all, as aforesaid, the protagonism of the female characters; second, the attention of the poet to exotism; third, the contrast between Europe and Asia; fourth, the evocation of a paradise; fifth, the role accorded to eschatology; sixth and last, the creation of the human being. Not all of these subjects are properly mythical, but the way in which the poet introduces them to construct his play must be described as completely cogent with the functions, actors and diction of myth. Our contribution will discuss the innovating trends conveyed by Euripides to his tragedy, in view of their influence on the later Greek literature. The revision of myth as a social agent will also be considered, insofar as *Hypsipyle* represents how myth was conceptualized by the contemporary Athenian society.

Maciej Helbig
Independent Researcher

οἶόν τοι τὸν Ἀδωνιν. The Myth of Adonis in Theocritus' 15th Idyll: The Women of Syracuse as an Example of a Short Dramatic Form in Alexandrian Poetry

Keywords: Theocritus, Adonis, Alexandrian mime, short dramatic forms.

Abstract: The main aim of the presentation is to highlight the elements of the Adonis cult adopted by Theocritus, particularly in the third part of his mime titled *The Women of Syracuse*. The passion for realism and short literary forms, visible in Alexandrian poetry, led to the further development of the short dramatic form known as mime. Initially intended to entertain audiences, mime had a loose plot and in its early stages allowed ample room for improvisation. It is considered to have likely influenced the origins of Attic comedy, although mime actors did not use masks. Later, during the Roman Empire, this short dramatic form began to displace more serious theatre performances. Among the authors who chose to work with mime were figures such as Sophron of Syracuse, Epicharmus, and, from the Hellenistic era, Herondas, as well as Theocritus, known for his bucolics. The latter decided to frame his 15th idyll in the form of a city mime. In 149 lines of the poem, he inserted three scenes from the lives of two women, Gorgo and Praxinoa, who lived with their husbands in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II. The poet dynamically describes the women's preparations and their journey through the bustling metropolis to the festival in honour of Adonis, organised by Queen Arsinoe. From the perspective of this presentation, the most important part seems to be the third section of the mime, i.e., the song of the famous singer about Adonis and Aphrodite. The preceding scenes prepare the listener for the hymnic interlude,

which describes the objects of the Adonis cult. Everything here is carefully observed and expressed so artistically that the work could be considered one of Theocritus' better works and one of the best examples of the short dramatic form known as mime.

Jelena Pilipović
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Belgrade University, Serbia

Trans-mental Epiphany: God/Goddess as a Phantasmatic Entity in Euripides' Tragedies

Keywords: Euripides, epiphany, Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, divine presence, imagination, phantasm, alienation.

Abstract: Trans-mental epiphany is the suggested name for a special phenomenon, impressively represented in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, *Ion* and *Bacchantes*. The epiphanies of a deity to a chosen mortal, or a group of mortals, represent an iterative event, repeated often enough to be part of their daily existence. *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchantes* offer a uniform model: iterative epiphanies create the impression of an unwavering, albeit discontinuous, presence of the deity, while *Ion* deviates somewhat - instead of the discontinuous presence of Apollo himself, there is a continuous presence of his energy in the temple space. In such trans-ontological, divine-human, communion, the god or goddess is largely imaginary. He/she is rarely physically present, and even then the physical presence is perceptually limited. Instead, the god or goddess becomes the object of constant imagining, thinking, admiring, invoking, cultic worship... The divine being thus becomes a phantasmatic entity in the psychical reality of mortals. Involved in the communion with a single divine being, sometimes at the expense of others, the chosen humans are thus alienated from the world of men. In turn, they create an *image* of their lives as deeply filled with the divine presence, while the fine border between intra-mental and extra-mental is erased.

PANEL 2: NATIONALISM, POLITICS AND MYTH (12:45-14:15)

Elizabeta Šeleva
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“Myth of the West” and its Deconstruction in Contemporary Macedonian Drama (Dejan Dukovski)

Key words: Myth of the Promised Land, Occidentalism, “Divo meso” (Wild Flesh), Goran Stefanovski, Dejan Dukovski

Abstract: This paper is focused on the dominant perception of the West in recent artistic presentations, which proves its value as a wishful pattern of success. The appropriation of Western culture and its values became wishful, especially for the people from the Balkans, following the current political debates on Balkan (cultural) identity. Being a privileged, “vertical” axis of the symbolic geography for a long period of time, the features of the West also show its actual correlation to the ancient myth of a promised land, originating from the Bible. With the words of respectful scholar Armando Gnisci, the West itself was “made” to be conquered and therefore it become synonymous to the positive attributes of mobility, success and progress. Besides, Austrian author W.S. Sebald in his well renowned novel “The Rings of

Saturn” – melancholically reflecting on the streams of European history - points out that the West became “a notorious direction of the human progress itself”. Thus, West was perceived as a mythological frontier of the civilization itself. On the other hand, contemporary Macedonian drama turns its attention to another, bitter point, which is (more or less) also involved in this myth of a West as a “promised land”. Starting with the cult “Scene 10”, as a key chapter of the notorious as well as paradigmatic play “*Divo meso*” („Wild Flesh“), by Goran Stefanovski (1952-2018) - Macedonian drama re-investigates and re-evaluates another, yet counter - aspect of the above mentioned Western myth and the concept of Occidentalism. The work of Dejan Dukovski (b.1969), contemporary Macedonian playwright, widely acclaimed throughout the theatre stages all over Europe, re-shape the destructive consequences of Western myth, using both the powerful and effective tools and subversive strategies of parody, black humor, satire, revolt. It proves to be so and is exemplified - first of all within the provocatively entitled drama “*Who The Fuck Started All This*” (1996) – which was then followed by a series of texts, such as: “*Other Side*”(2004), “*Emptied City*” (2007), “*Lost Germans* (2011),”*Walking Dead*” (2014) – all impregnated by a witty deconstruction of the myth of the West, as an obscene spectacle of “sexual abuse and violence”.

Igor Štiks

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National Drama and its Myths: From Megalomania to Hypochondria

Key words: nationalism, national drama, national myths, megalomania, hypochondria the Balkans

Abstract: National megalomania is based on collectively shared projections of grandiose historical importance and enviable attributes of one’s own nation, often followed by superiority complex over other groups, typically neighbouring ones. I analyse national megalomania through the lens of psychoanalytic theories, suggesting that a certain collective hypochondria constitutes its complementary feature. Megalomaniacal narratives, legends and myths foster unrealistic expectations, widespread frustration and internal tensions, providing a fertile ground for political manipulation and emotional exploitation. The ‘national drama’ feeds on anxieties, fears and paranoia as well as a sense of imminent threat and even existential danger to the national community. I suggest that national megalomania in the Balkans revolves around five major tropes that can be found, in various combinations and to varying degrees, in almost every national group in this region: 1) ancient origins, 2) the golden age, 3) territorial claims, 4) national victimhood, and 5) devaluation and even demonisation of other (neighbouring) groups. To elucidate these tropes, I use the most illustrative examples from across this region. I further argue that collectively shared megalomaniacal narratives and projections arise from the need for national unity and social coherence that seem unattainable in a globalised world that renders the nation-state model increasingly inadequate or even obsolete.

Vedran Dizdarević

"Blaže Koneski" Faculty of Philology,

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The Three Lives of Antigone: Anachronism and Alienation in Slavoj Žižek’s “Ethico-political Exercise”

Keywords: Antigone, Slavoj Žižek, anachronism, alienation, Bertolt Brecht

Abstract: This paper offers a reading of Slavoj Žižek's first and only dramatic text titled *The Three Lives of Antigone* — published in the book *Antigone* (2016) — alongside the interpretive essay *Run Antigone, Run*. This reading of *The Three Lives of Antigone* analyzes the play itself (labeled by Žižek as an "ethico-political exercise") and the key aspects in which it departs from Sophocles' ancient tragedy: the changed function of the chorus, the deliberate use of anachronism, the offering of several alternative endings, and the use of dramatic "alienation" (*Verfremdungseffekt*) inspired by Bertolt Brecht's epic (dialectical) theater. This reading of *The Three Lives of Antigone* shows that Žižek's dramatic text breaks away from his earlier interpretations of Sophocles' play, such as in the essay *Melancholy and the Act* (2000) and the book *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (2002). Namely, while in Žižek's earlier theoretical texts, Antigone's conduct is taken as an example of a radical political and ethical act that visibly changes the political and social space, thus creating something new; in the later text, she is presented as a potential obstacle in the process of political emancipation. All this aims to create, according to Žižek, a contemporary, "cruel", and postmodern Antigone, which can serve as a critical tool for dealing with the contradictions of contemporary society and politics.

Žarko Ivanov
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Mythical Reinterpretations: Pasolini's *Pylades* as Sociopolitical Commentary

Keywords: Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Pylades", "Oresteia", myth, politics, power, social transformation, criticism

Abstract: In 1959 Pier Paolo Pasolini, as a profound connoisseur of Aeschylus' dramatic work, makes a translation of "Oresteia". Reinterpreting the political meaning of the Greek drama, Pasolini uses ancient myth to criticize modern social structures and ideologies. Focusing on the tragedy "Pylades", Pasolini addresses themes of power, politics and transformation, reflecting his Marxist incline and disillusionment with contemporary political paradigms. The tragedy of "Pylades" becomes an allegory for the modern world, providing insight into human nature, power dynamics, and the struggle between tradition and progress. Through an analysis of Pasolini's creative strategies, language, and thematic focus, this presentation explores the play "Pylades" as a timeless commentary on the human condition and social change.

Igor Pop Trajkov
PhD in Cultural Studies

The Mental Health of the Frustrated Leader in Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*: Hippolytus Enchained in the Social Labyrinth

Key words: taboo, mental health, West, hybrid democracy

Abstract: This paper will depict the portrait of the frustrated power-relation with the established social norms in the play *Phaedra's Love*, within the tendency of the western societies to be absolved of their own conservative cultural heritage. Namely in the prevailing academic works about this play the analysis is focused on the depressive, frustrated side of love which is in line with the violent, primitive impulses, while focusing on the referential

notes in the play, which this text is a replica of *Phaedra* by Seneca. In this they are usually tracking the mental issues of the suicidal author, finding components which correlate with the author's health. These findings are certainly correct, however Kane also managed to depict the birth of the leader who is frustrated when he/she realizes they cannot control everything, or perhaps, becomes frustrated for the sake of it. This situation is very close to the mental distortions typical of the dictatorships' and hybrid democracies' patterns which occurred in the western entities in the new millennium, emanated from the nervous behavior and narcissism, as described in the classic psychoanalysis. When the leader sees he cannot control everything, he creates his violent tentacles, trying to hide his weakness, which in this case is the incestuous (tabooed) love. No wonder the play of Seneca is considered as inspiration for this text; the author whose rigid perfection moved many dictators, such as Mussolini. In the post-Kane period we can see this "mental" mythology present in pop culture, films/series (*300*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*).

PANEL 2': MYTH, GENDER, FEMINIST REWRITINGS (12:45 – 14:00)

Cassandre Martigny

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An "oblique look" at the Odyssey: the Myth of Ulysses Reconfigured from a Female/Feminist Perspective in Claudine Galea's *Trois fois Ulysse* (2024)

Key words: Myth, *Odyssey*, *Trois fois Ulysse*, Contemporary drama, Feminist rewriting

Abstract: *Trois fois Ulysse*, written by Claudine Galea and performed on 3 April 2024 at the Vieux-Colombier Theater in Paris, is a contemporary adaptation of the *Odyssey* that takes an "oblique look" at the epic, signalling a "feminist revision" of the ancient myths. This drama reconsiders the notion of heroism from the perspective of three female figures - Hecuba, Calypso and Penelope - who play a major role in Ulysses's destiny. Through their three visions of the protagonist, linked to three experiences of violence, separation and solitude, they also sing of their own great journeys and rewrite their myths.

Andreea Bugiac

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Beyond Masculine and Feminine : Mythical Reconfigurations and Subverted Gender Binarism in Sylviane Dupuis' Theatrical Works

Keywords: contemporary drama, postdramatic theatre, neo-dramatic theatre, myth, Sylviane Dupuis

Abstract: Postdramatic, metatheatrical or postfeminist theatre: there is no shortage of labels preceded by *post-* or *meta-* in the critical approaches to the Swiss playwright Sylviane Dupuis' theatrical writing. Ever since her first play, *La Seconde chute* (1993), a one-act play intended as a continuation of Samuel Beckett's *En attendant Godot*, Dupuis' theater has created a veritable brand for itself based on the way in which it adapts, reinvents, or even disrupts a complex mythical material incorporating both religious and literary myths. In our paper, we will begin by questioning the validity of the concept of "postdramatic theater" (Lehmann 2002) as applied to Dupuis' dramaturgy, in the context of more recent reflections on the return of narrativity (Monfort 2009, Pavis 2016) or even the unfulfilled death of

drama in the contemporary Francophone theater (Sarrazac 2012). Next, drawing on the method of differential comparativism proposed by Ute Heidmann in her approach to “mythic reconfigurations” (Heidmann 2018), we would like to examine the relationship between Dupuis’ theatrical writing and myths. Finally, we will analyze a series of mythical masculine or feminine figures present in the Swiss playwright’s works with the goal of underlaying the importance of mythical fictions in structuring the experience of the other and of oneself both as a woman and a playwright in the contemporary world.

Alina Kornienko

Université Paris-VIII-Vincennes-Saint-Denis, France

Elles disent... L'Odyssée: The Contemporary Ulysses by Jean-Luc Lagarce

Key words : French drama, Ulysses, myth, rewriting, poetic drama

Abstract: *Elles disent... L'Odyssée*, one of the first plays by contemporary French playwright Jean-Luc Lagarce, is a rewriting of Ulysses' adventures, and presents a distinctly feminine perspective, a feminine narrative, and an oral storytelling approach. Lagarce pays tribute to Penelope's waiting, highlighting the interpretation of her image and her selflessness throughout the centuries. More than ever in literary history, Ulysses, through Lagarce's work, takes on a tragic dimension of the beyond. In Lagarce's interpretation, Ulysses' life becomes a drama of (non)return, a drama of misunderstanding and rupture with what he left behind when he departed for the Trojan War. While using his unique poetic style of theater of language, Lagarce succeeds in offering a new vision of Ulysses' image and character, as well as the entire myth, in its (a)temporal progression.

Bela Gligorova

Independent Researcher Skopje, North Macedonia/ Belgrade, Serbia

In the Space between Adaptation and Acknowledgement of Trauma: Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* and Its Most Recent Theatrical Lives

Key words: trauma-inspired writing, adaptations, memory play

Abstract: In an interview with *The New York Times*, in honor of the 25th anniversary of her groundbreaking play - *How I Learned to Drive* (1997) - contemporary American playwright Paula Vogel speaks about the fine line between writing inspired by real-life events/experiences and the public's/press's need to categorize writing about traumatic events along autobiographical and/or historical lines, as if to ascertain its authenticity, and with that, its legitimacy. Namely, Vogel says: “whenever women write autobiographically, we are told that we are confessional. No one says that about Sam Shepard, or David Mamet, or Eugene O'Neill.” (NYT, February 25, 2020). Vogel's text - which over the course of the last few decades has received multiple adaptations and accolades - continues to capture audiences on both sides of the fourth wall. It is by far Vogel's most known text to date, in a career spanning four plus decades. The subject matter - pedophilia, incest, misogyny - continues to resonate, especially in a post-MeToo climate. Focusing on another aspect of the text - life-lived trauma, i.e., how and if Vogel's experiences feature at the forefront/background of the work itself (or as she puts it herself - “there's a myth, and it's I think a very perilous myth, that the reason that women become lesbians is because of sexual trauma, a fear and a hatred of men. The last thing I'm going to do is get put

into that category” (NYT, February 25, 2020)), I’ll be examining a recent adaptation of Vogel’s text, one done in a language (Serbian) and theatrical/lived culture removed from the one her work is set in (Serbian, post-Yugoslav). Namely, I’ll be focusing on the myth-making aspect of the original playtext and the recent adaptation/staging by Heartefact House (“Kako sam naučila da vozim”, directed by Tara Manić, translated into Serbian by Ivana Đurić Paunović, text adaptation by Vuk Bošković), as it relates to language/languages of trauma, healing, recovery centered around the play’s central metaphor - learning how to drive.

PANEL 3: MYTH ON SCREEN AND IN DIFERENT MEDIAS **(15:00 – 16:30)**

Lada Stevanović
Institute of Ethnography,
SASA, Belgrade, Serbia

Ancient Drama and Myth on Screen

Key words: ancient drama, theatre, myth, film

Abstract: Antiquity was an important part of the Seventh Art from its very beginning. There are several reasons for that: long tradition of antiquity in the theatre and literature, an attempt to attract educated audience from the high class in the cinema halls, the illusion of the stable past in the era of quick changes, etc. Ancient motives and themes on small and big screen are numerous. *Peplum* or *Swords and Sandals* genre has been attracting huge audience to the cinema halls since 1950s and 1960s. Subgenres of films with ancient motives are numerous. Apart from spectacles, antiquity is present in cartoons and animated films, TV serials, in Hollywood and small cinematographies. There is no doubt that genealogically film would not exist if there were not for ancient theatre and its development. However, film artists have not been looking for inspiration in ancient drama that often. Undoubtedly, there are exceptions, but proportionally the number of films based on Greek tragedies and comedies is strikingly smaller than those inspired by some other motives and myths. Among the most famous works are those by Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Oedipus Rex*, *Medea*), Michael Cacoyannis (*Iphigenia*, *Electra*, *The Trojan Women*) and some others. The question that interests me is why ancient drama was not more often in the focus of interest of film artists that were interested in ancient myths. Also I will turn shortly to the mentioned films, as well as to the film by Woody Allen, *Mighty Afrodity* that makes reference to ancient theatre.

Slavica Srbinovska
"Blaže Koneski" Faculty of Philology,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Interpreting Narratives on Medea: Historical Contexts and Different Media

Keywords: myth, ancient plays, adaptation, culture.

Abstract: The myth of Medea, along with Euripides' and Seneca's plays titled *Medea* form the crux of this study. These works are instrumental in revealing the evolution of the narrative of love, suffering, passion, hatred, and revenge in the ancient era. The research, which involves a comparison of the plays of Euripides and Seneca, aims to integrate knowledge from the field of philosophy of the Antique period. It seeks to derive the interpretation of differences in the meanings of the depiction of Medea's actions in texts

from different ancient periods. In parallel with ancient works, the study focuses on a contemporary interpretation understood as an adaptation of Euripides' play in a film by Lars von Trier realized in the twentieth century (1988) under the same title. This study employs a comparative research approach. It compares the characteristics of the presentation in the drama versus the film, and interprets the differences arising from different historical contexts, that of antiquity and that of the twentieth century. The interpretation of these differences is carried out through the prism of philosophy, ethics, history, and psychoanalysis. This approach, combined with the adaptation of the narrative in various media, produces a nuanced understanding inherent to the historical period of creating and delivering the works. The research seeks to indicate the points of view and aspects through which the authors exploit the potentials of myth in antiquity and the twentieth century for devising the dramatic works and films in which the narrative of Medea represents new semantics realized differently.

Massimo Fusillo
Scuola Normale Superiore - Pisa

The Extensions of Medea

Key words: Expansion, Analepsis, Medea, Background, Trilogy, Performance, Movies

Abstract: Modern dramatists show a significant attitude toward the analeptic expansion of Medea's myth, which can be interpreted as a way to enhance the empathy for this complex and disturbing character, showing its familiar and ethnic background. The paper will deal with Franz Grillparzer's trilogy, Pier Paolo Pasolini's movie, and especially with Heiner Müller's trilogy *Medea Material*, a significant example of post-dramatic theatre, which develops an uncanny fragmentation of language, and a postmodern poetics of apocalyptic ruins. Finally, Federico Tiezzi's interpretation of Heiner Müller's trilogy (1988) will be analyzed, in comparison with his recent performance of Euripides' tragedy at the Ancient Theatre Festival in Siracusa (2022, translation by Massimo Fusillo).

Nataša Avramovska
Institute of Macedonian Literature,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

The Mythic Image as a Metaphor for Transhumanist Transformation in Theatrical Performance

Key words: Centaur, Centaur Theater's "Flux", woman-cat, Karen Yes's "Eleonora and the Cat"

Abstract: The mythic image of the centaur, half human-half horse, is the motto of the French theater *Centaur Theater*; founded in 1990, it declares the transhumanist idea of the ideological, spiritual, and corporeal transformation in overcoming the dichotomies: nature-culture, humanism-transhumanism, etc. This theater's manifesto precisely formulates: "The centaur is an expression of unity. When you see a centaur, you see a relationship. I can only be whole when I am with you: the centaur is a promise." The paper will follow *Flux*, a theatrical performance launched in 2006 and further established in 2009 in co-production with the Italian International Equestrian Center in Druento and played as part of the theater festival *Teatro a Corte 2009* in Turin, Piedmont, Italy. The mythic image of the centaur is analyzed as a semantic crossroad of numerous aspects of the current cultural moment in drama and theater along with the inter-/cultural communication in general in this

theatrically spectacular performance. Then, on the same line of interpretation, Karen Yes's play *Eleonora the Cat* is analyzed together with the alternative theatrical rendition performed by Monika Angelevska, Gracija Atanasovska, Jasmina Vasileva, and Veronika Kamchevska produced by Tiit! Inc. – Skopje 2023 (November 2023), where the central mythic figure of a woman-cat symbolizes the human power of self-transformation. The paper signifies the susceptibility of the mythic images, in this case, "monstrous", for their semantic transformation and conformation to the semantic registry of "the spirit of the times" in which they are re-actualized. At the same time, it denotes how these once "monstrous" mythic images are especially productive today in portraying the "new normal" in the face of humanity's transhumanist transformation.

Kristina Dimovska
Institute of Folklore "Marko Cepenkov",
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

The Function of Norse Myths in the Videogame *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* and the Theatrical Performance of *Mythos Ragnarok*

Keywords: function, Norse myths, narrative, *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (videogame), *Mythos Ragnarok* (theatrical performance).

Abstract: In order to stay relevant as literary and, more broadly, as artistic forms of expression, myths go through processes of transformation. They are being modernized, adapted to the new contemporary trends, genres and media, and become an integral part of the new forms of artistic expression. The subject of interest in the paper is the function that Norse myths (specifically myths about Hel and Ragnarok) perform in the narration of two different "texts". On the one hand, we explore the videogame *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*, a gender-inverted version of the katabatic myth of the decent to the underworld, and on the other hand, we explore the British theater group *Mythos Ragnarok*, whose theatrical performance is based on narrating a story about the most famous Norse gods – but in an improvised wrestling ring/theater stage. "Function" is defined as the role that the North myths play in the narration of both of these stories and the dramatic effect their narration achieves. In order to survive, myths necessarily go through transformations and become part of other genres and media, but they adapt to the purposes that the designers of the game, or the directors of the play, assign them. They become part of a more complex audiovisual "text" (understood in a broader sense of the word), of a theatrical performance, which does not only aim to amuse the player or the spectator, but rather raises awareness that myths do continue to exist in the contemporary world, but just in a "modified" form. They no longer are isolated narrations, but building blocks of multimedial projects. For these reasons, they should be interpreted using contemporary approaches.

PANEL 3': RITUALS, BALLET, DANCE (15:00 – 16:15)

Besfort Idrizi
Faculty of Dramatic Art, Skopje,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Exploring Theatrical Elements in the Cult of the Dead: A Case Study of the Necromanteion of Acheron

Key words: Necromanteion of Acheron, Oracle of the dead, Homer, Rituals, Theatre, Temple, Hades, Puppet, Fasting

Abstract: Beliefs in the afterlife within Greek mythology were deeply ingrained, leading to organized meetings with souls facilitated by priests in specialized locations. This paper examines the rituals and activities conducted at the Necromanteion of Acheron, challenging the notion of actual soul encounters and proposing an analysis through the lens of theater techniques and principles. By scrutinizing the temple's rituals, spatial layout, and interior design, parallels with theatrical practices are explored. The study aims to analyze the cult of the dead, particularly within the Necromanteion of Acheron, within the framework of a theatre performance. This research seeks to uncover potential similarities and exchanges of techniques between theater and the cult of the dead, considering the cult's precedence over theater. The hypothesis posits the likelihood of priests orchestrating "theater shows" to manipulate believers' perceptions, fostering genuine belief in soul encounters.

Ayhan Erol
Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, Turkey

Myth, Dance and Music: The Cem Rituals in Alevism

Keywords: Alevi, Myth, Ritual Dance, Semah, Music

Abstract: The Alevis in Turkey have allegiance to the Twelve Imams, who are patrilineal descendants of the Prophet Muhammed's cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali but they are certainly not a part of Iranian Shiism. Having been marginalised socially, politically, and geographically since the 16th century Alevi communities formed their own rules, and thus drew apart from the direction of the central authorities. In this process, the religious and social authority within the community was held by 'holy men', dedes, belonging to a hereditary priestly caste. The cem ceremony, which appeared in this process, officiated by the dede, is a ritual of intense communal significance for Alevis. The cem rituals could be conceived of as the secret gatherings of the Alevi communities who have not been able to express themselves and their identity within the framework of the prevailing social order, and who have come to live outside that order. Cem rituals function as a drama based on myths that are stories drawn from the past to legitimize or validate the practice, thought, symbol, etc. of the present for Alevis. In fact, Alevi communities have always used their knowledge reflecting their own imagination of history and myth to construct an idiosyncretic identity.

The song (deyiş, lit. 'saying' or nefes, lit. 'breath') and dance (semah, sema, lit. 'audition') are of central significance in the cem rituals. At the same time they are perceived in the rituals as an expression of faith. It can be considered that songs and dances in the cem ceremonies may serve as the part of a drama that will attract people to the ritual. Until the early 1990s, Alevis actively avoided explaining their beliefs to outsiders and were against permitting non-Alevis entering their rituals. By the mid-1990s they began to hold their rituals publicly in the Cemevi (lit. Cem house) in the Turkish cities and in their cultural centres in the diaspora. Almost all Alevi associations or the cemevis in the diaspora and 'at home' have a semah group educated and organized by a semah instructor. As opposed to traditional cem rituals in which everybody may take part in the dance, the semahs performed in the urban cems are carried out by the semah groups consisting of young men and women. Moreover, these semah groups also perform in the non-ritual contexts. If the predominance of semah within the Alevi ritual, the cem, is one factor to be studied, then differences in their present interpretations in Turkish cities and in the diaspora is the another. In this paper, I will analyse these differences in the context of the translocality of the semah. The presentation will be accompanied by supporting audio and visual examples.

Magdalena Marija Meašić
University of Rijeka, Croatia

On Ballet and the Enacting of the Early-Day Notions of “Sovietness”

Key words: Ballet, Soviet Union, Ideology, Mythology, Shostakovich, Prokofiev.

Abstract: The tradition of European ballet, commonly perceived as the pinnacle form of theatrical effeminacy, underwent a radical transformation in Russia following the birth of the Soviet Union. Suddenly, the fable-like topics and ethereal scenery of the romanticist European and Russian stages began to wane, giving way to a new type of ideologized narratives set in Soviet space and time, supporting the construction of the new Soviet mythology. The early Soviet ballet narratives, playing a role in the construction of the new Soviet identity, became highly politicized rituals, perpetuating Soviet ideology on stage for the wide audience to witness and engage with. Ballets of particular interest included in this study, among others, are Sergey Prokofiev's *Le pas d'acier* (The Steel Step, 1926), Dmitry Shostakovich's *Zolotoy vek* (The Golden Age, 1930), and *Bolt* (1931), all set in early Soviet times and following revolutionary Soviet people navigating the changing political and social landscape. While Prokofiev's ballet honours the process of industrialization, Shostakovich's *Zolotoy vek* depicts a Soviet soccer team in an unnamed Western country, suffering mistreatment by capitalist bourgeoisie and eventually overthrowing it, and *Bolt* follows the story of Soviet factory workers fighting saboteurs. While the receptions and destinies of these works have already been well-researched, this study aims to capture the essence of the pre-Socialist Realist ballet-performed “Sovietness” through an analysis of the selected repertoire's narratives and the ways they explicitly and implicitly support (and at times unintentionally subvert) the codification of Soviet identity, ideology, and mythology.

Sonja Zdravkova-Đeparoska
Faculty of Music,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

The Myth of the Woman in the Stage Adaptation of Aco Shopov's Poetry Cycle *Prayers on my body*

Keywords: myth, dance, woman, Shopov, poetry, choreography

Abstract: Myths are created, changed, deconstructed and correlated with the time and space in which they exist. Throughout the history of the theater we follow their "recycling", reinterpretation and de/reconstruction. The woman is a part of many myths and their interpretations, starting from Lilith through Eve, Penelope, Medea and up to modern female models who parade in different spheres of life. The woman in the range of interpretations was the impetus for the creation of a multitude of works of art. The dance theater is based on female prototypes on which the plot and the choreographic construction are based. On the other hand, women are the subject of a large number of literary works, through the treatment of different aspects. The fusion of literature and stage performances is imminent to drama, but is much less present in dance theatre. Namely, this kind of fusion of different expressions we followed in December 2023. As part of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Macedonian poet Aco Shopov, the ballet “Prayers to My Body” was staged, inspired by the poetry cycle of the same name. The woman as an inspiration, but also the pivot of this cycle, was the basic, initial, but also the final category, starting from the lyrics, all the way to the final stage product. For the needs of the stage, the cycle was

dramaturgically reworked into a triptych with dichotomous authorship (choreographer-composer). In each of these parts, the woman received a different symbolism. The performance presented the woman in all her diversity. This analysis refers to the different types present in the play, their connection with certain myths and the setting of the poetry-movement-meaning realization.

PANEL 4: MYTH IN GORAN STEFANOVSKI'S PLAYS (16:45-18:00)

Mišel Pavlovski
Institute of Macedonian Literature,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Cultural Trauma and the Mythical in Goran Stefanovski's Plays

Keywords: cultural trauma, myth, Goran Stefanovski, drama, Macedonian drama

Abstract: The phenomenon of cultural trauma is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the cultural fabric is the most sensitive to the impact of traumatic changes, precisely because culture is a depository of continuity, heritage, tradition, identity of human communities. Hence, it is provocative and significant to examine the relationship between mythical, mythopoetic and cultural trauma in Goran Stefanovski's plays. The paper (part of a larger project) focuses only on the dramatic works from the early period of Stefanovski's work. In doing so, it starts from two theses: on the one hand, in the work of our author, almost all the characters are influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by some kind of cultural trauma. On the other hand, the dramatic material, sometimes directly and obviously, sometimes not noticeably at first glance, interacts with the myth, constructs and/or builds upon it. Thus, the narration of the identities, culture and attitudes of Goran's characters relies on these two important factors. Namely, that is what the paper strives to determine and define.

Darin Angelovski
Institute of Macedonian Literature
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Forms of Reception of Classical Myth in Contemporary Macedonian Drama

Key words: Myth, drama, reception, imitation, emulation, recreation, reinterpretation, Macedonian contemporary drama, Philoctetes, Odysseus, Ismene

Abstract: In Macedonian literature from the nineties onwards, the appearance of a large number of dramatic works in which the classical myth is set as the main theme is evident. This tendency corresponds to an interest in specific ideas such as Identity, Home, Otherness, Belonging, Homeland, Memory, Multiculturalism, etc. that played a pivotal role in discussions of culture and society, and of the relations between them from the post-independence and transitional period. The focus of the research will be aimed at tracing the ways in which the classical myth is embedded in the structure of the contemporary drama according to the methods of imitation, emulation and recreation understood as models of reception that show a self-conscious and creative attitude towards the classical myth. The choice of plays is necessarily selective and it refers to the drama "Philoctetes" (1998) by

Ljubisha Georgievski, "Odyssey" (2012) by Goran Stefanovski (2012) and "Ismene" (2022) by Katerina Momeva.

Ivan Dodovski
University American College Skopje

Unravelling the Balkan Dionysus: Western Arrogance and Eastern Irrationality in Goran Stefanovski's *Bacchanalia*

Key words: Goran Stefanovski, Euripides, Dionysus, the Balkans, the West, imagology, irrationality, nationalism, deconstruction

Abstract: Written on the basis of *The Bacchae* by Euripides, Goran Stefanovski's play *Bacchanalia* (*Bahanalii*, 1996) revisits the ancient myth of Dionysus and employs it so as to connote the swirl of irrationalism evidenced in the Yugoslav civil wars of the 1990s. Still, its implications go much farther. The paper combines contextual details and close reading to illustrate the play's evocation of the stereotype of Balkan irrationality vis-a-vis Western self-congratulating image of enlightenment. In particular, the analysis focuses on the image of Dionysus; the role of the chorus; the generational conflict between Pentheus, on the one hand, and Cadmus and Teiresias, on the other; as well as on the relation of Pentheus to his mother Agave. This hermeneutical approach allows for the conclusion that Goran Stefanovski's use of the mythical scheme results not only in a critique of Balkan nationalisms, but also in a deconstruction of Western arrogance. The play seems to offer a nuanced vision – one that principally recognises the limits of the rational paradigm and, at the same time, embraces the potential of a Balkan Dionysus seen as an ecstatic, creative, though sometimes misused energy of life.

Ema Lakinska
Institute of Macedonian Literature,
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Mythical Images versus Archetypal Representations in Goran Stefanovski's *Jane Zadrogaz*

Keywords: mythical images, archetypal representations, *Jane Zadrogaz*, Goran Stefanovski

Abstract: The paper explores the hypothesis that in addition to archetypal representations, the script of the play *Jane Zadrogaz* by Goran Stefanovski also contains mythical images. Therefore, in the paper we will first define the mythical image, and then illuminate its difference from the archetypal representations present in the play. In the further analysis, we will locate several mythical images in the text and approach them hermeneutically, interpreting them in the postmodern context of the play, in order to reach new insights about how these mythical images function and how they are dynamized in such contemporary text.

PANEL 4': INTERCONNECTIONS OF MYTH, PAGANISM, FOLKLORE, ARCHETYPES (16:45 – 18:00)

Ana Martinoska
Institute of Macedonian Literature,

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Folkloristic and Cultural Study of Incantations: A Genre Between Myth and Ritual Theater

Key words: incantations, mythical-magical thinking, ritual procedures, folkloristic analysis, modern forms, cultural and gender analysis

Abstract: The genre of incantations, the secret area of folk culture and the most archaic type of folk medicine, is a product of mythical-magical thinking. They are always composed of a verbal magical formula with mysterious supernatural power and ritual procedures, which are a communicative chain of actions and messages, in which the sick person, the witchdoctor/healer and the supernatural, evil forces participate. As Etienne Souriau argues, the drama begins at the moment when the weak human power and its insignificant destiny will face the one on the other side, with the power of the invisible demonic being that appears as an external psychological stimulus. Along these lines, the focus of this paper will be on a folkloristic analysis of Macedonian incantations, both those folk ones known from our rich folklore treasury, as well as the modern forms. In this respect, we will rely on the works by significant Slavic folkloristics who studied this genre, including Vladimir N. Toporov, Svetlana Tolstoy, Ljubinko Radenkov, Marko Kitevski and others. The research itself will include indications of the mythical and dramatic elements in the incantations, but also a broader cultural analysis of the gender aspect, social stigma, commercialization and other contemporary concerns.

Maria Marinova
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria

The Samodiva: Folklore Depictions vs. Literary Interpretations

Keywords: samodiva, shepherd, love, patriarchy, modern times, mythology

Abstract: The underlying theme of the paper will be Petko Todorov's drama *Samodiva* first published in 1904. Parallels will be drawn with two contemporary Bulgarian novels having similar plots and ideas. The leading element in folklore texts and in literary interpretations is love but reinterpreted with an opposite meaning. Love in folklore is unrequited and therefore always brings misery, which does not hold true in original texts. After losing a bet, the heroine from the drama *Samodiva* has to leave her home and go live with the shepherd. Having voluntarily descended into the human world, she retains her essence and even manages to change people to a certain extent. In the context of patriarchy, however, such a change cannot be final, and the winner of the bet suffers eventually. Recent Bulgarian literature also looks into the image of the samodiva. A number of novels of recent years have interpreted the supernatural through folkloric images and notions. The paper will cover the novels *Stolen. Doomed. Protected* by Iskra Urumova and *Moon Flower* by Kathryn Di. In them, the love between a samodiva and a shepherd is brought to the fore. When the two characters are brought over into the world of modern technology, in which men and women are placed on an equal footing, love proves to be the force that helps them overcome all obstacles; it proves to be the emotion that can even defeat evil. In all literary plots, though in different ways, the conflict between the woman, who already has a certain power, and the claimant to her spot is brought to the fore. In the struggle for this spot, the young samodiva must prove her qualities and capabilities. Ancient mythological layers can be identified here.

Inna Näkkinen
Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub, the Department of Cultures,
University of Helsinki, Finland

Spiritual Encounters of the Chernobyl Myth on Stage: Mavka, Tierratrauma and Intermedial Ecocriticism

Keywords: nuclear, spirituality, Chernobyl/Chornobyl myth, paganism, mavka, tierratrauma, the Exclusion Zone, intermedial ecocriticism, Pavlo Arie

The reconsideration of the Chernobyl myth, overwhelming the Chernobyl disaster (1986) appeals to re-valuation of the nuclear event as a manifestation of the divine and a call to spiritual awakening, which enhances to interpret the disaster via spiritual dimensions. The focus of pagan spirituality in communicating the Chernobyl myth encompasses a range of beliefs and interpretations, envisioning the Chernobyl disaster as an implication of the struggle between the natural and the artificial, a call to spiritual awakening, and a reminder of the importance of remembering the past and reconsidering the present nuclear agenda. Such appeal to pagan spiritual practices, stemmed from the sacredness of nature and the spiritual meanings of natural cycles of birth, growth, and death, is regarded both as among conditions of survival in the post-traumatic/post-apocalyptic society and as a power regulation over the societal needs and values in the radiation contaminated area (that the Chernobyl Exclusion zone is). The presentation intends to show the theatrical interpretation of paganism and its spirituality, amalgamated with Orthodox Christianity beliefs in hope for protection and the Soviet atheistic policies, in staging 'the Chernobyl myth' via addressing to the East Slavic folklore image of Mavka (a female spirit of the forest) in reflecting fears, uncertainty, hope and resilience in spiritualization of radiation contaminated area. The presentation appeals to the social and cultural imaginaries of pagan spirituality of the Chernobyl myth in Pavlo Arie's *At the beginning and at the end of times* (in origin: Павло Аріє «На початку і наприкінці часів», 2015, Ukraine) and its stage performance 'Zona' (2017) by the Ukrainian Theater of Finland (Ukrainalaisten Yhdistys Suomessa, director Ihor Frey). Such comparative analysis of depicting pagan spirituality of the Chernobyl myth can demonstrate the narrative tools of interpreting nuclear tierratraumatic (Albrecht 2017) experience from the perspective of intermedial ecocriticism (Bruhn 2020), emphasizing the personalization and emotionalization of scientific knowledge via different media types as the ways of knowledge transitions to the public, which not only helps communicating 'tierratrauma' from the perspective of survival/hope/resilience studies and 'examining the role of interpretation in 'human-environment' relations' (Drenthen 2017), but also allows clarifying the ways of narrating 'tierratrauma' within translating the nuclear history of humanity and communicating the spiritual dimensions of the value paradigm transformations of the tierratraumatic community.

Aleksandra Kuzmić
Scientific Associate, Philological High School, Belgrade

The Quest for Freedom in Milena Marković's *Doll Ship*

Keywords: *Doll Ship* (Brod za lutke), Milena Marković, freedom, identity, fairytale, archetype

Abstract: The paper employs a comparative approach to explore the ideological and dramaturgical function of the quest for freedom in Milena Marković's award-winning play *Doll Ship* (Brod za lutke, 2004). The protagonist begins her journey through adult life, building her identity with a desire to do *what nobody has done*, thereby entering a space of

freedom of thought and deed. However, her life choices and challenges lead her from one archetype to another, which Milena Marković portrays through a series of thematic axes, building her postmodern theatrical illusion on (para)mimetic scenes from well-known fairytales, whose personae (“masks of the soul”) the heroine assumes, as do other characters in the *Doll Ship*, reflecting their ideological and dramaturgical functions. Moving from Alice to Snow White, Goldilocks, Thumbelina, and the Princess to the Witch, the heroine fails to become a free being, proving to be a prisoner of her value/“value” system, of gender and other stereotypes she cannot overcome in achieving her life goals. Despite this – or possibly *because* of this – this profoundly unhappy, grotesque-tragic heroine nevertheless wants to try again from scratch, convinced that a different life is possible (*I want to be reborn/Daddy*).

30 November

Keynote lecture 2 (09:45 – 10:30)

Katerina Kolozova

Full Professor at the Graduate School of the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities from Skopje

A Theme Revisited Too many Times: Antigone, Kinship and State

Keywords : feminist structuralism, the post-Freudian subject, feminist materialism, maternal morality in Greek drama

Abstract : Against the background of the centrality of the notion “composition of deeds” (systasis tōn pragmatōn) in Aristotle’s Poetics we will revisit the theme of Antigone and the tension between kinship and state, or between morality of “blood” and political “duty.” In doing so, we will seek to rediscover the potential of the structuralist approach, revisit Luce Irigaray’s feminist take on Antigone and reexamine the emancipatory potential of Judith Butler’s appropriation of Hegel’s classical reading of the theme at hand.

PANEL 1: REWRITINGS OF CLASSICAL MYTHS AND HISTORY (10:45 – 12:00)

Salvatore Costanza

Department of Philology,

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Grece

Phaedra’s Rage: Theatrical Rewritings of Classical Myth according to Fr. Bozza, J. Racine, d’Annunzio, E. Bono and R. Psatha

Keywords: Theatre rewriting, Phaedra, Love Curse, *Furor*, Guilt, Classicism, Titanism, Psychological Drama.

Abstract: Theseus’ wife Phaedra provides a paradigm of rage and fault in modern and contemporary theatrical dramas. It is interesting to analyse the reception of this myth starting from classical models from Antiquity such as Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and especially Seneca’s Latin *Phaedra*. The heroine embodies the reproachful love, since she falls in love with her stepson Hippolytus. However, the young man rejects any contact with the fair sex. Modern poets stress the pathos of Phaedra and her guilt. Moreover, each theatrical rewriting is characterised by emphasizing some elements of classical myth according to its peculiar instance. In Renaissance times, the Cretan author Francesco Bozza develops the conflict between Christian virtue and fatal love in his Italian tragedy (1577). Jean Racine (1671), faithful to Jansenism, emphasizes the heritage of the fault given the familiar ties of Phaedra. His heroine is a paradigm of the sinner, while Hippolytus falls in love with a young lady, Aricia. The 20th-century Italian dramas on Phaedra show different feelings: Gabriele D’Annunzio expresses the Titanic revolt of the woman meant as an example of superhuman revolt against the gods (1909). Indeed, Elena Bono describes a familiar drama of frantic love performed in a pastoral scenario of modern Tuscany (1954). Finally, Rita Psatha develops an original interpretation of this tragedy set in a high bourgeois milieu by offering a psychological analysis of her Irini/Phaedra (2001). All this ascertained, this triangle of relationship (Phaedra-Theseus-Hippolytus) receives each time a new interpretation that shows the actuality of this classical myth. Phaedra does not stop to question and scandalise

her readers/spectators because of her revolt against the rules. She got into a self-destructive pattern. Modern tragic poets also question their contemporaries by reading this classical model which is an inexhaustible mine of inspiration.

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From Empire to Nation : the Mythologization of Historical « Facts » in Jean Racine's Alexander the Great within the Macedonian Cultural Context

Key words: Jean Racine, Alexander the Great, mythologization, historical fiction, imperialism, nationalism.

Abstract: This paper examines the mythologization of Alexander the Great through two distinct lenses: Jean Racine's creative use of historical sources in his play *Alexander the Great* and the reception of this work within the contemporary Macedonian political and cultural landscape. It explores Racine's selective approach, particularly his decision to draw upon narratives of Alexander as presented by Quintus Curtius. By choosing this source among others available to him, Racine crafted a portrayal of Alexander that aligned with the ideals of Louis XIV's court, creating a narrative that resonated with royal expectations of virtue, power, and restraint. In contrast, the contemporary Macedonian reception often overlooks Racine's nuanced interpretation, recasting Alexander as a national hero embodying strength tempered by a sense of justice and self-limitation. This reinterpretation, I argue, serves specific nationalistic aims, offering a vision of Alexander that supports modern ideological narratives while simplifying Racine's original complexity.

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The Evolution of the Cleopatra Theme in French Literature from the 16th to the 17th Century: From Jodelle to Benserade and Mairêt

Keywords: Cleopatra, French theater, 16th century, 17th century, Jodelle, Garnier, Benserade, Mairêt, tragedy, literary evolution.

Abstract: This study offers a comparative analysis of the representations of Cleopatra in four French plays written between the 16th and 17th centuries: Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive* (1552), Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (1578), Benserade's *Cléopâtre* (1636), and Mairêt's *Marc Antoine ou la Cléopâtre captive* (1637). By tracing the evolution of this theme, our study explores how each author reinterprets the figure of Cleopatra, highlighting the continuities and breaks in her representation according to the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of their respective eras. The comparison of these works aims to reveal how this figure, beyond her historical identity, became a myth reflecting the concerns of each era, while remaining an inexhaustible source of fascination and inspiration for French playwrights. This study also emphasizes the importance of the reception and reinterpretation of classical works in French literature. These plays provide new and enriching perspectives on universal themes such as power, love, and fate, while contributing to a deeper understanding of the literary and cultural evolution of France from the 16th to the 17th century.

Nouredine Fadily
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Hassan I University Settat

**Weaving of Mythical Material in Youth Theater: *Antigone Sous le Soleil de Midi*
by Suzanne Lebeau**

Keywords: Youth theater; mythology; drama; rewriting; universality

Abstract: Children's literature has explored all areas. From creativity to rewriting, it helped to the intellectual training of young readers. Youth theater, more particularly, rewrote classics, revisited myths while providing modifications both aesthetic and ideological. This is the case of *Antigone sous le soleil de midi* by Suzanne Lebeau, a play published in 2021 and rediscovering the myth of Oedipus and Antigone. It is a fact that the play returns to one of the founding figures of the Western mythology. More than 20 centuries later, Antigone is still staged, with a lot of questions, inner intuition insinuating that we have a certain influence on the world. In this rewriting of the myth of Antigone, spectators are invited to share a space for intense questions. What gives the play a dimension timeless: it is both historical and eternal. Through these mythical figures who are passed into history, Suzanne Lebeau stops on the fundamental questions that underlie the functioning of Western societies, in proposing an incursion of a philosophical, ethical order. That being said, our communication will attempt to study the passage from the initial text to its most recent rewriting, to question the possibility (or not) of thwarting destiny, about questions of choice, of the fragility of life... It will also be an opportunity to characterize the significant elements for the construction of dramatic characters and the contribution to the universality of the myth. These elements gathered and clarified, we will be able to obviously answer the initial question: What weaving of mythical material into the youth theater?

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How the Masks Fell in Marguerite Yourcenar's *Electra*

Key words: Electra Myth, unconscious rivalry, variance, autocriticism, criticism.

Abstract: Marguerite Yourcenar writes her play *Electra or the Fall of the Masks* (*Électre ou la Chute des Masques*) during the 1940's, and its publication and first stage performance was during the 1950's. This corresponds to the time when a big number of French writers and playwrights (Giraudoux, Anouilh, Cocteau, Sartre...) introduced the myth into their plays as a kind of universal model that is easily adapted and reflects the current conditions of modern society. In accordance with the procedure that is dear to her, through auto-critical writings that accompany her works in the form of notes or prefaces, Yourcenar presents her views on the dramatic variants of the Electra myth from antiquity to the time when she publishes her version. Pointing out what she doesn't like in those plays, as well as to what she owns to them in the creation of her version, Yourcenar frees her own take on the Electra Myth of any kind of political, sociological or philosophical dimension and turns it toward the dark abysses of the unconscious. Thus, *Electra or the Fall of the Masks* experiences an unexpected, Freudian dramatic denouement – Electra kills her mother because she “unconsciously” perceives her as a rival because she is secretly in love with Aegisthus; on the other hand, Orestes, just before he kills Aegisthus, learns that he is his real father. The

revenge turns into an unexpected, but deliberate patricide, where Orestes' choice can again be interpreted as an "unconscious" elimination of the rival since the other, the "idealized" but not-real father, is already long dead.

PANEL 1' : MYTH AND DRAMA BEYOND EUROPE (10:45 – 12:00)

Kalina Maleska
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Reinterpretation of African Myths in the Postcolonial Plays of Soyinka, Onwueme and Césaire

Key words: postcolonial drama, Soyinka, Onwueme, Césaire

Abstract: Postcolonial drama has seldom been researched, as literature professor Kanika Batra notes. She points out that in regard to the works of authors such as Wole Soyinka or Derek Walcott, it is their poetry which is much more explored than their plays. This text analyses the plays *Death and the King's Horseman* by the Nigerian writer Soyinka, *Tell It to Women* by the Nigerian writer Osonye Tess Onwueme, and *A Tempest* by the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire. The protagonists in Soyinka's play fight the mystifications and idealization of the past and the cultural traditions. *Tell It to Women* presents the social circumstance in postcolonial Nigeria where the high and middle classes initiate false development programs with foreign financial aid to allegedly improve the life of rural women. *A Tempest* parodies Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, putting the characters as well as the gods in a state of resistance towards the colonizers. In this context, the local god Eshu argues with and undermines the views of several Roman gods and goddesses. The research shows how these three authors, who are at the same time political activists, represent the contemporary social and political events in various parts of Africa through reinterpreting myths, placed in a new context.

Alioune Willane
Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis, Senegal

Theater and Rewriting, the New Myths of Modernity: A Comparative Reading of *Beatrice of the Congo* by Bernard Dadié and *L'exil d'Albouri* by Cheik Aliou Ndao

Key words: writing, myth, modernity, otherness, dynamism

Abstract: The process of writing and representation draws on material that presents itself in several forms. The culture, history, customs of each world as well as its myths often allow the author to give founding speeches dynamism. This work is carried out thanks to the relative freedom of the author who transgresses, alters and recreates to resurrect a meaning, an image or a symbol in the same context or in another context. By applying this principle of reading to the plays *Beatrice du Congo* by Bernard Dadié and *L'exil d'Albouri* by Cheik Aliou Ndao, the comparison makes it possible to analyze the different resources of the new texts of the myths of historical myths in a context of modernity or postmodernity. The analysis goes beyond simple representation, but reconciles myth and dramatic art as modalities of construction of new nationalisms in most former African colonies. The objective is to show

how two different worlds understand original figures borrowed from chronologically distant and culturally different spaces. The approach will make it possible to show in the context of this article the universality of certain myths but also their productivity.

Andrea Sánchez i Bernet

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain

Euripides with a Cuban Accent: *Medea* by Reinaldo Montero

Keywords: classical tradition, postmodernism, Medea, Euripides, Reinaldo Montero, Cuban theatre, contemporary theatre

Abstract: This work deals with the version of Euripides' tragedy *Medea* in the homonymous play by contemporary Cuban playwright Reinaldo Montero. More specifically, it will explore how the close reading of Euripides' text throughout the Cuban adaptation reinforces the subversive denouement. Three types of strategies in Montero's drama show that he is proposing a re-reading of a concrete tragedy and not just another version of the Medea myth. Firstly, the Cuban text retains the characters and dramatic structure of the classical tragedy; secondly, it develops a number of passing details scarcely mentioned by Euripides; and thirdly, some scenes are almost a word-for-word paraphrase of the hypotext. It will be argued that this constant reference to the Euripidean model translates into an expectation of fidelity and an increasing anticipation of the infanticide for which Medea is best known, which makes the Cuban Medea's decision to spare her children all the more shocking.

Meriem El Baddouri

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The Threads of Myth: Driss Ksikes and His Theater of Utopia and Engagement

Keywords: Theater, myth, agora, identity, revolution.

Abstract: Driss Ksikes presents us a style of writing where all elements intersect: arts, genres, media, social issues, politics, religion, language, etc. He weaves a web where space-time, memory, identity, and myth coexist, revealing his genius. He views theatrical writing as an agora, a political space built collectively. For this reason, he offers us a theatre that aligns with research and avant-garde movements, advocating for the liberation from hegemony and authoritarianism. Myth is highly present in Ksikes' work. The city he often refers to in his plays is materialized in his work as this a utopian place, inviting the reader/spectator to join. He speaks of his city in terms of "myth," "utopia," "Oedipiades" (the former title of *The Match*), and "Babel" (the lost Babel in the plays *Don't burry too fast Big Brother* and *E-Babel*). However, he clearly explains that it is not an unattainable dream but a revolution of minds capable of finding a third space where differences, freedoms, and margins are respected. The classical myth as we know it is also present in his work, with frequent appearances of figures like Antigone or Oedipus. At times, we find representations of chthonians or the god who tortures humans, while at other times, angels and demons are demystified, fallen to the rank of the worldly.

PANEL 2: MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIAN DRAMA **(12:15 – 14:00)**

Ana Stojanoska
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The Myth as a Dramatic Core in Contemporary Macedonian Drama: A Case Study of *Bolen Dojchin* and the Contemporary Macedonian Drama

Key words: Macedonian drama, myth, drama origin, contemporary drama, theatre.

Abstract: The myth is the essence, the nucleus, the base of the drama (theatre). The myth and its context have been used as a dramatic origin since the very beginnings of ancient drama. Macedonian drama also uses the myth in several different ways. Macedonian drama and theater has used myths as a base of a dramatic structure from the very beginning. Most often, these are typical and authentic myths that are used as basic dramatic material. But Macedonian drama and theater both create, recognize, and build new myths, or rather symbolically establish them so clearly that they are myths themselves—such as the example of "Macedonian Bloody Wedding" by Vojdan Chernodrinski. This paper presents the research of the myth as a dramatic origin in contemporary Macedonian drama, specifically with the mythical hero Bolen Dojchin (The Ill Dojchin) and his sister Angelina as a case study. The process of creating a dramatic work based on a myth in this study will be presented through the reading of the folk ballad about the Bolen Dojchin, the two plays by Georgi Stalev "Bolen Dojchin" and "Angelina," as well as the play by Blagoja Risteski-Platnar "Beautiful Angelina." The research defines the key elements of the myth, which are later used as the fundament of the dramatic material. Since it is a case study, the theatrical performances created according to these plays will also be presented in it. Contemporary theory of drama and theater literature will be used in the paper.

Biljana Rajčinova-Nikolova
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The Integration and Functioning of Myth in Macedonian Contemporary Drama: *Slovenski Kovčeg* by Venko Andonovski

Key words: drama, myth, identity, own root, search for identity

Abstract: The relationship between the Macedonian contemporary drama, myth and identity, as well as the functioning of the myth in the drama, today, are becoming more and more relevant for consideration. The research is based on the claim of Elizabeta Sheleva that "Identity has a double character: one is 'identity as origin' - what we once were, in the past, throughout history, and the second is 'identity as a project', something that is constructed in a flexible way in harmony with the future – and advances the original phase of identity as an origin" (Sheleva, 2005: 63). Hence, the search for origin, for identity, for self-emancipation is a complex process, it implies binding and believing in one's own fatal historical destiny, confirmed by the Other. Developing this thought, the thesis of the research is that emphasizing the 'self' by emphasizing 'identity as origin' allows identity to be expressed as a subjective imagination, reshaping the imagological and auto-imagological delusions of self-concept created and imposed by the Other, and of 'identity as a project' to counter the myth

of origins. The subject of interest are precisely the effects and consequences of identity conflicts (occurring on the East-West axis), which should provide the answer to the question of how to get to one's own roots, how to forget the imposed myths of another time, to go through that tragic process by going back to one's own hidden past. The goal is to investigate whether the way out of the search for one's own roots, for origin, for identity is in the myth (the model of Slavism as a myth of community), which will indicate the 'root of origin' (and identity as origin), as a possible way out to be in time. If so, does the search for Slavhood and the tendency to restore the Slavic community oppose the myth of continuity, which points to 'identity as a project' (imposed identity argumentation) as a possible way out to be in the present. To realize the goal, we focus on the dramatic text *Slovenski kovčeg* by Venko Andonovski (1996), where the action is situated in 1993; a time of transition, a time when the issue of identity is problematized, using insights from postcolonial theory, imagology and identity studies, which explain identity through essentialist and constructivist concepts.

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The Myth of the Ailing Dojčin as a Warning Paradigm for the Fate of Humanity

Keywords: Sick Dojčin, Angelina, the fight between good and evil, myth of Narcissus, sin, incest, Pandora's box, artificial intelligence

Summary: In addition to its function of explaining the creation of the world, interpreting human life through metaphors and allegories, the hidden logic of the mythical opinion also contains a certain model of original behavior (recommended moral norms).

In the paper, the archetype of the fight between good and evil embodied in the heroes Bolen Dojčin and Crna Arapina is updated through the plays of Georgi Stalev-Popovski "Bolen Dojčin" (1971) and "Angelina" (1972). To explain the essence of the problem, the individual destinies of the characters will be analyzed, starting from their genesis, conditional sin, relationships with other characters, the fight to the last breath, the tragic pyrrhic victory. Special attention will be paid to the illness of the hero Dojčin and his last battle viewed as a cautionary legacy framework for humanity's final battle with artificial intelligence. The myths' warnings about the narcissistic nature of the Sick Dojčin, about incest, about overachievement, about the fear of opening Pandora's box of evil, about divine creation, about free will and the destiny of humanity will also be emphasized.

If the origin of good behavior is reflected in respecting a world in which goodness consists solely in fulfilling obligations and protecting oneself, then the immanent morality of the myths is quite the opposite of what we practice today. We today fail to fulfill the crucial obligations to live by rules centered on measure, sustainability, coexistence and self-preservation, instead we take the place of creator ourselves, creating powerful artificial structures under the pretense that they will serve us, without being aware that we are endangering our own survival.

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"Is it Allowed to Kill the Whipsnake, or is it a Sin"?: Reading Mitko Majunkov's Early Plays Through the Prism of the Mythological

Key words: Mitko Majunkov, "Eternal Game", drama, myth.

Abstract: The trilogy "Eternal Game" ("The Big Whipsnake", "The Shadow" and "Desolate Land") by the contemporary Macedonian writer Mitko Majunkov is a multi-layered work with a complex linguistic and literary structure. The dramas that make up the trilogy create their own world of symbols and meanings, a world that refers to primordial themes and paradigms. The Whipsnake, The Shadow, The Desolate Land, the Misty Sea, the Land of the Eye of the Needle, the house, the hut, all these are arch motifs extracted from the deep mythic conception of the world. The analytical reading of these plays through the prism of mythology should show that Majunkov chooses universal themes for his original dramatic approach, which he elaborates through the prism of well-known mythical images and archetypal motifs. Exploiting the potential of a myth, the author deals with current topics based on the premise of the already known mythical topics (evil, plunder, desolation, dehumanization, sacrifice, oblivion, loss of language, homeland, identity, life, death, hell, etc.). What makes this trilogy particularly authentic is the introduction of a specific dramatic time, the time after the Flood, and a specific dramatic space. Dramatic time and space begin to lose their rigid structure precisely at the moment when the journey of the characters along the mythic axis begins. Dramatic time and space begin to lose their rigid structure precisely at the moment when the characters' journey along the mythical axis begins. Buried deep in some distant and unknown time, it takes the heroes to the distant Desolate land, the Land of the Far and Misty Sea where memory and everything that was previously created die. Majunkov takes the mythology-folklore matrix, he starts to build the psycho-social profile of the characters on it, and as a binder he takes the language, the original speech of the characters who have to bring the dramatic action on the stage. Through the mythological as one of the aspects of building the basic idea, the characters in the trilogy are transformed into a metaphor for the structure of the collective and its destiny.

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The Abject, Sin and (Self)Sacrifice in the play *Fair Angelina* by Blagoja Risteski-Platnar

Keywords: Fair Angelina, Ailing Dojchin, Macedonian contemporary drama, abject

Abstract: The play *Fair Angelina* (1995) by Blagoja Risteski-Platnar utilizes the Ailing Dojchin myth as a beginning paradigm for the plot, from where the story continues with the author's unique narrative. This original narrative is similar to Sophocles' Oedipus Rex; however the sister Angelina, becomes the main character instead of her brother. Dojchin's attempt to rob a church and kiss a saint (this motif is present in some Macedonian folk songs), causes a curse to leave him bedridden, and his city Solun is left without its defender. Angelina, according to the curse, has to sleep with her brother, in order to save him and Solun from the curse (Dojchin's sin is being redeemed by another one, incest). Angelina saves Solun, however through this act of self-sacrifice, she becomes ostracized among the citizens of Solun. She is also degraded due to the taboo she commits. When the community discovers her shameful self-sacrifice, she becomes exiled, and instead of being respected as a saviour, she is murdered due to the sin. The aim of this article is to showcase the transition of Angelina, from a static to a dynamic figure. However, once she becomes the main initiator of the play, she returns to the margins and becomes stigmatized by society (Solun's citizens). Angelina's fall is going to be analyzed through Julia Kristeva's abjection theory with her study *The Powers of Horror*. We will also use Jasna Koteska's book *(A) Sanitary Enigma*, to further clarify the abject and the maternal (Angelina's) body.

Katerina Panov Kožarov

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***The Siege of Masada* by Venko Andonovski: Transcribing Sisyphean Contemplation in the Path from the Top to the Bottom of the Mountain**

Keywords: Venko Andonovski, 'The Siege of Masada', play, myth, ideology, Sisyphus, philosophy of absurdism, suicide

Abstract: All accomplished authors are aware of the magnificence that enables mythology to exist as a type of proto world, eternally parallel to ours. The founder of the analytical psychology, the famous Swiss psychiatrist, Carl G. Jung, having mentioned man's collective unconsciousness, had proved that there had been a connection between the deepest parts of a neurotic's dreams and fantasies and mythology. Furthermore, Freud would even define the myth as mankind's collective dream, so additionally a myth as well as a dream could not be understood without the quiescent contents of our subconscious. From this perspective, the myth is an internal part of our being, and probably, answers to many dilemmas should be resolved there. In his play 'The Siege of Masada', Venko Andonovski actually proves the validity of these theories by putting mythology as a central window for us to see his point of view. The story of Sisyphus as a symbol of the philosophy of the absurd is a key to decoding the message given through his six essays on murder and suicide.

PANEL 2': MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY THEATER PRODUCTIONS (12:15 – 14:00)

Jitka Goriaux

The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague,
Theatre Faculty (DAMU)

***Antropolis* by Roland Schimmelpfennig and Karin Beier: The Experience of Tragic Conflict on the Contemporary Stage**

Keywords: tragic conflict today, Karin Beier, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Thebes, Labdacids, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, *The Bacchae*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *The Phoenician Women*

Abstract: The cycle of five performances of Roland Schimmelpfennig's plays, *Anthropolis I–V*, was staged at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg under the direction of the theatre's artistic director, Karin Beier, in the fall of 2023. The impetus for this project emerged in 2020 during the first covid lockdown, when the artists felt the need to depict on stage the disintegration of the polis as a fundamental unit of our social and political structures. Director Karin Beier proposed focusing on the mythological narratives related to the city of Thebes, here serving as a metonymy for our society. Drawing inspiration from tragedies and other ancient materials related to the Labdacid cycle, contemporary German playwright Roland Schimmelpfennig created and adapted a series of seven plays (presented in Hamburg in five evenings). "Was it just that our society killed its gods?" summarises Karin Beier, adding that the challenges of our time, such as climate change, species extinction, migration, or the threat of nuclear war, intersect the current faith in reason and progress in a manner similar to the Greek gods. Based on both dramaturgical and scenic studies of *Anthropolis I–V*, the communication aims to provide concrete responses to this fundamental

question of how it is possible to update the experience of tragic conflict in contemporary theatre, at a time when humanity seems to be the measure of all things and where all personal and social situations appear solvable through human reason.

Anna Chiara Corradino, Tor Vergata University of Rome
Marta Lietti, Freie Universität Berlin/ Gent University

What about the children?: Variations on Medea's Myth in Milo Rau's *Medea's children* and Mimmo Borrelli's *Malacrescita*

Keywords: Medea, Milo Rau, Mimmo Borrelli, contemporary theatre, myth reinterpretation, children in theatre, socio-political commentary

Abstract: In Euripides' *Medea*, the children of Medea and Jason never speak on stage. We only hear their cries from inside the palace at the end of the play, just before Medea slaughters them (E. Med. 1273-1278). This silence reflects a characteristic feature of ancient Greek theater, where children appear almost as props, with limited and subordinate dramatic action. In contemporary representations of Medea, increased attention has been devoted to her sons, thereby granting them greater prominence and providing them with a more significant voice. In our joint paper, we explore two of these inversions of the tragic stage convention (of voiceless children) and the reinterpretation of Medea's myth in Milo Rau's *Medea's Children* (2024) and Mimmo Borelli's *Malacrescita* ("Bad Growth," 2012). Rau's performance examines the role of children in theater by blending real-life events with Medea's classical myth. The drama centers on a mother who attempts filicide, mirroring Medea's infamous act of vengeance, with every role played by children. This adaptation allows children to express their own perspectives on human experiences such as love and death. Conversely, Borelli reimagines Medea's myth within the context of Italian organized crime from the perspective of the surviving children of a woman he portrays as a contemporary Medea. In a monologue Borelli himself performs on stage, using a childlike voice and gestures. This mimetic strategy explores the agency of children who are victims of parental violence. This paper aims at analyzing the dramatic, mythological, and socio-political implications of these contemporary re-evaluations of the role of Medea's children.

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Myth Challenged by the Present in Milo Rau's Theater

Key words: Milo Rau, political theater, immersive theater, myth reinterpretation, *Trilogy of ancient myths*, *Antigone in the Amazone*.

Abstract: Acclaimed as one of the most interesting and influential, but also most controversial artist of our time, the Swiss playwright, film and theater director, Milo Rau, founder of the International Institute of Political Murder (IIPM), is especially known for his politically engaged theater, at the frontier between fiction and documentary, art and activism. This paper focuses on his play *Antigone in the Amazone* (2023) that closes the *Trilogy of ancient myths*. As in the first two parts, *Orestes in Mosul* and *The New Gospel*, where the son of Agamemnon and Jesus were respectively immersed in the ruins of the former capital of the Islamic State in Iraq and in a refugee camp in Southern Italy, Rau replaces the Sophoclean tragedy, which addresses the issues of modern, rational civilization attacking traditional civilization, in the heart of the Amazon rain-forest in Brazil's Para State,

where the capitalist machinery ravages nature and displaces communities. Rau reenacts the El Dorado Do Carajas Masacre that took place on April 17, 1997, when 19 members of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) were shot by military police during a protest. In the play the call for justice that emerged in the aftermath of the massacre rejoins Antigone's claim. The paper analyses the actuality and political relevance acquired by the classical myth in Rau's theater project, in which members of the MST movement perform together with the actors, while the indigenous environmental activist Kay Sarah embodies the tragic heroine. The paper further addresses the stake of Milo Rau's documentary and immersive theater aesthetics, as well as the important place of catharsis in it.

Sašo Ognenovski, Ph.D
ZRUM "Perun Artis" - Bitola

Ancient Myths Through the Theatrical Transcendence of Jan Fabre

Keywords: myths, theater, director, dramatist, contemporaneity

Abstract: Ancient myths have always been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for playwrights, directors, and actors alike. The list of interpretations of the great ancient tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides by dramatists such as Bertolt Brecht, Heiner Müller, Jean Anouilh, Dušan Jovanović, Eugene O'Neill, and others is extensive. The transposition of ancient myths into directorial visions involves unique conceptual procedures that imply research on a scholarly level. Jan Fabre is one of the most original and interesting theatrical figures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, whose poetics carry sharp and indelible messages. "The Peak Mytikas" and "Mount Olympus" are two of his monumental theatrical works that deal with the contemporary interpretation of ancient myths through the lens of today's political and social turbulence. This paper will focus on the interpretation of the theatrical symbolism of these productions, which, with their significant curiosity, have entered festivals worldwide, occupying a substantial part of real time with their impressively long durations of eight and twenty-four hours. Through a comparative analysis of the myths themselves and their semantic presence in the modernization of these productions, we will focus on the messages each production conveys through the directorial concept. Jan Fabre's stage works fuse ancient history with the malignancy of modern times in a rigid yet highly complex manner. This paper will attempt to explain the entire symbolic transcendence of his work as well.

PANEL 3: MYTH AND DRAMA YESTERDAY AND TODAY **(15:00-16:45)**

Suzana Miceva
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The Role of Myth in Children's Drama from the 19th Century to Contemporary Times: Examples from Macedonian and International Works

Keywords: myth, drama, children's literature, fairy tales

Abstract: Myth serves as a subtext across various literary genres, functioning either as a narrative fragment or as metaphorical representation. This presence is also evident within children's literature, with children's drama being no exception. Mythological themes can be

identified in some of the earliest dramatic texts for children in Macedonia, as well as more broadly. Drama provides an apt medium for expressing children's creativity and spontaneity, particularly when children are active participants. Furthermore, it serves as a means for stimulating imagination and facilitating immediate learning by presenting diverse life situations alongside historical and mythological narratives through dramatic expression. Imitation lies at the core of dramatic play, which resonates with children's inherent characteristics. Understanding drama as an extension of play is vital in child development; through play, children engage in enjoyment, learning, communication, and creation. The processes of creation and creativity are essential for fostering children's fantasy and imaginative capabilities. It is only through creative endeavors that children can develop their potential, gain awareness of their surroundings, and cultivate new perspectives. In this study, we aim to examine and analyze the role of mythology in children's dramas from the 19th century to the present day, including popular forms such as television and radio dramas.

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The Myth of the Amazons and the Drama *Teuta* by Dimitrije Demetar: On the Phenomenon of Betrayal and Transformation

Keywords: myth, drama, Amazon, national betrayal, homeland, woman

Abstract: This article addresses the complex myth of the Amazons and its "reflection" in the drama "Teuta" (1845) by the naturalized Croatian of Greek origin, Dimitrije Demetar. The well-known drama from the Illyrian period deals with the question of the "justifiability" (=motivation) of the "national" betrayal of the king, motivated by love, as well as the transformation of the queen from a rigid Amazon to a gentle wife and mother, also motivated by love. The presence of several distinct "mythical destinies" from the complex myth of the Amazons in Demetar's drama is a result both of the needs of the time (the Illyrian movement in Croatia in the 1830s and 1840s) and of Demetar's dedication and exceptional knowledge of ancient Greek literary heritage and his affinity for drama and theater.

We focus on, analyze, and comment on the "mythical" elements in this drama, and we also problematize the phenomenon of betrayal and the character shift of the main heroine, concluding that transformations are possible and justified, but betrayals are not.

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***The Bacchae* by Euripides in Contemporary Context**

Keywords: The Bacchae, Euripides, drama, myth, Igor Vuk Torbica.

Abstract: In the text we will discuss the staging of the text "The Bacchae" by Euripides seen through the dramaturgical - directorial reading of Biljana Krajčevska and Igor Vuk Torbica. In the stage production entitled "The Bacchae - a brief overview of the disintegration", the authors build an original stage world based on the myth and the text of Euripides. The correlation of the myth and the original text with modernity can be traced through several stakeholders, such as, for example, through the system of stage signs or stage semiotics in post-dramatic theater; in fact, the disintegration of a system is on display as a prerequisite for the birth of a new one. To put it more precisely in a Hegelian sense, "...nothing is so valuable that it cannot decay/perish." The directorial concept of Igor Vuk Torbica is

productive and effective and represents a stage act of admonition and warning, yet it ends with a ray of hope: when this civilization wears out, the play suggests that a new evolution will begin. Through the analysis of the concept of the plays, we want to show how the myths and texts of the past are read, understood and staged today and whether answers to the questions that are still relevant today can be found in them.

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Myth and Drama as Metaphor: Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

Keywords: artificial intelligence, Hinton, new myth, metaphor, anti-drama

Abstract: Geoffrey Hinton, the "father of artificial intelligence", in his lecture to the students at Stanford University last year, admitted that artificial intelligence has exceeded its initial trajectory and gone in a direction that brings great challenges. We are facing a new, radical evolutionary leap that is completely redefining the realms of human existence. The world is faced with a great algorithmic puzzle that opens many unknown questions. It is because of these characteristics that artificial intelligence grows into a new myth, with a concept and characteristics that have completely defined the myth throughout history. At the same time, it opens vast horizons for the research of contemporary social, cultural and philosophical issues that create the modern man's attitude towards life and largely determine his place in it.

Artificial intelligence, through its digital codes and sequences, reflects the entire human capital, diligently stored over thousands of years of existence. It grows into the most authentic metaphor of the myths that perpetuated man's eternal search for the truth of his existence and of the collective anti-drama. New technological trends are a metaphor for the Promethean fire stolen from the gods, in which man is both god and Prometheus at the same time.

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What Does ChatGPT Know about Myth and Drama?

Key words: artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, myth, drama, applied research.

Abstract: In our paper, on this occasion, we will start from the definition of the terms *myth* and *drama* in the explanatory dictionaries in the Macedonian language, and then we will turn to artificial intelligence, while we try to do applied research. Namely, lately, when it comes to artificial intelligence, ChatGPT cannot be ignored. It is defined as a multimodal node model, created by OpenAI, which since last year (2023) has launched the fourth version in its series of GPT models. It is reportedly available on the paid chatbot product ChatGPT Plus, through the OpenAI API, and through the free Microsoft Copilot chatbot. As a model, GPT-4 is considered to be an upgraded model, which uses public data. On this occasion, we want to show what "ChatGPT" thinks about myth and drama, that is, we will use the question of creating "new myths", so through applied research we will try to perceive the "creativity in thinking" of artificial intelligence, which occurs in all spheres of life.

PANEL 3': MYTHICAL PATTERNS (15:00-16:45)

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Reinterpretation of the Myth in the Decadent Theater of Gabriele D'Annunzio

Key words: D'Annunzio, theater, mythology, decadence.

Abstract: The Italian writer Gabriele D'Annunzio at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries shows a particular interest in drama and theater. His original conception of the theater implies a desire to get out of the then dominant theatrical forms in Italy, especially from the banality of everyday life, present in the themes and forms of the bourgeois theater. For this purpose, motivated by the desire to return to the sublime theatrical forms, the author resorts to a dramaturgical re-actualization of the myth and the ancient drama. Especially in the work *The Dead City* from 1896, there is a revival of Greek tragedy and its intersection with the modernist tendencies of European decadence. This tragedy in five acts, the action of which takes place in the contemporary era of the author, but is located in Greece, at the archaeological site of Mycenae in the Peloponnese, reinterprets some of the typical thematic-motive elements of Greek myth, such as, for example, blindness and incest. The play experienced significant success, and its first performance took place in Paris in 1898, starring the legendary Sarah Bernard.

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Mythical Patterns in *A Doll House* by Henrik Ibsen

Key words: Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll House*, myth, drama, worldview.

Abstract: Francis Fergusson in his *The Idea of a Theater* makes parallels between Sophocles' tragedies and Henrik Ibsen's dramaturgy, while George Steiner in *The Death of Tragedy* argues that in his last eight plays Ibsen has created a new mythology filled with archetypal and cultural content. In my presentation, I will focus on the diverse, often conflicting approaches in the interpretation of the relationship between the myth, the mythical vision and the literature given by Cassirer, Frye, Kerenyi, Jung, that were implemented by several authors during the last few decades in their interpretations of the mythical patterns and values in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House*, examining the subtext, Nora's motivations and the visual metaphors that are rooted in the mythical worldview and/or in the Greek tragedies and ancient culture.

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The Trial as a Mythical and Theatrical Process: From the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus to *Diogene's Paradox* by Arsovski

Keywords: myth, justice, trial, guilt, punishment, chorus, jury

Abstract: The concept of error/guilt leading to conflict and crimes among close relatives is one of the key parameters in understanding the essence of the tragic plot in Aristotle's *Poetics*: “(when the sufferings occur between family members, as for example, when a brother kills a brother, or a son his father, or a mother her son, or a son kills his mother or is preparing to kill her or commit some similar wrongdoing, the poet must seek this out)” (XIV, 20). From this perspective, it likely becomes clear why the theatrical space, from the very beginnings to the present day, often assumes the status of a courtroom. The idea that the most hidden crimes cannot be concealed and sooner or later become publicly visible and are punished was probably not invented by William Shakespeare. Through a comparative analysis of several dramatic works (*Oresteia* by Aeschylus, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, *An Enemy of the People* by Ibsen, and *Diogen's Paradox* by Arsovski), we will attempt to trace the connections between the topos of the trial as a mythical-religious matrix and the structure of the dramatic action, which revolves around the concepts of detecting and sanctioning guilt, characteristic both of ancient tragedy and various dramatic works from different epochs. Through this comparative reading, we will try to explore the mythical implications of the dramatic plots structured as a form of detective search or as legal proceedings.

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Navigating the Labyrinth: Leadership, Myth, and Drama in *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill

Keywords: leadership, leadership labyrinth, myth, drama, gender

Abstract: Caryl Churchill explores in depth the concept of the leadership labyrinth, which captures the complex and multifaceted challenges women face in achieving and maintaining leadership roles, in the drama *Top Girls*. From this perspective, *Top Girls* delves into the systemic and societal obstacles that women encounter on their way to leadership. Churchill highlights how gender biases, organizational practices, and cultural expectations contribute to the labyrinthine journey women must navigate. Churchill's dramatic structure further enhances the psychological and emotional experience of the Leadership Labyrinth. The fragmented narrative, blending realism with surreal elements, reflects the disjointed and often contradictory experiences of women who aspire to leadership. The diverse backgrounds and experiences of the characters in "*Top Girls*" actually highlight the intersectional approach in the leadership maze. Factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and historical context further complicate women's journey through the labyrinth, demonstrating the varied and complex challenges they face. The work provides a nuanced and critical examination of the leadership labyrinth, debunking the myths about women, and the complex and often invisible barriers women face in ascending the higher echelons of leadership. The drama raises awareness of these challenges and the need for more equitable and supportive organizational structures to enable the development of women's leadership, dispel myths about the gender gap, and shed light on aspects of gender barriers that are hard to see and therefore often overlooked.

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Reviving Ancient Echoes: Use of Classical Myths of Pygmalion in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and *Back to Methuselah*

Keywords: Allegory, Greek Myth, Galatea, Legend, Pygmalion

Abstract: Classical myths have long been a source of inspiration. They are not only revisited but also reimagined in the modern drama, offering a fresh perspective on timeless tales. The study explores the use of the Greek myth of Pygmalion, in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, and the archetype Pygmalion in another work *Back to Methuselah* in themes of transformation, creation, and the complexities of human relationships. The myth of Pygmalion, derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, tells the story of a sculptor who falls in love with a statue he has created. This critical analysis examines that George Bernard Shaw's use of the Pygmalion myth demonstrates his ability to adapt classical themes to address contemporary issues and philosophical questions. Through these works, Shaw not only critiques social and cultural norms but also envisions a future where humanity's creative potential leads to continuous evolution and improvement. The preliminary reflections highlight that *Pygmalion* focuses on the themes of individual transformation within a socio-cultural framework, highlighting issues of class and gender, when resonating the ancient myth. In contrast, *Back to Methuselah* uses the archetype to explore broader philosophical questions about human potential and evolution. The research methodology involves detailed

qualitative content analysis of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and *Back to Methuselah* as primary sources. The literary works are analysed for the integration of the Greek myth into the contemporary works. Additionally, it incorporates a literature review encompassing books, critical essays, and scholarly articles to provide supplementary insights and context.