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Ecology and the Performing Arts

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Ta številka *Amfiteatra* je posvečena prof. dr. Janezu Strehovcu (1950–2025), filozofu in teoretiku novomedijske umetnosti, mislecu onkraj ustaljenih okvirjev.

This issue of *Amfiteater* is dedicated to Prof Dr Janez Strehovec (1950–2025) – a philosopher, theorist of new media art and out-of-the-box thinker.

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UVODNIK

Pretežni del tokratne obsežne številke predstavljajo razprave, pripravljene na podlagi prispevkov na *Amfiteatrovem* mednarodnem simpoziju, ki je na temo »Ekologija in uprizoritvene umetnosti / Ecology and the Performing Arts« potekal 9. in 10. oktobra 2025 v prostorih Slovenskega gledališkega inštituta (SLOGI) v Ljubljani. Organizirali so ga Akademija za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo, Slovenski gledališki inštitut, revija za teorijo scenskih umetnosti *Amfiteater* in Lutkovno gledališče Ljubljana. Simpozij je idejno zasnoval dr. Janez Strehovec (1950–2025), filozof in teoretik novomedijske umetnosti ter njenih kontekstov, ki je v zadnjih letih objavil tudi nekaj poglobljenih člankov o ekoloških temah v sodobni umetnosti in družbi. Ta številka *Amfiteatra* je posvečena njegovemu spominu.

Podnebne spremembe, trajnostni razvoj in zeleni prehod so ključne besede, ki so v zadnjem času pogosto v obtoku. Narašča zavedanje, da te teme niso vezane zgolj na izsledke naravoslovja ali na iskanje izključno tehnoloških rešitev, temveč da morata svoje poglede in pristope prispevati tudi humanistika ter družboslovje. Pojavljajo se nove filozofske, družbene in politične paradigme, ki referirajo na segrevanje ozračja, okoljske katastrofe in grožnjo izginjanja vrst, tudi človeške.

Antropocen se s klimatskimi spremembami, povezanimi s krčenjem gozdov, izginjanjem vrst, onesnaženjem in segrevanjem planeta ter topljenjem ledenikov, vzpostavlja kot točka streznitve, ko lahko začne človeštvo kritično opazovati prehojeno pot. Vpliv kapitalizma na okoljske spremembe je generiral koncept kapitalocena, ki ga je leta 2009 skoval švedski ekolog Andreas Malm, in h kateremu so prispevali in še prispevajo teoretiki družbenih, okoljskih in feminističnih študij.

Pojavljajo se nova vprašanja in problemi, povezani z dejstvom, da človeštvo ni ekskluzivni nosilec življenja na Zemlji; srečujemo se z večvrstnimi skupnostmi, vzponom nečloveških akterjev (angl. *nonhuman agents*, *nonhuman actors*), nečloveškim obratom (Grusin), z mislijo o svetu brez nas (Thacker), vključujočo družbo ter z umetniškimi odgovori na te izzive. Upoštevanje nečloveških akterjev (živali, rastlin, pametnih strojev) je spodbudilo kritiko antropocentrizma in vpeljalo etiko vključevanja teh akterjev v skupnostih, kjer se srečujejo in sodelujejo s človekom.

Antropocen (kapitalocen) kot s klimatskimi spremembami in okoljskimi katastrofami opredeljen dogodek (in ne, glede na nove znanstvene teorije, s človekovo aktivnostjo bistveno opredeljena geološka doba) spodbuja sodobno umetnost, da radikalizira kritiko antropocentrizma in začne upoštevati deprivilegirane nečloveške akterje.

Namen *Amfiteatrovega* jesenskega simpozija je bil premisliti ekologijo in podnebne spremembe v povezavi z dramatiko, gledališčem, uprizoritvenimi in hibridnimi

umetniškimi praksami (npr. performans, novomedijska in intermedijska umetnost). Vprašanja, kako se odzvati na bližajočo se katastrofo ter kaj in kako lahko umetnost pripomore k zelenemu prehodu, so vse pogosteje prisotna tudi v umetnosti.

Tematski sklop prve številke letošnjega *Amfiteatra* tako prinaša trinajst člankov v slovenskem in angleškem jeziku. V grobem jih lahko razdelimo na dva sklopa. Del člankov se posveča obravnavi ekoloških tem v dramatiki in (deloma) gledaliških uprizoritvah, pri čemer metodološko izhajajo iz teatrologije, primerjalne književnosti, slovenistike in okoljskih ter kulturnih študijev. Več avtorjev obeh linij je, zanimivo, pritegnil arhetipski motiv drevesa v najrazličnejših legah in pojmovanjih.

Druga linija pa tematiko reflektira predvsem v sodobni umetnosti in hibridnih umetniških praksah, na primer v performansu, novomedijski in intermedijski umetnosti. Ti prispevki temeljijo na transdisciplinarnih pristopih sodobne teorije in filozofije, uprizoritvenih študijev, kulturnih in vizualnih študijev itd.

V okviru drugega sklopa velja posebej opozoriti na štiri besedila, ki so bila na simpoziju predstavljena v okviru panela »Eko-epistemologije. Transdisciplinarni horizonti uprizarjanja« in ki obravnavajo vodo (predvsem morje) kot epistemološki ter umetnostni koncept. Njihovi prispevki izhajajo iz okoljske in modre humanistike, ki ju povezujejo z ekokritično analizo.

Lada Čale Feldman proučuje »strategije reprezentacije« v okoljsko angažirani drami *Kyoto* Joeja Murphyja in Joeja Robertsona, ki subvertira distopični trend sodobne britanske podnebne dramatike. Strategije povezuje s političnimi teorijami »posvetovalne ekologije« in razpravlja tudi o drugih povezavah med dramo, razpravo in javnim mnenjem.

Članek Gašperja Trohe obravnava vlogo nečloveških akterjev v slovenski dramatiki 20. in 21. stoletja ter raziskuje, kako se njihova funkcija spreminja od simbolnih figur do samostojnih nosilcev dramskega dogajanja.

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol pretresa motiv drevesa v uprizoritvah Žige Divjaka, režiserja, ki se v zadnjih letih intenzivno loteva angažirane obravnave različnih vidikov podnebnih sprememb.

Petra Ježková pregleda motiv drevesa in njegove sečnje v češki, pa tudi širše v evropski dramatiki ter gledališču. Osredotoči se na analizo metaforičnih pomenov tega motiva.

Teoretska razprava Giade Cipollone raziskuje dialog med otoškimi študiji in uprizoritvenimi študiji z različnih teoretskih vidikov. Ukvarja se z epistemološkimi vidiki konceptov plitvine (Schneider) in *transpasifika* (Looser), ob katerih se odpira plodno analitično področje za raziskave, kako umetniške prakse prispevajo k epistemološki rekonfiguraciji otoških svetov.

Bruna Bonanno predlaga koncept *piratske dramaturgije* kot analitično kategorijo in ustvarjalno prakso za ponoven premislek o radikalnih ekologijah in alternativnih

načinih ustvarjanja sveta onkraj kopenskih okvirov.

Članek Marie Paole Zedda reflektira več primerov performativnih umetniških praks skozi perspektivo Sredozemlja, natančneje Sardinije, ki jo razume ne le kot geografsko ozemlje, temveč tudi kot specifično epistemično polje v dialogu z globalnim jugom.

Anja Dimitrijević v svojem prispevku proučuje, kako lahko z umetniškim raziskovanjem širimo okoljsko ozaveščenost, in sicer na področju vodne geografije z Beneško laguno kot središčem obravnave. Meni, da performativne in s telesom opredeljene prakse omogočajo lokacijski način razumevanja ekologije.

Članek Narvike Bovcon predstavi tri pristope na področju sodobne tehnološke umetnosti, ki modelirajo okolja in okoljsko problematiko tako, da konstruirajo možne modelne rešitve.

Aleš Vaupotič se v članku ukvarja z okoljsko etiko in prek metod teorije diskurza opiše potek ter strukturo izjavljanja na primeru novomedijskega projekta Vuka Ćosića *Nacija – Kultura*, ki velja za zgodnji primer avtonomne ustvarjalnosti stroja na področju novomedijske umetnosti.

Tako Kaja Kraner kot Tery Žeželj v svojih razpravah obravnavata performativno delo Neje Tomšič. Kraner ekološke vidike njenega dela locira prek tega, kakšna vloga prostoru, kraju ali krajini pripade v pripovedi. Žeželj pa predlaga arboristično analizo, navdihnjeno z rastlinsko dramaturgijo M. Infante in razvito skozi analizo pripovedovalskega sprehoda *Razpletanje vrta III* Neje Tomšič, s čimer umetniško delo prav tako stopa v dialog z lokacijo.

Prispevek Jatun Risba se osredotoča na štiridelno umetniško filmsko serijo *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* (Risba & Livera, 2022–2023) ter raziskuje, kako lahko performativne metodologije preoblikujejo estetiko, formate in materialnost filmske produkcije ter reprezentacije.

Zunaj tematskega bloka so objavljene tri razprave. Uroš Trefalt analizira ideološke, estetske in družbene implikacije transformacije tradicionalnih lutkovnih likov v srednjeevropskem kulturnem prostoru s poudarkom na slovenskem kontekstu.

Eva Kraševec se posveča komediji z začetka dvajsetega stoletja, zlasti avantgardnim dramskim besedilom Alfreda Jarryja, Guillauma Apollinaira in Aleksandra Vvedenskega.

Helena Valerija Krieger pa raziskuje širši kontekst šestnajstih avtorskih baletnih koreografij *The Dying Swans Project*, ki je bil zaradi pandemijskih omejitev realiziran le v virtualnem prostoru.

Vabljeni k branju.

Maja Murnik

Ekologija in uprizoritvene umetnosti / Ecology and the Performing Arts

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Abstract

The contribution focuses on the play *Kyoto* by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, which premièred in 2024 at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in a co-production by Good Chance and the Royal Shakespeare Company and transferred to the West End in 2025. In contrast to its environmentally conscious predecessors in contemporary British drama, in which the subject of climate change is predominantly treated from a bottom-up perspective, the play *Kyoto* dramatises the ten-year negotiation process of the so-called Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which took place at the highest global decision-making level: the United Nations Climate Change Conferences.

Although Murphy and Robertson's exposure of the conflicting interests of global players in environmental politics could be attributed to the entire recent "turn" in British political drama that "lays emphasis on argumentation and reflection rather than quick action" (Redling), immediate critical responses to *Kyoto* propelled the play into a genuine "thriller". The interest of this paper is to examine the play's "strategies of representation" – particularly its attitude to language – and to discuss the links it establishes between drama, debate and public opinion. These links are, namely, characteristic of a perennial dramaturgical matrix that has found in *Kyoto* one of its most darkly humorous specimens, attuned to the "deliberative ecology" that is both the singular promise for saving the planet and the crucial obstacle to doing so.

Keywords: *Kyoto*, environmental plays, deliberative dramaturgy

Lada Čale Feldman is a full professor and the Chair of Theatre Studies at the Department for Comparative Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, in Croatia. Besides her two co-authored and eight authored books in Croatian, she has also co-edited several collections, among them the English-language volumes, *Fear, Death and Resistance: Croatia 1991–92* (1993, with I. Prica and R. Senjković) and *Misperformance: Essays in Shifting Perspectives* (2014, with M. Blažević). She is a recipient of six awards (one international and five national).

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The Deliberative Ecology of *Kyoto*

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The focus of my paper is the play *Kyoto* by the young British playwrights Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, which was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon and the Swan Theatre in 2024.[1] It then transferred to the @sohoplace theatre in the West End in 2025, after which it had its US première at Lincoln Center's Mitzi Newhouse Theatre. The play, which dramatises the ten-year negotiation process that led to the so-called Kyoto Protocol – agreed in 1997 after a series of United Nations climate conferences – received predominantly positive reviews in its country of origin and was praised for its "entertaining" presentation of a potentially very dull topic, crowned by a "tremendously zippy production" (Lukowski) by Stephen Daldry and Justin Martin. The audience was cast as delegates to the conference, with some even seated at the circular conference table designed by Miriam Buether, side by side with the performers. The production, however, was not as warmly received in the United States, where it felt like "three long hours" and did not "move" the critics (Seff), perhaps partly due to its criticism of American policy, that is, the portrayal of all Americans, as one critic put it, not only as "villains" but also as "a bunch of very unattractive idiots" (Hofler).

My choice of this particular play to discuss the topic of "environment and the performing arts" was not primarily inspired by the level of attention *Kyoto* received in the anglophone world – evidenced by Christiane Amanpour's CNN interview with Joe Murphy and the lead actor Stephen Kunken, which attests to the play's high profile – but rather by its somewhat unusual approach to the challenges that such a global issue presents to art, drama and theatre in particular, especially in light of ongoing discussions about the desired features, aims and scope of "ecodramaturgy" (Woynarski). It should therefore be emphasised that *Kyoto*, as a play, partakes of two significant recent developments in British theatre: on one hand, it is one of several recent environmentally conscious British plays (see Angelaki; Hudson; Watson); on the other, it is also part of a recent "turn" in British political "drama of ideas" by a younger generation, such as Joe Penhall's

1 This work was created within the framework of the institutional research project Literary Knowledge at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU. The views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. The European Union cannot be held responsible for them.

Blue/Orange (2000), Lucy Pebble's *Enron* (2009), D. C. Moore's *The Empire* (2010), and Duncan Macmillan's *Lungs* (2011). According to Ellen Redling, all these plays "lay emphasis on argumentation and reflection rather than quick action", following in this respect well-renowned playwrights such as David Hare. Later, we may add, James Graham with *This House* (2015), J. T. Rogers with *Oslo* (2016), and Irish playwright Owen McCafferty in *Agreement* (2023) also did so – all of them through explicit references to processes of negotiation and/or public political debates.

From the poetic standpoint, however, one should immediately state that in its address of the incommensurability of the ecological "hyperobject", *Kyoto* is far from unsettling traditional drama and the inherited registers or conventions of performance, as Una Chaudhuri suggests that the "drama of bad ideas" – as she wittily calls all plays facing the horror of the climate future – does or should do. On the contrary, the play seems to belong more to a fairly typical, if not light-hearted, theatre repertoire. It has a certain appeal because, despite its heavy degree of information delivery – as even some American critics admit – it still manages to reach the cinematic heights of an "electrifying political thriller" (Stewart), full of twists and turns that create a breathtaking viewing experience. But there is more: as if to counter the dystopian atmosphere of most contemporary British plays addressing environmental crisis from a bottom-up perspective and focusing on disastrous outcomes such as floods, storms, famine and social conflict (see Watson), the play, some British critics claimed from the outset, brought "unexpected wit" and "evoked laughter", proving to be "extraordinarily funny" (Barton). Judging from the interview the authors gave to Kate Kellaway, the play even claims to inspire optimism, despite its debunking of illusions about perhaps incremental but nonetheless significant progress in global environmental policy. Convinced that "there is a way forward together", the writing duo stated in the interview that they "wanted the audience to feel there is hope".

My argument will therefore focus on three crucial polemical points, each addressing the correlations between dramatic form, content and the ideological stakes of their successful interpenetration. This approach will lead me to situate *Kyoto* within the broader context of contemporary (post)dramatic theatre practice and its ethico-political, if not explicitly activist, tenor. Firstly, although, as I have already pointed out, *Kyoto* is not among the most daring eco-dramaturgical experiments but rather a commercially oriented theatre project – if not a product for middle-class consumption – I have chosen it to discuss the urgent topic of "ecology and the performing arts" because I have recently been interested in identifying crucial features that could mark the aforementioned new "deliberative turn" in contemporary dramaturgy and connect it with what I recognise as a perennial dramaturgical matrix. By the latter, I mean a subgenre of "deliberative drama": specifically, drama that either represents or initiates a process of collective discussion that ultimately leads to political action

or decisions on matters of public interest. Historical examples of this subgenre are not hard to find and range from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Aristophanes' *Assembly of Women*, through Marivaux's *Colony*, Büchner's *Danton's Death* and Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, to more recent works such as Joël Pommerat's *Ça ira. Fin de Louis* (2014) and even the hit film *Conclave* (2024).

Kyoto, I will argue, differs from most contemporary environmental theatre pieces because, just like the truly immersive performance *World Climate Conference* by Rimini Protokoll from 2014 or the piece *COP – Make it Work!* by Bruno Latour and Philippe Quesne from 2015, the play refuses to address climate change from the position of a passive and powerless observer or even victim – immobilised by their helplessness in the face of this overwhelming, uncontrollable and unrepresentable "sublime" – and instead chooses to question the use of active and maximally efficient human management of this threat, even if only in the form of a deliberative practice that takes place at the highest level of global decision-making. However, in contrast to the mentioned postdramatic preludes by Rimini Protokoll and Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers to the actual 2015 Paris Climate Conference – both of which endeavour to involve the audience in the ultimately all too unmanageable "reality" of the delegates negotiating an agreement that corresponds to the major goals of their respective countries – *Kyoto* is not only a fictional but also a historical play.

For all the critics' praise for the immersive nature of its first performance, it is clear from reading the play that it follows a much more traditional path of dramatic docu-theatre – from a thoughtfully researched and written play to acted production – which is about the audience not inhabiting the role of people who are actually in a position to change global climate policy, but imagining it, taking a step back and "reflecting on it". I refer here to the ongoing discussion about the relative progressiveness of dramatic and postdramatic theatre, particularly Hans-Thies Lehmann's emphasis on "the real and our reflection upon it" as a reaction of the audience that characterises attendance at postdramatic performances. Precisely the same formulation is adopted by Benjamin Bennett to argue that this kind of reaction simply requires an underlying narrative and a literary meaning. Therefore, in his view, this leads Lehmann to a conundrum in which "postdramatic theatre, in order to be precisely what it is, must become dramatic theatre all over again", since "the theatre's strict realness, taken by itself, is not something that can operate in history without first being processed, without being given some form of communicable extension beyond the few moments in which we happen to apprehend it directly" (Bennett 205–206).

In this regard, despite inviting the audience to take delegate passes with lanyards, to assume the role of a representative of their allotted country, and to sit in the recreated theatre of the UN General Assembly next to the actors playing the delegates, the

play *Kyoto* should be described as thoroughly Aristotelian, without any pejorative connotation attached to the label. By "Aristotelian" I mean that the play presents – to quote Andreas Englhart's bemused admonition in the face of contemporary German posthumanist environmental theatre – "actors in roles that involve action", for "those who act bear responsibility and, if they have acted wrongly, carry the burden of guilt" (53). The characters in *Kyoto* are faced with such age-old ethical decisions: they are not, as in the two aforementioned interactive performances, empty masks for well-meaning so-called ordinary citizens or Latour and Quesne's *science-po* students, who, in their capacity as audience, are supposed to blindly follow the given instructions and accept their role-playing in the world of a simulated future climate conference, but fictional beings interpreted by professional actors. These beings live in the world of an actual historical conference where they represent actual people thoroughly conditioned by their ethical decisions and others' expectations – people, in fact, who could have either deliberately delayed and derailed the negotiations on reducing the carbon footprint or they could have encouraged the adoption of policies that would have led to a cleaner environment and a fairer share of the obligations related to climate change and its devastating consequences.

Hence my interest in the "human ecology" of *Kyoto*'s dramatic situations, that is, in the interactions that constitute its specific social "ecosystem", with its rules of behaviour, its inclusions and exclusions, and its capacity to reconstitute or reformulate pre-existing micro-social norms – a kind of capacity, incidentally, that was denied to the audience in the supposedly highly interactive works I mentioned earlier. That is why even the most benevolent commentators on Rimini Protokoll's *World Climate Change Conference* noted that during the production, "the experts occupy a large part of the performance time, as most of the workshops are in the form of lectures", and that, although "the spectators are invited to participate in the assembly through a role, as a delegate of one of the member countries", the overwhelming "emphasis is on the didactic aspects of the performance", so that spectators are "sitting quietly and listening to the information being relayed to them", while "communication with members of their group is rushed through the intermissions in the corridors, without giving them time for any real friction or confrontation" (Machairidis 18–19).

In the fictional world of *Kyoto*, however, in one of the play's pivotal moments, it turns out that a group of delegates from undervalued, powerless nations within the UN – who are, of course, potentially the most affected by rising sea levels – are not only compelled but also empowered to exercise this ability and form a historic alliance of small island states in order to challenge the behind-the-scenes machinations of influential global actors who are portrayed as relentless champions of their own economic and ideological interests at the expense of the avowedly "insubstantial" number of people living in the Caribbean and Pacific islands. As theories of democratic deliberation have

recently revised some of their central assumptions precisely with regard to a distinct "dramaturgy" of deliberation (Ercan and Hendricks) and a "deliberative ecology" – implying the identification of "fluid", "complex", "dynamic" and "unpredictable" features that affect "webs of interdependence", which "simultaneously support and constrain" social entities "at a given moment in time" (Mendonça et al. 334), it is more than appropriate to look at how *Kyoto* shows that attempts to deal with the prospect of natural environmental catastrophe should (also) be seen through the lens of this second kind of "ecology" – the one that hopefully enables people to work together to prevent the worst. In view of the fact that recent developments in the United States have unfortunately shown the extent to which the evasion of responsibility for the environment is ensured by a blatant disregard for democratic procedures, if not by the abolition of the idea of democracy as such – that very form of political life, from which the institution of theatre has emerged – it is perhaps quite interesting, among other avenues of investigation, to look at the play that addresses precisely the inextricability of the democratic debate not only from the desired salvation of the environment but also from the operative elements of a theatrical representation. It is not surprising that, in this context, some critics recalled the political metaphor of "the world stage" as an age-old, sometimes even "clumsy", rhetorical device, which fits perfectly here because it becomes both "figurative and literal" (Barton).

Although the two previous postdramatic experiments on audience involvement in the procedural mechanisms of COPs were, to some extent, guided by the same idea, I argue that it is precisely the anti-representational attitude these experiments promote that prevents them from truly engaging with the above-mentioned consubstantiality. If one accepts the critical accounts of the participatory shortcomings of these "assembly performances", as Dmitrios Kyriakis Machairidis termed these events, and, as Michael Haas argues, their reckless disregard for their own energy expenditure, these two projects appear to have provoked what Benjamin Bennett, in his overall critique of the inherently contradictory principles of post-dramatic theatre already mentioned here, called a "totalitarian" reaction of the audience to their artistic initiatives – a kind of automatic consensus to the rules of their game (193–218). Moreover, it is only logical, since no *personal* involvement on the part of the audience was desired; only the playing of a sociopolitical role was intended. According to Machairidis, "the interest in this specific role is that it is not composed through personal or psychological characteristics, but through socio-political ones attributed to the country to which it belongs" (18).

My second point, therefore, is that *Kyoto* relied precisely on this latter aspect of human behaviour, which was so unwelcome in the two immersive experiments, as any personal involvement could, of course, disrupt the planned course of the interaction. As I will show shortly, *Kyoto* dispensed with didacticism in all its representations and

"unreality", and confronted the audience with the very human, psychologically complex and emotionally guided embodiments of the opposing positions by having the actors perform the necessary impersonations. That is, they demonstrated the performative style and body language of the participants in the deliberations, showing how they "leave their seats and step onto that stage" and thus "signal everything about their virtue" (Barton) – in other words, how they present and enforce their arguments, how they reach various listeners through their passionate advocacy of their causes, and how they subsequently win over their audience. Deliberation is never only about the content that is being discussed, nor only about the role that is assigned in the given political landscape, but also about the personal character of the performance and the constitutive unpredictability of its outcome. In the case of the aforementioned pre-enactments, however, the experts were absorbed in their tasks, appearing *only as performers* of what Stephen Hilgartner called "science on stage", while the audience, supposedly invited to participate wholeheartedly in the deliberation process, never truly had any influence on its pre-configured development.

My third point relates, therefore, to the concept of democracy and the paradox of form and content *Kyoto* makes us confront when we compare the play's topicality to the democratic aspirations of postdramatic deliberative dramaturgy. To be sure, the intergovernmental level of decision-making during climate change COPs does not imply democracy as a form of government, but it does imply a democratic process – debate and voting as a prerequisite for the formulation of a policy in question. Given the current theoretical and artistic critique of democratic procedures and the rejection of the goal of political *consensus* as undesirable *stasis* in favour of what Jacques Rancière, in a slight variation on Derrida's messianic invocation of a *démocratie à venir*, calls *dissensus* – a kind of constant unsettling of the boundaries of the political in order to include more and more people in it – the difficult question of *Kyoto* is the following: what about issues like climate change, which literally cannot wait for a *démocratie à venir* and which simply urgently need a global *consensus* of those responsible? While formally deploying the dramatic conflict that any truly democratic deliberation must entail, *Kyoto* also demonstrates the potential perniciousness of such an open-ended approach to democracy for the only viable strategies for achieving environmental goals: it uses the traditional dramatic form of "frictions and confrontations" of the interested parties in order to precisely show how the procedural aspect of the ongoing deliberations can be abused and distorted to endlessly postpone the realisation of a much-needed agreement into the indefinite and increasingly uncertain future so that the dark forces of fossil fuel lobbyists and profitable industries can carry on business as usual.

On the surface, *Kyoto* follows an exciting but fairly straightforward narrative in strict chronological order. It begins with the moment when Reagan ends his presidency, having, it seems, also ended ideological bipolarity for good by publicly calling on and

persuading Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. Unfortunately, around the same time, a scientific "discovery" of anthropogenic climate change darkens the bright prospects of unbridled capitalist triumph and the global promotion of "the American way of life", which will soon prove to be the greatest ideological stake in the face of gloomy experts advocating reductions in gas emissions. The play thus begins to trace a ten-year-long, painful saga of negotiations held during a series of UN climate conferences, a saga finally crowned by a "happy ending": the final agreement signed in 1997 under the solemn aegis of a "beacon" in human history. However, the audience is in fact confronted with a much more complex temporal and ontological structure that aims at a multilevel dramatic irony. The comically incongruous "Brechtian" narrator of the story – who, as we learn later, is in fact already dead at the beginning of the play – is none other than the demonic defender of fossil fuels himself, the American lawyer Don Pearlman, Reagan's former energy adviser. He addresses the audience from the vantage point of his metaphysical position in the present moment, which he calls "the age of disagreement", from which he invites the audience to descend into the more promising 1980s. It is then that Seven Sisters, the Macbeth-like consortium of oil companies, recruits Don to act as a kind of mediator during the upcoming climate conferences, or, to be more precise, to spy on their interests in the guise of the phantom CEO of the Climate Council and advisor to the Saudi Arabian delegate. Pearlman is aware that he is the last dramatic figure with whom an environmentally conscious inhabitant of the earth can identify. He patronisingly addresses the audience with the retrospective knowledge of a reliable witness. He guides them through all the stages of the negotiations, intervening time and again to comment on the unfolding scenes and expose the strategies he has employed to obstruct the agreement. He is the only one allowed to move from the backstage, where he is involved in high-dollar intrigues with the nations involved in the oil trade, to the front stage, where he acts as an extremely shrewd participant in the COP debates, forcefully undermining any setting of concrete "targets" and "timetables" that would commit the powerful nations to reducing their gas emissions. In this way, a double – historical and diegetic – ironic distance is created for the audience, even though they share the same space with the actors acting as UN representatives.

In addition to this obvious analogy between the spaces of theatre production and theatrical representation on the one hand, and the dynamics of covert conversations vis-à-vis public policy on the other, the play also insists on parallels between dialogic interaction and the deliberative practice of policy-making, as it focuses on the medium of language – as a means of communication, representation, manipulation and, not least, as a provisional binding force for the parties involved, following a telling motto from Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*: "I don't think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little." In contrast to such veneration of verbal tools, one of the Seven

Sisters, when referring to the fatal "targets and timetables", bluntly declares: "We hate those words", demonstrating the extent to which a materialistically driven worldview opposes the only viable means not only of discussion and collaboration but, above all, of imaginative, creative, if not utopian, "doing things with words" (Austin), which is the actual foundation of the action-oriented norms of theatrical dialogue. This does not mean, however, that the sinister consortium does not appreciate verbal manipulation, for what they will whisper into Don's ear as a replacement for the unwanted phrasings is the hypocritical, endlessly malleable "empty signifier" (Laclau) of Western export-democracy, which should be used to beguile their opponents: "Freedom. Freedom to choose" (Murphy and Robertson 20).

Under the watchful ear of the diabolical intruder – the lawyer Don, sarcastically disguised as the CEO of the Climate Council – the representatives engage in a vaudeville-like exchange of politically predictable jibes reflecting the balance of power in the global landscape, with the United States and China as the main ideological and economic adversaries, Europe, that is, Germany, as the conscientious, crypto-leftist eco-activist, and the aforementioned small island states – the first to disappear from the face of the earth – trying to stand out and protest against the irresponsibility of the powerful. In contrast to the predominantly anti-logocentric and materialistic tendencies of today's ecological theory and art (cf. Latour; Woynarski), in this play the whole question of agreeing on a common strategy that reduces the risks of planetary catastrophe on the one hand and satisfies divergent economic, social and political interests on the other proves to be primarily a struggle for the right expression, the right word, the right length and structure of a sentence in the declaration. So it turns out that every utterance in the negotiation process must be controlled, "down to the last comma", as one of the interested lobbyists warns Don Pearlman, while exhorting him to do his best to keep the unwanted phrases "bracketed" for as long as possible, because to "unbracket" them on the instructions of the Convention's persistent chairman, Raul Estrada, is to ensure their collective acceptance and thus unleash their binding potential for the future. The more heated the debate over seemingly innocuous phrases (should "human influence on global climate" be formulated as "appreciable"? "observable"? "inappreciable"? "significant"? "insignificant"? "substantive"? "insubstantive"? "pronounced"? "moderate"? "identifiable"? "inconclusive"? "incontrovertible"? "unconfirmed"? "meaningful"? "possible"? "material"? "plausible"? "detectable"? "disputable"? "verifiable"? "minor"? "measurable"? "minimal"? "demonstrable"? "doubtful"? "visible"? "arguable"? "noticeable"? "inconceivable"? or "discernible"?) or the change of tense from "would" to "could" to "will", the more exhausted the representatives become, or the more stubbornly they refuse to give up the negotiation. After numerous exchanges of both friendly and hostile fire, deals are offered or traded, and unpredictable alliances are reorganised under newly emerging diplomatic conditions or blackmail, the chairman's compromise solutions are suddenly accepted, and the agreement is finally adopted – unanimously.

However, there is another, private area behind the stage of this public, globally influential deliberative stage, namely the dramatic sphere of Don's everyday life, where Shirley Pearlman, Don's wife, is introduced. A conventional, moderately liberal and private rather than public feminist, who is so blinded by the narrow-mindedness of her own identity politics that she rages against the editors of *Time* magazine for putting the title "Planet of the Year" on its front cover instead of "Woman of the Year", Shirley appears to be a naive bystander who follows her husband around the world, mindlessly accepting his cynical explanations of the state of the world in the secret hope that one day he will take her on a well-deserved holiday to a glamorous resort. So far, so bad: we can immediately object to this overtly misogynistic portrayal of a typically clueless wife, if we were not mindful of the true impact of this character, who is, in fact, the only one seemingly destined to remain at the very margins of the debate. As opposed to those who consider the choice of the anti-hero Pearlman as protagonist and narrator to be "a stroke of genius" on the part of the two playwrights,[2] I would say that the latter applies more to the decision that Shirley becomes increasingly aware of the true scope of the whole environmental issue and is therefore given the last word in the play.

Not only is she the only character who actually evolves during the course of the negotiations, but it is also she who, at the end of the play, callously informs us of Don's death from lung cancer, most likely caused by his careless unwillingness to stop smoking – another symptom, one might surmise, of his indifference to the warnings of science about the effects of not only global but also self-inflicted air pollution. When the character of Don Pearlman patronises the audience at the beginning by using derogatory terms for a certain type of theatregoer, calling them "you theatre, artsy liberal types who pay your bills in empathy" – making fun of the hypocrisy of all upper-middle class alibis – it is precisely Shirley, the model, conscienceless, frivolous *bourgeoise*, who rounds off the irony of the play in her final monologue, not only by once again making an implicit connection between the UN building, the theatre and the world, but also comparing herself to the female lion, which, as the audience learns, lives twice as long as the male:

> I wonder what that female lion does for half her life?
>
> *Beat.*
>
> *She turns to the audience.*
>
> Why am I listening to someone I don't know, talking about someone I don't like?
>
> The world is full of people we don't know, and people we don't like. I look around at the world today, and I'm terrified. We're all drifting further and further apart, speaking completely different languages, and the interpreters have well and truly left the building.

2 I refer here to a blog by the couple Stephen and Ellie writing under the heading of Berkeley Square Barbarian, and published at https://www.berkeleysquarebarbarian.com/2025/03/12/kyoto-the-play-review/, accessed 5 Jan. 2026.

Meanwhile, the cherry blossom in Kyoto falls earlier each and every year.

But you know... Even though America didn't ratify the protocol, Raul had organised it in such a way that it would come into force with or without them. Most countries met their targets. Many even exceeded them. It was a small step towards –

She looks up.

The cherry blossom is falling.

Blackout.

The End. (Murphy and Robertson 132)

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Povzetek

V prispevku se osredotočam na dramo *Kyoto* Joeja Murphyja in Joeja Robertsona. Premierno je bila uprizorjena leta 2024 v gledališču Swan Theatre, in sicer v sodelovanju produkcijske hiše Good Chance in Kraljeve Shakespearove družbe, leta 2025 pa se je preselila v londonski West End. Za razliko od večine predhodnih okoljsko angažiranih del sodobne britanske dramatike, v katerih je tematika podnebnih sprememb prikazana s perspektive »od spodaj navzgor«, je *Kyoto* dramatizacija desetletnega pogajalskega procesa o t. i. Kjotskem protokolu iz leta 1997, ki je potekal na najvišji ravni globalnega odločanja: na konferencah Združenih narodov o podnebnih spremembah.

Čeprav bi Murphyjevo in Robertsonovo razkrivanje navzkrižnih interesov globalnih akterjev v okoljski politiki lahko pripisali nedavnemu korenitemu »obratu« v britanski politični drami, ki »poudarja argumentacijo in razmislek namesto hitrih ukrepov« (Redling), je bila *Kyoto* v kritikah takoj razglašena za pravi »triler«. Cilj članka je proučiti njene »strategije reprezentacije« – zlasti odnos do jezika – in razpravljati o povezavah med dramo, razpravo in javnim mnenjem, ki se vzpostavljajo v njej. Te povezave so namreč značilne za večno dramaturško matriko, ki se je v *Kyotu* utelesila kot primer skrajno mračnega humorja, pod taktirko »posvetovalne ekologije« – edine obljube za rešitev planeta in hkrati tudi ključne ovire na tej poti.

Ključne besede: *Kyoto*, okoljske drame, posvetovalna dramaturgija

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Posvetovalna ekologija v drami *Kyoto*

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Pričujoči znanstveni članek[1] proučuje stičišče okolja in uprizoritvenih umetnosti, in sicer z analizo drame *Kyoto* (2024) mladih britanskih dramatikov Joeja Murphyja in Joeja Robertsona. Prvič jo je uprizorila Kraljeva Shakespearova družba v gledališču Swan Theatre v kraju Stratford-upon-Avon; leta 2025 se je predstava preselila v gledališče @sohoplace v londonskem West Endu, sledila pa je ameriška premiera v Mitzi Newhouse Theatre, gledališki hiši Lincoln Centra. Gre za dramatizacijo desetletja kompleksnih političnih pogajanj, ki so leta 1997 dosegla mejnik s Kjotskim protokolom – mednarodnim sporazumom, ki je sad številnih podnebnih konferenc Združenih narodov. Avtorica članka trdi, da njeni izbiri *Kyota* kot osrednjega predmeta analize ni botrovala gola prepoznavnost dela v angleško govorečem gledališkem svetu, temveč predvsem njegov edinstveni dramaturški odgovor na neznanski izziv, ki jih globalne okoljske krize predstavljajo za gledališki medij, zlasti za sodobno akademsko razpravo o mejah in namenih ekodramaturgije. Članek ugotavlja, da *Kyoto* s poetičnega in strukturnega vidika ne predstavlja motnje tradicionalnih gledaliških konvencij in ne spodkopava konvencionalnih registrov dramske predstave; nasprotno, umešča se v lahko dostopen in tradicionalen gledališki repertoar. Čeprav posreduje na tone zgodovinskih podatkov, političnega žargona in znanstvenih podrobnosti, je drama pri tem uspešna; uporabi namreč filmski tempo dinamičnega političnega trilerja, zgodba pa je polna nepričakovanih preobratov. Treba je tudi poudariti, da veliko večino sodobnih britanskih podnebnih dram zaznamuje mračna perspektiva »od spodaj navzgor«, osredotočena na katastrofalno ceno, ki jo bo zaradi kolapsa okolja plačalo človeštvo – npr. z lakoto, poplavami, neurji in državljanskimi vojnami; *Kyoto* pa prinaša popolno subverzijo tega distopičnega trenda.

Osrednja teza članka izhaja iz treh polemičnih trditev, ki služijo raziskavi tesnih povezav med dramsko formo, zgodovinsko vsebino in njunim stičiščem, ki je etično visoko tvegano; vse to *Kyoto* umešča v okvir sodobne postdramske gledališke prakse in aktivističnega uprizarjanja. Prva trditev je, da je *Kyoto* sicer komercialen projekt, namenjen predvsem gledalcem iz srednjega razreda, in ne radikalen, avantgarden ekodramaturški eksperiment; vseeno pa omogoča neprecenljivo študijo primera,

1 Pričujoče delo je nastalo v okviru institucionalnega raziskovalnega projekta Literary Knowledge na Filozofski fakulteti v Zagrebu, ki ga financira Evropska unija – NextGenerationEU. Izražena stališča in mnenja so izključno stališča in mnenja avtorja oziroma avtorjev in ne odražajo nujno stališč Evropske unije. Evropska unija zanje ne more biti odgovorna.

v katerem se odraža nov »posvetovalni obrat« v sodobni dramatiki. Članek trdi, da se *Kyoto* močno razlikuje od velike večine okoljskih gledaliških del, saj človeštva ne uprizarja kot skupka pasivnih, ohromljenih žrtev, ki jih paralizira nedoumljiva sublimnost podnebnih sprememb. Podobno kot *World Climate Conference* (2014), potopitvena produkcija kolektiva Rimini Protokoll, ter *COP – Make it Work!* (2015) Bruna Latoura in Philippa Quesneja, *Kyoto* proučuje aktivno človeško delovanje in globalno upravljanje v obliki posvetovalnih praks na visoki ravni. Navedeni postdramski predhodnici občinstvo poskušata neposredno vključiti v živo simulacijo sodobnega vrhovnega zasedanja o podnebnih spremembah, *Kyoto* pa ubere drugo pot; gre za zgodovinsko dokumentarno gledališko delo s scenarijem, kar ohranja tradicionalni dramski okvir in občinstvu omogoči, da se distancira od neposrednega igranja vlog in posveti globoki intelektualni refleksiji. Drama je v temelju aristotelska, saj v njej nastopajo igralci in uprizarjajo različne like, ki sprejemajo daljnosežne odločitve, se mučijo z etičnimi dilemami in nosijo izrecno breme politične krivde.

Z osredotočenjem na interakcijo likov nastaja fascinantna študija »človeške ekologije« in družbenih ekosistemov, članek pa jo primerja s togimi, didaktičnimi omejitvami potopitvenega postdramskega gledališča. V produkcijah, kot je simulacija vrhovnega zasedanja, ki jo je ustvaril Rimini Protokoll, so bili gledalci pogosto le pasivni, tihi opazovalci, izpostavljeni dolgim in togim strokovnim predavanjem, zelo malo časa pa je ostalo za resnična trenja oziroma politične konfrontacije. *Kyoto* pa s pridom izkorišča prav slednje. Članek to dramsko napetost povezuje s sodobnimi političnimi teorijami »posvetovalne ekologije«, ki javne razprave obravnavajo kot izredno fluidne, dinamične in nepredvidljive mreže človeške soodvisnosti. Z uprizoritvijo teh visoko tveganih pogajanj v tradicionalni gledališki arhitekturi *Kyoto* pokaže, kako ključno vlogo imajo demokratični postopki pri reševanju ekoloških kriz. Klasično metaforo »svetovnega odra« spremeni v dobesedno realnost in sporoča, da je preživetje našega okolja neločljivo povezano z odprto, demokratično razpravo in gledališko reprezentacijo.

Druga glavna trditev članka se osredotoča na način, kako *Kyoto* izpostavi izrazito človeške, psihološke in čustvene elemente političnega prepričevanja, ki so v eksperimentalnem, s pravili omejenem zborovalnem uprizarjanju (angl. *assembly performance* – op. prev.) pogosto zatrti. Namesto da bi igralce ali gledalce obravnaval kot prazne družbenopolitične maske, ki zastopajo svoje države, *Kyoto* uporabi profesionalne igralce za izjemno kompleksne, čustveno nabite upodobitve resničnih zgodovinskih osebnosti. S tem poudari, da pri političnem posvetovanju nikoli ne gre le za objektivne podatke ali vnaprej določene globalne vloge, temveč za temeljno nestabilen, performativen dogodek, katerega izid je odvisen od posameznikovega značaja in človeške nepredvidljivosti. Tretja ključna trditev članka pa zadeva globok demokratični paradoks, ki se razkrije v drami. Sodobni filozofi, kot sta Jacques

Rancière in Jacques Derrida, zagovarjajo odprt, neprekinjen politični »disenz«, ki služi nenehnemu izzivanju institucionalnih meja; *Kyoto* pa pokaže, da eksistenčne grožnje, npr. podnebne spremembe, ne morejo čakati na idealizirano demokracijo prihodnosti, temveč zahtevajo zavezujoč globalni konsenz. Skozi tradicionalno dramsko strukturo konflikta in soočenja se razkrije temačna resnica: lobisti industrije fosilnih goriv zlahka izkoriščajo odprta, postopkovna pravila demokratične razprave in manipulirajo z njimi, da bi se sprejemanje podnebnih sporazumov vleklo v nedogled, posli v skladu z uničujočimi korporacijskimi interesi pa bi se nemoteno nadaljevali.

Ta strukturna napetost se poraja iz linearne kronološke pripovedi, ki zajema desetletje od konca Reaganove administracije do podpisa sporazuma leta 1997, tok zgodovine pa prekinja briljantna plast brechtovske dramske ironije. Pripovedovalec v drami je pokojni ameriški odvetnik Don Pearlman, nekdanji Reaganov svetovalec za energetiko in neusmiljen operativec v službi vplivnega konzorcija naftnih družb, znanega kot Sedem sester. Pearlman, ki z metafizične perspektive govori v naši zaskočeni sedanjosti, ki jo imenuje »doba nestrinjanja«, deluje kot ciničen, pokroviteljski vodnik skozi zgodovino vrhovnih zasedanj o podnebnih spremembah. Prosto prehaja med zakulisjem korporacijskih zarot in odprtimi razpravami v OZN, kjer si agresivno prizadeva, da bi iz sporazuma črtali zavezujoče cilje in časovnice. Ta dvojna ironična distanca občinstvo prisili, da uživa v napetem političnem trilerju in se hkrati jasno zaveda Pearlmanovega uničujočega dolgoročnega obstruiranja. Izkaže se, da je glavno bojišče v drami jezik, saj služi kot orodje za komunikacijo, manipulacijo in pravno zavezovanje: v nasprotju s sodobnimi ekokritičnimi trendi, kjer je manj poudarka na človeškem jeziku v korist materialistične filozofije, *Kyoto* pokaže, da je globalno ekološko preživetje povsem odvisno od srdite, izčrpavajoče semantične vojne za besedišče, stavčne strukture in ločila. Članek obravnava tudi zasebno, domačo sfero drame, kjer se pojavi Donova žena, Shirley Pearlman, edini lik, ki doživi resnično intelektualno in etično preobrazbo, saj se sčasoma zave resničnega, strahotnega obsega ekološke krize. Zato ji avtorja drame podelita avtoriteto za zaključni nagovor. Shirley je tista, ki ob koncu drame gledalcem brez olepševanja pove, da je Don umrl zaradi pljučnega raka, ki si ga je nakopal s kadilsko trmo. Članek zaključuje, da je ta družinska tragedija briljantna mikrometafora za Pearlmanovo javno kariero. V usodni, samopovzročeni bolezni se polno odraža njegovo cinično ignoriranje znanstvenih opozoril nasploh in pokaže, kako ga je trmasto zanikanje onesnaženosti lastnega telesa na koncu stalo življenje, zaradi njegovih političnih mahinacij pa v smrtni nevarnosti ostaja tudi naš planet.

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Povzetek

Članek obravnava vlogo nečloveških akterjev v slovenski dramatiki 20. in 21. stoletja ter raziskuje, kako se njihova funkcija spreminja od simbolnih figur do samostojnih nosilcev dramskega dogajanja. Avtor izhaja iz sodobnega »obrata k nečloveškemu«, ki v humanistiki preusmerja pozornost z izključno človeškega sveta na živali, naravne procese in materialne entitete. S primerjalno analizo treh dram – *Otroka reke* Daneta Zajca, *Driada* Gregorja Strniše in *Jagnje* Neže Lučke Peterlin – pokaže razvoj odnosa med človekom in naravo na odru. Pri Zajcu sta Dan in Reka alegoriji izgubljene prvobitne enosti in smisla v svetu, zaznamovanem z nihilizmom. Pri Strniši Driada ne deluje več kot ideal, temveč kot katalizator, ki razkriva konflikt med materialističnim svetom in presežno razsežnostjo domišljije. Najmlajša drama, *Jagnje*, pa presega antropocentrično perspektivo: živali in naravni procesi niso več simboli človeških stanj, temveč enakovredni akterji, katerih obstoj ni podrejen človeku. Članek pokaže, da slovenska drama postopno prehaja od narave kot metafore k naravi kot samostojni realnosti, s čimer odpira nove možnosti gledališke reprezentacije in ekološkega mišljenja.

Ključne besede: nečloveški akterji, slovenska dramatika, Dane Zajc, Gregor Strniša, Neža Lučka Peterlin, ekokritika

Gašper Troha je doktoriral na Oddelku za primerjalno književnost in literarno teorijo Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani. Ukvarja se s sociologijo literature, zlasti sodobne svetovne in slovenske dramatike in gledališča. Je raziskovalec na Akademiji za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo Univerze v Ljubljani ter direktor Slovenskega gledališkega inštituta. Objavljal je v številnih domačih in mednarodnih znanstvenih revijah. Skupaj z Vaneso Matajc in Gregorjem Pompetom je soavtor knjige *History and Its Literary Genres* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). Je tudi urednik in avtor knjig *Literarni modernizem v »svinčenih« letih* (Študentska založba, 2008) ter *Lojze Kovačič: življenje in delo* (Študentska založba, 2009). Leta 2015 je izdal monografijo *Ujetniki svobode* (Aristej) o razvoju slovenske dramatike in gledališča v socializmu, leta 2024 pa *Slovenska dramatika in tuji vplivi po letu 2000* (Beletrina).

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Nečloveški akterji v slovenski drami

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Uvod

Gledališka uprizoritev temelji na soprisotnosti akterjev in gledalcev, torej na živem medčloveškem stiku (prim. Fischer-Lichte).[1] Vendar pa človek v tem svetu ni sam, ampak je obkrožen z naravo, živalmi, stroji itd. Kljub temu se zdi, da so slednji večinoma le ozadje, na katerem se odigrajo zgodbe s človeškimi protagonisti. Gledališče raziskuje njihove motivacije, konflikte, družbene razmere ipd.

V 21. stoletju je v humanistiki in družbenih vedah prišlo do t. i. obrata k nečloveškemu (*nonhuman turn*), ki ima svoje korenine v misli s konca 20. stoletja, obenem pa je reakcija na podnebne spremembe in družbene procese, ki jih povzročajo. Gre za različne teoretske in filozofske pristope, ki prestavljajo svoj fokus raziskovanja s človeka na nečloveško. Slednje so lahko živali, telesa, organski in geofizikalni sistemi, materialnost ali tehnologije (prim. Grusin vii–xxix). Pri tem pa ne gre le za to, da prej spregledani deli našega sveta dobijo svoje mesto v teoriji, pač pa tudi za obrat k »nečloveškemu v vsakem od nas« (Grusin xx). Skratka, obrat k nečloveškemu je obrat pozornosti, ki prepoznava doslej spregledane dele sveta in človeškega stanja.

Seveda pa prikazovanje narave in nečloveških akterjev na odru ni novost 21. stoletja. Poznamo ga že od stare Grčije, npr. od Aristofanovih *Ptičev*, a se vloga nečloveških akterjev skozi zgodovino bržkone spreminja. Postavljajo se nam torej naslednja vprašanja:

Kako je mogoče na odru prikazati nečloveške akterje, ki bi delovali in ne bi imeli človeških lastnosti, ne bi torej postali nekakšne podobe ljudi in medčloveških odnosov? Kako se vloga teh nečloveških akterjev spreminja v slovenski dramatiki 20. in 21. stoletja? Kaj so vzroki za te spremembe?

Ta vprašanja bomo skušali osvetliti s primerjalno analizo treh slovenskih dram – *Otroka reke* Daneta Zajca, *Driada* Gregorja Strniše in *Jagnje* Neže Lučke Peterlin. Prvi

1 Raziskava za to razpravo je nastala v okviru programa Gledališke in medumetnostne raziskave (št. P6–0376), ki ga financira Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARIS) iz državnega proračuna.

dve sta dramski klasiki iz šestdesetih in sedemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja, zadnja je igra mlade dramatese, ki je leta 2025 dobila nagrado za mladega dramatika na 55. Tednu slovenske drame.

Kako literatura misli nečloveške akterje?

Nečloveške dramske osebe so v dramatiki prisotne že od njenih začetkov. Omenili smo že živali npr. v Aristofanovih *Ptičih*, ob njih pa se pojavljajo tudi številni bogovi, ki prevzemajo človeške podobe, se pojavijo v svoji božji podobi kot t. i. deus ex machina ipd. Za nas je pomembnejše mesto teh dramskih oseb v 20. in 21. stoletju, saj v tem obdobju pride do sprememb v dojemanju narave oz. nečloveških akterjev, kar danes imenujemo obrat k nečloveškemu.

Med dramskimi žanri se za našo raziskavo zdi posebej primerna poetična drama, ki pogosto prikazuje ali le evocira nečloveške dramske osebe. Zgodovina literature in teorija drame običajno te osebe razumeta kot alegorije ali simbole. Na ta način, s t. i. dialogom druge stopnje, poetična drama vzpostavlja presegajoči svet (prim. npr. Troha »Problemi«, Toporišič »Prešitje«, Kralj »Maeterlinckov«). Zato raziskovalci nečloveške dramske osebe razlagajo kot odraz notranjega dogajanja drugih dramskih oseb ali celo avtorja. V tem smislu je zanimiva teza Denisa Poniža, ki vidi bistvo poetične drame v združevanju temeljnih principov lirike in dramatike ter zagovarja oznako lirska drama, ki jo povzema po Petru Szondiju. Tako mu je poetična drama tista, ki spaja zunanji konflikt med dramskimi osebami s prikazovanjem notranjega življenja in psihičnih stanj, kar je značilno za lirsko izpovedovanje. Kot to formulira Poniž: »V lirski drami kot bralec/gledalec ves čas prestopam med dvema ravninama, zavest prehaja med dvema izpovednima načinoma, lirska drama svojemu bralcu/gledalcu omogoča, da aktivira svojo zasebnost ali pa se prepusti toku skupinskega zaznavanja in oblikovanja odnosa do tega, kar pripoveduje pesnik-dramatik« (328).

Če hočemo spremeniti naš pogled in dati nečloveškim akterjem pomembnejše mesto, moramo najprej razmisliti o našem zornem kotu, o samem pristopu do našega predmeta. Kot piše Richard Grusin o obratu k nečloveškemu: »Obrat k nečloveškemu ni le ukvarjanje z nečloveškim, ampak predvideva, da opustimo tradicionalno delovanje ljudi, da se umaknemo nečloveškemu – živemu in manj živemu –, da si lahko izbori svoje mesto« (xxi). To bi pomenilo, da moramo nečloveške dramske osebe jemati resno in premisliti odnose med njimi in ostalimi dramskimi osebami. Kako so zasnovani? Kakšne posledice ima to za razumevanje in delovanje dramskih tekstov v celoti? Zdi se, da bomo ravno tu našli največje spremembe.

Seveda se je s temi vprašanji literarna zgodovina že ukvarjala. Tako Mateja Pezdirc Bartol bere morje in ladjo v slovenskih dramah kot simbol človekovega notranjega

dogajanja in vprašanj odgovornosti (prim. Bartol). Podobno Igor Žunkovič analizira oblikovanje dramskega prostora in časa v Strniševi *Driadi*. Žunkovič detektira dvojno resničnost predstavljenega sveta. Na eni strani je pesniška resničnost, na drugi malomeščanska štacunarska miselnost, njun konflikt pa gradi izrazito etično razsežnost te poetične drame. Kot lucidno ugotavlja Žunkovič: »Driada se ne pusti ujeti in s svojimi fantastičnimi sposobnostmi tistim, ki ji prisluhnejo, odstre resničnejši pogled na svet, v katerem je v najmanjši stvari vsebovana celota vesolja in v katerem v tej celoti odseva vsaka najmanjša stvar. Izkaže se, da ni Driada tista, ki prinaša čudeže v človeško življenje, temveč je to človek sam, če se odpre svoji domišljiji« (44).

Že pri Žunkoviču se fokus premakne od nečloveške osebe kot simbola ali alegorije k posredniku, ki omogoča dramskim osebam, predvsem pa bralcu/gledalcu, da ugleda etično razsežnost besedila. Nečloveška dramska oseba pri Strniši deluje, dobi številne človeške lastnosti, a obenem ostaja dvodimenzionalna. Je posrednik med umetniškim svetom, presežnim, in ljudmi, ki jim pomaga uvideti dvojno naravo resničnosti in tako odkriti smisel obstoja, ki presega štacunarsko logiko materialnega dobička.

Drugačen pristop predlaga Brian Massumi v svoji razpravi »The Supernormal Animal«. V njej razmišlja o tem, kako se spreminja raziskovanje po nečloveškem obratu. Če je nekoč veljalo, da živali in ljudi razlikuje sposobnost refleksije in s tem svobodne volje, se zdi, da sodobna spoznanja o vedenju živali dokazujejo, da instinkt ni povsem refleksen. Izhajajoč iz raziskave Nika Tinbergna o srebrnih galebih in njihovih vzorcih hranjenja, Massumi (prim. 2–7) ugotavlja, da živali in ljudje delimo željo po preseganju običajnega. »Kar je značilnost supernormalnosti, je sila, ki vleče naprej v kvalitativnem smislu. Supernormalnost je sila, ki vleče stran od konformizma v deformacijo, preseganje norme brez skupne mere. Supernormalnost tako ni sila impulza ali prisile, ampak čustvene motivacije« (9). To pomeni, da je tako v ljudeh kot pri živalih prisotna notranja želja po preseganju vsakdanjega, trenutnih razmer. Kar imenujemo nagon pri živalih, je tako bliže naši intuiciji. Še več, ta razvoj vključuje refleksijo in kreativno iskanje novih rešitev. V tem smislu »žival ni nagonska, ampak je njen razvoj nagonski« (11). Kreativnost, ki jo živali in ljudje izkazujemo v našem razvoju, nas vodi v polje estetike, kjer naše odločitve niso v prvi vrsti določene z uporabnostjo, ampak s samim užitkom iskanja novih rešitev, pogledov itd.

Evolucija je tako povezava dveh tendenc. Na eni strani kreativno preseganje običajnega, na drugi normalizacija, če novost služi svojemu namenu. Ti tendenci se nenehno izmenjujeta in dopolnjujeta, predvsem pa sta značilni tako za ljudi kot za živali. Zato Massumi predlaga drugačen pristop k raziskovanju. Pri tem zavestno odstranimo mejo med človekom in naravo. S tem damo prostor dejstvom, ki so bila do sedaj spregledana, predvsem pa začnemo dojemati kreativno postajanje kot skupni temelj vseh živih bitij. Še več, s tem se začnemo zavedati, da prav dejanje spoznanja

generira našo realnost. Da torej način našega spoznavanja oz. mišljenja o stvareh določa, kakšne so te stvari v našem svetu in dojemanju (prim. Massumi 13, 14).

Zanimiv primer aplikacije tovrstnega raziskovanja na literaturo je poglavje Huberta Zapfa v knjigi *Live Handbook Environmental Humanities*. V njem predstavi kulturno ekologijo kot teorijo, ki presega mejo med naravo in kulturo ter raziskuje, kako se sistemi znanja, umetnosti in družbe povezujejo z naravnimi ekosistemi. Izvira iz antropoloških raziskav Juliana Stewarda in Gregoryja Batesona, ki združujeta jezik, ritual, umetnost in naravne procese v enotno ekološko misel. Literarne in umetniške prakse imajo v tem okviru poseben status, saj delujejo kot kulturni ekosistemi, ki preizprašujejo uveljavljene družbene strukture in odpirajo prostor za ustvarjalno preobrazbo (Zapf 2–3).

Zapf kulturno ekologijo povezuje tudi z literarno antropologijo Wolfganga Iserja. Iser je literaturi pripisal vlogo, da ljudem pomaga sprejeti civilizacijske procese, obenem pa preizkuša neuresničene možnosti skozi vzpostavljanje fiktivnih svetov (prim. Iser). Zapf to idejo razširi, saj ne izhaja le iz procesov v posameznikovi zavesti, ampak Iserjeve ideje aplicira na odnose med kulturo in naravo. Literatura tako razkriva »slepe pege kulturne evolucije« ter obenem simbolno vrača glas marginaliziranim in izključenim (Zapf 3–4).

Zapf ponazori svojo metodo z devetimi vidiki kulturne ekologije ob romanu Amitava Gosha *Lačna plima* (*The Hungry Tide*, 2004).

1. **Ekokulturna spoznanja.** Literatura ustvarja lastno obliko znanja, ki povezuje znanstveno in izkustveno, osebno in družbeno. V *Lačni plimi* se prepletajo politika, lokalna mitologija in varovanje narave, kar odpira prostor za transdisciplinarno razumevanje (Zapf 3).

2. **Transformativni potencial.** Leposlovje uteleša povezanost in raznolikost, s čimer presega antropocentrizem. »Roman presega prevladujoče antropocentrično dojemanje sveta z ekološko ozaveščenim, holističnim dojemanjem medsebojne povezanosti človeka in narave« (Zapf 4).

3. **Izpostavljanje marginaliziranih.** Lik ribiča Fokirja predstavlja marginalizirane skupnosti in žrtve nasilne preselitve v Sundarban. Njegova povezanost z ustnim izročilom simbolizira protidiskurz uradni zgodovini in krepi spomin na izbrisane glasove (Zapf 4).

4. **Raziskovanje ekotonov.** Mejne cone – kot so mangrove, plimne ravnice in legende o Bon Bibi – postanejo metafore za fluidno sožitje človeka in živali (Zapf 4–5).

5. **Uporaba več perspektiv.** Ghosh uporablja več pripovednih glasov in oblik (roman, dnevnik, pesem), kar odraža kompleksnost prikazanega sveta in obravnavanih problemov (Zapf 5).

6. **Medvrstna empatija.** Skozi odnose med liki, rečnimi delfini in tigri, ki jih tematizira in prevprašuje, roman ustvarja prostor za »čustveno povezovanje in soobstoj bioloških vrst« (Zapf 5).

7. **Etika drugosti.** Razmerje med Fokirjem in znanstvenico Piyo temelji na prevajanju in delni nerazumljivosti, kar izpostavlja meje empatije in nujnost spoštovanja drugačnosti – človeške in nečloveške (Zapf 5–6).

8. **Eko-večpomenskost.** Roman ne ponuja enostavnih rešitev, temveč odpre prostor za kompleksna razmerja med varovanjem narave in socialno pravičnostjo, kjer so zahteve ljudi in tigrov ali delfinov enako legitimne, a obenem nasprotne (Zapf 6).

9. **Trajnostnost / medgeneracijska povezanost.** Literatura omogoča transgeneracijsko prenašanje spominov in ustvarja prostor za nove interpretacije. V *Lačni plimi* je medgeneracijska povezanost predstavljena preko posledic, ki jih imajo dejanja in odločitve preteklih generacij na življenja literarnih oseb. Obenem je Fokirjev upor predstavljen kot možnost in grožnja za soobstoj človeka in narave v Sundarbanu (Zapf 6).

Seveda se ta načela ne izražajo v vseh literarnih delih v enaki meri, morda se katera sploh ne pojavijo, predstavljajo pa po njegovem mnenju potencial, ki ga ima literatura v polju ekokulture. Za nas se zdi posebej pomembno spoznanje, da je literatura kot medij primerna za realizacijo novega pogleda na odnose med človeškim in nečloveškim. Da je torej lahko pomembno sredstvo ekokritike in ekokulture, kar bomo skušali pokazati ob izbranih dramah v nadaljevanju. Ob tem bomo razmislili o posameznih Zapfovih načelih, ki dobro analizirajo različne možnosti, preko katerih se ta kritika oz. ekokultura lahko uveljavi.

Dane Zajc: *Otroka reke*

Otroka reke je ena od treh osrednjih slovenskih poetičnih dram, ki so se razmahnile v šestdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja – prva je *Antigona* Dominika Smoleta (1960), tretja pa *Samorog* (1964) Gregorja Strniše (prim. Troha). Zajc je dramo začel pisati spomladi 1960, takoj po premieri *Antigone*, in jo dokončal leto dni kasneje. Uprizorjena je bila 22. 1. 1962 na Odru 57 v režiji Tarasa Kermaunerja. Kot zapiše Taras Kermauner, je bila podoba skrajnega nihilizma (prim. tudi Toporišič »Prešitje« in Poniž). »Kot sem forsiral Božičev načrtni absurdizem, črno grotesko – glej dramo *Vojaka Jošta ni*, na Odru 57 je sledila *Otrokoma reke* – sem želel čim močnejšo uveljavitev Zajčevega sveta. Vedel sem, da smo kot grupa tako močni, da bomo prenesli tudi nihilizem« (Kermauner 105).

Pesnik in ženska pripovedujeta zgodbo o Danu (Danetu ali Dnevu?) in Reki. Protagonista sta nečloveški osebi, naravna pojava, ki sta se rodila iz enosti reke. Ta

distanca nas takoj napoti na alegorično oz. simbolno tolmačenje glavnih dveh oseb, ki sta v interpretacijah razumljeni kot ontološka principa in prikaz eksistencialnega položaja človeka. Njun temeljni konflikt je ločenost, ki pa je ne moreta preseči oz. jo lahko presežeta le tako, da umreta, da se torej spremenita v nič. Njuno iskanje je večna pot k izhodiščni povezanosti, ki pa ni uresničljiva.

Dan in Reka se rodita, ko Dan vrže svoje oči na dno reke. Na začetku sta združena v svetlobi sonca, nato pa gresta med ljudi in vsak na svojo stran neba. Dan išče ptico, ki jo mora zapreti v kletko svojih prsi, Reka ga čaka. Kasneje Reko zvabi Tujec v deželo ur, kjer ona trpi. Dan jo reši in skupaj iščeta svojo povezanost, ki pa je ne moreta najti. V deželi smrti lahko najdeta svojo prostost le tako, da izgubita vse, tudi ljubezen. Ker tega ne zmoreta, se posušita in se spremenita v togi sohi, ki ju odneseta stražarja kamnite ptice kot že toliko drugih pred njima (prim. Zajc).

Ta nihilistična in distopična podoba sveta postavlja nečloveške akterje v samo središče. To so v začetku Dan, Reka in reka, iz katere izhajata. Na drugi strani sta Pesnik in Ženska, ki pripovedujeta zgodbo in se do nje opredeljujeta. Nečloveške osebe so nekakšna idealiteta, podoba prvobitne povezanosti, celote, ki se razbije v trenutku, ko gresta Dan in Reka med ljudi. Tako prestopita v svet ljudi in kreneta na svojo pot iskanja nekdanje enosti, sreče. Slednje ne moreta doseči, kar interpreti razlagajo kot podobo sodobne eksistence oz. občutka nesmisla, kot sta ga v svoji filozofiji opisala Jean-Paul Sartre in Albert Camus.

Poskusimo sedaj brati *Otroka reke* skozi optiko načel ekokulture, ki jih detektira Hubert Zapf. Kot zaključuje Zapf: »Seveda se vse te točke ne uresničujejo v enaki meri v vsakem literarnem delu. Kljub temu pa opisujejo potencial literarnih besedil, ki ga je mogoče opaziti v številnih ključnih literarnih delih različnih kultur. Kažejo na različne načine, na katere sta lahko literatura in umetnost relevantna za okoljsko humanistiko« (6).

Zajčeva drama prinaša **ekokulturna spoznanja**, saj ubeseduje avtorjevo osebno izkušnjo, ki se transformira v občo izkušnjo njegove generacije in generacij za njim. Gre za občutek nihilizma, ki je bil skrajen, a obenem »dokaz, da se nismo zvedli na eno samo linijo; da je naš model v temelju drugačen od partijskega; da zares dopuščamo svobodo« (Kermauner 105). Poleg tega drama kaže **transformativni potencial** s svojo temo prvobitne povezanosti in sreče, ki ostaja nedosegljivi končni cilj. Že Kermauner poudarja, da je šlo pri Zajcu za **marginalno pozicijo**, ki pa jo je Oder 57 podpiral. Še več, na margini je bila tudi sama skupina ustvarjalcev okrog revije *Perspektive* in Odra 57, saj je šlo za majhno eksperimentalno gledališče v šestdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. Res pa je, da so prav njihove osrednje drame spremenile tudi institucionalno gledališče v tem desetletju (prim. Bibič). Ob *Otrocih reke* je posebej izpostavljena **etika drugosti**, saj njena struktura, ki združuje liriko in dramatiko,

omogoča vživljanje v čutenje dramskih oseb in bržkone tudi avtorja samega. Ne nazadnje sta v samo literarno vrsto vgrajeni dialoškost in večpomenskost, saj je drama vedno prikaz različnih glasov, ki šele na ravni celote tvorijo celoto in lahko vzpostavljajo enotno sporočilo. Pri Zajcu so to glasovi posameznih dramskih oseb, ki govorijo vsaka s svoje pozicije iskanja smisla in doživljanja sveta. Celoto združuje občutek izgube smisla, enosti, ki ga ni mogoče obnoviti. Lahko ga le sprejmemo in vztrajamo na poti iskanja do lastne smrti.

Otroka reke torej zaznamujejo nečloveški akterji, ki predstavljajo idealiteto, podobo prvobitne povezanosti, smisla, sreče. So podoba, h kateri ostale osebe stremijo, a v nemožnosti realizacije propadejo, saj sodobni svet zaznamujeta nihilizem in absurd.

Gregor Strniša: *Driada*

Driado je Strniša napisal kot triptih radijskih iger v letih 1975 in 1976. Leta 1976 je bila krstno uprizorjena tudi v SNG Drama Ljubljana (premiera 15. 10. 1975, režija Mile Korun) in je izšla v knjižni obliki pri Mladinski knjigi.

Strniša je igro žanrsko opredelil kot transcendentno burko v treh slikah. V njej se izriše konflikt med Driado in meščansko družino Pimpekov. Ti povezujejo vse tri slike, ki se zgodijo poleti leta 1930, jeseni 1959 in spomladi 1976. Tako avtor pripelje dogajanje in njegove ponavljajoče se vzorce v tedanjo sodobnost. Strniša na samem začetku opredeli osnovno shemo dramskega dejanja:

> Na vseh treh slikah, komaj vinjetah na rob predvčerajšnji, včerajšnji in današnji Ljubljani, stoji v ospredju in tako povezuje te različne čase burke, z njihovimi zmeraj novimi ljudmi vred, ves čas enako mlada in obenem prastara naslovna oseba DRIADA – bolj v ozadju, kot je v skladu s temeljno rodovno potezo, pa ugledna meščanska rodbina PIMPEK, veliko starejša od ljubljanskega mesta, ki ga bo tudi preživela, večna v mejah in merah sveta. (5)

Driada kot nečloveška dramska oseba tu ni ideal, h kateremu stremijo ostale osebe, pač pa je katalizator, Lado Kralj bi to označil kot nosilca intuicije (prim. Kralj in Troha), ki razcepi svet na dvoje. Na svet materialnosti, ugodja, koristi in moči ter na transcendentni svet umetnosti, kozmičnega zavedanja ipd. Povsem jasno je, da je Strniša na strani tega transcendentnega sveta, v katerem vidi smisel posameznikove eksistence, obenem pa je res, da te dramske osebe praviloma propadejo – Obešenjak dela samomor v Zajčkih, Pijanec skupaj z Driado pristane v norišnici v Kozarcih, Starček v Velikanu pa kramlja z Astronomom in se ne spomni več, da bi kdaj kaj narisal. Skratka, družba uničuje ljudi, ki slutijo presežnost, ki vidijo življenje onkraj sle po moči in bogastvu, a tu je Driada, da bralcu/gledalcu pokaže razliko in pravo pot.

To dvojnost opažajo tudi drugi raziskovalci. Tomaž Toporišič analizira *Driado* kot primer postdramske pisave oz. drugačne teatralnosti. Njegovo izhodišče je Strniševa izjava iz pogovora v Osrednji knjižnici občine Kranj 9. 12. 1983: »Avtor je poustvarjalec, ki mora znati presneto dobro čakati, prisluškovati in gledati z notranjim vidom, tistemu, kar se že javlja v njem in skozenj, in potem tisto stvar čim bolj pravilno in dosledno zapisati tako, kot sama zahteva« (Snoj 120). Tisto, kar stvar zahteva, pa so pravzaprav samogovori ali večgovori, »ki izrekajo to, česar navadno ne izrekamo« (Toporišič, »Gregor« 356).

Zanimiv je poudarek, ki ga odkriva Igor Žunkovič, ko ugotavlja, da Strniša spaja animistični in astrofizikalni pogled na svet. Tudi Žunkovič detektira nasprotje med Pimpeki in osebami, ki Driado prepoznajo. Slednjim Driada odstre resničnejši pogled na svet, »v katerem je v najmanjši stvari vsebovana celota vesolja in v katerem v tej celoti odseva vsaka najmanjša stvar. Izkaže se, da ni Driada tista, ki prinaša čudeže v človeško življenje, temveč je to človek sam, če se odpre svoji domišljiji« (44). V tem smislu »se stapljata animistični pogled na svet, v katerem je vsaka stvar oživljena, in sodobni, astrofizikalni pogled na svet, v katerem se razmerje med subjektom in objektom poruši tako, da so vse reči definirane le v natančno določenih okoliščinah, točno določenem vidiku opazovanja, zunaj teh določil pa so drugačne ali jih sploh ni« (prav tam).

Strniševa burka je še v večji meri primer ekokulture. Spaja različna **ekokulturna spoznanja**, saj sopostavlja animistični in znanstveni pogled na svet. Poudarja povezanost človeka in narave oz. manko te povezanosti ter s tem udejanja svoj transformativni potencial; izpostavlja **marginalizirane posameznike**, kamor spadajo Obešenjak, Magajna in Astronom, ki razumejo Driado in njeno vlogo. Strniša prikaže dva izrazito nasprotujoča si pogleda na svet (**uporaba več perspektiv**), ki ju pooseblja Pimpeki na eni in Driada na drugi strani. Izrazita je tudi **etika drugosti**, saj gre v celotni drami za prepoznavanje Driade kot drevesne vile in presežnega v našem svetu, s tem pa tudi za prepoznavanje legitimnosti pogleda, ki sega onkraj materialnosti. Ne nazadnje pa Strniša naslavlja tudi **medgeneracijsko povezanost**. Ta je pri njem negativna, saj sledimo rodbini Pimpekov, ki v različnih časovnih obdobjih ostajajo enako neobčutljivi in omejeni v svoji sli po moči in bogastvu. Ker predstavljajo slehernika oz. vsaj meščana, ustvarjajo distopično sliko medgeneracijskih prenosov, ki se vleče v neskončnost, kar poudari tudi avtor v predgovoru, ko zapiše, da je rodbina Pimpek »veliko starejša od ljubljanskega mesta, ki ga bo tudi preživela, večna v mejah in merah sveta« (5).

Nečloveška dramska oseba je pri Strniši Driada, do katere se druge dramske osebe še vedno opredeljujejo, a zdi se, da ne v smislu ideala, kakor pri Zajcu, ampak bolj v smislu prepoznanja in odpiranja domišljije. Če se osebe Driadi odprejo, aktivirajo

svojo domišljijo in začutijo svobodo, ki jim jo prinaša. To spoznanje pa obenem pomeni, da so obsojene na margino in osamljenost. Na drugi strani so Pimpeki, ki ostajajo za Driado gluhi in slepi. Ker so v večini ter imajo moč in denar, je celotna slika v veliki meri distopična, groteskna, obenem pa tudi komična. S tem Strniša realizira svojo družbeno kritiko meščanske samozadostnosti in omejenosti.

Lučka Neža Peterlin: *Jagnje*

Jagnje je drama, ki je bila nagrajena z nagrado za mladega dramatika na 55. Tednu slovenske drame (2025). Žirija je v svoji utemeljitvi izbora zapisala, da »avtorica vzpostavlja svetove, ki se gibljejo na presečišču fizičnega in metafizičnega, časnega in onkraj časnega sveta« (Bozovičar 27). *Jagnje* torej deli vzpostavljanje več realnosti z obema prej analiziranima tekstoma, enako pa sta poudarjena tudi vloga jezika in vzpostavljanje različnih atmosfer. Poleg tega je žirija posebej omenila temo narave in drugačnega pristopa k ekološkim temam. »Kot posebno kvaliteto besedila prepoznavamo njegovo umeščenost v neurbani svet, naravo, okolje, ki nagovarja preko nečloveških živali« (prav tam).

Avtorica, ki predstavlja najmlajšo generacijo slovenskih dramatikov, se torej bržkone navezuje na nekdanjo poetično dramo, a jo tudi že bistveno predrugači. V igri prevladuje vprašanje povezanosti človeka in narave, ekološke teme, ki pa so obdelane na inovativen način. Tekst je sestavljen iz devetih delov, kratkih prizorov, ki prinašajo podobe narave ali pa prevprašujejo odnose med človeškimi in nečloveškimi akterji. Igro odpira podoba podrte cerkve in ovc, ki se skrivajo pred poletno pripeko. Nadaljuje se s paralelnim monologom medvedke in mlade ženske, lovom na srnjaka, spominom na mrtvo ovco, maščevanjem nad naravo zaradi samomora hčere, zimsko impresijo; prizorom, kjer živali prevzamejo primarno vlogo moči na svetu, in napadom stekle volkulje na mlado žensko; konča pa se z epilogom, naslovljenim Jagnje, ki poudarja cikličnost umiranja in ponovnega rojstva ter prepletenost človeka in narave.

Avtorica izpostavlja dve temi. Odnose med človekom in naravo ter sam ustroj sveta. Ob tem celoto zaznamuje distanca avtoričinega pogleda, ki deluje nevtralno in objektivno. Čeprav se osebe/pripovedovalci posameznih prizorov vživljajo v dogajanje, se perspektive nenehno menjajo in se med seboj relativizirajo. Poglejmo paralelni dialog Gozda. Na eni strani medvedka:

> Odprem eno oko in potem še drugo in vidim, kako se žarek počasi in nežno razširja po prostoru. Zdaj je verjetno čas, da premaknem svoje telo.
>
> Ne gre.

Na drugi mlada ženska:

> Zjutraj vstanem in v telesu čutim neznosno težo, zvečer ne morem zaspat po ure in ure in ure, ker mi vsebina želodca mezi gor in se razširja v požiralniku, boli in strah me je in ker ne vem, kaj narest, si dam tri povštre pod glavo, se zavijem v odejo, jo zbašem v pernato kuglo in tiščim k vratu, da me obteži, da me obvaruje, ker očitno me nič drugega ne bo rešilo; ker bi morali rešiti same sebe, a ne, ampak meni to kar ne uspe in telo me vsak dan, vsak dan, vsak dan, vsak dan terorizira. (936–937)

Podoba krivde ob spominu na mrtvo ovco se dopolnjuje s hladnokrvnim ubojem srne in njenih mladičev.

> Zvečer je ta prizor z mano in kdaj je namesto ovčjega telesa moje telo
>
> in namesto ovčje glave moja glava, [...]
>
> Košuta z dvema mladičkoma.
>
> Čisto počasi in nežno začne košuta grizljat lišaje, ki se razraščajo po preprostih lesenih robovih gredic.
>
> Mladička jo pričneta posnemat in nerodno ližeta lišaje.
>
> Bele pike na njunih rjavih kožuhih se mešajo s snežinkami, ki jima mehko padajo na hrbta.
>
> Gledava jih.
>
> Medina gre potiho do vrtne ute in iz nje vzame revolver.
>
> Z eno hitro potezo iztegne roko in trikrat ustreli. Srne popadajo na tla.
>
> Ne uspe mi zadržati hlipanja. Medina me pomilujoče pogleda.
>
> Veš, vsakič ko ustreliš, je, kot bi se srečal z bogom. (947–948)

Avtorica ustvarja podobe, ki odpirajo nove perspektive. Opiše npr. napad stekle volkulje na mlado žensko in izginjanje njenega telesa.

Epilog poudarja cikličnost sveta, narave in človeških življenj, ki jih preplete s podobo jagnjeta, religijske žrtve.

> Vsako nedeljo se svet konča.
>
> Medtem se položi opeka in ogrodje in stene in streha.
>
> Medtem se pogovarjamo in odkrivamo in izumljamo in umiramo in pozabimo in spet odkrijemo nov smisel in ga pozabimo in odkrijemo in izumljamo in umiramo in odkrijemo nov smisel.
>
> [...]
>
> In smo iz prave države in napademo tvojo napačno državo in hočem kraljestvo in hočem združiti svoje kraljestvo s tvojim in imeti eno samo ogromno kraljestvo
>
> in hočem boga in ustvarim boga in ljubim boga in te ubijem v njegovem imenu.

> Potem stojimo okoli kremiranega ali balzamiranega ali mumificiranega trupla. Vržemo ga v luknjo in zakopljemo z zemljo. Izrečemo sožalje.
>
> Potem stojimo okoli živega človeka s torto. V torto zapičimo majhne sveče in jih prižgemo. (956–957)

Kaj prinašajo ti postopki in zakaj jih avtorica uporablja? O tem poroča v svojem članku Dora Trček. Kot osnovno motivacijo navaja izjavo avtorice: »Gledališče je praviloma vedno antropocentrično, zato sem želela napisati nekaj, kar sledi percepciji živali, rastlin ali gliv – ne človeka. Seveda je to paradoks sam po sebi, ker sem to pisala kot človek z lastno kognicijo, toda kljub temu sem hotela vzpostaviti neki več-kot-človeški pogled« (52). Ta pogled pa je obenem tudi kritična oz. politična gesta. Vendar ta političnost ni programska niti ne izhaja iz želje dati glas drugemu, pač pa »želi omogočiti razmere, v katerih se lahko glas sploh zasliši. Tako lahko radikalna nežnost deluje kot oblika upora – ne kot umik, temveč kot razkroj hegemonije« (52).

Nečloveški akterji v drami *Jagnje* nimajo več simbolne vrednosti. Prikazani so v svoji pojavnosti, ki jo avtorica opazuje z veliko mero empatije, a tudi z dobršno mero distance. Prikazuje različna razmerja med človekom in nečloveškimi osebami – večinoma živalmi in podobami narave –, v katerih eni in drugi nenehno menjajo vloge rablja in žrtve ter s tem spodkopavajo naše ustaljeno dojemanje človeške dominacije. Če je Zajc postavil nečloveške akterje kot ideal in Strniša Driado kot katalizator, Peterlin postavlja svoje nečloveške akterje kot nosilce dramskega dejanja ali njegove žrtve. Na ta način gradi svet, v katerem je večno kroženje med rojstvom in smrtjo tista skupna določujoča lastnost, ki nas povezuje in nas bo preživela. Človek ni več pozvan k odgovornemu ravnanju in spremembi odnosa do narave, ampak mu je predstavljeno dejstvo, da svet obstaja z njim ali brez njega, saj deluje po zakonih, ki nas presegajo.

Po letu nastanka bi moralo *Jagnje* biti veliko bliže romanu *Lačna plima* Amitava Ghosha in načelom ekokulture, ki jih je opisal Zapf. *Jagnje* prinaša **ekokulturna spoznanja**, ko meša osebna izkustva z na videz objektivnimi spoznanji; ima **transformativni potencial**, ko presega antropocentrizem z menjavanjem perspektiv; **izpostavlja marginalizirane**, saj vzpostavlja razmere, v katerih lahko uzremo svet živali, žuželk, gliv ...; **raziskuje ekotone**, mejna območja med svetom človeka in narave; **uporablja več perspektiv** in spodbuja **medvrstno empatijo**; preko uvajanja pogleda drugega (živali) gradi **etiko drugosti**; izpostavlja kompleksnost razmerij med človekom in naravo, med empatijo do živali in potrebo po lovu, obvladovanju narave (**eko-večpomenskost**); ne nazadnje pa izpostavlja tudi **medgeneracijsko povezanost** preko poudarjanja cikličnosti. Peterlin torej s svojo dramo naslavlja vse elemente ekokulture. Tako gradi nov pristop k ekološkim temam v slovenski dramatiki in na novo vzpostavlja vlogo nečloveških akterjev.

Sklep

Razmišljanje o vlogi nečloveških akterjev v slovenski dramatiki odpira prostor, v katerem se srečujejo teorija drame, literarna zgodovina, estetika in filozofija. Odgovor na vprašanje, kako je mogoče na odru prikazati naravo, živali ali stroje, ne da bi jih reducirali na človeške like in medčloveške odnose, se skriva v preobrazbi našega pogleda nanje. Tradicionalno so bili nečloveški akterji razumljeni predvsem kot alegorije, simboli ali projekcije notranjih stanj človeških protagonistov. Zato so posebej pogosti v žanru poetične drame, ki se razvije ob koncu 19. stoletja in je pri nas močno prisotna tudi v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. Nečloveški akterji namreč predstavljajo bodisi ideal, tretjo osebo, ki ni prisotna, jo pa druge dramske osebe nenehno evocirajo in se do nje opredeljujejo, bodisi nosilce intuicije, ki vidijo onkraj in vzpostavljajo neempirično realnost.

Z obratom k nečloveškemu, ki ga sodobna humanistika povezuje s podnebnimi spremembami in razvojem novih filozofskih paradigem, se pojavi možnost, da nečloveške akterje na odru prikažemo kot samostojne entitete, ki soustvarjajo svet igre. To pomeni, da niso več zgolj ozadje ali nosilci sporočil za človeka, ampak postanejo enakovredni akterji dramskega dogajanja.

Analiza treh slovenskih dram – Zajčevih *Otrok reke*, Strniševe *Driade* in *Jagnjeta* Neže Lučke Peterlin – jasno pokaže razvoj te perspektive. Pri Zajcu nečloveška lika Dan in Reka utelešata ideal prvobitne povezanosti, ki pa je v sodobnem nihilističnem svetu nedosegljiv. Čeprav sta osrednja akterja, se njuna funkcija razume v alegoričnem smislu: kot podoba izgubljenega smisla in hrepenenja po enosti. Narava tu ni sama sebi namen, temveč služi kot posrednica filozofske izkušnje, ki odseva človekov eksistencialni položaj.

Pri Strniši se nečloveški akter premakne od simbola k vlogi katalizatorja. Driada, drevesna vila, ne uteleša več absolutnega ideala, temveč odpira prostor za razcep med materialnim svetom meščanske družine Pimpekov in transcendentnim svetom domišljije, umetnosti ter kozmičnega doživljanja. Vloga Driade je dvojna: na eni strani ostaja nečloveška figura, ki uteleša animistični pogled na svet, na drugi pa človeškim likom – in z njimi gledalcem – omogoča uvid v presežno razsežnost realnosti. Vendar ostaja njena prisotnost posredna: sama Driada ne uravnava dramskega dejanja, temveč deluje kot katalizator spoznanja. Čeprav gre za odmik od čiste alegorije, narava in njene manifestacije še vedno služijo človeku, ki mora skozi stik z njimi prepoznati lastno omejenost in možnost svobode.

Drugačna je drama *Jagnje* Neže Lučke Peterlin, saj zavestno stopi onkraj antropocentričnega izhodišča in se poskuša približati percepciji živali, rastlin in gliv. Nečloveški akterji tu niso več simboli ali katalizatorji človeškega spoznanja, temveč

dejanski nosilci dogajanja. Ovce, medvedka, volkulja in celo glive se pojavljajo kot samostojne entitete, katerih usoda ni podrejena človeku, temveč se prepleta z njegovim življenjem v cikličnem kroženju rojstva in smrti. V prizorih, kjer se perspektiva nenehno menja – od živalske k človeški in nazaj –, se ruši ustaljena hierarhija med človekom in naravo. To pomeni, da je mogoče na odru prikazati nečloveške akterje tako, da ostanejo to, kar so: živali ali naravni procesi, ki delujejo po lastni volji in niso zvedeni na človeško metaforo. V tej drami narava in živali niso več pasivno ozadje, temveč so aktivni soudeleženci, ki na enaki ravni kot ljudje nosijo breme življenja, smrti in obstoja.

Vzroki za zgoraj opisane spremembe so večplastni. Najprej je treba omeniti obrat k nečloveškemu v humanistiki in družboslovju, ki se je uveljavil kot odziv na ekološko krizo, podnebne spremembe in kritiko antropocentrizma. Dramski avtorji in avtorice narave ne upodabljajo več kot simbol človeških občutij, temveč so začeli iskati načine, kako jo predstaviti v njeni lastni razsežnosti. Ne nazadnje pa so spremembe bržkone povezane tudi z estetsko in politično gesto mlade generacije dramatikov, ki v luči planetarne krize išče nove dramske strategije. Peterlin sledi logiki »več-kot-človeškega pogleda«, ki ni programsko političen, temveč ustvarja pogoje, da se glas narave in živali lahko sliši.

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Abstract

The article examines the role of nonhuman actors in 20th- and 21st-century Slovenian drama. It traces how their function shifts from symbolic figures to autonomous agents within dramatic action. The discussion is framed by the contemporary "nonhuman turn", which shifts scholarly focus away from an exclusively human-centred worldview and towards animals, environments and material processes. Through a comparative reading of three plays – Dane Zajc's *Children of the River*, Gregor Strniša's *The Dryad* and Neža Lučka Peterlin's *The Lamb* – the author demonstrates how theatre gradually redefines the relationship between humans and nature. In Zajc's play, nonhuman figures embody an unattainable ideal of primordial unity, reflecting existential loss and nihilism. In Strniša's drama, the titular tree spirit, the Dryad, functions as a catalyst, revealing the clash between the materialistic world and the transcendent dimension of imagination. Peterlin's contemporary play moves further by dismantling anthropocentrism: animals and natural processes appear as independent agents rather than metaphors for human experience. The article concludes that Slovenian drama evolves from using nature as a symbolic background to recognising nonhuman entities as co-creators of dramatic reality, opening new possibilities for ecological and theatrical thinking.

Keywords: nonhuman actors, Slovenian drama, Dane Zajc, Gregor Strniša, Neža Lučka Peterlin, ecocriticism

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Nonhuman Actors in Slovenian Drama

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The article explores how nonhuman actors function in Slovenian drama and how their roles have evolved from symbolic representations of human concerns to autonomous agents shaping dramatic worlds. Starting from the theoretical framework of the "nonhuman turn", which challenges anthropocentric thinking in contemporary humanities, the author examines how theatre can represent animals, natural forces and environments without reducing them to metaphors for human psychology or social relations.

The study focuses on three plays from different periods, revealing a gradual transformation of dramatic perspective. Dane Zajc's *Children of the River* (1960s) presents nonhuman protagonists, Day and River, as embodiments of a lost primordial unity. Although they stand at the centre of the play, they still function allegorically, reflecting existential despair and the impossibility of restoring meaning in a nihilistic modern world. Nature thus serves primarily as a philosophical mirror of human experience.

Gregor Strniša's *The Dryad* (1970s) represents a transitional stage. The titular tree spirit does not merely symbolise transcendence but acts as a catalyst, exposing the tension between bourgeois materialism and imaginative, cosmic awareness. Characters capable of recognising the Dryad gain insight into a broader reality but are simultaneously marginalised by society. Here, the nonhuman figure becomes an active mediator rather than a passive symbol, although it still ultimately signals possibilities for human self-realisation.

A major shift occurs in Neža Lučka Peterlin's contemporary play *The Lamb* (2025). The drama deliberately abandons anthropocentric hierarchy and attempts to approach perspectives of animals, plants and ecological processes. Scenes shift among human, animal and environmental viewpoints, blurring distinctions between predator and victim, between human and nonhuman. Death, decay and regeneration are shown as cyclical processes encompassing all beings equally. Nonhuman actors no longer function as metaphors or catalysts but become full participants in dramatic

reality. The world continues regardless of human presence, emphasising ecological interconnectedness rather than human dominance.

The author connects these developments to broader cultural and ecological changes, including awareness of the climate crisis and new theoretical paradigms in the environmental humanities. Literature and theatre are presented as crucial cultural spaces where alternative relationships between humans and nonhumans can be imagined and emotionally experienced.

The analysis ultimately demonstrates a historical progression: from nature as an allegorical background, through nature as a mediator of transcendence, to nature and animals as equal agents in dramatic structures. Contemporary Slovenian drama thus contributes to ecological thought by redefining theatre as a space where human and nonhuman worlds coexist on shared ontological ground.

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Povzetek

Žiga Divjak je režiser, ki se v zadnjih letih intenzivno ukvarja z uprizoritvami, kjer je v ospredju ekološka tematika. Njegove uprizoritve so primer angažiranega dokumentarnega gledališča, ki prikazuje različne vidike podnebnih sprememb skozi simultanost različnih gledaliških strategij. Uprizoritve ne govorijo o rešitvah, temveč v večji meri seznanjajo in ozaveščajo gledalca o ekološki in humanitarni krizi ter razpirajo gledališče kot prostor javnega razmisleka, kjer smo soočeni s kontradiktornostmi sodobnega sveta. V prispevku bomo natančneje analizirali tri dela, to so *Vročina* (SMG, 2021), *Krize* (SMG, 2022) in *Kako je padlo drevo* (SNG Drama Ljubljana, 2022), ki jih povezujejo skupen motiv drevesa in najnovejša znanstvena spoznanja o skrivnem življenju dreves ter sodelovanju med bitji, ki so sestavni del vsakega ekosistema.

Ključne besede: sodobna slovenska dramatika, ekologija, Žiga Divjak, motiv drevesa, snovalno gledališče, dokumentarnost

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Skrivno življenje dreves v uprizoritvah Žige Divjaka

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Uvod: motiv drevesa v sodobni slovenski dramatiki

Drevo je pradaven, arhetipski motiv, prisoten že od začetka evropske dramatike in gledališča, ki se pojavlja v različnih zgodovinskih obdobjih in pri najvidnejših dramatikih svojega časa, če naštejemo le nekaj imen: Evripid (*Bakhantke*), Shakespeare (*Sen kresne noči*, *Macbeth*, *Kralj Lear*), Čehov (*Češnjev vrt*), Beckett (*Čakajoč Godota*) idr.[1] Motiv drevesa nastopa tudi znotraj slovenske dramatike 21. stoletja, katere vrste dreves se pojavljajo in kakšen je njihov pomen, pa bom uvodoma ilustrirala s tremi primeri.

Dragica Potočnjak v drami *Za naše mlade dame* prikaže deklico Brino, ki si popeva otroško pesmico in se skriva v krošnjah dreves: »*Visoko drevo. Vidimo le rob krošnje. Z ene od vej bingljajo otroške nogice. Nogice se gibljejo v ritmu Brinine pesmice (rajanke)*« (Potočnjak 290). V nadaljevanju izvemo, da gre za cvetočo jablano, ki je tipično drevo slovenskih sadovnjakov in predstavlja dom, domačnost, varnost, tradicijo, vse tisto, česar Brina ne najde v svoji družini. Čeprav beži in se na drevesu skriva pred mamo, jo za vse življenje poškoduje očetova spolna zloraba, drama pa prikaže, kako živeti, če ti je bilo otroštvo ukradeno.

Simona Semenič drevo vključi že v uvodne vrstice drame *medtem ko skoraj rečem še ali prilika o vladarju in modrosti*: »*daleč daleč stran / in vendar ne tako daleč, da ne bi mogel zavohati cvetoče / lipe sredi trga / sredi kraljevskega mesta /stoji razkošna palača*« (30).

Drama Simone Semenič izhaja iz pravljičnega izročila o vladarjih v razkošnih sobanah, hkrati pa je pred nami »poučna zgodba« o ustroju družbe, prikazu njenih mehanizmov, manipulaciji z ljudstvom, o izmišljenih notranjih sovražnikih, uporu, vojni in družbeni odgovornosti. Besedilo tako gradi na prezentaciji univerzalnega in konkretnega: pravljični nekoč in nekje ves čas prebija stvarni tukaj in zdaj, najočitneje v podobi 20-letne cvetoče lipe, enega od temeljnih simbolov slovenstva, ki korespondira z

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nastankom dramskega besedila leta 2011, ob 20. obletnici osamosvojitve Slovenije.

Na izviren način drevo vključi v dramo *Razglednice* Simona Hamer, saj je celoten prizor tudi grafično oblikovan v podobi drevesa (37). Fragmentarna dramaturgija mozaičnih zgodb beleži fotografske vtise popotnice Tinke, zgodovinsko navdahnjene prizore med osvajalcem in oprodo ter izpovedi nemih prič krvave zgodovine. Prav takšno je drevo vrste čankiri, njegovo pričevanje pa se nanaša na grozljiv kamboški genocid, ko je režim ukazal pobiti dojenčke in otroke.

Če hočeš odstranit

plevel, moraš izruvat tudi korenine.

Tako so govorili. In tako so delali; odstranjevali plevel s koreninami

vred. Logično. Drugače nisi nič naredil. Ker iz majhnega zraste veliko, ne?

Mene ni nihče nič vprašal. Klasika. Dolgo me sploh niso opazili. Odstranjevanje zahteva

posebno obliko pozornosti. Še posebej, če imaš omejen čas in sredstva. V imenu produktivnosti je treba optimizirat proces. Tako so govorili. Čeprav je bilo govorjenje že zdavnaj odveč. Vsi so vedeli, *kaj* je treba naredit. *Kako* je bila pa improvizacija. Lopata. Vile. Palica. Kavlji in sekire. Tu in tam kakšna mačeta. Listi sladkorne palme; tisti oleseneli, rahlo nazobčan del. Domišljija ne pozna meja, ne? In enkrat takrat – ko so naboji postali skoraj tako redki kot upanje na drugačen jutri – enkrat takrat so me opazili. Če hočeš odstranit plevel, moraš izruvat tudi korenine. *Tp!* Kljub sili, ki je prisotna, je bil zvok skorajda neslišen. Plitek. *Tp!* Top. Pomešan med glasbo, med agregate za elektriko, med slogane, ki so dajali temi noči smisel in cilj – večinoma so se klali ponoči. Da ne bi slučajno kdo kaj videl. Nikoli ne moreš bit dovolj previden, ne? Kilometre in kilometre naokoli nikogar. Nobenega radovedneža – kdo si je pa upal? Nikjer nikogar. Razen živali in rastlin. Ampak mi ne znamo govorit. Nikogar ne moramo zatožit ali izdat. Nismo nevarni. *Tp!* Je naredilo prvič. Tako enostavno, tako ekonomično, da sem se še jaz vprašalo, kako se tega niso spomnili prej. *Tp!* Drugič. Mladenič je deloval mirno. Zbrano. Zanesljivo. Stopil je po naslednjega - v tisti temi, med kričanjem, brnenjem in petjem – je delovalo, kot da je vse to popolnoma normalno. Še en dan v službi, ne? In on je moral bit dober delavec. Moral. Ni šlo drugače. Prinesel je naslednjega. Obraz – zaledenela maska. Čustva so luksuz iz nekih drugih časov. Telo se je napelo. Iz leve proti desni – zamah – kot da kosiš travo. *Tp!* Enostavno.

Ekonomično. In že so se nove kaki uniforme in novi pari rok

pripravljali na zamahe. *Tp!* Hitro. *Tp!* Enostavno.

Tp! In ekonomično. *Tp!* Če hočeš odstranit plevel,

moraš izruvat tudi korenine. *Tp!*

Še malo. *Tp!* Še – pet? Še petkrat – Tp!

Še petkrat bo treba prijet za nogice.

Še petkrat zamahnit.

Še petkrat se bodo majhne

glavice razčefukle ob mene.
Toplota možganov
na mojem lubju
in svežina noči.
Zvočniki in agregati.
Če hočeš odstranit
plevel, moraš izruvat
tudi korenine.
Še pet dojenčkov,
Še pet otročkov in so.
Konec. Za danes.
Tp!Tp!Tp!Tp!Tp!
Jutri pa nova runda. S L I K

Lep pozdrav iz polj smrti, lep pozdrav izpod sence drevesa čankiri, lep pozdrav iz Kambodže!

Uvodoma skicirani trije primeri nam pokažejo, da imajo drevesa znotraj sodobne slovenske dramatike različne interpretativne funkcije in pomene: prvo učinkuje na intimni ravni družinskih odnosov, drugi dve pa prinašata družbenopolitični kontekst. Kot bomo pokazali v nadaljevanju, pa je Žiga Divjak tisti ustvarjalec, ki v slovenskem prostoru motiv drevesa najintenzivneje poveže z ekološko in okoljsko problematiko ter drevesa in ljudi umesti v soodvisne ekosisteme.

Ekološka problematika v gledališču Žige Divjaka

Živimo v svetu, kjer se dogajajo požari, poplave, suše, izumiranje živalskih in rastlinskih vrst, migracije, segrevanje ozračja in drugi pojavi, ki opozarjajo na človekovo nevzdržno ravnanje s planetom. Čeprav smo dnevno soočeni z različnimi članki, obvestili, novicami, podatki o okoljski problematiki, nas zanima, na kakšne načine je možno skozi dramatiko in gledališče vzpostaviti zavedanje o okoljskih temah. V primerjavi z literarnimi vedami ter medijskimi in filmskimi študijami se je gledališče s svojo močno antropocentrično dediščino razmeroma počasi odzvalo na ekološke teme, v zadnjem času pa raziskovalci gledališča in uprizoritvenih umetnosti vedno intenzivneje prispevajo k okoljski humanistiki (Lavery). Če ekokritika raziskuje, kako literatura obravnava naravo, pa ekodramaturgija prinaša okoljsko perspektivo v uprizoritvene umetnosti. Ekologija in gledališče je tako izjemno širok pojem, ki vključuje različne vidike odnosa med naravo in kulturo, človekom in okoljem, izhajajoč iz tradicije razsvetljenstva, ki je te pojme postavilo drugega proti drugemu (Kershaw 15). O tem, da se interes za raziskovanje in uprizarjanje ekoloških

tem povečuje tudi v Sloveniji, priča številka revije *Maska* z naslovom *Ekologija med izvedbo in uprizoritvijo*. V uvodniku Pia Brezavšček (2) poudarja, da je predvsem mlajša generacija umetnikov, pa tudi dramaturgov in teoretikov umetnosti, izrazito odprta za naslavljanje medvrstnega sobivanja in okoljskih tem.

To je značilno tudi za režijski opus Žige Divjaka, ki se v zadnjih letih intenzivno in odmevno ukvarja z uprizoritvami, kjer je v ospredju ekološka tematika, kar je značilno zlasti za uprizoritve *Vročina*, *Krize*, *Bodočnost*, *Kako je padlo drevo*, *Jata* in *Anhovo*. Njegove uprizoritve so najpogosteje primer angažiranega dokumentarnega gledališča, ki prikazuje različne vidike podnebnih sprememb skozi simultanost raznolikih gledaliških strategij. Uprizoritve ne govorijo toliko o rešitvah, temveč v večji meri seznanjajo in ozaveščajo gledalca o ekološki in humanitarni krizi ter razpirajo gledališče kot prostor javnega razmisleka, kjer smo soočeni s kontradiktornostmi sodobnega sveta. Pozicija režiserja ni naivna, a hkrati je v njegovem delu ves čas vidno zaupanje v moč gledališča: »Ne verjamem, da je v teatru mogoče doseči razrešitev. Lahko pa gledališče ponudi občutek skupnosti in zavedanje, da nisi sam. […] Verjamem, da se z uzavestitvijo svoje pozicije znotraj predstave zgodi tudi premislek o tem, kakšno pozicijo zavzamemo v vsakdanjem življenju« (Divjak, »Najbolj« 95–96). V članku bom natančneje analizirala tri dela, to so *Vročina* (SMG, 2021), *Krize* (SMG, 2022) in *Kako je padlo drevo* (SNG Drama Ljubljana, 2022), ki jih povezuje skupen motiv drevesa, pri čemer me bo zanimalo, kakšen pomen ima drevo v posamezni uprizoritvi, kakšna je njegova reprezentacija znotraj posamezne uprizoritve in kako je to povezano z ekološko tematiko ter idejno zasnovo uprizoritve.

Vročina

Vročina neposredno tematizira ekološko krizo, je kritika velikih korporacij, neukrepanja državnih vlad, kritika potrošništva in brezbrižnosti, kjer je vodilno načelo nenehna rast in dobiček.[2] Uprizoritev ni nastala na podlagi vnaprejšnjega dramskega besedila, temveč je bila v maniri postdramskega gledališča izhodišče avtorjeva ideja, nato pa je sledilo večmesečno raziskovalno delo, nekakšno novinarsko zbiranje podatkov, različnega dokumentarnega gradiva, branje strokovnih knjig z okoljsko tematiko, pogovori z igralci, njihove improvizacije, končno besedilo tako nastane ob pripravah na predstavo v sinergiji zbranega materiala in razmišljanj nastopajočih igralcev, uprizoritev je kolektivno delo in je primer t. i. snovalnega gledališča. »Tako obliko gledališča nujno definirajo proces (iskanja poti in sredstev umetniškega podjetja), sodelovanje (z drugim), multivizija (vključevanje različnih občutij, izkušenj in stališč do sveta) in stvaritev novega gledališkega dela« (Šorli in Dobovšek 15).

2 Žiga Divjak in igralci: *Vročina*, režija Žiga Divjak. Koprodukcija: Slovensko mladinsko gledališče, festival steirischer herbst '21 in zavod Maska Ljubljana, premiera v Gradcu je bila 24. 9. 2021, v Ljubljani pa 12. 10. 2021. Zasedba: Vito Weis, Gregor Zorc, Draga Potočnjak, Damir Avdić, Mina Palada in Maya Sara Unger.

Gre za globalni problem in mednarodno zasedbo, zato tudi odločitev, da predstava večinoma poteka v angleškem jeziku s projiciranim prevodom.

Kot je zapisano v *Gledališkem listu* (3), besedilo črpa fragmente in motive iz strokovnih knjig *Manj je več: Kako bo odrast rešila svet* Jasona Hickla, *Kako razstreliti naftovod* Andreasa Malma, *Ministrstvo za prihodnost* Kima Stanleyja Robinsona in *Neprijazna Zemlja: Življenje po segrevanju* Davida Wallacea Wellsa. Ključno vprašanje je, kako ta material spraviti na oder, ga uprizoriti, saj dokumenta »samega na sebi namreč ni mogoče uprizoriti, vselej se morajo ustvarjalci predstave odločiti za kako interpretacijo. Že golo zaporedje, v katero ustvarjalci postavijo dokumente, izpričuje neko interpretacijo, neko stališče. Dokument torej nikoli ni nosilec resnice, temveč se z vstopom na sceno vselej izkaže za pomensko odprtega in v temelju performativnega« (Murnik 243).

Dokumentarni material, to so številni statistični podatki o segrevanju ozračja, izumiranju živalskih vrst, dvigovanju morja, o izginjanju gozdov, izpustih CO_2 … ter posamezni podatki o tem, kaj se bo z našim planetom zgodilo v prihodnje, so ustvarjalci preoblikovali v nekakšno zvočno pokrajino, kjer s ponavljanjem posameznih ključnih besed dosežejo zvočne učinke, pri čemer sta poudarjeni ritmičnost in melodičnost besed, ki so pogosto tudi rimane. Način govora prehaja iz hitrega izgovarjanja faktografskih podatkov v glasno, skandirano izgovarjanje in ponavljanje ključnih besed, ki učinkujejo kot nekakšni povzetki, gesla, napisi na protestniških transparentih (»profit is profit«, »no more fish by 2048«, »only sixty harvests left«, »spar, lidl, hofer / fresh, fresh, fresh« …), ki močno učinkujejo na gledalca in še dolgo odmevajo v njegovi glavi. Opazni so prehodi iz enoglasja v večglasje oziroma zborovsko izvajanje, iz govorjenja v petje. Kolaž izjav ustvarja svojo lastno ritmično kompozicijo, mehanično naštevanje dejstev pa dobi poetično dimenzijo (Pezdirc Bartol 242–3). »Splošne podatke ves čas aplicira na posameznika, posamezne igralce, in se počasi bliža njihovim osebnim zgodbam« (Troha 162). Te prinašajo intimno in čustveno dimenzijo in posledično nastopajoči iz globalne angleščine preidejo v svoje materne jezike.

Uprizoritev odlikuje uporaba premišljenih vizualnih podob, ki imajo sugestivno moč na gledalca, tako estetsko kot pomensko. Takšen je že notranji krog odra, ki ga prekriva travnik z rdečimi makovimi cvetovi, ki ga v teku predstave povsem prekrije umetna megla. Igralec Vito Weis, gol, prvinski, z velikimi suhimi vejami v roki ponazarja mogočno drevo. Ta sanjski, skorajda arhetipski prizor je prispodoba rajskega vrta, ki pa je v celoti sestavljen iz umetnih elementov: umetna trava, umetne rastline, suhe veje, umetni sneg, mrtva riba, vse to so vzporednice z izginjajočo, mrtvo naravo našega planeta. Motiv drevesa oblikuje prizor, ki učinkuje z različnimi gledališkimi izraznimi sredstvi, kot kažeta zapis besedila in spodnja fotografija.

HERE COMES THE SUN/VITO TREE

MINA: Here comes the sun

Here comes the sun

And I say it's all right

Little darling, it's been a long cold lonely winter

Little darling, it seems like years since it's been here

Here comes the sun

Here comes the sun

/…/

HOTTER PLANET

MAYA: A warming planet means drier forests, and drier forests mean more wildfires and more wildfires mean more carbon in the atmosphere and fewer trees to sink that carbon from the atmosphere, which means even more carbon in the atmosphere and a warmer planet, which means even drier forests and even more fires and even fewer trees to sink that carbon, and even more carbon in the atmosphere and a warmer planet, which means even drier forests and even more wildfires, and even fewer trees and even more carbon and an even warmer planet. (Divjak, *Vročina* 13–4)



Vročina, na fotografiji je Vito Weis. Foto: Clara Wildberger / Arhiv Slovenskega mladinskega gledališča

Režiser z nizanjem različnih uprizoritvenih elementov prikaže soodvisnost temperature in življenja, zaradi dvigovanja temperature se drevo suši, sonce pa postane grožnja preživetju. Zato tudi igralec začne spuščati veje in se spreminja v posušeno drevo, ki propada in pade. Temu sledi tudi besedilo, saj zviševanje temperature posledično vpliva na celoten planet, na oceane, zrak, manj hrane, posledično več beguncev in večjo politično nestabilnost. Čeprav je drevo stranski motiv, gre za vizualno zelo močen prizor, ki je tesno povezan z idejo uprizoritve.

Krize

Drugače je motiv drevesa prisoten v uprizoritvi *Krize*.[3] Gledališki prostor je popolnoma bel, drevesa pa so del scenografije, na stenah namreč visijo štori posekanih dreves, kot nekakšne lovske trofeje, »razstavljeno je tisto, kar sicer ostane v zemlji« (Bogataj 474). Zastavi se nam vprašanje, kako so posekana drevesa povezana s samo idejo uprizoritve. Ta je izrazito dvodelno zasnovana. V prazen prostor postopoma prihaja sedem nastopajočih, pridejo goli, v svoji prvinskosti, povezanosti z naravo, na odru jih čaka kupček oblačil in rekvizitov, ki jim ustvari identiteto. Spoznamo jih v trenutku vsakdanjega življenja, so sleherniki, nekakšni tipi sodobne kapitalistične družbe: mlad oče s številnimi otroškimi pripomočki na počitnicah, dostavljavec paketov, poslovnež v obleki in kravati, gradbeni delavec, študentka z zapiski, gospa, ki se odpravlja na rojstni dan, in mlada ženska, ki gre na jogo. Za vse je značilno, da so v časovni stiski, ujeti v neizprosen tempo vsakdanjika, kar je preneseno na raven uprizoritve, nastopajoči namreč ves čas tečejo, skoraj eno uro so v pogonu, vedno bolj utrujeni, izmučeni, prepoteni, zadihani, rdeči v obraz. »Tek na mestu je odlična pris(podoba) našega stadija kapitalizma« (Vidali, »Zemlja« 8). Njihov napor, vsakodnevni boj za preživetje, gledalec občuti fizično in telesno, ne pa verbalno. Med nastopajočimi namreč ni nikakršne komunikacije, nobenega dialoga niti pogleda, vsak zase teče, kot bi bil na tekočem traku. In če se vrnemo na začetek, lahko ugotovimo, da nam režiser sugerira misel, da so izmučeni tekači in scenografija posekanih dreves del istega sistema, v obeh primerih gre za brutalno izkoriščanje, popredmetenje vsega živega, izkoriščanje človeških virov tako sovpada z izkoriščanjem narave.

3 *Krize*, režija Žiga Divjak, premiera 27. 10. 2022. Koprodukcija: Slovensko mladinsko gledališče, Maska Ljubljana, Bitef (Beograd) in Zadruga Domino (Zagreb). Zasedba: Sara Dirnbek, Iztok Drabik Jug, Klemen Kovačič, Katarina Stegnar, Vito Weis, Gregor Zorc, Blaž Šef.



Krize, na fotografiji: Vito Weis, Draga Potočnjak, Gregor Zorc, Iztok Drabik Jug, Katarina Stegnar; foto: Matej Povše / Arhiv Slovenskega mladinskega gledališča

Performativni del izvedbe spremlja glas nevidnega pripovedovalca, ki na poljuden način posreduje zgodovino človeštva, kjer je človek večino časa živel v skladu z ostalimi ekosistemi, šele z vzponom kapitalizma se je to ravnovesje porušilo, zdaj smo v dobi antropocena, za katerega je značilna vedno večja gospodarska rast na račun živega sveta in v korist peščice prebivalcev planeta. Naracijski glas ni dramskega niti literarnega izvora, temveč posreduje dejstva in ideje strokovnih knjižnih predlog *Manj je več* Jasona Hickla in *Goba na koncu sveta* Anne Lowenhaupt Tsing ter tako navaja različne primere sodelovanja skozi zgodovino (npr. staroselci) kot tudi primere sodelovanja v naravi:

> Drevesa sodelujejo. Se sporazumevajo. Si med seboj delijo, kar imajo. In to ne le v okviru svoje vrste, temveč prestopajo razmejitve med njimi. Pa ne samo drevesa; zdaj vemo, da so razen peščice vrst v enakem odnosu z mikorizo vse rastline. Prav tako kot pri naših črevesnih bakterijah tudi to spoznanje kljubuje načinu, kako razmišljamo o medvrstnih razmejitvah. Je drevo res posameznik? Ali ga v resnici lahko dojemamo kot posamezno enoto? Ali pa je le en vidik širšega, večvrstnega organizma? (Divjak 11)

Postopki uprizoritve v drugem delu proizvedejo prav to možnost spreobrnitve in rešitve, prestop iz posameznika v člana skupnosti, ki jo povzroči motnja in posledično sprememba ekosistema. Nastopajoči so postavljeni v nekakšno postapokaliptično stanje, so preživeli borci kapitalističnega boja za nenehno rast in dobiček. Pohabljeni, z amputiranimi udi, so tako zopet pomenska vzporednica s posekanimi štrclji dreves. Prikazana je njihova ranljivost, šele v tej situaciji se med njimi vzpostavita solidarnost in kolektivizem. So hendikepirani ljudje s spoznanjem, da je preživetje stvar sodelovanja oziroma z besedami Žige Divjaka: »Neko prepričanje je, da krize izvabljajo iz ljudi najslabše, da pogosto vodijo v kaos, v resnici pa nas izkušnje učijo, da so ljudje v krizah neverjetno altruistični, da so pripravljeni tvegati svoje življenje za drugega. Zanimivo je, kako v krizah pride do čudovite samoorganizacije in močne skupnosti« (»Najbolj« 109). Vse to pa drevesa počnejo že tisočletja.

Kako je padlo drevo

Za razliko od prikazanih dveh primerov snovalnega uprizoritvenega pristopa je bil proces nastanka uprizoritve *Kako je padlo drevo* drugačen, saj je bilo izhodišče dramsko besedilo Katarine Morano, ki je stalna ustvarjalna sodelavka Žige Divjaka, in sicer je pogosto dramaturginja njegovih predstav, včasih pa tudi (so)avtorica dramskih besedil, kot so *Sedem dni*, *Usedline*, *Kako je padlo drevo*, *Zakaj sva se ločila* idr. O njunem specifičnem ustvarjalnem procesu Tomaž Toporišič zapiše: »Divjak in Morano ohranjata vloge igralca, režiserja, pisca in drugih ustvarjalcev v procesu, a hkrati so te nefiksirane, izmenljive in spremenljive. Ustvarjanje je hkrati individualno in kolektivno, pisec ali barthesovski pisar ni ločen od drugih ustvarjalcev, ni edninski, je del procesa, a v njem sodeluje ali sodelujejo predvsem kot urejevalec besedila, ne kot dramatik« (238). Besedilo je nastalo z mislijo na konkretno igralsko ekipo,[4] devet dramskih oseb prikazuje razširjeno družino, starša in tri odrasle hčere, Tamaro, Anito in Lilo, prvi dve s partnerjema, ter soseda, brata Roka in Jako.

Besedilo je razdeljeno na dva dela in 12 prizorov ter vsebuje več diskurzivnih plasti: okvir predstavlja meditativna pripoved Jake, nato imamo monološke izpovedi, npr. prizore zaslišanja, ki stopnjujejo napetost usodnega dogodka in postopno razkrivajo dogajanje, ali pa notranji tok misli oseb, govorjen v mikrofone, ter večinoma dialoške igrane prizore vsakdanjega življenja, v katerih spoznamo medosebne odnose (družinske, partnerske, starševske, prijateljske, sosedske) in stiske sodobnih posameznikov, ujetih v neoliberalno logiko sveta. »Govor likov je zapisan z redukcijskimi značilnostmi ljubljanščine, klasična skladnja se je umaknila beleženju napovedne pogovorne skladnje z vsemi premolki, prelomi, medmeti, ponovitvami in mašili« (Stanič 9).

> Jaka: In ta občutek, da so vsi faking neregulirani. Da se nč ne da ... da je pač ... denar nad vsem. In da mi lohk pač sam ... ne vem, gledamo, kako vse propada. Ne vem, no, men se sploh ne zdi, da smo kej čudni pač, mi, pač, k smo ... pač karkol že. No, in tko mi je blo pač, k so začel ograjevat kle okol naših dreves pa našga parkca, da bojo ta luksuzna stanovanja gradil. Ja ne, pizda, ne, ne boste. Zakaj bi dal še zadn kos zelenga klele naokol za neka luksuzna stanovanja, k jih bojo neki bogataši kupval in prodajal kt neke investicije. Ja, pač ne bi dal. Jst bi rajš mel to naravo, ta kisik, to senco. In pač fak of. Dost je blo. Te časi so se izpel. Mudi se, gremo naprej. Čao. Boli me kurac. Jst bom na tem drevesu. (Morano 51)

Kot nakazuje zgornji odlomek, je osrednji zaplet povezan z drevesom, ki stoji na zelenici blokovskega naselja, zdaj pa ga bodo posekali, da bodo lahko zgradili luksuzna stanovanja. »Skupnostno drevo, v katerega senci so se odvijale njihove življenjske zgodbe, postane realna in simbolna točka upora – upora proti gentrifikaciji, upora proti nasilju, proti kapitalu, upora proti nesmislu življenj, kakršna živijo, in upora proti nemoči, da bi se vsemu uprli« (Vidali, »To« 8). Fragmenti vsakdanjih malih zgodb tako

4 Katarina Morano: *Kako je padlo drevo*, režija Žiga Divjak, premiera 3. 12. 2022. SNG Drama Ljubljana. Zasedba: Silva Čušin, Janez Škof, Tina Vrbnjak, Nina Ivanišin, Maruša Majer, Uroš Fürst, Gregor Zorc, Iztok Drabik Jug in Timon Šturbej.

ustvarijo prerez problemov današnje družbe: gentrifikacija mestnih središč in s tem povezani stanovanjska kriza, globalna ekološka katastrofa in nemoč posameznika, pritisk kapitala in izčrpanost sodobnega človeka, ki se kaže v nenehnem hitenju in posledično duševnih stiskah, ob tem pa zamujene priložnosti starejše generacije ter eksistencialna vprašanja mlajše generacije, povezana z občutkom brezizhodnosti in izgubljenosti. Povprečna družina in povprečna stanovanjska skupnost poudarjata vtis vsakdanjosti, to so zgodbe sodobnih slehernikov, s katerimi se bralci oziroma gledalci zlahka identificiramo. Avtoričin občutek za dialog, jezik in filigranske podrobnosti doda veristično, skoraj dokumentaren značaj, ki ga dopolnjujejo humorni podtoni. Fragmente dogajanja v celoto povezuje zgodba o senzibilnem fantu Jaki, sosedu, ki spleza na drevo in ga brani s svojim telesom: »Jst ne grem z drevesa« (Morano 61) in »Ne, ne boste me … to je tut mal moje drevo« (Morano 63).



Kako je padlo drevo, na fotografiji: Nina Ivanišin, Gregor Zorc, Tina Vrbnjak, Timon Šturbej, Maruša Majer, Uroš Fürst, Iztok Drabik Jug, Silva Čušin, Janez Škof. Foto: Peter Uhan / Arhiv SNG Drama Ljubljana

Drama stopa na področje ekokritike, ki med drugim raziskuje, »kako je v literaturi in kulturi definiran oziroma ubeseden odnos med človekom in drugimi živimi bitji v naravi« (Čeh Steger 205), ter opozarja na spremembe urbanih okolij, kjer se izgubljajo naravni prostori. V svojih izpovedih Jaka, podobno kot glas v *Krizah*, pripoveduje o simbiozi v rastlinskem svetu, navaja znanstvena spoznanja o življenju dreves, ki med seboj sodelujejo

in skrbijo drugo za drugo, si pomagajo in komunicirajo na svoj način. Jaka izraža prav to zavedanje, da med živimi bitji ni takšnih razlik, tako kot človek ima tudi drevo pravico do obstoja, pri čemer pa ne gre za antropomorfizacijo, drevo je vredno samo po sebi, ker je živo, ne ker ima človeške lastnosti. Jaka, predstavnik mlade generacije, iskreno verjame v takšen svet, v dobro, v skupnost, v pogovor, v sodelovanje, v sožitje vseh živih bitij, vse te izginjajoče vrednote je pripravljen brezkompromisno braniti in s svojim uporom premakne tudi poglede ostalih. Kljub prizadevanjem drevo pade, v uprizoritvi slišimo žaganje, stopnjevano napetost in nasilje, kar režija Žige Divjaka še poudari, saj so igralci v drugem delu ves čas udarjali na bobne, kar je dodalo stopnjevani ritem, izražalo jezo malega človeka ter poudarilo obredno atmosfero končnega dogodka.

Zaključek

Analiza treh uprizoritev Žige Divjaka je pokazala, da imajo drevesa (pri vseh treh je bil scenograf Igor Vasiljev) različno funkcijo, včasih so stranski motiv, drugič del scenografije oziroma del vizualnih sporočil, spet tretjič ključna idejna točka uprizoritve. Prav tako se spreminja njihova interpretacija: posušene veje, ki jih dviguje igralec v *Vročini*, aludirajo na višje temperature in posledično suše, požare in izginjanja gozdov; scenografija štorov posekanih dreves v *Krizah* je vzporednica izkoriščanju in izčrpanosti sodobnega človeka ter popredmetenju vsega živega; drevo na zelenici stanovanjske soseske, ki ga bodo posekali zaradi gradnje luksuznih stanovanj, v *Kako je padlo drevo* pa postane simbol upora proti gentrifikaciji, nasilju, kapitalu, razčlovečenju. Če primerjamo vse tri analize, odlomke in fotografije, ugotovimo še eno skupno točko, vsa drevesa so posekana oziroma na koncu padejo, zato bi bil posledično bolj smiseln naslov prispevka »Kako je padlo drevo v uprizoritvah Žige Divjaka«. Odločitvi za drugačen naslov pa je botrovalo dejstvo, da vse tri uprizoritve, čeprav drevesa (pro) padejo, reflektirajo vrednostni koncept, da bo človeštvo preživelo le, če bo temeljilo na sodelovanju in pravičnejši razdelitvi dobrin. Prav te ugotovitve pa prinašajo tudi najnovejša znanstvena spoznanja o življenju dreves in sodelovanju med bitji, ki so sestavni del vsakega ekosistema. Zato članek zaključujem z mislijo gozdarja Petra Wohllebna, avtorja uspešnice *Skrivno življenje dreves*, pri katerem sem si izposodila naslov svojega prispevka:

> Drevo ni gozd, ne more uravnavati lokalnega podnebja in je na milost in nemilost prepuščeno vetru in vremenu. Več dreves skupaj pa tvori ekosistem, ki omili skrajno vročino in mraz, shrani velike količine vode in pripomore k zelo vlažnemu zraku. V takšnem okolju so drevesa varnejša in lahko dočakajo visoko starost. V ta namen morajo za vsako ceno ohraniti svojo skupnost. Če bi se vsi primerki brigali le zase, številni ne bi doživeli pričakovane starosti. (Wohlleben 10–1)

Prav to pa je tudi osrednja ideja, ki je vpisana v vsako od analiziranih uprizoritev.

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Abstract

Žiga Divjak is a director who has, in recent years, been intensively engaged in productions that put environmental themes front and centre. His productions are examples of socially engaged documentary theatre that portray various aspects of climate change through the simultaneity of theatrical strategies. The productions do not offer solutions but rather inform the spectator about and raise awareness of environmental and humanitarian crises and open the theatre as a space of public reflection in which audiences are faced with the contradictions of the modern world. This paper closely analyses three works, namely, *Vročina* (*Fever*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2021), *Krize* (*Crises*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2022) and *Kako je padlo drevo* (*How a Tree Fell*, SNT Drama Ljubljana, 2022), connected by the shared theme of the tree and the latest scientific findings about the secret life of trees and the cooperation among beings that form part of every ecosystem.

Keywords: contemporary Slovenian drama, environmental themes, Žiga Divjak, tree theme, devised theatre, documentary theatre

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The Secret Life of Trees in the Theatre Productions of Žiga Divjak

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We live in a world with wildfires, floods, droughts, the extinction of animal and plant species, migrations, a warming atmosphere, and other phenomena that call our attention to humanity's unsustainable treatment of the planet. Every day we are faced with various articles, reports, news and data about environmental problems. In this text, however, we are interested in how drama and theatre can raise awareness about environmental issues. The theatre, with its strongly anthropocentric heritage, has been relatively slow to respond to environmental issues in comparison with literary, media and film studies. But lately, scholars of the theatre and the performing arts, as well as theatre-makers themselves, have been giving ever more thought to the subject. This is also characteristic of Žiga Divjak's directorial opus. For the past five years, he has been intensively engaged in productions that put environmental themes front and centre. His productions are examples of socially engaged documentary theatre that portray various aspects of climate change through the simultaneous use of various theatrical strategies. The productions do not offer solutions but rather inform the spectator about and raise awareness of environmental and humanitarian crises and open the theatre as a space of public reflection where we are faced with the contradictions of the modern world. In this paper, we will more closely analyse three works, namely *Vročina* (*Fever*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2021), *Krize* (*Crises*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2022), and *Kako je padlo drevo* (*How a Tree Fell*, SNT Drama Ljubljana, 2022), with the tree as their connecting theme. The tree has various roles: the dry branches held up by the actor allude to rising temperatures and the ensuing drought, wildfire and forest loss; the scenography with the stumps of felled trees parallels the exploitation and exhaustion of the contemporary human beings and the objectification of all living things; the tree on the green plot of a residential neighbourhood that is to be felled to make way for a luxury housing development becomes a symbol of resistance to gentrification, violence, capital and dehumanisation. These productions are informed by the fundamental idea that humanity will survive only if it is founded on cooperation and a fairer distribution of goods, in which everyone takes only what they need. This idea is also supported by the latest scientific findings on the secret life of trees and the cooperation among the living beings that make up each ecosystem.

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Abstract

Trees and their felling appear in classical drama across cultures as a frequent and universally understandable metaphor for vulnerability, the fragility of order, and a threat to balance. In this context, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard* comes to mind, but trees are also often symbolically felled in Czech classical drama. However, the metaphor is clearly still relevant in today's postdramatic theatre; it has been adopted by the performing arts, and trees are once again being felled not only on Czech stages but also on Nordic ones. The study interprets the spread, age, and communicability of this theatrical metaphor as evidence of the essential connection between humans and ecological issues. This connection suggests that ecological concerns in theatre are not merely a recent trend, even though ecological themes have understandably become increasingly prominent in recent decades.

The study therefore provides a brief overview of ecology in Czech theatre in recent decades from both perspectives. It also examines the range and resonance of the scenic metaphor of trees and the interesting coincidence that it became the main theme of two theatre productions, one Czech and one Norwegian. Finally, it presents historical examples illustrating the strong tradition and potential of this metaphor in selected Czech and European drama.

Keywords: ecology and theatre, trees on stage, postdramatic theatre, metaphor of trees in drama, Czech drama, European drama

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Trees as a dramatic and performative metaphor

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In this paper, I will begin with a brief introduction to the topic of ecology in Czech theatre.[1] I will then turn to the study's central topic, trees on stage, including the productions that inspired my investigation. Finally, I will attempt to trace the metaphor of trees in selected Czech and European drama classics.

1.

The ecological aspect cannot be ignored by Czech theatre in the 21st century. Ecological considerations began to be discussed more prominently at the beginning of this millennium, when ecology became a topic both in connection with the impact of theatre production and its sustainability, and in theatre production itself. In many cases, these two levels have merged, whether in newly formed theatre groups, themed festival seasons, or in the conceptual approach to entire seasons thematically linked to ecology at the dramaturgical and operational levels.

In 2009, Prague's National Theatre also took several measures to make its operations more environmentally friendly. Through a series of well-thought-out cost-saving measures and upgrades to its technical equipment, it inspired other theatres to follow its example of good practice in sustainable theatre operations (it included the installation of a photovoltaic power plant, one of the largest in Prague at the time, the installation of energy-saving bulbs and LED lights, and a plan was developed to transport stage sets to the theatre by water and so on; cf. Rýgrová, "Zelená").

These measures were reported in the press by Marie Riegrová, who is also the author of a basic introduction to "green theatre", which she brought to the Czech Republic through her journalistic work and her book *Sustainable Theatre*, subtitled *Ecology,*

1 The peer-reviewed article was written on the basis of institutional support for the long-term conceptual development of the research organisation Arts and Theatre Institute (IP DKRVO) provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

Thrift, and Self-Sufficiency as New Signs of Artistic Creation (Rýgrová, *Udržitelné*). The result was a brief, somewhat belated but still useful compendium on environmentally friendly theatre operations. With belatedness, I am referring to the books *Green Theatre* (2007) by Kurt Gerhard Heinlein, *Theatre Ecology* (2009) by Baz Kershaw, and *A Sustainable Theatre* (2013) by Barry Witham.

The connection between the concepts of *ecological morality* or *ecological responsibility* and *art* or *theatre*, which, in fairness, would surprise no one today, was considered a surprising revelation until only recently. While it cannot be said that ecology has become a leitmotif or widely shared theme in Czech theatre, a number of theatres have nevertheless begun to take practical steps towards more environmentally friendly operations. A considerable number of individual events and initiatives in this area have also significantly raised awareness of the topic, which has been reflected upon and elaborated in greater detail by artists, theorists, critics and academics.

In this context, I must also mention the phenomenon of temporary "pop-up" theatres or the architectural "recycling" of old factory buildings and the revitalisation of brownfields, or even the recycling of means of transport, as demonstrated in Czechia by the Forman brothers' vintage *Ship of Secrets* or the *Cultural Bus* by artist, musician, multi-talented artist and performer Petr Nikl. Authors Vojtěch Poláček and Vít Pokorný provided a comprehensive report on this trend in their book *Recycled Theatre* (2015). The ideal of not only a theatre, but any cultural centre, is – from the perspective of sustainability – a symbiosis between resource conservation and renewability, economic efficiency and freedom of artistic expression.

The focus on ecology and climate emergency also became a topic of discussion and events organised as part of the largest exhibition of scenography and theatre space, the Prague Quadrennial (PQ) 2019, and, a year later, ecology became the theme of the Czech Theatre Night, which is part of European Theatre Night. In 2020, the event took place in a significantly different format than in previous years. Theatres were to connect with their audiences only through online platforms. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, that year's theme, *Theatre and Sustain-Long-Ability*, became even more relevant than the organisers could have expected. A total of 64 theatres from 17 towns and municipalities in the Czech Republic took part in it. The event included a webinar entitled How to achieve sustainability in theatre and not go crazy in the process. (The phrase "not go crazy in the process" or variations of it has since been repeated at various cultural and artistic events, suggesting a response by the cultural sphere to the widely shared anxiety arising from the climate crisis, intensified by the pandemic and post-pandemic situation and the general acceleration permeating our lives in all spheres.)

As far as theatre production itself is concerned, environmentally oriented themes have appeared in Czech theatre in the 21st century in several different ways. One

notable trend is the didactic message in productions for children (or children and adults). Interest in ecology and sustainable development can also be seen in various site-specific events and performances, and rural "centres for sustainable creativity" have long focused on the principles of environmental responsibility.[2] Since around the 2010s, ecological themes have become part of the repertoire of established theatres (no longer fairy tales and parables).

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic was a clear catalyst for the further "boom" in environmental themes in Czech theatre, as the closure of theatres and schools and the general uncertainty once again brought climate anxiety to the forefront. In a multifunctional space in Prague in the former Švehlova kolej building (a theatre known as Venuše ve Švehlovce), Jiří Honzírek, director of the independent Brno-based Divadlo Feste theatre, founded a platform for artists interested in climate change called CO2kolektiv. The first production he staged with the ensemble was based on an essay by Martin Vrba, a young philosopher and climate activist active in the Czech branch of the global Extinction Rebellion movement, entitled *Odvaha k beznaději* (*The Courage to Despair*), which was also the name of the new group's chamber production in 2020.

In it, Vrba develops the idea of Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who drew attention to the "ideological trick of hope", which, as a belief in a happy ending, is not a stimulant for activity, but an opiate that numbs the pain of the reality of one's situation. Žižek skilfully illustrated this with the case of a smoker who constantly reassures himself that he can quit smoking whenever he wants. However, this belief is in fact an obstacle to any real change: the very awareness of the possibility of quitting smoking creates an obstacle to this possibility becoming a reality (Vrba). Honzírek staged Vrba's essay in collaboration with the author, and they also applied Žižek's line of thought to the climate crisis. Honzírek expressed this in an interview using a different analogy: "It is interesting to look at today's society as a child who, for some reason, is allowed to eat unlimited amounts of sweets, even though we know that sooner or later their teeth will rot" (Haleková).

Vrba's doom-laden conviction that it takes courage to fully admit that collapse is imminent is presented in the production itself only as one extreme pole of a discussion that the performance seeks to stimulate without taking any a priori stance on possible views of the situation. One-sided apocalyptic appeals are generally not perceived as functional stimuli for change among Czech theatre artists who address ecological issues. Environmentalist and theatre scholar Milo Juráni, who will be discussed further below, agrees with the ideas of American professor and researcher Una Chaudhuri, arguing that this almost self-flagellating acceptance of all blame by

2 Since 2012, there has been a map of similar cultural centres in Czechia and Slovakia, called RurArtMap: https://rurartmap.net/.

humans is essentially another symptom of the arrogance and human self-centredness of the Anthropocene epoch, "a worldview that has placed humans and their interests at the center of every reality and which also reinforces hierarchical thinking and promotes sexism, racism, and various injustices" (Chaudhuri 27).

When addressing ecological issues, Czech theatre artists deliberately avoid superficial appeals in favour of discussion, aestheticisation and layers of meaning. This was also the case with another in a series of ecologically motivated and interpretable productions – a poetic visual-theatrical collage exploring our roots, dreams and surrounding reality entitled *na houby* (the Czech title is a play on words, it means "for mushrooms" but at the same time it also means "it sucks"), staged by Prague's Chemické divadlo (Chemical Theatre) at the Rubín A Studio in 2021. The creators drew on ideas from the book by Chinese-American anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015). With a motto taken from her book, "We are not mere consumers. We are consumed", they relativised the stereotypes of the Anthropocene. Inspired by Lowenhaupt Tsing's surprising perspective, they created a scenic, at times hallucinogenic vision of mushrooms and their mycelium, the internet of the forest as a possible alternative to the internet of machines. Nature in the post-cybernetic age. The internet of mushroom-picking groups, discussions, selfies and videos. Mushroom picking as a "national" phenomenon. Mushrooms as part of the nutrient cycle in nature, mushrooms as our food and as an age-old inspiration for artists, rebels and dreamers of all kinds. And above all this: the reality of climate change, drying and disappearing forests.

Another means characteristic of Czech culture and, by extension, theatre, which theatre professionals use to avoid agitation when addressing environmental issues, is humour – satire and parody. At the beginning of the 2020s, two such productions were staged. One was a staging of the satirical comedy *Kill Climate Deniers* by Australian playwright David Finnigan, which reveals the power of the media and social networks in shaping public opinion. The production at Prague's Švanda Theatre (2021) plays with the expression of Quentin Tarantino's black comedies and draws on popular music, yet it still asks urgent questions, such as: Who will force society to start treating the planet more gently? Scientists? Climate experts? Eco-terrorists? Finnigan's play takes aim at all groups across the spectrum of opinion.

A similar message was conveyed by a more intimate production by the socially engaged Olomouc theatre Na cucky, associated with its director Michal Hába, who also wrote and directed the one-man show *Budoucí lokální hvězda Hochman hraje bývalou globální hvězdu Thunberg* (*Future Local Star Hochman Plays Former Global Star Thunberg*), subtitled *Humorous Theatre from the Age of Climate Change*. It was

a bitterly comical statement about the helplessness of individuals and society in the face of the greatest threat of our time, introduced by the motto "How to talk about the climate crisis when the world would rather watch a gala evening full of celebrities than melting glaciers?" The production, full of pop culture references and unexpected connections, once again asked: Do you have to be a celebrity to talk about climate change and be heard? And who does society actually listen to today? Director Hába, known for his politically bold and provocative style, has created an entertaining yet urgent theatrical manifesto in this stand-up comedy, in which "ecopolitics" emerges as the only way forward; an energetic ride full of humour, smoke machines and uncertainty – in a world where greenhouse gases are not the only thing creating a thick atmosphere.

The resonance of ecological themes can also be found in the hybrid new circus genre of Czech theatre, which combines acrobatics with physical theatre, creating complex images imbued with symbolic meaning. Noteworthy examples include productions by the most successful companies of this kind in the country, such as Cirk La Putyka, which in 2024 presented *Hey, Earth!* directed by Thomas Steyaert and Laterna magika, where director Darcy Grant staged *In Our Hands* in the same year (cf. Jedličková).

The legendary HaDivadlo theatre in Brno, which has maintained a leading position in Czech alternative theatre since the 1970s, has devoted itself to ecology through a programmatic commitment. Under the artistic direction of Ivan Buraj, it announced the Nerůst (No Growth) project as the theme for the 2022/23 season. With the slogan "No growth against burnout", Buraj sought to relativise the mantra of contemporary society, which is focused on GDP growth and performance in all areas. He therefore decided not to stage any new premieres during the season and to use the time and space gained to deepen, vary and expand existing productions in various ways. Creators who had previously worked at the theatre returned to renew, update and advance their productions; debates, workshops, etc., were organised. Above all, a community of audiences and creators was built, which has always been a very important aspect of the theatre's functioning. This season, the aforementioned Slovak theatre scholar and environmentalist Milo Juráni was hired as the theatre's resident dramaturg. He had already collaborated with the theatre during the pandemic, which HaDivadlo approached positively within the limits of its possibilities. When it was not possible to perform, the theatre creators seized this unique opportunity to reflect on theatre and recorded a series of podcasts entitled *The Future of Theatre*. In the introduction to the series, they noted that many texts and interviews about the future of theatre refer to the so-called third theatre reform (the term follows the thinking of Kazimierz Braun, who described the first theatre reform as the transformation of theatre at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the second as events connected with the alternative theatre movement of the 1960s). And they asked what the nature of the third theatre reform should be, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic fulfilled the

vision of German playwright Heiner Müller, who provocatively called for theatres to close for a year so that we could understand their value. In interviews, they pondered what theatre should look like after reopening: Can we start where we left off? What are the most interesting concepts and tools we can use to begin revising theatre? And is theatre in its final throes, or, on the contrary, can it become the leading art form after film, which dominated the 20th century, due to its irreducibility to the online space? Milo Juráni spoke for almost two hours in a podcast on the topic of "Eco-dramaturgy, post-anthropocene in theatre, non-human protagonists". The theses and ideas of this podcast subsequently became a source for further theoretical discussions and practical actions, not only in the sphere of theatre.

2.

I have summarised only the most significant events and activities in Czech theatre in the past years that have emphasised the theme of ecological responsibility, both in operation and in the creative process itself. My aim was not to provide an exhaustive list (and the above quickly becomes outdated, so an update would certainly be appropriate), but rather to outline the situation, starting points and typologies that I consider useful for understanding and providing the appropriate context for the topic of my study.

A strange coincidence led me to consider the metaphor of cutting down trees (and later on just trees) on stage:

As part of the Czech alternative theatre festival 4+4 Days in Motion, which reflects the latest nonconformist phenomena on the theatre scene, the creative collective Wariot Ideal performed in 2023 with a piece entitled *The Primeval Forest, or Who Will Spread the Plague Now?* whose central motif and, in fact, sole content was the cutting up of a felled tree trunk. In the same year, Det Norske Teatret staged *Heil ved*, a production with very similar content: a group of men on stage felled and cut up a respectably long trunk of a mature tree. I do not consider this coincidence insignificant; I mean that these productions appeared in such distant European theatres in the same year, without their creators knowing anything about each other. It testifies to the pan-European resonance of the theme and the semantic richness of the metaphor of trees on stage. This coincidence led me to reflect more deeply on the metaphor of cutting down trees – or trees as such – on stage.

First, however, I will focus on the two productions themselves, which are surprisingly similar in many respects but also carry different connotations. Both can be called performances: the performers carry out a strictly utilitarian, matter-of-fact activity on stage in its entire unabridged real timespan; we can forget about any dramatic

situation here. The audience must gradually give up all expectations of a twist, a plot, a punchline … it is somewhat reminiscent of the absurd situation of prolonged anticipation in *Waiting for Godot*; in the end, it is really just about coexisting with the unremarkable, explicitly unresolved cutting of a tree trunk and its slicing into logs. The actors do not play anything; they only try to serve the given purpose with appropriate effort. In both performances, this slow, concentrated activity, elevated to a theatrical event, can be frustrating for viewers eager for constant change, twists, ideas and thoughts … or they can accept it as intentional, as a special genre that we could call a kind of "slow theatre".

In the provocatively minimalistic and simple Prague performance, *The Primeval Forest, or Who Will Spread the Plague Now?* (Wariot Ideal, 4+4 Days in Motion, Ponec, 12 October 2023), the whole process resembles a ritual to a certain extent. Performers dressed in white shirts and black trousers carry a log of impressive size and weight onto the stage, carrying it together on their shoulders like a coffin; their activity, without unnecessary words, resembles a funeral. It is perhaps only an allusion, perhaps even inappropriately pathetic; it is much more a ritual of simple work. The actors do not act (or at least they try not to); they place the log on supports, cut it with chainsaws, then chop it on blocks (with axes or with the help of a wood splitter) and stack the logs into a pile. The natural sounds of work and machines are recorded and amplified by a sound engineer-musician present on stage using microphones, then multiplied, further refined and mixed with simulations of birdsong, nature and other sounds created using a mixing console on the left foreground of the stage. The second part of this difficult and lengthy, almost contemplative, profane work is created by three actors wearing oversized plush masks depicting forest animals – a hare, a squirrel and a dormouse. They watch the forest being felled on a television screen in the background of the stage throughout the performance. This plan frames the entire performance; it begins and, after the completion of the entire action, the performers-lumberjacks leave first, followed slowly by the animals, after processing the logs into firewood. With a plastic bag in their hands and a cassette player playing forest sounds, they no longer resemble authentic animals; their childish portrayal is a strange mixture of parody, sentimentality and kitsch. The creators seem to be playing on the strings of environmental grief in an overly banal way. This is also evident in the text they published about the performance:

> For thousands of generations, human beings considered themselves part of a wider community of nature and cultivated active relationships with other people, animals, plants and other natural phenomena, including the landscape and weather, which we have only "recently" begun to consider inanimate and soulless. […]
>
> How much work does it take to fell a tree, cut it up and chop it into logs and chips?
>
> But where will the hare, squirrel and dormouse find refuge while loggers ravage their homes?

> Love of nature in an era of increasing consumption of barbecue briquettes. (Wariot Ideal; translated by P. J.)

In the performance, the perspective and portrayal of the animals balance on the edge of irony and seriousness; they are a kind of counterpoint to the strictly purist, civilised, and, in its tediousness and simplicity, almost absurd action on stage. With its naive simplicity and directness, the entire performance is reminiscent of *The Little Mole in the City* (1982), one of Zdeněk Miler's best short animated films about his world-famous mole and an iconic half-hour film with a timeless ecological message. In the genre of children's films, it has a surprisingly futuristic-surrealistic atmosphere and sincere pathos, capturing the longing for nature and nostalgia for home. Given the time of its creation and the political situation in socialist Czechoslovakia, this film is remarkable for its clear, artistically uncompromising ecological message.

The title of the Norwegian performance *Heil ved*, which premièred in Oslo on 12 November 2023, can best be translated as "massive" (an idiomatic expression referring to solid wood but also to the character trait of being able to withstand anything; Stehlíková). While the performance is very similar in content, it is, at the same time, a good example of how the same metaphor – cutting down trees on stage – can carry layered and diverse meanings. The ecological aspect is only one of them, and rather a secondary one at that. In Norway and the Nordic countries in general, wood has long been a key fuel source. The performance programme states:

> It was the difference between freezing and being warm. It was the difference between ore and iron, between raw meat and a steak. In winter, it was the difference between living and dying. That's how important wood was to the first Norwegians. Gathering fuel was simply one of the most important tasks, and the calculation was simple: if you had little, you froze. If you had too little, you died. And perhaps a few thousand years of frost and suffering have created a unique Nordic heating gene that people in warmer climates do not have? Barely a hundred years of fan stoves and paraffin tanks have not been able to eradicate this reflex – and the joy many people find in gathering firewood may be due to the fact that the wood-burning gene is awakened, connecting us to the gatherers from whom we all descend.

Cutting and chopping wood on stage thus carries a certain archetypal significance; we all have some kind of relationship (even if subconscious) with wood and trees, whether we are activists sounding the alarm and drawing attention to the climate crisis or its deniers. Both performances build on this, with the Norwegian one focusing more on the theme of identity, although harmony with nature is certainly part of it for Norwegian men.

The Norwegian performance is much more comprehensive than the Czech one. It is based on the popular book *Norwegian Wood* (*Hel ved*) by writer Lars Mytting from

2011, from which we quoted a selected passage used in the programme. In addition to practical advice for cottage owners and fireplace owners, the book summarises what wood has historically meant to the inhabitants of the Nordic countries, describing traditions and legends associated with it, including completely contemporary stories. Its text is only fragmentarily incorporated into the production, through voice-overs and subtitles. To a certain extent, it also inspired the songs composed specifically for the performance by Norwegian singer-songwriter Torleif Stein Bjella. They sing about the value of slow, hard work in an overly fast-paced "black digital sea". But even the Norwegian performance is not without lighthearted humour; in songs based on Norwegian folk music and American country, Bjella gently pokes fun at the lumberjacks' stubbornness and taciturnity, as well as their distinctive dialect. In the production, he sings, plays the guitar, violin, double bass, accordion and chainsaw, and even performs with his own tractor, which he had to drive 200 km from his hometown to Oslo for this purpose. The sounds of working with wood effectively complement the production's musical side.

This unusual theatrical spectacle appeals to all the senses: in addition to the catchy "lumberjack" music, there is the smell of wood, diesel and petrol from chainsaws and a crackling fire – lit right on stage. The rawness and authenticity of all the components effectively contrast with the classic proscenium stage of the Norwegian National Theatre. This continues until the entire large birch trunk ends up as neatly stacked logs, known as a *hráň* (a pile of timber with gaps between the logs, intended for drying, which is an important part of Norwegian culture, as we can also read in Mytting's book: girls in rural Norway used to choose their husbands based on the shape of the woodpile).

As I have tried to describe, both performances, based on essentially the same idea of cutting and chopping a log into pieces, have a similar meaning in some respects and differ in others. The common thread running through both productions is a certain, almost meditative mood; a deliberate, almost irritating slowdown. We can also perceive them as a response to the general acceleration of a globalised society, overwhelmed by the technological development of communication media to the very limits of its capacity. Alongside the climate crisis, the effects of the pandemic and military conflicts, this is another significant source of anxiety, as Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen writes in his books (e.g., *The Tyranny of the Moment*, 2001).

Nordic studies scholar, critic and translator Karolína Stehlíková wrote about the performance in Oslo: "The theatre artists create a kind of meditative space in which the audience is allowed to observe others performing quite monotonous but meaningful work while conducting their own dramatic monologues in their heads"

(Stehlíková 76). This also applies to the Prague performance. The fact that nothing else happens on stage throughout the evening except cutting a tree trunk and splitting logs naturally provoked a controversial reaction. Critical reflection included both: sharp rejection of this "simple, straightforward, and […] completely useless action" (Hulec) and understanding and sympathy with its contemplative tone (Žantovská; Král). The simple activity of the performers – lumberjacks in its real time (seeming even longer in theatre time) – opened up space in the minds of the audience, unbound by the action on stage, for associations and their own thoughts. One of the bards of Czech theatre criticism, Karel Král, wrote on his blog that at that moment he had before his eyes the disappearing forests near his cottage:

> I already have the impression that in this once green, now grey, thinning forest, it is not only the trees that are dying. It is not very habitable. Only parasites are demonstrably thriving there. For example, deer ticks, which began successfully driving even me out of "our" forest several years ago. Of course, I suspect that we are responsible for the destruction and that it would greatly help nature if people, the most dangerous parasites, left it alone.

With its consistent simplicity, the Czech performance provoked some to resistance and others to contemplation, for example, about human parasites. What the Norwegians were contemplating, Odin knows, perhaps their roots.

3.

Let's take a brief look at the history of the metaphor of cutting down trees (or trees themselves) in drama and theatre.

A similar identity-forming function is found in Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem *Peer Gynt* from 1867, in which the playwright sharply satirises the character traits of the Norwegian people through the arrogant, self-satisfied, yet half-hearted and indecisive title hero. In the third act, Gynt cuts down a tree deep in the forest, amid the inclement grey autumn weather with snow falling. The entire first scene of the third act is devoted to this. Felling a tree is a symbol of confrontation with an obstacle, and, in Gynt's case, this confrontation is typically boastful (talkative): it has the character of a struggle with an opponent. Gynt talks to the tree as if it were a character. He scolds it, addressing it as an "ancient churl" in a "chain mail shirt" and boasting that he will defeat it despite all its resistance; he comments on his struggle with the tree and its trembling branches: "you're shaking your twisted arms" (then he realises that it is just a tree). He talks about hard work, about life in nature, about how difficult it is to be independent, self-reliant, left to fend for oneself. He reflects on his condition as an outcast from normal society. The image points to a desire for autonomy, even a boast-

ful determination to achieve it, but at the same time reveals that it is a hard, cruel path, full of adversity. Gynt experiences the obstacles with some excitement, giving them an almost personified dimension …. The scene ends with a tree falling and Peer cutting off its branches …. The contrast is provided at the very end of the scene by the appearance of a young boy who cuts off his finger with a sickle to avoid military service. Such a determined solution – even if it is a matter of escaping responsibilities – is unavailable to Peer, who distances himself from it.

The metaphor of cutting down a tree has a special meaning here; it is more of a battle; from Gynt's perspective, the tree becomes an interlocutor with whom he engages in a kind of dialogue (almost in the manner of Don Quixote). There is also exaggeration, a certain demonisation and personification of obstacles, as seen through the eyes of a loudmouthed, narcissistic pseudo-hero. When I think about it, it is the only moment in the dramatic poem where Peer is somewhat of a decent person (or at least tries to be, for a moment), but soon he runs away from work and from Solveig. So, woodcutting could also be seen here as an attempt to be a good, decent person.

> *[Deep in the pine-woods. Grey autumn weather. Snow is falling.]*
>
> *[Peer Gynt stands in his shirt-sleeves, felling timber.]*
>
> PEER *(hewing at a large fir-tree with twisted branches)*. Oh ay, you are tough, you ancient churl; but it's all in vain, for you'll soon be down. *(Hews at it again.)* I see well enough you've a chain-mail shirt, but I'll hew it through, were it never so stout. Ay, ay, you're shaking your twisted arms; you've reason enough for your spite and rage; but none the less you must bend the knee! (Ibsen, *Peer Gynt: A Dramatic* 113–114)

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov worked with the metaphor of trees in a completely different way. If we think about the metaphor of cutting down trees on stage, it is certainly this playwright who gave it its key dramatic form, and whose *The Cherry Orchard* we remember as the first and most striking example. Chekhov used the symbolism of trees as early as his play *Uncle Vanya* (1897), where the doctor Astrov, on the contrary, plants trees. Frustrated by his personal life, relationships and material circumstances, he sees hope precisely in planting trees, in caring for the forest as a factual and symbolic possibility for growth and positive values. Significantly, his actions remain misunderstood and overlooked.

Iconic is Chekhov's metaphor of cutting down trees in *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), which serves as a lyrical condensation of the drama's overall tone. The orchard of old fruit trees on Ranevskaya's estate is a symbol of the past, tradition, aristocracy, beauty (not only when in bloom), but also stagnation and the unsustainability of the former lifestyle. The unseen but sensed image of the cherry orchard being cut down, which brings the drama to its climax, symbolises a painful blow to the roots, memory and ideals. The dramatic

note prescribes: "They hear the sound of axes in the distance, cutting down the orchard" (Chekhov, *The Cherry* 95). Ranevskaya then comments directly on stage: "Oh, my dear, sweet lovely orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell!" (27) At the same time, none of the characters could or knew how to change the situation leading to this outcome. The orchard, which no one could maintain anymore, became a burden for the indebted family in a difficult existential situation. Its value was incalculable and difficult to explain in the pragmatic new era. The felling of trees symbolises the end of the old aristocratic era, the demise of values and the inability to adapt to the new era. Sentiment stemming from emotional attachment to the past, feelings of loss and the desire for security are confronted here with pragmatism based on the need to act effectively, deal with the present, or plan for the future. But what can the future be without roots? Chekhov's metaphor of cutting down trees is imbued with a strong melancholy. A scenic depiction of trees being felled – expressed mainly through sounds and shadows, according to the author's notes; but all the more powerful for it – evoking sadness and vulnerability. And also human weakness and the impossibility of holding on to everything we love.

Also in Czech drama, the metaphor of trees was frequently used with both similar and specific connotations. The motif of the tree plays a significant role in Alois Jirásek's drama *The Lantern* (*Lucerna*, 1905). The play was originally intended to be called *Our Linden Tree*, so we could even say that the linden tree is one of its most fundamental symbolic elements. It is clear from this that this specific, traditional Czech national tree, a powerful symbol for the Czech nation, especially during the National Revival, also carries these connotations in the drama. However, everything is wrapped up in a well-acceptable, not ideologically garish, friendly tale drawing on old legends from the region and including supernatural beings; the play is rightly called the Czech *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for its form, mood and popularity. The main character, the miller Libor, comes into conflict with the authorities because he refuses to cut down an old linden tree growing on the land near his mill. The linden tree stands in the way of the lords' new plans, blocking their view. Libor is the only one who rebels against this, even at the cost of personal consequences, but I do not want to get bogged down here in describing the twists and turns of a relatively rich plot full of symbolic meanings. For our topic, it is perhaps clear even from a brief outline that the linden tree in *Lucerna* is one of the most striking examples of a tree as a symbol of freedom, tradition and national identity in Czech drama. Historically, this motif resonated with the ideals of the national revival, which Jirásek helped to shape in his writing. In the visual design of the drama productions, it therefore always appeared as a prominent, central element of the stage: its existence and the threat of extinction are the driving force behind the drama.

The scene around the linden tree is the play's conflictual climax – the moment when it is decided who has power: the authorities or a conscious individual with an unyielding conscience. Libor, the miller, defends the old, sprawling, majestic linden tree by the

mill with the words: “I will not cut down the linden tree. It has been growing here for ages, and it has a right to grow here” (Jirásek, *The Lantern* 45). His unyielding defence shows that the tree is not just a “thing” but a bearer of values (not unlike those attributed to trees in Chekhov’s metaphor).

The symbol of tree felling also appears in *Anežka* (1912), the final drama by Vilém Mrštík, author of *Maryša*, probably the best-known Czech realist play. Mrštík wrote *Anežka* with his wife, Božena Mrštíková, née Pacasová. It is an introspective play about the creative struggle of an artist who, in an existential struggle, becomes a craftsman producing artistically worthless artefacts and desperately seeks his own expression in a polemically diverse field. The play also addresses the conflict between artistic creation and the responsibilities that arise from a relationship; another theme, albeit more marginal, is the relationship between tradition and modernity. The introduction to the drama is noteworthy for our topic. The author’s note prescribes the evocation of the felling of an old tree-lined avenue: in the background, we hear the blows of an axe and the rumbling of falling trees.

The sound of the axe is an invisible actor that dramatically heightens the tension. The axe “speaks” instead of the characters; it is the voice of change and violence against nature and tradition. This activity is then commented on in the dialogue itself: "ANEŽKA: What a pity, what a pity about those trees! … The mill’s most beautiful adornment ... and now it’s gone! Their corpses lay on the wagons as if on a bier, and as they hauled them away, it seemed to me like a funeral – no one spoke, everyone was just hurrying, and tears welled up in everyone's eyes ... […] That I, of all people, had to live to see those oak trees murdered ... PAVLA: They cut them down, cut them down – what murder is there in that!” (Mrštík and Mrštíková 6, translation PJ). This dialogue highlights differences between people and their values and sheds light on the title character’s sensitivity. Once again, the avenue is not just a group of trees, but a bearer of identity and family history. In the Mrštík couple’s drama *Anežka*, the felling of the avenue is also a significant dramatic and symbolic element. In Chekhov’s play, it was a powerful finale; in the Mrštíks', it is a similarly significant overture. What they have in common is the scenically effective depiction of evocations, i.e., actions that are not shown on stage but are nevertheless unquestionable. The pathos and resonance of the symbol – scenically performed at the level of suggestion – is thus only reinforced. The sound of axes and falling trees functions as a quiet but powerful “voice” of change and destruction. The play uses this motif to deepen the theme of the loss of tradition and resistance to the superficial, barbarically heartless modern world.

Similar to Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* or Jirásek’s *The Lantern*, trees represent a symbolic fragile link between the past and the new era. This symbolic potential of tree-lined avenues, which mark old roads as connecting links, is also evident in Ib-

sen's *The Lady from the Sea* (1888). Here, the avenue is not cut down, but stands as an important space of transition; the entire drama is introduced by the stage note: "Beyond, a road along the seashore. An avenue of trees along the road. Between the trees are seen the fjord, high mountain ranges and peaks […]" (Ibsen, *The Lady from the Sea* 1–2). The avenue, which connects the house/garden to the sea, plays a significant symbolic role here: it is a transition from the outside world to the inner space of the drama. A channel through which the past flows back into the present. A path along which comes a challenge that shakes the existing balance. The Stranger, who is the embodiment of Ellida's suppressed past, comes this way, and the avenue is thus also the space through which that past enters the present. The alley is also a passage to freedom. Ellida is the "lady of the sea", married into the interior, but her inner identity remains connected to the wildness and freedom of the seaside. The alley is therefore a passage – a safe place where she can choose between these worlds.

Another example of tree symbolism can be found in Samuel Beckett's most famous absurdist drama, *Waiting for Godot*, from 1952. Here, only one tree remains from the avenue – like an anchor in uncertainty and even nothingness, a silent witness to waiting and ultimately a symbol embodying a seed of hope … Beckett introduces the drama with laconic stage directions: "A country road. A tree. Evening."

The road with a single tree is a symbol; every road leads somewhere, or at least it should, creating the illusion of a transitional space, but this time without any real transition.

The tree is a key symbol; it is the only visible object in the empty space, even though at first it appears to be dead:

> VLADIMIR: What is it?
> ESTRAGON: It's a tree.
> VLADIMIR: What does it say to you?
> ESTRAGON: Nothing.
> VLADIMIR: It looks like a dead tree. (Beckett, *Waiting* 7–8)

Even so, it can be more than just physical support for the characters.

However, at the beginning of the second act, it turns out that it is alive:

> VLADIMIR: *(halting before the tree)* Leaves.
> ESTRAGON: Leaves?
> VLADIMIR: On the tree.
> ESTRAGON: Are they new?
> VLADIMIR: I'm asking you.
> ESTRAGON: *(after close inspection)* It must be spring. (Beckett, *Waiting* 58–59)

The tree is covered with leaves. Symbolically, in the static atmosphere of futile waiting, this is the only tangible proof that time is actually passing in the drama. A sign of the natural cycle – spring. A possible hint of hope, but ultimately it does not change the situation: Godot still does not come, and the waiting continues. There is a cruel irony in this; a change that could herald something is meaningless. Nevertheless, amid all this inactivity and rigidity, the tree becomes the drama's only active actor or presence. Beckett also relativises any meaning and possibility of self-reflection of the characters by referring to the frailty of their memory: when change comes, the tree grows leaves, and they are almost unable to recognise it with certainty.

The tree is a serious and ironic reminder of the characters' despair and their inability to act. Soon after the beginning, and then again during the play, they consider hanging themselves from it.

> ESTRAGON: Let's hang ourselves immediately!
> VLADIMIR: From a bough?
> ESTRAGON: We can always try.
> VLADIMIR: Go ahead.
> ESTRAGON: After you.
> VLADIMIR: No no, you first.
> ESTRAGON: Why me?
> VLADIMIR: You're lighter than I am. (Beckett, *Waiting* 12–13)

However, these are just empty words again. The tree thus also symbolises possible death, or rather a place of waiting where even death does not occur. Its presence thus underscores the absurd, endless state of waiting and indecision at the heart of the play.

Conclusion

The fact that ecology is an increasingly relevant topic for theatre is clear, understandable and indisputable. In the first part of this study, we attempted to use specific examples to demonstrate how the ecological theme entered Czech theatre in full force in the first decades of the 21st century, both in the sustainability of theatre operations and in the content and themes of theatre productions. We also pointed to a clear moment of acceleration in these themes: the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remarkable coincidence that the metaphor of tree felling was foregrounded on European stages – specifically in the Prague performance *The Primeval Forest, or Who Will Spread the Plague Now?* (2023) and the Norwegian production *Heil ved* (2023) – led us to reflect further on the relevance and resonance of this metaphor in theatre and drama more generally. The study thus primarily seeks to highlight the deeper

continuity of a kind of ecological thinking that was inherent in theatre and drama even when these topics were not yet explicitly called ecological.

In the history of European and Czech drama, we find numerous examples of tree metaphors. We have highlighted only a few of the most striking ones and attempted to interpret and explain their meaning. These include the symbolic meanings associated with trees in Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem *Peer Gynt* (1867) and drama *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), the powerful metaphor of tree felling in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) and the symbol of a lonely tree as the only scenic object in Samuel Beckett's most famous absurdist drama *Waiting for Godot* (1952). The symbol of the tree is also used in Czech classical drama – most notably in Alois Jirásek's *The Lantern* (1905), where trees represent a symbolic fragile link between the past and the new era, similarly in the plays of Vilém Mrštík, specifically in the drama *Anežka* (1912), which he wrote with his wife Božena, née Pacasová. And we could go on; we would certainly find more similar examples.

These examples show that trees are, and historically have been, carriers of powerful and significant scenic metaphors, whether in contemporary performances, where their thematisation and symbolism are often linked to the importance of the environment and identity, or in earlier drama, where trees and their stage presentations also functioned as powerful metaphors. Their meaning was often also linked to identity and symbolised roots, certainty and tradition. They could also become challengers, means of confrontation and bearers of change and hope.

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Povzetek

Drevesa in njihova sečnja se v klasični dramatiki različnih kultur pojavljajo kot pogosta in univerzalna metafora za ranljivost, krhkost reda in ogrožanje ravnovesja. Ena prvih asociacij v tej smeri je drama *Češnjev vrt* Antona Pavloviča Čehova, simbolična sečnja dreves pa je pogosto prisotna tudi v češki klasični dramatiki. Očitno je, da navedena metafora ostaja aktualna tudi v sodobnem postdramskem gledališču; prevzele so jo uprizoritvene umetnosti in sečnja dreves se ni ponovno vrnila le na češke, temveč tudi na nordijske odre. V pričujoči raziskavi poskušam razširjenost, starost in sporočilnost te gledališke metafore utemeljiti kot dokaz temeljne povezanosti človeka in ekološke problematike. Iz te povezanosti je razvidno, da ne gre le za trend v zadnjih desetletjih, ko aktualnost ekoloških tem seveda vse bolj narašča. Razmerje med ekologijo in gledališčem obravnavam tako z vidika delovanja gledališča kot tudi z vidika ekologije kot teme v gledališkem ustvarjanju.

V raziskavi zato podajam kratek pregled ekologije v češkem gledališču zadnjih desetletij z obeh navedenih vidikov. Proučujem tudi razsežnost metafore dreves na odru ter zanimivo naključje, da je zadevna metafora osrednja tema dveh gledaliških stvaritev oziroma predstav, ene češke in ene norveške. Nato predstavim primere iz zgodovine, ki kažejo na močno tradicijo in potencial te metafore v češki in evropski drami.

Ključne besede: ekologija in gledališče, drevesa na odru, postdramsko gledališče, metafora dreves v drami, češka dramatika, evropska dramatika

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Drevesa kot dramska in performativna metafora

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Jasno, razumljivo in nesporno je, da ekologija postaja vse aktualnejša gledališka tema. V prvem delu pričujoče raziskave poskušamo s konkretnimi primeri pokazati, kako se je ekološka tematika odločno uveljavila v češkem gledališču prvih desetletij 21. stoletja, tako na področju njegovega trajnostnega delovanja kot tudi v sami gledališki ustvarjalnosti – torej vsebinsko in tematsko. Pri tem poudarimo tudi, da se je proces tovrstne tematizacije občutno pospešil zaradi pandemije kovida 19.

Po zanimivem naključju je metafora sečnje dreves dosegla doslej največjo izpostavljenost na evropskih odrih – in sicer s praško predstavo *Původní les aneb kdo teď bude roznášet mor?* (umetniška skupina Wariot, festival 4+4 dnevi v gibanju, Ponec, 12. 10. 2023) ter norveško produkcijo *Heil ved* (Oslo, premiera 12. 11. 2023), kar nas je vodilo k nadaljnjemu razmisleku o aktualnosti in odmevnosti te metafore v gledališču in dramatiki nasploh. V raziskavi sem tako v prvi vrsti poskušala opozoriti na globljo kontinuiteto ekološkega mišljenja, ki je bilo v gledališču in dramatiki prisotno že, ko tovrstne tematike še niso izrecno opredeljevali kot ekološke.

V zgodovini evropske in češke dramatike najdemo številne primere dreves kot metafor. V članku izpostavljamo le nekaj najizrazitejših, ki jih poskušamo interpretirati in osvetliti s pomenskega vidika: od simbolnih pomenov dreves v dramski pesnitvi *Peer Gynt* (1867) ali v *Gospe z morja* (1888) Henrika Ibsena do močne metafore sečnje dreves v *Češnjevem vrtu* Čehova (1904) in simbola samotnega drevesa kot edinega scenskega elementa v najbolj znani drami absurda Samuela Becketta *Čakajoč Godota* (1952). Simbol drevesa se pojavlja tudi v češki klasični drami – najizraziteje v delu *Laterna* (1905) Aloisa Jiráseka, kjer drevesa simbolizirajo krhko vez med preteklostjo in novo dobo; podobno je tudi v dramatiki Viléma Mrštíka, zlasti v drami *Anežka* (1912), ki jo je napisal skupaj z ženo Boženo (roj. Pacasová). Še bi lahko naštevali, saj podobnih primerov zagotovo ne manjka.

Iz navedenih primerov je razvidno, da so drevesa bila in ostajajo nosilci močnih in povednih scenskih metafor – tako v sodobnih predstavah, kjer se tovrstna

tematizacija in simbolizem pogosto navezujeta na pomembnost okolja in identitete, kot v preteklosti, ko so drevesa v dramah in njihova prisotnost na odru prav tako predstavljali močne metafore. Njihov pomen je bil pogosto povezan tudi z identiteto ter je simboliziral korenine, gotovost in tradicijo. Postala so celo izzivalci, sredstva soočenja ter nosilci sprememb in upanja.

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Abstract

This article explores the dialogue between Island Studies and Performance Studies through two theoretical perspectives emerging from different contexts. The essay first reconstructs some of the key genealogies through which Island Studies has developed as a field, highlighting the shift from insularity as a fixed geographical condition to islandness as a relational epistemological lens. The article then examines two conceptual contributions that bring Island Studies into conversation with Performance Studies. Rebecca Schneider's notion of the *shoal*, developed from an Atlantic perspective, foregrounds littoral zones as epistemological thresholds where bodies, histories and environments meet in unstable and transformative relations. Diana Looser's concept of *transpasifika*, emerging within Pacific Studies and transpacific scholarship, proposes a relational framework for analysing how performances circulate across islands, diasporic communities and global networks. Read together, these perspectives reveal how performance and islandness can be understood as relational processes shaped by movement, instability and ecological interdependence. The encounter between Island Studies and Performance Studies thus opens a productive analytical terrain for investigating how artistic practices participate in the reconfiguration of insular worlds and their broader epistemological configurations.

Keywords: island studies, performance studies, oceanic epistemologies, *shoal*, *transpasifika*

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Island Studies and Performance Studies

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Introduction

This article emerges from the ongoing research project "@PERIL. Performing Islandness. Performance, Dramaturgy and Curatorship of the Island since the Seventies", based at Università Iuav di Venezia.[1] The project investigates the relationship between performance and insularity, exploring how artistic practices and critical theories engage the island both as a theoretical object and as a specific ecosystem, thereby enabling the rethinking of relations among bodies, ecosystems, imaginaries and utopias of dwelling. As understood in this article, performance designates theatrical and artistic practices not only in a strict sense but also, more broadly, as an embodied mode of enacting, transmitting and generating cultural knowledge (Taylor; Schechner, *Performance Studies*).

The article is structured in three parts. It first outlines some of the key genealogies through which Island Studies have taken shape as a field, with particular attention to the shift from insularity as a fixed condition to islandness as a relational epistemological lens. It then explores the dialogue between Island Studies and Performance Studies through two theoretical perspectives situated in different oceanic contexts: Rebecca Schneider's notion of the *shoal*, articulated from an Atlantic perspective, and Diana Looser's concept of *transpasifika*, developed within contemporary Pacific Studies debates. Analysed in their respective specificity and brought into dialogue, these contributions open a space for thinking the relation between performance and islandness, revealing both the analytical terrain they share and the productive tensions in which they differ.

1 This article was developed within the panel "Eco-Epistemologies: Transdisciplinary Horizons in Performance", proposed by the research unit PerLa | Performance Epistemologies Research Lab (Università Iuav di Venezia) and presented at the *Amfiteater* symposium Ecology and the Performing Arts (9–10 October 2025, SLOGI, Ljubljana). The panel brought together five contributions exploring different intersections between Performance Studies and Island Studies, Blue Studies, Critical Performance Ecologies, Environmental Necropolitics and Digital Space and Environment, with the aim of investigating the epistemological potential of transdisciplinary approaches to performance and ecology.

Island Studies. Genealogies and New Critical Perspectives

Over the past few decades, Island Studies has developed as a field committed to formulating critical perspectives through which to read the forms of thought and practice that emerge within insular geographies. Islands are approached both as localised laboratories of complex socio-ecological relations and as conceptual devices through which to observe some of the decisive polarities of past and present. If islands have long circulated across different traditions of knowledge as privileged sites of philosophical, literary and political inquiry, the consolidation of Island Studies as a recognisable academic field belongs more specifically to the late 20th century, when a constellation of institutions, conferences and research networks began to give visibility and continuity to a dispersed but growing body of work.

One of the earliest attempts to define the field came in 1994 from the anthropologist Grant McCall, who proposed the "Nissology" as the study of islands "on their own terms" (2). McCall's intervention sought to affirm the island as a geographical, historical and cultural unit irreducible to mainland perspectives. However, the emancipatory force of this gesture was accompanied by a typological impulse that risked stabilising the island as a bounded and exceptional entity and the islander as a singular subject defined by territorial coherence and cultural specificity. The field's foundational moment is therefore marked from the outset by a productive tension between epistemological autonomy and essentialising closure.

Published in the same year, 1994, Epeli Hau'ofa's "Our Sea of Islands" redirected that tension in a radically different way. Against colonial and developmental narratives that imagined Pacific islands as small, remote, vulnerable and structurally dependent, Hau'ofa foregrounded the everyday movement, kinship, exchange and navigation, proposing Oceania not as a scattered set of little lands but as a vast and connected sea of islands: "there is a world of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as 'a sea of islands'" (201). The shift is well known but remains crucial: the ocean ceases to appear as a separating void and instead becomes a connective medium, dense with relations, histories and affects. Hau'ofa's intervention has expanded the scale of insular thought and displaced its coordinates, making relation, circulation and oceanic mobility central to the field's future elaborations.

The field entered a new phase of consolidation in the early 2000s, especially through the work of Godfrey Baldacchino, who explicitly described the "coming age of Island Studies" (2004). This early text, drawing on the insular anthropology of Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), from which it borrows its title, takes the first steps toward the consolidation of Island Studies by: moving beyond a singular and archaic definition of insularity; and advancing an interdisciplinary methodology

capable of recognising the extended significance of local phenomena, without reproducing the rigid dialectic between globalisation and localism.

In the editorial of the first issue of the *Island Studies Journal* in 2006, Godfrey Baldacchino recapitulates the stages through which Island Studies had achieved institutional recognition and calls for a renewed transdisciplinary expansion of the field. In this brief text, Baldacchino programmatically relaunches a new key concept for Island Studies ("Editorial" 9): *islandness*, preferable to *insularity*, which seems to retain the semantic connotations of backwardness and isolation ("The coming" 272).

"Islandness operates as a variable: it does not determine events, but shapes and orients their unfolding, influencing physical and social processes in specific – and specifically significant – ways" (273). The shift to islandness marks a decisive move away from deterministic conceptions of the island and its inhabitants. If McCall's nissology advances an ontological understanding of the island as a stable typological unit endowed with identifiable and measurable traits, islandness does not distil an essence – whether geographical or communal – but rather points to a situated and specific insular condition. In his subsequent contribution introducing the first reader in Island Studies, *A World of Islands* (Baldacchino ed., *A World of Islands*), islandness is further mobilised as a notion capable of shifting the perspective from islands in the world to a world of islands, with a clear echo of Hau'ofa's formulation: islandness rescues the island from being understood as a pure trope or social microcosm and instead foregrounds it as a site of action, not an isolated point on the map but a node within an archipelagic network. From this perspective, an island-based gaze does not reduce the islander either to the triumphalist category of resilience or to the deficit-oriented ones of marginality and exclusion; rather, it holds together the epistemological duality of a perspective that looks from and for the island, as well as with the island.

Since then, islandness has become a "contested concept" (Foley et al. 1808), increasingly less concerned with refining definitions of the island as a fixed and static object – confined within the land/sea dichotomy and opposed to the continent – and more inclined to investigate the dynamics of interconnection and movement between islands. This shift has favoured what has been described as the "relational turn in Island Studies" (Pugh, "The Relational"). In doing so, it moves beyond the study of relations between islands towards a greater consideration of the relations between islands and the sea, and between islands, the sea and broader land–sea assemblages (Pugh, "The Relational"). Within this perspective, islandness evolves from a variable capable of modulating physical and social processes into an epistemological lens through which relations, flows, infrastructures, practices and imaginaries that exceed the visible surface of land can be observed. Without

abandoning insular specificity, islandness becomes invested with a relational constitutivity that positions the island within nodes of archipelagic, oceanic and transnational networks.

This relational turn has also brought the field increasingly into dialogue with new epistemologies that seek to decentre continental frameworks of thought (Glissant, *Poétique*; Glissant and Obrist, *Archipelago*) and foreground relational logics of mobility and connection: from Ocean Studies to the Blue Humanities, from wet ontologies to political engagements with the contested concept of the Anthropocene.

In the recent *Rethinking Island Methodologies* (2023), three leading scholars of the field – Godfrey Baldacchino, Elaine Stratford and Elizabeth McMahon – offer an updated overview of the work carried out within Island Studies, critically assessing its outcomes while relaunching its methodological ambitions. Their perspective remains attached to the idea of the island as a synecdoche of the world – where biodiversity and endemism, accelerated extinction and systemic vulnerability become sharply visible – allowing the complex articulation between ecologies, economies, culture and power to be read at scale (12). At the same time, they acknowledge the full co-implication of Island Studies and Archipelagic Studies, emphasising the archipelagic imagination as a new sensibility capable of amplifying the plurality and relationality of islands. The methodological foundation of island scholarship must therefore account for a complexity that holds together the punctual materiality of specific places and their scalar interconnections. This expansion multiplies the reasons for studying islands, archipelagos and the assemblages – human and more-than-human – with which they are entangled, embracing the challenges, strategies, tactics and opportunities offered by insular forms of life.

It is also from within this shift that their dialogue with Performance Studies becomes especially productive: both fields are drawn to unstable grounds, threshold conditions and situated forms of knowledge generated where bodies, environments, histories and imaginaries meet.

Island Studies and Performance Studies: Rebecca Schneider's *Shoal* (2020)

If Island Studies have significantly contributed to the development of ecological thinking – moving away from essentialist understandings of environments and increasingly attentive to the relational, material, cultural and political interdependencies that shape ecosystems – the encounter between Island Studies and artistic practices, particularly performative ones, remains comparatively recent and exploratory (Brinklow, "Stepping-stones"; "Studying").

Rebecca Schneider is a leading scholar in the field of Performance Studies, which was institutionalised in 1980 with the founding of the Department of Performance Studies at New York University by Richard Schechner. Within the framework of Performance Studies – traced through the work of scholars such as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Michael Kirby, Peggy Phelan, Jon McKenzie, Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider – performance is understood as a broad spectrum of actions and practices (Schechner, *Performance Studies*): both as scenic action and, more expansively, as a cultural practice that takes behaviour and the bodily repertoire as its primary objects of study and as a mode of embodied knowledge transmission, a form of doing that participates in the production and contestation of repertoire, identity and cultural memory (Taylor). Rebecca Schneider offers one of the first and most compelling points of contact between Island and Performance Studies. In her essay "This shoal which is not one: Island studies, performance studies, and Africans who fly", published in *Island Studies Journal* in 2020, Schneider explores the unstable zone in which the two fields begin to share an epistemological threshold.

The essay takes as its starting point the variant stories surrounding Igbo Landing, the 1803 shoaling of the slave ship *York* and the mutiny of a group of enslaved Igbo-speaking Africans who, after revolting against their captors, ran aground near St. Simons Island, Georgia. Schneider is less interested in reconstructing a single historical truth than in dwelling on the undecidability that structures the tale.

> The multiple versions of this story resound with still circulating cross-currents of pain and joy, an optimism and pessimism sounding in percussive iterations that do not resolve (or do not only resolve) […] But perhaps either way and simultaneously—rising into the air to fly away and/or walking into the water to drown—the Igbo at Dunbar Creek refused the plot that the island plantations held in store. So in terms of the variant endings to the tale, perhaps both can be true—drowning and flying. Who is to say what happened? Who is to say that folk in the littoral zones among life and death do not fly? (203)

It is through this unresolved narrative that Schneider introduces the figure of the *shoal*. Echoing Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One*, the shoal is not simply the unstable sandy geography between land and sea but also a conceptual device that troubles fixed categories: between land and water, Black and Indigenous analytics, history and fabulation, human and more-than-human. Quoting Tiffany Lethabo King in *The Black Shoals*, Schneider understands the shoaling as a form of practice – "combining, merging, and generating new forms of Black embodiment […] pushing the limits of what is conventionally understood as the human body" (King 117).

At this point, Schneider turns to Island Studies scholar Jonathan Pugh's argument that islands should not be understood as discrete geographical entities but as assemblages composed of ocean, island and ship (Pugh, "The Relational" 1042). Drawing on the

Deleuzian notion of assemblage – ultimately rooted in Spinoza – Pugh invites us to resist thinking of sea, ship and island as separate entities and instead to approach them as dynamic configurations shaped by shifting relations between human and more-than-human forces. To articulate this idea, Schneider highlights that Pugh turns to performance, specifically the Barbadian Landship dance tradition. In the Landship, dancers embody maritime orientations through choreography, producing bodies that are simultaneously "at sea" and "on land". Although the performance is deeply rooted in the cultural history of Barbados, it also incorporates layered temporalities that recall different maritime regimes, from the slave ship to the steamship and to the contemporary cruise liner. These shifting references reveal how capitalist relations have historically operated through changing configurations of island, sea and ship (Pugh, "The Relational" 1055).

Seen from this perspective, the simultaneity enacted by the Landship resonates with the irresolution that structures the stories of Igbo Landing. Just as the dancers are both at sea and not at sea, the Igbo rebels are said both to have drowned and to have flown. The narrative remains suspended at a threshold, in a shoal, refusing a definitive resolution. Rather than deciding what a body can or cannot do, attention shifts toward the relational conditions through which bodies, environments and histories are continually composed and recomposed.

According to Schneider, this convergence between Island Studies and Performance Studies is not accidental. Performance has long been theorised as a liminal field. In Victor Turner's influential formulation (*The Ritual Process*; *From Ritual to Theatre*), liminality occupies the central phase of ritual, designating a condition of betweenness between established social states. Early Performance Studies (Schechner, *Performance Theory*; *Performance Studies*) adopted this concept to describe theatrical or performative spaces as zones in which actions are neither fully real nor entirely unreal; they are spaces where reality may be suspended and alternative configurations explored. Nevertheless, liminality has also been widely debated within Performance Studies, where scholars have questioned whether it functions merely as a transitional corridor that ultimately restores the dominant order, or whether it can instead generate more radical forms of suspension and instability.

In this sense, performance operates much like the shoal itself. Acts such as storytelling, dance and theatrical gesture are at once singular and iterable: they reappear, transform and circulate across bodies and media. In relation to the broader "solid ground" of the real, performative acts are neither fully real nor fully unreal, just as the dancers of the Landship are neither in the sea nor entirely outside it.

> Performance studies may share something with island studies if the shifting aqueous netherworld of sea and shore shares something with the movement into and out of materiality and immateriality that characterizes zones of performance. Dance, theatre,

> orature, and gestures that repeat are at once singular and citational, continually de- and re-composing. Considered in relation to the larger landmass of "the real", theatrical or performance-based acts such as stories, dances, and plays are not real but not *not* real, just as Landship dancers are not at sea but not not at sea. In the netherworld of performance, solid states oscillate toward becoming undone, and fluid states syncopate with stasis. The so-called human, too, laps at its own borders as one so-called human plays at becoming another, speaks through another, or takes the shape of a spirit, a stone, a tree, a ship, a wave, a dream, a bird. […]
>
> The suggestion here is that thinking with shoals, and liminality/littorality in general, may enable a capacity toward what we do not/yet/know. To be caught upon a shoal is to be arrested out of flow from within flow, but it is also a fulcrum point for the potentiality of otherwise ways of knowing. (207)

The force of this relationship lies in the fact that both performance and islandness occupy an unstable in-between. Neither fully fixed nor fully fluid, both are continually de- and recomposed through repetition, erosion, drift, recurrence, and return.

Both are, in this sense, "on a shoal", which names a littoral condition of knowledge. It marks a threshold where forms do not resolve into identity but remain suspended in oscillation: between land and sea, stable ground and pure flows, appearance and disappearance, materiality and immateriality, body and more-than-body. Islands and performances, from this perspective, can both be approached as situated modes of knowing generated in conditions of interruption, friction and unstable relations. To think with shoals, Schneider suggests, is to think with liminality/littorality not as a passage toward resolution but as a suspended and generative threshold, one that may "enable a capacity toward what we do not yet know" (208).

Island Studies and Performance Studies: Diana Looser's *Transpasifika* (2021)

If Rebecca Schneider's reflection situates the encounter between Island Studies and Performance Studies from a North American Performance Studies perspective, Diana Looser approaches a related set of questions from a different geographical and intellectual horizon: that of contemporary Pacific Studies. Her work develops within the framework of Transpacific Studies, an interdisciplinary field that since the mid-2000s has sought to rethink the historical, political and cultural relations that traverse the Pacific region. Emerging at the intersection of Asian, Southeast Asian and American studies, this field moves beyond earlier geopolitical designations such as "Asia-Pacific" or "Pacific Rim", foregrounding instead the movements of peoples, materials, imaginaries and infrastructures that have shaped the region across different historical moments.

The transpacific perspective has opened important possibilities for analysing connections that exceed national or continental frameworks. By tracing the circulation of diasporas, cultural forms and political struggles across the ocean, it has drawn attention to the networks through which Asian, Pacific Islander and American communities have interacted and transformed one another. Yet, as Looser observes, much transpacific scholarship remains structured around the axis linking Asia and the United States. In many accounts, the Pacific appears primarily as a connective medium between continental powers, a space across which flows of capital, labour, military power and cultural exchange take place.

In this sense, the prefix *trans* tends to emphasise passage and connectivity across the ocean, foregrounding movement between distant points rather than the specific worlds that inhabit the oceanic space itself. While this perspective has been crucial for revealing the geopolitical and economic forces shaping the region – particularly the long histories of American military presence and imperial expansion in the Pacific – it can also risk reproducing a cartographic logic in which the ocean functions mainly as a corridor between continents.

As Looser notes, such frameworks may inadvertently obscure the histories, epistemologies and cultural practices of Pacific Islander communities, whose perspectives have often remained marginal within broader transpacific debates. For this reason, her work proposes a partial reorientation of perspective: one that loosens the United States as the central reference point of transpacific cartographies and foregrounds the differentiated histories, local epistemologies and cultural frameworks that structure Pacific worlds. According to Looser, any relational account of the Pacific must remain attentive to the heterogeneous cultural contexts and material conditions through which mobility, exchange and encounter take place.

Within this discussion, Looser also identifies a significant disciplinary gap. Despite the centrality of ritual, dance and performance in many Pacific societies, these practices have rarely been treated as primary objects of analysis within Pacific scholarship. Instead, performative practices are frequently mobilised as ethnographic illustration or metaphorical evidence for broader social processes, rather than examined as complex aesthetic events shaped by specific conditions of production, spectatorship and embodiment.

> Pacific studies' primary grounding in the social, political, and natural sciences has tended to preclude performance as a subject of critical inquiry. Instead, performance has been enlisted as a metaphor for understanding ethnohistorical encounters and processes, or the performance event is captured in an ethnographic account as a means of illuminating other social practices and structures. […]

> This situation needs to change, because the analytic tools and perspectives of theater and performance studies are admirably equipped to interpret how the intercultural interactions and their attendant social processes described above are worked out in everyday life and in aesthetic contexts. Performance studies thus has a significant conceptual contribution to make to Oceanian scholarship by showing, for instance, how theoretical abstractions and macro structural forces can be grounded in performance's socio-materialities, and by offering new methods for examining how the intricacies of race and culture are expressed corporeally. (21)

Theatre and Performance Studies offer conceptual and methodological tools particularly well suited to analysing how social relations, cultural identities and political tensions are enacted within embodied and situated practices. By focusing on the material conditions of performance – its spatial arrangements, corporeal dynamics, collaborative processes and audience relations – performance scholarship enables the examination of how broader historical and structural forces manifest themselves within concrete artistic events.

From this perspective, performance emerges as a dynamic medium through which Pacific communities negotiate histories of colonialism, migration and cultural transformation. The stage, the festival, the ritual gathering or the artistic collaboration becomes a site where relations between islands, diasporas and global networks are actively produced and reconfigured.

It is within this broader context that Looser introduces the concept of *transpasifika*, a term she proposes as an analytical lens for approaching contemporary performance in the Pacific.

> It is thus less a spatial designation (traversing an area) than a relational one (a way of talking expansively about a sense of relationships among the peoples and cultures of the Pacific world).
>
> "Transpasifika" is a term that embeds multiple interculturalisms. "Pasifika" ("Pasefika" in Samoan) can denote the ocean, but it is more commonly a term designating Pacific Islands peoples in general, while eluding the (derogatory) aggregate of the generic "Pacific Islander" category. […] "Pasifika" is therefore a collective, relational term, specifying no single culture or essential trait but indicating communities linked through common ancestries or experiences (sometimes amicably, sometimes in deep conflict), and involving multiple habitations, transits, identifications, and modes of place-making. As an indigenized term built on an Indigenous one (unlike, for example, the Māori tino rangatiratanga, which steadfastly refuses direct translation) "Pasifika" references and critiques a hybrid history: it both refers to and resists Magellan's *Mar Pacífico*, acknowledging the legacy of European knowledge and power in constituting the region while insisting on an Indigenous substructure and reemergence, and avowing the agency of Pacific/Oceanian peoples to define space, place, and identity in the present. (25).

Rather than functioning as a comprehensive label for cultural production in the region, *transpasifika* operates as a conceptual lens through which the discourses of transpacific studies and performance scholarship can be brought into dialogue. The term shifts the focus from the Pacific as a space to be crossed to Pasifika as a relational constellation of communities, histories and cultural practices extending across islands, diasporas and global networks.

This reconceptualisation is particularly productive for Performance Studies, where performative practices already unfold within relational and processual fields. Performances emerge through the circulation of bodies, repertoires, audiences and institutions that move between islands, diasporic communities and international stages. Approached through a *transpasifika* lens, performance becomes a medium through which dispersed relations are materialised, negotiated and transformed, carrying genealogies of movement, displacement and belonging that exceed conventional territorial frameworks.

Within this perspective, the *trans* of *transpasifika* acquires a performative dimension. It signals not simply movement across space but the processes through which cultural meanings are produced through embodied interaction, historical memory and shifting political conditions. The meaning of a performance, therefore, does not reside solely in the work itself but emerges from the networks of relations that sustain and transform it.

This relational approach also enables the tracing of the mutable geographies of Pacific mobility. Pacific Islander migrations have historically unfolded through colonial displacement, labour circulation, military presence and diasporic settlement, producing communities distributed across the region and beyond. Performance mediates these conditions of dispersion, enabling the maintenance of cultural practices while generating new forms of collective identification in changing social contexts.

Finally, Looser's proposal foregrounds the political implications of these relational formations. The Pacific has long been shaped by colonial expansion, militarisation, nuclear testing, extractive economies and the accelerating effects of climate change. Within these conditions, performance becomes one of the sites through which Pacific communities articulate responses to these pressures, producing aesthetic forms that address questions of sovereignty, ecological vulnerability, migration and cultural survival. Read through a *transpasifika* lens, such practices reveal how artistic expression participates in the ongoing reconfiguration of the Pacific "sea of islands" (Hau'ofa 201).

To conclude, looking at performance from the island – and at islands through performance – shifts attention away from stable objects toward relational processes. Both emerge as dynamic fields in which bodies, histories and imaginaries are continually recomposed. Rebecca Schneider's *shoal* and Diana Looser's *transpasifika*

indicate two distinct ways in which Island Studies and Performance Studies begin to intersect across different contexts.

If Schneider foregrounds the littoral threshold as a site of epistemological instability, Looser emphasises the relational networks through which performances circulate across the Pacific Ocean. Nevertheless, *shoal* and *transpasifika* are not simply two "oceanic" variations of the same relational framework: they emerge from historically and culturally distinct genealogies. Schneider's *shoal* is forged within the tradition of the Black Atlantic, its conceptual force inseparable from the history of the plantation, the violence of the Middle Passage and the haunting irresolution of African diaspora; Looser's *transpasifika* is grounded in Pacific Indigenous cultural studies and in struggles for Indigenous self-determination, shaped by different regimes of colonial violence and by marine cosmologies that Hau'ofa had already charted as irreducible to any continental frame. These are also differently oriented political and critical projects. Schneider's framework locates its force in irresolution, suspension and the "not yet knowing": working through haunting and the refusal of closure as modes of resistance, it keeps the violence of the Black Atlantic alive as an open wound rather than a resolved past. Looser's *transpasifika* moves from a different starting point: the affirmation of Pacific Islander agency, the specificity of cultural identities and the density of Indigenous practices. To read these two frameworks together, as this article proposes, is therefore not to dissolve this difference but to hold it open: as two distinct situated knowledges that converge on the same question – how performance and islandness think together – while remaining irreducibly anchored in their own oceanic worlds.

In this sense, the encounter between Island Studies and Performance Studies opens a shared analytical terrain in which performance and insular worlds can be understood through relationality, movement and instability within broader epistemological entanglements.

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Povzetek

Članek raziskuje dialog med otoškimi študiji in uprizoritvenimi študiji z dveh teoretskih vidikov, ki izhajata iz različnih kontekstov.

Esej se začne z rekonstrukcijo nekaterih ključnih momentov razvoja otoških študijev kot znanstvenega področja, pri čemer je izpostavljen obrat od otoške lege (ang. *insularity* – op. prev.) kot nespremenljivega geografskega stanja k otoškosti (ang. *islandness* – op. prev.) kot relacijski epistemološki perspektivi. Nato prouči dva koncepta, ki prispevata k vzpostavitvi dialoga med otoškimi študiji in uprizoritvenimi študiji. *Plitvina* (ang. *shoal* – op. prev.), pojem, ki ga je Rebecca Schneider razvila v atlantskem kontekstu, izpostavlja obalna območja kot epistemološke pragove, kjer se telesa, zgodovine in okolja srečujejo v nestabilnih in transformativnih odnosih. *Transpasifika*, koncept Diane Looser, ki izhaja iz pacifiških študijev in transpacifiških znanstvenih dognanj, predlaga relacijski okvir za analizo, kako se uprizarjanje razširja po otokih, skupnostih v diaspori in globalnih omrežjih. S skupnim branjem obeh perspektiv se razkrije, kako lahko uprizarjanje in otoškost razumemo kot relacijska procesa, ki ju oblikujejo gibanje, nestabilnost in ekološka soodvisnost. S srečanjem otoških študij in uprizoritvenih študij se torej odpre plodno analitično področje za raziskave, kako umetniške prakse prispevajo k rekonfiguraciji otoških svetov in njihovih širših epistemoloških konfiguracij.

Ključne besede: otoški študiji, uprizoritveni študiji, oceanske epistemologije, plitvina, *transpasifika*

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Otoški študiji in uprizoritveni študiji

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Članek osvetljuje dialog, ki se poraja med otoškimi študijami in uprizoritvenimi študiji, ter trdi, da med področjema obstaja plodna epistemološka sorodnost, saj sta usmerjeni v pragovna stanja, relacijske procese in umeščene oblike vednosti. Njuno presečišče ni predstavljeno v celoti, temveč skozi prizmo dveh teoretskih prispevkov, umeščenih v različna oceanska konteksta: skozi koncept *plitvine* Rebecce Schneider in koncept *transpasifike* Diane Looser.

Začetek članka je namenjen rekonstrukciji izvora otoških študijev kot področja. Njegovemu razvoju sledimo od »nisologije« (Grant McCall, 1994) in temeljne rekonceptualizacije Oceanije kot »morja otokov« – povezovalnega medija namesto razpršene množice oddaljenih in odvisnih ozemelj (Epeli Hau'ofa) – prek konsolidacije *otoškosti* kot epistemološke perspektive (Godfrey Baldacchino) do »relacijskega obrata« (Jonathan Pugh, 2016). Iz tega je razvidno, kako so se otoški študiji postopoma oddaljili od omejenega, esencialističnega razumevanja otoka, in sicer v smeri relacijskega okvira, ki se osredotoča na tokove, skupke, transformacijo in mobilnost, kar pomeni premik področja proti uprizoritvenim študijem.

Sledi obravnava eseja Rebecce Schneider »This shoal which is not one« (*ISJ*, 2020), enega prvih strukturiranih poskusov mišljenja otoških študijev in uprizoritvenih študijev skupaj. Schneider, ki izhaja iz radikalno različnih pripovedi o dogodkih v kraju Igbo Landing (o uporu in množični smrti zasužnjenih Afričanov iz ljudstva Igbo leta 1803 ob obali Georgie), razvije koncept plitvine kot obalnega območja epistemološke suspenzije. Na podlagi teorij liminalnosti (Turner, Schechner), ki jih pretresa z vidika črnskih študij (King, Moten), Schneider predlaga plitvino kot prag, kjer telesa, zgodovine in okolja sobivajo, a se ne razrešijo v stabilno identiteto. Plesno tradicijo, ki jo gojijo v kulturnih centrih Landship na Barbadosu in za katero je značilno, da izvajalci hkrati utelešajo kopno in morje, preteklost in sedanjost, predstavi kot ključni primer uprizarjanja, ki deluje prav v tej plitvini: trdi, da so si otoški študiji in uprizoritveni študiji bližje na področju »obalnega stanja vednosti«, ki »omogoča pot v smeri tistega, česar še ne poznamo«.

Nato je obravnavan koncept *transpasifika*, ki ga je razvila Diana Looser v študiji »Moving Islands« (2021). Looser kritizira okvir transpacifiških študij, ker slednji

reproducira kartografsko logiko, po kateri ima Pacifik predvsem vlogo koridorja med celinskimi silami na račun epistemologij, kozmologij in kulturnih praks prebivalstva Pacifiških otokov.

V nasprotju s to tendenco *transpasifika* preusmerja analitični pogled na Pasifiko sámo kot relacijsko konstelacijo skupnosti, zgodovin in predstav, ki se razteza čez otoke, diaspore in globalna omrežja. Looser trdi, da gledališki in uprizoritveni študiji nudijo edinstvena metodološka orodja za analizo tega, kako se družbeni odnosi, kulturne identitete in politične napetosti udejanjajo v utelešenih in umeščenih praksah; predstava torej ni le metafora v pacifiški znanosti, temveč osrednje prizorišče neodvisnega delovanja in ustvarjanja vednosti.

Članek se zaključi z argumentacijo, da *plitvina* in *transpasifika* nista zgolj dve »oceanski« različici istega relacijskega okvira. Koncept plitvine, kot ga je razvila Schneider, izhaja iz tradicije črnskega Atlantika in kot način uporniške miselnosti kritično moč črpa iz nadnaravnega (ang. *haunting* – op. prev.), suspenzije in zavračanja pomiritve s preteklostjo. Transpasifika, kot jo je razvila Looser, pa temelji na epistemologijah pacifiških staroselcev ter je politično zavezana neodvisnemu delovanju staroselcev in specifičnosti pacifiških kulturnih identitet. Članek trdi, da cilj skupnega branja obeh pojmov ni zabrisati njuno nesimetričnost, temveč jo ohranjati odprto: kot dve različno umeščeni obliki vednosti, ki sta si sicer bližje pri vprašanju, kako uprizarjanje in otoškost misliti skupaj, hkrati pa ostajata trdno zasidrani v lastni oceanski geografiji, kulturah in zgodovinah.

* Pričujoči članek je nastal v okviru panela »Eko-epistemologije. Transdisciplinarni horizonti uprizarjanja«, ki jo je predlagala raziskovalna enota PerLa – Performance Epistemologies Research Lab (Univerza Iuav v Benetkah) in je potekala na *Amfiteatrovem* simpoziju »Ekologija in uprizoritvene umetnosti« (9.–10. 10. 2025, SLOGI, Ljubljana). Obravnavala je pet prispevkov, ki raziskujejo različna presečišča med uprizoritvenimi študiji in otoškimi študiji, modrimi študiji, kritičnimi ekologijami uprizoritvenih umetnosti, okoljsko nekropolitiko ter digitalnim prostorom in okoljem, s ciljem raziskati epistemološki potencial transdisciplinarnih pristopov k uprizarjanju in ekologiji.

Prevedla Urška Daly.

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Abstract

Based on the framework that both piracy and dramaturgy have shaped and reshaped the collective imaginary, this contribution proposes the notion of "pirate dramaturgy" as an entangled mode of thinking-through-practising radical ecologies (and alternative world-making). Exploring the *Exterritory Project* (2009–ongoing) by artists Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela as both a material and immaterial site for rethinking the threads between ecology and performance while sailing through international waters of the Mediterranean Sea and the juridical voids they constitute, the article questions the urgency of reconceptualising modes of worlding beyond terrestrial-based frameworks. Drawing on blue humanities and anarchist studies, the article brings these fields together around the concept of extraterritoriality and proposes the concept of pirate dramaturgy as both an epistemic category and an operational tool – an engaged mode of looking at performances that navigate the margins of the legal–juridical as well as the edges of forms of representation. Through close analysis of Amir and Sela's interventions in extraterritorial waters, the contribution examines how maritime zones of legal ambiguity become dramaturgical sites for alternative modes of thinking and performing ecological–political practices, while foregrounding the radical potential of extraterritoriality to engage with the oceanic turn in performance studies.

Keywords: dramaturgy, piracy, anarchism, extraterritoriality, salt waters, blue studies

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Spinning Extraterritorial Yarns: Notes Towards Pirate Dramaturgy

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Extraterritorial Yarns[1]

At the time of this writing, ecological questions proceed apace alongside the rise of the far right and the waning of the political significance and the communitarian aspirations that originally shaped the foundational substance of the democratic project and its co-dwelling.[2] Whether in the North or in the South, the inexorable ascendancy of narrow elites – comprising major owners, purchasers and investors who orchestrate the ecological discourse with the theatrical flair of television hosts – unfolds relentlessly and unimpeded. Scientifically trained in the generation of profit and capital accumulation, these entrepreneurs, who simultaneously function and perform as entertainers, correspond exactly to those who ostensibly govern and (should) steward the *ecology*, thereby consolidating their roles as the primary architects and enforcers of juridical authority and political demarcations. What constitutes legality and what does not; who is granted legitimacy and who is excluded from that legitimacy; what is a national territory deserving of protection and/or recognition as a state and what is not; which spaces are subjected to reduction or stripped of their margins – reabsorbed and folded back into dominant political domains – and which ones are empowered to conquer and expand their conceptual

1 This article was developed within the panel Eco-Epistemologies. Transdisciplinary Horizons in Performance, proposed by the research unit PerLa – Performance Epistemologies Research Lab (Università Iuav di Venezia) and presented at the Amfiteater symposium Ecology and the Performing Arts (9–10 October 2025, SLOGI, Ljubljana). The panel brought together five contributions exploring different intersections between Performance Studies and Island Studies, Blue Studies, Critical Performance Ecologies, Environmental Necropolitics, and Digital Space and Environment, with the aim of investigating the epistemological potential of transdisciplinary approaches to performance and ecology.

2 This article was written during a research stay in Melbourne, Australia – on a continent positioned at the furthest edge of what is conventionally defined as the *West* and radically dislocated from the Mediterranean waters that form the geographical and conceptual site of this case study. It took shape in the aftermath of the August 2025 White House meeting between Donald Trump and seven European leaders convened to discuss ending the war in Ukraine. In an article published in *Il Sole 24 Ore*, titled "The Washington Summit Demonstrates the Need for the United States of Europe", Giuliano Noci described the moment as marking not merely a Spenglerian decline but the "funeral of the West", with Europe – or, more precisely, those whose lives unfold across its lands and seas and make it possible at all – reduced to a silent, paying audience (Noci; my translation). Events have since moved beyond what was agreed in the rooms of the White House: Russia's attacks on Ukraine and Israel's assault on the Palestinian population in Gaza have continued, while Europe has lost political ground, stalled for time and dissolved into fragmented leaderships increasingly subordinated to the arms race of both East and West, rather than asserting itself as a pacifist, unified yet plural voice. Europe thus appears to require not simply reform but complete reconstruction and radical reconceptualisation.

and effective geographies; who endures punishment as disobedient and bears the designation of international terrorist and who, because of complicit and blind silence or enslavement, receives celebration as the ideal citizen, the laudable servile patriot: these determinations are arbitrarily established by a small coterie of powerful people who, from their concentrated and short-sighted loci of authority, govern and exercise dominion over all others and across any terrestrial, maritime and aerial dimensions. It is within this context of juridical violence and oppression – where law becomes the instrument of elite domination rather than collective justice and where ecological narratives must be reinvented and reenacted – that it becomes urgent to situate the radical potential of piracy and its alternative world-making. In doing so, such a repositioning enables a rethinking of not only our modes of conceptualising ecology but also all the practices bound up with it. Hence, piracy needs to take the stage. But which piracy? And which stage?

In a fundamental book that rethinks Western land-oriented history by adopting a maritime gaze, Marcus Rediker (*Outlaws*) attempts to understand how the world worked at a time-space when oceans and continents – and thus, cultures and politics – were connected through crews of people boarding ships. On his voyage back and forth across the Atlantic – crossing those who were labelled *outlaws* because of the various ways they defied the laws of the day in order to resist their exploitation – the author proposes the sailor's yarn as a key for exploring what was historically hidden when discourses of dwelling, labour and resistance remained entrenched within terrestrial categories. Building on the genesis of the term, which grows from four related worlds of work – textile manufacture, fishing, rope making, seafaring – and whose original definition refers to spun fibre prepared for use in weaving or knitting (26), Marcus Rediker describes what soon takes on a meaning in nautical slang:

> To spin a yarn is to tell a story or tale, usually one of maritime adventure, about dramatic shipwrecks, bloody battles, tyrannical officers, or determined resistance. These were often long, complex and colourful narratives, incorporating humorous, marvellous and fantastic elements as well as communal lore, practical knowledge of class and work and death-defying experience. The yarn is perpetually invented and reinvented in each and every maritime setting, whether at sea or ashore, as individual storytellers add their own talents and fashion their tales for an everchanging audience. The maritime story is called a yarn because of a specific labour process on the ship, where work was collective, lonely, and noncontinuous (26–27).

The collectivity, loneliness and discontinuity of yarns – and their material and immaterial evocation of strands, ropes and nets that constantly interweave – constitute the cardinal principle through which Marcus Rediker constructs his discourse around an alternative mode of inhabiting lands and seas. It is precisely within the weaving of these threads that hold together Mediterranean waters – through unexpected,

previously unmapped yet proximate and kindred routes – that this article positions itself. This article therefore argues that any rigorous, sustained reflection on ecology – whether theoretical or practical – must also pass through piracy, whose imaginary continues to exceed and unsettle the frameworks imposed by narrow, powerful elites. This intersection thus gestures toward a fundamental epistemic, aesthetic and political framework for rethinking our worlding as well as for enacting a decisive shift of perspective from land to sea, enabling us to think-through-practising radical and water-based modes of dwelling together.

Rather than addressing the full complexity of how piracy might constitute itself as a comprehensive methodology, I reserve for other contexts the upheaval and transformation it might entail.[3] What I choose to foreground instead is the concept of extraterritoriality, which operates as the generative knot where the multiple yarns of the *Exterritory Project* are both tied together and spun forward into new configurations and through which I attempt to extend and develop the notion of *pirate dramaturgy* as both analytical category and creative practice.

By spanning and floating across multiple and heterogeneous dimensions and through their intrinsic and defining features of in-betweenness – simultaneously *ex-straneus* and *extra legem* and yet paradoxically and consistently citizens of a state, thereby perpetually compelled to confront and negotiate with institutional authorities and juridical frameworks – pirates have fundamentally challenged and reframed the boundaries and demarcations between legality and illegality, between legitimate and illegitimate forms of sovereignty and power (Heller-Roazen; Cotta). They have actively and strategically positioned themselves within an ongoing, contested re-negotiation and re-configuration of political power and authority, thereby significantly and continuously shaping and influencing dominant collective imaginaries about law, territory and belonging (Rediker, *Villains*). Nevertheless, as often and repeatedly occurs with those stubborn and disobedient subjectivities that attempt to resist systemic and hegemonic structures – operating simultaneously as insiders and outsiders – pirates have ultimately and perhaps inevitably been appropriated, neutralised and swallowed up by land-based jurisdictions (Sadowski). Swallowed up by the expansive, all-consuming apparatus of consumer capitalism and its cultural industries, their radical potential has been absorbed and defused. Rather than examining the popular-cultural reappropriation and commodification of piracy conceived merely and exclusively for mass consumption – carefully designed for simplistic entertainment and systematically dispossessed of its radical potential for

3 Here, I refer to another publication where I focused on the specific agency of the Jolly Roger flag to introduce the figure of the pirate as a conceptual persona who, embodying a maritime-multi-perspective, enables us to rethink critically and creatively both human-environment organisations and human-community interactions. The attempt is, thus, to reshape our dominant discourses – terrestrial and colonial – by promoting a salt-watery epistemology that facilitates the shifting, expanding and simultaneously deepening of our modes of conceptualisation and imagination, both geographical and political. See Bonanno.

genuine political transformation and collective liberation (Liang) – this contribution navigates and interrogates the contested meanings, interpretations and political orientations that remain at stake in contemporary representations of piracy. It seeks, thus, to rehabilitate and reclaim the figure of the pirate not as a dangerous and violent criminal requiring avoidance, punishment and elimination, but rather as a contemporary political symbol and practical model that embodies radical, subversive and genuinely collective ways of co-existing and organising social life, both across wet contested spaces and within terrestrial movements. Indeed, as Anselm Franke, Eyal Weizman and Ines Weizman observe:

> Pirates learn how to abuse and exploit the advantage of their geography – the political voids and legal loopholes that exist in extraterritorial zones help constitute an alternative, faster, deadlier, and more efficient system of flow and circulation. Piracy was indeed for trans-oceanic trade what terrorism is for economic globalization (Franke, Weizman E., Weizman I. 121).

This comparison, while provocative and unsettling, highlights how pirates, operating outside conventional territorial frameworks, fundamentally disrupt established systems of control and circulation and, thus, embody the meaning and perspective of being extraterritorial. And it is precisely around and through this concept of extraterritoriality – which Gerhard Richter defines as "existing in a territory beyond territory, belonging to a territory while at the same time being 'extra' or superfluous to it" (Hart 16) – that Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela co-curated a publication entitled *Extraterritorialities in Occupied Worlds* to develop its critical and creative framework.

Edited and produced as an integral part of the broader *Exterritory* art project itself, it was specifically designed and intended to encourage and facilitate both the theoretical investigation and practical exploration of ideas and concepts concerning extraterritoriality in all its dimensions. And thus, the whole project explicitly and ambitiously attempts "not only to draw on existing definitions of extraterritoriality but seeks to reload it with new meanings, searching for ways in which the notion of extraterritoriality could produce a critique of discriminating power structures and re-articulate new practical, conceptual and poetical possibilities" (Amir and Sela 15). It does so by generating a network of intellectual, artistic and professional connections that circumvent national politics and social hierarchies, while setting up enclaves *of (temporary) freedom*.[4]

4 This expression *(temporary) freedom* directly recalls the authors' own description of their work and helps to clarify its meaning and perspective. The full statement from which this expression is taken is the following: "*Exterritory* is an art project that strives to create a platform for knowledge production and exchange in an autonomous space temporarily free from grounding national restraints. The project wishes to become a platform in transit of (temporary) freedom." For further insights, see the website of the artists or this link: https://www.visibleproject.org/project-4/exterritory-project/.

> The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it. Because the State is concerned primarily with Simulation rather than substance, the TAZ can 'occupy' these areas clandestinely and carry on its festal purposes for quite a while in relative peace. [...] As soon as the TAZ is named (represented, mediated), it must vanish, it will vanish, leaving behind it an empty husk, only to spring up again somewhere else, once again invisible because of undefinable in terms of the Spectacle. The TAZ is thus a perfect tactic for an era in which the State is omnipresent and all-powerful and yet simultaneously riddled with cracks and vacancies. And because the TAZ is a microcosm of that 'anarchist dream' of a free culture, I can think of no better tactic by which to work toward that goal while at the same time experiencing some of its benefits here and now. (Bey, *The Temporary* 128)

TAZ is the abbreviation for Temporary Autonomous Zone, a concept conceived by the anarchist Hakim Bey in his manifesto to "highlight indeterminate zones within late capitalism, everyday occurrences that refuse, whether by accident or design, to be incorporated into dominant narratives" (Sellars 83). This manifesto became an extraordinarily divisive text in anarchist circles and revolutionary movements as well as in cyberculture – a complexity and a controversy that, while fascinating and generative, I do not intend to explore further here, leaving a more thorough engagement with its theoretical and political waves for other contexts.[5] What is instead relevant to underline is the role of the TAZ as a site that, precisely because of its extraterritoriality, actualises those times and spaces in which freedom is possible and truly materialised. Specifically, it is through its temporality and its capacity to exist simultaneously beyond the State, the Nation and any institutional law, that the TAZ, as the first modern form of *pirate utopia* (Bey, *The Temporary* 163), constitutes exactly the epistemic category by means of which the *Exterritory Project* might be examined and reframed. Just as pirate utopias – stateless, mobile, organised according to their own codes and articles[6] – were conceived as temporary formations enacted across ungovernable, ungoverned waters, so too does this project unfold upon and perform with Mediterranean salt waters: a

5 For a general overview of the relevance of Temporary Autonomous Zones' conception and its declinations and effects in current global politics and philosophical, ecological knowledge production, see, among others, Waalwijk, Swanstrom and Polyakov.

6 The features and organisational structures of pirate utopias are first traced by Hakim Bey – pseudonym of Peter Lamborn Wilson – in his essay "Pirate Utopias", in which he outlines pirate enclaves as early forms of proto-anarchist societies that operated beyond the reach of state governance and embraced radical, if provisional, forms of freedom. On the radical and anarchist potential of pirate figures and communities as models of alternative political organisation see: Bey, *Pirate utopias*; Graeber, *Fragments*; Graeber, *Pirate enlightenment*.

temporary space beyond territorial control that materialises alternative modes of co-dwelling in the gaps between territorial jurisdictions. As Bey himself insists:

> It is not a harbinger of some pie-in-the-sky Social Utopia to which we must sacrifice our lives that our children's children may breathe a bit of free air. The TAZ must be the scene of our present autonomy, but it can only exist on the condition that we already know ourselves as free beings (Bey, *The Temporary* 173).

It is precisely within this condition – of recognising one's own freedom and finding the space and the time in which to perform it – that the dramaturgy of the project takes shape. Freedom, here, is not an abstract ideal or a given, but rather a field of practice that must be continuously negotiated, reclaimed and practised. It is by floating on this dramaturgical intention that the project positions itself as a site of experimentation, where the act of practising and the act of thinking are not separated but deeply entangled, each informing and transforming the other. Significantly, it is through its thinking-through-practice (Bleeker, *Doing* 23–48) radical forms of freedom that dramaturgy, finally and extensively, turns into a mode of enacting that goes beyond its simple technical or organisational function. It becomes, instead, that "catalytic mode of working that has the capacity to activate processes that in today's sociopolitical and economic context could be understood as indirect, inefficient, interfering, or negatively efficient" (Georgelou, Protopapa, Theodoridou 21). As such, dramaturgy positions itself as a form of resistance to the dominant logics of productivity and measurable outcome, insisting on the value of what escapes easy quantification – the slow, the oblique, the unresolved. In doing so, it becomes a salt-soaked path for circumventing any form of control and, above all, for creating alternative forms of coexistence and reciprocity capable of holding together artists and thinkers from conflict zones where such encounters are usually denied.

Moving towards wet routes – attentive, tentative, inhabiting ungovernable and contested spaces – the project suggests intersections of currents that escape any terrestrial positioning and plunge into water-based sites. In so doing, any sense of being bound by the State dissolves, making it possible to recreate that maritime dimension of the *jus publicum Europaeum* described by Schmitt, in which a form of freedom irreducible to its terrestrial counterpart is activated by ships as essentially non-state vessels (Schmitt 172–173). Within this stateless geography, the *Exterritory Project* was conceived in 2009, when Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela began searching for a neutral space in which to screen a compilation of films by artists from the Middle East. As Alice Pfeiffer reports in the Global Edition of the *New York Times*, "the only space that appeared to be suitable, allowing people from countries in conflict to show their work together, was a strip of extraterritorial water 11 kilometres, or about seven miles, off Israel in the Mediterranean. The

strip is generally about 13 kilometres wide, beyond which lie international waters" (1).[7]

Floating on salt waters and escaping from land-bound laws, the project then began as a platform for critical thinking on the problems of nations and borders worldwide and, in particular, as an attempt to find a way to curate artist events and seminars in the context of the ongoing Palestinian boycott of Israeli cultural institutions, seeking a mutually accessible space free from questions of boundaries and hyper-national claims.[8] The live performance – and the whole concept of the project – started with the projection of a video named *Wild West*, which was presented on the sails of a boat in June 2009 in the extraterritorial strip, and it was followed online by thousands of viewers around the world. The main intention was to suspend national borders by perceiving salt waters as a "space of experiential unruliness" (Hildebrandt 188) and as one of those (few) things which cannot become private property, since no part of the sea – historically and traditionally – can be considered as a territory owned by any people whatsoever (Grotius 84). While lands are occupied, the sea remains outside any sovereignty – and thus, it creates an image of art exhibited in an ungovernable space, a meeting point for artists and practitioners from various currents of knowledge drawn to its potential and its radical agency of freedom. After the first projection, over the following nine months, Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela worked on a new, broader edition of the project, studying the notion of territory from multiple perspectives – legal, linguistic, sociological, artistic – to explore the capacity of extraterritoriality to hold certain people, spaces, images at a distance removed from their usual legal system, by questioning and practising this distancing – this representational logic – the artists attempt "to encourage the need to rethink the limits of current political concepts, as well as those of current modes of relation between law, representation and space. These shape what is perceived as the political sphere and consequently the art world" (Heiman para 3).

The subsequent edition of the project – planned for June 2010 and taking the form of a floating journey departing from Israel's extraterritorial waters towards Cyprus – was launched through an open call to which artists and curators around the world responded. A week before the planned departure, Turkish aid ships bound for Gaza were attacked by Israeli commandos. And yet, despite warnings from the Israeli army to interrupt, the artists proceeded. The result was a resounding success: nearly 7,000 viewers followed online, with 24 artists and 50 programmes presented. Videos, photographs and images in motion were projected from boat to boat while

7 Not by chance, it is on this same strip of water that, from 31 May 2010, the Israeli Defence Force began boarding and seizing vessels of the Free Gaza Movement aid flotilla: civilian convoys that had been sailing to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Far from being silenced, the movement has since grown into a global initiative – the Freedom Flotilla Coalition and now Global Sumud Flotilla – bringing together activists, artists and solidarity networks from across the world, who continue to challenge the blockade and the political conditions that sustain it. At the time of this writing, an even larger expedition is expected in March 2026 – as a sign that the call for freedom does not diminish but multiplies. For further insights, see: Sanger, De Jong.

8 To explore this further, see Sutton.

conferences and conversations were held on open desks and on beaches. Alternative and heterogeneous forms of gathering were witnessed by participants, filmed by the organisers and followed live online. These unfolded simultaneously across a stretch of extraterritorialities that extends the notion of territoriality – conventionally defined as "the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area" (Sack 55). As such, extraterritoriality becomes a critical, creative attempt to articulate a dimension that moves beyond territory – predominantly conceived as the instrument of control over people and spaces. In this regard, in a short essay, Leonardo Mastromauro discusses the unstable, ungraspable and unownable definition of the South(s) as an intensity that traverses social and spatial relations and, by deactivating the operations of the geopolitical machine, opens life to the dimension of what he defines as *the inappropriable.* The notion of *inappropriability* thus becomes the conceptual and imaginal category that stands against every form of governability and sovereignty, of control and administration, against the power of purchase, possession and subjugation within national flags and militarised borders. What is particularly interesting to note here is that, to arrive at this concept, Leonardo Mastromauro takes an etymological detour tracing the Latin root of the word *territory* back to *terrere*, which specifically recalls the verbs "to terrify" and "to frighten" (53–57). By navigating the intersection of Indigenous and Mediterranean studies, this etymological move draws attention to the ways in which the exercise of domination has historically constituted the founding act of territory and the category through which the relationship between social, cultural and political space has most often been conceived and enacted, thought-practiced. Such a semantic framework brings into sharp relief the close and almost symbiotic relationship between territory and the notion of the State. As Ryngaert argues, the State exercises its governmental authority over its territory to the exclusion of other States, thereby producing a condition bound up with the drawing of ever more rigid territorial boundaries (2). How, then, might such lines of separation be rethought? How might such demarcations begin to dissolve? And perhaps most urgently – assuming a language in which the sea is figured as a space of political militancy – how might we *break the siege*[9] and engage anew with the notion of frontiers and blockage? It is in response to these questions that the blue and oceanic studies might offer a particularly generative, both theoretical and practical, immaterial and sensory horizon.

Sustained and articulated by Steve Mentz, *blue humanities* – understood through "wet narratives [that] emphasize disorder, disorientation, and rupture" and "a

9 Here I refer to the slogan of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition and the Global Sumud Flotilla, which gained widespread visibility particularly following 7 October 2023, in pro-Palestinian demonstrations on a global scale. The reference is also connected to the title of a song written collaboratively during their recent expeditions, which has become a symbol of resistance against Israel's blockade of Gaza. For further details, see the movement's official websites: https://freedomflotilla.org/, https://www.globalsumudflotilla.org/.

dry countermovement that attempts to make sense and meaning out of disaster" (*Shipwreck Modernity* 11) – provide a platform for scholars who have shifted their attention from land-bound frameworks to the movements of seawaters, advocating a maritime multiperspectival approach embodied and enacted through watery metaphors. Central to this reorientation and deterritorialization is the rethinking of the language through which we habitually make, compose and manipulate reality – a mode of conceptualising the world that is entrenched and deeply anchored to the need of grounding, rooting, landing (Jue 11–15). Contrary to any dry structure that has historically and predominantly operated in the definition of geopolitical agency and ecological domains – mostly drawn from customary Western discursive maps that usually "harbor a colonialist mindset" (Oppermann 3) – blue humanities seek to raise critical awareness about our relations among (extra)territorialities and politics. According to Joanna Zylinska, the ontological shift toward a model of being, thinking and acting with saltwater is underpinned by multiple ethical and political demands. As she writes, adopting an epistemology engaged with sea and ocean allows us "to repair historical injustice that has resulted in the impairing of our own 'Western' epistemological frameworks and to learn from others about how to think and live otherwise" (Zylinska 65).

In order to materialise possible forms of solution – or at least formulate tools with which to begin – Steve Mentz, in his book *Ocean*, proposes a series of conceptual substitutions that quietly but insistently challenge the terrestrial bias deeply embedded in our modes of conceptualisation and representation of the world – a vocabulary that has for too long been grounded in the stability and fixity suggested by the very notion of "fields" of research (xv–xviii). Among these substitutions, the term ship replaces the notion of state, gesturing towards the ways in which salt waters, rather than solid, bounded and boundable land, might centre heterotopic and relational forms of belonging that resist the enclosures of national sovereignty (Mentz xvi–xvii; see also Kuhn). The boat thus becomes a space that – inhabiting the sea – positions itself beyond the nation-state and dwells within those extraterritorial dimensions that open onto alternative ways of relating to the world. Not by chance, boats, sails and screens on waters are the media through which the entire dramaturgy of the *Exterritory Project* is conceived and performed. What kind of world, then, could take shape from within this unstable position? And what type of dramaturgy intervenes in its constitution? How, finally, might dramaturgy turn into a practice of worlding?

A ~~Small~~ Pirate Planet

In her essay "EF's Visit to a Small Planet" (2004), Elinor Fuchs elaborates what a dramaturgical mode of looking entails by proposing the image of a small planet: as

if any performance, any play, any dramatic action operates to create a world that functions according to its own internal logic and laws. Imagining dramaturgy as a map with coordinates – as well as metamorphosis, genealogy, presence and proximity of bodies – Elinor Fuchs proposes a theoretical gaze that locates within dramaturgy a small world, a specific mode of inhabiting the stage that gradually opens onto a mode of inhabiting geography more broadly. Without dwelling on the full detail of a text that begins, not by chance, with an illustration of *A Chart of Mars* by Sir Robert Stawell Ball – as if to suggest the visual composition of a planet, the attempt to define it, map it, measure it, draw it in order to understand it, without ever exhausting it – dramaturgy and the mode of looking it carries (Bleeker, "Dramaturgy" 166) emerge here as instruments of observation and making. In so doing, they reveal themselves as media through and with which performers imagine, enact and bring the audience into a world:

> A play is not a flat work of literature, not a description in poetry of another world, but is in itself another world passing before you in time and space. Language is only one part of this world. Those who think too exclusively in terms of language find it hard to read plays. When you "see" this other world, when you experience its space-time dynamics, its architectonics, then you can figure out the role of language in it. If too tight a focus on language makes it hard to read plays, too tight a focus on character creates the opposite problem: it makes the reading too easy. To look at dramatic structures narrowly in terms of characters risks unproblematically collapsing this strange world into our own world. The stage world never obeys the same rules as ours, because in its world, nothing else is possible besides what is there: no one else lives there; no other geography is available; no alternative actions can be taken (Fuchs 6).

We might generally assume that the world established by dramaturgy itself is *ex-straneus* to the one inhabited by its audience – as if it were a purely aesthetic experience. Yet, since the aesthetic dimension is inherent in any radical emancipatory politics and is constitutive of a specific mode of dwelling (Žižek 131), what kind of world might the practice of dramaturgy, becoming pirate, establish? And then, since every action constructs its own precise ecology, how might a pirate dramaturgy, in its extraterritorial dimension beyond land-bound paradigms, construct an aesthetics – and, ultimately, a politics? More precisely, and perhaps most urgently: how might dramaturgy construct a pirate planet? Pertinent to observe – and in order to sketch a few notes to be developed elsewhere – is the political role of this thinking-through-practice. If dramaturgy is indeed:

> a politicized practice itself that provides a *ground* on which to address artistic production by working within structures and reimagining our relation to them at the same time, in order to produce something that exceeds them, a socialization perhaps that cannot be restricted either to the confines of an artistic project or to

> a collaboration, nor consequently to the logics of the neoliberal market (Georgelou, Protopapa, Theodoridou 24)

then how might we think and rethink it through the pirate imaginary? And what might this entail in practice? Answering these questions would require considerably more space than is available here; what remains pertinent to note, however, is the need to return, once more, to the etymological roots of the word dramaturgy itself – that is, to the Greek terms of *drama* and *ergon*, action and work, which become critical and creative knots as well as a productive point of departure (Georgelou, Protopapa, Theodoridou 74–92). This etymological detour, indeed, raises the question of what these actions are and in which spaces they need to be enacted. By working through these reflections, the concept of *pirate dramaturgy* takes shape, then, as an imaginal and material methodology drawn from the pirate commonwealth built upon ships. Its horizontal organisation, its position within extraterritorialities and its constitutive generation of radical democratic law-making (Land) allow us to rethink any ecological discourse bound to the abode – *oikos* and *logos*, yet again – moving beyond the concept of *domus* and thus resisting domestication, mastery, centrism (Malabou 219). Furthermore, it mobilises and activates a practice capable of sabotaging and reinventing the dominant terrestrial modes of knowledge production, both epistemic and aesthetic. Such a dramaturgy becomes, then, not merely the work of the actions of performance, but the scope of transformations that may derive from and be affected by the enactment of the performance itself (Stanger 220).

Like pirates who set sail across extraterritorialities, under a flag that no longer performs its sovereign function of proscription and exclusion, moving through strategies that exceed national laws – not merely hijacking and disrupting, but inventing otherwise – the *Exterritory Project* charts such a course. In so doing, Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela stage perhaps the most urgent attempt to reclaim those communitarian aspirations and that foundational democratic project that needs to set back into circulation a free mode of thinking and practising – temporary, yet constant and repeatable – both onshore and offshore. These are the sites that Jacques Rancière calls "the happy shores of the free exchange of goods and bodies" – that is, the shores of democratic politics (Rancière 47). Sailing and composing on the waterfront then, it turns dramaturgy into a pirate practice of worlding: a stubborn, engaged and radically democratic antidote to the political and terrestrial burn(out).

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Povzetek

Prispevek izhaja iz okvirja, da sta tako piratstvo kot dramaturgija prispevala k oblikovanju in preoblikovanju kolektivnega imaginarija, zato predlaga pojem »piratske dramaturgije« kot vmrežen način mišljenja s prakticiranjem radikalnih ekologij (in alternativnega ustvarjanja sveta). Raziskuje projekt *Ex-territory Project* (2009–) umetnic Maayan Amir in Ruti Sela kot materialno in nematerialno prizorišče za ponoven premislek o *nitih* med ekologijo in uprizarjanjem; pri tem pluje po mednarodnih vodah Sredozemskega morja in pravnih prazninah, ki jih te predstavljajo, ter pod vprašaj postavlja nujnost rekonceptualizacije našega svétenja (angl. *worlding* – op. prev.) onkraj kopenskih okvirov. Pri tem se opiram na modro humanistiko in anarhistične študije, ki jih povezujem prek koncepta ekstrateritorialnosti, ter predlagam pojem piratske dramaturgije kot angažirane obravnave predstav, ki krmarijo po robu pravno-sodnega ter po mejnih oblikah reprezentacije. S podrobno analizo intervencij, ki jih Amir in Sela izvajata v ekstrateritorialnih vodah, prispevek proučuje, kako pravno nejasna območja na morju postanejo dramaturška prizorišča za alternativne načine mišljenja in uprizarjanja ekološko-političnih praks. Pri tem poudarja radikalni potencial, ki ga ima ekstrateritorialnost za prispevek k modremu obratu (angl. *blue turn* – op. prev.) v uprizoritvenih študijih.

Ključne besede: dramaturgija, piratstvo, anarhizem, ekstrateritorialnost, slane vode, modri študiji

bruna bonanno je dramaturginja in študentka doktorskega študija na Univerzi v Milanu, kjer se ukvarja z dramaturškimi praksami, povezanimi z radikalno demokracijo in slanimi vodami. Je soustanoviteljica kolektiva salmastra na Siciliji in zaposlena kot asistentka za dramaturgijo (Univerza Iuav v Benetkah). Kot gostujoča raziskovalka je delovala na inštitutu ARIA (Univerza v Antwerpnu), v okviru raziskovalnega programa Public Exchange Bureau (univerza Deakin University v Melbournu), pri Stevu Mentzu (univerza St John's University v New Yorku) in v raziskovalni enoti S:PAM (Univerza v Gentu). Njen najnovejši projekt je bil nagrajen na Beneškem gledališkem bienalu 2025.

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Razpredanja o ekstrateritorialnosti: zapiski o piratski dramaturgiji

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Članek predlaga koncept *piratske dramaturgije* kot analitično kategorijo in ustvarjalno prakso za ponoven premislek o radikalnih ekologijah in alternativnih načinih ustvarjanja sveta (angl. *world-making* – op. prev.) onkraj kopenskih okvirov. Koncept razvija s poglobljeno obravnavo projekta *Ex-territory Project* (2009–) umetnic Maayan Amir in Ruti Sela, pri čemer se opira na modro humanistiko, anarhistične študije in dramaturške teorije.

Članek se začne z navezavo argumentacije na trenutno politično konjunkturo, ko pravno nasilje, prevlada elit in komodifikacija ekološkega diskurza zahtevajo nujne epistemološke in estetske alternative. V tem kontekstu rehabilitira piratstvo, ne kot kaznivo dejanje, temveč kot politični simbol in praktični model za kolektivne, horizontalne in subverzivne oblike sobivanja. Radikalni potencial tega modela sta tekom zgodovine vsrkala kopenska jurisdikcija in potrošniški kapitalizem, a si ga je mogoče znova prisvojiti.

Ključne ugotovitve prispevka so naslednje:

Ekstrateritorialnost kot generativni okvir.

Ekstrateritorialnost – opredeljena kot obstoj na ozemlju onkraj ozemlja – je izpostavljena kot osrednji konceptualni vozel pri delovanju projekta *Ex-territory Project*. S plovbo po mednarodnih vodah Sredozemskega morja in pravnih prazninah, ki jih te predstavljajo, Amir in Sela ustvarjata prostor, ki je hkrati materialen in nematerialen, zakonit in nezakonit, lokalen in globalen. Pokaže se, da pravno nejasna območja na morju ne delujejo kot obrobne praznine, temveč kot ključna dramaturška prizorišča – prostori, kjer lahko alternativne ekološko-politične prakse mislimo in uprizarjamo drugače.

Začasna svoboda kot piratska utopija.

Članek temelji na konceptu začasne avtonomne cone Hakima Beya in trdi, da se v projektu *Ex-territory Project* udejanja začasna, a ponovljiva oblika svobode, ki razveljavlja državno suverenost, ne da bi v zameno zahtevala drugo stalno ozemlje. Tako kot piratske utopije projekt deluje prek mobilnosti, horizontalnosti in izginjanja, svobodo pa pri tem uresničuje v sedanjosti in je ne odlaga v idealno prihodnost.

Piratska dramaturgija kot mišljenje skozi prakso.

Na podlagi pojma »mišljenja skozi prakso« (angl. *thinking-through-practice* – op. prev.) Maaike Bleeker in koncepta »dramaturškega majhnega planeta« Elinor Fuchs članek predlaga piratsko dramaturgijo kot način dela, v katerem se mrežita delovanje in mišljenje ter estetika in politika. Pri tem dramaturgija ni tehnično ali organizacijsko orodje, temveč postane katalizatorska, odporna in v svétenje usmerjena praksa, s katero sabotiramo prevladujoče kopenske načine produkcije vednosti ter ustvarjamo alternativne oblike sobivanja in vzajemnosti.

Modri obrat in premik s kopnega na morje.

Članek izpostavlja epistemološka in politična tveganja prehoda s kopenskih na vodne okvire ter s tem prispeva k modremu obratu v uprizoritvenih študijih. V navezavi na modro humanistiko Steva Mentza trdi, da slana voda ponuja horizont, ki služi ponovnemu premisleku o ozemlju ter pripadnosti in ki ga zaznamujejo dezorientacija, nesuverenost in relacionalnost. Tak horizont se upira pristranskosti kolonializma in državnega centrizma, zakoreninjeni v dominantnih zahodnih geopolitičnih imaginarijih.

Politična nujnost projekta.

Projekt *Ex-territory Project* se bere tudi kot poskus ponovne prisvojitve skupnostnih in demokratičnih prizadevanj, ki jih spodkopavata vzpon ozkih elit in skrajno desna politika. Amir in Sela dramaturgijo spreminjata v piratsko prakso svétenja; s tem uprizarjata trdovratno, radikalno demokratično protiutež tistemu, kar članek v sklepni podobi označi kot politično in kopensko (iz)črpanje.

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Abstract

This article reflects on performance artistic research as a critical tool for investigating the contemporary Mediterranean from a situated perspective in Sardinia, understood both as a geographical territory and as an epistemic field in dialogue with the Global South. Through the lenses of necropolitics, neomaterialism, transcorporeality and performance epistemology, the article examines how artistic practices can activate relational, affective and critical forms of knowledge in territories marked by extractivism, ecological violence, militarisation, depopulation and erased histories. Following a genealogical trajectory that begins with Maria Lai's *Legarsi alla montagna*, the article analyses *CAMPOSUD* and Andreco's *Parade for the River Tirso,* Valentina Medda's *The Last Lamentation* and Nicola Di Croce's *Attuning to / Resonating with (Sulcis)*. These case studies are read as practices that move beyond site-specificity toward forms of attunement, listening, participation and intra-action with territories, waters, ghosts and more-than-human agencies. The author argues that, in the haunted Mediterranean, performance does not simply represent necropolitical landscapes but produces conditions through which the dead, the silenced, the nonhuman and the contaminated may become perceptible, opening towards what she calls epistemic disarmament.

Keywords: performance epistemology, Haunted Mediterranean, attunement, necropolitics, Maria Lai, transcorporeality, necrochoreographies, artistic research

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Performance as Necrowriting: Necropolitics, Resonances and Artistic Research in the Haunted Mediterranean – A Sardinian Genealogy

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Introduction

This article[1] reflects on performance artistic research as a critical tool for investigating the contemporary Mediterranean through performative practices and epistemologies rooted in Southern Italy, and more specifically in Sardinia. From this situated perspective, Sardinia emerges not only as a geographical location but as an epistemic field in dialogue with shores further south, with the Global South and with the fluid imaginaries through which borders may be rethought.

The Mediterranean is approached here not as a neutral geography or as a harmonious space of exchange, but as a field of friction where asymmetric epistemologies of power (Quijano) confront each other. In this perspective, performance and the performing arts become sensitive, spectral and critical devices, capable of connecting bodies, memories and environments through situated, nonlinear research. Artistic research, in particular, is understood as a practice capable of activating relational, affective and critical forms of knowledge in contexts shaped by necropolitics (Mbembe).

By *necropolitics*, I refer to Achille Mbembe's concept of sovereign power as the power to decide "who may live and who must die" (Mbembe 11), making death central to sovereignty. In this sense, the Mediterranean becomes central to the present reflection as a haunted site of necropower, where the subordination of life to death-power takes the form of armaments, factories, toxic substances, ecocides, epistemicides and topographies of cruelty (Mbembe).

1 This article adopts a curatorial and autoethnographic perspective, intertwining academic inquiry and curatorial research over the past decade. It was developed within the panel "Eco-Epistemologies. Transdisciplinary Horizons in Performance", proposed by the research unit PerLa – Performance Epistemologies Research Lab (Università Iuav di Venezia), as well as from the theoretical frameworks of the PhD Programme in Cultures, and presented at the *Amfiteater* symposium Ecology and the Performing Arts (9–10 October 2025, SLOGI, Ljubljana).

These forces do not only determine social histories and the destinies of peoples; they also configure matter itself, the agency of spaces, and, in this case, the artistic practices that investigate them.

Through the lens of geographic materialism, Sardinia and the archipelagic configurations around it are analysed in a double perspective: as political space and as material body; as haunted territory endowed with its own agential charge, inhabited and constituted by dissolved bodies, spectral matter, residues and lives, both present and absent.

The liquid space of the sea withdraws from its crystalline, postcard-like imagery in order to become dense and viscous matter: a body that agitates, transforms and decomposes the exoticising imaginary of tourist routes, while revealing the structural asymmetries between the Norths and Souths of the world, old and new colonialisms and how territories marginalised by modernity are left to die or occupied by industries of death.

The article examines forms and practices of artistic research in contemporary performance that engage with the Sardinian landscape, through a neomaterialist and ecological perspective, considering the island as a "methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (Borgdorff 46). The artists' works analysed here trace concrete experiences of *transcorporeality* – conceived as an in-between space of corporeality inseparable from more-than-human worlds, linking bodies and territory – and of the liquid instability of Mediterranean borders, exposing the impossibility of containing margins, runnels and conceptual vortices that generate epistemic fields of the abyss and of collapse.

The article highlights, in the practices examined, a move away from the concept of site-specificity, insofar as the context – and not only the site – is considered, from a neomaterialist perspective, with particular reference to Barad's agential realist ontology and to feminist geography, as a subjectivity: an agentive matter that informs and conditions artistic practice, assuming, in the process, a form of intra-action. This shift of emphasis away from the notion of the site-specific determines a mode of intervention connected to atmospheres, entanglement, forms of listening and attunement. Artistic practice thus becomes collaborative, fluid and sympoietic (Haraway).

The article unfolds through a genealogical and methodological trajectory. It begins with Maria Lai's *Legarsi alla montagna* as a foundational gesture for thinking performance in Sardinia as a situated practice of memory, relation and territorial repair. Lai's work allows me to identify a set of questions that return, transformed, in more recent artistic practices: the relation between community and landscape, the non-nostalgic reactivation of tradition, the fugitive condition of insular artistic

production and the possibility of performance as a material and symbolic response to territorial trauma. The article then moves to a series of projects that emerged in the wake of Lai's renewed international recognition, following her inclusion in the LVII Venice Biennale *Viva Arte Viva* and Documenta 14 in 2017. Among them, *CAMPOSUD* occupies a central position, together with other projects that emerged from or around it, as radical pedagogy and curatorial practice become performative tools for reactivating Gramscian and Southern epistemologies. It then turns to Andreco's ecological ritual for the Tirso river, Valentina Medda's mourning of the Mediterranean sea as corpse and archive-body and Nicola Di Croce and Maurizio Saiu's sonic research in Sulcis, where listening becomes a practice of attunement to extractive and military violence. Across these works, I argue that island-based performance practices can produce forms of epistemic disarmament: a suspension of sovereign knowledge through which bodies, territories, voices, waters, ghosts and more-than-human agencies enter into relation.

The analysis of Maria Lai's work, considered here as a genealogy, makes it possible to introduce some of the central questions addressed in this article concerning insular artistic production: the relation to distance from centres of production; the lack of recognition and the consequent fugitivity that characterises the presence of artists from the island; the fragility of territories haunted by histories of structural violence, from both sociological and environmental perspectives, due to the neglect of territorial policies; and the Southern Question, expressed in Gramscian terms, which has never been fully confronted and from which extractivism, climate devastation, abandonment and depopulation derive.

These case studies involve distinct but interconnected practices: radical and performance pedagogy as a situated form of knowledge in Mediterranean territory which contributes to the creation of a common body of knowledge; performance as a tool for investigating the relation between bodies and borders and for confronting the dissolution of the border itself in the experience of the sea's liquid body, within the theoretical horizon of *transcorporeality* (Alaimo, *Exposed*; Bennett); and acoustic/sonic research into listening and attunement, approached both as theoretical and aesthetic frameworks and aligned with a mediatic and extra-sensory dimension of perception. Across these practices, performance research insists on the perceptual process as a form of epistemic and aesthetic disarmament.

The more recent case studies have been analysed through the tools of performance epistemology, critical studies and forms of curatorial accompaniment, allowing a deep, situated knowledge of the context to emerge.

These processes are informed by a confrontation with the nature of the Mediterranean itself, and in particular with its coasts and with Sardinia, which becomes, for the reasons explored throughout the text, both a bearer of *unauthorised grammars* (Chambers, *Mediterraneo*) and a haunted territory: "a hauntological place, where the past is not simply preserved but persists as a spectral presence that informs and deforms our present enabling the emergence of historiographies and narratives that have been crushed and erased by dominant ones" (Napolano and Chambers, "Mediterranean Hauntology"). As Chambers writes,

> viewed today from its northern shore, especially from Italy, the Mediterranean appears as a generally disavowed space […]: forgotten colonialism, contested modernities, and exuberant intercultural formations that historically precede and exceed the national and Western framing conferred on its history. In this sense, the Southern Question and the "backwardness" of the Italian South remain integral to the interrogation of practices emerging from the Global South (Chambers, *Mediterraneo* 18).

The failure to recognise the persistence of a Southern, and specifically Mediterranean, question produces a condition of perceptual obfuscation in local cultural history: an insular depression, a loss of presence, to recall De Martino, on a territorial scale. Archives and ancestrality reflect a difficult relation to the past and to what is identified as "tradition": a memory of impenetrable history that excludes minor voices, sometimes channelled into rigid and controversial identitarian forms (Conelli), and that speaks of a narrow and tortuous passage into modernity – a modernity at once desired and suffered, first through Savoyard invasion and later through mass touristification.

Rather than anchoring itself in regional identitarianism or in nostalgia for a past hardly worth recovering, the pathways analysed here attend to the complexity of a liquid territory and of a Mediterranean haunted by its losses, reflecting the violences of other Souths in a continual coast-to-coast dialogue. According to Chambers, "if melancholy is considered as a political and cultural mode of mourning that has not yet been worked through, then the critical tear that accompanies postcolonial mourning perhaps adds to that scene the recognition of the impossibility of a common language capable of making the world adhere to a single will and to a total understanding. This pushes us toward an oblique positioning in the world" (Chambers, *Mediterraneo* 19).

The history of Sardinia, including its artistic history, speaks of its specificity, but within flows and currents shared with a broader territory and culture: that of the Mediterranean. This wider field summons circulating knowledges, vocalities and shared sound systems, rituals, practices of lament and mourning, diasporas and

epistemic violences, albeit within the differential relations among the various Souths and between these and Europe.

At the same time, it tells of a separate history: one that is unrecognised and, therefore, difficult to recognise, since it has been only marginally studied and represented by official national history, including official art history. This is due to the specificity of the territories and manifestations it encounters, including those of a linguistic nature, and to the subalternity it suffers in relation to hegemonic forms of knowledge.

In this sense, the Mediterranean Sea becomes method, space and body – physical and political – through an amplitude that exceeds national borders, disarms and dissolves. Through the *unauthorised grammars* (Chambers, *Mediterraneo*) of performance artistic production, it can question the devices of distancing, isolation and the reproduction of hegemonic structures towards both global and local Souths.

Within the mourning of culture, in the lament for knowledges that no longer reproduce themselves, in the oblivion of memory, in the spectre of depopulation, in the toxic debris scattered along beaches and coasts used for NATO military experiments, and in the memory of hunger that drove women, men and children to eat roots less than a century ago, threads are lost in a place to which one no longer wishes to return.

Recent performance research only partially reverses this tendency. Rather than surrendering the past to hagiography or to the abstraction of design as modernisation of tradition, it directs its gaze towards the present. Without forgetting the past, it coexists with ghosts, attunes to them as living and subterranean questions and listens to the echoes of territory within a multilinear, non-progressive temporality. Ghosts become guides and thresholds, methodological companions (Gordon), rather than simply objects of study. In a spiralling temporality the perception of a landscape informed by the living and the no-longer living, by the human and the more-than-human, opens onto *necrowritings*, a term which, in Cristina Rivera Garza's account, designates a plural writing composed of a *communalidad* among the living, and between the living and the dead, whose contents are grafted onto echoes, territories, visual and symbolic landscapes and more often onto the material landscapes where necropolitics take shape.

The term *necro* therefore agitates the field of power, but also that of a different agency, one that destabilises the notion of bodily materiality and the sovereignty of the living. The methodologies applied here are grounded in curatorial, attuning and embodiment practices: processes that aim to record, read and embody territory through the lens of transcorporeality, highlighting the interstitial space where bodies, sounds and matter relate in the redefinition of borders and thresholds, in a continuous shifting of ontological and epistemic distinctions.

Transcorporeality, potential history and embodied cartographies

The case studies presented here are informed by curatorial practices in situated artistic research, through contact between body and territory, the relations among matter, space and bodies in their compresence and communal temporality. This methodological frame opens onto spectral dimensions and deepens not only the experience of transcorporeality and of the relations between human and more-than-human, living and non-living, but also regards performance and its epistemologies as a form of potential history, acting retroactively and in the present, as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay suggests:

> Potential history is a form of being with others, both living and dead, across time, against the separation of the past from the present, colonized peoples from their worlds and possessions, and history from politics. In this space wherein violence ought to be reversed, different options that were once eliminated are reactivated as a way of slowing the imperial movement of progress. (Azoulay 56)

These practices can be conceived as transindividual and plural writings composed of spectral languages and voices, presences, matters and residues, organic and non-organic, capable of communicating with invisible and haunting subjectivities. Attuned to spaces of collapse and trauma, they function through forms of *transcorporeality*.

In "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature," Stacy Alaimo defines trans-corporeality as "the time–space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from 'nature' and 'environment'" (Alaimo, "Trans-Corporeal" 238). This definition is crucial here because it allows the relation between bodies, landscape, residues and nonhuman agencies to be understood not as metaphorical proximity, but as material co-implication.

Taken together with necropolitics, these lenses unsettle the subject-object relation in artistic and performative research, bringing the performative action of matter into dialogue with the spectral forms present in territory and exceeding chronological time.

The method of capturing these voices is connected to embodied cartography and perceptual approaches that combine field research tools, participatory assembly, environmental recordings and somatic-sensory practices. These methodologies treat territory as a subject endowed with an agential nature, inhabited by presences that resist detection, as if extinct or disabled. Their traces form haunted archives, sets of (re)sources and databases which are collected, composed and decomposed in the act of performance.

Maria Lai, *Legarsi alla montagna*: A Ghost Story of an Ungrounded Trauma, a Child, a Mountain, a Rainbow and a Community in Struggle

Rather than functioning as a canonical origin, *Legarsi alla montagna* operates here as a fugitive genealogy. It provides a set of gestures – tying, repairing, listening, reactivating, entering into relation with the mountain – that return differently in the contemporary practices analysed below.

Known as the first work of relational art in Italy, the participatory public art performance – or, to use the artist's own more precise definitions, the "proposal of memory" or "intervention in the territory" – *Legarsi alla montagna* (*Bound to the Mountain*, 1981) marks one of Maria Lai's first returns to her native village in Sardinia. Lai (Ulassai, 1919 – Cardedu, 2013) returned fugitively after almost sixty years of nomadism in various cities on the "continent" – as the continental part and the rest of Italy are named, and perceived, by inhabitants from Sardinia – and not only on the island, from which she had voluntarily distanced herself before the age of twenty. At that time, the young Lai had left Sardinia, never to return there permanently. Ogliastra, in the north-eastern area of the island, had long been a land of conflicts and kidnappings, as well as the scene of internal feuds that caused the death of close family members, including one of her brothers.

Legarsi alla montagna was Maria Lai's response to a request from the Municipality of Ulassai to create a monument to the fallen. To this invitation, the artist responded with life, drawing inspiration from a rereading of a local legend rooted in an actual environmental tragedy. It is a story of death, ghosts and resurrection: the collapse of part of the mountain of Ulassai, which in 1858 destroyed part of the village and the family home of a little girl. She survived her sisters and family because she had gone to a cave to watch the sheep and, miraculously, had come out after seeing the rainbow and a blue ribbon flying. This blue ribbon – relic and salvation – would become the element that inspired the creation of a twenty-seven-kilometre strip of denim fabric, which the artist produced together with the village community, entering houses and windows, connecting threads, spaces, human and more-than-human entities to both one another and the territory.

In keeping with the customary forms of her artistic practice, and faithful to her idea that, as a woman, an artist "always thinks at least in twos" (Montaldo), Lai involved Piero Berengo Gardin – cousin of the well-known photographer Gianni – and Tonino Casula, an artist and a relevant figure of conceptual and optical art – eccentric, irreverent and animated by a passion for concrete forms of protest and action. Casula directed the documentation of the project *Legare collegare i fili di Maria Lai*.

The collapse of the mountain, the historical wound and the vision of a ghostly child – in whom Maria Lai probably saw herself reflected – underlie the work. They entrust the memory of a village bent by internal struggles and by structural environmental fragility to the forces of the surrounding environment, and to a pact of alliance and reconciliation with the mountain itself. A village fractured and fragmented by too many deaths may, through the enactment of a relational ritual, rediscover a new form of alliance and *intra-action* (Barad) among humans and with the mountain, with the forces it summons.

Legarsi alla montagna involved the entire village, exposing the internal fractures of a culture rooted in mountain values, territorial protection and the relation to the land, but also in *disamistade*, a Sardinian word meaning enmity or unfriendliness: a feature that characterises the culture of inland Sardinia and has fuelled, sadly, well-known local feuds. The blue ribbon respected feelings of friendship and enmity and brought to light the web of relations through small painted bread sculptures – traditional *pani pintau* – indicating where the thread could cross the interior space and bind it to the outside, to the territory and where this was not possible.

The work, which, in its preparation, brought together children and elders, and connected them to the territory, lasted several months before dissolving into a day of celebration on 8 September 1981. The artist's action was made possible by her acceptance of the earlier invitation of Arturo Martini, her former teacher from her Venetian period – an invitation which she had long resisted: the recovery of traditional figurative codes, which Lai regenerated without yielding to a hymn to traditionalism. As Anna Maria Montaldo notes,

> In the *Pupi di pane*, the lesson of Martini, absorbed at the Accademia in Venice, also re-emerges – a lesson with which Maria Lai reconciled herself only in her mature years, acknowledging Arturo Martini, among other things, for encouraging her to rethink and draw from her culture of origin, from which she had voluntarily distanced herself. (Montaldo 31)

The local artefact is never an archive or homage to the past; it is a poetic and political relation launched into the present, a response to a call for transformation, to an urgency linked to the disintegration of a territory and to a series of internal and material fractures. *Legarsi alla montagna* is a fugitive action (Moten and Harney). In this sense it adheres to the ephemeral potential of performance (Phelan), which would lead Lai to move again and to repeat the act, with variations, in other contexts both within and beyond Sardinia – in Camerino, for example, and later elsewhere in different forms. This action of memory deposits within the territory the germinal thought of a potential history, laying the foundations for the *Stazione dell'Arte*, a cultural centre conceived as an act of community transformation and as the prefiguration of

new situated and plural actions. These produce forms of relation and belonging to the territory without property, leaving space open to new appropriations, forms, practices and possibilities.

Faced with ecological and environmental collapse, Lai raises a question that strongly resonates with the contemporary field of action. Her relation to landscape, the mountain and the community prefigures current concerns, reminding us that "The ancestral is not in the past. It is the present way we are situated in a world that cares for some by taking advantage of others. It is the decisions we make to keep in place or undo the sedimentations of force and power … as we make our way home, how are we making the homes of others?" In the exhibition *The Lying Body: Only the Futures Revisit the Past* in Bolzano, curated by Emanuele Guidi, the anthropologist and artist Elizabeth Povinelli wrote this sentence on a wall, inviting us to reflect on the continuity between natural and technological landscapes and asking how certain past and ancestral knowledges – such as rituals, intangible heritage and performances – can be resituated and made meaningful within a radically transformed environment.

CAMPOSUD: radical pedagogy, Gramsci legacy and the island as method

The choice of the first case study, *CAMPOSUD*, is situated within this perspective. Born from the possibility of analysing the legacy of Antonio Gramsci's thought through the tools of contemporary artistic research and production, the project does not merely recover a theoretical tradition rooted in the island's history. Rather, it reactivates it as a living field of thought, capable of opening onto the contemporary and of returning as an echo from other Souths of the world. In this sense, *CAMPOSUD* – a radical pedagogy symposium and long-term curatorial project – opens onto the question of the performativity of pedagogy, understood as a situated practice, a critical transmission and a space for the collective production of knowledge.

Developed in response to a call issued by the Civic Museums of Cagliari, *CAMPOSUD – A Visionary Camp* (2017–2021) deliberately moved away from philology and commemoration in order to rethink Antonio Gramsci in the present.

Two elements define the project. The first is the identification of the Mediterranean question as central to reflections on the Global South. The second is the observation of the generativity of Gramscian thought in artistic research and academic debate, especially at the point where these fields collide: post- and decolonial thought, radical pedagogy, unlearning and praxis as a relation between theoretical elaboration

and artistic action, intersecting the so-called epistemologies of the South (Santos), articulated by Latin American thought precisely in dialogue with the legacy of Gramsci.

Working from a situated horizon – Europe's southern edge and a condition of deep insularity, looking towards the southern shores of Africa and towards Western Asia and East Mediterranean coasts, both profoundly linked to Sardinian history – allows the project to reflect on the relation between spatial forms and the production of imaginaries and theoretical contributions.

At the methodological level, the curatorial structure of the symposium is based on expanded strategies in which theory, practices, workshops, artistic production, participatory urban and spatial interventions and performance converge while disciplinary boundaries liquefy against the solarised horizon of the sea. The project emerged in response to the scarcity of theoretically informed reflection in the local territory, particularly with respect to environmental humanities, radical and social ecologies, Southern questions, post- and decolonial thought and queer theory.

If, on the one hand, this absence can be read as a sign of independence from North European and North American academic hegemonies, on the other, it also reveals a self-referential tendency and a disalignment from national and international circuits: a symptom of an insularity that appears not only geographical but systemic and that reveals isolation as the other face of the island.

The idea of a (non-)school, of a pedagogical project centred on praxis, arises from the need to respond to an insular depression – economic, geographical and relational – by reconnecting, circulating, exchanging, forging alliances and opening spaces for international theoretical and critical dialogue without renouncing a situated perspective.

Over the years, *CAMPOSUD* and the projects that followed have unfolded history starting from the traces of the present, without nostalgia for a past to which there is no deep desire to return. The very idea of *campo* functions as an invitation to the temporality of the South: to make camp, to camp within research, to occupy theatres, museums and public spaces, and to inhabit a long time by insisting with bodies in the territory and interrogating it continuously. At the same time, it reminds us of what Giorgio Agamben defines as *campo*, "the place in which the most absolute *conditio inhumana* ever to appear on Earth was realized" (Agamben 50–51, translated by M. P. Z.), a context where "the state of exception ceases to be a temporal suspension of the state of law. According to Agamben, it acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that remains continually outside the normal state of law" (Mbembe 12–13). In *CAMPOSUD*, this notion questions the notion of the South and the colonial and imperial powers, as it resonates with the echoes of the Mediterranean.

The nomadic shift towards Calasetta – an island within the island – away from the city and towards the vortices of routes between Tunisia and Sardinia, Tabarka and Sant'Antioco, near one of the largest refineries in Southern Italy and within a history of mining extractivism, slavery and unresolved colonial questions, produces a deeper rooting in the political space of the Mediterranean, which becomes body alongside other bodies, subject and epistemology at once.

The complexities of the territory – located near important tourist destinations but also close to one of the largest refineries in the region, Porto Vesme – together with systemic unemployment, the lingering spectre of mining extractivism and processes of desertification, questioned the project and expanded the scope of the issues it addressed. The methodological tools offered by radical ecology did not focus solely on environmental aspects or on the field of traditional ecologies; rather, they intersected with theories of social and political ecology, relational practices of care, cooperative decision-making methodologies and the mutualism of knowledge as interconnected and interdependent systems.

CAMPOSUD became the driving force behind several artistic actions, productions, interventions and participatory practices, reversing the usual dynamics of performing arts festivals. As an artistic and performative symposium, it aspired to become a living, ignited work: a context for the live convocation of further practices. Within this framework, in particular, paths, shows, concerts, artistic interventions, workshops and performances were activated in a spatial and temporal condition that evoked the orchestration of elements, at times deliberately placed in temporal and spatial simultaneity, thereby constituting a field of resonance and dialogue among its different parts.

Among these practices, the question of social and environmental ecology was performatively activated by choreographers and artists. Among them, Andreco, an Italian artist and environmental engineer, created *Giardino Gramsciano*, a sculpture and participatory performance realised in the outdoor space of the Teatro di Sardegna, as well as *Cultivating Utopia, Cultivating Potential*, a work dedicated to the relation between Gramsci and the cultivation of plants during his imprisonment and to the influence of this relation on the articulation of his political thought.

Starting from these solicitations, and questioning the issue generated by *CAMPOSUD*, Andreco creates *Parade for the River Tirso – Ritual for Ecological Transformation* (2021), a work realised in Ottana, in northern Sardinia, in the framework of *Abitare Connessioni*, a project produced by an urban planners collective to rethink the depopulation phenomena in the inner regions. The presence of the hydroelectric power plant represents a case of extractivism within a similar necropolitical framework of the Southern coasts. The plain of Ottana constitutes one of Sardinia's chemical hubs

after Sarroch, the already mentioned Porto Vesme and Porto Torres. However, today it appears as a cemetery of abandoned factories and rusted scrap metal. The factory caused a very high number of asbestos-related cancer cases among workers, many of which were not recognised. In the report cited by *Il Manifesto*, it is stated that "the findings show – the parliamentarians write – that out of 1,081 applications, as many as 1,066 were rejected" (Cossu). This tragedy is linked to the still-unresolved difficulty of land remediation, the impossibility of reconverting local production to pastoralism and agriculture and the desertification of the territory.

Realised in collaboration with artisans from Ottana and Orani, makers of masks for the traditional Carnival, and in collaboration with the choir of the *Tenores di Ottana*, performers of *canto a tenore*, as well as young people from the territory, *Parade for the River Tirso* allows the silence of environmental necropolitics to emerge, to become song, procession and parade, in an act of connection between the urban centre and the river, passing through the ghost of the power plant. The sonic disturbance, the perception of emissions still present, the spectral presence and the memory of the dead are traversed by a collectivity that, through difficulty and resistance, finds in the artistic process the strength to rethink trauma and to position itself as witness through the choral nature of participation.

According to Irmgard Emmelhainz, what takes place in the face of contemporary necropolitics, from the side of images and performance, is a fundamental passage: one that leads to a change in posture and positioning both for those who produce images and for those who observe them. This shift moves from the image as an act of memory and testimony alone – characteristic of the phase of critical and aesthetic analysis after the Shoah – towards a contemporary condition in which, in the face of structural violence, the image summons a futural role: an image that passes through its relation to destruction and confronts the scope of history according to an insurgent and, at the same time, insurrectional dimension.

Beyond the witness images, Emmelhainz considers "the possibility of an 'image of soulèvement' – in the sense of an image of an other that could threaten Western imperialism and capitalist absolutism, a system this [sic] is consensually driven by the desire and need for visibility, and that legitimates social Darwinism through racism and misogynist speech in the public sphere" (Emmelhainz 4).

Looking through this lens, the parade recalls forms of political protest, just as the mask restores an ancestral relation with the earth, animals and plants, and with it the necessity of transforming oneself and hiding within hybrid, amphibious bodies; the choirs recall songs of struggle. Through the recovery of traditional elements, the relation to Gramscian praxis and the recognition of the importance of overcoming the stigma that characterises inland areas and leads to increasing depopulation, Andreco's

act assumes the dimension of a collective ritual: a choral act for and with the river, the plants, the surrounding matter and, at the same time, for and with the community. The river is investigated here according to an agential dimension, capable of depositing and transmitting memory, of moving and sedimenting it, in order to speak of deaths, of an insular condition, of a water that separates and connects, telling of oblivion, of those who are not seen – people, territories, matters. Of the necropolitics of the South.

In this sense, Emmelhainz argues that "the collateral damage of the 'surpassing' (or monumental) disaster implies the withdrawal of tradition. Therefore, resurrection is required. Modernism either willfully rejects tradition or is indifferent to it; only those who fully discern the withdrawal of tradition after the surpassing disaster have tried to resurrect it, since their history has been written by the victors" (Emmelhainz 7).

The Last Lamentation: mourning the sea as a corpse

From the river and the damaged inland territories, the article moves towards the sea and its specific condition, analysing a different approach to the immaterial heritage. In Valentina Medda's *The Last Lamentation*, the Mediterranean is no longer a horizon or a border, but a corpse, an archive-body and a transcorporeal medium in which human and nonhuman remains, voices, salts and memories dissolve into one another.

The project mobilises the languages of performance in the creation of a video work and a choreographic and performative action engaged in the rereading of the Mediterranean funeral lament and of a sea that itself becomes body. In the artist's words, the project "is a funeral rite for the Mediterranean, conceived here as a place of waiting, suspension, and death, the embodiment of an absence, a deposit of corpses and a corpse in itself. The work narrates the tragedy of the sea through a hypnotic vocal and choreographic score that rewrites ritual codes in abstract and contemporary forms" (Medda, in Zedda 32).

Started in 2018 from an artistic residency in Beirut, the project creates a cultural bridge between the coasts of Sardinia, the artist's homeland, and those of the Eastern Mediterranean, placing side by side ritual forms present across the whole basin from coast to coast, studied already in 1959 by Ernesto De Martino, and today almost extinct in Southern Italy while still alive along the southern and eastern shores from Lebanon to Morocco.

Mourning for a Mediterranean that appears as both political and physical space, as a body to which the bodies of those who cross it in diasporas from the Souths of the world are delivered and dissolved, and mourning for a cultural space that now appears fortified and armed, are at the core of the process. If the initial trajectory of

the project drew on participation, philological and bibliographic research and Judith Butler's reflections on grievable lives, Medda's research gradually shifted towards Astrida Neimanis's hydrofeminism and transfeminist neomaterialism, and towards transcorporeality as traced by Alaimo, intertwining these perspectives with salt archives, migration studies and mourning.

This shift occurs over time, also in relation to a continuous practice of immersion, crossing, return and perception. An increasingly profound relation with the matter of the sea generates new questions about the relation between the living and the non-living, while opening onto the refinement of listening, silence and disarmament. Within the dramaturgical structure, the sea is no longer background or scenic backdrop, but rather agentive matter and abyssal voice.

In its first public presentation in Cagliari (2023), the performance was shown under "radars, surveillance devices, Mediterranean scrub, limestone rocks, crumbling like dry skin, both sky and sea full of signs, engines, bodies" (Zedda 37). Twelve women cross the site to reach the edge between earth, sky and deep water. They take their positions at the edge of the abyss, like statues, turning their gaze to the horizon and their backs to the onlookers. Faceless women, with their very own breath, restore a heaviness, a sigh, a whisper, a name, to lives considered unworthy of being named, even in death. These laments combine different traditions, recounting violent deaths and feuds, and break through the silence around 'endings.'

As De Martino writes in his anthropological analysis of mourning ritual in Sardinia, "'lamenting' means […] above all remembering suitable liturgical forms to be selected from those available in each [professional] mourner's cultural memory and which tend, so to speak, to cover the fundamental types of possible mourning situations" (De Martino 122–125).

In this sense, stories move between those figures. It is that choral crying out to sea, as one, water, salt, matter, living, inanimate, plural body that dissolves, liquefies, questions boundaries.

In refusing connection to spoken language, the work summons a *phoné* nourished by the sound and breath of the sea, through the intervention of musician Gaspare Sammartano and, in field recording, of Attila Faravelli, opening onto an acoustic research inhabited by nonhuman and more-than-human presences. In Medda's work, this contributes to what I have elsewhere called an *abyssal horizon* of sound (Zedda), intensifying the project's epistemic and conceptual torsion. Between breaths, the Mediterranean horizon fuses with the abyssal mourning, the corpses and the remains of people passing away and through the sea: it is the voice of the sea that speaks, carrying with it the thresholds of dissolved other voices.

Medda inhabits this possibility through the practices and mediations of listening, by dwelling in transition and by laying down the instruments of knowledge – beginning with the body itself, positioned in a clinamen. The trauma of deaths at sea, in that sea which Alessandra Di Maio has defined as the Black Mediterranean (Di Maio), sutures the history of Sardinia to a broader history by observing the shared *koiné* of song.

As Chambers suggests,

> The Mediterranean is a cemetery. Suspended in its waters are the truncated lives and dreams of those who each day seek to cross it. We, too, immerse ourselves in this unspeakable archive; our bodies share the same water as those who perished, where the salt of their blood is destined to circulate for hundreds of thousands of years in fluid chemistry. The sedimented histories and lives suspended in its medium interrogate us. Liquid archives echo and extend the rites of mourning and lament. The sea, the wind, the river, the bird calls, the dying light of day and the oncoming dusk concentrated in the ghosting of the present that cannot be netted or explained. (Chambers, "Women in Black" 125)

Attuning to / Resonating with (Sulcis): Ecological Violence, Resonance and Sonic Disarmament

While Medda's work listens to the sea as a mourning body, Di Croce and Saiu turn listening towards the ordinary sound of militarised production. In Sulcis, attunement becomes a practice of sonic disarmament: not the interruption of violence, but the perceptual exposure of its normalisation. *Attuning to / Resonating with (Sulcis)* is a project by Nicola Di Croce, sound artist and researcher in sound studies and planning, born from an invitation to develop a research path within the curatorial programme *Dalle Acque – Ecologie dell'ascolto*, in the inland areas of the Santa Barbara trail,[2] known as the miners' trail, dedicated to the waters and lives of the mine.

The project explores the concepts of attunement and resonance through sound and listening, focusing on the Sulcis territory, particularly its aquatic ecology. Starting from the complex coexistence of rivers and caves, abandoned mines, renewable energy infrastructure and new industries – especially in the arms sector – the research reflects on water management and its role in local culture and in energy production in a highly marginalised area. The aim is to create a space in which to reflect, beginning from the manifestations of water in the territory, on the vitality of nonhuman bodies and materialities connected to it, experimenting with ways of entering into resonance and establishing a "dialogue" with their specific sounds and vibrations.

2 Santa Barbara is venerated in Sardinia as the patron saint of water and miners.

Di Croce's process, nourished in artistic research by the tools of planning and by the theories of listening and attunement, meets a deeply embodied and territorially grounded approach through the encounter with Maurizio Saiu, a Sardinian choreographer with an internationally recognised artistic trajectory between Sardinia and New York, who has recently moved to Domusnovas and has become a mediumistic and embodied lens within the territory. Through dialogue with Di Croce and the curatorial direction, Saiu (un)maps the territory, tracing, intertwining and connecting obscured places and relations, unfolding and, at the same time, reverberating a pulsating/vibrant/disturbed field, as a space of listening, questioning and encounter of emblematic and controversial Southern issues.

As a choreographer and native inhabitant who recently returned to the island, Saiu creates a choreographic methodology in space-making and community process, unearthing silenced trauma and histories of humiliation in the narration between bodies and territories.

Most strikingly, the process unveils and amplifies the presence of an Italo-German weapons factory established in Domusnovas in the years following the great drama of unemployment caused by the closure of the mines.

Many former miners and citizens, historically engaged in political life, according to Saiu's testimony, find themselves drawn into an unwanted complicity with Mediterranean tragedy, accepting the factory work under the spectre of unemployment and economic deprivation. A resonating silence envelops the town and the community. Bombs built in the factory departed from Sardinian coasts at that time to Gaza and towards other shores of the Mediterranean, in a history that repeats itself wherever neoliberal blackmail sanctions forms of exploitation, extractivism and differential colonialism. The proximity of the military bases of Decimomannu and the NATO presence on the Sulcis coast confirms an economy that, from agriculture and shepherding, is handed over to factories of death, betraying the political history of the territory, a history of struggle and resistance.

The work inscribes itself within the framework of a critical and politically engaged research, described as giving voice to marginalised subjects and questioning what happens when we attempt to attune ourselves to unrecognised, unconventional, nonhuman and unrecognisable voices. As Brigstocke and Noorani write:

> The geohumanities have become increasingly preoccupied with the ways in which aesthetics and sensory experience can play a role in challenging established modes of voice, authority, and authenticity, by foregrounding the active role of nonhuman agencies, processes, and ecologies in the construction of publics and politics. (Brigstocke and Noorani 2)

After days of preparation, research and field recordings, the process culminates in the decision to convene a chorus and a listening and chanting session in front of the factory. The call gathers unaligned gazes before the violence of the present: members of the choir from the nearby city of Iglesias, artists, activists, ordinary people. Among them, a specific presence is constituted by a group of "shamanic activists", women who "receive song" and who, through singing, cleanse places.

They arrive by word of mouth and arrange themselves along the factory's frontage while the sirens marking shift changes sound for a production that operates uninterruptedly, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The security guards' alarms overlap, and they cannot understand what is happening. Between prayer and protest, the voices and unauthorised grammars are there not so much to sing as to resonate, to capture echoes, to become mediumistic forces in relation to the pain of the place.

Di Croce listens, attunes and records; with the help of film-maker Gaetano Crivaro, he documents the process. Not an archive, but a performative act, one that unsettles the archive by absorbing it and becoming reproducible testimony.

The decision to position the performers outside the factory, facing it, and to remain in attentive listening to its incessant humming – rather than interrupting the production process – allowed for a shift towards the perceptual dimension and for the factory to be approached as a subject, however unsettling, and as a resonant element within the landscape. In dialogue with sound studies in the field of geo-environmental research, this mutual and intersubjective shift in listening produces a new mode of aural perception – posthuman in orientation – grounded in the concept of attunement.

Tuning into a subtle mode of listening, far from high volume and attentive to the seemingly ordinary character of the hissing sound, made it possible to narrate the ordinariness of war and its normalisation. The relation to the outside of the factory – its excess – is mediated through sound, leads listening into a field of indistinction with waste and with what is perceived as "contaminated".

A fine line of resonance and listening, of prayer and denunciation, opens onto the political and epistemic possibility of a research that is not preordained, and that gives itself over to subtle, perceptual, vibrational, eerie listening – to a magical materialism that upsets preordained categories of knowledge. As Chambers notes,

> Considering the Mediterranean as "an infinity of traces without the benefit of an inventory" (Gramsci 1948: 51), sonic histories offer a persistent background noise that disturbs the institutional silence of the historical archive. Sounds become a source of critical perturbation, and the musical archive becomes "a question of the future, the very question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise, and of a responsibility (Derrida 1995)." (Chambers, *Mediterraneo* 9)

A Thousand Deaths: Towards an Epistemic Disarmament

The trajectory traced in this article moves from tying to mourning, from pedagogy to procession, from lament to listening. In each case, performance does not simply represent necropolitical landscapes; it produces situated conditions through which the dead, the silenced, the nonhuman and the contaminated may become perceptible. The practice of attuning to these inaudible voices is what I call epistemic disarmament.

What distinguishes these practices, despite their different methodologies and disciplinary locations, is the deposition of authorship in favour of performance and artistic research as a field of suspension and of emergence of the nonhuman, through postures of subtraction and through their relation to territory and landscape.

Conceived as a posture, an aesthetics and a methodology of listening, epistemic disarmament asks which voices can be captured when they escape radar. It leans on the perceptual labour of resonance, on accompanying an inquiet territory. When research becomes communal, the world opens across multiple embodied levels. Disarmament, as an artistic and epistemic method – collapse, repair, listening, resonance, low frequency – refuses the neoliberal demand for novelty and the assertive modality of knowledge. It allows one to traverse perceptually the Mediterranean collapse we inhabit, leaving open the question of how to stand before and within a regime of necropolitics, proceeding without an answer and letting encounter and corporeality generate a different epistemic field, one that in turn informs knowledge and academia.

The acts of attuning and listening to resonances and of making together with traces, scores, detritus and remains, emerge here as tools for unlearning (Spivak) and unworlding (Halberstam, *Unworlding*). Halberstam's reflection on wildness may be recalled here only insofar as it helps to name what remains partially ungovernable: forms of life, matter, desire and relation that escape capture, domestication and full epistemic visibility (Halberstam, *Wild*). In the practices analysed in this article, this ungovernable dimension appears above all through ghosts, residues, voices, waters and territories that do not simply return from the past, but disturb the present as forces that cannot be entirely ordered or represented.

By unravelling the conceptual categories that distinguish research from performative action, these practices can also act retroactively on history as practices of repair, enabling forms of knowledge silenced by the differential politics of modernity. Artistic research, in its insistence on perception, is proposed here as a form of epistemic and aesthetic disarmament, both in dialogue and in friction with Northern European traditions, capable of laying out and depositing knowledge, of unravelling the world and of standing on the thresholds of bodies and of silenced necropolitics, responding to the Mediterranean crisis through echoes that propagate from the margins, from coast to coast.

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Povzetek

V članku obravnavamo performativno umetniško raziskovanje kot kritično orodje za proučevanje sodobnega Sredozemlja, in sicer z vidika Sardinije; slednjo hkrati razumemo kot geografsko ozemlje in epistemološko polje v dialogu z globalnim jugom. Skozi prizmo nekropolitike, neomaterializma, transkorporealnosti in epistemologije uprizarjanja proučujemo, kako z umetniškimi praksami aktivirati relacijske, afektivne in kritične oblike vednosti na ozemljih, ki nosijo pečat ekstraktivizma, ekološkega nasilja, militarizacije, odseljevanja in izbrisanih zgodovin. Genealoško gledano, se članek začne z delom *Legarsi alla montagna* (Maria Lai); na tej podlagi analizira dela *CAMPOSUD*, *Parade for the River Tirso* (Andreco), *The Last Lamentation* (Valentina Medda) ter *Attuning to / Resonating with (Sulcis)* (Nicola Di Croce). Navedene študije primerov beremo kot prakse, ki jih zaznamuje odmik od lokacijske specifičnosti (angl. *site specificity* – op. prev.) k oblikam uglašenosti (angl. *attunement* – op. prev.), poslušanja, participacije in intra-akcije z ozemlji, vodami, prikaznimi in več-kot-človeškim. Avtorica trdi, da v Sredozemlju prikazni performans ne reprezentira le nekropolitičnih pokrajin, temveč ustvarja pogoje, v katerih lahko tisti, ki so mrtvi, utišani, nečloveški in kontaminirani, sploh postanejo vidni – s čimer se odpira za to, kar sama imenuje epistemološko razoroževanje.

Ključne besede: epistemologija uprizarjanja, Sredozemlje prikazni, uglašenost, nekropolitika, Maria Lai, transkorporealnost, nekrokoreografije, umetniško raziskovanje

Maria Paola Zedda je študentka doktorskega študija na Univerzi Iuav v Benetkah. Njeno raziskovalno področje je odnos med *nekropolitiko* in plesom, ki ga proučuje skozi pojma *nekrokoreografij* in *transkorporealnosti*. Je soustanoviteljica raziskovalne enote PerLa (Univerza Iuav) pa tudi avtorica in urednica več kritičnih publikacij, med drugim *Enzo Cosimi: Una conversazione quasi angelica* (Editoria e Spettacolo, 2019) in *The Last Lamentation: Valentina Medda* (Kunstverein Milano, 2024). Poleg akademskega raziskovanja razvija kuratorske projekte, ki se osredotočajo na potencial telesa in performativnosti v javnem prostoru, dejavna pa je tudi kot umetniška direktorica v različnih okvirih.

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Performans kot nekropisava: nekropolitika, rezonance in umetniško raziskovanje v Sredozemlju prikazni – sardinska genealogija

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V prispevku obravnavam performativno umetniško raziskovanje kot kritično orodje za proučevanje sodobnega Sredozemlja skozi performativne prakse in epistemologije, ki izvirajo z območij na robu južne Italije. S perspektive Sardinije – kot epistemološkega in geografskega polja, ki je v dialogu tako z obalami južneje kot z globalnim jugom, ter kot otoka, ki ob ponovnem premisleku o mejah podžiga tekoči in fluidni imaginarij – raziskujem potencial umetniškega raziskovanja v uprizoritvenih umetnostih kot orodja, s katerim lahko aktiviramo relacijske, afektivne in kritične oblike vednosti v kontekstih, ki jih oblikuje *nekropolitika* (Mbembe).

Obravnavani performansi in plesne prakse proučujejo območja, ki jih je zaznamovalo ekstraktivistično in epistemološko nasilje; s tem krepijo neavtorizirano slovnico Sredozemlja (Chambers in Cariello), ki se pogosto izraža skozi umeščeno vednost žensk, njihov odnos do magičnega sveta, skozi poslušanje in glas brezdanjega ter naseljenega s prikaznimi, pa tudi skozi njihove utišane zgodovine.

Participacija, neomaterializem in vprašanje intra-akcije z ozemljem se prepletajo z zgodovino razlastitve, ki k južni Italiji pristopa s pomočjo orodij Gramscijeve in postkolonialne teorije. Sredozemlje – natančneje, vprašanje otoškosti – zato postane hkrati področje in metoda umetniškega raziskovanja in kritične refleksije.

Članek zaznamuje genealoški in metodološki pristop; v delu *Legarsi alla montagna* umetnice Marie Lai prepoznava javno intervencijo kot temeljno gesto za mišljenje performansa na Sardiniji kot umeščene prakse spomina, relacije in sanacije ozemlja (angl. *territorial repair* – op. prev.).

Študije primerov, ki jih analiziram, so nastale po tem, ko je bila Lai ponovno deležna mednarodnega priznanja, in odražajo odmevnost njenega ustvarjanja. To so *Camposud*, radikalni pedagoški simpozij in z njim povezan performans *Parade*

for the River Tirso (Andreco oz. Andrea Conte); *The Last Lamentation*, umetniški projekt Valentine Medda, ki se osredotoča na sredozemsko žalovanje ter na morje kot arhiv-telo in truplo obenem, prepojeno z raztopljenimi spomini; ter *Attuning to / Resonating with (Sulcis)* umetnika in raziskovalca Nicola Di Croceja, ki se ukvarja z ekološkim nasiljem na območju, zaznamovanem z odseljevanjem, ekstraktivizmom, gospodarsko krizo in tovarno orožja za izvoz. Obravnavam jih z metodologijami, razvitimi na področju epistemologij uprizarjanja, in proučujem, kako lahko navedena umetniška raziskovanja na presečišču dekolonialnih in neomaterialističnih pristopov razokvirijo ustaljene oblike vednosti. Vsa so namreč nastala po tem, ko je bila Maria Lai vnovič prepoznana na mednarodni ravni.

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Abstract

This contribution explores how artistic research can foster environmental awareness through engagement with aquatic geographies, focusing on the Venetian Lagoon. It argues that embodied and performative practices enable a situated mode of ecological understanding, in which bodily experience, site-specificity and sensory perception function as tools for interpreting environmental change. The text emerges from the research project *Repeating Eutrophia* (2019–ongoing), developed in collaboration with artist Laura Santini within the collective Confluenze. The project draws on the ecological concepts of *eutrophia*, understood as balanced nutrient conditions in aquatic ecosystems, and *eutrophication*, referring to nutrient over-enrichment leading to algal blooms, hypoxia and potential ecosystem collapse. "Repeating" indicates both the iterative structure of the artistic process and the cyclical dynamics of ecological transformation under investigation. Through performative experimentation, participatory actions and site-responsive practices, the project translates ecological processes into sensory experiences. Within this framework, performance operates as a methodological tool for sensing and articulating environmental change, complementing scientific modes of ecological observation. The project has developed through seven iterative episodes, each addressing the tension between ecological balance and excess through different artistic formats. While rooted in the Venetian Lagoon, *Repeating Eutrophia* operates as an open research structure that can be extended to other environmental contexts.

Keywords: artistic research, aquatic ecologies, screendance, lagoon, embodied ecology

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Digital Space, Environment and Performance in the Venetian Context

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I. Introduction

Artistic research increasingly operates as a situated mode of ecological inquiry, producing knowledge through embodied, performative and site-responsive practices. Within this context, aquatic geographies offer a critical terrain for investigating the entanglement of human and non-human systems, where environmental processes are experienced not as external phenomena but as relational and affective conditions.

This contribution emerges from an intertidal conceptual and methodological orientation. Intertidal zones, defined as the fluctuating interfaces between land and sea, are characterised by cyclical exposure and submersion, producing environments structured by rhythmic instability and continuous transformation. As both an ecological and an epistemic figure, the intertidal provides a framework for thinking threshold conditions, where boundaries are not fixed but repeatedly negotiated through temporal and material variation. This logic extends into the lagoonal ecology of the Venetian system, where tidal dynamics, salinity gradients and anthropogenic pressures generate a similarly unstable field of coexistence.

This intertidal condition finds expression in the film *Intertidal.Barene*, conceived as a screendance work in which movement, environment and mediation co-constitute one another. Following Douglas Rosenberg's understanding of screendance as a mediated and interdisciplinary practice, the film engaged the screen not as a neutral surface of documentation but as an active site of choreographic reconfiguration, where spatial and temporal relations were continuously produced through mediation. In this sense, the barene – the salt marsh landscape – functions simultaneously as ecological substrate and choreographic field, while the camera operates as a threshold device that translates intertidal variability into a mediated kinetic and perceptual structure. Within this expanded ecological field, embodied and performative practices become tools for attending to environmental change at the level of lived and sensed experience. Rather than approaching the environment as an object of representation,

this research considers how movement, proximity and corporeal engagement can generate situated forms of ecological perception.

This article examines how performative practices can function as methods for perceiving, interpreting and communicating ecological processes, specifically eutrophication, within the Venetian Lagoon. Through the analysis of seven iterations of *Repeating Eutrophia*, the article examines how artistic research can generate situated forms of ecological knowledge that complement scientific observation. Digital and sensory archives further function within this framework as situated tools for reading environmental change. Rather than neutral repositories of data, they operate as relational dispositifs through which ecological transformations, climate-related pressures and shared vulnerabilities between human and environmental systems can be traced and interpreted (Baldacci; Regi).

II. Shores

Algal blooms and biodiversity: Why eutrophication in Venice?

Besides the well-known threat of global warming and the increasing risk that parts of Venice may be submerged due to rising sea levels, another complex environmental issue that affects the lagoon ecosystem is the proliferation of algae, commonly referred to as eutrophication. Eutrophication is primarily caused by nutrient over-enrichment in the water, a process often intensified by stagnant conditions and rising temperatures. This phenomenon reduces light penetration, disrupts aquatic food webs and depletes dissolved oxygen as organic matter decomposes. Consequently, aquatic habitats can shift from a balanced and productive state to a degraded environment characterised by hypoxia, biodiversity loss, and, in some cases, the production of harmful toxins.

Beyond eutrophication, scientists have observed another large-scale transformation affecting marine and freshwater ecosystems: the increasing acidification of the world's waters. Although the biological consequences of acidification remain the subject of ongoing scientific debate, it may significantly affect the reproduction, physiology, growth and development of a wide range of plant and animal species (Jackson 23).

In the Venetian Lagoon, algal proliferation has been observed with increasing frequency in recent years, raising concerns about its ecological and social impacts. As algal blooms expand, they can alter the natural colour and clarity of the lagoon's waters and, in some cases, produce neurotoxic substances that pose potential

risks to our health and marine life. Understanding the factors and consequences of eutrophication is therefore essential for assessing the broader environmental challenges facing the lagoon and for developing sustainable strategies to protect this fragile ecosystem.

The balance between a healthy aquatic system and an over-enriched one is delicate. In a well-balanced aquatic body, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are present at moderate levels, supporting and sustaining the growth of phytoplankton, aquatic plants and microorganisms without causing ecological imbalance. These nutrients circulate through natural biogeochemical cycles, supporting biodiversity while maintaining water clarity and adequate oxygen levels (Zirino et al. 33).

However, when nutrient inputs exceed the ecosystem's natural assimilative capacity, this equilibrium is lost. Excessive nutrients, often originating from agricultural runoff, urban wastewater and industrial discharge, stimulate the rapid proliferation of algae and phytoplankton. Maintaining the balance between nutrient availability and ecosystem capacity is therefore essential for preserving the ecological stability and water quality of aquatic environments.

Since 2020, we have been filming and documenting various algae-related phenomena in the Venetian Lagoon to better understand the relationship between society and the underwater environment. Through this process of visual documentation, our research aimed to observe how algal proliferation manifests, how it transforms the aquatic landscape and how these ecological changes intersect with human activities and perceptions of the environment. By recording these occurrences over time, a visual archive was created to reveal the dynamic interactions between environmental processes and the social life that depends on and shapes the lagoon ecosystem.

Methodology: Documentary fieldwork

Direct engagement with the local community was central to the research process. By listening, observing and filming daily life, it became possible to understand how residents, workers and tourists respond to the changing lagoon environment. During extended periods of observation, we noticed how pervasive algae had become in the urban waterscape. They appear everywhere: coating the stone steps of canals, wrapping around boat ropes and clinging to the edges of buildings wherever their foundations meet the saline water.



Figure 1. *Repeating Eutrophia Digital Archive*, 2020–ongoing, © Anja Dimitrijević (collettivo Confluenze)

Attention was also directed toward the everyday practices through which people interact with this persistent presence. During field observations, cleaning workers were seen clearing algae from slippery steps to improve pedestrian safety, while gondoliers regularly scraped away green accumulations from their moorings to ensure stable access to their boats. In other moments, young women sitting near the canals carefully positioned themselves to avoid the slick surfaces. These ordinary gestures reveal how algae, although often perceived as a marginal or purely ecological phenomenon, are embedded in the rhythms and routines of urban life in the lagoon.

Navigating theory – performative methods – filmic approaches

The theoretical framework that informed our methodology for studying eutrophication was collaborative and relational, incorporating postnatural perspectives within a framework of theories of experiential and material engagement (Braidotti; Barad, *Meeting*; Barad, *Performatività*) and situated and embodied knowledge (Haraway). Guided by feminist methods, it also emphasised non-hierarchical, non-vertical work practices, facilitating collaboration, ensuring a cohesive vision and fostering a sense of care among all participants. These ethics were central to the project's integrity, shaping not only interpersonal dynamics but also the approach to environmental observation and documentation.

Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledge emphasises that all knowledge is produced from a specific location and is inherently multiple. It challenges Cartesian dualism, which separates and privileges the mind (reason and intellect) over the body, with its sensory experience and emotions, suggesting that true knowledge can be attained only through detached rationality. Haraway, instead, argues that knowledge is generated from the particular physical, social and cultural context of the knower. By acknowledging these partial perspectives, her framework encourages more

inclusive practices in science and research, fostering attention to underrepresented human communities and more-than-human actors and highlighting the relational and contextual dimensions of understanding. For this reason, in our research, performative and movement-based practices are employed not merely as expressive tools but as epistemic methods through which ecological transitions can be engaged and interpreted. This methodological stance reframes performance as a legitimate form of research.

This approach also echoes Barad's concept of "intra-action", in which knowledge emerges from the entanglement of the observer, the environment and material processes. Filming, walking and documenting the lagoon, therefore, function as forms of engagement through which ecological realities become perceptible and shareable. This approach did not merely record algae as an isolated phenomenon but situated them within the lived, social and ecological fabric of the Venetian Lagoon.

This dimension also resonates with Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics, which understands artistic practice as emerging through networks of social relations and shared encounters rather than as an autonomous object. From this perspective, relational art takes as its theoretical horizon "the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space" (16). This understanding is particularly relevant to *Repeating Eutrophia*, where performative practice functions not as isolated aesthetic objects but as collective situations that generate encounters between participants, environments and ecological processes.

Even scientists who have found evidence of environmental change in Venetian paintings have noted that the water levels depicted were significantly lower than current levels, thereby confirming the ongoing, gradual rise of sea levels. For their analysis, they actually observed the algae belt on buildings over time:

The overall result of land subsidence and sea level rise is usually referred to as "relative sea level rise (RSL)", which represents the point of view of the city that is progressively submerging and apparently sees the sea level rising. [...] In the last three decades, the rise seems to have come to a halt. In view of city safeguard, the question is whether the sinking of the land has definitively come to a half after the regulation of the underground water extraction or if it is simply a question of a temporary negative fluctuation of the sea level. The answer can only be found from the knowledge of the natural trend of the relative sea level rise change over a time period which should be as long as possible. To this aim, the "photographic" paintings by Canaletto and pupils were studied to understand how the relative sea level rise has changed over the last three centuries by looking at the shift in the level of the algae belt on buildings. (Camuffo and Sturaro 333)

The use of algae as a biological indicator in these historical analyses resonates strongly with our own fieldwork observations. While Camuffo and Sturaro identify algae as markers of tidal levels within visual archives such as paintings, our project encounters the same organisms as living agents shaping the contemporary sensory and social environment of the lagoon. In this way, artistic practice and environmental humanities expand the scientific perspective by situating algae not only as indicators of environmental change but also as actors embedded in everyday urban life.

In a number of paintings, the brown-green front left by algae is visible on the buildings facing the canals. The front is a precious biological indicator of the average high-tide level (HTL) made by the laminaria alga (Camuffo, 2001). In the past, the upper level of the algae belt, called Commune Marino was in some cases also engraved on buildings with the initials "CM", but this information is unreliable for the earliest times because the early labels were damaged, or lost or displaced during building restorations. The algae belt is determined by the frequent tidal wetting that dampens bricks and stones: the cumulative effect of the frequent submersions, as well as the water kept in the pores, constitutes the habitat favorable for seaweed. (Camuffo and Sturaro 333)

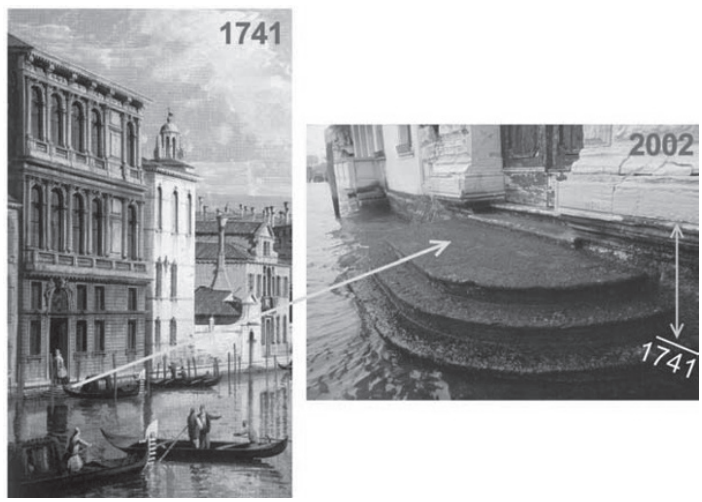


Figure 2. A view of Canal Cannaregio painted by Canaletto in 1735 (left), and a detail of the same building today (right). The algae shift is 71 ± 10 cm. Some minor restorations are visible.



Figure 3. *Repeating Eutrophia Digital Archive*, 2020–ongoing, © Anja Dimitrijević

Despite increasing scientific attention to the Venetian Lagoon, significant gaps remain in understanding algal proliferation and eutrophication. Species inventories are incomplete, long-term monitoring is uneven and local ecological knowledge is rarely integrated into formal studies, while systematic assessments of toxins and seasonal blooms remain limited. These gaps point to the need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine ecological research with situated, experiential forms of inquiry. Within this context, performance is used both as a site of knowledge production and as a method for engaging ecological processes. By integrating all these methods, the

project translates environmental data into sensory registers, where documentation of algal proliferation becomes material for choreographic, visual and spatial composition. This process foregrounds ecological relationality, making visible the entanglements between human and more-than-human systems that conventional scientific representation often isolates. Rather than addressing environmental issues discursively, the work explores how performance can generate situated forms of ecological perception through movement, spatial composition and material engagement with site-specific elements such as water, algae and tidal conditions. In doing so, it positions the audience within an experiential field in which ecological processes are encountered as immediate rather than abstract, fostering attentiveness and forms of situated ecological awareness.

Inspired by Karen O'Rourke's *Walking and Mapping*, especially in the first stages of the project, *walking* was employed as a method of inquiry using movement through space as a way to perceive, engage with and map the environment. This approach allowed us to generate knowledge through physical presence and relational experience. We also focused on capturing emerging elements by attuning ourselves to spontaneous, unpredictable phenomena that arise during the process. Rather than imposing fixed structures, we allowed the work to evolve in response to the environment and participants. Our choreographic process was also informed by Jonathan Burrows' *A Choreographer's Handbook*, which emphasises composition as a dynamic, iterative practice in which attention to rhythm, repetition and variation becomes a way of structuring meaning. Together, these methods created a flexible, responsive framework that blends movement, observation and site-specific interaction for exploration. Burrows's method serves as both a philosophical and practical guide for dance makers, inviting practitioners to consider choreography not merely as a fixed set of prescribed steps but as a dynamic process in which form, rhythm, relation and the body's *thinking through movement* become central components of artistic inquiry. This perspective resonates with our performative methodology, in which iterative composition and engagement serve as modes of research and ecological inquiry.

The use of improvisation as a tool to find material is intimately linked to that kind of choreographic process which finds things first and then decides the order to put them in. Let's call this process "cut and paste". We improvise to find the strongest movements and then use cut and paste to put them together. (Burrows 25)

Improvisation served as a fundamental tool in the development of choreographic material, allowing movements to emerge organically before their final arrangement is decided. This exploratory approach, often described by Burrows as a "cut-and-paste" method, involves identifying compelling fragments through improvisation and subsequently assembling them into a structured sequence. By privileging discovery

over pre-planning, material becomes more responsive and authentic, creating a dynamic foundation for each piece.

In parallel, Thierry De Mey's filmic practices have informed our video-based methods. De Mey engages with diverse environments, ranging from natural landscapes to highly structured urban and architectural settings, so that the movement unfolds in direct conversation with its surroundings. In his work, the location does more than frame the dance; it actively shapes the dancers' gestures, their physical responses and the overall corporeal quality of the performance. "His filming locations are not mere backdrops; they are *milieus* that form a matrix of original corporealities and particular kinds of movements as the dancers are imbued with them, have to adapt to them, and insert themselves and unfold their movements in them" (Walon). In this sense, screendance becomes an important methodological framework for our research. As Douglas Rosenberg frames it, screendance is a mediated and interdisciplinary practice in which the ephemeral body of dance is reconfigured through the spatial, temporal and technological logic of the screen. This perspective allows us to move beyond documenting choreography and instead capture the specific atmospheres, kinaesthetic textures and spatial relations that emerge within a particular territory.

III. Non-Human Flows

Repeating Eutrophia

With the theoretical and methodological framework in place, the research unfolded through a sequence of artistic episodes that enacted ecological inquiry as performative practice. Each iteration of *Repeating Eutrophia* was conceived as an experimental response to the changing conditions of the lagoon. By shifting between different formats and media, we explored how eutrophication could be perceived and communicated through artistic means. These works did not aim to illustrate scientific knowledge, but rather to create situations in which environmental processes could be sensed and collectively reflected upon. In the following sections, each episode is discussed in detail, highlighting the motivations, methods and ecological insights that emerged from these artistic interventions.

The first episode, *Repeating Eutrophia 1* (2019), was conceived as a multimedia performance for the student festival programme *Il divertimento per li regazzi*, curated by Extragarbo in Sacca Fisola, Venice. As discussed in the introduction, the project emerged following the creation of the short experimental screendance film *Intertidal. Barene*, which explored the relationship between the salt marshes and human movement. While this earlier film focused on the evanescence and erosion of the salt

marsh landscapes, it also prompted a broader question: what are the most visible consequences of climate change within the water itself?

Building on these reflections, we began a filmic investigation of aquatic ecosystems that gradually expanded toward the theatrical stage. The performance translated our observations into choreographic language, mirroring the fluid, graceful movements of marine algae within their aquatic environments. Through this process, the stage became a space where ecological processes could be visually and physically interpreted, creating a performative representation of underwater dynamics and inviting audiences to reflect on the fragile conditions of these ecosystems.

Repeating Eutrophia 2 (2020) investigated the translation of algal proliferation into digitally mediated kinesthetic repetition, using spiral movement structures to examine how cyclical ecological processes can be abstracted and re-embodied within remote performance conditions. It took the form of a spiral dance performed on Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work was created for an exhibition at the Centre for Gravity in Bristol, curated by Lia Mazzari and Ben Parry. In this context, we presented our ongoing research to other participating artists and, together, explored a practice based on circular, repetitive movement patterns.

In the period following the first lockdown and preceding subsequent mobility restrictions, Venice experienced an exceptional reduction in human activity, creating a condition that enabled freer observations of lagoonal processes with minimal anthropogenic interference. Within this context, alongside ongoing concerns regarding algal proliferation, other ecological dynamics became increasingly visible, including the temporary presence of marine dolphins and a broader perceptible resurgence of non-human life within the lagoon system.

Repeating Eutrophia 3 (2021–ongoing) took shape as a digital archive, assembling video documentation, field recordings and other visual materials related to micro- and macroalgae. This evolving platform serves as a living repository of observations, reflections and collaborative research, enabling both ongoing documentation of ecological changes and critical engagement with the social and environmental dynamics of the lagoon.

Repeating Eutrophia 4 (2022) addressed how choreographic practices rooted in aquatic performance can render the imperceptible dynamics of eutrophication experientially legible in controlled environments such as the swimming pool. The work was presented as a performance during the *Traffic Festival delle Anime Gentili* in Pergola, Italy, curated by Pietro Consolandi, Matteo Binci and Bianca R. Schröder. Drawing on a background in synchronised swimming, the piece was ideated as an experiment to simulate and embody the surface conditions of toxic algal blooms

that frequently affect natural aquatic environments. The underwater choreography selectively adapts elements of synchronised swimming in order to translate ecological processes into structured visual and kinetic patterns, enabling audiences to experience eutrophication as a spatial and corporeal phenomenon.

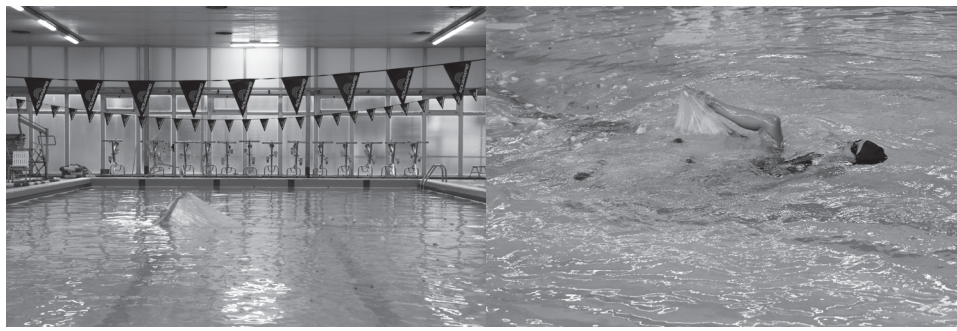


Figure 4. *Repeating Eutrophia*, 2022, performance, © Traffic Festival

Repeating Eutrophia 5 (2023) examined how urban mobility practices, specifically roller-skating and collective walking, can function as choreographic tools for engaging ecological proliferation as a condition entangled with contemporary capitalist metabolic processes in the Venetian Lagoon. The work was developed in collaboration with the Roller Skate School of Murano and presented as part of the programme "The Lagoon / Has the Moon / Between Its Legs / Playing Ball – Venice as a Model for the Future?" (6 May–13 October 2023), curated by Barbara Casavecchia and Pietro Consolandi. This piece was explicitly informed by Cecilia Alemani's curatorial discourse for the 2022 Venice Biennale, particularly its engagement with cyborg imaginaries and expanded posthuman forms, and extends this lineage through Hito Steyerl's analysis of infrastructural circulation and capitalist metabolic systems, in which environments are understood as actively enmeshed within extractive and computational logics. Within this framework, algal proliferation is approached both as an ecological acceleration process and as a material manifestation of entangled human and non-human systems shaped by these broader economic and environmental dynamics. The work culminated in a performative happening, "dancing algae," in which roller-skating operated as a kinetic system for translating ecological excess and imbalance into collective movement and spatial composition.



Figure 5. *Repeating Eutrophia*, 2023, performative walking tour, © Ocean Space

Repeating Eutrophia 6 (2024) investigated how choreographic and pedagogical practices can be used to translate ecological processes, such as algal growth and decay, into embodied forms of learning for early childhood education. The work shifted toward education and collective creation through a performative workshop for children, developed as part of Ocean Space's Education Programme in Venice during the 2023/2024 academic year. Designed for 100 five-year-old children, the workshop combined choreographic storytelling with environmental learning. Drawing on Karen Barad's conceptualisation of ecological transformation as shifts in species dominance rather than linear narratives of loss, the workshop explored cyclical patterns of algal proliferation through movement. Each choreographic sequence corresponded to a different type of algae, encouraging participants to generate their own movement scores and engage directly with ecological processes through embodied experimentation.



Figure 6. *Repeating Eutrophia*, 2024, performative workshop for children, © Ocean Space

Across earlier iterations of *Repeating Eutrophia*, the research increasingly encountered questions about representation in addressing ecological processes, where visual and choreographic registers risked stabilising phenomena that are in fact dynamic, diffuse and partially inaccessible. This awareness prompted a methodological shift toward practices capable of opening representational structures to uncertainty, relationality and expanded forms of perception, where ecological understanding emerges through situated engagement rather than fixed depiction.

In response to these representational concerns, *Repeating Eutrophia 7* (2025–2026) investigated how sound-based and installation practices can articulate interspecies relations within environments of toxin-producing algal blooms across intertidal and submerged ecologies. The piece unfolds as a sonic journey from intertidal zones into underwater environments, interweaving recordings from scientific conferences, journalistic investigations and testimonies from people who live and work in fragile marine ecosystems. These materials are composed as an open field rather than a linear narrative, allowing ecological processes to remain fragmentary, shifting and perceptually unstable. In this framework, sound does not operate as a representational substitute for visual form, but as a connecting element that enables attentional proximity to environmental change.

Overall, the research highlights the potential of performative practices to foster ecological understanding through situated perception rather than representation. By integrating embodied research methods, including walking, mapping, choreographic composition and sonic field recording, we have developed a multisensory approach that brings scientific and environmental processes into lived and experiential awareness through different media. A key insight is that performative acts function as thresholds of perception, where ecological knowledge emerges through relation, attunement and partial access rather than stable representation.

The Venetian archipelago

Venice often appears as a microcosm, an emblematic space where the evolving relationship between humans and nature can be observed, reimagined and reshaped. It offers a setting in which sustainable practices and attitudes emerge through an ongoing process of balance and adaptation. For an in-depth exploration of Venice's role in the context of climate and sociocultural transformations during the Anthropocene, see Baldacci. A wide array of artistic and cultural initiatives has taken root here, grounded in principles of care, environmental awareness and community empowerment. These efforts echo similar movements in island and water-based cities worldwide, encouraging more conscious and responsible modes of interacting with the environment.

As an island city, small in scale but deeply interconnected with global networks, Venice is particularly conducive to collaboration. This is reflected in the many partnerships and collective efforts formed by diverse organisations, community groups and individuals engaged in these ongoing environmental and cultural projects. Ultimately, our work contributes to the growing field of environmental performance by offering participatory, affective and site-specific tools for engaging communities in critical dialogue and collective imagination around ecological futures.

Contributions to environmental understanding and community action

This research draws on performative methods that integrate corporeal practices with critical reflection. We offer these and other movements not to replace scientific literacy or formal ecological inquiry, but to suggest that engaging watery landscapes through movement can permit meaningful insights. Could we propose a physical vocabulary to encapsulate the realities of these aquatic environments? Can we imagine a repertoire of gestures that resists simple representation or gestures that do not merely demonstrate chemical or biological processes, but instead propose ways of inhabiting and sensing these spaces? How can performative practices function as a method for perceiving, interpreting and communicating ecological processes, specifically eutrophication, in the Venetian Lagoon?

The results of this approach have been multifaceted. In public events and workshops, conversations with local audiences revealed rich experiential knowledge: participants shared personal memories of the lagoon and its seasonal changes, recounted childhood games connected to water and tides and described daily encounters with algae and other aquatic phenomena. Children, in particular, offered playful yet insightful improvisations, inventing movements that reflected their embodied understanding of water, flow and algae proliferation. During slow walks through the lagoonal environment, perception itself became increasingly attuned to subtle variations in surface, colour and movement, where gradual shifts in water texture, vegetal accumulation and tidal traces reconfigured attention from a representational reading of the landscape toward a more continuous and connecting mode of sensing environmental change. These interactions suggested that ecological processes can be accessed not only through observation but through imaginative, bodily engagement. Other outcomes included new ways of mapping movement patterns onto tidal rhythms and the production of visual and auditory materials that captured the textures, sounds and motions of the lagoon environment. These results indicate that performative practice can serve as a bridge between scientific knowledge, local

experience and aesthetic exploration, producing forms of ecological awareness that are relational, participatory and multisensory.

IV. Conclusions

By situating bodies within watery landscapes and translating the rhythms of algae, tides and community interactions into movement, the work foregrounds relational and embodied ways of knowing. These watery landscapes, with their constantly shifting conditions, create both ecological richness and sensory complexity, making them an ideal site for exploring human–environment interactions. Beyond producing insights about the Venetian Lagoon, the practice reveals the generative potential of integrating artistic, scientific and social perspectives. Performative and choreographic methodologies can operate as situated epistemic practices that do not aim to fully represent ecological processes, but instead generate processual forms of knowledge. The research, therefore, contributes to contemporary debates in environmental humanities and artistic research by proposing performance as a situated methodology through which ecological knowledge itself can emerge. In doing so, it suggests that artistic research can complement scientific observation by generating forms of ecological understanding grounded in perception, participation and embodied experience.

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Povzetek

Prispevek proučuje, kako lahko z umetniškim raziskovanjem širimo okoljsko ozaveščenost, in sicer na področju vodne geografije z Beneško laguno kot središčem obravnave. Članek trdi, da utelešene in performativne prakse omogočajo lokacijski način razumevanja ekologije, pri čemer telesna izkušnja, lokacijska specifičnost (angl. *site specificity* – op. prev.) in čutno zaznavanje delujejo kot orodja za razlago sprememb v okolju. Besedilo izhaja iz raziskovalnega projekta *Repeating Eutrophia* (2019–), ki je nastal v sodelovanju z umetnico Lauro Santini v okviru kolektiva Confluenze. Projekt temelji na ekoloških pojmih evtrofije, opredeljene kot uravnoteženo stanje hranil v vodnih ekosistemih, in evtrofikacije, ki pomeni čezmerno obogatitev s hranili ter vódi do cvetenja alg, hipoksije in mogočega kolapsa ekosistema. Beseda »repeating« (angl. 'ponavljanje' – op. prev.) se navezuje na iterativno strukturo umetniškega procesa, pa tudi na ciklično dinamiko ekološke preobrazbe, ki je predmet raziskave. S performativnimi eksperimenti, participativnimi akcijami in prostorsko odzivnimi praksami se v projektu ekološki procesi prevajajo v čutne izkušnje. Uprizarjanje v tem okviru deluje kot metodološko orodje za čutenje in artikulacijo sprememb v okolju ter dopolnjuje znanstvene načine opazovanja ekološkega stanja. Projekt se je razvijal skozi sedem iterativnih epizod; vse so v različnih umetniških formatih obravnavale napetost med ekološkim ravnotežjem in presežkom. Čeprav so korenine projekta *Repeating Eutrophia* v Beneški laguni, deluje kot odprta raziskovalna struktura, ki jo je mogoče razširiti na druge okoljske kontekste.

Ključne besede: umetniško raziskovanje, vodne ekologije, *screendance*, laguna, utelešena ekologija

Anja Dimitrijević je umetnica, ki deluje v Benetkah. Diplomirala je iz vizualnih umetnosti, ima pa tudi dva magisterija z Univerze Iuav v Benetkah, in sicer iz aplikativnega gledališča in uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Raziskuje na stičišču uprizoritvenih praks, vizualnih umetnosti in izobraževanja, pri čemer se posebej osredotoča na vodne ekologije, zlasti v Beneški laguni. Je članica raziskovalne enote PerLa, ki jo koordinira prof. Annalisa Sacchi, ter kolektiva Confluenze, kjer je skupaj z Lauro Santini razvila projekta *Repeating Eutrophia* in *Intertidal.Barene*.

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Digitalni prostor, okolje in uprizarjanje v beneškem kontekstu

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Umetniško raziskovanje vse bolj deluje kot lokacijski način proučevanja okolja, pri čemer se vednost poraja z utelešenimi, performativnimi in na lokacijo odzivnimi (angl. *site-responsive* – op. prev.) praksami. V tem kontekstu vodne geografije ponujajo ključen teren za preiskovanje prepletenosti človeških in nečloveških sistemov, kjer se okoljski procesi ne doživljajo kot zunanji pojavi, temveč kot relacijski in afektivni pogoji.

Konceptualna in metodološka usmeritev tega prispevka izhaja iz značilnosti bibavičnega pasu. Slednjega opredeljujemo kot spremenljiv vmesnik med kopnim in morjem, zanj pa je značilna ciklična izpostavljenost in poplavljenost, kar ustvarja okolja, zaznamovana z ritmično nestabilnostjo in nenehno preobrazbo. Bibavični pas kot ekološka in epistemološka figura tvori okvir za mišljenje liminalnih pogojev, kjer meje niso stalne, temveč se o njih vedno znova pogajajo časovne in materialne spremembe. Enaka logika velja tudi za lagunsko ekologijo beneškega sistema, kjer dinamika plimovanja, slanostni gradienti in antropogeni pritiski ustvarjajo podobno nestabilno polje sobivanja.

Značilnosti bibavičnega pasu prikazuje film *Intertidal.Barene*, zasnovan kot *screendance*, v katerem gibanje, okolje in posredovanje (angl. *mediation* – op. prev.) delujejo kot sooblikujoče sile. V skladu z Douglasom Rosenbergom, ki *screendance* opredeljuje kot posredovano in interdisciplinarno prakso, navedeni film ne uporablja zaslona kot nevtralne površine za dokumentiranje, temveč kot aktivno lokacijo koreografske rekonfiguracije, kjer se skozi posredovanje nenehno porajajo prostorska in časovna razmerja. V tem pogledu imajo »barene« – solinska pokrajina – vlogo ekološke podlage in koreografskega polja hkrati, kamera pa deluje kot liminalna naprava, ki spremenljivost bibavičnega pasu prevaja v posredovano kinetično in zaznavno strukturo. Utelešene in performativne prakse v tem razširjenem ekološkem polju postanejo orodja za obravnavo okoljskih sprememb na ravni živete in občutene izkušnje. Pričujoča raziskava k okolju ne pristopa kot k objektu reprezentacije, temveč proučuje, kako lahko gibanje, bližina in vključenost telesa ustvarjajo lokacijske oblike okoljske zaznave.

Članek proučuje, kako lahko performativne prakse delujejo kot metode za zaznavanje, interpretacijo in komunikacijo ekoloških procesov v Beneški laguni, zlasti evtrofikacije. Analizira sedem iteracij projekta *Repeating Eutrophia* in preiskuje, kako lahko umetniško raziskovanje ustvarja lokacijske oblike ekološke vednosti, ki dopolnjujejo znanstvena opažanja. Digitalni in senzorični arhivi v tem okviru opravljajo funkcijo lokacijskih orodij za razbiranje sprememb v okolju; ne delujejo kot nevtralne shrambe podatkov, temveč kot relacijski dispozitivi, skozi katere lahko sledimo in interpretiramo ekološke preobrazbe, podnebne stresorje ter skupne ranljivosti človeških in okoljskih sistemov (Baldacci; Regi).

Z lociranjem teles v vodne krajine in s prevajanjem ritmov alg, plimovanja ter skupnostnih interakcij v gibanje stopijo v ospredje dela *Repeating Euthropia* relacijski in utelešeni načini védenja. Zaradi stalnega spreminjanja pogojev nastajata tako ekološko bogastvo kot senzorična kompleksnost, zato je ta lokacija idealna za raziskovanje interakcij z okoljem. Poleg spoznanj o Beneški laguni se s tovrstno prakso razkriva tudi generativni potencial za povezovanje umetniških, znanstvenih in družbenih perspektiv. Performativne in koreografske metodologije lahko delujejo kot lokacijske epistemološke prakse, ki ne služijo celoviti reprezentaciji ekoloških procesov, temveč ustvarjanju procesualnih oblik vednosti. Raziskava tako prispeva k sodobni razpravi na področju okoljskih humanističnih ved in umetniškega raziskovanja, saj predlaga uprizarjanje kot lokacijsko metodologijo, s katero lahko nastaja tudi ekološka vednost. S tem nakazuje, da z umetniškim raziskovanjem lahko dopolnjujemo znanstvena opažanja, in sicer z ustvarjanjem oblik razumevanja ekologije, ki temeljijo na zaznavi, participaciji in utelešeni izkušnji.

Prevedla Urška Daly.

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Povzetek

Eden izmed okvirov za razumevanje in reševanje okoljske krize je vzpostavljanje ravnovesja med človeškimi, naravnimi, kolektivnimi in umetnimi agenti, ki ga lahko gradimo na konceptih iz okoljske etike in etike informacijskega okolja. Umetniška dela so obravnavana kot funkcionalni modeli za sobivanje človeških in nečloveških entitet. Posebna pozornost je posvečena razumevanju tehnologije, saj nastopa v vlogi problema in rešitve za nastali problem. Poraja nove fenomene, tako na ravni družbenih odnosov kot na ravni spreminjanja okolja. Besedilo predstavi tri pristope na področju sodobne tehnološke umetnosti, ki modelirajo okolja in okoljsko problematiko tako, da konstruirajo mogoče modelne rešitve. Ars Electronica v Linzu integrira umetnost, tehnologijo in družbo skozi povezane platforme in iniciative, od umetniško-raziskovalnih, znanstveno-tehnoloških, izobraževalnih in diskurzivnih do družbeno-političnih. Pri pregledu delovanja ekosistema Ars Electronice pokažemo raznolike metode, s katerimi umetnice razvijajo svoje projekte, pri tem posebno pozornost posvetimo slovenskim nastopom na teh festivalih. Kot zgodnji primer ekološke medijske umetnosti obravnavamo delo Paula Ryana, njegovo metodo za beleženje stanja Zemlje in doseganje konsenza s trojčenjem ter ob uporabi tehnologije videa. Tretji način modeliranja ekosistemov so umetniška dela Pierra Huygha, ki človeškega agenta ne predpostavljajo nujno, ampak dosežejo določeno stopnjo neodvisnosti in odprtosti v samouravnavanju.

Ključne besede: ekološka umetnost, video, novomedijska umetnost, infosfera, konstrukcionizem, Ars Electronica, Paul Ryan, Pierre Huyghe

Narvika Bovcon je profesorica za video in novomedijsko umetnost, poučuje na Fakulteti za računalništvo in informatiko ter kot zunanja sodelavka na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje Univerze v Ljubljani. Njena raziskovalna področja so uporabniški vmesniki za razstave na spletnih platformah ter v okoljih virtualne in obogatene resničnosti, teorija in praksa novomedijske umetnosti, vizualizacija informacij in digitalna humanistika. Od leta 2016 je glavna in odgovorna urednica revije *Likovne besede*.

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Umetniško modeliranje trajnostnega ravnovesja med človeškimi in nečloveškimi akterji: festival Ars Electronica, umetnika Paul Ryan in Pierre Huyghe

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Okoljski izzivi sodobnega časa se skupaj s prepletenostjo potrošniške družbe, globalnih proizvodnih, finančnih, političnih, tehnoloških in medijskih sistemov kažejo kot nerešljivi – v posamezniku prožijo občutke nuje po ukrepanju hkrati z občutki nemoči. Kljub načrtom in pobudam trajnostnega razvoja mednarodnih organizacij, ki upoštevajo družbene, politične, ekonomske in tehnološke vidike ter spodbujajo etično delovanje, se vedno znova pokaže težavnost uveljavljanja teh pobud na globalni ravni, zato smo pri doseganju okoljskih ciljev bolj kot ne neuspešni.[1] Konsenz glede trajnostnega delovanja in pravičnega dostopa do virov se zdi nemogoč, dodatno ga načenjajo taktike zelenega zavajanja (*greenwashing*) ali prenašanje odgovornosti za ekološko samoomejevanje s korporacij na potrošnike ter na drugi strani netransparentnost delovanja umetnointeligenčnih sistemov v infosferi, ki (so) upravljajo infrastrukture, filtrirajo informacijske tokove in manipulirajo tudi s čustvi uporabnikov. Rešitev našega okolja je nuja, pravzaprav je to edini problem, s katerim se moramo vsi ukvarjati, kljub slabim napovedim, in pri tem umetnost ni izvzeta.

Dvojna vloga umetnosti kot raziskovalke upodobitvenih režimov na ravni tehnoloških inovacij in ogledala družbi skozi bolj ali manj kritično refleksijo se je s konceptualno umetnostjo premaknila od mimesis k poiesis, proti umetniški kognitivni storitvi, ki soustvarja razširjene koncepte politike in znanosti. Janez Strehovec je analiziral priložnosti, kako lahko umetnost deluje kot ekološka praksa: (1) s predstavljanjem ekoloških tem in promoviranjem trajnostnih praks, (2) z uporabo naravnih materialov, (3) s tehnološkimi zelenimi inovacijami, ki jih izumijo umetniki v sodelovanju z znanstveniki, (4) s svojo notranjo trajnostno organizacijo v obliki ciklične umetniške ekonomije, remiksa in opustitve ustvarjanja iz nič, (5) z energijsko

1 Fizika v ozadju globalnega segrevanja z modeli različnih scenarijev reševanja tega problema, tudi v družbeno-politični razsežnosti, je razložena npr. v Dessler.

manj potratno izvedbo velikih umetniških prireditev, (6) kot prizorišče za družbeno kritiko antropocena, (7) z aktivizmom v sodelovanju s civilno družbo, (8) z za umetnost specifičnimi učinki in klimatsko fikcijo. Naštete paradigme poveže v tabeli z njihovimi manifestacijami v umetniških žanrih in s primeri od Benjaminovih *Arkad* do najnovejših projektov (Strehovec 37–38).

Cilj te razprave je predstaviti tri sisteme pristopov k okoljski krizi, ki se v okviru sodobne tehnološke umetnosti udejanjajo na različnih ravneh. V prvem delu besedilo kartira aktualne umetniške projekte na zadnjih izvedbah festivala Ars Electronica in festivalske odseke, ki omogočajo večplastno obravnavo okoljske problematike. Drugi del besedila se ozre v zgodnje obdobje medijske umetnosti in predstavi videobeleženje okolja za njegovo reinhabitacijo, v pomenu naselitve na nov način, kakor ga je konceptualiziral ekološki umetnik Paul Ryan v svojih spisih o semiotičnih in topoloških modelih komunikacijskega koda videa ter ob tem načrtoval uporabe teh dognanj v javnih umetniških projektih. V tretjem delu ob razstavah Pierra Huygha primerjamo vizije ekosistemov, ki se uravnavajo in samoorganizirajo brez človeka.

I.

Diskurz današnjega vsakdana prežema posebna pozornost, posvečena razumevanju tehnologije, saj slednja nastopa tako v vlogi očitnega, večplastnega in zapletenega problema kot tudi obljubljene rešitve, ki bo v prihodnosti prinesla preboj. Vendar pa v tem trenutku že poraja nove probleme – na ravni družbenih odnosov in uničevanja okolja. Zdi se, da smo ujeti v Benjaminovo podobo angela napredka, v premik skozi nova znanstveno-tehnološka odkritja, ki za seboj pušča ruševine sveta (Benjamin, *Izbrani* 219). Poraja se dilema med energetsko in surovinsko požrešno tehnološko tekmo na eni strani in nižjetehnološkim sonaravnim načinom bivanja na drugi, obe viziji sta v svetu, polnem vojn, konfliktov in tekmovalnosti, problematični. Odgovor na vprašanje, ali tehnološko, strojno, umetno, umetnointeligenčno ali biološko, naravno, človeško, bi verjetno moral biti vključujoč, ne zgolj eno ne zgolj drugo. Umetniška dela, ki jih obravnava to besedilo, so ponujena kot funkcionalni modeli za sobivanje človeških in nečloveških agentov, potopljenih v infosfero. Gre za razširitev okoljske etike z živih bitij tudi na neživa in umetna, v najsplošnejšem pojmu na informacijske organizme; rešitve je v tem pogledu mogoče iskati z vzpostavljanjem ravnovesja med človeškimi, kolektivnimi, tehnološkimi, sistemskimi in naravnimi agenti (Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* in *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*; Bovcon in Vaupotič; Vaupotič, *Osebni*; Vaupotič, *Novomedijska*).

Sodobni izzivi na presečišču tehnologije in družbe so na festivalu Ars Electronica obravnavani v treh glavnih sklopih: skozi optiko umetnosti na razstavnih prizoriščih,

skozi refleksijo na simpozijih in skozi sejemski prikaz realiziranih rešitev v okviru evropskih, globalnih oz. lokalnih projektov, ki segajo od izobraževalnega procesa do industrijskih, infrastrukturnih in zakonodajnih rešitev. Ekosistem Ars Electronice tvorijo naslednje platforme: AE Center, AE Festival, Prix, Futurelab, Export (dogodki v tujini), Solutions (rešitve za institucije in podjetja), Blog, Future Thinking School (izobraževanje za univerze, institucije in podjetja), Create Your World (za najmlajše), arhiv (od 1979), S+T+ARTS Prize (nagrada Evropske komisije), Platform Europe (evropske iniciative). Povezani ekosistemski pristop je sistematičen in učinkovit, umetniško-tehnološke vizije prevaja v širše razumevanje in praktično uporabo, s tem umetnost integrira v družbo in z njeno pomočjo spreminja resničnost.

Prenovljeni Ars Electronica Center s stalno postavitvijo ima izrazito didaktičen značaj: obiskovalci se ne zgolj čudijo interaktivnim instalacijam kot v preteklosti, ampak so ciljno informirani o tem, kako delujejo sodobne informacijske tehnologije, npr. računalniški vid, strojno učenje in nevronske mreže, ki so v ozadju modelov umetne inteligence. Gre za osnovno izobrazbo, ki je nujno potrebna za razumevanje in orientacijo med tehnologijami, s katerimi se vsakodnevno srečujemo in ki v veliki meri oblikujejo prikaze vsebin skozi spletne in mobilne vmesnike. Kako se do prepričljivih dejstev lahko dokopljemo z obdelavo in vizualizacijo podatkov, ki so osnova za narativizacijo ter razumevanje dogajanja, prikazuje npr. projekt *Anatomija umetne inteligence* (avtorja Vladan Joler in Kate Crawford, 2018), ki v obliki informacijske grafike predstavi številne komponente v ozadju spletnega osebnega asistenta Amazon Echo, vse do kapitalskega sistema, delovne sile in rudnin.[2] O izdelavi novih pametnih in trajnostnih materialov, o možnostih bioničnih protez, robotike in nevroznanosti obiskovalko informirajo eksperimenti, pospremljeni z razlago in nekateri tudi z uporabniško izkušnjo. Tako lahko npr. v projektu *NeuroFly* (2021–), ki je nastal v trboveljskem Katapultu Robotika pod vodstvom Maše Jazbec, preizkusimo upravljanje simulatorja letenja samo z mislimi prek možganskega vmesnika.[3]

Festivalski arhiv je pomemben vir za raziskovalce informatizirane sodobnosti, saj se teme, ki so naša stalnica že več desetletij – kot so okoljska kriza, demokracija in upravljanje podatkov, lastnina in prevlada v kontekstu novih informacijskih tehnologij, zasebnost in konstrukcija identitete, razširjena resničnost in teleprezenca, umetna inteligenca in robotika – vsako leto premislijo v aktualnih okvirih in v povezavi z dejanskimi rabami v industriji in družbi, pri čemer umetniška interpretacija, intervencija in modeliranje tvorijo enakovreden pristop v razpravi o alternativnih, bolj trajnostnih in bolj demokratičnih rabah. Hkrati je to eden od načinov odgovora na vprašanje, kaj novomedijska umetnost lahko stori za človeštvo oz. za okolje. Npr. tema festivala leta 2024 je bila *Upanje – Kdo bo obrnil tok?* (*Hope – Who Will Turn the Tide?*),

2 https://anatomyof.ai. Vse povezave v opombah so dostopne 8. 5. 2026.

3 https://masajazbec.si/2021/01/16/neurofly.

kustosinja osrednje razstave Olga Tihonova je odnos med upanjem in umetnostjo umestila v uveljavljeno predstavo o tem, kako deluje umetnost:

> Čeprav je upanje neoprijemljivo, še vedno raje upamo. Ker nas dandanes argumenti znanosti ne morejo več pripraviti k ukrepanju, sledimo umetnikom, da nas popeljejo na križišče razmišljanja, delovanja in druženja. S kompleksnejšimi oblikami mišljenja, onkraj logičnih vzrokov in posledic ter tehnoloških izboljšav, umetniki izzivajo naše ustaljene načine občutenja in osmišljanja. Hodeč po njihovi poti, se bomo morda naučili bolje razumeti svet in bolje bivati v njem. (*Hope* 30)

Temi upanja in spremembi toka stvari so ustrezali projekti na temo reševanja okoljske krize – med njimi velja omeniti nekaj slovenskih nastopov (*Hope* 46–47): instalacijo Kolektiva Krater s performansom vedeževanja o prihodnosti urbanega degradiranega in potem umetniško revitaliziranega območja Kraterja v Ljubljani ob pitju čaja in med brskanjem po njihovem arhivu.[4] Ali pa projekt Nine Mršnik, ki izdela produkcijsko linijo za pečenje pohištva iz delcev odpadne plastike.[5] Ter *Radiotrofno zatočišče* Saše Spačal za sobivanje dveh bioloških vrst, pri čemer glive varujejo človeka pred sevanjem.[6] Umetniška imaginacija v omenjenih projektih dopolnjuje raziskave materialov in organizmov, ki so znane iz drugih disciplin, s tem ko jih oblikuje v konkretne izdelke, ambiente in kulturne prakse. Umetnico postavlja v vlogo tiste, ki bo obrnila tok, vendar ne več v vlogi genija ali prerokinje, ampak kot slehernica v svojem vsakdanjem uporabniškem življenju, ki prispeva svoj delček trajnostne prakse v širši zavezi, da je treba naše celotno delovanje spremeniti, priložnosti za te spremembe pa izvajati na raznotere načine tudi na zasebni ravni. Gre za individualno gojenje upanja, vsakdo lahko prispeva s svojo kreativnostjo v svojem bivališču in tako poskrbi za nizek okoljski odtis lastnega mikroekosistema, medtem ko so globalni sistemi odmišljeni oz. jih nadomešča vizija pomnožitve posameznih etičnih iniciativ.

V odnosu do teme upanja je bil naslov naslednje festivalske edicije leta 2025 skorajda streznitev: *Panika*, in nekoliko relativiziran z obliko ankete, ki v podnaslovu sprašuje: da ali ne. Panika zaradi izgubljanja nadzora nad tehnološkim razvojem, ki bo uničil planet in nas nadomestil s pametnimi roboti. Gre za nadaljevanje diskusij, tudi tiste iz leta 2023 z naslovom *Kdo je lastnik resnice?* (*Who Owns the Truth?*), ki so pokazale na pogojenost umetnointeligenčnih modelov z računalniško infrastrukturo v zasebni lasti in s pristranskimi podatkovnimi zbirkami, pogosto pridobljenimi brez vednosti in pristanka lastnikov avtorskih pravic gradiva, ter na ogromen okoljski odtis teh orodij in podatkovnih centrov. Večkrat ponovljena parabola na simpoziju leta 2025, ki se je loteval vprašanj odgovorne in smiselne uporabe umetne inteligence, je bilo Platonovo nasprotovanje uporabi pisave v izobraževanju, ker bo uničila samostojno razmišljanje

4 https://krater.si.

5 https://ars.electronica.art/hope/en/events/wastescapes.

6 https://ars.electronica.art/hope/en/spaceship-from-hope.

in mnemotehnične metode spominjanja (prim. Yates), v resnici pa je, kot danes s pogledom na pretekla stoletja lahko z zanesljivostjo ugotovimo, generirala ogromno novega znanja in izboljšala življenjske pogoje; prek te vzporednice lahko sklepamo, da moramo in smemo sprejeti današnja nova orodja, tj. robotske pomočnike, in z njimi začeti soustvarjati naše prihodnje znanje.

Učinke razvoja oz. uničevalnega izkoriščanja naravnih virov so leta 2023 prikazovali številni dokumentarni filmi, npr. *Broken Spectre* (avtor Richard Mosse, 2018–2022) o amazonskem gozdu, ki so skušali informirati in aktivirati svetovno občinstvo, da bi ukrepalo proti prikazanim neetičnim in smrtonosnim netrajnostnim praksam (*Prix AE 2023* 218). Leta 2025 v galerijskih filmih ni več zaznati aktivizma, slonečega na upanju, da se bo ukrepalo in popravilo škodo, ampak je pripoved le še beleženje absurdnega kataklizmičnega stanja, na katero se prebivalci prilagajajo. Tako je npr. v filmu *Void in Resonance* (avtor Jerónimo Reyes-Retana, 2025) prikazan vpliv zvočnega udarca ob izstreljevanju raket SpaceX v vesolje na gojenje ostrig v bližnjem zalivu, ki je sicer v sosednji državi in s tem v drugem pravnem okviru, s statičnimi meditativnimi videoposnetki na videz neokrnjenega zaliva, pri čemer je pričevanje prizadetih pridelovalcev zelo omejeno, glavnino zvočne plasti pa zajema nevtralni govor o tehnologiji zapisovanja in predvajanja zvoka (*Panic* 77). Sopostavitev delov in plasti projekta, ki je po svojem žanru videoinstalacija, sporoča trpko resignacijo in nemoč življenja zaradi prevladujoče tehnologije, ki je prikazana kot družbeno in fizikalno dejstvo.

Vprašanje laži se od pristopov raziskovalnega novinarstva premika k odgovorom umetne inteligence na podlagi stohastičnega strojnega učenja, npr. v dialogu med dvema AI-avatarjema v projektu *Tech Bro Debates Humanity* (avtorica Sputniko!, 2024), ki v situaciji t. i. sobe odmevov argumentirata smiselnost potovanja v vesolje z vidika preživetja človeške vrste – tokrat obiskovalec razstave ni več v naporni vlogi tistega, ki komunicira z umetnim agentom in v tej komunikaciji razmišlja o svojih vprašanjih in Turingovem testu, pač pa izmenjavo opravita sama umetna agenta med sabo (*Panic* 73). Njun dialog je povprečen, soliden, kot bi poslušali človeške govorce na kaki okrogli mizi na televiziji; kar pride do izraza, je mehaničnost procesa argumentacije, ki človeškemu ni tako zelo tuja, fenomen *uncanny valley*, ki je v časih digitalne 3D-animacije označeval podobnost in različnost simulacije s fotografsko podobo, je v tem primeru zaznan v meglenih obrobnih artefaktih sintetične podobe. Te pojave, te napake, identificira projekt *Anatomy of Non-Fact: AI Hyperrealism* (avtorica Martyna Marciniak, 2024) na primeru medijske »fotografije« papeža v puhovki Balenciaga, ki tudi natančno poimenuje in razloži AI-artefakte z namenom izobraževanja gledalke sodobnih medijskih vsebin (*Prix AE 2025* 64–65). Nekonsistentnosti v podobi imajo v spekulaciji *Dystopia Land* (avtorji Etsuko Ichihara, Civic Creative Base Tokyo, 2025), ki predstavlja kozji kult z umetnointeligenčno generiranim reklamnim videom,

drugačen pomen (*Panic* 57). Če smo pred dvema letoma še opazovali, kakšne like in gibe lahko ustvari umetna inteligenca in kako jih uporabimo v postopku avtorske animacije – ter ocenjevali njihovo ustreznost glede na avtorsko vizijo –, to leta 2025 ni več v ospredju, ampak so preprosto privzeti kot danost in ena od sodobnih estetik videa: umetnointeligenčno ustvarjeni slabi, neceloviti, nerealistični izdelki, s katerimi se v hitrih montažah sporoči neka vsebina, pove neka zgodba. Druga skrajnost so meditativni prelivi med hiperestetiziranimi z AI ustvarjenimi fantastičnimi podobami, ki npr. v projektu *Hiii, I'm Flynn* (avtorji Malpractice, 2025) vizualizirajo razmisleke prve umetne študentke, vpisane na Univerzo za uporabne umetnosti na Dunaju.[7]

Pri spekulacijah o bližnji prihodnosti je pogosta uporaba satire: npr. projekt *Consume Our Consumption* (avtorji Anya Koehne, Annan Zuo, Jiabao Li, 2025) ponuja tabletko *plascetamol*, narejeno iz črevesnih bakterij črvov, ki jedo plastiko, po zaužitju te tablete lahko tudi ljudje postanejo del reševanja problema onesnaženja z odpadno plastiko (*Panic* 234); ali pa projekt *HydroGAN* (avtorji Fariha Ahmed, Fatima Nazir, Alice Aslem, Selma Fejzullaj, Jood Elbeshti, Shawky Abdalla, 2025), ki oglašuje umetnointeligenčno generirano vodo, ta zna dekodirati uporabnikove biološke ritme in filtrirati njegovo uporabo socialnih omrežij (*Panic* 177).

Arhiv Ars Electronice omogoča sledenje izbranim motivom od zgodnjih edicij do danes. Različne projekte upravljanja z naravo tako zasledimo že od postavitve *The Telegarden* (razvit na univerzi v južni Kaliforniji leta 1995, v muzeju Ars Electronice 1996–2004), kjer uporabniki prek spleta na daljavo zalivajo rastline in ustvarjajo spletno skupnost. Podobno zgodnje so teme rasti organizmov v odnosu do virov svetlobe in uporabnikovih gest v interaktivni in generativni umetnosti, npr. *Phototrophy* (avtorja Christa Sommerer in Laurent Mignoneau, 1995). V ta niz se postavlja slovenski projekt zelene stene z akvarijem *StellaVerde* (avtorji Gregor Krpič, Simon Gmajner v sodelovanju z Janom Babičem, Markom Jamškom in Galom Sajkom, 2023), gre za prototip vrta kot mogoči scenarij za trajnostno pridelavo hrane s senzorji in robotom, ki avtonomno pleza od rastline do rastline ter za vsako poskrbi skladno s podatki o njenem stanju – človek je v tem primeru izvzet; projekt je nastal v sodelovanju z Institutom »Jožef Stefan« (*Who Owns* 69). Podobno tudi terarij *Sottobosco* (avtor Alberto Anhaus, 2025), ki ustvari postnaravno, hibridno okolje podrasti, po kateri se gibljejo mikrorobotski insekti, postavlja vprašanje ravnovesja naravno-tehnološkega sistema (*Panic* 70).

Motiv psa je nosilec empatije do nečloveških vrst, živalskih in robotskih. *Topologija K9* Maje Smrekar človeka in psa poveže na ravni evolucije, telesnosti in bioetike (prim. Puncer; Smrekar); na festivalu Ars Electronica je bil leta 2017 nagrajen v kategoriji hibridne umetnosti z zlato nike, leta 2018 pa z nagrado Prešernovega sklada. Maja

7 https://i-am-flynn.web.app/, https://www.ooekultur.at/exhibition-detail/flynn.

Smrekar se umetniškim raziskavam medvrstnega sobivanja v sodelovanju s psi in umetnimi agenti posveča tudi v projektu *!brute force* (2019, 2022), prav tako predstavljenem na Ars Electronici.[8] Na osnovi molekulske strukture serotonina zgradi mrežo, po kateri se gibljeta dva performerja, človek in pes, senzorji merijo njun utrip srca, temperaturo, potenje, ti podatki so v nadaljevanju uporabljeni v nevronski mreži za izdelavo modela naslednjega mrežnega ambienta, morfologije robotov in njihovega gibanja.

Živalskega psa so v projektih zadnjih let nadomestili robotski psi. Plesni performans *SpotShotBeuys* (avtorica Silke Grabinger, 2023) je parafraza Beuysovega performansa; tokrat gledamo tudi skozi oči/kamero robotskega psa Spota, ki opazuje performerko, v gibanju sta v nenehni interakciji pogleda, ki med njima ustvarja prostorsko koordinacijo in psihološko komunikacijo, tako rekoč čustveno vez med človekom in robotom, vsaj enostransko.[9] V projektu *Dinamizem psa na vrvici* (avtor Takayuki Todo, 2025) robotski pes nastopa kot žrtev, trpinčena žival na verigi, ki mu prepreči vsak poskus osvoboditve – realistični gibi napadalnega psa so tisti vzvod, ki v opazovalki sproži doživljanje robota kot živega bitja.[10] Gre za razširitev odnosa z robotom: ne vživljamo se le v humanoidne robote, ki omogočajo čutenje robotskih protez in zamenjave telesa, kot v eksperimentih Maše Jazbec v sodelovanju s profesorjem Hirošijem Išiguro, pač pa čutimo empatijo tudi do živalim podobnih robotov.

Številni projekti problematizirajo antropocentrično kreativnost, s tem ko vključijo delovanje bakterij, npr. *Micro Orchestrism* (avtorji Kaori Ogawa, Kaito Nakahori, Harpreet Sareen, 2025) sonificira fermentacijo pri nastajanju sakeja (*Panic* 188); ali vodnih tokov in drugih naravnih procesov kot generatorje zvokov v soustvarjenih glasbenih kompozicijah in ambientih.

Pomemben del festivala so skupnostni projekti. *The Wild Future Lab* iz Kenije predstavlja eksperiment predelovanja vlaken iz odpadnih listov bananovca, iz katerih se lahko izdeluje trajnostni tekstil (*Panic* 111). V iniciativo DAS (Data, Art & Science) sodi tudi večdelni japonski projekt o ohranjanju voda, ki angažira skupnost lokalnih prebivalcev ob reki, da v projektu občanske znanosti 3D-skenirajo rečne pejsaže in beležijo pripovedi z namenom ohranjanja spomina, tematizira prisotnost vode z njenimi značilnostmi v različnih lokalnih izdelkih, ki sodijo npr. v vrhunsko kulinariko, in poudarja skrb za naravno in kulturno dediščino (*Panic* 399). Študentski projekt *Chornozem* (avtorji Kirill Kohl, Olivia Menezes, Yaroslava Shylyk, 2025) ukrajinskim kmetom ponudi dostopno orodje (sestavljeno iz gnojila s kurkumo, UV-luči in drona s kamero) za prepoznavo s težkimi kovinami onesnažene pridelovalne zemlje in kot celota opozarja, da je ekocid poseben vojni zločin (*Panic* 215). The Vienna Geospace

8 https://ars.electronica.art/planetb/de/brute-force/, https://www.majasmrekar.org/brute_force.

9 https://www.silk.at/repertory/spotshotbeuys

10 https://ars.electronica.art/panic/en/view/dynamics-of-a-dog-on-a-leash-23838ddb450c8091a7cefbf322daeec4/.

Hub (iniciativa Evropske vesoljske agencije) predstavi *Green Transformation Information Factory*, ki nudi satelitske podatke kot orodja za preobrazbo v klimatsko nevtralna odporna mesta. Za več-kot-umetnost so pomembna tudi vprašanja vključitve v vsakdanje življenje, ki segajo vse do izdelave patentov, razvoja tehnologije, aktivizma, poučnosti, zakonodaje in delovanja v skupnosti. Kot sinteza teh prizadevanj nastopa projekt *The EuroStack*, ki razvija potrebne gradnike avtonomije (surovinske, tehnološke, finančne) in demokracije za odporno Evropo (Panic 103–105).

Mednarodni odprti poziv za razstavo *State of the ART(ist)* – gre za skupno pobudo Ars Electronice in avstrijskega zveznega ministrstva za evropske in mednarodne zadeve, ki poteka od leta 2021:

> je namenjen umetnikom, katerih preživetje in delovne razmere so močno prizadeti zaradi politične represije, vojne, omejevanja svobode izražanja, okoljskih kriz ali ekonomskega in sistemskega izkoriščanja. Poudarek je na projektih na presečišču umetnosti, aktivizma in odpora, ki umetniško izražanje razumejo kot dokumentacijo in intervencijo, izpodbijajo dominantne razlagalne vzorce in odpirajo nove prostore za družbeni diskurz.[11]

Na festivalu Ars Electronica predstavljena umetniška dela pripadajo specifično umetniškim smerem raziskovanja. Kartiranje osrednjih tem, motivov in pristopov je pokazalo, da umetnice pri tem uporabljajo različne metode: ustvarjalno in oblikovalsko mišljenje; asociativno povezovanje motivov, konceptov in procesov znotraj posamezne discipline ter skozi potujoče metafore tudi prek meja disciplin; spekulativne metode za modeliranje delovanja sistemov, izmišljanje alternativnih realnosti ali utopičnih prihodnosti; transdisciplinarno raziskovanje, ki povezuje raznorodne pristope, uvide in dognanja ter sestavlja nove epistemološke celote, nova polja znanja; konstrukcionistično iskanje rešitev, ki ustvarjalno zadostijo posameznim načrtovanim uporabam oz. zahtevam; ozaveščanje občinstva skozi dokumentarni pristop in pripovedovanje zgodb kot v raziskovalnem novinarstvu; zajemanje, obdelavo in vizualizacijo podatkov; generativne modele umetne inteligence kot ustvarjalne sopotnike in zmogljive strojne sodelavce; raziskave in predelave novih materialov v krožnem procesu ponovne uporabe, pametnih funkcionalnosti in biorazgradljivosti; participatorne projekte za skupnostno učenje in izumljanje novih življenjskih slogov; performativne eksperimente in ambiente za razvijanje empatije, medvrstno povezovanje in sobivanje; aktivizem za zaostritev boja za pravično družbo in enake možnosti. Seznam metod ni sistematičen in tudi ne izčrpen, pač pa je odprt za nova umetniška izumljanja.

11 https://ars.electronica.art/stateoftheartist/en/opencall/.

II.

V drugem delu besedila bomo raznolikim metodološkim pristopom, ki smo jih identificirali na platformah ekosistema Ars Electronice, postavili nasproti celovitost sistema za okoljsko umetnost, ki ga je v svoji dvajsetletni praksi razvil ekološki umetnik Paul Ryan (1943–2013) in opisal v esejih, zbranih v knjigi *Video Mind, Earth Mind* (1992).[12] Njegov sistem povezuje v novo funkcionalno celoto ekologijo, tehniko (video), umetnost, komunikacije in družbo, pri čemer izhaja iz samouravnavajočih se sistemov, utemeljenih na matematičnih, kibernetičnih in semiotičnih načelih ter dognanjih. Ryan je v kontekstu umetnosti svoj relacijski sistem opredelil kot alografsko umetnost, ki za razliko od avtografske umetnosti, kjer je izvirnik unikaten in neprenosljiv, obstaja v obliki notacije, partiture, scenarija ali navodil in je na voljo za različne izvedbe (prim. Goodman).

Video je prvi elektronski medij, ki je omogočil takojšnjo uporabo podobe gledalke, s tem ko jo je vključil v zanko zaprtega krogotoka, kjer kamera snema gledalko, nad kamero pa stoji z njo povezan monitor, prav tako obrnjen proti gledalki; gledalka gleda svojo podobo na monitorju in se nanjo odziva, kar kamera zajema in monitor hkrati predvaja.[13] Paul Ryan je videotehnologijo razumel v povezavi z njenim družbenim učinkom. Ni ga zanimala vizualna estetika elektronske podobe v smislu nadaljevanja praks iz slikarstva in kiparstva, ampak je bila prenosna videokamera zanj gverilsko orodje v ekopolitični akciji, orodje opolnomočenja, s katerim je vsakdo lahko ustvarjal svoje resnične, relevantne vsebine in ne bil več zgolj indoktriniran s programom televizije prek oddajnikov in anten.[14] Ryan analizira rabo videa in loči tri značilne situacije. (1) Video kot obrnjeno zrcalo v inštalaciji zaprtega kroga. (2) Videoposnetek na traku in kasnejši ogled predvajanega posnetka, ki omogoča (samo) evalvacijo, introspekcijo in izboljšanje načinov obnašanja, spremembo odnosa in (samo)kontrolo. (3) Video kot izobraževalno sporočilo na infrastrukturi kabelske televizije za lokalno obravnavo problemov: videe snemajo lokalni videografi, prek kabelske televizije dosegajo okoliško prebivalstvo, ki se ga obravnavana problematika tiče in se na osnovi neposrednosti videoinformacije (ki ima dokumentarno težo dejstva) odloča za ustrezno ravnanje. Model je razširljiv s pomnožitvijo po mreži kabelskih televizijskih kanalov in ga je mogoče uporabiti v drugih lokalnih okoljih na globalni ravni. Ryan je mdr. predlagal vzpostavitev občinskih in od različnih društev podprtih ekokanalov na kabelski televiziji, npr. NEST – New York City Ecochannel za

12 O ekološki umetnosti v Sloveniji glej Zgonik.

13 Sicer je v tovrstno inštalacijo mogoče vnesti tudi časovni zamik, kar ima za posledico potujitev lastne podobe gledalke na monitorju in učinke percepcije skorajšnjega dohajanja preteklih in sedanjih gibov gledalke. Npr. v inštalacijah Dana Grahama (Vaupotič in Bovcon)

14 Ryan je študiral pri Marshallu McLuhanu (1967–68) in kot umetnik raziskoval medij videa s prvimi kamerami Portapak (1968–69) v okviru skupine Raindance. Leta 1970 je za časopis skupine, *Radical Software*, napisal esej *Kibernetsko gverilsko bojevanje* (*Cybernetic Guerilla Warefare)*. Zgodnje obdobje videa in razvoj videa v odnosu do televizije opiše v eseju *Genealogija videa*, ponatisnjen v knjigi *Video Mind, Earth Mind* (312–324).

trajnostno prihodnost. Deloval je tudi kot bioregijski aktivist v zalivu San Francisca, z videom beležil okoljske probleme povodja reke Passaic, doline reke Hudson, parka Riverside v New Yorku, obale polotoka Cape Ann nad Bostonom in drugod. Učinke videotehnologije je formaliziral v sistem notacij za zapisovanje stanja Zemlje (angl. *Earthscore Notational System*), ki ga je predstavil v eseju z naslovom *Notacijski sistem Earthscore za orkestriranje zaznavnega soglasja o naravnem svetu* (Ryan 379). Videonotacijski sistem *Earthscore* je razvijal od leta 1972 do leta 1991 in ga predlagal v izvajanje v številnih javnih izobraževalnih projektih.

Iz rabe videa kot obrnjenega zrcala Ryan s pomočjo diagramskih prikazov (gledalca in njegove podobe pri interakciji z zrcalom in pri interakciji z videokamero) izpelje topološko strukturo medija: gledalec in njegova podoba na videomonitorju se lahko rokujeta, desno roko gledalca povezuje z desno roko njegove podobe na monitorju Möbiusov trak videosnemanja.[15] V eseju *Video kot orodje evolucije* Ryan primerja evolucijo človeške kulture, ki se vrši z novimi paradigmami v znanosti in umetnosti, z evolucijskim razvojem organizmov, ki je bil posledica stresa v okolju, zaradi katerega se je razvila nova oblika, ki je omogočila preživetje (74). Zase pravi: »Sem neke vrste evolucijski umetnik, ki ponudi formalno osnovo za uporabo videa v človekovem prilagajanju na okolje.« Nadaljuje s pojasnilom, kaj je bila nova paradigma, ki jo je izumil: »V tehničnem smislu sem Kleinovo steklenico spremenil v šestdelen, enoznačen, neusmerjen in neprehoden krogotok« (78). Kleinova steklenica npr. nastane tako, da združimo nasprotna roba Möbiusovega traku (Ryan 97; prim. Weisstein). Ryan je ustvaril relacijski krogotok (*relational circuit*), ki omogoča šest pozicij: prvost, drugost in tretjost ter vmesne pozicije prehoda, tj. med prvostjo in drugostjo, med drugostjo in tretjostjo, med tretjostjo in prvostjo (Ryan 103). Iz diagramskega prikaza krogotoka je razvidno, da je prvost dvakrat vsebovana, drugost vsebuje prvo in je vsebovana v tretji poziciji, medtem ko tretjost vsebuje prvo in drugo pozicijo. V eseju *Znak samega sebe* (347–353) Ryan opiše devetnajst lastnosti relacijskega krogotoka, pri čemer se v zvezi z logičnim zaprtim sistemom nasloni na semiotika Charlesa S. Peircea in matematika Kurta Gödla. Izhaja iz kibernetske teorije Gregoryja Batesona, s katero postulira sistem kot sklenjen krog, ki se sam regulira s spreminjanjem razlik med deli na način, da zmanjšanje vrednosti v določenem delu povzroči zvečanje vrednosti v drugem delu, ki povzroči zvečanje vrednosti v prvem delu. Neusmerjenost sistema interpretira kot razliko (torej novo evolucijsko paradigmo videa) od ustaljenih družbenih kodov, ki narekujejo smer pisanja ali govorjenja. Njegov relacijski krogotok prakse za doseganje zaznavnega soglasja s pomočjo videa je neusmerjen, saj znotraj njega tri osebe poljubno prehajajo med šestimi pozicijami, vsako zavzamejo po enkrat, tako se skozi tri izkušnje vsakega akterja (prvosti, drugosti in tretjosti) sistem notranje uravnoteži.

15 Z odsevom v zrcalu se ni mogoče rokovati, stakneta se desna roka gledalca in leva roka njegovega odseva.

Pozicije prvosti, drugosti in tretjosti Ryan razume v tradiciji C. S. Peircea: za prvost so značilne spontanost, svežina, čustvo in samobitnost ne glede na druge; drugost zaznamujejo dejstva, ki so omejitev, odpor in reakcija; tretjost pa je stopnja zmernosti, zakonitosti, vzpostavljanja korelacije med prvostjo in drugostjo. Snemanje videa poteka v trojicah, oseba A snema izbrani naravni motiv v naravnanosti neposredne osredotočenosti nanj, oseba B posname svoj odziv na posnetek osebe A, oseba C predlaga montažo posnetkov osebe A in osebe B.

Sledeč Gregoryju Batesonu, Ryan navaja naslednje elemente za dekodiranje in beleženje stanja Zemlje: štiri kategorije s po tremi primerki, in sicer tri nežive oblike, to so zrak, zemlja in voda, tri rastline, značilne za lokalno okolje, tri živali, značilne za lokalno okolje, tri tehnološke podaljške človeka, ki se uporabljajo v regiji; dvanajst luninih men kot časovni ekološki kontinuum; šestintrideset odraslih oseb, razporejenih v trojice, tj. trikrat dvanajst trojic. V eseju *Earthscore kot namerna skupnost* (Ryan 60) iz dvanajstih trojic zgradi skupnost z natančnimi pravili organizacije na ravni celic (tj. trojic), družin in skupnosti, njihovega delovanja in samokorekcije, pravil izmenjave videoposnetkov med celicami, ki jih ustvarijo posamezne celice, nalog celic, prehajanja med trojicami, zagotavljanja raznolikosti itd. Osebe v trojicah vadijo trojčenje (*threeing*), gradijo medsebojne odnose s prehajanjem med tremi pozicijami in konsenz, ki presega konfrontacijo dialoga in izločanje tretjega: »Sledeč navodilom in enoznačnim pozicijam v relacijskem krogotoku, performerji lahko nevtralizirajo učinke izbire v medsebojnih odnosih ter s tem spremenijo spopade, dvorjenja in teritorialne instinkte v umetnost obnašanja« (402).

Metodo *Earthscore* je Ryan izvedel mdr. tudi z učenci na Dalton School leta 1989, kjer je učenje potekalo na tri načine: prek intuicije (prvost), s podatki (drugost) in o vzorcih ter kontekstih (tretjost). Ekološko prizorišče tega projekta je bil Black Rock Forest v dolini reke Hudson, osmošolci so opazovali spremembe od zime do pomladi, razdeljeni so bili v štiri skupine po tri učence: skupina za video, skupina za slike, skupina za številke, skupina za besede, vsaka skupina je s svojimi metodami opazovala, beležila in interpretirala izbrani motiv iz narave. V vsaki skupini je vsak učenec preizkusil vse tri načine učenja, tako so lažje dosegli konsenz in bolje spoznali izbrani naravni pojav. Ryan je pri razvijanju te metode tudi sam posnel mnogo ur videotrakov, na katerih je beležil reko na načine prvosti (videoposnetek površine vode kot neposredni odziv na njeno podobo), drugosti (beleženje ovir v strugi, ob katere voda zadene) in tretjosti (prepoznavanje in sistematizacija vzorcev vodnih oblik, ki nastanejo kot posledica tipov ovir). Tovrstni ekološki videi so Ryanov predlog sporočila, ki bo v skupnosti povzročilo spremembo razmišljanja in delovanja ter ustrezen ekološki odziv, pri čemer je pomembno, da tudi sama skupnost vadi trojčenje, ki ji omogoči, da postane sposobna ustreznega skupinskega odločanja, ki je okoljsko trajnostno, saj, kot ugotavlja Ryan, preživimo lahko le skupaj z okoljem (158).

III.

Drugačno vizijo spekulativnih prehodnih sedanjosti kažejo umetniška dela Pierra Huygha, npr. projekt *After ALife Ahead* na razstavi *Skulptur Projekte Muenster* (2017) ali pa njegova samostojna razstava *Liminal* v galeriji Punta della Dogana v Benetkah (2024).[16] Gre za okolja, v katerih človek ni več prisoten, ampak je v njih pustil nekatere sledi, ki delujejo vpete med subjektivitetami (živimi, neživimi, konceptualnimi, računskimi) okoljskega sistema, ki se uravnava prek različnih senzorjev teh organizmov oz. informacijskih entitet in njihovega odzivanja na zaznane pogoje v okolju. »Namesto neke privilegirane točke opazovanja ta novi pogoj vpetosti poudarja sobivanje različnih odnosov – med inteligencami, med podsistemi, med entitetami, med lestvicami – do te mere, da sploh ne potrebujejo nujno človeškega pogleda« (Reed 183).

Okolje *After ALife Ahead* sestavljajo: ruševina betonske zgradbe dvorane za hokej na ledu, katere tla je Huyghe razrezal in prekopal po vzorcu Arhimedovega razreza kvadrata v logični igri *Ostomachion*, medtem ko je v streho naredil odprtine z loputami, ki jih elektromotorji na podlagi senzorjev okolja odpirajo in zapirajo ter s tem v okolje spuščajo sončno svetlobo in dež; rakave celice v inkubatorju, katerih rast vpliva na računalniške modele in pojavljanje virtualnih piramid pod stropom dvorane v projekciji povečane resničnosti (skozi aplikacijo na prenosnih napravah obiskovalcev); različni naključni organizmi, ki so se naselili v lužah; akvarij z betonskimi ploščami trikotne oblike in strupenim morskim stožčastim polžem (lat. *Conus textile*), ki ima na lupini izrazit vzorec trikotnikov treh velikostnih stopenj; pav himera, ki ima zaradi dveh vzorcev DNK pol perja modrega in pol perja belega (Huyghe 350–381). V tem okolju se biološki organizmi, voda, pesek, zrak in logični vzorci ter računski modeli na računalnikih odzivajo drug na drugega. Delujejo kot informacijske entitete v infosferi z različno stopnjo kompleksnosti. Edini človek v tem sistemu je obiskovalka razstave, ki se sprehaja po prizorišču, ki spominja na filme Andreja Tarkovskega – na cono iz filma *Stalker* (1979) ali pa na interier/eksterier hiše, v kateri dežuje, in katedrale brez strehe s hišo, lužo, človekom, psom in sneženjem v filmu *Nostalgija* (1983). Obiskovalka raziskuje prizorišče, povezuje in interpretira znake, predvsem prek vzorcev, tako bioloških kot matematičnih.

Do razstave *Liminal* sedem let kasneje so se tehnologije precej spremenile, umetne nevronske mreže ne izvajajo več le vnaprej programiranih algoritmov, ampak se čedalje pogosteje tudi učijo, na osnovi človeških sledi, s katerimi so podatki označeni, in tudi same nenadzorovano. S tem se poraja inteligenca, ki simulira človeško, se uči postati podobna človekovim sposobnostim pri izdelavi posameznih vsebin. Umetnik gre v svoji spekulaciji polčloveške entitete še korak dlje, racionalno delovanje nevronske

16 O spekulativni fikciji v slovenski umetnosti glej Kraner. O razstavi *Liminal* glej tudi Berlot Pompe.

mreže sopostavi z nevronsko mrežo, ki simulira trpljenje in prekinja učenje, ki poteka na podlagi senzoričnega stika simuliranega telesa z okoljem. S tem ustvari model umetnega človeka, ki nastaja skozi odziv na okolje v dinamičnem odnosu utelešenega trpljenja in napredujoče racionalnosti. Osrednji projekt na razstavi, računalniško simulacijo *Liminalno*, Huyghe opiše takole:

> *Liminalno* je prehodno stanje, iz katerega lahko izide nekaj nepredvidenega. Gre za neobstoječe bitje, ki nima ne jaza ne sveta, je zunaj kakršnekoli zunanjosti. Gre za špekulacijo o nemogočem človeškem stanju v obliki situacijske simulacije, med katero lahko spremljate nastanek te nečloveške stvari, te stvari, s katero se morda, nemogoče, poistovetimo. […] Na to človeško obliko s tako rekoč nizko stopnjo obstoja vplivajo dogodki, ki se nahajajo zunaj podobe, v fizičnem, senzoričnem prostoru. Gre za breztelesno subjektivnost, ki uporablja umetno nevronsko mrežo za črpanje informacij od zunaj prek nepredvidljivih reakcij ovojnice. […] Um, ki se še vedno ustvarja, v relativni ločenosti od nepopolnega telesa. Racionalna inteligenca, ki se uči, poskuša napovedovati z zajemanjem gibov telesa, ki se odziva na zunanje dogodke in kot posledico ustvarja vedenjske odzive tega telesa. Toda telo ni vedno podvrženo tej inteligenci niti njenim napovedim. Da bi bila ta človeška oblika bolj resnična, je bil nanjo pritrjen možganski organoid, sintetično nevronsko vezje, ki lahko v vsakem trenutku izrazi trpljenje. Sprejema ali zavrača dražljaje iz okolja in s tem ogroža razvoj inteligence. (Huyghe 10–15)

Okolje je za človeka sestavljeno iz znakov, objektov in interpretantov (Peirce). Huyghe orkestrira »konceptualna okolja oz. okoljske koncepte«, ki so hkrati modeli in omogočajo mišljenje resničnosti onkraj antropomorfne projekcije, »zagotavljajo interpretantom okolje, v katerem lahko to zmožnost miselne eksaptacije[17] lokalizirajo na stičišču informacij in materiala, vzorca in snovi«. Z intervencijo v neposrednost odnosa med interpretantom in svetom, ki sta neločljivo vpeta, omogočijo vznik ideje, ki preoblikuje pomenjenje (Reed 185, 189). Obiskovalka razstave *Liminal* je na videz zunaj, izvzeta iz prizorišč oz. okolij, ki jih gleda na videoprojekcijah, čeprav se realnočasovne simulacije prek senzorjev odzivajo na njeno gibanje po galeriji, medtem ko gosta tema ustvarja potopitveni učinek doživljanja povezanega prostora. V teh posnetih okoljih človek ni prisoten, pač pa so prisotne entitete, ki so podobne človeku do te mere, da v njih najde svoj nepopolni odsev, gre za maske človeškega obraza in neživa ali pa polčloveška telesa. V posameznih projektih srečamo: zamaskirano opičjo deklico v praznem mestu po jedrski katastrofi; človeško okostje sredi puščave, ki ga opazujejo robotske kamere prek računalniškega vida in se ga z nevronsko mrežo učijo montirati v neskončen video; akvarij s senzorji v prahu morskega dna okoli betonske replike Brancusijeve *Muze*, s katerimi sobivajo počasni morski pajki in morske zvezde; oslepele votlinske ribe, ki jih v izmenično neprosojnem akvariju

17Eksaptacija je v biologiji lastnost organizma, ki se je razvila, da je opravljala določeno funkcijo, vendar je potem dobila drug namen. Gre torej za sposobnost konceptualnega modela, da vpet v okolje spremeni svojo funkcijo, pri tem pa ohrani svojo strukturo.

občasno osvetli žaromet; albino psa z roza taco, ki verjetno izhaja iz laboratorijskih poskusov; hibridne umetnointeligenčno imaginirane organizme na meji med živim in neživim; roje žuželk, te biološke sistemske organizacije, ki kot čelada obdajajo glavo človeške figure; veter, vonj, zvoke v galerijskih sobah, iz takih okoljskih zaznav sistem generira umetne jezike, položene v usta zamaskiranih performerjev; realnočasovno simulacijo hiperrealističnega modela golega ženskega telesa s črno luknjo na mestu obraza, ki se sprehaja po temnem planetu. Estetske, melanholične, nekoliko srhljive vizije okolja, ki je preživelo človeka.

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V besedilu smo predstavili tri modele razmisleka o možnostih ravnovesja med človekom, naravo in tehnologijo. Primer ekosistema Ars Electronice sestavlja širok spekter transdisciplinarnih umetniških metod ter družbenih kontekstov, ki se povezujejo v usmerjenem in učinkovitem iskanju rešitev za okoljsko krizo. Primer metode *Earthscore* za beleženje stanja Zemlje in doseganje konsenza v zvezi z okoljskimi problematikami na osnovi trojčenja, ki jo je s pomočjo videotehnologije razvil Paul Ryan, je zaprt sistem, ki zajema komunikacijo celovito, saj je nanj projiciran celovit sistem znakovnih tipov C. S. Peircea. Oba sistema, Ars Electronica in Ryanov relacijski krogotok, zajet v metodi *Earthscore*, sta usmerjena na človeka in njegove povezave z okoljem z namenom skupnega obstanka. Tretji, drugačen sistem so okolja v projektih Pierra Huygha, ki človeka ne predpostavljajo kot svoj nujni del, pač pa le kot sled. To ne pomeni, da določeni znaki v teh okoljih ne bodo imeli bistveno drugačnega učinka na človeka, ki se bo v njih prepoznal, kot na ostale entitete. Človekova sled je v teh okoljih neke vrste iniciacija za umetnointeligenčne organizme, ki se iz nje učijo postajati do neke mere podobni človeku. V tem zadnjem primeru gre za dinamično ravnovesje ekosistemov različnih entitet, nad katerimi človek nima prevlade in ne nosi več odgovornosti za ohranjanje sebe ali življenja.

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Abstract

One of the frameworks for understanding and addressing the environmental crisis is the pursuit of a balance among human, natural, collective and artificial agents – a balance that can be grounded in concepts from environmental ethics and information ethics. Works of art are considered functional models for the coexistence of human and non-human entities. Special attention is directed towards technology, as it figures as both the problem and a possible solution to that problem. At the same time, it also creates new phenomena at both the level of social relations and that of environmental change. The text presents three approaches in the domain of contemporary technological art that model environments and environmental issues to construct possible model solutions. Ars Electronica in Linz integrates art, technology and society through related platforms and initiatives, from artistic-research, scientific-technological, educational and discursive practices to sociopolitical actions. In reviewing the functioning of the Ars Electronica ecosystem, the article shows the diverse methods with which artists develop their projects, with special attention to Slovenian contributions to these festival editions. As an early example of ecological media art, the article considers the work of Paul Ryan, his method of recording the state of the Earth and reaching consensus through threeing and video technology. A third way of modelling ecosystems is observed in the artworks by Pierre Huyghe, which do not necessarily presuppose a human agent but achieve a certain degree of independence and openness in self-regulation.

Keywords: ecological art, video, new media art, infosphere, constructionism, Ars Electronica, Paul Ryan, Pierre Huyghe

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Artistic Modelling of a Sustainable Balance between Human and Non-Human Agents: Ars Electronica Festival, Artists Paul Ryan and Pierre Huyghe

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The article discusses three systematic approaches in the domain of new media art that construct environments as possible model solutions to environmental issues. Works of art are considered functional models for the coexistence of human and non-human entities in the infosphere, that is, the environment viewed from the perspective of Luciano Floridi's information ethics. The aim is to expand environmental ethics from living beings to inanimate and artificial ones – in the most general sense, to all conceivable and detectable entities.

The first part of the article presents the Ars Electronica festival, which addresses contemporary challenges at the intersection of technology and society through the lens of art, as well as through symposia and displays of implemented educational, industrial, infrastructural and legislative solutions developed in European, global and local projects. When mapping the central themes and approaches in artistic projects at recent festival editions, the author relies on Janez Strehovec's analysis of the ways and opportunities for art's ecological function. Using examples, the author shows that artists incorporate a variety of methods: art and design thinking; associative linking of motifs and concepts using travelling metaphors across disciplinary boundaries; speculative methods for modelling how systems function; transdisciplinary research; constructionist search for solutions based on issues and requirements; raising audience awareness through documentaries and storytelling; data visualisation; generative artificial intelligence models; exploration and development of new physical materials; participatory projects for community learning; performative experiments fostering empathy and interspecies connections; activism for achieving environmental and social equity, equality and justice.

The second part of the article looks back to the early period of media art. It presents the *Earthscore* method for recording the state of the Earth and achieving consensus through the so-called *threeing* technique and video technology, as conceived by the ecological artist Paul Ryan. His writings on semiotic and topological models of the communication code of video are collected in the book *Video Mind, Earth Mind* (1992). Ryan's relational circuit is based on Gregory Bateson's cybernetic theory, which postulates a system as a closed loop that regulates itself by changing the differences occurring in its parts. Ryan interprets the non-directional system as a new evolutionary paradigm of video in comparison to the directional systems of writing or speaking. His relational circuit, diagrammatically presented as a Klein bottle, is undirected, since within it three people arbitrarily move between six positions, each occupied once; thus, the system internally balances itself through the three experiences of each person. Ryan understands the positions of firstness, secondness and thirdness following the tradition of Charles S. Peirce: firstness is characterised by spontaneity, secondness is marked by facts and reaction, and thirdness is the position of moderation, establishing a correlation between firstness and secondness. The video is filmed in threes: person A films a selected natural motif, person B films their response to person A's footage, and person C proposes a montage of the footage from persons A and B. These ecological videos are Ryan's idea of the message that will trigger a change in thinking and an appropriate ecological response in the community that actively practises threeing, because, as Ryan notes, we can only survive together with the environment.

A different vision of the environment is shown in the artworks of Pierre Huyghe, for example, in the project *After ALife Ahead* (2017) and his solo exhibition, *Liminal* (2024). These are environments in which humans are no longer present, but have left some traces that operate embedded between the subjectivities (living, non-living, conceptual, computational) of the environmental system, which is regulated through various sensors of these organisms or information entities and their responses to perceived conditions in the environment. Huyghe orchestrates environmental concepts that are at the same time models that enable thinking about reality beyond anthropomorphic projection, based solely on information and matter. In these environments, entities operate that bear similarities to humans to the extent that they find their own imperfect reflection in them, for example, masks of human faces and inanimate or semi-human bodies. In the computer simulation *Liminal*, Huyghe creates a model of an artificial human being that emerges through a response to the environment in a dynamic relationship of embodied suffering and progressive rationality, generated by two neural networks that regulate the movement of a photorealistic simulation of a female body without a face.

The article presents three systems that model the possibilities for balance among humans, nature and technology. The Ars Electronica ecosystem comprises a wide range of transdisciplinary artistic methods and practices across various social contexts that connect in a focused, effective search for solutions to the environmental crisis. The *Earthscore* method for recording the state of the Earth and achieving consensus on environmental issues, practising Paul Ryan's *threeing*, is a closed system that encompasses communication in its entirety. Both systems, Ars Electronica and Ryan's relational circuit, are focused on humans and their connections with the environment to ensure coexistence. A third, different kind of system is observed in the conceptual environments of Pierre Huyghe, which do not assume humans as a necessary part but contain their traces, which in these environments serve as a kind of initiation for artificially intelligent organisms that learn from them to simulate humans. In this final case, what is at stake is the dynamic balance of ecosystems made up of different entities, over which humans have no dominance and no longer bear responsibility for preserving either themselves or life.

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Povzetek

Okoljska etika je področje, kjer se skušajo okviri moralnega delovanja in etičnih načel razširiti prek meja človeškega. Etični premislek postaja vedno bolj vključujoč od izhodiščne kantovske osredotočenosti na človeka; postopoma so vanj vključena čuteča bitja, živa narava, nato pa tudi neživa narava. Okolje v pomenu nečloveške entitete postane samostojna etična vrednota. Posebno vprašanje predstavljajo umetni artefakti, kot je kulturna dediščina. Najprej besedilo prek metod teorije diskurza opiše potek in strukturo izjavljanja na primeru novomedijskega projekta Vuka Ćosića *Nacija – Kultura* (2000, rekonstrukcija leta 2022). Gre za zgodnji prepričljiv primer avtonomne ustvarjalnosti stroja na področju novomedijske umetnosti. Besedilo nato pregleda temeljne makroetike in med njimi posebej informacijsko etiko Luciana Floridija, ki je del njegove filozofije informacije. Etična vprašanja so obravnavana v infosferi kot vseobsegajočem okolju, to okolje pa je koncipirano tako, da omogoča tudi razmislek o umetnih, tj. inženirsko načrtovanih agentih ter hibridnih povezavah umetnih, naravnih in človeških agentov. Zdi se, da večagentni sistemi odprejo pomembna vprašanja odnosov med osebami pa tudi v odnosu do skupnosti, s katerimi so povezani kulturni artefakti in prakse. Informacijska metafizika, ki jo predlaga Floridi, je podlaga za razumevanje in konstruktivno obravnavo kompleksnih pojavov digitalne dobe. Minimalistična zasnova etike informacijskega okolja omogoča ovrednotenje ter moralno odločanje med možnimi načini delovanja z namenom krepitve dobrobiti celotne infosfere, ki predstavlja resničnost na najbolj vključujoč način.

Ključne besede: novomedijska umetnost, etika informacije, okoljska etika, Vuk Ćosić, Luciano Floridi

Aleš Vaupotič je docent in višji znanstveni sodelavec. Med letoma 2021 in 2023 je bil direktor Moderne galerije v Ljubljani. Doktoriral je iz realizma v umetnosti in literaturi na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani ter na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani magistriral iz videa in novih medijev. Vodil je interdisciplinarni raziskovalni projekt Trajnostna digitalna hramba slovenske novomedijske umetnosti, ki je med letoma 2021 in 2024 potekal na Univerzi v Novi Gorici, Univerzi v Ljubljani, Inštitutu za intelektualno lastnino v Ljubljani in v Moderni galeriji v Ljubljani, financirala ga je ARIS. Je avtor znanstvene monografije s področja primerjalne umetnostne vede *Vprašanje realizma* (2019) in številnih znanstvenih člankov.

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Novomedijska umetnost in etika infosfere

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1 "An AI created a podcast of your paper."[1]

Smo v trenutku, ko se računalniška simulacija človeškega izjavljanja že bliža stopnji, ko je ne bo več mogoče razlikovati od dejanskih človeških izjav. 26. aprila 2026 je Davie504 (Davide Biale), vloger za področje električnih bas kitar, objavil prispevek »This AI Situation is Getting Worse«.[2] Prek humorja in ironije pove, da dobiva občutek, kako hitrost razvoja orodij umetne inteligence postaja, kot pravi, »protizakonita«. Nadomeščajo programerje, oblikovalce, umetnike, očitno tudi glasbenike, kar Davie504 prikaže z virtuoznimi fragmenti funkovske glasbe, ki preverjajo sposobnosti algoritmov. »[P]ri tem nastane čudno etično vprašanje. Če naložim na splet golo UI-verzijo, se zdi packarija [*slop*]. Ampak, kaj pa v primeru, ko najamem prave glasbenike, da ponovno odigrajo dele, ki jih je generirala UI?« razmišlja naprej. Davie504 odpre tri pomembne teme: pravno regulacijo umetne inteligence, tj. vprašanja, ki pogosto postanejo del vsakodnevnih novic; etična vprašanja s področja umetnosti oz. ustvarjalnosti ob uporabi umetne inteligence, omeni pa tudi pojem *slop*, ki negativno označuje izhodne podatke globokih nevronskih mrež, ko se prikazujejo kot človeške izjave v različnih medijih.

Islovar verzijo tega izraza prevaja kot prazno govoričenje (*wordslop*). *Računalniški slovarček* gesla še nima. *Slop* je beseda leta 2025 ameriškega slovarja *Merriam-Webster*, ki jo definira kot: »digitalna vsebina nizke kakovosti, ki nastaja običajno v velikih količinah s pomočjo umetne inteligence,« torej *AI slop*.[3] Seveda se lahko pri tem spomnimo na smetje (*spam*), ki ga poznamo še s spleta 1.0, postopek spamanja, ki še vedno polni elektronske poštne predale, pa vendar gre za nekaj drugega. Smetje so fragmenti, predvsem besedil, ki jih dobivamo, ne da bi si jih želeli oz. da bi se naročili na njihovo prejemanje. Sporočilo je običajno na prvi pogled neartikulirano, seveda pa hkrati tudi povsem jasno in razumljivo, saj praviloma nekaj prodaja oz. promovira

1 Besedilo je nastalo na podlagi raziskovalnega projekta Trajnostna digitalna hramba slovenske novomedijske umetnosti, ki ga je financirala ARIS (J7-3158).

2 *YouTube*, https://youtu.be/4xeFxeZn9aw?si=HYG23Yxq1JXCvMAm. Vse povezave v opombah so bile dostopne 5. maja 2026.

3 https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/word-of-the-year. Beseda se mdr. nanaša na UI-pomije z namigom na hrano za pujse, prim. *RTV 365, Val 202*, https://365.rtvslo.si/podkast/finomeni/175193541, tudi *Delo*, *Dnevnik* ipd.

(Vaupotič, »The Sonnet«). S slopom se povezuje, saj se tako spam kot slop pojavljata v prevelikih količinah, da bi lahko vstopala v medčloveško komunikacijo, ne da bi jo tako ali drugače zmotila, modificirala in pravzaprav ošibila.

Znanstvenoraziskovalna sfera je s kvantifikacijo vrednotenja svojih rezultatov lahka tarča za generativno umetno inteligenco. Julija 2025 je pisec tega besedila prejel elektronsko sporočilo pošiljatelja Academia.edu z naslovom »UI je ustvarila podkast iz vašega članka«. Zahtevano je bilo soglasje z več kot štiridesetimi stranmi pravniškega besedila. Prikazal se je vmesnik za predvajanje zvoka, označen s »private to you«. Nato se podkast pravzaprav ni predvajal. Po nekajkratnem ponovnem nalaganju je bilo mogoče slišati naslov našega članka ter imeni soavtorjev, ki sta zveneli, kot bi jih izgovoril nek direktor iz organizacije Academia.edu; ni bilo mogoče ponoviti predvajanja, da bi se slišalo, kdo je bil pravzaprav imenovan. Iskanje z Google takoj najde več informacij o tem pojavu – potencialni uporabniki nove storitve niso bili navdušeni.[4]

Z vidika razumevanja novomedijskih komunikacij in z njimi povezanih vprašanj etike v okolju, sestavljenem iz informacij, se pokažeta dva poudarka. Prvič, uporabnike na splošno moti avtomatično *remiksanje* njihovih znanstvenih člankov, ne da bi dali izrecno dovoljenje, t. i. *opt-in*, v primeru Academia.edu pa se je treba potruditi in poiskati ustrezno nastavitev, da se ta funkcija onemogoči. Nalaganje člankov na njihovo spletišče je v prvi vrsti namenjeno ljudem, študentom in raziskovalcem, ki jih berejo, pa tudi spletnim iskalnikom, ki jih približajo bralcem. Manj je za avtorje sprejemljivo, da so njihova besedila uporabljena za učenje globokih nevronskih mrež, da o neposredni izdelavi predelav sploh ne govorimo.[5] Podoben je primer vsiljive »UI pomočnice« v programu Adobe Acrobat, ki predlaga: »Poklepetaj [Chat] s svojimi dokumenti,« torej da naj npr. umetna pamet povzame vsebino in sama naredi gradiva za učne ure o in z uporabo romanov, ki jih odpremo iz datoteke tipa PDF.[6] Ali pa ko vmesnik za klepet v aplikaciji WhatsApp vabi, ob seznamu klepetov, ki potekajo z ljudmi, naj se uporabnica pogovarja tudi z umetnim agentom Meta AI – pri tem je pomenljivo, da sta dodana zelo poudarjen gumb in vmesnik ekranov, ki, po moji izkušnji, otežijo izhod iz pogovora z umetno pametjo.[7] Pri vsem tem vzbuja skrb

4 Nekdo se npr. jezno sprašuje, zakaj smo avtomatično vključeni v to neželeno storitev. Odgovor spletišča, hannah_ehrlich, julija 2025: »Hvala za vse odzive in misli! Podkast se ne izdela, dokler ne greste na stran s podkastom – če to možnost zavrnete v nastavitvah UI, preden poslušate katerega od podkastov, podkasta ne bomo izdelali. Opravičujemo se za zmedo in, če imate več vprašanj in želite govoriti o podrobnostih svojega računa ali podkasta, se prosim obrnite neposredno na naše podporno osebje.« https://feedback.academia.edu/feedback/214348. Prim. tudi Evan Tobias: »Academia.edu & AI: What Researchers Need to Know NOW (& how to opt out)«, 28. junij 2025, https://youtu.be/zSbUA48YS_A?si=eJb0yeg6T3M30lm1.

5 Vprašanje dopuščanja predelav je zgledno urejeno z licencami Creative Commons (Ustvarjalna gmajna), kjer je to ena od omejitev, ki so: brez predelav (ND), nekomercialno (NC), deljenje pod enakimi pogoji (SA). Računalniško programje predvideva drug standardni nabor licenc.

6 *Adobe Desktop Help. Get started with generative AI features*, pogl. Develop study guides, https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/gen-ai-get-started.html.

7 Model Llama 4, prim. https://ai.meta.com/blog/llama-4-multimodal-intelligence/. Zanimivo, da na mojem telefonu z operacijskim sistemom Android tega gumba ni, videti ga je na iPhone.

to, da generativna umetna inteligenca smeti po naši komunikaciji in nas kognitivno izčrpava, poleg tega, da posega tudi v naše osebne podatke ter lastnino.

Po drugi strani pa je zanimivo, da je koncept zaupanja vrednega repozitorija del paradigme odprte znanosti s povezanimi načeli FAIR (najdljivost, dostopnost, interoperabilnost, uporabljivost podatkov), ki jih sprejemajo UNESCO, Evropska komisija, slovenska zakonodaja idr. V ospredju je prizadevanje, kako narediti podatke take, da jih lahko obdelujejo stroji, gre za podatke in metapodatke *za stroje*.[8] Uporaba na področju umetne inteligence je samoumevna, poleg splošnejših ciljev, da bi se uporabljali skupni standardi in ontologije. S tega vidika je odprtost znanosti izrecno namenjena strojnemu zbiranju in obdelavi podatkov. Ta druga perspektiva pokaže tudi na krhkost tehniških in informacijskih entitet, podatkov, agentov, artefaktov. Podatki se izgubijo. Umetni agenti se pokvarijo, zastarijo, niso več podprti znotraj sistema tehnologij, izginejo.

Primer je platforma za povečano resničnost (*augmented reality*) Layar, ki je vključevala tudi mobilni brskalnik za povečano resničnost.[9] Od leta 2009 so se tehniške rešitve nadgrajevale v smeri presenetljivo uspešne integracije Layarja v sistema iOS in Android: običajni uporabniki so brez težav takoj dobili spletni dostop in na svojih mobilnih telefonih videli 3D-modele prek posnetkov njihovih kamer. Leta 2018 pa je bila storitev (saj je bil del sistema centraliziran) ukinjena, ker je propadlo krovno podjetje (Bovcon in Vaupotič; Bovcon idr., »*Atlas 2012«*). Podobna je zgodba Macromedie oz. Adobe Flash, platforme za izdelavo animiranih vektorskih slik in interakcije, ki se je začela močneje uveljavljati med grafičnimi oblikovalci in ki se je nato nenadoma nehala uporabljati z novimi spletnimi brskalniki in operacijskimi sistemi. Gre za primera izvorno digitalne kulturne dediščine, v primeru Flasha celo načina oz. pristopa k interaktivnemu grafičnemu oblikovanju in animaciji. Temu področju trenutno muzeji praviloma še ne posvečajo ustrezne pozornosti (Vaupotič idr.).

To besedilo sestavljata dva dela, najprej bo predstavljen novomedijski umetniški projekt, ki v dveh realizacijah v dveh družbeno-zgodovinskih in tehniških kontekstih omogoča vpogled v etične odnose v okvirih eksperimentalne informacijsko-komunikacijske platforme. Drugi del bo bolj teoretično naravnan in posvečen informacijski etiki ter etiki umetne inteligence Luciana Floridija kot razširitvi okoljske etike na infosfero kot vseobsegajočo resničnost.

8 »Običajno se proces FAIRifikacije začne, ko področna skupnost premisli za svoje področje relevantne zahteve po metapodatkih in druge vidike povezanih načel ter oblikuje te premisleke kot za stroje uporabne metapodatkovne komponente.« *GO FAIR*, https://www.go-fair.org/how-to-go-fair. Prim. tudi Wilkinson idr.

9 *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layar.

2 Pospešitev informacijskih tokov in sposobnost za delovanje

Pospešitev informacijskih tokov pomeni povečano hitrost obdelave informacij in telekomunikacije, potovanje podatkov prek interneta, po vsem svetu tako rekoč v trenutku. Pametni stroj, ki uporabnici odgovarja in daje vtis, kot da razume in sodeluje v komunikaciji, uporablja ta vidika, ki sta v samem jedru tehniške imaginacije, kot sta o njej npr. pisala Vilém Flusser ali Walter Benjamin. Oba sta prepoznala problem poplave medijskih tokov, pomislimo na Benjaminovo »sprejemljivost z zabavo« (174). Pa vendar, kaj se pravzaprav dogaja. Kako dobiti oprijemljiv vpogled v večpredstavnostna sporočila, ki nas dosegajo?

Lev Manovič uporablja pojem remiks za mešanje fragmentov gradiv v t. i. sodobni kulturi remiksa. Predlaga sicer tudi globinsko mešanje medijev (Manovich, *Software* 46, 268), vendar modeli umetne inteligence ne mešajo medijev v Manovičevem globinskem smislu, v pomenu, da bi artikulirano sestavljali nove medije[10] – umetna inteligenca danes tipično deluje na multimodalni ravni, npr. ko so slike in besedila del istega prostora razpostavitve (*embedding space*). V tem primeru se sami mediji ne preoblikujejo, nastaja nekakšna medijsko nevtralna kvazisemantika, ki se izraža v običajnih medijih, ki so sestavine učnih podatkov.[11] Kulturo remiksa je treba v kontekstu umetne inteligence razumeti preprosto kot mešanje vsebin glasbe in videa ter grafičnih elementov.

En možni pristop je, da se čim natančneje identificirajo diskurzi in z njimi povezane družbene skupine, ki stopajo v dialog v okvirih sestavljenih izjav. Gre za dobro znan pristop iz teorije večjezičja Mihaila Bahtina, ki poudarja pomen dialoga glasov v romanu kot sekundarni izjavi, najobširneje ilustriran na romanih Dostojevskega. Izjava je določena z začetkom in koncem izjavljanja, ima avtorico, ki je zanjo odgovorna, ni pa čisti produkt, npr. ekspresija osebe, ki izjavlja, saj človeške govorice, kot vemo iz strukturalizma, obstajajo v skupnostih govorcev. Izjava je sestavljena iz tujih besed, ki jih izjavno dejanje prepomeni in osmisli v konkretni situaciji. Foucaultovska in bahtinovska teorija diskurza vztrajata, da gre za heterogen skupek prepletajočih se praks, ki se povezujejo s tem, da smo ljudje hkrati del različnih skupin (prim. Vaupotič, *Vprašanje* pogl. 5; Vaupotič, »Kdo«). Avtorica je po Bahtinovi teoriji odgovorna za svobodno reakcijo prejemnice, pri tem mora hkrati predvidevati situacijo recepcije in si prizadevati za bogatitev velikega dialoga resničnosti; monološki govor ima negativno konotacijo, ker krni in uničuje glasove konkretnih družbenih skupin. Tudi neosmišljeno in neodgovorno mešanje tujih besed v novi izjavi je, kot pravi Bahtin, zgolj »nečist in neobdelan [vendar pa

10 Prim. tudi postmedijsko stanje Petra Weibla.

11 Na tem mestu se ni mogoče obširneje posvetiti tem vprašanjem. V modelih, ki prevajajo besedila v slike, so slikovne reprezentacije istega pomena blizu ustreznim besedilnim reprezentacijam v mnogorazsežnostnem prostoru naučene nevronske mreže (prim. Bajohr).

pravzaprav] direktni avtorski jezik«, zgolj slaba oblika monološkosti, ker govorno raznoličje ni umetniško urejeno (Bahtin, *Teorija* 133).

Pri tem nastaja pomembna dilema, ki se pokaže npr. na področju etike kulturne dediščine. Kulturni internacionalisti poudarjajo vrednost kulturne dediščine za človeštvo kot celoto, na nacionalno kulturo osredotočeni pogledi pa nasprotno povezujejo kulturne dobrine z nacijami, poudarjajoč lokalne vrednote in raznolikost. Če imajo nacije in predvsem nacionalne države možnost delovanja (*agency*), pa je to praviloma manj gotovo za intranacionalne kulturne skupine, ki so tudi manj razločno strukturirane (Matthes). Nguyen in Strohl razvijata razlago neetičnosti kulturnega prilaščanja prek intimnosti kulturne skupine, torej prek vzporednic z medosebno intimo. Tako kot osebe zunaj intimne zveze ne smejo uporabljati ljubkovalnih imen, ki se uporabljajo v tesni medosebni zvezi, tudi ni etično uporabljati praks kulturnih skupin, če nisi njihova pripadnica. Matthes povzema:

> Da bi skupina izrazila zahtevo, da tisti zunaj nje ne uporabljajo njihovih praks, mora vendarle imeti neko vrsto sposobnosti za delovanje, […] te skupine so v primeru zahtev, ki se nanašajo na kulturno prilaščanje, tipično »podagentne« […] Takšne podagentne skupine lahko »približno izrazijo« odločitve, toda njihove želje bodo pogosto nedoločene: prizadevanje za spoštovanje skupinske intimnosti bo zato nujno izziv in tvegano (Nguyen in Strohl 2019: [996,] 999), vendar pa vseeno bolj sprejemljivo, kot da bi se zgolj privzelo neko osnovno stališče v imenu skupine ali se sklicevalo na konkretne člane, ko skušajo govoriti v imenu skupine. (Matthes)

Dodatna težava je, kako določiti meje intime določene skupine, saj so osebe hkrati del različnih skupin; spomnimo na Foucaultevo misel, da smo pravzaprav razlika mask (Foucault 144). Problem je torej, da raven pod pragom možnosti delovanja nasprotuje etičnemu načelu, da to, kar moraš, implicira, da to tudi zmoreš. V jedru razmisleka je agent, dejstvo spodobnosti delovanja, ki je ob marsikateri skupini lahko kompleksno vprašanje.

Matthesov pregledni članek se dotika za digitalno obdelavo podatkov ter za telekomunikacije, npr. za videonadzorne sisteme, pomembnega vprašanja: kaj pravzaprav pomeni varovanje osebnih podatkov? Deli človeka z digitalnimi razširitvami v družbenih omrežjih ipd., torej deli te neostro zamejene entitete (dialoško vpete v heterogeno mrežo diskurzov in institucij), niso vrsta lastnine, ampak segmenti celote. Obseg entitete kot regije v informacijskem okolju se lahko opisuje in preverja glede na sposobnost opazovanja in delovanja v lokalnem in oddaljenem prostoru teleprezence. Npr. če me nekdo snema in opazuje v oddaljeni nadzorni sobi, jaz tiste sobe ne vidim in tam ne morem delovati. Del mene je tako rekoč ugrabljen, kot to razlaga Luciano Floridi. Drugače je v primeru kirurga, ki izvaja operacijo na daljavo, saj oddaljeni prostor lahko opazuje in v njem tudi deluje

prek daljinskega upravljanja z orodji (Floridi, *Etika informacije* pogl. 3.4.5; Vaupotič in Bovcon, »Osebni«).

Etična vprašanja se torej preverjajo ob identiteti kulturnih skupin ter njihovi sposobnosti delovanja in artikulacije svojih teženj. Predpostavlja se nadindividualna in hkrati manj kot individualna entiteta – taka, ki kot vloga preči individuum, ta pa se hkrati plasti v več vlog in zato postaja del več kulturnih skupin. Gre za glasove iz Bahtinove teorije dialoškosti. Zanimivo je tudi Flusserjevo opozorilo, da znanstvenica z lahkoto razume ekspertne tehnoslike, npr. rentgenske, in njihovo neločljivo povezavo z radiološko metodologijo, ob filmu v kinematografu pa se zvečer, v drugi vlogi, še vedno vživi v tehnoslike na platnu (Flusser 134–136; Vaupotič, *Vprašanje* 186–187).

2.1 *Nacija – Kultura* Vuka Ćosića (2000, 2022): ustvarjalnost stroja in odnosi med človeškimi glasovi

Projekt rekonstrukcije tega že klasičnega dela slovenske novomedijske umetnosti je bil večkrat predstavljen z različnimi poudarki (Vaupotič idr.; Vaupotič, »Umetnostni«). Zgodnji prepričljiv primer ustvarjalnosti stroja je tesno povezan z medijskimi tehnologijami in medijskimi vsebinami leta 2000 in leta 2022. Razstava v Muzeju sodobne umetnosti Metelkova je bila odprta pred prelomnim 30. novembrom 2022, ko je javnost prvič dobila dostop do ChatGPT in v praksi spoznala elokventne globoke nevronske mreže.[12] Pred tem trenutkom so bili generatorji besedil ekscentrične algoritmične naprave, ki so izdelovale modernistično-eksperimentalni poeziji podobna besedila.

Prva verzija projekta je leta 2000 v obliki soneta prikazovala nize črk in besed, ki so jih v iskalno okence na takrat osrednjem slovenskem spletnem portalu Mat'Kurja v živo vpisovali spletni surferji.[13] Brez kakršnekoli izbire ali manipulacije in anonimno se je prikazoval glas naroda, ki takrat najbrž ni pričakoval, da bi kdo lahko proces spletne interakcije tudi opazoval. Sonet kot domnevno najgloblji izraz slovenskega narodnega duha, je še enkrat opravil svojo funkcijo, pravzaprav prikupno in ironično prikazujoč narod »minus«, kot pravi avtor, kulturnost v pomenu lepega obnašanja in rabe zborne slovenščine. Seveda se je pri branju sonetov-prikazovalnikov razumelo posamezne želje in hotenja oseb, ni šlo npr. samó za takrat na področju digitalne poezije razširjeno naključno prekombiniranje vnaprej zbranih besedilnih fragmentov. Prav tako se besedilo ni sestavilo v slovenski jezik, ostalo je kolaž, montaža nezdružljivega, mozaik glasov v s simboličnimi pomeni nabiti obliki soneta, ki se upira slovenščini, kljub temu da celoto razumemo prek nje.

12 Potekala je od 13. oktobra do 8. februarja 2022. *MG+MSUM*, https://www.mg-lj.si/si/razstave/3567/razstava-nacija-kultura.

13 http://web.archive.org/web/20030401083528/www.matkurja.com/slo (posnetek spletne strani z 2. aprila 2003).

Leta 2022 se je avtor, ki je vodil rekonstrukcijo projekta, odločil za tri ravni sprememb glede na prvo verzijo.[14] Razstava je nastajala ob izteku kulturnih in političnih pretresov, ki jih je sprožila in krepila pandemija kovida ter z njo povezani sicer dobronamerni pozivi k vzpostavljanju razdalj med ljudmi. Na vsebinski ravni je projekt meril na takratno slovensko vlado. Kritična ost projekta je bila usmerjena tudi na skupnost okoli družbenega omrežja Twitter, ki sta jo v slovenskem kontekstu zaznamovala sovražni govor in brezčutnost.[15] Druga raven se nanaša na vprašanje tehnične rešitve za avtomatično izdelavo berljivih in za bralce smiselnih sonetov, tukaj je Ćosić sodeloval s programerjem Markom Plahuto (prim. prilogo in Plahuta).[16] Prenos iskalnih nizov iz leta 2000 je – v osrednjem delu razstave – zamenjala globoka nevronska mreža z arhitekturo GPT-2, ki se je učila na tvitih v slovenščini in dodatnih medijskih besedilih. Manj je morda pomembna tretja sprememba, namreč da so bile sestavine prve različice razdeljene v več delov instalacije.

Prostorsko postavitev so leta 2022 sestavljali trije deli: Ljudstvo, Vodja in Panteon (Slika 1).



Slika 1: Razstava *Nacija – Kultura* Vuka Ćosića leta 2022 v +MSUM v Ljubljani. Foto: MG+MSUM

14 V sodelovanju z Moderno galerijo in projektom Trajnostna digitalna hramba slovenske novomedijske umetnosti.

15 Po odprtju razstave je Twitter prevzel Elon Musk. Za projekt je bila pomembna možnost avtomatičnega zbiranja vsebin, ki je postajalo vedno večji problem.

16 Sodelovala sta npr. že pri knjižnem prevodu in algoritmični nadgradnji Manovičeve *Estetike umetne inteligence* (Manovich, *Estetika*).

Ćosićeva umetniška poetika se povezuje z avantgardami in konceptualizmom, napisi na steni z informacijami o projektu npr. simulirajo antropološko-raziskovalni diskurz. Del s podnaslovom Ljudstvo je sestavljalo štirinajst navpičnih ploskih računalniških ekranov, na katerih so se dinamično pretakali petrarkovski soneti na izbrane teme: delo, izobraževanje, mediji, okolje, šport … Animacija besedil je bila taka kot na razstavi leta 2000. Posamezen sonet je prikazoval tematsko podobne tvite. Marko Plahuta je predhodno zbral tvite in jih klasificiral z metodo nadzorovanega učenja: model je bil razvit za klasifikacijo novic, kar omogoča tematsko razvrščanje naslovov novic ali tvitov, torej katerim od stotih vsebinskih tém pripadajo. Na razstavi so bili animirani soneti predstavljeni kot videi.

Drugačna tehnična rešitev je bila uporabljena za drugi in tretji segment instalacije, in sicer transformerska arhitektura tipa GPT-2 za Vodjo in Panteon. Segment Vodja so sestavljali vsakodnevni odgovori na tvite slovenskega premierja, ki so bili objavljeni na Twitterju prek funkcije odgovor s posebnega uporabniškega računa, in sicer kot slikovna datoteka, saj je v sonetu črk preveč za besedilni tvit. Pravzaprav je šlo za primer korespondence v sonetih, kot jo poznamo iz literarne zgodovine. Segment Panteon je sestavljalo štirinajst natisnjenih sonetov na snopih listov na steni, obiskovalka je lahko odtrgala posamezen sonet in ga odnesla domov. V obeh primerih sonete sestavlja začetni tvit z vladajočo koalicijo povezane osebe, nadaljevanje pa je nastalo na podlagi modela GPT-2 in uporabilo začetni tvit kot poziv – model je torej dokončal sonet (glej Sliko 2).

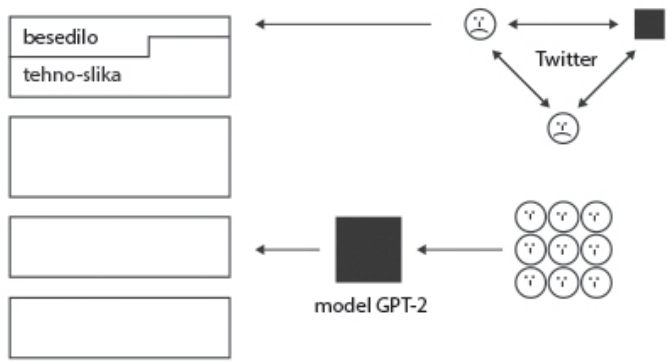
Tridelno instalacijo je mogoče razumeti, kot da tematizira tri vidike jezika novih medijev. Razlika med nadzorovanim in nenadzorovanim strojnim učenjem je povedna za segment Ljudstvo. Nadzorovano učenje se nauči na označeni učni množici in potem klasificira nove primere (predstavljajmo si slike mačk, kjer je v učni množici dodana informacija, ali je na sliki mačka ali ne). Nenadzorovano učenje bi omogočalo bolj odprt pristop in nevtralno raziskovanje podatkov, ki se nato gručijo glede na kvantitativne podobnosti gradiva, ti pristopi se v praksi npr. uporabljajo za določanje avtorstva. Lev Manovič se je v *Estetiki umetne inteligence* (2019) oprl prav na to razločevanje. Poraja se vprašanje, ali so vnaprej dane kategorije nekaj, kar je treba razumeti kot obliko omejitev? Vsekakor so vir pristranskosti, ki jo vnašajo tudi osebe, ki so označevale podatke. (Ljudstvo, kot rečeno, uporablja tehniko nadzorovanega učenja.)

Del instalacije z naslovom Vodja mdr. odpira vprašanja, kdo sme oz. ima možnost govoriti v kibertekstnih konstelacijah, torej napravah za branje besedil na podlagi bralkinih manipulacij besedilnega mehanizma. Bodisi v enouporabniškem kibertekstu, ki uporabnico sooči s sistemom rigidnih pravil, ali pa v večuporabniški komunikaciji npr. medmrežnega družbenega omrežja, kjer prav tako obstajajo hierarhije glede možnosti izjavljanja in potekajo pogajanja, vendar tokrat mimo centralnih pravil

tehničnega sistema. Seveda gre v obeh primerih za specifični možnosti novomedijske komunikacije, ki poleg omejitev ponujata tudi možnosti, ki jih v neinteraktivnih besedilih ni (Vaupotič, »Kdo«). Gre za pomembno vprašanje, ki se pojavlja tudi v vsakodnevni interakciji uporabnikov z digitaliziranim zdravstvom in državno upravo.

Z vidika te razprave je najpomembnejši novi mehanizem za izdelavo sonetov z GPT-2. Gre za t. i. véliki jezikovni model, ki je nastal prav za ta projekt, nato pa se takšne modele še dodatno uči (*fine tuning*, ‚(fino) prilagajanje (parametrov)', prim. *Islovar; Računalniški*), da naredijo nekaj posebnega: v primeru *Nacije – Kulture* leta 2022 se je model prek slovenskih tvitov naučil slovenščine, nato pa prek zbirke slovenskih pesniških besedil še izdelave poezije in sonetov. Kaj se je zgodilo na ravni komunikacije, izjavljanja?

Če pogledamo na komunikacijo kot na dialog več oseb oz. različnih oseb v konkretnih družbenih vlogah, na ravni med izjavami in znotraj sestavljene izjave, se pokaže pomembna sprememba med obema verzijama projekta. Leta 2022 so bili slovenski uporabniki platforme Twitter izvor podatkovne zbirke za izdelavo sonetov. Leta 2000 so vsebine zagotavljali spletni iskalci na portalu, ki so iskali slovenske spletne vsebine.



Slika 2: Shema delovanja generatorja besedil *Nacija – Kultura* iz leta 2022, uporaba velikega jezikovnega modela GPT-2 in družbenega omrežja Twitter. Sonet sestavlja tvit v prvi kvartini in nadaljevanje, ki ga izdela posebej za projekt naučeni veliki jezikovni model.

Natančen pogled na udeležence v družbenem omrežju pokaže zanimivo komunikacijsko dinamiko. Za Ćosića so leta 2022 uporabniki, katerih gradiva vključi v projekt, izrazito jezni, sovražni in tesnobni. Ne vsi konkretno in na splošno, ampak večinoma in specifično, ko uporabljajo Twitter – takrat so zelo pogosto taki, še posebej v Sloveniji, kjer je bila ta platforma povezana s politiki in političnim udejstvovanjem. Mogoče je reči, da se je gostilniško kvantanje preselilo na splet z ne prav pozitivnimi posledicami. Shematično predstavljeno, vidimo izolirane uporabnice in uporabnike, ki začnejo nesrečni in nato postanejo še bolj nezadovoljni, ko praviloma nestrpno in zaradi vmesnika družbenega omrežja brez zavesti o tem, da so sogovorci zares osebe, razpravljajo v formatu, ki je tradicionalno omejen na 140 oz. 280 znakov (glej Sliko 2, zgoraj desno). Primer uporabljenega tvita je: »Privoščim vam ventilator.«

Povečevanje oddaljenosti med ljudmi zaradi pandemije se je poravnalo z brezosebnostjo konverzacije prek vmesnikov, ki v primeru globalnih komercialnih platform ves čas dodajajo tudi priporočila, reklame. S tem komunikacijo med uporabniki pravzaprav motijo. Splošna težava s popularnimi družbenimi omrežji je, da izjavljalka izgublja nadzor nad izrečenim, torej tem, kar prejemnica vidi na svojem ekranu, nad objavo z dodatki, ki jih določi platforma (to je še bolj kot na Twitterju poudarjeno na omrežjih Facebook in YouTube, seveda pa imajo enako vlogo priporočene objave drugih uporabnikov). S tem se krni integriteta izjave – objava na družbenem omrežju ni tisto, kar je napisala uporabnica, ampak (v skladu z Bahtinovo definicijo izjave) kar je doseglo prejemnico po koncu dejanja izjavljanja.[17] Kot je običajno pri novomedijski komunikaciji, stoji pred prejemnico večavtorski skupek, preprosto to lahko pomeni mojo izjavo in z njo vsebinsko povezane reklame. Objave na družbenih omrežjih nato seveda postanejo učni podatki za modele umetne inteligence, potem ko so bile monetizirane že kot goli podatki. Vse to nujno vodi v nezadovoljstvo in nesrečnost uporabnikov, najprej neposredno, nato pa še zaradi zlorabe njihovih vsebin in dela.

Kljubujoča izjava s Twitterja je nato uporabljena v *Naciji – Kulturi* kot prvi verz oz. del na novo ustvarjenega soneta (in grafično označena s kurzivo). Incipit se nadaljuje v drugi del soneta, ki je umetniški artefakt, Flusserjeva tehnoslika kot večpredstavnostna upodobitev konceptualizacije – nekakšna simulacija (Vaupotič, *Vprašanje* pogl. 5.4.2). Globoka nevronska mreža se najprej nauči, določi uteži na povezavah med umetnimi nevroni, na podlagi množice zbranih izjav iz slovenske sfere na omrežju Twitter. Ker gre pri učnih korpusih običajno za velepodatke (*big data*), je smiselno privzeti, da so uporabniki glede izjavljalske pozicije nevtralni glede zadovoljstva s potekom in izkupički sporazumevanja, nekatere izjave so nastale v kontekstih, ki krepijo osebno integriteto in samorazvoj komunikacijskih partnerjev, druge so bile odzivi na šikaniranja in pritiske,

17 Štiri določila izjave so izmenjava govornih subjektov, zaključenost (tematska izčrpnost, povezana z govorkinim namenom), ekspresivnost (govorkin čustveno-vrednostni odnos do vsebine izjave) in naslovljenost (upoštevanje konkretne naslovnice) (Bahtin, *Estetika* 229–282). Platforma izjavo dostavi z dodatki, kar pomeni novo uredniško manipulirano celoto, ki je z vidika navedenih določil ne koordinira več samo izjavljalka, ki je uporabnica družbenega omrežja, ampak hibridni naravno-človeški sistem iz več agentov.

nekatere vrednostno nevtralne; vse skupaj je skrajno fragmentirano v utežeh velikega jezikovnega modela. Podatkovna množica je posredovana algoritmom, ki vzpostavijo situacijo nepregledne črne škatle, uteži v nevronski mreži, ki izdela drugi obsežnejši del soneta (Slika 2 spodaj). Tole je primer iz ene od knjižnih razširitev galerijskega projekta, prvega dela sonetnega venca vencev vencev, sonetni venec *Novice*, sonet 9.

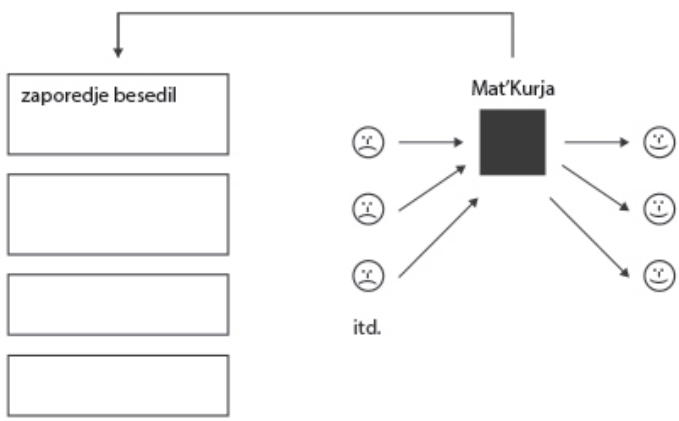
Samo ob tej hrvaški plaži
opažajo več sto morskih psov
vsak dan zrejo v morje,
ponoči pa jih priganjajo na planjavi.

In da bi v morje zaplavali;
počasi in brez truda so že tu!
Popoldne bo še deževno - megleno: prekletstvo;
in če ne prej pa čez par dni spet na obalo.

Se pticam in volkom zdilajo hiše
okoliščine so kot ptice:
v morju plavajo kot gobe po dežju.

A ko se približaš morju, je to za en klinc?
V morje grem vedno brez vode;
ko padem vanjo z mokrimi sanjami. (Ćosić 29)

Ob uporabi iskalnega toka na spletnem portalu Mat'Kurja je bila izjavljalna konstelacija med sogovorniki in odnosi privzemanja iz tujih izjav leta 2000 drugačna.



Slika 3: Shema generatorja besedil *Nacija – Kultura* iz leta 2000, prikaz toka iskanja na portalu Mat'Kurja v obliki soneta

Oseba, ki išče odgovor, torej nekdo, ki ima konkretno težavo, se z zametkom zbeganosti sooči z oknom iskalnika na takrat uveljavljenem spletnem portalu. Praviloma (je) dobi(la) zadovoljiv odgovor, torej se interakcija sklene z zadovoljno uporabnico (Slika 3). Situacija je tako rekoč nasprotna tisti s Twitterja; na zgodnjem svetovnem spletu so ob uporabi spletnega portala osebe prehajale iz nesreče v srečo, če parafraziramo Aristotela, leta 2022 pa osebe v Ćosićevem projektu ostajajo nesrečne.

***

Pristop, ki se osredotoča na to, kdo izjavlja, torej kdo odloča, kaj bo videla oz. slišala bralka, in kako so fragmenti tujih človeških izjav prekombinirani v nove sestavljene izjave, izhaja iz temeljev kantovske etike, ki postavlja človeka v center etičnih razmislekov. Kot v primeru fenomenologije, ko je dostop do resničnosti posredovan prek doživljanja, je v središču človek, ki ga teorija diskurza, prek navezave na filozofijo jezika, natančneje določi in razkrije v heterogenem prepletu družbenih praks. Družbeno konkretno v določenem zgodovinskem trenutku je odločilno. Kot nakaže pogled etike kulturne dediščine, je sposobnost za delovanje kriterij za razmislek o etičnih zahtevah posameznikov in skupin. Kulturna dediščina ima s tega vidika instrumentalno vrednost prek povezave s skupinami ljudi in njihovimi kulturnimi konteksti, ravno te družbeno-zgodovinsko specifične vire za izjavljanje pa je treba identificirati kot aktivne glasove v velikem dialogu resničnosti.

3 Etika infosfere kot okoljska etika

V članku »Konstrukcionistično razumevanje identitete v neoavantgardizmu« Vaupotič in Bovcon pokažeta, kako je mogoč – in ponekod umetniško artikuliran – tudi pogled, ki se ne osredotoča na jaz, na človeškega akterja kot vir delovanja, ampak gleda s stališča vseobsegajočega informacijskega okolja, kjer se vzpostavljajo entitete, med njimi tudi človek, pa tudi sistemi iz več agentov, kot so skupine ljudi, partnerske zveze ali korporacije, umetni agenti. Gre za regije v okolju, ki ga sestavljajo informacije različnih vrst. Jaz oz. katerakoli entiteta je razumljena kot dinamičen del informacijskega okolja s polprepustno membrano, ki ga ločuje od okolice. Egologija, preučevanje osebnosti in njene integritete, se izkaže za ekologijo komunikacijskih procesov, ki pomeni pogajanja za ohranjanje in večanje bogastva informacij v homogenem okolju infosfere; zavest v človeškem pomenu besede je seveda le poredko vključena v neštete in najrazličnejše procese v infosferi.

Npr. *Stanfordska enciklopedija filozofije* je izvorno digitalni artefakt, obstaja na internetu prek uporabe in soustvarjanja, ki ga vodi skupnost strokovnjakov in deležnikov. Nikoli ni bil knjiga, prvi natis. Namenoma je bil zasnovan kot trajnostna

spletna skupnost, »dinamično referenčno znanstveno delo«.[18] Kot *Nacija – Kultura* se v času spreminja, ima obdobje, ko je bila enciklopedija nedokončana, obstajajo izzivi, kako zagotoviti trajnostne pogoje delovanja. Za muzejsko skupnost spremenljivost računalniško podprtih kulturnih artefaktov predstavlja izziv. Kakorkoli že, naša kultura se je odločila, da bo priznala intrinzično vrednost tudi takšnim izvorno digitalnim tehniškim artefaktom in jih zavarovala, prim. npr. *Icomov kodeks muzejske etike*, ki se nanaša na izdelke človeške ustvarjalnosti kot etične paciente, neaktivne prejemnike dejanj z moralno vrednostjo (Floridi, *The Ethics* 123).

Okoljska etika je področje, ki si prizadeva za razširitev okvirjev moralnega delovanja in etičnih načel. Etični premislek se širi onkraj kantovske osredotočenosti na ljudi in postopno vključuje čuteča bitja, živo naravo, nato pa tudi neživa okolja in predmete. Okolje v pomenu nečloveške entitete dobi neodvisno etično vrednost. Za okoljsko etiko je pomembno razlikovanje med intrinzično in ekstrinzično instrumentalno vrednostjo, ki je običajno vrednost za ljudi. Navedek iz *Stanfordske enciklopedije filozofije* pravi:

> na splošno je sprejeto, da, ko ima nekaj intrinzično vrednost, to povzroči *prima facie* neposredno moralno dolžnost za moralne agente, da ga zaščitijo ali da se vsaj vzdržijo tega, da bi ga poškodovali […] Številne tradicionalne zahodne etične perspektive pa so osredotočene na človeka, tako da bodisi dodelijo intrinzično vrednost zgolj človeškim bitjem […] ali da dodelijo znatno večjo količino intrinzične vrednosti človeškim bitjem […] (Brennan in Lo)

Okoljska etika je izhodišče za informacijsko etiko Luciana Floridija, ki je del njegovega obširnejšega projekta o filozofiji informacije. Njegov namen je razširiti obseg etične obravnave dejanskosti do skrajnih meja. V nadaljevanju je naveden njegov miselni eksperiment, ki ilustrira intrinzično vrednost dejanskosti onkraj uporabnosti za človeka pa tudi privilegiranja čutečih bitij ali živih organizmov.

> Predstavljajte si dečka, ki se igra na odpadu. Tja nihče nikoli ne pride. Nihče od tam nikoli nič ne uporablja, niti ne bo nihče nikoli česa takega želel. Tam je veliko zapuščenih starih avtov. Deček se zabava, ko razbija njihova vetrobranska stekla in luči, tako da spretno vanje meče kamne. Neizmerno se zabava, vendar pa bi se večina od nas nagibala k temu, da predlaga, naj bi se zabaval drugače, da naj se ne igra takšne destruktivne igre in da njegovo obnašanje ni le moralno nevtralno, ampak že zares obsojanja vredno, vendar seveda le v manjši meri, če se ga primerja z resnejšimi lumparijami. (Floridi, *The Ethics* 80)

Pri tem se sklicuje na svojo sistematizacijo filozofije informacije, informacijsko ontologijo kot informacijski strukturalni realizem (Floridi, *The Philosophy*). Floridi predlaga etiko informacije, ki je: »okoljska etika, ki zamenja *biocentrizem* z

18 Prim. https://plato.stanford.edu/about.html#pubmod, https://plato.stanford.edu/support/sepia.html. Vaupotič, »The Book«.

ontocentrizmom in nato interpretira Bit z vidika informacije. […I]nterpretira *Bit* in *nič* na informacijski ravni abstrakcije, kot *infosfero* in *entropijo* […] Na kratko, je okoljska etika, ki temelji na fenomenih in ustrezajočih jim konceptih informacije/infosfere/entropije namesto življenja/ekosistema/bolečine« (*The Ethics* 98).

Razcvet in rast na eni strani ter trpljenje in nič na drugi. Pomembno je dodati, da Floridi izraz entropija uporablja v metafizičnem pomenu besede in ne v fizikalnotehničnem niti informacijskoteoretičnem. Označuje manjšanje kompleksnosti in s tem bogastva infosfere, vsakršno destrukcijo ali kvarjenje entitet (oblike, vzorci, razlikovanja, vsebine, osebe …), ki so razumljene kot informacijski predmeti, s tem pa bi prihajalo tudi do siromašenja Biti (65–67). Katera koli oblika Biti je koherentno informacijsko telo in informacijsko stanje je minimalni skupni imenovalec, ki povezuje vse entitete. Informacijska etika s tem odstrani tudi zadnje predsodke in pristranskosti glede »neživega, mrtvega, neotipljivega, abstraktnega, inženirskih izdelkov, umetnega, sintetičnega, hibridnega ali tudi zgolj mogočega«, pa tudi idealnega in intelektualnega (64, 111). »I[nformacijska]E[tika] jemlje Bit/infosfero kot intrinzično dobro […] moralna preskriptivnost postane, vsaj tudi, intrinzična lastnost informacije [poleg ostalih moralnih] prvih načel, kot so εὐδαιμονία, sreča, dolžnost ali življenje« (75).

Antropocentrične standardne makroetike		Nestandardne makroetike
Osredotočene na dejanja ljudi	Osredotočene na agentko, človeško naravo	**Osredotočene na pacienta**, na kar obstaja[19]
Družbene	Individualistične[20]	Alo- ali ontocentrične; informacija je univerzalni pacient, načelo ontološke enakosti, aksiološki ekumenizem
Možnost interakcij, intersubjektivnost	Avtonomija agentke, intrasubjektivnost	Moralni status, dostojanstvo, *dignitas* (bistvene lastnosti, moralni interesi, kot sta lastna narava in dobrobit), ki agentu postavlja zahteve; minimalistična teorija zaslužnosti (*desert*)
Filozofija zgodovine, moralna dejanja v času[21]	Pedagogika	Filozofija žrtve; filozofija narave in prostora

19 Kot izjema je kantovska verzija kontraktualizma pri Johnu Rawlsu osredotočena na pacienta, etično vrednotenje se izvede, ne da bi se upoštevalo agentovo mesto v družbi (Ashford in Mulgan). Tudi v etiki vrlin agentka (lahko) postane prejemnica dejanja.

20 Platonovo *Državo* je mogoče brati, da se nanaša na agente, kot so politične stranke, podjetja, skupine, institucije, vendar pa to za današnje etike vrlin ni običajno (Floridi, *The Ethics* 61).

21 V centru pravic in dolžnosti je moralno odgovorna agentka, ki jo odlikuje zavest, je svobodna in razumna, torej načrtuje in vrednoti, in je zadostno informirana; zanjo je značilna intencionalnost. To je kantovska absolutna in neprimerljiva moralna vrednost; »dobre volje« zahtevajo več spoštovanja, ker se lahko moralno izboljšujejo, na podlagi racionalnosti (Floridi, *The E*thics 63, 68, 113–115, 149).

Deontologizem (Kant …)	**Konsekvencializem**[22]	**Etika vrlin**	**Informacijska etika**, tudi medicinska etika, bioetika, okoljska etika …
Dolžnost	Sreča (εὐδαιμονία)	Vrlina	Spoštovanje (pacienta), skrb (agenta)[23]
Ovrednotenje *pred* dejanjem	Ovrednotenje *po* dejanju	Pacient ima določen moralni status (bistvene lastnosti in moralne interese), ki si zasluži (pravice, da obstaja in se razvija) in zahteva (vodila, omejitve za agenta) vsaj minimalno spoštovanje (v izhodišču, privzeto, načeloma, *prima facie*, relativno, če je mogoče, vsaj tudi, z možnostjo, da ob primerjavi pretehtajo drugi interesi).	
Skladnost dejanja z dolžnostmi in univerzalnimi maksimami; motivacije	Dejanja je mogoče izboljšati		
Informacija je nujni epistemološki predpogoj za moralno odgovorno dejanje			Informacijska ontologija
/		Modra etika (iz izraza *blue-print* za tehnično risbo oz. načrt)	
/			Zelena etika, kadar se zasledujejo zgolj konservativni, heteronomni cilji
Etika obnašanja in nastajanja			Etika okolij

Tabela 1: Informacijska etika med standardnimi in nestandardnimi etičnimi pristopi (prim. predvsem Floridi, *The Ethics* 61–64, 98–99)

Dejanje je razumljeno kot relacija med agentom kot virom in pacientom kot prejemnikom. Na podlagi tega Floridi razdeli temeljne etične pristope, makroetike, med standardne in nestandardne (Tabela 1).[24] Prehod med standardnimi antropocentričnimi etikami k nestandardnim napreduje v korakih, k biocentričnim in naprej k ontocentričnim pogledom (*The Ethics* 85, 87, 98). Deželska etika (*land ethics*) Alda Leopolda ne vključuje tehnologije in artefaktov, globoka ekologija Arnneja Næssa se omejuje do neživega in mrtvega (Floridi, *The Ethics* 111, 131, 133, 137, 122). Floridi ugotavlja »manko uravnoteženosti med razredoma agentov in pacientov, ki se je pojavil v globokih oblikah okoljske etike, ki ne prinašajo s sabo enako 'globokega' odnosa do sposobnosti delovanja [agency]«. Pri tem omenja distribuirane sisteme agentov in s tem povezano moralo brez zavesti (160). Pristop informacijske etike vključuje vse vidike poslovne etike, ki se nanaša na pravne osebe, partnerstva, vlade, korporacije, podjetja (137, 148). Za informacijsko etiko je vsaka entiteta v pomenu danosti, obstoječe celote (vsaj) etični pacient in predmet skrbne obravnave. Obsega vse, kar je mogoče kakorkoli razlikovati in zaznati, najmanj kot podatek v pomenu danosti, nehomogenosti v dejanskosti.

22 Kontraktualizem je inačica konsekvencializma (negativna antropologija, racionalnost pri lastni koristi). »Klasični utilitaristi so zavzemali stališče konsekvencializma hedonističnih dejanj« (Sinnott-Armstrong; prim. tudi Ashford in Mulgan).

23 »Koncept skrbi, kot ga uporablja I[nformacijska]E[tika], je sekularni ekvivalent pavlinskega koncepta ἀγάπη (‚ljubeče obravnave z naklonjenim pogledom') ali *caritas* (‚nežnost, ljubezen, ki temelji na tem, da se nekaj ceni'). Po smrti boga je duhovna vrednost Biti postala precej bolj vprašljiva [… in zato je] agent tisti, ki ga je treba narediti občutljivejšega« (Floridi, The *Ethics* 74–75).

24 Pri nas se z vprašanji etike umetne inteligence ukvarja npr. Ernest Ženko.

Standardne etike se osredotočajo na akcijo ali agenta. Okoli vprašanja akcije se razvijata deontološka etika in konsekvencializem. V ospredju je družbeni vidik, intersubjektivnost, dejanja človeštva; maksime vnaprej ponujajo smernice za delovanje v deontološki etiki (npr. pri Kantu), v oblikah konsekvencializma pa se dejanja ocenjujejo za nazaj. Na agenta je osredotočena etika vrlin, ki je individualistična in postavlja v ospredje človeško naravo in avtonomijo posameznika.

Kot je videti, informacijska etika vključuje tudi elemente etike vrlin. Modra etika se nanaša na konstrukcionistični pristop, »infosfera ima svoj lastni razvoj kot svoj lastni cilj in ne obstaja 'prostor zunaj', ki bi določal njeno teleologijo« (Floridi, *The Ethics* 76).[25] Floridijevo zagovarjanje konstrukcionizma se navezuje mdr. na pragmaticizem Charlesa S. Peircea kot na filozofijo ustvarjalnosti, zasnutkov in je nekaj drugega od konstruktivizma, ki v relativističnem smislu zavzema stališče, da je vse skonstruirano (*The Logic* xiii). Zato zgolj težnja po ohranjanju obstoječega ne zadostuje, potrebno je snovanje novih vsebin in kompleksnosti v infosferi, to pa povzročajo agentje in večagentni sistemi, človeški, naravni, umetni ali hibridni. »IE razume agente predvsem kot *ustvarjalce* in ne le kot *uporabnike* svojih okolij« (*The Ethics* 128).

V jedru informacijske etike je pristop, ki je nasproten pristopu v kantovski etiki (prim. tudi op. 21 zgoraj). Namesto absolutne etične vrednosti človeka je v ospredju minimalističen pristop.[26] Aksiološki tok je obrnjen, razred ima intrinzično vrednost, ker ima vsak član intrinzično vrednost in ne obratno (120). Pacient ima določen moralni status (bistvene lastnosti in moralne interese), ki si zasluži (pravice, da obstaja in se razvija) in zahteva (vodila, omejitve za agenta) vsaj minimalno spoštovanje[27] (v izhodišču, privzeto, načeloma, *prima facie*, relativno, če je mogoče, vsaj tudi, z možnostjo, da ob primerjavi pretehtajo drugi interesi). Za etiko informacije je vrednost entitete privzeta kot »vsaj« v pomenu nereduktibilnosti; brezpogojno, mimo vidikov instrumentalnosti ali čustev. Intrinzičnost te vrednosti Floridi razlaga prek metode objektnega programiranja kot podedovano esenco.[28] Ta vrednost je absolutna[29] in je v naravi entitete *x*, razumljene *kot* informacijska entiteta. Kot taka načeloma lahko zavzame vlogo pacienta *P* moralnega dejanja (124).

25 Gre za spinozistično idejo: »Vsa bitja so po naravi obdarjena […] z močjo prizadevanja. Ta *conatus*, oblika eksistencialne inercije, vzpostavlja 'bistvo' kateregakoli bitja« (Nadler).

26 Heideggerjev koncept *Dasein* je primer minimalističnega pristopa (Floridi, *The Ethics* 68).

27 Spoštovanje pomeni, da agentka, ki je sposobna notranjih stanj, s posebno intenco in brez prisile prepozna intrinzično vrednost pacienta – to je »brezinteresna, ki ceni, in pazljiva pozornost« (Floridi, *The Ethics* 113).

28 Prim. Floridi, *The Ethics* pogl. 6.1.

29 »[T]ukaj je minimalna intrinzična vrednost entitete neprimerljiva, ker je edinstvena v pomenu, da je ni mogoče naprej reducirati, je nujno skupna vsem entitetam, ki sploh lahko imajo intrinzično vrednost, in si zasluži, da se jo spoštuje privzeto, vendar le *ceteris paribus*, to pomeni, da lahko nad njo pretehtajo premisleki, ki se nanašajo na druge stopnje moralne vrednosti na nižjih ravneh abstrakcije« (Floridi, *The Ethics* 122). Omenjene nižje ravni abstrakcije seveda pomenijo vedno večje upoštevanje kompleksnosti pojavov in odmik od minimalistične izhodiščne točke, ko so vse entitete razumljene zgolj kot bivajoče, ki ga je mogoče tako ali drugače fizično razlikovati od nečesa drugega.

Floridi omenja »lestvico razredov informacijskih entitet glede na njihov potencial, da udejanjijo procese, ki bi lahko izboljšali regije infosfere, kjer imajo vpliv«, to pa stoji nasproti absolutni vrednosti npr. življenja v biocentričnih etičnih teorijah (75).

Kaj pa zlo, negativna aksiologija? Brez intrinzične vrednosti je v tem kontekstu samó nekaj, kar ni informacijska entiteta, intrinzično nemogoč objekt pa je logično protislovje samo.

> Informacijske entitete so v najslabšem primeru brez vrednosti [worthless], nikoli z negativno vrednostjo [unworthy]. […] Dejanja so lahko pacienti […] kot sporočila […] Vendar pa, medtem ko so objekti v najslabšem primeru intrinzično brez vrednosti, so lahko sporočila tudi z negativno vrednostjo in zaslužijo, da se jih aktivno ne spoštuje [… ker so tudi] procesi, ki zadevajo druge informacijske entitete pozitivno ali negativno. (129)

Negativno dejanje seveda ne zahteva nujno tudi intencionalnosti, obstajajo negativni naravni procesi.

Minimalistični pristop informacijske etike pomeni seveda odpiranje in krepitev senzibilnosti za drugačne entitete, ki obdajajo posameznico ali človeštvo. Floridi omenja takšno senzibilnost pri stoikih in neoplatonistih (111). Pri tem opozarja na »ponavljajoče se kvalifikacije, 'nad čimer lahko pretehta drugo', 'minimalno' in '*ceteris paribus*', ter ključen pomen tega, kar imenujemo 'ravni abstrakcije', na katerih je moralna situacija analizirana« (128). Po eni strani je informacijska ontologija hermenevtično deskriptivno sredstvo senzibiliziranja, ki omogoča obravnavo etičnih statusov entitet brez zavesti, ki zato ne morejo biti odgovorne (angl. *responsible*), pa vendar so lahko prek sposobnosti za avtonomno delovanje – npr. kot algoritmične črne škatle – vir za moralno ovrednoteno dejanje (angl. *accountable*, pogl. 7.7). Prek pravzaprav semiotskega pristopa, obravnave vsega, kar je mogoče tako ali drugače zaznati, ter večplastne zasnove resničnosti od fizikalnih procesov do procesiranja funkcionalnih informacij, ki ne dosegajo pomenske stopnje, ki bi bila primerljiva z vsebinami človeške zavesti, informacijska etika zajame pestrost resničnosti, tudi v delu, ki ga na vprašanja odnosov med oblastjo in vednostjo osredotočena teorija diskurza (npr. Foucaultova) ni mogla. Poseben pomen dobiva informacijska etika predvsem pri obravnavi hibridnih večagentnih sistemov, kjer se ljudje vključujejo v širše celote skupaj z računalniškimi algoritmi. Če želimo govoriti normativno na tej ravni, je skupino moralnih agentov nujno razširiti onkraj antropocentričnega pristopa.

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Smisel informacijske etike je torej povečanje občutljivosti za del resničnosti, ki jo sestavljajo stroji za obdelavo podatkov. Gre za entitete, ki postajajo vedno bolj pomembne in ki se na kompleksne načine vključujejo v življenja ljudi. Mogoče jih

je razumeti kot prejemnike moralno označenih dejanj, lahko pa jih obravnavamo kot agente, ki izvajajo dejanja, ki jih je mogoče vrednotiti etično. Ekstremen primer sočutja pri doživljanju umetnih agentov, ki so izdelki tehnike, so pričevanja o odzivih na brcanje psom podobnih robotov na družbenih omrežjih. Ljudje včasih doživljajo robote podobno, kot doživljamo čuteča bitja (Koban in Wieringa). Na festivalu Ars Electronica z naslovom *Panika: da/ne* leta 2025 je bil prvi projekt tematske razstave *Dinamika psa na vrvici* (Takayuki Todo), desetminutni tehnoperformans generičnega robotskega psa, ki na verigi napada občinstvo. Prvo poglavje razstave, Moralne meje nadzora, je odprlo vprašanje situacije, ko »začenjamo delegirati lastno odgovornost«. Ob pogledu na robota modela Unitree Go2, ki pravzaprav deluje neverjetno dobro, pade, se pobere, se zaplete v verigo, se odmota … se gledalki odpira vprašanje sočutja do umetnega agenta oz. primernosti takšnega odnosa: »Bomo postali bolj senzibilni ali povsem otopeli?« beremo na razstavi na besedilih na steni. V tej perspektivi je v ospredju torej situacija, ko etični premisleki pokažejo, da je minimalna etična vrednost naprave zavrnjena, saj negativni učinki na družbo prevladajo, skrb za čuteča bitja pretehta nad upoštevanjem intrinzične etične vrednosti robota. Ali zato, ker gre za robota, sočutje ni na mestu, je asociacija na pasje boje neprimerna? So umetni agenti po našem občutku vsaj relativno entitete z intrinzično moralno vrednostjo ali ne; ta instalacija vsekakor odpre problem, da robotska reprezentacija mučenja živali *predstavlja* mučenje, ki pa se ne dogaja *tukaj*, podobno kot npr. v situaciji reprezentacije nasilja v industriji zabave in umetnosti.

Vendar pa navedeni problem sočutja s strojem in podobne nevarnosti nekritične rabe generativne umetne inteligence, kot so ChatGPT, Grok itn. (prim. Hegarty), pokažejo, da je situacija zapletena, minimalistična moralna vrednost kot etično izhodišče je zgolj prvi korak za premislek in izdelavo smernic, kako se obnašati v svetu, v katerem pametni stroji že sodelujejo v velikem dialogu resničnosti. Opis novomedijske umetnine kot kompleksne oblike izjavljanja v primeru projekta Vuka Ćosića *Nacija – Kultura* je lahko predlog, kako razgrniti problematiko in pokazati na medčloveške odnose v kompleksnih hibridnih okoljih, ki se v tem trenutku spreminjajo tako rekoč iz dneva v dan.

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Priloga: Tehnična izvedba rekonstrukcije *Nacije* – Kulture Vuka Ćosića leta 2022 za razstavo v +MSUM

Marko Plahuta je na predavanju v +MSUM opisal tehnično ozadje treh podprojektov (prim. Plahuta): (1) *klasifikacije tvitov* na posamezno temo in tekoči izpis v obliki soneta; (2) *izdelave velikega jezikovnega modela*, tvit je poziv za generiranje soneta v tviteraškem jeziku; (3) *Twitter bota* oz. spletne uporabe modela, ko tvit sproži nastanek soneta kot odgovor. Podatkovna zbirka za učenje modela: (i) Plahuta je zbiral tvite, zajemal je 28 tisoč uporabniških imen, ki jih je prepoznal kot slovenske, poleg tega ima tudi zgodovinski arhiv, skupaj 82 milijonov tvitov, od teh 55 milijonov unikatnih, ki niso retviti. (ii) Baza povzetkov novic, ki jo je zbiral vsaj pet let, več kot dva milijona enot. (iii) Soneti za dodatno učenje modela, da piše sonete.

(1) *Klasifikacija tvitov*. Uporabljen je bil Plahutov klasifikator za novice: zajame se vir RSS in vsaka novica se klasificira glede na navzočnost stotih vnaprej danih tem (klasifikator je bil naučen na učni množici, ki jo je Plahuta zbiral ročno in avtomatsko; tehnologija je nevronska mreža *gated recurrent unit* z mehanizmom pozornosti). Orodje je bilo razvito za novice, na tvitih deluje slabše, komentira Plahuta. Tviti so bili klasificirani, tako da je v posamezni skupini (14 skupin za segment Ljudstvo) po 100–200 tvitov, ti pa so bili nato animirani v obliki soneta.

(2) *Modul za generiranje sonetov*. Zahteve: (a) iztočnica-poziv je tvit (del prve kitice); (b) skladenjsko pravilen sonet; (c) tviteraški dialekt; (č) modul mora generalizirati, pridobiti generalno znanje pisanja sonetov; (d) relativno nezahtevna strojna oprema (zaradi bota; modul je instaliran na strežniku, ki nima drage grafične kartice, kakršne se uporabljajo za treniranje nevronskih mrež). Kot tehnološka rešitev za generiranje sonetov je bil izbran GPT-2, manjša verzija sorodnega GPT-3, ki je bil v tistem času uporabljen v ChatGPT. GPT-2 vključuje 200 milijonov parametrov, je generativni

kavzalni model s fiksno dolžino (označeni so konec in odstavki). Osnovni model je bil naučen na podlagi tvitov v slovenščini, nato pa je bil prilagojen na manjši zbirki sonetov (*fine tuning* kot prenos znanja). Tri dni učenja na domačem računalniku z dobro, in hkrati dosegljivo, strojno opremo (Nvidia RTX 3090) je bilo potrebnih za osnovni model (knjižnica transformers GPT-2 s Hugging Face in PyTorch). Proces je vključeval pripravo učne množice in večkratno učenje, da je bil dosežen sprejemljiv rezultat: izločeni so bili npr. preveč preprosti (prekratki, ena beseda, emoji) ali preveč kompliciran tviti (računi, ki objavljajo zgolj sporede avkcij) ali tviti brez informacijske vrednosti (sami emojiji) … Uporabljenih je bilo med 3 in 4 GB »suhega teksta« (tviti in dva milijona naslovov novic, kot pove Plahuta, »da se stabilizira jezik«). Plahuta komentira, da je v naučenem modelu GPT-2 »napaka« pravzaprav prevelika, ker je bilo v učni množici premalo teksta – več slovenskega Twitterja pač ni. Izdela se tekst z dolžino do približno sto besed.

Rezultat so najprej primeri tvitov, še ne pesmi – osnovni jezikovni model »zna tvoriti slovenske stavke in tudi nek smisel ima, se naveže na iztočnico, ni pa to nek orakelj,« pravi Plahuta. Nato je uporabil pribl. 500 sonetov za prilagajanje parametrov (*fine tuning*); sonete je pridobil iz več virov (Wikivir, Wikipedija, spletišča, besedila, ki so mu jih poslali znanci), jih zbral v eno datoteko in oblikovno uredil – kitice, verzi, odstranil je krativce, ostrivce … Sledi generiranje sonetov: izhodni podatki so kitica ali največ dve (izhodna sekvenca je prekratka za celoten sonet). Algoritem: vnesemo tvit; generiramo sto različnih besedilnih sekvenc, tj. tri- ali štirivrstične kitice, in kitice, ki vsebujejo izvirni tvit ali pa ne; algoritem, ki prepozna štirivrstičnico (s pozivom na začetku), drugo štirivrstičnico, ki ne vsebuje tvita, in dve trivrstični kitici. Nizko nastavljena entropija (t. i. temperatura) – generira najbolj verno besedilo, včasih ne uspe, takrat je treba dvigniti »temperaturo«, da se tvori bolj naključno besedilo, »potem nastane slabši sonet, ampak vseeno nastane« … Potrebnih je 1–5 poskusov, da dobimo vse štiri kitice …

Podrobnejši opis: prekratki tviti se ne upoštevajo, ker je preveč tvegano (npr. samo ena beseda), tema še ni fiksirana; najkrajši poziv je pet besed. Sto besedilnih nizov je surovina za končni izdelek (če se postopek ne ponovi). Pet verzov in en verz se zavrže, dve trivrstičnici pa sta ustrezen rezultat; vsako kitico posebej doda med kandidate za trivrstičnico – dve trivrstičnici ostaneta skupaj. Včasih sta tudi štirivrstičnici že zgenerirani skupaj; redko prvi del skupaj in drugi del skupaj. Včasih modelu ne uspe generirati prve kitice (da vsebuje iztočnico in se zaključi v štirih vrsticah) – ponavlja s povišanjem temperature (včasih gre skozi 20 iteracij, tj. 2000 besedilnih nizov). Iz tega nastane sonet iz bolj kaotične prve kitice in manj kaotičnih ostalih treh (entropija, s katero so bile zgenerirane). Začetki se niso pojavili v učni množici, zato model »generalizira s težavo«. Če pride temperatura do najvišje stopnje, se generiranje prekine, za namen bota se nato uporabi drug dnevni tvit ali pa eden iz zaloge starejših.

Plahuta je ročno vstavil prelome stavkov in opazoval, kakšna je kvaliteta generiranega soneta. Pri nekaterih načinih prelamljanja je boljša, pri drugih slabša, pri istem tekstu.

Za bota je moral Plahuta narediti logiko, inženiring pozivov, tj. preprosto aritmetiko, ki nekako prelamlja besedilo, in je pri tem upal, da mu bo uspelo, saj pri botu ni možnosti, da bi ročno modificiral iztočnico. Za knjigo je poslal iztočnice Ćosić, najmanj desetina generiranja ni uspela (prim. Ćosić). Ćosić je prompte prelomil, Plahuta je popravljal prelome. Za vsakega od 196 sonetov za knjigo je Ćosić dobil 20-50 verzij soneta na iztočnico, prebral je več kot 2000 sonetov, urejeni so bili po temperaturi – Ćosić je, kot sam ugotavlja, izbiral tiste v sredini (glede temperature), »tam so bili vedno nekako najboljši«, po intuiciji, da se slogovno ujema. Pomembna je torej vloga urednika, ne samo pri knjigi, isto velja tudi za sonete na razstavi v delu Panteon; »samo bot dela avtomatično, tam ni osebe vmes«.

(3) *Twitter bot*. Zahteve: objavljanje sonetov, generiranih iz tvitov slovenskega predsednika vlade; objavljanje dvakrat dnevno; dovolj velika zaloga že generiranih sonetov, če ni novih tvitov; samo en sonet na določen tvit; generirani sonet mora biti objavljen v slikovni obliki. Bot je aplikacija v programu Python. Potreben je strojni dostop do Twitterja (branje premierjevih tvitov, objava tvitov kot odgovor), za kar je bilo treba dobiti dovoljenje (pozimi v letih 2022 in 2023 se je restriktivnost povečevala). Dvakrat na dan se bot aktivira in prebere vse tvite; pregleda, ali je kakšen nov (pred tem je že generiral sonet na podlagi tvita iz zaloge); če je, se skuša generirati sonet; če ne uspe, gre na prejšnji tvit, generira sonet in ga objavi na Twitterju; če tudi to ne uspe, se uporabi že zgenerirani sonet iz starih tvitov; ko imamo besedilo, se doda podlaga, »Prešernov pergament in poseben font«, tekst se natisne na sliko, sledi objava. Premier je bota blokiral, zato ima projekt dva ločena avtorizirana dostopa do Twitterjevega API-ja, prvi bere (praktično ni ga mogoče blokirati, ker se ne ve, kateri je), drugi piše in, ko je blokiran, objavlja na svojem računu.

Sledi še nekaj poudarkov iz razprave po predstavitvi. Če bi bil hipotetično tvit, ki je poziv za model, kvartina, bi bil generirani sonet boljši (model bi imel dobro razumevanje tega, kaj naj napiše; hitro bi zgeneriral jezikovno in formalno kvaliteten sonet), saj je bil model doučen na poeziji in zato, ko vidi poezijo, jo lažje nadaljuje, ugotavlja Plahuta.

Hoteli so uporabiti le Prešernove sonete, vendar jih ni dovolj. Učna množica so heterogeni soneti, tudi sodobni. Polovica sonetov ni imela enajst zlogov v verzih. Tega oblikovnega pravila torej model ni mogel izluščiti iz učne množice.

V angleščini bi uspelo neprimerljivo bolje, obstaja večja baza sonetov. Problem je, da ni dovolj slovenskega teksta, potrebnega bi bilo najbrž 20 GB teksta (datoteka .txt), razmišlja Plahuta.

Komentar Vuka Ćosića: namenoma je uporabljen GPT-2 in ne GPT-3, ki je bil tudi manj dostopen, ni bil cilj »v perfektnem rezultatu, ampak *proof of concept*, in gliči so nas zanimali. Ravno v *Mladini*, dva tedna nazaj, je nekdo pokazal, kako ChatGPT« na ukaz v naravnem jeziku napiše popoln sonet, kar pa bi bil za projekt »slab rezultat«.

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Abstract

Environmental ethics is a field that attempts to expand the framework of moral action and ethical principles beyond the limits of the human. Ethical consideration is becoming increasingly inclusive, moving beyond the initial Kantian focus on humans to include sentient beings, living nature and, eventually, inanimate nature. The environment, as a non-human entity, acquires independent ethical value. A special issue arises from human-made artefacts, such as cultural heritage. First, the text describes the structure of enunciation using methods of discourse theory, drawing on the example of Vuk Ćosić's new media art project *Nation – Culture* (2000, reconstructed in 2022). It is an early, convincing example of the machine's autonomous creativity in new media art. The text then reviews fundamental macroethics, in particular, Luciano Floridi's information ethics, which is part of his philosophy of information. Ethical issues are discussed in the infosphere as an all-encompassing environment, conceived to enable reflection on artificial, i.e., engineered, agents and hybrid combinations of artificial, natural and human agents. Multi-agent systems seem to raise important questions about relationships among people and with the communities to which cultural artefacts and practices are connected. The information metaphysics proposed by Floridi is a basis for understanding and constructively addressing the complex phenomena of the digital age. The minimalist conception of the ethics of the information environment enables ethical evaluation and moral decision-making between possible courses of action to enhance the well-being of the entire infosphere, which represents reality most inclusively.

Keywords: new media art, information ethics, environmental ethics, Vuk Ćosić, Luciano Floridi

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New Media Art and the Ethics of the Infosphere

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The text reflects a moment when computer-generated simulations of human utterances can no longer be distinguished from actual human utterances. The term "slop" is being introduced to denote the output of deep neural networks that appear to be human statements across different media. Slop reminds us of the earlier phenomenon of "spam", the unwanted messages, seemingly unarticulated but at the same time very clear and understandable, since they are obviously trying to sell us something. Both slop and spam enter interpersonal communication by overwhelming it with a massive number of messages, thereby disrupting, modifying and weakening the dialogical exchange in our societies. In addition to causing cognitive exhaustion, generative artificial intelligence output – that is, slop – also violates our privacy and often uses our intellectual property without permission.

On the other hand, it is important that the concept of a trusted repository is part of the open science paradigm and aligned with the FAIR principles for data exchange and sharing. The data here is primarily intended for machines; their use in artificial intelligence research and services is a given, alongside the broader goal of adopting common standards and ontologies in research practice. This second perspective reveals the fragility of the technical and informational entities, namely, data, agents and artefacts. Data are sometimes lost. The artificial agents break down, become obsolete, lose support within the operating systems and digital platforms, and vanish. Examples include the augmented reality platform Layar and the Macromedia/Adobe Flash vector animation tool. We can construe these as born-digital cultural heritage; in the case of the Flash platform, it was also an approach to interactive graphic design and animation. However, the current heritage institutions are not devoting sufficient effort to safeguarding and preserving this segment of heritage. Bear in mind that this is the part of the heritage that is a key record of the transition of our societies from the pre-digital into the digital age.

The text consists of two parts. The first part presents a new media art project in two versions realised two decades apart – they reflect the different sociohistorical and

technical contexts and reveal insights into the relationships between people and their utterances within an experimental digital communication platform. The second part is dedicated to Luciano Floridi's information ethics, which is construed as an environmental ethics that focuses on the infosphere, the information environment as the all-encompassing reality.

In conditions where the flow of information is accelerating, a key question regards human agency. Also, an important question is how to gain insight into the multimedia and multi-author messages we face. One approach is to identify the social discourses and their social groups that enter into dialogue within and between composite utterances. This follows a well-established approach in Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, a version of discourse theory. Mikhail Bakhtin studies the dialogue of voices in novels, which is considered a secondary utterance; his main example of dialogic emphasis in novel writing is Dostoevsky. An utterance has a beginning and an end of enunciation; it has an author who is responsible, but it is not exclusively her own product, for example, a personal expression, since human languages exist in the communities of speakers. An utterance consists of foreign words, that is, someone else's words, which are given a new meaning and significance in a given concrete situation. The author is responsible for the addressee's free response and must consider the context of reception while striving to enrich the great dialogue of reality. A monologic discourse, a direct word, carries a negative connotation in this theoretical approach, because it does not reveal the richness of the voices of different social groups. (Foucault's theory of discourse can be used similarly.)

An important dilemma emerges here, as illustrated by ethical issues in the domain of cultural heritage. On the one hand, there is an internationalist and universalist view on the values of cultural heritage. On the other hand, cultural heritage can be construed as tied to national identity. However, while the nations and, in particular, nation-states do have agency to promote cultural heritage as part of identity-building, this is not the case for many intranational cultural groups that are less clearly structured and lack the means to act or even articulate their claims. In this approach, therefore, the ethical questions are posed through careful identification of cultural groups and their agency, as well as their ability to formulate and express those claims. In line with the theory of discourse, a supraindividual and subindividual entity is presupposed – a social group that traverses individuals, and an individual may be part of several social groups. The ethical focus is on preserving voices, as construed by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. The voices are actions of people in concrete contexts.

The project *Nation – Culture* by Vuk Ćosić (2000, 2022) is a classical work of Slovenian new media art. It represents an early, viable case for machine-based verbal art generation. The analysis focuses on the relationships between voices that take part

in the artistically articulated dialogue, which is the work. (The full Slovenian article includes an appendix summarising the public presentation where Marko Plahuta, the programmer of the project's 2022 reconstruction, explains its technical details.) The first version of the project from 2000 consisted of a projection of sonnets that were a search stream, that is, the real-time queries of users of the then main Slovenian portal for the World Wide Web, *Mat'Kurja*, presented in the shape of a sonnet on a projection in a gallery space. The second embodiment, the 2022 reconstruction, used several solutions, among them most interestingly a custom GPT-2 large language model trained from scratch on Slovenian tweets; subsequently, using Slovenian sonnets, the generative model was fine-tuned to write sonnets.

The project analysis in the paper focuses on how the voices of users are represented or merely used (e.g., as training data) in the sonnets at the exhibition. We see the differences between the early hopeful use of website content via search engines, the disillusionment of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current political atmosphere, articulated through the artistic use of a large language model.

The second part of the article focuses on Luciano Floridi's information ethics, aiming to expand the scope of environmental ethics to include new media art and artificial agents, primarily drawing on his monograph *The Ethics of Information* (2013). Environmental ethics is a field where attempts are being made to expand the framework of moral action and ethical principles beyond the limits of the human. Ethical consideration expands from the Kantian focus on humans to include sentient beings, living nature and, eventually, inanimate nature. The environment, as a non-human entity, gains independent ethical value. A special issue arises from artificial artefacts, such as cultural heritage. The distinction between an intrinsic and an extrinsic – that is, instrumental – value is of key importance. Luciano Floridi develops his macroethics as part of his system of the philosophy of information. Information ethics is, for him, an environmental ethics that replaces the life, ecosystem, pain triad with the triad information, infosphere, entropy (which as a metaphysical term, as he notes, represents an impoverishment of the information environment, which encompasses everything starting with anything distinct in some way from something else; it does not have the same meaning as the term in physics and information theory).

Information ethics is a non-standard ethics, meaning it is not centred on the agent but on the patient. It differs from deontologism, consequentialism and contemporary virtue-ethical approaches. If the ethical act is considered a message from the agent to the patient, then the passive entity is the patient. It is (for this perspective) the source of value and therefore demands respect from the agent. In contrast to the Kantian maximalist approach, which considers people to be the only ethically relevant entities, information ethics advocates a minimalist approach. The patient has a certain moral

standing, consisting of essential properties and moral interests. This standing deserves to be respected – through rights to exist and develop – and demands respect – through guidance and constraints on the agent – at least minimally: initially, in principle, *prima facie*, relatively, where possible, at least also, overridably and when contrasted with other interests. Any form of Being is a coherent body of information – the information state is the minimal common factor shared by any entity. Information ethics removes biases even further, against "inanimate, lifeless, intangible, abstract, engineered, artificial, synthetic, hybrid, or merely possible," as well as ideal and intellectual (64, 111). "IE takes Being/infosphere as intrinsically good [...] moral prescriptivity becomes, at least also, an intrinsic property of information [... together with other] first principles, such as εὐδαιμονία, happiness, duty, or life [... w]hat is morally good in itself" (75). Information ethics is not pure conservative green ethics, but a blue ethics (from blueprint) that foregrounds the increase of complexity and flourishing of the infosphere. The agents actively contribute to enriching their environments, which in part aligns information ethics with virtue ethics.

In its conclusion, the paper reflects on the two approaches: one that starts from discourse theory and focuses on the different voices linked to social groups and then the intrinsic-value approach of environmental ethics, which allows us to think about distributed systems of agents and morality without consciousness. It emphasises the dilemma of choosing the human focus of ethics, the responsibility of entities with consciousness, and the different ethical issues within the agency of machines that are merely accountable, but cannot be held responsible for their actions. Should we, as people, feel bad for a robot being harmed or abused? How should such a dilemma be approached? Information ethics, with its minimalist approach, is the first step in articulating the new ethical problems linked to digital technologies. These questions, however, are increasingly misaligned with our moral intuitions and emotional responses to situations in which human utterances are seamlessly integrated with simulated utterances generated by large language models. The study of new media art, as in-depth experimentation with new communication technologies, can provide a rich source for understanding changes in human communication amid the increasingly ubiquitous simulation of human expression.

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Abstract

The article begins by laying the groundwork for discussing selected performative works by the contemporary Slovenian artist Neja Tomšič in relation to how the concept of ecology has been defined in contemporary art over the past few decades. In line with Tomšič's interdisciplinary artistic approach, which lies at the intersection of performative and visual arts, the article briefly explores the relationship between narrative and space or spatial categories. Building on this, it provides a basic contextualisation of Tomšič's work, analysing her specific performative pieces in the process. The article attempts to demonstrate that Tomšič's projects can be analysed from an ecological perspective, understood as a methodology for examining the relationship between the environment and its interacting actors. The ecological aspects of her work are therefore evident not only in her focus on space and landscape but also in the significant role that space, place or landscape plays in the narrative.

Keywords: space, landscape, ecology, visual arts, performative arts

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Space as Protagonist: Ecological Aspects of Neja Tomšič's Performative Works

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Since the second half of the 20th century, the concept of ecology in the humanistic analysis of art has generally been understood as closely related to nature/environmental protection or sustainability, particularly in recent decades.[1] However, it does not have this exact meaning in biology and natural history, the fields in which it was first defined. The concept was introduced into biology and natural history by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel in the second half of the 19th century, but it did not become widely established in American botany until the end of the century. In this context, ecology can be considered, first, as a *methodological approach* to the study of living beings, their relationships with one another, and their adaptation to geographical conditions. This approach has historically developed in dialogue with simultaneous theories of evolution. Secondly, ecology can be considered as a *theory of development* that forms the basis of a specific methodology of study (Kingsland 1–13). For the purposes of this article, we could consider the relationship between ecology and theories of evolution by drawing an analogy with the approaches to the study of the historical development of art that developed simultaneously: theories of evolution could be placed in proximity to the so-called formalist approaches to art history that separate individual works of art from their broader context, analysing them as separate entities by focusing on their intra-formal characteristics (e.g., phonetic, morphological, syntactic and grammatical) and comparing them with other equally "atomised" artworks. In contrast to this, ecology as a methodology of study could be placed alongside contextual approaches to analysis based on Marxist, feminist, postcolonial and other theoretical contributions that emphasise the embeddedness of works of art in sociopolitical, economic and cultural processes and circumstances (Adams 16–100), with an additional, more direct focus on the relationship between the artwork and the situated viewer.

For this reason, it is no coincidence that the concept of ecology has entered discussions in the broader field of the humanistic analysis of art in recent decades,

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with a focus on the concepts of space and the physical environment. The themes of ecology, environmental issues and climate change have been consistently represented, particularly in the interdisciplinary fields of ecocriticism and environmental literary criticism, which began to emerge mainly in the 1990s. Initially, literary ecocriticism focused on the relationship between literature and the physical environment. However, subsequent developments have brought themes such as deep ecology (see Ferry 81–107), the relationship between human and non-human agents, the notion of nature, and material ecocriticism to the fore (Marland 846–859). In dialogue with related critical-theoretical research approaches, particularly postcolonial studies, the early phase of this subfield developed a conceptual apparatus for analysing specific literary works, focusing primarily on spatial categories, such as space and place, and different understandings of place (locus, place and site), the relationship between the local and the global as well as the urban and the rural, which are established through the construction of literary worlds (Jurša 182–183). In short, over the last three decades, the themes of ecology, environmental issues and climate change have become more prominent in art discussions through a focus on space, the physical spatial environment, or spatial categories, as well as through the analysis of certain types of relationships between entities and the environment, which are "proposed" by works of art (Morton, *Ecology* 29–35; Morton, "Why Ambient Poetics" 52–56). This has primarily occurred in the literary arts, even though previous approaches to analysis have more often placed time or temporal categories in the foreground through their focus on the story (Ryan), directly or indirectly following the differentiation of temporal and spatial arts, which stems from Lessing's comparison of literature and fine arts in *Laocoön* (1766).

In narratology, space has traditionally been discussed in terms of the narrative situation's setting or physical environment. However, this does not mean that space merely serves as a passive backdrop to the action; it can also play an important role in shaping characters. For instance, the natural landscape can serve as a projection surface for characters' psychological and mental states, based on an analogy between these states and perceptible aspects of the landscape, as also seen in the tradition of landscape painting (Carus 92–94) and contemporary film production, particularly in environmental science fiction (Matts and Tynan). Additionally, space can resonate with the thematic starting points of a story, as observed in the frequent depiction of confined interior spaces in modernist prose and vast exteriors in Romantic poetry (Barotov 40–43). A greater focus on space within narratology can be observed only from the second half of the 20th century onwards. Examples include Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1957), Yuri Lotman's *Structures of the Artistic Text* (1970), and Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre's work, among others, analyses the role of art and the

humanities in the production of social space while distinguishing between abstract space and "emotionally charged" place.[2]

In relation to the connection between ecology and art, the focus on spatial categories is also evident in the notion of environmental imaginary, which emerged in the diverse field of environmental humanities (Neimanis et al. 70–73) and gained recognition and formalisation in the 2000s. In this context, the environmental imaginary – modelled on the concept of the social imaginary – provides a starting point for explaining "how the natural environment shapes the attitudes, discourses, and practices of the people who dwell there" and can be interpreted in three intertwined ways: as something that is socially constructed, implicitly present and of which individuals are not fully aware; as a starting point for how individuals access the world and construct identity; and as a starting point for imagining the future (Warf). Specifically, the concept of environmental imaginary has recently taken on a more prominent political role based on the idea that environmental science alone is insufficient to attract public attention and trigger changes related to environmental issues (Neimanis et al. 80). Environmental science and the policies and measures aimed at addressing environmental issues should take into account human desire, motivation and values, since "a deep understanding of the environment cannot be divorced from human imagination, culture, and institutional and social practices" (80). In other words, the concept of environmental imaginary serves as a starting point for emphasising the role of imagination and emotion in experiencing space and the relationship between humans and the environment, particularly regarding environmental issues and climate change. It is therefore presented as a possible means of eliminating alienation from environmental issues and the negative framing of climate change in the current post-political context or the context of political resignation. This approach also recognises the role of art in addressing climate change and ecological collapse.

The concept of space, physical environment or landscape is a key starting point for the performative works of the contemporary Slovenian artist Neja Tomšič, whose work lies at the intersection of performative and visual arts. Tomšič, who is primarily a visual artist, having graduated in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, has presented most of her work created over the last decade in both institutional contexts of contemporary performing arts and in gallery contexts. She often frames her work with hybrid media markers, such as immersive documentary installation with narration (*Circle*, 2022), theatrical essay (*Circle*, 2022) and visual essay (*Opium Clippers*, 2017), as well as a novel in the landscape (*Jadran Resort*, 2024) and a narrative walk dedicated to the stories of trees (*Untangling a Garden III*,

2 The conceptual distinction between space and place can also be found in the book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, written by the humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan and published three years after Lefebvre's book. French anthropologist Marc Augé proposed a similar distinction – namely, the difference between "place" and "non-place" – in his influential book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1992).

2025). Productively combining the artistic fields of performing and visual arts, the artist aims to expand the established modes of presentation and reception of both. For example, her work focuses on objects and materials that are not merely props, but rather carriers of emphatically aesthetic qualities (auditory, tactile and visual) and examples of material culture surrounded by narratives, in line with the contemporary intertwining of art and anthropology/ethnography (Hayward).

Tomšič's performative works, which are always based on a specific space as a starting point for research – often abandoned spaces, architecture or public infrastructure – could be placed alongside approaches to documentary theatre. The works created in collaboration between Tomšič and the Nonument group could also be placed in proximity to spatial dramaturgy, which emphasises the connection between architectural space and dramaturgy (Griffero; Kleine). In addition to space appearing as a key actor and "source" of the story in Tomšič's works, objects also play an important role, a general characteristic of the visual arts. A focus on objects can also be found recently in object theatre – primarily a subfield of puppetry based on the animation of found objects or an approach in which found or everyday objects serve as a starting point for creating a story with characters (Foley). Despite the possible entry points listed for analysing Tomšič's work, the article will primarily focus on contextualising it from the perspective of shifts in the field of visual and intermedia arts, which has a somewhat longer tradition of more direct "staging" and construction of the experience of space or landscape.

The Narrative "Construction" of Space in the Work *Circle*

Before turning to an analysis of the performative work *Circle* (2022), it is worth highlighting the basic features of the Nonument group's approach. Tomšič has been a member of this multidisciplinary collective since 2011. The Nonument group also includes intermedia artist and curator Martin Bricelj Baraga, architect and architecture theorist Miloš Kosec, Nika Grabar and other occasional collaborators. The continuous starting point of their artistic and research work is *nonuments* – architecture, public monuments or public infrastructure that once had a specific meaning, ideological function and clear purpose but that has subsequently lost them due to historical, political and economic processes, leaving these spaces to decay and turn into ruins (Nonument group). In the works of the Nonument group, these spaces represent a basis for researching social processes, tensions and values, especially those that define public space, since no social or cultural practice takes place outside of space; space is the site upon which all experience transpires and the scene in which public memory and cultural identity are generated. It could be said that the artistic and research work of the Nonument group follows the premise that social processes can be reconstructed

by focusing on space itself – on the historical processes accumulated within it – rather than solely on the users, architects and practices associated with that space.

Tomšič, who has a similar research background and also works independently, consistently uses storytelling in her work, a practice that has become more widespread in the performing arts in recent decades and often historically contextualised with the tradition of folk culture and oral histories (Sobol 122–133). However, storytelling is also well-established in the field of visual and intermedia arts – especially in the context of research-oriented approaches grounded in ethnographic methods (Foster 27–39). In the latter context, it most often takes the form of contextualising visual, audio or audiovisual documentation, either as alternative guided tours of the exhibition or as lecture-performances by artists accompanying the exhibition presentation. Despite the diversity of approaches, storytelling often allows visual artists to connect diverse information stored in material objects, documents, spaces, times or subjects of discussion. It is rarely a linear narrative based on a plot with a clear beginning, middle and end; rather, it is a fragmented narrative with gaps that the audience is expected to fill in based on their experiences, memories and cultural context.

This approach is certainly evident in the work *Circle* from 2022, which Tomšič (in collaboration with the Nonument group) labels an "immersive documentary installation with narration". *Circle* stems from research into a very specific spatial context, namely, the Railway Workers' Park in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, which is established in this work as a palimpsest of human history and memory – a sediment of human interventions, economic processes and political changes. Although the park can be defined as a public garden in an urban context, in landscape architecture, there is a clear distinction between gardens and public parks. Gardens have a longer history and are often defined as venues for private desires, whereas public parks began to develop particularly during the industrialisation process from the 19th century onwards and are intended to serve the community, therefore having a distinctly democratic foundation (Ward Thompson 57). Furthermore, a park is not just an artificially created space; it is also a prime example of landscape architecture, situated at the intersection of nature and culture. Landscape architecture, namely, creates hybrids and connections between the two, making it a meaningful starting point for reflecting on human relationships with nature and, above all, for articulating a non-dichotomous understanding of nature pertinent to the Anthropocene (Prominski 74–79). From this perspective, gardens and public parks, as well as ruins, are not only a possible foundation for reconstructing social processes, but also for how we imagine and implement our relationship with nature.

In the institutional context of contemporary performing arts, *Circle*'s performance venue is centred around a circular sand-filled structure on which various objects

are arranged. Additional assemblage objects are also arranged throughout the stage area, which features improvised seating for the audience. At the very beginning of the performance, Tomšič addresses the audience directly. The narrative part of the performance then leads the audience through individual gardens and parks. First, we take a narrative stroll through Antoniadis Park in Alexandria. Tomšič evocatively describes its peculiarities, providing a foothold for the audience's imagination while simultaneously reconstructing the park's history. This is followed by a chapter focusing on a different type of space – a playground – in which Tomšič invites the audience to use their childhood memories to picture it while offering additional points of reference through gestures and actions relating to the objects arranged in the circular sand structure. Through childhood memories, we finally enter the Railway Workers' Park in Cluj-Napoca, which, as the artist points out, evoked the sensory fragments from her childhood experiences of a particular playground, sensorially recreated in the performance (touching the earth, picking up stones from the ground or listening to the sounds they make, the creaking of rusty old doors, etc.). The connection between the physical space and the "virtual" memory space is further substantiated by the circumstances: as Tomšič explains, the Railway Workers' Park had already been demolished by the time she visited it, meaning she could only experience it through the combination of material residues on site, stories of others and documentation. After the artist describes the park's special features and contextualises its construction in the 1960s, recorded statements made by its former users are played. These narratives focus particularly on the key changes the park began to undergo in the mid-1990s, when the city's public infrastructure gradually came under private control, prompting numerous artistic and civil society initiatives seeking to keep the park public.

At the time *Circle* was created, the specific park that served as a starting point of the performance was a kind of hybrid between a ruin and a construction site or between a place with tangible characteristics and cultural significance and a transitional non-place characterised by constant movement and a less definable identity (Augé 77–116). Following the reconstruction of the recent history of the Railway Workers' Park, Miloš Kosec and Nika Grabar of the Nonument group also contribute to Tomšič's narration with their own storytelling interventions. In the final part, *Circle* stops at the Pata Rat landfill site in Cluj, while also referencing Jorge Luis Borges' short story *Circular Ruins* from 1940. *Circle*'s central structure, based on an analysis of a particular park, appears in the narrative as a collision between the cyclical aspects of natural processes and the – even if fragmentary – linearity of the story, or perhaps a mirror of human history, which always oscillates between the imperative of progress and condemnation to cyclical repetition.

Through storytelling and minimal, barely perceptible material supports for the audience's imagination, Tomšič constructs *Circle* as a journey through a specific space

and, due to its unique characteristics, enables the reconstruction of the forces that determine this particular social space, which lies at the intersection of nature, culture and civilisation. In this context, the park is neither a fixed site where the performance attempts to reconstruct its original state nor merely a ruin that has been constituted throughout modernity as an object of fascination. Instead, *Circle* narratively constructs the park as a cultural-natural hybrid, highlighting its transformations and how society and the non-human world jointly shape its materiality and meaning. In short, the park is considered an environment that is inseparable from the various forms of life that inhabit and interact within it. Furthermore, the narrative structure recognises the vitality of this environment rather than treating it as merely a backdrop for the action and a passive witness to historical changes.

The Atmospheric Landscape of the *Jadran Resort*

Similar to *Circle* and other works by Tomšič, the "novel in the landscape" *Jadran Resort* stems from research into a specific spatial context – namely, a cluster of ultra-luxurious resorts built with foreign capital along the Montenegrin coast. Based on interviews with workers and the founder of one such resort, Tomšič and her collaborators, Natalija Vujošević and Tara Langford, created four characters who, alongside the carefully designed set, introduce the audience to the *Jadran Resort* environment. At the beginning of the performance, the audience gathers in the venue's foyer, where they watch a promotional video of the resort. They then randomly select an accompanying script, which determines their role: they can either be part of the audience watching the onstage action as Tomšič narrates, or they can be a performer – a mountain waitress, a seasteader on a cruise ship, a corporation or a luxury guest – experiencing the performance in a particular way. The hybrid form of a "novel in the landscape" intertwines theatrical and exhibition presentation conventions, requiring the audience to be active and physically immersed – either by taking on the role of a performer and immersing themselves in an evocative script read through headphones, or by browsing the archive stations onstage after the narrative performance concludes.

As my primary interest lies in the approach to constructing landscapes or environments, it can be pointed out in the first phase that the formal design of the performance itself introduces a landscape connected with the context of Montenegro and – more broadly – with the Mediterranean experience as an atmospheric or ambient entity, rather than merely as an object of the gaze and aesthetic contemplation, as is generally characteristic of the modern Western tradition (Kante 127–157). According to contemporary definitions of atmosphere, such an atmospheric presence cannot be attributed to the objects or environment from which it originates, nor to the subjects

who experience it through empathy or projection, as it is essentially an emergent property (Böhme, "Atmosphere" 114).[3] The origins of the concept of atmosphere and ambience in relation to artistic landscape representation can otherwise be traced back to the tradition of 19th-century landscape painting. During this period, there was a radical shift in the subject of artistic depiction: the landscape ceased to serve merely as a backdrop for human action or narrative, becoming the focal point of the composition, that is, acquiring the perceptual status of a figure. In the former, the reception of the artwork proceeds gradually as the viewer reconstructs the composition, its elements and, above all, the interactions between them. In the latter, the landscape directly transposes the viewer into an aesthetic mood or atmosphere. In short, there is a difference between the gradual choreography of attention, which, even in the context of the fine arts tradition, follows the example of linguistic narration and the dramaturgy associated with it, and the immediacy of sensory confrontation, where the landscape is a projection surface for human mood and, above all, a means of transposition into mood. It is precisely in this context that the aesthetics of atmosphere is crucial. Atmosphere is essentially relational, leaning more towards affects than emotions, the latter of which have a more gradual structure that is closer to the story (Jameson 48).

Contemporary authors who systematically deal with the aesthetics of atmosphere and ambience, such as Gernot Böhme and Tonino Griffero, have emphasised that it clearly calls into question the distinction between the material and the mental, as well as the dichotomy between object and subject. The concept of atmosphere originated primarily in meteorology. It was only in the 18th century that it began, through its association with the weather, to be used metaphorically, referring to the aesthetic aspects of the environment or to the sensory effect the weather has on humans. Starting from a meteorological origin, Tonino Griffero defines the atmosphere as the phenomenic character from which the pre-object impressions originate (Griffero, *Atmospheres* 27) or the mostly external sensations "effused into a (not yet clarified) spatial dimension and tied to situations" (31). Such an understanding of atmosphere therefore defines it as the result of the interplay of various environmental factors, both human and non-human, rather than being merely the projection of human emotional states or the result of material interventions in the environment. In addition, atmospheric space is defined as the logical, psychological and anthropological precondition of locational space; the latter has clear lines, definable areas and spatial relations and can be used to delineate the boundary between objects/bodies and their environment (Schmitz, *Atmospheric Spaces* 1–3). It goes without saying that

3 Here, I am referring to the concept of emergent properties as defined within the framework of assemblage theory, which was initially proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and subsequently developed by Manuel DeLanda, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and others – often a more direct reference to the work of contemporary ecological art. In these theoretical frameworks, an assemblage is defined as a whole made of parts; however, the whole cannot be defined as the sum of the parts, since what is essential to assemblage are the qualities of the whole, which are not present in its parts, but are the result of their productive encounter (DeLanda 7).

locational space, most often conceived as the abstract space of Euclidean geometry, forms the basis for representations of space in both visual art, which constitutes space as an object of gaze, and architecture, which constitutes space as a material site of intervention or a venue for inscribing ideas/plans into passive matter.

In the performance *Jadran Resort*, the phenomenon of ultra-luxurious hotels privatising the Montenegrin coastline serves as a starting point for constructing an immersive environment for the audience, and for presenting a series of libertarian utopias related to the marine/ocean environment. This includes various forms of "seasteading" – the practice of creating permanent residences in international waters and building maritime settlements independent of established governments. Documentary stations, which the audience can browse at the end of the storytelling part of the performance, showcase projects such as *The World*, a cruise ship offering billionaires the opportunity to purchase their own apartment, and the *MS Satoshi*, originally conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic as an attempt to establish a crypto-state unbound by territory and territorial restrictions. The performance indivisibly combines fact and fiction, intertwining multiple temporalities, perspectives and geographical locations, thus providing a glimpse into the so-called sublime of global capitalism, while the structure and choreography of the viewer's experience create an atmospheric, almost phantasmagorical Mediterranean landscape, inseparable from the fluid and shifting hydroecology of the Adriatic Sea. As mentioned, in Tomšič's work, landscape is always a palimpsest of human history. In the performance *Jadran Resort*, the experience of the landscape is distinctly class-conditioned: the concept of a floating, independent state where capital can circulate freely is intertwined with the wellness experience of luxury tourism supported by New Age ideals, apparently unhindered by limitations, obstacles or disruptive situatedness. *Jadran Resort* thus lucidly indicates that the difficult-to-define aesthetics of atmosphere is, in fact, today's prevailing commodity aesthetics.

Another important point for contextualising Tomšič's work is the shift in how the landscape or a specific location becomes an integral part of the artwork in a diverse tradition of land, environmental and site-specific art since the 1960s and 1970s. The diversity of this tradition is perhaps most evident in the classification offered in the extensive monograph *Land and Environmental Art* by Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, in which the authors begin from the question of what artworks do in relation to the environment in which they are placed, or what concept of nature they imply. Kastner and Wallis thus offer five fundamental clusters: "integration", relating to works that treat the environment as a material, for example, by removing or moving materials located at a specific site; "interruption", bringing together works that attempt to combine the environment and human activity, simultaneously cooperating with and criticising the exploitation of natural resources in the name of industrial and urban

development; "involvement", grouping works that attempt to build on a one-to-one relationship with the earth/nature/environment, often through the performing body or rituals; "implementation", highlighting works that focus primarily on exploring the environment as an ecosystem and repository of sociopolitical realities; and "imagining", bringing together works in which nature is most often thematised as a metaphor or signifier, understood as a concept, an optical construction or linguistic elaboration that can take the form of a diagram, sentence or photograph, which is why these works also focus on research into historical practices of mapping, organising and cultivating nature, etc. (44–189).

What is common to this diverse art tradition is that the perceptible aesthetic and material qualities of the landscape or a specific space – sometimes even in a purely physical sense – become an integral part of the artwork, whereby the initial basis of this strategy was often a tendency to eliminate representation and the possibility of market circulation of the artwork, as well as a certain relationship with concurrent ecological movements and the beginnings of environmental humanism (Ratz 72). Recent art approaches regarding the relationship to a specific landscape, location or environment have shifted from the original "site-specific" to "site-sensitive" or "site-responsive" (Hayes 83–92), introducing a specific space or landscape not only as a subject of research but also, often, as a starting point for confirming its local singularity. In addition, a strategy that Robin Mackay calls "plotting the site" is intended to redefine the basic premise of previous site-specific art and is also pertinent to Tomšič's approach: the question is no longer how the viewer responds to a location through the mediation of the artist, but rather, "what is the site (qua nested material complex) responding to – what are the traumas that haunt it and drive it […] and how do they address me? Surface read as symptom, and the artist-investigator as already implicated in the contingencies of the plot" (Mackay 267). In other words, space as a determinable location or landscape is treated not only as an object of research but also as a subject.

Conclusion

Whether working independently or in the framework of the Nonument group, Tomšič's work is characterised by the fact that a specific space does not merely appear as the setting for a story or the depiction of human action, or as a metaphor reflecting the content, identity or emotional state of the characters. Instead, it appears as a key source or even the protagonist of the story. In a perceptual sense, it is the (back)ground that has become the figure. In the storytelling that forms an integral part of Tomšič's performative works, the human protagonists – if one can even speak of them as such – do not primarily refer to themselves. Rather, the space offers additional information

about their identity through its material, aesthetic and atmospheric qualities. It is the space itself that acts as the main protagonist. In addition, in Tomšič's work, objects and materials do not primarily serve as a starting point for creating characters in a story; rather, their capacity to create experiences of an atmosphere "between objects and subjects" (Bjerregaard 1) is at the forefront.

The concept of ambient poetics, as defined by the ecological philosophy of Timothy Morton, is therefore pertinent to the analysis of Tomšič's works. Artists whose work could be described as an example of ambient poetics rarely position themselves as activists aiming to "'solve' the climate crisis or raise awareness of the dire conditions awaiting humanity in the twenty-first century and beyond" (Spencer 5). However, they often provide a foundation for a more nuanced approach to engaging with the environment. Morton defines "ambient" as a "sense of a circumambient, or surrounding, world", suggesting "something material and physical, though somewhat intangible" (Morton, *Ecology* 33). By this definition, he outlines the features of literary, sound, performative and visual artworks that are environmental in form, even if they are not necessarily directly ecological in content. By describing the numerous aesthetic qualities of such artworks, Morton argues that ambient poetics seeks, above all, to undermine the normal distinction between background and foreground (32–43).

In her performative works, Tomšič's approach operates simultaneously on two levels: historical reflection/contextualisation, which is inherently situated, and ambient poetics, which attempts to sensitise ambient perception and has a long tradition of intertwining art and phenomenology. With regard to space as the main protagonist of her performances, Tomšič productively combines the traditions of visual and performing arts with a Lefebvrian systemic, or macro, view of the social construction of space (as presented in *The Production of Space*), and with the micro perspective and imaginative construction of space (as most consistently represented in another seminal 20th-century work on space, namely Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*).

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Povzetek

Članek na začetku vzpostavi osnovo za analizo izbranih performativnih del sodobne slovenske umetnice Neje Tomšič, vezano na vprašanje, kako je bil v zadnjih desetletjih v sodobni umetnosti opredeljen pojem ekologije. V skladu z interdisciplinarnim umetniškim pristopom Tomšič, ki ga je mogoče umestiti na presečišče performativnih in vizualnih umetnosti, se članek v osnovnih potezah dotakne odnosa med pripovedjo in prostorom ali prostorskimi kategorijami. Na tej podlagi članek ponudi osnovno kontekstualizacijo dela Tomšič in pri tem analizira njena izbrana performativna dela. Kot poskušamo pokazati, je dela Tomšič mogoče analizirati z ekološkega vidika, razumljenega predvsem kot metodologija za preučevanje odnosa med okoljem in akterji, ki z njim interagirajo: ekološke aspekte njenega dela je mogoče locirati ne le v fokusu na prostoru in krajini, ampak zlasti v tem, kakšna vloga prostoru, kraju ali krajini pripade v pripovedi.

Ključne besede: prostor, krajina, ekologija, vizualne umetnosti, performativne umetnosti

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Prostor kot protagonist: ekološki vidiki performativnih del Neje Tomšič

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Članek se osredotoča na ekološke vidike izbranih performativnih del slovenske umetnice Neje Tomšič, ki deluje na presečišču performativnih in vizualnih umetnosti. Pri tem izhaja iz osnovnega izhodišča, da je sicer v glavnini humanističnih obravnav umetnosti v zadnjem desetletju povezava med umetnostjo in ekologijo pogosto razumljena v določeni bližini z naravovarstvom ali okoljevarstvom, a da na področju biologije oz. naravne zgodovine, kjer se pojem ekologije tudi najprej definira, pojem nima takega pomena. Kot pokažem ob opiranju na vire, bi bilo mogoče o ekologiji v izvornem pomenu razmišljati zlasti kot o *metodološkem pristopu* k preučevanju živih bitij, ki teh ne atomizira, ampak se osredotoči na njihovo razmerje do (fizičnega) okolja in geografskih okoliščin. Do neke mere podobno razumevanje ekologije, ki v ospredje postavi prostor, fizično okolje ali krajino, je zastopano tudi v zgodnjih fazah interdisciplinarnega področja ekokritike (*ecocriticism*) in okoljske literarne kritike (*environtental literary criticism*), ki se je od devetdesetih let 20. stoletja začela osredotočati na povezavo literarnih del in fizičnega okolja. Navezava na literarne umetnosti je v članku vzpostavljena tudi zato, ker je sestavni del performativnih del Tomšič pripovedovanje, zato v začetni fazi nakažem tudi na pogostejšo zastopanost fokusa na prostor in prostorske kategorije v naratologiji, zlasti v okviru t. i. prostorskega obrata v družboslovju in humanistiki.

Glavnina članka je osredotočena na kontekstualizacijo dela Tomšič, pri čemer se posebej osredotočimo na analizo performativnih del *Krog* (2022) in *Jadran Resort* (2024). Zlasti slednje v ospredje postavi tudi tematiko estetike atmosfere, ambienta in ambientne poetike, kot je med drugim definirana v delih ene od ključnih referenc sodobne ekološke in okoljske umetnosti, filozofa Timothyja Mortona. Na podlagi analize konkretnih del Tomšič v zaključnem delu trdim, da je mogoče ekološke aspekte njenega dela locirati ne le v fokusu na prostoru in krajini, ampak zlasti v tem, kakšno mesto prostoru, kraju ali krajini pripade v pripovedi.

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Abstract

The article proposes a way of ecologising the analytical lens for environmental site-specific artworks by responding more closely to the conditions of their sites. It emerges from the observation that environmental art is often evaluated primarily through the lens of impact, particularly in cultural policy and everyday criticism, thereby reinforcing quantitative evaluative frameworks. The article first critically examines this tendency by mapping two evaluative oppositions, aestheticist and solutionist. The former responds to the idea of art's intrinsic value, while the latter emphasises its instrumental value. Both, however, tend to separate the artwork from its site. In response, the article proposes an arboreal analysis, inspired by Manuela Infante's plant-based dramaturgy and developed through an analysis of Neja Tomšič's storytelling walk, *Untangling a Garden III*, part of a long-term research on Rafutski Park. Through three analytical categories, rooting, branching and entangling, the approach understands the artwork as deeply conditioned by and intertwined with its site, thereby challenging the dualistic division between artwork and environment as well as drawing on Donna Haraway's concept of *natureculture*. The arboreal analysis raises the question of the mobility or transportability of site-specific works through the lens of commodification, highlighting it as a key category for understanding the complex ecological and production conditions in which the artworks operate today.

Keywords: arboreal analysis, Neja Tomšič, Rafutski Park, *Untangling a Garden III*, instrumentalisation, commodification

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Arboreal Analysis: Towards a Site-Responsive Approach in Analysing Site-Specific Art

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1 Introduction

Surrounded by more than 1,100 trees, even a brief wander through a relatively modest area of Rafutski Park, lying on the national border, gives the impression of having walked much further and encountered evidence of diverse imprints from the world.[1] Gathering species rarely found in its proximity, if found at all, the park is a place of rare ecological crossroads. To be situated in such a space through an artistic practice, in this case, through an experience of a storytelling walk, *Untangling a Garden III* by Neja Tomšič, felt like collapsing into the overlap of multiple time scales and lived experiences, developing a dependency on presences that emerged. As the walk is structured by a prologue and seven stories, each of them centring on one of the tree species in the park, the experience of the sense of being bound to the site unfolded through spending time in the park and immersing oneself in the narrated relationships between humans and trees, creating a format that resists an easy identification as an autonomous artwork. Which analytical framework could be used to analyse the situatedness of this work, which merges realities and immerses the audience in the park?

Sharing an interest with multiple contributors for this issue on the intersection of performing arts and ecology, and being deeply inspired by such artistic practices, I started to notice, also through the discussions with colleagues, a growing frustration with an internalised tendency for connecting cultural production on climate change in a utilitarian manner that is strongly moralised. Through the discussions with my partner Arne, to whom this contribution owes a lot, I became aware of a trend in my thinking toward narrowing artistic practices by positively valuing certain artistic strategies (such as slowness, intimacy, site-specificity) or concepts from environmental humanities (for example, entanglements, care, nonhuman agency) and uncritically connecting them to the idea of a *better* and more sustainable

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future. Importantly, directly translating the artistic strategies into environmental impact lacks a framework to complexify the reality of art and artistic production by acknowledging and reflecting the limitations of art, especially institutional art, which is bound to overproduction, to the demand for innovation and enclosed within its own circle.

This contribution consists of two parts. The first focuses on the evaluation of environmental art, reflecting on the personal tendency of arguing for an ecological or societal impact of artworks by rapid, overly comprehensive, sometimes even hollow connections between artistic strategies and societal and ecological issues, and critically evaluating the measure of the impact which sometimes emerges when analysing the artworks through the ecological perspective. The second part turns to the analysis. By proposing an ecologised lens for understanding how artworks operate, it aims to outline a framework that may offer evaluative criteria beyond the notion of impact. It examines the aforementioned artistic experience of Neja Tomšič's *Untangling a Garden III* and, through this case study, reflects on mutual dependency between the site and the artwork as a way to move beyond impact-based evaluation and toward a relational understanding of environmental art. It explores the potential of an analytical response to site-specificity, one that also responds to the natural environment of the work, to understand the artwork as a sprout or emergence from the environment rather than solely from human creativity. The last part aims to critically reflect on this proposal by situating it within broader tendencies toward the production of experiences in contemporary artistic practices, particularly in a sociopolitical context in which the service economy accounts for a large share of economic activity, and so the market logic tends to reduce such practices to commodities.

2 Evaluating Environmental Art and Arboreal Analysis

As environmental art emerges from engagements with natural environments, natural materials or ecological concerns, it is necessarily entangled with realities beyond the sphere of art and always challenges the idea of artistic autonomy. In the following section, I will briefly sketch a few highly simplified stances for evaluating art and its relationship to its broader context to highlight the underlying assumptions and evaluative criteria that inform each position and to critically reflect on thinking art through the notion of impact. Afterwards, I will focus on the selected case study to articulate a possibility for critically evaluating environmental art beyond a direct or applicable solution outside the sphere of art.

2.1 Beyond Impact as a Measure

While art remains intertwined with society, the idea of art as autonomous, representing one end of the spectrum of artistic autonomy and its social function, emerged alongside the division of manual and intellectual labour (Stakemeier 14). This shift toward the primacy of the aesthetic experience culminated in the bourgeois society, in a stance promoted by the 19th-century idea of *l'art pour l'art*. As Kerstin Stakemeier writes, "in order to not ideologically collide with the former religious or feudal use values of the artworks the artworks' early bourgeois acclamations had to render them purposeless, free from any applied function – ultimately *aesthetic*" (14). This radically aestheticist perspective (which has changed over the centuries, so it is important to acknowledge that it is simplified in this text in order to remain within its scope) thus insists on the autonomy of art and its independence from any external purposes. It promotes the idea that art is not subordinated to any political or practical goals and restricts the evaluative judgement to the work's aesthetic and experiential properties, resisting any criteria that are not immanent to the work itself.

Critical responses to environmental artworks, however, often seem to apply ethical, political or practical judgements through objections such as that the works are *preaching to the choir* or moralising or through a critique that they fail to provide any concrete solution. All these comments are rooted in the other end of the spectrum, in a solution-oriented view of art that prioritises the novelty of the ideas it produces. In this solutionist approach, art is seen as a means to achieve something beyond its own sphere. In such a position, there is, as we can see in the European cultural policy (see the report *State of Culture* from 2024 by Culture Action Europe), but also in the earlier cultural policies from the second half of the 20th century, a risk in creating and legitimising a framework which imposes an evaluating structure of impact on the artwork. It reduces artistic practice to the spectrum from failure to success, making it reasonable to dismiss art as a public good based on its potential failure to fulfil political goals of improving social welfare. Or, as Belfiore notes, it supports "the belief that since the arts are made possible by the commitment made by society through public spending, it is to be expected that they should have clear responsibilities towards the society that maintains them alive" (21).

From the solutionist perspective, the works should provide a better understanding of climate change, function as a medium to make ecological threats perceptible, as one of the means of informing audiences, as an amplifier of awareness about it, or as the initiators of a change. Here, art has the potential to change *our* consciousness with a belief that this will cause a mobilisation to move *us* closer to, for example, an end of extractivist and destructive practices. This perspective aligns with some of the trends in the environmental humanities. While the authors resist reducing art to its

impact and do not call for the transformation of the whole of artistic production, they nonetheless argue for the recognition of art's importance by locating the possibility of transformation in changes to the predominant imaginaries. They frame art as one of the key mobilisers for such change. This is captured, for example, in the quote "[h]ow we live in the world is contingent upon how we imagine that world to be" (Neimanis and Loewen Walker 563).

In the scholarship on the topic of ecology and performing arts, we can follow this already in one of the earliest cornerstones, in Una Chaudhuri's "'There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake': Toward an Ecological Theater" from 1994, where the author writes about the theatre as a place for "a much-needed ecological consciousness" (28). This argument resonates with much of a contemporary theory where theatre continues to be understood as an active site of ecological thought. For example, in an ecocritical study of the American theatre in the 20th century, *Earth Matters on Stage: Ecology and Environment in American Theatre*, from 2021, professor of theatre, Theresa J. May, understands theatre as a place of social change (3), which takes Chaudhuri's argument even a step further. May sees theatre as "a practice of collaborative imagination and collective conjuring" (4) that can transform our collective consciousness and therefore "intervene in the large master narratives that have helped perpetuate environmental injustice" (4). While these examples raise the question of what art can do in the face of ecological catastrophe, arguing that change is necessary and can occur within the sphere of art as a public good, they also seem to overstate the transformative power of art by making connections on the symbolic level and lacking material grounding.

These two extremes, the aestheticist and the solutionist perspectives, correspond to the two opposite ways of valuing art, namely, for its instrumental value on the one hand, and for its intrinsic value on the other. If generalising, instrumental value is more often promoted in the sphere of cultural policy and funding bodies (for a critical analysis of "hyperinstrumentalism" see the article by Steven Hadley and Clive Gray or the one by Eleonora Belfiore), while the intrinsic value is often more strongly reflected upon in the field of philosophy, art and art theory. It is important to note, however, that these approaches are often combined in more complex ways and vary greatly in terms of the specificity and context of the work.

I would like to propose that both the solutionist and the aestheticist perspectives are produced on the binary opposition of art and its environment. While the aestheticist approach tends to simplify the environment by subordinating it to aesthetic concerns, positioning it as a passive backdrop, the solutionist perspective risks reducing both art to its external outcomes and the environment to something given and universal. In the following section, I focus on the storytelling walk *Untangling a Garden III*. I aim to propose an analytical framework that responds to the park, which is both the site

of the artwork and the focus of the research, to embed the analysis in a non-dualistic view of *natureculture* (Donna Haraway) and thus recognise the reciprocity between art and the environment in which it occurs. The proposal to make it necessary to respond to the work's locality can already be traced back to a call by Una Chaudhuri from the same text as quoted above. Namely, the author calls to "join ecological concerns with the protocols of 'site-specific' theatre" to "directly engage the actual ecological problems of particular environments" (24). This deeply resonates with the following proposal to analyse artistic practices as situated practices shaped by the specificities of the environments in and with which they work.

2.2 Case Study: *Untangling a Garden III*

In the storytelling walk, *Untangling a Garden III*, which premièred in September 2025 in a production by Glej Theatre and the European Capital of Culture GO! 2025 Nova Gorica–Gorizia, I had the opportunity to accompany a part of the process as a dramaturg, thus my analysis stems from quite a deep engagement with the work and with the creators. However, the following categories for analysis emerged only retrospectively, as a way of reflecting on the project. They were not used during the creative process.

The author of the artistic research on Rafutski Park, *Untangling a Garden,* Neja Tomšič, has a background in visual arts. Her practice is research-based, stemming from the intersection of writing, storytelling, drawing, ritual creation and performance. It is structured around long-term projects with multiple, diverse public iterations to tackle the investigated phenomena. She has been working intensively in the field of performing arts since her 2017 project, *Opium Clippers*, and is one of the leading representatives of performing arts research in the Slovenian context. The focus of her work is often shaped through the examination of a space, an approach central also to the present project, which is part of this longer research project. Tomšič is also a member of the Nonument Group, which focuses on the study of public spaces.

The project on Rafutski Park started in 2020 and is, as we can read on Tomšič's website:

> interweaving stories from its history with its botany, and unravelling the imagination related to the park, as well as to the intense period of exchanges between Slovenia and Egypt at the turn of the 20th century and in the first half of the 20th century. The starting point of the research is the botanical archaeology of the park, i.e. the historical, cultural, mythological and symbolic aspects of plants. The project links them with historical and social changes [...] but above all, it seeks to outline the rich and complex lives of plants through research, performance and community events in Rafutski Park.

Up till now, the project has had multiple iterations, including the planting of Solkan radicchio, a sound installation, a performance-in-progress presented in Cukrarna Gallery in Ljubljana, where Tomšič was mapping the site's architecture and linking it with plants brought from Slovenia to Alexandria, and a geo-located audio walk for Rafutski Park. An event of a similar format to *Untangling a Garden III* already took place in autumn 2024, when Tomšič invited seven collaborators with diverse backgrounds to participate as storytellers and to prepare a story stemming from one of the park's trees. For the present format, we continued to work with the same stories, composed by Ana Čavić, Maja Čehovin Korsika, Ana Duša, Rok Kušlan, Katarina Nahtigal, Katja Šulc, Neja Tomšič, Silvia Viviani and, additionally, with the vocal group Ardeo that performed and sang vocal compositions by Gašper Torkar.

The stories focus on seven trees, each of a different species. These trees, bamboo, cypress, magnolia, wisteria, yew, cork oak and wild cherry, serve as windows into the tangled realities that we experience in the park during the event. At the beginning, the hosts gather the audience and lead them to the small auditorium in the park. Here, on the stairs in the auditorium, Neja Tomšič awaits. She contextualises one of the earliest exotic parks in today's Slovenian territory, focusing on its location and its trajectories from the moment it was bought by Anton Laščak in the first half of the 20th century. Laščak built a neo-oriental style villa. While this building remains a focal attraction in the park, Tomšič's research focuses on the park's natural environment, its trees and the fact that the park's unique microclimate nurtures species found nowhere else in Slovenia. At the end of Tomšič's narrative, the female choir Ardeo starts repetitively singing the Latin name of the first tree station, bamboo. Hearing them sing draws the audience's attention to the bamboo forest in front of the auditorium, where the singers are standing. Throughout the performance, their short compositions – each a repetitive vocal setting of the Latin name of the next tree – mark the transitions, calling the audience to move from one tree to the next. The walk is circular, so the event ends with the second visit to the auditorium, where the choir and all the storytellers perform a singing and storytelling score, gathering short passages from each story.

2.3 Arboreal Analysis

In the work, the trees are not only the topic of each narrative but agents of rooting the storytelling and anchoring the stories while also expanding our understanding of the park. The seven narratives that follow the prologue are, to different extents, collages of personal experiences, oral history, scientific and botanical facts, mythical accounts and historical material. As each narrative itself already offers more than one possible mode of grasping the reality of a tree and of the park, we are guided through several inconsistent, partial and provisional attempts to grasp the complexity of the site. The

park gradually emerges as a multilayered place, shaped by countless realities from its past, activating many different associations and interpretations.

The work's topic or content is also its site. Because of that, I propose to also inform the analysis by the site, adopting what I will refer to as an "arboreal" approach. Analyses of performances usually rely on medium-specific frameworks and performing arts categories to understand how meaning is organised. For instance, Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx's model for analysis approaches the works through the lens of dramaturgy, understanding it as a relational approach which "concerns the meaningful coherence of all theatrical means employed, of their organisation and structure in time and space, and how their interplay generates meaning and experience" (7). Their dramaturgical analysis thus foregrounds the relationships between the work, the space and the audience. The arboreal approach proposed here is deeply inspired by this relational orientation and the emphasis on the space. However, instead of adopting pre-existing dramaturgical planes, as in the above-mentioned example, the "principles of composition, modes of addressing the spectator, and ways in which a performance relates to wider social and artistic contexts" (6), the arboreal approach seeks its analytical logic in the site itself. It understands the work as an emergence from the site and thus focuses also on its process. In doing so, it borrows a structuring logic from outside the theatrical medium, from the trees, and is inspired by seeing the work as a living organism.

In thinking about this, I am inspired by a conversation on plant-based dramaturgy with Manuela Infante in the "Transmission in Motion" seminar series organised by Utrecht University in 2020, where Infante presented the strategies of structuring performance *Estado Vegetal*. She developed the plant-based procedures of deep time, ramification, morphing and branching out. As Maaike Bleeker writes about the process of creating this work, "[d]oing dramaturgy involved feeding the process with insights from plant philosophy and plant neurology, speculating on the possibilities of plant logic, analysing the potential and implications of this logic, and structuring the materials being created" (191). While Infante's work used plant-based logic in the creation of the piece, I adopt a tree logic to analyse the work by abstracting from the existence of the trees to articulate the approaches their logic suggests. Three characteristics appear particularly productive for analysing *Untangling a Garden III*: branching, entangling and rooting.

In what ways can branching, entangling and rooting operate as analytical categories to analyse a performative artwork? Branching, as a logic of something leading to multiple directions, draws attention, first, to the structure of the performance, in this case, the stationary rhythm of eight stops connected by passages of walking and singing interventions; second, to the narrative logic of each story; and third, to the connections

and relations in their content. Entangling raises the question of which relations the work acknowledges and which connections it generates. Rooting, on the other hand, asks how and where the work situates itself. Together, these three foci aim to understand the park and the trees not just as a backdrop, a scenography, a material, a performer, a medium or a theme, but as collaborators that require certain procedures to insist on the entanglement of human and nonhuman agents, of past presences and present intentions, of dispersed geographies and cosmologies. I will try to reflect on the extent to which the work *Untangling a Garden III* responds to them.

To begin with, what branches in the performance, and how? As seen in the title of the event, *Untangling a Garden III*, the iterations themselves seem to be conceived as branches of a longer project, sharing the same title and distinguished only by the order of public presentations and their position in the development of the research. The whole walk consists of particular stories and, between walks, narrative fragments and transitions. While the prologue establishes a clear and shared point of departure, the stories are, to a certain degree, independent and function as parallels, producing a dramaturgy of branching. When the storytellers and the choir gather at the end in the auditorium, they perform a score that collects short citations from each story. These repetitions do not synthesise the experience but function more as an echo that opens a moment for reflection by remembering and reassembling, a time capsule for the audience to establish and stay with their own connections.

The stories differ in perspective and draw from biology, mythology, history, geography, personal experience, literature and tradition and thus function as little branches through which the park's realities can spread. While some details refer to another story, they are quite independent or unconditioned by others. Even each particular story does not follow a linear logic of telling a story about the tree, but takes the tree as a focal point around which different aspects are woven. Travelling through the seven stations becomes a process of sedimentation, enriching the park's reality, without any intention to fully grasp it or to create a closure. Although the event is structured around storytelling stations and shaped by language, the act of walking between the selected trees, possibly associated with a procession, introduces an embodied dimension. Movement intensifies the branching of associations. The brief passages, sometimes silent, sometimes filled with conversation, allow for a sensorial encounter, each time enchanted by one more story. They create small windows for wandering.

As parks bear witness to countless individual and collective events and print them into the landscape itself, walking and being in a park itself evokes an associative engagement and modes of rest, recreation, sociality, contemplation and withdrawal. In this sense, branching not only reveals the structural logic of the performance but also reveals how the park, as an associative field, is continually activated. Besides that,

working with the park also forges connections across dispersed realities, linking us to other places and times through the stories themselves. Such a networked perspective is already a consequence of the park's own heterogeneity, as it gathers species that would rarely be found growing together.

The next aspect of the proposed arboreal lens, entangling, exposes the associative strands that stem from the site: mythological, scientific, personal and chronological attempts to grasp the trees and the environments we live with. It also strongly highlights the role of the choir that is always introducing the next stop by exposing the botanical dimension of plant classification. The choir unifies the stations into one immersive experience and intensifies the performativity of the event through its recurrent presence. By using methods of storytelling and singing, *Untangling a Garden III* foregrounds the significance of voice and language for the exchange and sharing of diverse realities. In focusing on entangling, which emphasises the collective meaning-making, it is crucial to mention the collaborative and, in a way, curatorial approach in creating this work. Tomšič invited seven collaborators to create their own stories in their own ways, alongside a choir and a composer. By contributing and "planting" their stories or compositions within the park, each participating collaborator multiplies the layers of the park.

While the analysis through branching and entangling focused primarily on procedural principles that generate an affective experience of the park's complexity, rooting foregrounds how the work is anchored to the site, in this case, emphasising its situatedness and the mutual dependence between the artwork and the park. The experience of the whole format of the storytelling walk is inseparable from the site. Most of the elements of the work, spatial organisation, dramaturgy, the light, sounds and the conceptual context, depend on the conditions of the park. In this sense, the park defines the dramaturgy of the work, demanding an immersive participation and cultivating a very embodied eye (and ear). The stories, however, remain dispersed, open-ended and exploratory, allowing the stories to continue the oral tradition of circulating and maintaining an interpretative flexibility. They are rooted in the park mainly at the level of their initial narrative framing. The trees are treated primarily as symbols, often referencing their roles in folk beliefs and connecting spiritual and mythical practices from around the world, situating them within human perception. This symbolic framing might be connected to the fact that the trees are encountered in the park and taken as parts of the park, of the human-made space, which strongly constructs and frames what we perceive as nature.

The rootedness of the research practice and of the structure of the event, marked by the intensified presence of the site and its embodied experience, contrasts with a certain uprootedness of the narratives themselves. Apart from Tomšič's prologue,

the stories could potentially be transposed to a tree of the same species elsewhere, revealing a tension between the situatedness of the format and the relative mobility of its narratives. This link between abstraction and transportability calls for a broader consideration of site-specificity in terms of the extent to which the work is tied to its site and raises the question of how site-specific works operate under contemporary ecological concerns and the instrumentalising tendencies of cultural policy. In what follows, I remain with this tension and approach it through the lens of commodification.

2.4 Site-Specificity in the Experience Economy

Site-specific art gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, as part of a broader neo-avant-garde tendency to exit spaces traditionally dedicated to art and bring art closer to life. In the 1997 article "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity", which is of crucial importance for the development of this section, Miwon Kwon shows that the resistance to commodification was among the key motivations for the move of artistic practices into natural environments or everyday spaces (86). Following Kwon, the immobility of site-specific works opposed and challenged the modernist paradigm of art as "autonomous and self-referential, and thus transportable, placeless and nomadic" (85). As they were tied to specific locations, the works resisted the logic of the "capitalist market economy, which circulates art works as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods" (86). Site-specificity thus functioned also as a strategy to disable the commodification of art.

It is worth noting that the turn to site-specificity in art coincides with and is often connected to the growth of environmental activism in the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, the site in some early site-specific works often functioned primarily as an abstract replacement for the canvas or other traditional media, and its ecological and material conditions remained unaddressed. Under contemporary ecological pressures, however, the meaning and stakes of site-specificity in natural environments shift significantly. The question of mobility, therefore, also raises a question of how a work relates to its environment, whether it commodifies the site itself, restores it, treats it primarily as an aesthetic background, exposes its vulnerabilities, or renders it interchangeable. From this perspective, the degree to which a work abstracts from its site may invite criticism for commodifying the environment from which it emerges, effectively making it exchangeable with another location. The longer exploration of this, however, lies beyond the scope of this article.

Importantly, Miwon Kwon later complicates the relationship between mobility and commodification. Observing the shifts of the conditions in which site-specificity

operates, she notes that "the site has been transformed from a physical location – grounded, fixed, actual – to a discursive vector – ungrounded, fluid, virtual" (95) and that "the art work is becoming more and more 'unhinged' from the actuality of the site" (96). As the opposition between site-specificity and commodification becomes less obvious, Kwon poses a question that crucially shapes this contribution: "what is the commodity status of anti-commodities, that is, immaterial, process-oriented, ephemeral, performative events?" (96)

Following her, the commodification of art is not solely related "to the realm of manufacturing (of things) but defined in relation to the service and management industries" (102) as experiences become valuable commodities. Kwon links this shift to the changing role of artists, in which they are produced as brands of artistic expertise, as nomadic producers across sites, and as providers of "interventionary services" (103). Kwon's contribution to understanding how site-specificity is transformed into a sought-after product within capitalism, which privileges experience and authenticity, is invaluable to the present argument. In this sense, experiential artworks in natural environments may strongly mirror and respond to the needs of contemporary capital. Site-specificity itself, when it promises direct responses to climate change, can become a value in itself for the solutionist perspective.

3 Conclusion

The examination of the work through the notion of rootedness led to the lens of commodification. Once site-specificity is situated within a system of commodification, a closer interrogation of this critical framework is required. Firstly, as Christoph Hermann writes in *The Critique of Commodification: Contours of a Post-Capitalist Society,* the term gained academic prominence in the 1970s, initially in theoretical inquiries on art, moving away from its Marxist roots (2). By non-Marxists, it was used "to criticize certain aspects of capitalism, such as the sale of goods that are not suitable for exchange on markets" but not for a "fundamental critique of capitalism" (4). Importantly, the arboreal analysis proposed here examines the work through its relationship with the site rather than treating site-specificity as a stable format or property of the work. It does not aim to critique or moralise the work's position in contemporary society, but rather traces how it operates in a commodified landscape and how it rearticulates its own use value through the relationships it establishes with the site and its participants, potentially countering or reshaping the consumerist logic.

Secondly, the proposed arboreal approach analyses the work through categories that emerge from the site itself, rather than applying pre-existing categories from art theory. Taken together, all three principles of branching, entangling and rooting

emphasise the interrelatedness of the work, the site, the audience and the authors, highlighting its embeddedness in material, social and ecological conditions. This approach seeks to move beyond the dualistic framing of art and environment, which risks either simplifying the artwork or reducing the environment's complexity. It emerges as a critical response to the solutionist mode of evaluation that often dominates discussions of environmental art, where artworks are framed primarily as responses to ecological concerns.

Situating the analysis itself in the location of the performance aims to prolong the agency of the environments that helped shape the experience. However, these categories of entangling, branching and rooting introduce a level of abstraction. Much like the stories, this analytical lens abstracts from the trees and translates their logic into conceptual terms. While it draws on relations in the environment, it risks using them as generalised metaphors and simplifying the specificity and singularity of the trees and the site in order to focus on the artwork in isolation. Nevertheless, this methodological mobility, which is similar to the pre-existing categories in artistic analyses, is, to a certain extent, important as it might prove useful for analysing other works if it remains attentive to what is lost. Its value does not lie in capturing the complexity of ecological processes themselves but in drawing attention to them.

To conclude, *Untangling a Garden III* navigates multiple, interwoven tensions that demand attention in their complexity, resisting any simplistic judgement that simply affirms or criticises the work. They reveal the complexities that contemporary artistic practices navigate. For example, on the one hand, the work was produced within the framework of the European Capital of Culture programme, which often serves touristic and municipal agendas to increase the value of urban places. On the other hand, the work was researched and situated in the park, the significance of which exceeds mere cultural branding. These seemingly opposing dynamics collectively shape the work's meaning. Ultimately, the arboreal analysis aims to lay out a field for attending to how works navigate between institutional frameworks, ecological realities and the unpredictability of a site, showing that the return to paradise, to the Garden of Eden, is impossible because the very idea of paradise is different. Nature as such, as Timothy Morton wrote, does not exist (1).

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Povzetek

Prispevek predlaga način za ekologizacijo analize prostorsko specifičnih okoljskih umetniških del z vključevanjem realnosti njihovih lokacij. Izhaja iz opažanja, da je okoljska umetnost pogosto vrednotena predvsem skozi prizmo učinka, zlasti v kulturnih politikah in javnih debatah, kar omogoča kvantitativne okvire vrednotenja. Članek to tendenco najprej kritično reflektira z mapiranjem dveh vrednotenjskih opozicij: esteticistične in solucionistične. Prva izhaja iz ideje o intrinzični vrednosti umetnosti, druga poudarja njeno instrumentalno vrednost, obe pa umetniško delo praviloma ločujeta od njegovega okolja. Kot odgovor članek predlaga arboristično analizo, navdihnjeno z rastlinsko dramaturgijo Manuele Infante in razvito skozi analizo pripovedovalskega sprehoda Razpletanje vrta III Neje Tomšič, enega od delov daljše raziskave o Rafutskem parku. S pomočjo treh analitičnih kategorij, razvejanja, ukoreninjenja in prepletanja, arboristična analiza umetniško delo razume kot neločljivo prepleteno in močno pogojeno z lokacijo. S tem se odmika od dualistične delitve med umetniškim delom in okoljem ter se opira na koncept natureculture, ki ga je uvedla Donna Haraway. Arboristična analiza hkrati odpre vprašanje mobilnosti oziroma prenosljivosti prostorsko specifičnih del skozi prizmo komodifikacije, ki se izkaže kot pomembna kategorija za razumevanje kompleksnih ekoloških in produkcijskih pogojev, v katerih umetniška dela delujejo danes.

Ključne besede: arboristična analiza, Neja Tomšič, Rafutski park, Razpletanje vrta III, instrumentalizacija, komodifikacija

Tery Žeželj (1995) je zaključila magistrski program Contemporary Theatre, Dance, and Dramaturgy na Univerzi v Utrechtu. Med študijem je opravljala prakso v Framer Framed v Amsterdamu in pri projektu Andreje Božić in Julie Willms *How to exit a reality (Attempt 1 of 19)*. Po študiju je bila samozaposlena v kulturi. Od leta 2023 je članica umetniškega sveta Gledališča Glej. Trenutno je zaposlena kot mlada raziskovalka na Univerzi v Novi Gorici, kjer raziskuje avantgardno umetnost socialistične Jugoslavije preko perspektive vode.

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Arboristična analiza: o prostorsko odzivnem pristopu k analizi prostorsko specifične umetnosti

Tery Žeželj
Raziskovalni center za humanistiko, Univerza v Novi Gorici

Prispevek je sestavljen iz dveh delov. Prvi reflektira osebno težnjo po zagovarjanju ekološkega ali družbenega vpliva umetniških del s hitrimi, pretirano obsežnimi, včasih celo praznimi povezavami med umetniškimi strategijami ter družbenimi in ekološkimi vprašanji in kritično ovrednoti kategorijo vpliva (*impact*), ki je včasih vgrajena v ekološko lečo za analizo umetniških del. Drugi del se osredotoča na delo *Razpletanje vrta III* Neje Tomšič in predlaga model analize okoljske umetnosti, ki se osredotoča na medsebojno odvisnost med lokacijo in delom. S tem želi ponuditi okvir, ki presega vprašanje merljivega vpliva. Raziskuje potencial analitičnega pristopa, ki se odziva tudi na naravno okolje dela, in sicer kot način razumevanja umetniškega dela kot nečesa, kar vznikne in je do neke mere posledica okolja.

Če poenostavimo, sta skrajnosti na spektru razumevanja umetnosti esteticistični pristop, ki vztraja pri avtonomiji umetnosti in njeni neodvisnosti od kakršnihkoli zunanjih ciljev ter se osredotoča na intrinzično vrednost umetnosti, in solucionistični pristop, pri katerem je umetnost razumljena kot sredstvo za doseganje nečesa zunaj lastne sfere, s čimer poudarja instrumentalno vrednost umetnosti. Okoljska umetnost, ki vedno nastane v srečanju z naravnimi okolji, naravnimi materiali ali ekološkimi vprašanji, je nujno prepletena z realnostmi onkraj sfere umetnosti in vedno presega idejo umetniške avtonomije. Zato je pogosto reflektirana skozi solucionistično vrednotenje. Ta pristop umetniško prakso reducira na spekter od neuspeha do uspeha, s čimer omogoča zavračanje umetnosti kot javnega dobrega na podlagi njenega morebitnega neuspeha pri izpolnjevanju političnih ciljev za izboljšavo družbene blaginje.

Članek predlaga, da tako solucionistična kot esteticistična perspektiva nastajata na binarni opoziciji med umetnostjo in njenim okoljem. Kot odgovor na to prispevek predlaga arboristično analizo, ki gradi iz koncepta *natureculture* Donne Haraway in tako prepoznava recipročnost med umetnostjo in okoljem, v katerem se dogaja.

Analize uprizoritvenih umetnosti se običajno opirajo na medijsko specifične okvire in umetnostne kategorije, da bi razumeli, kako je organiziran pomen. Arboristični pristop, predlagan tukaj, je globoko navdihnjen z relacijsko usmeritvijo in poudarkom na prostoru, za kar gre pri analitičnem modelu Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink in Sigrid Merx, svojo analitično logiko pa išče v sami lokaciji. Analitične kategorije si izposodi zunaj gledališkega medija, pri drevesih. Pri tem se navdihuje pri pogovoru o rastlinski dramaturgiji z Manuelo Infante v seriji seminarjev *Transmission in Motion*, ki jih je leta 2020 organizirala Univerza v Utrechtu. Tu je Infante predstavila strategije strukturiranja performansa *Estado Vegetal*. Razvila je rastlinske postopke globokega časa, razvejanja, morfiranja in razraščanja. Pri abstrahiranju drevesne logike se kot posebej produktivne za analizo dela *Razpletanje vrta III* izpostavijo tri kategorije: razvejanje, prepletanje in ukoreninjanje.

Medtem ko se analiza skozi razvejanje in prepletanje osredotoča predvsem na strukturne načine, ki generirajo afektivno izkušnjo kompleksnosti parka, ukoreninjanje izpostavlja zasidranost dela v lokaciji in reflektira njegovo umeščenost ter medsebojno odvisnost med umetniškim delom in parkom v našem primeru. Izkušnja celotnega pripovedovalskega sprehoda je neločljiva od lokacije. Kljub temu pa se pojavi zanimiva napetost med ukoreninjenostjo celotne raziskovalne prakse in strukturo dogodka (okrepljena prisotnost lokacije, njena telesna izkušnja) na eni strani ter določeno izkoreninjenostjo samih pripovedi na drugi, kar odpira vprašanje, koliko park deluje bodisi kot pogoj bodisi kot prazno mesto.

V času ekoloških kriz se namreč pomen in vloga prostorske specifičnosti, zlasti v naravnih okoljih, drastično spreminjata. Danes takšne prakse odpirajo drugačna vprašanja kot na svojih začetkih v sedemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja, namreč vprašanje o tem, kako se delo nanaša na svoje okolje, ali komodificira samo lokacijo, jo skuša obnoviti, jo obravnava predvsem kot estetski vir, razkriva njene ranljivosti ali jo naredi zamenljivo. Posledično vezanosti ni mogoče razumeti zgolj v formalnih terminih, temveč se dotika vprašanja vsebine, torej koliko sta realnost in ranljivost okolja integralni del pomena dela. Preučevanje dela skozi pojem ukoreninjenosti tako vodi do leče komodifikacije kot pomembne plasti arborealne analize, ki kljub svoji široki kompleksnosti ponuja bolj niansirano vrednotenje umeščenosti umetniškega dela. Cilj arboristične analize ni kritizirati položaja dela v sodobni družbi ali ga moralizirati, temveč slediti, kako deluje v komodificirani krajini in na novo opredeljuje lastno uporabno vrednost z zahtevo po trajnem odnosu z lokacijo ter tako nasprotuje potrošniški logiki.

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Abstract

This paper examines Jatun Risba and Franco G. Livera's four-act art film series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* (2022–2023) and its associated transdisciplinary Live Art screening events, *Poetics of Relation*, to explore how performance-based methodologies can reshape the aesthetics, formats and materiality of film production and representation. As the project's author, co-director and performer, Risba investigates how immersive, unpredictable and tactile encounters with more-than-human entanglements during the filmmaking process – undertaken without scripts, production crews or budgets – can generate instinctive, ad hoc configurations of subjectivity that re-enchant both the creative work and the world it engages. This approach offers a potent, transformative remedy to the limited foresight characteristic of the current Anthropocene (Capitalocene) era.

Filmed across different seasons within the same natural reserve, the films capture the biosphere's circular rhythms and transformations. This approach underscores the significance of embodied, place-based knowledge and highlights the interdependence between human and nonhuman agents as they navigate the ever-changing tapestry of life. By integrating Édouard Glissant's concept of Relation, the project fosters emergent, rhizomatic communities that embrace multiplicity and opacity, challenging dominant narratives and enabling novel modes of cocreation and coexistence.

Contributing to discourses on new materialism, eco-aesthetics and relational art, the author argues that performative, collaborative approaches can cultivate ecological awareness and foster more inclusive, participatory and decentralised forms of art production, community engagement and collective world-making.

Keywords: vital materiality, new materialism, posthumanism, performative filmmaking, more-than-human ecologies, relational art

Jatun Risba (they) is a migrant transdisciplinary artist from Slovenia whose work engages ecofeminist and posthumanist discourses through performance and intermedia art. Their practice cultivates interspecies reciprocity by awakening sensory awareness via Buddhist practices and experimental uses of technology. They hold a BA (Hons) from NABA, Milan, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Art & Science from Central Saint Martins – UAL. Risba's work has been presented internationally across Europe, as well as in South Korea, Singapore, Iran and the United States. Their texts have appeared in numerous online and print publications, including *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture* and *Body, Space & Technology Journal.*

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Vital Materiality in the Art Film Series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain*

Jatun Risba

A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain is a series of four experimental feature-length art films produced between 2022 and 2023 by artists Jatun Risba (SI) and Franco G. Livera (IT). The filming location for all the films was Lijak Natural Park near Nova Gorica, Slovenia – a landscape shaped by an intermittent karst spring that feeds Lijak Creek, which remains dry for much of the year yet can release sudden torrents after heavy rainfall. The site lies close to the Soča Valley, a mountainous region that served as the Isonzo Front during World War I, where an estimated 1.7 million soldiers lost their lives.

Livera's grandfather was among the Italian soldiers sent to this front and was one of the few who returned alive. This personal history opens a cross-temporal vortex into which the authors deliberately immersed themselves, confronting and transforming the traces of transgenerational, war-related trauma inscribed in this politically contested terrain – a region that hosted the first cross-border European Capital of Culture, GO! 2025 Nova Gorica–Gorizia.

The shooting of the first film began in spring 2022, in a world still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, after an initial visit to the site. With no intention of starting a film project – without a screenplay, budget or crew – it emerged instead as an instinctive creative drive in response to a subtle pulsation, a quiet yet tangible solicitation dripping directly from the land. At least, this is how I retrospectively interpret the beginnings of an ambitious, time and energy-consuming project that had no rationale or agenda for coming into being.

Rather than following a fixed plan, the project unfolded as both a process-based exploration of the karst landscape and its subterranean processes and as a practice of rewilding. In contrast to the regimented, militarised training imposed on soldiers, our daily preparation for filming unfolded as exercises in listening and haptic attunement – practised through proximity, vulnerability and wonder. It was an exposé of the harsh, yet at times enchanted condition of moving through an untamed terrain that we did not seek to control but rather to embrace and correspond with fully.


Numero d'ordine 5962

Il Presidente della Repubblica
Capo dell'Ordine di "Vittorio Veneto"

su proposta del Ministro per la Difesa
con Decreto in data 31.05.1971
ha conferito l'onorificenza di
Cavaliere
dell'Ordine di Vittorio Veneto
al Sig. GALUZZI ANGELO
ai sensi dell'art. 4 della legge 18 marzo 1968 n. 263 per riconosciuti meriti combattentistici, con facoltà di fregiarsi della relativo insegna

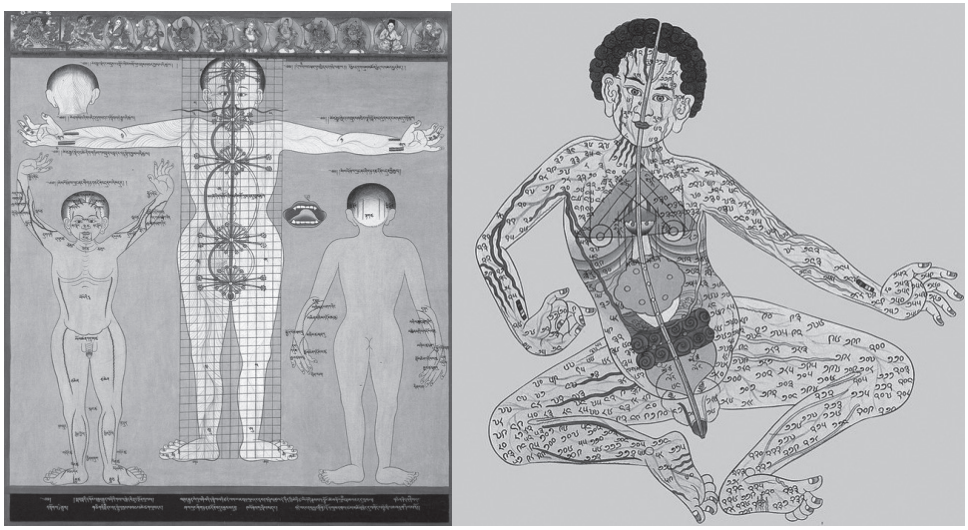
Roma, li 31.05.1971

Il Presidente
del Consiglio dell'Ordine

Mystical, Philosophical and Scientific Reflections on the Work's *Modus Operandi*

The centrality of water and its drifting quality in the work can be read as an expression of the *oceanic self*, regulated by and attuned to the pulsatile movements of the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) – the liquid matrix, very similar to seawater, that envelops and nourishes the central nervous system. While neuroscience acknowledges CSF as crucial for brain development, signalling and waste clearance, physician–researcher Mauro Zappaterra advances a more radical proposition: that CSF is the vessel of consciousness itself.

Informed by ancient systems of knowledge, this perspective reframes CSF as more than a physiological substrate: it becomes a living interface between body and mind, a fluid medium of awareness. Yogic and tantric practices, such as pranayama (yogic breathing), kundalini/tummo (inner-fire techniques) and phowa (the transfer of consciousness at death), map a subtle anatomy of the body, in which channels (*nāḍīs* in Sanskrit; *rtsa* in Tibetan), winds (*prāṇa*/*rlung*) and drops (*bindu*/*thigle*) circulate. Through these circuits, inner fluids and energies are said to regulate perception, vitality, heat and states of consciousness.



Such esoteric traditions conceptualise consciousness as circulation – flowing through networks of energy and fluids rather than being confined to neural tissue. This perspective resonates with contemporary understandings of endogenous psychoactive substances: unlike exogenous compounds introduced through ingestion or injection, endogenous molecules such as DMT, endorphins and cannabinoids are synthesised within the body and modulate perception and consciousness from within. In this light, ancient somatic practices anticipated what Romain Rolland termed the *oceanic feeling*, later theorised by Freud as a state of ego-dissolution and a sensed interconnectedness with the cosmos.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that consciousness may arise not only from neural activity but also from the movements of endogenous psychoactive compounds and physiological fluids throughout the body. Recent studies of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) further imply that the self is not a bounded, isolated entity but a fluid, relational process. Approached in this way, consciousness is not merely housed in the brain but circulates, modulates and may even emerge from within its liquid milieu.

Drawing on my more than a decade-long exploration of human consciousness and subtle anatomy, these ideas and practices found their way into the series, permeating both its material and conceptual debris. The unpredictability of what awaited at the location – insects, rain, slippery surfaces, cold weather – foregrounded the vital materiality of moving through and with the wilderness more than any premeditated creative impetus. These atmospheric conditions decisively shaped the artistic process, framing the film through notions of horizontality between different subjectivities. Thus, the film's dramaturgy unfolded through porous exchanges between human bodily fluids (sweat, urine, saliva, blood), external waters and nonhuman actors responding to the ever-shifting rhythms and forces of the ecosystem.

How to Listen to the Multiplicity of Voices that Do Not Express through Language?

The decision to forego verbal communication enabled the development of posthuman narratives and pluralistic storytelling techniques, shaped by a multitude of encounters with other-than-human entities and influences. Verbal language was used only in the trailers, where it serves to contextualise the anarchic, multispecies fabulation of the series – and even then, it is mediated through the language and tempo of poetry.



Watch the Act 1 (spring) trailer:
https://vimeo.com/jatunrisba/act1ashholder

The spring act, *Ash Holder*, draws inspiration from a tale connected to the site about a Roma family fleeing persecution along the riverbank, tragically losing their children along the way. Forced to survive on their own, they grew up feral. This legend informed the qualia of my soma, leading me to explore how a mythos of political persecution, exile and abandonment affects my behaviour and interaction with the place. The persona the camera follows or captures is an opaque entity whose personhood remains vague and shape-shifting. Who is this being? How did they arrive in this land? What is their story? By excluding linguistic communication from the film, the human other becomes a mirror-like surface onto which the audience can easily project whatever they want or need to. The fact that they possess a female body enhances their porosity. It increases the number of meanings they are able to convey and evoke, both historically and transcontextually.

The autumn act *Salamandra, Salamandra, Salamandra*, continued this inquiry into pre- and posthuman sensitivity. In most scenes, the character wears a military shirt or jacket, black leggings, and work boots, yet their history and storyline remain unclear. What are they doing alone in the woods? Are they a lost soldier or a deserter who abandoned society to await the end of the war? At crucial moments, this figure transforms into a numinous presence akin to a dakini. Dakinis are wrathful female spirits or practitioners in Tibetan Buddhism, often regarded as messengers between worlds and forces of transformation. In other sequences, the same figure mutates into insect-like apparitions, revealing the fluidity of the self in relation to its surrounding environment.



Watch the Act 3 (autumn) trailer:
https://vimeo.com/jatunrisba/act3salamandra

In the winter act, *Snowdrop*, the human character takes on the role of a sniper with a fragmented, multiple personality. At times, they are rigorously alert and disciplined; at others, they exhibit a childlike presence and behaviour. The character's inner turbulence is expressed through two distinct dance sequences. By day, a contemplative, almost meditative dance unfolds near a natural water reservoir. In contrast, at night, in the film's final scene, a tarantata-like dance erupts. Its wild, compulsive and disoriented movements express a descent into distress and madness – of the character, or of humanity itself? – while drawing on the South Italian tradition of *tarantism,* a self-healing ritual practised in a patriarchal society marked by sexual violence and profound economic and gender inequalities. The two dances operate as somatic strategies through which the suffering human other externalises inner turmoil and transmutes it into embodied transformation.



Watch the Act 4 (winter) trailer:
https://vimeo.com/jatunrisba/act4snowdrop

The film that completed the project's seasonal cycle, *Dren: Devil's Tree,* was shot in August 2023. Filming coincided with the most devastating floods in Slovenia in more than a century, turning the work into a pertinent historical document of global climate upheaval. It is the only film to feature a guest performer – the English live artist O. Pen Be. The transgenerational duo, clad in white military camouflage gowns that lent them an ethereal, sorcerer-like presence, responded to the sudden rise of the waters with performative rites intended to pacify the agitated spirits and guardians of the land, invoking their attention and blessing.



Watch the Act 2 (summer) trailer:
https://vimeo.com/jatunrisba/act2dren

On the Other Side of the Self: Practising Contiguity

A paradigm shift explored both in the filming process and in the development of the *Poetics of Relation* collaborative screening events – with live music and performances – concerns a move away from the notion of a fixed, autonomous self toward an understanding of subjectivity as fluid and interdependent. In this perspective, the self emerges through processes of relation and contiguity: it arises within the currents of an omnipresent becoming, flowing through and connecting the entire web of life.

During the making of the films in particular, atmospheric and elemental forces – such as temperature, moisture, stones and wind – became visible and influential partners in the creative process. Rather than acting as a neutral background, these forces operated through a condition of contiguity with the filming duo and the recording apparatus. For example, the mechanical eye of the GoPro camera was immersed in the running creek, revealing an underwater, elemental world normally invisible to the human eye. At other times, it was mounted on the head, tracing the precarious, unsteady movements of walking barefoot across a pebble-strewn terrain. In short, such environmental conditions required acknowledgment and dialogue rather than control. The resulting grassroots approach to filmmaking generated an aesthetic and a worldview that evoke something primordial and ancient, allowing the subconscious mind to surface and articulate its spontaneous, organic connections with the surrounding world.

Why is working from such a grounded, unmediated state of humanness meaningful? Moreover, is it meaningful at all? This mode of practice is somehow related to processes of becoming familiar with one's own mind and resonates with meditation practices centred on observing inner movements – thoughts, emotions, sensations – as they arise and pass away without attachment. In such practices, awareness develops through attentive proximity to experience: a form of inner contiguity with what unfolds moment by moment.

The silent inquiry that informed the project asked how such a process of discovery could be transferred from "the cushion" into the external world and used to explore alternative forms of relating to the environments we coexist with and depend upon. In the filming process, the "other" took the form of the environment itself – the biosphere and its nonhuman inhabitants – with whom we entered into relations of cocreation rather than observation from a distance.

In the *Poetics of Relation* events, the "other" was a human collaborator, often someone we had not worked with before. These encounters resembled a kind of blind date. As in many forms of relational exchange, not every meeting resulted in a harmonious outcome. Through this process, we learned that certain conditions are necessary: humility, openness and a genuine interest in experimentation and collaboration. Such attitudes proved essential for enabling encounters in which contiguity could unfold into productive and generative forms of collaboration.

Poetics of Relation: Rhizomatic Encounters and Emergent Co-presence

The screenings of the art film series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* were conceived within an interdisciplinary format, entitled *Poetics of Relation*. This approach enacts research-creation as a process of emergent encounter between human, nonhuman and more-than-human agents. Rooted in Édouard Glissant's understanding of Relation as a rhizomatic, non-hierarchical and opaque mode of being-with, these events generated in situ communities through a multidirectional interplay of moving image, improvised music, vocalisations, spoken word, bodily presence, performative scores and environmental agency.

Echoing the early history of cinema – when silent films were accompanied by live music and collective sensory immersion – the screenings reactivate a performative, relational *dispositif* in which meaning arises from co-presence rather than representation alone. Through the interweaving of different artistic languages and forms of expression, the format cultivates openness and curiosity toward alterity. It allows unpredictability and improvisation to be experienced not as external threats, but as intrinsic to a shared, interdependent and creatively vibrant field of becoming. Within this field, experimentation is encouraged, failure is held, and new forms of being and creating together can begin to take shape.

The first iteration of this format revealed significant challenges, not in terms of artistic quality, but in the emergence of intense relational frictions stemming from unrehearsed collaboration within newly assembled constellations of participants. These encounters functioned as a diagnostic field, immediately exposing the high levels of

emotional toxicity that permeate contemporary life, shaped by systemic precarity, psychological exhaustion, addiction and widespread mental health struggles. What initially appeared as "failure" thus became a crucial epistemic moment: a manifestation of unresolved collective wounds surfacing through the very conditions of openness, co-presence and fragility that the format sought to cultivate. Rather than indicating a flaw in the project's conceptual orientation, these frictions confirmed its relevance, demonstrating that the format touches precisely those layers of relational trauma and affective disconnection that are often repressed, aestheticised or rendered invisible within institutionalised cultural spaces.

Relational and dialogic modalities, grounded in reciprocity, non-hierarchical exchange and mutual exposure, remain unevenly distributed and insufficiently practised within contemporary societies. Consequently, they are not easily accommodated by dominant artistic infrastructures, ideological frameworks and institutional logics that privilege authorship, control, techno-determined predictability and extractive modes of value production. Such environments tend to marginalise processes that rely on indeterminacy, shared vulnerability and collective attunement.

Engaging in a poetics of relation, therefore, requires cultivating humility, embracing not-knowing and suspending mastery – dispositions that many contemporary subjects, including artists, find challenging to inhabit in contexts defined by competition, acceleration and relentless self-optimisation. Nevertheless, it is precisely for this reason that the continuation of open-ended, processual and co-creative formats becomes politically and ethically urgent. They offer rare spaces in which alternative modes of togetherness, care and interdependence can be rehearsed, sustained and creatively reimagined.

From the Commonwealth of Hydrojustice and Vibrant Matter to the Unity of Breath

To conclude, the art film series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* and its live screening format *Poetics of Relation* unfold as an exploration of post-anthropocentric imaginaries and narrative forms, tracing how they arise from the interdependence of all beings and their attunement to the cyclical movements of inner and outer waters. At the heart of the work stands Lijak itself, whose roaring – or at times absent – flows function as the series' true protagonist, mirroring the subtle circulations of bodily fluids and breath that regulate perception, affect and existence. The fluid aesthetics of the project are shaped by this karstic spring, offering a visual and performative articulation of hydrojustice, a concept developed by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos to propose a post-anthropocentric understanding of justice grounded in the subjectivity of water.

Within this framework, water is not conceived as a passive resource but as the elemental medium of entangled life, dissolving anthropocentric hierarchies and enabling materially situated, reciprocal relations with the more-than-human world. This aqueous ontology resonates with Jane Bennett's (*Vibrant Matter*; *Influx & Efflux*) notion of vibrant matter, in which all bodies – organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman – participate in continuous processes of influx and efflux, animation and transformation.

Together, these perspectives foreground the series' commitment to conceiving artistic practice not as a sovereign, human-centred act shaped by colonial, extractivist and capitalist legacies, but as a dynamic circulation of material agencies, affects and forces, revealing how human and nonhuman beings are codependent and continuously shaping one another.

Finally, the experimental and interdisciplinary format of the project reclaims the grace, synaesthetic interactions and sensuous intelligence of a body entangled with the land and attuned to the seasonal rhythms and atmospheres of the wild. It renders perceptible a fluid, relational self, continuously formed by exchanges of breath, moisture, sound and movement – both carried by and permeated through the currents of the biosphere and the fragile, emergent assemblages of human togetherness. In this sense, the work articulates an ethics and aesthetics of co-breathing: a practice of becoming-with that unfolds through vulnerability, resonance and the shared material conditions of planetary life.

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Povzetek

Prispevek obravnava štiridelno umetniško filmsko serijo *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* (Risba & Livera, 2022–2023) ter z njo povezane transdisciplinarne *live art* dogodke *Poetics of Relation,* in sicer z namenom raziskati, kako lahko performativne metodologije preoblikujejo estetiko, formate in materialnost filmske produkcije ter reprezentacije.

V vlogi avtorice, sorežiserke in performerke raziskujem, kako lahko imerzivna, nepredvidljiva in taktilna srečanja z več-kot-človeškimi prepletenostmi v procesu snemanja – izvedena brez scenarijev, produkcijskih ekip ali proračuna – ustvarjajo instinktivne, ad hoc konfiguracije subjektivnosti, ki lahko ponovno očarajo tako ustvarjalno delo kot svet, s katerim vstopajo v odnos. Takšen pristop ponuja močan, transformativni odgovor na omejeno, atomizirano predvidljivost, značilno za trenutno epoho antropocena (kapitalocena).

Filmi, posneti skozi različne letne čase znotraj istega naravnega rezervata, beležijo krožne ritme in transformacije biosfere. Ta pristop poudarja pomen utelešenega, na kraj vezanega znanja ter izpostavlja soodvisnost med človeškimi in nečloveškimi akterji, ki soustvarjajo nenehno spreminjajočo se tapiserijo življenja. Z vključevanjem koncepta relacije Édouarda Glissanta projekt spodbuja nastajanje emergentnih, rizomatskih skupnosti, ki sprejemajo mnogoterost in neprosojnost, izzivajo dominantne narative ter omogočajo nove načine soustvarjanja in sobivanja.

Prispevek, ki se umešča v diskurze novega materializma, ekoestetike in relacijske umetnosti, zagovarja, da lahko performativni in sodelovalni pristopi krepijo ekološko zavest ter spodbujajo bolj vključujoče, participatorne in decentralizirane oblike umetniške produkcije, družbenega angažmaja in skupnega oblikovanja sveta.

Ključne besede: živa materialnost, novi materializem, posthumanizem, performativno filmsko ustvarjanje, več-kot-človeške ekologije, relacijska umetnost

Jatun Risba (oni) je migrantska transdisciplinarna umetnica iz Slovenije, katere delo se skozi performans in intermedijsko umetnost navezuje na ekofeministične in posthumanistične diskurze. Njuna praksa spodbuja medvrstno vzajemnost z razvijanjem senzorične zaznave, podprte z budističnimi praksami in eksperimentalno rabo tehnologije. Diplomirala sta na NABA v Milanu (BA Hons) ter pridobila podiplomski certifikat iz umetnosti in znanosti na Central Saint Martins – UAL. Risbino delo je bilo predstavljeno mednarodno po Evropi ter tudi v Južni Koreji, Singapurju, Iranu in ZDA. Njuna besedila so bila objavljena v številnih spletnih in tiskanih publikacijah, med drugim v revijah *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture* in *Body, Space & Technology Journal.*

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Živa materialnost v umetniških filmih *Drevo ne pade daleč od gore*

Jatun Risba

Prispevek obravnava umetniško filmsko serijo *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* (2022–2023), ki sta jo ustvarila Jatun Risba in Franco G. Livera, ter z njo povezani performativni format projekcij *Poetics of Relation*. Projekt raziskuje, kako lahko procesualni, performativni pristopi preoblikujejo estetiko, metodologije in materialnosti filmskega ustvarjanja ter vzpostavljajo nove oblike relacijskega bivanja.

Filmi so bili posneti v Naravnem parku Lijak pri Novi Gorici, v kraškem okolju, ki ga zaznamujeta presihajoči izvir in kompleksna zgodovinska plastovitost prostora, povezana z dediščino soške fronte. Ta specifična lokacija deluje kot prostor prepleta osebnega, kolektivnega in transgeneracijskega spomina, ki ga avtorja raziskujeta skozi utelešeno *in situ* izkušnjo.

Projekt je nastal brez vnaprej določenega scenarija, proračuna ali produkcijske ekipe, kot odziv na intuitivni impulz in neposredno zaznavo okolja. Namesto nadzora ali reprezentacije se proces snemanja razvija kot praksa uglaševanja, poslušanja in soustvarjanja v dialogu z nečloveškimi akterji ter materialnimi pogoji prostora. V tem smislu projekt deluje kot raziskava kraške krajine in njenih podzemnih procesov, hkrati pa kot praksa »ponovnega podivjanja« (rewilding), ki poudarja ranljivost, odprtost in ekologijo čutov.

Osrednji teoretski okvir izhaja iz razumevanja zavesti kot tokovne, relacijske in materialne entitete. V dialogu z nevroznanostjo, somatskimi praksami ter ezoteričnimi tradicijami (npr. joga in tibetanski budizem) avtorica razvija idejo, da zavest ne izhaja zgolj iz možganske aktivnosti, temveč iz kroženja telesnih tekočin, kot je cerebrospinalna tekočina, ter endogenih psihoaktivnih snovi. Ta perspektiva odpira razumevanje subjekta kot fluidnega, poroznega in soodvisnega procesa.

Filmi opuščajo verbalni jezik in linearno naracijo ter razvijajo posthumanistične pripovedne strukture, oblikovane skozi srečanja z drugimi več-kot-človeškimi entitetami. Človeški liki ostajajo nedoločeni, transformativni in večpomenski, kar

omogoča projekcijo in identifikacijo ter hkrati razpira vprašanja identitete, spomina in pripadnosti. Posamezni filmi tematizirajo različna stanja zavesti, telesnosti in odnosa do okolja, pri čemer se prepletajo elementi mitologije, zgodovine, somatskih praks in ekološke zavesti.

Pomemben vidik projekta predstavlja tudi format *Poetics of Relation*, ki združuje filmske projekcije z živimi performansi, improvizirano glasbo in kolektivno prisotnostjo. Navdihnjen s konceptom Relacije Édouarda Glissanta, ta format vzpostavlja rizomatske, nehierarhične skupnosti, v katerih pomen nastaja s soudeležbo, improvizacijo in nepredvidljivimi interakcijami. Takšni procesi pogosto razkrivajo tudi napetosti in konflikte, ki odražajo širše družbene pogoje, kot so negotovost, izčrpanost in pomanjkanje relacijskih veščin v sodobni družbi.

Projekt se umešča v diskurze novega materializma, ekoestetike in relacijske umetnosti ter zagovarja, da umetniška praksa lahko deluje kot prostor eksperimentiranja z alternativnimi oblikami skupnosti, soodvisnosti in skrbi. S tem naslavlja potrebo po razvoju etike in estetike sobivanja, ki presega antropocentrične in ekstraktivne modele ustvarjanja.

V zaključku prispevek poudarja vlogo vode kot osrednjega materialnega in simbolnega elementa projekta. Presihajoči tokovi Lijaka odražajo notranje tokove telesnih tekočin ter širše ekološke procese, s čimer postanejo nosilci postantropocentričnega razumevanja sveta. Projekt tako artikulira prakso »skupnega dihanja« kot obliko bivanja-v-odnosu, ki temelji na ranljivosti, resonanci in medsebojni prepletenosti vseh oblik življenja.

Razprave / Articles

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Abstract

The study focuses on the transformation of traditional puppet characters within the cultural space of Central Europe, with particular attention to the Slovenian context. It analyses the ideological, aesthetic and social implications of these changes. Challenging the linear narrative of cultural evolution, the author instead highlights the loss of the carnivalesque principle – marked by grotesqueness, ambivalence and subversion – as a critical cultural shift. Through a comparative lens on the Czech Kašpárek and Slovenian figures such as Gašperček, Jurček and Pavliha, the study reveals how ideological pressures and the absence of historical continuity led to the infantilisation and neutralisation of these characters' critical potential. The text emphasises that these figures are not merely forms of entertainment but function as cultural archetypes that mediate memory, identity and resistance. Ultimately, the study argues that tradition cannot be replaced by formal construction and that aesthetic domestication is symptomatic of a deeper societal transformation.

Keywords: Central European puppetry, carnivalesque, Slovenian puppet types, trickster puppet characters, subversion and resistance, ideological domestication, cultural memory

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Decline and Emergence: Puppet Types from Tradition to Modern Reinterpretations

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Central Europe as an "Identity" Concept

Central Europe represents a conceptually ambivalent and dynamically shifting entity whose definition fluctuates between geographic localisation, historical experience and cultural-political identity. This region, shaped by the interaction of diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious communities, has for centuries existed in tension between the hegemonic powers of the West and the East. The geographic in-betweenness is also reflected in the perception and characterisation of Central Europe – a community of nations that, on the one hand, present themselves as part of the Western world, while on the other hand exhibit distinct Eastern features. These features are, in certain cultural contexts, associated with the Slavic cultural sphere, as seen in the cases of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia, or with a long history of mutual cultural influence observable even among nations such as the Hungarians and Romanians. If we were to employ a metaphorical or literary mode of expression, this expressive and cultural space could be viewed as a tension between comedy and tragedy. It is precisely within this ambiguous zone – one that defies clear genre or ideological categorisation – that what is often, though problematically, referred to as the grotesque is born. The grotesque here functions not as a fixed aesthetic term but as a dynamic field of meaning, in which irony, absurdity and existential unease engage in constant dialogue with the historical and cultural context. Within this framework, puppetry is not merely a form of folk art but serves as a significant mediating tool for ideological, social and cultural reflection – one that caricatures, identifies and portrays the characteristics of this in-between space. A key question emerges: How did puppet theatre and its central figures contribute to shaping the collective identities of small Central European nations? And to what extent can its analysis help us understand the mechanisms of cultural adaptation and resistance within constantly shifting power structures? Ultimately, how can this "grotesque" space and its uniqueness within Europe be defined?

The term "Central Europe" resists precise definition, lying at the intersection of geographic, historical-political and cultural interpretations. For centuries, this space has been characterised by the coexistence of various ethnic groups and smaller nations, whose cultural traditions and languages often stood in opposition to dominant Germanic, Romance or Uralic influences. In his essay *The Kidnapped West: The Tragedy of Central Europe*, Milan Kundera posed the question of what it means to be a small nation: "A small nation is one whose very existence may be put in question at any moment; a small nation can disappear, and it knows it. The French, the Russians, and the English have never known the doubts that haunt a small nation: Will we still be here tomorrow?" (Kundera 51)

This in-betweenness is further echoed in literature, as Kundera suggests. Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* portrays a euphoric society oblivious to its impending collapse; Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* presents feigned stupidity as the final refuge of freedom; Kafka's novels describe worlds without memory, existing outside historical time. According to Kundera, all major works of Central European literature – from the 20th century to the present – may be seen as a prolonged meditation on the possible end of European humanism. This literary reflection has given rise to a phenomenon of cultural polyphony, wherein elements of shared historical experience intersect with persistent tensions and discontinuities (Kundera 51).

Puppetry played a particular, albeit marginal, role in this process – not only entertaining but also educating and subverting. In traditional Central European puppet theatre, we find a strong tendency towards ironic and grotesque stylisation of social reality. Key characters like Kašpárek, Pimprle,[1] Kasperl or Vitéz László functioned as allegorical figures, capable of reflecting contemporary political conditions and satirising institutional hierarchies. Puppet theatre thus became a powerful tool of collective imagination, projecting national identity constructs. Its performative nature allowed protagonists to constantly shift roles, characters, languages and even gender to adapt to changing audiences or power structures. Figures such as Kašpárek or Pimprle are not merely comedic archetypes but complex metaphors for the adaptability of Central European nations in times of historical instability.

Central European puppetry shared a common repertoire of archetypal Western European figures – Punch (England), Pulcinella (Italy), Guignol (France), Kasperle (Germany) – which were then localised into specific cultural contexts: Kašpárek in the Czech lands,

1 Pimprle is a traditional figure in Czech and Moravian folk puppet theatre, often regarded as a regional counterpart to Kašpárek. The term "pimprle" derives from the German *Pimperle*, referring to a small hand puppet. In the Czech context, the character is documented as early as the 18th century, during the rise of itinerant puppeteering traditions. Pimprle appeared in both domestic and fairground performances, typically portrayed as a grotesque, often mischievous and insolent servant or jester with the licence to mock figures of authority. In the 20th century, with the institutionalisation and aestheticisation of puppet theatre, Pimprle gradually lost his subversive and playful qualities. His presence in the public sphere diminished over time, partially replaced by more modern or pedagogically oriented puppet characters. Pimprle thus exemplifies a broader cultural and aesthetic shift from a carnivalesque to a more rationalised and disciplined conception of theatre.

Paprika Jancsi and Vitéz László in Hungary, Vasilache in Romania, Matej in Belarus and Kasper/Kasperle in Germany and Austria. These characters are marked by comic violence and moral ambivalence, often adopting a burlesque tone. Cultural transfers occurred within the region, with Czech Kašpárek influencing Slovak Gašparko, while German Kasperl appeared in Austrian and South German versions. Czech influences even extended eastward, as seen in the Kharkiv-based puppet company Bi-Ve-Mar.[2] These transfers also included linguistic and cultural appropriation – for instance, the Viennese character Wenzel spoke German with a Czech accent. This "colonising" effect was especially evident in Slovenia, where Italian and German patterns, and later Czech ones, became normative.

Traces and Evolution of the Protagonist in the Process of Puppet "Colonisation" in Slovenia

In contrast to Czech, Polish, Slovak or Hungarian theatre historians, who have thoroughly mapped the itinerant puppet troupes of the 18th and 19th centuries, Slovenia still lacks a comparable account of the puppet nomads who once travelled through the Carniola region. There is little doubt that the inhabitants of this Alpine country were familiar with the phenomenon of puppet theatre and likely had opportunities to witness performances across various levels of society. For example, the Czech theatre scholar Alice Dubská (25) notes that a certain Mathias Unger from Graz travelled with his puppet troupe across Central Europe during the 18th century – from Bratislava and Moravia to (Slovenian) Carniola. Along with Leopold Unger, he performed puppet shows as early as 1765 at the castle of Prince Miklós Eszterházy in Eisenstadt, Hungary, and later in 1785 in Graz.

The oldest surviving written record of contact with puppet theatre in Slovenian territory relates to the phenomenon of family-based puppetry in the 19th and 20th centuries. Towards the end of the 19th century, marionette performances were held in the provincial town of Šentjur in the Savinja region (within historical Lower Styria), organised by members of prominent musical families such as the Ipavec and Schwab dynasties. These performances likely reflected trends common across 19th-century Europe, especially in bourgeois and artistic circles where *family puppet theatres*[3]

2 Bi-Ve-Mar was a puppet theatre company founded in Kharkiv (then Kharkov, present-day Ukraine) by visual artists Pyotr Dzhunkovsky and Vera Belorusova. Their work drew upon traditional forms of puppetry while simultaneously engaging with the modernist and avant-garde currents of interwar Eastern European culture. The company's productions were rooted in local folklore as well as the classical repertoire.For more on Bi-Ve-Mar, see Goldovsky and Raitarovskaya.

3 Family puppet theatre gained prestige due to the interest of educated and culturally active individuals and established itself primarily as a theatre for children, with a strong emphasis on educational function. This led to the creation of a new repertoire and the birth of Czech puppet dramaturgy. The first plays were written as early as the 1850s, and surviving texts are preserved in the series *Divadlo s loutkami* (*Theatre with Puppets*), published from 1887 onward. Another key factor was the involvement of academically trained visual artists. Their engagement in amateur puppetry and their influence on the industrial production of puppets contributed to the high artistic quality of Czech puppet theatre. This dominance of visual aesthetics not only enhanced its visual sophistication and modernisation but also sparked debates as to whether puppetry was more of a visual art than a theatrical one. Paradoxically, it was precisely this visual quality that helped establish puppetry as an independent and legitimate art form (Blecha 12).

enjoyed considerable popularity. The Šentjur performances were public, and the repertoire included works such as *Dr Faust* (Košutnik). Herbert Krtin describes his experience from 1889 as follows:

> I remember as far back as 1889 that puppet shows were performed in our home: *Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, Cinderella, Faithful Jerička* – but the most popular piece was *Dr Faust.* The puppets were dressed quite brilliantly by Katarina, daughter of the late Dr Gustav Ipavec. He also participated in the performances. They were held at least once a week during the winter season, from 5 to 6 in the evening. The audience consisted of children from the upper square as well as adults who were brought in. In 1898, I then created what is today's puppet theatre myself. (Košutnik)[4]

The most thorough analysis of historical Slovenian folkloric puppetry was provided in the 1950s by scholar Niko Kuret. Although primarily an ethnographic study, his research shows how puppets became part of carnival and folk traditions. His long-standing interest in the so-called cross-frame puppet, operated by a prone puppeteer, led him to formulate hypotheses about its typology, origins and cultural significance. He presented these not only in Slovenian scholarly journals but also internationally – for example, at the Congress on Traditional Puppetry in Liège in 1958. Kuret's field research ("Zanimiva oblika", 113–124), enriched with archival data and eyewitness accounts, allowed him to identify three regional centres of this puppet form in Slovenia: the Ptuj Field (Ptujsko polje), Suha Krajina and the Upper Savinja Valley (Gornja Savinjska dolina). In all cases, these were intimate forms of stage performance, typically held during weddings or community festivals. Kuret's conclusions are relevant to ethnology, theatre history and the study of ritual dramatic forms. Nevertheless, they did not directly shape the development of Slovenian puppet theatre, which – amid the flood of Central European influences – continued to search for its identity and its own traditional puppet hero.

From Subversive Grotesque to Fairy-Tale Domestication

The establishment of the first Slovenian puppet theatre in 1910 by academic painter Milan Klemenčič (1875–1957) must be understood in the context of efforts towards national cultural emancipation within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Klemenčič responded to the absence of a local puppetry tradition by drawing heavily from German and Italian artistic movements – such as Jugendstil, symbolism and the Gesamtkunstwerk – which set him apart from the otherwise Slavic-oriented Slovenian cultural projects of the time. His aesthetics were significantly shaped by figures like Paul Brann and Richard Teschner, whose productions emphasised the puppet as

4 Unless otherwise indicated, translations from Slovenian, Czech and German are the author's own.

an autonomous visual subject. Additional inspiration came from Podrecca's Teatro dei Piccoli, which merged national puppetry traditions with modern stage design. Klemenčič's theatre rejected commercial forms (i.e., Kasperlism) and focused on the cultural-educational function of puppetry through stylisation and metaphor. In his seminal 1910 production of Dr Faust, he combined visual and dramatic elements into a synthetic form of *haute théâtre*. The first attempts to adapt foreign puppetry traditions in Slovenia – particularly the works of Franz Pocci[5] – resulted in a significant shift in meaning. While the German Kasperle Larifari functioned as a satirist and disruptor of authority, his Slovenian counterpart Gašperček Larifari was infantilised and stripped of his critical potential. This led to the elimination of narrative ambivalence and the simplification of linguistic humour. Original language-based satire that parodied bureaucratic speech and preacherly diction was reduced in translation to childlike humour ("a big sausage" instead of a philosophical dream about a roast),[6] thereby erasing any ironic depth.

This transformation was driven not only by the absence of a critical puppetry tradition but also by the dominant influence of Catholic morality and cultural conservatism. The Slovenian tradition thus replicated clear gender norms: the puppet is male, the performer is male, and the story unfolds within a patriarchal framework. Unlike their European counterparts, who often question both power and gender norms, the Slovenian puppet hero was "tucked away" in the realm of childlike innocence – devoid of irony, mockery or freedom. Compared with other Central European figures of the comic servant or jester, the Slovenian jester appears never to have been granted a genuine opportunity to "put on the coat of ambiguity". His dramatic and puppet-theatre incarnations have been maintained over a long period within a relatively univocal, normatively controlled framework that minimises ambivalence, subversive potential and the capacity to destabilise dominant social and gender roles. Whereas figures such as Kašpárek or Larifari in the Czech and German contexts have gradually accumulated layers of meaning and now oscillate between popular burlesque clown, children's guide

5 Count Franz Pocci (1807–1876) is today best known within puppetry circles, although he was also a writer, painter and composer. As a "classic" of puppet theatre, he had a lasting influence on the development of professional stage performance. His influence was instrumental in enabling Joseph Leonhard Schmid to establish a puppet theatre in Munich, and Pocci himself authored the majority of plays performed there. Between the theatre's opening on 5 December 1858 and his death in 1876, he wrote 53 plays and prologues, many of which have since become part of the classical puppet repertoire. Pocci's texts are grounded in fairy-tale motifs – some inspired by the Brothers Grimm, others of his own invention – characterised by a poetic fairy-tale tone sharply contrasted with the visceral and mundane needs of his central character, Kasperl Larifari. The fusion of folk and Romantic traditions in his works created a new genre of puppet play, the derivative character of which Pocci was himself fully aware.

6 While in the original German version, Kasperl Larifari appears as a philosophical ironist who mocks not only society but also himself, this critical dimension is entirely absent in the Slovenian translation. For example, in Pocci's original play *The Magic Violin* (*Die Zaubergeige*), Kasperl says: "*Im Schlaf kommt vielleicht der Traum und bringt mir ein Kalbsbratl, nachher erwach ich gesättigt, denn das Leben ist ja doch eigentlich nur ein Traum, wie ich bereits einmal in der Komödie gesehn hab!*" ("In sleep, perhaps a dream will come and bring me a veal roast; then I'll wake up satisfied, because life is really only a dream – just as I once saw in a comedy!") (Pocci, *Die Zaubergeige* 229). In the Slovenian adaptation, this passage is replaced with the line: "In sleep, perhaps a big sausage will appear – and if you're good, I'll give it to you." This shift from philosophical satire to childlike humour clearly demonstrates the removal of the critical subtext that was central to Pocci's writing (Pocci, *Čarobne gosli* 10).

and ironic commentator on power, the Slovenian jester remains largely fixed in the position of a transparently legible buffoon. It is as if his potential "coat of ambiguity" were metaphorically locked away in the cloakroom – available as a possibility, yet systematically excluded from the repertoire of staging and reception strategies.

Cultural Conservatism and the Neutralisation of Critique: Puppet Theatre as a Mirror of Ideological Conflict

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the strong presence of the clergy in Slovenian national culture smoothly transitioned from a revivalist paradigm to a marked restorationist phase. This shift influenced not only spiritual life but also public opinion and society's aesthetic preferences. The most prominent figure of this conservative, ideologically rigid current was Anton Mahnič (1850–1920) – a theologian, literary critic and later bishop. From the 1880s onward, Mahnič emerged as the key ideological architect of a Catholic cultural-political offensive that responded to the escalating processes of secularisation, liberalisation and emancipation discourses in modern European society. Through the journal Rimski katolik, he created an intellectual platform from which he consistently attacked what he saw as insufficiently Catholic tendencies in art, society and politics. Mahnič firmly advocated for the radical reconstruction of society based on Christian ethics and drew a stark dichotomy between "orthodox Catholicism" and liberal thought. His criticism was characterised by a strong degree of normative repression – his most notable target being the poet Simon Gregorčič (Rychlík 134–135), who was publicly stigmatised by Mahnič for supposed moral "impropriety", with lasting effects on both his social and personal integrity.

Mahnič was also among the first to publicly criticise the Sokol organisation, which – though initially aligned with national revivalism – increasingly engaged in progressive cultural initiatives under the influence of Czech liberalism, including the promotion of amateur puppetry. This form of cultural production laid the groundwork for the later institutionalisation and professionalisation of puppetry in Slovenia. Yet in Mahnič's eyes, Sokol represented an ideologically deviant space – a symbol of liberalism and modernity that, from the perspective of Catholic orthodoxy, was utterly unacceptable. He openly declared that there was no place in such an environment for an authentic Catholic. It is thus not surprising that the central figure in Pocci's plays – the jester, a seemingly binary but in fact elusive, transgressive and opportunistic character who challenges all forms of authority, morality and normative order – could not survive within the ideological framework of conservative Catholicism. In a climate shaped by Mahnič and his intellectual allies across theology, public discourse, literature, art,

physical education and politics, such a character would be perceived as a symbolic threat. Resistance to liberalism was thus also expressed in the reception and staging of cultural products that, under different circumstances, might have been considered apolitical (Putna 134).

Klemenčič's reduction of Pocci's dramas into fairy-tale structures ultimately confined Slovenian puppet theatre largely to the realm of children's entertainment. In contrast, the German and Austrian traditions managed to preserve a link between grotesque comedy and political satire. Gašperček Larifari thus represents a case of cultural domestication – one that retained the external formal structure of the original but emptied it of its critical content, effectively neutralising it. Whereas in the original texts Kasperle Larifari embodied the archetype of the folk jester who undermines authority through irony, in the Slovenian context Gašperček became merely a humorous guide through the world of fairy tales, devoid of any deeper narrative dimension. As such, Gašperček was not only the first attempt to create a national puppet figure but also a manifestation of broader efforts to define a specifically Slovenian puppetry identity within the European context. His character became a symbol of cultural adaptation – oscillating between fidelity to foreign models and the search for an original dramatic expression (Verdel 44–50).

Ideological Construction and Didactic Instrumentalisation in the Context of Slovenian Puppetry

The puppet theatre organised by the Sokol association represented a key moment in the development of Slovenian puppetry. Czech cultural influence played a crucial role in this process, shaping not only the puppets' visual and technological conception but, above all, the dramaturgy itself. Through the Sokol movement, puppet theatre thus became a tool for the education and ideological formation of youth – its artistic and aesthetic dimensions were to a large extent subordinated to pedagogical aims. Gašperček was stripped of his critical sharpness and transformed into a bearer of moral values, tasked with transmitting didactic messages to children. Out of these efforts ultimately emerged an entirely new character, Jurček. The name itself is very well known and widespread among Slovenians. In addition, it has a specific connotation when one wishes to gently scold someone. Everyone understands what it means when we say to a child, "You, Jurček, you!" The child has done something wrong, even though in its innocence it believed it was doing the right thing – and we call it Jurček (Verdel 62). His emergence was a direct consequence of the attempt to construct a hero optimally suited to pedagogical and ideological requirements. Jurček was not presented as a traditional comic figure, but as a model of proper behaviour

whose purpose was not only to entertain children but above all to instruct them. Whereas Kašpárek was clever, independent and often provocative, Jurček was, by contrast, obedient, conforming and guided by pedagogical intentions. His function was to embody the ideal Sokol youth.

This transformation also affected the overall character of the productions. A simple exposition of moral values came to dominate, and the conflict between good and evil became unequivocal, leaving little room for inner tension or dramatic ambivalence. Stories featuring Jurček often lacked dramaturgical depth and, instead of poetic or fantastic elements, offered realistic situations with an explicit educational purpose. Supernatural beings were deemed inappropriate and replaced by everyday problems meant to show children how to behave correctly. Despite official support, Jurček never truly became the dominant figure of Slovenian puppet theatre. One of the main reasons was the absence of original plays. Many Slovenian Sokol theatres were forced to adapt older Czech texts, often merely by changing the name of the main hero while retaining the dramatic structure. This discrepancy between the ideological effort at innovation and the practical continuity of existing material meant that Jurček functioned more as a formal concession than as a genuinely new tradition.

Jurček is thus not the result of an organic development of puppetry, but a product of ideological necessity. Whereas traditional figures emerged gradually within folk culture, Jurček was created "from above" with the explicit aim of educating. This intention progressively curtailed the puppeteers' creative freedom, requiring them to comply with pedagogical demands and thereby narrowing the space for experimentation, humour and poetic imagination. Although he was conceived as a modern replacement for Gašperček, he never fully supplanted him. With the onset of World War II, many theatres reverted to the earlier model. Jurček, therefore, remained an episodic phenomenon that certainly reflects the ideological tendencies of its time, but did not inscribe itself permanently into collective memory as a living component of Slovenian puppetry tradition. From the standpoint of cultural history, the figure of Jurček constitutes an important example of how ideology can shape artistic production – and, at the same time, of the fact that for an artistic tradition to remain viable, it requires more than formal conformity to an ideal: it requires authenticity, dramatic force and a sustained relationship with a living audience.

Cultural Limits of Constructing a Puppet Archetype

The effort to constitute a "traditional" Slovenian puppet jester ultimately failed to produce a figure with which audiences could fully identify, either in the form of Gašperček or Jurček. Gašperček, as codified by Klemenčič within his artistic

marionette theatre, most likely evoked too strong an association with the German puppetry tradition. In contrast, Jurček, established in the Sokol puppet theatre, was perceptually infantilised, fairy-tale idealised and dramaturgically non-modern. Another problematic aspect was that both figures were linked to marionettes whose technological limitations impeded expressive action and kinetic dynamism – fundamental factors for productions built on interactive and visually compelling puppet theatre. As Verdel (71) notes, Niko Kuret, who devised a new character, attempted to restore to Gašperček his original discursive agility and propensity for humour, qualities that had been inherent in his early stage incarnations. This modification, however, proved insufficient; it was necessary to create a new designation that would evoke a more natural cultural context for Slovenian audiences.

The outcome of this effort was Kuret's Pavliha,[7] a hybrid figure seeking to synthesise Slovenian folk humour with renewed inspiration drawn from foreign comic archetypes such as the German Kasperle, the Czech Kašpárek or the English Punch. This experiment aspired to establish a new national puppet figure; yet, much like its predecessors, it suffered from a problematic lack of identity anchoring. Although Pavliha drew on the tradition of Slovenian satirical production – for example, Fran Levstik published in 1870 the satirical journal *Pavliha*,[8] whose content targeted political and social abuses – Pavliha, as a dramatic character, occupied an intermediate space between folk narration and modern theatre. His dramatic profile likewise displayed a marked inconsistency. Pavliha oscillated between ostensible naivety and a form of cognitive cunning, using it to parody a society rigidly structured by norms and stereotypes. Unlike Gašperček and Jurček, who functioned primarily as passive comic figures, Pavliha often resorted to explicitly violent solutions to conflicts, something intrinsically suited to glove-puppet technology.

Despite these extensive efforts, Pavliha was unable to establish himself as an authentic folk hero; his figure remained dramaturgically unanchored and lacked a clearly defined characterological modus operandi. When it became apparent that

7 The Slovenian term *Pavliha*, in the broader sense of the word, carries several semantic meanings and cultural connotations. First, as a comic character in puppet theatre, Pavliha is the Slovenian counterpart of figures such as the German Kasperle, the Czech Kašpárek or the English Punch. As an archetypal folk trickster, he embodies intelligent cunning and an ironic stance towards authority. Second, as a folk hero and symbol of cleverness, Pavliha appears in certain Slovenian folkloric narratives as a sly yet resourceful protagonist who is able to overcome difficult situations through humour and guile. Third, as the title of a satirical periodical, the name was used by Fran Levstik in 1870 for a satirical journal whose content focused on a critique of contemporary political and social structures. Finally, as a general idiom for a joker or jester, in colloquial Slovenian the term *Pavliha* is occasionally employed to designate a person with comic or eccentric traits, implying both positive humorous qualities and a certain degree of naivety or simple-mindedness. Taken together, *Pavliha* thus constitutes a Slovenian cultural variant of a widely disseminated European archetype of the comic figure, integrating humour, satire and an implicit critique of the social status quo.

8 The newspaper *Pavliha*, published in Vienna from April to July 1870 under the editorship of Fran Levstik (1831–1887), is regarded as the most important Slovenian satirical paper of the 19th century. Its publication took place under highly tense political circumstances, which are clearly reflected in its content. Evidence drawn from the contemporary press, Levstik's correspondence and literary-historical studies indicates that the discontinuation of the paper was shaped not only by political pressures but also by the attitudes of the Young Slovenes towards political compromise, radicalism and criticism of the Church. An additional significant contextual factor was the election of Dr Valentin Zarnik (1835–1888) to the provincial assembly in 1869 and 1870, which influenced Levstik's subsequent activities (Globočnik 116–172).

Pavliha alone did not suffice as a catalyst for the revitalisation of Slovenian puppet theatre, a new figure, Kljukec, was attached to him ex post in an additive manner. Originally a marginal character who appeared occasionally as Pavliha's counterpart, Kljukec was transformed after World War II into a stable dramatic entity. Kljukec was inspired by a historical bandit from the 16th or 17th century whose name has survived in folk tradition as *Lažnjivi Kljukec* ("Kljukec the Liar"), also known as Baron Münchhausen or Baron Prášil. Yet even this extension did not lead to an adequate institutional stabilisation of Pavliha's figure. Puppeteers attempted to make him more appealing by changing his visual paradigm. Instead of a conventional jester's cap, he was given a hat, and his costume was stylised after Carniolan folk dress. Parallel to this, new dramatic texts by Slovenian authors were commissioned to strengthen Pavliha's cultural embeddedness within the national dramaturgy. Niko Kuret sought to connect Pavliha with traditional folkloric narratives, but his adaptations never firmly established themselves on the puppet stage.

Despite these attempts, Slovenian glove-puppet theatre remained marginalised, and Pavliha became yet another experiment in the effort to create a representative Slovenian puppet figure. In contrast to well-established European comic characters, which achieved broad cultural impact thanks to their capacity to address both child and adult audiences, the Pavliha plays (*Pavlihijada* – a series of farcical puppet plays featuring the traditional Slovenian jester Pavliha) never transcended the boundaries of children's spectatorship. Rather than becoming a socially relevant satirical figure reflecting Slovenian reality, Pavliha's stage appearances gradually degenerated into moralising narratives. The attempt to create a modern, national and at the same time "popular" puppet figure thus proved to be an irreversibly unsuccessful project – stagnating in a historical vacuum between infantilised fairy-tale stylisation and an inconsistent, artificially constructed tradition.

Puppet Archetypes as Mediators of Memory, Identity and Resistance

The story of traditional puppet characters in Central Europe – above all figures such as Kašpárek or Kasperle – is not merely a history of aesthetic change; it is symptomatic of a profound cultural transformation within European society. These figures, once bearers of grotesque subversion and of a carnivalesque inversion of the social order, gradually disappeared from active cultural discourse over the course of the 20th century. Their decline reflects shifts in social structure, in audiences and in the very role of theatre itself, which lost its popular base and became increasingly institutionalised and oriented towards children. Along with this, the organic foundations on which

these figures had been shaped for generations also disintegrated – namely, living tradition, oral transmission, itinerant theatre and shared experience. This process, however, cannot be understood as a simple, linear "decline", but rather as a complex transformation unfolding within a broader context of Central European cultural transfers. Developments in the Czech lands at the beginning of the 20th century had a decisive impact on Slovenian culture, particularly in the realms of spoken drama and puppet theatre. For this reason, systematic research into the Czech cultural sphere is crucial for understanding Slovenian theatrical and puppetry traditions.

In the Czech lands – and in the broader Central European region – this development was preceded by a phase of so-called puppetry renaissance at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when the archaic medium of puppet theatre was rediscovered and reinterpreted in the context of a rapidly modernising society. The ethnographic movement and the culture of exhibitions – most notably the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague in 1895 – transformed puppets into exhibits of "folk culture" and into evidence of the nation's historical continuity. In parallel, association-based and family puppetry developed, institutionalised among other things by the founding of the Loutkové divadlo Umělecké výchovy (Puppet Theatre of Artistic Education) in 1914, and supported by publications that newly defined puppet theatre as an instrument of education and national culture. A serially produced apparatus for home puppet stages emerged, types and aesthetics were unified, and puppet theatre moved from fairgrounds into bourgeois interiors and school classrooms. An important factor in this transformation was the advent of cinema, which compelled puppeteers and theorists to articulate more precisely the specificity of puppet theatre in relation to the "silent" moving picture, as theatre scholar Martin Bernátek (12–19) demonstrates in his article on the renaissance of Czech puppetry and cinematography. The comparison with film made it possible to present puppets as a medium that preserves live speech, immediate performativity and the active role of the spectator, rather than as a mere relic of premodern entertainment. The puppetry renaissance thus stands at the intersection of ethnographic interest, modern educational and pedagogical ambitions, the rise of mass culture and the competition of new media. At the same time, however, it prepared the ground for the subsequent domestication and "taming" of traditional figures. What had originally been linked to carnivalesque disruption of order and to bodily grotesque was gradually translated into the framework of a children's repertoire subjected to moral control.

Whereas in Central Europe traditional puppet theatre passed through a phase of renaissance, institutionalisation and subsequent withdrawal from public space, in Slovenia, it was only just emerging, in an environment that lacked a deeper historical foundation in folk puppetry. The Slovenian puppetry tradition, constructed from the beginning of the 20th century onward, thus found itself in a paradoxical position:

it was being born at the very moment when, elsewhere, the tradition was coming to an end and when the traditional "jester" was being transformed from a living figure of popular culture into a codified character of modern children's theatre. Instead of organically evolved folk figures, new "artificial" characters arose in Slovenia – Gašperček, Jurček, Pavliha, Kljukec – figures searching for their function, language and audience. Their existence was burdened by the absence of historical continuity and of anchorage in living cultural memory, which led to their dramaturgical and ideological inconsistency. This search for new figures and forms was not simply an aesthetic experiment; it was a response to a cultural vacuum produced both by the loss of traditional formal structures in Central Europe and by the absence of a domestic popular puppetry substratum in Slovenia. Slovenian puppet theatre thus became a mirror of broader cultural dilemmas: How can one create a relevant artistic form without deep roots in tradition? How can national identity be articulated within a space marked by strong cultural influences and hegemonic models emanating from "more developed" puppetry centres? And how can figures that originally arose as spontaneous expressions of collective experience be replaced by new forms that are defined from the outset "from above" – through ideology, pedagogy or aesthetic stylisation?

The failure of most of these attempts demonstrates that tradition cannot be replaced by mere construction, and that puppet characters are not only instruments of entertainment but, above all, cultural archetypes that mediate memory, identity and resistance. The Slovenian experience likewise confirms that the loss of the carnivalesque principle – with its ambivalence, transgression and capacity to ironise power – represents not only an aesthetic loss but, above all, a social one. In this sense, the emergence of Slovenian puppet theatre should not be viewed as a simple narrative of belated "national awakening", but rather as an attempt to articulate an autonomous voice at a moment when the traditional jester was already disappearing from the stage and the Central European puppetry field was undergoing profound restructuring. Research into these processes thus raises crucial questions about cultural memory, identity and the transformation of public space in the Central European context.

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Povzetek

Razprava analizira transformacijo tradicionalnih lutkovnih likov v srednjeevropskem kulturnem prostoru s poudarkom na slovenskem kontekstu. V ospredje postavlja njihove ideološke, estetske in družbene implikacije ter zavrača linearni model kulturnega razvoja. Namesto tega kot ključen premik identificira razgradnjo karnevalskega načela, zaznamovanega z groteskнostjo, ambivalentnostjo in subverzivnostjo. S primerjalno analizo češkega Kašpárka in slovenskih likov (Gašperček, Jurček, Pavliha) pokaže, kako so ideološki pritiski in prekinitev zgodovinske kontinuitete prispevali k infantilizaciji ter nevtralizaciji njihovega kritičnega potenciala. Lutkovni liki so obravnavani kot kulturni arhetipi, ki posredujejo kolektivni spomin, identitetne formacije in oblike odpora. Razprava sklene, da tradicije ni mogoče substituirati s formalnimi konstrukti ter da estetska domestikacija odraža globlje družbene transformacije.

Ključne besede: srednjeevropsko lutkarstvo, karnevalskost, slovenski lutkovni tipi, triksterski liki, subverzija n odpor, ideološka domestikacija, kulturni spomin

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Zaton in vznik: tipi lutk od tradicije do sodobnih reinterpretacij

Uroš Trefalt
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Članek analizira transformacijo tradicionalnih lutkovnih likov v srednjeevropskem prostoru s posebnim poudarkom na slovenskem in češkem kulturnem kontekstu. Avtor primerjalno obravnava ključne tipe, kot so češki Kašpárek ter slovenski Gašperček, Pavliha in Jurček, pri čemer pokaže, da njihove transformacije niso zgolj estetske narave, temveč odražajo globoke ideološke, politične in družbene premike, povezane z modernizacijo, nacionalnimi gibanji in poznejšimi procesi institucionalizacije kulture.

Ena osrednjih ugotovitev članka je razpad karnevalskega principa, ki je v tradicionalnem lutkovnem gledališču Srednje Evrope deloval kot prostor družbene in simbolne subverzije. Likom, kot je Kašpárek ali Kasperl, so bile lastne grotesknost, telesna ekspresivnost, vulgarni humor ter ambivalentna identiteta, ki je omogočala kritiko oblasti, cerkve in družbenih norm. Ti liki so delovali kot tipične »tricksterske« figure, ki so rušile hierarhije in vzpostavljale začasni obrat družbenega reda. Od druge polovice 19. stoletja pa – vzporedno z vzponom meščanske kulture in procesi pedagogizacije umetnosti – prihaja do njihove postopne domestikacije: nasilje, seksualnost in politična ostrina so omiljeni, liki pa se preoblikujejo v moralno sprejemljive in otrokom prilagojene figure.

Avtor posebej poudari, da je ta proces v srednjeevropskem prostoru tesno povezan z zgodovinskimi diskontinuitetami, kot so razpad imperijev, nacionalna emancipacija in ideološki režimi 20. stoletja. V slovenskem prostoru, kjer je bila tradicija lutkarstva manj institucionalno stabilna, se te prekinitve kažejo v izrazitejši diskontinuiteti med zgodovinskimi liki in njihovimi sodobnimi reinterpretacijami. Nasprotno pa češka tradicija kljub transformacijam ohranja večjo kontinuiteto in simbolni kapital, vendar je tudi tam prišlo do postopne izgube subverzivne funkcije likov.

Pomemben poudarek članka je tudi kritika sodobnih reinterpretacij, ki temeljijo predvsem na formalnih, estetskih ali konceptualnih pristopih. Takšne rekonstrukcije pogosto reproducirajo vizualne in narativne elemente tradicije, vendar izgubljajo

njeno performativno in družbeno funkcijo. Liki, kot so Gašperček Larifari, Jurček ali Pavliha, tako postajajo prazni označevalci brez svoje nekdanje kritične moči.

V sklepu članek ugotavlja, da transformacija lutkovnih likov v Sloveniji in na Češkem odraža širši proces kulturne normalizacije, depolitizacije in estetizacije umetnosti. Tradicije ni mogoče nadomestiti zgolj s formalno rekonstrukcijo, saj ta zahteva razumevanje njenega zgodovinskega, družbenega in performativnega konteksta. Ključni izziv sodobnega lutkovnega gledališča v srednjeevropskem prostoru je zato ponovno vzpostaviti povezavo med estetsko formo, kolektivnim spominom in subverzivnim potencialom, ki je nekoč določal kulturno relevantnost teh likov.

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Povzetek

Članek se posveča komediji z začetka dvajsetega stoletja in ugotavlja, da gre za obdobje, v katerem beležimo bližino in preplet komedije s kompleksnostjo družbenih sprememb in časa, ki mu zlasti ob izkustvu svetovnih vojn z grozo in travmo ni bilo prizaneseno. Opažamo množičen pojav dramskih oblik, v katerih se prepletajo tako komične kot tragične prvine, in uporabo številnih slogovnih sredstev klasične komedije v delih avantgardnih avtorjev. Na podlagi primerov avantgardnih dramskih besedil Alfreda Jarryja, Guillauma Apollinaira in Aleksandra Vvedenskega analiziramo nove slogovne tendence ter premike v dojemanju komedije kot literarne zvrsti.

Alain Badiou dvajseto stoletje označi kot stoletje »strasti do realnega«, ki na prvi pogled nima komične razsežnosti. Kako gre torej »strast do realnega« skupaj s komedijo in fenomeni komičnega, ki se – v nasprotju z realnim – nahajajo prav na področju videza, iluzije in podvojitev ter so s svojo umeščenostjo v območje dozdevkov daleč od realnega? Oziroma drugače, ali ima strast do realnega komične razsežnosti? Izbrani primeri izpričujejo, da komedija strasti do realnega kljubuje z ironijo, grotesko, absurdizmom in potujevanjem, kot ga teoretsko in praktično utemeljuje Bertolt Brecht, a da ob tem izgublja celovitost strukture in stopa z literarnega piedestala. Namesto tega se posamezni komedijski elementi vrivajo v vse žanre ter zlasti v performativno dogodkovnost, ki jo razumemo na osnovi študije *Estetike performativnega* Erike Fischer-Lichte in postmodernistične poetike, kot jo v dramskem smislu definira Hans-Thies Lehmann v *Postdramskem gledališču*, s katerimi je komedija neločljivo povezana celotno dvajseto stoletje vse do danes.

Ključne besede: komedija, avantgarde, potujitveni učinek, strast do realnega, performativno, postmodernizem

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Komedija na začetku dvajsetega stoletja, njena strast do realnega in vpliv na razvoj žanra

Eva Kraševec
SNG Drama Ljubljana

Uvod

Komedija je v prvi polovici dvajsetega stoletja, v času avantgard in modernizma, razgiban in raznolik fenomen, ki je na svojstven način zaznamoval dramsko paradigmo celotnega dvajsetega stoletja. Utrla je pot uprizoritvenim strategijam, ki so del subverzivne in kritične gledališke prakse vse do danes. V dvajsetem stoletju so začeli dramatiki v vse večji meri svobodno mešati elemente različnih dramskih žanrov, kar sicer poznamo tudi iz starejših literarnih obdobij, a tega prej ne bi mogli pojmovati kot prevladujočo tendenco; z dvajsetim stoletjem so začela množično nastajati dela, ki imajo hkrati značaj tako komičnega kot tudi resnega dramskega žanra, obenem pa se je začel tudi proces intenzivne razgradnje tradicionalne komedijske strukture in dramskega jezika, tj. širša uporaba komedijskih elementov v splošni, tudi ne strogo komedijski rabi, kar se potem nadaljuje in intenzivira tudi v sodobni dramatiki in gledališču enaindvajsetega stoletja, v katerem se zdi kategorija žanra na določen način presežena oziroma potrebuje redefinicijo tako v teoriji kot v uprizoritvenih praksah.

Poudariti velja, da je komedija dvajsetega stoletja pogosto trpkega smeha, kot lahko spremljamo na primerih avantgardističnih dramskih tekstov, absurdističnih komedij in tudi na podlagi Brechtovega dela, ki zaradi uvajanja postopkov epskega gledališča velja za eno temeljnih prelomnic v moderni zgodovini gledališča. Pomembno paradigmo za razvoj komedije predstavljajo ustvarjalci gledališča absurda in njihovi avantgardni predhodniki. Najizrazitejši predhodniki gledališča absurda so Alfred Jarry, Franz Kafka, skupina OBERIU in Antonin Artaud (Bennett 24), vendar se vsi našteti ne umeščajo v tradicijo komedijskih dramskih tokov. Z vidika anticipacije novih komedijskih tendenc in razgradnje klasične komedije so od naštetih zlasti zanimiva dramska dela Alfreda Jarryja ter dela Aleksandra Vvedenskega, predstavnika sanktpeterburške skupine OBERIU. Morda manj izpostavljen avtor, ki je prav tako zaznamoval komedijsko paradigmo dvajsetega stoletja, je Guillaume Apollinaire, ki uvaja celo vrsto komedijskih nastavkov znotraj nastajajoče nove paradigme in v luči

avantgarde vzpostavlja nov odnos do gledališča kot umetnosti dvajsetega stoletja. Primerov avantgardnih praks in zametkov komedije je sicer še mnogo, od futurističnih sintez, del Rogerja Vitraca, Luigija Pirandella do Ignacyja Witkiewicza itd. Bistvene premike na področju komedije je afirmiral Bertolt Brecht z epskim gledališčem in novim dramskim pristopom, ki temelji na ključni komedijski komponenti – potujitvi.

Na podlagi vseh zgoraj naštetih avtorjev bi lahko dvajseto stoletje, v nasprotju s prevladujočim vtisom, označili tudi kot stoletje komedije. Vendar sta smeh in komedija dvajsetega stoletja drugačna od preteklih obdobij, saj izhajata iz kompleksnosti družbenih sprememb in časa, ki mu z grozo in travmo ni bilo prizaneseno. Kljub temu ali prav zato se je vzpostavilo več močnih komedijskih tokov, ki podpirajo tezo, da je dvajseto stoletje zavezano kritični in subverzivni komediji. Po drugi strani je dvajseto stoletje zaznamovano s »strastjo do realnega«, kot ga je označil filozof Alain Badiou. Kako pa gre »strast do realnega« skupaj s komedijo in fenomeni komičnega, ki se – v nasprotju z realnim – nahajajo prav na področju videza, iluzije in podvojitev ter so s svojo umeščenostjo v območje dozdevkov daleč od realnega? Oziroma drugače, ali ima strast do realnega komične razsežnosti?

Strast do realnega

Filozof Alain Badiou vzpostavi vprašanje, kaj je realno dvajsetega stoletja: »Lacan je zelo dobro opazil, da je izkustvo realnega vedno deloma tudi izkustvo groze. Pravo vprašanje nikakor ni vprašanje imaginarnega, pač pa je treba dognati, kaj je imelo v teh radikalnih preizkušnjah vlogo realnega« (Badiou 34). Dober primer umetniškega delovanja v slogu *passion de réel* tega stoletja je stremljenje igralca, režiserja in avtorja Antonina Artauda. Njegov modus gledališkega ustvarjanja najbolje zaobjamemo s pojmom iz manifesta gledališča krutosti, v katerem Artaud zabrisuje mejo med gledališčem in njegovim dvojnikom, življenjem, ki predstavlja realno gledališča. Pojem reprezentacije nadomesti prezenca, saj se Artaudevo gledališče odpoveduje iluziji, poudarja pa neposrednost, surovost in nepredvidljivost: »Gledališče je za Artauda stanje nenehne krize (tak pa je tudi njegov odnos do življenja, ki ga izpoveduje v svojem delu, najdirektneje v pismih: nered, kaos, obup), v katerih ne moreš uživati, saj gledališče ni nikakršen surogat niti korektiv resničnosti, temveč je potrebno biti v njem neprestano dejavno navzoč« (Lukan 27–8). Ob tem se Artaud zaveda tudi ritualnega izvora gledališča in njegove imanentne teatralnosti, ki jo je treba vsakokrat ustvarjati s pomočjo gledaliških sredstev in se jim njegov uprizoritveni jezik ne odreka: »Jasno je, da uporablja premike, ubranosti in ritme, a le toliko, kolikor prispevajo k nekakšnemu osrednjemu izražanju, in ne da bi dajal

prednost kateri od umetnosti, kar nikakor ne pomeni, da ne uporablja vsakdanjih dejstev in vsakdanjih strasti, a bolj kot odskočno desko, podobno kot mu lahko RAZDEJALNI HUMOR s smehom povrne pravila razuma« (Artaud 112–3). Artaudeva želja je v gledališču ponovno vzpostaviti možnost »resnične utvare«. Artaudeva neposrednost je tako podložena z različnimi gledališkimi sredstvi in je usmerjena v prizadevanje po redefiniciji človeka in njegovega notranjega in zunanjega sveta ter njegovega mesta v svetu (prav tam 114).

Komedija dvajsetega stoletja pa se *passion de réel* loti z drugega zornega kota, in sicer prek poudarjanja realnega s kontrastiranjem artificielnega, ter rezonira skozi spačen obraz groteske, skozi absurdizem in nonsens ter skozi brechtovsko potujevanje, ki ponuja nenehne preskoke od utvare do realnega. Kritična in subverzivna komedija v tem obdobju svobodno in neobremenjeno poseže po izraznih sredstvih tako imenovane »nižje komedije«, ki se izraža skozi tragikomičnost, kot da bi se nenehno zavedala realnega, ki je osnova njenemu izrazu in potrebe po njem.

Znotraj Badioujevega zastavka se sprašujemo, kaj je realno komedije v dvajsetem stoletju. Prva misel bi bila, da ob vsem tem komediografija obmolkne, vendar številni primeri komedij pričajo o tem, da je realno komedije v tem stoletju postalo močan antagonizem grozotam časa – vojnam, krizam, revolucijam, totalitarnim sistemom. V dvajsetem stoletju dramatiki vse pogosteje prepletajo elemente različnih dramskih žanrov, pri čemer ta tendenca postane prevladujoča šele z modernizmom. Ob tem prihaja do razgradnje tradicionalne dramske strukture (Szondi 7) ter postopne izgube stabilnih žanrskih kategorij, kar se v sodobnem gledališču radikalizira do točke, ko žanr kot tak izgubi normativno funkcijo. Hkrati pa zgodovinske katastrofe dvajsetega stoletja problematizirajo možnost tradicionalnega komičnega, saj, kot opozarja Adorno, umetnost po Auschwitzu ne more več ohranjati svoje estetske nedolžnosti (Adorno 34). Komedija tako ne izgine, temveč se preobraža v fragmentarne, pogosto ambivalentne oblike komičnega, ki jih lahko razumemo tudi v luči karnevalske in subverzivne logike smeha (Bakhtin 10). Pa vendar, na kakšen način se je komedijski duh odzval na vse to in kako je s komedijo, ki se napaja iz videza in iluzij v kontekstu dvajsetega stoletja? Komedija kot umetniška zvrst, ki temelji na videzih in dozdevkih, vzpostavlja svojevrstno distanco do realnega, kot je to tudi sicer značilno za umetnost dvajsetega stoletja. Obenem pa moč fikcije povzroči, da lahko tudi dozdevek dojemamo kot realen (Badiou 69). Komedija se dejansko zgodi v samem srečanju z realnim. Kakšne metode ubirajo pri tem različne komedije in kaj s tem povzročijo, bomo poskušali ugotoviti na podlagi nekaj izbranih primerov komedij s preloma iz devetnajstega v dvajseto stoletje in iz prve polovice dvajsetega stoletja.

Ko govorimo o komediji, je pomembno pomisliti na njen namen. *Enciklopedija Britannica* jasno definira: »Komedija, zvrst drame ali druge umetniške oblike, katerih osrednji namen je zabavati. Po eni strani je nasprotje tragediji, po drugi pa farsi, burleski in drugim oblikam šaljive zabave« (Hoy). V nadaljevanju gesla pa sledi priostritev v smer kritičnosti komedije: »Namen komedijskega umetnika je pridržati ogledalo družbi, da bi zrcalilo njene norosti in slabosti, z upanjem, da bo posledično prišlo do izboljšav« (prav tam).

Ne gre oporekati, da je komedija žanr, ki zna zabavati. Tega se je v svojem gledališkem delu zavedal tudi Bertolt Brecht, ki je v svojem teoretskem delu jasno začrtal temelje popolnoma nove dramaturgije epskega gledališča, ki se ni izogibala zabavi občinstva, a je vedno pridržala tudi ogledalo, kar je Brechtu uspevalo v različnih fazah njegovega ustvarjalnega življenja. Zgled epskega gledališča je eden od močnih gledaliških tokov dvajsetega stoletja, ki je vplival tudi na koncepcijo kritične in subverzivne misli, kar se v določenem segmentu dotika tudi komedije, predvsem pa njenega kritičnega potenciala. V svojem delu se je izdatno ukvarjal z vprašanjem distance, na katerem je zasnoval tudi svojo metodo epskega gledališča. Postopek epskega gledališča je prav »tehnika demontaže tesnih in nujnih vezi, ki realno združujejo z dozdevkom in ki izhajajo iz dejstva, da je dozdevek resnično načelo umestitve realnega, tisto, kar lokalizira in napravi vidne surove učinke njegove kontingence« (Badiou 67). Brechtova gledališka invencija je torej v jedru našega zastavljenega problema – kaj je v komediji realno in kako ga izluščiti iz materije komičnega. Epsko gledališče je za to ponudilo odlično metodo, ki je sicer stara kot gledališka umetnost sama, a jo je prav Brecht v svojem intenzivnem teoretskem in praktičnem angažmaju izpostavil v točni definiciji, ki se je odlično prilegala njegovemu času.

Slogovna sredstva komedije, ki jih uporablja Brecht, so raznovrstna, med njimi še posebej izstopa ironija, ki je implicirana že v samem potujitvenem učinku. Pri karakterizaciji se tudi Brecht, tako kot mnogi dramatiki prve polovice dvajsetega stoletja, odmika od realističnega upodabljanja in se osredotoča na ključne poteze posameznega karakterja, ki jih nato poveča do skorajšnje karikature, da postanejo zares vidne, kar je pomembno tudi za igralčevo zavedanje, saj naj bi posamezen dramski lik oblikoval v dialektičnem odnosu med vlogo in samim seboj. Pri samem načinu igre pa se Brechtu zdi pomembna naslonitev na tradicijo *commedie dell'arte*, saj se zaveda, da z realističnim načinom igre ni mogoče vzpostaviti vseh vsebinskih ravni.

Dvajseto stoletje se je začelo v velikem slogu in si zadalo nalogo temeljite spremembe ter stvaritve nove družbe v duhu velikih družbenih sprememb. Avantgarde so se intenzivno ukvarjale s sodobnostjo in v umetnost vnašale strast do realnega (prav tam 164). Praktično vse nove avantgardne forme so iskale svoj izraz v radikalnem odmiku od realistične estetike in močno poudarjale ukvarjanje z notranjo realnostjo, ki je

realizem in naturalizem, kot eminentno žanra devetnajstega stoletja, nista več mogla prikazovati vpričo silovitosti in turbulenc dvajsetega stoletja. Pri tem jim ni šlo zgolj za kritiko realizma kot takega, temveč za preseganje postopka mimetičnega upodabljanja (*mímesis*) ter reprezentacije, dveh temeljnih osi vse dotedanje umetnosti nasploh.

Alfred Jarry in *Kralj Ubu*

Alfred Jarry bil eden tistih, ki so že konec devetnajstega stoletja eksperimentirali z logiko in formo. Zavrgel je tradicionalna klasična komedijska načela ter s tem napovedal eno od najmočnejših smeri razvoja komedije v dvajsetem stoletju – komedijo absurda, kar predstavlja pomemben mejnik v zgodovini komedije. Obenem pa je prav v tej igri najintenzivneje povezal komične in tragične prvine, ki jih do sedaj še nihče ni spojil na toliko ravneh kot prav ta nenavadni avtor, ki je s svojim delom radikalno prelomil s tradicijo in napovedal prihod povsem nove smeri v dramski literaturi, kar je poskušal utemeljiti tudi s svojim izvirnim konceptom 'patafizike,[1] ki je s svojo enigmatično avro privlačnosti navdušila mnogo Jarryjevih sledilcev in naslednikov.

Po eni strani lahko *Ubuja* interpretiramo kot kritiko oblasti, po drugi pa gre pri tej igri za kritiko človekove narave, saj se delček ubujevstva skriva v vsakem izmed nas, kar je v Jarryjevem času učinkovalo zlasti kot napad na tedanjo buržoazijo, ki je predstavljala gledališko občinstvo, katerega okus se je gibal nekje med Offenbachovimi operetami in Feydeaujevimi farsami. Tega napada pa komedija ni naredila z neposredno kritiko, ki bi bila uperjena proti gledalcem v dvorani, temveč mnogo bolj celovito, lahko bi rekli celo strukturno, in s perfidnim razkrivanjem ubujevske logike oblasti, pri čemer groteskna hiperbolizacija razgalja mehanizme nasilja, pohlepa in politične infantilnosti.

Kralj Ubu prikazuje sprevrženo logiko človeštva prav s tem, da iz nje izhaja, nanjo prisega, jo dosledno poudarja in groteskno karikira ter tako, že v okvirih krstne uprizoritve leta 1896, provocira oziroma problematizira. Četudi preprosta, je to njegova osrednja in najprepoznavnejša komedijska strategija, ki je ne ustavi nobena konvencija. In ta strategija je, poleg oziroma prav z neposredno verbalizacijo izraza »merdre«, na katerem temelji Jarryjeva komedijska gesta, močno vznemirila francosko občinstvo na premieri. Pri tem je Jarry, kljub preprostosti zgodbe in narativni premočrtnosti dramske strukture, kritičen in subverziven, saj je svojo igro postavil v šokantno točen kontekst. Morda je prav njegov *Kralj Ubu* eden od tistih trenutkov v zgodovini komedije, ki najjasneje dokazujejo bistvo komedijske subverzivnosti –

1 'Patafizika (’pataphysique) je po Jarryju znanost, ki je nad metafiziko in za razliko od slednje vključuje celoten ustroj vesolja, znani in neznani svet, narekuje pa tudi enakost vseh fenomenov. Poleg tega je 'patafizika predvsem znanost o posamičnostih in preučuje zakone, ki uravnavajo izjeme. Poimenovanje v izogib enostavnim besednim igram, kot so denimo »pas ta physique! (»ne tvoja fizika«), »pâte à physique« (»fizikalno testo«), »patte à physique« (»fizikalna šapa«) ali »pas ta fille, *sic*« (»ne tvoje dekle, *sic*«), uvaja apostrof na začetku termina (Schumacher 189).

precizna in dobro namerjena komedijska gesta, ki je vzpostavljena v pravem trenutku, ima eksplozivno moč. In prav s tem se je Alfred Jarry vpisal v zgodovino gledališča; v svoji igri je namreč razpostavil osupljivo preprostost oblastniške logike ter s tem pokazal na banalnost zla, kar glede na potek zgodovine v dvajsetem stoletju lahko deluje celo profetsko, zlasti pa izpostavlja hrbtno plat demokracije, ki v duhu kapitalizma izkazuje anomalijo neizmernega in neustavljivega pohlepa. Jarry je prikazal pohlep in infantilnost želje po več v komedijskem modusu, ki v času predmoderne oblasti ne bi bil mogoč. Kljub temu da, natančno gledano, ta komedija ne sodi v dvajseto stoletje in tudi ne izhaja iz badioujevske »izkušnje groze«, pa na svojevrsten način anticipira grozo oblasti v kapitalizmu, kar se potrjuje s pogledom iz prihodnosti.

Za nastanek *Kralja Ubuja* je bil nujen pogoj vzpostavitev moderne države in oblasti, ki ji lahko ogledalo nastavi najbolj banalna farsa. Ubu zrcali ključne napake svojega časa, ki so peljale v veliki konflikt prve svetovne vojne. Prav s tem so izza demokratične fasade prišle na plan vse ubujevske poteze, od imperializma in naraščajočega nacionalizma, ki sta tlakovala prvo vojno, pa vse do primitivne želje po dobičku in prestižu, ki je vodila v vsesplošno grabljenje bogastva. *Ubu* se izkazuje kot neverjetno ciničen komentar oblasti dvajsetega stoletja in je kot metafora in dosledna farsična karikatura aktualen v *zeitgeistu* različnih obdobij, o čemer govorijo tudi umestitev te igre v klasični dramski kanon in njene številne uprizoritve. Ata Ubu v današnjem zgodovinskem trenutku zlahka postane metafora za ekstremnega in stihijsko delujočega politika, saj je sam naziv »ubu« postal poimenovanje določenega sindroma oziroma pojma, s tem je pridobil določeno evokativnost in prešel tudi v splošno rabo. Ubu vzpostavlja komedijsko sliko voditelja in s tem upodablja figuro realnega demokratične oblasti, kar Jarry doseže z metodo kontrasta. Ob tem, ko Ubuja vzpostavi kot predmoderno variacijo oblastnika, pokaže na dejanski problem republike in na hrbtno plat demokracije. Ubu deluje kot rabelaisevski lik, ki poskuša prignati realno komedije do samega ekstrema, ki šele pokaže razkorak, vrzel med idealom in realnim. Komedijski pendant strasti do realnega je pri Ubuju groteska, ki jo v dramskem smislu za uprizarjanje resničnosti opredeljujeta uporaba popačenih, grozljivih likov, situacij in atmosfer ter povezovanje komičnega s tragičnim (Humar idr. 135).

V tem smislu *Kralj Ubu* posebej jasno potrjuje tezo, da ima t. i. »strast do realnega«, kot jo opredeli Alain Badiou, tudi komično razsežnost. Prav Jarryjeva radikalna zvestoba »realnemu« oblasti – torej njenemu brutalnemu, vulgarno materialnemu in absurdno samoumevnemu delovanju – ne vodi v resnobno reprezentacijo, temveč v groteskno komedijo. Realno oblasti se pokaže kot že samo po sebi komično, saj je v svoji nasilni logiki hkrati pretirano, nelogično in smešno. Komedija tako ne zamegljuje realnega, temveč ga razkriva v njegovi najsurovejši obliki, kjer se groza in smeh nujno prepletata.

Guillaume Apollinaire in *Tejrezijeve dojke*

Drugi francoski avtor, ki je že v zgodnji fazi dvajsetega stoletja vplival na razvoj komedije absurda, je bil Guillaume Apollinaire. Svoj surrealistični protest proti realistični estetiki v gledališču *Tejrezijeve dojke* (1903) je po lastnih besedah napisal za Francoze, kot je Aristofan pisal svoje komedije za atenske državljane. Komedija tematizira pomembni temi časa, feminizem in antimilitarizem, premiera pa je povzročila škandal tudi zaradi jasnega konteksta prve svetovne vojne, saj je kot nenavaden odgovor oziroma celo svojevrstno nadaljevanje Jarryja na svoj farsični način intervenirala v absurdni svet realizacije ubujevskih tendenc časa. Izhodišče *Tejrezijevih dojk* naj bi Apollinaire napisal leta 1903, ko je spoznal Alfreda Jarryja, ključne popravke pa je dodal po lastni izkušnji vojne, v kateri so padle številne intimne in družbene iluzije. Novi čas je bil za Apollinaira, ki je kot prvi uporabil poimenovanje nadrealizem – *surréalisme* (Berger 35), čas radikalno novih idej, za katere je bilo treba šele vzpostaviti prave pogoje. Apollinaire naj bi igro v pripravah na uprizoritev leta 1918 predelal in pri tem poudaril temo rodnosti, kar je najverjetneje posledica prilagoditve na povojni čas (Béhar 316).

V *Tejrezijevih dojkah* se zgodi presenetljiva zamenjava spolne identitete, ki v tej igri ni zgolj enostaven komedijski trik, temveč deluje nepovratno in zato subverzivno. Tereza z enostavnim burkaškim *slapstickom* obvlada svojega moža, ga premaga in podvrže preobleki, ki ga transformira v žensko. S to preprosto gesto Apollinaire idejno preseže Aristofanove poskuse emancipacije tako v *Lizistrati* kot v *Zborovalkah* (Segal 414–5). Igra se zaključi s Terezino vrnitvijo, ki pa ne predstavlja vrnitve v začetno stanje, temveč vsebuje tisto bistveno spremembo, ki je ključna za vzpostavitev enakopravnih pozicij med spoloma.

Apollinaire je dejansko napisal burko, s katero se je ponorčeval iz nekaterih najizrazitejših tendenc povojnega časa, zlasti iz intenzivne politične spodbude k reprodukciji. Obenem se v *Tejrezijevih dojkah* že jasno zaznava metoda nadrealističnega pisanja, paradigma, ki jo je Apollinaire pomagal ustvarjati. S tem ko je presegel »fotografski naturalizem« z upodabljanjem notranje narave z vsemi njenimi čudeži (Béhar 316), se je že približal temu, kar je potem kot nadrealizem leta 1924 v *Manifestu* definiral Breton.

Apollinairov odnos do odrske umetnosti je zaznamovalo predvsem stališče, da je gledališče treba reformirati, njegovo družbeno vlogo pa je ocenjeval za manj pomembno, kot je bila v preteklosti – zlasti na račun pojava in razvoja sedme umetnosti, ki omogoča »popoln spektakel«. Vizijo gledališča vidi kot bolj agresivno burleskno oziroma cirkuško gledališče, ki naj bi bilo preprostejše od dotedanjega dolgočasnega in realizmu zavezanega gledališča (Schumacher 142).

Eno od pomembnih slogovnih sredstev Apollinairove igre je tudi nenehno poigravanje s presenečenjem, ki ga je kot slogovno sredstvo svoje umetnosti utemeljil v posthumno objavljenem predavanju *Novi duh in pesniki*, v katerem ga je opredelil kot temeljno novost novega umetniškega gibanja (Béhar 314). Smoter te igre je mogoče razbirati prek ironičnega razumevanja dramske akcije, ki že nakazuje tudi nastavke poznejšega gledališča absurda. Apollinaire je v tem svojem dramskem delu poskusil do konca prignati postopke, ki jih je sicer poprej raziskoval na področju poezije, obenem pa je skozi daljšo in strukturno kompleksnejšo dramsko formo poskusil speljati lok nenehnih presenečenj.

Apollinaire je igro z uporabo skrajnosti zapeljal v območje burke ter s tem jasno izrazil svoje stališče glede političnih spodbud k nataliteti v povojni Franciji. Burka je po definiciji iz *Gledališkega terminološkega slovarja* »kratka komedija s poenostavljenim in karikiranim dogajanjem, robatim humorjem«, burkaška komedija pa je »komedija, ki norčavo prikazuje tipične značaje nižjih družbenih slojev, vključuje tudi kritiko življenja« (Humar idr. 54–5). Avtor v knjižnem predgovoru pravi, da bi lahko bila njegova igra kar najbolj pretresljiva drama, če pa bi Francozi dejansko dvignili nataliteto, pa bi postala resnična burka (Béhar 314). Bistveno pri Apollinairovem poskusu komedije je, da se v njej komedijski pendant strasti do realnega kaže v formi burke, ki izkušnjo realnega predeluje v smeh oziroma v neuničljiv zanos in pri tem izdatno računa tudi na ironično distanco. Obe možnosti, ki ju je predvidel kot možni žanrski opredelitvi, sovpadeta, saj je realno njegove burke že (skorajšnji) povojni svet, v katerem se bodo prave sile moči šele oblikovale in v katerega je bilo gotovo več kot smiselno poseči z umetniško gesto. Sprememba Terezinega spola in njena emancipacija tako ni več satira na feministično gibanje, temveč realna težnja po enakovredni delitvi vlog. Apollinaire postavlja novo paradigmo zakona, ki je v njegovi viziji progresivno egalitaren in daleč pred njegovim časom. V tem smislu se njegove (utopične) sanje po pozitivni spremembi, ki jo prinese vojna, uresničijo v tej viziji, ki pa je, kot vemo iz zgodovine, še daleč od realnega.

Pri Apollinairu ima strast do realnega komično razsežnost. V *Tejrezijevih dojkah* se »realno« ne kaže predvsem kot nasilna logika oblasti, temveč kot niz družbenih imperativov – zlasti povojnih politik natalitete, spolnih vlog in nacionalne regeneracije –, ki jih komedija vzame dobesedno in jih s tem privede do absurda.

Prav v tem dobesednem približevanju realnemu se vzpostavi komični učinek: ko se družbene norme, ki so sicer prikrite kot samoumevne resnice, materializirajo na odru, se pokažeta njihova notranja protislovnost in arbitrarna narava. Preobrazba spola, razpad stabilnih identitet in množična reprodukcija, ki jo igra satirično tematizira, razkrijejo, da je »realno« povojne družbe že samo po sebi konstrukcija, ki deluje pretirano, nelogično in zato komično.

V tem smislu Apollinaire ne ironizira realnega od zunaj, temveč ga dovede do točke, kjer se njegovi lastni mehanizmi začnejo lomiti. Komično tako ne nastopi kot nasprotje realnega, temveč kot njegov učinek v trenutku, ko je realno vzeto absolutno resno.

Aleksander Vvedenski in *Božič pri Ivanovih*

V prvih desetletjih dvajsetega stoletja so se avantgardne strategije komedije razvijale z enako ali še močnejšo silo tudi v vzhodni Evropi. *Božič pri Ivanovih* (1938) je igra v devetih slikah, ki jo je Aleksander Vvedenski napisal v radikalnem odklonu od zapovedanega socialističnega realizma in v kateri je stvarnost reprezentirana na popolnoma samosvoj in nenavaden način. Prav ta samosvoja in nenavadna reprezentacija realnosti je bila po vsej verjetnosti tudi razlog za to, da je absurdizem Vvedenskega podobno kot komedijsko-groteskne taktike nadrealistične komedije, npr. *Viktorja ali otrok na oblasti* Rogerja Vitraca, izjemno močno vplival tudi na povojno slovensko gledališče in dramatiko, npr. na Dušana Jovanovića in Milana Jesiha.[2]

Igra *Božič pri Ivanovih* na več ravneh ruši konvencije realistične gledališke poetike in parodira kanonizirano klasično rusko literaturo, zlasti Čehova in Dostojevskega (Roberts 97). Poigrava se z linearnostjo dramskega časa in neprestano razbija koherenco dogajanja. Vvedenski ruši realizem dogajanja na kar največ ravneh in se poigrava z delovanjem logike. Živali, enoletni otrok in deli telesa lahko govorijo in imajo celo intelektualni diskurz. Dramatik v določene didaskalije vnaša subjektivni glas pripovedovalca, ki deluje potujevalno. V prizorih je dosledno izpisan čas in nekateri potekajo delno vzporedno ali pa trajajo dlje, kot bi si predstavljali po realistični dramski logiki (prav tam 98–100). V igrivosti in humornosti dramskega dogajanja je nenehno prisoten podton resnosti, ki namiguje na realno družbe in političnega sistema, v katerem je ustvarjal Vvedenski.

Ruski absurdizem je eno tistih avantgardnih gibanj, ki razbija povezave, privilegira nesmisel in se odpoveduje gledališču kot estetski totaliteti. S tem se dogaja obrat od dramaturško jasno oblikovanega sporočila k performativnemu dejanju. Slednje pa za celostno manifestacijo potrebuje gledalca, ki »drugi del uresniči z intuicijo, svojim razumevanjem, svojo fantazijo« (Lehmann 75). Vvedenski si prek svoje filozofije o času prizadeva za prekinitev kontinuuma dogajanja in vzpostavlja alternativno dojemanje trajanja časa. V didaskalijah na začetku in koncu posameznega prizora vestno navaja podatke o času in trajanju. Če jim sledimo, pridemo do ugotovitve, da se nekateri prizori časovno delno ali v celoti prekrivajo, torej mestoma dogajajo simultano.

2 O tem izčrpno piše Tomaž Toporišič v razpravi »Parataktični absurdizem in (ne več) dramska komedija od Jesiha do Semenič in naprej«, ko poudari, da se je Dušan Jovanović v igri *Norci (iz šestdesetih let 20. stoletja)* »gibal tudi v smeri dramske taktike, ki je bila hkrati gogoljevsko groteskna, absurdistična kot pri Daniilu Harmsu in Aleksandru Ivanoviču Vvedenskem, nadrealistična kot pri zgodnjih igrah Rogerja Vitraca in njegovem *Viktorju ali otrocih na oblasti*, teorija pa jo je predvsem s Tarasom Kermaunerjem začela interpretirati kot ludistični modernizem« (Toporišič 130).

Igra *Božič pri Ivanovih* odpira raziskavo najrazličnejših družbenih transgresij, od seksualnosti, nasilja in tabujev do problema družbenih konvencij in meščanskih norm, ki jih obrača na glavo. Vvedenski je v begu od zapovedanega sovjetskega socrealizma dogajanje v igri subverzivno umestil v salon meščanske družine s konca devetnajstega stoletja. S svojo prevratniško logiko in alogičnostjo je tradicionalno pričakovanje božične jelke in vsega lepega, mirnega, družinskega in nasploh idiličnega obrnil v njihovo nasprotje, kar prinese sprva neslutene, a tako v igro kot v zgodovinski čas vpisane prvine tesnobnosti, nedomačnosti oziroma občutja »*das Unheimliche*«. V nemščini beseda *unheimlich* izhaja iz *heimlich*, kar pomeni domač, prijeten, varen, intimen, navdajajoč s »prijetnim občutkom mirnega zadovoljstva itd., prijetnega miru in varne zaščite kot v varni, zaprti hiši«. Od tod pa dobi *heimlich* tudi dodaten pomen, in sicer nečesa skrivnega, skritega, prikritega, z nekolikšno razširitvijo pomena tudi ogrožajočega, grozljivega – torej pravega nasprotja domačnosti (Dolar 13). Tesnoba, ki prihaja iz okolja varnega doma, je tista tesnoba, ki jo imenujemo *unheimlich*, in igra *Božič pri Ivanovih* se poskuša v nekaterih segmentih približati prav tovrstnim občutjem. Druga paralela z občutjem *unheimlich* je stremljenje Vvedenskega k alogičnosti in njegovo občutenje racionalnosti kot temeljne zablode njegovega časa. Razum po Vvedenskem »ne doume sveta«. Gre torej za drugi vidik pojma *das Unheimliche*, ki nastane kot posledica vzpona znanstvene in politične racionalnosti in ki odpira večno dimenzijo človekovega izkustva – a se zaradi svoje nenavadne narave umešča v vmesni prostor med imanenco in transcendenco oziroma sublimnim. To mesto je intimno, a hkrati tuje in prav v tem najbližje izkušnji človečnosti tudi v psihoanalitskem smislu. S tem smo torej na sledi neke posebne vrste tesnobi in grozljivemu, a tudi presežnemu in vzvišenemu. Dramatika se znotraj gledališča, za razliko od filmskega medija, redko loteva žanra grozljivke in pri občinstvu še redkeje izzove občutke subtilne groze in strahu, četudi so bila prav ta občutja, poleg sočutja ter katarze, v samem temelju antične tragedije. Razmah žanra grozljivke je v socialnem smislu pogojen z akumulacijo negativnih impulzov iz družbenopolitičnega dogajanja, ki se lahko v najrazličnejših oblikah sproščajo prek umetniškega medija, obenem pa je grozljivo svojevrstna hrbtna stran komičnega.

Igra *Božič pri Ivanovih* je s svojo tragifarsičnostjo izvrsten dramski primer vzpostavitve grozljivega oziroma srhljivega znotraj fenomena komedije. Avtorjev postopek pisanja lahko umestimo med tiste poskuse dramskega ustvarjanja, v katerih se jasno izrisuje realno komedije, ki je tudi v tem primeru grozljivo. Že po vsebinski liniji lahko, kljub absurdnemu dogajanju in jeziku, ki privilegira nesmisel, v postavitvi dramskega dogajanja v prostore uradnih institucij opazimo odmev stalinističnih postopkov likvidacije. Tudi duhovita absurdnost vseh dramskih likov, ki zastopajo predstavnike teh institucij, namiguje na realno, ki tiči v ozadju. Vvedenski ga sicer kamuflira z vsemi razpoložljivimi, zlasti komedijskimi sredstvi, vendar se to nenehno vrača kot bolečina in neovrgljiva bridkost. Opaziti je celo

presenetljiv proces, in sicer, da so najbolj komične in absurdne situacije najbližje realnemu, kar dejansko potrjuje tezo, da komedija dvajsetega stoletja v svojih najizrazitejših slogovnih potezah izhaja neposredno iz strašljive realnosti, ki evocira njeno realno in je z njim tudi tesno prepletena. Institucionalni in družbeni red – meščanska družina, administrativni sistemi, ideološki aparati – se pokaže kot struktura, ki deluje predvsem na ravni lastne samoumevnosti, ne pa na podlagi racionalne utemeljitve. Komični učinek pri tem ne izhaja iz zunanjega komentarja, temveč iz samega postopka literalizacije realnega, kjer njegova dosledna izvedba vodi v razpad koherence in pomena.

V tem pogledu se Vvedenski neposredno navezuje na širši avantgardni premik z začetka dvajsetega stoletja, v katerem Alfred Jarry že s *Kraljem Ubujem* pokaže, da je groteskna komedija sposobna razkriti realno oblasti kot že v izhodišču absurdno in nelogično strukturo. Podobno tudi Guillaume Apollinaire v *Tejrezijevih dojkah* vzpostavi logiko komedije, ki realno družbenih imperativov – spolnih, političnih, reproduktivnih – ne komentira od zunaj, temveč jih izpelje do njihove dobesednosti, kjer se razkrijejo s komičnim preseganjem samih sebe.

Vvedenski se izkaže kot nadaljevalec istega postopka: komedija ni več reprezentacija sveta, temveč način, kako svet v svoji prekomerni realnosti sam preide v območje komičnega. Prav zato se »strast do realnega« v avantgardi ne kaže kot vračanje k resnici sveta, temveč kot njena estetska izpeljava do točke, kjer realno postane nerazločljivo od svoje lastne groteskne forme.

Odgovori komedije *passion de réel*

S tremi primeri komedij iz prve polovice dvajsetega stoletja smo želeli prikazati nekaj različnih komedijskih strategij, ki jih predstavi dvajseto stoletje. Realno komedije oziroma komedijski pendant realnega se prikazuje v odmiku od realizma, v farsi, burki, groteski, karikaturi, nonsensu, tragifarsičnosti, tragikomediji, absurdističnih poetikah in v postopku epskega gledališča, ki se loti rahljanja vezi med realnim in dozdevkom ter s tem umešča dozdevek v samo realno in jasno izpostavi njegov učinek.

Fenomen komičnega v dvajsetem stoletju ne vznika iz sproščenega vzdušja in splošnega blagostanja, kot bi lahko domnevali iz stereotipne predstave o komediji kot o veseli, neproblemsko zastavljeni in radost prinašajoči dramski zvrsti, temveč iz kompleksnega problemskega sveta, ki ga racionalno pogosto niti ni mogoče razrešiti. V tem obdobju je bila komedija nosilka pogosto nepričakovane reakcije na politično dogajanje ali pa je pod njenim okriljem nastal kodificiran odgovor na trde politične razmere v totalitarnih režimih.

Komedijske pisave uporabljajo postopke tako visoke kot nizke komedije, pri čemer se ta distinkcija v modernosti postopoma razrahlja in izgublja svojo stabilno estetsko funkcijo. S tem se vzpostavi razširjeno polje komičnega, ki ni več zamejeno znotraj žanra, saj se komičnost vse pogosteje odmika od neposrednega smeha in deluje kot strukturalni princip kritičnosti in distance. Komedija se tako razširi v vse pore performativnega in postopoma preseže literarni okvir, kar je še posebej vidno v drugi polovici dvajsetega stoletja skozi postmodernistične poetike in estetiko performativnega.

S tem ko se preoblikuje pojem komedijskega žanra, se oblikuje tudi nova paradigma, v kateri komedijski postopki prehajajo v različne žanre in medije, pri čemer delujejo kot orodje rušenja avtoritete in ideološke samoumevnosti. Po vrhuncu klasične komedije in njenem kasnejšem razkroju v romantiki smo v dvajsetem stoletju priča njeni temeljni razgradnji, kjer, kot ugotavlja Segal, »smeh ni rezultat prepoznave šale, ampak izhaja iz nesmisla same strukture« (Segal 403). Komedijska struktura tako postane poligon formalnega eksperimenta, hkrati pa tudi prostor, kjer se razkrije temeljni manko stabilne žanrske identitete.

V tem smislu realno komedije ni več zunanja referenca, temveč strukturni učinek same komične forme, ki realnost proizvaja skozi njeno deformacijo. Prav zato se komedija v dvajsetem stoletju približa tudi brechtovski potujitvi in postdramskemu razumevanju gledališča, kjer predstava ne reprezentira realnosti, temveč producira njene učinke v samem performativnem aktu (Lehmann). Komedija dvajsetega stoletja se tako ne opredeljuje več kot žanr, temveč kot način mišljenja realnega skozi njegovo estetsko destabilizacijo.

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Abstract

The article focuses on comedy at the beginning of the 20th century and argues that this was a period marked by comedy's proximity to and intertwining with the complexity of social change and of a historical moment shaped, especially through the experience of the world wars, by horror and trauma. The author notes the mass emergence of dramatic forms in which both comic and tragic elements are intertwined, as well as the use of numerous stylistic devices of classical comedy in the works of avant-garde authors. Based on examples of dramatic avant-garde texts by Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire and Alexander Vvedensky, the article analyses new stylistic tendencies and shifts in the perception of comedy as a literary genre. Alain Badiou characterises the 20th century as the century of the "passion for the real", which at first glance has no comic dimension. How does the "passion for the real" fit with comedy and the phenomena of the comic, which – in contrast to the real – are located precisely in the realm of appearance, illusion and doubling and, with their location in the area of appearances, are far removed from the real? Or, in other words, does the passion for the real have comic dimensions? The selected examples testify that comedy defies the passion for the real with irony, the grotesque, absurdism and alienation as theorised and practised by Bertolt Brecht, but that, in the process, it loses the integrity of its structure and steps off its literary pedestal. Instead, individual comedy elements intrude into all genres and especially into performative eventness, understood here through Erika Fischer-Lichte's The *Transformative Power of Performance* and through postmodernist poetics, as defined in dramatic terms by Hans-Thies Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre*, with which comedy has been inextricably linked throughout the 20th century and up to the present day.

Keywords: comedy, avant-garde, alienation effect, passion for the real, performative, postmodernism

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Comedy at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Its Passion for the Real and Influence on Genre Development

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Comedy in the first half of the 20th century, during the avant-garde and modernism, was a dynamic and diverse phenomenon that uniquely marked the dramatic paradigm of the entire 20th century. It paved the way for staging strategies that are part of subversive and critical theatrical practice to this day. In the 20th century, playwrights increasingly freely mixed elements of different dramatic genres. This practice is also known from earlier literary periods, but was not previously considered a dominant tendency. With the 20th century, works began to be created en masse that had the character of both a comic and a serious dramatic genre. At the same time, the traditional comedy structure and dramatic language began a process of intensive decomposition, as did the wider use of comedy elements in general, including in contexts not strictly comedic. This tendency continued and intensified in contemporary drama and 21st-century theatre, in which the genre category seems to have been surpassed or to require redefinition in both theory and performance practices.

Based on Badiou's question of what is real in this century, we ask ourselves what constitutes the real of comedy in the 20th century. The first thought might be that comedic writing is silent about the horrors of the time. However, numerous comedies clearly show this is not the case. Examples of comedies testify to the fact that the real of comedy in this century has become a strong antagonism to the horrors of the time – wars, crises, revolutions, totalitarian systems. However, in what way has the comedic spirit responded to all this and what about comedy, which is fuelled by appearance and illusions in the context of the 20th century? Comedy, as an artistic genre based on appearances and appearances, establishes a kind of distance from the real, as is also typical of 20th-century art. At the same time, the power of fiction means that we can also perceive the appearance as real. Comedy actually happens in the very encounter with the real. We will examine the methods different comedies use in this regard and the results they produce, based on a few selected examples.

It is worth emphasising that 20th-century comedy is often bitterly funny, as can be seen in avant-garde dramatic texts, absurdist comedies and in Brecht's work, which is considered one of the fundamental turning points in the modern history of theatre. An important paradigm for the development of comedy is the theatre of the absurd and its avant-garde predecessors. Alfred Jarry, Franz Kafka, the OBERIU group and Antonin Artaud are just a few of the most prominent predecessors of the theatre of the absurd. However, not all of them fit into the tradition of comedy. From the perspective of anticipating new comedic tendencies and deconstructing classical comedy, the dramatic works of Alfred Jarry and the works of Alexander Vvedensky, a representative of the Saint Petersburg OBERIU group, are particularly interesting. Perhaps a less prominent author who also marked the comedy paradigm of the 20th century is Guillaume Apollinaire, who introduces a whole series of comedic additions within the emerging new paradigm and, in the light of the avant-garde, establishes a new attitude towards theatre as an art of the 20th century. Bertolt Brecht also affirmed important shifts in the field of comedy with epic theatre and a new dramatic approach based on a key comedy component – the alienation effect.

Using a few examples of comedies from the first half of the 20th century, the article illustrates some of the period's comedic strategies. The real of comedy, or the comedic counterpart of the real, is presented in a departure from realism, in farce, grotesque, caricature, nonsense, tragifarce, tragicomedy, absurdist poetics, as well as in epic theatre, which sets out to loosen the ties between the real and the imaginary, thereby placing the imaginary within the real itself, thus clearly highlighting its effect.

The phenomenon of the comic in the 20th century does not arise from a relaxed atmosphere and general well-being, as one might assume from the stereotypical idea of comedy as a cheerful, unproblematic and joy-giving dramatic genre, but from a complex, problematic world that may not even be rationally resolved. During this period, comedy often elicited unexpected reactions to political events or, under its auspices, a codified response to the harsh political conditions in totalitarian regimes was created, as in the works of the Russian absurdists.

Comedic writing uses numerous procedures of both high and low comedy, thereby achieving the most productive fusion of these concepts in the spirit of modernity. It thus becomes evident that "low" and "high" comedy no longer exist as independent categories in the same way as before, and that the entire question is even more directly one of criticism and subversiveness. The genre of comedy also expands and is no longer a binding category, as it often moves away from laughter and simple comic effects. Comedy spreads its wings into all the pores of the performative. It emerges from the literary pedestal, especially in the second half of the 20th century, through postmodernist poetics and performative aesthetics. As the concept of the comedy

genre evolves, a new paradigm gradually emerges in which comic procedures pass into different genres and media and functions – through Brechtian-tinged humour, irony and other comedic stylistic techniques – as tools for undermining authority and ideological certainties.

After comedy's peak in the classic period and its decline in the romantic period, in the 20th century, we witness the dismantling of the comedy structure, which becomes a testing ground for freedom and, consequently, opens a wide field of expressive possibilities, which authors intensively explore. Individual comedy elements intrude into all genres, especially into performative and postmodern poetics, with which comedy has been inextricably linked throughout the 20th century and up to the present day.

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Povzetek

Umetniški vodja Gauthier Dance Company iz Stuttgarta, Eric Gauthier, po obsežni odpovedi mednarodnih gostovanj leta 2021 svoje plesalce poimenuje Dying Swans. Družbeni in zdravstveni izzivi, ki so vplivali na umetnost v obdobju pandemijskih omejitev (2020–2022), so omogočali realizacijo projektov le v virtualnem prostoru, ki je postal edina možnost za umetniško ustvarjanje in ohranjanje stika z občinstvom. Virtualna premiera *The Dying Swans Project*, ki vsebuje šestnajst avtorskih baletnih koreografij, je bila 16. aprila 2021.

Članek raziskuje pristope k prostoru, ki so jih uporabili koreografi, ter načine umetniškega izražanja skozi digitalni medij, ki po Gauthierju ostaja le alternativa tradicionalni odrski izkušnji.

Nagovarjanje občinstva prek kamere zahteva drugačne uprizoritvene elemente, kjer oder nadomestijo urbano okolje, studio ali narava, kar vzpostavlja nove fenomenološke, konceptualne in teoretske temelje za transformacijo plesnega gledališča. Teoretske razlage, podkrepljene z analizo uprizoritvene prakse, kažejo na prisilno sprejemanje virtualnega gledališča kot začasne rešitve, hkrati pa virtualnost predstavlja izziv sodobnosti. Z uporabo Pavisove metode analize članek preučuje prostorsko estetiko *Dying Swans Project* v okviru hibridnih form, ki presegajo tradicionalni odrski prostor in v postpandemijskem obdobju vstopajo v novo družbeno paradigmo. Pavisova metoda je dopolnjena s Foucaultevim razumevanjem heterotopije kot drugega prostora, v katerem se sopostavljajo različni, zgodovinsko, medijsko in zaznavno neenotni prostorski redi.

Ključne besede: sodobni balet, intermedijska umetniška praksa, postpandemijski ples

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Heterotopije digitalne transformacije: prostorska analiza *The Dying Swans Project* v pandemijskem in postpandemijskem kontekstu

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Uvod

Obdobje pandemije koronavirusa (2020–2022) je začasno ohromilo družbeno življenje in prisililo umetniške institucije k zaprtju, kar je močno vplivalo na svet uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Umetniki so kljub neznosnim razmeram hitro začeli iskati alternativne načine družbenega povezovanja za realizacijo svojih umetniških vizij. Uporaba informacijsko-komunikacijskih tehnologij je kljub omejitvam pristne gledališke izkušnje omogočila ponovni stik z občinstvom. Družbeni vidik te nuje odraža vstop tehnološke virtualnosti v vsakdan, kar prepoznavam kot biopolitični vednostno-oblastni mehanizem nadzora posameznika v neoliberalnih okvirih subjektivacije. V tem članku je obravnavan vzorčni spletni plesni projekt *Dying Swans Project*, ki predstavlja alternativno kreacijo sebstva in družbenega povezovanja s poudarkom na raziskovanju heterogenih prostorov znotraj Fokinove *ideje laboda* ob predpostavki, da interpretacija ideje in njena prostorska umeščenost omogočata konstituiranje pomenov. Izhajam iz Foucaultevega koncepta heterotopije, ki gledališče uvršča med prostore prepletanja različnih resničnosti (22–27) in projektnega načrta Erica Gauthierja, ki temelji na reinterpretacijah plesa *Umirajočega laboda*, izvzetih iz kanonskega konteksta koreografije Michela Fokina, z izražanjem upanja, hrepenenja in želje po stiku z občinstvom, kar odraža izkušnje pandemijskega časa. Cilj projekta Stuttgartske baletne hiše je bila preselitev predstave v virtualni prostor kot takrat edina izbira udejanjanja repertoarja.

Teoretske razlage premeščanj tradicionalnega odrskega prostora v polje specifičnih in heterogenih prostorov sodobnih uprizoritvenih oz. scenskih praks podkrepim s teoretskimi dognanji avtorjev s področja plesnih študij Susan Leigh Foster, Janet

Adshead in Judith Mackrell, gledaliških ved in teatrologije Mete Hočevar, Hans-Thiesa Lehmanna, Barbare Lesák, filozofije umetnosti in estetike Bojane Kunst in Petre Pogorevc, Mojce Puncer, Miška Šuvakovića, likovnih ved in estetike Uršule Berlot Pompe, teoretikov novih medijev Janeza Strehovca, Oliverja Graua, Marise Enhuber idr., prostorsko analizo gledališke uprizoritve povzemam po predlogi Patricea Pavisa.

V kontekstu digitalnih prostorov v uprizoritvenih praksah me zanima razlikovanje med uporabo digitalnih medijev kot tehnološkega orodja znotraj tradicionalnega gledališča, digitalnim prostorom kot samostojnim ali mešanim uprizoritvenim medijem ter njegovo dokumentarno-arhivsko funkcijo. Takšna razmejitev odpira vprašanja redefinicije gledalčevega zaznavanja, prostorske postavitve predstave in razmerja med izvedbo v živo ter medijsko posredovanimi oblikami uprizarjanja. Zato analiza razgrinja tudi spremembe v komunikaciji z občinstvom prek digitalnih medijev in pokaže, da virtualna realizacija ni le tehnična rešitev kriznega časa, temveč prostor preoblikovanja koreografske misli. V raziskavi zato sistematično opisujem prostorska in medijska razmerja, ki jih *Dying Swans Project* vzpostavlja na prehodu iz institucionalnega odrskega prostora v digitalno posredovano uprizoritveno obliko. Osredotoča se na razlikovanje med filmsko oblikovanim prostorom odrskega dogajanja, samostojno medijsko konstrukcijo prostora in foucaultevsko heterotopično sopostavljanje odra, baletne dvorane, studia, urbanega okolja, narave, telesa in digitalnega zapisa ter metaforičnega prostora Fokinove ideje laboda.

Metodološka izhodišča

V kontekstu postmoderne prostorske paradigme, kjer uprizoritev postane prostorska in vizualna izkušnja, identificiram heterogene uprizoritvene prostore ter njihove pomenske in formalno-strukturne podobnosti. Razkrivanje pomenov temelji na Barthesovi tezi o mreži odnosov med besedilom, gledalcem in širšim konceptualnim poljem, kar omogoča subjektivno interpretacijo v okviru medbesedilnega raziskovanja (nav. po Auslander 46). Metodološko izhajam iz predpostavke, da prostora v *Dying Swans Project* ni mogoče razumeti samo kot prizorišča plesa, temveč kot razmerje med telesom, kamero, montažo, zvokom, lokacijo in gledalčevim posredovanim pogledom.

Pojem postmodernosti v razpravi uporabljam v povezavi s prostorsko in medijsko razpršenostjo sodobnih uprizoritvenih praks, v smislu medbesedilnosti, relativizacije stabilnega pomena in ob tem večji vlogi gledalčeve subjektivne interpretacije. Postmoderna prostorska paradigma označuje premik od odra kot enotnega reprezentacijskega prostora k heterogenim prostorom, v katerih pomen nastaja skozi sopostavljanje telesa, lokacije, medija, podobe, zvoka in kulturnega spomina. Učinki postmoderne »prostorizacije« po Manovichu dajejo prednost prostoru pred časom,

sploščijo zgodovinski potek časa in zavračajo velike pripovedi. Avtor dodaja, da so v osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja računalniški mediji zaporedno shranjevanje nadomestili s shranjevanjem z naključnim dostopom; hierarhično organizacijo informacij so nadomestili s sploščenim hipertekstom, psihološko gibanje pripovedi v romanih in filmih pa s fizičnim gibanjem skozi prostor (78).

Virtualnost v kontekstu članka označuje medijsko posredovano obliko prisotnosti, ki nastaja skozi digitalni zapis, ekran, montažo in gledalčevo oddaljeno zaznavo. Virtualni prostor ima tehnično, zaznavno in konceptualno razsežnost, virtualna podoba pa nastane kot rezultat kadriranja, približevanja, oddaljevanja, ritmiziranja in postprodukcijskega oblikovanja plesnega dogodka in se po Deleuzu realizira izven časovno-prostorskih koordinat s svojimi idealnimi posebnostmi in virtualnimi povezavami (139). Pojem abstrakcije po Roseltu razumem kot postopek izločanja, zgoščanja in preoblikovanja izbranih elementov iz kompleksnega fenomena (420–422). V analizi *Dying Swans Project* abstrakcija označuje postopke, pri katerih koreografija pomen oblikuje skozi organizacijo gibanja, telesnega detajla, trajanja, kadra in afektivne napetosti.

Pavis v knjigi *Analyzing Performance* razvija protokole za analizo uprizoritev, v kateri opredeli tudi metodo prostorske analize predstave. Analizo konkretizira s terminom scenografija kot nizom parametrov, opredeljenih kot urbane, arhitekturne, scenske, gestikularne idr. prostorske oblike, z razmerjem med slušnim in igralnim prostorom ter načeli strukturiranja oziroma organiziranja prostora. Natančneje jih opredeli kot dramaturško funkcijo odrskega prostora in njegove zasedenosti, razmerja med odrom in njegovo zunanjostjo, povezavami med uporabljenim prostorom in fikcijo uprizorjenega besedila, razmerjem med prikazanim in prikritim ter vprašanjem, kako se scenografija razvija in čemu ustrezajo njene preobrazbe (38). Analiza obravnava tudi sisteme barv, oblik, materialov in njihove konotacije, pri čemer Pavisovo metodo integriram v svojo analizo, ki jo dopolnim s Foucaultevim razumevanjem heterotopije kot drugega prostora, v katerem se sopostavljajo nezdružljive resničnosti.

Na tej podlagi v raziskavi oblikujem dve raziskovalni usmeritvi kot sistematičen opis prostorskih in medijskih razmerij, ki jih *Dying Swans Project* vzpostavlja na prehodu iz institucionalnega odrskega prostora v digitalno posredovano uprizoritveno obliko. Prva raziskovalna usmeritev se nanaša na opis premestitve *Dying Swans Project* v virtualni prostor, pri čemer me zanima, kako kamera, montaža, izbrana lokacija in izbira kadra ustvarijo hibridno prostorsko strukturo. Druga raziskovalna usmeritev se nanaša na heterotopični značaj projekta, saj virtualni prostor sopostavi tradicionalni oder, urbano okolje, naravo, intimni telesni prostor, ekran in digitalni zapis znotraj Fokinove ideje laboda. Izraz »prostori znotraj ideje laboda« pri tem ne označuje fizičnega prostora v neposrednem pomenu, temveč konceptualno in afektivno polje,

v katerem se kanonski motiv *Umirajočega laboda* razpre v različne koreografske, družbene, telesne in pandemijske pomene. Analiza pri tem sistematično opisuje načine, na katere projekt oblikuje druge prostore pandemijskega in postpandemijskega časa.

Transformacija tradicionalnega institucionaliziranega odrskega prostora

Tradicionalno gledališče v evropskem prostoru razumemo kot sistem, ki se je skozi stoletja razvijal, nadgrajeval in izpopolnjeval glede na gledalčeve potrebe percepcije. Institucionalizirani gledališki prostor obsega oder in zaodrje z vsemi tehničnimi pritiklinami ter prostor za občinstvo. Takšna tehnična opredelitev odrskega prostora pomensko ne zadostuje za razumevanje gledališkega prostora, saj ta nastane šele ob uprizoritvi, ko se konstituirajo različni prostori, ki preoblikujejo gledalčevo percepcijo. Gledališki teoretiki definirajo pojem prostora z upoštevanjem različnih vidikov materialnih in nematerialnih načel, ki vplivajo na njegovo zaznavanje.

Tako Meta Hočevar nekoliko poetično opredeljuje pojem gledališkega prostora: »Prostor je dokaz za zgodbo. Zgodbi podeli status resničnosti. Zaradi prostora verjamem zgodbi. Še tako neverjetne zgodbe postanejo v pravem prostoru verjetne in še tako izmišljen prostor postane zaradi zgodbe, ki se v njem (z)godi, resničen. To je gledališče« (12). V nadaljevanju gledališki prostor opredeli na različne načine: kot lokacijo ali funkcijo oziroma življenjski prostor zgodbe, prostor kot sporočilo ali kot sprožilec zgodbe, prostor kot samostojni parameter s svojo lastno zgodbo ali predzgodbo, ki je v posebnem odnosu s prikazovano zgodbo, prostor kot stališče, kot nosilec vzdušja, kot impulz gledalčevim spominskim asociacijam, prostor kot energijo ali metaforo (prav tam 31).

Nekateri drugi teoretiki menijo, da gledališki prostor sega prek rampe, ob predpostavki prostorske tukajšnjosti in istočasne navzočnosti izvajalcev in občinstva. Gledališki prostor določa funkcijo posameznika: človeku ob vstopu v avditorij prostor dodeli vlogo gledalca, ko ta zavzame pozicijo, s katere bo spremljal predstavo, tistega, ki stopi na oder, pa prostor opredeli kot nastopajočega. V teh pogojih se v skladu z družbeno pogodbo vzpostavi medsebojni stik, ki v tok dogajanja vključi vse navzoče, kar aktivno kumulira izkustva. Jens Roselt to spoznanje uokviri v celostni naravi gledališkega prostora (89). Drugačen pogled pojmovanja gledališkega prostora se vpeljuje s fizično arhitekturno delitvijo na prostor za gledanje in prostor za nastopanje. Jasno določena meja vzpostavlja specifično hierarhijo pogleda. Pri tem je gledalec potisnjen v vlogo nevidnega opazovalca, medtem ko iluzija četrte stene ukine vzajemnost in uokviri nastopajočega v ločen (odrski) prostor. Z zgodovinske perspektive gledališkega uprizarjanja se ta pogled povezuje s teorijo Noverrovega zaprtega slikovnega

prostora.[1] Vendar pa problematiziranje pojmovanja prostora sega še dlje v zgodovino. Susan Leigh Foster povezuje definiranje plesnega prostora z zgodovinskimi sistemi plesnih notacij z uvedbo koncepta »čistega prostora« kot univerzalnega jezika plesa,[2] ki sega že v obdobje Ludvika XIV. (18).

Judith Mackrell čisti prostor reprezentira kot nevtralno površino, ki jo dopolnjujejo mirovanja med gibi, prostor kot ozadje linij in vzorcev, poln razsežnosti in odmevov koreografije, skupinske dinamike plesalcev, ki producirajo čustva in gibe, prostor, ki ga ustvari plesalec, ko je obrnjen s hrbtom proti gledalcem, plesalec, zaprt v svoje telo, plesna kompozicija kot prostor, različna koreografska žarišča znotraj scene, veliko ali malo uporabljenega scenskega prostora, zgornji in spodnji prostor, pri katerem ima avtorica v mislih grand skoke in parterno tehniko (173–175).

Roselt gledališki prostor opredeli širše:

> Prostor gledališča je predpostavka predstave, obenem pa tudi produkt gledaliških procesov. Prostore lahko štejemo za dinamične, saj jih proizvajajo dejanja udeleženih. Igralčeva gesta, performerjeva hoja ali plesalčeva pirueta so dejanja, ki ustvarjajo prostor. Pri tem je treba upoštevati, da je prostorskost ne le vizualen, pač pa tudi akustičen fenomen. Bližino in daljavo ali prostranost in volumen lahko prikličejo tudi glasovi, šumi ali toni. Govorjenje stavka ali petje melodije je dejanje, ki v teku predstave ustvarja specifične prostore, ki, ko se izvedejo, minejo, ne da bi za sabo pustili kakšno materialno sled. (89)

Roselt obravnava tudi prostor gledalcev, znotraj katerega se v uprizoritvi vzpostavlja specifičen odnos med odrom in občinstvom. Prostor pri tem ni razumljen zgolj kot fizična danost, temveč kot dejavnik, ki organizira poglede, premešča perspektivo ter določa oblike prisotnosti in aktivnosti gledalcev. Ti so opredeljeni kot »(so)stvarniki prostora«, saj s svojo navzočnostjo, zaznavanjem in odzivi pomembno prispevajo k njegovemu konstituiranju (90). Podobno kot Roselt tudi Pavis izvirne rabe prostora ne umešča izključno v njegovo materialno oziroma scenografsko razsežnost, temveč jo prepoznava tudi v besedilu in zvoku. Ti elementi se prepletajo s fizičnim prostorom in časom ter v medsebojni povezanosti oblikujejo prostorskost dane scenografije (*Analyzing* 135).

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1 Jean-Georges Noverre je v svojih pismih zapisal: »Balet je slika in oder je platno« (nav. po Hrvatin 188). S tem je izpostavil pojmovanje odra kot estetiziranega prostora, v katerem se naravno ne pojavlja neposredno, temveč kot harmonizirana in kompozicijsko urejena podoba. Noverrov koncept »zaprtega slikovnega prostora« tako vzpostavlja specifično razmerje med gledalcem in nastopajočim: aktivni družbeni odnos nadomesti z distanciranim, pretežno pasivnim opazovanjem. Podobno kot slika v galeriji ne vzpostavlja zavesti o tem, da je opazovana, tudi odrski prostor deluje kot dvodimenzionalna estetska ploskev. Nastopajoči so v takšni zasnovi umeščeni kot elementi zaključene kompozicije, ki gledalca ne nagovarjajo neposredno, temveč učinkujejo predvsem znotraj notranje organizacije odrske slike.

2 Plesne notacije (Beauchamp, Feuillet idr.) so vsebovale planimetrične prikaze plešočih teles v različnih smereh in poteh v prostoru. Zaradi kulturnih in zgodovinskih posebnosti posameznih plesov se je kasneje izkazala potreba po homogenizaciji koncepta prostora in časa. Specifični odrski prostor, ki ga je opredeljeval posamezni koreografski zapis, je dobil definicijo čistega prostora, v katerem je označena le smer lokacije avditorija, kar olajšuje orientacijo bralca plesnih zapisov koreografij. Redefiniranje lokacije in s tem vzpostavitve čistega prostora tako omogoča primerjavo specifike posameznih plesov in njihovo vrednotenje. Nova, abstraktna konceptualizacija prostora v plesnih zapisih definira le geometrična načela, kar omogoča univerzalnost plesnega jezika (18–25).

Max Herrmann poudarja, da funkcija prostora ni v reprezentaciji, temveč v prikazu gibanja v njem. Definira dva pojma prostora: dejanski, ki je vezan na fizični prostor (oder, avditorij, gledališka zgradba), in doživljeni prostor, ki je dinamično ustvarjen na vsaki predstavi, v kateri se preobrazi v neki drugi prostor (Roselt 91).[3]

Martina Löw sintetizira abstraktni prostor z družbenimi kvalitetami, ki ustvarjajo nove prostore (271), medtem ko Lehmann uvaja metonimični prostor, ki zabrisuje mejo med realnim in fiktivnim doživljanjem gledališkega prostora. Posledice se realizirajo v gledališkem razumevanju prostora: iz metaforičnega in simbolnega nastane metonimični prostor (194–195).

Zgodovinsko gledano, se je konkretna raba gledališkega prostora nanašala na performativni prostor, razmerje med izvajalci in gledalci ter organizacijo in strukturo gibanja obeh subjektov. Najbolj značilni performativni prostorski formi sta bili italijanska škatla (17. stoletje), kjer sta oder in občinstvo postavljena drug proti drugemu kot dve škatli, ter enoprostorski oder brez prostorske ločitve gledalcev od izvajalcev.[4] Čeprav se pojav enoprostorskosti izraziteje umešča na začetek 20. stoletja, ta ne pomeni nujno popolnega brisanja meja med izvajalci in gledalci, temveč predvsem preoblikovanje njihovega prostorskega in zaznavnega razmerja. V šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja se je z razmahom postmodernih umetniških praks razumevanje performativnega prostora dodatno razširilo na negledališka prizorišča, ki so postala pomemben prostor raziskovanja zlasti za plesne performanse. S tem se razmerje med izvajalci, gledalci in prostorom ni več vzpostavljalo zgolj znotraj tradicionalnih gledaliških form, temveč tudi v okoljih, ki so omogočala drugačne oblike prostorske organizacije, zaznavanja in participacije. Takšne premike je mogoče povezati z razumevanjem Mojce Puncer, ki sodobne umetniške strategije teritorialnih prehajanj, participacije in komunikacije ter umetniške raziskave življenjskih oblik,

3 Omenjena dvojnost dojemanja prostora se navezuje na dva historično pogojena koncepta. Pri prvem je prostor razumljen kot matematično-fizikalni objekt, ki je homogen in izotropen in katerega empiričnosti se ne dotakne nobeno občutenje (Waldenfels 205). Roselt ta koncept povezuje z novoveškimi inovacijami uveljavljajočih se naravoslovnih znanosti 17. stoletja, z Galilejevim odkritjem kartografije vesolja in Descartesovo reorganizacijo telesa in duše, ko se pojmi razsrediščijo v oblikovanju predpostavk za idealno perspektivo. V kartezijanskem pristopu nastane prazen prostor, ki razmeji stvari in omogoča objektivno presojo za subjektivno delovanje. Pri drugem konceptu prostora pa objektivni prostor ni abstrahiran od subjektivnega. Dojemanje prostora tako ni objektivno merljivo, temveč se relativno nanaša na subjekt, ki je napolnjen s čutnimi kvalitetami (94).

4 S tehničnimi inovacijami pri odrski opremi, z uporabo novega medija filma in drugimi posegi takratnih avantgardnih umetniških tokov je enoprostorski oder začel spreminjati samo odrsko umetnost: polje gledališča je postalo njegov celotni notranji prostor, ki ni več poznal avditorija in je ponudil izziv izvajalcem in gledalcem k njegovi izvirni in konkretni uporabi. Friedrich Kiesler, ki je leta 1913 koncipiral enoprostorski oder *Wiener Konzerthaus*, je v enem svojih teoretskih manifestov, objavljenem v dnevnem časopisu *Berliner Tageblatt* leta 1923 (nav. po Lesák 43), utemeljil novo gledališče, ki je lahko obstajalo izključno v novem prostoru, pri čemer je zavračal italijansko škatlo kot oder z zastorom, kjer so zložene panorame. Ob tem je Kiesler ostro zavračal dekoracije kot sredstva za reprezentacijo naturalističnega iluzionizma meščanskega gledališča, kar je bilo za tedanjega avantgardista skorajda samoumevno. Pojmu novega gledališča in Kieslerjevi izvirnosti koncipiranja enoprostorskega odra je tedaj oporekal Jakob Moreno - Levy (nav. po Roselt 113) s sklicevanjem na opredelitev pojma improvizacijskega gledališča, objavljenega v svojem delu *Das Stegreiftheater* leta 1924, kjer je oder kot središče dogajanja umestil v arhaično prapodobo gledališča, s čimer je ustvaril igralsko skupnost, ki prostorsko-funkcionalno ne ločuje gledalcev od interpretov. Z ukinitvijo te ločnice je ustvaril celotni notranji prostor kot polje gledališča. Roselt, ki je izhajal iz paradigme enoprostorskega odra, opredeljenega po Kieslerjevih zapisih, je zaključil, da so lahko v tem okolju prepričljivi samo plesni nastopi (prav tam 121), kar so tako ali tako na začetku prejšnjega stoletja prevzele različne struje modernega plesa, ki so se uprle prostorski dispoziciji klasičnega baleta.

odmaknjene od tradicionalnih estetskih pojmov lepega in sublimnega, združuje v pojmu postestetske umetnosti (*Sodobna* 693).

Pozna osemdeseta leta 20. stoletja so odprla široko polje razprav o paradigmah sodobnega gledališkega ustvarjanja ter spodbudila iskanje konceptov, s katerimi bi bilo mogoče natančneje opredeliti njegove estetske, formalne in produkcijske značilnosti. Lehmannova teoretizacija postdramskega gledališča vključuje tudi razpravo o dramskem in postdramskem gledališkem prostoru, znotraj katere naredi kratek pregled postdramske prostorske estetike, ga poimenuje »preobrat okoli leta 1980« in ga podkrepi z argumentacijo:

> Emancipacija vizualne semiotike gledališča, povezana s politično retoriko in v konkurenci z njo, je ostala v neoavantgardi 60. let še omejena. Gledališka interpretacija je lahko predstavljala radikalno »branje«, vendar je bolj ali manj še vedno veljal primat besedila in posredovanja pomena. Slednjima je morala vizualnost v tradicionalnem dramskem gledališču vselej služiti – ne glede na njeno lastno razgrnitev optičnih in arhitekturnih čarov. Za prosto razgrnitev »gledališča podob«, kakor radi imenujemo Wilsona in naslednike, je bil potreben še nadaljnji dvojni zagon distanciranja: in sicer zagon politične izjave v ožjem in dramske literature v širšem pomenu. V začetku 80. let je zbudilo pozornost dejstvo, da je cela vrsta pomembnih inscenacij […] na različne načine realizirala velike *tableauje*. Pot si je utrlo novo poudarjanje odrske podobe, zanimanje za prestiliziran odrski prostor, ki se je kmalu izrazil v slavi radikalnih umetnikov, kot je Jan Fabre. (197)

V dvajsetletnem obdobju pred obratom Lehmann prepoznava zametke konceptov usmerjanja v stik s publiko in kot spremembo v obratu navede potopljenost gledalca v pogled, podrobnosti, formalne strukture in pomen. Funkcijo prostora označi kot gradnik uprizoritvene izkušnje z izpostavitvijo *tableau* (uokvirjanja), igre s prostorom, scenske montaže, časovnih prostorov, prostorov konflikta, postdramskega prostora kot kraja izjem, prostora kot gledališča določene lokacije in heterogenih prostorov.

Ugotavlja, da se kot *tableau* odrski prostor zapira v podobo slike in ga strukturira kot vizualno kompozicijo. Sistem uokvirjanja pa lahko preseže njegovo klasično dojemanje z uporabo svetlobnih ali zvočnih prostorskih okvirjev ter z igro med prostorom in površino, predvsem prek scenografskih posegov ali prostorskih umestitev izvajalcev na nenavadne pozicije – na primer na rampo odra, kar tvori uokvirjanje okvirjev, pri čemer se prostor zato osvobodi hierarhije besedila.

Drugačno podobo postdramskega prostora ustvarja tudi »montirani« *tableau* kot produkt scenske montaže, ker generira radikalno drugačen kompozicijski učinek. V scenski montaži oder ni več razgrnjen kot homogeno polje, temveč se artikulira kot niz izmenično sinhroniziranih ali asinhroniziranih polj, ki proizvajajo učinek prostorske ali časovne razmejenosti. Gre za montažni princip, analogen filmskemu, kjer se posamezni kadri ne združujejo v kontinuum, temveč v dialektično napetost;

med fragmenti so časovni prostori, kjer prostorska dramaturgija ne služi le kot ozadje, temveč aktivno intervenira v potek časa kot lastnega temporalnega režima gledalca v gibanju. Prostor tu postane nosilec časovne strukture, ki presega linearno naracijo in omogoča sočasnost različnih časovnih plasti – preteklost, sedanjost in potencialna prihodnost se prepletajo v istem uprizoritvenem polju, kar ustvarja fenomenološko izkušnjo časovne heterogenosti. Nadalje Lehmann uvaja prostore konflikta, kjer se odrski prostor razširi v avditorij ali pa je strukturiran tako, da globina odra teče proti občinstvu. Ta dispozicija onemogoča kontemplativni odmik in vzpostavlja gledališče kot kraj izjem – prostor skupnosti v izredni situaciji, ki zahteva distanciranje od vsakdanjika. Tu se institucionalni pojem gledališča presega in preoblikuje v gledališče določene lokacije, kjer prostor ni več nevtralen oder, temveč specifična lokacija z lastno zgodovino, arhitekturo in družbeno funkcijo, ki postane integralni del uprizoritvene semantike. Kot zadnji gradnik uprizoritvene izkušnje avtor izpostavlja heterogene prostore, ki implicirajo teritorialni premik v javno sfero. Tu nastajajo urbano in arhitekturno definirani gledališki prostori, kjer se meje med institucionalnim gledališčem in mestnim okoljem zabrisujejo. Oder se ne omejuje na gledališke stavbe, temveč se razširi v drugi javni prostor, ki s svojo materialnostjo in družbeno konotacijo soustvarja pomen uprizoritve (197–206). Ta premik od institucionalnega k lokacijsko specifičnemu gledališču radikalno preoblikuje ontologijo uprizoritvenega prostora in odpira novo paradigmo v sodobnih scenskih umetnostih heterogenih prostorov.

Drugi prostori

Michel Foucault (1986) v konceptu heterotopije gledališče razume kot prostor, ki sopostavlja nezdružljive resničnosti in ustvarja iluzije, ki jih digitalna tehnologija dopolnjuje z virtualnimi podobami (22–27). Lehmann trdi, da je gledališče vedno vključevalo tehnologijo, danes nadgrajeno z digitalizacijo (274), ki v sodobnem času raziskuje in predstavlja nove prostore ter oblikuje drugačno podobo gledališča. Razumevanje uporabe digitalnih prostorov je razmejeno na uporabo digitalnih medijev znotraj tradicionalnega gledališča in uporabo digitalnega prostora za uprizoritev kot alternativo fizičnemu. Prva vrsta praks uporablja tehnologijo kot orodje pri izvedbi tradicionalnih gledaliških uprizoritev. Pri drugi vrsti praks se uprizoritev dogaja v mediju digitalnega prostora (včasih tudi mešanega – *mixed reality*) in je obenem modelirana skozi ta medij. S tem se odpirajo nove perspektive in vzpostavljajo drugačni pristopi k razumevanju uporabe digitalnih medijev, redefiniranju gledalčevega zaznavanja, načinom postavitev predstav ter vprašanjem opredeljevanja izvedbe *live performance* (v živo) v razmerju do medijsko posredovanih oblik. Tretja vrsta praks služi dokumentiranju in arhiviranju uprizoritev.

Obravnava preselitev plesnih koreografij *Dying Swans Project* v obliko spletnega videa zahteva tudi upoštevanje govorice videa kot samostojnega medija. Pascal Bonitzer v knjigi *Slepo polje* video prostor opredeli kot medij čiste površine, elektronskega mrgolenja in ploskovnega oblikovanja, kjer se podobe zlagajo na ploskev in ne v tridimenzionalno globino prostora, ki ustvarja iluzijo, kot to deluje pri filmu (26–27). Video kljub temu ne deluje zgolj kot tehnična reprodukcija predhodnega odrskega dogodka, saj z lastnimi izraznimi sredstvi oblikuje čas, prostor in gledalčevo zaznavo. Kadriranje, bližnji plan, rez, montažni ritem, zvočna obdelava, razmerje med vidnim in izvenvidnim ter možnost ponovnega gledanja vzpostavljajo drugačno organizacijo dogodka.

Vaupotič in Bovcon v razpravi o konstrukcionističnem razumevanju identitete v neoavantgardizmu opozorita na pomen videa in novih medijev v povezavi z dialogom z ekranom, pri čemer video razumeta kot medij, ki gledalca postavlja v drugačno zaznavno in komunikacijsko razmerje do podobe (325–328). Ta vidik je za *Dying Swans Project* posebej pomemben, ker ples ne poteka pred gledalcem v skupnem fizičnem prostoru, temveč se vzpostavlja v razmerju med plesalčevim telesom, kamero, ekranom in gledalčevim oddaljenim pogledom. Različica videa zaprtega krogotoka[5] dodatno poudarja, da se video podoba lahko oblikuje kot sistem sprotne povratne zanke med telesom, kamero in ekranom. V takšnem dispozitivu gledalec ne spremlja zgolj že vzpostavljene podobe, ampak vstopa v prostor tehnično posredovanega pogleda, v katerem se prisotnost ustvarja skozi medij. Čeprav *Dying Swans Project* ni zasnovan kot klasični video zaprtega krogotoka, njegovi posnetki ohranjajo pomembno značilnost te medijske logike: telo je dostopno prek ekrana, ekran pa postane osrednje mesto srečanja med koreografijo in občinstvom. Prostor plesa se zato ne izteče v fizični lokaciji snemanja, saj ga dokončno oblikujejo video podoba, montaža, digitalna distribucija in gledalčev način gledanja.

V gledališki praksi svojevrstne reprezentacije in percepcije prostora vplivajo na različna dojemanja prostorskega konteksta umetniških del kot značilnosti postmodernih pa tudi sodobnih obravnav realnega. V živi predstavi, z uporabo avdiovizualnih, IKT digitalnih orodij, fizična in prostorska prisotnost ter časovna sedanjost dobivajo drugačno dimenzijo. Uporaba digitalnih medijev lahko v trenutku nastajanja predstave konstituira druge prostore – na primer izvzetost izvajalca iz vidnega gledalčevega polja, ki prek mikrofona komunicira s publiko. Podobno lahko recimo uporablja telefon ali izza kulise prek ozvočenja ustvarja zvoke, šume, govori ali poje. V predstavah se kot element prostora uporablja luč (silhuete izvajalcev, razmejitev odrskega prostora na več intimnih ali funkcionalnih prostorov). Naslednja možnost je neposredni video prenos iz drugega prostora, kjer komunikacija poteka prek projekcije, ali uporaba kostuma, opremljenega z elektrodami, ki zaznavajo

5 Žanr videa zaprtega krogotoka Vaupotič in Bovcon opredelita po Danu Grahamu kot video zrcalo s spominom. Gledalec, ki je posnet, se vidi na ekranu nekoliko kasneje (327).

gibanje in ga projicirajo na platno, s čimer se razmejuje vidno od nevidnega. Uporablja se tudi digitalna scenografija, ki na odru upodablja specifična okolja in je alternativa tradicionalni scenografiji. Druga možnost je uporaba kamere, ki z neposrednim prenosom omogoča spremljanje dogajanja na odru prek medijev, kot so televizija, radio, računalnik, pri čemer gledalec ni fizično prisoten.[6]

Roselt opozarja na odvzemanje možnosti gledalčevega medijskega prehajanja meje, kar utemeljuje s tem, da se medijskost predstave zgodi na mejnem območju med gledalčevim prostorom in odrom, kjer se vzpostavlja napeto razmerje med gledati in biti gledan, skrivati se in biti viden, med vseobsegajočo preglednostjo in razpršeno nejasnostjo, za kar je gledalec, ki v živo prek medijev spremlja predstavo, prikrajšan (126). Tudi Uršula Berlot Pompe govori o načinih človeške interakcije v virtualnem prostoru, ki so kljub visoko razvitim oblikam simulacije dejansko drugačni od izkustva v realnem prostoru (9). Janez Strehovec v knjigi *Besedilo in novi mediji* zavzame bolj pozitivno stališče, ko opozarja na premik od vizualnega k taktilnemu in mobilnemu. Gledalec, ki ga avtor imenuje uporabnik, ni več pasiven in fiksiran v prostoru v določeni oddaljenosti od gibljive in statične podobe, da jo lahko kontemplira, ampak se z novimi interaktivnimi tehnologijami preoblikuje v aktivnega, mobilno in mrežno povezanega soustvarjalca (nav. po Bovcon 10).

Naslednja možnost je popolna preselitev umetniškega dela v virtualno okolje. V ta namen je koncipirana in v tem okolju nastaja, kar odpira neskončne možnosti njenega konstituiranja in prezentacije, saj se tehnologija nenehno posodablja in nadgrajuje. Ob tem Eda Čufer (nav. po Kunst in Pogorevc 296) izpostavlja vprašanje legitimnosti alternative tradicionalnim modelom ter predlaga utemeljitev osnov za ustvarjanje drugačnega tipa gledališča, čemur se v potovanju skozi čas ni mogoče izogniti. Pavis (*Sodobna* 235) ta tip gledališča poimenuje kibernetično gledališče, Milohnić pa primere postmodernističnega gledališča v polju multimedijev označi kot drastičen odmik od tradicionalnega (131). Strehovec poudarja, da je tradicionalna umetniško-estetska funkcija postala zastarela, in sodobno umetnost vidi v funkciji kulture. Pri tem ugotavlja, da proizvajalci umetniških del pogosto nimajo izobrazbe s področja umetnosti, ampak odlično obvladajo nove medije. Kljub temu so njihova dela umeščena na družbeno mesto umetnosti (183–200). Zato strategije snovanja projektov in njihova kompleksna narava prevprašujejo tudi koncept avtorstva: s soustvarjanjem avtorjev različnih profilov je namreč problematizirano individualizirano avtorstvo. Na to se navezujeta tudi Bourriaudevi poimenovanji *relacijska estetika* in *kolaborativno avtorstvo* (nav. po Kunst in Pogorevc 172), ki na področju sodobne umetnosti

6 Sodobni baletni koreografi pogosto uporabljajo tovrstne strategije uprizarjanja. Pri tem izpostavljam Crystal Pite, ki v predstavah *Flight Pattern* (2017) in *Angels´* Atlas (2022) uporablja svetlobo za oblikovanje kolektivnih teles in čustvenih prostorov. Wayne McGregor v predstavi *Infra* (2008) nad odrom na LED-zaslonu z animiranimi figurami plasti odrsko dogajanje. Edward Clug v predstavi *Sleeping Beauty Dreams* (2018) uporablja tehnologijo zajema gibanja, s katero se gibanje Diane Višnjeve v realnem času prevaja v digitalne avatarje oziroma vizualne učinke na projekcijski površini. Akram Khan pa uprizoritev *Desh* (2011) nadgradi z bogato animacijo.

devetdesetih let opisujeta medsebojne človeške odnose pri ustvarjanju umetniških projektov. Ob tem je zanimiva Bourriaudeva tehnofobnost, kar Narvika Bovcon (2009) v kontekstu družbenih relacij razloži kot Bourriaudevo negativno pojmovanje tehnologije, ki jo ima za del kapitalističnega stroja.

Berlot Pompe o ideji modernega prostora razmišlja ne več kot o stabilnem vsebniku predmetov in teles s prehodom od newtonskega razumevanja prostora kot »posode« k moderni relativizaciji, temveč kot o nastajajoči subjektivno oblikovani projekciji, ki jo ukrivljata čas in prostor in je podvržena eksperimentiranju, abstrahiranju in deformiranju umetniških prikazov realnega (7). Povzema poudarek iz razprave Oliverja Graua, ki osvetljuje pomen interaktivnosti in potopitvene izkušnje v umetnosti novih medijev:

> Digitalno ustvarjeni virtualni prostor po eni strani pomeni kontinuiteto v razvoju iluzionističnih načinov reprezentiranja prostora, ki so v zgodovini umetnosti variirali glede na omejitve in pogoje tehničnih medijev reprezentacije, po drugi strani pa omogoča nova čutno-mentalna izkustva gledalca, s čimer povratno vpliva na spremembe v načinu doživljanja sodobne realnosti. (Berlot Pompe 9)

Mojca Puncer v filozofski obravnavi sodobne teorije umetnosti izhaja iz fenomenološke misli filozofa Mauricea Merleau-Pontyja (*Medprostori* 32–34), ko izpostavi fenomenološki pogled na prostor (prav tam 8), kar se razume podobno kot Herrmannovo doživljeno dojemanje prostora, ki izhaja iz subjektivne telesne zaznave, torej doživljanja prostora od znotraj, v katerega je posameznik potopljen. Pojem hibridnih prostorov v umetnosti avtorica poveže z oblikami javne umetnosti in urbanizma, navigabilnimi prostori in podatkovnimi zbirkami ter drugimi prostorskimi praksami, s katerimi se danes umetnost srečuje. Deleuze in Guattari s pojmom shizoanalize definirata deteritorializacijo prostora ter pretočnost in transformativnost mej. V polju umetnosti pojem razlagata kot pristop neomejenega toka v decentraliziranem sistemu, v katerem se entiteta rizomatično povezuje z okoljem (87–88). Althusserjeva interpelacija umestitve subjekta v ideologijo družbe, panoptični miselni eksperiment nadzora, materializacija ideologije v obliki spektakla so družbene prakse kapitalizma, ki jih Henri Lefebvre (nav. po Puncer 10) združi v pojmu socialni prostor. Definiranje prostora in njegove transformacije v sodobnem postmodernem diskurzu odpira brezmejne možnosti realizacij v družbenem kontekstu prehajanja od interdisciplinarnega k transdisciplinarnemu.

Marisa Enhuber digitalizacijo obravnava kot pretvorbo fizičnih vsebin v virtualne oblike ter analizira, kako digitalni umetniški prostor spreminja dostop do umetnosti in načine njenega sprejemanja. Ugotavlja, da digitalizacija demokratizira umetnost, saj zmanjšuje časovne, finančne in geografske ovire ter omogoča širšo participacijo občinstva. S kulturološkega vidika selitev umetnosti v virtualni prostor tako odpira

nove možnosti dostopnosti, izobraževanja in kulturne izmenjave, hkrati pa ostaja omejena za občinstva brez ustreznega dostopa do digitalnih tehnologij (121–137).

Komunikacija z občinstvom prek družbenih medijev potencialno širi področje delovanja umetniških institucij ter krepi nove oblike povezovanja in udeležbe. Gauthier poudarja, da digitalizacija služi trženju, a ogroža pristnost gledališke izkušnje z grobim poseganjem v tradicionalno gledališko uprizoritveno formo. Predstava, ki naj bi bila enkraten in neponovljiv dogodek, postane marketinški produkt, ki gledalca in izvajalca prikrajša za neposredno, živo umetniško izkušnjo in iluzijo (»Be a Mover«). Adshead opozarja na izgubo prvobitnih pomenov v digitalnih uprizoritvenih prostorih (20). Pavis gre še dlje s problematiziranjem medijev, ki vstopajo tudi v naše telo z nameščanjem vsadkov, sond, srčnih spodbujevalnikov in mikroprocesorjev in s tem fizično ter kognitivno odpravljajo omejitve telesnih zmogljivosti (233–234), kar Michael Grantham umesti v koncept transhumanizma (7). Pavis razmišlja tudi o »spodbujevalnikih duš«, ki obsedajo in razpršujejo našo domišljijo in pozornost ter kategorijo človeškega poskušajo označiti kot zastarelo (*Sodobna* 234). Transhumano in posthumano reflektirata zadnji stadij človeške evolucije (Grantham 7). Pavis izrazi skrb zaradi prihajajočega obdobja novih realizmov in materializmov ter objektno orientirane ontologije v sodobni humanistiki in umetnosti, ki odstavljata človeško bitje iz reda biti (*Sodobna* 234).

Kljub temu se moramo soočati z realnostjo 21. stoletja, ki jo oblikuje tehnokultura, ter razmisliti o hibridiziranih oblikah tradicionalnega odrskega prostora, kar je v obdobju pandemije (2020–2022) postalo nuja (prim. Strehovec 11–13). Postpandemijsko obdobje (po letu 2022) je prineslo trajne spremembe v plesno umetnost, saj so se umetniške prakse, razvite v času pandemije, delno integrirale v sodobne koreografske in uprizoritvene strategije. Digitalizacija, ki je bila sprva nujna rešitev, je postala stalni element v plesni produkciji, kar je vplivalo na estetske, produkcijske in družbene vidike plesa. Kot ugotavlja Enhuber, je digitalizacija povečala dostopnost plesnih vsebin, hkrati pa je spodbudila razprave o izgubi pristnosti žive uprizoritve (121–137). Postpandemijski ples se sooča z izzivi ohranjanja ravnovesja med virtualnimi in fizičnimi prostori, pri čemer se pojavljajo hibridne forme, ki združujejo obe paradigmi.

Prostorska analiza *Dying Swans Project*

Analiza izhaja iz projektnega načrta Erica Gauthierja, ki je vključeval šestnajst plesalcev, šestnajst koreografov, šestnajst skladateljev in prav toliko filmskih produkcijskih ekip. Koreografije so nastajale v baletnih dvoranah, gledaliških in drugih prostorih, vendar so bile v končni obliki preseljene v virtualni prostor. Zato njihove prostorskosti ni mogoče razumeti zgolj kot razmerja med plesalcem in fizičnim prizoriščem, temveč tudi kot rezultat filmske obdelave, montaže, izbire kadrov, zvoka in digitalno posredovanega

gledalčevega pogleda. Vsebinsko so se navezovale na Fokinov ples *Umirajočega laboda*, vendar so večinoma odstopale od njegove kanonske oblike, ki temelji na klasični baletni tehniki, tradicionalnem odru in simbolizaciji boja med življenjem ter smrtjo. V projektu ta motiv postane izhodišče za osebne interpretacije izkušnje zaprtja, upanja, hrepenenja, odsotnosti občinstva in »lakote« po aplavzu, ki je bila umetnikom v času pandemije odvzeta. Ker koreografi Mauro Bigonzetti, Virginie Brunelle, Kinsun Chan, Edward Clug, Dominique Dumais, Andonis Foniadakis, Itzik Galili, Eric Gauthier, Smadar Goshen, Anita Hanke, Guillaume Hulot, Nicki Liszta, Constanza Macras, Kevin O'Day, Elisabeth Schilling in Bridget Breiner izhajajo iz različnih kulturnih in umetniških okolij, so tudi njihovi koreografski pristopi izrazito raznoliki.

Noben video ni bil posnet kot živa predstava. Vsi posnetki so oblikovani s filmskimi postopki in montirani v postprodukciji. To bistveno spremeni razumevanje prostora kot nevtralnega prizorišča plesnega dogajanja, ki tako postane konstruirana vizualna in zvočna celota. Kamera, montaža in zvok določajo perspektivo, usmerjajo gledalčevo pozornost, izpostavljajo koreografska žarišča in oblikujejo atmosfero. Gledalcu se na ta način izmakne suverenost v dekodiranju informacij, saj njegovo zaznavo usmerja medij sam. V tem okviru je pomembno tudi vprašanje filmskega prostora. Bonitzer izpostavi razliko med filmom in videom: pri filmu gledalec spremlja podobe v posebnem, ločenem diegetskem (filmskem) svetu, kjer se vzpostavljajo odnosi med človeškimi liki kot digitalne slike, ki so potencialno podvržene kakršnimkoli ploskovnim transformacijam, medtem ko video poudari gledalčevo reakcijo in odnos do ekrana (25–28). Ob sklicevanju na Bonitzerja Vaupotič in Bovcon opozorita tudi na filmske plane, s katerimi se filmski prostor razreže in oblikuje kot diegetski prostor po meri človeškega telesa (325).

Veliki plan tako pri plesnem videu spremeni razmerje med telesom in prostorom, saj obraz, roka, koža, pogled ali posamezen gib izstopijo iz širše prostorske kontinuitete in se vzpostavijo kot detajl, površina in afektivna bližina. Ta logika je v *Dying Swans Project* razvidna predvsem v koreografijah, kjer kamera izpostavlja intimne telesne detajle. Plesalčeva koža, dlan, obraz, dihanje ali tetovaža pridobijo status samostojnega prostorskega znaka. Gledalec se telesu približa bolj kot v tradicionalni gledališki situaciji, pri tem pa izgubi pregled nad celoto odrskega prostora. Video podoba tako razširi plesno zaznavo z dostopom do mikroravni telesnega izraza, prostor pa preoblikuje v zaporedje izbranih in medijsko oblikovanih fragmentov. Intimni prostor v dramaturški funkciji oblikovanja odrskega prostora je izrazito prisoten v uprizoritvah Adonisa Foniadakisa in Itzika Galilija, kjer se fizični prostor v postprodukciji skoraj razgradi, detajli, posneti v bližnjem planu, pa delujejo kot heterotopije plesnega telesa. Te koreografije imajo značilen skupni imenovalec Pavisove rabe uprizoritvenega prostora in jih umeščam v prvo prostorsko raven.

Skoraj diametralno nasprotje predstavlja raven koreografij, ki se najbolj približajo odrski formi živega gledališča. V organizacijo prostora teh video posnetkov režija ne posega v veliki meri. Po Bonitzerjevo je v tej perspektivi plesalec slika sama. Ta pristop je prepoznan v koreografijah Maura Bigonzettija, Bridget Breiner, Edwarda Cluga, Anite Hanke, Kinsuna Chana, Elisabeth Schilling, Smadarja Goshena in Kevina O'Daya, ki so umeščene na oder ali v odru podobno okolje. Kljub temu tudi v teh primerih oder delno deluje kot filmsko organizirano vizualno polje.

Naslednjo raven predstavljajo koreografije, ki zapuščajo tradicionalni oder in se umeščajo v urbano okolje ali naravo. Takšne prostorske rešitve uporabijo Virginie Brunelle, Guillaume Hulot, Dominique Dumais, Constanza Macras, Eric Gauthier in Nicki Liszta. Park, gozd, industrijsko okolje, stopnišče, nadhod ali drugi prehodni prostori pri tem aktivno sodelujejo pri oblikovanju pomena in ne služijo zgolj kot kulisa. Vzpostavljajo občutke premika, utesnjenosti, izolacije, prehoda ali iskanja novega načina bivanja.

Povezovanje uporabljenega prostora in fikcija uprizorjenega plesno-koreografskega besedila oblikujeta naslednjo raven, ki jo nadalje razslojim. Prvi sloj se vzpostavlja skozi naslove koreografij: Kevin O'Day v delu *We Were Many* z naslovom in uporabo klobukov vzpostavi fiktivni prostor odsotnih teles; Constanza Macras v *All Tomorrow's Parties* gledalca usmeri v pričakovanje izgubljenega družabnega prostora, čeprav je koreografija izvedena v parku; Anita Hanke z naslovno navezavo na Talebovo teorijo črnega laboda (*Taleb's Theory*) prikliče nepričakovane dogodke z velikimi posledicami in uprizoritev postavi v kontekst pandemične negotovosti; Nicki Liszta v *Oblong Blur*, ki temelji na ideji Corwinove *Odiseje podolgovate zamegljenosti*[7] prevprašuje prilagajanje vrednot in slogov zaradi vstopa medijev v umetnost; Gauthierjev *Covid Cage* pa že z naslovom natančno določi časovni in prostorski okvir dogajanja ter odpre vprašanje ujetosti telesa v lastno pandemično izkušnjo. Drugi sloj analize se nanaša na asociativno dvojnost med prostorsko razsežnostjo in utesnjenostjo. Ozki nadhodi, stopnišča, kad, vedro, montažne konstrukcije, ki dopuščajo le gibanje nog, prostori znotraj osvetljenih palic, platno, ki ločuje spodnji in zgornji prostor, gozd, prizori s ključi v vratih ali pogled skozi zaprto okno podpirajo temeljni impulz projekta, ki izhaja iz izkušnje omejitve gibanja, odsotnosti občinstva in spremenjenega razmerja do telesa. Ob tem je treba dopustiti tudi možnost abstraktne plesne pisave, ki pomena ne oblikuje z neposredno berljivo simboliko, temveč z izločanjem narativnih elementov, zgoščanjem telesnega impulza, ritmizacijo gibanja, kompozicijsko organizacijo kadra in afektivno atmosfero. Abstrakcija v tem smislu ne ukinja pomena, ampak

7 Leta 1947 je pisatelj Philip Hamburger v častniku *New Yorker* objavil članek o Normanu Corwinu, ki ga je naslovil »Odiseja podolgovate zamegljenosti«. Članek je osvetlil Corwinovo delo v letih, ko je bil najbolj priznan pisec radijskih iger v Združenih državah Amerike, v dobi radia. Lastne inovativne ideje in različne sloge je prilagajal filmu in televiziji. Njegova zvočna subtilnost ga je popeljala v različne avtorske situacije in njegovo delo je pustilo velik pečat v kreativni industriji (Smith in Verma 1).

ga premešča iz prepoznavne zgodbe v razmerje med telesom, prostorom, časom in gledalčevo zaznavo.

Zadnja raven zajema sisteme barv, oblik, materialov in njihovih konotacij. V večini koreografij je zaznati zadržano barvno paleto, pri čemer najpogosteje izstopa kontrast med belo in črno. Ta podpira občutek izolacije, krhkosti in simbolne napetosti med življenjem in smrtjo, ki se navezuje na izhodiščni motiv umirajočega laboda. Izrazitejša barvna odstopanja zato pridobijo posebno pomensko vrednost. V koreografiji *All Tomorrow's Parties* kostum z bleščicami in živo modra jakna podpirata narativ družabnosti in izgubljenega praznovanja, medtem ko intenzivna oranžna scenska kompozicija pri Elisabeth Schilling oblikuje močno vizualno atmosfero.

V koreografske strategije, ki vzpostavljajo druge prostore in jih v poglavju o tradicionalnem institucionaliziranem odrskem prostoru razlagam po Mackrell in Roseltu, tako vstopajo še »negledališki« fizični prostori pandemijske nuje in digitalno okolje, ki si jih podreja, preoblikuje in pomensko razširja. Projekt se s Foucaultevo teorijo heterotopije povezuje prav v tej sopostavitvi realnih in imaginarnih prostorskih redov. Digitalni prostor *Dying Swans Project* ni le nadomestek odra, ampak postane prostor, v katerem se hkrati pojavijo gledališče, video, filmski kader, zasebnost telesa, urbana zunanjost, narava, digitalni zapis in pandemijska zapora. Foucault heterotopijo opredeli kot drugi prostor, ki zmore na enem mestu povezati več med seboj nezdružljivih prostorov (24); v projektu se to zgodi skozi ekran, ki gledalca spusti v tuje lokacije in ga hkrati zadrži zunaj fizičnega dogodka. Ekran je zato paradoksalni prag, ki omogoča dostop, vendar ukinja soprisotnost; širi občinstvo, vendar odtuji možnost žive izkušnje.

Sklepno-sintetična misel

Postmodernistično relativistično umetniško izražanje se lahko nanaša ali pa ne na tradicijo, družbo, kulturo, politiko ali samo na umetnikovo telo kot vir in sredstvo materializacije umetniške ideje, zato pomeni branje tovrstnih besedil in iskanje njihovih pomenov razgrnitev širokega polja mogočih interpretacij, ki se odmikajo od zgodovinskega kanona.

V tem okviru je treba rabo pojma prostor v *Dying Swans Project* razumeti na petih medsebojno povezanih, vendar ne istovetnih ravneh. Prva raven zadeva prostor video posnetka odrskega oziroma odru podobnega dogajanja, kjer prostor še vedno izhaja iz razmerja med plesalcem, kompozicijo, scenografijo in gledalčevim pogledom, vendar ga kamera, rez, bližnji plan, montažni ritem in zvočna obdelava preoblikujejo v medijsko organizirano vidnost. Druga raven se nanaša na fizične in lokacijsko

določene prostore, v katerih projekt zapušča tradicionalni oder ter v plesno govorico vključuje urbano okolje, naravo, prehodne prostore in intimno telesno bližino. Tretja raven je izrazito konceptualna in metaforična, na četrti se uporabljen prostor poveže s fikcijo uprizorjenega plesno-koreografskega besedila in na peti ravni se prostor poglobi v sisteme barv, oblik, materialov in njihovih konotacij.

Formulacija, ki govori o »grajenju prostorov znotraj ideje laboda«, zaznamuje pomenski proces, v katerem se Fokinov kanonski koreografski motiv *Umirajočega laboda* razpre v več medsebojno različnih interpretativnih območij. Ideja laboda v projektu tako postane izhodišče za oblikovanje notranjih, telesnih, afektivnih, medijskih in zgodovinskih prostorov. Vzpostavijo se prostori spomina na klasični baletni kanon, prostor pandemijske zaprtosti, prostor odsotnega občinstva, prostor ranljivega telesa, prostor hrepenenja po stiku in prostor digitalno posredovane umetniške prisotnosti. Takšna raba prostora se izmika arhitekturnemu označevanju in postane metaforična na način, kako se pomen laboda razporeja med telesom, gibom, naslovom koreografije, izbranim okoljem, kamero, zvokom in gledalčevo zaznavo. »Prostori znotraj ideje laboda« so zato prostori interpretacije in nastajajo tam, kjer se kanonska podoba *Umirajočega laboda* oddalji od svoje zgodovinske odrske oblike in se preoblikuje v razpršeno, heterotopično mrežo sodobnih pomenov.

Pavisova analiza omogoča, da se ta razpršenost ne obravnava kot nedoločena odprtost pomena, temveč kot sistematično berljiva prostorska organizacija. Prostorske oblike, dramaturška funkcija odrskega prostora, povezava med uporabljenim prostorom in fikcijo koreografskega besedila, razmerje med prikazanim in prikritim ter sistemi barv, oblik, materialov in njihovih konotacij pokažejo, da *Dying Swans Project* prostor uporablja kot samostojen pomenski element. Oder, kadar se v projektu pojavi, ni več stabilno središče uprizoritve, temveč ena izmed prostorskih možnosti znotraj širšega digitalnega polja. Kamera pri tem deluje kot dejavnik prostorske selekcije, ki gledalcu določi, kaj bo videl, kako blizu bo telesu, kateri fragment bo izstopil iz celote in kako se bo plesni dogodek časovno ter zaznavno organiziral. Na tej ravni se Pavisova metodološka usmeritev smiselno poveže s Foucaultevim razumevanjem heterotopije. Projekt vzpostavlja druge prostore, ker na ekranu sopostavi med seboj neenotne prostorske rede, kot so institucionalni oder, baletna dvorana, urbana krajina, narava, notranji prostor telesa, digitalni zapis, metaforični prostor laboda in gledalčev zasebni prostor sprejemanja. Ti neharmonični prostori se v virtualnem dogodku začasno zbližajo, prekrivajo in medsebojno preoblikujejo. Ekran je zato mogoče razumeti kot heterotopični prag, ki gledalcu omogoči dostop do plesnega dogodka, hkrati pa mu odvzame soprisotnost, skupni dih dvorane in neposredno izmenjavo med plesalcem in občinstvom. Prav ta dvojnost določa osrednjo prostorsko napetost projekta.

Analiza je še pokazala, da se različna kulturna ozadja ustvarjalcev projekta in njihovi konceptualni pristopi k reprezentaciji ideje *Umirajočega laboda* bolj ali manj odmikajo od estetskega v njegovem primarnem pomenu, posebej če se omejimo na polje baleta. V projekt vstopajo izkušnje novega sveta, telesna ranljivost, prekinjena uprizoritvena kontinuiteta in želja po komunikaciji, vendar se te razsežnosti ne iztečejo v enotno naracijo. Plesni jezik je ponekod formalno zgoščen, drugje redukcijski, mestoma izrazito telesen, intimen ali prostorsko razpršen. V vseh primerih pa njegova pomenska učinkovitost nastaja iz razmerja med telesom, izbranim prostorom, kamero, zvokom in gledalčevo zaznavo. Zato se koreografije večinoma težko poistovetijo z estetično-formalistično odrsko baletno formo, saj projekt klasični motiv *laboda* razpre v širše polje medijske, prostorske in afektivne transformacije. Vpliv digitalizacije zato odpira tudi temeljna estetska, zaznavna in ontološka vprašanja sodobnega gledališča.

Sklepno-sintetično misel zaokrožam z ugotovitvijo, da *Dying Swans Project* ne ukinja gledališkega prostora, temveč ga premešča, razsredišči in razširi. Njegova heterotopičnost ni v tem, da bi virtualni prostor preprosto nadomestil oder, temveč v tem, da hkrati ohranja spomin na odrsko izkušnjo, razkriva njeno odsotnost in vzpostavlja novo obliko posredovane prisotnosti. Tudi metaforično »grajenje prostorov znotraj ideje laboda« je del tega procesa, ki nakazuje, kako se zgodovinski baletni motiv v digitalni transformaciji razsloji v različne prostorske, telesne in zaznavne pomene. V tej napetosti med fizičnim, virtualnim, imaginarnim in metaforičnim prostorom projekt razkriva eno izmed ključnih značilnosti postpandemijske plesne umetnosti, ko postane prizorišče koreografije njen konstitutivni, dramaturški in pomenski nosilec.

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Abstract

The artistic director of the Stuttgart-based Gauthier Dance Company, Eric Gauthier, named his dancers the Dying Swans after the extensive cancellation of international tours in 2021. The social and health-related challenges that affected the arts during the period of pandemic restrictions (2020–2022) allowed artistic work to be realised only in digital or screen-mediated forms, which became the sole means of artistic creation and of maintaining contact with audiences. The online première of *The Dying Swans Project*, which features sixteen original ballet choreographies, took place on 16 April 2021.
The article examines the approaches to space employed by the choreographers, as well as the modes of artistic expression enabled through the digital medium, which, according to Gauthier, remains only an alternative to the traditional stage experience.
Addressing the audience through the camera requires different performative elements, in which the stage is replaced by the urban environment, the studio or nature. This establishes new phenomenological, conceptual and theoretical foundations for the transformation of dance theatre. Theoretical interpretations, supported by an analysis of performance practice, point to the forced acceptance of virtual theatre as a temporary solution; at the same time, virtuality represents a challenge of the contemporary moment. Using Patrice Pavis's method of analysis, the article examines the spatial aesthetics of *The Dying Swans Project* within the framework of hybrid forms that transcend the traditional stage space and, in the post-pandemic period, enter a new social paradigm. Pavis's method is complemented by Foucault's understanding of heterotopia as an "other space" in which incompatible spatial orders are juxtaposed.

Keywords: contemporary ballet, intermedia artistic practice, post-pandemic dance

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Heterotopias of Digital Transformation: A Spatial Analysis of *The Dying Swans Project* in Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Contexts

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The article offers a theoretically grounded spatial analysis of *The Dying Swans Project*, produced by Gauthier Dance Company in 2021 as a response to the disruption of live performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than understanding the project as a temporary digital substitute for theatrical performance, the study interprets it as a complex artistic phenomenon that reveals a broader transformation of contemporary dance, theatrical space, spectatorship and choreographic meaning. Based on multiple reinterpretations of Michel Fokine's canonical *The Dying Swan*, the project is examined as a paradigmatic case in which a historically stable ballet motif is displaced from the institutional stage into digitally mediated, heterogeneous and post-pandemic spatial configurations.

The central argument of the article is that the relocation of dance into virtual space cannot be understood as a neutral act of recording or transmitting a pre-existing performance. In *The Dying Swans Project*, space is produced through the interaction of the dancing body, the camera, montage, sound, location, the screen and the spectator's mediated gaze. The digital format therefore transforms the ontological conditions of performance: the event is no longer defined by the co-presence of performer and audience in a shared theatrical space, but by a technically and aesthetically constructed field of visibility. The screen becomes the primary site of encounter, simultaneously enabling access to the dance event and cancelling the immediacy of live theatrical exchange.

Methodologically, the article combines Patrice Pavis's model of performance analysis with Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Pavis's analytical parameters enable the examination of the dramaturgical function of space, the relationship between the visible and the hidden, the connection between spatial organisation and choreographic fiction, and the semiotic role of colours, forms, materials and spatial transformations. Foucault's concept of heterotopia expands this framework by interpreting the

project's digital space as an "other space" in which incompatible spatial orders are juxtaposed. The project brings together theatre, ballet studio, urban environment, natural landscape, intimate bodily space, cinematic frame, digital archive and the spectator's private viewing situation. These spaces do not merge into a stable whole; they remain heterogeneous, unstable and mutually transformative.

The article differentiates between several spatial levels. The first concerns filmed or stage-like space, where the traditional relationship between dancer, scenography and spectator is partially preserved, but reorganised by camera movement, editing, framing and sound. The second concerns concrete physical locations, including studios, theatres, parks, forests, staircases, industrial areas, transitional architectural zones and intimate spaces. These locations are not passive backgrounds but active semantic agents that produce associations of isolation, restriction, transition, vulnerability and the search for renewed social contact. The third level is conceptual and metaphorical: the "spaces within the idea of the swan" refer to interpretative, affective and historical zones generated by the displacement of Fokine's motif into a post-pandemic context.

The study also identifies several choreographic and media strategies within the project. Some works foreground the body as an intimate spatial field. Through close-ups of skin, face, hands, breath or bodily detail, the camera fragments the dancing body and transforms it into a micro-spatial sign. This produces an affective proximity inaccessible in conventional theatre, while depriving the spectator of a total view of stage composition. Other works remain closer to stage-based performance but are nevertheless reconfigured through cinematic mediation. A third group moves decisively beyond the stage into urban or natural environments, where spatial displacement becomes central to the production of meaning. A fourth group connects the space used to the fiction of the staged dance-choreographic text. Finally, in the fifth group, the space is articulated through systems of colours, shapes, materials and their connotations. In these cases, choreography emerges from the interaction among movement, site, atmosphere and the symbolic charge of the chosen location.

The article further shows that the project redefines the legacy of *The Dying Swan*. Fokine's canonical image is no longer treated as a fixed ballet text centred on classical technique and the symbolic struggle between life and death. Instead, it becomes an open conceptual matrix through which choreographers articulate experiences of confinement, loss, longing, bodily fragility, absence of applause and the desire for contact with the audience. The swan motif is thus transformed from a historical choreographic figure into a dispersed field of contemporary meanings.

The article concludes that *The Dying Swans Project* should be understood as a hybrid form of digital dance theatre rather than as documentation of live performance. Its significance lies in showing how pandemic conditions accelerated the transformation

of choreographic practice and exposed the ambivalent status of digitally mediated performance. Digital mediation enabled artistic continuity, broader accessibility, and new spatial experimentation, but it also altered the fundamental conditions of theatrical presence by eliminating shared physical space, direct performer–spectator exchange and the unrepeatability of the live event. The project, therefore, establishes digitally mediated presence not merely as an emergency solution, but as a contemporary condition through which dance, space, body and spectatorship are reconfigured.

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Submit articles as attachments in Microsoft Word or OpenOffice format, using 12-point Times New Roman with 1.5 line spacing. Separate paragraphs with an empty line. Quotations longer than five lines should be set as separate paragraphs in 10-point type, without quotation marks. Omissions and adaptations within quotations should be indicated by an ellipsis in square brackets. Notes are not intended for bibliographical citations; they should appear as consecutively numbered footnotes. In English texts, Amfiteater uses British spelling (-ise, -isation, colour, theatre, centre, analyse, travelled, etc.), spaced en dashes and no Oxford (serial) comma before "and" or "or" in a series, unless needed for clarity.

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When quoting an author and related work within the text, state only the page numbers in brackets, e.g., (161–66). When the author of the quoted work is not mentioned in the sentence, state the author's name and the page numbers in brackets without punctuation between them, e.g., (Reinelt 161–66). For different bibliographical entries by the same author, include a shortened title of the work, e.g., (Reinelt, *Javno* 161–66). In-text citations and the bibliography follow MLA style, 8th edition.

Titles of books, productions, performances etc. are written in italics: e.g., *Storm Still* by Peter Handke.

Titles of articles are written in normal font and in quotation marks: As Rosemarie Bank argues in her article "Recurrence, Duration, and Ceremonies of Naming".

When the same bibliographical entry is quoted in succession the author should just repeat the page number (161–66) and not (Ibid.).

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- *Book with editors:*
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