

СОФИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
„СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“



SOFIA UNIVERSITY  
„ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI“

Faculty of Classical and New Philologies  
Department of English and American Studies

**Elgoni Nikolla**

**ABSTRACT**

of the dissertation entitled

**Theatre and Politics:**

**Reception of American Drama in Albania and the Balkans during  
the Cold War**

for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Education and Science  
professional field **2.1 Philology (Literature of the peoples of  
Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia)**

American Literature in the Twentieth Century

Academic supervisor: Prof. K. Slavova PhD

Sofia 2023

The dissertation was discussed and approved for public defense at a meeting of the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Classical and New Philologies at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” on 28.11.2023.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, main part, conclusion, appendix, and bibliography. The main part contains five distinct chapters. The total length of the study is 185 pages, including 20 illustrations.

The dissertation defense will be held on ..... at ..... in the ..... hall of the Rectorate Building of “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia.

The defense materials are available to those interested in office 167, the Rectorate Building of “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia.

## **Table of Contents**

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION .....	4
OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	6
METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY .....	9
STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION .....	11
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BASIC CONCEPTS.....	15
CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL AND THEATRICAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH.....	27
CHAPTER 3: ARTHUR MILLER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST .....	34
CHAPTER 4: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS BEYOND THE IRON CURTAIN .....	37
CHAPTER 5: LILLIAN HELLMAN IN THE BALKANS .....	41
CONCLUSION.....	44
CITED LITERATURE .....	46
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS .....	49
PUBLICATIONS ON THE DISSERTATION TOPIC .....	50

## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION**

The current dissertation traces the presence of American drama in Albania and other Balkan countries during the communist period. It aims to shed light on lesser known or completely unknown facts, translated plays, and stage performances that have been ignored for decades. What drew my attention to this topic was the need to investigate this blank spot in Albanian culture that continues to be unexplored even two decades after the end of the Cold War. American drama is extremely popular in many cultures, including the Balkans, but there is no research on its presence in the most isolated communist country in Europe. Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Lillian Hellman are among the twentieth century's most acclaimed American playwrights worldwide; their plays lend themselves easily to dramaturgical and directorial adaptations precisely because they bring to life universal issues, because they tend to provoke emotional and social responses, and because they are recognizable in transnational cultural space. In the twenty-first century, the three dramatists continue to be relevant for their wealth of significant themes, original style, rich language, and plastic forms.

The need for such a study is justified by several considerations: first, by the lack of information on the development of Albanian theatre during the Cold War and its relations with European and American drama and theatre; second, by the absence of research and publications in other languages worldwide that would make the issues under discussion here accessible to a wider audience. There are several publications (mostly in Albanian) that partially provide

information on the topic at hand, and this dissertation duly refers to them in its attempt to provide some sort of theatre historiography. First and foremost is the history of Albanian theatre, *Historia e Teatrit Shqiptar* by Josif Papagjoni (2011), which portrays the historical context in which theatre developed in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, and provides fragmentary information on American plays staged in Albanian theatres. Another major source is Refik Kadija's scholarly article, "American Studies in Albania in the Past and the Future", which traces the influence of American culture (including literature and American drama) in Albania since the turn of the last century. This article provides valuable insight on adaptation processes - especially during the communist years. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Iris Klosi, who has undertaken a comprehensive study on Arthur Miller and his influence in Albania during the communist era.

The current thesis brings together the existing archival material on the reception of American drama in Albania, focusing on the three major playwrights who were also staged in the neighboring Balkan countries during the Cold War. In doing so, it outlines the specific cultural situation in the most isolated country in the Balkans, and the vital role of Albanian censorship, which imposed various methods to twist and distort original American plays. At the same time, the study compares the situation in Albania with that in the former Yugoslavia (North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia) and Bulgaria to highlight similarities and differences in terms of ideological pressure on the theatrical stage during the Cold War, the

political use of art as a propaganda tool, but also the ways in which the cultures of the United States of America and the Soviet world still managed to get to know each other via theatre stage. Or as theatre scholar Zoltan Imre argues in his article “Theatre, Propaganda and the Cold War”: “Theatre was intercultural even in the difficult political, ideological and social circumstances of the Cold War” (1972:108). Apparently, during these almost five decades, there were such rare moments of cultural exchange between the United States of America and Albania in the theatrical arena, although they were rather timid and closely guarded.

### **OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The dissertation aims to trace and analyze the contradictory reception of American drama on the Albanian theatrical stage during communism in comparison with other theatre stages in the Balkans (mainly in the Albanian-speaking regions of former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) in the period 1945-1991. More precisely, the study examines how the dramatic works of major American playwrights Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Lillian Hellman managed to get across to almost all countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe and how they were staged and transformed in the communist world. On the one hand, several of their plays were translated, staged, and did manage to go beyond the Iron Curtain, but on the other hand, they were subjected to serious censorship, rewriting, and ideological distortion. The focus of the study is on Albanian theatre practice, but partial comparisons with the Yugoslavian and Bulgarian political and cultural contexts in the

period 1945 - 1991 will throw light both on the specificities of different cultures as well as the common mechanisms of political pressure on theatre and the intersections between politics and art in the Soviet era. Among the more important research questions are the following: What was the influence of American drama and theatre in Albania and the Balkans? Which American playwrights were most popular behind the Iron Curtain and why? How have their works been translated and transmitted beyond their original contexts? What images and messages about American culture and society were imposed on the stage and beyond? What was the representation of capitalist America under the most restrictive communist regime?

The hypothesis of the study is closely related to the assumption that American drama has been staged on the Albanian stage to a much lesser degree and more sporadically than in other Balkan countries due to the harsh repressive nature of Enver Hoxha's communist regime. Ironically, the American drama was used to defend the very communist ideology in Albania by providing a highly distorted representation of the capitalist enemy - especially the image of the USA. In addition to highlighting the factors for the scarce reception of American drama on the Albanian stage, the study aims to explain why individual leftist playwrights such as Arthur Miller were translated and staged on the Albanian stage, while other leftist social playwrights such as Lillian Hellman, Albert Maltz, and Clifford Odets were removed from theatrical repertoires, contrary to neighboring countries (such as Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia, and Romania). Albania is still the missing piece of the puzzle on the map of the Balkan countries:

being extremely hostile to American culture and art during the communist regime - unlike neighboring regions of Kosovo and North Macedonia, which introduced American plays to their theater audiences significantly earlier. Clear evidence of this is the translations of several plays by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams from English into Albanian, published by several publishing houses in Pristina, which made them accessible to a much larger Albanian-speaking audience. Also, the theatres in Pristina and Skopje were much more open to enriching their repertoire with American plays than the theatres on the territory of Albania ruled by the dictator Enver Hoxha.

The exploration also has its limitations related to some objective and subjective factors. The main difficulty stems from the lack of sufficiently preserved documentary materials in the theatre archives and in the National Library in Tirana, as well as the absence of published translations or video recordings of the staged plays. The lack of resources has been somewhat compensated by unexpected finds in the private collections (archives) of individual directors or actors who, despite their advanced age, shared interesting facts and photographic material with the author of this thesis. The sporadic nature of preserved memory in public and private archives makes it difficult to analyze more systematically the reception of American drama in the Albanian and Balkan context during the Cold War. Another limitation is related to the different languages into which the original plays were translated, as well as the critical materials that discuss the presence of American drama in the Balkans - Albanian,

Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and Romanian. For these reasons, the analysis has focused mainly on plays translated or staged in Albanian. At the same time, in the countries of the former Yugoslavia there have been identified several studies conducted in English, through which one can learn about the history of the local theatrical practices, as well as the influence of American culture and theatre behind the Iron Curtain. Yet another limitation has to do with the fact that the reception of a particular work by a particular audience in a particular era is very difficult to measure and document: the thoughts and emotional processes of the various audiences in their responses to the American plays have been nowhere documented due to the highly repressive state apparatus in communist Albania and self-censorship. For this reason, the study offers a theatrical historiography of the official reception of American drama during this specific period rather than an analysis of audience attitudes, feelings, and understanding of the original plays via the stage.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The aims and objectives of the work presuppose a multifaceted research and systematization of various sources that provide information on the reception of American drama in Albania and in some Albanian-speaking regions of the former Yugoslavia during the communist regime: from the archives of various theaters in Tirana, Korca, Fier, Pristina, Prizren, and other cities, through published and unpublished translations into Albanian of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Lillian Hellman, to critical articles, theater programs, files, and reviews

in magazines and the press. In addition to these written sources, the research relies on the personal oral recollections and archives of individual directors and actors of the older generation who were active participants in the theatrical processes during the communist regime – all collected through the method of oral interviews. These disparate sources require the application of a complex interdisciplinary approach, combining diverse theories ranging from reception models in theatre, through translation theories, to specific methods of analysing dramaturgical texts.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, the methodology of this research can be described as 'interdisciplinary' (Snell-Hornby, 2006:72), i.e., going beyond the text of the original plays and beyond the linguistic aspects of translation. In this sense, reception is seen as a more general cultural practice that takes place on the stage and that takes into account the influence of ideology, history, and cultural tradition, as well as the transformation of the text on the theatre stage, where it is constantly changing and shifting. Overall, the methodology is based on a combination of Susan Bennett's theory of theatrical reception and Patrice Pavis's theory of cross-cultural transfer on stage between the source and target cultures (represented as a dualistic model of an hourglass figure that filters different layers of the foreign culture into the receiving culture). For the purpose of analyzing the translation into Albanian of individual plays by Miller, Williams, and Hellman, the study relies on a variety of theories of translation related to the role of ideology in the reception of drama in translation (primarily Lawrence Venuti's ideas), censorship and

power, and the impoverishment of the original text as a result of certain strategies of distortion (as postulated by Antoine Berman). In addition to this reception methodology, the study continuously employs a comparative approach on various levels: comparing staging practices in different countries and the movement of the three playwrights between the worlds of Eastern Europe and the West in the context of the Cold War, as well as tracing the impact of communist censorship on translation decisions, or how the imagery and meanings of the original play have been rendered in the language of the target culture.

## **STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation consists of 185 pages, including a bibliography of 10 pages and 5 pages of appendices. It consists of an introduction, five main chapters, and a conclusion.

The organization structure of the work is based on two pillars: 1) first, a chronological presentation where the facts related to the reception of American drama are being traced and described in order to highlight trends in the overall process over time, as well as to illustrate the abrupt temporal changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall; 2) second, the spatial logic of the analysis moving from the original context of the creation of American drama (the United States of America) to the receiving context of Eastern Europe and the Balkans - thus following the natural movement in space of the original towards its transformations and adaptations beyond the primary context of creation.

**The introduction** presents the historical and cultural context

for the development of this research study, the hypothesis, subject, objectives, and scope of the study, as well as the relevance of the topic. It situates the playwrights and their works in the context of the respective historical period and the central discourses explored in the dissertation. It also describes the two-year process of collecting primary and secondary materials in various theatre archives and libraries in three Balkan countries.

**The theoretical chapter (Chapter 1)** focuses on the various theoretical premises, ideas and concepts used to analyse the reception of American drama in the Balkans, and Albania in particular. Among the main theories are Patrice Pavis's model of the cross-cultural transfer of theatre from the source to the target culture, as elaborated in his book *The Theatre at the Crossroads of Cultures*, as well as Susan Bennett's ideas about the different types of reception in the theatre. In addition, Lawrence Venuti's postulates and concepts of the translation process have been introduced as they shed light on the translational aspects of reception in the analysis of stage productions.

**Chapter Two** prepares the reader for the specific analysis of the transmission of American plays during communism by introducing the historical and cultural context of Albania since the early twentieth century, offering an overview of the American cultural presence in Albania and in the neighboring Balkan countries such as the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. It introduces the factors that shaped the development of the theatre in the region earlier in time, and more specifically, during communism (1945-1990), starting with Albania and continuing with Bulgaria and former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia,

North Macedonia, Kosovo.) It is interesting to note that theatre was established as a propaganda institution around 1944 -1945 in most Balkan countries when the foundations of socialist art and theatre were established. In the beginning, the socialist theatre in Albania focused on a repertoire taken from the USSR or from other Eastern European countries, and the state encouraged Albanian writers, actors, and directors to create original plays related to the 'correct' ideology. In Bulgaria, the situation was similar, but the repertoire of plays was much richer and diverse than in Albania. The former Yugoslavia was even more open to American culture, a fact supported by Lillian Hellman's visit to Belgrade and her meeting with the Yugoslavian president Tito.

**Chapter Three** is devoted to Arthur Miller, his place on the American and Balkan stages during the Cold War, situating the playwright's complex fate in the bitter cultural war between the Western world and the Soviet world. As a social leftist author, who openly expressed his critical stance during McCarthyism in the United States, he was persecuted in his own country in the 1950s. Since Miller was a significant author not only for the West but also for the Eastern bloc, his presence was felt even in Albania, although his plays were put on stage as late as the 1980s - at the end of Enver Hoxha's regime. Special attention is paid to the plays *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *A View from the Bridge* and *The Crucible*, their translation into Albanian and their overall reception under the watchful eye of censorship institutions. In communist Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia his plays were staged relatively soon after their first Broadway performances and were performed much more frequently,

but even there he fell into the trap of political games after his critique of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The next analytical chapter (**Chapter 4**) focuses on the reception of Tennessee Williams during the period of political turmoil in the Balkan countries. He enjoyed a great popularity in all communist countries except Albania. Several of his plays were translated into Albanian and there were attempts to stage them on the Albanian stage, but they were banned after their first performance, especially the play *Orpheus Descending*. Because of the strongly Freudian view of the inner psychology of the individual, Tennessee Williams's plays were viewed with skepticism by the censors and remained only as documents in the national archives. This chapter compares Williams's central role in American playwriting over the years, his popularity in Balkan countries but also demonstrates how his highly lyrical and plastic style was rendered in a rather simplistic manner in the Albanian translation of his most representative play, *The Glass Menagerie* (in Pristina, Kosovo). *The Glass Menagerie* was staged in Tirana as late as 1990 at the Academy of Arts Theatre. Due to the late appearance of his plays in Albania and Kosovo, some analysis has been included on the extraordinary boom of his work immediately after the end of the Cold War, although this period goes beyond the original scope of the thesis.

**The fifth chapter** of this study focuses on the presence of Lillian Hellman in Albania and the Balkan countries. Again, the analytical chapter begins with Hellman's positioning in American society and culture since the late 1930s, then turns to her influence in

the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. After the former Yugoslavia distanced itself from Moscow, she even visited the country and met President Tito in Belgrade - a significant fact that influenced her artistic career and her reception in Serbia. Her play *The Little Foxes* made its way to the Balkan countries, being staged in Sofia as early as 1947 - in contrast to the negative reaction and transformation of the play in the Albanian context of communism (staged as late as 1988). Based on the evidence gathered for Slovenia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, the current exploration provides an extended analysis of the factors why productions of Hellman's *The Little Foxes* differed drastically from country to country. The chapter concludes by offering a cultural analysis of the Albanian translation of her most significant play.

## **CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BASIC CONCEPTS**

The analysis in this study relies on two main theoretical pillars, namely, reception theory and cultural theory of translation. Further, they have been complemented by ideas related to the functioning of ideology as well as censorship and self-censorship constraints imposed. The aim of this chapter is to delineate the theoretical framework of the study, certain ideas and concepts that would shed light on the ways in which the American plays under discussion here have been transformed, distorted, abridged, and rewritten through the lens of communist ideology.

First and foremost, the exploration relies on the reception theory by Susan Bennett, who in her book *Theatre Audiences: A*

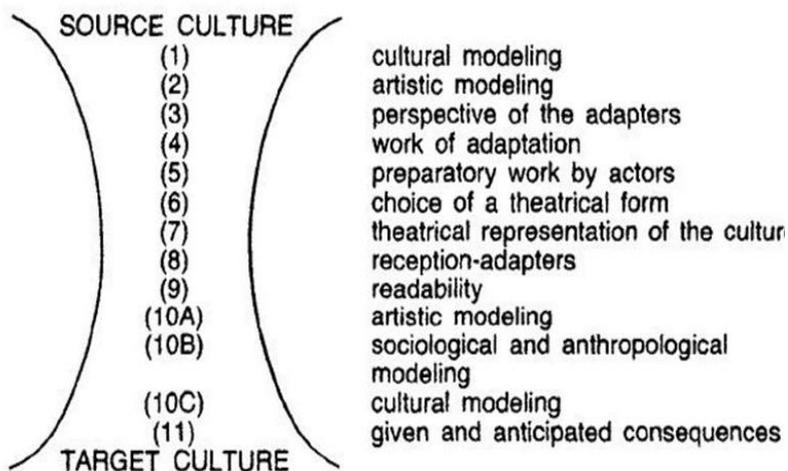
*Theory of Production and Reception* insists that audiences play an active role in the creation of theatrical meaning and that audience interpretations are shaped by their social and cultural contexts as well as by the elements of theatrical form. Bennett provides a historical overview of theatre audiences and their relationship to theatre, demonstrating that audiences have always been an integral part of theatre and that their expectations and experiences change over time. She further argues that audiences are active participants in the creation of theatrical meaning and that their interpretations of a play are influenced by their respective social and cultural contexts. She also discusses the ways in which audiences are influenced by elements of theatrical form, such as the use of lighting, sound and set design. The theorist has applied her ideas to a range of theatre productions, including plays by Shakespeare, Brecht, and Beckett. She analyses the ways in which audiences responded to these plays and how their interpretations were shaped by their social and cultural experiences. *Theatre Audiences* provides a valuable perspective on the ways in which audiences can engage with theatrical performances and how this involvement influences the interpretation of a play's meaning. This book is important to the research because it helps to understand the censored audience-theatre performance relationship in the context of the Cold War in Albania and the Balkans.

For a deeper understanding of the process of reception of one culture by another via theatre, the dissertation relies on Patrice Pavis's receptionist model of intercultural exchange in theatrical performance. More precisely, the model is described by the French scholar as an

hourglass of culture, “a strange object that resembles both a funnel and a mill” (1990:3). At the top of the figure is the foreign culture, already formed in the original anthropological and sociocultural environment, moving towards the host culture. The flow between different contexts and traditions is regulated by passing through about ten to twelve filters (intermediaries), the most important of which are the following: cultural and/or artistic modelling, the point of view of those adapting the performance, the preparatory work of the actors, the choice of theatrical form, the theatrical representation of culture, the adaptors of reception (the “conducting elements”), the levels of interpretation, and finally the given and expected consequences (how the audience perceives and processes the known and unknown elements of the cultural flow). The system of filters operates in both directions (from and to both cultures), although the visual hourglass figure creates a false idea of only a hierarchical and unidirectional movement. As Pavis explains, in order to reach us, “the foreign culture must pass through the bottleneck. If the grains of the culture are fine enough, they will pass without problem, but slowly, into the lower part - that of the target culture, from where we observe this slow flow. The grains will rearrange themselves in a way that seems random, but which is partly regulated by their passage through a dozen or so filters placed by the target culture and the observer” (1990:2).

The blending of cultures in the theatre is not just a collection of elements that make a universal substance. This is why Pavis describes the theatrical transfer not as a 'cauldron' in which individual elements are melted down, but as “a crossroads of traditions, of artistic

practices, where we can hope to capture the clear hybridization of culture and bring together the entangled paths of anthropology, sociology and artistic practices” (1990:2). The French theatre semiotician prefers the approach of ‘international culturalism’ rather than multiculturalism or transculturalism to explain the “dialectics of the exchange of cultural labels between cultures” (1990:2), and it is for this reason that he presents his idea of the movement between two or more cultures through the figure of the hourglass, visually presented below:



The concepts introduced by Pavis are particularly useful for the analysis of the presence of American drama into the host cultures

of the Balkans. For the purposes of the ensuing analysis, I will rely primarily on concepts such as *reception adaptors* and *levels of interpretation*, i.e., narrative, thematic, formal, ideological, sociocultural, and other filters. As Pavis explains, some of these are more significant: for example, ideological and sociocultural levels of interpretation usually control lower levels of interpretation (related to genre, theme, form, style, etc.), thus turning the dominant ideology in the receiving culture into a *normative model for sociological or cultural codification* (Pavis 1992: 18). Years later, in a revised version of his theory, Pavis argues: “The stage is that privileged place where our ideology, our ideological condition, is influenced in an impressive way by the power of desire. Perception and reception are linked to the power of desire: every performance is therefore intertwined with the perspectives of the ideological condition. Each code is important in creating the code of perception, determining the system of values conveyed by the content of the play, including particular codes related to genres, historical periods, character types and language codes, ideological and cultural codes (2003: 86-87). Politics and ideology can influence reception and the overall perception of art through the local political situation, but they exert their influence most powerfully through the imposed ideology of the theatre-makers (the directors who choose the plays for the audience and the actors who interpret the political processes). In the Albanian culture during the Cold War, the intervention of the theatre actors was impossible. Everything was dictated by the official institutions of the theatre, subordinated to the state ideological apparatus.

In addition to the audience's role in perceiving a theatrical performance, language is also important – more precisely, how playwrights and actors use it to convey meaning, create mood, and shape the dramatic experience for the audience. These elements are highlighted in Marvin Carlson's book *Speaking in Tongues: Language at Play in the Theater*. The author discusses the functioning of verbal and nonverbal language in theatre, including the use of accents and dialects, the use of slang and colloquial language, poetry and verse form, and the use of the voice and body to convey social and political messages. In the book, Carlson pays particular attention to the role of language in cross-cultural performances, examining how different languages and dialects can be used to create a sense of authenticity and cultural specificity. He draws on examples from a range of theatrical traditions, including classical drama, modern theatre, and contemporary experimental theatre, demonstrating the importance of language in different theatrical forms such as musicals, puppet, and classical theatre. Finally, he summarizes how language is used to create meaning and shape theatrical experience : “Thus the theatre, designed to reflect the culture of which it is itself a part, has had to find in all ages and periods strategies for depicting not only the perceived social actions of its audiences but also the impact of external forces that invariably influence those audiences, no matter how homogeneous they may have been” (1996:21). In the context of the Cold War in communist Albania and in the neighboring Balkan countries, in order to reach audiences in a more veiled way, translated texts and the stage productions themselves had to locally adapt the

language of the original by using colloquial language to convey messages to the audience in a more natural way, but also to carefully select particular concepts and phrases related to the unfamiliar world of enemy capitalism in order to be allowed on stage at all.

Another strategy to influence the “correct” understanding and interpretation of American plays behind the Iron Curtain was by critically discussing them in advance in the press, by implying specific messages in the materials presenting and interpreting the respective plays and productions. In the context of the Cold War in Albania, most American plays were translated into Albanian and put on stage with the use of special theatrical programs, notes, reviews, and commentaries providing instructions for reading, understanding, and interpreting the messages, characters and ideas intended to reach the audience. For the purposes of analyzing such materials accompanying translations and productions, this thesis relies on the French literary theorist Gerard Genette’s theory of paratext. As the term itself implies, it includes all the additional texts that surround a text, such as titles, subtitles, epigraphs, prefaces, introductions, illustrations, even the author’s name and biography. These ideas and concepts are useful in the analysis of the "dossier" of Miller’s play *Death of a Salesman*, which is preserved in the archives of the National Theatre in Tirana; it illustrates unequivocally how communist propaganda operated before and after the play was put on stage.

Last, though not least, the translation of American plays into Albanian proved to be an important factor in "filtering" and preparing the plays of Miller, Williams, and Lillian Hellman during the Cold

War. To analyze several specific translations, this dissertation relies on various ideas and concepts from translation theory. While reception via textual translation is not the focus of this thesis, it is part of the overall theatrical reception I would like to discuss. Firstly, I would highlight the theory of Antoine Berman, a French translator and translation theorist who has written extensively on the challenges and complexities of translating literary works from one language into another. One of Berman's key contributions is his article "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign" ("les épreuves de l'étranger), where he explores both the ordeal of "the target culture experiencing the unfamiliar foreign text and word" and the ordeal of "the foreign text being uprooted from its language and context" (Berman 2000: 286). The French scholar disapproves of the traditional practice of negating the foreign in translation by 'naturalizing' (bringing the foreign text as close as possible to the reader - somewhat synonymous with Venuti's later strategy known as 'domestication'). He argues that "the real ethical goal of the act of translation is the acceptance of the foreign as foreign", despite the resistance of the receiving culture to "letting the foreign pass" through various strategies of distorting the text (e.g., 'explicitation', 'elongation', 'impoverishment', etc.) - what Berman calls by the philosophical term 'negative analytics' (Berman 2000: 289). On the basis of his penetrating analysis of existing translations of novels, he identifies twelve 'deforming tendencies' (douze obstacles à surmonter) or negative deformations such as 'rationalization', 'clarification', 'elongation', 'quantitative impoverishment', 'qualitative impoverishment', 'destruction of rhythm', 'destruction of signifying

networks of signification or their exoticism', 'destruction of linguistic structures', 'exoticization of vernacular language', 'destruction of expressions and idioms', 'weeding out of the complexity of languages' (Berman 2000: 292-4). Berman contrasts the 'distorting tendencies' to the 'positive tendencies' that facilitate the process of signification in translation as well as the positive transformation of the target language.

Another major theory from the field of translation that sheds light on cultural differences in translation at the intersection of foreign and source cultures, and especially on the role of ideology and dominant power discourses in the host country, is related to the work and translation experience of the American scholar Lawrence Venuti. He advocates a more ethical and politically engaged approach to translation. One of his main arguments is that translation is not an objective process, but rather a highly subjective one that is influenced by the cultural and ideological prejudices of the translator and the society from which he or she comes. In his book, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Venuti talks about the "invisibility" of the translator, primarily in the United States, in two aspects: first, the translator's situation (the tendency of translators "to translate smoothly into English, producing an idiomatic and comprehensible target text" and thus creating an "illusion of transparency"), and second, in relation to the activity of translation itself, i.e., the way in which translated texts should "give the impression that the translation is not a translation of a foreign text but is 'the original'" (Venuti 1995: 1). Therefore, he appeals for a

'foreignization of the translation', a strategy to preserve the foreignness of the source text and therefore the linguistic and cultural differences. This approach is in opposition to the dominant norm of *domestication* in translation, which involves bringing the source text closer to the cultural and linguistic norms of the target language and culture. He argues against the accommodation of the foreign to the recipient culture in order for translators to make the translated text more accessible to readers of the target language. This can result in the loss of important cultural and linguistic nuances, and Venuti even calls it an "exercise in violence."

The violence of translation lies in its very purpose and action: the reconstruction of the foreign text according to the values, beliefs and representations that pre-exist in the target language, always determining the production, dissemination and reception of texts... Whatever otherness the translation brings is sealed by the culture of the target language, assimilated to its notions of intelligibility, to its canons and taboos, to its codes and ideologies (Venuti 1995: 18-19).

Venuti's appeal to translators is to engage in a more critical and politically conscious approach in their translation work. His call corresponds to the ideas developed by Suzanne Bassett in her book *Translating for the Theatre: The Case Against Performability*. In it, she insists that the cult of fidelity to the original text and cultural context in theatrical translation has led to a limited understanding of translation that prioritizes the needs of the audience and the director over the possibility of the staging/performativity of the text: "The term performativity is often used to describe the indescribable, presumably

existing hidden gestus message in the written form” (Bassnett 1998:102). According to Bassnett, this approach suggests that the ultimate goal of the theatre translation is to create a text that can be easily put on stage, rather than to create a translation that captures the essence of the original work. These critical ideas are particularly useful in analyzing theatrical productions under repressive regimes or overt and covert censorship, and they help in understanding some of the 'banned' productions in Albania, such as those of Tennessee Williams.

The distortions of the dramatic text under conditions of censorship and self-censorship are often the result not so much of translation strategies or decisions, but of ideological and political pressures. In his article "Ideology and Translation," Stefan Baumgartner focuses on the complex relationship between ideology and translation. He insists that translation is not a neutral process but is deeply influenced by the ideological beliefs and values of the translator. He stresses the role of the so-called 'cultural turn' (cultural shift) in translation studies, insisting on the centrality of cultural context in translation policy. His emphasis is on ideology and how it influences the translator's decision-making process. Baumgartner concludes that ideology can manifest itself in various ways in translation, “including through word choice, tone, and phrasing of the translated text” (Baumgarten 2012:11). He provides several examples to illustrate his argument, including translations of political speeches and literary works. Baumgartner stresses the importance of acknowledging the influence of ideology in translation and the need for translators to be aware of their own ideological biases in order to

produce more accurate and culturally sensitive translations. He also adds that “All interpretation, regardless of the purpose of the translation and its situational context, depends heavily on the analyst’s view (or ideology) of the concept of ideology itself” (Baumgartner 2012:61). These ideas are particularly pertinent to the interweaving of translations of American drama in the political circumstances of Albania and the Balkan countries during the Cold War. As Ioana Szeman reveals in her article "A Memorable French-Romanian Evening:

Nationalism and the Cold War at the Theater of Nations Festival" on a Romanian performance in Paris in 1957, the relationship of state-subsidized theater to nationalism and censorship is very strong: during the Cold War, "theater was an arena of confrontation and negotiation" (Szeman 2017 :218).

There are various definitions of censorship in art and literature. For the purposes of this exploration, I will use Nicole Moore's understanding as “the act of suppressing or restricting free expression, often in the name of protecting public morals or national security” (2017: 46). She discusses diverse forms of censorship, including government, self-censorship and corporate censorship, as well as more covert forms of suppression, such as pressure from publishers or advertisers to modify or censor content. The interviews I took from Albanian theatre directors from the older generation reveal a whole arsenal of means to censor and restrict individual and creative freedom, to stifle the free thought and expression of theatre-makers - especially in the cases of American cultural transmission when the

authors in question were considered a threat to public morals and national security.

## **CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL AND THEATRICAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH**

**Chapter Two** briefly introduces the main points in the development of the theatre history in several Balkan countries - mainly Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. In doing so, it summarizes the historical factors that led to the divergent trends and processes in the various countries during the Cold War.

The beginning of the cultural contact between Albania and the United States of America can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when Clement C. Moore, the author of the popular poem *The Christmas Night Before*, published his book *Georg Castriot, nicknamed Skenderbeg, King of Albania* (1850), and Henry Wordsworth Longfellow wrote his poem *Skenderbeg* in the third part of *Tales from the Motel* (1873). In fact, the real clash of the two cultures occurred in the twentieth century, after Albanian immigrants to the United States established their communities, first in Boston, and then in other neighboring Massachusetts cities, and after Albania finally overcame the Ottoman Empire's domination that lasted almost five centuries.

### **Theatre in Albania from 1945 to 1990**

Throughout its history, the national theatre of Albania has suffered serious damage from the excessive interference of politics, not only in

terms of its management and guiding policies, but also in terms of decisions which plays to stage, with what content and how. During the years 1944-1945, the Albanian socialist state controlled the newly established realistic theatre in three directions: a) imposing a repertoire made primarily of plays in the mode of "socialist realism", provided by Yugoslav, Russian or other Eastern European authors; b) encouraging Albanian playwrights to create original local plots; and c) ensuring the professional qualification of actors by mastering the principles of the Stanislavski system.

In the period between 1955-1965 a number of Albanian theatre directors and stage designers graduated or specialized in universities in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, which strongly influenced the quality of productions and artistic language in their home country. At the same time, new actors and actresses had graduated from the Alexander Moisiu Higher School of Acting, performing plays from the world's treasury by Russian and Albanian theatre directors. In this period, the first theatre festivals of professional theatres were organized, which became a centre for the exchange of artistic experience and professional development. For the first time, the National Theatre established its own school and became a place for passing on and sharing professional experience with other theatres in the country.

The years 1965-1972 saw a complete nationalist shift: national plays became the main repertoire, whereas productions of the world's great dramatic works - especially contemporary and American ones - gradually declined, encouraging native dramaturgy and the

renewal of artistic language in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the next period, between 1972-1985, Albania fell into complete isolation – contrary to the more liberal conditions in the whole Eastern bloc. The bleak political and economic situation, together with the country's cultural isolation, brought about zero contacts with world literature and drama. The extreme politicization of theatre groups created a conflicting and divisive atmosphere among actors, with innovative playwrights and authors being labeled "modernists," often punished, fired, sent into exile, and even imprisoned. Political pressure and censorship resulted in extremely schematic works filled with communist clichés and optimism, as well as reduced number of staged plays as a whole and new premiere productions.

After the death of dictator Enver Hoxha in 1985, liberalization began in the country, with the state reducing censorship over the National Theatre. With the end of the communist dictatorship in 1990, the whiff of freedom was felt. The natural consequences observed pulled in several directions: a) the inclusion of more plays by foreign authors; b) the opening of opportunities for the theatre to address the taboos, previously forbidden, amplifying the social criticism of corruption in public administration and the demand for more freedom and rights; c) support in assisting political changes towards democracy; d) first attempts to present authors who had been banned during communism f) increasing conflict between generations and visions, leading to an abrupt break with the tradition of Albanian drama and the new artists who introduced new themes and stylistics.

In general, the beginning of theatre as a cultural institution in Albania had been associated with the presence of foreign world playwrights such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, Brecht, Chekhov, and others. In the 1960s, the theatrical repertoire began to decline, eliminating foreign plays, with the peak of the negation of everything Western happening in the 1970s and 1980s, when almost all the plays on stage were by Albanian authors. As a result, Albanian theatre broke away from contemporary theatre style, methodology and practices very early on, living inwardly in extreme xenophobia. Some believe that this extreme enclosure in one's own tradition and the erasure of the foreign had acted as a stimulus for the development of Albanian playwrights' work, but this is a controversial thesis.

### **American Theatre on Yugoslav Stages during the Cold War**

In contrast to the growing isolation of the Albanian theatre and its hostility to American drama, post-war Europe saw a real boom in producing contemporary American theatre. A new generation of American playwrights, such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Edward Albee, took over the stages of London, Paris, Berlin, and other capitals. In the Eastern Bloc, Yugoslavia showed the greatest interest and openness to popular American playwrights, who were quickly translated and produced. The presence of Miller and Williams in the repertoires of Yugoslav stages was not only a sign of political opening and a desire for good diplomatic relations (so-called cultural diplomacy), but also a willingness to open to innovative styles in acting and directing. The transformation towards modern

contemporary theatre is also an indication of a change in audience attitudes and Western-oriented interests among the theatre audience in Yugoslavia, which was rapidly moving away from the communist path and seeking its own independent path of development.

### **The Founding of the National Theatre of Kosovo**

Until 2008, Kosovo was legally an autonomous region within Serbia and due to the inter-ethnic wars in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia it took a difficult path of an independent state with its own cultural identity. Individual plays by American playwrights were staged in the 1980s and 1990s, but the real peak of American playwrights came only after 2000, especially in relation to Tennessee Williams. It is worth mentioning that in 1983 *The Glass Menagerie* had already been translated into Albanian and performed on stage in Kosovo, while Miller's one-act play, *Incident at Vichy*, was translated and staged in Albanian in Pristina in 1973. The 2000s saw the beginning of a strong run of productions based on Tennessee Williams's plays, marked by the staging of *The Rose Tattoo* in 2000 and 2001 at the National Theatre of Kosovo. In 2001 and 2008 *The Glass Menagerie* was staged again in Prishtina, at the Dodona Theatre, and in 2010 it was followed by *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Ironically, Arthur Miller was the last to be performed: *Death of a Salesman* took over the stage of the National Theatre of Kosovo in 2014, and his later play *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* was performed in 2015 at the Istef Begoli Theatre in Peja, Kosovo. Apparently, reception of Western drama during communism was severely hampered.

### **Traces of American Drama in the Albanian Theatre of Skopje**

The Albanian-speaking theatre in Skopje was founded in February 1950 as a result of the cultural and artistic movement of the Albanians living in Macedonia, former Yugoslavia, and is connected to the artistic and cultural society "Emin Duraku", which played an important role in the Albanian movement in the city. Following the opening of a theatre that put on stage plays in Turkish, the government approved the establishment of an Albanian theatre. Two intellectuals, prof. Abedin Krasniqi and prof. Abdus Hussein, have a special merit for the opening of this theatre. The theatre's first production was Gogol's "The Wedding", performed in July 1950, but thereafter productions of Albanian plays predominated. During the 1963 earthquake, the building was destroyed, and performances were staged in the towns of Gostivar and Tetovo, until the main theatre in Skopje was fully rebuilt. In 40 years, the Albanian theatre in Skopje hosted 183 plays from Albanian, Yugoslav and world drama.

In 2002, a festival called "Albanian Theatre in Macedonia" was held at the theatre in Dibra, with the aim of encouraging Albanian theatre activity, involving new actors and directors, and placing more emphasis on the creative process. Some of the most representative plays of the Albanian Theatre in Skopje at this festival are American: *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee (productions of 2003 and 2008) and an adaptation based on *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck (2007). Due to a lack of resources in the Skopje theatre archives, there is little information about the presence of American drama in this theatre

before the 1990s, although there are traces of it in Kosovo and other neighbouring former Yugoslav countries.

### **The Presence of American Drama in Communist Bulgaria**

The Bulgarian Theatre was founded shortly before the liberation of the country from the Ottoman Empire. One of the first theatre companies formed gave birth to the National Theatre, established in Sofia in 1904. Between the two world wars, Bulgarian theatre was heavily influenced by European and Russian traditions, but quickly caught up with American drama. Thus, American drama became part of the Bulgarian theatre scene relatively early compared to European stages- as early as the 1930s with the plays of Eugene O'Neill. Kornelia Slavova's book *American Drama on the Bulgarian Stage: Theatre as a Translation of Cultures* (2014) offers a detailed overview of the presence and flowering of American drama over seven decades. In this long process, Slavova outlines four main periods: 1) partial penetration through the figure of O'Neill in the period between the two world wars; 2) the admission of individual leftist playwrights in the late 1940s, such as Albert Maltz, Lillian Hellman, and Arthur Miller, and their ideological use for socialist art in the 1950s and 1960s; 3) a reorientation toward aesthetic concerns in American dramaturgy through the figures of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee, and the re-discovery of Eugene O'Neill in the 1970s and 1980s; 4) a boom in American drama in the post-Communist context at the border between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In terms of official reception, Slavova concludes:

A major factor in the cultural translation of American drama in Bulgaria in the twentieth century was not so much the national theatrical tradition or the actors' methods, but the dominant ideology that controlled the higher and lower levels of interpretation (related to the overall theatrical representation of American society and culture, as well as the choice of theatrical form, genre, style, etc.). Different political and economic regimes have domesticated American drama by different means: in early socialism, communist propaganda relied on ideological pressure and manipulation, replaced in late socialism by more sophisticated forms of subversion and camouflage, while after 1989 they gave way to market mechanisms of seduction and adaptation (2014: 281).

### **CHAPTER 3: ARTHUR MILLER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST**

This analytical chapter focuses on Arthur Miller's uneven and winding path to the theatre stages of the Balkan countries and the Eastern Bloc as a whole. His work in the United States reached its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s (with the Broadway productions of *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949)), and then, in the wake of McCarthyism in the 1950s, he had a difficult time but returned to the stage with the plays *After the Fall* (1964), *The Misfits* (1961), *The Price* (1968), and *Incident at Vichy's* (1964). Because of

his liberal views and his refusal to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to investigate anti-American leftist artists during McCarthyism, as well as his opposition to the Vietnam War and his support for Soviet dissidents during the Cold War, Miller often fell out of favor in his own country. In Eastern Europe (including the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria), he was extremely popular for his critical attitude towards capitalist America fraught with social contradictions, political and ideological tensions, for his liberal principles, and for his defense of values and morality in the life of the individual and society. In the 1950s and 1960s he was extremely popular in Eastern Europe with his plays successfully performed in Moscow, Belgrade, Sofia, Warsaw, and other cities. But in 1968 Miller suddenly fell out of grace due to his criticism of Soviet policy after the Soviet tanks entered Prague: as a result, his was discredited as a public figure and writer, his plays were silenced in the USSR until the 1990s, he was declared “a non-progressive author”. Thus, ironically, Miller fell into the trap of the Cold War politics: being simultaneously rejected in both East and West for his honest civic stance.

This fact also explains why Miller's reception is extremely uneven in Albania. His first play there was *A View from the Bridge* (1955), directed by Socrates Mio, and it was produced only a few times in the 1960s, including a production directed by Piro Mani, at the Andon Zako Çajupi Theatre in Korça - subsequently banned by the dictator himself due to its Freudian connotations. In the 1970s very few plays by Arthur Miller were staged due to the restrictions imposed

by the communist system. There was an attempt to stage *The Crucible* in 1973, but it was unsuccessful. The translation was used for a performance of the same play in the late 1980s at the Bylis Theatre, directed by Fatos Sela, when Albania was opening up after perestroika, the death of dictator Enver Hoxha and the changes taking place in the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The play was again interpreted through the prism of communist ideology - as an indictment of the power of sexual possessiveness and religion.

The most important encounters on Albanian stages with Arthur Miller's plays occurred in the 1980s, when *Death of a Salesman* was first staged in 1986 at the National Theatre, directed by Fatos Haxhiraj, immediately after the death of dictator Enver Hoxha; the play criticized the alienation and dehumanization of American society through the downfall of the character Willie Lowman. *All My Sons* was staged in 1988, just a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Based on all existing documents it becomes clear that Miller was the first and primary American playwright for the Albanian stage. His productions were seriously delayed, having already reached Moscow, Sofia, Belgrade, Bucharest, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Skopje. This demonstrates how the Albanian communist regime purposely restricted and censored American authors, creating a large void in the cultural background of the Albanian public from 1945 to 1990.

The analysis in this chapter attempts to demonstrate the power of politics over theatre and how ideology can twist the messages and images of the original by erasing the socio- political and economic context in order to offer the audience a distorting picture

that satisfies the regime's political propaganda. The analysis of the cut out and distorted Albanian translation of *The Crucible* only confirms Venuti's idea of the "violence" of the original by the mechanisms of power, to forcibly domesticate the work to fit the publicly imposed critical image of America as the enemy. Similarly, *Death of a Salesman's* Theater Program and Theater File - found in the National Theater's archives (dated 5/25/86) - look like a police file written by anonymous critics who gave strict instructions on how to stage the play, what messages to instill in the audience, what accents to place, how the actors should play in a "politically correct manner." This kind of "paratext" in Gerard Genette's terms reveals unequivocally the connection between theatre as a political weapon of communist power, as well as a way of educating and raising "proper" socialist citizens.

#### **CHAPTER 4: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS BEYOND THE IRON CURTAIN**

**Chapter Four** begins with Tennessee Williams's presence in American drama, and then moves on to the analysis how his plays were received in the Balkan countries during the Cold War. Undoubtedly, Williams's central place on the American stage is determined primarily by his extremely rich and diverse artistic legacy in various genres, which left a strong mark on the development of world art. His innovative works were ahead of their time with their sensational themes, their sensitive outsider characters living in an alienated world, their distinctive Southern atmosphere of loss and

nostalgia, their lyrical-poetic style, and their deeply psychological dramas of the outcast. Not at all accidentally, Williams has been described as "the master of compassion in American drama" and has quickly succeeded in captivating theater audiences around the world.

The lyrical playwright has enjoyed a great popularity in Eastern Europe during the Cold War: his plays were performed in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Belgrade, Skopje and Pristina; sometimes in several languages, depending on the multilingualism of the region. For example, his earliest play, *The Glass Menagerie*, reached Belgrade and other Serbian cities shortly after its first Broadway production, where it was performed in Serbian; in Skopje it was performed in Macedonian in the 1940s and 1950s, whereas in Pristina, Kosovo, it was staged in Albanian as late as 1983. Apparently, Williams was warmly received in all Balkan countries during the Cold War, but not in Albania. His absence has produced a real gap in the knowledge of American culture and drama in the Albanian context. Some of the main reasons for this deliberate "absence" are the sensational nature of his plays (often focusing on various taboo topics such as sexuality, the painful sensitivity of the outsider, speaking frankly about love and sex, homosexuality, etc.), his recognition in the West and in Europe (turning him automatically into an enemy), and because of his presentation to the audience of the destroyed psyche of the individual in crisis situations. In the Eastern Bloc, attempts have often been made to use Williams's drama for political purposes as a propaganda tool exposing the ills of capitalist society as part of the "culture war" that was fought between the USSR and the USA, the "pax Americana" vs.

"pax Sovietica".

For these reasons, Williams walked a particularly difficult path in Albania. His most representative plays, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and *Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), never reached the Albanian stages during communism. They were performed only in the late 1980s, after the fall of the communist regime from power. It was only then that the great catch-up and something of an explosion of Williams's work began. *The Glass Menagerie* was staged on the Albanian stage in early 1990 by the Theatre of the Academy of Arts in Tirana, when liberalization had already taken place, but Albania could still be considered communist because the real student demonstrations happened in December 1990 and democratic parliamentary elections were held in Albania in March 1992. In fact, *The Glass Menagerie* was translated into Albanian in Kosovo as early as 1983, and could have been easily transferred to Tirana, but that did not happen. This fact reveals again the harsh nature of communism in Albania (as opposed to neighboring countries) and the country's ruthless censorship, which condemned its audience to ignorance and isolation from world culture. A translation of *The Glass Menagerie* into Albanian from the early 1980s, (preserved in the Kosovo National Library), shows that no major changes or cuts were made to the original text. An analysis of the translated version demonstrates how the foreignness of the American reality was relatively preserved without forcing "domestication" (in Venuti's terms), and the cultural context of the American South was largely preserved. This is an extremely rare phenomenon – the existence of a translation from English into

Albanian that had not been ideologically distorted or politically rewritten according to the Communist Party rules simply because it was created in Pristina, Kosovo, as part of Yugoslavia during the Cold War.

This fact once again proves the role of the receiving culture and the specificity of what Pavis calls "codifying norms" in relation to theatre reception in different countries. Due to the different historical, ideological, and cultural conditions, Williams traveled a different path in Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Kosovo. If we consider Williams's reception on the Bulgarian stage during the Cold War, we find that he "contributed strongly to the aesthetic development of Bulgarian theatre" precisely because of his differences from socialist realism and optimism - despite the censorship's attempt to present him as a critic of social problems, of tragic isolation, of religious intolerance, loneliness and cruelty, in order to denounce the "decline of capitalism" and "moral degradation" in the United States (Slavova 2014: 203). In Albania, these themes remained taboo during the Cold War; only realistic plays with positive socialist content were given a chance.

The American playwright's only encounter with Albanian audiences occurred in 1973, when an attempt was made to stage *Orpheus Descending*, but this was not possible due to the repressive measures taken by the communist regime. Archival documents show that directors and actors were persecuted for even a timid attempt to stage important plays that deviated from the socialist point of view. Director Mikhail Luarasi's attempt to stage *Orpheus Descending* in 1973, following the example of the Soviet Union and Bulgaria,

bordered on hysteria, or rather paranoia, because of the way the Party's anonymous critics approached this play. The production itself was halted and banned during the dress rehearsal for fear of the audience's encounter with the bizarre Christian imagery, the love scenes, the white man lynching scene, and the overall symbolism and content of the work. While in Moscow and Sofia the same play was used as early as 1960 to denounce racial discrimination in the United States, the Albanian communist regime could look no further than socialist realism decades later.

Because of all these complex political turns, it can be said that the beginning of the twenty-first century marked both the discovery and re-discovery of Tennessee Williams by the Albanian audiences: in the last three decades *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Glass Menagerie* and *Streetcar Named Desire* have become regular titles in the repertoire of Albanian theatres.

## **CHAPTER 5: LILLIAN HELLMAN IN THE BALKANS**

**Chapter Five** of the dissertation focuses on the work of Lillian Hellman and her presence in the Balkans between 1944 and 1990. The first section introduces the playwright's influence in her home country since the 1930s. Hellman's successful years in the United States were in the 1930s and 1940s, primarily with *The Children's Hour* and *The Little Foxes*. Her constant travels in Europe, including Nazi Germany and the former Yugoslavia, demonstrate her extraordinary courage and willingness to understand political and economic issues from the inside. Hellman quickly became popular in the Eastern Bloc as well,

thanks to her outstanding socially oriented plays, journalistic talent, intellect, and courage during the Cold War. Prosecuted by the House Un-American Activities Committee during McCarthyism (for her refusal to name sympathizers of leftist ideas), she gained international fame and particular popularity behind the Iron Curtain. Hellman was invited to meet Tito when the Soviet Union broke relations with the former Yugoslavia, making her visit to Belgrade sensational news. The production of *The Little Foxes* at the Belgrade Drama Theatre coincided with her visit to Belgrade as a journalist, not as a playwright. Her play *The Little Foxes* was staged repeatedly in Belgrade (1948), Zagreb (1949), Ljubljana (April 1949) and Skopje (1949), a tradition that continues to this day. Hellman made it to the Bulgarian stage in the harshest years of aesthetic dogmatism and growing ideological monopoly - between 1948 and 1953, and *The Little Foxes* was staged at the Ivan Vazov National Theatre as early as the 1947/48 season.

Against the background of this enormous success in the Eastern bloc and in the Balkans in general, it is difficult to understand why Hellman reached the Albanian stage in the last years of the communist regime. *The Little Foxes* was not staged until the 1988- 89 season when political liberalization began due to glasnost and perestroika after the death of dictator Enver Hoxha. It remained in obscurity for almost the next thirty years after the change in the political system. One of the reasons why she was not considered suitable for the stages of communist Albania was probably the fact that she was a woman, and her boldness was not acceptable as a model behavior in the patriarchy-dominated local culture.

The dismissive attitude towards the play persisted even in other Albanian-speaking regions such as Kosovo and North Macedonia, where Albanian theatres had a permanent repertoire. Perhaps the reason is again rooted in the fact that she is a woman of leftist convictions, outspoken politically, and had a reputation in the United States as an ardent feminist. Although the state apparatus of socialist Albania promoted women as workers and powerful citizen, this was merely a "facade" or superficial understanding of women's role in society. Women in Albania have traditionally had no voice; they are equal to men in terms of work duties, but without having a voice. The Communist Party was afraid of such strong female figures, regardless of their talent and ability, because they were afraid of the example they could set for Albanian women.

Based on the facts gathered about the productions of this single play by Hellman in Slovenia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, the study analyses the factors behind the playwright's different perception in the communist countries – all related to their historical and cultural national specificities. The last section of Chapter Five is devoted to the translation of *The Little Foxes* from English into Albanian and the transformations that occurred along the lines of intensifying criticality the representation of class inequality, racial issues, and the greedy nouveau riche in the American South who attempted to plunder the labor of the black poor through deception and financial speculation.

## CONCLUSION

The current study confirms the hypothesis that American drama was staged on Albanian stages to a lesser extent than in other Balkan countries due to its specifically isolationist climate during the communist regime.

First, the study presents a kind of theatrical historiography of Albanian theatre, highlighting five stages in the period of almost five decades under consideration:

1) 1944 -1954 : the beginning of the development of the Albanian socialist theatre, marked by staging only "socialist realism" plays by Yugoslav and Russian as well as the introduction of Stanislavski method.

2) 1955 - 1965: Albanian directors who had specialized in the USSR or other Eastern European countries returned and influenced the selection of plays, interpretations, and stage language of Albanian productions; plays from the "world golden heritage" by Russian and Albanian directors were staged. It was during this period that Arthur Miller's plays first entered the theatrical scene.

3) 1965 -1972: boosting local Albanian drama and decrease in the number of productions by foreign playwrights.

4) 1972 - 1985: due to the country's severe isolation, Western culture and art were restricted, the content of art was highly politicized and schematized, and theatre innovators were labeled "modernists," being punished or sent into exile.

5) 1985-1992 gradual and slow liberalization after the death of Enver Hoxha, which intensified after the fall of the regime in

1990; more foreign plays were produced and taboos in art began to be overcome.

In general, the advance of American drama into the post-war years in the Balkans, particularly in Albania, coincided with the period of the laying of the foundations of socialist art, and for these reasons involved a much more complex and veiled relationship of appropriation and careful recoding and rewriting. The study shows how Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Lillian Hellman were received differently in their native American contexts, in Balkan countries, and with a huge delay, in the Albanian social and cultural context. Their reception behind the Iron Curtain largely became hostage to the cultural Cold War, *pax Americana* versus *pax Sovietica* in the period 1945 and 1989. The production history of the American plays under review from the mid-1940s to the 1990s shows that their reception was most enthusiastic in the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, whereas they did not fit into Albania's state cultural policy. In the later 1980s, there was a gradual softening of dogmatic politics, but it was only after the death of Enver Hoxha that it became possible to hear the voices of Williams and Hellman on the Albanian scene. For this reason, their work has left almost no mark on Albanian dramaturgy and art in general.

Undoubtedly, the dissertation concludes that Arthur Miller has been the most translated and most performed playwright in communist Albania, though his path was a winding one, sometimes forcibly delayed or interrupted. Suffice it to say that the world's most performed American play, *Death of a Salesman*, traveled exactly forty

years to the Albanian stage (after being produced all over the world, including China). In the drastically changed political and economic context after 1989, the theatrical interest in the classics of American drama Hellman, Miller and Williams has intensified, even though they no longer occupy a central place on the Albanian stage today.

The collected archival documents illustrate how the theatre scene in the Balkans in the second half of the twentieth century often saw battles between ideology and aesthetics, between intellectuals and party leaders, between politics and poetics. This study demonstrates once again that theatre is a public arena where different national traditions meet, where ideological principles are affirmed and contested. The examples analyzed show how American drama has often been forcibly altered and used as a weapon to combat American capitalism, but also occasionally it succeeded in operating as a means of cultural mediation and aesthetic renewal.

## **CITED LITERATURE**

- Bassnett, Susan, and André Lefevere. *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Vol. 11. Multilingual Matters, 1998.
- Baumgarten, Stefan. "Ideology and translation" in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, Vol. 3. 59-65. John Benjamins Publishing Company. 2012.
- Bennet, Susan. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction, Traditional Theater*. London: Routledge Publishing. 1996.

- Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997.
- Hellman, Lillian. (1939) 2001. *The Little Foxes*. New York. York: Josef Weinberger Plays.
- Imre, Zoltan. *Theatre, Propaganda and the Cold War: Peter Brook's Midsummer Night's Dream in Eastern Europe (1972)* | SpringerLink.  
[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-48084-8\\_7](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-48084-8_7). Accessed 19 Sept. 2022.
- Kadija, Refik. "American Studies in Albania in the Past and the Future", *John F. Kennedy- Institute fur Nordamerikastudien, Abteilung Fur Kultur Working Paper No. 68/1994*.
- Klosi, Iris. "Translation and Theatre Performance of Arthur Miller's Plays in Albania", *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, Vol 4/ Issue 3. 2018.
- Meserve, Walter J. "American Drama and the Rise of Realism". *Jahrbuch Für Amerikastudien*, 1964. 152-59.
- Miller, Arthur. *A View from the Bridge: a Play in Two Acts*. Dramatists Play Service Inc.1957.
- . *All My Sons*. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. 1947.
- . *Death of a Salesman. Play in Two Acts*. New York: Pinguin Press. 1949.
- . *The Crucible*. New York: The Viking Press. 1953.
- Moore, Nicole. "Censorship Is". *Australian Humanities Review* 54 (2013): 45-65.
- Papagjoni, Josif. *Historia e Teatrit Shqiptar. The History of the*

- Albanian Theatre*. Tirana: Academy of Science in Albania. 2011.
- . *Teatri Kombëtar. The National Theatre*. Tirana: Academy of Science in Albania. 2005. Pavis, Patrice. *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. University of Michigan Press. 2003.
- . *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*. Routledge. 1990. Slavova, Kornelia. *American Drama on the Bulgarian Stage: Theatre as Cultural Translation*. [Amerikanskata drama na bulgarska scena: teaturut kato prevod na kulturi]. Sofia: Polis. 2014.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary. "The Turns of Translation Studies," *The Turn of Translation Studies*, 2006, 1-217.
- Szeman, Ioana. "A Memorable French-Romanian Evening": *Nationalism and the Cold War at the Theatre of Nations Festival*. In: *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 207-221.
- Williams, Tennessee. *Orpheus Descending: A play in Three Acts / 145*. New York: New Directions. Reprint, New York: Dramatists Play Service. 1957.
- . *The Glass Menagerie*. New York: Random House. 1945.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS**

1. The study of the reception of American drama in communist Albania is the first and only of its kind to date in Albania, as well as internationally. It contributes to existent research because it makes use of entirely unknown and unexplored material collected in the archives of various theatres in the Balkans.
2. The research incorporates new and unpublished visual documents as well as original recordings and materials in Albanian and Macedonian.
3. The parallel study of productions of American drama in other Albanian-speaking regions of the Balkans, as well as in relation to several countries of the same period such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania, provides an opportunity to compare how different national theatrical traditions and practices functioned under the political regime of communism.
4. By focusing on the most restrictive communist ideological regime in Europe, this dissertation offers new insights into the role of ideology, censorship, and translation in the rewriting of American drama, as well as the abuse of art under the pressure of political power.
5. The work is written in English, which opens vistas for new comparative and interdisciplinary research on a wider scale, as well as fresh interpretation of the theatre-politics relationship. As a first attempt on the topic, this work can serve as a basis for future scholarship.

## PUBLICATIONS ON THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1. *“Theater as Propaganda: Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman on the Albanian Stage under Communism”*, Journal “XIV конференция на нехабилитираните преподаватели и докторанти от ФКНФ, съст. Мадлен Данова, ред. Гергана Борисова, Sofia: University Press 2018, pp. 149-156, 156, ISBN 1314-3948.
2. *“A View From the Bridge: A View on the Albanian Communist “Past” on the Albanian Stage”*, Conference “Young Researchers”, 2017, Volume 1, Sofia: University Press, 2019, pp. 515-522, ISBN 978-954-07-4611-1, <http://phdsu.blogspot.com/2019/02/1.html>.
3. *“Journey Across the Communist Past of Albania through the Lens of American Drama on Stage (1960-1990)”*, XA Proceedings, Vol. 2 No. 1, Zagreb: Portal of Scientific Journals of Croatia, 2019, pp. 134-145, ISSN 2623-5668.
4. *“Taking Center Stage: Staging Women in Arthur Miller’s Plays in Albania before the 1990s”*, МЛАДИ ИЗСЛЕДОВАТЕЛИ, Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, Том 3, Сборник 2019, (pp. 91-97), ISBN 978-954-07-4747-7.
5. *“Illusion-Making and Illusion-Breaking: All My Sons on the Albanian Stage Before the Collapse of Communism”*, Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies: BELLS90 Proceedings. Vol. 2 (2020) Article 33 (pp.437–445). <https://doi.org/10.18485/bells90.2020.2.ch33>. 2020.

