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FOR READING, WATCHING AND CLAPPING: SARTRE'S *DIRTY HANDS* AND HRISTIĆ'S *CLEAN HANDS*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to show how and to what extent destinies of two characters two antipodal drama titles are intertwined in the context of human sinning and atonement. We are going to analyze *Dirty Hands* by Jean-Paul Sartre and *Clean Hands* by Jovan Hristić. The paper offers interpretations of errors committed by tragic heroes and their comparison with characters from Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*. *The paper sheds more light on the role and importance of the environment in shaping human guilt, as well as the consequences which this guilt leaves in the lives of the drama characters.*

Keywords: Jean-Paul Sartre *Dirty Hands* (*Les Mains Sales*, 1944), Jovan Hristić *Clean Hands* (*Čucme pyke*, 1960), Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, tragedy, tragic hero, guilt, irony, humor, purification, moral.

In this paper we are going to attempt to interpret the messages and morals from two drama pieces from the twentieth century; we have in front of us Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands*¹ and *Clean Hands* by Jovan Hristić. We are going to discuss guilt as a determinant of human destiny. These two writers and philosophers² dealt with the inscrutable question of sin, hurt and the meaning of human suffering, whether it was deserved or stemming from someone else's intentions. We will try to discern the subtle boundary between that which is destined and that which is human, i.e. that which is unquestionable, inevitable and unchangeable, and that which can be decided on and which can be influenced; we will consider the position and power of man in such an

¹ Fifty years after its premiere, in 1998, director Jean-Pierre Dravel staged, in the very same theater where the play was presented for the first time (the Theatre Antoine), *Dirty Hands* and this performance was declared the best theatrical performance of the entire season in the whole of Paris. B. M. J. M. 1998.

² Sartre completed his studies and passed an exam which allowed him to teach philosophy in 1929 (his first professorship was in Le Havre in 1931, after he had completed his army service), while Hristić got a degree from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in pure philosophy in 1958.

environment.

Hands as a symbol of man's actions and struggles, embody the human thoughts and words: they leave a mark and a record of man's existence. When dirtied, they have always represented an act of sinning, and when clean, they have always represented the clean, immaculate soul. In Jovan Hristić's drama, we meet a completely different Oedipus, an antihero,³ an Oedipus without the burden of the past, an Oedipus who is free, sinless, and who does not allow for anything to disrupt the harmony and simplicity of his life. In the first act, involved in polemic with the Sphinx, and later also with Teiresias, Ion and citizens, he persevered and, despite the destiny which awaited him, his morality remained intact and his soul remained pure. How? Unlike Sophocles' Oedipus, who is investigating his own morality, putting it to the test and who wants to know the whole truth, Hristić's Oedipus refuses to sin and resists being involved in the political games imposed by his social environment.⁴ We cannot escape the impression that Hristić's vision of Oedipus represents an eulogy to the old, blinded Oedipus, who is being taken by Antigone into exile to Colonus.⁵ It is through his convictions that young Oedipus ridicules the tragic destiny which awaits him. He often repeats the following words: "My hands are clean."⁶ For instance, in his conversation with the Sphinx, while the monster criticizes him for not having killed Laius, he says: "A man is born innocent, and he should die innocent. This is what the gods give us. Sins, we earn ourselves. My father taught me to stay away from sin. If others sin, it does not mean that I must sin, too. My hands are clean, I want them to stay clean as well. That's life."⁷ The encounter between the Sphinx and Oedipus is the first encounter of good and evil in the drama, of the bright and the dull, of the enthusiastic and the sleepy, of the naive and the treacherous. However, as much as Oedipus is perceived as a one-dimensional, transparent person, a person who is what he lives, what he thinks, feels and acts for the sake of a single goal, for the sake of blind sinlessness, that much the very appearance of the Sphinx becomes more complex. She is like a living pan which weighs

³ Frajnd 1971: 344.

⁴ When asked about the relationship between literature and politics, Jovan Hristić once replied: "I do not know if I managed to avoid that trap. My plays *Clean Hands* and *Savonarola and His Friends* were considered reactionary by some and they even wondered how anyone could have put them on the repertoire of a theater such as the Yugoslav Drama Theater in the first place. On the other hand, and at the same time, some other people blamed me for using the Aesopian language and for avoiding to speak openly about some problems. I wrote these plays the way I wrote them, I would have written them in exactly the same way if I had lived in a democratic country and not here. But in a politicized society you cannot avoid getting into a situation when somebody decided to read your work in a 'political way'. And whether you have ever thought of politics or of some political response – that's none of their business." Radisavljević 1998.

⁵ It was Vladimir Stamenkovic who was the first one to notice that the complex conceptual subtext of *Clean Hands* can be better understood if it is not compared with the original version of the myth, but with its indirect version presented in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. (Stamenković 1987: 75.) However, it seems to us Hristić's young Oedipus is more similar to Sophocles's old man, who underwent purification through suffering and then found his peace. In this sense, he is very similar to Velimir Lukic's Oedipus in *the Theban Plague*. See Maričić 2008: 218–224.

⁶ These two words occur thirty times in the play. Sartre "hid" the title from the main character of his play, while Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*, over the length of five acts and twenty four scenes, wrote the word "love" only ten times. Maričić 2008: 221.

⁷ Hristić 1970: 21.

human sins; like a creature who brings catharsis to the city, who is there for the benefit to the city and who is its guardian against the pandemic of sin, but who is also a brutal executioner who takes away lives of innocent citizens without any rules.

The notion which runs through entire Hristić's drama *Clean Hands* and makes a distinction among the characters, i.e. which singles out Oedipus's character as a prototype of transparent morality, politeness and good manners, begins to be developed at the very beginning, in the conversation between the Chorus and the Sphinx: "Are you all such cowards that you cannot withstand the sin of a single man? I do not know what the gods think, but to me you are worse than Laius. You are not even sinners, you are cowards. A sin means a man, but I do not see a single human face among you."⁸ It is interesting to point out that, at the end of the first act, Oedipus somewhat desecrated the ideal image of himself, when, remembering the Sphinx's words and beauty, he lied about having killed Laius. However, since this is the only point in the entire drama when he does something which is contrary to his principles, which he loudly proclaims in his dialogues, such a procedure gives the impression of simplicity, or even of a desire to fulfill the wishes of others.

Oedipus believes that gods are merciful, that the act of birth does not entail any guilt on the part of man, and that man earns their sins themselves. The young shepherd denies responsibility for the events that he caused, attributing them to chance. He kills the Sphinx, liberates Thebes, and becomes the new master, but not intentionally. Solving the riddle is for him a game, and not an act of rescuing the town. Oedipus is more similar to the Boy, who appears in the early scenes, than he is to sly Teiresias, serious Ion or to Sophocles's Creon, who does not appear in Hristić's *Clean Hands*. The Shepherd of Kithairon does not want either the easily acquired fame nor the honors, but he also does not want to lose his former identity; he does not hide the scars on his feet, but is struggling to not dirty his hands by agreeing to sin. However, his "ignorance, nescience, lead him to say a lie, to say that he killed Laius. That lie and the solution for the Sphinx's riddle are the acts which bring him into the circle of men from which he had previously been separated, and they force him to take his stance towards that circle, which is something that he consistently refuses to do."⁹ He is alone in his understanding of what is right.¹⁰ On the opposite side, there are the relentless evil doer, the poet and the prophet, and even the queen, who, together, devalue his principles and disparage his life over-arched by the shepherd's bell. It seems that Oedipus's biggest antipode is prophet Teiresias, who does not believe that a man can keep his hands clean, because this denies his existence and actions. For him, clean hands are actually empty hands, hands which do not want to accept

⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

⁹ *Frajnd* 1971: 344.

¹⁰ When recommending Jovan Hristić for a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the three academicians wrote the following about Oedipus from *Clean Hands*: "He violated a predetermined order, he renounced his own tragic determination and kept his 'hands clean', unblemished, morally clean, but also insignificant and unfulfilled in time and in mythology." see Palavestra, Bečković, Simović 1997: 4. (Unfortunately, neither the credibility nor the authority of the three academicians, nor the excellent written report helped. Jovan Hristić never become even a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. See Maričić 2009: 88.

responsibility, hands which are only apparently free: “Take a good look at that which hangs from your shoulders. Is it the hands? Two empty banners which not a single man is willing to stand behind... You constantly keep saying ‘no, no, no’ and you think that you are free. Will you finally realize that freedom does not consist of either ‘yes’ or of ‘no’.”¹¹ The reader, although they may believe in Oedipus’s purity and in his right to innocence, may not remain deaf to Teiresias’s words. Actually, the question arises whether one can preserve one’s morality by doing nothing and by refraining from action. Hristić’s Teiresias, although more courageous and bolder than Sophocles’s one, also believes in the inevitability of the fate which has been chosen for him by the gods. The dialogue between Hristić’s Oedipus and Teiresias is on the verge of resembling a dialogue between the premises of the drama *Clean Hands* and of the drama *Oedipus the King*¹² as a whole. What makes the distinction between Sophocles’s and Hristić’s Oedipus is the fact that Hristić’s Oedipus first appears as a boy, but he also remains a boy. In terms of his characteristics, his behavior. Jocasta, at one point, addresses him with the following words: “You are a child, but children are worse than murderers. They do not know what life is, but only what is good and what is bad.”¹³ As such, gods have destined him to solve the Sphinx’s riddle: “I sense that he is going to come as early as today. He is going to be handsome in his innocence and innocent in his ignorance. Is it really only the innocent ones and those who know nothing who are destined to answer all the questions? Why is it that only they live in the world of ready-made answers, without even knowing the right question?”¹⁴ The Sphinx¹⁵ embodies the inevitability and sets it into motion. It is not enough for the citizens to exile the sinful old king Laius, but the riddle must be solved as well. Oedipus is very reminiscent of an actor who refuses to play the role which has been written exactly for him.

Jocasta’s character is equally interesting in Hristić’s drama. Aged from sorrow, the Queen, in the company of the old executioner Laius, lived at the court in a procession of long and trying days. Upon Oedipus’s arrival and upon Thebes returning to life, we see a new Queen, one filled with a hope of change, a hope of healing. We cannot but get the impression that Jocasta’s replies in the first act are on the verge of making us laugh, only for them to make us feel the true scale of her renewed grief at the very end.¹⁶ It seems that it is her that we can most easily identify with. Jocasta is the most tragic character in the drama, because she, unlike Oedipus, does not have the right to choose, the right to crime

¹¹ Hristić 1970: 64.

¹² In the original Serbian text the title of Sophocles’s famous play, and of probably the most famous tragedy, is given in accordance with the most recent Serbian translation of Aleksandar Gatalica. On why the Serbian translation uses the word “господар” (master), see Gatalica 2011: XXI–XXII.

¹³ Hristić 1970: 47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 16.

¹⁵ In the *Infernal Machine*, yet another version of the myth of Oedipus, Jean Cocteau created his own character of the Sphinx. She is unusual, feminine and has a crush on Oedipus. Alas, Oedipus prefers glory and honor! And the Sphinx will become vindictive and unforgiving. See Kokto 2011: 45–61; Radovanović 2008: 53–58.

¹⁶ The complexity of this character was noticed by the director Predrag Bajcetic (Yugoslav Drama Theatre, 1960), and so Marija Crnbori, playing Jocasta, had to perform in three different genres in only three acts: “In the first it was comedy, in the second it was a drama of serious internal conflicts, while in the third it was a predestined, classical tragedy - which is, in a sense, grading ...” see Selenić, Hristić 1960.

and to guilt, but only the right to grief.

Humor is present from the very beginning of the play and fits the atmosphere of joyful anticipation of the new king. It gradually disappears, giving way to Jocasta's grieving replies. Therefore, most of it is to be found in dialogues with Teiresias, but not in the ones with Oedipus. This is how the Queen addressed the old prophet, "Let's leave it for now, Teiresias. I looked at myself in the mirror this morning and saw that I had wrinkles around the eyes. Do you know what this means? A queen who awaits her husband cannot let something like that happen to her. Especially if it is to be a young man, as you say. This should be finished as soon as possible, or I'll otherwise grow old. Can he be seen in the intestines of this bird of yours?"¹⁷ In her encounters with Oedipus, we get to see the grieving Jocasta. From the initial admiration, over understanding and then mild criticism, their relationship transforms into a cry of pain for the newly arrived son. Here are some of the Queen's replies: "Tell me about yourself, Oedipus. I want to know everything about you, your every move, your every thought..." "You think only of your innocence. Are you sure it's worth it?"... "Oedipus, don't leave me alone! I feel that all the past suddenly opening up before me. Do not leave me! I'm afraid, Oedipus! Oedipus, where are you?"¹⁸ It is while uttering these final words addressed to Oedipus when Jocasta finds herself in the very center of her grief, from where, it seems, she escaped years earlier and it is then that she addresses him with "my little son". It is with this confession that her false and fleeting happiness forever gave way to the eternal sorrow.

Petar Marjanovic writes that a wealth of ironic replies in *Clean Hands* represents an insufficient compensation for a lack of humor.¹⁹ However, this Hristić's irony (so omnipresent in his theater criticism and in his poems) is more than capable of eliciting a faint smile, a proper smile, or even laughter. It was with utmost care and meticulousness, that Marjanovic²⁰ analyzed the "apparatus of antiquity" (names, terms, stories, proverbs). We are now going to mention some interesting occurrences of irony which the skilled critic omitted. Ion, perhaps the most interesting character in the drama, speaks about the myth and about Oedipus:²¹ "Chorus: Ion, why is Oedipus's name Oedipus? Ion: They hanged him at the butcher's when he was little. Shepherds often confuse boys for lambs." Ion wonders what kind of a poem he should write about Oedipus:²² "...I could put it all into trochaic feet, but it seems that the iambic feet are more exalted and dignified. 'And so, brave Oedipus...' You can see for yourself that it does not work. It resembles ordinary prose too much. It does not inspire noble sentiments. But the iambic, the iambic is something else entirely. He immediately transports you to the very heart, so to speak, to the very sense of things. Don't you agree with me?" Only a little later, still on the topic of this unwritten poem, Ion makes an allusion to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*:²³ "I admit that the beginning is a bit prosaic. Maybe I should start by addressing the Muses, as it would

¹⁷ Hristić 1970: 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 35, 37, 69.

¹⁹ Marjanović 1998: 104.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 97–100.

²¹ Hristić 1970: 44.

²² *Ibid.* 56.

²³ *Ibid.* 56.

be more inspired. But that is Homer's style. 'Sing, Muse, of the deeds of glorious Oedipus...' Doesn't sound bad, what do you think? You still don't like it. Should I throw the epithets out? But I have already tried to avoid Homer's double epithets, although they are highly praised these days. 'Oedipus glorious-wise.' No, you certainly wouldn't like it." The coinage "glorious-wise" is obviously Hristić's and is, of course, ironic. Finally, Ion and Teiresias mention the most famous of the mythical singers, musicians and poets:²⁴ "Teiresias: I want you to entrance people just as Orpheus used to entrance them. I know that you're an inspired poet, Ion. Ion: Can I look back? Teiresias: What do you mean? Ion: Orpheus was not allowed to look back as he climbed out of Hades. He sang, but he was not allowed to see what was behind him. You don't have to understand it literally."

Let us stay in Hristić's drama for one more paragraph. Regardless of the humor, the irony, and of the critics' opinion that *Clean Hands* represent a refined persiflage, it seems to us that the piece, at least at times, contains elements of a profound tragedy. All the way from Jocasta's character to Oedipus, who, fundamentally, was out of sorts. Even though critics or we ourselves may label it as a lèse-drama, a too static and logorrheic piece, *Clean Hands* nonetheless still possess something which is the essence of a true, modern tragedy. It is a tragedy with a thesis, to be more precise.

Let us now turn our attention to Jean-Paul Sartre's piece with the antipodal title. *Dirty Hands* is a drama in seven acts whose plot takes part in the imaginary land of Illyria during the Second World War. It is a story about a crime committed by an intellectual with moral preconceptions and big ideas. Hugo Barine is a perfect graduate college boy who firmly stands behind the principles of his Party, which he did not join out of interests, but out of firm belief in ideals. Being just one of the many editors of newspapers in their organization, he agrees to murder the "traitor" of the Party, Hoederer, in order to prove his loyalty and to confirm his party identity.²⁵ By chance, but also by political shenanigans, the crime which he committed, the real motives of which he had not even known with certainty, becomes pointless, while his hands remain stained with the blood he shed. The traitor becomes a hero. The murdered Hoederer will now have a monument erected to honor him as a pioneer of some new idea about uniting the three centers of power – the monarchists, the proletarian and the Pentagon – who rule Illyria for the benefit of the country and its people; it was because of that very Hoederer's idea about merging and separating the government after the war that his murder had been ordered in the first place.²⁶ As we get more familiar with the destinies of the characters, we get the impression that Hugo is twice guilty. Firstly, he is guilty for his acceptance of the idea that Hoederer should be killed, which was, however, the idea which he gradually started rejecting as he was getting to know Hoederer better. Secondly, he is guilty because of the act of murder

²⁴ *Ibid.* 48.

²⁵ Selenić wrote that the issue of dirty hands had long haunted Sartre. A testimony of that is "his screenplay *In the Mesh* which was written immediately before the play about Hugo and Hoederer. The conflict between Jean, who is in favor of starting an armed struggle, and Lucien, who is against killing, anticipates the central conflict of *Dirty Hands*". See Selenić 2002: 189.

²⁶ Velimir Lukic, also an excellent writer of plays based on antique motifs, ends his drama *And Death Arrives to Lemno* in a similar way. While recovering from his wounds, his Philoctetes got manipulated and exploited. See Maričić 1998: 287; Stolić 2012: 156–157.

itself which, in the end, he commits for an entirely different reason, out of jealousy, after having seen his girlfriend Jessica in Hoederer's embrace. At first, the two motives for a single murder make him double guilty, but none of them had been initiated by his own thoughts, but by his party's orders and by circumstances. However, it remains uncertain whether Hugo would have killed only out of jealousy, and would he have killed just for the sake of ideology. He himself does not know the real reason: "I—I killed him because I opened the door. That's all I know. If I hadn't opened that door— He was there, he held Jessica in his arms, he had lipstick on his chin. It was all so trivial. But I had been living for so long in tragedy. It was to save the tragedy that I fired... It wasn't I who killed—it was chance."²⁷ Hugo is aware only of his motive for wanting to kill Hoederer, which is why he says: "I can't separate the murder from the motive for it."²⁸ This sentence is exactly in line with this: "It was an assassination without an assassin."²⁹ Hugo is ashamed that he did not do it for the original reason, for his personal beliefs which were stimulated by a desire to serve the Party, but that it all happened by pure chance. He stands firm in his opinions: "And now you want me to dishonor myself even more and to agree that I killed him for nothing. Olga, what I thought about Hoederer's line I continue to think. When I was in prison I believed that you agreed with me, and that's what kept me going. I know now that I'm alone in my opinion, but I won't change."³⁰

The universes of Hugo and Sophocles' Oedipus overlap.³¹ Both heroes are in conflict with that which surrounds them. Oedipus can not avoid the unfortunate fate that gods have chosen for him. Hugo, on the other hand, cannot keep his hands clean in the world in which he intended to be helpful and to do good, because that what is outside of him it does not comply, that what is outside hides evil in itself. Hristić's Oedipus fights it in a lucid way, and so a tragedy is avoided. He is battered and injured, but also almost sinless. Sophocles' Oedipus and Sartre's Hugo are heroes with similar destinies. At a particular point in time, they are both a salvation for the others and for the social environment, but they are fatal for themselves. It is a dualism which is the trademark of tragic heroes. It is reflected in the fact that the tragic hero does something intrinsically evil (murder), while his morality is truly based on humane and just principles. By comparing the aforementioned dramas of Hristić and Sartre, one can come to the conclusion that it is the freedom of choice which largely determines the fate of the hero. This implies a conscious decision to take a particular course of action. Hristić's Oedipus remains consistent and persistent in his struggle. Hugo's choice to commit murder is open for discussion.³² The

²⁷ Sartr 1981: 169.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* 173.

³¹ Sartre's and Hristić's plays were, with huge differences of opinion but with very interesting conclusions, compared by: Frajnd 1971: 346–347; Matić 1969: 167; Jeremić 1967: 607; Marjanović 1998: 100. We have here indicated some of the parallels, as it seems to us, in a very discreet way.

³² Jovan Hristić wrote this on Jean-Paul Sartre's plays: "A heroic deed gets transformed into meanness, dirt, a meaningless act, because it does not take much for it to acquire the sense and the meaning which are the exact opposites of the ones that it had only moments earlier. The murder of Hoederer may be a feat, it may be a crime passionate, it may also be a dirty act of a hired spy... What we see is not how human lives gain density through an act, but how an act loses its density by becoming a plaything of historical and political directors.

choice itself, however, seem to be only an illusion. What makes it such are the circumstances when he makes the decision, the organization of the Party and his position in it. He does indeed give up on his initial choice, and the fatal event occurs instantly for the reasons which remain unclear even to himself. We cannot say that Hugo becomes a murderer willingly. The crime is his, but the fault is split: it is a crime of society, not of an individual, just as Oedipus's crime had been determined by his social environment, parents and ancestors. Hugo's tragedy is not reflected in him becoming a murderer, but in the fact that his act, in the newly-created political circumstances, serves no purpose, let alone being justified. Hugo was loyal to the Party, despite the fact that the Party perceived people as useful but replaceable office supplies, so, disappointed, at the end of the play he exclaims: "Unsalvageable!"³³ Hugo is not like Ovid's Medea who says: "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."³⁴ He does not turn his back on himself and his beliefs, on the contrary: "I thought I was too young. I wanted to hang a crime round my neck, like a stone. And I feared it would be too heavy for me to carry. How wrong I was! It's light, horribly light. ... It has become my destiny, do you understand? It controls my life from outside, but I can't see it or touch it, it's not mine, it's a fatal disease that kills painlessly."³⁵ One is safe to say that Hugo, although not inclined to commit a crime, sacrificed himself in vain in order to achieve something good for the community.

Guilt in ancient tragedies can be compared with life at its very foundation, in the act of childbirth. Just as we are not born by our own design, so the tragic hero does not do evil voluntarily. Otherwise, tragedies would be only stories about incorrigible criminals, crime poems of a kind. The poet Ion himself at the end of *Clean Hands* explains it in this way: "I just observe human nature, but in this way I can observe it from a small distance. Its guilt and innocence, its clean and dirty hands. If you only knew that all of this meant nothing, you would be ashamed to use the word 'guilty'."³⁶ A tragic hero is a complex hero. Although his character may be simple in nature – as Hristić's Oedipus is – what makes him complex is his struggle with the inside and outside world. This is how Oedipus takes up his struggle: "I only have my clean hands which nobody sees and my clear conscience which no one is listening to. Today, the world has become blind and deaf."... "I want to tell you something, citizens. I am not a murderer of my father, nor the husband of my mother. I did not kill Laius, although he begged me to do it. I did not become Jocasta's husband, although she did everything she could to make me her husband. I stand before you with clean hands. My hands are clean, citizens."³⁷ We cannot but search for reflections of this tragedy in the present-day life, in the world around us. Every single day, all of us are battling the Sphinx, the cunning Hoederer, sly Teiresias and the capricious system. And most of us go into this battle with big dreams and great expectations. Can we

This duality of a gesture and of an act cannot be expressed in a better way anywhere else except in the theater, and it is because of this that one may expect from Sartre more drama and less abstract philosophical rhetoric."

See Hristić 1986: 130.

³³ Sartr 1981: 174.

³⁴ *I see better things, and approve, but I follow worse.* A quotation from Ov. *Met.* VII 20.

³⁵ Sartr 1981: 170.

³⁶ Hristić 1970: 58.

³⁷ Hristić 1970: 72–73.

win the battle and what state are our hands going to be in afterwards? Empty or full? Clean or dirty? Open or closed in an act of a refusal to give somebody one's hand? The answers that we are looking for by examining the principles of a particular school of philosophy are the very answers that we look for in the individuals at the scene, and later inside ourselves. Hristić explained it simply and clearly by saying that drama is not a picture of life, but its formula.³⁸

By reading these two drama pieces with “antipodal titles” we arrive to the conclusion that their characters are not antipodal themselves. Hugo, just like the contemporary, Serbian Oedipus, is characterized by moral principles and well-intended convictions, as well as by an inability to cope with the world where those principles do not apply. Namely, the will of the gods, *fate*, cannot be changed, nor can be the system whose part is young Hugo. What remains for us to do is to, in the manner of Stoic Seneca, ask ourselves what it is that we can influence, and what it is that happens independently of our will and actions and to determine the boundary which is going to help us survive as autonomous individuals. Did our characters manage to do that? Apparently they did not, and that is why they provoke our pity and compassion. The outcome is the same, although one character tried to remain clean by not doing anything, while the other one tried to do the same by acting for the sake of good. Oedipus finally tells us: “My eyes see neither good nor evil, they are empty. My hands are not clean, I do not have them. What have you given me so that I could see, so that I could know? The world has escaped into its darkness, and it is only darkness that has remained inside of me, too. I stand before you as darkness inside darkness.”³⁹ The feeling that we are left with after reading these dramas is a sort of synthesized happiness for being left out from their destinies, for having relived them only as observers and for having actually learned something, for having observed delicate nuances, for having deepened our understanding. Tragedies, it seems, do not only leave an emotional mark on us, but, which is actually more important, leave an intellectual mark which impresses upon us everything that the characters have experienced. And for this reason it is so important to read them.

It is, therefore, through its complete, timeless mythical story, that tragedy, wrapped in a cloak of suffering, hurt and fear, takes on the form of a full circle, while it is through catharsis that it finds its purpose. What do we learn from tragedies? We learn to understand other people's thoughts, actions and feelings, so that we can, when the covers are closed and the curtain is dropped, be emotionally bound up with the character while searching our own feelings. And that is what we, after reading these two plays, did get, but each play managed to communicate the emotion in its own way.

³⁸ Hristić 1998: 185.

³⁹ Hristić 1970: 75.

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**ДВЕ ДРАМЕ ВРЕДНЕ ЈОШ ЈЕДНОГ ЧИТАЊА:
САРТРОВЕ ПРЉАВЕ РУКЕ И ХРИСТИЋЕВЕ ЧИСТЕ РУКЕ**

Резиме

Циљ овог рада јесте да покаже колико се и на који начин прожимају судбине ликова двеју драма антиподног наслова у контексту људског сагрешења и испаштања. Анализирали смо два драмска дела – *Прљаве руке* Жан-Пол Сартра и *Чисте руке* Јована Христића и понудили смо тумачења погрешака трагичких јунака и њихово поређење са ликовима из Софоклове трагедије *Господар Едип*. Осветљена је улога окружења и њен значај у обликовању људске кривице, као и последице које та кривица оставља на живот драмских ликова.

Кључне речи: Жан-Пол Сартр (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905–1980), *Прљаве руке* (*Les Mains sales*, 1944), Јован Христић (1933–2002), *Чисте руке* (1960), Софоклов *Господар Едип*, трагички јунак, кривица.

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