

*Truth & Other
Lies*

Dramaturgy
Packet

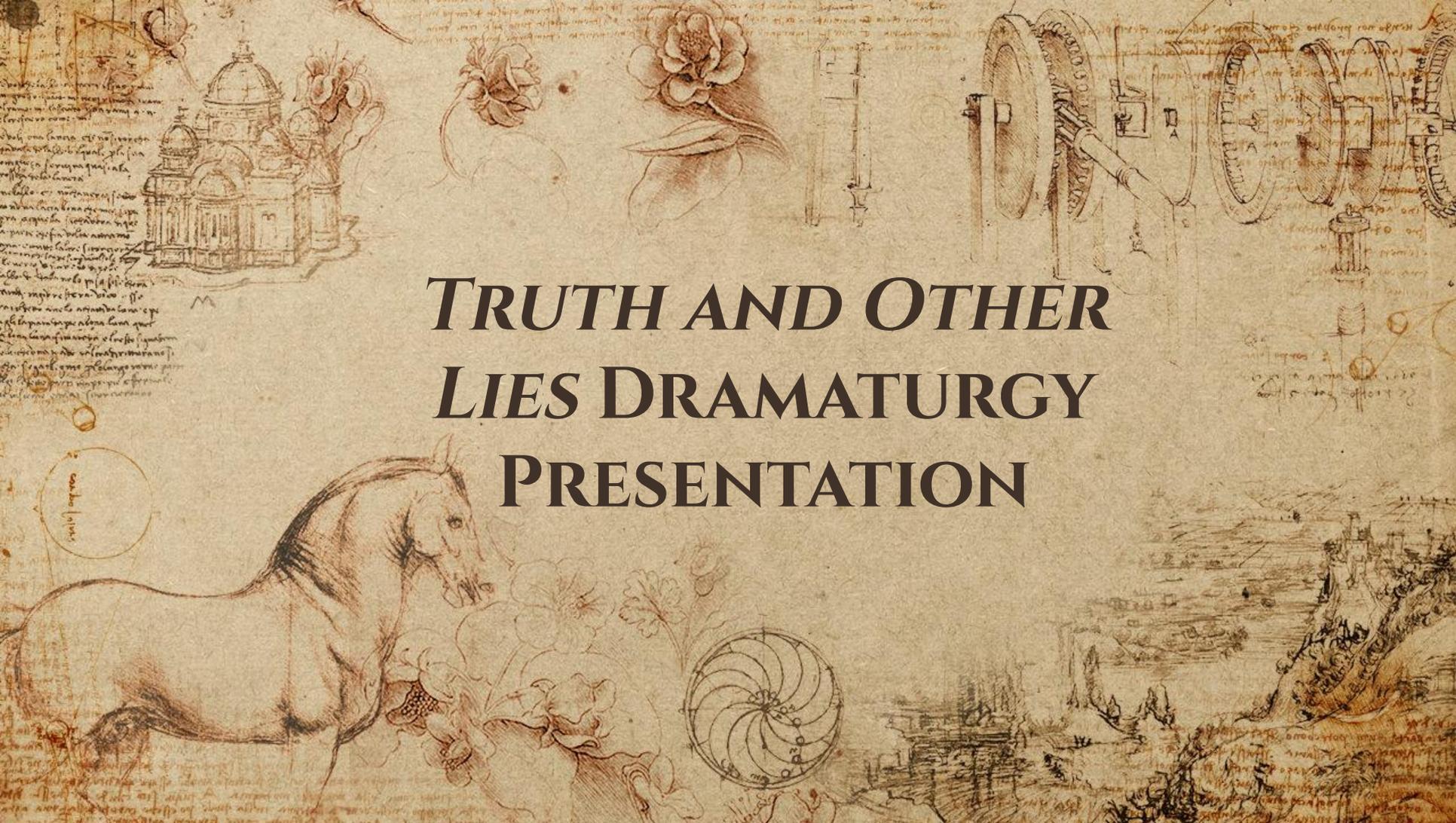
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August 19, 2019-February 25, 2020
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*TRUTH AND OTHER
LIES DRAMATURGY
PRESENTATION*





1.

TIMELINE AND BREAKDOWN

STORIES INCLUDED

- ❖ The mythology of Narcissus and Echo
- ❖ The mythology of Sekhmet
- ❖ The legend of Momotaro
- ❖ The urban legend of Charlie No-Face
- ❖ The urban legend of Robert Johnson
- ❖ The folklore of Baba Yaga
- ❖ The conspiracy theory of Emilia Bassano

WORLD MAP



Baba Yaga- Finland and N. Russia

Emilia Bassano- London, England

Charlie No-Face- W. Pennsylvania

Narcissus and Echo- Ancient Greece

Momotaro- Japan

Robert Johnson- Mississippi

Sekhmet- Ancient Egypt

STORIES TIMELINE

1400s BCE
Sekhmet

1590s-1600s CE
Emilia Bassano

1755 CE
Baba Yaga

1960s CE
Charlie No-Face

8 CE
Narcissus and Echo

1680s-1700s CE
Momotaro

1930s CE
Robert Johnson

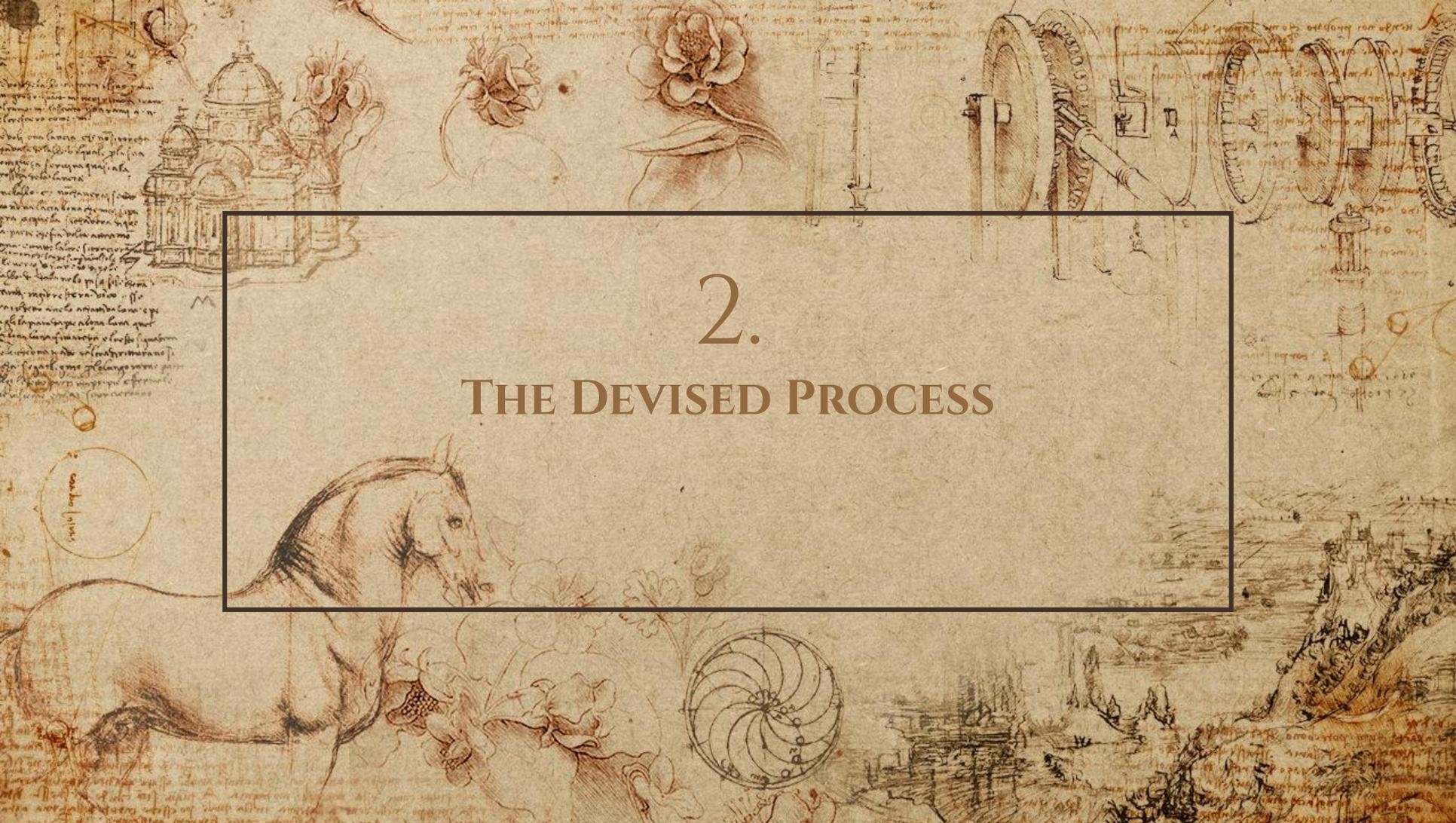
BREAKDOWN

Our script explores four different stories:

- ❖ The love triangle between Narcissus, Echo, and Ameinias
- ❖ The friendship between Baba Yaga and Charlie No-Face
- ❖ Emilia Bassano's journey to become Shakespeare's ghostwriter
- ❖ The mother-son relationship between Sekhmet and Momotaro

2.

THE DEVISED PROCESS



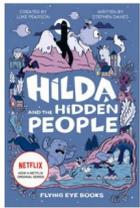
Hippogrif

A **Hippogriff** is a magical beast that has the front legs, wings, and head of a giant eagle and the body, hind legs and tail of a horse.



RESEARCH

- ✦ After creating a Constitution and working as an ensemble, we divided into groups and each presented 4 myths, legends, urban legends, and claims of truth



Norwegian trolls have been adapted to contemporary children's entertainment in the graphic novel and television series *Hilda*.



VOTING

Student Name: _____

Framing Devices

1. Several separate stories, that have very few moments of cross-over, share a common theme, or location. (See *Almost Maine* or *Gorges Motel*)
2. One character serves as a through line through several stories in a mash-up.
3. The first act presents separate stories to follow. Those stories collide in the second act. Perhaps we see how these stories might affect those in the modern world. (See *Into the Woods*)
4. Claims of truth appear in the background (i.e. the Mandela effect) as one character remembers earlier moments or claims of truth differently from another character, so that the audience is left to decide what the truth is (since they will not be presented with the moments in question).
5. An omnipotent narrator leads the audience through several stories about Truth. Perhaps the narrator has a character that they tell the story to, like child, and we periodically interrupt the stories to discuss the truth of things. (See *The Princess Bride*)
6. A central character is called upon to tell stories in a high stakes situation (e.g. to save the world, to save their own life, to save magic in the world, to save the old gods). (See *A Thousand and One Nights*) Perhaps in their desperation, mixes up characters from a variety of stories.
7. A central narrator tells several stories but is revealed to be unreliable in some way by the characters within the tales. He has been lying to the audience, and it is up to the characters to make sure that their truth is told correctly!
8. Modern day characters go in search of Truth. They travel to other cultures and times on their Journey of discovery. (See *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*)
9. A Group of Contemporary characters engage in storytelling (perhaps a series of campfire stories, or See *Canterbury Tales*, or stories told while the contemporary characters are stranded

We then voted on:



Tone



Production roles



Characters

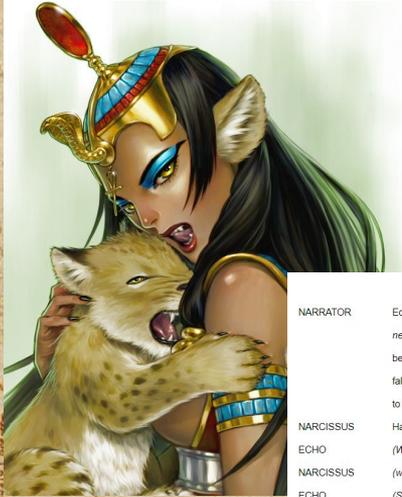


A framing device



Number of narratives

WRITERS



Act 1 Scene 3

NARRATOR	Echo fell in love with Narcissus instantly. <i>(Narcissus and Echo act out the next description)</i> As he made his way through the forest, she crept behind and gazed at him. With his every movement, she found herself falling deeper in love. When, at the sound of a bird call, Narcissus came to a sudden halt, Echo continued to walk, and he heard her footfall.
NARCISSUS	Hark! Who goes there? I can hear your moving, so don't try and hide!
ECHO	<i>(With a gulp)</i> Hide!
NARCISSUS	<i>(With a flourish of his sword)</i> Make your presence known. Who's here?
ECHO	<i>(Sheepishly)</i> Here.
NARCISSUS	Come out!
ECHO	Out!
NARCISSUS	An insult! Why do you shun me?
ECHO	Shun me!
NARCISSUS	Who are you to shun the mighty warrior, Narcissus? Begone!
NARRATOR	Come now, Narcissus. Accept the challenge.
NARCISSUS	<i>(After a moment of thought)</i> Come, let us join together.
ECHO	<i>(Looking at the Narrator)</i> Together?
NARRATOR	Yes, tis a dream come true.
ECHO	<i>(Erupting from the leaves)</i> Together! <i>(She embraces Narcissus).</i>
NARCISSUS	You are a mountain nymph?! Revolting! Hands off! I would rather die than

- ❖ The writers group took the selected characters and created the narratives/crossovers
- ❖ Two writers were selected to write drafts for each narrative
- ❖ The writers also created the order of scenes within the acts

PLAYERS

- ❖ After presenting new idea to the group, two actors and an outside eye joined the writers to create a storyboard and a list of technical needs
- ❖ These ensemble members would present written scenes with new ideas for the group to comment on



Emilia Storyboarding I

Characters (all live):

- Emilia Bassano
- Countess Pembroke/ Hyter Sprite
- The Narrator/ The Devil
- William Shakespeare
- Henry Carey

Act I:

1. Emilia is having tea with Countess Pembroke. Emilia is expressing her struggle to publish her literature. The Countess, speaking mostly in verse and revealing her love for necromancy, informs Emilia that there is a place where one can "make a deal with the devil." As she describes her experience, shadow puppets reenact the scene beside the women. Emilia is nervous, but desperate enough to exchange her soul for fame and success.
2. Emilia is in an unknown location searching for someone. She passes Henry Carey, who looks her over then continues walking away. She is finally approached by the narrator in a cloak who makes a show of presenting a contract. After some thought, Emilia signs the contract with resolute and shakes the narrator's hand. All of this occurs without true dialogue.

FINAL DRAFTS AND READ-THROUGHS



Truth & Other Lies – Invited Read-Thru Audience Feedback

Thank you for coming to hear the read-thru!

This script is the result of the collaboration of the Devised Theatre Class, and we intend it to continue to evolve through the rehearsal process in the Spring semester. Because of this, we are interested in hearing any feedback that you would be willing to share with us. **Please note that you don't have to feel compelled to respond to all of these questions presented here.** We have several specific questions that we are seeking feedback on, however, there is a place on the back of this sheet for you to include any feedback – positive or negative – that you may have.

Please return this form to us at the end of this reading, or, if you would like more time to think about your response/s, you can place it in Dr. Porterfield's Mailbox in the Theatre & Dance Main Office.

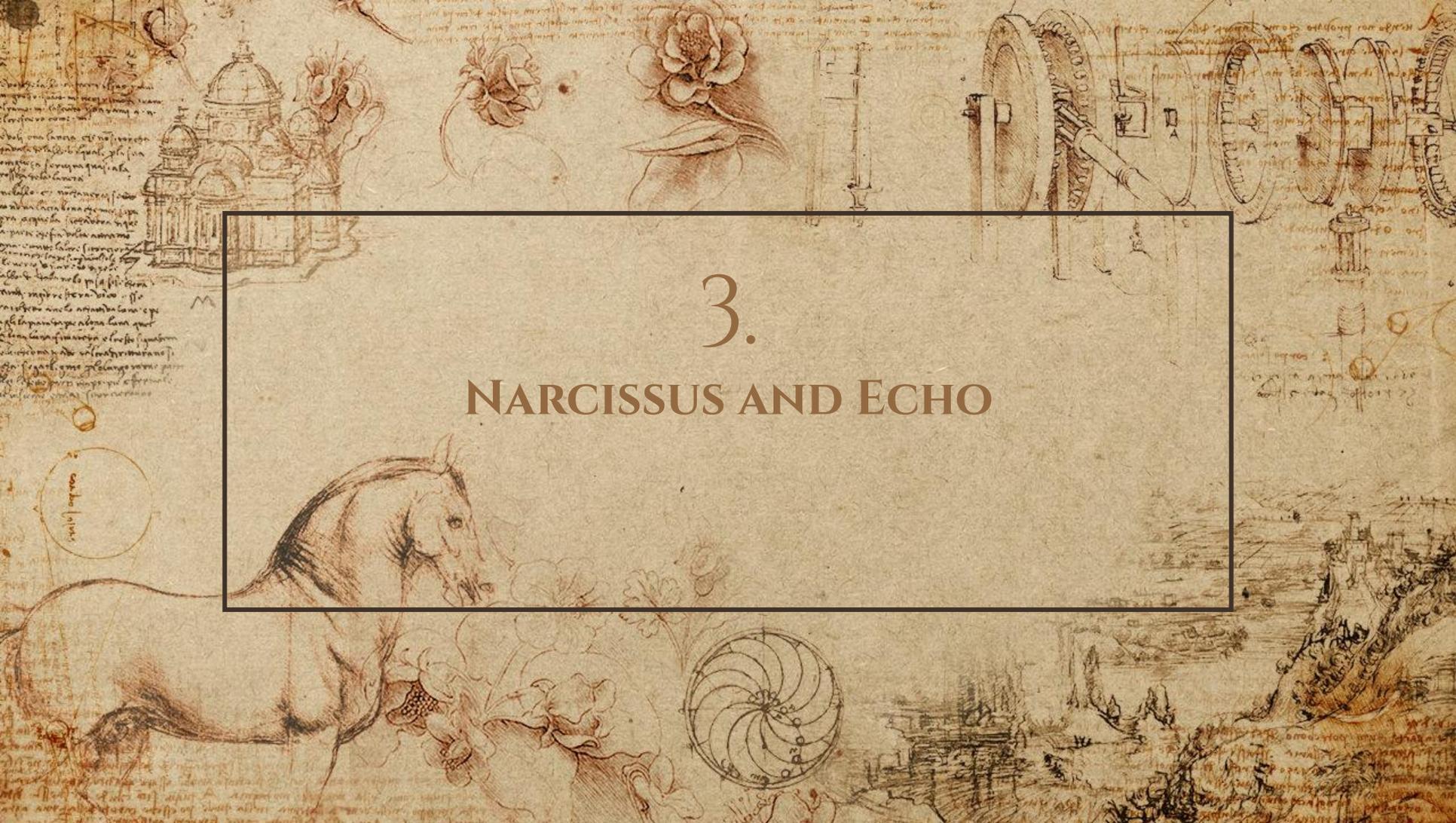
Direct Ending!

1. What was your final take-away from the piece? What themes/ideas/lessons do you think the play is trying to present? *The pursuit of truth is never painless, also by making souls more accessible it read in this lovecraftian oldritch horror telling of a cautionary tale about pursuing truth, which I find very effective.*
2. What was your first impression of the Narrator? How/When did that change over the course of the play? *Fourth wall joke made me think the narrator is unreliable. Narrator isn't telling, but instead changing the story by bulging narcissis. Norder comes across as malleable, reminds of it they are. Narrator starting to be a villain*
3. What production (i.e. directing, design, performance) choices might we include to help clarify our story? *Seeing these scenes would help as hearing just stage directions is difficult to invest to. Sprites need to have some improvised dialogue*

- ✦ The writers switched narratives and partners to polish the drafts, add transitions, and standardize the format
- ✦ The ensemble presented the script to audiences in two read-throughs for feedback

3.

NARCISSUS AND ECHO



ECHO AND PAN



- ❖ Nonnus' poem includes how Pan envies Echo's musical skill and proceeds to chase and harass her
- ❖ Because Echo loves her virginity and shuns Pan, he sends men to kill her

NARCISSUS AND AMEINIAS



- ❖ In Conon's version of Narcissus, Narcissus spurns Ameinias' advances and offers him a sword by which to kill himself.
- ❖ Ameinias does; filled with remorse, Narcissus punishes himself by also committing suicide.
- ❖ A Narcissus flower (a daffodil) grows out of his blood

NARCISSUS + ECHO



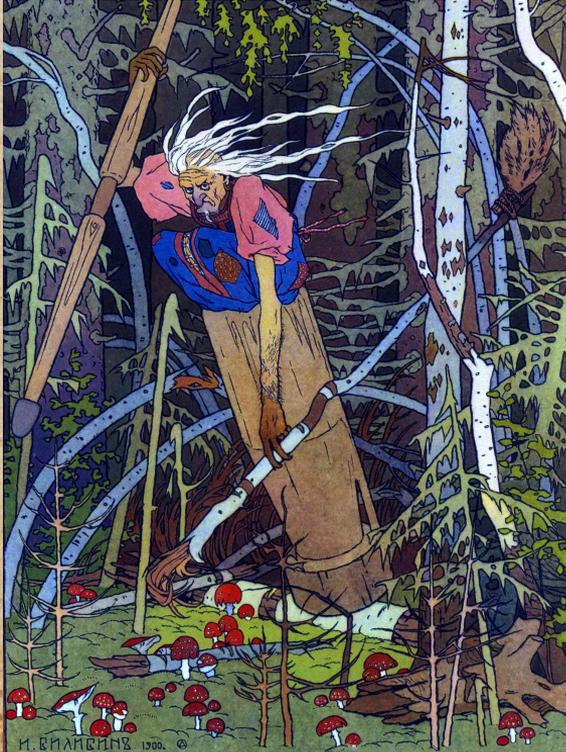
- ❖ Ovid combined the Greek mythologies of the self-loving Narcissus and the cursed Echo into a romance
- ❖ Hera discovers Echo covering for fellow nymphs who had sex with Zeus while she distracted Hera
- ❖ Hera cursed her only to repeat what was said by others



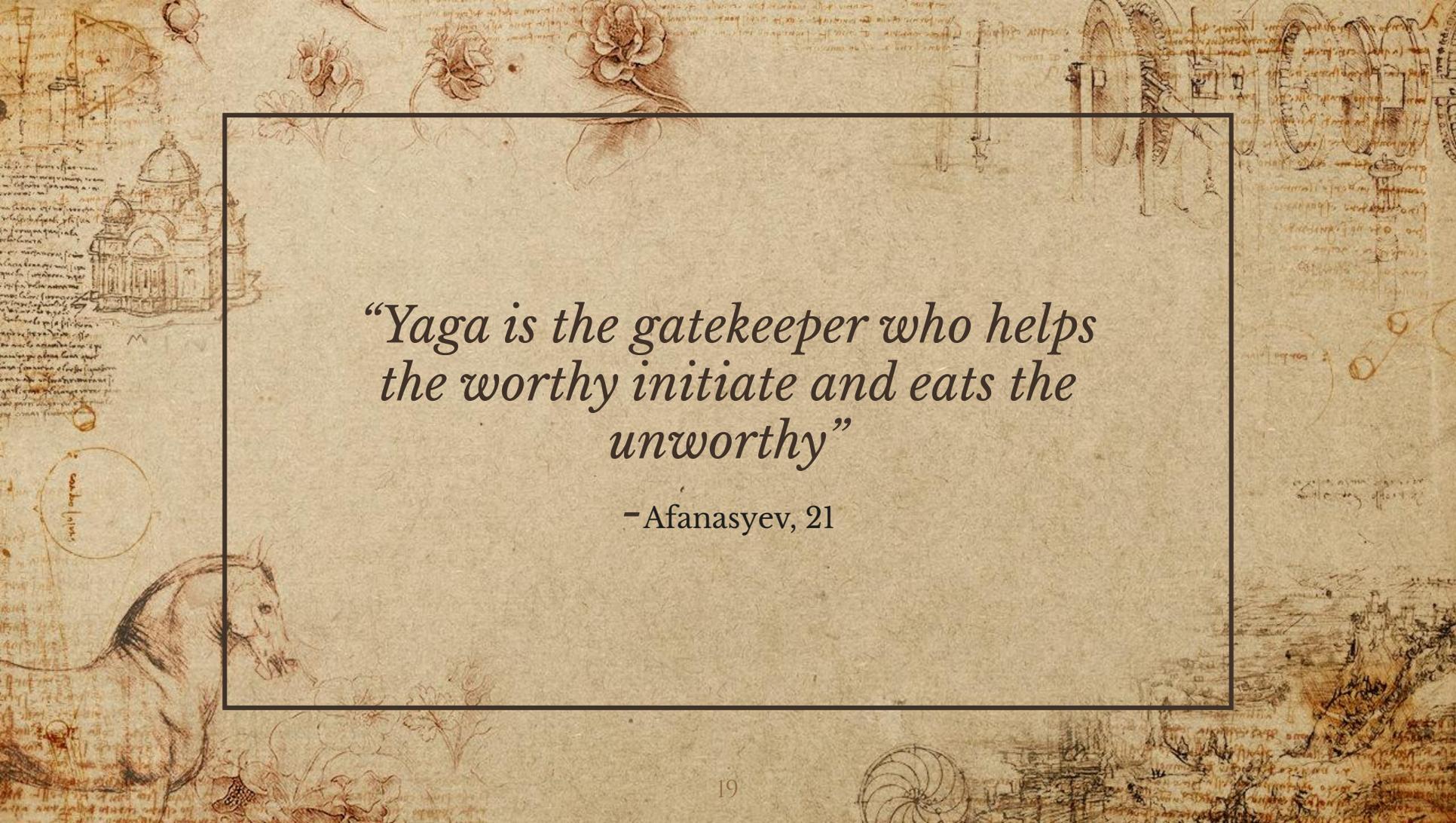
4.

BABA YAGA AND CHARLIE NO-FACE

BABA YAGA



- ✦ In Russian folklore, she is an ugly witch who gives the hero shelter and information or a magical item
- ✦ She is usually outwitted by the hero
- ✦ Her hut is at the edge of the woods between the world of the living and the dead



*“Yaga is the gatekeeper who helps
the worthy initiate and eats the
unworthy”*

– Afanasyev, 21

CHARLIE NO-FACE



- ❖ Nine year old Raymond Robinson was playing on a crumbled bridge when he climbed a beam for a bird's nest and was burned by high voltages
- ❖ He lived in obscurity but took nighttime walks
- ❖ Encounters with locals created a legendary boogeyman known as “Charlie No-Face”

5.

EMILIA BASSANO



EMILIA BASSANO LANIER



- ✦ She was an Italian Jew, feminist poet, and musician
- ✦ She was mistress to Henry Carey and perhaps Shakespeare himself
- ✦ The names “Emilia,” “Bassianus,” and “Bassiano” appear in Shakespeare’s plays along with characters sharing her biography

HENRY CAREY



- ❖ Also known as Lord Hunsdon, he was the master of court entertainment and patron of Shakespeare's acting company
- ❖ Emilia was his mistress as a teenager

THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE



- ❖ Also known as Mary Sidney, she was the sister of Philip Sidney
- ❖ She was a translator, poet, leader of a literary salon dedicated to an English cultural renaissance, and owner of an alchemy laboratory
- ❖ It is suspected that she and her husband were patrons of one of the first theater companies to perform Shakespeare's plays

6.

SEKHMET AND MOMOTARO



SEKHMET



- ❖ She is Ra's daughter whose mission was to punish conspirators against the gods
- ❖ In her bloodlust, she began to slaughter the entire human race
- ❖ The gods made a red beer and poured it on fields where Sekhmet would pass
- ❖ After drinking, she had a revelation to "make love, not war."

THE ELDERLY COUPLE



- ❖ One day while the woman was washing clothes, a peach emerged from the river. She took it home to cut it and a boy came out of it
- ❖ Momotaro grew to be unusually strong
- ❖ He asked the couple to make him dumplings so he could defeat the devils of Devils' Island

MOMOTARO



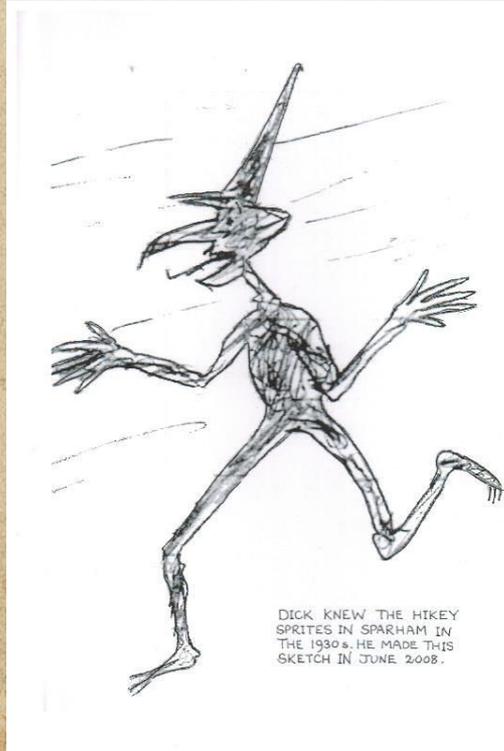
- ❖ On his journey Momotaro was joined by a dog, monkey, and pheasant because he shared his dumplings with them
- ❖ On Devils' Island, all four of them defeated the devils
- ❖ He returned home with treasures from the island

7.

HYTER SPRITES



HYTER SPRITES OF NORFOLK



- ❖ Loosely referred to by many names including hight sprites, hykry, hikra, ikry, highy sprites, hyker sprites, or hyker sprikes
- ❖ They are grateful for kindness, but mainly meant to keep unruly children in line
- ❖ One account identifies the sprites with twittering noises

The background is a textured, aged parchment page from an antique manuscript. It features faint, handwritten text in a historical script, likely Latin or Greek, arranged in columns. Several diagrams are visible, including a complex geometric figure with multiple lines and points in the upper left, a circular diagram with internal lines in the lower left, and a circular diagram with a shaded segment in the lower right. The overall appearance is that of a historical scientific or mathematical text.

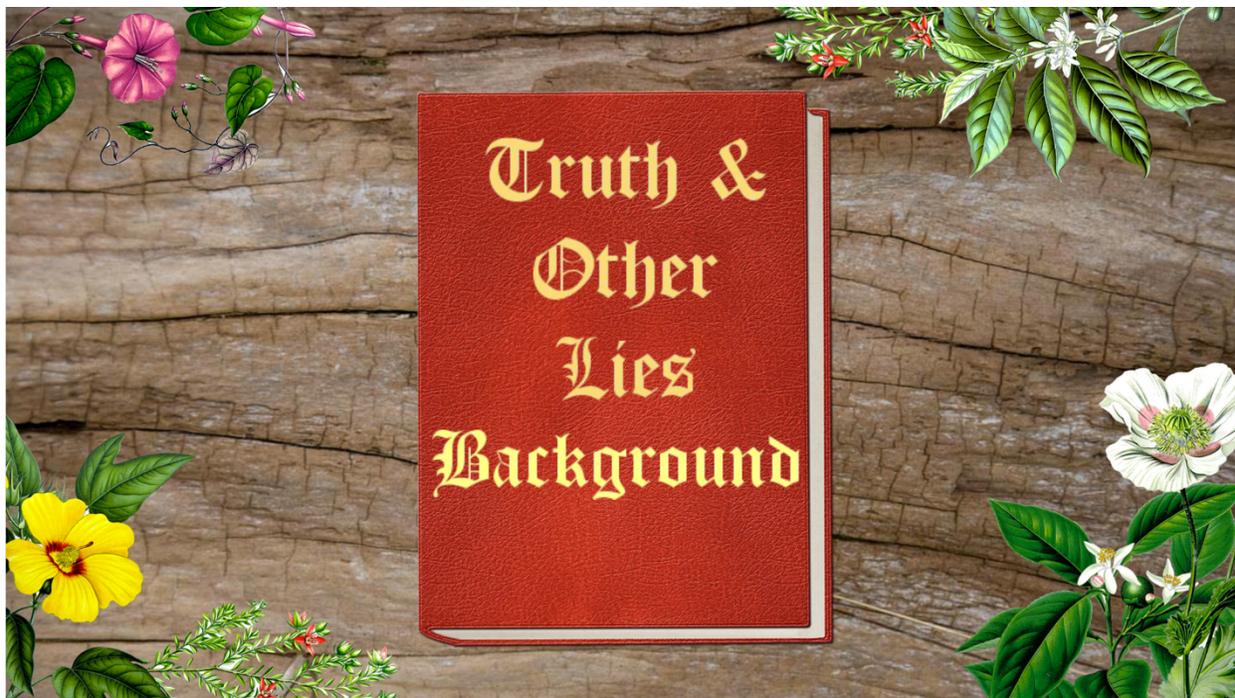
THANKS!

Any questions?

You can message me at cabroyles@valdosta.edu

WORKS CITED

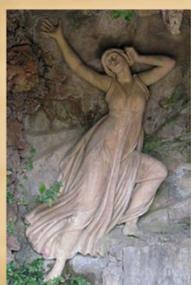
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In Conon's myth, the gods curse **Narcissus** to fall in love with himself. Cursed with unrequited love for himself, he commits suicide. A daffodil grows out of his blood.



Young **Ameinias** professes his love to his friend Narcissus. Narcissus spurns his advances and offers him a sword instead. Ameinias prays for the gods to curse Narcissus.



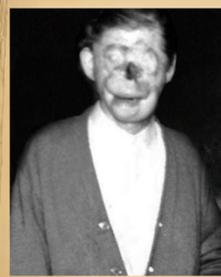
In a poem by Nonnus, the Greek god Pan envies the nymph **Echo's** musical skill, so he chases and harasses her. When Echo, who loves her virginity, shuns Pan, he sends men to kill her.



Emilia Bassano was a feminist poet, musician, and mistress to the patron of Shakespeare's acting company. It is fabled that she is the author of Shakespeare's plays.



In Russian folklore, **Baba Yaga** is an ugly witch who gives the hero shelter and information or a magical item. They usually outwit her. She lives between the world of the living and the dead.



Young Philadelphian Raymond Robinson had most of his face melted from electrocution. He lived in obscurity, but nightly encounters with locals created the boogeyman known as "**Charlie No-Face**".



Sekhmet is the Egyptian god Ra's daughter. While punishing humans, she starts craving blood. The gods make a red beer and pour it on fields for her to drink. She has the revelation to make love, not war.



In Japanese legend, the boy **Momotaro** is born from a peach. He grows to be unusually strong and is joined by a dog, monkey, and bird to defeat the devils of Devils' Island.



The **set design** was conceptualized early in the devised process. Our set requires a shadow puppet theatre, a pool of water, and a narrator's chair.



Our visual concept of "enchanted forest meets storybook" is reflected in the **set dressing**. **Props** such as the shadow puppets use different mediums tell our stories.



While some characters have individual **costumes**, the Hyter Sprites wear a layer of leaves and add other pieces such as hats when playing a new character.



Each character has a different **makeup design** that both pays homage to their origin story and fits into our storybook world. Echo's design is floral because she is a forest nymph.



The Narrator
All Times
All Places



Sekhmet
1400s BCE
Ancient Egypt



Narcissus
8 CE
Ancient Greece



Echo
8 CE
Ancient Greece



Ameinias
8 CE
Ancient Greece



Emilia Bassano
1590s-1600s
London, England



Momotaro
1680s-1700s
Japan



Baba Daga
1755 CE
Northern Russia



Charlie - No - Face
1960s CE
Pennsylvania



Truth and Other Lies Dramaturgy Notes

The Devised Process

Truth and Other Lies is a product of a devised process. In Fall 2019, a class of twenty-one students worked together to conceptualize, write, and design the beginnings of this production. As opposed to a standard classroom structure of an instructor feeding information to a group of students, every student had a hands-on opportunity to contribute to our final product. We gathered together as an ensemble, equal in importance, and entirely responsible for ourselves and each other. There was a firm agreement that this was not only a collaborative process but also an exercise in compromise and making sacrifices for the benefit of the project.

After spending some time laying the groundwork for discussion and performing team-building exercises, the director, our professor, split our class into groups. Each group was assigned to research and present on a few myths, legends, urban legends, and claims of truth that the ensemble may be interested in including in our project. The ensemble voted on our play's tone, characters, framing device, and the number of stories included in the play based on those initial research presentations. Groups were then assigned to perform short interactions between potential characters, or moments from the chosen stories, for the rest of the class who then identified strong visual or physical moments from those performances that resonated with audience members. Eventually, the writer's group retained many of these visual moments throughout the development of the script; it was from our experimentation with movement and scene-setting that a mirroring scene, an influential "director" character, the action of

drawing essence, characters as set pieces, and even elements of our scenic design were born.

Our director then split the ensemble into three categories: writers, actors (“players”), and designers (“outside eyes”). The writer’s group established the basic plot of the four narratives, and each writer wrote two scenes worth of drafts. After the writers completed a draft, they handed it off to the players who worked with the designers to interpret the script and bring new ideas to the group. The show’s final set/props designer, makeup designer, and sound designer were members of the devised ensemble and played a significant role in influencing the setting, tone, and style of the production. Scenes such as Narcissus’ call for help, the tarot reading with the Countess, and the encounter with the animals on Momotaro’s first hunt remained through the editing process based on the positive feedback from these presentations.

Because we needed to complete the majority of the development of the script during the Fall 2019 semester, we aimed to have a rough draft by the last week of classes. The ensemble held two open read-throughs of the script and invited audiences to sit in and listen. These early audiences, consisting predominantly of VSU students and faculty who provided written feedback on their experience of the play, strongly influenced the final edits of the script. The ensemble was aware in advance that these final edits would be made by myself (as the dramaturg) and Dr. Porterfield (as the director) in the weeks between Christmas break and the start of this Spring 2020 semester. However, we made an effort to standardize, revise, edit, and rearrange the

script in a manner that both completed the project and honored the ensemble's original intentions.

The Script

It was the objective of the ensemble to choose stories that represented cultures that spanned both place and time. We wanted to introduce new characters usually excluded from the mainstream Western narrative. Our final selections included the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, the mythological Narcissus and Echo of ancient Greece, the historical figure of Emilia Bassano from Elizabethan London, the Japanese legend of the warrior Momotaro, Baba Yaga from Russian folklore, the Hyter Sprites of Norfolk, and the American urban legends of Robert Johnson and Charlie No-Face. Although our play contains many references to these characters in their original form, we have chosen to craft our own narratives and connections from the framework to present a unique tale targeted to modern audiences.

Truth and Other Lies explores the importance of truth while acknowledging that it is subjective and dependent on countless individual points of view. Our characters struggle to discover their truth, even when it may be difficult to find or hard to face. In the end, they are better for the experience, and we hope that you will find yourselves moved by their journeys. We in the world of theatre know that stories are powerful enough to unite an audience of strangers in a single place and time and to present new facets of the elusive yet revealing truth. When we share stories, we come closer to knowing and understanding others.

Iphigenia

- + Required as a sacrifice at the start of the Trojan War
- + In some versions she marches willingly to the altar
- + Euripides ending says she is saved by Artemis with a ram and escapes to Taurus
- + Parallels can be drawn between her story and the Biblical story of Isaac



3



4

Emilia Bassano as Shakespeare

- + She was an Italian Jew, feminist poet, and musician
- + She was mistress to the patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and perhaps Shakespeare himself
- + The names "Emilia," "Bassianus," and "Bassiano" appear in Shakespeare's plays along with characters sharing her biography



19



20

Norwegian Trolls

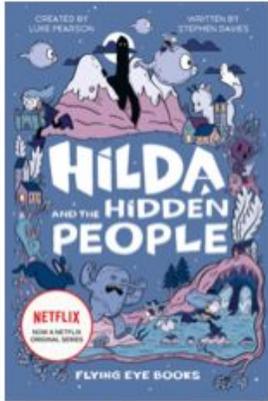
- + Used to teach children lessons and garner appreciation for nature
- + Become boulders, tree roots, stones, and branches upon death (old age or exposure to sunlight)
- + They are tricky, greedy, evil creatures but have small brains and can easily be outwitted
- + Have long noses and detest the sound of church bells



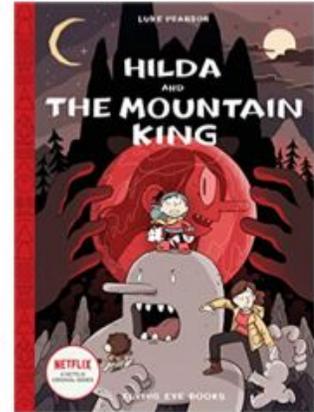
27



28



Norwegian trolls have been adapted to contemporary children's entertainment in the graphic novel and television series Hilda.



Statements From the Dramaturg:

Dramaturgy, as I have experienced it, is the research of a script within its historical and cultural context that is transformed into a production assembled by actors, designers, producers, and many other players. My job as the dramaturg was to compile the information collected by the ensemble members of the devised theatre class, collaboratively create a narrative from it, translate it to the actors and designers to enhance their artistic work, and present it to the audience in a friendly format.

The Process

My role in *Truth & Other Lies* was twofold; I acted as an ensemble member in the devised class in the Fall 2019 semester and as the dramaturg for the production in the Spring 2020 semester. In the Fall 2019 devised class, I was placed in the writer's group with six other students. Our group established the basic plot of the four narratives, decided on the number of scenes per narrative, arranged the scenes in order of their intended appearance within two acts, and wrote a draft for every scene. As soon as the class ended, I assumed my role as the dramaturg and began standardizing, revising, editing, and rearranging the script with the director before the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester. I was also assigned to selecting sides from the working draft script for call backs, which were scheduled to take place on the second day of classes.

The director invited me to sit in on call backs as a second pair of eyes with an intimate knowledge of the script and its needs. After the cast was selected, I gave a dramaturgy presentation and attended two rehearsals and took notes for the director again, as a second pair of eyes. During the rehearsal process, I designed lobby posters, wrote program notes, and collaborated with the costume designer to include her colored costume renderings of the principal characters in the headshot case.

Challenges of the Project

Due to its devised nature, reaching a consensus on issues ranging from the play's framework, to the narrator's whereabouts to the number of ensemble members. Many of these issues were resolved when turned over to the authority of the director, but small disagreements persisted among the ensemble. Several members committed to roles such as music production and puppetry and then did not follow through. Our script had to adapt, even going as far as changing a character originally intended to be

performed by a giant puppet into one that would be played by an actor. Although I learned valuable lessons about teamwork and compromise with the ensemble, I felt relieved when there were no longer six other voices giving input on the script's structure. One of our meetings was primarily spent with a writer vehemently opposing a change I had suggested at the beginning of class. I stayed silent, let other members voice their opinions, and attempted to continue moving forward.

The director and I had only a matter of weeks to polish the script before auditions. In the process, some of our favorite references were cut, but every change was made in an effort to honor the ensemble's original intentions while producing an intelligible and producible piece of art that would be palatable to audiences. The call back process was just as rushed. As soon as call backs were over, we had less than fifteen minutes to compare and collect our ideas before our director was due to meet with the other mainstage season directors to place her bid on actors. Even after this meeting, we remained on campus well into the night debating two variations on the cast list. After rearranging the double casting of the ensemble, telephoning the set designer for set piece dimensions, and running through many hypothetical scenarios, we resolved to sleep on it and reconvene the next day before the list was to be posted at noon. Fortunately for us, an important piece of information was shared with us the next morning by another faculty member that solidified our decision.

Pre-Production

The same director I worked with on *House of Desires* recommended that I join the devised class for a richer experience with the script. The name of the show and the initial idea that it would consist of references to mythology, legend, folklore, and even conspiracy were decided by the director before any students began working on the project. In a society where citizens are bombarded with opinions over social media, many riddled with accusations of "fake news," we thought it would be interesting to explore the importance of truth, the elusiveness of the totality of truth, and the significance of inclusive storytelling.

The director, who was our professor for the devised class in the Fall, split our class into randomly selected groups who were assigned to research and present stories and characters the ensemble may be interested in including in our project. Ultimately we only selected nine or ten of the dozens of stories presented. My research on the claim that Emilia Bassano Lanier wrote many of Shakespeare's plays made the cut into the final script. As an ensemble, we employed the Viewpoints methodology laid out by Anne

Bogart and Tina Landau in *The Viewpoints Book*. Using these techniques, we took to the stage to perform short interactions between potential characters for the rest of the class who then identified strong visual or physical moments from those performances that resonated with audience members. I enjoyed exploring the story from an acting perspective and two of the scenes I masterminded and presented during this phase of devising impressed my classmates enough to remain in our script.

Our final character selections included the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, the mythological Narcissus and Echo of ancient Greece, the historical figure of Emilia Bassano from Elizabethan London, the Japanese legend of the warrior Momotaro, Baba Yaga from Russian folklore, the Hyter Sprites of Norfolk, and the American urban legends of Robert Johnson and Charlie No-Face. The director then split the ensemble into three productive groups: writers, actors, and designers. Each writer wrote two scenes worth of drafts. As we continued to revise the drafts, we rotated between narratives to maintain a fresh perspective through the story. I released my grip on the Emilia Bassano storyline and flourished in composing dialogue, jokes, and commentary in the Narcissus and Echo storyline. Because we needed to complete the majority of the development of the script during the Fall 2019 semester, we aimed to have a complete rough draft of the script by the last week of classes.

After our class ended, I met with the director in the weeks between Christmas break and the start of this Spring 2020 semester to make the final cuts and edits to the script. She trusted me with unlimited access to the script and expressed her desire to drastically shorten our almost three and a half hour script and clean unclear scenes based on audience feedback. We made an effort to honor the ensemble's original intentions while still landing on a palatable piece of art in the limited time we had.

Textual Analysis

At first, I felt disheartened with the direction in which our devised script was heading. Our class was spending so much time presenting character scenarios on stage that actual writing was delayed and I was anxious to begin. Once we finally began, the research I presented fell into other artists' hands and I was uneasy with the changes they were making to my vision. However, after sharing some requested information from my research, I made myself pull back from my attachment to the material I had initially researched and began the writing process for a different narrative as I had been tasked to do. My usual approach to script analysis was not applicable during this phase of the process because we were working with a script that had not yet

been created. I have experience with textual analysis as I have taken both Production Concepts and Play Analysis classes during my time at university. In the Play Analysis class in particular, our class used David Ball's *Backwards & Forwards* book to analyze and evaluate scripts. During the editing phase of our script, I used Ball's techniques to keep track of and rationalize each narrative's sequence of events though they were mixed together.

With *Truth & Other Lies*, I depended on feedback from the ensemble and audiences of our early invited read throughs to guide my writing process. In our first story presentations, I wanted to bring research from intriguing or relatable characters. After flipping through books on Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology, (one of which I half heartedly copied from,) I began typing fragments of ideas into a search engine. It was after reflecting on my own interests and hobbies that I decided to pursue on William Shakespeare and Norwegian trolls from a children's show that I love. This decision allowed my secondary trips to the library to be more motivated and direct. At the first writing group meeting, we listed our favorite presented stories on the board and brainstormed ways to merge them into four narratives. It was exciting to find textual themes and connections in very different stories and create a new perspective.

Production Research

As I stated in the Textual Analysis section, my preliminary round of research was from a wide net of information. As we narrowed our interests, I was assigned to new characters and stories. Most of my time was spent researching the Greek mythology of Narcissus and Echo. When I was given the storyboard for this narrative, my director had found that these characters are sometimes in the same story, but sometimes exist in their own world. We especially focused on the male admirer named Ameinias in one version of Narcissus. Originally, the writer's group wanted to present Narcissus and Echo as two ancient, separate characters who were forced into a heteronormative narrative. However, in my research I found that Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* containing Pan and Echo was published around the early 5th century and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was published 8 AD. Conon was a contemporary of Ovid and released his work containing Ameinias around the same time as the *Metamorphoses*. These dates suggest Ovid released his work before or around the same time the other authors and that the intentions of these characters is unclear and our assumptions could not be justified. Our portrayal of these characters, however, and our contrived intentions were still valid and made for a compelling new take on an age old story.

Our play portrays the rebellion of characters against an oppressive narrator and in the spirit of new voices, we attempted to tell our stories from a minority perspective. We included homosexual lovers, a racially ambiguous, feminist author, a handicap, nonbinary child, a witch performed by a male actor in drag, and a ruthless African goddess. We intentionally chose stories that represented cultures that spanned both place and time. By including voices that cover historical and geographic ground, our play explores the importance of truth while acknowledging that it is subjective and dependent on countless individual points of view.

During the draft process there was little I could do because all of our work was hastily being pieced together. In writing drafts of the scenes I had been assigned, I attempted to include as many Easter eggs from original research by my classmates, director, or myself as was appropriate in a conversational and humorous manner as possible. When I was able to access the complete script at the end of the Fall 2019 semester, there was a lot of information to be processed. Before editing any content, I standardized the script's format and organized written feedback from class members and read through audiences by character arc. I then read through each character's story, (as scattered as they may be,) and identified plot holes as well as potential spaces for growth. After watching two productions of the show, I am proud of our progress but still unsatisfied with the ending. Although we adjusted 90% of the pace to be clear, engaging, and evocative, the ending, which contains most of the rationalization for our character's actions, continues to drag. I intend to cut more of the script for a concise, justified ending.

At the first rehearsal, I gave the cast a dramaturgy presentation. I summarized what was done in the devised class and how our initial research impacted the stories the actors would be portraying. Only two of the actors cast in the production were involved in the devised process, so all this information was new to most of the cast. I attended two rehearsals to take notes, which I gave to the director: one early in the process and one closer to dress rehearsal. Some of the directorial direction had shifted to meet the new interpretations the actors brought to the story. Most of these were beneficial and changed, if not enriched, my perspective of what was already part of our script. In a play that I thought I knew forwards and backwards, I could see the importance of the art of acting unfolding before me. During the rehearsal process, one actor was especially intrigued by his legendary Japanese character and expressed interest in stylizing his acting. He requested examples from Japanese anime of warriors and the role of an honorable son. I spent several hours with friends who were diehard anime friends sifting through and saving clips heavy in style that related to the emotions of our script.

Audience Engagement

This audience for this play is intended to be anyone mature enough to understand oppression and uprising. Our university is a rural, politically conservative community and our audience is a mixture of residents and university students. When presenting information to our audience, I had to be careful not to get bogged down in the logistics of each myth or folklore, but to express the general ideas and themes of each.

I knew that both my lobby display and program notes would reflect two semesters of work, so it was a challenge deciding what to discuss and how to balance information from both processes. Because our narrator is not revealed to be corrupt until the top of Act II, I had to withhold any information or discussion of the oppressive narrative from my audience materials. I used the set designer's concept of enchanted forest meets storybook to design my informational lobby display posters. The first poster is the cover of a story book and each piece of information is a page in that book embellished with vines, wood, and flowers. Due to our large number of main characters and the rotating nature of their stories onstage, I wanted to visually introduce the characters to the audience before they entered the theatre. In the lobby display case where we post headshots of cast members, I positioned a colored costume rendering of each character along with their name, country, and date of origin next to the headshot of the actor playing them.

In addition to acting as a dramaturg for this production, I also worked as a box office treasurer during the Spring 2020 semester. I was informed on the workings of the production which was helpful to customers with questions about content. I also had the opportunity to sit in on a talk back with KCACTF respondents after one of our productions. They asked me about the research process and especially focused on Emilia Bassano after I revealed that I had done most of my research on her storyline. I explained the importance of female recognition in the arts and otherwise and how we encourage our audiences to think critically about the role women have played in our history and the lengths they must go to for recognition.

To Whom It May Concern:

February 27, 2020

It is my pleasure to write in recommendation of Catherine "Allyson" Broyles. Allyson came into our theatre program as an Interdisciplinary Studies major taking advanced electives as part of her studies, and, through her excellent class work, quickly distinguished herself as one of our most promising academic students. Eager to harness her enthusiasm for more academic theatre work, I asked her to serve as a dramaturg for a production *House of Desires*. Working closely with her on this as an independent study, it soon became clear to me that she has a keen aptitude for dramaturgical research and literary analysis. Based on her success in this, she was chosen to be the dramaturg for our most recent devised production. This show, *Truth & Other Lies*, began in Fall of 2019 when a class of twenty students were tasked with developing an original script that would be produced as part of our mainstage season in February of 2020. During both the development and the production process of this piece Allyson proved herself to be a skilled and intuitive dramaturg for new works. Though she is relatively new to this field, her natural sense of curiosity and her keen analytical instincts make her one of the most promising young dramaturgs I have ever work with. Over the past two years, Allyson has decided that her true calling is in the field of dramaturgy and literary management. Her desire to pursue this work professionally may be relatively new, but her eager desire to work in this field is impressive, and your program would no doubt benefit from her passion, enthusiasm, attention to detail, and sharp writing skills.

Allyson has also proven to be a true asset in the casting process. Her in-depth knowledge of the characters of the plays was put to use from the first day of the rehearsal processes. In the absence of a stage manager for either production at the time of auditions, she served as my casting assistant. During the lengthy process of callbacks she provided an organized and discerning second pair eyes, and in the complex casting meetings that followed she served as a consistent reminder to me of which actors had gotten closest to our original interpretations of characters, where specific actors had moments of success in achieving the heightened comedic style I was after, and of which actors were most capable of taking directorial notes in a manner that brought them closer to our vision for the characters. Allyson is also an invaluable asset in the rehearsal room. She was not only essential during the early, table work rehearsals, when actors repeatedly called upon her to provide definitions and contextual connections, but in blocking rehearsals geared towards developing the particular, heightened physical style needed for each of the productions, Allyson was not only a supportive, enthusiastic audience for their developing comic chops, but was able to clearly articulate which actor choices were best able to communicate the essential crux of characters or actions of the plot. In the final stages of both productions, she wrote carefully geared program notes and created some of the most extensive lobby displays that we have ever had here at VSU, in order to make the play approachable to our audiences, comprised primarily of college students and the small cadre of arts supporters in our small Southwest Georgia town.

Most recently she served as the dramaturg for our production of a devised script, titled *Truth & Other Lies* developed by our students here at VSU. She was not only a part of the writing team for this process, (and contributed some of the most successful scenes in the play), she worked over

the Winter Break with me as a new play dramaturg to edit the script before we headed into rehearsals this Spring. Based on feedback from audiences who had attended invited read-throughs of the script in November of 2019, the second act of the initial draft required a significant restructuring of the second act and substantial cutting to keep it to a manageable running time. We only had a few weeks to accomplish this arduous task, but Allyson was more than up to the challenge. Working under looming deadlines has never deterred her; in fact, she seems to thrive under pressure. She has a keen eye for dramatic structure and was quick to identify where problem areas existed in a script, and adept at making suggestions for improvement and clarity. She is a marvel at sensing when the voice of individual characters lacks cohesiveness or clarity. And her strong interpersonal and collaborative skills make others eager to accept and make changes based on her superb critical analysis of texts.

Our rehearsal process for this production was short, with less than three full weeks of rehearsals before going into tech, and unfortunately our cast had very few members that were part of the original devising process. Allyson helped this play transition as seamlessly as possible from its original collaborative, devising group to its production team. She continuously fought to preserve the intentions of the devisers while deftly making changes on the fly to the script to make it better suited to our production realities. On two separate occasions, when it was clear that scenes were not working, Allyson made substantial cuts and edits to scenes with only hours' notice. In both cases she managed to maintain the integrity and intent of the scenes, while making edits in ways that were least burdensome to the young cast who had already passed the off-book date. Her program notes and lobby display for this production not only helped provide context for the wide array of mythological and legendary characters in the script but were able to introduce audiences to the devising process, mapping the journey of the script from inception to fruition.

Allyson has continually proven herself to be a true asset to every part of the production process. I believe that her strong aptitude for dramaturgical research, her keen artistic sensibilities, and her strong writing and analytical skills make her an excellent applicant for the work of your apprenticeship. Her drive and determination to make a career in the fields of dramaturgy and literary management is sincere and backed up by the skills to make her a success. She is a mature, responsible individual who is no stranger to dealing with audiences and theatre professionals alike. Your program would no doubt benefit from having her among your ranks. If you have any questions about Allyson or her work, please do not hesitate to contact me; I would be happy to continue to sing her praises.

Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Rynn Porterfield,
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GA - Valdosta State University (1 Record)

Truth and Other Lies

Allyson Broyles