The Myth of Helen of Troy: Reinterpreting the Archetypes of the Myth in Solo and Collaborative Forms of Playwriting.

Volume One of Two

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Abstract

In this practice-based thesis I examine how I interpreted the myth of Helen of Troy in solo and collaborative forms of playwriting. For the interpretation of Helen’s myth in solo playwriting, I wrote a script that contextualised in a contemporary world the most significant characters of Helen’s myth which are: Helen, Menelaus, Hermione, Paris, Hecuba, Priam. This first practical research project investigated how characters that were contemporary reconstructions of Menelaus, Hermione, Paris, Hecuba, Priam, Telemachus were affected by Helen as an absent figure, a figure that was not present on stage but was remembered and discussed by characters. For the interpretation of Helen’s myth in collaborative playwriting, I asked three female performers to analyse the character of Helen and then conceptualise and write their own Helen character. The performers’ analyses and rewritings of Helen inspired me to write a script whose story evolved around three Helen characters that were dead and interacted with one another in a space of death. This script formed part of my second practical research project that explored the ways of making Helen’s character present (both scripts that culminated out of my two practical research projects are included in the section of the Accompanying Material). I analyse the process of writing the scripts of the first and second practical research project through the use of Jungian archetype theory. In the first chapter of the thesis, I explore what an archetype is according to Jungian theory and then explain how this theory enables me to comment on the process of reinterpreting the myth of Helen of Troy through the writing of the two scripts. In the second chapter, which is the commentary on the first practical research project, I show how archetype theory provides a theoretical tool with which I can clarify and analyse how I reinterpreted and/or reworked the archetypal emotional energies of Menelaus, Hermione, Hecuba, Priam, Paris, Telemachus in the writing of new characters. In the third chapter, which is the commentary on the second practical research project, I investigate how the archetype theory helped me identify the key emotional experiences of the performers’ Helen characters, experiences which I organised and developed further in the writing of my own Helen characters. I conclude my thesis by arguing that my scripts cannot provide a final interpretation of Helen’s myth because they still lack a certain overarching theme or concept.
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Introduction: the Multiple Versions of Helen’s Myth.

My PhD thesis in Performance Practice aims to examine the ways I can reinterpret Helen’s myth in solo and collaborative forms of playwriting. Solo form of playwriting means the playwriting that happens by myself as a sole writer and the collaborative playwriting is the form of playwriting where a writer writes a script together with performers, directors or other contributors in the making of performances. The idea for my thesis came after I read Euripides’s Helen (412 BC) for an assessment in my Masters in Playwriting (2005-6). The task of the assessment was to organise a programme for a theatre that had a main stage and one or two studios. The programme was supposed to have an overarching theme and the theme I chose was ‘Ancient Greek Myths’. I decided to work on this theme because I am from Greece, a country where ancient Greek myths have a strong presence in everyday life. At a very young age a Greek child will experience Greek mythology through adaptations of myths in illustrated children’s books. When we go to school we study ancient Greek myths as part of our curriculum, we also read and write essays on Homer’s Odyssey and Iliad (approx. 700 BC), texts that introduce and describe the powers of many mythical gods and heroes; at school we also visit ancient Greek sites and we learn how mythical heroes or heroines are associated with these sites. When we become adults, we start using in our everyday language metaphors that establish a connection with the mythical past (examples are ‘she is a Medea’ – which means that this woman is an overwhelming or emotionally excessive woman – or ‘this news reporter is a Cassandra’, which means that he/she always tells bad news). Various restaurants or ships are called after a mythical hero or heroine (for instance, in my hometown a restaurant is called ‘Pasifae’ because Pasifae was a mythical queen from Crete who had insatiable eating habits; Zeus punished Pasifae for her gluttony, and induced her to fall in love with a bull; her union with the bull resulted in the birth of Minotaur). Many Greek people have names of various mythical heroes or heroines such as Antigone, Electra, Iphigenia, Orestes, Persephone, Penelope, Calliope, Phaedra, Telemachus, Odysseus, and at times when someone introduces him/herself as either Antigone or Odysseus to a group of people then people may even discuss briefly the myth that is connected with these names. And even though natural phenomena have various scientific explanations, I, and perhaps other Greek people too, cannot help thinking or secretly imagining that certain gods or semi-gods are responsible for various natural phenomena (particularly the idea of
Aeolus the god who used to release from his sack various winds is still very appealing and real to me. So it is a cultural reality that ancient Greek myths have a continuing presence in the life of a Greek person; they influence our ways of thinking and being in the world.

Throughout my PhD thesis I will refer to other Greek myths besides the myth of Helen to illustrate the points I am trying to argue. This further manifests my fascination with Greek mythology, but I should now return to a description of my assignment for my MA course, in order to explain how I arrived at my desire to write a thesis that dealt specifically with the myth of Helen of Troy. When I completed my assignment, I had created a programme that consisted of plays whose plots or stories were based on ancient Greek myths (such as Aeschylus’s *Prometheus*, Heinrich von Kleist’s *Penthesilea*), and plays that were using ancient Greek myths to explore political issues or existential concerns (such as Caryl Churchill’s *Mouthful of Birds*, Jean Cocteau’s *Infernal Machine*, Heiner Müller’s *Medea Material*). Amongst the plays I had chosen was Euripides’s *Helen* and I remember choosing this play because it showed how a very well-known myth can be subverted and lose the certainty of its structure. Helen of Troy was supposed to be the most beautiful woman in the world. She was the queen of Sparta but left her country to follow her lover Paris to Troy. Paris was the son of Priam who was king of Troy. When Menelaus, the husband of Helen and king of Sparta, found out that Helen was in Troy with Paris, he started a war against Troy. This war is known as the Trojan War, it lasted ten years and ended with the downfall of Troy. Menelaus took Helen back to Sparta and it is said that he either killed her there or they continued living together until their deaths.

Euripides’s *Helen* tells the story of Helen in a different way. Helen never went to Troy. She never fell in love with Paris because she had always been in love with her husband Menelaus. The gods created an immaterial double of Helen, a ghost that resembled her. Paris took this ghost with him to Troy and the Trojan War eventually took place over an immaterial female body that had Helen’s shape. The gods transported the real Helen to Egypt and she stayed there until the Trojan War was over.¹ This new version of the myth demonstrated to me that the myth of Helen is a versatile myth, i.e. there is not one definite version of this myth. The fact that this myth has no final retelling is also evident from the way I recounted the original story of the myth before. As we can see, I ended the myth in two ways: Menelaus either killed Helen or they lived together happily (the first option is suggested in Euripides’s *Trojan Women* (415 BC) and the second can be seen in the *Odyssey* (approx. 700 BC)). The Helen myth also
creates open-ended questions about Helen’s involvement in the love affair with Paris. Some say that Helen followed Paris because she fell in love with him, some others, such as two paintings by Johann Georg Platzer (1704-1761) and Giovanni Battista Piazetta (1683-1754) both entitled *The Rape of Helen*, suggest that Helen was abducted or taken away by Paris against her will.

The multiple versions of Helen’s myth led me to the conclusion that this myth offers possibilities for reinterpretation. Particularly, Helen’s character is not easy to define because she does not possess a fixed or stable meaning. There is no final answer about what really happened to Helen, as one can alternatively argue that Helen’s move to Troy was something she desired or something that was forced on her. We are also never sure who the *real* Helen is. Did she or did she not go to Troy? Was she a ghost or was she real? Does a *real* Helen exist? The fact that Helen declines to give clear or definite answers about her being drove me to explore her character in my own playwriting. I wanted to investigate Helen’s openness in interpretation and establish how I could find my own interpretation of Helen through playwriting. Helen’s myth also contained in one single story widely contrasting elements such as beauty and war, love and betrayal, happiness and death, and I was interested in examining how I could bring together or reconcile these elements in the writing of plays. Therefore, after I finished reading Euripides’s *Helen*, I started writing a research proposal whose main research question was how I could reinterpret Helen’s character through playwriting. What new insights could I offer to Helen and her myth(s)?

When I started discussing the research proposal with my supervisor Graham Ley, I gained a clearer idea about the ways I could reinterpret Helen’s myth through my playwriting practice. Together with Graham Ley, we decided that I should create two practical research projects that would explore the external and internal construction of Helen’s character. The first practical research project would examine how I could interpret Helen in an external way: it would assess the ways I could write a script about characters who were deeply affected by Helen, characters that would talk about, discuss and comment on Helen without her being present. The first project would also present my personal response towards Helen’s myth, my personal interpretation of the myth’s characters. As I will argue in my thesis, anyone who retells, reworks or rewrites a myth will assimilate in his/her retelling or rewriting elements from his/her cultural background as well as elements drawn from his/her experience as a gendered person. For instance, certain characters I created for my first practical project reproduced certain Greek stereotypical forms of behaviour which I have experienced since my childhood.
such as the type of the over-confident macho man who likes to be in power, swears, objectifies women, becomes aggressive for no apparent reason; the type of the wailing old woman who wishes to draw the attention of others, or the type of the overbearing mother who wants to reassure herself that she has done an excellent work as a mother. These stereotypical forms of behaviour are very common in Greece because they are considered ‘normal’, politically ‘correct’ and ‘acceptable’. In my writing, I reproduce these types of behaviour in the characters’ interactions, but I also try to parody them at certain moments.

The second practical research project would investigate to a larger extent how the retelling of a myth is culturally determined and influenced by one’s gender/sex. This project explored the writing of a script with a female performer who would embody Helen; the female performer would temporarily step into the female body of Helen (or enter the psyche of Helen) in order to sense and feel what it meant to be Helen to her personally. I would then use the performer’s sense of being Helen as inspiration for the creation of a Helen character. Both practical research projects would explore the ways I could interpret Helen’s myth through playwriting. The first practical research project would deconstruct Helen’s effects on characters that surround her; and the second practical research project would investigate the ways the female performer and I could create a Helen character that could assimilate the female performer’s feelings as Helen and my personal interpretation of the performer’s feelings.

As soon as I established how I was going to research my interpretation of Helen through my practical research projects, I wanted to find a theory that would help me analyse the process of interpreting Helen’s myth through playwriting. I chose Jungian psychoanalysis because it answers certain questions about the nature of myths and explains why they are open to reinterpretation. As I will show in the first chapter, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) divides our unconscious into personal and collective unconscious. The unconscious is the part of ourselves that we are not consciously aware of and consists of traumas, complexes, repressed memories, dreams, instincts, not yet realised emotional experiences. For Jung, the personal unconscious contains unconscious elements that belong to each one of us personally, it contains our personal traumas, complexes, forgotten memories, idiosyncratic characteristics or potentials. The collective unconscious stores elements that are not personal or individual but exist in the body of every living being on earth. These elements are instincts, emotional experiences which derive energy from instincts, images of birth and death, and dreams. Jung defines instincts as archetypes and maintains that archetypes have the ability to become
conscious through the images or figures of mythical characters, animals or objects that appear in myths and dreams throughout the world. As Jung argues in his essay ‘On The Psychology of the Unconscious’ (1943): ‘There are present in every individual, besides his personal memories, the great “primordial” images... the inherited possibilities of human imagination as it was from time immemorial. The fact of this inheritance explains the truly amazing phenomenon that certain motifs from myths and legends repeat themselves the world over in identical forms. It also explains why it is that our mental patients can reproduce exactly the same images and associations that are known to us from the old texts’ (65). For Jung, the archetypes acquire the form of mythical characters, animals, objects or natural elements in order to send certain messages to our bodies, messages about our physical or existential survival. These messages are not processed or interpreted by each one of us in the same way because we have different psychobiological experiences and our interpretation will become affected by our personal unconscious.

If myths have the ability to express archetypal messages, then what messages are present in the myth of Helen of Troy? What do they tell us about our lives? How do we read or interpret them? In order to answer these questions, I studied various literary sources on Helen’s myth such as: Homer’s epic poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (around 700 BC), Sappho’s poem *Fragment 31* (around 600 BC), Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* (458 BC), Euripides’s tragedies *Andromache* (428-24 BC), *Trojan Women* (415 BC), *Helen* (412 BC), *Oreste* (408 BC), and Gorgias’s rhetorical exercise *Encomium of Helen* (around 430 BC), Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus* (approx. 1592), Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), Goethe’s *Faust* (1806), H.D’s poem *Helen in Egypt* (1961), Howard Barker’s *The Bite of the Night* (1987), Mark Schultz’s *The Short History of Helen of Troy or Everything Will Be Different* (2005), as well as Christine Evans’s *Trojan Barbie: a Car-crash Encounter with Euripides’s Trojan Women* (2009).

These literary sources show how the mythical characters of Helen, Menelaus, Hermione, Priam, Hecuba, Paris, and Telemachus perform certain actions that have archetypal significance. This means that the mythical characters possess a score of emotional experiences whose form or shape may change according to various historical circumstances, but the core of this score is archetypal and unchanging. For instance, the mythical character of Menelaus is motivated by the archetypal emotional experience of anger or despair. Every time we will meet this character we will experience his anger or despair but the way or form with which Menelaus will express this archetypal emotional experience will be different. The epic poet Homer will decide to present Menelaus’s
anger through his strong desire to fight and kill Paris in the Trojan War, whereas the playwright Mark Schultz will demonstrate Menelaus’s archetypal emotion of anger and despair through his alcohol addiction and aggressive behaviour towards his daughter. Both writers insert in their rewriting of Menelaus the archetypal emotional experience of anger and despair, but their rewriting of Menelaus is different because they come from different cultures and histories and they also have a personal vision about the character. The archetypal message of the myth of Helen of Troy is contained in the archetypal emotional experience of the mythical characters, and in the first chapter I discuss how the Jungian archetypes of the Shadow, Hero, Anima/Animus, Wise Old Man, Daughter, Mother, Child create a vocabulary for the identification and definition of archetypal messages. After discussing the Jungian archetypes, I detect how Menelaus, Hecuba, Helen, Priam, Telemachus, and Hermione expressed or manifested in the various contexts of the literary sources the archetypal energies of the Jungian archetypes of the Shadow, Mother, Anima, Wise Old Man, Hero or Self, and Daughter, respectively.

Jung classified and defined the archetypal energies as the Shadow, Mother, Anima/Animus, Wise Old Man, Hero or Self, Trickster and Daughter. In this way, Jung translated into a more concrete language the dark and unknown archetypal energies of our psyche, a language that helped him recognise and analyse the effects of these archetypal energies within our everyday life. In the first chapter, I examine how each Jungian archetype contains a specific archetypal energy, and after each examination I describe how each specific archetype becomes alive in the mythical characters of Helen, Hecuba, Telemachus, Hermione, Menelaus, Paris. In other words, I focus on a specific scene or image from a literary source and discuss how in this image or scene a mythical character’s actions or ways of being give life and/or form to the archetypal energy of the Shadow, Daughter, Hero, Anima, Mother, Trickster, Wise Old Man. In this way, I hope to show how each mythical character from Helen’s myth contains a specific archetypal message. In the appendices of my thesis, I provide brief synopses of the literary sources in order to help the reader understand how the scenes or images on which I have focussed are contextualized within the wider plot or story of the literary source.

The Jungian theory of archetypes helped me investigate how I readdressed in the context of two writing projects the archetypal messages of Helen’s myth. In other words, the Jungian archetypes gave me a theoretical tool with which I could define or recognise the archetypal messages of Helen’s myth and then articulate and explain how I could reinterpret these messages in the writing of two scripts that were created by
myself or in collaboration with performer(s). For the first practical research project I tried to identify the archetypal messages of the most significant mythical figures of Helen’s myth such as Menelaus, Hecuba, Priam, Helen, Hermione, Paris, Telemachus (the last character may not be as significant in Helen’s myth as the others but I clarify, in the first chapter, how Telemachus fits into my examination of the myth’s archetypal messages). In my second practical research project, I tried to define the archetypal message that was contained in the performers’ Helen embodiment and examine how I could use this message to create my own character of Helen.

Archetypal message and archetype are not the same. The archetypal message is present in an image that derives energy from the archetype. In the first chapter, I explain the difference between archetype and archetypal image. According to Jungian theory, the archetype in itself is formless and shapeless and exists only as a potential or energy that can become fully conscious through the archetypal image. I examine how Jung was inspired by Plato for the creation of his theory on archetypes and then discuss in more detail the distinction Jung draws between the personal and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious contains, as I have mentioned, instincts which send their messages of survival through the archetypal image of an emotional experience. The archetypal image informs our body about the actions we have to perform in order to react to certain situations. The archetypal image of the archetype is informed by culture and the personal unconscious. This means that the archetype does exist as a universal potential within our body or psyche but the way we express or activate this potential is individual and depends on the idiosyncrasies of our bodies. Even though Jung believed that archetypes are eternally inexplicable and dark, he did create a set of archetypes that have a more specific form and a less obscure image. These archetypes are the Shadow, Mother, Daughter, Hero or Self, Wise Old Man, Anima/Animus, Trickster. For Jung, these archetypes symbolise universal emotional experiences or universal patterns of emotional states. I describe what exact emotional experiences are maintained, according to Jung, in each of these archetypes and then examine how these archetypes express or visualise their archetypal images in the mythical characters of Menelaus, Hecuba, Hermione, Telemachus, Priam, Helen, Paris. By identifying the archetypes of the mythical characters, I shed light on the archetypal images or archetypal messages of the mythical characters so that I can, then, analyse in the next chapter how I have reinterpreted these images through the characters of my first practical research project.

The second chapter is the commentary on my first practical research project. I follow and discuss how the Shadow, Daughter, Trickster, Wise Old Man, Anima, Hero
or Self, Mother archetypal images of Menelaus, Hermione, Priam, Helen, Telemachus, Hecuba are redeveloped in seven characters that were rewritten in three drafts. Six of the seven characters are physically present on stage, whereas one is absent from the stage but is constantly referred to in the characters’ dialogues or monologues. The new characters I created were contemporary reinterpretations of the mythical characters and in the commentary I analyse how the archetypal images of each character are reworked within the context of a contemporary world. In the previous chapter on the archetype and the archetypal image, I introduced the idea that the archetypal images of a mythical character need to be contextualised within a story or narrative in order to emerge or exercise the energy of their archetype. I explore how I composed a story in order to give new life to the archetypal images of the Shadow, Mother, Daughter, Anima, Wise Old Man, Trickster. Because this practical research project investigated the impact of Helen as an absent character in a script, I clarify in what ways I constructed an absent female character that was as beautiful, famous, life-determining, and consequential as Helen. The construction of the absent female character was processed through my personal unconscious and incorporated therefore certain fantasies of my male gender/sex.

In the third chapter, I analyse the process of creating a Helen character with three female performers. I decided to work with three performers instead of one, as was initially planned, because I wanted to expand and enrich the interpretations of Helen’s character. The three female performers were Simeon Lai, Kim Komljanec and Rasha Dawood. These performers came from three different countries, they were equipped with a unique and individual presence, and interrogated what it means to embody Helen and give her a character that was not an absent immaterial idea but a woman with an active presence and a human self. I begin the chapter by exploring Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti’s interpretations of the terms ‘human’ and ‘gender’ in order to analyse how the three female performers expressed their own ideas on female gender and women whilst discussing Helen’s myth. The female performers created their own version of Helen’s myth and integrated this version into their own Helen character. I recorded how each performer discussed, interpreted and embodied their own Helen character in improvisations, and then watched these recordings in order to write a script that would contextualise in a narrative the three Helen characters of the performers. In order to process and develop further the performers’ Helen characters for the creation of my script I interpreted the Helen characters as three different archetypes: the Daughter, Queen and Trickster. By defining the performers’ Helen characters as the Daughter, Queen and Trickster archetypes, I was able to draw from these archetypes archetypal
images which I assimilated into the Helen characters of my script. In the commentary I point out that my decision to visualise the performers’ material as three different archetypes was not coincidental because each performer’s analysis of Helen inadvertently or unconsciously presented images of their corresponding archetype. I conclude the thesis by showing how the Jungian method of deconstructing the unconscious has helped me analyse the process of interpreting Helen’s myth in solo and collaborative forms of playwriting. I argue that the theory of archetypes provides a method for showing and clarifying how the emotional energies or archetypal messages of a myth acquire new form and content in the writing of new characters. The scripts I wrote in order to test this method of analysis still lack a narrative arch or concept, i.e. the story they want to tell is still very unclear. I therefore offer some solutions that could help clarify the stories of my scripts. I conclude that only by knowing what kind of stories I want to tell through my script will I be able to find my own interpretation of Helen’s myth. The clearer the metaphor of my interpretation is, the more my story will resonate with the audience’s collective unconscious.
Endnotes

1 Euripides was not the first person who had suggested that Helen was in Egypt during the Trojan War. In his *Histories* (450-20 BC), Herodotus writes that Helen never managed to reach Troy but was stranded in Egypt. While he is in Memphis, an ancient city of Egypt, Herodotus asks some priests about Helen: ‘I questioned the priests about the story of Helen, and they told me in reply that Paris was on his way home from Sparta with his stolen bride, when, somewhere in the Aegean sea, he met foul weather, which drove his ship towards Egypt, until at last, the gale continuing as bad as ever, he found himself on the coast, and managed to get ashore at the Salt-pans, in the mouth of the Nile now called the Canopic’ (124). Herodotus continues by saying that Paris left Egypt but Helen stayed there under the guardianship of the king Proteus. In Plato’s *Phaedrus* (360 BC), Socrates says that the ancient Greek poet Stesichorus (640-555 BC) wrote a poem about a Helen who never went to Troy, who never followed Paris to Troy. According to Socrates, Helen’s spirit had blinded Stesichorus because he was demeaning her in front of others. Stesichorus regained his sight when he completed a poem that restored Helen’s reputation as loyal wife (463).

2 I chose to explore these particular characters because their lives were significantly affected by Helen. Hecuba and Priam both lose their children because of the Trojan War. Menelaus is deeply wounded by Helen’s betrayal. Paris falls in love with Helen. Telemachus faces a very problematic situation at home because his father Odysseus has not yet returned from the Trojan War. Hermione has to grow up without her mother, and she also has to live under the shadow of her beautiful mother Helen. I think that Helen is the most significant character of the myth because her movement from Sparta to Troy (whether voluntary or involuntary) sets into motion significant events such as the Trojan War and changes the lives of many mythical characters, even characters that I will not examine in my thesis such as Aphrodite, Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Hector, Andromache, Achilles etc.
1. The Jungian Archetypes: What they Are and How they Show or Designate the Emotional Energies in Helen’s Myth.

In this chapter I will discuss the Jungian archetypes and then examine how they can help me determine the emotional energies of the characters of the myth of Helen of Troy. The characters I will explore are Helen, Menelaus, Hecuba, Paris, Priam, Hermione, Telemachus. In the course of the chapter, I will clarify that archetypes act like names or symbols that contain or define a specific set of emotional experiences. I will explore how Jung defined the archetype and show how he used archetypes to explain the unconscious. Even though Jung has maintained that archetypes have no particular shape or form, he did suggest that archetypes can take the form of the Mother, the Child, the Shadow, the Trickster, the Hero, the Daughter, the Wise Old Man, the Anima/Animus. For Jung, these archetypes are the principles around which our collective unconscious is organised, they are generic image schemas that give rise to archetypal images of emotional experiences. The difference between the archetype and the archetypal image is that the first is universal, atemporal and unchanging whereas the second is informed and shaped by the cultural environment and the idiosyncrasies of our personal psychology. Archetype and archetypal image are indispensable for each other: the first cannot be manifested in conscious life without the archetypal image and the second has no power or dynamic without the archetype. In this chapter, I will explain why the archetypal images of the archetype need to be contextualised within a story or narrative in order to become meaningful and communicate the emotional energy of the archetype. I will then examine how the Jungian archetypes of the Trickster, the Shadow, the Mother, the Daughter, the Wise Old Man, the Anima/Animus appear in various literary or playwriting versions of the myth of Helen of Troy. I will suggest, for instance, that the characters of Paris, Menelaus, Hecuba, Hermione, Priam, Helen, Telemachus are configurations of the Trickster, Shadow, Mother, Daughter, Wise Old Man, Anima, Hero respectively. By determining what precise archetype activates the actions or emotional experiences of the mythical characters, I aim to understand the precise emotional energies that exist in the mythical characters and then determine how I can reuse and reorganise these emotional energies in the writing of characters for my two practical research projects.
1.1. The Etymology of the Word ‘Archetype’.

Before I start my analysis of the Jungian archetype, it would be useful to look at the etymology of the word ‘archetype’. The word ‘archetype’ is made out of two Greek words: archē which comes from the word ἀρχή which means beginning, starting point and principle and type which comes from τύπος which means type, shape or template. In the online Merriam Webster Dictionary the archetype is defined as: ‘1: the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies: prototype; also 1a: a perfect example, 2: idea 1a 3: an inherited idea or mode of thought in the psychology of C. G. Jung that is derived from the experience of the race and is present in the unconscious of the individual’.¹ In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2008), the term archetype has the meaning of: ‘a perfect example of something, because it has all the most important qualities of things that belong to that type’ (64). In the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004), archetype has these definitions: ‘1 a very typical example. 2 an original model. 3 Psychoanalysis (in Jungian theory) a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious. 4 a recurrent motif in literature or art’ (68).

1.2. Archetypes as Original Models or Inborn Primordial Images.

In the above definitions we see that archetype is explained as prototype which means the ‘perfect’ or ‘typical’ example of something, an originary form that is copied and imitated. In book X of The Republic (approx. 380 BC), Plato argues that all objects around us are not the true or original ones but replicas of originary forms or ideas who were first created by a god (2007: 338). The carpenter who creates a bed does not create an original bed but a representation of the concept or idea of the bed-in-itself which was first created by a god. An artist, too, will never create a real bed but always an imitation of a bed, (a second-hand bed) that was created by the carpenter who originally based the creation of his bed on the bed-in-itself of the god. Plato also discusses which forms of ruler, artist, guardian or philosopher should exist in an ideal state. He firstly examines how society classifies people according to their profession. A society, for instance, has certain categories of rulers, guardians, shoemakers, artists, dramatists, philosophers etc. He then analyses the contributions of these
professions in society and suggests how each one must work to materialise and organise the ideal state. For instance, the ruler should look after the common good not ‘his own interest’ (Plato 24); the artist should produce artworks that can influence young people to do good things, to appreciate beauty and reason (98); the guardians of the ideal city-state should be ‘men of courage, self-control, piety, freedom of spirit and similar qualities’ (90). In describing how the ruler, guardian or artist should function ideal state, Plato outlines the original forms or prototypes of these professions and seems to suggest that these prototypes should serve as an idea or model for imitation. In book VIII, Plato tells the simile of the cave to argue that the ‘form of the good’ exists somewhere beyond our immediate experience of the world in an ‘upper world’ or ‘intelligible region’ which ‘is responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it’ (244). In this sense, one should go upwards to a higher level of reality to tap into the source or original idea of the good in order to understand the most perfect form of justice, light, beauty, reason, truth, intelligence.

Jung’s theory of archetypes is partly influenced by Plato’s concept of ideal Forms. In his essay ‘Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype’ (1954), Jung discusses the origin of the term archetype and claims that:

“Archetype” far from being a modern term, was already in use before the time of St. Augustine, and was synonymous with “Idea” in the Platonic usage. When the Corpus Hermeticum, which probably dates from the third century, describes God as τὸ ἀρχέτυπον φῶς, the ‘archetypal light,’ it expresses the idea that he is the prototype of all light; that is to say, pre-existent and supraordinate to the phenomenon “light.” Were I a philosopher, I could continue in this Platonic strain and say: Somewhere, in “a place beyond the skies,” there is a prototype or primordial image of the mother that is pre-existent and supraordinate to all phenomena in which the “maternal,” in the broadest sense of the term, is manifest (75).

At the beginning of this essay Jung suggests that there is a concept of the Great Mother from which emanate ‘widely varying types of mother-goddess’ (75). The Great Mother can be seen as a Platonic Idea of motherhood, an idea that belongs to ‘living dispositions... that perform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions’ (79). In short, the idea of the
Great Mother is an eternally significant image of a mother that shapes our expectations of what a mother is; it will guide us to think of the particular characteristics that are inherent in our concepts of mothers. For Jung, images or ideas, such as the Great Mother, exist *a priori* in our psyche, they are ‘present in our germ-plasm’ because we have inherited them from a primordial past, from ‘the beginning of our species’ (78). However, the primordial image or archetype of the Great Mother is, ‘determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience’ which means that our ideas or expectations of what a mother is are influenced by our everyday experiences of motherhood, experiences that can be individual or cultural. Jung further notes that ‘the archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a *facultas praeformandi*, a possibility of representation which is given *a priori.*’ [author’s italics] (79). Here, Jung creates the distinction between the archetype and the archetypal representation (which is also called archetypal image as we will see later): the first embodies an idea of something that is ever-existent, primal, archaic, and resembles perhaps Plato’s ideal Form of something (it is difficult to perceive the Ideal Form but we can feel the effects of this Form in our everyday lives); the second is the *image* that embodies our cultural or individual experiences of the archetype, the *image* makes visible the effects of the archetype in our everyday lives. I will clarify further the differences between the archetype and archetypal image, but I hope to have shown how Jung wants to introduce in his definition of the archetype the fact that in itself the archetype has no power. The archetype needs the *image* to make its power known to us and the *image* will give a more tangible or pragmatic form to the archetype; without the *image* the archetype as a ‘living disposition’ is non-existent. Jung concludes his essay by suggesting that the images of the Great Mother archetype can never be finalised because the archetype ‘can be named and has an invariable nucleus of meaning – but always only in principle, never as regards its concrete manifestation. In the same way, the specific appearance of the mother-image at any given time cannot be deduced from the mother archetype alone, but depends on innumerable other factors’ (80).

1.3. *Archetypes as Universal Components of the Psyche.*

The distinction between archetype and archetypal image is very closely interrelated with Jung’s division of the psyche into consciousness, collective and personal unconscious. In his essay ‘On the Structure of the Psyche’ (1931) he writes that our experience of the world is
divided between the things we experience ‘immediately’, which are ‘the contents of consciousness... these seem to stream into us from outside in the form of sense-perceptions. We see, hear, taste, and smell the world, and so are conscious of the world’ (40). Other elements that we do not experience or realise in an immediate or conscious way form the material found in the personal and the collective unconscious. As I will discuss later, the collective unconscious stores the archetypes which are universal potentials for the creation of images of emotional experiences; the personal unconscious, which is informed by culture and personal idiosyncrasies, processes the images so that when the images of the archetypes reach consciousness they are adapted and shaped according to ever changing socio-cultural circumstances. Jung may have maintained that the psyche ‘remains an insoluble puzzle and an incomprehensible wonder, an object of abiding perplexity – a feature it shares with all Nature’s secrets’ (*Undiscovered Self*, 44), but the fact that he distinguished the conscious from the unconscious categories of our psyche showed his effort to establish or impose some kind of order onto the chaos or darkness of the psyche. This order enabled Jung to identify, analyse and heal certain psychic wounds or complexes, and furthermore, to unlock and realise the messages of survival that exist in myths, dreams and fairy-tales. I will now clarify more Jung’s distinction between the collective and personal unconscious in order to analyse further how the archetype is differentiated from the archetypal image and how the archetype is associated with instincts.

For Jung, the personal unconscious is the unconscious that encompasses images, impressions, fantasies, traumas and memories that belong to our subjective experience of the world since the first day of our existence (perhaps since the day of our conception in the uterus). In his essay ‘The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious’ (1938) Jung writes that the personal unconscious includes:

materials.... of a personal nature in so far as they have the character partly of acquisitions derived from the individual’s life and partly of psychological factors which could just as well be conscious. It can readily be understood that incompatible psychological elements are liable to repression and therefore become unconscious... We recognize them as personal contents because their effects, or their partial - manifestations, or their source can be discovered in our personal past (135-36).

The collective unconscious exists beyond our personal experience, beyond the personal unconscious:
....the rationally explicable unconscious, which consists of material that has been made unconscious artificially, as it were, is only a top layer, and that underneath is an absolute unconscious which has nothing to do with our personal experience. This absolute unconscious would then be a psychic activity which goes on independently of the conscious mind and is not dependent even on the upper layers of the unconscious, untouched – and perhaps untouchable by personal experience. It would be a kind of supra-individual psychic activity, a collective unconscious, as I have called it, as distinct from a superficial, relative, or personal unconscious (‘Structure of Psyche’, 148). ²

Jung calls the collective unconscious ‘a supra-individual psychic activity’ because it stores emotional experiences or states of being that are universal, atemporal and impersonal. We are all moved by the same emotions in spite of our cultural, historical or individual differences. We all experience the same events such as birth, hunger, love or death, events that unite us all universally or globally, events that seem to exist beyond ourselves, beyond our personal control and historical circumstances. As Jung speculates:

If this supra-individual psyche exists, everything that is translated into its picture-language would be depersonalized, and if this became conscious would appear to us sub specie aeternitatis. Not as my sorrow, but as the sorrow of the world; not a personal isolating pain, but a pain without bitterness that unites all humanity [author’s italics] (ibid 150).

Pain and sorrow are triggered or motivated by instincts which are universal drives or reflexes that sustain our body’s survival. For Jung, the terms archetype and instinct seem to share the common ability of sending to our body images that carry messages or information for our survival. Jung, for instance, suggests that ‘The collective unconscious... is the source of the instinctual forces of the psyche and of the forms of categories that regulate them, namely the archetypes’ (ibid 158). In ‘Instinct and the Unconscious’ (1948), Jung explains how the images of the instinct or archetype are transmitted to the body by describing how the yucca moth finds its way to the yucca flower, the source of its nourishment: ‘The yucca moth must carry within it an image, as it were, of the situation that “triggers off” its instinct. This image enables it to “recognize” the yucca flower and its structure’ (137). Elsewhere Jung
states that: ‘the instinct of the leaf-cutting ant fulfils the image of ant, tree, leaf, cutting, transport, and the little ant-garden of fungi... If any of these conditions is lacking, the instinct does not function, because it cannot exist without its total pattern, without its image’ (‘Nature of Psyche’ 201). In this sense, the instincts manufacture images and structure these images according to a specific pattern (or narrative as I will later explain) in order to inform how we can maintain our survival. The body of anything that lives and breathes remembers through images that in order to survive in a present situation it must exercise the same function that led to survival in the past.

For Jung, the instinct’s potential to create images for our survival is inborn and therefore images are ‘ever-present and biologically necessary regulators of the instinctual sphere’ (‘Nature of Psyche’ 201). Because the images provide information about survival, Jung suggests that they are the ‘meaning of the instinct’ [author’s italics] (ibid 201). As the meaning of the instinct, the image makes conscious the fact that the body has to be kept alive in the environment. Jung writes that ‘Archetypes are typical forms of behaviour which, once they become conscious, naturally present themselves as ideas and images, like everything else that becomes a content of consciousness.’ (ibid 226-27). The image then is the visual representation of the instinct or archetype; this means that the instinct will guide the body to react in a particular situation by bringing forth the image of an emotional experience, the emotional experience as image will manifest itself through a movement of the body. If, for instance, a lion approaches someone unarmed the instincts will bring to consciousness the emotion of fear and the body will perform certain actions to save itself. The performance of certain actions by the body can be considered as the image of the emotional experience. Jung examines the interrelation between emotion and instinct in this way: ‘If you suddenly meet a snake and get a violent fright, you can legitimately call this impulse instinctive because it is no different from the instinctive fear of snakes in monkeys. It is just the uniformity of the phenomena and the regularity of its recurrence which are the most characteristic qualities of instinctive action’ (‘Instinct and Unconscious’, 130-131). The image of the emotional experience of fear is the physical extension of the instinct that exists ‘a priori’ in our bodies. Every time the body faces a dangerous situation the emotion of fear will instantly emerge and guide us to react in a particular way.

However, the archetype can never become fully conscious through the image. For Jung, the archetype is eternally dark and inexplicable, and the images draw only some of its contents out of their unconsciousness: ‘It [image] undoubtedly does express unconscious contents, but not the whole of them, only those that are momentarily constellated.’
This means that the archetype can never be realised in its fullest potential. We get to know only those elements of the archetype that can help our survival in a specific situation. Jung therefore suggests that:

The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially “irrepresentable” basic form. The latter is characterized by certain formal elements and by certain fundamental meanings, although these can be grasped only approximately. The archetype as such is a psychoid factor that belongs, as it were, to the invisible, ultraviolet end of the psychic spectrum (‘Nature of Psyche’, 213).

The original state of archetypes is a state of unconsciousness, obscurity, darkness and numinosity. As soon some parts of the archetype acquire a specific form or meaning through the ‘archetypal image’, they have left the realm of the collective unconscious and have reached consciousness. The change from unconsciousness to consciousness transforms the archetype into something less dark, less inexplicable or inexpressible, it acquires the form of ‘archetypal images’ which process information from a specific cultural context in order to enhance the body’s capacities for survival in that specific cultural context. The body has to imagine new ways of surviving because the body’s situation in a time or space is never the same. The instincts have the capacity to re-structure or realign images in indefinite ways in order to help the body survive in ever-changing and ever-evolving situations. The goal of the instincts, however, is survival, which is a universal, eternal and unchanging drive and need. We could argue then that the archetypal images interpret or translate the substance or material of the archetype into something more intelligible or visible and make it useful for our conscious life. The interpretation of the archetype, and the images that are born from this interpretation can never be final or always the same. The archetype’s potential for image creation may be universal but the images are changing in time, they are reshaped and reconfigured in order to meet the conditions of an ever-changing cultural, social or historical context. In The Undiscovered Self, Jung explains that:

Human knowledge consists essentially in the constant adaptation of the primordial patterns of ideas that were given to us a priori... These need certain modification, because, in their original form, they are suited to an archaic mode of life but not to the
demands of a specifically differentiated environment. If the flow of instinctive dynamism into our life is to be maintained, as is absolutely necessary for our existence, then it is imperative that we remold these archetypal forms into ideas which are adequate to the challenge of the present (70).

Having in mind the distinction that Jung draws between archetype and archetypal image, we could argue that the archetype is the energy that motivates or activates specific emotions in a specific time and space through a set of archetypal images whose shape and form is affected by a variety of cultural conditions or individual characteristics of our bodies. As I will discuss later, Jung concluded that the archetypes of the collective unconscious can acquire the form or image of the Mother, Shadow, Hero, Trickster, Wise Old Man, Anima/Animus. These archetypes should be understood as more concrete images of the archetypes that represent the basic actions or set of emotional experiences that sustain (or even hinder) our physical and existential survival. The Mother archetype is, for instance, the image that gives rise to the archetypal images of emotional experiences of nurturance, love, affection, warmth, security, protection. The way these emotional experiences are expressed or practised may vary according to culture and history, but as experiences in themselves they are ever-existent and universal.

In myths and fairytales, the Jungian archetypes of the Shadow, Hero, Daughter, Wise Old Man, Mother, Trickster acquire presence through mythical characters. This means that mythical characters in dreams or myths embody and make conscious the emotional experiences of the Mother, the Hero, the Trickster, the Wise Old Man, the Anima/Animus. Culture and history will again influence and shape the ways a mythical character will represent the archetype. For instance: in Western culture we might sense or perceive that the Hero archetype is activated in the character of Christ, King Arthur or Antigone; in other non-Western parts of the world the Hero archetype will be present in the characters of Gilgamesh or Buddha. Analytical psychologist James B. Hogenson clarifies the archetype’s openness to cultural interpretation in this way: ‘The distinction Jung draws is between what he termed the archetype-as-such and the archetypal image. The representation is the representation that we find in a given myth. Thus Beowulf, Heracles and Hiawatha are all images of the hero archetype, and Jung is emphatic that these particular representations are cultural in origin and show certain variations from culture to culture’ (43-44).

Apart from the cultural interpretation of the archetype there is also a more personal one which depends on the experiences we have gained throughout our life, experiences that
are maintained in the personal unconscious. Jungian literary critic Susan Rowland argues in her book *C.G. Jung and Literary Theory* (1999) that if we meet in a dream or myth a figure or object or a natural element that encompasses the universal characteristics of the Mother archetype, we will interpret these characteristics in our own unique and individual ways according to the idiosyncrasy of our body, our gender/sex and our personal unconscious (10). The individual or personal ways of interpreting an archetype have been further elaborated by Jungian analysts Maureen Murdock and Jean Knox. In her book *The Heroine’s Journey: A Woman’s Quest for Wholeness* (1990), Murdock argues that our personal experiences of the Mother will guide the ways we understand the Mother archetype: ‘There are two poles of expression of the archetype of Mother: the Great Mother who embodies limitless nurturance, sustenance, and protection and the Terrible Mother who represents stasis, suffocation, and death. These archetypal models are elements of the human psyche that form in response to typical human dependency in infancy and childhood... If the mother is perceived by the child as the source of nurture and support, the child will experience her as a positive force; if she is perceived as neglectful or smothering, the child will experience her as destructive’ (18). In her book *Archetype, Attachment, Analysis: Jungian Psychology and the Emergent Mind* (2003), Jean Knox maintains that our body carries certain image schemas which she defines as ‘a mental Gestalt, developing out of bodily experience and forming the basis for abstract meanings’ (63). Because they are abstract, image-schemas exist ‘beyond the realm of conscious awareness’ but have the capacity to ‘provide a reliable scaffolding on which meaningful content is organized and constructed’ (64). Knox explains that a child inherently possesses the image-schema of ‘containment’ which it seeks to fulfil through his/her attachment with his/her mother. Because the Mother is the primary giver of containment, the child will learn and experience the meaning of ‘containment’ by interacting with his or her mother. The way a mother responds to the image-schema of ‘containment’ will affect and determine the way the child will experience ‘containment’ in his or her future relationships. Knox draws on cognitive scientist Mark Johnson’s work to argue that: ‘The archetypal aspect of any experience lies in the pattern of relationship between the objects or people, a pattern that can be traced back to the underlying image schema. ‘Secure’ parents provide an experience of safety and containment which is rooted in the image schema of ‘containment’ and enablement (Johnson 1987: 126). In contrast, intrusive parents who impose on their infant while failing to notice or respond to his or her communications are likely to activate the image schema of ‘force’ or ‘splitting’ (67-68).
In the next section, I will show that the ways we interpret or discover the meaning of an archetype or an archetypal image schema require us to consider how the archetypal images of the archetype are contextualised within the story in which they appear and externalise the energy of the archetype. I will argue that the archetype becomes meaningful only when we understand or realise how it functions within the context of a story or narrative. We will draw the conclusion that the archetype cannot exist outside of a story or narrative, i.e. it needs to be incorporated into the dramaturgy of a text in order to become functional.

1.4. Archetypes in the Narrative of Myth.

We saw earlier how Jung described the ant’s efforts in building its shelter. The ant follows a specific sequence of events, it organises or puts together certain images together: ‘the ant fulfils the image of ant, tree, leaf, cutting, transport, and the little ant-garden of fungi’. Jung concludes that if something is missing from this sequence of events then the whole pattern of constructing the shelter is disrupted. Similarly, Jungian analyst Maxson J. McDowell detects that certain animals such as birds have acquired wings because certain body parts and natural elements worked together to create a whole new entity: ‘In the evolution of birds the properties of bone, muscle, feather, air and gravity interacted according to inherent constraints and the wing emerged from these interactions’ (645). These two events, the construction of shelter and the invention of the wing, suggest that there is underlying structure or an underlying composition of elements that motivates the existence of certain things, including our own selves.

In his book *Narrative and Self* (1990), literary theorist Anthony Paul Kerby argues that our experiences in the world, whatever happens to us has the pattern of a narrative: ‘we often undergo experience in narrative sequences quite automatically, without choice’ (48). This means that our identity, our sense of who we are, what we were and what we might become is determined by our personal history, by the ways certain events were linked together, by the ways certain situations of the past have led to other situations in the present and so have created our life story. For Kerby, it is not possible to live or exist without a personal history or personal narrative: ‘persons are such only if (among other things) they can be considered to have a history, a history of acts and involvements. We may use the term person without knowing that history, but a history is nevertheless always implied’ [author’s
Kerby maintains that the actions or events of our history cannot be understood or become meaningful if they are taken out of the context of our history; the actions or events have never happened in isolation and each one has always played a vital part in our history as a whole: ‘The actions of human agents, to be intelligible, must be seen against the background of a history, a history of causes and goals, of failures, achievements, and aspirations... Actions do not occur in a void and are not meaningful in and of themselves; their meaning is dependent on the broader perspective of a framing story, as events in a history’ (40).

According to Kerby, we realise the meaning or the necessity of an event or action only after we determine how this action was situated in a wider narrative or history of actions: why did this action happen? When? What went on before? Who was involved in the action? The why, when, what, who questions are questions that try to establish the context in which something happens. Jungian analyst Verena Kast maintains that actions in dreams are given significance and meaning because of their context. In her book *The Shadow in Ourselves: A Subversive Force of Life* (2002), Kast looks at the ways configurations of the Shadow appear in dreams and suggests that the context or narrative of the dream will point out which figures have aspects of the Shadow, not the figures by themselves or the figures taken out of their context. Kast also argues that our personal associations and emotions will guide us to determine which content of the dream empowers archetypal images of the Shadow (40). This means that Shadow figures will be perceived as such because of their actions and the impact these actions have in the wider context of the dream. Moreover, our emotional response to the events of the dream’s narrative will guide us to understand or realise that a particular element has Shadow characteristics. As I will explain later, the Shadow is the archetype that contains all the aspects of ourselves that we hate and would prefer not to have or identify with.

Both Kerby and Kast seem to argue that the context or the overall narrative gives meaning to the actions of dream figures or human beings. The actions of the character will become meaningful as long as we follow how he/she interacts with his/her environment or other characters. We will interpret a mythical character as configuration of a particular archetype because we will determine and sense how his/her archetypal images or the emotional experiences he/she expresses affect other characters or the overall environment of the narrative. Likewise, the way other characters respond to a mythical character will show or reveal the archetype from which the mythical character draws his/her energy. I understood that the mythical characters of Hecuba, Priam, Paris, Helen, Hermione, were motivated by the
archetypes of the Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Trickster, the Anima, the Daughter, because I witnessed how the mythical characters affected each other in the environment or narrative of Helen’s myth. For instance: I noticed that Helen was an Anima figure because she had managed to raise very strong emotions of passion and love in both Paris and Menelaus. Similarly, Hecuba materialised the archetypal images of the Mother because she was constantly grieving for her lost children Hector, Polyxena, Cassandra, and Astyanax her grandchild. The deaths of Hecuba’s children were caused by the Trojan War which is one of the most significant events in Helen’s myth. The fact that mythical characters presented their archetypal images because they were interrelated with other characters or because they reacted to certain events of Helen’s myth shows that the context or the narrative structure of the myth is responsible for prompting the mythical characters to present the force of their archetypes. In short, the mythical characters were able to make visible their archetypes only because they were contextualised in a myth or story, because they became parts of a narrative structure. Jennifer Van Bergen also comments in her book Archetypes for Writers: Using the Power of Your Subconscious (2007) that story comes to life only because character-archetypes interrelate: ‘All character archetypes fit together with a specific set of other character archetypes and it is the interplay between these secret lives that makes the story’ (23).

In the commentaries on my two practical research projects, I clarify what decisions I took in order to make my script work as a story. I will explain how I integrated my characters within a narrative framework, a framework that empowered my characters to transmit their archetypal energies in a new context, a new myth and story. Characters cannot exist outside of a story in a similar way as human beings can’t. Anthony Paul Kerby argues that human beings ‘are “story-telling animals” precisely because we are already caught up in a story, and already committed to meaning’ (45). When we write, talk, play, cook, we always make meaningful associations, we put our thoughts and ideas together in a narrative order, we visualise how one action may cause another one and so create a specific result. Playwright David Edgar suggests in his book How Plays Work (2009) that audiences in theatre always expect to be drawn into a particular narrative or story because performances exercise our skills in narrative composition ‘... as our emotions empathise with the fate of the characters and our minds judge whether the matter is probable, our senses are doing something else. What we see and hear conditions our compositional response, allowing us to draw meaning from the patterns, shapes and rhythms which are presented to us’ (9). Likewise, dramaturg
Rachel Ditor highlights the necessity of storytelling in theatre when she writes that a sense of narrative structure has to occur even in plays or performances that do not have a coherent narrative, that may have a jumbled, disjointed or illogical sequence of images or events: ‘I often focus the issue of story with writers by asking, “Where do you want to take me?” The journey can be primarily emotional or intellectual or anything that a writer can imagine and pull off, but in a broad sense this is what story has come to mean to me: what’s the ride of this play?’ (2009: 35).

For Jung, the collective unconscious is filled with myths and stories. Any form of storytelling brings to consciousness the myths of the collective unconscious. As Jung writes: ‘the collective unconscious appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious’ (‘Structure of Psyche’, 152). In this sense, every myth offers the possibility to visualise, realise and understand what happens in the collective unconscious. Moreover, myths prove the existence of our psyche and, more particularly, they prove how the different layers of the psyche work together to produce myths and stories. Jung notices, for instance, that people from ancestral or prehistoric times have created myths about the ways nature changed (for example, the change of day into night), and so resisted a passive acceptance of nature, an acceptance without interpreting it or thinking about its ways of working. Jung writes that ‘The fact that the sun or the moon or the meteorological processes appear, at the very least, in an allegorized form points to an independent collaboration of the psyche, which in that case cannot be merely a product or stereotype of environmental conditions. For whence would it draw the capacity to adopt a standpoint outside sense perception?’ (‘Definitions’, 444). In this sense, myths and stories carry meanings of life, meanings about the ways nature functions, messages about the way instincts and archetypes affect our body. As Jung contends: ‘a mythological motif... is a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way. From this standpoint it is a psychic expression of the physiological and anatomical disposition’ (‘Definitions’, 444).

In her book The Woman Who Runs with the Wolves (1992), Clarissa Pinkola Estés, a Jungian analyst and storyteller analyses further the influence of myths on our bodies and argues that ‘Stories are embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life. Stories enable us to understand the need for and the ways to raise a submerged archetype’ (16). As a storyteller, Pinkola Estés senses that the art of storytelling is universal.
and atemporal, because it crosses boundaries of culture and historical periods in order to connect us with ever-existing truths of humanity: ‘Telling or hearing stories draws its power from a towering column of humanity joined one to the other across time and space, elaborately dressed in the rags and robes or nakedness of their time, and filled to the bursting with life still being lived’ (19). For Pinkola Estés, stories connect with our soul or collective unconscious because ‘The spoken story touches the auditory nerve, which runs across to floor of the skull into the brainstem just below the pons. There, auditory impulses are relayed upward to consciousness or else, it is said, to the soul... depending on the attitude with which one listens’ (25-26). Because stories establish a dialogue with our collective unconscious, they enable us to connect with our instinctual selves and therefore provide healing power to existential problems, worries or states of distress. As Pinkola Estés suggests: ‘(story) shows the way out, down, or up, and for our trouble, cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls, openings that lead to the dreamland, that lead to love and learning...’ (20).

Rachel Ditor’s question ‘Where do you want to take me?’ suggests that every story has a specific destination, it leads to a particular conclusion that entails a particular meaning, concept or evaluation of life. Fairy-tales or parables offer very clear examples of how meanings are disseminated through storytelling. Jean Knox describes how fairy tales empower children to understand the cause and effect of certain actions, to realise the consequences of actions, and to assume the necessity of moral values such as integrity, unconditional love, compassion, solidarity, self-determination etc. Knox analyses, for instance, that the learning outcome of *The Princess and the Frog* should show how irresponsible it is to give a false promise. In the fairy tale, the princess loses a golden ball in a well and a frog volunteers to catch the ball provided that the princess kisses him. The princess agrees to kiss the frog, but after the frog hands her the ball, she runs away without kissing him. When the princess arrives at her palace the frog is waiting in her room. This time, she cannot avoid kissing him. As Knox concludes ‘The frog’s reappearance in her home and her father’s insistence that she keeps her promise force her to face the reality of the effect of her own psychological processes on other people’ (149).

Both of my practical research projects lacked the instructive power or learning outcome of narratives. The scripts I wrote for my projects did not show how certain elements or archetypal images are put together in order to produce a specific result. In other words, I did not focus enough in turning my scripts into stories or narratives that could distil an overarching meaning or concept. My interest was more in looking at how I could reinvent the mythical characters of Helen’s myth by exploring how the Jungian archetypes of the Shadow,
Daughter, Wise Old Man, Trickster, Hero, Anima/Animus were working inside the mythical characters. I investigated how the Jungian archetypes could guide me to discover and visualise the archetypal images that operate in Helen, Hecuba, Menelaus, Priam, Paris, Hermione, Telemachus. As I will explain in the commentaries, I wanted to realise which archetype motivated these mythical characters in order to determine the mythical characters’ emotional energies and make further use of this energy in the creation of new characters. Before I explain further the contents of the Jungian archetypes, I want to clarify why Jung created the archetypes which can be interpreted as categories of the collective unconscious.

1.5. Archetypes as Organizing Principles or Living Symbols of the Collective Unconscious.

I wrote earlier that Jung’s classification of the psyche into consciousness, personal and collective unconscious introduced some kind of order into the dark and unknown world of the psyche. This order would help us learn more about ourselves, learn more about those parts of ourselves which we are unaware of, those parts that exist beyond our consciousness. Jung writes in his book *The Undiscovered Self: Answers to Questions Raised by the Present World Crisis* (1958):

Anyone who has any ego-consciousness at all takes it for granted that he knows himself. But the ego knows only its own contents, not the unconscious and its contents. People measure their self-knowledge by what the average person in their social environment knows of himself, but not by the real psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them (6).

In his autobiographical book *Memories, Dream, Reflections* (1977), Jung argues that the theory of archetypes stemmed from his desire to know and grasp the contents of the unconscious. In the chapter entitled ‘Confrontation with the Unconscious’, Jung describes how the understanding of the unconscious contents as images helped him overcome the fear and uncertainty that was caused by his own wild and unsettling dreams or visions: ‘To the extent that I managed to translate the emotions into images – that is to say, to find the images which were concealed in the emotions – I was inwardly calmed and reassured. Had I left
those images hidden in the emotions, I might have been torn to pieces by them... As a result of my experiment I learned how helpful it can be, from the therapeutic point of view, to find the particular images which lie behind emotions’ (201). The image seems to have given Jung the power to explain and bring down to earth the material of the unconscious. He reduced or framed their contents into an image, the image of an archetype, in order to understand their significance and so bring them into balance with consciousness. After noticing the calming or healing effects of turning the unconscious contents into images of archetypes, Jung states that:

The essential thing is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them, and at the same time to bring them into relationship with consciousness. That is the technique for stripping them of their power. It is not too difficult to personify them, as they always possess a certain degree of autonomy, a separate identity of their own. Their autonomy is a most uncomfortable thing to reconcile oneself to, and yet the very fact that the unconscious presents itself in that way gives us the best means of handling it’ (211).

Even though Jung was reluctant to give particular names to archetypes because they ‘point back to one essentially “irrepresentable” basic form’ (‘Nature of Psyche’, 213), he did try to personify them by giving them the names of the Shadow, Mother, Anima/Animus, Daughter or Kore, Child, Hero, Wise Old Man, Trickster. By giving specific names or images to the archetypes, Jung identified with more precision the source of emotional problems or traumas in a similar way as a doctor makes a diagnosis and determines the name of the disease behind a pain or a malfunction of our body. By naming or personifying the archetypes as Mother, Daughter, Trickster, Anima/Animus, Hero, Shadow, Wise Old Man, Jung could perhaps interpret more efficiently the meaning of a dream or vision and then determine or heal traumas, emotional problems and every other problem that occurred in the unconscious.

We can reach the conclusion that Jung saw the Anima/Animus, Shadow, Child, Daughter, Hero, Wise Old Man, Trickster as specific images that regulated the function of the unconscious because in his essay ‘Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious’ (1954) he argues that there are three main archetypes: The Wise Old Man, The Anima and The Shadow and, as we will see, he also wrote essays on the archetypes of The Trickster, The Child, The Mother, The Daughter or Kore, The Hero. In writing these essays, Jung suggested perhaps that our collective unconscious is structured according to these images of archetypes. This
theory can be seen as essentialist, if we take this division to be the final answer to how the psyche works. Susan Rowland, for instance, argues that ‘archetypes are definitely not structures in the sense of fixed entities, as they are definitely not inherited images. What archetypes generate in the individual psyche varies widely with cultural, social and personal circumstances. Yet archetypes are structuralist in suggesting an underlying (if unfathomable) code.’ (2002: 102). However, in spite of their inherent essentialism the Jungian archetypes have inspired psychologists or psychotherapists such as Joseph Campbell, Maureen Murdock or Allan G. Hunter to detect and establish which stages of life or stages of awareness lead to individuation. Individuation is the complete realisation of who one is, the complete awareness of one’s unconscious contents, the complete integration of unconscious states of being into our conscious life, the complete understanding of the archetypes (it is an ideal state of being where all psychological conflicts are resolved and a balance is found between all opposing qualities, between strengths and weaknesses, between anima and animus, between Shadow and Light elements).

Writers and story consultants Pamela Jaye Smith, Christopher Vogler, Jennifer Van Bergen have also used the Jungian archetypes to delineate the universal drives that motivate characters in widely known films in order to help writers access these drives and create characters that resonate with the collective unconscious of audience members. Even though these writers or story consultants have each created different sets of archetypes than the ones suggested by Jung, it is clear that Jung’s theory of archetypes has influenced them to construct their own theories of archetypes in writing. Moreover, in my second practical research project, Jung’s archetypal categories of the collective unconscious inspired me to categorise the raw material of the three performers into the Daughter, Trickster, Queen archetypes in order to make it available for further development. The Queen archetype is not included in the Jungian archetypes but I created it because it was the most relevant image or figure that was brought forward by the Helen interpretation of Kim Komljanec. In short, Jung’s method of looking at how we can give a specific name or image to universal emotional experiences in order to understand them better and realise their effects, has inspired the creation of other methods that seek to contact and connect with archetypal unconscious elements. This suggests that Jung’s method of organising the collective unconscious is not final and absolute because it can be adapted, reapplied and reinvented.

The archetypes are also not essentialist because, as we have already seen, they are manifested through images whose shape is never finalised as it is informed by ever-changing cultural and historical conditions. We could compare archetypes to living symbols which, for
Jung, are the symbols that are open-ended and signify meanings that can never be fully explained or defined. In ‘Definitions’ (1921), Jung creates two categories of symbols: the living and the dead symbol. Jung differentiates the living from the dead symbol in this way: ‘The symbol is alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning. But once its meaning has been born out of it, once that expression is found which formulates the thing sought, expected, or divined even better than the hitherto accepted symbol, then the symbol is dead, i.e., it possesses only a historical significance.’ [author’s italics] (474) This means that the living symbol stands for meanings which have not yet become fully conscious or fully visible, but we are aware of their significance or their images. The dead symbol, on the other hand, may also have the same meaning as stereotype which is a fixed or stable idea about something, an idea that is significant for a specific time and place. For Jung, the living symbol expresses meanings or ideas that are relevant for every historical period or culture; in a sense the living symbol is archetypal because it ‘formulates an essential unconscious factor, and the more widespread this factor is, the more general is the effect of the symbol, for it touches a corresponding chord in every psyche’ (477). The different layers of the psyche collaborate in the creation of the symbol as the unconscious content cannot acquire significance if it remains in an unconscious state: ‘Purely unconscious products are no more convincingly symbolic per se than purely conscious ones; it is the symbolic attitude of the observing consciousness that endows them both with the character of a symbol’ (477). Lastly, the living symbol brings to life meanings that have an impact on our whole being, our feelings and thinking processes, our conscious thinking as well as our intuition, our spirit as well as our senses. As Jung argues: ‘data from every psychic function have gone into its making’ (478).

The purpose of the living symbol is perhaps to halt and contain within one image, as Ernst Cassirer has suggested in The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (1957), the constant flux or stream of images and impressions that affect everyone, to integrate these images within a relatively stable or fixed sign or point of reference. The point of reference will raise the images out of their inarticulate state and communicate their essence or meaning to a community of people (89). In this sense, archetypes can be seen as words or images that enable one to understand which emotional experiences belong to a specific area of our chaotic and unexplainable archetypal unconscious contents. In other words, they delineate which particular aspects of the collective unconscious give rise to a diverse variety of emotional experiences.

I will now examine how Jung analysed the archetypes of the Anima/Animus, Shadow,
Mother, Daughter, Hero, Wise Old Man and show how each of these archetypes contains a specific set of emotional experiences. After examining the archetypal contents or images of each archetype, I identify how each archetype expresses its specific archetypal images in the mythical characters of Helen, Menelaus, Hecuba, Priam, Paris, Hermione, Telemachus. This identification will help me define the emotional energies that exist in the mythical characters.

1.6. **The Shadow, Anima/Animus, Hero, Wise Old Man, Trickster, Mother, Daughter Archetypes. How these Archetypes Appear in the Myth of Helen of Troy.**

1.6.1. The Anima/Animus Archetype

The anima/animus are archetypes but stand for archetypal qualities that are feminine (anima) and masculine (animus). According to Jung, the anima is the unconscious of man and the animus is the unconscious of woman. The anima represents Eros and the animus, Logos. The anima contains elements that are emotional, sensitive, magical, sensual, dark, mysterious, erotic, whereas the animus encompasses reason, intellect, discipline, structure and strategic thinking. The anima produces moods, the animus produces opinions (Jung, ‘Individuation’ 206). In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung suggests that his anima is the main source of information about his emotions:

> It is she who communicates the images of the unconscious to the conscious mind, and that is what I chiefly valued her for. For decades I always turned to the anima when I felt that my emotional behaviour was disturbed, and that something had been constellated in the unconscious. I would then ask the anima: “Now what are you up to? What do you see? I should like to know.” After some resistance she regularly produced an image. As soon as the image was there, the unrest or the sense of oppression vanished. The whole energy of these emotions was transformed into interest in and curiosity about the image (212).

Jung argues that anima images inspire in men contradictory feelings of fear and worship, passion and aversion, attraction and disgust. Mythical figures such as witches,
Sirens, evil fairies that crave for the blood of young men, but also good and saintlike representations of the Mother archetype are metaphors or images of a man’s anima (Archetypen, 27). In his essay ‘Concerning the Archetypes, With Special Reference to the Anima Concept’ (1936), Jung seems to suggest that the anima’s ambivalent, erotic, magic and motherly characteristics cause psychological disturbance: ‘When the anima is strongly constellated, she softens the man’s character and makes him touchy, irritable, jealous, vain, and unadjusted. He is then in a state of “discontent” and spreads discontent all around him’ (70-71).

But the anima does only produce negative emotions or moods. She also urges men to be creative. Jung assumes, for instance, that the anima has prompted Rider Haggard to write his horror novel She (1887). He also suggests that one can find in John Erskine’s novel The Private Life of Helen of Troy (1926) ‘a really admirable description of anima-psychology in a woman’ (‘Psychological Aspects of the Core’, 202). In Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung describes how his own anima pushed him to exercise his artistic skills as writer. One night, he was writing down certain powerful fantasies and at some point he stopped and asked himself what he was doing. All of a sudden, Jung writes:

‘a voice within me said, “It is art.” I was astonished. It had never entered my head that what I was writing had any connection with art... I knew for a certainty that the voice had come from a woman. I recognised it as the voice of a patient, a talented psychopath who had a strong transference to me. She had become a living figure within my mind’ (210).

The conversation between Jung and the woman in his unconscious soon turned into an argument because Jung was not convinced that his writings had any artistic value whereas the woman persisted that they had. After a while Jung noticed that the woman lacked reasoning capacities: ‘the “woman within me” did not have the speech centres I had’ (210) which led him to conclude that ‘the insinuations of the anima, the mouthpiece of the unconscious, can utterly destroy a man. In the final analysis the decisive factor is always consciousness, which can understand the manifestations of the unconscious and take up a position towards them’ (212). Jung suggests here that with the help of his own masculine rationality he was able to tame and restrain the uncontrollable emotions of his feminine side.

According to Polly Young-Eisendrath, Jung’s anima/animus concept ‘is tainted by essentialism’ [author’s italics] (2004: 123) as it consolidates or reproduces certain beliefs or
prejudices about men and women, about the properties that constitute what man or woman is. As Young-Eisendrath puts it: ‘The meaning of “masculinity, men and maleness in this kind of theory is Logos, rationality, independence, and objectivity. The meaning of “femininity, women and femaleness” is Eros, connectedness, and subjectivism. This is the picture of the two sexes that Jung painted, reflecting the biases of his cultural era’ (127). However, Young-Eisendrath also suggests that the anima/animus theory enforces the acceptance or recognition that our self is a complex, fluid and decentred self, that our beings are not purely masculine or feminine, and that we project onto the opposite sex these aspects of ourselves with which we feel uncomfortable or think that they may not belong to the ideas we have about being a man or a woman. She explains that:

Jung loudly calls our attention to one important theme in regard to sex differences: the opposite sex as a projection-making factor. He invites us to see aspects of ourselves that are denied to consciousness (because they are intolerably awful or idealized) through our projection into others. His theory of contrasexuality, that everyone has a biologically based opposite-sexed personality derived from genetic traces of the other sex (hormonal, morphological, and the like), is tainted by essentialism but clear about its psychological domain. This condition creates an Other within, an unconscious subpersonality. That subpersonality has a life on its own, usually dissociated, and often projected onto the opposite sex, a fetish, or an aspect of the world, in order to defend the self against anxiety and conflict (123).

For Young-Eisendrath, the anima/animus are ‘strong internal images of femininity and masculinity’ (122) and they point out what characteristics of the female or male sex exist in ourselves, characteristics that we usually try to overshadow or interpret them as exclusive characteristics of the opposite sex. As Young-Eisendrath writes: ‘Expressed as emotionally laden images, these archetypes structure what is latent of the opposite sex in each of us, a sort of soul-mate of both ideal and devalued potentials’ (123).

The mythical character of Helen can be considered an Anima representation because she is commonly associated with Eros characteristics of love, passion, sexuality, beauty, dream, creativity. Helen is generally seen as the woman who left her husband for another man, the woman who fell madly in love with Paris and abandoned her country. In Sappho’s poem ‘Fragment 31’ it is suggested that her love or passion for Paris completely eradicated her rational thinking: ‘and she left/ her perfect husband and went/ sailing off to Troy/ without
a thought for her child/ or her dear parents’. In his *Encomium of Helen*, the sophist Gorgias emphasises Helen’s lack of resistance towards Paris: ‘So if Helen’s eye, pleased by Alexander’s body, transmitted an eagerness and striving of love to her mind, what is surprising?’ (29). Apart from falling in love herself, Helen also stirs in other men the desire to love and possess her. In Euripides’s *Helen*, Helen complains about the effects of her beauty: ‘My beauty – /If anything so unlucky could be called beautiful – /Was dangled by Aphrodite as a bait, so that Paris,/if she won, would marry me. Which she did, /Naturally. Paris soon kissed goodbye/ To his cattle sheds on Mount Ida, I can tell you,/And came to Sparta, to into bed/With me, at the earliest possible opportunity’ (138). Later on, Helen says that Theoclymenus, the Egyptian king who was supposed to protect her, has also fallen victim to her beauty: ‘Theoclymenus, is most importunate/In his pursuit of me’ (140).

In Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus*, Helen is admired for her extraordinary and sublime beauty. Dr Faustus’s tragic alliance with Mephistophilis has given him certain supernatural powers, one of which is to bring to life or make visible legendary figures such as Helen or Alexander the Great. As a form of entertainment, a group of scholars ask Faustus to awaken the ghost of Helen who, according to one scholar is the ‘admirablest lady that ever lived’ and a ‘peerless dame of Greece, whom all the world admires for majesty’ (12.3-6). Faustus satisfies their request and Helen appears in front of the scholars as a ghost; she is visible but immaterial and intangible. The scholars are all very impressed by her beauty. One scholar finds that ‘too simple is my wit to tell her praise’ (12. 16); another speculates that ‘No marvel though the angry Greeks pursued/With ten years’ war the rape of such a queen,/Whose heavenly beauty passeth all compare’ (12. 18-20), the third scholar admits that Helen is ‘the pride of Nature’s works’ (12. 21). Faustus is also in total awe of Helen: ‘Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,/And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?’ (12. 81-82). For Faustus, nothing excels Helen’s beauty: ‘all is dross that is not Helena’, ‘thou art fairer than the evening air’ or ‘brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter’ (12. 87-95). Faustus’s last wish before his eternal surrender to Lucifer is to take Paris’s place and become Helen’s lover. Helen acquires a more tangible presence and leaves the stage together with Faustus (12. 100).

Helen’s Anima characteristics of beauty, sexuality, lack of intellect, desire and evil are further accentuated in the way Shakespeare depicts Helen in *Troilus and Cressida*. The play takes place in the midst of the Trojan War and revolves around the beginning and end of Troilus and Cressida’s love relationship. Troilus is one of Priam’s sons and Cressida is the daughter of Calchas a Trojan priest. The first time we hear about Helen in *Troilus and Cressida* is in the first act when Pandarus, Cressida’s uncle, talks with Troilus about
Cressida’s beauty. He mentions that Cressida’s beauty could have been equal to Helen’s if her hair and skin were as white and fair as Helen’s (in ancient Greece as well as in the Elizabethan times fairness of complexion was the strongest sign or characteristic of female beauty): ‘An’ her hair were not somewhat darker than Helen’s – well, go to – there were no more comparison between the women’ (1.1. 39-41). Because Pandarus wants to match Troilus with Cressida, he tries to make Cressida notice Troilus by telling her that Helen has flirted with Troilus: ‘But to prove you that Helen loves him: she came and puts me her white hand to his cloven chin’ (1.2.114-15). Pandarus suggests perhaps that only a very beautiful man could earn Helen’s attention, because Helen is a very beautiful woman herself. Whilst Pandarus tells the story about Helen and Troilus, Cressida implies that Helen is an uninhibited, extravagant or loose woman: ‘she’s a merry Greek indeed’ (1.2.105).

In the third act of the play, we see what Cressida means by ‘merry Greek’ when we meet Helen in person in Troy in front of Priam’s palace. Helen and Paris are followed by musicians when they enter the stage (3.1.40), which means that both Helen and Paris lead a life of pleasure and idleness, and are not particularly affected by the casualties of the Trojan War. Helen’s character is weak and shallow; she seems to have no intellect at all and is only a beautiful doll that makes pointless remarks and is interested only in her personal entertainment (3.1. 66-67). Before her entrance, one of Paris’s servants describes Helen’s beauty in these terms: ‘mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty, love’s visible soul’ (3.1. 31-33). However, certain characters such as Thersites or Diomedes, both Greek soldiers, discuss Helen in very negative terms, they believe she is a whore because she has caused a massive destruction. Thersites, for instance, underlines the absurdity of the Trojan War because ‘All the argument is a whore and cuckold; a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon’ (2.3. 69-71). In a similar note, Diomedes suggests that Helen is the embodiment of a strongly infectious lethal disease: ‘For every false drop in her bawdy veins/A Grecian’s life hath sunk; for every scruple/ Of her contaminated carrion weight/ A Trojan hath been slain. Since she could speak/ She hath not given so many good words breath/ As for her Greeks and Trojans suffered death’ (4.1. 71-76).

In Goethe’s Faust Part II, Helen first appears as a ghost in Act I. Faust summons her together with Paris as part of a spectacle he has prepared for an emperor and his court which includes an astronomer, a diplomat, a poet, ladies, a courtier, a knight. As happened in Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, everyone praises Helen’s beauty, some more than others. Faust is here again the strongest or most passionate admirer of Helen’s beauty and expresses his passion and extreme enthusiasm for Helen in a monologue he delivers while he sees her. In
the monologue, Faust describes that after seeing Helen, the world has a new meaning, it is filled with more hope. Faust knows that Helen’s ghost is temporarily present and therefore doubts whether he can live after she disappears. He owes her everything: ‘It’s you I owe as tribute every start/Of strength, my passion’s innermost heart/ my liking, love, devotion, lunacy’ (lines 1. 6498-6500). Mephisto who oversees the spectacle from a prompt-box tells Faust to restrain his exaggerated enthusiasm. In the spectacle, Helen shows off her skills at seducing men by kissing Paris. This urges a lady to comment that ‘she’s slut and nothing but’ (1. 6), but the majority of men are excited by Helen and either say that she is ‘beautiful from head to foot’ (1. 6505) or yearn to be Helen’s lovers: ‘I’d like to be where he (Paris) is, I know that’ or ‘Who would not be a prisoner in such bonds?’ (1. 6528). When Paris is about to carry Helen away, Faust jumps to take Helen from Paris’s hands. This leads to an explosion, Faust falls to the ground unconscious, and Helen and Paris both disappear.

Faust is haunted by Helen throughout Faust Part II. After the events at the emperor’s courtyard, Faust travels back in time to meet her in person. In Act III, he finds Helen in Sparta after the Trojan War. Here, Faust acts more like an observer and does not participate in what he sees. The Trojan War has recently come to an end and Helen has just arrived in front of her palace in Sparta. When Helen enters the stage, she is praised again by a Chorus of Trojan women for her beauty; Helen herself seems less concerned about her looks because she is afraid that Menelaus will take her life as a sacrifice for the Trojan War. Helen enters the palace she left ten years ago with mixed feelings. After a while, she rushes out of the palace more afraid and terrified than before. She met an ugly old woman who is definitely a bearer or messenger of bad news. The ugly woman is called Phorcys and she is Mephisto in disguise. Phorcys comes out and announces that Helen and the Trojan women will be sacrificed; but Phorcys is also willing to help Helen escape from Sparta and transfers them to a different time and place. Helen and the Chorus of women are now in the Middle Ages in the courtyard of a medieval castle. Faust appears as a knight and feels again totally disempowered by Helen’s beauty. He is ready to give up everything for her: ‘What is there left for me to do but render/ Myself and all I thought was mine to you?’ (3. 9269-70). This time Faust and Helen become lovers, they travel to the idyllic place Arcadia where they give birth to a child called Euphorion. In Goethe’s Faust Part II, Helen continues to represent the archetypal beautiful woman that all men want to possess. Her character does not appear to be distinctive for her sophistication or other intellectual abilities. When we first see her in Faust Part II, she is an empty beautiful woman, a ghost that slips through Faust’s fingers; later on she acquires a more pragmatic presence but she is a woman whose emotions of fear or guilt
have taken her over entirely; towards the end she becomes Faust’s beautiful wife, she gives birth to Euphorion in whom we recognise the figure Lord Byron. Euphorion, as Lord Byron, dies for Greece’s freedom and liberation from the Ottoman Empire, and after his death Helen vanishes again into the air. Helen has a dreamlike quality, her presence eludes the real world, there is nothing real or material about her.

In more contemporary reconsiderations of Helen such as in Howard Barker’s *The Bite of the Night* (1987) or Christine Evans’s *Trojan Barbie: A Car-crash Encounter with Euripides’ Trojan Women* (2009), the Anima characteristics of irresistible or dreamlike beauty, destructive love, crazy passion, amorous death, uncompromising seduction, dangerous sexuality, and sadistic desire are still Helen’s most prevalent characteristics; we could even say that Helen lives or breathes because of these elements or characteristics. In *The Bite of the Night*, Helen is first discussed by the characters Hogbin and Savage who are a scholar and a pupil respectively. Hogbin suggests that Helen’s abduction was the pretext for the Trojan War, the real reason being the Greek’s desire to become the sole traders in the Mediterranean Sea as well as enslave some tribes of Asia Minor. However, Savage seems to insist that the war was fought for ‘Helen’s cunt’ (1998: 15). Helen does not reply directly to Savage but she defends herself towards the end of the play by claiming that the war was a matter of personal responsibility: ‘I refuse the blame. Every conscript had his choice and every widow could have blocked her. But if they died for Eros, where’s the tragedy in that? In other wars they’ll scream for flags, sometimes for banks, or even for books, I’ve heard. No, cunt’s a worthy cause as slaughters go.’ Here, Helen identifies herself with Eros which is the archetypal element of love, passion, feeling, desire, sexuality and the most important aspect of the Anima archetype. In Greek belief, Eros goes against reason or logic (which are Animus elements), and Helen confirms this belief in her suggestion that people are afraid of her because ‘I’ll cling in the imagination of a girl, or in a boy’s head, make all his thoughts unscholarly’ (ibid 105).

I think that the play does try to suggest that the Trojan War was instigated by the suppression of the Eros characteristics in our lives, a suppression that leads to a wrong or distorted way of handling our reasoning capacities and the release of a destructive, negative or sadistic energy. When Helen appears on stage for the first time, she describes certain atrocities that happened in the Trojan War (the usual atrocities of every war) and in the midst of her description she encourages people to hit her: ‘Do hit me if you want to, others did’ or ‘Burst my face or I shall go on talking’ (21). Later on Helen even suggests that the more broken or worried she looks the more desirable she becomes: ‘Of course I suffer all the
consequences. More of insomnia and yet the overall effect is I am more desirable’ (32). Half way through the play, Helen’s body is mutilated, her hands and legs are chopped off and she is carried around on a chair. This image of Helen materialises perhaps, on the one hand, the male unconscious desire to see a beautiful woman in a state of total subjection, utter pain, and extreme distress; Helen points towards this desire when she says that her appeal depended on her pain, not her beauty: ‘I was already a spectacle of pain, why else did they want me? ... Beauty did you say? No, it’s pain they loved... My kiss stiff as brick, and my womb full of straw’ (59). On the other hand, Helen’s mutilated body may be the symbol of the massive hatred and destruction that takes place in wars. Helen herself alludes to the archetypal obscenity or violence of wars when she claims that: ‘I have a child in me and yet I hacked the features off dying boys’ (65). The images of violence are further multiplied when Helen suggests that instead of killing her in a ‘civilised’ or ‘diplomatic’ way, she would prefer to be killed in an unpretentious way ‘in a gush of violence. I wanted to be beaten out of life by some mad male all red about the neck and veins outstanding...’ (ibid: 106). Eventually Helen is strangled by a soldier and the character Savage tells how his experience of loving her was intricately connected with the desire to kill her: ‘No sooner did she love me than I longed for her death.’ (ibid 108). Apart from enticing men to hurt her (due to their uncultivated sense of love and the suppression of Eros), Helen’s beauty does also become a symbol of civilisation. The character Schliemann (a real archaeologist who supposedly discovered remnants of Troy during 1870) states that: ‘The Asiatics took Helen into Asia. The Europeans took Helen back again. At that moment they became a culture!’ (ibid: 85).

Christine Evans’s *Trojan Barbie* takes place after the Trojan War outside the city of Troy (the time alternates between present and ancient time or as the Evans puts it ‘the past, folded uneasily into the present (2009: iii)). Helen’s character intends to bring civilisation back into the deserted and burned landscapes of the destroyed city of Troy, but her intention is dictated by her desire to look beautiful and glamorous and not by any sense of altruism, by the desire to help others. The stage directions clearly suggest that Helen is definitely not affected by the disasters of the Trojan War, the only thing that affects her is her beauty: ‘Helen sweeps on in make-up and in high heels. She holds a movie star pose in her own pink spotlight. We ache for the cigarette she doesn’t have... Mica is transfixed’ (ibid: 9). Mica is a camp guard who supervises the Trojan women and, as happens with every man who sees Helen, he is totally taken by her beauty. Helen realises the effect she has on Mica and uses him to take whatever she desires. For instance, she wants Tylenol to cure her headache and Perrier water because ‘the tank water tastes vile’ (9). Helen reminds of the beautiful wives of
dictators who idiotically try to overlook or negate the violence and injustice that is activated by their husbands. She constructs an imaginary beautiful world that does not correspond to the real bleak world around her: ‘If I was running the camp, we’d have hot showers and decent meals by now, and probably some nice times in the evenings. Some café tables, with umbrellas, and drinks with umbrellas in them too, and gentlemen callers with cigars’ (38).

When Menelaus enters with the intention to punish Helen for her betrayal, Helen manages to win him over with her beautiful appearance and cliché phrases such as: ‘Oh, those long, aching nights. But at last… we’ve found each other again. I almost gave up hope, kidnapped by barbarians. I stayed faithful, you know. The days… interminable. The nights … unbearable. But deep down, I knew you’d rescue me. That some day, my Prince would come’ (54).

Helen’s seduction succeeds because Menelaus calls her ‘my naught little kitten’ which means that he has overcome his need to punish her.

But Helen’s character does not only contain images of fatal beauty, dreamlike presence, unintelligent sexiness, aloof glamour, classy prostitution, overbearing emotionality, sexual desire, irresistible seduction. Helen also impersonates the feminine qualities of intuition and calmness. In the Odyssey, Telemachus visits Menelaus and Helen in Sparta in order to ask about his father’s whereabouts. When Telemachus, Menelaus, and some other friends sit around for dinner, Telemachus’s identity remains unrecognised until Helen comes in and with a great intuition notices that this ‘man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachos, who was left behind in his house, a young child…’ (4.143-44). The reference to Odysseus brings up memories of the Trojan War and the deaths or lost traces of friends and relatives. The atmosphere becomes very depressive and Helen decides to extinguish the bad memories with a drug: ‘Into the wine of which they were drinking she cast a medicine of heartsease, free of gall, to make one forget all sorrows, and whoever had drunk it down once it had been mixed in the wine bowl, for the day that he drank it would have no tear roll down his face, not if his mother died and his father died, not if men murdered a brother, and he with his own eyes saw it. Such were the subtle medicines Zeus’ daughter had in her possessions…’ (4.220-27).

1.6.2. The Wise Old Man Archetype

The most significant characteristic of the wise old man is his wisdom and intelligence which
he has gathered through various experiences of his long life. The wise old man is objective, emotionally distant, composed, sensible, uninfluenced by personal prejudices or feelings. When he judges a situation or someone’s behaviour, he thinks with a clear mind and articulates an opinion that is neutral, an opinion whose aim is not personal gain but collective help, assistance towards other people and the community. A recent article in the *Economist* entitled ‘The U-bend of Life: Why, Beyond Middle Age, People Get Happier As They Get Older’ (December 2010) explains that elderly people can achieve a more detached, patient and benevolent attitude towards life, because they are less self-centred and less inclined to take things personally. According to the article, the young and the elderly differ in their reactions to insults or gossip.

In one study, for instance, subjects were asked to listen to recordings of people supposedly saying disparaging things about them. Older and younger people were similarly saddened, but older people were less angry and less inclined to pass judgment, taking the view, as one put it, that “you can’t please all the people all the time (34-35).

The article clarifies further that the benevolence or calmness of elderly people stems from their awareness that death is near, an awareness that reduces their expectations from life. They become more interested in the present, are less obsessed with the future, less willing to work on their self-image, less interested in becoming accepted by others. In this way, they become more pragmatic and focus more on life at the present moment.

Jung discusses the archetype of the Wise Old Man in his essay ‘The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales’ (1948). In this essay, Jung recounts a tale where a young child shepherd has lost his flock of sheep and therefore is afraid to return back home. He meets an old man who advises him to travel away from home and wander continuously until after seven years he will reach a high mountain where something good will happen to him (219). The wise old man’s advice comes quickly and is based on the circumstances of the present moment. If the young boy returns home, his father will most probably disown him, whereas if he runs away he will live on his own, he will learn many things about himself and the world. In this way, he will grow into an exceptionally mature individual. The wise old man knows from experience what is better for the development of the individual and therefore offers the most reasonable or sensible solution to the child’s problem. His advice comes also at a moment where the boy is unable to think clearly and take decisions by himself.
But the advice could be interpreted as heartless and cold, as it does not consider how traumatic it will be for the boy to run away from his father and mother at such a young age. The child’s premature separation from his parents causes great sadness, grief, devastation to everyone, the mother, the father, and the child himself. The negative (trauma) as well as positive effects (maturation) of the wise old man’s advice show that the actions and sayings of archetypes never have any fixed identity or agenda. In general, the archetype contains powers that are bad and good, positive and negative, constructive and destructive, powers that never entirely negate each other but regenerate through each other, derive energy and life from each other. In his book *Senex and Puer* (2005), archetypal psychologist James Hillman asserts that an archetype’s ‘signs are relative… Jung never let us forget that the psyche’s opposites contain each other, so that every virtue can be a vice, or vice a virtue. To declare a complex negative is to freeze it in hell. What can it do? Where can it go?’ (116). This means that whenever we are confronted with a psychological problem, we need to see how the problem can include a potential for personal progress or individuation.

In *Senex and Puer*, Hillman explores the negative aspects of the wise old man archetype, negative aspects that on further reflection prove vital and necessary for the development of our psychology. The senex or wise old man archetype represents the power of the old, the power of the ‘established order’, an obstinate power that does not welcome changes, that has set up certain rules which cannot be doubted or questioned (252). But at the same time life would not be livable without rules and order and the senex archetype provides the necessary knowledge for ‘the principles by which we live, the limits we set ourselves and the world around us, the scale of values (less the values than their hierarchy) and, above all, the order brought through control, self-control and control over others’ (255). When we think and reflect on the ways our lives are ordered or organised, the ways we design our value hierarchies, we exercise our capacity for introspection which is also an activity prompted by the senex archetype. Introspection or inwardness is best practised in solitude, in the absence of company, and the result is the realization of personal limits, personal mortality, unwanted truths but also a deeper awareness of personal ambitions, aspirations, purpose in life, the universal conditions of being. In short, the senex archetype increases our self-knowledge as ‘the lead of Saturn is the downward, inward pull of gravity into subjectivity. The plumb-line drops ever deeper, straight to the grave, and below, to time past and underworld spirits. The inward and downward pull into oneself and one’s death implies that the senex is the chief force at work in some Jungian descriptions of individuation’ (257).

Hillman finds that Saturn or Kronos is one of the most distinctive archetypal images
of the senex archetype. He personifies intelligence, power, order and creation, he is the archetypal *nous* (mind), before him nothing existed, he is the one who started and structured everything and therefore he is the ‘original governor of the universe’ (254). The story goes, however, that Kronos ate his offspring so that none of his children could take his place as king of the universe. His wife Earth (Ge or Gaia) rescued one child which was Zeus. Zeus grew up, killed his father and created a new order in the universe. The myth suggests that a king or governor may not like to hand his power to someone else, but eventually he has to do so because his position and power are never permanent. New governors, kings and queens take the place of the old in order to handle the problems or challenges of ever renewed circumstances. The image of Kronos devouring his children could also be suggestive of the bad effects of compulsive introspection which are: self-consuming intellectual working, constant isolation, the feeling that you are eaten up by personal anxieties and preoccupations, seclusion and self-centredness, the act of killing the inner child which represents the possibility of joy, happiness, change.

In the myth of Helen of Troy, the archetype of the wise old man is present in the mythical character of Priam, the king of Troy, husband of Hecuba, and father to Paris, Hector and many others. The most distinctive characteristics of Priam are his benevolence, kindness and generosity, characteristics that shape his behaviour towards Helen. Most people at Troy hate Helen because they consider that her elopement with Paris is the cause of the Trojan War. The Greeks are trying to invade Troy and thousands of men have already died. Priam is the king of Troy and he is also the father of sons who fight in the Trojan War. As a king who feels that his city is in imminent danger of downfall and a father who is anxious about the future of his sons, he has more than one reason to hate and dislike Helen. But instead of hating her, he respects and cares for her deeply. His wisdom enables him to distinguish that Helen’s elopement from Sparta and the Trojan War are two different or separate things. Priam dissociates Helen completely from the Trojan War and therefore treats her as a beloved guest or daughter even. He even entreats her to sit next to him and discuss the Greek warriors they see from the walls of Troy: ‘Come over where I am, dear child, and sit down beside me, to look at your husband of time past, your friends and your people. I am not blaming you: to me the gods are blameworthy who drove upon me this sorrowful war against the Achaians. So you could tell me the name of this man who is so tremendous; who is this Achaian man of power and stature?’ (3. 162-167).
1.6.3. The Shadow Archetype

In *The Undiscovered Self*, Jung writes:

Our rational philosophy does not bother itself with whether the other person in us, pejoratively described as the “shadow”, is in sympathy with our conscious plans and intentions. Evidently it does not know that we carry in ourselves a real shadow whose existence is grounded in our instinctual nature. The dynamism and imagery of the instincts together form an a priori which no man can overlook without the gravest risk to himself. Violation or neglect of instinct has painful consequences of a physiological and psychological nature for whose removal medical help, above all, is required (83).

For Jung, the Shadow archetype encompasses all those aspects of ourselves that we abhor and fear such as dark killer instincts or collective destructive emotions such as envy, jealousy, greed, hatred. In her book *The Shadow in Ourselves*, Verena Kast maintains that the Shadow archetype also encompasses personal weaknesses, complexes, insecurities, phobias, emotional problems, egoism, traumas, bodily dysfunctions, disabilities, physical disfigurations, domination of instinctual drives (2002: 24). To my understanding, Jung named the archetype that embodies all the dark, weak and insecure aspects of ourselves the Shadow because: a) a shadow is black and black is commonly associated in Western culture with something dark and negative such as death, danger, night, horror, blindness, dirt, smoke, bad luck, b) there is an expression: ‘You’re afraid of your own shadow’ which means you’re afraid of your own self and, c) a shadow is a physical extension of ourselves: we cannot avoid having a shadow because we are compelled by nature to produce one. The fact that we always cast a shadow or shadows around us could be a metaphor for the way the Shadow archetype exists in our unconscious: it may be black (negative) and insubstantial (it is a mere reflection of our body in black colour), but we cannot escape from it, it is inextricably tied to ourselves and follows us wherever we are. Throughout his work, Jung has always stressed that the Shadow is an unavoidable part of ourselves. Having in mind the atrocities of the Second World War, Jung proclaimed that ‘Even if, juristically speaking, we were not accessories to the crime, we are always, thanks to our human nature, potential criminals. In reality we merely lacked a suitable opportunity to be drawn into the infernal melee. None of
us stands outside humanity’s black collective shadow. Whether the crime lies many generations back or happens today, it remains the symptom of a disposition that is always and everywhere present’ (*The Undiscovered Self*, 96). We are born with the Shadow, because it is necessary for our survival. Our bodies maintain, for instance, killer instincts because these will help us defend ourselves against life threatening situations.

According to Jung, the Shadow per se is not negative but the failure to accept and embrace the Shadow is problematic and shows lack of maturity. On a personal level, for instance, Jung observes that love partners usually fail to realise the darkness in their own selves and instead project their own personal darkness onto each other; in this way, they are led to the conclusion that all mistakes, dark phases, problems, emotional upheavals of the relationship begin from their partner’s behaviour or attitude, never from their own (‘The Shadow’ 9). However, in love relationships, Shadow aspects also bring two people closer, two strangers with the same trauma become uncannily familiar. Kast argues, for instance, that our own personal Shadow components can become a point of attraction for others because, ‘whatever is maladjusted, or awkward, what is located in the Shadow, gives life. From an outer perspective, it is the interesting part of a human being, something that makes the personality distinct’ (2002: 27). This does not mean that we should take pride in our personal Shadow aspects because the Shadow is the most vulnerable or painful part of the psyche and therefore needs improvement and conscious confrontation.

For Jung, the inability to accept and acknowledge our Shadows is a sign of limited self-knowledge, it shows lack of honesty about who we are, what we are capable or incapable of. As Jung asserts ‘Recognition of the shadow… leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection’ (*The Undiscovered Self*, 104). If we see no imperfection, traumas, killer instincts or other dark aspects in ourselves, we unconsciously or consciously believe that we are perfect, immaculate, invulnerable, unrealistically strong. This belief has destructive effects on the body which are: inability to deal with complexes, unconscious self-loathing, compulsive behaviours, addictions, delusions, projection of unwanted elements onto others. In their book *Romancing the Shadow: How to Access the Power Hidden in Our Dark Side* (1997), psychologists Connie Zweig and Steve Wolf argue that drug-abuse, excessive sex, gambling, drinking, excessive money-spending, violent moods, wrong choice of partners etc, stem from denial of the Shadow, the unwillingness to listen to its message and respect its existence, to find inner resources and conquer the uncertainty, insecurity, loneliness, emptiness which is made conscious by the Shadow. As Zweig and Wolf write: ‘When we are in the grasp of compulsive behaviours, we aim, even unknowingly, to deaden shadowy
feelings and to fill an invisible emptiness’ (40). All addictions try to push the Shadow away but eventually this kind of suppression does not work. The Shadow comes back in a magnified form and distorts needs, desires, and eventually annihilates or kills the body.

In the myth of Helen of Troy, the Shadow archetype dominates the character of Menelaus. He invades Troy in order to take revenge on Paris and Helen who have both betrayed him: Paris paid back Menelaus’s hospitality by stealing his wife and some of his fortunes, and Helen begun an extramarital affair with Paris and broke the vows of their marriage. Homer describes Menelaus’s dark emotional state when he introduces the Greek warriors at the beginning of the Iliad: ‘He went among them in the confidence of his valour, driving them battleward, since above all his heart was eager to avenge Helen’s longing to escape and her lamentations’ (2. 586-590). When Menelaus makes a plea to Zeus, he proclaims that the death of Paris will teach a lesson to ungrateful people or abusers of kindness: ‘Zeus, lord grant me to punish the man who first did me injury, brilliant, and beat him down under my hands’ strength that any one of the men to come may shudder to think of doing evil to a kindly host, who has given him friendship’ (3. 351-354). Revenge is nurtured by strong dark emotions and derives energy from the Shadow archetype. The dark killer instincts have also taken over the entire consciousness of Menelaus when he is about to fight Paris in a single combat. As Homer describes: ‘Now as soon as Menelaos the warlike caught sight of him making his way with long strides out in front of the army, he was glad, like a lion who comes on a might carcass, in his hunger chancing upon the body of a horned stag or wild goat;’ (3. 21-25).

Throughout Euripides’s work, Menelaus is presented as a dark lethal figure whose sole interest is to fight and kill. In Iphigenia at Aulis (406 BC) he fiercely encourages and supports the sacrifice of the young and innocent Iphigenia. In Andromache (between 428-425 BC), he is willing to help his daughter Hermione murder Andromache and her child. In Orestes (408 BC), he does not intervene to rescue Orestes from stoning. In Trojan Women, he is determined to kill Helen because she caused the Trojan War. In Helen, Menelaus does at times show certain feelings of love and affection towards his wife, but these feelings are undermined or overshadowed by his desire to kill either himself, his wife, or the king of Egypt. When Helen and Menelaus realise that an escape from Egypt would be impossible, Menelaus thinks about his honour, reputation and says: ‘Here, by this pyramid./I kill you, I stab myself./... Shall I let all Greece say this of me:/ ‘He let them snatch his wife, and lived?’’ (lines 842-50). Helen and Menelaus manage eventually to escape from Egypt, but their escape is bathed in a brutal bloodshed that is caused by Menelaus. Menelaus and Helen
borrow a ship from the Egyptian king in order to perform a funeral ritual for the supposedly
dead Menelaus. While on sea, Menelaus and his soldiers attack all the Egyptian crew
members in order to take full command of the ship and escape. An Egyptian crew member
who has managed to rescue himself, describes how Menelaus gave the first sign to kill and
slaughter the Egyptians. : ‘Now, Greeks, now!/Kill the enemy, Smash them, drown them./
Protect yourselves!/’ Your bo’ sun shouted./ Spars, oars, benches,/We did what we could./ But
they had knives./The deck swam with blood: If you slipped, you died’ (lines 1594-603).

In the Bite of the Night, Menelaus is called Fladder and his Shadow characteristics
become visible through his language which is filled with dark and obscene images. He
describes, for instance, how certain sick stories about Helen’s sexuality manage to excite
him: ‘Helen fucks the wounded in the wards, they said... Which aroused me. Shamefully. Or
dogs, some venture to suggest. Which aroused me. Shamefully. The filthy infantry. The long
click of their dreams. I crept to the canvas in the dew, sodden and erect, to eavesdrop what
malpractice their knotted maleness would inflict on you... Our suffering. Our ecstasy’ (1998:
19). In his constant effort to destroy Helen’s image, Fladder also announces that Helen is an
exhibitionist: ‘I know she stood naked on the battlements in the seventh year – The eighth
year, was it, stood naked and the wind sneaked round her parts, the cool’ (ibid 22). It is
doubtful whether these stories are true or whether they are the product of Fladder’s dark and
sick obsession with Helen, his uncontrollable fantasizing about Helen.

Menelaus’s Shadow qualities are also revived in the character of Harry in Mark
Schultz’s A Brief History of Helen of Troy (2005). As audience members we are led to think
that Harry is a representation of Menelaus, because like Menelaus he has lost his beautiful
wife and throughout the play his daughter Charlotte describes the myth of Helen of Troy in
order to show how both herself and her father have been affected by this loss. Harry’s
Shadow qualities appear in his alcohol addiction, his aggressive behaviour and his inability or
unwillingness to offer emotional support to his daughter. When his daughter tries to come
So stop it. Okay? Stop it. Just stop it. We’re fine. Let it go’ (2005: 19). On the other hand,
Harry becomes very possessive towards Charlotte when she decides to leave home; he
destroys her self-esteem by telling her that she is ugly, he tears apart her luggage, and says:
‘Over. Done. Gone. No more. I will ruin you. To keep you. If I have to’ (ibid 26). Unlike
Helen who abandoned Menelaus because she fell in love with another man, Harry’s wife left
because she died. In spite of this difference, Harry and Menelaus share a similar feeling of
loneliness and despair. In her description of the Helen myth Charlotte says: ‘Maybe that’s
how the war really started. A little girl. Alone in a room. And her dad. Menelaus. In the next room. Crying’ (50).

1.6.4. The Trickster Archetype

In Euripides’s Helen, Menelaus meets a secondary character who unintentionally ridicules him. The character is the old woman housekeeper of the palace, and since her words and actions have a comic, subversive and ironic effect, she becomes a representation of the Trickster archetype. The meeting between Menelaus and the old woman happens in front of the palace of Egypt where Menelaus has arrived ship-wrecked, dirty, exhausted and in desperate need of help. The old woman treats Menelaus like a beggar or homeless man, she tells him to go away and because he does not obey her, she wants to hit him. Menelaus avoids her beating, he asks her to be nice because he had once a ‘glorious army’ (line 454). The old woman replies: ‘You may have been a great man somewhere or other - but you aren’t one here!’ (line 455). Her reply heightens or emphasises what we already see on stage: a transformed Menelaus deprived of all his military splendour or masculine strength. In the Iliad we knew Menelaus as the proud king of Sparta, the legal husband of Helen, a highly skilled warrior; he had urged to war thousands of Greeks, he had assembled and organised armies, he had conquered Troy. In Helen, in front of the old woman his successes count for nothing, his clothes are torn, he thinks and talks like the common folk (lines 420-435), he has lost his physical strength, he cries when he remembers his ‘past fortunes’ (line 458). The old woman’s attempts to beat Menelaus as well as her insensitive remarks are comic and humorous but on a deeper level they make clear that nothing in the world is certain, that an authoritative power as Menelaus’s can be subverted, destabilized, devalorised, reduced to nothing according to circumstances, that Menelaus has also a human or more emotional side when he cries and begs the old woman to help him. In this sense, the old woman’s words and actions are ironic because they help us realise more strongly that in Menelaus inhere more meanings or personalities than one: he is not just a hyper-masculine warrior king but also a man in need of food, a man who feels scared, lost, insecure and devastated.

The main intention of irony is to enlarge the space of meaning-creation, to debunk or undermine certain rigid constructions of meanings, to defy the literal comprehension of words, and as Linda Hutcheon suggests in her book Irony’s Edge ‘to remove the security that words
mean always what they say’ (1994: 14). The Trickster archetype lives for the same purpose as irony: to detach us from the literal understanding of reality, to highlight that reality is ambiguous and open-ended. For Jung, The Trickster is always engaged in a constant play of transformation and disguises. He can be an animal, a medicine man, a shaman, a divine figure and although as Jung puts it, he has phallic or male characteristics, he can also transform himself into a woman (‘Trickster-Figure’, 168). His nature is in a constant process of reconfiguration because he can be a divine figure that has no instincts and is therefore beyond human nature but then his actions can be very clumsy, insensible and awkward which means that he is not very clever. Because his transformations are constant and endlessly creative, the Trickster keeps our imagination active, we constantly wonder what disguise will he/she put on next and what exactly is being suggested through his/her disguises and transformations.

The transformations of the Trickster engender a feeling of liberation because in every transformation social conventions and physical laws are annihilated. Transforming oneself by wearing unusual, extraordinary clothes creates the sense that social personas can be subverted or reconsidered, transforming oneself by putting on devices such as roller-skaters and wings shows that natural abilities can be extended and multiplied. Transformations may also transpose to a state of extra-daily awareness, a state of transcendence and trance even. Because the transformations and playfulness contest cultural laws, good manners or civilised behaviour, Jung contends that the Trickster images within the psyche have a primitive and animalistic character.

In picaresque tales, in carnivals and revels in magic rites of healing, in man’s religious fears and exaltations, this phantom of the trickster haunts the mythology of all ages, sometimes in quite unmistakable form, sometimes in strangely modulated guise. He is obviously a “psychologem,” an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. In his clearest manifestations he is a faithful reflection of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level (ibid 260).

The Trickster is closely associated to the ‘animal level’ because he causes laughter and humour which are both instinctual reactions of the body. In Woman Who Runs With the Wolves, Pinkola-Estés observes that the instinctual characteristics of the Trickster in ancient were present in goddesses of wild sexuality and obscenity who were revered for their dirty humour, for their ‘innocent yet wily lewdness’ (1992: 335). The stories around these
goddesses inspired laughter which released the ‘stopped-up tears or forgotten memories’ and
the ‘sensual personality’ of the body (335). The release or awakening of these bodily
elements worked like a cure, a medicine, an antidote for the repression of instincts, a remedy
for melancholy and depression. As Pinkola-Estés writes:

It became clear to me that the importance of these old Goddesses of obscenity was in
their ability to loosen what was too tight, to lift gloom, to bring the body into a kind of
humor that belongs not to the intellect but to the body itself, to keep these passages
clear. It is the body that laughs at coyote stories, Uncle Trungpa stories, Mae West
lines, and so forth. The obscene Goddesses cause a vital form of neurological and
endocrine medicine to spread throughout the body (ibid 336).

Further on, Pinkola-Estés narrates how Demeter met the obscene goddess Baubo while
searching desperately for her lost daughter Persephone (I will examine this myth later).
Baubo managed to make Demeter ‘smile just a little’ by ‘wiggling her hips in a way
suggesting sexual intercourse, and shaking her breasts in her little dance’ (ibid 338). The
scene between Baubo and Demeter reminds that a good joke brings light and hope in a dark
period. It gives us consolation to move on, it is reinvigorating and liberates from pessimism.

However, one should also be careful with jokes and irony because their unstable and
open semantics can be less liberating and more oppressive. Because irony and jokes have the
ability to do many things in one go such as play with our awareness, our understanding of
reality, criticise our behaviour, demystify our beliefs, leave certain things unsaid (so that
others fill in the blanks of meaning and suggest the irony), they create confusion and become
(mis)interpreted as sarcastic, unclear, strongly evaluative and judgmental (Irony’s Edge 37).
The misinterpretation of irony causes anger and frustration. Apart from the misunderstood
irony, there is also irony and jokes whose intention and goal is to be corrosive, derogatory
and extremely offensive. Who hasn’t experienced getting hurt by a joke, irony or laughter?
Who hasn’t been traumatised by an ironic remark in the past? The Trickster may amuse us
with his/her jokes, with his/her capacity to downplay our self-importance and suggest
something truthful about ourselves, but his/her comments are not always welcome. We are
not always or in any circumstances ready to take in humour, to detach ourselves from
ourselves, to see things from an evaluative distance, to interpret irony in a good or beneficial
way, to get rid of personal feelings and laugh at our weaknesses, egoisms, insecurities,
failures and personal disasters. Therefore, the Trickster is always risks being misunderstood,
many times he/she is beaten up and as Stephen Nahmanovitz suggests in his book Free Play: ‘Always improvising, unmindful of the consequences of his acts, he may be dangerous, his own experiments often blow up in his face or in others’ (1990: 46-47).

Apart from the old woman housekeeper in the Egyptian palace, the character of Paris is also a representation of the Trickster archetype in the Helen myth. In the Iliad, Paris undermines or ridicules the image of strong masculinity that is consolidated by warriors such as Hector, Menelaus, Agamemnon and many other male characters. When the wild Menelaus approaches Paris to fight him in a single combat or duel, Paris becomes frightened and runs away: ‘But Alexandros the godlike when he saw Menelaos showing among the champions, the heart was shaken in him; to avoid death he shrank into the host of his own companions’ (3. 30-32). But Paris does not only mock the strong masculinity stereotypes of the Iliad, he also maintains fluid and transformative Trickster characteristics when he transforms from warrior to lover. Paris does eventually meet Menelaus in a single combat but as soon as they start fighting Aphrodite transfers him via cloud from the battlefield to his bedroom (3.380-382). Whilst in the bedroom, he makes love to Helen. The transformation or the carrying off of Paris is ironic because it is a supernatural event, and as a supernatural event it subverts our notions of what is real or true and becomes open to plural interpretations. One meaning of the transformation could be that it is better to make love than war. It could also mean that humans or mortals are moved like chess pieces by the gods or that the Trojan War is completely pointless because the person who is responsible for it leaves the battle and joins Helen in bed. Paris is also very good at evading arguments and taking things in a light way which are also Trickster characteristics. When Helen criticises his absence from the battle he responds: ‘Lady, censure my heart no more in bitter reprovals. This time Menelaos with Athene’s help has beaten me; another time I shall beat him. We have gods on our side also. Come, then, rather let us go to bed and turn to love-making (3. 438-441). Other Trickster characteristics of Paris are his excessive beauty and musical talents. Hector mentions these characteristics when he repudiates him for being a coward: ‘The lyre would not help you then, nor the favours of Aphrodite, nor your locks, when you rolled in the dust, nor all your beauty.’ (3. 53-55). These characteristics may seem impractical in the context of the Trojan War but they are able to entertain and make us forget the hardships of life.

In Troilus and Cressida, the character of Paris embodies with great success the archetypal Trickster elements of playfulness, idiocy and dangerous naïveté. When the king of Troy Priam summons his sons and other important figures to ask whether it would be wise to give Helen back to the Greeks, Paris refuses to surrender Helen to the enemies because this
would be a sign of weakness, it would be a betrayal of Helen herself, and of their own sense of respect: ‘What treason were it to the ransacked queen/ Disgrace to your great worths, and shame to me/ Now to deliver her possession up/ On terms of base compulsion’ (2.2.150-53). This reasoning shows that Paris’s state of mind is idiotic or out-of-the-real-world. He does not realise the seriousness of the situation, he does not care about the young men who lose their lives in the Trojan War. With a self-centred naiveté and a totally unrealistic viewpoint on life, he also argues that fighting or dying for Helen is an act of courage and strength that will be remembered for centuries to come: ‘There’s not the meanest spirit on our party/Without a heart to dare, or sword to draw,/ When Helen is defended, nor none so noble/Whose life were ill bestowed, or death unfamed,/Where Helen is the subject’ (2.2.156-59). Later, Paris reveals his Trickster characteristics again when he fools around with Pandarus. He tells him that he knows about the secret love affair between Troilus and Cressida; when Pandarus demands to know how he knows, Paris very mockingly or jestingly replies: ‘I spy’ which is a singsong phrase from the children’s game hide-and-seek. (3.1. 90). Paris also show his very childish and immature side when, in the midst of important negotiations, he asks Diomedes whether he deserves Helen more than Menelaus: ‘And tell me, noble Diomed, faith, tell me true,/ Even in the soul of sound good fellowship,/ Who, in your thoughts, merits fair Helen most, Myself or Menelaus?’ (4.1.53-56).

1.6.5. The Child Archetype

For Jung, the child symbolizes imagination, creativity, possibility, helplessness, dependence, tenderness, hope, new beginnings. Jung investigates this archetype in his essay ‘The Psychology of the Child Archetype’ (1940) where he writes:

The “child” is born out of the womb of the unconscious, begotten out of the depths of human nature, or rather out of living Nature herself. It is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind; of ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature. It represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself (170).
By realizing the potentials and aspects of his/her self, the child engages in constant physical and spiritual development and growth. In order to create the necessary conditions for the child’s possibility to realise itself the child directs its energy onwards, towards life and future and not downwards or backwards towards the past and death. The perspective towards the future means that the child enters the phase of individuation which is the process of realising consciously and becoming aware of your unconscious potentials and weaknesses. Jung suggests that whenever children are threatened by witches or enormous snakes and dragons in fairy tales, these dragons aim to stop the child’s move towards individuation; they wish to contain it within its pure instinctual nature and obstruct the potential for spiritual development (122). But death is anyway incorporated in the move towards the future because the older the child grows the more it approaches death, but the realization that death is near comes later in life.

The Child archetype seems to share many characteristics with the Trickster archetype because both archetypes activate images or behaviours of innocence, playfulness and unceasing creativity. The child knows the importance of instincts of self-preservation such as informing the parents that it is time for food or sleep, but it also recreates instincts into play activities. The play activities throw light on the archetypal desire for creativity and the constant wish to develop ways of understanding the world.

In the myth of Helen of Troy, the character of Astyanax appears to be a reconfiguration of the Child archetype. However, Astyanax has a minor significance in Helen’s myth and in my practical research projects I do not investigate how the Child archetype can influence the creation of a particular character. Therefore I will not explore this archetype more here.

1.6.6. The Mother Archetype

In his book *Symbols of Transformation* (1912), Jung says that the images of dawn and sunrise have been translated in prehistoric times as sun god’s birth, death and rebirth. According to this myth, the sea was the mother of the sun god; she gave birth to him morning and then devoured him in the evening, she then gave birth to him again the following day. The natural elements of day, night, sun, sea, water, darkness combined with the activities of swallowing and giving birth or resurrecting, are used to symbolise certain archetypal experiences or
images of the Mother archetype.

The first image of the myth (the sun coming out of the water) is a metaphor for the actual birth of the child: full of possibility, brightness and hope the child comes out of the dark waters of the womb. The womb maintained the child in a secure place but now the child is expelled from the womb and goes to fulfil him/herself in a journey. As soon as the child exits the womb it loses the maternal warmth and experiences the first traumatic experience of loss, a traumatic experience that swallows up our entire existence throughout life (the image of the sun going back to the water represents this). In this sense, the Mother archetype becomes the giver of life but life already at birth entails darkness and death because the child can never forget the idyllic and peaceful life in the womb. The fact that the sun god is not entirely annihilated, though, but resurrected again and again means that the child’s life is not lost, it merely needs to negotiate or find means to compensate the loss of the maternal warmth and security.

The most controlling presence in the myth of the sun god is the sea mother because she regulates all the movements of the sun. Her dominant character may correspond with or represent the fact that the Mother is the most important factor of our psychological development. The Father is also important but his purpose is to teach us elements of the Wise Old Man or Animus, the child learns from him the sense of symbolic order, structure, logic and differentiation. The Mother is important for our psychology because she is the first teacher of emotions, the positive as well as the negative, and she makes known the results or consequences of emotional reactions. She also provides the first information about the satisfaction of certain instincts and is responsible for the refinement or socialization of the darker instincts. In his essay ‘Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype’ (1938), Jung comments that the Mother archetype produces images of nursing kindness, wild emotionality, darkness, irrational and rational desires and that beneath these images we always have the sense that the Mother manages to bring into harmony the opposing or contradictory qualities of wildness and kindness (92). In her book *Jung: a Feminist Revision*, Susan Rowland reflects further that the Mother has under her control and care all archetypal images from the emotional to the spiritual: ‘The archetypal mother partakes of all the multiple plurality and numinous resonances of archetypal images. This means that the mother can stand for the divine, spirituality, the body and, crucially, the future direction of the person’s psyche as well as the past.’ (2002: 115).

The Mother’s ability to balance opposing qualities suggests that she is an individuated being, which further suggests that she has reached an ideal state of being. This is
of course an unrealistic mother because no one manages to achieve complete individuation, a complete awareness and acceptance of all weaknesses, Shadow elements, strengths, anima/animus aspects, the complete integration of the unconscious elements in the conscious self. According to Jung, the mother archetype produces in our consciousness images of a real/tangible mother and an ideal fantastical mother (‘Mother Archetype’, 81). In the personal unconscious, the individual carries memories from his or her first contact with the maternal body which is also the first contact to a different body than his/her own (84). The real mother is the mother who gave birth to the child, the mother who has her own traumas, darkness, problems and is also on a journey towards individuation. In the collective unconscious, there is an original image of a mother (Urbild) which is similar to the Platonic models or blueprints which I have discussed briefly before (ibid 75).

Young-Eisendrath warns mothers against the ‘hothouse mothering’ a term which suggests the mother’s obsession to incarnate the Platonic Ideal Mother and as a consequence identify ‘with the child’s needs and wants, so much so that we become oblivious to the needs and wants of other adults around us as well as our own. We are dominated by wanting to be wanted by our child or children and wanting to be validated and seen as ideal mothers’ (2001: 100). The hothouse mothers swallow up their child like the sea mother, their love is excessive, hysterical, suffocating and controlling (this love may also be considered fake or artificial like the hothouse, as it satisfies the mother’s ego and not the child’s needs). In her book Tales of Love (1987), Julia Kristeva argues that the love between a mother and child should not be centred and confined between themselves, but should include from time to time something or someone other than themselves, it should be contextualised within society, otherwise ‘without diversion toward a Third Party, the bodily exchange is abjection or devouring’ (34). In this sense, the mother’s archetypal destination would be, a) to reveal gradually that she is not a tireless nurturer, protector and carer, but a human being with her own set of traumas and emotional troubles, b) that her love is also directed elsewhere towards a husband or her job, and c) help the child cultivate and develop a love that is not self-centred but relational, trusting, compassionate, supportive, true, willing to heal traumas, vulnerabilities, shortcomings.

In the myth of Helen of Troy, the Mother Archetype is strongly present in the character of Hecuba. In The Iliad, Hecuba displays the maternal characteristic of nursing when she meets her son Hector: ‘…stay while I bring you honey-sweet wine, to pour out a libation to father Zeus and the other immortals first, and afterwards if you will drink yourself, be strengthened’ (6.258-60). Later on, Hecuba tries to dissuade Hector from fighting Achilles
outside the walls of Troy: ‘Hektor, my child, look upon these and obey, and take pity on me, if ever I gave you the breast to quiet your sorrow. Remember all these things, dear child, and from inside the wall beat off this grim man. Do not go out as champion against him, o hard one; for if he kills you I can no longer mourn you on the death-bed, sweet branch, o child of my bearing, nor can your generous wife mourn you, but a big way from us beside the ships of the Argives the running dogs will feed on you’ (22. 82-89). Hector is killed eventually by Achilles and his body is dragged around the battlefield. When Hecuba makes her plea to Hector, she has perhaps instinctively sensed or intuited that Hector will die and that his body will be disgraced. Hecuba is able to foresee all this because she is a mother and as a mother she has a close contact with the Mother archetype. The universal purpose of the Mother archetype is to inform Hecuba and all mothers and fathers around the world how to care for and protect their children, even if they are dead. As a mother, Hecuba is also unable to think of Helen with a reasoning mind like Priam and feels strongly that Helen is responsible for the death of her children. In her personal lament towards Hector, Helen confesses that she was the target of Hecuba’s insults and hatred (24. 770). In Euripides’s Hecuba (424 BC), Hecuba suggests that instead of her daughter Polyxena, Helen should have been sacrificed for the sake of Achilles’s death because: ‘she was the one who brought him to Troy and caused his death. If some prisoner-of-war must be singled out for death, some woman of outstanding beauty, the this is not our concern; Tyndareus’ daughter has no equal in loveliness and is guilty of wrong-doing far more than we are’ (line 270).

The loss of a child is a parent’s worst experience ever. There is no greater pain, sadness, grief; a dead child haunts the lives of its parents forever, the boundaries between life and death are broken. In Christine Evans’s Trojan Barbie, Hecuba experiences the grief for her dead children in this way: ‘To outlive your own children/ Is to drink dust/and eat shadows/ (She sits in the dirt and rocks.)... Where are my children?/ Drowned, stabbed or stolen/ they still call out to me—/ But when I call back—Silence./ Sand in my ears./ Salt on my tongue—/ The buzzing taste of blood’ (2009: 34). The absence of the children creates an atmosphere of deep silence and dryness, anything related to life disappears, there is only death. Later, Hecuba wants to take care of the dead body of Astyanax. One could say that caring for the dead is a meaningless activity, but Hecuba thinks otherwise because ‘it’s terrible for the living, to throw the dead away as if their lives had meant nothing’ (56). Caring and giving are the strongest and the most essential characteristics of the Mother archetype.
1.6.7. The Daughter Archetype

This archetype transmits archetypal images of purity, virginity, innocence, sacrifice, helplessness, weakness, passivity, victimization. For Jung, a strong archetypal image of this archetype is the character of Persephone in the myth of Demeter and Persephone. Persephone was the sole daughter of Demeter the ancient Greek goddess of nature and agriculture. One day Persephone went out in the fields to pick up flowers. Suddenly, the earth opened and Hades came out. He grabbed Persephone and took her down to the underworld. Demeter worried about Persephone and started looking for her. Having realised that Persephone was nowhere to be found, Demeter became sad and desperate. For many months, Demeter neglected her duties as protector of nature and the earth became barren, nothing was able to grow. In his effort to save the earth, Zeus arranged with Hades to give Persephone back to Demeter. As soon as Demeter and Persephone saw each other, the earth became fertile again. From now on, Persephone would spend six months of a year with Demeter and six months with Hades. It is said that during the months that Demeter and Persephone are together we have spring and summer, and when they are not winter and autumn.

In his essay ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’ (1941), Jung suggests that the Demeter-Persephone myth symbolizes the different stages of life, stages that are not only associated with ageing but also with emotional experiences of strength and weakness:

Demeter and Kore, mother and daughter, extend the feminine consciousness both upwards and downwards. They add an “older and younger,” “stronger and weaker” dimension to it and widen out the narrowly limited conscious mind bound in space and time, giving it intimations of a greater and more comprehensive personality which has a share in the eternal course of things (188).

In Jung’s analysis, the myth signifies the eternal course of a human being’s life journey, a life journey that includes happiness, sadness, despair, growth, ageing, maturation. Perhaps we need to descend into the darkness and the underworld, as Persephone does, in order to pass through the different life stages and acquire a fuller sense of what life is. However, Jung’s description of Persephone’s descent into the underworld and darkness contains images of strong victimization:
The maiden’s helplessness exposes her to all sorts of dangers, for instance being devoured by reptiles or ritually slaughtered like a beast of sacrifice. Often there are bloody, cruel, and even obscene orgies to which the innocent child falls victim. Sometimes it is a true nekyia, a descent into Hades and a quest for the “treasure hard to attain,” occasionally connected with orgiastic sexual rites or offerings of menstrual blood to the moon. Oddly enough, the various tortures and obscenities are carried out by an “Earth Mother.” There are drinkings of blood and bathings in blood, also crucifixions [author’s italics] (184).

In this version of the story, Jung suggests that Demeter, who probably is the Earth Mother, was complicit in the abduction of Persephone: ‘...the various tortures and obscenities are carried out by an “Earth Mother.”’ He seems to neglect or overlook the grief and melancholy that Demeter and Persephone endure because of their sudden and violent separation. In this version, Demeter wants Hades to kidnap her daughter because the order of the world demands the sacrifice of a young girl. Luce Irigaray reconsiders how Zeus and Hades handled Persephone and finds that: ‘Jupiter trades his daughter’s virginity for affirmation of his male omnipotence… To exist as God in the eyes of all, he agrees to give his daughter in marriage to the god of the Underworld. This transaction takes place without the consent of either his daughter or her mother’ (1994: 103). For Irigaray, Zeus and Hades are male gods, followers of a strong patriarchal institution. Demeter and Persephone are incapable of resisting or subverting their decisions, but their reunion during spring and summer has a special significance. As Irigaray puts it: ‘she [Persephone] goes back in time, as must any woman today who is trying to find the traces of her estrangement from her mother…’ (ibid 107). In The Heroine’s Journey (1990), Maureen Murdock suggests that a woman’s individuation begins when she grows aware of her mother/daughter split, when she starts overcoming the hostility towards her feminine nature, a hostility brought about by the materialist patriarchal culture.

For Young-Eisendrath and Jean Shinoda Bolen, Persephone embodies the feminine stereotype of the ‘youthful, slender, lovely’ girl (2004: 82) whom men want to possess either by marriage, casual relationship, or even rape. Young-Eisendrath analyses how the image or stereotype of the young, beautiful and submissive girl affects women and men:

Young women and girls are encouraged to trade on appearance, to make it a focus.
They are openly admired for appearance, in a way they may not be admired for intelligence, and certainly not for aggression or competition. Taking up the challenge of making a beautiful appearance, a young girl or woman does not know that her appearance may be used by men to compete amongst themselves as a commodity to be bought and sold, or as a dangerous power to be tamed... They’ve (men) heard that having a beautiful woman brings admiration from other males. They’ve heard how a beautiful woman can use her power to humiliate a man. They’ve also heard that “no can mean yes” and that resistance to having sex should be “worn down” (84).

For Bolen, Persephone embodies the feelings of loss, disorientation, lack of vision or perspective, and insecurity: ‘A young Persephone doesn’t know what she wants to do with her life and this lack of definition makes her susceptible to “being abducted” by stronger personalities who can impose on her their expectations of whom they want her to be’ (166). However, Bolen stresses that Persephone grows out of her sense of loss and disidentifies with the lost and passive girl when ‘she stops withholding herself, denying the truth about her situation, and learns from experience’ (166). In the myth, Persephone may have lost her innocence but she becomes queen of the underworld which is a position of power and influence. The negative experiences of victimization and rape turn Persephone into a strong and independent woman, the experiences are a rude awakening but they activate in her a willingness to guide others through their own difficult or negative experiences: ‘When she recovers and if she integrates the experience and is stronger and wiser because of it, she is then able to be a guide for others, perhaps as an AA sponsor, or therapist, or indirectly through her creative work as a poet, artist, musician, or writer’ (167). Bolen also suggests that certain women avoid taking responsibility over their own lives and choices, they identify with a Persephone that never learns from her experiences, a Persephone that remains a victim forever, they are ‘forever envying others, blaming parents or someone else for what they lack, and in their self-absorption never grow up’ (168).

In the myth of Helen of Troy, the archetypal potentials of the Daughter are realised in the character of Hermione. Hermione is young and beautiful but lacks Persephone’s perspective of growing older and becoming a wise queen of the underworld. The beauty of Hermione is praised in the Odyssey where she is described as ‘the lovely Hermione, with the beauty of Aphrodite the golden’ (4. 14) and in Sappho’s poem 33 Hermione and her mother Helen embody a standard of female beauty: ‘for when I look at you face to face/not even Hermione can compare/and it is no slight to liken you/ to golden Helen’. But Hermione is
doomed to be an invisible and passive character, a pretty doll that is given and taken. Her needs and desires are never acknowledged and she usually becomes a victim of circumstances that were not of her own making. In Euripides’s *Orestes*, she is a silent character whom Orestes and Electra attempt to kill in order to avenge themselves at Helen and Menelaus. When Apollo intervenes in order to settle the situation, Hermione seems to be rescued but then the god decrees that Orestes has to take her as his wife (line 1654). Orestes as well as Menelaus agree to the marriage but we never hear what Hermione thinks. In the *Odyssey*, we meet Hermione in Sparta at her wedding to Neoptolemos. Menelaus has arranged the marriage and again we do not know how far Hermione was asked for her approval: ‘The girl he [Menelaus] was sending to the son of Achilles, breaker of battalions, for in Troy land first he had nodded his head to it and promised to give her, and now the gods were bringing to pass their marriage; so he was sending her on her way...’ (4. 5-7). In Euripides’s *Helen*, Helen worries about Hermione’s fate but she is just one of the many problems that Helen faces. This means that Hermione’s drama disappears amongst the other tragic incidents. As Helen laments: ‘My mother is no more and it was I that killed her – the guilt for this is my own, though I am guiltless. And the girl who was our house’s jewel and mine, my daughter, is husbandless and grows grey in her virginity. My two brothers, called the Dioskouroi, the sons of Zeus, are no more...’ (line 280). In Sappho’s *Fragment 31*, Hermione is abandoned by her mother: ‘... she left/her perfect husband and went/sailing off to Troy/without a thought for her child...’ In Euripides’s *Andromache*, Hermione embodies the stereotype of the spoiled, proud, insecure and egoistical princess; she envies Andromache and blames her for her inability to have children.

In the *Bite of the Night*, the character of Gay is Helen’s daughter (her father is Paris). Gay is a representation of the Daughter archetype because she becomes the target of various victimizations. One of these victimizations is the fact that Gay has been subjected to the brutality of the Trojan War. She says, for instance: ‘The amount of killing I have seen! My father, for example, on the floor and skinned. Paris! Yes, it’s true! They skinned him. And my grandfather was inside out. I have seen the lot, I can assure you, and I thought to myself, Gay, they want you to go insane’ (1998: 28). The end of the Trojan War creates chaos and disorder. In the midst of the chaos and disorder, Gay becomes easy prey to all sorts of sexual assaults, because she is young and unprotected. The play includes the character of the writer Homer who secretly endeavours to molest Gay. Gay’s reaction to this is: ‘You’re not to put your hand into my dress again. (He stops.) I think the beach should be a place for children to be children and not poked about by peculiar old men’ (ibid 35). Gay is further victimised by
the character Savage for whom she undresses herself (probably in order to seduce him). When Gay notices that apart from Savage another man too stares at her naked body, she wants to put on her clothes. Savage takes the clothes away from her and Gay falls victim to the predatory staring of men (98). Gay’s nakedness is humiliating, she is a naked body whose feelings of shame and dignity are totally ignored, and she becomes the absolute victim of the male gaze. As a result perhaps of experiencing the darkness of the Trojan War, Gay has developed a deep understanding about life and politics, an understanding which she articulates in lines such as: ‘Democrats... believed life was too short for privilege, so they sent their infants into schools to learn the way of the world, and they emerged from schools like tigers, intent of butchering the weak’ (63) or ‘the hate must go somewhere. The hatred must. If only we had Helen! She could be the object but now it’s the state!’ (113). Gay’s relationship with her mother Helen seems to be tenuous or entirely broken. Perhaps their relationship is a victim of Helen’s fame, Helen’s reputation of being the cause of the Trojan War.

Mark Schultz’s play A Brief History of Helen of Troy (2005) is entirely dedicated to Helen’s daughter Hermione. Even though the mythical character of Hermione does not feature in the play per se, it nevertheless follows how Charlotte a teenage girl identifies herself with Hermione, because she shares Hermione’s feeling of being abandoned by her mother. Charlotte suffers under the loss of her beautiful mother and throughout the play she presents to audience members the myth of Helen of Troy, she describes what happened in the myth and gradually focuses on Hermione’s story and drama. When Charlotte is not presenting the myth, we see how she copes with life under the shadow of her mother’s death. With little support from her father, Charlotte becomes completely overwhelmed by pain, grief, sadness; these feelings paralyse her and make her open to all sorts of cruelties and victimizations. Charlotte wishes to leave home and become a famous porn star and, as happens with Gay, she takes her clothes off in order to be photographed by a pervert guidance counsellor (however, it is not clear if the incident with the counsellor did actually happen or if it is constructed by Charlotte’s escapist imagination). Charlotte has also a distorted sense of what sex means. To her best friend Franklin she says ‘So. You don’t have to like me to fuck me. Aren’t you curious?’ (2005: 34). Charlotte’s constant concern is how to become more desirable or sexy, she constantly fantasizes that men want to have sex with her. The boys refuse to answer her desperate plea for sex, they even abuse her verbally for being extremely needy and sex-craving. The loss of her mother has taken Charlotte to a dark world of loneliness, self-victimization and insecurity and she tells the story of Hermione in
order to talk about her own self: ‘And on the other side of the world. Still alone. Still in her room. Her daughter. Hermione. And she screams. She screams. From her dark little room. Across every sea, over every fucking ocean separating her from her mother. She screams.

1.6.8. The Hero or Self Archetype

This archetype incorporates experiences of learning, growing, changing and maturing, physical and emotional strength, overcoming traumas and diseases, fighting against oppressive and established orders, pull towards self-discovery, reaching a state of individuation, independence and autonomy, teaching others how to achieve individuation, overthrowing stereotypes and finding one's own true self in the world. I have already discussed configurations of this archetype in the previous sections of this chapter. In the Princess and the Frog fairy tale, the Princess is a heroine because her contact with the frog teaches her the importance of keeping promises and respecting others. In the puer and senex battle for power, the puer is a hero who wants to destroy the old order and establish his own order. In the myth of the sungod, the sungod is a hero who struggles to achieve autonomy and independence from the dark waters of the sea mother. In the story of Demeter and Persephone, both mythical women are heroines in their own way: Demeter loses Persephone and then fights against the powerful Zeus and Hades to get back her daughter. Persephone experiences abduction, rape, and involuntary marriage to Hades the king of the underworld. As queen of the underworld, however, Persephone has to find the strength to accept her situation, live with her negative experiences, and console others about their own death and darkness. I have also suggested that characters such as Christ, King Arthur, Antigone, Buddha, Gilgamesh are all images of the Hero because they have an exceptional physical, emotional or spiritual power which they use to subvert old establishments and create a new world order.

Jung discusses the archetype of the Hero or Self in his essay ‘Concerning Rebirth’ (1950). For Jung, this archetype motivates us to change our character, it inspires us to move
from one state of being to another, to acquire a new awareness of things and being reborn as a different individual. All of the above mentioned mythical characters, for instance, find themselves in situations that prompt them to change an aspect of their character or an order in their social or political environment. According to Jung, change or transformation can occur through dreams or visions, the healing of certain aspects of ourselves, loss of soul or abaissement which means the realisation of internal emptiness, the descent into darkness, madness or depression, and participation in rituals where, as Jung explains ‘The transformation process takes place not within him but outside him, although he may become involved in it. The initiate who ritually enacts the slaying, dismemberment, and scattering of Osiris, and afterwards his resurrection in the green wheat, experiences in this way the permanence and continuity of life, which outlasts all changes of form and, phoenix-like, continually rises anew from its own ashes’ (117).

For Jung, the experiences of change and transformation will trigger a process of self-reflection or self-awareness. Self-awareness begins when we start acquiring a complete sense of Self which, for Jung, is ‘the psychic totality and at the same time a centre, neither of which coincides with the ego but includes it, just as a larger circle encloses a smaller one’ (142). The ego is our conscious experience of our Self, the part of our Self that strives to accommodate social expectations. The change or transformation results in the knowledge of unconscious contents that exist beyond the ego. The unconscious contents are the collective unconscious and archetypes which, to my understanding, Jung also defines as immortal aspects of our psyche. Jung claims that:

We are that pair of Dioscuri, one of whom is mortal and the other immortal, and who, though always together, can never be made completely one. The transformation processes strive to approximate them to one another, but our consciousness is aware of resistances, because the other person seems strange and uncanny, and because we cannot get accustomed to the idea that we are not absolute master in our own house (131).

According to Jung, theatre makes possible the experience of the collective unconscious because we come close with each other and unconsciously become aware that we share common emotional reactions. The awareness of the collective unconscious is a heroic experience because we feel connected with the immortal aspects of ourselves, these parts of ourselves that are impersonal and remain hidden from the ego and consciousness. As
Jung puts it: ‘... if I feel that this crowd is a great and wonderful unity, I am a hero, exalted along with the group. When I am myself again, I discover that I am Mr. So-and-So, and that I live in such and such a street, on the third floor’ (126). However, the complete immersion into the collective unconscious, the inability to maintain awareness of all layers of the psyche (consciousness, personal unconscious, collective unconscious) means loss of individuality and complete dissolution or (dis)integration of the Self into nature or mass culture. Jung therefore suggests that the Hero is able to develop in his/her being a balance between the opposing powers of consciousness and unconscious. This balance leads towards individuation which, for Jung, is ‘an opus contra naturam, which creates a horror vacui in the collective layer and is only too likely to collapse under the impact of the collective forces of the psyche’ [author’s italics] (146). The collective forces are not only instinctual parts of ourselves, parts that connect us with nature, but also traditions, rituals, and gender stereotypes that strive to integrate and assimilate us within society.

For Polly Young-Eisendrath, individuation means the ability to ‘become relatively freed up from childhood and other complexes’ (2004: 130). This ability, however, demands the realisation of our traumas and vulnerabilities which we cannot control or erase completely: ‘The door to individuation often opens through the experience of neurosis: self-dividedness in its first bold sweep. Relational disillusionment, lack of agency, the inability to meet one’s goals no matter how hard one tries, and painful enactment of negative complexes (e.g., acting like your aggressive father, your depressed mother, or the child who was victim) are the usual wake-up calls’ (130). If we become active and consciously decide to reduce the effects of complexes, then psychic peace or wellbeing become possible. As Young-Eisendrath concludes: ‘Experientially, one comes to witness and accept a range of subjective states without blame and with a certain playfulness or lightness of being. The usual outcome of this process is greater courage, insight, empathy, and creativity’ (132).

In myths, dreams and fairy tales, our complexes, traumas or negative internalizations of father or mother elements take metaphorical forms of monsters, evil creatures, wild animals, witches, massive earthquakes, storms, or floods. The task of the hero is to confront these monsters with the help of magic weapons or advice by various magicians, or people with a good heart and a strong intellect. Even though the hero is always embarking on a journey that, as Joseph Campbell argues ‘involves giving up where you are, going into the realm of adventure, coming to some kind of symbolically rendered realization, and then returning to the field of normal life’ (2004: 112), the hero’s gender/sex defines in many ways the structure of the journey. The male hero will have to face different problems than the
female hero or heroine: they will have to conquer different beasts, different obstacles, and aim for different kinds of realizations or transformations towards the end of their journeys. The male hero is perhaps more interested in completely annihilating the old order, in asserting power and becoming a new master or new ruler, whereas the female hero or heroine desires the peaceful assimilation of the old into the new world order, she yearns for a deeper connection with her own self and with nature. The differences between the hero and the heroine’s journey can be detected in the ways Joseph Campbell and Maureen Murdock discuss the hero and heroine’s journey in their books *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1944) and *The Heroine’s Journey* (1990) respectively.\(^{14}\)

In the myth of Helen of Troy, there are plenty of characters that embody archetypal images of the Hero archetype. Achilles, Hector, Odysseus are Heroes because of their physical and intellectual strength, their resilience against evil forces, and their capacity to show emotional parts of themselves which shows recognition of their feminine side. However, Telemachus is also a Hero in this myth because he yearns to change the situation at his home. His father Odysseus has been absent for almost two decades and his mother’s suitors waste and abuse Odysseus’s fortunes. The suitors represent dark principles of greed, exploitation, and possessiveness. The goddess Athena encourages Telemachus to leave home and find out where Odysseus is. This journey is a journey of self-determination because if Telemachus discovers that his father is alive he will gain new strength and hope that things will change. During his journey, Telemachus meets positive or benevolent configurations of the Anima in the old servant Eurikleia, his spiritual mentor Athena, and the intuitive queen Helen. These women praise Odysseus’s strength and cleverness and therefore equip Telemachus with courage and hope. When Telemachus is about to leave Sparta, Helen hands him a goodbye gift, a wonderful robe that she herself has woven and which, as Helen says, is ‘for your wife to wear at the lovely occasion of your marriage.’ (15. 126-27). The gift indicates that Telemachus will soon marry and find peace and happiness. A stronger indication of Telemachus’s good future takes place when Helen interprets with her great intuition an omen they have just witnessed: ‘As this eagle came down from the mountain, where was his origin and parentage, and caught the goose that was nursed in the household, so Odysseus, after wandering long and suffering much, will come home and take revenge; or he is already home, and making a plan of evil for all of the suitors.’ (15. 174-78).
Conclusion: Archetypes as Indicators of Emotional Energies or Tools for Organising and Developing Material.

In this chapter I have tried to explain what archetypes are and how they make visible images of emotional experiences. Each archetype is responsible for making known or informing our consciousness about a particular set of emotional experiences. The information of the archetype is transmitted through images of the emotional experiences which need to be contextualised within a narrative in order to visualise or give form to the meaning of the archetype. I have shown why Jung suggested that the archetypes could be defined as the categories of the Shadow, Daughter, Mother, Anima/Animus, Trickster, Hero, Wise Old Man; these categories enabled Jung and other contemporary Jungian analysts to clarify the contents of the collective unconscious and then identify how each category carries their own messages of emotional experiences. I have used the Jungian categories of archetypal contents to analyse certain emotional experiences that exist in the myth of Helen of Troy. More particularly, I have tried to determine how the archetypes of the Shadow, Daughter, Mother, Anima, Trickster, Hero, Wise Old Man exist in the myth of Helen of Troy as the characters of Menelaus, Hermione, Hecuba, Helen, Paris, Telemachus, Priam respectively. By identifying the archetypes of the characters in various literary or dramatic treatments of the myth, I uncovered or described the specific energy that motivates the emotional experiences of the mythical characters. In my first practical research project, I explored how I reinterpreted and reused the archetypes of the mythical characters for the creation of new characters in three different drafts of a script. In the commentary of this project, I will show how the identification of the Shadow, Mother, Trickster, Wise Old Man, Anima, Hero, Daughter in Helen’s myth, offers a method or language of analysing how the archetypal force of mythical characters can be reinvented and recontextualised in a contemporary world. For instance, we saw how the archetypal images of the Shadow were being exercised in Menelaus: how can the archetypal images of the Shadow acquire life and new form in the contemporary world of a script? How are these archetypal images changed? How does my personal unconscious interfere in these changes? In the second practical research project, I used Jung’s method of categorising the collective unconscious, as an inspiration for categorising and organising the raw material of three performers. The raw material of the performers consisted of their personal interpretations of Helen’s mythical character. I classified the performers’ Helen interpretations into three different archetypes, the Daughter, the Queen and the Trickster, and then wrote three Helen
characters that assimilated in their narratives the performers’ material and my personal ideas or images that were associated with the Daughter, Trickster and Queen archetype.

Endnotes


2 The terms ‘archetype’, ‘instinct’ and ‘collective unconscious’ seem to have the same meaning in Jung’s theory. Jung writes, for instance, that ‘The collective unconscious, on the other hand, is the source of the instinctual forces of the psyche and of the forms of categories that regulate them, namely the archetypes’ (‘Instinct and Unconscious’, 158). The collective unconscious is explained as the ‘ancestral heritage of possibilities of representation’ (ibid 151) a definition which could also be given to the archetypes. The archetypes also appear to have the same function as instincts when Jung states that ‘archetype’ means an inborn idea. In short, the archetype, the collective unconscious and the instinct all share the same purpose in informing the reflexes and surviving capacities of our bodies. Jung also defines the archetype as ‘primordial image’ which is inextricably linked with the ‘mythological motif’: ‘The primordial image, elsewhere also termed archetype, is always collective, i.e., it is at least common to entire peoples or epochs. In all probability the most important mythological motifs are common to all times and races; I have, in fact, been able to demonstrate a whole series of motifs from Greek mythology in the dreams and fantasies of pure-bred Negroes suffering from mental disorders’ (‘Definitions’, 443).

3 Jungian literary critic Susan Rowland distinguishes the archetype from the archetypal image in this way: ‘Archetypes have no form in themselves. They may even have no existence under normal definitions. Jung called the archetype a “hypothesis” to account for the way the human psyche makes similar images in dreams and art across cultures and throughout history.... Only archetypal images, not the hypothetical and ultimately unrepresentable archetypes-in-themselves, have form.... Since these images are the closest we can come to the heart of the archetype (although inevitably coloured by social experience), the archetypal images are the meaning... the images are limitless as to their possible shape and dimensions’ [author’s italics] (2010: 9). Susan Sellers understands the Jungian archetypes in this way: ‘archetypes are not determined in terms of their content but in terms of their form, and this only to a very limited degree. They provide an ‘empty’ structure, the content of which is filled with the material of conscious experience and which consequently changes in each new manifestation’ (5).

4 In her book Goddesses in Everywoman: Archetypes in Women over Fifty (2001), Jungian analyst Jean Shinoda Bolen explains how the potentials or energies of the archetype grow and develop by comparing them to seeds: ‘Archetypes might also be compared to the “blueprints” in seeds. Growth from seeds depends on soil and climate conditions, the presence or absence of certain nutrients, loving care or neglect on the part of the gardener, the size and depth of the container, and the hardiness of the variety itself. Under optimal conditions, the full potential in the seed is realized’ (ix).

5 In his book The Secret Life of Plays (2010), Steve Waters also argues that characters obtain meaning or significance only through interaction with other characters or the general environment: ‘... character only emerges through interaction; like ‘shifters’ in language (a term coined by linguist Otto Jespersen for words such as ‘I’ or ‘there’, which possess no meaning beyond the context in which they appear), dramatic character is defined by situations. Determining the ‘meaning’ of a character is as futile as trying to have the final word on any individual; they’re simply the sum of set of interactions within the play’ (100).

6 Myth is studied and investigated by various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, literary theory,
mythography, psychology, psychotherapy, art. Susan Seller’s *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women’s Fiction* (2001) offers a very good introduction to the various research strands on myth and fairytale. Raya A. Jones’s *Jung, Psychology, Postmodernity* (2007), offers an even more recent account on the ways myth works in prehistoric as well as contemporary societies.

7 Ernst Cassirer writes: ‘The process of language formation shows for example how the chaos of immediate impressions takes on order and clarity for us only when we “name” it and so permeate it with the function of linguistic thought and expression. In this new world of linguistic signs the world of impressions itself acquires an entirely new “permanence,” because it acquires a new intellectual articulation. This differentiation and fixation of certain contents by words, not only designates a definite intellectual quality through them, but actually endows them with such a quality, by virtue of which they are now raised above the mere immediacy of so-called sensory qualities’ (1957: 87). The word will give new ‘permanence’ to the sensory impression because it will remain as a word to be communicated within a community of people who will understand that this particular word will mean a specific sensory impression and not another. In her book *Jung, Irigaray, Individuation* (2008), Frances Gray analyses the purpose or necessity of definition of essences: ‘What makes something what it is... is revealed in definition and definition therefore serves to point to the essence or the essential properties of any concept, idea or thing’ (131). The names of the archetypes therefore are not meant to foreclose their properties into one specific interpretation but rather they help us find one word that could best communicate and articulate their properties. When we actually start to communicate the word that defines the archetype’s properties, we will see that its properties will be interpreted in many different ways. For instance, the Mother archetype is a familiar image or word to everyone and communicates a particular set of experiences such as the fact that we were given birth to by a mother, we have existed as embryos in the calmness and stillness of a mother’s womb. However, as I have shown before, the meanings we give to the idea of the Mother vary vastly from one individual to another, as one will interpret her as caring, kind, nurturing, protecting, and another as cold, a hag, overprotective etc. The Western culture will celebrate motherhood through the image of the Virgin Mary, another culture through the image of the Pakistani Hariti or the Japanese Kishi-Mojin. The myths and stories that surround these mother goddesses are very different from each other as they assimilate characteristics or historical events that are culturally specific.

8 The lines are quoted from Don Taylor’s translation of *Helen* (1990).

9 Verena Kast’s book *Der Schatten in Uns: Die Subversive Lebenskraft* (2002) which translates as *The Shadow in Ourselves: The Subversive Force of Life* explores how the Shadow archetype affects our dreams as well as our social life. The book has not been translated into English and I have therefore translated certain parts or quotations myself.

10 The lines are quoted from James Morwood’s translation of *Helen* (1998).

11 In her book *Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes the Baby’s Brain* (2004), Sue Gerhardt argues for instance that: ‘As people come and go around him, smells and sounds and sights constantly changing through the day and night, patterns begin to emerge. Slowly the baby begins to recognise the most regular features and to store them as images. These might typically be a soothing image of a smiling mother coming through the door when he cries in his cot, or it might be a disturbing image of a hostile face grimacing as she approaches. Meaning emerges as the baby begins to recognise whether the mother coming through the door will bring pleasure or pain’ (19).

12 Maureen Murdock interprets Persephone’s story in this way: ‘Persephone is pulled away from herself as her mother’s daughter and enters the depths of her soul. This may be a universal experience of woman: losing a former sense of self and feeling lost, confused, and in the depths of depression, only to discover that in these depths is a new sense of self. Breakdown becomes breakthrough’ (98).

13 The hero’s change can be either internal or external. For instance, the Princess changes internally, because the reappearance of the frog at her home triggers a process of self-reflection which will help her realise how unfair she treated the frog. Christ, on the other hand, wants to change the established order of things; this change does not involve a change in himself but a change in the world, which is an external change.

14 In his book *Pathways to Bliss: Mythology and Personal Transformation* (2004), Campbell reformulates Jung’s theories on the Hero or Self and writes that the hero of either gender/sex approaches ‘areas of the unconscious that have been repressed: the shadow, the anima/animus, and the rest of the unintegrated self’
(116). However, Campbell’s *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* examines the journey of the male hero because the hero meets and takes as wife a goddess that can ‘never be greater than himself’ (116) and then he has to prove himself, prove that he ‘has been effectually purged of all inappropriate infantile catheces’ (136) in order to be competent enough to take his ‘father’s place’ (121). When the journey ends, the hero goes back to the world in order to teach others about his rise up to meet and become one with the father. He is, however, alone as no one will be able to understand ‘the message of the all-generating void’ (218). The heroine, on the other hand, is not alone. In *The Heroine’s Journey*, Murdock suggests that the heroine does not stand out from the rest, she does not feel special or uniquely gifted; she invites everyone to join her into a circle to learn *together* the lessons of her journey (173). For Murdock, the heroine’s journey is about realising that the journey upwards to meet social expectations, to separate entirely from the weak or emotional mother and achieve recognition from the powerful and intellectual father, has destroyed a significant part of her Self. Heroines, therefore ‘find their way back to themselves not by moving up and out into the light like men, but by moving down into the depths of the ground of their being... The spiritual experience for women is one of moving more deeply into self rather than out of self’ (89). Helen Jacey’s *The Woman in the Story* (2010) is a more recent exploration on the Heroine’s journey as it is depicted in very recent Hollywood films, TV Dramas and world cinema. Jacey identifies which films reproduce stereotypical notions of women and which films develop or show the full complexity of a heroine’s journey.
Preface to the Commentary on the First Practical Research Project.

The first practical research project explored my response to the myth of Helen as a solo-playwright. In the commentary I will discuss the writing of three drafts of a script called *Highways of Pleasure*. For the writing of the first draft of the script, I identified the Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Daughter, Wise Old Man archetypes in the myth of Helen of Troy and then tried to re-imagine and reinvigorate the emotional energies of these archetypes within characters that were contextualised in a contemporary world. As I have explained in my theoretical chapter, the Mother archetype figures as Hecuba in the myth of Helen of Troy, the Trickster as Paris, the Shadow as Menelaus, the Daughter as Hermione, the Wise Old Man as Priam, the Hero as Telemachus. In the commentary, I will examine how the characters of Claire, Nick, Chris, Kate, Paul and Jerry in *Highways of Pleasure* reconfigured the archetypes of the Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Daughter, Wise Old Man, Hero respectively. The emotional energies of the Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Daughter, Wise Old Man, Hero were present first of all in the professions and psychological landscapes of the new characters. Claire who was a reinterpretation of the Mother was in my script a domineering full-time mother. Nick who represented the Trickster was a painter who defied in his speech and art laws of logical coherence. Chris who drew energy from the Shadow was a gangster. Kate revived images of the Daughter and was a girl who was in search of hope and light in the darkness of the underworld. Paul who was a re-configuration of the Wise Old Man was a psychoanalyst. Jerry was a Hero in search of himself. The fact that the archetypes of the Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Daughter, Hero, Wise Old Man were reconfigured as crazy mother, abstract painter, gangster/drug-dealer, girl in search of peace, young man in quest for self-definition and psychoanalyst proves that archetypes retain their archetypal properties but acquire new form. They change and become remodified as soon as they are expressed through my personal unconscious which absorbs or integrates information from my gender/sex, personal memories and cultural environment.

In the commentary, I follow how I weaved a narrative or story with the characters of Claire, Nick, Chris, Kate, Paul and Jerry. As I have suggested in the introduction the archetypes of the characters cannot make sense or become meaningful unless they are contextualised within a particular story in which they interact with other
characters. In other words, the characters manifest and show their archetypal source of energy only when they come across, interact with or confront other characters or else are placed within specific situations in a narrative or story. The first element that helped me construct a story with the characters of Nick, Chris, Kate, Paul and Jerry was the idea that these characters were affected by the absence of a woman. This idea came from my supervisor Graham Ley who had suggested that my two writing projects would negotiate the writing of the absence and presence of Helen. In this sense, the first practical research project would interrogate how I could write a script about the Helen character as an absent female character. In other words, the first practical research project was a practical analysis or practical exploration of Helen’s line in Euripides’s *Helen* ‘My name could be in many places but not my body’ (line 589). What kind of stories could people tell about Helen? What does she signify? What myths are created about her? In the first practical research project I changed the name Helen to the name Meredith and tried to realise what kind of stories could the characters of Nick, Chris, Kate, Paul and Claire construct and tell about Meredith as lover, wife, mother, daughter, patient. In order to make Meredith as consequential as Helen, I imagined that Meredith was a celebrity, a famous pornstar, a mother, a symbol of beauty, a writer of self-help books, an ambassador of the UN, a woman who killed herself, a woman who had a similar history as Marilyn Monroe (she was famous, had affairs with significant personalities and eventually she was found dead in a hotel). The fact that Meredith had a similar life to Marilyn, or else the fact that I chose to represent Helen as a celebrity woman with a tragic past or complex history also showed that my Anima, (my internal representations of women, ‘the woman inside me’) acquired in writing a form that is culturally determined, and takes into consideration the stories of women who have a mythical nature in our present time.

The second element that helped me link the characters together in a story was the invention of Jerry’s journey of self-discovery. Jerry wanted to investigate the life of Meredith and therefore asked Nick, Kate, Chris, Claire and Paul to tell him what they knew about Meredith. The creation of this character was a dramaturgical decision to prompt the characters to discuss and construct their personal stories about Meredith and her absence. In the commentary, I examine what archetypal complexes drove Jerry to research the absence of Meredith, and how these complexes were nurtured by his male psychology. The comments I received from supervisors William Stanton and Graham Ley and actors, director and audience members who participated in the readings of the drafts of my script helped me identify the key problems of Jerry’s intentions and his
obsession with Meredith. In the commentary, I will conclude that the main research purpose of the first practical research project was to define what Meredith meant for my Hero character, how the stories about Meredith affected his psychology, and how these stories assisted his process of individuation.

For the second practical research project, I created three Helen characters with three female performers. I incorporated the characters into a script that was performed as a rehearsal reading by the three performers on the 17th of March 2010 at Thornlea Studio 1. The three performers were Rasha Dawood from Egypt, Kim Komljaneč from Slovenia and Simsim Lai from China.

The second practical research project explored the writing of the presence of Helen. In the first practical research project, I investigated how the idea of Helen’s absence urged me to create a script around six characters whose lives were deeply affected by the absence of a beautiful woman. The stories of the characters or the stories about Helen as absent character, drew energy from the emotional patterns of the Hero, Daughter, Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Wise Old Man and brought to light my personal psychological complexes, personal unconscious pornographic desires and concerns of my male gender/sex. In the second practical project, I ceased to explore how the absence of Helen was interpreted by each character (who was an extension of myself, my personal unconscious) and started to look for ways to analyse and write her presence. Because the research focus of this project was to recreate a presence of Helen that was not the presence of a ghost or an idea looming over characters, but a real, tangible and physical presence, I asked three female performers to collaborate with me in the writing of her character. The fact that Helen was a woman (even a mythical one) meant that if I wanted to investigate her physical presence, her ways of being present and active in the world, I had to ask a woman how she might have felt if she were Helen. To ask a woman to become Helen and feel herself as Helen would involve the woman in a process of embodying Helen. The woman would embody Helen in order to think, feel and sense how her own psychobiological being would become affected if she were to be Helen in the particular events of Helen’s myth. Once the woman started articulating her experiences as Helen, she would create a unique Helen character whose version of the myth of Helen would be the ‘truest’ or the most ‘authentic’ one (because it was based on the woman’s own personal psychobiological experiences). In this chapter I will present how I prompted three female performers to arrive at a personal interpretation of Helen and how I encouraged them to embody this interpretation in solo-performances and improvisations. I
will then discuss how I interpreted the three different Helen embodiments by the performers as three different archetypes: The Queen Archetype, The Daughter Archetype and the Trickster Archetype. My interpretation of the Helen presences as archetypes was a way to organise and translate the material of the performers into dramatic characters. My decision to associate a performers’ Helen embodiment with a particular archetype was not taken by chance, but was supported by the ways the performers responded to Helen. Throughout the chapter I will demonstrate that the characteristics of the three archetypes were present in the performers’ processes of imagining and embodying Helen as well as their personal ways of existing and experiencing the world.

3.1. **The gender/sex of Helen.**

I will now clarify why I have put the terms ‘truest’ and ‘authentic’ in quotation marks. My aim behind this project was, as I have said before, to empower three female performers to experience and know the character of Helen through their flesh, their strengths or weaknesses of their bodies so that I could establish a clearer insight into the emotional journey of Helen. Given that Helen is a woman, her physical anatomy and organism belong to the category of the female sex. By asking female performers to embody Helen I would examine what aspects of the myth were important for women whose bodily functions are informed by a different sex than my own. The performers would unconsciously enter a process of knowing Helen by sensing how their sex, their instincts, their bodily memories (i.e. the pleasure, pain, exhaustion, awe, paralysis etc) would have reacted in the events of Helen’s myth. The performers would realise what it is to be Helen through an instinctual knowledge, a knowledge of the body, that is more primitive and archaic, more archetypal, more intuitive and therefore closer to truth (closer to truth because it is the instinctual or intuitive knowledge that guides our bodies to survive and is for that reason universal, eternal and indisputably true).¹

Given that instincts are eternal and constitute a vital part of one’s sex, one could assume that sex too is eternal, unchanging and universal as it equips our bodies with certain unchanging or universal physical capacities. However, contemporary feminist theorists (such as Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Toril Moi) have argued that sex is not as stable, fixed, universal and natural as it seems to be but can acquire the function of a political or cultural
signifier. For Butler, the sense that life can only become livable if one belongs to either the male or the female ‘sex’, this sense is already an act of unnatural political suppression. In her book *Bodies that Matter* (1997) she demonstrates that sex does not only signify the natural differences between men and women but exists also as a sign for the regulation of our bodies, an ideal concept manufactured to monitor sexual behaviours (2). In this sense, the ‘sex’ categories serve a similar purpose with the ‘gender’ categories which teach or dictate certain behaviours to men and women so that they can communicate and approach one another for the survival of our species. As sexual behaviours or the customs, attitudes or politics that accompany sexual behaviours vary around the world, ‘gender’ becomes more flexible and open to change and cultural transformation than ‘sex’ which means the natural, biological or physical characteristics of the male and female body. To return to Butler’s claim, however, it seems that there is a violence enacted by culture to contain all human subjects in either the male or the female ‘sex’ without acknowledging that some human subjects appropriate and inhabit the ‘male’ or the ‘female’ in diverse ways. These human subjects are the intersexed, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, transvestites, transgendered etc, they are minorities that cannot and/or do not want to include or incarcerate their bodies within the binaries of male/female sex or masculine/feminine gender (Fausto-Sterling 8). To my understanding then, the sex/gender distinction is complex and open-ended because:

1) Bodies never react to instincts alone. The body’s reactions to certain circumstances are always processed or mediated through the codes of a particular culture. It is not clear if the codes of a particular culture are inscribed in the sex or the gender of our bodies.  

2) Even if each body possesses a universal sex that functions according to an archetypal set of instincts, each body is also idiosyncratic (age, size, capacities, health vary) and defined by personal traumas, personal aesthetics and politics, and cultural conditioning. This means that each body will interpret and perform the archetypal set of instincts in different, culturally specific and subjective ways. In this sense, the effects of the biological sex are bound to be affected by the culturally shaped gender and vice versa.

The differences between each body’s interpretation and performance of archetypal instincts proves that sex as well as gender cannot exist in one unique form, a form that can claim to be more ‘perfect’, ‘normal’ or more ‘truthful’ than others. Each one of us inherits certain instincts or universal reflexes (such as the need for food, for protection, for satisfaction of the
libido etc) but because each one inhabits a different body, different psychobiology, each one performs the universal reflexes in a personal way and develops therefore personal philosophies of life. The reason why I have put ‘truth’, ‘truest’ and ‘authentic’ in quotation marks was because something that is universal and therefore indisputably true (such as instincts) is always and by necessity affected and/or changed by personal interpretation. For this reason, one woman’s story as Helen could never be universally true or universally acceptable. One woman’s story as Helen could contain some elements that are true for every woman, such as the fact that the female body is bound to experience childbirth or motherhood. But beyond the elements of their universal sex, women have different bodies, acquire different psychobiological experiences throughout life, adopt different cultural codes. In this sense, no woman is the same as another and therefore no woman would interpret the myth of Helen in the same way as another. When I asked three female performers to analyse the figure of Helen, I expected that the performers would create different narratives for their interpretations, narratives that unconsciously or consciously would encompass unique characteristics of their selves. My expectation was correct, and as we will see in the chapter, each performer emphasized different aspects of Helen’s myth and therefore drew different conclusions from Helen’s actions. Some of the performers’ points of emphasis and conclusions were culturally motivated, i.e. they carried elements from the performers’ cultural background and communities, and some others were personally constructed, i.e. they were based on personal issues or problems.

I collaborated with three female performers instead of one, as I wished to explore what was different in each performer’s narrative of Helen. Secondly, I wanted to make clear that Helen should not acquire presence through one body alone, one form of a human body but invite in her reconstruction ‘difference, alterity and Otherness’. Three Helens from different cultural backgrounds and with different bodily characteristics (one was constantly wearing a scarf, another was suffering under diabetes) would create the sense that the corporeal and human presence of Helen was ‘non-unitary’, that the presence of her femininity or femaleness could never be finite, ideal or absolute, but open to interpretation and reinterpretation within a discourse that is ‘nomadic’, i.e. a discourse that takes into account the voices and discourses of different cultures. The ‘non-unitary vision of the human’ and ‘nomadic’ are terms that Rosi Braidotti has used in her effort to include in our understandings of the ‘human’ practices or experiences of the ‘human’ that are non-Western or non-White or versed in non-Western philosophical discourses (2006: 11). Braidotti wishes to contest the belief that only a Western understanding of the human is ideal or good for the entire
humanity. For Braidotti, to respect and value the ways different cultures understand the ‘human’ means to respect and value our own sense of being and belonging in the global community:

A sustainable ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or ‘earth’ others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism. This is not the same as absolute loss of values, it rather implies a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one’s territorial or environmental interconnections. This is an ethical bond of an altogether different sort from the self-interests of an individual subject... It is a nomadic eco-philosophy of multiple belongings (35).

I think that the ‘ethical bond’ is realised when we strive to be compassionate, when we see beyond our self-interests and look into another’s emotional world and existence, when we feel and recognize that underneath our cultural, racial, sexual differences all of us share archetypal emotional patterns of grief, anger, frustration, fear, jealousy. As I will show later, the Helen characters of the performers experienced a different set of emotional experiences and a different sense of responsibility towards the Trojan War. However, whilst watching their Helen interpretations, I wanted to find out whether they shared certain emotional experiences or whether they could empathise with each other’s ways of being in the world, with each other’s suffering. I wanted to establish where the performers’ opinions on Helen met in order to determine the theme or concept I wanted to explore in the script of my second practical research project. As I will explain later, during the writing of the first and the second draft of the script, I was not able to find the meeting point of the performers’ Helen characters and therefore the theme of my script was very unclear.

3.2. The Process of Character-Creation.

The second practical project taught me a method of collaborative character-creation which I had never practised before. The first stage of this method involved the performers in a process of analysing the myth of Helen through their readings of various literary sources. The
second stage involved them in a process of arriving at a personal interpretation of the myth and embodies this interpretation in Helen characters of their own creation. The steps I followed in helping the performers create their interpretation and embodiment of Helen were these:

1) In our first rehearsal all the performers had read Euripides’s *Helen*. I asked them to read out aloud a monologue from the play that had fascinated them.

2) For one month I worked with each performer on her own. This was the first stage of character-creation. At the early stage of the process each performer came to know Helen without becoming influenced by opinions of other performers. I was giving the performers various literary material on Helen and instructed them to read and talk about the sources without reflecting or thinking about the intellectual depth of their opinions.

3) While each performer and I were still working on our own and not as a group, I asked each performer to bring into the rehearsal her favourite fairy-tale. The performers described the plot of the fairy-tales and discussed which values were important for the fairy-tale characters. My idea was to look at what kind of fairy-tale characters had affected the performers at an early stage of their lives. The remembrance of the fairy-tale could help the performer build a Helen character that could follow the psychic pattern of their beloved fairy-tale character.

4) I summarized with the performers the seven most significant aspects of the myth. These were: a) Helen is a woman in constant transit between Sparta-Troy-Sparta; b) Helen is the cause of war; c) Helen is a queen; d) Helen has a daughter, a husband and a lover; e) Helen is transported to Troy by boat; f) Helen is hated by people who have lost relatives in the Trojan War; g) Helen is considered the most beautiful woman in the world. The reason I did this summary was to remind the performers of the basic scenes or images of myth and so prepare each to construct her own story with the myth of Helen.

5) I asked each performer to write her ‘Helen monologue’ over the Christmas vacation (December 2009-January 2010). One of my instructions was that Helen should say or think this monologue in a specific place and time whether it is in Sparta, on the boat to Troy, at Troy during the war or back home in Sparta after the war. The questions to consider were these: To whom was she telling the monologue? For what reason? What impact did her monologue have on people around her? Did she feel relieved? Was she more anxious? I set up the task of writing a monologue because the
monologue gives you the opportunity to establish a very close and intimate relationship with the character. The audience watching a character deliver a monologue gains a thorough insight into his/her ways of thinking, the manners of his/her articulation, his/her ideology, emotional conflicts etc.

6) As soon as the performers wrote their monologues I gathered them all together and asked them to perform the monologues in front of the group. The task of performing the Helen characters through solo-performances of the monologues or through improvisations comprised the second part of character-creation. I derived the task of writing and performing the monologues from the Writing for Performance Workshop (organized by playwright Kaite O’ Reilly within the Drama Association of Wales in October 2009). In this workshop, one of the exercises was to write and perform short monologues that were either inspired by our relations with a specific location or a found-object. The experience of writing and performing the monologues helped us achieve a more complete idea or knowledge of character-construction. Apart from conceptualising in our minds the characters that delivered the monologues, we also had to perform these characters drawing energy from the emotional experiences of our bodies. In this sense, we acquired a better physical sense of the characters, a physical sense that expanded our knowledge of the character and enriched the conceptual writing of the monologue. Having experienced how the knowledge of a character increases once he/she is performed, I assumed that by letting the performers perform the physical actions of their Helen characters they would gain a clearer insight into the emotional world of their characters. While the performers performed their monologue in front of the group, they also demonstrated in a very clear way what aspects of Helen’s myth were important for their interpretation and the story they were trying to create.

7) As soon as a performer finished her monologue, I instructed the other performers to embody a minor or significant character from the myth of Helen and ask the Helen character questions. The minor or significant characters could be a dead soldier, a Trojan or Spartan widow, Paris, Helen’s daughter Hermione, Aphrodite, the mother of a soldier, a servant, a woman visiting Helen’s temple etc. The purpose of this task was to engage myself and the performer in a further exploration of their characters. The spontaneous answers of the performers were meant to bring to our consciousness more unconscious and unexpected sides of the characters.

8) During two rehearsals I instructed the performers to step into the character of Helen
and improvise dialogue with the other Helens around them. The performers started confronting each other as Helens, they disagreed with each other’s interpretations of Helen and brought to the surface the cultural and personal differences of their female ‘gender’.

9) I had recorded all the rehearsals in order to watch them again and note down whatever was useful for the writing of my script. My aim was to investigate and detect what archetype emerged in the performer’s embodiment of Helen. Whilst watching the recorded material, I could observe and determine more in detail how the performers were expressing their thoughts on the sources of Helen, how their words, accents, intonation, silences, gestures or body movements corresponded with emotional experiences that were specific to particular archetypes of the Daughter, the Trickster and the Queen. By classifying or categorising the material of the performers into three archetypes, I wanted to test how the Jungian method of classifying the contents of the psyche could be applied in the process of writing a script in collaboration. I wanted to establish what kind of archetypal images appeared in the performers’ interpretations and embodiments of Helen and then determine to what particular archetype belonged these archetypal images. By knowing or realising the archetypes that nurtured the performers’ interpretations of Helen, I would be enabled to visualise and imagine further archetypal images of the archetype and then integrate these archetypal images in the Helen characters of my script.

I will now discuss how the three performers evoked in their analysis of Helen’s myth the archetypal images of three different archetypes: the Queen Archetype, The Daughter Archetype and the Trickster Archetype.

3.3. Creating the Helen Character with Kim Komjalenc: Helen as a Queen Archetype.

The archetype of the queen is an archetype that is imperial, serene, omniscient, dignified, eloquent, sincere, powerful, controlling, decisive, authoritative, intelligent, respectable and remarkable. For me, Kim Komjalenc is a person whose physical presence encompasses and puts into practice some of these adjectives. She has a very distinctive character and effortlessly manages to draw the attention of people. When we first started reading Eur.
Helen, Kim’s eloquence, her diction and her use of unmistakable grammar added a sense of serenity and importance to her sayings. It was as if a queen was giving a speech to her people. Apart from her powerful elocution, Kim’s analysis of Helen’s character in Euripides’s text explored elements that were associated with characteristics of the Queen archetype. She talked about the fact that no one could escape the lethal power of Helen’s beauty, a power that had cost the lives of many people and, as Kim put it, ‘actually played against her’. Kim commented further on the power of Helen’s beauty and constantly pointed out that Helen had tried to retain control and dignity during and after the Trojan War. Whilst looking at passages from Homer’s *Iliad*, Kim suggested that ‘Despite all the circumstances that are horrible she keeps this dignity. She’s actually treated as a queen. She does everything in a dignified way.’ Kim remarked that Helen’s character in Homer’s *Odyssey* exercised great power on people around her: ‘I’m not sure if she’s aware of that power or not. But her beauty is power... People act differently when she’s around. They would think of one thing about her but then they would change and just do the opposite. She has a strong influence on how people feel’.

To my understanding, Kim revealed during our conversations a personal issue with control or controlling others. Apart from giving to the performers literary texts, we also looked at certain paintings of Helen (by Dante Gabriel Rosetti (1863) or Sir Edward John Poynter (1881)) and a picture of a small Barbie-doll that represented Helen. Whilst looking at the Barbie-doll, I asked Kim about her relation to dolls when she was a child. Kim started remembering some incidents that demonstrated a controlling and authoritative behaviour towards her dolls:

I never liked to play with Barbie dolls, but children dolls, dolls that would represent children. I would set up schools and I would be the teacher. When I played with them at school some of them I had to punish. I was the teacher and they were my pupils. I had to punish them so they wouldn’t do it again. I always chose a role where I could have a bit of control. As the youngest you get told what to do a lot of the times. So I guess I compensated that by having control over my toys.

The queen is able to control and manage the lives of her people by dictating or establishing codes of good and moral behaviour (in this way the queen forces people to follow her rules and unconsciously pre-empts their revolt). Just as a queen criticises at times the moral aberrations of her people, in a similar way Kim too expressed her scepticism on Helen’s moral behaviour. For instance: Kim suggested that Helen’s decision to leave her
husband and child in Sappho’s poem ‘was not a good thing to do.’ When Helen welcomes Telemachus in the *Odyssey* during the wedding of her daughter, she displays a very immoral and insensitive side of her character. According to Kim, ‘she’s someone whose status is really low. It’s almost as if we the audience we would love her to fall. Because she’s caused the great war and she’s treating this as if it were a very small thing. She treats the loss of the boy’s father like a little thing.’ The moral undertones of Kim’s analysis became even more apparent when she decided to perceive in Helen’s journey to Troy a metaphor against betrayal:

I bet that if that is the stake (the Trojan War) when every woman cheats on her husband, there wouldn’t be as much cheating going on as it is now. If every woman thought if I go and have an affair with this man and leave my children... leave my husband they wouldn’t have done it I think. I think this is a much more powerful story than how the Bible teaches: Do not fornicate.

Kim found that the consequences of Helen’s betrayal illustrated something that concerns all queens and kings: As a queen or king, are you allowed to give space to yourself? If the queen and king prioritize the good of their community, what happens to their rights and needs as individuals? Is it possible for queens and kings to value personal desires more than their role in society? Kim drew parallels between Helen and Antigone in terms of their initiative to respect personal ethics over the rules of their countries. ‘If she (Antigone) didn’t bury her brother, then could she have faced anyone else? That was so important to her that she thought my own ethics first and then the country’s rules. So it was with Helen. I love this man, I have to be with the man I love not with the one I married.’ In this sense, Helen felt the necessity to become queen of her own self, to regulate her own desires and pleasures according to personal will and not according to the demands of her royalty. In her book *Grab the Queen Power: Live Your Best Life* (2005), Allyn Mitchell Evans examines how the Queen archetype can become a source of strength, empowerment and confidence in women who have learned to suppress their personalities and behave according to opinions of others. She writes in bold letters: ‘The Authentic Queen is Powerful. A Queen recognizes and understands her power. She claims it and doesn’t apologize for having it. She is inner directed and follows her heart’ (184). Kim’s choice of fairy-tale raised further discussions on the issues of personal empowerment and responding to the call of one’s heart.

In our rehearsals Kim narrated to me the tale of Takemuce” a wandering cat that is
starving but never loses her dignity to obtain food. She works for a rabbit but when she is told off, she decides to leave. When she finds a coin, she buys herself a ribbon not food. At the end of the story Takemuce opens a bakery and is very proud of herself. When I asked Kim to talk about Takemuce’s motives in the story, she highlighted Takemuce’s efforts in being true to herself, her capacity to rely on her own resources:

She had a quite a straight line of what she wanted to do. She didn’t have a specific goal “this is what I want to do” but she had an idea of who she wanted to be... So it wouldn’t really matter if she ended up being... I don’t know sewing clothes for someone or selling sausages... It doesn’t really matter as long as she takes care of herself... that motive was quite clear of integrity and of independence.

Immediately after her analysis of the fairy-tale, Kim and I wrote down the most significant aspects of the myth of Helen. I asked Kim to tell me on the spot which version of the Helen myth was more interesting for her. Kim more emphatically this time said that she would be interested in the Helen that leaves home at her own will. This story is ‘more about her’, as Kim put it. If we compare Takemuce with the Helen character that follows her lover, we see that both characters personify the quest or desire for individual or personal agency. Both characters make mistakes (Takemuce spends her scarce money on a ribbon and Helen abandons her kingdom) but these mistakes are produced by their willingness to gain ultimate control and power over their lives. In spite of the circumstances, both characters will not compromise or suppress their right to take decisions and exercise free will. The difference between Helen and Tacemuce is that Helen is a queen and Tacemuce a common female cat. As a queen Helen had a very important role to fulfil within society and her personal agency was restricted by this role. In the last rehearsal of the first stage, Kim had a complete idea of her Helen narrative:

I’m interested in what happened or what happens when she does meet Paris or when she is there at Troy, what’s the dynamics there... because it’s like... if she left she must have believed that that was the right thing to do. If it was her own decision. Then how does she come to realise how wrong it was in other aspects so... once she consumes her love and then what does that do to her. How does that change her... when she realises what are the consequences of her act that would have been very interesting to look at.
I think that Kim’s Helen character underwent a journey that tested the limits of her independence. She was a queen who wanted to follow her heart and free herself from social constraints. As a queen, though, she was destined to live and exist as the king’s wife. A king without a queen seems powerless, incomplete, corroded, and as therapist Allan G. Hunter suggests in his analysis of the Monarch archetype: ‘The Monarch or Monarch Pair... is to be seen as a balance of the male and female working harmoniously together for the good of the realm.’ (2008: 72). Hunter argues further that ‘For the Monarch, “I” ceases to exist. The royal plural “we” is not just an affectation. The Monarch speaks in terms of the whole realm’s best interests.’ (74). Helen could never reach full independence in her life because she did not only belong to the king but to the entire state of Sparta. All her movements and actions had to serve the benefit of her country, not her personal desires or personal self-fulfilment.

3.4. Creating the Helen Character with Rasha Dawood: Helen as a Daughter Archetype.

Whereas Kim sensed that Helen’s drama stemmed from her awareness that she was torn between her passion for Paris and the good of her country, Rasha Dawood found that Helen’s tragedy was her victimization by Paris. Rasha saw in Helen a woman who never decided to go to Troy of her own free will. She was abducted by Paris in spite of herself. Apart from the fact that Helen suffered the violence of her kidnappers, she also faced a bad reputation because everyone including her husband, daughter, mother believed that she was Paris’s mistress. Rasha insisted that it is wrong for Helen in Euripides’s Helen to feel ashamed and guilty because:

She’s innocent. She’s done nothing. She’s a victim. The only fault of her is her beauty. The way she feels at how others judge her. Look at her. How the Greeks accused her. She’s imprisoned in a false image. It’s the easiest way. To put her in a stereotype. And everyone after that is free and relieved. I don’t know but I find it very interesting that she suffered from the feeling of shame. As if she’s chosen to be kidnapped... In my country some victims of rape, they choose not to tell their husbands... they keep it secret. Because they think that in a way or another they would
Rasha immediately associated Helen’s myth with incidents from her country. This meant that Helen’s myth became for Rasha a vehicle to discuss issues that preoccupy women in Egypt. One of these issues was the shame Egyptian women feel for things for which they are not responsible. According to Rasha, once a woman has been raped she is destined to feel ashamed and suffer under a bad reputation throughout her entire life. In a sense, a raped woman is, firstly, victimized by the rapist who has exerted strong physical violence on her and, secondly, she endures another kind of emotional victimization by friends, husband or other family members who distance themselves because rape has ‘soiled’ her, it has made her ‘impure’.

In order to discuss more thoroughly the association between rape and impurity, Rasha examined the scene in Euripides’s Helen where Menelaus asked Helen for proof of her purity. In a sense, Menelaus wanted from Helen a sign that she had not slept with another man. Rasha pointed out the absurdity (or stupidity) of such a demand:

When he found her she told him that she’s pure and kept herself to him and nothing happened and he asked her about a proof and I keep thinking... What is that proof? (laughter) How can a woman provide to her husband that she hasn’t another relationship or an intercourse with another one? ... And what if she was forced to have an intercourse? Or she was raped? Does this make her impure? Or she betrayed her husband or something like that... How can we judge her? It’s interesting because it’s not something that just happened in the past... What will happen after their return home? Will they continue their relationship? As if nothing happened?

Rasha remembered the story of an actual rape victim. When the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait in 1990, an Iraqi officer raped an Egyptian woman who lived in Kuwait and worked as a doctor. The husband of the woman sympathized with her at the beginning but eventually he decided to divorce her. As Rasha said ‘they couldn’t continue their relationship, it was as if something broke...’ What broke was the husband’s ‘belief’ that his wife was ‘pure’. Rasha explained that, apart from causing extreme sadness, Egyptian women pay an extra heavy price for their divorce: their families disininherit them and forbid them to come back home.

Helen’s submissive behaviour towards her husband in Euripides’s Helen reflected the situation of women in Egypt and therefore presented Rasha with a good opportunity to
critique the complete annihilation of an Egyptian woman’s subjectivity. If subjectivity partly means that we are entitled to express personal opinions about any subject matter, then Helen in Helen seemed to have abandoned any claim for subjectivity. When I asked Rasha if she perceived a change in Helen’s character throughout the play, she insinuated that Helen never moved from a passive to a more active and confrontational position.

she’s the same from the first part to the last part... If I were her I wouldn’t act the same. I have to question what I heard from my husband. There are no changes in her views or her attitudes or her acts. I think it’s not normal. If my husband after all the disasters I have passed came and asked me about a proof of being pure. I have to question that. If my husband hasn’t done anything about my daughter and sees that it’s not something important to him I have to question that. If my husband tells me that he will kill me in order not to marry someone else and at the same time I tell him that I love him, how I suffer in this situation I have to question that... If I know that someone loves me and does his best for my happiness and bla bla bla and then acts in a different way you should question that... It’s like you stopped the thing... to see clearly.

To my understanding, Rasha’s perception of Helen drew images from the archetype of the Daughter archetype. As I have suggested earlier, the Daughter or Maiden archetype has been imprinted in our consciousness through the mythical character of Persephone, the daughter of the nature goddess Demeter. Unconsciously, the myth generates the sense that Persephone is an innocent, passive and weak character. She does not have personal agency over her life because, firstly, she has no physical power to fight against the sexual desire of Hades and, secondly, she does not have the means or rhetoric skills to contradict Zeus and break the treaty with Hades. Many aspects of Rasha’s interpretation of Helen evoked images of female victimization which is the main characteristic of the archetype of the Daughter. For Rasha, Helen was predominantly defined by what other men wanted from her and less from what she desired herself. In other words: Just as in the case of Persephone, Helen’s being, who she was and what she wanted was always determined by two powerful men. Paris had kidnapped Helen to satisfy his sexual pleasure and Menelaus demanded from her signs of purity in order to restore his broken pride. What Helen desired, according to Rasha, was always related to her family life: she wanted to give her daughter and husband all the love she could give.
At the final stage of our character-creation I asked Rasha to write down the most significant events of the myth of Helen. The description of the basic events or scenes unconsciously led each performer to realize that the myth had a certain order and language. The language and order of the myth was a source from which the performer could draw ideas for the construction of her personal order and language of her narrative. In other words, the myth provided the performer with an original language and the performer had to use the pattern of this original language to create her own personal dialect for the communication of her story of Helen. Whilst writing the events, Rasha imagined that Helen returned home after the Trojan War and realised that her closest people were not only compassionate with her abduction but blamed her for it. Rasha’s narrative for Helen employed images of helplessness, shame and fear of social expulsion.

Apart from being beautiful or trying to convince the others that you are the most beautiful mythical woman in the world, I want Helen to be more human... I feel that she’s a victim of the war. Many women have suffered from this and they’re still suffering. Many prisoner women in Iraq are raped by American soldiers and they get pregnant and they have children and in our countries it is a shame really to have a child without marriage... It is something that society can never accept. Many women suffer from that. From that feeling of shame. And the society tends to accuse the victim. And this is the point I want to highlight. When a woman is raped, she shouldn’t be ashamed. Even if the closest person to you is pushing you to believe that... the victim should struggle not to get into that trap. I see Helen from this point of view. Helen is a good woman, she’s a strong woman so she should put an end to that.

Rasha’s narrative took the form of a feminist mission. Because many Egyptian women choose to scorn and accuse victims of rape, Rasha found that as a victimized Helen she could make a plea to everyone (particularly women) to put themselves in the situation of the victim and either feel sympathy or realize the extent of the emotional damage. Victims of rape need consolation and emotional support. If they are repudiated or totally abandoned, they decide to deal with rape in silence. Silence not only intensifies the victim’s emotional pain, it also encourages rapists to strike again. ‘When they choose to stop telling anyone and keep it secret. And this doesn’t help you know, to overcome the situation for her and for other victims. And stop the criminal.’
3.5. **Creating the Helen Character with Simsim Lai: Helen as a Trickster Archetype.**

According to Kim and Rasha, Helen faced a tragedy either because she took fatal decisions or because she was raped and faced social rejection. The general atmosphere or mood of Kim and Rasha’s interpretation was bleak, dark and at times profoundly heartbreaking. Simsim Lai’s reading of Helen’s myth was very different to Rasha and Kim’s interpretation because she utilised humour, subversion and parody. This meant that whilst Simsim was talking about Helen, the Trickster archetype had taken possession of her and guided her to create her interpretation of Helen. The Trickster archetype not only offers comic relief in moments of despair, grief and sadness but also debunks certain myths about life, death, marriage, love, sex etc. The Trickster invites us to laugh at our fears and insecurities, to laugh at the fact that we are tragic protagonists of our life-drama.

Jonathan D. Hill, an explorer of Trickster archetypes in Amazonian and African rituals, explains how Tricksters subvert the literality of language: ‘Amazonian and Afro-American tricksters are a semiotic process of playing with the distinction between literal and tropic meanings. Mythic tricksters open up the conceptual distinction between the interpretation of words and other signs as merely semantic or referential vehicles’ (2002: 73). The breaking apart of literality allows for multiple images and figurations to enter into language, figurations that engender in Hill’s terms a ‘reflexive, interpretive distancing between the acting subject and the immediate situation’ (ibid). To my understanding, the Trickster’s exercise of ‘interpretive distancing’ refers to the choices we make in our interpretation of situations, texts, myths. When presented with a certain situation, we are supposed to interpret the situation and perform a certain action. We can choose to interpret the situation literally or reflect and look at it from a distance. If we interpret the situation from a distance, if we use humour and joke about it (or let the Trickster archetype inspire our reflective abilities), we can either negate or pluralize the literal meanings of the situation.

The difference between literal and distanced interpretations occurred while the performers interpreted Helen’s myth. Both Kim and Rasha had decided to empathize with Helen’s suffering, they had sensed or understood literally what it meant for Helen to become a victim of fate, to be the source of blame and hatred. Simsim, on the other hand, chose not to get too emotionally involved in her interpretation of Helen’s sources. She examined Helen’s
myth with a certain critical distance, a distance that empowered her to unveil the hidden intentions behind Helen’s behaviour. In the first day of our rehearsal, Simsim pointed out that Helen’s long and repetitive monologues about her sorrowful state intended to force (or hypnotize) the audience to feel sympathy or pity for her.

I found it really funny... The people say ‘you’re assuming the worse, it may never happen’ but she’s so self-traumatizing. I mean of course it’s a trauma and a disaster... But she’s saying... ‘Oh I’m a disaster to you. I’m a disaster to everyone and I’m really bad’... And it is really funny to hear people saying ‘Actually you’re not.’ Of course she’s important but let’s think... a girl in the street... She says ‘Oh I’m a disaster, I’m so traumatizing, I’m doing these things’ and then you think ‘Oh my God you think you’re so important’ (laughter)

Simsim demystified Helen and made us notice that at times endless mourning is a way to draw attention, a way to nurture our egoism and vanity. Trickster archetypes have the capacity to reveal something truthful behind the intentions of certain behaviours, they draw the curtain and illuminate the absurdity and futility of certain actions or statements. In her book *Fools Are Everywhere* (2001), Beatrice K. Otto describes many stories that celebrate the ability or talent of the jester or trickster to manifest the impossibility of certain laws or orders imposed by rulers or kings. For instance: if a king put into effect a law that was completely impractical, the role of the jester was to make him aware of his foolishness and point out the bizarre consequences of his law. The king laughed at himself and then usually changed the law (115).

Simsim wanted to parody Helen’s myth. For Linda Hutcheon, parody is ‘one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance’ (2000: 85). Simsim wanted to highlight the discursive aspects of Helen’s existence. She wanted to expose the process of building a Helen character and, in particular, to showcase ‘how’ one becomes Helen, ‘what’ makes one Helen, in what particular context and for what purposes exist Helen’s representations. She was not interested in the idea of “I want to be a Helen that deals with this issue, this experience of my life etc.”:

I’m more interested about how we talk about Helen... It doesn’t matter who she is. It doesn’t matter what the historical Helen is... She is like a myth... It’s so misty, like
fog... haze... What interests me is going to be how I’m going to be a Helen. That is more interesting than I embody Helen... How I understand Helen... It is more my perception... Almost like self-analysing myself from my background... What makes it Helen to me instead of like I embody Helen, to act Helen... How am I going to become a Helen or how am I going to help people think I’m Helen... For me that is the process itself... or how I embody myself to become a Helen... How am I Helen... That is more interesting to me because I have to see light: What is Helen for me and what is not Helen for me. [my italics]

Simsim’s desire to explore the discursive aspects of Helen’s beauty stemmed perhaps from a personal experience at an old people’s home. Whilst doing movement work with old people as part of an assignment for her MFA in Theatre Practice, she noticed an old man who had a stroke and could not move, eat or talk. The man was noticeable not only because he wore a napkin or couldn’t eat properly but mainly because he was trying to molest every woman in his vicinity. Simsim’s first impression was very negative: ‘there’s saliva and sneezing and you see him touching other women... You find that terribly disgusting’. But then something beautiful happened. ‘I asked him to look at me and we moved... and I saw that he’s really doing stuff like really working on the body and things... and that for me is beautiful... because he’s not pretending to be something... at that time he was really communicating with me... and that for me is beautiful’. The experience made Simsim think of the paradoxes that exist in our understanding of beauty and ugliness: if a beautiful young man touches women this may seem justified or acceptable, if an old derelict man does the same it is inappropriate and disgusting. Simsim questioned the distinction between the way things are and the way things appear.

When we see the outer we also determine the inner automatically... If you’re old does it mean that you’re not desirable? ... Maybe Helen is just beautiful... actually she’s terribly stupid... Maybe she’s really stupid... Really really... She’s stupid because she cannot handle anything...She’s flirting with men... they kidnap her to Egypt.

Simsim discussed further the paradoxical and deceptive nature of appearances when she related her favourite fairy-tale, the *Beauty and the Beast*. Simsim argued that the dark and bleak aspects of Beauty’s imprisonment have been transformed in the Disney appropriation of the tale into something beautiful and enjoyable. In other words, the violence enacted
through unlawful imprisonment is either completely erased, beautified or presented as justified. As Simsim put it: ‘Now according to law we’re not allowed to keep someone... It’s illegal... It’s almost like kidnapping but in the story “it makes it so romantic with roses everywhere and such a castle with nice piano and all the books and nice furniture, nice dress, nice food”... It makes it justified... But... YOU KEEP SOMEONE FOREVER (laughter)’. When we recognised the ‘hidden violence’ of the tale, Simsim and I laughed out loudly because the intended meanings of the tale were subverted and an unexpected, harsh but truthful message emerged: that a young woman should sacrifice her freedom in order to save her father and transform the Beast into a beautiful prince. Simsim explained with irony why the fairy-tale had a strong appeal on her in spite of its darkness and messages of female subjugation.

In the fairy tale... I’m against the hidden violence... It is very strong and I’m against it and what is interesting is... I still like the story... I like to be violently treated... (Laughter)... I like to be put in a castle. I like that. I like to be in the castle dressed beautifully. With a very handsome man... It’s very funny actually... I’m against the whole principle but I still enjoy the whole story.

Simsim’s remarks were honest, humorous, and caused great laughter in all our rehearsals. While we were laughing, we came closer and felt more interconnected. As Jean Shinoda Bolen writes: ‘in the shared laughter, there is a sense of commonality about vulnerabilities and strengths’ (2001: 105).


When the first phase of character-creation had ended, I asked the performers to write a Helen monologue. This Helen monologue was meant to provide a first sense of how the performers had imagined their Helen characters. The monologue was supposed to give voice and visual form to their unique understanding and interpretation of Helen. The performers performed
their monologues in front of the group and in this way presented the key emotional experiences and physical actions of their Helen characters not only through the language of their writing but also through movements, gestures, voice and facial expressions. I will now describe how the performers’ physical representation of their characters created further archetypal images of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes.

Kim’s monologue (Appendix Three) was written in the style of the interior monologue, i.e. Helen was not addressing someone other than herself. In the monologue, Kim’s Helen character remembered the main incidents of her journey to Troy, from the moment she left home till the outbreak of the Trojan War. The archetypal images of the Queen emerged in the writing as well as the physical expression of Kim’s body. Whilst recounting the incidents, Helen wore a ‘purple ceremonial dress’ and prepared herself to sharpen the swords of Paris and Menelaus. Her movements were slow and calculated creating the sense that she was performing a ritual. Her posture seemed very composed and her diction very clear and solemn. The writing was poetic and highlighted Helen’s sense of guilt. For instance, having taken in her hands one of the swords, Helen spoke with a choked voice: ‘One of them will die. And my tears will drown him. How could you, my dear lovers, my dear husbands? How could you let me clean your weapons? Are you blind? Do you trust me?’ Whilst watching Kim perform her Helen, I was thinking that this Helen character was acknowledging that the Trojan War was her fault. Her last sentence or concluding thought (‘And Menelaus, please... show mercy on him... But please do not show mercy on me...’) in correlation with her physical action of choosing to sharpen Menelaus’s sword only (which meant that Menelaus had more chances to kill Paris), pointed out her need to sacrifice herself and Paris. This double sacrifice would be her punishment for her inability to perform her royal duties.

The physical expression of Rasha’s Helen character presented signs of the humble and emotionally injured Daughter Archetype. Her back was slightly tilted, her steps were heavy, insecure and restless. Rasha explained the reason of her character’s restlessness in the stage directions of her monologue (Appendix Three): ‘After her returning, Helen found herself isolated. Even her daughter avoids her and she feels as lonely as in her exile. She couldn’t sleep for weeks...’ Rasha clarified that her Helen character was ‘surrounded by ghosts, surrounded by menace... she’s in an ocean, she doesn’t know what to do. Should she swim or should she wait to be rescued? She doesn’t know’. The experiences of menace, sleeplessness, dizziness, uncertainty, darkness, all these experiences reminded strongly Persephone’s sense of loss in the underworld. But against Persephone’s silence, her complete surrender to her
tragic fate, Rasha’s Helen character summoned her power and intellectual strength to address one monologue to her daughter and one to her husband. Both her daughter and her father had chosen to scorn her for letting herself become a raped woman. In the monologue towards her daughter, she therefore pleaded for more compassion: ‘I can’t help the bad reputation, to be surrounded by the suspicious glances everywhere, but what I can’t bear the most is your accusation.’ In her monologue towards Menelaus, Helen used strong poetic metaphors to argue her point: ‘When the long nights besieged me tightly, the only thing could give me strength and resistance is that lovely dream! That someday, my husband would come and take me away from all this! And after all, I am still jailed and you are my jailer!’

Simsim’s performance of her Helen monologue (Appendix Three) developed poetic elements that subverted habituated meanings. On the paper, Simsim’s monologue had an incomprehensible narrative whose purpose was (I think) to convince people of the innocence of Helen. In order to help Simsim construct a narrative beyond the sentences of her text, I underlined certain phrases from her monologue and asked her to improvise a short performance with these phrases. Simsim asked Kim to shout at her the phrases I had underlined and speak the remaining text. The performance started when Kim shouted the phrase ‘Yes I am Helen’ and Simsim repeated the phrase with a shrilling, high-pitched voice. Simsim started then running to and fro in the rehearsal space whispering the text that was left out, the text I had not underlined and shouting the text I had underlined. Simsim found a coffin (it was probably a prop from a previous performance) and started jumping in and out of it, she closed herself inside it and carried it around her as if it were a common wooden box. Simsim had created a narrative for her Helen character that exercised a strong subversive and disruptive power. By the end of her performance, I sensed that Simsim had somehow incorporated in her performance the shape-shifting or metamorphic abilities of the Trickster archetype. For me, it was not clear who her Helen character really was: was she a madwoman, a funny clown, a woman who desperately tried to hide her guilt, or all of these faces put together in one single multifaceted and multitalented female body?

After performing the monologues, we could sense that each performer had created a unique Helen character that summarized and embodied her interpretation of Helen’s myth. For the next step in the process of character-creation, I asked the performers to improvise dialogue or interactions with each other as Helens. The purpose of the improvisations was to investigate what kind of tensions or discrepancies could take place when the Helen characters met each other. The meeting of the Helen characters could provide an opportunity to the performers to reveal hidden or unexpected aspects of their characters. I also wanted to find
out whether the Helen characters would feel at times compassionate with each other. Their compassionate moments would help me clarify the point of their ‘ethical interconnection’ and then guide me to determine the theme of my script.

However, because I was totally inexperienced in organizing improvisations, I made many mistakes at this stage of character-creation. One of these mistakes was that I did not let the performers know the exact purpose of the improvisations. I had not informed the performers that the improvisations could produce further knowledge on their characters such as awareness of hidden unexpected sides, readiness to share their pain or general beliefs, incapacities to communicate, revelation of personal traumas, fragile aspects of their psychology etc. In fact, my main mistake was that I had not tried to give themes to our improvisations, themes that appear in the myth of Helen of Troy such as the theme of being the most beautiful woman in the world, the theme of feeling guilty or not guilty for the Trojan War, the theme of betrayal, the theme of losing loved ones in the Trojan War etc. I also did not give any information about the space of their meeting or the reason of their meeting: were they meeting in Troy, Sparta, somewhere between, in a modern bar? Why were they suddenly confronted with another version of Helen? How could they face the fact that each Helen was not the only Helen that existed in the world? Without giving a theme to the improvisations or providing information on where and why the Helen characters suddenly met, the performers were at times uncertain of what they were supposed to do and improvise.

In spite of the mistakes, I gathered very valuable material from the improvised interactions. For instance: Rasha and Kim’s Helen character did eventually enter into a debate about their personal responsibility in the Trojan War. Their debate and arguments proved not only the strength of their rhetoric skills but also brought up the main differences between the archetypal images of the Queen and the Daughter archetype. Kim’s Helen character focussed more on how she could become a better queen for her people, whereas Rasha’s Helen character was more concerned about her personal contribution in the Trojan War. I quote below a passage from the improvisations in order to show how widely different were the performers’ attitudes towards the Trojan War.

Kim: Only when you know how many people hate you... It’s only then you can know how much you love yourself. Because that’s the only thing you’ve got then, isn’t it?

(Beat.)

So that’s why I always shut you up, when you start telling me how
much you hate yourself. Because I just can’t bear to hear that...

Rasha: Don’t you feel responsible? For the death of the people. For the collapse of two great countries?

Kim: Oh yeah... I feel responsible. But me whining about it, is not going to make it any better...

Rasha: Can’t you see... Can’t you see the disasters? All around you?

Kim: Is me feeling sorry for them... Is it going to bring their mothers back? It’s not isn’t it? Me taking decisions, is going to make it better. Killing Paris is going to make it better... Me crying about it is not.

Simsim’s Helen character did not take part in the debate over responsibility. Inspired by the straightforwardness of the Trickster archetype, she pointed out how futile, absurd and impractical was this kind of debate. From the very first improvisation, Simsim’s Helen character told the other Helens that they were nothing but drama-queens. She told them ‘You’re such a melodrama’ and then burst out crying in a fake/hysterical way, shouting at the other two Helen characters phrases they had used in their monologues. She embraced the Helen characters and screamed at their faces. In a sense, Simsim re-enacted moments from the narratives of Kim and Rasha’s Helen characters in a style that was emotionally excessive and very caustic. Kim and Rasha were disturbed by Simsim’s performance and for one minute they stood paralysed in the rehearsal space. As soon as they recovered their senses, they started arguing about marriage and infidelity (Kim: You know I once had two lovers at the same time. Rasha: Oh, you didn’t waste time. Kim: Haven’t you ever thought of any other man than your husband. Rasha: I’m not interested in... sex). Simsim was not interested in their arguments and preferred to pass her time with tumbling.

The performers’ movements, arguments, speeches and behaviours presented personal subjective ideas or philosophies of life which were not unrelated to their cultural background. For instance, Kim’s decision to highlight personal power and agency in her monologue as well as improvised interactions corresponded with the fact that she was coming from a cultural background that values feminist issues more than Egyptian society. On the other hand, Rasha’s constant lament over her weak position or her tendency to agree with the old-fashioned beliefs that female beauty is a source of evil (‘I hate my beauty. It’s my crime’ said Rasha’s Helen) or her idea that a woman is a whore when she engages in extramarital affairs showed that some prejudices of Egyptian society had influenced strongly the embodiment of her Helen character. Having resisted the embodiment of one specific Helen position from the
binaries victim Helen/personal agent Helen, passive Helen/active Helen, involved Helen/not involved Helen, etc, Simsim desired to mock and ridicule Kim and Rasha’s tragic Helen figures, she moved around the rehearsal space aimlessly, she ate biscuits, she never spoke or argued her points in the logical and coherent ways of the other Helen characters.

I sensed that Simsim’s Helen character seemed dislocated and dissociated from the other Helen characters. This dissociation gave the sense that she was an outsider or an outcast. Beatrice K. Otto has suggested that Tricksters live as outcasts and therefore are empowered to see the truth in things more clearly. She quotes a Chinese proverb: “The fool knows the truth because he is a social outcast, and spectators see most of the game” (2000: 100). Simsim’s playfulness and strange behaviour may have isolated her from the other Helens but her isolation produced a thought-challenging insight on the ‘game’ of human conditioning. Behind her wild and enormous freedom of expression, Simsim triggered a reconsideration or re-evaluation of the norms, dogmas and boundaries that constitute the human or the female gender more specifically. She provided a sense of the human as ‘something other than what it is traditionally assumed to be’ (Butler 2004: 35), something never entirely fixed, in a mode of constant becoming or as Butler would have suggested ‘open to fundamental transformation in the gendered order of things’ (2004: 34). Simsim’s unconventional Helen character annoyed and bewildered Kim and Rasha. They either tried to tame or contain her in their own understandings of Helen. But Simsim had also a positive influence on them because she inspired them to think critically of their lives and become self-ironic. As I will clarify later, in the second draft of my script I intended to evoke in the Helen characters a desire for self-irony in order to create a stronger sense of communication between them.


The writing of the first draft of the script occurred after I had watched and studied carefully the recordings of all the stages of character-creation. Whilst watching the recorded rehearsals my aim was to determine to which archetype belonged the performer’s perception and embodiment of Helen. This meant that I was trying to dissect or discover how the images of the spontaneous intellectual as well as physical responses of the performers were related to
the Daughter, Trickster, Queen. My decision to identify which archetypes were activating the Helen characters of the performers supported the writing of my script in these ways:

a. When the performers finished with the improvisations, I entered the period of writing the script. The performers had given me their material and I had to use it to create three Helen characters for my script. I explored how the performers’ material corresponded with archetypes in order to use their material and organise it in the creation of my own Helen characters. The reason why the three archetypes helped me in the organization of my writing was because they function in a similar way as concepts which, according to Ernst Cassirer, have the capacity to organize certain indefinite or chaotic sensory and emotional impressions into definite linguistic forms so that we can refer to these forms and remind ourselves that such form contains this set of sensory or emotional impressions. For Cassirer, every idea, experience, image or thing can only exist as long as it is acknowledged as a category or organizing principle within a particular order or system: ‘an apparently singular fact becomes known, understood and conceptually grasped only in so far as it is “subsumed” under a general idea, recognized as a “case” of a law or as a member of a manifold or a series’ (1953: 26). By categorizing (or by enclosing) the performers’ responses into the archetypes of Trickster, Daughter and Queen, I was enabled to use these archetypes as a vehicle to access or refer to the emotional experiences of my personal and the collective unconscious. The performers presented their views and embodiments of Helen, I interpreted these embodiments as archetypal images that operate in three archetypes and then I used the emotional power of the archetypes to create three dramatic Helen characters in my script. In other words, the archetypes provided a kind of language with which the performers and I exchanged information on the emotional experiences of the Helen characters, they were a tool that helped me realize the emotional properties of the performers’ Helen characters, emotional properties which I processed and developed further in the Helen characters of my script.

b. By trying to interpret and define which archetype personified the responses of each performer, I wanted to look for further material that could elucidate and clarify more the archetypal images of the Helen characters of the performers. For instance: Rasha’s Helen character directed me to look for further material on female victimization, particularly female victimization in association with war,
captive and hostage-taking. I read Etty Hillesum’s *Etty: A Diary 1941-1943* (1981/85) in which Hillesum wrote about her imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp and Ingrid Betancourt’s *Letter to My Mother: A Message of Love, a Plea for Freedom* (2008) which contained letters that Ingrid Betancourt exchanged with her mother and daughter while she was held hostage under the guerrilla group FARC from 2002-2008. In the letters, Betancourt describes the dark and profoundly desolate experience of her captivity inside the Amazonian jungle. In order to obtain information on the Queen Archetype I watched the Channel 4 docudrama *The Queen* (2009) which described certain issues that can torment royal families.

As we have seen in my first practical research project, as soon as I started writing my script I started creating a story that could contain and give life to my own Helen characters. My drive to create a story for this script led me to think about the space, place or the time where the Helen characters could appear and make aware their presences. Since all the performers’ Helen characters reproduced in their narratives images of war, blood, violence, despair, fatal passions, I figured that death could be the place where the Helen characters met each other. When I started writing the first draft of the script, I situated the Helen characters in a place of death, a place that had an indefinite time and space.

The indeterminate space of death invoked the sense that the Helen characters possessed a tendency towards transgression and introspection. The Helen characters seemed to have transgressed the boundaries of life and death because in spite of the fact that they were dead, they spoke and communicated as living people. The aliveness of their dead bodies produced the sense that they were eternally endowed with speech, movement, life and a desire to reflect about their lives and their deaths. In a sense, the Helen characters shared similar characteristics with the characters of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *In Camera* (1944) who were also dead and occupied a room in the dark and infinite space of death. However, in my script I did not want the space of death to be a cold environment where characters are eternally trapped to remember their failures and project their insecurities onto each other (as happens in Sartre’s play I think). I wanted death to represent a tranquil or silent environment where the Helen characters could find some peace to tell their stories and discuss their lives. I imagined that death would encourage the Helen characters to assume a self-reflective mode through which they could present and weave into their dialogues or monologues the texts or ideas that were generated by the performers during our rehearsals as well as new texts written
by myself.

Whilst I was combining these texts in my writing, my dramaturgical aim or purpose was to reveal gradually to the audience member how the Helen characters begun to establish a sense of who they were in the obscure space of death. Expatriated from their usual dwelling places, situated within an unfamiliar, unknown space, surrounded by Helen characters who shared the same name but not the same past or back-stories, the Helen characters reflected on their lives and circumstances of their deaths. The Helen 1 and Helen 2’s back-story (i.e. the story of their lives before death) was constructed around the basic events of the performers’ narratives. For instance: Helen 1’s back-story was based on Kim’s narrative of a Helen that had left Sparta to follow Paris; Helen 2’s back-story was based on Rasha’s story of a Helen that was raped and driven away by her relatives. As Simsim’s Helen character had a narrative that was very open-ended, invited multiple interpretations, and criticized our desire to watch romance and drama, I decided to develop her Helen character into an old hybrid woman who had a love affair with death; she could speak three different languages, made ironic remarks, performed acrobatics, had rude manners, annoyed the other Helen characters, philosophized on love and the artificial character of life (‘We’re all made out of paper waiting to be delivered’).

My next dramaturgical purpose was to expand and enrich the narratives of the Helen characters by implementing in their narratives images, actions, movements and emotional experiences of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes. This step in the writing of the script required the use of my own archetypal resources as a writer, i.e. I had to reflect how I could integrate into my script archetypal images of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes. In other words, I had to configure how the Helen characters would process and develop their archetypal characteristics (i.e. the emotional components of their archetypes) in the story of my script. My last step in the writing of the script was to find points of empathy between the Helen characters, to discover how the characters could enter a process of sensing or reading parts of their own personal tragedy in the tragedy of the other Helens. In the first and second draft of the script, I was not able to find or work into my script moments of empathy as every Helen character was (in an egotistical manner) focussed in the narration of her story and nothing else. I will now give examples to explain how I incorporated into the narratives of the three Helen characters action-patterns of their archetypes and why empathy became impossible.

Whist Helen 1 (inspired by the Queen archetype) gradually started to remember her story, her unconscious intention was to control or dominate the space through a constant
reference to her passion for Paris, her desire, her mistakes. My main concern as a writer was to voice and articulate her emotional conflict in phrases that sounded like sayings of important people: ‘When a queen decides to leave her kingdom. To neglect her duties. To give space to her own personal and singular ethics as a woman. She lets down. She disappoints’ ([1st Draft] Helen(s) 4). Driven by my assumption that queens (no matter where they are from) carry an air of self-importance, I infiltrated in Helen 1 an unconscious desire to over dramatize the tragic events of her life, to point out the spectacular nature of her life and death. Whilst Helen 1 was remembering her death (which carried a strong symbolic significance as she was decapitated by her husband in the fields of her kingdom), her language was wrapped in poetic imagery: ‘My head rolled and rolled until it reached the sea and disappeared in the water’ (ibid 21). In her effort to recount her story, Helen 1 rarely paid attention to the other Helen characters or experienced an interest to empathise with their stories. Helen 2, on the other hand, wanted to force empathy from the other Helen characters. Helen 2’s death was a suicide that occurred when she left home and wandered alone in the desert. Drawing energy from the passivity and deeply traumatized Daughter Archetype, Helen 2 did not possess the strength to overcome her painful memories and therefore suffered even after her death from their remembrance. In order to alleviate her pain, Helen 2 performed a distancing technique: she insisted that Helen 1 or Helen 3 had suffered from the violence and brutality of her rapists, she constantly entreated them to remember and confess the abuse she herself had endured when she was taken to Troy against her will: ‘He pushed you against the wall. He slapped you. He was hurting you. Both physically and emotionally. There was no tenderness. These men... Don’t you remember their faces? Their ugliness was incredible. Why can’t you admit it?’ (ibid 7). Blinded by the feeling of injustice or blinded by her desperate plea for sympathy or consumed even by her need to raise awareness, she thought that Helen 1 and 3 were rape victims that tried to forget or deny their horrible experiences. Helen 2 begged them to admit their experiences, if not for their own good then for the good of all women who may have a similar fate (ibid 8). In this sense, Helen 2 could not acknowledge the presences and stories of the other Helen characters and therefore had chosen consciously or unconsciously not to empathise with them. The character of Helen 3 was not only trying to retain an emotional distance from Helen 1 and Helen 2, she also attempted (consciously or unconsciously) to distract or prevent any audience member or reader of my script from empathising and/or sympathising with Helen 1 and Helen 2. Helen 3’s intention throughout the script was to incite the audience member or reader to think critically about the representation of suffering by Helen 1 and Helen 2. Helen 3 developed a
parodic technique which is also used in Italo Calvino’s novel *If On A Winter’s Night A Traveller* (1982). In this novel, a character or voice of indistinct nature interrupts the narration of the events in order to discuss, analyse and comment on the reader’s relationship with the characters, the reader’s emotional response towards the events – this character unconsciously critiques and/or parodies the usual empathetic or voyeuristic reading of a novel. Apart from demystifying Helen 1 and Helen 2 through constant ridicule or debasement, Helen 3 attempted to persuade the reader or the audience member to reconsider why he/she sits in the theatre to listen to their stories, what is their significance for our everyday life, what kind of memories has he/she been projecting in their narratives. Helen 3’s phrase ‘You’re both deeply depressed. Deluded. And... driven by a desire to... A desire to... to... to repeat the drama of your death’ ([1st Draft] *Helen(s)*, 15) was not only addressed to Helen 1 and Helen 2 (which in the space of death eternally recounted their tragic stories) but also to a potential reader or audience member who will never lose interest in the drama, passion and death of characters.

In spite of the fact that all Helen characters felt towards the end of the play the need to fall asleep and experience some kind of warmth and solidarity in the eternity of death, the first draft of the script produced the sense that the characters were unable to empathise with one another. I had not discovered or worked sufficiently on the concept that could bring together the dissonant voices of the characters, the idea for which the characters could either summon their emotional forces to speak out in unison or encounter a profound confrontation that could shake or alter their viewpoints. This concept or idea was the key dramaturgical issue that had to be explored and clarified in the script. When Graham Ley read the first draft, he suggested that the clarification of this concept could have provided an anchor of meaning behind the coexistence of the characters, a sense of purpose behind the Helen characters’ willingness or desire to narrate their stories. The uncertainty surrounding the script’s concept could invite an audience-member to question or look desperately for the motive behind the characters’ desire to tell their stories to each other.

Graham Ley’s comments helped me identify which aspects of the script needed more development. In my effort to establish a concept for the second draft of my script, which is included in Volume Two of my thesis, I imagined that the Helen characters suffered in various ways from social injustice and that in the space of death they had found an opportunity to transform their sadness to self-irony and fictionalization, i.e. they found a kind of relief in treating their tragedies as fiction. In order to intensify the sense of injustice enacted upon the bodies of the Helen characters I added certain events to their narratives,
events that evoked very strong emotional experiences of disappointment, loss, bereavement, frustration, betrayal, isolation. For instance: in the narrative of Helen 2, I wove in the fact that she had secretly been exchanged between her husband and the prince of Troy in order to create an excuse for war, a war that would determine which country would exploit more the resources of the other. Helen 3’s narrative also acquired a clearer structure in the second draft because she was now a Chinese queen that had suffered a strong injustice because of her strange sense of humour. As her humour was inappropriate for her position she was forced to resign, her son was taken away from her and she was violently deported to a desolate island. Given that Helen 3 was still under the influence of the Trickster archetype, she constantly ridiculed and disrupted the emotional tension caused by the remembrance of the tragic events. In her effort to discharge the negative energy from her tragedy, she laughed at her memories and seemed dispassionate towards them.

In their attempts to fight against Helen 3’s strange or unusual ways of dealing with her tragedy, Helen 1 and 2 either accused her of heartlessness or tried to stifle her or invented or narrated Helen 3’s tragic events for her ((2nd Draft) Helen(s), 85). Whilst Helen 1 and 2 were recounting these events, Helen 3 watched them silently. There was irony in this moment as Helen 3 who was personally involved in the tragic events refused to interfere in the narration of her life-story by Helen 1 and 2. Helen 1 and 2 were so overwhelmed and consumed by their desire to tell Helen 3’s story that they were not interested to know if these events were real or imagined. When Helen 1 and 2 started consoling Helen 3 the only answer she gave was: ‘Can we please change the subject?’ (ibid 86), insinuating that consolations are pretentious and generating a sense of uncertainty in her reaction. Were these events lies? Did she want to change the subject because she was bored or was she sad about the truth of the events and therefore wanted to avoid revisiting them? By raising question marks behind Helen 3’s emotional response, I wanted to distort the truthfulness of the events in order to argue the point that ‘after all everything is fiction’. Towards the end of the second draft, Helen 3 invited Helen 1 and 2 to approach their tragedies as fiction, to see their eventful and tragic lives from a different perspective, a perspective that could trigger more contemplation on personal responsibility. Helen 3 was prompting Helen 1 and 2 to position themselves outside of their tragic stories, to obtain an external eye and read their tragedies as something narrated, something fictional. In this way, they could enable themselves to keep an emotional distance from their memories, an emotional distance that would allow them to realize their own contribution in the making of their tragedies.

The second draft of the script ended with Helen 1, Helen 2 and Helen 3 smiling and
laughing. I wanted to create the sense that they had entered a process of depersonalization, a process that could transform their egocentric or self-indulgent victimization to something more positive and open to interrelatedness and empathy. In a sense, Helen 1 and 2 enacted a self-irony that, for Rosi Braidotti, is a ‘positive passion’ that prevents one from thinking only of him/herself and therefore creates possibilities for an ethical ‘interconnectedness’ among people. According to Braidotti, self-irony entices one to see his or her failings in a ‘non-tragic’ way, it detracts one from moaning about his/her failures, and therefore help us to become more non-judgmental (2006: 201). By practising a non-judgmental attitude towards ourselves, we move a step forward in breaking or limiting the need for judging others. If we don’t judge others according to standards set up by Western rationalistic and materialistic culture, then we acquaint ourselves better with the concept of empathy, the concept of understanding other people’s needs and desires as much as personal needs and desires.

3.8. The Rehearsed Reading, Audience Reception.

Given my inexperience in directing, the only instruction I gave the performers during rehearsals was to treat their parts as long introspective monologues with no end and no beginning, a text that was running eternally like a calm stream of water. When the monologue of a character was interrupted by her conversation with other characters, the character was not meant to talk directly to the other character but imagine the other character as an internal voice that interfered in her self-reflection. The instruction I gave was hard to follow and apply as I was not a director and therefore could not determine how I could translate my writing into a performance event, how to guide the actors to perform and transfer the actions of my text on the stage. Another problem was my inability to control and conjoin the different stage dynamics of the performers. The performers were not only coming from a different cultural background, they were also versed in different theatrical experiences. Rasha had no experiencing in acting at all, Simsim was a very well trained actor coming out of Phillip Zarilli’s psycho-physical actor-training, and Kim was more familiar with a psychological approach to acting. My role as the organizer of the rehearsed reading was to reassure the performers that the purpose of the rehearsed reading was not to find solutions for the staging or acting of the text; as with all rehearsed readings, the purpose was to present my writing to an audience in order to hear and gather their comments for the development of my text.
As I have suggested in the previous commentary, the audience members of a rehearsed reading are aware that their comments on the writing will help the writer see the weaknesses of his/her script, detect which characters need more development etc. In this sense, the audience members are actively engaged in the process of rewriting the script as they support the writer’s work through their discussions and comments. I was able to obtain a great number of comments that helped me rethink certain aspects of the script, particularly how to overcome the script’s lack of narrative cohesion and how to clarify the script’s pivotal idea or metaphor. Most audience members acknowledged that the narratives of the Helen characters were interesting and engaging but they were cautious about the clarity of their intentions. Why did the characters feel the necessity to tell their stories in the space of death? How were they related to each other? What concept linked together the characters’ willingness to narrate their stories? As William Stanton noted: ‘What’s at stake between them? What does each of them really want? If they’re dead, what can they do now?’

3.9. Conclusions.

The script of the second practical research project may have suffered from a lack of an overarching concept, but the method of its creation proved that a myth and the literature related to this myth can help a theatre group create a devised piece of performance. To my understanding, a theatre group that does devised theatre decides not to work for their performance on an already existing playtext, a well-known or published script but to create their own unique performance text through a devising process. During the devising process all the actors or performers or everyone involved in the theatre group share their ideas, write texts through automatic writing exercises, make improvisations in order to generate material for the production of their performance. When the performers and I started discussing the mythical character of Helen by reading certain passages from Euripides’s Helen, we inadvertently started a conversation around issues that concern our everyday lives such as politics, gender issues, the power of beauty, what is an ideal woman etc. In a sense, the myth of Helen encouraged us to begin a lively discussion; without the myth as a basis or trigger of discussion we would have wasted a great amount of time in trying to find ways to create a conversation about anything that was important for us. In other words, the myth gave us an opportunity to share certain opinions about the mythical characters of the myth, and these
opinions reflected personal ideologies or viewpoints on life which we would not have communicated to each other if they were not instigated by the myth. A myth or even a fairy tale can become a highly productive way to start discussions that will reveal what members of a theatre group are thinking about the world or life. Myths are always bound to raise discussions because they convey messages for our survival and therefore demand that we make them meaningful for ourselves, meaningful according to ever-changing or ever-evolving historical, cultural and socio-political circumstances.

As the commentary has tried to show, throughout the devising process the mythical character of Helen elicited some insightful and polemical responses from the performers. The performers drew from Helen’s myth meanings or ideas that resonated with their lives, their personal concerns and personal ways of living in the world. In this way, the performers enabled me to see what kind of presence or significance Helen could acquire in our contemporary world. What could be Helen’s most vital project or desire as a woman today? How were these projects and desires defined by the performers’ culture and their idiosyncratic ways of being in the world? Each performer interpreted the mythical character in her own individual way and created a Helen character that embodied that interpretation. The stimulus that was given by asking the performers to build their own Helen character shows again how a myth can guide us to express or expose certain ideologies or viewpoints on life through a form that is artistic or fictional, a form that is removed from the ‘true’ or everyday self of the performer, yet manages to contain certain aspects of the performer’s individual or personal ways of being or thinking.

The mythical character of Helen contains certain essential or structural characteristics that build the story of Helen’s myth such as the fact that Helen is the world’s most beautiful woman, she is a queen, she is related to Menelaus and Paris, she embarks on a journey to Troy, etc. When the performers were asked to embody the mythical character of Helen in improvisations, the performers embodied the essential characteristics of Helen, but also developed them further and reinterpreted them according to their own individual ways of thinking or being in the world. I explained, for instance, that Rasha’s Helen character was feeling that Helen’s beauty was partly responsible for the Trojan War (‘My beauty is my crime’) whereas Kim and Simsim’s Helen characters were less concerned about the effects of their beauty. This is a difference that reflects the performer’s unique and individual ways of processing and interpreting the material of the myth, and to a further extent also shows where the performers are coming from or what preoccupations they might have in their everyday lives. In short, Helen’s essential characteristics provided each performer with a list of
subjects or issues which the performers analysed or deconstructed through the creation of their own Helen character. In other words, the creation of the Helen character encouraged the performers to reveal what they thought about certain issues that preoccupy our lives such as beauty, war, responsibility, betrayal in marriage.

The idea of asking performers to embody Helen characters in improvisations can work with other mythical characters as well. This means that a group of performers might want to see how they can generate material for their performance by reassessing or re-evaluating other mythical or fictional characters such as Ophelia or Jesus Christ. They can stage a performance that can present three or four or five different Ophelia characters, each Ophelia arguing or discussing the reasons behind her suicide in her own unique way, each Ophelia reflecting the performer’s own ideas of why Ophelia killed herself or the performer’s personal arguments on the subjects of innocence, love and suicide. A group of performers can even experiment with gender reversal when embodying mythical characters. For instance, male performers could see how far they could create Ophelia characters or female performers could endeavour to embody the male figure of Christ. This experiment can prompt the group to reflect on the ideas that constitute gender stereotypes.

Whilst the performers of a theatre group may embody mythical characters in order to generate material for a performance, the task of the writer who will compose a text or a script for the performance is to find a way to structure or integrate the performers’ material within a specific story. Here, the project also showed that the identification of archetypes is a good method for organising and developing the raw material of the devising process. The method of identifying the archetypes behind the performers’ Helen characters can help a writer determine the archetypal energies that exist behind the performers’ material and develop them further. As I have tried to show in the commentary, the identification of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes helped the creation of my own Helen characters because the archetypes triggered a process of image creation in my unconscious. As I was thinking that the performers’ Helen characters were containing energies from the Daughter, Trickster, Queen archetypes, images from these archetypes emerged in my consciousness and I integrated these images into the ways of writing my own Helen characters.

For instance, after clarifying that Rasha’s Helen character was drawing energy from the archetype of the Daughter, certain images of abuse, pain, trauma, rape, vulnerability, captivity, passivity, weakness came to my consciousness and I created the Helen 2 character based on these images. The Helen 2 character constantly talked about the pain or abuse she had endured whilst she was a captive in Troy. But because she was deeply traumatised by her
experience as a rape victim or starving hostage within Troy, she never talked about her experiences in the first person, she projected her experiences onto the other two Helens and forced them to remember or admit their painful experiences as rape victims. Of course the other two Helens ignored her because they had not experienced rape and wanted to communicate or share their own personal experiences as Helens.

In a similar way, the Queen archetype brought to my consciousness images of authority, self-importance, power, affluence, neglecting the people’s will, dictatorship, constant effort to become influential, respect, and these images guided me to create the Helen 1 character. Helen 1 barely paid attention to the other two Helens, she craved for attention and respect, she constantly discussed her passionate affair with Paris and her failure as queen of Sparta (as if this was the most important story of all), she even went to the absurd extreme of excusing her husband’s expedition to Troy: ‘If I were my husband... I would have reacted in a similar way as he did. I would have either destroyed everything or killed myself. There is a code of honour.’ (2010: 80). The Trickster archetype communicated to my consciousness images of laughter, fun, parody, incomprehensibility, subversion, dirt, and these images inspired the construction of the Helen 3 character. While I was writing the Helen 3 character, I was constantly thinking that the aim of this character would be to make fun of the other two Helens, to break or subvert the monotonous narration of their dramatic monologues not only in order to change the atmosphere of the text, to add a different layer to it, but also in order to prevent audience members from identifying themselves with the Helen 1 and Helen 2 characters. If audience members identify themselves with characters on stage, they become too emotionally involved in what they see without thinking about the wider context of what they see on stage, without considering the politics or socio-cultural aspects that determine or shape what they see on stage. Helen 3 tried to discourage audience members from empathising or sympathising with Helen 1 and Helen 2 by acting strangely, screaming, speaking in German, telling stories whose truth was questionable, uttering incomprehensible sounds as if she were an electrical doll that suffered a massive breakdown. In this way, Helen 3 also inserted in my text a comment against naturalism or naturalistic writing, as she was constantly fighting against our need to identify with characters, to mirror ourselves in characters and draw from their stories a moral lesson for our own lives.

Apart from helping the process of writing, the identification of archetypes can also assist performers in determining the tone of voice, the gestures or movements of the characters they create during the devising process. The determination of archetypes triggers or nurtures a process of image creation in the unconscious and, therefore, performers who
realise the archetype or the archetypal energy of their character can discover archetypal images that stem from this archetype and work around these images in improvisations. The archetypal images of the archetype can guide the performers to generate more material for their characters, they can help them find a structure of movements, gestures and tone of voice. After generating material, the writer or the dramaturg is responsible for organising the material and creating a script which will form the basis of the performance. The script will unify all the different voices of the performers and direct them to serve or support an overarching concept or metaphor of the script. This means that the writer or the dramaturg will try to see how the material that was generated by the performers could work within a story that has a specific metaphor or argument. The writer or the dramaturg needs to be able to say that the material of the performers was processed in a particular way within the script in order to tell to audience members a specific story or myth. If the material of the performers reaches audience members in an unstructured or disorganised way, in a way that does not conform to any rule of storytelling, then the material becomes hazy and audience members will lose interest in it.

The delineation of the concept or metaphor will be a result of conscious thinking, a product of my will and desire to communicate something to my audience. This will or desire is partly nurtured by my unconscious, mostly it is formed according to cultural conditions, social necessities and political ideologies that surround my writing. In this sense, a further stage of rewriting my script would involve my effort to balance more efficiently in the writing of my characters the unconscious poetic elements of my Anima with the meaningful, conscious and conceptual aspects of my Animus. My conscious thinking and unconscious feeling need to cooperate, not to overshadow or cancel each other out. To speak in a metaphor: The characters should carry one away into the realm of Anima, into a trancelike repose, but this is a repose that does not hypnotize one completely but, on the contrary, awakens the Animus and encourages one to think critically about a specific ideological or existential problem. In the second practical research project, I tried to pay respects to the Anima and preserve the poetically and emotionally rich narratives of the performers in the Helen characters of my script. But my purpose as a writer would be now to find my own way through their narratives, to use their poetry and emotional complexity for the exploration of a concept or metaphor, to produce with the help of their voices an ideological evaluation of the world that surrounds me.
In her essay ‘Voice I’ (1984), Helene Cixous distinguishes two kinds of knowledge: the conceptual knowledge that is ‘the symbolic knowledge which posits before you abstract givens that you must learn... with the head’ and the ‘knowledge that cannot be without a praxis, without the experience of the body and which produces modifications’ (61). I assume that the knowledge of the body is similar to the instinctual knowledge which is a knowledge that is closely associated or includes in its practice learning through intuition. Michele Le Doeuff defines intuition as: ‘a mode of immediate apprehension, a direct intellectual grasp of something true, which is distinct from, though not necessarily radically opposed to, mediated knowledge achieved through reasoning, discussion, internal debate, dialectic, experimentation, deduction, language, applying or trying to apply some form of proof’ (1984: 4).

Young-Eisendrath defines gender in this way: ‘I regard gender categories not as universal givens, but as products of the local interpretive community that assigns meaning to sex difference, primarily to get work done and maintain social structures’ (2004: 50). For Eisendrath, gender is an element that does not have a fixed or stable essence: ‘Naturally (in the nature of being human) gender is constantly being constructed out of a variety of biological and environmental cues, and its subjectivity changes throughout the life cycle’ (ibid 51).

In her book Sexing the Body (2000), Anne Fausto-Sterling’s critical concern among others is to make clear that certain characteristics of the male or the female sex are shaped by cultural assumptions or social prejudices (5).

Toril Moi writes in her essay What is a Woman? Sex, Gender, and the Body in Feminist Theory (1999): ‘There are innumerable different ways of living with one’s specific bodily potential as a woman. I may devote myself to mountain climbing, become a ballet dancer, a model, a nurse, or a nun. I may have lots of sexual relations or none at all, have five children or none, or I may discover that such choices are not mine to make’ (66).

In her book Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics (2006), Rosi Braidotti writes that ‘alterity, otherness and difference are crucial terms of reference in poststructuralist ethics’ (13).

In her book Undoing Gender (2004), Butler emphasizes that stable norms of “femininity” or “masculinity” cannot exist as gender is constantly ‘being remade’ (10) or ‘crafted in time’ (13) according to socio-political circumstances. As soon as the power system tries to ‘settle gender once and for all’ (10) or attempts to erase differences of gender (cultural variations or other) it exercises cultural imperialism or fascism even. From a different angle, Clarissa Pinkola-Estes clarifies in her book Women Who Run With the Wolves (1992) how disrespectful to nature we become when we measure ourselves against one singular form of beauty, when we don’t respect or value the differences of our bodies: ‘There cannot be only one kind of songbird, one kind of pine tree, only one kind of wolf. There cannot be one kind of baby, one kind of man, or one kind of woman. There cannot be one kind of breast, one kind of waist, one kind of skin’ (202).

This is a Slovenian fairytale written by the Slovenian female author Svetlana Makarovic (1939-).

Here Rasha referred to the fact that in Euripides’s Helen, no one wants to marry Hermione because she is stigmatized by the belief that her mother is the cause of the Trojan War (lines 694-696).

Renata Šribar provides a thorough insight into contemporary feminist movements in Slovenia in her essay ‘Lacking Integration’ (2002).

In an interview that took place after the rehearsed reading, Simsim suggested that her embodiment of Helen was a kind of revolt, resistance or critique against Kim and Rasha’s embodiments of Helen: ‘The other two characters they represent that kind of self-suffering woman which personally I don’t think it is a justified way to represent a woman on stage. It is my personal point of view. I’m not concerned if the understand me... I don’t
think it is appropriate. It is in strong conform to what is going on everywhere. In the movies. In the novels. That kind of romanticizing suffering of a woman. Romanticizing sacrifice of a woman which I don’t think is healthy... healthy representation... That kind of romanticizing love, “loving the wrong person” “being in trouble” “that is love”... this kind of thing is everywhere. Shouldn’t we question about that?'

During the improvisations, there was a moment where Simsim’s subversive acts of criticism prompted Rasha and Kim to practice some sort of self-irony. At some point Simsim’s Helen character was fed up with the constant moaning and self-traumatisation of the other Helen characters and declared how deluded they were: ‘Don’t romanticize everything... You watch too many Hollywood movies... Too much Sex and the City’.

Rasha’s response to this was very unexpected. She stood up, took up an affirmative pose and stated: ‘I like melodrama... I am proud of being a melodrama (holding a wooden stick) I can fish in a melodramatic way. I can cook and eat in a melodramatic way. I can kill you all in a melodramatic way. I can scream in a melodramatic way ‘Ahhhhhhhhhhh’. (Kim burst into laughter.) I can laugh in a melodramatic way ‘Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha’... (A short pause. Kim and Simsim laugh and clap their hands.) I now know who I am and what I want. But... Have you thought about yourselves? Who are you?’

The other Helens laughed heartily at Rasha’s performance and Simsim congratulated Rasha for finally finding some ‘free will’. Whereas previously Rasha had assumed the position of a woman that was afraid (she kept hiding behind the chairs or sat recoiled in a corner or wanted to leave the space or wore her warm jacket on), she seemed very liberated and free whilst performing the monologue. This moment of self-irony influenced to a very great extent the writing of the second draft of the script.

The character is something like a commentator that foresees the expectations, desires or pleasures we derive from the reading of a novel. In the passage I quote below, Calvino reveals the process or mechanics of narrative construction, i.e. he shows how the character, the reader and the author are situated in the formation of the narrative: ‘For a couple of pages now you have been reading on, and this would be the time to tell you clearly whether this station where I have got off is a station of the past or a station of today; instead the sentences continue to move in vagueness, greyness, in a kind of no man’s land of experience reduced to the lowest common denominator. Watch out: it is surely a method of involving you gradually, capturing you in the story before you realize it – a trap’ (1992: 12).

Graham Ley asked me these questions in his comments: ‘Where do you think the piece is going over its extent? To put that in audience terms, what do the audience know or what have they perceived to make the journey worthwhile? To some extent, that is the same issue as the evolution of the individual characters, and the product of their exchanges - what is the product of their exchanges?’

I hope that a future director will discover many different ways to stage the text. If we consider also that each character is based on a particular archetype, I assume that a director can use this information to help him/her analyse the actions of the text.

The term ‘will’ here carries the meaning that Jung has given to ‘will’ in his book Typologie (2008). Jung understands that will stems from the act of conscious thinking or conscious motivation. The unconscious motivation of the body is not ‘will’. According to Jung, the ‘will’ is mainly influenced by culture and moral education and does not appear in the mentality of primitive people (194).
Preface to the Commentary on the Second Practical Research Project.

In the second practical research project I explored how I could write a script on the presence of Helen. The script of this research project would not describe the effects of an absent Helen body on characters but demonstrate how Helen can become present, how Helen discusses and talks about her life herself, with her own voice, her own imagination, her own character. I wrote the present Helen together with three female performers who shared the same gender/sex as Helen and therefore could inform me what feelings, desires, needs, opinions might Helen have as a woman. For the writing of this script I first studied some principles of the devised theatre and then created a method that helped me draw relevant information from the performers (my reflections on my study of devising are included in the conclusion). I asked the performers to read passages from literature on Helen and tell me what they think of Helen, I then instructed the performers to create their own unique Helen character and perform a monologue as their personal Helen character. The performers then started improvising dialogues with each other as ‘Helens’. I had recorded all the material that the performers had given me and then started writing the script. During the writing of the script I decided to classify the performers’ response, interpretation and characterisation of Helen into three different archetypes: the archetype of the Queen, the Daughter and the Trickster. In the commentary, I will explain that this classification helped me organise the material of the performers in order to analyse it and make it useful for the writing of my script. By defining the performers’ interpretations of Helen as three archetypes I enabled myself to write three Helen characters which combined a) the material of the performers, b) personal material from my own archetypal emotional experiences of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetype, and c) material I read about real life Queens, War Victims and Tricksters. In this project I investigated again how I tried to contextualise the Helen characters within a story. In a sense, the script I wrote had no particular story and I realised that lack of a story only after I presented my script as a rehearsed reading. The rehearsed reading gave me the opportunity to hear the feedback of audience members, a feedback that will definitely help me find the story I want to tell through the three characters of Helen.

For the second practical research project, I created three Helen characters with three female performers. I incorporated the characters into a script that was performed as a rehearsed reading by the three performers on the 17th of March 2010 at Thornlea Studio 1. The three performers were Rasha Dawood from Egypt, Kim Komljanec from Slovenia and Simsim Lai from China.

The second practical research project explored the writing of the presence of Helen. In the first practical research project, I investigated how the idea of Helen’s absence urged me to create a script around six characters whose lives were deeply affected by the absence of a beautiful woman. The stories of the characters or the stories about Helen as absent character, drew energy from the emotional patterns of the Hero, Daughter, Mother, Trickster, Shadow, Wise Old Man and brought to light my personal psychological complexes, personal unconscious pornographic desires and concerns of my male gender/sex. In the second practical project, I ceased to explore how the absence of Helen was interpreted by each character (who was an extension of myself, my personal unconscious) and started to look for ways to analyse and write her presence. Because the research focus of this project was to recreate a presence of Helen that was not the presence of a ghost or an idea looming over characters, but a real, tangible and physical presence, I asked three female performers to collaborate with me in the writing of her character. The fact that Helen was a woman (even a mythical one) meant that if I wanted to investigate her physical presence, her ways of being present and active in the world, I had to ask a woman how she might have felt if she were Helen. To ask a woman to become Helen and feel herself as Helen would involve the woman in a process of embodying Helen. The woman would embody Helen in order to think, feel and sense how her own psychobiological being would become affected if she were to be Helen in the particular events of Helen’s myth. Once the woman started articulating her experiences as Helen, she would create a unique Helen character whose version of the myth of Helen would be the ‘truest’ or the most ‘authentic’ one (because it was based on the woman’s own personal psychobiological experiences). In this chapter I will present how I prompted three female performers to arrive at a personal interpretation of Helen and how I encouraged them to embody this interpretation in solo-performances and improvisations. I
will then discuss how I interpreted the three different Helen embodiments by the performers as three different archetypes: The Queen Archetype, The Daughter Archetype and the Trickster Archetype. My interpretation of the Helen presences as archetypes was a way to organise and translate the material of the performers into dramatic characters. My decision to associate a performers’ Helen embodiment with a particular archetype was not taken by chance, but was supported by the ways the performers responded to Helen. Throughout the chapter I will demonstrate that the characteristics of the three archetypes were present in the performers’ processes of imagining and embodying Helen as well as their personal ways of existing and experiencing the world.

3.1. **The gender/sex of Helen.**

I will now clarify why I have put the terms ‘truest’ and ‘authentic’ in quotation marks. My aim behind this project was, as I have said before, to empower three female performers to experience and know the character of Helen through their flesh, their strengths or weaknesses of their bodies so that I could establish a clearer insight into the emotional journey of Helen. Given that Helen is a woman, her physical anatomy and organism belong to the category of the female sex. By asking female performers to embody Helen I would examine what aspects of the myth were important for women whose bodily functions are informed by a different sex than my own. The performers would unconsciously enter a process of knowing Helen by sensing how their sex, their instincts, their bodily memories (i.e. the pleasure, pain, exhaustion, awe, paralysis etc) would have reacted in the events of Helen’s myth. The performers would realise what it is to be Helen through an instinctual knowledge, a knowledge of the body, that is more primitive and archaic, more archetypal, more intuitive and therefore closer to truth (closer to truth because it is the instinctual or intuitive knowledge that guides our bodies to survive and is for that reason universal, eternal and indisputably true).¹

Given that instincts are eternal and constitute a vital part of one’s sex, one could assume that sex too is eternal, unchanging and universal as it equips our bodies with certain unchanging or universal physical capacities. However, contemporary feminist theorists (such as Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Toril Moi) have argued that sex is not as stable, fixed, universal and natural as it seems to be but can acquire the function of a political or cultural
signifier. For Butler, the sense that life can only become livable if one belongs to either the male or the female ‘sex’, this sense is already an act of unnatural political suppression. In her book *Bodies that Matter* (1997) she demonstrates that sex does not only signify the natural differences between men and women but exists also as a sign for the regulation of our bodies, an ideal concept manufactured to monitor sexual behaviours (2). In this sense, the ‘sex’ categories serve a similar purpose with the ‘gender’ categories which teach or dictate certain behaviours to men and women so that they can communicate and approach one another for the survival of our species. As sexual behaviours or the customs, attitudes or politics that accompany sexual behaviours vary around the world, ‘gender’ becomes more flexible and open to change and cultural transformation than ‘sex’ which means the natural, biological or physical characteristics of the male and female body. To return to Butler’s claim, however, it seems that there is a violence enacted by culture to contain all human subjects in either the male or the female ‘sex’ without acknowledging that some human subjects appropriate and inhabit the ‘male’ or the ‘female’ in diverse ways. These human subjects are the intersexed, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, transvestites, transgendered etc, they are minorities that cannot and/or do not want to include or incarcerate their bodies within the binaries of male/female sex or masculine/feminine gender (Fausto-Sterling 8). To my understanding then, the sex/gender distinction is complex and open-ended because:

1) Bodies never react to instincts alone. The body’s reactions to certain circumstances are always processed or mediated through the codes of a particular culture. It is not clear if the codes of a particular culture are inscribed in the sex or the gender of our bodies. 

2) Even if each body possesses a universal sex that functions according to an archetypal set of instincts, each body is also idiosyncratic (age, size, capacities, health vary) and defined by personal traumas, personal aesthetics and politics, and cultural conditioning. This means that each body will interpret and perform the archetypal set of instincts in different, culturally specific and subjective ways. In this sense, the effects of the biological sex are bound to be affected by the culturally shaped gender and vice versa.

The differences between each body’s interpretation and performance of archetypal instincts proves that sex as well as gender cannot exist in one unique form, a form that can claim to be more ‘perfect’, ‘normal’ or more ‘truthful’ than others. Each one of us inherits certain instincts or universal reflexes (such as the need for food, for protection, for satisfaction of the
libido etc) but because each one inhabits a different body, different psychobiology, each one performs the universal reflexes in a personal way and develops therefore personal philosophies of life. The reason why I have put ‘truth’, ‘truest’ and ‘authentic’ in quotation marks was because something that is universal and therefore indisputably true (such as instincts) is always and by necessity affected and/or changed by personal interpretation. For this reason, one woman’s story as Helen could never be universally true or universally acceptable. One woman’s story as Helen could contain some elements that are true for every woman, such as the fact that the female body is bound to experience childbirth or motherhood. But beyond the elements of their universal sex, women have different bodies, acquire different psychobiological experiences throughout life, adopt different cultural codes. In this sense, no woman is the same as another and therefore no woman would interpret the myth of Helen in the same way as another. When I asked three female performers to analyse the figure of Helen, I expected that the performers would create different narratives for their interpretations, narratives that unconsciously or consciously would encompass unique characteristics of their selves. My expectation was correct, and as we will see in the chapter, each performer emphasized different aspects of Helen’s myth and therefore drew different conclusions from Helen’s actions. Some of the performers’ points of emphasis and conclusions were culturally motivated, i.e. they carried elements from the performers’ cultural background and communities, and some others were personally constructed, i.e. they were based on personal issues or problems.

I collaborated with three female performers instead of one, as I wished to explore what was different in each performer’s narrative of Helen. Secondly, I wanted to make clear that Helen should not acquire presence through one body alone, one form of a human body but invite in her reconstruction ‘difference, alterity and Otherness’. Three Helens from different cultural backgrounds and with different bodily characteristics (one was constantly wearing a scarf, another was suffering under diabetes) would create the sense that the corporeal and human presence of Helen was ‘non-unitary’, that the presence of her femininity or femaleness could never be finite, ideal or absolute, but open to interpretation and reinterpretation within a discourse that is ‘nomadic’, i.e. a discourse that takes into account the voices and discourses of different cultures. The ‘non-unitary vision of the human’ and ‘nomadic’ are terms that Rosi Braidotti has used in her effort to include in our understandings of the ‘human’ practices or experiences of the ‘human’ that are non-Western or non-White or versed in non-Western philosophical discourses (2006: 11). Braidotti wishes to contest the belief that only a Western understanding of the human is ideal or good for the entire
humanity. For Braidotti, to respect and value the ways different cultures understand the ‘human’ means to respect and value our own sense of being and belonging in the global community:

A sustainable ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or ‘earth’ others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism. This is not the same as absolute loss of values, it rather implies a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one’s territorial or environmental interconnections. This is an ethical bond of an altogether different sort from the self-interests of an individual subject... It is a nomadic eco-philosophy of multiple belongings (35).

I think that the ‘ethical bond’ is realised when we strive to be compassionate, when we see beyond our self-interests and look into another’s emotional world and existence, when we feel and recognize that underneath our cultural, racial, sexual differences all of us share archetypal emotional patterns of grief, anger, frustration, fear, jealousy. As I will show later, the Helen characters of the performers experienced a different set of emotional experiences and a different sense of responsibility towards the Trojan War. However, whilst watching their Helen interpretations, I wanted to find out whether they shared certain emotional experiences or whether they could empathise with each other’s ways of being in the world, with each other’s suffering. I wanted to establish where the performers’ opinions on Helen met in order to determine the theme or concept I wanted to explore in the script of my second practical research project. As I will explain later, during the writing of the first and the second draft of the script, I was not able to find the meeting point of the performers’ Helen characters and therefore the theme of my script was very unclear.

3.2. The Process of Character-Creation.

The second practical project taught me a method of collaborative character-creation which I had never practised before. The first stage of this method involved the performers in a process of analysing the myth of Helen through their readings of various literary sources. The
second stage involved them in a process of arriving at a personal interpretation of the myth and embodying this interpretation in Helen characters of their own creation. The steps I followed in helping the performers create their interpretation and embodiment of Helen were these:

1) In our first rehearsal all the performers had read Euripides’s *Helen*. I asked them to read out aloud a monologue from the play that had fascinated them.

2) For one month I worked with each performer on her own. This was the first stage of character-creation. At the early stage of the process each performer came to know Helen without becoming influenced by opinions of other performers. I was giving the performers various literary material on Helen and instructed them to read and talk about the sources without reflecting or thinking about the intellectual depth of their opinions.

3) While each performer and I were still working on our own and not as a group, I asked each performer to bring into the rehearsal her favourite fairy-tale. The performers described the plot of the fairy-tales and discussed which values were important for the fairy-tale characters. My idea was to look at what kind of fairy-tale characters had affected the performers at an early stage of their lives. The remembrance of the fairy-tale could help the performer build a Helen character that could follow the psychic pattern of their beloved fairy-tale character.

4) I summarized with the performers the seven most significant aspects of the myth. These were: a) Helen is a woman in constant transit between Sparta-Troy-Sparta; b) Helen is the cause of war; c) Helen is a queen; d) Helen has a daughter, a husband and a lover; e) Helen is transported to Troy by boat; f) Helen is hated by people who have lost relatives in the Trojan War; g) Helen is considered the most beautiful woman in the world. The reason I did this summary was to remind the performers of the basic scenes or images of myth and so prepare each to construct her own story with the myth of Helen.

5) I asked each performer to write her ‘Helen monologue’ over the Christmas vacation (December 2009-January 2010). One of my instructions was that Helen should say or think this monologue in a specific place and time whether it is in Sparta, on the boat to Troy, at Troy during the war or back home in Sparta after the war. The questions to consider were these: To whom was she telling the monologue? For what reason? What impact did her monologue have on people around her? Did she feel relieved? Was she more anxious? I set up the task of writing a monologue because the
monologue gives you the opportunity to establish a very close and intimate relationship with the character. The audience watching a character deliver a monologue gains a thorough insight into his/her ways of thinking, the manners of his/her articulation, his/her ideology, emotional conflicts etc.

6) As soon as the performers wrote their monologues I gathered them all together and asked them to perform the monologues in front of the group. The task of performing the Helen characters through solo-performances of the monologues or through improvisations comprised the second part of character-creation. I derived the task of writing and performing the monologues from the Writing for Performance Workshop (organized by playwright Kaite O’ Reilly within the Drama Association of Wales in October 2009). In this workshop, one of the exercises was to write and perform short monologues that were either inspired by our relations with a specific location or a found-object. The experience of writing and performing the monologues helped us achieve a more complete idea or knowledge of character-construction. Apart from conceptualising in our minds the characters that delivered the monologues, we also had to perform these characters drawing energy from the emotional experiences of our bodies. In this sense, we acquired a better physical sense of the characters, a physical sense that expanded our knowledge of the character and enriched the conceptual writing of the monologue. Having experienced how the knowledge of a character increases once he/she is performed, I assumed that by letting the performers perform the physical actions of their Helen characters they would gain a clearer insight into the emotional world of their characters. While the performers performed their monologue in front of the group, they also demonstrated in a very clear way what aspects of Helen’s myth were important for their interpretation and the story they were trying to create.

7) As soon as a performer finished her monologue, I instructed the other performers to embody a minor or significant character from the myth of Helen and ask the Helen character questions. The minor or significant characters could be a dead soldier, a Trojan or Spartan widow, Paris, Helen’s daughter Hermione, Aphrodite, the mother of a soldier, a servant, a woman visiting Helen’s temple etc. The purpose of this task was to engage myself and the performer in a further exploration of their characters. The spontaneous answers of the performers were meant to bring to our consciousness more unconscious and unexpected sides of the characters.

8) During two rehearsals I instructed the performers to step into the character of Helen.
and improvise dialogue with the other Helens around them. The performers started confronting each other as Helens, they disagreed with each other’s interpretations of Helen and brought to the surface the cultural and personal differences of their female ‘gender’.

9) I had recorded all the rehearsals in order to watch them again and note down whatever was useful for the writing of my script. My aim was to investigate and detect what archetype emerged in the performer’s embodiment of Helen. Whilst watching the recorded material, I could observe and determine more in detail how the performers were expressing their thoughts on the sources of Helen, how their words, accents, intonation, silences, gestures or body movements corresponded with emotional experiences that were specific to particular archetypes of the Daughter, the Trickster and the Queen. By classifying or categorising the material of the performers into three archetypes, I wanted to test how the Jungian method of classifying the contents of the psyche could be applied in the process of writing a script in collaboration. I wanted to establish what kind of archetypal images appeared in the performers’ interpretations and embodiments of Helen and then determine to what particular archetype belonged these archetypal images. By knowing or realising the archetypes that nurtured the performers’ interpretations of Helen, I would be enabled to visualise and imagine further archetypal images of the archetype and then integrate these archetypal images in the Helen characters of my script.

I will now discuss how the three performers evoked in their analysis of Helen’s myth the archetypal images of three different archetypes: the Queen Archetype, The Daughter Archetype and the Trickster Archetype.

3.3. Creating the Helen Character with Kim Komjalenc: Helen as a Queen Archetype.

The archetype of the queen is an archetype that is imperial, serene, omniscient, dignified, eloquent, sincere, powerful, controlling, decisive, authoritative, intelligent, respectable and remarkable. For me, Kim Komjalenc is a person whose physical presence encompasses and puts into practice some of these adjectives. She has a very distinctive character and effortlessly manages to draw the attention of people. When we first started reading Eur.
Helen, Kim’s eloquence, her diction and her use of unmistakable grammar added a sense of serenity and importance to her sayings. It was as if a queen was giving a speech to her people. Apart from her powerful elocution, Kim’s analysis of Helen’s character in Euripides’s text explored elements that were associated with characteristics of the Queen archetype. She talked about the fact that no one could escape the lethal power of Helen’s beauty, a power that had cost the lives of many people and, as Kim put it, ‘actually played against her’. Kim commented further on the power of Helen’s beauty and constantly pointed out that Helen had tried to retain control and dignity during and after the Trojan War. Whilst looking at passages from Homer’s *Iliad*, Kim suggested that ‘Despite all the circumstances that are horrible she keeps this dignity. She’s actually treated as a queen. She does everything in a dignified way.’ Kim remarked that Helen’s character in Homer’s *Odyssey* exercised great power on people around her: ‘I’m not sure if she’s aware of that power or not. But her beauty is power... People act differently when she’s around. They would think of one thing about her but then they would change and just do the opposite. She has a strong influence on how people feel’.

To my understanding, Kim revealed during our conversations a personal issue with control or controlling others. Apart from giving to the performers literary texts, we also looked at certain paintings of Helen (by Dante Gabriel Rosetti (1863) or Sir Edward John Poynter (1881)) and a picture of a small Barbie-doll that represented Helen. Whilst looking at the Barbie-doll, I asked Kim about her relation to dolls when she was a child. Kim started remembering some incidents that demonstrated a controlling and authoritative behaviour towards her dolls:

I never liked to play with Barbie dolls, but children dolls, dolls that would represent children. I would set up schools and I would be the teacher. When I played with them at school some of them I had to punish. I was the teacher and they were my pupils. I had to punish them so they wouldn’t do it again. I always chose a role where I could have a bit of control. As the youngest you get told what to do a lot of the times. So I guess I compensated that by having control over my toys.

The queen is able to control and manage the lives of her people by dictating or establishing codes of good and moral behaviour (in this way the queen forces people to follow her rules and unconsciously pre-empts their revolt). Just as a queen criticises at times the moral aberrations of her people, in a similar way Kim too expressed her scepticism on Helen’s moral behaviour. For instance: Kim suggested that Helen’s decision to leave her
husband and child in Sappho’s poem ‘was not a good thing to do.’ When Helen welcomes Telemachus in the *Odyssey* during the wedding of her daughter, she displays a very immoral and insensitive side of her character. According to Kim, ‘she’s someone whose status is really low. It’s almost as if we the audience we would love her to fall. Because she’s caused the great war and she’s treating this as if it were a very small thing. She treats the loss of the boy’s father like a little thing.’ The moral undertones of Kim’s analysis became even more apparent when she decided to perceive in Helen’s journey to Troy a metaphor against betrayal:

I bet that if that is the stake (the Trojan War) when every woman cheats on her husband, there wouldn’t be as much cheating going on as it is now. If every woman thought if I go and have an affair with this man and leave my children... leave my husband they wouldn’t have done it I think. I think this is a much more powerful story than how the Bible teaches: Do not fornicate.

Kim found that the consequences of Helen’s betrayal illustrated something that concerns all queens and kings: As a queen or king, are you allowed to give space to yourself? If the queen and king prioritize the good of their community, what happens to their rights and needs as individuals? Is it possible for queens and kings to value personal desires more than their role in society? Kim drew parallels between Helen and Antigone in terms of their initiative to respect personal ethics over the rules of their countries. ‘If she (Antigone) didn’t bury her brother, then could she have faced anyone else? That was so important to her that she thought my own ethics first and then the country’s rules. So it was with Helen. I love this man, I have to be with the man I love not with the one I married.’ In this sense, Helen felt the necessity to become queen of her own self, to regulate her own desires and pleasures according to personal will and not according to the demands of her royalty. In her book *Grab the Queen Power: Live Your Best Life* (2005), Allyn Mitchell Evans examines how the Queen archetype can become a source of strength, empowerment and confidence in women who have learned to suppress their personalities and behave according to opinions of others. She writes in bold letters: ‘The Authentic Queen is Powerful. A Queen recognizes and understands her power. She claims it and doesn’t apologize for having it. She is inner directed and follows her heart’ (184). Kim’s choice of fairy-tale raised further discussions on the issues of personal empowerment and responding to the call of one’s heart.

In our rehearsals Kim narrated to me the tale of Takemuce’ a wandering cat that is
starving but never loses her dignity to obtain food. She works for a rabbit but when she is told off, she decides to leave. When she finds a coin, she buys herself a ribbon not food. At the end of the story Takemuce opens a bakery and is very proud of herself. When I asked Kim to talk about Takemuce’s motives in the story, she highlighted Takemuce’s efforts in being true to herself, her capacity to rely on her own resources:

She had a quite a straight line of what she wanted to do. She didn’t have a specific goal “this is what I want to do” but she had an idea of who she wanted to be... So it wouldn’t really matter if she ended up being... I don’t know sewing clothes for someone or selling sausages... It doesn’t really matter as long as she takes care of herself... that motive was quite clear of integrity and of independence.

Immediately after her analysis of the fairy-tale, Kim and I wrote down the most significant aspects of the myth of Helen. I asked Kim to tell me on the spot which version of the Helen myth was more interesting for her. Kim more emphatically this time said that she would be interested in the Helen that leaves home at her own will. This story is ‘more about her’, as Kim put it. If we compare Takemuce with the Helen character that follows her lover, we see that both characters personify the quest or desire for individual or personal agency. Both characters make mistakes (Takemuce spends her scarce money on a ribbon and Helen abandons her kingdom) but these mistakes are produced by their willingness to gain ultimate control and power over their lives. In spite of the circumstances, both characters will not compromise or suppress their right to take decisions and exercise free will. The difference between Helen and Tacemuce is that Helen is a queen and Tacemuce a common female cat. As a queen Helen had a very important role to fulfil within society and her personal agency was restricted by this role. In the last rehearsal of the first stage, Kim had a complete idea of her Helen narrative:

I’m interested in what happened or what happens when she does meet Paris or when she is there at Troy, what’s the dynamics there... because it’s like... if she left she must have believed that that was the right thing to do. If it was her own decision. Then how does she come to realise how wrong it was in other aspects so... once she consumes her love and then what does that do to her. How does that change her... when she realises what are the consequences of her act that would have been very interesting to look at.
I think that Kim’s Helen character underwent a journey that tested the limits of her independence. She was a queen who wanted to follow her heart and free herself from social constraints. As a queen, though, she was destined to live and exist as the king’s wife. A king without a queen seems powerless, incomplete, corroded, and as therapist Allan G. Hunter suggests in his analysis of the Monarch archetype: ‘The Monarch or Monarch Pair... is to be seen as a balance of the male and female working harmoniously together for the good of the realm.’ (2008: 72). Hunter argues further that ‘For the Monarch, “I” ceases to exist. The royal plural “we” is not just an affectation. The Monarch speaks in terms of the whole realm’s best interests.’ (74). Helen could never reach full independence in her life because she did not only belong to the king but to the entire state of Sparta. All her movements and actions had to serve the benefit of her country, not her personal desires or personal self-fulfilment.

3.4. Creating the Helen Character with Rasha Dawood: Helen as a Daughter Archetype.

Whereas Kim sensed that Helen’s drama stemmed from her awareness that she was torn between her passion for Paris and the good of her country, Rasha Dawood found that Helen’s tragedy was her victimization by Paris. Rasha saw in Helen a woman who never decided to go to Troy of her own free will. She was abducted by Paris in spite of herself. Apart from the fact that Helen suffered the violence of her kidnappers, she also faced a bad reputation because everyone including her husband, daughter, mother believed that she was Paris’s mistress. Rasha insisted that it is wrong for Helen in Euripides’s *Helen* to feel ashamed and guilty because:

She’s innocent. She’s done nothing. She’s a victim. The only fault of her is her beauty. The way she feels at how others judge her. Look at her. How the Greeks accused her. She’s imprisoned in a false image. It’s the easiest way . To put her in a stereotype. And everyone after that is free and relieved. I don’t know but I find it very interesting that she suffered from the feeling of shame. As if she’s chosen to be kidnapped... In my country some victims of rape, they choose not to tell their husbands... they keep it secret. Because they think that in a way or another they would
Rasha immediately associated Helen’s myth with incidents from her country. This meant that Helen’s myth became for Rasha a vehicle to discuss issues that preoccupy women in Egypt. One of these issues was the shame Egyptian women feel for things for which they are not responsible. According to Rasha, once a woman has been raped she is destined to feel ashamed and suffer under a bad reputation throughout her entire life. In a sense, a raped woman is, firstly, victimized by the rapist who has exerted strong physical violence on her and, secondly, she endures another kind of emotional victimization by friends, husband or other family members who distance themselves because rape has ‘soiled’ her, it has made her ‘impure’.

In order to discuss more thoroughly the association between rape and impurity, Rasha examined the scene in Euripides’s Helen where Menelaus asked Helen for proof of her purity. In a sense, Menelaus wanted from Helen a sign that she had not slept with another man. Rasha pointed out the absurdity (or stupidity) of such a demand:

When he found her she told him that she’s pure and kept herself to him and nothing happened and he asked her about a proof and I keep thinking... What is that proof? (laughter) How can a woman provide to her husband that she hasn’t another relationship or an intercourse with another one? ... And what if she was forced to have an intercourse? Or she was raped? Does this make her impure? Or she betrayed her husband or something like that... How can we judge her? It’s interesting because it’s not something that just happened in the past... What will happen after their return home? Will they continue their relationship? As if nothing happened?

Rasha remembered the story of an actual rape victim. When the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait in 1990, an Iraqi officer raped an Egyptian woman who lived in Kuwait and worked as a doctor. The husband of the woman sympathized with her at the beginning but eventually he decided to divorce her. As Rasha said ‘they couldn’t continue their relationship, it was as if something broke...’ What broke was the husband’s ‘belief’ that his wife was ‘pure’. Rasha explained that, apart from causing extreme sadness, Egyptian women pay an extra heavy price for their divorce: their families disinherit them and forbid them to come back home.

Helen’s submissive behaviour towards her husband in Euripides’s Helen reflected the situation of women in Egypt and therefore presented Rasha with a good opportunity to
critique the complete annihilation of an Egyptian woman’s subjectivity. If subjectivity partly means that we are entitled to express personal opinions about any subject matter, then Helen in Helen seemed to have abandoned any claim for subjectivity. When I asked Rasha if she perceived a change in Helen’s character throughout the play, she insinuated that Helen never moved from a passive to a more active and confrontational position.

she’s the same from the first part to the last part... If I were her I wouldn’t act the same. I have to question what I heard from my husband. There are no changes in her views or her attitudes or her acts. I think it’s not normal. If my husband after all the disasters I have passed came and asked me about a proof of being pure. I have to question that. If my husband hasn’t done anything about my daughter and sees that it’s not something important to him I have to question that. If my husband tells me that he will kill me in order not to marry someone else and at the same time I tell him that I love him, how I suffer in this situation I have to question that... If I know that someone loves me and does his best for my happiness and bla bla bla and then acts in a different way you should question that... It’s like you stopped the thing... to see clearly.

To my understanding, Rasha’s perception of Helen drew images from the archetype of the Daughter archetype. As I have suggested earlier, the Daughter or Maiden archetype has been imprinted in our consciousness through the mythical character of Persephone, the daughter of the nature goddess Demeter. Unconsciously, the myth generates the sense that Persephone is an innocent, passive and weak character. She does not have personal agency over her life because, firstly, she has no physical power to fight against the sexual desire of Hades and, secondly, she does not have the means or rhetoric skills to contradict Zeus and break the treaty with Hades. Many aspects of Rasha’s interpretation of Helen evoked images of female victimization which is the main characteristic of the archetype of the Daughter. For Rasha, Helen was predominantly defined by what other men wanted from her and less from what she desired herself. In other words: Just as in the case of Persephone, Helen’s being, who she was and what she wanted was always determined by two powerful men. Paris had kidnapped Helen to satisfy his sexual pleasure and Menelaus demanded from her signs of purity in order to restore his broken pride. What Helen desired, according to Rasha, was always related to her family life: she wanted to give her daughter and husband all the love she could give.
At the final stage of our character-creation I asked Rasha to write down the most significant events of the myth of Helen. The description of the basic events or scenes unconsciously led each performer to realize that the myth had a certain order and language. The language and order of the myth was a source from which the performer could draw ideas for the construction of her personal order and language of her narrative. In other words, the myth provided the performer with an original language and the performer had to use the pattern of this original language to create her own personal dialect for the communication of her story of Helen. Whilst writing the events, Rasha imagined that Helen returned home after the Trojan War and realised that her closest people were not only compassionate with her abduction but blamed her for it. Rasha’s narrative for Helen employed images of helplessness, shame and fear of social expulsion.

Apart from being beautiful or trying to convince the others that you are the most beautiful mythical woman in the world, I want Helen to be more human... I feel that she’s a victim of the war. Many women have suffered from this and they’re still suffering. Many prisoner women in Iraq are raped by American soldiers and they get pregnant and they have children and in our countries it is a shame really to have a child without marriage... It is something that society can never accept. Many women suffer from that. From that feeling of shame. And the society tends to accuse the victim. And this is the point I want to highlight. When a woman is raped, she shouldn’t be ashamed. Even if the closest person to you is pushing you to believe that... the victim should struggle not to get into that trap. I see Helen from this point of view. Helen is a good woman, she’s a strong woman so she should put an end to that.

Rasha’s narrative took the form of a feminist mission. Because many Egyptian women choose to scorn and accuse victims of rape, Rasha found that as a victimized Helen she could make a plea to everyone (particularly women) to put themselves in the situation of the victim and either feel sympathy or realize the extent of the emotional damage. Victims of rape need consolation and emotional support. If they are repudiated or totally abandoned, they decide to deal with rape in silence. Silence not only intensifies the victim’s emotional pain, it also encourages rapists to strike again. ‘When they choose to stop telling anyone and keep it secret. And this doesn’t help you know, to overcome the situation for her and for other victims. And stop the criminal.’
3.5. *Creating the Helen Character with Simsim Lai: Helen as a Trickster Archetype.*

According to Kim and Rasha, Helen faced a tragedy either because she took fatal decisions or because she was raped and faced social rejection. The general atmosphere or mood of Kim and Rasha’s interpretation was bleak, dark and at times profoundly heartbreaking. Simsim Lai’s reading of Helen’s myth was very different to Rasha and Kim’s interpretation because she utilised humour, subversion and parody. This meant that whilst Simsim was talking about Helen, the Trickster archetype had taken possession of her and guided her to create her interpretation of Helen. The Trickster archetype not only offers comic relief in moments of despair, grief and sadness but also debunks certain myths about life, death, marriage, love, sex etc. The Trickster invites us to laugh at our fears and insecurities, to laugh at the fact that we are tragic protagonists of our life-drama.

Jonathan D. Hill, an explorer of Trickster archetypes in Amazonian and African rituals, explains how Tricksters subvert the literality of language: ‘Amazonian and Afro-American tricksters are a semiotic process of playing with the distinction between literal and tropic meanings. Mythic tricksters open up the conceptual distinction between the interpretation of words and other signs as merely semantic or referential vehicles’ (2002: 73). The breaking apart of literality allows for multiple images and figurations to enter into language, figurations that engender in Hill’s terms a ‘reflexive, interpretive distancing between the acting subject and the immediate situation’ (ibid). To my understanding, the Trickster’s exercise of ‘interpretive distancing’ refers to the choices we make in our interpretation of situations, texts, myths. When presented with a certain situation, we are supposed to interpret the situation and perform a certain action. We can choose to interpret the situation literally or reflect and look at it from a distance. If we interpret the situation from a distance, if we use humour and joke about it (or let the Trickster archetype inspire our reflective abilities), we can either negate or pluralize the literal meanings of the situation.

The difference between literal and distanced interpretations occurred while the performers interpreted Helen’s myth. Both Kim and Rasha had decided to empathize with Helen’s suffering, they had sensed or understood literally what it meant for Helen to become a victim of fate, to be the source of blame and hatred. Simsim, on the other hand, chose not to get too emotionally involved in her interpretation of Helen’s sources. She examined Helen’s
myth with a certain critical distance, a distance that empowered her to unveil the hidden intentions behind Helen’s behaviour. In the first day of our rehearsal, Simsim pointed out that Helen’s long and repetitive monologues about her sorrowful state intended to force (or hypnotize) the audience to feel sympathy or pity for her.

I found it really funny... The people say ‘you’re assuming the worse, it may never happen’ but she’s so self-traumatizing. I mean of course it’s a trauma and a disaster... But she’s saying... ‘Oh I’m a disaster to you. I’m a disaster to everyone and I’m really bad’... And it is really funny to hear people saying ‘Actually you’re not.’ Of course she’s important but let’s think... a girl in the street... She says ‘Oh I’m a disaster, I’m so traumatizing, I’m doing these things’ and then you think ‘Oh my God you think you’re so important’ (laughter)

Simsim demystified Helen and made us notice that at times endless mourning is a way to draw attention, a way to nurture our egoism and vanity. Trickster archetypes have the capacity to reveal something truthful behind the intentions of certain behaviours, they draw the curtain and illuminate the absurdity and futility of certain actions or statements. In her book *Fools Are Everywhere* (2001), Beatrice K. Otto describes many stories that celebrate the ability or talent of the jester or trickster to manifest the impossibility of certain laws or orders imposed by rulers or kings. For instance: if a king put into effect a law that was completely impractical, the role of the jester was to make him aware of his foolishness and point out the bizarre consequences of his law. The king laughed at himself and then usually changed the law (115).

Simsim wanted to parody Helen’s myth. For Linda Hutcheon, parody is ‘one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance’ (2000: 85). Simsim wanted to highlight the discursive aspects of Helen’s existence. She wanted to expose the process of building a Helen character and, in particular, to showcase ‘how’ one becomes Helen, ‘what’ makes one Helen, in what particular context and for what purposes exist Helen’s representations. She was not interested in the idea of “I want to be a Helen that deals with this issue, this experience of my life etc.”:

I’m more interested about how we talk about Helen... It doesn’t matter who she is. It doesn’t matter what the historical Helen is... She is like a myth... It’s so misty, like
fog... haze... What interests me is going to be how I’m going to be a Helen. That is more interesting than I embody Helen... How I understand Helen... It is more my perception... Almost like self-analysing myself from my background... What makes it Helen to me instead of like I embody Helen, to act Helen... How am I going to become a Helen or how am I going to help people think I’m Helen... For me that is the process itself... or how I embody myself to become a Helen... How am I Helen... That is more interesting to me because I have to see light: What is Helen for me and what is not Helen for me. [my italics]

Simsim’s desire to explore the discursive aspects of Helen’s beauty stemmed perhaps from a personal experience at an old people’s home. Whilst doing movement work with old people as part of an assignment for her MFA in Theatre Practice, she noticed an old man who had a stroke and could not move, eat or talk. The man was noticeable not only because he wore a napkin or couldn’t eat properly but mainly because he was trying to molest every woman in his vicinity. Simsim’s first impression was very negative: ‘there’s saliva and sneezing and you see him touching other women... You find that terribly disgusting’. But then something beautiful happened. ‘I asked him to look at me and we moved... and I saw that he’s really doing stuff like really working on the body and things... and that for me is beautiful... because he’s not pretending to be something... at that time he was really communicating with me... and that for me is beautiful’. The experience made Simsim think of the paradoxes that exist in our understanding of beauty and ugliness: if a beautiful young man touches women this may seem justified or acceptable, if an old derelict man does the same it is inappropriate and disgusting. Simsim questioned the distinction between the way things are and the way things appear.

When we see the outer we also determine the inner automatically... If you’re old does it mean that you’re not desirable? ... Maybe Helen is just beautiful... actually she’s terribly stupid... Maybe she’s really stupid... Really really... She’s stupid because she cannot handle anything...She’s flirting with men... they kidnap her to Egypt.

Simsim discussed further the paradoxical and deceptive nature of appearances when she related her favourite fairy-tale, the *Beauty and the Beast*. Simsim argued that the dark and bleak aspects of Beauty’s imprisonment have been transformed in the Disney appropriation of the tale into something beautiful and enjoyable. In other words, the violence enacted
through unlawful imprisonment is either completely erased, beautified or presented as justified. As Simsim put it: ‘Now according to law we’re not allowed to keep someone... It’s illegal... It’s almost like kidnapping but in the story “it makes it so romantic with roses everywhere and such a castle with nice piano and all the books and nice furniture, nice dress, nice food”... It makes it justified... But... YOU KEEP SOMEONE FOREVER (laughter)’. When we recognised the ‘hidden violence’ of the tale, Simsim and I laughed out loudly because the intended meanings of the tale were subverted and an unexpected, harsh but truthful message emerged: that a young woman should sacrifice her freedom in order to save her father and transform the Beast into a beautiful prince. Simsim explained with irony why the fairy-tale had a strong appeal on her in spite of its darkness and messages of female subjugation.

In the fairy tale... I’m against the hidden violence... It is very strong and I’m against it and what is interesting is... I still like the story... I like to be violently treated... (Laughter)... I like to be put in a castle. I like that. I like to be in the castle dressed beautifully. With a very handsome man... It’s very funny actually... I’m against the whole principle but I still enjoy the whole story.

Simsim’s remarks were honest, humorous, and caused great laughter in all our rehearsals. While we were laughing, we came closer and felt more interconnected. As Jean Shinoda Bolen writes: ‘in the shared laughter, there is a sense of commonality about vulnerabilities and strengths’ (2001: 105).


When the first phase of character-creation had ended, I asked the performers to write a Helen monologue. This Helen monologue was meant to provide a first sense of how the performers had imagined their Helen characters. The monologue was supposed to give voice and visual form to their unique understanding and interpretation of Helen. The performers performed
their monologues in front of the group and in this way presented the key emotional
experiences and physical actions of their Helen characters not only through the language of
their writing but also through movements, gestures, voice and facial expressions. I will now
describe how the performers’ physical representation of their characters created further
archetypal images of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes.

Kim’s monologue (Appendix Three) was written in the style of the interior
monologue, i.e. Helen was not addressing someone other than herself. In the monologue,
Kim’s Helen character remembered the main incidents of her journey to Troy, from the
moment she left home till the outbreak of the Trojan War. The archetypal images of the
Queen emerged in the writing as well as the physical expression of Kim’s body. Whilst
recounting the incidents, Helen wore a ‘purple ceremonial dress’ and prepared herself to
sharpen the swords of Paris and Menelaus. Her movements were slow and calculated creating
the sense that she was performing a ritual. Her posture seemed very composed and her diction
very clear and solemn. The writing was poetic and highlighted Helen’s sense of guilt. For
instance, having taken in her hands one of the swords, Helen spoke with a choked voice:
‘One of them will die. And my tears will drown him. How could you, my dear lovers, my
dear husbands? How could you let me clean your weapons? Are you blind? Do you trust
me?’ Whilst watching Kim perform her Helen, I was thinking that this Helen character was
acknowledging that the Trojan War was her fault. Her last sentence or concluding thought
(‘And Menelaus, please... show mercy on him... But please do not show mercy on me...’) in
correlation with her physical action of choosing to sharpen Menelaus’s sword only (which
meant that Menelaus had more chances to kill Paris), pointed out her need to sacrifice herself
and Paris. This double sacrifice would be her punishment for her inability to perform her
royal duties.

The physical expression of Rasha’s Helen character presented signs of the humble and
emotionally injured Daughter Archetype. Her back was slightly tilted, her steps were heavy,
insecure and restless. Rasha explained the reason of her character’s restlessness in the stage
directions of her monologue (Appendix Three): ‘After her returning, Helen found herself
isolated. Even her daughter avoids her and she feels as lonely as in her exile. She couldn’t
sleep for weeks...’ Rasha clarified that her Helen character was ‘surrounded by ghosts,
surrounded by menace... she’s in an ocean, she doesn’t know what to do. Should she swim or
should she wait to be rescued? She doesn’t know’. The experiences of menace, sleeplessness,
dizziness, uncertainty, darkness, all these experiences reminded strongly Persephone’s sense
of loss in the underworld. But against Persephone’s silence, her complete surrender to her
tragic fate, Rasha’s Helen character summoned her power and intellectual strength to address one monologue to her daughter and one to her husband. Both her daughter and her father had chosen to scorn her for letting herself become a raped woman. In the monologue towards her daughter, she therefore pleaded for more compassion: ‘I can’t help the bad reputation, to be surrounded by the suspicious glances everywhere, but what I can’t bear the most is your accusation.’ In her monologue towards Menelaus, Helen used strong poetic metaphors to argue her point: ‘When the long nights besieged me tightly, the only thing could give me strength and resistance is that lovely dream! That someday, my husband would come and take me away from all this! And after all, I am still jailed and you are my jailer!’

Simsim’s performance of her Helen monologue (Appendix Three) developed poetic elements that subverted habituated meanings. On the paper, Simsim’s monologue had an incomprehensible narrative whose purpose was (I think) to convince people of the innocence of Helen. In order to help Simsim construct a narrative beyond the sentences of her text, I underlined certain phrases from her monologue and asked her to improvise a short performance with these phrases. Simsim asked Kim to shout at her the phrases I had underlined and speak the remaining text. The performance started when Kim shouted the phrase ‘Yes I am Helen’ and Simsim repeated the phrase with a shrilling, high-pitched voice. Simsim started then running to and fro in the rehearsal space whispering the text that was left out, the text I had not underlined and shouting the text I had underlined. Simsim found a coffin (it was probably a prop from a previous performance) and started jumping in and out of it, she closed herself inside it and carried it around her as if it were a common wooden box. Simsim had created a narrative for her Helen character that exercised a strong subversive and disruptive power. By the end of her performance, I sensed that Simsim had somehow incorporated in her performance the shape-shifting or metamorphic abilities of the Trickster archetype. For me, it was not clear who her Helen character really was: was she a madwoman, a funny clown, a woman who desperately tried to hide her guilt, or all of these faces put together in one single multifaceted and multitalented female body?

After performing the monologues, we could sense that each performer had created a unique Helen character that summarized and embodied her interpretation of Helen’s myth. For the next step in the process of character-creation, I asked the performers to improvise dialogue or interactions with each other as Helens. The purpose of the improvisations was to investigate what kind of tensions or discrepancies could take place when the Helen characters met each other. The meeting of the Helen characters could provide an opportunity to the performers to reveal hidden or unexpected aspects of their characters. I also wanted to find
out whether the Helen characters would feel at times compassionate with each other. Their compassionate moments would help me clarify the point of their ‘ethical interconnection’ and then guide me to determine the theme of my script.

However, because I was totally inexperienced in organizing improvisations, I made many mistakes at this stage of character-creation. One of these mistakes was that I did not let the performers know the exact purpose of the improvisations. I had not informed the performers that the improvisations could produce further knowledge on their characters such as awareness of hidden unexpected sides, readiness to share their pain or general beliefs, incapacities to communicate, revelation of personal traumas, fragile aspects of their psychology etc. In fact, my main mistake was that I had not tried to give themes to our improvisations, themes that appear in the myth of Helen of Troy such as the theme of being the most beautiful woman in the world, the theme of feeling guilty or not guilty for the Trojan War, the theme of betrayal, the theme of losing loved ones in the Trojan War etc. I also did not give any information about the space of their meeting or the reason of their meeting: were they meeting in Troy, Sparta, somewhere between, in a modern bar? Why were they suddenly confronted with another version of Helen? How could they face the fact that each Helen was not the only Helen that existed in the world? Without giving a theme to the improvisations or providing information on where and why the Helen characters suddenly met, the performers were at times uncertain of what they were supposed to do and improvise.

In spite of the mistakes, I gathered very valuable material from the improvised interactions. For instance: Rasha and Kim’s Helen character did eventually enter into a debate about their personal responsibility in the Trojan War. Their debate and arguments proved not only the strength of their rhetoric skills but also brought up the main differences between the archetypal images of the Queen and the Daughter archetype. Kim’s Helen character focussed more on how she could become a better queen for her people, whereas Rasha’s Helen character was more concerned about her personal contribution in the Trojan War. I quote bellow a passage from the improvisations in order to show how widely different were the performers’ attitudes towards the Trojan War.

Kim: Only when you know how many people hate you... It’s only then you can know how much you love yourself. Because that’s the only thing you’ve got then, isn’t it?

(Beat.)

So that’s why I always shut you up, when you start telling me how
much you hate yourself. Because I just can’t bear to hear that...

Rasha: Don’t you feel responsible? For the death of the people. For the collapse of two great countries?

Kim: Oh yeah... I feel responsible. But me whining about it, is not going to make it any better...

Rasha: Can’t you see... Can’t you see the disasters? All around you?

Kim: Is me feeling sorry for them... Is it going to bring their mothers back? It’s not isn’t it? Me taking decisions, is going to make it better. Killing Paris is going to make it better... Me crying about it is not.

Simsim’s Helen character did not take part in the debate over responsibility. Inspired by the straightforwardness of the Trickster archetype, she pointed out how futile, absurd and impractical was this kind of debate. From the very first improvisation, Simsim’s Helen character told the other Helens that they were nothing but drama-queens. She told them ‘You’re such a melodrama’ and then burst out crying in a fake/hysterical way, shouting at the other two Helen characters phrases they had used in their monologues. She embraced the Helen characters and screamed at their faces. In a sense, Simsim re-enacted moments from the narratives of Kim and Rasha’s Helen characters in a style that was emotionally excessive and very caustic. Kim and Rasha were disturbed by Simsim’s performance and for one minute they stood paralysed in the rehearsal space. As soon as they recovered their senses, they started arguing about marriage and infidelity (Kim: You know I once had two lovers at the same time. Rasha: Oh, you didn’t waste time. Kim: Haven’t you ever thought of any other man than your husband. Rasha: I’m not interested in... sex). Simsim was not interested in their arguments and preferred to pass her time with tumbling.

The performers’ movements, arguments, speeches and behaviours presented personal subjective ideas or philosophies of life which were not unrelated to their cultural background. For instance, Kim’s decision to highlight personal power and agency in her monologue as well as improvised interactions corresponded with the fact that she was coming from a cultural background that values feminist issues more than Egyptian society. On the other hand, Rasha’s constant lament over her weak position or her tendency to agree with the old-fashioned beliefs that female beauty is a source of evil (‘I hate my beauty. It’s my crime’ said Rasha’s Helen) or her idea that a woman is a whore when she engages in extramarital affairs showed that some prejudices of Egyptian society had influenced strongly the embodiment of her Helen character. Having resisted the embodiment of one specific Helen position from the
binaries victim Helen/personal agent Helen, passive Helen/active Helen, involved Helen/not involved Helen, etc, Simsim desired to mock and ridicule Kim and Rasha’s tragic Helen figures, she moved around the rehearsal space aimlessly, she ate biscuits, she never spoke or argued her points in the logical and coherent ways of the other Helen characters.

I sensed that Simsim’s Helen character seemed dislocated and dissociated from the other Helen characters. This dissociation gave the sense that she was an outsider or an outcast. Beatrice K. Otto has suggested that Tricksters live as outcasts and therefore are empowered to see the truth in things more clearly. She quotes a Chinese proverb: “The fool knows the truth because he is a social outcast, and spectators see most of the game” (2000: 100). Simsim’s playfulness and strange behaviour may have isolated her from the other Helens but her isolation produced a thought-challenging insight on the ‘game’ of human conditioning. Behind her wild and enormous freedom of expression, Simsim triggered a reconsideration or re-evaluation of the norms, dogmas and boundaries that constitute the human or the female gender more specifically. She provided a sense of the human as ‘something other than what it is traditionally assumed to be’ (Butler 2004: 35), something never entirely fixed, in a mode of constant becoming or as Butler would have suggested ‘open to fundamental transformation in the gendered order of things’ (2004: 34). Simsim’s unconventional Helen character annoyed and bewildered Kim and Rasha. They either tried to tame or contain her in their own understandings of Helen. But Simsim had also a positive influence on them because she inspired them to think critically of their lives and become self-ironic. As I will clarify later, in the second draft of my script I intended to evoke in the Helen characters a desire for self-irony in order to create a stronger sense of communication between them.


The writing of the first draft of the script occurred after I had watched and studied carefully the recordings of all the stages of character-creation. Whilst watching the recorded rehearsals my aim was to determine to which archetype belonged the performer’s perception and embodiment of Helen. This meant that I was trying to dissect or discover how the images of the spontaneous intellectual as well as physical responses of the performers were related to
the Daughter, Trickster, Queen. My decision to identify which archetypes were activating the Helen characters of the performers supported the writing of my script in these ways:

a. When the performers finished with the improvisations, I entered the period of writing the script. The performers had given me their material and I had to use it to create three Helen characters for my script. I explored how the performers’ material corresponded with archetypes in order to use their material and organise it in the creation of my own Helen characters. The reason why the three archetypes helped me in the organization of my writing was because they function in a similar way as concepts which, according to Ernst Cassirer, have the capacity to organize certain indefinite or chaotic sensory and emotional impressions into definite linguistic forms so that we can refer to these forms and remind ourselves that such form contains this set of sensory or emotional impressions. For Cassirer, every idea, experience, image or thing can only exist as long as it is acknowledged as a category or organizing principle within a particular order or system: ‘an apparently singular fact becomes known, understood and conceptually grasped only in so far as it is “subsumed” under a general idea, recognized as a “case” of a law or as a member of a manifold or a series’ (1953: 26). By categorizing (or by enclosing) the performers’ responses into the archetypes of Trickster, Daughter and Queen, I was enabled to use these archetypes as a vehicle to access or refer to the emotional experiences of my personal and the collective unconscious. The performers presented their views and embodiments of Helen, I interpreted these embodiments as archetypal images that operate in three archetypes and then I used the emotional power of the archetypes to create three dramatic Helen characters in my script. In other words, the archetypes provided a kind of language with which the performers and I exchanged information on the emotional experiences of the Helen characters, they were a tool that helped me realize the emotional properties of the performers’ Helen characters, emotional properties which I processed and developed further in the Helen characters of my script.

b. By trying to interpret and define which archetype personified the responses of each performer, I wanted to look for further material that could elucidate and clarify more the archetypal images of the Helen characters of the performers. For instance: Rasha’s Helen character directed me to look for further material on female victimization, particularly female victimization in association with war,
captor and hostage-taking. I read Etty Hillesum’s *Etty: A Diary 1941-1943* (1981/85) in which Hillesum wrote about her imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp and Ingrid Betancourt’s *Letter to My Mother: A Message of Love, a Plea for Freedom* (2008) which contained letters that Ingrid Betancourt exchanged with her mother and daughter while she was held hostage under the guerrilla group FARC from 2002-2008. In the letters, Betancourt describes the dark and profoundly desolate experience of her captivity inside the Amazonian jungle. In order to obtain information on the Queen Archetype I watched the Channel 4 docudrama *The Queen* (2009) which described certain issues that can torment royal families.

As we have seen in my first practical research project, as soon as I started writing my script I started creating a story that could contain and give life to my own Helen characters. My drive to create a story for this script led me to think about the space, place or the time where the Helen characters could appear and make aware their presences. Since all the performers’ Helen characters reproduced in their narratives images of war, blood, violence, despair, fatal passions, I figured that death could be the place where the Helen characters met each other. When I started writing the first draft of the script, I situated the Helen characters in a place of death, a place that had an indefinite time and space.

The indeterminate space of death invoked the sense that the Helen characters possessed a tendency towards transgression and introspection. The Helen characters seemed to have transgressed the boundaries of life and death because in spite of the fact that they were dead, they spoke and communicated as living people. The aliveness of their dead bodies produced the sense that they were eternally endowed with speech, movement, life and a desire to reflect about their lives and their deaths. In a sense, the Helen characters shared similar characteristics with the characters of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *In Camera* (1944) who were also dead and occupied a room in the dark and infinite space of death. However, in my script I did not want the space of death to be a cold environment where characters are eternally trapped to remember their failures and project their insecurities onto each other (as happens in Sartre’s play I think). I wanted death to represent a tranquil or silent environment where the Helen characters could find some peace to tell their stories and discuss their lives. I imagined that death would encourage the Helen characters to assume a self-reflective mode through which they could present and weave into their dialogues or monologues the texts or ideas that were generated by the performers during our rehearsals as well as new texts written
by myself.

Whilst I was combining these texts in my writing, my dramaturgical aim or purpose was to reveal gradually to the audience member how the Helen characters begun to establish a sense of who they were in the obscure space of death. Expatriated from their usual dwelling places, situated within an unfamiliar, unknown space, surrounded by Helen characters who shared the same name but not the same past or back-stories, the Helen characters reflected on their lives and circumstances of their deaths. The Helen 1 and Helen 2’s back-story (i.e. the story of their lives before death) was constructed around the basic events of the performers’ narratives. For instance: Helen 1’s back-story was based on Kim’s narrative of a Helen that had left Sparta to follow Paris; Helen 2’s back-story was based on Rasha’s story of a Helen that was raped and driven away by her relatives. As Simsim’s Helen character had a narrative that was very open-ended, invited multiple interpretations, and criticized our desire to watch romance and drama, I decided to develop her Helen character into an old hybrid woman who had a love affair with death; she could speak three different languages, made ironic remarks, performed acrobatics, had rude manners, annoyed the other Helen characters, philosophized on love and the artificial character of life (‘We’re all made out of paper waiting to be delivered’).

My next dramaturgical purpose was to expand and enrich the narratives of the Helen characters by implementing in their narratives images, actions, movements and emotional experiences of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes. This step in the writing of the script required the use of my own archetypal resources as a writer, i.e. I had to reflect how I could integrate into my script archetypal images of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes. In other words, I had to configure how the Helen characters would process and develop their archetypal characteristics (i.e. the emotional components of their archetypes) in the story of my script. My last step in the writing of the script was to find points of empathy between the Helen characters, to discover how the characters could enter a process of sensing or reading parts of their own personal tragedy in the tragedy of the other Helens. In the first and second draft of the script, I was not able to find or work into my script moments of empathy as every Helen character was (in an egotistical manner) focussed in the narration of her story and nothing else. I will now give examples to explain how I incorporated into the narratives of the three Helen characters action-patterns of their archetypes and why empathy became impossible.

Whist Helen 1 (inspired by the Queen archetype) gradually started to remember her story, her unconscious intention was to control or dominate the space through a constant
reference to her passion for Paris, her desire, her mistakes. My main concern as a writer was to voice and articulate her emotional conflict in phrases that sounded like sayings of important people: ‘When a queen decides to leave her kingdom. To neglect her duties. To give space to her own personal and singular ethics as a woman. She lets down. She disappoints’ ([1st Draft] Helen(s) 4). Driven by my assumption that queens (no matter where they are from) carry an air of self-importance, I infiltrated in Helen 1 an unconscious desire to overdramatize the tragic events of her life, to point out the spectacular nature of her life and death. Whilst Helen 1 was remembering her death (which carried a strong symbolic significance as she was decapitated by her husband in the fields of her kingdom), her language was wrapped in poetic imagery: ‘My head rolled and rolled until it reached the sea and disappeared in the water’ (ibid 21). In her effort to recount her story, Helen 1 rarely paid attention to the other Helen characters or experienced an interest to empathise with their stories. Helen 2, on the other hand, wanted to force empathy from the other Helen characters. Helen 2’s death was a suicide that occurred when she left home and wandered alone in the desert. Drawing energy from the passivity and deeply traumatized Daughter Archetype, Helen 2 did not possess the strength to overcome her painful memories and therefore suffered even after her death from their remembrance. In order to alleviate her pain, Helen 2 performed a distancing technique: she insisted that Helen 1 or Helen 3 had suffered from the violence and brutality of her rapists, she constantly entreated them to remember and confess the abuse she herself had endured when she was taken to Troy against her will: ‘He pushed you against the wall. He slapped you. He was hurting you. Both physically and emotionally. There was no tenderness. These men... Don’t you remember their faces? Their ugliness was incredible. Why can’t you admit it?’ (ibid 7). Blinded by the feeling of injustice or blinded by her desperate plea for sympathy or consumed even by her need to raise awareness, she thought that Helen 1 and 3 were rape victims that tried to forget or deny their horrible experiences. Helen 2 begged them to admit their experiences, if not for their own good then for the good of all women who may have a similar fate (ibid 8). In this sense, Helen 2 could not acknowledge the presences and stories of the other Helen characters and therefore had chosen consciously or unconsciously not to empathise with them. The character of Helen 3 was not only trying to retain an emotional distance from Helen 1 and Helen 2, she also attempted (consciously or unconsciously) to distract or prevent any audience member or reader of my script from empathising and/or sympathising with Helen 1 and Helen 2. Helen 3’s intention throughout the script was to incite the audience member or reader to think critically about the representation of suffering by Helen 1 and Helen 2. Helen 3 developed a
parodic technique which is also used in Italo Calvino’s novel If On A Winter’s Night A Traveller (1982). In this novel, a character or voice of indistinct nature interrupts the narration of the events in order to discuss, analyse and comment on the reader’s relationship with the characters, the reader’s emotional response towards the events – this character unconsciously critiques and/or parodies the usual empathetic or voyeuristic reading of a novel. Apart from demystifying Helen 1 and Helen 2 through constant ridicule or debasement, Helen 3 attempted to persuade the reader or the audience member to reconsider why he/she sits in the theatre to listen to their stories, what is their significance for our everyday life, what kind of memories has he/she been projecting in their narratives. Helen 3’s phrase ‘You’re both deeply depressed. Deluded. And... driven by a desire to... A desire to... to... to repeat the drama of your death’ ([1st Draft] Helen(s), 15) was not only addressed to Helen 1 and Helen 2 (which in the space of death eternally recounted their tragic stories) but also to a potential reader or audience member who will never lose interest in the drama, passion and death of characters.

In spite of the fact that all Helen characters felt towards the end of the play the need to fall asleep and experience some kind of warmth and solidarity in the eternity of death, the first draft of the script produced the sense that the characters were unable to empathise with one another. I had not discovered or worked sufficiently on the concept that could bring together the dissonant voices of the characters, the idea for which the characters could either summon their emotional forces to speak out in unison or encounter a profound confrontation that could shake or alter their viewpoints. This concept or idea was the key dramaturgical issue that had to be explored and clarified in the script. When Graham Ley read the first draft, he suggested that the clarification of this concept could have provided an anchor of meaning behind the coexistence of the characters, a sense of purpose behind the Helen characters’ willingness or desire to narrate their stories. The uncertainty surrounding the script’s concept could invite an audience-member to question or look desperately for the motive behind the characters’ desire to tell their stories to each other.

Graham Ley’s comments helped me identify which aspects of the script needed more development. In my effort to establish a concept for the second draft of my script, which is included in Volume Two of my thesis, I imagined that the Helen characters suffered in various ways from social injustice and that in the space of death they had found an opportunity to transform their sadness to self-irony and fictionalization, i.e. they found a kind of relief in treating their tragedies as fiction. In order to intensify the sense of injustice enacted upon the bodies of the Helen characters I added certain events to their narratives,
events that evoked very strong emotional experiences of disappointment, loss, bereavement, frustration, betrayal, isolation. For instance: in the narrative of Helen 2, I wove in the fact that she had secretly been exchanged between her husband and the prince of Troy in order to create an excuse for war, a war that would determine which country would exploit more the resources of the other. Helen 3’s narrative also acquired a clearer structure in the second draft because she was now a Chinese queen that had suffered a strong injustice because of her strange sense of humour. As her humour was inappropriate for her position she was forced to resign, her son was taken away from her and she was violently deported to a desolate island. Given that Helen 3 was still under the influence of the Trickster archetype, she constantly ridiculed and disrupted the emotional tension caused by the remembrance of the tragic events. In her effort to discharge the negative energy from her tragedy, she laughed at her memories and seemed dispassionate towards them.

In their attempts to fight against Helen 3’s strange or unusual ways of dealing with her tragedy, Helen 1 and 2 either accused her of heartlessness or tried to stifle her or invented or narrated Helen 3’s tragic events for her ([2nd Draft] Helen(s), 85). Whilst Helen 1 and 2 were recounting these events, Helen 3 watched them silently. There was irony in this moment as Helen 3 who was personally involved in the tragic events refused to interfere in the narration of her life-story by Helen 1 and 2. Helen 1 and 2 were so overwhelmed and consumed by their desire to tell Helen 3’s story that they were not interested to know if these events were real or imagined. When Helen 1 and 2 started consoling Helen 3 the only answer she gave was: ‘Can we please change the subject?’ (ibid 86), insinuating that consolations are pretentious and generating a sense of uncertainty in her reaction. Were these events lies? Did she want to change the subject because she was bored or was she sad about the truth of the events and therefore wanted to avoid revisiting them? By raising question marks behind Helen 3’s emotional response, I wanted to distort the truthfulness of the events in order to argue the point that ‘after all everything is fiction’. Towards the end of the second draft, Helen 3 invited Helen 1 and 2 to approach their tragedies as fiction, to see their eventful and tragic lives from a different perspective, a perspective that could trigger more contemplation on personal responsibility. Helen 3 was prompting Helen 1 and 2 to position themselves outside of their tragic stories, to obtain an external eye and read their tragedies as something narrated, something fictional. In this way, they could enable themselves to keep an emotional distance from their memories, an emotional distance that would allow them to realize their own contribution in the making of their tragedies.

The second draft of the script ended with Helen 1, Helen 2 and Helen 3 smiling and
laughing. I wanted to create the sense that they had entered a process of depersonalization, a process that could transform their egocentric or self-indulgent victimization to something more positive and open to interrelatedness and empathy. In a sense, Helen 1 and 2 enacted a self-irony that, for Rosi Braidotti, is a ‘positive passion’ that prevents one from thinking only of him/herself and therefore creates possibilities for an ethical ‘interconnectedness’ among people. According to Braidotti, self-irony entices one to see his or her failings in a ‘non-tragic’ way, it detracts one from moaning about his/her failures, and therefore help us to become more non-judgmental (2006: 201). By practising a non-judgmental attitude towards ourselves, we move a step forward in breaking or limiting the need for judging others. If we don’t judge others according to standards set up by Western rationalistic and materialistic culture, then we acquaint ourselves better with the concept of empathy, the concept of understanding other people’s needs and desires as much as personal needs and desires.

3.8. The Rehearsed Reading, Audience Reception.

Given my inexperience in directing, the only instruction I gave the performers during rehearsals was to treat their parts as long introspective monologues with no end and no beginning, a text that was running eternally like a calm stream of water. When the monologue of a character was interrupted by her conversation with other characters, the character was not meant to talk directly to the other character but imagine the other character as an internal voice that interfered in her self-reflection. The instruction I gave was hard to follow and apply as I was not a director and therefore could not determine how I could translate my writing into a performance event, how to guide the actors to perform and transfer the actions of my text on the stage. Another problem was my inability to control and conjoin the different stage dynamics of the performers. The performers were not only coming from a different cultural background, they were also versed in different theatrical experiences. Rasha had no experiencing in acting at all, Simsim was a very well trained actor coming out of Phillip Zarilli’s psycho-physical actor-training, and Kim was more familiar with a psychological approach to acting. My role as the organizer of the rehearsed reading was to reassure the performers that the purpose of the rehearsed reading was not to find solutions for the staging or acting of the text; as with all rehearsed readings, the purpose was to present my writing to an audience in order to hear and gather their comments for the development of my text.
As I have suggested in the previous commentary, the audience members of a rehearsed reading are aware that their comments on the writing will help the writer see the weaknesses of his/her script, detect which characters need more development etc. In this sense, the audience members are actively engaged in the process of rewriting the script as they support the writer’s work through their discussions and comments. I was able to obtain a great number of comments that helped me rethink certain aspects of the script, particularly how to overcome the script’s lack of narrative cohesion and how to clarify the script’s pivotal idea or metaphor. Most audience members acknowledged that the narratives of the Helen characters were interesting and engaging but they were cautious about the clarity of their intentions. Why did the characters feel the necessity to tell their stories in the space of death? How were they related to each other? What concept linked together the characters’ willingness to narrate their stories? As William Stanton noted: ‘What’s at stake between them? What does each of them really want? If they’re dead, what can they do now?’

### 3.9. Conclusions.

The script of the second practical research project may have suffered from a lack of an overarching concept, but the method of its creation proved that a myth and the literature related to this myth can help a theatre group create a devised piece of performance. To my understanding, a theatre group that does devised theatre decides not to work for their performance on an already existing playtext, a well-known or published script but to create their own unique performance text through a devising process. During the devising process all the actors or performers or everyone involved in the theatre group share their ideas, write texts through automatic writing exercises, make improvisations in order to generate material for the production of their performance. When the performers and I started discussing the mythical character of Helen by reading certain passages from Euripides’s *Helen*, we inadvertently started a conversation around issues that concern our everyday lives such as politics, gender issues, the power of beauty, what is an ideal woman etc. In a sense, the myth of Helen encouraged us to begin a lively discussion; without the myth as a basis or trigger of discussion we would have wasted a great amount of time in trying to find ways to create a conversation about anything that was important for us. In other words, the myth gave us an opportunity to share certain opinions about the mythical characters of the myth, and these
opinions reflected personal ideologies or viewpoints on life which we would not have communicated to each other if they were not instigated by the myth. A myth or even a fairy tale can become a highly productive way to start discussions that will reveal what members of a theatre group are thinking about the world or life. Myths are always bound to raise discussions because they convey messages for our survival and therefore demand that we make them meaningful for ourselves, meaningful according to ever-changing or ever-evolving historical, cultural and socio-political circumstances.

As the commentary has tried to show, throughout the devising process the mythical character of Helen elicited some insightful and polemical responses from the performers. The performers drew from Helen’s myth meanings or ideas that resonated with their lives, their personal concerns and personal ways of living in the world. In this way, the performers enabled me to see what kind of presence or significance Helen could acquire in our contemporary world. What could be Helen’s most vital project or desire as a woman today? How were these projects and desires defined by the performers’ culture and their idiosyncratic ways of being in the world? Each performer interpreted the mythical character in her own individual way and created a Helen character that embodied that interpretation. The stimulus that was given by asking the performers to build their own Helen character shows again how a myth can guide us to express or expose certain ideologies or viewpoints on life through a form that is artistic or fictional, a form that is removed from the ‘true’ or everyday self of the performer, yet manages to contain certain aspects of the performer’s individual or personal ways of being or thinking.

The mythical character of Helen contains certain essential or structural characteristics that build the story of Helen’s myth such as the fact that Helen is the world’s most beautiful woman, she is a queen, she is related to Menelaus and Paris, she embarks on a journey to Troy, etc. When the performers were asked to embody the mythical character of Helen in improvisations, the performers embodied the essential characteristics of Helen, but also developed them further and reinterpreted them according to their own individual ways of thinking or being in the world. I explained, for instance, that Rasha’s Helen character was feeling that Helen’s beauty was partly responsible for the Trojan War (‘My beauty is my crime’) whereas Kim and Simsim’s Helen characters were less concerned about the effects of their beauty. This is a difference that reflects the performer’s unique and individual ways of processing and interpreting the material of the myth, and to a further extent also shows where the performers are coming from or what preoccupations they might have in their everyday lives. In short, Helen’s essential characteristics provided each performer with a list of
subjects or issues which the performers analysed or deconstructed through the creation of their own Helen character. In other words, the creation of the Helen character encouraged the performers to reveal what they thought about certain issues that preoccupy our lives such as beauty, war, responsibility, betrayal in marriage.

The idea of asking performers to embody Helen characters in improvisations can work with other mythical characters as well. This means that a group of performers might want to see how they can generate material for their performance by reassessing or re-evaluating other mythical or fictional characters such as Ophelia or Jesus Christ. They can stage a performance that can present three or four or five different Ophelia characters, each Ophelia arguing or discussing the reasons behind her suicide in her own unique way, each Ophelia reflecting the performer’s own ideas of why Ophelia killed herself or the performer’s personal arguments on the subjects of innocence, love and suicide. A group of performers can even experiment with gender reversal when embodying mythical characters. For instance, male performers could see how far they could create Ophelia characters or female performers could endeavour to embody the male figure of Christ. This experiment can prompt the group to reflect on the ideas that constitute gender stereotypes.

Whilst the performers of a theatre group may embody mythical characters in order to generate material for a performance, the task of the writer who will compose a text or a script for the performance is to find a way to structure or integrate the performers’ material within a specific story. Here, the project also showed that the identification of archetypes is a good method for organising and developing the raw material of the devising process. The method of identifying the archetypes behind the performers’ Helen characters can help a writer determine the archetypal energies that exist behind the performers’ material and develop them further. As I have tried to show in the commentary, the identification of the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetypes helped the creation of my own Helen characters because the archetypes triggered a process of image creation in my unconscious. As I was thinking that the performers’ Helen characters were containing energies from the Daughter, Trickster, Queen archetypes, images from these archetypes emerged in my consciousness and I integrated these images into the ways of writing my own Helen characters.

For instance, after clarifying that Rasha’s Helen character was drawing energy from the archetype of the Daughter, certain images of abuse, pain, trauma, rape, vulnerability, captivity, passivity, weakness came to my consciousness and I created the Helen 2 character based on these images. The Helen 2 character constantly talked about the pain or abuse she had endured whilst she was a captive in Troy. But because she was deeply traumatised by her
experience as a rape victim or starving hostage within Troy, she never talked about her experiences in the first person, she projected her experiences onto the other two Helens and forced them to remember or admit their painful experiences as rape victims. Of course the other two Helens ignored her because they had not experienced rape and wanted to communicate or share their own personal experiences as Helens.

In a similar way, the Queen archetype brought to my consciousness images of authority, self-importance, power, affluence, neglecting the people’s will, dictatorship, constant effort to become influential, respect, and these images guided me to create the Helen 1 character. Helen 1 barely paid attention to the other two Helens, she craved for attention and respect, she constantly discussed her passionate affair with Paris and her failure as queen of Sparta (as if this was the most important story of all), she even went to the absurd extreme of excusing her husband’s expedition to Troy: ‘If I were my husband... I would have reacted in a similar way as he did. I would have either destroyed everything or killed myself. There is a code of honour.’ (2010: 80). The Trickster archetype communicated to my consciousness images of laughter, fun, parody, incomprehensibility, subversion, dirt, and these images inspired the construction of the Helen 3 character. While I was writing the Helen 3 character, I was constantly thinking that the aim of this character would be to make fun of the other two Helens, to break or subvert the monotonous narration of their dramatic monologues not only in order to change the atmosphere of the text, to add a different layer to it, but also in order to prevent audience members from identifying themselves with the Helen 1 and Helen 2 characters. If audience members identify themselves with characters on stage, they become too emotionally involved in what they see without thinking about the wider context of what they see on stage, without considering the politics or socio-cultural aspects that determine or shape what they see on stage. Helen 3 tried to discourage audience members from empathising or sympathising with Helen 1 and Helen 2 by acting strangely, screaming, speaking in German, telling stories whose truth was questionable, uttering incomprehensible sounds as if she were an electrical doll that suffered a massive breakdown. In this way, Helen 3 also inserted in my text a comment against naturalism or naturalistic writing, as she was constantly fighting against our need to identify with characters, to mirror ourselves in characters and draw from their stories a moral lesson for our own lives.

Apart from helping the process of writing, the identification of archetypes can also assist performers in determining the tone of voice, the gestures or movements of the characters they create during the devising process. The determination of archetypes triggers or nurtures a process of image creation in the unconscious and, therefore, performers who
realise the archetype or the archetypal energy of their character can discover archetypal images that stem from this archetype and work around these images in improvisations. The archetypal images of the archetypes can guide the performers to generate more material for their characters, they can help them find a structure of movements, gestures and tone of voice. After generating material, the writer or the dramaturg is responsible for organising the material and creating a script which will form the basis of the performance. The script will unify all the different voices of the performers and direct them to serve or support an overarching concept or metaphor of the script. This means that the writer or the dramaturg will try to see how the material that was generated by the performers could work within a story that has a specific metaphor or argument. The writer or the dramaturg needs to be able to say that the material of the performers was processed in a particular way within the script in order to tell to audience members a specific story or myth. If the material of the performers reaches audience members in an unstructured or disorganised way, in a way that does not conform to any rule of storytelling, then the material becomes hazy and audience members will lose interest in it.

The delineation of the concept or metaphor will be a result of conscious thinking, a product of my will and desire to communicate something to my audience. This will or desire is partly nurtured by my unconscious, mostly it is formed according to cultural conditions, social necessities and political ideologies that surround my writing. In this sense, a further stage of rewriting my script would involve my effort to balance more efficiently in the writing of my characters the unconscious poetic elements of my Anima with the meaningful, conscious and conceptual aspects of my Animus. My conscious thinking and unconscious feeling need to cooperate, not to overshadow or cancel each other out. To speak in a metaphor: The characters should carry one away into the realm of Anima, into a trancelike repose, but this is a repose that does not hypnotize one completely but, on the contrary, awakens the Animus and encourages one to think critically about a specific ideological or existential problem. In the second practical research project, I tried to pay respects to the Anima and preserve the poetically and emotionally rich narratives of the performers in the Helen characters of my script. But my purpose as a writer would be now to find my own way through their narratives, to use their poetry and emotional complexity for the exploration of a concept or metaphor, to produce with the help of their voices an ideological evaluation of the world that surrounds me.
Endnotes

1 In her essay ‘Voice I’ (1984), Helene Cixous distinguishes two kinds of knowledge: the conceptual knowledge that is ‘the symbolic knowledge which posits before you abstract givens that you must learn... with the head’ and the ‘knowledge that cannot be without a praxis, without the experience of the body and which produces modifications’ (61). I assume that the knowledge of the body is similar to the instinctual knowledge which is a knowledge that is closely associated or includes in its practice learning through intuition. Michele Le Doeuff defines intuition as: ‘a mode of immediate apprehension, a direct intellectual grasp of something true, which is distinct from, though not necessarily radically opposed to, mediated knowledge achieved through reasoning, discussion, internal debate, dialectic, experimentation, deduction, language, applying or trying to apply some form of proof’ (1984: 4).

2 Young-Eisendrath defines gender in this way: ‘I regard gender categories not as universal givens, but as products of the local interpretive community that assigns meaning to sex difference, primarily to get work done and maintain social structures’ (2004: 50). For Eisendrath, gender is an element that does not have a fixed or stable essence: ‘Naturally (in the nature of being human) gender is constantly being constructed out of a variety of biological and environmental cues, and its subjectivity changes throughout the life cycle’ (ibid 51).

3 In her book Sexing the Body (2000), Anne Fausto-Sterling’s critical concern among others is to make clear that certain characteristics of the male or the female sex are shaped by cultural assumptions or social prejudices (5).

4 Toril Moi writes in her essay What is a Woman? Sex, Gender, and the Body in Feminist Theory (1999): ‘There are innumerable different ways of living with one’s specific bodily potential as a woman. I may devote myself to mountain climbing, become a ballet dancer, a model, a nurse, or a nun. I may have lots of sexual relations or none at all, have five children or none, or I may discover that such choices are not mine to make’ (66).

5 In her book Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics (2006), Rosi Braidotti writes that ‘alterity, otherness and difference are crucial terms of reference in poststructuralist ethics’ (13).

6 In her book Undoing Gender (2004), Butler emphasizes that stable norms of “femininity” or “masculinity” cannot exist as gender is constantly ‘being remade’ (10) or ‘crafted in time’ (13) according to socio-political circumstances. As soon as the power system tries to ‘settle gender once and for all’ (10) or attempts to erase differences of gender (cultural variations or other) it exercises cultural imperialism or fascism even. From a different angle, Clarissa Pinkola-Estes clarifies in her book Women Who Run With the Wolves (1992) how disrespectful to nature we become when we measure ourselves against one singular form of beauty, when we don’t respect or value the differences of our bodies: ‘There cannot be only one kind of songbird, one kind of pine tree, only one kind of wolf. There cannot be one kind of baby, one kind of man, or one kind of woman. There cannot be one kind of breast, one kind of waist, one kind of skin’ (202).

7 This is a Slovenian fairytale written by the Slovenian female author Svetlana Makarovic (1939-).

8 Here Rasha referred to the fact that in Euripides’s Helen, no one wants to marry Hermione because she is stigmatized by the belief that her mother is the cause of the Trojan War (lines 694-696).

9 Renata Šribar provides a thorough insight into contemporary feminist movements in Slovenia in her essay ‘Lacking Integration’ (2002).

10 In an interview that took place after the rehearsed reading, Simsim suggested that her embodiment of Helen was a kind of revolt, resistance or critique against Kim and Rasha’s embodiments of Helen: ‘The other two characters they represent that kind of self-suffering woman which personally I don’t think it is a justified way to represent a woman on stage. It is my personal point of view. I’m not concerned if the understand me... I don’t
think it is appropriate. It is in strong conform to what is going on everywhere. In the movies. In the novels. That kind of romanticizing suffering of a woman. Romanticizing sacrifice of a woman which I don’t think is healthy... healthy representation... That kind of romanticizing love, “loving the wrong person” “being in trouble” “that is love”... this kind of thing is everywhere. Shouldn’t we question about that?

During the improvisations, there was a moment where Simsim’s subversive acts of criticism prompted Rasha and Kim to practice some sort of self-irony. At some point Simsim’s Helen character was fed up with the constant moaning and self-traumatisation of the other Helen characters and declared how deluded they were: ‘Don’t romanticize everything... You watch too many Hollywood movies... Too much Sex and the City’. Rasha’s response to this was very unexpected. She stood up, took up an affirmative pose and stated:

‘I like melodrama... I am proud of being a melodrama holding a wooden stick) I can fish in a melodramatic way. I can cook and eat in a melodramatic way. I can kill you all in a melodramatic way. I can scream in a melodramatic way ‘Ahhhhhhhhhh’. (Kim burst into laughter.) I can laugh in a melodramatic way ‘Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha’... (A short pause. Kim and Simsim laugh and clap their hands.) I now know who I am and what I want. But... Have you thought about yourselves? Who are you?’

The other Helens laughed heartily at Rasha’s performance and Simsim congratulated Rasha for finally finding some ‘free will’. Whereas previously Rasha had assumed the position of a woman that was afraid (she kept hiding behind the chairs or sat recoiled in a corner or wanted to leave the space or wore her warm jacket on), she seemed very liberated and free whilst performing the monologue. This moment of self-irony influenced to a very great extent the writing of the second draft of the script.

The character is something like a commentator that foresees the expectations, desires or pleasures we derive from the reading of a novel. In the passage I quote below, Calvino reveals the process or mechanics of narrative construction, i.e. he shows how the character, the reader and the author are situated in the formation of the narrative: ‘For a couple of pages now you have been reading on, and this would be the time to tell you clearly whether this station where I have got off is a station of the past or a station of today; instead the sentences continue to move in vagueness, greyness, in a kind of no man’s land of experience reduced to the lowest common denominator. Watch out: it is surely a method of involving you gradually, capturing you in the story before you realize it – a trap’ (1992: 12).

Graham Ley asked me these questions in his comments: ‘Where do you think the piece is going over its extent? To put that in audience terms, what do the audience know or what have they perceived to make the journey worthwhile? To some extent, that is the same issue as the evolution of the individual characters, and the product of their exchanges - what is the product of their exchanges?’

I hope that a future director will discover many different ways to stage the text. If we consider also that each character is based on a particular archetype, I assume that a director can use this information to help him/her analyse the actions of the text.

The term ‘will’ here carries the meaning that Jung has given to ‘will’ in his book Typologie (2008). Jung understands that will stems from the act of conscious thinking or conscious motivation. The unconscious motivation of the body is not ‘will’. According to Jung, the ‘will’ is mainly influenced by culture and moral education and does not appear in the mentality of primitive people (194).
Conclusion: Giving Names to Things.

The two practical research projects showed how the theory of archetypes helped me interpret the characters of the Helen myth in solo and collaborative forms of playwriting. By determining and naming the archetypes that inhere in the myth, I visualised and found the components around which the myth is organised, and then proceeded to re-use and reinterpret these components in my playwriting practice. In the first practical research project, the process of naming and/or realising that the characters of Hecuba, Hermione, Menelaus, Paris, Priam, Helen, Telemachus contained archetypal images of the Mother, Daughter, Shadow, Trickster, Wise Old Man, Anima and Hero archetypes respectively helped me understand the archetypal significance of these characters, an archetypal significance that I tried to re-establish and re-communicate in the writing of new characters. The possibility of understanding and realising the archetypal images of the mythical characters as soon as they are identified as the Shadow, Mother, Trickster, Wise Old Man, Anima, Hero reflected Ernst Cassirer’s theory of language, according to which the sense impressions of the world can only become intelligible if they are given a particular name that describes the particular characteristics and elements of these sense impressions. For Cassirer, the human mind has the capacity to classify and organise the elements of the environment into specific classes of objects or concepts in order to make sense, interpret, realise and communicate their potentials. If this capacity did not exist then, according to Cassirer, we would become passive receivers of sense-impressions which we would not have been able to understand and determine their effects. Cassirer explains that gods were invented in order to evoke and signify certain properties of sense-impressions. The name of the god functioned as a metaphor for a certain set or properties of human activities:

.... every department of human activity gives rise to a particular deity that represents it. Whenever a special god is first conceived, it is invested with a special name, which is derived from the particular activity that has given rise to the deity. As long as this name is understood, and taken in its original sense, the limits of its meaning are the limits of the god’s powers; through his name the god is permanently held to that narrow field for which he was originally created (1953: 20).

I wished to clarify in the introductory chapter that the archetypes have a similar function as
gods in the sense that Cassirer gives to the word ‘god’. They denote specific properties of emotional experiences, they have specific lessons to teach to our awareness, they are responsible for making conscious a specific set of images of emotional experiences. In this sense, the archetypal images of the Mother are entirely different from the archetypal images of the Trickster because the Mother archetype’s field of interest are the emotional experiences of protection, nurturance, care, while the Trickster evokes experiences of humour, subversion, idiocy, childishness, defiance of moral codes.

As I have already noted, by finding which archetypes were driving the emotional experiences of the characters in the myth of Helen of Troy, I was able to investigate how this myth is organised and structured. Around which emotional experiences was this myth organised? How did the characters embody these emotional experiences? What characters were in this myth? What emotional energies were being explored within these characters? How could I make use or reinterpret these emotional energies for the creation of new characters? In the introductory chapter I investigated how the Jungian archetypes of Trickster, Mother, Wise Old Man, Shadow, Daughter, Anima, Hero operated within various literary or playwriting versions of the Helen myth and then I examined how the archetypal emotional experiences of these archetypes could be reworked, re-developed and re-organised in the various drafts of my first practical research project. By re-organising and re-interpreting the archetypal images of the Mother, Wise Old Man, Shadow, Daughter, Trickster, Anima, Hero I was able to argue that archetypal images derive their functional power from archetypes that are instinctual, atemporal and transnational but the form they acquire as characters is influenced by my personal unconscious and my cultural environment. This means that the characters retain in their construction an emotional power that is universal, primeval and archaic but the outlet, expression and imagery of this emotional power is always informed and affected by personal memories from my immediate cultural environment. For instance, I developed the Shadow qualities of Menelaus in the character of Chris who embodied or performed a macho masculinity that is very common in Greek culture. When I was writing Chris, I unconsciously drove him to express the Shadow aspect of his character through his constant swearing, his violent attacks on other male characters, his desire for power, his never-ending interest in sex, genitals, prostitutes and money, his constant demeaning of his dead wife, his overabundant need of attention. It is usual for a Greek macho man to express his emotions of anger, aggression, jealousy, and fear in the ways Chris was expressing them.

The writing of Chris may validate or consolidate certain recent observations on the
theory of archetypes, particularly the theories of Jean Knox and John Merchant. In his recent article ‘A reappraisal of classical archetype theory and its implications for theory and practice’ (2009), John Merchant questions Jung’s definition of archetypes as ‘a priori psychic structures which have the capacity to direct psychological life’ (345) and offers a new understanding of archetypes as ‘mind/brain structural templates’ that are developed from personal experiences during infancy. He states for instance that: ‘archetypal imagery emerges from particular image schemas which have arisen developmentally from specific affective experiences of childhood.’ (349) and further argues that: ‘We only have to assume that when some resonating ‘now’ affect occurs, the pre-existing template is activated’ (345). This means that a child will learn some basic emotional experiences from his or her immediate environment, experiences that he or she will internalise as a child and express them as an adult in the form or template he or she has learned them. Merchant’s theory on archetypes and myths helps me understand how personal experiences of my childhood affect and shape my reworking of a mythical characters such as Menelaus. For instance: the Shadow aspects of Menelaus gave rise to emotions of anger, jealousy, aggression, despair; I then embodied and expressed these emotions through the form of a character that resembled the type of a macho Greek man. My decision to embody and express these emotions through this form was not coincidental or arbitrary because the type of the Greek macho man is a type I have known and experienced since my childhood. In a sense, this type may have been stored in my unconscious as a template or image that is associated with emotions of anger, aggression, jealousy and despair.

The Greek macho man, however, does not only evoke in my unconscious dark or Shadow emotions but also Trickster elements such as humour, subversion and self-deprecation. Certain Greek macho men sometimes laugh at their own efforts to prove their grand masculinity, they comment on their own weaknesses and indulge in self-deprecation. In Chris I incorporated the characteristic of the Trickster and in this way he became one of my most successful characters. As I explained in my commentaries the mixing or integrating of two archetypes in one character provides a sense that the character’s psychology is mobile, it is in a constant movement between two opposing archetypal forces. By sensing that the actions or behaviours of the character derive energy from more than one archetype, an audience member may become more drawn to follow the narrative of this character because there is a constant transformation and renewal in the character, a sense that nothing is stable or fixed, a sense that the character has an indefinite number of possibilities to balance or stabilise the changes he or she undergoes in his or her journey. In his book The Writer’s
Journey: Mythic Structures for Writers (2007), Christopher Vogler maintains that good and engaging characters need to externalise a sense of conflict in their actions, a sense that they are torn between two opposing qualities. According to Vogler:

If your story is about the single quality of trust, the possibility of suspicion immediately arises. Suspicion is necessary to test and challenge the concept of trust. If your main character wants something, there must be someone who doesn’t want her to get it who brings out hidden qualities in your hero by opposing her... We enjoy stories that are polarized by a struggle between two strong characters... but we are also entertained by stories polarized by great principles of living that tug the characters in two directions at once, so they are torn between duty and love, for example, or between revenge and forgiveness (316).

For Vogler, a character’s effort to reconcile his or her opposing qualities cultivates his or her personal maturation process or individuation: ‘Characters in relationships strongly tend to become polarized as part of their process of growing and learning through conflict’ (317). In my opinion a character becomes even more engaging when his or her internal conflicts remain unresolved till the end of the play, because then it is possible for an audience member to wonder and imagine how the conflict between these qualities will either end or become more complicated. Archetypes can help us understand and recognise the opposing qualities or internal conflict of the character.

Here the naming or defining of the archetypes that ‘tear’ the character apart becomes necessary because the names of the archetype will again make conscious the archetypal images or archetypal elements of the opposing archetypes, and in this way we will be able to configure the nature of the character’s conflict. In a sense, it would be a useful practice for me as a writer to consciously think, decide and find which archetypes may nurture or energise a character’s intentions. In this way I will be able to determine the changes or conflicts that a character undergoes in my own writing as well as in plays I read or watch.

As I have shown in the commentaries of my projects, characters whose actions are nurtured by two or more archetypes, have the potential to become more complex and more open to dialogue with audience members. By infusing two archetypes into a character the writer can enrich a character’s journey with contrasting images that can invite audience members to think about the character’s journey, to question his/her motivations instead of becoming emotionally involved in the character’s emotional experiences. Whilst I was
writing the character of Claire, for instance, I tried to balance in her character the opposing archetypal characterisations of the grieving mother and the playful or melodramatic theatre actress. In this way, I wanted to suggest to audience members that Claire’s tragic memories of the death of her children, or loss of everything, were perhaps not entirely true, that her intentions behind the telling of her stories were perhaps motivated by a desperate need for attention, for feeling like a martyr. I wanted to put the audience members in a position of questioning rather than believing (blindly) the stories or ramblings of Claire.

I intended to do a similar thing with my Helen characters towards the end of that piece when Helen 1 and Helen 2 started interrogating Helen 3 about her own tragic story. Did she have a real tragic story to tell or was her story constructed by Helen 1 and Helen 2 as part of their strong need to overdramatize? I wanted to leave this question open so that audience members would come up with their own answers. The possibility for creating this question was given by the integration or balancing of two archetypal forces in the writing of characters. It is the contrast or conflict between two archetypal forces, such as the Trickster (represented by the Helen 3 character and the playful actress of Claire) and the Mother or Daughter (visualised in the grieving motherhood of Claire and the victimization of Helen 2) that manages to create open-ended questions, to expand an audience member’s sensations and thinking processes.¹

Vogler has argued that conflict and polarity are vital elements of storytelling because, as he contends, everything in the world has a polarized nature: ‘We are polarized as a species, coming in two basic models, male and female. Polarized categories like age and youth or life and death are realities that no one can ignore... Our entire galaxy is polarized, a spinning disk of stars, dust, and gases that has definite north and south poles and its own polarized magnetic field’ (2007: 317). If myths attempt to explicate certain elements of nature such as the change of day into night, then one of the implicit purposes of myth could also be to reflect on or tell a story about the polarity that occurs in nature, the polarity and complexity that inheres in our psychologies. The myth of Helen of Troy, for instance, is structured around many polarities or conflicting aspects. First of all, it is not clear whether Helen went to Troy because she fell in love with Paris or whether she was abducted by Paris against her will. In Euripides’s Trojan Women we see for instance how two women Hecuba and Helen fight to prove that one version of the myth is true in order to achieve their intentions. This happens towards the end of the play where Menelaus declares that he will punish Helen for her love affair with Paris. Hecuba and Helen will tell different versions of the myth, they will bring up the mythical polarity of Helen’s involvement or non-involvement in her abduction in order to
either support Menelaus’ decision or change his mind. Helen wants to save herself and therefore recounts that Paris ‘married me by force’ (line 962). Hecuba, on the other hand, wants to destroy Helen and in order to do this denies her claims of innocence: ‘Force was used by my son, you say, when he took you away. Why then was this not noticed by any of the Spartans? Did you scream for assistance from Castor or his brother? They were still there, young and strong, as yet not raised to the stars’ (lines 997-1000); and earlier in the play Hecuba proclaimed that: ‘You saw him resplendent in his foreign costume and gold and you went out of your mind’ (lines 990-91). We may think that Hecuba’s version of the story is truer, but Hecuba and Helen’s retelling of the Helen myth manage to draw our attention to the fact that a myth has never a single interpretation. Each myth has two or more interpretive poles or sides that constantly undermine or conflict with each other. This happens because any myth speaks to each of us in different ways, we extract from a myth unique meanings that matter to us on a personal level, meanings that teach lessons for our personal survival.

I was motivated to work with three performers instead of one in my second practical research project in order to realise and investigate further what it means for a myth to have multiple instead of one singular or essential meaning or interpretation. In the second practical research project I examined how I could write or create a Helen character with the help of three female performers. I asked Rasha, Kim and Simsim to find a personal meaning in Helen’s myth and express this meaning in three different Helen characters of their own creation. The performers embodied or developed in their interpretations and performances of their Helen characters personal as well as cultural preoccupations of their gender/sex. In other words, Rasha, Kim and Simsim’s readings or interpretations of Helen were informed by their culture, their education, personal idiosyncrasies or views on subject matters such as love, betrayal, representations of women in the media. The differences of the performers’ interpretations highlighted that the images of the Helen myth are able to be interpreted in ways that are infinite or indefinite, because each person will invest his or her interpretation of the myth with a unique characteristic of his/her psychobiological being, each person will articulate the myth’s story in a different language, a different accent, a different body posture emphasising or pointing out different elements or images of the myth. Here again we see that a myth’s images may be structured in a fixed or unchanging way because whenever the myth of Helen is told we already know that it is about a woman who was the most beautiful woman on earth, we know that she had an affair with Paris, we know that Menelaus started the Trojan War to get Helen back. But the interpretation of these images or events is never single because we will always develop personal views on why certain mythical characters acted in a
particular way or why certain events happened in one way and not another.

In order to prompt Rasha, Kim and Simsim to create their interpretations or views on Helen, I used some techniques of the devising theatre, techniques that have been developed by various contemporary theatre groups such as Forced Entertainment or Split Britches. My idea, for instance, to ask the performers to read Euripides’s *Helen* and then analyse or say whatever comes to mind about this text came from Lois Weaver’s devising exercise ‘The Use of the Personal’: ‘We look at a piece of material that has already a structure. We look where there might be a place in the storyline of *Streetcar named Desire* where our lives may cut across and may actually make us think: actually that moment reminds me of this moment in my life.’ The discussion on *Helen* or other texts on Helen’s myth brought to the surface many cultural as well as personal issues that concerned the three female performers. These issues were further examined and elaborated when the performers created their own Helen characters in improvisation exercises which were inspired from improvisation techniques used by Tim Etchells with Forced Entertainment (2008: 52). The improvisations gave me the chance to see how the performers could embody their interpretations in the rehearsal space, how the performers felt what it means to be Helen amongst other Helens, what arguments could take place between them as Helens, what were their main differences.

As soon as our devising process finished, I created a script from the raw material of the performers. In a sense I had to find a way to create three Helen characters based on the three Helen characters of the performers. Here, the theory of archetypes helped me develop a method with which I could rewrite and reinterpret the Helen characters of the performers for the writing of my script. During the first practical research project the archetype theory had taught me to look for the specific emotional energies of the basic mythical characters of the Helen myth, it had guided me to name these energies so that I could realise how they could function in contemporary characters. In the second practical research project the archetype theory helped me in a similar way because I treated the three Helen characters of the performers as three mythical characters whose source of emotional power needed to be defined and named so that I could use it for the writing of my ‘own’ Helen characters (I will explain the quotation marks later). By sensing that the Queen, Daughter and Trickster archetype were motivating the interpretations of the performers, I was able to pin down, organise and structure the material of the performers, to recreate in my imagination further archetypal images of the Queen, the Daughter and Trickster and assimilate them in the journeys of my Helen characters.

The archetypes might have helped me think about how to write or what to include in
the Helen characters of my script but the Helen characters I created and presented in my
script were not and will never be entirely my own because they were developed or devised
together with Rasha, Kim and Simsim. That is the reason why I have put the word ‘own’ in
quotation marks. There are ethical implications involved in the writing of characters that are
based on material that is not entirely mine but comes from the lived bodies of the performers,
material that reflects the experiences of the performers as women, their personal concerns and
sensitivities. Even though Rasha, Kim and Simsim were aware that they were participating in
my project which meant that we had unconsciously or silently agreed that the material we
generated from this process was left entirely at my disposal, it was ethically questionable why
I had the self-claimed responsibility to interfere in the performers’ material in order to shape
and/or confine it into a text, to restructure the material and decide what to include or what to
leave out in the creation of my Helen characters, to choose what to make visible, what to take
out into the public through my writing. Here, it would be useful to discuss or interrogate
briefly who has the final say in the creation of the performance text within the devised
theatre. In their book *Devising Performance: A Critical History* (2006), Deidre Heddon and
Jane Milling argue that one of the most important aims of the devised theatre is: ‘to engender
a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative,
‘version’ or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience
and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways,
construct our lives’ (192). Yet, theatre groups that employ a devising process for their
performances often hand over to the dramaturg or the director the responsibility of structuring
the material of the devising process into a meaningful performance text, a performance text
that can convey some kind of vision or overarching idea.  

While these ethical issues need to be acknowledged, what also matters more to me as
a writer and researcher is to find what kind of story I wanted to tell in the script of my second
practical research project. In fact, both scripts of my two practical research projects still lack
a coherent vision or meaning, and my main focus in a further reworking or redrafting of these
scripts will be to act as a dramaturg, and search or reflect thoroughly on what concepts or
main ideas are being examined in the scripts. My two practical research projects produced
scripts that did not explore a main theme because I was not interested in creating a fully
developed script, but in investigating how I could configure a method for defining the archetypes of a myth in order to reuse these archetypes for the creation of characters. The projects tested how this method could work in solo and collaborative forms of playwriting. My investigation into the archetypal emotional experiences that are present in the myth of Helen led me to explore the kinds of stories I could write about Helen, the kinds of archetypal images that are evoked by Helen. The first project examined the stories characters could tell around a female figure that was as consequential, controversial, mythical, famous and beautiful as Helen and the second project focussed on what stories could Helen herself say through the bodies or presences of three women from three different cultures. In both projects Helen’s figure proved to be a great source of storytelling because it was never easy to define who she really was and therefore her nature was always open to interpretation and further myth-making. Was she a victim? A woman in love? A clown? A queen who failed to protect her country from war? A mother who neglected her children? A suicidal woman like Marilyn Monroe? If Helen had a son, what could he be like? All these questions, though, should guide me to answer the main question about what exactly does Helen or Helen’s myth mean to me personally. What kind of story do I want to explore through Helen’s myth? If myths and fairytales are supposed to convey messages or meanings about the ways we live, the ways we structure our everyday lives, then how can I make my scripts function as myths or fairytales? What metaphor or meaning do I want to investigate through the death of three Helen characters or the journey of a young man who hears stories about the most beautiful woman in the world? How can I bring my characters’ archetypal images together under a narrative context and produce a specific meaning?

I suggested before that in order to determine the concepts of my script I need to intervene as dramaturg and clarify the core metaphors or key questions of my scripts. In my thesis I have briefly introduced the fact that a script has no strong value as a narrative or story experience unless it generates something meaningful, unless all its elements such as characters, their actions and emotional experiences, their use of language, props, theatrical spaces, themes, political or ethical issues, style, operate under a unifying concept and generate a specific meaning or metaphor that will activate audience members to interpret it. The role of the dramaturg is perhaps to determine this unifying concept or metaphor, and then see how well the script fits into or serves the overall aims of the performance. In order to explore more what kind of meaning or metaphor I want to investigate through the writing of a script I need perhaps to reflect again on Cassirer’s theory of the power of language in order to determine how necessary it is perhaps to articulate in words, to name or simply describe what
I intend to argue or state by writing a script. In *Language and Myth* (1955), Cassirer argues that the word is ‘supreme in power’ (48) because it makes conscious thinking possible, it gives us the power to grasp the limits and strengths of ourselves, it helps us understand our environment, it creates myths that advance our awareness of who we are and what we can do to change. In order to illustrate the power of language or the power of naming things Cassirer tells the story of Isis, who ‘craftily persuaded the sun-god Ra to disclose his name to her, and how through possession of the name she gained power over him and over all the other gods’ (48). Cassirer’s intention in telling this myth is to underline the power of language, whereas our response to this myth could be that language works to overpower things and is able to act as an instrument of totalitarianism. Here, again, we see that the meaning of something said or argued is never single or foreclosed. A point of further research and exploration would be to see how far an argument or statement of a script can generate multiple responses; how far the images of the script invite us to imagine other arguments beyond the initial argument of the writer; how far a script cultivates our desire to create further stories and myths; and how far a script enables the audience to become dramaturgs themselves and realise the meanings of the performance.6

Apart from thinking about the concepts of my plays, my investigation on how the Jungian archetypes can be used to discuss my reinterpretation of the Helen myth within my playwriting practice has prompted insights on the practice of playwriting in general. In the first chapter I tried to show that the Jungian archetypes can bring to the surface the archetypal or eternal essence of certain actions of the mythical characters. The mythical characters appear in various literary contexts and, therefore, they are never written in the same way, the language they are using is different, they have different habits, different ways of expressing themselves, different cultural backgrounds. Beneath the different rewritings of Menelaus, Helen, Hermione, Hecuba, and Paris, there is a constant score of emotional experiences that connects all the different versions of the mythical characters and which I discovered through the Jungian archetypes. In my first practical research project, I showed how I reassessed or reinterpreted this constant score of emotional experiences in the writing of new characters. Even though my ways of writing the characters were entirely different from the way Sappho, Euripides or Shakespeare was writing the mythical characters, I could feel or sense that beneath our differences the archetypal significance of the characters had never entirely changed. The Jungian archetype theory pointed out how each mythical character had an archetypal force which endures through time and translates across cultural spaces.

In the second practical research project, I investigated how the myth enabled
performers from diverse cultural backgrounds to construct stories about Helen of Troy. In spite of the fact that Rasha, Simsim and Kim were from different cultures, they all had something to say about Helen because her myth was dealing with issues that have universal significance such as female victimization, the right for individuality or subjectivity, war, marriage, betrayal, beauty. The myth has a certain number of events or images that are essential and unchanging. This means that even though there are various versions of the myth, the myth has a fixed structure, a fixed series of events that will always be consciously or unconsciously present in every retelling of the Helen myth. Whenever we talk about the myth of Helen, we always talk or think about the fact that Helen is the most beautiful woman in the world, that there was a Trojan War, that Menelaus was betrayed or deprived by his beautiful wife. The myth’s structure or fixed series of events encouraged performers to contemplate and discuss the issues that concerned them, the issues they wanted to explore further in their own characterisations of Helen. It was the way the events of the myth were interrelated that made the performers interested in the myth, interested in drawing conclusions about life and politics. One of the most important findings of my thesis was my realising how important structure or interrelation of archetypal images is for a myth. Myths exist or have the power to exist over centuries because they combine archetypal images in a way that directly affects our collective unconscious.

My research findings on archetypes and myth, my conclusions about the ways archetypes make conscious the archetypal emotional energy of mythical characters and the way myths structure archetypal images suggests that this might allow writers to establish a contact with our collective unconscious. Future research might explore how the Jungian archetypes can help writers access unconscious material that have archetypal significance, through working on myth or fairy-tale reinterpreted using the Jungian archetypes. Diverse writers might access images that exist in his/her unconscious in a latent or unintelligible state, images that are not only personal memories but come from the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious contains images that affect all of us in a similar way no matter where we are from or what age, sex or historical period we belong to; these are images of grief, love, death, birth, hatred, jealousy, affection, victimization etc.

Shared exploration with other writers after recognising the Jungian archetypes in our myth, might reveal images that are related with the Jungian archetypes (particularly through writing exercises of automatic writing or free association exercises around the archetypes). Images arising from these processes could be integrated into stories, developing characters and storylines that could resonate with the collective unconscious. The structure of the myths

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from which we draw our inspiration has the potential to link archetypal images together, and the clarity of its storyline activates our imagination and invites us to feel the power of certain archetypal images. In addition, mythic storylines are not too convoluted or complicated but aim to convey clear, simple and pure archetypal images.

Future research might also explore my findings on the importance of collaboration and sharing of ideas or dramaturgical concerns when writing a script. I think that only through collaboration and exchange of information can the writer understand how far his/her stories and images resonate or get in touch with the collective unconscious. The two research projects I conducted for my thesis had a collaborative nature because the writing and rewriting of the scripts was affected by discussions with performers, actors, directors, audience members, and friends. Through these discussions I realised or discovered which scenes or images in my writing were too conceptual or heady and did not communicate with clarity and precision images from the collective unconscious. As a writer, one has to strive to create images that have a pure and simple archetypal nature, images that give light to the darkness or vastness of the collective unconscious. As Jung suggested, all myths give visual form to material from the collective unconscious because they deliver messages for the survival of our species. Every writer has to create his/her own myth and convey something meaningful to his/her audience; in the process of writing the script, a discussion with other writers or any kind of audience is helpful for understanding or realising what progresses or impedes the communication of archetypal images. I have entitled my conclusion ‘giving names to things’ in order to suggest among other things how important it is for a writer to hear what people have to say about his/her script. A writer’s audience will name and identify certain problems in the script, they might even be able to name and suggest what needs further development. ‘Giving names to things’ is a way of clarifying what images need to be reworked in order to improve the mythmaking capacities of a script, to improve the way the script connects or interrelates archetypal images.

Endnotes

1 Recently I watched a film entitled Tony Manero (2008). The film is set in Santiago, Chile, in 1978 during the Pinochet dictatorship. The film follows the life of a poor unemployed middle-aged man called Raúl as he is trying to become a famous impersonator of John Travolta’s Saturday Night Fever character Tony Manero. The most striking aspect about Raúl is his habit of brutally murdering people to obtain money for the costumes and other items for his impersonation. On the one hand, we see Raul trying to imitate Travolta’s dance movements
and, a few minutes later, we see him smashing the skulls of old people for money. The police are not after him, because during the dictatorship they are preoccupied with catching anarchists. Whilst I was watching the film, I could not stop thinking at the very intriguing and shocking dynamic that was created from the integration of the two archetypes of the Shadow and Trickster inside Raúl’s character. Raúl’s dancing made me laugh because it was clumsy and over-the-top, at the same time I was very horrified at seeing him exercise his dark animal impulses on helpless people. The Trickster dance elements offered comic relief or contrast to the horror of the killings, but beneath this relief the balancing of two opposing archetypal forces revealed very effectively the entire emptiness of Raúl’s character; both the dancing as well as the killing were a result of the character’s total internal emptiness or dissolution which was nurtured by the very dangerous and chaotic environment of the dictatorship. If the director or scriptwriter had decided to focus entirely on either the Shadow or the Trickster elements of this character, to present the character only as either serial killer or funny impersonator at the time of the dictatorship, then the character’s emotional journey would not have been as complex and intriguing; we would never become entirely convinced that the chaos or darkness of the dictatorship is responsible for creating the social phenomenon of Raúl: he is a totally quiet and unpredictable serial killer, he has no conscience at all, he wants to become the next John Travolta, nothing else.

2 Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw’s workshop on the devising processes of their theatre group took place at the University of Lancaster and was organised by Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris for the Women’s Writing for Performance Project (AHRC), 2003-6. A DVD recording of the workshop can be found at University of Exeter’s library under the title: Split Britches: Film Documentation of A Four-Day Workshop / with Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver.

3 In his book Certain Fragments (2008) Tim Etchells describes the process of improvising: ‘improvisations would start without anyone noticing – during lunch break perhaps when someone might get up and start messing about in the performance area – the waving a maybe, trying out some text. Then someone else would join in and someone else, and someone else. Before long they’d be somewhere else too – pushing the material into unexpected territory... For a few days they’d play almost without thinking, doing, well, whatever came to mind. Improvisations (they finally got used to the word) were long and relatively unstructured. The mood would be, well, “see what happens”’ (52).

4 Heddon and Milling find, for instance, that ‘The role of The Wooster Group’s director, Liz LeCompte, in structuring the ‘raw’ materials, seems more central; though the generation of materials may be collaborative, the performance appears to be more singularly “her” vision, her organisation’ (2006: 213).

5 The role of the dramaturg as provider of meanings and concepts has led to some open-ended discussions. The dramaturg can be seen as a person who has a keen awareness of all the elements of a performance and therefore can understand how the performance should be structured or put together in order to communicate with audience members. As Paul Monaghan argues: ‘If performance is a composed arrangement of materials in space and time, then the dramaturg needs to be keenly attuned to what these materials are and how their arrangement and treatment creates frameworks for experience and interpretation... What are the parts, and how do they contribute and weave together? And how does the whole live, speak and reside in its environment?’ (2010: 80). On the other hand, the dramaturg has been dreaded for his or her intellectual intervention in the performance-making, an intervention that does not allow much space for creativity or impedes the imagination of the theatre group. Reflecting on the role of dramaturgs within dance theatre, Synne Behrndt commends that the dramaturg ‘historically has come to be seen as “the protector” of a concept (often based on a written play) that has been worked out prior to rehearsals. According to this, the actual rehearsals are therefore about putting decisions into practice, and the dramaturg’s role, for it becomes a role, is to ensure that the process moves towards its goal’ (2010: 192). Behrndt further on draws on Maiike Bleeker’s experiences of dramaturgy to show that the dramaturg’s effort to direct everything towards a goal can have a restrictive implication on the creative processes of a theatre or dance group: ‘Bleeker remarks that this role as a “protector of the goal” has produced a problematic reputation in that dramaturgy, and the dramaturg, have become “associated with pre-given concepts that have to be fulfilled, rules that have to be imposed on the artistic material, prescriptions that have to be carried out – or, to put it simply, with limitations imposed upon artistic freedom’ (2010: 192-93). Even though I still lack experience in discussing the dramaturgy of my scripts with dramaturgs or directors, I sense that any issues regarding the imposition of meanings on my scripts can be solved if the writer, director or dramaturg or the whole theatre-group has a willingness to listen to each other and agree together on what the performance should mean to the audience.

6 The idea that audience members can act as dramaturgs came from Australian playwright Richard Murphet’s
intention to create plays that involve audience members as dramaturgs in the meaning-making process of the performance: 'Another thing I was interested in doing was relieving the audience from having to just follow the narrative. I was interested in the audience having some power, enabling their own dramaturgy. In being able to put together a narrative they liked, because there were probably hundreds of narratives to choose from' (2010: 63). For me the moment where audience members may act more poignantly as dramaturgs happens in rehearsed readings of scripts when audience members discuss any problematic aspect of the script, and so encourage the writer to develop the script further, to clarify his or her authorial intentions.
Appendices

Appendix One: The Literary Sources of the Myth of Helen of Troy.

I provide here brief synopses of my selected literary sources to show how the mythical characters appear in these sources.

Iliad

Helen appears in Book III. Helen is in Troy inside Priam’s palace and weaves a web that depicts scenes from the Trojan War. The Trojan War has already begun and takes place outside of her room. The goddess Iris arrives at her room and entreats her to go to the walls of the palace to witness a fight between Menelaus and Paris. The two rivals have agreed to resolve the issue of her possession with a single combat. If Menelaus kills Paris, Helen will go back to Sparta together with some other goods that Paris stole from Menelaus’s palace. If Paris wins, Helen will stay in Troy. Helen goes to the walls and meets Priam who treats her with great kindness and asks her to describe the Greek warriors they see in the battlefield. Menelaus and Paris start fighting and, when Menelaus is about to strike down and kill Paris, Aphrodite covers him in a cloud and transfers him to his bedroom. Aphrodite then disguises herself as an old woman and visits Helen who sits by the walls together with other Trojan women. The goddess orders her to go to Paris who needs her company. Helen refuses but a protest against a goddess is futile. Helen finds Paris and reprimands him for running away from Menelaus. Eventually they make love.

Helen has also a distinctive presence in Book VI and Book XXIV. Both books describe Helen’s respect and great admiration for Hector who is Paris’s brother and a great man and warrior. The first time we see Helen speaking to Hector is in Book VI when Hector comes into Paris’s bedroom in order to take him back to the battle. While Paris puts on his armour, Helen invites Hector to stay for a while and rest. She starts relating how miserable her life is and expresses her regrets for staying alive after she was born. If she had died then the Trojan War wouldn’t have happened. In Book XXIV, Helen attends Hector’s funeral. She cries for him together with his mother Hecuba, his wife Andromache and other Trojan Women. In her personal lament, Helen praises
Hector’s kindness and generosity. He and his father Priam were the only people that tried to defend her position, to protect her against everyone who hated her and believed that she was the cause of the Trojan War.

*Odyssey*

Helen appears in Book IV of the *Odyssey*. The Greeks have won the Trojan War and Helen is back in Sparta. Helen and Menelaus are celebrating their daughter’s marriage with Neoptolemus. During their celebrations, Telemachus and his friend Pisistratus arrive at Menelaus’s palace to ask if they know anything about Odysseus who has not yet returned home like all other Greek warriors. Menelaus invites Telemachus and Pisistratus to join their celebration and eat dinner together even though he cannot recognise who these two young men are. When Helen comes out of her room and sits at the dinner table, she immediately notices that the young man is Telemachus, Odysseus’s son. Menelaus, then, starts narrating how great and strong Odysseus was and makes Telemachus sob. In order to help Telemachus overcome his pain and sadness, Helen infuses in his and everyone’s drink a drug that acts like an antidepressant. Helen, then, tells a story of how she came to know Odysseus herself when she was still at Troy. According to her story, Odysseus had entered Troy as a spy and only Helen recognised who he was. She took care of him and kept his identity hidden from all the Trojans. Menelaus, then, tells another story in order to praise the exceptional cleverness of Odysseus. He tells a different story about Helen’s position between the Greeks and the Trojans. According to his version, Helen intended to betray the Greeks to the Trojans. When the Greek warriors entered Troy with the Trojan horse, Helen approached the Trojan horse and started shouting the names of the Greek warriors. She was also trying to sound like the wives of the Greek warriors. Some Greek warriors wanted to jump out of the horse and leave their hiding place but Odysseus prevented them from doing so. Menelaus concludes that Helen must have been under the influence of Aphrodite when she was trying to betray them. Helen then orders her servants to prepare the beds for Telemachus and Pisistratus. She herself goes to sleep with her husband Menelaus.

We also meet Helen, Menelaus and Telemachus in Book XV. Telemachus prepares to leave Sparta. When Menelaus and Helen say goodbye to Telemachus, they suddenly see an eagle that has snatched a goose from Menelaus’s farms. According to
Helen, this incident is an omen signifying that Odysseus will soon come back to Ithaca and bring peace and balance at home.

**Sappho’s Fragment 31**

Sappho’s poem begins with the assertion that whatever one loves is the most beautiful thing on earth: ‘Some say an army on horseback,/ some say on foot, and some say ships/ are the most beautiful things/ on this black earth,/ but I say/ it is whatever you love...’.

For Sappho, the story that exemplifies how powerful and all-consuming love can become is Helen’s myth. Helen sacrificed everything to be with Paris: ‘It’s easy to show this. Just look/ at Helen, beautiful herself/ beyond everything human,/ and she left/ her perfect husband and went sailing off to Troy/ without a thought for her child/ or her dear parents...’ Sappho then remembers a girlfriend who also left home like Helen and also impersonates the idea that whatever one loves cannot compete with anything ‘... reminding me of Anactoria,/ who is gone/ and whose lovely walk/ and bright/shimmering face/I would rather see/ than all the chariots/ and armed men in Lydia.’

**Aeschylus’s Agamemnon**

The play takes place in Argos, the palace of Agamemnon. This play does not contain any of the characters I have decided to rework but has ample references to Helen’s character. Helen is constantly referred to as a woman that brings only destruction, she personifies Evil, debauchery, lethal beauty, hatred and despair. A very significant reference to Helen takes place when the Chorus, which are the old men of Argos, describe how the Trojans were punished because Paris stole Helen from Menelaus. The theft of Helen caused a series of disasters. Menelaus became restless and his sense of love was deeply betrayed. He is haunted by Helen’s ghost, Helen is in his dreams and whenever he tries to touch her she goes away. Apart from Menelaus’s despair, Helen also causes grief to many mothers who lose their sons in the Trojan War. The second very significant reference to Helen is when the Chorus explain that the word Helen means destroyer. They call her ‘bringer of war’ (line 686), ‘Helen: hell to soldiers, cities, fleets’ (lines 689-690). The chorus then compares Helen to a lion cub that seems innocent and harmless at first but then turns dangerous and destructive as soon as it
grows. Whereas the lion cub was calm, the lion devours a flock of sheep. The same has happened with Helen as the Chorus sing. Everyone at Troy admired her beauty to begin with, she was like a jewel ‘a flower of desire to pierce the heart’ (line 743), but then she became a Fury, her elopement with Paris was an unholy deed that gave birth to destruction. When Clytemnestra comes out of the palace and the dead bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra can be seen, the Chorus make a plea to Helen and say that these deaths are the ‘last flower in your garland of corpses’ (lines 1461-62).

Euripides’s *Andromache*

The play takes place in Thessaly in front of Neoptolemus’s palace. Some years after the end of the Trojan War. Neoptolemus has brought home Andromache as a slave and has forced her to become his mistress. But Neoptolemus has also married Hermione and she is his legitimate wife. A conflict arises between the two women because Andromache has a child with Neoptolemus, whereas Hermione cannot conceive any children. Hermione wants to destroy both Andromache and her child. While Neoptolemus is away, Hermione’s father Menelaus comes in to help his daughter kill Andromache and the child. Andromache tries to plead with Hermione and Menelaus but they are not listening. Peleus, Neoptolemus’s grandfather, arrives and tries to reason with Menelaus by telling him how wrong he is in everything he does. He is the husband of Helen, the most promiscuous woman on earth, he launched a war for Helen instead of trying to forget her, he even urged his brother Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia. Peleus manages to save Andromache because Menelaus has to leave and settle an upheaval in a neighbouring state. Without her father to protect her and grant her wishes, Hermione feels entirely alone, afraid, guilty and wants to kill herself. Orestes comes in and promises to take Hermione away from this house.

Euripides’s *Trojan Women*

The Trojan War has ended with the downfall of Troy. The Trojan women wait outside the walls of Troy to be picked up by Greek soldiers. The plan is to take these women to Greece where they will serve as slaves. Amongst the Trojan women is the queen of Troy, Hecuba, who cries for the death of her children. Amongst the many children she has lost are Hector, killed by Achilles, and Polyxena, slain in a sacrifice. Priam her
husband is also dead. Hecuba learns from Talthybius what will happen to her living daughters Cassandra and Andromache. The first will be given to Agamemnon and the second to Neoptolemus. Cassandra enters in a state of madness and foresees that she will bring destruction at Agamemnon’s home. As soon as Cassandra leaves, Andromache enters with her son Astyanax. She starts relaying how Polyxena died and argues that death is much better than a sad or miserable life. Talthybius enters again and informs Andromache that her son Astyanax must die because the Greeks want to make sure that all Trojan men are dead. In this way, no Trojan man will ever attempt to organise an army and avenge himself on the Greeks. Andromache is devastated and curses Helen. The Greek soldiers carry away Astyanax and Andromache leaves also. Hecuba feels entirely helpless and collapses. Menelaus then enters and proclaims that he will kill Helen as soon as they arrive in Sparta. Greek soldiers bring Helen in front of Menelaus and Hecuba. In order to save herself, Helen starts saying that she was taken to Troy against her will. Aphrodite snatched her out of her home. She claims that all her efforts to escape from Troy failed. She also argues that the Trojan War benefitted Greeks because they were able to prove how powerful they were. Hecuba tries to counter Helen’s arguments and reveals that Helen was not forced by anyone to follow Paris to Troy. According to Hecuba, Helen was infatuated with Paris and no one heard her screaming for help while she was leaving Sparta. It was also not true that Helen wanted to escape because Hecuba always urged her to leave Troy but Helen never cooperated. Hecuba entreats Menelaus to kill Helen for the sake of all the dead soldiers, Greeks as well as Trojans. Menelaus states that he will punish Helen with death. Her punishment will prevent other women from being unfaithful. Talthybius enters with the dead body of Astyanax. Hecuba has to bury her grandchild whilst her city is being burned in the background.

Euripides’s Helen

The play takes place in Egypt. Helen is in front of the king’s palace and tells in her opening monologue that she has been wrongly accused for causing the Trojan War. Paris did not take the real Helen to Troy but a ghost that resembled her. Helen was transported to Egypt by Hermes and, therefore, the Trojan War took place over the ghost of Helen, not the real Helen. Helen knows from a prophecy that Menelaus will arrive in Egypt after the Trojan War and take her back home. But Menelaus has not yet
arrived and Helen is now in a great trouble because Theoclymenus, the new Egyptian king, wants to marry her against her will. Teucer, an exiled Greek soldier, enters and tells Helen that the Trojan War is over. He also informs her that her mother Leda committed suicide when she heard that her daughter caused the Trojan War. Helen’s brothers Castor and Polydeuces also killed themselves and no one wants to marry Hermione, her daughter, because everyone hates Helen. Helen is even more devastated by these news but the Chorus women advise her to stay calm and talk to Theonoe who is Theoclymenus’s sister and a prophetess. In the meantime, Menelaus and a few members of his army have ship wrecked in Egypt. Menelaus enters and meets Helen. Menelaus and Helen do not recognise one another at the beginning but they soon realise who they are. Menelaus cannot understand why there are two Helens and Helen tells him about the ghost of Helen. Another Greek soldier enters and confirms what Helen says: the Helen that Menelaus took back from Troy is a ghost and has now vanished into air. Helen and Menelaus now plan to escape from Egypt but Theonoe threatens to betray their secret plan to her brother. Finally, Theonoe decides not to say anything to her brother. Helen and Menelaus trick Theoclymenus. They steal one of his ships and leave for Sparta.

Euripides’s Orestes

The play takes place in Argos, in front of Agamemnon’s palace. Agamemnon has been murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and Orestes has killed his mother Clytemnestra in order to avenge his father’s death. When the play begins Orestes is haunted by the terrible Furies. He sleeps and Electra is with him all the time, trying to nurse him or calm him down. In her beginning monologue, Electra says that Helen and Menelaus arrived during the night at Argos in order to pay their respects to the dead relatives Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. According to Electra, Helen entered the town in secret and tried to remain as unnoticed as possible in order to avoid the contact with people from Argos. Everyone in Argos hates Helen, because she is seen as the cause of the Trojan War and many young men have died in this war. When Electra finishes her monologue, Helen enters and tells Electra that neither Orestes nor she Electra are guilty for Clytemnestra’s death. This happened because Apollo wanted it so. Unable to leave the palace in case someone sees her, Helen asks Electra to visit Clytemnestra’s grave in order to leave certain offerings to her dead sister. Electra advises Helen to send her own
daughter Hermione. Helen summons Hermione and tells her to bring the offerings to Clytemnestra. Hermione does not say anything, she obeys Helen’s orders and goes to Clytemnestra’s grave. Helen then leaves and Orestes wakes up a few moments later in a devastated state. Sleep is the only remedy against the Furies. Menelaus enters and Orestes tells him that the people of Argos are planning to stone him for his matricide. Tyndareus, Clytemnestra’s father, then enters and does not only reprimand Orestes but says that he will urge everyone at Argos to participate in Orestes’s stoning. Menelaus could be the only person who could save Orestes but he refuses to help. Orestes together with Pylades and Electra organise to kill Helen and abduct Hermione in order to, firstly, avenge themselves against Menelaus and Helen who both have caused the downfall of Agamemnon’s house, and secondly to blackmail Menelaus to help Orestes escape death. Orestes, Pylades go inside the palace to kill Helen and Electra waits outside for Hermione. When Hermione enters, Electra persuades her to go quickly into the palace where Orestes and Pylades take her as a hostage. What happens inside the palace is then narrated by a messenger, a servant from the palace, who tells that Helen disappeared when Orestes was about to thrust his sword into her neck. Apollo appears above the palace and resolves the conflicts by telling Orestes, Electra, Pylades, and Menelaus that Helen has become a semi-goddess, she has become a star that will help ships reach their destination. Apollo also orders Orestes and Pylades to marry Hermione and Electra respectively.

Encomium of Helen

Gorgias was a sophist. During the 5th century BC he lived in Leontini in Sicily and wrote mock speeches that tried to showcase his skill in public speaking and advocacy. His text Encomium of Helen tries to convince or persuade readers or listeners that Helen’s elopement with Paris was not a bad thing but something that was justified. At the beginning of his essay he argues that Helen was not responsible for leaving Sparta because Paris hypnotised or seduced her with a powerful language. A powerful speech can have the same effect as drugs because it undermines or defeats one’s self-control. Gorgias continues Helen’s exoneration by arguing that love is impossible to resist. It is the most powerful weapon against all moral inhibitions. Love distresses, it makes people sick or mad. Love diverts or destroys the clarity of thought and therefore Helen, according to Gorgias, should be excused for not thinking about any consequences while
she was falling in love with the beautiful Paris. Gorgias concludes that everyone grows weak against love.

*A Brief History of Helen of Troy or Everything Will Be Different*

Charlotte has lost her mother. Her father Harry is desperate about this loss but makes little effort to help his daughter recover from the grief. He and Charlotte fight all the time. At various intervals or interludes throughout the play, Charlotte tells the story of Helen of Troy and identifies Helen of Troy with her mother, Helen’s husband Menelaus with her father, and Helen’s daughter Hermione with herself. Charlotte is captivated by Helen’s mythical and extraordinary beauty and dreams of becoming as mythical, beautiful and famous as Helen. In order to achieve her dream, Charlotte wants to become a porn star. She fantasizes that her guidance councillor takes naked photos of her. She also imagines that all her friends want to have sex with her. This desire or obsession to be seen as a sex object drives her closest friend Franklin away from her. At the end of the play, Charlotte tells how difficult and lonely Menelaus and Hermione must have felt when Helen left for Troy. In the last scene, Harry tries to comfort Charlotte while she sleeps.

*Trojan Barbie: A Car-Crash Encounter with Euripides’ Trojan Women*

Lotte Jones is a young woman who repairs broken dolls for a living. She goes for holiday to Troy or the place where once Troy was. Even though Lotte lives in the present world, whilst at Troy, she starts meeting various characters from Euripides’s Trojan Women such as Hecuba, Andromache, Helen or Polly X who is Hecuba’s youngest daughter. It is not clear whether Lotte has travelled back in time or the characters have travelled forth in time. What matters more is that Lotte witnesses the brutality of the Greeks against the Trojan women (Lotte herself gets caught by Greek soldiers and is violently transported to the refugee camp of the Trojan women). In the play, most of the Greek soldiers are dressed in contemporary soldier uniforms and some characters such as Helen demand to be given items that belong to our contemporary world such as Perrier water or Tylenol. In a sense the past and the present are intermingled in order to show that nothing has changed throughout time when it comes to the devastation and disaster a war brings. Towards the end of the play, Hecuba
receives the dead body of Astyanax in the form of a broken doll. Lotte manages to repair certain parts of the doll and hands it over to Hecuba for burial.

Bibliography


Appendix Two: Scene-Breakdown for the First Draft of the Script That Was Written for the First Practical Research Project.

This play could be called ‘The Picture’. It has seven characters: the young man, his father, the painter and the poet, the daughter, the husband, the mother.

Scene One: A very beautiful woman has committed suicide. Her two previous lovers (a painter and a poet) meet and discuss some things they remember about her. They try to figure out how their relationship evolved and question themselves why she abandoned them in the first place.

Scene Two: The young man is sleeping on his father’s couch. He is woken up by a phone call. The daughter of the woman has called the young man’s father in order to announce the death of her mother. The father was the analyst of the woman in question. He is not very surprised, because he knew that this woman would kill herself sooner or later. The son asks for a picture of her, but his father does not have anything on him. The son desperately wants to know what this woman looked like.

Scene Three: The young man visits the late husband of the woman. He is a very rich man and the woman’s mother lives with him. They both express their grief for the loss of their relative, but the young man detects a deep resentment towards the woman. He wants to see a picture of her, but no one is able to help him on that matter.

Scene Four: The young man is sitting in a bar. He meets the daughter of the woman. He has already talked to her on the phone, which means that they are not complete strangers. The young man asks the girl if the beauty of her mother put her under strong pressure. The girl replies in the affirmative.

Scene Five: The painter and the poet meet again. They discuss about the young man’s invitation to a dinner party. In order to clarify his suspicions that someone persuaded the woman to commit suicide, the young man has arranged a dinner party, inviting everyone related with the woman. The painter and the poet try to recollect how the woman looked like, but to no avail. They then fight about whose inspiration was influenced the most by the woman.
**Scene Six:** The young man tells his father what he intends to do in the dinner party. He wants him to join him in the dinner party, which is much to his dislike.

**Scene Seven:** In the dinner party, the young man gradually realizes that he too might have contributed to the suicide of the woman. His interest has become obsessive and his passionate craving to see the woman’s picture shows how possessively he wants to ‘own’ the beauty of this woman. Everyone had his/her reasons for wishing this woman dead, but they also had reasons for desiring her company among them. To compete against each other for her possession is a condition they cannot live without.
Appendix Three: The Helen Monologues by Kim Koljanec, Rasha Dawood, Simsim Lai.

I do not possess an electronic version of these monologues. I apologise for any inconvenience caused due to the small letters.

Kim Komljanec’s Helen Monologue.

Helen is dressed in a purple ceremonial dress. On each side of her, two swords lie opposite to each other on the floor. She holds a cotton cloth.

HELEN: As I ran downhill, in that early-morning sunlight, I had no idea; my feet were light as those of a sleek colt running freely across a glade. Little did I know of the darkness I was about to enter. I made no sound, my feet hardly touched the ground, I jumped over stones to reach the seashore as quickly as I possibly could. The ship was waiting for me. My lover was waiting for me. My men were ready.

She kneels down to one of the swords. She picks it up by the blade, holding it more like a baby than a weapon, and starts polishing it.

Your men they were. Your men. And you knew. You let them go, you let them wait for me, ready on the ship, when I was betraying you. You let them, you told them you would never punish them, so long as they bring me safely across the sea to the other shore, to the other man. You let them go. Freely. And me. You let me go. I know now, when I kissed your white lips in the silence of that innocent morning seven years ago, you were not sleeping. You lay awake, you heard me leave the room, you probably even watched me draw the white curtains to restrain your view of the sea, of the port, of the ship waiting patiently to take me as far away from you as any ship can. You let me go, you let me leave you. You knew where I was going, you knew the exact distance between us that was about to be, you knew it, by heart, not only in nautical miles but in miles that only two hearts can measure. Still, you let me go. And I did. Leave you. Because that’s how it has always been.
Kim Korljenec:  
Helen's decision

between us. You ruled, I obeyed. How foolish of me. To think I could

fool you. Or myself.

She stops to hold back her trembling voice. She looks away, towards the other
sword. She puts the first sword, now polished, down and walks to the other
one, picking it up by the handle, holding it like a weapon. During the next part
of the speech, she swings it around as if in a battle.

And I came to you. You never thought I could do it, did you? You
didn’t think I’d dare. You challenged me and when I met your
challenge, when I knocked on your window that night, and you were
too stunned to send the girl away, you couldn’t hide your admiration.

And it felt so good. I allowed you to spill your admiration all over my
body, my salt-bathed skin, smelling of wet ropes and seaweed-covered
wood. I wanted you to take off my dirty clothes, you to kiss away the
looks of the sailors, the accidental touches of their rough palms, the spit
of the sea, the spilt wine I drank on board to quench my fear, my
anticipation, my incredulity. I was a whore in your bed that night; but I
felt more of a queen than I ever have with him. You let me rule, you let
me send away the other girl, you let me take you and it felt so right to
be here. The sea was furious, trying to free itself out of the land,
breaking its waves against the rocks, and us, we were laughing at the
angry black sea, so free we felt that night.

She puts down the sword. And grasps the cloth.

And then, a moon’s cycle later, the morning came, the same morning I
left behind; calm and innocent. Menelaus’ morning. And ships came.

Not one, not ten, hundreds. The sea was black with wooden vessels, the
sky was white with sails. The sound of the oars hitting the sea was
roaring and the rocks broke under that heavy sound. Hundreds, thousands, millions of men, millions of muscles straining and stretching, approaching, approaching. And you were still laughing.

There was not a drop of fear in your eye. I, however, I was terrified. Not of being hurt, of hurting. I saw all the men, lying in streams of blood running downhill, colouring the sea red. I saw the wounded, the mutilated, the dying and the dead. And I saw the widows and the orphans that were left behind. Not one, not ten, hundreds, thousands, millions of deaths approaching, approaching. Suddenly I knew: the kiss I left on those white lips that early morning, that kiss was blacker and heavier than all the rocks of Sparta's shore put together. That kiss, that king that let me go so freely, has come to get me back. And until all the oceans of the world are coloured crimson red with blood, he would not stop. I knew, how blood thirsty Menelaus' throat was as he let out his warrior shriek in Sparta's bay. Approaching, approaching.

*We hear the shriek from her memory. It is deafening.*

But all the bodies that we walk upon since that day, for seven years, all your dead and dying brothers, dear Paris, and all my dead and dying brothers, drowning in a sea of blood, all their limbs, their dismembered bodies, their cries for help and their last words, their whispers for mercy, none of that moves me or makes me shed a tear as bitter and salty as the tears I will cry today. There will be only one body today, my lover, my husband. Only one, but whoever dies today will drown, not in his own blood, but in the ocean of tears my eyes will cry.

Millions of dead men I don't care about, but two, I do. And how could
you two, my dear lovers, my dear husbands, have been so foolish as to
let me prepare your weapons for today’s battle? How could you have
been so blind? Do you really trust me both so much?

*She kneels down to both swords, parallel now. She runs her fingers along the shiny blades.*

This morning, the light was so bright, almost white, when I woke up,
just like that day when I left Greece, this morning, before I washed or
dressed, I went for a walk. I went away from the sea, towards the fields,
and I saw the women, the widows, cutting, harvesting the crops. I bent
down and hid my face, not to be recognised or else, I’m sure I would
have become their harvest, too, I who am the reason for their husband’s
deaths. And as I bent down towards the ground, I saw this:

*She bends down and reaches into her dress, pulling out a hone.*

A hone, the women brought it with them to the field to sharpen their
sickles. You see, in the years that have gone by when their husbands
were away, the wheat has grown wild, the fields are untamed and the
stems of the wheat are harder to cut. So the women have learned to use
the tools, only their husbands used to know. I saw one of them do it,
right there, in the field. So I picked up the hone.

*She straightens up again.*

And I hid it in my dress. And I knew, what it was I had picked up. I
picked up my own decision. The destiny of two countries. You see,
now, I’ve polished your swords, dear Paris, dear Menelaus, but now it
is decision time. I have the tool, I’ve learned to sharpen a blade and I
know I can make the other one blunt. And oh, dear Paris, my lover, my husband, you who let me be the queen in your bed and at your side, you who make me feel so free and, oh, so much a woman, without you, I would never have known myself, you know that. And you must have read on my skin this morning, when we made love what I learnt about myself: the bitter, salty truth, that I am a responsible person. That as he ruled me, he gave me freedom you can never give me and he gave me power, I never had with you, I was less a woman with him, but more a person. And I need to be a person again. I want to.

*She picks up Menelaus' sword and starts sharpening it.*

And I will sharpen his sword, dear Paris, so that as he stabs you, you will not hurt, you will not suffer, my dear, my lover, my husband, my brother, you will not bleed but from the heart when you realise I betrayed you, too.

*She cries.*

And Menelaus, please, be merciful. On him, but please, not on me.
After her returning, Helen found herself isolated. Even her daughter avoids her and she feels as lonely as in her exile. She couldn’t sleep for weeks so she decides to take the first chance to face her daughter and her husband.

Helen (to her daughter)

Why do you avoid me?

Since I came I’ve tried my best to be close to each other again. I’m trying to catch every chance to sit and talk with you and the only effort you can offer is to escape. Since when you became so cold? I’m wondering, is this my dearest daughter, my sweetheart or someone else! Remember how was we, before (hesitation) the war and all the disasters. Our relation was a role model for every mother and daughter! Oh Hermione, I’m dying to have you in my arms again, what a dream! You were my strongest motive to overcome all what happened to me. I came back to life just because of you. This decision wasn’t easy as you might think. Through ten years, my soul died part by part. I thought I would never see your dearest face or touch your lovely hair again and that meant the end to me.

Night after night I suffered silently in my exile. Unfortunately, being at home doesn’t end my sufferings; on the contrary it gives it other dimension!! I knew, I would face all kinds of accusations and hate from the Greeks and the Trojans. But not from you. You who is a part of me, the dearest part! This is the last thing I can imagine or bare!! It’s like I against myself or me against me! Look how this is creasy!!

Haven’t you thought that I’m not just a mother? I’m a woman too. Have feelings and desires like all women. But I chose to neglect all my desires and feelings because of you because I want to be a good mother, I want to deserve you. So I fore grounded the image of the mother even in the weakest moment in my life and after that my daughter refuses my motherhood!

Why you choose to be like all of them? Is it the easiest choice? Will all the problems be solved by punching me? Please do not participate in killing me. I’m still your mother.
Hermion, it could be you! It could be any other woman. Try to put yourself in my situation!

I know, you blame me for what happened. For all the shame I’ve brought to you and the whole family, for your grandmother’s death, for being unmarried till now and for being neglected. I know you are a victim but I’m a victim too. Do not forget that please.

I can’t help the bad reputation, to be surrounded by the suspicious glances everywhere, but what I can’t bare the most is your accusation. You even haven’t tried to hear me. It is endurable to live with that feel of shame, all that must end now. I’m not ashamed, do you hear me? I am not ashamed anymore because I’ve done nothing.

(Pause)

You told me once when you were just a kid that people always says to you that you are not as beautiful as your mother. And that made you angry. I used to calm you down by saying “sweetheart, in the future when you become a young lady you will be even more beautiful than me.” Know, I’m happy you wouldn’t. How lucky you are!

Do you know what beauty means? It means disasters, collapse, sadness, Jealousy, loneliness and being deprived of your beloved ones.

If you want to accuse me, you should accuse me for my beauty; this is the only crime I can admit.
Helen (to her husband)

You asked me if I’ve kept myself pure. And I answered yes. But you would never believe! Even if what you are suspicious about, is happened. I’m pure. And will be pure till the last moment of my life. Why can’t you see that! I’m just a victim of a war like many women who paid the price of something they aren’t responsible for! How many women do you think faced and will face the same fate? Hundreds, thousands, or even it might be much more.

Stop pushing me to admit something I don’t want to talk about or even to remember! It makes no difference, all’s gone. And I need to forget, why you insist to remind me each time you look at me? I hardly can remember your old sights which were full of love and admiration.

In my exile, when it was getting dark and felt so lonely and cold, the only thing could warm me up was remembering your lovely sights to me. Your tender touches on my hair and soul.

When the long nights besieged me tightly, the only thing could give me strength and resistance is that lovely dream! That someday, my husband would come and take me away from all this! And after all, I still jailed and you are my jailer! How foolish and naive I was!

It seems that it’s my fate to suffer all these again and again, whether there or here. I won’t find peace anywhere!

I’m very confused, I trained many times, sometimes in my imagination, sometimes in front of the mirror that I’ll get my courage to ask you to continue our happy life and skip all what happened. In a begging way or a passionate one, I tried them all. But I noticed now, how can I do that with myself! I participate in humiliating myself! As if there is nothing but you! I should rather ask myself, would I be able to skip your attitude to me? I won’t be able to forget the moment in which you asked me about a proof of my loyalty, of my love. After the shock, I tried to find a proof, any proof! But I was speechless. I couldn’t find even a very tiny proof that can convince my beloved husband that I’ve been loyal to him! How can I forget such a moment! If just we could see souls as we can see bodies!
Can you suggest an ideal answer to me? What did you expect to hear? And what kind of proofs that any woman in any place in the world can provide? To confirm her loyalty to suspicious husband! And what if I ask you now to prove that you wasn’t cheating on me through long ten years, Huh, See, how it is very complicated!

I asked myself who are you, Do ever I know this man! Or should I ask if you ever know me! We should be introduced to each other, shouldn’t we! (Shaking her hand) hello, I’m Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. Haven’t you heard about me? No one hasn’t heard about Helen of troy! I assume! We should have coffee sometime, if you like! And start knowing each other closely or it’s too late!
Simsim Lai’s Helen Monologue.

Monologue of Helen

(She enters the stage. A pause. When the words are in bold, they should be spoken as loud as possible. The words in grey should be spoken, but they are not audible. There is no sound.)

Yes I am Helen. I am that Helen who is a femme fatale, that’s how most of the people think I am. That kind of woman who is “alluring and seductive, whose charms ensnare her lovers in bonds of irresistible desire, often leading them into compromising, dangerous, and deadly situations.” Alright, To make it simple, convenient, beautiful, good: Helen is old. There is no breast milk... I have wavy hair, reddish in colour. By the way I use this Helen of Troy hair dryer to make my hair wavy, that’s And I am, big eyes, full lips, figure shape and thin. This is the very first thing for a femme fatale I think, as men love beautiful women. Age matters... There is no emotion, no desire... as well, I am young and sexual. You never say old and sexual, right? Old women are not emotional, sexual, lovable and desirable. If then there won’t be any Trojan war. Actually it is quite good, at least Helen won’t be blamed for the millions of death, she will be praised for her kindness and wisdom like a grandmother. Then Helen could become the good example of woman instead of femme fatale hated by all women. I am not cruel. What’s wrong? As a matter of fact I... am a good example of women, are you not all wanting to be like me? If not how come there are so many beauty contests in the world? I feel occupied... And all those cosmetic advertisements? They must earn a lot otherwise they can never occupy the most expensive floor in a department store. Don’t you want to be beautiful, Are you obsessed? sexual and charming and attractive to men? Don’t you want to be mysterious yet enchanted that can control your lovers and drives him to the point of obsession and exhaustion so that he is incapable of making rational decisions? If yes, you should not be against me, You are actually trying to be me. Please stop saying you bitch you slut who sleep with any man in the world. You fucking woman, sleep with old man ugly man and not a mother at all! You will have aids and Your cunt is ugly... Is rotten. You are so fucked up... by your father, sister, brother and cousins! You bitch!! I am just trying to be free. I am collecting my strength... To have a free will like everyone has. But you just want my breast milk as an exchange, feeding you everyday like feeding a baby. You are just a baby boy whom I sing lullaby to. Whether it is my will to leave you or being taken away from you, I am the one to be blamed for the war. Yes, it is me, not you! Never you! Well, alright, don’t ask me then. Stop
asking me why! I don’t know, ask my lawyer, yes lawyer. I won’t speak for myself, I can’t speak for myself so many years. I have never had a chance! Ask the playwright, the painter, the writer, the director, the doctor, the operator, motor, flower, soccer player. Please, let me free.... (A pause. Takes a big breath. She walks away.).
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The Myth of Helen of Troy: Reinterpreting the Archetypes of the Myth in Solo and Collaborative Forms of Playwriting.

Volume Two of Two

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Signature: .................................................................
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1. The Script for the First Practical Research Project.

HIGHWAYS OF PLEASURE

Third draft of the script written for the first practical research project.

CHARACTERS

CHRIS (Late fifties. He wears a suit. Loose tie.)

NICK (Thirties. He wears sunglasses and black leather jacket.

   Black trousers.)

VALERIE (Late thirties. Formal office dress.)

JERRY (Early twenties. Casual jumper and trousers.)

CLAIRE (Late eighties or nineties. Dressed like a widow.

   She wears a black veil.)

KATE (Early or mid twenties. Casual dress.)
Scene One.

(A graveyard. CHRIS faces his wife’s grave. He sits on a stool.)

CHRIS: Meredith my love I…

(A pause.)

I need you…

(A short pause. CHRIS smiles.)

I never liked reading your books… Never… To me they were nothing but lies…

(A short pause.)

What?

(A short pause.)

You were beautiful…. Yes… You were beyond comparison… There was no logic behind it… We had a great time in Yalta…

(A pause.)

Yalta?

(A short pause.)

That was so long ago. I can hardly remember it.

(A short pause.)

I sit here like a widow… A widow sits here for hours mourning…

(A short pause.)
I shouldn’t mourn like a widow…. Everything I do is because of you…
I’d stir up thousands of motorcyclists to chase you down Canyon Road if
you wanted me to. If death is a better lover than I am then there is
nothing I can do about it… You didn’t give a damn about your daughter
or your dear husband… You gave up thinking about me… How…

(NICK enters. He holds flowers. He leaves the flowers on the grave. He wears
sunglasses. He takes out hipflask. He drinks.)

Hello…

(A pause. CHRIS raises from his stool. A short pause.)

Why don’t you sit?

(A pause.)

NICK: Were you talking to yourself?

(A short pause.)

CHRIS: Why don’t you take off your glasses?

NICK: My eyes are sensitive to light.

CHRIS: It is getting dark.

NICK: Really?

CHRIS: Yes…

NICK: Be careful…

CHRIS: What?

NICK: I didn’t come here to fight…

CHRIS: She killed herself…

NICK: She was in love.

CHRIS: You’re handsome. Your erection must be wonderful….

(A short pause.)

NICK: We were friends.
(A short pause.)

CHRIS: She used to sit on this stool. Totally naked. We used to play games.

NICK: She’s watching you…

(CHRIS grasps NICK by his collar. He throws him to the ground. He is about to kick him on the face. He stops. CHRIS helps NICK to stand up. A short pause.)

CHRIS: It all ends up with a nice fuck anyway. We had sex in hotel rooms... In poorly aired rooms… She liked the smell of sweat… It was putrid…

NICK: You’d always smell nice to her.

CHRIS: You talk about love as if…

NICK: As if what?

CHRIS: As if there is no dark side to it.

NICK: There is only light.

CHRIS: No.

NICK: There is freedom. There is air. There is wind…

CHRIS: You’re crazy.

NICK: There is beauty. There is coming to being. Pure essence. There is life.

(A short pause. CHRIS bursts in laughter.)

You’ve got a beautiful daughter.

(A short pause.)

Meredith used to say that… giving birth to someone renews life and death at the same time…

(A short pause. CHRIS gets serious.)

CHRIS: I love her... I love my daughter… She’s a precious little thing…

(A short pause.)
She used to cry a lot when she was a baby…

NICK: I used to cry a lot when I was a baby. I am still crying… *(A short pause)* Meredith used to say that crying is a remedy for torment… The libidinal currents are no longer a threat to life… On the other hand crying makes a face less attractive nevertheless… You know… Her last book was about how one creates a real woman. A woman in tears…

CHRIS: I read it last night. It was like a porn film.

NICK: No.

CHRIS: She has never made you come?

*(A pause.)*

NICK: Never.

CHRIS: She has never made you come?

NICK: *(shouts)* You’re such a coward…

CHRIS: She likes it… I can feel it…

*(A pause. NICK smacks CHRIS across the face. CHRIS takes out a gun. He points it at NICK.)*

My wife used to wear sunglasses when she walked out of the house… She could do everything…

*(A short pause.)*

Everything...

*(A short pause.)*

All she had to say was ‘I want more’ and tons of sperm would explode on her face…

*(CHRIS shoots at the grave. NICK looks at it.)*

NICK: You…

*(A short pause.)*
You destroyed the flowers. You destroyed everything… I designed this grave with my own hands. It was white. Now it is red and black…

CHRIS: I cracked my wife open… I filled her holes…

(A short pause.)

NICK: There are so many ways one can love…

CHRIS: Was she drinking? Was she taking any pills? You know she was hysterical don’t you?

(A short pause.)

Don’t you?

NICK: She was seeing someone. An analyst… She’s got a degree in… Maths… She’s pure logic. Her name is Valerie Compton…

CHRIS: My wife and I… We had a great time in Yalta.

(A pause.)

NICK: You took her in your arms.

(A short pause.)

CHRIS: You…

(A short pause.)

You’re such a bastard…

(A short pause.)

A cold superficial bastard…

NICK: I loved Meredith… I loved her in a different way than you did.

(A pause.)

CHRIS: She had this dream once. There was thunder. Lightning. An old medieval castle. There was a young man. A prince… He was blonde.
NICK: A young man is a symbol of change. A symbol of revolt. He could have been you… at a younger age…

CHRIS: It could have been a stranger…

(A short pause.)

Someone I don’t know. Meredith met him in the corridor. Perhaps they took the same lift.

NICK: What do you think of Valerie?

CHRIS: Nothing.

NICK: Do you like her?

CHRIS: No… I don’t know.

NICK: Do you know her?

CHRIS: Not really.

NICK: Have you seen her?

CHRIS: No. Yes. I did once.

NICK: Will you call her?

CHRIS: Call her?

NICK: Do you know her?

(A short pause.)

Will you call her? Will you talk to her?

(A pause.)

CHRIS: Listen…

(A short pause.)

It is getting dark…

(A short pause. CHRIS folds the stool.)
I…

(A short pause.)

I’d do everything for her… I’d do everything for my wife…

(A short pause.)

I’d do everything for her.

(Blackout.)

**Scene Two**

(VALERIE’S consulting room. A desk. A telephone is on the desk. Dim light. VALERIE looks out of the window. JERRY lies on the couch. A pause.)

JERRY: The phone is ringing…

(A short pause.)

It’s been ringing for hours…

(A short pause.)

You think I’m making this up…

(A short pause. JERRY picks up the phone.)

She’s not here at the moment. She’s not very well… Usually she’s very talkative…

(VALERIE takes the receiver from JERRY’S hands. She puts it down. A pause.)

Are you going to see him again?

(A short pause.)

For your own peace of mind?

(A short pause.)
No… I don’t think you should see him. The press… They keep asking you questions… They think it was your fault… You are famous now in a way…

(A pause.)

I’m not going to leave you Valerie… We’ll get out of this together. I could go through hell for you. It’s just that I need to know. I need to know if it pleases you…

(A pause. VALERIE lights a cigarette. She inhales.)

I love it when you smoke…

(JERRY goes towards VALERIE. He kisses her passionately. VALERIE does not respond.)

For me… there’s no better woman in the world… She was nothing next to you. Nothing. I love you Valerie… You think I’m lying don’t you?

(VALERIE withdraws.)

I care about you…

(VALERIE sits at her desk. She extinguishes her cigarette.)

Valerie?

(A pause. JERRY lies on the couch.)

I’m so scared.

(A pause. JERRY closes his eyes for a while. He opens them.)

I remember… You wanted to know if I had any particular desire to kiss Meredith on the lips… Well… No… I could never fall in love with her… I’m a regular guy. I’m just a student. She’s… beautiful… perfect… She was in love…

(A short pause.)
There must have been something... Something to do with her husband...
Maybe she was so much in love with him that... I don’t know... She was your patient for many years...

(A short pause. VALERIE looks at JERRY.)

I think she enjoyed being your patient and you enjoyed being her analyst...

(A short pause.)

A clever combination, don’t you think?

(A pause.)

I’ve been reading her books... I think they’re dealing with the idea of possession and violence... What do you think?

(A pause.)

Say something please...

(A short pause.)

You make me feel lonely...

(A short pause.)

How could you drop so low? He was her husband. And apart from that... he’s a most despicable animal. He’s been trading women and drugs for years... (A short pause.) Well... in a way you’re a criminal as well. You’ve been making business out of human complexes... Risky business...

(A short pause.)

I don’t know what I’m saying...

(VALERIE is about to exit.)

Where are you going?

(A short pause. VALERIE stops.)
Please stay…

(A short pause.)

I’m sorry…

(A short pause.)

I hate it when you leave me… You were going to the kitchen, weren’t you? Or was it the toilet? You were going to make coffee?

(VALERIE exits. A short pause.)

You do know that Meredith has a daughter, don’t you? I’ve read about her in the papers… She used to vandalise clothe shops… She’s got character I think…

(JERRY fumbles with the things on VALERIE’S desk. He opens the drawers. He takes out a pair of scissors. He examines them. He tries to cut his finger. VALERIE enters. She leaves the tray on the desk violently. She rushes towards JERRY. She takes the scissors and puts them back in the drawer. She rearranges her things on the desk. Her movements are very tense. She hands the cup of coffee to JERRY. She smiles faintly. JERRY tries the coffee. He fixes his eyes at VALERIE. A pause.)

It is gorgeous…

(A short pause. VALERIE sips her coffee and sits at her desk. She opens her diary. A short pause. JERRY drinks.)

Have you ever thought of being a mother?

(A short pause.)

Would you like to be my mother? I could be your son if you like…

Sorry… This is going too far. I’ve lost my sense of humour.

(A short pause.)

Both of us have lost our sense of humour….

(A short pause.)
Meredith was meant to be your biggest case ever…

(A short pause.)

She kept you busy and…

(A short pause.)

And then…

(A short pause. VALERIE drinks coffee. She chokes. A short pause. JERRY seizes VALERIE in his arms. VALERIE slaps JERRY. JERRY goes to the couch. He sits.)

You expected from me to fuck her. You were expecting from me to have sex with Meredith. You left us many times on our own. We were waiting outside your office. We had nothing to talk about… There was nothing…

(A pause. VALERIE approaches JERRY. She smiles. She sits next to him. She touches his hair. She kisses him on the cheek. She is about to kiss him on the lips. JERRY stands up.)

One day she opened the door and you were not in… We had been waiting for you…

(A short pause.)

We had been waiting for hours. We sat in silence. She looked at me and…

(A short pause.)

I couldn’t move… I just… couldn’t…

(A short pause. JERRY goes towards the window. His movements are very slow. As if trembling. He opens the window. He looks outside.)

The sound of cars… A distant sound…

(A short pause. JERRY closes the window. A pause. VALERIE sobs.)
And now you’re crying… Like a little child…

(A short pause.)

The pair of scissors… They are a symbol of reconciliation. It was the last thing she gave to you, wasn’t it?

(A pause. JERRY approaches her. He kisses VALERIE’S hand.)

I’m not going to leave you Valerie… You’ve got me under your spell. Look at me… I know that you blame yourself for not treating her properly… But forget about her… She was nothing. Look at everyone around you… If it weren’t for her husband she’d been lying in the street forever. Her body all broken. Something to feed the dogs with… Her husband may be an asshole. He may be an asshole but… The way he put his arms round her… He carried her away from the crowd… I saw him… I saw everything… I will never forget this Valerie… Never…

(A short pause. VALERIE moves away from JERRY. She opens the drawer. She takes out the pair of scissors.)

What?

(A short pause.)

What are you doing?

(A short pause. VALERIE plunges the scissors into her stomach. JERRY rushes towards her.)

No… Valerie… No…

(Blackout. Complete Darkness. A pause. An old lady enters with a candle. She is dressed like a widow. She carries a purse. It is CLAIRE. She moves towards the desk. She clears it violently. She places her purse on the table.)

CLAIRE: All women would agree that her ways of behaviour were the best… (A short pause.) Now committing suicide is quite a complicated matter but… who says that it’s not worth copying…
(She sits by the table. She takes out of her purse a mirror and a lipstick. She puts lipstick on her lips and round her lips. She leaves it on the table. She takes out a black lipstick. She draws circles around her eyes.)

If my memory serves me right… All girls wanted to possess exactly the same doll she was carrying around with her… Or the ice cream she licked… On the other side of the spectrum were boys… Boys that would speculate day in day out how to seduce her. Rape her even… She kept everyone busy…

(A short pause.)

You’ve got blood on your hands my dear child… Here wipe it off…

(A short pause. CLAIRE takes out of her purse a tissue.)

Why don’t you come closer?

(A short pause. JERRY comes closer. He takes the tissue. He wipes the blood from his hands. CLAIRE takes a big breath.)

My name is Claire and Meredith is my daughter or better say I’m the mother of Meredith given that it would always embarrass her to think herself as a daughter of someone whereas if I say I’m her mother I’m doing myself a favour to be called her mother…

(A short pause.)

I never expected to hate my own flesh and blood.

JERRY: Where is Valerie?

CLAIRE: I did not go to her funeral. It was on Monday. I never go out on Mondays. Today is Wednesday.

JERRY: There is nothing left for me to live for. I had better kill myself too.

(CLAIRE bursts in laughter.)

I lost her. I’m going to die soon… I won’t see her again.

CLAIRE: You’re very funny…
(A short pause.)

JERRY: Really?

(A short pause.)

CLAIRE: Yes…

JERRY: Why?

CLAIRE: I don’t know… Your trousers are funny…

JERRY: (smiles.) My trousers?

(A short pause. CLAIRE raises from her seat. JERRY’S laughter subsides. A short pause.)

CLAIRE: I was walking on empty streets… I was starving… There were houses… All burned down… I slipped over a crying baby… I used to be a very beautiful woman myself… A Jewish woman. Everybody would drink to my health and my husband… He was a great man… He entered me. He laid his strong hands on me. For a moment I thought I was the happiest woman alive but… I… (A pause.) I ruined everything. I gave birth to disaster. A child called Meredith. She came out full of blood… I wanted to cut her head off but her father wouldn’t let me… Soon enough we found out that we were actually raising a lion under our roof… She poisoned my husband because he refused to marry her. What was there to do? He was her father. Then… (CLAIRE cries. A short pause.) She killed all my other children… In her rage. (A short pause.) She… She pushed them… One after the other… We were on platform number nine. I will never forget this number. Oh… my legs can hardly support me. Such is the burden of my guilt…

(CLAIRE is about to faint. JERRY holds her. He helps her to sit down.)

JERRY: We’ve all been through terrible losses…

CLAIRE: You men… You’re so ignorant…. I see trouble coming…

JERRY: What kind of trouble?
CLAIRE: You saw what happened to your friend…

JERRY: My friend?

CLAIRE: You killed her.

JERRY: No…

(A short pause.)

No…

CLAIRE: You persuaded her to do it… To take the scissors and…

JERRY: I didn’t.

CLAIRE: I saw it happening. I saw it…

JERRY: Are you under any medication?

CLAIRE: No…

(A short pause.)

Yes… I don’t remember… Who cares…

(A short pause.)

What about you?

(JERRY looks at her.)

JERRY: Yes… Sometimes… I take pills. They help me sleep…

CLAIRE: I’ve lost my children.

JERRY: I think you’re exaggerating.

(A short pause.)

CLAIRE: Me?

JERRY: Yes.

CLAIRE: Why? Why am I exaggerating?

JERRY: You’re ill. I’m sorry to tell you this but you’re very ill.
CLAIRE: (shouts. She takes hold of his arm.) You don’t know what it takes to live after all your children have gone… Besides… When I think of her beauty… Exaggeration is the first word that comes to mind… (She clasps JERRY.) All men would sacrifice their precious semen for her… They would masturbate in front of the TV and declare themselves guilty for not producing any offspring with their wives… Her egotism was so profound… It accounts for her husband’s behaviour… He spends his nights in a bar called ‘Highways of Pleasure.’

JERRY: ‘Highways of Pleasure’?

CLAIRE: Why was she borne like that Jerry? Can you explain that to me please?

JERRY: You know my name? How do you know my name?

CLAIRE: Her childhood was very strange. Deprived of usual pleasures… She must have heard the bombings. She was still inside me. I was trying to hide myself from them. I am a Jewish woman… It was not my fault. The war was not my fault…

(CLAIRE takes out of her purse a photo album. The photo album has the shape of a heart. It is pink.)

Come sit next to me… Here are some pictures of Meredith… Do you like her?

JERRY: Do you know that Meredith has a daughter? Has she ever mentioned anything about her? She’s very unsettled. She’s a young woman…

(CLAIRE turns some pages.)

CLAIRE: Jerry my dear… (She strokes JERRY’S face.) You don’t have to worry about anything. Everything will work out fine for you. Trust me… Take a look at my daughter for instance… Look… Here she’s in a beauty contest… She went there by herself.

JERRY: But…

(CLAIRE turns some more pages.)
CLAIRE: What is it?

JERRY: All I can see here is blank pages…

CLAIRE: Are you sure?

JERRY: There are no pictures.

CLAIRE: Oh…

(CLAIRe closes the album.)

You’re getting blind… Yes… You’re getting blind.

JERRY: But it’s just the pictures I cannot see. They are not there. Perhaps they were never there.

CLAIRE: Jerry my love… You’re so young… So full of life.

(A short pause.)

I could help you recover your sight if…

(A short pause.)

If you decide to… marry me…

JERRY: Marry you?

CLAIRE: Yes…

(A pause.)

What?… What is it? Why? Why not?

(A short pause.)

JERRY: You smell of camphor…

(CLAIRe takes out of her purse a small gun. She points at JERRY. JERRY moves back.)

CLAIRE: We need to stick together Jerry. In times like these love is our only hope. We need one another. She’s going to spread blindness like an epidemic. You will be saved if I offer you my hand and you take it… Otherwise…
You leave me no other choice…

(A very bright light suddenly floods the room. NICK enters. He wears a black leather jacket. He has sunglasses on. The light illuminates a red abstract painting. NICK looks at CLAIRE. JERRY tries to accustom his eyes to the light.)

CLAIRE: We were just playing… Here… (CLAIRE hands the gun to JERRY.) You can shoot at me if you like… Don’t worry. It’s plastic…

NICK: Can I keep it?

CLAIRE: No…

NICK: Why?

CLAIRE: It was my daughter’s favourite toy… She used to play with all sorts of guns… Besides I would never give anything to a man who reminds me of death… Even if he’s good looking… like you…

(CLaire puts the lipsticks, album and gun into her purse.)

What have you decided Jerry? Are you going to marry me?

NICK: I could marry you if you like.

CLAIRE: Forget it…

(Listen to me Jerry… It’s not that I hate my daughter. It’s just that I wanted to have boys. Many boys instead of one girl… The war Jerry… The war… Listen… You may be thinking that I’m a bad mother but… you don’t understand what went on between us… You should have seen her Jerry. She took everything away from me. I used to bring tears to everyone’s eyes. My monologues were awe inspiring and she… She just happened to have breasts. She drew everyone away from me. She was a thief… A most despicable evil sorceress… Like Circe… (She cries).)

(A short pause.)
Oh what am I doing here anyway… *(A pause. She withholds her tears.)*
Forgive me Jerry… I’m old… *(A pause. She hands JERRY a coin.)* Here
I want you to keep this…

*(A short pause.)*

You don’t have to thank me…

*(A short pause.)*

I’m going…

*(A short pause.)*

I’m going home on my own. I came here on my own… I’m going…

*(A pause.)*

*(CLAIRE blows out the fire in the candle. She takes the candle and exits. A pause. NICK tries to take the coin from JERRY. JERRY holds to it firmly. He pushes NICK back with force. NICK takes out a knife. JERRY stands still. NICK puts the knife back.)*

NICK: I’m sorry…

*(A short pause.)*

I don’t know what came over me…

*(A short pause.)*

It’s your present anyway…

*(A short pause.)*

The old lady was very pretty. Do you know who she was?

*(A pause. NICK takes out a hipflask. He drinks. He hands the hipflask to JERRY. He drinks.)*

JERRY: Thanks…

*(A short pause.)*
She said she was Meredith’s mother…

NICK: Meredith?

JERRY: The Meredith we all know…

NICK: Are you sure?

(A pause. NICK takes the hipflask back.)

JERRY: Where am I?

NICK: You’re in a gallery. My gallery…

JERRY: Are you blind?

NICK: No.

(JERRY examines the painting. A pause.)

This woman… She was quite old. Her sadness was so profound… She was a mother in pain.

JERRY: She was just an old hag.

(A short pause.)

A dirty old woman in desperate need of attention and sex and… who knows what else…

NICK: You’re very arrogant.

JERRY: She wanted me to marry her. I’m a young man. How was I supposed to take her as my wife? She was sick…

NICK: How would our world look like if women suddenly took it upon themselves to make us men feel redundant? What would men do without women? Or the other way round?

JERRY: What are you talking about?

NICK: You do like women I suppose… And women must like you I think? I’ve known Meredith for several years… What do you think of her? She was
very sweet. Do you know what she was like? What was she like? What about her beauty? Do you think her beautiful?

JERRY: No.

NICK: Are you sure?

JERRY: Yes.

NICK: I’ve known her for several years.

JERRY: You were a friend of hers?

NICK: Yes.

JERRY: A close friend?

NICK: A good friend.

JERRY: I like your painting…

(A short pause.)

I see something in it… It reminds me of a slaughterhouse…

(A short pause.)

It is a memory from my childhood… I hate slaughterhouses… This has nothing to with your painting… This painting is very good… I like it…

NICK: (smiles) Is everything all right with you?

JERRY: No… I don’t know… I feel empty…

NICK: Why a slaughterhouse? Are you afraid of blood? Are you afraid of love?

JERRY: I feel very tired… I have a strong desire to sleep… I don’t sleep well.

NICK: Love makes you go mad… Meredith was talking about her husband’s sperm. I was listening to her… It was hot like a volcano she said… I was in a corner making this painting while Meredith was talking. She used to admire him. She admired her husband. I was watching her. She was like a volcano…

(A short pause. JERRY touches the painting.)
I once burned my fingers on it. Be careful.

(A short pause.)

Whenever I touch it my veins are about to burst. I need fresh air. It reminds me of those nights Meredith and I talked over a bottle of wine. We were on our own. Her intelligence was so profound. She was a sublime woman. Above all judgement…

JERRY: What kind of judgment?

NICK: Any judgment really. Meredith had this idea that judgements are the basic components of criticism… and criticism prevents you from taking the most out of your desires… And desire makes you feel free… It is the basic ingredient of love…

JERRY: You never touched her I suppose.

NICK: No.

JERRY: But you thought about it.

NICK: No…

(A short pause.)

No I didn’t.

(A short pause.)

I didn’t… She… felt lonely at times and I… I was there for her…

(A pause.)

JERRY: You’re very beautiful.

(A short pause.)

You’ve got perfect features.

(A short pause.)

If Meredith had ever thought about having a lover. It must have been you…
NICK: I don’t think so.

JERRY: Your youth appears to be eternal.

NICK: We were friends.

JERRY: You were trying to make darkness disappear… Why? Why do you wear sunglasses?

NICK: I don’t know… My eyes are sensitive to light. Very sensitive.

JERRY: Sensitive?

NICK: Yes.

JERRY: So sensitive that you cannot see…

NICK: Yes…

JERRY: I think you’re fake… A façade… A nice clean good looking façade.

NICK: What do you mean?

JERRY: Your phrases are very predictable… ‘We were on our own’… ‘Spending nights together over a bottle of wine’. You’re a predictable character.

NICK: She was feeling lonely.

JERRY: Just look at yourself. Look at your penis for instance. It is so unmolested and clean and… I don’t know… It is so… unreal…

NICK: You have no sense of humour. You’re an imbecile. A primitive man.

JERRY: Meredith had a daughter… Her name is Kate… She got into a lot of trouble. She was arrested by the police once… Do you know anything about this?

NICK: Meredith and I… We were really close… Our conversation wasn’t bound by trivial matters.

JERRY: Trivial matters?

NICK: Yes…

JERRY: I don’t get it… I don’t… Everything is so… dark…
So incomprehensible… As if… As if everything was for nothing…

She was nothing. Her beauty was nothing. Her death didn’t mean anything. To you she was always absent. Or better say. She was present in the way you wanted her to be present.

NICK: Have you ever known love? Real love?

JERRY: The old lady was right… You remind one of death because you’re dead yourself. You make everyone around you feel dead…

NICK: Do you want me to disappear?

JERRY: Yes…

NICK: But this is my gallery… This place belongs to me… I mean… What do you expect me to say?

JERRY: I want you to disappear.

NICK: Listen… I’m not a nobody… I’ve got needs… I sometimes have the need to go to the toilet. I meet someone in the toilet. No… She’s waiting… Outside… Somewhere…

(A short pause.)

She burned herself… She sacrificed herself for love…

(A short pause.)

In my painting I see her making love, screaming, walking, menstruating, making love, touching herself in my painting… I was watching her… A slaughterhouse? No… A painting can never just be about one woman alone… She is there for the sake of other things… A woman in tears… Emptiness… A trace of emptiness… A sweet one…

(A short pause. NICK vanishes behind the painting.)
JERRY: Hey…

(A short pause.)

Nick?

(JERRY moves the painting. He reveals a bar behind the painting. Stools. Bottles. KATE is behind the bar and dries glasses. CHRIS sits on a stool. He drinks and looks at KATE. The gallery darkens. The light is on the bar. A pause.)

Hello…

(A pause.)

Wait a minute…

(A short pause.)

You must be Kate… I’ve read about you. I’ve seen you…

CHRIS: He’s a stranger. He’s looking for trouble.

KATE: Yes… My name is Kate. I own this bar. It is called ‘Highways of Pleasure’. I offer all sorts of drinks. What would you like to drink?

JERRY: Whatever…

(KATE pours him a drink.)

KATE: It’s on the house…

JERRY: Thank you…

(JERRY drinks it in one go. A pause. KATE stops drying. She takes out a cigarette. CHRIS lights it for her. She inhales.)

KATE: I could have been crying. I could have been tearing my limbs apart when I found out how my mother died… But I decided not to. I tried to be as indifferent as one can be. Mother used to say that tears are one of beauty’s worst enemies. I disagree with her. Crying dismantles one’s face from all pretensions. The face becomes beautiful in its purity. But never mind…
I pursued a very troublesome and destructive career… I broke windows because of my mother. I set fires on shops… Clothes shops in particular. I liked the way clothes were burning. I liked the smell of it… The police were after me and eventually I had to spend a couple of nights behind bars… *(smiles)* You see… I somehow managed to create a story for myself… A story about my own self… She was far more beautiful than I am *(A short pause. She inhales)* It’s all over now and… I realised that when it comes down to loving her. Loving my own mother. I forget everything. I forget every grief caused by my ugliness. And when I think of how much I love her I regret not having shed one single tear at her funeral. I shouldn’t have listened to her. I should have cried… I should have let myself go.

*(CHRIS claps his hands. KATE extinguishes her cigarette.)*

Crying makes you feel good… In a way…

*(CHRIS claps his hands.)*

CHRIS: That was really great… Congratulations…

KATE: Thank you…

*(A short pause.)*

JERRY: Sorry but… You think yourself ugly?

*(A short pause.)*

KATE: Do you think me beautiful?

JERRY: Very beautiful…

KATE: If you see another Meredith in me… Then I wouldn’t take this as a compliment… It is horrible. She lives inside me? Who am I then? What is to become of me?

JERRY: It is you I find beautiful. Not your mother… And… I really like your bar too…
CHRIS: He’s after your money…

KATE: It was my mother’s idea actually… The whole place. The decoration. The name.

JERRY: Highways of pleasure?

(KATE pours JERRY a drink. JERRY drinks it in one go.)

KATE: A motorway is nearby so…

CHRIS: Yes. You waste your drinks on strangers like him. Just like your mother. She wasted herself.

KATE: On whom? She wasted herself on whom? On you father?

CHRIS: You’re getting very emotional… That’s normal… You’re still very young…

KATE: You thought mother was hysterical, didn’t you?

CHRIS: Well… Yes…

KATE: But she was good enough for you to ejaculate into, wasn’t she? At least that’s how I came to this world…

CHRIS: Don’t you dare speak to me like that. I’m your father. I’m not your boyfriend…

KATE: I’m very much entitled to swear at you. You deserve it.

CHRIS: Well… Perhaps you’re right. I do deserve it. I’ve been a bad boy and I like it… I threw a party in the memory of my wife… There were plenty of women running around half naked…

(A pause. CHRIS drinks. A pause.)

KATE: We’re in the middle of nowhere…

(A pause.)

My bar is in the middle of nowhere…

JERRY: I love it…
CHRIS: Do you know who I am?
JERRY: Yes…
CHRIS: Who send you to me?
JERRY: I came here by myself…
CHRIS: I don’t believe you…
JERRY: Why not?
CHRIS: Tell your boss I’m going to pay what he asked of me. Not a penny more. I’ll blow his brains out… No mercy…
JERRY: I came here by myself…
CHRIS: (shouts) Are you going to tell him what I said?

(A pause. KATE holds her father’s hand.)

KATE: Father…

CHRIS: What?

(A short pause.)

What do you want?

KATE: This young gentleman seems to have been through many ordeals lately… Probably the unexpected loss of a beloved person… Just like us really…

(A short pause.)

What’s your name?

JERRY: Jerry…

KATE: It’s only a couple of days since we lost my mother Jerry… You must forgive our desire to talk about her…

CHRIS: How can you be so open to guys like him Kate?

(A short pause.)

How do you know something’s wrong with him?
KATE: I can see it in his eyes…

CHRIS: Don’t take everything at face value Kate…

(A short pause. KATE pours JERRY a drink.)

KATE: This won’t be on the house…

JERRY: It doesn’t matter. I will pay for it… I… could give you anything…

(JERRY drinks it all in one go.)

I am…

(A short pause.)

I am very thirsty. I feel hot…

(A short pause.)

KATE: Are you ok?

JERRY: Yes… I… I’ll pay for my drink… I… could give you anything… I…

I’ve got money… Somewhere…

(A short pause. JERRY rummages in his pocket. He takes out the coin. He leaves it on the bar.)

CHRIS: Where did you get that from? Did my wife give it to you? Did you…

(CHRIS squeezes JERRY’S face. KATE places her hand on CHRIS’S shoulder.)

KATE: Father…

CHRIS: Sorry…

(CHRIS lets JERRY go. KATE examines the penny. A pause.)

KATE: This is a very rare penny… It was issued a couple of years ago… It’s the only one that has Meredith on either side… It is unique in the sense that both sides are the same. People should think that mother was far from being a two of a kind woman…

CHRIS: But… her death came so unexpected… She used to dream of death…
KATE: This coin is very precious. You could buy the whole bar if you wanted to.

JERRY: Would you sell it to me?

KATE: No. Never…

CHRIS: Don’t be so stupid Kate.

(A short pause.)

Your place is worth half the money you could get from this stupid little coin…

KATE: Never…

(A short pause.)

I’d never sell it. I’d rather give my life than sell this place… I have invested so much emotion in it...

(A short pause. KATE pours herself a drink.)

Especially now that…

(A short pause.)

Mother’s gone…

CHRIS: You’re talking like Mary Magdalene.

KATE: Are you comparing me to a whore?

CHRIS: Mary Magdalene was not a whore.

KATE: This woman has nothing to do with me.

CHRIS: Your place is in the middle of nowhere…

KATE: You can go if you don’t like it…

CHRIS: I’m the only one who comes here.

KATE: You’re a very good customer I dare say… You drink a lot…

CHRIS: You’re going to end up with your gangs again…
KATE: I feel safe in here… I like this place. It is very dark and… quiet… and…

CHRIS: I need to go to the loo…

KATE: And… It was the first thing I did which my mother was proud of… How can I forget this?

CHRIS: Your feelings are very dear to me but…

(A short pause.)

I need a piss…

(CHRIS stands up from his stool. He takes a few steps. He is a little dizzy from drinking. He unbuttons his trousers. He is about to urinate.)

KATE: Father…

CHRIS: What is it darling?

KATE: What do you think you’re doing?

CHRIS: I’m answering the call of nature…

KATE: You can do that in the toilet…

(A pause. CHRIS looks around.)

CHRIS: Oh…

(A short pause. CHRIS smiles.)

I’m so sorry Kate. I didn’t realise. It’s not that your place looks like a dump… Your mother wouldn’t have been proud of me.

KATE: Will you please go to the toilet?

CHRIS: Bye…

(A pause. CHRIS exits.)

JERRY: Do you love him?

KATE: Yes… I love him.
(A short pause. JERRY drinks.)

JERRY: I know that you love him…

(A short pause.)

I can feel it.

(A pause.)

KATE: Where did you get this coin?

JERRY: Fuck the coin…

KATE: What?

JERRY: Take it. It’s yours.

KATE: What are you doing here? What do you want?

JERRY: You’re in the middle of nowhere.

KATE: You can go if you don’t like it…

JERRY: You let boys walk out of your life? Like this?

(A short pause. KATE smiles.)

You have the most melancholic smile I’ve ever seen…

KATE: It’s all because of my mother… I get very melancholic when I think of her… She was… I mean she still lives inside me…

(A short pause.)

I can’t do anything about it…

(A short pause. KATE pours herself a drink. She drinks.)

Maybe I don’t want to do anything about it… I always had this feeling that she was someone great and… She was there for me when I needed her but… She was so impeccable… Yet still very fragile… All my boyfriends used to compare me with her but… It’s all over now… I’m through with love…
JERRY: How dramatic.

KATE: You can laugh at me if you like.

JERRY: Would you take my heart if… I… were to…. offer it to you?

KATE: Are you drunk?

JERRY: No…

(CHRIS enters. He stands still for a while. A short pause.)

CHRIS: She used to be a porn star…

(A short pause.)

My wife used to be a porn star…

(A short pause.)

Her orgasm was the greatest one I had ever seen or… heard even… The cinema screens were filled with such desire and… contempt…

(A short pause.)

I’ve had such a long piss. It was cataclysmic.

(A short pause.)

Meredith and I we… We had such great times together… I became a porn star myself. I used to be a weight lifter. My muscles looked really wild. We did a couple of scenes together… Really intense fucking...

(A short pause.)

JERRY: Were you not jealous of her? When she was doing scenes with other men or women?

CHRIS: We were free to do anything we liked…

KATE: I thought you burned a whole cinema down once…

(A pause.)

CHRIS: Times changed…
KATE: Nothing has changed…

CHRIS: It was all part of the romance.

KATE: Her death is part of the romance too?

*(A pause.)*

CHRIS: You talk as if…

*(A short pause.)*

Just like your mother. She thought she was better than the rest of us… She didn’t want to work as a porn star when she found out that she was going to have a baby… A beautiful baby called Kate… She wanted to be pure…

*(A short pause. **CHRIS bursts in laughter.**)*

She thought she could do anything she liked without asking me whether I liked what she liked or not… She started writing books instead of opening her beautiful long legs to all sorts of… I’m sorry I… I’m a little drunk… *(A short pause.)* She changed her life… You made her change her life Kate… You and your wise words…

*(A short pause.)*

I’m your father and well… as you may have noticed… the fact that you’re my daughter means that I own you… Just like you own this bar here… You’re one of my possessions… A most precious one… My treasure.

KATE: Thank you but I don’t think I belong to anyone… I don’t even know if I belong to myself…

CHRIS: I don’t expect you to understand me… You’ve never been in love. Real love.

*(A pause. **CHRIS drinks.**)*

Did you sell your place to this gentleman?
KATE: Of course not…

CHRIS: It won’t last long… You like the smell of fire… You always liked it.

KATE: I don’t like it anymore.

CHRIS: Have you ever watched one of Meredith’s films Jerry? She was a great actress don’t you think?

(A pause.)

JERRY: I don’t know…

CHRIS: You’re such a liar…

KATE: Leave Jerry alone father…

CHRIS: This is men’s talk.

KATE: Oh really?

CHRIS: Jerry’s trying to play the good guy… I’m the bad guy.

JERRY: Well… Excuse me but I’ve read some horrible things about you. You should be ashamed of yourself…

CHRIS: Why?

JERRY: You exploit people. You drink their blood.

(CHRIS smiles.)

CHRIS: I think Meredith was cheating on me with younger boys… Boys like you Jerry…

JERRY: I don’t think so…

KATE: She never had a lover. You were imagining things.

CHRIS: She made me imagine them.

KATE: You’re a drunkard. You’ll never be able to find a better woman than my mother. You may think yourself strong and powerful… You may be trafficking women and drugs and making a profitable career out of it but
you’ll never be happy… You’ll never see her again. You’ll never touch her again… I won’t be able to touch her either…

*(CHRIS takes out his gun. He points it at JERRY.)*

What do you think you’re doing?

CHRIS: If death is a better lover than I am then there is nothing I can do about it…

*(A short pause.)*

KATE: Father…

CHRIS: Jerry’s trying to take you away from me Kate… Just like he did with your mother… He took her away from me… Guys like him were always turning her on… They’re young and promising… They’re a revolution in bed…

*(A pause.)*

KATE: If you kill Jerry… You’re going to regret this for the whole of your life…

JERRY: I’m not afraid to die Kate.

KATE: He doesn’t know anything about life…

JERRY: Me neither.

KATE: Really?

JERRY: Kiss me.

*(KATE kisses JERRY.)*

CHRIS: Hey…

*(A short pause.)*

Hey…

*(A short pause.)*

Kate?
(A short pause.)

I do not recognise you Kate…

(CHRIS shoots in the air. JERRY and KATE stop.)

JERRY: What? What is it? What happened?

(CHRIS puts his gun into his pocket.)

CHRIS: It’s just that…

(A short pause.)

Jerry’s trying to steal you away from me…

(A pause.)

I loved your mother Kate I loved her… Everything is happening so fast. I want to know you better… I will be left on my own… Entirely…

KATE: There is much to be enjoyed in loneliness…

(A pause. KATE lights a cigarette. She inhales.)

May I ask you something father?

CHRIS: Yes…

KATE: Do you remember when you paid a huge amount of money for my release from jail? Do you remember this father?

CHRIS: Of course I remember…

KATE: Do you know what mother did to me after you set me free?

(A short pause.)

She smacked me so hard that I lost any sense of reality around me…

(A short pause.)

She was the one who turned me in you know… She had to put all my vandalism to an end. The jail seemed the only solution but… you…

CHRIS: I was trying to be helpful…
KATE: You father… You have such a great capacity to destroy things… It’s not that I blame you for it but… Well… It’s obviously not the right thing to do…

(A short pause.)

We came here to this bar… It belonged to a friend of yours as you know… She bought it from him and we sat down to have a drink… We talked things through… She asked me to look after this place… Loneliness would do me good she said…

(A short pause.)

I agree with her now… It is a most purifying experience…

(A short pause.)

I don’t know why she killed herself… I’m going to miss her but I feel that she did this for her own good… She did not commit any crime to herself or to others… She has set herself free…

(A pause. Lights fade slowly at the bar and fall on VALERIE’S consulting room. VALERIE leans over the edge of the couch. JERRY moves towards the couch. He lies on the couch.)

JERRY: I don’t think anyone of us can be free… We’re all bound to one another. We think we’re free when we love someone. We go out… We manage to open ourselves to someone else… Yet this freedom is… It is of a very peculiar kind...

(A short pause.)

VALERIE: I’m glad you’re back…

(A short pause.)

I’ve missed you…

(A short pause.)
JERRY: I feel exhausted… I’ve been to so many different places… I’ve seen two men fighting over a woman. I saw you killing yourself with a pair of scissors. An old lady asked to marry me. An artist saved me from her. I met a father and a daughter… The daughter was an angel… She was a real saint…

(A pause.)

VALERIE: What was she like?

JERRY: The daughter?

VALERIE: No… Meredith… You said you saw her jumping off from my window… Her body was covered in blood… Do you remember anything about this?

JERRY: I… didn’t like it… I don’t want to talk about it…

VALERIE: It’s hard for me to believe that Meredith could die… Even in a dream. It is impossible to think of her rotting inside a grave… Worms finding their way through her heart…

(A pause.)

And you said you saw me killing myself too? In front of you… Why? Why would two women kill themselves in front of your eyes? Explain to me please why on earth you amongst thousands of men were privileged enough to witness the suicide of two intelligent looking women? Why? Why did I kill myself?

JERRY: I don’t know. You were afraid of something…

VALERIE: You’ve been under a lot of pressure lately…

JERRY: Probably…

VALERIE: You haven’t got anyone to cheer you up? Have you been feeling lonely?

(A pause.)

I’m sorry…

(A short pause.)
I shouldn’t have been so intrusive. I’m making fun of you… It’s wrong…

(A short pause.)

I was really upset with you. You stopped your analysis… And you suddenly come back to me after one month…

JERRY: I didn’t have much time.

VALERIE: Is it a matter of time or were you just worried.

JERRY: About what?

VALERIE: You were afraid of falling in love with me.

JERRY: I’m supposed to be your patient.

VALERIE: You rationalize.

JERRY: It never crossed my mind.

VALERIE: You don’t have to feel embarrassed about it.

JERRY: Is she dead?

VALERIE: Who?

JERRY: Meredith.

VALERIE: Of course not.

(VALERIE lights a cigarette. She inhales.)

She’s more alive than ever. She published another book lately. It’s a huge success.

(A short pause.)

As a matter of fact we’re going out tonight. The two of us… We’re going to see a play…

(A short pause. VALERIE moves towards the window.)
What you said about Meredith jumping off from my window is quite interesting.

(A short pause.)

I am not supposed to tell you this but… It is really interesting…

(A short pause. VALERIE extinguishes her cigarette. She sits on her desk.)

I used to have a statue of Venus de Milo on my desk… Meredith and I… We were in the middle of our session… She stood up and looked out of the window… She took the statue and threw it out… (shouts) “I want to kill that bastard. He’s ruined my life. I want to kill him. Kill him.”

(A pause.)

That’s what she said… Meredith thought she saw her husband walking by… Which is completely absurd… You can hardly recognise any faces from up here… She could have injured him though… Had she actually…

(A short pause. VALERIE starts laughing.)

A couple of minutes later we were laughing our heads off…

(A pause. VALERIE stands up. She lights a cigarette. She goes towards the window. She looks out of the window.)

I’m really sick of her you know… She started analysis because of him. He’s cheating on her. He has sex with other women. How could she marry a man like this? How could she drop so low? He’s scum. She’s humiliating herself. She could have had any man she wanted. Is there anyone in the world who would not think her beautiful? She takes such good care of her body. Her books sell like hell and she ends up going after him like a dog. I think it’s all about self-punishment. It goes back to her tragedy of course. Her mother ditched her on a bin while she was a baby… But that’s not the point. We all have our traumas and… she was always exceptional in everything she did… She’s accomplished so many things. She’s the mother of a daughter who’s been naughty yes but she
also happens to be such a sensitive and caring young woman… I don’t know what to say. Meredith knows so many things about life. Still her marriage is a complete failure. Her husband is not to be trusted… He’s the worst egoist I’ve ever met.

JERRY: Are you in love with him?

(A pause.)

Do you really like him or are you just jealous of her?

(A pause. VALERIE extinguishes her cigarette.)

I’m sorry…

(A short pause. VALERIE goes and sits at her desk. She puts on her glasses. She opens her diary.)

I don’t know what came over me…

(A pause.)

Please forgive me…

(A pause.)

VALERIE: You’ve lost your sense of humour.

(A short pause.)

I’ll tell you what…

(A short pause. VALERIE closes her diary.)

Why don’t you go out with us? Tonight. It will be a great opportunity for you to meet Meredith… She’s such a great person… She’s a daydreamer. Like you…

JERRY: Valerie…

VALERIE: I’ll call her straightaway… See if she agrees… Well… She won’t say no… I’m quite sure…
(VALERIE picks up the phone. She dials a number.)

Yes… Hello… Oh… Is that you Ken?

(A short pause.)

Hi… this is Val… I’m fine thank you… (smiles) Yes. I’m fine. Can I talk to Meredith please?

(A short pause.)

No. No… It’s just that a friend of mine would like to join us tonight and I was wondering if Meredith would have a problem with this… I’m sure she won’t but… Ok… Thank you Ken…

(JERRY suddenly raises from the couch. He puts the receiver down. A pause. JERRY looks at VALERIE. He goes back to the couch. A pause.)

That was her hairdresser…

(A pause.)

She doesn’t go anywhere without him…

(A pause.)

What is wrong with you? First, you insult me… You’re insinuating that I’m a whore and then you slam down the phone… I don’t understand you…

JERRY: I’m tired…

(A pause. VALERIE takes off her glasses. She puts on her coat.)

VALERIE: I need to go… I need to be at home before seven.

(A short pause.)

I need to change.

(A short pause.)

Get up please. I need to lock the room…
(A short pause.)

JERRY: This couch makes me sleep… I want to dream... I’m in need of dreams…

(A short pause. JERRY closes his eyes. He falls asleep. Lights fade slowly.)

Scene Three.

(The bar. KATE writes on a notebook. CLAIRE enters. She stands for a while and looks at KATE. She is dressed like a widow.)

KATE: Hello…

(A short pause.)

What can I offer you?

(A short pause.)

I was about to close.

(A short pause. CLAIRE’s purse falls down.)

You dropped something…

(A short pause. CLAIRE rushes towards KATE and embraces her. KATE smiles.)

Are you ok?

(CLAIRE cries.)

What’s wrong?

(KATE offers her a napkin. CLAIRE dries up her tears.)
CLAIRE: I cry too easily…

KATE: Me too.

(A pause.)

CLAIRE: Will you ever forgive me?

(A pause.)

KATE: Is that you mother?

(A pause.)

You’ve grown so old… What happened?

(A pause.)

CLAIRE: My dear child… Every wrinkle you see is a sign of grief… I have been a very unhappy woman…

(A short pause.)

KATE: I can’t believe my eyes. I was thinking about you the whole time. You left me without saying good bye.

(A short pause.)

How could you be so cruel mother?

(CLAIRE cries. KATE embraces her.)

I always thought you hated crying…

CLAIRE: No. Not today… Today is a special day…

(A short pause.)

Please forgive me my child… Forgive me… I’m so glad to see you. To find you well… Is everything all right with you? You didn’t commit suicide after all… People are so conceited… They say so many wrong things… Stupid things really…

(A pause.)
KATE: You suddenly appear in front of me like a ghost… I thought you were dead. What am I supposed to think now?

CLAIRE: Nothing. You don’t have to think about anything anymore.

KATE: I felt a little betrayed. Were you trying to put me under some kind of test?

CLAIRE: Of course not my child… It didn’t have anything to do with you…

KATE: You deserve a slap I think…

CLAIRE: It will be most welcome. Believe me… Oh I missed you so much… There was not one single day I was not thinking about you… It’s just that… I can hardly explain this to you…

(A short pause.)

I was raped… You’re a child of rape. I was so afraid of you. I thought I would never be a good mother to you. You would always remind me of this horrible event…

(A pause.)

KATE: Now mother… Why would he ever rape you? You liked him… You were in love with him.

CLAIRE: He was a complete stranger to me. He was a German soldier and I was just a woman who happened to be looking for some food. He told me he would let me live if I did not scream… How could he do this to me? How could he be so inhuman? His wife was probably waiting for him to come home. She must have been looking after his children with love and affection. Oh… I feel so horrible in my own flesh… I was prey to human instincts…

(A pause.)

KATE: What are you talking about?

CLAIRE: He raped me my child. He deprived me of my beauty… My purity…
KATE: Do you know how many times I was raped?… Emotionally raped… Because of you… Because of what I’ve been hearing about you. The whole world was talking about you. And then you suddenly disappear… People think you killed yourself but you’re alive. I don’t know what to expect any more. I cannot take this any longer.

(A pause.)

I think you need to sort out your problems with your husband yourself… My father raped you? I would never think you capable of coming up with such an idea… It is sick… What happened to you mother?

CLAIRE: It’s not an idea… It happened for real…

KATE: I don’t care…

(A pause.)

CLAIRE: I came here to make up with you. There are not many days left for me. I’ve grown old. And you still look so young… So full of life… Help me please…

(A pause. KATE fixes her eyes on CLAIRE.)

KATE: Ok… I will help you…

(KATE pours drinks. They say cheers. A pause.)

CLAIRE: I feel very weak actually… I see how you manage here on your own and I admire you.

KATE: Thank you.

(A pause. CLAIRE drinks.)

CLAIRE: This bar is very lonely.

KATE: It is late…

CLAIRE: What kind of customers do you get?

KATE: Drivers mostly… Random People…

CLAIRE: Some lorry drivers were accused of murdering women.
KATE: So?

CLAIRE: Nothing...

(A pause.)

KATE: I enjoy the company of drivers. I like them… I like their sense of not belonging anywhere. They stop here and then continue their journey to who knows where…

(A pause. KATE drinks.)

I need to close for tonight… It is quite late.

(A pause. CLAIRE looks at her. KATE lets her hair fall down. CLAIRE drinks.)

CLAIRE: What happened to your husband if I may ask?

KATE: My husband?

CLAIRE: You divorced him?

KATE: I… don’t have a husband…

CLAIRE: He wasn’t good enough for you? Do you have a boyfriend?

(A short pause.)

I’m sorry. I’m asking too many questions… I try to fill in the gaps of time…

(A pause. KATE smiles.)

KATE: Yes… I do have a boyfriend… He’s been dreaming of me. Day in day out.

CLAIRE: I almost forgot how it is to love someone… Please remind me…

KATE: The night is all ours. He goes to bed very early. He’ll be awake when I visit him. He’ll be waiting for me.

CLAIRE: I’m so envious of you. You’re perfect. You’ve grown into a most wonderful woman. A woman that is beyond admiration. What people say about you is so little in comparison to what I see. And I see a stable and
confident woman who thrusts knives at me with her eyes. I see a woman who knows what she wants from life. A woman whose beauty should be a topic of discussion amongst many people.

(A pause. KATE drinks.)

KATE: Well… I never used to be an actress myself.

CLAIRE: What do you mean?

KATE: Your films have become very famous… Some tapes are priceless. It’s hard to get a copy of them…

CLAIRE: I never acted on the screen. I did theatre. I was a Jewish woman.

KATE: My only objection to your way of handling things was that… You cannot be an actress of your genre and have a family at the same time.

CLAIRE: Am I being attacked now? Are you throwing stones at me for the choices I had to take while I was a young woman?

KATE: I don’t understand why you’re so upset about it… We’ve had this conversation before… You shouldn’t have had me if you appeared even once-

CLAIRE: I was a theatre actress. Yes. And it was hard for me to waste all my energy in raising a child. I wanted to move my audience. I wanted to touch their innermost feelings. My cries resounded in the theatre like the sweet song of a bird… You think I’m lying don’t you? I may be half blind but I can see it clearly in your eyes. You think I’m making this story up in order to excuse myself. I had to choose between life and art. And I chose the latter. I gave birth to you, but I now see that this was a horrendous mistake. You’re the greatest enemy of art. You demoralised every aspect of artistic communication. You destroyed everything. You and your porn films.

KATE: I beg your pardon?

CLAIRE: You were like a wild animal. For the sake of a wider audience you transformed yourself into the filthiest bitch ever…
KATE: My porn films.

CLAIRE: Yes...

KATE: Are you out of your mind?

CLAIRE: Your mission on earth was to make men want you. You set fires in their homes. You destroyed their marriages. You turned your husband into a drunkard… You ruined him.

KATE: I…

(A short pause.)

I won’t criticise you any longer.

(A short pause.)

After all… Everybody does what feels best at given circumstances.

(A short pause. CLAIRE grasps her purse. She takes out a gun. She points it at KATE. KATE moves back.)

CLAIRE: I won’t accept this…. Although I’m much older than you, your wisdom appears to be far greater than mine.

KATE: What are you talking about?

CLAIRE: I grew so jealous of you and your life that I wanted to kill you. I think now it’s the right time for me to do it. Don’t you think? It is night. No one else is watching. I’ll kill myself later on. Don’t worry.

KATE: But mother… why would you do such a horrible thing?

CLAIRE: I have no idea. I guess there can never be reconciliation between us.

KATE: I think there can be. We just have to believe in it.

CLAIRE: You think so?

KATE: Of course.

(A pause.)
CLAIRE: You know… When women play with guns… It all amounts to this.

(A short pause. CLAIRE shoots a stream of water out of the gun.)

Everything becomes so wet.

(A short pause.)

Don’t you think?

(KATE and CLAIRE burst in laughter. The lights fade slowly. End.)
2. The Script for the Second Practical Research Project.

*HELEN(S)*

Second draft of the script written for my second practical research project

**CHARACTERS**

HELEN 1

HELEN 2

HELEN 3
H1: I am alone...

H2: Me too...

(A pause.)

I feel alone...

H1: I am alone...

(A short pause.)

I don’t feel alone...

(A short pause.)

H2: You don’t feel anything?

H1: I am not feeling alone...

(Silence.)

H2: Are you trapped?

H1: No way.

H2: I can’t see anything. I need more light.

H1: I want you to disappear.

H2: Disappear?

H1: You’re miserable. And ugly.

H3: Your cunt is ugly... ugly. And dirty. It’s always very dirty.

H2: I remind you of something, don’t I?

H1: Of what?

H3: Of what?

H2: I remind you of...

H1: What?

H3: What?
H1: What is it?
H3: What is it?
H1: Say it...
H3: Say it...
H2: You seem to forget. You suffered a lot.
H1: I don’t understand.
H3: I don’t understand.
H2: When will this ever end? When will you stop doing this to yourself?
H1: Never.
H3: Never.
H1: I have a headache.
H3: I have a headache.
H2: You’re trapped.

(Silence.)

H3: I am not a monkey... I am Helen...
H1: *I am Helen. I am the real one.*
H2: What makes you real?

(A short pause.)

Is it your beauty?

(A short pause.)

An old friend said to me once: ‘Against every new outrage and every fresh horror we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness. We shall draw strength from within ourselves.’

(A short pause.)
H1: What’s that supposed to mean?

H2: Don’t you understand?

H1: You make me laugh. What are you?

H3: I’m not here to entertain you. I’m here to laugh at myself.

H1: What is there to laugh at?

H3: Nothing, everything.

H1: I’m surrounded by idiots.

(A pause.)

H2: She reminds me of a girl. She reminds me of your daughter.

(Silence.)

Your daughter. She was very dear to you. She used to call you: ‘Helen... give me your breast milk.’ ‘Helen... I love you...’ ‘Helen... You’re the most beautiful person I’ve ever seen’... Your daughter used to say very nice things to you... But... not anymore... Now... there’s only hatred in her eyes...

(Silence.)

I am surrounded by ghosts.

(A short pause.)

H1: I have no regrets. Apart from...

(A pause.)

When I look at you... I just want to smash you into small pieces... I’ve told you to disappear...

H2: You’re not in a position to order anyone.

H1: Why can’t you just leave me alone? I want to be on my own. Leave me alone. Both of you. Get out of here.

H2: I cannot leave this room.
H3: I want to dance. Are you musicians? Play some music for me please.

H1: Who the fuck are you really?

H3: I am Helen... Helen. Helen. Helen. You don’t want me to be Helen? That’s your problem. It’s not a serious problem. But a problem nevertheless...

H2: You’re both derelicts... Emotional paralysis. Do you feel ashamed?

(Silence.)

H1: I am a queen. I have no room for shame. A queen possesses power. She’s self-centred. She needs to be respected. She cares about everyone. She’s the one who’s going to make everyone feel ok. I never dared to think about my own state of feeling ok. I’ve been so self-centred that I lost any sense of who I am or what I want in this bloody depressive planet called earth.

H2: You were a good woman. A strong woman.

H1: When a queen decides to leave her kingdom. To neglect her duties. To give space to her own personal and singular ethics as a woman. She lets down. She disappoints.

H3: Jokes fight the expansion of egotism.

(Silence.)

H1: Where am I really? What is this place? It smells... It smells of sweat.

H2: Look at yourself... You’re to be pitied really.

H3: You’re dead.

H1: That is not true.

H3: It is true.

H2: (to H3) Are you afraid of death?

H3: I am old. I was ninety two when I died.

(A short pause.)
Death and I became very good friends. I grew fond of Death. Contrary to what people believe, his psyche was not impenetrable. He was the most sensitive person I’ve ever known. And he had great sense of humour too...

_(A short pause.)_

H1: I really don’t understand what is going on here... I really don’t...

H2: This place reminds me of...

H1: Of what?

H2: I cannot find the courage to...

H1: To do what?

H2: To speak...

H1: You’re a coward.

H2: A close relative of mine told me once: ‘What is going on, what mysteries are these, in what sort of fatal mechanism have we become enmeshed? The answer cannot simply be that we are all... cowards. We’re not that bad. We stand before a much deeper question.’

H1: _(she points to her head)_ Is anything leaking from up here? Some vital liquid perhaps?

H3: Death came to me and said: “Would you like to be my wife?” I said: “Only if you promise to bring me luck.”

H1: You’re all mad.

H2: There’s no reason for us to be enemies.

_(A pause.)_

H1: You seem kind and generous... But...

H2: But what?

H1: No one knows anything. I don’t know where I’m going. You don’t know where you’re going. This little thing here doesn’t.
H3: Where would you go?

H1: I have no idea.

H2: What’s the difference between feeling alone and being alone?

H1: There’s a huge difference but I don’t want to philosophize. Not right now.

(A short pause.)

I always wanted to go somewhere. Somewhere beyond anything that was banal and everyday...

H2: You haven’t done anything wrong.

(A short pause.)

It’s them... They made you feel... guilty.

H1: It was beyond my control. Everything was beyond my control.

H2: Your daughter. She didn’t love you anymore. She thought you abandoned your family for another man.

H1: Yes. That’s what I did. I fell in love with another man.

H2: No. That’s a lie. You never loved anyone. They took you away by force.

H3: “Only if you bring me luck.” Death then replied: “Your death will be just the way you want. That’s good luck”. I fell in love.

H2: You never loved anyone apart from your husband.

H1: I fell in love with another man. I did it. I ran away. I left home. My husband was aware. He cried: ‘Helen, please don’t leave me. Helen, you’re hurting me. You’re hurting your daughter. You plunge a knife deep in our hearts.’

(A pause. H3 starts tumbling.)

My husband was very much in love when I left him... I loved him too but...
I was feverish. I ran like a sleek colt. My feet were light. I hardly touched the ground. I jumped over stones. I reached the seashore. The ship was waiting for me. I saw my lover... I felt at home.

He kissed my body. My skin. He took off my clothes. My heart was beating madly. Everything was so familiar and so strange. I was a tiny little scared.

He pushed you against the wall. He slapped you. He was hurting you. Both physically and emotionally. There was no tenderness. These men... Don’t you remember their faces? Their ugliness was incredible. Why can’t you admit it?

You are very confused.

You were raped. And you screamed.

It was a very intense moment.

It was a scream of pain. A cry for help.

What’s this thing doing there?

You mean me?

Yes.


You are both mistaken. You both suffer under delusions. You were both raped. You think you can abolish the horror. But no. You cannot escape. Listen to me please. No one’s going to believe you. They will insist that you are the criminals. I beg you. Don’t do this to me, to you or to
anyone. Everyone. Your friends, family, husbands, children. Everyone needs to know. There was no pleasure. Only pain, humiliation, disgust, despair.

H3: You think yourself smart?

(A pause.)

You think yourself smart?

(A pause.)

H2: I am not smart.

(A pause.)

And I am not trying to teach you anything.

H3: Then why don’t you just shut up.

(A short pause.)

H2: Perhaps I could teach you how to feel lost.

H3: Shut up!

H1: (laughs)

(A pause.)

H2: I could teach you how to feel sad. How to lose every desire to live. I could teach you how to feel useless. How to feel alone... I was beautiful once. I was a very beautiful Helen. And I was holding my daughter. The picture of us holding one another. What a dream! Mother and daughter. Is there anything more beautiful than this?

H3: (in Chinese.) You’re a fucking lunatic. You’re so fucked up.

H1: I think there’s some truth in her sayings. She’s lost something that is very valuable for me too.

H3: What is it?

H1: Dignity towards myself.
H3: I want to fart.

H1: I have a moral obligation to serve my desires.

H3: What do you watch when you make love to yourself?

H1: Nothing. I don’t need any stimuli from anywhere.

H3: What about Rambo films?

H1: You’re a pervert.

H3: (laughs.)

H1: What’s so funny?

H3: Nothing.

H1: No seriously. What’s so funny?

H3: Nothing... There’s nothing to laugh about. I laugh because of your nothingness. You’re such a melodrama. Everything’s so... melodramatic... So so pathetic... (swears in Chinese.)

H1: Melodrama?

H3: You’re so helpless...

(A short pause.)

H1: Melodrama, did you say?

(A short pause.)

Well.

(A short pause.)

Excuse me but that’s just my life, ok? That’s just my life... It’s just happens to be a soap opera ok? And if that’s funny to you then... If that’s funny to you then so be it... It’s not funny to me, ok?

(A pause.)
H2: (to H3) Why don’t you try to admit it? Admit it. You’re Helen too. There was a man. The prince of Troy. He forced himself in you. Not one or ten but hundreds of times.

H3: What do you want me to do?

(A short pause.)

What do you want me to do?

(A short pause.)

Do you want me to feel sorry for you?

(A pause. H3 performs screams. Loud screams.)

(screams) ‘Oh I left my daughter and my husband’ ‘Oh... I left my lover’...

(A pause.)

H1: Please do it again.

H3: I can’t.

H1: Why not?

H3: It’s difficult.

H1: You’re such a waste. You waste yourself in.... In silly things really.

(Silence.)

H2: Who are you really? Are you comedy? Are you the queen of comedy?

H3: (she does not respond.)

H1: I have never seen anything like this before.

H2: Is she Chinese?

H1: Apparently.

H2: How interesting.

H1: It is impossible to read her.
H2: What is there to read? She’s a circus. A Chinese circus.

H1: *(shouts to H3)* Are you Chinese?

*(A short pause.)*

H3: I’m the melodrama of your melodrama *in* your melodrama.

*(A short pause.)*

H2: Oh...

H3: *(does not respond.)*

H2: You must be very popular then.

H3: *(does not respond.)*

H2: Everyone likes melodrama.

H3: *(does not respond.)*

H2: I love melodrama.

H3: *(does not respond.)*

H2: I’m proud of being a melodrama...

H3: Really?

H2: Yes.

*(A short pause.)*

I am a melodrama.

*(A short pause.)*

I can kill you all in a melodramatic way... I can cook and eat you in a melodramatic way... I can scream in a melodramatic way ‘Ahshhhhhhhhhhhhhhh’.

*(H3 and H1 burst out laughing.)*

H3: That is so great. Congratulations.
H2: I can laugh in a melodramatic way... ‘Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha,’...

(H3 and H1 laugh. They clap hands. They shout ‘Fantastic’, ‘Bravo’ etc. The jovial atmosphere subsides. A pause.)

Pirandello hates melodrama... He thinks it spoils the taste of the audience.

H3: Pirandello. Audience. Taste... Pirandello. Audience. Taste. Does anyone know a good joke? ... ha, ha, ha, haaaaaaaaa (this goes on as a scream.)

H1 What did you do to her?

H2: I don’t know.

H3: I fell in love with Death. No one likes Death. He made love to me. We had a child together. I felt so guilty... Don’t ask me whyyyyyyyyyyy... (this goes on as a scream.)

(A short pause.)

H1: There’s something melodramatic in her too. She’s an infinite source of melodrama.

(A short pause.)

It’s a mess. Everything’s a mess. (H3’s scream ends.)

(Silence.)

H2: You never wanted any mess. You were loyal. You were true to yourself.

H3: You were loyal. True to yourself.

H2: And that is what made you beautiful.

H3: That is what made you beautiful.

H2: Being true to yourself.

H3: Being true to yourself.

H2: You were a good mother.

H3: A good mother.
H2:  *(to H3)* What’s wrong with you? Where’s your voice?

H3:   I’ll talk to my lawyer.

H2:   Listen to me... No one has the right to doubt your loyalty. Least of all your husband and your daughter... You don’t deserve the hatred. You don’t deserve to be ignored and neglected.

H3:   You’re a promiscuous woman. Sex, be it by rape or consent makes no difference to me. You slept with another man. You deserve to be beaten to death. Your adultery inflicted pain to your country. Psychic pain. You stink, dirty. You deserve to be punished. Treated as a whore.

*(Silence.)*

H2:   No... No one deserves that... I want...

H1:   What do you want?

*(A short pause.)*

H2:   I just want to rest... Really...

*(A short pause.)*

H3:   You want some more melodrama...

H2:   Yes...

*(A short pause.)*

It is...It is the only way...

*(A short pause.)*

I cannot cope without melodrama...

*(A short pause.)*

I need something fake to keep me alive. To help me heal the losses I’ve endured.

*(A pause.)*
H1: People don’t know what to do with themselves... They’re so careless...
So self-indulgent really...

(A pause.)

Each day and night. A current of blood and tears drives me into the dark.
Like my husband and my lover. They jumped... And never came back.

H2: You didn’t come back either. Half of you was left there. In the dark.

H3: I am dead. But I feel more alive than ever.

H2: You lost any sense of reality.

H1: I fell in love with someone who was a stranger to me yesterday. He
became my lover the next day. I felt that I could love him for the rest of
my life. And the day after tomorrow I was forced to...

(A pause.)

I became a stranger to myself.

H2: This is called rape.

H3: ‘Oh... I didn’t know what I was doing!’ ... ‘Oh... I fell in love with a
complete stranger...’ ‘My husband pissed his underpants. How could I
marry such a child?’

H1: Is she drunk?

H2: She’s saying that you’re not always entirely sure who it is you’re married
to.

H3: ‘I’ve fallen in love with the wrong person...’ Oh... oh... Oh... ‘He
deceived me.’

H2: I was deceived. My entire marriage was a deception.

H3: ‘Why did he make me do things?’ ‘Oh... I’m not going to trust anyone...
All men are jerks.’ I wish they could smell my fart forever.

H1: You have a very big mouth... Too big for your body... Are you good at
giving blow jobs?
H3: That’s a personal question.

H1: You can tell me.

H3: I’m not here to entertain you. I’m not here to entertain anyone.

H2: Why are you here?

(A short pause.)

I think this is a place for remorse. A place where you can find peace within yourself.

H3: I am trying to get rid of myself. Please help me get rid of myself.

H1: What do you mean?

H3: You wouldn’t be able to understand. You’re not in a position to understand. Neither of you is. You’re both deeply depressed. Deluded. And... driven by a desire to... A desire to... to... to repeat the drama of your death.

H1: There’s no sense in you being here. Why can’t you just disappear?

(A pause.)

H2: My dear Helen... You want us all to disappear, don’t you? You do not want to remember what happened. Is it the easiest choice? Avoiding the truth.

(A short pause.)

Do you know what beauty means? It means disasters, collapse, sadness, jealousy, loneliness, hypocrisy... Being deprived of your beloved ones...

(A short pause.)

You were a beautiful queen. No doubt. A devoted wife and mother. No doubt in that either. And your husband was... good. He ruled one of the richest countries in the world. Everything was perfect. But... you were kidnapped. They took you to a dark place. For ten years. You were not eating properly. You never washed yourself. You were cold and sick.
You begged for toilet paper. You lost hair. And you were beaten, tortured... raped... beaten again... they wrapped you inside a sack full of rats.

H3: (she holds a mirror. She looks at herself. She combs her hair.)

H1: Nothing was intentional. Or planned even...

(A short pause.)

All this disaster was for nothing really. I fell in love with a prince from another country... I felt more alive than ever.

H2: You were living in a very dark place... Living? No. Living is not the right word. You were surviving... Or at least trying to hold onto something called life... The sunlight was hardly ever available to you. The only thing that kept you alive was the thought of your dear daughter and your dear husband... Your daughter was called Hermione. Do you remember that?

(H2 takes out a piece of paper. She reads.)

‘My dearest Hermione, I’m dying to have you in my arms again’... This letter was addressed to your daughter. At moments of complete silence and concentration you summoned all your strength to write these painful words to your daughter...

(H3 holds the mirror in front of H2.)

No, thank you... Listen here: ‘What a dream! To be close to you again. I’m alive just because of you. The mere thought that I will never see you again. Never see your face or touch your lovely hair. It is the deadliest torture ever.’

(H3 holds the mirror in front of H1)

H1: Thank you but... No. Not right now... Give me that letter.

H2: No.

H1: Give it to me.
H2: No.

H1: Give it to me please... I would like to read it.

*(H2 hands H1 the letter. H1 reads it.)*

H3: There comes a day when we feel the need to get rid of letters. Old letters. We do not bear the sound of people crying. We throw the letters in the fire. The fire makes a sweet noise. The noise stays with you forever.

H1: This letter. It was not addressed to my daughter. I never wrote anything to my daughter. This is the only thing I regret deeply... I just couldn’t find the right words to tell her how much I had missed her...

*(A short pause.)*

My daughter understood where I was going. She was mature enough to understand.

H2: Your daughter felt betrayed. And she never had the power to confront you... She was jealous of you...

H1: That is not true... There was always a deeper understanding between us.

H2: Why do you always shrink back from the truth?

H3: I will never shrink back from the truth. I used to be a queen you know. I was honest, good and fair but was also known for my propensity to see life as a comedy sketch. I gave a public speech once. I said that Death had visited me during my sleep. I told my audience that he had a penis to die for. A woman laughed and her husband cut off her ear... The woman’s brother killed her husband and the husband’s father killed the brother. People were afraid of me. I was deported to a desolate island. I lost someone dear person to me but before you ask me anything about it let me tell you that the jokes I told myself kept me company. I have always considered myself a practical person.

H1: What’s the point in being practical if life cannot give you what you want? This letter here was addressed to my lover. I was leaving him. I was bidding him goodbye forever.
H2: You were writing letters to your husband. Letters full of love and admiration.

H1: I never wrote anything to my husband. What was I supposed to tell him? That I’m having a good time with my lover? Do you think I’m whore? Is that what you think I am?

H2: Let me remind you. You were writing: ‘When the long nights besiege me tightly, the only thing that gives me hope and strength is this lovely thought: That someday, my husband will come and take me away from all this!’

H1: The letter was addressed to my lover... Listen... Here: ‘I dreamt of you last night. The sea was furious.’

H2: You were encouraging your husband and your daughter. You were writing: ‘Life here hardly touches my deepest resources – physically perhaps I do decline a little and sometimes I am infinitely sad – but fundamentally I keep growing stronger.’

H3: How does one grow stronger against the loss of love? What is left for one to want?

H1: I never wanted anything extravagant. I just wanted to be with my lover. I was not made out of stone.

(A short pause.)

I was recounting my dream to my lover. I wrote: ‘I dreamt of waves breaking against the rocks. Were they trying to break free from the land? We were laughing at the angry sea. We were free. It was night.’

H3: Night? No... There was no night in my thinking. I always knew what was going on around me... But... Well... One day I was in the middle of negotiating the borders of my country and... Alas... a great farting attacked my bowels. It was if I had eaten some bizarre spices. People in the room could hardly breathe and thought that all this was a bad joke... My fellow citizens yelled at me. They said I was not giving a damn about the children of my country. That I do not think of the future of my
country at all. I saw Death sticking out his tongue to me... *(smiles)* He was cute.

H2: There was a war... A great war... It started early in the morning...

H1: Yes... it was early in the morning... When a queen runs away with a prince from another country, the king cannot be impartial about it.

H2: Your husband was trying to set you free. After ten years of relentless fighting and killing, he managed to release you from your tormentors... There were dead bodies everywhere. Widows. Orphans...

*(A short pause.)*

I saw children playing with skulls... bones, fingers... I felt disgusted. I felt like a ball everyone can hit...

H1: My husband felt betrayed and humiliated.

H2: Oh, please Helen wake up. How can you be so naive? The war was not a consequence of his humiliation. All this had nothing to do with you. It was about business...

H1: Business?

H3: Death said to me once: ‘We’re surrounded by liars.’

H1: What kind of business?

H2: They staged everything behind your back. You were just a secondary character.

H1: A secondary character? I have never been a secondary character. I have never been a character. I was a real person. I have always been immersed in real emotional intensities.

H3: One of Death’s favourite phrases was: ‘We’re so fucked up.’ ‘We like to keep our assholes busy.’

H1: The pain was real. The disappointment. There was not the slightest possibility of happiness. I don’t think anyone can realise what I went through.
H3: We hardly understand one another. I mean... Let’s face it... Absurdity invades the way we humans communicate... I find this very amusing and incredibly funny... Come on... Don’t look so stern...

H1: You mean I should laugh at myself? At the fact that people died because of my relationship?

H2: I don’t want to laugh. I cannot do anything else but be sad and think of the loss of innocent people, the destruction, the violence... Everything was so well-calculated.

H1: I will never forget the day the war started. I remember how I woke up and saw my lover lying next to me. He wasn’t looking at me. He was pale white and sweating. I looked out of the window and almost fainted. The sea was black. Thousands of ships everywhere. I could hear my husband shouting...

(A short pause.)

‘I turned to you my dear lover and said: You won’t get hurt. You won’t suffer, my dear, my lover... You won’t bleed. Your heart will bleed.’

(A short pause.)

I tried hard to reach my husband in the battlefield. The smell of death was everywhere... I wanted to go back home. I couldn’t stand this any longer.

H2: I returned home after the war and was again queen, mother, wife. I thought I was safe but something, everything had changed. My husband was very distant and cold.

(A short pause.)

My nights were sleepless. I was hearing things. I was surrounded by shadows. I felt alone. Everyone was looking at me with suspicion. My friends, my family. Everyone was confronted with this ridiculous dilemma: Did I truly suffer or had I actually enjoyed it a little? All this was pure nonsense of course. The truth was... I was a victim of diplomatic contrivances. They used me as a kind of... excuse... to mask
their shamelessness... I tried to speak to my daughter. She was my only hope... But she was avoiding me... *(shouts)* ‘For the sake of Allah. I am not a monster’.

H1: *(she throws the letter to the ground.)* This has gone too far... I cannot bear this any longer...

H2: No... Don’t throw it away.

H1: I cannot dig up the past anymore...

*(H3 picks it up. She makes it into a ball and throws it to H1. H1 throws it back. They play. They laugh.)*

H2: Please do not participate in killing me.

*(H2 collapses. H1 stops.)*

H1: Why don’t you play? We’re so alone anyway. So alone in our sufferings.

H2: I can’t. I really can’t...

*(H1 helps H2 to stand up. A short pause.)*

I tried to explain everything to my daughter. My tone was strong and firm. I said: ‘Unfortunately, being at home doesn’t end my sufferings; on the contrary it gives them other dimensions! I knew I would face all kinds of accusations and hatred from everyone. But not from you. Not from my own daughter. You who is part of me, the dearest part! This is the last thing I can imagine or bear!! It’s like I against myself or me against me! Don’t you find it crazy?’

*(H3 shapes the letter into aeroplane. She sends it away. She runs to catch it.)*

H1: I was crazy. I was mad. I wanted to fly away and disappear in the clouds... I set my husband against my lover. ‘How could you, my dear lovers, my dear husbands? How could you let me clean your weapons? How could you be so blind? How could you trust me?’

H3: One day I asked someone to open a door to hell... Someone did it and you know what happened?

H1: What happened?
H3: Nothing happened. Absolutely nothing. Everyone was so disappointed.

H1: You’re very bizarre. You’re heartless. You don’t have any feelings for anyone.

H3: It is difficult to understand the impersonal and purely generic nature of jokes. The lack of communication is so large and unyielding... Well ... We’re used to it, anyway... It seems that marriages suffer from lack of communication too. Isn’t it so?

H2: Yes, it is so... One day I grasped my husband by the arm. I demanded the truth from him. My words were something like this: ‘You asked me if I’ve kept myself pure. And I answered yes. But you would never believe me. What do you expect to hear? What are you trying to do? Did you actually participate in my abduction? Why are you lying to me? Do you think I’m stupid?’

H1: I kneeled before my husband and asked him to take me home. The worst had already happened. The country of my lover was gone. Completely wiped out. All I could do was rescue my lover from the rage of my husband. I begged my husband to make love to me. ‘I betrayed you my dear lover. Just as I had betrayed my husband’.

H2: You only care about sex. How can you be such a prostitute?

H1: I beg your pardon.

H2: I guess we are destined to be what we are. We cannot change ourselves.

H1: I was trying to save my lover’s life.

H2: What for?

H1: Yes...

(A short pause.)

What for really? He had lost everything. His brothers were dead. His sisters were disgraced by soldiers. And I... (cries) I left him. He was completely alone. Incredibly sad. I should have killed him. Will he ever find the strength to forgive me?
H2: I’m the one to whom an apology is owed. I hadn’t done anything wrong. I didn’t implicate anyone in disasters. I was not responsible for anything.

(A short pause.)

I didn’t know what to do. They wanted to make me feel guilty. They thought it was an easy way to shut me up. But I was not that weak... I knew what was going on. They had used my beauty as an occasion for war... Life is so cruel. So unbearably cruel really.

(A short pause. H3 holds tries to comfort H2. They hold hands.)

I felt very exhausted. I couldn’t talk to anyone. Nothing was true. Everything sunk in a mud of corruption. I was constantly thinking of my daughter. What kind of future could she have in this hell?

H1: When I reached home, my daughter ran into my arms. She had grown into a wonderful young woman. She was the light of my life. My joy, my dream... It was so wrong of me to leave her behind. We could have learnt so many things from one another.


(A short pause.)

(Shouts.) They took her away from me... They took her from me... My daughter, my greatest treasure... (cries) Why were you so cold to me my child? ... I should have persuaded her to join me. Together we could have made it. We could have managed to create a new, a better world.

H3: A world where absolutely nothing happens. A world where a mother can teach her child a joke or two... Teach her child that life is not that bad. Even if fate proves the opposite.

H2: The Egyptian desert was cruel. I was starving. There was no water.

H1: Apart from my daughter, I was not welcome to anyone else. I had missed my homeland. My people... But the wheat had grown wild, the fields untamed, the wheat harder to cut.

(A short pause.)
Right there, in the field. My husband killed me. He hacked off my head...
My head rolled and rolled and rolled until it reached the sea and
disappeared in the water.

H2: I died. As silently as I could.

H3: I think we should give each other a hug.

(H1, H2 and H3 embrace one another. After a while H3 distances herself. Silence. H3 reads from a paper.)


(A short pause.)

H1: Escape from what? From where?

H2: From the long labyrinth of human existence.

H1: That sounds pompous... Do you want us to congratulate you?

H2: I don’t want anything from anyone.

H1: I think it’s true though. There is no escape. If I were my husband for instance, I would have reacted in a similar way as he did. I would have
either destroyed everything or killed myself. There is a code of honour. You haven’t got much choice.

H2: I don’t know how one can justify or excuse such an excessive behaviour. It’s absurd.

H1: None of is born to hate and destroy. We are borne to love, not to hate.

H2: Why didn’t you kill yourself?

H1: I tried to once but I couldn’t. Besides... my husband wanted me alive.

H2: I wanted to kill myself too. I knew I would go to Heaven. My conscience was clean.

H1: Did you wash it yourself? Did you put it in a washing machine? At high temperature?

H2: You were deceived. You were forced to have sex. You were humiliated.

H1: Listen... I need to make something clear.

H2: I need to make something clear too: You’re hypocrite.

H1: You want to get rid of me. But I don’t want to go. I can’t.

H2: A hypocrite doesn’t need to go anywhere. A hypocrite feels safe everywhere.

H1: I will never see myself as a victim. I did something different, unexpected. I transgressed and paid with my blood.

H2: You were a victim of circumstances too.

H1: I was ‘Enmeshed in a fatal mechanism’, yes?

H2: Exactly. There’s no point in trying to conceal that.

H1: I’m not trying to conceal anything. I drew a very clear picture of my pain and my sufferings... I have always been at the forefront of my actions and my decisions. Whereas you... You were like a bullet in a gun. The bullet cannot do anything on its own. The hand that pulls the trigger makes the bullet move.
H2: Why are you dead? Did you feel free to do anything you liked?

H1: What do you keep behind your scarf? Is it your pride? An inherited sense of guilt? What is it exactly?

H2: I hate your image of Helen. I hate it.

H3: Will you please stop arguing all the time. It disturbs the peace of the dead people. You’re not alone in this world.

(A short pause. H3 looks for something in the space. Behind the curtains.)

H1: She’s right. Our tears won’t make things any better. There’s no point in arguing about our sufferings... Arguing about who succumbed more to destiny than the other.


H1: A dead soldier? Really?

(A pause. H3 comes back. She holds a spider in her hand.)

H1: What’s this? What is this? It looks disgusting.

H3: It’s a spider.

H1: Who gave this to you?

H3: The soldier.

H1: What? Where? Why? Why did he give you a spider? What does he want? Talk to me you... You despicable little whore...

H2: Come here. I would like to see your little spider. It looks cute.

(H2 caresses the spider.)

I love spiders. In my exile, I used to eat spiders. I survived because of spiders.

H1: I hate you all.

H3: The spider doesn’t like any of you.
H2: Why not?

H3: I don’t know.

H1: Where’s the soldier? Why is he here?

H3: I don’t know.

H1: You don’t?

(A short pause.)

Tell me.

(A short pause. H1 and H2 pull a blanket over H3. They try to smother her.)

(in Slovenian.) You fucking bitch.

H2: (in Arabic) ‘Stop pushing me to admit something I don’t want to talk about’

H3: (screams) Let me go.

H2: (in Arabic) ‘Or even to remember’.

H3: (screams) Tragedy confronts.

H1: (in Slovenian) You little cocksucker. I’ll make your mother pregnant.

H3: (screams) Comedy escapes.

H2: (in Arabic) ‘Why do you insist to remind me each time you look at me?’

H1: (in Slovenian) I wish your death is slow and painful. You cunt. Your pussy smells of shit.

H3: (screams) You’re such a melodrama.

(H1 and H2 let go of H3. H3 breathes heavily.)

You’re such a melodrama.

(A short pause.)

(A short pause.)

SOLDIER: I’ve come to see the melodrama.

(A short pause.)

I’ve come to see you. (A short pause.) A bomb tore my limps apart. My hands, my head, my legs, my testicles... Everything was spread all over the place... Tiny little pieces of casserole meat... (smiles.) Diese melodramatische Scheisse ist zum Kotzen*... Well... let me tell you what happened a few days before I died. People were telling me to be brave. To laugh at death. To get rid of my fears. To be afraid means to be a coward: ‘And don’t do anything stupid... Cause if you kill yourself, people will think that you’re the worst egotist that has ever lived on this bloody depressive planet called earth’. (A short pause.) At times of war you have no desire to analyse the absurdity of life. You think of your mother instead. You think of Helen as your mother. You’re fighting for your country. And your mother watches over you.

(Silence.)

H3: What do you make of it?

(A short pause.)

H2: I feel sorry for him. He died too early.

(A short pause.)

There is nothing worse than dying young.

H3: (to H1) What about you? What do you have to say?

H1: I have nothing to say.

H3: Really? You always have something to say.

H1: Well... I am not the cause of his death. Why didn’t he desert the battle? Everyone is the king of their own destiny.

(A short pause.)
I have nothing more to say.

(A short pause.)

Of course if he were my son, I would have reacted differently... I would have uttered a heart-wrenching cry. I would have wished to be buried alive... Next to my beloved son... But right now... I cannot feel anything... What is there to feel anyway... I feel so lost in the darkness of this world...

H3: ‘I feel so lost in the darkness of this world’ ... ‘I feel nothing.’

H1: Having no feelings at all is very bad.

H3: Even if you’re deprived of your beloved ones? Your truly beloved ones?

H1: Yes. Even so. You cannot destroy images of the past. That’s the only thing you cannot destroy.

(A pause.)

You suddenly look so serious. What’s wrong?

(A pause.)

Hold on a minute.

H2: What is it?

H3: You’re so securely contained in your small worlds. I have tried to unlock you. To break your cages to pieces.

H1: The guy... The soldier... His way of speaking.

H2: What’s the matter?

H1: I cannot believe this.

(A short pause.)

Oh... That is so horrible.

H2: Her child?

H1: Life is full of coincidences... Tragic coincidences.
H2: What happened?

H1: When they deported her to this desolate island. They took her child away from her.

H2: Why? What drives people to become so inhuman?

H1: They wanted to punish her. She was on the verge of messing up her kingdom completely. Look at her... She’s not to be trusted. She’s trying to hide her tears. She’s not even capable to mourn like a proper mother. In Slovenia we call these people cowards...

H2: What happened to the child?

H1: He was adopted by a common family, an insignificant family. He grew into a wonderful young man. He was of royal descent.

H2: But he was sent to fight in the war.

H1: Yes. A war caused by my love, my passion, my mess...

H2: Who was the child’s father? Was it really Death? A stranger?

H1: I don’t know really... It could be anyone...

(A short pause.)

I don’t care...

H2: (to H3) I apologise... I apologise for trying to smother you before. I was out of myself.

H3: You don’t have to apologise.

(A short pause.)

I’m just a stranger to you... I come from a very distant place... And I’m making fun of you.

(A short pause.)

Perhaps comedy makes you realise how isolated insulated you are... How weak you are really... And you don’t like that... No one likes that. You’re afraid of me. It’s normal.
H1: Listen... I am so sorry... So sorry for the loss of your child. How old was he when you left him behind?

(A pause.)

H3: Can we change the subject?

(A short pause. H2 embraces H3.)

H1: When I tried to kill you, I acted like a child.

H3: (shouts) Can we please change the subject?

(A short pause.)

H1: I behave like a child sometimes... I imagine that...

(A pause.)

I am completely alone... In an empty space. I am entirely on my own. Not knowing what to do next...

H2: Me too... I feel alone.

H3: ‘I feel alone’... ‘I feel so isolated’ ‘Oh, I cannot do anything about it’ ‘Oh, I feel so unfuckable.’

H1: I am alone. I don’t feel alone.

H3: Okay. You are alone but you don’t feel alone... Have you been sleeping around lately? To put it bluntly: Have you been naughty?

H2: You don’t feel anything?

H3: I feel something actually. I am little hungry and extremely wet. I need some help.

H1: I am not feeling alone.

H3: Well. You should feel alone. There’s no one left for you to play. You’ve killed everyone. You’re so profoundly alone.

H2: You’re cruel.
H1: Do you want me to laugh at myself? Should I laugh at the fact that many people died because of my relationship?

H3: Yes... It will help you get rid of yourself...

H1: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha...

H2: When will this ever end? When will you stop doing this to yourself?

H1: I won’t stop doing this to myself... It is the only way to cope.

H2: You need something fake to keep you going. Me too.

H3: Me too. Me too. Me too. Me too. Can’t you find anything better than this?

H1: I need to heal the losses I’ve endured.

H3: I think we’ve lost a lot of time thinking and talking about losses... It’s an inexcusable loss of energy.

H1: I wish I could be a better person, a better mother... I hope that one day my daughter will think of me and say: ‘I wish I could be as courageous as my mother.’

H3: *(in Chinese)* Are you nuts? Who do you think you are?

H2: I should have taken my daughter with me.

H3: In the desert? Are you crazy? Haven’t you ever thought that your daughter had a very rich and beautiful life at home? She had two boyfriends and she was a very intelligent girl. What was she supposed to do in the desert? It would have been a most gruesome waste of time.

H2: But her father was corrupt. He was an evil man.

H3: Well... At least he taught her how to cheat laws in the least visible way possible. Now, that’s a very good prospect isn’t it?

H1: It is impossible to understand you.

H3: I am dead. Yet I feel more alive than ever.

*(Lights fade. End.)*
The translation of this monologue is: I died a few days ago. I was alone in my bedroom. And I was just lying on my bed and waited. I started thinking about the feeling of guilt. I wondered why to feel guilty makes one very sick. There is a great longing for screaming, crying, drinking, killing. And this is no histrionic shit. Feelings of guilt grow everywhere. They develop in relationships. At work. In political negotiations. Feelings of guilt are the worst enemies of truth. They are produced by pangs of conscience, ambiguity, death. They exist in the absence of courage, power, real love. And it is not easy to liberate yourself from them. You cannot just open the door and go away. Even animals feel guilty. Death told me once that I shall never be free from him.

* This melodramatic shit makes me vomit.