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

Volume One of Two

Submitted by Ioannis Souris to the University of Exeter

as a thesis for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Practice

In October 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ………………………………………………………………………
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.
Contents

Acknowledgments 5

Introduction: The Multiple Versions of Helen’s Myth. 7

First Chapter

1. The Jungian Archetypes: What They Are and How They Designate or Show the Emotional Energies in Helen’s Myth. 17
   1.1. The Etymology of the Word ‘Archetype’. 18
   1.2. Archetypes as Original Models or Inborn Primordial Images. 18
   1.3. Archetypes as Universal Components of the Psyche. 20
   1.4. Archetypes in the Narrative of Myth. 27
   1.5. Archetypes as Organising Principles or Living Symbols of the Collective Unconscious 32
   1.6. The Shadow, Anima/Animus, Hero, Wise Old Man, Trickster, Mother, Daughter Archetypes. How These Appear in the Myth of Helen of Troy. 36
      1.6.1. The Anima/Animus Archetype 36
      1.6.2. The Wise Old Man Archetype 44
      1.6.3. The Shadow Archetype 48
      1.6.4. The Trickster Archetype 52
      1.6.5. The Child Archetype 56
      1.6.6. The Mother Archetype 57
      1.6.7. The Daughter Archetype 61
      1.6.8. The Hero or Self Archetype 66
   1.7. Conclusion: Archetypes as Indicators of Emotional Energies or Tools for Organising or Developing Material. 70

Preface to the Commentary on the First Practical Research Project. 74

Second Chapter

2. Commentary on the First Practical Research Project: The External Construction of Helen. 77
   2.1. How I Determined Who the Absent Woman Was. How I Gave a Contemporary Shape to the Anima Figure of Helen. 80
   2.2. The Creation of Jerry, My Hero Character. 83
2.3. The Writing of the First Draft of the Script: How I Integrated the Archetypal Emotional Experiences of the Shadow, Mother, Trickster, Daughter, Wise Old Man in New Characters. 85
2.4. The Writing of the Second Draft: Jerry’s Dream. 93
2.5. The Third Draft of the Script: Mourning Meredith’s Absence or Death. 99
2.6. The Rehearsed Reading of the Third Draft: My Role as Dramaturg in and after the Rehearsals. 103
2.7. Conclusion: Absence, Presence, and some Concluding Thoughts on the Jungian Archetypes as Method of Analysing the Writing Process. 107

Preface to the Commentary on the Second Practical Research Project. 116

Third Chapter

3. Commentary on the Second Practical Research Project: The Internal Construction of Helen. 117
3.1. The Gender/Sex of Helen. 118
3.2. The Process of Character-Creation. 121
3.3. Creating the Helen Character with Kim Komljanec: Helen as a Queen Archetype. 124
3.4. Creating the Helen Character with Rasha Dawood: Helen as a Daughter Archetype. 128
Creating the Helen Character with Simsim Lai: Helen as a Trickster Archetype. 132
3.5. The Performance of the Helen Monologues and the Dramatic Improvisations 135
3.6. The Writing of the First and Second Draft of the Script. The Ascription of the Three Archetypes to the Performers’ Material. 140
3.7. The Rehearsed Reading, Audience Reception. 148
3.8. Conclusions. 133

Conclusion: Giving Names to Things. 155

Appendices 169

References 192