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HELEN TRAVELS FROM THE DARKNESS OF FAUST INTO THE LIGHT OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Despina Kosmopoulou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Hellenic Open University

dkosmopoulou@gmail.com

Abstract

Ancient Greek myths are an inexhaustible source of meanings. Mythical persons were consolidated as archetypal figures and took on a dramatic character in the context of ancient Greek tragedy. These persons, as familiar beings, are the trigger for later creators to express their own concerns and thoughts. Thus, a coupling of archetypes and influences of the era of each creator emerges. The theory of intertextuality is the expression of this coupling. Through intertextuality, the ancient myth and the new text meet at specific

points – intertexts – without the ancient text losing its importance and value. Thus begins a conversation between the two texts. This conversation as a hybrid framework – as Baktin will call it – is the field for the expression of new intertextual conversations and quests.

The new text resulting from this coupling is autonomous and functions as a response to the different social and historical stimuli, as well as the perceptions of the creators. In other words, alongside intertextuality goes the concept of reception, i.e. the way the creator perceives the myth, transforms it according to its values and perceptions.

Within this context, the archetypal figure of the Beautiful Helen will travel from the ancient myth and the Euripidean *Helen*, at the end of the 19th century to confront the *second Faust* of the German philosopher and writer Goethe, while much later the important Greek poet Yannis Ritsos will place her in the context of the *Fourth Dimension* to express his own issues and concerns.

Keywords: *Intertextuality, Reception, Helen of Beauty, Goethe, Ritsos, Euripides*

Introduction.

One of the most talked about mythological figures is Helen of Tyndareus or Beautiful Helen or Helen of Troy, whose unparalleled beauty created serious problems from an early age. She was not once, but twice the victim of kidnapping. Firstly, she was kidnapped at a very young age by Theseus[1] and later, after her marriage she was kidnapped or seduced by Paris or according to others it was she who finally seduced him. Her philological course indicates that she is the archetype of female beauty and in specific, the woman who dares to leave her husband for a "foreign" man, who earns her as a trophy from Venus. Despite the Homeric legend, which blames her for the disastrous Trojan war and for infidelity as well, Euripides approached her completely differently by attributing to her the role of the victim of a divine trick. She is being taken by Hermes to

1 Παυσανίας (1992[α]) 229.

Egypt, where she "accidentally" reconnects with Menelaus. Several authors from different literary genres have taken up her defence, such as Gorgias with his famous rhetoric, with which he hastens to defend her.[2]

The literary archetype of Helen travels through time and it is found in almost all literary genres. We meet her in Sparta, as the wife of Menelaus, who follows Paris, in Homer and then we meet her married to her "grabber" Paris in Troy. Euripides, following the myth presented by Stesichorus in his poem *Helen's Palinodia*,[3] believes that only her idol is taken to Troy, as Hera, out of jealousy and wrath, takes her to Egypt, where she remains faithful to Menelaus. But archetype's journey is not completed in the ancient world, but is also transferred to the 19th century, where Goethe attempts to squarely compare medieval German classicism with romanticism, and then it is transferred to the theatre.

Helen does not stop there either, her journey through time continues in the 20th century, where great Greek poets, such as Seferis, Elytis, Sikelianos and Palamas dedicated important poems to the myth of Helen. In 1955, Seferis wrote *Eleni* in Cyprus, inspired by a lost homeland, which reminded him of his own and uses the myth, just like Euripides, but he brings Eleni to his present reality.[4] In his poem he mixes contemporary events with the events in Troy and the story of Helen in Egypt.[5] In 1970, Yiannis Ritsos, wrote his own version of *Eleni* in Samos, a poem which was included in his poetry collection with the title *The Fourth Dimension*. Elytis dealt with *Helen* in 1978 and included the poem in the *Maria Nefeli* collection, which constituted a stage poetic work.[6]

In this article, we will study some of the forms that the archetype of Helen took over the centuries in Greek and foreign literature and theatre. Using the tools of comparative grammar, intertextuality and the theory of reception, we will examine Helen as an archetype through Homeric and post-Homeric works. Then we will examine the presence of Helen through the different perspective of Euripides and the way which he negates her notorious past. Helen's journey through time takes us to the dark world of Faust and the

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2 Hall (1997) 119.
3 Allan (2008) 146.
4 Γαραντούδης & Καγιαλής (2008) 243.
5 Σεφέρης (2004) 239 – 242.
6 Ελύτης (2008) 44 – 45.

temptation that Goethe accuses her for. Finally, through the study of modern Greek poetry and the work of Yiannis Ritsos, titled: *The Fourth Dimension*, we understand the profound effect that the archetype of Helen had and still has in modern era.

The archetype of Helen.

Helen is the archetype of the notorious and beautiful bride, who is an exchangeable element through marriage, while at the same time she despises the institution that gives her this particular value. Helen represents the dazzling feminine beauty, whose origin is undoubtedly divine and in advance we are aware of the well-known myth of her descent from Zeus, who transformed himself into a swan to mate with her mother Leda.[7] A second point of view, mentioned by Pausanias in *Attica*, says that Helen is the daughter of Nemesis and Zeus and Leda was heρ nurse who nursed and raised her.[8]

Pausanias refers to the cult of Helen due to the existence of sanctuaries[9] and other archeological finds, in the area of Laconia, such as the tomb of Horse, in which Helen's father, Tyndareus, sacrificed a horse in order to make Helen's suitors swear to protect her and her husband if they are unjusted.[10] The cult of Helen in Sparta was active until the classical era and in fact, she is identified as the goddess of rebirth, vegetation and fertility, i.e. the Great Goddess, which several researchers identify with a pre-Greek deity.[11] As it is reasonable, Helen's beauty attracted a multitude of suitors, who were the greatest Greek rulers and this was also the reason for the oath, to which Tyndareus submit them to the tomb of Horse.[12] But, as it was already mentioned, Helen's abduction and beauty did not only concern her adult life, as at the age of nine she was abducted by Theseus and released by the Dioscuri shortly after.[13]

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7 Παπαχατζής (2015) 130; Χριστόπουλος (2007) 22 – 24.
8 Παυσανίας (1992^{α}) 193; Χριστόπουλος (2007) 22 – 24.
9 Παυσανίας (1992) 105.
10 Παυσανίας (1992^{β}) 143.
11 Στεργιούλης (2022 – 2023) 86; Bachès (1993) 28 – 29.
12 Παπαχατζής (2015) 128 – 129; Austin (1994) 24.
13 Syropoulos (2009) 98; Παυσανίας (1992^{α}) 229; Στεργιούλης (2009) 86.

Therefore, it is evident that the prevailing view of most of the sources, such as the Homeric epics, lyric poetry, the tragic poets and Hesiod, mention that Helen's role was determined by Aphrodite, who offered her to Paris. From time to time this myth has been interspersed with condemnations and chattering or with awards, judgments and different interpretations. The most well-known sources present Helen as beautiful, lustful and unfaithful, but there are also contrary refers, such as that of Herodotus, who mentions Helen's presence in Egypt during the Trojan War, a fact that places her far from the events of Troian War[14] and certainly, this differentiates her from being the main cause of it.

"Negative" criticisms towards unfaithful Helen are consistent with the social position of the woman of classical Athens, when the Euripidean dramas were produced. A woman in Euripides' time never became an adult, as she had no political rights or speech, or any legal rights and she was not entitled to attend or participate in *Ekklesia*. The Athenian woman was the daughter and later the wife of an Athenian citizen, as she was delivered from the hands of a guardian to the hands of the husband.[15] This was also the reason women who were respected were not referred by their names, but by their relationship with men.[16] Her main role was the transmission of citizenship to her descendants, although, she herself was not considered a citizen and her life was limited to her household, handicrafts and weaving.[17] Although, Helen was described in scenes weaving, she does not belong to the "bourgeois", she is autonomous, independent of her husband's name and more reminiscent of a seer than a mortal, although Homer projects a "susceptible" and human side of her.

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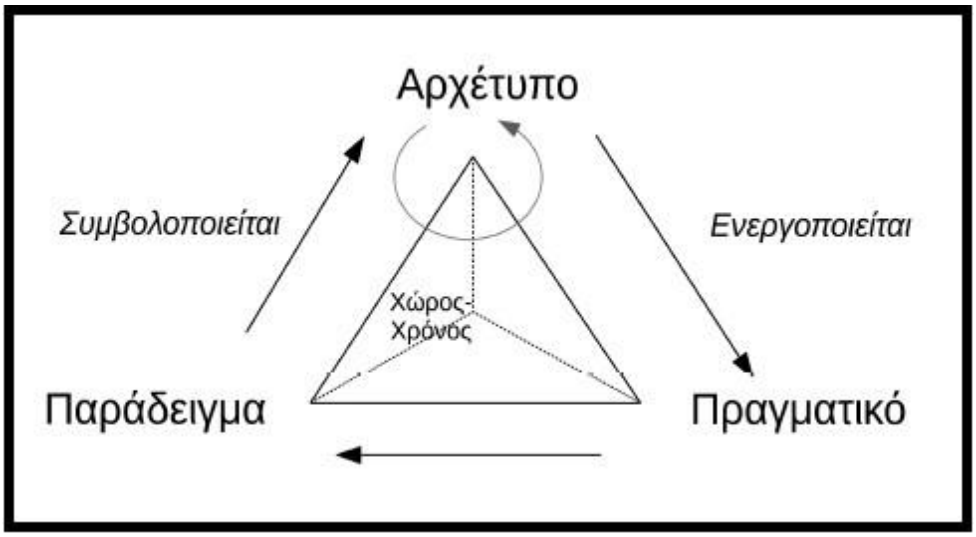
14 Ηρόδοτος Β: 116 (2012) 128 – 129.
15 Mossé (1991) 47 – 48 και 56; Zaidman & Schmitt – Pantel (2004) 70; Just (1989) 13 και 29; Μήλιος (2008) 68.
16 Π.χ. Η κόρη του Απολλόδωρου ή η μητέρα του Ξενοφάνη. Just (1989) 28.
17 Just (1989) 14; Mossé (1991) 47 και 56; Μήλιος (2008) 68.

In case of wife's adultery, the Athenian law allowed divorce, but then the wife loses the right to participate in any religious or social events and fell to the level of a concubine or a foreigner – outsider.[18] The seduction of a married woman would bring death to the lover, unlike rape, which incurred only a monetary penalty.[19] This is probably why Homer placed Menelaus outside of Sparta at the time of Helen's voluntary abduction, thereby avoiding degrading the daughter of Zeus and putting Paris in mortal danger. After all, the men of classical era considered that every woman had no judgment and had uncontrolled sexuality, destructive qualities, and these were demonstrated by several tragedies[20] with a typical reference to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*,[21] where he calls Helen "a woman without judgment" and in Euripides' *Orestes* has mentioned that the Menelaus married Helen, who was the "hate of the gods".[22]



Archetype creation. Source: Kosmopoulou, 2020: 110.

The figure of Helen differs from the model of the Athenian woman and she symbolizes the archetype of a different woman with natural graces, who on the one hand fulfils the conditions of the "ideal" wife, but proved to be unfaithful and mindless, so that she becomes an example to avoid for the Athenians. It is obvious that the myth projects the "real" in a didactic mood, so that will become an "example" and its symbolization

18 Just (1989) 70; Cohen (2002) 147 – 148.
19 Just (1989) 68.
20 Παπαδοπούλου (2008) 165.
21 Στ. 1470 – 1475. Αισχύλος (2015) 35.
22 Στ. 27 – 28. Ευριπίδης (2018) 12.

creates the archetype.[23] Specifically, a person, who eventually becomes the archetype, starts from the creation of an event, which concerns his contemporary reality and causes a sensation for a specific period of time, long or short, and returns at regular intervals.[24]

To follow this point of view, Helen and "any Helen" is the woman who follows her heart and overturns the social facts of urban Athenian society. Therefore, society needs to be protected from these behaviours and in order to get rid of the archetype of the first offender it creates an example to avoid, as far as Helen is concerned. Otherwise, an example could be created to imitate, as in the case of Alceste, who sacrificed herself for her husband. An important element in the process of archetype's formation is space-time, as the "paradigm" is constantly moving in "various regions of rational reality" while remaining in the foreground. The person becomes a symbol and rises to the highest point of the pyramid, where the archetypes are usually found.[25]

The cult of Helen in one of the two leading (Athens and Sparta) of the classical era was particularly strong and an insult to her person was considered worthy of punishment, thus, as Plato mentions in *Phaedrus*, when Stesichorus of Imera in Sicily wrote a particularly critical poem for the honour of Helen he lost his sight. When he realized that the cause of his blindness was a hubris, he was forced to write the poem *Helen's Palinodia*[26] and his sight returned. The poem of Stesichorus seems to be the fuse for the creation of the tragedy *Helen* of Euripides. The dramatization of myths or legends was a tool for the transmission of knowledge, education and, above all, standards, concerning the social and political behaviour of Athenian citizens,[27] if we consider that women, as well as children, had the right to attend the performances, as future citizens.

Helen through the eyes of Euripides.

In most tragedies, which refer to the Trojan War, Helen has been considered as *casus belli* and Euripides refers to her as it in many of his works, but in a completely different

23 Κοσμοπούλου (2020) 110.
24 Κοσμοπούλου (2020) 110.
25 Κοσμοπούλου (2020) 110.
26 Πλάτων (2001) 243a – b 236 – 237; Σταύρου (1994) 16.
27 Μαρκαντωνάτος (2021) 15.

way in his homonymous tragedy. Therefore, it is obvious that this particular heroine preoccupied the poet to a great extent and it is evident that the judgments and praises that his heroes utter about Helen do not express just his own opinion and this becomes evident from his efforts in his dramas to project the true causes of the Trojan war, which lie in the warlike mood of the male population and definitely did not happen for Helen.[28]

The poet attempts to question the rules of marriage institution as defined by the male population.[29] The differentiated from the other tragedians, Euripides writes *Helen* in a particularly turbulent time with strained relations between Athens and Sparta and the recent destruction of Sicily, while within Athens there is military and political demagoguery while philosophical and political concerns are at their peak. The poet chooses to express his anguish through his dramatic work.[30] The historical and political situation of the time seeks calm, an end to the war and a compromise with Sparta more than any other time and as a praiser of peace the poet tried in his own way to push his audience into a lull in war. In such a difficult period, the situation would be especially acute and the moral restoration of the Spartan heroine-thea Helen could calm the hatred and create conditions of peace.[31]

In *Andromache*, Euripides highlights the human factor by attributing to Paris and Helen all the sufferings of the war in Troy, such as the death of Achilles and Hector. Andromache in her argument with Menelaus considers Helen an "insignificant cause", clearly degrading her. In the same tragedy, Peleus accuses Menelaus of not guarding his house and calls Helen "unfaithful" and someone should pay for her not to return.[32] Despite this, Menelaus defends her, considering that she was a victim of the gods and especially of Aphrodite.[33] Euripides throughout this tragedy refers to the first fall of Troy by Peleus and hints that Helen has nothing to do with the causes of this war, the roots of which lie

28 Χατζηανέστης (1989) 74 – 75.
29 Vellacott (1975) 135.
30 Τοπούζης (1993) 35 – 38.
31 Σταύρου (1994) 17 – 18.
32 Συνοδινου (2021) 79 – 80.
33 Συνοδινου (2021) 81.

in the past.[34] In *Andromache* we see Helen trapped as the cause of a war, which she never actually wanted.[35]

In *Hecuba*, and in *Troades* as well, the poet again names Paris and Helen as the causes of the war and in fact, Hecuba curses her daughter-in-law to have the fate of her daughter and considers that she should die on the grave of Achilles instead of Polyxene.[36] In *Orestes*, the characterizations of Helen want her to be *θεομίσητη*[37] and *πολυκτόνος*,[38] while her father himself mocks Menelaus for the "bad" woman who sent him to Troy, meanwhile Pylades demands her death as justice for the dead of the war. We notice that Helen is considered both from Trojans and Greeks an evil and unfaithful woman and "miasma" for both. Even Helen herself admits that she feels ashamed of her actions and takes full responsibility for them.[39] In the two above mentioned tragedies, Helen, even if she does not act, she is a person who is trapped as a "miasma" everyone judged her, because of her decision to follow Paris and differentiate herself from the usual model of a wife.[40] At the end of *Orestes*, Apollo intervenes as a «Deus ex machina» to "exonerate" Helen, who was used by the gods to start the war.[41]

The version of the myth of Helen, which Euripides used for his homonymous tragedy, is now completely conversed and transformed, creating a "heretical" tragedy which is derived from Stesichorus' *Helen's Palinodia*.[42] Euripides places Helen in Egypt, while in Troy there is simply an "idol" of her made by Hera, who was enraged by the "crisis of Paris" and at the same time, by acting so the goddess protects her marriage from infidelity. The poet chooses to begin his drama with an introductory monologue from the protagonist of the tragedy, that is, Helen herself, who explains the situation in which she finds herself.[43] In his previous tragedies, Euripides was particularly caustic with Helen, but in this work, probably in keeping with the broader framework of the "sophisticated

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34 Συνοδινου (2021) 82; Lesky (1983) 527.
35 Κοσμοπούλου (2018) 160.
36 Συνοδινου (2021) 85 – 86; Easterling & Knoxx (2005) 436.
37 Hated by the Gods.
38 Multi-killer. Μπούσιου (2009) 28.
39 Συνοδινου (2021) 86 – 88; Lesky (1983) 537.
40 Κοσμοπούλου (2018) 160.
41 Συνοδινου (2021) 88 – 91.
42 Σταύρου (1994) 16; Lesky (2003) 240; Lesky (1983) 541.
43 Διαμαντάκου – Αγαθού (2010) 55 – 56.

confrontation of opposites", he highlights the innocence of the heroine, but also the tendency of people to be seduced by swindles and to believe in free will, while decisions are predetermined either by the gods or by fate.[44]

According to two reports on Aristophanes, this particular drama was staged in 412 BC.[45] and his story lies between the real and the phenomenon. It presents similarities with *Iphigenia in Tauris* as it begins with a prologue by the heroine, who repeats the mythological elements and makes reference to the "ether", which plays a significant role for Euripides,[46] as his work was deeply influenced by Sophistic teaching and the new approaches to ethics and politics. The poet severely criticizes new ideas and his writing reflects the intellectual and political developments of his time.[47] Helen's fate, as we have mentioned before, was determined by the dispute of the gods and Hera's displeasure created the condition of the "idol", on which the whole premise of the tragedy was based. The appearance of Teuctro provides the general feeling of hatred towards Helen's person, which Euripides will attempt to confute[48] by giving Helen a long soliloquy, in which she laments the defamation of her name and the loss of her own people.[49]

We observe a realistic and human appearance of Helen in the homonym play of Euripides, who acts logically, mourning the loss of her dignity, as the poet is accustomed to disrupt the heroic atmosphere by interposing realistic scenes.[50] While, he takes the opportunity to condemn the divination art,[51] which brings him closer to the sophists.[52] Helen regains her honour, which has never been broken, according to Euripides. Scholars have always wondered if Helen is a tragedy, as it differs from the rest of dramas and has elements that connect it to the New Comedy, but from the moment the story originates from myth and was presented in the Dionysia, for Euripides contemporaries was a tragedy. Although, the heroes experience more realistic problems and do not depend on

44 Τοπούζης (1993) 35 – 38.
45 Lesky (1983) 541; Easterling & Knoxx (2005) 421; Συνοδινού (2021) 91.
46 Lesky (2003) 242.
47 Easterling & Knoxx (2005) 421; Pucci (2012) 49.
48 Lesky (2003) 242 – 243; Συνοδινού (2021) 94.
49 Lesky (2003) 244; Συνοδινού (2021) 93 – 94.
50 Easterling & Knoxx (2005) 423.
51 Τοπούζης (1993)
52 Easterling & Knoxx (2005) 427.

divine powers or mysterious situations, a new regulator of situations appears, Fortune, which relates *Helen* to the New Comedy, we cannot help but consider it as a tragedy, as it differs significantly from the small-town environment of New Comedy.[53]

Helen echoes an intertextual association with Plato's *The Republic*, although the latter's known rejection of the theatre, several common elements are observed in the work in question. Ultimately, the dramatic seems to permeate his work and a correlation can be seen between the "den", in which the "idol" of Helen is kept, and the "cave", mentioned by Socrates in his allegorical account of Plato's work. These two spaces, which have been chosen by two different authors, seem to be on the same level, distorting their "subtextual relationship". Therefore, we observe an osmotic relationship between the theatrical and philosophical scene, which does not stop only in the space, but also progresses to the people and the general thinking of the two works.[54]

Although Euripides was not particularly popular among his contemporaries because of his particular writing style and ideas, which made his audience consider him atheistic and impious.[55] During the Hellenistic period Euripides' works were particularly popular.[56] During the classical era polis guarded the religious sentiment and in turn religion created cohesion in the city which resulted gods who appear in the drama to have certain fixed and stereotyped characteristics.[57] Euripides tends to portray earthly strife as reflections of divine contests between the Olympian deities with disastrous results for mortals.[58] In Helen's case, her fate is determined by the dispute between Venus and Hera over the outcome of the "crisis of Paris" resulting in the "unfair" exposure of her reputation and her own absence from her family in a hostile environment, which tries to subdue her.

Goethe's dark Helen.

53 Lesky (1983) 542; Markantonatos (2020) 3.
54 Διαμαντάκου – Αγαθού (2019) 109 – 114; Diamantakou (2019) 35 – 38.
55 Lesky (1983) 510 – 511; Lesky (2003) 15.
56 Markantonatos (2020) 3.
57 Μαρκαντωνάτος (2023) 20.
58 Μαρκαντωνάτος (2023) 21 – 22.

Goethe's choice to transcribe the personality of Helen should be considered under the light of the European worldview of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as it was influenced by various cultural currents and this choice was an outgrowth of the author's classical education. After all, the transformation of a "mythical dramatic figure" depends not only on the author, but on his historical, social, political and cultural surroundings as well. A person, originating from myth, like Helen, avoids oblivion because it retains its ability to express a certain part of society, history or even politics. Transcriptions, as a philosophical trend, work using semiotic and symbolic language, forcing their contemporaries to engage with the myth and not remain mere observers.[59]

Goethe's Helen has been characterized as a neo-mythological work, treating the specific term in a philosophical mood. This new mythology attempts to confront the ideas of the Enlightenment, reacting to the commoditized restoration of the past, deeply wishing to create a clear and unified European ideology.[60] Goethe and Schiller can be considered as the personalities, who guided their contemporary thought as well as the German-speaking theatre,[61] since in this particular period the belief that aesthetic education is liberating is widespread.[62] At the same time, there is a nationalist upsurge in Germany, which, in fact, has been linked to the trend towards classicist studies,[63] while there is also a rise in the philosophical metaphysical contrast between the man and the divine, in which a number of doctrines participate.[64]

The broader view of the individual and his free development emerge as vital issues of the time, while the bourgeoisie tries to define itself based on constants, seeks a new reality at the social level and stands to support its ideology.[65] This socio-cultural condition leads Goethe to “Strum und Drang”[66] and after a two-year residency in Italy he follows “Weimar Classicism”. His work was significantly influenced by his contact with Schiller and Herder and he showed deep interest in approaching the ancient Greek works and the

59 Brunel (1988) 965.
60 Μήττα (1997) 94 – 99.
61 Fischer – Lichte (2002) 182 – 203; Lennard & Luckhurst (2002) 64 – 65.
62 Fischer – Lichte (2002) 183 – 184; Λάμπρου (2002) 185 -190.
63 Χασάπη – Χριστοδούλου (2002) 84 υπ. 318.
64 Benoit – Dusausoy & Fontaine (1992) 340.
65 Macintosh (2012) 431.
66 Benoit – Dusausoy & Fontaine (1992) 324; Hartnoll (1980) 166.

revival of ancient Greek mythology.[67] The poet shapes up his heroes according to the dictates of each literary trend, either in search of reverie, fantasy or in the search of mystery and the classical ideal and sometimes humanism.[68]

Taking the above into account, we understand that the Helen of the *Second Faust* has clear influences from the 19th century reception and keeps up with the demands of the elite and cultured German public for "witty theatre", which should have high educational qualities and should not follow the modern way of life and everyday life of common people.[69] Goethe was looking for dramatic heroes, who can become symbols, and succeeds in creating the allegorical and idealistic figure of Helen.[70] In 1800 the dramatist entered in his diary an "early Helen", which contained 265 verses[71] and its creation was abandoned until 1825, when he resumed and completed it a year later and in 1827 the play *Helen, Classic - Romantic Phantasmagoria* was published, as an independent work and five years later incorporated it into the Second Faust.[72]

Goethe handles Helen's text believing that the theatre is for the nation a "mirror and model of moral teaching"[73] and it is no coincidence that in this particular period the theatre is identified by nationalistic tendencies, trying to define national identity and from 1870 onwards theatre is used as an "ideological toolbox". Faust treats Helen as an aesthetic experience, reduces her to a "supreme being" from which he will manage to approach the "highest" point of experience and power. To Faust, Helen represents the "experience of Greek civilization".[74] The title *Helen, Classical Romantic phantasmagoria*, which Goethe gave to his independent text of Helen, express his intention to combine the two elements in an encounter between antiquity and the Middle Ages.[75] The word "classic" refers to the ancient Greek element, "romantic" to the Middle Ages and "fantasmagoria" to the "spectre – idol" of the ancient Greeks, possibly also to

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67 Highet (1988) 515; Χασάπη – Χριστοδούλου (2002) 82
68 Fischer – Lichte (2002) 247.
69 Fischer – Lichte (2002) 200.
70 Fischer – Lichte (2002) 247.
71 Μάρκαρης (2009) 1118.
72 Backes (1993) 223; Trevelyan (1981) 243.
73 Sosulski (2007) 35 – 36.
74 Highet (1988) 525.
75 Μάρκαρης (2009) 1118 – 1119.

the images - idols of the fantasists, while it no longer represents Helen, who it actually appears on the stage and is far from the image of the idol.[76]

The word "fantasmagoria" can also be justified in terms of scenery, as the scenery is alternated through the phantasmoscope. The entrances and exits of the actors are made in a special way that emphasize Helen, as an idol. Since there is a change in Faust's behaviour between the third and fourth act, it is possible that this whole episode is an actual dream of the protagonist.[77] The whole text is determined by the tendency of the time to "aestheticize" the dominant person.[78] Beautiful Helen is a figure that can create a special form of art, as it can play with the senses, since it represents concepts such as beauty, flesh and the idol.[79]

Also, the attempt to restore the honour of Helen harmonizes with the spirit of Goethe's time, when the "restoration" of ancient Greece comes in relation to the investment of the Europeans towards Greece and this comes from the dissemination of Greek art to cultured Europeans.[80] In addition, when we see through historical events, which are related to the revival of the ancient Greek ideal, but also to the struggle of the Greeks for liberation,[81] it is perhaps not accidental that the publication of this particular work by Goethe was chosen at this specific time. The work was completed at 1826 a date close Lord Byron's death and this makes the allegory of the figures and Euphorion in particular, even more obvious.[82]

Helen is a kind of challenge for Goethe, as he is called upon to transform the "sinful" woman into an "idea" and succeed it as he managed to recall the "timeless idea of the Beautiful".[83] Thus, Goethe ensures to carry out as many changes of Helen's forms as were necessary, in order to approach her ideal form. His goal was to turn Helen from a sexual symbol into an artistic personality and in order to reach this stage he used the appropriate means of expression and the necessary counter-borrowings from antiquity. The dramatist,

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76 Μάρκαρης (2009) 1119.
77 Μάρκαρης (2009) 11125 – 1126.
78 Beardsley (1989) 248 – 251.
79 Trevelyan (1981) 239 – 240.
80 Γιακωβάκη (2016) 446.
81 Prost (1977) 551.
82 Μάρκαρης (2009) 1033.
83 Παυλάκης, (1988) 166.

through his classical education, has formed a broad world view of the good and the beauty and he passes it through the adaptation of the myth of Helen.[84]

In addition, the poet's attempt to "build" his work in a set of "contradictions", which deals with the internal conflict of his heroes, not only the main ones, but also every person who participates in the dramatic text, provided that it contains various personalities on stage.[85] Goethe presents three entities of Helen, the mortal, who is despised by the world, as she symbolizes infidelity and foolishness, the divinity, who is an object of worship, and the idol, whose existence is questioned or leads to exoneration.[86]

The transition of Helen to modern Greek poetry and *The Fourth Dimension* of Ritsos.

The audience to which Euripides addressed to was particularly wide and the effect he had on it was great, as his dramaturgical technique incorporated the audience into the play, watching and turning them into participants.[87] This resulted in a wide public acceptance of Euripides work, even nowadays which is particularly outstanding and this is the reason his work is a source of inspiration for modern artists. From the 20th century and onwards, the revival of ancient tragedy begins by younger creators, who transformed the ancient Greek myths and the characters of tragedy into new works, which are either created in prose or in verse, by great poets, such as Sikelianos, Palamas, Elytis and Ritsos, whose used the past as a basis, so that they can comment on the era they were living in their own way.[88] The relationship between myth and literature crystallizes through the literary myth and determines the differentiation of the "mythical narrative" into poetic or more generally into literary form.[89]

Yiannis Ritsos writes the poem *Eleni* during May and August of 1970 in Karlovasi of Samos island and includes this particular poem in a poetry collection titled *The Fourth*

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84 Benoit – Dusausoy & Fontaine (1992) 328.
85 Κατσουνάκη (2006) χ.σ.
86 Backes (1993) 234.
87 Syropoulos (2016) 28.
88 Πεφάνης (2005) 63 – 75; Μπλέσιος (2021) 437 – 453.
89 Σιαφλέκης (1995) 41 – 45.

Dimension, this was written in twenty years between 1956 – 1975.[90] The referred poetry collection consists of seventeen poetic compositions, which can be divided into two sections: 1) the *αρχαιόθεμα*,[91] which include thirteen poetic compositions, ten of which are already linked to the ancient myth from the title (*Orestes*, *The Return of Iphigenia*, *Agamemnon*, *Persephone*, *Ajax*, *Chrysothemis*, *Ismene*, *Phaedra*, *Philoctetes*, *Helen*), while the remaining three are indirectly related or contain mythological elements (*Under the shadow of the Mountain*, *The dead house*, *Chronicle*), 2) the remaining four poetic compositions evolve in the era, when they were written (*The Sonata of Moonlight*, *The Window*, *When the Stranger Comes*, *Winter Clarity*).[92]

The title that Ritsos has given to his work refers to the dimension of time, which he promotes to a symbol, quoting it as a concept, as mental alienation, as an existential event and as material decay. Time is presented as a "problem", which the poet "distracts", although the reader is not permanently subjected to the existential problematic of time, but he assumes its political and historical dimension.[93] During this period, Ritsos dealt with antiquarian-themed poems, probably to avoid censorship on the one hand, and on the other this specific work constituted a relief and an escape from the grim reality of the dictatorship, which led him again to exile.[94] *The Fourth Dimension* is structured as a play with poems in monologue form, with stage directions and prose.[95] The poet is no stranger to theatre as a genre and in fact, he has written several plays that are part of the poetic theatre, such as: *A Woman by the Sea*, *The Blind's Sticks*, *Beyond the Shadow of the Cypresses*, etc.[96]

Ritsos in the case of the "dramatic monologue" *Eleni* adopts the poetic techniques of Cavafy and Seferis, as he follows the first one in using a familiar story in an "foreign way" in order to gain the reader's respect for the well-known hero, who turns into anti-

90 Μαστροδημήτρης (1994 – 1995) 192 – 193.
91 Their theme is derived from ancient myths.
92 Νησιώτης (1958) 249 – 252; Μερακλής (1981) 517 – 544; Sangiglio (1978) 40 – 72; Κάσσος (2000) Πλάτης (1991) 58 – 59; Θωμαδάκη (1991) 80 – 89; Βελουδής (1991) 113 – 116; Γεράνης (1991) 127 – 134; Beaton (1996) 280.
93 Μερακλής (1981) 530.
94 Πρεβελάκης (1992) 449.
95 Beaton (1996) 205 και 280.
96 Διαλησμάς (1991) 54; Χωρεάνθης (1988) 66.

hero, to become an ordinary person, who bends under the weight of events, which drag him down. From the second one he borrows the matching of mythical events or events which derive from history with contemporary events.[97] Helen of Paris, Helen of Menelaus and Beautiful Helen becomes just Helen beyond any definitions and characteristics given to her by the ancient writers. The definition of the person is made more distinct by the indefinite article, which Ritsos uses to the title of Helen's monologue in contrast to the rest of the heroes of *The Fourth Dimension*. Helen, who has given beauty as well as blood to history, reappears through art in timelessness, with some trying to atone for her and others blaming her for her "role", while she breaks the boundaries of space and time, continuing to fascinate.[98]

Helen, as Ritsos heroine, is now in old or rather in a mythical age, capable of raising a de profundis confession, which reveals the heroine through the prism of her advanced age and implies rich experience on a spiritual and mental level. In addition, she creates a feeling of distance to the reader, emphasizing, however, in the real dimension of the happenings, whose expression is made at a high level of speech, where spiritual clarity is emphasized over the material deterioration of the body. Helen has already lost the glamor of her much-discussed beauty[99] and her archetype is demystified and turns from a heroine into a common person, familiar to the reader-spectator, where time makes the signs evident in her soul and body.[100] Everyday people confront the worn-out heroine, the young and wrathful handmaidens and the once-young butler parade themselves in front of the helpless Helen, who they taunt and deride in words and in deeds.[101] The living world highlights this fact intensely, what the deprived and inactive protagonist experiences and now reminds us of the trapped Helen of Euripides in a completely different phase.[102]

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97 Beaton (1996) 281.
98 Δάλλας (2008) 53 – 62.
99 Φραγκόπουλος (1994 – 1995) 265 – 266.
100 Στον πρόλογο υπάρχει η περιγραφή μιας Ελένης γερασμένης με καμπούρα. Ρίτσος (2009) 270.
101 «Μια μέρα, που ένιωσα κάπως καλύτερα, τις παρακάλεσα πάλι
να μου βάψουν το πρόσωπο. Μου το 'βαψαν. Ζήτησα έναν καθρέφτη.
Το 'χαν βαμμένο πράσινο, με μαύρο στόμα. «Ευχαριστώ», τους είπα,
σα να μην είδα τίποτα παράδοξο. Εκείνες γελούσαν» Ρίτσος (2009) 272.
102 Κοσμοπούλου (2018) 160.

Ritsos introduces Helen to the reader at the same time with her silent visitor, to whom she addresses her monologue, just before the end, time has eroded everything around her and the poet describes the altered environment inside and outside the house.[103] Realism governs all descriptions of the poem and there is no trace of embellishment, as are all poems of *The Fourth Dimension*.[104] This particular poem is not about Helen, but it is Helen herself, who speaks, without melodramatics, without seeking pity or showing evidence of self-pity. Helen is modestly dignified, apologetic and honest, she does not use innuendo, but exposes all those who have passed through her life by naming them, although she pretends to forget them and confuses them with each other. Even though Helen describes the "here and now" she connects it with the "there and then" of her deeper myth through the "prism of the intrinsic descriptions of writing" of Ritsos, leading, at the same time, to the myth's timelessness.[105]

Helen does not fail to refer to the Trojan War and the consequences, which for the poet is a return to the Worl War II and the suffering it caused. But the age and the condition of the heroine sees the post-war period as bleak, painful and dull.[106] Ritsos chooses Helen to vindicate her, as her whole story is governed by third party decisions for her, she is snatched, rushed, to her fate, to her marriage, to her second rapture, all are determined by third parties, whether they are gods, parents or grabbers. The poet chooses this limbic state of Helen to give her a voice, even on the verge of death she can express herself freely, she can be momentarily emancipated of course and feel independent. Her desire to feel free is fulfilled by her "ascension", which entails death, which ultimately binds her and does not allow her to escape.[107]

Conclusions.

103 «Από μακριά κιόλας φαινόταν η φθορά — ασοβάντιστοι τοίχοι, πεσμένοι· ξεθωριασμένα παραθυρόφυλλα· τα κάγκελα του μπαλκονιού σκουριασμένα. Μια κουρτίνα σάλευε έξω απ' το παράθυρο του πάνω πατώματος, κιτρινισμένη, κουρελιασμένη στο κάτω μέρος». Ρίτσος (2009) 270.
104 Δάλλας (2008) 53 – 62.
105 Κοσμοπούλου (2020) 58 και 101.
106 Ρίτσος (2009) 285.
107 Κεντρωτής (2009) 265 – 276.

The much-discussed and controversial personality of Helen begins her journey through time from the pre-Hellenic years, representing the goddess of fertility, vegetation and worshiped in Sparta in temples built in her honour. Her supposed birth from Zeus and Nemesis or from Zeus and Leda also contributes to her divine status. The incomparable beauty attributed to her, upgrades her a mythical figure and she is seized at the age of nine by Theseus, from whom it is assumed that she had a daughter while still being a child. Her mortal father tries to restore her fame by forcing her to marry Menelaus through the procedures followed by Athenian women, but again he has no opinion for her fate, since it is determined by the "crisis of Paris" and the goddesses that take part in it. The second abduction of Paris, whether voluntary or not, is the beginning of the Trojan War and the Homeric epics. Therefore, we observe her becoming mortal and indeed, the most hated woman of her time, as Greeks and Trojans killed because of her for a decade or so, while the sufferings of the Trojan War continued and then interspersed the world of tragedy with themes, which mainly involved and focused around this war.

Stesichorus was the springboard for a different Helen, as he lost his sight due to the writing of a hymn in which he defamed Helen and he rushes to restore her honour. Euripides borrows this version of the myth, which names Helen as the victim of the gods, as Hera, angered by the result of the "crisis" and takes her to Egypt, until she is discovered by Menelaus, who arrives as a castaway. Euripides removes any responsibility from Helen and makes her a pawn in the hands of the gods. The figure of Helen never ceases to inspire creators throughout the centuries.

There are many texts in verse or prose that deal with the subject in question up to the 20th century. A typical example is Helen, Goethe's Classical Romantic phantasmagoria, in which the dramatist attempts to combine the classical with the romantic and transforms Helen from a provocative person into an ethical character, who can teach the audience, who watches it, without its creator erasing his past, but by ensuring to develop her into the person he needs. Even in the 20th century Helen is not silent, the greatest Greek poets are still inspired by the archetype of beauty and poets such as Sikelianos, Palamas, Seferis and Elytis write poems based on her myth. In 1970, Ritsos writes his own Helen, a Helen who is tired, disengaged, terribly old and on the verge of death, but with a spiritual clarity, that captivates and with experiences beyond the average person. Detached and objective,

Helen finds herself between the present and the past and through her deep confession she "walks" gradually towards the light of death.

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