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Cheryl Walker
Scripps College

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H. D. and Time

Cheryl Walker

Much of recent H. D. criticism focuses on two parts of the poet's accomplishment: her recuperation of female and maternal meanings from cultures of the past and her contributions to the revision of her own culture through her extraordinary achievements in creating new female-centered myths.[1] There is no doubt that in her quest to find a voice and to gain legitimacy, H. D. both chafed against patriarchal strictures and sought to elevate the female to a position at least illustrious as that of her male counterparts. As she wrote in *HERmione*, "A lady will be set back in the sky. It will be no longer Arcturus and Vega but stray star-spume, star sprinkling from a wild river, it will be myth; mythopoeic mind (mine) will disprove science and biological-mathematical definition."[2] This 1927 statement represents one version of her quest.

However, in our desire to make H. D. "the mother of us all," we have perhaps overestimated her congruence with contemporary feminist patterns just as in our desire to reclaim Emily Dickinson, we have neglected to make room for Dickinson's nineteenth-century reservations. Like Dickinson, H. D. took fire from the spark created by her passion for and friction with powerful male figures. Like Dickinson again, H. D. took little delight in women as a group or in political struggles to liberate them. As Barbara Guest rather stringently puts it: "H. D.'s attitude toward women was either a reach for total possession, a need to overwhelm them, as in her struggle with (Elizabeth) Bowen, or she remained critically aloof; she regarded those women who did not interest her as mere members of the tribe."[3] For her part, Emily Dickinson is reported to have said to T. W. Higginson: "Women talk; men are silent: that is why I dread women."[4] Though we need not forget Dickinson's rhetorical strategies in her conversations with Higginson, this comment is quite within the parameters of what we know of her mind, as H. D.'s undervaluing of political activism and lack of engagement with women as a tribe are within what we know of hers.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that these poets have nothing to teach us about the relationship between patriarchy and the female artist simply because their views were mediated by personal and historical conditions. Though at times out of patience with female behavior, both Dickinson

and H. D. created probing analyses of patriarchy's effects on women. Both began with a distrust of history, feeling instinctively that history had been constructed as "his story" even as science had come to represent the triumph of his-story in the present age. In their meditations on time and timelessness, both women poets revise that story; Dickinson by her linguistic dislocations designed to dismantle patriarchal certainties, and H. D. by her decision to examine the flow of history, committing herself to a conscious attempt to alter it with her art.

The difference between the two strategies is instructive. Dickinson never set herself up to speak for the female principle, remained consciously ahistorical, and accepted with comparative ease the social limitations on her freedoms—even symbolically ridiculing them by choosing for herself a more restricted role than her times would have required. H.D., on the other hand, did set herself up to speak for the female principle, did become historical, and lived a thoroughly unconventional life which, if not particularly bohemian, mocked almost every standard dear to the Pennsylvania middle class from which she came.

My purpose in making this comparison is to remind us again that history does matter. What was possible for H. D. was not possible for Emily Dickinson even if she had desired to defy convention in the ways H. D. did. Furthermore, just as Dickinson and H. D. could not have lived one another's lives, so neither of them is quite the model for our own quests we sometimes wish her to be.

However, a closer look at one aspect of H. D.'s shaping of a woman's life in literature suggests a paradigm for the whole modern period linking Emily Dickinson's times to our own. That aspect is the woman poet's relationship to the problem of time and history. By recovering some of the structural properties of H. D.'s development, we can see come into focus the possibility of a change in women's relationship to history. H. D. began to write with an outsider's sense that time was a force she could not alter, which did not include her, and which threatened her movements so that only by discovering an evasive strategy for avoiding the temporal could she hope to establish a place for herself. The poppy dream is the form she gives this strategy in *Sea Garden*.

By the end of her life, H. D. has developed a very different sense of her relationship to time. She is no longer running away from history but has accepted both her place in it and her responsibility to work for change. Instead of the poppy-seed ecstasy of her early Imagism, she writes in *Hermetic Definition*: "I need no rosary/of sesame/only the days' trial,/reality."[5]

Though still a visionary poet, H. D.'s ability to imagine herself embedded in history and potent for change locates her as a twentieth-century woman and opens her texts to interpretation in terms of the stages Julia Kristeva describes in her essay, "Women's Time." I would like to initiate this exploration of H. D.'s temporal development by quoting a rather lengthy passage from that essay. Kristeva says:

> As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word "temporality" hardly fits: all-encompassing and infinite like imaginary space, this temporality reminds one of Kronos in Hesiod's mythology, the incestuous son whose massive presence covered all of Gea in order to separate her from Ouranos, the father.[6]

Though this is a complicated and even somewhat obscure description of two types of "women's time," it is strangely evocative of the early poetry of H. D. Here is H. D.'s voice in the second section of "Sea Gods":

> But we bring violets,
> great masses—single-sweet,
> wood-violets, stream-violets,
> violets from a wet marsh.
>
> Violets in clumps from hills,
> tufts with earth at the roots,
> violets tugged from rocks,
> blue violets, moss, cliff, river-violets.
>
> Yellow violets' gold,
> burnt with a rare tint—
> We bring deep-purple
> bird-foot violets.
>
> We bring the hyacinth-violet,
> sweet, bare, chill to the touch—
> and violets whiter than the in-rush
> of your own white surf.[7]

This is not an instantaneous perception captured in a moment of time, as Imagism demanded. Its effect is cumulative and deeply dependent on repetition. Yet the effect is one of speed. H. D.'s agility here sends the mind hurtling from repetition toward eternity. We are faced with "vertiginous visions," on the one hand, and the massive presence of something eternal, a landscape, on the other. The speaker also becomes the landscape with its precipitous cliffs, its thundering shores, its flowers of serenity; as though Gea were being separated by an act of will from Ouranos, the father.

But what of *jouissance*? Ecstasy there is but it is a poignantly erotic ecstasy, subject to loss, despair, and so subject to time. While furnishing us with an important part of H. D.'s early temporal orientation, Kristeva's description can only point to part of our experience of the early poems. The undertow is the recuperated presence of the father, the antagonist and the representative of another form of time. He is the presence who freezes the speaker and upon whose "frozen altars," as D. H. Lawrence called them, H. D. sometimes seems to pile her poems.

H. D. is certainly not the only writer to see in linear time the signature of the father. James Joyce wrote: "Father's time, mother's species." Adrienne Rich

remarks sardonically: "Time is male/ and in his cups drinks to the fair." In *The Gift* the grandfather clock hovers over the action with the same haunting suggestion of impending doom we feel when Rafe's watch is mentioned in *Bid Me to Live*. Time, clock time, chronological time, is the property of the fathers whereas words and word games, art, belong to the women or to men like Lawrence, whom H. D. thought of as a feminine spirit. Mama in *The Gift* plays with anagrams. "It was a game, it was a way of making words out of words, but what it was was a way of spelling words, in fact it was a *spell*. The cuckoo clock would not strike; it could not because the world had stopped."[8] Mamalie's power also stops time and creates a palimpsest in which figures from different eras overlap.

Papa, on the other hand, merges with images of Bluebeard and nightmare, the witch who flies in the night. His schedule is formidable, inexorable: "everything revolved around him." He goes out in the night to look at the stars. In her child voice H. D. mulls it over: "He goes out to look at stars that have something to do with time flying, Mr. Evans said, that has something to do with winter and summer and the way the earth goes round the sun" (*G* 52). In *The Gift* various forms of time are gendered as the child persona slides between father and mother, between *kronos* and *kairos*. At one point she says: "Clock-time and out-of-time whirl round the lamppost" (*G* 66).

Part of the project of the later H. D. was to resolve the conflict between mother and father which raged for many years in the poet's psyche. *The Gift* could not be written until that peace was made and was not complete until the last years of World War II. By that time, H. D. had made her peace with both her father's and her mother's legacies. Her mother's legacy she would embody in the vision of womanhood implicit in *Helen in Egypt* which is dedicated to her mother, a vision which reconstructs masculinity through the force of love. But it had always been easier to find a positive force beyond time in the eternal maternal. At the point at which she could finish *The Gift*, H. D. could also accept her position in time with much greater ease than the young girl does in the novel. The girl will feel frozen for many years—"because to live I had to be frozen in myself"—but the adult narrator can say: "I seem to be sitting here motionless, not frozen in another dimension but here in time, in clock-time" (*G* 140). The return to clock-time was part of that psychological process of healing.

If H. D.'s early poetry illustrates her desire to escape the dead hand of the fathers with its temporal signature as history, it certainly makes a strong attempt to establish a realm of imaginative and creative life in which the poet's special group of partisans might redeem the compromised present. In "The Tribute," for instance, the narrator allies herself with a scattered remnant who inhabit "a city set fairer than this/ with column and porch." The "we" whose vision she represents seem to be mostly male. Though eclipsed by time and war, they are part of a prophecy of redemption.

We are veiled as the bud of the poppy
in the poppy-sheath
and our hearts will break from their bondage
and spread as the poppyleaf—
leaf by leaf, radiant and perfect
at last in the summer heat.

Beauty here, though a female presence, is timeless and immortal, for "could beauty be done to death,/ they had struck her dead/ in ages and ages past" (*CP* 59-68). Another way of reading this is to see in it a belief that the female, as subject to time, is lost, dismembered. Only in a timeless realm, in which female-male bonding occurs without conflict and almost without gender, is there a chance for a female poetic voice.

Perhaps this is an overly schematic example: the early H. D. appropriating a vatic voice to evade the problems of time and gender which left her frozen if not mute. However, I believe this instance is useful to consider as a limit or boundary, one toward which much of her early work moves again and again. Eventually, she would find it unsatisfying, and for some of the reasons that Kristeva outlines in "Women's Time."

After the passage describing the two types of time associated with female subjectivity that I quoted above, Kristeva goes on to caution: "Female subjectivity as it gives itself up to intuition becomes a problem with respect to a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective time as departure, progression, and arrival—in other words, the time of history" (192).

From the mid-1920s through the 1930s, during what I call H. D.'s middle phase, this problem was one the poet began to feel more and more acutely. In the poetry she seems to be struggling with a sense of stultification. Time is stopped or predictable and repetitious but not with the repetitions of unnameable *jouissance*. There is no timeless serenity any longer. Her persona seems to be unravelling literally in the repetitious lines of the poems in *Red Roses for Bronze*. At the other extreme, she is a statue or a marble mask, as in "Trance." The voice is struggling against incoherence and half in love with easeful death. In the "Sea-Choros" from *Hecuba*, she writes:

I am dead
whether I
thread the shuttle for Pallas
or praise the huntress,
the flower of my days
is stricken,
is broken,
is gone
(*CP* 240-41)

I would submit that this is not only the character Hecuba speaking of her losses at the fall of Troy but H. D. herself bemoaning a loss of poetic power and centeredness.

In 1933 and 1934, H. D. underwent analysis with Sigmund Freud out of a

need to move on in her life. She wrote: "I wanted to free myself of repetitive thoughts and experiences—my own and those of many of my contemporaries."[9] Freud made her write "history" and reactivated her struggle with her father, thus bringing her back to time.

Though a close examination of her *Tribute to Freud* cannot be undertaken in the limited space we have here, it should be said that H. D. employs in it the same metonymic style she uses in other late prose works like *The Gift*, *End to Torment*, and *Bid Me to Live*. On the one hand, we have a narrative, a progression of events, but on the other, we have a set of associations linking concepts and individuals synchronically in patterns that are frustratingly difficult to pin down in a logical sequence. Nevertheless, it is possible to recover these metonymies if we stare fixedly and for a long time into the semantic pool.

An important series of associations for the purpose of this argument is Freud-father-time-catastrophe-death. Her old fear of the realm of the fathers which was experienced often as a fear of time became particularly acute in the face of the possible catastrophes of civilization made manifest in Nazi-dominated Vienna of the 1930s. Furthermore, Freud himself as a surrogate father was moving nearer and nearer to his own death. H. D. remembers him saying to her dramatically, "Time gallops"—a phrase linked in her mind with the "time flies" she dilates upon in *The Gift*.

H. D. struggled against Freud in certain ways and remained immune to his influence in others. Yet he certainly helped her. In "The Master" she writes: "it was he himself, he who set me free/ to prophesy" (*CP* 458). Because Freud was committed to a maternal, nurturing function with his patients, H. D. seems to have experienced him as both male and female. Through her analysis, the poet was able to acknowledge the positive elements of both the male and the female legacy. She was able to achieve a degree of independence and flexibility she had not felt before.

The encounter with Freud is energetically depicted in "The Master" which contains H. D.'s self-proclamation of that independence from the father ("for she needs no man,/ herself/ is that dart and pulse of the male"—*CP* 456) as well as her tenderness and dedication to him. The strength of both sides of her ambivalence can be felt in the following lines:

> Let the old man lie in the earth,
> (he has troubled men's thought long enough)
> let the old man die,
> let the old man be of the earth,
> he is earth,
> Father,
> O beloved
> you are the earth,
> he is the earth, Saturn, wisdom,
> rock, (O his bones are hard, he is strong,
> that old man)
>
> (*CP* 457)

Here, in addition to the obvious ambivalence of the speaker's feelings, we find the association of the father with power, fear, rock, intellectual "wisdom," and death. We might also remember that the god Saturn was alternatively known as Kronos, the same as the Greek word for time. Though the father is associated with time, however, he is also earth. The violent dichotomy Kristeva describes in which Gea is wrenched from Ouranos, the father, seems to have given way here as the father merges with the mother, and becomes nurturing as well as terrifying, spatial as well as temporal, female as well as male.

Yet the vision of time in "The Master" is only briefly historical (in section VII where H. D. rightly predicts the contentiousness over Freud's legacy which followed his death). Most of the poem is rendered mythically in the Greek disguise of the journey to Miletus. In crucial ways H. D. still felt it necessary to avoid the ordinary as one can see by the fact that she adheres to a vision of change effected by two exceptional individuals, Freud and herself.

As the men squabble over Freud's legacy, she alone, a woman, finds the most potent application of his theories in the "turn from easy pleasure/ to hardship/ of the spirit" (*CP* 460). And Freud is the "only one, the old man,/ sacred to God" who is allowed to be spiritually present at the celebration of female mysteries with which the poem culminates in sections XI and XII. Both figures are able to transcend gender and lose their personal specificity at the end in a dilation which is far from clear on the idea that "woman is perfect." Though H. D. claims at the end that the prophesy that the Lord will become woman has already been fulfilled, this visionary moment is unconnected to actual historical time. We have no idea when or under what conditions it occurred. It simply allows her to leave behind the thorny problem of Freud as tyrant and of herself as a misguided disciple searching for "a neat answer."

Still, in terms of her orientation toward time, I feel that H. D.'s experience with Freud was crucial and that its effects can be traced in her late masterpieces *Trilogy, Helen in Egypt,* and *Hermetic Definition. Trilogy* is a re-encounter with history and time in poetry such as H. D. had never undertaken before. "This search for historical parallels"—as she names it in *The Walls Do Not Fall* (section 38)—produced some of her greatest poetry. Though she is Psyche, able to transcend the destructive effects of time brought home to roost in war, we should remember that her vision here is an epiphany experienced *in time*, a revelation she hopes to pass on to illuminate her readers, much as Mary opens the eyes of the ordinary servant Kaspar. Kaspar receives the gift. As H. D. describes his transformation, first he is lost in the experience of revelation, "out-of-time completely," but ultimately he is returned to his present-day existence: "or rather a *point* in time," to integrate what he has learned.

Helen in Egypt is H. D.'s most extended discussion of the relation between gender and time. The poem takes up many other issues as well—the role of

psychology in re-membering, the relation between love and death, the role of an agape-like Love in redeeming history—but this poem too returns to a moment in time. L'Amour and La Mort "will always be centralized by a moment, 'undecided yet,'" as the poet says late in her poem.[10] Relationships of all sorts, parents and children, men and men, women and women, men and women, are confined within the repetitive patterns one discovers in history and yet they are protean too, always capable of breaking out of these forms into dimensions of expanded possibility. Thus, following Stesichorus, H. D. tells us that the Helen of Troy for whom the battle was fought was an illusion produced by the expectations of a narrow historical focus. Another Helen, more complex and more substantial, sat out the war in Egypt and struggles in the poem to take responsibility for the confusions of a history which she both shares and transcends.

In the first section of the poem where Helen and Achilles meet, Helen's task is to neutralize the anger of this figure representative of patriarchal history who holds a women responsible for historical mayhem. Using the symbols available to her in the temple, "Helen achieves the difficult task of translating a symbol in time, into time-less time or hieroglyph or ancient Egyptian time" (*HE* 13). Egyptian time is controlled by the Amen-script of the god which Helen understands intuitively rather than intellectually. In the symbolic realm of the Amen-script, Helen knows she is innocent of the guilt imputed to her by history but her greater integrity demands a confrontation with her avatar, the Helen of Troy whose experiences she also mysteriously shares.

In the first section of the poem, "Pallinode," she struggles against history in order to neutralize the anger of Achilles and make him accept the transcendental reality of a womanhood innocent of the destructiveness connected with women in human time. One can read *Helen in Egypt* as a kind of temporal autobiography in which this first phase corresponds to H. D.'s first approach to the problem of time through strategies of evasion or escape into a timeless realm.

"Leuke," the second section of *Helen in Egypt,* chronicles Helen's return to Greek time and to intellectual rather than intuitive knowledge. Like H. D.'s middle period of poetic creativity, "Leuke" takes as its central organizing event the encounter with Freud, here called Theseus. Theseus guides her, helps her unstrap the heavy burden of her past, and listens to her description of her dilemma. Should she return to Achilles and take on the challenge of patriarchal history with its hostility toward women or should she remain with Paris, who represents personal time and the triumph of the psyche over the debilitating aspects of the past? Paris's love constructs Helen as Eros and offers her the peace of "a small room," a heaven-haven illuminated by the light of Leuke, the white island, where male and female merge without anger in the spirit of life. During their first encounter, Theseus tells Helen:

> that only Love, the Immortal,
> brings back love to old-love,
> kindles a spark from the past; (*HE* 149)

His message means that "Helen must be re-born, that is her soul must return wholly to her body" (*HE* 162). The trance of Egypt with its transcendental mysteries must be broken.

Theseus counsels Helen to choose Paris in order not to give way to the death-cult seemingly represented by Achilles. Yet in the end she goes her own way. Like the H. D. who wishes to re-encounter her father and her own personal history through myth, Helen decides to measure "time-in-time (personal time)" but also "star-time (the eternal)" by returning to Achilles and "the writing" which is herself.

> I will encompass the infinite
> in time, in the crystal,
> in my thought here. (*HE* 201)

Though Theseus has been of great help in bringing her intellectual wisdom and reconciliation with her historical past, she knows that Achilles awaits her in Egypt where historical realities and transcendental meanings must be brought together, through the connection of Eros and Eris, love and death.

"Eidolon," the third section, begins with an acknowledgment of the centrality of time to Helen's quest. H. D. says: "Now after the reconciliation with time, Greek time, (through the council and guidance of Theseus), Helen is called back to Egypt" (*HE* 208). But why Egypt again? H. D. herself poses this question in Book Two of "Eidolon." It appears that Achilles also seeks in Helen a way into Love, not erotic love but rather mystical love under the sign of his mother, Thetis, whose eidolon—or avatar, or image—frees him from his anger against the historical Helen and reminds him of the larger vision of acceptance and wholeness represented by the sea, her element.

> She fought for the Greeks, they said,
> Achilles' mother, but Thetis mourned
> like Hecuba, for Hector dead. (*HE* 296)

In order to be fully human, H. D. seems to say, one must accept both the realm of personal love, of war and history, and the realm of transcendental Love, of Egyptian mysteries, and divine forgiveness. Refusing to choose one or the other, Helen seeks a third answer. So in returning to Egypt, "this third Helen, for the moment, rejects both the transcendental Helen and the intellectual or inspired Helen" (*HE* 258) of Theseus' Greek wisdom.

Most readers are convinced that in the end Helen finds a third way, resolving the contradiction represented by Paris-Achilles and situating herself in what Frank Kermode describes as the *aevum*. According to Kermode, "The concept of *aevum* provides a way of talking about this unusual variety of duration—neither temporal nor eternal, but, as Aquinas said, participating in both the temporal and the eternal. It does not abolish time or spatialize it; it coexists with time, and is a mode in which things can be perpetual without

being eternal."[11] Albert Gelpi, responding to a similar model, also quotes Aquinas and sees Helen "between time and eternity and participating in both." He compares H. D.'s vision with T. S. Eliot's "still point of the turning world" and Ezra Pound's "SPLENDOUR,/ IT ALL COHERES." As Gelpi, and other readers read the poem, "everything (is) caught up in the resolution."[12]

Despite its neatness and persuasiveness, I would like to dissent from this widely-held view concerning H. D.'s temporal resolution at the end of *Helen in Egypt*. If all we had were the lines before the coda, we would certainly have to conclude that the poem ends in triumph and synthesis:

> there is no before and no after,
> there is one finite moment
> that no infinite joy can disperse
>
> or thought of past happiness
> tempt from or dissipate
> now I know the best and the worst;
>
> the seasons revolve around
> a pause in the infinite rhythm
> of the heart and of heaven.
>
> (*HE* 303-04)

But after this lovely moment in which "the Wheel is still," the poem goes on, into the coda, "Eidolon." After the pause, the rhythm of the heart resumes and Helen asks in her "wholly human" guise, "But what could Paris know of the sea?" Having resolved the issues raised by Paris by telling us that the dart of Love is the dart of Death, the poet turns again to Achilles. Achilles represents a timeless dimension which "spells a charm" like Mama's anagrams in *The Gift*. He has broken with the patriarchal Command—with Father Time—in favor of previously repressed allegiances which are even more potent.

> only Achilles could break his heart
> and the world for a token
> a memory forgotten.
>
> (*HE* 304)

Thetis/Helen are together the "memory forgotten" and they represent the power of the eternal/maternal as against the power of paternal time, even erotic time. Achilles represents not the *aevum* but H. D.'s old love, *kairos*, the fullness of synchronicity outside of linear temporality.

My argument, then, is that H. D. does not resolve the conflict between these two temporal dimensions in *Helen in Egypt* but instead leaves open the dialectic for further development in *Hermetic Definition*. As she says in Book II of this last section: "Perhaps it is the very force of opposition that creates the dynamic intensity of 'the high-altar, (Helen's) couch here'" (*HE* 225).

In choosing for Achilles at the end, she does not simply resurrect the transcendentalism of her first anti-historical vision in Egypt. Yet she does diminish the importance of historical time in favor of those images of eternal

return, the sea and the sand, "the infinite loneliness" of a quest for other shores than those upon which one is born mortal and mundane.

Hermetic Definition is the most personal and least transcendental, in the old sense, of all H. D.'s volumes. Its temporal code, rather than *Helen in Egypt*'s, shows the real integration of body and spirit, time and timelessness, as the poet acknowledges her imminent death and joys in the persistence of her work as an artist. Perhaps the most poignant aspect of this sequence's treatment of time is the fact that in it the poet does allow a resolution, suggesting her surrender of life construed as ongoing dialectic. There is "the sense of an ending" here, a sadness we don't feel in H. D.'s earlier work.

In "Grove of Academe" from the title sequence, H. D. invokes her past retreat into a timeless realm by writing an appreciation of St. John Perse. She clearly admires his classical art: "this retreat from the world,/ that yet holds the world, past, present,/ in the mind's closed recess" (*HD* 27). But at this stage of her life, she can no longer find this pause an ultimate refuge:

> you showed me how I could cling
> to a Greek rock and how I could slide away,
> but did you show me how I could come back
> to ordinary time-sequence?
>
> (*HD* 44)

Many aspects of these poems show H. D.'s acceptance of her life, of history, of her responsibility to work for change. The details from present day events, her body consciousness, her rejection of the rosary of sesame in favor of "The days' trial,/ reality"—all confirm our sense that her project now is "to recover identity" and to use that recovery for the benefit of civilization. The child, *Esperance*, is her image for the work of artistic creation which may consume the artist but which "lives in the hope of something that will be." It is "the past made perfect." She in no way denigrates the lived life of history. Hermione, who stands for both H. D.'s earlier persona and her child Perdita, perhaps, "lived her life and lives in history" (*HD* 112). Now H. D. approaches what Julia Kristeva describes as the third stage of feminism in Europe: "*insertion* into history and the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time" (195).

At the beginning of this essay, I said that the structural properties of H. D.'s temporal development might operate as a paradigm for the change some women have experienced in their relation to history during the modern period. Like many creative women, H. D. began with a sense of being an outsider to history. Time was the antagonist, history the signature of an oppressive patriarchy. As she developed, her vision of the temporal took on first, in the palimpsestic phase, a more androgynous aspect. In the end, it seems, time appears genderless and thus corresponds to the visionary project Julia Kristeva applauds finally in "Women's Time."

At the end of "Women's Time" Kristeva advocates what she calls the "demassification of the problematic of *difference*." By this she means "showing

what is irreducible and even deadly in the social contract" (209), but in the interest of seeing where difference is not irreducible, where the evolution of civilization may require a sense of continuity as well as divergence in the experience of the two sexes. Kristeva advocates "this in such a way that the habitual and increasingly explicit attempt to fabricate a scapegoat victim as foundress of a society or a counter-society may be replaced by the analysis of the potentialities of *victim/executioner* which characterize each identity, each subject, each sex" (210).

In spite of her commitment at one level to detailing the battle formations in the war between the sexes, H. D. was ever ready to see the male as a friend and ally as well as an enemy. In fact, much of H. D.'s struggle with the meaning of time demonstrates her continuity with the male Modernists rather than her complete divergence from their practice.

We can see this continuity, for instance, in the appeal of the mythic for both H. D. and her male counterparts. Thomas Mann, in *Freud and the Future*, points to a higher truth embodied in the actual, a truth which marks individual lives with the imprint of historical parallels, making them both a formula and a repetition. Pound, Eliot, and Yeats each found a mythic expression of the temporal potent to reveal the larger contours of historical progression and connect them to vital moments in the past. Like H. D.'s Holy Ghost in "The Walls Do Not Fall" of *Trilogy*, the myth or dream they all delineate is meant to be

> ... open to everyone;
> it acts as go-between, interpreter,
>
> it explains symbols of the past
> in to-day's imagery,
>
> it merges the distant future
> with most distant antiquity. (*CP* 526)

We can certainly say that the angle of H. D.'s encounter with these matters was in part determined by the times in which she lived. We can also say that her relationship to "Father time" was daughterly instead of merely filial. It was rebellious but not dismissive. In her quest for the wisdom belonging to male "gods"—Amen, Zeus, Christ, Freud—she sought to appreciate as well as appropriate the positive attributes of their legacy. "Take me home, Father," the speaker says to Amen, in *Trilogy* (*CP* 527). Formalhaut's temple, to which Helen returns in Egypt, is "not far/ from Theseus, your god-father,/ not far from Amen, your father" but Helen's vision, like H. D.'s is "dedicated to Isis,/ or if you will, Thetis" (*HE* 212), to the potency of the female enlightened spirit.

H. D., like Emily Dickinson, ultimately dedicated her life to love and art, repeating in her own words the earlier poet's formulae: "my business is circumference" and "my business is to love." However, H. D.'s quest found its recompense in her reclamation of an identity committed to meaningful and public work, an identity-model spuriously offered to women in the

nineteenth century but only perhaps genuinely possible in our own time. We can see this claim being asserted in the birth of the child as she pictures it in "Winter Love": a male child with a female inheritance, the child of art whose project is the rectification of imbalance, mutual destructiveness and male teleology.

Like Julia Kristeva in "Women's Time," H. D. saw herself as a visionary. But her "spiritual realism"—as she called it— united history with metaphysics at the end of her life. In her desire to help others, in her reconciliation with time, in her unashamed linkage between biography and myth, in her dedramatization of gender conflict, H. D. moved beyond her early and middle phases. As feminists of a different generation, we may or may not wish to claim her resolutions as our own. Nevertheless, her work like Julia Kristeva's offers useful imaginings to a world in many ways bereft. *Esperance* is H. D.'s gift to a barren time.

NOTES

1. The past ten years has seen an explosion of criticism of H. D.'s work. In this brief citation I will mention only a few important works: Susan Sanford Friedman's *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H. D.* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981); Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing Beyond the Ending* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985); and *H. D.: The Career of that Struggle* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986); Alicia Ostriker, *Writing Like a Woman* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1983); and the centennial H. D. issue of *Contemporary Literature* edited by Friedman and DuPlessis, Vol. 27, Winter 1986.
2. *HERmione* (New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 76.
3. Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H. D. and her World* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1984), p. 246.
4. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson,* ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958), p. 473. Similar reflections appear in letter #246 to Edward S. Dwight in which Dickinson is bemoaning the death of Dwight's wife: "I cared for Her—so long—she spoiled me for a ruder love—and other women—seem to be bristling—and very loud," p. 389.
5. *Hermetic Definition* (New York: New Direction, 1972), p. 19; all subsequent references to this volume will be given in the text as *HD* with page reference following.
6. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), p. 191; further references will be given in the text.
7. *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 30; hereafter references will be given in the text as *CP*, page reference following.
8. *The Gift* (New York: New Direction, 1982), p. 10; references hereafter appear in the text as *G*, page reference following.
9. *Tribute to Freud* (Boston: Godine, 1974), p. 13.
10. *Helen in Egypt* (New York: New Direction, 1961), p. 271; hereafter references will appear in the text as *HE*, page following.
11. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford UP, 1967), p. 72.
12. Albert Gelpi, "Hilda in Egypt," *Southern Review*, Vol. 18, New Series (April 1982), pp. 245-47 passim.