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The Lens of Trauma: Montage Poetics in H.D.'s Trilogy

Emily Olsen
Virginia Commonwealth University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

Emily Rose Olsen

Director: Dr. Richard Fine, Professor, Department of English

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract

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I argue that the theory of cinematic montage inevitably impacted H.D.'s insight into war and trauma during the final years of World War II. Montage first emerged in the wake of World War I from a particular need to psychologically engage the post-war citizen. Montage transformed the passive viewer into an active participant, allowing victims of war-shock to confront and communicate trauma. When H.D. witnessed the desolated cityscape of London 25 years later during World War II, she sought an artistic solution to trauma and war-shock. For H.D., this solution presented itself in the modern long poem and intellectual montage theory. While H.D. never explicitly stated a link between the cinema and her written work, her thinking about film through montage theory can be clearly read within her epic war poem *Trilogy*, written between 1944 and 1946. In its three poetic sections, H.D. uses poetic montage as a technique to remember and resolve both past and present trauma. Montage functions not only as an effect, through the deployment of various poetic techniques, but also as a way of thinking about history and experience. Exploring the ways in which H.D. uses montage as both technique and theory, I observe *Trilogy* as an expression of recovery and redemption.

Introduction

In April 1920, while staying in a hotel on the island of Corfu, Greece, American modernist poet Hilda Doolittle, better known under her pen name H.D., had a vision that she later would later describe as "the writing-on-the wall." What first appeared to be flickering shadows and light against the hotel wall developed into a series of enigmatic shapes: a soldier's head; a goblet or chalice; a lamp shaped like the tripod at Delphi; an angelic figure that H.D. calls Niké, or Victory; and finally, a sun-disk from which a man reaches out to draw the image of Niké. For H.D., these visions were not simply hallucinations; they appear with "a sense of quality and intensity, of clarity and authenticity" (*Tribute to Freud* 41). This visionary experience became a critical moment in H.D.'s creative and personal development after World War I. She later remembered the experience during her psychoanalytic sessions with Sigmund Freud in the 1930s, and again in her memoir *Tribute to Freud*, written in 1944. For H.D., the projected images contained some symbolic meaning that needed translation:

> But symptom or inspiration, the writing continues to write itself or be written. It is admittedly picture-writing, though its symbols can be translated into terms of today; it is Greek in spirit, rather than Egyptian. The original or basic image, however, is common to the whole race and applicable to almost any time. (*TTF* 51)

The picture-writing on the wall in Corfu stayed pronounced in H.D.'s memory over multiple decades. However, it wasn't until World War II, a period of intense creativity for her, that H.D. found the need to remember and record these visions and her sessions with Freud. Whether "symptom or inspiration," the symbols yielded something important for H.D., both personally and universally.

H.D. travelled to Corfu in reaction to a series of personal tragedies that occurred between 1915 and 1919, at the height of World War I. In 1915, H.D.'s child was stillborn; her marriage to Richard Aldington dissolved after he joined the army in 1916; her close friendship with D.H.

Lawrence came to an end in 1917; and her father and brother both died in 1919. By the time

H.D. experienced her vision in Corfu, H.D. was "war-shattered [and] high strung," according to

Susan Stanford Friedman (*PW* 222). The coinciding incidence of both personal and historical

catastrophe caused H.D. to incur what she deemed to be her own "personal war-shock," from

which she did not fully recover until World War II (*TTF*, 93). In 1939, the sudden recurrence of

war and its close, immediate presence in H.D.'s life offered her a way back into the past. Much

of H.D.'s work during this time interprets signs and symbols from the past in order to make

sense of the present. Writing to Norman Holmes Pearson about the first group of poems in what

would later become *Trilogy*, H.D. stressed the need to connect the experience of World War II

with the rest of history: "in the very midst of the 'fifty thousand incidents' of the actual Blitz,

there is that last desperate re-valuation or final valuation…. Now here it is, very stark and written

at the last - a sort of vindication of the writer, or the 'scribe'" (Pearson vi). Written in three parts

between 1944 and 1946, *Trilogy* was H.D.'s poetic response to World War II. At the time, H.D.

lived in London, mere blocks away from the site of frequent air raids. In such close proximity to

the wreckage of war, H.D. wrote that "the past is literally blasted into consciousness with the

Blitz in London" (*Notebooks*, 30). Though written decades after World War I and her visionary

experience in Corfu, the influence of these events became essential to the writing of her epic war

poem.

The visionary powers that H.D. conveys in *Trilogy* were also undoubtedly shaped by the

work she did between the wars. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, H.D. took to literal picture-

writing: the cinema. She actively experimented with avant-garde cinema as a member of the film

group POOL and as an editor for the film journal *Close Up*. The collective enterprise known as

POOL was launched in 1927; its three members were H.D., the filmmaker Kenneth Macpherson,

and the novelist Bryher. As a group, they wrote for, edited, and published *Close Up*, which ran

from 1927 until 1933. As Laura Marcus notes, "*Close Up* became the model for a certain type of

writing about film — writing that was theoretically astute, politically incisive, critical of films

that were simply 'entertainment'" (Donald, Friedberg, Marcus 3). Although the popular

Hollywood productions had found success with continuity editing, a form of editing that hid the

film's artifice, *Close Up* drew attention to a new kind of storytelling that pushed formal

boundaries. In the 1920s, European filmmakers were using highly sophisticated editing

techniques to project the subconscious onto the screen. Perhaps the most revolutionary film

editing technique, however, was montage; developed by Soviet film theorists, montage created a

new way of thinking about film. Soviet montage broke free from the confines of time and space,

drawing attention to the artificiality of film.

H.D. embraced the new and modern genius of montage, as her essays in *Close Up* and

her work with the avant-garde film *Borderline* show. Yet, H.D. was certainly not the only

modern writer to engage in and find inspiration from cinema. As Michael Wood argues, "the

principle of montage" and "the construction of imaginary space through the direction of the

gaze" are "quintessentially modernist" (222-223). The entanglement of modern literature and

film runs deep and has been thoroughly discussed within literary scholarship. To name a few

significant studies: Susan McCabe examines the impact of cinema on the work of William Carlos

Williams, Gertrude Stein, and Marianne Moore in her book *Cinematic Modernism*; David Kadlec

assesses the influence of modern film on Williams and Louis Zukofsky in his article "Early

Soviet Cinema and American Poetry"; and Laura Marcus discusses Virginia Woolf's writings on

the art and medium of film in *Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period*.

However, H.D. arguably had the most explicit and direct connection to the industry of modern

film; both Marcus and McCabe include H.D. in their books as well. H.D.'s fascination with visual projection and the image is evident in much of her early work, but these concepts became fully realized through the lens of cinematic theory in the 1920s. For H.D., modern film combined spirituality, science, and art; it became the perfect medium. Although POOL and *Close Up* disbanded with the demise of silent film in the 1930s, H.D. carried the theoretical framework of montage and avant-garde film into her later work.

Though H.D.'s direct involvement with film was limited to a brief six-year period between the wars, I argue that the theory of montage inevitably affected H.D.'s insight into war and trauma during the final years of World War II. Montage first emerged in the wake of World War I from a particular need to psychologically engage the post-war citizen. As I will later explain in greater detail, montage transformed the passive viewer into an active participant, allowing victims of war-shock to confront and communicate trauma. When H.D. witnessed the desolated cityscape of London 25 years later during World War II — "a city of ruin, a world ruined…almost past redemption" — she sought an artistic solution to trauma and war-shock (*TTF* 84). For H.D., this solution presented itself in the modern long poem and intellectual montage theory. While H.D. never explicitly linked the cinema and her written work, her thinking about film through montage theory can be clearly read within her epic war poem *Trilogy*. In its three poetic sections, H.D. uses poetic montage as a technique to remember and resolve both past and present trauma. Montage functions not only as an effect, through the deployment of various poetic techniques, but also as a way of thinking about history and experience. Exploring the ways in which H.D. uses montage as both technique and theory, I observe *Trilogy* as an expression of recovery and redemption. H.D. transforms the raw,

observable destruction of her current reality into a potentially hopeful vision of the future, both for herself personally and for other survivors of war.

Various critics have already made strong and astute connections between H.D.'s written work and her involvement in cinema. Over many decades, these critics have illuminated the complex nuances buried within H.D.'s Imagist poems, prose works, and later long poems. As early as 1983, Charlotte Mandel's article "The Redirected Image: Cinematic Dynamics in the Style of H.D." drew connections between H.D.'s knowledge of modern film practices and her 1951 long poem *Helen in Egypt*. Mandel reveals the cinematic parallels that exist within the poem's "structure, scenario set-up of language, and in poetic techniques which correspond to film editing practice" (Mandel, 37). In her 1994 book *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis, & Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems*, Susan Edmunds examined H.D.'s work through the combined lens of film theory and psychoanalytic theory, tying together the visionary elements of H.D.'s poetic work and her experience as a patient of Freud. She brings together Freud's theories of the unconscious and Soviet montage theory in order to provide new insight into *Helen in Egypt*. Other analyses, particularly the work of Susan McCabe, have considered the cinematic apparatus in relationship with H.D.'s feminine, embodied aesthetic. As McCabe explains, "From her early Imagist poetry to her explicit involvement with film beginning in the mid-twenties, H.D. refashions female embodiment through montage" (133). McCabe's analysis of H.D.'s poetry reconsiders her early collection *Sea Garden* through this fresh perspective. Similar readings expand on the body of criticism that emerged during the 1980s, which opened up much of H.D.'s late work to feminist criticisms.

These important studies, along with several others, reveal particular patterns that have unfolded in discussions connecting H.D.'s involvement in cinema and her poetry. However, as

Cristina Walter explains, much of this scholarship remains ultimately theoretical and ahistorical (Walter, 82). Scholars tend to focus on H.D.'s interest in psychoanalysis and spirituality when discussing vision and film theory in H.D.'s work. However, the strong historicism in *Trilogy* — which envelops the historical rupture of WWII into a palimpsestic global history — pairs fittingly with cinematic theories of time and memory. For theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, the theory of montage specifically provided a new way to think critically about the course of history. This critical thinking about history becomes necessary for H.D.'s personal recovery from a traumatic past, as well as for global restoration after the damaging effects of war.

This project begins by identifying the theoretical framework through which I will read and interpret *Trilogy*. The first chapter moves through the major features of cinematic montage theory as it was conceptualized by Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein, then takes up the intersections between Eisenstein's theories and H.D.'s work with POOL and *Close Up*, identifying her knowledge of and affinity for modern editing techniques. For H.D., montage theory perfectly combined psychoanalysis and artistic expression. After establishing this connection, I explore the relationship between montage and modernity. Emerging from a period of technical innovation and post-war trauma, montage was an artistic response to a new world-view subsequent to World War I. This chapter continues to discuss the new ways that modern film approached time and history through the lens of montage theory following this modern shift. Contemporaneously, many modern poets, including H.D., embraced montage poetics in their post-war epics. As representations of the post-war reality, cinematic montage theory and the modern poetic tradition are intertwined.

After establishing this initial framework, I break up my analysis of *Trilogy* into its three consecutive parts: *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels*, and *The Flowering of the Rod*. Within each of these sections, different aspects of montage are identified as they occur within the poem. These chapters show how H.D. uses both the theory and practice of montage to confront and heal from the trauma of war. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the poet uncovers and translates various signs and symbols from ancient mythologies, uniting them together within a common history. Just as a cinematic montage sequences create a new and ineffable idea out of a series of shots, the poet finds new hope and possibility beyond the immediate present. Both writer and reader become revisionary mythmakers, as the "spectators" become collectively involved in the process of creation. *The Walls Do Not Fall* concludes with the realization that nothing is destroyed, only forgotten; it is through montage poetics that these memories can be recovered and redeemed.

Norman Holmes Pearson writes of *Tribute to the Angels* that H.D. "gives thanks for the services of the seven angels at the throne of God, un-named by Saint John and to-be-named by scribes later, like H.D. herself" (Pearson x). Addressing John's apocalyptic vision in the Book of Revelation, H.D. revises tradition through the process of alchemy and through her own dream-vision of a new savior. This particular chapter focuses primarily on alchemy and the dream as they relate to Eisenstein's theories. It delves further into Eisenstein's discussion of the dialectical image, which is at the very core of his intellectual montage definition. It also defines and considers Eisenstein's concept of the "creating spectator, which reconsidered the function of the cinematic audience. Using witness testimony to assemble a series of images, H.D. successfully creates a new narrative of recovery and redemption.

In the third and final section of *Trilogy*, *The Flowering of the Rod*, H.D. envisions a world beyond the war. In this concluding poem, H.D. adopts a much more structured narrative than has been presented in the previous two parts; the memories from a forgotten history have now taken shape. Having confronted past trauma, H.D. now must leave the space of the dream and continue into a yet unrealized future. I conclude my analysis of *Trilogy* on this final section in order to consider the greater purpose and intention behind intellectual montage theory. I discuss Eisenstein's original intent for montage on the screen and what this might mean for H.D. as she continues to write after the war. What new narrative replaces the finality of war? How does H.D. use the new knowledge unearthed from her montage techniques in order to build a new future? This concluding chapter builds from H.D.'s reconsideration of war and trauma in order to expand the scope of my analysis. On a larger scale, I consider how montage could be used as an appropriate technique through which to revise our understanding of history.

Chapter 1: Cinematic Montage and Modernism

In the introductory pamphlet for *Borderline*, published in conjunction with the film's

release in 1930, H.D. describes the film as "the most modern art of portraiture in movement"

(Donald et al. 228). The director, Kenneth Macpherson, dissects and sculpts the intricate fullness

of human experience with great skill, contrary to the assumption that film effortlessly captures

the progress of events:

> The professional writer, seldom if ever stops to puzzle out the difficult reasons for time-limits, effect of light and shadow that may or may not mean to him what it must inevitably mean to the director or the man behind the camera. Certain juxtaposition of event or character, he may insist, is inevitable to this or that effect. He will not and indeed can not, stop to realize that the film, rightly presented, is not a matter of one effect but many, nor of any one art but many. (229)

Though seemingly artless, the "juxtaposition of event or character" is actually induced through

the skillful eye of the director and through the crafting of screen montage, a film editing

technique introduced to cinema by Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Through the meticulous

cutting and fitting of tiny strips of film "in very much the same manner that you would fit

together a jig-saw puzzle," the director creates a subtle rhythm that communicates behind the

narrative structure, gesturing towards the inarticulate (cite). Using montage, *Borderline* dissects

and recombines those physically present moments of everyday existence, injecting them with

reflective, psychological import.

Though H.D. lauds Macpherson's technical and creative ingenuity as director of

Borderline, she identifies the German and Soviet filmmakers as the original geniuses of

montage. In the same pamphlet, H.D. identifies Eisenstein's film *October: Ten Days That Shook*

the World as "the most perfect and now almost historical example of creative originality plus

technical ingenuity," with its "lightning-like effect of repeated firing" (230). H.D.'s knowledge

of Eisenstein and his montage theories is unsurprising; *Close Up* published nine translations of

Eisenstein's writing between May 1929 and June 1933, in addition to a number of occasional pieces about him and his work (viii). Sergei Eisenstein's innovative use of montage in the 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin* and 1928 film *October* generated much attention to the experimental film-editing techniques and avant-garde film forms in the Soviet Union. However, Eisenstein's theories were not widely known in the West until *Close Up* introduced its mainly British and American readers to Soviet cinematic theories. Although Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Sergei Eisenstein all shaped what has become understood as Soviet montage theory, it is Eisenstein's dynamic model of "intellectual montage" that has attracted the greatest amount of critical attention.

Eisenstein regarded montage as "the nerve of cinema" (*Film Form* 48). His many essays on film describe intellectual montage as "an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots," with each shot providing "no more than a certain association" (60). The meaning of these otherwise singular images is complicated when assembled into a montage sequence. When their conflicting associations collide, "the accumulation of such associations can achieve the same effect as is provided for the spectator by purely physiological means in the plot of a realistically produced play" (60). A successful montage sequence will produce a complex emotional response from the spectator that is otherwise inaccessible through the production of a single shot. Furthermore, the new emerging concept is not intelligible within any of the single frames; only when they are placed in juxtaposition with one another does this new idea occur to the spectator. Eisenstein praised this dialectic approach to film as composing a superior "intellectual montage": "It is art's task to make manifest the contradictions of Being…to form accurate intellectual concepts from the dynamic clash of opposing passions" (46). It is in these outward contradictions that the complexities of human experience are understood. By heightening these tensions on

screen for the masses, Eisenstein saw potential for film to inspire intellectual involvement and political change.

Much of the terminology that Eisenstein uses adopts the language of semiotics and linguistics, taking inspiration particularly from the Japanese ideogram. In his essay "The Filmic Fourth Dimension," Eisenstein argues that a film frame "can never be an inflexible *letter of the alphabet*, but must always remain a multiple-meaning *ideogram*" (65). This concept of the ideogram defined cinema for Eisenstein: a single shot can only represent objects as they appear in reality, whereas the collision of these independent elements could bridge the gap between reality and perception. Though the individual shots may be singular in meaning, the combination of these "hieroglyphs" elicits a complex emotional response and creates new ideas from within the spectator. The filmmaker's task is to craft and present the appropriate visual symbols to replicate the process of thought. Eisenstein's description of intellectual montage as "thought made visible" had a crucial influence on H.D.'s analyses of modern film (Donald et al. 102). The first three articles that H.D. wrote for *Close Up*, under the title "The Cinema and the Classics," express admiration for films that depict "some precise and definite clear intellect at the back of the whole" through simple yet intricate acts of "chiseling and cutting, shaping and revising" (111). She often praises Eisenstein's intense focus on the symbol, gesture, or "hieroglyph," all of which serve as the collective vessel of some essential knowledge and greater truth.

H.D. also found ways to put Eisenstein's theories into practice through her work on the 1930 film *Borderline*. The POOL group's most ambitious cinematic project, *Borderline* used both psychoanalytic theory and Soviet montage theories as obvious influence. In her introductory pamphlet for the film, H.D. compares the editing effects achieved by director Kenneth Macpherson to the "meticulous jig-saw puzzle technique in the best of the advanced German and

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Russian montage" (230). She describes one particular montage sequence that depicts the physical struggle between two main characters, Astrid and Thorne. Through a rapid series of cuts, the montage sequence moves in quick succession between close-up shots of Astrid's face, Thorne, the dagger in Astrid's hand at different angles, symbolic objects around the room, and the other characters in the downstairs bar. The result is a "sort of jagged lightning effect," as H.D. describes it (230). The collision of these individual shots forces the spectator to consider what new conclusions arise from their association. Using these montage techniques, this scene absorbs the spectator's own psychological associations into its creation of meaning. This kind of active spectatorship is essential to Eisenstein's theory of intellectual montage. For Eisenstein, "the strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator" (*Film Sense* 33). Both the author and the spectator participate in the act of creation.

This creating spectator differed greatly from the passive consumer that dominated modern civilization. Faced with a deluge of technological reproduction and the rapid distribution of information, Marxist philosopher Walter Benjamin perceived the new post-war citizen as unable to adequately communicate the traumatic experience of war: "For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power" (Storyteller 84). The war created a new necessity to confront and communicate trauma in order to properly reconcile past and present experience. Yet, modern modes of technology were introduced to properly manage the human body and centralize power, creating a spectator who was largely passive, uniform, and submissive. Benjamin's cure for passivity could be found in this new, modern art form: the cinema.

As modern film methods advanced, experimental filmmakers incorporated more complex narratives and multi-shot editing techniques as a way to shock the spectator out of passivity. During the 1920s, Eisenstein's montage theories addressed the sudden and urgent need identified by Benjamin. The spectator became integral to the process of artistic creation, allowing new ways for the modern subject to exploit individual experience and articulate personal trauma. Cinematic montage combined the physical, optic experience with the internal, psychological experience, involving both the body and mind of the spectator in the construction of meaning. While advanced, modern technology worked to dull the human senses, directing a forward gaze towards a single task, it was through montage that "perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle" (Motifs, 175). Rather than shielding the spectator from shock, film utilized techniques such as montage that would activate the senses and heighten attention. Though the post-war citizen shrank beneath the expanse of advanced technology, capitalist infrastructure, and world politics, film reached outward towards the individual with profound awareness of the human experience.

H.D. was acutely aware of this potential for film to repair trauma. For H.D., the cinema offered a potential solution to both her own personal war-shock and the political rupture caused by World War I. Having previously sought relief in psychoanalytic theory and formal analysis, the cinema seemed to be a perfect medium, intertwining the science of psychoanalysis and the art of image projection. H.D. envisioned film as using a symbolic language that could communicate through unconscious processes and move across the boundaries of time and space. As Laura Marcus explains, "[H.D.'s] lifelong fascination with hieroglyphics was further stimulated by the writings of both Freud and Eisenstein, a conjuncture of poetics, politics, psychoanalysis…and film aesthetics" (Donald et al. 102). As H.D. would later explore in greater detail, Freud and

Eisenstein both provided a new means through which to confront trauma. In her 1944 memoir *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. retrospectively connects the practice of cinema and the teachings of psychoanalysis in light of the sessions she underwent with Freud during the 1930s (McCabe 133). H.D. writes in her memoir, "Here is this hieroglyph of the unconscious or subconscious of the Professor's discovery and life-study, the hieroglyph actually in operation before our very eyes" (*TTF* 47). Returning to this critical period in her life, the intersections between cinema and psychoanalysis become clearer and more relevant to the process of traumatic recovery.

Both Benjamin and Eisenstein also integrate modern psychology into their analyses of cinema and montage, particularly Freud's theories on memory and the unconscious. As a reader and contemporary of Freud, Eisenstein's discussions of intellectual montage often reveal the influence of Freud's work. For example, Eisenstein compares the processes of artistic creation to the process of remembering, which exists in two stages: the first stage is "the *assembling* of the image," while the second "consists in the *result* of this assembly and its significance for the memory" (*Film Sense* 17). Film and other works of art can be understood as "just this process of arranging images in the feelings and mind of the spectator" (17). Freud's writings often theorize the function of memory in the mind of the individual, though he questions the compatibility of memory and consciousness in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. He claims that "becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory-trace are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system," and "consciousness arises instead of a memory-trace" (*Pleasure Principle*, 25). Benjamin was also influenced by Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, using direct language from Freud's text in order to theorize connections between memory and shock in the work of Proust and Baudelaire. According to Freud's theories, consciousness receives no memory traces, but rather serves the important function of protection against stimuli: "The more

readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely are they to have a traumatic effect" (Motifs, 161). Because modern daily life was so saturated with stimuli, these shocks are passively absorbed rather than fully addressed as experience. By subjecting the viewer to editing effects such as montage, film re-introduces shock into the modern experience and allows the spectator to grapple with their unconscious memories.

Benjamin also discusses the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema in what is perhaps his most famous essay, "A Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction." He compares the scientific work of psychoanalysis to the aesthetic work of film, both of which enable material access to the unconscious. Just as psychoanalysis articulated the invisible impulses of the unconscious, the camera introduces us to what Benjamin terms "unconscious optics" ("Work of Art" 237). Through its "lowering and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions," the camera intervenes in the mundane (237). What is not readily apparent to the naked eye in the everyday becomes lucid through the lens of the camera: "[An] unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a place consciously explored by man" (236). The cinematic apparatus can be understood as the perceptible space through which the spectator is able to access unconscious memory. The passage of time and its events are not simply recorded and projected as they appear; rather, the montage sequence creates intentional order, directed focus, and manipulated time in order to represent what lies beneath the film's material form.

These concerns with memory and the unconscious arose from a new form of experience that emphasized the measurement and representation of time. As Mary Ann Doane explains, "Time is, in a sense, externalized, a surface phenomenon, which the modern subject must ceaselessly attempt to repossess through its multifarious representations" (9). Photography and

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film first emerged as means of rationalizing and compartmentalizing time, an essential component to the rise of modernity. The cinema, through its projection of isolated and static frames, produces "the illusion of continuous time and movement" and therefore demonstrates the paradox of capturing the continuous forward motion of time (9). Similarly, Freud's theories of temporality were concerned with the issues of traces and recording. However, Doane is careful to make strong distinctions between the concepts of time and memory within Freud's work. Though the modern subject occupies a reality "so fully bound up with the concept of time," time inevitably leaves no record. For Freud, "Time is not an inert process, external to the subject…. Instead, it is an effect, a mirroring of the operation of the psychical system. Within psychoanalysis, the commonly held view that memory is the residue of time is an impossible one" (45). Whereas memory can be properly stored within the psyche and outwardly expressed, time remains consistently out of grasp. As one moment occurs, it is simultaneously lost.

Freud considered experiential memory both storable and representable, unlike the amorphous and ephemeral nature of time. While Doane notes that the concept of time is often marginal in Freud's work, the problem of memory is central. In "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" Freud uses an antiquated writing apparatus to model the psyche's record of memory and the problem of its limits. The Mystic Writing-Pad consists of multiple layers; the top layer is a celluloid sheet that rests on top of a wax slab. This top sheet can be written upon with any pointed instrument, making a faint indentation in the wax below that appears as a mark through the plastic. To erase the writing, the celluloid sheet can be lifted away. The celluloid acts "as a protective sheath for the waxed paper, to keep off injurious effects from without" ("Writing-Pad" 210). Freud uses this process as an analogy for the impression of memory upon the unconscious mind:

I showed that the perceptive apparatus of our mind consists of two layers, of an external protective shield against stimuli whose task it is to diminish the strength of excitations coming in, and of a surface behind it which receives the stimuli, namely the system Pcpt.-Cs. (210).

Like the writing-pad, the mind has the capability to retain infinite memory traces while still remaining receptive to the new. Consciousness serves as the "protective shield against stimuli," receiving the shocks and traumas of experience, while the retention and representation of these memory traces is reserved for the unconscious.

Whereas later experimental films became preoccupied with the unconscious storage of memory, early cinema focused on the index of time. These films provided an archive of modern existence, captured by the camera and infinitely re-playable on the screen. The banal moments of the everyday induced both exhilarating awe and fear of the ability of the camera to represent everything, the planned and the unplanned. Suddenly the fleeting nature of time could be contained and revisited, giving every moment the potential for investigation. Early film sought possibility within cinema's indexical qualities; though the modern spectator moved passively through their own daily lives, film suspended these everyday moments and compelled greater reflection. The cinema could heighten the senses and enable communication between the individual and the modern world they occupied. However, by accumulating an archive of singular moments and endowing them each with particularity, early cinema also inevitably dealt with the problem of producing an overwhelming sameness. As Doane notes, it is then not surprising that cinema "embraces narrative as its primary means of making time legible" (67). Though the fascination with recording "real time" motion dominated the first decade of cinema, film quickly moved towards methods and techniques that emphasized narrative development. For Benjamin and Eisenstein, cinematic montage injected significance into the banal index of time by abiding by the gestures of memory rather than the limitations of external time. Cinema could

be understood as an act of remembering, the process of filtering the memory of trauma through the protected layer of conscious, visual experience.

H.D. recognized in montage this same potential. Defined by conflict, shock, and audience participation, intellectual montage represented the avant-garde and the revolutionary. These qualities appealed to H.D. as an artist and a critic; montage offered healing from her own personal war-shock, but it also opened up a new way of thinking about experience and history. Seeking new possibilities for film beyond its appropriation by mass culture, H.D. used montage theory as a way to talk about politics and history. In her essay "Russian Films," H.D. writes:

> For the world of the film to-day (there is no getting away from it) is no longer the world of the film, it is *the* world. It is only those who are indifferent to the world itself and its fate, who can afford to be indifferent to the fate of the film industry and the fate of the film art…. There has never been, perhaps since the days of the Italian Renaissance, so great a 'stirring' in the mind and soul of the world consciousness. (Donald et al. 135)

For H.D., the cinema created a language and lens through which to understand the modern world. With its emphasis on memory and psychological associations, montage offered a language through which to reconsider the legacy of war.

H.D. was not the only modern thinker to use montage in this way. Both Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer envisioned cinematic montage as a way to rewrite history. In his 1927 essay "Photography," Siegfried Kracauer compares historicism with photography and cinema. According to Kracauer, "historicism is concerned with the photography of time" (425). Both photography and actuality films capture moments without mediation, reconstructing the series of events in their temporal succession. This temporal sequence "contains the meaning of all that occurred within that time" (425). However, such an archive is bound within the continuum of time and space, and therefore cannot properly communicate the selectivity of memory. The sheer accumulation and saturation of detail evacuates the images of their particular significances,

assembling "a nature alienated from meaning" (435). Such an archival history loses its symbolic power. In response, Kracauer suggests the potential of film editing to restore historical significance:

> However, if the remnants of nature are not oriented toward the memory-image, then the order they assume through the image is necessarily provisional. It is therefore incumbent on consciousness to establish the provisional status of all given configurations and, perhaps, even to awaken an inkling of the right order of the inventory of nature…. The capacity to stir up the elements of nature is one of the possibilities of film. This possibility is realized whenever film combines parts and segments to create strange constructs. (435-436)

The "strange constructs" of edited films reproduce the gaps, lapses, and fragments of memory, creating a record of those significances that lie outside of the frame. It is necessary to reproduce these temporal discontinuities in order to represent a true reality.

Kracauer uses film-editing effects to construct a new definition of history, one that resists an indelible forward progress. Instead, an authentic history challenges "the natural appearance of the prevailing social order" (Hansen 32). Rather than adhering to continuity and coherence, history must replicate the selectivity of memory. In doing so, historicism necessarily resists the reliance on a dominant historical narrative and envelopes subjective experience. Whereas an indexical history flattens differences and "domesticates otherness," a selective history engenders significance from social context (30). This selectivity is unrestricted by sequential time or spatial limitations; instead, dialectical images are created and assembled through the process of reflection and with an acute awareness of difference. Kracauer's redefinition of history correlates with the post-war reality in which previous certainties were complicated; national borders were redrawn, global powers were dissolved, and large-scale violence entered daily life. After the fragmentation of a previous impermeable understanding of Western resilience, a reflective and selective history is essential.

Like Kracauer, Walter Benjamin also reexamines the traditional understanding of history through the lens of cinematic editing effects. He specifically fastens onto the theory of montage as the most appropriate approach towards history. In his 1940 essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin criticizes the idea that progress should be the signature course of history, claiming that a dedication to progress suppresses critical discourse. Instead of articulating the past as "the way it really was," a critical history is assembled by "seizing hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" ("Theses" 255). Moments of historical significance arise out of these moments of shock, evoking Benjamin's discussion on film, montage, and trauma. Just as cinematic montage shocks the spectator out of passivity, crises of the past attract close critical attention. This critical compilation of history encourages the possibility of revolution and resistance against the homogenous course of history. It is crucial, then, that Benjamin wrote his essay on history during the rise of Fascism and the early years of World War II. Mere decades after the first global war, World War II once again threw Europe into crisis. Yet, as Benjamin's cinematic theories indicate, the process of remembering allows the unconscious to recover from trauma under the shield of consciousness. Benjamin's model of history offers both the possibility of recovery and resistance by reopening the past and disrupting the continuum of time.

The emergence of film as a dominant art form during the first half of the 20th century had a distinct influence on other mediums as well, particularly modern poetry. "Words are shocks," writes Gertrude Stein in *Useful Knowledge*, evoking Benjamin's urgent call for film to shock the spectator out of passivity (qtd. McCabe 18). Both modern cinema and poetry used the sensory spaces of their respective mediums in order to engage the modern subject and best represent the crisis of the "lived" body. Just as Benjamin carried cinematic montage into textual spaces through the literary montage of *The Arcades Project*, the body of the modernist poem "gained

new angles, line-breaks, asymmetries, and synapses, shifting within and through the very technologies that disoriented the relationship of the human body…to time and space" (McCabe 18). The poetic space resisted a typical narrative structure and reflected the mechanics of memory through its disruptive formal features. Even before selections of Eisenstein's writings were published in *Close Up*, Ezra Pound's "proto-cinematic Imagism" anticipated the Soviet montage theories (13). The desire to communicate the authentic "thingness" of an object was pursued without extraneous or embellished detail, paralleling the cuts and collisions of film-editing techniques. Eisenstein would later specifically link film and modern poetry, proclaiming that "the charm of modern poetry" derives from the rhythm that "arises as a conflict between the metric measure employed and the distribution of accents, over-riding this measure" (*Film Form* 48). Both experimental film and modern poetry sought ways to represent the complexities of the lived experience by manipulating the temporal and spatial continuum.

As Susan McCabe shows, the "montage poetics" of modernists such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and H.D. developed in response to a new awareness of the body's fragility following World War I (McCabe 21). The long poems of the 1940s, such as Pound's *Cantos*, Williams's *Paterson*, and H.D.'s *Trilogy*, utilized fragmentation as an aesthetic choice and assembled entire epics from shorter poetic sequences. Using montage methods of construction, the modern long poem sought to create a historical account of 20th century life. In creating a history that encompassed the catastrophic destruction and trauma of both world wars, modern poetry absorbed the historic possibilities of cinematic film-editing effects. Just as Kracauer and Benjamin embraced a critical, reflective history as articulated by the theories of montage, modern poetics sought redemption and recovery through montage poetics.

Despite poetry's continued emphasis on montage and the dialectic image into the 1940s, the modern avant-garde movement largely disassociated from the cinema by the mid-1930s with the introduction of sound into motion picture. Those filmmakers and critics associated with the avant-garde regarded the development of "talkies" to be the end of cinema as a high art form. *Close Up* provided the forum for debate on sound and the cinema, publishing pieces by Eisenstein, Bryher, Kenneth MacPherson, and H.D. that considered the consequences that sound might have on the silent language of montage. H.D. commented, "Is there any more damaging revelation than art revealed? Art is cut open, dissected so to speak by this odd instrument. Movietone creates and recreates until we feel that nothing can remain hidden, no slightest flaw of movement or voice or personality undetected" (Donald et al. 119). Though H.D. abandoned cinema with the demise of silent film, her statements on art, cinema, and language are made manifest in the long poems she wrote during World War II. The montage poetics of *Trilogy* gesture towards the inner speech of the cinematic spectator and access the language of dreams. Though the epoch of cinematic montage had passed, the age of literary montage took its place, enabling the great poets of the modern era to assemble epic histories of their time.

Chapter 2: The Wisdom of the Hieroglyph in *The Walls Do Not Fall*

The visual and psychological elements that are so integral to cinematic montage

techniques, and that became characteristic of cinematic modernism, are central to the thematic

and structural development of *Trilogy*. Eisenstein's emphasis on the dialectic approach of

montage supports the redemptive arc that H.D. creates through a series of juxtapositions between

seemingly disparate moments in history. H.D. begins *Trilogy* with a dialectical image that

parallels two far-away places at distant moments in time. *The Walls Do Not Fall*, which H.D.

began writing in 1942, is dedicated to her friend Bryher and alludes to a trip they took together to

Egypt two decades prior. The epigraph of this first section of *Trilogy* includes the inscription,

"for Karnak 1923 / from London 1942," previewing the poetic lines that follow. Recalling her

visitation to the temple of Amon-Ra in Egypt, its ancient ruins open to the elements, H.D.

connects the experience of living in London during World War II to both her personal past and a

universal human history. This association begins a series of explorations into double-meanings

and hieroglyphic symbols throughout all of *Trilogy*, and an insistence that "the ultimate reality of

any single moment in history is contained in a pattern of essential experience which informs all

time" (Friedman 103). The first section of *The Walls* begins with a depiction of H.D.'s current

reality, London in 1942, devastated by the However, this reality becomes conflated with

memories of the past, the ancient ruins of the temple and the Egyptian mythologies behind its

history:

> An incident here and there,
> And rails gone (for guns)
> From your (and my) old town square …
>
> there, as here, ruin opens
> the tomb, the temple enter,
> there as here, there are no doors:

> the shrine lies open to the sky,
> the rain falls here, there,
> sand drifts; eternity endures (Trilogy, 3).

The poet understands her immediate surroundings through mental associations that are separated by physical place and time. The present is not an end in and of itself, but rather an encoded message; it is meant to be deciphered through layers of history, images of the past that project onto the present.

H.D. dislocates the present moment from its specific time and place, creating a connection between disparate events in history. These connections are not immediately obvious and, in fact, often seem vague or enigmatic during an initial read. The poet reassembles the normal sequence of time, folding unfamiliar symbols and mythologies of the past into images and references that are more recognizable. Like the cinematic montage sequence, this poetic sequence demands the reader's close attention. Each image in the sequence redirects attention and requires an exploration into the deeper connections being made by the poet. H.D.'s arrangement of history, which superimposes present-day London with images of the past, refashions the standard linear narrative. History no longer remains relegated to the past; all moments in time can now occupy the same space. In the first few stanzas of *Trilogy*, the conflation of "here and there" opens up the realm of meaning to multiple interpretations. The wreckage of war-stricken London no longer falls at the end of the spectrum of time, but instead exists together with the ancient ruins of an Egyptian temple; making this connection allows the poet to conclude that "eternity endures." For Eisenstein, the separate shots of the montage sequence resulted in a single, unique creation rather than "a sum of its parts" (*Film Sense* 7-8). Similarly, H.D. pulls together separate symbols, mythologies, and histories from throughout time in order to assemble a new creation in the midst of total destruction.

This first juxtaposition between present-day London and the ancient city of Karnak sets off a string of associations between different cultures, mythologies, religions, and time periods. The Christian prophet Samuel "trembling at a known street corner," the Pythian oracle of ancient Greece, and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Pompeii in 79 A.D. are all referenced within a few lines of each other, initiating the creation of a reinterpreted history. *The Walls* becomes a continual effort to recover and decode those moments that lie buried and forgotten in the past, pieces of an alternative history. Unable to escape the tragedy and devastation of her own reality, the poet looks to be healed by the secrets that these histories hold. This poetic practice falls in line with both H.D.'s assertion that montage "seems almost just some such process of 'remembering'" as well as Sergei Eisenstein's deconstruction of artistic creation into the two stages of remembering (Donald et al. 233). Each layer of the past remains a permanent part of history and can be continuously retrieved from memory. In the second section of *The Walls*, the poet asks, "how can you scratch out // indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure?" (*Trilogy* 6). The palimpsest, Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad, and ultimately the cinematic montage sequence all gesture towards the function of memory. In the case of *Trilogy*, the constant uncovering of a forgotten historical past denies an eventual end; though the past may be forgotten, it never disappears. The poem transforms the strictly linear nature of time and history into a cyclical process, revitalizing a moment that has reached its end and discovering renewal after tragedy and death.

Throughout the poet's excavation of the past, she encounters various items of containment, such as jars, shells, and cocoons, that uncover these forgotten memories of a universal history. The most revelatory items of containment, though, are words themselves. H.D. necessitates the fragmentation of words and images in order to reassemble a new creation; these

words are subject to a kind of cinematic editing, cutting and rearranging their pieces into an intentional sequence. For example, beginning with the phrase "here am I," the poet rearranges the lexical structure to reveal new words and new meanings:

> here am I, Amon-Ra,
> *Amen*, Aries, the Ram;
>
> time, time for you to begin a new spiral,
> see — I toss you into the star-whirlpool;
>
> till pitying, pitying,
> snuffing the ground,
>
> here am I, Amon-Ra whispers,
> *Amen*, Aries, the Ram,
>
> be cocoon, smothered in wool,
> be Lamb, mothered again. (30)

The simple phrase "here am I" leads to the Egyptian god Amon-Ra, the Christian prayer, "Amen," and the astrological sign Aries. Independently, each divinity carries its own history and its own set of devotions that conflict with one another. However, the poet recognizes the emergence of a new concept when these words/images become pieces of a whole. Through the cuts and rearrangements of each word, the sequence radiates a collective message that alludes to a rebirth. Every new manifestation brings another version of the savior, and now the poet demands that it is "time for you to begin a new spiral." H.D. beckons for the next cycle to begin, a new manifestation of the familiar resurrection myth.

This process of breaking something down to its most essential, separating into pieces in order to re-conceptualize the whole, echoes the sentiments expressed in H.D.'s three-part essay for *Close Up*, "Cinema and the Classics." She commands filmmakers to "slash and cut" and "sweep away the extraneous"; her ideal film consists of "some precise and definite clear intellect at the back of the whole, one centralizing focus of thought cutting and pruning the too extraneous

underbrush of tangled detail" (Donald et al. 111). The poet's editing techniques in the above

lines from *The Walls* occur in two different ways. First, the poet's lexical transformation takes a

word that is initially whole, both in its semantic form and in its corresponding meaning, and

breaks this apart into its pieces. With each cut and rearrangement of the letters, a new word

forms and a common thread of central significance begins to emerge. Second, the poet arranges

each of these new words into a montage sequence: "here am I, Amon-Ra, / *Amen*, Aries, the

Ram." Assembled together within the couplet, their united central focus strips each word of its

"extraneous underbrush of tangled detail." The meaning and message of the sequence is

extracted through the poet's associations and memories, rather than through elaborated

explanation of each strand of history. The creation of the montage sequence acts as a discovery, a

realization of the poet's psychological associations. This sequence is then repeated three stanzas

down, returning back on old memories. In fact, this montage sequence returns to the memory that

began the poet's exploration of the palimpsestic past. Amon-Ra hearkens back to the epigraph of

The Walls, which references H.D.'s visit to the temple of Amon-Ra in Karnak. Within itself, the

montage sequence resembles a process of remembering; but these individual images also stretch

out through the poem, accumulating more memories of the past. As Susan Edmunds describes it,

"a given word or image seems to float out of sight for shorter or longer distances, and then settle

in another narrative that reincorporates it to startlingly new effect" (34). The continual

recollection of familiar memories shapes a cyclic history in which the secrets of the past are

never lost. It is the role of the poet to uncover and translate the secrets held within symbols and

signs of the past.

Throughout *Trilogy*, the poet encounters various signs and symbols that must be

interpreted; the writer is translator, interpreter, and messenger of the buried past. It is the power

of the poet to interpret "the ancient rubrics," the enigmatic fragments of memory, and assemble them in a way that exposes truth. In her letters to Norman Holmes Pearson about the progress of *The Walls*, H.D. identifies the writer as "the original rune-maker, the majic-maker [*sic*]" (32). In written language, words are symbols and signs that contain possibility in their ambiguity. It is the role of the writer and the poet to exploit these symbols and create meaning out of language. Adalaide Morris observes this same conviction as a central tenet of Imagism. Morris notes, Imagist theory "privileges sight as fresh, accurate access to the exterior world" (413). To Imagist theorists such as Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme, "the test of good poetry is whether words turn back into things that we can see"; they "find in vision the release from a shared system of signs into spontaneous, intuitive, unmediated apprehension of essences" (414). Morris goes so far as to analyze the visionary nature of *Trilogy* and to connect this visionary aesthetic to film, but never directly address the cinematic qualities of H.D.'s poetic language and techniques. In the same way that the filmmaker achieves a visual overtone from the assemblage of segmented film frames, the *Trilogy* poet engenders emotion and significance from words that act as visual symbols, fragments of the whole.

Intellectual montage theory emphasizes the importance of symbols and signs in engendering significance for the audience. In Eisenstein's montage theories, each image that flashes forth in the sequence is considered a "hieroglyph"; the "combination of two hieroglyphs of the simplest series is to be regarded not as their sum, but as their product" (*Film Form* 29-30). Each individual image, separately, "corresponds to an *object*, to a fact, but their combination corresponds to a concept" (30). A single object or fact fits into this holistic understanding of complex emotions or concepts. In "The Mask and the Movietone," the last segment of "Cinema and the Classics," H.D. similarly refers to the greater wholeness that emerges through the

compilation of discreet symbols: "We cannot worship sheer mechanical perfection but we can love and in a way worship a thing…that is a symbol of something that might be something greater" (Donald et al. 119). H.D. writes this in response to the introduction of sound into film through Movietone technology, which she argues is more of a catalogue or recorder of objects than a sophisticated art form. "If I see art projected too perfectly," H.D. asks, "don't I feel rather cheated of the possibility of something more divine behind the outer symbol of the something shown there?" (119). For H.D., a greater power and significance lies behind the projected image's external characteristics. When film aims to create a perfect replica of reality, the audience looks no further than the image clearly projected before them; but as a symbol, the projected image can be a piece of some greater, divine whole.

Throughout *The Walls*, the poet searches for such symbols; every word woven within the poem conjures a corresponding image. On their own, these word-images can only convey their direct correspondent, but together they formulate the poem. As Morris explains, "These images are holograms or discrete cells of the poem containing in code the plan of the whole" (432). Each single unit folds into the poet's universal vision, the new concept that Eisenstein envisions taking shape through the successful assemblage of a cinematic montage sequence. For H.D., writers "are the keepers of the secret, / the carriers, the spinners"

> of the rare intangible thread
> that binds all humanity
>
> to ancient wisdom,
> to antiquity;
>
> our joy is unique, to us,
> grape, knife, cup, wheat
>
> are symbols in eternity,
> and every concrete object

> has abstract value, is timeless
> in the dream parallel
>
> whose relative sigil has not changed
> since Nineveh and Babel.
> (*Trilogy* 24).

Writers are both carriers and spinners, procurers of language as well as creators of meaning. Through the apprehension of raw linguistic material, the poet produces the "intangible thread that binds all humanity to ancient wisdom." The symbols within the short sequence, "grape, knife, cup, wheat," point to no significant history or mythology. They are simple, everyday objects that are granted a divine "abstract value" through the power of language. Though the actual object and the bearer of their memory may disappear from existence, this abstract value remains "timeless in the dream parallel." These linguistic symbols are more powerful than their direct denotation because of the infinite and eternal associations they evoke in their utterance. This is emphasized by the last lines of this section, which reference the ancient cities of Ninevah and Babylon. Once powerful cities, both were destroyed and subsequently vanished. Yet their memory and legacy remain; the Biblical myth of the Tower of Babel is meant to explain the origin of different languages, which proliferated with the destruction of the tower. Though the tower was destroyed, language remains.

The permanent remains of history are recovered throughout *The Walls*, both as physical remains, like the temple of Amon-Ra and the ruin left by the Blitz, and the psychological remains of experience as expressed through language. Though the physical remains show only an image at its end, memory is selective; the poet begins to decipher the "meaning that words hide" by remembering (53). Every word is a remnant of its history; by connecting these symbols, the poet recovers what has been forgotten (but not lost) through the passage of time. In the process of creating the montage sequence, symbols are splintered from their source, and a sort of

30

disorder ensues. Yet, these fragments are then arranged together by the poet into a new formation. Every symbol is aggregated into one universal and concurrent history. As a result, the poet does not simply remember history as it was from the beginning to the end, but weaves together a revised history. Through her creative use of language, H.D. discovers renewal from within the various fragments of this new history.

In the process of remembering a revised universal history, H.D. also begins to process her own traumatic experiences during and before World War II. The sudden and familiar shock of World War II causes H.D. to relive a series of traumatic events that she had experienced during World War I[1]. In the forward to H.D.'s memoir *Tribute to Freud*, Norman Holmes Pearson describes the writing that she worked on during the war years as "re-creations," revitalizations of her own myth (Pearson vii). H.D. wrote to Pearson, "For me, it was so important, it was so important, my own LEGEND. Yes, my own LEGEND. Then, to get well and re-create it" (vii). Just as Benjamin argued that the cinematic montage sequence could be a way to confront trauma under the shield of consciousness, H.D. is able to confront her trauma through the process of poetic creation. Her writing provides a physical space to face her trauma, to understand and heal from the past, and to craft a redemptive personal history. This excavation of the past allows H.D. to reinterpret her own legend and "construct a new symbolic system that did not objectify her self as woman" (Friedman 211). All of the symbols unearthed from ancient histories and mythologies revise patriarchal values of war and violence, instead emphasizing feminine symbols of birth and creation. This "new synthesis of symbol" on the one hand reconfigures a universal history that is continuously rebirthed, that cyclically continues forever instead of

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[1] In 1915, H.D.'s child was stillborn; her marriage to Richard Aldington dissolved after he joined the army in 1916; her close friendship with D.H. Lawrence came to an end in 1917; and her father and brother both died in 1919.

linearly reaching an end (212). On the other hand, these symbols also contain remnants of H.D.'s subjective memories, and every poetic montage sequence communicates her own personal recovery and renewal.

This redemption is only made possible by the writer. In contrast to the view that "poets are useless," H.D. claims that poets are actually the keepers of knowledge and the key to deciphering the palimpsest. It is the "scribe" who holds the most power in H.D.'s world, the poet who has the ability to create meaning and redefine the divine: "for gods have been smashed before // and their idols and their secret is stored / in man's very speech" (*Trilogy* 15). Again, the material objects remain secondary to the meaning concealed behind language. Whereas physical manifestations are finite, their significances are limitless; it is the capability of writers, scribes, poets — the interpreters — to discover and communicate intangible truth and purpose. In *The Walls*, the speaker of the poem takes on this role of scribe during the war years. However, there is a shifting relationship between the poet and the reader that often conflates these two positions. The poem's speaker is both a reader of inherited texts and the translator, delivering her newly revised understanding of history. She investigates her own memories and dreams, and also beckons others to read with their own "peculiar ego-centric personal approach to the eternal realities" (52). In this way, H.D. is able to address her own personal trauma while also inviting the reader to consider his or her past. She not only directs the reader's eye to forgotten traces of history, but also creates a focus on the act of reading itself, a poetic practice that strongly resembles the intention behind intellectual montage.

For Eisenstein, that intent was to arouse emotion within the spectator; each montage piece "summons a certain association — the sum of which will be an all-embracing complex of emotional feeling" (*Film Form* 60). Though the emotional response has been pre-formulated by

the filmmaker, it arises spontaneously out of the spectator. In this way, the viewer's experience

of watching the film puts them in conversation with the creator. Additionally, although the

sequence denotes the filmmaker's intended emotion or message, the spectator is also expected to

bring his or her own memories into the interpretation. The creation of meaning is a collaborative

process between the filmmaker and the spectator. Each of these interactions creates a bridge

between the filmmaking process and the act of watching. The filmmaker draws attention to the

craft of film rather than trying to replicate reality, jarring the spectator's thought process and

extracting an immediate reaction. H.D. constructs a similar exchange between the poet and the

reader in *Trilogy*. She exerts her power over the reader for much of the poem, obtaining and

arranging her cryptic symbols in a way that re-interprets her own personal "legend." The poem

serves as a deeply personal space through which she can take control and face her past.

However, there are also moments in the poem where she hands control over to the reader.

In section 32, for example, the poet intermingles her own thoughts with those of the reader:

> This search for historical parallels,
> research into psychic affinities,
>
> has been done to death before,
> will be done again;
>
> no comment can alter spiritual realities
> (you say) or again,
>
> what new light can you possibly
> throw upon them?
>
> my mind (yours),
> your way of thought (mine),
>
> each has its peculiar intricate map… (*Trilogy* 51)

The speaker describes her own process of searching for "historical parallels" within the poem,

which stands among the many other attempts to create connections and learn from the past. But

after the realization that "no comment can alter spiritual realities," the speaker must expel this difficult truth from herself and places its utterance on the reader. She declares that each mind has "its peculiar intricate map," but formally intertwines her own thoughts with those of the reader through her use of parentheses. The poet's thoughts are distinctly separated from those of the reader, but they hold significant influence on one another as well. As Eisenstein explains, "This is the same image that was planned and created by the author, but this image is at the same time created also by the spectator himself" (*Film Sense* 33). Although H.D. finds healing within her own revised history, the reader is also able to participate in this process and formulate his or her own personal associations. Multiple meanings emerge from the same arrangement of images.

The passage above exemplifies the ways in which H.D. invites the reader into the role of creator simply through her selection of particular pronouns. The poet uses "I," "you," and "we" throughout *The Walls* either to create distance or to unify the speaker and the reader. The narrative "I" concentrates the narrative of resurrection around the speaker, whose various transformations are staged before the watchful "you"; the reader observes the poet become reborn after incurring trauma. Michael Hardin notes that often this "you" has no specific referent, other than the general reader, as in: "you will be, not so much frightened as paralysed with inaction" (*Trilogy* 23) and "the philosopher's stone is yours if you surrender sterile logic, trivial reason" (40). The speaker creates an intentional space between her own healing process and the experience of the reader within the poem. Yet, there are also significant moments in which the speaker blends her own identity with that of the reader, choosing to use the pronouns "us" or "we." Susan Edmunds notes, "The narrator of 'The Walls' is an 'I' who continually claims to merge into a 'we,' a plurality that itself functions not as a loose confederation of individual voices but as a fused community, almost a fused self, of 'nameless initiates' who together take

one 'Name'" (35). The passage she refers to occurs in section 13 of *The Walls*. The first few

stanzas of this section distinguishes a sound first-person voice: "my old self, wrapped round me,

// was shroud (I speak of myself individually / but was surrounded by companions // in this

mystery)" (20). However, by the end of this section, the only enduring pronoun is a collective

"we": "even if we snarl a brief greeting // or do not speak at all, / we know our Name, // we

nameless initiates, / born of one mother" (20). This gradual and subtle shift to the inclusive "we"

conveys a collective sharing of the (specifically feminine) power to create meaning.

The constant shifting of pronouns moves the reader between different spaces of either

intimacy or detachment. Hardin explains that this stylistic choice "challenges totality" within the

poem: "without a consistent and definitive pronoun, the reader and the persona of the poem are

situated in a sliding space between all pronouns. One can never be sure whose will be the next

voice or in what position the reader will be" (157). Though the speaker often takes command by

employing the narrative "I," there is ultimately no authority over the creation of meaning. H.D.

creates a performative space within the poem to articulate her own trauma and recovery, but also

allows the poem to be overwritten by the reader's individualistic interpretation of language. She

invites the reader to take part in the shared experience of traumatic recovery, while also creating

space for the reader to confront his or her own individual traumatic memories. The "sliding

space" between reader and speaker resembles the kind of spectatorship that Benjamin envisioned

taking place within the cinema. While the physical space between the spectator and the screen

provides a "shield of consciousness," a clear identification of "I" and "you," the spectator is also

an active participant in the creation of meaning. The reader can process memory and trauma as

part of the collective "we" that reads and interprets the signs of the poem.

Both the speaker and the reader share in this active process of reading the signs of an inherited text, materializing visual images through verbal signification. The conscious space of the poem is populated with "the symbolic register of language" (Edmunds 98). The process of reading both within and through the poem is equivalent to the visionary process of seeing or understanding. In her reading of *Helen in Egypt*, H.D.'s 1961 epic poem, Susan Edmunds describes the poet's reading and revision of ancient texts as a "visionary act of reading" (98). Identifying the influence of Freud on H.D.'s work, Edmunds compares this process to hysteric hallucinations, materializations of visual images that are created with the mind. Freud suggests that hallucinatory symptoms indicate a repression of memory and an attempt to evade trauma. He condemns the hysteric distortion of past events. However, Edmunds also aligns the narrator of *Helen* with the "creating spectator" of Eisenstein's intellectual montage theories, "whose acts of organizing and interpreting disjunctive filmic images simultaneously prompt his or her own political awakening and commitment to social change" (99). In opposition to Freud's position that visionary acts of reading indicate an unhealthy internalization of forgotten memories, Eisenstein's theories suggest that the spectator's "embodied thinking" incites action and social change (99). H.D.'s pairing of Freud and Eisenstein creates a narrator who is able to use fantasy to reshape past trauma.

Though Edmunds's poignant analysis refers singularly to *Helen in Egypt*, her interpretations can also be applied to the visionary acts of reading that take place in *Trilogy*. For example, in section 40 of *The Walls*, H.D. alters her reading of the name "Osiris," the Egyptian god of the dead and ruler of the underworld, to revise traditionally patriarchal beliefs into an identity that accentuates female power and maternity. H.D. produces each linguistic variation out of "Osiris" in an attempt to "recover the secret of Isis," the Healer, who is sister and wife of

Osiris. "Osiris" breaks up into "O-sir-us" or "O-sire-is" and further into "Sirius," the brightest

star in the sky, whose rise before the summer solstice heralded the flood of the Nile (*Trilogy* 54).

The lexical creation of Sirius "relates resurrection myth and resurrection reality," connecting the

myth of Osiris's resurrection to the actual flooding of the Nile, which brings new life and

vegetation (54). The poet materializes the Osiris myth through the power of her words, animating

the actual resurrecting powers of Isis through her connection of Osiris and Sirius. The poet

proclaims, "my thought / would cover deplorable gaps // in time, reveal the regrettable chasm, /

bridge that before-and-after schism" (54). The speaker's revisionary reading of the signs creates

actual change, transforming ancient myth into present reality. H.D. is able to apply the

redemptive past to the present turmoil of war and personal trauma.

The *Walls Do Not Fall* ends almost where it begins, in the midst of the World War II air

raids in London. The ominous "zrr-hiss" of bombs brings the reality of war back to the poem

(58). Unlike in the first section of *The Walls*, H.D. faces the traumatic experience of war without

mediation. The signs and symbols have been interpreted and shed, leaving H.D. with a direct

confrontation with her traumatic experience. Although the air is thick with dust and powder and

bodies "blunder through doors twisted on hinges," the speaker of the poem is still left with hope

and possibility; despite the physical destruction of war, "still the walls do not fall" (58). The

fragments of history stand permanently against the present devastation, permanent in time

through the perseverance of language. H.D.'s excavation of history reveals that nothing can be

destroyed, only forgotten. The poet ends *The Walls* by hopefully exclaiming, "possibly we will

reach haven, / heaven" (59). H.D. offers hope for both safety and resurrection, not only for

herself, but for the reader as well.

Chapter 3: The Dialectic Dream in *Tribute to the Angels*

In May 1944, H.D. began writing the second poetic segment of what would become her complete *Trilogy*. She described this new set of poems, *Tribute to the Angels*, as "a sort of premature peace poem," written in the months before D-Day. Whereas *The Walls Do Not Fall* was written during the terror of the Blitz, *Tribute to the Angels* was conceived during a brief pause from the chaos of war. H.D. wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson in December of the same year, "I really DID feel that a new heaven and a new earth were about to materialize. It lasted as you know, for weeks - then D-Day! And the re-gathering thunder storm" (Hollenberg, 44). Though these new poems were meant to connect with the first set, they were also intended to "carry on from the black tunnel or darkness or 'initiation', at least towards the tunnel entrance" (44). *Tribute* falls between the darkness of traumatic experience and the light of recovery. In this transitional space, H.D. explores what secrets from the past could reveal for the war-torn world. Introduced in the first section of *Tribute*, the art of alchemy becomes a primary agent of transformation in the sequence, fusing together individual parts to create some new, more valuable whole. The speaker urges her fellow orators and poets to "take what the new-church spat on and broke and shattered;"

> collect the fragments of the splintered glass
>
> and of your fire and breath,
> melt down and integrate,
>
> re-invoke, re-create
> opal, onyx, obsidian,
>
> now scattered in the shards
> men tread upon (*Trilogy* 63)

Alchemy provides a way through which diverse elements can be joined to reveal hidden knowledge. The broken and discarded parts become valuable in their integration; on their own they remain quiescent and powerless.

The transformative powers prescribed to alchemy in *Tribute* work in much the same way as Eisenstein's dialectical image. Emerging from Hegelian dialectics, and later taken up by Walter Benjamin as a crucial concept within his *Arcades Project*, the dialectical image is the basis of Eisenstein's intellectual montage. Whereas other Soviet montage theorists such as Lev Kuleshov and Dziga Vertov thought of montage as an aesthetic governed by "linkage," Eisenstein distinguished his intellectual montage methods by insisting on the dialectical "collision" of shots (Kadlec 319). For Eisenstein, "placing single shots one after another like building-blocks" could not create the "rhythmic relationship" of montage (Dialectic Approach 49). It is only through the collision between individual shots that "a new, higher dimension," as Eisenstein puts it, can emerge (54). H.D.'s language when describing the alchemical process embodies this idea of collision; the individual elements "melt down," "integrate" "fuse," and "join," with one another to "change," "alter," and "re-create" (*Trilogy* 63, 71). Alchemy functions almost as an editing technique, revising and reconstructing the material parts in order to depict the greater truth and knowledge behind them. However, Eisenstein's dialectical image and H.D.'s alchemical process diverge in their ultimate purpose. Whereas Eisenstein thought of montage as a way to awaken the spectator politically, H.D. uses alchemy's transformative properties to face trauma and reach reconciliation. H.D.'s response to her shattered, war-stricken world is a pronounced dedication to "the patron of alchemists," Hermes Trismegistus, (*Trilogy*

63)[1]. Adopting the tradition of alchemy, H.D. articulates Eisenstein's "new, higher dimension"

as some new divinity that will emerge from the devastation and redeem the human race.

Alchemy has been traditionally understood not only as a transformative process, but also a

process of purification. Whether turning lead to gold or creating the philosopher's stone,

alchemy involves the essential desire to produce a pure form out of base materials, to find the

divine within the earthly. As Elizabeth Anderson explains, "[Alchemy] becomes another mode of

ancient wisdom as the alchemist attempts to understand God in Creation" (77). For H.D.,

alchemy allows the broken remains of war to be fused into a new entity, something divine. While

traumatic experience cannot be erased, H.D. uses the remnants of memory and history to

discover redemption. Following the Hermetic tradition, she searches for this wisdom within the

dynamic relation amongst all matter.

Rather than transforming material elements, H.D.'s alchemical process distils word. Just

as in *The Walls*, H.D. performs lexical reconstruction to revise old mythologies. But in *Tribute*,

the crucible replaces the items of containment; the metamorphosis provided from within shells,

jars, and cocoons now takes place in the alchemical bowl. In section 8, for example, the poet

performs linguistic alchemy to transform the compound word "marah-mar" into its final form,

"Mother":

> Now polish the crucible
> and in the bowl distill
>
> a word most bitter, *marah*,
> a word bitterer still, *mar*,

---

[1] Elizabeth Anderson writes, "Hermeticism is more of a worldview than a set of doctrines. It is marked by devotion to Hermes (both god and sage), mediator between the divine and humanity, and the search for ancient wisdom, which will bring the seeker to God's presence…. In addition to his numerous other attributes, Hermes Trismegistus is the founder and patron of alchemy, with Hermeticism forming its philosophical basis" (75,77).

sea, brine, breaker, seducer,
giver of life, giver of tears;

Now polish the crucible
and set the jet of flame

under, till *marah-mar*
are melted, fuse and join

and change and alter,
mer, mere, mere, mater, Maia, Mary,

Star of the Sea,
Mother. (*Trilogy* 71)

The bitterness is taken from section 3 ("he of the seventy-times-seven passionate, bitter wrongs")

and adopted as the phrase *marah-mar*. This compound word translates literally to "bitter-sea":

marah is the Hebrew word for bitter, and *mar* means "sea" in Spanish. H.D. reconstructs these

words from their original negative connotations ("sea, brine, breaker, seducer,") and creates new

variations of meaning: mere, the English word for a lake or marsh; mer and mère, the French

words for sea and mother; mater, Latin for mother; Maia, Greek goddess and the mother of

Hermes; Venus, the Star of the Sea; and Mary, the mother of Jesus. This distillation process

reclaims a forgotten tradition of the feminine divine. A more forgiving, maternal process of

rebirth replaces the "bitter" vengeance of the Biblical apocalypse.

As Adalaide Morris states, "*Projection* is the technical term for the final stage in an

alchemical transmutation: the precipitation of a new, more perfect form" (Morris 113). However,

the alchemical process does not simply build towards this final mother figure; it is a fusion of

individual, opposing parts. What is revealed to be at the bottom of the crucible in section 9 is a

dialectical "bitter jewel" (72). The bitterness of *marah-mar* remains a distinct element within the

resulting jewel, as are each of its derivatives. The result is a dialectical image, one that emanates

both male and female divinity. The bitterness of *marah-mar* originates from the story of the

apocalypse, as H.D. quotes from the apostle John in the Book of Revelation: "*I make all things new*, / said He of the seven stars, // he of the seventy-times-seven / passionate, bitter wrongs" (65). Yet, as Susan Gubar notes, H.D. "self-consciously" sets her poem within this Biblical narrative (208). She questions the punishing wrath of John's apocalypse, offering her own revision of this narrative. The reclaimed feminine mythology is folded into this patriarchal tradition through the process of alchemy, putting them in argument with one another. This relationship is reinforced a few stanzas down in section 9. The poet asks, "what do you offer to us who rebel...what is this mother-father / to tear at our entrails? // what is this unsatisfied duality / which you can not satisfy?" (*Trilogy* 72). These lines may perhaps reference the myth of Prometheus, who stole the knowledge of fire from the gods. The poet wonders what new knowledge this bitter jewel might provide, what might this new mother-father divinity offer through the combination of its two parts?

H.D. explores this new dialectical deity and its opposing parts through the angels Uriel and Annael. Uriel is the archangel of salvation whose name in Hebrew means light of God. He appears early in *Tribute* as "red-fire," delivering the "judgment and will of God, God's very breath" (67). After the alchemical creation of the bitter jewel, the female angel Annael appears as "hardly a voice, a breath, a whisper," the companion of Uriel. The poet worships them as two of the seven Angels that harken the second coming of God. However, Uriel and Annael represent two very different traditions. Whereas Uriel is associated with the merciless and punishing hand of God, Annael is described as "peace of God" and becomes associated with Venus, the Roman goddess of love (79). Facing these two opposite and powerful forces, the poet resolves to "hail them together":

> So we hail them together,
> one to contrast the other,

two of the seven Spirits,
set before God

as lamps on the high-altar,
for one must inexorably

take fire from the other
as spring from winter (80)

The friction of the dialectical image is stressed within the relationship between Annael and Uriel. The collision of these two contrasting spirits uncovers the answer to salvation and life after death. Together they are the "delicate, green-white, opalescent" jewel in the crucible, the ancient wisdom that reveals the divine in the earthly. The movement from winter into spring signals a new, bountiful beginning, resurrected from darkness and death.

Although alchemy is the agent of transformation in *Tribute*, the poet does not actually identify herself as the jewel's creator. Rather, the poet is always a witness, either commanding or watching the process unfold. H.D. repeatedly draws attention to spectacle and the act of viewing throughout *Tribute*, usually as a collective action. The poet constantly reminds the reader that she is recounting what appears before her, and in turn, appears before us. The poet repeats either "we see," "we saw," or "we have seen" in nearly every section of *Tribute*. This acute attention to viewership has much in common with the way H.D. approached her role as spectator in *Close Up* film reviews. For example, H.D.'s review of *The Student of Prague* begins with a description of the theater surroundings before actually discussing the film itself:

> A small room, a stuffy atmosphere; a provincial Swiss lake-side cinema; the usual shuffle and the unaccustomed (to the urban senses) rattle of paper bags. Crumbs. […] Something has been touched before I realise it, some hidden spring; there is something wrong with this film, with me, with the weather, with something […] I wish I had stayed home, or why didn't I go instead to that other little place, it's better ventilated, across the way. And so on. This storm that doesn't break. I have no reaction to anything… O *that's* what the little man is after. For I see now." (Donald et al. 120).

H.D.'s description of the stuffy theater and its noisy patrons seems almost as if it was, in fact, a scene from a movie. Her reaction to all of the different sights and sounds almost distracts her from what is happening on screen. We enter H.D.'s immediate thought process at first as she regrets going to the theater at all; but then, a sudden recognition grabs her attention and pulls her into the film. H.D. puts a strong emphasis on how the spectator interprets meaning through his or her own experiences. The subjective act of spectatorship has implications beyond what is projected on the screen.

Visual witness becomes the primary mode of understanding within *Tribute*, allowing perception to shape reality similar to how H.D. describes her own cinematic spectatorship. When H.D. describes the experience of war in section 6, for example, she focuses heavily on the act of watching and on first-hand witness: "so many stood and watched / chariot-wheels turning, // saw with their very eyes, / the battle of the Titans, // saw Zeus' thunderbolts in action / and how from giant hands, // the lightning shattered earth / and splintered sky" (*Trilogy* 68). They watch with "unbroken will" and "unbowed head," completely absorbed by the destructive wrath of the gods. Yet, despite their attentive gaze, the observers are unaware of what lies outside of their own viewership: "had they known the fire // of strength, endurance, anger / in their hearts, // was part of the same fire / that in a candle on a candle-stick…is named among the seven Angels, / Uriel" (69). It is this questioning of singular experience that provides an alternative to the finality of war. As Jonathan Foltz explains, "The act of viewing a film…involves not just our perception of it but an active process of mutual mediation" (11). The collective viewership of the poem's "we" begins to revise traumatic experience. When the poet recalls the angel Annael as companion of Uriel, she can only do this by remembering both her own personal transformation in *The Walls* and the harrowing experience of war: "*Annael* - and I remembered the sea-shell / and I

remembered the empty lane // and I thought again of people / daring the blinding rage // of the lightning" (*Trilogy* 79). By evoking these memories from various sources of experience, the poet makes manifest a new collective vision: the Lady.

The purified force within the alchemical crucible evolves into a vision of the Lady, who seems to be a perfected amalgamation of all the feminine divinities mentioned before: Isis, Aset, Aphrodite, Eve, and the Virgin Mary. She becomes realized through this process of alchemy; the Lady is a purified force created through the combination of disparate images. In section 19, the poet exclaims of the Lady, "We see her visible and actual, beauty incarnate" (82). A crucial detail, H.D. creates the Lady from vision: she is only *seen* as actual and incarnate. Born out of visionary experience, the Lady teeters between invention and reality. It is at first unclear whether the Lady actually appears before the poet or whether she is projected from within the poet's mind. H.D.'s projection of the Lady resembles the process enacted by Eisenstein's "creating spectator," previously described in Chapter 2. In his essay "Word and Image," Eisenstein describes the ability of the spectator to bring a projected image to life: "This image planned by the author has become flesh of the flesh of the spectator's risen image…. By one - the spectator - engendered, in one, born and emerging. Creative not only for the author, but creative also for me, the creating spectator" (*Film Sense* 34). Although the filmmaker creates and arranges the images of a montage sequence, Eisenstein insists that this process of creation is shared with the spectator; the filmed material is, in a sense, reborn through viewership. The language that Eisenstein uses, "born and emerging," is particularly significant within the context of *Tribute*. Seeking to be reborn after the devastation of war, the poet introduces a series of maternal deities into the patriarchal apocalyptic myth. The image that is cast through this poetic montage is the Lady, as she appears to both the poet and her collective of witnesses. Although the witnesses are

powerless and awestruck in section 6, they become active creators through the collection of their

experiences. H.D. empowers the witnesses of war by endowing the gaze with powers of revision.

This revision is made possible through a series of montage sequences. The Lady emerges

as the synthesized "higher dimension," as Eisenstein put it, a new entity created out of collective

visionary experience. H.D. strings together images that depict the Lady as she has been

previously represented in traditional iconography. These images describe how "we have seen

her," but the poet admits that "none of these suggest her as I saw her":

> we have seen her head bowed down
> with the weight of a domed crown,
>
> or we have seen her, a wisp of a girl
> trapped in a golden halo;
>
> we have seen her with arrow, with doves
> and a heart like a valentine
>
> we have seen her in fine silks imported
> from all over the Levant,
>
> and hung with pearls brought
> from the city of Constantine […]
>
> But none of these, none of these
> suggest her as I saw her,
>
> though we approach possibly
> something of her cool beneficence (*Trilogy* 93-94, 96)

Although the poet claims that "the painters did very well by her," none of these single images

can contain the Lady (94). Each depiction "approaches" the Lady as she appears to the poet,

gesturing towards this new figure. In section 32, she emerges as a separate entity from the

sequence of images, bearing "none of her usual attributes" (97). H.D. creates the Lady by pulling

together these common and conflicting depictions of the Virgin Mother, yet she is distinct from

them. Breaking up and re-arranging text from the Book of Revelation, H.D. then inserts the Lady

into Biblical mythology, adopting her as the new savior. At this point, the Lady takes shape in reality; her attributes are not only "seen," but also "borne" (97).

However, the Lady first appears to the poet in a dream, and slowly emerges out of the unconscious to become this fully realized figure of resurrection. This act of projection parallels the well-established connection between psychoanalysis and film theory. Emerging at end of the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis and cinema developed a symbiotic relationship within modernity. This relationship has been studied at length over the last few decades, especially in regards to H.D.'s active involvement in both the cinematic and psychoanalytic fields[2]. However, little has been said about the dream-vision that occurs in *Tribute*, how it draws from both Eisenstein's theories of montage and Freud's theories of the unconscious, and what this means for H.D.'s recovery from trauma. Written during World War II about the experience of World War I, H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* provides insight into what she deems "war-shock" through dream interpretation (*TTF* 93). Recalling her visionary experience in Corfu, H.D. writes in *Tribute to Freud* that the images she sees projected on her hotel wall can be interpreted in "two ways or more than two ways" (51). The first way seems to be Freud's contention that "we can read or translate it as a suppressed desire for forbidden 'signs and wonders,' breaking bounds, a suppressed desire to be a Prophetess" (51). Yet, H.D. mentions another possibility, taking issue with Freud's diagnosis that she is acting out on suppressed desires. Alternatively, the projected images might be "merely an extension of the artist's mind, a *picture* or an illustrated poem, taken out of the actual dream or daydream content and projected from within (though apparently from outside)" (51). H.D. interprets the "writing-on-the-wall" as an act of creative expression, the

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[2] See Laura Marcus's "Introduction" to Part 6 of *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, pp. 240-246.

manifestation of "a high-powered *idea*" (51). The projected images are explorations into the mind of the artist, a penetration of unconscious space.

Written within a year of *Tribute to the Angels*, this passage from *Tribute to Freud* significantly influences our reading of the Lady. For H.D., the Lady is this high-powered idea, the artist's dream that is "projected from within." Having actually appeared to H.D. in a dream as she was writing *Tribute to the Angels*, the Lady becomes fully explored in her poetic projection: "There is a Lady too…she put in an appearance — in a dream — in the middle of writing the sequence, so in she went to the book" (Pearson ix). H.D. parenthetically acknowledges in *Tribute* that dreams are not created solely from within, but actually originate from lived experience. The Lady appears as a fragmented, abstract dream-image, but ultimately originates from the conscious world. Sarah Graham explains that according to trauma theory, H.D. could not have written about her trauma directly "because trauma, by its very nature, remains unprocessed in a coherent, conscious sense" (306). The dream mimics the ways in which the mind processes trauma, through non-narrative fragments. As H.D. and the poem's collective of witnesses begin to recall and make sense of the dream, the Lady's purpose becomes more defined, and recovery from trauma becomes a possibility.

This psychoanalytic understanding of the dream is strongly connected to the theories surrounding modern film and montage. "*Borderline* is a dream," H.D. pronounces in her review of the film, "and perhaps when we say that we have said everything. The film is the art of dream portrayal and perhaps when we say that we have achieved the definition, the synthesis toward which we have been striving" (Donald et al. 232). For H.D., the cinema provides a conscious space on which the enigmatic symbols of the unconscious can be projected and interpreted. This resembles Eisenstein's explanation of montage as the representation of "*intellectual* contexts" by

combining "shots that are *depictive*, single in meaning, neutral in content"; in other words, the montage depicts the invisible process of thought (*Film Form* 30). H.D. similarly uses poetic montage in order to project and decipher the dream, which resides within this invisible, psychological space. Adalaide Morris focuses on the word projection as it appears in much of H.D.'s work, stating, "Accounts of dreams are, as it were, projections of projections, and H.D. was justly proud of her command of this intricate transmutation" (107). Projected into the conscious space of the poem, the dream can be rendered and translated. Furthermore, the poetic spectators contribute to her translation of the dream, creating and revising images as "creating spectators," to use Eisenstein's terminology. It is only through the persistent testimony of the poem's witnesses that the Lady can be recognized. So while H.D. attempts to articulate her own war-shock by writing *Trilogy*, in itself a dream, she also recruits others to formulate a response to trauma.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Walter Benjamin similarly recognized this possibility for montage after World War I. For Benjamin, film-editing techniques like montage have "enriched our field of perception" because "an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored" ("Work of Art" 236). Therefore, traces of traumatic memory can be brought to the surface and processed in a visual space. The dream interpretation that takes place in *Tribute* provides a similar space to explore the unconscious. As the poet slowly wakes up from her enigmatic dream, she struggles to comprehend whether the Lady has actually appeared before her or if she is simply a figment of her imagination:

> I realized I had been dreaming,
>
> that I lay awake now on my bed,
> that the luminous light
>
> was the phosphorescent face

or my little clock […]

And yet in some very subtle way,
she was there more than ever,

as if she had miraculously
related herself to time here (*Trilogy* 90-91)

Though the poet realizes after waking that the Lady was part of a dream, she is no less real.

Lingering on this moment right after waking, H.D. finds a moment of time in which the dream

and the wakened state are interconnected. The poet repeatedly returns to the image of the clock,

which "minute by minute, ticks round its prescribed orbit" (88). Although time passes, the

Lady's montage sequence constantly returns the memory of the dream to the present. Rather than

treating time as fleeting and elusive, the poet implores that "this curious mechanical perfection /

should not separate but relate rather, // our life, this temporary eclipse / to that other…" (88).

This concept recalls Mary Ann Doane's differentiation between time and memory; although time

is purely external and cannot be stored or retained, memory can be reproduced (Doane 45). With

this realization, modern cinema incorporated techniques like montage in the 1930s as a way to

reflect deeply on everyday experiences. For H.D. in *Trilogy*, the record of memory is vital; it is

what enriches "our life, this temporary eclipse" with something eternal and divine.

In the last sections of *Tribute*, the Lady is no longer possessed by symbolic iconography:

"But nearer than Guardian Angel / or Good Daemon, // she is not-fear, she is not-war, / but she is

no symbolic figure // of peace, charity, chastity, goodness, / faith, hope, reward" (*Trilogy* 104).

Reconsidering the union of Annael and Uriel, H.D. now exposes the Lady as "a new phase, a

new distinction of colour" that cannot be captured by either ancient iconography or by symbolic

images and speech (106). The montage sequence has successfully produced this new idea that

cannot be articulated by its individual parts. Now fully realized, the Lady is observed carrying

the Book of Life, a revised Book of Revelation. This book is palimpsestic, filled with ancient wisdom but also left blank for the impression of a new tradition. Having successfully recovered the secrets of the past, the poet now looks into the future:

> So she must have been pleased with us,
> who did not forgo our heritage
>
> at the grave-edge;
> she must have been pleased
>
> with the straggling company of the brush and quill
> who did not deny their birthright;
>
> she must have been so pleased with us,
> for she looked so kindly at us
>
> under her drift of veils,
> and she carried a book" (100).

At the "grave-edge," the moment of crisis, the writer becomes the new mythmaker, saving the human race by recovering a forgotten history. According to Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, this re-written narrative, "counters the trauma engendered by war and war narrative from a female perspective" (82). Made manifest through a collective testimony, the Lady now offers an alternative to the annihilation of war. By the end of *Tribute*, H.D. has successfully constructed a narrative of recovery.

In the final section of *Tribute*, H.D. has successfully reached the "haven, heaven" that was alluded to in *The Walls*: "Where the flames mingle // and the wings meet, when we gain / the arc of perfection, // we are satisfied, we are happy, / we begin again" (*Trilogy* 109). The perfect combination has been attained to yield this resurrection. Eisenstein describes this combination as a "dynamic clash of opposing passions" (*Film Form* 46); Benjamin, "perception in the form of shocks" ("Motifs" 175). And like H.D., both Eisenstein and Benjamin saw montage as acting on the spectator beyond the space of the screen or poem. Eisenstein pursued

the spectator's political awakening whereas Benjamin envisioned a spectator that could actively participate in an environment saturated with stimulating technology. For H.D., the reader has re-entered a world ravished by war. At the end of *Tribute*, the new beginning is shown just within reach, the blank pages of the Book of Life are ready for continuation; and yet, this is not the end that H.D. anticipated for *Trilogy*. In the few months after writing *Tribute*, H.D. wrote to Pearson that she felt the need "to 'do' something about it — either write a slight introduction or as you say leave it and do a third to the trilogy" (Pearson x). Having recovered from past trauma, *Trilogy* reaches a point of stasis: what is this new narrative that replaces the trauma of war? H.D. continues her treatment and healing of trauma in the final section of *Trilogy*, *The Flowering of the Rod*, which faces the world beyond the war.

Conclusion: Reconsidering History in *The Flowering of the Rod*

H.D. wrote *The Flowering of the Rod* as "beyond and above the war" (Pearson, xi). Although she wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson in September 1944 claiming to lack inspiration for the third and final piece of *Trilogy*, only a few months passed between *Tribute* and the poems of *Flowering*; as Pearson astutely notes, "her ideas were seeds in the sections she had already written" (x). The images, signs, and symbols that have repeatedly appeared and been explored by H.D. throughout *Trilogy* culminate in this final consideration of war and history. Having "withstood // the anger, frustration, / bitter fire of destruction," H.D. observes that "we have done all we could…we have given until we have no more to give" (*Trilogy* 113). Standing back from the wreckage, H.D. divulges the new knowledge that has emerged from her epic three-part montage sequence. Using this new knowledge, H.D. creates a narrative that challenges the very idea of time and progress. She encourages an approach towards history that disregards the normal confines of linear time and instead follows the structure of memory.

Though no longer confronted with the immediacy and closeness of war, H.D. resists the urge to passively resume life as it was before. As Goodspeed-Chadwick notes, *Flowering* "moves on to tackle the issue of resurrection as an antidote to trauma and paralysis, or stasis" (84). Within the poem, resurrection represents the emergence from war, the literal resumption of life after a period of death and violence. Yet, H.D. warns against the impulse to find "simple affirmation" in resurrection (*Trilogy* 116). The poet observes, "In resurrection, there is confusion / if we start to argue; if we stand and stare, // we do not know where to go" (116). The ability to carry on beyond the war is obscured by complacency with the present state of peace. However, it is necessary to continue remembering the past in order to move forward into the future. As the poet later asserts, "resurrection is a sense of direction" (123). Much of *Trilogy* uses montage

towards this purpose; H.D. exerts a continuous effort to interpret the past and discover this new direction, a new way experience war and trauma.

In many ways, this resembles the greater purpose that Eisenstein originally intended for his intellectual montage techniques. Eisenstein's formal experimentations with montage are closely intertwined with his revolutionary ideology and materialistic approach towards history. James Goodwin points to the 1925 essay "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form" to explain Eisenstein's motivations behind montage. For Eisenstein, "the photographic media, as inventions of the industrial revolution, have a unique opportunity as art forms to render this revolutionary advance in man's productive relationship with the material world" (Goodwin 142). Montage was Eisenstein's means of pulling the cinema "toward the project of treating historical revolutionary material" (143). His formal experiments in films such as *Battleship Potemkin* and *October* sought to identify an alternative to conventional history: a revolutionary history. Eisenstein's films also made an impression on other theorists and artists during this period. With examples of artists such as Eisenstein, Walter Benjamin would develop his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Production," which considers the ways in which montage encourages action from within the passive post-war spectator.[1] Throughout the 1920s, montage provided not only a new formal aesthetic for experimental film, but also a significant historical and political purpose beyond the cinematic screen.

H.D.'s poetic montage embodies much of this original purpose. *Trilogy* offers an alternative history during the final years of World War II, one that might replace a narrative of ongoing violence and conflict. During these late war years, H.D. again finds use for Eisenstein's montage techniques, this time using the modern long poem instead of the cinema. For H.D., the

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[1] Benjamin's theories surrounding cinematic montage after World War I are explained earlier in this thesis in Chapter 1.

theory of montage gains new vitality following the devastating occurrence of a Second World

War. Her poetic montage methods challenge a conventional understanding of history and the

traditional belief in human progress. For example, in the second section of *Flowering*, the poet

claims, "I would rather drown, remembering…":

> I would rather beat in the wind, crying to these others:
>
> yours is the more foolish circling,
> yours is the senseless wheeling
>
> round and round — yours has no reason —
> I am seeking heaven;
>
> yours has no vision,
> I see what is beneath me, what is above me,
>
> what men say is-not — I remember,
> I remember, I remember — you have forgot:
>
> you think, even before it is half-over,
> that your cycle is at an end,
>
> but you repeat your foolish circling" (*Trilogy* 121).

Whereas the "others" are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past due to their "senseless

wheeling," the poet instead chooses to look back on history with intentionality. In order to

progress forward, it is necessary to have a critical understanding of the past; "I see what is

beneath me, what is above me." Reflecting Siegfried Kracauer's historical application of

montage, H.D. disregards the indelible forward progress of linear time in favor of a more

selective and intentional history. The poem's "others" repeat their "foolish circling" by only

looking blindly ahead; World War I leads then into World War II. Seeking a way out of this

cycle of crisis, H.D. reinterprets the palimpsest of history. She criticizes the idea that there is a

definitive course of history, one that has been decided and passed on through patriarchal

tradition. Instead, H.D. chooses to remember a forgotten history of female power, a history that offers birth and redemption in the place of more death and conflict.

As has been discussed in all of the preceding chapters, *Trilogy* uses montage techniques in order to uncover and interpret this alternative history; in *Flowering*, these ideas and methods culminate in the story of Kaspar and Mary. From section 12 onward, H.D. retells the story of the days before Christ's death and resurrection through the eyes of two marginal characters of the Bible: Mary Magdalene, the prostitute who was first to bear witness of Christ's resurrection, and Kaspar, the magi who brings myrrh as a gift for the newborn Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. As Adalaide Morris notes "the first two parts of *Trilogy* had precipitated a new male and female principle; now, in part 3, they meet to effect the transformation" (114). Kaspar, described as a heathen and an inheritor of the ancient alchemical tradition from a line of Arabs, carries a sealed jar of "priceless, unobtainable-elsewhere myrrh," a distillation that some say "lasted literally forever" (*Trilogy* 132). In H.D.'s retelling, Mary and Kaspar meet and exchange this jar of myrrh, conflating Christ's death and resurrection with his birth. On his way to "a coronation and a funeral — a double affair," Kaspar encounters Mary Magdalene and observes her kissing the feet of Christ (130). Through a speck of light that reflects off of Mary's hair, he is transported into an elaborate vision: "but when he saw the light on her hair / like moonlight on a lost river, // Kaspar remembered" (148). Within this vision, Kaspar receives the jar of myrrh from Mary and remembers the deliverance of this gift to the newborn Christ; the rigid rules of time and space are disregarded as past and present are conflated into a single vision of redemption.

In describing Kaspar's vision, H.D. uses techniques and ideas that parallel the principles of cinematic montage theory. For one, the vision appears to Kaspar as if in a mirror, an intermediary space that is comparable to a film screen:

> this was Kaspar
> who saw as in a mirror,
>
> one head uncrowned and then one with a plain head-band
> and then one with a circle of gems of an inimitable colour;
>
> they were blue, yet verging on purple […]
>
> this blue shot with violet;
> how convey what he felt?
>
> he saw as in a mirror, clearly, O very clearly,
> a circlet of square-cut stones on the head of a lady,
>
> and what he saw made his heart so glad
> that was as if he suffered,
>
> his heart labored so
> with ecstasy (150)

The vision appears before Kaspar as if reflected in a mirror; it is inspired projection rather than

neurotic hallucination. As in cinematic montage, the vision contains a sequence of clearly

identifiable images, and yet the resulting effect cannot be put into adequate words; Kaspar

cannot at first "convey what he felt" or truly describe the purple-blue color of the gems.

Furthermore, the images reflected before Kaspar stir intense emotion within him, and he emerges

with a strong sense of both ecstasy and suffering. Intellectual montage requires an attentive and

shrewd spectator, and Kaspar lives up to this role. His joy requires labor, and his final ecstasy is

mixed with suffering. Multiple dichotomies are merged together through Kaspar's efforts; the

oppositions between suffering and ecstasy, time and eternity, male and female "at last rest in

balanced unity" (Edmunds 82).

  Part of Kaspar's ability to discover this unification is through his ability to read and

translate ancient signs and symbols. Kaspar's youth was dedicated to "rigorous sessions of

concentration / and study of the theme and law / of time-relation and retention of memory"

(*Trilogy* 151). With this understanding of time and memory, Kaspar is able to call upon ancient wisdom to render the message of his vision. Within a "fleck of light like a flaw in the third jewel" he finds "the whole secret of the mystery" (152). As readers of H.D.'s text, we have also been exposed to many of these ancient signs and symbols. The images that H.D. has already recovered and translated throughout *Trilogy* are placed within Kaspar's vision, such as the alchemical jewel. These are signs recovered through H.D.'s revised history, which combines patriarchal convention with an alternative feminine tradition. Therefore, although Kaspar deciphers the vision using his knowledge of old signs and symbols, a tradition that has been passed on through generations of male patronage, he discovers a unified male and female history through his encounter with Mary. Similar to a cinematic montage sequence, the vision taps into Kaspar's individual knowledge, but also reveals something new entirely through its revision of the patriarchal tradition.

This collision of opposites results in a sudden breakage from other boundaries of space and time. The fleck of light seen on the crowned jewel changes shape and transports Kaspar's vision to a continuously widening circle of time:

> And the flower, thus contained
> in the infinitely tiny grain or seed,
>
> opened petal by petal, a circle,
> and each petal was separate
>
> yet held, as it were
> by some force of attraction
>
> to its dynamic centre;
> and the circle went on widening
>
> and would go on opening
> he knew, to infinity;
>
> but before he was lost,

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out-of-time completely,

he saw the islands of the Blest,
he saw the Hesperides (153)

Kaspar's vision goes backwards into the "depths of pre-history"; he sees the Hesperides, nymphs

from Greek mythology who guarded the Tree of Life in a garden at the western edge of the

world, on the Islands of Blest (161). In this brief moment, Kaspar becomes aware of "the whole

scope and plan // of our civilization on this, / his and our earth, before Adam" (153). H.D.

merges two images of Paradise: the garden on the Islands of Blest and the Garden of Eden in

which Adam and Eve ate fruit from the forbidden tree. These images emerge out of the smallest

detail, a fleck of light, grain, or seed that transforms into a flower of intricate design. The flower

confers meaning in the same way as a skillfully cut montage sequence: although "each petal was

separate," they are held together by "some force of attraction to its dynamic centre." In her *Close

Up* essay "Restraint," H.D. identifies this force of attraction as a result of skilled editing

techniques. For H.D., a successful cinematic scene is guided by "some precise and definite clear

intellect at the back of the whole, one centralizing focus of thought cutting and pruning the too

extraneous underbrush of tangled detail" (Donald et al. 111). Kaspar's vision is centrally focused

on the poet's dedicated search for Paradise; the quick cut to an image of the Islands of Blest

reveals a time before the fall of man, an uncorrupted heaven on earth. The individual parts of

Kaspar's vision are carefully crafted to communicate this whole, and as such, Kaspar translates

the innate connections created between disparate images.

The meaning behind Kaspar's vision emerges from an implicit rhythm rather than a direct

message: "And he heard, as it were, the echo / of an echo in a shell, // words neither sung nor

chanted / but stressed rhythmically; the echoed syllables of this spell / conformed to the sound

//of no word he had ever heard spoken" (*Trilogy* 156). None of the images directly confer

meaning, nor do they utter the secret of resurrection in legible words. Rather, it is translated and understood through interconnected moments of a reinterpreted past, "through spiral upon spiral of the shell / of memory that yet connects us // with the drowned cities of pre-history" (156). It is only by revisiting this extensive history that the secret can take shape. No single frame of memory can individually communicate this message; it requires a montage of memories separated by time and space. This is how montage methods succeed where a strictly linear depiction of time fails. As Eisenstein explains, "The full picture of the whole, as determined both by the shot and by montage, also emerges, vivifying and distinguishing both the content of the shot and the content of the montage" (*Film Sense* 10). Kaspar is able to discover this "full picture of the whole" within fragments of remembered history, and consequentially, these past memories are "vivified" by a new emerging revelation. Through montage, H.D. gives new life and breadth to forgotten and marginalized histories.

The story of Kaspar and Mary concludes with Kaspar at the birth of Christ, delivering the gift of myrrh. H.D. reconstructs the events of Christ's life to begin a new cycle: death, resurrection, birth. The three-part structure of *Trilogy* reflects this cycle as well, beginning with the air raids in London and concluding on the birth of a new era after the war. In many ways, this sequence narrates H.D.'s recovery from the war-shock that returned with onset of World War II. Utilizing montage theories and techniques, she constructs a history of feminine power that allows her to confront and redefine her in a way that emphasizes healing and renewal. However, despite the deeply personal underpinnings of *Trilogy*, H.D.'s epic poem also addresses the larger scope of history, insisting on a new kind of historicism. Engaging with intellectual montage theory, H.D. reconsiders the shape and progress of history in the wake of two global conflicts. Early in *Flowering*, reflecting on inevitable decline of powerful cities, the poet insists, "It is not madness

to say / you will fall, you great cities, // (now the cities lie broken); / it is not tragedy…it is simple reckoning, algebraic, / it is geometry on the wing" (*Trilogy* 126). All great cities rise and fall; this can be calculated mathematically, assured by the prophetic design of history. Throughout *Trilogy*, H.D. considers the full scope of this design, composed of many individual rises and falls. She envisions history taking the shape of a lily, "each petal, a kingdom, an aeon" (127). This perspective of history emphasizes the connections between each petal, each significant instance from the past, and considers what those connections can reveal.

This conceptualization of history is particularly characteristic of literary modernism after World War I; disillusioned by war, many writers and artists contemplated the subjective nature of time and experience within their creative works. Cinematic montage emerged in the 1920s as a response to this new world-view and changing set of aesthetics. However, a decade after she abandoned the cinema, these ideas and concepts remained prevalent in H.D.'s creative work. Following World War II, H.D. repurposed montage beyond the cinema in order to reapply the healing effects onto the current state of history. Combining the science of psychoanalysis and the art of image projection, intellectual montage became the ideal response to the seemingly endless cycle of war. Turning to write *Trilogy*, montage becomes the effective diagnosis for world ravaged by massive and indiscriminate warfare.

This re-conceptualization of history is also evident in other literary works written after World War I. Most prevalently, Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927-1940) uses the theory and methods of montage in order to reconsider history and progress. In *The Arcades Project*, a collection constructed over the course of 13 years between 1927 and 1940, Benjamin uses the theory of montage in practice in order to assemble a history of the Paris arcades in the 19th century. He defines his method as "literary montage," an assemblage of various quotations

from mostly unidentified textual sources (*Arcades*, 460). Benjamin amassed and reflected on

hundreds of these fragmentary pieces, assembling the collection without apparent regard for

logical chronology. Rather than adhering to the traditional conventions of historical time, he

evokes an alternative temporality based on a "constellation" of images:

> It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, an image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill" (462).

Benjamin disrupts the relationship between past and present; instead, "then" and "now" are

brought together in a coinciding image. These dialectic images, Benjamin claims, are the only

genuine history. They are not purely dependent on temporal distance, but instead form a

relationship based on their related significance. The temporal relationship matters less than the

associative connection between the various fragments.

Although he is writing about 19th century Paris in the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin's use

of literary montage draws from his own first-hand experiences after World War I. In creating his

genuine history, Benjamin seeks answers from the past that might inform the present. As

Benjamin writes in his "Theses on the Philosophy History," written at the beginning of World

War II, "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption" (254).

For H.D., the camera eye revealed a palimpsestic past that could not be perceived by the naked

eye, exposing an unrealized truth. In *Trilogy*, she looks back into the camera lens and uses

montage as a way to redeem a broken history.

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