PART I: BEGINNINGS
Chapter I

It is some afternoon in May, twenty-five years ago—1935 or 1936—in a high-school room. A young teacher is reading:

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air...

The patience of her voice, where resignation and the hope for a communion in teaching still struggled, the reaching out of her voice to engage our care, had a sad sweet lure for me. But now, as she read the poem, something changed, became more, transformed by her sense of the poet’s voice, impersonating H.D.

... fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

To recall the poem, blunted and rounded in the heat, is to recall its first reading, and leads me back to that early summer of my own life. Just beyond the voice of the poem, the hum and buzz of student voices comes distantly from beyond an open window.

The poem came as an offering. It may have been a diversion or a reward in our course of instruction. She had presented it as something more, a personal communication. “I have brought a poem today, not as part of your required reading” did she say? or “not English literature, but a confidence, a gift or share”? It was clear, anyway, that much of what we had to read was a prescribed thing she had to teach and we had to learn. Not only histories and zoologies, but novels and poems became school work.

Books had opened in childhood imaginations of other lives in which the idea of our own lives dwelling took on depths and heights, colors and figures, a new ground beyond self or personality in the idea of Man. But this prescribed thing was different, books became materials for examinations. English Literature with its reading lists, its established texts, its inquisitions, was to map our compulsory path in what had seemed before an open country. Work by work, author by author, the right roads were paved and marked, the important sights were emphasized, the civic improvements were pointed out where the human spirit had successfully been converted to serve the self-respect of civil men, and the doubtful, impulsively created areas were deplored.

If we, in turn, could be taught to appreciate, to evaluate as we read and to cultivate our sensibilities in the ground of other men’s passions, to taste and to regulate, to establish the new thing in the marketplace, we were to win some standing in the ranks of college graduates, and educated middle class, urbane and professional, as our parents had done before us.
But there were times when Miss Keough all but confided that the requirements of knowing the code of Literature were tedious; and there were other times when—even among these things we were supposed to read—she would present some poem or story as if it belonged, not to a reading list but to her own life. All the status of appreciation and knowing about things seemed nothing at all then, compared with the alliance life might make in love with other lives revealed in men’s works. She would introduce certain writers—reading aloud or lending a book for me to read at home—with some hesitation that gave them an importance in my personal relation to her, fearfully and in that bravely, as if, were I to come to the heart of the matter in them, I would come too to this woman’s heart and to my own.

This poem *Heat* by H.D. we understood was offered so. It belonged not to the order of poems and stories that we must know all about if we were to be accomplished students. It belonged to the second order that seemed to contain a personal revelation. It was the ground for a possible deeper communion. At times like this, reading to us, she was like a child searching out her companions, sharing with us corners of a garden that were secret or magic places, bring forward treasures or keys, taking us to see her animals and friends, in order to place her life in our keeping. She was trying us, not demanding response but testing for an affinity.

“This is the fine thing”—was that part of the transformation in the reading voice? “This intense care that can so distinguish its feeling of thickness and pressure this is the rare courage”? There was her admiration for the sensitivity and the intensity that the poem made available, but there was her shyness too, as if what had been disclosed in the poem touched upon a similar disclosure in herself. The way the poet H.D. admitted, let-in, to her self through the poem, and then, in a double sense, admitted to the listener or reader, being almost a victim of the thickness of air, the bluntness of fruit—let life use you this way—this was not shameful (as crying out, “*O Wind, rend open the heat*”, being intense about trivial things I like pears, threatened the composure of household, gang, school and city or state, and was shamed, put down, as one must put away childish things), to propose the truth of what was felt, to articulate just the emotion that was most vulnerable and in need, took courage.

Courage, yes—but there was something more. This poem in itself was necessary in order for what it evoked to be kept as a power. It was the sense of the necessity that what was felt be kept that filled the poet in writing. To find out feeling meant to evoke a new power in life. To feel at all challenged the course of everything about one. To articulate the feeling, putting it forth in a poem like this, brought others into the challenge. To strengthen and enlarge not only the resource but the responsibility of life ahead. It was something larger than being courageous then; a trust in living, not only to use things but to be used by them, a drive that broke through the restrictions and depressions of spirit whereby men were shaped to a public purpose.

Falling in love, a conversion or an obsession these were close to what the poet knew in the poem, seeing the world in the light of a new necessity. An in-forming.
meant the poet submitted her will to be shaped by what happened. A longing? Or prayer? Addressed to a natural force in a world in which inner and outer nature were one?

In the heat of the afternoon. Outside, the whir of sprinklers, the glare, the blur of voices. Inside that murmur, there was a place of refuge, a silence created in our attention. Classrooms for us—certainly for me—in high school began to be meeting rooms. What I was to become was there for me in the presence of a few teachers as it never had been at home, as it never was to be later in university lecture halls. Yes, there were others, but this one, this grave young woman, attended the possibility of a poet in me. She could be a task mistress where the uninspired and uninspiring preparation for college entrance exams was concerned. She had, after all, to project an authority over us. She had her pay for that. She must have endured, we must have endured, a tedium then, but the dreary tasks of accomplishment and graduation could vanish in moments when work itself took on another meaning.

What I was to be grew in what she was. “I want to know what you will make of this,” she would say, leaving with me Lawrence’s *The Man Who Died* or Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* to take home. I was not to sum them up, not to know something about them so that I could do well on an examination, but to grow through them and towards them in some way. What I would make of *The Man Who Died* or *The Waves* would be what I would make of myself, the course of a life. These works were keys at once to responsive chords in myself, to the company of a larger life and to my work there. “A larger life,” *la vita nuova*, may be opened to us in some such way because we fall in love, as I surely was in love with her, discovering in a teacher that which awakens an objective for ardor. “*La gloriosa donna della mia mente*” Dante calls Beatrice. It was a responsibility to glory that she touched in me.

For my teacher brought me, where I sought to find our meeting ground in these books, not to some estimate of their cultural worth, but to a love of the spirit disclosed. H.D., Lawrence, Virginia Woolf—these had become most real or most alive or most individual in their writing. Wasn’t it that they intensely showed what they were? Daring the disregard or scorn of conventional readers, if they might find the regard of the true reader.

The intensity of my own spirit was lifted from the shame it had seemed to incur in adolescence—for intensity, in itself, was uncouth—towards a worth, a share, a fire or flame out of a fire, that through her eyes I saw disclosed in these writers was a thing, the thing, to be loved. The ardor for the truth of what was felt and thought, the faith in passion, was a virtue, a power of man, to search out a life within life.

The thick air of adolescence, the thick air of Bakersfield, the heat of the valley town where I grew up after I was ten until I went to college, pressing up, blunting the edges, gave substance to the immediacy of the poem “Heat” as she read. There was the
charged most-real sensual image.

She must have said something about “imagism”. Certainly she had talked about “imagism” in discussing another poem, “Patterns” by Amy Lowell. But Amy Lowell’s garden had been descriptive in its appeal. Images there had illustrated the area of the poem so that a scene might appear, words chosen to call up visual representations. It was flat-work, not sounding the depths, as I remember the poem.

In the poem of H.D.’s, the image stirred not only pictures from my knowledge of a like world, from the shared terms of orchard, pear and grape at the stem, and the shimmering medium of air in the heat; but it stood too for another statement, arousing and giving a possible articulation for inner urgencies to be realized, to be made good. The poem had a message, hidden to me then, that I felt but could not read, an unconscious alliance that made for something more than a sensual response. We were directed to imagine the scene, but the actual poem involved something we almost forgot in the suggestion of pears and grapes, or air so thickened and shaped in the heat that it cunningly fitted thickness and shape of fruit, so that the suggestion shaped the poem itself. The idea of this being a perfect lyric, an ecstatic, a memorably shaped moment drew us away from recognition of the opening and closing address of the poem that cried out for release from such perfections.

We had heard of the heat of composition or inspiration that was like a forge in which words or metal yielded to man’s shapings. It was a good thing, like the heat that brought pears to their shape and ripeness. And this poem had been shaped, yet it had too, not perfection but the organic irregularities that life forms have. It had not the regularity of an imposed system, or repeated patterns of stress and syllable, alliteration and rhyme in a prescribed scheme; but its form grew, as living forms do, in the faith or feeling of a being, transforming itself, using inheritance and environment, tones and cadences as they happened towards its melody. Just beyond the threshold of our untrained ears were the rimes built on the tone-leading of vowels and the variation of consonant groupings: “it” to “thick”, “fruit” to “through”, “air” to “pears”, “rounds” to “plough”; or the r, the d, the p of “rend open” to “drop” to “presses up”. The short lines of the verse had their rhythm by the measures of changing numbers. The poem was finely conditioned, felt along the track of some inner impulse. It had form that was H.D., as the leaves of an oak have a form that is the signature of the oak. It had form not by conventions kept but by the pulse of its own life.

There was another expression we had read or heard that was echoed in the poem—a cry that rent the air. Something about to happen that would challenge inheritance and environment. “Rend it to tatters,” H.D. asks in the poem. The address and the evoked image, anyway, in their message concentrated a likewise hidden prayer of adolescence that this intensity, this threatening to come to a conclusion, this susceptibility not be rounded in the oppressive thick air of home and town towards homeowner and townsman, but be broken or break forth into something new. The thickness and heat that ripened was this intensity’s own medium of life. All about one, one saw the
process of the town's shaping unruly youth into its citizens, pressing desire into the
roundness of its satisfactions, thickening the fire of the spirit into energetic figures that
would be of public use. O, let my youth be rent open by some new force, the soul
prayed: a path be made, like a wind rending what cohered towards an end of energies
into even, if need be, an incoherence, to free movement from its impending end,
enlarging the demand for form;

cut the heat—
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

More than sensation then, more than impression, gave force to the image. It
was not only a vivid representation of sensor data but an evocation of depth. Image in
Amy Lowell's poem had meant that words could illustrate. But in this poem Heat
“image” conveyed not only the appearance of things but experience, the reciprocity
between inner and outer realities. There was another working of the image, more than
Amy Lowell proposed, partly conscious and partly unconscious. I was aware that
sensual intensity in this poem of H.D.'s, like the sensual intensity in Lawrence's work,
demanded some new beginning in life from my own intensity. Such images were more
immediate and real than likenesses of seeing, hearing or smelling were. I was unaware
that the poem “Heat” was the matrix of two statements in one. I did not know that this
intense image of fruit, heat and longing for a force that would break the ripening perfec-
tion, had a significant concentration for me. I could not, after all, have articulated the
significant concentration of my own adolescent experience, for I did not realize that my
own human life was an image, that my self was a persona, in which many levels of
meaning were incorporated.

The power of subtle, hidden organization, inbinding all elements to its uses,
towards an early conclusion of free movements, a last judgement—such a shaping was
the direction of all simple urgencies—towards the pear, towards the poem, towards the
person of a man. But simple ends, direct uses of things, closing in on the opportunity,
threatened the realization of some wholeness. I thought not of the fruit of the tree but
of the life of the tree, turned ring upon ring, the years gathered towards the spread of its
branches. I felt I must be, the world must be, something more various and full, having
more of flux and experience than the immediate terms of achievement around me
disclosed. Let me not come into my fulfillment until the end of all things, so the soul
secretly resolved.

The poem had something to do with keeping open and unfulfilled the urgencies
of life. Men hurried to satisfy ends in things, pushed their minds to make advances,
right answers. accomplishments, early maturations. They contrived careers that they
fully filled. They grew round and fat upon the bough in the heat that kept them, and they
prayed that they not fall, that no wind come to break them loose.
In H.D.'s early work, in certain poems, experience had hung upon its bough. The poems most anthologists present, the poems that have been selected to label H.D. an “Imagist”, are few and belong to the brief period of the movement called Imagism—between 1912 and 1915; and even these have been mistaken, removed from the context of the book Sea Garden of 1916, to be taken, as they are, as efforts to capture the impression of a moment or thing in itself.

For Hulme and often for Eliot, the image was a striking figure of the author's intelligence and attitude. Whatever else they are, that the setting sun may be like a ruddy faced farmer peering over a wall or that the evening may be like a patient etherized upon an operating table are not intuitions of the real universe. For Amy Lowell, the image was imitative of sensory appearances. But for Pound and H.D.—as, too, for Lawrence and Williams—the image was a vision of reality. Pound saw the image as a nexus in the psychological sense. Reviewing Sea Garden early in 1919, John Gould Fletcher, a fellow Imagist, wrote: “It is really about the soul, or the primal intelligence, or the Nous, or whatever we choose to call that link that binds us to the unseen and uncreated... To penetrate H.D.'s inner meaning, it is only necessary that we approach her poetry with an open and responsive mind... But this state of mind, receptive, quiescent, is also necessary if we are to understand Plotinus, or Dionysius the Areopagite, or Paracelsus, or Behem, or Swedenborg, or Blake.”

The image for H.D., or for some contemporary readers of H.D., was not unrelated to the neo-Platonic Images, to idea and eidolon. The very movement of the line involved image: “A new cadence,” we find in the preface to the Imagist Anthology of 1915, “means a new idea.” There was no thing that was not image, there was no image that was not a lure of the divine and elemental in one. Anguish and ecstasy gave presence to, and were aroused by a presence in, rocks and sea, thunderous surfs, gardens and orchards exposed or sheltered. This was the famous rapture of H.D. in her early work, the root of her lyric genius. The line of her verse grew taut, tempered to keep an edge naked in experience, tensed to provide a mode in which reverberations of these presences might be heard. The image and the voice or dramatic persona provided a nexus in poetry corresponding to the outer and inner worlds in which she worked towards higher and finer modes.

The new poetry was not to be a commodity, a thing of literature or culture, but an instrument in a process of spirit. Pound writing his Cavalcanti essay in this same period pictures such a process in the contribution of Provence to poetry. “The whole break of Provence with this world,” he tells us, “is the dogma that there is some proportion between the fine thing held in the mind, and the inferior thing ready for instant consumption.” “You deal with an interactive force: the virtu in short,” he continues. “The conception of the body as perfected instrument of the increasing intelligence pervades. So, in “Toward the Piraeus”, contrasting her poetic voice perhaps with that of Lawrence, H.D. imagines her virtu:
my own lesser, yet still somewhat fine-wrought,  
fiery-tempered, delicate, over-passionate steel.

It is an image of an instrument prepared for experience that is at once of her physical body-tone, of her spirit, of her verse itself. It was an image too that appealed to the sentiments of the twenties. Not the erotic sensualities of “Hymen” or the intoxications of “Heliodora” came to stand for H.D.’s voice, but the tenseness itself, the almost frigid apprehension that in the poem “Wash of Cold River” she characterizes:

all the sheer rapture  
that I would take  
to mould a clear  
and frigid statue;

It was part of her art, yes. H.D. herself sought fineness of feeling, exactness, and she had suggested in “Sea Rose” or “Sea Lily, Sea Violet” or “Pear Tree” an exquisite sensibility, leaf and petal delicately cut, “precious”, “like flint / on a bright stone”, “fragile as agate”, “from such a rare silver”. She referred to the sculptor’s art and in poetry to lines cut so as if in stone. Pound too in the Cavalcanti essay referred to the sculptor’s art to illuminate the poet’s art: “The god is inside the stone, vacuos exercet aera morsus. The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential, and the rest ‘accidental’ in the philosophic technical sense. The shape occurs.”

In Pygmalion (published early in 1917) H.D. presented the persona of the sculptor as correspondent to the poet to speak of the vitalities at work in the art beyond the mastery of the craft,

am I master of this  
swirl upon swirl of light?

where the gods go, the force of the work is interactive. The sculptor works in stone and light an image that emerges, as the voice emerges from the language, from the medium to his mind. Man, stone and light cooperate in the work. “Am I the god?” Pygmalion asks:

or does this fire carve me  
for its use?

There is the crude literary sense in which Amy Lowell’s “Patterns”, Pound’s “Metro”, Flint’s “Swan”, Joyce’s “I hear an army charging upon the land”, and H.D.’s “Heat” are “Imagist” poems. These anyway, are the examples that are ready to my mind as I write. They have lasted as such from those anthologies Pound or Amy Lowell or H.D.
and Aldington gathered to represent the new poetry in the period of the Imagist movement. They carry over into school textbooks by rote. And so far as “Imagist” ends were satisfied, the movement comes to an end there.

But with Joyce’s “I hear an army charging upon the land”, as with H.D.’s “Heat”, the image cannot be separated, for me, from the prophecy or prayer, the efficacy of the poem. The key lies in a rhetoric.

Pound had sought a cure of tongues by the discipline of the eye, some restraint that would keep words grounded in meaning. The pomp of Milton or the luxury of Swinburne had led men to value effect and enthusiasm in themselves as “poetic”, towards an inflation of language. Protesting against the “prolix” and the “verbose” against words “shoveled in to fill a metric pattern or to complete the noise of a rhyme-sound” or “decorative vocabulary”, Pound insisted that there be “absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.” If we think of his later concern for a monetary credit that is grounded in an actual productive order, “the growing grass that can nourish the living sheep,” and his cause against the great swindling of confidences in usury, commodity speculation, money changing and inflation, we find a basic concern for the good credit of things: both words and moneys are currencies that must be grounded in the substance of a real worth if they be virtuous. Abstraction from meaning meant manipulation of the public trust, as, in America, demagogues had long established by their misuses the sense that what was “rhetorical” was for effect upon the people only, without substance in meaning.

In *Kulchur*, relating his own Cantos to the music of Bartok and even, then, of Beethoven, Pound observed in these works “the defects inherent in a record of struggle.” No other work so contains or shows forth the troubled spirit of our times: it is his genius that even where he presents flashes of eternal mind—veritas, claritas, hilaritas—he does not sublimate but remains involved, by defect, in the agony of the contemporary. A profound creative urge, like So-shu, churns in the sea of Pound’s spirit everywhere, as it churns in the seas of our own history; so that we see it most just where contention will not allow our reason to be undisturbed. It is part of his polemics that Pound juxtaposes his insight of the good to his prejudice of the bad. We are lost if we rest with his uses. So, when Pound wrote, “Consider the definiteness of Dante’s presentation as compared with Milton’s rhetoric,” stirring us to reaction, all was not *claritas*. In the contention, our sense of definiteness and of Dante was to be the greater; but our sense of Milton and rhetoric was to be the less. Where Pound uses the popular prejudicial meaning of “rhetoric”, voiding its base in the likeness once known between the flow of speech and the flow of a river, he troubles the currents of meaning, the currency of the word, and forces us to be involved with the restoration of sense to the language.

*Hretor* (ἡρετός, orator) had its meaning grounded in the Greek verb *hreo* (ἥρεω, to say, that had a pun, at least, if not a root in common with the verb *hreo* (ἥρεω) to flow. The flow of speech was for the Greeks, as for us, an expression that could refer to words running glibly off a tongue being like a babbling brook and likewise to it the speaker’s power or fluency. A poet must be fluent in speech; there must be currents of
meaning as well as specific meanings. Speech was a river. *Liddell & Scott* tells us that “hoi hreontes was a nickname for the Heraclitean philosophers who held that all things were in a constant state of flux.” The mistrust that men had of speech was part of their mistrust of rivers, that swept men along, that persuaded.

Pound was a man of inner conflicts. His persuasion was against persuasion. It is a vital character of his saying, or his river of speech, a currency he has in the common sense where it is most disturbed, that words against which he contends, “abstraction”, “rhetoric”, “jew” or “shit”, appear deprived of their good sense. “Rhetoric” became a term of derogation in his criticism; just as in the Cantos his great river of voices began, sweeping all conflicts up into Heraclitean flux, having mastery through its triumphant rhetoric.

As in these poems of H.D.’s and James Joyce’s we may see too it is the rhetoric that gives us the key. It is the persuasion of

*I hear an army charging upon the land*

that carries us beyond the image towards the poet’s presence as clairaudient. Say that Joyce is referring to the waves of the sea made the more vivid because he imagines them as the horses and men of an army—these horsemen of the surf are an old Celtic idea—and that, in the close, his cry of despair and loneliness imitates the retreat of the wave. It still remains that what the poem presents leads us throughout to something that the poem “says”. Joyce is also telling us he hears—and everything we know of his world in “The Dead” or *Ulysses* or the closing pages of *Finnegans Wake* verifies the sense—the armies of the dead and the unborn at the shores of consciousness, swarming invasions from a sleeping reservoir that press upon the waking mind, as all the things of the waking world press upon the sleeping mind. What appears, whatever we see there, arises from the evocation of “I hear”. The beginning of the saying reaches out from its closest sense, its hearing; the speaker hears, the hearer sees. It is all in the medium of saying: second-speech begins; the second-hearing or second-sight comes to meet it. They were also, those hosts—and all we remember of what was about to happen fulfills the sense of prophecy—intimations of the actual armies of the First World War. “I hear an army charging upon the land” is not only an image of the sea breakers but an omen of war, ready to take on reverberations from history, fitting, preparing as it does, our own immediate knowledge of a world that is now all a sea of armies gathering. Place Joyce's poem in the order of Arnold's “Dover Beach” or Hardy's “Channel Firing” and it ceases to be an imagist poem.

It was the rhetoric too, the form of speech, that gave meaning to image in H.D.'s poem. “O wind, rend open the heat”—if we respond wholly, persuades us to a need in our own being that is not separable from whatever imagist values were realized.

In Pound’s “Metro”, the immediate sense is the interchange or correspondence of blossoms wet pressed to a black bough with faces in a London crowd. We grasp the sense in being struck by the likeness. If we ask further, what does this mean? are these
faces upon what “bough”, blown by what wind? we ask on our own. In H.D.’s poem, the whole presentation of the poem is a metaphor for something hidden from the poet as well as from the reader. Everything that is felt is clearly rendered; what is felt is that something more must impend. We, the poet and those of us readers who have become involved, must, like the knight who would heal the wound of the Fisher King and revive the Waste Land, ask the meaning of “fruit that cannot fall”, of “thickness of air”, of “heat”. We must discover correspondences in our selves.

It is a sufficient sense of “Metro” and “Swan” to grasp the image or of “Patterns” to follow the impersonation and sense the garden as we go. We may take such poems over into another light, see them as parts of larger events, remove their discretion and give them over to other depths or complexities; but the poets meant these images and scenes to satisfy us in themselves.

Let these ratiocinations stand. The great art of our time is the collagist’s art, to bring all things into new complexes of meaning. I am the more aware that the figures of wet pale faces that are blossoms upon the black bough of some Tree, of the Swan, and of the Lady in the Garden, are not only immediate images struck of particular things seen by Pound, Flint, or by Amy Lowell, but are epiphanies—showings forth of eternal Images of the Poem. “Only passion endures,” Pound writes somewhere: “the rest is dross.” I depend here upon some enduring memory of these poems. Just so, they have been claimed by my mind as examples, fitting its vision; my vision then may mistake them in part to fit. They have waited there long among the shades of memory, and now perhaps that we have recalled them the course of this study will bring them forward, until we must read again the actual texts in the present light. But in the case of Joyce’s poem, as with H.D.’s, the memory and the text have always been in the foreground, for I have returned to them again and again, evoking my life in new readings. From the first reading, the poem has been a member of what I am.

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It may have been in 1937, one of those radiant days that October brings to Berkeley after the fog and even cold of the summer. I sprawled on the grass, the little Black Sun Press book with pages printed in blue, lovely and most delicate, in my hands, and as I turned for the first time to the poems, cutting the pages as I went, I read aloud to two girls—young women—whose sense of the world was deeper than mine, I felt, so that I was supported by their listening. For they had known poverty and loneliness in an alien land (the one Italian, the other Jewish, coming from immigrant families); they came from the working-class households close to the burden of labor that furnished food and clothing, that gave them a more immediate sense of the human lot.

Athalie was the young jewess. Let her be a “jewess”, for she impersonated a racial elegance, knowingly referring to old ideas of beauty from the Middle East, Levantine hints that had a mock seductiveness, exciting our sense of the exotic and taunting us in that sense. At the same time she had a bitter knowledge of what to be
jewish meant—it gave reality to her despair. She could make a play where

Rachel née Rabinovitch

tears at the grapes with murderous paws,

reciting the lines with a terrible kind of humor, because the poetry became her own revelation to our company that adored her of some inner risk. “A woman runs a terrible risk,” she would say. She had barely made—did not finally make—the transition from her family, dominated by a fanatic orthodox father, from a folk-world out of the Polish ghetto and a poetry out of ancient Jewish ways, to the shores of light she thought to find in philosophy. The mind! Athalie’s mind was a fire. James and Dewey might be a new testament, but the old testament remained. Truth she knew by its disaster. Terror of her mad father, pity for her enduring mother, madness and enduring in her self, the old covenant that put women among contaminated beings, the old mystery that raised her into the bridal glory of the Shulamite, the old wisdom that looked deep into the vanity of all things and cried “Fear God! There is no end.” “Of making many books there is no end!” —All was caught up into a wave of hysteria, inspired, impersonated, daemonic in part, with a sense of its own caricature, with a sense of its outrage. She had histrionics then, delighting in tirade and dramatic gestures. Lighting it all, so that she is still a power in my memory, she had intense joys and despairs, a vitality that leaped—as later I was to discover the Hasidim once leaped and danced before some glory or joy in the most grievous of times—before the fact of Picasso’s Woman in the Mirror or some scene realized in The Idiot of Dostoievsky, celebrant, before whatever was expressive of passionate, troubled human nature; and she had a wild affection for whatever in us showed response. To suffer, to undergo, to understand anything, danced in a frenzy. Her consciousness rose, as the consciousness of the world rose at that time, towards holocaust. The lot of the jews, the lot of women—these stood in their concentration for the lot of mankind that contained and was predicted in all. Imitating Madame Croiza’s immortal howling as Electra in the recording of the Claudel-Milhaud Oresteia, she was imitating something she felt prophetic, and as we came to the ebftides of the night, she would acclaim Celine’s Voyage au bout de la nuit, where from the dark of Paris slums new Furies arose that suited her fury. Something had been revealed in the heart of France that was everywhere true. Long before her anticipation of human disaster was fulfilled at Belsen and Buchenwald, before at Nagasaki and Hiroshima ways of a further evil were initiated, Athalie had passed from the brilliant wave of her despair and joy, and the wave had gone out, back into the miseries and infantile recesses of dementia praecox. Something once acted had become most real.

Or we may say, something set into action. We were, it seems to me now, trying the scene and ourselves to find the plot and our roles there. We imagined a life as passionate, as full of depths and heightened colors as we found in the arts of man. The lawn, the sun, the two full-bodied young women with their flowing hair and their sandaled feet, and my reading there, had the autonomy the stage has over all other
events. They were my audience as I read, yes, but they were also—the whole little scene was built up with their cooperation—a chorus. Let these things be a fate over me. I read on, leafing through the pages of Joyce's *Collected Poems*, past the bronze crayon portrait, past poems that did not key in. Lines or words in scanning would give the clue. “A merry air”, no. “Welladay! Welladay!” would not do. There was a self-mockery in the book, contriving the title *Chamber Music* and deliberating to taunt its own sentiment with a parody of itself, the too-muchness of the song's manner. Something like this one knew from adolescence, striving to cover shyness and passion and ignorance from those who would despise it by enacting one's self-consciousness, playing the fool or anticipating rejection by an automatic rejection incorporated in the feeling itself, a safety of irony that disavowed the original feeling. But the voice I sought out in the poet was a different voice. It was there in certain poems where the emotion took over from the self-conscious rule.

*Because your voice was at my side*

did not dissemble.

*There is no word nor any sign*

*can make amend*

struck direct from an experience that did not permit fancy or pose, and it spoke too for some dramatic conviction I had. Poetry was a communal voice, and there was a voice in me that sought much communion in order to feel at all.

*All day I hear the noise of waters*

*Making moan,*

I read,

*Sad as the sea-bird is, when going*

*Forth alone,*

acknowledging in reading, what I could not otherwise acknowledge in myself or in them, that we too, each, had gone, *went* forth so.

The Italian girl, Lilli, had a kind of laughter of eyes, of the curve of her lips, as if even one's loneliness was reflected there. Did she pretend to be a Muse? She walked as if there were a music within which she walked, with an air, a reverie, that set her everywhere apart. Hesiod tells us that the Muses hinting at their art said: “We know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things.” And then he says: They “moved with vigorous feet... Thence they arise and go abroad by night, veiled in thick mist, and utter their song with lovely voice.”
Everything Hesiod tells of the Muses might tell of Lilli; she, like them, a serious spirit who was at the same time playful. She was amused, as if there were some womanly strength and wisdom for living in her that came out of shared weakness and sorrows, where compassion was part of appreciation. She had humanity; and to have humanity was harder and at the same time richer than what was needed to be a woman or what was needed to be Italian or Jewish. But it was not that life was hard or that it was rich. To be alive was, I think, in itself some kind of inner joy to her, not only human life but the life of a geranium or of the grass could awake in her a response that touched that inner music. As I read Joyce that day, she had a sympathy for the inner music of the poem that in our consciousness of that sympathy made music all, as a sustaining current.

They were, in their audience, these two women, my nurses, as with a nurse's delight in the free vitality, they caught up the spirit of Joyce with that love in which we find most dear some earnest candid need or weakness—no, the vulnerability in itself that shows bravely forth as a condition, not for our commiseration but for our sympathy, feeling with it, as in Joyce's poem, a vital information.

Or they were playing nurse, for we were all children of ourselves, and writers like Joyce or Dostoievsksy or painters like Picasso and Matisse, artists we admired seemed to us children of their Arts. Or we hoped to be children. For what we meant by "child" had little to do with what we had been. It was, rather, some potential we felt within us. It was the secret alliance with life that we saw in artist or saint that we admired.

Lilli had come from a land and language of saints. "Dearest Brother," she would address me, laying her hands upon me with an expression of intimate care and love that may have emulated Saint Francis. The man Joyce, because his poem had that vulnerability and candor, in the midst of self-consciousness and pose, would be "Brother". I had no knowledge then of the *Canticle of the Sun*; but, just as Athalie evoked her person at times from furies and lamentations out of the Songs and Wisdom of Solomon, so Lilli's joy in pathos had its counterpart in the litanies of Francis. The poem was a lament, a confession, or a hymn that showed forth sympathy with what was alone. In truth the poet-voice was isolate. "All day, all night, I hear them flowing / To and fro," I read aloud and paused before the next poem.

The campanile sounded, bells announcing with their renderings of popular tunes that the change of hours was about to come. Turning over with dismay, I cried, "I have to go."

In jostling streams, lower classmen, some in uniform, some still to change into uniform, went from all parts of the campus towards the gymnasium. It was Military Drill that impended.

"You don't have to go," Lilli commanded, raising her hand in a dramatic gesture that had been delegated its powers by an imagination of our company. "Stay with Joyce." What we had been enacting, the reader and the listeners—the muses, perhaps, for some serious amusement or enchantment was worked through our cooperation—celebrating this most high reading of the poem, was to become real. "Rejoice with Joyce," Athalie commanded. A poem was to take over.
Away towards duty, the one command of the state over us, the students went. In time. Towards the eleven o’clock. To march in time.

There had been the arrogance of Joyce, or the intelligence of Joyce, or the inspiration of Joyce, that had exiled him from church and state, from Ireland, from place and time, so that Dublin was finally all his own, transformed. For the poet, too, there had been going forth alone. The moment was an eternal, an isolate thing. A moment of a poem was an eternal thing, from which many phases of itself radiated in time, where we might enter our share in a man’s isolation.

The students obeyed the orders of the day. Milita at eleven. Some, I knew, got excused by doctor’s orders, escaping from the boredom of it, disqualified by virtue of some physical defect, bad eye-sight or flat feet, or by psychiatric warrant. Doctors were liberal in providing the cut.

I, too, did not like the boredom, the surrender of mind and body to obey compulsory authority in order that there be such an authority over me. There was an eternal conflict between these orders, forcing us into conformations, surrendering self and awareness to endure the tedium, and the other obedience, we had just begun, to an inner order of spirit or the obedience to the beauty of a thing or the fitness of the time. Nerves that must be kept the edges of a vulnerable everlasting consciousness, kept raw and yet fine—our nerves that must serve us if we were to be artists—strained and recoiled at each session of drill, barely allowed for the numbness necessary to get through.

I hear an army charging upon the land.

I read out of Joyce. It was the poem that followed, where I had stopped, taking up the words that rang, not of onerous classes and marches, but of war:

And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees.

War! We were supposed to hate the thought of it, but to embrace the fact of it. Some students were opposed to whatever fact of war. There were pacifists, students who challenged the order to take Military and went on strike, as if they had a right to education that they did not owe to the United States Army. They were expelled if they did not dodge the issue. They had conscience. For the state, to be prepared did not mean to be prepared for life but to be prepared for War. It was a condition of our being educated at all at a state university that we be prepared, that we march. Keep time. I, too, believed that back of the army was a cult of War or a business or profession of War, an evil—for it stood against all hope of peace; but I had not righteous conviction to take a stand. I despaired myself of peace. I was afraid of vested authority.

Away from me the disconsolate students went as I read. It was too late. I could never make it. I would be late. Without an excuse. This poem of Joyce’s was not an
excuse; it was an affronting fact. The time was gone.

It's that moment I wanted to remember, turning, not without panic but with relief too, away from the Military hour that was a bother, a burden, and then, because I felt there was something wrong about the submission, a shame, and somehow, because there had been in those other students a conscience there was not in me, a guilt—turning away from bother, burden, shame, guilt—to the orders of the poem. Attended by two radiantly beaming women who had won me so into their company, their conspiracy, against the army, against the university finally. For I never took getting a degree seriously then. I never went to Military classes again. I ceased going to other classes that I had found a sham. I had come into a poetic order more commanding than my fear of military authorities, but I had lost too the reality of graduating from school, of going on to take my place as a cultural authority. Towards something else, a reality where the poem, the little book of Joyce, the reading and the women, had survived time.

On the fields below, the troops were marching in ranks. Between eleven and twelve o'clock. The students flooded out, breaking and eddying, released, upon the noon bells, hurrying towards their fraternities and public eating rooms. I had let them go.

With panic, with the benediction of my companions, with guilt and joy, I had come from the orders of the day, a deserter, from my possible career as a poet-professor, from literary strategies and prizes to be, into the reading of a poem. Cast in the play. The play was autonomous. Now the melody of events was stronger in me, “carried away”, so the common sense of it is, transported into the authority of the poem from the authority of advisers and generals.

The authority of the poem was a voice of the spirit. To be a poet meant an even fanatic allegiance to a vision or a dream, in order that there be poetry. Men commonly spoke of vision or dream with mistrust. To be a dreamer was ambivalently respected. Dreams rendered men uneasy in their satisfactions. A poet must follow his own ideas or feelings. In a way, instead of having ideas or feelings, the poet lets ideas or feelings “have” him. Seized by an idea.

Giving the authority that the requirements and grades of the university, the approval of my teachers, had once had over me back to the immediacy of what I had come to love, I came into a new fate. The quickening of vowels and consonants, the sequence and hidden design of voice and image that followed the sequence of emotion and intellection belonged now to an eternal order that challenged all other timely conventions.

_They come out of the sea and run shouting by the shore, _I read.

In time, Athalie was to be a mumbling, cackling thing; as Lilli or her sister Mary told me later, gobbling down chocolates and then, slyly, as if her visitor did not see, storing them away in her shoes. I saw her once in an interval before all was lost. She had been released by the hospital, shocked into a kind of social behavior. But they had
cured the edge of her vital being, burning her mind and nerves back from their ends in the knowledge of a terrifying world.

Lilli, working in canneries in the summer and keeping her identity finally with the working class, became a Trotskyite partisan. Her dream, her imagination, was to work towards some salvation and justice that lay asleep in the muscles of men and women working in field and factory, still untranslated into ideal and action. It is towards what I have called the eternal that time is disturbed to awaken those who furnish the food and stuff of life to the virtue, the power, that lies in their labor. All that is unjust leaves us restless with time, divorced from the eternal. If I had come under the orders of poetry, I saw too that those orders would come into their full volition only when poetry was no longer a profession and when the man who would enact the poet shared in the daily labor towards the common need, as men once knew in monastic orders the spirit was free only in communal service.

But the great imagination of socialism in which the old Christian communism survived, the acknowledgment that all goods belong to God, the gospel that the nineteenth century knew of new terms for freedom through the work of life, has gone into its ebb; and from the salvation and justice that were all ideal, imagined themes for a new life, men’s minds have turned to strategies and expediencies and then to their defeat there. Workers were to be awakened not to the good that was in labor, to the true community that lay in the creation of men’s goods, but to the political power that might lie in organization. To become leaders! To bargain in the market where labor was not a work but a commodity! Not to increase our common share in labor but to monopolize towards power. Over dinner tables and in living rooms with Picasso’s Guernica presiding on the wall the flame of inspiration disappeared in the heat of contentions and political ambitions.

Those young men struggling back to their frat houses, breaking away from their ordered ranks, released into their crowd or their selves, were to go on into the ranks of armies and industries made real upon that other field of lies and ambitions, fears and hopes—a war that only gave rise to a wider breach between nations, preparing in its waste for war upon war.

My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?

It was before the outbreak of the First World War that Joyce wrote that close of his poem, of the war that we know now is not an incident but the continuum, the meaning of our nations, our politics, our labor unions, our masses.

Come, let us have a lasting sentence! What is there lasting but our human condition, but what is most vivid in our imagination of what our life has been? The green lawn in the sun. The radiant women—Etruscan beauty as in Picasso’s classic mode, Semitic beauty as in Matisse’s odalisques. The feet, feet, feet of men marching in time towards their Military classes. The distant shouting of orders in the playing field, that in turn becomes the issue of orders in battle fields and war offices, warehouses and shipyards and laboratories, new classrooms and factories. The war, too, defines eternal measures.
Chapter Two

Writing these opening pages of a book “On H.D.” or “For H.D.”, a tribute and a study, I came at this point to see this first part or movement of the book as relating how I had found my life in poetry through the agency of certain women and how I had then perhaps a special estimation not only of the masters of that art but of its mistresses, so that certain women writers instructed as well as inspired me. Miss Keough reading to us in that high school English class long ago the poem “Heat”, so that there was a voice that I loved in the voice of the poem; Athalie and Lili listening as I read “I hear an army charging upon the land” so that there was the voice of my own loving in the voice of the poem—these had emerged as first awakenings to the informing and transforming powers of Poetry. In the very beginning, in the awakening of childhood back of this later awakening of the man I was to be, there had been my mother’s voice reading the fairy tales and myths that were to remain the charged ground of my poetic reality.

I have written elsewhere that I am unbaptized, uninitiated, ungraduated, unanalyzed. I had in mind that my worship belonged to no church, that my mysteries belonged to no cult, that my learning belonged to no institution, that my imagination of my self belonged to no philosophic system. My thought must be without sanction. Yet to be a poet is to be reborn—to be baptized, initiated, graduated, analyzed. The Muses—for me, in my adolescent days, these women, my teacher and my companions—admit the poet to their company. But we are drawn to them, as if in the beginning we were of their kind, kin of Poetry with them.

Back of the Muses, so the old teaching goes, is Mnemosyne, Mother of the Muses. Freud, too, teaches that the Art has something to do with restoring, remembering, the Mother. Poetry itself may then be the Mother of those who have destroyed their mothers. But no. The image Freud projects of dismembering and remembering is the image of his own creative process in Psychoanalysis which he reads into all Arts. Mnemosyne, the Mother Memory of Poetry, is our made-up life, the matrix of fictions. Poetry is the Mother of those who have created their own mothers.

Given the memory of Miss Keough reading “Heat” and then of Athalie and Lili attending my reading of Joyce’s “I hear an army charging upon the land”, a third memory claimed its place, and in the relations of these three scenes the formal image of the book came: the first part developing along the lines of three stages and their attendant women my falling in love or conversion, my loving or company in the art, and then, something quite different it would seem, setting all into a new movement, my first intimations of an historical task with the modernist imperative. For my directive to The Cantos of Ezra Pound, and at the same time a directive to work not from preconceived form but towards creative form, came from another woman, Louise Antoinette Krause. She was a poet, perhaps what is called a poetaster, for nothing came of her writing later, but, importantly, she was an arbiter of the modern. She had taste, an autocratic or egotistic sense of the right things: Stein, Sitwell, Proust, Joyce. “Should he read Eliot?” her para-
mour, Bobby Haas, asked. “No,” she announced, addressing me in the third person—it was as if he had enquired at Delphi of the oracle: “His work is too lurid as it is. He must read Pound.”

Just here, with this memory, the composition of the book came clear, and I accepted the ground I must prepare in the first movement, between love and taste, Eros and Form. It was not only my love but my taste in poetry that determined this tribute to H.D. Had that arbiter, Louise Antoinette Krause, not been so purely a creature of taste or fashion and so little a creature of soul, as I remember her, I might have mistaken taste for liking. Liking, being fond of like things and people, was itself a mimic of love, and could be a mimic too of judgement. But Love and the sense of Form or Judgement—passion and law—know nothing of liking or disliking. The modern taste, the exacting predilection, beyond likes, was, just here, the third aspect of my involvement with H.D. I was to be not only a Romantic but also a Formalist. I was to be involved in the world of the spirit.

For Form is the mode of the spirit, as Romance is the mode of the soul. In liking and disliking there was a beginning of creating one’s soul life, determining in recognizing what would be kindred and what alien to one’s inner feeling of things, making a likeness of one’s self in which the person would develop. In taste, almost the vanity of taste, there were intimations of the formal demand the spirit would make to shape all matter to its energies, to tune the world about it to the mode of an imagined music.

In my conversion to Poetry I was to find anew the world of Romance that I had known in earliest childhood in fairy tale and day dream and in the romantic fictions of the household in which I grew up. Now it seems my soul first set out on its journey in my falling in love with my teacher, with some intimation of spirit in her, that reappeared later disguised in the foolish even vain presentation of a taste for the modern. The high adventure was to be for me the romance of forms, haunted by its own course, its secret unfolding form, relating to some great form of many phases. So the world of the spirit is hidden in the experience of soul and body, in-forming romance and sensation in a third possibility, as soul dramatizes or enacts spirit and body, or as body incarnates and feels through soul and spirit.

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Something in me—a like earnest regard—ready and with the joy of self discovery, had leaped up towards a life, a larger play of vitalities, that a young teacher, in her early thirties perhaps when I was sixteen, had disclosed to me in the work of D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and H.D. It was, wasn’t it, that in these the inner consciousness saw its clue to its part or work in the world? that the intense truthfulness to feeling, the self, was to be the key? the way?

I drew now upon my teacher’s own romance, her hero worship or daydream of the writer. The important thing for her was that the writer evoked a greater demand in life,
that the tips of consciousness, the nervous susceptibility, be kept bare, sympathetic, ready, as a condition for reality. Coming to realize something is a creative involvement, for we are making it real. She was not wrong that truth was romantic, that the life of the writer was a romance. There is no physical reality that is not psychic or spiritual, for the universe appears real to us as the dreams of the body, soul and spirit become one dream; and what is most terrible about the world men have made is that it so embodies the dreams, the soul and spirit, of mean and vain imaginations. She was not wrong to daydream of the writer. The hero, the saint or poet, move in such a confusion or cooperation of modes in one great mode that we call Reality or Vision, a romance that must create its own terms of existence in the midst of dreams of empire and wealth.

“The study of literature is hero-worship,” Pound writes in *The Spirit of Romance*. The shade of Carlyle's vision of the poet haunts Pound’s thought here. But “hero” for Edna Keough did not mean the sublime ego, the great man that figured in Carlyle's thought of Dante or Goethe. It meant the courage to live with sensitivity. All that was sensitive to qualities and finenesses in life most needed courage, heroic resolve, in a town like Bakersfield where I was growing up. It needed daring to live by the imagination.

Edna Keough was Irish. She was consciously Celtic. She found me out, tried me too, with Stephen's *Crock of Gold* and *Deirdre*, with books of *Fionn* and the old world of glamors and wishes. “Escape literature” such is called by those who would be wardens of the prison of their particular realities. There was a likeness between this imagination of folklore and the personal imagination of Lawrence in *The Man Who Died* or Virginia Woolf in *The Waves*. Both presented a life where what was real had depth and responsibility in what was fantastic. Lawrence in-dwells in his Christ but also in his priestess of Isis in that story. He has presences or identifications, as the Celtic bard Taliessin claimed presence everywhere too: “I have been in the firmament with Mary Magdalene,” he sings. Virginia Woolf or H.D. presented a correspondence between inner feeling and outer appearance, so that flowers, animals, rocks, sea, night and day, had being as conditions of the writer’s being. They spoke with one voice. The cooperation of fantasy and reality, the interchange of being, had a counterpart in the old Celtic affinity for interweaving forms, shape-changings, reincarnations, in an art where figure and ground may be exchanged. H.D. addressing her “Sea Rose”, “meagre flower, thin, / sparse of leaf,” is also addressing some person, we realize, and beyond that some share that being itself had in the sea rose, an idea or ideal in the image, “caught in the drift”, evoking the correspondence.

Let these things be terms of your life, and you will come into the things that I love—that was what my teacher seemed to say. She had come herself to Bakersfield from Berkeley, from what was for me the outside world, leaving behind associations where she had been close to the community of poets or at least at the margins of poetry. She had had a link among her friends to the generation of A.E. and Yeats in Ella Young, a gaunt beautiful touched old woman, clairvoyant, whom I in turn as a young student at Berkeley once heard speak of those poets who practiced magic, those women who saw
into what was beyond the common sense, that folk that dwelt upon the margins of fairy. But all men were folk in their dwelling there, as men were business men who lived upon the margins of money. Professional men lived on the margins of success, literati on the margins of literature, public figures upon the margins of the public. As poets lived upon the margins of poetry or, “touched”, upon the margins of fame.

This was the operation of what was called a “story”. “A story” in childhood meant a fib. “That was just a story” meant it wasn’t true or important; or “You made it up”, that too meant falsehood. But “story” meant also an entertainment, in the afternoon or evening, close upon nap or bedtime, close upon dreaming then.

Miss Keough had left behind some stage of her life when in Carmel or in Taos the story had been haunted by thought of Jeffers or of Lawrence. The fame of a poet was an actual presence or power for her. The town where she had come to teach was protestant against charm. It knew no news nor wanted to know any of an other life. Yet, just in this, it was most of the fairy world, for people of the town in fairy tales are always blinded by greed and realistic ends to the inner magic of the heart. The burden of the 1930s, the hardship she must have known during depression years to support her mother and to finish her education—these too were terms of the old stories. She had, along with her resignation to the terms of her job, some romance of teaching. She enacted her part in a folk rite of the soul. She brought news and waited for news of any who had known or might come to know the life of the poets. Just beyond the news, just beyond the troubled vision of an other life raised by the poets who were heroes for her, lay the old question of the mysteries: “Do you know who you are?” “Do you know where you are going?”

There may have been wish, a power of that god Wunsch that Grimm believed stood back of the verb to wish. I was to go forth then, from a wish she had, the hero—not the hero of Carlyle’s essay, but the other, unlikely brother or little one or silly one of the fairy tales, following a hint given by a maiden or a lady, and I would come some day under the protection of the Moon’s grandmother, of the sun’s grandmother, of the wind’s grandmother, to find three hairs of an answer.

She had left behind a wish. And, coming to Bakersfield, in her teaching she had had that inspiration to open for me the wish that underlies, informs, and directs, the writer’s way towards a confession that turns out to be an opening up of self in the light of men’s love. A wish and a desire. It was desire, Eros, that, unknowing, attended my awakening.

“You were a wonderful boy,” she wrote me years later. But I was a wretched boy. I had found the wonder in her.

Love showed me the way and bid me to follow. My work in life must be likewise to reveal inner forces, to make articulate what pulse, nerve and breath knew. Shame or guilt, weakness or sin—these were lifted up to be the very material, despised among men, that gave the gold of experience. Hiding what others might scorn or revile, showing forth what others might value or reward—all this was the very misery of life in that town where hidden indulgences grew and values dwindled to fit shop fronts. Where
truth is the root of the art, to come to fullness means to unfold at last the full flower of what one was, the truth of what one felt and thought—a flowering of corruptions and rage, of bile and intestines, as well as of sense and light, of glands and growth. I knew nothing of Baudelaire, but I knew that the heart must be stripped bare. But so much of what I felt and thought sickened me or frightened me. I longed to come into the trust of mankind—but what in me trusted? The wish and the trust were what I must search out.

I was to undertake the work in poetry to find out—what I least knew myself—what I felt at heart. But in the beginning the work was a gift to my teacher. I was to undertake the work to present what I felt at heart to someone who had a trust I did not have in the heart, who wished for just that gift for love's sake. I was to undertake the work in order that Eros be kept over me a Master.

“Folks expect of the poet,” Whitman writes in his 1855 Preface, “to indicate the path between reality and their souls.” There was, anyway, a path between Edna Keough’s reading that poem of H. D.’s, a path taken because of love, and the reality of this book that is my soul way. Not because I read everything H. D. wrote. It was not until The Walls Do Not Fall that H. D. would take her place, along with Ezra Pound and Williams, as a Master for me in my art. Then, recognizing in her writing a gospel of Poetry, I was to read everything in a new light. So that, when in the third book of the War Trilogy, The Flowering of the Rod, I came to read these lines:

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\text{I go to the things I love} \\
\text{with no thought of duty or pity;} \\
\text{I go where I belong, inexorably,}
\]

the way to the things I loved appeared to me as the path between reality and my soul. They fitted. I had an old sense that allied with H. D.’s sense, in which my life was involved. Between that first poem heard as a gift of love and as news of the gods, a secret then of what the path was to be and charged with that portent, between the poem “Heat” and this masterpiece in which I saw the portent fulfilled, there had been a way. What had been loved had along some path come to be most valuable. The path of H. D.’s work, between that poem and the many levels of consciousness mastered in the War Trilogy, and the path of my own recognitions in poetry and life, between that classroom where I had resolved to devote my life to poetry and the first formative crises when I began to see what that poetry was to be, had their coordinations.

A classroom had been a meeting room. I had come at the appointed hour with a lover’s joy in her company who had given me the most gracious of gifts: these things she loved she gave me to love. Books were the bodies of thought and feeling that could not be otherwise shared. There was more: certain writers so revealed what human being had been that each of us had a share in that being. Love and Poetry were so mixed in the alembic that they coinhered in a new experience. “When in the company of the gods,” H. D. writes in that passage of The Flowering of the Rod, “I loved and was
loved”—that was long ago in childhood hours of Mother's reading myth and fairy tale—

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\begin{align*}
\text{never was my mind stirred} \\
\text{to such rapture} \\
\text{my heart moved} \\
\text{to such pleasure,} \\
\text{as now, to discover} \\
\text{over Love, a new Master.}
\end{align*}
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Every resonance had been prepared, for I had found—as when I was sixteen I had found a new teacher who brought me to Love—a new Master over Poetry in the work of H.D. In these things my mind likewise was stirred to rapture, my heart moved to such pleasure. My first teacher had given me a key to my future resource. She had presented the work that was worthy, and the work was to be the ground of Eros. For that winged bright promise that the soul seeks in its beloved appeared to me in the life that the sensitive inner consciousness of Lawrence, Virginia Woolf or H.D., had found for itself in their writing, thriving there, hidden from the careless reader, surviving the scorn and even hatred of the antipathetic reader, a seed that would chance somewhere, sometime, upon the ground that awaited its revelation, for the reader who would not misunderstand or revile but who would come to find therein his own kindred life.
Chapter Three

The work, the ground, and Eros lie at the heart of our study here. The work itself is the transformation of the ground. In this ground the soul and the world are one in a third hidden thing in imagination of which the work arises. It is the work of creation then. It is Poetry, the Making. It is also the opus alchymicum of Hermetic and Rosicrucian alchemy. The rimes of this poetry are correspondences, workings of figures and patterns of figures in which we apprehend the whole we do not see. The path that poetry creates between reality and the soul is such a work. Our path here must often come close to the path of depth psychologies and theosophical teachings, but we are tracing the path of Psyche and Eros as workers of a fiction in the art of poetry, projecting not a cure of souls or an illumination of souls, except as the secret of fictions cures or illumines, but the inner works of the poetic opus. Our work is to arouse in a contemporary consciousness reverberations of old myth, to prepare the ground so that when we return to read we will see our modern texts charged with a plot that had already begun before the first signs and signatures we have found worked upon the walls of Altamira or Pech-Merle. Mythos Aristotle defined as the plot of the story. The plot we are to follow, the great myth or work, is the fiction of what Man is.

Soul and Eros are primordial members of the cast. To imagine ourselves as souls is to become engaged in all the mystery play, the troubled ground of a poetry that extends beyond the reaches of any contemporary sense. Eros and Psyche are personae of a drama or dream that determines, beyond individual consciousness, the configurative image of a species. Just as the source of the song lies in an obscurity back of the first writing on the wall, so in my own childhood in the dawn of intelligence, before I could read or write, there was a story or fairytale told of Cupid and Psyche. In the beginning I heard of this god Eros and of the drama of loss and search. I understood only that there was a wonder in this tale.

If the Work has to do with Eros—and for the poet the poem is a return to the work in the charged sense we would pursue here—the would-be poet stands like Psyche in the dark, taken up in a marriage with a genius, possessed by a spirit outside the ken of those about him. That there be gold or wonder or the beloved in such a blind matter, no one else can believe. So William Carlos Williams in “Paterson Four” sees the work of poetry in the chemistry where the Curies work the pitchblende:

A dissonance
in the valence of Uranium
led to the discovery

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by the hour, the day, the week

27
to get, after months of labor,
a stain at the bottom of the retort
without weight, a failure, a
nothing. And then, returning in the
night, to find it.

LUMINOUS!

For my middle-class parents the work I was to undertake was as fearful and
doubtful as that calling that Psyche in the story Apuleius tells knew in the dark. The
genius of Poetry appeared to them “not a son-in-law of mortal birth but a dire mischief”,
“a winged pest”. They, like Psyche’s parents, were dismayed and strove to dissuade me.
They tried to make me see this alien calling in the light of common sense. And there was
every reason to mistrust, for I had no sure talent. I was in the dark about what poetry
was. How badly first poems turned out! If one looked at them at all in a critical light, the
charm might be broken. What garbled and even monstrous expressions stood for the
first articulations of poetic feeling! “Knowledge, the contaminant,” Williams writes.
Luminous in the dark, and so Madame Curie works—it haunts Williams that it is a
woman—for she is the poet, but also, here too, she is Psyche:

And so, with coarsened hands
she stirs
And love, bitterly contesting, waits
that the mind shall declare itself not
alone in dreams.

Hints of the old story seem to inform the scene.
There was the Palace of Eros. Psyche was to inherit all, on the one condition that
she not seek to see her Eros in the light. Her mind must not become involved in
knowing. “When well inside the palace she came upon splendid treasure chambers
stuffed with unbelievable riches; every wonderful thing that anyone could possibly
imagine was there.” This Palace, as it appears in the beginning of the story, is like the
wealth of works the imagination has left that we call our Culture. Writing, painting,
architecture and music seem to exist to enrich our appreciations, to furnish forth our
taste, to suit or not our predilections. Some men believe that mountains, streams,
animals and birds, that the plenitude of the world exists like this, a storehouse of
commodities for human improvement and uses. And the Palace of Eros has another like-
ness to the world that exists through the arts: “No single chain, bar, lock or armed guard
protected it,” the story tells us. It lay an open secret for those who discovered it to live in.

Psyche before her sin is a dilettante. To read, to listen, to study, to gaze was all
part of being loved without loving, a pleasure previous to any trial or pain of seeking the
beloved. The light must be tried; Psyche must doubt and seek to know; reading must
become life and writing; and all go wrong. There is no way then but Psyche's search, the creative work of a union in knowledge and experience. At the end, there is a new Eros, a new Master over Love.

Eros, like Osiris or Lucifer (if He be the Prince of Light whom the Gnostics believe scattered in sparks throughout the darkness of what is matter), is a Lord over us in spirit who is dispersed everywhere to our senses. We are drawn to Him, but we must also gather Him to be. We cannot, in the early stages, locate Him; but He finds us out. Seized by His orders, we “fall in love”, in order that He be; and in His duration the powers of Eros are boundless. We are struck by His presence, and in becoming lovers we become something other than ourselves, subjects of a daemonic force previous to our humanity, that, as Hesiod pictures Him, “unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them.” Eros is a primal authority, a cosmic need. Men knew His terrors before they knew anything of Him as Cupid, before men had arrows.

There was an Eros before there were Titans or Gods. But then there is a second telling or a second coming of Eros or a second Eros. After the Titanic Kronos cuts away the genitals of the Father Uranus, the Great Sky, and casts them away behind him upon the raging sea (that may be the sea of the act itself) “they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it grew a maiden” — Aphrodite—and with her, Eros and Himeros. A transformation has taken place. In this Greek figure the Father’s parts, the essential “Father”, reappear in three persons: the goddess Aphrodite or Beauty where his penis was, and the attendant gods, Eros and Himeros, where his testicles were.

In the Zohar of Moses of Leon in the thirteenth century A.D., there appears another figure of the Father that may be related to his Greek figure from the Theogony of Hesiod in the eighth century B.C. In the Kabbalistic Tree of the Sefiroth, the Glory of En Soph appears as a woman, the Shekinah. But we learn too of the mystery of the two sides—the Left and the Right— which are testicles from which the souls of the living come. Souls, in Kabbalistic lore, are seminal.

Love, desire, and beauty, in the poet’s Theogony, precede mankind. They were once forces that came to be forms. We experience something, the meaning of things seems to change when we fall in love, as if life were a language we had begun to understand. It is the virtue of words that what were forces become meanings and seek form. Cosmic powers appear as presences and even as persons of inner being to the imagination.

In the old rites Eros appeared as an unwrought stone, a herm. And from our childhood, for some of us dim, for some of us vivid, memories remain of the suggestion a stone may have of being alive. The presence or luck of a stone, the protective genius of a stone, even its speech. For the sculptor the stone “speaks” and the form emerges along the lines of a colloquy between the artist or poet and the inspiration of his material. Back of the erotic stone there lies, we know, a dumbness or meaninglessness, in which the stone is only chaotic matter. For what we call our common sense, for the mind
that is fearful and then contemptuous of being influenced by things, the stone is inert. But for the imagination, for the mind seeking creation, even seemingly inert matter is alive. So, for the Orphic poets, the seed or egg of the universe is created by *Hyle*, the primal chaos of matter.

Again and again in our lives we find our vital sense of the universe must return to this muddle, to begin again in the unspeaking obstruction of the stone. It is the artist's block that heightens his awe of the other power in which his material speaks to him. The block itself is the blockage of a breath. The inspiring stone “breathes” as the artist awakens to his work. From the unwrought Eros, once the work begins, the form of a vital spirit flies up. Chaos itself, the block, is alive with that possibility. In its obscurity it corresponds to the unconscious of our modern psychoanalysis, for the idea of the unconscious is that of a vitality that also, unless a man enter a colloquy with what cannot sensibly speak and take instructions from what he cannot know, may show itself as a deadly and deadening matter. But once he take his faith in what he cannot see, from a World-Egg, as the Orphic poets sang, where once there was demonic Chaos, the moving universe comes forth, and, as Jane Harrison observes in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, “it was almost inevitable that there should emerge from the egg a bird-god, a winged thing.”

Hidden, the Eros is the very vitality felt in the stone. Revealed, he is shown as an idea, a youth flying up from the head of a titanic Mother or Matter awakening or come alive in the ground, the Earth-goddess Ge or Gaia. This Earth is also the artist’s content, the ground of potential ideas in which he works. In the figure shown by Jane Harrison on page 639 of the *Prolegomena*, attendant upon the work are two satyrs with pickaxes, breakers of the ground; the giant female head uprises; and from the aroused head two *erotes* spring—the primal Eros and Himeros.

In Hesiod’s *Theogony* the second Eros and Himeros appear as transformations of the Father’s testes, and back of this erotic epiphany there was a chaotic terror, what we call a psychotic act—the castration of the Father. In the mysteries of the Mother the awakening of chaos giving rise to love and desire seems also to follow upon such an attack, but here upon the Mother. One satyr holds his pick swung high for a blow; the other has completed his stroke. In an earlier figure shown on page 279 of the *Prolegomena* we see the *anodos*, the calling-up, of the Maiden. “The colossal head and lifted hands of a woman are rising out of the earth. Two men are present. Both are armed with great mallets or hammers, and one of them strikes the head of the rising woman.” It may be the same rite. We see them attacking the stone, breaking the ground or egg—it is the mothering head—to release from its container the content of a new order: Eros and his other.

In Athens, Jane Harrison tells us, the cult of Aphrodite gave way to the cult of the male Eros. “There is no Aphrodite,” Alcman sang:

*Hungry Love*

*Plays boy-like with light feet upon the flowers.*
Love that had been a woman in an other phase is impersonated by youths.

“O Menexenus and Lysis, how ridiculous that you two boys,” Socrates says at the close of Plato's Lysis, “and I, an old boy, who would fain be one of you, should imagine ourselves to be friends — this is what the bystanders will go away and say — and as yet we have not been able to discover what is a friend.”

In the aristocratic cult of the homo-Eros, the winged images we saw drawn upon the vases become winged ideas in full. The daemonic force of Eros remains, but within the created world of Plato's book the cosmos itself has been idealized. Empedocles had called Eros Philia or Philôtes; and now in Lysis, Plato's Socrates speaks of a first principle, a higher Eros, the πρωτον φιλον. In his Hexameters, Xenophanes had remarked: “If oxen and lions had hands or could draw with hands and create works of art like those made by men, horses would draw pictures of gods like horses, and oxen of gods like oxen, and they would make the bodies in accordance with the form that each species itself possesses.” In the idealizing philosophy of Plato the gods have their truth only in the ideal of the good. Whatever of the old divine world cannot be incorporated in the good must be put away as false. Just as men may imagine themselves to be friends but cannot come to discover what is a friend, so men may imagine immortal gods with immortal bodies, but “no such union can reasonably be believed to be; although fancy, not having seen or surely known the nature of God, may imagine an immortal creature having both a body and also a soul which are united throughout all time.”

The young men flying in a sexual rapture now are called to school their bodies, serving a new rapture of the rational mind. For them there is to be a rational Eros, the Love because of Whom men try to love, the First Beloved, the most dear, because of whom men hold life dear and would imagine themselves friends. Caring in itself is an adventure of the imagination that is wed here to the great adventure of Eros and desire.

But the old power of the old Eros haunts the new love of friends. We do not quite know what makes us find things most dear. Just here, in the unknowing, Plato must call upon the primal force to make real the idea. The good has power in men's minds, but it comes not in their knowledge but in their desire that there be good. Eros and even Dionysos, desire and intoxication, Plato argues are daemons of the good.

But then the story turns, as life itself turns. The light spills. Eros is burned or betrayed. Some five hundred years after Plato, a Christian contemporary of Apuleius, Ignatius of Antioch, said, “crucified”: “My Eros is crucified.” It is the beginning of our era.

Eros, in Apuleius’s story, when he comes to Psyche in the dark, is something she knows not what. He is what the oracle at Miletus said he was—a monster that belongs to the old order, an unwrought stone. But he is also another, for he carries arrows. She is curious about those arrows, but her hand trembles and she wounds herself. She bleeds. Psyche becomes soul; the figure of the human Eros comes to light, the divine Bridegroom to be. Who might have been a dilettante becomes an exile from delight; what might have been pleasure is to be joy—that is the new faith. It is in exile from Eros that this love and this faith appear, depending upon a promise that is unbelievable. In the new myths Orpheus turns to look and Eurydice is lost; “Woman, what have I to do
with thee?” the Christ says to his mother or bride or woman; the spirit loses or denies the soul. Psyche disobeys the law and raises the light to see Eros, and the separation of soul and spirit is made. Something like this happened in our history, so that for men of the second century after Christ that there was a Life within life, a Love within love, became a promise only faith could believe. Eros had been seen in the flesh, a figure the light drew out of the old dark to husband the soul. The great dark reality in which body, soul, and spirit had been one in unknowing was reft. “Knowledge, the contaminant” and then “Uranium, the complex atom, breaking/down.” Men revile the body they had seen. Psyche is set to those tasks. Life and history appear to travail in punishment before the restoration of paradise. The spirit retreats from its incarnation into the reaches of ecstasy and despair, heaven and hell.

The god said: “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” As H.D. tells of Him in The Flowering of the Rod:

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\text{He was the first to say,}
\text{not to the chosen few,}
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\[
\text{his faithful friends,}
\text{the wise and good,}
\]

\[
\text{but to an outcast and a vagabond.}
\]

The passers-by jeered at Him, so Matthew tells us. We remember that for Plato too there had been the sense of what “by-standers” would say, mocking the Eros of those who imagined themselves to be friends. “Even the robbers,” so Matthew testifies, “who were crucified with Him abused Him in the same way.” There may then have been mockery when one said, as Luke testifies he said, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom!” Eros, being taunted, would have replied: “I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” For Paradise is Itself the inexorable power of Eros.

In Greece, in Plato’s lifetime, the virtue of boy-love in men’s eyes had come to be suspect, and the faithful friends lost the ground in Eros they had imagined as philosophers. He who had immortalized the Symposium was to condemn symposia in his Laws, where in his old age Plato sees the State as the stronghold of Reason: “Now the gymnasia and common meals do a great deal of good, and yet they are a source of evil in civil troubles; as is shown in the case of the Milesian, and Boeotian, and Thurian youth, among whom these institutions seem always to have had a tendency to degrade the ancient and natural custom of love below the level, not only of man, but of the beasts... Whether such matters are to be regarded jestingly or seriously, I think that the pleasure is to be deemed natural which arises out of the intercourse between men and women; but that the intercourse of men with men, or of women with women, is contrary to nature, and that the bold attempt was originally due to unbridled lust.” The Platonic and Sapphic lovers are driven not only outside the law or the rational but outside of the
natural into the criminal chaos from which Eros had first come.

In Jerusalem the Temple was to fall and the Jews go scattered among the Gentiles into the Diaspora. Gnostic cults taught that the Light Itself had been in the beginning scattered so into a Darkness, sparks or seeds of light imprisoned in matter. All men were to become outcasts and vagabonds. There was in “today”, because of the promise, no end of time in the actual world.

He had also said: “The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem.” Man had retracted his worship from place and time; the old cosmic gods, and the Elohim among them, withdrew from mountain and temple to men’s minds. We saw for a moment in Plato’s imagination the old cosmology transform into or given way to a new ideology. Now, everywhere, cosmology and ideology give way to psychology.

Hesiod, like the Old Testament, speaks of a beginning that was Earth and Sky. And Heraclitus says of Hesiod: “They think that he knew many things, though he did not understand day and night. For they are one.” And then: “God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger. But he undergoes transformations—just as fire, when it is mixed with spices, is named after the savor of each.” This was the ancient world, where if God was man, He was also beast and sun, wind and tree; where before there was man, there was Beauty, Eros and Himeros.

But with the Gospel of John—is it six hundred years later?—a Book begins to take the place of the Old Testament that had been a spoken word, muthos, passed from man to man. The new written testament knows nothing of Earth or Sky, of day or night, of summer or winter. “In the beginning was the Word,” “Everything came into existence through Him, and apart from Him nothing came to be.” The universe had once, almost, spoken to man. Now, a language that was only the Word, the speech of man, was to be the universe. The vis imaginativa in which the things of men’s souls and the things of the actual universe dance together, having concourse and melody, the magic world of many sources, is disowned. And what appears is dogma and heresy.

The primal Eros rages in the division: sex witches brew their ointments in Thessaly, devils and lamiae swarm about the bodies of saints, familiar animals that were once dear to the household come now as familiars with messages from beastly hell. The old reverences die out or are scattered out from their centers to flare up in new woods and fountains, in the hearts of guilty lovers or upon pagan hearths, in the hinterlands where groves are too close and wheat too dear to be denied. “In Benedict and Gregory,” Taylor puts it in The Medieval Mind, “the salvation which represented the true and uncorrupt life of man on earth, as well as the assured preparation for eternal life with God, had shrunked from the universality of Christ, and even from the fulness of desire with which Augustine sought to know God and the soul.” But the Christ had not been more universal in the beginning than Galilee was in the midst of Judaea; He had been a god of a division among Jews. The universal Christ is the god of an Empire. The salvation which represented the true and uncorrupt life of man on earth has its counterpart in the Roman law which represented the civilized life of man on earth.
The universality and the fullness had, as had the Roman organization, marches upon disorder. Clovis crossed the Rhine into humanity, but his ancestor, so Gregory of Tours tells us, was a dragon or demon of the other side. The Eros within was Christ; the Mother within was a Virgin. The Eros without was “a monster Bridegroom,” was Pan and then Satan; the Mother without was Nature, was Aphrodite, was a Witch, was Lilith. The Church was a bulwark against them—even in marriage. The Nature without was lawless and false; the Church recognized a Nature within and defined what was outside her law as contra naturam.

The Palace of Eros, where once Psyche had known every imagined thing, had fallen into the darkness of a perishing civilization, and Psyche’s tasks begin. Driven by dogma, threatened by excommunication, she must harrow Hell before she come again into a light.

Pound in The Spirit of Romance recalls another contemporary of Apuleius and Ignatius of Antioch in the second century, the poet of the Pervigilium Veneris. When we compare these voices, we are aware that there was not only the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, or the Christ enthroned, god of the Empire—but there was a Christ of the mysteries who had His place with Isis and with Aphrodite, the Venus Genetrix, and with the Virgin Without, Artemis or Diana.

Yea, hers is the song, and the silence ours!

So the poet of the second century sings in prophecy:

*Ah, when shall mine own spring come?*

*When, as a swallow long silent, shall my silence find end?*

Then Pound tells us: “The song did not again awake until the Provençal viol aroused it.”

I think of the Church as a husk of the divine. The medieval synthesis was also the ground of a winter in which seeds of a new transformation worked, crossings-over and minglings of spirit where it had been scattered and gathered now towards new growth. In the eleventh century poets again appear, as if spring, nine centuries underground, had returned from the Pervigilium Veneris. “High and low among the first come leaves,” Arnaut Daniel sings. “The boughs and sprays are new with flowers, and no bird holds mute a mouth or throat, but cries and sings.”

The Spring genius breaks through everywhere in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, within the Church and without. In Poictiers and Champagne, the trouvères sang once more of a Lady and of an ars amatoria that was also an ars poetica. They held courts of a law that was Love’s, where certain ladies sat in judgment: and poets avowed they knew no other law over their hearts. Pound, writing for G.R.S. Mead’s The Quest, a journal of theosophical thought in 1916, suggests that the lady “serves as a sort of mantram” and quotes from a code of Amor: “The lover stands ever in unintermittent
imagination of his lady (co-amantis).” It was perhaps the Law Without, for the ladies commanded duties of love or proofs that were acts contra naturam. “I am Arnaut,” Daniel sang: “who swims against the current,” “nadi contra suberna.”

There was some inner rite; there was a trobar clus. So, as Pound tells us: “We find this poetry divided into two schools; the first school complained about the obscurities of the second—we have them always with us. They claimed, or rather jeered in Provence, remonstrated in Tuscany, wrangle today, and will wrangle tomorrow—and not without some show of reason—that poetry, especially lyric poetry, must be simple; that you must get the meaning while the man sings it.” Where there was, some objected, a willful obscurity, there was for others a matrix of meanings. In Provence, in castles on the Rhine, up from the hinterlands of the Pyrenees or of Wales, poets began to sing of hearts or of a land that has long lain waste and desert, of a Lady who is Queen of Love, of Fairy, of an Island or a Wood. There is a requirement of adultery or a condition of adultery. Things are mixed or must be mixed. But also, the hero of the new mysteries must transgress the sacraments of the Church to come into the environs of the Eros Without; he must prove his Love. Forbidden sexual acts are bidden as proofs. There is no service that is not tried.

While in the courts there were those other courts, at large in Provence another movement was at work—or perhaps another phase of the same order? Out of Bulgaria, from the margins of Christendom, had come preachers of a Manichaean Christ—so the Church says—and they won converts everywhere. There are echoes of the gnosis in their legend. They kept certain laws of the spirit: they would not eat meat nor would they kill; they would not take oath; they volunteered poverty. These were rites of purgation, catharsis, to free the spirit from its bondage in this world. They are exiles from Paradise and sought return, purification. They had revived the old order of Spirit, Soul, and Body, and turned against the incarnation. This hearsay we know because these things had become evil in the eyes of the Church, which turned to stamp out the heresy. Not only the Albigensians but Waldenses and the Spiritual Franciscans—those who kept the terms of Saint Francis’s will to embrace Poverty, “the Lady Poverty” he called her—were hunted down and exterminated.

Christ, verus imperator mundi, in His vicar, Innocent III, out of His plenitudo potestatis, His fullness of power in this world, released the horrors of the Albigensian crusade upon the Provence where this specter of another Christ had invaded the Empire. If we do not believe, as the Albigensians were said to have believed, in a dualism throughout the universe between forces of light and forces of dark, what we see here is a God divided against Himself. The Eros within Christendom was permitted or gave His permission only in the orders of generation; all other Eros was forbidden. So, from outside the Empire, from the margins where things mix, a Christ returns, and an Eros too, who is now the verso of the law of the established Church. In this new Law, the generative order is forbidden; all other Eros is permitted. An echo of the Church accusation against the Cathars or Bogomils—they were, originally, Bulgars—is left in our word for a sexual act that is still outside the law of the established State: to bugger. In this
feature of transgression, there was a likeness between the courts of Love and the Cults of the Perfecti.

There is another likeness between the code of the Troubadour and the creed of the Cathar in the cult of the Lady. If the heresy of the Provence was of the Gnostic-Manichaean tradition, it would have taught that the secret of the Light or Spirit that was imprisoned in the world had something to do with a Woman, Helen or Sophia. There was at Montsegur, so the twentieth-century Albigensian devotee Maurice Magre writes, a Lady. But she was two: Esclarmonde de Foix, the chaste, who keeps the castle, and Esclarmonde d’Alion, the bastard, l’amoureuse, who wanders with the outcasts in the forests and mountains. Where does the story come from? It comes, one suspects, made to fit the romance of the gnostic Helen or Pistis Sophia who had been “Light of the World.” Once fitting, it becomes part of the story. There was then a Lady. However close, whatever correspondence there was or was not between the heresy and the ars amatoria of the poets and their Lady, the trobar of the Provence came to an end when the Cathar came to an end.

But the infection was abroad, the signs of a new time continue. On the Rhine they refused to take oath; at Lyons they gave their goods to the poor and went out to preach, inspired by the Holy Ghost. At Assisi Saint Francis in his Testament said that God had Himself commanded that he and his brothers give all to the poor and be content with but one patched cloak. “And I labored with my hands,” he wrote, “and I wish all other brothers to labor.” There was too close a likeness perhaps between the vows to poverty that the Cathars made and the love Saint Francis had for his sancta paupertas. After the death of the saint, from the infallibility of His dogma, Pope John XXII declared the love of poverty heretical. The saint was Within; his Wish was Without. In 1318 at Marseilles four who kept their vows in Saint Francis’s Rule were burned.

In his Frederick II, Ernst Kantorowicz thinks of Francis as a poet, for he lived in this world as if it were in the eternal presence of all things—“the first open-eyed soul who spontaneously experienced Nature and Life as magic and emotion, and traced the same divine pneuma in all that lived.” He lived in the Palace of Eros then, in the fullness of the imagination, and, receiving the stigmata, he received too the burn from the oil of Psyche’s lamp; he impersonated Eros.

If Saint Francis can be seen so, beyond his sanctity, as a poet, we too begin to experience “Nature and Life as magic and emotion”. A story or mythos of many myths begins to unfold in history itself that has poetic organization; actual men become personae of the real. Again and again, in eternal return, the old orders will not be done away with but move to speak in the new.

So, not only the song of the minnesingers echoes in a Mechthild of Magdeburg's Flowing Light of God, but we see in the Catholic mystic’s address to Frau Minne ghostly presences from the old story of the Mother Venus imposing her sentence upon Cupid and Psyche. “My Lady Love,” the Soul cries: “Thou hast hunted and taken, bound and wounded me; never shall I be healed.” It is the Christ who is the awaited Bridegroom;
the terms are Christian. But when Frau Minne answers the Soul, saying: "It was my plea-
sure to hunt thee; to take thee captive was my desire; to bind thee was my joy," she is
very like Venus in her wrath. "I drove Almighty God from His throne in heaven, and took
His human life from Him, and then with honor gave Him back to His Father," Frau Minne
continues—"How couldst thou, poor worm, save thyself from me!" In which we may
remember another god driven from his palace and his bride, his human life, by
Aphrodite, and removed into his immortality beyond Psyche's reach. The story of one
Eros has entered the story of another Eros.

The Provence was laid waste, but out of the cult of its poets the *ars amatoria*
went, from Toulouse to Palermo and Florence. By that tradition or teaching, Beatrice
was to lead Dante in his vision until she drew him "*Within the yellow of the eternal
rose*"—*Nel giallo della rosa sempiterna*—"which doth expand, rank upon rank, and
reeketh perfume of praise unto the Sun that maketh spring forever." Such is the inspira-
tion of Dante, and such his vision therein, that in *The Divine Comedy*, as in Saint
Francis's legend and his *Canticle of the Sun*, it almost seems as if the separation of and
from Eros were done.

Out of the Celtic world, possibly first by a Welsh prince, Bledri ap Cadivor, as
Jessie Weston tells us, "*Latinarius*" or "translator", in the twelfth century, who came over
to the Norman side, a story came over to the Christian side, a magic comes over into a
religion, and again, the Eros Without comes over into the Eros Within. Francesca, who
whirls in the hellish storm of the Eros Without, tells Dante that she and Paolo were
seduced by the enchantment of reading the story of Lancelot, by Romance. The Celtic
genius, a poetry that was not a rational melody but a weaving of a spell, so intertwined
and elaborated its figures that now we see the one Eros, now the Other. Which came
first? the scholars ask. Fertility-cult, folk-lore or Christian mystery—however we read—
the hallows, the Grail, the Lance that drips its blood into the Dish, the Wound, the
Lamenting Women that attend, are *feyrie*, *phanopoeia*. The sacra of the Church and the
magic treasures of ancient kings, the sexual emblems and ritual objects of chthonic
cults, have been stolen to furnish the changeling mysteries of a romance in Poetry. They
have become properties of another stage.

Romance has appeared, and there may be a new Eros. Not only the primal
cosmic power but also the Platonic ideal, the First Beloved, but also the most human god
that Psyche sought, but also the Eros as evil that Church fathers, Catholic and heretic,
had imagined, but also now the power of a cult that remains as a mode in poetry. Eros
had become a tradition of the poem. Garden and rose, bird and dawn, dew and paradise
are notes now of a melody that first troubadours sang.

I too may be Celtic, and a spell be necessary here; weaving is necessary, to keep
many threads and many figures so that every thread is central and every figure central
to threads and figures. But in this return of the *erotes* of the verso to our own time, we
are heirs of work done in the first decades of this century. In *The Spirit of Romance*
Pound related the tradition of Eros from Apuleius to "*the consummation of it all in
Dante's glorification of Beatrice*" and "*the final evolution of Amor by Guido and Dante,*
a new and paganish god, neither Eros nor an angel of the Talmud.” The poetic tradition of the Grail was related to this tradition by Jessie Weston in The Quest for the Holy Grail (1913) and in From Ritual to Romance (1919). The cult of the gods as it is found in the hellenizing poems of Lawrence, H.D., and Pound in the Imagist period cannot be separated from the reawakened sense of the meaning and reality of the gods in contemporary studies of the mystery cults—Jane Harrison’s Prolegomena (1903) and Themis (1912), Cook’s Zeus (1914), the Orphic studies of Robert Eisler, the Gnostic studies of G.R.S. Mead, whose lectures Pound attended in 1916 finding “in the legend of Simon Magus and Helen of Tyre a prototype of chivalric love.” In scholarship as well as in poetry there is an insistence that the contemporary world must call up within itself the old gods, that there must be a return of the Underworld. “I know, I mean, one man who understands Persephone and Demeter,” Pound writes, “and one who understands the Laurel, and another who has, I should say, met Artemis.” These things are for them real. Edward Sapir, reviewing H.D.’s Collected Poems in 1925, saw rightly, beyond the images, “the rediscovery of ancient and beautiful ways made apt once again for the hungry spirit.” Along these ways, Eros and Psyche reveal their meanings—here, now; there, then. “All ages are contemporaneous,” Pound wrote, but it was by the poetic genius that “all ages” and “the contemporary” were created. The Spirit of Romance was not a history of the past but an instruction in the nature of the high art that was to be the contemporary poetry.

“Earth’s fallen kingdom contains its original face,” a friend, M.C. Richards, writes in a poem that has come in a letter. “Dante found it in a dream,” H.D. writes in The Guest in 1946, a companion work or counterpart of The Spirit of Romance thirty years later. Where Pound had taken the story of the Spirit of Romance from what he calls “the phantom dawn” in Apuleius to the Latin Renaissance after Dante, H.D., “remembering Shakespeare always, but remembering him differently,” follows the proliferation of the Spirit in Tudor poetry. Theosophic insights lie back of Pound’s study, Freudian learning informs H.D.’s—but these poets bring us to see the theosophic and the psychoanalytic anew as hints of a primary poetic vision that returns where it will in man’s history. With certain men, Pound wrote, “their consciousness is germinal. Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or the grain, or the blossom. And these minds are the more poetic, and they affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth... the strength of the Greek beauty rests in this, that it is ever at the interpretation of this vital universe, by its signs of gods and godly attendants and oreds.”

This image of seed and influence, consciousness and germination, reappears in H.D.’s account of a Spirit of Romance brought into the ground of Poetry in England: “The lesser and the greater poet alike met in the unanimous acceptance of one article of faith. . . . The dream was greater than reality. Out of it, they built a city, comparable to Augustine’s City of God, or a fortress as formidable as the Castle of Theresa. Francis himself might have learned much from the blossoms of Robert Herrick or the lilies of all kinds of that Winter’s Tale.” The images of the poem, then, were not impressions trans-
lated from daily reality into words but evocations of a dream greater than reality. “The spiritual inheritance, substantially absorbed by Rome, was not lost,” she tells us: “It had been carried, not in iron chests guarded by the vanguard of a conquering army, but it had blown on the wind, as the jester, the beggar wandered, himself suspect, from court to court. He gathered sometimes as he went, strange flowers, it is true, but the seeds of the faith, in the end, blown by the tempest or carried in the dowry-chest of the girl from the south, took root.

“An exotic flower—it blossomed only in the queen’s tiring-room or later, in the king’s banquet-hall. Then it was hewn down. But the roots of that flower still flourished and sent out thorny branches.”

The seed and the roots here are seed and roots of a poetic faith in which Eros and Poetry, Romance, Rite and Lore have become One in the imagination. “An aristocracy of emotion,” Pound calls it in 1916—evolving “out of its half memories of Hellenistic mysteries.” “A Dream greater than Reality,” H.D. calls it in 1946. Whatever we are following here, it is not the heresy of Spirit against Matter or against the Incarnation; for in the Imagination there is no contradiction between the Radiant Body and the actual physical body: the one is seen in the other, or imagined in the other, towards the fullness of an imagined life.

It is of the essence of Poetry that sexual rite, fertility rite, Christian rite, and Celtic magic rite, may be confused, transmuted in an alembic, until we cannot divide the magic from the divine. The ritual objects of the Grail romance are entirely properties of the imagination. So H.D. traces in The Guest how in Shakespeare’s lifetime the imagination in the poetic theater took over into a higher reality the things of the church and the things of the court.

Henry VIII had ransacked the monasteries. “The church was plundered by the palace; the palace became the background for new ritual.” In the masques and plays acted in the throne-room or the antechamber the objects from the world of religion become stage properties. “Sumptuous plate and linen, looted from the Cardinal’s palace, was shared alike by Montague and Capulet. Juliet’s tomb was, no doubt, magnificently draped in violet. The candle-sticks recalled another canopy, another burial.” In the reality of actual life, Christendom and Kingdom fell. But the “original face” remains, for just here, in the fall, Christendom and Kingdom fell into the Imagination. In the reality of imagined life, Christendom and Kingdom had begun.

That one image may recall another, finding depth in the resounding, is the secret of rime and measure. The time of a poem is felt as a recognition of return in vowel tone and in consonant formations, of pattern in the sequence of syllables, in stress and in pitch of a melody, of images and meanings. It resembles the time of a dream, for it is highly organized along lines of association and impulses of contrast towards the structure of the whole. The impulse of dream or poem is to provide a ground for some form beyond what we know, for feeling “greater than Reality”.
Pound in *How To Read* (1927) and again in *ABC of Reading* (1934) lists three practices or faculties of poetry: (1) *phanopoeia* “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on to the visual imagination”, where language operates somehow like a magic lantern or a motion-picture projector in relation to the receiving mind that is a screen. The early definition of the image as “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” is appropriate for the stationary, almost hallucinatory, presentations of early imagist poems—Pound’s “apparition” of faces as petals on a black bough, seen in the blink of an eye or of a camera shutter, or H.D.’s rose, “cut in rock”, that exists in a garden as if frozen in time, as if time had come to a stop in the photograph. H.D.’s reiterated hardness and cut-edges may have been in part a critical reaction to the great salon photography of the first decade of the century, to the blurred and softened atmospheric images of Steichen, Stieglitz or Coburn.

But these stills are few in number. After a handful of imagist poems, the poets were interested in movement. The sequence of images is what tells in the *Cantos* of Pound, and, scene juxtaposed to scene, line juxtaposed to line, the poem is built up like an Eisenstein film in the cutting room. In the passing of image into image, person into person, in H.D.’s *War Trilogy* too we are reminded of the transitions and montage that developed in the moving picture.

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The other two ways “to charge the language with meaning to the utmost possible degree” were (2) *melopoeia* and (3) *logopoeia*: “inducing emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of the speech” and “inducing both of the effects by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver’s consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed.”

* 

“Imagism” divorced from this concern “to charge the language with meaning” is not the imagism of Pound, H.D. and Aldington proposed in the Credo of 1912. The image that would charge language with sensory impression—”Amygism”, Pound called it—and the image that would charge language with an interesting effect—Hulme’s

*And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer*
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table

—these are generically different from the image that would charge language with meaning. Perception and expression are paramount where man’s emotions and intellects give value to an otherwise valueless language and world. But, for Pound, H.D., as for Williams and D.H. Lawrence, things and events strive to speak. To evoke an image is to receive a sign, to bring into human language a word or a phrase (in Pound’s later poetics, the ideogram; in H.D.’s, the hieroglyph) of the great language in which the universe itself is written. Here, to experience is to read, to be aware involves at once the senses and the translation into language of our own. It is the belief that meaning is not given to the world about us but derived from the world about us, that our human language is a ground in which we participate in the cosmic language. Living is reading the message or poem that creation is about. Such a sense of the universe as a meaningful creation and of experience as coming to apprehend that meaning determines the change from the feeling that poetic form is given to or imposed upon experience, transforming into content, to the feeling that poetic form is found in experience, that content is discovered in matter. The line of such poetry is not free in the sense of being arbitrary but free in its search and self-creation, having the care and tension (attention) almost of the ominous, for a world that would speak is itself a language of omens. Eliot’s images are often theatrical devices; but his garden, the drained pool, river, sea and flowers of Four Quartets are images of charged meaning, having their origins in a more than personal phantasy—they are signs of self that have come to inform the poet’s true self-epiphanies of what is happening, not symbols but ideas, seeings of the truth of things. William Carlos Williams’s resolve in the opening passage of Paterson does not read “not in ideas but in things”; what he writes is “no ideas but in things”, as we enter the poem where we are to strive, in order to live, to read such a language of things—river, falls, fire, detritus, words. For words are not thoughts we have but ideas in things, and the poet must attend not to what he means to say but to what what he says means.

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This is the charge of the mystery cult, the showing forth of a meaning which is a thing seen, where Image and Logos are revealed in the gift of the Idea. We may see what it means or, sensing the meaning, search for what it means; or we may, as most would, dismiss whatever presentation abruptly with “I don’t see any meaning in that.” The mythos and dromenon of the Dionysia were a way of participating in the meaningful; the singers and dancers coming into the community of meanings, as the poet comes into such a community when he sings or recites as if our daily words were a language of poetry, having the power of themselves to mean, and our role in speaking were to evoke not to impose meanings. The things of the poem, the words in their musical phrasings, here are sacra, charged with divine power, and give birth to poems as the poet sings, as
the powers of stones, waters, winds, in men’s rites give birth to gods. In the process itself a magic begins, so that gods and poetry enthral. “Le sacré c’est le père du dieu,” Jane Harrison quotes from Durkheim. “Le désir c’est le père de la sorcellerie.” The intent of the poet is to arouse the content and form of the poem as the ritual devotee seeks to arouse the content and form of the god.

The religious image and the poetic image are close in turn to the psychological archetype of Jungian analysis which seeks to arouse the content and form of the individual life from the collective unconscious. Certainly, we can recognize in Whitman’s “eidolon yacht of me”, in Lawrence’s “ship of death”, in the “Ra-Set boat” of Pound’s Rock-Drill, and in H.D.’s “Ship to hold all” in Helen in Egypt, not only the intensity of a personal expression, but also the depth of a community of meaning. The language is not American or English or Greek or Egyptian but the language of Poetry, in which this image of a soul-boat upon a sea in the poetic imagination comes to speak.

Pound’s phanopoeia, melopoeia and logopoeia are not reasonable literary terms but such magics, the glamor of wizards being to cast spells, “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on the visual imagination”; the incantations and incenses of Hermeticists being to induce “emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of speech”. The “inducing both of the effects by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver’s consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed” suggests that the poet has powers to induce, to stimulate; but we see, barely disguised, that it is “the actual words or word groups employed” that have such power. The imagination is not the primary imagination, that Coleridge defines as “the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception ... a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation”, but a screen upon which a higher power that Pound calls phanopoeia projects. This image-making or image-casting magic may be Coleridge’s secondary imagination, an “echo” of the primary: “coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.”

Coleridge and Pound alike have a common source in their reading of the Renaissance Hermeticist Marsilio Ficino’s version of Iamblichus’ De Mysteriis. “In most psychologies employing the concept of spirit, and often in Ficino’s,” D. P. Walker tells us in his Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella, “all sensation is by means of the spirit, and the media of all sense-data are some kind of spirit,” and he quotes a
passage from a letter of Ficino's that bears upon this matter of the music of poetry and
the vision of poetry, *melopoeia* and *phanopoeia*, as a magic to arouse the mind to form
and content, of the casting of the image or echo of creation by some affinity of body, soul
and spirit for the manifestation of song:

Nor is this surprising; for, since song and sound arise from the cogitation of the
mind, the impetus of the phantasy, and the feeling of the heart, and together
with the air they have broken up and tempered, strike the aerial spirit of the
hearer, which is the junction of the soul and body, they easily move the phan-
tasy, affect the heart and penetrate into the deep recesses of the mind.

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Our consciousness or Idea of having heart and mind, as well as of having soul
and spirit, being aroused by such a poetry.

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“The impetus of the phantasy,” Walker tells us, “when distinguished from imag-
ination, is a higher faculty, which forms ‘intentions’.” I would recall Pound’s questioning
in the Cavalcanti essay: “Does ‘intension’ mean intention (a matter of will)? Does it mean
intuition, intuitive perception... ?” In working upon his translation of Cavalcanti’s *Donna
mi prega*, which was to be reworked in *Canto XXXVI*, Pound makes careful distinction
between the concept of “intellect passif”, which he finds in Renan’s *Averroes et
Averroïsme* defined as “la faculté de recevoir les phantasmata”, and the “possible intel-
letto”, which Pound translates as “latent intellect”.

* 

“Form, Gestalt,” Pound notes: “Every spiritual form sets in moment the bodies in
which (or among which) it finds itself.” So Love starts from form seen and takes His
place, as subject not object, as mover, in the idea of the possible.

* 

*Who will, may hear Sordello’s story told:*
*His story? Who believes me shall behold*
*The man, pursue his fortunes to the end....*

so Robert Browning opens his *Sordello*, calling upon will and belief, where the imagina-
tion appears as a theatrical magic, a cooperation between the writing and the reading,
between the speaker and the hearer, to participate in the reality of a world evoked by
words given the magic of belief. “Appears Verona,” the Faustian poet directs, and then, again, as if calling up a spirit—“Then, appear, Verona!” Here, the beginning of his *Cantos* in its first version:

> Hang it all, there can be but the one ‘Sordello,’
> But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks....

“Has it a place in music?” he asks. The answer may lie in our passage from Ficino, for later Pound proposes in this first draft of *Canto* I: “*We let Ficino / I Start us our progress....*”

> And your: ‘Appear Verona!’?
> I walk the airy street,
> See the small cobbles flare with poppy spoil.

“Lo, the past is hurled / In twain,” Browning shows us in *Sordello*:

> up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
> Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
> Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
> Verona.

The evocation is Shakespearean. But this Verona has no stage but a place in the believing mind, a stage belief makes in the mind (as Shakespeare too has but one place where his world is most real). The scene itself then is a spirit. Both Sordello and Verona are shadows in which the form of the poet itself quickens, setting into motion the body in which it finds itself, the body of a belief.

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In the same years that he worked on *The Spirit of Romance* and *Cavalcanti*, studying Avicenna and Ficino, the London years before the War when Pound was in the excitement of understudying Yeats, gathering the lore of light and forms that continues to work in the *Cantos* half a century later; in the same years that he attended the Quest lectures of G. R. S. Mead on Simon Magus and Helen of Tyre, on Hierotheos’s *Book of the Hidden Mysteries*, on the *augoeides* and Origen’s “primal paradisiacal body of light as the *seminarium* from which all bodily forms, both subtle and gross, can arise”; in the very years that defined the life time of Imagism proper—from the Credo of 1912 to H.D.’s resignation as literary editor of *The Egoist* and her replacement by Eliot in 1917, Pound, as a messenger, angel or Hermes, of Poetry, moved between the generation of Yeats, initiate of the esoteric tradition, and the generation of Gaudier-Brzeska, prophet of the spirit or genius of forms which Gaudier called “sculptural energy” and “the vortex”, and
of the little group of fellow poets, “Imagists”, among whom H.D. was central. The “movement” was not an isolated literary affectation or strategic front but the first phase of certain generative ideas in poetry that were to reach their fruition, after the modernism of the twenties and the critical reaction of the thirties, when Pound, Williams, and H.D. were far apart in their work, three decades later in the period of the second World War with the great poems of Pound’s, Williams’s and H.D.’s old age that begin with H.D.’s War Trilogy, with *The Walls Do Not Fall*, published in 1944.

In turn, the germ-idea of the “image” in its beginning phase was a fruition of a general renaissance of theosophy and psychology in the first decade of the century which, like the Hellenistic and the Florentine renaissances, brought back the matter of old mystery cults, “reawakened” the gods and revived speculations concerning the nature of the imagination. Pound’s “See, they return”, Williams’s “Now they are coming into bloom again!” from the poem “March”, H.D.’s cry—“o gold, stray but alive / on the dead ash of our hearth”—from *The Tribute*, these convey the yearning for the revival of the past in the present, the leaven of dormant powers awakened again. Not only poets but intellectuals in the wake of Frazer’s *Golden Bough* and Bergson’s *Évolution Créatrice* were involved. So, we find Dora Marsden, the editor of *The Egoist*, writing on the image as a factor of knowledge:

> The animal which thinks must have two worlds to think with . . . intellection is nothing other than the interweaving of two worlds. He must have become so well acquainted with his inner images that, when he cognizes (experiences) the outer image, the inner relative springs into effect alongside it. Precisely the superimposition of the external thing by its wraith-like indwelling double constitutes re-cognition.

Or, again, John Gould Fletcher’s review of H.D.’s *Sea Garden* in 1917 with its reference to “Plotinus, or Dionysius the Areopagite, or Paracelus, or Behmen, or Swedenborg, or Blake” may suggest the ambiance of intellectual conversation in which the “image” of Imagism arose.

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The landscape of *The Pisan Cantos* or of *Paterson*, like the landscape of the War Trilogy, is a multiple image, in which the historical and the personal past, with the divine world, the world of theosophical and of poetic imagination, may participate in the immediate scene. H.D. had seen this in the 1920s as a palimpsest. In literature, Pound had written, “the real time is independent of the apparent.” So, Henry James mingles with lynxes and with the divine powers Manitou and Kuthera attending, and Mt. Taishan appears in the Pisan atmosphere; from a photo in *The National Geographic* the wives of an African chief come into the landscape of *Paterson*, and the dwarf living under the falls is also the genius of the language; so, in the initial dedication of *The Walls Do Not Fall*
(recalling the Rome/London/Egypt sequence of Palimpsest in 1926) H.D. proposes an image between two worlds: Egypt 1923 and London 1942, which opens into a reality whose time will take a center in the Nativity.

Pound has observed that Dante in The Divine Comedy had not only given an account of the soul's journey (or “trip”, as it is called by the devotees of the psychedelic experience) but had also created an image of the divine world; the “world” of the poem was itself an image. The “idea” of the poem is this concretion of three worlds in one, a unity of real time in which many apparent times participate, a central intention whose meaning appears on many levels, an architecture of reality with its ascending and descending spirits—the whole a vision or seeing of a thing directly treated. The particular images of the poem then being seen to be notes in a melody that was in turn part of a larger movement, and these images belonging to movements, in turn forming the “world” of the whole, a single great image. This imagination of the “world” to which the intent of the poem belongs is Coleridge's primary imagination, Ficino's phantasy that is informed by the intention of the whole, the Image of images.

“Now at last he explains that it will, when the hundredth canto is finished,” Yeats writes of Pound in 1928, “display a structure like a Bach Fugue. There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes ... and, mixing with these, medieval or modern historical characters.” Then: “He has shown me upon the wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Chastity, in the middle Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura's day.” The whole Yeats saw as a prescribed composition, or an architectural plan, having sets, archetypal events, for he himself was forcing his Vision into prescribed wheel and gyre, to get the times right, imposing a diagrammatic order of such archetypes upon history.

“God damn Yeats' bloody paragraph,” Pound writes in 1939: “Done more to prevent people reading Cantos for what is on the page than any other one smoke screen.” “Hear Janequin's intervals, his melodic conjunctions from the violin solo,” he writes in Kulchur: “The forma, the immortal concetto, the concept, the dynamic form which is like the rose pattern driven into the dead iron-filings by the magnet. Yeats saw structure like Bach’s; but Pound contrasts the music of structure, “as J. S. Bach in fugue or keyboard toccata”, with the “music of representative outline”, which he finds in Janequin's intervals and conjunctions, and would seek himself, as “from the floral background in Pisanello's Este portrait, from the representation of visible things in Pietro di Borgo, there is a change to pattern and arabesque, there is an end to the Medieval Anschauung, the medieval predisposition.” The poem, like music, taking shape upon the air. So, in the Cantos, Aphrodite appearing to her son Anchises at Cythera takes form
upon the air—that is, upon the element, “the air they have broken up and tempered”, and also upon the air or melody the violin plays, having the voices of birds as Pisanello has the pattern of flowers in his art. So, Pound works to incorporate the voices of men and even, in the Adams Cantos, the epistolary styles as musical entities leading into pattern and arabesque, to bring forward phrasings and syncopations of vowel-tones and consonants. Yet what he had achieved in *The Cantos*, Pound came to feel by the time he was writing *Kulchur*, was not the clear line of Janequin, who had transmuted the sounds of birds into a musical reality nor the architectural mastery of Bach, but an art—like the music of Beethoven or like Bartok’s Fifth Quartet, Pound says—having “the defects inherent in a record of struggle”. The real time of *The Cantos* was not to be independent of the apparent time.

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It is the form of the poet’s experience itself that we see in the form of his work—in *The Cantos*, of struggle and conflict as well as of independent and sublime vision, of stubborn predispositions as well as of its taking form from the air. “What is a god?” Pound had asked in his *Religio*: “A god is an eternal state of mind,” he had answered and “When is a god manifest? When the states of mind take form, “The *religio* was also a poetics in which the imagination was the eternal state of mind, taking form in the things of the poem. But Pound in the twenties and thirties came more and more to depreciate the imagination. Poetic belief, the belief that is volunteered in what is but imagined to be real, contends with the authoritative belief, the belief that is commanded and which must be defended against heresy. Where in the essays of the London period Pound is exploring ideas of imagination and poetry, in the essays of Rapallo he speaks not as a visionary but as pedagogue, a culture commissar, an economic realist, a political authority, and, in each of these roles, he feels that Imagination and vision is unsound. Esthetics has a ground in reality that inspiration does not: “the Whistler show in 1910 contained more real wisdom than that of Blake’s fanatic designs.” Perhaps he suffered from a blind reaction to Yeats’s values, but *The Cantos* would move Pound again and again to ecstatic imagination beginning with the *Pisan Cantos*. Leucothea would be invoked throwing her girdle to rescue the Odysseus poet of *The Cantos* from the sea of time and space as Blake shows her in his *The Cycle of Life of Man* (reading Kathleen Raine’s *Blake and Tradition*, 1969: R.D.), as the Neo-Platonists return to inspire the late cantos. The chapter “Neo-Platonicx, Etc.” in *Kulchur* does not disown but it dissembles: “This kind of thing from the Phaedrus, or wherever it comes from, undoubtedly excites certain temperaments, or perhaps almost anyone if caught at the right state of adolescence or in certain humours.” Like Odysseus, Pound’s exile can be read as the initiation of the heroic soul (the hero of a Poetry) descending deep into hubris, offending and disobeying orders of the imagination and returning at last after trials “home”. Odysseus offended Poseidon and is shipwrecked; Pound offends the Elohim and comes at last, like Job, to trials of old age and despair.
In H.D.'s War Trilogy the form emerges along the path of a weaving that, like *The Cantos*, may follow pattern and arabesque in immediate areas, flowers and birds leading on to a world beyond the medieval predisposition (“its art-craft junk-shop / paint-and-plaster medieval jumble / of pain-worship and death-symbol,” H.D. writes in *The Walls Do Not Fall*) towards the figures of ultimately real things, intuitions of the truth of things, but also is colored at times by stubborn predispositions. But it is H.D.'s poetics that interprets and transmutes her psychoanalytic and occultist preconceptions (though in *Sagesse* and in *Hermetic Definitions* occultist systematic interpretations seek to take over the authority of the real). Freud and later the theurgist Robert Ambelain come to lead H.D. into poetry, as Mussolini and Major Douglas lead Pound away from his mind.

The War Trilogy does not evoke comparison for H.D. with the quartets of Beethoven or Bartok. Music as it appears in the Trilogy is transcendental, and the art of the poem has its counterpart in the arts of painting or tapestry, a triptych portraying the soul's journey in an evolution from the shell fish of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, iv, that is “master-mason planning / the stone marvel”, to the woman with her child, her Christ-child, at the close of *The Flowering of the Rod*. Yet the tapestry must incorporate, even as Pound's Cantos must, “the defects inherent in a record of struggle”. As later in *Helen in Egypt*, H.D. will refer to the tradition of the palinodia of Stesichorus, the poet's restoring to Poetry the truth about Helen, in the War Trilogy she strike's out, alone of the Imagists, to restore the truth of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost to Poetry. Not a conversion to Christianity, but a conversion of Christianity to Poetry.

There is an evolution of life-forms, experiences, yet they exist one in another; the work of art itself contains in its processes the beauty of the shell and the beauty of the Christos or Logos that in the human world has specific manhood. The image of the whole poem is so thrown upon the imagination or aroused in the imagination “fixed or moving”, that “fixed” it appears as a tapestry; “moving” it is the path of something happening on different levels in time, it has plot or mythos. From the earliest tidal waters of our life, from

*There is a spell, for instance, in every sea-shell:*

to the evolution of the old divine orders into the Christos, not only Osiris but Venus, Astarte, also contained in the “jar” or alembic of the Christian mysteries. But these
mysteries have their authority now not in a church but in a poem. “Over Love, a new Master”, the announcement of the Christ may mean also that there is a new genius of forms over the poem.

*

We too must return in our weaving upon the air, the theme of image and meaning, to look into the War Trilogy again, the “tapestry” disclosing the “world”; and, as we regard once more the little company of poets or of heretics (H.D. herself working now in a belief disowned by her companions of Imagist days) or of disciples in a mystery, in the Presence that is “spectrum-blue / ultimate blue-ray”, that is “a spacious, bare meeting-house”, that is a cartouche enclosing a name, an idea comes into sight—the haunting suggestion of another dimension of the content or form.

As, in canvasses of Salvador Dali we see not a symbol, one thing standing for another, but what he calls a paranoic image, where one thing coexists in another—a man’s head that is also a lion that is also a hairy egg. So, here, the meeting-house is also a heart.

We are at the cross-roads,
the tide is turning....

in the turn of a heart-beat.
At heart, we are individual, complete. “The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them,” William Harvey begins the dedication to his *Anatomical Disquisition on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*, “the sun of their microcosm, that upon which all growth depends, from which all power proceeds.” I would recall here Helen Fairwood and Captain Rafton in H.D.’s story *Secret Name*, riding back in the dark from Karnak, having seen there the apparition of the “temple or tomb or birth-house”, the thud-thud of the hoofs answering the beat of their hearts, arousing another image of their lying beneath the heart of the mother: As if they in some strange exact and precious period of pre-birth, twins, lovers, were held, sheltered beneath some throbbing heart.” “First, before anything else,” Harvey writes: “a drop of blood appears, which throbs, as Aristotle had noted. From this, with increasing growth and formation of the chick, the auricles of the heart are made, in the pulsations of which there is continual evidence of life. Alter a few more days, when the body is outlined, the rest of the heart is made, but for some time it remains pale and bloodless like the rest of the body, and does not throb.”

*  

Then: “Whoever examined this matter closely will not say that the heart entirely is the first to live and the last to die, but rather the auricles (or that part corresponding to the auricles in serpents, fishes, and such animals) which live before the rest of the heart, and die after it.”

*  

The poem too begins with a pulse, a melodic impulse (a “beat” which belongs to a unique pattern in time) and the melodic impulse contains a form (as that beat of blood in the egg contains the form of the chick at work). There is then an image that is also (“the first to live and the last to die”) a rhythm.

*  

Genetics teaches us that unseen coordinates, the genes, lie back of this pattern in time, this rhythm of being, that is also a pattern in space, this form or image—of a man, of a chick, of a poem, then—if it be thought of as a part of the process of life. The “free verse” of high poetry was not abstractly free, but free, specifically, from the concept of a poem’s form as a paradigm, an imposed plan to which the poet conformed. The form was germinal, the germ being the cadence that began in language—“a new cadence means a new idea” —arousing a life of its own, a poem.
Erwin Schrödinger tells us in *What Is Life?* that “we believe a gene—or perhaps the whole chromosome fibre—to be an aperiodic solid.” “A small molecule,” he writes: “might be called the germ of a solid.”

So too we may think of an idea, a novel or a poem, as beginning at some point or germ, growing, finding its being and necessary form, rhythm and life, as the germ evolves in relation to its environment of language and experience. This is an art that rises from a belief in the universe as a medium of forms, in man’s quest for form as a spiritual evolution, each realized experience of form in turn the germ of a new necessity for form or affinity for form.

In contrast, conventional art, with its conviction that form means adherence to a prescribed order where metric and rime arise in conformation to a regular pattern, has its ground in a belief that man by artifice must win his forms as models, reproductions, or paradigms, against his nature, in a universe that is a matter of chaos or that has fallen into disorder.

Schrödinger, contrasting organic and inorganic forms in nature, says: “Starting from such a small solid germ, there seem to be two different ways of building up larger and larger associations. One is the comparatively dull way of repeating the same structure in three directions again and again. That is the way followed in a growing crystal. Once the periodicity is established, there is no definite limit to the size of the aggregate.”

“The other way is that of building up a more and more extended aggregate without the dull device of repetition. That is the case of the more and more complicated organic molecule in which every atom, and every group of atoms, plays an individual role, not entirely equivalent to that of many others (as in the case of a periodic structure). We might quite properly call that an aperiodic crystal or solid and express our hypothesis by saying: We believe a gene—or perhaps the whole chromosome fibre—to be an aperiodic solid.”

Genetic thought along these lines is akin to poetic thought that pictures the
poem as an organic crystallization, its germ or law or form being immanent in the immediate life, what is happening, in the work of the poem. “I believe in technique as the test of a man’s sincerity; in law when it is ascertainable,” Pound writes in 1912: “in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse.” Free verse, later projective verse as expounded by Charles Olson, developed a new sense of metric and rime deriving from an inner, periodic formal intuition. Here, structure is not satisfied in the molecule, is not additive; but is fulfilled only in the whole work, the apprehension of the work’s “life” springing anew in each realization, each immediate cell.

Marianne Moore is a master of poetry that is periodic in its concept—as if art were a convention—which has its counterpart in her concern for social conformities, in her admiration for rigor, for the survival of vitality where character-armor takes over to resist areas of experience that cannot be included in the imagined social contract of poetry. Schrodinger in his bias for the form he sees in living matter finds inorganic crystals “comparatively dull” in structure; but the poem “He ‘Digesteth Harde Yron’”, which is built of periodic units, is not “comparatively dull”, for her zest for language as a vitality in itself contends throughout with the use of metric to make a conforming pattern. Words were not yet reduced to the conventional trivial units of New Yorkerese that they become in her later verse. Yet in the larger units of structure the structures are already inorganic. Once the stanza is set, there is no further form, no further “experience”, realized in its extension. The number of stanzas is arbitrary. The poem presents examples of itself, a series that may be “complete” at any point because, otherwise, it is extensible as long as the poet’s rationalizations continue. The form of the whole, in conventional verse, does not rest in the fulfillment of or growth of its parts toward the revelation of their “life” but in the illustration of the taste and arbitration of the poet. Between its appearance in What Are Years (1941) and its appearance in Selected Poems (1951) Marianne Moore eliminated three lines of stanza six in “He ‘Digesteth Harde Yron’”, all of stanzas seven and eight, without altering the “form” of the whole. The uncertainty she has often shown about the total form of a poem is a corollary of a periodic or imitative structure where, as Schrodinger observes of mineral structures, “there are no definite limits to the size of the whole.” Although in its inception Marianne Moore’s verse follows the line of a growth out of a germinal nucleus, and in this it was, especially in the twenties and thirties, akin to that of her peers, H.D., Williams, or Pound. The thoroughly conventional poem projects a prescription of the line to line conformity. But Marianne Moore’s growth, being periodic inorganic, has no internal law of the whole. The history of the poem, for Marianne Moore, consists of instances of itself, as natural history for her is after Linnaeus and pre-Darwin a collection of types or models of species. In her technical brilliance (as late as the poem “Style” circa 1956), she excels. The very crux of the poem is its mechanical expertness. But in her poetics, in her thought and feeling of
the poem then, she does not evolve as life does but repeats; her verse is not creative but exemplary in form. So there is no process of rebirth, of an evolving apprehension of form in her work, of impending experience, that might make for a major impetus in the later years of her life, such as we find in *The Pisan Cantos*, in *Paterson*, and in the War Trilogy, in the work of poets whose poetry had come to be a “life” work.

*

It is not in their exemplary character-structure but in their passion, in their ripeness, the fullness in process of what they are, that I am moved by H.D., Pound, and Williams. They move in their work through phases of growth towards a poetry that spreads in scope as an aged tree spreads its roots and branches, as a man’s experience spreads; their art in language conveying scars and informations of age without armor as a man may gather in his face and form acknowledged accumulations of what he is in his life, in his cooperation with the world about him.

*

Thus, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, it is the cooperation of the elements of the poem that informs. Not imitating but arising from the beat of the heart and from the breath, yes.... As in his *Projective Verse* essay of 1950, Charles Olson was to see the impetus of a new poetry as “from the union of the mind and the ear that the syllable is born”, the hearing of the poem, and from “the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE”, the inspiration and feeling of the poem. Recalling again what H.D. in “Secret Name” sees, where the poet (the H.D. we recognize in the Helen Fairwood of the story) and the god (the Bear Zeus that Helen Fairwood recognizes in Captain Rafton) have their apotheosis in the apparition of the birth-house or germinal cell, as the woman and man “in love”, heart-beat to heart-beat, are carried, “brother” and “sister” now, “twins, lovers”.

“The mind is brother to this sister (the heart) and is, because it is so close, the drying force,” Olson writes, “the incest, the sharpener.” Where I see his meaning super-imposed upon H.D.’s image in “Secret Name”. Syllable and line, Olson has it, are born “of the incest of verse (always, that Egyptian thing, it produces twins!)”. If, as we have been persuaded by Freudian psychoanalysis, we may read in everyday events and speech as in dreams a language that tells of our genital life, that language tells too of our breathing and of the circulation of our blood. Our consciousness of life, our “speech” then, arising from these.

*

H.D. cannot arbitrate but must follow the inspiration (the in-breathing) and the beat, as she follows the feel and balance of the poem, for she works, having all the predisposition of her previous thought, towards the discovery of the whole. She works,
as in analysis, to bring the content from latency into awareness. History here consists of “incidents” or parts of something in process, and the work of the poet is to find or render what is happening. Natural history is an evolution. The design unfolds, self-creative. Her sense of affinity with the shell-fish as “master-mason” (pathetic fallacy to the critic who does not believe there is a continuity of spirit in the universe) is morphological. She is concerned with a correspondence that is also, if we believe in evolution as life creating itself, where self is spirit, a sense of psychic origin.

*

In xxxvi “of The Walls Do Not Fall, the poet’s mind operates in a field of human mind, again as a thread weaves in a tapestry:

“your way of thought (mine),

\[
each \text{ has its peculiar intricate map,} \\
\text{threads weave over and under} \\
\text{the jungle-growth} \\
\text{of biological aptitudes} \\
\text{inherited tendencies,} \\
\text{the intellectual effort} \\
\text{of the whole race...}
\]

Each mind has its “peculiar ego-centric / personal approach / to the eternal realities” and “differs from every other / in minute particulars”, “as the vein-paths on any leaf”, as each line in the poem has its “approach” and must be perfected there, having that imperfection that it is perfected only in the field of its existence which it experiences as “approach” or “intention”. H.D.’s “eternal realities” I would see here as figures in a design to which any individual life contributes. The germinal form of Man in which we individuate and out of which we are each the immediate occasion of our species is such a figure, “of the whole race”. Here she draws upon the biological identity, as in The Flowering of the Rod, ix, she affirms:

\[
\text{No poetic phantasy} \\
\text{but a biological reality,} \\
\text{a fact: I am an entity} \\
\text{like bird, insect, plant} \\
\text{or sea-plant cell...}
\]
where “poetic phantasy”, with its connotation of being made up for fancy’s sake, is not the poet’s term but her interior adversary’s, not then that poetic phantasy in Ficino’s terms identified with the creative imagination, for the tenor of the War Trilogy is that Dream and Life are one—the “spiritual realities” and “eternal realities” are “biological”. It is not only the figure of Man then out of which and to which the individual thread has its weaving of intention, but, beyond Man, in the larger field of Life itself, so that the poet strives for organic form as Life form. This is not a humanist art. The “whole race” is ultimately not the species Man but the race of the living.

*  

With Olson’s *Projective Verse* the field of the imagination was extended to a form that took its imperative in the atomic particular of the cell. The energy of the poem he saw had its spring in the immediate event: “Let’s start from the smallest particle of all, the syllable.” There is a change then possible that haunts our minds since Olson’s charge—that the formal imperative or intent has its spring back of the word or phrase (back of that civilization of meanings agreed upon that the dictionary represents) in the minim of our speech, the immediate sounding event. In this minim, in our articulation of vowels, lies the crucial evolutionary fact underlying the word. Speech, our specifically human instrument, is a possibility that arose with the separation of larynx and soft palate. “Specialization, semanticity, arbitrariness,” these functions of language we share with all primates; “discreteness”, “traditional transmission” with our fellow anthropoids; but with the play of vowel color, we have our own music, giving rise to new qualities in speech: “displacement”, “productivity”, “duality of patterning”, the operations of our natural imagination in which sound makes sense. (See, Charles D. Hockett, “The Origins of Speech”, *Scientific American*, September 1960)

*  

So, I see *The Walls Do Not Fall* develop along lines of an intuited “reality” that is also a melody of vowel tone and rime giving rise to image and mythos and out of the community of meanings returning to themes towards its individual close. In her work she consciously follows the lead of image to image, of line to line or of word to word, which takes her to the brink (as “gone” leads to “guns” in the opening of the poem) of meaning, the poet establishing lines of free (i. e. individual) association within the society of conventional meanings. The form of the poem, of the whole, is an entity or lifetime, a “biological reality”, having life as her own body has life.
The “Heart” in our projection of the tapestry of the poem appears as the brotherhood of scribes or initiates of Thoth; they belong to, have given their allegiance to, the truth or the heart of things. In the “City Under Fire” of parts i, ii, ix, x, xi, xii, xiv, xxiv, xxix, xxxiv, and the closing xli of The Walls Do Not Fall, the heart is on trial. As in the code-script involving all the future development of the poem, there appears the accusation that the City makes against the poet: “your heart, moreover

is a dead canker

they continue, and
your rhythm is the devil’s hymn.

It is “Isis, Aset or Astarte” who is accused here; the sexual lure and seductiveness of the poet in her service or her cult, the cult of the love affair, the affair of the heart, the cultivation of heartache, heart-consciousness or passion over mind-consciousness or reason. The theme in The Walls Do Not Fall of giving thanks for recovery or survival in a time of war (on this level, a prayer during an air-raid) is in turn a thanks for recovery, as in Tribute to the Angels:

where Zadkiel, we pause to give
thanks that we rise again from death and live,

from a heart-attack, consciously or unconsciously included in the statement. In Narthex (see, The Second American Caravan, 1928), the sign—“triangle set on triangle that makes a star, the seal of Solomon”—is the heart, where the triangle of an old affair “Katherine-Mordant-Raymonde”—is “burnt out”, “residue of suffering” kept or learned heart, we say. The “half-burnt-out apple-tree / blossoming”, the epiphany of Tribute to the Angels, may be the heart (the “tree” of arteries and veins) recovering. It was, she tells us, “the spear / that pierces the heart.”

*  

The attack, the being under fire, is an old theme of H.D.’s. In “Halcyon” from Red Roses for Bronze of 1931:

“tinsel” they said the other lives were
all those I loved,
I was forgot;
what is most the heart of the matter for the “I” comes under the attack of others as irrelevant; in “The Tribute” of 1916: “till our heart’s shell was reft / with the shrill notes”, where Beauty and love are the causes of an exile. In the War Trilogy thirty years later, the “we” who are under attack are devotees of beauty and of a heresy of love; the art of writing, the “script, letters, palette”, is itself under attack as tinsel. The actual War, the incendiary attacks, the deprivations, come to illustrate or manifest another war the lover and poet knew under attack, to reactivate the violence felt in the critical and social rejection of her person and her art that H.D. had known. But these voices that accuse have been brought over into the authority of the poem; they are voices of the poetic consciousness itself. The adversary is heart-felt.

*  

Returning to the City or Heart under “Apocryphal fire”, In The Walls Do Not Fall, I, we see it clearly: “the heart burnt out, dead ember, / tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered, / yet the frame held.” This “death” of the physical heart and its “resurrection” in the opening poem leads forward to the poet’s taking heart in the Christos or taking love in the Lover, as, in turn, we recognize her “New Master over Love” in the blossoming of the tree, in which the flowering of the rood returns, itself the news of a Vita Nuova from the Cross. So, too, the City burning gives us leads. We see Sodom, or Pompei “with its House of the Dionysian Mysteries, some city of Astarte, Carthage the burned and salted ground” (or, as in Helen in Egypt, Troy thrown down, the City, like the Woman, “hated of all Greece”). It is a scene like that shown in the Lot and His Daughters attributed to Lucas van Leyden or in the visionary canvasses of Bosch or Brueghel, where the City is inflamed, as, from the crusade against the Cathars of Provence, where at Béziers the Pope’s armies turned the cathedral of Saint-Nazaire into a great oven in which the faithful were burned, to the raging wars that swept Christendom in the seventeenth century where Protestant and Catholic sought to exterminate each other, the heart of the Christian reality—the City of God—was broken.

Or the scene is from Bosch’s Garden of Delights, or, as Wilhelm Franger argues it should be titled—The Millennium, where in the right-hand panel we see those who dwell in the wrath of God, in the volcano of His inner agony. It is Jehovah’s realm, before Christ, the intestines of the Burning Mountain. The “we” of H.D.’s poem, who cry:

\[ \text{Dev-ill was after us,} \\
\text{tricked up like Jehovah} \]

have seen the Bad Father, and live in the world as if in the wrath of the last days. Where we cannot identify with the will of powerful groups in the society we live in, we feel their power over us as an evil. The word evil, the O. E. D. suggests: “usually referred to the root of up, over”, may then be whatever power over us of outer or inner compulsion. As the power and presumption of authority by the State has increased in every nation, we
are ill with it, for it surrounds us and, where it does not openly conscript, seeks by advertising, by education, by dogma or by terror, to seduce, enthral, mould, command or coerce our inner will or conscience or inspiration to its own uses. Like the pious Essenes alienated from Romanizing priests and civilizing Empire alike, like the Adamite cult to which Bosch may have belonged, the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, alienated from the spiritual authoritarianism of the Church and from the laws of warring feudal lords and principalities, we too may find ourselves, at odds with the powers that be, members of a hidden community, surviving not in history but in the imagination or faith. Like Jews paying taxes to Caesar or like little children suffering under the tyranny of powerful adults, we then live in a world that is “theirs”, in “their” power, in which a deeper reality, our own, is imprisoned. Our life is hidden in our hearts, a secret allegiance, at odds with the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and the true kingdom is “not of this World”. The artist—the poet as well as the painter or musician—striving to keep alive the reality of his art as revelation and inspiration of Truth or Beauty finds himself so at odds with the dominant motives of profit and industry embodied in the society; for Communist and Capitalist alike the work of art is taken to be a commodity of social exchange. Not only gnostics and pacifists but artists and poets, those who live by an inner reality or world, having a prior adherence to the heart’s truth or wish, appear as heretics or traitors to those who lead or conform to the dominations of the day.

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In “The Tribute”, the City stricken by war has already been betrayed “for a thrust of a sword, / for a piece of thin money” and the gods driven out, except for War, and this Mars has “treacherous feet”. In “Cities” of 1914, H.D. had seen “hideous first, hideous now” the hive of a “new” or false city crowd out all vestige of the old beauty, only a few left to cherish what once was and to await the coming of beauty again, like a heart that has lost love and waits, alienated, for its return.

As the poet Rilke saw the poets as bees storing the honey of the invisible in a time when, from the center of the commodity-culture, there come crowding over from America empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things, “Dummy-life,” H.D. sees the City as a hive where the few remnants keep “grains of honey” and there appears a mass-people of the new age, larvae spreading “not honey but seething life”. “We are perhaps the last to have still known such things,” Rilke writes to von Hulewicz in 1925. “We would feed forever / on the amber honeycomb / of your remembered greeting,” H.D. reiterates in The Walls Do Not Fall in 1942: “but the old-self,

      still half at-home in the world,
      cries out in anger..

*
The surrender of this-worldly purposes so important in religious conversion and the separation of desire from passion into its own pure kingdom so important in the conversion of lovers to love, these are like the conversion of outer and inner reality to form a poetic real. Outer and inner conflicts enter into and surcharge the poetic. At odds with powerful influences, whether they be his own impulses or the opposing will of other men, the poet holds the new reality only by a heightened intensity. Realizations come not as charming experiences but as rare gains in reality, as raptures. The “honey” Rilke and H.D. speak of is such “rapture”, the secretion of the life experience of a besieged spirit, part then of a complex that includes the other features we find in apocalyptic statement—anger, outrage, despair, fear, judgment. The flaming cities are not only representations of persecutions suffered or punishments anticipated in heresy, they are also representations of a revenging wrath projected by the heretic, the stored-up sense of injustice and evil will over us raging outward. Within the picture painted or raised in the poem, as in the individual psyche and in the society at large, we see the same symptoms. Everywhere, we find at every level the content felt as psychic is manifest. The individual psyche lives in the psychic society, as the individual physical body lives in the physical City. The artist then is not only psychically at odds but physically at odds. His art a physical contradiction of the pseudo-things and advertisements about him, as his spirit is a psychic contradiction. The manifest ugliness of things made in the spirit of investment and profit is physically oppressive.

The triumph of utility over beauty in the square unornamented functional architecture of the “International” style is the dominant idea in our contemporary utilitarian City, appropriate expression of the will-to-power of large corporations over all individual variation; as, in turn, the dominant idea in international affairs—the Atomic War—hints at the anger, outrage, despair, fear suffered by corporation-men themselves living in their own system.

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H.D.’s apocalyptic vision in the War Trilogy, like her identification with Hellenistic decadence in the period between the first two World Wars, provides an historical perspective in which the experience of London under attack in the Second World War becomes meaningful in relation to depths and heights of personal reality, depths she had come to know in her psychoanalysis with Freud and then in new terms with the study of occult and hermetic lore, heights she had known in aesthetic and erotic ideals as early as her first work. To be a poet appeared as a challenge of existing things, and poets seemed to form a heretical group, as among poets “Imagists” in turn were viewed as heretical by conventional versifiers. “She is fighting in her country,” H.D. wrote of Marianne Moore in 1916 in The Egoist, “against squalor and commercialism. We are all fighting the same battle.”

She had known too in the War Years the persecution that dogged the little pacifist group around D. H. Lawrence, for Frieda and Lawrence had taken refuge in the house where H.D. lived. “Victims, victimised and victimising,” she writes in Bid Me To Live:
“Perhaps the victims came out, by a long shot, ahead of the steady self-determined victimisers.” They were, she and Lawrence and Pound, not of the lost generation “but they had roots (being in their mid-twenties and their very early thirties) still in that past. They reacted against a sound-board, their words echoed...” “What was left of them was the war generation, not the lost generation.”

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Beauty under attack, Imagism under attack, pacifism under attack, and, as the Wars like great Dreams began to make it clear, life itself under attack—H.D. had an affinity for heretical causes. In psychoanalysis again she found a cult under attack. “Upon my suggestion to H.D. that psychoanalysis seemed to affect some people as does Christian Science,” Robert McAlmon argues with the contempt commonsense has for such things, “she took me seriously and said yes, it was a religion.” It was, Freud felt, to take the place of religion, and he thought always of psychoanalysis under attack as Truth under attack, for the civilization itself—indeed, civilization itself—was at war against knowing anything about, much less recognizing within, the contents of the unconscious. “My discoveries are a basis for a very grave philosophy,” she tells us Freud told her: “There are very few who understand this, there are very few who are capable of understanding this.”

* 

To be analysed was not only an initiation, a learning to read the meaning of dreams, of daily life, of the poem; it was also a trial. “‘I am asking only one thing of you,’ he said,” H.D. writes in Tribute to Freud; then: “Even as I write the words, I have the same sense of anxiety, of tension, of imminent responsibility that I had at that moment.”

What he asks is that she not defend his philosophy. Is it in some way like Augustine’s perception that while Rome falls to the barbarians, the Christians, seeking out the meaning of Rome, must not defend the truth or city against the enemy but convert the enemy to the city—a “City of God” that Rome may be but that is not Rome. “At the least suggestion that you may be about to begin a counter-argument in my defense, the anger or the frustration of the assailant will be driven deeper. You will drive the hatred or the fear or the prejudice in deeper ... The only way to extract the fear or prejudice would be from within, from below.”

* 

The apocalyptic picture of the world that is also the heart under attack is a complex image of correspondences between what is felt as inflicted and what is felt in projection, of wishes for vengeance that are also fears of punishment seen fulfilled in actual events.” Pompei “has nothing to teach us,” H.D. begins the Trilogy:
we know crack of volcanic fissure,
slow flow of terrible lava,

pressure on heart, lungs, the brain...

where the events of the London blitz illustrate the wrath of the Father, and the arguments of the pro-war forces in English society demanding the adherence of all wills to the war effort reappear as voices of the Protestant Ethic, the very spirit of industrial and commercial capitalism, an attack upon art, sexuality and Woman. Behind the war is an old war against Tiamat. On a psychological level, an analytical level, the war is sensed in pressures of inner wrath—of the “Jehovah” within—upon living organs. Such a condition demands of the imagination a new heart and a new reality in which there is the germ of survival.
So it is the story of survival, the evolution of forms in which life survives. In the tides of oceanic life-force, the *élan vitale*, the individual heart appears as the shell-fish. “That flabby, amorphous hermit / within” is the brain in its skull-shell, and its limit, the limit of thought in the overwhelming element of what is. But it is also the heart, holding against too much feeling:

\[
\text{it unlocks the portals} \\
\text{at stated intervals:} \\
\text{prompted by hunger,} \\
\text{It opens to the tide-flow:}
\]

where a correspondence is felt between the tide of the sea and the tide of the blood, between ebb and flow and the systole and diastole; between the valves of the heart and the valves of the shell-fish who lives in the tidal rhythm, as the brain lives in the tidal flow of the heart, fed by charges of blood in the capillaries

Here (*The Walls Do Not Fall*, iv) the individual life begets itself from and must also hold itself against the enormous resources of life, against the too-much, “beget self-out-of-self”, take heart in what would take over the heart in its greater power. The theme recurs: in xvii: “the tide is turning”; in xxv: “my heart-shell / breaks open”. It leads forward in *Tribute to the Angels* to Gabriel, the Moon-Regent, Lord of Spiritual Tides, and, in *The Flowering of the Rod* to the echo of the sea and of her Tiamat-identity that Woman brings with her to the Christ.

The “indigestible, hard, ungiving” thing, of iv, that “living within” begets “that pearl-of-great-price”, may be a coal, in xvii, “for the world’s burning”; for, in xxv, we learn that the phoenix dropped “a grain, as of scalding wax” from its burning, that “lodged in the heart-core, / has taken its nourishment” and, in xxviii, that the grain fell “between a heart-beat of pleasure / and a heart-beat of pain.” We see readily the statement that the nucleus of the poem itself as a pearl may grow from a painful “indigestible” thing. Underlying it we may sense the statement that the poet has taken heart in a long-forgotten burning event.
As, in the systole-diastole reference, the consecration / affirmation of xxxix is charged with biological meaning:

We have had too much consecration,

too little affirmation,

too much: but this, this, this

has been proved heretical,

too little: I know, I feel

the meaning that words hide.

where the presentation of intellectual alternates—the orthodoxy arising from convention and the consensus of authority versus the heresy of the individual experience—would seem farthest from referring to the physical image of the heart, but in its form of alternating beats, of a flux between too much and too little, it proposes not the image of opposites but the image of a circulation, the returning flood from the ventricle of the heart into the arterial circuit, where the sense of the more-than-enough in the word “too” may refer to the crisis or strain. The “hermit / within” who would survive and create “self-out-of-self” in the tide flow of oceanic feeling must keep his limits, “of nothing-too-much.”

In the opening poems of *The Flowering of the Rod*, this theme of crisis or heartbeat in a duality flowers in full song, beginning with the “I go where I love and where I am loved”, ii, and continuing through viii—a song of assent and affirmation in the alternating current of human will. Here, beyond the of-nothing-too-much, she acclaims “the insatiable longing”, “the eternal urge”, “the despair”, then the desire itself “to equilibrate the eternal variant”.

*“To charge with meaning to the utmost possible degree,” Pound had commanded the poet. To the heart’s limit? “Meaning may be then H.D.’s new Master over Love that is also a new heart taken in poetry and appears as the key from which the new feeling of history distributes its rhythm. The “but gods always face two-ways” of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, ii, charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree, means times too always face two ways. “Every hour, every minute,” H.D. tells us in *Tribute to Angels*, “has its specific attendant Spirit”; there is no time that is not a god, the dying and rebirth of self. “The tide is turning”, of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, xvii, where “we” are “coals for the world’s burning” refers not only to a turning-point in the orders of human history but to a turning-point in the boy’s history, the diagnosis of a crisis; and, back of these, to a turning-point in which we know the intent of life itself manifest.*
“When I first tried animal experimentation for the purpose of discovering the motions and functions of the heart by actual inspection and not by other people’s books” Harvey writes: “I found it so truly difficult that I almost believed with Fracastorius, that the motion of the heart was to be understood by God alone. I could not really tell when systole or diastole took place, or when dilation or construction because of the quickness of the movement.

* 

It is in the “I could not really tell when” that only the imagination pleads us on—the affirmation, H.D. calls it. The vision of history in *The Walls Do Not Fall* grows from a seed of light or pulse—it is an old occult tradition. A heart-beat, a seed of time, a mustard seed, so immediate that it precedes our sense of it:

> then I woke with a start  
> of wonder and asked myself  
> 
> *but whose eyes are those eyes?*

“All that we can observe,” Whitehead argues in *Adventures of Ideas*, “consists of conceptual persuasions in the present ... Literature preserves the wisdom of the human race; but in this way it enfeebles the emphasis of first-hand intuition. In considering our direct observation of past, or of future, we should confine ourselves to time-spans of the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second.”
[July 31st, 1964] Conceived first in the Spring of 1961 as a daybook, allowing for sketches of thought, digressive followings of impulse and searchings for content, for design within design, a demonstration of what occurs as I take H.D.’s War Trilogy as the ground of interpretation, days haunted by passages of her poem, introducing new elements, rendering new possibilities, three years later in the Summer of 1964, as in those drawings at the cave-temple of Pech-Merle in the Hall of Hieroglyphics “superimposed, drawn by fingers in the soft clay (soft and pliable even now), with no dominant direction, crossing and interpenetrating one another”, where, Giedion tells us in The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art, “Aurignacian man gained magic possession of coveted animals by drawing their outlines in the darkness of the caverns, illuminated only by a flickering torch”, or, as in Marie and Pierre Curie’s working the pitchblende, following the lure of an unseen as-yet element, who appear in Paterson: Four as personae of the poet himself working the language where “A dissonance / in the valence of Uranium / led to the discovery”

to get, after months of labor.

a stain at the bottom of the retort
without weight, a failure, a
nothing. And then, returning in the
night, to find it

LUMINOUS

the book returns again and again to this material in which the lure of a seed or a heartbeat or a minimal nucleus of consciousness lingers. Thought here not expository but experimental, trying the materials, and operative, the matter itself changing in experiment, the immediate work in its working creating itself anew as gold or goal. In places I am thinking-through lines twice thought through before, not to come to the conclusion of a thought but to return to its movement, to old traces, drawn by the idea that is a generative force, inhabiting these lines, along these lines, to find out what draws me, in the dark by the light of what I have known towards the light of what I do not yet know, am about to know as I draw; the drawing, a dramatic rehearsal.

A finding then, a finding out of a way in going, of the poet in the figure of the poet traced from lines where H.D. before me worked along these lines. Life of poet crossing and interpenetrating life of poet in the imagination of something “to gain magic-possess-ion” of that most coveted animal power, the lion-voice, the serpent-wisdom, the nightingale-song, the antlered crown—to commune with the animal force felt in the poem return to the working of the poem. So, the rehearsals of self as “that craftsman, / the shell-fish”, or, “when I, / the industrious worm, / spin my own shroud”, or “erect serpent” in The Walls Do No Fall; so, the ecstatic flight as “the first wild goose”, having the migratory bird’s instinctual drive to “hover / over the lost island, Atlantis”.

65
For I am not a literary scholar nor an historian, not a psychologist, a professor of comparative religions or an occultist. I am a student of, I am searching out, a poetics. There are times when my primary work here, my initiation of self as poet in the ground of the poet H.D. and also my working of what is now a “matter of Poetry” (as the Arthurian lore is called the matter of Britain) and in turn an element in the great matter of the Creation of Man, there are times when my work has given way to literary persuasions and arguments, as if I might plead the cause of my life experience before the authorities at Nicaea and have my way, no longer heretical, taken over by those food bishops who control appointments and advancements as established dogma, a place won for H.D. in the orthodox taste and opinion of literary convensions.

But just here I would admit those crossed lines, mixed purposes, almost of a literary scholar, an historian, a psychologist, a professor of comparative religions, overwriting the poet and the figure before us that we are striving to realize.

Where now we have only this one way to go, to the knotting and the untying of knots, moving along the line of our moving, the sometimes multiphasic sentence, we follow, trace of this coveted animal or animating power we address, crossing and recrossing its charm as if we could so bring in over into our human lot the form it is of a book we are writing or of a life we are leading, is the nucleus itself of our work which we feel as an impending lure, the turning point where we are, leading us on.

*

We are, where a work of art is thought of as organic, related to a concept of life itself as a process of form in creation, always where “the tide is turning”. In the opening of *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

```
unaware, Spirit announces the Presence  
shivering overtakes us,
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the Presence in which we shiver is the entity of the poem itself in which the poet shivers, the immanence of the design of the tapestry in the weaver’s held breath as he works.

*

The heart, felt in the very beat of the verse, expressed in the insistent figure of alternating ebb and flow, consecration and affirmation, “hot noon-sun” and “the grey / opalescent winter-dawn”, appears in the foreground of the design as a jar carried by the Mage Kaspar to a new Master over Love (over the heart then). And Life appears as genius, an odor of myrrh, where the seal of the jar or heart was unbroken, that comes from the Christ-Child as if from one’s own heart. Life is the Presence, “spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray,” H.D. addresses it in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, xiii: “rare as radium, as healing”, toward which or from which the memory of the Curies from William Carlos
Williams’s *Paterson* may have come. So, too, Wilhelm Reich saw Life in each cell, as he tells us in *The Function of the Orgasm*, as a blue flame. In poetry, perhaps, we can allow the vision, though H.D.’s critics were suspicious of poetic fraud; in psychiatry, it brought disgrace for Reich and, ultimately, actual imprisonment for medical fraud upon the seer.

*  

We can allow the blue light? But once H.D. presents it, the “ultimate blue ray”, what we could not really tell then, is not a passing fantasy but some ultimate term of the reality of the poem. The empire of her thought and feeling is always precarious, in excess of critical permission, and now to bring in this remnant of theosophical color-theory? of romantic dream-key? the blue flower of Novalis’s *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*? The very names Theosophical and Romantic are pejoratives in the great court of that Nicaea I am tempted to address.

*  

So, we are lost, we have lost our argument and must go on deeper to follow the lead of this Heart, as if the heart were itself an organ of intelligence and we would find more than a figure of speech in the intuition of “to know by heart” or “to know in one’s heart”. But now it is a jar that we follow in the poem, and the blue light is an odor....

*  

When first announcement comes in *The Walls Do Not Fall* of the Christos, we are told:

*His, the Genius in the jar*  
*which the Fisherman finds,*

*He is Mage,*  
*brining myrrh.*

The “stone-marvel” of the sea-shell, the “egg-shell”, are little alabaster jars. Stars, too, are “little jars of that indisputable / and absolute Healer, Apothecary”, and contain something; as words and then poems are containers, where meaning and presence are myrrh and the odor of myrrh

*  

*O heart, small urn*  
*of porphyry, agate or cornelian,*
how imperceptibly the grain tell
between a heart-beat of pleasure

and a heart-beat of pain;
I do not know how it came.

As in Kaspar's vision of the unfolding of the seed or pearl as a nucleus of light in the world is contained and revealed: “no one will ever know / whether the picture he saw clearly / as in a mirror was predetermined” or “no one will ever know how it happened / that in a second or a second and a half a second” there is a gnosis beyond knowing. “Of the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second,” Whitehead says. “I could not really tell,” Harvey testifies. “A small molecule,” Schrodinger tells us, “might be called ‘the germ of a solid.’”

*  

It is not abstract, a separate mental conception, apart from the material instance; but ineffable, elusive to definition. “The sense of having lived,” Henry James writes in his Preface to The Wings of the Dove, trying to recapture the germ of that work—the idea of Milly Theale desiring “to achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived.”

*  

So, the hidden seed, the myrrh or meaning, “the heart’s rapture” may also be such a sense of having lived, for it is to live that I find myself returning to the poem.

*  

As it was the title What Is Life? that drew me to Schrodinger’s work, and the sense of life, the excitement or immediacy in the writing of Schrodinger that leads me on to read. To bring forward into fulness of consciousness and involvement “the sense of having lived”. That must then spring from the immediate presence of one’s having lived in the only area the sense of anything can take place or time in—in the present intuition. The writer’s having lived in the writing the reader in turn lives in.

“The image so figured would be, at best, but half the matter, James writes: “the rest would be all the picture of the struggle involved, the adventure brought about, the gain recorded or the loss incurred, the precious experience somehow compassed.”

*  

The image and the tissue of the image, the weaving and the woven tapestry, contain something, the sense of having lived, so that where we respond to books or to works of art intensely we think of them as living, we have the sense of having lived in the
world of our reading. In *Tribute to the Angels*, the Lady, Mother of God, appears to H.D. bearing not the Christ but a book, as if Life or Love were also Poem or Work of Art—“her book is our book; written”, H.D. confides in xxxix:

> or unwritten, its pages will reveal

> a tale of a Fisherman,

> a tale of a jar or jars.

*  

“I have trouble following,” my friend Thomas Parkinson had noted in reading the first draft of the Day Book at this transition from James’s evocation of the picture or image, the adventure, the gain or loss, and the precious experience somehow compassed, to H.D.’s “her book is our book”. The passage from James had come abruptly to my mind as I wrote, and I, following, also had trouble. Certainly, the intensity of James’s living in the writing itself, life in turn the germ of the book, comes near to the sense I have of H.D.’s cult within the poem. Now, going back to the passages in which the Lady appears, from the xxiv with its beginning lines I have quoted more than once in this work: “Every hour, every moment / has its specific attendant Spirit” through xli with its return of the Angels as bells tolling the Hour—“our purpose, a tribute to the Angels”, the lines leap up from xxxvi: “she brings the Book of Life, obviously.”

*  

This is the religion of the Book. The People of the Book, so Islam denoted the Jews, Christians, and themselves. And we who take our lives in the afterlife of Christendom in writing and in reading must come across hints of the Word as we follow the word and of the Presence as we find a book lively. The Lady in *Tribute to the Angels* may be the Mother of the Word—the writer herself:

> She carried a book, either to imply

> she was one of us, with us,

or she may have been the Bride of the Word, the reader:

> or to suggest she was satisfied

> with our purpose, a tribute to the Angels.

At the close of the work itself, in *The Flowering of the Rod*, we see Her again, here Kaspar brings forward the jar in which the old lore or sacred orthodox but esoteric story has been stored. But the bearer of the gift has met a woman along the way, the myrrh has
become mixed perhaps, the story even as the woman tells it passes into another lore belonging to the world of Woman, the Mara of bitter experience to become “Mary-myrrh”. Receiving the gift for the Child, the Mother may be the Muse receiving the poem on behalf of the Poem or Poetry. “Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance, / as of all flowering things together. As, we realize, in the presentation of the poem itself H.D. as bearer of the content of the poem is like Kaspar for she is not sure the content has not been “changed”, mixed, and yet she comes to know the gift—for the poem comes as a gift to the poet writing—is one of having lived in the pleasure of “a most beautiful fragrance”, the music of the poem.

* 

The ambivalence of the heart (“facing two ways”), the secretiveness of the heart, these are to be brought before the Christ Child; He Himself a sealed jar, yet a-jar somehow, for the essence escapes everywhere—mercurial, hermetic. He had been declared King, heir of the Fathers, even as the myrrh had been the secret or secretion of the Fathers, yet the suspicion lingers that another intention, a Woman’s, has interfered. The hardness of the heart is brought before the Child in the gift, for it is contained in the “small urn” of alabaster. As in Narthex almost two decades earlier, where H.D.’s seeing-in-depth first appears, she must bring the burnt-out triangle of painful experience into the hieroglyph of Solomon’s seal, a woman’s message worked into the sign of the Mage, so here, the odor of a woman’s bitterness, of brine, “I a Siren-song” is brought into the myrrh: “in recognition,” she tells us in The Flowering of the Rod, xx, it might be “of an old burnt-out / yet somehow suddenly renewed infatuation...” Alabastor and salt of the sea had been terms of her first poems.

But then, as if love everywhere, even bitter love, burnt-out and lost love, were Love, it is not from the jar, whatever became of its myrrh, but from the Jar, the heart of the matter:

\[
\text{the fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh} \\
\text{she held in her arms.}
\]

“I am the Way,” this God had said. And the way as we write may be the Christ; its music, the fragrance. “I am the Life,” the sense of having lived, of its living, the closeness to essential Life in which our recognition of any work of art is involved may be our sense of its Mastery. He is the book she carries as she appears to the poet, and in the close of the book the poet writes, as at the close of the War Trilogy, He appears as the Child. “The Kingdom is within,” He also said, where the Way, Word, Life, Master, World are one, in the Heart.
This is not the beginning of the book. That was later, or coming later, it was written earlier. What was to become our study began surely long ago. In one sense it began before writing or reading began, when as a child I lay drifting in the environment of voices talking in the next room. I would be put to bed among the potted plants by the wall that was all windows of a sunroom or herbarium at my grandmother’s, and as my elders talked in the inner chamber, I, outside, could gaze at the night sky where some star was “mine” and watched over me, stars were eyes, or the first star seen was a wish or would grant a wish. My soul, they told me, went out to the stars or to other worlds. I laid my body down to rest in the bed as if it were a little boat and sailed on a voyage I pretended. “Wynken, Blynken, and Nod,” the rime went, “one night”

Sailed off in a wooden shoe—
Sailed on a river of crystal light,
Into a sea of dew.

“Where are you going, and what do you wish?”—so the old moon questions the voyagers. “I know where I’m going and who’s going with me,” another old song went. The rime was a child’s fancy by Eugene Field, who was to become, when one was grown-up, a repressed, even despised source, put away among childish things. In Maxfield Parrish’s picture—“Show us the picture,” we used to ask as Mother read—still glowing in memory, they go out into a sea of stars, into the blue of the night sky. “I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

The soul, my mother’s sister, Aunt Fay, told me years later, was like a swarm of bees, and, at night, certain entities of that swarm left the body-hive and went to feed in fields of helium—was it in the upper atmosphere of the earth or in the fire-clouds of the Sun? The “higher” ascended nightly, and in its absence, the “lower” dreamed, flooding the mind with versions of the Underworld. “While the cat’s away, the mice will play.” There were not only pretend dreams or plagiarized dreams like making up the Wynken-Blynken-and-Nod Boat out of Eugene Field to be one’s own, but there were rare dreams of the higher realms, instructions from angels of the Sun, and there were dreams of one’s own “lower” nature, messages from the Underworld, rebellious images that flooded the mind in the absence of its King, when genitals or liver, heart or bowels, took over the imagining screens of the brain for their own drama.

My aunt’s name—Fay or fairy—had to do with illusions or enchantments, bewilderings of the mind in which we saw another world behind or under things, and at the same time with the enchanters themselves, the folk who lived under the Hill. Fate, faith, feign, and fair, we find, following the winding associations of fay, fey, and fairy, in the O. E. D., are related. From many roots, words gathered into one stem of meaning, confused into a collective suggestion. There is fay, too, from fe an, meaning to join, to fix. In the
United States of the nineteenth century it meant the fit of a garment: “Your coat fays well,” the O. E. D. gives us. The casting of the image is high fairy, *phanopoeia*; but the image itself, as Pound conceived it to be—a nexus, “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time,” he wrote in *A Stray Document*, “which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth. . . “—the image itself is *fay*: an apparnition and a joining in one.

The little poem by Field was *fay*, for it cast its spell. And in the inner chamber, the adults, talking on, wove for me in my childish overhearing, Egypt, a land of spells and secret knowledge, a background drift of things close to dreaming—spirit communications, reincarnation memories, clairvoyant journeys into a realm of astral phantasy where all times and places were seen in a new light, of Plato’s illustrations of the nature of the soul’s life, of most real Osiris and Isis, of lost Atlantis and Lemuria, and of the god or teacher my parents had taken as theirs, the Hermetic Christos. This word *teacher*, as I first heard it, before I went to school, meant the same as a god. God was not a god, but from His Being He sent out teachers or gods. True teachers, like Christ, Buddha, Hermes, or Lao-Tse, were Light Beings, messengers of the Sun Itself. Hermes, Mercury, was the one with winged helmet and winged sandals I had seen in the bronze figure that stood on the piano at Aunt Fay’s. He was the god of the high air, of those helium fields, carrying a rod around which two snakes twisted. This wand or *caduceus* meant, Aunt Fay explained, that he was god of Life, systole and diastole of the heart beat. But the real image of the god was the picture Grandmother showed me in *The Book of the Dead*. Egypt was the hidden meaning of things, not only of Greek things but of Hebrew things. The wand of Hermes was the rod of Moses, and my grandmother studied hieroglyphics as she studied Hebrew letters and searched in dictionaries for the meaning of Greek roots, to come into the primal knowledge of the universe. This god, the Egyptian Thoth, was Truth, the truth of what life is that we know in death. He appeared not in the high air but was a Being of the Sun Below the Earth, a Lord of the Dead. He held the scales and weighed the soul; he judged between the fair and unfair. He had another title in *The Book of the Dead*—He—Who—Decides—In—The—Favor—Of—Osiris.

Fay from *fata* had to do with the dead. The fairies as fates or norns were spinners of the threads from which life was woven, who measured man’s span and cut the cord to deliver him into death as once they had cut the first cord or chord when the music began. But the word *fey* too came from another root that meant *fated to die, cowardly or weak*, as the O.E.D. tells us—unmanned. In our common speech it meant “crazed,” “touched,” and then, “clairvoyant,” “in tune with the dead”. The lords of the dead were in the Egyptian writing: the Ibis-headed Thoth, Isis with the disk crown, the lion-headed Sekmet, the winged serpent Sun, showing the animal nature in which our souls had evolved.

Just as, when that rime of Eugene Field’s was all but forgotten, in the study of Pound’s Cantos I was to come again to a “river of crystal light” and in the study of Yeats or André Breton I was to come to hear of a “dew” or a “sea of dew” so in Whitman’s “eidolon yacht of me,” in Lawrence’s *Ship of Death*, in the “caravel” that in *Helen in
Egypt carries Achilles to the shore where Helen waits, I was to come again to that “wooden shoe,” the Wynken-Blynken-and-Nod Boat. When I was no longer a child but a boy in my early teens, I had found it again in the fairy ship of Avalon. The Boat of Dreams, the Boat of the Dead, was one of the great images of Poetry. In the late Cantos of Pound it has appeared as I saw it, almost as early as that other picture by Maxfield Parrish, in the Egyptian picture-writing my grandmother studied: it was the Ra-Set Boat. “And then went down to the ship,” Pound had begun the established text of those Cantos, moving with the phantoms of Odysseus and his descent to the dead upon a sea of the imagination.

In the fairy-world, the otherness or alien nearness of the dead and of hidden elements, of illusion and delusion in our daily life, the witchcraft of phantasy and the bewitched obsessions of madness, all the psychological dangers, combined as if they were the heart’s wish. The specter that haunts Europe Marx had called the hidden wish of the human spirit in history; the traumatic image Freud had called the repressed wish of the psyche—the primal scene. The underground uprises into the place of what is above-board. Justice demands it. The verse appears, so vivid that we see the surface of things had faded in the sunlight, and what we most feared we might be we must become. The living seem dead and the dead most alive. The words fay, fay, and fairy, had a meaning I was to learn among schoolmates that in the common usage superseded all other meaning: queer, perverted, effeminate. Old concepts of sodomy and shamanism—the cult that Orpheus was said to have brought from the forest world of the North into Greece, a cult of mediumship; poetry and homosexuality—carry over into our vulgar sense of the word fairy, where men’s fear and mistrust of a sexual duplicity is most active.

The Above and the Below, the Left and the Right—Hermetic doctrine and Kabbalistic lore suggested a reality that was duplic. Love, I was taught, had once been, in another life, hatred; and hatred, love. There were times when in flashes of anger against my mother’s will, I would glower or strike out. That was the law of karma, my mother would explain, that hatred and love were so intertwined. This too was in the caduceus—in those two snakes on the magic wand, above which the wings of the mind hovered. Male and female were mixed too, I learned, for we who were men had been women in other lives and understood what to be a woman meant out of the depths of our human experience, the source of sexual sympathies and powers. So, Shakespeare, because he had the memories of many lives, had inner knowledge of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, Anthony and Cleopatra, Hamlet and his mother, the Queen. Being was the ground of ambivalence that was the counterpart in turn of the ambivalence of the universe at large hidden and disclosed in things.

In the beginning I heard of guardian angels and of genii, of vision in dreams and truth in fairy tales, long before Jung expounded the gnosis or Henri Corbin revived and translated the Recitals of Avicenna. For these ideas were properties not only of the mind above, the high thought of Neo-Platonists or of Romantic poets, but they were lasting lore of the folk mind below too, wherever old wives told their tales. Gossip had brought
rumors of the divine wisdom into American folk ways. From the popular movement of nineteenth century American spiritualism, where witch tradition out of Salem, shaman rite out of the world of the American Indian, and talking in tongues or from the spirit out of congregations of the Holy Ghost in the Protestant movement, mingled to become an obsession at large, so that in the last decades of the century in town and in the country groups met to raise the dead at rapping and levitating tables, new affinities with more ancient mystery cults of spirit and of a life beyond life were awakened. The theosophy of Plutarch, Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the hermeticism of Pico della Mirandola, or The Light of Asia and the Bhagavad-Gita, joined in the confusion of texts and testimonies of libraries that could include accounts written by trance mediums of travel to past time or far planets, manuals of practical astrology and numerology, or Max Heindel's The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception, “Its Message and Mission: A Sane Mind. A Soft Heart. A Sound Body.”

My grandmother, as a young wife of eighteen, had lost two babies in a polio epidemic, and she came down to San Francisco from what is still backwoods Sierra country to go from one spiritualistic circle to another, seeking consolation or communication, some continuity of feeling. The Indian guides must have seemed not out of place, for she had been born in Indian country in the wilderness of the Modoc territory in Eastern Oregon, just after the Civil War. My father's family had moved West too, first into Ohio at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and then on, at the frontier or beyond the frontier of America, into California. Tales of pioneer days, of Indian wars and Indian sympathies, lingered on, along with the new lore of strange ways. From Modoc County in northeastern California, where she had gone as a young bride, my grandmother brought Indian baskets and beaded belts, feathered charms and wampum or strings of shell money, her curios. In my childhood, there were still mediums at times among those meeting in the other room who talked in Indian voices; but my grandmother had gone on from the spiritualist circles within a year or so, and sometime in the eighties, had joined with a group to form a Hermetic Brotherhood.

Their thought rose from a swarming ground prepared by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Isis Unveiled had appeared in 1877; The Secret Doctrine in 1888. Sinnett’s Esoteric Buddhism, the popular presentation of theosophical ideas, had appeared in 1883. Into her alembic or witch’s pot, Blavatsky had stirred whatever hints, scraps, legends, lore, visions, phantasies, things she made up herself, into a muddle or stew. “Pot and Pantheism” a contemporary wit dubbed it. Though she ransacked demonologies, histories of magic, studies of religion, encyclopedias of gnosticism and neoplatonism—“about 2100 quotations from and references to books that were copies at second hand. . . without proper credit,” an angry critic wrote: “Nearly the whole of four pages was copied from Oliver’s Pythagorean Triangle, while only a few lines were credited to that work”—the material of Isis Unveiled, H. P. B. insisted, was not out of reference books she had read, a matter of her own research and imagination, but was revealed to her in the Astral Records. So her disciple Olcott describes how, in the evening when he would return from his office and sit opposite her as she wrote “with the
vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer”—but we see it also as with the vacant eye of one recalling what she had read that day—she would “shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisibly in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw.” Did she pretend, as I used to pretend as a child to sail out in the boat previous to dreaming? Why? Her references were actually all there in books that Olcott and she had gathered in their library in that very room or in libraries of occultist friends. She had an insatiable curiosity and energy in gathering information. She talked with everyone and read everything. In those very years (1875 - 1877) when *Isis Unveiled* was conceived and written, she drew upon the learning of a friend, Alexander Wilder, an American occultist, who had edited and annotated Thomas Taylor’s *Eleusinain and Bacchic Mysteries* and translated the *Theurgia* of Iamblichos. Blavatsky insisted her guides were spirits. “One such collaborator,” Gertrude Williams tells us in her book on Blavatsky, *Priestess of the Occult*, “was the Old Platonist who, remaining invisible, talked by the hour, dictating copy, checking references, answering questions.” “The spirit Old Platonist would be more convincing,” Mrs Williams observes, “if there had not been an Old Platonist in the flesh—Dr. Wilder, who also talked by the hour, checking references and answering questions.” But the work was not meant to be convincing. It was meant to be upsetting to the mind that would have tolerated Dr. Wilder as an authority in a curious field of thought but would balk at the pretension of a spirit as an authority in a revelation. Her purpose was not to convert but to overthrow the established orders of thought, to set up whatever was doubted, feared or despised in the place of the ruling authorities. Yes, but mixed up with the hysterical impulse to insult and subvert the respectable and reasonable was—also a component of hysteria—the intense sense of how much the society itself was in need of some release of vital powers that had been repressed.

“I am solely occupied,” Blavatsky wrote to her sister, “not with writing *Isis*, but with *Isis* herself. I live in a kind of permanent enchantment, a life of visions and sights, with open eyes, and no chance whatever to deceive my senses! I sit and watch the fair good goddess constantly. And as she displays before me the secret meaning of her long lost secrets, and the veil, becoming with every hour thinner and more transparent, gradually falls off before my eyes, I hold my breath and can hardly trust to my senses! . . . Night and day the images of the past are ever marshalled before my inner eyes. Slowly, and gliding silently like images in an enchanted panorama, centuries after centuries appear before me . . . I certainly refuse point-blank to attribute it to my own knowledge or memory. I tell you seriously I am helped. And he who helps me is my Guru.”

My “Daemon,” Socrates had called him. Or Genius. The Muse, a poet might have called *Isis*. But Blavatsky was not, she insisted, musing. Whatever else *Isis Unveiled* might be, it was not to be taken as a scholarly study, a philosophy, or a work of the imagination; it was to be taken as revelation, a dictate of the unconscious. A new specter was raised to haunt the course of Western Civilization.

“The mind is the great Slayer of the Real,” is one of the aphorisms in *Voices of Silence*, “translated” by Blavatsky out of Senzar, the language of the world before
Atlantis. The scholar, the philosopher, the poet, were all men of the mind, and in the critical distance of their disciplines or arts, slayers of the real. This “Real” was Isis naked, the Revealed Doctrine. We can read another message in the oracle, for the Mind, the idiotic or autistic dream and will, is also a great slayer of another “real,” the common sense. Blavatsky had set about to destroy what Freud calls the reality principle. John Symonds in his book on Blavatsky, The Lady With The Magic Eyes, from which I quoted the fragment from Voices of Silence, comments: “The Mind is here used in the sense of consciousness, upon which all our Western scientific knowledge is based, but which the East regards as only part of the world of illusion.” Blavatsky’s Mind as Slayer of the Real may have stood for the conscious then at war with the unconscious, as Freud was to find it in his study of hysteria at the end of the century. Plagiarism, fraud, perversion by pun, by reversal of values and displacement of content, of above into below, of male into female, left into right, before into after—all these Freud saw as operations of the unconscious.

She impersonated the Unconscious, but she also gave her ego over to unconscious—“invisible” or “occult” she called them—guides. She was unconscious of what she read or learned in talking with Dr. Wilder, and accepted the information only in a trance-like state from the unconscious where it had been repressed from her consciousness.

She was a wishful thinker, and she flew into rages when her wishes were questioned. She did not rage at Nature—Nature seemed to cooperate with her powers—but she was savage when confronted by ways of the mind that others took for granted as proper, by what was right to think, reasonable to hope for. More, she was outraged by her own disciples, the credulous and ever-admiring Olcott, the reason-seeking Sinnett, for she wanted the mind in following her Doctrine to be converted by what it could not believe, to submit to the unreasonable. She did not want her theosophic manifesto to be accepted; she wanted men to come by way of what they could not accept into the rebellious impulses that lay back of Isis Unveiled. “If you only knew what lions and eagles in every part of the world have turned into asses at my whistle, and have obediently wagged their long ears in time as I piped,” she wrote to a confidante.

There is pathos in her scorn. She had wanted to awaken a disobedience in man that would restore the lion or eagle he must be. The hidden Adam restored, man transformed under the dictatorship of the unconscious. You have nothing to lose but your chains of belief and disbelief, she had wanted to say.

For she herself was bound in chains of belief and disbelief. The imagination was intolerable to her conscious mind. She denied that there was any truth or trust in what a man might create or initiate. Even her book, in order to be doctrine, could not be created by her or have any virtue in her own thought but must be dictated by Masters outside the work, just as the truth of Man could not be immanent in his evolution but must be established in a paradigm, an actual plan given in the beginning, recorded in the eternal—the “Akashic” or Astral Light—and lost. “I certainly refuse point-blank to attribute it to my own knowledge or memory,” she had said then, as if such an attribu-
tion would have brought the authenticity of *Isis Unveiled* into question. She would have excluded the more vehemently any suggestion of her own phantasy or imagination as a source.

Whatever came from the individual inner volition was suspect. Over and over again she warns against the elemental and animal entities, the false impulses, that threaten any free life of the psyche as a medium. It is experience itself that she warns against. What does not come from a superior external authority, from Adepts “*closely connected with a certain islands of an inland sea,*” what does not come from the teachings of a primal and esoteric wisdom, comes from below, from the Left, from the swarming mass of a false science based upon the senses. All the imaging, voicing, personating, creating activity that characterizes the imagination in the ego was denied and mistrusted by her conscious mind. Only what was actual and imperative was permitted reality. Her ideas, her intuitions, her voices—the imagined teachers Morya and Koot Houmi—were illusions, if they belonged to her own creative life. The Universe itself was Maya, if it was created. The real could not be made up.

Given the chains of belief and disbelief, the alternative of illusion is delusion. The creative was the veil of Isis. To find the hidden thing one had to strip the creative veil away. The magic of Blavatsky, the fascination of her writing, was never then to be the magic of an enchanting prose, evoking its life in us to become most real in the weaving of a spell that is also a music with many images and levels of meaning—the illusion of an experience. Her magic was to be, on the contrary, the fascination of an argumentative delusion, the pursuit of proofs and laws behind appearances.

She sought in India and in Egypt, she drew portraits, and, finally, she faked evidence to prove that her Masters were not figures of a dream or fiction, creatures of the veil, but were actual persons. Anti-materialistic though she declared herself, she could not believe they might be spiritual beings “*not of this world.*” She rejected all sublimations. Proofs lay in materializations—cups and saucers, gloved hands, bells rung, wafts of scent, actual letters received in a spirit post-office. Ideas, imaginings, reveries were immaterial; she sought only the manifest. Yet she could live too in “*a kind of permanent enchantment,*” as she writes to her sister, smoking hashish and having, not her own phantasies but hashish phantasies. Given the manifest agency of the drug, so that any suspicion of her own psychic agency might be denied, she could dwell “*with Isis herself.*”

In 1891, a month before her death, she closed her last essay with a quotation from Montaigne: “*I have here made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them.*” The string she had brought of her own was the thread of her argument, a wish that she and mankind with her might be released from the contradictions of dream and fact, creative idea and actuality, volition and authority, that tortured her spirit. But the string was also the quest for the end of dream, creative idea, volition—if only they could be proved to be their opposites, so that what we thought was moving would prove to be schematic and settled. The string was the obsessional winding of the thread: the double-faced words “mind” and “Real,” the
inversion of evolutionary theory, the perversions of geological theory, the transference of fact into fiction and fiction into the mode of fact, the subversion of accepted scientific thought, the plagiarism, the fraud—worst of all, the reasoning of a woman who knows she must be right and will take any means to prove it.

With pathos, she added: “Is anyone of my helpers prepared to say that I have not paid the full price of my string?” She had been attacked and exposed, vilified and ridiculed. Her own followers had come to doubt that her Masters “really” existed. But the pathos was Mercurial, for she had meant for her followers in all the stupidity of their conscious minds, bound by chains of Theosophic belief, like her defamers bound by the chains of scientific or religious disbelief, to pay the full price of her string.

For the price of the string, the price of the wish, the quest, the obsession, lay in an oppressive state. She had gathered a pitchblende of suggestion, once her doctrine was mixed, in which some radium lay hid. In the mess of astrology, alchemy, numerology, magic orders, neo-Platonic, kabbalistic and Vedic systems combined, confused, and explained, queered evolution and wishful geology, transposed heads—the fact of her charged fascination with it all, her need, remains genuine. Her sense binds: that until man lives once more in these awes and consecrations, these obediences to what he does not know but feels, until he takes new thought in what he has discarded, he will not understand what he is.

*Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, midden heaps that they are of unreasonable sources, are midden heaps where, beyond the dictates of reason, as in the collagist’s art, from what has been disregarded or fallen into disregard, genres are mixed, exchanges are made, mutations begun from scraps and excerpts from different pictures (“2100 quotations . . . without proper credit”) to form the figures of a new composition. In the conglomerate that Blavatsky gathered, things of disparate traditions whirl and take on new shapes for the conscious imagination, separated from their contexts and credits, tainted with foreign meanings. Her conscious insistence that her work was dedicated to the immutable and archetypal Reality of the esoteric wisdom hid or veiled her unconscious wish—it was a vital intuition also of the meaning of science, religion, and art—as a magic to take over Nature, our own inner nature then—from the Father, and to give birth to a new Nature, to prove What Is to be an illusion in the light of What Must Be. The Isis, the Esoteric Wisdom of What Is, appears in the imagination to keep alive the rebellious writer’s sympathies with her own nature—Nature then—in the presence of the would-be usurping wish.

So, Blavatsky saw vividly how Science, under the dictatorship of Reason, had isolated itself from concern with any world of spirit, psychic world, and finally from human and animal sympathies, declaring only that world to exist which could be positively known. “We must bravely face Science and declare,” she wrote in 1888, “that the true Occultist believes in Lords of Light; that he believes in a Sun, which—far from being simply a ‘lamp of day’ moving in accordance with physical laws; and far from being merely one of those Suns, which according to Richter, ‘are sun-flowers of a higher light’—is, like milliards of other Suns, the dwelling or the vehicle of a God, and of a host
of Gods.” Her chapter-heading Modern Physicists Are Playing At Blind Man’s Buff has not lost meaning but has gained in terror in our day, seventy-five years later.

There had once been, she tells us in The Secret Doctrine,

“on the plan of the Zodiac in the upper Ocean or the Heavens”: a certain realm on Earth, an inland sea, consecrated and called the ‘Abyss of Learning’, twelve centers on it, in the shape of twelve small islands, representing Zodiacal Signs—two of which remained for ages the ‘mystery Signs’—were the abodes of twelve Hierophants and Masters of Wisdom. This ‘Sea of Knowledge’ or learning remained for ages there, where now stretches the Shamo or Gobi Desert. It existed until the last great glacial period, when a local cataclysm, which swept the waters South and West and so formed the present great desolate desert, left only a certain oasis, with a lake and one island in the midst of it, as a relic of the Zodiacal Ring on Earth. For ages the Watery Abyss—which, with the nations that preceded the later Babylonians, was the abode of the ‘Great Mother,’ the terrestrial post-type of the ‘Great Mother Chaos’ in Heaven, the parent of Ea Wisdom, himself the early prototype of Oannes, the Man-Fish of the Babylonians—for ages, the ‘Abyss’ or Chaos was the abode of Wisdom and not of Evil. The struggle of Bel and then of Merodach, the Sun-God, with Tiamat, the Sea and its Dragon—a ‘War’ which ended in the defeat of the latter—has a purely cosmic and geological meaning, as well as an historical one. It is a page torn out of the Secret and Sacred Sciences, their evolution, growth and death—for the profane masses. It relates (a) to the systematic and gradual drying up of immense territories by the fierce Sun at a certain pre-historic period, one of the terrible droughts which ended by a gradual transformation of once fertile lands abundantly watered into the sandy deserts which they are now; and (b) to the as systematic persecution of the Prophets of the Right path by those of the Left.”

The psychic history of the Universe, Earth, and Man was the drama of each in the other, written in traumatic scenes—the freezing of the Hyperborean continent, the submerging of Lemuria and Atlantis, the drying up of the Gobi centers. Just as in the bardic tradition the poet has lived in all things—so that Gwion (Finn) in the thirteenth century Romance of Taliesin is not only the hero or god-child Fionn of the land of fairy but names himself also Taliesin, the ninth century poet, and, again, may be a power of the cosmos, for he claims: “Chief bard am I to Elphin, / my original country is the region of the summer stars;”

I was with my Lord in the highest sphere,
On the fall of Lucifer into the depth of hell.
I have borne a banner before Alexander...

This “I”, the poet’s persona in his song, living in whatever it sings of:
I am a wonder whose origin is not known.
I have been in Asia with Noah in the Ark...

—just as in the psyche-mysteries of Freudian psychoanalysis, the individual psyche is seen to recapitulate the psychic life of the species:

“Since the time when we recognized the error of supposing that ordinary forgetting signified destruction or annihilation of the memory trace,” Freud tells us in Civilization and Its Discontents: “we have been inclined to the opposite view that nothing once formed in the mind could ever perish, that everything survives in some way or other, and it is capable under certain conditions of being brought to light again, as, for instance, when regression extends back far enough . . .” so in Blavatsky’s theosophy the individual psyche inhabits every place and time, every event in the history of the collective; everything survives in some way or other.

Tracing the history of “the Eternal City,” Freud then turns to picture the psyche itself as such an Eternal City. “Now let us make the fantastic supposition,” he continues—it is one of the creative phantasies of Freudian thought:

“that Rome were not a human dwelling-place, but a mental entity with just as long and varied a past history: that is, in which nothing once constructed had perished, and all the earlier stages of development had survived alongside the latest. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars were still standing on the Palatine and the Septizonium of Septimus Severus was still towering to its old height, that the beautiful statues were still standing in the colonnade of the Castle of St. Angelo, as they were up to its siege by the Goths, and so on. But more still: where the Palazzo Caffarelli stands there would also be, without this being removed, the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, not merely in its latest form, moreover, as the Romans of the Caesars saw it, but also in its earliest shape, when it still wore an Etruscan design and was adorned with terracotta antefixae. Where the Coliseum stands now we could at the same time admire Nero’s Golden House; on the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of to-day as bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but on the same site also Agrippa’s original edifice; indeed the same ground would support the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the old temple over which it was built”

To penetrate the depths of the psychic life, Freud resolves: “We shall have no hesitation in allowing ourselves to be guided by the common usages of language, or as one might say, the feeling of language, confident that we shall thus take into account inner attitudes which still resist expression in abstract terms,” and following clues, like the hero of the detective fiction which is the contemporary of psychoanalysis, Freud reads in the psyches of his patients the drama of a prehistory or metahistory, like the account of what really happened that forms the last scene of the popular “Mystery.” So,
in the theosophic mystery, the traumas of Hyperborea or Atlantis may be our own. “Those very Monads, which entered the empty, senseless Shells, or Astral Figures of the First Race emanated by the Pitris,” Blavatsky writes, “are the same who are now amongst us – nay, ourselves, perchance.” Pound in Canto VII, writing in a period when he was most conversant with Yeat’s kabbalistic lore, hearing “Thin husks I had known as men, Dry casques of departed locusts / speaking a shell of speech,” may have had the presence of such kelipah in mind, evils, that are quickened only by the sins of man but in themselves are but the dead residue of creation: “Life to make mock of motion.”

For the husks, before me, move,
   The words rattle: shells given out by shells
   . . .
And the tall indifference moves,
   a more living shell,
Drift in the air of fate, dry phantom, but intact.

The bardic tradition may be recalled by Robert Graves in his “historical grammar of poetic myth,” The White Goddess, or the primal scene of Titanic infants playing with fire haunt Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents, as the Atlantean transgression of Nature’s laws returns to Blavatsky’s mind, because we live in a time into which all times are gathering. “The communion of saints is a great and inspiring assemblage,” Whitehead writes in his Aims of Education in 1929: “But it has only one possible hall of meeting, and that is, the present.” We find ourselves gathering what they were or drawn to the idea of them, for we have that wish for a great time or a great space—overpopulated as we are—to live in; and we call up the whole population of mankind to live in us.

“Before the mind’s eye, whether in sleep or waking, came images that one was to discover presently in some book one had never read,” Yeats tells us in Per Amica Silentia Lunae:

“and after looking in vain for explanation to the current theory of forgotten personal memory, I came to believe in a Great Memory passing on from generation to generation. But that was not enough, for these images showed intention and choice. They had a relation to what one knew and yet were an extension of one’s knowledge. If no mind was there, why should I suddenly come upon salt and antimony, upon the liquefaction of the gold, as they were understood by the alchemists, or upon some detail of cabbalistic symbolism verified at last by a learned scholar from his never-published manuscripts, and who can have put together so ingeniously, working by some law of association and yet with clear intention and personal application, certain mythological images? They have shown themselves to several minds, a fragment at a time, and had only shown their meaning when the puzzle picture had been put together. The thought was
again and again before me that this study had created a contact or mingling with minds who had followed a like study in some other age, and that these minds still saw and thought and chose.”

Yeats had sought out Helena Blavatsky in 1887 when he was in his early twenties and had gone on in other circles to devote his life to the esoteric wisdom cults. But it was the affinity that Poetry in the Romantic tradition has for the occult that moved him, for from the first Yeats had believed that Poetry was itself a secret doctrine. It was the study of Blake that had brought him to the threshold, leading beyond to Boehme and to the Zohar of Moses of Leon. It was Shelley who had set him on his way, for Yeats had read in that poet’s *Hellas* of a Jew, Ahasuerus, of whom it was said:

Some feign that he is Enoch: others dream  
He was pre-Adamite, and has survived  
Cycles of generation and of ruin.

“Already in Dublin, I had been attracted to the Theosophists because they had affirmed the real existence of the Jew, or of his like,” Yeats tells us in *The Trembling of the Veil*. He demanded, like Blavatsky, that his images be verified. He had come in search of a Master in life who had appeared to him in Shelley’s play—the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus. “*Mistake me not!*” Ahasuerus had said in Shelley’s *Hellas*: “All is contained in each.”

*Alone, and its quick elements, Thought, Will, Passion*  
Reason, Imagination, cannot die;  
They are, what that which they regard appears,  
The stuff whence mutability can weave  
All that it hath dominion o’er, worlds, worms,  
Empire, and superstitions.*

It was to increase the dominion of the poetic mind that Yeats pursued his studies in the occult. The doctrine of correspondences that he found there enlarged the mission of metaphor and simile. The concept of the *eidolon* inherited from Iamblichus in which primal and eternal images are the movers or powers of the universe, agents of reality, charged the poet’s reveries and visions with a radical purpose, a directive towards the heart of the matter, taken in what the majority of men took to be a literary pastime—at best a function of cultured sensibility, at worst an idle and even childish indulgence in phantasy.

Yeats is often called a symbolist, but the symbol, for him, was a magic intermediate, having its efficacy in the route it made between the soul and the image, the objective. But, it was also—it had—it moved into his mind with—intention and choice. It was also the subject; it presented itself to him. For Yeats, as for Blavatsky, the great images were not imagined in the sense of being thought up, but came to the imagination. There
was a way, he tells us, in which men kept their bodies still and their minds awake and clear so that they became mirror of the real.

“I had no natural gift for this clear quiet” he continues: “and I was seldom delighted by that sudden luminous definition of form which makes one understand almost in spite of oneself that one is not merely imagining.” It was to live in this as if it were more than imagined, as if it were a poetry that had its authors in eternity, as Blake called them, and the poet in his art projected a like-poetry, a microcosmos of the Real in the medium of words, guided, like Freud, “by the feeling of language.” The Universe was a great Work of Language, life itself its voice, and all that the poet felt, heard, saw, and sensed, in the world about him or in himself was a language he must come to read, just as each art had its particular language of images, sounds or movements in which meanings were evoked.

In an age when what we commonly call Science, the evocation of the use of the world, the presumption of mechanical imaginations in place of all other imaginations, defined its own realm as the sole Real and all other worlds as unreal, there were men in the arts too who attempted to define such realistic claims, working purely in terms of semantic or cultural values, at war with unrealistic or animistic tendencies. Turning to the heretical or pseudo-Scientific of the occult, the evocation of a world in terms of a living language, Yeats was turning too from any purely literary or aesthetic interpretation of the role of poetry, to affirm the truth he had found in Shelley or Blake as the most real. He sought not only theosophy, god-knowledge, but theurgy, god-work; and there was magic too, daemonic experiment. Words were at once agents of personal feeling and composition in a poem and also bearers of knowledge felt, evokers of the real and casters of a spell.

*

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the ritual cult to which Yeats belonged, begun by Dr. Woodman, Dr. Wynn-Wescott and MacGregor Mathers after the publication of Mather's The Qubalah Unveiled in 1888, ten years after Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled and the same year as The Secret Doctrine, gave rise not only to new formations in occultist circles but also to new formations in the literary world. There is a first splinter group—as such mutinies were called in Marxist movements of the 1930's—when between 1900 and 1901 MacGregor Mathers and Aleister Crowley leave the party or are ousted from the party, in a furor of legal battles, theoretic arguments and black magic wars. Crowley, obsessed since the trauma of the Chogo Ri expedition of 1902, when he was the sole survivor of a group attempting to climb that mountain, with the terror of the void (“The Abramelin demons, that Crowley had invoked at Boleskine, would seem to have formed a secret alliance with their cousins of the Hamalan heights,” C. R. Cammell observes in his study of Crowley), devotes his life to finding a sufficient nightmare to fill the emptiness. Since the Second World War (where certainly the void and terror opened in the death chambers of the Nazis or the radioactive holocaust of the Americans over Japan
would seem a sufficient blackness), in the rise of a Poetry of emptiness and black humor
and in another poetry of spiritual rebellion as in the works of Philip Lamantia or in the
film-poetry of Kenneth Anger, the influence of Crowley begins to appear.

But we have here to do with a later division of the Order of the Golden Dawn into
two distinct and even opposing groups among its members. Virginia Moore in her study
of Yeats, The Unicorn, traces this history. The one, followed by Yeats and Algernon
Blackwood, continued along the line of a pantheism in which all gods had reality in
terms of the Anima Mundi below and the Great Mind or God above. The other, led by A.
E. Waite, and including Arthur Machen, Charles Williams and Evelyn Underhill, in 1903
broke with the parent body and formed a group which kept the Golden Dawn name but
directed its study towards a Christian, even Catholic, mysticism. For this second group,
the validity and verification of the esoteric tradition lay in the concern with the power of
the Christos—and outside the Christian reality, the esoteric was evil.

For Algernon Blackwood, who with Yeats and the elder Watkins formed, Virginia
Moore tells us, a Society of the Three Kings, there was, if we read his popular romances
aright, a theurgy in the worship of the elements that united him with the regions of the
stars and opened a way into the elemental realm of Nature, the restored childhood
world of The Education of Uncle Paul, The Centaur, or A Prisoner in Fairyland. For Yeats,
as The Trembling of the Veil and Per Amica Silentia Lunae testify, there was a magic that
opened his mind to invasions of sensation and image, uniting his imagination with the
passionate and daemonic life of the Anima Mundi. They may have been—those three
Kings devoted, we are told, “to the study of Mysticism not Occultism”—three Magi or
Magicians too, studying the magic of the Child. Yeats in his Autobiography, like
Blackwood in his novels, makes it clear that he seeks what he once knew in his child-
hood when he dwelt upon the thresholds of an enchantment or faierie in Nature, a close-
ness to the earth and to folk ways.

There was another movement after the death of Madame Blavatsky. This time not
in the temple of a theurgic cult but in the lecture hall of a theosophic school. G. R. S.
Mead, who had been Blavatsky's secretary, followed the way not of magic rite nor of
mystic ritual but of gnosis, the teaching in the divine mysteries. In 1896 he published his
translation from a Latin version of the Coptic text the Pistis Sophia; in 1900 his study of
surviving Gnostic texts and traditions, Fragments of a Faith Forgotten; in 1906 Thrice-
Greatest Hermes, studies in Hellenistic theosophy and gnosis, with a translation of the
Trismegistic literature; and then, the series of eleven texts: Echoes from the Gnosis. In
the magazine The Quest, edited by Mead, his purpose is clearly to establish all religions
as one ground of man's search for a life in the Divine World, to free the mind of man in
his quest for the Divine from the inhibiting forces of dogma and church views, and at the
same time, to revive the sense of the Divine World as the Real, the source of man's vital
life.

Along another path, at Oxford and especially Cambridge, following The Golden
Bough of Frazer in 1890, both classicists and folklorists found themselves students of
the mystery cults. The way led from Bergson's L'Evolution créatrice, Jane Harrison tells
us in her Preface to Themis in 1912. “I saw that Dionysus was an instinctive attempt to
express what Professor Bergson calls durée, that life which is one, indivisible and yet ceaselessly changing.” From a second source, Durkheim’s Répresentations Individuelles et Répresentations Collectives, she had gathered that not only was the mystery-god an agency of “those instincts, emotions desires which attend and express life” but that “these emotions desires, instincts, in so far as they are religious, are at the outset rather of a group than of individual consciousness.”

The texts of the classicist or the folklorist began to take on contemporary meaning in the light of ideas of life forces and collective mind. “I was no longer engaged merely in enquiring into the sources of a fascinating legend,” Jessie Weston writes of her conversion from the folklorist view in the Preface to From Ritual to Romance: “but on the identification of another field of activity for forces whose potency as agents of evolution we were only now beginning rightly to appreciate.” Tracing the roots of the Grail legend to “the mysterious border-land between Christianity and Paganism,” she tells us the path led from Cumont to Mead where she found “not only the final link that completed the chain of evolution from Pagan Mystery to Christian Ceremonial, but also proof of that wider significance I was beginning to apprehend. The problem involved was not one of Folk-lore, not even one of Literature, but of Comparative Religion in its widest sense.”

In the Quest Society, as in the person of its leader, G.R.S. Mead, the current of The Golden Bough and the current of The Secret Doctrine meet. In the pages of Mead’s journal, The Quest, we find the new philosophy of Bergson along with Jessie Weston’s Grail essays, Eisler’s studies in Orphic cult and the Fisher King, Pound’s Psychology and Troubadours, along with essays on the Progressive Buddhism of Daisetz Suzuki. And there is not only the study of the mythos, the lore, but there is—so the testimony goes—back of these essays a revival of the dromena, of the actual rites. “I know, I mean, one man who understands Persephone and Demeter,” Pound says, “and another who has, I should say, met Artemis. These things are for them real.” The mysterious border-land between Christianity and Paganism that Jessie Weston sought knowledge of lay not only in the past but in the present London of 1909: “No inconsiderable part of the information at my disposal,” she writes, “depended upon personal testimony, the testimony of those who knew of the continued existence of such a ritual, and had actually been initiated into its mysteries.”

My grandmother was an elder in a provincial version of this Hermetic movement, far from its center in London. Close to the wood-lore of her origins in frontier life, she had some natural witch-craft perhaps. But then it may be too that all Grandmothers, as in fairytales are Wise Women or Priestesses of Mother Nature. I was but a boy when she died, and with her death, my family’s tie with the old wisdom-way was broken. There was no cult life for them after her death.

There is only what I remember out of childhood: the colored lithographs of Egyptian temples and the images upon the table, the voices talking of “Logos” and “Nous,” the old women looking wisely into the Astral Light and telling what they saw there.
My father and mother had been initiates, but in their own lives the tenor of the initiation was lost. From the region of San Francisco, they moved to Bakersfield in 1929, obedient to the directions of the stars in the Zodiac, as now Zen converts are obedient to the *I Ching*—Fate and Chance. They were isolated from their Brotherhood, their studies changed to studies that were respected by the community into which they had moved. By the time I was adolescent, my father was involved in the study of botany and local historical sites. After his death, Mother was relieved, I think, that this way of studying things might be dismissed. New friends did not share her belief—that was part of it—but then, though her belief may have lasted, her interest did not last.

In my mind it has lasted. The lure is the lure of those voices weaving as I began to understand words a net of themes in which knots of meaning that refused any easy use appeared, glimpses from the adult world of words beyond them, as words were just beyond me, such a tapestry as Penelope is said to have woven that was never done but begun again each day, or as Helen wove, in which were all the scenes of the Trojan War. What was the hidden meaning of such a “Troy,” of “War”? they would ask. It was not a dogma nor was it a magic that I understood for myself in the theosophic world about me but I understood that the meanings of life would always be, as they were in childhood, hidden away, in a mystery, exciting question after question, a lasting fascination.

The quest for meanings was a vital need in life that one recognized in romance where the hero must learn the language of birds, overhear the conversation of trees, call up even shadows to populate his consciousness. By associations, by metaphor, by likeness of the part, by fitting as part of a larger figure, by interlinking of members, by share, by equation, by correspondence, by reason, by contrast, by opposition, by pun or rime, by melodic coherence—what might otherwise have seemed disparate things of the world as Chaos were brought into a moving, changing, eternal, interweaving fabric of the world as Creation. It was the multiplicity of meanings at play that I loved in the talk of my parents in the nineteen-twenties. Two phases of the psyche’s development in childhood—the endless questioning and the timeless play—found their reflection or continuation in the adult world above and beyond.

We shall lose it all if it be not those voices talking over the evening fire. But the voices are gone. The waves throwing themselves down in ranks upon the shore are what I hear.

*

There had been catastrophe. There would be catastrophe. The time in which a man lived was a whirl or drift in a great sea that might rise out of itself into a roaring end of things. In the early years of the Depression, ‘30 or ‘31, when I was eleven or twelve, I would lie awake before going off to sleep at the summer cottage at Morro Beach, letting the crash of the surf take over and grow enormous in my mind which dwelt at times like this upon the last days of Atlantis, imagining again the falling of towers, the ruin of cities, the outcry of a populace swept under by the raging element. When would the
long-awaited tidal wave, the advancing wall of water, sweep all before it? Even so the
grown-ups talked of Atlantis and of America, as if it were a New Atlantis. The Atlanteans,
even as we might, in their science had come to know too much, the grown-ups said. They
had found some key to the universe and had unlocked forbidden, destroying, powers.

Taller than Morro Rock I would think the breakers of that catastrophe must be. I
would try to picture the flood enormous enough to crash upon the mountains of the
Coast Range as if they had been but banks of sand, a wave to drown the San Joaquin. Or
I would listen, curled up on the ledge back of the seat in the coupé, as Mother drove us
home from the movies in San Luis Obispo to the beach, for the fascinating sound above
the fascination of the motor-sound, for the sea-roar. Now it will come, now it is coming,
pouring in from the coast to meet and overwhelm us.

Born in 1919 at the close of the War, I belonged, I had been told, to an Atlantean
generation that would see once more last things and the destruction of a world. There
was a repeated dream I had as a child that came to be my “Atlantean” dream, for my
mother told me it was a memory dream from that previous life. I belonged, too, to the
generation that had been destroyed in a cataclysm before the world we lived in began. I
had a part in the fabulous.

Sometimes in phantasizing, calling up pictures like this to illustrate an other life,
I would rescue myself and set out upon the sea again in a boat. But the boat now was
no longer charmed or charming, like the Wynken-Blynken-and-Nod Boat had been.
Huddled in the wrappings of my bedclothes, I was never sure how the dark exposed
rowboat or life-boat had escaped the holocaust in which it had been said all was lost,
but it had been said too that certain adepts escaped and I would be an adept. I was
never sure how the boat was making its way now north and east over a grey and forbid-
ning sea towards new land. The way was alien. I was never sure that this part, going on
to rescue myself like this, would work out at all. My heart sank, for even in a dream, I
could but pretend to be an adept; I would be found out. On and on the boat sped
towards some colony or destiny that had no such reality as the deluge, the sea itself,
had, but lay ahead unseen and unreal.

We had moved from the Bay Region to the Valley in ’28 away from the house my
father had designed in Alameda as a young architect before I was born or adopted by my
parents, away from the towers of San Francisco where he had worked in a firm as a junior
architect; and away too from the circle of Hermetic students. Back of what we knew as
children, scenes were being shifted: from the big house with its parties, the garden and
the studio, to the crowded little house in Bakersfield where my sister and I slept in the
same room; from the conversation at table that was all fabulous history and fantastic
science to the admonitions and explanations of the Depression years, the economic
was left me from the talk of the elders in that antechamber of my childhood was now all
my own. My parents, living far from the center of things, were concerned with security
and status, the politics and business opportunities of Bakersfield: our religion became
something we did not talk about to everybody. I talked to myself about it.
I would shake the Mah Jong Table and the palace of many gardens and courts, the
majestic halls and ramparts, constructed by giant hands from another world, the
corridor where the Queen walked in the evening to meet the King, would fall. It seemed
as if distant almost real shouts of anguish rose among the tottering ivory walls, and,
making my play of earthquake—for I was the genius of the scene—I almost heard the
confusion of delicious dismay, grief and fear, echoed in my heart as if bonds of human
sympathy united me with the inhabitants of this world I created to destroy again and
again. What I would see then was . . .

Yes, I would see the actual mahjong tiles. I had had to build with utmost care and
grandeur my little piled-up city or kingdom with many levels, for in the care, piece by
piece, a place for something to happen was prepared, an other realm was built up, each
tile the immediate occasion of a life fated to come to its last day. What I would see then
was the monolithic real building I was engaged in, coming into existence block by block
and yet the blocks themselves coming into existence in the building, out of what they
were—the imposing gleam of the red dragon and green dragon walls, the mysterious
symbols of the Chinese game with its winds and flowers converted into ancient glyphs
and signs of a fated citadel. The Queen again would walk in the shadowed colonnade,
the priests would sound their alarms from the tower, the scenes of human panic would
flare-up in the mind's eye, the pitiful consolation of the Queen in the King's embrace as
the walls fell, the . . . No, he would not get to her!— the crashing house between, the
grief and loss. Each time I would experience what the victims of the holocaust experi-
enced.

In the Atlantis phantasy and the Atlantis game or play, the most real emerged
only in terms of what was most unreal. It was an experience true and untrue to itself. I
could call up these returns of a scene, but I had no will in calling them up that could go
against the emerging pattern, given in the play. The intense reality wherever I became
arbitrary, as if I could alter the fate of my play, dissolved into unreal and unsure
elements. I could not name for sure any place as my destination. I could not name for
sure any time as my appointed time. So, though I read eagerly anything and everything
about my Atlantis, it grew only more suspect in the obsessional proofs of Ignatius
Donnelly—I didn't believe in an historical Atlantis—and yet, when geologists and
reasonable historians scorned the would-be fact of Atlantis, the sinking land seemed
real. Outside of history, there was an Atlantis—the shuddering earth, the engulfing
waters that must have been, came into their own again.

“In other words, they are not poetised versions of unique historical events in
the life of any individual hero,” Jane Harrison writes of myths in Themis: “but reflect
recurrent ritual practices, or dromena.” The things said over the fire long ago in my
grandmother's rooms, or the talk at table in my childhood of planetary influences,
elemental powers, lives before this life—the whole pictured island of lost consciousness
under the sea waves that might rise once more—Atlantis—was not false history but
spoke of a feeling about the course of life itself. My grandmother died in her drama, her
mise en scène of the Hermetic cult, and those who had lived in the enchantment of her
stage survived to defend, to prove, to suspect, or to put away, what, when she had been alive, had been the language in which her living was written.

It is in the dream itself that we seem entirely creatures, without imagination, as if moved by a plot or myth told by a story-teller who is not ourselves. Wandering and wondering in a foreign land or struggling in the meshes of a nightmare, we cannot escape the compelling terms of the dream unless we wake, anymore than we can escape the terms of our living reality unless we die. There is a sense in which the “poet” of a poem forces us as writer or reader to obey a compelling form, the necessities of the poem, so that the poet has a likeness to the dreamer of the dream and to the creator of our living reality; dream, reality, and the poem, seem to be one.

The dream that was called my Atlantis dream was not something I thought up or that derived from the talk of my elders. The sequence remains emblematic and puzzling. Had my parents been Freudian instead of Hermeticists, they might have called it my birth-trauma dream. My first mother had died in childbirth, and in some violent memory of that initiation into life, she may be the mother-country that had been lost in legend. But for me, the figures of the dream remain as if they were not symbolic but primal figures themselves of what was being expressed or shown. Memory of Atlantis or memory of birth-trauma, phantasy of Isis or play with words—these are not what the heart fears and needs, the showing forth of some power over the heart.

First there was the upward rise of a hill that filled the whole horizon of what was seen. A field of grass rippled as if by the life of the grass itself, yet I was told there was no wind. When I saw that there was no wind it was a fearful thing, where blade by blade the grass so bowed of its own accord to the West. The grass moved towards the left. The seer or dreamer then was facing north. There may have been flowers—day’s eyes—the grass was certainly in flower. The field was alive and, pointing that way, across the rise of the hill to the West, gave a sign.

Was I four or five when I first dreamt this dream? It came again and again as if to cut its shape for sure in what I would be. “For these images showed intention and choice”

Yeats said of such primary things. When I heard the story of that nymph who fell hopelessly in love with the Lord of the Sun, Helios, I was drawn to identify with the Sunflower that rooted in her passion turns her head to follow the Sun’s way, for there was some faint reminder there of the grass I had seen in my dream bowing to the West. But in my dream there was no sun. The light was everywhere, and I can not be sure whether it was morning, evening or high noon.

Then, in a sudden almost blurred act of the play, there was a circle of children—sometimes they are all girls or all boys, sometimes they are boys and girls—dancing in the field. They choose or have chosen someone who is “IT” in the center of the ring, but I see no one there. The Dreamer is in the center, the “I” or Eye of the Dream. And just here, I realize that this “I” is my self and second that I have been “chosen”, but also that in dreaming I am the Chosen One, I have been caught in the wrong—a “King” or victim
of the children's round dance. Ring a round of roses. Pocket full of posies. Or is it poses? for I had been proposed or I had posed as King, posed myself there. Ashes, ashes. All fall down!

In the third part—but it is the second section of the dream, for the Field and Its Dancers are two parts belonging to the one section—I am shown a cavern underground. A throne room? There is a stone chair on a dais. Seeing it is the King's chair or, even, in some dreamings of this dream, finding myself a lonely King in that chair, there is no one rightly there. A wave of fear seizes me. All things have gone wrong and I am in the wrong. Great doors break from their bars and hinges, and, under pressure, a wall of water floods the cavern.

The open field, the dance and the presumption, the seeing the dark throne and the flooding of the underworld (the dream that my mother believed to be memory of a past life) seem now a prediction of what life will be, now a showing forth of some content of what life is, as in the Orphic mysteries the story of Persephone was shown in scenes. The restless dead, the impending past life, what had been cast away—a seed—sprouts and in the vital impulse would speak to us. The head of a giant woman rises from the ground.

“I have seen Kore,” the initiate Heracles says: “What face more terrible? I am initiate, prepared for Hades.” Wonder and terror seem to be signs of the rite. But in my life dream, I have not seen the Maiden, for I stand in her place or in her way.
Chapter 6
RITES OF PARTICIPATION

The drama of our time is the coming of all men into one fate, “the dream of everyone, everywhere.” The fate or dream is the fate of more than mankind. Our secret Adam is written now in the script of the primal cell. We have gone beyond the reality of the incomparable nation or race, the incomparable Jehovah in the shape of a man, the incomparable Book or Vision, the incomparable species, in which identity might hold & defend its boundaries against an alien territory. All things have come now into their comparisons. But these comparisons are the correspondences that haunted Paracelsus, who saw also that the key to man’s nature was hidden in the larger nature.

In space this has meant the extension of our “where” into a world ecology. The O.E.D. gives 1873 as the earliest English use of the word in the translation of Haeckel’s *History of Creation*—“the great series of phenomena of comparative anatomy and ontogeny . . . oecology.” The very form of man has no longer the isolation of a superior paradigm but is involved in its morphology in the cooperative design of all living things, in the life of everything, everywhere. We go now to the once-called primitive—to the bush man, the child, or the ape—not to read what we were but what we are. In the psychoanalysis of the outcast and vagabond, the neurotic and psychotic, we slowly discover the hidden features of our own emotional and mental processes. We hunt for the key to language itself in the dance of the bees or in the chemical code of the chromosomes.

The inspiration of Marx bringing economies into comparison and imagining a world commune, of Darwin bringing species into comparison and imagining a world family of the living in evolution, of Frazer bringing magic, rituals and gods into comparison and imagining a world cult — the inspiration growing in the nineteenth century of imperialist expansions was towards a larger community of man. In time, this has meant our “when” involves and is involved in an empire that extends into the past and future beyond times and eras, beyond the demarcations of history. Not only the boundaries of states or civilizations but also the boundaries of historical periods are inadequate to define the vital figure in which we are involved. “For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other,” Diotima tells Socrates in Plato’s Symposium, “does not appear to be the desire of lovers’ intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment.”

The Symposium of Plato was restricted to a community of Athenians, gathered in the common creation of an *arete*, an aristocracy of spirit, inspired by the homo Eros, taking its stand against lower or foreign orders, not only of men but of nature itself. The intense yearning, the desire for something else, of which we too have only a dark and doubtful presentiment, remains, but our *areté*, our ideal of vital being, rises not in our identification in a hierarchy of higher forms but in our identification with the universe.
To compose such a symposium of the whole, such a totality, all the old excluded orders must be included. The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and the unknown; the criminal and failure—all that has been outcast and vagabond must return to be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are.

The dissolving of boundaries of time, as in H. D.'s *Palimpsest*, so that Egyptian or Hellenistic ways invade the contemporary scene—The reorganization of identity to extend the burden of consciousness—this change of mind has been at work in many fields. The thought of primitives, dreamers, children, or the mad—once excluded by the provincial claims of common sense from the domain of the meaningful or significant—has been reclaimed by the comparative psychologies of William James, Freud, Levy-Bruhl, Piaget, by the comparative linguistics of Sapir or Whorf, brought into the community of a new epistemology.

“Past the danger point, past the point of any logic and of any meaning, and everything has meaning,” H.D. writes in *Bid Me To Live*: “Start superimposing, you get odd composites, nation on nation.” So, Malraux in his Psychology of Art hears “a furtive colloquy in progress between the statuary of the Royal Portals of Chartres and the great fetishes” beginning in museums of the mind where all the arts of man have been brought into the complex of a new idea of art and Man in their being superimposed. “Our art world is one,” he writes in *The Metamorphosis of the Gods*, “in which a Romanesque crucifix and an Egyptian statue of a dead man can both be living presences.” “In our imaginary museum the great art of Europe is but one great art among others, just as the history of Europe has come to mean one history among others.”

“If, as Pound began to see in *The Spirit of Romance*, “All ages are contemporaneous”, our time has always been, and the statement that the great drama of our time is the coming of all men into one fate is the statement of a crisis we may see as ever-present in Man wherever and whenever a man has awakened to the desire for wholeness in being. “*The continuous present*,” Gertrude Stein called this sense of time and history, and she saw the great drama as man’s engagement in a composition of the contemporary. Man is always in the process of this composition. “*The composition is the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing,*” she writes in *Composition As Explanation*: “they are the composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living. It is that that makes living a thing they are doing.”

“Nothing changes from generation to generation,” she writes later in her lecture *Portraits and Repetition*, “except the composition in which we live and the composition in which we live makes the art which we see and hear.” "Once started expressing this
thing, expressing any thing there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence.” “Each civilization insisted in its own way before it went away.” To enter into “our time”, she saw as “a thing that is very troublesome”, for life itself was a disturbance of all composition— “a fear a doubt and a judgement and a conviction”, troubling the waters toward some needed “quality of distribution and equilibration.”

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The first person plural—the “we”, “our”, “us.” is a communal consciousness in which the “I” has entered into the company of imagined like minds, a dramatic voice in which the readers and the man writing are gathered into one composition, in which we may find kindred thought and feeling, an insistence, in Plutarch or Dante, Plato or D.H. Lawrence, closer to our inner insistence than the thought and feeling of parents or neighbors. The discovery of self, time and world, is an entering into or tuning to possibilities of self, time and world, that are given.

“The single experience lodges in an individual consciousness and is, strictly speaking, incommunicable,” Sapir writes in Language: “To be communicated it needs to be referred to a class which is tacitly accepted by the community as an identity. Thus, the single impression which I have of a particular house must be identified with all my other impressions of it. Further, my generalized memory or my ‘notion’ of this house must be merged with the notions that all other individuals who have seen the house have formed of it. The particular experience that we started with has now been widened so as to embrace all possible impressions or images that sentient beings have formed or may form of the house in question. In other words, the speech element ‘house’ is the symbol, first and foremost, not of a single perception, nor even of the notion of a particular object but of a ‘concept’, in other words, of a convenient capsule of thought that embraces thousands of distant experiences and that is ready to take in thousands more. If the single significant elements of speech are the symbols of concepts, the actual flow of speech may be interpreted as a record of the setting of these concepts into mutual relations.”

There is no isolate experience of anything then, for to come into “house” or “dog”, “bread” or “wine”, is to come into a company. Eros and Logos are inextricably mixed, daemons of an initiation in each of our lives into a new being. Every baby is surrounded by elders of a mystery. The first words, the “da-da” and “ma-ma”, are keys given in a repeated ritual by parental priest and priestess to a locus for the child in his chaotic babbling, whereby from the oceanic and elemental psychic medium—warmth and cold, calm and storm, the moodiness previous to being—persons, Daddy and Mama, appear. But these very persons are not individual personalities but communal fictions of the family cultus, vicars of Father and Mother, as the Pope is a Vicar of Christ. The Child, the word “child”, is himself such a persona, inaccessible to the personality of the individual, as the language of adult personal affairs is inaccessible to the child. To have a child is always a threat to the would-be autonomous personality, for the parent
must take leave of himself in order to enter an other impersonation, evoking the powers of Fatherhood or Motherhood, so that the infant may be brought up from the dark of his individuality into a new light, into his Childhood. For the transition to be made at all, to come into the life of the spirit, in which this Kindergarten is a recreated stage set of the mythic Garden, means a poetry then, the making up of an imaginary realm in which the individual parents and infant participate in a community that exists in a time larger than any individual life-time, in a language. For “Father”, “Mother”, “Child”, are living words, deriving their meaning from thousands of distinct experiences, and the actual flow of family life, like the actual flow of speech, “may be interpreted as the setting of these concepts into mutual relations.” The toys of the nursery are not trivia but first given instruments of an extension in consciousness, our creative life. There is a travesty made of sacred objects when the building blocks that are also alphabet blocks, the animal and human dolls, the picture books, are rendered cute or babyish.

“The maturity of man—” Nietzsche writes in Beyond Good and Evil: “that means, to have reacquired the seriousness that one had as a child at play.” In The Zohar of Moses of Leon, God Himself appears as Child-Creator-of-the-World: “When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to make the world, all the letters of the Alphabet were still embryonic, and or two thousand years the Holy One blessed be He, had contemplated them and toyed with them. When He came to create the world, all the letters presented themselves before Him in, reversed order. The letter Tau advanced in front and pleaded: May it please Thee, O Lord of the world, to place me first in the creation of the world, seeing that I am the concluding letter of EMeTh (Truth) which is engraved upon Thy seal.” One by one the letters present themselves. At the last, “the Beth then entered and said: O Lord of the world, may it please Thee to put me first in the creation of the world, since I represent the benedictions (Berakhoth) offered to Thee on high and below. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: Assuredly, with thee I will create the world, and thou shalt form the beginning in the creation of the world. The letter Aleph remained in her place without presenting herself. Said the Holy one, blessed be His name: Aleph, Aleph, wherefore comest thou not before Me like the rest of the letters? She answered: Because I saw all the other letters leaving Thy presence without any success. What, then, could I achieve there? And further, since Thou hast already bestowed on the letter Beth this great gift, it is not meet for the Supreme King to take away the gift which He has made to His servant and give it to another. The Lord said to her: Aleph, Aleph, although I will begin the creation of the world with the beth, thou wilt remain the first of letters. My unity shall not be expressed except through thee, on thee shall be based all calculations and operations of the world, and unity shall not be expressed save by the letter Aleph. Then the Holy One, blessed be His name, made higher-world letters of a large pattern and lower-world letters of a small pattern. It is therefore that we have here two words beginning with beth (Bereshith bara) “in-the-beginning He-created.” and then two words beginning with aleph (Elohim eth) “God the.”

In this primal scene, before the beginning of the world that is also here before the
beginning of a writing, the Self contemplates and toys in a rite of play until the letters present themselves and speak; as in another primal scene, in a drama or play of the family, the child contemplates and plays with the sounds of a language in order to enter a world in which Father and Mother present themselves and speak. So too in the fullness of the imagination, blocks and even made-up playmates present themselves. The teddy bear was once in the shaman world of the great northern forests Grandfather or Folk-Father. The figures we play with, the members of our play world, given as they are, like the Katchina dolls of the Zuni child, are spirit figures. “My unity shall not be expressed except through thee,” the Child-Creator promises. It is the first promise of love, “on thee shall be based all calculations and operations of the world.”

These powers, the ambience in which all things of our world speak to us and in which we in turn answer, the secret allegiances of the world of play, the psychic depth of time transformed into eternity in which the conceptual persons of Father and Mother, Child and Play-Thing, exist—these are pre-rational. Brother and Sister have such an existence in the unreal that, where actual brother and sister do not exist or are unwilling to play the part, imaginary brother and sister may appear.

For men who declare themselves partisans of the rational mind at war with all other possibilities of being, the pre-rational or the irrational appears as an enemy within. It was not only the Poet, but Mother and Father also, that Plato would exclude from his Republic. In the extreme of the rationalist presumption, the nursery is not the nursery of an eternal child but of a grown-up, a rational man. Common sense and good sense exist in an armed citadel surrounded by the threatening countryside of phantasy, childishness, madness, irrationality, irresponsibility—an exile and despised humanity. In that city where Reason has preserved itself by retreating from the totality of the self, infants must play not with the things of the imagination nor entertain the lies of the poets but play house, government, business, philosophy or war. Before the guardians of this state the voices and persons of the Child-Creator stand condemned as auditory and visual hallucinations a dangerous non-sense.

In the world of the Zohar, dolls were not permitted. The Child plays with the letters of an alphabet and Logos is the creator of the world. Man is to take his reality from, to express his unity in, the letter. But this letter is, like the doll, alive to the mind. Tau presents herself and speaks, just as the bear in our nursery does. To the extent that once for us too alphabet blocks were animate, all future architectures and worlds are populated, and we are prepared to understand the world-experience of the Kabbalist.

In this world-experience rationality does not exist apart from the whole, but the understanding searches ever to picture the self in the ununderstandable. The human spirit draws its life from a tree larger and more various than knowing, and reason stands in need of a gift, “the gift of the queen to them that wander with her in exile.”

There is a return in the imagination to the real, an ascent of the soul to its “root”, that Hayyim Vital describes in his life work, The Tree of Life: “The imaginative faculty will turn a man’s thoughts to imagine, and picture as if it ascended in the higher worlds up to the roots of his soul . . . until the imagined image reaches its highest source and
there the images of the supernal lights are imprinted on his mind as if he imagined and saw them in the same way in which his imaginative faculty normally pictures in his mind mental contents deriving from the world.” We seem to be in the description of the process of a poem, for here too the mind imagines, but then enters a real it had not imagined, where the image becomes informed, from above or below, and takes over as an entity in itself, a messenger from a higher real. In his ascent the mystic is irradiated by the light of the tree and in his descent the light finds a medium through which to flow back into the daily world: “The thought of the prophet expands and rises from one level to another . . . until he arrives at the point where the root of his soul is. Next he concentrates on raising the light of the sefirah to En Sof and from there he draws the light down, from on high down to his rational soul, and from there, by means of the imaginative faculty, down to his animal soul, and there all things are pictured either by the inner senses of the imaginative faculty or by the outer senses.”

Returning from En Sof, the unknowable, unimaginable God, from beyond sense, the imaginer, no longer imagining but realizing, carries a light from station to station, sefiroth to sefiroth, irradiating the imagined with reality, transforming the sense of the divine—the articulated Tree of Life—the cosmos, the rational soul and the animal soul, in light of a source that is a numinous non-sense or beyond sense.

This Tree, too, we saw each year, for at the birthday of the Child-Christos, we were as children presented with a tree from which or under which gifts appeared—wishes made real. This Christmas tree came, we know, from the tree-cults of the German tribes, ancestral spirits—a burning tree. But it is also a tree of lights, and where, in the time of Jacob Boehme, in the early seventeenth century, the Jewish and the Germanic mystery ways are wedded in one, the Christmas tree may have also been the Divine Tree of the Zohar, lit with the lights of the sefirah.

In this ritual of the imagination of Hayyim Vital, there is not only the ascent by pretending, the “as if” of his text, the pretension then, but the mystic is pretender to a throne, a “source” or “root” in the Divine. In the descent a magic is worked and all the pretended way of the ascent is rendered “greater than Reality”. Not only the deep dream but the day dream enlightens or enlivens. “Occasionally,” Werblowsky relates from Vital, “the imaginative faculty may even externalize or project the effects of this ‘light’ so that the experience becomes one of external sense impressions such as of the apparition of angelic messengers, the hearing of voices.”

This Tree of Life is also the tree of generations, for its branches that are also roots are male and female, and the light or life is a mystery of the Shekinah, the ultimate Spirit-Mother of Israel as well as God’s Glory. The root or seed is a quickening source in the immortal or eternal womb, wherein each man is immortal.

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In his study of Australian tribal rites, the psychoanalyst Geza Roheim draws another configuration of source, dream, and transformation of reality, that may cast
further light on our way towards a picture of what is involved in poetry when the images and personae of a dream greater than reality appear as active forces in the poet's world:

“Strehlow, who as a missionary living for decades among the Aranda was certainly an authority on their language, tells us that he cannot explain the meaning of the word altjira, it seems that the natives connect to it the concept of something that has no beginning—erin a itja arbmanakala, him none made. Spencer and Gillen, however, have given another interpretation of the word. In their glossary, we find ‘altjeringa: name applied by the Arunta, Kaitish, and Unmatjera tribes to the far past or dream times in which their mythical ancestors lived. The word altjeri means dream.’ Strehlow denies this; he says the word for dream is altjirerama: and gives the following etymology: altjira (god) rama (to see).

“For one thing, it is clear that altjira means dream and not god or ancestor (as Strehlow indicates) for I found that a folktale: a narrative with a happy end, is also called altjira. It is evident that Strehlow, from his preoccupation with Altjira (God) of the Aranda Bible, managed to miss the real meaning of the word. Altjira = dream, altjireramaa = to dream; altjirerinja = dreaming. This is as near as I could get to Spencer and Gillen's altjeringa. Moses thought it must be a mistake for either altirerindja or altliranga. There was no name for any mythical period. The time when the ancestors wandered on earth was called altjiranga nakala, i.e. ‘ancestor was’, like ljata nama, i.e. ‘now is’. Other expressions were noted as equivalents of altjiranga nakala; these were imanka nakula, ‘long time ago was’, or kutata nakala, ‘eternally was’. This led us to the explanation and etymology of the word altjiranga mitjina. Mitjina is equivalent to kutata, ‘eternal’; nga is the ablative suffix from; therefore altjiranga mitjina = ‘the eternal ones from the dream or ‘the eternal people who come in dreams’. This is not my explanation, but that of the old men, Moses, Renana, and Jirramba. Another Aranda word for dream, ancestor, and story, is tnankara. It is not often used, and as far as I could see it means exactly the same as altjira.”

In story and tribal rite, the Australian native seeks to convert time and space into an expression of his unity, to create a language of acts and things, of devouring and being devoured, of giving birth and being born, in which man and the world about him come into one body. “In an emu myth of the Aranda, Marakuja (Hands Bad), the old man emu, takes his bones out and transforms them into a cave . . . The kangaroo men take the mucus from their noses; it becomes a stone still visible now. The rocks become black where they urinate.” Here the altjiranga mitjina, the ones living in a dream of time more real than the mortality of the time past, invade the immediate scene. For the Australian as for Heraclitus, “Immortal mortals mortal immortals, their being dead is the other's life.” The things lost in time return and are kept in the features of the place. “Environment is regarded as if it were derived from human beings,” Roheim observes.
In repeated acts —bleeding, pissing, casting mucus, spitting into the ground, or in turn, eating the totemic food and drinking the blood of the fathers—the boy is initiated into the real life of the tribe. “An old man sits beside him and whispers into his ear the totemic name. The boy then calls out the esoteric name as he swallows the food. The emphasis on the place name in myth and ritual can only mean one thing, that both myth and ritual are an attempt to cathect environment with libido . . . The knowledge of the esoteric name ‘aggregates’ unites the boy to the place or to the animal species or to anything that was strange before”

The “beast, anus, semen, urine, leg, foot” in the Australian song, chant or enchantment, that is also hill, hole, see, stream, tree or rock, where “in the Toara ceremony the men dance around the ring shouting the names of male and female genital organs, shady trees, hills, and some of the totems of their tribe,” are most familiar to the Freudian convert Roheim. He sees with a sympathy that rises from the analytic cult in which Freud has revived in our time a psychic universe in which dream has given a language where, by a “sexual obsession” (as Jung calls it), the body of man and the body of creation are united.

The “blood” of the Aranda, the “libido” of the Freudian, may also be the “light” of our Kabbalist text. “En Sof,” Gershom Scholem tells us in Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: “is not only the hidden Root of all Roots

it is also the sap of the tree; every branch representing an attribute, exists not by itself but by virtue of En Sof, the hidden God. And this tree of God is also, as it were, the skeleton of the universe; it grows throughout the whole of creation and spreads branches through all its ramifications. All mundane and created things exist only because something of the power of the Sefiroth lives and acts in them. The simile of man is as often used as that of the Tree. The Biblical word that man was created in the image of God means two things to the Kabbalist: first, that the power of the Sefiroth, the paradigm of divine life, exists and is active also in man. Secondly, that the world of the Sefiroth, that is to say the world of God the Creator, is capable of being visualized under the image of man the created. From this it follows that the limbs of the human body are nothing but images of a certain spiritual node of existence which manifests itself in the symbolic figure of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man. The Divine Being Himself cannot be expressed. All that can be expressed are His symbols. The relation between En Sof and its mystical qualities, the Sefiroth, is comparable to that between the soul and the body, but with the difference that the human body and soul differ in nature, one being material and the other spiritual, while in the organic whole of God all spheres are substantially the same.”

“The world of the Sefiroth is the hidden world of language,” Scholem continues, “the world of divine names.” “Totemic names,” Roheim calls the whispered pass-words of the Australian rite.”The creative names which God called into the world,” Scholem
calls the Sefiroth, “the names which He gave to Himself.” It is the alphabet of letters revealed to the initiate as at once the alphabet of what he is and what the universe is and the alphabet of eternal persons.

As Scholem hints, “the conception of the Sefiroth as parts or limbs of the mystical anthropos leads to an anatomical symbolism which does not shrink from the most extravagant conclusions.” Man’s “secret parts” are secret names or hidden keys to the whole figure of man, charged with magic in their being reserved. In the communal image, the human figure is male and female. Ass-hole, penis, cunt, navel, were not only taboo but sacred, words to be revealed in initiations of the soul to the divine body, as at Eleusis the cunt of a woman in the throws of birth was shown. In what we call carnal knowledge, in the sexual union of male and female nakedness, God and His creation, the visible and invisible, the above and the below are also united.

Ham, who sees the nakedness of his father, is the prototype of the Egyptian who in an alien or heretic religion knows the secrets of God. To steal a look, like the theft of fire, is a sin, for the individual seeks to know without entering the common language in which things must be seen and not seen.

“At the initiation ceremony the point is to displace libido from the mother to the group of fathers,” Roheim writes. In the contemporaneity of our human experience with all it imagines, there may be not a displacement but an extension of libido: the revelation of the mother remains, the revelation of the male body is added. “Some old men stand in the ring and catching hold of their genitals tell the boys to raise their eyes and take particular notice of those parts. The old men next elevate their arms above their heads and the boys are directed to look at their armpits. Their navels are exhibited in the same way. The men then put their fingers on each side of their mouths and draw their lips outward as wide as possible, lolling out their tongues and inviting the special attention of the novices. They next turn their backs and, stooping down, ask the novices to take particular notice of their posterior parts.”

For Roheim, the images and magic of Australian story and rite are one with the images and magic of all dreams:

After having withdrawn cathexis from environment, we fall asleep. But when the cathexis is concentrated in our own bodies we send it out again and form a new world, in our dreams. If we compare dream mechanisms with the narratives of dream-times we find an essential similarity between the two. The endless repetitions of rituals and wanderings and hunting are indeed very different from a dream; but when we probe deeper we find that they are overlaid by ceremony and perhaps also by history. The essential point in the narratives as in the ritual is that man makes the world—as he does in sleep.

These natives do not wander because they like to...Man is naturally attached to the country where he was born because it, more than anything else, is a symbol of his mother. All natives will refer to their ‘place’ as a ‘great place’; as they say ‘I was incarnated there’ or ‘born there’. Economic necessity, however,
compels him time and again to leave his familiar haunts and go in search of food elsewhere. Against this compulsion to repeat separation, we have the fantasy embodied in myth and ritual in which he himself creates the world.

Where the nursing woman and the countryside itself are both “Mother”, and where in turn the men of the tribe may initiate and reveal maleness as an other Mother, “Mother” means unity, what Gertrude Stein called the Composition. What we experience in dreaming is not a content of ourselves but the track of an inner composition of ourselves. We are in-formed by dreams, as in daily life we experience that which we are able to grasp as information. We see, hear, taste, smell, feel, what can be drawn into a formal relation; to sense at all involves attention and composition. “It is very interesting that nothing inside in them, that is when you consider the very long history of how every one ever acted or has felt, it is very interesting that nothing inside in them in all of them makes it connectedly different,” Stein writes in Composition As Explanation: “The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen.” The endless repetitions of rituals and wanderings and hunting as the pattern of life for the Australian is a living inside the Composition; and in their exhibiting the secrets of the male body to the boy, the men of the tribe are making a composition where what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. In the ritual, song, parts of the body, parts of the landscape, man and nature, male and female, are united in a secret composite of magic names.

“One of the main sources of male creative power,” Roheim tells us, “is the incantation itself.”

When I asked old Wapiti and the other chiefs what makes the animals grow? the spirits? the ancestors? O, no, they said: jelindja wars, the words only. The form of the incantation is an endless, monotonous flow of words, and actually the men urinate very frequently while performing the ceremonies. This parallelism between the words and the fluid is brought out in a description by Lloyd Warner: ‘The blood runs slowly and the rhythm of the song is conducted with equal slowness. In a second or two the blood spurts and runs in a rapid stream. The beat of the song sung by the old men increases to follow the rhythm of the blood.’

We may begin to see, given Stein’s concept of insistence that informs composition, and then thinking of the pulse of the living egg-cell itself, that beat, rhythm, underlies every figure of our experience. Life itself is an endless, monotonous flow, wherever the individual cannot enter into it as revealed in dance and melody to give rhythmic pattern; the world about goes inert and dead. The power of the painter in landscape is his revelation of such movement and rhythm in seeing, information, in what otherwise would have been taken for granted.
Gertrude Stein, reflecting upon permanence and change in the artist’s vision, sees that “the only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything.” Close to the Cubist Movement in Paris, she had experienced how painting or writing in a new way had otherwise hidden unborn experience of the world, so that one saw and heard with a profound difference. “A new cadence means a new idea,” H.D. and Richard Aldington, writing in the Preface to the Imagist Anthology of 1916, declared. Here too, cadence is how it is done; to make clear the meaning of cadence they referred to the choral line of Greek poetry that was also the movement of the choraldance, strophe and antistrophe. So too, Roheim, initiate of Freudianism, as Stein was initiate of Cubism, or H.D. of Imagism, sees in the narratives of his Australian informants how “in all of them environment is made out of man’s activity,” for he had himself experienced a conversion in which a new environment for man had been made out of analytic activity. The “manmade world.” in which “environment is regarded as if it were derived from human beings” is the narrative itself; the unity of things in how the story is told.

Parts and operations of the human body, but also parts and operations of the cosmos, are related in a new ground, a story or picture or play, in which feeling and idea of a larger whole may emerge. The flow of sound from the throat and the flow of urine from the bladder, the flow of energy from the dancing feet, the flow of forms in the landscape, the flow of water and of air felt, translated in a rhythmic identity disclose to the would-be initiate what man is but also what the world is—both other and more than he is himself, than the world itself is.

Cézanne working at his vision of Mont Sainte-Victoire or Dali at his paranoic vision of the Catalan landscape not only draw but are drawn by what they draw. From body and from world towards an other body and other world, man derives meaning in a third element, the created—the rite, the dance, the narrative; the painting, the poem, the book. And in this new medium, in a new light, “man” and “environment” both are made up.

The power of the poet is to translate experience from daily time where the world and ourselves pass away as we go on into the future, from the journalistic record, into a melodic coherence in which words—sounds, meanings, images, voices—do not pass away or exist by themselves but are kept by rime to exist everywhere in the consciousness of the poem. The art of the poem, like the mechanism of the dream or the intent of the tribal myth and dromena, is a cathexis: to keep present and immediate a variety of times and places, persons and events. In the melody we make, the possibility of eternal life is hidden, and experience we thought lost returns to us.

The eternal ones of the dream,” Roheim observes, “are those who have no mothers;”

they originated of themselves. Their immortality is a denial of the separation anxiety. Separation from the mother is painful; the child is represented in myth as fully formed, even before it enters the mother. The tjurunga from which it is born is born is both a phallic and a maternal symbol.
The *tjuranga*, like the cartouche that encircles the Pharaoh's name as the course of the sun encircles the created world, is a drawing of the spirit being, an enclosure in which we see the primal identity of the person. But all primal identities are Adamic containing male and female, man and animal, in one. We are each separated from what we feel ourselves to be, from what we essentially are but also from the other we must be. Wherever we are we are creatures of other places; whenever we are, creatures of other times; whatever our experience, we are creatures of other imagined experiences. Not only the experience of unity but the experience of separation is the mother of man. The very feeling of melody at all depends upon our articulation of the separate parts involved. The movement is experienced as it arises from a constant disequilibrium and ceases when it is integrated.

“Composition is not there, it is going to be there, and we are here,” Stein writes. Between there and here or then and now, the flame of life, our spirit, leaps. A troubled flame: “The time in composition is a thing that is very troublesome,” Stein tells us: “If the time in the composition is very troublesome it is because there must be even if there is no time at all in the composition there must be time in the composition which is in its quality of distribution and equilibration.”

An anxious flame: “In totemic magic the destroyed mother is re-animated and in the totemic sacrament, eternal union of the mother and child is effected,” Roheim tells us. But the eternal separation of the mother and child is also celebrated therein. “As a religion it represents the genitalization of the separation period and the restitution that follows destructive trends.” War, Heraclitus called the flame, or Strife.

“All men are bringing to birth in their bodies and in their souls,” who here speaks as an Eternal One of the Mother, says to Socrates.

There is a poetry, which, as you know, is complex and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all arts are creative; and the masters of all arts are poets or makers ... What are they doing who show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? ... The object which they have in view is birth in beauty. Beyond beauty—birth in the eternal and universal.

“According to the natives of the Andjamatana tribe,” Roheim tells us, “children originate in two mythical women known as maulangami. They live in a place in the sky. Their long hair almost covers them and on their pendulum breasts are swarms of spirit children who gather their sustenance therefrom. These women are the source of all life, each within her tribe producing spirit children of her own moiety.” But these women, we realize, are not first sources; they have their origin in turn in the telling of their story. In the communication of the story the narrator and the listeners have their source and all life has its source and draws eternal nourishment.

“Each Aranda or Juritja native has an immortal part or spirit double, whose immortality consists in eternally rejoining the Mother in the sacred totemic cave. From time to time they reidentify themselves with the eternal in them.” It seems to Roheim that in the story “they deny their great dependence upon Mother Nature and play the
role of Mothers themselves.” But Mother Nature in the eternal bond with Man is Herself, as He is, the member of a cast in a drama. In the rites that Roheim sees as denials of dependence, we see the dancers reviving the human reality in all that is disturbing to union, involving themselves in, insisting upon, and taking their identity in, the loss of their identity, keeping the rime of their separation alive in the sound of their unity, rehearsing their exile in the place where they are. The flame springs up in a confusion of elements, times, places.

For the Freudian, it all rests in a “psychical survival of the biologic unity with environment.” “This ‘oceanic feeling’ (Freud) or ‘dual unity situation’” Roheim argues, “is something we all experience in our own lives; it is the bond that unites mother and child.” “By taking the tjurunga along on his wanderings the native never gives up the original bond of dual unity which ties the infant to his mother.”

From the unity once known between Mother and Child, the boy is initiated in a rite in which things once unified in feeling are shown as separated—this is the anatomization of the Australian scene, where parts of the body are exhibited as independent entities; but it is also the anatomization practices in which the poet is born, where words once unified in the flow of speech—the Mother tongue which in turn had been articulated from the flow of sounds in the child’s earlier initiation—are shown as articulated—separated into particular sounds, syllables, meanings—in order to be reorganized in another unity in which the reality of separation is kept as a conscious factor. The “Mother” is now the World, and the “Child” is the Self. The World is revealed as a “Creation” or “Poetry” or “Stage”, and the Self, as “Creator” or “Poet” The man or the hero begins his life that demands something of him, a wandering in quest of something known in the unknown. Taking with him the quest itself as his Mother, as the Australian takes the tjurunga or the devout Kabbalist the Shekina, he is to be most at home in his exile.

Roheim telling about his Australian natives does not mean to initiate us into the Aranda but through his creation of the Aranda in our minds to initiate us into the psychoanalytic fiction. The old men prancing, bleeding themselves and showing their private parts; the emu ancestors, the eternal ones who come in the dream, the primordial Mother and Child, are people not of the Australian bush but of a creative book, haunted by “the wanderings of human beings from the cradle to the grave in a web of daydream,” as the author of this mankind himself wanders in a web of psychoanalytic reverie. “In the eternal one sof the dream it is we who deny decal and aggression and object-loss, and who guard eternal youth and reunion with the mother,” Roheim writes in his coda:

*The old and decrepit men of the tribe become young and glorious once more. Covered with birds’ down, the life symbol, they are identified with the eternally youthful ancestors. Mankind, the eternal child, splendide mendax, rise above*
reality ... The path is Eros, the force that delays disintegration; and hence the promise held forth in the daydream and in its dramatization is no illusion after all. The tjurunga which symbolizes both male and female genital organ, the primal scene and combined parent concept, the father and the mother, separation and reunion ... represents both the path and the goal.”

This tjurunga we begin to see not as the secret identity of the Aranda initiate but as our own Freudian identity, the conglomerate consciousness of the mind we share with Roheim. “Above and below, left and right,” the Kabbalist would have added in drawing his figure of the primordial man. The whole story is “daydream”, a “web”, and we are not sure that because the path is Eros, the child, but he is also splendide mendax, a glorious maker of fictions, in which all the conglomerate of what Man is might be contained. The simple tjurunga now appears to be no longer simple but the complex mobile, that Giedion on Mechanization Takes Command saw as most embodying our contemporary experience: “the whole construction is aerial and hovering as the next of an insect”—a suspended system, so contrived that “a draft of air or push of a hand will change the state of equilibrium and the interrelations of suspended elements...forming unpredictable, ever-changing constellations and so imparting to them the aspect of space-time.”

If, as in Malraux’s Psychology of Art, we see painting and sculpture not only as discrete works but also as participants in a drama of forms playing throughout the time of man, so that what were once thought of as masterpieces of their time and place are now seen anew as moving expressions of—but more than expressions, creations and creators of - spiritual life, as acts of a drama of what Man is that has not come to its completion, but which we imagine as a changing totality called Art; so poems too begin to appear as members of a hovering system called Poetry. The draft of air or the touch of a hand reappears now as the inspiration or impulse of mind that will change states and interrelations—“time in the composition comes now,” Gertrude Stein puts it, “and this what is troubling everyone the time in the composition is now a part of distribution and equilibration”—“past the danger point”—throughout the history of Man. History itself, no longer kept within the boundaries of periods or nations, appears as a mobile structure in which events may move in time in ever-changing constellations. The effort of Toynbee’s Study of History, beyond Spengler’s comparison of civilizations, is towards an interpenetration of what before seemed discrete, even alien, areas of the life of man. Present, past, future may then appear anywhere in changing constellations, giving life and depth to time. The Eternal Return, no longer conceived of as bound to revolutions of a wheel—the mandala of a Ptolemaic universe or of a Jungian Self—beyond the “organic” concept Toynbee derives from Vico’s life cycles, we begin to see now as an insistence of figure in an expanding universe of many relations. The Composition is there, we are here. But now the Composition and we too are never finished, centered, perfected. We are in motion and our meaning lies not in some last or lasting judgment, in some evolution or dialectic toward a higher force or consciousness, but in the content
of the whole of us as Adam—the totality of mankind's experience in which our moment, this vision of a universal possibility, plays its part; and beyond, the totality of life experience in which Man plays His part, not central, but in every living moment creating a new crisis in the equilibration of the whole. The whole seen as a mobile is a passionate impermanence in which Time and Eternity are revealed as One.

Elie Faure in *The Spirit of Forms* (from which, as from Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Malraux's thought, we take it, develops) writes:

*We have reached a critical point in history when it becomes impossible for us to think profoundly—or to create, I imagine—if we isolate ourselves in the adventure of our race, if we refuse to demand a confirmation of our own presentiments from the expression in words or in the arts that other races have given themselves... One of the miracles of this time is that an increasing number of spirits should become capable not only of tasting the delicate or violent savor of these reputedly contradictory works and finding them equally intoxicating* (he speaks here of those fetishes and cathedral statues that Malraux in his work is to find “sinister” in their colloquy) but

*even more than that, they can grasp, in the seemingly opposed characters, the inner accords that lead us back to man and show him to us everywhere animated by analogous passions, as witnessed by all the idols, for all of them are marked by the accent of these passions... The critical spirit has become a universal poet. It is necessary to enlarge inordinately, and unceasingly, the circle of its horizon.*

This “we” was “an increasing number”, but it was also, Faure saw, a few, an élite - a cult, then, of “the mobility of the spirit, favored by the exigencies of environment and the mixture of the species”, projecting “a limitless visible field of emotion and activity”, towards a cathexis of all that was known of man and the word, in terms of an open and expanding consciousness, as our Aranda initiates project their field of emotion and activity in terms of a tribal consciousness as an enclosure of time and space. For the Australian, the hardness of Nature herself drives him out from his home-place. The Aranda is a man of an actual wasteland where he is again and again forced to wander in times of drought and famine when a man in want of water often opens a vein in his arm to drink the blood, and the brotherhood of the tribe must be kept in a constant imagination against the hunger in which men eat each other. Here the “we” is a term of survival itself. The creative fiction—the tribal narrative, the eternal ones of the dream, the spirit doubles, and the immoral sky-mothers—has its intensity of realization in the traumatic experience of the actual environment.

The esoteric tradition in Jewish mysticism again had its intensity in the loss of the home-land and in the long wandering in exile as children of a spirit-Mother, the Shekinah. She was the Glory, but She was also the Queen or Mother or Lady, and She
might appear, as She does in The Zohar, as a great bird under whose celestial wings the immortal spirit-children of Israel nestled. The Jews, like the Aranda, lived in a threatening environment that called forth, if they were to survive, an insistent creation, the tenacity of a daydream to outlast the reality principle.

For the Imagists in London in 1912 there had already been exile. Pound, Eliot, and H.D., had sought a new spiritual home among eternal ones of the European dream, among Troubadors or the Melic poets, in refuge from the squalor and stupidity of the American mercantile, industrial and capitalist world—“the American dream”, it was called. Joyce had chosen a voluntary exile from Ireland, “dear dirty Dublin”; and Lawrence had fled from his environment in the industrial working class village to wander in exile in search of his own Kingdom of the Sun.

It was the World War that provided the traumatic crisis—it was the very face of the civilization showing through at last, the triumph of squalor and stupidity where the cult of profits and the cult of empire combined to exact their tribute, and the other cult-world of the poetic vision was challenged as a reality. Only in the imagination would beauty survive. “I would bid them live,” Pound sings in his Envoi to Mauberley in 1919

As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time...

He addresses in the Envoi a “her”, whose “graces give/Life to the moment”—a Lady “that sang me once that song of Lawes”, but also a Mother that the Imagist poets had taken—Beauty. To survive in spirit men must be reborn in Beauty’s magic amber, for the rest were revealed by War where

\[\text{Died some pro patria, non dulce non et decor}\]
\[\text{walked eye-deep in hell}\]
\[\text{believing old men's lies, then unbelieving}\]
\[\text{came home, home to a lie,}\]
\[\text{home to many deceits,}\]
\[\text{home to old lies and new infamy...}\]

“Wrong from the start—” Pound describes himself: “No,”—

...hardly, but, seeing he had been born
In a half savage country, out of date...

* 

They did not “belong”. In that feeling their exile was not voluntary, but a recog-
nition of necessity. In the poem “Cities” published in The Egoist in 1914, H.D.’s sense of a “we”, a lonely few, isolated by their common devotion to beauty, and to the goods of the intellect, in the midst of a city of “them” who worship squalor, profit, and war, as the “one god”, is not a phantastic attitude assumed but a feeling rooted in the social reality. “Can we believe,” she proposes, “by an effort”

comfort our hearts:
  it is not waste all this,
  not placed here in disgust,
  street after street,
  each patterned alike,
  no grace to lighten
  a single house of the hundred
  crowded into one garden-space.

Two ways of life—the one realized by the Protestant-Capitalist cult in its terms of usury, real estate, production for profit, and profitable work, and the other realized by the Military cult, in which old orders of Mithraic and Wotanic cult survived, in terms of Fatherland, death in battle, holocaust, and the hero’s reward in the Valhalla orgy and the memorial days—these two had combined forces in 1914 to make a new world. War was to become, as it is in our own day, the most profitable business, the foundation of the economy, and the economy was to become the cause of the soldier. Not “Light”, as it had been for the Zoroastrian Mithraist, against “Darkness”; but the right of private property in the sense of capitalism against socialism or communism.

H.D. sees war-time London of the First World War in terms of the Platonic myth of the Golden Age and the Iron Age, and also, as in her War Trilogy London of the Second World War, in terms of the gnostic myth of souls from a creation of Light surviving in a second creation of Darkness. In “Cities”, the maker of cities has made a second city and a second people—this is the hive of the modern metropolis, crowded with cells

hideous first, hideous now—
spread larvae across them,
not honey but seething life

And in these dark cells,
packed street after street
souls live, hideous yet—
O disfigured, defaced,
with no trace of the beauty
men once held so light.

Back of this world is the memory of another, first, city:
with the beauty of temple
and space before temple,
arch upon perfect arch,
of pillars and corridors that led out
to strange court-yards and porches
where sun-light stamped
hyacinth-shadows
black on the pavement.

It is the Poictiers or Verona of the first Cantos, and thirty years later in The Pisan Cantos it is “the city of Dioces whose terraces are the colour of stars” and also the Wagadu, the Mother-City of the Fasa, that four times in their wandering has been lost—“gone to sleep” the epic tale Gassire’s Lute puts it, as given by Frobenius in the sixth volume of Atlantis, his collection of African folktales and poetry. In the prison camp at Pisa the memory of Wagadu, four times fallen asleep—“once through vanity, once through breach of faith, once through greed, and once through dissension”—with the chorus naming the cities of its four incarnations—“Hoooh! Dierra, Agada, Ganna, Sillal — Hoooh! Fasa!”—returned to Pound as the lost city that is also the strength of those who live in the thought of her. “For in herself Wagadu is not of stone, nor of wood, nor of earth. Wagadu is the strength that lives in the hearts of men and that one time can be seen because eyes let her be seen, because ears hear the strike of sword and the clang of shield, and one time is invisible because worn out and beset by the untameable nature of men she has gone fast a-sleep.” “Now in the mind indestructible, “Pound sings in Canto LXXIV, and in Canto LXXVII: “now in the heart indestructible.” Wagadu may then be the first city of H.D.’s Cities, the Mother that those who are devoted to Beauty remember. “For each man will salvage Wagadu in his heart,” the African epic promises—“bergen”,—the German translates, which means to salvage or rescue and also to give shelter to, to hold or to hide: “and each woman will keep hidden a Wagadu in her womb.”

The people of that city, the people of a dream of a kind of human life once known that perished as the dominant way and is yet carried forward in the minds and hearts of certain devotees, this people remains, like the “we” of H.D’s poem, intensely aware of themselves in their allegiance to an invisible city more real than the city in which they are:

Can we think a few old cells
were left—we are left—
grains of honey,
old dust of stray pollen
dull on our torn wings,
we are left to recall the old streets?
To be a poet was to be disowned in terms of the reality values of the new city, to be outcast from the true motherland. In “The Tribute”, published in *The Egoist* in 1916, the First World War and city of London are again seen in terms of an evil state that has taken the place of a good:

*Squalor spreads its hideous length*

*through the carts and the asses’ feet,*

*squalor coils and reopens*

*and creeps under barrow*

*and heap of refuse...*

“Don’t use such an expression as ‘dim lands of peace.’”, Pound had commanded: “*It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete.*” For a moment the word “squalor”, if we take it as an abstraction, may abstract us from the immediacy of the poem, but the squalor of the city is itself the presentation of a person of the poem. A “personification” it is called by those who believe such things are mere devices of a poetic grammar. But this squalor is the face or mask of an actual entity:

*it lengthens and coils*

*and uncoils and draws back*

*and recoils*

*through the crooked streets*

the Evil One Himself, the old serpent or worm, seen by the poet in the seizure of the poem as He has been seen in the vision of saints and satanists or in the clairvoyance of seers, an astral shape pervading the ways of the city, so that the streets are “crooked”, as in *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* Robert Lowell sees a path “snake” up its hill. Where He wounds us there are “*our old hatreds*”, and in victory He may blacken the song upon singing lips. The dragon is *Neschek* as He appears in Pound’s fragment of Canto LXXII or Jormungand, the Midgard Serpent, whose scales are the corpses of men and whose venom is a corrupting greed and ambition, in whose likeness is the squalor of the slums, the coils of usury, and the murderous arrogance of modern war. In *The Tribute*, the tribute seems first to be the draft of young men into the armies of America and England, and the dragon has triumphed:

*with no voice to rebuke—*

*for the boys have gone out of the city,*

*the songs withered black on their lips...*

The “larvae”, the unawakened people of the poem “Cities”, are now the people of the dragon, their “one god”:
They have banished the gods
and the half-gods
from the city streets,
they have turned from the god
of the cross roads,
the god of the hearth,
the god of the sunken well
and the fountain source...

and now they show their enmity openly towards those who do not hold their values and would oppose the tribute to their war:

Though not one of the city turned,
not one girl but to glance
with contempt toward us.

The few with convictions against the war really did face social ostracism. “The world of men is dreaming,” Lawrence wrote to Lady Ottoline Morrell in 1915: “it has gone mad in its sleep, and a snake is strangling it, but it can’t wake up.” Two years later, driven out of Cornwall where they had been raided by the police, the Lawrences took refuge with H.D. at 44, Mecklenburgh Square. “London is really very bad: gone mad, in fact,” he wrote Cecil Gray: “People are not people any more; they are factors, really ghastly, like lemures, evil spirits of the dead.” And young men who had already begun their work for beauty’s sake had died, “the songs withered black on their lips” — “non ‘dulce’ non ‘et decor’”. In the pages of The Egoist war lists, first of young French and German artists and writers, then of English, had begun to appear.

The “we” of “The Tribute” is a remnant few very like the pitiful group that in Aristophanes’ anti-war Lysistrata hold the decimated city:

A few old men rose up
with a few sad women to greet and hail us,
a few lads crept to welcome. . .

And the song was “withered black” upon the lips in another sense. For Pound, Lawrence, Joyce, H.D., Eliot, have a black voice when speaking of the contemporary scene, an enduring memory from this First World War that had revealed the deep-going false-hood and evil of the modern state. These had from their early years as writers a burning sense of the “they” that ran the war and that accepted its premises and of the “we” whose allegiance belonged to a Wagadu hidden in their hearts, among whom now many ghosts or specters—Wilfred Owen had come as the first great English loss among poets, but Gaudier-Brzeska and Hulme from the immediate circle of The Egoist had followed.

At the close of “The Tribute”, a prayer for deliverance begins:
May we know that our spirits at last
will be cleansed of all bitterness—
that no one god may trample the earth,
but the others still dwell apart
in a high place
with our dead and our lost.

Now the Wagadu no longer appears as an earlier city back of or surviving within the
squalor of the contemporary city as in the poem Cities, where those “who recall the old
splendour await the new beauty of cities”, but as a city in an other world evoked by a
wish:

That the boys our city has lost
and the gods still dwell apart
in a city set fairer than this
with column and porch.

They appear here, the banished gods and lost boys, as the eternal ones who come in
dreams, to whom the poet’s tribute is offered:

That the lads of that city apart
may know of our love and keep
remembrance and speak of us—
may lift their hands that the gods
revisit earth.

That the lads of the cities
may yet remember us,
we spread shaft of privet and sweet
lily from meadow and forest. . .

“And this we will say for remembrance, “ the poet continues: “Speak this with their
names”—

Could beauty be caught and hurt
they had done her to death with their sneers
in ages and ages past,
could beauty be sacrificed
for a thrust of a sword,
for a piece of thin money
tossed up to fall half alloy—
then beauty were dead
long, long before we saw her face. . .
“The Tribute” is not an easy poem to appreciate in terms of what came to be accepted as H.D’s virtues in the modern aesthetic of the twenties—the ardor kept in restraint, the Hellenic remove, the hard-wrought art, the spare statement. The Imagist rules will not fit. But once we turn from “Cities” and “The Tribute”, keeping the context of these poems, the seemingly “removed” Hellenism of “Adonis”, “Pallas”, or “Sea Heroes”, written in the same period, proves to be a screen image in which another level of feeling is present.

_Akroneos, Oknolos, Elatreus,
helm-of-boat, loosener of helm, dweller-by-sea,
Natueus, sea-man,_

are lists of the war dead and lost from Homer. And now from our own sense of the experience of the War—and here her rites of remembrance have quickened in us the impact of what happened before we were born—we understand anew and in depth the agony of

_But to name you,_
_we reverent are breathless_
_weak with pain and old loss,_
_and exile and despair—_

Since the dark, bitter, empassioned days of the First World War, even the words themselves—“beauty”, “lad”, or “boy”—have become uneasy words, smacking of the idealistic or the sentimental before what we call the Real, the pervading triumph of mercantile utilitarianism: the display aesthetic of packaging and advertising art to put over shoddy goods, repeated in the display aesthetic of the new architecture, where a wealth of glass or cellophane, aluminum, copper, or gold paper facing takes over the city, presented in a poverty of imagination, housing the same old shoddy operations of whiskey, cigarette or paper companies; and back of the sell, the demand for profit and increase, the exploitation of mind and spirit to keep the rackets going, the economy of wage-slavery and armed forces, and over all, the threat of impending collapse or disastrous war. We too, in a hostile environment, taking our faith and home in our exile, live in creative crisis.

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There is this sense, then, in which the Imagists— that group of poets printing in the pages of The Egoist between 1914 and 1917—stand at the beginning of a phase in poetry that has not ended. Pound, writing in 1914, felt that a break was necessary with the preceding generation in poetry: _“Surely there was never a time when the English ‘elder generation as a whole’ mattered less or had less claim to be taken seriously by ‘those_
on the threshold’. For my own generation, our elders—for me, specifically Pound, H.D., Williams, and Lawrence—remain primary generative forces. Their threshold remains ours. The time of war and exploitation, the infamy and lies of the new capitalist war-state, continue. And the answering intensity of the imagination to hold its own values must continue. The work of our elders in poetry was to make—‘a Dream greater than Reality’—a time-space continuum in which their concern for quality and spirit, for romance and beauty, could survive. Estranged from all but a few about them, they made a new dimension in which eternal companions appeared. As to the Aranda the ancestors came, or to the Kabbalist mystics dreams and even immediate presences of Elijah or of a maggid or angel came, so to Pound Plotinus appears, and to H.D., in the orders of the new poetry, the Christos or the Lady.

In 1919 Pound published in Quia Pauper Amavi a first draft for the opening three cantos of a new poem, addressing Robert Browning:

Hang it all, there can be but the one ‘Sordello,’
But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks,
Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say
the thing’s an art-form. . . .

It was to be a realm in which Robert Browning and Arnault, Brancusi and Kung could coexist; where Eleanor and Cunizza come and go; and

Gods float in the azure air,
Bright gods and Tuscan, back before dew was shed.

For the banished gods and for the heroes. And those lost. But not now, as in Dante, appearing each in his place in a set scene or architecture of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. For here in The Cantos, the dead gather in as at a séance.

Ghosts move about me patched with histories

it seems to the poet. But there are not only voices speaking, personae, in this “catch” of time as Pound called it, there are also scenes—images of the poem, moving pictures. Where Dante had back of The Divine Comedy his magics to call upon: the magic of the poetic and of the mystic descent or ascent to the eternal world, drawing upon the practice of the dream-vision in not only Medieval Christian but in classical Roman tradition, but also upon the practice of the Mi’raj, the spiritual transportations of the Sufi Recital; Pound had these and other magics: the séance tables of London mediums, the discourse of voices in which the rivers of many traditions came into a sea of humanity, but also, a new clairvoyance, the photo montage of times and places in the movies of Griffith.
In the three masterworks of this period—Pound’s early Cantos, Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and Joyce’s *Ulysses*—the contemporary opens upon eternity in the interpenetration of times. The literate public objected to or made fun of what they called their “references” or “quotes”. “Say that I dump my catch,” Pound had put it in the first draft of the Cantos—

\[ shiny and silvery \]
\[ As fresh sardines flapping and slipping on the marginal cobbles? \]

and the image stands, for he was “fishing” and in it all working to catch something being said, about to be said, fishing along lines of metamorphoses in the beginning. Surely, knowing Mead and Yeats, Pound was aware of Eisler’s *Orpheus the Fisher*, where the god appeared as a fisher of souls who was also the divine poet—the lyre was also a net or the poem in a net of words. In the early *Canto I*, the poem itself appears as a fishmonger’s booth:

\[ I stand before the booth (the speech), but the truth is inside this discourse: this booth is full of the marrow of wisdom. \]

It may also be then the medium’s cabinet. Our own net casts wider than Pound would, and we see that the shaman’s tent is also such a booth. But Pound’s intuition moves out, back of his evocation of Robert Browning’s magic practice of the dramatic monologue, and So-shu churns in the sea,

\[ So-shu also, using the long moon for a churn-stick... \]

So Pound will give up the intaglio method and in the flux of a cinematographic art call in the swarming fish of the sea, where Robert Browning, Peire Cardinal, Catullus, gods, oak-girls and maelids, Metastasio, Ficino, Kuanon, Guido Cavalcanti, Botticelli, Mantegna are drawn into the nets of the first haul. These persons, like the place names of Wagadu—Dierra, Agada, Ganna, Silla, are locii of a virtu moving through time. Frobenius traces the wandering of the Fasa from Djerma of the Garama which he equates with Dierra, mentioned by Herodotus five hundred years before Christ, from the Fezzan of North Africa, to Tagadda on the ancient route through the Sahara, to Gana and then to Silla of the Sahel. But the Wagadu of *The Cantos* is the lost city not of a tribe but of a kindred among all men, “all aristocracy of emotion” Pound called it.

It was the mixture of times and places, and especially the breakdown of all nationalistic distinctions that most angered the hostile critics and readers. Renaissance English or medieval Italian or modern French could enter into an American poem: not
only Dante but Kung and even Gassi were to be our heroes in the new legend. The new practice was most concentrated in the famous coda of *The Waste Land* in 1922:

> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
> Poi s’ascose nel foco che gli affina  
> Quando fiam uti chelidon—*O swallow swallow*  
> Le Prince d.’Aquitanie a la tour abolie  
> These fragments I have shored against lily ruins  
> Why then he fit you. Hieronymo’s mad againe.

*Data. Dayadhvam. Damyata.*

Children singing a round dance; Dante in Purgatory telling of Arnaut Daniel, master of the *trobairitz*, “Then he hid himself in the fire which refines them”; and the voices of the poet of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, of Gerard de Nerval, of Kyd in the person of Hieronimo, and of the thunder out of the Upanishads, speak one after another, taking over from Eliot’s “own” voice. Or speaking for Eliot, meeting through Eliot as through a medium. “*Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a ‘character’,* Eliot notes, “*is yet the most important personage in the poem, united all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.*”

For William Carlos Williams it was “*the great catastrophe to our letters. “* “There was heat in us, a core and a drive that was gathering headway upon the theme of a rediscovery of a primary impetus, the elementary principle of all art, in the local conditions,” he writes in his *Autobiography:* “*Our work staggered to a halt for a moment under the blast of Eliot’s genius which gave the poem back to the academics.*” Picturing himself as defending something betrayed by Eliot, and by Pound in his admiration of Eliot, Williams posed against the internationalism of *The Waste Land* the authenticism of the American speech. “*Nothing from abroad would have the reality for me that native writing of the same quality would have,* “ he resolves as an editor of *Contact* in 1922: “*Eliot or Pound might say to me today— ‘Read Laforgue!’ I might even be tempted to read because I had respect for their intelligence. But their words could not tempt me, force me, accompany me into the reading.*” Against the cinematographic time-flux, he meant to take with a vengeance the camera eye of still photography, the locality in time.

There was the studied disdain of silence on Eliot’s part for Williams’s work. It meant that Williams was never taken up in England; no influence could move Eliot who came to rule the informed taste abroad as Pound never did. And there was the increasing grievance on Williams’s part. Not only Eliot but Pound and H.D. came to be seen as betrayers of the American thing in their exile, their “*foreign*” work. “*When one’s friends hate each other,*” the old man Pound would write in Canto 115:
how can there be peace in the world?
Their asperities diverted me in my green time.

At heart, Williams’s genius as a poet lay not in the local condition, in the isolated perct, the “American” thing or speech, but in the heritage Eliot—Jacob to his Esau—had stolen from him, in the world-poem where the wives of an African chief, a red basalt grasshopper recalling Chapultepec, Toulouse Lautrec, Madam Curie working the pitch-blende, Sappho, and Peter Brueghel were to enter in. The Waste Land had stolen a march on Paterson, but when the first volume of Paterson appeared twenty-four years later Williams had brought his early poem into a fullness that was to be a challenge to the poets to come as The Waste Land was not.

In his Preface to Selected Essays in 1954 Williams tells us: “Poetry is a dangerous subject for a boy to fool with, for the dreams of the race are involved in it.” He sought, he writes of Paterson in his Autobiography in 1951, “to find an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world about me.” Between “the dream of the race” and “the knowable world”, between the “idea” and the “thing” his river was to flow, the Passaic, yes, but also in the realized poem “the thunder of the waters filling his dreams!”

“The subject matter of the poem,” he said in his lecture at the University of Washington in 1948, calling upon Freud’s theory of the dream, “is always phantasy—what is wished for, realized in the ‘dream.’ of the poem—but the structure confronts something else.” The Poem as a Field of Action, he titles that lecture, anticipating Charles Olson’s Projective Verse with its composition by field. “The only reality we can know,” he continues, “is measure ... How can we accept Einstein’s theory of relativity, affecting our very conception of the heavens about us of which poets write so much, without incorporating its essential fact—the relativity of measurements—into our own category of activity: the poem. Do we think we stand outside the universe? Or that the Church of England does? Relativity applies to everything, like love, if it applies to anything in the world.”

William’s local condition and his “no ideas but in things” must ring true, find their resonance, in “the dreams of the race” and in a relativity of measurements that applies to everything, as H.D.’s elect, the lovers or the writers, must somehow in their vision prove to keep the dream of “everyone, everywhere.” The very heightened sense of the relatedness of everything set poets apart. The very secret of the impulse in poetry is the troubled awareness the poet has of meanings in the common language everywhere that those about him do not see or do not consider so important. “We,” H.D. writes in The Walls Do Not Fall, “bearers of the secret wisdom,” and then:

but if you do not even understand what words say

how can you expect to pass judgement on what words conceal?
The ancient instruction “As above, so below” from the Smaragdine Tablet may be “the secret wisdom”, but H.D. was initiate of Freud where she had learned in analysis that for the good of her soul she must bear the wisdom of “what words conceal.” She tells us Freud said to her, “My discoveries are a basis for a very grave philosophy. There are very few who understand this, there are very few who are capable of understanding this.” But he might also have said “very few who are willing to understand”, for the crisis of the new psychoanalytic wisdom lay in the resistance men have against knowing what is above or below, the strange refusal to see what they are doing or to hear what they are saying just when they are most engaged in their own self-destruction—“the untameable nature of men,” the epic of Gassire’s Lute says. So, Oedipus cannot and will not understand the vatic warnings of Tiresias or the fears of Jocasta but must pursue his blind course in order to expose the conflict within only at the cost of catastrophe for all. He seems to seek in the drama a compelling reason to make his blindness actual.

The great compulsion of our own states with their war economies and compulsory military servitude, the history that is now all written upon verges of a war to come, about which we can do nothing and which we can imagine only in terms of total destruction, bears a curious resemblance to the hubris and fate of the Greek drama. The People of the Truth and the People of the Lie, the Zoroastrians called the adherents of peaceful agricultural ways and the adherents of war; but Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Truth, was to become a War-Lord, for His was the One Truth, and all other truths were lies. “And now just look at what is happening in this wartime,” Freud writes in a letter to Van Eden in 1914: “at the cruelties and injustices for which the most civilized nations are responsible, at the different way in which they judge of their own lies, their own wrong-doings, and those of their enemies.” “The individual in any given nation has in this war,” he writes in Thoughts On War and Death in 1915, “a terrible opportunity to convince himself of what would occasionally strike him in peace time—that the State has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrong doing, not because it desired to abolish it, but because it desires to have the monopoly of it, like salt and tobacco.”

For Freud, as for Lawrence, H.D., Pound, Joyce, or Eliot, the immediate experience of the First World War brought an intensified experience of the “we” and the “they”! “The individual who is not himself a combatant—and so a wheel in the gigantic machinery of war,” Freud writes, “feels conscious of disorientation, and of an inhibition in his powers and activities.” So, in “Cities” H.D. in 1914 could still imagine the task of the “we, to be to awaken the “they” from their hideous larval life, to “recall the old splendor” towards a “new beauty of cities.” In an essay on the work of Marianne Moore in August 1916, she speaks of Marianne Moore’s work as if it were under question: “these curiously wrought patterns, these quaint turns of thought and concealed, half-playful ironies” that readers “have puzzled over... and asked—what is this all about?” This poetry might be her own as well with its curiously wrought patterns. Even among the literate, the few who made any pretense at all of being concerned with poetry, the Imagists were ridiculed and reviled. And among the less than few who appreciated,
appreciation was not the same as understanding. In the conclusion of that essay, H.D. breaks out and the “they” that had been readers appear as the other “they” of “Cities”, and likewise, the identification of herself with Marianne Moore in a “we” is outright: “She is fighting in her country a battle against squalor and commercialism. We are all fighting the same battle. And we must strengthen each other in this one absolute bond—our devotion to the beautiful English language.”

The war experience had revealed a division in which one side could no longer communicate with the other. “It rends all bonds of fellowship between the contending peoples,” Freud writes in Thoughts on War and Death, “and threatens to leave such a legacy of embitterment as will make any renewal of such bonds impossible for a long time to come. Moreover, it has brought to light the almost unbelievable phenomenon of a mutual comprehension between the civilized nations so slight that one can turn with hate and loathing upon the other.” But this abyss of incomprehension appeared not only between opposing states, but within each state between the few antipathetic to the war itself and those obedient to or sympathetic with the war. In the poem “The Tribute”, H.D. sees the “we” and the “they” divided by a will on the part of the “they” not to hear, not to see—a resistance against beauty and any hope of peace, but also a compulsion towards ugliness and war, a conspiracy that these shall be the terms of the real. The City of the Gods, “set fairer than this with column and porch”, no longer what once was or what will be, the city of an historical task, is now a dwelling place of youths and gods “apart”.

Augustine, when Rome fell to the Vandals in the fifth century and the Christians were accused of betraying the Empire in their disaffiliation from the war, answered in The City of God with the ringing affirmation of an eternity more real than historical time, a life eternal or supreme good more real than the good life of the philosopher. “And thus it is written, “ Augustine tells us: “The just lives by faith, for we do not as yet see our good, and must therefore live by faith.” For Augustine—as for Freud—there was the incomprehension between nations, or for poets the incomprehension between writers and readers, or for Sapir the incomprehension between the individual happenings and the language as communication itself—for Augustine too in the world beyond the household and the city, the world of human society at large “man is separated from man by the difference of languages. For if two men, each ignorant of the other’s language, meet, and are not compelled to pass, but, on the contrary, to remain in company, dumb animals, though of different species, would more easily hold intercourse than they, human beings though they be.”

“But the imperial city has endeavoured to impose on subject nations, not only her yoke, but her language, as a bond of peace, so that interpreters, far from being scarce, are numberless” he continues: “This is true; but how many great wars, how much slaughter and bloodshed, have provided this unity! And though these are past, the end of these miseries has not yet come. For though there have never been wanting, nor are yet wanting, hostile nations beyond the empire, against whom wars have been and are waged, yet, supposing there were no such nations, the very extent of the empire
itself has produced wars of a more obnoxious description—and with these the whole race has been agitated either by the actual conflict or the fear of a renewed outbreak.”

For Augustine, convert of the Christian cult, Latin words themselves had a difference of meaning, and in that difference there was a disillusionment with all the values of the Roman world. Only in a total conversion could the “they”, the would-be good and just men of the Empire, understand the “we”, the little company of would-be saints. The rest—the whole “realistic” approach—meant utter misery. “But, say they, the wise man will wage just wars. As if he would not all the (line missing in Duncan mss.) rather lament the necessity of just wars, if he remembers that he is a man; for if they were not just he would wage them, and would therefore be delivered from all wars. For it is the wrong-doing of the opposing party which compels the wise man to wage just wars, and this wrong-doing, even though it gave rise to no war, would still be a matter of grief to man because it is man’s wrong-doing. Let everyone, then, who thinks with pain on all these great evils, so horrible, so ruthless, acknowledge that this is misery. And if any one either endures or thinks of them without mental pain, this is a more miserable plight still, for he thinks himself happy because he has lost human feeling.”

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To write at all is to dwell in the illusion of language, the rapture of communication that comes as we surrender our troubled individual isolated experiences to the communal consciousness. But this “commune” is not, even in the broadest sense, the language of the human society at large. To write in English is not only to belong to a language-world different from French or Aranda but also to belong to a language-world different from though within the English-speaking world other National literatures. Writing and reading is itself an initiation as special as the totem-dance of the Aranda, and just as the Aranda learns to read his own parts in the parts of the landscape about him, so that the body of the world becomes one with his own consciousness, so we learn to find our life in a literature, and, in turn, literature itself is valued as it seems true to life.

But once we would derive our life not in terms of tribe or nation but in terms of a larger humanity, we find our company in Euripides, Plato, Moses of Leon, Faure or Freud, searching out keys to our inner being in the rites of the Aranda and in the painting processes of Cezanne. We must move throughout the history of man to find many of our own kin, for here and now those who think and feel in the terms we seek are few indeed. But from each of these the cry goes up—to whom other than us, their spiritual kin—from an intense solitude. Not only Freud’s “There are very few who understand this”, but Stein’s “Do you know because I tell I you so, or do you know, do you know. (Silence) My long life, my long life,” or Joyce’s “Thinking always if I go all goes. A hundred cares, a tithe of troubles and is there one who understands me? One in a thousand of years of the nights?” or Pound’s plea from Canto 116:
I have brought the great ball of crystal,
who can lift it?
Can you enter the great acorn of light?

but the beauty is not the madness
Tho my errors and wrecks lie about me

and I cannot make it cohere...

Before war and death the whole world of the higher culture seems to be an illusion indeed. For Freud, the war evoked a powerful disillusionment. The cosmopolitan man, as Freud portrays himself in *Thoughts on War and Death* in peace-time dwelt in an “other” world, leaving the Mother-land or Father-land of the national state and entering a new Mother-land of an international dream:

“Relying on this union among the civilized races, countless people have exchanged their native home for a foreign dwelling place, and made their existence dependent on the conditions of intercourse between friendly nations. But he who was not by stress of circumstances confined to one spot, could also confer upon himself, through all the advantages and attractions of these civilized countries, a new, a wider fatherland, wherein he moved unhindered and unsuspected.” The generation of Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and H.D., living in the dream of European culture, or of Lawrence living in the dream of Western Indian culture, is the last to live abroad so. The generation of the twenties—the “lost” generation, as Stein called it—Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Mary Butts, Henry Miller, Katherine Anne Porter, Kay Boyle, Robert MacAlmon, live in Europe or Mexico as if in limbo, forerunners of the jet set and the new wave. The cosmopolitan son of an imaginary world-father pictured by Freud had his roots in a time “before the War”, in an illusion of peace, and thought of the achievement, of the past as his spiritual heritage.

“This new fatherland was for him a museum also, filled with all the treasures which the artists among civilized communities had in successive centuries created and left behind,” Freud continues: “As he wandered from one gallery to another in this museum, he could appreciate impartially the varied types of perfection that miscegenation, the course of historical events, and the special characteristics of their mother-earth had produced among his more remote compatriots.”

This dream of European Culture must recall the Palace of Eros. But Freud’s heir of the ages and of the earth finds his reality not in daydream but in an actual sea and actual mountains, in the treasure store of men’s actual works. “Property is not capital. The increment of association is not usury,” Ezra Pound insists in *Social Credit: An Impact* (1935) and prefaces his pamphlet with Jefferson’s saying—“The earth belongs to the living. In the rites whereby man became cosmopolitan man he came into an increment, an environment enhanced by his realization of the work and experience of others involved, into an increase that was not taken from things but taken in them.”
In the cult-life of Freud's cosmopolitan man, as in the life of the Imagists, the gods and the heroes, the imagined beings and the men who in their creative work have increased the store of the imagination, are ancestral, Eternal Ones of the Dream. A new father-land is taken in the image of a world-father of man-kind. And a new kin is found in the ancestors — those who have contributed to the association of man “any and all of the qualities which have made mankind the lords of the earth.”

“Nor must we forget,” Freud concludes his picture of this illusion of the civilized man: “that each of these citizens of culture had created for himself a personal ‘Parnassus’ and ‘School of Athens’. From among the great thinkers and artists of all nations he had chosen those to whom he conceived himself most deeply indebted for what he had achieved in enjoyment and comprehension of life, and in his veneration had associated them with the immortals of old as well as with the more familiar masters of his own tongue.”

*

It is not the world of nature from which the poet feels himself alienated. One of the primaries of the poet is his magic identification with the natural world—“the pathetic fallacy” the rationalist-minded critics and versifiers call it. Freud's cosmopolitan man is a poet and a primitive mind, for in his pathetic union with the world, he “enjoyed the blue sea, and the grey; the beauty of the snow-clad mountains and of the green pasture-lands; the magic of the northern forests and the splendor of the southern vegetation . . . the silence of nature in her inviolate places.” Where the rationalist will be quick to see that to find joy in the blue sea or beauty in mountains, magic in forests, splendor and silence in nature, is to live in an environment transformed by human sentiments; for these qualities are just that increment that would make man a lord. The joy and the splendor exist in a magic reciprocity—a property that is not capital; an increment that is not usury. Joy, magic, splendor, beauty, and the silence of “inviolate places” are pathetically present too in the language of the Aranda sexual organs and orifices, the “secret” organs of joy, magic and splendor in the flow of blood and urine, the excitement and release of orgasm.

So too, the nature poems of H.D.—the early poems of sea and orchard, shell and tree in full blossom or fruit—betray in their troubled ardor processes of psychological and even sexual identification, and those critics who have rebuked her for these poems may be disturbed by content in the poem they do not want to recognize. In Orchard, she writes: “and I fell prostrate crying: / you have flayed us / with your blossoms”. This flowering tree—it is the flowering half-burnt-out tree of The Flowering of the Rod—may also be the emotional tree of a sexual encounter; for this poem addresses the “rough-hewn / god of the orchard”, “alone unbeautiful”, “son of the god”, and in its first publication in The Egoist was titled “Priapus (Keeper of Orchards)”, and the “you” was then “thou”, the too-intimate almost forbidden second person pronoun in English. The first pear falling, the thundering air and the honey-questing bees of the poem appear then in a
poetic magic in which the natural environment and the sexual experience are fused. The intensity belongs neither to the tree as object nor to the priapic penis as object but to the evocation of the image in which they are fused.

Nor is it from the world of the ancestors that the poet feels alienated. The ultimate reality that the eternal ones of the dream have for the Aranda—the ultimate reality that our toys and imaginary play-mates had for us in childhood—Moses, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Hannibal have for Freud; and Sappho, Euripides, Shakespeare or Browning have for H.D. They are forefathers of the work, but they seem also at times previous reincarnations of the spirit at work.

These poems where many persons from many times and many places begin to appear—as in The Cantos, The Waste Land, Finnegans Wake, the War Trilogy, and Paterson—are poems of a world-mind in process. The seemingly triumphant reality of the War and State disorient the poet who is partisan to a free and world-wide possibility, so that his creative task becomes the more imperative. The challenge increases the insistence of the imagination to renew the reality of its own. It is not insignificant that these “poems containing history” are all products of a movement in literature that was identified in the beginning as free verse. The Egoist, where Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Williams, Moore, H.D., Lawrence, and Aldington first appeared together had formerly been The New Freewoman; free verse went along in its publication with articles on free love and free thought. And the “new” we find also as a demand. In his quarrel with Eliot, Williams could oppose the “new” to the “past”—as if all of the past were what Eliot meant by his “tradition”. But the definition of the “new” was given by Ezra Pound from Confucius in “Make It New”, and in The Spirit of Romance and in the essay Cavalcanti he turns to the late Medieval reawakening of poetic genius not with the antiquarian’s concerns but in search of enduring terms for the renewal of poetry in his own time. The study of literature, he wrote then, was “hero-worship”—“It is a refinement or, if you will, a perversion of that primitive religion.”

The image, for the Imagists, was something actually seen. “At least H.D. has lived with these things since childhood.” Pound writes to Harriet Monroe in 1912, “and knew them before she had any book-knowledge of them” In ABC of Reading he argues for a statement of Dante’s as a starting point “because it starts the reader or hearer from what he actually sees or hears, instead of distracting his mind from that actuality to something which can only be approximately deduced or conjectured from the actuality, and for which the evidence can be nothing save the particular and limited extent of the actuality.” In the major phase of his last years William Carlos Williams, the poet who was to have “no ideas but in things”, would relate poetry to dream and to phantasy, as H.D. would in “Good Frend” project the fictional life of Claribel who had no more actuality than her being mentioned in passing in Shakespeare’s The Tempest—itself a drama of the poet’s powers to enchant—and in Helen in Egypt she would weave another fiction of persons who belong not to actuality but to an eternal dream. But the bias for what Williams called “the local conditions” as the primary impetus is strong and continues to haunt my own generation.
The immediate persuasion of Imagist poets was against the fantastic and fictional as it was for the clear-seeing, even the clairvoyant, and the actual, for percept against concept. The Image as “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in time” or “the local conditions” could open out along lines of the poet’s actual feeling. The poem could be erotic and contain evocations of actual sexual experience as I have suggested in the poem Orchards. And then, the image was also something actually seen in the process of the poem, not something pretended or made up. It was the particular image evoked in the magic operation of the poet itself—whatever its source, and it usually had many sources. In reviewing Fletcher’s poetry in 1916, H.D. may be speaking too of her own art: “He uses the direct image, it is true, but he seems to use it as a means to evoke other and vaguer images—a pebble, as it were, dropped in a quiet pool, in order to start across the silent water, wave on wave of light, of colour, of sound.”

There was in the image a presentation that gave, Pound writes in “A Stray Document”, “that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.” When he tells us that the total plan of Dante's Commedia is itself an image, there is a possibility that the image is something seen of or in the “other” world, a clairvoyance. Works of art here are works of a magic comparable to the imaginative practices of Vital or Ficino in which the imagination is thought of not as creative but as a higher vision. In Pound's “Aux Etuves de Wiesbaden”, Poggio says: “We are fortunate to live in the wink; the eye of mankind is open, for an instant, hardly more than an instant.”

The personae of the Imagists had derived from the dramatis-personae of Robert Browning. Pound and H.D. wrote not in the tradition of the personal lyric, but they drew upon the dramatic choral lyric and the trance-voice of religious evocation to charge the actual with meaning. In this making the actual the condition of the true and the real, there was a curious consequence. For those elements of the imagination that are usually distinguished from what is actual—the impersonations, the projections, the creations of worlds and the speculations in ideas—return now in their higher truth and reality to be identified with the actual. In such an operation, H.D. suggests in her notes to Ion, for the devotee of Euripides, the actor of Hermes is indeed Hermes: “Roughly speaking, there were two types of theatre-goers in ancient Greece, as there are today. Those who are on time and those who are late. The prologue is the argument or libretto; it outlines the plot. The ardent lover of the drama will doubtless be strung up to a fine pitch of intensity and discrimination from the first. The presence of this actor, who impersonates the god Hermes, will actually be that god. Religion and art still go hand in hand.”

If poetry has to do with enchantment and the imagination has traffic with what is not actual but a made up world, if indeed these would-be serious poets wove a romance of the actual itself, then religion and art may both be fictional and the intensity of their truth and reality [is] the intensity needed to make what is not actual real. The crux for the poet is to make real what is only real in a heightened sense. Call it his personal
feeling, or the communal reality, it exists only in its dance, only to its dancers. Outside the created excitement, what we call the inspiration of art, the things done—the bleeding, the exhibition of private parts, the reiterated correspondences of the human world to the great world of nature and the eternal world of the dream—do not communicate. The reader of the poem must be just such an ardent lover as the communicant of the Mass, or the magic of the sacrament is all superstition and vanity. Christ is not actually there, even where He is most real.

The poet and the reader, who if he is intent in reading becomes a new poet of the poem, come to write or to read in order to participate through the work in a consciousness that moves freely in time and space and can entertain reality upon reality. “He has to begin as a cloud of all the other poets he ever read,” Robert Frost says, comparing the poet to a water-spout at sea: “and first the cloud reaches down! toward the water from above, and then the water reaches up! toward the cloud from below—and finally cloud and water join together to roll as one pillar between heaven and earth: the base of water he picks from below, all the life he lived outside of books.” But, in eternity, there is a cloud below, a sea above, as well: books are real and also imagined, and they must be included if we would draw upon all the life we have lived; life, a dream or a stage on which we act, is also larger than the life we have lived, for its reality is extended in all the poets we have read.

In this great poetry, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” may have its resonance with “Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow, /Creepes in this petty pace from day to day, /To the last Syllable of Recorded time”, for we have come in the comparison of languages to imagine one human drama in many tongues. If the language of Matthew be inspired, so is the language of Shakespeare. Christ and Macbeth have become personae of a world-poem. Not only this is true, but if it is, then also this is true. It has come to pass, anyway, that only in the imagination are Christ and Macbeth surely real.
Book II

Nights and Days
In Horace a man speaks to his own poetic faculty even as to another person; and they are not the words of Horace only but he says them as though reciting the words of the good Homer, here in his Poetria: Dic mini Musa, virum, etc. In Ovid Love speaketh, as if he were a human being, in the beginning of the book named Remedy of Love, here: Bella mihi, video, bella parantur ait. And by this may all be made clear to one who finds a difficulty in certain parts of this my little book.

—Dante Alighieri, La Vita Nuova, xxv.
Chapter One

March 10, Friday. 1961. (1963)

Naming the stars out of the seas of heaven, men drew a net-work. The knots were suns, were burning. What the poets who bound the dragon of their confusion spun were lines of association where figures of light appeared, giving direction. All life is oriented to the light from which life comes. The bees in the dances are oriented to the sun and, if it is dark, will dance in relation to a candle flame. Men found at night a new orientation in the stars, found a heaven, a spreading mesh of lights, that became a projected screen of where and when they were as they danced, an image of another net that in memory we throw out over moment and place that are suns in time, the net of our selves. The bees dance to tell where the honey is.

They memorized as they realized. In turn, now, the surfaces and involvements of the brain were an imprint of the seas above; and the skydome above was the image of another configuration in the skull-dome below. So, a network there too bound the dragon of a confusion in constellations of living cells that made up a body or series of imaginary bodies a man was, is, would be.

*

It was a map. It was a great design of where they were and then of when. Night after night here in the country I have been learning my stars. The wavering cold of a mixed winter and spring, as if those distant lights were within the aroma of March blossomings, the lilac, lemon, and grasses, of the star-world, brings a fragrance of stars. Earth sparks of scent seem just to have flown up into those signs of the ancient ways in which the book of when-where sparkles and glows. As we come home from an evening with neighbors, Orion is in the high heaven.

*

The figure of the giant hunter in the sky brings with it, as often, the creative genius of Charles Olson for me. Since the appearance of Origin 1 a decade ago, my vision of what the poem is to do has been transformed, reorganized around a constellation of new poets—Olson, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley—in which Olson’s work takes the lead for me. This man, himself a “giant”—six foot seven or so—has been an outrider, my own Orion.

It was this same time of year, with Orion overhead, in 1955, when Olson read aloud to Jess and me the beginnings of a new sequence of poems, O’Ryan. The scene in the bare room at Black Mountain with its cold and the blazing winter sky at the window springs up as I write. The fugitive hero of that sequence was drawn from Robert Creeley, but he is also in the humor of the poem Hercules the Sun or Son who must pass the twelve houses of the zodiacal initiations:
“Overall, mover of the unnumbered”—“who did twelve labors”, Olson names him.

* 

He’s also—what else has he to be?—the rueful figure any of us are as the men we are. “Who

\[
told \text{ } you \text{ } your \text{ } flesh \text{ } is \\
as \text{ } rosy \text{ } as \text{ } your \\
baby’s, \text{ } as \text{ } rosy \text{ } as \\
Rosy, \text{ } as, \text{ } your \\
mother’s, \text{ } as \text{ } who \text{ } got \text{ } you \text{ } up
\]

and to be up there, sky-high, is also to be “all lit up” as in *O’Ryan 8*, and look down, as in 9, “you got a hard on and it’s to be made.” But:

\[
I \text{ } don’t \text{ } read \text{ } your \text{ } face. \text{ } Or \text{ } you \text{ } mine. \\
By looking \text{ } up \text{ } or \text{ } down. \text{ } . . .
\]

* 

Yet our roots are in the sky. Radical! The Milky Way appears, cross-section of our galaxy. In the earliest news out of heaven, what they said—the mythos—was that it was the slain body of the dragon, it was the flow of everlasting mothering milk, it was light, it was rhetoric, river, fluid. A stream of suns.

* 

Something of what we are is up in the air, beyond our grasp, and wherever we are not sure of what is going on—as in the heavens then—a phantasy of our selves appeared.

* 

Otherwise, other ways (as Charles Olson gave me the lead in his “Against Wisdom As Such” that our wise is not more or less than our ways), if there are not these roots in the sky, this place that is also a time of what must be—otherwise poetry is a litter. “Litterature,” Lewis Carroll called his collection of bits and starts out of which he put together *Sylvie and Bruno*. “The reader will overlook my spell,” he added.
In our time, Joyce, gathering up his mountain of litter, sorting and resorting, accruing scraps upon scraps, took a patron in that “Dodge-son”. He too made out of the mound of twenty-five years’ labor a pun upon literature and wrote a crawling language that must enter here, if only to play the adversary, for I have taken thought in this ground too. Like Milton, Joyce was blind. *Finnegans Wake* has its roots among letters and in the body, as if it were not moved by the stars. The work has intestinal fortitude, true to an internal chemistry. Its seasons are rounds of digestion. He had lost sight of the heavens.

*

In a man’s guts there are no gods. There is agony, there is pleasure. Pain that binds the spirit to its own when-where. Pleasure that may be taken, as we may take thought.

In the flight of the imagination, in the reading of the stars, in taking thought, we go out of our selves. Flame out of the wet wood. Out of literature then. Out of matters of pain and pleasure.

*

The consciousness bent down to a literature lives on its wits in a sulfurous burning. And if we come under literary dictates, all is voluptuous or all agony, is a matter of what we like and do not like, of literary taste, of good-and-bad the tongue knows, is hell.

As the other consciousness we see in the light spread out in the heavens. Gods there; and in the darkness, daemonic stars.

*

In the map of stars we began to map our selves. Our projection of what we are was also a first poetry. A first making of a thing or image that projected a spiritual form in what we did not know. Well ... There must have been another projected spiritual form—not only this but also this—when the adam named their things and kinds of the earth, another network of sticks and stones and names “that never hurt one”. In our literary listings and groupings, we are doing all of that, nothing more. We make constellations in poetry that are, if they be anything, linked by gender, works of our selves then, ideograms of spirit, of when and where what we are is happening.
This study of H. D.’s work is such an astrology, projecting a net of responses in which points in the sky and lines of feeling suggest figures in a plot at work from day to day. Here each opus is a sun, the locality of an event. An opus in itself—but I have in mind the Opus or Work as it appears in the imagination of certain alchemists, something undertaken in which we may discover the way of the soul, begin the romance of our spirit. A romance in Poetry that would be a counterpart of the alchemical romances of the seventeenth century.

So, when I think of H. D.’s later work: the War Trilogy, The Writing on the Wall (Tribute to Freud), the poem “Good Frend” and the historical essay “The Guest” that form By Avon River, and her Madrigal— the roman-a-clef Bid Me To Live—that these are masterpieces has a double charge. It means both that she is my master here in the art of writing; and, just in this, that she is my master here in spirit. That this book, in turn, is an apprentice piece. Where, trying my hand, a student, I must often miss and go on as best I can.

Jean Cocteau lists his Oeuvres as a king might list the states of his kingdom: Poesie, Poesie de Roman, Poesie Critique, Poesie de Theatre, Poesie Graphique, Poesie Cinematographique. Drawings and movies are conceived as propositions of “Poetry”. As we recognize that Blake’s illustrations, not only of his own books but of Bunyan, Milton, and Dante, belong to the plot of his poetics.

Drawing a picture of his work in this way, articulating not only into prose and verse, but into formal entities—poem, novel, drama, critique, history, translation—the poet creates a syntax of the whole art in which individual works are jointures of a larger structure, not conclusions but functions. Each thing-in-itself is revealed anew as it is seen as the member of possible sequences.

So Joyce conceived Chamber Music, Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man, Exiles, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake as a deliberate series of forms in which his work is defined—as characteristic a design as the progress of parts in Ulysses: the book of songs, the book of short stories, the memoir, the drama, the book of the conscious mind, or Dublin awake, the book of the dreaming mind, or Dublin asleep. The sense of order in Joyce is simple-minded, comparable to that of Cesar Franck; his inventive genius lay in the elaboration and illustration of one-dimensional, one-directional systems.

In Pound’s work too we recognize the conceptual mind of the artist at work in the total design, but here that total design is not, as Joyce’s is, a prescribed convention which the artist solves in a unique variation. Pound’s total form, like the form of any poem or book, is not obvious but hidden, intuited by the artist then as a process, organizing and reorganizing the meaning of what he has done in what he does. “Years ago,” he writes in the “Date Line” for Make It New in 1935, “I made the mistake of publishing a volume (Instigations) without blatantly telling the reader that the book had a design.” Here design means also intent in an open possibility. In The Chinese Written Character
As A Medium For Poetry Pound had found the inspiration of a moving syntax (as contrasted with the categorical syntax of Joyce, where parts of speech are things). “A true noun, an isolated thing,” we read in the Fenollosa essay, “does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots. Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them.”

As the works of the poet are articulated, so too his life is articulated. Phases appear, and immediate impressions and emotions are felt to belong to the ideogram of a body in time. The individual image operates as a manifestation of feeling, as the individual persona operates as a manifestation of identity. Projected in time from a series of works, there is an increment of design. Feelings take on the shape of a created life-experience, the lifetime in Poetry, and the personae take on the shape of a self, the poet.

Images, as the Japanese poet Kitasano proposed to Pound in 1937, take on another dimension in their assembly, and the poet, moving on from the evocation of the immediate image, in the “collection, arrangement and combination” of images becomes involved in a plastic apprehension. “That which we vaguely call poetical effect,” he writes, “means, generally, ideoplasty which grows out of the result of imagery.” The shape of an imaginary geometry, an aesthetic intuition like the thinking out “to make a heart-shaped space with two right angles” it seems to Kitasano, begins to haunt the poet as he begins to be aware of the arrangements and combinations possible in his work. A sense of inner orders, of outline, arises. “The relation between imagery and ideoplasty,” he continues, “makes us suppose the heart-shaped space which is born by the connection of the same mysterious two curves.” In this process the aesthetic feeling arises and, in turn: “The phenomena in our life proceed, through our senses to our experiences, and intuitions. It is intuition rationally that provides the essentials for imagery, and it is the method of poetry that materializes intuitions perceptively and combines.”

In H.D.’s early work the evocation of the Greek past and in the Greek past of the god-world, of nature and of her own life-drama in superimposed image and person, the identifications with Sappho and Euripides, and the development of the dramatic monologue and choral modes in sequences, the identification with the spirits of Sappho and Euripides: these are formal intuitions. In Red Roses for Bronze in 1931 the forms are clearly realized by the poet. And with Ion, translated from Euripides, and the notes to Ion, begun in Athens in 1920, there is a turning point—the crowning achievement of her first phase, but also the declaration of her later work. And in the very dedication of the book we see the poet’s formalization of her own creative life. “For B. (Bryher) Athens 1920/P (her daughter Perdita) Delphi 1932.” In her novel Palimpsest in 1926 this suggestion of design in time first appears in the sequence of times given the component parts: Hipparchia (circa 75 B.C.), Murex (circa 1916-1926 A.D.), Secret Name (circa 1925 A.D.). From the flux of possible relationships she has begun to take certain keys in which her own life-experience is plotted and in turn to find between her own time affini-
ties in history. Hipparchia and Raymonde Ransome are members with H.D. herself in a composite figure drawn from H.D.’s two confinements—the first in 1916 when the child died; the second in 1919 when H.D. herself almost died in the influenza epidemic. These identities and contrasts are correlatives of a third form, “a heart-shaped space,” as Kitasano called it, imagined in time by the growing formal sense. These images rime with each other by factors of child-birth, of being deserted, of fever, of being found and nursed.

The transitions or notes which H.D. adds in her translation of the Ion of Euripides are initial to the major phase of her work that lasts from the inception of the War Trilogy with The Walls Do Not Fall in 1942 to the end of her life with Hermetic Definitions in 1960.

From the vague sense she had had in 1916 that she was not interested in the image as a thing in itself but in something “moving, whirling, drifting”, by 1932 she had come to see movement as inherent in the proportion of Euripides’ work. It is part of H.D.’s interpretation in translation that she divides the whole into “nineteen divisions . . . sanctioned by the form of the play.” It is not only that “each represents an entrance, an exit, a change in inner mood and external grouping of the characters,” but we begin to be aware that back of H.D.’s conception of the play is a complex analysis—historical, ideological, psychological, as well as aesthetic. What is involved is the change, from knowing how to do something that might be prescribed into knowing what must be done; from the mastery the craftsman has with his language to the obedience that the initiate must have who has come under the orders of meanings and inner structures he must follow. It is no longer her art but The Art.

So, when in her Translator’s Note to Ion, H.D. writes: “It is significant that the word ION has a double meaning. It may be translated by the Latin word UNUS, meaning one, or first, and is also the Greek word for violet, the sacred flower of Athens,” she may not only refer to Ion as initiating a new spirit in Athens but also to her own translated Ion as initiating a new spirit in her work to come.

Ion is the pivot. But then there is another aspect to the time of the work for it is a time of crisis. In the world at large between 1929 and the Second World War were years of economic depression and then the many crises and apprehensions in which the inevitability of the War was built up. In H.D.’s personal life there may also have been depression, the poet’s coming to himself “per una selva oscura”, in a dark wood, “che la diritta via era smarrita” —where the straight way is lost. For H.D., the very increased consciousness of the structure, of significance and form, may have been the crisis. She sought and found her way in the psychoanalysis with Freud in 1933 and 1934.

For she stood upon the threshold of an art where she was to take her place with Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams in the adventure of the higher imagination, in the full risk of the poem in which divine, human, and animal orders must be revealed. There had been an heroic resolve in Ion. “Especially . . .” Freud wrote H.D. in his appreciation of her notes, “where you extol the victory of reason over passions.” But it is, too, in the play, an address to the passionate intellect.

There is a passion of mind that moves toward abstract beauty, the Ionian style,
“the valiant yet totally unselfconscious withdrawal of the personality of the artist.” That is part of it. “Let not our hearts break before the beauty of Pallas Athene,” H.D. continues: “No;
“she makes all things possible for us. The human mind today pleads for all; nothing is misplaced that in the end may be illuminated by the inner fire of abstract understanding; hate, love, degradation, humiliation, all, all may be examined, given due proportion and dismissed finally, in the light of the mind’s vision. Today, again at a turning-point in the history of the world, the mind stands, to plead, to condone, to explain, to clarify, to illuminate.” then: “each one of us is responsible.” then: “What now will we make of it?”


There was the great work to undertake, but it was only in the experience of wartime London of the Second World War, where in the actual bombings life and death were so mixed, hope and despair, that the time ripened, the things of the poet’s own inner life came due. The days of bombardment, the trials and crucible of the war, furnish a crucible of the poem where the long prepared art, the accumulated craft and knowledge fit or work. But it is the time too that fits, that works. In prophecy, this is the proof. It is the fulfilling of the word.

As at Pisa, uprooted from his study and his idées fixes, “a lone ant from a broken ant-hill,” Ezra Pound was to come, in another part of the war, in the Summer and Fall of 1945, to a turning point, exposed, at the heart of the matter. Mussolini had been torn to pieces, like Cola di Rienzi his Renaissance counterpart. “Manes was tanned and stuffed,” Pound remembers in the first Pisan canto. The poet had hitchhiked to Pisa and surrendered, given himself up to the army. Had he expected death? His fellow prisoners are led off to the firing squad each day. And, for the first time in the Cantos, in these Pisan cantos, some attitude of authority, some self is surrendered, so that a pose seems to have fallen apart, exposing the genuine, confused, passionate mind. “A lizard upheld me,” he testifies. He is in the condition of first things.

Not since the Imagist years, between 1912 and 1915, had Pound’s and H.D.’s poetry belonged to a common movement. He had gone on from the Vorticism of Gaudier-Brzeska with its spirit of forms to the Vorticism of Wyndham Lewis with its blast at culture. The Pound of the thirties with his treatises on economics and his historical comparisons of Jefferson and Mussolini seems far indeed from the world of H.D. But when the Pisan-Cantos appeared in 1949 how closely Pound’s lines

If the hoar frost grip thy tent
Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent.
recalled H.D.’s lines from Tribute to the Angels that had been published in 1945:

   where, Zadkiel, we pause to give  
   thanks that we rise again from death and live.

In December of 1944, H.D. had finished her War Trilogy; she was 58. At Pisa, Pound was 60 when he finished the Pisan Cantos. William Carlos Williams at 62 in 1944 was working on Paterson I. For each there was to be ahead, in the last years of their lives, a major creative phase.

And “to reveal that secret and sacred presence”—there was to be Paterson. “It called for a poetry such as I did not know,” Williams writes in his Autobiography, “it was my duty to discover or make such a context . . .”

‘How deep is the water?’ asked Paul. ‘I mean at the deepest place?’”

**Paterson I (1946):**

   So you think because the rose  
   is red that you shall have the mastery?  
   The rose is green and will bloom  
   overtopping you...

**Paterson II (1948) “Sunday in the Park”:**

   His anger mounts. He is chilled to the bone.  
   As there appears a dwarf, hideously deformed—

It is the genius of the place, of the falls—but the falls are the locus of the poem in the language; the river, the rhetoric. The dwarf then is the poet’s own familiar.

   The dwarf lived there, close to the waterfall—  
   saved by his protective coloring.

And in **Paterson III (1949)** “The Library” another image of the language but the poem itself also, and then of the poet, occurs:

   An old bottle, mauled by the fire  
   gets a new glaze, the glass warped  
   to a new distinction, reclaiming the undefined.

It seemed to me then that Williams, in the imagination, had come to the same place,
under fire, that appears in *Tribute to the Angels* where

> then she set a charred tree before us,  
> burnt and stricken to the heart;

as if in London, in Pisa, in Paterson, there had been phases of a single revelation. Indeed, Williams saw that if his Paterson “rose to flutter into life awhile—it would be as itself, locally, and so like every other place in the world.” Was it that the war—the bombardment for H.D., the imprisonment and exposure to the elements for Ezra Pound, the divorce in the speech for Williams—touched a spring of passionate feeling in the poet that was not the war but was his age, his ripeness in life. They were almost “old”; under fire to come “to a new distinction.”

Where the fullness of their age was also the fullness of an historical age, as if the Second World War were a trouble of the times, unprepared or prepared for its old age? They give, these three works out of the war, a text for the historian of our contemporary spirit; as Shakespeare gives text for the Tudor Renaissance; as Dante gives text for the thirteenth century catholic world.

In the light of these works I write today. Taking them as my immediate ancestors, as they in turn took Swinburne, the Pre-Raphaelites Rossetti and William Morris, and Robert Browning, as theirs. As Pound has his direct heritage from Yeats, carrying over the neo-Platonism, the Greek and Renaissance mystery cults, Plotinus and Gemistos Plethon—and even (*Section: Rock-Drill, Canto 91*) the Rosicrucian John Heydon. Heydon had appeared first in the early drafts of Canto III:

> Another one, half-cracked: John Heydon,  
> Worker of miracles, dealer in levitation,  
> “Servant of God and secretary of nature,”  
> The half transparent forms, in trance at Bulverton:

Pound owing as much of his medium to Yeats—how Pound becomes a medium himself—as Yeats owed modern measure to Pound.

In *Sagesse*, the first ten poems of which were published in *Evergreen Review* 5, Summer 1958, H.D. comes round close to Yeats, for she takes the Kabbalist theurgy directly over from *La Kabbale Pratique* of Robert Ambelain as a poetic practice:

> An owl hooted out in the darkness,  
> so the angel came—what angel and what name?  
> 
> *is it Tara, Dieu fontaine de sagesse*  
> *and the angel Ptébiou? It was his hour*  
> 
> *or near his hour, what did he say?*  
> seeking to follow along the line of associations
into a mystery, the haunted mere of Märchen
and old legends, or even Lethe or Eunoë, now and here.

She had never been, actually, close to Yeats, nor had she read his works. “Of course—what a tour de force,” she writes in a letter in 1960 of Virginia Moore’s study of Yeats: “that digging out the very ‘secret’ R.C. ceremonial! Odd, I met Yeats and ‘Georgie,’ as they first called her, & they invited me to Oxford—but something held me back. I did not know that ‘Georgie’ was a medium or he, what he was.”

She did not know then that there had been a poet before her who tried to draw images from Hermetic cult and rite. Nor how close to the “Yeatsian” tradition she was in her own way in Sagesse as she asks,

what am I doing? am I swept into a cycle
of majestic Spirits, myself aspiring yet questioning

my right to mention even one of the seventy-two regents
of the right Temple of the Ædipus Ægyptianus

And Pound in Canto 91:

that the body of light come forth
   from the body of fire
And that your eyes come to the surface
   from the deep wherein they were sunken
Reina—for 300 years
   and now sunken
That your eyes come forth from their caves
   & light then
      as the holly-leaf
      qui laborat, orat
Thus Undine came to the rock,

   by Circeo
and the stone eyes again looking seaward
   Thus Apollonius

    (if it was Apollonius)

& Helen of Tyre

This nearness to Lethe or Eunoë, to shadow or light, to the astral or phantasmal world in which Simon Magus and his Helen still have their powers, is the daydream of
old age. Which has no reality except in the imagination. As, too, in the *Coda to Asphodel*, William Carlos Williams comes close to the myrrh and light of H.D.’s *Flowering of the Rod* when he writes of what it is like “after a lifetime.”

Asphodel
has no odor
save to the imagination
but it too
celebrates the light.
It is late
but an odor
as from our wedding
has revived for me

These three—Pound, Williams, and H.D.—belonged in their youth to a brilliant, still brilliant generation that began writing just before the First World War and publishing in *The Egoist* in London, in *Poetry and Others* in America. They alone of their generation—and we must add D.H. Lawrence to their company—saw literature as a text of the soul in its search for fulfillment in life and took the imagination as a primary instinctual authority. The generative imagination Pound called it. They took the full risk of seeking to fulfill their vision of the poet as seer and creator. It is the heroic concept of the poet that the Romantics had had, Carlyle’s Hero as Poet, whose “musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost harmony of it, namely the melody that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be, here in this world.”

At the outbreak of the Second World War Edith Sitwell was inspired to write in the prophetic mode of high poetry. But the rest of that company—Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, T. S. Eliot—remain within the rational imagination and do not suffer from the creative disorders of primitive mind, the shamanistic ecstasies and the going “after strange gods.” Following this generation that had made the breakthrough came not a creative but a reactionary period. There is one lonely ghost light of poetry where Hart Crane is seized by his vision of the Bridge. There is one lonely acolyte of poetry where Louis Zukofsky perfects his art, wrapped in the cocoon of an “objectivism” derived from Pound and Williams, a hidden zaddik in a thicket of theory, to emerge in the myrrh and light of “A”, to keep the music, and in the working hive of his thought in *Bottom: On Shakespeare*.

For a new generation of young writers in the early 50s, the *Pisan Cantos* and then *Paterson* had been the challenge. But for me, the War Trilogy of H.D. came earlier, for searching out those first vatic poems of Edith Sitwell that Kenneth Rexroth had shown me in *Life and Letters Today* I had come across H.D.’s passages from *The Walls Do Not Fall*. Then came “Writing on the Wall” and “Good Frend”. When the third volume of the Trilogy, *The Flowering of the Rod*, was published in 1946 I had found my book. From the
beginning then, certainly from 1947 or 1948 when I was working on *Medieval Scenes* and taking H.D. as my master there among the other masters, there was the War Trilogy. In smoky rooms in Berkeley, in painters’ studios in San Francisco, I read these works aloud; dreamed about them; took my life in them; studied them as my anatomy of what Poetry must be.

A new constellation was appearing in those days in the magazine *Origin*. It had started with a manifesto by a man called Charles Olson—he had come to see me once in Berkeley, but I did not know then that he was a poet—that was just after *Medieval Scenes* in 1947—it had started with Olson’s *Projective Verse* essay of 1950, or it had started with a correspondence between this Olson and a Robert Creeley, a poet younger than myself. In Spring 1951 another poet Cid Corman published the first issue of *Origin*. There, for the first time in the work of any contemporary, I began to find a Call to Order. “*I, Maximus, of Gloucester, To You*” the first poem began:

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Off-shore, by islands hidden in the blood
jewels & miracles, I, Maximus
a metal hot from boiling water, tell you
what is a lance, who obeys the figures of
the present dance
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In “The Gate & The Center” in that same issue Olson writes: “whatever be individualization, there are groupings of us which create kin (‘hungry after my own kind’), limits—of, say, Seven Tribes of man, or whatever—which same limits become vessels of behavior towards *use* of self, & recognition.”

I have taken these as an imaginary kin and their works for me form a network of stars that influence me, as the willing astrologer believes his stars influence him; and hanging over me can seem even an evil at times, such powers I have given to the thought of them, in order perhaps to imagine a powerful kindred. Such a network appears in Olson’s poem “As The Dead Prey Upon Us”:

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they are the dead in ourselves,
awake, my sleeping ones, I cry out to you,
disentangle the nets of being!
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nets, “*which hamper at each step of the ladders,*” “*The nets we are entangled in,*” that must be the tissues of life, the network of cells that is our flesh in which we exist. Is that it? to be released from the grievance and ache of the mother-flesh?

Stars, spirits, the dead. Some passage read years ago in Gertrude Levy’s *The Sword from the Rock* had raised in my mind the idea that as men came to know the stars, to name them, and then to draw lines and inferences, netting the whole sky together in a sky-map of constellations, so they came to bind Tiamat, the Dragon of the Formless Heavens. The stars were, in that concept, knots of the net. That bound also, then...
Tiamat, the Mother of our Formless Nature? the libido?

I had seen old pictures where Christ the Fisher of Men was Orpheus fishing for
the fish of the Zodiac, Pisces, with a net. And I knew too that the sum of our wisdom was
what the dead knew. Wise with what was dead in us.

But these poems of our first constellation: The War Trilogy, *The Pisan Cantos* and
*Paterson* came as living stars. Works that were not only masterpieces, but striking fire
that continues to burn and lead on—to the broken insistences, the sublimity and the
rant of Pound’s Rock Drill and Thrones; to the melodic distribution of phrases, the
phrasing allowing for melodies within a melody, of Williams’s *Desert Music* and *Journey
to Love*; to the world-dream woven at the loom of *By Avon River, Tribute to Freud, Bid Me
To Live*, and in the far-flung skeins and lights of *Helen and Achilles (Helen in Egypt)*. “We
have only one course:” Olson tells us in his song—

*the nets which entangle us are flames*

then:

*o souls, burn
alive, burn now*

As, in writing, deriving as I do, I burn the nets of my origins.
II

An incident here and there
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square

“Here”, “there” are suns, are loci. When-where points of the net. Actual fires. So, the Romans knew there was a genius of the place where we are. There was a point to it.

But “here”, “there”, the dedication of The Walls Do Not Fall makes clear are:

To Bryher
for Karnak 1923
from London 1942

A thread is spun out in the loom between two points of the design, two places, two times. Where Bryher appears as patroness.

This is the figure of the kneeling donor, a meaningful element of the rite in painting in the late Middle Ages—the one who makes possible the Opus.

H.D., deserted by Aldington, near death in a London hospital, had been rescued by Bryher who found her there; and then, rescued from her life in London, from the grievous associations of her marriage with Aldington, yes, but also from the other trials of her life as a poet in company with Lawrence and Pound. Bryher took her away, or made it possible for her to go away to the Isles of Greece. Athens 1920. Karnak 1923.

In the dedication verse of Palimpsest H.D. draws a likeness of Bryher as severe and unidealized as the portrait of the Chancellor Rolin in Van Eyck's painting of the Madonna. The great stars Hesperus, Aldebaran, Sirius, and Mars are, we sense, where Bryher too has her star-nature, companions of H.D.'s who failed her in need, who “reel and fall.”

To BRYHER

Stars wheel in purple, yours is not so rare
as Hesperus, nor yet so great a star
as Bright Aldebaran or Sirius,
nor yet the stained and brilliant one of War;

stars turn in purple, glorious to the sight
yours is not gracious as the Pleiads are,
nor as Orion’s sapphires, luminous;
yet disenchanted, cold, imperious face
when all the others, blighted, reel and fall,
your star, steel-set, keeps lone and frigid trist
to freighted ships baffled in wind and blast.

Pregnant with her second child H.D. had been stricken with double pneumonia. “The material and spiritual burden of pulling us out of danger,” she writes in Tribute to Freud, “fell upon a young woman whom I had only recently met—anyone who knows me knows who this person is. Her pseudonym is Bryher, and we all call her Bryher. If I got well, she would herself see that the baby was protected and cherished and she would take me to a new world, a new life, to the land, spiritually of my predilection, geographically of my dreams. We would go to Greece, it could be arranged. It was arranged, though we two were the first unofficial visitors to Athens after that war.”

“Anyone who knows me knows who this person is”—“She turned out to be the daughter of Sir John Ellerman, the heaviest taxpayer in England,” William Carlos Williams puts it in his Autobiography. Years later. But the thought of H.D. irritates him; he wants to put her down. “Wanna see the old gal?” I asked Bob. ‘Sure. Why not?’ So one afternoon we decided to take in the show. Same old Hilda, all over the place looking as tall and as skinny as usual.” Wherever he remembers her this almost insulting, almost insulted colors his voice. He wants to brush Bryher off: “She had with her a small, dark English girl with piercing, intense eyes, whom I noticed and that was about all.” And the thought of Bryher’s proposing to Robert McAlmon and their marriage, McAlmon’s “disastrous story”, as he calls it, rankles. “She turned out to be the daughter of Sir John Ellerman, the heaviest taxpayer in England. Bob fell for it. When he told me, I literally felt the tears come to my eyes, whether from the anticipated loss of the man’s companionship and the assistance of his talents, or joy for his good fortune, I couldn’t decide.”

The fortune itself rankled. Williams wasn’t going to fall for it. Fall under the claim money made. The reality of money, the charm of money. “I could not imagine what to give the wealthy young couple as an adequate present,” he tells us, “until Floss fell on the ideal gift: a box of the rarest orchids we could gather.” “Imagine,” Marsden Hartley laughed at the wedding supper, “what it would look like in the papers tomorrow, the headline: POETS PAWING ORCHIDS!”

Several days later, Williams continues, they received a post card “showing several actors, men and women with their hands in a pot of money, and signed, obscurely, D.H., in bold capitals.” He means to get back at something—“I accused H.D. later of being the sender”—of being in on the scene then? “but she violently denied it. I never believed her.”

The rancor is complex in William Carlos Williams; it flashes forth testily in his Autobiography. For us, for that constellation of new poets who began to appear in Origin in the 50s, where Charles Olson, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, Paul Blackburn, Larry Eigner and I had our places, Williams was our immediate master. The poet of The
Wedge in 1944 had broken a new way. The poet of The Clouds and then Paterson in the late 40s had awakened us to our task in the language and had awakened us too to rediscover the poet of Spring and All. He seemed so wholly the poet in Paterson, the derisive, the defensive, the contending voice seemed so composed, to heighten the pathos of the ideal:

Go home. Write. Compose

Ha!

Be reconciled, poet, with your world, it is the only truth!

Ha!

—the language is worn out.

And She—
You have abandoned me!

—at the magic sound of the stream
she threw herself upon the bed—
a pitiful gesture! lost among the words:

we saw him so as the hero, that it was hard to admit how close to hurt pride he could be, how he contended in his own mind for recognition.

But this place is New York, this year is 1921. There is already a disappointment not an appointment between these two poets who had once read their poetry together. A divorce of feeling. A refusal of recognition.

Looking back, Spring and All in 1922 stands a major realization of form. Its twenty-eight poems belonging to an open sequence of feeling, cohering, not in any plan or prescribed theme, but in the essence of their belonging to the pure intuition of the whole. As free as the new music of Webern or the new painting of Kandinsky. The work itself having the insistence of the formal. So much depended upon seeing what was being done. Charged with spring. With the spring of a new poetics. The sequence of discrete, sharply drawn, contrasting poems that are in turn parts of something else, elements throughout of a melodic structure. That can include (as the new art of the collage begins to include

Wrigley’s, appendicitis, John Marin:
skyscraper soup—

or after “The Sea”, “Underneath the sea where it is dark / there is no edge / so two—”,
comes XXI The Red Wheelbarrow. For upon the “so much depends” and upon the “red wheel / barrow” the imagination must have a heightened apprehension of what form means to take hold.

A year of achievement. Surely he must have known what he had done. But it was a year of rancor for Williams too, for what he had done in *Spring and All*, to give simple things a power in the imagination, to compose so in the pure exhilaration of a formal feeling, was not recognized by those closest to him in poetry. Pound, writing on “Dr. Williams’ Position” in 1928, does not mention *Spring and All*, and he seems to be defending an art in its lapse. “Very well, he does not ‘conclude’;” Pound writes: “his work has been ‘often formless’, ‘incoherent’, opaque, obscure, obsfuscated, truncated, etc.”

Williams had struck out to make a new claim for form and it had not been recognized. More than that, the impact of *Spring and All* was obliterated by the timeliness, the *mise en scène*, the very usable attitudes and conclusions of *The Waste Land*.

*The Waste Land*, as it seemed to the literati of 1922 to voice most to their time, appears now as a period charade; with put-on voices and some epitome of modernism-1922 played against cultural tones, orchestrated with Edgar Allan Poe and the Vedas. The “O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—/ It’s so elegant / So intelligent” we all recognize as a knowing touch of the artist, a stylish manoeuvre.

The modernism-1922 is there in *Spring and All*, in the hey-ding-ding tough-voice of “Shoot It Jimmy!” and Rapid Transit

*To hell with you and your poetry*—

cuts in. But it is there an authentic part of the conflict the poet knows, in its own rights, as the red wheelbarrow is. For what it is. An insistence in the poem.

Yet...

Eliot must be part of our picture. He worried about social forms, about being in good form. He was never quite sure about the form, the beginning and the end of that first long poem. About what belonged. As he worried too about who and what belonged in the right thing, in literature, in the true establishment. About what to include. “Do you advise printing ‘Gerontion’ as a prelude in book or pamphlet form?” he writes Pound: “Perhaps better omit Phlebas also?? Certainly omit miscellaneous pieces.” “The poem,” Pound wrote Eliot, “ends with the ‘Shantih, shantih, shantih.’” A period charade? But it was the first poem in which the American mind lay so mediumistically open to the wastes of Europe’s agony. “The great catastrophe to our letters,” Williams recalls in his *Autobiography*:

“I felt at once that it had set me back twenty years, and I’m sure it did. Critically Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself—rooted in the locality which should give it fruit. . . I had to watch him carry my world off with him, the fool, to the enemy...”
Yet... “This is not to say that Eliot has not, indirectly, contributed much to the emergence of the next step in metrical construction, but if he had not turned away from the direct attack here, in the western dialect, we might have gone ahead much faster.”

“He might have become our adviser, even our hero,” Williams puts it. But he left the American language, the speech of childhood, the common speech—not for English, but for the language of English literature.

The footnotes may have done the damage, as Eliot believed later. They sent readers to look up the sources, not to find the fountain of feeling back of the poem, but to add to their know-all. For a new class in America that now fill our departments of English, bent upon self-improvement, anxious about what was the right book to refer to, Eliot, having his own like proprieties, became a mentor. “He returned us to the classroom.” The Waste Land with its contrasts of an upper cultured world in its anxious aristocracy, “staying at the arch-duke’s, my cousin’s”, to “go south in the winter”, or sitting as the Lady does in “A Game of Chess”, uneasily, in a movie set of traditional rich decor, with another world always threatening to show itself, to show the culture up—dead who will not stay buried, songs that are “‘Jug Jug’ to dirty ears”—this contrast fit and fed the literary needs of new young men in the Universities who were no longer climbing in society but climbing in culture, haunted by a world they had come from where their people had not read Kyd or Webster.

Eliot represented a high sophistication, as Noel Coward represented a low sophistication for those who were not serious-minded. He gave a histrionic remove.

The poem suffered in its very success. It had been cut and reorganized to succeed, and had lost in its conscious form whatever unconscious form had made for the confusion of sequence, the “miscellaneous pieces” that did not seem to fit. “These fragments I have shored against my ruins.” Out of whatever real ruin that threatened, Pound and Eliot had agreed finally upon the monumental artifice of a ruin, a ruin with an outline. “Complimenti, you bitch,” Pound writes Eliot: “I am wracked by the seven jealousies, and cogitating an excuse for always exuding my deformative secretions in my own stuff, and never getting an outline. I go into nacre and objets d’art.”

The heart of the poem was the unbearable mixing of things. The ruins were the ruins rising from adultery and rage, “when the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing waiting,” of the cuckold cursing “Co co rico” and of finding the way through, the meaning of what must be undergone. The agony of the adulterous marriage is seen as the agony of the earth in the corruption and desire of Spring. The curse burns the earth back and then in the waste land there is finally the prayer for rain. The Shantih shantih shantih at the close is the cry of the stricken heart.

In the fashionable reading the mise en scène took over. The fame of the poet itself had triumphed over the pain of the poem. Eliot was not, in the outcome, stricken but celebrated. The poem, once the Depression years were there, seemed to be an historical prophecy. And in the 20s, in circles like the little group that inhabits Mary Butts’s Armed With Madness, the game of the poem was taken up in a social magic, the charging of things with symbolic powers, the ritual mixture of Christianity and another
cult of adulterous suffering, with the help of the new cult of psychoanalysis. “The glasses turn to chalices,” Pound had written off gleefully to Eliot in those initial letters:

*The glasses turn to chalices*  
*In his fumbling analysis*

*The Waste Land,* anyway, is part of our story. In my first years at the University of California, in 1937 and 1938, when there was no knowledge at all—if there is any now—of H.D.’s post-Imagist work, *Palimpsest, Red Roses for Bronze,* or *Ion,* in the reading lists of modern lit., when William Carlos Williams was unknown, and Ezra Pound with his Cantos relegated to the dubious territory of the “experimental” along with Stein and *Finnegans Wake;* Eliot and *The Waste Land* were established, along with Archibald MacLeish and W. H. Auden. With the difference—and so it is part of our story—that back of the literary aspect of the poem was another aspect, back of the respectability there was something shady. A rite, a dramatization of life, that was something more.

William Carlos Williams could take Eliot as his challenge, and against the cult of Europe, in the year of *The Hollow Men,* 1925, seek to define the issue with *In The American Grain.* Against the Old World. Red Eric. “Rather the ice than their way: to take what is mine by single strength,” he begins. “The worst is that weak, still, somehow, they are strong: they in effect have the power, by hook or by crook.”

Did he see his own lot in Edgar Allan Poe, an exile in his homeland? “But in poetry he was at the edge—there was nothing—

“Here in poetry, where it is said ‘we approach the gods,’ Poe was caught, instead, in his time. . .”

“Had he lived in a world where love throve, his poems might have grown differently. But living where he did, surrounded as he was by that world of unreality, a formless ‘population’—drifting and feeding—a huge terror possessed him.”

“Disarmed, in his poetry the place itself comes through. This is the New World. It is this that it does, as if —”

That year H.D. published a *Collected Poems.* She had been known in *Poetry* and in *The Egoist,* since that moment in 1912 when Ezra Pound had written off to Harriet Monroe “it is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic,” as an Imagist. She had been featured in Pound’s *Des Imagistes,* and then with her husband, Richard Aldington, had taken part in the later Imagist Anthologies of 1915, 1916, 1917. The word was set in whatever public mind: H.D., Imagist. Miss May Sinclair had said in *The Egoist* that H.D. was the Imagist. That was 1914. It did not mean what it has come to mean. In the confusion of Amy Lowell’s sponsorship, the movement came to include impressionism, not a heightening but a broadening of sensitivity. The taut line of H.D.’s verse was coupled now in the uninformed mind with the loosely conceived line of popularizers. Certain poems “Sea Rose” or “Heat” or “Orchard”—became set pieces with “Patterns” among anthologizers. For H.D. in the public mind seemed a more refined Amy Lowell, capturing images.
Writing on *Sea Garden* in 1917, John Gould Fletcher said: “To penetrate H.D.’s inner meaning, it is only necessary that we approach her poetry with an open and responsive mind.” Imagist, Imagist, Imagist—the cuckoo sang in the ears of the day from his anthology nest. “It is really about the soul,” Fletcher warned, “or the primal intelligence, or the *Nous*, or whatever we choose to call that link that binds us to the unseen and uncreated.” But the possibility that the image was no mere impression but had to do with the Platonic image or might come full round to the *Imago Christi* went unheeded.

Then there was, for those who saw beyond the “Imagism”, the cult of something called Greece. Along with her earliest poems appeared translations from Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis* and *Hippolytus*:

Artemis dominates: “She fronts the coast.” Say it is no more than a translation, a task set to learn the lineaments and spirit of Euripides. The “we” in H.D. will always then be in part the choral consciousness of the Greek drama; the way “we” are a true folk, and our individual fates appear to us as if they were enacted upon a stage for our common sense as audience. There is an “I” each of us, as a member of a chorus of citizens, artists, or folk witnesses, has:

*I crossed sand-hills.*
*I stand among the sea-drift before Aulis* a knowledge of the people. “At least H.D. has lived with these things since childhood,” Pound says in that letter to Harriet Monroe. And the chorus tells “what happened”; the myth, the hearsay, comes from them. The heroes or the participants in the great fate do not see the myth—what the hearsay tells. They are projections of what the chorus fears will happen.

But Iphigeneia commanding the chorus

*Stand silent, you Greeks.*
The *fire kindles.*

is also the inspired actor in the play. She is the genius, fired by the chorus, and thus hints go out of a likeness to the genius of the poem itself:

*For I come to do sacrifice,*
*To break the might of the curse,*
*To honour the queen, if she permit,*
The *great one, with my death.*

And out from Iphigeneia’s “death”, from her “fame”

... *spears will clash in the contest,*

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the waves dash upon the coasts of Chalkis. Remembering, “She fronts the coast.”

In 1916 “The Shrine” appeared in Some Imagist Poets with the subscription “She watches over the Sea”. The “She” of the poem may be the lure, that has grandeur too, of a woman, a femme fatale:

   It was evil — evil
   when they found you,
   when the quiet men looked at you —

Certainly the sequences of “shelter”, “full and sweet”, “tempting the quiet”, “evil” and then:

   But you — you are unsheltered,
   cut with the weight of wind
   you shudder when it strikes
   . . .

   when the tides swirl
   your boulders cut and wreck

all of this can, and does, once we recognize the possibility, more than an age of an exposed headland, refer to a persona or mask of the emotional regularity in women, of sudden “treacherous” moods and passions that make Scylla—or here may it not be Artemis-Scylla—a prototype. “She” of the Shrine does appear in all her savage splendor back of Iphigeneia.

   You brought me to the Greek light
   And I will not hold you guilty
   For my death

Iphigeneia says, addressing her father. But some ambiguous play may move here, for at first I mistook the address and had thought it was the Goddess she addressed:

   Alas, day, you brought light,
   You trailed splendour,
   You showed us god:

   “Artemis, rejoicer In blood-sacrifice,” the chorus calls the Goddess. As Iphigeneia volunteers to the sacrifice, she enters her “fate”, which is also her “fame”; she becomes both the blood-sacrifice and the rejoicer in blood sacrifice.

   “Alas,” the chorus cries:
she steps forward
To destroy Ilium and the Phrygians.

. . .

She comes to meet death,
To stain the altar of the goddess

Where we may also read: “In order that there be a stain on the altar of the goddess.”

H.D. found her meter, drew her characteristic taut intense line from her translations, as she drew too upon the Melic poets for the lyric mode she wanted, as in painting Picasso drew upon classic sources. They were—Pound or H.D. or Joyce—most modern in their appropriation of the past. The stylization of their verse had its counterpart in Satie’s Socrate or the Greek style of Cocteau. We have only to consider the spirit of Sea Garden or Heliodora Braque’s late drawings for Hesiod are. Or the Alexandrian portraits of Derain.

But H.D. found also in Euripides not only form but content. They were one. And in Iphigeneia, Helen, Thetis, Artemis, Helios, Achilles she saw the persona or masks of her own life story. In the work of her old age, in Helen in Egypt, she weaves, as ever, the revelation of “these things since childhood” in the terms of Homer and Euripides.

Greece in the story is the homeland or mother-land, where, if we read as we do in dreams, we see that it is America that was H.D.’s Greece. She was most American in her “Hellenism”, as Edward Sapir saw in his review of Collected Poems in 1926: “The impatience of the rhythms and the voluptuous harshness and bleakness of the sea and shore and woodland images manifest it. Such violent restraint, such a passionate pleasure in the beauty of the denuded scene and the cutting thrust, themselves but inverse symbols of caress, could only develop in a culture that hungers for what it despises.” It was “In the American grain.”

But there were few who read deeply. For most there was, past the “image” thing, the “Greek perfection” thing. She had found her style not only in translating but in pruning. “While the sense of the Greek has been strictly kept,” she wrote in The Egoist in 1915: “it is necessary to point out that the repetition of useless ornamental adjectives is a heavy strain on a translator’s ingenuity. This is only one instance from many where the Homeric Epithet degenerates into what the French call a remplissage—an expression to fill up a line. Such phrases have been paraphrased or omitted.” And in her Ion of Euripides in 1937 she notes: “The broken, exclamatory or evocative vers-libre which I have chosen to translate the two-line dialogue, throughout the play, is the exact antithesis of the original.”

There are times when she herself characterizes her art as cold and removed—what those who denigrated her Hellenism most accused her of—as in “Wash of Cold River”:
to mould a clear
and frigid statue;

rare, of pure texture,
beautiful space and line,

marble to grace
your inaccessible shrine.

For most readers, the Hellenic thing in H.D. was all “clear”, “frigid”, “pure”, “beautiful”, “inaccessible”. It set her apart.

Writing to Williams in 1916, H.D. pled against his impurities: “I trust you will not hate me for wanting to delete from your poem all the flippancies. . . I think there is real beauty—the real beauty is a rare and sacred thing in this generation. In all the pyramid, Ashur-ban-i-pal bits and in the Fiesole and in the wind at the very last. . . I feel the hey-ding-ding touch running through your poem a derivative tendency which, to me, is not you—not your very self. . .”

The words rankled. “We look for deliverance,” Williams came back, “from the desolation of a flat Hellenic perfection of style.”

“Hilda Doolittle before she began to write poetry,” he tells us in the 1920 Prologue to Kora in Hell, “or at least before she began to show it to anyone would say: ‘You’re not satisfied with me, are you Billy? There’s something lacking, isn’t there?’ When I was with her my feet always seemed to be sticking to the ground while she would be walking on the tips of the grass stems.”

When was that? “One in particular struck me,” he writes home to his brother in 1905: “She is tall, about as tall as I am, young, about eighteen and, well, not round and willowy, but rather bony, no that doesn’t express it, just a little clumsy but all to the mustard. . .

“We went over fields, through woods, climbed fences, jumped streams, and laughed and talked till everyone simply had to get into the game. Well, this lasted hours, then Miss Doolittle, that’s her name, found some flowers and sat down beside them to protect them from the rest of the party. I sat down beside her and the rest passed on. We began talking of flowers, when she said she knew a place where hepaticas grew so thick the ground was blue with them. I said I would like to see it, and we being at the tail end of the crowd turned aside and went into the woods. Needless to say we lost the crowd and had a great two hours walk by ourselves. Oh, Ed, but she is a fine girl, no false modesty and all that, she is absolutely free and innocent. We talked of the finest things: of Shakespeare, of flowers, trees, books, & pictures and meanwhile climbed fences and walked through woods and climbed little hills till it began to grow just dusky when we arrived at our destination. We had by this time, as you imagine,
gotten pretty well acquainted. She said I was Rosalind in *As You Like It* and she was Celia, so I called her that, although her real name is Hilda. . . . I got home at twelve, covered with some mud, a little glory and oceans of a fine comfortable happy feeling inside of me somewhere.”

Williams was 22 that year. And in the manly earnest speech of the letter there is another youthfulness or innocence, of America itself before the War.

In the *Autobiography* in 1951 the picture has changed or something has been betrayed in the picture: “There was about her that which is found in wild animals at times, a breathless impatience, almost a silly unwillingness to come to the point. She had a young girl’s giggle and shrug which somehow in one so tall and angular seemed a little absurd.

“Ezra was wonderfully in love with her and I thought exaggerated her beauty ridiculously. To me she was just a good guy and I enjoyed, uncomfortably, being with her.

“‘For God’s sake,’ I told him, ‘I’m not in love with Hilda nor she with me. She’s your girl and I know it. Don’t be an ass.’

“Once I went alone for a walk with Hilda, one April I suppose, in that really lyrical Upper Darby country of those days. I particularly remember the grape hyacinths in a gully beside the road, deep blue, a flower with which I was completely unfamiliar. Hilda told me she was studying Greek and that she had heard that I too was writing poetry. That hurt. It wasn’t something I wanted to talk about, for as a matter of fact I had in my own opinion produced nothing. Ezra, of course, was the hero.

“Oh, well, she added, to help me along I suppose, I’ve been writing too. Some translations, she added—to escape blame. We wandered along. She with the back of her skirt dragging, no hips, no nothing, just Hilda, through the deep grass, over fences, barbed wire (I remember how Edmonson once told me, after a group walk one day, a fellow can’t help but look sometimes! she was that careless).

“As we went along—talking of what?—I could see that we were in for a storm and suggested that we turn back.

“Ha!

“She asked me if when I started to write I had to have my desk neat and everything in its place, if I had to prepare the paraphernalia, or if just sat down and wrote.

“I said I liked to have things neat.

“Ha, ha!

“She said that when she wrote it was a great help, she thought and practiced it, if taking some ink on her pen, she’d splash it on her clothes to give her a feeling of freedom and indifference toward the mere means of the writing.

“Well—if you like it.

“There were some thunderclaps to the west and I could see that it really was going to rain damned soon and hard. We were at the brink of a grassy pasture facing west, quite in the open, and the wind preceding the storm was in our faces. Of course it was her party and I went along with her.
“Instead of running or even walking toward a tree Hilda sat down in the grass at the edge of the hill and let it come.

“‘Come, beautiful rain,’ she said, holding out her arms. ‘Beautiful rain, welcome.’ And I behind her feeling not inclined to join in her mood. And let me tell you it rained, plenty. It didn’t improve her beauty or my opinion of her—but I had to admire her if that’s what she wanted.”

“Hellenism,” Williams wrote in the Prologue to Kora in Hell, “especially the modern sort, is too staid, too chilly, too little fecundative to impregnate my world.”

The reproof of H.D. rankled. And the other sore spot of the Autobiography—Eliot’s role—rankles here too. Before The Waste Land then. “T. S. Eliot and his, ‘Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.’” Was it Pound’s unqualified admiration for Eliot? “For what the statement is worth, Mr. Eliot’s work interests me more than that of any other poet now writing in English,” Pound had declared in reviewing Prufrock in 1917. And there may have been a cut-back that hit Williams more directly: “His men in shirt-sleeves, and his society ladies, are not a local manifestation; they are the stuff of our modern world, and true of more countries than one.”

“And there is always some everlasting Polonius of Kensington forever to rate highly his eternal Eliot,” Williams exclaims.
The first, the opening scene with its grouping, the three young would-be poets—H.D., Ezra Pound, Williams—remains a kind of announcement of the drama of modern poetry. Germinal, germane. Where we see these had their own Ion, firstness of spirit, and a flower. William Carlos Williams in “Postlude” with its

\[
\begin{align*}
&O, \text{ prayers in the dark!} \\
&O, \text{ incense to Poseidon!} \\
&\text{Calm in Atlantis}
\end{align*}
\]

or in “First Praise”:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Lady of dusk-wood fastnesses} \\
&\text{Thou art my Lady.} \\
&\text{I have known the crisp, splintering leaf-tread} \\
&\text{with thee on before}
\end{align*}
\]

is close indeed to H.D. Seems almost to answer or to belong to “Pursuit”:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{this and a dead leaf-spine,} \\
&\text{split across,} \\
&\text{show where you passed.}
\end{align*}
\]

“(which to me stands, a Nike, supreme among your poems),” H.D. wrote of “Postlude” in that letter of 1916.

“Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness,” Pound sings in “A Virginal”. The volume the poem appears in, \textit{Ripostes}, 1912, is dedicated to William Carlos Williams.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.} \\
&\text{No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavour,} \\
&\text{Soft as spring wind that’s come from birchen bowers.} \\
&\text{Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,} \\
&\text{As winter’s wound with her sleight hand she staunches,} \\
&\text{Hath of the trees a likeness of the savour:} \\
&\text{As white their bark, so white this lady’s hours.}
\end{align*}
\]

In the end, that germinal grouping will reappear. \textit{The War Trilogy, The Pisan Cantos, Paterson}—and more especially later poems of Williams like “To Daphne and Virginia” or “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower”—can be compared because they are of a kind, having that common generation, that first spirit or Ion of the beginning scene, revealed at last.
So, “the box odor” from “To Daphne and Virginia” may be our first flower too:

*The box odor*

*is the odor of that of which*

*partaking separately, each to herself I partake also . . . separately.*

But meanwhile there are, “sanctioned by the form of the play,” divisions, separations. In the Imagist period itself, when Pound, H.D., and Williams first appear as a group in *The Egoist*, there are new groupings. Pound is close to Yeats, as Williams and H.D. are not. H.D. is close to Lawrence, and Williams in time finds a kinship with Lawrence, as Pound never does. “Each represents an entrance”—Eliot enters the picture—“an exit”—H.D. leaves the picture—“a change in inner mood and external grouping of the characters.”

In London, always keeping his correspondence with Williams, Pound goes on, after Imagism, to his “Vortex”, a new grouping where Williams never fits. “If I am introducing anybody to Kulchur,” Pound writes in *[Guide to] Kulchur*, “let ‘em take the two phases, the nineteen teens, Gaudier, Wyndham L. and I as we were in Blast, and the next phase, the 1920s.”

“The sorting out, the rappel à l’ordre, and thirdly the new synthesis, the totalitarian.” For Ezra Pound in the 20’s Eliot, Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis gave definition. *The Cantos, The Waste Land, Ulysses and The Apes of God* formed the *Quadrivium* of a modern education.

In New York another grouping appears, defined by their mutual sympathies. It was not a program. They were not concerned with culture, with a Kultur, but with the art of the poem. Amateurs in a sense. Looking back, we find them standing out in *Others*, the American anthology of 1917: William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens. “One has to keep looking for poetry as Renoir looked for colors,” Stevens writes to Williams after *Al Que Quiere* in 1920, “in old walls, wood-work and so on. Your place is

*among children Leaping around a dead dog.*

The group in London were culture-heroes. Not only was the Imagism of Eliot, Pound, and H.D. an attack upon the literature but upon the deeper culture of England, forcing new roots in the revival of ancient matter. The counter-group in America were artists, relating themselves now to an aesthetic, to the poem as an art object. There would be the objectivism of Williams’s work in the 1920s; there would be Wallace Stevens’s fictive musics and still-lifes; there would be Marianne Moore’s found objects and practiced connois-
seurship. Where Pound also always had a secret or not so secret aesthetic allegiance. The poem, for him too, was a work of art, to be compared with Brancusi or Bartok. For didn’t he have, beyond the purposes of his *Kulchur*, his “nacre and objets d’art”? Where Eliot’s verse had literary overtones, Pound’s had luminosities and the musical phrase.

In the groupings of Eliot, Pound, H.D. in London, and Williams, Stevens, Marianne Moore in New York, I am led on by something else at play, a dynamic figure. Is there a “heart-shaped space”, some all but intangible form that we sense as something happening in the separations and reformations, the overlappings and differences among the members. Once the whole play is there, with its prologue in America, “in that really lyrical Upper Darby country of those days”, “before the War”, where Williams, Pound, H.D. meet in one grouping, and Marianne Moore is near but not included, and then, its first scene in the Imagist Movement, in the four years or so between 1912 and 1914; with its epilogue in the second configuration in the Second World War, each of the members is seen in a new division between those who are to go on to a major phase in their old age that will change the ground or culture of Poetry itself, and those who are seen as having no dialectical role. Under fire of life’s either coming into a new creative phase in old age, larger and deeper, challenging a new generation of poets, or coming to the summation of the work of a personal artist as a thing in itself, the work of Williams, like that of Pound and H.D., takes on new scope. Williams, in this second exposure, is revealed as no connoisseur of the poem as art object in itself but as a visionary, reawakening in poetry once more transcendent themes and implications. As if in the dynamics of some ideoplasty there were an exchange between the two superimposed configurations in which the heart of poetry appears, Eliot now belongs clearly on the side of Stevens and Marianne Moore. He regrets the Notes to *The Waste Land* that had suggested any involvement with Jessie Weston’s *Ritual to Romance* or the cult of the Tarot cards, and in his *Four Quartets* we find that even religious matters are literary in their character, having the proper artistic distance. In the thing happening between the two figures is a central thread, a germinal figure, in which the emerging task of our own poetry is given.

Threads are spun out and are woven, from event into event. Hands work the dancing shuttles of a close net to make things real, to realize what is happening. A tapestry of a life appears in the mesh of many lives, a play. But just as when we weave a complex of lines a cloud or atmosphere appears, a texture or cloth, something more than the threads told, and out of that texture appear, not only the figures we were translating in to our design, but other figures of the ground itself; so a “life” appears in the work itself. The weaving or the painting or the writing is “subjective”, is an act out of however we can do it; the “subject matter” is “objective”, is some thing or event as actual as ourselves which we reach out to capture, to draw into a texture with ourselves. In the medium, our work and this thing become mixed, changed then. A ground appears as a new condition of what we are doing.

Say we work loosely; we do not know quite how to secure our object, and gaps appear in the work. They have become, these make-shift elements, qualities of the
whole, of the real. “The hey-ding-ding touch was derivative,” Williams writes in his Prologue to *Kora In Hell*, “but it filled a gap that I did not know how better to fill at the time.”

The stars are a fishing net, as men fish in heaven for what they are. The design was to fill in the gap of the sky, of space and time. But then, man has so shaped himself in his imagination of the stars, that Astrology, even when we know more, know how falsely the stars are shown in its diagrams, shows us still a typology of character. “It might be said,” Williams goes on about the hey-ding-ding touch, “that that touch is the prototype of the improvisations.”

History is a close-weave. Fishing for the event.

The dragon is created in the creation of the net. It is as She is bound that we trace out the figure of Tiamat. So, too, the imagination is flung out to come into its figures. Naming actual things, persons, places and times about us, we make our terms in which our design will be realized. Just beyond “our” design, because we do not ourselves name these things but come to these things through names given in the beginnings of man's story, as the light of a star comes to us across “light-years”, the thing in the word comes to us across “language-years”. All the things of our lives came to us, first, before words, into focus, out of a commune of things, an already human world around us, where we were already happening; came out of a surrounding of words we did not understand but came to understand. Where there are meanings, here, too, we send the threads out towards one point, draw them back into another.

When we first come into the attraction of words in poetry, it is the craft of the net, the novelty of usage, the knot effect, often, that strikes us. We mistake the effect for the art. Style and signature most valuable, and the direct, uncharacterized speech, uninteresting. The “flippancy”, the uptodateness or regular guy voice of Williams's language—the risk of those knots, the craft, the thing posed—appears interesting in itself. To be original. To challenge the communal thing. Will he make it?

To tie fancy knots and to contrive a greater show of our abilities. But all these original knottings are mistaken, are “hey-ding-ding”—“lead nowhere” the common sense is—if they are all novelty, things of 1920, not lasting forces. The knots that are flames are not originalities, but origins.

“I think you have the ‘spark’,” H.D. writes in her letter to Williams, “and when you speak direct are a poet.” The spark lies in, is, the word wherever it is spoken direct, directs what we are then, for we involve ourselves in what is said. Direct. Even this being Bill Williams is a persona, a mask of a man. The interesting effects, the devices that give personality, are part of it; but they are not the work of the other, the poet, whose urgency it is to speak regardless of this person. In poetry we strive to make things real by working with every word as coming direct from an inner voice, as the immediate condition of or presence of the poem itself.

For the knots of the net are actual suns; are in poetry, as in dreams, directives in the imagination between actual events and man’s self, are terms of the real, are wherethes that co-existing in the word and in the world make actual events real. We sense
the residue— the culture of Eliot, the slang of Williams, the pedantry of Pound, the
remove of H.D. — as impediments in the individual nature to the imagined free voice.

A residue? or an impediment? But we move upon a stage where we must act our
unknown “selves” in parts that are given by groupings, to hold our own and to corre-
spend with other members of the scene. And the scene changes. In each grouping our
part is somehow altered. What is our own and what is our correspondence we must dare
as we can. The actor has his role given him. And the poet too has something given—
what the poet is, how to enact the poet. The concept and the project is his creation.
Analogous to the individual personality, but different, even contending, for the poet is a
person of an order beyond the present scene or grouping. Attendant thereto. To the
time and place. The poet of the company. The poet of the hour.
“Every hour, every moment,” H.D. tells us in *Tribute To The Angels*, “has its specific attendant Spirit.”

The Renaissance Platonist Ficino had designed a magic to evoke the powers of angelic orders, Regents of the Planets. Incenses, tones, colors, the feel of woods or stones, were organized in a music or rite to awaken the senses or open the senses to shapes and presences beyond the sensual. Each hour had its particular genius, became then a possible work of the art.

*but I make all things new,*
*said He of the seven stars,*

In the *Tribute*, the seven stars are, as stars are in the Cabbalistic imagination of Ficino, angelic powers: *Raphael, Gabriel, Azrael, Uriel, Annael, Michael, Zadkiel*. They are, in their hours, guardians.

The clock ticking becomes the Lady knocking at the door of consciousness

*and she was standing there actually,*
*at the turn of the stair.*

It does not seem so out-of-the-way when we take it that the thought of the Lady came to her:

*that I lay awake now on my bed,*
*that the luminous light*

*was the phosphorescent face*
*of my little clock*

*and the faint knocking*
*was the clock ticking.*

We are most familiar with this way of the subconscious to use things happening about us to project or to evoke its own forms. But in “Sagesse” IV, it is another time magic, not unconscious now but conscious; not using the clock, “this curious mechanical perfection”, in itself, but using its hours in relation to the old orientation of the star map and the figures drawn from the stars that present themselves. Waking in the dark alone, she is not in the dark, she is not alone.
An owl hooted out in the darkness
so the angel came — what angel and what name?

is it Tara, Dieu fontaine de sagesse
and the angel Pte’biou? it was his hour

or near his hour, what did he say?

This angel is an attribute of God. The old gods and the new, the Greek world and the Christian-Judaic world, have been found in the synthesis of a poetic-theurgy. As in the Cabbalistic system, the source of the voice, the self, is hidden. These angels-gods-guardians are attendants of the poetry itself, the voice in its manifestation. Patrons of the hour of writing, of naming the patron of the hour.

The thought of Ezra Pound might have come as an owl hooted in the darkness. Her mind was no nearer to that other grouping of the powers of poetry, to 1905 or 1912, no farther, than it was from this new grouping. In the poem “Stars wheel in purple” let the thought of Williams, Pound, Lawrence, and the ghost of her Roman lover Aldington come in the naming of Hesperus, Aldebaran, Sirius, Mars. I should be more bold, for anyone who is not with me here will long ago have ceased to read the book. They are not less real, more real, in the real of the poem than the stars, or these others, the powers that attend the poet.

Where angels appear in the orders of the poem—as they do in Rilke’s Duino Elegies or in these poems of H.D. —we remember too in reading their dedications that patrons, Rilke’s friend, the Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, or H.D.’s friend, Bryher, are also “angels”. And we see between the higher angel of the imagination and the lower angel of our everyday world, some likeness. We see the figure of the medieval lord as donor kneeling in the presence of his Virgin and Child or his crucifixion, having a share, a donation, in the work of the artist.

Just as when we wake at some hour of the night and find ourselves not disoriented, in the dark, but in the thought of some attribute of God, a particular angel, to see things in that light; so we may find ourselves in the course of a poem also in the thought of some attribute of our Life, a particular person, having also his or her particular time.

These dedications in The War Trilogy—to Bryher, to Osbert Sitwell, to Norman Holmes Pearson—form a part of the concept then, for they are human sponsors of the thought of the poem, just as the seven angels appear as supernatural sponsors of the thought of the poem. These patrons stand in turn as sponsors of the artist’s soul, godmothers or godfathers we call them.

Pound had once stood as such a sponsor, when in the high baptism of poetry he named H.D. and a literary movement in one: “Imagiste”. Where she was born into a new identity, that lasted no more than four years—but the name stuck. In the despair and fever of her broken marriage, the still birth of 1915 “from shock and the repercussions of war news”—“the death of my father followed closely on the news of the death of my
older brother in France”—and then the second confinement of 1919, close upon death, stricken with pneumonia, and in the birth of her child, Perdita: H.D., Imagiste, died, and was delivered to life again. Delivered from her old life by Bryher.

The mythos, the telling of it, how it is made up is part of our text; the dromenon, how it is enacted in the poet’s life is part, what she went through in the time of the poem. What they tell and what they do, the text and the action, form in turn a rite de passage, a way of survival for the poet in the personal life. In Palimpsest or in the novelette Narthex (published in The Second American Caravan in 1928) H.D. begins to tell the myth of what she went through in 1915 and 1919.

“We travel far in thought, in imagination or in the realm of memory,” she writes in Tribute to Freud: “Events happened as they happened, not all of them of course but here and there a memory or a fragment of a dream-picture is actual, is real, is like a work of art or is a work of art.” Then, just beyond this I find: “For things had happened in my life, pictures, ‘real dreams’” throughout it is the reality of a dream, of a memory, of things that happened, that is H.D.’s concern. And that reality lay in a nexus of “actual psychic or occult experiences that were superficially, at least, outside the province of established psychoanalysis” and of psychoanalytic experiences—the novelettes of the mid-20s, before her analysis, are psychoanalytic-minded; it was the reality of what poetry was. Life, itself, it seemed always to H.D. was “like a work of art” or was “a work of art”—a poetry. What is important here is that she took whatever she could, whatever hint of person or design, color or line, over into her “work”. What was real was what entered the picture.

“Flagrantly creative, how could they endure you?” she addresses Rico (Lawrence) in Bid Me To Live. “Creative” here means making-things-up. “Key-of-heaven tree,” Miss Kerr had told her Rico had named the tree in her garden. “Did you make it up, the name of that tree?” she asks in the letter to Rico that she will not send but is making-up. “Did you make up Miss Kerr telling me the story, with the signed Henry James above her writing-desk and the petunia curtains?”

In the life of every “creative” writer some life they make-up becomes more real than whatever was there before. “Rafe is not the Marble Faun, not even a second-rate Dionysus,” Julia writes. Richard Aldington remains untouched by H.D.’s imagination. “I wrote that cyclamen poem for him in Dorset, at Corfe Castle, where I wrote your Orpheus. But you are right. He is not Dionysus, you are not Orpheus.” But Lawrence, a creator himself, can be Orpheus; as H.D. can appear in the person of Eurydice.

So Bryher delivering H.D. from her old life into a new enters a picture, becomes one of the figures, not only in the personal life, but, because that life is the matter of a poetry, in the design of a poet. We recognize her in the young Roman, Julia Cornelia Augusta, who attends Hipparchia in Palimpsest, whose “small firm hand, detached and hard as ivory, dragged her back, back when she was lax and floating going—gone—”. The old nurse had wakened her: “The young lady has been here the last three days to see you. ‘Young lady?’” “Worse. She saw now. One of the preposterous new-rich who wanted to polish off (for court purposes) her accent.”
In Narthex, we see her as Gareth, sometime in the mid-20s. “Say in the soul I want something,” Raymonde Ransome thinks, “black or white, good or bad, anything just so you want it enough, up or down and something (with Faust it was Mephistopheles) will answer. Perversely at that moment Katherine answered.” But Gareth too is an angel here, for she too had answered in a time of need. “Katherine, Gareth, they were two antique coin sides, Katherine one side, towered head, some Asiatic goddess, many breasted, something monstrous that yet holds authenticity, Gareth the other side, boy Emperor, slightly undershot little chin that gave a baby frailty to the hard clear profile... and that frightening intensity... late Greek, Graeco-Phoenician” or they are guardians of a door. “Two-fold initiation said the keeper of the gateway, you want to get through a door, doors are Janus-faced.”

Gareth (Bryher) can seem to Raymonde like the angel driving Eve forth from the garden of her affair with the serpent and the apple, Katherine and Mordant, as Gareth rescues Raymonde from her London troubles. “Garry like a sword flashing through late London mist... had flayed her forth, out of the ‘sticky drug of the Katherine-Mordant cycle’ into the wilderness.” He who has a servant has a master; so too liberating angels tyrannize. Garry orders Raymonde off to d’y Vaud to write and then after three months wires for her to join her in Venice “in order to take a boat (they would discuss that later) somewhere.”

“She was connected with great wealth,” Robert McAlmon writes, telling of his marriage to Bryher in Being Geniuses Together, and in his eyes, as he titles his opening chapter “Money Breeds Complications”, there were complications.

There was, ever-present, in the Ellerman household the thought of “people knowing one only for money’s sake, and artists seeking to be patronized and financed.” But to be patronized or financed was not exactly the same as to find a patron or to receive a patron. It seemed to Robert McAlmon that Wyndham Lewis’s manner “soon became patronizing”. That was another sense of the word. To look down?

Lewis wanted McAlmon to get Sir John Ellerman to patronize him as an artist. McAlmon did get Ellerman to persuade certain editors to take drawings of Lewis’s, but McAlmon could go no further. Lewis couldn’t understand, McAlmon tells us, “that I was walking very carefully to avoid having Sir John plan my life.”

Bryher had this way of taking things over, he tells us. “I managed to slip away, but she got at the Lump” (H.D.’s child, Perdita) “and through her at H.D. She got at me too, but I knew some day soon I’d go away for good.” Earlier, we find: “Bryher, with her fervor for education, had taken on the upbringing of Hilda Doolittle’s infant.” Bringing someone up, taking someone over, is different from looking down. But our patron also may “look down”, as “the angels look down”.

Robert McAlmon, “a coldly intense young man, with hard blue eyes,” as his friend Williams describes him, “an ideal youth’s figure,” would not have seen our angel, for his sights, as we come to know in his writing, would brook no such nonsense. The imagination itself is “nonsense”, any imagination, as far as McAlmon was concerned. He disliked mysticism, he disliked “where Joyce goes Irish-twilghtly and uses words for
their isolated beauty”, he disliked Mary Butts’s “pretence”, he disliked whatever hint of this malady called imagination and could be sarcastic or angry when confronted by it. “Oh, to hell with Yeats,” he explodes, “and his sugared mysticism”, or sneers when writing of H.D.’s “taking up” with Freud: “It appears that Doctor Freud discovered that the lady had been shocked upon discovering her father all but killed in a tram accident when she was but ten years old. It had left an impression upon her”. “Such creative and astounding imaginative insight upon the part of these psychoanalysts,” he concludes, “can only leave a layman such as myself breathless with awe.”

He would not have seen—where if we follow here we must see—an angel of the hour present in Bryher’s taking over. He would not have gone along with the idea that some attribute of God begins its work where a young woman may act as godmother. “Post war and late war eyes (unlike the very early shattered generation),” it seems to Raymonde Ransome, “had said ‘hell, what’s the use?’ Robin Rockway with his cap tilted with remembered flying unit grace had flung his ‘hell’ and his ‘hell’until even Garry, stoic and sympathetic, had recoiled.”

Richard Aldington, Robert McAlmon, and Bryher too, have in common a certain stubborn literal mindedness; they are post-war or late-war eyes, Romans-Marius or Julia Augusta in Hipparchia, Freddie in Murex, Robin Rockway and Gareth in Narthex—Roman lovers, Roman patrons. Pound, Lawrence, H.D.—the poets—will always be Greek. William Carlos Williams too, McAlmon says, “was inclined to go literary and nostalgic about things Greek”; and Joyce had “a precious and literary nostalgia for the Greek poetizing, word-pretifying qualities dear to Pound’s heart, melopoeia, logopoeia, phanopoeia. That is, an interest in words as words for their evocative and suggestive qualities to the extent of being indifferent to the larger qualities of material, content-concept...”

H.D.-Raymonde Ransome-Hipparchia is a Greek in exile among Romans in a Roman world. And then there are others, not Roman or Greek, but Asiatic or Egyptian: the witch Mavis at her mirror, “the incense of some banished Circe that rose in spirals toward an enchantress’ cedar roof so that Greeks (thinking men) were blurred over and forgot their Greek formula” in Murex, or Katherine and Alex Mordant, “the late over-ornate winged Sphinx” and “some bearded bull” “Ninevah”—figures of old disastrous affairs, persons of a sexual magic. And in H.D.’s consistent translation into Hellenic parallels, they are figures of the orientalizing cults in the Roman world. “In this, our present day, literary Alexandria,” she had written in 1916. It was Gareth’s role, not only to rescue Raymonde from death in 1919, but after “those diplomatic dodgings with poor Rockway”, “after five years’ separation”, to rescue Raymonde from evil in 1925 or 1926, from the very midst of this mix-up with Katherine and Mordant.

Who were they? those others? “Once when I painfully unravelled a dingy, carelessly woven strip of tapestry of cause and effect and related to him, in over-careful detail, some none-too-happy friendships,” H.D. writes of Freud, “he waved it all aside. . . ‘But why,’ he asked, ‘did you worry about all this? Why did you think you had to tell me? Those two didn’t count.’”
“Those two didn’t count,” she continues: “There were two’s and two’s and two’s in my life.” And among these, “there were 2 countries, America and England as it happened, separated by a wide gap in consciousness and a very wide stretch of sea.” The persons in Narthex belong also to two interlocking figures: “They were superimposed like two mystic triangles, the two triangles that make a star, the seal of Solomon. Triangle pointing up, triangle pointing down. . . the seal of utter wisdom. Alex Mordant, Katherine, Raymonde. . .” this is the triangle not only of what Gareth calls “evil”, the evil in Raymonde, and of what Raymonde thinks of as the orientalizing Greek and the emotions, but also of the pre-war world—Katherine and Mordant and Raymonde, when in their company, are demodé, “PreRaphaelite”. Then: “Raymonde again (the Ray Bart of Gareth’s predilection) Gareth and Daniel.”

Later the figure returns to Raymonde’s mind: “The triangle Raymonde, Daniel, Gareth was a sort of platinum-white self-luminous white thing, you couldn’t dissipate it. Iron frame work of burnt out triangle of Katherine, Mordant, Raymonde being burnt out leaves residue of suffering. Gareth was insufferable.” The inner war with her angel has been rising all along, and now it speaks out: “What did Gareth know of the feeling of a burnt out frame work? What did Daniel? Alex Mordant knew things, Katherine was things. Why can’t Gareth leave me alone to become something of the past? Why can’t Gareth leave me to be played out?”

Gareth and Daniel are late war and post war eyes. “Garry held true, fibre and valour but with strident inhibitions enough to drive any one let alone poor nerve-shattered Rockway, to destruction. Garry had to be like that. . .” to survive. “Garry links me up to the post-war people,” Raymonde thinks, “I link Garry up to the war people. We have held on sometimes hating each other. . . as now.”

Two countries, two times: H.D. ambiguously American-English, before-the-war/modern, felt her life itself as a link of a larger design, an interweaving of two areas of pattern. Two continents: the Old World and the New World. But then there was also the duality of feeling. In Narthex, as years later in The War Trilogy, she builds interlocking patterns of her twos and threes, of fours and sevens, to compose the complex of her feelings and thought. “Classic Venice, romantic Venice (Raymonde was debauched with the whole spectacle), poster Venice, post-card Venice, Othello Venice, clap-trap stage Rialto Venice became real. . . Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Wagner and Duse and George Sand Venice (she was frankly reeling with it) came true, became so many sets of feeling to cope with.”

It is this very multiphasic association that alienates Raymonde from Gareth. “Garry saw in one dimension. . . outgrown trick of pre-war Raymonde’s.” “Ages kept coming up into ages where they don’t belong, Raymonde was stricken with it, ghost ages like the dove in the light globe, Tintoretto swings, dove-sun into his barn announcement in the Scuolo di San Rocco.” And Gareth, who does not see this way, is left out. “Propitiate Gareth,” Raymonde commands herself, “get her into it.” “She had spread wide wings and Garry (this was the honor of it) hadn’t. Garry was sulking visibly in sunlight.”
“Garry was staring at her. Be decent, Raymonde. Carry sent you the wire, got you out of vibrant, weary, over-wrought loneliness and tension. Garry paid your fare here. You're the guest of Gareth. Be decent. You have behaved horribly.” But the fact remained: “Garry couldn't know, odd dissociated half relationship with Rockway, emotion and all its tangled connotations. Garry moved in one cycle, had just one dial to go by... Garry didn't understand emotion and all its overlayers, the seasons so to speak, marked in zodiacal symbol like those seasons now part of a sort of coronal to the madonna... that blue garmented love-mother with time ticking away above it.

When we read Aldington's *Life for Life's Sake*, McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*, or (this year, 1963) Bryher's *Heart to Artemis*, these have in common a one-dimensional seeing, no mind for emotion's overlayers. They seem to be rivals of the poet; both Aldington and Bryher putting down Pound, uninterested finally in the poetry to which H.D.'s work belongs.

“Let Zeus Record”, the sequence in homage to her angel in Red Roses For Bronze, may also be in propitiation. For to get her into it, H.D. had made painful disclosures of her inner ambivalence of feeling. These are poems of praise too then, not only for Bryher's loyalty, her “one dimension”, in the face of H.D.'s mixed emotions, but for her attendance in a time when Love seemed dead:

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yet when Love fell
struck down with plague and war,
you lay white myrrh-buds
on the darkened lintel;

you fastened blossom
to the smitten sill;
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The dedication of *The Walls Do Not Fall* in 1942 is not a propitiation. In a lifetime the poetess and her patroness had come to the understanding of old companions, living in some recognition of their differences. But it is perhaps a payment of a kind, “for Karnak”, a gift in return for the gift of 1923. A return.

And the poem itself begins as a letter from H.D. in London to Bryher who was still in Switzerland in 1942. Just here: “from your (and my) old town-square”; but then, imperceptibly, it continues to be written for us, for all her readers.
In 1920 Bryher had made real her promise that “she would herself see that the baby was protected and cherished and she would take me to a new world, a new life.” She had made Greece possible, “a new world”—but the New World was America, the first mother-land. In the latter part of 1920, in fact, Bryher and H.D. had gone to America, to see, as if for a last time, the old New World. So Bryher had been guardian angel, but also nurse or mid-wife, taking H.D. from her old life into a new, a second mother-land that was Greece. “My mother’s name was Helen,” H.D. tells us in Tribute to Freud. And the psychoanalyst had interpreted her desire for Greece as a desire for union with her mother. “I was physically in Greece, in Hellas (Helen). I had come home to the glory that was Greece,” H.D. writes.

Geographically, this Greece was Athens or the isles, as in translating, for H.D. it was Euripides or Sappho. But in time, Hellenism meant for H.D. not Athens, the classic period, but the great Hellenic dispersion after Alexander—the city of Alexandria then, and Egypt. Her Hellenic time belongs to the stage that Gilbert Murray in his Five Stages of Greek Religion called “The Failure of Nerve”, in the orientalizing Greek world between the third century B.C. and the second century A.D.

“The world of Hellenism was a changed and enlarged world,” Professor Tarn writes in his Hellenistic Civilisation: “Though the particularism of the Greek city-state was to remain vigorous enough in fact, it had broken down in theory; it was being replaced by universalism and its corollary, individualism. The idea emerges of an oecumene or ‘inhabited world’ as a whole, the common possession of civilised men.” “It is a rise of asceticism, of mysticism, in a sense, of pessimism,” it seems to Murray. “The personality of the individual has free scope,” Professor Tarn observes, but Murray sees: “a loss of self confidence, of hope in this life and of faith in normal human effort; a despair of patient enquiry, a cry for infallible revelation; an indifference to the welfare of the state, a conversion of the soul to God.”

For the Hellenistic Greek, such as Plutarch, Egypt was the source of wisdom, at Sais, at Karnak. Helen, in H.D.’s Helen in Egypt, is hidden away in an Amen-temple that may be at Karnak, in a “mother” back of Greece, back of America. And in Palimpsest, the book in which H.D. in the mid-20s sought to delineate her Hellenistic consciousness related to the modern period, Ermy in Murex is a Jew, but she is also “The East. The lotos of Buddha.” She is “dead, unopened, unawakened”; she is “Egypt”. What Murray called the Failure of Nerve was also the mixing of Greek with Jewish, Indian, and Egyptian civilisations—the reawakening of the ancient world in the birth of a new. So, in Palimpsest the third “chapter” or story is Secret Name, “Excavator’s Egypt”.

We too are excavators. In the vulgar eloquentia of our day we have a valuable coinage “to dig”, that may mean in the popular sense “to go in for”; that makes sense, deeper sense, in light of how archaeology has awakened our imagination of origins or sources in time past, as meaning to dig thru layers of what a thing is, to get back to the
roots and to reconstruct from fragments. Back of that, the love one must have for the idea of Troy or the Mayan thing to go digging for it.

Here, anyway, is a last find for the day. Some glimpse of another previous world, though it was contemporary also, seen in the genre of Secret Name. Hipparchia and Murex may be compared with the novels and short stories of Mary Butts, to the life of Speed the Plough, which appeared in 1923, or of Ashe of Rings, which was published by Contact Editions, closely associated through McAlmon and Bryher with H.D.’s world. And in her later historical novels of the thirties, in The Macedonian and Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra, Mary Butts portrays the dawn and the height of the Hellenistic spirit. For the connoisseur of The Little Review, The Dial, Pagany or Life and Letters Today, Mary Butts and H.D. appeared in one context and must have had their resonances.

In turn, Secret Name recalls another writer of the twenties—this time not a member of the avant-garde but a popular writer—Algernon Blackwood. I never asked H.D. if she had read Blackwood. He belonged to the same generation as Yeats, and in The Centaur in 1911 he had portrayed a Greece behind Greece itself, an elemental Nature that man knows in dream. If she had never read Blackwood, H.D. was to enter the same thought. “I’ve begun at the wrong end,” O’Malley says in The Centaur; “I shall never reach men through their intellects. . . I must get at them from within. To reach their hearts, the new ideas must rise up from within. I see the truer way. I must do it from the other side. It must come to them—in Beauty. . . I can work it better from the other side—from that old, old Garden which is the Mother’s heart.”

Ghost stories have to do with our feeling about the presence of the past in the present where we are. Blackwood, like M.L.R. James before him, had a feeling of the evil of the past, the ecstasy of the past as a power over man. James in 1904 had published the first of a series of volumes of such stories that had their fascination, the very real impact, in the real terror and disgust which James, the scholar of heretical documents, had found in those “ghosts” of old ways that lasted on, behind the scenes, in Christian history.

But for Blackwood the beauty was greater than the evil. Like Yeats, he was at home in the occult and supernatural, most alive in the magic of the Eternal Return. To be possessed, in The Promise of Air (1918) or The Bright Messenger (1922), is to be inspired, flooded by a larger consciousness, an elemental but also an angelic Self. The horror of the orthodox Christian James gives way in the theosophical Hermeticist Blackwood to a floating sympathy with all spiritual imagination.

The story Secret Name may have an intermediate kind in the psychological ghost-stories of May Sinclair, but in its central revelation of an other world, we are, for the first time in H.D.’s work, clearly in the genre of the theosophical romance.

Memories of childhood and events in the past, and certain dreams, H.D. tells us in Tribute to Freud, are “retained with so vivid a detail that they become almost events out of time.” Memories, dreams, and then—it is the core of her memoir—hallucination: the “writing on the wall”, actually projected before her eyes on the wall of a hotel bedroom in Corfu 1920. It was for Freud, she tells us, “the most dangerous or the only
actually dangerous ‘symptom’”. It was the essence of Imagism, the immediate presentation.

Not until the second world-war did H.D. come, as Blackwood and Yeats had, into theosophical circles. She may be speaking, in the Freud memoir of 1944, from her later view, but not necessarily, for the concept of second-sight belongs to folk lore at large and the idea of vision to poet lore, before whatever doctrine there may be in theosophical initiation. “For myself,” H.D. continues: “I consider this sort of dream or projected picture or vision as a sort of half-way state between ordinary dream and the vision of those who, for lack of a more definite term, we must call psychics or clairvoyants.” Then later: “I may say that never before and never since have I had an experience of this kind.”

Helen Fairwood’s hallucination or vision or presentational immediacy of the little birth-house or temple or tomb it seems to her “set square with no imperfection or break in its excellent contour, like some exquisite square of yellow honeycomb” in the court at Karnak, is an effort to tell about this other actual presentation. Phantasy, tradition, surround it, and it almost seems a moment of what Cocteau so loves—the eternal return. But this is not, we realize, made-up, as Helen Fairwood’s surrounding associations are a make-up, but—that is the danger, the madness—come from a source independent of our creative mind, our conscious daydream. The word rimes with all the surrounding pattern we had been weaving but it comes as if of itself.

Festugière in *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* comments that the evaluation of such presentations as a higher good or reality is a trait of the Hellenistic period, distinctly contrasting with our own sense of such presentations as mental disorders. Epilepsy, paranoia, or heat-stroke in the Egyptian desert—the Mi’Raj, the visionary trance, the writing on the wall, has been declared beyond our ken, out of bounds.
I have been reading recently along a line in the German romantic tradition, perhaps with
a vague sense of relation to this search that has a beginning and an end in the entity H. D., but at the same time it seemed to me a rest or a change from my daily preoccupation
to read these romantic tales and phantasies in the evening before sleep. Then I found
myself following clues of what I sought for in these tales of man’s psyche in the northern
forest world. Long ago, as a child, I had known Tieck’s The Elves, and in after years I had
read it again, but now—in the light, that for some must seem the shadow, of the materia
poetica as I have begun to see it in my study—Tieck’s fairy tale told its story anew. That
tale that live in the fir-ground—“ the dingy fir-trees with the smoky huts behind them,
the ruined stalls, the brook flowing past with a sluggish melancholy”, “as if bewitched
and excommunicated, so that even our wildest fellows will not venture into it” it appears
to most eyes—that is really the ground at once of an enchantment and of a fructifying
source, seem now the people of a despised way of life, gypsies they appear in the story,
pagan remnant or Albigensian outcasts they may be; now the people of some outcast
area of the psyche itself, of a repressed content that to the conscious mind seems the
home of “a miserable crew that steal and cheat in other quarters, and have their hoard
and hiding-place here” but that is in the unconscious a wonderland, the hidden garden
of an other nature; now the people of the romantic impulse, mistrusted and disowned—
the romantic fallacy, the rightminded call it. The magic of this source, whether it be an
actual company, of poets or heretics, or a hidden area of the psyche, or a source of the
poem, lies in its being secret to all who have not entered into its inner life. Once it is
explained, shown up for what it is, once the Secret is told that man’s life has its abund-
dance and blessing in this fearful, rejected ground, and that good fortune perishes.
“Beware of telling any one of our existence; or we must fly this land, and thou and all
around will lose the happiness and blessing of our neighborhood,” the Elfin Lady tells
Mary in the story. And in the end, in anger at her husband’s injustice to those people
that he sees as a nuisance to the country and their huts a blight, Mary cries out “Hush!
for they are benefactors to thee and to every one of us,” and as Andres at every word
grew more incredulous, and shook his head in mockery”, she discloses the existence of
the Elves.

Now all enchantment falls, and it is not only the Elvin world that disappears, illu-
sion that it is, so that all night a host passes out of the neighborhood, and in the morning
all is still. But also the illusion of the actual world fades; “The freshness of the wood
was gone; the hills were shrunk, the brooks were flowing languidly with scanty streams,
the sky seemed gray; and when you turned to the Firs, they were standing there no
darker or more dreary than the other trees. The huts behind them were no longer
frightful; and several inhabitants of the village came and told about the fearful night,
and how they had been across the spot where the gipsies had lived, how these people
must have left the place at last, for their huts were standing empty, and within had quite a common look, just like the dwellings of other poor people."

The Square of Saint Mark’s Cathedral in *Narthex* exists in Raymonde’s seeing into it the way she does, not seeing through it. “Crawl into Saint Mark’s Cathedral like a bee into a furled flower head”; but “It was true that you could slit the thing to tatters, it had none of that quality Gareth liked... reality.”

The dark and the light, the fearful and the lovely, belong to the romantic illusion and disillusion. The “*o wind, rend open the heat*” with which we began belonged to the same world of romance—living as Tieck and Wagner. My sense is that we are coming from what were once national traditions “German” or “English” or church orthodoxies of belief and doctrine or progressive views into something else, a community of meanings, where we are to inherit—all things seen now as works of the imagination of what man is—a thread of being in which there are many strands. A psyche will be formed having roots in all the old cultures; and—this seems to me one of the truths I owe most to Charles Olson’s poetry—the old roots will stir again. But this sense of impending inheritance is in the thought itself; for long before us, in the nineteenth century, Carlyle, Emerson, or George MacDonald took their thought in Novalis, Tieck, or Hoffmann as we do now.

So, last night, in this sequence of German Romantics—Tieck’s stories translated by Carlyle, Wagner’s *Ring* cycle, and then the *Helen Phantasmagoria* of Goethe’s *Faust*—I went on to Hoffmann’s *Don Juan* and with *Don Juan* this morning my thought takes its lead.

E. T. A. Hoffmann. It had been “E. T. W.”; the biographical note by Christopher Lazare says that “the Amadeus, later substituted for Wilhelm, was a Mozartean afterthought.” Hoffmann, we read, “yearned for some signal from the unknown.”

In *Don Juan or A Fabulous Adventure That Befell A Music Enthusiast on His Travels*, the narrator is an author (we take him for the author then) who wakes from deep sleep in a strange inn to the sound of an overture. He is told when he rings for the valet that a door opens from his bed-chamber into the theater itself, where *Don Juan* by the famous Maestro Mozart of Vienna is being presented. He attends then, sitting in this special visitor’s loge that opens off of his room.

During the opera he hears in the loge beside him “the rustle of a silken garment”, senses “a gentle, perfumed breath of air close to me”. In the intermission he turns from his enchantment in the Mozart opera where he had been most drawn to the actress singing Donna Anna to find... to face the Lady of the play herself. “The possibility,” the author of the story writes:

“The possibility of explaining how she could, at one and the same time, be both on stage and in my loge never occurred to me. Just as a happy dream brings together the strangest events and our instinctive belief freely accepts it, in all its incongruity, as a phenomenon of life, so did I somnambulistically accept the presence of this marvelous creature. More than that, I realized, all at once, that there were secret bonds which tied me so closely to her, that she could not keep away from me even when she appeared on
the stage.” Then: “She said that music was her only reality, and that she often believed she could understand in song much that was mystically hidden or evaded expression in life.”

There follows a moment of hallucinatory revelation in which Hoffmann, the author of the story (“the Amadeus, substituted for Wilhelm. . . a Mozartean afterthought”) in a sleight of name is also the author of the opera, is Mozart. It depends upon the old afterthought, the possibility of the actual name Amadeus held in common:

“‘I know the frenzy and yearning of love’ [Donna Anna confides] ‘that were in your heart, when you wrote the part. . . in your last opera. I understood you. Your soul was laid bare to me in song! Yes,’ (here she called me by my first name) ‘Naturally, I have sung you. I am your melodies.’“

Here again, as in Tieck’s The Elves, the secret life is betrayed and the world of illusion dies. “As from a great distance, accompanied by the harmonica of an aerial orchestra” the author seems to hear Anna’s voice: “Non mi dir bell’ idol mio!”; then, in the Epilogue, Clever Man and Mulatto-Face, the Mid-Day critics discuss the death of the singer: “But that is what comes of overacting.” “Yes, yes. I warned her time and time again! The role of Donna Anna always affected her oddly. Yesterday, she carried on like one possessed.”

For the author the opera had been “as though the most esoteric thoughts of a bewitched soul had become fixed in sound and had taken form and shape, standing out in relief against a remarkable concept”; his very life seems to have its source in the stage. Writing to his friend, Theodore, he says “This conflict between the divine and demonic powers begets the notion of life on earth, just as the ensuing victory begets the notion of life above earth.” But this “notion of life” we see is the story of a ghost, an afterthought, that appears between our being and the other life that we know on the stage, in the story, in legend, in the poem, in the vision of painting and sculpture.
Our figures of the patrons in late Medieval painting belong to two worlds. We know not in *The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* whether the *Patron* is in *Her* presence or She is in *his* house. In Van Eyck’s Ghent Altarpiece, Joos Vydt kneels in the life in contrast to the facing figure of St. John the Baptist who stands in the painting of stone, having the presence of a work of art within the Altarpiece itself. The patron, the donner, in the painting takes on flesh of flie, an illusion, in paint that seems life-like in contrast to the illusion of stone in the painting of the saint.

In back of that *Adoration of the Lamb*, the great central figure of the Ghent Altarpiece, is another play of images, a cult or afterthought of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, a 15th century charade—the Order of the Golden Fleece, where his court played Knights of the Round Table and Argonauts in one mystery. The blood of Flanders shed at Ghent, out of which Burgundy had great wealth, flows from the Lamb into the Grail. Christian figures—the Lamb, John the Baptist, the Bleeding Heart, the Cup—become one with the wool that was the source of the wealth; with the theatrical ideal of chivalry; became one, in turn, with Greek legend.

It took wealth. It was in turn the creation of wealth. In this relationship between the artist and the patron, the artist—the true alchemist—transformed money into richness. For Colchis to be present in the court of Burgundy; for Karnak to be present in London or the glory that was Greece to be brought to Bryher. So, the Van Eycks painted for Philippe le Bon tableaux of the chivalric mysteries, woven in turn into tapestries to transform the streets of Sluys where his bride Ysabel of Portugal landed in 1428, enhancing the actual world with another reality of the imagined world. And that imagined world of the Van Eycks takes on a solidity from properties of the patron’s world: the jeweled crown, the sumptuous robe, the golden throne, the burnished chandelier, the laver and basin have a greater immediacy. For the artist himself, Jan Van Eyck, had been brought into such a world by his patron, as ambassador of Philippe to the court of Portugal must have worn such robes.

The reality that Gareth poses against Raymonde’s other world of lure and involvement or enrichment is the seeing through lure to the things of common sense and hard cash. It is the Protestant ethic described by Weber in *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* that gives Gareth her one dimensional resistance. Putting together this picture of the patron Bryher, from *Narthex*, from *Let Zeus Record*—but also now three years after my first draft, from Bryher’s *Heart to Artemis*—I see how typically she resists luxury, phantasy; to keep money virtuous. It was the image of Artemis, the ardent spare beauty in which some ascetic necessity was satisfied that drew Bryher to H. D.’s poetry. For the artist it meant the beauty possible for one with limited means. For the patron it meant the beauty permissible for one who would maintain the responsibilities of capital, avoiding luxury and waste.

Remembering McAlmon’s “Money Breeds Complications”, we remember too that
the artist breeds complications in order to enrich: the intertwining and doubled images of marginal illuminations, the underpainting and mixing of tones in the luxuriance of Titian, the elaborations of the poet worked in interchanges of vowels and consonants, undermeanings and overmeanings. So Joyce, presented with the largest gift of the century by his patroness Harriet Weaver, developed and complicated his *Finnegans Wake*—a jeweled, overworked texture that only the extravagantly endowed artist could venture. Miss Weaver was dismayed for she had wanted some reiteration of the solid achievement Joyce had secured in *Ulysses*, her money's worth; not this fairy gold or counterfeit of values.

“Compare the *Phaedra* and the *Hippolytus* series which were actually written in Greece,” Bryher says in reviewing *Hymen* in 1922: “with *Cuckoo Song*, *Thetis*, *Evadne*. Apart from an added intensity of color—the ‘lizard blue’ water, the ‘red sands’ of Crete”. . . but in *Phaedra* there was not only the added intensity of color, there was also the appearance of a counter force, protestant to Phaedra’s passion,

*For art undreamt in Crete —  
strange art and dire,  
in counter-charm prevents my charm,  
limits my power*

that may be the same limit that Raymonde sitting in the Square of St. Mark’s faces, the resistance the protestant ethic has against the alchemy, the transmutation of values, of the artist's impulse. The modern patron, the capitalist patron, may be loyal, generous, conscientious, but he must also be righteous, and the art he sponsors must be valid, credible, creditable. For all of “wish” and “touch”, of “sea-magic” and Circe’s longing for the glance of Odysseus, Bryher in reviewing the poem *Circe* sees her as “any woman of intellect who, with the very sincerity of her vision, turns lesser minds ‘each to his own self’”, an image of the higher capitalist mind. It is not by her inability but by the very strength of her character that Gareth is not taken in by the honeyhorn of St. Mark's cathedral with its saints and incrustations of wealthy suggestion. Bryher's H. D. is the high-minded priestess of Artemis,—the poetess set apart. But in the 20s, H. D., in the milieu provided by Bryher, changes. Athens was integrity, but now there is not only Athens. Another H. D. emerges in kinship with Venice and finds herself alienated from the earlier “pure” H. D. She has a secret alliance with things and people that Gareth hates. “Mordant brought me those blue hyacinths. . . How Gareth hated Mordant.” Phaedra in her passionate heat for Hippolytus offends Artemis: that is the play of the mid-20s, *Hippolytus Temporizes*. But also, between the artist and the patron, between the one who would transform reality and the one who would use reality, there is a difference of view and even truth that quickens another division within the self of two images where Phaedra and Artemis contend.

In *Narthex* we see for the first time the synthesis that will flower in her later work. In the composite image of St. Mark’s H. D. reaches forward towards a fusion of oriental
opulence and Greek spirit in images now of the Renaissance Christian world. “I had
enough of Greek things, I said I wanted something... so called Christian mysticism that
finds complete co-relation with so-called classicism,” Raymond says to Daniel: “I have
found it this time and with you, in Venice. I never really understood, accepted the rena-
sissance.”

Entering more and more into the world of Bryher, H. D.’s major expression in this
period is in the prose novelette that can provide elaborations and developments.
Between 1925 and 1927 there are six published pieces: the three stories of Palimpest,
the children’s book The Hedgehog, the novel Hedylus, and the story Narthex. In 1928
and 1930 there are four more: two “Raymonde” stories The Usual Star and Two
Americans, then Kora and Ka and Mira-Mare. There is a new—“precious” it could be
felt—scene now: the cultivated lovelife, the emotional transmutations of two’s and
three’s, the divisions and multiplications of the authoring personality, the practiced
sensibilities belong to life in the higher circles of our society, the leisure class. Poems in
Red Roses for Bronze appear not as works but as gifts or tribute. There is no only
Raymonde’s “Say ‘Garry liked my writing,’ what did it mean? It meant, Garry paid my
fare here and I have behaved outrageously” but there is also H. D.’s pathos in Chance
Meeting:

Take from me something,
be it all too fine
and untranslatable and worthless
for your purpose,
take it,
it’s mine.

In the drift of her writing in the 2os, she provides a picture of this world set apart
by money from the common lot of working for a living, of the poet living from hand to
mouth, and set apart by the post-war modernism from the traditions of the upper class.
As the artist sees it: haunted by the unrealized wealth of associations, unreal then in the
terms it has made for its reality. A fiction of sensibilities, these stories are related on the
one hand to the art of Proust in the period before the war or of James in the golden age
of American capitalism. Raymonde and Daniel in their triangle with Gareth, we find, are
like Kate Croy and Merton Densher in their triangle with Milly Theale: “They are far from
a common couple, Merton Densher and Kate Croy, as befits the remarkable fashion in
which fortune was to waylay and opportunity was to distinguish them,” James writes
in the introduction to The Wings of the Dove:—the whole strange truth of their response
to which opening involves also, in its order, no vulgar art of exhibition; but what they
have most to tell us is that, all unconsciously and with the best faith in the world, all by
mere force of the terms of their superior passion combined with their superior diplo-
macy, they are laying a trap for the great innocence to come.

A fiction of an emotional drifting, these stories related on the other hand to the
literature of the “lost” generation, to the *romans-a-clef* of Mary Butts, especially—
*Armed With Madness, The Death of Felicity Taverner, or Imaginary Letters*, but also the
popular novels of the day, Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* or Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is The
Night*. The cult of the poem—Imagism—and the “we” H. D. had known in association
with poets before the war was replaced now by the cult of the personality in other
circles, verging upon the old orders of high society and upon the new orders of cafe
society, little intense groups of ephemera having their day in the brief “modern” wave
after the War that would run out in the “crack-up”, as it was for Fitzgerald, of the
Depression. “Something not very far off the deification of man is us now,” Mary Butts
wrote in *Traps for Unbelievers* (1932): “not, or not yet, of the kings and millionaires, but,
and again, and this is primitive, of the conspicuous young men and women, our sexually
desirable ones, whose nature it is to wax and wane and be replaced. Our Year-in-Year-
out spirits, *eniautoi daimones*, whose beauty is no stronger than a flower.”

So Daniel Kinouel, Gareth’s husband, is an agonizing lure for Raymonde in
*Narthex*: “the turn, she could almost feel it, of fine collar bone under the grey or under
the dark blue or under the fawnbrown of his shoulders. She had been so vivid, so
certain of what had been there that there had seemed no reason for reaching across,
drawing simply as one draws a curtain from before some holy statue, the cloth from
those lean shoulders. . .” In the poem *Red Roses for Bronze* the avidity is not so
tempered:

*but sensing underneath the garment seam*
*ripple and flash and gleam*
of indrawn muscle
and of those more taut,
I feel that I must turn and tear and rip
the fine cloth
from the moulded thigh and hip,
force you to grasp my soul’s sincerity,
and single out
me,
me,
something to challenge,
handle differently.

They turn, twist, test each other to produce flashes of higher emotion. The *noli me
tangere*, that is so important a part of D. H. Lawrence’s sexual design, is important here;
there is also their living off of their nerves or their erotic excitement, living beyond their
means, dependent as they are upon Gareth. Like Lawrence, they use the potentiality of
homosexual attractions to heighten the heterosexual bond. In London, Raymonde had
held Daniel up to her lover Mordant, as if she fired the one man like a crystal before the
furnace heat of the other, it seems to her; and, sitting in Venice, she recalls “this sacrifi-
cial thing between them, great bulk of remembered (in London) male body, heavy
thighs” of Mordant to key up the idea of Daniel as Hermes. The double triangle image
of Katherine-Mordant-Rayon/ e/Ray Bart-Gareth-Daniel is the instrument of an erotic
art. We remember from Williams’s 1905 the naive magic of “She said I was Rosalind in
As You Like It and she was Celia”; but now more terrible powers are called up to inhabit
the drama of life.

Daniel follows to the Cathedral, where Gareth will not go, to fetch Raymonde:
“Gareth is waiting.” They have just this place and time before they must return, before
Raymonde says to Daniel “We must go back to Gareth.”:

“‘Look at the drinking fountain’ meant ‘and how is Garry?’ Daniel knew that the
‘whole renaissance is in this drinking fountain’ meant ‘I am worried about Garry.’ The
mind, a lily, rising on tall stem, rose out of confusion, out of hysteria. . . ‘I loved her ...
terribly.’

“I mean,’ a voice continued, her voice? ‘I have loved . . . terribly. It’s terrible to
love and know oneself inadequate and helpless.’ ‘So she says.’ ‘So-?-’ ‘Gareth. She says
she is sorry for me if. . . I love. . . Ray Bart.’ ‘Being sorry does no good to any one, I am
sorry for myself, harassed and lacerated loving . . . Daniel.’ Sparks were drawn into one
tall light. One candle burned where inappropriately darkness had made cornice and square
mosaic shine like gold fish.” The two hermetic lovers practice cruelty as if to strike a
light, flint against flint. “I know why people hate you,” Raymonde will flash out: “People
hate you for the same reason that they hate me, Daniel.” And Daniel will flash back: “You
have the tortured silly smile of some archaic statue.” “I know.” “Rather tight. Looking
mincing almost.” “I know.” “You don’t know, I’m rather glad you don’t know.” “Why—
why glad Daniel?” “It’s—horrible.”

In The Usual Star (1928), the beauty of Daniel is thematic: “incandescence of
swan features and the famous Swedish film star,” it seems to Raymonde; it can also
include her, for there is the “incandescence of the two of them, burning with their cere-
bral intensity”—an identification in beauty. “Raymonde wanted Marc de Brissaic to
protect her from intolerable incandescence.” In the 20s the great cult of beauty arises
in those lights of the screen, gathering all possible erotic attractions: Garbo or Valentino,
existing as they do in an an-
drogynous lure. “Human nature was not meant for that
strain,” Mary Butts writes of the cult of person: “The star-dust at Hollywood is full of
dead stars.

In Two Americans (1930), the presence of the great negro star Saul Howard
awakens in Raymonde some other identification with him as an artist or an American
that exorcises the hold Daniel had had. “‘No, it’s altogether this way. You see,’ she was
surprised to hear what she said, ‘he’s removed a silver thorn out of my side, called
Daniel.’”

Outside the charged circle of this “incandescence” — as out-side the circle of the
Imagist poets—there is a “they”, those who do not understand, who misjudge: the
general’s wife, the pro-consul’s widow of the poem Halcyon. H. D. must have been aware
of how little sympathy the middle-class, more importantly, how little sympathy the
professional class had for this disestablished, self-centered life of the rich. Her discomfort can show itself in the sense of vulgarity about her. But there is also the sense of being hated by the vulgar that she had known in another way as a member of the pre-War circle of poets. The “they” now are the economically responsible, the solid and moral middle-class, and Gareth, having her solid upper middle-class attitudes—having after all the “reality” of the hard cash—can seem to belong at times to “them”. In *Halcyon* we find:

‘*tinsel*’ they said the other lives were,
all those I loved,
I was forgot

and later:

*I never had an illusion,*
*they hate me,*
every one, everyone,
*but it’s worse for you,*

*you’re a baby, a lost star,*

*Halcyon* is a dramatic monologue, of a poor relation dependent upon “*my late cousin, the wool merchant’s wife*”, isolated from those who understand her, in exile in a commercial port. But H.D. too, during this period of the late 20s and the 30s was “forgot”, and where she was remembered, her critics were not sympathetic with this work. All the prejudices of the new educated class were to be against just such irresponsibility. Thomas Burnett Swann in 1963, forgetting her, can note his dissymmetry with Raymonde Ransome in summing up the prose of H. D.: “Most of the characters—poets, temptresses, hostesses—are either precious or tedious, and so, too often, is the heroine, although she seems to be intended as a contrast to her superficial friends.”

[Dream, April 5, 1963: “There were things I wanted to ask you,” I said. Her attention wavered, yet she was intensely there. There was some impatience with the moment, along with her having all the time in the world. “Did you ever read Blackwood?” I asked, “You must have—“ Was her answer there or not? Was she evasive or had it seemed so unimportant that her interest could not recall whether she had or not.

“But I shiver at the thought of you reading the old prose & poems,” she had written in 1960 when she was still alive: “To use Yeat’s phrase, I am ‘dreaming back’ but the intermediate writing now seems an obstruction—of course it was a way of life, of living. Don’t take it too seriously—“

And wasn’t I in asking impatient of her answering now. “I’ve been finding out the—“ did I say “split” or “fault”? “—two H. D.’s.” Hilda Doolittle-H. D., Raymonde-Ray
Bart. She looked disappointed in me. But then a flash of fellow feeling was there, a conspiracy of writers. She knew that one used everything to make up one's work. But didn’t I pose use as if it were less than or opposed to transformation?

“Yes, yes, I think we did,” she said, tentatively, gazing off into space or back into time to see her answer. In the hotel room in New York she had looked past me or beyond me that way, as if clairvoyant, searching some Akashic blank for a sign. I almost caught the titles of books as she searched for them. But I was talking—would I ever hear what she had to say? I had to tell her how much I knew as if that could make the bond, awaken the full force of sympathy I wanted.

“Did you ever think how much in this outdoors thing,”—I was thinking of the early poems, the woodlands of *Pursuit*, the sea of *The Shrine* “where rollers shot with blue/cut under deeper blue” – “this back to the elements, back to nature” —I was recalling that story Williams told in his *Autobiography*:

“There had been a storm and the breakers were heavy, pounding in with overpowering force. But Hilda was entranced. I suppose she wasn’t used to the ocean anyhow and didn’t realize what she was about. For without thought or caution she went to meet the waves, walked right into them. I suppose she could swim, I don’t know, but in she went and the first wave knocked her flat, the second rolled her into the undertow, and if Bob Lamberton hadn’t been powerful and there, it might have been worse. They dragged her out unconscious, resuscitated her, and had just taken her up to the house.”

“Did you ever think how much in this back to nature thing you were at one with the common view?”—with all those free thinkers of the working class and lower middle class, I was thinking, sun-tanned, sunburnt—Nudists?—followers of a popular theosophy and nature-worship. “Bright Messenger—did you read that?” I wanted to tell her how close at first H. D. was to the world of *The Centaur* or *The Education of Uncle Paul*. Vaud, her Vaud, had been the place too of Algernon Blackwood’s revelations of wind and fire gods. But now I was going to lose it again. There may have been a wave of not wanting to lose her.

We sat out-of-doors in an arbor under grape-vines, it was another time now, some revenant-time of my adolescence in the San Joaquin. “Fletcher talked in his review of your poetry about Plotinus, Proclus; Boehme,” I went on, trying to recall the conspiracy between H. D., and the old H. D. with her love for theosophy, and my own goings-on, going-to-far: “Didn’t you talk way back then in London about the great image, the eidolon?”

“There was a book...” she said, and now I was going to lose her I felt again, she was so near, there was a smile with it: “There was a book we all read,” she smiled, and I saw again the glint of her playful, affectionate conspiracy. There were times in our interview when I’d been painfully aware of how mistaken I was, how little she liked my digging, digging, digging at Raymonde Ransome. Wasn’t she tired, barely tolerant of my
book. “Why don’t you write a book about your own affairs?” she had asked me at one point; there could have been a barbed impatience in that. But we did talk about writing then and I did not take up the barb if it was there. “I’ve had a book on my mind—“ I said, looking off into the distant possibility myself but just missing it, “But it’s lost.” Had her question been almost an angry reproof, a rebuff? She meant, that’s what I saw when she asked, a book of my own sexual engagements, a series of those I had fallen in love with. Back to nature.

“There was a book we all read. . .” she had disclosed. As I woke the name of the author was there and her last curious smile—“taunt” the word came to me yesterday as I was walking back from the mailbox at the corner; I have to work in “the furies’ taunt” I had thought; —Was that in Helen?

“E. Nesbit Trilby was the author’s name,” she had said, and then: “It was a silly novel of high society, I’m afraid.”
All given things have a command over the artist; thoughts come to the poet, images are presented not invented; and where there is poetry we see chance as a donation, the universe as a donor. Chosen most gifted, inspired. In French, La donnee is the idee fondamentale d’un ouvrage d’esprit. The poem itself is a gift in exchange. In these stories and poems of the middle period, H. D. seeks to give herself, a feudal token for a holding, the inner even confused, even painful, account to overlords of love and loyalty. Not only Gareth but Daniel is donor; his the narthex, the initiatory love-death. Not only Gareth and Daniel but the persona Ray Bart and the descending triangle with Katherine and Mordant give the star.

To pay back, to get even, here is transmuted in the return of truth; for the scales of the artist are not only a balance that Thoth holds but they are also the scales of a music, the series of proportions in a drawing from life. In the language we are given there is the Old Norse donation, skal a bowl, the bowls of the scale; there is the Latin donation scala, a ladder, the ladder of ascending or descending tones, the graduations that give measure; the Jacob’s Ladder as Denise Levertov evokes it in that poem:

The stairway is not
a thing of gleaming strands
a radiant evanescence
for angels’ feet that only glance in their tread,
and need not
touch the stone.

It is of stone.

given, these ascents and descents of spirit,
even the rosy glow of the stone
only because behind it the sky is a doubtful, a
doubting
night gray,

by the actual so that a man climbing

must scrape his knees, and bring
the grip of his hands into play. The cut stone
consoles his groping feet.

It is the cut of the stone, the scrape of reality that verifies the spirit. The night gray, the roughness of the way gives verity, and the artist seeks it out, for his work is not only a
gift for like-souls, for the human donors before and after, but a gift for the sky, a gift for the very hazard in which experience has had its keen edge.

“When a man dreams his own dream, he is the sport of his dream;” George MacDonald writes in *Lilith*: “when Another gives it him, that Other is able to fulfill it.”

We see certain things in the poem that “appear there” as Donna Anna who is also something else (“Naturally, I have sung you. I am your melodies”) appears in Hoffmann’s Don Juan; as the Lamb appears in Van Eyck’s great altarpiece, but also in the rites of the Fleece, so that He is not only Christ the Lamb or the God-Fleece that the Argonauts sought, but also the artist’s theme, we are aware not only of the artist but of another. The work of art itself appears as a gift for another but also as a means for another to be there. Self expression may be an urgency of art, but the self has no expression except in this other.

In *Tribute To The Angels*: “it was an ordinary tree/in an old garden-square.” It is only a half-burnt-out-tree, a survivor of the war; it is also the other half the tree in its flowering; the whole recalling then the Solomon’s seal of *Narthex*: the half-burnt-out triangle of those before the War and the bright triangle of those after the War—the two are needed to make the design. A *donne* of the poem: “we saw the tree flowering”, in order to see. The tree itself bestows the fundamental idea of *Tribute To The Angels*, but in turn it comes as an answer to a prayer or a question, the “is this union at last?” of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, that may ask union with God or the universe or the union of all the gifts of the poet in her opus. In the creation of a melody there is a given passage of tones that lead towards another phrase or phase to which they belong. Melody arises in the union of otherwise diverse feelings.

Invoking angelic powers in the opening pages of her *Tribute*, H. D. establishes a scale or rather a series of scales: the Judaic and the Greek divine orders are two that in the Christian scale become one; the Christian, the New Dispensation, and the Egyptian, the old Heretical Tradition, are two that in turn in the psychoanalytic and theosophical interpretation become one. What is involved here is a polyphony, proceeding from the choral mode of her earliest work out of Euripides, a formal counterpart of the polyvalence of elements in H. D.’s life-feeling. The poem must find its mode in dimensions that allow for angels to occur as they allow for the worm on the leaf and the star, for shapers and donors outside the person of the poet herself to come into the work. For she, like E. T. A. Hoffmann, yearned for some signal from the unknown. A presentation from the unconscious? But these presents come from outside the signature of H. D. the leaf, the sea, the shell, the tree in flower come from the actual, natural world; Thoth, *Amen*, Raphael, Annael, Christos and the Lady come from the lore-world of other men; and the poem itself unfolds before the poet from the rimes and developments given in the words from the increment of human experience the poet comes to know in the language, from other experience in which her experience comes true. It is in consciousness that the exchange is made; the gift comes into our own consciousness from an other consciousness. The sky, the wave, the blade of grass are elements of writing because they are elements of our conscious life.
The War itself gave proportion to personal feelings of being lost, of surviving, and yet of braving circumstance, of holding to the ideal. The “I do not know why”, “we are powerless”, “our bodies blunder”, “we know no rule/ of procedure”, “we have no map” reiterates the old Alexandrian mood H. D. knew in her first phase—the Failure of Nerves Gilbert Murray had called the Alexandrian phase in history—but it also is a realistic sense of the human lot at large in the Second World War and after. It is also the statement of the artist’s working terms. Form for H. D. “hewn from within by that craftsman” is the shell of organic experience; the work is a territory between the master-mason, her entity, and the oceanic life in which it takes its life. Defined by the tide-flow.

Did *The Walls Do Not Fall* at first seem to her to be complete in itself? The scholar may someday find that

> His, the track in the sand  
> from a plum-tree in flower  
> to a half- open hut-door,

is a track that leads to some image in the old lore; it may be an actual track seen in Egypt, in “Karnak 1923”. The scholar may never find the track, “or track would have been” H. D. calls it:

> but wind blows sand-prints from the sand,  
> whether seen or unseen

but when it comes in *Tribute to the Angels* there is no “half-open hut-door”

> we crossed the charred portico,  
> passed through a frame—doorless—

and the tree is an apple tree not a plum.

*Tribute to the Angels* is placed and dated: *London, May 17-31, 1944*; and *The Flowering of the Rod: London, December 18-31, 1944*. *The Walls Do Not Fall*, published in 1944, has only the “from London 1942” of the dedication to indicate when it was written. There must have been a time in which *The Walls Do Not Fall* stood alone.

These three books were never given a common title by H. D.”The War Trilogy” I call it, and I find now others too came to use that designation. Yet they are three panels of a triptych, related when they are complete to the three panels of an altarpiece: on the left the desolation of the war, center the revelation of the angels and the flowering tree in the midst of a last judgement, and on the right the three kings, the poet herself as Magdalene, and the Child Redeemer. The otherwise incidental image of the flowering tree and the lore of
from Lang’s collections of fairy tales which H. D. read again in the War years, and the

*He is Mage,*

*bringing myrrh.*

appear to be enrichments in detail in the *Walls,* are taken up into the center of the design in *Tribute to the Angels* and *The Flowering of the Rod,* as the possibility of his name Amadeus—a Mozartean afterthought—gives Hoffmann the thread of his identity in his story *Don Juan.* What seemed incidental proves to be the key to the realization of a larger picture.

“Invention presupposed imagination,” Stravinsky says in his *Poetics of Music,* “but should not be confused with it. For the act of invention implies the necessity of a lucky find and of achieving full realization of this find. What we imagine does not necessarily take on a concrete form and may remain in a state of virtuality, whereas invention is not conceivable apart from its actual being worked out. Thus, what concerns us here is not imagination in itself, but rather creative imagination: the faculty that helps us to pass from the level of conception to the level of realization.”

I must have come across the definition before, that poetry, from the verb *poiein,* meant *to make,* but it was in Stravinsky’s book that the statement got across, and that poetics is “the study of work to be done”. To make things happen. And my idea of melody I found most clearly expressed there too in 1948, that “Melody, *Mélôdia* in Greek, is the intonation of the *melos,* which signifies a fragment, a part of a phrase”, for that year, working on the Venice Poem, I had begun to follow the lead of the immediate particular towards an open invention. “Watch the duration of syllables, the tone leading of vowels” Pound had instructed. Later, in 1950, in Olson’s *Projective Verse* this importance of the melos, the immediate factor, was reiterated: “Let’s start from the smallest particle of all, the syllable,” he proposed—let the syllable “lead the harmony on.” “To step back here to this place of the elements and minims of language, is to engage speech where it is least careless—and least logical. For from the root out, from all over the place, the syllable comes, the figures of, the dance:”

We made in a poem a place for the syllable to occur as it did not occur in the careless rush of speech. The damnation of systematic rime was like the damnation of systematic thought for it was careless of the variety of what was actually going on, the lead one sensed in incident, in factors so immediate they seemed chance or accident to all but the formal eye.

A place was made in the midst of the war for an epiphany to occur. The art in poetry is this art. She made up her mind to see the tree. She made a place for the tree. For this tree that was suddenly there, to be no mere tree but more, to be an occasion of *the* tree, to be just the incidental half-burnt-out apple tree it was.
Prayer, rite, taking thought—these prepare a place for a happening. “Listening for the syllables must be so constant and so scrupulous,” Olson writes, “the exaction must be so complete, that the assurance of the ear is purchased in the highest—40 hour a day—price.” Atheists and sceptics are right when they say that God is only an occurrence along the line of some human projection; that, otherwise, reasonably, there are no gods, is no God. Rime too is a creature of our constant practice and attention. That it was “made-up” meant, so we were told when we were children, that it was a lie in some way. Then there was: if you make up your mind, you can do it. It will come true.

In Cocteau’s film Orpheus the guardian angel Heurtebise tells Orpheus not to try to understand but to follow. It is a law in the reading of poetry that is a law too in the writing. Unless we follow, unless we follow thru the work to be done, there is no other way of understanding. Participation is all.

Heurtebise is not only guardian but guide. And Orpheus, who brought the poet’s lyre into Greece, must follow his lead.

“Hermes,” H. D. addresses him in the opening of Tribute To The Angels. Hermes, psychopompos, who gives us the lead. It is a matter both of being inspired, a breath, a being given the line, and of being led on, of foot:

"Hermes," H. D. addresses him in the opening of Tribute To The Angels. Hermes, psychopompos, who gives us the lead. It is a matter both of being inspired, a breath, a being given the line, and of being led on, of foot:

Thoth, Hermes, the stylus,
the palette, the pen, the quill endure

Here, first, in The Walls Do Not Fall, the God, patron of writers, appears by name, the weigher and measurer of truth, the lord of the scales, We see now the Hermes of the Ways, the Herm of the early Sea-Garden, “facing three ways”, “of the triple pathways”—the many-foamed ways of the sea, the sheltered orchard, and the dunes and grass of the open shore—we see that he was a first instance of this other Hermes—

beyond death; Mercury, Hermes, Thoth
invented the script, letters, palette;

the indicated flute or lyre-notes
on papyrus or parchment

are magic, indelibly stamped
in the atmosphere somewhere,

In the poem we as poets are or aspire to be makers of some immortality, that an instant, a syllable, a least thing pass “beyond death” into song. Whatever love claims and care works may have its name, that once only kings had. “I say the syllable, king, and that it is spontaneous, this way:” Olson writes, “the ear, the ear which has collected, which has listened, the ear, which is so close to the mind that it is the mind’s, that it has the mind’s speed . . .

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“it is close, another way: the mind is brother to this sister and is, because it is so close, is the drying force, the incest, the sharpener . . .
“it is from the union of the mind and the ear that the syllable is born.”

Hermes is hermetic—hidden, sealed, occult, a messenger.
A glass vessel closed by fusion, soldering or welding. Alembic.

There was “the meaning that words hide” she had felt in *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

they are anagrams, cryptograms,
little boxes, conditioned
to hatch butterflies. . .

In the revelation of psychoanalysis there had been, a trick between the mind and the ear, an incest or insect of that brother to this sister, the syllable that hid the pun within the word. Care, attention, had opened doors for souls in what they were saying, doors of other things they were saying.
Ibis of Egypt, Ibex of Switzerland, come. Karnak 1923, where H. D. sought in the banquet chamber of Thothmes for a wish or a key, to read hieroglyph—the Luxor bee, chick and hare still haunt her in London 1942. I was four in 1923 and learning “I” is for Ibis. “I” is for Ibex. Switzerland, Zurich, where H. D. wrote her letters in 1959, 1960, 1961, until in a stroke the letters were gone, the sequence of syllables was broken.

Ibis and Ibex were, before I could read, bird and animal of the alphabet “I”. Not of that other “I”, my own person “I”. In time, as incidents of “bear” and “owl” occurred in life and then in the course of poems, my bird and animal were to be owl and bear. They came to me, but also, by afterthought, by fascination, by saving the words and the images towards a design, by noticing how things referred to them, how news or gospel kept coming in of bear and owl, what was occurring in life and in poems was recognized in them—signs of event.

I accepted the owl, as I remember, during a seminar on Marx which I attended in 1948. The professor had just said that perhaps man’s great insights always came at the wrong time—“like the owl of Minerva, he said, “that flew by night.” The message of the light, of mankind’s commune in life through work, came in the dark—too late, after its day; came, looking forward, too early, before its time. And hadn’t I, as a young poet, to fly blind for ten years—not until Medieval Scenes did I know what I was doing; not until the Venice Poem in 1948, ten years after I began, did I know how to do it.

I had not accepted it before, when I was little, with my crossed eyes squinting to focus, with my round-eye glasses, when they said I was owl-eyed.

A word game. Ibex was the king of the mountain crags, native of the land of Hans Christian Andersen’s story Little Rudy, a lure of the heights. In the tale there were two maidens: one, Babette, his betrothed, is human, but “she is far above you,” her angry father says to Little Rudy; the other, the Ice-Maiden, is a spirit of the Alps. The “heights”, I find again, looking up the derivation of “Alps” in the O.E.D.; or, from the Latin, albus, “white”. For the Ice-Maiden is also an “alp”—a night-mare or demon of the dream. In Little Rudy, “Alps” and “alp” are one in the lure of the heights.

There is in the height of my fantasy, not an obsession but a thought that persists, a fancy that psychoanalysis has found entertained by many children, of an other more real mother than my mother. In the play of dates, my birth year 1919 and the death of my first mother in the complications of child-birth and the flu echoes in my mind the birth of H. D.’s child in the complications of the London flu epidemic. In the play of the initials H. D., my birth name Edward Howard Duncan—E. Howard Duncan echoes her signature; and in the increased risk of the play, the name of the author in my dream, E. Nesbit Trilby may conceal—between the childhood charm of E. Nesbit’s world and the fatal delusive career of Trilby where charm is sinister—its warning.

In H. D.’s The Hedgehog, searching for the meaning of a word herisson, the little girl Madge climbs “like a bird or a mountain goat or wild sheep”, like an ibex then, up
where “The steep side of the hill was a very Swiss side of the hill”, where “A cloud was
nosing its way up over the edge of the rock wall like the nose of a very white and very
woolly big sheep”, where “The blinding silver across the white cloud a little dazed her.”

H. D. is writing at Vaud in 1925 this story of what life is like told for her daughter
who is six. Just here, in the heights, Madge, daughter of the story, comes into this “dizzi-
ness on hill-paths.” “Who-eee’ A voice up above Madge made Madge pause a moment,
one foot fitted in a boulder, the other carefully planted on a space of dried grass . . .”

But the poet, too, may have known how such a call can inter- rupt, in the heights
of writing, suddenly, some voice that recalls an inner voice, that brings one down to
earth, as we say. In a moment of panic we remember who and what we are. There is a
way in the rising, climbing melodic airs of poetry that those other feet, of the poem's
climbing, are in the imagination “like a bird or a mountain goat or wild sheep”. Here we
must follow, as if we could trust it. Or find ourselves suddenly having those other,
unimaginative, feet that make the way, as it is for Madge in the story once she comes to
herself, “steeper than she had thought.”

“Madge found” — but it is something the poet found too— “the it's better never
to stop and think in the middle of a path that goes up the side of a hill or down the side
of a hill like a snail-track on a house wall.”

For where our feet are on the ground, how unreal it seems that heads are in the
clouds.

The other, as early as the alphabet animal I-is-for-Ibex, was there in the nursery.
The figure of an Ibis, of the Ibis-headed wisdom. Not on my building block, but on the
page in my grandmother's book. It was an emblem of my parent's world. There was then
in the beginning the sense that this bird brought with it, him, a reminder of how I did not
understand what was going on around me. In the adult world there were always
hermetic, sealed, meanings. Beyond my ken. The marsh or river bird, with its long stalk-
legs and its fantastic long curved beak, was holy, was adult, was a word in a language
we would not read, hieroglyph.

Was there, in old Mrs. Roger's anteroom, in the room of the Elder Brother as they
called her, or Teacher, where I waited while my mother went thru to the other room . . .
was there a stuffed ibis? or heron? Or a screen with an ibis— no—a heron on it?

“Now Madame Beaupere said herisson, which is the French and the Swiss-French
for hedgehog. Madge, who understood most anybody's French, somehow for the
moment couldn't remember just what was a herisson. Some kind of heron, perhaps, she
thought.” It was a screen. The shadowy little scene has stayed with me since I was
six or seven, because I was guilty of something that I can't recall clearly. I looked behind
the screen and saw—was it a wash-basin and pitcher on a table, a lavatory? the laver
and kettle of Van Eyck's altarpiece at Ghent? I thought later I had seen a chamber-pot,
and that this was what was unmentionable. One didn’t mention going to the bathroom,
I had been taught.

The door to the inner chamber had a double or triple bead curtain which
obscured the opening. When they had meetings, I think my mother explained, this was
the Veil of Isis.

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“Iris; I don’t really think of iris here,” Helen Fairwood says in *Secret Name*: “It’s so essentially a Greek flower. But *Isis*, it’s almost the same thing.” However, it was really of the birds she thought.

In Cocteau’s *Orpheus* the poet and his angel Heurtebise and his death go thru a mirror as if thru water. Into glory and terror. When Orpheus is returned to life, separated from his angel and his death, he is, in the movie, an ordinary man writing poetry, a facteur of literature. The other, the beyond, has left him. “Let him return to his mire,” Heurtebise says.

These others—my parents, my grandmother, and the Elder Brother, old Mrs. Rogers, were not poets. They were—what everybody laughs at California for breeding—middle-class occultists. Grief in the loss of her first two children had brought my grandmother to the spiritualists’ tables of the seventies. In the twenties of our century, forty years later, passions, wishes, thoughtfulness, vanity, wisdom, hopes and despairs in my family were colored in terms of this despised way—in terms of reincarnation, astrology, and initiation. It was a muddling of an other world and this world, the mirror, and the mire.

Their master was the magnetic old lady who lived in this stuffy little apartment that they called—I don’t know that, but I suspect—that just this little suite of rooms, this plan of inner chamber and outer chamber, was also the temple of that god Thoth, the Ibis-headed man, of Osiris and Isis. I was in the waiting room.

As I write now, I am in the waiting room again. I do not see any more than my eyes saw. My eyes have seen the veil, the double or triple moving depths of bead curtain, that in my work may still be my fascination with the movement of meaning beyond or behind meaning, of shifting vowels and consonants—beads of sound, of separate strands that convey the feeling of one weave. Of words games then. Of *Ibex, Ibis, Isis*.

In Charles Olson’s warning to me in 1954 *Against Wisdom As Such*, he writes: “I wanted to say that San Francisco seems to have become an école des Sages ou Mages as ominous as Ojai, L.A.”

There is something about looking behind things. There is the fact that I am not an occultist or a mystic but a poet, a maker-up-of things.
Chapter Three

It is time now for the projected configuration, the visual projection of the War Trilogy. Not only the images of the poem arise from vision but the formal concept relates primarily to illumination, painting or tapestry, in contrast, for instance, with the musical concept of Eliot’s Four Quartets or Pound’s Cantos. Music enters in—the “O, What I meant/ by music when I said music” of Tribute to the Angels XXII comes as a poignant yearning:

\[
\begin{align*}
music & \text{ sets up ladders,} \\
& \text{it makes us invisible,} \\
\text{it sets us apart,} \\
& \text{it lets us escape}
\end{align*}
\]

“but from the visible,” she continues: “there is no escape.” What is seen and in the poem the matter is always the seen, is what cannot be escaped, the ground of responsibility. For H.D. the eye in seeing is involved:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{but from the visible} \\
& \text{there is no escape;}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{there is no escape from the spear} \\
& \text{that pierces the heart.}
\end{align*}
\]

Vision itself may be the spear; the eye being struck, the necessary vulnerable spot, where reality can get at the hero-poet. Yet this reality in what is seen is just that web of appearance that we also mistrust as the phantasmal, the Celtic glamour or faerie. H.D.’s intensity of image arises in her stricture of the eye to see in the clear, to penetrate the elf-skin or shimmer of excited vision and to locate the object. She holds a limit in poetry against the riot of the imagination, for she seeks a conscious recognition of what is going on. The very tenseness of her line is an attention that functions to hold back from the potency poetry has to produce its own luxe of the unreal, the world seen thru a glass darkly, the shadow of the dome of pleasure, the strange thunders from the potency of song, and the magic casements that open upon fairy seas. This reverie or “escape” in ascent or descent beyond the scale of the consciously analyzed is the medium of what she calls music that she resists. Dream and day-dream are a source of image, as ecstatic states in her waking life are a source, but in the poem she does not dream or day-dream but strives to render an exact account of what she has seen.

In the first panel, The Walls Do Not Fall, there is the war, the City (London) drawn under the rain or reign of fire, that in late Medieval Christian painting would have been
Sodom and Gomorrah. In classical history, it is “Pompeii has nothing to teach us.” In my family’s theosophical fantasy this City in its last days was Atlantis:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{over us, Apocryphal fire,} \\
&\text{under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor} \\
&\text{slope of a pavement . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

The ruins, the pressure, the fire, where

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{the bone-frame was made for} \\
&\text{no such shock knit within terror,} \\
&\text{yet the skeleton stood up to it:}
\end{align*}
\]

revivifies the image she had known twenty years before of that burnt-out triangle of iron: the inner psychic state finds its fulfillment in the conditions of the bombardment. Reality for H.D. is an identity between the self and the event.

The tapestry itself weaves the theme of the City under fire to haunt all other areas of the poem. It is not only a figure but a thread. In the foreground are woven, recalling the ground of flowers and small animals of Medieval tapestry, the first forms of our life, shell-fish, worm on the leaf, serpent. In verse XXXVIII the analogy with tapestry is openly drawn in answer to the counter questioning of her own thought. The antagonist of the poem argues:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{This search for historical parallels,} \\
&\text{research into psychic affinities,}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{has been done to death before,} \\
&\text{will be done again;}
\end{align*}
\]

and the protagonist of the poem defines clearly that search and research, parallels and affinities here are not operations toward a philosophy but operations of a fabrication, open possibilities of design. History, psyche, biology, the physics of the universe are elements of the artist’s creation. The poet and her reader, the animal and plant worlds, the stars and events are revealed in a fabric the poem weaves.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{my mind (yours),} \\
&\text{your way of thought (mine),}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{each has its peculiar intricate map,} \\
&\text{threads weave over and under}
\end{align*}
\]

\text{the jungle-growth}
of biological aptitudes,

inherited tendencies
This sense of the interrelation of figures, each particular “map” having its “inherited tendencies” and in turn its “aptitudes,” is on the one hand a sense of life in terms of correspondences and evolutions of form, Darwinian and ecological; on the other hand the artist’s sense of the work itself in which each part derives from and is source of the design of the whole.

Randall Jarrell is snide and means to dismiss H.D.’s work from serious consideration when in Partisan Review he comments glibly: “H.D. is History, and misunderstands a later stage of herself so spectacularly that her poem exists primarily as an anachronism.” Yet the statement “H.D. is History” is curiously right; for she takes her identity in her vision of history.

I make all things new.
I John saw. I testify.

So, in Tribute to the Angels she reminds us of another text where John at Patmos “misunderstands” a stage of history—for it is a puzzle of the Christian apocalypse that it mistakes history in order to create a history that had not been there before. So too, Bosch, seeing the conflict of rising nations and warring churches in the light of his Adamite heresy as an Armageddon, misunderstands the “history” of his times. But to speak of misunderstanding thus is to misunderstand History itself, for historians, no less than artists, are creative and make all their things new. Gibbon and Spengler have their fire in their “misunderstanding.” Thoth, Mercury, is patron of thought itself, mercurial where it informs.

* 

“To show how the worm turns” means something mercurial about the psyche, about the worm turning into its butterfly; means too something hermetic about the evolution of the psyche —the worm or dragon, the old serpent, that turns to betray us in ourselves. Following the tradition of the tapestry, the worm on the leaf is just such a detail of the flowering ground as we have seen in medieval work; and turns or leads into other figures of the scene:

Gods, goddesses
wear the winged head-dress

or horns, as the butterfly
antennae
to reappear in “the erect king-cobra crest,” the uraeus of the god-crown of Egypt.

* 
From The Book of the Dead I find: “Understanding said of him, ‘He is like that which he creates.’”

March 12, Sunday

In The Walls Do Not Fall, the quick-changing mercurial and the conspiring hermetic appear in the experience of the War itself.

We have seen how the most amiable under physical stress become wolves, jackals, mongrel curs;

“Let us, therefore,” H.D. turns: “entreat Hest”

in her attribute of Serquet,

the original great-mother, who drove

harnessed scorpions before her.
In the background—a scene resembling the City under Fire in Lot’s Daughters, a painting attributed to Lucas of Leyden, reproduced in Verve, January-March 1939. For H.D., it is not a City of the Plain but does recall Pompeii, Nineveh, and Babel. In Tribute to the Angels, in the central panel, it is compared to Rome, Jerusalem, Thebes. Above, there is the night sky with stars—Sirius, Vega, Arcturus; the constellations —Scorpion, Archer, Goat, Waterman, Aries “the wandering stars” and “the lordly fixed ones.” Over the world-city, over actual London, the skies open up and pour out their flames. It is the old wrath of god; it is the actual new incendiary attack. Fallen walls and blackened dwellings stand out, silhouetted in the raging light.

So, when in the poem, the poet says

\[
\begin{align*}
o, & \text{ do not look up} \\
& \text{into the air} \\
you who are occupied & \text{in the bewildering} \\
\text{sand-heap maze} & \text{of present-day endeavour;}
\end{align*}
\]

it is a reference to the incendiary bombardment that has cast a confusing light upon the common-sense business of men. But it is also, we begin to realize, a reference to the stars.

\[
\text{You will be, not so much frightened}
\]
\[
\text{as paralyzed with inaction}
\]

refers then both to heeding the war and to heeding the stars.

The worship of nature is H.D.’s first heresy; and then, in that worship there is further the willing evocation of and participation in the enchantment of nature. Woodland and sea shrine are primaries of the poet. Helios is a spiritual light but he is always the Sun. But in the first poems the stars do not have the place they are to have later in her feeling of ratios. Hermes is a garden herm; he is not yet Hermes-Mercury having the light of a star. In “The Shrine”, She-Who-Watches-Over-The-Sea is not yet thought of as the star Venus, the dual identity with Lucifer,

\[
\text{Phosphorus at sun-rise}
\]
\[
\text{Hesperus at sun-set}
\]
so important in the concept of the later work. In the great ratio that morning-evening star will be for H.D. as for T.S. Eliot in The Four Quartets the star of Mary. Eliot’s “Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,” protectress of ships, is the benign persona of that same power, the ancient sea-borne goddess, who in “The Shrine” appears as the wrecker of ships.

The Orion of “Orion Dead” is the titanic Orion, child of earth, as Apollodorus drew him, ravener of the woodlands. Heat of the sun, light of the torch—what touch knows and can know defines the limits of vision. Her early ratios are all within the reality established concert of sensory-sensual data. “Bid the stars shine forever” I find in “Centaur Song”;

\[
O \text{ I am eager for you!} \\
as the Pleiads shake \\
white light in whiter water \\
so shall I take you?
\]

in “Fragment Thirty-Six” (from Sappho’s “I know not what to do: my mind is divided”) and in “Fragment Forty” (“Love . . . bittersweet”):

\[
(such fire rent me with Hesperus,) \\
then the day broke.
\]

What is beyond reach enters into Collected Poems 1925 only as it appears in earthly mortal experience, a reflection in water, at most an attendant of dawn. And in “The Hedgehog” where H.D. unfolds adventure by adventure her sense of the divine world, though Zeus is translated into “the father of everyone ... like the other God our Father which art in Heaven” and His messengers are listed, the stars are not among them. This God remains the Weltgeist.

It seems to Madge, questioning the learned Doctor Blum in her search for the meaning of herisson, that it might be a messenger.” ‘A messenger?’ Doctor Blum inquired, having, it appeared, forgotten about the eagle. ‘Oh, a messenger’—he remembered—‘like—like what, exactly, Roselein?’ ‘I mean a sort of thing that—that helps people. I mean, like the eagle was a messenger of God, and the cuckoo was God, and the swan was God too, when he was most white and beautiful and had Helen and Cassandra, who made the war of Troy, and the messengers who are called Oreads...’” The angels or people of the heaven are birds, but they are not yet stars.

Up to 1925, anyway, for all of H.D.’s early identification of her time with Alexandrian times, her imagination keeps the bounds of the pre-Alexandrian Greek mind. Like Xenophanes of Colophon, she holds to the reality of earth. “For everything comes from earth,” Xenophanes maintained: “and everything goes back to earth at last. This is the upped limit of the earth that we see at our feet, in contact with the air; but the part beneath goes down to infinity.” This is the chthonian good sense of the Greeks;
and the sensory directive of the Imagists in poetry, disciplining the imagination to the
concrete and away from aerial fancy, is close in spirit. “She whom they call Iris,” xenophonnes wrote: “she too is actually a cloud, purple and flame-red and yellow to behold.”
“The intelligence of Man grows towards the material that is present,” Empedocles taught. Even in Orphism this strong prejudice or practical wisdom insists upon its elements of earth, air, fire, and water; *pneuma* is breath, and the *Anima Mundi* is the element air in which we take our living breath.

The tradition of the substantial resisted the sidereal theology of the Chaldeans “as long as Greece remained Greece,” as Cumont puts it. Plato’s “great visible gods,” divine intangible ultimate realities or essences, were the wedge; but for the imagination to entertain the lords of light or the star of Bethlehem, a conversion of mind had to take place. Vision in and of itself became a highest criterion of the real. Things got out of hand, man saw and took self in what he could not grasp. To have a star then, to take life in the remotest possibility of the real and even in the risk of what was not realized—the unreal—was at the root of the new understanding or misunderstanding of the divine. What we see is Man's deep and transforming engagement with an “other” world of nonsense, and nonsense, the troubling of reality that we know as Christendom, not only the City of God but also Alice's “Wonderland.”

The early determination of known limits remains in *The War Trilogy* working side by side in the fabric of consciousness with the later cosmic ratios. There is not only the stellar phantasm of

\[\textit{The Presence was spectrum-blue,} \]
\[\textit{ultimate blue ray,} \]

like the blue aura of popular theosophy or the blue flame or light that Wilhelm Reich, heretical psychoanalyst, tells us he saw in the living cell, but there is also the strong counter-feeling of necessary bounds, that the hermit within

\[\textit{like the planet} \]
\[\textit{senses the finite,} \]
\[\textit{it limits its orbit} \]

What she has sensed, what she has dreamt, what words suggest are distinguished even as they are interwoven in one experience. “*I sense my own limit*” remains a primary term of her art. And the dual proportions—the apprehension of the great stars and the humanistic concept of self—give an ironic charm to her admission that follows the “*O, do not look up /into the air,*” address to those others who are occupied in “present-day endeavour:”
and anyhow,
we have not crawled so very far

up our individual grass-blade
toward our individual star.
The figures of the foreground must be, and their world, seen as under a microscope's lens, enlarged. To the left we find the world of tidal life, a margin; and the under-water. Her sense here is evolutionary, that given in the earliest life forms we will find “the craftsman,” “the hermit” or “self-out-of-self, / selfless, that pearl-of-great-price.” In *Tribute to the Angels*, she will insist again:

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No poetic phantasy
but a biological reality,

a fact: I am an entity
like bird, insect, plant

or sea-plant cell;
I live; I am alive;
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To the right: the field where the worm clings to the grass-blade, explores the rose-thorn (that here, in the transformation of the tapestry becomes a forest), eats at the leaf, devours the ear-of-wheat—

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for I know how the Lord God
is about to manifest, when I

the industrious worm,
spin my own shroud.
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This same insect perspective of the psyche appears in Pound's vision of the *Pisan Cantos*, in the “nor is it for nothing that the chrysalids mate in the air” of Canto 74 that colors the meaning of the Confucian “To study with the white wings of time Passing” that occurs later in the same Canto. In Canto LXXX:

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if calm be after tempest
that the ants seem to wobble
as the morning sun catches their shadows
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leads towards the “The ant’s a centaur in his dragon world” of the close of LXXXI. These reflections which Pound draws from seeing the actual small world about him enormous are like the mirages or loomings in which ships and the Farallon Islands upon the horizon appear giants reflected from layers of air beyond Stinson Beach.

In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the worm is an identity of the poet. The identification
may be taken as metaphorical, illustrative of the poet’s persistence:

_In me (the worm) clearly_
_is no righteousness, but this —_

*persistence; I escaped spider-snare,_
*bird-claw, scavenger bird-beak,*

*clung to grass-blade,*
*the back of a leaf . . .*

But the I that was shell-fish and that was also worm recalls the incantations of the Taliesin wherever life has been or is:

*I have been teacher to all Christendom_
*I shall be on the face of the earth until Doom,*
_And it is not known what my flesh is, whether flesh_
*or fish.*

_The Book of Taliesin_, Alwyn and Brinley Rees tell us in _Celtic Heritage_, is replete with utterances beginning with ‘I have been’, “and the things he has been include inanimate objects — stock, axe, chisel, coracle, sword, shield, harp-string, raindrop, foam; animals such as bull, stallion, stag, dog, cock, salmon, eagle—and a grain which grew on a hill.” These identifications may be also the impersonations of the actor — the animal dancer in the caves of pre-history or the twentieth century student of Stanislavsky.

There were often times in childhood when, lying in the tall grass, the perspective of the world shifted so that this little scope became the eye’s universe and an ant or worm was hero or protagonist of that world; his journey along a leaf, over a stem, around a stone, became momentous. So that I would forget myself in the ant’s purposes or in the worm’s intent. That was one instance where one’s consciousness was transported to another world that was still this world.

The other, related perspective, was the one of H.D.’s poem, as the identity would come in dreams, where one was an ant or worm, living a life within a life, in a perspective of the ant’s “dragon world” within one’s own sensible human world. Though I am persuaded to the truth of Freud’s sexual analysis of the language of dreams and of our daily lives, as a poet I know that language has many such realms for the wave of life itself strives to speak in us, and from some parent cell drifting in the first seas, child of Ocean and of radiations from Sun or even from the stars beyond, a germ of animal sympathy has survived to find its life in me as a man. In some protomammal—mutation or conversion of a germinal form—all the yet-to-evolve possibilities of wolf, rabbit, elephant or man lay hidden; we are co-expressions of the idea of the mammal, members
of a “kingdom” as the biologists recognize. There may be then in the differentiated members an intuition of the undifferentiated potency in which we belong to a tree of living forms, and may dream in the tree of being not only ancestral entities but collateral entities.

There is the curious poetic tradition that Denis Saurat traces in Gods of the People not only of other worlds but of other lives, not only of a divided mind but of a divided existence. What idea of reality lay back of Blake's

*The caterpillar on the Leaf*
*Reminds thee of thy Mother's grief.*

Not only trance mediums made trips to other planets and stars but poets too practiced mental travelling “to the other side” of the waters as in Blake or to the other side of the interstellar abyss as in Victor Hugo's *Contemplations*. Here Saurat traces a cosmos in which every being has many personalities—“each has other parts, elsewhere in space, elsewhere in time.” “A frowning thistle implores my stay,” Blake writes:

*What to others a trifle appears*
*Fills me full of smiles or tears;*
*For double the vision my eyes do see,*
*And a double vision is always with me*
*With my inward Eye ‘tis an old Man grey;*
*With my outward a thistle across my way—*

The great *Maya* of Indian thought seems to invade the West. But if *poiein* means to make, and poet is maker; Maya, Zimmer tells us, means to measure, to form, to build; the *maya* of illusion of the leaf is itself in Indian thought a great poetry. It is not out of order that in the poetic tradition of other cultures, even in England or France or in America, like concepts should appear. Victor Hugo in *Pleurs dans la nuit* hears a stone that he has kicked out of his way cry out:

*I took Thebes in its ruin,*
saw Susa on its knees
*I was Baal at Tyre! I was Scylla in Rome!*

“So each man,” Saurat gathering the idea from fairy tradition and poetic lights and also from folk-lore of unorthodox twentieth century Christianity, finds “is spread out in time and space, has parts of his being in the past, parts in the future, parts somewhere on earth, parts in the stars and in spiritual worlds parallel to this physical world.”

The ratio between the worm and the star, the identity taken in the mollusc or the wild-goose, may isolate H.D. from her contemporaries. Deeply as Ezra Pound drank at the fountain of Yeats's occult lore, though in the *Cantos*, as in *The War Trilogy*, angelic
powers appear and parts of the poet's being are in the past, though the ant looms large in reflection, the poet's identity does not become confused in the web of many incarnations. But this same confusion that isolates H.D. from her contemporaries unites her with the imagination of Blake and Victor Hugo.

As early as “Narthex” in 1928 we find a conversion in H.D.'s concept from the Greek one-dimension to the Venetian—“renaissance” Raymonde calls it. She practices a magic of warming and drifting identifications. “The sun would soon go suddenly but mites still swarmed within it ... people ... people ... in the porches of the piazetta, in and out of the cathedral doorways. People swarmed and people drifted...” “I want to be a great bee,” Raymonde thinks: “I want to crawl in and forget everything in this thing.” She sees Saint Mark's Cathedral as a great flower.

Raymonde's mind, it seems to her, rises out of confusion, out of hysteria, “a lily, rising on tall stem.” “Loss of identity is the gift of Venice,” she continues: “power to crawl, snail self up the surface of high window and creep half-hatched moth in among tenuous rootlets and dynamic deep earth feelers.” It is this experience that Raymonde cannot share with Gareth.

“I am the child of Gaia (Earth) and of starry Ouranos (Heaven),” so the Orphic initiate testified in the Underworld. H.D.'s “Earth” or mother was named Helen, was Helena or Greece then. And her father, the astronomer, was a master or keeper of the stars, Ouranos then. The stars had been there in the beginning for her, as her father's study or property—her paternal inheritance. In the prose works of the middle period, 1925 to 1935, there is the Solomon's Seal star of “Narthex” and the movie star of The Usual Star, but the stars of Heaven do not appear. In the poems the stars begin to come out—Narcissus in “Myrtle Bough” turns from his “chrysalis of steel and silver” and “who cast my silver-self afar” sees his own image in Hesperus

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for one star
rises above the sand-dunes
one star lights
the pool above the marshes
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“Yourself in myself,/ mirror for a star,/ star for a mirror.” In “Myrtle Bough” the Greek theme is mixed with “the contents / of Assyrian phials,” with “dreams of Medes and Grecians.” The star cult enters H.D.'s poetry as it entered Greek culture, an invasion of Assyrian-Chaldean-Persian influences—“the Median rites.” In the “Stars wheel in purple” of Let Zeus Record, Hesperus, Aldebaran, Sirius, the Pleiades, and “Orion's sapphires, luminous” appear; they are, we know, also actual lovers. “Take me home,” H.D. will sing in The Walls Do Not Fall:

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where we may greet individually
Sirius, Vega, Arcturus
where these separate entities
are intimately concerned with us,
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These now seem most surely to be the stars of an astrological cult, but we must remember too that “take me home” is “take me back.” That “anywhere / where stars blaze through clear air” can be London before the War, when that brilliant new constellation of poets appeared together briefly: Pound, Eliot, Lawrence, Williams, Marianne Moore; each separate entity intimately concerned with H.D. as none of them were so concerned later. And back of that “home”, the first home appears: it is the study of the father. In *Tribute to Freud* H.D. makes it clear that the study, the father’s room, of Professor Freud leads back to the study of Professor Doolittle. These great astral forces then of *The War Trilogy*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{where great stars pour down} \\
\text{their generating strength, Arcturus} \\
\text{or the sapphires of the Northern Crown;}
\end{align*}
\]

are charged with the powers of living men.

[April 24th, 1963]: In the dream I had gone to meet Jess at the country house or retreat of Muriel Rukeyser, but this Muriel Rukeyser was another. Even in the dream I was troubled by the fact that I could not identify the woman, and now it seems to me, for Muriel Rukeyser in my mind has always impersonated the poetess, that the house in the dream may have been the retreat of the Poetess Herself. It was in a village on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, a very English village with great trees, that had not changed since the earliest days of colonial America. This Pennsylvania home may have been H.D.’s Bethlehem, and then, because the stars come into the picture, it may be the Bethlehem too, for just before sleep I had been rereading her account of her father and mother in *Tribute To Freud*. Her mother, she tells us there, was a descendant of one of the original groups of the Unitas Fratrum, the Moravian Brotherhood, of Count Zinzendorf. The Moravians had settled in the New World, in the earliest days of colonial Pennsylvania. What returned to my thought as I began work this morning was the revelation of the stars. For the dream Muriel Rukeyser, the Poetess of the major arcana of my own dream-tarot, took us out to see the night sky. All the stars of the cosmos had come forth from the remotest regions into the visible. At first I was struck by the brilliance of Orion, but as I looked the field was crowded with stars, dense cells of images and then almost animal constellations of the night sky. It was as if we saw the whole over-populated species of Man and in that congregation of the living and dead, the visible and the invisible members of the whole, we began to make out patterns of men, animal entities whose cells were living souls.

“We see these skies here,” the Poetess said, “because we are very close to the destruction of the world.”
In the middle ground of the panel, where men and gods mingle, under the stars and the fire, under fire (light and flame), what we see in the Heavens and what we see in terms of our evolutionary life (above and below) are dimensions now of something happening in a multiple image, like those revelations of one thing in another or mingling of images in Salvador Dali's dream paintings.

Where in the foreground of our Nature the life of the worm is enacted, suggesting in his cocoon a shroud, and in his metamorphosis a resurrection; in the middle-ground of our human Person, we are reminded that men, gods, wear winged and horned head-dresses

as the butterfly
antennae,

or the erect king-cobra crest
to show how the worm turns.

These images are rimes and recall previous occurrences of the poem to the mind as echoes of sound do. There is, as there is a highly developed melody of syllables, a melody of figures in H. D.’s work. Neither rime nor image occurs as a device, to punctuate line-end or to enliven some convention in its keeping; but they are cells of the tissue of meaning and feeling itself. Blake's Worm on the Leaf is now not only “thy Mother's grief” but Pharaoh, Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt—two kingdoms or two natures or two minds, and will be, in verse XXXV of The Walls Do Not Fall,

in the light of what went before

“be ye wise . . . as serpents,” woven into one figure, a felt design in the poem that in turn transforms our sense of design in history where Blake, Pharaoh, and the cunning of the serpent that the Zohar tells us Jacob stole from Laban, enter in to a new continuum.

“Transformation aims at the continuum of all perceptions,” Robert Kelly writes in his Notes on the Poetry of Images (1960). “Percepts are from dreams or from waking, rise from the unconscious or from the retina of the awakened eye. Poetry, like dream reality, is the juncture of the experienced with the never experienced. Poetry, like waking reality, is the fulfillment of the imagined and the unimagined.” Then: “Poetry is not the art of relating word to word, but the ACT of relating word to percept, percept to percept, image to image until the continuum is achieved.” And: “The progression of images constitutes the fundamental rhythm of the poem.”

There is always reference to tapestry and painting—these images in H.D.’s work are interwoven; the movement of the poem in time is parallel to an imagined movement
of the eye over the surface of the larger picture in time. But the fusion of voice heard and image seen along the track of a moving, changing picture is more immediately related to the sound-track and the film of the newest “visual” art, the movie. The sequence of the poem in which in the opening “shots” we see first “rails” then “rails gone” then “guns” then the old town square, in fog, for there is “mist and mist-grey, no colour,” and the frame changes to reveal “Luxor bee, chick and hare” carved in stone writing. The transitions, the flash-backs, the movement of the eye from object to object to tell its story, the projection—all these aspects of H.D.’s art relate not only to the stream of consciousness or the free associations of her analysis with Freud in 1933 and 1934 but to the techniques of the cinema.

Answering The Little Review’s valedictory questionnaire in May 1929, H .D. wrote: “Just at the moment I am involved with pictures. We have almost finished a slight lyrical four reel little drama, done in and about the villages here, some of the village people and English friends. The work has been enchanting, never anything such fun and I myself have learned to use the small projector and spend literally hours alone here in my apartment, making the mountains and village streets and my own acquaintances reel past me in light and light and light. All the light within light fascinates me, ‘satisfies’ me, I feel like a cat playing with webs and webs of silver.” In this new art, contemporaneous with H.D.’s own lifetime, painting and tapestry could be recalled. H.D. sees the projection of the image as a web of silver, or is it the thread of film that she means? But “web” occurs again—it is not only what she most wants to do or know or be, it is also what she most fears: “I fear the being caught in any one set formula or set of circumstances, I fear poverty in that it might catch me up in some ugly web of the wrong sort of things and the wrong sort of attitudes. I fear people from the future who may ‘trap’ me.”

Between 1928 and 1930, Kenneth Macpherson, Bryher’s second husband, edited and published Close Up, “The Only Magazine Devoted to Films as an Art,” with Bryher as Assistant editor. Old associates appear from the literary nexus of the early twenties—Gertrude Stein is there to contribute her avant-garde note, and Dorothy Richardson writes an elegiac to the silent film. But the writers in Close Up seem not to be associated, as writers in Des Imagistes, The Little Review, transition, or Exile, were, with a common cause in a new art in writing; they suggest often the intimate amateur correspondence of a social “in-group.” “(Dear H.D. Pardon the theft)” Hay Chowl can write in quoting an article of H.D.’s. The “We have finished a slight lyrical four reel little drama” of H.D.’s reply to The Little Review, with “some of the village people and English friends” came as an account of how far she was from her old literary associations. The thought of Pound, Williams, or Lawrence is remote now; even the profession of poetry will not do when she is asked “What should you most like to do, to know, to be?” In this “Bryher” milieu new associations were forming, however, that will play their part in H.D.’s return in full to the profession of poetry in her last phase. When the London correspondent of Close Up, Robert Herring, later becomes editor of Life and Letters Today a new literary context appears. Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson, and H.D., will be a familiar expectation; Bryher is an even more constant contributor; Edith Sitwell enters the picture (and
there may be a common ground of magic and visionary prophetic mode between the later poetry of Edith Sitwell and H.D.'s *War Trilogy*; carried over from the impetus of *Close Up*, the art of film becomes a new department of *Life and Letters Today*, and more important, the genius of Eisenstein is brought into the new ground.

The history of “in-groups”—Bloomsbury, Villefranche, or Basel—as yet to be studied out. Literary historians are shy, even unhappy, to account for the way purely social factors enter in to the picture of the development of the art. We are attracted, moth-mind to the flame, by the brilliance of the company. Within the charmed circle the four reel little drama glows, we are drawn in. To have been included! But just here I falter. From the outside, the circle is an armed exclusion. Raymonde, Gareth, Daniel in H.D.’s novels test each other as if they tested the defenses of a citadel. One could never be certain that circumstances, surroundings—for a moment these walls suggest the other walls of *The War Trilogy*—would not set one apart among “the wrong sort of things and the wrong sort of attitudes.” Here, as in the web that satisfies and the web that she fears of H.D.’s reply, the attractive social circle is forbidding; fearful within, and fearful without.

The group of Bryher’s friends are involved now, as she is, in films. In film-talk and film study, and also in the making of a film. For Kenneth Macpherson in 1929 worked on a film with H.D. as star. Somewhere within the charmed circle copies may still exist. The “silver-self” “cast” as a “star” by Narcissus in the poem “Myrtle Bough” takes on a new meaning. And the medium of film is ultimately in the image projected in terms of light, cast upon the screen. Back and forth the puns of being cast in a star-role, being cast on the screen, being cast in a new light, dance in bewildering webs of exchange. “The light within light fascinates me,” H.D. wrote. It’s a risky reading that for a moment again another impulse arises linking the flood of light streaming out from the movie projector with “the rain of beauty” of *The Flowering of the Rod* and just beyond with “where great stars pour down / their generating strength.” “The sky is skyey apparition,” Dorothy Richardson writes in *Close Up*: “white searchlight. The book remains the intimate, domestic friend, the golden lamp at the elbow.”

In the book tapestry, painting, film may be evoked as one vision where the mind is weaver, painter, projector. Here images are not seen in locus of the subconscious or locus of the eye’s retina, but they are *visualized*, created in the mind’s light that men have always puzzled over. In the midst of the City under Fire in *The Walls Do Not Fall* there is a light in which the artist works “circled with what they call the cartouche.” The *cartouche* in French is an escutcheon upon which or within which figures that are emblematic appear; it is also a cartridge. In Webster’s it says: “2. An oval or oblong figure, especially one on an Egyptian monument containing a sovereign’s name. 3. In some fireworks, the case containing the inflammable materials.” H.D. makes a passing joke about it, a play of words between her art and the rival war: “folio, manuscript, old parchment /will do for cartridge cases;” and then that “Hatshepsut’s name
Like the surrealists after Freud, she sets up new movements in the mind by the evocation of puns. Or like Eisenstein in his new language of cinematography where montage, rapid sequences and juxtapositions of images extend the vocabulary of the film. “The technical possibility,” he writes in *Close Up*, “foolishly called a ‘trick’, is undoubtedly just as important a factor in the construction of the new cinematography as is the new conception of staging from which it is sprung.” Where it is not their pointedness or cleverness but their power to disturb our set idea, our sense of outline, that counts.

Here the content of the *cartouche*, the Queen’s name, and then the thought of her, so that even in reference she appears to the mind’s eye, is something that threatens the cherished reality of the tangible; as the immediacy of God in evocation or invocation, beyond the sensory or outside the sensory, is something we resist the thought of. Stars, immortals, gods, contained in their cartouche or cartridge, the poem, if they invade our sense of the actual, disturb, are “inflammable materials.”

And *The War Trilogy* itself in the mode of the apocalyptic revelation contains within the circle of its ecstatic longing and belonging the light of joy that is also the flame-heat of a stored-up wrath. The rain of fire is God’s wrath, and in a curious emanation the “sword” emerges from the “word.” Were it not for men’s thoughts and dreams, we realize, there would have been no war. The realization, once it is there, never ceases to trouble H.D. The terror and evil of the war give power and beauty to the poem.

*Never in Rome*
*so many martyrs fell;*

*not in Jerusalem,*
*never in Thebes,*

*so many stood and watched*
*chariot-wheels turning,*

from the fearful scene a proud music takes over, and the poet’s voice takes on strength and resonance. The poem evoking, summoning forth from where it was hidden, this meaning of war, wrath and the fulfillment of prophecy—is apocalyptic. Ammunition. A cartouche.

Within the circle of initiates—the “we” that in H.D.’s life had been a group of poets and then an exclusive social group, and now, in wartime London, was a group of occultists—the encircling containment of an art, a knowledge in which figures become emblematic—we see the double image of a group and their patron or leader. One, among whom H.D. as writer belongs, children of Hermes,
wistful, ironical, wilful  
who have no part in  
new-world reconstruction

take on from the cartouche an Egyptian character. But the cartouche that contains or surrounds the group is also “a spacious bare meeting-house” where, within the congregation of the dream, a man appears, “upright, slender.” Once, long ago, she had been in love with him in Daniel. There is no time for that. The whole scene exists in a split second. The poet was dozing, perhaps... anyway: “then I woke with a start / of wonder and asked myself” she says. He is, or might have been, Ra, Osiris, Amen. In the projection, between his circle and the stars, he appears in another avatar as the zodiacal Aries painted in His Zeus glory—the Golden Fleece and the Lamb, as in the late middle ages He had indeed been worshipped at the Court of Burgundy. It is the Christ who impends, and His advent is created in the poem as it was created in history in the alembic of troubled boundaries, superimposed and adulterated civilizations, dissolved religions—a “trick” montage of Greek, Persian, Hindu, Egyptian, Syrian gods in one unorthodox Jewish god, a synthetic realization scandalous to the orthodox, in His incarnation an heretical affront, as H.D.’s realization in the War Trilogy was scandalous to the literary orthodoxy of the day. It was “silly,” “irresponsible,” “compounded of primitive elements yet rather appealing to a sensibility both modern and confused,” to present the world of the poet’s imagination in the old sense of the dream-vision; to be aware throughout that this dream-vision was still the very human mode of thought that Freud had studied; and in it all to insist upon the divine inspiration. Not only the thought of the Master in the dream but His Presence:

In the meeting house, we see who the new Master over Love is, whom the star from the beginning, announced.

He might even be the authentic Jew stepped out from Velasquez;

As long ago the sculptor appeared at work between the stone and the light in the poem “Pygmalion”, creating a medium at once for his art and for the god, and H.D. herself pictured her part as poet in terms of the chiseled line, the tempered and hammered image, now the painter appears at work between the dream and the realization or incarnation, and H.D. names the palette as one with script and letters that

are magic, indelibly stamped on the atmosphere somewhere.

The magic charges the Christ of Velasquez with living Presence; a confusion between what the painter has made and what has inspired the painter in which the work of art has a life of its own. So that the poet recalling the eyes in the painting lowered know
that open they “would daze, bewilder,” and in that bewilderment then testifies:

\[
\text{I assure you that the eyes} \\
\text{of Velasquez’ crucified} \\
\text{now look straight at you,} \\
\text{and they are amber and they are fire.}
\]
“An image, in our sense,” Pound writes in his 1916 Memoir of Gaudier Brzeska, “is real because we know it directly. If it have an age-old traditional meaning this may serve as proof to the professional student of symbology that we have stood in the deathless light, or that we have walked in some particular arbour of his traditional paradiso, but that is not our affair. It is our affair to render the image as we have perceived or conceived it.” In The Serious Artist (1913), he saw that the responsibility of the arts was to “bear witness and define for us the inner nature and conditions of man”; “Even this pother about gods reminds one that something is worthwhile,” he went on. And in “Religio” from the same pre-war period, Pound presents the Renaissance neo-paganism of Gemistos Plethon, Ficino or Pico della Mirandola, the higher humanism in which gods are “eternal states of mind” manifest “when the states of mind take form” that may appear to the sense of vision or to the sense of knowledge. Gnostic then as well as imagist, but not Christian. “What are the gods of this rite?” Pound asks, and answers: “Apollo, and in some sense Nêlos, Diana in some of her phases, also the Cytherian goddess.” “To what other gods is it fitting, in harmony or in adjunction with these rites, to give incense?” “To Kore and to Demeter, also to lares and to oreiads and to certain elemental creatures.”

Form and rite here are not associated by Pound with the image and practice of the poet, though, as in “Religio” it is by beauty that we know the divine forms, in another early essay, “The Tradition” (1913), the tradition in poetry is “a beauty which we preserve,” and in passing, Pound tells us “We know that men worshipped Mithra with an arrangement of pure vowel-sounds.” This is as far as Pound goes toward a suggestion of the poet’s creative involvement with the divine world. Listing the reports that the artist must not falsify, Pound in The Serious Artist includes that he must not falsify his report “as to the nature of his ideal of this, that or the other, of god”—where Pound has all but put god aside among the random fancies of some men, with “this, that or the other”, as if he wanted to be sure he would not be taken for a Christian sentimentalist or enthusiast. “If god exist,” he adds. And not an “ideal” but a fact: there is no qualification here of “if the life force exist”. “We might come to believe that the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy,” Pound argues: “something more or less like electricity or radio-activity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying. A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in swift motion.”

In Cavalcanti Pound speaks directly of the god in the work of art: “The best Egyptian sculpture is magnificent plastic; but its force comes from a non-plastic idea, i.e. the god is inside the statue . . . The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential, and the rest ‘accidental’ in the philosophic technical sense. The shape occurs.” We recognize here as we recognize in H.D.’s Pygmalion the informing genius of Gaudier-Brzeska. For this driven youth sculpted, wrote or talked late at night to H.D. and Richard Aldington as he talked to
Pound or Hulme—to create again and again in talk his vision of the artist-demiurgos at work in a spiritual vortex. In his essays and letters the language is charged with the character of his nature and art: “the driving power”, “life in the absolute”, “the intensity of existence.” In H D.’s early idea of her art, in images of fire and cut stone, the ghost of Gaudier does enter in; as it enters in in Pound’s idea of her art in motives of force and form.

Does Bergson’s *élan vital* enter in here? For Ezra Pound in his first London years the *élan vital* was very much in the air—in the theosophical environs of Yeats, Mead, and *The Quest* lectures, and then again in an entirely other circle, in the philosophical environs of the Bergsonian T.E. Hulme. In his *Prolegomena and Credo* of 1912, Pound sees his own turning to the Melic poets and to the Medieval romance tradition in poetry as vital, not literary: “a man feeling the divorce of life and his art may naturally try to resurrect a forgotten mode if he find in that mode some leaven, or if he think he sees in it some element lacking in contemporary art which might unite that art again to its sustenance, life.”

When Wyndham Lewis’s scorn for the romantic takes over—ranting against what he sees as the cult of Time, the Primitive and the Child—Bergson will be out of bounds. When Eliot’s pervading concern for respectability introduces its criterion with the rhetoric of a new literary orthodoxy—though Pound’s clan will win through in the *Cantos*, flooding passages with image and presence of light and divine energy—in Pound’s theory kulchur will replace life as the sustenance of art.

But in his first development—pre-War, pre-Eliot and Lewis—Pound’s premises are not ideological but psychological. He insists upon the intellectual and emotional complex where “ideas, or fragments of ideas, the emotion and concomitant emotions, must be in harmony, must form an organism.” In poetry “the mind is upborne upon the emotional surge.” This relation of the poem to a wave of life expression is as far as Pound is to go to relate the art to an organic creativity; and in his later criticism even these ideas of emotion and surge become diffident. The Aphrodite of *The Cantos* does not rise as Hesiod would have her from a bloody wave; she is not the goddess of sexual love and life renewal Pound addressed in *The Spirit of Romance* but the Aphrodite of the higher intellect in which Beauty has become a pure essence. The spirit of romance is supplanted by the spirit of the schools. Philosophers, not poets, form the great tradition; and among philosophers, those who seek the victory of the mind over the passions are now Pound’s masters. So, in *The Pisan Cantos*, Anchises lays hold of the goddess’s “flanks of air/drawing her to him / Cythera potens”; yet even this phantasm of the air is not the very Aphrodite, who is “no cloud, but the crystal body.” In Canto 91, *Section: Rock-Drill*, she appears again as “the GREATER CRYSTAL”—in its capitalization the insistence is clear. “Right reason takes the place of the earlier “intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time”; and “from fire to crystal / via the body of light” the Princess Ra-Set “enters the protection,”

*the great cloud is about her,*
*She has entered the protection of crystal.*
Here the “river of crystal” appears, carrying the soul-boat up out of the carnal and psychic mire into “the body of light come forth from the body of fire”, a sublimation that contrasts sharply with H.D.’s impassioned evocation in *Tribute to the Angels*, “re-light the flame”, where venery and the venereous (the boa of heat) are called forth from the body of fire and re-related to venerate, venerator in the name of Venus-Aphrodite.

*

H.D. sees the gods not only as eternal state of mind, higher beings, or great images cast in a phanopoeia, but as expressive entities of the worshipper’s own creative life:

> Shall I let myself be caught
> in my own light?

Later, her Freudian persuasion will reinforce this view, but as early as “Pygmalion”, the worked image (each particular intellectual and emotional instance that becomes experience then) is thought of not only as being realized in itself, an expression, but as an entity in a psychological process, a projection. She has passed from the idea of the artist’s work as having its end in the object, the image, as if captured in stone, the closed system of beauty, to the dramatic perspective in which the art is a magic ground in which thought and feeling come into being and meaning returns from the object to inform the artist as he works—a way of participation thru the created object in a self-creating life; from

> I made image upon image for my use,
> I made image upon image, for the grace
> of Pallas was my flint

to the more involved recognition of poetry as a creative process, as in 1917 she had concentrated in a stanza the questions that in the 1930s will lead Malraux to his massive *Psychology of Art*:

> Now am I the power
> that has made this fire
> start from the rocks?
> am I the god?
> or does this fire carve me
> for its use?

In turn, the creative process is recognized as a life quest or romance—Psyche’s quest for Eros, the soul’s quest for salvation, a new Master. She had passed from the persona or
mask worn in the play to the psyche, the soul of the play that comes into being thru its masks. When, in *The Walls Do Not Fall* Christ appears in the image "stepped out from Velasquez," her sight of the painting, as with the statue of Pygmalion, has broken the boundaries of the aesthetic into meaning. The work is not self-contained but serves another purpose, that eyes “look straight at you”—a magic efficacy, the very presence of Christ.

In such a transformation paint or stone take on body, as in carnality in amber eyes that would shine so in the poem, as if they could shine so in the painting. Here H.D.’s insistence that she is, we are, involved in the poem as if it were a field of associations brings us up against such a bias in aesthetic as Dewey has in *Art in Experience*: “If the perception is then eeked out by reminiscence or by sentimental associations derived from literature—as is usually the case in paintings popularly regarded as poetic—a simulated aesthetic experience occurs.” The criticism would seem to apply to my own appreciations as I go, where the poem and the painting are no objects but operations in a field of reminiscences, the perception eeked out everywhere by associations that are sentimental, these sense of life and the mentality so identical for me. There can be no accident that along with my changing sense of poetry in my read-in of H.D.’s work, and in my own writing the flooding out into literary derivations, has come a breakthru or breakdown of aesthetic evaluation of painting to include literary qualities in early Cezanne, Moreau, Bocklin, or the Pre-Raphaelites Burne-Jones and Rosetti, painters long exiled from the dominant taste of my day because of their false poetics. H.D. has been dismissed by adverse critics with slurring references to William Morris; as Pound has been put down with hints of Swinburnism; Joyce with aspersions of Pager. “There are works of art that merely excite,” Dewey warns: “in which activity is aroused without the composure of satisfaction, without fulfillment within the terms of the medium. Energy is left without organization. Dramas are then melodramatic; paintings of nudes are pornographic; the fiction that is read leaves us discontented with the world in which we are, alas, compelled to live without the opportunity for the romantic adventure and high heroism suggested by the story-book.”

For Ezra Pound, the operation of the work outside the spirit of its art, the excess in which what might have been aesthetic, beautiful, or later, in Vorticism, energetic, becomes psychological—sensually, sexually, or religiously sentimentalized—the psychic chiaroscuro of and in any thing—is distasteful, even abhorrent. After *The Spirit of Romance* in 1910, Pound goes no further in the master of Dante, though he pays homage to Dante's mastery as a poet, for Pound would put aside the heart of the matter, the imagination of a Christian synthesis; as in *The Cantos* he can include the Greek gods in his history but must dismiss those unchaste aspects that the Cambridge classicists and the Vienna psychoanalysts had begun to suggest; he must exclude too the mire and the star in which Christ is born. There is a threatened chastity of mind in Pound that would put away, not face, the thought of hellish things, here in considering the Divine World, as later in considering fascism, where also he cannot allow that the sublime is complicit, involved in a total structure, with the obscene—what goes on backstage.
Spirit in the *Cantos* will move as a crystal, clean and clear of the muddle, even the filth, of the world and its tasks thru which Psyche works in suffering towards Eros.

“The conception of the body as perfect instrument of the increasing intelligence pervades,” he writes of Cavalcanti. He is naturally repelled when in Rubens he sees the flesh portrayed as meat. He rages like a Puritan bigot faced with the Whore of Babylon at the adulterous—latinizing—syntax of Milton, who “shows a complete ignorance of the things of the spirit.” Usury brings “whores for Eleusis”, corrupts the sacred orgy; the art too, under usury, becomes whorish and profane.

Healthy mindedness is an important virtue for Pound’s art of the clean line. Clean mindedness, then. “The old cults were sane in their careful inquisition or novitiate,” he insists in *The Spirit of Romance*. Here and in the Cavalcanti essay Pound insists upon the “well-balanced”, the “mens sana in corpore sano” base. “All these are clean, all without hell-obsession”, he writes of Ventadour, Guido, Botticelli, Ambrogio Praedis; and then, it does not occur to him that we must turn to others if we seek information concerning the nature of darker matters. To think at all, to imagine or to be concerned with, that state of human psyche whose light is Luciferian and whose adversity is Satanic—much less to admit that in our common humanity we are ourselves somehow involved in that state—is, for Pound, to go wrong, to darken reason, a morbidity of mind. “We seem to have lost the radiant world where one thought cuts through another with clean edge,” Pound writes of the change from Cavalcanti to Petrarch, and he relates the change in poetry to a change in world view, the loss of “a world of moving energies ‘mezzo oscuro rade’, ‘risplende in se perpetuale effecto’, magnetisms that take form, that are seen, or that border the visible, the matter of Dante’s *paradiso*, the glass under water”; “untouched,” he concludes, “by the two maladies, the Hebrew disease, the Hindoo disease.” In reviewing *Love Poems and Others* by D. H. Lawrence in 1913, Pound, who praises Lawrence’s narrative verse, finds “the middling-sensual erotic verses in this collection” “a sort of pre-raphaelitish slush, disgusting or very nearly so.” In writing on the work of Henry James, he tells us: “The obscenity of The *Turn of the Screw* has given it undue prominence. People now ‘drawn’ by the obscene as were people of Milton’s period by an equally disgusting bigotry; one unconscious on the author’s part, the other a surgical treatment of a disease.” Where we begin to see that Pound’s aesthetic disgust is not unmixed with psychological factors that he would like to disown.

Virgil was O.K. for Dante, it seems to Pound, for Dante knew no better. It is not the poet-portrayer of the Underworld and prophet of the coming Christos, but the high-minded master of the Superworld, Plotinus, who leads Pound up out of the mire of mud, bog-suck and whirl-pool that is Pound’s Hell. Holding the Medusa-head downward, Plotinus petrifies the evil; and perhaps Pound sees Plotinus in history as having petrified into the clear crystal of neo-Platonism the murk of the Alexandrian period, the chiaroscuro in which Christ was synthesized. “You advertise ‘new Hellenism,’” Pound writes to Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review*: “It’s all right if you mean humanism, Pico’s *De Dignitate*, the *Odyssey*, the *Moscophores*. Not so good if you mean Alexandria...”
It is to the art of music that Pound looks, to the time “when each thing done by
the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up within it.” There is an
echo of Carlyle's concept of poetry as musical thought here, but it is important too that
in music the material of the artist seems most to have transcended the “slush” of flesh
and earth, to be furthest from “the metamorphosis into carnal tissue” that represented
the decay of values in Rubens. The avoidance of Christ in The Cantos, a poem that is after
all primarily an epic of the gods and of the divine reality, is complex; but even with those
gods who do appear in the Cantos, Pound avoids all knowledge of their aspects of
embodying our carnal experience of suffering and mortality as a value in life. Aphrodite
appears in Her light body, having no association with the whorish simulacra men have
made of her. There can be no compassion whereby the high suffers in the low. In the
highest vision there are not then the eyes of the crucified, with their secret that life’s
victory lies in the passion of the love-death, but there is the love-light of

the stone eyes again looking seaward.

and the Sphinx's riddle in Canto 115 “of men seeking good, / doing evil.”

“Unless a term is left meaning one particular thing, and unless all attempt to
unify different things, however small the difference, is clearly abandoned, all metophys-
ical thought degenerates into a soup,”—so the art for Pound must strive for the disso-
ciation of ideas; in the Cantos he strives for the clear entity of things and beings in them-
selves. For H.D. terms are either duplicit or complicit, the warp and woof of a loom. As
in Paterson, William Carlos Williams pictures poetry, like a city, “a second body for the
human mind,” he quotes from Santayana’s The Last Puritan, having all the complication
of one thing in another a city has. Neither H.D. nor Williams is concerned with meta-
physical thought. Pound’s soup into which metaphysical thought must fall when asso-
ciations are allowed may be the dream. “Paterson is a man (since I am a man) who dives
from cliffs and the edges of waterfalls... But for all that he is a woman (since I am not a
woman) who is the cliff and the waterfall.” In such a poem or such a dream no entity is
unmixed, there is no form that can be satisfied in itself or fulfilled in its own terms.

Since 1938, when at nineteen I began to read the Cantos and then in the library
the files of The Little Review, I have had a strong sense of this quality of a thing in itself,
the intensely realized form of Brancusi’s columns and heads, the deliberate design of
syntax in Joyce’s Ulysses, the absolute sense of language in context in the Cantos, the
changes in energy—movement and tone—so exactly made. Here it is the composition,
not the exposition, of content that counts, and this count is a mathematic of numbers
and the ratios that have been learned in the working hand and in the ear, having to do
not only with soundings but with equilibriums, beyond the calculation of the brain
alone. I have still this excitement about the masterpiece, the mastery of weights that lie
at the edges of intuition, the informed impulse of each nerve in training, the skill that
extends our apprehension of what is going on. In my mind H.D.’s War Trilogy and Helen
in Egypt have been placed, “weighed”, with such works of art, realized forms having, as

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Pound writes of Brancusi, “a mathematical exactitude of proportion.” Our awareness of life itself springs from such an aptitude for intricate formulae, keeping the numbers dancing in proportions, the living mechanism of the body and the brain in its analyses and syntheses performing, to be alive to things at all demanding, a high cybernetics. The lasting thrill of the artist’s work is that it fits, as our actions fit, when we feel them to be most alive, more than we imagined or longed for, so that we gain a heightened expectation of proportion.

I am sure that these apprehensions do not come from the unknown but are the very beginning terms of consciousness, the first factors of our human communication. The rumor remains of the unconscious, the incommunicable below, and of the super essential, the incommunicable above. But where numbers or images or persona occur we are in the realm of consciousness, for to figure and to sense is the mode of awareness. Even the rumors of psychoanalysts and metaphysicians are, like all rumors, elements arising in consciousness. The unconscious is, to apply the formula of theology, the uncreating; the super-essential, the uncreated. Myths and archetypes, like the structures Plotinus or Jung pursue in thought, are the stories and pictures we know as creation, the ground the collective conscious makes for experience. It is our consciousness not our unconscious that strives to imagine the real and the unreal, that would make a body even in the unrealized, so that the toil of creation is never done. Even these haunting rumors of the beyond consciousness, of the unknowable, appear as creatures of conscious language. Words propose “a Word beyond utterance, eluding Discourse, Intuition, Name, and every kind of being.”

After the excitement in the authenticity of masterpieces, having resistant individuality and a demanding skill, I have come to see such works not as the achievement of inventors or masters or diluters or starters of crazes, as Pound would have us classify writers in his *ABC of Reading*, not as objects of a culture, embodying original sensibilities, but as events in another dimension, a field of meanings in which consciousness was in process; where I saw psyche and spirit, as I had come through Darwin to see the animal organism, arising in an evolution of possible forms, surviving, perishing, derived always from an inheritance in which the formal persisted, arriving always as a trial or essay in which the formal had to live the last of a species, the first of a species, and yet having only its own terms, its own life, in which to make it. Every manifestation of spirit is the matter from which spirit must derive itself.

What is intent here? “Does ‘intenzion’ mean intention (a matter of will)?” Pound asks, seeking the sense of certain terms of Cavalcanti, “as understood at that ‘particular epoch’”, he stresses:”does it mean intuition, intuitive perception…” The psyche strives to realize; the spirit ... to render clear? to rarify? —but I would take spirit in a rock, who am yet obsessed with light. Intent is ours for we are at work; and may change its aspect where form is not a container or an object but “an extension of content.”

It is the ground art makes for the experience and the dream to become communal that I most value. Our own dreams, like our own lives, are fleeting and insubstantial, unless they are delivered over from the personal into the commons of man’s dream. The
man I am would stake my person from him, if it would not give itself to his intent. In works of art what was a passing fancy labors to become a lasting fantasy, the “Dream, Vision” of H.D’s later poetic, personality to become manhood; for our manhood to be a ground of reality, for the gods to flourish, “stepped out from Velasquez”. The germ of this sense of art & life as a creation of a community of feeling may have quickened even as I began to read in Pound’s *Cantos* and to have my sense there of art as a personal achievement of form, for in December of 1937, in the first issue of *Verve*, passages of Malraux’s *Psychology of Art* appeared. Along with the aesthetic—the concern with the beauty achieved—there was then the psychological—the concern for the meaning that labored to come into existence in art. Going back now I find evidence certainly of what must have encouraged me, under pain of being rhetorical, to search for what would declare itself, however it could in words: where Malraux speaks of “the metabolism of destiny into consciousness”, “across particular modes of expression, a plane of communication amongst men”, meaning seems to try itself for survival with a risk. And when Malraux tells us “That Jonah in the belly of the whale and Joseph in the pit prefigure Christ in the tomb, that the visit of the Queen of Sheba foreshadows the coming of the Magi—such beliefs quickened in the sculptors an emotion that, in due time, infused their representations of Jonah, Joseph and the Queen of Sheba with the very breath of life...”, he seems to speak for me as I would make it clear that not only is the work of the artist to realize a form in itself, but that form is in turn a womb of unrealized feeling and thought that must seek birth in form, in a man’s work.

*These passages of Malraux, read when I was nineteen, converted my mind so that H.D.’s later work was bound, as by a spell, to seem a break-through in poetry of a new gain in consciousness. Or the poem had ripened, having in it now more of the permission to live. There was too, I am sure, the redemption that the religion of my parents, the Hermetic teachings in which my own mind had been nursed, would come into its own, having meaning in this new psychological light. Yet these things converted or redeemed because my spirit had taken hold in them, finding life here and not elsewhere, discovering a self and a story in the threads and images with which it worked itself and story, a—*

*—TAPESTRY. The visual projection of the poem comes to me in germs of a narrative and emblematic tapestry. To spin a yarn; to weave a tale—so we speak in our common use today long after looms have disappeared from our daily lives. There is back of that sense a scene in which the poem and the tapestry, going on at the same time in the same room, belong together. Where Homer sings of the wrath of Achilles and of Odysseus (as in our day, the song appears in Zukofsky’s “A”-12, addressed to Celia Zukofsky—and in her, to Bach—Blest, Ardent, Celia, Happy :*
Tell me of that man who got around
He knew men and cities
His heart riled
As he strove for himself and friends
He did not save them.
Tell us about it, my Light,
Start where you please.)

where the poet sings, the women spin and weave, as the poet in turn spins out the thread of his narrative and weaves at the loom of his rimes and stressed tones towards the workings, the close interrelations of his story.

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There might have been some “joke”, a knot or pun of the interchange in the development of the two arts—the two weavings where the story refers to a hero hidden among the women at the loom, or to a Penelope who like Shaharazad in the Arabian Nights must contrive to make her weaving or story begin again each day. To avoid something happening, to keep something happening. The exile in which the Odyssey can take place.

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It is one of the recurrent images of H.D.’s writing of the process itself. “Threads weave over and under” in XXXVIII of The Walls Do Not Fall; and it is in the tradition of the tapestry-maker’s art that we see the foreground of grass and leaves and enlarged insect life in the poem, a decorative area as well as an area of meaning in the story where each part of the work

\[ \text{differs from every other} \]
\[ \text{in minute particulars} \]

\[ \text{as the vein-paths on any leaf} \]
\[ \text{differ from those of every other leaf} \]
\[ \text{in the forest . . .} \]

*

As H.D.’s signature could bring to mind the insignia woven in the design of a palace tapestry, and did, as I was working on Medieval Scenes in 1947, so that when the lines came in “The Banners”:
in the vision of those initials, and in the conjunction of Poet and Sovereign Power as one, the dreamer of the dream or the maker of the poem, I recalled, not my own “R.D.”, but a passage in *Tribute to Freud*, which I had read two years before, in which H.D. tells us:” (I have used my initials H.D. consistently as my writing signet or sign-manual, though it is only, at this very moment, as I check upon the word ‘signet’ in my Chambers English Dictionary that I realize that my writing signature has anything remotely suggesting sovereignty or the royal manner.)”
Pound in *How To Read* (1927) and again in *ABC of Reading* (1934) lists three practices or faculties of poetry: (1) phanopoeia “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on to the visual imagination”, where language operates somehow like a magic lantern or a motion-picture projector in relation to the receiving mind that is a screen. The early definition of the image as “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” is appropriate for the stationary, almost hallucinatory, presentations of early imagist poems—Pound’s “apparition” of faces as petals on a black bough, seen in the blink of an eye or of a camera shutter, or H.D.’s rose, “cut in rock”, that exists in a garden as if frozen in time, as if time had come to a stop in the photograph. H.D.’s reiterated hardness and cut-edges may have been in part a critical reaction to the great salon photography of the first decade of the century, to the blurred and softened atmospheric images of Steichen, Stieglitz or Coburn.

But these stills are few in number. After a handful of imagist poems, the poets were interested in movement. The sequence of images is what tells in the *Cantos* of Pound, and, scene juxtaposed to scene, line juxtaposed to line, the poem is built up like an Eisenstein film in the cutting room. In the passing of image into image, person into person, in H.D.’s War Trilogy too we are reminded of the transitions and montage that developed in the moving picture.

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The other two ways “to charge the language with meaning to the utmost possible degree” were (2) melopoeia and (3) logopoeia: “inducing emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of the speech” and “inducing both of the effects by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver’s consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed.”

* 

“Imagism” divorced from this concern “to charge the language with meaning” is not the imagism of Pound, H.D. and Aldington proposed in the Credo of 1912. The image that would charge language with sensory impression—”Amygism”, Pound called it—and the image that would charge language with an interesting effect—Hulme’s

*And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge*  
*Like a red-faced farmer*

or Eliot’s
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table

—these are generically different from the image that would charge language with meaning. Perception and expression are paramount where man’s emotions and intellects give value to an otherwise valueless language and world. But, for Pound, H.D., as for Williams and D.H. Lawrence, things and events strive to speak. To evoke an image is to receive a sign, to bring into human language a word or a phrase (in Pound’s later poetics, the ideogram; in H.D.’s, the hieroglyph) of the great language in which the universe itself is written. Here, to experience is to read, to be aware involves at once the senses and the translation into language of our own. It is the belief that meaning is not given to the world about us but derived from the world about us, that our human language is a ground in which we participate in the cosmic language. Living is reading the message or poem that creation is about. Such a sense of the universe as a meaningful creation and of experience as coming to apprehend that meaning determines the change from the feeling that poetic form is given to or imposed upon experience, transforming into content, to the feeling that poetic form is found in experience, that content is discovered in matter. The line of such poetry is not free in the sense of being arbitrary but free in its search and self-creation, having the care and tension (attention) almost of the ominous, for a world that would speak is itself a language of omens. Eliot’s images are often theatrical devices; but his garden, the drained pool, river, sea and flowers of *Four Quartets* are images of charged meaning, having their origins in a more than personal phantasy—they are signs of self that have come to inform the poet’s true self-epiphanies of what is happening, not symbols but *ideas*, seeings of the truth of things. William Carlos Williams’s resolve in the opening passage of *Paterson* does not read “not in ideas but in things”; what he writes is “no ideas but in things”, as we enter the poem where we are to strive, in order to live, to read such a language of things—river, falls, fire, detritus, words. For words are not thoughts we have but ideas in things, and the poet must attend not to what he means to say but to what what he says means.

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This is the charge of the mystery cult, the showing forth of a meaning which is a thing seen, where Image and Logos are revealed in the gift of the Idea. We may see what it means or, sensing the meaning, search for what it means; or we may, as most would, dismiss whatever presentation abruptly with “I don’t see any meaning in that.” The mythos and dromenon of the Dionysia were a way of participating in the meaningful; the singers and dancers coming into the community of meanings, as the poet comes into such a community when he sings or recites as if our daily words were a language of poetry, having the power of themselves to mean, and our role in speaking were to evoke not to impose meanings. The things of the poem, the words in their musical phrasings, here are *sacra*, charged with divine power, and give birth to poems as the poet sings, as

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the powers of stones, waters, winds, in men’s rites give birth to gods. In the process itself a magic begins, so that gods and poetry enthral. “Le sacré c’est le père du dieu,” Jane Harrison quotes from Durkheim. “Le désir c’est le père de la sorcellerie.” The intent of the poet is to arouse the content and form of the poem as the ritual devotee seeks to arouse the content and form of the god.

The religious image and the poetic image are close in turn to the psychological archetype of Jungian analysis which seeks to arouse the content and form of the individual life from the collective unconscious. Certainly, we can recognize in Whitman’s “eidolon yacht of me”, in Lawrence’s “ship of death”, in the “Ra-Set boat” of Pound’s Rock-Drill, and in H.D.’s “Ship to hold all” in Helen in Egypt, not only the intensity of a personal expression, but also the depth of a community of meaning. The language is not American or English or Greek or Egyptian but the language of Poetry, in which this image of a soul-boat upon a sea in the poetic imagination comes to speak.

*Pound’s phanopoeia, melopoeia and logopoeia are not reasonable literary terms but such magics, the glamor of wizards being to cast spells, “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on the visual imagination”; the incantations and incenses of Hermeticists being to induce “emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of speech”. The “inducing both of the effects by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver’s consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed” suggests that the poet has powers to induce, to stimulate; but we see, barely disguised, that it is “the actual words or word groups employed” that have such power. The imagination is not the primary imagination, that Coleridge defines as “the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception ... a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation”, but a screen upon which a higher power that Pound calls phanopoeia projects. This image-making or image-casting magic may be Coleridge’s secondary imagination, an “echo” of the primary: “coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.”

*Coleridge and Pound alike have a common source in their reading of the Renaissance Hermeticist Marsilio Ficino’s version of Iamblichus’ De Mysteriis. “In most psychologies employing the concept of spirit, and often in Ficino’s,” D. P. Walker tells us in his Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella, “all sensation is by means of the spirit, and the media of all sense-data are some kind of spirit,” and he quotes a
passage from a letter of Ficino's that bears upon this matter of the music of poetry and the vision of poetry, *melopoeia* and *phanopoeia*, as a magic to arouse the mind to form and content, of the casting of the image or echo of creation by some affinity of body, soul and spirit for the manifestation of song:

Nor is this surprising; for, since song and sound arise from the cogitation of the mind, the impetus of the phantasy, and the feeling of the heart, and together with the air they have broken up and tempered, strike the aerial spirit of the hearer, which is the junction of the soul and body, they easily move the phantasy, affect the heart and penetrate into the deep recesses of the mind.

* 

Our consciousness or Idea of having heart and mind, as well as of having soul and spirit, being aroused by such a poetry.

* 

“The impetus of the phantasy,” Walker tells us, “when distinguished from imagination, is a higher faculty, which forms ‘intentions’.” I would recall Pound's questioning in the Cavalcanti essay: “Does ‘intension’ mean intention (a matter of will)? Does it mean intuition, intuitive perception...?” In working upon his translation of Cavalcanti's *Donna mi prega*, which was to be reworked in *Canto XXXVI*, Pound makes careful distinction between the concept of “*intellect passif*”, which he finds in Renan's *Averroes et Averroisme* defined as “la faculté de recevoir les phantasmata”, and the “*possible intellecto*”, which Pound translates as “latent intellect”.

* 

“Form, Gestalt,” Pound notes: “Every spiritual form sets in moment the bodies in which (or among which) it finds itself.” So Love starts from form seen and takes His place, as subject not object, as mover, in the idea of the possible.

* 

Who will, may hear Sordello’s story told:  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end....

so Robert Browning opens his *Sordello*, calling upon will and belief, where the imagination appears as a theatrical magic, a cooperation between the writing and the reading, between the speaker and the hearer, to participate in the reality of a world evoked by
words given the magic of belief. “Appears Verona,” the Faustian poet directs, and then, again, as if calling up a spirit—“Then, appear, Verona!” Here, the beginning of his Cantos in its first version:

Hang it all, there can be but the one ‘Sordello,’
But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks....

“Has it a place in music?” he asks. The answer may lie in our passage from Ficino, for later Pound proposes in this first draft of Canto I: “We let Ficino / I Start us our progress....”

And your: ‘Appear Verona!’?
I walk the airy street,
See the small cobbles flare with poppy spoil.

“Lo, the past is hurled / In twain,” Browning shows us in Sordello:

up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona.

The evocation is Shakespearean. But this Verona has no stage but a place in the believing mind, a stage belief makes in the mind (as Shakespeare too has but one place where his world is most real). The scene itself then is a spirit. Both Sordello and Verona are shadows in which the form of the poet itself quickens, setting into motion the body in which it finds itself, the body of a belief.

*

In the same years that he worked on The Spirit of Romance and Cavalcanti, studying Avicenna and Ficino, the London years before the War when Pound was in the excitement of understudying Yeats, gathering the lore of light and forms that continues to work in the Cantos half a century later; in the same years that he attended the Quest lectures of G. R S. Mead on Simon Magus and Helen of Tyre, on Hierotheos’s Book of the Hidden Mysteries, on the augoeides and Origen’s “primal paradisiacal body of light as the seminarium from which all bodily forms, both subtle and gross, can arise”; in the very years that defined the life time of Imagism proper—from the Credo of 1912 to H.D.’s resignation as literary editor of The Egoist and her replacement by Eliot in 1917, Pound, as a messenger, angel or Hermes, of Poetry, moved between the generation of Yeats, initiate of the esoteric tradition, and the generation of Gaudier-Brzeska, prophet of the spirit or genius of forms which Gaudier called “sculptural energy” and “the vortex”, and
of the little group of fellow poets, “Imagists”, among whom H.D. was central. The “movement” was not an isolated literary affectation or strategic front but the first phase of certain generative ideas in poetry that were to reach their fruition, after the modernism of the twenties and the critical reaction of the thirties, when Pound, Williams, and H.D. were far apart in their work, three decades later in the period of the second World War with the great poems of Pound’s, Williams’s and H.D.’s old age that begin with H.D.’s War Trilogy, with The Walls Do Not Fall, published in 1944.

In turn, the germ-idea of the “image” in its beginning phase was a fruition of a general renaissance of theosophy and psychology in the first decade of the century which, like the Hellenistic and the Florentine renaissances, brought back the matter of old mystery cults, “reawakened” the gods and revived speculations concerning the nature of the imagination. Pound’s “See, they return”, Williams’s “Now they are coming into bloom again!” from the poem “March”, H.D.’s cry—“o gold, stray but alive / on the dead ash of our hearth”—from The Tribute, these convey the yearning for the revival of the past in the present, the leaven of dormant powers awakened again. Not only poets but intellectuals in the wake of Frazer’s Golden Bough and Bergson’s Évolution Créatrice were involved. So, we find Dora Marsden, the editor of The Egoist, writing on the image as a factor of knowledge:

The animal which thinks must have two worlds to think with . . . intellection is nothing other than the interweaving of two worlds. He must have become so well acquainted with his inner images that, when he cognizes (experiences) the outer image, the inner relative springs into effect alongside it. Precisely the superimposition of the external thing by its wraith-like indwelling double constitutes re-cognition.

Or, again, John Gould Fletcher’s review of H.D.’s Sea Garden in 1917 with its reference to “Plotinus, or Dionysius the Areopagite, or Paracelus, or Behmen, or Swedenborg, or Blake” may suggest the ambiance of intellectual conversation in which the “image” of Imagism arose.

* * *

The landscape of The Pisan Cantos or of Paterson, like the landscape of the War Trilogy, is a multiple image, in which the historical and the personal past, with the divine world, the world of theosophical and of poetic imagination, may participate in the immediate scene. H.D. had seen this in the 1920s as a palimpsest. In literature, Pound had written, “the real time is independent of the apparent.” So, Henry James mingles with lynxes and with the divine powers Manitou and Kuthera attending, and Mt. Taishan appears in the Pisan atmosphere; from a photo in The National Geographic the wives of an African chief come into the landscape of Paterson, and the dwarf living under the falls is also the genius of the language; so, in the initial dedication of The Walls Do Not Fall
(recalling the Rome/London/Egypt sequence of Palimpsest in 1926) H.D. proposes an image between two worlds: Egypt 1923 and London 1942, which opens into a reality whose time will take a center in the Nativity.

* Pang has observed that Dante in The Divine Comedy had not only given an account of the soul's journey (or “trip”, as it is called by the devotees of the psychedelic experience) but had also created an image of the divine world; the “world” of the poem was itself an image. The “idea” of the poem is this concretion of three worlds in one, a unity of real time in which many apparent times participate, a central intention whose meaning appears on many levels, an architecture of reality with its ascending and descending spirits—the whole a vision or seeing of a thing directly treated. The particular images of the poem then being seen to be notes in a melody that was in turn part of a larger movement, and these images belonging to movements, in turn forming the “world” of the whole, a single great image. This imagination of the “world” to which the intent of the poem belongs is Coleridge’s primary imagination, Ficino’s phantasy that is informed by the intention of the whole, the Image of images.

* "Now at last he explains that it will, when the hundredth canto is finished,” Yeats writes of Pound in 1928, “display a structure like a Bach Fugue. There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes ... and, mixing with these, medieval or modern historical characters.” Then: “He has shown me upon the wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Chastity, in the middle Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura’s day.” The whole Yeats saw as a prescribed composition, or an architectural plan, having sets, archetypal events, for he himself was forcing his Vision into prescribed wheel and gyre, to get the times right, imposing a diagrammatic order of such archetypes upon history.

“God damn Yeats’ bloody paragraph,” Pound writes in 1939: “Done more to prevent people reading Cantos for what is on the page than any other one smoke screen.” “Hear Janequin’s intervals, his melodic conjunctions from the violin solo,” he writes in Kulchur: “The forma, the immortal concetto, the concept, the dynamic form which is like the rose pattern driven into the dead iron-filings by the magnet. Yeats saw structure like Bach’s; but Pound contrasts the music of structure, “as J. S. Bach in fugue or keyboard toccata”, with the “music of representative outline”, which he finds in Janequin’s intervals and conjunctions, and would seek himself, as “from the floral background in Pisanello’s Este portrait, from the representation of visible things in Pietro di Borgo, there is a change to pattern and arabesque, there is an end to the Medieval Anschauung, the medieval predisposition.” The poem, like music, taking shape upon the
air. So, in the *Cantos*, Aphrodite appearing to her son Anchises at Cythera takes form upon the air—that is, upon the element, “the air they have broken up and tempered”, and also upon the air or melody the violin plays, having the voices of birds as Pisanello has the pattern of flowers in his art. So, Pound works to incorporate the voices of men and even, in the Adams Cantos, the epistolary styles as musical entities leading into pattern and arabesque, to bring forward phrasings and syncopations of vowel-tones and consonants. Yet what he had achieved in *The Cantos*, Pound came to feel by the time he was writing *Kulchur*, was not the clear line of Janequin, who had transmuted the sounds of birds into a musical reality nor the architectural mastery of Bach, but an art—like the music of Beethoven or like Bartok's Fifth Quartet, Pound says—having “the defects inherent in a record of struggle”. The real time of *The Cantos* was not to be independent of the apparent time.

*

It is the form of the poet's experience itself that we see in the form of his work—in *The Cantos*, of struggle and conflict as well as of independent and sublime vision, of stubborn predispositions as well as of its taking form from the air. “What is a god?” Pound had asked in his *Religio*: “A god is an eternal state of mind,” he had answered and “When is a god manifest? When the states of mind take form, “The *religio* was also a poetics in which the imagination was the eternal state of mind, taking form in the things of the poem. But Pound in the twenties and thirties came more and more to depreciate the imagination. Poetic belief, the belief that is volunteered in what is but imagined to be real, contends with the authoritative belief, the belief that is commanded and which must be defended against heresy. Where in the essays of the London period Pound is exploring ideas of imagination and poetry, in the essays of Rapallo he speaks not as a visionary but as pedagogue, a culture commissar, an economic realist, a political authority, and, in each of these roles, he feels that Imagination and vision is unsound. Esthetics has a ground in reality that inspiration does not: “the Whistler show in 1910 contained more real wisdom than that of Blake's fanatic designs.” Perhaps he suffered from a blind reaction to Yeats's values, but *The Cantos* would move Pound again and again to ecstatic imagination beginning with the *Pisan Cantos*. Leucothea would be invoked throwing her girdle to rescue the Odysseus poet of *The Cantos* from the sea of time and space as Blake shows her in his *The Cycle of Life of Man* (reading Kathleen Raine's *Blake and Tradition*, 1969: R.D.), as the Neo-Platonists return to inspire the late cantos. The chapter “Neo-Platonicks, Etc.” in *Kulchur* does not disown but it dissembles: “This kind of thing from the Phaedrus, or wherever it comes from, undoubtedly excites certain temperaments, or perhaps almost anyone if caught at the right state of adolescence or in certain humours.” Like Odysseus, Pound's exile can be read as the initiation of the heroic soul (the hero of a Poetry) descending deep into hubris, offending and disobeying orders of the imagination and returning at last after trials “home”. Odysseus offended Poseidon and is shipwrecked; Pound offends the Elohim and comes at last, like Job, to trials of old age and despair.
In H.D.’s War Trilogy the form emerges along the path of a weaving that, like The Cantos, may follow pattern and arabesque in immediate areas, flowers and birds leading on to a world beyond the medieval predisposition (“its art-craft junk-shop / paint-and-plaster medieval jumble / of pain-worship and death-symbol,” H.D. writes in The Walls Do Not Fall) towards the figures of ultimately real things, intuitions of the truth of things, but also is colored at times by stubborn predispositions. But it is H.D.’s poetics that interprets and transmutes her psychoanalytic and occultist preconceptions (though in Sagesse and in Hermetic Definitions occultist systematic interpretations seek to take over the authority of the real). Freud and later the theurgist Robert Ambelain come to lead H.D. into poetry, as Mussolini and Major Douglas lead Pound away from his mind.

The War Trilogy does not evoke comparison for H.D. with the quartets of Beethoven or Bartok. Music as it appears in the Trilogy is transcendental, and the art of the poem has its counterpart in the arts of painting or tapestry, a triptych portraying the soul’s journey in an evolution from the shell fish of The Walls Do Not Fall, iv, that is “master-mason planning / the stone marvel”, to the woman with her child, her Christ-child, at the close of The Flowering of the Rod. Yet the tapestry must incorporate, even as Pound’s Cantos must, “the defects inherent in a record of struggle”. As later in Helen in Egypt, H.D. will refer to the tradition of the palinodia of Stesichorus, the poet’s restoring to Poetry the truth about Helen, in the War Trilogy she strike’s out, alone of the Imagists, to restore the truth of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost to Poetry. Not a conversion to Christianity, but a conversion of Christianity to Poetry.

There is an evolution of life-forms, experiences, yet they exist one in another; the work of art itself contains in its processes the beauty of the shell and the beauty of the Christos or Logos that in the human world has specific manhood. The image of the whole poem is so thrown upon the imagination or aroused in the imagination “fixed or moving”, that “fixed” it appears as a tapestry; “moving” it is the path of something happening on different levels in time, it has plot or mythos. From the earliest tidal waters of our life, from

There is a spell, for instance,
in every sea-shell:

to the evolution of the old divine orders into the Christos, not only Osiris but Venus, Astarte, also contained in the “jar” or alembic of the Christian mysteries. But these
mysteries have their authority now not in a church but in a poem. “Over Love, a new Master”, the announcement of the Christ may mean also that there is a new genius of forms over the poem.

*

We too must return in our weaving upon the air, the theme of image and meaning, to look into the War Trilogy again, the “tapestry” disclosing the “world”; and, as we regard once more the little company of poets or of heretics (H.D. herself working now in a belief disowned by her companions of Imagist days) or of disciples in a mystery, in the Presence that is “spectrum-blue / ultimate blue-ray”, that is “a spacious, bare meeting-house”, that is a cartouche enclosing a name, an idea comes into sight—the haunting suggestion of another dimension of the content or form.

As, in canvasses of Salvador Dali we see not a symbol, one thing standing for another. but what he calls a paranoic image, where one thing coexists in another—a man's head that is also a lion that is also a hairy egg. So, here, the meeting-house is also a heart.

_We are at the cross-roads,
the tide is turning....

_in the turn of a heart-beat._
At heart, we are individual, complete. “The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them,” William Harvey begins the dedication to his *Anatomical Disquisition on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*, “the sun of their microcosm, that upon which all growth depends, from which all power proceeds.” I would recall here Helen Fairwood and Captain Rafton in H.D.’s story *Secret Name*, riding back in the dark from Karnak, having seen there the apparition of the “temple or tomb or birth-house”, the thud-thud of the hoofs answering the beat of their hearts, arousing another image of their lying beneath the heart of the mother: As if they in some strange exact and precious period of pre-birth, twins, lovers, were held, sheltered beneath some throbbing heart.” “First, before anything else,” Harvey writes: “a drop of blood appears, which throbs, as Aristotle had noted. From this, with increasing growth and formation of the chick, the auricles of the heart are made, in the pulsations of which there is continual evidence of life. After a few more days, when the body is outlined, the rest of the heart is made, but for some time it remains pale and bloodless like the rest of the body, and does not throb.”

*Then: “Whoever examined this matter closely will not say that the heart entirely is the first to live and the last to die, but rather the auricles (or that part corresponding to the auricles in serpents, fishes, and such animals) which live before the rest of the heart, and die after it.”*

*The poem too begins with a pulse, a melodic impulse (a “beat” which belongs to a unique pattern in time) and the melodic impulse contains a form (as that beat of blood in the egg contains the form of the chick at work). There is then an image that is also (“the first to live and the last to die”) a rhythm.*

*Genetics teaches us that unseen coordinates, the genes, lie back of this pattern in time, this rhythm of being, that is also a pattern in space, this form or image—of a man, of a chick, of a poem, then—if it be thought of as a part of the process of life. The “free verse” of high poetry was not abstractly free, but free, specifically, from the concept of a poem’s form as a paradigm, an imposed plan to which the poet conform’d. The form was germinal, the germ being the cadence that began in language—“a new cadence means a new idea” —arousing a life of its own, a poem.*
Erwin Schrödinger tells us in *What Is Life?* that “we believe a gene—or perhaps the whole chromosome fibre—to be an aperiodic solid.” “A small molecule,” he writes: “might be called the germ of a solid.”

So too we may think of an idea, a novel or a poem, as beginning at some point or germ, growing, finding its being and necessary form, rhythm and life, as the germ evolves in relation to its environment of language and experience. This is an art that rises from a belief in the universe as a medium of forms, in man’s quest for form as a spiritual evolution, each realized experience of form in turn the germ of a new necessity for form or affinity for form.

In contrast, conventional art, with its conviction that form means adherence to a prescribed order where metric and rime arise in conformation to a regular pattern, has its ground in a belief that man by artifice must win his forms as models, reproductions, or paradigms, against his nature, in a universe that is a matter of chaos or that has fallen into disorder.

Schrödinger, contrasting organic and inorganic forms in nature, says: “Starting from such a small solid germ, there seem to be two different ways of building up larger and larger associations. One is the comparatively dull way of repeating the same structure in three directions again and again. That is the way followed in a growing crystal. Once the periodicity is established, there is no definite limit to the size of the aggregate.”

“The other way is that of building up a more and more extended aggregate without the dull device of repetition. That is the case of the more and more complicated organic molecule in which every atom, and every group of atoms, plays an individual role, not entirely equivalent to that of many others (as in the case of a periodic structure). We might quite properly call that an aperiodic crystal or solid and express our hypothesis by saying: We believe a gene—or perhaps the whole chromosome fibre—to be an aperiodic solid.”

Genetic thought along these lines is akin to poetic thought that pictures the...
poem as an organic crystallization, its germ or law or form being immanent in the immediate life, what is happening, in the work of the poem. "I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity; in law when it is ascertainable, " Pound writes in 1912: "in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse." Free verse, later projective verse as expounded by Charles Olson, developed a new sense of metric and rime deriving from an inner, periodic formal intuition. Here, structure is not satisfied in the molecule, is not additive; but is fulfilled only in the whole work, the apprehension of the work's "life" springing anew in each realization, each immediate cell.

Marianne Moore is a master of poetry that is periodic in its concept—as if art were a convention—which has its counterpart in her concern for social conformities, in her admiration for rigor, for the survival of vitality where character-armor takes over to resist areas of experience that cannot be included in the imagined social contract of poetry. Schrodinger in his bias for the form he sees in living matter finds inorganic crystals "comparatively dull" in structure; but the poem "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'", which is built of periodic units, is not "comparatively dull", for her zest for language as a vitality in itself contends throughout with the use of metric to make a conforming pattern. Words were not yet reduced to the conventional trivial units of New Yorkerese that they become in her later verse. Yet in the larger units of structure the structures are already inorganic. Once the stanza is set, there is no further form, no further "experience", realized in its extension. The number of stanzas is arbitrary. The poem presents examples of itself, a series that may be "complete" at any point because, otherwise, it is extensible as long as the poet's rationalizations continue. The form of the whole, in conventional verse, does not rest in the fulfillment of or growth of its parts toward the revelation of their "life" but in the illustration of the taste and arbitration of the poet. Between its appearance in What Are Years (1941) and its appearance in Selected Poems (1951) Marianne Moore eliminated three lines of stanza six in "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'", all of stanzas seven and eight, without altering the "form" of the whole. The uncertainty she has often shown about the total form of a poem is a corollary of a periodic or imitative structure where, as Schrodinger observes of mineral structures, "there are no definite limits to the size of the whole." Although in its inception Marianne Moore's verse follows the line of a growth out of a germinal nucleus, and in this it was, especially in the twenties and thirties, akin to that of her peers, H.D., Williams, or Pound. The thoroughly conventional poem projects a prescription of the line to line conformity. But Marianne Moore's growth, being periodic inorganic, has no internal law of the whole. The history of the poem, for Marianne Moore, consists of instances of itself, as natural history for her is after Linnaeus and pre-Darwin a collection of types or models of species. In her technical brilliance (as late as the poem "Style" circa 1956), she excels. The very crux of the poem is its mechanical expertness. But in her poetics, in her thought and feeling of
the poem then, she does not evolve as life does but repeats; her verse is not creative but exemplary in form. So there is no process of rebirth, of an evolving apprehension of form in her work, of impending experience, that might make for a major impetus in the later years of her life, such as we find in *The Pisan Cantos*, in *Paterson*, and in the War Trilogy, in the work of poets whose poetry had come to be a “life” work.

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It is not in their exemplary character-structure but in their passion, in their ripeness, the fullness in process of what they are, that I am moved by H.D., Pound, and Williams. They move in their work through phases of growth towards a poetry that spreads in scope as an aged tree spreads its roots and branches, as a man’s experience spreads; their art in language conveying scars and informations of age without armor as a man may gather in his face and form acknowledged accumulations of what he is in his life, in his cooperation with the world about him.

*  

Thus, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, it is the cooperation of the elements of the poem that informs. Not imitating but arising from the beat of the heart and from the breath, yes.... As in his *Projective Verse* essay of 1950, Charles Olson was to see the impetus of a new poetry as “from the union of the mind and the ear that the syllable is born”, the *hearing* of the poem, and from “the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE”, the inspiration and feeling of the poem. Recalling again what H.D. in “Secret Name” sees, where the poet (the H.D. we recognize in the Helen Fairwood of the story) and the god (the Bear Zeus that Helen Fairwood recognizes in Captain Rafton) have their apotheosis in the apparition of the birth-house or germinal cell, as the woman and man “in love”, heart-beat to heart-beat, are carried, “brother” and “sister” now, “twins, lovers”.

“The mind is brother to this sister (the heart) and is, because it is so close, the drying force,” Olson writes, “the incest, the sharpener.” Where I see his meaning superimposed upon H.D.’s image in “Secret Name”. Syllable and line, Olson has it, are born “of the incest of verse (always, that Egyptian thing, it produces twins!)”. If, as we have been persuaded by Freudian psychoanalysis, we may read in everyday events and speech as in dreams a language that tells of our genital life, that language tells too of our breathing and of the circulation of our blood. Our consciousness of life, our “speech” then, arising from these.

*  

H.D. cannot arbitrate but must follow the inspiration (the in-breathing) and the beat, as she follows the feel and balance of the poem, for she works, having all the predisposition of her previous thought, towards the discovery of the whole. She works,
as in analysis, to bring the content from latency into awareness. History here consists of “incidents” or parts of something in process, and the work of the poet is to find or render what is happening. Natural history is an evolution. The design unfolds, self-creative. Her sense of affinity with the shell-fish as “master-mason” (pathetic fallacy to the critic who does not believe there is a continuity of spirit in the universe) is morphological. She is concerned with a correspondence that is also, if we believe in evolution as life creating itself, where self is spirit, a sense of psychic origin.

*

In xxxvi “of The Walls Do Not Fall, the poet’s mind operates in a field of human mind, again as a thread weaves in a tapestry:

“your way of thought (mine),

\[
\text{each has its peculiar intricate map,} \\
\text{threads weave over and under} \\
\text{the jungle-growth} \\
\text{of biological aptitudes} \\
\text{inherited tendencies,} \\
\text{the intellectual effort} \\
\text{of the whole race...}
\]

Each mind has its “peculiar ego-centric / personal approach / to the eternal realities” and “differs from every other / in minute particulars”, “as the vein-paths on any leaf”, as each line in the poem has its “approach” and must be perfected there, having that imperfection that it is perfected only in the field of its existence which it experiences as “approach” or “intention”. H.D.’s “eternal realities” I would see here as figures in a design to which any individual life contributes. The germinal form of Man in which we individuate and out of which we are each the immediate occasion of our species is such a figure, “of the whole race”. Here she draws upon the biological identity, as in The Flowering of the Rod, ix, she affirms:

\[
\text{No poetic phantasy} \\
\text{but a biological reality,} \\
\text{a fact: I am an entity} \\
\text{like bird, insect, plant}
\]
or sea-plant cell...

where “poetic phantasy”, with its connotation of being made up for fancy’s sake, is not
the poet’s term but her interior adversary’s, not then that poetic phantasy in Ficino’s
terms identified with the creative imagination, for the tenor of the War Trilogy is that
Dream and Life are one—the “spiritual realities” and “eternal realities” are “biological”.
It is not only the figure of Man then out of which and to which the individual thread has
its weaving of intention, but, beyond Man, in the larger field of Life itself, so that the poet
strives for organic form as Life form. This is not a humanist art. The “whole race” is ulti-
mately not the species Man but the race of the living.

* 

With Olson’s Projective Verse the field of the imagination was extended to a form
that took its imperative in the atomic particular of the cell. The energy of the poem he
saw had its spring in the immediate event: “Let’s start from the smallest particle of all,
the syllable.” There is a change then possible that haunts our minds since Olson’s
charge—that the formal imperative or intent has its spring back of the word or phrase
(back of that civilization of meanings agreed upon that the dictionary represents) in the
minim of our speech, the immediate sounding event. In this minim, in our articulation
of vowels, lies the crucial evolutionary fact underlying the word. Speech, our specifically
human instrument, is a possibility that arose with the separation of larynx and soft
palate. “Specialization, semanticity, arbitrariness,” these functions of language we
share with all primates; “discreteness”, “traditional transmission” with our fellow
anthropoids; but with the play of vowel color, we have our own music, giving rise to new
qualities in speech: “displacement”, “productivity”, “duality of patterning”, the opera-
tions of our natural imagination in which sound makes sense. (See, Charles D. Hockett,

* 

So, I see The Walls Do Not Fall develop along lines of an intuited “reality” that is
also a melody of vowel tone and rime giving rise to image and mythos and out of the
community of meanings returning to themes towards its individual close. In her work
she consciously follows the lead of image to image, of line to line or of word to word,
which takes her to the brink (as “gone” leads to “guns” in the opening of the poem) of
meaning, the poet establishing lines of free (i. e. individual) association within the
society of conventional meanings. The form of the poem, of the whole, is an entity or life-
time, a “biological reality”, having life as her own body has life.
II

The “Heart” in our projection of the tapestry of the poem appears as the brotherhood of scribes or initiates of Thoth; they belong to, have given their allegiance to, the truth or the heart of things. In the “City Under Fire” of parts i, ii, ix, x, xi, xii, xiv, xxiv, xxix, xxxiv, and the closing xli of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the heart is on trial. As in the code-script involving all the future development of the poem, there appears the accusation that the City makes against the poet: “your heart, moreover

*is a dead canker*

*they continue, and*

*your rhythm is the devil’s hymn.*

It is “Isis, Aset or Astarte” who is accused here; the sexual lure and seductiveness of the poet in her service or her cult, the cult of the love affair, the affair of the heart, the cultivation of heartache, heart-consciousness or passion over mind-consciousness or reason. The theme in *The Walls Do Not Fall* of giving thanks for recovery or survival in a time of war (on this level, a prayer during an air-raid) is in turn a thanks for recovery, as in *Tribute to the Angels*:

*where Zadkiel, we pause to give*

*thanks that we rise again from death and live,*

from a heart-attack, consciously or unconsciously included in the statement. In *Narthex* (see, *The Second American Caravan*, 1928), the sign—“triangle set on triangle that makes a star, the seal of Solomon”—is the heart, where the triangle of an old affair “Katherine-Mordant-Raymonde”—is “burnt out”, “residue of suffering” kept or learned heart, we say. The “half-burnt-out apple-tree / blossoming”, the epiphany of *Tribute to the Angels*, may be the heart (the “tree” of arteries and veins) recovering. It was, she tells us, “the spear / that pierces the heart.”

*

The attack, the being under fire, is an old theme of H.D.’s. In “Halcyon” from *Red Roses for Bronze* of 1931:

*“tinsel” they said the other lives were*

*all those I loved,*

*I was forgot;*
what is most the heart of the matter for the “I” comes under the attack of others as irrelevant; in “The Tribute” of 1916: “till our heart’s shell was reft / with the shrill notes”, where Beauty and love are the causes of an exile. In the War Trilogy thirty years later, the “we” who are under attack are devotees of beauty and of a heresy of love; the art of writing, the “script, letters, palette”, is itself under attack as tinsel. The actual War, the incendiary attacks, the deprivations, come to illustrate or manifest another war the lover and poet knew under attack, to reactivate the violence felt in the critical and social rejection of her person and her art that H.D. had known. But these voices that accuse have been brought over into the authority of the poem; they are voices of the poetic consciousness itself. The adversary is heart-felt.

*  

Returning to the City or Heart under “Apocryphal fire”, In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, I, we see it clearly: “the heart burnt out, dead ember, / tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered, / yet the frame held.” This “death” of the physical heart and its “resurrection” in the opening poem leads forward to the poet’s taking heart in the Christos or taking love in the Lover, as, in turn, we recognize her “New Master over Love” in the blossoming of the tree, in which the flowering of the rood returns, itself the news of a Vita Nuova from the Cross. So, too, the City burning gives us leads. We see Sodom, or Pompei “with its House of the Dionysian Mysteries, some city of Astarte, Carthage the burned and salted ground” (or, as in *Helen in Egypt*, Troy thrown down, the City, like the Woman, “hated of all Greece”). It is a scene like that shown in the *Lot and His Daughters* attributed to Lucas van Leyden or in the visionary canvasses of Bosch or Brueghel, where the City is inflamed, as, from the crusade against the Cathars of Provence, where at Béziers the Pope’s armies turned the cathedral of Saint-Nazaire into a great oven in which the faithful were burned, to the raging wars that swept Christendom in the seventeenth century where Protestant and Catholic sought to exterminate each other, the heart of the Christian reality—the City of God—was broken.

Or the scene is from Bosch’s *Garden of Delights*, or, as Wilhelm Franger argues it should be titled—*The Millennium*, where in the right-hand panel we see those who dwell in the wrath of God, in the volcano of His inner agony. It is Jehovah’s realm, before Christ, the intestines of the Burning Mountain. The “we” of H.D.’s poem, who cry:

\[\text{Dev-ill was after us,} \\
\text{tricked up like Jehovah}\]

have seen the Bad Father, and live in the world as if in the wrath of the last days. Where we cannot identify with the will of powerful groups in the society we live in, we feel their power over us as an evil. The word evil, the O. E. D. suggests: “usually referred to the root of *up, over*”, may then be whatever power over us of outer or inner compulsion. As the power and presumption of authority by the State has increased in every nation, we
are ill with it, for it surrounds us and, where it does not openly conscript, seeks by advertising, by education, by dogma or by terror, to seduce, enthral, mould, command or coerce our inner will or conscience or inspiration to its own uses. Like the pious Essenes alienated from Romanizing priests and civilizing Empire alike, like the Adamite cult to which Bosch may have belonged, the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, alienated from the spiritual authoritarianism of the Church and from the laws of warring feudal lords and principalities, we too may find ourselves, at odds with the powers that be, members of a hidden community, surviving not in history but in the imagination or faith. Like Jews paying taxes to Caesar or like little children suffering under the tyranny of powerful adults, we then live in a world that is “theirs”, in “their” power, in which a deeper reality, our own, is imprisoned. Our life is hidden in our hearts, a secret allegiance, at odds with the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and the true kingdom is “not of this World”. The artist—the poet as well as the painter or musician—striving to keep alive the reality of his art as revelation and inspiration of Truth or Beauty finds himself so at odds with the dominant motives of profit and industry embodied in the society; for Communist and Capitalist alike the work of art is taken to be a commodity of social exchange. Not only gnostics and pacifists but artists and poets, those who live by an inner reality or world, having a prior adherence to the heart’s truth or wish, appear as heretics or traitors to those who lead or conform to the dominations of the day.

* 

In “The Tribute”, the City stricken by war has already been betrayed “for a thrust of a sword, / for a piece of thin money” and the gods driven out, except for War, and this Mars has “treacherous feet”. In “Cities” of 1914, H.D. had seen “hideous first, hideous now” the hive of a “new” or false city crowd out all vestige of the old beauty, only a few left to cherish what once was and to await the coming of beauty again, like a heart that has lost love and waits, alienated, for its return.

As the poet Rilke saw the poets as bees storing the honey of the invisible in a time when, from the center of the commodity-culture, there come crowding over from America empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things, “Dummy-life,” H.D. sees the City as a hive where the few remnants keep “grains of honey” and there appears a mass-people of the new age, larvae spreading “not honey but seething life”. “We are perhaps the last to have still known such things,” Rilke writes to von Hulewicz in 1925. “We would feed forever / on the amber honeycomb / of your remembered greeting,” H.D. reiterates in The Walls Do Not Fall in 1942: “but the old-self,

\[
\text{still half at-home in the world,} \\
\text{cries out in anger.}
\]

* 

234
The surrender of this-worldly purposes so important in religious conversion and the separation of desire from passion into its own pure kingdom so important in the conversion of lovers to love, these are like the conversion of outer and inner reality to form a poetic real. Outer and inner conflicts enter into and surcharge the poetic. At odds with powerful influences, whether they be his own impulses or the opposing will of other men, the poet holds the new reality only by a heightened intensity. Realizations come not as charming experiences but as rare gains in reality, as raptures. The “honey” Rilke and H.D. speak of is such “rapture”, the secretion of the life experience of a besieged spirit, part then of a complex that includes the other features we find in apocalyptic statement—anger, outrage, despair, fear, judgment. The flaming cities are not only representations of persecutions suffered or punishments anticipated in heresy, they are also representations of a revenging wrath projected by the heretic, the stored-up sense of injustice and evil will over us raging outward. Within the picture painted or raised in the poem, as in the individual psyche and in the society at large, we see the same symptoms. Everywhere, we find at every level the content felt as psychic is manifest. The individual psyche lives in the psychic society, as the individual physical body lives in the physical City. The artist then is not only psychically at odds but physically at odds. His art a physical contradiction of the pseudo-things and advertisements about him, as his spirit is a psychic contradiction. The manifest ugliness of things made in the spirit of investment and profit is physically oppressive.

The triumph of utility over beauty in the square unornamented functional architecture of the “International” style is the dominant idea in our contemporary utilitarian City, appropriate expression of the will-to-power of large corporations over all individual variation; as, in turn, the dominant idea in international affairs—the Atomic War—hints at the anger, outrage, despair, fear suffered by corporation-men themselves living in their own system.

* *

H.D.’s apocalyptic vision in the War Trilogy, like her identification with Hellenistic decadence in the period between the first two World Wars, provides an historical perspective in which the experience of London under attack in the Second World War becomes meaningful in relation to depths and heights of personal reality, depths she had come to know in her psychoanalysis with Freud and then in new terms with the study of occult and hermetic lore, heights she had known in aesthetic and erotic ideals as early as her first work. To be a poet appeared as a challenge of existing things, and poets seemed to form a heretical group, as among poets “Imagists” in turn were viewed as heretical by conventional versifiers. “She is fighting in her country,” H.D. wrote of Marianne Moore in 1916 in The Egoist, “against squalor and commercialism. We are all fighting the same battle.”

She had known too in the War Years the persecution that dogged the little pacifist group around D. H. Lawrence, for Frieda and Lawrence had taken refuge in the house
where H.D. lived. “Victims, victimised and victimising,” she writes in *Bid Me To Live*: “Perhaps the victims came out, by a long shot, ahead of the steady self-determined victimisers.” They were, she and Lawrence and Pound, not of the lost generation “but they had roots (being in their mid-twenties and their very early thirties) still in that past. They reacted against a sound-board, their words echoed…” “What was left of them was the war generation, not the lost generation.”

* 

Beauty under attack, *Imagism* under attack, pacifism under attack, and, as the Wars like great Dreams began to make it clear, life itself under attack—H.D. had an affinity for heretical causes. In psychoanalysis again she found a cult under attack. “Upon my suggestion to H.D. that psychoanalysis seemed to affect some people as does Christian Science,” Robert McAlmon argues with the contempt commonsense has for such things, “she took me seriously and said yes, it was a religion.” It was, Freud felt, to take the place of religion, and he thought always of psychoanalysis under attack as Truth under attack, for the civilization itself—indeed, civilization itself—was at war against knowing anything about, much less recognizing within, the contents of the unconscious. “My discoveries are a basis for a very grave philosophy,” she tells us Freud told her: “There are very few who understand this, there are very few who are capable of understanding this.”

* 

To be analysed was not only an initiation, a learning to read the meaning of dreams, of daily life, of the poem; it was also a trial. “‘I am asking only one thing of you,’ he said,” H.D. writes in *Tribute to Freud*; then: “Even as I write the words, I have the same sense of anxiety, of tension, of imminent responsibility that I had at that moment.”

What he asks is that she not defend his philosophy. Is it in some way like Augustine’s perception that while Rome falls to the barbarians, the Christians, seeking out the meaning of Rome, must not defend the truth or city against the enemy but convert the enemy to the city—a “City of God” that Rome may be but that is not Rome. “At the least suggestion that you may be about to begin a counter-argument in my defense, the anger or the frustration of the assailant will be driven deeper. You will drive the hatred or the fear or the prejudice in deeper ... The only way to extract the fear or prejudice would be from within, from below.”

* 

The apocalyptic picture of the world that is also the heart under attack is a complex image of correspondences between what is felt as inflicted and what is felt in projection, of wishes for vengeance that are also fears of punishment seen fulfilled in actual events.” Pompei “has nothing to teach us,” H.D. begins the Trilogy:
we know crack of volcanic fissure,
slow flow of terrible lava,

pressure on heart, lungs, the brain...

where the events of the London blitz illustrate the wrath of the Father, and the arguments of the pro-war forces in English society demanding the adherence of all wills to the war effort reappear as voices of the Protestant Ethic, the very spirit of industrial and commercial capitalism, an attack upon art, sexuality and Woman. Behind the war is an old war against Tiamat. On a psychological level, an analytical level, the war is sensed in pressures of inner wrath—of the “Jehovah” within—upon living organs. Such a condition demands of the imagination a new heart and a new reality in which there is the germ of survival.
So it is the story of survival, the evolution of forms in which life survives. In the tides of oceanic life-force, the élan vitale, the individual heart appears as the shell-fish. “That flabby, amorphous hermit / within” is the brain in its skull-shell, and its limit, the limit of thought in the overwhelming element of what is. But it is also the heart, holding against too much feeling:

\[
\text{it unlocks the portals} \\
\text{at stated intervals:}
\]

\[
\text{prompted by hunger,} \\
\text{It opens to the tide-flow:}
\]

where a correspondence is felt between the tide of the sea and the tide of the blood, between ebb and flow and the systole and diastole; between the valves of the heart and the valves of the shell-fish who lives in the tidal rhythm, as the brain lives in the tidal flow of the heart, fed by charges of blood in the capillaries.

Here (The Walls Do Not Fall, iv) the individual life begets itself from and must also hold itself against the enormous resources of life, against the too-much, “beget self-out-of-self”, take heart in what would take over the heart in its greater power. The theme recurs: in xvii: “the tide is turning”; in xxv: “my heart-shell / breaks open”. It leads forward in Tribute to the Angels to Gabriel, the Moon-Regent, Lord of Spiritual Tides, and, in The Flowering of the Rod to the echo of the sea and of her Tiamat-identity that Woman brings with her to the Christ.

The “indigestible, hard, ungiving” thing, of iv, that “living within” begets “that pearl-of-great-price”, may be a coal, in xvii, “for the world’s burning”; for, in xxv, we learn that the phoenix dropped “a grain, as of scalding wax” from its burning, that “lodged in the heart-core, / has taken its nourishment” and, in xxviii, that the grain fell “between a heart-beat of pleasure / and a heart-beat of pain.” We see readily the statement that the nucleus of the poem itself as a pearl may grow from a painful “indigestible” thing. Underlying it we may sense the statement that the poet has taken heart in a long-forgotten burning event.

*
As, in the systole-diastole reference, the consecration / affirmation of xxxix is charged with biological meaning:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{We have had too much consecration,} \\
&\text{too little affirmation,} \\
&\text{too much: but this, this, this} \\
&\text{has been proved heretical,} \\
&\text{too little: I know, I feel} \\
&\text{the meaning that words hide.}
\end{align*}
\]

where the presentation of intellectual alternates—the orthodoxy arising from convention and the consensus of authority versus the heresy of the individual experience—would seem farthest from referring to the physical image of the heart, but in its form of alternating beats, of a flux between too much and too little, it proposes not the image of opposites but the image of a circulation, the returning flood from the ventricle of the heart into the arterial circuit, where the sense of the more-than-enough in the word “too” may refer to the crisis or strain. The “hermit / within” who would survive and create “self-out-of-self” in the tide flow of oceanic feeling must keep his limits, “of nothing-too-much.”

In the opening poems of *The Flowering of the Rod*, this theme of crisis or heartbeat in a duality flowers in full song, beginning with the “I go where I love and where I am loved”, ii, and continuing through viii—a song of assent and affirmation in the alternating current of human will. Here, beyond the of-nothing-too-much, she acclaims “the insatiable longing”, “the eternal urge”, “the despair”, then the desire itself “to equilibrate the eternal variant”.

* 

“To charge with meaning to the utmost possible degree,” Pound had commanded the poet. To the heart’s limit? “Meaning may be then H.D.’s new Master over Love that is also a new heart taken in poetry and appears as the key from which the new feeling of history distributes its rhythm. The “but gods always face two-ways” of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, ii, charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree, means times too always face two ways. “Every hour, every minute,” H.D. tells us in *Tribute to Angels*, “has its specific attendant Spirit”; there is no time that is not a god, the dying and rebirth of self. “The tide is turning”, of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, xvii, where “we” are “coals for the world’s burning” refers not only to a turning-point in the orders of human history but to a turning-point in the boy’s history, the diagnosis of a crisis; and, back of these, to a turning-point in which we know the intent of life itself manifest.
“When I first tried animal experimentation for the purpose of discovering the motions and functions of the heart by actual inspection and not by other people’s books” Harvey writes: “I found it so truly difficult that I almost believed with Fracastorius, that the motion of the heart was to be understood by God alone. I could not really tell when systole or diastole took place, or when dilation or construction because of the quickness of the movement.

* 

It is in the “I could not really tell when” that only the imagination pleads us on—the affirmation, H.D. calls it. The vision of history in The Walls Do Not Fall grows from a seed of light or pulse—it is an old occult tradition. A heart-beat, a seed of time, a mustard seed, so immediate that it precedes our sense of it:

then I woke with a start
of wonder and asked myself

but whose eyes are those eyes?

“All that we can observe,” Whitehead argues in Adventures of Ideas, “consists of conceptual persuasions in the present ... Literature preserves the wisdom of the human race; but in this way it enfeebles the emphasis of first-hand intuition. In considering our direct observation of past, or of future, we should confine ourselves to time-spans of the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second.”
[July 31st, 1964] Conceived first in the Spring of 1961 as a daybook, allowing for sketches of thought, digressive followings of impulse and searchings for content, for design within design, a demonstration of what occurs as I take H.D.’s War Trilogy as the ground of interpretation, days haunted by passages of her poem, introducing new elements, rendering new possibilities, three years later in the Summer of 1964, as in those drawings at the cave-temple of Pech-Merle in the Hall of Hieroglyphics “superimposed, drawn by fingers in the soft clay (soft and pliable even now), with no dominant direction, crossing and interpenetrating one another”, where, Giedion tells us in The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art, “Aurignacian man gained magic possession of coveted animals by drawing their outlines in the darkness of the caverns, illuminated only by a flickering torch”, or, as in Marie and Pierre Curie’s working the pitchblende, following the lure of an unseen as-yet element, who appear in Paterson: Four as personae of the poet himself working the language where “A dissonance / in the valence of Uranium / led to the discovery”

\[
to get, after months of labor .
\]

\[
a stain at the bottom of the retort
without weight, a failure, a
nothing. And then, returning in the
night, to find it
LUMINOUS
\]

the book returns again and again to this material in which the lure of a seed or a heartbeat or a minimal nucleus of consciousness lingers. Thought here not expository but experimental, trying the materials, and operative, the matter itself changing in experiment, the immediate work in its working creating itself anew as gold or goal. In places I am thinking-through lines twice thought through before, not to come to the conclusion of a thought but to return to its movement, to old traces, drawn by the idea that is a generative force, inhabiting these lines, along these lines, to find out what draws me, in the dark by the light of what I have known towards the light of what I do not yet know, am about to know as I draw; the drawing, a dramatic rehearsal.

A finding then, a finding out of a way in going, of the poet in the figure of the poet traced from lines where H.D. before me worked along these lines. Life of poet crossing and interpenetrating life of poet in the imagination of something “to gain magic-possession” of that most coveted animal power, the lion-voice, the serpent-wisdom, the nightingale-song, the antlered crown—to commune with the animal force felt in the poem return to the working of the poem. So, the rehearsals of self as “that craftsman, / the shell-fish”, or, “when I, / the industrious worm, / spin my own shroud”, or “erect serpent” in The Walls Do No Fall; so, the ecstatic flight as “the first wild goose”, having the migratory bird’s instinctual drive to “hover / over the lost island, Atlantis”.

For I am not a literary scholar nor an historian, not a psychologist, a professor of
comparative religions or an occultist. I am a student of, I am searching out, a poetics. There are times when my primary work here, my initiation of self as poet in the ground of the poet H.D. and also my working of what is now a “matter of Poetry” (as the Arthurian lore is called the matter of Britain) and in turn an element in the great matter of the Creation of Man, there are times when my work has given way to literary persuasions and arguments, as if I might plead the cause of my life experience before the authorities at Nicaea and have my way, no longer heretical, taken over by those food bishops who control appointments and advancements as established dogma, a place won for H.D. in the orthodox taste and opinion of literary conventions.

But just here I would admit those crossed lines, mixed purposes, almost of a literary scholar, an historian, a psychologist, a professor of comparative religions, overwriting the poet and the figure before us that we are striving to realize.

Where now we have only this one way to go, to the knotting and the untying of knots, moving along the line of our moving, the sometimes multiphasic sentence, we follow, trace of this coveted animal or animating power we address, crossing and recrossing its charm as if we could so bring in over into our human lot the form it is of a book we are writing or of a life we are leading, is the nucleus itself of our work which we feel as an impending lure, the turning point where we are, leading us on.

We are, where a work of art is thought of as organic, related to a concept of life itself as a process of form in creation, always where “the tide is turning”. In the opening of *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

> unaware, Spirit announces the Presence
> shivering overtakes us,

the Presence in which we shiver is the entity of the poem itself in which the poet shivers, the immanence of the design of the tapestry in the weaver’s held breath as he works.

The heart, felt in the very beat of the verse, expressed in the insistent figure of alternating ebb and flow, consecration and affirmation, “hot noon-sun” and “the grey / opalescent winter-dawn”, appears in the foreground of the design as a jar carried by the Mage Kaspar to a new Master over Love (over the heart then). And Life appears as genius, an odor of myrrh, where the seal of the jar or heart was unbroken, that comes from the Christ-Child as if from one’s own heart. Life is the Presence, “spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray,” H.D. addresses it in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, xiii: “rare as radium, as healing”, toward which or from which the memory of the Curies from William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson* may have come. So, too, Wilhelm Reich saw Life in each cell, as he
tells us in *The Function of the Orgasm*, as a blue flame. In poetry, perhaps, we can allow the vision, though H.D.’s critics were suspicious of poetic fraud; in psychiatry, it brought disgrace for Reich and, ultimately, actual imprisonment for medical fraud upon the seer.

* 

We can allow the blue light? But once H.D. presents it, the “ultimate blue ray”, what we could not really tell then, is not a passing fantasy but some ultimate term of the reality of the poem. The empire of her thought and feeling is always precarious, in excess of critical permission, and now to bring in this remnant of theosophical color-theory? of romantic dream-key? the blue flower of Novalis’s *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*? The very names Theosophical and Romantic are pejoratives in the great court of that Nicaea I am tempted to address.

* 

So, we are lost, we have lost our argument and must go on deeper to follow the lead of this Heart, as if the heart were itself an organ of intelligence and we would find more than a figure of speech in the intuition of “to know by heart” or “to know in one's heart”. But now it is a jar that we follow in the poem, and the blue light is an odor....

* 

When first announcement comes in *The Walls Do Not Fall* of the Christos, we are told:

> His, the Genius in the jar  
> which the Fisherman finds,

> He is Mage,  
> bringing myrrh.

The “stone-marvel” of the sea-shell, the “egg-shell”, are little alabaster jars. Stars, too, are “little jars of that indisputable / and absolute Healer, Apothecary”, and contain something; as words and then poems are containers, where meaning and presence are myrrh and the odor of myrrh

* 

> O heart, small urn  
> of porphyry, agate or cornelian,
how imperceptibly the grain tell
between a heart-beat of pleasure

and a heart-beat of pain;
I do not know how it came.

As in Kaspar’s vision of the unfolding of the seed or pearl as a nucleus of light in the world is contained and revealed: “no one will ever know / whether the picture he saw clearly / as in a mirror was predetermined” or “no one will ever know how it happened / that in a second or a second and a half a second” there is a gnosis beyond knowing. “Of the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second,” Whitehead says. “I could not really tell,” Harvey testifies. “A small molecule,” Schrodinger tells us, “might be called ‘the germ of a solid.’”

* *

It is not abstract, a separate mental conception, apart from the material instance; but ineffable, elusive to definition. “The sense of having lived,” Henry James writes in his Preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, trying to recapture the germ of that work—the idea of Milly Theale desiring “to achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived.”

* *

So, the hidden seed, the myrrh or meaning, “the heart’s rapture” may also be such a sense of having lived, for it is to live that I find myself returning to the poem.

* *

As it was the title *What Is Life?* that drew me to Schrodinger’s work, and the sense of life, the excitement or immediacy in the writing of Schrodinger that leads me on to read. To bring forward into fulness of consciousness and involvement “the sense of having lived”. That must then spring from the immediate presence of one’s having lived in the only area the sense of anything can take place or time in—in the present intuition. The writer’s having lived in the writing the reader in turn lives in.

“The image so figured would be, at best, but half the matter, James writes: “the rest would be all the picture of the struggle involved, the adventure brought about, the gain recorded or the loss incurred, the precious experience somehow compassed.”

* *

The image and the tissue of the image, the weaving and the woven tapestry, contain something, the sense of having lived, so that where we respond to books or to
works of art intensely we think of them as living, we have the sense of having lived in the
world of our reading. In *Tribute to the Angels*, the Lady, Mother of God, appears to H.D.
bearing not the Christ but a book, as if Life or Love were also Poem or Work of Art—“her
book is our book; written”, H.D. confides in xxxix:

> or unwritten, its pages will reveal

> a tale of a Fisherman,
> a tale of a jar or jars.

* 

“I have trouble following,” my friend Thomas Parkinson had noted in reading the
first draft of the Day Book at this transition from James's evocation of the picture or
image, the adventure, the gain or loss, and the precious experience somehow
compassed, to H.D.'s “her book is our book”. The passage from James had come
abruptly to my mind as I wrote, and I, following, also had trouble. Certainly, the inten-
sity of James’s living in the writing itself, life in turn the germ of the book, comes near to
the sense I have of H.D.’s cult within the poem. Now, going back to the passages in
which the Lady appears, from the xxiv with its beginning lines I have quoted more than
once in this work: “Every hour, every moment / has its specific attendant Spirit” through
xli with its return of the Angels as bells tolling the Hour—“our purpose, a tribute to the
Angels”, the lines leap up from xxxvi: “she brings the Book of Life, obviously.”

* 

This is the religion of the Book. The People of the Book, so Islam denoted the
Jews, Christians, and themselves. And we who take our lives in the afterlife of
Christendom in writing and in reading must come across hints of the Word as we follow
the word and of the Presence as we find a book lively. The Lady in *Tribute to the Angels*
may be the Mother of the Word—the writer herself:

> She carried a book, either to imply
> she was one of us, with us,

or she may have been the Bride of the Word, the reader:

> or to suggest she was satisfied
> with our purpose, a tribute to the Angels.

At the close of the work itself, in *The Flowering of the Rod*, we see Her again, here Kaspar
brings forward the jar in which the old lore or sacred orthodox but esoteric story has
been stored. But the bearer of the gift has met a woman along the way, the myrrh has become mixed perhaps, the story even as the woman tells it passes into another lore belonging to the world of Woman, the Mara of bitter experience to become “Mary-myrrh”. Receiving the gift for the Child, the Mother may be the Muse receiving the poem on behalf of the Poem or Poetry. “Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance, / as of all flowering things together. As, we realize, in the presentation of the poem itself H.D. as bearer of the content of the poem is like Kaspar for she is not sure the content has not been “changed”, mixed, and yet she comes to know the gift—for the poem comes as a gift to the poet writing—is one of having lived in the pleasure of “a most beautiful fragrance”, the music of the poem.

* 

The ambivalence of the heart (“facing two ways”), the secretiveness of the heart, these are to be brought before the Christ Child; He Himself a sealed jar, yet a-jar somehow, for the essence escapes everywhere—mercurial, hermetic. He had been declared King, heir of the Fathers, even as the myrrh had been the secret or secretion of the Fathers, yet the suspicion lingers that another intention, a Woman’s, has interfered. The hardness of the heart is brought before the Child in the gift, for it is contained in the “small urn” of alabaster. As in Narthex almost two decades earlier, where H.D.’s seeing-in-depth first appears, she must bring the burnt-out triangle of painful experience into the hieroglyph of Solomon’s seal, a woman’s message worked into the sign of the Mage, so here, the odor of a woman’s bitterness, of brine, “I a Siren-song” is brought into the myrrh: “in recognition,” she tells us in The Flowering of the Rod, xx, it might be “of an old burnt-out / yet somehow suddenly renewed infatuation...” Alabastor and salt of the sea had been terms of her first poems.

But then, as if love everywhere, even bitter love, burnt-out and lost love, were Love, it is not from the jar, whatever became of its myrrh, but from the Jar, the heart of the matter:

> the fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh <br>she held in her arms.

“I am the Way,” this God had said. And the way as we write may be the Christ; its music, the fragrance. “I am the Life,” the sense of having lived, of its living, the closeness to essential Life in which our recognition of any work of art is involved may be our sense of its Mastery. He is the book she carries as she appears to the poet, and in the close of the book the poet writes, as at the close of the War Trilogy, He appears as the Child. “The Kingdom is within,” He also said, where the Way, Word, Life, Master, World are one, in the Heart.
CHAPTER FIVE

March 14, Tuesday. 1961(1963)

"Without thought, invention, you would not have been, o Sword.

“Rails gone (for guns),” the poem begins, with the officers of the State, in the name of the War Effort, taking over all the conditions of personal reality into their own use, “from your (and my) old town square.” With the declaration of war in the modern state, which claims to represent the authority of the people, the means and ends of the war become the ultimate reality (as in the interim between wars, which we call “Peace,” to face reality means to accept and work with the terms of the dominant mercantile capitalistic and usurious standards). The critical contempt that met H.D.’s War Trilogy was in part the contempt of the Protestant ethic for womanish ways, and back of that the old war between the Father and his hero-sons and the heathen realm of the Mothers, anticipated by H.D. in the “they snatched off our amulets, charms are not, they said, grace” theme introduced in The Walls Do Not Fall, ii. But there was also the contempt of those concerned with the War Effort for H.D.’s sense that ultimately the War was to be subject to Writing itself as a higher prime of reality. To bring up the old gods of Egypt, already proved false and declared out-of-bounds by the historical victory of Bible, was anachronistic in the face of the air attacks on London. The critics of the day—Dudley Fitts and Randall Jarrell—found her concept of history silly, if not dangerous, an offense to any common sense. The “still the Luxor bee, chick and hare / pursue unalterable purpose and the “eternity endures” of the opening passage of the poem was the declaration of a personal real equal in its terms to the real terms of the war, i.e. political and national contentions, and H.D. had known from her experience of the pillory undergone by the Lawrences and other friends in the First World War that the cost of such a declaration was to suffer an all but overwhelming rejection. Here too the criticism is anticipated in the poem, where, in xxxi, the main statement of the voices of the adversary begins, accusing the poet of “intrusion of strained / inappropriate allusion, / illusion of lost-gods, daemons; / gambler with eternity....”

Robert Lowell’s Land of Unlikeness, published the same year as The Walls Do Not Fall, with its “Tonight the venery of capital / Hangs the bare Christ-child on a tree of gold,” was acceptable for it recognized the victory of the industrial order over Christendom as ultimately real; Lowell held no unreal confidence in a higher reality of Christ. He was appropriately despairing in his opposition to the facts of the war. He acknowledged what Tate calls in his introduction to Lowell’s first book “the disappearance of the Christian experience from the modern world.” The young poet in despairing anger refers to Christ throughout with the realistic recognition that He is a lost cause or an absent spirit, like a Hamlet crying “Looke here upon this Picture, and on this.” “The ghost of risen Jesus,” “my carrion king, Jesus,” “the Hanging Jesus”—the Jesus that history crucifies haunts his mind. At one time only, in “Cistercians in Germany” does the
a historical, anachronistic or eternal image of Christ appear: “To Bernard gathering his
canticle of flowers, / His soul a bridal chamber fresh with flowers, / And all his body one
extatic womb, / And through the trellis peers the sudden Bridegroom.” The poet is upon
the verge of an epiphany, but he remains intellectually discrete and clearly takes this
near appearance of Christ not as an Image but as a description of Bernard’s scene.
Perhaps upon later consideration Lowell felt even this spiritual pretension false; he does
not include it in the canon of Lord Weary’s Castle.

In contrast, H.D.’s insistence upon the Living Christ, her sense that not only the
Christian experience but the Greek and even the Egyptian experiences have not disap-
peared from the modern world but gather immediate to our own experience, does not
recognize what the consensus of opinion of reasonable men has determined is the true
nature of history. For all of human history appears to H.D. as if it were a Creation or
fiction of reality, involving wish as well as world in its works—and here, the war as much
as the writing is wish, but the writing triumphs, for it most approximates the total config-
uration. It is the “unalterable purpose” of the poem to convert the War to its own uses;
the bombings of London are read as signs in the Poem Effort which claims priority over
the War Effort. “Eternity endures” means not only that the eternal themes of the poem,
the images—the cartouche or the sword—last beyond the war, but that they, like the
poet, endure, as one endures the insolence of those who cannot understand, the War’s
usurpation of human life from its most real purposes. There is the sense too that—as in
the Gospel of Saint Luke, Jesus’s “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,”
or His “He who joins not in the dance mistakes the event” in The Acts of Saint John—the
War is not to be taken for granted as simply an economic or political opportunity or as a
disorder, but it is also a Mystery play or dream projection to be witnessed and inter-
preted, to be endured in order to be understood. The War rises from the dramatic neces-
sity and informs: “Pompeii has nothing to teach us, / we know crack of volcanic fissure,”
H.D.testifies. So, there were gnostics who taught that the human soul must come to
know the depths of hell and sin as well as the heights of heaven and the good before it
complete its human self or experience. In Freudian terms, the War is a manifestation of
the latent content of the civilization and its discontents, a projection of the collective
unconscious. “And beyond thought and idea,” H.D. continues: “their begetter..

Dream,
Vision.

*

“The total world of which the philosophers must take account,” William James
writes in his Principles of Psychology in 1890, “is thus composed of the realities plus the
fancies and illusions.” What we must deal with in such a totality of the human experi-
ence demands in poetry, as James saw it demanded in philosophy, a new texture of
thought and imagination. “For there are various categories both of illusion and of
reality, and alongside of the world of absolute error (i.e., error confined to single individuals) but still within the world of absolute reality (i.e., reality believed by the complete philosopher) there is the world of collective error, there are the worlds of abstract reality, of relative or practical reality, of ideal relations, and there is the supernatural world.”

*

It is “the total world which is” that concerns James; and in his sense that What Is is multifarious, in his insistence upon the Sagetrieb many strands we must come to see before consciousness have something like the fullness demanded by What Is, James is kin to Emerson before him and to Dewey and Whitehead after. The quest he projects is not only that of the philosopher who would approach the nature of human experience in its complexity but also that of the poet who seeks a poetics adequate to convey various levels of feeling and thought toward the complete. Whitman’s “Self,” expanded to include the variety of human existence, is such a concept. The at-homeness in many persons, times and places, that characterizes The Cantos, the War Trilogy, or Paterson, represents the tendency to think of completeness in terms of the variety of human life, even of life itself, beyond the less-than-total individual sub-world: “to determine the relation of each sub-world to the others in the total world which is”.

*

In the world of the imagination, of fiction and fable—the world of creation—James includes “the various supernatural worlds, the Christian heaven and hell, the world of the Hindoo mythology” with “the world of the Iliad, that of King Lear, of the Pickwick Papers.”

*

Money and war are also fictional entities, for men believe in them, as they believe in elves and gods, to make real their lives. Swords, spades, hearts, diamonds, and the drawings upon the walls, poems keeping their time, too, are conditions of the real, of What Is, man-made. All makers are at work between thought and the actual, feeling their way. It is what we call Poetry of The Making that articulates the feeling in language—the wish manifest in the image, Sword or new Master over Love—toward the fullness of experience. We see our Way and create our Thing in the world about us as desire illumines. “The `larger universe,’ here,” James writes, “which helps us to believe both in the dream and in the waking reality which is its immediate reductive, is the total universe, of Nature plus the Supernatural.”

*
Conventional poetics, which belongs to the Age of Reason that sought to reduce even religion to a consensus of the opinion of reasonable men, had reduced the frame of mind to exclude the supernatural from individual experience, to rationalize genius and make a metaphor of inspiration, to confine reality to what, as Dryden has it in his Preface to *All For Love*; “all reasonable men have long since concluded.” In philosophy, in poetics, in science, and in politics, men strove to make and to hold a world of sense, practical knowledge, ideal relations, logical conclusions, around which what Freud calls the Super-Ego, grown enormous, built its authority, against an enemy world of the irrational—fearful, to be avoided or rendered harmless—the world of fictions (romance, supernatural, vision and dream), of “sheer madness and vagary.” Howling hairy madmen and shrieking desolate virgins appeared in the imaginations of Fuseli, Blake, Goya, Hoffman, Potocki, the Marquis de Sade.

*James’s world of fictions is the real of the creative imagination. It is in the work of realizing, composing or bringing into cooperation the various worlds of senses, sciences, fictions, opinions, ideals, ideas, and “sheer madness and vagary,” held as one creation or poetics, that the artist develops the imagination “to charge with meaning to the utmost possible degree.”*

*To recognize madness as a term of the real extends our life in What Is. This is the revelation of Goya’s *Caprichos* or of Girrard de Nerval’s *Chimeras*, that what otherwise had been isolated obsession and hallucination is brought into the communal imagination to become mystery and mystic vision. As, again, in the ritual of the Christian Mass, “madness and vagary” have been brought over into the order of the communal reality—a play enacted in which the body of Christ is eaten and His blood drunk, that must be held by the communicant as a mystery, an idea, but also an actual happening within a world of its own; that must also be not a play but a greater reality. The power of the Mass, its numinous force, its real, is that of a fiction where ideal and madness become contrasting elements of one structure. Conflicting elements, love and devouring cannibalistic hunger, are sublimated or condensed, held in a third element of devotion, the intensity of the created feeling arising from the incorporate disturbance.*

*“Dichten = condensare,” Pound notes in his *ABC of Reading*: “Basil Bunting, fumbling about with a German-Italian dictionary, found that this idea of poetry as concentration is as old almost as the German language. ‘Dichten’ is the German verb corresponding to the noun ‘Dichtung’ meaning poetry, and the lexicographer has rendered it by the Italian verb meaning ‘to condense.’”*
“The first thing that becomes clear to anyone who compares the dream-content with the dream-thoughts,” Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1896), “is that a work of condensation on a large scale has been carried out.”

Ezra Pound has the daemon of a poet and has described the genius of a poem not as a descending spirit or inspiration but as a welling-up of a spring or emotion. So, in his *Retrospect* of 1918 he inscribes: “Only emotion endures.” “We might come to believe that the thing that matters in art,” he writes in *The Seriкус Artist* (1913), “is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity transfusing, welding, and unifying... .” Then: “A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it into swift motion.” But Pound is a man of divided mind, and a mind, further, impressed during his years as a would-be candidate for his doctorate with the concerns and ambitions of a would-be professor of literature. The poetic emotion which Pound experiences as being a truth of his own nature is complicated by considerations of a different order, the concern for literary opinion, for changing established standards and reading lists. In *The Serious Artist*, the arts “bear witness and define for us the inner nature and conditions of man” and are falsified if they be altered to conform to the taste of the time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics.” In *Guide to Kulchur*, as in *The Cantos* of the 1930s, the ideogram which presented in configuration the inner responses of the man became confused with the ideogram of a proper sovereignty. Ideas in action became idées fixes acting upon a recalcitrant world. “As the man, as his mind, becomes a heavier and heavier machine, a constantly more complicated structure,” Pound observes in *The Serious Artist*, “it requires a constantly greater voltage of emotional energy to set it into harmonious motion.” Only with the upsurge of emotional crisis that came at Pisa, where in the death-camp Pound came at last into the destiny of his poetic identity, did the conglomerate that had gathered in *The Cantos* begin to move again, and then it was to be a breaking up of fixed ideas into drifts and debris in the creative currents.

In certain works of his pre-War London period, in *The Spirit of Romance, Religio, Aux Etuves de Wiesbaden, Genesis (after Voltaire), and Cavalcanti*, Pound derives from the Neoplatonic cult of Nelios, from the Provencal cult of Amor, from the Renaissance revival of pagan mysteries after Gemistos Plethon, and from the immediate influence of the theosophical revival in which Yeats was immersed, an analogous tradition of poetry as a vehicle for heterodox belief, a ground in which the divine world may appear(with the exception of the Judaeo-Christian orders). At the thought of Jesus, Pound has all the
furious fanaticism of the Emperor Julian; he is a pagan fundamentalist. Aphrodite may appear to the poet, and even Kuanon, but not Mary; Helios and even Ra-Set may come into the poem, but not Christ. Yet these gods of the old world are not only illustrations of a living tradition; they are, Pound testifies throughout The Cantos, presences of a living experience. Does the poet cast them as images upon our minds or do they use the medium of the poem to present themselves? They come to the poet or he calls them up. So, in the first draft of Canto I: “Gods float in the azure air....

“It is not gone.” Metastasio
Is right, we have that world about us.

* 

Even as H.D. testifies in The Walls Do Not Fall in 1942 to the attendance or Presence of Ammon-Ra-Christos and of Mary in London, so in The Pisan Cantos Pound in 1945 testifies he was attended in his tent by his familiar gods-Helios, Hermes, Aphrodite, and the Lady of the Pomegranate. It was a heterodox religion to hold, and Pound in other works of the pre-War London period, particularly in The Serious Artist, strove to rationalize or make respectable the content of this tradition in terms of a natural philosophy of poetry, after the models of Remy de Gourmont’s Natural Philosophy of Love or of Allen Upward’s The Divine Mystery, appealing to the authority of Fabre and Frazer, to give his adherence a biological and anthropological reality, but also to uphold the poetic intuition itself against the attack of what he knows cultural and religious orthodoxy to be. To hold the poetic intuition in the face of his own professorial or professional righteousness, the rationalizing authority Pound often writes to cover for the shamanistic poet he is at heart. But this Super-Ego could disapprove too of Pound’s delite in pedantry. This is the poetic pathos in Thrones where, pursuing lexicographical speculations, Pound breaks with impatience to answer the impending voice of an inner adversary:

If we never write anything save what is already understood, the field of understanding will never be extended. One demands the right, now and again, to write for a few people with special interests and whose curiosity reaches into greater details.

Not only must the poet cover for the devotional character of the poem but he must defend the scholarly character too against some shadowy critical authority.

* 

Only by interrupting the imagination can Pound in corporate certain “worlds” of his individual reality. The texture of the poem must allow for the contention of the mind.
Abrupt interjections appear, dramatizing the conflict between two drives: one, akin to that of William James or William Carlos Williams or H.D.—“to extend the field of understanding”; the other, after Dryden, akin to Eliot, to appeal to “what all reasonable men have long since concluded.” The problem throughout is one of translation between the individual experience which is repressed in the official culture or banished to the realm of madness and the body of what is taken as authoritative. Fenollosa’s Chinese written character, Gaudier-Brzeska’s vortex of energy in sculpture, Frobenius’s culture-morphology, Gesell’s justice, and freedom in the exchange of goods—all these correspond to the poet’s inspiration to extend the field of understanding in a new poetics. Ideogram, vortex of energies, form as meaningful and organic, and equilibrium in the circulation of goods (feelings and thoughts) are basic terms of what happens in The Cantos. Just as, significantly, they, like The Cantos, are rejected by the taste and opinion of reasonable men or relegated to the peripheries of the culture where harmless fantasies or worse, madness and vagary begin to appear. The form of The Cantos, like the ideal form of a democratic government, must allow for the authority of the individual—here the authority of the individual response or impulse—within a community of differing responses. Of all contemporary poetries it has the greatest inner tolerance for even conflicting tones, certainties, doubts—the texture of a widely, even wildly, multiphasic personality.

* 

For there is another voice, corresponding perhaps to the regular-guy voice of Williams, that breaks through, as in the transitions of puberty the voice breaks between boyhood and manhood, and the personality breaks too, between the familial and the communal consciousness, making dramatic the conflict between the new sexual nature and the forces of authority in custom and government that forbid its expression and would compel its expression. The bold-face emphatic, the rant, the caricature of voice, the contentious mode appears, where another Pound roars and pounds on the table to bring Fenollosa or Frobenius, Gaudier-Brzeska or Gesell, whatever had opened the way for new inspiration and life-sense for the poet, to the consideration of government officials and university professors of literature, or reasonable men, to become part of the authoritative. There is hysteria, but we see too that it rises, most markedly in the irritations of Pound and D. N. Lawrence, men who, like H.D., testify to elements in experience that are not accepted in the social norms, just where the man strives to bring his individual awareness and the communal awareness into one.

* 

The voices of Eliot or of Wallace Stevens do not present us with such disturbances of mode. They preserve throughout a melodious poetic respectability, eminently sane in their restriction of poetic meaning to the bounds of the literary, of symbol and
metaphor, but at the cost of avoiding facts and ideas that might disturb. Both the individual and the communal awareness are constricted to fit or adapted to the convenience of an accepted culture. Writing in *The Dial*, January 1928, Eliot finds that Pound might actually believe what is suspect or outside the terms of proper English belief simply unbelievable:

*He retains some medieval mysticism without belief, this is mixed up with Mr. Yeats' spooks (excellent creatures in their native bogs); and involved with Dr. Berman's hormones; and a steamroller of Confucian rationalism (the Religion of a Gentleman, and therefore an Inferior Religion) has flattened over the whole. So we are left with the question (which the unfinished Cantos me more pointed) what does Mr. Pound believe?*

Pound, as well as D. H. Lawrence, belonged to the side of those who hankered after strange gods. In the ranks of Poetry itself, and in those ranks among poets who were surely their peers, Pound and Lawrence were heterodox in their cult of the daemonic both in terms of the old orthodoxy of the consensus of religious beliefs within the society and in terms of the new orthodoxy of the consensus of rationalist scientism. From the beginning H.D. had been of the pagan party, and with the War Trilogy she moved as a poet to the battlefront. The full roster of Mr. Eliot's accusations, carefully loaded to excite the prejudices of right-thinking critics, was to be applied against her. Mysticism without the sanction of any church, daemonic and ghostly personae, biological and sexual coordinations, and, in H.D.’s case, Freudian in place of Confucian rationalism.

*It is just the discordant note—the rant of Pound, the male bravado of Williams, the bitter anger of Lawrence, the feverish exaltation and heightened concern with adverse arguments—it is this not only being aware of the loss of community but being involved in the heart of the trouble, undertaking the trouble, that gives to the heterodox their vital meaning, beyond the special culture of the times, in the process of our own art, for they challenge what we would take for granted. The rant, the bravado, the sarcasm, the exaltation are purposeful overcharges that touch again and again to keep our sense alive to the disorder, the demand of experience for a higher order of form. The discord of their modes to the social norm is a therapeutic art.*

*Where the individual protest is vehement and then, as with Pound and Lawrence, out raging against the “democratic” norms that oppose and confine the development of man's inner nature, there is the seed of the totalitarian reaction. Where the individual
despairs of his living his own life or finding his own life within the society under the
domination of established proprieties, he may give over the struggle for liberation and
seek a design for privilege within conformation or strike out for the domination of his
own will. A Hitler or a Mussolini, a Lenin or a Stalin, successfully find the way to
dominion; surrendering all inner freedom, they become possessed and impersonate the
absolute authority of the state that was once the enemy. Where a democracy is
composed of a people in which the individual conscience and nature is not liberated, so
that a common standard or consensus of the majority rules and not the union of each in
free volition, the state is already totalitarian.

Pound must protest his right to write “for a few people with special interests.”
The hostility of a popularist democracy for “special interests” may be politically directed
towards the overweening powers of industrial tycoons, Papist plots, and military
lobbies, but it extends too to any sensibility, science, or art, that is not readily available
as a commodity to all interests and uses. It is the unpopular sensitivity of the poet, for
one thing, that is under attack. Complex or obscure considerations threaten the secu-
ritv and self-esteem of men who take pride in their common sense against any
uncommon concern. “They claimed, or rather jeered in Provence, remonstrated in
Tuscany, wrangle today, and will wrangle tomorrow-and not without some show of
reason-that poetry must be simple.” That’s part of it. The popular mind resists and
resents any extension of awareness beyond the use of public polity, for thought and
feeling must cope there with new complexities and obscurities.

* * *

“Could beauty be done to death,” H.D. cries in 1916, during the First World War,
in “The Tribute”:

“Could beauty be caught and hurt
they had done her to death with their sneers...

That, too, is part of it. The beauty of the poem, the poet’s sense of beauty, in itself, that
cannot be bought and sold, Beauty, in a society based upon commodity-profit is ambiva-
 lamently praised and despised. The popular mistrust, the industrial and commercial
mistrust, opposes and destroys where it can individual sensitivity, as out of place in the
“democracy” of big party politics or in the “community” of the modern city as individu-
alist architecture with its romantic and expressive form, even ornament, is in the plans
of the new functionalism.

But the mistrust is within too. The poets turn upon each other and themselves in
accusation and guilt-Lawrence accuses Joyce of obscenity; Pound finds Lawrence’s
erotic poems “disgusting or very nearly so”; H.D. strikes out against the bravado of
Williams; Williams hits back with exacerbated sensitivity against H.D.’s exaltation of the
“sacred” (“real beauty is a rare and sacred thing in this generation”).
“So what good are your scribblings?” the partisans of the Sword demand in *The Walls Do Not Fall*. The immediate contention means “of what good for the War Effort?,” but the accusation gives rise to answers in the poem that it is her very way of life, her ultimate individuality that is under question. Not only in wartime conditions but throughout the society living for love or living for experience is heretical, so contradictory to the common persuasion of the use of life—-to career, to comfort, to security—that it gives rise to defensive affirmations where we feel the “I know, I feel” transcends the question, pushed, in order to survive as a life-purpose, to the ultimate. But the voices of disapproval remain, for they are part of what the poet knows and feels Deeper, they have been incorporated in the poet’s psyche, taken-to-heart. The old arguments against the cult of beauty, against Imagism, against the ecstatic, against the occult and mythopoetic, crowd in to impersonate the poet’s own duality between doubt and conviction in writing.

What I am getting at here is that the man individualizes him-self, deriving his individuality from the ideas and possibilities at large of manhood in a community that includes all that we know of what man is (“Grandeur, horror!” Victor Hugo cries out in his vision of that Leviathan). And the desire to know more of what man is, extending the idea of man beyond the limitations of particular nationalities, races, civilizations, the taking of self in the species, or in the life force, or in the cosmos, is the need for self beyond what can be granted by whatever known community, the need for a manhood big enough to live freely in. The poetic urge, to make a poetry out of the common language, is to make room for the existence of the poet, the artist of free speech. As in the beginning, the sky was divided from the earth below, or Heaven from Hell, to give space, a height and a depth, in human life. He differentiates the area of existence, creating his “own” area, deriving the individuality as much from dissociation as from identification, disowning as well as owning possibilities of his being, making a place for self in the community of his total consciousness which is an inner counterpart of his awareness of the outer community in which he lives. He recognizes in the world about him those contentions he feels within.

Pound in “Canto XIV” not only attacks in society at large but attacks in his own mind “the betayers of language ... those who had lied for hire . . . the perverters of language,” disowning the corrupt language of the press even as he strikes out in the very excesses of that language, having the bigotry to damn “bigots, Calvin and St. Clement of Alexandria,” allowing them no more understanding than they allowed their
enemies, inflamed against inflammatory words. In contrast, the famous Usura canto (XLV) has a grandeur of tone that would seem to indicate that the poet has no such secret temptation to use his art for profit as he has to use his art for public persuasion and attack, for defamation of character. In the troubled flux of the late Cantos “the temple is not for sale” stands with equanimity.

*

In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, H.D. gives some assent to the “we fight for life” terms of the Sword’s claim, for she answers here only that Writing too is part of the fight for life. But the communal pronoun “we” proper is used throughout the poem to refer to the community of a mystery within the larger society: “we know not nor are known,” “we passed the flame,” “they were angry when we were so hungry,” “we reveal our status / with twin-horns, disk, erect serpent,” “we, authentic relic, / bearers of the secret wisdom,” “we take them with us / our writings / beyond death,” “we are proud, / aloof, / indifferent to your good and evil,” “we know each other / by secret symbols,” “we know our Name / we nameless initiates”—this is the language of the Holy Spirit cults of the 16th and 17th century Reformation, where community as well as self has been dissociated from the society at large and created anew in order to survive as a living reality in the consciousness. H.D. would create not only a life of her own but she would fuse elements of the community of poets, the community of the psychoanalyzed, and the community of Christ, to have a community of her own. In the light of what that community means by Life, the War is not all, mostly is not at all, a fight for life. “I am hungry, the children cry for food / and flaming stones fall on them,” she returns in answer to the Sword’s claim: “our awareness leaves us defenseless.” In *Tribute to the Angels*, those who suffer in the bombings of London are not victims of a fight for their life but of a contention that is not theirs. “Never in Rome / so many martyrs fell,” yes, but the war in the sky is “the battle of the Titans.” In *The Flowering of the Rod*, her dissociation from the purposes of the war, like Pound’s from the purposes of the peace in the Usura canto, is clear:

> the harvester sharpens his steel on the stone;
> but this is not our field,

> we have not sown this;
> pitiless, pitiless, let us leave

> The place-of-a-skull
> to those who have fashioned it.

In section x, she declares again: “It is no madness to say / you will fall, you great cities... it is simple reckoning.”

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This putting away of allegiance that obstructs the poetic or religious reality is an inner psychic as well as an outer social struggle for life-space, for the identity of the poet and the way of poetry to create itself and find its true community, that is, its freedom, within the mass of a populace where forces rule that care nothing for or are hostile to its existence.

Even as these poets strove to make a place for their poetry, they had a strong drive to disown those aspects of poetry that might be held up to the derision of the rigorous minded. In a letter to Williams in 1908, Pound writes: “Here is a list of facts on which I and 9,000,000 other poets have spieled endlessly.” He at least is not to be taken in by the pretensions of the poetic. There follows a list of themes:

1. Spring is a pleasant season. The flowers, etc. etc. sprout, bloom etc. etc.
2. Young man’s fancy. Lightly, heavily, gaily etc. etc.
3. Love, a delightful tickling. Indefinable etc. A) By day, etc. etc. etc.
   B) By night, etc. etc. etc.
4. Trees, hills etc. are by a provident nature arranged diversely, in diverse places.
5. Winds, clouds, rains, etc. flop thru and over ‘em.

So, Pound continues; the tone is not simply vernacular, but a sophisticated putting-on of common sense—it protests its being wise to some shame incurred in poetic themes that might be betrayed in its own voice. “Delightsome tickling” covers with male bravado any suspicion of being taken-in by sexual excitement or love, lest the poet be caught in some “unmanly” emotion. Pound, deeply pre-Raphaelite in his affinities, will protest as a modernist in 1913 against Lawrence’s “middling-sensual erotic verses” as “a sort of pre-raphaelitish slush, disgusting or very nearly so.” Behind his “jesting,” as he calls it, is Pound’s native Puritanical mind in its distaste for the sensual. But deeper going, there is the intellectual disclaimer.

Compare Dante in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, speaking also to his peers on the themes of poetry:

*These we call the worthiest of those subjects which can be handled; and now let us hunt out what they are. And, in order to make this clear, it must be observed that, as man has been endowed with a threefold life, namely,*
vegetable, animal, and rational, he journeys along a threefold road....
Wherefore these three things, namely, safety, love, and virtue, appear to be
those capital matters which ought to be treated supremely, I mean the things
which are most important in respect of them, as prowess in arms, the fire of
love, and the direction of the will.

The direction of the will in the course of the twentieth century is deeply
disturbed. The main drive of the Imagists away from the specially “poetic” dictions
of the nineteenth century toward the syntax and rhythms of common daily speech was that
of Dante in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, who argued that the vernacular “because it was
the first employed by the human race, as because the whole world makes use of it” was
nobler than learned speech-and “It is also nobler as being natural to us, where as the
other is rather of an artificial kind.” Pound’s *Cathay*, meant as Hugh Kenner has pointed
out to be carried in the soldier’s pocket, in 1914 had the eloquence of a new poetic
vernacular, the force of a common nobility; but in the *Confucian Odes*, following the
Second World War, the voices of his translation grow disparate; a jazzy and folksy dialect
takes the place of common speech-the low-life specialty that operates even as the
learned grammatical speech of upper classes to convey a class consciousness set apart
from our common humanity. In his version of *The Women of Trachis* Pound runs the
gamut between the Shelleyan sublime of the choruses and the stereotyped vulgarity of
the Cockney waiting-woman or nurse. Her speech has just that artificiality that Dante
felt robbed learned speech of nobility—it is furthest in Pound’s mind from the vernacular.
Yet Dante sees this true or natural speech “as that which we acquire without any rule,
by imitating our nurses.” Herakles has the voice of Pound’s own nature as he cries:
“Splendor. It all coheres”—a cry that has tragic pathos in this translated play that incor-
porates the play of the poet’s own poetic tragedy, where Pound had been heroic in his
life to restore the word “common” to its coherence from the meaning of the word
“common” as used by the middle-class of “lower classes.” But the hubris of self-
 improvement and advancement in status goes deep in our American world, of rescuing
ourselves from the common lot, and, profoundly American, Pound inherits in full the
class and racial antagonisms in which our American culture has developed, even as he
struggles to transform that culture. The Nessus shirt in which Heracles burns is the shirt
of a consciousness of what is going on, where Heracles is heroic, as Pound is, by his
strength of character in adverse fate, by his taking on in full the way it is.

*  

“We are alone . . .”, Freud writes in *The Dream-Work*, an essay of that last year
of the nineteenth century: “We are alone in taking something else into account.”
“We have introduced a new class of psychical material between the manifest
content of dreams and the conclusion of our enquiry.” It is this area between the mani-
fest and the conclusion of his enquiry, between the manifest content of the poem and

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the enquiry into that content, that Pound cannot introduce as a conscious artist. The poetic genius “rescues” the content. This is the authenticity of the Cantos: the poet’s sensitivity, his feel for the material he admits. In his essays before the First World War his conscious mind allies itself with his genius; but, for the author of Kulchur, major themes of his poetic inspiration, indeed, inspiration itself, is suspect. The content of his great poem begins to seem to have “the defects of a record of struggle.” His conscious aesthetic contradicts the work of his creative aesthetic which must then come more and more as an unconscious directive—to the consciousness a matter of defect and struggle.

Because the poem-work then, like the dream-work, is a composition that takes place in the unconscious that the consciousness feels as an imperative towards form, in The Cantos we read, as Freud saw the dream was to be read, “as it were a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts.” In the ideogrammic method, Pound finds a configuration that returns, beyond his rationalizations and predispositions, to the feel of things; he has faith in the truth of the instinctive synthesis, where he must exceed his own conscious reading analysis.

Where intelligence is consciousness, Pound is marred intelligence. Not in the complex of heterodox material he has admitted into his ideogram, but in repressed contents of his experience that he does not and can not admit. Good or evil, Will moves in the Cantos separated from any psychological insight until the crisis of the Pisan Death Camp. But since intelligence is something larger than what consciousness can admit, an awareness that may lie in the feel of things’ fitting imperatively as they lead toward the form of the poem, even when the consciousness cannot think of what is at work there, at the fingertip’s sensitivity, at the ear’s equilibrium, and in the secret mind’s sense of undercurrents, The Cantos are a major breakthrough. Pound is a great Dreamer, and it was a condition of his Dream that he vehemently and even violently reject the Freudian breakthrough that began the translation of the language of dreams into our daily consciousness.

We may see the deeper significance the role of translation has had for Pound as a poetic task, when we think of how in psycho-analytic translation dreams and daily life have begun to appear as a language we must learn to read in order to translate something we have always to say that we do not know yet to hear. “The dream-thoughts,” Freud writes, “and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages.” So, too, we see the importance of the ideogram for Pound, for its is his route towards—“as it were a pictographic script”—the condensare of the dream.
section two

March 14, 1961
(1963, 1975)

Poems are not objects but events of Poetry, of our consciousness of making a universe of feeling in language. Is it the celebration of a mass, at once to enter the intensity of such a passion of the word and at the same time to release the hold of a need the word has over us? Even in the beginning when I sought to find a Poetry, the need for it to be was there, and now in the depth of what I have known in my art the need seems everlasting. Or is it a praying for the release into this other universe? Into this singing or dancing What-Is?

As our concept of What Is changes, our concept of form changes—for our experience of form is our experience of What Is. As I begin to see in terms of William James’s pluralistic reality, a sense of the total world emerging from many kinds of apprehension, Sagetrieb and in terms of Freud’s exploration of one kind of psycho sexual reality with its sense of the divine will as Eros and Thanatos, the three things Dante named as worthiest concerns in the poem—“safety, love, and virtue”—and their three appropriate forces—“prowess in arms, the fire of love, and the direction of the will,” whatever their meaning in the thirteenth century and in Dante’s life, take on new and troubled meanings when they are taken as primaries in our own lives. Dante understood “safety” as having to do not with the interests of his city Florence primarily but with the good of humanity as a whole, and so, he took the Emperor as against the city, and he was condemned to death, a traitor, in Florence. As today, for the sake of “safety” of Man, our own “prowess of arms” would have to be given, were we to take Dante’s politics, to the union of all nations, against the contention of those who govern the United States in the name of private enterprise against communal goods and who are engaged in a disastrous struggle for domination against their counterparts in Russia and China. We live today, as Dante lived in the thirteenth century and in Florence, in a crisis of just these three worthiest subjects that must have their definitions not in our personal interests or we find ourselves at war with the commune, not in our national interests, or we find ourselves at war with other nations, but in our human interests, our understanding of the universal term that is Man. “Of all civilizations,” Dante argues in De Monarchia, not of Florence or of Rome alone. The goal of politics he discerns is “the realizing of all the potentialities of the human mind.” “And this demands the harmonious development and cooperation of the several members of the universal body politic.”

All through the body of our nation men and women are suffering and needing to find a way—to find “the prowess of arms!”—to fight for the survival of even a few potentialities of the human mind. This is the war, our war we know to be true: to save the potentialities of the human mind. The Constitution of these United States—but we must think of these now as states of the human mind united—was written, with its Bill of Rights, to embody as the Law of a Nation the eighteenth century vision of what the
potentialities of the human mind were: it presents a Bill of Potentialities for Mind. It is not the rightness of their policies that makes Jefferson and Adams heroes of what I would call our nation—which I see as indeed of the same order as that Jerusalem that Blake speaks of in Milton:

\[
\begin{align*}
I \ & \ \textnormal{will not cease from Mental Fight,} \\
& \textnormal{Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand} \\
& \textnormal{Till we have built Jerusalem} \\
& \textnormal{In England's green & pleasant Land}
\end{align*}
\]

—but that they, Jefferson and Adams, were devotees of the potentialities of the human mind, of man's best estate. “In Tartarian-Eroian, Geann-Ouranian”, Charles Olson scrawls on an OFFICE MEMORANDUM of the University of Connecticut the closing passage of his Maximus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{love} \\
& \text{time and life space} \\
& \text{time & exact} \\
& \text{analogy} \\
& \text{time & intellect} \\
& \text{time & mind} \\
& \cdots \\
& \text{the initiation} \\
\end{align*}
\]

of another kind of nation

—It is to save the potentialities of such a nation that is proper to the mind, not the brain as such, but that whole organic evidence of what we are about that “Mind” addresses—to save the goods of the intellect, that the poet names “safety” to be one of three with “love” and “virtue” or man's proper power (what I take to be the meaning of Olson's “proprioception”). “I too,” Whitman answers that Phantom—“terrible in beauty, age, and power,” he tells us, “the genius of poets of old lands”—who challenges the poet that he does not sing the theme of War:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Be it so, then I answer'd} \\
& \text{I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one than any,} \\
& \text{Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory} \\
& \text{deferr'd and wavering,} \\
& \cdots \\
& \text{the field the world,} \\
& \text{For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul...}
\end{align*}
\]

This “Nation” or “Jerusalem” or “Kingdom”—for we go back here to that kingdom not of this world that Christ speaks of in the New Testament that must be
founded on Earth as it is in Heaven—belongs to a Poetry toward which our conscience in terms of our human society works, even as our conscience works toward a Poetry in what we call “Poetry”. The Bill of Rights is not a claim but a poem, a creation informed thru out by a will toward true order, right reason, just proportion, but no more than a will toward true order, right reason, just proportion, but no more than a will toward, an intent enacted.
In the current issue of the poets’ journal *open space*, I find in an untitled poem by Harold Dull upon listening to the opera *Orfeo* the concept that in each step of the life drama of Orpheus he gains a question: “and by the time / he goes into the dark / to lose her the second time . . .

he has as many apparently forever to be unanswered questions as there are strings on his lyre”

striking a chord with those passages of H.D.’s *Helen in Egypt* where in Book Two of the *Eidolon* section it seems that Helen in her living has gained “a rhythm as yet unheard,” and that history—the war at Troy and Troy’s fall are “Apollo’s snare / so that poets forever / should be caught in the maze of the Walls / of a Troy that never fell.”

“Was it a question asked / to which there was no answer?” H.D. asks, and then:

*who lured the players from home*
*or imprisoned them in the Walls,*

to inspire us with endless,
intricate questioning

So the proposition of the last poem in *Eidolon*, Book Two, states: “There is only a song now and rhetorical questions that have already been answered.” But the rhetorical question, it has already been answered in the poem, is meant not to find its answer but to incite the movement of the poem, leads on, opening a way for the flow of the poetic feeling to go, question and answer for the sake of a rhythm; as the questions of high and low, of the gap in society or consciousness or concept, of the proposition taken up from William James’s *Principles of Psychology* of many realities entering into the picture of the total world of man’s experience, or the idea of a Permission or Grace given, are instrumental and will be seen at last to be as many as the strings of the lyre to which they belong upon which I play. The lyre in turn existing for the sake of the book I am making here, drawing from the faces of Pound, Williams, H.D., the faces of the book’s Pound, Williams, H.D., or from the face of the Permission itself, the face that appears in the drawing, belonging to the work we are about, you with me, if you follow. “There is a spell, for instance,” the Poet has told us in the beginning, “in every sea-shell,” that given life we make it a life of our own, and that that lasts—the potsherd, the ghostly outlines of Mohenjodaro’s city plan, the song of Troy—when the life and the men are lost. Back, back, back we must go to find sufficient self to live in to these beings, taking being.
For I needed this book for a place for her to exist in me. “The fate of modern poetry as a whole,” Burkhardt wrote a century ago in *The Three Powers*, “is the consciousness, born of the history of literature, of its relationship to the poetry of all times and peoples. On that background, it appears as an imitation or echo.” By imitation or echo alone then, if they alone are possible. Searching whatever text mind or heart recalled, argument or the beginning of a rhythm, to find out an H.D., the H.D. this book means to unfold. A rhetorical question, to give rise, as the pencil draws, as the brush paints, to a figure of many faces known and yet to be known. The lady has her own life. She is not now Hilda Doolittle, and only in her special sense is she the poetess H.D.—she is the person who narrates her story in The War Trilogy and she has just that one poem in which to exist; as Claribel of H.D.’s poem “Good Frend” is given the poem in which to have a life, to be a person of the drama. She is not in the Dramatis Personae of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, where she is named only in passing “the king’s fair daughter Claribel”

*And we read later, in one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis:*

*Claribel was outside all of this
The Tempest came after they left her;
Read for yourself, Dramatis Personae*

** **

*Read through again, Dramatis Personae;
She is not there at all, but Claribel,
Claribel, the birds shrill, Claribel,
Claribel echoes from this rainbow-shell
I stooped just now to gather from the sand*

has just that poem “Good Frend” in which to exist in the heart of H.D., taken over from Shakespeare. Go read thru the War Trilogy; you will see how I have taken up what would furnish my even blind will as I work with its substance. As if I were a gap, making up my self. A critical study? There may be times when the painter sees his own insight in a passage of his painting and he had then to look deeper until he saw what otherwise might have been his insight as the work’s factor. And passages of fine biting bravura might come in, only to be obliterated in the trying, painstaking drawing out of a task he knew no other way to do, or kept once he had taken that way, like the under-drawing showing thru in Picasso’s *Guernica* that reminds us it is to participate in the idea that we work, line over line as in the first drawings we recall in the cave’s depths, and so in faith—his one faith—in the saving grace of his being involved in the Work itself, and having this work given—as if in love giving himself over to the Work—in the (unknown)
creative will that drives all speech, all writing, all language he believes ...

You know the poem, you have read it well. I do not feel you do justice to the War Trilogy yet, you write; for you as a friend (a reader) of the original know it is so much more, so much other than the likeness I have drawn. Or you, who have never loved (read) the original, tell me that I make too much of a poor matter, the passages of the poem that appear never up to the poem I am imagining. The lady smiles at us, for this figure I am drawing from of the Lady with a Book may be the very lady who appears in her Tribute To The Angels, her author in my author,

*which is no easy trick, difficult*  
*even for the experienced stranger*

H.D. tells us. Is she talking about this Person's relating Herself to time here, in the rhythm of the clock's ticking, to appear to the poet in her dream? But it is a double image, for the Lady appears to the reader as She appeared to the writer in the medium of the poem, another trick, in the hypnotic measure, the evocative tick of syllables in procession. She is so communicated.

My other reader who is not H.D.'s reader, who does not get what I draw from or, unsympathetic, sees only in a bad light or a poor light—what can be known of my own sense in working of how little I get it, how blurred often the work is, yet, for I have been working here over four years, having always the source of the original that does not go dead on me, that gives again and again, of what a life there is in this for me, keeping the nexus of what she means to me working in the imagination.

*I see her as you project her*  
*not out of place*

the reader or critic with goodwill addresses the artist in Tribute to the Angels

*you have done very well by her*  
*(to repeat your own phrase)*

*you have carved her tall and unmistakable,*  
*a hieratic figure, the veiled Goddess*

“o yes—you understand,” the poet replies:

*but she wasn’t hieratic, she wasn’t frozen,*  
*she wasn’t very tall...*

*
She was demented surely. Though analysis may read unconscious sexual content in poems, only in the early erotic masque “Hymen” with its “dark purple” color have I found overt reference to sexuality, heat and snow of maiden chastity, and then in the tradition of the true nuptial rite a recounting of what happens in the taking of the flower of the bride's vagina:

There with his honey-seeking lips
The bee clings close and warmly sips,
And seeks with honey-thighs to sway
And drink the very flower away.

(Ah, stern the petals drawing back;
Ah, rare, ah, virginal her breath!)

Crimson, with honey-seeking lips
The sun lies hot across his back
The gold is flecked across his wings.
Quivering he sways and quivering clings
(Ah, rare her shoulders drawing back!)
One moment, then the plunderer slips
Between the purple flower lips.

These images clothe but to enhance the sexual lure. But throughout her work she bears testimony to a fever that is not localized, the heat of Mid-Day and a fierce yearning that can be avid, a sensuality that can declare, as in Red Roses for Bronze:

sensing underneath the garment seam
ripple and flash and gleam
of indrawn muscle
and of those more taut,
I feel that I must turn and tear and rip
the fine cloth
from this moulded thigh and hip,
force you to grasp my soul’s sincerity.

The clothing postpones, incites and increases the craving the sexual organ itself will exorcise. The question that calls up not an answer but an increased rhetoric or current, the freefloating desire, takes over. In the prose work Nights, written in the 1930s, Natalia Saunderson seeks this excitement in itself in making love; as a poet might seek the excitement of inspiration in itself in writing poetry:

Her deity was impartial; as the radium gathered electric current under her
left knee, she knew her high-powered deity was waiting. He would sting her knee and she would hold muscles tense, herself only a sexless wire that was one fire for the fulfillment. She was sexless, being one chord, drawn out, waiting the high-powered rush of the electric fervor. It crept up the left side, she held it, timed it, let it gather momentum, let it gather force; it escaped her above the hipbone, spread, slightly weakened, up the backbone; at the nape, it broke, distilled radium into the head but did not burst out of the hair. She wanted the electric power to run on through her, then out, unimpeded by her mind.

*

The rimes, the repetitions of the incantation, would hold the serpent power mounting in the work, to time it, "let it gather momentum, let it gather force." In shaman rite and yoga rite men have come into heavens or crowns or nirvanas of a thought beyond thought, like the poet inspired, carried away by words until vision arises, as of the whole.

But this blowing one's top or the Taoist ecstatic's churning the milky way with his lion tongue is fearful. The snake in the spinal tree of life has made a nightmare of impending revelation for me, for he wears still the baleful head of the diamondback rattler, the hooded fascination of the king cobra. The Nagas that sway above the Buddha's dreaming keep my thought away from him.

For a moment this power, this would-be autistic force of the poem, glints forth in The Walls Do Not Fall: “or the erect king-cobra crest / to show how the worm turns” and then, where “we” refers to the poet initiates:

So we reveal our status
with twin-horns, disk, erect serpent.

“Walk carefully, speak politely,” she warns, for words conceal meanings, “in man's very speech” as in the world, “insignia”

in the heron’s crest,
the asp's back,

Is it to hide the serpent power that Helen, evoking Isis, in Helen in Egypt would “blacken her face like the prophetic femme noire of antiquity”?

How could I hide my eyes?
how could I veil my face?
with ash or charcoal from the embers?

Helen thinks, but Achilles already sees something in her and turns upon her in horror:
What sort of enchantment is this?
what art will you yield with a fagot?
are you Hecate? are you a witch?

a vulture? a hieroglyph?

Vulture crown but also serpent crown. The eyes of the woman in Stuck's painting *Die Sünde* watch with the eyes of the anaconda or boa constrictor who is coiled about her, its head flattened in the nape of her seductive neck. Lying in wait. In the depths of intimacy, the hidden will show itself to strike. In such flashes of hate, the Great Mother shows her Hecate face. The jeweled and painted fan upon the floor of the dream was I had to remember the spread hood of a cobra treacherously disguised. “Hated of all Greece!” the cry rings as a refrain in Helen in Egypt, an echo or imitation of “Desired of all Greece.” And now with naked feet I walked among snakes. In the Hindoo story a wife walking so at night in the dark wood among snakes proves the strength of her faith and devotion to a new Master over Love.

But the Pythian oracles, shamanesses of Attic snake cult, the bird-priestesses in winged and feathered robes of owl or sea-hawk, the carrion Lilith or Eve with her familiar, must have turned fanatical eyes, painted eyes of peacock blue and red and gold, cobra eyes. Angry hurt and hurting eyes. Fearful eyes. The gorgoneion mask whose snaky locks writhe with power.

*

September 3, 1964

“An art is vital only so long as it is interpretive,” Pound proposes in “Psychology and the Troubadours”: “so long, that is, as it manifests something which the artist perceives at greater intensity, and more intimately, than his public.”

“We have about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germinal universe of wood alive, of stone alive,” he continues: “When we do get into the contemplation of the flowing we find sex, or some correspondence to it, ‘positive and negative,’ ‘North and South,’ ‘sun and moon.’

*For the particular parallel I wish to indicate, our handiest illustrations are drawn from physics: 1st, the common electric machine, the glass disc and rotary brushes; 2nd, the wireless telegraph receiver. In the first we generate a current, or if you like, split up a static condition of things and produce a tension. This is focussed on two brass knobs or ‘poles.’ These are first in contact, and after the current is generated we can gradually widen the distance between them, and a spark will leap across it, the wider the stronger, until with the ordinary sized labo-
ratory appliance it will leap over or around a large obstacle or pierce a heavy book cover. In the telegraph we have a charged surface-produced in a cognate manner attracting to it, or registering movements in the invisible aether.

The *trobar clus*, the cult of love in Provence that was also a cult of poetry, was ‘an art’, that is to say, a religion,” Pound suggests, of a way to the experience of “our kinship with the vital universe.” Did this ‘close ring,’ this aristocracy of emotion, evolve, out of its half memories of Hellenistic mysteries, a cult—a cult stricter, or more subtle, than that of the celibate ascetics, a cult for the purgation of the soul by the refinement of, and lordship over, the senses?” Does the Lady stand to the lover, as his Muse to the Poet, to inspire and cooperate in the art, to demand and command in the name of Amor or of Poetry—a new Master over the Art, so that the poet gives his will, his hunger and the satisfaction of his hunger over to a higher authority—*donna della mia mente*—that appears to him in the art. In faith he writes in the dark upon a ground that may writhe with the thrill in which he walks, but, devoted to the rule of the art, he is saved in the increase of his phantasy.

In the heightened state, exceeding immediate satisfaction, the goal of genital release is increased from a physical to a spiritual tension, and the original object becomes an instrument towards a sublimation. “The Greek aesthetic would seem to consist wholly in plastic, or in plastic moving towards coitus, and limited by incest, which is the sole Greek taboo,” Pound observes in the Cavalcanti essay. In the aesthetic of Provence “the conception of the body as a perfect instrument of the increasing intelligence pervades”; beyond the sensory-reality, “the impact of light on the eye,” and its ideal forms, in the spirit of Romance, the poets sought “an interactive force: the virtu.” A magic begins, and the poem as an operation of the new theurgy—love, sexual intercourse, as operations of the new theurgy—becomes other—worldly centered. Beatrice and Virgil, spiritual beings, are the true inspirations and hence critics of *The Divine Comedy*. In the high humor of the tradition, Blake will truly declare that he writes not for this world but for his true muses or lovers or readers in the spirit.

“Sex is, that is to say, of a double function and purpose, reproductive and educational; or,” Pound continues in “Psychology and the Troubadours”: “as we see in the realm of the fluid force, one sort of vibration produces at different intensities, heat and light.” Then:

“The problem, in so far as it concerns Provence, is simply this: Did this ‘chivalric love,’ this exotic, take on mediumistic properties? Stimulated by the color or quality of emotion, did that ‘color’ take on forms interpretive of the divine order? Did it lead to an ‘exteriorization of the sensibility,’ and interpretation of the cosmos by feeling?”

“Thirteen years ago I lost a brother,” Blake writes to his patron Hayley, upon the death of Hayley’s son in May of 1800: “and with his spirit I converse daily and hourly in the spirit, and see him in my remembrance, in the regions of my imagination. I hear his advice, and even Now write from his dictate.” And in a letter to Flaxman in September that same year, he writes: “And Now Begins a New life, because another covering of
Earth is shaken off. I am more famed in Heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my Brain are studies Chambers filled with books & pictures of old, which I wrote & painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life, & those works are the delight & Study of Archangels. . . . I see our houses of Eternity, which can never be separated, tho’ our Mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.”

In his excited state—“my enthusiasm,” he calls it in his letter to Hayley, “which I wish all to partake of, since it is to me a source of immortal joy.... By it I am the companion of Angels” Blake sees in terms of his Divine World, radiated with Love, a feeling as in Heaven above earthly feeling. This “Above” in Blake contrasts sharply with a “Below” there seems to be a gap in feeling; for Hayley in Blake’s earthy moods is “Pick Thank” and Flaxman, “Sculptor of Eternity,” is “Blockhead.” Between 1808 and 1811, feeling mocked by Flaxman who had been his teacher and driven by Hayley who all Blake’s life was his patron or angel, Blake reviled them in epigrams and verses:

Anger & Wrath my bosom rends:
I thought them the Errors of friends.
But all my limbs with warmth glow:
I find them the Errors of the foe.

He had come to suspect that Hayley was patronizing and that Flaxman put him down as a madman. Hayley’s commissions for prints that had not been done yet pressed him and then depressed him. “I curse & bless Engravings alternately, because it takes so much time & is so untractable, tho’ capable of such beauty & perfection,” he writes Hayley or, again: “Your eager expectation of hearing from me compels me to write immediately,” Hayley’s very “generous & tender solicitude,” Blake calls it when Hayley paid his bail and court costs in Blake’s sedition trial, leave the artist feeling indebted and driven. “I received your kind letter with the note to Mr. Payne, and have had the cash from him.”

“. . . Mr. Flaxman advises that the drawing of Mr. Romney’s which shall be chosen instead of the Witch (if that cannot be recovered), be ‘Hecate,’ the figure with the torch and snake, which he thinks one of the finest drawings.

September 4, 1964

Joey, the “Mechanical Boy,” of Bruno Bettelheim’s study in the Scientific American, March 1959 (“A case history of a schizophrenic child who converted himself into a ‘machine’ because he did not dare be human”), lives as a creature in a world created by an inaccessible creator, as a machine charged by invisible “pretend” electricity. “He functioned as if by remote control, run by machines of his own powerfully creative fantasy. Not only did he himself believe that he was a machine but, more remarkably, he created this impression in others,” Bettelheim tells us. “Entering the
dining room, for example, he would string an imaginary wire from his energy source—an imaginary outlet—to the table. There he ‘insulated’ himself with paper napkins and finally plugged himself in.... So skillful was the pantomime that one had to look twice to be sure there was neither wire nor outlet nor plug. Children and members of our staff spontaneously avoided stepping on the ‘wires’ for fear of interrupting what seemed the source of his very life.”

The higher claim to reality of Joey’s created world over the uncreated world is a counterpart of the higher reality the world of his creation has for the artist over the world as material from which it is drawn. The “charge” we feel in the recognition of high art, the breaking thru into special truths or keys of existence, is a power the artist has evoked in transforming a content from a private into a communal fantasy. At certain conjunctions, where form and content are suddenly revealed in full, waves of excitement, as if a current had been turned on, pass over the brain and through the nervous systems, and the body seems tuned up in apprehension of what is happening in the work of art. “Many times a day,” Bettelheim tells us, Joey “would turn himself on until he ‘exploded,’ screaming ‘Crash, crash!’ and hurling items from his ever present apparatus—radio tubes, light bulbs, even motors. . . .” It is as if he were seized by the reality of his conception. It is not Joey’s retreat into a private world that we experience, but rather the intensity of his communication, the obliterating power of the language he has made, that takes over not only his reality but also that of those about him. Even at night he is governed by his work, fixing apparatus to his bed to “live him” during his sleep, “contrived from masking tape, cardboard, wire and other paraphernalia.” With such an intensity, Orpheus in Harold Dull’s poem transforms the actual events of his life into fantastic events—questions that refuse their answers—that are really strings upon a lyre that is a triumph of the imagination. The poet would give himself over to the charge of song, or, beyond poetry, the seer Blake would give himself over to the charge of vision, as Joey gives himself over to the charge of his made-up machine.

Certainly at times we confront in Joey’s work the operations of metaphor, correspondence, persona, and word play that govern the poem, and like the poet, Joey must be obedient to laws that appear in the structure he makes. “He was unable to designate by its true name anything to which he attached feelings. Nor could he name his anxieties except through neologisms or word contaminations.” But the artist too must find new names and knows that the true name is hidden in the work he must do, as Isis knows that Ra’s Secret Name is not the name that all men know but is hidden in his breast. (“They are anagrams, cryptograms, / little boxes, conditioned / to hatch butterflies,” we remember from *The Walls Do Not Fall*.)

“For a long time he spoke about ‘master paintings’ and ‘a master painting room,’” Bettelheim continues, and translates “(i.e. masturbating and masturbating room).” But now it is as if “masturbating” were not the true word until we also understand it is “master painting,” an ideogram is forming that when complete may reveal the hidden, as yet unexperienced, term; something that masturbating and master painting are but instances of. As here, from Orpheus transforming his life into an instrument of
music, or Nathalie Saunderson transforming her sexual seizure into an electricity, or
Pound's concept of a universe of fluid force, Joey's idea of being lived by an electric
current, I would gather a picture of a power the artist knows in which the fictional real
becomes most veridical, in which art comes closest to religion—as in Blake's world, in
which man appears as a creature of his own creative force.

Like the poet, Joey must face his adversary in his work. "One of his machines,
the 'criticizer,' prevented him from saying words which have unpleasant feelings.' Yet he
gave personal names to the tubes and motors in his collection of machinery. Moreover,"
Bettelheim tells us, "these dead things had feelings; the tubes bled when hurt and
sometimes got sick." The excitement and the discharge of excitement in the work of art,
"master painting," and the aesthetic requirement, the inbuilt 'criticizer' of the artist that
determines appropriate material, appear in a grotesque guise in Joey's universe. His
tubes and motors are personae of his poem that has overcome all terms of identity
outside of its own operation; as in "Good Frend", Claribel, no more than a name, is so a
person. Joey's tubes and motors are not dead things, for they are words in a language
that would be living. Deprived of communication, for the adults about him would not
listen, "When he began to master speech, he talks only to himself." We gather that his
parents cut off that current of questioning by which a child participates in first commu-
ications, taking apart and putting together the machinery of language which before he
had known only as a vehicle of electric emotions and persuasions. But Joey turns to
another mute or frozen language embodied in man-made objects about him. "At an
eyear date he became preoccupied with machinery, including an old electric fan which he
could take part and put together again with surprising deftness."

Bettelheim is concerned with the loss of the flow of feeling, represented in the
universe of Joey by the need to be turned on or charged; but we are concerned here with
how Joey's powerful creative fantasy is like the poet's creative fantasy, the poetic imag-
nation that must have a higher claim to reality than immediate "distractions," in order
for the poem to come into being, and how much Joey, run by his own fantastic machinery,
is like the inspired poet in his divine madness. Pound, Williams, and H.D. do not make
that romantic claim, but all three are disturbed by the power of words over them. Memory (the past), awareness (the immediate), wish (the future) are all heightened and
demand satisfaction in the excitement of the work; and more, in that nexus of three, a
creativity is at work to change the nature of truth. Blake gave the Imagination highest
authority and sought to live in Creation. He could call up the shades of Moses and the
Prophets, Homer, Dante, Milton—"majestic shadows, grey but luminous, and superior
to the common height of men" and converse with them by the seashore. In his margin-
alia to Lavater's *Aphorisms* Blake writes: "As we cannot experience pleasure but by
means of others who experience either pleasure or pain thro' us, and as all of us on earth
are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth.
So it is impossible to know God or heavenly things without conjunction with those who
know God and heavenly things. Therefore all who converse in the spirit converse with
spirits . . .
Such tricks hath strong imagination
That if it would but apprehend some joy
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.

There is a story that when Blake was making a drawing of “The Ghost of a Flea” the sitter inconsiderately opened his mouth. The artist, “prevented from proceeding with the first sketch,” listened to the Flea’s conversation and made a separate study of the open mouth.

* 

Joey lives in the Imagination deprived of the current of human friendship except for the love and care invested in the machines about him. He does not retreat to become a ‘mechanical boy’ (“because he did dare to be human,” Bettleheim sees it)—but he advances in the one initiation into human spirit opened to him, the area of achievement and wish embodied in the operations of electrical and plumbing systems, even as in words it is the human work embodied that makes possible the formation of consciousness. The shapes of Homer, Dante, Milton gathered in the mind in the magic of Blake’s intense reading, as a person of the electric fan—the human invention—gathered in Joey’s mind in the magic of his intense taking apart and putting together again, cast shadows “superior to the common height of men,” as Joey was convinced, Bettleheim tells us, that machines were superior to people, or Plato that ideas were superior to things. “If madness and absurdity be synonyms, which they are not, then Blake would be as ‘mad as a March hare’” Samuel Palmer wrote to Mrs. Gilchrist in 1862: “for his love of art was so great that he would see nothing but art in anything he loved.” So Joey in his love for mechanism saw nothing but mechanism in what he loved. Language may mean all to me, more than art, for the universe seems striving to speak and the burden of life to be to understand what is being said in words that are things and persons and events about us.

“Not every child who possesses a fantasy world is possessed by it,” Bettleheim observes: “Normal children may retreat into realms of imaginary glory or magic powers, but they are easily recalled from these excursions. Disturbed children are not always able to make the return trip.” And those who know no disturbance of reality, we would add, cannot make the trip out at all.

The shaman’s trip to the Other World, the medium’s trip to the Astral field, the poet’s trip to Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, is a counterpart of the dreamer’s trip to the dream or the child’s trip to the land where he plays. In the process of realization, the Creator must so go into the whole of His Creation in order to create it that it becomes the most real and He becomes most real in it. In the full power of the Imagination, Creation is all, and Who had been Creator is now Creature. God is immanent in the Universe, and incarnate in a person. This is one of the mysteries of the human Christos. Here too there
must be a round-trip, the return to God, but it must also be not easy but the least easy of all recallings, for Christ’s apotheosis in hubris must be fulfilled in crucifixion. In the full Christian persuasion—most high divine madness—there is a triumph of creativity: the Eternal insists that He has had a lifetime and death in history; the Supreme Fiction insists that it has had a personality in the nonfictional Jesus.

October 1, 1964

To be easily recalled from these excursions, to possess a fantasy world and not to be possessed by it—the way of normal children is achieved by keeping in mind that the imaginary is not real, that such areas of the psyche’s life are no more than child’s play, that it is no more than a story. Here, in the fairy tale, taking place in whatever far country and having that time between once upon a time and forever after, stored away for children in the minds of their old nurses and, since the seventeenth century, in a new literary form initiated by the Contes de ma mere l’oie of Charles Perrault, the nursery romance, the subversive force of man’s creativity hides in an amusement. “In den alten Zeiten, wo das Wunschen noch geholfen hat”—in the old times, when Wishing still could help—the German folk marchen begins, and in the guise of entertainment, the old woman imparts to her infant audience news of the underworld of man’s nature, of betrayals and cheats, of ogres and murderers, thieves and shapechangers. They learn to mistrust the real, but they learn also the wishes and powers of old religions and states that have fallen away. The fairy tale is the immortal residue of the spirit that seeks to find its place in the hearts of each generation. As in the twelfth century, religious mysteries and erotic formulations found immortal life in the high romances of the Arthurian cycles, so the folk world perpetuated itself in the yarns spun at the hearthside, and even now, when the spinning wheel has gone from the household way and the fireplace has lost its central function there, the marchen has survived in book form, rescued by the devoted Brothers Grimm. As, again, in the court nurseries of le Roi soleil, like bees secreting the royal jelly to feed the possibility of a queen, imparting style and sentiment, plot and wish, to life, a group of courtiers, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, as if apprehending the death of their way—Perrault, then the Countesses de Murat, d’Aulnoy, d’Auneuil, and the Count de Caylus—write their Cabinets des Fees. When the dust of the revolutionary tumbrels and the blood of the guillotine have come and gone, and the bourgeoisie, the merchants, industrialists, and managers of our age, have taken over, Perrault’s Cinderella, like the Queen of Elfland who carried away Thomas of Erceldoune, would carry away the young from the common sense of a Protestant and capitalist reality into her irresponsible romance, the unreal of falling in love and being loved. Early in the process of the Christian era, Augustine, inspired by a most Puritanical demon of righteousness, had warned against such a corporeal light that “seasoneth life of this world for her blind lovers, with an enticing and dangerous sweetness” and deplored the lot of those who are misled by required love. Yet the ghosts of the dead, of defeated forces in
history, survive in fascination of the living. When the last nobility had died out in the
nobility and the rule of public utilities succeeded, Beauty and The Beast from Madame
Leprince de Beaumont’s eighteenth century tale, as well as Oedipus from the drama of
Sophocles, revive in the art of Cocteau.

March 15, Wednesday. 1961

“Hellenic perfection of style...”

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In the book The Hedgehog, written at Vaud, 1925, the Greek gods belong to the
story-world, and, in turn, the little girl Madge, who may be, as H.D.’s daughter Perdita
was that year, six, who lives then in an age previous to reading, figures out the actual
world with information from stories her mother has told her so that her own experience
becomes a story. “The stories weren’t just stories,” Madge’s mother tells her, “but there
was something in them like the light in the lamp that isn’t the lamp.” She sees things in
story-light, and in this light Pan, Weltgeist, Our Father Which Art, are lights in turn in the
world about her which is a lamp to see by.

*  

Madge in her story is searching for a secret word. It is a matter of the open secret there,
everywhere, a word everyone uses, but only experience unlocks the meaning
“Hérisson.” Don’t find the word too quickly; mis-take it in order to look for it. The girl
Madge knows but she does not know what this word hérisson is. “Vipers!” Madame
Beaupère exclaims, “You should have a hedgehog”—but she is French, “Hérisson” she
says. Madge “somehow for the moment couldn’t remember just what was a hérisson.
“‘Ah,’ said Madge knowingly, ‘but yes, the very thing, a hedgehog.’ She said hedgehog
in French, not knowing what it meant.” She must set out in quest of the word in the
world.

*  

In Tribute to the Angels, twenty years later, we find just such a riddle or
search for a name again:

it lives, it breathes,
it gives off fragrance?
I do not know what it gives,  
a vibration that we can not name

for there is no name for it;  
my patron said, ‘name it’;

I said, I can not name it,  
there is no name;

he said,  
‘invent it.’

*  

So in 1912 Pound had given a name “Imagism” to something required in poetry, and returning to the propositions of the 1912 Credo we can see in “Direct treatment of the ‘thing’” and in “To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation” the directive towards an art that strives to find in the image a secret name or password in which “thing” and “word” will become presentation. But this name “Imagism” bound. There was an excitement of introducing the new Imagist poets in The Egoist and the excitement too of not knowing what it meant. May Sinclair said that H.D. was the Imagist, an epitome. Had she achieved the definitive Imagist poem? But then, Pound had said that he launched the word to define the poetry of H.D. And he had meant too to confine her work to what he had admired.

*  

The idea of H.D.’s cut-stone, pure, terse line was her own version in part, a demand of her temperament that fitted the Credo’s demand for a literary functionalism, a clean line against ornament. In her note to the Euripides translations that appear in The Egoist in 1915 she writes that she sought “rhymeless hard rhythms” to capture “the sharp edges and irregular cadence of the original.” But these hard rhythms, sharp edges and irregular cadences are not only of the original but of a modernist aesthetic in painting, music, and architecture, where ornament, as in poetry rhetoric, was coming to be a term of derogation.

*  

Early poems like “The Contest” with its “you are chiselled like rocks / that are eaten into by the sea” or “Sea Lily”, where the flower petal is “with hard edge, / like flint / on a bright stone” operate to define the meaning of the Imagist poem as well as the
quality of the immediate image; as early titles “Hymen” or “Heliodora” contributed to
the idea of a new Hellenism. Idea and ideal are as essential to the image as the imme-
diate sensory presentation. To dig the poem we must be receptive, back of these Images
of free wild elements in nature, and of sheltered gardens, of delicate stony flowers, and
of flowers torn and trampled under foot, of unruly surfs, not only to presences of gods
and daemons, the elementary idols of the poem, but to the temper of the verse itself, the
ideal of human spirit presented. “Posing,” the unkind were likely to judge it, but for her
kind H.D.’s tone presented a key in which to live. This ideal is what in my generation
Charles Olson has called a stance. Poetic will is involved, awkwardly at first, trying, in
what we call style or tone, but it would go beyond manner, to take over and make its own
definition of poetry where we strive to exemplify something we desire in our nature.
“There was about her,” Williams writes of H.D. in his Autobiography: “that which is
found in wild animals at times, a breathless impatience, almost a silly unwillingness to
come to the point.” But now, seeing past Williams’s meaning to convince us that he was
not taken in by H.D. and even, we are aware, to stir up our disaffections—seeing, past
that, the content here with the role in mind that idea and ideal have in the artist’s search
for a definition of what he is to be, Williams does give us telling details. “She said that
when she wrote it was a great help, she’d splash ink on her clothes to give her a feeling
of freedom and indifference toward the mere means of the writing.”

*  

If in Imagist poems like “Heat” there had been as well as the perfectionism, the
intense realization of an instant in time, the prayer for life beyond perfection and real-
ization, in The Hedgehog, having “almost a silly unwillingness to come to the point,” the
mode of story exorcizing the mode of image, there is a first statement as early as 1925
of the sense of life as an intellectual and spiritual adventure that is to become the domi-
nant mode of H.D.’s imagination in the major phase that begins with The War Trilogy. We
have taken “Ion” as a turning point, with its commentary that incorporates poetic expe-
rience and psychoanalytic experience to give depth and complexity of meaning to form
and content: now, not only an intensity of image, not only a style, but also a perception
in organization, a way, is to be essential in the creative force of her work. We may take
The Hedgehog as an announcement. It seems isolated, her only children’s book; the
Greek world in story is so different from the Greek world in the “intellectual and
emotional complex in an instant of time” that the Imagist Credo demanded. And it is
different too from the exalted, enthralled or ecstatic voice of the personae of H.D.,
whether of the poems of the Lawrencian period—”Adonis”, “Pygmalion”, or
“Eurydice”—or of the Sapphic fragments, or of the prose of Palimpsest; for a new voice,
the common sense of the wise nurse telling what life is like to the child, or the questing
sense of the child seeking in a story to find out what is going on, enters in. H.D. will all
her life be concerned in her work with conveying to our sympathy the fact that agony
seems to be in the very nature of deep experience, that in every instant there is a
painful—painful in its intensity—revelation. In *Palimpsest*, Nipparchia, Raymonde, and Helen Fairwood agonize; the interior monologue means to communicate the impact of ineffable experience. But in *The Hedgehog*, Madge's interior monologue is talking to herself in search of a language. The meaning of *hérisson* is not beyond finding out, but it is postponed until Madge can gather, asking from everyone and from everything, the most common sense—the communality—of what it is. In the very opening of the book, the lead is given. *Quoi donc?* And then: “Which means,” Madge recognizes: “well what do you mean by trying to tell me that anything like that means what you seem to think it means.” The adventure is the old guessing game I am thinking of a word; What is it? and Madge seeks to find out a definition that does not confine.

*  

She seeks too to find a definition of her self that does not confine, as H.D. was seeking to do in her own life. And Madge trying out her style can miss. In talking with Madame Beaupère, she speaks “in such a funny unnatural affected little way” at one point that Madame Beaupère is put off, and Madge perceives “that her grown-up manner had not quite worked.” But the ideal is rightly a matter of trial for it is part of the searching out of means towards feeling: “she thought and practiced it, in order to give her a feeling of freedom and indifference,” as later, H.D.’s ideal of the Hellenic tries to reach the feeling of hardness and perfection. And does, for what changes in H.D.’s concept is not that the feeling of hardness and perfection ceases to be desired but that other feelings enter in to the picture. “Echo is easy to find,” Madge knows, “and the boy Narcissus,” but “Some of the light-in-lamp people you look for and never find.”

*  

In Homer we know it is all a story told, as Shakespeare would remind us, even while we are entranced, that this “life” is a stage upon which actors play. This is their nurse voice, when even the greatest poets amuse us as if they were giant maids and we were children. So Cocteau and Bergman would involve us beyond the being moved in the moving pictures in the knowledge thruout that we entertain their entertainment. It is in the mystery of the Muses that we transcend belief and disbelief and follow the story, for the story-teller has as part of his art not only that he leads us into the magic realms but that he can recall us from the excursion. Where there is no story magic, blood will be blood and pain pain so that misled, carried away, the child is hurt and cries out or is afraid. In Flaherty's film of Samoan life, I fainted during the tatooing ritual, flooded with the apprehension of pain. But in story, in the self-mutilation of Oedipus or the immolation of Christ the pain is not a thing in itself but belongs to a configuration of action, fulfills and leads on. My mother would lean over in the dark of the movie house to recall me: “It is only a movie, it is just a movie,” she would whisper. Shakespeare's actors reminding us that it is but a stage seem finally to be saying that our actual life is only a 279
stage from which we may be recalled at death. And Christ in the testimony of St. John at Ephesus told his beloved disciple that the death upon the cross was but a figure in a dance—“and if you have not entered the dance, you mistake the event.” “Growing up and last year’s shoes that didn’t fit this year—these were things that were part of a dream, not part of reality,” Madge thinks: “Reality was the Erlking and the moonlight on Bett’s room wall.”

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The story-telling voice of The Hedgehog enters into the commentary of “Ion” in whose voice the Greek drama appears in the guise of fairy tale. And the address of the opening of The Walls Do Not Fall establishes such a voice in which we are aware of the story-teller and his following, the I and a you in which the individual reader is but one; “from your (and my) old town square,” belongs to the nurse’s art, drawing us into the realm of her telling. The “we” and the “they” are people of the story, as the “I” is at one time a person of the story—“I sense my own limit is part of what she has to tell—and the poet who may address her audience as well as the “they” of the poem: “but if you do not even understand what words say, / how can you expect to pass judgment / on what words conceal?” Those of the audience who are with her will think of themselves as “we,” those who are not in it and would interrupt will think of themselves as “they.” And the story-teller anticipates their doubts of the story and exhorts them to surrender: “Let us substitute / enchantment for sentiment.” Yes, she continues: “re-dedicate our gifts / to spiritual realism”; but it is all to be “a Tale told of a jar or jars,” having the truth of what “we are told.” In Helen in Egypt, which H.D. saw as her culminating master work, Helen is entirely a creature of story—having her life in all that has been told of her.

*  

There remains the actual feeling, a Greece that is all H.D.’s. She evokes a realm of pagan things—hinterlands of the psyche—but also inner qualities of places and times, woodlands, sea-coasts, gardens, mountain ledges. In Hedylus the stranger-father-critic says to the young poet: “Your idea of the rock-ridge becoming re-divided into separate efflorescence, according to the altitude, implying, as I judge, a spiritual comparison as well as a mere natural one, is unique, differing in all particulars from anything I have yet met with.”

*  

It was not pure beauty, or it was something besides pure beauty, that even the poems that gave rise to H.D.’s repute for the rare and pure strove to capture, but beauty or perfection as it was a key somewhere to the nature of event, and finally, as it played its part in the development of the story.
Yes, but this striving was not only to capture a quality in what she had known but was to challenge experience itself in turn to yield a quality. “Beauty” was from the first, as in the review of Marianne Moore’s work or in the poem “The Tribute” she makes clear, a battle-cry, a cause. The Image too was a demand as well as a response.

*  

In December 1916, reviewing Fletcher’s *Goblins and Pagodas* in *The Egoist*, she criticizes or challenges “certain current opinions concerning the so-called new poetry,” and against the proposition of the images upon a Greek vase as things of art, self-contained images, she proposes: “How much more than the direct image to him are the images suggested by shadow and light, the flicker of the purple wine, the glint across the yellow, the depth of the crimson and red. ... When the wine itself within the great jar stands waiting for him.” Then: “He uses the image, direct it is true, but he seems to use it as a means of evoking other and vaguer images—a pebble, as it were, dropped into a quiet pool, in order to start across the silent water, wave on wave of light, of color, of sound.”

There is at least the possibility that whatever battle-cry of “Beauty” or idea of the fine-wrought image, there was also another thing a poem was—“a pebble ... dropped into a quiet pool” to set up reverberations in life so that “Here, there,” Greece and its things, old gods and pagan places or the mode of story, enlivened consciousness in living, made it moving with “wave on wave of light, of color, of sound.” Story, like perspective in painting, may be an invention to satisfy a need in experience for design, to build a house for feeling in time or space. Does story stand within the actual life or the actual life experience stand within the story as the wine itself is stored in the great jar upon whose surfaces the artist has painted his image of the wine and the jar?

*  

The threads interweaving create a close intricate field of feeling; and we admire the work in which there is no ornament dismissed but where light flows from what we took to be ornament and proves to be essential. In the shuttle flying under the swift sense of the work, the “incident here and there” gathers so many instances from themselves into a moving significance, unfolding or discovering a design, that we see now the art was to set things into movement, was not only the weaving of a work of art but as if each knot that bound the whole into the quiet of a unity were also the pebble that dropped into that quiet as a pool broke up, was knot but also slipping-of-the-knot, to set up an activity through-out in the work of time and space within time and space.

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The sense that “we are at the cross-roads” then has structural as well as histor-
ical and psychological meaning in *The War Trilogy*. Given the name Imagiste, H.D. was never satisfied that it meant what she seemed to think it meant, and even after her analysis with Freud, she did not rest with the Freudian image but went on to the *eidola* of *Helen in Egypt*. What was required was that there be the full power of a double meaning, that the real refuse to be defined. In word and image and then in story her sense was always that “the tide is turning.”
Chapter Seven

October 8, 1964

I seek now in working upon the later draft of the book not to correct the original but to live again in its fob and content, leaving in successive layers record of reformations and digressions as they come to me. The form realized then is not to be a design immediately striking, like those housing developments and landascapings that rise where disorderly areas of a city have been cleared away, but it may be like an old city—Freud’s picture of Rome upon Rome—in which in the earliest remains, in the diary of March 10th to March 15th, March 20th to March 29th, then May 25th of 1961: later additions may appear, anachronistically like the Gaudi restorations in the gothic cathedral of Palma or the Casa Guell’s art-nouveau romanticism in the midst of old buildings, where we are aware of periods of creative activity and conservative inertia. Altering and using old streets, laying out new districts, surrounding old barrios, willing to carry out the project of a Frank Lloyd Wright palace upon the Grand Canal of my Venice, having most in mind to convey the life of the idea of the city, a book of continuations not of conclusions, I build even as I prepare the book for the publisher at last, living once more as I copy, and take over wherever I see a new possibility in the work.


A first vigil? I had wanted, after Hoffmann's *The Golden Pot*, to bring forward the likeness between Hoffman's method in that Hermetic romance of telling the story by “vigils” and H.D.’s keeping her appointment with the sequences of her later work. The ancient time-cult of the gods in which the time of the work had its appointed spirit or genius and the modern appointment of the psychoanalytic hour, each day taking up the work anew and continuing, contribute to the method I would follow here having the continuity of a daily return, having the commitment in each session to whatever may arise there, so that the conscious concern may be immediate to impulse and those felt but not yet articulated senses of what is involved that we call intuition, risking the coherence of the whole in the attention at hand. Going in faith that all such attentions are creative of the whole I seek. Open to impulse, so that I must trust peripheries and undercurrents to lead me.

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Wherever I work the directive increases.

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In this method, the break of four days—from March 15th to today—is not a day of rest but a withdrawal from, and then perhaps a withdrawal of, direction.
**THE DREAM:** A manufacturer had commissioned me to do a rug. The rug it turns out is the rug that I began in 1954 for Jess and finished in Mallorca in 1956, having no cartoon previous to the work but in each phase of the work the form being conceived. Writing the date for this chapter or vigil, I had started “4:20 A.M. March 20, 195—” I had put down the 5 of 1954, but recalled that it was 1961, going on, but knowing that now in the course of the work I would have to account for that 1954.

In the dream scene, going to the factory to see the reproduction of my work I found a mint reproduction. Yes. That was the disturbing thing in the dream: that they had arrived at their copy by some translation from my concept, as if it were mint, so unlike the rug I knew, that I could not account for what had happened. Was it for what had happened to the rug since the 1954? Had there been then an alternate rug, a form from which not towards which I had worked?

The copy was mostly lavender, a color which is minor in the original (here it may have been changed by the painting by Tom Field that I had during the spring and summer of 1956 at Black Mountain), but it had the inconclusive asymmetrical order that I work towards. Yet it had not been built up of intricate color localities—“when/wheres” I’ve called them in this study; “orchestrations” they seemed to me when I was working on *The Venice Poem* in 1948, for I was following impulses towards design that haunted me in listening to the *Danses Concertantes* and the *Symphony in Three Movements* of Stravinsky where if seemed to me that form impended through, that every particular of the structure was charged by the numen of the whole. Having no musical literacy, certainly having only an analogical understanding, I derived certainties of my own aesthetic, and then of a poetic, of a theory of forms and of the nature of making itself, as I have derived understandings from sciences I do not “really understand.”

* 

I had wanted to describe the “orchestration” of H.D.’s work, the intricate resonances of particulars that contribute to the symphonic whole.

* 

The manufacturer had, anyway, “lied” about the model. And the rug that must stand for the original work, that must do to represent what I had done, when I tried to find grounds for acceptance, bewildered. They had “missed” through. Maybe they had evaded.
“You will want to take credit,” the official of the company said. Representative? There were two officials, anyway: a foreman who was an efficient woman explaining to me as I stood, undone as I was by what they had done, that the rug still needed cutting, was first. Here it seemed to me she meant they had taken some aspect of my total concept as if it were only a texture and had used it for long runners of weaving that were trimmed to fit the original. There had been, hadn’t there?, I remembered in my dream, or now writing, remember, such complexly textured rag-rugs in halls long ago at home. She explained too that there had been some of my colors they hadn’t been able to get.

I could not visualize in these terms what their reproduction would be like.

The other official, the business manager, was discussing with me my agreement with the company to accept the reproduction. Yes, that was unavoidable. There was no way, I felt, to account for my disagreement which was actually the disagreement between the image (my rue) and the copy. But the manager was discussing our terms. I would want to take credit, he was saying. “Oh yes,” I replied, “as I always do on books and records.” But even as I said it I was puzzled or uneasy about what I assumed when I said “records” and was substantiating the claim in my mind with credit I did not mean as true. I wanted to be paid, I said, as I always do want, on the basis of royalties. “That way,” I said, “if the work is disliked or liked, I have not been underpaid or overpaid.”

But the impossible thing throughout was my claim in relation to the rug they were releasing as mine. In no way could I see it even looked like my work.

Earlier in the dream, just back of this manufacturing scene, had been another scene of Landis and his friend stealing from the corner grocery, which I read upon waking as relating to stealing in writing. There may have been some translation between taking food without paying, without crediting it? and the credit-payment theme of the manufacturer’s episode. The product the company offered somehow copied my work without the stealing, the installment and credit planning, that had been essential in its conception.
Recording the dream, I find myself repeating the perplexity of the dream-situation. I cannot reproduce it, as the manufacturers in the dream could not reproduce the rug, because I cannot or will not supply the particulars. Now, I have lost, perhaps, the “message” that lingered in my mind when I woke at four. It had to do with the key to H.D.’s poetics that was my own.

*

That in working this book, it must be built up, risking the composition of the whole (where I incur some critical failure in the book’s not resembling what literary criticism calls for today) in order to, but also because I must, take the directive of the immediate sense, as in Charles Olson’s “instanter” movement that projective verse demands.

*

“Overlook.”

As one oversees and then naturally overlooks the “when/where” if one follows a plan. Overlook is what the director (both the fore-woman and the manager) does in the dream.

*

Supplying the particulars. That may be in the “they wrote parts of color”, as I remember the line in my longer invention on the Adam. As hooking in each tuft of colored wool to become a new term of my vision of the whole design, I came to think of life itself being so worked: if one determined to take up ones vision of life from each immediate happening.

*

Between the chapter of March 15th and this chapter there is the break that I must work with then. In the midst of the first series of days, on the 10th, Saturday, hitchhiking to the otherside of Tamalpais to see my cousin Carol as Sabine in Wilder’s Skin of Our Teeth, getting out of a foreign car, a Renault, I smashed the little finger on my writing hand. By Wednesday it was infected, by Thursday the swelling, the swelling pain had taken over. It had to be lanced. To drain away the intolerable accumulation. And last night, again, the finger was lanced to clear up the foreign matter.
Is everything of account? There is in the poetic of H.D.’s later work an aesthetic of accounting, of keeping record? A vision in terms of what-is that is built up into a poetry of what counts? Where everything counts—impossible to reproduce. The atomic in writing is, as Olson gives it in Projective Verse, the immediate sound particle. But for me the resonance of the particle infects everything.

* 

The rug was hooked-work, (“Stolen” then?, the whole vision emerging from individual determinate after individual determinate as I put in bits of color.

* 

And in that work too there would be periods, even long periods, of waiting on the work. I would wonder about the total design, trying out in my mind various paths. Now the whole thing looked if I were to make a large yellow area “there” or carry out a continuous flowing line “here”.

* 

Or I would desert the work, lose track of it. There were times when there was nothing I could do. Or nothing I would do.

* 

In the work itself the multiplicity of wonderings makes for impulse after impulse towards larger form, broken by other apprehended forms. It is in the departures from what is forming that the poetic of the rug appears—a form disturbed throughout by the directive of many forms. It was in the process of coming to know what I was doing and just there letting go, breaking, even rebelling, so that I might come to what I did not know I was doing. The making of the rug seems now to relate to the concept of a universe of many realities I have drawn from William James.

* 

In any immediate area, if the articulation be made, an almost single directive might be kept (a rendering then, a clarification of issues, to make a definition of what is) with minimum confusion (mixing of one sense of the real with another). But the challenge for the artist is to find his equilibriums in the mixed matter.

III

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What I rose to write here I lost. But as I got just here to the word “rose”, I remembered
the idea or key I had gotten out of bed in the early morning dark, searched out the note-
book in the study, to start with:

it was “aroused”; and then, hadn’t I been thinking of the word “excited” just
before that? “Excited” was the feeling of being a terrier on the track of something, of
sensing, of sniffing, getting the scent, being sent. “Aroused” was this too but was also
that I was aroused from sleep by the dream and then the beginnings of ideas, was also
that I was angry. Curiosity and anger certainly are part of what I have had to deal with
in this approach to reality. The line of my prose sought sentences that would hunt down,
track out another line of something I wanted to find. There was also impatience then,
how often I wanted to win something before I won thru. That was an element in the crisis
of anger.

*

This is an age of criticism, so the critics tell us. An age that has sought to dena-
ture and exhaust its time of crisis in bringing philosophy, the arts, human psyche, histori-
ical spirit and the inspiration of the divine world into the terms acceptable to academic
aspirations. To undertake this study I must go against the grain of values and rationali-
ties established in my lifetime by a new official literary world. Finding their livelihood in
American universities, a new class of schoolteachers has arisen, setting up critical stan-
dards and grading responses to fit the anxieties and self-satisfactions of their profes-

sional roles and writing verses to exemplify these ideals. In Hound & Horn they begin to
age of criticism does not mean Pound’s Cavalcanti essay, Cocteau’s Call to Order, Dame
Edith Sitwell’s notebooks or H.D.’s The Guest, Charles Olson’s Projective Verse or Louis
Zukofsky’s Bottom: On Shakespeare, for these are concerned with the inner nature and
process of poetry itself. The university versifiers mistrust or despise equally the ardor
of the scholar where it appears, Lowes’ Road To Xanadu or Pater’s Renaissance studies.
What they seek is not the course of some passionate intuition that men have called
inspiration or divine fire or the inner melody of things; these very words are signals for
critical contempt. We may recognize or feel what men call the divine fire but we cannot
grade or weigh it. We cannot make it count or assign it its place in literary affairs.

*

My vision of poetry has been drawn from Carlyle as well as from Whitman, from
Dante, from Burckhardt, from Pater and Symonds as well as from Pound or Olson—where-
ver another man’s vision leads my spirit towards a larger feeling. And there has been
a fire, a fire of anger that rose, as I found the Romantic spirit and back of that the Spirit
of Romance and back of that the cult of life as a romance of the spirit belonged to an
order that was under attack or was under boycott. There was another, an official, an
authoritative order of “poets” : Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Yvor Winters, Louise Bogan for whom poetry was not a process or nature of life but a disciplining. And after them, Randall Jarrell, Brooks and Warren. Their name is legion; they swarmed and swarm in competition with one another to establish an idea cut each to his own limitation for the poet.

* 

It is an anger that pressed up to take over the direction of my writing on H.D. against slights and insults to her work. The polemic urge was there, to take offense wherever it was found in the context of old abuses, neglects and mistakings of the poetry. Randall Jarrell’s “H.D. is silly in the head” response to The Walls Do Not Fall or Louise Bogan’s revelatory contempt for the Notes to Ion—these are telling efforts on their part. In Untermeyer’s anthology with Wilbur and Jarrell as editors H.D.’s work no longer appears.

* 

Yet how mistaken the anger seems. The War Trilogy was not written, any more than Paterson or The Pisan Cantos were, for classrooms, anthologies or the new reviews. Jarrell and Louise Bogan were most right in their recognition that H.D. was not for them.

* 

What remains is the first thought on waking. The word “aroused”, and back of that “excited”, may lead too to the word “inspired” —a key to how the body built up its tone or mode (mood) for writing. Here, on the physical level the cooperation of different systems is demanded. “Aroused” —our visceral participation. “Excited” —our nervous participation. “Inspired” —our respiratory participation (heart and lungs). Then—But what is the word that applies to the circulatory (heart and brain)? I cannot find the word—a word in the series “aroused”, “excited”, “inspired”. Is “ardent” the word? “Fired”? There was the ardor of Lowes or of Pater that gave their prose the heat of high art. Was anger, angry the pain of something burning one, part of it? The ardor for the Cantos, for Journey to Love, for H.D.’s work, being a fire that burned in another way when I came into contact with derogatory critics.
In his commission, the germ of this book, Norman Holmes Pearson started in my mind an “original” of this book that I thought of as a task, to ride out on quest or trial, for the Lady. He did not ask for that. We had discussed her work in correspondence, and then, he had asked—would I try a book, a tribute on the occasion of H.D.’s seventy-fifth birthday, October 24, 1961. I did not mistake what he hoped for, a small book, a critical appreciation, but I knew too, I warned him, that I must be involved, if I get at what H.D.’s work meant to me, in the unresolved matter of my own poetics. I must increase the risk of her reputation in grounds of my own reading, drawn as I was to just those elements of Alexandrian, Renaissance, and 20th century theosophy and of Romanticism that among orthodox theologians and literary critics are held most disreputable.

I must make up for the critical disregard, I thought. To take up arms for her honor? There was, is, anyway this being aroused to defense, to offense, to fight for her cause that I saw as my own. To wear this challenge on my sleeve.

Nor could there ever have been a small, a proper book. H.D. did not stand alone, but her work, like that of Pound and Williams belonged to a nucleus of the poetics in which I had my own beginnings; as also I saw Lawrence and H.D. forming another nucleus. In the inheritance of the art, each poet released complex chromosomes forces that entered into new syntheses of poetic individuality. There were agreements, reinforcements of one poet’s imagination in anothers. But also, I found their disagreements were crises in the formation as I worked, contending with Pound and Williams where they took issue with her or with each other, searching out the issue to be my own.

Then I began to see the book as being not only the story of a poetics but of the role women as muses and even, as Robert Graves does, as deities over Poetry, but the term poetess was derogatory. The relation of a man to the idea of mother or sister or wife raised the specter of the female will to trouble his idea of woman’s genius. So, Marianne Moore in her modesty claiming no more than an honest craft was commended and even admired, but H.D. or Dame Edith Sitwell, writing in the personae of the inspired seer, pretenders to the throne of Poetry that gives voice to divine will in an age which mistrusts even the metaphor, excited contempt. I had heard Randall Jarrell and Richard Wilbur give voice to their outrage at the pretension of Edith Sitwell or had read Hugh Kenner who placed her among the starters of crazes, the mountebanks of literature. As, in The Flowering of the Rod, Simon thinks:
we must draw the line somewhere;

he had seen something like this
in a heathen picture. . .

harkening back to a prehistory in which there was mother rule. In our diagram of the orders of Poetry, the Poetess appears, as the Empress appears in the configuration of the Empire, or the Priestess or Pope Joan in the orders of the Church, having the majesty of a first power.

Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman might form in my mind a generative figure of American poetry in the nineteenth century.

*

“H.D. / Ezra Pound?” In her accounting of her personal life she goes back again and again to her marriage with Aldington and his leaving her; in her old age she will still try to tell the story, keeping alive a hurt a being betrayed that can surround her sense of having lost. But for H.D. too there was a sense of herself in relation to Pound, to Lawrence, and in her Hermetic Definitions, written in 1960, to St.-John Perse as poetess or seeress in a mystical marriage with a poet or seer, Mary Magdalene in The Flowering of the Rod who in going over to the Christ brings her seven demonic powers into His power, or Helen of Helen in Egypt in her encounters with Achilles, Paris, Theseus. Nowhere does H.D. refer to Williams, but in his own record from the initial letter of 1905 until the bitter recounting of that meeting in his Autobiography in 1951 Williams's thought goes back to his encounter with her.

*

Mother and father of our poetry I keep trying to project. Reproduction, “that was the disturbing thing in the dream”, I wrote. And then later, “Where everything counts — impossible to reproduce.” The fact is that Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, H.D., Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, are not mothers and fathers to us but lonely isolate spirits, akin only as we read. The fact is that our contemporary diagram demands these three H.D., Pound and William Carlos Williams, only as The War Trilogy, the Pisan Cantos and Paterson were battlegrounds in our own struggle towards the realization of a poetry that was to appear in the early fifties. “Aroused”, “excited”, “inspired”, “fired”, we found ourselves contending for these masterpieces against those for whom our own work was never to have a place.

*
Then, as following the method of H.D.’s later work, of a day by day account, I began this section, I have imagined another intent in which the matter of H.D. is taken as a *mantra*, my thought ever returning thereto and taking its way anew. And the book becomes, not some challenge to the literary lists—as if I might win a place for her honor in establishing (by my authority, by being an author in that sense) a place in men’s minds of active concern—but another original in my thought (for Norman Pearson had suggested a gift for her herself) the gift of itself love seeks to make.

*

A rose. He arose or rose early in the morning. Aroused to the book.

*

To be aroused, *angry*, I said. It is certainly too to be sexually aroused, where we follow the Freudian persuasion. To rise to the occasion. An aroused content is a disturbed content, as now, bringing the Freudian reading in at all, a shadowy suspicion begins. In following Freud, I am concerned not with what might be my own psyche but with whatever news of Man’s psyche, in which I have my share—Psyche, then, of the story that Apuleius tells. She was a searcher in the story, as a consequence of her looking where looking was forbidden. And now, in the conjunction of the hour, 4:20 AM, the dream of the rug that may be a rug in a hall, or a cover of a bed, or an original design, and the ghost of the word “aroused”, another searcher, a figure of myself as a child comes to form a link. There was, before I could read, another event in which what I was to be took root. The little figure aroused, in the cunning of sleep, walking, goes to see what he heard. Was it at the same hour? 4:20 A.M. To rise early and following a scent...

What I remember is searching for and finding the hiding places of the Easter eggs before Easter morning. In the dream there was a reminder of those rag-rugs in the hall between the nursery and the parents’ bedroom.

*

Aroused then is, as the Freudian thought would have it, the penis aroused; the ghost of the word “aroused” the ghost of the Freudian idea. With the sense that the pen is ready to write.

*

In this book where my purpose is to give my soul into the work, the cause appears in a new light. For I have taken psychic being, taken fire, from these works. Over years, I have confused my self with them—the open secret in the Freudian primal scene is only a ground floor—used the *War Trilogy* in creating the poet I am. We are
concerned with the architecture of a man, but building with words, with the breath or spirit forms, morphemes in inventions of time, we build structures of air, rising one within another without displacement. “Forged” myself, remembering Joyce’s word. And may have evoked that primal scene to create the scene where we are, as the magician enacts the spying upon the naked body of Noah, repeated in the spying upon Jacob in intercourse, to incite in the mind a mystery of curiosity that would see the secrets of Creation Itself, of discovery and hubris.

*  

Where is the original? I took thought from her thought; I took heart in her heart.

*  

In working on The Venice Poem in 1948 I first realized that I was not original but derived my spirit in poetry. Taking my cues from adopted parents, I found my speech and play ready, as from the sounding of the bells “a tribute to the Angels;

yet though the campanili spoke,
Gabriel, Azrael,

though the campanili answered,
Raphael, Uriel,”

with other bells of the campus campanili actually sounding in my ear, studying the architecture of St. Mark’s, I began the poem, evoking attendant spirits as I had seen H.D. in Tribute to the Angels evoke lords of the poem. Archangels, for archangels, Ficino tells us, “direct the divine cult and look after sacred things.” I meant to derive a poet and to take my origin in him, having no genius of my own to take the genius of the language, as H.D. had dared to take the great genii of the hours to direct the poem. [But I was “adopted”; I would never really look like my adopted parents or my representatives of the parents.]

The Cantos had shown a way to take ancestors in time, as Homer, and then the Renaissance translator Andreas Divus “In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer”, are ancestors of Pound as he translates the eleventh book of the Odyssey and brings it into his own Cantos—adopted fathers or authors of the original (Pound’s actual father’s name being Homer, as we remember H.D.’s mother’s name was Helen); and in the “Et omniformis omnis intellectus est” of Psellos that opens Canto XXIII I had found a lead towards that magic in which the mind becomes whatever and all that it will. Jane Harrison in Themis had supplied another lead with her observation that the dithyramb was Φ τηξθ αμβοσ, “Zeus-leap-song, the song that makes Zeus leap or beget,” a mimesis in which the Zeus-Child, Zagreus, was brought to birth. But it was in the War
Triology that begins with its declaration of a new Master over Love and closes with the presentation of the Child, with its early proposition—

*so that, living within,*

*you beget, self-out-of-self*

—that prepared my thought for The Venice Poem, the first poem where I not only knew what must be done—in Medieval Scenes I knew what the poem wanted—but also how to do it. In Medieval Scenes I had thought of myself as artisan and medium of the poem in one, receiving certain scenes and working them in language. In the Venice Poem, the world of the poem was not a scene received and rendered but a matrix, within which and through which I lived, into which I brought my actual life, the unfortunate course of love and betrayal which I suffered during the time of writing, not in order to express what I experienced but in order to take what I experienced as a passion, to in-form myself with the content of the poem, to form a womb or to adopt a womb in the matter of the poem, in order to beget in a Zeus-leap-song a Child out of myself that was to be my poet.
I woke again this morning before dawn. But there is only what I rejected of the dream to work with, and back of that—not even an image but a name that seems out of order, disorderly,—“SALLY RAND”. Once I bring the name up, back of the name I glimpse the fragment of a dream image I must recover now. I had, I gather, in a scene that must form part of our pictograph, been caressing H.D.’s naked back. One member of the dream-work or of the “Chinese written character as a medium for poetry” I have to do with, was my hand moving over the bare shoulders and back of a woman who in the dream was H.D. But she was also, the fore-woman, the last element in sequence was—well, I have no more than the name, the popularity, the vulgarity, the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, of “SALLY RAND” to work with. Must I bring this matter up? In the transgression of boundaries, even here where I have meant to keep boundaries fluid and self-creative so that no content would be out-of-bounds, I feel uneasy. [One of my readers writes in the margin: “I find these pages a little querulous and oddly defensive in an almost petulant manner.”]

* 

“We can see,” Fenollosa writes in his essay *The Chinese Written Character As A Medium for Poetry*, which coming into Pound’s hands in 1916 opens the way in modern poetry for ideogram and projective verse, “not only the forms of sentences, but literally the parts of speech growing up, budding forth one from another”—as the scene of the naked back and the name of Sally Rand are for us parts of speech. “All that poetic form requires is a regular and flexible sequence, as plastic as thought itself ... Perhaps we do not always sufficiently consider that thought is successive, not through some accident but because the operations of nature are successive. The transferences of forces from agent to object constitute natural phenomena, occupy time. Therefore, a reproduction of them in imagination requires the same temporal order.”

* 

But some “accident or weakness” in or of my subjective operation did break away from the pictograph. The hand caressing the bare back of the woman who represented H.D. was changed or the scene was disturbed, the surface of the pool stirred and the scene dissolved into... into—what? There was the name foremost in my mind as I woke up: Sally Rand.

*
My father and mother went to the Chicago World’s Fair that year. Was it 1933? It would then have been the year when H.D. began her analysis with Freud. Yesterday as I was writing down the previous dream, and then as I came to picture the various books to which this study refers as if the work of art were itself a cover-image of some original, that title of Baudelaire’s *Mon Coeur Mis a Nu* kept coming to mind. *My Heart Stript Bare.* Was that one of the requirements or realizations the book demanded? The title kept insisting to be admitted.

But Baudelaire’s *Mon Coeur Mis a Nu* is only a title for me. Of a book that has been on my shelves since 1946 with pages uncut. Henry Miller had had in his *Tropics* and in *Black Spring* this *coeur mis a nu* directive. I had picked up the Baudelaire to have near at hand one of the key books of the nineteenth century, but I never read it. I didn’t really like this idea of trying to expose the heart. It stood in critical reproof of my wanting a fiction within which the heart hidden might reveal itself as it would in the working.

*  

For those of us who are weavers of the veil, spinning the thread that changes life into its story, *Mon coeur mis a nu*, if it must be there, appears as a clothing of the heart, a figure in the cloth—but the cloth is itself the tissue of the heart. As the heart in H.D.’s *The Flowering of the Rod* we saw brought forward by the mage Kaspar as a gift for the Child—a sealed jar. But unbroken, it has also been broken. It is an open secret. Everyone has heard the story.

*  

Seven seals upon the book. Seven veils of Ishtar. In reading, in penetrating the secrets of the author—so in arts and in sciences—Freud tells us, an anxiety can grow as “budding forth one from another” a sexual curiosity works behind a scientific quest. And, doctor and scientist of the soul, Freud advanced another idea—that behind analysis itself was another anxiety, *anal*, he called it. Prying into, cutting up, laying bare the heart was, is, a surgical operation and also something more distressing, a destructive intent. There were transformations or “transferences of force from agent to object” in critical curiosity of cruel and bloody impulses.

*  

*Mon coeur mis a nu*, this work of Baudelaire’s that is in my mind entirely an imaginary work, an emanation from some hidden book, is then an operation, takes on the hubris, the transgression, of my own “scientific curiosity”. There is a work that I have read many times that comes to mind now, standing as it has for years (since I first read it at fifteen or sixteen) for this *mis a nu* violation of life, the story of an act that cuts the threads of the story. It is Hawthorne’s *The Birthmark.*

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"No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection."

He operates. He is “successful”. He removes all trace of the mark of birth; of what Christians called the original sin; of the vulnerable spot where the hero’s death will strike. “You know better than to try to improve in poetry,” Jack Spicer said, when I was distressed by the failure I felt in working on this book—“Why do you try to correct your prose?” Rewriting, reworking—just over what we are most unsure of, most do not know how to work, “whether to term a defect or a beauty.”

The story Hawthorne tells in The Birthmark has to do with the artist’s urge to render the essential free from its contaminations. It is an alchemical tale then. It has something to do with laying the heart bare, to know its secrets of life.

With criticism too, then, with the concept of cleaning up a written sentence, erasing the blemishes of this prose as I write it, removing what seems to mar some possible clear thing.

Georgiana then is our book, our inner nature, our own body. And the alchemist or doctor or gnostic or perfectionist, the critic and artist Aylmer at last gazes down upon the perfected image of his wife.

Waking, she perishes. Was it that the life was in the flaw? “that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness?” “Do not repent,” she instructs her stricken husband, “that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer.”

Waking from the dream, I rejected the best it had to offer. SALLY RAND. “Ecdysiast,” A joke. She had been brought up. Hey-ding-ding. Something had risen to the occasion. She was there, and I awoke. An instruction. “I cannot use SALLY RAND in the H.D. Book,” I said. “I cannot bring that up.”

But it had been brought up—the dancer with her ostrich-feather fans.
As, pursuing the pun, I am a fan of H.D.’s. This cult of the movie-star, of the dance-star, of the sports-star, and then among us in our common selves, of the poet-star, is as much of our daily reality as Sally Rand and her fan dance.

* 

And there may have been another transference of force, a pun, that gave Sally her power over the popular imagination. For everyone knew, tho they would only subconsciously remember (I do not recall that any of the jokes picked up on that word “ostrich”) that the ostrich hides its head in the sand, is afraid to see the facts of life.

* 

Sally Rand was surrounded by the vulgar laughter, the knowing smirk. She was the victim of a joke? She had her popularity in a joke, in the 'Sally Rand” jokes, and when they died out, what she was died out, leaving only the ghost of her name to haunt the jumping rhymes of children who have no other memory of her—’Sally Rand has a fan, /” Iona and Peter Opie report in *The Language and Lore of Schoolchildren*, 1959: “If she drops it—oh man!”

* 

She was, incarnate, a creature of the hey-ding-ding touch or mark that H.D. had wanted removed from William Carlos Williams’s poetry to reveal the real beauty. The H and D, above and below.

* 

There was as I recall no more than the gentle joking about did Father go to see Sally Rand and her dancers? In—wasn’t it called “Elysium”? In their side-show burlesque or nudist *Elysium*. Did he want to see? It would all turn out to be a joke. They would rag him. The ladies would laugh gently to cover something that I did not understand. Sally Rand was “common” was somehow both alluring and distasteful.

* 

In *Bid Me To Live* (“my Madrigal, my *roman a clef*,” H.D.called it in her *Newsweek* interview upon the publication of the book), H.D. gives her account of a charade, an evening’s game in which Lawrence and Frieda (Fredericks and Elsa, in the novel), Rafe and Julia Ashton, Bella Carter and Vane impersonate God and serpent, Adam and apple-tree, Eve and the angel at the gate. It is not part of their play, or, it is not openly part of their play; but in the original of that charade, in the story of our Ur-Parents in the Garden, they are of the Tree of Knowing and they saw the hey-ding-ding touch. In the lore the
Above and the Below separated into two. They saw they were naked.

*

In a collection of memoirs, letters and biographical sketches presenting a portrait of D.H. Lawrence, I found another account of just that evening: where another charade is presented in which Fredericks, Elsa, Rafe and Julia Ashton, Bella Carter and Vane appear as Lawrence, Frieda, Richard and H.D. Aldington, Bella (who is to be the second Mrs. Aldington) and the British composer, Cecil Gray.

*

Was it before or after Lawrence wrote his poem *Elysium* that appears in *Look! We Have Come Through!*?

*

Once the charade is set going in the novel, elements take on new levels of meaning, new circles of meaning ringing out from each pebble. “Somewhere, somehow, a pattern repeated itself, life advances in a spiral.” That is it, part of my sense here. For the pattern, the spiraling advance, is in the swirling veil of Ishtar or Isis or of our Nature, not the heart but the charade of the heart. “Every breath she drew was charged with meaning,” H.D. writes of Julia. This sense of the meaningful is the charge we have as weavers in the weaving, to bring forward meanings into the work, as creatures ourselves of the tissue of life. Or the screen?

*

Sally Rand was, to my Freudian persuasion, a screen-image.

*

“They have to bring forth,” Mary Butts writes in 1932 in *Traps for Unbelievers*, “from the eating-houses of Brooklyn, from farmsteads in Kansas, from shepherds’ huts in the Puszta in Hungary, flesh that can bear the weight of the world’s imaginings about Aphrodite ... All the young gods, of sex and war, of art and sport and maidenhood; of drink and the mysteries of excitement and moving about ... the gods of ourselves, in the order we most want them.

“Only it is men and women now who have to bear the burden of that desire: the movie star and the athlete, the flying man and woman, the speedboat racer and the boxer.”

And the artist? The cult of Picasso? And the poet?
Certainly T.S. Eliot belonged to this order, standing as an idol of the higher sophistication called culture, as Noel Coward stood for the lower sophistication called show business.

As in our day, Ginsberg and Kerouac are stars, beside whom any flyer or racer dims.

There is a priestess, a personality of this cult of ourselves I would make H.D. to be—this too? A bare-back rider of Pegasus of the Circus?

It was my hand caressing her bare back, as if it were in touch with fame, with this woman, from which sprang, once the dream was disturbed, the other famous, popular name.

“Not, it may be observed, the older and soberer incantation,” Mary Butts writes: “not the Father or the Grandfather or the Intellect; not Zeus Chronides or Athene; not Zeus of the Underworld and dread Persephone.”

But, waking this morning, disturbed, I thought... the thought kept coming back... “Did I ever ...” It was the hand kneading, needing then, the bare back. “... stroke my mother's back so” Or the mother's back?

Jehovah, I remember now from my reading in the Works of Thomas Vaughan last night, showed Moses His bare backside. How had they ever been able to keep that Rabelaisian detail as part of the story? of the real beauty?
II

I had gleaned from some reference to a dictionary that the word verse, our verse in poetry, like our prose in poetry, was backwards and forwards, as a man ploughing goes along one line and returns. Prose, forward in the row or line; then “turning to begin another line” (as now I find in the O.E.D.) versus.

As men plough forward and back, did they once write, turning enil eht fo dne eht ta

But in verse now, we return to begin another line. We do not reach the end or margin.

*

It is a fanciful etymology. To demonstrate that, once words cease to be conventional, customary or taken-for-granted in their meaning, all things begin to move, are set into motion. In the figure of ploughing, we see that prose and verse are two necessary movements in the one operation of writing. That here what we call the ploughing of the field we also call poetry or our own operation in language. Writing that knows in every phase what it is doing.

*

Forward and back, prose and verse, the shuttle flies in the loom.

*

“It means against too,” Spicer noted in the margin of an article I had written on Ideas of Form, and he asked me to look the word up in the O.E.D. There was pro and versus. My polemics. Lines of a poem “employed in Law to denote an action by one party against another.”

*

There is from vertere to turn, version: “a rendering of some text or work, or of a single word, passage, etc., from one language into another” ; and too, “the particular form of a statement, account, report given by one person.”

* aversion
There is the verso or “the side presented to the eye when the leaf has been turned over.” The other side of the fabric, where the colors are more vivid for not having been brought to light. The underside of the weaving.

There is the verso, the world beneath the stone, the underworld. Where not only mystery but misery hides. Where not only occult wonder but obscene infection swarms. Life revealed when the stone is turned over, reversed.

For wasn’t there, as Freud found, dug out, exposed: anal and oral phantasy—shit and devouring demons everywhere. The witch in the wisewoman?

There is in the operation Freud describes as the screen image a standing of one thing in the place of another. “It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood: memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess,” he writes in *Screen Memories* (1899). The fabric of history, of memory, then, must be continually woven in order to exist because it is not the fabric of the past but the fabric of the present that we weave.

We find meanings and significances to make up the Presence in which we, I, are, am.

“Out of a number of childhood memories,” Freud had pointed out, “there will be some scenes which, when they are tested (for instance by the recollections of adults), turn out to have been falsified.” Fabricated or forged, made-up, worked, to be a scene at all means that facts have been taken over by the restless human creativity. In the terms William James gives of a plurality of reals, we read: “there will be some scenes which turn out to have only a personal, not a conventional, reality.”

Then, describing this operation—it is the operation of our weaving, the classical operation or pretension of the magician, Freud observes: “They are false in the scene that
they have shifted an event to a place where it did not occur ... or that they have merged two people into one or substituted one for another, or the scenes as a whole give signs of being combinations of two separate experiences."

*  

As in the charade which the poets and lovers play in War-Time London, the loss of Paradise is brought into the loss of the pre-War world, and in their impersonations the personalities of Lawrence and H.D. become linked to the archaic personae of Jehovah and the Forbidden Tree.

*  

“She had the same feeling!” H.D. writes in *Bid Me To Live*, “that she had had in Capri, her word would call any Spirit to her, but she must be careful how she spoke. How she thought, even. It would be tempting something, luring something too poignantly near.”

*  

Screen-images or screen memories Freud calls them, these things too poignantly near. Figures of the veil, we have called them. The heart figured to clothe the heart. He speaks in that essay of “the high degree of sensory intensity shown by the pictures and the efficacy of the function of memory in the young.” I have suggested that we are not only creators, but, if and where we are creators, we are creatures of the veil we weave, children out of the whole cloth, charged with the intensity of the transforming work itself.

*  

Then Freud warns: “these falsifications of memory are tendentious, that is, they serve the purpose of the repression and replacement of objectionable or disagreeable impressions.” But he goes further to question whether we have any memories at all from childhood. He almost raises this picture of everywhere objectionable or disagreeable realities giving rise to the what we are in what is, creatures of our own transformation of what we could not satisfy in life, satisfying realities disappearing into their satisfactions.

“In these periods of revival,” Freud continues, “the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time.”

*  

What we are involved in now, after the brooding thought, the penetrating
analysis, the pervasive suggestion of Freud, is that our recognitions must go two ways. Though, after Freud, enthusiasts have tended to see the underside as the true and the overt statement as a cover, we would see both as present terms of the weave of truth.

* 

As what sent me off along this line of prose, verse; versus; version, aversion, verso, was that bit out of Vaughan's *Anthroposophia Theomagica*: “This fire is the vestment of the Divine Majesty, His back-parts which He shewed to Moses; but His naked, royal essence none can see and live. The glory of His presence would swallow up that natural man and make him altogether spiritual. Thus Moses his face—after conference with Him—shines, and from this small tincture we may guess at our future estate in the regeneration.” “But I have touched the veil,” Vaughan continues, “and must return to the outer court of the Sanctuary.”

“The trembling of the veil of the Temple,” Yeats had called the generation of Mallarmé. Between the high-mindedness and the low thought-forms a Void—but it was also a Maelstrom—trembled, shimmered, began to cast forth its old fascination. What is on my mind is that Yeats too, like Freud, poetics as well as psychology, was drawn to find out hidden content, working to bring us into a new consciousness in magic, away from the abstract and absolute, towards the coordination of above and below.

* 

There was a time of the trembling; then a time of the forcing of overt images. We now have our sanctuary only within the open secret in which the tissue of life reverses and restores the face, as Waite in a footnote to Vaughan quotes the Vulgate: *ignis involens*.

* 

We no sooner saw the backside that God showed Moses, because the Glory, the face, was forbidden, was too much, than we saw the sexual figure with which this images was charged, the other back-side that Freud forced us to admit existed in our thought. As Satan, the Goat of Mendes, presented in parody, in a charade of the verso, his ass-hole to be kissed by the devout. Where, too, the face of the devotee “shines and from this small tincture...” When Madame Blavatsky tells us that Isis has revealed to her “the secret meaning of her long-lost secrets”, in the context of a garment that becomes more transparent, the sexual reference of the word contends to take over the tenor of the statement.
[H.D.’s allegiance, like Freud’s, belongs to the high mind. Pound, we remember, called her, long long ago, “that refined charming, and utterly narrow minded she-bard ‘H.D.’” and yet, had wanted her to keep the “few but perfect” position in poetry. But in *Ion*, in her apostrophe to Athene, H.D. addresses “this emanation of pure-spirit” with a new sense of what high-mindedness might mean. Reading the passage again, in the context of the Hermetic “above and below” (the “As above, so below” of the Smaragdine tablet) and also of the Freudian idea of displacement above and below, we see that the above must work in the below and the below in the above, there must be a circuit for thought to be creative, for desire to be intelligent: “This most beautiful abstraction” [the Athene] pleads for the great force of the undermind … that so often, on the point of blazing upwards into the glory of inspirational creative thought, flares, by a sudden law of compensation, down, making for tragedy, disharmony, disruption, disintegration.” In our task, we must have “the desire actually to follow all those hidden subterranean forces,” if we would come to the reward of thought. “You flee no enemy in me, but one friendly to you,’ says the intellect, standing full armed…”

High mind must labor—Williams in *Paterson* calls up the figure of Madame Curie working the pitchblend—in obscure matter. But just where the mind disavows its sexual motivation or where the genital organ disavows its mental imagination, a contention begins in man’s nature. What a dark filthy fabric of lies and richness the political figures of our day seem to weave towards their precipitation of “tragedy, disharmony, disruption, disintegration”—as if driven by necessity—the old Judea-Christian dream of a War to end the trials of Creation in a holocaust of fire. What does it mean? In 1935 and 1936, as Jung began to first publish his studies of Alchemy, that matter of the Second World War was gathering in men’s minds everywhere. These falsifications of memory were tendentious. Possessed by the thought of the enemy, in fear and anger, men turned their high minds to the invention of the nuclear explosion in matter, to the cultivation of last diseases, to research in gasses that would cripple the minds of whole populations.

In Alchemy, so too in psychoanalysis, the work depended upon some equivalence or ambivalence between the gold (the Good, the life, the essential) and the shit (the waste, the contamination—but it was also that which was returned to the life or richness of the soil). The Tree had been of Good and Evil, but in the contention of Man’s knowledge it had appeared as the Tree of Good contending against Evil, a universe in agony. For the Christian convert Augustine the very curiosity to know at all could appear as adversary to faith, as the primary evil.
It was the work of Freud in psychology to follow an adverse curiosity, to bring to light just those references that had in the old religion or magic been sacred-taboo, hidden in order to be revealed, set aside, filled with awe / awful. Privates or secrets: penis, testicles, vagina, labia, clitoris, intercourse — words hidden in their Latin propriety, proper in their place. In the doctor’s inner offices, in the medical report or in the criminal courts, the words might appear as symptoms or charges: sodomy, unnatural relations, perversions — acts that had once been communal in ritual or initiation. Driven, out of mind, out of the community of men, as the old gods went. In bad taste. Or, in bad smell, bad repute. Virtu, that Olson suggested to me once must have meant man-smell. “That smells,” we say of some work of art that offends our taste.

Freud is a hero in a work that had begun to bring up out of the festering darkness (out of the darkened backrooms, the atmosphere of evil thought and shamed confession, in which the decadents of the nineties found their vices; out of the misery and suffering in which the realists found their doctrine of sexual bondage) into the light of day the vanished goods. The rich store underground was to be restored in the sight of man and god.

In the Judeo-Christian mythos, as in the Orphic tradition, God—Jahweh or Phanes—is Maker or Poet of a universe that as a work of His art, is good. Day by day of creation the “and God saw that it was good” is reiterated, the sublime assurance of the artist. But in the Christian myth, Lucifer, light-bearer of the high mind, is adversely critical of What Is and declares matter itself to be bad, the breeding of animal life vile and the image of Man distasteful. Shame in their nakedness is one of the first illuminations knowledge brings to Adam and Eve. Lucifer becomes the Enemy as he becomes the Critic, and in the Below, which now is a Hell where criticized or condemned men are in pain, he appears as Sathanas, the Adversary.

But in the work itself, the Creation as a work of art, Lucifer-Satan and Jahweh too, the author, are parts. The reader who is concerned with the structure, with form and content, will exclaim “it is good” at the appropriateness of even adversity in light of the composition. But now, as we begin to see this mythos as having just the truth of its composition, the truth of any story, it itself becomes a part of our own story in which we may try to restore the whole of experience or, rather, within that whole, to bring back the sexuality of man into his common goods.
The work was in Joyce's interior monologue, where Bloom's thought works back and forth between the vision of the nymph Gerty MacPowell where “all melted away dewily in the grey air” and the versions of sexual excitement, the screen weavings of “Licking pennies”, “that's the Moon”, “Mutoscope pictures in Capel street: for men only. Peeping Tom.” to romantic phantasies “Dare say she felt I. When you feel like that you often meet what you feel...” announcing the sexual urgency: “Well cocks and lions do the same and stags”. He is avoiding, his conscious mind is playing over, or above, a below, where “lions do the same” Bloom discharges his excitement. “Mr. Bloom with careful hand recomposed his wet shirt. O Lord, that little limping devil.”

The mutoscope pictures are “for men only”, but Ulysses itself in the installments of The Little Review took its place immediately in the high mind, and broke down in its directness the double standard that had divided what was proper for men to think of from what was proper for women to hear. When Virginia Woolf speaks of Ulysses as “an illiterate underbred book ... egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating”, it is she not the book that fails. The bare, simple words—the sexual words that belong to an inner poetry—begin to appear with the poetic ramblings of Molly Bloom: cunt, cock, fuck “Let out a few smutty words,” Molly Bloom says. But they were let out of their smut into the light of day, having their place with the other nouns of Molly's soliloquy: “that would do your heart good to see rivers and lakes and flowers all sorts of shapes and smells and colours springing up even out of ditches...”

Then in Lawrence's Lady Chatterly's Lover Mellors must talk the speech of the lower orders too but these lower orders are the country-folk, the dialect of pagany then. “A woman's a lovely thing when 'er's deep ter fuck, and cunt's good,” Mellors says echoing the words of the Creator.

It was there, in those pages of a novel, between Mellors and Connie, made up out of some other thing between Lawrence and Frieda that had or hadn't happened. For us, that Mellors and Connie, after arguing and accounting for the tribal lore of sex, as they do; after setting things to rights; make love, and that Lawrence has words for it, is—like the other sexual revelation of Freud's and like Molly Bloom's sexual reveries—a break-thru, a release of withheld words into the common language, a release then of withheld feelings into the possible grace of common understanding.
There’s “a woman’s a lovely thing” and “cunt's good” given as threads of the loom, as themes of working good.

And just this earnest, ardent thing in Lawrence, this assertion and affirmation in the words “lovely” and “good” has called forth, calls forth, the smut-hounds and censors who believe that women and cunt are evils, powers over them, and the smirking sophisticates who believe women and cunt are commodities. “Don’t you think all that stuff is old hat” an informant for Time magazine asked me when Lady Chatterly’s Lover was going to be republished. How dated the novel is!”

*

As, in its way, Sally Rand was dated and showed up something in me. Mellors and Connie are in a strip-tease for some readers. Mis a nu in order to find naked reverences, the old reverences of the earth, Elysium, they are naked, exposed not only to the love of some readers in those pages but naked to the ridicule of others.

*

“He heard the distant hooters of Stacks Gate for seven o'clock. It was Monday morning.” We too are reminded of the industrial practical realities of men's lives, of the living that must be worked for. This is the reality James described as utilitarian. Beyond ideal relations, sensual immediacies, imagination and the supernatural, this distant hooting is from a world where reality is fitted to men’s uses and productions, the reality of up-to-date. How silly, once we are aware that what we are reading is in the light of other men's opinions, Lawrence's nakedness appears. The hooting is in the background. It is the factory whistle. The conclusions of reasonable men are bearing in upon the scene.

“He shivered a little, and with his face between her breasts pressed her soft breasts up over his ears, to deafen him.”

*

In Tribute to the Angels H.D. invokes (against the hooters?) by the sound of bells and by the sign of candle, guardian angels to stand with the old daemons or demons.

*

H.D. in her work does not bring the anglo-saxon words, banned by genteel proprieties, into use. In her generation, heirs of the suffragette fight for equal rights, women began to claim an equal share in the right to consciousness, including sexual consciousness. “Bearing in mind that all men conceal the truth in these matters,” Freud in 1905 writes of his initial enquiries into the sexual disturbances that underlay neurotic disor-
ders. With *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterly’s Lover* in the 1920s and then, in 1937, Pound’s *Canto XXXIX*, where in Circe’s mingle.

*Girls talked there of fucking, beasts talked there of eating,*
*All heavy with sleep, fucked girls and fat leopards,*

as the physical realities of sex, referred to in the language of the Protestant ethic as “privates” or “secrets”, begin to be thought of as communal goods, the words for organs and acts begin to appear in works no longer written for private circulation but to be “published”. “*James Joyce was right,*” rings as a refrain in the prose of *Murex* which follows the mode of the interior monolog, but, though H.D. is a poet for whom the revelation of inner truth is primary, delineating changes of erotic emotion from tensions of withholding to raptures of release, she does not and perhaps could not refer to the sexual parts of the body openly. Not until Denise Levertov’s “*Hypocrite Women*” and “*Our Bodies*” in 1963 will the right Joyce had won be claimed by a woman and the words “cunt” and “balls” take their place with “hands”, “eyes”, “mouth”, “feet” in the language of the physical body in a woman’s poetry.

But not only sexual names had been banished by the Protestant ethic. Indeed, the names flourished wherever they were used to express scorn or irreverence. Back of the sexual organs and the names, more feared and hated were the sexual mysteries and powers. Calling up Lilith, “*and one born before Lilith*”, and Eve, Isis, Astarte, Cyprus in *The Flowering of the Rod*, H.D. would bring back other banished names in which the daemonic sexual nature of woman is evoked. The Puritanism of Augustine in the 4th century or of Calvin in the 16th would censor spiritual as well as physical possibilities. So, Mary Magdalene in *The Flowering of the Rod*, “outcast”, “unseemly”, is City-goddess of Magdala and also “myrrh-tree of the gentiles” and also a Siren of the sea—a numinous power of the ancient Mother-world—as well as a whore. She returns like the very sacred and taboo divinity of Woman as ruler of sexual mysteries that in the nineteenth century began to be called pornography. Having called up

*a word most bitter, marah
a word bitterer still, mar*

H.D., in turn, invokes the star of morning, Lucifer above:

*Phosphorus at sun-rise,
Hesperus at sun-set.*

The she calls upon the disturbance below, what Boehme called the *Turba*:
O swiftly, relight the flame
before the substance cool,

for suddenly we saw your name
desecrated; knave and fools

have done you impious wrong,
Venus, for venery stands for impurity

and Venus as desire
is venereous, lascivious,

while the very root of the word shrieks
like a mandrake when foul witches pull

its stem at midnight ...

thru to:

O holiest one,
Venus whose name is kin

to venerate,
 venerator.

It is this trouble with names, or this trouble of a name, that is followed by the section we have already considered when I wrote about searching for the name of something, of herisson:

it lives, it breathes,
it gives off — fragrance?

but then:

I do not know what it gives

The patron who said “name it”, who said, “if you cannot, if there is no name, 
invent it”, was, if not Freud himself, very like Freud.
A long way round. “Beating about the bush” is our common expression. I gather what I mean as I go. And must write as if I gathered my sense as a man would gather water in a sieve.

Lady Chatterly “had not even heard the hooters. She lay perfectly still, her soul washed transparent.”

Yes, it is true. Writing in this book on that Saturday, just after I had smashed my finger, I was out of touch with the pain. The finger, insulted as it was, after all, hooted. What I was going to write but dissented, but still must go on with, is that in the higher orders they do not hear the hooters? they are not offended? but “perfectly still”, “washed transparent”? A realm of ideas that is above the distraction of an injured finger.

Dame Edith Sitwell has turned like an outraged falconess from the higher orders swooping down, distracted, clawing and tearing at the self-esteem of petty critics and versifiers, at the journalistic smirk and hoot. Is it—lady like?

Where the hooting is, there is a division between the upper and the lower; there is a war in the void.

Working towards this study, I have found H.D.’s deriders, hooters of the daily press, of the current literary reviews. It is part of the polemic, the store of outrage, my hearing at times not the Michael, Raphael, Gabriel of the angelic orders, not the bell-notes over the waters, over the medium of language where those great rimes sound, but the derisive Monday morning reproofs, denials and smirks of Randall Jarrell, Louise Bogan, Robert Hillyer, industrious literary businessmen, and back of them, the conspiracy of silence. Into the texture of the poem H.D. has woven their voices, as life does weave into the tissue of our physical bodies memories that make for a lasting resistance against insult, for possibilities of repair.
The poem takes as its condition of being its liabilities,

\[
\text{and fixed indigestible matter}
\]
\[
\text{such as shell, pearl; imagery}
\]

\[
\text{done to death; perilous ascent,}
\]
\[
\text{ridiculous descent ...}
\]

where the poet lets the voice of the adversary play and list against her work just those qualities that rescue the work from what is correct and invulnerable.

*  

The war, the actual bombing of London, the daily attacks, the lies and ambitions of wartime politics, may have made real and immediate again the experience of attacks and strategies of literary wars the writer had known.

\[
\text{This search for historical parallels,}
\]
\[
\text{research into psychic affinities,}
\]

\[
\text{has been done to death before ...}
\]

*  

“The meaning that words hide” remains. And where—sick, tired, I imagine her, tired of these voices—she came to Freud in 1933, in the exhaustion of her first creative tide that had carried her high in 1916 and the early 20s, in the waning of her critical reputation in which Red Roses for Bronze of 1931 and Ion of 1937 appeared, there was not only a personal but a creative need for a new Master over Love.

*  

“To greet the return of the Gods,” she wrote on a card, sending gardenias to Freud upon his arrival in London after the Nazi’s taking Vienna in 1938. One of the high orders, the Princess George of Greece had arranged for Freud’s collection of Greek and Egyptian antiquities to follow him to London. “Other people read: Goods”, he wrote in reply.

*  

They had in common-our ardent “high-minded (as Pound might have called her, as he called her in that letter to Williams “narrow-minded”), our high-minded poetess
who sought the return of the gods and our earnest “low-minded” (as Pound would have called him, as Pound called him in the *Rock-Drill Cantos* “a kike”) psychoanalyst who sought the return of the goods—not only genius but the derisive voices of critics in their ears. They excited antipathies. Science like art had provided smirks of distaste. Art like science had shown its conspiracy of silence.

* 

In the trilogy, in the three panels of the poem, there is a narrative of the old order entering into the new, the despised becoming part of the revered—as the all but forgotten *Red Roses For Bronze* is remembered in H.D.’s last work, *Hermetic Definitions* of 1960. Kaspar, a mage of the old pagany (of the stars), in *The Walls Do Not Fall* no more than a promise of the story

*His, the Genius in the jar
which the Fisherman finds,*

*He is Mage,
bringing myrrh*

that might also for a moment have been the story of Arabian Nights fame, brings forward a jar (it is the heart, the Word, the Star), stars, hearts, words—containing—“the Genius in the jar”, she says; “bringing myrrh”, she says. Containing life, meaning, light.

* 

Life, meaning, light are in the jar. But then a woman enters the picture; as in the alchemical passage of the alembic or the witchcraft passage of the cauldron—in “the crucible”, from marah, bitterness, an operation begins as brine and tears of the sea join

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

Kaspar, admitting her at all, admits the Siren-seductress, even the pornographic—“disordered, dishevelled”, “unseemly” and in the disorder, “the light on her hair like moonlight on a lost river” he has a vision of the old orders. There is vision then in the jar, he sees the Islands of Paradise. “I am that myrrh tree of the gentiles,” the woman declares, and she shows in her speech a glimmer back of paradise of unseemly sexual rites:

*there are idolators,*

*even in Phrygia and Cappadocia,*
who kneel before mutilated images
and burn incense to the Mother of Mutilations

that contain the image to come of Mary weeping bitterly over the mutilated body of the Christ.

*

Seven devils that had been cast out are part of the story, the marah itself, perhaps, “were now unalterably part of the picture”

Lilith born before Eve
and one born before Lilith,
and Eve; we three are forgiven,
we are three of the seven
daemons cast out of her.

*

It was in hiding away the daemons, the sexualities, even the armpits and ass-hole of our bodies, in guilt or shame, divorcing them from the goods (for only that is a good that is communal and above-board), taking them away from God into the claim of secret or private property, that they became evils, lords “over” us.

*

In his Three Contributions to the Theory of Sexual Love of 1912, Freud tells us that besides the realm of eros, where men and women become lovers, discovering their bodies anew, and come into the drama of their romantic phantasies, he found another falling in love, with pieces and parts, where there was no reciprocity. Beneath the surface, hidden in the heart, repressed from consciousness, he detected perversions, sexual acts and appetites in exile.

“The highest and the lowest in sexuality are everywhere most intimately connected,” he observed.

*

Kaspar, who may have been Abraham, the poem tells us, is the old patriarchal order, Mage of the star-world above; as Mary Magdala represents the powers of the matriarchal world. In their meeting, an exchange takes place—he is initiated into the revelation of the sea, as she in turn has prepared for her becoming one of those whom
the Son will bring with Him into the new Paradise. But now the persons change and Freud, the image of the sea-world of the unconscious, the initiate of the Libido, take the place of Kaspar, and the poetess evoking the heavenly powers takes the place of the Sea-priestess. Between the man and the woman a work is begun, to bring up into the light certain banished elements of our being, to bring up the full confession of the heart into joy. *The Wedding of Heaven and Hell* Blake proposed. The mixture of many things in the configuration of the poem, the associational method in the psychoanalysis, bring the above into the below, the below into the above; and in time, we see they bring over the primal Paradise into the new.

*  

In the weaving under and over of threads we bring these things from the light of the verso that men call Night into the Light of the face that men call Day.

*

Already, the hooters, who had hooted at Freud because they would keep sexual matters in the dark, use Freudian hoots to cast shame and darkness once more over our nature.

Rand or round? “It’s a German word,” Jess said, and searched out the dictionary to draw the sorts. “Will you draw the sorts” “No! I don’t want to know!” I replied, and then: “Yes. Give me the German.”

: edge, brink / margin (of a book)
Sally Rand was marginal then. *aus Rand und Band sein*, be out of bounds, out of hand, be unmanageable.

den Rand halten: hold one’s tongue, shut up.

bis zum Rande voll: brim-full.
Nights and Days


“Ne pas oublier un grand chapitre sur l’art de la divination par l’eau, les cartes, l’inspection de la main, etc.” So Baudelaire writes in Mon coeur mis à nu, which now that it has come up, I begin to use in my own divinations. Finding my rime in the opening propositions of Baudelaire’s essay: “De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi.” Where he, too, proposes to start “n’importe où, n’importe comment, et le continuer au jour le jour, suivant l’inspiration du jour et de la circonstance, pourvu que l’inspiration soit vivre.”

* 

To bring one thing into another as, primary to art, the painter draws from life until the object or person or scene selected informs his eye and hand, the painting a colloquy entertained. But I have in mind now the great conversation—conversion—of painting within painting: Picasso’s bringing up Velasquez’s masterpiece Las Meninas where the elements of that painting speak at Picasso’s talking table, as in the beginning of his work Picasso had spoken in the language of El Greco to draw sentiments of hunger and cold, figures of an agony, from his own life in Montmartre. The martyrs of the religious heresy of art, of Bohemia, in the wake of Baudelaire and the Romantic agon appearing in the very style of those martyrs of the Catholic world that writhe in the canvases of El Greco in the wake of the Renaissance, where the sensuality of the pagan revival and the all but Manichaean spirituality of the Reformation contend. As later, king now over a Spanish empire of painting, Picasso reiterates the splendor of the Prado in the splendor of his own palace La Californie. “The dog we see in his study of The Maids of Honor”, Jaime Sabartes tells us, “is not the dog painted by Velasquez, but Picasso’s dog. . . Here and there, features of his intimates show up in the face of the Infanta or the faces of other figures. . . When we look closely at these ‘studies’, we have the feeling we are looking over Picasso’s shoulder as he works, one day in a dark mood, relaxed on another, but always preoccupied in pursuit of an idea, a fugitive thought. . .”

* 

Picasso would divine his life in the depths of Velasquez’s painting—but this life is his own sight in creation as the chiromancer would divine the lines of a life in the hand, following from figures seen towards fugitive ideas, or as any old gypsy reading the cards would call up the cast and numbers of scenes in which a play will begin. “Whenever I examined this painting closely,” Sabartes says of the Velasquez in the Prado, “I always had the impression I was looking at a scene from a play. Was this because of the characters represented, their gestures and attitudes, and the court costumes of another
epoch? Was it because of Velasquez's way of representing them, some suspicion of his motives in grouping them as he did? Bringing into play a confusion of immediacies and mirrors of immediacies, Velasquez presents the eyes with a mystery of their point of view: behind the painter's back the figures of Philip IV and his queen appear reflected in a mirror so that we begin to realize that they must stand where we do, facing the painter—outside the canvas in its own representation, for we see in the painting the verso of the painting facing us and the painter's face is towards us as if he worked in a mirror; upon the walls of the room in the picture are copies (mirrors) by Mazo of originals by Rubens now in the hand of Velasquez.

* 

Divination is working with things to release the content and form of a future or fate, sometimes bringing up what we choose upon a conscious impulse, sometimes drawing the sorts by chance to bring a foreign element into action. Here sorting and mixing are functions of a higher organization in which, troubled by my thought of Baudelaire's *Mon coeur mis à nu*, I begin to take thought in Baudelaire's thought. "*De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi*, appears reflected almost as if contrived to fit the composition of my own reflections. And as I read Baudelaire the specter of my trouble with his trouble begins to come forward, as if in a mirror behind me as I work. He is a voice set into motion from a deck of fifty-two playing cards or from a tarot deck of seventy-eight, but this deck is another, of playing poets or voices of poetry. He has been brought into play as if by hazard; but in the configuration of the fifty-two cards or seventy-eight names of God interrelated sequences and sets have been imagined that form such a tradition or interpretation of what Poetry is that every number moves towards order. Kurt Seligmann in *The Mirror of Magic* argues that the Tarot's "entire magic theory rests upon the belief that in nature there is no accident—that every happening in the universe is caused by a preestablished law, but in the poetic theory of our Tarot there is no accident, yet there is no preestablished law, for every happening destroys the law before it, moving, as it does, towards the creation of a law that will be established only in the composition of the whole."

* 

When I spoke of H.D.'s being the Poetess and recalled too the charge of Pound's so-long-ago "refined, charming and utterly narrow-minded she-bard" and of Williams's "Hellenic perfection of style", I had in mind another specter—the genius of a woman that men would propitiate or exorcise. The Poetess was an enormous persona like the hieratic figures of women in the major arcana of the Tarot—*l'Imperatrice, la Papesse*— who with the Juggler, the Emperor, the Pope, the Hermit and the Fool, belong to a series of types brought forward from the later Medieval World (in which *la Papesse* may well be not Pope Joan but the Albigensian Esclarmonde, and the Fool may be the Parsival-Hero
of twelfth century romances and fairy tales) into the Renaissance configuration. The Tarot, like the Hermetic charades of Catherine de Medici or the alchemical romances of the seventeenth century, provided the ground for the creative imagination to work in and its figures are projects of that creation. Poetry is another such matrix of surviving, evolving, and changing entities, and the Tarot, like Poetry, has periods and reformations. The Tarot I had in mind is not the Tarot of Marseille, but the presentation belonging to the London of 1910 and the mysteries of the Order of the Golden Dawn, the Tarot drawn by Pamela Coleman Smith following A. E. Waite’s prescriptions. La Papesse now is The High Priestess, recalling not Esclarmonde, but MacGregor Mathers’s wife, Henri Bergson’s sister, as Isis. The scenes on the lesser arcana might be from the great prose romances of William Morris, and in the idealization of its women, Birdalone and Elfhild mingle with the cult figures of Art Nouveau. Egyptianized to become the Book of Thoth in the eighteenth century, Hebrewized to become a Cabalistic text in the nineteenth, the cast of the original play survives, however costumed, in Waite’s deck, but now the abstract numbers and impersonal face cards give way to illustrations, the cryptogram of numerical symbols becomes directly a romance or fairytale in moving pictures. Even as in poetry the Imagists were beginning to demand a clairvoyant art and to project scenes of enigmatic content—primary vision or insight, as in Pound’s April:

Three spirits came to me
And drew me apart
To where the olive boughs
Lay stripped upon the ground:
Pale carnage beneath bright mist.

Slight as the imagist poem might seem to be, it has also the charge of a vision—it is a card predicting a poetry. In that passage from A Packet for Ezra Pound in which Yeats speaks of The Cantos he sees the sequences of that poem as sequences of cards: “I have often found there,” he writes, “brightly printed kings, queens, knaves, but have never discovered why all the suits could not be dealt out in some quite different order, and when he tells us that Pound “has scribbled on the back of an envelope certain sets of letters that represent emotions or archetypal events. . . then each set of letters repeated, and then A B C D inverted and this repeated, and then a new element X Y Z, then certain letters that never recur. . . and all set whirling together”, where “the Descent and the Metamorphosis—A B C D and J K L M—his fixed elements, took the place of the Zodiac, the archetypal persons—X Y Z—that of the Triumphs, and certain modern events—his letters that do not recur—that of those events in Cosimo Tura’s day”, Yeats envisions the order of The Cantos as being very much indeed like the laying out of cards in a divination.

*
Taking the Major Arcana as a set of projected parts for the woman to play in a drama, the Tarot provides us with the two figures in the hierarchical order—the Empress and the Popess, two in the order of virtues or powers—Justice with her scales and sword and the virgin Strength forcing the lion’s mouth. In the Marseilles deck the winged figure of Témperance is a woman; pouring water from one vessel into another, she may be pouring the Soul or Life from one body into another. In the Waite deck this figure has been re-formed to be “neither male nor female.” We see her as a virtue, but she is linked in what we see to one of the two women who appear in the cosmic orders—the World, the figure of a dancing woman (“the rapture of the universe when it understands itself in God,” Waite gives us), and the Star, the naked figure of a woman kneeling who pours water from two vessels, like Temperance then, but She returns the water of life or the soul to its elements or sources, from one vessel to the spring and from another to the earth.

*

How far abroad have we gone, preoccupied in pursuit of this fugitive idea of the Poetess as a card in divination? H.D. is immersed from the period of the War Trilogy on in the lore of occultism, and it is not surprising that in a poetry that means to keep Hellenistic mysteries alive in the imagination, as in Freudian analysis the repressed is brought forward into the present consciousness, the emblems of Renaissance hermeticists, astrologers and alchemists who mixed pagan and Christian images play their part. In Nights, published in 1935, after H.D.’s analysis then, the protagonist Natalia Saunderson plays the Tarots with Felice Barton “an overblown queen of hearts or (Tarots) queen of cups”, and there is a kind of emotional magic going on: “She tapped something in you, David says of Mrs. Barton.

“He understood, in his ridiculous way, everything, it seems to Natalie, “things she herself couldn’t cope with. “No, she didn’t, she tells him, “I mean, it was talking about those cards. And later, Natalie refers again to the cards: “She lent me those German Tarots. We had such fun, we spread out all the cards and that diluted sort of Burne-Jones English set I have.

*

In the War Trilogy, although alchemical and astrological lore enter into its synthesis, there is no use of Tarot. Thoth is evoked as patron of scribes, and in his Hellenistic identification with Hermes, as in Tribute to the Angels, he is patron of thieves and poets, but there is no Book of Thoth, that favorite Tarot fantasy of nineteenth century occultists, in H.D.’s poem, for she is relating faithfully a synthesis in which the Hellenistic Christos was born that knew nothing of Tarot. Though the opening scene of the City under Fire could have been related to the Tower; and the Moon, the Sun, Death, Judgment, the Devil, the Wheel of Fortune, the Lovers—all could have been resurrected
in the meaning of the poem; though the High Priestess may correspond to the Lady of *Tribute to the Angels*, for she too holds a book (“The same—different—the same attributes, / different yet the same as before”), they do not enter in.

*  

Yet the unfolding of the poem is very like a reading of cards. “An incident here and there” like a hint here and there in the first distribution of cards from which the Seeress will read what is happening. The ruin where the fallen roof leaves the room open to the sky, the tide pool, the worm on the leaf, the track in the sand from a tree in flower to a half-open hut-door, the bare early colonial meeting-house: these do not appear as mise-en-scène or as images in themselves to be captured but as elements of a language to be deciphered, as the chiromancer divines her meanings from the scenes of that deck Pamela Coleman Smith designed in the manner of Burne-Jones. The major arcana of this divination in H.D.’s trilogy will be the great powers of the Semitic, Egyptian, Greek, and Magian, worlds that mixed in the alembic of the Alexandrian imagination prepare the syntheses from which the powers of the Christian world will emerge.

*  

But in this reading the meaning of things, as if conversant in dreams with the Presence or with Our Lady, having some poetic gnosis of the divine world, H.D., like Caedmon, commanded by the angel to sing something, or like the Ploughman, whom Blake saw releasing souls from their seeds to grow into the day, is inspired, reviving in the meaning of poet the spirit of shaman magic and vision. Something of the awesome remove of this order belongs to the imagined card of the Poetess, the title itself having that ambivalence of the sacred in which travesty and honor contend.

*  

The Poetess like the Popess is a disturbing persona; like the woman Mary of Magdala, who is “a great tower”, she is a demoniac, for her simple humanity is contaminated by genius.

*  

The daimones of Mary Magdala are female powers—Lilith, Eve, and one before them, from the Hebraic orders, and the great goddesses of the classical world. The one before Lilith and Eve in the teachings of Jewish gnosticism may be Sophia, the Daughter of God, whom the Samarian Simon claimed reincarnated in his Helen. But, as for man or woman the Muse remains female, the genius is male. As Maker or Poet the man, like God, creates; and the idea of the Poetess as Creatrix is again like the Popess—Pope

320
Joan—the idea of a woman as a pretender to manhood, a disturbing sex magic. Men live uneasily with or under the threat of genius in women.

*

In the ballad *The Queen O’ Crow Castle* the poetess Helen Adam takes over from folklore such a tale of a man winning a possessed queen, where here I would see the drama of sexual love that would conquer a demonically inspired woman. The hero has a genius of his own: “He walks wi’ an angel baith morning and night” that casts fear of sex, for “Nae lassie daur step ’neath the stir o’ those wings.” This angel of Callasten’s has his counterpart in the *deil* of the Queen O’ Crow Castle; both are the solitude, the genius of the poet. To the would-be lover of the Queen her genius appears as a demon-rival:

*Fire,*

*Fire,*

*Fire fierce and red.*

*The gay fires o’ danger in the dark o’ her bed.*

*

*L’eternelle Vénus (caprice. hystérie, fantaisie) est une des formes séduisantes du diable,* Baudelaire writes.

*

In Courbet’s great canvas *L’atelier du peintre* of 1855, humanity is gathered in its types about the studio of the painter. “The metamorphosis of womanhood,” Werner Hofmann tells us in his *The Earthly Paradise,* “is distributed over various parts of the picture. We have the mother, and not far from her the harlot still dressed in her plain country clothes (to the right behind the grave-digger’s top-hat); and we have the central figure of ‘Truth’.” In addition to these Courbet had originally painted in the elemental female figure, the animal-like *femme fatale,* giving her the features of Jeanne Duval, the mistress of Baudelaire.

*

*Mon coeur mis à nu* was written between 1859 and 1866. In the high romantic fashion of the day there was a cult of the *femme fatale,* and for Baudelaire the fascination of women had a powerful and threatening psychic reality. But throughout the nineteenth century, the Popess changing into the High Priestess, this persona is persistent: Helen, Seraphita, Kundry, Lilith, She. In the formative years of H.D.’s generation, women
were fighting to free themselves from the bondage they felt in such stereotypes, to take their places as equals of men; yet these were also the high years of Art Nouveau, when the powers of women to charm, to enthrall, and even to enslave, were portrayed everywhere. In the battle for women’s rights, women’s powers would seem like powers of darkness, a tyrannical myth, against which the light of reason must strive. With the World War common sense seemed to have won, and the Mom, the Career-Woman, and the Model, to have taken the place of the Eternal Female. The flat planes and straight lines, the functionalism, of the modern seemed to have cast into permanent disrepute the devious courses of Art Nouveau. The analytic functionalism of Freud’s psychology seemed to have exposed at last to the light of day the shadowy demons of hysteria and dream. A new Oedipus had overthrown the Sphinx—for the answer to her dark riddle was “the Oedipus complex”—and Thebes was freed from the pestilence of neurosis. In the twenties and thirties, the emancipated, shedding the passionate masks of man’s ancient dramas, hoped to be cured of tragic fate. So the Old Man in Yeats’s last play The Death of Cuchulain rants against the modern and spits upon the dancers painted by Degas—“above all upon that chambermaid face”—for the women who could dance Emer are gone. “I am old, I belong to mythology,” he says: “I could have got such a dancer once, but she has gone; the tragi-comedian dancer, the tragic dancer, upon the same neck love and loathing, life and death.”

* 

Not only in art, but with Bachofen’s Das Mutterrecht in 1861 in the revision of history the nineteenth century image of woman took hold. Back of the caprice, hysteria, fantasy—the psychic entity in men’s minds of woman as all powerful—and back of the other figure, the pure, higher, suffering Psyche-woman, in the primal myths Bachofen found hints and certainties of a war in which Mother-rule was overthrown by Father-rule. Before the Father-Gods, Jehovah or Zeus, and their law, Bachofen argued, there had been the Mother-Goddess and her law; before History, there had been Nature.

Digging into her realms, under earth, into the prehistory of caves and midden-heaps, men searched to bring up once more long forgotten images of what woman was—at Willendorf, at Lespugue. Scholars and archaeologists making finds at Ur and Minos, at Mycenae and Malta, brought a visual reality to the romantic idea of the Mother of the Gods. “Delve into the deepest depths to reach them,” Mephistopheles says to Faust in Goethe’s phantasmagoria when Faust would seek the Mothers—that was in the twenties of the nineteenth century.

So too from old wive’s tales and from heretical texts in the swarming ground of gnostic and hermetic belief from which Jews, Christians and Moslems had drawn, scholars of Greek and Coptic found, where texts spoke of deep things, teachings concerning a femality in God, a person who was Mother or Wisdom or Glory, a daughter but also a mother of God. It was as if the oldest mysteries had returned to take up their stand in woman just as the new rationalism of modernity promised to free her. As if an
ancient image were taking over, even in the citadel of Roman Catholicism where the Mother of God was to be advanced in the dogma of Her Immaculate Conception and Her Assumption. The giant head of Kore was rising again into the identity of woman.

* 

With *King Jesus* in 1946 and *The White Goddess* in 1948, Robert Graves, a poet antagonistic to Yeats as to Pound—and I would take it ignorant of H.D.’s *War Trilogy*—advanced a grammar of myth where Mary Magdalene appears as a Great Queen or Fate (“In *Tom o’ Bedlam’s Song* she is Tom’s Muse—“Merry Mad Maud.”) and where that refrain “Lilith born before Eve / and one born before Lilith, and Eve; we three” began to be explicated. According to Graves the Semitic goddess Michal of Hebron was Adam’s creatrix; but then from gnostic sources he goes on to identify the Virgin Mary with Michal and in turn from the Essene Ebionites with a female Holy Spirit. “We have come to be governed by the unholy triumvirate of Pluto god of wealth, Apollo god of science and Mercury god of thieves,” Graves protests. There can be no end to the present miserable condition “until the repressed desire of the Western races, which is for some practical form of Goddess worship, with her love not limited to maternal benevolence and her afterworld not deprived of a Sea, finds satisfaction at last.”

* 

Horace Gregory tells us in the lore of contemporary poets that Graves and the Poetess Laura Riding had inscribed above their bed: “God Is A Woman.” It became the epigraph of my suite of heresies (of gnostic orthodoxies) *Medieval Scenes* before I had read *King Jesus*, indeed, before *The White Goddess* was written. I had found the lore of Morgan le Fay in the Freudian Roheim’s *The Riddle of the Sphinx*, but then, as this book must have suggested, I had come to live in the ambience of such meanings and H.D.’s twentieth century gnostic “Tale of a Jar or Jars” had opened the way.

* 

“Woman is not a poet: she is either a Muse or she is nothing,” Graves argues and then explains that he does not mean that a woman should not write but that she should “either be a silent Muse and inspire the poets by her womanly presence, as Queen Elizabeth and the Countess of Derby did, or she should be the Muse in a complete sense; she should be in turn Arianrhod, Blodeuwedd and the Old Sow of Maenawr Penarrd who eats her farrow, and should write in each of these capacities with antique authority.

* 

Sometime in the Spring of 1942 I chanced upon a copy of Laura Riding’s *Progress*
of Stories and within the year had come so under the spell of her authority or the
authority of her spell—that I could feel her scorn over my
poetic fumblings until I ceased, the poet in me abashed as the force of her seeing thru
what poets made of poetry became more persuasive. In the characters of Lilith
Outcome, Lady Port-Huntlady, Frances Cat or the Indescribable Witch, Laura Riding
projected masks of herself as their creatrix, a woman self-banished into a female critical
mentality to stand opposite the male humanity of God in a creation removed into a
humorous existence by or from the Creation. In Their Last Interview, God is “tired as
ever of his uncompletedness”, “his ministry of sympathies”, and “anxious to fade back
into humanity”; Miss Lilith Outcome is delighted by his tolerance of her existence.
“Then you quite forgive me for being more correct?” she asks. “I haven’t your authori-
tative touch,” He replies.

Miss Riding would have nothing to do with talk of Muses; it was, she argued, a
dishonesty that obscured the right reasons of poetry. “Poets have attributed the
compulsion of poetry to forces outside themselves—she wrote in the Preface to her
Collected Poems in 1938, “to divinities, muses, and, finally, even to such humanistic
muses as Politics . . . The nineteenth-century lament was: ‘Where is the Bard?’ The
twentieth-century version is: ‘Where is the Muse?’ In America: ‘where is the Myth?’”

In her argumenting Laura Riding could play the Old Sow of Maenawr Penarrd very
well indeed, devouring the world if need be. She liked playing Witch, Mrs. Story, Dame
Death, and Poetry Herself, and talking with men who would be poets like an older and
naturally superior sister. In Graves’s life between 1927 and the outbreak of the Second
World War, she was Queen Tyrant of his thought. “There was thereupon a unity to which
you and I pledged our faith,” he writes in the “Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding”
from the 1930 edition of Good-bye To All That: “How we went together to the land where
the dead parade the streets and there met demons and returned with demons still
treading behind. And how they drove us up and down the land.”

Before the White Goddess was, Laura Riding was.

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There was a way of gaining correctness and authority that Laura Riding sought in
putting away uncompletedness, humanity, the ministry of sympathies. She became
obsessed with the proper use of poetic faculties, the right reasons for poetry, and some-
time after her Collected Poems in 1938 writing poetry at all came to seem impossible.
She set about making a dictionary to free words from their corrupting associations, still
driven up and down the land by demons.
There was the trouble with names and bound up with that the trouble with what a man and a woman was. Beyond the democratic man-voice of Williams or the exalted or ecstatic woman-voice of H.D., there was in one direction the possibility Laura Riding exemplifies—the tyranny of style over the matter of life, the poet's removal from the contaminating medium, where eventually the language itself seems an Augean stable of meanings one does not want to mean. Graves too in his grammar of myth strives to restore—“the unimprovable original, not a synthetic substitute—the true language of poetry from the corruptions of other men's uses.” “What ails Christianity is that the old Mother-Goddess religious theme and the new Almighty-God theme are fundamentally irreconcilable. Catholicism is not a religion based squarely on a single myth; it is a complex of juridical decisions, often contradictory, made under political pressure in an agelong law suit between Goddess and God.” This fundamentalism, intolerance of contradictions, singlemindedness, sets Laura Riding and Robert Graves at odds with the pluralistic, many-minded poetry of Pound, Williams or H.D., where there is not one myth alone but a gathering of myths. Here the poet does not see the language as a system but as a community of meanings as deep and as wide as the nature of man has been, and he seeks not rightness but the surrender of style to the feeling of words and associations. To become impure with life, if need be.

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In the “suddenly we saw your name / desecrated” passage of Tribute to the Angels xi-xii in an alchemical alembic of the poem a flame burns between the star Venus and venery or “desire as venereous” to sublimate the name until the word “to venerate, / venerator” is restored. But following the word “venereous” the name passes thru the blackness of its contradiction:

while the very root of the word shrieks
like a mandrake when foul witches pull

its stem at midnight,
and rare mandragora itself

is full, they say, of poison,
food for the witches’ den.

The poet may have meant to rescue the name Venus from its desecrations—“knaves and fools / have done you impious wrong”, she protests; but in the actual operation of the poem not only is the name brought to its sublimation but it has been brought through its nigredo. We are meant to remember the lurid scene of witches’ sex magic in which
the root of the word (Venus) appears as a phallic mandrake full of seminal poison—an image from the underworld of the mind, the more potent because we may remember now also from Hesiod’s account of the origin of Aphrodite that she grew from the white foam of the penis of Ouranos which Chronos had cut off and cast in the sea, and that men called her Philomedes “member-loving” because she sprang from the members.

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The important thing here is not only the sublimation but the accumulation of experience in that sublimation, the union of opposites, yes, but also the having passed thru the dialectic of these opposites. Here again we are in the tradition of the gnostic cults that in the War Trilogy has begun to inform H.D.’s mythopoeic thought. Hans Jonas in The Gnostic Religion gives us from Irenaeus’s report the teaching of Carpocrates that “the souls in their transmigrations through bodies must pass through every kind of life and every kind of action” and, again: “their souls before departing must have made use of every mode of life and must have left no remainder of any sort still to be performed: lest they must again be sent into another body because there is still something lacking to their freedom.” We might see in a new light the evolution thru the spiral of animal forms that the Psyche claims in The Walls Do Not Fall and the passionate yearning for opposites—“the insatiable longing / in winter, for palm-shadow / and sand and burnt sea-drift”—in The Flowering of the Rod. This doctrine of salvation as freedom thru the fulfillment of all servitudes under all powers is at least near the concept of the War Trilogy. Jonas points out that the doctrine of Carpocrates is one of the antecedents of mediaeval Satanism and of the Renaissance Faustian myth. My reading of the mandrake-mandragora passage then not as a protest but as a bringing in of the phallic nigredo to the poem has in mind H.D.’s Freudian persuasion and also her gnostic sympathies. We may read in the light (or darkness) of the Carpocration creed the “parasite, I find nourishment: / when you cry in disgust, / a worm on the leaf” in The Walls Do Not Fall; the “I am yet unrepentant” is not a cry of defiance against the Father in a Protestant belief that sin is an act against God, but a resolution of acceptance of experience in a gnostic belief that all human life is a manifestation of the Father’s creative will. Mary Magdalene in The Flowering of the Rod does not repent to put away, but the demons cast out of her, the poem tells us, “were now unalterably part of the picture.” Lilith, the carrion owl-goddess, the Satanic female, is “forgiven”, taken into the new dispensation.

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The imagination raises images of what a man is or what a woman is again and again in order to come into the shape of our actual life; or it seems in order that we come to live in terms of imagined being where we act not in our own best interest but in order to create fate or beauty or drama. The Christos and the Magdalene-Ishtar of the War Trilogy are persons in whom the divine may become real for H.D.; they are begotten in a matrix of the word’s “mediation” where “Dream” and “Vision” are at work. They are
begotten in the operation of the poem in which they occur then, thru which they come into our consciousness, and H.D. is very much aware of this. Reality is not only received but also created, a creation in which the poet, the language, the beings who have arisen in man’s dreams and vision as far as we know them, all participate as creators of a higher reality.

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Robert Graves is most consciously concerned in King Jesus or in The White Goddess with correcting the image of Jesus from its creative flux; the mode of his Muse is argumentative. He protests that his Jesus is not an entity of the imagination—tho for him dream and vision are the sources of authority, and his Jesus is drawn as is H.D.’s from gnostic and cabbalistic traditions—but an actual entity to be discovered only once righteous reason has rendered him free from imaginative accretions. In Graves’s knotted reason, like most Christians he cannot accept the Christos Who belongs entirely to the realm of desire and creative will but he demands the verification of an historical Jesus.

*

The Christos in the War Trilogy and the persona of Mary Magdalene, though they arise from a common ground of lore with Graves’s Jesus and Mary Magdalene, are closer to the story entities of D.H. Lawrence’s The Man Who Died, where we are concerned with the imaginary life of Jesus as “Reborn, he was in the other life, the greater day of the human consciousness.” In this new life, the Lawrencian Jesus turns away from his being the Master, putting away “the young, flamy, unphysical exalter”, and living in a nausea, awaiting his physical awakening. In Lawrence’s Madeleine we see not the aloof lady of The Flowering of the Rod but another person of H.D.’s, the “I” of The Walls Do Not Fall, who cries in The Man Who Died, “Master! . . . Oh, we have wept for you! And will you come back to us?” In the curious turn of Lawrence’s vision, the spiritual man—but Lawrence does not say the spiritual man, he says the “unphysical” man—is the old dead self and the physical man, the indwelling in the body’s awareness, is the new. For Madeleine, the woman who worships him as the Messiah, he has pity and revulsion, a nausea of disillusion. In the new life a second figure of the woman appears, the priestess of Isis, who attends not his image but the image of the woman’s powers. In the first part of The Man Who Died the crow of the cock may be the Word, the young cock Master of his hens “tipping his head, listening to the challenge of far-off unseen cocks, in the unknown world. Ghost voices, crowing at him mysteriously out of limbo.” When the Lady of Isis presses him to her in the ritual of healing the wounds: “the wailing died out altogether, and there was a stillness, and darkness in his soul, unbroken dark stillness, wholeness.”
“So at last he saw the light of her silk lanthorn swinging, coming intermittent between
the trees, yet coming swiftly. She was alone, and near, the light softly swishing on her
mantle-hem. And he trembled with fear and with joy, saying to himself ‘I am almost
more afraid of this touch than I was of death. For I am more nakedly exposed to it.’”

Life, here, is the revelation of Isis through her priestess: “dimlit, the goddess-statue
stood surging forward, a little fearsome like a great woman-presence urging.”
Not in their selves but in the presences of Isis and Osiris they meet.

*

He had been, before, the Messiah, the spirit of the crisis in self, the great Critic or
Savior, but now, as he tells Madeleine: “I am glad it is over, and the day of my interfer-
ence is done.” Beyond lies the other, “the greater day of the human consciousness.”
“My public life is over,” he says, “the life of my self-importance.”

*

In _The Walls Do Not Fall_ the Messiah or the Christ is not the embodiment of a self-
importance or Messianic inflation of the ego that Lawrence saw in him. Love, itself, was
for D.H. Lawrence mixed with the day of interference. For H.D. He comes as a new
Master over Love; but this Christos, like Lawrence’s _Man Who Died_, must be freed from
“old thought, old convention”, the nausea of His false image “of pain-worship and
death-symbol”; and, like Lawrence’s Christ again, H.D.’s Christ passes through this
stage to be united with the person of Osiris. As, in turn, we can see the Mary Magdala
of _The Flowering of the Rod_ as the psyche-woman “I transformed in the magic of the
daemons of womanhood”—Isis among them—like the Priestess in _The Man Who Died_,
belonging to the greater day of the human consciousness.

*

The more correctness, the authoritative touch of Laura Riding’s Lilith Outcome,
the “mania of cities and societies and hosts, to lay a compulsion upon a man, upon all
men” in which Lawrence’s _Man Who Died_ had had his share—and the concern with what
shall and shall not be included in literature, with arbitration and the exemplary, that has
made for our Age of Criticism—this critical superego is embodied in H.D.’s Simon, as the
Poet may be embodied in Kaspar.

_But Simon the host thought_
_we must draw the line somewhere._

*
It is not fair, H.D. tells us, to compare Simon with Kaspar, for Simon was not conditioned to know that these very devils or daemons

as Kaspar would have called them, were now unalterably part of the picture.

*  

We are concerned here with the daemons or genii of the woman, her powers as a creative artist. Simon, like Kaspar, in the poem is one of the dramatis personae—he, too, is unalterably part of the story. In the conception of the whole fabric there is, unalterably part, a contentious demon, an adversary—the “Dev-ill” of The Walls Do Not Fall, “tricked up like Jehovah.” We hear his voice in the legion that the poet answers in her passages of apology. He appears in the third person plural they of “charms are not, they said, grace” and of “we fight, they say, for breath, / so what good are your scribblings?” Is he then, the Spirit of our New Criticism, the one addressed as “Sword” in The Walls Do Not Fall?

you are the younger brother, the latter-born,

your Triumph, however exultant,

must one day be over.

*  

In The Flowering of the Rod Kaspar who knows the story the stars tell, what is “now unalterably part of the picture”, knows

the first actually to witness His life-after-death,

was an unbalanced, neurotic woman.

The myrrh which he carries in the jar is also the genius and the gospel or lore of the poem itself. In The Walls Do Not Fall words, we were told, were little boxes that hid or kept meaning; as stars were “little jars of that indisputable / and absolute Healer, Apothecary . . . to hold further / unguent, myrrh.” So, now:

though the jars were sealed

the fragrance got out somehow,

and the rumour was bruited about

“fragrance” and “rumor” are identified. Kaspar, the Mage, bringing his gifts in recog-
nition of the birth of the Christ Child brings (fragrance/rumor) the gospel of the Christ-Life as a present in the beginning

or another—Kaspar could not remember;

but Kaspar thought, there were always two jars,
the two were always together,

why didn’t I bring both?
or should I have chosen the other?

*

The two myrrhs or two genii refer on one level to the two traditions of Christ—the Christ of the exoteric Church and the Christ of the esoteric Mysteries. They may refer too to the Law of the Father-God and to the Realm of the Mothers; for Kaspar brings his essence from the tradition of patriarchal Zoroastrian shepherd kings, and the essence which Mary Magdalene comes for, related to “those alabaster boxes / of the Princesses of the Hyksos Kings”, is the odour of her own, “incense-flower of the incense-tree”, and of the sea. The two not at war but mixed; once separated, but now reunited in the birth of the Christ-Child.

So Proclus in his Commentaries upon Plato’s myth of Atlantis tells us that it is a myth of two orders in the ancient world: “beginning from the Gods, of Olympian and Titanic divinities” or “beginning from the intellect, of permanency and motion, or sameness and difference; or from souls, of the rational and irrational; or from bodies, of heaven and generation; or in whatever other way you may divide essences, according to all divisions, all the genus of those within the pillars of Hercules will be analogous to the better, but of those without to the less excellent co-ordination of things.” “It was always maintained / that one jar was better than the other,” Kaspar remembers in the poem:

but he grumbled and shook his head,

no one can tell which is which,
now your great-grandfather is dead.

For H.D. heralds the mingling of the essences, the confusion of the traditions, in the first century, echoing the neo-Platonic confusions of the fifth century, in the twentieth century. “Hence,” Proclus concludes: “whether you are willing Orphically to arrange the Olympian and Titanic genera in opposition to each other, and to celebrate the former as subduing the latter; or Pythagorically, to perceive the two co-ordinations proceeding from on high, as far as to the last of things, and the better adorning the subordinate rank; or Platonically, to survey much of infinity and much of bound in the universe, as we
learn in the Philebus, and the whole of infinity in conjunction with the measures of bound, producing generation, which extends through all mundane natures,—from all these, you may assume one thing, that the whole composition of the world is co-harmonized from this contrariety.”

*

Kaspar, like Simon, was disturbed by the thought of a woman, but he cannot exclude her. In the mingling of the myrrhs in one jar there was the mingling of sexes: the Christ uniting not only the contrary orders of history and prehistory, Athens and Atlantis, but as the new Adam uniting again the Eve and Adam. Nowhere does H.D. fuse male and female in one body, except in the implied fusion here in the identity of the Child. Not only Simon, who abhors the female, but Kaspar, who is troubled by her but moved to ecstasy in her presence, remain male; as Mary Magdalene remains ultimately female. Yet “though the jars were sealed, / the fragrance got out somehow / and the rumour was bruited about”—in the most real the two were always at one. H.D. would have found such a tradition in the neo-Platonists, or in the Kabbalistic tradition of the Adama Kadmon; she must have come upon it in the period of her psychoanalytic conversion, for the psychic bi-sexuality of man is an axiom of Freud’s. There was also, more immediate to our study here, the fact that a woman’s genius had come into the genius of the Poet through her own operations as poet in this work.

*

In Tribute to Freud, writing of the signet or “sign-manual—the royal signature, usually only the initials of the sovereign’s name”, she suddenly sees that her writing signet, her H.D., has something “remotely suggesting sovereignty or the royal manner.” The initials H.D. present the suggestion of a hidden identity, something more poetic certainly than the immediate plainness of Hilda Doolittle. But were those initials in the beginning not only this but also to suggest the Poet, without suggesting a woman, to help the reader to overlook or confuse the gender of the writer?

*

“Averse to personal publicity,” Charlotte Bronte wrote in her 1850 preface to Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights, “we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine. We had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice.”

*

Aroused to battle by the claims of genius wherever they are made—for genius is
itself of the old titanic order—male guardians of the literary Olympus have been the more aroused when the titaness appears, with the sense that

\[
\text{it is unseemly that a woman} \\
\text{appear disordered, dishevelled,}
\]

\[
\text{it is unseemly that a woman} \\
\text{appear at all;}
\]

for the dominance of man's rules must be maintained over woman's realm. Woman, identified with the whole Atlantean sequence of disorder, irrationality, change—Dame Mutabilitie herself—may be permitted to operate in her place, if it is clear that hers is the inferior claim. Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson, Dame Edith Sitwell, H.D., Mary Butts, coactive in the avant-garde of the nineteen-twenties with Joyce, Pound, Eliot, Lawrence and Williams, form in the conventional estimate a second rank, and where their work has exceeded that allotment their presumption has been bitterly attacked and derided. Marianne Moore who established early and definitely the propriety of her claims has escaped the worst censure. Laura Riding who argued the superiority of her reasons in Poetry over the false and distorted reasons of other poets was ridden out of town. With Dame Edith Sitwell her presumption of noble class as well as of sibylline genius and gender added to the fury of status-conscious verse-writing and reviewing professors of English Literature. Even Virginia Woolf, wrapped round as she was by the genteel literary guarantee of the Bloomsbury group and writing as a sensitive and sensible adherent of their high civilization, smarted under the goads that would keep woman in her place.

* 

But there is, too, a deeper suspicion, not only that men are prejudiced to keep their dominance in the society but that men find genius itself unwomanly, unmanly. Women too have had that fear and then envy or hostility towards genius in men. Strindberg, Joyce, Lawrence, Williams have given expression of their creative isolation even in marriage, and defend or apologize for the shadowy other daemonic male being.

In sexual love between man and man, where there is creative genius, where the lovers have their daemons, there may be a counterpart to the Isis between the man and the woman in Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* or to the new Master over Love in H.D.'s Trilogy—a God, governor of the creative powers in whom they love. Thus, Socrates, who has his daemon, argues that love is most true when addressed in the name of the First Beloved, the One because of Whom we love. He, like Christ, is a Sun, or is the Love the Sun has for us. Apollo Musagêtès, Leader of the Muses, of the female powers, and Director of the Genii, of the male powers. Whitman called him “the President of Regulation”.

332
So too, in sexual love between man and woman Christian magic teaches not falling in love but rising in love to a mutual love in God, where Christ is the First Beloved. To exorcize the daemonic or to compose the daemonic.

*

The narrative of the *War Trilogy* is the story of the restitution, of the daemonic and of woman, cursed by the Fathers, into the sight of God or among the Goods. It is the story told in George MacDonald’s *Lilith* in the nineteenth century. The bringing up into the fullness of the Self of the most disturbing contents, of what the persona most fears.

As poets in the romantic tradition have identified with Lucifer (Milton unconsciously, Blake and Hugo, then, consciously) and sought the wedding of heaven and hell, the poetess H.D. identifies with a Mary Magdalen who brings up all outcast spirit into the new dispensation.

It is the prostitute; it is *venery, venereous, venerate, venerator* in the star Venus, the same light that shines so brilliantly just after the sun has gone down or just before the sun rises, Hesperus at sundown or Phosphorus at dawn, Lucifer-Venus. It is the card of our Tarot reading then—*L’Etoile*. It is Mary of Magdala, where

\[
\text{through my will and my power} \\
\text{Mary shall be myrrh.}
\]

*

But this will and this power, this Mary and this myrrh is the genius of the poem, the genius of the jar.

It is not only Mary in the presence of the Wise Man, seeing as he does “it was unseemly that a woman / appear at all . . .”, it is the poetic or daemonic creativity of the woman. “Turned towards the world,” Jung writes in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, “the anima is fickle, capricious, moody, uncontrolled and emotional, sometimes gifted with daemonic intuitions, ruthless, malicious, untruthful, bitchy, double-faced, and mystical.”

*

“La femme est naturelle, c’est-à-dire abominable,” Baudelaire confesses. “Aimer les femmes intelligentes est un plaisir de pederaste.” “J’ai tourjours été étonné qu’on laissât les femmes entrer dans les eglises.”

*

It is not only the lady, in whom this gospel says were seven daemons forgiven—
Isis, Astarte, Cyprus—Lilith, one born before Lilith, and Eve—and back of them Gemeter or Demeter. Earth-mother and venus. . . It is not only this woman kissing the feet of Him Whom they call Master, but it is the woman H.D. too, this poetess, with her presumption—the poem itself—it is, was, will be to some unseemly that she be there at all.

*

We may see then behind or over or included in the scene between the Wise Man Kaspar and the Fallen Woman Mary another scene. Let us not imagine now a critic—the distaste of the fundamentally unsympathetic and then antagonistic Fitts or Jarrell must not stand for the caution, the discretion, that Kaspar with his tradition and profound gender carries. It must be the poet Williams or the poet Pound or the poet Baudelaire then that confronts the poetess:

he drew aside his robe in a noble manner
but the un-maidenly woman did not take a hint;

she had seen nobility herself at first hand;
nothing impressed her, it was easy to see;

she simply didn’t care whether he acclaimed
or snubbed her—or worse; what are insults?

*

“De la nécessité de battre les femmes,” Baudelaire writes. He is not writing here his heart stripped bare. He is not writing that fiery book that Poe had proposed. “No man dares write it,” Poe had said, “true to its title.”

But Baudelaire’s own daemon projects the persona of the dandy; he strives for the telling mot, the keys of a Baudelairean attitude. He is a litterateur. It is a disease of the French literary world that infects Cocteau in his phantasy and Artaud in his madness alike. They hear or sound the currency of their own phrases ringing upon a stage and let their masks speak what they will.

But: “Quelles conversation peuvent-elles avoir avec Dieu?” he asks.

*

As Simon in H.D.’s story of the hidden essence, questioning the Master’s allowing her to kiss His feet, may question the gift she brings:

this man if he were a prophet, would have known
who and what manner of woman this is.
II

In *Murex* the poetess Raymonde Ransome has a pen-name Ray Bart. We find ourselves in the story in the mixing ground of two persons, the woman and the poet, of what we are in the actual real and what we are in the real of the imagination. There is the atmosphere of London itself: “an ineffable quality of merging so that one never knew the barrier of day or night” that relates to a state of suspension in the story, the “cocoon-blur of not-thinking that was her fixed and static formula for London.”

We are at the inception of a poem. In the stream-of-consciousness two things impend. For Raymonde Ransome there is a recall, the bringing up of an old betrayal with associations involving the loss of a child in birth and with the loss of a lover. For Ray Bart, there is a poem impending, and these losses now are gains in intensity.

*“Raymonde Ransome had wanted to drift and dream through the obliterating afternoon. Nothing to do but listen, nothing in London to do but wait. Listen to what? Wait for what?”*

*It was, in 1926, a prose prepared to find its way along lines of association. The process we have now in the verb “to dig” had begun. Opening distances back of things, as Proust had, or digging to uncover layers of meaning as Jane Harrison had in her *Prolegomena* and in *Themis*, or searching out psychological levels as Freud had, writers sought a new syntax that could provide shifting perspectives in consciousness.*

*“Somewhere, working on *Mrs. Dalloway* or on *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf had the sensation of digging out a space in which her characters had their existence. “Whenever I make a mark,” she says of working on *The Waves*, “I have to think of its relation to a dozen others.” These are the rudiments of a projective-feeling in writing, of composition by field. August 30th, 1923, she writes of *Mrs. Dalloway* in progress: “*The Hours* and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humor, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight in the present moment.” Monday, October 15th: “It took me a year’s groping to discover what I call my tunneling process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it . . . One feels about in a state of misery—indeed, I made up my mind one night to abandon the book—and then one touches the hidden spring. . .”*
It was to touch the hidden spring, “that the caves shall connect and each comes
to daylight at the present moment”, that I read Ulysses or The Tempest, the De Vulgari
Eloquentia of Dante or The Guest of H.D.—as I read cards, water, signs in dreams or the
tenor of life around me—not to find what art is but through the art to find what life might be.

How Virginia Woolf labors at her art, suffers under the thought of what her writing
might be worth as literature. Her journal reveals, if our reflection or common rumor had
not told us before, that she labored to bring forth her own life out of a dark place. There
is: “I was walking up Bedford Place is it—the straight street with all the boarding houses
this afternoon—and I said to myself spontaneously, something like this. How I suffer.
And no one knows how I suffer, walking up the street, engaged with my anguish, as I was
after Thoby died—alone; fighting something alone. And when I come indoors it is all so
silent—” Against which, the elaborate structure must hold. The art draws upon the
anguish, brings illuminations that lift the heart up, breaks thru to the light; the art draws
the writer up out of the anguish into the writing, setting into motion what had been the
matter as if frozen underground.

The cards when we read them, anyway, open fearful ways into the light of day:
the goat of Mendes, the card of abject grief, the inversions of goods, the cards that show
my own soul swollen with vanity or darkened in deceit—these were parts of the
ideogram drawn out of the Tarot reading for this book.

In every story of the soul there is this anguish of giving birth to one’s self. For
Virginia Woolf and for James Joyce those cards were dark at the end of life, darkened by
the beginning. As in Between the Act “Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs
had become enormous. And Giles too . . . It was the night before roads were made or
houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place
among the rocks.” Or in Finnegans Wake: “it’s old and old it’s sad and old it’s sad and
weary I go back to you, my cold father, my cold mad father. . . One in a thousand of
years of the nights?”
The content of the dream, that Freud tells us must be read as a pictographic script. Or, as Schrödinger tells us in his essay upon the nature of life: “this tiny speck of material, the nucleus of the fertilized egg. . . (that) contains an elaborate code-script involving all the future development of the organism.”

The cast of the play or the members of the major arcana of the Tarot, the themes and persons of the poet, the periods and recurrences of dark and light of the artist—likewise in a configuration of events we have our own unique patterns or soul stories. But in the works of man, in the testimony of painting, music and writing I find an other self as if I belonged to a larger language where minds and spirits awaken sympathies in me, a commune of members in which myself seems everywhere translated. If there are, as Freud argues, no memories from childhood but only memories referring to childhood, it is not surprising that all writing that contributes to ones consciousness in the present belongs to ones own past, or is lost.

* 

What I am trying to get across is that just as there are threads weaving H.D.’s trilogy *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels* and *The Flowering of the Rod* to form a moving coherence, out of and into the lore of the human past—in art what Schrodinger called in physics “an aperiodic solid”—a ministry of sympathies, so, the three works are in turn one articulated cell of a larger fabric. These almost extraneous sorts I have drawn out of Virginia Woolf and Joyce, out of Baudelaire, out of my dreams—the Sally Rand theme then, and the “aroused” being a key, to remember “aroused” as well as “excited” and “inspired”—refer to some larger form or soul-self of which all of H.D. comes to be a part. To which I belong, in which I have my present/presence or womb of myself.

* 

Through time this fabric extends. It is my own creation as I mistake it. I have never found another human being who does not exclude from his fabric some star of first magnitude in mine; who does not include in first magnitude some “blindspot” or “aversion” of mine.

* 

Yet just this tissue is the cosmic extension of the aperiodic solid of me. These are the works whereby I have come to know the Work. Thus have I bound Tiamat; in this series, out of these stuffs come into my code-script.

* 

There is no such unique net of being, no code-script, that does not dance in the outpouring rays of the stars, no knot of my work that does not tremble between truth
and falsity as it touches the human fabric that extends thru time.

This net is not now my creation but my creator. Where the caves or the cold feary mad father of the “earliest” memories of the Fathers reappear in other caves that “come to daylight at the present moment.”

*

Freud in Screen Memories gives us a vision of men weaving the past as the tissue of the present. That is all a tissue of lies, yes—of the imagination. But then there was “when they are tested (by the recollections of adults)”. There are tests or trials in which the communal fabric becomes the over-truth.

*

Heraklitus said of our great imaginary web or fabrication or reality of realities: “God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger. But he undergoes transformations, just as fire, when it is mixed with spices, is named after the savor of each.”

*

The net is not the world; it is the imagination of the world.

*

Of our great net, of our humanity or ministry of sympathies, Heraklitus said: “Immortal mortals, mortal immortals, one living the others’ death and dying the others’ life.”
So, Mary of Magdala may have brought her marah into the myrrh, brought her genius or her daemon or her seven into the Presence, into the Child—as we, too, bring our selves into what we call our Childhood.

* 

If there is some exchange, some rumor of Virginia Woolf in the caves of the ice age, some cold draft of that inner dark in James Joyce; if I too now find these rumors or drafts or odors everywhere that I find what I am as a man; if I too, because I have come into touch with the work of some neurotic woman—it is only the inbinding or sentence a Virginia Woolf makes of words we use all the time, “the great hooded chairs had become enormous”, so that a spell is cast—if I too become the ground in which the words of others grow and change my soul; so I understand then the translation of the myrrh in H.D.’s narrative and how

the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

* 

Gospel is rumor or news, a good spell. We have only rumor or news of what is. The real world, Thomas Vaughan tells us, is invisible. And in our contemporary physics too thought must work beyond the visible with ideas of the unseen or not yet seen seeking the nature of the real world.

* 

Thomas Vaughan refers then to the mustard seed, the smallest of generative particles in which the esoteric meaning of things hides itself awaiting its season and new ground in those whose hearts are receptive and whose minds are willing. In the Christian mystery given in Matthew, Mark and Luke, “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field.” Christ telling this parable says that he means to speak of “things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” But this seed is, He tells us, the word: “Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

It is this passage that H.D. draws upon when, in The Flowering of the Rod, Kaspar stoops for the lady’s scarf and sees “in that half-second” a fleck of light in a jewel that opens like a flower to disclose the real world—the kingdom of heaven, “the lands of the blest, / the promised lands”. H.D. names the kingdom in terms of the Hesperides and
Atlantis. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the heart portrayed first as a shell-fish in the systole and diastole of the tide-flow, then as a psyche or butterfly, “dragging the forlorn / husk of self after us”, in XXV is revealed in terms of such a seed, the heart-shell now breaking open like the husk of a grain:

*the Kingdom is a Tree*
*whose roots bind the heart-husk*

to earth,*
*after the ultimate grain,*

*lodged in the heart-core,*
*has taken its nourishment.*

The mustard seed of time and the mustard seed of light, invisibilities, in which Kaspar sees, are immediacies of knowledge contrasting with “*the old tradition, the old, old legend*”, expanses of time and space that characterize learning. In *Tribute to the Angels*, H.D. uses the language of spiritual alchemy so riming the terms of the word and of “*mer, mere, mere, mater, Maia, Mary*” with the elements in the alembic where the stone is being made, that meaning and odor and the jewel are identified with the *marah*, the sorrow of woman, and with the *myrrh*. The jewel in which the fleck of light comes to Kaspar’s vision then is the *Philosopher’s Stone*. It seems almost not to happen for its moment of time is a grain in which his spirit dwells but invisible to his mind.

Some ten years before H.D. wrote this passage, Whitehead in *Adventures of Ideas* wrote in a passage we have considered earlier: “Literature preserves the wisdom of the human race; but in this way it enfeebles the emphasis of first-hand intuition. In considering our direct observation of past, or of future, we should confine ourselves to time-spans of the order of magnitude of a second, or even of fractions of a second.”

* 

H.D. will see the mustard seed as Thomas Vaughan, the Rosicrucian, does. “So in me,” she tells us in *Tribute to Freud*, “two distinct racial or biological or psychological entities tend to grow nearer or to blend, even, as time heals old breaks in consciousness”—as in the alembic of the alchemists diverse elements are brought into one work. She relates herself here to the esoteric tradition as “a descendant of one of the original groups of the early 18th-century, mystical Protestant order, called the Unitas Fratrum, the Bohemian or Moravian Brotherhood” and she goes on then to associate Count Zinzendorf and Freud: “Count Zinzendorf, the founder of the renewed Bohemian brotherhood, was an Austrian, whose father was exiled or self-exiled to Upper Saxony, because of his Protestant affiliations. The Professor himself was an Austrian, a Moravian actually by birth.” It seems part of H.D.’s design to leave no more than this
hint that we must search out for ourselves. In the War Trilogy again we can see these
two as entities that tend to grow nearer or to blend: the New Master over Love who
commands “name it”, when, in Tribute to the Angels, the poetess cannot name the color
of the jewel in which “venerate” and “venereal” —a break in consciousness—are united,
is surely Freud; but when in the dream sequence of The Walls Do Not Fall He appears in
“a spacious, bare meeting house”—“the Dream / deftly stage-managed the bare, clean
/ early colonial interior”—the figure of Zinzendorf has replaced Freud. We are no longer
in the psychoanalyst’s rooms but in the environs of Herrnhut, the Lord’s House, where
“The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed”, as Zinzendorf named the revived Moravian
church, meets. Or in the environs of the first log house at Bethlehem in Pennsylvania
which Zinzendorf dedicated himself on Christmas Eve in 1741, for Bethlehem was not
only H.D.’s ancestral city but the city of her birth and her first eight years, of her “child-
hood” then.

* 

Was there—I do not know if I read it or dreamed it—a teaching among these
believers who kept their Christ as a hidden mustard seed in their hearts that they would
recognize Brethren among the professing-Christians about them by the illumination of
eyes, by a fleck of light from the jewel that a luminous eye is? In the Moravian scene of
the dream it is the look of Christ’s eyes that speaks—“as if without pupil / or all pupil,
dark / yet very clear with amber / shining. . .” In the centuries of persecution after the
Hussite wars of the fifteenth century, driven to live in the forests in hiding like the
Albigensians before them and the Waldenses who took part in the new movement, and
then taking the way of being a church hidden within other churches, the Brethren had to
recognize each other silently, with no more sign than the inner sympathy could read like
the exchange of a glance in which a would-be lover reads forbidden response.

* 

Count von Zinzendorf not only was patron of the renewed Church but he created
rituals and wrote hymns in which a new religious language emerged that brought out the
associations of sexual and spiritual images. The spear, the wound, and the flow of blood
from Christ’s side were deliberately related to the penis, the vagina and the menstrual
flow. Sessler in his study of the Moravian movement tells us “It is said that a niche
covered with red cloth was built into the wall of the church, into which children were
placed to symbolize their lying in Christ’s Side-Wound, and that Christian Renatus,
Zinzendorf’s son, built a Side-Wound through which the congregation marched”—called
“the true Matrix”. Zinzendorf, like Freud, worked towards a sense of words in which the
“venerate” and “venereal” were again restored.

*
H.D. does no more than indicate a relationship between the world of her poem and the world of the Zinzendorfian Brethren. We no sooner see the eighteenth-century meeting house than we are told that He, the Christ of the poem, looks with “the eyes / of Velasquez’ crucified”; we have passed from the reality of the religious enthusiast to the reality of the painter. All around us in the poem is the atmosphere of religion, numinal suggestion. What, in the terms of the art itself, is this “fleck of light”, this “grain” or “flaw or speck” where

\[
\text{the speck, fleck, grain or seed} \\
\text{opened like a flower.}
\]

* 

The religious serves in the poem to tell us something about the nature of the poetic experience; as we come to recognize shifting depths of myth or of mystic doctrine in the images of the poem we begin to feel the world as H.D. does, as a ground of such depth. Life itself is revealed to the poet as to us in light—the immediate flash—of a particular reality, where metaphor, multiple reference, rime and melody, quicken and organize time and the spatial world in which the reality exists.

* 

\[
\text{And the flower, thus contained} \\
\text{in the infinitely tiny grain or seed} \\
\text{opened petal by petal} . . . \\
\text{and the circle went on widening} \\
\text{and would go on opening,} \\
\text{he knew, to infinity.}
\]

* 

Do we believe that? the germ of William Harvey? the tiny speck of material containing the code-script of Schrödinger? the universe expanding from its primal atom?
I do not believe, for I am a poet: I imagine as I make it up. Or my thought goes along lines of imagination here as it will, guided by the feeling of what fits, what informs or what promises form; where it knows only pain and trouble in working where belief is needed. These rumors ring true or are true to a form towards which I move. “I go where I belong, inexorably,” H.D. writes in The Flowering of the Rod:

In resurrection, there is confusion
if we start to argue; if we stand and stare,

we do not know where to go;

... does the first wild-goose care
whether the others follow or not?

I don’t think so—he is so happy to be off—
he knows where he is going;

so we must be drawn or we must fly...

*

The wild-goose flight has the truth of inner impulse, taking thought in the flight itself, true to a wish when we know only its felt imperative. The affirmations of inner nature, of biological instinctual reality—that we call “blind” instinct—in the opening pages of the poem have prepared our recognition here, and then in the spirit of the poem our assent, that in this life-will we are moved by the deepest imperative. The imperative of the poem towards its own order is of this kind for H.D., a feeling she must follow and cannot direct, taking command over her from within the process of its creation as she works. She compares the soul’s objectification with “the stone marvel” of the mollusc, “hewn from within”, but it may represent a spiritual force of the cosmos beyond the biological. This “life”-will towards objective form is ultimately related to an animal crystallization, and the images of jewel, crystal, “as every snowflake / has its particular star, coral or prism shape” suggest that there is—not an inertia but a calling throughout the universe towards concretion. The poet in the imminence of a poem (what now after Olson we may see as the projection) answering such a calling as a saint has his calling or a hero his fate. “Inexorably.”

“It is geometry on the wing,” H.D. has it in section X of The Flowering of the Rod; “not patterned,” she adds, where she means that this imperative, the deepest impera-
tive of the poetic-urge then, is not pre-planned but created in a trajectory that will not, must not, be satisfied until it reaches Paradise. The ecstacy of the poem, an intimation of—the Hesperides, the Isles of the Dead, heaven, Atlantis: H.D. gives the various names that the hidden promise of Paradise has been given from Homer to the Renaissance syncretists that discarded and even despised by sophisticated modern scientific orthodoxy has been left to be cherished only by occultists and heretical minds. And again, we find this inner impulse is called by H.D. “that smallest grain”, the mustard seed invisible to the conscious consideration that moving the consciousness “grows branches / where the birds rest” and “becometh a tree.”

*

A wild-goose chase the projective must always seem to men who want prescribed directions and ends and who must fight to put down impulse towards whatever kingdom not of this world as an enemy of conventional or social values.

*

In the nineteenth century the last echoes of such a kingdom not of this world sounded in the call of socialism, communism and anarchism, as in the eighteenth century it had sounded in the creative fiction of liberty. In the “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs” the command of the loving Father in the new dispensation of His Christ; in the communalization of property the individuality held as a little child—the lingering dream of Christendom. But in Russia, Marxian communism gave rise to the specter of the wrathful Father, the old pre-Christian tyranny, in the Bolshevik dictatorship. In America, democracy gave rise to the second diabolic specter—for in the Satanism of industrial capitalism, the large forge of the General Economy days in Zinzendorf’s little colony of the Mustard Seed was developed into the present Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

*

H.D.’s War Trilogy came to me in the period after the Second World War as a revelation of truth, true to a life or consciousness sought. As in the war years, I found in Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage such a work. The outrage of the critics of the day was similar to the outrage of like minds when confronted by the War Trilogy. “I very much dislike this work,” Lionel Trilling forthrightly began his put-down in the Kenyon Review: “Pilgrimage, of all the ambitious works of our time, is the least fruitful and the least charming.” “It was like Proust without sex,” the more abruptly sophisticated Time magazine line went. Trilling bridled at Miriam’s thought that “By every word they use, men and women mean different things,” mistaking it not as an operative element in the process of the character’s inner reality but as an article in the author’s doctrine of mili-
tant feminism. “However close Miss Richardson may stand to Virginia Woolf,” he
continued, allowing that Virginia Woolf, and Jane Austen before her, might be of Dorothy
Richardson's ilk, it was offensive that Miss Richardson felt an affinity in her work, that
she had the presumption to claim in 1938 an affinity with Joyce, Proust and James.
“There is between her and the work of these three masculine writers a very real and
important difference,” he warns and proceeds to argue and rationalize towards the
conclusion that “speaking from the literary point of view, it [the emotional solipsism of
Richardson's interior monolog] has produced a literary manner private without being
personal, arbitrary without being original, making a demand upon the reader which is
not rewarded as demands of equal difficulty are rewarded by the three men we have
spoken of, in the reader's enhanced sentiment of reality.” The distaste that governs
Trilling’s reading might be a prototype of the critical distaste for H.D.’s work as early as
Palimpsest but especially for the poetry of the major phase. Was there some link that
bound in one syndrome—from our text we might call it the Simon complex—a religious
orthodoxy and a literary orthodoxy in a guise of criticism that must “draw the line some-
where” to exclude the female revelation?

*

But from the opening pages of Pointed Roofs, through the valors and shames of
Miriam's girlish experience, haunted by some “break in consciousness” that cast up
dark moods and images, into the troubled depths of Miriam's selva oscura in Deadlock,
Revolving Lights and The Trap, I had gathered what the outraged critic had so specifi-
cally denied the reader would find—my enhanced sentiment of reality. There was in
Miriam's consciousness the presence ever immanent of an illumination in experience
itself, a grief or agony ready to leap up into reality to add its color to her impressions,
and, bound in with this, an apprehension at moments in climbing a stair or in the
opening of a door of an awaited ascension into the light. Her mind strained after it; her
spirit came to be sure of it or to be sure in the thought of it. Then there would be
moments of epiphany, pure sensations of the light in rooms, that I too had known. I took
community in the work of Dorothy Richardson even as in the criticism of men like Trilling
I was aware that that community was despised in the world of the great reviews.

*

“There was glory hidden in that old darkness,” Miriam thinks coming home late
at night from a socialist meeting. “Within the radiance, troops of people marched
ahead, with springing footsteps; the sound of song in their ceaselessly talking voices;
the forward march of a unanimous, light-hearted humanity along a pathway of white
morning light.” Like Dante, Dorothy Richardson pre-dates the present of her work
(1900) so that she can work with foreshadowings. Miriam's thought grows darker; in
their unity she feels her own isolation and now the socialists appear as “Men”, she capi-
talizes and italicizes the word, Russian revolutionaries (her suitor Michael Shatov). “Their scornful revolutionary eyes watched her glance about among her hoard of contradictory ideas . . .” Miriam, like Stephen Dedalus or Proust’s hero, is a self recaptured, a creation of the author’s youth, and as in Stephen’s thought we find germs of something like Joyce’s later concepts, so in Miriam’s stream-of-consciousness propositions of Pilgrimage appear. “She offered them,” Miriam thinks, “a comprehensive glimpse of the many pools of thought in which she had plunged, using from each in turn, to recover the bank and repudiate; unless a channel could be driven, that would make all their waters meet. They laughed when she cried out at the helplessness of uniting them. ‘All these things are nothing.’” There are religious undertones in the uniting of waters, and now Miriam’s repressed memories of the break-up of her childhood begin to take over and more ancient or atavistic ways of thought, of eros and thanatos take over:

“There was a glory hidden in that old darkness, but they did not know it; though they followed it”—the socialists, but they are now also Miriam’s parents in their marriage, working in the darkness of history or of the wedding-bed, appear now as a “they”, a hidden order like the “they” of H.D.’s work: “Accepting them, plunging into their darkness, she would never be able to keep from finding the bright devil and wandering wrapped in gloom, but forgetful, perpetually in the bright spaces within the darkness.” It is her father’s death and the trauma of her mother’s death by cancer that give hidden direction to her thought. “But even if factories were abolished and the unpleasant kinds of work shared out so that they pressed upon nobody,” she thinks, “how could the kingdom of heaven come upon earth as long as there were childbirth and cancer?”

* * *

Joyce’s Portrait, with its closing passages in Stephen’s diary where eros and thanatos again move his thought, had had this quality of a revelation for me earlier. The dark disorder of “I fear him. I fear his redrimmed horny eyes. It is with him I must struggle all through this night . . .” setting off the flame of the close, which Joyce in Finnegans Wake playing upon his troubled sense of “forge” and “forgery” was to darken. But we took Stephen’s resurrection as an affirmation of our own youthful intent.

“April 26. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.”

“April 27. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.”

The figures of the artificer Daedalus and of his unfortunate son, tricked out in wings of wax, haunt with irony the high resolution, but Joyce contrives to be true not only to the later knowledge but to his youthful inspiration as well.

*
Emotionally true? Psychologically true?

In *The Serious Artist*, Pound wrote: “The arts give us a great percentage of the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of mankind, of immaterial man, of man considered as a thinking and sentient creature.” Then: “By good art I mean art that bears true witness.”

* 

True witness, where I have found it, to the troubled psyche, the searching, yearning heart and mind, to the instability of opinions, to the grandeur of fate, to the states of another consciousness of being at one, to the solitude that is a condition of communion, to the “is there one who understands me?” cry of a *Finnegans Wake*, to the sense of a melody in experience itself that transcends argument, true witness to the immediacy of life is contrasted with that other aim in writing exemplified by Dryden’s correction of Shakespeare to suit “what reasonable men have long since concluded.”

* 

Truth in Richardson, Joyce or Proust, as in Pound, Williams or H.D. arises as the truth of “what the heart is and what it feels.” Close to confession then, but the intent is not to unburden the soul. It is to project the wholeness of his experience—in this way close to the psychoanalytic process—as the content of a work that will present the scales, the ratios, chords and discords of the soul’s own creative order.

* 

“Let us just for the moment feel the pulses of *Ulysses* and of Miss Richardson and M. Marcel Proust, on the earnest side of Briareus, D.H. Lawrence wrote in *Surgery for the Novel—Or a Bomb*. He loathed their portentous search for self or accounting for their lives: “Absurdly, childishly concerned with what I am. ‘I am this, I am that, I am the other. My reactions are such, and such, and such. And, oh, Lord, if I liked to watch myself closely enough, if I liked to analyze my feelings minutely, as I unbutton my gloves, instead of saying cruelly I unbuttoned them, then I could go on to a million pages instead of a thousand. In fact, the more I come to think of it, it is gross, it is uncivilized bluntly to say: I unbuttoned my gloves. After all, the absorbing adventure of it! Which button did I begin with?” etc.

“The people in the serious novels are so absurdly concerned with themselves and what they feel and don’t feel, and how they react to every mortal button; and their audience as frenziedly absorbed in the application of the author’s discoveries to their own reactions: ‘That’s me! That’s exactly it! I’m just finding myself in this book.’ Why this is more than death-bed, it is almost post-mortem behaviour.”

*
Joyce taking over his Roman Catholic examination of conscience into the operations of the personal imagination, or Dorothy Richardson the Quaker interior voice, write as if they received in the magic of their transmuted experience a book in which revelation was given of a true otherwise hidden life. So, in Tribute to the Angels Our Lady carries a book in place of the Lamb. “Her book is our book,” H.D. writes: “its pages will reveal / a tale of a Fisherman, / a tale of a jar or jars.” And earlier: “she brings the Book of Life, obviously.”

In the Zohar, Abraham it is said gives account of all his moments, hours, days, years; rendering up his life in the wholeness of its living, as Proust strives to remember the fullness of his time. Freud, here as in many things continuing the Kabbalistic tradition, brings into the modern science of the soul such an accounting for ones world. Not only in the Jewish world but in the Greek world of Orphic mysteries there was such a concept of being responsible for the whole of ones life—for the redeemed souls had to drink not of Lethe but of a fountain of memory.

Beyond confession or remembrance, this dual creation of self and consciousness that Lawrence reacted against—as surely he would have reacted against the “I'm just finding myself in this book”, the million pages instead of a thousand, mode of my own writing here—in their being “so absorbedly concerned with themselves and what they feel and don't feel”, these writers of the new interior monolog read their lives as the Kabbalists read the Torah, exploring the permutations of meaning in each letter and diacritical mark. As in H.D.'s version of the Ion of Euripides where Ion, who might be Lawrence, demands unreflective action: “to strike at evil, is pure:” and the Pythia replies “you must know why you strike,” the ordeal of the contemporary psyche was to recreate the meaning of its life.

*  

“Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed,” we would recall from Pound writing of the germinal consciousness, as he called it in 1916: “And these minds are the more poetic, and they affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth. And this latter sort of mind is close on the vital universe; and the strength of Greek beauty rests in this, that it is ever at the interpretation of this vital universe.” As in Religio he writes: “A god is an eternal state of mind.” But that the germinal consciousness, affecting mind about it, was dark as well as light, Pound can never accept. Again and again in the Cantos, the question of dualism troubles him. Like a Christian Scientist he wants to say that suffering is a mental error. Yet what Pound called “the two maladies, the Hebrew disease, the Hindoo disease”—the brooding mind correspondent with suffering and corruption, as well as the radiant mind correspondent with joy and purity, rested in its being ever at the interpretation of the vital universe. Pound demanded that the mind take thought only in “the radiant world where one thought cuts through another with clean edge”; wherever he faced muddle, the digestive and excretory functions of the universe or the digestion and excretion involved in transmuting the meanings of experience, he could no longer think, he could only—closing his mind in distaste—react.
* 

Wherever Hell appears in earlier *Cantos* it is exterior to Pound. The light is fluid and pours, but Plotinus commands: “*Keep your eyes on the mirror.***

> Prayed we to the Medusa,  
> *petrifying the soil by the shield.*

* 

Then, after the trauma of the Second World War experience, when in the debacle of the Fascist last days he was forced almost to admit the disorder, the Hell, of Mussolini’s reign which he had held as a model of order, the later *Cantos* pour forth the contradictions of the mind no longer removed from its underworld. “*Though my errors and my wrecks lie about me,*” he will sing in *Canto 116*: “*and I cannot make it cohere.*” “*But the beauty is not the madness,*” he confirms.

* 

In the *Pisan Cantos*, as the voice of Pound ransacking his broken consciousness begins, like Lear, his testimony of what the heart knows, outrage as well as tenderness comes. God Himself, Boehme argued in the sixteenth century, was the fire of Hell as well as the light of Heaven, wrath as well as love. Ugly flarings up of the *Turba*—the unrest of all creation—must be there if a man bear witness to what he is and feels, even tho he is aware his thought and feeling are dis-eased. For the business of the artist is to bring things to light. In Pound’s *Canto 91*, it is the light that presides:

> *ab lo dolchor qu’al cor mi vai*  

entoned, then:

> *that the body of the light come forth  
from the body of fire  
And that your eyes come to the surface  
from the deep wherein they were sunken.* . . .

> *Over harm  
Over hate  
overflooding, light over light*  
. . .

It is in this context of a testimony to the light, evoking the lore and vision of light:
the light flowing, whelming the stars

that the harm, the hatred, rises into the light of day. Marx, who would compel the mind to take up the cause of the oppressed, and Freud, who would compel the mind to take up the cause of the repressed, appear as enemies of the high mind. Here, no Athena comes as she comes in H.D.’s version of Ion to declare the alliance between the intellect and the great forces of the under-mind. The out-raging voice breaks (as in the text, the italics indicate the interjected mode) and the poem shifts abruptly to low-minded rant:

Democracies electing their sewage
till there is no clear thought about holiness
a dung flow from 1913
and, in this, their kikery functioned, Marx, Freud,
and the american beaneries

* 

He might have used the high King James tone that he had used in the Usura Cantos. But Pound had written: “You can be wholly precise in representing vagueness. You can be wholly a liar in pretending that the particular vagueness was precise in its outline.” And here, in this discordant passage, where his hatred of American policies beginning with the First World War, of jews, and of colleges, in images of sewage and dung flow stands contrasted with his adoration of great women with their lovers, queens of nature and heaven, in images of light and crystal waves, Pound does not pretend to the urbane antisemitism of Eliot but breaks into the true voice of his feeling—not only what he feels but exactly as he feels it. Because of this, we see, as we are never quite sure in Eliot, the nature of Pound’s hatred of jews.

* 

Baudelaire in Mon coeur mis à nu had raged not only against women but against jews:

Belle conspirations à organiser pour l’extermination de la race juive.
Les juifs Bibliothecaires et temoins de la Rédemption.

The dis-ease or out-rage is presented in the high tone of his Dandy style; it is incorporated in the Baudelairean attitude. But in Pound, to express these feelings at all breaks the voice. Sewage, dung flow, kikery, beaneries are raw words and deliberately low. The contrast may be between the man Baudelaire and the man Pound, or the times; but what we would note here is that the imperative in the Cantos is to expose the character of the thought and feeling involved; where the journalistic notes of Mon coeur mis à nu are governed by manner.
To render it true, then. Not only the truth of outrage in Swift or Baudelaire, in Pound or Céline, that suddenly forces us to recognize the virus (these passages, outrages, are lesions of feeling and thought) that others would keep hidden or dressed up; but the truth of how consciousness moves, where form has been developed to bear testimony to undercurrent and eddy, shifts, breaks and echoes of content. In a conventional art, the sense of Beauty is a sense of what other men will find beautiful, pleasurable, enhancing and exemplary in their social terms. Poetry would present models of feeling, and reviewers of this order commend or chastise the poet’s being to their taste or exciting their distaste. But there is a higher or larger order of poetry where Beauty is a sense of universal relations, of being brought into intensities of even painful feeling. Here, the virus is life, the hatred is emotion, the breaks in consciousness—that in conventional thought seem inroads of natural chaos or damaged passages that need surgery or correction—are surfs or sun-spots of the deep element.
If Truth lived in a well, and I do not remember where that was, she appears as a Pre-Raphaelite illustration—perhaps a drawing by H.J. Ford in one of Lang's Fairy Books—a beauty in rags.

* 

Diogenes, a man looking for Truth, lived in a barrel. Another figure in rags. And Truth in the Well, in *Les Enfants du Paradis* is presented by Carné and Prévert as a woman in a barrel of water. Garance, the naked truth, a nineteenth century strip-tease.

* 

But when I first took a name for that Greek philosopher, I mistook the name. *Demosthenes*, I thought it was, but I knew, too, that I was wrong. That was the name of another, somehow, misfit, learning to speak with pebbles in his mouth. “What was the name of the one who was looking for truth with a lantern, the Greek philosopher?” I asked Jess. “Demosthenes,” he answered, reiterating my thought.

* 

Old figures, the well of wisdom or the well that reappears in the lives of the Jewish fathers and the maiden drawing water from the well, reappear in low guise: a strip-tease artist in a barrel, a pesty old man with a smoky lantern. “The well is dry, the ravens cry.”

* 

Keats’s *Beauty is truth, truth beauty* strikes another image that is not Keats's but our common speech. When an arrow has been shot to its mark we say, “The aim is true, that’s a beauty!”

* 

But when I go to Keats’s text, as I must, following the path of my associations here, to find the truth of the matter, I see Keats addresses our Truth who lived in a well in the fairy tales: “Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness,” he calls her. “Thou foster-child of silence and slow time . . .”
The figure of Diogenes as he comes to mind searching for Truth, or rather daring the Truth, is a dismisser of words, accuses our speech everywhere of hiding or disguising the truth, of deceiving then. Here the lie is a mask some truth wears, a false face. Truth speaking tells us a story, the story takes over from the teller. Unmask her!

But Garance in the movie wears only a smile, she does not speak. She wears the curving lure of silent lips and the seductive reflection of eyes dwelling in a woman's "quietness", "silence and slow time", that we have seen before in Leonardo's vision of La Gioconda. Just beyond this moment at which she is Keats's "unravish'd", she is, we see, as the poet saw her elsewhere, La Belle Dame Sans Merci. "Unravish'd" means not only that she has been had by no man, but that we too are not to have her. Truth, Beauty, here is pure lure. She will be the Sphinx, even the Medusa

The other figure that came to my mind—Demosthenes—is the rhetor. We see him walking by the sea-shore, trying his voice against the waves. Just as Diogenes in his barrel in the Greek world had his counterpart in Celtic fairy tale of Truth in a well, so Demosthenes has a counterpart in Canute trying his voice, his command, over the waves. In whose defeat, his word is proved false. Here it means powerless against the waves. He has no such command.

Our Demosthenes must work with only that Truth that can persuade the waves. These waves are the people.

Both the skeptic and the rhetor bring to light conditions of human concern where poetry does not work. In the hardness of heart where it has gone so hard by a man's heart that he searches after the bitter truth—truth, to expose his mother to the light of day—poetry, that's-just-poetry—means playing it false. Words are not to be trusted. At last, in the last of the world's suffering, all of What Is he will claim to be Maia, the false mother of meaning, the deceit of wish, where the powers of heaven and hell raven in a smaile.

Looking for Diogenes, I find in Dodd's The Greeks and the Irrational: “As Tylor pointed out long ago, ‘it is a vicious circle: what the dreamer believes he therefore sees, and what he sees he therefore believes.’” “But what if he nevertheless fails to see?” Dodds asks: “That must often have happened at Epidaurus: as Diogenes said of the votive tablets to another deity, ‘there would have been far more of them if those who were not rescued had made dedications.’”
The skeptic voice in the interior dialogue of the War Trilogy that finds the paraphernalia of the mysteries “trivial/ intellectual adornment” decries the poet’s uselessness in the time of war, seizing the opportunity to put him in his place. But back of the accusation against the Poet we find another accusation, against the psyche of Woman. “They snatched off our amulets,” the Poetess tells us: “charms are not, they said, grace.”

“We have them always with us,” Pound wrote in The Spirit of Romance: “They claimed, or rather jeered in Provence, remonstrated in Tuscany, wrangle today, and will wrangle tomorrow—and not without some show of reason—that poetry, especially lyric poetry, must be simple; that you must get the meaning while the man sings it.” Against the trobar clus, against Truth veiled in charm or in a woman’s smile. In the tradition of the mystery poem that Pound traces from Apuleius to Dante the figure of a woman is central: Isis, then the Venus of the Pervigilium Veneris, the Lady of the troubadours and Beatrice. They are ancestresses of our Bride of Quietness, Truth at the Well of the fairy tales, and the language of this poetry is the old speech, the lingua materna, as Dante called the Provençal.

In the lure of Beauty, Truth seems untrue. And wisdom likewise is a lure, so that in Gnostic cults wisdom is a woman. The Brotherhood of Poetry answering the Fellowship of the Sword in The Walls Do Not Fall are no better than women, asserting against the realities of work and war, against the claim that crisis makes in truth, a way of alluring promise. Recalling another passage in Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage where, following upon thoughts of the toiling masses in their struggle for socialism against exploitation, the thought of Yeats comes to Miriam’s mind, “the halting, half man’s half woman’s adoration he gave to the world he saw, his only reality.”

In the face of what we call reality, the poets in H.D.’s trilogy claim a prior reality. They are pretenders to a throne in Truth that does not seem real to common sense:

We are the keepers of the secret,  
the carriers, the spinners

of the rare intangible thread  
that binds all humanity
to the ancient wisdom,
to antiquity;

our joy is unique, to us,
grape, knife, cup, wheat

are symbols in eternity. . .

*A list of facts,* Pound had written to Williams of the old themes of poetry, “on which I and 9,000,000 other poets have spied endlessly.” Spring, Love, Trees, Wind. This voice of sound sense putting the merely poetic in its place will often take over in Pound. But in another vein, a rare intangible thread or umbilical cord binding him to the womb of pre-history, to the Mutterrecht, Pound loses the “spiel” of the American businessman who knows that poetry is a commodity among commodities. Then he sings, not with 9,000,000 other poets, but with those few who practice the *trobar clus,* for whom Spring, Trees, Love, Wind have enduring and hidden meaning. As in the Pisan Cantos he will recall: “in the hall of the forebears / as from the beginning of wonders. . .”, “The wind is part of the process.” In the Rock-Drill he will present an ideogram of hearts, diamonds, clubs, spades. These things, like the “grape, knife, cup, wheat” of H.D.’s poem, like “the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and meditation of our forefathers had entered” of Rilke’s letter to Von Hulewitz, are not a list of facts but are “vessels in which they found and stored humanity.”

*This art, Pound writes in *The Spirit of Romance* is good “as the high mass is good art.” Man-to-man the poetic voice had broken with embarrassment in our American self-consciousness. In the generation to which Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams belonged there was still the break between man-talk, that presented a show of even brutality in defense against any hint of vulnerability—it was the tone required for the competition and profiteering of the capitalist society—and the woman-talk to which all things that required inner feeling and sensitivity had been relegated. Poetry belonged among womanish things, a song Herakles sang while sewing for Omphale.

*The *trobar clus* was outlawed. The Spirit or the sacred in man’s being appeared in the old order as a woman, an angelic presence or Truth in which a man took his being, as Dante took his being in Beatrice. Bound by the rare thread to—“the ancient wisdom,” H.D.calls it—some unmanly otherness.
Pound and Williams, whose art belonged to the *trobar clus*, in their dis-ease were often ashamed of their Spirit. In *Paterson* the split, that in H.D.’s *War Trilogy* comes between the official society of church or army and the secret society of the poet, appears as a divorce within the language itself, a hidden divorce between man and woman. In the *Cantos*, where Pound is concerned with economics or politics, “men’s affairs”, he will put on the man-in-the-street persona or, as in early Hell Cantos or in *Canto 91*, break into a subliminal voice from some barracks or locker-room—“*The petrified terd that was Verres*”, “*fahrtng through silk*”, “*frigging a tinpenny whistle*”, “*sh-t*”.

*

Even for women, areas of poetic feeling must contend with limits that social attitudes would set within the psyche itself against womanish excess. In *The Walls Do Not Fall* H.D.’s accounting of her experience is an accounting for such an excess:

```
so mind dispersed, dared occult lore

found secret doors unlocked,
floundered, was lost in sea-depth,
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We are prepared—Freud and Jung have prepared us—for what “depth” means in the contemporary cult of analysis. It is as real as “hell” once was. And in the depth, where the earliest human time stirs us, we know that wisdom and occult lore are an old wife’s tale—“*sub-conscious ocean where Fish / move two-ways and devour*.” Then a self-mocking voice begins, where H.D. anticipates the reproof of the utilitarian realist: “*jottings on a margin / indecipherable palimpsest scribbled over / with too many contradictory emotions*”.

The accusation of the Poet and another accusation of the Woman fuse in a third accusation of the heterodox tradition. She dramatizes the desecration of the psyche in the definitions of reality set by the Protestant ethic, as later, in *Tribute to the Angels*, she dramatizes the desecration of woman’s and the poet’s spirit in the *Venus-venery-venereous-venerate-venerator* passage. “*Stumbling toward / vague cosmic expression,*” H.D. continues now in imitation of the mercantile skeptic voice:

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obvious sentiment,
folder round a spiritual bank account

with credit-loss too starkly indicated,
a riot of unpruned imagination.
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*

She was not wrong in so picturing her adverse critic’s reaction. “Felt, queer,
sincere, more than a little silly,” Randall Jarrell wrote in Partisan Review: “the smashed unenclosing walls jut raggedly from the level debris of her thought (which accepts all that comes from heaven as unquestioningly as the houses of London). H.D. is history and misunderstands a later stage of herself so spectacularly that her poem exists primarily as an anachronism.”

* 

“Wandering among barbarians, patching what religious scraps she can pick up,” he wrote a year later when Tribute to the Angels appeared: “Imagism was a reductio ad absurdum upon which it is hard to base a later style: H.D.’s new poem is one for those who enjoy any poem by H.D., or for those collectors who enjoy any poem that includes the Virgin, Raphael, Azrael, Uriel, John on Patmos, Hermes Trismegistus and the Bona Dea.”

What lies back of Jarrell’s advantage here, his taking it for granted that the less said of this kind of thing the better, is not an idiosyncratic stand (though some personal contempt finds occasion for expression), not a special disrespect (though his impressions of the texts in question are glib almost to the point of disrespect), but an orthodoxy of view. Jarrell’s great forte was that he successfully impersonated and then genuinely represented the needs and attitudes of the new educated literary class that was making its way in the English Departments of American colleges and universities, an increasingly important and established group of professor-poets concerned with what poetry should be admitted as part of its official culture. His appeal in rejecting even the “felt” and “sincere” where it was “queer” and “more than a little silly” was an appeal to some right proper and respectable range of thought and feeling that any member of a university faculty must keep in order to maintain his position. It is not at all clear in Jarrell’s reviews what H.D.’s work is, but it is most clear, if we accept unquestioningly all that comes from his authority, that whatever it is it is “silly”, “level debris”, “anachronism”—not to be countenanced by reasonable men.

And Jarrell’s judgment here as elsewhere stood for that of his class. Dudley Fitts found The Flowering of the Rod a play of “pretty, expected and shopworn” counters. He had found Tribute to the Angels “compact of brought-down-to-date Pre-Raphaelism: angels and archangels, lutes and cytharists, musks, embroideries, mystical etymologies, and the like”, and now, again, in the new work: “the reader is off on an uneasy Dolben-cum-Morris jaunt that starts vaguely from somewhere and ends barely more convincingly, in Bethlehem. I do not wish to be brutal; I should be a fool to pretend that H.D.’s intentions—her conceptions, even—are other than the highest; but it does seem clear to me that her whole method in these poems is false. For one thing, the diction is as pseudo-naive as the imagery is pseudo-medieval.” We begin to sense that something more is at stake than the question of what is academically respectable. Where the whole method is false, intention and conception which give rise to method must be false. Fitts would dismiss all the things of the poem as “counters”, inferring that they
have no more real (true) nature in experience. It may be that the very claim to experience in terms of the heterodox tradition made throughout the poem seems false to him.

* 

There are no lutes and cytharists in the War Trilogy. Mr. Fitts was a little carried away in his zeal to portray the distasteful Pre-Raphaelite mode of the poem. In another work under attack in those years, where Pound sang in the *Pisan Cantos* and the hounds of the *Partisan Review* bayed in protest, I find: “Has he curved us the bowl of the lute?” Pound has always been attacked for the medieval and the pseudo-medieval.

But the suspicion that disturbs Fitts is not mistaken; Pre-Raphaelism brought-down-to-date “and the like” does enter in. Back of H.D., as back of Pound or of Yeats, was the cult of romance that Rossetti and then Morris had derived from Dante and his circle, the *Fedeli d’amore*, and revived in the Victorian era. The Christ of H.D.’s trilogy is not the Christ of church prescription but of the imagination, related to the Christ of the mysteries, the Christos-Angelos of Gnostic myth and the Angel Amor of the *Vita Nuova*; and here again, the elder Rossetti and then Dante Gabriel in their revival of Dante had played their part. Beatrice in the Christian mystery cult of Amor may have been herself a presentation of the Christos-Angelos. Gabriel Rossetti tells us in his *Early Italian Poets* that Dante had identified the Lady with Love Himself.

* 

“This Figure imposes itself in the imperious manner of a central symbol,” Henry Corbin writes in *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*: “appearing to man’s mental vision under the complementary feminine aspect that makes his being a total being.” The crisis in angelology came in the Western World in the thirteenth century when William of Auvergne lead the attack against the Avicennan notion of natures operating in virtue of an inner necessity and according to the law of their essences and especially against the concept of the soul’s finding its inner necessity and the law of its essence in awakening through love to the presence of its Angel, the Active Intelligence. In the Moslem world as well as in the Christian world this concept of being united with the divine reality by a love union with the Angel who is present in the person of the Beloved becomes a prime heresy. Fitts’s “angels and archangels . . . mystical etymologies, and the like” would dismiss any such vision with something like the contempt of medieval theologians—for there were critics in the middle ages who raged in Provence against the lutes and cytharists, troubadours and catharists, against musks and embroideries and the pseudo-medieval. But, as Henry Corbin proposes of Avicenna: “our whole effort was bent to another end than explaining Avicenna as a ‘man of his time.’ Avicenna’s time, *his own time*, has not here been put in the past tense; it has presented itself to us as an immediacy. It originates not in the chronology of a history of philosophy, but in the threefold ecstasy by which the archangelic Intelligences each give origin to a world and
to consciousness of a world, which is the consciousness of a desire, and this desire is
hypostatized in the Soul that is the motive energy of that world.” Corbin would read
Avicenna’s recitals not as plays with counters but as visionary experiences. “The union
that joins the possible intellect of the human soul with the Active Intelligence as Dator
formarum, Angel of Knowledge or Wisdom-Sophia, is visualized and experienced as a
love union. It is a striking illustration of the relation of personal devotion that we have
attempted to bring out here and that shows itself to proceed from an experience so
fundamental that it can defy the combined efforts of science and theology against
angelology.” What the dogma of science with its imagination of the world in terms of
use and manipulation for profit and the dogma of theology with its view of reality in
terms of authority and system oppose in the cult of angels is the absolute value given to
the individual experience that would imagine the universe in terms of love, desire, devo-
tion and ecstasy, emotions which men who seek practical ends find most disruptive. “In
symbolic terms, let us say,” Henry Corbin comments: “that the Avicennan champion will
always find himself faced by the descendants of William of Auvergne, even, and not a
whit the less, when those descendants are perfectly ‘laicized.’”

*  
The hostile reader will find that all visions start “vaguely from somewhere
Biblical” or like Dante’s from somewhere Virgilian and end up “barely more convincingly,
in Bethlehem” or like Dante’s in the high fantasy of the luminous eye of God. Dante and
his circle, Corbin makes clear, were deep in this matter of angels “and the like”. The
whole method, William of Auvergne almost a century before Dante had shown clearly
and with telling scorn, was false. But the poets followed the tradition of Provence, not
the convincing arguments of the University of Paris. What Dante drew from translated
Sufi texts as well as from the songs of Toulouse and Albi where such Images of the First
Beloved appeared was the Spirit of Romance. Corbin admits too to an Avicennan roman-
ticism. “Nothing could be clearer then the identity of this ‘amorosa Madonna
Intelligenza’ who has her residence in the soul, and with whose celestial beauty the poet
has fallen in love. Here is perhaps one of the most beautiful chapters in the very long
‘history’ of the Active Intelligence, which still remains to be written, and which is
certainly not a ‘history’ in the accepted sense of the word, because it takes place entirely
in the souls of poets and philosophers.”

*  
H.D.’s Romance then may have been—given the angels, the Christ of the
mysteries, the doctrine of reality seen in vision and dream—false doctrine. The Roman
Catholic and the established Protestant churches had cast out such heresies. By the
nineteenth century to deal with such matters was to be a Rosicrucian or Theosophist or
worse. “This is incantation,” Fitts concludes in his attack on Tribute to the Angels, “but
of an irresponsible, even perverse, kind.” The rational and professional orthodoxy that had replaced the church authority concurred in outlawing Romance. So, the arbitrating voice of the *New Yorker* noted that “H.D.’s mysticism, once implicit in her Imagist poems dealing with Greek symbols, is rather thin and shrill in this collection of her later works, what with their Biblical background and their redemption-by-suffering theme”; and when Karl Shapiro and Richard Wilbur, two of the younger members of the new poem-writing caste, came to edit Untermeyer’s *Anthology of British and American Poetry*, H.D.’s work was eliminated from the canon.

* “Thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us”—the concept of a re-vealed poetry was not in tune with the mode of the great literary reviews of the forties. The new critics were partisans of what they called the rational imagination against whatever cults of experience—or the “irrational” as they put it. Poems were interpreted as products of sensibility and intelligence operating in language, solving problems and surpassing in tests in ambiguity and higher semantics, with special dispensations for exuberance as in Dylan Thomas. Back of it all was a model of the cultivated and urbane professor, of the protestant moderator victorious.

“Inspiration”, “spell”, “rapture”—the constant terms of the War Trilogy—are not accepted virtues in the classroom, where Dream or Vision are disruptive of a student’s attentions. But more than that, these new professors of literature were descendants of those ministers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, holding out against the magic of poetry as once they had held out—by burning or ridicule—against the magic-religion of the witch-cults, the theurgy of Renaissance hermeticists, or the saint-worship of ecstatic Catholicism. “The fact is,” John Crowe Ransom writes in *Why Critics Don’t Go Mad*, “that Brooks and I were about as alike as two peas from the same pod in respect to our native region, our stock (we were sons of ministers of the same faith, and equally had theology in our blood), the kind of homes we lived in, the kind of small towns.”

* The Rational Imagination then meant the respectable, bounded by the fears and proprieties of the townsman’s uses and means. It excluded something else, some irrational imagination; it excluded heathenish ways; it excluded highfalutin ideas, putting on airs.

* “The dimness of the religious light,” Ransom writes in that same essay, “is an anti-Platonic image which seems to me entirely Miltonic. And it is much to my own taste. (I am hurt by the glare to which Plato’s philosophers coming out of the human cave are
subjected; or for that matter Dante's Pilgrim coming perilously close in his Heavenly Vision; even in imagination my eyes cannot take it in.”

*

Randall Jarrell's “more than a little silly” may have been meant to reprove the Platonic theosophy of H.D. Pound, Williams and H.D. belonged to Pagany; they brought back in their poetry the spirit of Eleusis; against theology and metaphysics, an art that sought routes in experience to the divine. “Say it, no ideas but in things,” Williams wrote in the earliest beginnings of Paterson. “Nothing but the blank faces of houses,” he continues, but read further: “—into the body of the light.”

*

The light of Dante or of Plato, the spiritual light whereby men saw in dreams or in thought, but also the matter of the ancient world, the mothering Life or Great Mother, the dark mysteries of the underworld, offended the Protestant ethos. Seely which had meant “spiritually blessed”, “pious, holy, good” was shortened to silly as the interests of the merchantile and capitalist class took over the direction of society and profitable works won out against grace as a measure of value. All traces of the earlier numinous meaning of seely-silly were replaced by the meaning of “lacking in judgment or common sense; foolish, senseless, empty-headed” or “feeble-minded, imbecile”. The small town closed round its marketplace and customs, closed round its mind against silly things, and grew fearful of man's inner nature as it grew fearful or grew from fear of the nature outside.

*

The New Criticism, from the generation of Ransom or Yvor Winters to the generation of Jarrell or James Dickey, the critical small-town reaction, must strive against the Romantic tradition. The gods of the Cantos or of the War Trilogy are out of order for any monotheistic conviction. The immediate address to Thoth, to Amen-Father, to whatever eternal ones of the dream or of the imagination, must be unconvincing and offensive to the monotheistic cult of Reason as it had been to the monotheistic cult of Jehovah. The hint in H.D.'s persuasion that we might not be bound by the Covenant—

not in the higher air
of Algorab, Regulus or Deneb

shall we cry
for help—or shall we?
or Pound’s broken prayer in the *Pisan Cantos* (LXXIX) “o Lynx keep watch on my fire,” if they were not silly, were irresponsible and might be dangerous, a breaking thru of old ways. The prayers and invocations to angelic powers, as if they had a ground in reality, a validity, comparable to “God”, and this “God”ness in turn, when it was not a metaphysical proposition but an experienced reality—the Christ actually appearing in the bare meeting-room of the Dream in *The Walls Do Not Fall* or the Lady’s Presence in *Tribute to the Angels*—such things exceed the tolerance of the right-minded critic: it was idolatry or presumption. Beyond Imagism H.D., like Pound, had traveled the dangerous courses of image and the Divine Image, of idea and Eidolon. The schoolmen of literary taste took their stand with the schoolmen of modern Protestantism; the ground of experience was in divorce from God. Hadn’t modern science turned the earth to its uses? Nature was not a Mother.

* 

So for Jarrell or Fitts words were not powers but “counters” Fitts called them. “Pretty, expected, shopworn” if they were not smartly turned out. “This search,” H.D. had anticipated their reaction of ennui, “has been done to death before.” And she had answered that she meant not to rehearse the search for spiritual realities but to communicate her own particular way.

\[
\text{but my mind (yours)}
\]
\[
\text{has its peculiar ego-centric}
\]

\[
\text{personal approach}
\]

* 

Where words are thought of as generative or as in *The Walls Do Not Fall* mediative between the reality of Dream and Vision and the reality of the actual, moving to give birth to feeling and thought, language is our Mother-Tongue. We see not only gods but words anew: “their secret is stored / in man’s very speech, / in the trivial or / the real dream.” This sense that everything is meaningful if one learn to read must have drawn H.D. to Freud as a teacher. Certainly, her belief that the poet does not give meaning to the word but draws meaning from it, touches meaning or participates in meaning there, must have deepened in the psychoanalytic work. The power of the artist that Freud revered most was his daring to work more than he knew. The unconscious Freud called the source, but it was only in the world of consciousness that the depths of this experience could be read: the dream, the story, the work of art, was a manifest matter. Back of Freud was the tradition of earlier Jewish mysticism that sought in every thing and even in the universe a revelation of Being. Words were shop-worn only to shop-wearing eyes. “I know, I feel,” H.D. writes—it is a condition of method in *The Walls Do Not Fall*:
the meaning that words hide;

they are anagrams, cryptograms,
little boxes, conditioned
to hatch butterflies . . .

*

Against the idea of the mothering language in which our psyche is continually reborn, the matrix of meanings, of evolving thought and feeling, the critical reaction raises its semantic boundaries, its language as gesture or equation or statement. “Discipline”, “control”, “responsibility” assume prohibitive definition, striving to exorcize the medium.

*

The very mother tongue was “l’éternelle Vénus” for the man tormented by the conscience of Church dogma or of middle class regulations. The Great Mother was “une des formes séduisantes du diable.” The city limits surrounded the marketplace empty of God and filled with a rabble then where men contended to set up standards of trade and values. Outside, there was the country side where caprice, hysteria, fantasy—a female whorishness—swarmed in Nature in place of Truth.

*
What is the truth of the matter. The gospel truth. For the truth of what actually
happened we need a jury, “the recollection of adults,” which Freud in the early essay
*Screen Memories* would call upon to test the truth of childhood memories. Fact is one
kind of truth of the matter. But the facts of memories, Freud began to suspect, have been
reassembled into a fiction of the living. Each psyche strives in its account of the facts to
present its peculiar experience; here the facts are not true in themselves but become
ture as factors of the fiction to which they contribute. When we have assembled from a
group of witnesses—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—an account of the facts, only an
ardent faith can coordinate the historical evidence in which every recounted fact is
gospel truth of an actuality and the spiritual evidence in which every parable and reve-
lation is gospel truth of a dogmatic reality.

*

The life experience of any individual is not simply a matter of its actualities but
of its realities. The man who would present himself without the dimensions of dream
and fantasy, much less the experience of illusion and error, who would render the true
from the false by voiding the fictional and the doubtful, diminishes the human experi-
ence. In the extreme state of such an anxiety for what truth can be held with certainty,
he has left only the terms defined by logical positivism with which to communicate; the
rest is poetry, the made-up world—the forging of the conscience of his race.

*

In classifying “the various worlds of deliberate fable”—the world of the *Iliad*, of
*King Lear*, of the *Pickwick Papers*—with the various worlds of faith—the Christian
heaven and hell, the world of the Hindoo mythology, the world of Swedenborg’s *visa et
audita*—William James proposes that such fictions must each be “a consistent system”
within which certain definite relations can be ascertained. “It thus comes about that we
can say such things as that Ivanhoe did not *really* marry Rebecca, as Thackeray *falsely*
makes him do. The real Ivanhoe world is the one which Scott wrote down for us. In that
world Ivanhoe does *not* marry Rebecca.” It is curious, given his pluralism, that just here
James cannot allow that after the Ivanhoe world of Sir Walter Scott another Ivanhoe
world could have reality. The history of Christianity is a history of bloody perquisitions
and wars waged in the high mania of true against false doctrines of what Jesus was and
what the Christ was.

In the classical case, there is a strong tradition in Greek thought that Homer falsi-
fied the story of Helen. The poet Stēsichorus was blinded (blind like Homer to the truth)
after writing his *Helen* and wrote then a recantation of *Palinôdia* of which only a fragment remains: “*That tale was never true! Thy foot never stepped on the benched gall’y, nor crossed to the towers of Troy.*” Whereupon, as the legend goes, he recovered his sight. The historian Herodotus tells us that he learned from the priests in Egypt that Helen was given refuge at the court of Proteus in Memphis throughout the war. “Within the enclosure stands a temple, which is called that of Aphrodite the Stranger,” Herodotus testifies: “I conjecture the building to have been erected to Helen, the daughter of Tyndarus.” And at the conclusion of the Egyptian account, Herodotus proceeds to give his own reasons as an historian for finding this tradition convincing. So too, Helen in Euripides’s great drama testifies that she was never at Troy: “*Let me tell you the truth / of what has happened to me.*” (Following here Richmond Lattimore’s translation that carries into our tongue something of high poetry):

But Hera, angry that she was not given the prize,  
made void the love that might have been for Paris and me  
and gave him, not me, but in my likeness fashioning  
a breathing image out of the sky’s air, bestowed  
this on King Priam’s son, who thinks he holds me now  
but holds a vanity which is not I.

Euripides does not recant the Homeric account of Troy but imagines in his drama the fiction of an historical Helen and a spiritual Helen, the one in Egypt and the other in Troy, the one the real body and the other an eidolon.

*  

Yet James would stress the definite and consistent within each system of reality. “Neptune’s trident, e.g., has no status of reality whatever in the Christian heaven; but within the classic Olympus certain definite things are true of it, whether one believe in the reality of the classic mythology as a whole or not.” “The various worlds themselves, however, appear to most men’s minds in no very definitely conceived relation to each other,” he continues, speaking here of the larger subuniverses of reality—the world of sense, the world of science, the world of ideal relations, as well as the world of creative fictions: “and our attention, when it turns to one, is apt to drop the others for the time being out of its account.” But even within the world of fictions, as James’s own trouble with Thackeray’s *Ivanhoe* exhibits, men find it difficult to entertain contradictory accounts it would seem, much less to imagine new syntheses in which all accounts can be seen as contributing to the truth. Both the historical telling of Jesus and the spiritual account of the Christ in the New Testament present inconsistencies that must be held in one system, and a Robert Graves who is obsessed with reducing the variety of realities to what really happened must labor to establish a true Nazarene Gospel by clearing away what he would persuade us is false in the texts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
In the same year of James's *Psychology* (1890), Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* began to advance another sense of supernatural systems, where in place of separate and discrete worlds or churches, nations or races of the spirit and mind, incomparable truths, self-consistent, he raised the picture of a field of religious order where Neptune’s trident was no longer assumed to have no status of reality whatever in the Christian heaven. To the consternation of such a view, Frazer was to look for Neptune and trident in all other orders—“emblem of Hittite thunder-god, emblem of Indian deity...,” composing a language of persona, symbol, image and emblem that would dissolve the pluralism of cultures and civilizations in the monism of a larger language of human meanings.

The exclusive truth that defines any individual order, in what it excludes, may be seen as false to the larger fabric of orders. Every factor of human experience has its own truth in its potency. It is more fluid, more interwoven with other realities than James allows. Neptune’s trident that had no status of reality in the Christian heaven rose from the same ground, was child, as Heaven was, of man’s imagination become most real. Toynbee in his *Study of History*, some fifty years after James’s *Psychology* would trace the Kingdom of Heaven back to the idea of a cloud kingdom as it appears in Aristophanes’ fantasy of Cloudcuckooland. And if we look not in the upper world of Christian belief but in the lower world, we may find Neptune’s trident in the pitchfork among the instruments of Hell’s monitors.

Besides things as facts, there is another aspect of things as information, what sets up those widening circles of meaning and influence, what rings true. Neptune’s trident that once seemed discordant, out of mode or system, now is heard in another, larger or higher sense of scale to be true. By the inspired subscription of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. it is true and only it is true of Christ that he was the only begotten Son of God and was of the substance of God, who was incarnate, made Man, and suffered the Crucifixion. But by the inspired testament of *The Acts of John* the Lord not only suffered but he did not suffer. The Christ of this gnostic gospel is a Heraklitean Christ and His revelation is the suffering of the cross that is also the playing upon the Cross of the Contraries. “For you I call this cross of light,” He says to Saint John:”now logos, now spirit, now Jesus, now Christ, now door, now way, now bread, now seed...” “God and the World,” Whitehead proposes in *Process and Reality,* are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast.”
I take the poem, any poem, as a product of this “Creativity” as the individual experiences it in language, to convey the transformation of a multiplicity of impressions into a unity of expression, that now becomes in its own order part of a new multiplicity of what poetry is, a pending material of the need for a new transformation.

Here, the poet's sense of the truth of his matter is not that it belongs to some previous system, that it happened or didn't happen in history, that it is defined as orthodox or heretical, but that it belongs to the work in which he is engaged. Here, his responsibility to the truth is to test the action of sound and sense in the process of its creation of its own definition. He must recognize what is going on. In his Maximus, Charles Olson insists the ear must listen, and he speaks in terms of sea depths; “a peak of the ocean's floor he knew / so well the care / he gave his trade, his listening / at 17 to Callaghan (as Callaghan / at 17 to Bohlen, / Bohlen to Smith, Olsen,” as Olson in the language could, could set his dories out
as a landsman sows his fields
and reap such halibut...

Gloucester, for Olson, is not a small town boundary for the mind, but a locus of the Earth. The continent and the sea are real, or elemental to the great reality. The nation or state of mind is another thing, a project of certain men to exploit the communities of other men. So there is “perjorocracy”; there is ownership of utilities—the sea or land or language— proprietorships men would make over truth or means to close off—the wondership, Olson calls it—the freedom any man has to take thought and to create in what he is.

“Evil was active in the land,” is, in The Walls Do Not Fall, not only the War-Rule, usurping the creative will from each individual and forcing all action and language into its own terms, but it is also “tricked up like Jehovah,” the Puritan ethos or its descendant the capitalist ethos or its ancestor the monotheistic ethos. “They were angry when we were so hungry / for the nourishment, God” refers not only to the Laws of Moses that ban certain actual foods, but to the banning of some food of the soul, of some experience. “They snatched off our amulets.”
they whine to my people, these entertainers, sellers
they play upon their bigotries (upon their fears
Maximus cries.

* 

At the end of the nineteenth century, when William James was writing his *Psychology* and James Frazer his *Golden Bough*, even intelligent men, men with something larger than small-town minds, still thought, not of all men being civilized in a variety of civilizations, but of “civilized” men and of “primitives” or savages, and of “advanced” civilizations and “retarded” civilizations. It was a late version of the old Christian sense of the City and the wilderness-heathen land or pagany; or back of that of the older division between the City and the barbarian world.

But today there are some, men in every field of thought and feeling who begin to picture in their work a species of humanity, a “we” where Australian bushman and Manhattan cityman each have community, where mud beehive forms and concrete tower forms are differing, contrasting but not opposing, expressions of being men. “There is no more striking general fact about language,” Edward Sapir writes in 1921 in *Language*, “than its universality. One may argue as to whether a particular tribe engages in activities that are worthy of the name of religion or of art, but we know of no people that is not possessed of a fully developed language. The lowliest South African Bushman speaks in the forms of a rich symbolic system that is in essence perfectly comparable to the speech of the cultivated Frenchman....Scarcely less impressive than the universality of speech is its almost incredible diversity. Those of us that have studied French or German, or, better yet, Latin or Greek, know in what varied forms a thought may run.”
THE CHRIST AS PERSON OF THE POEM

Helen is at Troy; Helen is in Egypt. The spectral Helen in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is desire "performed in twinkling of an eye," Beauty that would draw a man's soul forth from him. The Helena of Goethe's *Faust* is an intelligence, where Joy and Beauty are known in one and lost. One Helen is the other Helen. Herodotus will be concerned to find the historical Helen: the truth was, he tells us, she was in Egypt. The Trojan Helen was a wraith of men's minds. But the poetic truth has to do with the existence of a real unity or creation seeking its fullness in many personae, in many places, in many times. We will never understand the power of the mistress of Simon Magus if we believe her to be only a whore from Tyre, for it is an important part of her meaning that she is also the great Helen who was born from the egg of Leda, and was daughter of Zeus.

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So too the *persona* of the Christos is continually created in the imagination. *Mythos* and *drômenon*, gospel and rite, are events first of poetry. This god Christ will not rest in an historical identity, but again and again seeks incarnation anew in our lives. The religious will takes the Divine as given, "uncreated," and seeks to use the god as an authority against any further creation of the idea of the god, drawing upon the spell of magic voice and action in which the Christ is real to convert, yet working throuout to establish prohibition and dogma to limit the creative energy to the immediate purpose. The powers that a Paul must use to set up one Church or one authoritative Christ in the place of many meanings and images, against the authors, come not from an historical Jesus where the truth of things can be located and done with but come from the fullness of a person that is hidden in the creative life, from a dangerous source. Creation and persuasion contend in the use. The cause must be drawn from the expression.

"Yet every cause," Burckhardt writes in *Force and Freedom*, "is in some way alienated and profaned by being expressed." "In the course of time, religion realizes how freely free art is behaving, moulding its material." The Church seeks to impose an unfree style, "the function of which is to represent only the sacred aspect of things, i.e., it must abandon the totality of the living object."

*

"Art is the most arrant traitor of all, firstly because it profanes the substance of religion," he continues. For the artist there is no established Truth, but events, ideas, things have their truth hidden in a form yet to be realized. "Secondly, because it possesses a high and independent selfhood, in virtue of which its union with anything on earth is necessarily ephemeral and may be dissolved at any time. And those unions are very free, for all that art will accept from religion or any other themes is a stimulus. The real work of art is born of its own mysterious life."
It is in the mystery-life of poem and novel, picture and drama, that Helen and Christ emerge as eternal persons of our human spirit, and again and again must be drawn from their conventions into their own life. Here the high and independent self-hood of each work of art is the vehicle of the reincarnation. H.D. working anew the Christos-Amen of her War Trilogy must free her figure from the predispositions of old ideas towards a life of its own. “The Christos-image is most difficult to disentangle,” she writes in The Walls Do Not Fall

from its art-craft junk-shop
paint-and-plaster medieval jumble
of pain-worship and death-symbol.

The difficulty of the separation coming into the operation of the poem, the medieval jumble and even the junk shop have been brought up and must haunt the picture then as a negative image. So Fitts finds his after-impression that the poem is “pseudo-medieval.”

* The Christ that is “the Presence...spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray” is not medieval but belongs to the Alexandrian orientalizing Greek world, to Gnostic doctrines of the Light Body and to Neo-Platonic theories of the soul being moved spiritually through the senses. This world of thought was revived by the Renaissance Platonists, following Pletho and Ficino. Sound was thought of as spiritually effective because it had movement, but color, though it came second to sound in order, was not primary because it was thought of as a static appearance. Following Newton’s demonstration that white light could be broken up by a prism into the spectral colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, theosophists identified the seven colors with the seven archangels, as before they had so identified the scale of seven tones. And following the early nineteenth century theories of color as vibration, the whole world of spirit was identified with a world of vibrations in which color and sound were equally primary as spiritual forces. Kandinsky in Concerning the Spiritual in Art speaks theosophically as well as psychologically when he tells us that in the color blue “We feel a call to the infinite, a desire for purity and transcendence. Blue is the typical heavenly color; the ultimate feeling it creates is one of rest.” “Rare as radium,” H.D. describes her blue ray, “as healing.”

It is a rarefied Christ H.D. would evoke here, the power of a pure color, the presentation of a dream where “deftly stage-managed” the bare, clean meeting-house
interior suggests the spirituality of innerness, the language of inner light of the Moravian communion stript bare of the morbid fascination with the wounds and blood of the Crucified. At last, it is the image from Velasquez that emerges and here where the terror and agony that would “Stun us with the old sense of guilt” is hidden by lowered eye-lids, in the remove of high art, the figure is accepted.

* 

But, “most difficult to disentangle,” in its high and independent selfhood, the persona is haunted throughout by past lives. Long before the art-craft junk-shop of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, before the dolls of Christ with up-rolled eyes, leaking piety from nailed palms, there was another Image that appeared in the Gothic world of Christ in torment. In a Christendom torn by savage wars of church against church and church against heresy the very ground of Christ was one of abject and evil suffering. With the great plagues of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sweeping the crowded populations of the new cities, not only wounds but sores ran from the Image. Is it against such Images, as if they were not true—against the Christ of Perpignan in the fifteenth century or the Christ of Grünewald in the sixteenth century—that H.D. would avoid the “medieval jumble / of pain-worship and death-symbol” and pose the Image of the Velasquez crucifixion?

* 

If we compare the Christ Caring the Cross of Bosch, contemporary with the crucified Christ of Grünewald, we see in the sixteenth century the expression of two contrasting images—the heterodox Quietist Master of Bosch and the orthodox Catholic Man of Grünewald. In the wholeness of the imagination they are magnetic alternates of one Image, having their life each in each. In their high and independent selfhood they are dependent upon each other. They exist in the rage of a higher union, as, we may begin to see, if. H.D.’s Christos, rightly, exists in the disentangling she feels necessary, in the difficulty.

* 

“And Heraclitus rebukes the poet who says, ‘would that strife might perish from among gods and men.’ They understand not how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the harp.”

* 

The crucifixion was not only a punishment (as those who judged Him saw it), not
only a sacrifice, passion and endurance, in the name of the world's sin (as the cult of pain-worship saw it), not only a compassion (as the cult of the Redeemer saw it), but also not a punishment, not a suffering, but, if one saw it as a thing in itself, a drama enacted, it was a play of revelation, or a dance. “To each and all it is given to dance,” the Christ tells John at Ephesus: “He who joins not in the dance mistakes the event.”

*  

The eighteenth century Christ of the dream in the War Trilogy has its origins in the very figure we see in the work of Bosch and in the gnostic Christ of St. John at Ephesus, in the heterodox tradition. The critical opposition—where those of orthodox persuasion considered the War Trilogy at all—had its origins too in the contentions raised against such a Christ of the Eternal Present, as if the truth of Grünewald's Christ must mean the falsity, the “irresponsible even perverse” and “naive” counter of Bosch. For the heretic sects, as often for mystics within the environs of the established Catholic and Protestant churches, the pain, death and judgment of Christ were a dramatic reality in their own persecution, a ground for vision and meaning. He was a persona not of a contention in history but of an eternal event. The Christ of Bosch is not a victim but an actor in a mystery.

*  

It is against the very idea of the Eternal that the critics of the War Trilogy strike. Jarrell’s quip that “H.D. is History and misunderstands a later stage of herself so spectacularly that her poem exists primarily as an anachronism,” Fitts’s outrage at the incantation (the music of the dance), knowingly or unknowingly echo the outrage and contempt of Church Fathers for deviate ideas of Christ outside the History of the Church. Attacking the “Myth” of H.D.’s Christos-Amen, H.H. Watts wrote: “Whatever, then, the sources of the poet’s view, it amounts to this: any man may, in his life, draw the inspired circle with a full sense that it coincides exactly with other circles drawn by past men, since they too were touched by the Vision that came from the Healer”—a view of H.D.’s sense of the past at work within the present that would seem to dismiss without consideration her insistence that each experience “differs from every other / in minute particulars.” But Watts is concerned to dismiss, not to explore, the mythopoeic ground of H.D.’s thought. Having established to his satisfaction that her method is mistaken, Watts expresses his contempt in his conclusion: “Very moving, if there be such a composite figure as Amen-Christos, such a fixed point, such an as-if. But one does not put a roof to bare ruined walls by means of an intensely felt metaphor or, to be quite fair, an emotional aperçu that is apparently the product of serious, extensive reading in comparative religion.” Is there back of this the outrage of a man who in his own belief knows the true Christ, the one that really is, against the false images of the Christ that the human creativity raises? Or is there the outrage of the rational atheist who will have
no traffic with things of the imagination at all?

* 

H.D., Pound, and Lawrence, in their poetic vision saw the art-craft image as the god played false. Where what had been a passion is reduced to a lynching or a martyrdom as the social realist imagination sees the man as a victim, Christ beatnik or Christ under-dog. What goes false here is that these figures made real for the one-way literal mind, cleared of all intensely felt metaphor or as-if, act to block further activity of the imagination. The art-craft junk-shop and the scholastic criticism (biblical or literary) concur in their stand against the possibility of resonance and meaning.

* 

This is not “our” Christos, H.D. insists. Her generation had a distaste for the warped emotionality of the cultivated sense of sin and suffering in the generation preceding theirs. The very aesthetic of the modern with its clean line and direct image was a reaction against morbidity. “This more or less masochistic and hell-breeding belief is always accompanied,” Pound wrote in Cavalcanti of the prejudice against the body, “by bad and niggled sculpture (Angouleme or Bengal).”

* 

They drew from everywhere it seemed, from “extensive reading in comparative religion,” cooperative with many sources, to create a new composition that would stand against the public culture and its images. As Augustine had brought his City of God to stand in place of the actual Rome, they brought inner images and evocations of the divine world to stand against the actual megapolis. Not only H.D., but Lawrence, Pound, Joyce, and, for all his claim for orthodoxy, Eliot, strive for a composite art to embody the individual composite. “A man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody,” Williams proposes in Paterson and, for all his claim for the local against the international, Williams’s America is a composite of times and places: “if imaginatively conceived—any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions.”

* 

The Christs of public worship then that embody the convictions of Roman Catholic power or of Protestant capitalism, the art-craft gods of the manufacturers and consumers of commodities are false to the inner convictions of the poet. Pound and Joyce avoid Christ entirely, and Lawrence and H.D. must recreate Him. But the Christ of Lawrence and H.D. is of the same order as the Helios or the crystal body of Aphrodite in Pound’s cantos, or the Living God of Lawrence’s last poems. The Divine Beings of our
poets are presentations of their most intimate conviction—the creative imagination. Aphrodite and Pomona attend Pound in his Pisan cell as a higher reality. “I assure you that the eyes of Velasquez’ crucified,” H.D. tells us,

    now look straight at you,
    and they are amber and they are fire.
She had “gay blue eyes,” William Carlos Williams tells us, and the Priestess of Isis in Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* who looks up at him “with her wondering blue eyes” may recall H.D. Not only readings in comparative religion but scenes from actual life enter into the composite to become the matter in which the divine presents itself. H.D., in picturing the confrontation of Mary Magdalene and Kaspar, and Lawrence, in picturing the confrontation between his Man-Who-Died and the priestess, may each draw from their own confrontation in the Bloomsbury days, creating from each his model a new reality.

*  

“Has Isis brought thee home to herself?” the woman asks the Christ of Lawrence's story. “I know not,” he says. “But the woman was pondering that this was the lost Osiris,” Lawrence continues: “She felt it in the quick of her soul. And her agitation was intense.” It was Orpheus that H.D. in her agitation saw Lawrence as; but Orpheus too was torn into many fragments and scattered.

*  

It is Christ-Osiris in the War Trilogy whose eyes open, as in Lawrence's novella the eyes of the Man-Who-Died open “upon the other life, the greater day of the human consciousness.” “To charge with meaning to the utmost possible degree,” Pound had asked of the poem. For Lawrence, as for H.D. and Pound, the revulsion for the Christ as Sin-Bearer is a revulsion for the way He sees life. The Man Who Died rises from nausea and disillusion. The Christ-life had been a sickness, of soul and body: “I wanted to be greater than the limits of my hands and feet, so I brought betrayal on myself. And I know I wronged Judas, my poor Judas... But Judas and the high priests saved me from my own salvation.” For Lawrence, the revelation was not in the Passion on the Cross but in the Man re-born. The priestess of Isis had been told: “Rare women wait for the re-born man. For the lotus, as you know, will not answer to all the bright heat of the sun. But she curves her dark, hidden head in the depths, and stirs not. Till, in the night, one of these rare, invisible suns that have been killed and shine no more, rises among the stars in unseen purple.”
Pound in the early period of *The Spirit of Romance* and the Cavalcanti essay, perhaps in his close association with Yeats, is concerned with an art that would “revive the mind of the reader...with some form of ecstasy, by some splendor of thought, some presentation of sheer beauty.” In the Cantos, Cypris-Aphrodite, Dionysos, Kuthera and Kore attend at Pisa, and in *Thrones*, “the boat of Ra-Set moves with the sun,” but he will not let Christ move. Pound, mentor and monitor of *Kulchur*, bending his mind to furnish his “Chronology for school use,” avoids the question of Christ and of the ecstatic.

* 

In 1916 his mind was more open. “Christianity and all other forms of ecstatic religion,” Pound writes in *Psychology and Troubadours*, “are not in inception dogma or propaganda of something called one truth...their general object appears to be to stimulate a sort of confidence in the life-force.” In *Cavalcanti* he writes again: “There is a residue of perception, perception of something which requires a human being to produce it. Which even may require a certain individual to produce it. This really complicates the aesthetic. You deal with an interactive force: the virtu in short.”

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Lawrence's *Man Who Died* and H.D.'s “over Love, a new Master” are creative projections, new images of a force or virtu, imagined along the line of interaction between the poet and the inspiring world, a life-force between percept and concept.

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The personification that for Hulme was a literary device related to the conceit to heighten impression, to remove the thing seen from its common associations and to render it divergent and interesting—

> And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge  
> Like a red-faced farmer

—for H.D. or for Lawrence was something quite different, coming into being along the route of a conversion, a feeling towards the deeper reality of the thing seen. They sought not originality but to recover a commune of spirit in the image. The “Make It New” that Pound took as his motto, could stand for the old renewed as well as for the new replacing the old. Not only the experiment for novelty but also the psyche in its metamorphosis and the phoenix.
The truth here is the truth of what feeds the life of the organism where “prompted by hunger, / it opens to the tide-flow” but in its openness conservative of the poet’s range of feeling. “But infinity? no,” H.D. warns: “of nothing-too-much: I sense my own limit.” As in The Man Who Died, Lawrence’s persona resolves, “Now I know my own limits. Now I can live without striving to sway others any more. For my reach ends in my finger-tips and my stride is no longer than the ends of my shoes.”

We sense it right away when a poet or painter is using a doll of Christ to project a given attitude, for the figure postures to present suffering or brotherly love and has no other life of its own. Even a master like El Greco, obsessed with attitude, will lose the persona. The doll of Christ becomes the occasion of a sanctified grievance that can easily be allied with the sanctions the artist or his patron would give to his own grievance. The exchange or interaction within What Is is closed off, and an inflation of attitude is drawn from the hubris involved.

In the exchange, the man makes a place for the God to be. In himself—the stigmata of a Saint Francis appear in the intensity of the compassion. Or the man as artist makes a place in his work for the God to be.

In the inflation, the man makes a place for his self, his grievance or guilt, to be deified in the doll.

We know the difference between the gods of vanity and the gods of desire. But my sense here is that in every event of his art man dwells in mixed possibilities of inflation and inspiration. Hence the constant warnings Dante must receive from Virgil and then from Beatrice. The locus of the Vision must be clearly given at the opening. The dark wood, the she-wolf, the leopard and the lion may be allegorical figures of Dante’s own times, of the Papal See, the city of Florence, and the Royal House of France; but they are also, most certainly, real figures of Dante’s own psyche, his acknowledgment of his own limits.

Dante’s sense of his own place is the foundation of the Dream, the locus of its Truth. “Thou art my master and my author,” he addresses Virgil—it is the Permission of the poet Dante in the man Dante. The glory is to be universal, not personal. The poet must not—it is the commandment of vision—usurp authority in his office. This is what Blake in turn means when he tells us “the authors are in eternity.” Dante’s master and author, Blake’s authors, are counterparts of Thoth and the New Master, not only over Love but over the Poem, in H.D.’s trilogy. These things, the poet testifies, I did not see by my own virtues, but they were revealed to me.
In the tenth circle of the *Inferno*, where the falsifiers of word and coinage contend, Dante loses his locus as poet. “I was standing all intent to hear them,” he tells us—he had been lost in the contests of the damned; some personal wish of his feeding upon the wrathful spectacle: “when the Master said to me: ‘Now keep looking, a little longer and I quarrel with thee!’” “For the wish to hear it,” Virgil adds, “is a vulgar wish.”

All Paradise and Saint Peter wax red in a famous scene of the Paradiso at the thought of how Boniface VIII uses the Office of Pope as a personal power. “He who usurpeth upon earth my place, my place, my place,” Peter exclaims: “il loco mio, il loco mio.” It is the wrath of the Office misused.

Dante is about to witness in the Office of the Poet the splendor of God, the Rose Itself, and there may be a warning in this reminder of *il loco mio* that the poet too is to most remember his place. But the author and master of the Divine Comedy, the poet, has also his locus—it is the work itself. And Dante, to know his own place, but writes the work in service of, as agent of, that author.
March 28, Tuesday.

There is, then, not only the order of Paterson and the Cantos in which we may consider the War Trilogy as a vision of our own times; but there is another order of dream or vision-poem disclosing the soul’s journey from this world through “Apocryphal fire,” leaving “the-place-of-a-skull / to those who have fashioned it” — How Virgil has to warn Dante to let Hell be—and coming at last into the presence of God in which works as various as The Divine Comedy or Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress may be of a kind with H.D.’s trilogy.

* 

Dante, the heir of a cult in Christendom of Amor; Bunyan, a preaching seventeenth century Protestant convert, certainly no heir of a high poetic tradition; and H.D., late Imagist, versed in a Hermetic-Christian lore of the twentieth century. But to each the order or worth of this world is revealed in the light of another world. Man’s spirit is seen more ardent, more in need. Angelic and daemonic spirits attend, and the narrative is in the terms of a religious convention the story of the individual soul’s trials or stations in consciousness towards an authority or author who is God.

* 

Each is a Dream-Vision. “I cannot rightly tell how I entered it,” Dante tells us, “so full of sleep was I about the moment that I left the true way.” The selva oscura is a dark passage of the Life-Dream, and the poet is moved by what Dante in the close of the Comedy calls his high fantasy.

* 

In Bunyan’s case he had, he tells us, set about to write an allegory. Well, no...he says:

And thus it was: I writing of the Way
And Race of Saints, in this our Gospel Day
Fell suddenly into an Allegory
About their Journey and the way to Glory.

* 

To “fall into” an Allegory is, in this case, like falling in love or falling into a revery, to be compelled in the Work by a creative force—”in Eternity,” Blake said that force was. Where what the imagination sees is acknowledged to be, not an unreal thing, nor an invention of the poet, but a higher reality revealed. The book itself becomes the Way.
journal, the daily return to the imagination of the book, becomes the journey.

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“In the similitude of a DREAM,” Bunyan subtitles the Progress.

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Then there is, as in a fairy tale, the primary condition that the soul have lost the straight way and find itself in bewildered, having no way out except its angel or daimon direct. “Through the wilderness of this world,” Bunyan has it. “So,” H.D. tells us, “through our desolation / thoughts stir.” “And they again began to multiply,” Bunyan testifies, “Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.”

*

It is like a dream but not a dream, this going out into the world of the poem, inspired by the directions of an other self. It has a kinship too with the seance of the shaman, and in this light we recognize the country of the poem as being like the shaman’s land of the dead or the theosophical medium’s astral plane. In the story of Orpheus there is a hint of how close the shaman and the poet may be, the singer and the seer.

*

Hermes in the old lore guides the poet in the underworld, as Virgil guides Dante in the Inferno. Briefly, in the Cantos, Plotinus appears to rescue Pound from the hell-mire of politicians and dead issues, but Pound is eager to interrupt the inspiration of his poem and to direct its course.

It is the originality of Pound that mars his intelligence. The goods of the intellect are communal; there is a virtu or power that flows from the language itself, a fountain of man’s meanings, and the poet seeking the help of this source awakens first to the guidance of those who have gone before in the art, then the guidance of the meanings and dreams that all who have ever stored the honey of the invisible in the hive have prepared.
From Bunyan's *Apology to Pilgrim's Progress*:

Would'st read thy self, and read thou know' st not what
And yet know whether thou art blest or not
By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
And lay my Book, thy Head, and Heart together.

—from this verse of Bunyan’s we may go on to the close of H.D.’s poem “Good Frend,” where H.D. calls upon Shakespeare as her author, with “Avon’s Trinity”:

When one is Three and Three are One,
The Dream, the Dreamer and the Song.
Glimpses of the Last Day: In the West some intense fire burned, red in the evening. Fires were scattered over the landscape, descending suddenly as if cages or caps of flames had been clamped down from another realm above over men where they were, working in the fields or on their way home, or as if footsteps of angelic orders, fateful and yet oblivious of the individual, had burst into flame. At random the incendiary blows fell and yet with a purpose everywhere to charge the world with the realization of its last day. Just here, and then just here, blows shook the earth, fires broke out, and men swarmed to recover the ground.

The landscape was out of Bosch’s Temptation of Saint Anthony or Brueghel’s Dulle Griet, a countryside with fields and hamlets laid waste by war or by industry and mining. For I have never seen a city under fire, but hitch-hiking thru West Virginia and Pennsylvania, I have seen such desolate and wrathful landscapes at night where man’s devastating work has raised great mountains of slag and left great pits in the earth, burning wastes and befouled rivers that appear an earthly Hell. In the dream, the visitation is, like these actual landscapes, a just rendering of some desire of man’s fulfilled. One of the afterthoughts of the dream was that this Last Day had to do with all men coming into one reality out of the—unreal, I called it in the dream, when I was conferring with the Doctor at the spring. It would be many things for many men but for all at last, not just for men in Europe and Asia but for America too, there would be the fires, the laying waste. It was “the lightning shattered earth / and splintered sky” of the poem I have kept as my text, the “zrr-hiss” of Tribute to the Angels.

*

The scene of the Flemish apocalyptic paintings was a pervasive reference. It had transformed or taken over the locus of San Francisco where the Flemish valley lay between Twin Peaks and the Bay, and the far-away incandescence glared out of the darkness of Playland-at-the-Beach, where the Pacific now meant the Abyss itself. The distant circle of burnings was the horizon. The spring, where the Doctor (Charles Olson) and I met to work the drawing of the waters in the primal direction, was in the East—it would have been the Berkeley hills. But here, the reference to my own city was gone (as too, there was no likeness to Olson’s Gloucester). The Place of the Spring was in the high mountains. Yet even as I write this the sense of high mountains seems wrong. I saw the mist-cloud realm of Ibsen’s Professor Rubek and Irene in When We Dead Awaken, as I saw those heights long ago reading the play, and then another high place from Ibsen’s Little Eyolf—for a second, Allmer’s “Upwards—towards the peaks. Towards the stars. And towards the great silence.” Then, replacing the idea of high mountains, I see as I write that the Place of the Spring was a cleft of the Mother Earth between low-lying hills.
The Doctor was certainly Olson, but that certainty did not belong to my first recognition in the dream. The important thing at first was that he was Jewish, not the Messiah, but that other beneficent power, the hidden rabbi, the Zaddik. So I told myself in the dream he is Einstein, he knows the numbers of the cosmos. He may have been Freud—Freud, the new Master over Love in H.D.’s life, but also Freud the Master of dreams. But Freud did not occur to me in the dream itself. No, I thought, it is not Einstein, it’s Charles. As I saw it was Charles, it was in his glance, how those familiar eyes beamed with the thought of our task together at the spring.

As, early in the dream, there had been another poet I knew. The youthful master of the incandescence was Robin Blaser. He existed on two levels or in two orders. In one, as a fellow in that earlier stage where all of us men sometimes courageously battled the fires that sprang up, sometimes cowered in panic, he told me of his dream concerning that incandescence. It was as he told me of it that I first saw that disk of fire. And then, thru his telling, thru his dream within my dream, I saw another Robin—Redbreast, I thought when I woke from the dream, and tried to figure; Who killed Cock Robin? Suggestions of an old rite seemed hidden in the dream figures. Along this line of half-waking digression I was led by that other haunting nursery rime, The Hunting of the Wren. “We will go to the wood, says Robin to Bobbin.” There may have been some distant periphery where the Wren Boys made their rounds. The Robin of the dream may have been Robin Hood, a person of the life drama, like the Child in childhood or the Man in manhood. There was too, ever ready in my post-Freudian associations, “red Breast” and “cockrobbing.” But the fact of the dream or vision remains: for the disk was not of fire or flame or destruction but was a pool of heat and light that drew all of us men out of our selves into its incandescence. The Robin of my dream was the fire man I saw long ago in the seance at Woodstock before the War.

So there was the other pun: Blazer. The white that was also red-hot, that burned, that was-to-burn something of me into a black charcoal, and to fire something of me into a radiance, was a blaze, a blazon or sign or seal of God as a pure intensity. Robin Blaser was a shepherd of this place of seal. The incandescence may have been the Fleece then. He was the tender. Now it comes to me that within this radius, this blazon was the spot that flares up, the tender spot as well as the threatening spot.

I was afraid, I told him. As if there were some great pain or agony in the blaze, and yet knowing there was no pain, no agony—only radiance. Robin's dream made a bridge between the Last Day (my dream time) and the Blazon (his dream place) where it seemed I went to try the fear I had, for I did in the dream anticipate my burning up in the heat to a black clinker, my entering the light.

Yet, with this vision of what was at last, of lasting things, there remained the works of the last days. As Robin tended the region of the incandescence, but also related his dreaming of that place, so I had my work to do. I was among men fighting the fires that sprang up bewilderingly where the steps fell. I was terrified as they were, cowering and praying in the dream that these strokes pass over my head.

Then came the break-through of astral forms, a streaming down into this land-
scape, where Bosch’s vision and my own San Francisco were already mingled, of another world, a coming together of universes. Giants and monsters, phantasms of Norse and Greek gods from storybooks of childhood, images of past eras, Palaeozoic and Mesozoic, fell as if poured out of their imaginary being into this one time and one world. It was the sign in the dream whereby I knew what must be done. I had known from the beginning and told those about me that we were in the Last Days, in the Glory then. Now the change came.

“The astral worlds have fallen down,” I told those about me. “We must redirect the spring” or “we must draw the springs in the first direction” or “the right direction.”

The Doctor came into the picture then. We went together or we met at the spring to draw forth the waters once more. I told him about the fall of the giant orders into the world. “How can the unreal have as much effect as the real?” I asked.

He was Einstein, Doctor of the Cosmos, and then Olson. Where I see now the cover of Olson’s *O’Ryan* with the giant Orion drawn in his stars by Jess. The falling of the astral worlds may be, then, the falling of the sky, where giant stars and dwarves, monstrous constellations and regents of the planets stream down in the collapse of time. Here, the Doctor and I must restore the Milky Way, the spring of stars that is our universe.

The Doctor had a key to the old science of the spring. I had to find the lock, but now it seems that I draw the waters forth by the physical magnetism of a shaman, witching, pulling invisible reins of the stream with my hands.

“You who are nearest to me,” I said to the Doctor, “are unreal.” I could see through his form, yet just then he seemed most dear. A sentence of Heraclitus comes to mind now which had been a theme in Olson’s San Francisco evenings in 1957: “Man is most estranged from that which is most familiar.”

The Doctor belonged to a supernatural order. At this moment of estrangement, there was a more powerful return. It was here that his eyes, most Charles’s, beamed upon me, that I saw Charles in the Doctor or thru the Doctor, at once my superior and my companion in the work at the springs.
To have a companion is a happiness. But these were not the springs of happiness but of meaning.

“The pursuit of happiness,” of good fortune then, of la bonne heure, good time, that inalienable right that those merchants, bankers and farmers set high who made their Declaration of Independence for these United States, is a vanity, even a vice, when it blinds men to life as a work. Le bonheur comes as a gift. It is easy to think of good times as a gift, but bad times too are a gift. It is the hour itself that comes as a gift, the time of the Work; and the artist learns early that it is not happiness, but what is meaningful, an appointment, what verges upon the mystery of his being, that may be hard to bear, that opens once more, more than happiness or unhappiness, the joy or flower of life. It is not a chance on the wheel of fortune but a chance to work he must seek, where from the many roots of what he is and of what he has known streams of humanity, of animal life, of divine wish, flow towards the beauty that can be terrible, the flower, that precedes the good fruit.

“I shall have no peace until I get the subject off my chest,” Pound wrote, sometime in 1932, in his ABC of Economics. He was never to have that peace. The subject itself was to lead him from the claritas of this little book, with its interweavings of ideal and practical views, on to the disturbed and then contentious pamphlets against those great windmills of the capitalist order—the usury of investment capital and the economy of war. “After about forty pages,” he wrote in the ABC. “I shall not ‘descend’, but I shall certainly go into, ‘go down into’ repetitions and restatements in the hope of reaching this clarity and simplicity.” “‘Capital’ for the duration of this treatise implies a sort of claim on others, a sort of right to make others work. My bond of the X and Y railroad is capital. Somebody is supposed to earn at least 60 dollars a year and pay it to me because I own such a bond.”

What he wanted was to restore time for the communal good. The necessary work must be distributed among all able to work. This would mean a shorter working day and time for creative work. It meant production for social needs, not for speculation. What Pound wanted was not the pursuit of happiness but the pursuit of the good. This taking thought toward the distribution of goods was an extension of early democratic thought.
in America. It meant finally that all men must be citizens, living in the imagination of the common good, against privilege. Which Adams saw “requires the continual exercise of virtue beyond the reach of human infirmity, even in its best estate.”

* 

“Any spare time not absolutely obsessed by worry can be the means to a ‘better life’”: this was the crux of Pound’s concern. It was 1932. The Depression—the meaning of “worry”—was economic (as now it is psychological and becoming apocalyptic). For the poor, enslaved by want, idle hours meant jobless hours. For the rich, idle hours meant time to waste, money to waste, profit to waste. Men selling their hours, so that labor came to mean a commodity of so-much time and not a means towards some good, struggled to get more of the profits, to increase the price of work-time, or feared for their livelihood. We have left from the waxing twenties, fat after the holocaust of money-making in the war, records of what life was like for those who had lost the goods of the intellect for the commodities of a cultured sensibility: the deracinated drift of Scott Fitzgerald or the inhabitants of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. Capitalist society, as Marx had rightly pointed out, exploited materials and men’s labor towards a profit that was empty of meaning. The whole speculative possibility of the market grew up around panics of inflation and depression, sales-manias, war-manias, and time-wasting.

* 

“Leisure is not gained by simply being out of work. Leisure is spare time *free from anxiety*”: that was one side of Pound’s sense, quickened by his knowledge of how men were wasted in the job-commodity market, by the spectacle of drifting rich and destitute poor in the early thirties. The corollary of such leisure as Pound wanted was not only time freed from wage-slavery by a shorter working day but time free for work, for what the artist, the poet of the Cantos, knew as his life work, as other men wanted time free for their households or hobbies. Hours that might be the means for poetry, for taking thought, for singing about the piano in the evening, for crafts and for the variety of exercises—these leisure hours depend in turn upon hours devoted to the common goods, to the raising of food, the furnishing of clothes, houses, minds, workshops, to distribution and transportation. The two are interdependent. Where anything was done at all, vision and work cooperated in one act. Such leisure could not be earned or given; it could only be created. The rest was exploitation, or obsessional competition in which men strove for an evil or hold over other men, a politics and a business that drove the souls of all before them with threats of war and unemployment.

* 

There is a sense in which men’s hours are their souls. This buying of men’s hours
under the threat of poverty and war rises in the same history that saw the new order of the devil wherein Mephistopheles buys men's souls with the lure of happiness. In the Zohar, Moses of Leon in the 13th century sees a man's being as his space and time. Not only must a man care for and account for every cell of his body, but he must account for every second of his life. A man's being is not his but a communal property, for “his” body and “his” time are held in trust to be returned to God. These men, the Abrahams or Davids of the Zohar, are creatures of a communal imagination. They have no right to themselves or right in themselves. They can not even, we read, judge; for the judgment was with God: it came from their communal identity.

*

What time is, what man is, what work is—these are elements of a use we make of living. Pound's thematic concern with the nature of economic evil and good must be ours too where we are concerned with evil and good at all.

*

In the late thirties, when I was just coming into young manhood, men still thought and talked about some total social good. Even while “Socialism,” “Communism,” and “Democracy” were written large on banners of contending nations in war, and total turned totalitarian, we had known—as younger men now have not known—a time when it seemed there could have been the choice for a peaceful economy. We had seen the good cast down and a convenient evil taken up and followed. Now in the “Communist” countries and “Democratic” countries alike a new era of military rule begins.

*

H.D., like Pound, shows scars of the experience men had during the Depression years. In 1933 she went to Freud to undertake a work or to become able again to return to work. She was in a depression. The term here is psychological, but the terms cross over—it is economic too. Thus: “obvious sentiment,” she lists in her cross examination of her limits in *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

folder round a spiritual bank-account,
with credit-loss too starkly indicated.

*

There is a thematic continuity we must keep, a sense of the appointed work and its time, to which our imagination and our making of poetry must return, to release life from its disappointments. We too, if we would restore the streams of vitality that in the
dream are called the spring in the first direction or the spring in the right direction, must
know no peace but work in a scene of war, as once men worked in a scene of depression.
My sense is not figurative here, for our world economy and politics moves now not by
the threat of depression but by the threat or hope of war; and the work to be done—to
bring back the place and time, the event or conjunction we have called in this study the
Presence or the Present, or to bring ourselves to it—means a change at the roots of the
world-order for the good in the place of an evil. As men came to know the depression
on a psychological level, we will experience in our turn the war within the psyche.

*  

Where the hour, the work, and the body are thought of as terms of outer and
inner economy, we begin to understand the burden of Pound's theme in Thrones:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The temple is holy} & \quad \text{because it is not for sale} \\
\text{and we see that it is not accidental that it follows upon} \\
\text{In a buck-board with a keg of money: Damn you, I} \\
\text{said I would get it (the wages).}
\end{align*}
\]

*  

From the “Time is not money, but it is nearly everything else” of ABC of
Economics; from “The temple is holy because it is not for sale” of Thrones, we may see
dereeper into the tenor of Pound’s Usura theme. But now I would gather here another
tenor of correspondences where economic practice is a key to spirit, so that to imagine
a new spirit, we imagine a new economic practice. So, we’ve got to go to the roots of
things, to find new terms or new orders. From H.D.’s

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Let us measure defeat} & \quad \text{in terms of bread and meat,} \\
\text{and continents} & \quad \text{in relative extent of wheat} \\
\text{fields;}
\end{align*}
\]

through Olson’s “Variations Done for Gerald Van de Wiele” which brings forward into the
contemporary world Rimbaud’s Season in Hell: “Le Bonheur! Sa dent, douce à la mort,
m’avertissait au chant du coq,—ad matutinum, au Christus venit,—dans les plus
sombres villes:” “what soul / isn’t in default?” Olson takes up Rimbaud’s words in his own

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{can you afford not to make} \\
\textit{the magical study} \\
\textit{which happiness is? do you hear} \\
\textit{the cock when he crows? do you know the charge,} \\
\textit{that you shall have no envy, that your life} \\
\textit{has its orders, that the seasons} \\
\textit{seize you too, that no body and soul are one} \\
\textit{if they are not wrought} \\
\textit{in this retort?. . .} \\
\* \\
\textit{In the dream of the spring it was the work itself that was the magical study.} \\
\*
\end{align*}
\]

This work, this sense of what happiness is, is somehow missed or mussed in American experience. The O.E.D. gives among the roots of the word: Old Norse \textit{verkja, virkja}, to feel pain; Danish \textit{virke}, to operate, act, weave. Greek \textit{organon}, organ; \textit{orgion}, orgy. Work then was once of the earth that brings forth in travail and is still, where the real work is done, where the fields are tilled and planted, the clothes are worked with pains-taking craft, the stone cut to fine measure, the sentences brought to their exacting senses. And we've to hold this happiness, against the prevailing sense in which happiness is when and where we do not suffer or take pains. As against that Declaration of Independence, we must remember now the communality we have with all men, our interdependence everywhere in life.

\*

Is there \textit{vir}, man, and \textit{virtus}, manliness, in the word \textit{virkja}, suffering? Is there \textit{orgaeo}, to swell and teem with moisture; is there \textit{orgeon}, “a citizen chosen from every demos, who at stated times had to perform certain sacrifices, being in fact a sort of priest;” is there \textit{orge}, “one's temper, temperament, disposition, nature, heart;” is there \textit{orgizo}, “to make angry, provoke to anger, irritate,” among the roots of this idea of Work or Life, as the O.E.D. tells us there is \textit{organon}, “an instrument for making or doing some-
thing” and orgion, “secret rites, secret worship”? What part has that Man-God upon the Cross that is also the Life Tree in our American right claimed as the pursuit of happiness?

*

In the Gospel of St. John at Ephesus, the Christ tells John: “And if thou givest ear to my round dance, behold thyself in me the speaker. And when thou seest what I do, keep my mysteries silent. If thou dancest, ponder what I do, for thine is this human suffering that I will suffer.”

*

For most Christians of church faiths, their Master suffered for their sins, a surrogate. Here Christ is Redeemer. It is this true: that in our concern to redeem, to save or keep alive the wholeness of what we are alive, we discover the work to do.

*

For the Gnostic Christians, their teacher was two—the one, the human Jesus, suffered, and the other, the divine Logos, did not suffer. Here again there is truth, for to know suffering as an act of the soul’s drama is something other than suffering, is more than a happy thing. Ill hap or good hap, the happening or chance, belongs to the inertia of man’s pleasure or displeasure. But in searching out what we suffer or enjoy not as happening to us or belonging to us but as belonging to a design or creation, taking our strength there, we discover a new person who does not suffer but who creates in our suffering, coming into an increase of meaning.

*

So, for the poet, for the man already transformed in making some work of art, for the carpenter, the meaning of the crucifixion scene is not the unhappiness of a lynching party nor the mere suffering of a passion, but it belongs to a poem in the actual world, the fulfillment of a prophecy or story-form. There is in the man and in the god a perfume and a radiance, a flower that portends; and in the passions of the two in One upon the cross or tree, we see the ripeness of what the story demands, the mystery of the whole thing in which nails, blood, and the cry, the Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani are designed to fit, to charge with meaning to the utmost degree, the crisis of the poem enacted.

*

In our work we lose our selves, our independence, the Jesus of each one, or it is fused and enters into the radiance of another power of the same being, another person
we imagine in the community of language and our work there, that we call the poet. It is in passion, in suffering, that, even as we cry out, we become workers, organs, instruments of our Art that is fateful or formal. The Christ is the music, the sense of needed form, the “over Love, a new Master.”

In the *Gospel of John* it is called the Round Dance. “If thou wouldst understand that which is me,” the Christ says: “know this: all that I have said, I have uttered playfully—and I was by no means ashamed of it. I danced, but as for thee, consider the whole…”

*

This being in suffering and in happiness and yet—and just there—being in the Dance or play is the experience of being in the poem, awakening to the demand of the language. We know it as longing unrequited, as our voluntary quest for fulfillment or fate or justice, which is not happiness, *la bonne chance*, nor the freak of chance that stands in *Zen* for the immediacy, but is Lord over all, the command of What Is that it come into Its Own, that has Beauty and fullness.

*

In the poem this fatefulness is the commanding sense of the form, of an inner course in action, a power then of the *orge*, of one’s temper or nature or heart in action. The volition of the artist is to fulfill the form or will that he feels or discovers in the thing he is making.

*

The man’s soulfulness disturbs the poet’s spirit; and the poet stands above the cross of anger or of love-anguish, and yet will himself cry out, as the Christ says to John that He cried: “And if those whom thou seest by the cross have as yet no single form, then all the parts of him who descended have not been gathered together.” It is in the poem that the parts of the poet are gathered together. Where in terms of the Egyptian mysteries, we see Isis as the Muse or Mother of the poet, gathering together, remembering (as in Greece, Mnemosyne was mother of the arts) the Osiris-Christ in the Horus, the sufferer and redeemer of the poem in the new work and its worker.

*

“Liberty” too is a demand of the anti-poetic. The poet cannot take liberties in the poem. For just there, where the arbitrary, self-expressive or self-saving, where the self-conscious voice comes, the *idiotes*, private howl or moan or the urbane sophisticated tone breaks or takes over from the communal voice. In the communal consciousness,
the idiot is a member; is, in a sense, any and every individual member if he be separated from the imagination of the whole. But self-expression and likewise self-possession in verse would set up an “I” that is the private property of the writer in the place of the “I” in which all men may participate.

*  

The “your,” “my,” “us,” “we,” “I,” “me” of the poet’s work, and the other “you,” “your,” “they,” “them” are pronouns of a play, members or persons of a world drama in division. These are no more at liberty, no more seek liberty than they pursue happiness, for the sense of poetic justice or form that is history reveals them all as actors or chorus of a work that now we see is a self-creative drama at play. The ideals of the revolution are also its hubris. Under the banners or the oracles, the content of the dream must be played out to its resolution, which we see in the burned and smoking countryside of the dream.

*  

“All that I have said, I have uttered playfully,” this god says.
It was to unmask play that Freud set about his life task. “Mein goldener Sigi,” his mother still called him in her nineties, Jones tells us. “From his mother came, according to him, his ‘sentimentality’.” Had she given him his name Sigmund? For Sigmund—and Freud was to be a hero of the psyche-world—Sigmund belonged, not to the Jewish consciousness but to the Germanic fairytale or play world. Freud was born with a caul; that was part of his mother’s legend of him. “Thus,” Jones writes, “the hero’s garb was in the weaving at the cradle itself.” Freud had genius, and to have genius is to be a member of the Dream, to be a creature of wish, of the mother’s wish (incestuous wish, Freud was to say) or prophecy of a great man in her son. Freud was to call this Mother-world of wish and fulfillment or failure the realm of the Pleasure-Principle.

*

The whole play of Freud’s mind, his true heroism, belongs to that source. His life task was to expose the fiction of dreams at work in man’s reality, to show up wishers for what they really were. He could descend in this guise of the scientist upon the nursery world with a vengeance, as if there would be an end of childish things and a full confession of infantile guilts. “We will have none of that nonsense in here,” we seem to hear some Victorian papa declare. Whatever phantasies attended the wetting of the bed, his father demanded an accounting for what really happened. “It was from such experiences,” Jones relates, “that was born his conviction that typically it was the father who represented to his son the principles of denial, restraint, restriction, and authority; the father stood for the reality principle, the mother for the pleasure principle.” But what, we might begin to ask, in this Freudian determination, did the child stand for? The father’s voice and the mother’s voice might direct Freud, but he agreed with the father that the child was wrong. There was to be no childish principle.

*

Among those childish things had been playing religion. There must have been the play of the name Sigmund, the incestuous hero of the Nibelung saga. There had been too another plaything. Freud’s nurse, Jones tells us, was a Czech: “and they conversed in that language, although Freud forgot it afterwards.” He may have put it away; “repressed it” is the later Freudian term. “That prehistoric old woman,” he called her later, meaning perhaps to deny that she belonged to his history. For she was Catholic, Jones tells us, and more importantly, “She implanted in him the ideas of Heaven and Hell, and probably also those of salvation and resurrection. After returning from church the boy used to preach a sermon at home and expound God’s doings.
“There may then have been caustic, if not angry, reproof from Freud’s liberal, free-thinking father at his infant son’s taking up with such alien ideas.

Let only Ananke and Logos be our gods, he proposes in The Future of an Illusion, where in the name of Science he belabors religion—as wish, but then as failing to repress evil wishes. Sometimes seeming to uphold the child: “I think it would be a very long time before a child who was not influenced began to trouble himself about God and the things beyond this world. Perhaps his thoughts on these matters would then take the same course as they did with his ancestors; but we do not wait for this development; we introduce him to the doctrines of religion at a time when he is neither interested in them nor capable of grasping their import.” It is never clear in The Future of an Illusion that there might have been a particular child protesting here that he had been led astray. But there had been a time when Freud’s beloved nurse and he had formed just such a “we,” talking a language together, Czech and Christian, foreign to the Jewish and rationalistic persuasion of his fathers, a vernacular eloquence such as Dante says “we acquire without any rule, by imitating our nurses,” that provided the medium that nursery languages provide for children of making an other world, where Father and Mother, reality and pleasure principles, give way to the Child, to the principle of play or enacting what is, a sense of form that demands its creative ends over whatever reality or pleasure.

There must have been some moment of apology, of putting the blame off on Nurse, of recanting, that we see reflected in the plea: “Perhaps his thoughts on these matters would then take the same course as they did with his ancestors.” For liberal and free-thinking as the senior Freud was, he must have, with humorous and kindly point perhaps, but with the severity of the nineteenth century Papa surely, reminded the infant Freud he was barely two, or two and a half, Jones tells us, who disputed like the infant Jesus in the temple that this God of the Catholic faith was the enemy of his ancestors. If the nurse was Catholic, she plays the role in Freud’s childhood of the heretic. Was she a Moravian Czech? H.D. did not know this story of Freud’s old nurse, but along the lines of her own association in Tribute to Freud she drew the course religion had taken with her ancestors, the way of the Unitas Fratrum or Moravian Brotherhood, and the way she had taken in psychoanalysis into one design. “Livonia, Moravia, Bohemia—Count Zinzendorf, the founder of the renewed Bohemian brotherhood, was an Austrian, whose father was exiled or self-exiled to Upper Saxony, because of his Protestant affiliations. The Professor himself was an Austrian, a Moravian actually by birth.”

Freud remembers that he gave his nurse all his pennies, and Jones remarks of the memory: “Perhaps it got connected with her dismissal for theft later on when he was two and a half years old.” Did she play the Promethean role, stealing the fire that the father had forbidden the child, the fire of the soul’s realms, Heaven and Hell, and of the soul’s drama of salvation and resurrection, that Freud was to bring from the cathedral into the doctor’s office in the name of scientific reason?

The Future of an Illusion is the book of a haunted mind, of a man divided against himself. “Certainly this is true of the man into whom you have instilled the sweet or
bitter-sweet poison from childhood on.” But this man is Freud himself, the man who followed his genius, his Sigmund, to lay bare the incest-wish in the psyche, his life work with dream and play, his obsession with the City of God or Rome. “But what of the other, who has been brought up soberly?” he asks. This man is that other person of Freud, who lays down the conditions under which dreams and play can come into the question at all. There was truth, William James saw, in the worlds of fiction—it was the truth of religion and poetry in one. But for Freud that truth might be various was at times intolerable. It was his lasting communication that the heroic struggle for the reality principle took place in the earliest years. In the little scene some intolerable action takes place: the beloved Nurse is banished, the child surrenders childish things and undertakes his father’s ways. But the “prehistoric old woman” that Freud tells us was ugly too is still to be banished from the thoughts of the Master in his seventy-first year. It was never to be done; the father was never entirely to win over the child in Freud. He wrote to Ferenczi while The Future of an Illusion was still in press: “Now it already seems to me childish; fundamentally I think otherwise; I regard it as weak analytically and inadequate as a self-confession.” The dramatic fiction remained, the ‘As If’ reality could not be dismissed.

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As it is played at the close of the second act of Wagner’s Die Walküre, first produced in 1857 when Freud was a babe in arms.

Wotan, the Father-God, drives out Brunnhilda, his own Psyche or Sympathy. He had commanded, “Death to Sigmund! This be the Valkyrie’s work.” She defends Sigmund against the ancestral law. “In greatest need, I must falsely abandon the true one!” she cries. She becomes then an exile from the Father, dwelling in his wrath; and just there, she becomes Nurse or Muse of Sigmund in his incestuous love for Siglinda. The hero, shielded by his Valkyrie, strikes out to kill Siglinda’s husband, but even as he aims his blow, Wotan as Father appears. “A reddish glow breaks through the clouds, heralding Wotan, who stands above Hunding” so that the son’s sword is shattered and the husband’s spear strikes home.

*  

Did Freud never question or search out his namesake in that old story? There were, he argued, instinctual wishes “born anew with every child.” These he believed most real and grievous—“such instinctual wishes are those of incest, of cannibalism, and of murder.” But there were other wishes that appeared to Freud not with the reality of instincts but with the unreality of inhibitions or illusions. “Think of the distressing contrast between the radiant intelligence of a healthy child and the feeble mentality of the average adult,” he is moved again to argue, thinking here of religious ideals as an adult contagion. Yet he can, identifying with the adult, view religion as a weakness of
childhood in the same passage: “From this bondage I am, we are free. Since we are
prepared to renounce a good part of our infantile wishes..

“I am reminded,” he tells us proudly, “of one of my children who was distin-
guished at an early age by a peculiarly marked sense of reality. When the children were
told a fairy tale, to which they listened with rapt attention, he would come forward and
ask: Is that a true story? Having been told that it was not, he would turn away with an
air of disdain.”

Here we are reminded in turn of another scene that Freud does not recall, where
Freud himself comes home from the cathedral, from the imaginative world of the Nurse-
Mother, of the Christ and Sigmund, to enact before his father a play he had come to
know. “To preach a sermon and expound God’s doings,” Jones tells us. But what of the
ritual he had seen? In the charmed or incestuous circle of the nursery the mythos had
been told. In the temple of the Child a mystery had been seen, the magic transubstan-
tiation of the Mass. What confused, inspired gospel had our two and a half year old
Freud to tell and to play out? Here it is not Freud’s son, but Freud’s father who is “distin-
guished by a peculiarly marked sense of reality”—for the senior Freud had a sense of
being Jewish, a sense of being rational, before this insult of Christian fairy tales. “Bitter-
sweet poisons,” Freud was to call them later. It is the father who turns from the son
“with an air of disdain.”

* * *

Ananke ("external reality" Freud defines it as) is “force, constraint, necessity,”
Liddell & Scott tells us: “Fate, destiny;” “actual force, punishment.” It is Freud’s reality
principle as a god. For the poets, the lexicon says, it stood for “bodily pain, anguish,
suffering.” It had then internal reality. It meant too “like Latin necessitudo, the tie of
blood, relationship, kindred.” And Logos is the Christ. Surely that Catholic or perhaps
Moravian Nurse, among the bitter-sweet poisons that had included doctrines of Heaven
and Hell must have told something of the Jewish Child who was the Logos, expounding
the word of God in the temple among the rabbis. He had come to give a new dispensa-
tion from the Law of the Father.

Those gods over The Future of an Illusion, the Ananke and the Logos that appear
as abstract, that Freud said must be the only gods of Science, had once been only a
scornful and offended Victorian papa—well, yes, he was Jewish and he was Austrian, but
the type was of the age not of nation or race in particular—and an imaginative and
charming nurse seeking to save the child.

Like those instinctual wishes of incest, cannibalism and murder that Freud
thought most real, “born anew in every child,” the inexorable will of the father and the
lasting good wish of the nurse belong to the very stuff of fairy tale and god lore.

*
“Playfully,” like poetically, can mean that things are not to be taken seriously. Yet, to charge the word with its utmost degree of meaning, there are seventeen columns under the word “Play” in the O.E.D. Like Pound’s “time,” it may not be money, but it is nearly everything else.

Among adults it is agreed that play is not to be taken seriously. “I thought we were only playing.” But the play of the child is his very being where alone he is completely engrossed. It is the ‘As If’ world. And it is, where the child has survived in the life of the adult, the creative fiction of man's religions and arts.

* 

The locus of Yeats's image of Michael Angelo where

\[ With \text{ no more sound than the mice make} \]
\[ His \text{ hand moves to and fro} \]

is, back of the Vatican hall where the Renaissance master works, another room where the child Yeats sits in solitary play at making up a world.

\[ Like \text{ a long-legged fly upon the stream} \]
\[ His \text{ mind moves upon silence.} \]

And back of these images, we remember from the Zohar—that Yeats knew well in his occult studies—the Child Creator of the Universe playing with the letters of the alphabet.

* 

The Christ then in a sense says to John that the Crucifixion is child's play. Unless you play with me, unless you are intent as I am in the thing, you will not understand what is going on. He had had, after all, only to surrender to the reality principle and to deny His role—cry out “I am only a man!” and Pilate would have let him go from His fate; he would have found his liberty. Or to have let the pleasure principle guide him.

But the play we are talking about has its own laws; it uses reality or pleasure as it will. This high play, like the high novel or high poetry, will not shape its ends to provide a happy or a likely consequence. It refuses the sensible.

* 

The reality principle sees the oedipus complex as a fixation where sexual wishes are in conflict with tribal custom, or even, as Freud does at times, as an instinct to incest and murder. The pleasure principle insists it would be best to let well-enough alone.
“Let me,” Teiresias insists,

*go home. It will be easiest for us both to bear our several destinies to the end if you will follow my advice.*

But Oedipus must, for the play’s sake, climb up into the uneasiest state necessary for the moment at which the crisis of the play shows forth and we realize the fulfillment of the plot. Beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the reality principle, is the play principle seeking its passionate formal fulfillment. This is the only glory we know.

Oedipus, with the blood streaming down from his eyes, having come into the fullness of the knowledge of his play, is like Christ with the blood streaming down from his hands—eyes that looked with love upon his mother; hands that touched with love his fellow men.

The difference between the neurotic nursing his guilt or sin and the hero is the dramatic gesture, the formal imperative.

* 

“Are we at the beginning of a great religious crisis?” Burckhardt wrote in 1871: “We shall be aware of ripples on the surface very soon.” He saw that “even languages are traitors to causes” and quoted from Bacon: “whereas the meaning ought to govern the term, the term governs the meaning.”

“Art, however,” he continues: “is the most arrant traitor of all, firstly, because it profanes the substance of religion, i.e., it robs men of their faculty for profounder worship, putting eyes and ears in its place, and substituting figures for feelings, which are only transiently deepened by them.” Then Burckhardt goes on to speak of the high and independent selfhood of art. “The real work of art,” he concludes, “is born of its own mysterious life.”

The figures of Child and of Christ in passion that we have drawn upon do not belong then to the world of religion; for what they are and undergo is not “for profounder worship” but “of its own mysterious life.” They belong not to the Church, that has its gods or God to be worshipped, as the Church in turn must be obeyed, but to the Art. Both meaning and term are governed in the art by the apprehension of the form. The spirit and the letter of the law, the betrayal and the cause, appear as elements of a structure that is at play. What Burckhardt calls the Art’s “high and independent selfhood” is not only the poet’s form, but the underlying relation and meaning in the story of things. It is the selfhood of Poetry that makes of the writer’s self no more and no other than a persona of the cast.

*
We have come a long way from that *Dream of the Last Day*. There were angels there, but there was no sign of Christ the Child or of Christ the Crucified. There was, instead, the turning back of the waters into their first courses. There may have been then an appearance of the reality principle, the inexorable will of the father, in the landscape that was the scene of modern war and the universal fear of—but it is also a wish for—total destruction. The turning of the waters at the spring may then have been the reviving of the mother-world, the Mutterrecht? But now, as the news comes from diggings in the first agricultural civilizations, in the very world of the Mothers, we see clearly that this is not the spring.

As the Father-World is a world of nations, the Mother-World was a world of cities. There was not one Mother, there were Mothers, and their crowns were armed citadels. Poets sang by heart long before there were cities, but the Mothers developed writing to keep their household records. Their soldiers went out from the hive to pillage the surrounding countryside and reduce its farmers and herdsmen to domestic order. “They culminated,” Robert Adams tells us in “The Origin of Cities” (*Scientific American*, September 1960), “in the Sumerian city-state with tens of thousands of inhabitants, elaborate religious, political and military establishments, stratified social classes, advanced technology and widely-extended trading contacts.” Universities, armies, industries, city administrations, political organizations belong to the realm of Mutterrecht.

No, the spring in the first direction refers to “that prehistoric old woman,” to an age when all men worked at the sources of their life. The Age of the Maker where at Jarmo he shaped the stone vessels. The Age of the Nurse where plants and animals were brought into the human commune and man discovered the sowing of seeds and the breeding of herds. We have come back, along the path of the Christ of St. John at Ephesus and his Round Dance, to the Christ of the country man, to the spring that lies in the grain. For before He was the Logos, He was the grain-food. We have come back to the first talk I had, sprawled on the lawn of the campus at Berkeley, twenty-five years ago, in 1947, with Charles Olson, for we talked then of cities, and of how they exploited the first things, having to coerce the men of the country-side to supply them with food and the necessities of life. The root or spring was pagan. The heart of the god was in the work, the essential work of the material source.

We have come, back of the dream, to “Against Wisdom As Such”, Olson’s essay on my early work. In the dream I play again with wisdom, speaking of the last days and apprehending as I did that alternative of black-as-a-clinker and the pure light. But then a change comes, and there is something to be done. I must draw, not conclusions but beginnings, the stream of thought and feeling into life.

“There are only his own composed forms,” Olson writes of the artist as a warning against the tendency of my thought, and the warning must remain: “each one solely the issue of the time of the moment of its creation, not any ultimate except what he in his heat and that instant in its solidity yield. That the poet cannot afford to traffic in any other ‘sign’ than his one, his self, the man or woman he is. Otherwise God does rush
—does he mean Authority does rush in? He may mean, as I do here, that the God of the profounder worship is not to be mixed up with the art: “And art is washed away, turned into that second force, religion,” Olson puts it. Then, driving home, he calls upon those forces of fire and water that reappear as elements of the landscape in my dream of the glowing disk and the spring.

“I said to Duncan,” he continues: “heat, all but heat, is symbolic, and thus all but heat is reductive.’ I asked Duncan if it wasn’t his own experience that a poem is the issue of two factors, (1) heat, and (2) time. How plastic, cries Wilhelm, is the thought of ‘water’ as seed-substance in the T’ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih. And time is, in the hands of, the poet. For he alone is the one who takes it as the concrete continuum it is, and who practices the bending of it.” So, in the dream I go with Olson to bend the waters.

“Rhythm is time (not measure, as the pedants of Alexandria made it). The root is ‘rhein’: to flow. And mastering the flow of the solid, time, we invoke others.”

*

When, in that letter of 1916, H.D. writes to Williams of “your Spirit,” she refers to this agency we know as the Poet who serves the selfhood of the poem and would bend time to its purposes. “A very sacred thing,” she calls the “business of writing;” and again “real beauty is a rare and sacred thing in this generation.”

The ardor or fire remains constant in her nature as a poet. Among the earliest poems, in Pygmalion, she gives voice to this place in the fire or in the swirl of water where God does rush in and the artist begins to traffic with spirit in the matter:

am I master of this
swirl upon swirl of light?

Pygmalion is the Maker engrossed in the Making. He is no longer at liberty. His own has become confused with properties of the work itself.

have I made it as in old times
I made the gods from the rock?

have I made this fire from myself?
or is this arrogance?
is this fire a god
that seeks me in the dark?

*

In the dream I faltered but had to go on. I had to act in the nexus of belief and disbelief to draw the reins of the water. It was not belief or disbelief about the life-force of the waters that was at issue. I knew no other world but this universe of pulsations
and exchanges. Everything existed by visible powers: the stars were radiant suns of energy that belonged too to the orders that wax and wane, that are born and die; the waters of the sea moved in tides drawn by the gravity of the moon and of the sun from the gravity of the earth—and we, too, who were animal, having the breath of life, had our origin in the alchemy of the cosmos where tides of the sun and tides of the sea cooperated under the aegis of the moon. “Earth-caused tides in the liquid Moon,” Gamow tells us, “must have been eighty-one times higher than the lunar tides in our oceans.”

The alchemist searching for the life-force in his alembic did not believe or disbelieve in the life-force. That nexus in which belief and disbelief become terms of our consciousness arises when we must act to direct those forces. To draw the reins of the horses, to draw the rains down into the circulations from which life first rose, is to draw upon our own life-force being to charge our self-consciousness. The self is surcharged. The consciousness raised to the testing point where it wavers between inspiration and inflation is seized by hopes and fears, beliefs and disbeliefs. Belief and disbelief are a protective order, the sense we have when we over-reach our limits.

This consciousness, this picture the human organism can make of what the cosmos is and of his operation there, is a special organ of life. It has evolved and is evolving, as all the other organs of our bodies have evolved. How close our common sense of the meaning of belief and disbelief is to our digestive tract. “I cannot swallow that” means that the consciousness resolutely resists trying the idea at all. “I cannot stomach that” means that the consciousness becomes sick with the idea and must throw it up. Then, when we take in certain facts about the universe or entertain new ideas, there will still be the sense that we cannot digest all the potentialities we sense are there—“I cannot take it all in.”

The rest is “shit,” “crap”—what the organism, the consciousness cannot draw upon at all in the fund of human ideas. The waste matter thrown off is not without virtue; it is just what we are unable as organisms to use. Or it is deadly—a ground of poisons that threaten, were we to take them in at all, the very structure of what we are.

In inspiration, this consciousness makes some organic leap. It sees the light or is struck by the light. Its whole relation to what is poisonous and what is nourishing changes, for its inner being or code-script has changed. The mind must conform to its seed-pattern, its identity or species, or die. But within a life, in a stroke of light, the mind can be in-formed. It can pass from one order into a new more complex order. It can come into a new species of mind.

For the uninspired, for all of us as we are our own selves, the urgency of our self-life commands the testing and tasting at its borders, filled with the apprehension a structure has that may or may not be able to tolerate this new food for thought. A matter of taste is an arbitrary thing, and we may be in error in our choice, but taste is all that preserves us from the chaotic possibilities beyond our ken. The real apprehension for
the organism in what can be believed or tolerated is for its own survival in identity.

*  

“This bitter-sweet poison,” Freud called religion, unconsciously recalling the sweets his nurse had fed him, the bitter consequences, and the poison he had come to see them as after his father’s counsel. He might have been converted, his mind poisoned by Catholicism against the way of his ancestors, but in the crisis his identity with his father was threatened. He was to keep faith all his life with that choice to affirm the way of his free thinking Jewish father, but he was to imagine in psychoanalysis new terms in which Catholicism, Judaism, and free thought too, were to be translated into the language of an underlying humanity. An inspiration, a mutation, had come in thought that was more various to survive. Old intolerances gave way, and the range of man’s food for thought was extended.
So we’ve to see H.D.’s “prompted by hunger, / it opens to the tide-flow” and the retraction that follows

\[\text{but infinity? no,}\
\text{of nothing-too-much:}\
\]

\[\text{I sense my own limit}\
\]
as referring to the survival of identity in the growth and evolution of the poet’s mind, recapitulating the experience of those first cells of life in the primal waters. Some of those cells remained what they were, and they remain in our seas today, triumphs of species to adapt and survive. They escaped somehow from the magic, the pouring radiations of the stars that altered the code-script. They were not among the cells that came into the light and lost their selves in dream. For these other cells that mutated towards new forms, that were to lose what they were, prompted by hunger, opened to the tide-flow of the stars. They died and were re-born, caught in the alembic under the radioactive rays, they were flooded with what we call longing. Their inner order was disturbed, re-arranged, altered. Burned to a clinker in the sun-spot—that was the greatest chance—or enlightened.

* 

This is the deeper sense, the life-force sense, of H.D.’s opening passages in *The Walls Do Not Fall*. Thinking of all the mutations in spirit, of the waste of millions in the process, we may read with new meaning

\[\text{O, do not pity them, as you watch them drop one by one,}\
\text{for they fall exhausted, numb, blind}\
\text{but in certain ecstasy,}\
\]

\[\text{for theirs is the hunger}\
\text{for Paradise.}\
\]

It is a theosophical poem, and theosophy, whether Hellenistic or Victorian, takes thought not from dogma but from speculations upon the nature of the cosmos as a divine revelation. Back of such thought is a concept of universal sympathies, correspondences, communications; the imagination of the whole of What Is as an experiencing entity. So that for the theosophical mind, even where Darwin’s acausal evolution is accepted, evolution, the evolution of forms, is an experience. “The universe is one
animal connected and contained by one life,” Proclus argues in his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*: “For if this life were not common, there would not be a sympathy of the parts in it. For sympathy is effected through a participation of the same nature.”

So the vision of the trilogy that sees history as the evolution of psychic forms sees the physical universe as vital—

> where great stars pour down  
> their generating strength, Arcturus

> or the sapphires of the Northern Crown.

*  

But now let us see the “prompted by hunger, /it opens to the tide-flow” as referring to the poetic consciousness itself. The tide-flow of the poem’s own compelling measures where rimes and ratios have a felt relation to the sympathies within the total cosmos. Carlyle’s sense that the heart of things is musical is of this order. The poem, H.D. would say, is generated just here, between the hunger—the opening of the organism to take in the world around it—and the sense of limits. Just this, she says, I could digest, incorporate, bring into my survival. The imagination might go beyond, but the biological reality is again and again asserted: “I am what I am” plays in counterpoint to a vision in which life is characterized not only by the limits of species but by the generation of new forms. “The Presence”, then, of *The Walls Do Not Fall* xiii, “ultimate blue ray, / rare as radium”, identified with the new Master over Love, may be rightly related to what we understand of the role mutation plays in the evolution of life-forms.

*  

In the small-town integrity of John Crowe Ransom as he protests against Dante’s *Divine Comedy* the sense of limits is all, the preservation from evolution of life-forms. For such an entity, holding its own in the constant danger of being lost in larger more complex forms, the battle against pathetic fallacy is a kind of magic to keep back the flood of sympathies. My mind returns to the cells that came into the dangerous currents of the light and were changed. Some of us dream of such a light and are even infatuated with the thought. So Proclus quotes from Orphic texts:

> The Gods admir’d, in ether when they saw  
> A light unlook’d for, bursting on the view,  
> From the immortal Phanes’ glittering skin.

But we seem to have remembered too in the morphology of our psyche a panic, as if there could be a withdrawal from being taken over so, we seem to recapitulate some
knowledge of the alternative in which millions of cells survived without being changed.

“Is am hurt by the glare,” Ransom tells us, “even in imagination my eyes cannot take it.” He is talking about the imagined glare of Dante’s vision of God.

Touched by the disturbances that make for poetry, Ransom prayed from the beginning for protection against them. “Two evils, monstrous either one apart,” he tells us in “Winter Remembered”, “possessed me, and were long and loath at going.”

Think not, when fire was bright upon my bricks,
And past the tight boards hardly a wind could enter,
I glowed like them, the simple burning sticks,
Far from my cause, my proper heat and center.

* *

It is as if, in our phantasy of cells quickened in the primal seas by the light, some of them resisted the knowledge and could escape the rule of sympathies. A man could be touched by the genius of Poetry as Ransom was and then emerge magnificently free from the ravages of inspiration in what he would call his “proper heat and center.” Finally the disease of poetry left Ransom’s spiritual body, and he ceased having poems in his mind. He could almost be at ease with his friend Brooks who had never lost his proper center. But we know Ransom had seen something in the light Plato saw by, for he tells us “I am hurt by the glare,” and we know that he glowed in the fire of sympathetic fallacy, for he tells us not to think so. The physical sensation remains.

* *

The planetary regents of Tribute to the Angels are not only figures reviving the lore of an old tradition in the drama of the present, but they are evoked as ministers of inner sympathies. The planets are influences—we have only to think of how interdependent those orbits and gravities are with our own terrestrial order in the solar system. And men, taking the wandering lights of the planets as elements of their thought, of their sky map and their cosmic imagination, have made them symbolic influences.

But H.D. is thinking of them, too, as star-beings, active intelligences. She returns again and again to the prayer for inspiration, for the “power between us” to inform the poem, just as Ransom turned his mind against the possibility of such identifications or projections. In her early childhood she had heard their names—Venus, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter. “Venus is very beautiful tonight,” her father, Charles Doolittle of the Flower Observatory, would report. The planets were persons of her father’s mysteries before they were persons of Greek myth. In time, in a lifetime of study, the divine powers of the ancient world would become more and more real in H.D.’s world, most particularly in their late Hellenistic syntheses, where astral cult and chthonic cult had merged with the poetry of what Festugière in La révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste calls les fictions.
littéraires. “I say fictions,” the Roman Catholic scholar writes, “because, for us moderns, it is evident that the hellenistic accounts of revelation carry no inner meaning of truth.” So, too, we remember from Freud’s Future of an Illusion when asked by his son who had a peculiarly marked sense of reality if a fairy tale were a true story, Freud replies, no.

But for H.D., as for the Romantics before her, for the masters of Rosicrucian and Hermetic romances in the Renaissance, or for the theosophists out of the Hellenistic period, the fairy tale could communicate the deepest truth. In The Hedgehog she tells us: “Bett made Madge understand that the stories weren’t just stories, but that there was something in them like the light in the lamp that isn’t the lamp. Bett would say to Madge, when she was a very little girl, ‘Now what is the lamp side of the story and what is the light side of the story?’ so Madge could see very easily (when she was a very little girl) that the very beautiful stories Bett told her, that were real stories, had double sorts of meanings.” By the time of the War Trilogy, not only the stories of the old gods, but the great Hellenistic literary fictions of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, and the gnostic gospels had come into H.D.’s realm of real stories and of double sorts of meaning.

At the same time, as we have traced in charade and roman à clef, H.D.’s life became more and more a story of her life. In the earliest poems, those close to her—Pound, Aldington, Lawrence, Bryher—were projected as persons of story and drama, and beyond these, as mythological persons. Life itself had double sorts of meanings. Did the flowering tree of the War Trilogy actually appear to her? In The Walls Do Not Fall v, she tells us that the track of the story will lead “from a plum-tree in flower / to a half-open hut-door” and in xxvi and xxvii she asks “of all the flowering of the wood” what flowering tree is to be our store. This is clearly the preparation of a fiction. In her notes to Ion she brought in the story of the burnt olive-tree of Pallas Athené, sending out a new shoot of frail silver life. “Pallas Athené, then, was not dead. Her spirit spoke quietly, a very simple message.” The revival of the burnt out tree was an old theme of H.D.’s fiction.

Yet in Tribute to the Angels, her testimony comes with the verity of the actual, an event long awaited, long prepared. The fictional depth and the actual figure contend so that, as she tells us, we do not know whether “we were there or not-there,” but

we saw the tree flowering;

it was an ordinary tree
in an old garden-square.

So, too, the dream-visitation of the Christ in The Walls Do Not Fall and of the Lady in Tribute to the Angels I take it are actual dreams. But just beyond, creatures of shadow and light, actuality and fiction, delusion and illusion, are the angelic beings. What we are forced to recognize is that she actually felt their presence. Ecstatic in the tide-flow she opened her mind to the invasion of the imagination. “Then came the break-through
of astral forms, a streaming down into this landscape, where Bosch’s vision and my own San Francisco were already mingled, of another world...”

* 

“More than a little silly,” Jarrell wrote of H.D.’s critical vulnerability. Back of that word “silly” I find the sense in earlier meanings: *Seely*, “blissful, holy; innocent, harmless; deserving of pity, helpless, defenceless; often of the soul, as in danger of divine judgment; frail, worn-out, crazy; foolish.” *Silly*, from: “deserving of compassion” to “feeble, insignificant; sorry; unsophisticated; feeble-minded; empty-headed; stunned, dazed as by a blow.” As late as the fifteenth century, in the mind of Medieval Christendom, it had meant happiness; “said of persons, their condition or experiences” when blessed by God. For the sophisticated mind of the Age of Reason it meant what was most condemned.

The silly condition of the open soul was that there must have been so many freaks, frail worn-out crazy rebirths; so many deaths of meaning, relapses into chaotic matter; so many ecstatic explosions in the alembic. We sense it in the course of human genius. The fact of the risk of inspiration is recognized in the common sense of “touched.” Where men have vision and courage for the experience of life itself, even where it exceeds the uses of understanding, beyond the preservation of the species, *silly* could mean blissful, and it was deserving of compassion, for it meant too to go in peril of the soul.

* 

The landscape of the dream may be thought of, as I have thought of H.D.’s poem, as the alembic where radiant powers move. The incandescence is the sun-spot, the tender-spot, the conjunction of the script and the fire. Just here what we are not begins to take life in Us. *We have no map,*” H.D. writes in the closing lines of *The Walls Do Not Fall*. On the biological level, in Darwinian terms, the whole intricately evolved pattern of those who survive gives no map that will tell us the fate of man, for the orders of the living are inbound and informed by the orders of the cosmos that men call chaos or chance. “Possibly we will reach haven, / heaven,” is the only resolution of the longing in us towards what is not ourselves but belongs to the current of possibilities in evolution. This “we” is no longer at liberty but serves the purpose that H. D, calls “Paradise” in the *War Trilogy*. “The seal of the jar was un-broken.” Yes, and Kaspar was most aware of his cause, his proper heat and center. But, “no secret was safe with a woman.”

* 

Italicizing, H.D. draws into correspondence the two utterances: “for many waters can not quench love’s fire” and
but to an outcast and a vagabond,
to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

There is a love in which we are outcast and vagabond from what we are that we call “falling in love.” It appears an evil or a power over us, and can seize us, sweeping from us all sense of who we are. We know it as the cells must have known the first magic rays, as pain, as longing, as loss, as ecstasy; for we are estranged from ourselves in this love or light, and something evolves.

Where we preserve ourselves, ripening into our own forms or species, we must often pray against this “falling in love,” the imperative that might carry us beyond ourselves. For there is the other love we know, the domestic and kindly love for what we are, our daily practice of love. In the highest vision they are one, but in the individual heart that enters the changes towards the higher vision so that “falling in love” may belong to the things we love, the changes are fearful.

It was this “falling in love,” if we read Ransom’s “Winter Remembered” rightly, that was Ransom’s time of knowing the hurt or light or inspiration that made him begin his struggle to reduce Poetry to a domestic art. There was

A cry of Absence, Absence, in the heart,
And in the wood the furious winter blowing.

Just for the moment he was in that very selva oscura, the desolation, where thoughts stir, in which the great adventure of the spirit in the Divine Comedy or Pilgrim’s Progress or the War Trilogy begins.

But the great adventure of the spirit is in its evolution, in its surrender of itself and coming into the trust of God in the peril of the soul. Towards Paradise, heaven, the light—that has been the eternal promise. The promise that falling in love makes to the lover.

* 

“Quando m’apparve Amor subitamente,” Dante says: “When suddenly Amor appeared to me, the memory of whose being maketh me shudder.” And he tells us in his journal of the same event: “I thought I saw in my chamber a cloud of the hue of flame, within which I discerned the figure of a lord, of fearful aspect to one who should look on him. And he seemed to me of such gladness as to himself that a wondrous thing it was; and in his words he said many things which I understood not save a few, among which I understood these: Ego dominus tuus. I am your Master. In his arms I thought I saw one sleeping, naked, save that she seemed to me wrapped lightly in a crimson drapery; whom, gazing at very intently, I knew to be the lady of the salutation, who the day before had deigned to salute me. And in one of his hands I thought he held a thing that was all aflame; and I thought he said to me these words: Vide cor tuum. Behold thy
heart. And when he had tarried a while, I thought he awoke her who slept and so wrought he by his art that he made her eat of that thing that was aflame in his hand, whereof she ate afeared. Thereafter, short time he abode ere his gladness was changed to bitterest weeping: and thus weeping, he gathered this lady up in his arms and with her I thought he went away heavenward: whereat I sustained so great anguish that my feeble little sleep could not endure, but broke and I was awake. And straightway I began to ponder and found that the hour in which this vision had appeared to me had been the fourth hour of the night: so that it manifestly appeareth that it was the first of the last nine hours of the night.”

*Wherever he names the time (la bonne heure) in La Vita Nuova, Dante finds it in terms of the number nine: “Nine times already since my birth had the heaven of light returned,” “so that almost from the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me and I beheld her almost at the end of my ninth;” again, Beatrice appears to Dante nine years later in the ninth hour of the day. The theme of the beginning in the end, of the first and the last is repeated in the design of nines, where in the first vision of Amor Dante finds the hour of the dream to have been “the first of the last nine hours of the night.” The second vision of Amor is in the ninth hour of the day. A third comes on the ninth day of a painful illness. Hours, days, years—months along, the nine months of gestation, seem missing. Then, in accounting for the time of Beatrice’s death Dante tells us, “because many times the number nine hath found place among the preceding words, whereby it appeareth that it is not without reason,” he will discuss the meaning of the number. First, he must show how the number nine appears in her death: “I say that according to the Arabian style her most noble soul departed in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and according to the Syrian style, it departed on the ninth month of the year—and according to our style, she departed in that year of our era, namely of the years of our Lord, wherein the perfect number was completed nine times in that century wherein she was placed.”

In a series of revelations Dante has dangerously hinted that Beatrice is analogous first to Love, then in the Giovanna Primavera-Giovanni prima verra passage that she is analogous to “la verace luce,” the True Light or Christ. Now he tells us that nine has reason; first, because it denotes the astrological harmony of the nine spheres appropriate to her birth; then, “more subtly and according to infallible truth, this number was her very self,” “This lady was accompanied by the number nine to give to understand that she was a nine, that is, a miracle whose root is the wondrous Trinity alone.”

But Dante has prepared for the daring of this suggestion in his digression on the license of poets in their fictions from which I took my epigraph at the beginning of this day book. He seems to be explaining his license to a serious reader with a philosophic bias: “Here a person worthy of having all his difficulties made plain might be perplexed, for he might have a difficulty as to what I say concerning Love, as if he were a thing in
himself and not only an intelligent being but a corporeal being. Which thing according to truth, is false; for Love exists not as a being in itself but as a quality of a being.”

Things are not what they seem. But poets are allowed, Dante argues, a “greater license in speech” than composers in prose. “The poets have spoken to inanimate things as they had sense and reason and have made them speak together, and not only real things but unreal things.” Is Amor then the creature of such a poetic license? Nor was the poet sincere in that high ardor of vision in which he saw Beatrice so exalted? “Deep shame were it to him,” Dante writes: “who should rhyme under cover of a figure or of a rhetorical colour and, afterwards, being asked, knew not how to strip such vesture from his words, in such wise that they should have a real meaning.” Is it philosophical error or theological heresy that the poet would cover for in his license? Is the real meaning beneath the vesture of the figures of Amor and Beatrice less than or more than the poet would tell us in the poem? In the first case he means to warn us that he praises Beatrice inordinately; in the second case, that she is in truth—“the glorious lady of my mind who was called Beatrice by many who knew not how she was called”—an other higher entity. In sections v and vi of the Vita Nuovo, Dante tells us how midway between him and Beatrice there sat a lady “marvelling at my look which seemed to end in her,” so that many mistook the object of his gaze. “Then I comforted me greatly being assured that my secret had not been made common that day to others by my look.” “And straightway,” he continues: “I thought to make this lady a screen of the truth.”

* * *

From Apuleius’s The Golden Ass or those “fictions littéraires du logos de révélation”, as Festugière would call them, to which the orthodox Gospel of John as well as the heretical Acts of John surely belongs, from the creative romanticism of the late Hellenistic age to Dante’s La Vita Nuova in the transition to the Renaissance, even to H.D.’s War Trilogy written in our period which has relegated the terms of Christian vision as well as of pagan mystery or of daemonic or angelic hierarchies to the domain of illusion and delusion, the response to experience in the spirit of romance has been to seek out the deeper meaning or impact of the seizure that we know as falling in love. In each romance there is a transformation, a deprivation in which beyond the physical, a psychic and then a spiritual reality is revealed. Festugière is right, I think, in his pointing out that these revelations are fictions littéraires, for they come about in an art of fictions, a witchcraft of the Word. And their higher truth or reality remains poetic, a revelation of the power of the reality of man’s language itself. “The end of my Love,” Dante writes, “was once this lady’s salutation [where salute may also mean salvation]; and therein dwelt my beatitude, for it was the end of all my desires. But since it hath pleased her to deny it to me, Love, my lord, by his grace, hath placed all my beatitude in that which cannot fail me... in those words that praise my lady.”

*
To find the hour and the place, bringing into the fictive creation the particulars of the actual life, is part of the magic of self-transformation, so that the creative fiction enters the sense of actual reality. H.D., like Dante, like John of Patmos, has no experience that is not meaning, that is not, by emblem or rubric, part of feeling beyond her feeling. The events of her life are not only personal, they are also hints of a great universe to which all man's fictions belong. Dante's astrological and numerological practices, reading the nine of his fictions into the times of his actual life, take creative thought in actuality as they take action in a creative fiction, akin to H.D.'s practice of astrology and angelology:

I had been thinking of Gabriel,  
of the moon-cycle, of the moon-shell,  
of the moon-crescent  
and the moon at full.

It is taking thought where the poet begins to have a heightened sense of time and this life as informed by his Work. But our Work, which may have been the alchemical Work, or the Work in the Art, is now in a larger sense a Life-Work or evolution of Life in which we play our human phase. The poet begins to have a heightened sense of his involvement in a great work beyond his work.

*  
Ananke, in Freud's The Future of an Illusion, the law of "in so far as external reality allows it," reflects all Freud's sense of how the soul in the throws of creative change was most likely to come through "touched" or "silly," maimed or lost, in its new self. He had on his mind too how maimed, lost, silly, souls often were, who had gone through the alembic of religious conversions.

But Ananke had a twin in Logos. Ananke/Logos, that Freud proposes to take the place of the old gods of the cathedral, is just, in one guise, the Hell-Heaven that his nurse had sown in his infant mind. Ananke/Logos might also be the Christ-Crucified/Christ-Child. He is Falling-in-Love/Loving. He is the inspiration, the feeling of a divine order that we sense in a directive that is not from our personal bias but from the self we have in a universal community. He is Amor. He is the evolutionary imperative.

"You would have the state of bliss to begin immediately after death;" Freud writes: "you ask of it the impossible, and you will not surrender the claim of the individual. Of these wishes our god Logos will realize those which external nature permits, but he will do this very gradually, only in the incalculable future and for other children of men. Compensation for us, who suffer grievously from life, he does not promise." The reality—this is Freud's sense here that seems most true—the deep reality of actual life is without consolation for the claim of the individual. Dante tells us that in deprivation
of the actual Beatrice he wept and then fell asleep “like a beaten sobbing child.” H.D. in the opening passages of The Walls Do Not Fall speaks of her “desolation” and inspiration “stalks” like a threatening hunter so that the poet trembles. Amor, in La Vita Nuova, appears as “a cloud of the hue of flame, within which I discerned the figure of a lord, of fearful aspect to one who should look upon him.”

Yet the promise, wherever the pain has been known and received as a condition of the Work, is bliss. We had been talking of Kaspar, in H.D.’s poem, for he came to a moment when he knew in a way he was lost. “The seal of the jar was un-broken”—Kaspar was what he was; but “no secret was safe with a woman.” Did he fall in love? He had a high sense of his cause, his proper heat and center:

he drew aside his robe in a noble manner
but the un-maidenly woman did not take the hint;

yet the epiphany of The Flowering of the Rod is his falling in love somehow, falling in with the stars, being inspired. “Kaspar did not recognize her,” H.D. tells us:

until her scarf slipped to the floor,
and then, not only did he recognize Mary
as the stars had told (Venus in the ascendant. . .

We begin to trace the line of an inspired seizure, from “as the stars had told”—Yes, he felt what Dante called the salutation of the Lady, he felt he had an appointment there, as eyes too may meet in a new light—through the travail of desire, the courses of the stars,

and what he saw made his heart so glad
that it was as if he suffered,

his heart laboured so
with his ecstasy

in his seeing “the fleck of light”

like a flaw in the third jewel

to his right, in the second circlet,
a grain, a flaw or speck of light.

*  

Dante tells us that in the vision of Amor, his heart or rather, “the vital spirit which
dwelleth in the most secret chamber of the heart” trembled so that “it was horribly apparent in the least of my pulses”; even as “the animal spirit which dwelleth in the high chamber to which the spirits of sense carry their perceptions” began to marvel.

* 

So that when he comes into the presence of the Christ-Child, Kaspar is inspired to see or to present (for the fragrance that is the Divine Presence is both the myrrh which he brings escaped from the unbroken seal of the jar and also the Child born from the virgin woman) what we have called the promise of falling in love or the revelation of the end of desire. Which the Mother sees or knows is there.

she said, Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance,  
as of all flowering things together.

* 

“It is really about the soul, or the primal intelligence, or the Nous, or whatever we choose to call that link that binds us to the unseen and un-created,” John Gould Fletcher wrote in 1917, reviewing H.D.’s Sea-Garden. “A new cadence means a new idea,” the Preface of Some Imagist Poets in 1915 argued. Something Platonic and then neo-Platonic haunts these passages, as it haunts Pound’s definitions of *logopoeia*, *melopoeia* and *phanopoeia*, with hints not only of a theosophy, a lore and wisdom of divine orders, but also a theurgy, an operation of divine orders.

Fletcher sees H.D.’s work in such terms and tells us we must read her as we read “Plotinus or Dionysius the Areopagite, or Paracelsus, or Behmen, or Swedenborg, or Blake, or any other of the mystics.”

In the mixing ground of pre-war London where theosophical currents passed through the talk of Yeats and the lectures of G.R.S. Mead into the main bloodstream of Pound’s thought in the Cantos or, from some aftermath of Blavatsky’s fantastic anthropology and cosmogony, were stored up by D.H. Lawrence to emerge in his Fantasia of the Unconscious, there must have been times when talk of metrics and cadence turned to old theurgic ideas of numbers and evocative measures, where cadence meant a means of vision; where idea, eidolon and image were closely associated concepts. Allen Upward’s The Divine Mystery with its exposition of poetic genius as shamanistic power and its doctrine that desire through intuition operates in the actual was read and talked about by the literary following of The Egoist as well as the theosophical following of The Quest.

But H.D. is not a mystic philosopher. Her genius is fictive and dramatic, not philosophic. When she speaks of “where thought dwells, / and beyond thought and idea, / their begetter, /Dream, Vision,” these—thought, idea, dream, vision—are not concepts or terms of a phenomenology but entities, *dramatis personae* of her universe. “Sword” and “Word” are poetic counterparts of daimonic beings in neoplatonic hierarchies,
having their creative necessity here in the plasticity of the immediate reality of the poem rather than in the requirements of a philosophic structure. She is searching out the quality of an experience coming into being. There is no reality in H.D.’s sense of things that is not involved in the physical and vital realities around us. “Dream” or “Vision” are creative forces at large, and the Word may enter, as Death enters Cocteau’s world or Bergman’s. Like Ficino or Pico della Mirandola, her sense of the reality of the gods is of a magic to inform the life of her art. She evokes the old gods, and then the new—Christ as Master, the Lady, or the Christ-Child—and attends the tutelary spirits of the hours, her angels, as actual figures of a dramatic intensity. The place “where thought dwells” has at least the reality of Shakespeare’s coast of Bohemia.

She may interpret on many levels the meaning of their appearance or presence, but she does not present these persons of the poem as ethical or edifying figures. The War Trilogy or Helen in Egypt will not supply metaphysical or even psychological ideas on the nature of Love or of Evil, for H.D. seeks not terms of concept but terms of experience. There is no argument for the good of the union of all things but in the Child, the Mother at the close of the poem finds “a most beautiful fragrance, / as of all flowering things together.”


In comparing The War Trilogy with La Vita Nuova, we must recognize that, while H.D. has Dante’s concern for psychology, she does not have his philosophic interest: Dante is exploring the concept of Love as well as telling its story and evoking the reality of Love as an experience. Nor does H.D. have the moral concern of Bunyan in his allegory. But for all three, as poets, the primary concern is in the world of experience they create, whatever their philosophy, their morality or learning. It is of the essence that Amor too in La Vita Nuova is not a concept or an allegory but a presence of the poem, who can hold a burning heart in his hand, an eternal being of the dream. As for Bunyan too, who meant allegory, “in the similitude of a DREAM”, Atheist and Ignorance appear with all the force of living creatures and his created world takes on the urgency and immediacy of revelation that the actual world has. It is in this, in our entering a made up reality, rather than in whatever concept, that the specifically poetic lies.

Every hour, every moment
has its specific attendant Spirit

belongs to the metaphysics of Hellenistic and Renaissance star cults that no longer make sense in our contemporary science. Astrology fell into such disrepairs as men no longer were concerned with the actual stars themselves and ceased to observe the precession of the equinoxes and as men were no longer concerned with picturing their
nature but turned to telling fortunes. But in *The War Trilogy* the verses have to do with
the stage directions of the drama H.D. means to unfold. In the enchantment in which the
Spirits of hours and moments appear, we are led to an inner feeling of things that
changes the world about us into the world of the poem. It resists metaphysical concern.
Well, it does not rest at all on such a concern but upon a thing seen and heard:

> for it was ticking minute by minute
> (the clock by my bed-head,

> with its dim, luminous disc)

This is not, in a sense, artful writing, for no wit or sensibility of the poet must appear to
distract us from the world of the poem:

> there was no door
> (this was a dream, of course),

> and she was standing there,
> actually, at the turn of the stair.

* 

It is what is actual to the poem that concerns her. She may follow lines of asso-
ciation, opening new levels of what is happening, exciting reverberations. These unfold
in the course of the poem from her deepened and heightened sense of its world, of what
is happening. The core of the Imagist ethos is there thruout her work in the last years.
“Direct treatment” remains; all the special effects, interesting or sensitive words,
similes, metaphors, epithets have been eroded away by the attention to what is going
on. The thing in itself had become by 1915 a thing in its surroundings and atmosphere.
By the time of *The War Trilogy*, H.D. is most aware of a many-leveled experience. So, she
is drawn back to the old mystery cults— to mystery not to mysticism— to the roots of the
drama, back of Euripides, in the secret worships of the Mother, of Dionysos, and to the
Christ and the Lady of the Christian mysteries. Where she makes definitions they are
operative not logical. These gods or angelic orders are never speculative figures, pro-
positions of God, or members of a metaphysical system; they are actors upon a stage that
is the world.

“Bliss” is a state of the realized moment, as in *Bid Me to Live*: “walking for the
first time, taking the first steps in her her life, upright on her feet for the first time alone,
or for the first time standing after death (daughter, I say unto thee) she faced the author
of this her momentary psychic being, her lover, her husband. It was like that in these
moments. She touched paradise.”

Paradise, like the houses of the Zodiac, can no longer be placed in the dimen-
visions of the physical universe; but all places and gods have entered the imagination and belong as surely to the feeling of things as they ever did, for we have only to step upon the stage of *The Tempest* to find that Ariel and Caliban are most real and in turn to awaken to such attendant servants about us in our actual life. The world-map of Dante is a curiosity, but the poet in the *Paradiso* looking deep into the profound and shining being of God, for all his theological schema of the trinity, sees “one by the second as Iris by Iris seemed reflected, and the third seemed a fire breathed equally from one and from the other” and it is not the theology that lasts but this seeming; for looking “entering through the ray of the deep light which in itself is true,” Dante, who is full of discourse, found his vision “mightier than our discourse, which faileth at such sight.” This Paradise, like H.D.’s, that once was a place in the physical universe, now is a place in feeling.

*  

“The Tuscan demands harmony in something more than the plastic,” Pound wrote in the Cavalcanti essay: “He declines to limit his aesthetic to the impact of light on the eye. It would be misleading to reduce his aesthetic to terms of music, or to distort the analysis of it by analogies to the art of sonority. Man shares plastic with the statue, sound does not require a human being to produce it. The bird, the phonograph, sing. Sound can be exteriorized as completely as plastic. There is a residue of perception, perception of something which requires a human being to produce it. Which even may require a certain individual to produce it.” Then, the passage we have returned to before: “This really complicates the aesthetic. You deal with an interactive force: the *virtu* in short.” “The conception of the body as perfected instrument of an increasing intelligence pervades.” “The truth having been Eleusis?” he writes in that same sense in *Kulchur,* “and a modern Eleusis being possible in the wilds of a man’s mind only?”

*  

The god that appears to bewilder H.D.’s Pygmalion is the *virtu*, the interactive force of a creativity between the man as he is a maker who experiences in his making and the world as it is a matter that informs as it is shaped. There is the sculptor’s “*own light,*” “*own heat,*” “*own fire;*” the increasing intelligence is an increasing awareness of instrumentality in which the sense of the work is known as in-formed by the stone, the swirl on swirl of light, by the appearance out of the work. It is experience that is the fire in “*does this fire carve me / for its use?*” as thirty years later it is the experience of the poem that is the new Master over Love. There is no awareness or being above, beyond, outside of, the interaction of things we experience; and here, in the work of the poet the Master of the poem must be the experience of the Word, the Master of Rime. Our uses are our illuminations.
THE H.D. BOOK: Outline & Chronology

Part I: Beginnings

Chapter 1  [Coyote's Journal, 5/6 (1966), 8-31]
Chapter 2  [Coyote's Journal, 8 (1967), 27-35]
Chapter 3  [Tri-Quarterly, 12 (Spring 1968), 67-82]
Chapter 4  [Tri-Quarterly, 12 (Spring 1968), 82-98]
Chapter 5: “Occult Matters”  [Stony Brook, 1 (Fall 1968), 4-19]
Chapter 6: “Rites of Participation”  [Caterpillar, 1 (October 1967), 6-29]
  [Caterpillar, 2 (January 1968), 125-54]

NOTE: These are all the chapters written to date of Part I, which I think to consist of nine chapters.

Part II: Nights and Days

Chapter 1  [Sumac, I, 1 (Fall 1968), 101-46]
Chapter 2  [Caterpillar, 6 (January 1969), 16-38]
Chapter 3  [IO, 6 (Summer 1969)]
Chapter 4  [Caterpillar, 7 (April 1969), 27-60]
Chapter 5: section one  [Stony Brook, 3/4 (Fall 1969)]
  three more page  [Credences, 2 (August 1975), 50-52]
Chapter 6  unpulisht to date  [1983]
Chapter 7  [Credences, 2 (August 1975), 53-67]
Chapter 8  [Credences, 2 (August 1975), 68-94]
Chapter 9  [Chicago Review, 30, 3 (Winter 1979), 37-88]
Chapter 10  [IRONWOOD, 22 (1983)]
Chapter 11  [Montemora, 8 (1981), 79-113]

NOTE: These are all the chapters written to date [1983] of Part II, which I think to consist of twelve chapters, the last chapter to be written after Part III is completed. Chapter 5, which addresses the matter of the State and War, remains in large part unpulisht. Chapter 6, which has to do with the transmutations of genital and poetic experience, has not been pulisht at all (contrary to the impression given by the checklist in Scales of the Marvelous [New Directions, 1979]).

Part III: A Reading of Helen in Egypt
Note: The last three chapters of Part I and the remaining chapter of Part II I think to be dependent upon what happens in Part III, of which no sentence has yet been ventured. The first draft of the Book was done in 1961, considerable over-lays were written in 1964, with dream material entering into the Book as late as 1964. It had been commissioned by Norman Holmes Pearson as a Book for H.D.’s Birthday, but at the time of the commission I had warnd him that I saw H.D. as the matrix of my finding my work in Poetry itself. “I askt him for an H.D. book,” Norman Holmes Pearson said sometime in the 1960s, “and he’s writing an LSD book.”

– RD
A BIBLIOGRAPHY
for the students of the poetics program
in relation to my H.D. work.

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   2. [other titles listed]
[no entries for B.C.]
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               B.C.
               The Pharaoh’s Nest (1961) autobiography

II  EGYPT
   3. Sigfried Giedion, The Eternal Present: The
      Beginnings of Art

III  Egypt
   4. Sigfried Giedion, The Eternal Present: The
      Beginnings of Architecture

[In reading H.D. it is essential to research and reflect upon what one temple and the tombs were]
   * see above, no. 2
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