

## THE TEXTUAL UNCONSCIOUS AND ITS EFFECTS: AGGRESSION AND REPARATION IN H.D.'S WORK, 1935–1948

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Through a reading of H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* (1944-48) and "The Master" (1933-34), this paper engages directly with the fundamental issue of the representation of the woman's body in the 1930s, crucial years for the heated debates on feminine sexuality within the psychoanalytical community. H.D. responds to Freud by presenting us with an image of woman as whole and not castrated in her self-censored/ repressed poem dedicated to 'the Professor.'

This paper further aims at investigating Melanie Klein's influence on H.D. Her focus on aggression in her analysis with W. Schmeideberg (Klein's son-in-law) came to supplement Freud's account of her unconscious fear of male sadism towards women with fresh and complex evidence interwoven in the writing of her war poem *Trilogy* (1944).

Without the analysis and the illuminating doctrine or philosophy of Sigmund Freud, I would hardly had found the clue or the bridge between the child-life, the memories of peaceful Bethlehem and the orgy of destruction ... to be witnessed and lived through in London. That outer threat and constant reminder of death drove me inward.

(H.D. *Hermetic Definition*)

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961) is regarded today as a major modernist writer in several genres –poetry, fiction and autobiography. Over the last decade there have been a considerable number of biographical approaches to H.D. The increasing attention paid to her prose texts (public and private) together with pervasive attempts to assimilate her work, in various ways, to postmodernism, have revealed that she anticipated most of the theoretical developments of *écriture féminine* and of poststructuralist feminist criticism of the 1980's.

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H. D. herself was obsessed with her own life story and told it over and over. It is ironic, then, that at first she appeared to feminism as a prisoner to biography—as a minor character in the biographies and autobiographies of Pound, D. H. Lawrence, Aldington and others—whom feminist critics needed to rescue.

In the first section of this paper I will focus on H.D.'s autobiographical writings between 1935 and 1948, exploring mainly the effect that her analysis with Freud (1933-34) had on her work and also the way in which her poem "The Master" acts as a "textual unconscious" in relation to *Tribute to Freud*, published in 1945 as her account of the whole analytic experience.

Drawing on recent psychoanalytic theory, the textual unconscious is an authorial unconscious, an unconscious involved in the production of literature. In this sense, it should be useful for raising questions about the relation between what gets into the work and what gets left out, and about the sorts of repression that may operate in the production of literature. Consequently, it seems obvious that the notion of a textual unconscious brings up important questions with regard to women's writing.

If we apply Freud's concept of transference-resistance, H.D.'s resistance, as expressed in her writing, takes the form of the creation of different discourses, each one of which represents a different negotiation of the need to repress and the desire to express forbidden thoughts. As the most public and polished text, *Tribute to Freud* reveals least about her analysis, particularly the notion of her rebellion against Freud. Reading *Tribute to Freud* intertextually with her private discourses on analysis ("The Master" and her correspondence) I will attempt to interpret and reconstruct what H. D. resisted telling us.

#### **THE TEXTUAL UNCONSCIOUS IN *TRIBUTE TO FREUD***

By the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, H.D.'s works started to be a source of interest for feminist criticism. Early criticism in the U.S. was headed by Susan Stanford Friedman, whose essay "Who Buried H.D.?" (1975) was able to situate this writer contextually and to revalue her position within Modernism and in the larger picture of literary history. Today H.D. is considered to be an outstanding modernist figure in several genres and her oeuvre, together with those of other modernist women writers, has come to challenge the heated debate over canon formation in its intersections with gender and, more widely, with sexual orientation—the latter being crucial in H.D.'s personal history of open bisexuality.

At her friend Bryher's insistence, H.D. agreed to go into analysis. Thus, April through July 1931 she was analyzed by Mary Chadwick and over the last two months of the same year with Hanns Sachs, one of Freud's disciples. H.D. was not able to establish the necessary transference relationship with Sachs, and Sachs himself, together with Bryher, tried to persuade her to be analyzed by Freud. H.D. was soon enthusiastic about the idea and in the summer of 1932 she started to get ready by reading psychoanalytic publications widely and by studying Freud's theories thoroughly. Finally, in December 1932, she was included in Freud's list of patients for the following spring.

H.D. never sought a special status within the analytical community. She considered herself to be a "student" of Freud who, in the near future, by virtue of her privileged psychoanalytic training, would be able in informal sessions to help those

whom she called a "war-shocked and war-shattered people" (1974, 94). In any event, both H. D. herself and Freud understood that their collaboration should bring about the rebirth of the writer rather than the birth of a new analyst.

What started as an analytic exchange came subsequently to produce a series of texts that recreate H.D.'s analytic experience. The most public among those texts is her memoir *Tribute to Freud*, written in 1944 and published for the first time as a shorter text (the first section of *Tribute* in its present shape) as "Writing on the Wall" in her *Life and Letters Today* (1945-46) and as a complete volume with some changes and under its current title in 1956. The most intimate and most private of all those texts are the daily letters she wrote to her friend Bryher in which she gives a wealth of details about fragments of the analysis and her own version of the analytic situation, together with a rich and complex self-portrait of herself. More intimate than "Writing on the Wall", but less private than her personal correspondence is her diary "Advent", gathered together and prepared for publication in 1948 from the personal notes H.D. took over the first three weeks of the analysis and that she would destroy later on. Nevertheless, in a more covert and mythologized way, we may talk about the composition of her poem "The Master", probably written in 1935 and later on censored by the writer in subsequent editions of her poems. Finally, her memoir *The Gift*, written between 1941 and 1943 can be read as the follow-up of her analysis in as much as it is a revision of her first infancy, and her analysis of her own war phobia, a fact she did not come to discuss directly with Freud.

It is important to analyze the extent to which "The Master" is inscribed in *Tribute to Freud* as what we have called the textual unconscious of the latter work, an element in which repression, displacement and condensation –operations present in every psychic process– come into play.

From Lacan's dictum that the unconscious is structured like a language and following Jonathan Culler's theses in his essay "Textual Self-Consciousness and the Textual Unconscious" (1984), we may further add that the unconscious is constituted by discursive processes characterized by what we call "literary" structures. Jakobson's well known definition of the poetic function of language can equally be applied to structures in the unconscious. Undisputed evidence of that is precisely Freud's description of the way in which condensation and displacement are present in the dream as well as in other compromise-formations such as jokes or slips of the tongue. These also come to operate in current debates about the Wolf Man and his oral repertoire, with its endless play and its multiple signifying chains.

Jonathan Culler writes that the literary unconscious, a common feature of discussions about literature and psychoanalysis, "is an authorial unconscious, an unconscious involved in the production of literature; and the notion is thus useful for raising questions about the relation between what gets into the work and what gets left out, and about the sorts of repression that may operate in the production of literature" (1984: 369).

It is clear that this is a most important factor to consider when we work on women's writing. In H.D.'s prose we come to witness a constant and subtle negotiation between writing and silence that is also present in the work of many women writers due to our phallogentric social order and literary institutions. In this respect, Freud's concepts of the patient's free association and of resistance within the

context of the talking cure accurately illustrate this negotiation marked by gender. Freud stated that the drama in the analytic situation lies in the analysand's resistance to put an end to repression –that is to say, a resistance to listen to the discourse of the unconscious. Repression is a force that operates directly on the patient's discourse to prevent all culturally forbidden desires from coming to light. The ego (bound to the reality principle) and the superego (bound to cultural norms and passed on by the parental figures) jointly operate to prevent the analysand from articulating forbidden desire. In the domain of the talking cure, the analysis attempts to elaborate the hieroglyphic language of dreams and the silent language of symptoms in order to translate them into the direct language of the conscious mind. Consequently, according to Freud, the scene of the analysis is a space of negotiation between the need to repress and the desire to speak out.

The rhetoric in *Tribute to Freud* turns this memoir into a continuation of analysis in which H.D. does not make a clear distinction between the present and the past as episodes that, in her view, do not correspond to a linear organization. Each one of the two texts that compose *Tribute* has a problematic status as far as its composition is concerned. As H.D. writes in the opening lines of the text, "Writing on the Wall" –with its well known dedication, "To Sigmund Freud, blameless physician"– was written in London during the fall of 1944, and contains no reference to the notes that were taken in the Vienna notebooks in the spring of 1933, whereas she adds in a cryptic manner, and referring to "Advent": "'Advent,' the continuation of 'Writing on the Wall,' or its prelude was taken direct from the old notebooks of 1933, though it was not assembled until December 1948, Lausanne" (1974: xiv). The fact that "Advent" is simultaneously considered as a continuation or a prelude to "Writing on the Wall" entails an important rupture in the narrative. According to Rachel Blau DuPlessis:

Both [WW and A] imply that the 'finished' status of the Freud memoir ... has now been self-ruptured ... That self-rupture is an act which, not to be tedious, could be assimilated to the strategies of 'writing beyond the ending'; here as a kind of self-critique, the rewriting by breaking the sequence, postulating (as 'prelude' and/or as 'continuation') another sequence. One might say that 'Advent' was placed with 'Writing on the Wall' to make sure it is remembered that what is learned from the careful (non)reading offered in the Freud memoir is precisely the necessity of continuance. (Friedman and DuPlessis 1990: 108)

Both of them have their origin in the analytic experience, they are a faithful translation of what happened in the analysis, even though we agree with Rachel Blau DuPlessis that unlike "Writing on the Wall", "Advent" basically aims at offering the raw material of H.D.'s associations (1990: 108). In the case of "The Master", we should understand it as an elaboration that has the analysis as its source; nevertheless like the texts in prose, it reveals a profound transference relation between H.D. and Freud.

## **H.D.'S ARGUMENTS WITH FREUD**

H.D.'s first analysis with Freud centered mainly on the episode that she herself calls "writing on the wall", which occurred in Corfu in 1920, in the intense experience she lived with Bryher in the Scilly Isles in 1919, and in her vision of the

character she identifies as Peter Van Eck in 1920. Over the time H.D. was being analyzed, Freud wrote his essay "Femininity" (1933) that came out in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), and his longer philosophical and speculative essays, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930).

As Susan S. Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1981) have written, "The Master" can be read as H.D.'s personal response to the Freudian theory of feminine psychosexual development as it is presented in "Femininity" (1933). It is a long narrative poem organized in twelve sections in which, despite its mythological contents, we can identify Freud under the figure of "The Master" and his oracle of Miletus as the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. In the poem's first sections, H.D. conveys an idealized image of the master as god, later on she is forced to recognize that "his tyranny was absolute" (1984: 452). She angrily reacts to the master's refusal to give her a conclusive response to her hesitations, "I wanted an answer,/ a neat answer" (1984: 454). In section IV, H.D. presents us with her alternative to the Freudian model of the development of female sexuality with her categorical statement, "I could not accept from wisdom/ what love taught,/ woman is perfect" (1984: 455). Section V acts as corollary to the aforementioned; H.D. celebrates the feminine self from its bisexuality, from the fusion of masculine and feminine elements that are powerfully expressed in beautiful ambiguously sensual images. The end of section V is totally explicit:

there is a rose flower  
parted wide,  
as her limbs fling wide in dance  
ecstatic  
Aphrodite,  
there is a frail lavender flower  
hidden in grass;  
O God, what is it,  
this flower  
that in itself had power over the whole earth?  
for she needs no man,  
herself  
is that dart and pulse of the male,  
hands, feet, thighs,  
herself perfect. (1984: 456)

This autonomous feminine self that "needs no man" appears as a whole self, a self that lacks nothing, not a castrated self, a self that in psychoanalytic discourse would take us to the fantasy of the phallic mother in the preoedipal stage.

The following sections in the poem do acknowledge Freud's achievements, his crucial contribution to the progress of modern psychology and its repercussions on the advance of research on the human psyche (section VII). In section VIII, H.D. openly declares that Freud never asked her either to agree with his ideas or to spread the word of orthodox psychoanalysis: "He was rather casual,/ (we won't argue about that)/ (he said)/ 'you are a poet'" (1984: 458). No doubt, Freud's closest disciples will make a very different use from the poet of the master's works. It is my contention

that the approach of Freud's disciples can be identified as a way to become authorized by establishing a male tradition (see section VIII), whereas H.D.'s response is understood as more authentic since it is based on a form of knowledge that derives from her role of woman and poet and that she calls "prophetic".

H.D.'s prophecy spreads over the two last sections of the poem (sections XI and XII). The poet checks out the absolute lack of male perception about the indisputable fact of woman's perfection: "men will see how long they have been blind,/ poor men/ poor mankind/ how long/ how long/ this thought of the man-pulse has tricked them,/ has weakened them,/ shall see woman,/ perfect" (1984: 460). Finally she invokes goddess Rhodocleia, the goddess of the future feminine renaissance: "O heart of the sun/ rhododendron,/ Rhodocleia,/ we are unworthy your beauty,/ you are near beauty the sun,/ you are that lord become woman" (1984: 461). In Susan S. Friedman's view:

This woman –the goddess Rhodocleia– brings men to her knees in worship.... But in this most resistant of all texts, the one she refused to publish, H.D. played directly with images of impotence and castration, by which she meant the defeat of patriarchal authority in the interlocking domains of language, sexuality and religion. (1990: 305-306)

If we go back to the episode of "writing on the wall" that appears several times throughout *Tribute to Freud*, we should be able to check in what way the subjects and concerns that are present in "The Master" operate as a textual unconscious in its two sections. The episode that gives name to "Writing on the Wall" has to do with the trip that H.D. took to Corfu with her friend Bryher in 1920. There she suffered from a very intense hallucinatory experience that consisted of the perception of diverse forms, in a *chiaroscuro*, on the wall in her hotel room. H.D. believes these forms are symbols whose meaning she will attempt to find out later on in her analysis with Freud. We will start by briefly quoting the central episode in these visions,

Victory, Niké, as I called her exactly then and there, goes on. She is a common-or-garden angel, like any angel you may find on an Easter or Christmas card ... She is a moving-picture and fortunately she moves swiftly. Not swiftly exactly but with a sure floating that at least gives my mind some rest, as if my mind had now escaped the bars of that ladder, no longer climbing or caged but free and with wings.... Niké, Victory seemed to be the clue, seemed to be my own special sign or part of my hieroglyph. We had visited in Athens, only a short time ago, the tiny temple of Victory that stands upon the rock of the Acropolis, to your right as you turn right from the Propylaea. I must hold on to this one word. I thought, 'Niké, Victory', I thought, 'Helios, the sun...' And I shut off, 'cut out' before the final picture, before (you might say) the explosion took place. (1974: 55-56)

Freud has a peculiar way of reading the figure of Niké at a certain point in the analysis when he is talking to H.D. about the ancient objects that lie on his table and hang from the walls in his office. When he refers to the statue of Pallas Athené, she writes:

'This is my favorite', he said. He held the object toward me. I took it in my hand. it was a little bronze statue, helmeted, clothed to the foot in carved robe with the upper incised chiton or peplum. One hand was extended as if holding a staff or rod. 'She is perfect', he said, 'only she has lost her spear'. I did not say anything. He knew that I loved Greece. He knew that I loved Hellas. I stood looking at Pallas Athené, she whose winged attribute was Niké, Victory, or she stood wingless. Niké A-pteros in the old days, in the little temple to your right as you climb the steps to the Propylaea on the Acropolis at Athens. He too had climbed those steps once, he had told me, for the briefest survey of the glory that was Greece. Niké A-pteros she was called, the Wingless Victory, for Victory could never, would never fly away from Athens. (1974: 68-69)

As Rachel Blau and Susan S. Friedman stated over a decade ago, the scene in which Pallas Athené appears without her spear can be read as a translation, in symbolic terms, of Freud's theory of penis envy and of the castration complex that leads women inevitably to the development of adult sexuality. The perfect woman is castrated, the one who has lost her spear. The figure of Niké, Victory in H.D.'s private mythology, is a winged figure who has lost her wings, one of the manifestations of Pallas Athené having lost her spear. It is evident that both in *Tribute to Freud* and in "The Master" we are in the middle of a heated debate about female castration. In opposition to the paradigm of femininity constructed around lack, in our view, "The Master" is a dissonant, coded and covert response that suggests woman's perfection in its difference and wholeness.

In *Tribute to Freud*, displacement and condensation operated as modes of representation, as much as they operate in the dream work. "Writing on the Wall" and "Advent" were written in 1944 and 1948 respectively, "The Master" is contemporary with analysis and critics say it was written around 1935. "The Master" would thus constitute a lower stratum than *Tribute to Freud* and these works as a whole could be thought of as a palimpsest, the most habitual and interesting compositional mode for H.D.

In her later diaries and poems, H.D. refers to the principles she learned from Freud that helped her confront the "Dragon of war-terror" (*Tribute* 1974: 94). Integrating Freud's concepts of repression, repetition compulsion, projection and trauma, H.D. looked for the recurring patterns in her periods of personal disaster. She believed that the emotions and actions of nervous breakdowns were partially determined by the buried layers of preceding catastrophes projected onto the present. She frequently turned to the image of "palimpsest" to describe this process. As Susan S. Friedman has accurately explained,

'Palimpsest' means literally 'scraped again' in Greek and refers in English to a tablet which is imperfectly erased and written upon many times. H.D. used the metaphor in *Palimpsest*, *Trilogy*, and a number of journals to express her concept of 'superposition,' the layering of similar events throughout time. As she applied the metaphor to her own life, personal history became a series of 'writings' inscribed on the same tablet. Each layer of time is erased to make way for the future, but the new is always determined in some way by the old. For H.D., the palimpsest of disaster

involved the interconnected shock waves brought on by war, death and betrayal in love. The presence of any of these seemed to bring to the surface her previous experiences with all the others. (1981: 29)

H. D. understood and Freud confirmed for her that the palimpsests of her personal history profoundly affected her art.<sup>1</sup> A palimpsest, for H. D. is a repetition, not a progression of layers, different yet the same as before. As Deborah Kelly Kloepper has written, a palimpsest "creates a strange, marginal writing that is both intentional and accidental; it must be excavated, sought after, at the very moment it is seeping through unbidden" (1990: 185). Susan Friedman remarks that for H.D. the palimpsest served as a metaphor of both personal and collective histories, "As an image for the psyche, palimpsest suggests the psychodynamics of conscious and unconscious memory and repression. As an image for history, it signifies the cyclical repetitions that structure the seemingly linear march of time (1990: 236-37).

In *Tribute to Freud* the psyche is structured as a palimpsest with several layers that bear the imprint of multiple inscriptions. Repression operates strongly, first of all due to the fact that H.D. does not dare to declare openly to Freud her bisexuality. In the only moment when she hints at a fleeting juvenile attraction to Frances J. Gregg, Freud sanctions: "When I told the Professor that I have been infatuated with Frances Josepha and might have been happy with her, he said, 'No—biologically, no'" (1974: 152). On the other hand, strangely enough, the long and consolidated relationship between H.D. and Bryher is left out of the analysis, and ultimately is alluded to as a neutral friendship, without any further nuance. It seems evident that in *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. does not intend either to refute Freud's theories on feminine psychosexual development, or to debate technical questions such as the preoedipal and Oedipal stages, the relationship between the girl and the phallic mother or the origin of bisexuality. Her project is altogether different in "The Master". From the force of the poetic image, "The Master" wants to be H.D.'s polished and condensed response to Freud's phallocentrism and heterosexism. The space-time displacement to classical antiquity in the poem falls within the limits of the closely familiar for both H.D. and Freud.

H.D. states in "The Master", "I had two loves separate" —section II— (1984: 453) and "woman is perfect" —section IV— (1984: 455). The barrier of repression has been lifted in what we have been calling the textual unconscious in *Tribute to Freud*. It is clear that this is a way of saying that "The Professor" —the way H.D. always called Freud— was not always right (1974: 99). H.D. designs her own alternative contributing with a poetic response to the psychoanalytic discourse that today, from different positions, schools and trends, is still under construction. Her prophetic words appear as a prelude to the contemporary debate between feminism and psychoanalysis. When in *Tribute to Freud* she reminds us that, "...beyond your caustic implied criticism —if criticism it is— there is another region of cause and effect, another region of question and answer" (1974: 99), she seems to be giving a much needed lesson to psychoanalytical orthodoxy.

## AGGRESSION AND REPARATION IN *TRILOGY*

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<sup>1</sup> H. D. wrote a novel entitled *Palimpsest* (1926) where she explored her inner split as an artist and a woman in her relationship with men. This novel painfully portrays a gifted woman whose intellect and creativity make her sexually undesirable to men who ultimately reject her for stereotypically feminine women.



We are voyagers, discoverers of the not known. (H.D. "The Walls Do Not Fall")

H.D. completed *Trilogy* in December 1944, just two months after she drafted *Tribute to Freud*. In his Foreword to the New Directions edition of the poem, Norman Holmes Pearson, H.D.'s friend and literary executor, tells that on the proof sheets of "The Walls Do Not Fall" (the title of the poem's first section), H.D. marked passages and initialed them for those to whom they seemed most appropriate. For herself she chose the second epigraph I am using in this section. *Trilogy* consists of three long poems written over a period of three years under the devastating impact of World War II, "The Walls Do Not Fall" (1942), "Tribute to the Angels" (1944) and "The Flowering of the Rod" (1944). In the first book of the *Trilogy*, published in the midst of the London blitz, the poet maintains the hope that though "we have no map;/ possibly we will reach haven,/ heaven" (1973: 59). "Tribute to the Angels" describes new life springing from the ruins, and "The Flowering of the Rod" shows an unyielding faith in love and in the continuation of life, inspired as it is by the epigram that opens this section, "pause to give/ thanks that we rise again from death and live" (1973: 111).

H.D. dedicated "The Walls Do Not Fall" to her friend Bryher, "for Karnak" where they had been together, "from London" where they were staying through the war years. They had visited the temple of Amen-Ra, had been in Egypt at the moment of the excavation of Tutankhamen, whom, in the statue now in the Louvre, Amen holds between his legs. H.D. was trying to connect the experience of World War II with her history and with the larger horizon of human history.

Karnak and London were periods of H.D.'s history. So also were Bethlehem and Philadelphia, though they remain as a very vague background in *Trilogy*. Bethlehem was her birthplace. In the "Advent" section in *Tribute to Freud*, she writes about its significance to her and thus its significance to "The Flowering of the Rod":

Church Street was our street, the Church was our Church. It was founded by Count Zinzendorf who named our town Bethlehem.

People tell one things, and other children laugh at one's ignorance. 'But Jesus was not born *here*'.

That may be true. We will not discuss the matter. Only after some forty years, we approach it. 'I don't know if I dreamed this or if I just imagined it, or if later I imagined that I dreamed it'. 'It does not matter,' he said, 'whether you dreamed it or imagined it or whether you just made it up, this moment. I do not think you would deliberately falsify your findings. The important thing is that it shows the trend of your fantasy or imagination.'

He goes on. 'Your were born in Bethlehem? It is inevitable that the Christian myth—' He paused. "This does not offend you?" 'Offend me?' 'My speaking of your religion in terms of myth,' he said, 'How could I be offended?' 'Bethlehem is the town of Mary,' he said. (1974: 122-23)

In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. raises the following question: "Do I wish myself, in the deepest conscious or subconscious layers of my being, to be the founder of a

new religion?" (1974: 37). *Trilogy* may well be her complex answer to this question, one in which, as Alik Barnstone states, although "[H.D.] does not establish a new religion, she certainly 'makes it new' while creating an eclectic scripture that derives from Egyptian, Greek, and biblical traditions" (H.D. 1998: vii). *Trilogy* can also be read as a product of H.D.'s subsequent analyses. It is a philosophically complex and difficult text.

In *Trilogy*, H.D. synthesizes the three disciplines of religion, art and medicine, appearing both as the Priestess and as the scribe. As a poet she identifies with the Egyptian Toth and the Alexandrian Hermes Trismegistes, and she wants to pay homage to the Toth/Hermes who "will lead us back to the one-truth". Her task is also didactic, aiming at instructing us to transcribe: "scrape a palette/ point pen or brush,/ prepare papyrus or parchment,/ offer incense to Toth,/ the original Ancient-of-days,/ Hermes-thrice-great" (1973: 48). As the transcriber of the writing-on-the-wall episode, the poet is endowed with a special gift for sight and hermeneutic power. As Susan S. Friedman has stated, H.D.'s poetry in *Trilogy* "has its roots in her translation of the hieroglyphs of the unconscious.... *Trilogy* contains forty-three sections that revolve around an intense moment of 'supernormal' consciousness when the rational mind of the poet is overwhelmed by the enigmatic voice of the unconscious" (1981: 75-76).

This section is a rereading of a large part of H.D.'s *Trilogy* from a Kleinian perspective in an attempt to analyze her portrayals of female aggression.<sup>2</sup> In her book *Penelope's Web. Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (1990), Susan S. Friedman makes an intriguing case for the centrality of matricidal fantasies in H.D.'s work. Proposing that H.D.'s "flight from home" and resettlement in London in 1911 was "a 'killing' of the motherland and fatherland embedded in the psyche of the fleeing artist", Friedman argues that "to break free means –terrifyingly– to 'kill' the mother" (1990: 220, 278) who would deny her daughter's artistic powers as she had previously denied her own. Yet while this reading fully recognizes the interweaving of anger and art for H.D., *Penelope's Web* as a whole maintains a curious split between a readiness to explore women's aggression between the mother-daughter dyad and a reluctance to explore women's aggression in the context of war. My attempt to reread H.D.'s ambivalence toward female aggression in her work is part of a larger and more ambitious project to suggest new readings (many of them inspired by Melanie Klein's theories) of H.D.'s canonical and marginal writings.<sup>3</sup>

As I have written before, her analysis with Freud took place in Vienna, March through June-July 1933 and November–December 1934. Later on, H.D. was also analyzed by Walter Schmideberg (October 1935 through May 1937), Melanie Klein's son-in-law, and one might venture that H.D.'s analysis oscillated at that time between a Freudian and a Kleinian pole. During the same years, Melanie Klein's pioneering speculations on infantile aggression, melancholia, envy and reparation

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<sup>2</sup> Melanie Klein (Vienna 1882-London 1960), one of the first female analysts who did not follow the Freudian orthodoxy. She moved to London, invited by Ernest Jones and decided to remain there. She started pioneer work in the analysis of children, and established her own (Kleinian) group within the British Psychoanalytical Society holding views in opposition to the Freudians.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, it would be crucial to have the chance to consult H.D.'s correspondence, as well as her friend Bryher's correspondence with H.D.'s analyst Walter Schmideberg (during the period when she was in analysis with him, between October 1935 and May 1937), and the manuscript of her poetic work, *Trilogy* (1942-44). H.D.'s letters and manuscripts are kept at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Harvard University.

became the object of increasing contention in the British Psychoanalytic Society, with her daughter, Melitta Schmideberg (Walter's wife), standing as one of Klein's leading detractors. This so-called professional struggle between mother and daughter, combined with H.D.'s therapeutic focus on her own capacity for anti-social and (self)destructive behavior, created a new frame of reference for her war experiences; and with the writing of *Trilogy*, she began to articulate a revised vision of war which called women's as well as men's aggression, into account. In addition, Walter Schmideberg also devoted some sessions of the analysis to her daughter's Perdita's own unresolved conflicts towards H.D.

Susan S. Friedman has extensively argued in *Penelope's Web* that in her analysis with Freud, H.D. was afraid to reveal an unconscious "Wish for Freud to occupy the position of victim as the precondition of rebirth –the killing of the Father who terrifies and the 'birth' of the wounded son who would be her [H.D.'s] equal" (1990: 342). Here Friedman carefully tempers the threat of the daughter's aggression by linking her patricidal wishes to more admirable wishes for social equality and the father's rebirth. This account contrasts sharply with that of H.D.'s matricidal fantasies, where the daughter kills for the comparatively selfish ends of revenge and self-advancement, and where the fate of the mother in death is of no concern.

Records of H.D.'s analysis with Walter Schmideberg (Friedman 1990: 292) suggest that H.D. used the years leading up to the World War II to undertake an exploration of female aggression against women (and the mother, in a patriarchal society that values the father's life over the mother's) in an analysis ambivalently indebted to the theories of Melanie Klein.

As several H.D. scholars (Friedman, DuPlessis) have argued, H.D.'s correspondence with Bryher reveals many elements present in the analysis and gives us a vantage point to assess and speculate about the hybrid nature (Freudian-Kleinian) of it. Apparently, H.D.'s correspondence shows many Kleinian terms, such as, good and bad object, unconscious phantasy, infantile sadomasochistic trends, etc. The experience of her analysis with Schmideberg seems to demonstrate the clear connection between female aggression and war.

It is my contention that by focusing on Kleinian sources for the war *Trilogy* we may uncover important aspects which have previously been overlooked, and suggest new readings. In this regard, the objectives of my work in this section would be the following:

1. To attempt to show to what extent H.D.'s analysis with Freud that has so far determined the history of the readings of H.D.'s works can be complemented or modified with a Kleinian analysis.
2. To assess to what extent Klein's ideas have influenced/shaped the writing of a complex poem in three parts, *Trilogy*. A reading of parts I and II, "The Walls Do Not Fall" and "Tribute to the Angels" and analysis of her debt to Klein (especially to her concept of "reparation").

## **AGGRESSION, FOOD AND STARVATION IN "THE WALLS DO NOT FALL"**

In Susan S. Friedman's account, female figures in H.D.'s work can show hostile feelings towards other women, but they always end up taking the position of masochistic victim of men's sadistic aggression in "the interlocking economies of war and motherhood" (1990: 282). Friedman finds strong support for her argument in H.D.'s 1934 analysis with Freud, where together they traced her fears of violence to an unconscious equation between the primal scene and the father's murder of the mother. Friedman proposes that during World War II the Nazis assume for H.D. "the part of the Father Who Terrifies –the one who kills and maims the mother and daughter in a sadomasochistic scene of violence and desire" (1990: 290, 340). In my view, Friedman in her account leaves unexplored two crucial issues that are far from any essentialist argument: women's own sadism and the mother's aggression against father or son.

The disparity between H.D.'s patricidal and matricidal fantasies in Friedman's account suggests that H.D. herself had greater difficulty in exploring female aggression against men than against women in a patriarchal society which values the father's life against the mother's. In the double standard laid down by patriarchal logic, the mere wish for the father's death is considered a public matter, requiring social justification, while the wish for the mother's death is bracketed as a private matter of consequence only to the daughter.

At least to some extent, Walter Schmideberg's ambivalence towards Klein's theories must have been influenced by Melitta Schmideberg's growing hostility towards her mother.<sup>4</sup> By 1941, the battle over Klein's work, which had been greatly exacerbated by the influx of Viennese refugees who regarded Klein's departures from Freud with bitter skepticism, erupted into a general crisis in the British Psychoanalytic Society. This crisis gave rise to the Five Extraordinary Meetings of 1942 and the Controversial Discussions, which began in January of 1943 and lasted until March of 1944. The Controversial Discussions were conducted as formal meetings in which Klein and several of her female disciples offered summary papers of her theories in an attempt to clarify her debts to, and departures from, Freudian thought. However, there was general agreement that these meetings served as displaced sites for expressing deeper anxieties about World War II. In April of 1942, Sylvia Payne told the Society: "The conflict is extraordinarily like that which is taking place in many countries and I feel sure that it is in some way a tiny reverberation of the massive conflict which pervades the world" (in Grosskurth 1986: 297-98).

While an exclusive focus on Kleinian sources for *Trilogy* is obviously inadequate to the poem's complexity, even a quick glance at Klein's influence on the poem uncovers important aspects which have previously been overlooked, and suggests new readings. We may begin with the theme of food and starvation in the hunger stories of "The Walls Do Not Fall". Sections 4 and 6 establish the theme through two narrators, the mollusc and the worm, who both inhabit the hostile and terrifying environment so common in the first long poem of the *Trilogy*. For H.D. the archaic meaning of "worm" (serpent) links this symbol to the healing power of Hermes's caduceus, which is entwined with snakes. Serpents were also sacred to the ancient Egyptians, and many poems in "The Walls Do Not Fall" draw from this culture that pre-dates (and thus re-codes) Judeo-Christian myths. H.D. embarks on a

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<sup>4</sup> See Phyllis Grosskurth's (1986) detailed account in part 3 chapter 3, "Mourning" (200-31).

quest to recover and reassemble the fragmented legacies of earlier cultures –a quest that parallels both the reassembly of Osiris by Isis, and the reconstruction of relics by archaeologists (H.D. had witnessed the excavation of Tutankhamen's pyramid in 1923).

While the speaker draws power from her new position as worm/serpent, she is also more vulnerable than the mollusc who "limits its orbit / of being" (1973: 8). The worm/serpent must "escape" menace from the sky (like Londoners during the blitz), from thorns, and from pursuit. Persistent, the worm ingests her hostile environment and "profit[s] by every calamity" (1973: 12).

Giving life to the abstract land of section 2, where "they [the mollusc and the worm] were angry when they were so hungry/ for the nourishment, God" (1973: 5), the mollusc and worm usher us into a world arrested at the oral stage, where heaven is the chance to "feed forever/ on the amber honey-comb/ of your remembered greeting" (1973: 39), and yet, at any moment, the gods may choose to devour, rather than nourish, their worshippers.

This can easily be related to the actual conditions of wartime London, with the long food-lines, short rations, and constant threat of attack. This world might equally be the product of the Kleinian infant's paranoid fantasies of maternal attack. Thus, a passage like the following, drawn from section 34, easily encompasses both experiences: "we know further that hunger/ may make hyenas of the best of us;/ let us, therefore (though we do not forget/ Love, the Creator,/ her chariot and white doves),/ entreat Hest,/ Aset, Isis, the great enchantress,/ in her attribute of Serqet,/ the original great-mother,/ who drove/ harnessed scorpions /before her" (1973: 47).

Like the Kleinian infant, the inhabitants of "The Walls Do Not Fall" are frequently insignificant and genderless, at once vulnerable, needy and self-obsessed. Their world itself often appears to exist without nuances; split sharply into rival camps of "us" and "them", "Good" and "Evil" (1973: 5), it recalls too the paranoid-schizoid phase of the Kleinian infant and its fantasies of the good and bad mother.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis has noted that while the "first poem [of the *Trilogy*] is, in the main, about Amen, the father God", the mother goddesses maintain "a muted presence" (1985: 116). The ongoing focus in the sequence on food and starvation confirms this sense; yet it also underlines the fact that the spiritual seekers of "The Walls Do Not Fall" cannot count on the mother's good will, for they live in a nightmare of constantly reversing agency. Thus, when Amen appears as "the Ram" in section 22, he confronts a child-like seeker who begs both to be taken home and to be eaten alive: "let your teeth devour me,/ let me be warm in your belly" (1973: 31). Where Freud traces childhood animal phobias back to a fear of the castrating father, the seeker's fantasy of self-annihilation follows an alternative pattern laid down by the devouring Kleinian mother. Amen himself, in bearing the belly of the mother as well as the phallic horns of the Mosaic patriarch, takes after this same figure, who acquires phallic traits when she swallows the father's penis during intercourse.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This can be related to the concept of the Combined parent figure in Kleinian theory. It is the earliest and most primitive fantasy of the Oedipal situation, expressed as the mother with the father inside her. It is the source of especially strong violence and sadism, derived from envy of parental intercourse and the exclusion from it of the infant. See M. Klein (1929) "Infantile anxiety-situations reflected in the work of

H.D. concludes "The Walls Do not Fall" as if threatened by a fit of madness. The protagonist-seeker spins out of control in an indeterminate space defined by the "reversion of old values,/ oneness lost, madness" (1973: 43). With the confession in section 34 that "hunger/ may make hyenas of the best of us" (1973: 47), the seeker acknowledges the strength of hunger, and abandons faith in any simple purity of love for the powers of Isis, "the original great-mother,/ who drove/ harnessed scorpions/ before her" (1973: 47): a goddess as willing to kill as she is to cure. This equivocal mother-figure takes center-stage in "Tribute to the Angels", where she appears as a "breaker, seducer/ giver of life, giver of tears" (1973: 71). There is a clear transition, by virtue of which the poet abandons the terrifying, persecutory world of "The Walls Do Not Fall", to enter a more self-reflective space in which to examine the residue of her own anger, frustration and grief.

## REPARATION IN "TRIBUTE TO THE ANGELS"

This is a wholly unified sequence, in which the poet moves forward under the guidance of Hermes Trismegistus, the founder of Egyptian culture, inventor of language, and with the support of the book of Revelation, where she finds her role as prophet justified. In my view, "Tribute to the Angels", shows a strong debt to Klein's theory of reparation.

Melanie Klein's ideas on sublimation and reparation from her early work up to her latter work,<sup>6</sup> including her latest paper "On the sense of Loneliness" (1963) –one of the most important pieces in my view–, put forward a conception of art as an outcome of depressive anxiety and a product of the depressive position. The impulse to make reparation for the damage caused by the ego's own aggression and destructive impulses arises when the object is both felt as whole and injured, and guilt and concern urge the ego to repair.

But Klein also undertakes what I will call a pure deconstructive effort in her project, especially by virtue of her subversion of any normative teleology implicit in her theory of the fragility of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.<sup>7</sup> The impossibility of ever being able to work through the depressive position and the falling back into circles of sadism and aggressiveness with their specific modes of paranoid-schizoid defenses, is explicit in most of Klein's later work.

Hanna Segal and Adrian Stokes among others have developed a Kleinian inspired aesthetic theory. In "A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetics" (1952), Segal argues that art is an expression of the depressive position. It is guilt, as a result of the subject's own hatred and aggression, which gives rise to the need to restore and recreate. Segal points out that in the unconscious of all artists there is an acute awareness that all creation is the re-creation of a once loved and once whole, but

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art in the creative impulse" (1975, vol I: 210-18).

<sup>6</sup> See "Infantile Anxiety Situations as Reflected in a Work of Art and the Creative Impulse" (1929), "The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego" (1930), "The Effect of Early Anxiety Situations in the Sexual Development of the Boy" included in *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932), her central essays on manic-depressive states (1935, 1940), and "Love, Guilt and Reparation" (1937).

<sup>7</sup> Klein first described the paranoid-schizoid position in 1946 in her paper "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms". In her work with children she observed that in the earliest states of mind, persecutory anxiety is met by processes which threaten to fragment the mind. Its severity affects the move onwards into the depressive position (usually reached at four to six months) because the integrity of the mind is severely disrupted.

now ruined and lost object, a ruined internal world and self. For Klein, the mourner is not only deprived of the lost object, but also fears that he will lose his internal good objects,<sup>8</sup> with which the loved person –or "ideal" in the most general sense– was identified. Mourning thus reinstates the individual's internal objects, becoming once again convinced of their presence via creative fantasies. For Segal, Marcel Proust epitomizes the aesthetic attitude. In the Proustian universe, only the lost past and the lost or dead object can be made into a work of art.

It would also be crucial to distinguish between creative acts and fantasied reparation, but this is difficult to grasp in the Kleinian account. C. Fred Alford sees the problem this way, "The artistic representation acknowledges the external world, even as it goes on to create another one. In creating another world of perfect wholeness and reconciliation, art calls attention to the contrast between this perfect world and its damaged, fragmented, empirical counterpart. It is in this contrast between fantasy and reality that the emancipatory power of art resides" (1989: 16). For Alford, whereas art need not terminate in premature catharsis, reparation in fantasy most likely will.

When considering how art can confront the meaninglessness of existence, C. Fred Alford siding with Klein, puts it this way: "The world possesses a surfeit of meaning, the result of projective identification, in which we make the world like us in order to make a home in it. Rather than find ourselves thrown into a world already void of meaning, we empty it ourselves via our envy, greed, and hatred, taking from the world all the goodness that might make it a decent home for humanity" (1989: 129). Alford remarks that beneath the terror of meaninglessness lies humanity's terror at its own irrational aggression. The real tragedy it is that it is the individual who makes the world the empty, unresponsive place it so often is. Alford remarks that the Kleinian account suggests that the problem of integrating our love and hate is so profound –and so constitutive of reality– that it will remain a severe problem in any imaginable society, even as it may take different forms.

In section I of "Tribute to the Angels", H.D. models the "new church", which "spat upon/ and broke and shattered" (1973: 63) the icons and rituals of its predecessors, on the Kleinian infant who "has, in his aggressive phantasies, injured his mother by biting and tearing her up". And where Klein goes on to state that the infant "may soon build up phantasies that he is putting the bits together again and repairing" his mother's body (1975, vol. I: 308), H.D. calls for her fellow "thieves and poets" to "collect the fragments of the splintered glass, .../ melt down and integrate,/ re-invoke, re-create" the lost mother-goddesses (1973: 63). This plea makes way for the central acts of reparation in the central bitter jewel sequence, whose imagery again alludes to Klein. In "Love, Hate and Reparation", Klein analyses emotional bitterness into its components of "frustrated greed, resentment and hatred" (1975, vol. I: 342). She traces these feelings back to the infant's early grievances against its persecutory parents, and argues that the work of reparation is to replace "bitterness of feeling" with love and "contentment". She writes: "If we have become able, deep in our unconscious minds, to clear our feelings to some extent towards our parents of grievances, and have forgiven them for the frustrations

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<sup>8</sup> For Klein, internal objects are, as it were, mirrors of reality. Our relations with objects comprise what we are. At the earliest stage of development there exists a repertoire of very varied "imagos" (unconscious experiences or fantasies of concrete objects), some of which are helpful figures or good objects.

we had to bear, then we can be at peace with ourselves and are able to love others in the true sense of the word" (1975, vol. I: 343).

Deborah Kloepfer has argued that the bitter jewel sequence functions as the space in which H.D. begins to work through the intense ambivalence of her early work, by "attempting to fuse ... conflicting aspects of the mother" (1989: 130). At least one instance in H.D.'s earlier writing support Kloepfer's reading and its patent relation to the Kleinian model of reparation. In "The Wise Sappho" (1982),<sup>9</sup> Sappho is said to find Eros "a bitter, bitter creature ... who has once more betrayed her"; in turn, her own "manners" and "gestures are crude, the bitterest of all destructive gibes of one sensitive woman at the favourite of another" (1982: 65, 60). H.D. uses repetition to trace adult aggression, our capacity to conduct "bitter, unending wars", back to the "bitter jewel" and the child's unresolved "bitterness of feeling" towards the persecutory mother (1973: 72).

The poet comes to recognize her ancient feelings of frustration and anger, and she is able to acknowledge their positive as well as negative effects. At the opening of "The Flowering of the Rod", the bitter maternal jewel is associated with "the anger, frustration,/ bitter fire of destruction" (1973: 114), and also with "the fire/ of strength, endurance, anger/ in [the] hearts" of the heroic Londoners who refuse to abandon their city during the Blitz (1973: 68-69). H.D.'s decision to "give/ thanks" to Uriel, angel of war, left unhallowed until now (1973: 70), reflects Klein's sense that aggression plays a necessary and productive role in human development. Thus, H.D. lights a candle to Uriel of "the red-death" and one to "Annael,/ peace of God" on either side of the bitter jewel sequence, and insists that the "one must inexorably/ take fire from the other/ as spring from winter" (1973: 70, 79, 80). Reenacting the drama of the Kleinian child, whose willingness to acknowledge and work through its anger toward the mother occasions its successful entrance into language and love, this passing of the flame from war to peace prepares the way for H.D.'s dream of the Lady, whose "kindly" look dissolves "primitive terror" (1973: 104). With the poet's declaration that "she must have been pleased/ with the straggling company of the brush and quill" who have honored her image in words and paint, we too experience the reparative power of symbols (1973: 100).

"Tribute to the Angels" turns progressively into a treatise on color, where the poet ends up painting in white, which is a no color and all colors. As she had previously written on poem 38, "she carries a book but it is not/ the tome of the ancient wisdom,/ the pages, I imagine, are the blank pages of the unwritten volume of the new" (1973: 103). Now, white is associated with renewal, reparation, happiness and perfection:

And the point in the spectrum  
where all lights become one,  
is white and white is not no-color,  
as we were told as children,  
but all-color;  
where the flames mingle  
and the wings meet, when we gain  
the arc of perfection,

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<sup>9</sup> Sappho's presence is undisputed in *Sea Garden* (1916), but H.D.'s specific meditation on the Greek poet has only been recently acknowledged (1982).



we are satisfied, we are happy,  
we begin again. (109)

There is a movement in the poem towards wholeness and the poet offers her own personal tribute to the angels.

H.D.'s exploration of female aggression in the 1930s and 1940s provides a counterpoint to her previous tendency to regard aggression and sadism as a purely masculine affair. Klein's primary focus on the mother-child dyad did not provide H.D. with significant models for exploring female aggression against men. However, in contrast to psychoanalytic accounts which place the mother-child dyad outside the social domain—outside the Law of the Father—Kleinian theory did allow H.D. to grant the mother a central role in the child's socialization. H.D.'s poetic interpretation of the Kleinian child's recruitment of its own aggression for the ends of healing and creativity offers critics a richly imaginative account of the conversion of individual anger into cultural production. As we have attempted to show, the Kleinian legacy comes to supplement and to challenge some deeply entrenched Freudian tenets. It does contribute to elaborate new readings of H.D.'s works and to current debates on modernist studies. This may as well be read as the return of the repressed with a vengeance.

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