

HD's WEB

an e-newsletter

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

2011 marks the 125th anniversary of H.D.'s birth (September 10) and the 50th anniversary of her death (September 27). *HD's Web* solicited pieces about readers' first encounters with H.D.'s work and how they have been affected by it. I hope you enjoy and are moved by (as I was) the brief contributions by Michael Boughn, Donna Hollenberg, and Lisa Simon, as well as the poems by Olive Ritch, and the essay by Julie Sampson, which explores *Sea Garden* in the context of the landscapes of the southwest of England.

I was a late-comer to H.D.'s poetry. A French and Russian double-major in college, I can't remember if I read any of her work in my few English classes: maybe "Oread." When I was in graduate school, I noticed my MFA-pursuing housemate had an entire shelf by her bed of works by "H.D.," which I remember thinking odd (why not use one's whole name?). It wasn't until a few years later when I was researching dissertation topics that I found that this mysterious H.D. had written a tragedy on a classical subject, *Hippolytus Temporizes*. My first substantial encounter with H.D.'s work was through this play, which led me to her poems, her novels, her essays...

While I have been at times frustrated or baffled by H.D.'s work, I have always relished the contact with a mind and spirit that is constantly seeking, testing, finding, and guarding what is good, true, and beautiful. Italo Calvino in his essay "Why Read the Classics?" proposes several definitions of "the classics" (the first is, "the books of which we usually hear people say, 'I am rereading...' and never 'I am reading...'"). His third definition comes to mind when I think about H.D.'s work: "The classics are books that exert a peculiar influence, both when they refuse to be eradicated from the mind and when they conceal themselves in the folds of memory, camouflaging themselves as the collective or individual unconscious." I like to think that H.D. would not mind her work being described in this way.

I have occasionally been surprised by reminders (signs?) of H.D. in unlooked-for places. The most startling was several years ago when I was visiting the Philadelphia Zoo with family, including my (then) very young nieces. We came around a corner, and there, on what I remember as a sandstone wall, were carved Egyptian hieroglyphs ("the hare, the chick, the bee"). I stood amazed (I later found out that the Philadelphia Zoo opened in 1874), but it was not until recently that I learned that Philadelphian architecture has not

a few Egyptian references: for example, a former synagogue of the Congregation Mikveh Israel (1824, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregation_Mikveh_Israel>), the Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Company building (1838, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pennsylvania_Fire_Insurance_Company_508-10_Walnut_St_Philadelphia.jpg>), and the Masonic Temple (1873, <http://www.galenfrysinger.com/Philadelphia_masonic_temple.htm>; keep scrolling down). The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has a large Egyptian collection, which it began building at the turn of the 19th century (<<http://www.penn.museum/about-our-collections/224-egyptian-section.html>>). Wondering how widespread the interest in Egyptian antiquity was in the Philadelphia area in the late 19th century, I came across a long article (more than two full columns) in the *Fancier's Journal and Poultry Exchange*, entitled "Egypt's Wonders: The Gigantic Pyramids as Seen by Recent American Tourists," continued from an earlier number (published in Hartford, PA; vol. 3, no.27 (July 17, 1876): 317; <<http://www.archive.org/stream/fanciersjournalp31876phil#page/316/mode/2up>>). When the editor of a journal for the "Fancier, Breeder, Market Poulterer, and Household [Poulterer]" considers that ancient Egypt is of sufficient interest to be front-page news, I conclude that the interest was indeed widespread and well-established.

These past few years have seen not only the continued growth of H.D. scholarship, but also the publication of many prose works that had not been previously available. *HD's Web* was founded as "an e-newsletter for those interested in H.D.'s work and life," and I hope it has served its readers well. As I've announced already on the HD Society List, this is my last issue as editor. My other responsibilities and commitments have made it difficult to continue to put together the newsletter with the timeliness it deserves.

Lara Vetter (of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte; co-chair of the H.D. International Society) will be assuming the editorship in 2012, and I am looking forward to seeing where *HD's Web* will go next.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Heather Hernandez, who graciously hosts *HD's Web* at her website (<<http://imagists.org/hd/index.html>>) and without whose expertise the newsletter would have remained a mere idea. Many thanks also to all those who have contributed articles, briefer pieces, and news items, without which the newsletter would have been a poor thing indeed.

It has been my habit to give a few lines from H.D. in the editor's note. Here are a few verses for winter days from "Birds in Snow" (*Red Roses for Bronze*, 1931):

See,
how they trace
across the very-marble
of this place,
bright sevens and printed fours,

*I am Thetis. The tis? Thetis.
I can change; you can change, too.*

But I am old –

my skin's a map of laughter lines,
my hair, sparse and baby white.

I cannot change, I cannot change
the rubbing out of my self as if

I'm at war, fighting to hold on
to what I know – fragments

scattered like the northern isles.
In the looking-glass, I see

not myself but a stranger
on a golden shore, dressed

in black, listening to the echo
of a Voice saying: *go*,

*have dominion over great
and small, and name*

*all living things that swim
and crawl.* Into the rock-pool,

still and cool, I peer
at unfathomable choice.

The sea opens, lengthening
my vision on the rocky shore.

Seer

(after H.D.)

So what good are your scribblings?

That voice again asking
in the dimmed light.

I loosen the grip of my pen
and watch it move across the page,
leaving ink marks – I read
the signs:

I write to see.

hills, at Martinhoe, they can write again, dream, have visions - the trauma of war left behind. In London.

... Imagine

you press a computer key, changing frequencies in cyber-space and time.

John!

You hear, if not the voice itself, then the ineradicable memory of that voice from out of nowhere.

John!

Through the window the garden, glistening, all sunlit, summery and laden with the perfume of numerous flowers; quiet as death - *purple buds ... show deep purple where your heel pressed* - Outside, Woodland Cottage is enveloped with ivy; sea eerily distant, backwards forwards, its rasp mesmerising the ear by its spell.

John!

It's still 1916; you are still there, here, a shade sitting beside Kat and Korshune - *I can almost follow the note* - It's Ra's voice you hear through the open window, wreathed in honeysuckle ...¹

The heart of a poet's dream
resurfacing with a rush of water
a message from a bottle washing up
far on other shores

voices

When does a poem (or collection of poems) begin? When/where will it (does it itself) decide to end? Are its precise marking moments one and the same as that instant of pencil meeting and leaving the paper (or fingers tapping and lifting from the keyboard)? Or, could its beginning be incipient months or years before, so that it resurfaces years later, when the poet is waiting, ready to meet the dream's message? Could its ending correspond, not with the final mark of the last re-drafting, or the moment the manuscript leaves the laptop on its email destination for the hoped-for publisher, but to some undefined later date? Perhaps it could match a time when the poet makes an internal shift of consciousness related to his, or her, psychic configuration concerning an event, person, or place. The delineation of "collection" may not always be as clearly demarked as a reader (or poet) would like to think. There are similar indeterminates concerning other comparable art forms, such as opera: Maria Callas is said to have once commented that an opera "starts in my imagination, [it] becomes my life and stays part of my life long after I've left the opera house."²

¹ A fictional fragment that I based on an account given in Louis Silverstein, "H.D. Chronology," June 26?, 1916, <<http://www.imagists.org/hd/hdchron.html>>. Kat is H.D., Korshune (sometimes spelled "Kershoon") is John Cournos, H.D.'s friend, and Ra is Richard Aldington, her husband.

² See "Rufus Wainwright opera opens in Manchester," in *The Sunday Times*, June 28, 2009.

Just as an opera singer, a poet is often besieged by inner-character voices; perhaps dialogues between inner voice/s and outer poet dictate the whys and wherefores of poetic composition. The writer H.D. seems always to have been susceptible to hearing inner voices; they called her to other- and under-world depths.

A gap where are waves

sea as life-script

When H.D. and her then husband Richard Aldington travelled to Devon in February 1916 her first collection of poems, *Sea Garden*, had recently been accepted for publication; in that sequence the scenery and mood implicitly evoke the landscapes of the southwestern coastal regions in which the couple were to immerse themselves for several months. H.D.'s sea-affinity was evident throughout her life; as a child, she had lived not too far from and often visited the sea during family holidays. Her memorable family holidays on the North Atlantic coast were later re-iterated persistently in her poems and prose, becoming part of her palimpsest-map of self-discovery. As a writer in England, her poetic forays into Greek straits were realised while she stayed on the coasts of North Cornwall and Devon, re-membering her childhood seascapes of the North Atlantic: New Jersey, Rhode Island, and the Casco islands off the coast of Maine. Throughout her life she was to spend much time in the southwest corner of England. The trip in early 1916 was (as far as I know) the first of her ventures to the area; certainly many of the significant experiences of her life, as well as a surprising number of her texts, were written, translated, or edited whilst she was staying in either Cornwall, Devon, or Dorset. She even spent one holiday off the far west coast, at Bryher, one of the Scilly Isles. The sea is a thematic link throughout the *oeuvre* of her poems. Where else in England could one be so easily within reach of such variety of magnificent sea-scenery?

After renting the Old School House at Martinhoe during February 1916, in March the Aldingtons moved into nearby Woodland Cottage in the parish of Parracombe and a little later their friend John Cournos travelled down to join them. H.D. told friends how happy she was at Woodland. Referring to her surroundings as "wild and pagan," she mentioned that the "thatched cottage with a brook [was] backed by a wooded hill with a small mountain in front and the sea, with cliffs covered with gorge, is half a mile down the valley."³ In a letter in May she told her friend, F.S. Flint, that "every day we go to Heddons [sic] Mouth about 1.30, bathe, scamper about on the rocks, build a drift-wood fire & have tea."⁴

Critical consensus has it that although these weeks of the poet's life are as yet part of a biographical narrative not yet fully explored, the writers evidently made the best of the "doomsday atmosphere which was never absent from consciousness."⁵ They enjoyed hedonistic

³ H.D., letter to Marianne Moore; see Louis Silverstein, "H.D. Chronology," April 15, 1916.

⁴ H.D., letter of May 25, 1916, to F. S. Flint, in *Contemporary Literature* 10, no. 4, Special Number on H.D. (1969): 574.

⁵ Donna Hollenberg, "Art and Ardor in World War One: Selected Letters from H.D. to John Cournos," *Iowa Review* 16, no. 3, H.D. Centennial Issue (1986): 126. Cournos relates that there were long walks of "twenty-five miles a day" and visits to the nearby Hunter's Inn, where "we filled ourselves with Niersteiner and, like souls possessed, danced and capered up and down the Devon hills, and scintillated with a wit which but rarely sprang from sober tongue. To forget the war was our one desire, and this was our way of seeking oblivion; but afterwards memory

pursuits, such as nude bathing at nearby Heddon's Mouth, accompanied by various friends who were also in the area; amongst these were Carl and Flo Fallas. During this period H.D. had reason to be balancing a precarious emotional tightrope: a few years before, her close relationship with Frances Gregg had ended; the previous year she'd had a stillbirth and during the time in Devon she was still mourning her lost child. Her relationship with her husband was under strain and she was said to be avoiding intimacy because of the fear of another pregnancy.

To add to her woes, during the early months of the year Richard was under pressure of conscription; he eventually enlisted as a private in a local regiment. His departure must have been doubly upsetting for Hilda. After he left, with their friend Carl Fallas, she's supposed to have turned to Cournos for support, "to console her in the days ahead," or as Cournos himself writes, "to maintain the thinning spread of spirit in growing chaos."⁶ It was during this period that the two friends mutually experienced the phantom voice of Richard calling them.⁷

You know you don't know the language
yet you can follow the trail of hieroglyphs
sea w/reeds seawards

sea-texts

During her time in Devon H.D. was writing avidly. There are differing accounts as to which manuscripts she was working on, but whilst Aldington was with her the couple probably stayed up some nights to work on respective translations.⁸ He wrote many poems, whilst his wife was working on Euripides' *Ion*; *Iphigenia in Aulis*; the poems "Heliadora" and "Nossis";⁹ possibly also on translations and extensions of Sappho's fragments, as well as on several of the poems later published under *The God*.¹⁰ She may have worked on an early draft of an essay on Meleager, entitled "Garland."¹¹

Fragments in poetic folds what is lost
or forgotten
filled in by future's reminiscence of a Past

would overtake us, would doubly grip us, to make us pay for our little excursions into half-forgetfulness." John Cournos, *Autobiography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), 288-9.

⁶ "Art and Ardor," 127. Hollenberg quotes Cournos's *Autobiography*.

⁷ H.D. refers to this in a letter to Cournos. See "Art and Ardor," 155.

⁸ Zilboorg believes that some poems, including "Heliadora," embed facts from the couples' lives; in that poem, the male character leaves the table where he had been working, to "greet the dawn." "'Soul of my Soul': A Contextual Reading of H.D.'s 'Heliadora,'" *Sagetrieb* 10, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 124.

⁹ Zilboorg, in "'Soul of my Soul,'" considers that H.D. may have been working on these translations and was "drawing on autobiographical experience" (123).

¹⁰ The gaps in present awareness of the details of H.D.'s life whilst staying in or near Martinhoe recapitulate her own strategy in her writing of some of these early lyrics; there are silences and spaces indicative of hidden narratives and the implicit sub-text of war.

¹¹ Zilboorg, "'Soul of my Soul,'" 130.

After Richard had enlisted, Hilda stayed several more weeks at Woodland Cottage in the company of Cournos, and then moved eastwards, to Corfe in Dorset, to be near her husband at training-camp. There she worked on “Fragment Thirty-Six,” “The Islands,” the poems based on Sappho fragments, “Eurydice,” and the trio of poems “Amaranth,” “Eros,” and “Envy.” Two years later, in 1918, she was in the southwest again. This time her trip took her further west, to the Penwith peninsula in Cornwall, where she lived with the composer Cecil Gray from March to late summer, became pregnant with their daughter Perdita, and met Bryher, who was to become her lifelong partner. This period of the writer’s life has been richly documented, both by academics and by H.D. herself, in several of her autobiographical fictions, including *Bid Me to Live*.¹² Her bond with the far west Cornish seascape was apparent; it was restorative, even mystical. Walking in this landscape and writing early drafts of *Bid Me to Live*, she felt that “the whole world was given her in consciousness, she was see-er, ‘priestess,’ ... wise-woman with her witch-ball, the world.”¹³ As well as the fictionalised personal narratives, she was probably working on “Leda,” “Lethe,” and “Song,” as well as the long sequence *Hymen*. The following year H.D. spent time on Bryher (one of the Scilly Isles) and off and on during her life, especially during the Second World War, she visited Cornwall, often staying on the Lizard peninsula, at Mullion or Trenoweth.

From here we kick the silver slipper
how it slips into the bluegreen sea

Devon as key-seascape & sea-thyme time-shifts

Although, with the exception of the months spent in Martinhoe, most of H.D.’s stays by or near southwest seas have been amply reported, as yet little attention has been given to the significance of the writer’s textual links with southwest coastal landscapes. This essay explores the interaction between some of her texts and the Devon coastal territory in which she temporarily settled. I believe that the sea-territory of this corner of the county became a central crux which propelled her toward more sophisticated poetic writing. The environment became a key-seascape, facilitating some of her later poetry.

As well as seeking refuge from the war-torn city, another motive for the couple to leave London for Devon may have been that they were eluding the male Modernist/Imagist writers’ “club” of Yeats, Eliot and Pound, so as to deliberately seek out a territory that had direct and established links with the by-then-outmoded Romantic aesthetic. Rather than being defined by the modernist school, north Devon’s contextual landscape was instead framed and haunted by those writers and poetry which most famously (and infamously) delineated the Romantic ethic and spirit: Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley. Several critics see the early poems in *Sea Garden* as a revival of the Romantic ethos. Could it have been intentional for the two writers to enter the space where these earlier poet antecedents had roamed, to pursue and become immersed in the idyllic backdrop of the landscape’s Romantic textual contexts? Shelley and his first wife Harriet had stayed in Lynmouth, five miles to the east of Martinhoe. There the poet

¹² *Bid Me to Live: A Madrigal* (London: Virago, 1984).

¹³ *Bid Me to Live*, 147.

worked on *Queen Mab* and other pieces.¹⁴ Coleridge and Wordsworth spent time in the region and a number of other earlier writers had associations with that corner of Devon; the district was teeming with the imprint of writerly footsteps and texts. Devonshire's literary context had a rich Victorian literary background palette, for the county's north coastal and moorland scenery had been assimilated into a scintillating variety of 19th-century and early 20th-century texts. The area was renowned as a place of romantic adventure.¹⁵

The echoes between H.D./Aldington and Shelley/Harriet are especially intriguing and the resonance is enhanced by their potent contextual links.¹⁶ The couples' visits to north Devon took place just over a hundred years apart, for the Shelleys had stayed in Lynmouth in 1812. H.D.'s interest in the earlier poet's work was intense, manifesting in several texts. In her novel *Paint It Today* she uses Shelley's translation of Plato in the epithet to *Adonais*, his elegy on Keats, to encode the affective intensity of her sister-bond with Frances Gregg.¹⁷ Significant themes of Shelley's were concerns of the later poet and she adopted specific poetic modes used by him.

¹⁴ James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography: Youth's Unextinguished Fire, 1792-1816* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2004), 258.

¹⁵ Texts included poems and novels; fictional characters as much as authors may have been responsible for the various enticements of the area. Writers and texts included Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* (1869) and *Clara Vaughan* (1864), a sensation novel set at Heddon's Mouth; Blackmore had also translated two of Virgil's *Georgics* (1862). Other novels included: Marie Corelli's *The Mighty Atom* (1896), which was set in Combe Martin; Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1854); Henry Kingsley's *Ravenshoe* (1861), said to be inspired by Trentishoe; and Charlotte Chanter's *Ferny Combes* (1856). In addition, George Eliot and George Lewes had stayed in Ilfracombe in 1856 and Eliot was inspired by its scenery and marine life; and the American Susan Coolidge's *In the High Valley* (1890, the last book in the *What Katy Did* series), was set along the coast of north Devon. Devon novelist Mary Patricia Willcocks, (her fiction included *Wings of Desire* and *Widdicombe*) had corresponded with both May Sinclair and Evelyn Underhill, both of whom knew H.D. Willcocks also corresponded with Jan Mills-Whitham, who was a friend of Cournos and the Aldingtons and lived on Holdstone Down, near Combe Martin, nor far from where they stayed. See Mary Patricia Willcocks' correspondence with manuscripts, Z19/42/1-12 c1908-47: literary MSS, TSS and proofs, Devon Record Office, Exeter. Of the poets, Coleridge's and Wordsworth's infamous walks in the area, with their scenic centres of Lynton and the Valley of the Rocks resulted in several poems, including "The Ancient Mariner" (Coleridge) and "The Excursion" (Wordsworth).

¹⁶ Reports about the Shelleys' visit to Devon are reminiscent of those about the Aldington couple: they were romantically involved; they stayed in a "romantic" cottage, whose name, "Woodbine," echoes that of the Aldingtons' "Woodland" (reported in *The North Devon Herald* newspaper, October 23, 1901); their cottage was similarly placed in the landscape: "[a]t its side and rear loomed steep hills; before it stretched the sea." Walter Edwin Peck, *Shelley: His Life and Work 1792-1817*, Part 1 (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1927), C-265. They also read and translated works together and took country walks, including to the Valley of Rocks. However, for the earlier couple, the dynamic between writer and muse was more traditional. Shelley's "To Harriet," written during this period, suggests that he "regarded his young wife as a potential second self," whilst her writing was restricted to letters to friends and family. Teddi Chichester Bonca, *Shelley's Mirrors of Love: Narcissism, Sacrifice, and Sorority* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 222. Nevertheless, it seems to have been Harriet who put into writing her response to the landscape surrounding them: in one letter she wrote, "It [Lynmouth] is such a little place that it seems more like a fairy scene than anything in reality." Letter to Catherine Nugent, June 30, 1812, in *The Clairmont Correspondence: Letters of Claire Clairmont, Charles Clairmont and Fanny Imlay Godwin*, volume 1, 1808-1879, edited by Marion Kingston Stocking (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁷ The novel concludes with a composite sigil: the placing of a wreath on the tomb of Shelley's grave, conflated with the inscription on that tomb: Ariel's song from *The Tempest*, "He hath suffered a sea change into something rich and strange." *Paint It Today*, 88. Note H.D.'s misquote of Shakespeare's text used for the inscription: "But doth suffer a sea-change/Into something rich and strange." *The Tempest*, act i, scene ii, lines 563-5. Perhaps this encoded a laying to rest of the past of her own relationship with Frances Gregg: H.D. may be encrypting her belief in the transmutation of their "dead" relationship into a spiritually living essence.

She shared his pre-occupation with the search for a lost twinned-soul in his quest romances, and both poets had a propensity for using cascades of imagery.¹⁸ Shelley's poem *Alastor* had been published just before he arrived in Devon; there are parallels between it and H.D.'s early work in *Sea Garden*. Did H.D. know of his trip with his first wife to north Devon? Did that influence her? Correspondences between their writings suggest that possibility.

However, perhaps it was just coincidence that the writer found herself in Devon; a case of synchronicity; or fate. Chronologically, H.D. completed the poems of *Sea Garden* before her trip to the Devon coast in 1916, so there could have been no equivalence of exterior scenery and interior poetic landscape. However, there are time-disparities surrounding the composition and publication of H.D.'s first book. Anyone familiar with that part of the north Devon coast as it merges into Somerset, would surely notice significant features of the wild and rugged seascape apparently reflected in so many of *Sea Garden*'s poems.¹⁹ Critics have tended to emphasise the poems' scenic mirroring of other coasts, such as those of Italy and Norway, or have focused on their geographical anonymity.²⁰ Susan Friedman notes that poems in *Sea Garden* are sited in a world of imagination, "in which nature is an exteriorization of the poet's consciousness."²¹ Was the poet oblivious to real features of territory surrounding her? Did she live in a bubble, far removed from the actualities of the place itself, instead conjuring the remote classical vistas of her inner fantasies into poetry? Much has been said about the classical locus of H.D.'s poetic landscape and her deeply embedded identification with that of the Greek topos. However, as Caroline Zilboorg has implied, there are indications that H.D.'s interiorised classical Greek landscapes were sometimes projected onto north Devon's scenery: "[b]oth Greek material and the landscape of her surroundings in Devon seem to me to combine in 'Nossis' and 'Heliodora.'"²²

¹⁸Cassandra Laity, quoting William Ulmer, describes the "'rapid, destabilizing passage from image to image' of the beloved which 'subjects desire to an open-ended process.'" "H.D., Modernism, and the Transgressive Sexualities of Decadent-Romantic Platonism," in *Gendered Modernisms: American Women Poets and their Readers*, edited by Margaret Dickie and Thomas J. Travisano (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 52. She quotes from Ulmer's *Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love* (1990). Laity remarks, "Eliot praised the precision of Pound's doctrines in 1917 for making it 'impossible to write like Shelley, leaving blanks for adjectives.'" She quotes Eliot's *To Criticize the Critic* (1965).

¹⁹Bryher said that for her *Sea Garden* evoked "both the Scillies and the South." *The Heart to Artemis: A Writer's Memoirs by Bryher* (Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2006), 216. That does not specifically refer to the scenery of north Devon, but her comments suggests that others have found in the poems a correspondence of text and place other and more than that of the classical allusiveness itself, which is uppermost in the poems' place-text lexicon.

²⁰For example, Zara Bruzzi suggests that Balzac's *Seraphita*, which opens with an "ostensibly real locale, centered on a Norwegian fjord," may have provided the poet with a "landscape of sea, shore, and snowy heights" to be dramatised "towards transcendence." "'The Fiery Moment': H.D. and the Eleusinian Landscape of English Modernism," *Agenda*, H.D. Special Issue, 25, nos. 3-4 (1987/8): 99-100.

²¹Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51. Friedman says that the poems in the collection have "no human geography"; they "are ... not set in Greece," "places are not specified ... the geography ... has been deliberately removed from human history."

²²Zilboorg, "'Soul of my Soul,'" 124. Aldington hints at his nostalgic recollection of the county when he describes the "pitiless" situation of "twenty men huddled in a leaky tent / singing wistfully of the Devon hills," whose "pathos" moves "even rich women...to compassion." "Song" in *An Imagist at War: The Complete War Poems of Richard Aldington* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2002), 149-50. He returned to the county for solitary fortnightly walking holidays during the early 1920's, which perhaps confirms his fondness for the area. *Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their Lives in Letters, 1918-61*, edited by Caroline Zilboorg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 187.

But, if there is no definitive equation of poems and place in H.D.'s poetry, what can be made of the more elusive conjunction of scene with inner-poetic-world that lured her, just at the critical time of poetic parturition, towards a location that would cradle her within its folds of elemental scenery? Was it just fortuitous that the Aldingtons ended up spending such a rural and at least partly reclusive existence, in a place where they were both (until the dual realities of war and complexities of conscription caught up with the pastoral idyll) inspired to maintain their writing momentum? If so, the visit could be seen as serendipitous. Given the unconventional life style and "Otherness" of the work of the poet, Devon's seascape fitted her quest for archaic and mystic territories, just as much as the ambiance of Celtic Cornwall, which she visited two years later.

Alternatively, did H.D. need to immerse herself within a real environment that resonated with the classical ethos of her own recent authorings? Precepts contained in many of the epigrams in Mackail's *The Greek Anthology*, from which many of the poems in *Sea Garden* derived, stressed the necessity of leaving toil and travail, to take time for respite in tranquil pastorally bordered sea-lands.²³ Did the couple deliberately decide to find a place that would evoke the sites/sights of a landscape, which had existed only in dreamlike imagination for H.D. as she wrote many of the *Sea Garden* poems? Certainly several of the poems, if read as autobiography, seem to suggest a yearning; a plea, "to find a new beauty / in some terrible / wind-tortured place."²⁴ If so, did she/they intend to experience, to immerse themselves within the scenic ambiance of the world of the inner landscape of her first poems, after, rather than before, their inscription in text? Could that absorption have acted as a kind of catalyst that triggered the poet to develop her writing skills, giving her the impetus to achieve the greater intricacy of her second period of poetry?²⁵ Several of H.D.'s critics have commented on how her writing changed after 1916; for instance, Diana Collecott places "her emergence from imagism" in 1916-17 and Zilboorg agrees that a change in style took place during this period.²⁶

There is no easy matching of chronological dates of H.D.'s texts with the factual dates of the writings themselves. Her life writing has always resisted any account of a chronological

²³ Eileen Gregory calls Mackail's *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* "H.D.'s bible for the Greek text." Gregory discusses the intertextuality between *The Greek Anthology* and *Sea Garden*. *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168-71. See in *Sea Garden*, for example, "Hermes," "Wood Music," "Orchard Corner," and "Shrine by the Sea."

²⁴ From "Sheltered Garden," in *Sea Garden. Collected Poems, 1912-1944*, edited by Louis L. Martz (Manchester, UK: Carcanet Press, 1984), 21.

²⁵ May Sinclair suggested three phases for H.D.'s early poetry, corresponding to the following dates: 1913-16, 1916-17, and 1921. She called the second phase a "transition," characterised by (greater) "comparative intricacy." See "The Poems of H.D." [review of H.D.'s *Collected Poems* (1925)], *Fortnightly Review* 121 (March 1927): 329-345; reprinted in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 453-67.

²⁶ Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 7; Zilboorg, in "'Soul of my Soul,'" says that in the poems "Nossis" and "Heliadora," the poet "is turning [here] from the impersonal speakers of *Sea Garden* ... to a more intimate examination of the personal material on which ... her later work will ... be based" (123); Robert Duncan found *Ion* (which she worked on whilst in Devon), a "turning point – the crowning achievement of her first phase, but also the declaration of her later work." "Nights and Days, Chapter 2," *Sumac* 1, no. 1 (1968): 107. Also in Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book*, edited by Michael Boughn and Victor Coleman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 209.

narrative. The reader only needs to refer to “A Note on Poetry”²⁷ to note how recalcitrant she was to any attempt to chronicle her life, or to any effort to match life-events with specific texts. Instead, the poet was intent on the search for an equivalence of writing and experience based on an internal, meditative linking. Her chains of memory, what she called her “inner world of imagination,” and “inner region of defence,” revolved around other parameters than those dictated by the patriarchal clock.²⁸ In later work, such as the autobiographical *The Gift*, she returned to the folds of her childhood roots, re-activating the mysterious crucible of the seeds of her esoteric origins: her extended memory allowed her to peer into the past, so as to re-member her own mother’s and grandmother’s past lives.²⁹ Critics have written about her tendency, in post-World-War-Two texts, to circle backwards repeatedly, widdershins-fashion, to her World War One experiences. They describe how “[h]er writing ... resists the linear chronology of her life,” instead gathering an accretion of palimpsest-like multiplicity.³⁰

It’s as though, arriving in North Devon, H.D. was taking herself backwards and right into the heart of the scenery of the sea-landscape of her completed and soon to be published first poems. As she drafted *Sea Garden*’s poems in war-torn London, did the poet, using a kind of reverse time-osmosis, allow her mind to drift into a reverie of what- is-to-come? Was she see/k/ing/seas into the future, rather than looking back to the past, as a sce/a/nery of southwest coasts became textually stitched within her anonymous, classically derived landscapes?

As far as I know, there is no archival material recording why the Aldingtons chose the north Devon coast as their war retreat.³¹ There may have been a considered plan that H.D. would visit the dramatic coastal area, to engulf herself within the stage-set of her already realised poetry. There, she could find and fit her dream, pursue the rhythm, match the tonal mode and experience the essence of poems that still deeply engaged her; this empathy could help her to realise half-formed imaginative ideas, acting as catalyst to new poems.

It is as though H.D., exemplary “Imagiste,”³² left the war-torn city in order to escape to a sea-haven crucible, whose scenery and atmosphere could whirl her away from trauma and loss, back to a sheltered and safe past where she had first experienced intense mystical envelopment.

²⁷ H.D., “Letter to Norman Pearson, 1937. (‘A Note on Poetry’),” *Agenda*, H.D. Special Issue, 25, nos. 3-4 (1987/8): 71-76.

²⁸ H.D., “A Note on Poetry,” 71 and 73. “Times, places, dates don’t seem so much to matter,” (“A Note on Poetry,” 74). Yet, paradoxically perhaps, she was always obsessed with such phenomenon as numerology, which included a fascination with dates of birth, meetings, anniversaries, deaths etc.

²⁹ In *The Gift*, the adult poet, enduring the terrors of the Blitz, reflects on her child self. Seeking sustenance from recollections of her grandmother’s revelations in the past, she recalls that as a girl “I saw, I understood...a memory of my grandmother’s or her grandmother’s – a lost parchment...” H.D., *The Gift*, (London: Virago Press, 1984), 134-5. There are other examples in *The Gift* that exemplify similar phenomena of retrieving memories from a past beyond the individual’s physical life. Arthur Versluis comments, “This concept of a word opening a door into the lives of one’s ancestors and into spiritual mysteries is at the very center of *The Gift*...” *Restoring Paradise: Western Esotericism, Literature, Art, and Consciousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 114.

³⁰ Norman Kelvin, “H.D. and the Years of World War I,” *Victorian Poetry* 38, no. 1 (2000): 170.

³¹ Except that their friends Carl and Flo Fallas were living in the same area.

³² Pound had so labelled H.D. and defined the new literary movement, in the now-famous incident at the British Museum tea-rooms in 1912, when he scrawled “H.D. Imagiste” at the bottom of three of her early poems: “Hermes of the Ways,” “Epigram,” and “Priapus.” See H.D., *End to Torment* (New York: New Directions, 1979), 18.

That retrospective movement could, in turn, propel her forwards to a transformative renewal and accretion of more sophisticated writing.

sea-garden & after

As already noted, several writers on H.D. have called the 1916-17 period that of a “New Birth” for the poet, considering that during this time the tenor of her poetry altered.³³ The poetry of *Sea Garden* has already been the focus of much intense analysis, but I would like to consider some of these poems, as well as some of the poems she was writing during or shortly after her Devon stay, to explore the possibility of rejuvenation and transformation.

An understanding of the apparently rather random nature of the release of the collection *Sea Garden* for publication is valuable for a reader’s understanding of the poems themselves. Shortly after their arrival in Martinhoe, in late February 1916, H.D. wrote to Amy Lowell, telling her that *Sea Garden* was to be published. She added the book “will not come out in three months” as planned, “because of paper shortage.”³⁴ The build-up to and actual publication of the poet’s first collection was apparently a textual pre-occupation throughout her stay in Devon: on 15 April, she told Marianne Moore that it is “horribly uneven,” adding “but it seemed best to make up the book at the time and *I just let all go*” (my emphasis). She mentioned that she was preparing another volume.³⁵ By May 17 she “has received the proofs of SEA GARDEN,” which are “beautifully printed” by the Chiswick Press, and is “awfully pleased.”³⁶

No question of wanting to O/wn the residual body
of texts

H.D.’s words to Marianne Moore, *I just let all go*, implicitly suggest that she had been reluctant to release her work for publication, perhaps because psychically, or psychologically, she was still bound to (or bonded with) her poems. For, if H.D. was loath to “let poems go,” and was working on the formation of another volume, whilst still focused on the energies of *Sea Garden*, her next manuscripts could show preoccupation with the same concerns and themes as that first collection.

The sequence of published collections by the poet is in any case not a straightforward process and is as tricky to map in chronological ordering with the writing itself as is the writing with H.D.’s life. Critical consensus has assumed a coherence and intent behind the scheme of both *Sea Garden* and its chronologically published follow-up sequences.³⁷ However, one or two

³³ See notes 25 and 26.

³⁴ See Silverstein, “H.D. Chronology,” February 22, 1916.

³⁵ Silverstein, “H.D. Chronology,” April 15, 1916. The poet’s comment implies that at least some poems from her next volume, *The God*, were first drafted in 1916, whilst she was in Devon.

³⁶ Silverstein, “H.D. Chronology,” May 17, 1916.

³⁷ For example, Eileen Gregory sees the poems as “selected and arranged quite deliberately.” She says “the unity of *Sea Garden* is not immediately apparent; nevertheless the work gives a singleness of affect.” “Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H.D.’s *Sea Garden*,” in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, edited by Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1999), 129-154, 139. Rachel Connor sees “an underlying sense of movement and process” and “underlying narratives.” *H.D. and the Image* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 36-7. Megan Lloyd Davies sees a “cohesive set of themes.” “H.D. Imagiste? Bisexuality: Identity:

writers have considered instead that the two published volumes, *Sea Garden* and *The God*, should be read as a single unit. Zara Bruzzi reads *Sea Garden* and *The God* as a “single text rather than as collections of isolated poems ... a dismembered narrative which the reader must reconstitute from related fragments – arguably the first Modernist long poem.”³⁸ Fred Beake’s reading of *Sea Garden* chimes with this: he sees a “rather centreless book, which is ... like a series of fragments from a larger dream.”³⁹ My interpretative inclination expands this approach in following H.D.’s early poetry over several more of the published collections, reading across and through *Sea Garden*, *The God*, *Hymen*, and *Heliodora*.

Several poems published in later H.D. collections hint at possible Devonian scenic origins and may have been written at, or soon after, her months in the county. Zilboorg has remarked how both “*Heliodora*” and “*Nossis*” (in *Heliodora*, 1924) merge H.D.’s beloved Greek landscape with that of the Devon scenery in which the poet was staying.⁴⁰ Other poems probably written during this period (or just afterwards), seem to conjure the spectacular scenery at Heddon’s Mouth, with its magnificent great gorge, which became the daily venue for the Aldingtons during spring 1916. Such is the heart of “*The Islands*,” where the “specific, exclusive domain”⁴¹ of the poem “is set apart / beauty is cast by the sea ...//... the winds that slash its beach / swirl the coarse sand / upward toward the rocks.”⁴² Connective threads are evident between several other *Sea Garden* poems and “*The Islands*” (later published in *Hymen*); other poems, in later collections, similarly present seascapes evoking that first sequence; so much is this the case that a reader is impelled to interpret them alongside, or as part of the pattern of the earlier poems. “*Sheltered Garden*,” “*The Gift*,” and “*The Shrine*” all chime with “*Islands*”: in them, the persona longs to find the wild-heart, the altar of a site, a shrine or *temenos* (sacred precinct): to “find a new beauty / in some terrible / wind-tortured place” (“*Sheltered Garden*”); “we have found you, / we watch the splendour of you, / we thread throat on throat of freesia / for your shelf” (“*The Shrine*”); and “bare rocks ... / ... twisted, no beauty / to distract” (“*The Gift*”). Other poems that seem to inscribe ritualistic movement towards a meditative, epiphanic state, or to invoke a goddess figure, include “*Thetis*,” “*Sea Heroes*,” and “*She Rebukes Hippolyta*” (in *Hymen*).⁴³

Her life followed a non-chronological twist of coastal paths
& fate took her into its coves and shores
of extended memory

Imagism” in *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth Century Women Poets*, edited by Vicki Bertram (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 42.

³⁸ Bruzzi, ““*The Fiery Moment*,”” 99.

³⁹ Fred Beake, “*The Sea Garden*,” *Acumen*, 46 (May 2003), 38-45. Accessible online at <http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=21513>.

⁴⁰ Zilboorg says that “[b]oth Greek material and the landscape of her surroundings in Devon seem to me to combine in ‘*Nossis*’ and ‘*Heliodora*’” (““*Soul of my Soul*,”” 124).

⁴¹ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 34.

⁴² From “*The Islands*” in *Hymen (Collected Poems)*, 126).

⁴³ *Collected Poems*, 21, 8, 18; 116-18, 129-30, 138-140. They show the “illusion of the poem as a liminal passage.” Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 124.

These connections hint that the poems were written during a particular period, which suggests that their origins have been obscured by later publication in sequences in which separate dispersal has disguised their similarities.

I like to read across all these first collections as a single entity, but am not suggesting that it is possible to construe a linear narrative from the poems; a reductionist approach misses the dizzy multiplicity of the writing. Nevertheless, the dispersed poems could be re-interpreted as a dynamic and dazzling interplay of lights, a shimmering ebb and flow of texts and tides. This would take into account the poet's engagement with sea iconography; the phono-texts; her life as poet-expatriate; her re-memberings of childhood coasts; the sublimated textualizations of her bisexuality; her fondness for word-play and coded devices; intertexts between her and others' poetry and her obsession with classically allusive seascapes.

Listen to the sea-shells of subtextual sounds
how they open doors

It is useful here to recapitulate critical readings of *Sea Garden*. Most interpretations implicitly recognize the poet's compulsive love affair with the classical world.⁴⁴ Some readings have emphasised her re-invention of a Romantic visionary landscape of the past, as a "reconciliation between the Romantic past and the war-torn present."⁴⁵ Others dissect the spare, sparse, and disembodied poems that make up *Sea Garden* as representative of the poet's deconstructed re-incarnations of the Sapphic impulse.⁴⁶ The latter proclivity for H.D. included a poetic reconstitution of a kind of celestial sisterhood, the eruption of multiple spirit/ed voices: these sublimate the personal trauma of the writer's loss of Frances Gregg, the American woman who had been H.D.'s intimate sister-friend before she arrived in England.

I agree with the gist of all these, but see the collection's initial guiding impulse as a disguised, fragmented, and extended elegy, a paean, for her lost friend; with the proviso that its poetic narrative is extended right across and through poems in later cycles.

The "coda" is a useful, explanatory, interpretive starting-point:

*The city is peopled
with spirits, not ghosts, O my love:*

*Though they crowded between
and usurped the kiss of my mouth*

⁴⁴ See for example, Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*; Gregory examines the complex intertextuality of classical allusions in H.D.'s work, including that of the early sequence.

⁴⁵ Cassandra Laity, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30. Susan Stanford Friedman says: "her distaste for the 'sheltered garden' and her celebration of wild, straggly, stunted sea roses were images of escape into a modernist green world beyond the confines of Victorian respectability ..." "Modernism of the 'Scattered Remnant': Race and Politics in the Development of H.D.'s Modernist Vision," in *H.D.: Women and Poet*, edited by Michael King (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1986), 116.

⁴⁶ See Diana Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 25, for a resume of these critics' readings.

*their breath was your gift,
their beauty, your life.*

The “coda”/“city” presents all the poems in *Sea Garden* as received gifts from a lost lover (“their breath was your gift”), who has presented the poet-persona with a psychic keepsake, an eternal memory of their relationship. *Sea-Garden*’s city may represent both the societal city, recently destroyed by war, and an eternal or Heavenly city, from where spirit-voices materialise to the poet-persona (“usurped the kiss of my mouth”). Rather than being overwhelmed by the onslaught of spectral phenomena, she has understood the gifted, enigmatic nature of their presence/s as having been esoterically sent by her eternal soul-mate.⁴⁷ The gift is reciprocal: “y[our] gift...y[our] life.” As a neat closure of the gift-exchange, H.D.’s own return-gift, earlier in the sequence, is her own poem, “The Gift,” which concludes:

I send no string of pearls,
no bracelet – accept this.

Gregory says of this poem: “the seer/poet, shaken by an intimate encounter with a woman she loves, offers her the ‘gift’ of this poem ... [which] honors the woman yet while doing so it shows the necessity of the seer’s withdrawal” from her, as clairvoyant.⁴⁸

Her voice her voice
it’s me
silly!
who else after all
would call opening throats
through a window

The sequence accepts the shaping destiny of guiding presences and can be read as a dual or split “gift,” from and for ancestral sororal presences. Gregory puts it thus:

[“Cities”] ... presents explicitly the figure of a guardian and speaker – the voice in the poems of *Sea Garden* - who is given the gift of utterance through the breath of spirits, ancient *daimones*. In this context the sea garden is a sacred place where the ever-present voices are entertained, where the work of spirit, marginal yet essential to life, can continue.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ H.D. may have been influenced by the Theosophist Emanuel Swedenborg’s text *The Heavenly City*; she was familiar with his mystical philosophies from her early days with Pound in America. See Bruzzi, ““The Fiery Moment,”” 98-9, and Peter Liebrechts, *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2004), 30. Interestingly, Laity notes that Frances Gregg inscribed several love poems to H.D. “On the fly-leaf, back pages and title pages of H.D.’s first copy of *Sea-Garden*...” *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, 39. See Adalaide Morris, “Giving in Turn: H.D. and the Spirit of the Gift” in her *How to Live/What to Do: H.D.’s Cultural Poetics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 120-148, for the contextual background of H.D. and the Moravian economy of the “Gift.”

⁴⁸ Gregory, “Rose Cut in Rock,” 148.

⁴⁹ Gregory, “Rose Cut in Rock,” 151.

A life compiled with all its secrets teased out
in infinite script

sea-spirits

Let's digress just for a moment and look back through cyber-space, where H.D. and her friend John Cournos sitting in their rented north Devon cottage look out onto the little garden and hear the ethereal voice of Richard Aldington calling his friend: *John. John!* You can interpret their experience as pure fantasy, brought on by recent traumatic events in H.D.'s life in wartime London; or you could take it at face value as a genuine psychic experience. I tend to do the latter. Reading H.D.'s poetry with its full implications includes trusting her clairvoyant "skills," for, unfashionable as these may now be, they began early in her personal and writing lives. Contemporaries were aware of her abilities, often turning to her for telepathic guidance.⁵⁰ By retreating to the southwest coast, the poet may have sought to revitalise her clairvoyant gifts, to enter the ritual of her poetic sea-garden dreamland, in order that she might honour the gift of that psychic inheritance; she was living out its processes. Was her visit to the West Country a tribute to her demons, a journey whose purpose was to meet the invisible guides who had called her out of herself, to invite and complete an "acceptance of one's given destiny"?⁵¹

Sea Garden presents a proliferation of unseen and incorporeal presences (the spirit-voices or deities) who "usurped the kiss of my mouth" and [whose] "breath was your gift." As Morris says of the sequence, "[t]he gods function not as a poem's ornament but as its absent center."⁵² These presences include the "sophisticated daimon" of "The Helmsman";⁵³ the wild and mysterious siren Goddess at the heart of "The Shrine" ("you are great, fierce, evil"), to whom the initiates "sing"; an unnamed and beloved lost companion, who in "Pursuit" has mysteriously disappeared: ("I can find no trace of you / in the larch-cones and the underbrush"); and the wind-daimons/erinyes/harpies of "The Wind Sleepers" (who "roam in search of their altar"⁵⁴).

The striking difference between the disembodied voices of these hidden presences in *Sea Garden* and those which appear richly scattered through the collections which follow (*The God, Hymen, and Heliadora*), including Adonis, Pygmalion, Eurydice, Demeter, Simaethea, Thetis, and Circe, is that so many of the latter are dramatic lyrics voiced by a variety of mythical (mostly female) "characters." These are presented with a refined variety of poetic skills, which suggest psychological development and sophisticated skills of apperception and clairvoyance. By the time she began to write these dramatic lyrics H.D. /poet/psychic had developed an uncanny ability to tune in, to pick up or "hear" others' individual voices, which necessitated the freeing of her persona to be "taken over" by an/other's identity. This transformative re-integration involved re-inventions of the poetic-self, necessitating letting go past accumulations of trauma and loss and emptying self into a "new way of being."

⁵⁰ In *Asphodel* she tells of her pianist friend Walter Rummel's "absolute conviction that there were ... voices in the air about them"; "[h]e believes he can *hear* things": she recounts how, after noting her susceptibility to these forces, he told her he thought she "might [also] be able to get it ... [g]et - something - somewhere." *Asphodel*, edited by Robert Spoo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 37 and 35.

⁵¹ Gregory, "Rose Cut in Rock," 144.

⁵² Morris, "Projection: A Study in Thought," ch. 3 of *How to Live/What to Do* (89-119), 98.

⁵³ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 113.

⁵⁴ Morris, "Projection: A Study in Thought," 98.

The experimental “try-outs,” as though in the mask of another’s self and as clairvoyant, permitted H.D. to embrace dual/split modes of real/outer and unreal/inner worlds and to present ways of handling this doubled gift, or role. For a woman artist who had previously been appropriated as object of (Imagist) male canonical theory, the practice promised a way out of alienation. The poems voiced as personal dramatic lyrics suggest that H.D. had accumulated confidence in her ability to express another’s interior identity, enabling her to give a voice to previously silenced mythical females. She probably wrote “Eurydice” in Dorset whilst at the peak of her assimilation of these skills. In that poem the long-suffering, previously silent Eurydice, retaliating, screams back at Orpheus:

At least I have the flowers of myself,
and my thoughts, no god
can take that;
I have the fervour of myself for a presence
and my own spirit for light;

and my spirit with its loss
knows this;
though small against the black,
small against the formless rocks,
hell must break before I am lost;

before I am lost,
hell must open like a red rose
for the dead to pass.⁵⁵

By the time this poem was drafted H.D. had been gifted with new singing powers and could revel as writer in her command of various masks or character roles and impersonations. She could let herself be “taken over” by guiding presences; could listen to their archaic spirit voices and release her-self to their “siren-singing” calls. As poet, she could invoke their siren-realm, entreat the granting of the power of song and release her ability to hear and “sing” a whole charm of voices. Here is where the roles of poet and opera singer meet: how the “voices” stay in the head and only dissolve into the ether at their own volition: neither singer’s nor poet’s.⁵⁶

H.D.’s memoir *Paint It Today*, which may have already existed in some form in 1916,⁵⁷ can be read contextually, as a prose equivalent accompanying *Sea Garden* and other early poems. It also centres on the poet’s love for and loss of Frances Gregg.⁵⁸ In the novel, *Midget*

⁵⁵ *Collected Poems*, 55.

⁵⁶ Sometimes the two worlds conjoin; years later, in 1955, when H.D. gave a radio “performance” of some passages from *Helen in Egypt*, she wrote that “I seemed to lose myself, to be myself [in the person of Helen] as hardly ever in my life before” (Silverstein, “H.D. Chronology,” February 2, 1955). This suggests that the poet had always looked for this kind of immersion into an/other personality, but that as writer, this skill had eluded her. Rachel Connor comments: “the use of voice in her performance ... allows her - through loss of herself - to challenge the notion of identity itself as singular and homogeneous.” *H.D. and the Image*, 84.

⁵⁷ *Paint It Today* was completed in 1921. (Edited by Cassandra Laity, New York: New York University Press, 1992). Friedman says that it was possibly the same book about which H.D. wrote to Courson in 1919 (*Penelope’s Web*, 71).

⁵⁸ The *roman à clef* narrates events in her life, and culminates during the First World War, ending as she enters into her long partnership with Althea, who represents Bryher.

(H.D.), describes how she has negotiated a doubled agony, what she calls “the tidal wave” of losing her friend Josepha (Gregg), in terms of her self-constructed invention of a “new trick of seeing”: the process suggests a special re-integration of inner (invisible) and outer (visible) worlds:

A tidal wave does one of two things... it slashes you out, in the crest ... high, high above the rest of itself and the rest of humanity. This is a very marvelous sensation to the few thus chosen to be the high froth or the high nothingness of the wave itself.⁵⁹

Most explorations of H.D.’s encounters with esoteric phenomena list the supposedly most intense arcane experiences that she had through her life, which began at least two years after her visit to Devon.⁶⁰ However, it is likely that during these early years of her marriage with Aldington, and probably before, during her relationship with Gregg, the poet was experimenting with alternative mind states - what we would now call hypnosis, trance or deep meditation. H.D.’s awareness of and experiments with out-of-the-body experiences may have occurred involuntarily, perhaps as a manifestation of post-traumatic shock syndrome, or a kind of psychological detachment, resulting from the trauma occasioned by her loss of Gregg, the events of the war, and the still-birth of her baby. Whatever led to the new perceptions, they evidently led to intensely felt sensitivities; these may have included such phenomenon as astral projection, as well as various other meditative dream and mind-states.

As Friedman remarks, Midget’s habit of escape described in *Paint It Today*, where she “leaves her body for a dreamscape,”⁶¹ “[a]nticipat[es] H.D.’s account in *The Gift* of her ‘trick’ for surviving air raids in World War II.”⁶² Having “left her *soul* ‘here’ (in ordinary space and time) and sen[t] her *body* ‘there’” (an/Other dimension) “to meet her lover in the spirit world,” she describes a kind of psychic inversion of fourth-dimensional territory.⁶³ Hence, the roots of daemonic possession, the conjuring (drawing up of spirits for the writer to embody) and the conjured (being as poet, object of the spirits’ call to another dimension), which became essential to the poet’s perception and transformative poetry.

sea/cret experience and territories

I understand H.D.’s transmogrification as having been accomplished by way of her “sea-immersion” into timeless transformative underworld/unconscious processes - the “sea-garden” of her sea/see/seer/secret experiences.⁶⁴ Her loss of self to the sea, her “sea-change,” intentionally, or not, took place whilst she was staying near the sea in north Devon.⁶⁵ Deep in the glades of wooded coastal copses the poet was able to find a sea-haven retreat, her enchantment, her

⁵⁹ *Paint It Today*, 48.

⁶⁰ See Albert Gelpi, “The Thistle and the Serpent,” introduction to H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1992), for an account of the experiences which instigated her intense interest in esoteric experience.

⁶¹ *Penelope’s Web*, 204.

⁶² *Penelope’s Web*, 204. Friedman further comments that Midge’s “dreamscape” is reminiscent of Poe’s “Dream-land” (204-5).

⁶³ *Penelope’s Web*, 205.

⁶⁴ My understanding of sea-significance for H.D. is largely indebted to the essay by Eileen Gregory, “Falling from the White Rock: A Myth of Margins in H.D.,” *Agenda*, H.D. Special Issue, 25, nos. 3-4 (1987/8): 113-123.

⁶⁵ Several poems encode an initiatory descent through gradations of water: they include “Thetis,” in *Hymen*, with its coloured striations of “paved parapet” (*Collected Poems*, 116-8).

temenos, which in effect located a site of sanctuary. It established in reality what had before existed only as an imaginary region recreated from within, in the early poems of *Sea Garden*.

Many texts by writers on the subject of ancient classical ritual describe sanctuaries as situated at places of “towering heights, [with] rocky cliffs ... and the sweet charm of sacred groves with their rustling leaves, singing birds, and murmuring brooks,”⁶⁶ sites which conjoin coastal-scapes and land locations. The corner of north Devon where the Aldingtons were staying exemplified an ideal archetypal location, fitting the criteria of that used in the Greek *topos* to encapsulate the features of the ritual site. North coastal Devon was, and is, the kind of environment which could become part of what Edward Casey called a “plenum-of-places,” or Eileen Gregory, writing about H.D., a “telos of nostalgia.”⁶⁷ A participant, inhabitant, or observer of this landscape (an amalgam of real and imaginary) is in search of nostalgia, at a place that is:

“... an encompassing whole made up of particular places in dynamic interaction with each other.” The world imagined in nostalgia serves as a “mediatrix” between the particular place of actual memory and the metaphysical place of origins.⁶⁸

Speaking many years later about her early poems, H.D. remarked,

I am surprised at the sadness in those poems ... It is hard to explain it. We say ... when someone dies, he or she has *gone home*. I was looking for home, I think. But a sort of heaven-is-my-home, I was looking for that ...⁶⁹

Paint It Today also explores its protagonist Midget’s sense of isolation as an expatriate in London, confirming the sense that for H.D. that period of her early poetry was shadowed by a feeling of homesickness and that what she had missed was “the roughness and the power of that wilderness” that she had left in America.⁷⁰

As noted already, throughout several of the early poems, both in *Sea Garden* and in later collections, the writer/persona seems to plead for a special place: a place of “torture,” wild, remote, inaccessible: her “shrine.” “The Shrine,” “The Wind Sleepers,” “The Gift,” “Sheltered Garden,” “The Cliff Temple” (all in *Sea Garden*); “Eurydice,” “Hermonax” (*The God*); “Thetis,” “Circe,” “The Islands” (*Hymen*); “Wash of cold river” (*Heliodora*); and other poems inscribe a sanctuary at the heart of the poem. The inner-kernel of “The Islands” (“Beauty is set apart”) suggests a sea/cret garden set within the circles of islands which encompass the poem.

⁶⁶ See Walter Burkert and John Raffan, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1985), 84-5.

⁶⁷ Gregory refers to Casey’s concept in *H.D. and Hellenism*, 35. She draws the term from Casey’s “The World of Nostalgia,” *Man and World* 20 (1987): 361-84.

⁶⁸ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 35.

⁶⁹ H.D., in her late memoir “Compassionate Friendship,” 12-13, quoted in Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 35. The final two ellipses are mine.

⁷⁰ *Paint It Today*, 14. Friedman refers to the “psychic borderlines of expatriatism.” “Exile in the American Grain: H.D.’s Diaspora,” *Agenda*, H.D. Special Issue, 25, nos. 3-4 (1987/8): 31. Laity, in her introduction to *Paint It Today*, says that the novel “reveals a story she suppressed in her poetry” (xvii).

“The Islands” has been identified as the locus of H.D.’s search for origins, home, and a maternal past. Her concept and textualization of “islands” is itself a kind of “plenum-of-places,” in that it incorporates the landscapes of Pennsylvania and the north Atlantic sea-coast of New Jersey, as well as Greece and the anonymous features within the *Sea Garden* poems themselves.⁷¹ The north Devon scenery, in which she immersed herself during the early months of 1916, could also be included as another idealised location that became part of her islands-plenum-of-places. I prefer to imagine the Devonian sea-territory as the most significant of all the locations, in its invocation of that archetypal place of origin.

Whilst she was in north Devon H.D. was able to experience a sensual, physical, emotional, and psychical response to the sea-world, whereby the English seas, looking out onto the Atlantic, could become fused with those of her home across the Atlantic. Revelling in this immersion she was able to delineate a textualized self, in terms of the loss of her early idealised childhood sea-landscape and a real (or figurative) looking back over amniotic Atlantic waters to distant American shores. Critics have remarked how the topographical textualization of sea figured in her treatment of the alienation and the difference she experienced as an expatriate: the severance, schisms, displacement, and fragmentation of self. For instance, writing in *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. mentions “two countries, America and England ... separated by a wide gap in consciousness and a very wide stretch of sea.”⁷²

H.D.’s inter-relationship with sea, both in life and texts, is mostly blissfully *jouissant*. She had many dramas and traumas to chasten her, but essentially sea-envelopment was a transformative, sometimes clairvoyant, healer. The watery coastal envelopment in Devon could have returned her to a timeless imaginary world of bliss; a space, where as se/er “beneath the water” she could explore the underwater sea-garden of the see/ed bed of her interior space, so enabling her to restore the lost imaginary M/other’s voice.⁷³

Writing in later life about her early “classical”/“Greek” poems, including some of those published in *Sea Garden*, H.D. describes the “nostalgia for a lost land” which they represent: “I might, psychologically just as well, have listed the Casco Bay islands off the coast of Maine but I called my islands Rhodes, Samos and Cos.” She identifies the lost land of Atlantis, “that island...England,” with the “sea-islands of the coast of Maine.” Her final image for her “phantasy” of islands, which she called poems of “escapism,” is the “clasp of the white necklace.”⁷⁴ H.D.’s charting of her “inner world of imagination” is emblemised by a topographical linking of the intense reality of the sea-scape islands of her childhood with the

⁷¹ Lundy island, with its complex history, is off the north Devon coast and accessible from Ilfracombe, but as far as I know H.D. did not visit the island.

⁷² H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 32. Like other expatriate women writers, H.D. persistently employed sea figuration to explain and analyse her creative impulse and self identity: as well as fiction and poetry she critically self-examined her status and sense of dislocation as an expatriate in letters, journals, essays, and other writings.

⁷³ The feminist critic, Hélène Cixous, in her analysis of the Imaginary, refers to a female fascination with oceanic origins. In several texts she invokes a sea-interior space, where “sea” becomes emblem of the semiotic chora. See, for example, “Le Rire de la Méduse,” *L’Arc* 61 (1975): 39-54, translated as “The Laugh of the Medusa” by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875-93, and “L’Approche de Clarice Lispector,” *Poétique* 40 (1979): 408-19, translated as “Clarice Lispector: The Approach,” by Deborah Jenson in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 59-77.

⁷⁴ “A Note on Poetry,” 71-5. The image of the “clasp of the white necklace” first appears in her poem “The Islands.”

“fragments” or beads of a “sheaf of poems,” which include several of her translated and expanded poetic texts from Sappho. She weaves these fragments with the re-membered fragrance of her beloved islands: they are garlands derived from her intoxicating childhood sea-garden.⁷⁵

Walking on exhilarating Devon coasts
sea/ee ing
beyond those forest paths
the secret invisible haven of Arden

It is as though “English” seas, represented for the poet in early 1916 by the southwestern coastal contours, were merged with those of her American home. Unlike her compatriot Sylvia Plath, who also visited north Devon seas some years later, but apparently hated the coastline, H.D. loved swimming in the sea, bathing nude and sun bathing and therefore had many opportunities to revel in intense “salt” experiences.

Beyond the reintegration of individual psychic origins, the sea as symbolic interior space also links with occult essences, which represent impersonal and timeless initiations of ritualistic transformation. The poet was possessed by the persuasive and compelling voices of the sea-sisters who had charmed her inner imagination as she wrote the poems which make up *Sea Garden*; nereids, naiads, and hamadryads lured her to water and the foam of sea. Each of their voices held the ring of authenticity, though they were invisible and often nameless; for as one writer exploring river/water iconography explains, “each has her particular identity and personality recognizable from her surroundings, her voice.”⁷⁶

Voice, in all its ramifications, is in any case vital to the poems in *Sea Garden* and in many of the poems composed after that sequence. However, H.D.’s poetic sound world has only recently begun to be analysed as a complex and essential component of her work, by the critic Adalaide Morris.⁷⁷ *Sea Garden*’s aural-territory is fundamental to that sequence, as Morris has

⁷⁵ My use of “fragrance” here is deliberate. As she reflects on the interplay between islands and early poems H.D. slips from the expression “fragrant pages” to “fragments...of parchment” (“A Note on Poetry,” 71-3).

⁷⁶ Frederic Colwell, *Rivermen; A Romantic Iconography of the River and the Source* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989), 41.

⁷⁷ See especially “Winged Words: H.D.’s Phonotexts and the Configurations of Meaning,” and “H.D. on the Air: Acoustical Technologies, Virtual Realities, and *Helen in Egypt*” in Adalaide Morris, *How to Live/What to Do*, 19-55 and 56-86. Morris notes several factors in H.D.’s background that predisposed her towards keen “aural acuity” (70). H.D.’s musical and aural sensitivities may have been influenced by her contacts a few years earlier with the pianist Walter Rummel in Paris and through him, with Debussy’s piano music. She could have attuned to that composer’s unique sound world. Debussy’s piano music, composed and performed during the years H.D. was in Paris, was noted for its dreamy evocation of mysterious aural colourings; its preoccupation with hazy and subdued light and shadow gradations of sound, achieved through overlapping chords and motifs; its exquisite harmonic changes and subtle changes of sound which included shifting chromatic changes. *Sea Garden*’s poems are poetically equivalent to such pieces as the series of *Images*, which had been composed just before H.D.’s stay in Paris, or the *Préludes*, which were finished by the end of 1913. Such compositions as *Voiles*, *Le Vent dans la plaine* and *Cloches à travers les feuilles* must have become familiar to the poet as she sat listening to Rummel, who, perhaps perceiving her as muse, asked for her opinion on the music. In her autobiographical *Asphodel*, H.D. mentions “[t]he gold fish ... and the castle under the sea” (*Poissons d’or* and *La Cathédrale engloutie*), referring to Rummel’s playing in terms of watery imagery (35-8).

extensively illustrated. Each poem's *phonotext* is made up of sound, in all its guises: noise, music, incantation, chant, voice, sound-effect, word-prosody, word-music, song. Most importantly, persistent all the way through, and prefiguring the poet's late epic work, *Helen in Egypt*, is the erotically charged sound-set of the sea and its environment, all-pervasive as urgent background, as well as bearer of enigmatic meaning.

sea-garden/seek arden

The encoded discourse within these poems is another underexplored feature of H.D.'s early work.⁷⁸ There are many cryptic possibilities within the poems and these disguise other secrets at the heart of the texts. Waiting to be discovered are chains of secret and hidden auditory signifiers, "wingéd words,"⁷⁹ which reveal and explicate the territory of liminal landscape set within the sea-scape frames. Morris begins her auditory exploration of *Sea Garden* with its first poem, "Sea Rose." But if H.D. embedded other cryptic wordplays in the split aural phoneme-chains of these poems, one must begin at the beginning, where the sea/cret of the garden is hidden, yet revealed, and that is with the title. Within the words *Sea Garden* are concealed the following sound-drifts: *seek garden; see guard; see card/seek hard*. And, more importantly, *See Garden* or *See a garden* or *Seek Arden*.⁸⁰ The coastal garden seascape of H.D.'s early collection therefore embeds one of Shakespeare's most famous landscapes within its enigmatic title and expands the interpretive frames of the sequence into new territory, that of the enchanting forest of *As You Like It*.

H.D.'s love of Shakespeare, in particular of certain plays, including *As You Like It*, is already well-documented and several of her prose texts indicate her fondness for and knowledge of them. In *HERmione*, for instance, the heroine delights in her own portrayal of cross-dressing Rosalind.⁸¹ The forest of Arden makes an appearance in the novel, ostensibly as the backdrop setting of Her/H.D.'s launch into eroticism through the unpleasant amorous approaches of George/Ezra Pound. The forest setting, however, is also presented as a place on the edge; it is "almost," "[b]ut not quite." As the narrative moves forward the forest's significance as stage-set alters and it becomes a space of liminal experience, a sacred grove of initiation. The young woman is taken to a transformative place of psychic vision, providing her with a precognition of what is just ahead of her: the homoerotic friendship with Frances/Fayne and the new kind of creative perception that she is to make the centre of her creativity: "[y]ou are a goddess'...her soul had gone futher [sic], almost she had found her mother—wood-goddess on a woodpath."⁸² Hermione's pagan erotic/psychic experiences within her dervish fir whirlpools prefigure and later transform into the mirroring under-water vortices of her initial erotic encounter with Fayne, which release and propel her into "'other' worlds of poetic, visionary, and sensual experience."⁸³

⁷⁸ See particularly "Introduction: H.D.'s Ongoingness," *How to Live/What to Do*, 1-15.

⁷⁹ Morris adopts the phrase which was used by H.D. in her acceptance speech for the Award of Merit by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which she accepted in May 1960. "Wingéd Words," *How to Live/What to Do*, 20.

⁸⁰ A book published in 1909, by her compatriot Margaret Morse, *On the Road to Arden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), which appears to be a modern re-telling of the Rosalind/Celia friendship, may have influenced H.D.; the phrase "Seek Arden" appears in the novel.

⁸¹ Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 245-8.

⁸² See *HERmione* (London: Virago Modern Classics, 1984), 67. My ellipsis.

⁸³ See *HERmione*, 164, and Laity, Introduction, *Paint It Today*, xxvii.

The doubled and dual secret meaning of “Seek Arden/Sea Garden” encoded in the title of *Sea Garden* may reiterate the sequence’s hidden encoding of the H.D./Frances Gregg relationship, whilst confirming the mythopoeic mind of the poet’s mode of creativity. “Arden,” as figure of landscape, is signifier of the other sea-scenic-scapes of the poems. Counter and antithetical to the sea, this enchanted wildwood or “magical forest”⁸⁴ can be understood as representative of a see/sea/cree site of pastoral retreat. In Shakespeare’s plays, “Arden” is archetypal: it can stand for an “enchanted and enchanting forest ... not far from the seacoast of Bohemia; or ... that very wood near Athens [where the ‘wild-thyme blows’], through which Hermia and Lysander ... pursued each other ... or ... the Bermudas ... one of those floating, wandering islands ... that ... misled ... mariners.”⁸⁵ It therefore encodes enigmatic sigils, as does *As You Like It*, as well as several other plays, including *The Tempest* and *The Winter’s Tale*.⁸⁶ So, H.D.’s disguised “Arden,” within that of “Sea Garden,” is an emblem of retreat, an inner sanctum or sacred grove, an idyllic pastoral wood, a never-never land, site of human folly, passion, intrigue, recrimination, resolve, repentance, and acceptance.

However, “Arden” is still a human world and as such contrasts with the otherworldly ambiance of the elemental sea environment, which embodies cosmic forces as cauldron of the supernatural. The *Sea Garden* sequence, with its twofold encryption of sea and land, may be an emblem for the ideal and idyllic site/s of classical retreat or sanctuary, which, as noted above, often collated both coastal and inland sites. *Seek Arden* is a wonderfully cryptic sigil. It encodes the ambivalence of *Sea Garden* as its poems capture the duality of the elemental landscape, with its liminal hovering on and over the edges of the shore and the sea. There is a subliminal message, telling the writer/reader to go and find the place, the site, where different worlds meet and overlap: for inspiration; for ecstasy; for renewal; for reinvigoration.

Not long after she sent her first book of poetry to be published, that is just what H.D. did; she came away from the war-torn city to seek an Arden-like territory. She found it in north Devon, near Woody Bay, where the heavily wooded slopes become grander towards seaward rocky cliffs, which fall sheer to sea. A little west, at Heddon’s Mouth, the wilder and desolate great gorge is set between bare slate hills. It is, even now, a desolate scene, held within a vast silence, where white foam breaks on to the jagged rocks. Yet, back up the stream, at Hunter’s Inn, there is a different world; a little Paradise of green trees and clear, rippling waters. Such was the territory often sought out by the poet over a time-spell of several months.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Stanford Friedman and Blau DuPlessis, “‘I had two loves separate’: The Sexualities of H.D.’s HER,” in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, 211.

⁸⁵ Richard Grant White, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1885), 127-8. See also Romuald I. Lakowski’s “‘Perilously Fair’: Titania, Galadriel, and the Fairy Queen of Medieval Romance,” in *Tolkien and Shakespeare: Essays on Shared Themes and Language*, edited by Janet Brennan Croft (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2006), 63. Lakowski remarks that “... though *M[idsommer] N[ight’s] D[ream]* may be nominally set in Athens, ‘the wood is in [Arden] Warwickshire, with its ... banks of wild thyme.’” Lakowski quotes Katharine M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck* (1959).

⁸⁶ Both plays were also favourites of the poet.

⁸⁷ Diana Collecott notes how, in 1920, H.D., with her now established partner Bryher, visited the Carmel pinewoods in California, where “[t]he woods sloped into headlands” (Bryher’s words, quoted in “Images at the Crossroads: The ‘H.D. Scrapbook,’” in *H.D.: Woman and Poet*, 362-3). Collecott, discussing the methodology of Kenneth Macpherson’s montages in “Scrapbook,” also says that “When his compositions incorporate the photographs of H.D. in the Carmel pine-woods, they confirm intimations of a sacred grove ...” (325).

The borderline land-seascape corresponds with the sound slippages to be found within H.D.'s individual poems and over poetic sequences, which shift and slide from sense to sense. These can be compared with the poetic cascades of meaning that drift and move over and through these collections. Changes of perception lead to new tricks of hearing and seeing. Boundaries between phonemes, words, phrases, and lines, and between individual poems are vague and indeterminate. Why, if such is the case, should each collection or sequence be read as a separate unit or entity? Given the subtleties of shifting sense, the only way to read these poems is with suspended expectation; letting go; falling: in love,⁸⁸ into enchantment; through rite, listening to the subtle and subliminal messages of the voices as they whisper, chat, chant, chime, collide, laugh, shout, and sing.

There is room here for just one example. The poem "Thetis," which appears in *Hymen*, but not in *Sea Garden*,⁸⁹ returns the reader to the "Cities" that concludes *Sea Garden*. I read "Thetis" as another hidden (slippery/shifty) link in the mysteries of these early poems' drifting, metaphorical maze of meanings:⁹⁰ the secret site of hidden secreted visionary power is, again, encrypted. "Cities" has always been considered rather idiosyncratic, positioned as it is as the final poem of the early sequence *Sea Garden*. But, in the reading suggested above, that poem can be read as representing the eternal, or "heavenly city,"⁹¹ and as such, its almost final lines, "The city is peopled / with spirits," invite correspondence with the final lines of "Thetis":

only the anemones and flower
of the wild sea-thyme
cover the silent walls
of an old sea-city at rest.

Here again, are chains of subliminal metaphoric and aural encryptions, which encode the matrix of the writer's poetic method and conjoin it with the lost world, the *jouissance* of her childhood-seas/seeing-world. Not only had H.D. found the wild-thyme fantasy grotto, the fairyland of Arden, in the enchanted coastal sea environments of the southwest, she was able to transform it into the stage-set of *temenos*, sacred grove or shrine. As such, the territory was a space where she could respond to already half-realised imaginative forces, and further, put into practice the interior meditative skills she had become used to observing, so as to attain a state of higher consciousness equivalent to that of the ecstatic mystical state. Whilst in this state of experiential mystical discovery, as poet/medium, she was able to touch an/Other dimensional world, peopled by the "spirits," who in her poetry became the purveyors of female transcendence.

⁸⁸ Eileen Gregory confesses, "Reading *Helen in Egypt* I was fascinated, reading *Sea Garden* I was falling in love." "Falling from the White Rock," 113.

⁸⁹ "Thetis" was first drafted before early 1919. "Thetis is a little weak," Aldington comments in a letter to H.D. of 13 January that year. *Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their Lives in Letters, 1918-61*, 156. The poem was heavily edited before it was published in *Hymen*. It may have first been drafted in 1917, when the poet was in Cornwall, or even before that, when she stayed in Devon. Another poem titled "Thetis" appears in *Heliodora (Collected Poems, 159-63)*.

⁹⁰ Eileen Gregory commented that "'Thetis' seems somewhat anomalous among the other poems in the volume [*Hymen*] ... in that it describes a (divine) woman's sexual self-sufficiency, her radical 'virginity' or erotic self-possession." "Ovid and H.D.'s 'Thetis,' (*Hymen* Version)," *The H.D. Newsletter 1, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 30*.

⁹¹ See note 47.

Thetis's sea-city is sigil of a lost island-idyll and as already remarked, islands for H.D. often emblematised the dispersed and lost sea-lands of her childhood, seeming to embody the innermost sanctum of an interior world where fragmented splits could be reassembled into a coherent spiritual/emotional whole.⁹² One of the spirits who claimed her from that past, through her writing, was her grandmother, Mamalie. In her note to Pearson H.D. specifically refers to Calypso's Island, in the Lehigh River, her first island of memory drained away or lost, like a miniature Atlantis.⁹³ Calypso's Island was also *Wunden Eiland*, site of the *Sanctus Spiritus*, the sign of secret ritualistic spiritual exchange, which H.D.'s Moravian grandmother had participated in and had later shared with her young writer-granddaughter.⁹⁴

As an adult the poet continued to be fascinated with people who had the gift of clairvoyance and the year before they came to Devon H.D. and Aldington met the theologian Evelyn Underhill,⁹⁵ who had published *Mysticism*, her study of spiritual development, in 1911, only a few years before. Underhill stressed how an individual in search of transcendence needed to lose all sense of individual boundaries. Her image for the soul in a "true" mystical state was that of an open "anemone," "who" can "know the ocean in which she is bathed."⁹⁶ Listening to the aural slippages in the final lines of "Thetis," "anemones," as emblem of mysticism, seems to represent the rapturous soul in a state of sea-eternal-time (flower/hour/our of the wild/isle sea-thyme/time) hovering over (c/over/hover) the "heavenly city," the island (silent/island) beneath the sea (old sea-city), which is "Sanctus Spiritus" (sea-city at rest). Even this little final quatrain of the poem shimmers with complex resonance. It is reminiscent of earlier poems, such as "The Islands" and "The Shrine" as well as portent of later poems, such as "Tribute to the Angels" and "The Flowering of the Rod," in *Trilogy*.⁹⁷

The Atlantis vision of lost island coded within "isle sea-thyme" and revealed as the source of her "Gift," is an emblem that recurs in H.D.'s work. "Thetis," her sea-thyme, sea/cret, under water g/Arden, sigil of an/other dimension, of Sirens, spells and singing-shells, both disguises and reveals her subliminal message of the *Sanctus Spiritus*. As she began to encrypt the sigil, in these early poems, H.D. was perhaps unconscious of what its lifelong significance would be to her, as poet and person. The figuration would stalk her from her past, through the First World War spell of those months in the southwest corner of the country and propel her into the future of the Second World War and the epic poetry of the later writing.

⁹² Or, as Collecott suggested, they could be "stepping-stones," which linked H.D., as poet-in-the-present, back across "treacherous territory" to her childhood past. *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 30. In *Bid Me to Live*, based on her months in Cornwall in 1918, H.D. expressed her intense identification with the magnificent sea-scenery around her, including that of the mythical Lyonesse or Atlantis allegedly lost under Cornish waters (115 and 149).

⁹³ "A Note on Poetry," 72.

⁹⁴ H.D. initially misinterprets "*Wunden Eiland*": "She says *Eiland* which must be an island, and the *Wunden*, I suppose, is wonder or wonderful." Later, the poet realises that it is "Island of the Wounds." See *The Gift*, 82-5.

⁹⁵ See Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 164.

⁹⁶ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930), 51.

⁹⁷ At the climax of "Tribute," the "jewel" in the "crucible" glitters "green-white, opalescent" in the flowering may-tree of the burnt-out, war-torn "city" (*Collected Poems*, 552-4) and the suffering poet slips from clock-time to out-of-time/sea-thyme as she reads the "Lady's" book stating its vision of peace and sanctuary (*Collected Poems*, 568-74). In "Flowering" Kaspar observes as Mary Magdalene merges with "the circles and circles of islands / about the lost centre-island, Atlantis" (*Collected Poems*, 601).

If I focus intently, I can just make out the (Siren) voice/s, quivery, wavering, a long, long way away, calling from one world to another, to anyone who wants to hear. I listen to the almost imperceptible whisperings, like seashells wherein are secret songs. I cannot elude them...

Imagine...

Time recedes (seas/sea-reeds/re-seeds), nearly twenty-five years.

It's me see. Silly.

The voice. Still hisses. Whispers. Muses.

Are you here? There?

Always late Summer and the window ajar and white asters star-ghosts lighting Rock House's dark garden corner with suns, smiling - *Blue fire crept, like Michaelmas mist, up out of the darkness, there was the usual solid columns of white pillars, seen far distant in a blue mist.*⁹⁸

How they cluster, fight for air space to crowd through and breathe in, here, the essence, incense, how it's white, like the lily is, scent.

H.D.!

Look round. See no ... One's there.

⁹⁸ H.D., *Nights* (New York: New Directions, 1986), 64.

Roundtable on American Regionalism and Modern Technology
American Literature Association Conference
San Francisco, California, May 24-27, 2012

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the effects of new technologies registered in significant ways in American art and culture, reflecting the emergence of industries, cities, infrastructure, and new ways of life. The proliferation of emerging technologies also affected culture in parts of the United States beyond modernized metropolises. American regional cultures—broadly understood to include art and literature, visual and material culture, and an array of vernacular and folk traditions—alternately incorporated and resisted the influences of technological change while maintaining numerous distinctive regional identities and forms.

This session will bring together papers that explore the complex relations between technology and region in the United States across a long modern period, from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century. We will include papers that examine particular locations, theorize regionalism in innovative and interdisciplinary ways, and examine regional encounters with specific technological developments. The session as a whole will seek to understand how regional experiences of technology have complicated, enriched, and troubled both the traditions of American culture and the ongoing efforts to come to terms with the legacies of these encounters in contemporary criticism.

Papers could explore some of the following areas:

- American literary regionalism's relations with technological change
- Regionalism and critical or social theory
- Political institutions, technology, and regional culture
- Ethnic, immigrant, racial, or nationalist minority identity in regional context
- Race or identity as technology
- Modes of transportation and infrastructural development
- Agricultural mechanization or food distribution networks
- Film, photography, early television, and other visual media in regional context
- Radio, newspapers, and regional aspects of mass communication
- Sheet music, music halls, rural entertainment circuits
- Jazz, blues, country music, early rock and roll, and regional musical genres
- Mail order products, rural free delivery, and other networks of distribution
- The fashion industry in regional permutations
- Domestic and public architecture, regional planning, and human geography
- Regional urbanism or cultures of the regional city
- Nature, ecology, conservation, resource utilization, and technology
- The military-regional complex

In *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, Marjorie Perloff shows how “The novelty of Italian Futurist manifestos [...] is their brash refusal to remain in the expository or critical corner, their understanding that the group pronouncement, sufficiently aestheticized, can, in the eyes of the mass audience, all but take the place of the promised art work.” (Perloff 85).

Building upon this premise of early Modernism—which crucially contributed to blurring the boundaries between artwork and critical/theoretical commentary—we would like to examine in this panel how the aesthetic dimensions and determinants of Modernist theoretical writing may be characterized. In their overall strategy to emphasize formal innovation, American Modernist writers such as Louis Zukofsky, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, or Gertrude Stein (among many others), tried to integrate the programmatic, prescriptive dimension of poetic theory within their poetic practice, by challenging what Perloff calls “the expository or critical” mode.

This is of course not without important consequences on both poetry and theory. Considering Stevens’ “Notes toward a Supreme Fiction,” for example, how can one delimit the theoretical gesture it emphasizes from the poetic value of the language used (in part) to convey it? Or, to phrase the question differently, how may the rhetoric of the poem carry simultaneously the poetic weight of figuration and the polemical, political and ideological weight of argumentation? Unlike in earlier periods of literary history—one can think of the essays in verse that were common up to the 18th century, in which fixed forms were used mostly decoratively—the modernist aesthetics of theory instantiates a more essential relationship with poetic forms which come to incarnate them. In this respect, the Modernist poem may be seen as the *object* of aesthetics in both senses of the word.

51. Historiographic Modernism: Innovation & the Past in Modernist Women’s Poetry

Organizer: Stacy Carson Hubbard (University at Buffalo, SUNY)

Chair: Suzanne Raitt (College of William & Mary)

1. Kelley Wagers (Penn State Worthington Scranton) “‘but gods always face two ways’: *Trilogy’s* Historical Turns”
2. Stephanie Hawkins (University of North Texas) “Words in Relative Motion: Stein’s *Tender Buttons*, the New Physics, and the Fragmentation of History”
3. Stacy Carson Hubbard (University at Buffalo, SUNY) “‘Marriage, Tobacco, and Slavery’: Marianne Moore’s Colonial America”
4. Melissa Zeiger (Dartmouth College) “Elizabeth Bishop’s History”

Abstract of the session:

This panel seeks to explore the relations of aesthetic innovation to theories of time and emergent forms of historiography in modernist women’s poetry. We will examine how four major poets’ formal and linguistic innovations served to represent and interrogate the past, specifically women’s exclusion or marginalization within hegemonic historical narratives. Did modernism constitute a rupture in time? A

superimposition of the present upon the past? A violent projection of the present into the future? Or some other configuration of past and present? We will trace the divergent responses these poets contrived in order to enact at once the radically (feminist) new and the reconstituted, hence useable, past.

While some readers have seen H.D.'s *Trilogy* as forging communicating links between "the out-of-time and the in-time," others see in it the dire cost of a "redemptive historiography" that contains and deflects the horrors of war. Accordingly, *Trilogy* seems either to renovate modernism's more typical engagements with history by describing a new and newly gendered warrior of historical consequence, or fall into the familiar trap of modernism's evasion of history in which the poem folds a troubled past into a restoring, regenerative cycle. In her paper, Kelley Wagers argues that *Trilogy* orchestrates, rather than attempts to resolve, such competing demands of a historiographic method calibrated to modern experience, and shows that the poem faces "two-ways" in order to proclaim a timeless resurrection achieved by repeated casts into historical particulars.

Despite Gertrude Stein's famous pronouncement that she would "kill" the "nineteenth century," it was not history itself that Stein rejected. Rather, Stephanie Hawkins argues in her paper, Stein rejected historical memory of a particular *kind*, one premised on linear time and chronological order based on nineteenth-century positivist science. The disordered temporal-spatial dimensions of Stein's poetry instead suggest its affinity with the "new physics" of Albert Einstein. Hawkins's essay will explore how Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914) builds on the relativistic framework introduced by early quantum physics to compose a non-linear history composed of disjunctive relations, thus setting in motion a dynamic between "monumental history"—cataclysmic world events—and personal history and calling attention to the cognitive processes that give events order and meaning.

Stacy Hubbard's paper examines Marianne Moore's engagements with seventeenth century narratives of New World travel and discovery, arguing that Moore revisits the scene of American origins as a way of examining the woman poet's relationship to poetic history and the possibilities for cross-cultural, inter-gender, and trans-historical dialog. Linking the story of Pocahontas and John Rolfe as retold in "Enough" to the story of Adam and Eve reimaged in "Marriage," Hubbard argues that Moore interprets the ways that cultures collide, adapt and borrow as a model for gender conflict and collaboration, as well as for the tensions between innovative and traditional poetics. In revisiting and rewriting New World history, Moore imagines the relation of the modernist moment to the historical past as what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "contact zone."

Melissa Zeiger's paper examines some early essays by Elizabeth Bishop in which she considers the nature of time's progression and its interpretation as history, placing her ideas in conversation with T.S. Eliot's in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and producing a version that Anne Stevenson calls "experience-time," time as it is felt by individuals and cultures. Like Eliot's, this sense of historical time is of a "simultaneous order" which places past and present in constant relation. However, Zeiger argues, in contrast to Eliot's emphases on canonical formation and on impersonality, Bishop's

world history is also a personalized cultural history, encoded in traces that might almost be missed: a pair of blue eyes, a bird's cage. Zeiger traces out the revisionist transformations of Eliot's thinking about tradition in the work of Bishop by way of extending our panel's investigations of modernist historical poetics into the post-modern moment.

67. "A Community of Meanings": H.D., Robert Duncan, and Norman Holmes Pearson

Organizer: Annette Debo (Western Carolina University)

Moderator: James Maynard (University at Buffalo, SUNY)

1. Michael Boughn (Independent scholar, poet, fiction writer) "H.D., Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book*, and the Occult"
2. Eric Keenaghan (University at Albany, SUNY) "A 'Companion of the Way': The Life-Politics of Norman Holmes Pearson's Patronage of Robert Duncan's *The H.D. Book*"
3. Annette Debo (Western Carolina University) "'Your work means bread and wine': Norman Holmes Pearson and H.D.'s *Last Poems*"

Abstract of the session:

The H.D. Book—itself a monumental structure of 678 pages—was published in its entirety in January 2011 by the University of California Press. An innovative mix of scholarship and creative writing, Robert Duncan's prodigious work was until now only incompletely available in twenty separate pieces. While its appearance will fundamentally impact H.D. and Duncan studies, this panel proposes a look at its inception. The panelists will create a triangular conversation, discussing the intertwining relationships between H.D., the older creative writer; Duncan, the younger poet paying homage; and Norman Holmes Pearson, H.D.'s literary executor and a patron of sorts for Duncan. Michael Boughn, co-editor of *The H.D. Book*, will open the panel by delineating the editing challenges created by a project written and revised over a five year period and initially published over a forty-five year period. His talk addresses the relationship between H.D. and Duncan, who corresponded from 1959 to 1961 and met in May 1960, when H.D. traveled to New York City to accept the American Academy of Arts and Letters's Award of Merit, presented for the first time to a woman. Boughn argues that the bond that sprang up between H.D. and Duncan was based upon their shared understanding that the culture of modernity had devastated the imaginative landscape and that they both found answers in the occult. Eric Keenaghan, a Duncan scholar, will pick up the story through Duncan and Pearson's unpublished correspondence. In 1960 Pearson commissioned Duncan to write an homage for H.D.'s seventy-fifth birthday, and Keenaghan claims that Duncan and Pearson both came to imagine *The H.D. Book* as bearing more than a potential for changing the "politics" of the literary and academic landscapes. They recognized it as articulating poetry as a "life line," another means of conceptualizing effective agency for an increasingly volatile and politicized American society during the Vietnam War. Duncan and Pearson's intellectual collaboration

permitted the former to mould H.D.'s legacy as an offering of a redemptive vision, inflected by own anarchist principles, a vision that could change understandings of personhood, collectivity, and life itself. An H.D. scholar, Annette Debo will complete this triangular relationship through her exploration of H.D. and Pearson's relationship, which began in 1937 when Pearson, then a graduate student, was sent to interview H.D. Their friendship was solidified during World War II when Pearson served in the OSS in London, and at the war's conclusion, he replaced Marianne Moore as H.D.'s literary representative in the U.S. An early advocate of American Studies programs, Pearson was positioning H.D. as an American poet by urging her repatriation, necessitated by the Cold War. *The H.D. Book* was one of Pearson's many efforts to alter her critical reputation by turning critical attention to her epics and later writings—collected in a volume he imagined as *Last Poems*—and away from her early Imagist poetry. This conversation will be facilitated by James Maynard, a Duncan scholar and Assistant Curator of The Poetry Collection at the University at Buffalo, which houses Duncan's papers.

79. Roundtable 7: Rethinking Poetic Innovation

Organizer: Marsha Bryant (University of Florida)

Moderator: Alan Golding (University of Louisville)

Other Participants:

Marsha Bryant (University of Florida)

Bob Perelman (University of Pennsylvania)

Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux (University of Maryland)

Steven Yao (Hamilton College)

Elisabeth Frost (Fordham University)

Michael Chasar (Willamette University)

Abstract of the session:

Making it new and making poetry happen are central to our conceptions of modernism. Indeed, the interplay of these structures of innovation shapes many ways that modernist studies maps its materials, forms, histories, geographies, and methodologies. Not surprisingly, the inaugural MSA gave prominent attention to H.D. and Ezra Pound—early poetic innovators who crossed cultural and media boundaries in their artistic practice. This year's theme, along with the proximity of The Poetics Program at Buffalo, make MSA 13 the ideal venue for a roundtable on rethinking poetic innovation. We propose a provocative mixture of perspectives that should yield a lively discussion. Specifically, we aim to:

- Renew models of the avant-garde, past and present
- Reconfigure formal innovation along global formations
- Reconsider the role of visual culture and popular culture in poetic innovation
- Revisit models of innovation that rely on counter-discourse
- Realign poetic practice with the marketing of innovation
- Recover diverse reader communities and their everyday innovations

Insisting on the key roles that circulation, sites of consumption, and audience reception play in poetic innovation, Professor Chasar explores diverse ways that innovation happens within popular culture. His approach ventures “outside the salon, the coterie, the little magazine, and the avant-garde” to consider mass communication technologies (advertising, radio) and “acts of innovative reading.” Chasar insists that we consider what these mass structures offer in their own right as well as what they offer to artists. Taking us beyond the “pictorial turn” and “gazer’s spirit,” Professor Bergmann Loizeaux will reexamine ekphrasis as a way of mapping poetic innovation across modernist styles and schools. Yeats, Williams, Moore, Auden, and others negotiated the mode’s paradoxical tendencies toward innovation and nostalgia, prompting the question of why so many post-1900 poets returned to the ekphrastic tradition. Loizeaux finds that its inherently dialogic nature opens lyric to the social world. Calling for a more global theory of poetic innovation during the modernist period, Professor Yao will draw attention to the broad range of poetic production within minority American literatures. Examining the body of verse by people of Asian descent in the U.S., he considers its diverse formal strategies in the early 20th century. By reconfiguring modernist innovation and tradition, Yao expands our prevailing conceptions of both the logic and the stakes of formal transformation. Professor Bryant will discuss counterintuitive innovations that women poets fashion through popular culture. Challenging outsider models, she asserts that materials such as Hollywood films and household advertising often underwrite the signature styles of Anglo-American poets who transgress gender boundaries. Fundamentally, Bryant questions the assumption that poems by women must parody or critique popular culture to be taken seriously as women’s poetry. Professor Perelman will situate the nexus of innovation, attention, and meaning within the current status of poetic innovation. In claiming that avant-garde has become “an eroded marker of prior transgression,” he questions the extent to which the term innovative can designate some of its predecessor’s cultural meanings (surprise, shock, activity, liveliness). If the term cannot avoid the “impossibly singular” meanings of avant-garde, is innovative now reduced to a pious dogmatism?

82. Becoming Modern

Organizer: Jody Cardinal (SUNY College at Old Westbury)

Chair: Rebecca Walsh (North Carolina State University)

1. Jody Cardinal (SUNY College at Old Westbury) “From Scientist to Modernist: Gertrude Stein’s Journey to Irony and Beyond”
2. Deirdre Egan-Ryan (St. Norbert College) “Willa Cather’s Squares: Becoming Spatially Modern”
3. Julia Lisella (Regis College) “Genevieve Taggard: Anxieties of an Emergent Modernist”

Abstract of the session:

The new modernist studies, with its emphasis on historicist and cultural studies methodologies, requires that we reassess the fraught nature of women’s transitions to

modernist innovation. While women writers long ago emerged from modernism's margins, their specific transitions from pre-modern to modernist aesthetics are too often still characterized in passive and largely biographical terms as in, for instance, familiar readings of H.D.'s modernism as derivative of that of her lover, Ezra Pound.

This panel extends recent historicist approaches in modernist studies, like those showcased in *Bad Modernisms* (2006) and *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (2010), to the specific issue of women's transitions to modern aesthetics while at the same time foregrounding class – an analytical category often overlooked in modernist cultural studies. Each paper explores how active interventions in specific discursive, spatial, and political struggles of the time fostered a transition to modern innovation among women writers and how gender and class complicated their relationship to hegemonic modern discourses.

Gertrude Stein's transition from a medical student to one of the most innovative modernists is usually described in personal terms as a successive working-through, in increasingly experimental texts, of a lesbian affair gone awry. Jody Cardinal's paper demonstrates instead that Stein's transition resulted from active intervention in historical debates about whether middle-class women should receive a college education. Using an interdisciplinary approach, Cardinal contextualizes Stein's three understudied polemics on the value of women's higher education (1898-1907) within contemporaneous scientific research. Stein's deeply conflicted attempts to define her own gender and class identity within this discourse fostered the development of irony and ambiguity in her writing, precursors to the more radical deconstruction and polysemy of her later texts.

Deirdre Egan's paper explores Cather's similarly ambivalent transition into modernity as it is revealed in her representation of urban spaces. Within Cather's depictions of Madison and Washington Squares, her protagonists in "Coming, Aphrodite" and *My Mortal Enemy* struggle to integrate a consciously modern landscape that appears divided against itself, between rich and poor, between past and present, between economic and social concerns. Extending recent explorations of space and geography in modernist literature, Egan reveals how spatial representations in Cather's fiction encode ambivalent responses to the modern and furthers recent reassessments of Cather as (an albeit problematic) modernist.

Focusing on poet Genevieve Taggard, Julia Lisella explores the conflicts between Taggard's self-identification as a modernist committed to reworking old aesthetic forms and the political sentiments of her work. Due to her explicit class thematics, contemporary scholars are often reluctant to classify Taggard as a modernist despite her innovations, visible, for instance, in *Calling Western Union*, which combines lyrics, narrative free verse poems about the working class, and stunning pieces of autobiography. Focusing on Taggard's early prose, particularly the preface to *May Days*, an anthology of her poetry published in the *New Masses*, Lisella illustrates how Taggard actively worked to fuse her political and aesthetic convictions, claiming a modernist identity at odds with the major, already-canonized voices of modernism.

89. Poetic Disputes In and Out of Print: Reading Modernism Through (& Beyond) the Archive

Organizer: Amy Evans (King's College London)

Chair: Michael Basinski (University at Buffalo, SUNY)

1. Stephen Collis (Simon Fraser University) "Foot Steps and Language: Metamodern Disputes around Postmodern Poetics"
2. James Maynard (University at Buffalo, SUNY) "Robert Duncan and the Moderns"
3. Amy Evans (King's College London) "Strife with the Goddess: Protest Poetics and the Erotic"

Abstract of the session:

In his study, *Contextual Practice*, Stephen Fredman introduces a new term to identify some of modernism's "most innovative works of poetry and art" as those "devoted to contexts, building works not around a central idea, theme, or symbol but by plucking and arranging images, materials, language, or even people from the surrounding milieu, 'fashioning. . . contexts of a new life way in the making.'" In our international and interdisciplinary panel, we develop Fredman's reconception of a modernist studies able to contemplate poetry's accumulation of "even people" in order to consider cross- and inter-generational relationships of a late modernism that identifies itself through dispute and alliance as two sides of a living, poetic tradition. We explore poetic relationships recognized within critical maps of modernism and accessible through publications and their scholarly critique. At the same time, by arguing through a particular focus on the Poetry Collection at the University at Buffalo, we seek to extend the idea of the printed, poetic dispute to include elements of these relationships that are either no longer, or yet to be, in the public domain: one paper focuses on verbal dispute, a second on letters and personal library holdings and a third on notebooks comprising composition, diary and dream journal entries. As such, ideally placed at the world's largest archival collections of several of these modernist writers, our panel will demonstrate the archive's own potential as a catalyst for the new in international modernist scholarship, whereby it too becomes a 'structure of innovation.'

In his paper, Stephen Collis explores two disputes with Language Writing from "within" the poetic avant-garde: Robert Duncan's well known disagreement with Barrett Watten over the latter's interpretation of Louis Zukofsky's *80 Flowers* (in 1978) and Lissa Wolsak's less well-known, perhaps less significant (but no less telling) disagreement with Bruce Andrews following a lecture the latter gave in Vancouver BC at the Kootenay School of Writing (in 1988). These disputes show the ways the narratives of the "postmodern"—as either a more or less linear generational shift or inevitable remaking of the "new"—are problematized by what he will refer to as the "metamodern," a term he takes from Vermeulen and Van Den Akker. Neither "pre" nor "post," the "metamodern" is determined by a "metaxis"—literally, a state of being "between" or of oscillation. This might make sense, in Duncan's case, as his career overlaps with the "modern" and "postmodern," but Lissa Wolsak, born in 1947 and not beginning to publish until the 1990s, does not fit as nicely into aesthetic periods, even

though her work is fruitfully compared to Duncan's, and her disputes with Language Writing revolve around similar issues: the refusal to dispense with (the supposedly outré) "subject" and its determining (to use Marx's phrase) "species being."

In his paper, James Maynard approaches the ideas of community and dispute from their alternative aspect, alliance, by considering the network of poetic affinities that form one poet's complex notion of a "derivative" poetry. In a biographical note that appears in Donald Allen's 1960 anthology *The New American Poetry*, Robert Duncan writes that "the sources of my virtue lie among those immediately preceding me in Stein, Lawrence, Pound, H.D., William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Stevens, and Edith Sitwell." Maynard will discuss the role several such modernists played as "sources" in Duncan's writing life by examining specifically the archive of their correspondences that form part of the Robert Duncan Collection housed in the University at Buffalo's Poetry Collection.

In her paper, Amy Evans suggests that extremes of both mutual poetic celebration and warfare can be seen at work through a triangulation of 'political' poets, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan and H.D.. Considering the definition of "dispute" as "a disagreement between management and employees that leads to an action of protest," Evans suggests that Duncan's writing of the younger, then living Levertov as the bloody goddess Kali constitutes an inversion of that of the older, dead H.D. as "Mother of Mouthings" while he moves from influenced to (challenged) influence and from poetry as the product of love to that of strife. Understanding this reveals the extent to which, for Duncan, H.D. constitutes the ideal example of the poet's role in times of political urgency and the authority of the female cultural voice. Evans examines entries in Duncan's notebooks, held in the Poetry Collection, which challenge extant, and largely women-excluding, models of generational lineage and poetic creation offered by Bloom, Eliot and Graves and suggests that the rupture between the younger poets occurs when Duncan can no longer bridge the distance between the real, writing woman and her mythologized, written counterpart during the acute circumstances of the Vietnam War. Her paper draws together hitherto separately acknowledged poetic relationships and places them within a more cohered critique of one poet's written engagement with female colleagues that potentially dissolves boundaries between readings of modernism offered by queer theory and feminist studies in order to explore the visibility and function of the eroticized woman in a homoerotic protest poetry.

96. Late Modernism and Empire

Organizer: Rebecca Walsh (North Carolina State University)

Chair: Cyrena Pondrom (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

1. Lara Vetter (University of North Carolina, Charlotte) "Imperialism and the Female Body in H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red*"
2. Emily McCann (University of Florida) "Queer Gothic, Empire, and Edith Sitwell"
3. Celena Kusch (South Carolina Upstate University) "Postcolonial Modernism: The Caribbean Issues of *Life and Letters Today*"

4. Rebecca Walsh (North Carolina State University) "Bryher in Afghanistan and Pakistan: 'Gandhara'"

Abstract of the session:

All four papers assembled here explicitly tackle the operations of imperialism and the underlying mechanisms that are associated with Empire formation, which modernist writing from the 1930s to the 1950s foregrounds in particularly striking ways. In focusing on work in this time period, these papers all suggest the importance of later modernism for bringing together political, generic, and aesthetic innovation that in many ways anticipates variations of later theoretical constructs about nation- and Empire-formation, the relationship between Empire and domestic, gendered bodies, and the ways that the "West" and the "non-West" are actually unstable, constructed categories. All four papers to varying degrees demonstrate the active role that women played as writers and behind-the-scenes producers in interrogating a political and spatial terrain at the category of nation and beyond and that, as two of the papers suggest, is underwritten by or connected to forms of patriarchal violence.

Both Lara Vetter's paper, "Imperialism and the Female Body in H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red*," and Emily McCann's paper, "Queer Gothic, Empire, and Edith Sitwell," trace explicit connections between the violence of nation/Empire and female disfigurement. Vetter calls for a continued re-examination of H.D.'s later work in the form of her 1940s novel, *White Rose*, which Vetter argues is not a-political and transcendently spiritual but rather is a searing interrogation of war and of British imperialist aggression targeting India, which is linked to similar scenes of violence directed at the female body (specifically Elizabeth Siddall, wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti). McCann's paper argues that Edith Sitwell's *I Live under a Black Sun* (1934) uses and reworks gothic tropes of female monstrous desire to critique the ways that fascistic political formations depend upon patriarchal subordination to further their real and symbolic reproduction.

Complementing Vetter's focus on British colonialism in India, Kusch's paper, "Postcolonial Modernism: The Caribbean Issues of *Life and Letters Today*," turns to the colonial Caribbean. Kusch contends that the 1940s Jamaican editorials and the West Indian special issue produced by Robert Herring, as editor of *Life and Letters Today*, and supported by Bryher, who bought and supported the periodical, contain a cogent postcolonial critique and articulation of the need for Caribbean national independence movements. In these *Life and Letters* publications, Kusch suggests, we find clear strains of Fanon's call for national literature and indigenous intellectual and artistic production. Like Kusch's focus on journalistic writing, Walsh's paper, "Bryher in Afghanistan and Pakistan: 'Gandhara,'" also focuses on an underprivileged genre, namely travel writing. It analyzes Bryher's efforts to chart the influence of ancient Asian and South Asian culture on Greek culture, and finds that it formulates ideas about cultural contact that run close to postcolonial theoretical models of hybridity. These "failures" of Empire in an ancient setting, Walsh suggests, challenge the underlying assumptions of "West" vs. "East" that historically helped to justify 19th- and 20th-century imperial projects. Vetter, Walsh, and Kusch all foreground particular imperial geographies, each of which

for me, drawn on in the sequence and in my academic work. I'm grateful for the generous support of postgraduate students' studies, international H.D. scholarship and creative writing.

Collecting Shells is available for purchase from the following website:
<http://www.oystercatcherpress.com/aevals.html>.

HD's Web is also pleased to note the publication of the following:

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