

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

H.D.: HER STRUGGLE AGAINST IMAGISM

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by

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Summary of Thesis for Ph.D. degree

by: Ian Edward Gregson

on: H.D.: Her Struggle Against Imagism.

The thesis firstly defines Imagism in theory and discusses it in practice. It then examines H.D.'s development from her most Imagist volume Sea Garden to her later, increasingly less Imagist volumes Trilogy, Helen in Egypt and Hermetic Definition. It indicates the particular form which H.D.'s Imagism takes and the reasons for her dissatisfaction with it as a technique. It shows that her continuing exploration of her inner world made the rigorously objective and definitive nature of Imagism increasingly inappropriate to her aims.

The thesis explores H.D.'s interests in magic, alchemy, the occult and various forms of religion and shows that she found justification for these interests in the theories of Freud and Jung. It suggests a connection here with the interests of Symbolist poets and stresses, in this way, the incompatibility between these interests and Imagism - which has an implicit view of experience of its own and one fundamentally opposed to that of Symbolism.

The thesis charts H.D.'s attempts to modify her Imagism, to make it more flexible, as the prerequisite to the expression of these mystical interests. It notes her failures and successes and indicates the considerable progress that she made in the direction of enlarged range. It notes the limits of this range - especially her lack of interest in human psychology in its social forms. It notes, also, that Imagism

remained, even at the end of her life, a constituent part of her poetry, although Helen in Egypt and 'Hermetic Definition' show her using it more sparingly, and with much more consciousness of its particular usefulness.

CHAPTER ONE	IRANIAN	1
CHAPTER TWO	SEA GARDEN	50
CHAPTER THREE	COLLECTED POEMS	91
CHAPTER FOUR	RED ROSES FOR BRONZE	126
CHAPTER FIVE	'THE POET' AND 'THE DANCER', AND <u>WHAT DO I LOVE?</u>	165
CHAPTER SIX	TRILOGY	193
CHAPTER SEVEN	THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THOUGHTS	226
CHAPTER EIGHT	HELEN IN EGYPT	266
CHAPTER NINE	HERMETIC DEFINITION	312
CONCLUSION		344
NOTES		347
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY		368

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE IMAGISM	4
CHAPTER TWO SEA GARDEN	50
CHAPTER THREE COLLECTED POEMS	91
CHAPTER FOUR RED ROSES FOR BRONZE	128
CHAPTER FIVE 'THE POET' AND 'THE DANCER', AND <u>WHAT DO I LOVE?</u>	165
CHAPTER SIX TRILOGY	193
CHAPTER SEVEN THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THOUGHTS	226
CHAPTER EIGHT HELEN IN EGYPT	266
CHAPTER NINE HERMETIC DEFINITION	312
CONCLUSION	344
FOOTNOTES	347
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	368

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C.P.	<u>Collected Poems</u>
R.R.B.	<u>Red Roses for Bronze</u>
T.	<u>Trilogy</u>
T.F.	<u>Tribute to Freud</u>
H.E.	<u>Helen in Egypt</u>
H.D.	<u>Hermetic Definition</u>

Abbreviations Used in the Text

I have used the following abbreviations, all of them referring to volumes by H.D.:

S.G. Sea Garden

C.P. Collected Poems

R.R.B. Red Roses for Bronze

T Trilogy

T.F. Tribute to Freud

H.E. Helen in Egypt

H.D. Hermetic Definition

In fact the purest of the Imagists was William Carlos Williams because the success of his poems is achieved because of Imagist restrictions, not despite them. They represent a deliberate choice on his part, a deliberate stripping away of traditional poetic means - especially of evocation and suggestion. His exploitation of the austere idiom that resulted, with its emphasis upon definition and clarity, and upon the Mallarmian limit-expressed in Williams' own dictum 'No ideas but in things',³ represents a carefully calculated matching of his materialist outlook with an expression that insists upon the concrete, the material.

INTRODUCTION

Jackson R. Bryer describes 'H.D.'s major claim to recognition' as the fact that she 'was the first and purest of the Imagists'.¹ Such a statement ignores the complexity of Imagism's place in her career: Imagism was both a help and a hindrance to H.D.; she resented its tight hold upon her poetry and constantly modified, but never completely removed, its influence. She was not the purest of the Imagists - even her first volume Sea Garden, which was predominantly Imagist, deviates from purity. F.S. Flint wrote that Imagism dealt in: 'Direct treatment of the "thing", whether subjective or objective'.² Sea Garden, though it deals directly with objects, uses this - as my second chapter shows - to deal indirectly with a subjective 'thing' which is the real subject-matter of these early poems.

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The self-conscious flatness of Williams' idiom represents a major contribution to the American poetic tradition. He found in it a poetic method that was peculiarly appropriate for dealing with twentieth century urban experience: compared with this centrality, H.D.'s achievement looks even more - to use the word literally - eccentric. By contrast, her poetic territory is an inner world whose boundaries she continuously extended. First of all confined to Greece, they reached out and encompassed Egypt, magic, alchemy, angelology, and other occult interests. Moreover, her awareness of this inner world grew and altered under the influence of Freud, by whom she was analysed, and of Jung, whose ideas had considerable affinity with her own.

The question to which my thesis continually addresses itself, therefore, is: how well did H.D.'s Imagist idiom accommodate itself to dealing with her inner world? The answer is that it was intermittently successful. Despite Flint's inclusion of the subjective 'thing', Imagism on its own has considerable difficulty dealing with subjectivity - here its lack of resonance, its tendency to define rather than suggest, is a hindrance. H.D.'s progress, therefore, was towards an increasing modification of Imagism. I study the forms that this modification took in some detail but also indicate that Imagism remained a component of H.D.'s technique - very similar images of sea and shore appear in 'Hermetic Definition', H.D.'s last poem, as appear in Sea Garden, her

first volume. It is for this reason that my title stresses H.D.'s struggle against Imagism. Imagism has a paradoxical place in her poetry. Some of her most powerful writing is easily identified as Imagist in kind: but her characteristic view of experience is much closer to that of Symbolism, the opposite of Williams' materialism. The conflict between what H.D. was attempting to say and the restrictions imposed upon the attempt by her technique is frequently sensed in reading her poems. Part of the fascination of studying H.D. is in the transparency of her development, in the ease with which her progress is observed. This ease results largely from the slowness of the progress and the number of the failures, but this makes the successes that much more interesting - the components of the success can be observed assembling in the failures. The infrequency of H.D.'s successes indicates that she was a minor poet, but she was also an important one. Imagism - the technique with which she wrestled, and which she extended - has been more important than any other in influencing the poetry written in English in this century. If H.D.'s subject-matter was eccentric, her technique was central - in this sense Bryer's emphasis is a correct one. It is the combination of the technique and the subject-matter which is unique.

Commentators on Vers-1 Richard Aldington complains in the 'Introduction' to his Complete Poems, 'are usually more interested in discussing what they call "tendencies" and elaborating their own theories than in studying the work of the individual poet.' The purpose of this thesis is, in fact, the study of an individual poet, H.D.; but in order to study her effectively, it is necessary to understand the "tendencies" which influenced her. I wish therefore to spend my first chapter discussing the movement - Imagism - which had a formative influence on her at the start of her career, and which forms an important perspective in which her later work can be placed.

CHAPTER ONE

IMAGISM

It is perhaps an indication of the correctness of Aldington's statement that there is far more material on Imagism than there is on H.D. It is also, in general, of a far higher quality. The earliest book was Glenn Hughes' Imagism and the Imagists², a useful history of the movement by one of its contemporaries. What that lacks in critical acumen and perspective is amply made up for by the much more recent books by Stanley K. Coffman Jr.³ and J.B. Haroot⁴. There is also a useful essay by Alan R. Jones⁵ dealing mainly with the theoretical background and the influence of T.S. Eliot, as well as his important book The Life and Opinions of T.S. Eliot⁶. For greater balance in terms of the relative importance of the two founding fathers of the movement, Pound and Eliot, it is as well to read Mary Ann Scheuing's thesis E.E. Cummings: Imagism's First Theorist⁷ in conjunction with Jones' essay. Both Jones and Scheuing tend

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to overrate the importance of their particular subjects. There are, as well as these studies which are exclusively about Imagism, at least two books that deal with it in some detail, and interestingly - Graham Hough's Image and Experience⁸ and Frank Kermode's The Romantic Image⁹; I shall discuss these later.

The major problem that faces the historian of Imagism is an insoluble one. It is impossible to work out who influenced who originally because it is not something that can be discovered from the texts. Imagism was as much affected by psychological as by literary factors - it evolved among literary practitioners who knew each other. Moreover, their testimonies as to influence are not reliable because they involve the complexities of self-effacement (Flint) as against self-assertiveness (Hulme), and of flamboyant exaggeration combined with both generosity to others and self-assertiveness (Pound). As Harner puts it: 'the living element of a relationship between writers can never be adequately inferred from their work alone. So much of a group relationship must consist in conversation and the interplay of minds and ideas.' (p.24).

However, a certain historical outline does emerge with the help of some simplification.¹⁰ The first or pre-Imagist stage can be defined as that which started in 1909 when Hulme formed a poetry club with Flint. This club assumed as Coffman says, 'a need for experiment, the members studied other literatures - the Japanese and Hebrew

poets and the French Symbolists - for techniques that might benefit English poetry, giving special attention to the use of imagery and the ways of achieving an exact and efficient diction.' (p.5)

At this stage the movement had not reached its fully complete form. However, the desire for change was shared by all the participants (besides Flint and Hulme, these were Edward Storer, Joseph Campbell, F.W. Tancred and Florence Farr) and the kind of change this should be was becoming increasingly apparent to them. Flint, in typically modest style, described the contributions made by the members: 'Hulme was the ring-leader. He insisted too on absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage ... There was also a lot of talk and practice among us, Storer leading it chiefly, of what we called the Image. We were very much influenced by Modern French Symbolist poetry.'¹¹

It is clear, therefore, that even at this stage - before, that is, Ezra Pound made any significant contribution - the basic ingredients of the Imagist movement had been formed. Flint initiated many of the poets into the mysteries of French Symbolism, he was deeply read in that poetry at a very early stage and recognised its potentiality as an influence. Noel Stock points out that:

As far back as 11 July 1908 Flint had written in The New Age of a similarity between Mallarmé and Japanese poetry and of the possibility of a poetry composed of suggestions rather than complete pictures; and he had declared: "To

the poet who can catch and render,
like these Japanese, the brief
fragments of his soul's music, the
future lies open."¹²

To these perceptive practical ideas, Hulme added more wide-ranging theoretical ones, largely derived from Henri Bergson. These he combined with his own obsessions, and the stylistic pronouncements of Remy de Gourmont. 'In Bergson's metaphysics', A.R. Jones has said, 'Hulme found a congenial language in which to clothe his poetic theory as well as justification for asserting the primary importance in poetry of the image.' And, as he continues: 'Hulme was quick to seize on Gourmont's emphasis on visual imagery, on the fact that vision is the basis of all art, that style must not evoke but present the objects of reality as physically as possible, that subject and style cannot be differentiated' (p.117). Hulme's own way of expressing these ideas is itself characteristically hard and physical: 'Transfer', he says, 'physical to language' (in the prescriptive shorthand shared by him and Pound). 'Dome of Brompton in the mist. Transfer that to art. Everything for art is a thing in itself, cf the cafe at Clapham as a thing in itself.'¹³

Taken together, Storer's insistence on the Image, Flint's interest in French Symbolism and Japanese poetry as sources of inspiration, and Hulme's philosophical preoccupations, clearly constitute a prototype of Imagism. It was the intervention of Ezra Pound that added the necessary impetus. He seems to have been thinking in

similar ways to these other poets quite independently of them: and here there is another difficulty for the tracer of influences. The remarkable feature of the Imagist movement is that so many poetic practitioners should have started to think in similar ways at more or less the same time. This clearly has far more to do with processes of development they had passed through on their own behalf than upon direct influence: only having passed through those processes could they be in a state of readiness for that influence. And having passed through those processes, the influence of the other poets helped to refine theoretical and technical positions they had already reached.

On 21 October 1908, Pound had written to William Carlos Williams. His 'ultimate attainments of poesy', he said, were:

- 1) To paint the thing as I see it.
- 2) Beauty
- 3) Freedom from didacticism.
- 4) It is only good manners if you repeat a few other men at least do it better or more briefly. Utter originality is of course out of the question.¹⁴

The form of this is exactly that of Flint's later 'Imagisme'.¹⁵ Moreover, although the second principle is conventional, and the third is as much Decadent as Imagist, the first and fourth principles are characteristically Imagist preoccupations - especially the insistence on painting and brevity.

Pound attended the club founded by Hulme and Flint a

month after it had started. It is impossible to gauge how much Pound gave and how much he took, but he inevitably made his mark. Flint was later to insist (in a draft¹⁶ for his 'The History of Imagism'¹¹) that his contribution was small:

Mr. Pound came and listened to all we had to say ... on the theory and practice of verse. He ... recited a good deal of his own verse ... But he ... added nothing of any value to the discussion. Most of the members of the group were pretty widely acquainted with ... French theory, and Mr. Pound had simply nothing to teach them; but he took very much. He took away the whole doctrine ... of what he later on called Imagisme.

Flint goes on to disparage 'Mr. Pound's belief ... that his was the dynamism that created both the law and the works exemplifying the law ...'. This, however, seems to have been partly the case. He was already known as a poet, was a much better publicist than the others, and anyway had more access to publishing, becoming, in the year the magazine was founded, 1911, the foreign representative of Harriet Monroe's Poetry. It was he, too, who invented the term 'Imagism', which helped to focus all the hunger for change which he and the other members of the club shared. Simply to coin the term helped to make Imagism, in Kenneth Rexroth's words, 'a bona fide movement of the Parisian type, with members, leaders, its own tradition, its own magazine and annual.'¹⁷

Richard Aldington has described how the term came to be used for the first time:

the Imagist mouvemong was born in a teashop - in the Royal Borough of Kensington. For some time Ezra had been butting in on our studies and poetic productions, with alternate encouragements and the reverse, according to his mood. H.D. produced some poems which I thought excellent, and she either handed or mailed them to Ezra. Presently each of us received a ukase to attend the Kensington bun-shop. Ezra was so much worked up by these poems of H.D.'s that he removed his pince-nez and informed us that we were Imagists.¹⁸

1912, then, marks the beginning of the second period of the Imagist movement. It was in that year that Pound's volume Ripostes¹⁹ appeared, together with what Pound called 'The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme' (pp.58-63). It was at this time that the most important steps forward were made, and that the most distinctively Imagist poetry was written (I shall discuss what this constitutes later in this chapter). Pound insisted upon certain qualities that the Imagist poem must have: Flint's views on the matter differed in certain important respects. The beginnings of conflict were latent even at the beginnings of the movement, and it is clear that the other poets, especially Flint, resented Pound's assumption of leadership. But Pound may well have been right, as he inferred later, that it was 'only by rather overbearing arrogance that he managed to coerce things into a semblance of unity, for a few weeks, or months, in 1911 or 1912, lasting till 1913.'²⁰

So, in Poetry in March 1913, the Imagists published their equivalent of the manifestoes produced by other movements. Flint contributed a note called 'Imagisme',¹⁵ with three rules:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase not in sequence of a metrenome. (p.199)

It was characteristic of Flint, though, that he did not set out these rules as his own - once again his diffidence was very much to the fore. He pretended that he had 'sought out an imagiste' (p.198) who had given him this information. And all the way through his note he referred to the Imagists as 'they'. Pound, in his contribution to the same issue of the magazine, 'A Few Don'ts by An Imagiste' (pp.200-206), was, by contrast, assertive. He contributed the most useful definition of the 'Image' that has been formulated: it is, he says, 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' (p.200). He then moved on to his prescriptions which were much more detailed and specific than Flint's - in particular, he said 'Don't use such an expression as "dim lands of peace." It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete.' (p.201). What Pound was attacking here was the impressionistic aspect of Symbolism and his insistence that Imagism should be cleared of this was to lead to arguments with Flint. I

wish to deal with this later when I deal with Imagist practice.

Pound became increasingly disillusioned with what he regarded as the slackness of the other Imagists and was already starting to transfer his allegiance to Vorticism by the end of 1914. In the September of that year he contributed an article called 'Vorticism' to the Fortnightly Review.²¹ What he effectively did by this transference was to move his Imagist ideas into the newer movement and to leave the others to turn 'Imagism' into whatever they wished. In particular, he wrote to Harriet Monroe in January 1915²² dissociating himself from an anthology that was about to appear called Some Imagist Poets.²³

The major difference between this and the first Imagist anthology Des Imagistes²⁴ (edited by Ezra Pound) was that, by now, Amy Lowell had started to assert her influence. As Richard Aldington puts it:

With her usual energy and vivacity she had been battling valiantly for us all, but was fed up with Ezra. So were others. I have a notion that Fletcher was particularly restive - his high-strung nature made him particularly sensitive. Moreover, Ezra had now attached himself to the Blast group, and was busy patenting a new movement, Vorticism, whatever that may have been ...

Amy arrived with certain proposals, to which she had evidently given a good deal of thought. She proposed a Boston Tea Party for Ezra, the immediate abolition of his despotism and the substitution of a

pure democracy. There was to be no more of the Duce business, with arbitrary inclusions and exclusions and a capricious censorship. We were to publish quietly and modestly as a little group of friends with similar tendencies, rather than water-tight dogmatic principles. Each poet was to choose for himself what he considered best in his year's output; and the anthology would appear annually ...²⁵

This 'Boston Tea Party' marks the beginning of the third stage of the Imagist movement. Any semblance of unity had now vanished - they were to be 'a little group of friends'. If Pound's principles for including poets in Des Imagistes had been 'arbitrary', Amy Lowell's venture meant the end of any application of literary principles, even though the prefaces to the anthologies contained outlines of such principles. This divergence did not necessarily produce bad poetry - the quality was often high - but it made Imagism as a label increasingly less meaningful. As Coffman says of the 1916 preface: 'A theory which defines image as clear presentation has no legitimate claim to call itself Imagism. If Imagism had not, as Pound insisted, gone "off into the froth", it had undeniably lost the right to its name.'²⁶ Finally, 'When America entered the war in 1917, Amy decided that we had better quit and each go his own way. The Imagist "movement" then was at an end, and it was left to others to carry on.'²⁷

To have recounted the history of Imagism is also to have accounted for some of its significance. For what

this indicates is that a large number of poetic practitioners were feeling a dissatisfaction at the same time - this, again, is one of the difficulties involved in tracing influence. Coffman has said that Imagism:

was not just a matter of technique. It was also an attitude toward the nature and function of poetry, an attitude whose significance extends beyond its use in explaining the formal qualities of a special kind of verse. What held these poets together was less a way of writing than a feeling, seldom clearly articulated, about what poetry should be and do in our culture ... Defined in these terms - that is, in its historical context - Imagism has its fullest meaning; it was the first attempt by contemporary poets to formulate a change of direction that would mark them as contemporary ... (p.3)

It seems to me that Coffman is largely right here, although he exaggerates. He is right, that is, when he says that what held the poets together was more 'a feeling' than a way of writing - this probably goes some way to explaining why they were held together for so short a time. He is also right when he says that it was the first attempt by contemporary poets to formulate a change of direction that would mark them as contemporary. This does seem to have been a shared preoccupation. Pound's stress upon the need to 'Make it New'²⁸ is well known. Hulme's anti-Romantic stance was partly based upon an attempt to create a sensibility that could approach modern subject-matter, as was his stress upon the physical

('c.f the cafe at Clapham as a thing in itself'¹³). Ford Madox Hueffer, who claimed his own poetry had an affinity with that of the Imagists, and who was an important influence upon them, stressed the importance of 'simple current speech' (Pound's phrase in indicating Hueffer's influence²⁹). Flint was less preoccupied with this but he does stress the need for renovation, as when he speaks, in a draft of an article in French on Imagism, about how it is necessary to restore 'l'art d'écrire, qui, en pays anglo-saxons, était tombé à plat, devant le journalisme, dans le ressassement ad nauseam des vieux thèmes, d'une langue poétique désuète, et d'une technique éboulée.'³⁰ Aldington self-consciously introduced modern subjects like the cinema and the tube into his poetry. And Lowell³¹ and Fletcher³² both introduced analogies of the poet to the craftsman in prefaces to their volumes of poems, stressing that a poet is a craftsman like other craftsmen, and does not rely upon inspiration. This, too, strikes a contemporary note.

Here, Coffman does seem to have hit upon a generally shared view. But even here it must be stressed that the extent of interest in writing poetry of an explicitly contemporary kind varied very much and that H.D. does not seem to have been interested at all until later in her career - and then in a very modified way. Moreover, he does carry the idea too far when he suggests that the Imagists shared a view 'about what poetry should be and do in our culture'. There seems little evidence for this and he is clearly hedging his bets when he says that it was

'seldom clearly articulated'. is largely a product of

Where I want to argue most strongly against Coffman is in his contention that Imagism can be defined most fully in a historical way. Graham Hough strikes me as much more accurate when he calls it 'the hard irreducible core of a whole cluster of poetic ideas that extend far beyond wants Imagism as a movement. Imagist ideas are at the centre of the characteristic poetic procedures of our time...'³³ So although, as I have said, to have recounted the history of Imagism is also to have accounted for some of its He is significance, what remains to be accounted for is the theory and the practice - both much more important than the history.

The most difficult question in dealing with the theoretical background is to decide the importance that French Symbolism should be assigned as an influence. In his book The Romantic Image Frank Kermode maintains that 'Hulme hands over to the English tradition a modernised, but essentially traditional, aesthetic of Symbolism. It would have made ground here in any case, but Hulme gave it a form which for various reasons offers an acceptable version of the magic Image ...'³⁴ Later, he extends his idea: 'To get the exact curve of the thing, insisting upon the imperviousness to paraphrase of the symbolic work of art ... was Mallarme's business as much as Hulme's ... In short, the Hulmian Image - precise, orderly, anti-discursive, the product of intuition - is the Symbol of the French poets given a new philosophical suit.' (p.130)

Kermode's position here is largely a product of views that he argues elsewhere in his excellent book about the twentieth century inheritance of Romantic ideas. Hulme - considering his stance on Romanticism and Classicism - was an inevitable target for him, and Kermode is absolutely right to argue that what Hulme wants in poetry is not Classical at all but solidly in the Romantic tradition. But to suggest that Symbolism and Imagism are the same thing, as Kermode does, is clearly to allow his central thesis to carry him too far. He is certainly right that Symbolism and Imagism shared something in common, that 'Pound like Hulme, like Mallarmé and many others, wanted a theory of poetry based on the non-discursive conchetto' (p.136). This is where the two movements meet. As Tony Tanner says, Imagism 'took over from the French movement a belief in the intense suggestiveness of separately perceived objects, a feeling that an object properly regarded will release an aura which has a more effective meaning content than abstract predication'.³⁵

This does not mean, however, as Kermode insists, 'that Hulme was trying to do much the same thing as Mallarmé' (p.130). For, as Tanner says, 'Imagism was not symbolism: it was in fact less ambitious, much narrower in its aims ...' (p.87). This lack of ambition was a point of dogma to Hulme, a part of his aesthetic philosophy: the 'feelings that Hulme wanted poetry to express' (as

Coffman says) 'were the minor, transient, almost trivial ones which result from seeing physical things in an unconventional way' (p.63). Moreover, the 'distinction between romantic and classical verse was not an academic point with Hulme. It was his way of distinguishing in poetic theory between the foolish overestimation of man's potentialities which extends his vision to include reality, and the wise foreshortening of his vision which also accepts the foreshortening with good grace' (p.61). And while 'he shared the Bergson-Symbolist belief in an absolute reality beyond normal perception, he firmly refused to permit introduction of this reality into his verse, and in fact established the refusal as a major premise of his poetics' (p.82).

In this sense, Symbolism and Hulmian Imagism are fundamentally opposed. To quote Wallace Fowlie:

Sade, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Lautréamont... with his own speech and poetic creation, waged a relentless war against human intelligence in its limited aspects of reason, logic, consciousness ... They are diametrically opposed to the rationalistic tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and take their place beside the gnostic writers and the masters of the occult tradition, of all those who tried to break down the rigid framework of logic in order to reach the darker world of dreams and the more luminous world of visions ...³⁶

What the Symbolists were opposing, in other words, was limit: what Hulme was opposing was limitlessness.

While Hulme never wrote anything explicitly against Symbolism, Pound did. In his article on 'Vorticism' in Fortnightly Review in 1914, he distinguishes it from Imagism:

The symbolists dealt in "association", that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word, they made it a form of metronomy (sic) ... The imagiste's images have a variable significance like the signs a, b, and x in algebra.³⁷

And he continues:

the author must use his image because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics...

(p.464)

What Pound is indicating here is that the image does not have a kind of magical eternal value, it acquires significance only momentarily, and according to its context. Placed in another context, at a different time, it will have a different significance. In this sense his pronouncement here connects with Hulme's belief in the importance of expressing the minor, the transient and the trivial. Pound is not as dogmatic about this as Hulme, and in fact Pound's poems tend to make the trivial detail significant - an achievement recognisable as conventionally poetic. Hulme's concern in his small poetic output (and this indicates his unusualness as a

poet) is characteristically to make the significant trivial through the use of a kind of transformative irony.

As Coffman puts it:

The comparison in each case reduces a normally "poetic" and impressive perception to the level of the trivia of everyday life. The reduction, of course, works to the advantage of both: the poetic loses its conventional stiffness and artificiality and the trivial becomes suddenly worthy of notice.

And he continues:

The physical object being trivial, reduces the lofty to insignificance and produces an effect of amused irony appropriate to the classical attitude and the pessimistic view of "Cinders".

(pp.71-2)

The important aspect here is the reduction of the significant to the trivial - the extent to which the reverse occurs is negligible, being only a matter of the fact that trivial detail enters the poem. Clearly, Hulme could not have produced a poetry that trivialised the significant without using trivia at all. The trivia becomes significant only to the extent that it becomes the object of attention. The significant is trivialised as a deliberate ironic gesture. 'The Embankment' is a good example:

Once, in finesse of fiddles found I ecstasy,
In a flash of gold heels on the hard pavement.
Now see I
That warmth's the very stuff of poesy.

Oh God, make small

The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,

That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie.³⁸

In no sense is this an attempt to exalt the blanket. The poem does not place the blanket among the stars, it domesticates the sky by transforming it into a blanket. The poem also seems to deny Coffman's view that the reduction of the significant produces an effect appropriate to the classical attitude. It does not insist on the smallness of man's place in infinity, it puts that infinity into human terms. As A.R. Jones says of another Hulme poem, 'Autumn' (p.269): 'the incomprehensible universe is made domestic'.³⁹

This is quite different from Hulme's theories about hardness and dryness: and it seems almost explicitly so when he says, in this poem, 'warmth's the very stuff of poesy'. But it is much more different from Symbolism. The characteristic effort of the earlier movement is all in the opposite direction, turning a blanket into the sky rather than the sky into a blanket. Symbolism and Imagism could both use the blanket: this they share in common. But they would use it in entirely different ways. The Imagist poem uses the blanket in order to pin down: the Symbolist poem would allow it to acquire associations. The Imagist poem uses it to define a meaning: the Symbolist would allow it to accumulate meanings. The Imagist emphasis is that, in Hulme's words, it 'is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things ... The great aim is accurate,

precise and definite description ... the particular verse we are going to get will be cheerful, dry and sophisticated.⁴⁰

Hulme's juxtaposition of the significant and the trivial in these poems brings me to a further aspect of Imagist technique - the use of what Pound called, in his essay on 'Vorticism', 'a form of super-position, that is to say ... one idea set on top of another.'⁴¹ This technique is an essential element in Imagist poetics and I shall discuss specific examples of it in H.D.'s poetry in my next chapter. It is interesting, therefore, that for Pound this technique is inseparably linked with his use of Japanese poetry as an influence. This same essay also contains his fascinating account of how he reduced an originally longer poem about a particularly heightened experience into the seventeen syllable form of the 'haiku':

Three years ago in Paris I got out
of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and
saw suddenly a beautiful face and
another and another ... I tried all
that day for words for what that had
meant for me ... that evening ... I
found suddenly the expression ... not
in speech but in sudden splotches of
colour. It was just that - a "pattern"
or hardly a pattern if by pattern you
mean something with a repeat in it.
But it was a word, the beginning for me
of a new language in colour ...

I wrote a thirty-line poem and destroyed it because it was what we call work of the second intensity. Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence.

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough. (pp.465-467)

He also indicates here his opinion that the 'Japanese have had the same sense of exploration. They have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing ...' (p.466). The interesting point is the particularity of the use that Pound discovered for the Japanese influence. This was very different from the vagueness of Flint's use of it. He, as I have noted earlier, found a connection between it and French Symbolism - though what that connection was, other than the tenuous one that they both use objects as a poetic centre, is difficult to say. It is certain that Pound was introduced to Japanese poetry by the Poetry Club of 1909. But it was Pound who discovered what its usefulness could be - that it could indicate the effect which brevity could produce, and the effect which images create when set on top of each other.

It is interesting to compare the attitudes of Flint and Pound in this area of the scaling-down of poems into their most economical form. Whereas for Pound it clearly represents a 'sine qua non' of the Imagist method, for Flint it is a potentially damaging tinkering. Glenn Hughes

prints two versions of Flint's poem 'The Swan', first called 'A Swan Song'.⁴² The first version is adjectival and limp, employs archaic diction ('with my soul adrift/ Upon its stagnant waters, wondering why/Thus rudderless I float askirt a shore,/A drear savannah, Death') and long meandering sentences. The second version is chiselled, hard and short. Pound - in his letter to Flint replying to Flint's 'The History of Imagism' in The Egoist - pointed to the difference between these two poems as the difference between the schools of 1909 and 1913: 'a difference made by something Pound had said one evening'.⁴³ Flint, however, replied that 'the illustration of my "Swan" chosen by you is a bad one; because the real difference between the two poems is one of form merely, and I am not sure that, apart from one or two weaknesses of style (I was less mature then than now), the earlier version (that is so far as the first strophe is concerned: the rest was deleted) is not the better Imagist poem.'⁴⁴

Clearly, then, whatever Flint learned from Japanese poetry, it was not what Pound learned. Without the paring down of poetry to its images - a paring down very much in evidence from the first to the second version of Flint's poem - there can be no technique of super-position. Without extreme condensation the super-position is obscured by extraneous material, as it certainly is in the first version of Flint's poem.

The aspect of Imagist theory which I wish to deal with last is that of free verse. Here, too, there is a good deal of confusion involved. Kenneth Rexroth indicates a source of some of this (the association with the French version) and effectively dismisses it:

Did Imagist theories of free verse owe anything to the tireless propaganda of Vielé-Griffin? I think not ... "Vers libre" is "libre" of the French alexandrine and the syllabic structure of French poetry. American free verse is free of the accentual pentameter and the quatrain ... Of course, poetry in the English language has always been free in Vielé-Griffin's sense. These rules of classical French poetry have no counterpart in even the strictest English prosody.⁴⁵

Coffman has pointed out that Imagism employed three different kinds of free verse 'in its effort to break up traditional forms by re-examining the poetic line as well as the poetic image.' These he defines as Eliot's, 'accentual, approximating the iambic line'; Pound's 'quantitative, taking account of word sounds in certain combinations' and Whitman's, 'that which is ostensibly free of accentual or quantitative norms and establishes its pattern by other means'.⁴⁶ This is yet another indication of the diffuseness of the movement, especially when it is considered how much freer the Whitman kind is, at one extreme, than the Eliot kind.

What is worth stressing most of all is how great Pound's achievements in rhythm were by comparison with the

other Imagists. He it was who was most interested in rhythmic experimentation and he continued to explore musical ideas in poetry throughout his poetic career - as his book ABC of Reading⁴⁷ amply indicates. More than any of the other Imagists he capitalised upon the great potentiality for new subtlety and expressiveness of rhythm which free verse allowed. The rhythms of Flint, Hulme, Aldington, Lowell, Fletcher and even those of H.D. cannot match those of 'The Return':⁴⁸

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

The advance marked by the line-endings here, the enacting of hesitancy achieved through the placing of 'tentative' and 'uncertain' before an inevitable pause, and the enacting of reluctance achieved through the end-stopping on the terminal spondee, mark the starting-point of a new metric in American poetry. As Geoffrey Thurley says 'imagism ... in America ... transformed itself to become a complex tradition of free verse that left few poets untouched':⁴⁹ but it was mainly Pound's achievement in lines like these that pointed the way for this transformation.

Nonetheless, there is a rhythm which is identifiably Imagist in kind and which characterises the verse of the other Imagists as well as that of Pound's Imagist phase. This rhythm is best discussed in specific contexts - which my thesis does elsewhere. However, to generalise: the Imagists eschewed large-scale rhythmic effects, they took the line as their rhythmic unit rather than the stanza or paragraph. They also eschewed mellifluousness and Whitman's paratactical flux in order to introduce staccato effects based around clusters of consonants.

By contrast, therefore, with the sense of spaciousness which Milton and Whitman characteristically achieved through their rhythms, the Imagists achieved a deliberate scaling down which produces a focusing upon detail. Their confining of the rhythmic unit is another way in which their poems emphasise the modesty of their aesthetic vision: their rhythms, too, emphasise boundary and limit. And their fricative consonants implicitly insist upon the unyielding hardness of the objective world.

pronouncements, verse becomes hard (1) through being concise and paring away all ornamental frills; (2) when, in remaining close to everyday speech, it conveys some of the harshness of quotidian reality; (3) when it tends towards concrete objectivity, thus avoiding sentimental effusions; (4) because, in rendering what purports to be an accurate account of its subject, it approximates the scientist's "hard" methods, his hard observation of detailed fact; (5) when it "dares to go to the dust-bin for its subjects" (Pound's praise for Fletcher's work); (6) when it avoids symmetrical, isochronic metres, which are branded soft, monotonous and soporific, and instead tracks in its rhythms the "rough" (i.e. irregular) contours of "things". Even the concentration on the image may be interpreted in terms of the desire for a

Imagism is perhaps best viewed as a doctrine of hardness, the commonest, widest-ranging concept in the movement's vocabulary. On a naive level, the Imagist's "hardness" may simply express his preferences in the selection of materials - thus, hard stone or hard bones as against mellow notes of music, soft hues, soft perfumes or the softness of silk, all of which had enthralled the alternately melancholy and hedonistic spirit of the Nineties. More radically, it applies to style, rhythm and emotion. Judging by Imagist pronouncements, verse becomes hard (1) through being concise and paring away all ornamental frills; (2) when, in remaining close to everyday speech, it conveys some of the harshness of quotidian reality; (3) when it tends towards concrete objectivity, thus avoiding sentimental effusions; (4) because, in rendering what purports to be an accurate account of its subject, it approximates the scientist's "hard" methods, his hard observation of detailed fact; (5) when it "dares to go to the dust-bin for its subjects" (Pound's praise for Fletcher's work); (6) when it avoids symmetrical, isochronic metres, which are branded soft, monotonous and soporific, and instead traces in its rhythms the "rough" (i.e. irregular) contours of "things". Even the concentration on the image may be interpreted in terms of the desire for a

resistant hardness, the image being
one of the least "convertible"
elements of poetry.⁵⁰

This paragraph by Natan Zach concentrates with great penetration upon the central Imagist characteristic. Hardness is very much a central preoccupation of the theory - especially of Pound and Hulme - and ought very much to be a characteristic of the practice. The remarkable feature of Imagist practice, however, is to what a small extent it can be effectively summarised in a paragraph. There is such variety in the Imagist spectrum, and variety perhaps especially in degrees of hardness (from Hulme at one end to Fletcher at the other) that it would be very difficult to classify some self-proclaimed Imagist poems as products of the same movement.

Hardness continued to be a central preoccupation of the Imagists even after Pound had left: but as keynote it was only properly observed when the movement was led by him. Only in his Imagist poems and those backed by him (especially those of Hulme, and those selected by him of H.D., Richard Aldington and William Carlos Williams) was hardness, in the senses indicated by Zach, a dominant feature.

By contrast, the poems of Lowell, Flint and Fletcher were not Imagist at all in the sense of containing both super-position as a basic technique, and hardness as an essential characteristic. Lowell and Flint had their own ideas about what Imagism was, and Fletcher felt only the vaguest allegiance to the movement. Amy Lowell was the most Imagist of the three, and often wrote a number of lines in

a poem, and occasionally a whole poem, which are Imagist in the senses outlined above. Coffman is not entirely right when he says that she was a 'symbolist without the philosophical attitude of Symbolism and an Imagist without the image ...' (p.175). In fact, the image has a definite presence in some of her poems, and a ghostly one in others. 'Dog-Days'⁵¹ is a fine example of her use of the image, combined here, unobtrusively, with statement. She evokes the scene with great exactness:

A ladder sticking up at the open window,
The top of an old ladder;
And all of Summer is there.

Even in the first three lines she has managed to insinuate emotional meaning into the poem by suggesting that Summer is a vivid localised presence. The next four lines introduce more description, 'wistaria', 'a thin belated blossom' that 'Jerks up and down in the sunlight'. She then introduces reported speech: "Tie back this branch," I say, '. In this way the speech emerges out of the description as it would do out of the scene. The change of mood that follows is perfectly timed. The sudden sense of alarm is indicated in the sudden quickness of rhythm:

But my hands are sticky with leaves,
And my nostrils widen to the smell of crushed
green.

The ladder moves uneasily at the open window ...

This is followed by her second call: '"Tie back that branch"'. The shift from 'this' to 'that' branch is perceptive here

and indexes a shift from a sense of sleepy familiarity in the scene to a sense of danger. The last two lines are placed on their own:

There is a ladder leaning against the window-sill,
And a mutter of thunder in the air.

In this way the ladder is returned to and shown as having acquired a totally different meaning. It is now regarded with apprehension and seems somehow connected, through the technique of super-position, with the 'mutter of thunder in the air'. This is a thoroughly Imagist achievement. In fact, the shift in meaning which the ladder undergoes shows in the space of one poem what Pound said in differentiating Imagism from Symbolism:

The imagiste's images have a variable significance like the signs a, b and x in algebra.³⁷

If 'Dog-Days' is interesting as an Imagist success by a part-time Imagist, it is also interesting to consider those unsuccessful poems by both Lowell and Flint which, while not entirely Imagist in kind, are clearly influenced by Imagist theory and practice. Such poems fail for two reasons. Firstly, they fail because of the technical inadequacy of their authors. But secondly, and more importantly, they fail because of the expressive inadequacy of Imagism.

Amy Lowell's poem 'Patterns'⁵² is an example of this. If Glenn Hughes' judgement on this poem is to be believed then the element of Lowell's technical failure here should be discounted: he refers to its 'technical expertness', and 'its resultant emotional force'.⁵³ Its cadence, he says,

'follows the shifting mood as easily, as infallibly, as its shadow follows a bird ...' (p.207). But its technical expertness is only in evidence in those passages which centre upon images - elsewhere it collapses. So, in the second paragraph she painstakingly describes the scene in which she sets the central figure of the poem:

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.

'Patterns' is clearly conceived around its eponymous image, and here Lowell's heroine is described in the middle of her tightly structured trap; the explicit hardness of the patterns emphasises their worthiness as an Imagist subject. So, the truth of the statement in the first paragraph is established - 'I too am a rare/Pattern.'

There is even a suggestion in the third paragraph that the hardness of the patterns indicates a social role that the woman is forced to play against her womanly instincts:

Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water

Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.

In this way Amy Lowell has betrayed an essentially un-Imagist cast of mind: for her, hardness can only represent the human surface; once the poet looks 'underneath' the keynote must be 'softness'. So, while the first three paragraphs work successfully in an Imagist way - they have some of the ritual precision of Pound's translation from the Chinese - the further Lowell looks into her character the less Imagist her technique becomes. Her instinct, here, seems to me to be a correct one. Pound's translations from the Chinese succeed because - although they all employ personae - they do not look very far behind the masks. Lowell's poem is much longer than any of the poems in Cathay⁵⁴ and much more ambitious in the way it attempts to explore character and feeling. Its shedding of Imagism in the attempt seems to me inevitable considering the unsuitability of Imagism's relentlessly definitive hardness for expressing complicated, and possibly contradictory, ramifications. This is an aspect of Imagism which was to prove important in H.D.'s development, and I shall return to it in Chapter Three.

The unfortunate fact about Amy Lowell's tackling of the problem in 'Patterns' is that, once she has left Imagism behind, she has little with which to replace it. The weaknesses which Imagism had helped to hold in check earlier in the poem start to dominate. Overstatement had been restricted to one line - 'my passion/Wars against the

stiff brocade' (and even this is possibly an ironic foreseeing of the war theme that later emerges); tweekness, too, had been restricted to the last line of the second paragraph - 'one small flower has dropped upon my bosom'. But this kind of extravagance takes over after the third paragraph.

Thirteen lines of the fourth paragraph are occupied with a fantasy that is expressed crudely and clumsily, for instance:

I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt
and the buckles in his shoes.

I would choose

To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze from my heavy-booted
lover.

Till he caught me in the shade,

And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body
as he clasped me,

Aching, melting, unafraid.

Imagist detachment has been replaced here by an exclamatory indiscretion. The next paragraph is interesting for the way it reveals another Imagist weakness - its inability to cope with narrative (H.D.'s overcoming of which I discuss in Chapter Six). Here, 'Patterns' lapses into a prosaic feebleness:

Underneath the fallen blossom

In my bosom,

Is a letter I have hid.

It was brought to me this morning by a rider
from the Duke.

"Madam, we regret to inform you the Lord
Hartwell

Died in action Thursday se'nnight."

As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.

"Any answer, Madam?" said my footman

"No," I told him.

"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.

No, no answer."

Once again, where Imagism is incapable of helping her,
Lowell's technique is incapable of coping with her subject-
matter. The effective image of the patterning that she had
used earlier has been ruined. What might have been, had it
been less explicit, a moving poem of loss which at the same
time suggested the helplessness which some women felt when
trapped in their war-time role, their 'pattern', has become
melodramatic, almost comic. The poem goes on further, making
her feelings even more explicit, and ends:

I shall go

Up and down,

In my gown.

Gorgeously arrayed,

Boned and stayed.

And the softness of my body will be guarded from
embrace

By each button, hook and lace.

For the man who should loose me is dead,

Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,

In a pattern called a war.

Christ! What are patterns for?

The line 'For the man who should loose me is dead'
introduces an interesting complexity, since to loose her has
both sexual and social connotations. And this indicates the
possibilities open to the poet who could combine statements

subtly with images. But elsewhere her statements are either too prosaic or too melodramatic, and her images are insufficient to tell the story.

The habit of lapsing into crude explicitness is something Amy Lowell shared with F.S. Flint. Poems of his such as 'Sadness', 'Immortality', 'Loneliness' and 'Regret'⁵⁵ are little more than pedestrian meditations in verse. Moreover, unlike Lowell, he did not have the ability to succeed in the simple effect, as in her 'Dog-Days'. Unlike that poem, Flint's poetry rarely presents a specific scene in a specific way. This is largely because his philosophical allegiance was to Symbolism, and his poems are characteristically generalised and abstract. On the other hand, his poems clearly show the technical influence of Imagism - and they consistently fail through half-heartedness. 'Chrysanthemums' (p.4) is an example of this - it contains both the word 'symbol' and the word 'images'. Symbolism is dominant - the flowers are, he says, 'the graceful soul of the china vase'; the room is 'the symbol of (his) patient heart'; 'a great tide of the eternal sea/will rise at her approach' and will 'surge to song'; she is 'a power that comes/ to fill with anguish the essential calm'. But on the other hand, the central objects in the poem, the chrysanthemums, never really acquire fully symbolic status, the poem does not have much suggestive resonance and the approach of his lady ('her hand is on the latch'), though generalised, remains slightly too particular.

In 'November' (p.3) he uses the word 'eternal', in 'Chrysanthemums' he uses the word 'essential': both words

are an indication of Flint's preoccupations. But these concerns are alien to Imagism - like narrative and character they represent areas of experience which Imagism finds difficult to express. For Imagism is necessarily concerned with the momentary, with an 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time',⁵⁶ and with the existential, with lived experience. Part of the reason for Flint's failures is that his essentialist aspirations were constantly undermined by the insistent existential flatness of the Imagist elements in his poems. But, like Lowell's failures, Flint's foresee some of the difficulties which H.D. was to face. For her outlook became increasingly essentialist in kind, in a way which I define and explore in Chapter 8.

Flint never seems to achieve the ease that Amy Lowell achieved in 'Dog-Days'. There is always with his poetry the sense of straining after poetic effect, the urgent need to endow experience with meaning. This sense of strain, this anxiety, seems to prevent him from achieving more unconventional effects such as those in Lowell's poem.

Geoffrey Thurley has referred to

the imagist alertness, which lets the still life be itself, drawing from it neither a heart-warming assurance of human significance, like Stevens, nor a desperate warning signal, like Crane. The imagist poet lets the phenomenon invade his sensibility. This is the result of a kind of actively passive intelligence, requiring considerable fineness and mental energy.⁵⁷

hard edges against each other, unyieldingly: the images here are soft-edged, literally liquid, and mingle with each other. Whereas in hard Imagist poetry, the images are segregated by staccato rhythms, here they are allowed to run together through rhythmic fluency and enjambement. The interesting feature of this is that - through breaking most of the Imagist rules - Fletcher discovered ways of expressing states of mind which strictly Imagist poetry was incapable of expressing. The confusion of feelings which these lines convey is something which the insistent definitiveness of Imagism would not allow; it is the very nebulosity of the impressions here which aids their success. Vagueness is converted into a kind of exactness.

The phrase 'pale terraces/Of afternoon' achieves an ambiguity through the placing of the line ending: it means both 'pale terraces' in a literal physical sense, and that the afternoon is like pale terraces. This effect is repeated in 'the wet grey robes/Of the hours' and 'the urn/Of the day'. The effect each time is to allow the reader to think that he is dealing with a concrete fact and then to allow that hardness to melt into an abstraction after the terminal pause. This is taking the mixing of abstract and concrete one step further: it forces the reader to realise how the one can appear to turn into the other. The insecurity that this produces in the reader is used to intensify the bewilderment which is the subject of these lines. This bewilderment is a result of an overturning of expectations, partly through the coming of rough weather upon a summer scene, rain and wind against roses. So, 'the urn/Of the day'

then the swift swaying footsteps
Of the wind that undulates along the languid
terraces.

Pools of rain - the vacant terraces

Wet, chill and glistening

Towards the sunset beyond the broken doors of
to-day. (p.3)

The idea of activity invading a languid scene - the idea obscured by the limp lines in the middle of the passage - is returned to here, with the wind over the 'languid terraces'. The last three lines represent what has been left behind after this invasion. But this composite image - the pools, the vacant terraces, and the sunset - says much more than this. The adjectives 'Wet, chill and glistening' sum up a complex feeling which has been present from the start. This feeling is compounded of a sense of dismay at the disturbance, and a sense that this disturbance represents the coming of a different kind of awareness, and a different kind of beauty. The sense of dismay was introduced through the images of wet and cold ('roses shuddering', 'streaming trees', 'wet grey robes') and this is repeated here in the wet and chillness. The beginning of activity that accompanied this was a kind of destructiveness, but it was also a kind of realisation - the turning over of the urn requires that the dream ends, but also means that it will be recognised as a dream. So, in these last lines, the introduction of the 'glistening' suggests this kind of compensation. The result of what has gone before is that the 'doors of to-day' are 'broken'. This suggests both that something has been destroyed and that this destruction leads towards a new opening, the realisation foreseen in the earlier lines.

So, Fletcher - while exhibiting few of the Imagist strengths - indicates, through his own strengths, the boundaries of Imagist expressiveness. He is able in this passage to say almost contradictory things simultaneously and in this way to evoke complex associations and ideas. H.D., too, when she came to write her war-time Trilogy, introduced a blending and fusing of her images in order to increase their suggestive power. And previous to this she had developed towards a softening of the edges of her images - a development which took over twenty years and which is the subject of Chapters 3 to 6.

Notwithstanding Pound's recognition that softness in poetry was not necessarily a defect, his own progress was very much in the direction of hardness. His explorations in technique are evident enough in Ripostes¹⁹ (and it is part of his interest to a reader that his poetry, taken together with essays like 'Vorticism',²¹ reveals his progress so visibly). His efforts reach a form of culmination in 1915 in Cathay, his translations from the Chinese. 'The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter'⁶⁰ indicates how the technique of super-position can produce brevity and precision. Image is super-posed upon image, statement is super-posed upon statement, and image and statement are super-posed upon each other:

And you have been gone five months.

The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.

By the gate now, the moss is grown, the
different mosses,

Too deep to clear them away!

The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow
with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.

Image and statement are heaped together here, like 'the different mosses'; heaped upon the wife, they accumulate weightily - her sorrow is inexorable. The exclaimed line 'Too deep to clear them away!' stresses her sense of submission before her fate: the objective signs of separation, of time passing, and the sorrow that results from both, force her into passiveness. Here the complaint of the wife itself has aesthetic implications, for it indicates that there are some experiences which Imagism is peculiarly well-suited to cope with, experiences when 'a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.'⁶¹ So, the Cathay poems concern themselves with feelings of an elemental, simplifying force - most usually with separation and loss. It is this which has guaranteed the survival of such ancient poetry, and it is this which makes it eminently suitable for the Imagist mode. In the expression of simple and powerful feelings Imagism is highly appropriate - it exercises a restraining influence upon the power and provides a direct equivalent to the simplicity in its own limpid outlines. These feelings are not the only subject-matter which benefits from Imagist expression - Williams was to find others which were peculiarly fitting. But it is perhaps in Pound's choice of a subject-matter suited to the medium - however intuitive that choice - that he most proves his

superiority to Flint and Lowell.

What Hulme, H.D., Aldington and Williams share in common with Pound is a use of super-position which is crucial to their work. In Hulme's case it involves the contrasting of the exalted against the mundane. Aldington's super-positions are much more conventional than those of the other four, but the technique is nonetheless of fundamental importance to his poetry. He is appalled by twentieth-century urban experience and constantly contrasts it with the poetic grandeur of the Greeks, and with the world of rural beauty. So, 'Eros and Psyche'⁶² is a poem of deep depression about a metropolitan super-position, the placing of 'A statue of Psyche and her lover, Eros' in 'an old dull yard near Camden Town'. This statue is contrasted against its background and against another statue, that of Cobden, which he regards as more appropriate to its surroundings. 'Church Walk, Kensington' (p.47) uses a similar juxtaposition, this time of cripples going to church, against 'the god, September'. Whereas 'Their clothes are black', and 'Their legs are withered/Like dried bean pods', he is 'Garlanded with crimson leaves', and: 'He held a branch of fruited oak./ He smiled like Hermes the beautiful/Cut in marble.'

Aldington's use of the technique of super-position tends to indicate a belief in a separate world, a poetic world which is unspoiled, natural and dignified. 'At the British Museum' (p.45) is a tribute to poetry in its ability to evoke this world. It uses super-position to indicate the way that poetry can transport its reader from 'heavy musty air, the black desks' to a place where:

The sun hangs in the cobalt-blue sky
The boat drifts over the lake shallows ...

The trouble with Aldington's poetry is its lack of discretion, he almost never allows his super-positions to do their work on their own. He tends to make strident intrusions, drawing the moral that the super-position has already more than adequately indicated. His earnestness constantly lengthens his poems inordinately, and fattens them with adjectives:

The banal sentimentality of the films,
The hushed concentration of the people,
The tinkling piano -
Suddenly,
A vast avalanche of greenish-yellow light
Pours over the threshold ... (p.48)

The technique of super-position requires severe economy to work most effectively, and this Aldington only occasionally achieves. Only on those occasions when he pares his poems down, and allows humour to temper his self-conscious intensity, does he write a good poem:

The chimneys, rank on rank,
Cut the clear sky;
The moon
With a rag of gauze about her loins
Poses among them, an awkward Venus -
And here am I looking wantonly at her
Over the kitchen sink. (p.48)

This contains the ingredients which I have noted in the other poems - notably the classical allusion contrasted with contemporary mundaneness - but it uses the incongruity to much

greater effect by cutting out extraneous comment and lowering the emotional pressure. Both Aldington and Amy Lowell were mediocre poets. The difference between them was that Aldington was a mediocre Imagist poet; he tried to make his poems work in an Imagist way, employing super-position and attempting hardness, and often failed: she was not essentially concerned with either of these, but they often entered her poems and affected their success.

The earliest poems of H.D. and William Carlos Williams conspicuously employ super-position, and, equally conspicuously, are characterised by hardness. H.D.'s 'Sea Iris' (S.G., p.40) contains that super-position which is the leading motif of the volume - the meeting of sea and land, and the placing next to each other of their attendant imagery. Here, this contrast is taken further so that ideas of sweetness and sourness are also super-posed, so that the flower is 'scented and stinging', 'sweet and salt'. The astringent associations that arise from this contribute to the poem's hardness, as, too, does the way that the rhythm stresses the solidity of the objects by its refusal to flow - the objects actually seem to form obstinate obstructions in the way of movement:

Weed, moss-weed,
root tangled in sand,
sea-iris, brittle flower ...

For the same reason, both of the first two stanzas save their only verbs until right at the end, and even these - 'print' and 'are' - are not verbs of motion. The result is a

concentration upon the business of experiencing the object, and the adjectives used - 'tangled', 'brittle', 'thin', 'scented', 'stinging' - produce an almost claustrophobically tactile effect.

Williams' 'Pastoral'⁶³ is much more detached from its images, the poet less involved in the tangle. There is a tangle nonetheless - here of urban objects super-posed into a random clutter. The cramped rhythm of the poem's middle lines is used to similar effect to the one I described in 'Sea Iris' - it concentrates attention upon the life of the objects, and gives a hard centre to the poem:

roof out of line with sides
the yards cluttered
with old chicken wire, ashes,
furniture gone wrong ...

Williams' appreciation of this hardness, though, is visual rather than tactile - he displays here his characteristically painterly enjoyment (registered in 'if I am fortunate') of the pictorial aspects of the urban scene. His role as observer is stressed by this, and this role is part of the subject, for the poem speaks against his previous earnestness ('When I was younger/it was plain to me/I must make something of myself') and in favour of a simple enjoyment.

For this reason, Williams' relationship with the subject of his poem is much simpler than H.D.'s relationship with the subject of hers. Where he ascribes fortunateness to himself, H.D. ascribes it to her image, the sea iris, which she calls 'fortunate one'. This ascribing of human

experience to the flower, together with the intimacy with which the iris is approached, suggests an involvement. H.D.'s sea iris seems to have a much more emotional significance for her than Williams' chicken wire has for him - she takes the reader so close to the object that it becomes difficult to focus upon it. Because of this, the sea iris takes on mysterious associations - ones which are only understandable in the context of Sea Garden as a whole.

In Sea Garden, H.D. presents a deliberately cultivated inner territory. For like her husband, Richard Aldington, she believed in a separate poetic world, a world of the imagination in which she took refuge, and the cultivation of this occupied her all her life. So, in the long poem she wrote at the end of her life 'Hermetic Definition', she says:

if I can do nothing else,
at least, I can recognise this
unfathomable, dauntless separation,

this retreat from the world,
that yet holds the world, past, present,
in the mind's closed recess ... (p.27)

So, partly for this reason, H.D. was continuously preoccupied with Greece and Egypt: those countries have ceased to be objective landscapes because they are so saturated with mental associations. They were important for her because they represented so much in terms of mental history.

What H.D. shares with Williams is a preoccupation with the boundary between inner and outer worlds. Their poems constantly have this dualism as their basis, and constantly

work out the implications of the ways in which the two are super-posed upon each other. Images of boundary, and invasion of boundary, are recurrent in H.D. - so, as I have said, her first volume, Sea Garden, centres upon the idea of the sea-shore as both the limits of land and sea, and the place where land and sea images are super-posed upon each other. And these images recur in her work as representatives of the way in which the outer world invades the inner.

For Williams, on the other hand, it is the outer world which is primary. He was preoccupied with the relation which matter has to mind and his poetry constantly uses superposition to explore the way that the two influence each other. Above all, though, his poems stress that objects should not be too easily translated into the language of emotional or intellectual significance. 'Spring and All', for example, stresses the solid particularity of objects as they stick out in an ungainly way from the lines:

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead brown leaves under them ...⁶⁴

Both H.D. and Williams were concerned with 'direct treatment of the "thing"':⁶⁵ the difference between them was that H.D. was concerned with the subjective, Williams with the objective, "thing". In order, therefore, to explore the different ways in which they used Imagist technique, it is necessary to look at their poems in a thematic way, to explore the opposite ends to which they applied their images. This exploration - which involves a discussion, also, of their opposite sensibilities - is the subject of my next chapter.

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

Ha! ...

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

I said I liked to have things neat.

Ha, ha!

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

Well - if you CHAPTER TWO

There were some thunderclaps to the west and I could see that it really was going to rain down soon and hard. We were at the brink of a grassy pasture facing west, quite in the open, and the wind preceding the storm was in our faces. Of course it was her party and I went along with her.

Instead of running or even walking toward a tree Hilda sat down in the grass at the edge of the hill and let it come.

"Come, beautiful rain," she said, holding out her arms. "Beautiful rain, welcome." And I behind her feeling not inclined to join in her mood. And let me tell you it rained, plenty. It didn't improve her beauty or my opinion of her - but I had to admire her if that's what she wanted. ¹

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

Ha!

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

I said I liked to have things neat.

Ha, ha!

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

Well - if you like it.

There were some thunderclaps to the west and I could see that it really was going to rain damned soon and hard. We were at the brink of a grassy pasture facing west, quite in the open, and the wind preceding the storm was in our faces. Of course it was her party and I went along with her.

Instead of running or even walking toward a tree Hilda sat down in the grass at the edge of the hill and let it come.

"Come, beautiful rain," she said, holding out her arms. "Beautiful rain, welcome." And I behind her feeling not inclined to join in her mood. And let me tell you it rained, plenty. It didn't improve her beauty or my opinion of her - but I had to admire her if that's what she wanted.¹

As this passage suggests, Hilda Doolittle and William Carlos Williams were friends, but their sensibilities were, from the earliest time, opposed. They seem here to be assuming different poses, adhering in fact to the stereotypes which might be expected from even a superficial reading of their work. To H.D. the rain is to be welcomed because it is beautiful: the more commonplace feelings are irrelevant, and ignored in the poetical stance she takes up. To Williams, on the other hand, the rain is simply wet: his pose is that of the common man, a 'no bull' position. Although the impression gained from this passage might be crude, it seems to offer an important insight into their different sensibilities. H.D. not only immediately responds to what she regards as beautiful, she becomes literally immersed in it: Williams, on the other hand, remains the detached observer. But paradoxically, it is H.D.'s pose which is the solipsistic one: by splashing herself with poetic ink and rain, she is sealing herself hermetically into a world self-consciously exalted and apart. This is part of the meaning of 'Oread' (C.P., p.81) - still her most famous poem - where the speaker also calls for immersion, and thereby for an oblivion which is simultaneously a special kind of awareness. And it is not surprising either, in this context, that her interests should later have become literally hermetic (c.f. Chapter 7).

Another clue to the distance between the two poets is available in a letter from H.D. to Williams:

Dear Bill:-

I trust you will not hate me for wanting to delete from your poem all the flippancies. The reason I want to do this is that the beautiful lines are so very beautiful - so in the tone and spirit of your Postlude - (which to me stands, a Nike, supreme among your poems). I think there is real beauty - and real beauty is a rare and sacred thing in this generation - in all the pyramid, Ashur-ban-ipal bits and in the Fiesole and in the wind at the very last.

I don't know what you think but I consider this business of writing a very sacred thing! - I think you have the "spark" - am sure of it, and when you speak direct are a poet. I feel in the hey-ding-ding touch running through your poem a derivative tendency which, to me, is not you - not your very self. It is as if you were ashamed of your Spirit, ashamed of your inspiration - as if you mocked at your own song. It's very well to mock at yourself - it is a spiritual sin to mock at your inspiration -

Hilda. 2

To H.D. poetry is something sacred, it is a different world in which the poet submerges himself. Williams' view is the opposite; as he goes on to say:

There is nothing sacred about literature, it is damned from one end to the other. There is nothing in literature but change and change is mockery. I'll write whatever I damn please and it'll be good if the authentic spirit of change is on it. (p.10).

In his poems he consciously takes up a stance; he is one man in a community, and his persona is often self-consciously sympathetic in order to bridge the gap between himself and

the rest of that community: so in his poem 'To a Poor Old Woman' he insists on his ability to perceive what the poor old woman is feeling:

munching a plum on
the street a paper bag
of them in her hand

They taste good to her
They taste good
to her. They taste
good to her

You can see it by
the way she gives herself
to the one half
sucked out in her hand

Comforted
a solace of ripe plums
seeming to fill the air
They taste good to her³

Moreover, for Williams, social and aesthetic questions become inseparable, so that in Paterson the quite distinct dualisms between writer and society, man and environment, and mind and matter, are brought together:

Say it! No ideas but in things. Mr.
Paterson has gone away
to rest and write. Inside the bus one sees
his thoughts sitting and standing. His
thoughts alight and scatter.⁴

These lines state one of Williams' fundamental aesthetic beliefs: 'No ideas but in things'. But this takes for granted a psychological belief about the way ideas are formed, and

beyond that a social position that becomes more explicit in the lines that follow, which are used as an illustration of the aesthetic tenet. Mr. Paterson is a writer and as such his ideas become inseparable from the things which surround him ('Inside the bus one sees/his thoughts sitting and standing'). In this way the dualism between matter and mind is resolved since both become types of matter. But Paterson is also a place, so that the dualisms between man and environment, and writer and society, are resolved at the same time. So, in 'A Sort of a Song', he says:

through metaphor to reconcile
the people and the stones.
Compose. (No ideas
but in things) Invent!⁵

'Compose' here is used ambivalently. Most obviously it refers to poetic creation, but more importantly it refers to the literal 'putting together' of the people and the stones, of resolving the dualism by the use in poetic creation of metaphor. This process is seen in action in the poem 'To a Poor Old Woman' quoted above. There the phrase 'a solace of wild plums' combines mind and matter, people and stones, and moreover the air which mediates the solace becomes the medium which unites the writer and his subject.

The metaphorical resolution of the people and the stones was, for Williams, what the Imagist method achieves. He would have agreed with Pound that it involves 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time',⁶ but he would have insisted that this complex arises out of a solid, material

thing. It is for this reason that for him

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens.⁷

So much depends upon it, that is, because it is from things like a red wheelbarrow that emotional and intellectual complexes arise. The human sensibility, to Williams, never feels and thinks in isolation but always in connection with the outside world.

In this respect his view is the opposite of F.H.

Bradley's:

My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it ... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.⁸

This passage is famous because it is quoted by T.S. Eliot in his notes to 'The Waste Land' and this serves to indicate the distance between the two poets. Bradley's view was relevant to Eliot because it corresponds to an alienation which he saw as central to modern experience:

To return to Bradley's ... I have heard the key
internal sense ... Turn in the door once and turn once only
our external ones ... We think of the key, each in his prison
circle! since ... Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
contiguous with ... Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus. (p.74).

As in Williams, essentially different dualisms are connected here, individual and society (indicated by the mention of Coriolanus - the individual who classically betrayed his society for the sake of individual honour); man and environment (the prison as against what surrounds it); and matter and mind (thinking of the key). For Eliot this alienation was a symptom of the corrupt nature of modern men, and it had appeared more straightforwardly as such in an earlier poem of his, 'Preludes', where the woman has

... such a vision of the street
from which to ... As the street hardly understands ... (p.23).

What happens here is the opposite of what happens in 'To a Poor Old Woman' where Williams sees the outer world as so much in harmony with the inner that the air actually fills with the solace felt by the old woman: to Eliot the street and the subjective vision of it are completely different (an idea which is ironically enforced by his wittily attributing a subjective vision to the street, a device which is common enough in poetry, but which is completely transformed here since the context calls into question the whole nature of subjectivity and objectivity). For Williams this subject/object dualism is an illusion which the creative act transcends.

To return to Bradley's terminology, for Williams even our internal sensations are not private to ourselves (let alone our external ones); there is no such thing as 'my own circle' since our minds are essentially similar to, and contiguous with, matter; the world is a common and public possession - no soul is an island.

So, in 'The Mental Hospital Garden',⁹ Williams implies that a recognition of the inseparability of the inner and outer worlds is essential to mental health. With the coming of summer, those patients who are cured must face the outside world:

Blinded by the light
they walk bewildered,
seeking
between the leaves
for a vantage
from which to view
the advancing season.

But this fills them with fear, while the separate, inner world of the mental hospital is safer:

They are incredulous
of their own cure
and half minded
to escape
into the dark again.

The vastness of the outside world frightens them - they require something small, something familiar to cling to as a refuge:

They glimpse
 a surrounding sky
 and the whole countryside. - they are
Filled with terror
 they seek
 a familiar flower
at which to warm themselves,
 but the whole field
 accosts them.
They hide their eyes
 ashamed
 before that bounty,
peering through their fingers
 timidly.

The image of the fingers here is a precisely rendered expression of the separation between subject and object, inner and outer worlds. The confrontation between the two is described perfectly in the climax of the poem:

One
emboldened,
 parting the leaves before her,
 stands in the full sunlight, before,
alone
 shading her eyes
 as her heart
beats wildly
 and her mind
 drinks up
the full meaning
 of it
 all!

Here, the patient is attempting to come to terms with the outside world; and so she encounters and enjoys its 'full

meaning'. The fingers, before an image of separation, have become a means by which the unity may come about - they are 'shading her eyes'. The ability of the inner to face the outer world brings about, Williams suggests, a unity of being: hence the close conjunction of 'eyes', 'heart', 'mind'. And this final sentence in the poem points also to an ultimate unity - that of man and his environment: the sentence begins with 'One' and ends with 'all', both with a line to themselves and both (visually confirming the harmony) in the middle of the line. In this way Williams indicates that the individual takes her part in the general, which specifically involves mind taking its part in matter: 'shading her eyes/as her heart/beats wildly/and her mind ...' suggests by the placing of the line endings that heart and mind are being shaded as well as the eyes - they become, that is, part of the physical act. Moreover, when Williams says that 'her mind/drinks up' he is speaking of mind as in complete continuity with matter, it becomes material, and the one, therefore, becomes part of the all. That is to say, since mind is inseparable from matter, man is inseparable from his environment:

the city
the man, an identity - it can't be
otherwise - an
interpenetration, both ways.¹⁰

But there is a further implication here for the poet, which is that the writer is inseparable from society. This idea Williams embodies in the Paterson personification - Paterson is simultaneously a city and a writer. Moreover, as I have said before, Williams often sets up a self-consciously sympathising persona which is meant to bring him closer to the subject of his poem. This device is suspect, and in 'To a Poor Old Woman' he simply insists too much to be convincing - he seems to need too much to make us believe in his sympathy. And later, in Paterson, he is more ready to concede a separation between writer and society, so that he quotes what appear to be the kind of comments which he receives from members of the community about his being a poet, comments which reveal their complete incomprehension of that aspect of his personality:

A wonderful gift. How do
you find the time for it in
your busy life? It must be a great
thing to have such a pastime.
But you were always a strange
boy. How's your mother? ...
Your father was such a nice man.
I remember him well
Or, Geeze, Doc, I guess it's all right
but what the hell does it mean? (p.138)

Nonetheless, Williams continued to believe that writer and society were inseparable and that poetry had a

social role (his belief in the use of American idiom is further testimony to this). To H.D., on the other hand, the poet was essentially someone apart, and though she spoke of the poet's social role, she saw his separateness from society as being an integral part of it. From the beginning of her career she saw the poet's role as in some sense occult, in some way connected with that of the 'initiates' remembered on 'sleepless nights':

their gesture, their calm glance.

I have heard how in rapt thought,

in vision, they speak

with another race,

more beautiful, more intense than this. (S.G., p.15)

This quotation clarifies the attitude behind H.D.'s letter to Williams quoted above. Poetry was sacred to her because poets are like initiates in possessing the key to secret wisdom. Because of this they have access to greater intensity and greater beauty than the quotidian world offers, and this, for her, supplied them with a sufficient social role. Where Williams seized upon aspects of urban experience (and often apparently insignificant ones) through which he expressed his own feelings, H.D. created her own inner world and interpreted her experience through it. So in 'Cities' she explicitly rejects modern urban experience and looks to past and future splendour:

Though we wander about,
find no honey of flowers in this waste,
is our task the less sweet-
who recall the old splendour,
await the new beauty of cities?

(S.G., p.46)

She therefore withdrew from this urban territory into one which she created for herself. In her novel Palimpsest H.D. describes Hipparchia (a portrait of herself) indulging in a mental activity which is much more than a random everyday habit, a mental activity which, in fact, is an important clue to her sensibility:

... her closed eyes returned to the inner world, the world of bush and tree; the world that unfolded before her shut eyes, clear in perfect outline was like some long scroll unwound before her. Of what use intellect when the brain, worn past endurance by beneficent Roman fever, finds this subtler implement? A scroll that unwinds before shut eyes, that reveals hill, wood, mountain, small lake, all minute and clarified like those very islands that she, giant Thetis, had towered among at Capua.

(p.114)

This is in direct contrast to Williams for whom, as I have said, inner and outer worlds are completely interconnected, which in turn means that poetry and the world are contiguous. For this reason he minimises the role of the poet in liaising between the two, to the extent that, for him:

The province of the poem is the world.
When the sun rises, it rises in the poem
and when it sets darkness comes down
and the poem is dark ...¹¹

For this reason the objects and experiences which he describes characteristically emerge out of, and suggest, a specific background. So the word 'depends' in 'The Red Wheelbarrow'⁷ is the word upon which the poem hinges: it indicates that there are objects around the wheelbarrow which are physically dependent upon it (almost 'hanging around' it): the rain water and the white chickens. Because, as Winifred Nowotny puts it, of the 'eccentric placing of line-endings', these two things emerge as if they were four, they are cut 'into their separate elements'¹² - as though 'rain' and 'white' were separate from 'water' and 'chickens'. The important point is that the wheelbarrow emerges into the poem out of its background and the artificiality of this is insisted upon by the unusual lineation. Objects in H.D.'s world, by contrast, emerge out of no such background: they are essentially bounded things; in Bradley's terms, her experience falls within her own circle, a circle closed on the outside. And since her artifice is not contrasted, as it is in Williams, with the hard, inescapable 'whatness' of things, the result is a much greater feeling of artificiality.

But this was an important part of her aim, and it was this same element which she saw in the poetry of Marianne Moore who has, she said:

something of the despair of the perfect artist - "see, you cannot know what I mean - exactly what I mean," she seems to say, half-pitying that the adversary is so dull - that we are so dull - "and I do not intend that you shall know - my sword is very much keener than your sword, my hand surer than your hand - but you shall not know that I know you are beaten." ¹³

And what she went on to say about self-conscious aestheticism in Marianne Moore certainly applies far more to herself:

Miss Moore turns her perfect craft as the perfect craftsman must inevitably do, to some direct presentation of beauty, clear, cut in flowing lines, but so delicately that the very screen she carves seems meant to stand only in that serene palace of her own world of inspiration - frail, yet as all beautiful things are, absolutely hard - and destined to endure longer, far longer than the toppling sky-scrapers, and the world of shrapnel and machine-guns in which we live. (p.119)

And she continued:

We are torn in our ambitions, our desires are crushed, we hear from all sides that art is destined to a long period of abeyance, and that the reconstruction of Europe must take all the genius of the race. I do not believe that...

Miss Moore helps us. She is fighting in her country a battle against squalor and commercialism. We are all fighting the same battle. And we must strengthen each other in this one absolute bond - our devotion to the beautiful English language. (p.119)

Taken together, these quotations from The Egoist and from Palimpsest indicate that H.D. saw poetry as providing a refuge from the squalor of modern society and of war by helping the mind to concentrate upon 'beauty', by referring it to an inner world of 'bush and tree'. Whereas to Williams there is 'nothing in literature but change' and whatever he writes will be 'good if the authentic spirit of change is on it', to H.D. poetry is a bastion against change. It provides a refuge by insisting upon permanence, upon eternal 'beauty'. It is partly for this reason that her inner world is a Greek one, a world, in Ruggero Bianchi's words, 'parnassianesimo, ellenismo, esotismo, formalismo...'¹⁴, 'un'esistenza diafana e irreale in un alone quasi rituale e appaiono sfolgoranti in una luce di visione, immobilizzati in un'atmosfera di eternità.' (p.200). An essay by her husband Richard Aldington could almost be intended as an explanation of this; he enters

what lawyers call a "pleading" on behalf of a new unfashionable and unstudied Hellenic ideal of art; and of life, too, for that matter.

For him:

there are two main kinds of art; there is the art which is in sympathy with its time, which seeks to express the whole life of its time - that of Shakespeare, for example - and there is the art of Ben Jonson or of Theocritus, the art of men who run counter to the spirit of their time, or rather to the accepted artistic notions of their time.

... I find that there is still a strange allure about the ordinary, uninteresting things which the Greeks loved - health and beauty and youth in the midst of friends. And for myself I would wish to see the art of today ... growing out of those things, and I should not object if it repeated things which have been already said, provided it re-assured me beautifully and conclusively that flowers are still elegantly coloured, and girls' lips very good to see, and the scent of hayfields and of the ocean very cordial.¹⁵

These quotations from H.D. and her husband tend to make her cultivation of an inner world seem motivated by straightforward intellectual aims, but the fact that there were also more obscurely emotional motives is clear from the way, in Tribute to Freud, she associates Greece ('Hellas') with her mother, Helen (pp.49-50). And a strong emotional element is suggested also in 'A Note on Poetry'.

"What are the islands to me?" They are, I suppose, an inner region of defence ... And of memory - suppressed memory, maybe ... desire to escape, desire to create (music), intellectual curiosity, a wish to make real to myself what is most real...¹⁶

Here there is a remarkable self-consciousness and complexity. What is certainly clear is that her attitude to this separate inner world is not as intellectually defined as Eliot's to the mental prison which he described in 'The Waste Land'.¹⁷ To him it is a matter of unmitigated and profound regret - though the mention of Coriolanus suggests the possibility of an individual dignity and power connected with it. Regret is part of H.D.'s attitude, as is indicated in the way she sees her inner world as a refuge from the world of sky-scrapers and war, but it is by no means all. She refuses to regard her cultivation of an inner world as entirely a form of escapism; in the passages quoted she twice raises the point and both times hurries on to suggest other reasons, as though she felt guilty about elements of escapism in her poetry. And this, it seems to me, is echoed in Sea Garden in the suggestion that arises there that what is being described is a world of beauty which is forbidden, and therefore both feared and desired. Frequently this causes an unexpected complexity of attitude to be implied; it is as though H.D.'s Moravian upbringing suddenly intrudes, introducing its strict moral code into the atmosphere of pagan licentiousness. So in 'Orchard' (one of her first poems to be published, and one of the poems about which Pound was enthusiastic) she says:

ought not to be entertained with in our mental lives). The enjoyment of the sensuous aspects of the escape into the woods is exquisitely conveyed.

and I fell prostrate
crying:
you have flayed us
with your blossoms,
spare us the beauty
of fruit-trees. (p.29)

As T.B. Swann says the 'very word "flayed" suggests Christian martyrdom or the self-inflicted tortures of saints and mystics.'¹⁸ Priapus, the keeper of the orchard, is to H.D. an object of both fascination and fear. Robert Duncan has pointed out the sexual element in many of H.D.'s nature poems, which, he says, 'betray in their troubled ardor processes of psychological and even sexual identification...'¹⁹ He sees in them a 'poetic magic in which the natural environment and the sexual experience are fused' (p.150). And this produces in the poems a remarkable and partly hidden fund of complexity. So, in 'The Helmsman', 'we have always known you wanted us' (pp.2-3) suggests arousal on the part of the 'us' as well as the 'you', in their awareness of his desires. The poem conveys sexual anticipation as much by their running away from him as by their going (by boat) towards him. Here again is the characteristic combination of fear and desire which seems intensified for the poet because both emotions are evoked just by thought about the experiences which arouse them (guilt and desire enter as elements in what ought or ought not to be entertained even in our mental lives). The enjoyment of the sensuous aspects of the escape into the woods is exquisitely conveyed:

we caught flower and new bramble-fruit
in our hair: we laughed
as each branch whipped back...

the sense of physical sensation here is especially acute with the combination of the lashing of the branches and the laughter (though the juxtaposition of images of pleasure and pain produces similar associations to these in 'Orchard'). It would be wrong to take the sexual aspects of this poem too far, but some of the imagery in the poem would give a field day to Freudians:

... the feel of the clefts in the bark,
and the slope between tree and tree -
and a slender path strung field to field
and wood to wood
and hill to hill...

We were enchanted with the fields,
the tufts of coarse grass
in the shorter grass -
we loved all this.

And once again the combination of fear and desire is evident in the final lines in the nervousness of sexual anticipation conveyed in the hesitating of the boat:

But now, our boat climbs - hesitates - drops -
climbs - hesitates - crawls back ...

The sexual element is much more peripheral in 'Sheltered Garden' (pp.18-19) (though some of the emotional content in the poem may result from 'hortus conclusus' associations with virginity). What is in evidence is the combination of fear and desire. The garden is beautiful, but

she expresses a horror of being enclosed in it. The heightened emotion is precisely indicated by the tone; the simplicity of

I have had enough
I gasp for breath.

is remarkably appropriate, the brevity of it making it exactly like statements uttered breathlessly. The 'h's' in the first line indicate a painful drawing-in of breath; 'gasp' contrasts well in its roughness and solidity; and 'breath' forms half of a half-rhyme, evoking the difficulty and strain of breathing. The second verse enacts the feeling of enclosure enacted also in the packed stresses of

Every way ends, every road...

and the quick syllables of

then you retrace your steps,
or find the same slope on the other side...

followed by the abrupt 'precipitate'. Moreover the anti-climax of the one word line after the lengthening of the previous two evokes the sudden disappointment of the discovery.

The poem has a curiously dream-like atmosphere, produced by the feeling of bewilderment and confusion caused by the need to escape from (and the fear of being stifled by) what would normally be an object of desire. Once again what seems to be expressed is a shying away from forbidden beauty, and here there is a corresponding desire to escape into invigorating pain, into 'some terrible/wind-tortured place'. This idea is echoed elsewhere in Sea Garden in the way that harshness and beauty are constantly associated with each

other, so that the sea rose is praised because it is 'harsh', and because of what it has endured:

you are flung on the sand,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind. (p.1)

So, too, in 'The Shrine' (pp.4-6) the monument is praised because of its austerity, its beauty being inseparable from the terror which it inspires:

you are unsheltered,
cut with the weight of wind -
you shudder when it strikes,
then lift, swelled with the blast -
you sink as the tide sinks,
you shrill under hail, and sound
thunder when thunder sounds.

And connected with this admiration of austerity is her belief in the earning of intensity and beauty. This is why she praises the sea rose as against the wet rose, which has an easy life, and why in 'Huntress' she admonishes:

Spring up - sway forward -
follow the quickest one,
aye, though you leave the trail
and drop exhausted at our feet. (p.23)

The idea is a Puritan one - a belief in the importance of endurance and hard work before attainment.

Associated with this idea is the belief that certain things attain a special worth, and thereby earn the detailed

Imagist attention which they receive from the poet. This is the positive side of the preciousness into which H.D. tends to lapse: she discovers a special moral, emotional, or aesthetic value where such value would not be expected. She uses the word herself in the significant context already quoted: the sea rose is more 'precious' than a wet rose. Moral and aesthetic values are indistinguishable here - they become the same thing: and it is clear that H.D. is doing here what her husband recommended in The Egoist, she is reassuring her readers 'that flowers are still elegantly coloured, and girls' lips very good to see, and the scent of hayfields and of the ocean very cordial.'¹⁵ And moreover the specially loved objects which she chooses for description are especially precious because they are evoked in an age - in her own words - of 'sky-scrapers ... shrapnel and machine-guns'.¹³ They are held up for the attention of the reader, the cramped syntax and rhythm of Imagism focusing upon them, and allowing the poems to hinge around them, so that their specialness can be stressed as an antidote to the destructive images of war - which are never actually mentioned in Sea Garden. In this sense they fulfil almost an occult purpose as magic charms, objects that confer strength against the encroaching darkness.

So, although Imagism by reputation is devoid of moral feeling, H.D.'s earliest poems are in fact subtly infused with it; 'Sheltered Garden' even contains a moral statement: 'beauty without strength/chokes out life' (p.19). And this introduction of moral feeling, by causing a juxtaposition of

feelings of pleasure and pain, sometimes in one image, sometimes in several, heightens the apprehension of both (in a similar way to which images are focused by super-position, as in the thematic contrast in Sea Garden of images of earth - flowers, fruit and so on - with images of the sea). These contrary pulls of fear and desire in her inner world clearly intensify our recognition of it as something special; and they also cause details in it to be curiously heightened as received impressions. In fact this world sometimes seems to be apprehended by a kind of hyperaesthesia that is simultaneously suffered and enjoyed. At times perceptions seem to be sharpened so much that expectations are altered, and what is observed seems to be happening with an unfamiliar slowness that produces disorientation: so in 'Orchard' (p.29) when she says:

I saw the first pear
as it fell ...

the long vowels of the terminal spondee 'first pear' produce a remarkably slow-motion effect; which the second line exaggerates with the information that the pear is seen only in the process of falling - as far as the reader is informed it does not reach the ground (an idea stated more explicitly in 'Garden' [p.24] where it is said that 'fruit cannot drop/through this thick air'). This impression of slowness increases the feeling that we have of a much heightened awareness; each perception has a correspondingly increased effect on the perceiver. For this reason the

statement in the second verse of 'Orchard' that the sound of the bees was 'thundered' by the air is accepted in its context as hardly an exaggeration at all - merely an indication of its effect upon the passive, and vulnerable, hearer.

So, too, in 'Evening' (p.17) what is described is not so much a nightfall as an extremely gradual infiltration of darkness. She concentrates attention upon the moment of transition and the reader is made to watch the change from daylight to darkness as the process is occurring, and made to see the closing of the flowers as though it were perceptible. 'The light passes/...' is a very skilful use of line ending since the action of the poem is summarised when the idea is taken in isolation, and the pause interposed here by the line ending brings about this isolating effect. This again aids the effect of hypersensitivity in the poem since the withdrawing light appears to be observed so minutely that the speed of its withdrawal is slowed to the extent that it can be seen in the process of passing each object. A similar effect is achieved in 'shadows dart/from the cornel-roots' and 'black creeps from root to root'.

Alongside this heightening of perception there is a heightening of emotion, since the hyacinths become, like the sea rose mentioned above, objects of special value through the Imagist attention bestowed upon them. This effect is increased by the anthropomorphic manner in which the actions of the flowers are described - 'the petals reach inward',

'shadow seeks shadow', the hypaticas have a 'bluer heart'; and the fact that the flowers 'grow faint' is open to an emotional as well as a visual interpretation. The cumulative effect of these emotional undertones is of the flowers seeking shelter from the feared darkness. Moreover, the attribution of value to the hypaticas is much aided by the considerable emotional weight given to the word 'lost' in the poem, appearing as it does at the culmination of the process of vanishing and darkening described above, and appearing twice in a position of stress - each time as the last word in the verse paragraph.

The senses of heightened perception and heightened emotion are also inseparably linked in 'Mid-Day':

The light beats upon me.

I am startled -

a split leaf crackles on the paved floor -

I am anguished - defeated. (p.7)

The Imagistic pinpointing succeeds in insisting upon a crisis here. The vertical line of the light (it is mid-day) is superimposed upon the horizontal direction of the 'split leaf', so that the speaker in the poem (hemmed in by the two of them) is pinpointed in the way that the lines of a map reference pick out a place on a map. The fact that it is mid-day also helps to define the situation, and to objectify the feeling that what is being described is a crisis, a moment of realisation. The fricative spondees ('light beats', 'split leaf', 'paved floor', 'black seeds', 'the grape slips') together with the laconic statements, deepen

the sense of urgency.

It is, in fact, the poem's blending of image with statement of emotion which makes it effective. So, the first verse alternates Imagist lines with straightforward statement. But in both Imagist lines emotion is strongly suggested - 'beats' expressing affliction, 'split leaf' the idea of being torn, which is continued later in 'My thoughts tear me' and 'I am scattered like/the hot shrivelled seeds'. There is something of pathetic fallacy in the poem; an emotional affinity is indicated between the speaker and the split leaf and shrivelled seeds, which suggests ruined promise on the part of the speaker as well as them. In this way the speaker is effectively contrasted with the poplar which 'is bright on the hill' and 'spreads out,/deep-rooted among trees.' It is bright by contrast with the blackness of the seeds, and deep-rooted by contrast with their scatteredness. It conveys a 'complex' of associations automatically so that although the contrast between the prostrate speaker and the tall tree is crude, it is also effective because the poplar is presented as a vision of something thriving and strong, as the speaker is at the point of death. And so the sense of acutely heightened perception is given emotional justification. The seeds and the split leaf receive such attention because they are close to the speaker's field of vision (he/she is presumably on the ground) but more importantly because of the state of mind in which they are seen.

This feeling of hyperaesthesia is the product of what Geoffrey Thurley calls 'the imagist alertness', which causes the imagist poet to let 'the phenomenon invade his sensibility'.²⁰ In fact, this characteristic is much more a feature of H.D.'s Imagist poems than that of any of the other Imagists - it is an indication of her involvement, her commitment to her images, as against their tendency towards an ironic detachment from them, observant but withdrawn. H.D.'s involvement is such that the object ceases to be something observed, a 'still life' in Thurley's phrase, it takes over the entire poem, so that small objects grow disconcertingly large through the microscopic attention bestowed on them. And this enhances the apprehension that the poems produce of entering a special world - the quality of the perceptions is so unfamiliar. At times the effect of an unusual concentration bestowed upon detail produces a similar effect to dream-like displacement, and different effects can contribute to a similar result, as I mentioned in the context of 'Sheltered Garden'. But again and again the effect is like entering a different world of perception. H.D. was to use similar effects later in her career. For instance in 'The Walls Do Not Fall' (pp.11-12) she achieves a description of a worm's vision of the world by enlarging small objects almost, but not quite, out of recognition. The worm in the passage represents the poet whose apprehension of the sensuous world is so penetrating that he sees 'multiplicity of magnified beauty/such as your gorgon-

great/dull eye cannot focus'. Aware of this the poet/worm remains 'unintimidated' but the effect of this magnifying of the world is to make the observer terrifyingly vulnerable and small. The use of the device here - where the vision is meant specifically to be that of the poet - suggests that H.D. regarded the creation of such a special world of perceptions as an essential part of the poet's nature.

So in Sea Garden the hyperaesthesia, the suggestion of dream-like apprehension, and the unfamiliar displacement of attention, contribute to set apart the world described as very special, in fact as an imagined, ideal world. There are explicit suggestions of this at times. The pear that falls in 'Orchard' is the 'first pear' and this, together with the suspicion that is constantly aroused in the reader that what H.D. is discussing is 'forbidden fruit', suggests that the pear is mentally conceived rather than physically experienced. And 'Pear Tree' (p.43) has an ambiguous second verse:

no flower ever opened
so staunch a white leaf,
no flower ever parted silver
from such rare silver...

This can mean either that the flowers on this tree are stauncher and rarer than any before or that the tree literally never existed (and therefore no flower has ever opened 'so staunch a white leaf') but is only an imagined, ideal tree and for that reason its flowers are ideally staunch and rare. Moreover, the latter meaning is reinforced by the repeated 'higher than my arms reach' in the first

verse, which suggests that the tree is imagined and actually part of an unattainable world. At such moments H.D. seems determined that we should not suspend our disbelief: she seems determined that we should recognise that what she is describing is not real, that it is (in her own words about Marianne Moore) 'meant to stand only in that serene palace of her own world of inspiration - frail, yet as all beautiful things are, absolutely hard ...'¹³

R.P. Blackmur has said of H.D.'s poems that they

dealt with the emotion of perception, and seldom made the transit where they dealt with the perception of emotion. The best of them gave quick sensual delight, a kind of crisp elation, which was a result of the words as words, and separate from the objects of the words. Her words gave, they never clutched; they had a free lyric existence - they had no consuming work to do.²¹

Such statements are false, at least as far as her first volume Sea Garden is concerned. What certainly is true is that these early poems do not deal with the perception of emotion as straightforwardly as the poems of William Carlos Williams characteristically do. Williams tends to present experiences and emotions as they are in the process of occurring, and fished seemingly at random out of the urban flow (which makes his use of a stream of consciousness technique peculiarly appropriate); so:

randomness - the experience is almost haphazardly, and the thought consequent upon it seems almost arbitrarily arrived at, but the two elements are felt to cohere because of the shared

returning home
late at night
I saw
a huge Negro
a dirty collar
about his
enormous neck
appeared to be
choking
him
I did not know
whether or not
he saw me though
he was sitting
directly
before me how
shall we
escape this modern
age
and learn
to breathe again²²

This poem is about perception of emotion in a way that H.D.'s never are; and this is because the experiences which H.D. describes do not come, as Williams' do, out of such an indeterminate outside world. What happens in the Williams poem is that a perception of something in the objective world is described and then an emotion and a thought arising from it is juxtaposed. The effect is of a precisely manipulated randomness - the experience emerges almost haphazardly, and the thought consequent upon it seems aleatorically arrived at, but the two elements are felt to cohere because of the shared

association with learning to breathe again. The transition from outer to inner is skilfully and self-consciously achieved in a way which acknowledges the distance between the two and at the same time implies their interpenetration. By contrast the experiences in H.D.'s poems come out of her encapsulated inner world and their emotional content (and 'content' is the correct word, since the experiences are literally 'contained' in the poem, rather than arising out of it) is conditioned by this - the emotions are present partly as attitudes towards this inner world. This is not to say that surprise is any less an important element in the 'invention' of the poem: both poet and reader discover in the poetry elements they had not expected in the poet. Nor are the emotions so discovered any the less powerful or complex for having this origin: what H.D. discovers in her own mind is just as disturbing and beautiful and difficult to fathom as what Williams' mind discovers outside itself.

It is important to stress, however, that what is happening in their poems is an opposite process: and an opposite process even though the end result is a use of images in both (and in both cases a use of images linked to the Imagist movement). Both take an 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'⁶ as the basis of their poems: but Williams uses it in order to translate mind into material terms and express it in that form; H.D. on the other hand presents matter which has already been transformed by mind. Williams presents mind become material ('no ideas but in things'⁴): H.D. presents matter become mental -

for her there are no things except those which have been altered, however subtly, by ideas. This is obviously the case in what is still probably her most famous poem, 'Oread':

Whirl up, sea -
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir. (C.P., p.81)

Although this poem has a very strong visual background, at no point does it present a defined visual image. In the first line the idea of the sea is too general to achieve this; after the first line the visual pictures of sea and pines become so blent that they create more a mental than a visual effect. In regard to the sensuous impact of her poems, H.D. often appeals far more to sound and touch than to sight: here the auditory effects produced by the terminal l's and r's - 'whirl', 'hurl', 'pools', 'fir' - by the many s's, and by the long vowels, are obvious; and the tactile effects suggested by 'pointed', 'splash' and 'cover us' are important to the exhilarating sensation which makes it outstanding.

The result is that we do not feel, as May Sinclair suggests, 'direct, naked contact with reality'²³ from a poem like this, we feel that reality has been thoroughly altered in advance. The sea is transformed by metaphor into a forest but then the metaphor itself is transformed by being pushed beyond its limits. The poem starts objectively

('Whirl up, sea') and then has subjectivity imposed upon it ('Whirl your pointed pines'). This is a conventional effect - the reader of poetry is used to making this step, through metaphor, from the observed to the imagined. But the poem's climax mixes the two ('cover us with your pools of fir') in a way that deliberately worries at the boundary between objectivity and subjectivity, and stresses their inseparability. The last line is self-consciously implausible - it draws attention to its fictiveness in a way that H.D.'s epic Helen in Egypt was later to do on a much larger scale. Here the effect is to stress how much 'reality' can recede in the face of a transforming vision.

The most interesting account of the poem is given by Susan Stanford Friedman:

The center of the poem is not the sea; it is the person who is seeing the sea aroused in a whirling passion of intensity. The reality of the poem is internal and subjective ... The person in the poem associates herself with the shore - the sea's tree-waves are addressed as "you", the shore is "us". She is in fact the spirit of the land, an "oread", one of the nymphs of the hills and mountains.²⁴

She goes on to interpret the poem in specifically oneiric terms:

This identity of male and female in the shape of a wave arises out of what Freud would call the symbolic quality of the visual images. If the sea whirled up in one of H.D.'s dreams, Freud would translate these pointed-pine symbols as

phallic references before he would go back into her childhood for explanations. 'Oread' does not turn back into anyone's childhood, but the sexual suggestiveness of the images operates much as Freud claimed dream-symbols worked. (p.105)

This is moving into the area of speculation but this approach seems to me a much more accurate one, even to H.D.'s Imagist poems, than the one which speaks of direct contact with reality. To return again to Bradley's terminology, H.D. is dealing with experience that falls within her own circle, the poems in Sea Garden are deeply personal: but her circle is not closed on the outside. Through her poems H.D. shares her inner world - what she has in common with her readers is its uniqueness and privateness. The interest of Sea Garden is in the complexity of the emotion which is expressed in it: and this complexity arises not only from the subject-matter, but actually about it. That is, the subject-matter arouses emotion not only through what it is objectively, but through what it is subjectively - the fact that it has emerged out of her fantasy life. And this accounts for the guilt and fear which constantly accompanies the feeling of wonderment and delighted awe.

The presence of the inner world which I have indicated in Sea Garden is only felt in terms of hints and nuances of tone. The main impression the volume gives is of being thoroughly involved with its Imagist technique: it presents numerous images, employs super-position, and is characterised by an almost relentless hardness. The

question then must be how well Imagism is suited to the expression of the inner world. The answer is that while that world is present only as hint and nuance, while it remains only the concealed subject of the poems, Imagism copes accurately and well. The sense of mystery that the hiddenness arouses seems, in Sea Garden, actually to be appropriate to the subject-matter of the poems, their sense of exotic fervour. And even employing only hint and nuance, H.D. manages here to suggest an ambiguous attitude to her fantasy world. It is a source of pleasure because it is forbidden and consoling, but also frightening because it threatens to enclose her - so 'Sheltered Garden' (pp.18-19) has the quality of nightmare, of dream turned upside-down, as the object of desire suddenly becomes an object of inescapable fear. And it can be a source of paradoxical pain because, while fascinating, it is unattainable. This is similar to the suffering in 'Eurydice', (C.P., pp.74-79), where the description of the flowers is meant to evoke the pain suffered by the goddess because they remind her of what she is doomed never to see again, and the ecstasy she feels through nostalgic invocation of the flowers only increases her suffering.

Unfortunately, this complexity depends upon a certain level of indirectness and H.D.'s poetic development was to take her in the direction of placing her inner world increasingly at the centre of her poems.

'Eurydice' itself indicates this. Much longer than any of the Sea Garden poems, it labours the poetic idea I have

described with a plaintive insistence. Like many of the poems H.D. wrote immediately after 1916, 'Eurydice' is characterised by repetitiveness rather than by the surprise which was a feature of her shorter Imagist poems. The most important point is that, in order to deal directly with her inner world, H.D. needed to alter her technique, to open it out to include discursive and narrative writing - Imagism would not be enough. Her gradual evolution of these necessary new techniques is the subject of Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Sea Garden is remarkable as a first volume because it seems more the end product of experiment than its starting-point. That is to say, it presents its Imagist idiom completely mastered, idiosyncratic but effective for its purpose; and it presents a set of themes stated and explored with consistency and coherence. The combination of this apparent assurance and mastery with the freshness inevitable in a poet using a new poetic technique and dealing with her own subject matter makes Sea Garden very successful. So, while many critics (notably Norman Holmes Pearson²⁵) have been trying to shift emphasis away from her earlier to her later volumes - which is largely a worthy endeavour - it is important to stress also that her first volume contains some of her most perfect poems. These poems, while they do not pose such interesting philosophical and stylistic problems as the later longer poems, are less ambitious and correspondingly less flawed.

It is therefore easy to understand Pound's

surprise when he first read H.D.'s poems, a surprise which is evident enough in the tone of his letter to Harriet Monroe, covering the poems he had sent her at Poetry:

It is the laconic speech of the
Imagistes. Objective - no slither -
direct - no excess of adjectives etc.
No metaphors that won't permit
examination - It's straight talk -
straight as the Greek!²⁶

What Pound is essentially indicating here is that in these earliest published poems H.D. is already a fully-fledged poet. The poems are remarkable for the sense they give of a poetic personality already fully formed, original and forceful. To hear of H.D.'s earliest poetic influences is interesting only for how little it seems to betray about how she became the author of Sea Garden. In answer to an inquiry by Thomas Swann, H.D. listed her early reading:

You are right about the
Nietzsche and Walter Pater. But we
started earlier with Hawthorne's
Tanglewood Tales and all fairy tales.
There was the usual school routine,
Keats, Shelley, Byron, Swinburne out
of school - and some of the Greek
(derivative) of Oscar Wilde - some
of de Regnier, Gautier, etc. with
Richard Aldington in the early
"Madrigal" days in Paris and London.
Andrew Lang's translation of
Theocritus which Ezra Pound brought
me....

I read and re-read as a school-girl, The Last Days of Pompeii of

Bulwer-Lytton - read Landor later in England ... Perhaps, as my father and half brother were astronomers the names, Venus, Mercury and so on, were subconsciously potent, though consciously the fairy tales were nearer. Yes, I read a very little Greek and what possible translations there were - Gilbert Murray's prose rather than his poetry ...²⁷

Aside from stressing the Greek bias in H.D.'s interests, this list does little more than state the obvious fact that her poems issue out of a very long Western poetic tradition. That this is as much the source of her themes - flowers, the sea, gods, wood and water nymphs, gardens, the seasons - as her own direct experience, is indisputable. But it does little to identify direct influence. The laconic and enigmatic quality of Sappho's poetic fragments are certainly a possible source, though Sappho is not mentioned by H.D. here. Moreover, Pater, who is mentioned, has been identified by Ian Fletcher as a likely precursor of Imagism. He quotes Pater's Mona Lisa passage in the form of its typographical rearrangement, by Yeats, as free verse, and notices that

The repeated "and" is a trick of syntax used by, for example, H.D.; and Pater uses many auxiliary verbs which have an effect of unobtrusiveness.²⁸

But while there is some truth in this, the passage has nothing of the taut economy of H.D.'s poems, and its rhythm

is far limper than her lines:

She is older than the rocks,
Among which she sits;
Like the vampire she has been dead many times,
And learned the secrets of the grave;
And has been a diver in deep seas
And keeps their fallen day about her ... (p.50)

Moreover, the phrase 'like the vampire ...' is unlike the characteristic Imagist procedure (one followed by H.D.) of replacing simile with the technique of super-position discussed in my first chapter - a technique which aids both economy and the clearer definition of images. So, Sea Garden remains remarkable for the way that it represents influences assimilated with seemingly complete thoroughness.

However, part of the reason for the feeling aroused by the poems in H.D.'s first volume of their not being a starting-point is provided by Ezra Pound, who commented that the subjects of her poems were ones she had 'lived with ... since childhood', that she 'knew them before she had any book-knowledge of them'.²⁶ Her subject-matter, in other words, issued out of a fantasy world she had created as a child. The freshness of the poems may also have something to do with this: the vision presented is occasionally child-like in its sense of wonder and bafflement, and its sense of a hypersensitivity associated with helplessness. It is because this subject-matter has been lived with that it acquires such coherence in the poems; it acquires, that is, the feeling of a world that has been lived in. The strengths

of this were in evidence in the poems written before 1916:
after that year, as my next chapter will show, the weaknesses
began increasingly to take over.

CHAPTER THREE

COLLECTED POEMS

'The God' - the collection that follows 'Sea Garden' in H.D.'s premature Collected Poems of 1923 - was never separately published. It includes poems ('Harmonax', 'Sitalkas', 'Orion Dead', 'Oread', 'The Pool' and 'Moonrise')¹ first published in magazines in the same period as the Sea Garden poems. These pieces are really the product of H.D.'s first Imagist inspiration, and compare well with the poems in her first volume. They do not really belong with 'The God', 'Adonis', 'Pygmalion', 'Barydice' and 'The Tribute',² which already show signs of decline. This decline continues throughout Collected Poems. With few exceptions - notably 'At Baia' (p. 100-101) - H.D.'s use of images

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becomes deadeningly technical. Her successes are more to do with displays of technical expertise than the use of that expertise to order and express an urgent subject-matter. Moreover, where the subject-matter does have an emotional urgency about it, the source of that urgency is often narrowly aesthetic in kind. What she consistently failed to do at this stage of her career was to translate personal feeling into a communicable language.

'At Baia' is the exception that proves the rule because it is one of the few poems written after 1916 in which such feeling is present in a recognisable form. The reason for its success, therefore, focuses attention upon the reason for her failure elsewhere. In its second verse it applies the Imagist method to describing (and conveying the emotion in) a personal scene:

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Why was it that your hands
(that never took mine)
your hands that I could see
drift over the orchid heads
so carefully,
your hands, so fragile, sure to lift
so gently the fragile flower stuff ...

What she manages to do in this poem is to use her preoccupations to different effect in the different context. So the word 'perilous' introduces a familiar H.D. idea, it implies the fear of being overpowered by the senses, and her attitude to this is ambivalent because although it is regarded as a danger, that danger is regarded as necessary. The peril is desired:

I should have thought
in a dream you would have brought
some lovely, perilous thing ...

The idea is transformed by its context through the sexuality indicated in the way that the flowers are seen as a substitute for kissing. And the detail tremulously expressed in the second stanza suggests a sexual element because an actual sexual move (the taking of hands in hands) is mentioned as having not occurred, and so even more attention is concentrated upon the activity of the hands, whose nervousness is implied in the insistent attempt to describe them - 'carefully', 'fragile', 'gently'.

What distinguishes this from the poems which surround it, is that it has an emotional pressure behind it which the Imagist technique is capable of controlling. In fact, it is

at moments like the passage first quoted from this poem that H.D. anticipates the technique of a later poet like Ian Hamilton in using the Imagist method to objectify an intimate scene - for instance, in his 'Father, dying'.³ The technique is perfectly suited to holding powerful feeling in check; but that feeling is increasingly lacking in H.D.'s poems in this period. This chapter, therefore, explores the nature and sources of H.D.'s failures between 1916 and 1925 and indicates their causes in her sensibility and her particular version of Imagism. It then goes on to discuss her limited successes - which represent a triumph of technical facility over thinness of content - in 'Demeter', 'Helen', 'The Look-Out', parts of 'Hymen', and her translations.

Identifying the sources of H.D.'s failure at this time is difficult and it is made more so because they are so thoroughly linked with the sources of her previous success. For her failure seem to have been caused by the particular effect on her of the Imagist technique in combination with her obsessive personality - the kind of preoccupations mentioned when discussing 'At Baia'. Where, previously, she had been able to employ her inner world as a source of creative strength, it became a deadening influence. After 1916 she became far more comfortably settled in the inner world that she had created for herself, and there is a corresponding loss of tension and intensity, a feeling that she is far too much at home with the idiosyncracies and eccentricities of this

imaginative territory. Her preoccupations become more and more aesthetic and she seems to have less and less to express. Her husband's autobiography provides a clue here - he sees her even poetry as 'the expression of a passionate contemplation of the beautiful'. He had 'never known anybody' he says

with so vivid an aesthetic apprehension. Lawrence (D.H.) was more keenly aware of the living world, but he was almost blind to the world of art. To look at beautiful things with H.D. is a remarkable experience. She has a genius for appreciation, a severe but wholly positive taste. She lives on the heights, and never wastes time on what is inferior or in finding fault with master-pieces.⁴

The idea that she lived on the heights succeeds in damning her with intended praise. The isolated nature of her sensibility becomes more and more damagingly relevant; and it is clear from her essay on Marianne Moore in The Egoist⁵ that she regarded the poet as a natural elitist (as one who is constantly demonstrating that his sword is sharper than ours). This meant that she came to have less and less to share with her readers, and although her meaning is usually very clear, the reason for her intensity about that meaning often is not. So in the poem 'The God' (pp.65-101) the reader has great problems coming to terms with what the poet is feeling and the number of readers who can feel it to the extent that she clearly does must be very small.

There is an initial problem because the poem is likely to appear at first simply a list of beautiful objects which she loves: 'portals of ebony/carved with grapes', 'cyclamen, fire-tipped, ivory-pointed,/white'. These objects are, through the Imagist method, made the basis of the poem, but the poem is really about a series of emotions which these objects tend to obscure rather than convey. So the clue to the opening

paragraph is not the 'heavy locks/circled with stiff ivy fruit' but the fact that she is 'asking' and the fact that the god's face is 'mysterious and far distant/from (her) sense'. But even when this is perceived by the reader he encounters a further difficulty: the emotions which the poet is experiencing here are unusual to the point of eccentricity. What she is feeling in this first verse paragraph is that the god's beauty is too set and fixed (the ivy fruit is 'stiff', the locks are 'heavy', and 'locks' itself suggests that the speaker is being excluded from seeing him) and too formidable (the 'great hammer-stroke' and the distance) to be accessible to the poet. From this the next two ideas follow easily:

I asked
can he from his portals of ebony
carved with grapes,
turn toward the earth?

which seems even more unlikely considering that 'the earth is evil/given over to evil'. So the first section leads to its despairing conclusion: 'we are lost'.

But this idea is quickly countered at the start of the second section with the central idea in the poem:

in a moment
you have altered this ...

The third section returns to a similar emotion as that in the first - the poet had felt unworthy:

I thought I would be the last
you would want,

I thought I would but scatter salt
on the ripe grapes.

and this section ends with an effective description of a need to hide in the face of such beauty when the self is felt to be unworthy:

as they clear I had drawn away into the salt inner world was
becoming more myself, a shell, time a circle closed on the
emptied of life.

'Self', by its placing in a position of stress, receives
special focus and is so juxtaposed for contrast against the
beautiful objects of which it is thought to be unworthy. It
is thus felt to be, not an abstraction, but something
particular and actual. However, this section is interposed
here only to highlight what is the central theme in the poem -
the god's beneficence. What 'The God' is expressing through
the cyclamen, which imagistically overcome the rocks, is the
greatness, the plenitude, of his mercy:

the god threw beneath my feet the flat rocks
while the fern have no strength
against the deep-purple flower-embers,
wrath of the cyclamen, wine-spilled.

it is dealt with far less iconically than in Sea Garden:
And the last paragraph expresses an ecstasy of gratitude:

each from his marble base
now I am powerless
to draw back
for the sea is cyclamen-purple ...

Here the loss is to a certain extent also a transformation, so
the line: 'they have ... light' is ambivalent: they
have both vanished into ... and become it, they have
do not deserve it. But this is merely one strand in the ideas
behind the poem and the response required in the reader is
much harder to discern. The problem is that words like
'interesting' are the ones which most readily spring to mind
when discussing many of the feelings which are expressed in
these poems: they do not arouse anything like the same
response in the reader - or at least the same level of response -

as they clearly aroused in the poet. H.D.'s inner world was becoming more and more at this time 'a circle closed on the outside', a 'sphere' 'opaque to the others which surround it'.⁶

In 'Pygmalion' (pp.70-73) H.D. is dealing with even more restricted and private feelings than in 'The God', describing, in fact, the perils of being a creative artist. As in the previous poem she is concerned with the connection between the human and the divine: here, however, the human has tried to come too near the divine and has suffered as a result. In this way the sculptor is in direct contrast with the speaker in 'The God': the latter gained the attention of the god through her humility, her belief in her unworthiness, while the former is guilty of a 'hubris' which incurs the wrath of the gods. The theme of loss is repeated here, though it is dealt with far less economically than in Sea Garden:

each from his marble base
has stepped into the light
and my work is for naught.

Here the loss is to a certain extent also a transformation, so the line: 'They have melted into the light' is ambivalent: they have both vanished into the light and become it, they have been replaced by fire. Fire has a double nature as destroyer and purifier, and this particular fire has divine connotations:

is this fire a god
that seeks me in the dark?

So as fire has been an important element in his sculpting in

the past, it seems - through the questioning which goes on throughout the poem - to be about to bring about a creative transformation of a different kind. So the poem begins and ends, not with his desolation at the loss of his past creations, but with his wondering what his future creation is to be. In the first stanza he says:

Shall I let myself be caught
in my own light?
shall I let myself be broken
in my own heat?
or shall I cleft the rock as of old
and break my own fire
with its surface?

and in the last:

Now am I the power
that has made this fire
as of old I made the gods
start from the rocks?
am I the god?
or does this fire carve me
for its use?

H.D.'s ideas about creativity are expressed through the image of the fire, and they emerge as questions because she is deliberately not providing answers. She indicates, however, that the creative act is one which involves more than the single personality of the sculptor or poet - it involves his collaboration with outside forces. She is talking, in other words, about the fire of inspiration and indicating its divine nature.

All this is interesting in its way but it also tends

to indicate how narrowly aesthetic H.D.'s outlook was becoming at this time. The cerebral content of her poems seems to become higher and higher and it is not used in combination with the kind of emotional intensity which was present before. Even the quality of her images seems to have declined. This is not to say that she was not capable of producing beautiful and precise images, even in the unusually uninspired period which she went through after her first volume. So in 'Eurydice' (pp.74-79) the goddess complains:

why did you bend your face
caught with the flame of the upper earth,
above my face?

This image captures completely how she had been on the verge of escape from the underground, 'upper' and 'above' placed with great precision next to each other, measuring each other, and the distance between them indicating that between Eurydice and freedom. But in a way even the definitiveness of this image is a symptom of decline: compared with the complexity of her earlier images, it seems merely functional in its effect. Her former image-making power seems to have radically declined so that in 'The Tribute' (pp.89-101) she takes twelve and a half pages to say less than she said before in well less than one.

This process of enervation continued after 'The God' in 'Hymen', and 'Heliodora and Other Poems'. It is as though the cathartic effect of Sea Garden was so complete that she had very little creative unease left after she had written the poems it contains, and the result is that her

poetry became more and more eccentric and superficial. She was left with very little to say because she had drawn so solipsistically on her inner resources that she had nothing left to draw upon. The result is preciousness:

I worship the feet flawless,
that haunt the hills -

(ah, sweet, dare I think,

beneath fetter of golden clasp,

of the rhythm, the fall and rise

of yours, carven, slight

beneath straps of gold that keep

their slender beauty caught,

like wings and bodies

of trapped birds.)

A vivid image is squandered here on an unworthy subject-matter which does not substantiate the delicately controlled surface.

This was a mistaken direction that William Carlos Williams would never have taken. The virtues that are lacking from the sensibility that produced these lines are the essentially social ones of a sense of humour and a sense of proportion - virtues which are pre-eminently a part of Williams' talent. Confined to her inner world, H.D. was condemned to run out of things to say: Williams, on the other hand, could draw upon the constant stimulus of the give and take between the inner and the outer worlds.

This meant that although Williams employed an Imagist technique, it did not have the damaging effect upon him which it did upon H.D. after 1916. His poems, like those of Marianne Moore, are the product of an accessibility to

experience'.⁷ This, in combination with Imagist technique, produced successful poems: H.D.'s solitariness, her obsessively aesthetic outlook, in combination with Imagist technique, increasingly produced unsuccessful poems. The poems of both Williams and Moore have upon them what Williams called 'the authentic spirit of change';⁸ given this, the Imagist technique, essentially static as it is, could work by imposing an aesthetic discipline, a necessary restraint. It is partly in this way that Williams mythologises Paterson⁹ - but the mythology comes after the detailed observation, it is the product of unmythological, daily experience. With H.D. the mythology came first - it predetermined the experience in her poems. And Imagism, together with mythology and her aesthetic outlook, actually started to stand between H.D. and accessibility to experience. Imagism actually seems to have moulded H.D.'s treatment of her subject-matter. For it is important to recognise that the adopting of a poetic technique has more than purely technical implications: a technique is not simply a means of communicating a state of mind, it becomes an aspect of that state of mind in itself. W.H. Auden has pointed out that:

Consciously or unconsciously, every poet draws a frontier between the poetical and the nonpoetical; certain objects, persons, events seem to him capable of embodiment in a poem, even if he has not yet discovered how, while there are others which it would never occur to him to consider himself, whatever other poets may

of leaf') have done with them. Further, among the various moods of feeling of which he is capable, he has preferences as a poet which may have little to do with his preferences as a man; a feeling which he enjoys may make little appeal to his imagination, a state of unpleasure may excite it.¹⁰

So, the poet's selection of subject-matter is determined by a poetic personality which may be different from his actual one. Moreover, an important aspect of this poetic personality is the poet's view of what subject-matter his technique is capable of translating into verse. It is an indication of how predominantly aesthetic H.D.'s poetic personality was that she actually equated subject-matter with technique, that the two became inseparable in her mind. That is to say, the boundaries of Imagism actually become the boundaries of her inner world.

Although, therefore, Imagism was meant to be liberating in its influence, it could, for an aesthete like H.D., impose a new set of restrictions upon the kind of subject-matter which could be regarded as 'poetical'. This new set of poetic values permeated H.D.'s consciousness, so that the sea rose, (S.G., p.1) for instance, is praised as a fellow spirit (and therefore a source of inspiration) in the sense that it possesses the Imagist virtues. It possesses, that is, those tactile virtues which Hulme prescribed - it is hard and dry. It is literally hard in the sense that its surface is solid ('meagre flower, thin/sparse

of leaf[†]) and also in a metaphorical sense, since it is a survivor:

Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sand,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind.

And it is dry both by contrast to the sea environment with which it is juxtaposed in the poem, and to a different kind of rose:

more precious
than a wet rose
single on a stem ...

(though it shares the solitariness of this rose and shares, in this way, in that aspect of its preciousness). The sea rose is praised, therefore, because it is a supremely well-defined object, juxtaposed with contrasting tactile surfaces and colours (the sea and the sand). And it is praised because it has hard edges and shares these with the objects around it - the sand is 'crisp', and the wind is 'driving'.

Even the early Sea Garden poems, then, carry the seeds of H.D.'s later failure and indicate the way in which Imagism, in H.D.'s hands, was to become a restriction. For her use of the technique was unsuited to describing the way one person reacts to another, since this requires the ability to describe changing states of mind and her images were self-consciously static and fixed. (It is interesting that in Red Roses for Bronze she approached this problem directly:

seriously - even earnestly - trying to tackle the problem of intimate relationships. I deal with this in Chapter 4). I think it is true to a certain extent, therefore, that the Imagist method did prevent H.D. from expressing her use of relationships and states of mind as well as she might have done. There are indications in her later poetry that she could be better at this than the Imagist approach would allow her to be. So in 'Sagesse', written in 1957, she produced a vivid evocation of a night during the blitzing of London which is achieved through the use of the phraseology and rhythm of one kind of working-class speech:

O ducks all right - go open for your dad,
that was his knock ...
how often must I tell you, Alf,
that our ducks sees too much and hears too much,
and calls out in the night,
maybe, she isn't bright or maybe, she's too
bright,
praying-like or singing-like, I wouldn't know;
she screams or sings, Father, father,
then I shake her up and wake her up
and call to Bert and say
"duckie, what is it dear?
what is it now? dad's here." (H.D., pp.77-78)

In this poem the anxiety of the mother about her daughter, together with the tense atmosphere created by the background of nightly blitzing, are evoked through the use of colloquial speech. And although these lines could not have been written without Eliot's precedent in 'The Waste Land',¹¹ it contains

far more sympathy for the characters involved than Eliot's passage which, with its literary references, clearly contains an element of condescension.

So, too, in her war trilogy, H.D. extended her use of the image to endow it with greater powers of emotional reference and free it from exclusive and direct "treatment of the 'thing'".¹² There is a remarkable example of this in 'The Flowering of the Rod':

there was hardly any light from the window
but there seemed to be light somewhere,
as of moon-light on a lost river
or a sunken stream, seen in a dream
by a parched, dying man, lost in the desert ...
or a mirage ... it was her hair. (p.136)

There is an expansiveness in this image which suggests a mind ranging away from 'an instant of time' and this achieves 'that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth'¹³ that Pound described as a characteristic of Imagism far better than the pinpointing tendencies of the pure Imagist approach. The baffled tone of 'there seemed to be light somewhere' and then the bewildered attempt to describe it through a succession of evocative images which carry a number of associations - a 'lost' river, a 'sunken' stream, a 'parched' man, a 'mirage' - all suggest a bewildered attempt to approach a comprehensive description of a complex state of mind. And yet there is specificity here, also, created by the addition of a dramatic element - the effect that the

light (that is, her hair) produces, is suggested with remarkable precision by the exact evocation of a scene. What has happened here is that Imagism has been transcended; it has been opened up actually to contain a state of mind; the effect of the hair is suggested by the dramatic comparison of states of mind.

These examples show that H.D.'s difficulties in the expression of states of mind in this period were partly a matter of technique. But it seems to me that she became so dominated by the Imagist technique partly as a result of a failing in her sensibility. Firstly, it is clear that she had difficulty in expressing many states of mind simply because she did not understand them; there are in her work sudden, revealing signs of coldness or stiffness which betray this. In Bid Me to Live she says, for instance, that 'some law of emotional dynamics drew Julia and Vane together' (p.107). She seems absorbed in the inner world of her poetic imagination and as self-absorbed as the central characters of the three sections of her novel Palimpsest (all of them portraits of herself), and it is largely for this reason that the states of mind of others are essentially alien to her.

But this general failing in her sensibility seems to me to have been exaggerated in 'Hymen' and 'Heliodora and Other Poems' because in the period when she wrote these volumes she began to cultivate the static purity of the Imagist image actually as a characteristic of her inner world. Her style became mannered in the sense that her use of

this kind of image and of the characteristic Imagist language is clearly self-conscious. For that reason technique and sensibility are inseparable here; the exclusiveness of Imagism became the exclusiveness also of her inner world. So it became not only the medium through which that world is apprehended but one of its essential characteristics; as much a cultivated part of it as the Greekness of the landscape.

Imagism is too definitive to suggest the blurred edges, the nebulousness, that is an important part of many feelings; its exactness tends to exclude the suggestion of vagueness that is often paradoxically necessary for their exact evocation. And the obstinately static nature of Imagism poses difficulties in the expression of the wavering and shifting which are an essential part of many states of mind. Her image of two wrestlers in 'Fragment Thirty-Six' fails for this reason. Described by Thomas Swann as an 'expansion of the epigraph, "I know not what to do: my mind is quite divided" by Sappho',¹⁴ the poem, in its use of this image, introduces far too many associations of massive stillness and directed strength to succeed in expressing the Sapphic dilemma:

My mind is quite divided,
my minds hesitate,
so perfect matched,
I know not what to do:
each strives with each
as two white wrestlers

sensibility; and standing for a match
cultivated these ready to turn and clutch
sculpture with poetry yet never shake muscle nor nerve nor tendon;
she describes how so my mind waits
to grapple with my mind ... (pp.244-245)

The rigorously defining and static nature of Imagism can often be used to great advantage. It works when it is used to hold up an object for examination, as in 'Sea Rose' (S.G., p.1); when it is used to provide a static centre around which other elements can move and define themselves, as with the Helmsman's implied steadiness which is contrasted with the past indecision and present nervousness of the 'we' in the poem (S.G., pp.2-3); and when a state of mind is kept firmly peripheral and fixed as it is in 'Mid-Day' (S.G., p.7).

Imagism has become an accepted and integrated part of the style of many modern poets. Even in a poem which is as strongly linked to movement as 'The Whitsun Weddings',¹⁵ Philip Larkin uses its photographic qualities to suggest how the speed of the train curtails a continued vision of the scenes which are taking place beyond the train window - so that for instance the cricketer is only seen 'coming up to bowl'. And the use of the Imagist image to suggest a sudden realisation has become very commonplace - as, for instance, in the last line of Larkin's 'Deceptions':¹⁶ 'To burst into fulfilment's desolate attic'. But it imposes severe limitations if (as is not the case with Larkin) it is the only means which a poet has for expressing his

sensibility: and I think in this period H.D. deliberately cultivated these limitations. Her use of the analogy of sculpture with poetry is significant here. In Bid Me to Live she describes herself working on a chorus sequence, trying 'to hew and chisel those lines, to maintain or suggest some cold artistry'.¹⁷ The aim revealed by this analogy is clear; it is not to bring an experience to life, but to harden it into a held instant, a defined stasis. It is the 'cold artistry' which is most important. But this attitude - which involves a removing of all life and movement from experience in order that it may become an aesthetically observed object and a piece of self-conscious artifice - causes such a narrowing and limiting in what is expressed that its cultivation as part of her inner world seems a form of narcissism.

Yvor Winters has said of H.D.'s early work that:

In describing a Greek landscape, she frequently writes as if it had some intrinsic value automatically evoked by a perception of its qualities as landscape but more important than these qualities in themselves.... Frequently, the ecstasy (the quality of feeling assumed is nearly identical in most of her poems) is evoked merely by rocks, sea and islands. But it would not be evoked by any rock, sea or islands: they must be Greek. But why must they be Greek? ... since the relationship between the feeling and the Greek landscape has no comprehensible source and is very strong, one must call it sentimental.¹⁸

Winters is wrong to apply this criticism to the poems in Sea Garden. In the earliest poems the Greekness of

the landscape is either peripheral or not present at all. Certainly, they do not stand or fall on the feelings they express about Greece, which acquires a representative function, providing images of a world of fantasy. Those poems are therefore far from being obscurely private. They succeed in articulating both the consolations and frustrations which fantasies involve - and are therefore not preoccupied, as Winters says, with a monotonous ecstasy. They express nostalgia for a world only mentally experienced; what H.D. has in common with her readers in her earliest verse, paradoxical though it may seem, is her own private fantasy world.

But after 1916 Winters' criticism acquires increasing validity. Her inspiration seems to have begun to flag and the narcissistic element in her cultivation of her inner world becomes increasingly apparent. It is undoubtedly true that Greece had a psychological importance for H.D. with an obscure background. This emerges in her book Tribute to Freud (pp.49-50) where Greece ('Hellas') is connected by verbal association with her mother, whose name was Helen (verbal connections had a significance for her beyond the Freudian one - they were of a quasi-mystical importance to her and for that reason she played about with them both in her war trilogy and in 'Hermetic Definition'). This connection with her mother tells us little, but it does suggest the very private nature of the importance which she attached to Greece. This would not matter except that after her first two volumes, Greece became more and more the

central subject-matter of her poems. There is a paucity of ideas in 'Hymen' and 'Heliadora and Other Poems' which allows Greek myth to become, not a means for expressing feeling, but an end in itself. Poems like 'Phaedra' (pp.199-200), 'Holy Satyr' (pp.217-218), 'Lais' (pp.219-221), 'Heliadora' (pp.222-226) and 'Centaur Song' (pp.232-233) are, for this reason, weighed down with preciousness as invigorating thought and feeling are increasingly absent. They are all surface, all poetical reference, for their own sake: their gestures are not substantiated by meaning. All of these poems are full to overflowing with references to colour and flowers: 'red', 'lizard-blue' (p.199); 'black', 'scarlet' (p.200); 'russet brown', 'amber', 'white' (p.217); 'gold', 'silver', 'white' (three times), 'purple', 'wine-deep tint' (p.219); 'black', 'white' (four times) (p.220); 'purple' (p.223); 'red', 'white' (p.224); 'purple', 'white' (p.225); 'white' (twice), 'purple' (p.226); 'poppy', 'flower', 'red leaf' (p.200); 'leaf circlets', 'honey-flowers', 'petals' (four times), 'flower cluster' (p.217); 'apple-leaf', 'flowerlet of flame flower' (p.219); 'flower' (p.220); 'flowers', 'narcissus' (p.222); 'rose' (p.223); 'lily' (twice), 'myrtle' (p.224); 'myrtle', 'lily', 'crocus', 'hyacinth', 'a wreath', 'violet' (p.225); 'violets', 'lilies', 'narcissus', 'lily' (p.226); 'flower', 'apple-flowers', 'flower-petals' (p.232); 'violets', 'petals', (p.233). And the Imagistic purpose which these colours and flowers fulfil is minimal - they are 'knew them before she had any book-knowledge of them', 19

present largely for their own sake, for the purpose of ornament. These objects are not observed with that closeness of attention which is characteristic of Sea Garden, H.D. is not involved with them as she was with the marine flowers in that volume. Here the flowers are merely referred to, and the intensity of tone seems to reflect more upon the poet than upon the images and their meaning. It is for this reason that her cultivation of an inner world begins to strike the reader as a kind of narcissism. Her poem 'Circe' (pp.171-173) is interesting in this context; the goddess laments the absence of Odysseus and complains that her magic means nothing to her, that she would give it up for his glance. But the powers attributed to Circe's magic are very similar to the imaginative powers of the poet - 'with a thought' she can 'call men/from the edges of the earth'. There are hints here of what becomes more explicit later in H.D.'s writing - her associating of poetry with magic, which also leads her into a belief in a set of initiates as appreciators of both (itself a self-regarding concept). But, more importantly, Circe's situation seems, through these connections, to represent that of the poet isolated with (and, by implication, by) his powers of imagination. This is what seems to have happened to H.D. in this period; Ezra Pound's comment that the subjects of her poems were ones she had 'lived with ... since childhood' and that she 'knew them before she had any book -knowledge of them',¹⁹

although it points to the naturalness of her grasp of that world, points also to how private a source of inspiration it was. And increasingly after Sea Garden, as she consciously or unconsciously realises in this poem, she is left stranded with her inner world like Circe with her magic. It is significant, moreover, that one of the best poems in 'Hymen' and the best two in 'Heliadora and Other Poems' deal, like 'Circe', with laments by their speakers for the extraordinariness of their fates. I am speaking of 'Demeter', 'Helen' and 'The Look-Out'.

Demeter, in the poem (pp.161-166) of that name, is 'greatest and least'; the goddess, like the poet, finds the easy difficult and the difficult easy. So the opening verse magnificently conveys, through its rhythm of rushing and stopping, both her irritation and her mental struggle:

And the look-out
Men, fires, feasts,
steps of temple, fore-stone, lintel,
step of white altar, fire and after-fire,
slaughter before,
fragment of burnt meat,
deep mystery, grapple of mind to reach
the tense thought,
power and wealth, purpose and prayer alike,
(men, fires, feasts, temple steps) - useless.

And the third verse perfectly expresses her jealousy - mixed as it is with a weariness of the sort of respect which she is shown ('flattery/of the mighty power'). The ponderousness of its opening two lines:

Ah they have wrought me heavy
and great of limb ...

expresses simultaneously the sort of 'gravitas' which they bestow upon her and her heavy sadness about it. From all this it is clear that what she misses is the familiarity of the respect, the love, which is accorded to a beautiful, but more accessible goddess:

she they have known,
she they have spoken with,
she they have smiled upon ...

Helen (p.227) is hated because of her beauty (or the hatred is anyway attributed to that):

the lustre as of olives
where she stands
and the white hands.

And the look-out (pp.291-295), like Circe, is used to represent the poet; acute consciousness is forced upon him and is painfully inescapable, and he would gladly change places with the others in the boat whose commonplace fate is, on the surface of things, a harder one:

if only I could see just the ring
cut by the boat,
if only I could see just the water,
the crest and the broken crest,
the bit of weed that rises on the crest,
the dolphin only when he leaps.

Here, H.D.'s view (expressed notably in the war trilogy) of the poet as possessor of the secrets of the unconscious seems

to be adumbrated. The look-out is condemned to a special vision, he is condemned to look into hidden depths and to see things which the others could not even guess at, to be continuously aware:

of the forms that pass and pass,
of that constant old, old face
that leaps from each wave
to wait underneath the boat
in the hope that at last she's lost.

What is also noticeable about 'Circe' is that although H.D. describes extremely well what Circe has - that is, what, in her isolation, she can produce through her magic - she does not convey with anything like the same vividness what it is that she lacks:

Panther and panther,
then a black leopard
follows close -
black panther and red
and a great hound,
a god-like beast,
cut the sand in a clear ring
and shut me from the earth,
and cover the sea-sound
with their throats,
and the sea-roar with their own barks
and bellowing and snarls,
and the sea-stars
and the swirl of the sand,
and the rock-tamarisk
and the wind-resonance -
but not your voice.

(p.172)

A ritual magic is elegantly invoked here, but that which is meant to measure up to, and be more important than this, Odysseus' voice, simply does not do so - being completely overwhelmed by the stately description which precedes it. The problem is that H.D. possessed an unusual imagination - extraordinary things were for her easily conjured up and set down in verse: but that which is within the compass of an ordinary sensibility she often found more elusive. As a result there is little evocation in 'Circe' of what the goddess is missing, of what to be loved by Odysseus would be like. This could be taken as not part of her intention in this particular poem, but, as I have said, there is a consistent failure in H.D.'s work to describe relationships, or even to evoke many of the ramifications of different states of mind.

That aspect of the blame for this which rests with the Imagist method has perhaps been best indicated (if unwittingly) by Ruggero Bianchi, when he says that Imagism

non deve essere effusione personale,
ma presentazione di una cosa, cioè di
una oggetto - come aveva detto Hulme -
concreto, reale e solido.²⁰

This means that where what H.D. is saying is easily translated into terms which are 'concreto, reale e solido' she is successful (as with the description of animals called up by Circe's magic) but where it is a case of translating feeling into poetic terms she often fails. This is where there is so radical a decline from Sea Garden to 'Heliodora

and Other Poems'. Sea Garden succeeded so well because it represented an unusual coinciding of a perfecting of technique with a discovery of subject-matter which aroused profound and complex emotion. After Sea Garden she was left increasingly with a competent technique and little for it to cope with.

It is therefore not surprising that at this stage in her career H.D. became a very successful translator: her translations from the Greek were preferred by T.S. Eliot to those of Gilbert Murray. She brought the Imagist virtues of clarity and simplicity to her translations and recreated the Greek authors in a way which makes their world something very different from that presented by Murray and the tradition of translation in which he worked. As Eliot said:

The choruses from Euripides by H.D.
are, allowing for errors and even
occasional omissions of difficult
passages, much nearer to both Greek
and English than Mr. Murray's.²¹

Although H.D. may not have been much nearer to the original than her predecessors, her translations were an important creative act since they presented the Greek in a revived and modified way, one which was more suitable to the times in which she wrote. For the atmosphere of mysteriousness conjured up by the incantatory rhythms of Murray she substituted a visual accuracy and concise expression which conjures up a subtler kind of mystery:

At high-tide
the sea - they say -
left a deep pool
below the rock-shelf:
in that clear place
where the women dip
their water-jars,
my friend steeped her veils
and spread the scarlet stuff
across the hot ridge
of sun-baked rocks ... (p.125)

H.D.'s characteristic exactness is clearly in evidence here, compounded of the visual element of the water juxtaposed against the rock, the sense of solidity in the hard monosyllables and the feeling of delicate but precise carving in the short lines (two to three stressed syllables) and the use of alliteration and suppressed rhyme (sea/say; clear/water; scarlet/hot).

But even when dealing with her own material, H.D.'s technical control was, at this stage in her career, sometimes enough to rescue very slight content. 'Hymen' is an example:

For her, for him,
For all within these palace walls,
Beyond the feast,
Beyond the cry of Hymen and the torch,
Beyond the night and music
Echoing through the porch till day. (p.148)

There are, in this passage, beautiful modulations of rhythm. A climax is subtly delayed and arrived at with precisely controlled hesitations and sudden advances, contained with dignified formality. The long second, fourth and fifth lines

inject an expansiveness and inclusiveness into what is being said, while the short first and third are by contrast very specific. And the whole issues mellifluously into the evocative last line, with 'Echoing' placed in a position of stress and so achieving an appropriate trembling effect through its short middle syllable. All this, together with the repeated 'for' and 'beyond', produces an effect of incantatory rhetoric which brings the first section of verse to a climactic close.

As if the sea had spilled its blue

As if the sea had risen

From its bed,

And sinking to the level of the shore,

Left hyacinths on the floor. (p.151)

This is a good example of successful use of the Imagist method - especially the use of the focusing last line where the idea culminates. 'Risen' is placed for precise effect since it makes the picture freeze at that point (to be unfrozen at 'sinking' at the start of the line after next) and also allowing emphasis to be placed on the pun on rising from bed.

Mellifluous rhythms - rather than the staccato rhythms more typical of Imagism - are a feature also of Love's Song (pp.157-158). This passage treats sex with a characteristic indirectness and awe. The comparison of the loss of virginity with the bee seeking honey allows reticence (since it is not made explicitly) to co-exist with a remarkable daring, since it allows, once the connection is made, a reference as uncompromising as

One moment, then the plunderer slips
Between the purple flower-lips
to be made with exquisite delicacy. At the same time the
comparison is saved from preciousness by its insistence on
physical fact:

The bee clings close and warmly sips,
And seeks with honey-thighs to sway
And drink the very flower away.

And:

The sun lies hot across his back,
The gold is flecked across his wings.
Quivering he sways and quivering clings ...

'Helen' (p.227) is also a considerable technical achievement. Significantly, however, the poem implicitly praises a particular kind of beauty - one which is set apart and elevated, as the repeated 'white' (a colour repeated also in other poems, notably 'White World') suggests. And the most remarkable feature of the poem is its sustained dignity and formality. This is achieved by the way that stress is balanced in each line, balanced so well that each line is perfectly poised. So in the first line 'all', 'Greece' and 'hates' receive equal stress; in the second, 'still eyes' and 'white face'; in the third, 'lustre' and 'olives'. And in the second stanza, the second line hinges around 'when', the fifth around 'past'.

But the formality and dignity here, and the coldness and absoluteness of the vision of beauty in the poem, are clues to H.D.'s inflexibility. At this stage of

her career the boundaries of her inner world had become so confining, that her images became (what T.E. Hulme said poetry should never become) a 'counter language'.²²

'Prose is in fact', Hulme said,

the museum where the dead images of
verse are preserved. Images in
verse are not mere decoration, but
the very essence of an intuitive
language. (p.135)

H.D.'s verse became another museum for dead images and images used for mere decoration. Herbert Read admitted:

(the Imagists) were the only
modern school of poets which
showed 'any clarity of creative
intention', but I criticized
them because 'in their manifestos
they had renounced the decorative
word, but their sea-violets and
wild hyacinths tend to become as
decorative as the beryls and jades
of Oscar Wilde.'²³

The examples which he cites so dismissively here (sea-violets and wild hyacinths) come from H.D., and what he says is certainly the story of 'Hymen' and 'Heliodora and Other Poems'. Moreover, the comparison with Oscar Wilde - as I shall show at the end of this chapter - is significant: what Read is hinting at is that the precious cliché into which some Imagist verse could slip was similar to the precious cliché against which Pound had intended it to be an antidote.

Poems like 'Simaetha' (pp.167-168) and 'Thetis' (pp.169-170) use images purely for their sensuous effect.

This can be pleasing enough:

you will step carefully
from amber stones to onyx
flecked with violet,
mingled with light,
half showing the sea-grass
and sea-sand underneath...

but it more and more tends towards a static, purely
picturesque and sometimes almost emblematic effect so that
even when she is describing something natural, its
naturalness recedes into artificiality:

there is rare amber
through the sea,
and flecks of it
glitter on the dolphin's back
and jewelled halter
and harness and bit
as he sways under it.

The introduction of 'amber' and 'jewelled' is significant.
The intention is similar to that in 'Sea Poppies', where
she uses the word 'gold' - it is a device by which the
natural richness can be measured. But here the effect is
altogether more studied, there is a feeling of trying too
hard about the whole thing which increases the effect of
artificiality.

Between 1916 and 1925, therefore, H.D.'s poetic achievement was considerably attenuated: her successes were of an almost purely technical kind as the content of her poems became thinner. The problem is not that her subjects are conventional: Ezra Pound often took Greek gods, and their like, together with the imagery of sea and shore, and endowed them with a renewed interest. The problem is that H.D. rarely, in this period, saw her conventional subject-matter from an interestingly new perspective. The problem is not to do with eccentricity: Marianne Moore, her contemporary, was also eccentric, but turned this to useful poetic effect. The problem is to do with the obsessive nature of her eccentricity, which led her into narrowness and isolation.

In fact, this led her backwards, after her initial poetic achievements, to the influences which she acknowledged in her letter to Swann.²⁴ Paradoxical though it may seem, it is not H.D.'s earliest poems which are the most derivative but those written after she had apparently formulated her own poetic personality. Once the emotional pressures which transformed her earliest material were lost, the poets who influenced H.D. in her nostalgia for Greece entered her poems in a more focused way. The sentimentality in her attitude to Greece identified by Yvor Winters is one she shares with a number of her predecessors.

The most obvious sources of this are Edgar Allan Poe's 'To Helen'²⁵ (the influence of which she acknowledges in her Tribute to Freud [p.50]) together with two of the poets she mentions in her letter to Swann - Oscar Wilde (his 'derivative' Greek poems) and Swinburne. As the personal urgency behind the poems lessens and the Greekness of the subject-matter grows correspondingly in prominence, Poe's poem seems to express the feeling implicit behind all the poems; the Greek images seem to be invoked for the same reason that Poe invokes Helen, because:

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

A similar nostalgia is echoed by Wilde, notably in his poem 'Pan'.²⁶

O goat-foot God of Arcady!
This modern world is grey and old,
And what remains to us of thee?

So that he calls upon Pan to return:

Ah, leave the hills of Arcady,
Thy satyrs and their wantons play,
This modern world hath need of thee.

The feeling behind this is remarkably similar - even if the language and rhythm are different - to many of H.D.'s poems written between 1916 and 1925. 'The Tribute' is a good example:

O spirit still left to our city,
we call to your wooded haunt,
we cry:

O daemon of grasses,
O spirit of simples and roots,
O gods of the plants of the earth -
O god of the simples and grasses,
we cry to you now from our hearts,
O heal us - bring balm for our sickness,
return and soothe us with bark
and hemlock and feverwort. (p.95)

After such passages, also, the comparison of H.D. to Swinburne - who would otherwise appear antithetical to what Imagism stands for - will not appear so surprising. The exclamatory intensity of tone of his poems on Greek subjects turns out to be very close to that of H.D.'s poems on similar subjects. While H.D. characteristically avoided the anachronistic language of which Swinburne was fond, in this temporary decline she shared with him a love of the highly-wrought and poetical; they both dealt in abstractions, and they both enjoyed word music for its own sake. They both wrote poems called 'At Eleusis'. First, the Swinburne:

I am thus gracious to the least who stands
Filletted with white wool and girt upon
As he whose prayer endures upon the lip
And falls not waste: wherefore let sacrifice
Burn and run red in all the wider ways ...²⁷

And now the H.D.:

The next stands by the altar step,
a child's face yet not innocent,
it will prove adequate, but you
I could have spelt your peril at the gate,

yet for your mind's sake,
though you could not enter,
wait. (p.265)

Both these passages are highly wrought, if in different ways (the Swinburne is expansive where the H.D. has the characteristic Imagist syntax, which holds its clauses in check, bound tightly in commas, rather than allowing them to spill and run). Both passages, too, are emphatic, exaggerated even, in tone - even if H.D. tries to avoid this by employing the seemingly unpoetic 'prove adequate'. And both passages are characterised by their high-minded fervour. The feeling behind H.D.'s poems with Greek subjects is, despite their technical differences, similar to that of her predecessors: she believes, like Wilde, that the modern world has need of Pan, and she believes, like Poe, that Helen can bring us home to 'the glory that was Greece'.

For H.D. Greece is an important part of that inner world which she sees as a bastion against change, and against the squalor and commercialism of the modern world. But she was clearly wrong to regard Marianne Moore as such a fellow spirit in this view of a separate aesthetic world, as a poet who carves a 'screen' that is 'meant to stand only in that serene palace of her own world of inspiration'.⁵ Marianne Moore also praises armoured inwardness, declares that 'eight pairs of ostriches/in harness, dramatize a meaning always missed/by the externalist'²⁸ and praises the pangolin (pp.118-121) because it is 'armoured' and has 'contracting nose and eye apertures/

impenetrably closable[†]. But she believes also, as H.D. appears not to, in an openness that will balance this. Her poetry does not express - as H.D. implies that it does - an antagonism to the 'toppling sky-scrapers'.⁵ 'New York' (p.60), for instance, represents an affirmation of that city, and largely because it encourages '"accessibility to experience"[†]. It is H.D.'s inaccessibility to experience which had been her downfall at this time. Marianne Moore takes her own aesthetic concerns and applies them to the quotidian, non-aesthetic world. She uses her knowledge of literature to interpret experience - as the phrase 'accessibility to experience', being a quotation from Henry James, indicates. As such her use of it recommends a simultaneous accessibility to both experience and literature. Marianne Moore's detachment from both is creative in the way that it allows her to cull examples from both to aid the central purpose of her poetry - renewal and reinterpretation. H.D.'s progress after her Collected Poems was to be made in the direction of greater accessibility to experience: she was never to liberate herself entirely from her inner world, but she did manage to renew and reinterpret it through a greater openness.

The period after the publication of her Collected Poems and before that of 'The Walls Do Not Fall' was one of transition for H.D. In that time (1926-1942) she published only one volume of poetry. In the thirteen years between 1913 and 1926, she published sixty-seven poems in magazines; in the twenty-two years between 1926 and 1942 she published only twenty-three.¹ The volume was Red Roses for Bronze, a fascinating but seriously flawed collection. The obviously experimental nature of many of the poems that date from after Collected Poems, together with her output of prose at this time (notably of the novels Palimpsest and Hedylus) are

CHAPTER FOUR

RED ROSES FOR BRONZE is sufficient indication in general for her a period of searching for new directions. She was at this time persistently looking for new modes of expression to accommodate the demands of her pressing personal experiences, urgently trying to come to terms with and express this aspect of her life; Palimpsest and Hedylus are novels about her own experience in very thinly disguised form. And the poems in Red Roses for Bronze generally show her in the process of trying to go beyond her own especially restricting form of Imagism to acquire a more flexible technique. Repeatedly she appears to have something of a very personal and urgent nature to say. Some of this emerges but most of it seems to remain submerged.

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nature of the poems in Red Roses for Bronze is partly a product of H.D.'s own psychological condition at this time. The effect of most of the poems in the volume is to present a vague background out of which certain details emerge with strange vividness and clarity. Specifically dream-like elements are present in the volume (especially in the outstanding 'Halcyon', pp.92-102) but what is most consistently present is a dream-like atmosphere. The most explicit indication of this is in 'Chorus Sequence' from 'Morpheus' where the subject is the desirability of a drugged sleep: in particular the phrases 'the fringe of consciousness' (p.80) and, even more, 'the borderland of consciousness' (p.81) suggest the way in which dream and waking invade each other. And this feeling of invasion² is a key to the volume as a whole; for the feeling of incongruity and disorientation which is consistently felt in Red Roses for Bronze often seems out of the control of the poet as though her unconscious mind were consistently threatening to enter the poems and take them over altogether. This hints at what I have mentioned before - at the inseparability of subject-matter and technique. The technical instability in the poems seems to reflect a personality in transition, and the subject-matter of the poems is a reflection simultaneously of courage and cowardice, of an attempt to deal with difficult personal feelings and a failure to bring them properly to the surface. Red Roses for Bronze is a prolonged hesitation.

However, the volume is interesting because it shows

H.D.'s later technique growing out of her earlier one. It shows this in the process of happening. That this process was a gradual one further indicates the importance of considering the earlier poetry when writing about the later: the gradualness points to the self-consciousness with which H.D. went beyond the earlier style and at the same time used elements of it to formulate the later one.

However, I wish first of all to deal briefly with some of the poems in the volume which have most in common with the earlier type. These are the translations (three of these, occupying 42 pages out of 139); 'If You Will Let Me Sing', 'Trance', 'Myrtle Bough', 'Songs from Cyprus', 'White Rose', 'Calliope', 'All Mountains', and 'Triplex'. All of these poems - with the exception of 'Songs from Cyprus' - have a conspicuous point of difference from the earlier Imagist poems: they are all written in the very short lines which are characteristic of Red Roses for Bronze. This is, in fact, a significant difference, since it considerably influences the rhythm of the poems. It eliminates the element of self-containment which was present in the earlier Imagist lines, which had the effect of focusing upon the images and emphasising the stasis which the image usually imposed. For this the short lines substitute a greater feeling of movement.

For this reason even these least adventurous among the poems in this volume constitute a kind of advance, since they to some extent overcome one of the greatest restrictions of her Imagism - its tendency to render

experience static. H.D. was therefore able to cope much better with experiences which involve change. So 'Trance' (pp.52-53) is one of the most successful Imagist poems she wrote after her earliest successes in Sea Garden. Her new ability to move swiftly from one perception to another produces the effect of dazzling and bewildering:

The floor
of the temple
is bright
with the rain,
the porch and lintel,
each pillar,
plain
in its sheet of metal;
silver,
silver flows
from the laughing Griffins:
the snows of Pentelicus
show dross beside
the King of Enydicus
and his bride,
Lycidoe,
outlined in the torch's flare...

Each separate entity and perception is given a line to itself, even to the extent of dividing the floor from the temple and the brightness from the rain. The effect is to delineate everything as the amazed eye receives it: but overall the effect is the opposite - it is to blur and confuse, and thereby to prepare us for the trance which comes about at the end of the poem:

I stare
till my eyes are a statue's eyes,
set in,
my eye-balls are glass,
my limbs marble,
my face fixed
in its marble mask;
only the wind
now fresh from the sea,
flutters a fold,
then lets fall a fold
on my knee.

Here the short lines are used to express the way that the speaker is becoming petrified into his trance, heavy syllables being placed to bring about an abrupt stopping at the end of each line, the eye-balls becoming 'glass', the limbs 'marble', the face 'fixed'. H.D. takes a chance in the last couple of lines as she introduces a sudden movement for contrast, but the risk pays off as this movement only serves to emphasise the stillness, and the ending is perfectly achieved. The wind from the sea only 'flutters a fold' and then causes the last movement of all - 'lets fall a fold/on my knee' (it is almost literally a dying fall). In this way the process is completed with a sense of finality.

It seems more than likely that H.D. was aware of the technical advance she was making in these poems. The fact that 'Trance' is about becoming immobile (and about a kind of movement of perception which precedes it) seems to point to a high level of self-consciousness. But this

'Calliopo' (pp.118-120) is largely unrealised and tedious. 'All advance is worth little enough in itself and was not really of much use except in those poems where H.D. was also dealing with new subject-matter: so the shorter lines are put to much better use in 'Red Roses for Bronze', 'In the Rain' and 'Chance Meeting' (of which more later). The most remarkable thing about the poems I list on page 130 is the staleness of their content, and the formality of their style. 'Trance' is the best of these - and that is slight enough. 'If You Will Let Me Sing' (p.19) is technically pleasing but nothing else. 'Myrtle Bough' (pp.54-65) re-introduces the familiar praise of austere values ('intolerant eyes flare out,/steel glistens' etc.). This is little more than a mannerism. Moreover, although it sometimes has the appearance of being a statement of moral principle it is actually far from that, being usually connected with H.D.'s aesthetic attachment to the Greeks. And what is worse is that the moral implications of what she is saying in contexts like this are simply not thought out: they appear at times to imply an endorsement of martial values, though without any attempt to consider what that might mean in the twentieth century.

'Songs from Cyprus' (pp.103-108) indicate once again H.D.'s love of ritual (especially the kind which involves exotic flowers) but adds little in this respect to 'Hymen'. 'White Rose' (pp.116-117) is little different from the sea rose of Sea Garden except transplanted inland, it is 'a stricken weary thing,/shaming the spring' but has, for that reason, 'wisdom' and 'beauty'. The intensity of

'Calliope' (pp.118-120) is largely unrealised and tedious. 'All Mountains' (pp.121-123) is another naive poem about preferring austere nature to the town. And 'Triplex' (p.124) is another empty exercise in trying to transpose Greek idiom into English.

I wish to deal now with a second category of poems in Red Roses for Bronze: poems in a newly evolved style which constitute a false start in terms of H.D.'s development, but which are nonetheless the most fully realised and the most interesting in the volume. The elements which these poems introduce into H.D.'s technical armoury were not really capitalised upon by her until after Trilogy, in Helen in Egypt and 'Hermetic Definition'. These are 'Red Roses for Bronze', 'In the Rain', 'Chance Meeting', 'Halcyon', 'Let Zeus Record', and 'Chance'. 'Chance' (pp.126-127) is the most unflawed poem in this collection and says what it has to say with economy and precision, expressing perfectly the insecurity involved in a love relationship. It begins with two questions and ends with one: it represents the inquiry by a lover as to whether the loved one feels the same - with the suspicion that he/she does not: 'can you bear/this loneliness?/I can't;'. The feeling of being anxious and on edge is perfectly conveyed:

apart from you
I fear wind,
bird,
sea,
wave,
low places
and the high air;

I hear
dire threat
everywhere...

Worse than all these exterior threats, therefore, is the interior one: the fear of the ending of love: 'don't you want me/any more?' (p.133)

The psychological insight in this poem represented a discovery for H.D. of a more human touch. She seems to have discovered how to find a source of poetic inspiration away from her own mental world, in the world which most people inhabit: she has left Greek mythology and her favourite imagery and speaks straightforwardly. The undercurrent of emotion in the poem is strong and sure, cleared of all trace of eccentricity. This is true, too, of section IV. in 'Sigil' (which as a whole belongs to my third category):

When you turn to sleep
and love is over
I am your own;
when you want to weep
for some never-found lover,
I come;
when you would think,
"what was the use of it,"
you'll remember
something you can't grasp
and you'll wonder
what it was
altered your mood;
suddenly, summer grass
and clover

will be spread
and you'll whisper,
"I've forgotten something,

what was it,

what was it,

I wanted to remember?"

(p.133)

The outstanding feature of this passage is the way it eschews any withdrawal into 'poetical' devices or subject-matter and, more positively, the faith that this assumes in human values, representing as it does a vindication of the love expressed. The feeling is conveyed with an unerring delicacy and simplicity. The security which tenderness of this kind ensures is enacted by the consonance of its sound effects: sleep/weep; over/lover; wonder/clover; summer/remember.

'Chance', however, is the least ambitious of these poems and it shares with the early Imagist writing an encapsulating of a feeling in a short space. It differs in this respect from the other poems in the second category, which are longer poems whose contexts are left deliberately vague. The least effective example of this is 'Let Zeus Record' (pp.109-115). This starts off in a very human way, suggesting the relationship of two people who know each other intimately, feel an abiding affection for each other and thereby understand implicitly what each is feeling:

I say, I am quite done,
quite done with this;
you smile your calm
reiterate chill smile
and light steps back...

Once this feeling has been established and the response of the other person described, the next feeling:

it seems no evil
ever could have been

seems not at all far-fetched, but simply understandable in the circumstances the way they are presented. The first difficulty comes, however, with the introduction of the Greek background of the poem:

so, on the Parthenon
like splendour keeps
peril at bay,
facing inviolate dawn.

The introduction of this element seems not only unnecessary but pretentious and also disruptive of the effect which the earlier lines had created. The trouble is that nothing we are told about the relationship (and we are told far too little) seems to justify placing it in this exalted context. And this is made worse because the tendency is to begin every section in a straightforwardly conversational tone, dealing with a more or less unpretentious statement, and then to work up to a grand climax with a reference to Greece or to Greek mythology (this is true of every section except IV and V, which are the best).

The use of this kind of reference seems, in a context such as this, like a nervous habit. It is as though she had desperately tried to objectify a feeling that would not be objectified. The Greek references therefore seem to be at best an empty mannerism, at worst an evasion. The nature of the relationship between the speaker in the poem, and the 'you' is left obscure, as is the sex of the 'you'. However, Section III seems more likely to have been written about a woman than a man:

Sometimes I chide the manner of your dress;
I want all men to see the grace of you;
I mock your pace, your body's insolence,
thinking that all should praise, while
obstinate
you still insist your beauty's gold is clay...

But the specific nature of the feeling in the poem remains unrealised: 'Let Zeus Record' is uncharacteristically vague. That the poem hints at lesbian feeling only increases the sense that it has something to hide, because it does no more than hint. Critics differ on the nature of H.D.'s sexuality,³ but there is a Sapphic intensity about her writing here which is not given a satisfactory correlative.

'Let Zeus Record', therefore, seems confused because it leaves too much half-said. 'Halcyon' (pp.92-102), by contrast, contains some similar elements but actually accommodates the confusion by presenting it as being part of the state of mind of the speaker. This poem is the most interesting in the volume and one of the most remarkable

that H.D. wrote. Its basic, cohering theme is the idea that the girl transforms the social scene (which is formal, civilised, elegant) by the contrast which she provides; she has:

small, small hands,
funny little gestures,
ways no one understands,
a figure under-small,
eyes that terrify people,
unfair estimates, prejudice,
hardly any charm... (p.93)

This contrast, however, is also expressed in terms of images which, instead of being observed parts of the social scene, are imagined, conjured out of the effect which the girl creates. The images take the form of a controlling metaphor: the girl is like a gull. This connects her with the 'halcyon' of the title - that being a bird believed, by the Greeks and Romans, to breed in a floating nest on the sea at the winter solstice, and to charm the wind and waves into calm for the purpose. She therefore has associations with both storm and calm since the bird ends one and brings the other - and the girl is capable of ending and bringing both - and also with the starting of a new life, which is what the girl brings about for the older woman. But her gull-like associations are not kept at this subdued symbolic level: the girl brings the sea with her into the social scene:

define, but H.D. has gone a long way towards defining it. She is not content with describing the girl, she describes

the sea comes where a carpet
laid red and purple
and where the edge showed marble
there is seaweed...

What these lines do is to substitute something very like surreal juxtaposition for imagistic superposition. For whereas the imagistic approach involves the superposing of elements normally found together in the specified scene, the elements juxtaposed here are generically different. Their incongruity arises out of their being the direct consequence of a subjective state; they are the product of a fantasy with hallucinatory vividness. The emotional state is imposed upon the scene rather than the scene being allowed to express the emotional state.

In this way a startling effect is produced; but the shock is not merely sensational, being justified because it indicates the disorienting effect of the young girl.

sedge breaks the wall
where the couch stands
the hands of strange people,
twisting tassel and fringe
of rich cloth, become clear ... (p.92)

The implication is that the effect that the girl has is completely unexpected - she appears unattractive but she also arouses an obscure longing in the mature woman. The feeling aroused is extremely complex and difficult to define, but H.D. has gone a long way towards defining it. She is not content with describing the girl, she describes

also the effect she creates; and she is not content to describe this by simplification, she insists upon the contradictory nature of this effect. As well as disconcerting, the girl reassures: the woman was 'fretful, insecure' (p.92) before she arrived. This represents the most important advance in the volume: a reader often feels when reading Imagist poems that the poet has ended up by saying considerably less than he set out to say. In 'Halcyon' H.D. seems determined to overcome this, to follow every ramification of her subject-matter and exhaust all its possibilities.

Whether this involved a development of subject-matter or of technique it is impossible to say: one of the major strengths of the poem is the way it moves so easily from one area of the subject into another and finds the technique to accommodate it. So she combines the direct, concrete images with the implied sophistication of the civilised speech, and switches from one to the other quickly while achieving both the simple impact of the one and the refined tone of the other. So in Section II:

unfair estimates, prejudice,
hardly any charm,
yet that isn't everything,
that isn't by any means all;
a wind has started a little whirlpool
of sand where the carpet ought to be ...

And in this case she actually combines this with something further - a hinting at the melodramatic, almost neurotic

thoughts which are going on underneath an unruffled surface:

and shells lie
by the preposterous feet
of that woman who frets me, annihilates me,
O she will kill me yet ...

Finally, she returns to the social surface for a carefully managed bathos at the end of the section:

O she will kill me yet
my late cousin, the wool merchant's wife.

Section III continues the idea of shattered expectations. 'That's life' she says at the start - but the arrival of the girl has changed it, shattered her 'peace' which she had equated with 'disappointment, insecurity, gloom'. What she had partly sought then, when she 'begged for a place in their room' was the security of settled social ceremony:

where disgrace attended
the shape of a head-band wrong,
of a misplaced comb ...

When the girl arrives these values are overturned and a different kind of insecurity follows, together with a bewildered joy.

An earthquake occurs in Section IV - though whether actual or metaphorical it is difficult to decide. Perhaps the point is that it does not matter which: under such special emotional circumstances objective and subjective are

even less separable than normal. In the last two verses H.D. beautifully combines two of the strong points of her verse - its elegance and its naturalness:

how can sand fly in hair
so carefully dyed
so rare a red?

how can shells lie by sandals
so beautifully sewn
with cornelian
and Tryphlia-stone?

Section V is partly straightforward narrative explanation, unremarkable in itself. What it does indicate, however, is H.D.'s ability to control the dramatic rhythm of a longer poem (notably lacking in 'Cities' in Sea Garden (pp.44-46) where length simply produced tedium). In this section she is dealing with events, possibly imagined, which took place before the scene in Section I: these events have been saved until now to provide a lessening of the intensity which has characterised the opening sections. Nonetheless, this part of the poem does provide continuity by taking up two important 'motifs' in the poem - the sea image and the view of social intercourse as trivial and boring. Both ideas are adapted for this context, though, by being treated in a considerably more blasé manner.

Section VI again stresses the double nature of the relationship - it causes arguments, but 'the days/without these quarrels' were

It is against something like a desert apart
without hope of oasis
or a grot lacking water
or a bird with a broken wing
or some sort of withered Adon garden
O, one of all or any of all those things. she

The sound here perfectly suggests the boredom and emptiness -
the heavy syllables with subtle repetition of like sounds:
'desert', 'apart', 'without', 'grot', 'water', 'sort';
'like', 'lacking', 'broken'; 'without', 'with', 'withered';
'bird', 'Adon', 'garden'; and the repetition of 'or'.

Section VII is successful albeit in a less
startling way than other parts of the poem: it is a vivid
piece of characterisation, a dramatic representation of the
personality which the ageing woman has become. She is
irritable:

I can't stay in hour after hour
and wait;
you were late ...

Section VIII is mainly unnecessary after this except
petulantly self-conscious:

don't tell me over and over
about that dress ...

obsessive: her) to begin life 'all over again'. The implied

I have no lover nor want to be
taunted with age ...

over fastidious:

I'm too staid
for grape-colour ...

self-indulgent:

I'm ill, I want to go away
where no one can come ...

It is against this background that the impact of the girl is measured - for in the context which H.D. provides these character traits are all revealed as the product of a sort of effete introspectiveness. Therefore the girl makes the woman suffer (and the suffering is real enough) because she will not allow her to resign herself. Explicitly - though also perhaps implicitly, just by her presence - she insists that the woman should not allow herself to be old:

O little elf, leave me alone,
don't make me suffer again,
don't ask me to be slim and tall,
radiant and lovely
(that's over)
and beautiful.

So, despite the apparent casualness of the technique, every word is made to count in the building up of a dramatic interplay which defines both roles in the specific terms of a particular situation. Section VIII is mainly unnecessary after this except that it does express a sense of combined envy and regret which the older woman feels towards the girl who is able (more than her) to begin life 'all over again'. The implied feeling of missed opportunity, which is inseparable from the joy at now salvaging something, make her weeping doubly meaningful. Moreover, the last lines of this section set the scene for the last two - Sections IX and X:

let me put my head there

where the feathers turn from grey to white,
from white to grey,
and cry.

They embrace and comfort each other (even though they 'quarrel again'), and their bond is strengthened because it strengthens them against the others. H.D. achieves an ending to the poem by returning to the sea imagery:

incomparable beyond relief,
white stones,
immaculate sand,

the slow move-forward of the tide
on a shallow reef,
salt and dried weed,
the wind's low hiss ...

(p.102)

These images no longer have any simple, easily translatable meaning. They are simply 'what's left' and they are in her 'skull'. They are important because they hold the two of them together, and they have the force of an amulet, a magical protection against evil. Their significance is powerful but indefinable.

'Halcyon' is of exceptional quality and I do not wish to suggest that the other poems in the second category are a comparable achievement. 'Red Roses for Bronze' (pp.1-8), 'In the Rain' (pp.9-18), and 'Chance Meeting' (pp.33-42) all seem to me to be deeply flawed poems. The opening section of the last mentioned poem indicates the nature of the risk that H.D. was taking in attempting to go beyond Imagism - it fails altogether. She has here produced verse which is completely lacking in the Imagist strengths. Vincent Quinn

has said that:

... H.D. had some talent for the interior monologue that is the essence of stream-of-consciousness writing, but her major strength was in image-making. When she shifted from a controlled use of metaphor to an introspective use of the vernacular, the results were commonplace ... her verse is weakest when she tries to express realistically the consciousness of the inner life. This fact suggests that her interest in stream-of-consciousness fiction was unfortunate for her poetry. It won her a minor place in the development of the modern novel, but it led her to deviate from her natural poetic sensibility.⁴

This statement is too much of a generalisation and seems to me to ignore the success of 'Halcyon', but Section I of 'Chance Meeting' does indicate that it contains some truth. The lack of hardness here is very damaging and the lack of specificity means that she is not restrained from producing high-flown 'poetical' lines:

a stylus
dipped in sun
and tears
and blood ...

and lines which are merely prolix:

dip stylus in the beauty of the translatable
things you know ...

She tends to slip into archaic language: 'missive', 'stay' the pain, 'stylus' (Section I); 'slay' (Section III); 'dross', 'unheeding' (Section IV). And her desire not to

simplify results sometimes in her doing the opposite - in mystifying what ought to be much more simple. All three of these poems are characterised by their lack of the virtue which Ezra Pound found in her earliest poems - 'straight talk'.⁵

An important difficulty results from the loss of the cohering properties of the image as it was used in the early Imagist poems. There the poem was based around it, balanced upon it. In poems like these it must be the feeling which brings the ideas together, image follows image and they often have little in common except a shared relationship with that feeling. Unfortunately that feeling is not always easy to locate or to understand and the coherence suffers as a result. What is more, the reader is allowed to drift mentally because his attention is not fixed on the personalities in the poem: he finds these difficult to pin down because their characters are not sufficiently realised.

To compare these poems with successful ones by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams is to realise where H.D. is failing. Admittedly, in Pound's early poems the intention is often satirical and the definition of personalities is sometimes so complete as to be crude (as in, for instance, his 'The Garden'⁶). But Section X of 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' is an example of poetry which uses modified Imagist technique to define a personality in a complex, interesting way:

Beneath the sagging roof
The stylist has taken shelter,
Unpaid, uncelebrated,
At last from the world's welter
Nature receives him;
With a placid and uneducated mistress
He exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress.
The haven from sophistications and contentions
Leaks through its thatch;
He offers succulent cooking,
The door has a creaking latch. (p.212)

Here Mauberley is defined dramatically - by use of the situation in which he is placed. Although H.D.'s personalities are situated exactly their situations are made nothing like as definitive. Mauberley is defined by contrast with the age in which he lives and the society in which he is forced to move. He has taken refuge from both, from the 'world's welter' and from 'sophistications and contentions'. He tries, in effect, to take refuge in the past. The 'Nature' in which he seeks solace consists of 'a placid and uneducated mistress', and 'succulent cooking' (physical comforts) and in his inadequate cottage (physical discomforts). The description of the latter concentrates on its boundaries (its 'roof', its 'thatch', its 'latch') and thereby emphasises the insecurity of his position.

It is no part of H.D.'s intention to achieve this level of definitiveness, but she tends to go so far the other way, towards nebulosity, that the reader is often left unclear about what is happening and what is being felt.

So, in passages like Section III of 'Chance Meeting' her style seems to become much too extravagant for what she is apparently saying, and her metaphors become so obtrusive that they distract attention almost completely from what she is trying to say:

I thought my thought
might spoil your thought,
being fierce and rare,
holding bright points
as stars in the mid-air,
slaying and hating
that which it loves most,
even as the sun
the host of stars of night;
even as the sun
must slay the stars
by day,
I thought my thought
would slay...

(p.37)

The intensity of tone here seems unjustified by the subject-matter; the exalted nature of the imagery emerges as an almost intolerable egotism (seeing that it is her 'thought' and that of her lover which is being discussed); and the tendency to abstraction in the language is confusing.

What is lacking in 'Red Roses for Bronze', 'In the Rain', and 'Chance Meeting', is any passage like Section X in 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' where the characters in the scene are made familiar, where the reader is told about the kind of consciousness which is present observing and feeling in the series of scenes. To some extent, however, this comparison is unfair because Pound's passage is detached, it

works through being self-contained, and is a considered judgement. H.D.'s scenes, on the other hand, are all described as they happen (and therefore necessarily with a sense of involvement): they work through the interplay between what occurs outwardly in the scene, and the thoughts which occur to the characters in them. That this is not an excuse for vagueness, however, is proved by William Carlos Williams' 'A Cold Front':

This woman with a dead face
has seven foster children
and a new baby of her own in
spite of that. She wants pills
for an abortion and says,
Uh hum, in reply to me while
her blanketed infant makes
unrelated grunts of salutation.

She looks at me with her mouth
open and blinks her expressionless
carved eyes, like a cat
on a limb too tired to go higher
from its tormentors. And still
the baby chortles in its spit
and there is a dull flush
almost of beauty to the woman's face
as she says, looking at me
quietly, I won't have any more.
In a case like this I know
quick action is the main thing.⁷

Never once in the three poems by H.D. is there created such a focused scene as this. It is Williams' quality of unflinching attention that is missing. He

summarises the situation in the first verse; after that it is all hard detailed fact combined with beautifully precise impression ('her mouth/open and blinks her expressionless carved eyes', and 'like a cat/on a limb too tired to go higher/from its tormentors.')

Here again the sensibilities of Williams and Doolittle are revealed as opposites: Williams' approach to the scene is almost scientific, certainly it is diagnostic, analytical, though combined with his inevitable sympathy for the woman (it is partly in this way that he confirms his own role as doctor in the scene). H.D.'s approach represents an eschewal of the logical path: she is continually side-tracked, and her thought tends to proceed laterally.

So I am confronted again with the unfairness of my comparison. It seems to me that the passages from Pound and Williams both reveal elements which are sadly missing from 'Red Roses for Bronze', 'In the Rain' and 'Chance Meeting' and the lack of these elements makes it genuinely difficult for a reader to get his bearings in these poems. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that H.D.'s intentions in these poems made it difficult for her to characterise the personalities involved (like Pound) and to describe a scene exhaustively (like Williams). Her subject is love and its quasi-mystical attributes, therefore overmuch definition would be anathema to her. It is necessary therefore to recognise the difficulties which H.D. was facing (they seem to me to have been insuperable in the form in which she tried to face them) and to respect her attempt to overcome them.

The best way to do this is to analyse 'Red Roses for Bronze' in detail. First of all some recognition of H.D.'s intention in the poem must be made. It is a genuine exploration of the poet's feelings about a particular man expressed through diffuse thoughts about him and incidents in which he was involved. The sense, therefore, of something left unsolved fulfils the intention in the poem, and, furthermore, seems realistic in the way it expresses indecision. This represents a significant break with Imagism in the sense that it forgoes the Imagist preoccupation with defined completeness.

Section I (p.1) begins with a conventional view of art as catharsis - her 'wretched fingers' will be sated by 'ecstatic work' (the two adjectives neatly balanced against each other). And the section also ends on this note - 'peace/even magic sleep/might come again'. The analogy from sculpture here seems to indicate that she is thinking of the Imagist method, and her description of the raw material (the 'something') as 'stone, marble, intent, stable, materialized' comes as near as possible to confirming it. The point of this is revealed most clearly by the last section where she sees herself triumphing over other women by creating her sculpture, which will endure, as opposed to the offerings of love made by other women, which will not:

... I would clear so fiery a space
that no mere woman's love could long endure;
and I would set your bronze head in its place,
about the base,
my roses would endure,
while others,

those, for instance,
she might proffer,
standing by the stair,
or any tentative offers of white flowers
or others lesser purple at the leaf,
must fall and sift and pale
in (O so short a space)
to ashes and a little heap of dust. (p.8)

So, theoretically anyway, H.D. confirms in this poem the value of the Imagist method: by solidifying, it endows experience with permanence. But the remarkable thing is that by the technique which it adopts the poem actually undermines this theoretical backing (as though H.D.'s technical experiments were ahead of her aesthetic thought). That is, there are elements in the poem which refuse to accept the simple solidifying into stone or marble. First of these is the appearance of the man with whom she is in love. He is detached (she refers to 'the slightly mocking,/slightly cynical smile/you choose to wear' (p.1)). This seems to indicate the difficulty of transforming his appearance into stone, of hammering in 'the line beneath your underlip' - and the hardness of 'hammer' contrasted with the softness of 'underlip' reinforces this.

This element is expanded in Section II where she describes a social situation remembered as especially significant. Her command of conversational tone here is precise and expresses her irritation and bewilderment. She also indicates the complexities of the social and emotional games which are being played and specifically points to the way these games belie the surface facts of the situation:

feelings in the subtle little sort of differentiating
Overall, the between the thing that's said
and that's said not...
fantastical which is affirmed she is telling us that it is
and
more real than the surface realism. Nonetheless, what such
the question that's an answer
passages indicate is the specialness of the world which her
Imagism tends that means that what's said or granted,
isn't answering ...

This aspect, in the context of the sculptural analogy (which
is taken up later in the poem) must point to the difficulty
of translating such deceptions into Imagist verse. The fact
that a sort of representative specimen of that is produced
('a clod/may hold the rarest flower,/so I?') emphasises
this point by its obtrusive artificiality as conversation.

What she is doing in passages like this is to
juxtapose the social world against her own inner world and to
contrast them. This happens even more clearly in 'In the
Rain' (pp.9-18) where the juxtaposition seems at times to
introduce an ironic note: 'a god said/"you were late"'. She
is clearly self-conscious about the fantastical nature of
some of the ideas she introduces, as her punning on 'quiver'
and 'bow' here indicates:

the God will stand
with his bow
and intimate arrows;
my heart will quiver and bow ... (p.13)

This self-consciousness makes it easier for the reader to
accept the fantastical ideas because the potentially comic
element is recognised: his doubts are anticipated and so
answered. But nonetheless the irony does not undermine the

feelings in the poem, but is undermined by the feelings. Overall, the irony is transcended and it is the fantastical which is affirmed: she is telling us that it is more real than the surface realism. Nonetheless, what such passages indicate is the specialness of the world which her Imagism tends to create: what they take for granted, technically, is that there is a range of subject-matter with which it cannot cope. What these juxtapositions amount to are a juxtaposition of Imagist subject-matter with subject-matter which Imagism finds intractable.

There are further examples in 'Red Roses for Bronze'. Section III expresses one part of the poet's attitude to the man she loves - her detailed appreciation of his physical attractiveness. There is an originality in this in the way that she insists on the ferocity of the attraction she feels to his body:

I feel that I must turn and tear and rip
the fine cloth
from the moulded thigh and hip

But once again she insists that things are not as simple as the purely Imagist approach would suggest. She also says she wishes to force him 'to grasp (her) soul's sincerity' but leaves it ambiguous whether she regards physical attraction as merely a means to this, or as an end in itself. Once again a complexity of feeling is allowed to emerge, especially as the line about her 'soul's sincerity' can be seen as merely a self-justifying afterthought, resulting from a fear of having gone too far.

Sections IV and V are an attempt to bring about a resolution of the conflicting elements in the poem. But that this fails signals an advance on H.D.'s part - for the complexity which is contained here refuses to be resolved by the sculptural analogy that she re-introduces at this point. That is, they refuse to become static and accept an easy sculptural, or Imagist, expression. H.D. seems, therefore, to have moved in the direction of greater "accessibility to experience"⁸, which causes a tension between her subject-matter and her technique. There is something that is less than socially human, perhaps, in the element of self-regard in 'Red Roses for Bronze' - of hugging her vulnerability to herself - and she does not control the expressive tension in the way that Williams and Moore do, but the messiness of this poem is refreshing. What has actually happened in the poem is very different from what she appears (according to the conclusion) to believe has happened; and what has actually happened has undermined the aesthetic ideas which are explicitly expressed. Therefore, although the poem is a failure, it represents an attempt to struggle out of the straitjacket in which she had wrapped herself.

I have called these poems in the second category a false start. By this I mean that the advance which they represent in H.D.'s development was not capitalised upon in Trilogy. However, they did provide a precedent for her both in Helen in Egypt and 'Hermetic Definition', both later than Trilogy. Both poems deal with the interaction of personalities which is a characteristic feature of this

second category. And 'Hermetic Definition' has a special affinity with 'Red Roses for Bronze'. It deals with her mystical search for a composite man who will satisfy both her spiritual and physical needs.⁹ Therefore, its roots are, in an important sense, in the earlier poem which is basically sexual but introduces the spiritual element - and implicitly regarding them as inseparable. H.D. herself recognised this because she quotes the lines from 'Red Roses for Bronze' which connect it with the later poem: briefly.

... "but I must finish what I have begun
the tall god standing
where the race is run;"
did the pine-cones in the flat dish
light an Olympic torch?
my fever, fervour was for one not born
when I wrote this;
the Red-Roses-for-Bronze
roses were for an abstraction;
now with like fervour, with fever,
I offer them to a reality ... (H.D., p.14)

This is in Section (12) of the first part. Two sections later she continues:

So my Red Roses for Bronze (1930)
bring me to-day, a prophecy,
so these lyrics that would only embarrass you,
perhaps reach further into the future;
if it took 30 years for my Red Roses for Bronze
to find the exact image,
perhaps in 30 years
life's whole complexity will be annulled... (p.16)

H.D. is recognising here how much the thirty year old volume was a starting point for her: only now, she is saying, has its full implications been realised.

Poems of the third category, however, illustrate the continuity between the early Imagist verse and 'The Poet' and 'The Dancer'¹⁰ and Trilogy. These poems are: 'Wine Bowl', 'Birds in Snow', 'When I am a Cup', 'Sigil', 'Epitaph', and 'The Mysteries'. The shorter of these may be dealt with briefly. 'Epitaph' (p.138) is significant only because it shows H.D.'s growing self-consciousness of her role as a poet: this was to be important in Trilogy where the role of the poet in society is an important theme. 'Wine Bowl' (pp.49-51) and 'When I am a Cup' (p.128) are significant because they show - though in a very crude way - her growing interest in various kinds of transformation. This is one of the motifs of Trilogy, especially when connected with alchemical references and with the idea of cyclical regeneration.

Transformation is one of the most important ideas in 'Sigil' (pp.129-137) - specifically the kind of transformation which love causes:

take everything,
I compensate my soul
with a new role;
you're free
but you're only a song,
I'm free but I've gone;
I'm not here,
being everywhere
you are.

(p.136)

Through love (according to the earlier sections) she becomes a flower. This means that she is secure ('flower does not fear/bird, insect nor adder' (p.131)). But it means also that everything has been changed, that her way of perceiving inner and outer worlds has been transformed. Therefore each moment is a continual awakening, a

realisation. Section II shows her self-consciously aware that it is a different world of perception which she has entered:

This is my own world,
these can't see ...

Sight being disqualified as a mode of perception, the other senses are unfamiliarly heightened, but despite this it is the familiarity which is stressed (expressing thereby something paradoxical about the love relationship):

familiar sound
bids me raise
frost-nipped, furred head
from winter-ground;

familiar scent
makes me say,
"I am awake" ...

H.D.'s way of introducing the heightened perception in this poem produces an effect of eccentricity and incongruity at times. The comparisons she introduces in Section I cause an immediate shock which is difficult to overcome. The tendency on first reading is either not to see the connection which she is making or to be so astounded by it as not to concentrate on what she is

actually saying. Further readings lead to greater acceptance of the comparisons and once disbelief is suspended the reader can enter the strange world of the poem. Once there he finds the images vivid as well as surprising and a certain amount of pleasure is to be gained merely from the strangeness.

Part of this is like the effect of hyperaesthesia which I pointed out in Sea Garden - the effect of entering a different world of perception with a corresponding effect of disorientation. This is a world where the perceiver is more aware of minute detail than of overall effect, more aware of the ground under the tree and the tiny life it contains than of the tree itself. But the important point in terms of H.D.'s development is that here these images are not used as an end in themselves, they are a means to an end, being used metaphorically. In this sense the images are used for a similar technical effect as those in the 'worm' passage in Trilogy (pp.11-12) which I quoted in my second chapter. What she is trying to do here is to renew an old idea by stating it in original terms: she is saying that she is inseparable from her loved one and is contained in him. However, the image of 'tree-loam' - being so unusual and vivid - exerts such a fascination that it distracts much of the attention from the love that is supposed to be the dominant motif. Despite this central difficulty, however, Section I has a strange beauty of its own since some of the emotional effect does manage to insinuate itself into the image, and the image is a haunting one:

so I I come an way know
separate parasite
white spear-head
with implacable fragile shoot
from black loam ...

And Section III (which is only seven lines long)
stands beautifully poised between the H.D. of Imagism and
the H.D. of Trilogy:

For:
I am not man
I am not woman
I crave

(p.9)

The interesting point here is that H.D. has used similar
images to stand as the sea-fish. In this passage she is
expressing a refusal to be overwhelmed, an insistence on
the wave.

These lines contain the thrilled sexuality of Sea Garden
(discussed in Chapter 2) and her desire to be totally
enveloped and overwhelmed by an experience.² The idea of
being a 'sea-fish' relates in a fascinating way to an
important passage in Trilogy. I am thinking of section (4) in
'The Walls Do Not Fall':

continuous, the sea thrust
is powerless against the coral,
bone, stone, marble
hewn from within by the craftsman,
the shell-fish ...

(p.8)

Having stated the physical nature of the image, she goes on
to draw out its meaning explicitly:

so I in my own way know
that the whale
can not digest me:
be firm in your own small, static, limited
orbit and the shark-jaws
of outer circumstance
will spit you forth:
be indigestible, hard, ungiving.
so that, living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,
selfless,
that pearl-of-great-price. (p.9)

The interesting point here is that H.D. has used similar images to state opposite ideas. In this passage she is expressing a refusal to be overwhelmed, an insistence on retaining a rigid integrity in the self to the extent of keeping the outer world at bay.

The last two poems in the third category are 'Birds in Snow' (p.125) and 'The Mysteries' (pp.139-148) which prefigure H.D.'s introduction of magical and mystical elements into her poetry. Their use in the former is uninteresting, but this poem also introduces Egypt, which (like Greece) was to be an important source for her in her use of mythology. 'The Mysteries' is about cyclical regeneration:

behold the dead are lost,
the grass has lain
trampled
and stained
and sodden;

behold,
behold,
behold
the grass disdains
the rivulet
of snow and mud and rain;
the grass,
the grass
rises
with flower-bud;
the grain
lifts its bright spear-head
to the sun again;
behold,
behold
the dead
are no more dead,
the grain is gold,
blade,
stalk
and seed within;
the mysteries
are in the grass
and rain.

(pp.146-147)

Overall the poem is repetitive and even, in places, naive, but it is important for introducing this theme. Moreover, the movement in the opening section from apparent gloom ('Dark/days are past/and darker days draw near') to hope ('one flower,/slight voice,/reveals/all holiness') is very similar to the movement in the opening section of Trilogy. It is this movement from gloom to hope, also, that characterises the poems that are dealt with in my next chapter.

In the early months of 1919, H.D. was in great distress. Besides being pregnant and separated from her husband, she was stricken with double pneumonia. Then news arrived of the death of her father. Fortunately, both she and the baby, a girl named Perdita, survived. During all these difficulties, her new friend was magnanimous.¹

The rhythm of this passage by Vincent Quins suggests the leading motif in H.D.'s life and work in the period between the wars - the motif of gain through loss. The fact that she named her daughter Perdita suggests this also - the new baby CHAPTER FIVE to represent the regaining of her baby which was lost through miscarriage. But perhaps 'THE POET' AND 'THE DANCER', AND most important of all, H.D. had gained through hardship the WHAT DO I LOVE? love and admiration of the woman who was to remain her closest friend, Bryher. The winning of such a friendship was part of the subject-matter of 'Malcyon' (R.R.B., pp. 92-102).

H.D. emerged from the sufferings of 1919 as a changed woman. As Peter Jones says in his 'Introduction' to Tribute to Freud:

the tensions prior to the birth finally caused a nervous breakdown in H.D. Bryher took her to Greece to recover, and in Corfu H.D. experienced the hallucinations which were to form the central part of Freud's analysis - the writing on the wall.

(p. 9)

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the tensions prior to the birth finally caused a nervous breakdown in H.D. Bryher took her to Greece to recover, and in Corfu H.D. experienced the hallucinations which were to form the central part of Freud's analysis - the writing on the wall. (p.6)

That last phrase, as Jones also points out (p.5), was the original title of Tribute to Freud, and indicates that H.D. regarded the experience as having been, in a sense, a source of truth as well as suffering - that the hallucinations had told her something. Suffering and truth are certainly combined in Swann's description of this 'vision of frightening power':

the luminous figure of Helios, the sun god, and Nike, the goddess of victory, seemed to move across the wall of her room and engulf her into the past of her poems, but a past now strangely terrifying.²

The truth revealed by this 'vision' is one which had had an important implicit presence in her previous poetry - the strength of the inner world in transforming the outer. But this truth took an increasingly explicit part in her poetry after this experience. Her poems occupied themselves more directly with the way that the mind works - the way that it is both acted upon by experience, and creates it - so that a number of poems in Red Roses for Bronze, for instance 'In the Rain' (pp.9-18) and 'Chance Meeting' (pp.33-42), use as their central idea a juxtaposition of inner and outer worlds. Connected with this, the idea of being 'engulfed', with the ambiguity of response involved in this (since 'the past of her poems' had been a created, ideal place, and the engulfing might therefore be intensely desirable as well as 'strangely terrifying') was to have - as I show in Chapter Six - a recurrent place in her work.

Moreover, the hallucinations looked forward to H.D.'s later work in indicating that the unconscious mind harbours ancient gods - an idea that was to be confirmed by H.D.'s later contact with Freud and Jung. In this sense, therefore, it could become a source of positive value, it could aid poetry as a bastion against change, against those commercial values that H.D. castigated in her essay on Marianne Moore in The Egoist - against 'the toppling skyscrapers, and the world of shrapnel and machine-guns in which we live'³. It is precisely in its ability to contain spiritual truth and therefore to transform a war-damaged present that the unconscious mind was to be used in Trilogy.

Meanwhile, in the poetry written after Red Roses for Bronze and before Trilogy H.D. continued her search for positive value. This took an increasingly, and more specifically, mystical form as H.D. ransacked diverse mythologies and occult systems, and looked for ways of combining them as a method of finding significance in the humdrum and the everyday. Here again, the contrast with William Carlos Williams is revealing. His development was in a truly Imagist direction since his incorporation of the humdrum and the everyday is performed only in order to insist that it is humdrum and everyday - not, in any way, to transcend it. If he does not, like Hulme, trivialise the significant, he does insist upon the triviality of the trivial, and his poems are fascinating for their self-conscious enjoyment of trivia - his poems respect it to the extent that they refuse to turn it into anything else.

This self-consciousness is clear in 'The Red Wheelbarrow'⁴ in the line 'so much depends'. This is an ironic recognition of poetry's conventionally transformative function: that function is subverted in this poem because Williams allows the wheelbarrow to remain itself, and shows that trivia, simply as trivia, can be interesting.

Williams' poetic development amounts to a continuing exploration of the trivial. Like H.D. he was interested in the mind, but his poetry is dedicated to proving that minds are ultimately similar to wheelbarrows - they are material objects. Therefore, if a wheelbarrow is transformed by becoming part of a mind, this is ultimately no transformation at all - here, too, it must occupy a thoroughly physical space. Perhaps, the difference between the views of the mind held by Williams and H.D. is the difference between that of a doctor and that of a mystic. Williams' urban sketches are characterised by a hard-headed materialism. His uniqueness as a poet results partly from his notable and apparently total lack of a religious sense. His poetry answers fully to Hulme's prescriptions, it expresses - as Coffman recounts those prescriptions - the 'minor, transient, almost trivial' feelings 'which result from seeing physical things in an unconventional way',⁵ it presents a 'wise foreshortening' of the human vision of the world (p.61). For Williams' poetic treatment of the mind is dedicated to proving that the mind, too, is finally trivial.

For this reason, Williams' view of experience was

perfectly suited to Imagist expression: his materialism was the philosophical equivalent of the aesthetic assumptions of Imagism. If, as Rene Taupin points out, in writing 'Kora in Hell il s'évadait des rythmes imagistes pour donner la liberté au train de ses émotions',⁶ this does not amount to as significant a dissatisfaction with Imagist procedure as Taupin suggests. In fact, the associative technique which Williams uses in Kora in Hell⁷ and elsewhere is different from that used by Symbolists, being harder and less evocative. The opacity of Kora in Hell was a temporary aberration and was later replaced by Williams' characteristic clarity.

Taupin therefore greatly overestimates Williams' closeness to Symbolism: the flatness, the insistence upon limit in his poems, contrasts starkly with the Symbolist insistence upon evocation and suggestion, its reaching out towards an infinite spaciousness of vision. But it was precisely this ambition that H.D.'s development was taking her towards, and her search for significance led her into mystical areas - especially magic, alchemy and the occult - which were very close to the interests of French Symbolists. Her problem was that, in developing these interests, she was facing an increasing technical difficulty: for she was developing an outlook that was antithetical to her technique. At the same time, therefore, as H.D. was exploring various forms of mysticism in order to discover positive values, she was trying to find

technical methods that could properly embody these new interests in poetic form. The rest of this chapter investigates the search for positive values; Chapter Six examines their effect upon H.D.'s technique.

The poems written between Red Roses for Bronze and Trilogy cohere in a way that the poems of the former volume do not: they examine what is achieved through endurance. The idea had been adumbrated in Red Roses for Bronze, for instance in her 'Choros Translations' from 'The Bacchae':

O which of the gifts of the gods
is the best gift?
this,
this,
this,
this;
escape
from the power of the hunting pack
and to know that wisdom is best
and beauty
sheer holiness. (p.28)

This is followed by the 'Epode' in which she delineates a hierarchy of happiness - the man is happy 'who, safe from the sea,/finds his sea-port' (p.28); the man is happy 'who rests'; and the man is happy who has 'wealth' and 'power' (p.29); but:

... happier, happier far
I count
mysterious,
mystical happiness,
this one
who finds

day by day,
hour by hour,
mysterious,
mystical,
not to be spoken
bliss.

(p.29)

These are only translations, but, by being chosen by H.D. to be translated, they receive her endorsement and indicate that the ideas expressed were sufficiently close to her case to inspire her. The first passage indicates the need to escape from the hecticness which prevents those who suffer it from appreciating wisdom and beauty, the second stresses the value of the mystical and the mysterious. The overall sense is clear. H.D. is pointing to the need to transcend the world of common cares (represented by 'the hunting pack') in order to achieve a hermetic happiness.

This theme is repeatedly present in the poems which H.D. wrote after Red Roses for Bronze - from the poem which appeared immediately after it ('magician')⁸ to the one which dates from the same year as 'The Walls Do Not Fall' ('Christmas 1944')⁹. The former echoes the opposition between the hardships of life, and its compensations, in a series of statements and counter-statements. Stated in prose the ideas behind 'magician' would consist of a series of pros and cons, a series of things on the one hand and a series of things on the other. The cons characteristically come first and are transcended by the pros. So:

There is no man can take,
there is no pool can slake,
ultimately I am alone;
ultimately I am done ...

but:

... look at the lawns,
how the spray
of clematis makes gold or the ray
of the delphinium
violet ...

It is not merely that there are compensations, it
is that the very basis for the kind of despair which is
expressed in those opening lines can be undermined. The
magician's power rests in his ability to bring about
transformations: Christ-like, he orders a spiritual rebirth:

We have crawled back into the womb;
you command?
be born again,
be born,
be born;
the sand
turns gold ripple and the blue
under-side of the wrasse
glints radium-violet as it leaps ...

Just as the efforts of the girl in 'Halcyon' to revitalise
the jaded woman are resented and resisted, so here the
magician is evaded:

He was right, we knew;
so we fled
him in rocks,
cowered from the Power overhead,
ate grass like the ox ...

He is evaded because he demands a reorientation in vision, a new positive response. He will rid his initiates of the deadness and fear in the old belief ('drab sack-cloth', 'dead candles', 'God in the thunder'). He will point to the ambivalence of experience and reveal that the sea for all its terror ('a shark rises/to tear/teeth, jaws') is also a thing of beauty. This all leads in Section 8 of the poem to a passage reminiscent of Whitman in its tactile cherishing of listed objects:

the grape,
the grape-leaf,
the half-opened tendril,
the red grape, the white grape, the blue grape,
the size of the wood-vine stock,
its roots in the earth,
its bark and its contour,
the shape of the olive,
the goat,
the kid and the lamb,
the sheep,
the shepherd,
the wood-pipe,
his hound,
the wild-bird,
the bird untrapped,
the bird sold in the market;

the laying of fish on the embers,
the taste of the fish,
the feel of the texture of bread,
the round and the half-loaf,
the grain of a petal,
the rain-bow and the rain...

Just as a Transcendentalist like Whitman appreciates the physical world devoutly and with a sense of gratitude to the God who created it, and whose fingerprints it bears, so H.D. feels gratitude to the magician who invokes these lovely objects. Renaming them becomes an act of devotion. 'The Poet' and 'The Dancer'¹⁰ represent a further elaboration of H.D.'s attempts to discover new values. The most striking lines in the poem are those which deal most directly with the theme which I have identified as being H.D.'s greatest preoccupation at this time - the theme of survival and, beyond it, of gain through loss:

snow folds over ember;
fire flashes through clear ice,
pattern frozen is red-rose,
rhododendrons bend under full snow,
yet each flower retains colour;
the rhododendrons are in flower
and snow covers
the flame heat
of purple,
of crimson,
of dark-blue,
of pale-blue,
of white
crystal
calyx;
miracle,
miracle of beauty returned to us,
the sun
born in a woman.

('The Dancer', p.86)

The conflict here between coldness and whiteness (and therefore deadness) on the one side, and warmth and blueness and redness (and therefore burgeoning life) on the other, is achieved with remarkable delicacy. The conclusion - if perhaps a little too much of a thematic leap - is very nearly justified by this preparation. Burgeoning life has bestowed upon it, through a combination of ideas in these four lines, an apotheosis. The first element in this combination is that it is associated with Christ through the pun on 'sun'. The second element is more pagan in kind, and indicates this one woman as the source of all warmth. In this way, burgeoning life becomes the object of worship through being associated both with the Roman Catholic adoration of Mary, and the primitive adoration of the sun.

This leads to the most completely realised passage in the poem:

We are more than human,
following your flame,
O woman,
we are more than fire,
following your controlled
vibrance;
we are more than ice,
listening to the slow
beat of our hearts,
like under-current of sap in a flowering tree,
covered with late snow;
we are more than we know.

('The Dancer', pp.86-87)

Here, in the composite image of the sap, the flowering tree

and the late snow, the theme of survival and of indestructible hope receives its most complete expression.

The simple statement 'we are more than we know', moreover, hints at the other important theme in the poem - her stressing of the need for painstaking attention to sensuous detail which reveals that our experience is more significant than we realise. In a sense this is turning the hyperaesthesia which was a feature of her earlier verse into an article of faith. So the opening passage in 'The Poet' announces a sort of progress into a greater awareness; the landscape of imagination which is presented is being invaded:

... the sea was so near,
one was afraid some inland tide,
some sudden squall,
would sweep up,
sweep in,
over the fresh-water pond,
down the lilies;
that is why I am afraid;
I look at you,
I think of your song,
I see the long trail of your coming,
(your nerves are almost gone)
your song is the wail
of something intangible
that I almost
but not-quite feel.

(p.80)

This is a hesitant apprehension of a mystical significance which is progressively revealed throughout the poem.

It is in this area that the poet and magician come together: both are occupied with entering worlds of heightened sensitivity. Now that H.D., according to Section 2 of 'The Poet', has 'escaped', she has entered such a world, where 'nothing is hidden/from (her)'. Having acquired such sensitivity:

I know what this youth thinks,
what nerve throbs in that old man,
how that wan soldier
back from the last war,
feels healing, electric, in a clear bar,
where an arm should be...

('The Dancer', p.85)

This leads to the apprehension of death-in-life I described above and to the simple affirmation:

dare further
stare with me
into the face of Death,
and say,
Love is stronger.

('The Dancer', p.90)

The whole movement of the poem is to 'dare further' and further, so that this leads deeper into mystical speculations. Section 12 combines art and religion (just as the whole poem deals with consecrated artists, the poet and the dancer), both of which overcome death:

singing to the priests, on high
build the altar
let life die,
but his song shall never die.

('The Dancer', p.92)

Here again is H.D.'s urgent establishment of positive values, but, in Section 13, she goes beyond even this to stress the importance of heightened feeling:

bid men follow
as we follow;
as the harp-note tells of steel,
strung to bear immortal peril,
(pleasure such as gods may feel)
bid men feel
as we feel. (‘The Dancer’, p.93)

The motif of gain through loss, of loss occasioning a reappraisal, and a taking of stock in order to discover what remains, continues in the poems H.D. wrote during the Second World War before she embarked on her Trilogy. The experience of coming to terms with war was extremely important to her because her greatest disturbances - the ones described at the start of this chapter - had been associated with the previous war. She herself was very much aware of this, to the extent that she says in Tribute to Freud:

I had begun my preliminary research in order to fortify and equip myself to face war when it came, and to help in some subsidiary way, if my training were sufficient and my aptitudes suitable, with war-shocked and war-shattered people. But my actual personal war-shock (1914-1919) did not have a chance. My sessions with the Professor were barely under way, before there were preliminary signs and symbols of the approaching ordeal. And the thing I primarily wanted to fight in the open, war, its

cause and effect, with its inevitable aftermath of neurotic breakdown and related nerve disorders, was driven deeper. With the death-head swastika chalked on the pavement, leading to the Professor's very door, I must, in all decency, calm as best I could my own personal Phobia, my own personal little Dragon of war-terror, and with whatever power I could summon or command order him off, for the time being at any rate, back to his subterranean cavern. (pp.98-99)

The poems written in the early 1940's, then, are responses to war. Of these 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks to the Mountain'¹¹ is the most unqualified success, but it achieves this success by taking the fewest risks. H.D. was clearly writing well within herself here, the technique is very close to that of her earliest poems, and her treatment of the subject of war is kept within bounds by being kept at arm's length. It is almost as if she wishes to overcome her war-terror by transforming war into something else, into something much more general. In this way it can be safely bundled together with other dangers, and be proclaimed overcome by wisdom and beauty. So 'Ancient Wisdom' says this prayer:

remember these ...
who when the earth-quake shook their city,
when angry blast and fire
broke open their frail door,
did not forget
beauty.

It is clear, however, that she is referring to war because she says that

in our desolation,
four times, four seasons
marched up from the valley
each with its retinue and panoply

The poem is dated May 8, 1943 - four years after the start of the War, and 'retinue and panoply' is a military reference, though of an archaic kind.

If 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks to the Mountain' makes little attempt to deal with the subject of war, however, it nonetheless is a poem of complete competence and austere beauty. It employs the characteristic Imagistic device of contrasting juxtaposition. The figure of Ancient Wisdom is compared with the mountain and shown to be even more unchanging. So, although a mountain is proverbially eternal and unaltering, it changes 'from gold to violet/as the sun rose and set', while 'she did not change'. The poem is remarkable for its restraint, especially in its distribution of colour. Where, in 'magician',⁸ the gush of colours tends to blur any visual effect by too hectically striving for it ('break white into red,/into blue/into violet/into green ...'), the repetition here of the single colour, 'blue', together with a subtle use of unstated colour, as in 'snow on her blue hood', helps it to achieve a visual force as well as to stress that Ancient Wisdom is eternal.

The success of this Imagist poem at this later stage in H.D.'s career is, in a sense, a testament to H.D.'s integrity as a poet. The fact that she could produce a good

poem of this kind, but chose to attempt poems of a different kind - because she wished to tackle more intransigent subject-matter, and to acquire a technique capable of coping with it - is an indication that she was determined not to be confined. She insisted on risking failure rather than continue to achieve easy successes.

To say this is not to belittle 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks to the Mountain'. It is the very fact that it is such fine poetry (and I think it is among H.D.'s most successful poems) that makes her decision not to repeat herself after this stage so admirable. The risks she was taking are all too obvious in 'May 1943'.¹² Here, her need to tackle this subject-matter is so urgent that she actually denies any poetic intention in the poem. In fact she denies it twice - firstly in the opening line (though here it takes the self-defensive form of saying it to the reader before he has a chance to say it to her) and secondly at the end of Section III.

Wilfred Owen had said that 'The Poetry is in the Pity',¹³ and so stated a preference for the subject-matter over the form, Life over Art. He too had been an aesthete pushed to the limits of his endurance by war, and therefore rendered unable to remain loyal to an aesthetic outlook. H.D.'s statement in this poem, however, is much more out of step with the rest of her output than Owen's. Moreover, she was not, like him, fighting on the front line.

Partly her statements in this poem are an indication of

the extent to which what she called 'war-terror' (T.F., p.99) disoriented her. For this reason - taken in the context of her output before and after the poem - they must be regarded as a temporary aberration.

More practically, from her point of view as a poet, the statements may have been a temporary expedient. What they emphasise is that the subject with which she is dealing is of great significance to her:

You may say this is no poem
but I
will remember this hour
till I die ... (p.3)

and:

this is not a poem
only a day to remember,
I say the war is over ...
the war is over ... (p.5)

She is asking (though redundantly) for a suspension of her readers' critical faculties until she has said what she must say. The result in this poem, and in the whole volume, is that what we are presented with are more like notes towards poetry than the completed product. Although, therefore, this volume is extremely flawed, it has a fascination of its own. What is presented is like a series of fragments which seem to bring the reader much closer to the actual texture of H.D.'s thought than her more formally successful poems could possibly do. It is the rough edges which are revealing. What Do I Love? is the least hermetic, the most open-ended of her volumes. The poems in it are vulnerable and personal: she is approaching her own experience

directly, without the aid of 'personae'. The volume may appear, for this reason, inconsequential, but its real consequence is Trilogy.

What Do I Love?, as the title explicitly indicates, is a search for positive values, for that which is worth loving. The most important poems in Red Roses for Bronze ('Red Roses for Bronze', 'In the Rain', 'Chance Meeting', 'Halcyon') had to some extent been this as well, but they had largely dealt with the more purely personal values, with the painful consolations of personal relationships. In all these poems the love between individuals is shown to be capable of transforming the mundane into the sublime. Where other values are hinted at they are largely used to bolster or define these personal values by their endorsing presence. The later volume does this as well; in fact 'R.A.F.' is in places reminiscent of 'In the Rain'; the melodrama of

... his eyes seemed to gather
in their white-heat,
all the fires of the wind,
fire of sleet,
snow like white-fire pellets,
congealed radium, planets
like snow-flakes:
and I thought,
the sun
is only a round platform
for his feet
to rest upon. (p.13)

is very close in kind to that of the earlier:

Your head

is bound with the myrtle,

is bound with the bay,

is bound with the red

rose;

God knows

(being God)

why you stay with us ...

(R.R.B., p.17)

But this volume also attempts a good deal more. What Do I Love? is characterised by an ambition greater than the technical competence which tries to accommodate it, and it is for this reason that it is more interesting than satisfying.

The preoccupation with time which is central to Trilogy is present in 'May 1943' in a more rudimentary form. In its appearance here it is closer also to the preoccupations of Eliot than it was later to be. Like Eliot, she appears at times to be referring to a 'moment in and out of time'.¹⁴ Moreover, the imagery and rhythm of lines such as

the old clock ticks,

but I hear drop-drop of an older water-clock;

the leaves whisper,

or is it a card-game in the orangery?

bright ghosts?

is it sun-light or jets of the candle-points

on the unbroken window-panes? (p.4)

is close to the more familiar imagery and rhythms of parts of 'Four Quartets'¹⁵ (the last of which was published a year before the date which is the subject of this poem). What

must be said in H.D.'s favour is that in writing these poems she was in the process of absorbing the influence and it is much less in evidence in Trilogy. Moreover, if the kind of imagery here is similar, the actual images are different, and 'sun-light or jets of the candle-points/on the unbroken window-panes' is as vivid and interesting an image as anything in 'Four Quartets', even if it is not endowed with the sense of a substantial significance which Eliot's images characteristically are.

The failing of all three poems in What Do I Love?, however, lies precisely in this area. The strength of Eliot's 'moments' is that by their cumulative use in a particular way, and by their strategic placing in particular contexts, they allow specific incidents to be endowed with more general significance. The trouble with the incidents in What Do I Love? is that they tend to remain worryingly specific and their general significance eludes the reader. However interesting individual sections in the poems are, they simply do not acquire much cumulative significance and they fail to construct a coherent context in which details acquire more than local importance. In short the volume shows H.D. still in the process of transition from being a writer of short Imagist poems to being a writer of long poems that use images as a part of their structure. It is noticeable in 'R.A.F.' (pp.13-20), therefore, that the lines which succeed best are those which, quietly and unpretentiously, employ a painstakingly defined image:

this field, that meadow
is branded for eternity
(whatever becomes of our earth)
with the mark
of the new cross,
the flying shadow
of high wings,
moving
over the grass. (p.16)

And the lines which most obviously fail are those which most obviously attempt to combine image with statement. The latter combination is of supreme importance and (as I shall show in my next chapter) was the most important advance H.D. was to make in Trilogy. Here the attempt collapses into triteness and tweekness:

If I dare recall
his last swift grave smile,
I award myself
some inch of ribbon
for valour,
such as he wore,
for I am stricken
as never before,
by the thought
of ineptitude, sloth, evil
that prosper,
while such as he fall. (p.20)

So, too, there are whole sections of 'May 1943' that emerge like riddles when the reader tries to link them with the rest of the poem. The most memorable part of it is the picture it presents of Londoners in the Second World War. This is unique in H.D.'s work in the sense of social

reality it conveys. A suntanned American is contrasted with the weary, anaemic people on the London streets, at whom he shouts "These people have the advantage over us" (p.6) H.D.'s personal role is interesting here (though not made properly explicit) because, although herself American, she spent the war years in London¹⁶ and identifies herself with the Londoners:

look at us - anaemic, good-natured,
for a rat in the gutter's a rat in the gutter,
consider our fellowship,
look at each one of us,
we've grown alike, slithering,
slipping along with fish-baskets,
grey faces, fish-faces, frog gait,
we slop, we hop,
we're off to the bread-queue,
the meat-shop, the grocery,
an egg? - really madam - maybe to-morrow -
one here - one there - another one over there
is heroic... (p.7)

As a period piece, a social picture, it is not very well done: but one is surprised to see it done at all by H.D. However, it is out of this context that another theme arises. It is first mentioned at the end of the passage quoted above:

one here - one there - another one over there
is heroic (who'd know it?) ...

It is the theme of heroism in unexpected places which leads to discussion of 'Goldie', 'a kid' and 'too young', who was killed while helping with the civilian war effort.

In this sense the poem is linked to 'R.A.F.', which deals with the heroism of a combatant in the Battle of

Britain. But that poem (except for Sections VIII to X, of which more later) is linked to H.D.'s deifying of the love object in Red Roses for Bronze. 'May 1943' by contrast (written after 'R.A.F.' which is dated 17th September 1941) is closer to the more general mythologising of quotidian experience which H.D. was to achieve in Trilogy. This is especially true of the remarkable Section XIII, with which the poem ends. Here Goldie becomes Goldilocks and Gretel and Saint Catherine, and H.D. employs a technique of merging and transforming of images and identities which was to prove invaluable to her later.

The associations with spinning which arise (p.12) in the context of Goldie's hair ('a thread so delicate, spun so fair') are connected with the idea of 'a Saint with Halo beside a wheel'. The wheel is the symbol of Saint Catherine (whom Maximinus ordered to be broken on a wheel, but who shattered it with her touch) and Saint Catherine, being the tutelary saint of maidens, is appropriate to a discussion of an heroic maiden like Goldie. Gretel is appropriate because she 'scatters bread-crumbs to show the way/through the dark forest' and therefore is like Goldie who, by driving a bus, helps a number of people on their way through the dark of wartime London. Gretel's crumbs become pebbles which 'lay like little shells/under green-boughs that swayed like water' and the whole story is sanctified by the comparison of this transformation with transubstantiation:

a Saint with Halo beside a wheel
is set on an altar where people kneel,
to take their bread from a priest, instead

of Gretel who changed her crumbs
for pebbles ... (p.12)

This theme of heroism, then, is central to 'May 1943' but there are a number of other passages in the poem which are not remotely connected with this and appear to be present in the same poem only because they are associated for H.D. with this same period in her life. For this reason the opening two sections appear to be completely separate from the ones that follow them - there is no thematic connection at all. It is in this context that H.D.'s repeated statement that this is not a poem most comes into play: these sections have more the effect of a diary entry for May 1943 than of a poetic interpretation of experiences associated with that date.

These two sections are therefore marred by a certain self-indulgence. This is especially true of the second, where no attempt is made to endow a personal event with a more communicable meaning:

do you remember how you leapt
the fast-locked iron-gate,
and where no profane foot was ever set ...
you untangled the sparrow's foot
from the threads of the lily-root? (p.4)

It is less true of the opening section where the enigmatic feeling caused by the unexplained personal element contributes to the overall feeling of something mysteriously meaningful afoot:

the wall-door under the chestnut-tree
that I nor anyone else ever saw open,
opens and lets out a carpenter:

he has his chisel,

I have my pencil:

he mends the broken window-frame of the
should some small tender ghost, orangery,
I mend a break in time.

(p.3)

The effect of impending (if hidden) significance - increased by her insistence that 'I will remember this hour/ till I die' - prefigures the same effect in Trilogy. The same is true of Sections VIII and X in 'R.A.F.' where there is also an attempt to 'mend a break in time'. Here a scene in a train between H.D. and an airman is heightened by what she sees when looking through the window - 'the stone-walls, prehistoric circles/and dolmens' (p.18). The beauty of this, together with its great age (she says in X that these 'sun-circles' are older than Karnak) places the scene in the train in a more hieratic perspective. Since the opening section has already associated the airman with the sun ('the sun/is only a round platform/for his feet/to rest upon') the experience takes on a mystical relevance. Unfortunately, the ideas are not linked sufficiently well and the significance of the relationship is not sufficiently substantiated to justify the introduction of this kind of imagery. The effect is disproportionate almost to the extent of being unintentionally mock-heroic; but the use of the idea marks a step forward towards the use of shifts of time in Trilogy.

'Christmas 1944' (pp.21-24) is an obvious precursor of 'Tribute to the Angels' and provides the most important answer to the question of what is worth loving with which the volume is occupied:

I ask, what would I take?
which doll clutch to my breast?
should some small tender ghost,
descended from the host
of cherubim and choirs, speak:
'look, they are all here,
all, all your loveliest treasures,
look and then choose - but one ...' (p.22)

The decision which is made in the poem is to look for spiritual sustenance below the stratosphere. Angels have been forced to descend 'to our level,/to share our destiny' (p.21). There is the example too, of Christ, with whom the poem ends. Like Him, 'we think and feel and speak/like children lost' (p.23) and have been cast metaphorically (mainly because of War):

at Christmas, from a house
of stone with wood for beam
and lintel and door-shaft ... (p.23)

Chapters Three, Four and Five, then, have described H.D.'s difficulties between the assurance of her earliest volume Sea Garden, and that of her war-time Trilogy. There is perhaps no clearer indication of H.D.'s status as a minor, rather than a major, poet than the length of time this development occupied, and the small number of poetic successes she achieved in that time. It is, though, the very slowness of her progress from one style to another that is

interesting, since it allows such a thorough examination of the components that were involved within it. As my analyses have shown, each new aspect of her technique and each new area of her interests was introduced into her poems with a conspicuous gradualness. The general impression that her development gives is of an untranscendent talent proceeding with honest integrity and earnest sincerity. Partly for this reason the achievement of Trilogy seems that much more of an achievement, since it was the product of such painstaking growth.

CHAPTER SIX

TRILGY

The relations between the explicit and the sensuous or enacting impulses bear on the problem I was discussing - Imagism and discursiveness, and how these may be brought together. It is problematic, because the nature of Imagism is that it rejects discursiveness; it wants enactment rather than description. And it wants enactment of a kind that also I think tends to reject narrative. So that the question for us has been whether a poet could use the hard, clear and sensuous image in such a way as to share its nature with the explicitly expressed issues without losing its essentiality.

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experimentation, and TRILOGY involved considerable additions to basic Imagist technique. Its prerequisite

was the willingness to write poetry of a lesser intensity. H.D.'s short early poems all seem to be produced under high emotional pressure; they are characteristically preoccupied with a focusing of great emotional force in a single description or incident. In comparison it seems that what the more mature poet of Trilogy had learned was the ability to relax, though this is only a matter of appearance. The point is that the greater technical skill which H.D. had acquired allowed her to achieve difficult results with seeming effortlessness.

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H.D. in Trilogy achieved this bringing together of Imagism and discursiveness. As Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have shown this was not achieved without a long period of experimentation, and moreover involved considerable additions to basic Imagist technique. Its prerequisite was the willingness to write poetry of a lesser intensity. H.D.'s short early poems all seem to be produced under high emotional pressure: they are characteristically preoccupied with a focusing of great emotional force in a single description or incident. In comparison it seems that what the more mature poet of Trilogy had learned was the ability to relax, though this is only a matter of appearance. The point is that the greater technical skill which H.D. had acquired allowed her to achieve difficult results with seeming effortlessness.

These difficult results include success in exactly those things which Silkin says are beyond the scope of Imagism - discursive passages and narrative. Her discursive passages are threatened in places by her lack of humour. There is little attempt at humorous writing anywhere in her work, though there is evidence quite often of verbal 'wit', which is another matter. In itself this is only a fairly minor reduction in her range, but unfortunately it has further implications. A poet who is writing discursively must be finely attuned to all the possible responses to what he is saying. He is, after all, attempting to persuade a reader of the truth of his arguments. This is not nearly so true of a poet who is dealing straightforwardly in images where the intention is largely to project a sensuous impression.

It was of the nature of H.D.'s sensibility that her sense of what was incongruous or disproportionate was very much subordinate to her earnest quest for esoteric truth. This meant that her sensibility was extremely acute in areas of which most people are hardly aware (which is partly responsible for the feeling of hyperasthesia I described in my second chapter). However, it also seems that her sensibility had considerable shortcomings in areas where that of most people is acute. Humour is one of these. Humour is a social virtue and H.D. was not a social poet.

The problem is that not to realise what is incongruous or disproportionate is to run the risk of writing something humorous, or verging on humour, where it is

inappropriate. There are two examples of this in Trilogy. Section (29) of 'The Walls Do Not Fall' is, at first, competent poetry of statement. She is asking God to bestow more faith, making, in other words, a fairly conventional statement of the devotional kind. But she comes then to describing the difficulty of retaining faith while 'the old-self,/ still half at-home in the world/cries out in anger...'. She must now express the sense of injustice which the old-self feels in the face of its experience, and she says:

the children cry for food
and flaming stones fall on them... (p.39)

The attempt here is clearly to combine an everyday happening with a Biblical reference - something she does effectively elsewhere. Unfortunately, the effect produced by these lines is simply disproportionate to the effect which she wants, and the emergence of the flaming stones is disruptively slapstick.

So also in Section (32) of 'The Walls Do Not Fall', she is at first dealing very adeptly with the pitfalls of writing the kind of poetry she is trying to write. She mentions the difficulties first of relying on the 'sub-conscious'. Its revelations are often untranslatable, they are 'incongruent monsters', 'fixed indigestible matter'. Next she lists the technical perils - 'imagery/done to death'; 'rhyme, jingle/overworked assonance'; 'juxtaposition of words for words' sake/without meaning'. She goes on to describe in more or less Imagistic terms the

nature of the sensibility that she and others of her kind had acquired: 'conditioned to the discrimination/of the colours of the lunar rainbow'. All this is impressive enough, but then she almost ruins the passage with: (p.27)

we were caught up by the tornado
and deposited on no pleasant ground,
but we found the angle of incidence
equals the angle of reflection ... (p.45)

The disparity between the highly physical (and melodramatic) activity of being swept up and dropped by a tornado, and the recognition of a scientific truth, causes (in H.D.'s own words at the start of the passage) a 'ridiculous descent'. Such an unintentional bathos could not have been perpetrated by a writer with an active sense of humour.

Fortunately, such lapses are rare and H.D.'s acquisition of the ability to write poetry of statement is significant. It indicates that she was unwilling simply to repeat her past successes and that she was determined to broaden her range in order to explore different areas of experience in poetic terms. So, her command of the dismissively sarcastic tone in Section (18) of 'The Walls Do Not Fall' is perfect and the adoption of the commonsense pose is good strategy for dealing with the occult. It suggests a tough-mindedness which compensates for the aura of credulity which occult belief is likely to create. Connected with this is her insistence on definition, which separates her own mystical beliefs from their vulgarisation by

art-craft junk-shop
paint-and-plaster medieval jumble
of pain-worship and death-symbol ... (p.27)

Her desire for definition, that is, is contrasted with this kind of confusion (perfectly evoked by the jumbled listing, the proliferation of hyphens, and the mocking dissonance 'jumble'/'symbol'). She is anxious also to differentiate her own belief in the merging of religious figures (Amen-Christos etc.), which is also connected with a predelection for hyphens, from this kind of confusion. She therefore insists upon the simple clarity of the scene presented by 'The Dream':

the bare, clean
early colonial interior,
without stained-glass, picture,
image or colour ... (p.27)

She insists on making her statement as simple and clear as possible, its simplicity and clarity emphasised by contrast with the muddle with which the passage starts. So, she manages the transition from the sarcastic to the speculative tone very deftly ('that is why, I suppose ...') moves into the description of the meeting-house, and ends with the straightforward statement 'Amen is our Christos'. She demonstrates considerable precision in the process, also, by her use of the word 'stage-managed' which describes perfectly the conscious directing of the scene by the unconscious, juxtaposing the Egyptian god with a Moravian setting. There is even an element of irony here which suggests some sophistication on H.D.'s part in the self-

consciousness with which she manipulates the dream: for the device of stage-management which the unconscious uses in the dream (which H.D. points out) is also used by H.D. in the poem. She suggests, in this way, a certain similarity between dream and poetic technique.

Related to the ability to write poetry of statement is the ability to write narrative poetry: both involve a control of development - in the one case of ideas, in the other of character and plot. Both are considerably more difficult to write than a competent poet can make them look. The third part of the Trilogy, 'The Flowering of the Rod' contains a narrative which runs from Section (12) until the end of the poem. This, like the later Helen in Egypt, though on a smaller scale, is a kind of narrative speculation - a narrative that is based upon a famous story but deals with it, as it were, at a tangent. That is, it deals with an area of the story that is unknown: in this case, with 'where and how (Mary Magdalen) found the alabaster jar' (p.129).

Narrative emerges here in the form of an exemplum, a story illustrating a point. What is exemplified here is that 'the first ... will be the twisted or tortured individuals' (p.129). And it seems likely that part of what H.D. had in mind was the importance of writers in society, who are 'too old to be useful' (p.24) but who also take 'precedence of the priest' and stand 'second only to the Pharoah' (p.15).

This means that writers, like Mary, and like the

thief who was 'the first to receive the promise' (p.129) are outcasts, but outcasts who are peculiarly blessed. They are 'out of step with world so-called progress' (p.129) but partly for this reason they are 'bearers of the secret wisdom' (p.14). The ideas H.D. is expressing here are expressed more straightforwardly in Jung's essay 'On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art':

People and times, like individuals, have their own characteristic tendencies and attitudes. The very word "attitude" betrays the necessary bias that every marked tendency entails. Direction implies exclusion, and exclusion means that very many psychic elements that could play their part in life are denied the right to exist because they are incompatible with the general attitude. The normal man can follow the general trend without injury to himself; but the man who takes to the back streets and alleys because he cannot endure the broad highway will be the first to discover the psychic elements that are waiting to play their part in the life of the collective. Here the artist's relative lack of adaptation turns out to his advantage; it enables him to follow his own yearnings far from the beaten path, and to discover what it is that would meet the unconscious needs of his age. Thus, just as the one-sidedness of the individual's conscious attitude is

Everything which is said about this man indicates

corrected by reactions from the unconscious, so art represents a process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs.²

I shall deal in my next chapter with H.D.'s interest in Jung, but what he is saying here does elucidate H.D.'s message. Her achievement in this narrative is in the way that she reverses her normal perspective on the outcast: this time the tortured individual is seen from the outside rather than from within. This represents a new departure for her and an increase in her range. It involves her in the depiction of social nuance, so that in (13) of 'The Flowering of the Rod' she perfectly conveys the different social status of Mary and the 'Arab', who was 'on his way/ to a coronation and a funeral - a double affair -'. That word 'affair' places him perfectly - albeit anachronistically, and in terms of a culture alien to him - by analogy with the modern English upper or upper-middle class, whose idiom it is (or was). The next lines define him further by the exclusiveness of his possession, the exalted nature of the ceremony he is about to attend, and the supercilious firmness of his tone:

what he had, his priceless, unobtainable-
elsewhere myrrh

was for the double ceremony, a funeral and
a throning;

his was not ordinary myrrh and incense
and anyway, it is not for sale, he said ...

(p.130)

Everything which is said about this man indicates

his high social status and its accompanying attributes - his poise, his complete 'savoir faire'. He makes a gesture of dismissal and makes it impressively ('he drew aside his robe in a noble manner'). His reaction of surprised inquisitiveness (as opposed to anything vulgar like anger) also defines him and it is partly through this attitude that we see Mary:

not a beautiful woman really - would you say?
certainly not pretty;
what struck the Arab was that she was
unpredictable... (p.131)

But there are suggestions also that H.D. is already applying more than social criteria for judging Mary, hinting, that is, at the special status which she acquires as an outcast. As such, she has a source of private strength:

she had seen nobility herself at first hand;
nothing impressed her, it was easy to see;
she simply didn't care whether he acclaimed
or snubbed her - or worse; what are insults?
she knew how to detach herself,
another unforgivable sin,
and when stones were hurled,
she simply wasn't there... (pp.130-131)

Such intimations continue alongside the more superficial social observations. Section (14) hints at the special significance of the myrrh, at its magical connotations, so that the jars which contain it 'had charms wrought upon them/ there were sigils and painted figures'. The Arab himself is

therefore implicated, and it 'was easy to see that he was not an ordinary merchant'. All this is an undercurrent to the carefully observed social surface, so that in (15) he makes another gesture of dismissal which is ignored.

It is at the end of (15) that Mary's 'scarf slipped to the floor'. This is received, at first, only on the level of its meaning in social terms - it is, as it were, 'bad form'. The passage moves first to a description of what the unveiling reveals, her pale face and her eyes which are darker and larger than many whose luminous depth had inspired some not-inconsiderable poets ... (p.134)

That idea, and the tone in which it is expressed, are close to the satirical Ezra Pound of Lustra,³ but it is adopted here to indicate Kaspar's sophisticated detachment. The passage finishes with his final verdict, though the qualifying word 'hardly' suggests his aristocratic restraint:

It was hardly decent of her to stand there, unveiled, in the house of a stranger.' (p.134)

Unveiling, however, becomes revelation in (16) and (17) and the characteristic word-play of the former '(though I am Mara, bitter) I shall be Mary-myrrh' indicates that the closeness of the two words would strike her as relevant. This passage is an exploration of meaning which has been prepared for by the slipping of the scarf: the dropping of the social guard allows the spiritual undercurrent to take over. This leads, in (17) to a return to description of the unveiled

woman, only in very different terms; Kaspar is being emotionally affected:

there was hardly any light from the window
but there seemed to be light somewhere,
as of moon-light on a lost river
or a sunken stream, seen in a dream
by a parched, dying man, lost in the desert ...
or a mirage ... it was her hair. (p.136)

The point is that the Arab has been distracted, his mind wanders under the influence of the woman and her hair, he becomes literally absent-minded. In this way both levels of the narrative, the social and the mystical, are expressed through an apparently trivial incident, through this slipping of the scarf.

It is in (19) that the theme of transformation is introduced into the narrative. This is one of the themes of Trilogy, and connects this part of the poem with what has happened earlier. Transformation is consistently regarded in Trilogy as one of the devices by which spiritual truth is revealed, so that, for instance, the Holy Ghost 'discloses the alchemist's secret' (p.29) and 'the crystal of identity' is 'splintered', 'the vessel of integrity' is 'shattered' (p.30). It is of the nature both of the poem's syncretism, and of its images of shifting and merging, that transformation in the poem is part both of a devoutly held belief and of a sophisticated poetic technique.⁴

In (19) the idea is put into Mary's mouth to allow

her to indicate that she may be more than she appears to be:

I am Mary, the incense-flower of the incense-tree,
myself worshipping, weeping, shall be changed to
myrrh;

I am Mary, though melted away,
I shall be a tower ... (p.138).

This is a turning-point in the story, though it has been prepared for by the hints I have described before and especially by (16) which indulges in word-play on Mary's name: 'Magdala is a tower', 'I am Mary, a great tower'. Having been physically revealed by the unveiling, she is now spiritually revealed and 'knotted her scarf/and' turned to unfasten the door' (p.138).

Transformation and revelation are in a sense connected also with the treatment of the Arab in (20). He is not transformed exactly, but the number of suggestions about his possible identity have a similar effect; he is not entirely revealed, but the suggestions tend to build up as a revelation of a composite identity. After this section we are aware of exactly how momentous this meeting has been, of what religious status these two characters have.

The following passage, (21), can therefore safely move us to a different scene, another stage in the narrative. Having speculated, she returns to what is accepted, in Biblical terms, as definitely true:

Anyhow, it is exactly written,
the house was filled with the odour of the
ointment... (p.141)

This scene again indicates Mary's status as an outcast but also gives pagan connotations to this: she is said to look like a Siren. Kaspar's previous detachment is projected onto Simon, while Kaspar is now ironically the one whose vision transcends the purely social feeling of wishing 'to avoid a scene':

Kaspar knew the scene was unavoidable
and already written in a star
or a configuration of stars ... (p.144)

The narrative, having left Kaspar, is now allowed to return to him, but he has been transformed in the meanwhile into the one who holds the key to what is happening. In this sense he is bracketed with Mary and Christ (Simon's 'Guest' (p.142)) rather than with Simon. But because he is 'technically' 'a heathen' (p.145) he allows non-Christian religious associations to enter the story - in other words he allows the previous syncretism in the poem to be mediated in the narrative:

he might whisper tenderly, those names
without fear of eternal damnation,
Isis, Astarte, Cyprus
and the other four;
he might re-name them,
Ge-meter, De-meter, earth-mother
or Venus
in a star. (p.145)

The narrative is now reaching its 'denouement', but it turns out not to be a 'denouement' of a narrative kind:

rather it is a revelation of the significance of the narrative.

Kaspar has a vision in which Mary is transformed, he saw

as in a mirror,

one head uncrowned and then one with a plain
head-band

and then one with a circlet of gems of an
inimitable colour ...

(p.150)

Mary becomes an archetype, and joins an ancient tradition of women of mystical significance, because Kaspar hears 'the echo/ of an echo in a shell', 'through spiral upon spiral of the shell/of memory that yet connects us/with the drowned cities of pre-history' (p.156). So, he 'understood and his brain translated':

Lilith born before Eve

and one born before Lilith,

and Eve; we three are forgiven,

we are three of the seven

daemons cast out of her.

(p.157)

H.D. manages, in these culminating sections of the story, to connect any number of diverse ideas, achieving a 'tour de force'. This idea of archetype is connected to a cyclical view of history (which is connected implicitly to a view of the 'collective unconscious'). However, this cyclical view is made more credible by being associated with a common psychological experience, the feeling of 'déjà vu':

That premonition we all know,

this has happened before somewhere else,

or this will happen again - where? when?

for, as he placed his jar on the stable-floor,

he remembered old Azar ...

(p.167)

This feeling partly serves to explain the vision which Kaspar has in Sections (27) to (33) which has, in places, the effect of flashback. Even on its own the description of this vision was eerily evocative; placed in this context it is more so:

literally, as his hand just did-not touch
her hand,
and as he drew the scarf toward her,
the speck, fleck, grain or seed
opened like a flower. (p.152)

This leads to the description of a flashback that reaches further back than any other: it is not the flashback of an individual, but of the whole race:

... before he was lost
out-of-time completely,
he saw the islands of the Blest,
he saw the Hesperides,
he saw the circles and circles of islands
about the lost centre-island, Atlantis;
he saw what the sacrosanct legend
said still existed,
he saw the lands of the blest,
the promised lands, lost;
he, in that half-second, saw
the whole scope and plan
of our and his civilization on this,
his and our earth, before Adam. (pp.153-154)

However, this feeling of 'déjà vu' not only throws more light on these previous sections, it also helps to bring

about a transition to the final part of the narrative. The idea of repetition (imaged in the 'as in a mirror' in Sections (28) and (40) and the twice-mentioned 'echo of an echo in a shell') allows H.D. to move with ease between Biblical present, past and distant past. So - to return to my quotation from Section (41) - Kaspar remembers remembering 'old Azar' and thought that 'there were always two jars' (p.168). It was the 'alabaster jar' which started off the narrative in Section (12) so this too indicates a repetition (and also a new use of the Imagist image as an organising device in a story).

By Section (42), therefore, the idea of repetition and the key image of the jar has succeeded in taking the narrative back to the birth of Christ, 'the floor of the ox-stall' where 'he placed his jar' (p.169). This, at the same time, leads the poet back into a more or less straightforward narrative technique. It is worth emphasising how tenaciously H.D. clings to narrative and uses it as a solid sub-structure to her mystical speculating, so that, even in the midst of that speculation, she introduces Sections (38) and (39) which define Kaspar as a character. Such passages are important not only in the way they temper the intensity, but also in the way they so firmly place the mystical experiences which are attributed to the character. Once Kaspar is more clearly recognisable as a person, his remarkable vision becomes more acceptable.

In the closing sections narrative once again takes over because narrative is now - after all that has

previously been said - sufficiently definitive to complete what H.D. has to say:

And Kaspar stood a little to one side
like an unimportant altar-servant,
and placed his gift
a little apart from the rest,
to show by inference
its unimportance in comparison;
and Kaspar stood
he inclined his head only slightly,
as if to show,
out of respect to the others,
these older, exceedingly honoured ones,
that his part in this ritual
was almost negligible,
for the others had bowed low. (pp.170-171)

The emphasis in the final section is, however, upon a kind of unity. Kaspar is accepted as being as worthy as the other two of the Magi by the acceptance of his gift ('it is a most beautiful fragrance'); the myrrh is said to be like 'all flowering things together'; and Christ and the myrrh become, in the poem's final transformation, the same:

Kaspar knew the seal of the jar was unbroken,
he did not know whether she knew
the fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh
she held in her arms. (p.172)

Here the effect I have described above is achieved largely because of the unexpectedness of the lines coming out of the everyday context of stooping for the scarf.

I mentioned above how H.D. had used the image of the alabaster jar. This is connected with what I have said about the willingness to write poetry of a lesser intensity and to reduce the emotional pressure: this is crucial because without it the writing of a long poem would have been impossible. The point about H.D.'s use of this image is that it is manipulated to greater effect than her images had previously been, it is placed strategically. Startling poetic ideas are less crowded together in Trilogy than in her earlier work where every line was compact and intense (or else was obviously aiming to be so). Here the intensity achieves more effect because it emerges out of a less intense context. To return to some lines I have already quoted:

As he stooped for the scarf, he saw this, (p.78)
and as he straightened, in that half-second,
he saw the fleck of light
like a flaw in the third jewel
to his right, in the second circlet,
a grain, a flaw, or a speck of light,
and in that point or shadow,
was the whole secret of the mystery;
literally, as his hand just did-not touch her hand,
and as she drew the scarf toward her,
the speck, fleck, grain or seed
opened like a flower. (p.152)

Here the effect I have described above is achieved largely because of the unexpectedness of the lines coming out of the everyday context of stooping for the scarf.

So, too, the sudden emergence of vivid imagery out of a colloquial background produces a kind of disorientation which is especially appropriate for the kind of spiritual experience which H.D. is trying, in Trilogy, to describe. It can produce moreover a poetry of justified surprise remarkable in its loveliness:

Annael - this was another voice,
hardly a voice, a breath, a whisper,
and I remembered bell-notes,
Azrael, Gabriel, Raphael,
as when in Venice, one of the campanili
speaks and another answers,
until it seems the whole city (Venice-Venus)
will be covered with gold pollen shaken
from the bell-towers, lilies plundered
with the weight of massive bees ... (p.78)

The surprise here is achieved by a use of metaphor. The name of the angel Annael is called a 'voice', a 'breath', a 'whisper'. This is then contrasted with the names of greater angels, Azrael, Gabriel, Raphael which are, by comparison, 'bell-notes'. This idea leads to a memory of Venice and its campanili. The metaphor here requires a remarkable leap of the imagination, but it is at least equalled by the metaphor which follows it, which involves an implicit likening of bells to lilies, and moreover requires a synaesthetic linking of the sound of the bells to pollen, since the bells, by ringing, appear to have sound shaken out of them. Unravelled in this way the lines appear to be contrived, but to return to credibility as a giver of spiritual hint: she uses the dream background to allow her to indicate a characteristically dream-

them after the unravelling is to recognise what H.D. has achieved - for the way she combines the ideas produces no sense of strain at all. The different ideas coalesce with ease, and produce a feeling of sensuous mingling which is much more appropriate to the subject-matter than hard-edged clarity could possibly be. The point about the experience which H.D. is describing is that it has nothing to do with rational clarity, it involves, instead, a kind of spiritual thrill. The sensation of ecstatic confusion produced by the metaphor is therefore completely appropriate.

On the other hand, the ability to achieve a kind of rational clarity was one of the great strides H.D. made in producing Trilogy. As I have said, her new-found ability to discriminate between and connect ideas in verse was crucial to her ability to cope with these extended pieces; it also helped her towards different methods of using imagery. So in Section (16) of 'The Walls Do Not Fall', she achieves the appearance of rational clarity even in a passage which is describing a dream. She mimics an academic tone with remarkable facility, describes Amen with fastidious detail and thereby differentiates him from Jehovah:

he is the world-father,
father of past aeons,
present and future equally;
beardless, not at all like Jehovah,

he was upright, slender ... (p.25)

The effect of this is to endow the dream with a greater credibility as a giver of spiritual hints: she uses the dream background to allow her to indicate a characteristically dream-

like merging (Egyptian gods appearing in a Moravian meeting-house) which facilitates one of the overall purposes of Trilogy, its religious syncretism. However, she cancels out the drawbacks of dream - our suspicions about its reliability - by assuming a rigorously analytical tone.

Having achieved this deferment of disbelief in the reader (which corresponds to her own belief in the dream while it is taking place) she then enacts the shift into waking. This is realistically achieved because she captures the sudden 'start/of wonder' which replaces the matter-of-fact attitude of the dreaming mind to what it has been witnessing. The paradoxical nature of the experience is implied: only when the dream is over does it become a dream. She moves then to a description of his eyes; this, too, is realistic - instead of remembering the whole scene which the dream presented to her, she remembers only one especially vivid detail:

the eyes, (in the cold

I marvel to remember)

were all one texture,

as if without pupil

or all pupil, dark

yet very clear with amber

shining ...

(p.25)

She is very close, here, to the Imagist method, especially in the last two lines. The tone of intellectual curiosity, however, the feeling of a searching of the experience to probe its meaning, is different. Moreover, she uses the image to link two sections, for the next one starts:

'... coals for the world's burning' (p.26). In other words she had discovered an ability to use images on different levels. The first layer of meaning is the purely physical, purely descriptive one - this is what the eyes looked like. The second layer involves either what their spiritual meaning is, or what association they suggest. So, the idea of 'burning' leads into the collecting of 'drift-wood' in order to 'light a new fire', and these ideas are connected to the idea of the turning tide. All this points to a much greater verbal awareness on H.D.'s part - an awareness only too obvious in her novel Palimpsest but not previously manifested in her poetry. She is able, here, to use colloquial phrases and endow them with greater meaning. The cliché 'the tide is turning' is cleverly used to surprise effect as it leads to actual images of the sea. The basic idea is similar to that in 'Oread' (C.P., p.81) where the sea/forest metaphor is taken literally and pushed so far that it produces another image. The idea, here, however, is used in a more verbal, less imagistic way, and it is manipulated with greater ease so that the ideas issue more fluently.

All this indicates that H.D. in Trilogy had evolved a technique by which, to return to Jon Silkin's words, 'the hard, clear and sensuous image' could be used 'in such a way as to share its nature with the explicitly expressed issues'.¹ There remains, however, an aspect of Trilogy which would make it antipathetic to the argument which Silkin constructed

in his essay. For the technique which H.D. evolved does involve the image 'losing its essentiality' as Silkin fears.

What most indicates this loss of essentiality is the lack of 'hard edges' about the images which H.D. now employed. Such hard edges are one of the distinguishing features of Imagist verse, having been prescribed by Pound and used in every Imagist poem worth the name. It is important to make a distinction here between hardness in the image in itself, and hard edges. Hardness in the image (the kind which Silkin refers to) is the quality of solid clarity: hard edges, on the other hand, require a kind of stubbornness, a refusal to merge or to be transformed. This distinction is irrelevant to Imagism as a whole because according to that theory the image ought to be both hard and hard edged. It is, however, relevant to H.D. because her images continue to be hard without necessarily having hard edges. This is significant because the employment of such hard edges as a way of expressing states of mind implies a specific belief about the nature of the human mind, and it is very obvious that H.D. no longer held this belief.

The opening of 'The Walls Do Not Fall' amounts almost to an explicit statement of this on H.D.'s part. She starts out in a more or less Imagist way and then goes beyond Imagism as though to say, as Eliot does in 'Four Quartets': 'That was a way of putting it - not very satisfactory'.⁵

An incident here and there,
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square:
mist and mist-grey, no colour,
still the Luxor bee, chick and hare
pursue unalterable purpose
in green, rose-red, lapis;
they continue to prophesy
from the stone papyrus:
there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there as here, there are no doors:
the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain falls, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures ... (p.3)

The opening is hard Imagist fact, 'hard news' almost:
'incident' was the euphemism which the newspapers used for
bombings. The fourth line, though, effects a transition:
'mist and mist-grey, no colour'. It is a quality very like
'mistiness' which Pound attacks in 'A Few Don'ts by an
Imagiste'⁶: here it is as though attention has been shifted
to what turns out to be the very soft, blurred edges of the
opening image. The quality of Imagist attention, of the
Imagist hard gaze, has vanished: we are left instead with a
literal absent-mindedness which transports us from wartime
London to ancient Egypt. What has happened here is a
shifting of the borders of the consciousness which is
presented, the referential quality of line 4 onwards opens
up the image from within.

What is deliberately lacking here, therefore, is

that concentrated purity which worked through a central image (for example, 'Sea Rose' (S.G., p.1)), or series of central images with a very similar thematic background (for example, 'Hermes of the Ways' (S.G., p.41)). The essence of the technique here, by contrast, is the finding of similarity in things apparently dissimilar. This is far more than merely a technical device: it operates through a specific belief not about human psychology. That is, it is based upon a belief in what Carl Jung would call the 'collective unconscious'.⁷ The dedication to the poem gives a clue to this: 'for Karnak 1923, from London 1942'. H.D. is indicating a connection between the ruins of Thebes and the bombed ruins of contemporary London. But for her this is far more than a literary analogy, it is reality: she is not saying that they are similar, she is saying that they are the same. So what starts out as a use of 'there' and 'here' as indication of parallels, becomes finally a complete fusion of the words by a use of ambiguity. That is, 'there, as here, ruin opens/the tomb', and 'there as here, there are no doors' becomes 'here, there/sand drifts' which means both that sand is drifting, as it were, hither and thither, and that sand drifts at Luxor and (impossible though it is on a literal level) in London.

That final breaking down of objective fact is important because it indicates how little H.D. was concerned here with objectivity. This is where the distinction I made between 'hard' and 'hard edges' enters: the residual hardness of H.D.'s images is illusory because what H.D. is

now overwhelmingly occupied with is the irrelevance of specificity: specific time and place were now no more for her than a literary convenience - they added a concreteness to the experience she was describing. For H.D. believed, when she wrote Trilogy, in an ultimate unity of all-time and all-place resulting from the unifying influence of the collective unconscious, so that for her specific time and place do not ultimately matter. She states this explicitly in Section (36):

In no wise is the pillar-of-fire
that went before

different from the pillar-of-fire
that comes after;

chasm, schism in consciousness
must be bridged over ...

(p.49)

For this reason the individuality of specific images is increasingly blurred in H.D.'s poetry: their edges are constantly under threat from an infinity of potential shifting, merging and transforming.

It is worth looking back on H.D.'s development in order to see how she reached this point from another perspective. For while the edges of her images did not, in Trilogy, receive the focus that they had previously received, it is important to stress that the Imagist preoccupation with edges influenced H.D.'s sensibility. In fact it probably helped her to reach this stage in her development through the strength of its emphasis upon limit and boundary.

For a technique, to a poet, as I suggested in Chapter Three, is more than merely a means to an end - it can become a way of looking at experience. In H.D.'s case, the Imagist focus on edges, combined with her own preoccupation with her inner world, seems to have resulted in the theme of limit and boundary becoming a recurring one in her work. This theme is central, though implicit, in Sea Garden, where the strategy of many of the poems involves the superposition of images of land against those of the sea. For this reason the idea of the edge of both land and sea, the sea-shore, receives special focus. The imagery of the sea-shore, moreover, is obsessively present in most of H.D.'s poetry after Sea Garden and always in contexts which insist upon it as an image of limit and boundary.

This is a crucial clue to an understanding of H.D. as a poet because it is her most characteristic preoccupation. It is, moreover, at the centre of a cluster of preoccupations - all of them with associative links with one another - which together make up her obsessive sensibility. I have already mentioned its connection with Imagism in the preoccupation with edges: it is also connected with her need to go beyond Imagism because her preoccupation with limit is connected with its opposite - a preoccupation with limitlessness. For there is a central contradiction in H.D.'s writing; in some poems she expresses a fear of limit, in some, a desire for it: in some poems she expresses a fear of limitlessness, in some, a desire for it. Much of her writing seems to

alternate between the twin poles of claustrophobia and agoraphobia. In technical terms what this amounts to is the opposition between Imagism and Symbolism which I described in Chapter One: Imagism opposes limitlessness, Symbolism opposes limit.

The first explicit statement of this theme comes in the poems 'Garden' and 'Sheltered Garden' (S.G., pp.24 and 18 respectively): both express a frantic claustrophobia, a fear of being stifled. 'Oread' (C.P., p.81) and 'Halcyon' (R.R.B., pp.92-102) represent steps beyond this: both involve the idea of the overcoming of boundary, an invasion by limitlessness, and both involve the sea as the instrument of this. The fame of 'Oread' may prevent the reader from realising how unusual is the emotion expressed in it: for the speaker is asking to be overwhelmed by the sea. In fact, the poem only becomes comprehensible when placed in the context of the polarities of limit and limitlessness in H.D.'s work. Seeking to be overwhelmed, the speaker is seeking an - admittedly extreme - remedy for claustrophobia: it is as though H.D. were expressing fear of the creative confinement which would result from being too exclusively concerned in her inner world and which would have damaging consequences in 'Hymen' and 'Heliodora and Other Poems!'

In 'Halcyon', H.D. took a step forward in sophistication: in this poem she was able to express simultaneously the opposing pulls of agoraphobia and claustrophobia. Moreover, the idea of sea invasion was

taken a stage further: this time it has penetrated the walls of a villa. The speaker in the poem feels claustrophobia because of the over-refinement of the social circles in which she moves (with its 'hair/so carefully dyed/so rare a red' and its 'sandals/so beautifully sewn/with cornelian/and Tryphlia-stone' (Section IV)); moreover, she feels trapped by the implications of growing older and losing her looks ('don't ask me to be slim and tall,/radiant and lovely/(that's over)' (Section VII)). On the other hand she is frightened and disoriented by the possibilities of release from all this which has been imported into her life by the young girl, 'mysterious little gull' (Section X), represented by the sea imagery that she brings with her. For this reason the poem moves between images of the 'room' (a word repeated in the opening passage) and of the sea: that is, between associations of enclosedness and spaciousness. The speaker's fear of both indicates a neurotic uncertainty.

In the process of expressing this abnormal state of mind, H.D. made two connected advances. First of all, she moved away from the Imagist emphasis upon close observation of the objective world and allowed the inner world, which previously had been only hinted at, an explicit presence. Whether the sea imagery represents an actual hallucination, or merely a metaphor for a state of mind, it is clearly not objectively there in the scene. The very nature of the presented scene becomes questionable in this poem: its opening lines deliberately

evade any pinpointing - 'I'm not here,/everything's vague, blurred everywhere'. H.D.'s strategy here involves a refusal to clarify the status of what is being described. Poetry writing imposes the need for economy and the need, therefore, for the withholding of certain elements which the reader must decide for himself. In 'Halcyon', the withholding of information becomes a device by which the fictive basis of the poem is allowed to remain ambiguous. What is being described may actually be only a dream. The point is that the refusal to define allows H.D. to enlarge the area of the poem's possible meaning.

This allowed a crucial breaching of Imagist boundaries: H.D. had allowed the edges of her images to soften. The result is that objective and subjective now run into each other and mingle, and this allowed the second advance initiated in this poem. Previously, the images in H.D.'s poetry, and the scenes containing them, remained obstinately themselves: after 'Halcyon' there is an increasing tendency for them to shift and transform. Since they are no longer presented as objective observation, they are open to considerable influence by the subjective, by the transforming power of the observer's mind. I suggested in Chapter Two that the images in Sea Garden actually represent objects mentally conceived rather than physically experienced, even though they were presented with apparent objectivity. In 'Halcyon' the fact that the images are mentally conceived is openly acknowledged, which allows her

to take greater liberties with them.

So, the passage in Trilogy which deals with the opposition between limit and limitlessness treats the subject differently from the way it would be treated by a pure Imagist. Superficially, the passage seems to be straightforwardly in favour of limit:

... infinity? no,
of nothing-too-much:

I sense my own limit,
my shell-jaws snap shut
at invasion of the limitless,
ocean-weight; infinite water

can not crack me ... (pp.8-9)

There is here one side of H.D.'s contradictory attitude. She still feels the need for limit which imposed such rigorous restrictions upon her early published poems; but the important emphasis in this passage is on the use of limit as an instrument against overwhelming forces. In fact, what H.D. is advocating in this passage is the cultivation, by poets, of an inner world: for, she says, the setting up of barriers against the external world will aid creativity. The 'shell-fish', like the poet, is a 'craftsman'; both protect themselves with 'bone, stone, marble/hewn from within'. This is not to say that the shell-fish/poet is not influenced by the outside world, for he must feed upon it:

(he) unlocks the portals
at stated intervals:
prompted by hunger,
(he) opens to the tide-flow ...
and so he knows 'the pull/of the tide'. Imposing limits
allows this 'master-mason' to plan 'the stone marvel':
allows him to take his materials and transform them:

be indigestible, hard, ungiving
so that, living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,
selfless,
that pearl-of-great-price.

In other words, the 'hard', the 'ungiving' is now only a means
to an end, the necessity now is to break down in order to
build up, to achieve a transformation.

So, while superficially the emphasis in this passage
is upon limit, it looks towards the limitlessness in which
H.D. was increasingly interested, an interior infinity, the
expanses of the inner world. For before she wrote Trilogy
H.D. had been psychoanalysed by Freud, and the result was
that she increasingly interpreted the imaginative territory
- previously cultivated with a degree of narcissism - as
being much larger in its implications, as containing the
collective history and destiny of the whole race. I
suggested in Chapter Three that what H.D. shared with her
readers in Sea Garden was the privacy of an inner world.
With the help of Freud and Jung this was to become a

guiding principle of her work. It is important to stress, though, that H.D.'s eccentricity always made it impossible for her to appeal to a wide range of human responses.

Both her revaluation of her inner world and her eccentricity clearly emerge in her Tribute to Freud: and these are the subjects of my next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONFIDENCE OF THOUGHTS

'There was another Jew who said, "the kingdom of heaven is within you"'. So, in Tribute to Freud (p.109), H.D. links the psychiatrist with Christ: the strategy is typical, both of that volume and of her later poetry. H.D.'s relentless search for significance characteristically takes the form of the finding of connections between something present and ordinary and something hidden and meaningful. She constantly sees the one as providing clues to the other. It became, with her, almost an intellectual reflex action, so that her fellow analyst J.J. van der Leeuw becomes the flying Dutchman (p.12) and:

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THOUGHTS

When later I came to think of it, yes,
he was mercurial,
Mercury. (p.14)

This process of moving from one idea to another by association was one she had started to incorporate into her poetry long before Trilogy. The technical advances which she had made in Red Roses for Bronze had allowed her to suggest a mind moving from one thought to another rapidly and non-logically. This technique became, in Trilogy, through the making of occult connections, not simply a matter, in Eliot's phrase, of 'suppression of "links in the chain"',¹ but the only possible mode of communication. Her poetic thought in that volume is mystical, rather than logical, in inclination; it is a passive rather than an active process. It is in its essence a different thing altogether from the kind of thought which moves discursively from one idea to the next: it is a matter of finding psychic affinity and mystical association. So in her later poem 'Winter Love' she

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confesses:

The-tis - Sea-'tis, I played games like this;
I had long reveries, invoked the future,
re-invoked the past, syllables, mysteries,
numbers;

I must have turned a secret key, unwittingly,
when I said Odysseus His psycho- (H.D.,
p.92)

'Unwittingly' here is significant; truths, for her, are
happened upon, they arise from a mysterious inspiration,
conjured up from verbal and symbolic links.

Here, then, is a case where a technical advance has
prepared for a change in her thought (though, of course, the
change in the thought may have aided the technical advance:
it is possible to be too much too rigorous about trying to
discriminate in a case of two-way influence like this). But
what also seems likely is that this approach to her mental
life was encouraged by Freud. I do not mean that he
encouraged the mystical approach but that he encouraged the
idea of jumping from one idea to another, non-logically -
which to H.D. would amount to the same thing.

An important part of his method of psychoanalysis
depended upon his patient allowing a stream of
association to flow in his mind and to describe it to the
analyst - a method which he himself, in The Interpretation
of Dreams, compared to the creative methods of Schiller.²
He also describes the technique in his autobiography:

Instead of urging the patient to say
something upon some particular subject,
I now asked him to abandon himself to a
process of free association, i.e. to say

beliefs that were whatever came into his head, while analytic theory. As he say ceasing to give any conscious direction to his thoughts.³

I was carried further and further back By this method Freud believed that significant psychological material would emerge through the way that a patient associated one idea with another. His psycho-analytical approach involved the application of objective, scientific judgements (or, at least, judgements that he regarded as such) to this extremely subjective process. He believed that in this way the particular obsessions of the patient could be identified and defined.

As Freud's mentioning of Schiller indicates, there is a long tradition of the use of association in poetry. Coleridge dedicated a chapter to the idea in his Biographia Literaria and presents his own definition:

It must be stressed, though, that Freud not only hit upon ideas which had been expressed by poets for a long time, also introduced an... Whenever we feel several objects at the same time, the impressions that are left... are linked together. Whenever therefore any one of the movements, which constitute a complex impression, is renewed through the senses, the others succeed mechanically.⁴

That this idea is an essential assumption behind much Romantic poetry is obvious - certainly Wordsworth's Prelude⁵ would be impossible without it, depending as it does upon the belief that the development of his soul was based upon impressions of childhood and adolescence, the associations of which have remained with him. Here again Freud was aware of the poetic heritage that had intuited

beliefs that were later to be a part of his psychoanalytic theory. As he says in An Autobiographical Study:

I was carried further and further back into the patient's life and ended by reaching the first years of his childhood. What poets and students of human nature had always asserted turned out to be true: the impressions of that remote period of life, though they were for the most part buried in amnesia, left ineradicable traces upon the individual's growth and in particular laid the foundations of any nervous disorder that was to follow. (pp.58-59)

It is clear from Tribute to Freud that the psychiatrist explored H.D.'s childhood in precisely this way. It must be stressed, though, that Freud not only hit upon ideas which had been expressed by poets for a long time but also introduced an idea which they had known, at best, only implicitly - the idea of the subconscious. The emphasis which all Romantic poets placed upon the Imagination and upon dreams certainly hinted at the belief in such a powerful and relatively unknown component of the human personality. Here, too, H.D.'s acceptance of Freud's view must have been prepared for by her knowledge of this poetic tradition. But Freud's importance for H.D. was in the way that he focused these ideas, gave them a new perspective and so re-integrated them.

The Freudian positing of an unconscious layer in the human personality, together with an associative technique that would partially elucidate it, fascinated H.D. That the workings of this mysterious human interior could become the object of detailed examination would clearly be heartening to a poet like her, since, as my second chapter indicated, she so painstakingly cultivated an inner world. It certainly encouraged her to erect the barriers that are imaged in the sea-shell and its shell-jaws (T, pp.8-9) because it seemed to indicate that important truths could be happened upon by looking within, and she characteristically distorted Freud's view of the sub-conscious to make it harmonious with her own. It is almost certain that Freud would have been antagonistic to the idea that he had said that 'the kingdom of heaven is within you'. This distortion is not at all a sign of intellectual unscrupulousness on H.D.'s part - apart from anything else it is much too blatant to be that. What it does suggest is H.D.'s inability to make distinctions, or, perhaps more accurately, her lack of interest in distinctions. This was the product of the overwhelmingly dominant tendency of her mind, which was to allow ideas and images to merge and blend. This means that the kind of dispute which Jung describes taking place between himself and Freud could never have happened between Freud and H.D.:

Freud's attitude towards the spirit seemed to me highly questionable. Wherever, in a person or in a work of art, an expression of spirituality ... came to light, he suspected it, and insinuated

that it was repressed sexuality. Anything that could not be directly interpreted as sexuality he referred to as "psychosexuality". I protested that this hypothesis, carried to its logical conclusion, would lead to an annihilating judgement upon culture. Culture would then appear as a mere farce, the morbid consequence of repressed sexuality. "Yes", he asserted, and "so it is, and that is just a curse of fate against which we are powerless to contend."⁶

The portrait of Freud here is poles apart from the one presented in H.D.'s book, and while this may be as much due to Jung's bias as H.D.'s, it seems that Jung's is closer to the truth as we know it from Freud's writings. The difference comes about because H.D. would not have disputed as to whether the contents of the subconscious were, objectively speaking, spirituality or repressed sexuality. This need for objective interpretation was a need of the scientifically trained Freud and Jung; for the poetically trained H.D. the subjective manifestation was sufficient in itself. To her, whether the images and associations that emerge from the subconscious have their origin in repressed sexuality rather than in spirituality was not as important as the images and associations themselves.

Connected with this dispute between Freud and Jung is Jung's dislike of Freud's belief that the subconscious presents its dream images as a 'disguise' for what is actually preoccupying it. This 'disguise' is something which

Susan Stanford Friedman sees as important to H.D. because her later poems

show in both their structure and texture the importance for H.D. of this assumption common to psychoanalysis and the occult - that ultimate truth, whether about the Universe or the individual unconscious, appears in disguised forms.⁷

It seems likely, in fact, that this idea of disguise was partly what interested H.D. both in the subconscious and in the technique of association. This interest seems to have a temperamental similarity to Yeats' attraction to symbolism, which attracted him partly because it was a technique whereby truth could be simultaneously revealed and concealed. In this way it catered both for his need to express himself and his paradoxical need to allow aspects of himself to remain hidden. This aesthetic diffidence is something that H.D. shared with him. It is connected, moreover, with a sense of occult mystery which Yeats and H.D. both enjoyed. Both symbolism and the association technique allow an area of mystery to remain because they collude at certain points with the disguise that embodies and complicates. They are pathways, for the initiate, to occult knowledge which it is his duty to reveal only in part to the uninitiated.

This to some extent solved the problem posed in 'Circe' (C.P., pp. 171-173) which seems to describe the poet

In this way, therefore, her inner world which was before largely a realm of fantasy could be reinterpreted as a source of wisdom; and her attitude towards its preservation became explicitly moral. This is indicated in the shell-fish passage (T, pp.8-9) which I discussed at the end of my last chapter. But it is interesting that she also uses this shell-fish image in an explanatory passage towards the end of her translation of the Ion of Euripides:

The human mind dehumanized itself, in much the same way (if we may imagine group-consciousness so at work) in which shell-fish may work outward to patterns of exquisite variety and unity. The conscious mind of man had achieved kinship with unconscious forces of most subtle definition.⁸

This passage reveals that for her the shell-fish image was strongly linked with the idea of the unconscious, and that the shell-fish represents not only a looking inwards but a reaching out: for, in this passage, she is summing up the significance of Euripides' play in the history of 'group-consciousness'. So she sees the inner world extending itself. It is extended first of all because it reaches inward to 'unconscious forces'. But it is extended also in the sense that it is shared by everyone, she sees consciousness now as being collective.

This to some extent solved the problem posed in 'Circe' (C.P., pp.171-173) which seems to describe the poet

severely weakened by isolation. The poet, if group consciousness is a reality, becomes less isolated because it makes his inner world, in a sense, social. This led H.D. to see a social purpose for poets, whom she describes in 'The Walls Do Not Fall' as

bearers of the secret wisdom,
living remnant
of the inner band
of the sanctuaries' initiate ... (T, p.14)

It is here that H.D. answers the possible criticism that her poetry lacks social reality. Social reality, for her, is not ultimately real at all - it is superficial and transient and conceals beneath its surface the transcendent reality that interests her. In fact the focusing of attention caused by her mystical belief in hidden significance was so powerful that she was largely unaware of the more everyday reality that occupies the attention of most people. This is not simply a conclusion drawn from reading her poetry - containing, as it does, very few contemporary references - but of reading her own account of her feelings about the growth of Nazism in Vienna when she was seeing Freud. Even to call them her feelings about the growth of Nazism is to endow them with a particularity that they never actually have in her description. Such was the mist of subjectivity through which she saw everything, such was the all-pervasiveness of the transforming power of her imagination, that the symptoms of this growth seem to become something altogether

different. For H.D. no experience was a hard irreducible fact. Even the simple anti-semitic signs outside the house of her famous Jewish psychiatrist loom out of her prose in a dream-like way:

And the thing I primarily wanted to fight in the open, war, its cause and effect, with its inevitable aftermath of neurotic breakdown and related nerve disorders, was driven deeper. With the death-head swastika chalked on the pavement, leading to the Professor's very door, I must, in all decency, calm as best I could my own personal Phobia, my own personal little Dragon of war-terror, and with whatever power I could summon or command order him off, for the time being at any rate, back to his subterranean cavern. (pp.98-99)

Earlier in the book she describes the most remarkable consequence of this kind of unworldliness when she ventured out to see Freud when Vienna was deserted. Almost everybody else had remained indoors out of fear: only she, it seems, had failed to read the danger signals for what they were. Freud, when she arrived at his office, was startled and appalled and could not understand why she went to see him when no-one else had dared to go. The description of the street which she offers as an explanation of her behaviour seems to suggest a radical disjunction between objective reality and her own interpretation of it:

The stacks of rifles gave the streets a neat, direct, simple, finished effect, as of an 1860 print. They seemed old-fashioned, the soldiers seemed old-fashioned; I was no doubt reminded of familiar pictures of our American Civil War ... There were some people about and the soldiers were out of a picture or a film of a reconstructed Civil War period. They did not seem very formidable. (p.65)

The effect here is dream-like in the feeling of incongruity of response; the scene is described very accurately but her reaction to it seems disorientingly wrong.

The point that I wish to emphasise is the eccentricity of H.D.'s way of apprehending experiences of this kind - it is as though the intensity of concentration of her aesthetic and mystical apprehension excluded all else. The face value of an experience was likely to elude her altogether. This can look very like naivete and it does seem that about certain areas of experience H.D. was disturbingly purblind. This aspect of her personality renews a question which is consistently asked about her poetry: the question as to whether its preoccupation with exotic subject-matter constitutes escapism. This is the question to which E.B. Greenwood addresses himself in an essay in Essays in Criticism⁹ and one about which H.D. was aware very early in her career - as she showed when she mused that her preoccupation with Greek islands was the result of a wish 'to make real to (herself) what is most real'.¹⁰

The way that she characteristically reacted to the direct, simple, physical experiences was either to ignore them or to convert them into something else. Putting this directly and simply: sex and violence are always blurred in her writings, and this seems to be a direct result of the kind of woman that H.D. was, rather than a result of H.D. the writer being reticent about such matters. The potentiality for terrible violence in the scene that H.D. describes in so detached a manner seems largely to have been missed by her - at least at the time. She seems to have been able to dismiss such possibilities from her mind - it is noticeable that her description automatically converts the scene into something aesthetic, it becomes 'a print', 'a picture or a film'. Automatically, she retreats into her special world and ignores the physical danger.

Tribute to Freud is also notable for the way it largely ignores Freud's sexual theory, or converts it into a theory altogether more exalted:

Eros and Death, those two were the chief subjects - in fact, the only subjects - of the Professor's eternal pre-occupation ... the Professor himself proclaimed that Herculean power of Eros and we know that it was written from the beginning that Love is stronger than Death. (p.108)

Eros, Hercules, Love - this is a way of apparently conceding the sexual component of Freud's theory while actually not

conceding it, while actually transforming it. The mergings and blendings which characterise H.D.'s prose operate in Tribute to Freud to achieve the most remarkable transformation of all - they convert Freud into Jung. H.D. resists Freud by the most effective method of all - by appearing not to resist. She seems to agree with Freud but insistently turns his ideas into something else.

So, there is a point where Freud clearly tried to introduce H.D. to the idea of 'penis envy'. She had described to him an hallucination she had experienced in which she saw pictures on the wall of a hotel bedroom in Corfu in 1920. She saw Nike, the Greek figure of Victory. Freud possessed a statue of the goddess and told H.D.:

"She is perfect ... only she has lost her spear". (p.108. H.D.'s italics)

But H.D. seems to miss the point of this altogether:

She has lost her spear. He might have been talking Greek. The beautiful tone of his voice had a way of taking an English phrase or sentence out of its context ... so that, although he was speaking English without a perceptible trace of accent, yet he was speaking a foreign language ... (p.75)

What Freud was trying to say here was, in fact, so foreign to H.D. that she did not understand it: she translates it into a language of her own. This, too, is what she did with sex itself. Far from rejecting it, she applied to it

an affirmation that transformed it sufficiently to make it importable into her mental territory. So, in section (11) of 'Tribute to the Angels' she complains that the name of Venus has been 'desecrated'; 'knaves' and 'fools', she says, have done the goddess 'impious wrong'. Section (12) then goes on to proclaim that the name Venus, 'is kin' 'to venerate, /venerator'. Such are the quasi-religious conditions under which she was willing to accept sexuality. Her other writings show her incomprehension of it when it takes more humdrum forms. Her autobiographical novel Bid Me to Live reveals her resigned helplessness as her husband commits adultery in her own bedroom. So, too, in her other novels, relationships take place - when at all - only in a cerebral, enervated form. Helen and Captain Rafton in the third section ('Secret Name') of Palimpsest are said to exist together:

As if they in some strange exact and precious period of pre-birth, twins, lovers, were held, sheltered beneath some throbbing heart. (p.313)

This successfully pre-empts the sexual question by placing the relationship on a different level - but it does not, by any means, answer it. Similarly, the H.D. figure in the first part of the novel, Hipparchia (after whom that part of Palimpsest is named) is said to have

apprehended poetry physically as she had never apprehended loving ... (p.47)

Doctor Gratius has told Julia that Hipparchia is 'dying of a

sort of aenemic (sic) ecstasy' (p.126). Hipparchia decides that she knows 'actually what she wanted' (p.92):

She wanted intimacy without intercourse.
But who offers comradeship without
passion? (pp.92-93)

The impression received from these writings is confirmed in an essay by Alfred Satterthwaite called 'John Cournos and "H.D."'. Satterthwaite describes how, when H.D.'s husband, Richard Aldington, went off to the first World War, he left John Cournos in charge of her. This trust, he says,

was never violated because of John's
strong sense of loyalty towards his friend,
and because of H.D.'s almost
pathological fear of conception.¹¹

Cournos was in love with a woman called Dorothy Yorke but later, returning from a visit from Russia, found that Aldington had fallen in love with her also, and that she had fallen in love with him:

John's consternation was cataclysmic ...
What he resented most was his suspicion
that H.D. had encouraged Richard's
relationship with Dorothy, that she
had, in fact, incited it, partly
because of her own sexual inadequacy... (p.403)

This consternation was aggravated by the memory of a previous experience he had had with H.D.:

work is, cons One evening in the Aldington's room in
indicated by Mecklenburgh Square John had gone
Descriptions further with the preliminaries to sexual
an impression intercourse with H.D. than ever before.
describes her He was still half in love with her, and
quality, she Richard was away at camp. At the very
brake of term last moment, H.D. had bridled; why she
An esc drew back at such a time, and why he
as she admit ever allowed himself to go so far, John
to set her po could not explain. At any rate, H.D. lost
her temper with John and accused him of
lusting after her body, rather than loving
her soul. As I have said before her
attitude toward sex was at the very least
confused and ambiguous. She told John if
he wanted sex he should get a whore...

(pp.403-404)

H.D.'s attitude to sex, as revealed in these passages, is only a component - albeit a very important one - in what amounts to a thoroughgoing shying away from physical experiences as a whole. As a writer she constantly emerges as one who resorts so completely to her mental resources that the physical basis of reality has become unreal. Although physical impressions often emerge from her writing - for an Imagist poet, of course, they are essential - they do so, characteristically, with a sudden disorienting sharpness; it is their unfamiliarity that gives them their vividness. They emerge like a sudden realisation, rather than - as, for instance, in William Carlos Williams - as a recognition of what has been known and solidly known for a long time. That there is very little social reality in her

work is, considering the extent of the withdrawal indicated by the passages I have quoted, hardly surprising. Descriptions of H.D. constantly stress her unwordliness, an impression given even by her appearance. Amy Lowell describes her as having 'a strange, fawn-like, dryad-like quality, she seems always as though just startled from a brake of fern ...',¹²

again An escapist element was basic to her personality, as she admitted in a letter to Eric W. White who was about to set her poems to music:

Well ... forgive all this, but since you are setting the songs you might as well know something of the background ... though the work is on the whole, I think, an attempt to escape, still the thing escaped from is always a clue, a sort of spring-board into the utterly unknown Deep ... (and it WAS deep, I tell you.)¹³

On the other hand, the anxiety that this escapism caused her is evident enough here, and when, later, the resorting to Greek landscape was joined (and reinterpreted by) the resorting to mysticism, it is once again evident that she wishes her readers to be aware that this is an escape from what is only apparently real to what is actually so. The italicised 'from' in her letter stresses the importance of the mundane as a 'clue', 'a sort of spring-board'. She constantly used the technique of association to probe the humdrum for meaning, just as Freud used it to probe casual statements for psychological clues. Just as Freud was

interested in the psychopathology of everyday life, H.D. was interested in its mythology, its alchemy, and its angelology.

It is largely these mystical areas she entered when she probed that 'utterly unknown Deep'; these are what she found in the unconscious. She was to refer to this 'depth' again in Tribute to Freud:

He had dared to say that the dream came from an unexplored depth in man's consciousness and that this unexplored depth ran like a great stream or ocean underground, and the vast depth of that ocean was the same vast depth that to-day, as in Joseph's day, overflowing in man's small consciousness, produced inspiration, madness, creative idea or the dregs of the dreariest symptoms of mental unrest and disease. He had dared to say that it was the same ocean of universal consciousness, and even if not stated in so many words, he had dared to imply that this consciousness proclaimed all men one; all nations and races met in the universal world of the dream; and he had dared to say that the dream-symbol could be interpreted; its language, its imagery were common to the whole race, not only of the living but of those ten thousand years dead. (pp.76-77)

This idea of an intellectual past being preserved in the subconscious and manifested in dreams was clearly a revelation to H.D. and allowed her to give free rein to her syncretistic impulse. Where Eliot and Pound explored the fragmentary remnants of literary traditions, she explored the fragmentary remnants of religious ones. With the backing of Freudian psychology she could explore religious and mystical images of varying antiquity, try to find a unifying meaning among them, and link them with techniques of association and dream-like merging. It is Section (16) of The Walls Do Not Fall that shows this happening most explicitly, as the Egyptian gods 'Ra, Osiris, Amen' meet in what is probably a Moravian church ('a spacious, bare meeting-house') in her home town - Bethelhem, Pennsylvania. In 'The Walls Do Not Fall' and 'Tribute to the Angels', central experiences are presented in dreams and, in 'The Flowering of the Rod', in a vision. And she sometimes uses dream-like elements in her poetry deliberately to conjure up a sense of unreality which allows connection by association, and merging of symbolic figures, to be more readily accepted. By reminding the reader of what he has experienced in dreams, the introduction of dream-like elements conditions him to accept other elements not normally apprehended by the conscious mind. In this way H.D. exploits aspects of the mind which neither judge, nor connect ideas by logic.

However, the further H.D. goes in this direction the clearer it becomes that the ideas she is expressing are profoundly unFreudian. Even to her the strain of this seems

to tell in the passage (pp.76-77) I have quoted above where she says 'even if not stated in so many words'. The fact is that the idea of the subconscious linking 'all nations and races' is much closer to Jung than it is to Freud. That H.D. had studied Jung is evident in the statement of her friend Norman Holmes Pearson that

Like many Freudians, she became quasi-Jungian and could bring the cabala, astrology, magic, Christianity, classical and Egyptian mythology, and personal experience into a joint sense of Ancient Wisdom.¹⁴

It seems possible that a highly imaginative person like H.D. who had both been psychoanalysed by Freud and was deeply read in mystical lore of various kinds could have reached conclusions independently, that, looking back, seem identifiably Jungian in kind. Nonetheless, it seems likely from this statement by Pearson that Jung at least helped to give such speculations a kind of written confirmation. H.D.'s prose often shows signs of direct Jungian influence, for instance in the passage from her Ion quoted above where she refers to 'group-consciousness',⁸ and in Helen in Egypt where her reflections on time and the transcendence of time lead her to speak of Helen invoking a symbol 'from the depth of her racial inheritance' (p.13). So, Jung's book Psychology and Alchemy,¹⁵ together with its predecessors the lectures 'Dream Symbols of the Process of Individuation' and 'The Idea of Redemption in Alchemy' (whose publication in the book The Integration of the

Personality¹⁶ predate 'The Walls Do Not Fall' by four years), help the reader of Trilogy to realise in what ways a quasi-Jungian would interpret alchemy.

In fact the remarkable thing about Jung's essay is the striking resemblance of its preoccupations to those of H.D. The psychiatrist, like the poet, was most concerned to re-interpret this mystical discipline in psychological and spiritual terms. H.D.'s concern - which I noted in my second chapter - with the dualism between matter and mind, as well as the concern with the dualism between outer and inner worlds, is one which Jung identifies as being central to a modern approach to alchemy:

during the carrying out of the chemical experiment the laboratory worker had certain psychic experiences that appeared to him as a particular behaviour of the chemical process.

Since it is a question of projection, it was naturally unknown to him that his experience had nothing to do with matter in itself (as we know it today).

He experienced his projection as a characteristic of matter; but what he actually experienced was his own unconscious.

(p.213)

The activity of the alchemist, as re-interpreted here by Jung, is very similar to the activity of the human mind as described by H.D. in Ion. She describes it dehumanising itself, reaching out like a shell-fish, and achieving 'kinship with unconscious forces of most subtle definition.'⁸ He describes the alchemist projecting his unconscious upon

matter, and so giving elements in his unconscious material form. The similarity of this to the expressive method of poets, especially Imagist poets, is obvious, and alchemy clearly offered a solution to the mind and matter dualism which Imagism posed:

Just because of the intermixture of the physical and the psychic, a doubt remains as to whether the final transformations in the alchemistic process are to be sought for more in the material, or more in the spiritual realm. But actually this question is wrongly put: no either - or existed for that age, but an intermediate realm between matter and mind, a psychic realm of subtle bodies to which a mental as well as a material manifestation was suitable. (p.222)

The simultaneously material and spiritual goal is the philosophical gold of spiritual truth - and here H.D. sees a connection between the alchemist and the poet. Both are engaged in this quest, and both pursue it through their arts:

Hermes Trismegistus
is patron of alchemists;
his province is thought,
inventive, artful and curious;
his metal is quicksilver,
his clients, orators, thieves and poets ...
(I, p.63)

Her directive to the poet is the same as Hermes' directive

to the alchemist - 'melt down and integrate' (I, p. 63). The chemical changes in the alchemist's crucible, the fusions, blendings, and transformations are analogous to the poet's verbal alchemy, his juxtapositions, blendings and transformations. The ultimate goal is achieved through a fusion that brings about union. For Martin Ruland, in A Lexicon of Alchemy, 'chemia' is 'an Art of Melting or Fusing'¹⁷. The truth which is thus obtained is a symbolic truth and one available only to the initiate. To return to Jung:

The place, or the medium, of the actualization is neither matter nor spirit, but the intermediate realm of subtle actuality for which the symbol is the only adequate expression. The symbol is neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal. It is always both - it is non vulgi, the aristocratic affair of one who is set apart ... chosen and predestined by God from the very beginning. (p. 226)

This is certainly enough to explain H.D.'s attraction to alchemy. It had a mystical significance in its connections with magic but it was also an expression of psychological truth in pseudo-scientific terms, and could therefore be fused with what she had learned about the unconscious from Freud. It also provided a system of symbols which had the concreteness of the image and the psychological significance of myth.

It seems to me, therefore, that the idea of the alchemical 'prima materia' (the starting-point of the

experiment) and its transformation into philosophical gold, is a central motif in Trilogy. So, H.D.'s poetic work, like the alchemical work itself, is in three parts and, as Evelyn Underhill says:

The alchemists, whether their search be for a physical or a spiritual "tincture", say always that ... it is composed of "three numbers" or elements ...¹⁸

The Three Principles being enclosed in the vessel ... which is man himself, and subjected to a gentle fire ... the process of the Great Work, the mystic transmutation of natural into spiritual man, can begin. This work, like the ingredients which compose it, has "three numbers": and the first matter, in the course of its transmutation, assumes three successive colours: the Black, the White, and the Red. These three colours are clearly analogous to the three traditional stages of the Mystic Way: Purgation, Illumination, Union. (p.173)

In Trilogy, H.D. was attempting to transform herself spiritually through her subject matter as the alchemist transforms himself alongside his 'prima materia'. The blackness referred to by Evelyn Underhill corresponds, in Jung's interpretation, to the 'darkness of our spirit'. In this way, as he points out:

the author feels or experiences the opening stage of the alchemistic process as coincident or even identical with his own psychological condition. (p.213)

This darkness of the spirit, this alchemical Blackness, has its equivalent in the opening passage of 'The Walls Do Not Fall', and, in a letter to Norman Holmes Pearson, H.D. referred to her original inspiration for the poem in almost precisely these terms. She wrote about how she had set about writing a long poem and indicated the importance of always proceeding with reference to the starting-point:

I took a bus to Putney - the trees, etc. as per enclosed. I wrote the poems at odd moments, as a poet should - started the first, on the top of the bus brushing through those chestnut-trees. They link on to the first - I purposely tried to keep the link, but carry on from the black tunnel or darkness or "initiation", at least towards the tunnel entrance. I really DID feel that a new heaven and a new earth were about to materialize. It lasted as you know, for a few weeks - then D-Day!¹⁹

The beginning of the poem, then, is a darkness, it deals with the depth of war. Nonetheless, H.D. stresses that the beginnings of hope are already present in this darkness, it is the darkness of 'initiation'. In other words it is the first stage of the 'Mystic Way' referred to by Evelyn Underhill, it is the Purgation that will lead to Illumination and Union. For H.D., here, the personal and the

historical are inseparable: the darkness and hope of the one is the darkness and hope of the other. The first section represents the most profoundly social moment in H.D.'s poetic output, it achieves its resonances because the personal and the historical reinforce each other. It takes the form of, in Ruland's sense, a 'meditatio':

The name of an Internal Talk of one person with another who is invisible, as in the invocation of the Deity, or communion with one's self, or with one's good angel.

(p.226)

The person addressed in this passage could be any of these persons, as well as Bryher, the poem's dedicatee. But the 'we' referred to (and there is only one other significant use of the pronoun in H.D.'s work²⁰) indicates also that H.D. is dealing here, as she so rarely does, with the spiritual fate of a whole society.

The central idea of the passage is that the destruction of the blitz is real, but also that it can be transcended - in other words that, ultimately, the walls do not fall. H.D.'s cyclical view of time allows her to regard the destruction as a necessary part of a recurring process. It is, in a sense, the alchemical experiment writ large:

man is purified by the darkness, misery and despair which follows the emergence of his spiritual consciousness. As psychic uproar and disorder seems part of the process of mental growth, so

"Solve et coagula" - break down that
you may build up - is the watchword
of the spiritual alchemist.

(Underhill, p.173)

So the breaking down of the walls that war causes
will lead to a new building up, to an alchemical
transformation of society. Such transformation has a
potential presence even in the midst of this spiritual
darkness. The word 'lapis' in the seventh line punningly
suggests the philosopher's stone; the word 'tomb' in the
eleventh line is also, according to Ruland, a word used
by alchemists:

The Philosophers have often made use
of the symbolism of the tomb to
contrive allegories concerning the
putrefaction of the Matter of the
Work.

(p.430)

This putrefaction is again a characteristic of the first
stage of the alchemical work and therefore again holds
within it the possibilities of the later stages, the
achievement of goldness.

So, too, 'the stone papyrus' is, as John Scoggan
has pointed out, 'the Flowering Rod'.²¹ Norman Holmes
Pearson attests that the reference here is to the temple
of Amen-Ra seen by H.D. and her friend Bryher.²² In that
temple, to return to Scoggan, 'the stone papyrus' were
'reeds shaped in stone' (p.27) and:

Each rod-pillar is an image of the World Tree which bears the Flowering of Creation ... The papyrus bundles naturally bear papyrus blooms, yet in the change to stone, the grass-flower was so difficult to reproduce that sculptors found alternative florescences to crown the pillars. They frequently chose the lotus bloom, e.g. at Luxor, where capitals are half-opened lotus buds ... In any case the bulging reeds suggested to the Egyptians a rotund fecundity, pregnant with the new life of the world. Therefore the reed-pillars were always associated with feminine procreativity, giving rebirth to Osiris in his kingship image as Horus. (p.29)

The procreative associations of these hieroglyphs in stone, 'the Luxor bee, chick and hare' (T, p.3), are therefore extremely powerful. Firstly, they are connected with Osiris, who, as

a vegetation spirit that dies and is ceaselessly reborn ... represents the corn, the vine and trees. He is also the Nile which rises and falls each year; the light of the sun which vanishes in the shadows every evening to reappear more brilliantly at dawn.²³

Secondly, they represent the Egyptian view of the magical power of words, since to the Egyptians word and object were

inseparable, and words called objects into being. So, Thoth, the inventor of language and script,

accomplished the work of creation by the sound of his voice alone ... As inventor of hieroglyphs, he was named "Lord of Holy Words".²⁴

So it is Thoth who is the attendant spirit of the hieroglyphs that 'prophesy' and so bring into being. He is, as Patrick Boylan's²⁵ book is dedicated to illustrating, the Hermes of Egypt, the original alchemist, since it was from Egypt that alchemy originally came. The word-play in which H.D. indulges has its precedent in the magical formulae of the Pyramids.

Thirdly, the papyrus/hieroglyphs represent flowering rods. In this sense they connect with the bennu bird referred to by H.D. in Section (25) of 'The Walls Do Not Fall', and which, as Norman Holmes Pearson reminds us is 'the Egyptian phoenix' and

dropped a grain in the small urn of the heart. The grain grew to a rod. The rod promised a blossom.

(Foreword, p.vi.)

They are connected also with the caduceus, referred to by H.D. in Section (3), which is, as well as a classical fable, an alchemical symbol:

The Caduceus is composed of three parts - of the golden stem, or rod, surmounted by an iron apple, and of two serpents which seem to be on the point of

devouring it. One of these serpents represents the volatile portion of the matter of the Philosophers, the other signifies the fixed part, and these strive with one another in the vessel. They are united, equilibrated, and restrained in the poise of fixation by the philosophical gold, typified in the stem or rod, and thus they are inseparably united in one body.

(Ruland, p.344)

So that the rods as Caduceus symbolise alchemical transmutation, and the Caduceus has also its more familiar function:

... among the dying

it bears healing:

or evoking the dead,

it brings life to the living. (T, p.7) (p.27)

H.D. in this way discovered hope, the kingdom of heaven, in the world within; as she herself said: 'that outer threat and constant reminder of death drove (her) inward'.²⁶ 'The Walls Do Not Fall' was the first product of this and was meant originally to stand on its own. It was the praise of Osbert Sitwell that motivated H.D. to write 'Tribute to the Angels', as Norman Holmes Pearson testifies:

He wrote a review of it for the

Observer ... "I like the review

so much," she wrote in June 1944,

"and the line, 'we want - we need -

more' so be-dazzled me that I sat

down the last two weeks of May and
did another series ... a sort of
premature peace poem."²⁷

So, while the later sections of Trilogy take up the themes
of 'The Walls Do Not Fall', they do not change the integrity
of that poem as a single piece. To state it in the terms in
which I have stated the subject-matter of these war poems,
the two later stages of the 'Mystic Way', Illumination and
Union, are at least tentatively reached within the first part
of Trilogy. Sections (16) to (18) contain illumination of a
kind, with the manifestation, in a dream, of 'Ra, Osiris,
Amen'. The conclusion of (18) reaches toward union:

now it appears obvious
that Amen is our Christos. (p.27)

Section (40) approaches 'the secret of Isis':

there was One
in the beginning, Creator,
Fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever ... (pp.54-55)

And Section (42) asks:

O, Sire,
is this union at last? (p.57)

In 'Tribute to the Angels', though, this
tentativeness has vanished: H.D. has gone altogether beyond
the stage of purgation. This section is concerned with
illumination. Its references to alchemical practice are
explicit ('Now polish the crucible' (p.71); 'O swiftly,
re-light the flame' (p.74)). And it refers explicitly to
transformation in the image of the flowering of the

charred tree (Sections (19) and (20)). So, too, illumination is specifically referred to. Darkness is overthrown:

... Hermes Trismegistus
spears, with Saint Michael,
the darkness of ignorance ... (p.98)

and whiteness (colour of the second stage) and light take over, leading towards union:

And the point in the spectrum
where all lights become one,
is white and white is not no-colour,
as we were told as children,
but all-colour ... (p.109)

The ultimate transformation into union is achieved in the narrative in 'The Flowering Rod', which I analysed in my last chapter. Technically, H.D. brings this about in two ways: firstly, by her peculiarly mystical use of the pun; and secondly, by her conflating of different myths in the same image. The pun, for H.D., represents a great deal more than verbal tinkering: it is a method of searching for truth. Like the Egyptians, she regarded words as having a magical significance: for this reason, Trilogy is centrally concerned with the importance of language and the importance of the poet in preserving it. It shares this preoccupation with 'Four Quartets'²⁸ but pushes the idea much further in regarding language as not merely a means of exploring truth, but as an end in itself, as a source of truth. The transformations and confluences which verbal coincidence effects are regarded by H.D. as spiritual discoveries. Here,

too, the alchemical analogy is important: two words are placed together and out of them arises a third meaning, a kind of verbal gold. Scoggan has analysed in detail the most important pun in 'The Flowering of the Rod' - the one on Mary, Magdala, Mara and myrrh, explored in Section (16):

Myrrh is a very prominent substance in the New Testament, always associated with Mary and the Tree of Life and the Cross. The myrrh-tree ... exudes a bitter yellow resinous gum which was used by the ancients as an ingredient of incense for anointing kings and the dead. The name of the tree is from the Greek myrrha, of Semitic origin; akin to the Hebraic mor myrrh, mar bitter; and Arabic murr myrrh, bitter (O.E.D.) The name Mary is derived from the same etymology, mar marah bitter. Hilda Doolittle's scholarship is accurate. Mary Magdalene, means a temple pillar, like Nut or Hathor, which sheds the Oil of Mercy that is myrrh instead of milk.

(pp.60-61)

So, as he goes on to point out, Mary Magdalene is always pictured in Christian iconography holding an alabaster vase of oils in one hand. This is where H.D.'s conflation of myths comes into operation. For this connects with the quest of Seth who journeyed into paradise and brought back the oil of life:

"The Flowering of the Rod" is about the transmission of this precious alabaster vase of oils from the time of Seth's visit to paradise, through

generations of belief into the hands
of Azar and the Magician Kaspar, one
of the Wise Men of the East. (p.62)

Here once again the centrally important idea of mergings and blendings that effect transformations is crucial. It is these effects that reach towards the idea of spiritual union which is H.D.'s intention. They allow Kaspar to achieve a unity of vision so that he is enabled to see the crown of the head of Mary Magdalene ('a circlet of square-cut stones on the head of a lady' (p.150)), and to see into one of the jewels there. Looking into it, he has a vision of the original unity, of creation:

And the flower, thus contained
in the infinitely tiny grain or seed,
opened petal by petal, a circle,
and each petal was separate
yet still held, as it were,
by some force of attraction
to its dynamic centre;
and the circle went on widening
and would go on opening
he knew, to infinity;
but before he was lost,
out-of-time completely,
he saw the islands of the Blest,
he saw the Hesperides,
he saw the circles and circles of islands
about the lost centre-island, Atlantis;
he saw what the sacrosanct legend
said still existed,
he saw the lands of the blest,
the promised lands, lost;

he, in that half-second, saw
the whole scope and plan
of our and his civilization on this,
his and our earth, before Adam. (pp.153-154)

To have taken such a complex pattern of references and made it cohere is a considerable poetic achievement. However, H.H. Watts, in his strictures on 'The Walls Do Not Fall' and 'Tribute to the Angels' (his essay²⁹ appeared before the third poem in Trilogy) does not address himself to this question. His concern is with more fundamental matters. He addresses himself first of all to the reason why such poems are written and then declares the poem

Very moving, if there be such a
composite figure as Amen-Christos,
such a fixed point, such an as-if. But
one does not put a roof to bare ruined
walls by means of an intensely felt
metaphor or, to be quite fair, an
emotional "aperçu" that is apparently
the product of serious, extensive
reading in comparative religion. (pp.298-299)

He decides that in fact H.D. does not believe in the reality of Amen-Christos but regards it merely as a 'poetic trope', and considers that

... it will take ... more than a trope
to deliver H.D., to deliver mankind,
from "the body of this death", from
the wheel and from the chain that
binds mankind to the wheel. (p.301)

There is a certain amount of validity in Watts' conclusions, but the arguments he uses for reaching them are wrongly put. Most importantly, to say that H.D. did not believe in the reality of Amen-Christos other than as a poetic trope is to make a fundamental mistake about H.D. Her mind was not of the analytical kind: it was not at all involved in the business of making distinctions. For her a concept that proved its reality in poetic terms was at least as real as one that proved its reality elsewhere. She believed in the predominant validity of the mind's interpretations: for her, what has been thought once always retains a certain reality. To say, as Jung would, that this may only be a psychological reality, is again to make a distinction that would be alien to her.

It is not surprising that she was attracted to certain magic and primitive kinds of thinking then, considering that magic, as Freud points out in Totem and Taboo, is governed by, 'the principle of the "omnipotence of thoughts"'.³⁰

Significantly enough, Freud sees the survival of this principle in modern neurotics:

... what determines the formation of symptoms is the reality not of experience but of thought. Neurotics live in a world apart, where ... only "neurotic currency" is legal tender; that is to say, they are only affected by what is thought with intensity and pictured with emotion, whereas agreement with external reality is a matter of no importance. (p.86)

This psychiatric diagnosis seems to tally disturbingly well with the psychological picture of H.D. which emerges from the evidence presented above - notably in the passages quoted from her book on Freud.

That there was a neurotic element in H.D.'s personality seems to me undeniable. But what is equally undeniable is the fascinating and powerful ways in which this is transformed in her work. H.D. reverses Williams: she believes that there should be no things but in ideas. It is to exemplify this central idea that H.D. incorporates into her work all the mystical references to which I have referred. She wishes to prove that all these beliefs held in the past have their place in our modern minds, and that their presence there has a significance that transcends the mere contingencies of the objective. In insisting on the primacy of the subjective - as she does throughout Trilogy, Helen in Egypt and Hermetic Definition, she insists upon the survival of past values. For her the past continues to be present in the strata of contemporary minds: for her, therefore, the exploration of the objective contemporary world is an irrelevant exercise compared with the archaeological excavation of subjective depths which contain the past.

There would surely be very few readers who would go as far as H.D. in her belief in the omnipotence of thoughts. On the other hand, Watts is surely wrong, ultimately, when he says that 'one does not put a roof to bare ruined walls by an intensely felt metaphor' - in a very important sense one can. To take the materialist argument this far is surely to ignore the transformative power of thought: the way that it can envisage change as a necessary preliminary to effecting it. It is to ignore also the transformative power of art: it is in this sense, after all,

that it is analogous to magic. It is an indication of the extent and the flexibility of Freud's genius that he realised this:

In only a single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects - thanks to artistic illusion - just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the "magic of art" and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct to-day. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes. (p.90)

This magical ability of art to transform reality is of central importance to H.D.: it emphasises the power of the artist, through his social function as outcast, to discover positive value. The importance of this function to H.D. cannot be overestimated. Passages within Trilogy state it explicitly, and the structure of that poem, with its insistent movement (as I have shown) towards positive conclusions, states it implicitly. For, to H.D., the artist (to return to the Jung passage quoted in Chapter Six) takes 'to the back streets and alleys', and here 'his relative lack of adaptation turns out to his advantage, it enables him ... to discover the unconscious needs of his age'.³¹ H.D. was an extreme example of this: she absentmindedly took to the Nazi streets of Vienna because she was so occupied with the back streets of her inner world. She was 'out of step with world so-called progress'

(T, p.129) because she was seeking spiritual values as a corrective - in Jung's words, as a 'process of self-regulation' - to the destructiveness of her age. Ever since her volume What Do I Love? she had been single-minded in this, and it is the cause of her resolute earnestness. This quality is remarkable considering the prevalence of irony, its tonal opposite, as a poetic mode among her contemporaries. Irony rarely appears in H.D.'s work. Where it does it is usually only reported from the mouths of others, as in the conversational manner of a number of the poems in Red Roses for Bronze and some of the passages in 'The Flowering of the Rod'. In all those cases, the conversational level in the poetry is revealed as trivial by being placed in a perspective of matters of greater import.

Nor does H.D. adopt the detached observing manner which is a feature of many of the Imagist poems of Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams. The simultaneously playful and serious wit of Marianne Moore, for instance in 'Propriety',³² and the self-consciously flat descriptive manner of Williams, for instance in 'Pictures from Brueghel',³³ are not within her range, and are simply not attempted by H.D. Her manner, by contrast, is always committed. Here again she is insistently uncontemporary. In fact, her commitment is consistently to beliefs that have been held - and held fervently - in the past. The fervour is of the greatest importance since, to H.D., it is this which gauges their validity, given the implicit belief behind all her later work in the omnipotence of thoughts.

The commitment which Trilogy expresses, then, is to past spiritual values evoked in order to counterbalance a present spiritual vacuum. While H.D.'s function here has its Jungian aspect, since it fulfils the artist's role as a therapist for his society, it also has a more straightforward personal function for H.D. For what this harking back to past religions also indicates is the influence which nostalgia still exercised upon her. It indicates, in other words, that she was still moved by feelings quite similar to the ones she had previously experienced about Greece. In many ways she retained throughout her life a closer allegiance to the poets I mentioned at the end of Chapter Three - Swinburne, Poe, and Wilde - than to her contemporaries, whose style, admittedly, is much closer to hers. For these earlier poets shared with her a yearning for past grandeur which takes a more sentimental form than that which is in evidence in 'The Waste Land',³⁴ and The Cantos.³⁵

Evidence of this allegiance is present, as she herself admitted, in her poem 'Winter Love', in which some of the passages 'are done in a strangely familiar Swinburnian metre - I can't think I must be Pound-Eliot.'²⁶ That poem is a sequel to Helen in Egypt which represents another return to Greek, combined now with Egyptian, subject-matter. In Helen in Egypt the 'omnipotence of thoughts', their power to transform, is explored in greater detail, and her search for spiritual value is continued in this form. This poem is the subject of my next chapter.

H.D.'s tenuous hold upon the objective world, with its concomitant intensifying of the vividness of the objective when it emerges, is the keynote to Helen in Egypt. The context presented in this long poem is predominantly abstract and subjective, and this is crucial to the view of experience presented in it - a view which is, in a sense which I shall explain later, essentialist in kind. However, given that the landscape which H.D. creates in her epic is indeterminate as a result of this abstractness, it was necessary that she provide her reader with landmarks, with elements of reassuring solidity. CHAPTER EIGHT

aided technically by her use of Imagism, combined here with scenic effects of a cinematic kind, and, in terms of subject-matter, by the use of Helen as a unifying consciousness. This chapter discusses all these elements in the poem.

What must, however, be emphasised is that the poem explores, through its many shifts and transformations, the effect which the overwhelming power of subjectivity, of the 'omnipotence of thought',¹ has upon our experience.

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And despite the clumsiness of some of its narrating, H.D.'s understanding of narrative is much more sophisticated in Helen in Egypt than it was in 'The Flowering of the Rod': she recognises in the later poem that fictiveness is not merely the province of the man who tells a story, that, in fact, all our experience is riddled with it. For this reason, Helen in Egypt is full of riddles and questions. The reader shares Helen's bewilderment, her profound insecurity, which produces in him a far-reaching uncertainty about the character and plot, even about the setting, of H.D.'s epic.

The word 'epic' is one which H.D. herself applies to her poem (p.299), but since it constantly questions the reality of the story it is telling, it is an epic of a peculiar kind. It is more concerned with interpretation than narrative, and its narrative seems to have more versions than characters - for the characters, especially Helen, constantly question the reality of their experience and suggest alternative explanations. Nor are the authorial interventions, that take place in the introductory prose passages, much help here either. For these too ask questions as much as they provide solutions; they are at best tentative and occasionally as

bewildered as the characters. So in Book Two of 'Eidolon' alone she asks: 'Where is (Helen) now?' (p.231); 'How bring them together? But why bring them together?' (p.234); 'What had she lost? What had she gained?' (p.236); 'It is a play, a drama - "who set the scene? who (sic) lured the players?"' (p.239). The prose introductions do carry some of the narrative burden, however clumsily. But another important part of their function is to draw the reader's attention to the unusualness of Helen in Egypt as epic. The commentary that they introduce deters the reader from becoming too involved in the story, so that he may concentrate upon the need to interpret it. They also introduce an element of self-consciousness which insists upon the fictiveness of the narrative, and in this way they deepen the uncertainty which the poetry arouses. It is therefore important that the prose introductions do not provide answers too readily.

What they do provide are clues to the nature of the uncertainties with which the characters are faced. For these characters constantly question the reality of each others' personalities: being as unstable as they are, shifting and transforming, can they constitute identities? This question has a naturalistic aspect: character undergoes change both through mood and development, and Helen is aware that the men she meets again (Achilles, Theseus, Paris) have been both altered by their experiences, and may alter minute by minute. But the transformations in the poem are not as simple as this. Helen in Egypt insists upon the changes that are brought about by infinitely subtle and complex

alterations in states of consciousness, varying from heightened awareness, or hyperaesthesia, to dream. The way H.D. delineates the ramifications involved in this produces the labyrinthine twists and turns of the poem. So, in one of her prose introductions, H.D. describes Theseus remembering the story. It is, though, 'another story' because he 'seems deliberately to have stepped out of the stream of our and of Helen's consciousness' (p.179). This produces another shift in perspective:

His Achilles lingering with Polyxena ...
is not Helen's Achilles "on the desolate
beach." (p.179)

This sort of shift is easily accepted by the reader since it is largely of the familiar kind brought about by the distortions of memory, and by differences in the way that different personalities observe the same event. This is the influence of subjectivity at its most comprehensible. Where it becomes less so is in the area of dream and day-dream: especially in a context that deliberately withholds information about the actual status of the experience that is being described. This is part of the poem's tinkering with fictiveness: its insistence that fictiveness is part of the texture of everyday reality, even of waking reality. And this, too, is an indication of H.D.'s greater sophistication in this poem as compared with Trilogy, where she carefully differentiated between dreams and waking.

In both the poetry and the prose introductions, therefore, the feeling that what is being described is a

dream or a day-dream, is continually present, and is occasionally made explicit. So, near the beginning of Helen in Egypt, Helen insists (but clearly insists too much) on the reality of what she is presently experiencing; "I am awake" she says, "no trance". Nonetheless, even here she has to concede "I move as one in a dream" (p.45). The opening prose passage in 'Leuke' recalls this state of mind, now described as 'an ecstatic or semi-trance state', only to tell us that now 'the dream is over' (p.113). However, this only emphasises how dominant this dream has been: it has occupied the majority of the poem so far, and is, moreover, over only 'momentarily'. It is noticeable also that the prose insists on hesitation even here. For it does not tell us that Helen was actually dreaming - she merely moved 'as one in a dream' - and it does not tell us that Helen is now actually awake - merely that it is 'as if' the dream had ended. And the poem that follows this prose introduces a further complexity, for the prose informs us that Helen is now occupied with 'remembrance' (p.113), and in the poem Helen says 'I remember a dream that was real' (p.114). The idea that dream can be reality is further reinforced by a reference here to the dream of Paris' mother 'that he (Paris) would cause war, / and war came.'

The poem's insistence on the complicated and bewildering interweavings of dream and reality perhaps largely explains why it repeatedly associates dream with the Labyrinth, the Classical image of complication and bewilderment. In Book Four of 'Leuké' Theseus refers to 'the

intricate windings of the Labyrinth[†] (p.163) as more difficult for Helen to conquer than Death, and runs through her experiences in an attempt to interpret them for her. But he, too, is distracted by the possible distortions caused by dream and insufficient memory:

that is all you remember,
it was all a dream until Achilles came;
and this Achilles?
in a dream, he woke you,
you were awake in a dream;
you say this waking dream
was enough, until his mother came ... (pp.163-4)

Two books later, these same elements are present when Helen puts her own experiences into Theseus[†] terms - 'was Achilles[†], she wonders, 'my Minotaur?' (p.189). And here the Labyrinth is associated with 'a dream[†] and 'a dream within a dream[†]: it has become, in other words, an image of convoluted inwardness. In this way it has a similar function to the sea-shell that worked in 'The Walls Do Not Fall' (T, pp.8-9) as a bastion against outward forces and became, in 'The Flowering of the Rod[†], a source of wisdom as the container of 'an echo of an echo[†] (T, pp.149 and 156).

Both the paths of a labyrinth and the spirals of a shell lead inward: they are both images of H.D.'s most fundamental preoccupation - her preoccupation with the inner world. The convolutions of both may deceive; H.D.'s use of them implies this, but her emphasis above all is upon the visionary truth which, in their inwardness, they may disclose. So, the sea-shell appears in Helen in Egypt as well as Trilogy; it is

a gift from Thetis to Helen in the later poem and its finiteness is stressed ('the infinite is reduced to a finite image, a "delicate sea-shell"' (p.118)). Nonetheless, this attribute is felt here, as in 'The Flowering of the Rod' as a paradoxical one: while the sea-shell is an image of limit in terms of the outer world, it is an image of limitlessness in terms of the inner. As the prose passage insists, '"a simple spiral-shell may tell a tale more ancient than these mysteries"' (p.118). It becomes a tomb, and the thousands of Greek dead becomes its pearl:

O the tomb, delicate sea-shell,
rock-cut but frail,
the thousand, thousand Greeks
fallen before the Walls,
were as one soul, one pearl ...

The connection, here, with Kaspar's vision as he looks into Mary's jewel and hears 'an echo of an echo in a shell' (T, p.149) is very strong, and there, too, there is the idea of paradoxical limit. For he sees, within the jewel, an 'infinitely tiny grain or seed' which 'opened petal by petal' and 'would go on opening/he knew, to infinity' (p.153). Looking within, therefore, he is vouchsafed a visionary truth:

he saw the islands of the Blest,
he saw the Hesperides ...

he, in that half-second, saw
the whole scope and plan

of our and his civilisation on this,
his and our earth, before Adam.

(pp.153-154)

What, then, these images of inwardness represent are the rewards which accrue from certain kinds of spiritual exercise - the mystical truths which are disclosed to those who look within. In fact the spiritual exercise to which they are closest is the activity of the alchemist as described in my last chapter, and interpreted by Carl Jung as a matter of 'projection'.² The psychic experience of transformation which the alchemist underwent and which he projected upon matter is imaged in both Kaspar's vision seen in Mary's jewel, and in the Labyrinth associated with Helen's dreams. So, the theme of transformation is again connected with alchemy, though its presence is much more shadowy in Helen in Egypt. The 'watchword of the spiritual alchemist', his "Solve et coagula" - break down that you may build up,³ occasionally becomes explicit, as when Helen describes the rebirth that she has achieved through the destruction of war:

I lost the Lover, Paris, ~~begetter,~~
but to find the Son; ~~your father,~~

old, old, old, are the Mysteries,
though I shed my years on Leuké,
as I dropped this mantle here,

my heart had been frozen, melted,
re-moulded, re-crystallized
in the fires of Egypt,

or in the fire of Death,
the funeral-pyre of the Greek heroes ...

(pp.161-162)

But 'Solve et coagula' is most important as a thematic background to the poem as a whole: Helen in Egypt constantly speaks of destruction leading to creation, and of death

leading to rebirth, and in this work, as in Trilogy, there are references to the flowering of the rod:

I saw the pomegranate, blackened walls,
blighted by winter, fear,
I saw the flowering pomegranate
and the cleft fruit on the summer branch;
I wait for a miracle as simple,
as inevitable as this ... (HE, p.135)

However, the understanding which Helen in Egypt adds to the experience in Trilogy is that the simplicity and inevitability of such miracles is surrounded by complications - that the uncertainties of experience make them appear neither simple nor inevitable. The transformations in Trilogy are clear-cut; Trilogy has 'Psyche, the butterfly,/out of the cocoon' (p.103): the transformations in Helen in Egypt are difficult, protracted:

live with the Swan, your begetter,
return to the Shell, your mother,

Leda, Thetis or Cytheraea;

Achilles or Paris?

beyond Trojan and Greek,

is the cloud, the wind, the Lover
you sought in the snow;

I am half-way to that Lover,

so rest - rest - rest -

here, we are half-way to the mountain,

the mountain beyond the mountain,

the mountain beyond Ida;

you found your way through despair,

but do not look back,

neither across the dividing seas,
to the sand and the hieroglyphs,
nor further (though nearer)
to the Towers and the blackened Walls,
there is nothing to fear,
you are neither there nor here,
but wavering
like a Psyche
with half-dried wings. (pp.172-173)

The repeated word 'half' stresses the feeling of incompleteness. This passage hints at the quest theme but has not that sense of purpose and assured meaning which the quest gives its participants: it has, instead, a sense of profound uncertainty, a questioning of quest. Helen is caught half-way between two places (Troy and Egypt) and half-way between two states of mind (seeking and rest). She is half-way towards being transformed but her rebirth is incomplete, she is Psyche but her wings are 'half-dried'. In this passage, and throughout Helen in Egypt, Helen struggles to understand her experience: much of the achievement of the poem is that it shows a mind actually in the process of that struggle, half-way towards understanding.

In struggling to understand, Helen is reaching towards definitions: both towards definitions of the men and gods she has encountered, and towards definition of herself and her own experiences. But it is definition which, in Helen in Egypt, constantly remains elusive: as the passage quoted above illustrates, it is constantly undermined by

uncertainties. For this reason, the Imagist method is again posed with a problem. Imagism, as my first chapter emphasises, insists upon definition, but H.D.'s mystical interests make it only locally possible. Increasingly, the limits which definition necessarily places upon what H.D. wished to discuss had to be discarded. I have shown this process at work in H.D.'s earlier poetry, but it reaches a further extent in Helen in Egypt because that poem directly addresses itself to the undefinable, it takes as part of its essential subject the difficulty of definition caused by the mind's distortions of our experience.

Where before stasis and limit were key characteristics of H.D.'s poetry, there are now shifts and transformations. Imagist assumptions are, in this way, reversed; if you are going to attempt 'direct treatment of the "thing" whether objective or subjective'⁴ you have to assume that thing will not have altered by the time you come to your treatment of it. The omnipresence of transformation in Helen in Egypt makes this impossible. The tendency of one character to become another character, and of one place to become another place, produces an effect completely the opposite of the technique of super-position used in Imagism. What happens there is that hard objects define each other by contrast by being placed next to each other. Here what is apparently hard softens, opposites melt together and produce a synthesis.

This means that the certainties of Imagist hardness have been undermined. And it is a constant theme of Helen in Egypt that the characters are searching for their bearings,

and cling to what is certain:

The whole heroic sequence is over,
forgotten, re-lived, forgotten again.
Only one thing is certain, the caravel,
as Helen had first called the death-
ship of Osiris. And as on his first
meeting with her, there are still "the
familiar stars". (p.59)

It seems, now, that physical objects can be mentally clung to
for comfort, but they are clung to desperately, with a
recognition of their ultimate unreality beside the
changeableness of experience:

only the salt air and a gull hovering
seemed real, and an old sailor
who greeted me as a lost stranger ... (pp.57-58)

These seem to be hard facts, but because of the context they
become dream-like. They appear too suddenly, and too focused,
to be part of the flow of more or less hard and
undifferentiated objectivity which we think of as waking
reality.

The point is that our expectations about objectivity
are completely disrupted by Helen in Egypt: the real place
of the poem is not Egypt nor Leuké, nor anywhere else, but
a created subjective geography. The poem is an exploration
of the mind conscious and unconscious, rational and intuitive.
What Helen in Egypt represents, then, is a further extension
of the element which I have noted as being consistently
present throughout H.D.'s work - her cultivation of an inner

world. Linda Welshimer Wagner is right to see the poem as 'a logical continuation of the themes and approaches of her earlier writing'.⁵ As Josephine Jacobsen, also, insists, there 'is an extraordinary unity in H.D.'s work, in the aspects of her vision. She limited herself radically in surface-range, depending on reinforcement rather than expansion.'⁶

The fascination of Helen in Egypt, therefore, is the way that it attempts to explore the meaning of images and experiences which were present earlier in her work, but present only as images and experiences. The spirit of inquiry which is present in the long poem produces a repetitiveness and a verbal clumsiness which are attendant upon H.D.'s earnest exploring and interpreting. But it produces also an extremely fruitful broadening of the possible approaches to images and experience. A much greater intellectual sophistication is in evidence on H.D.'s part in her attitude to both.

Just as the poem questions the validity of Imagist technique for the expression of experience, so, too, it questions the reality and value of experiences which are too shifting to be imagistically pinpointed. The poem ends upon a sort of peace that passes all understanding:

there is no before and no after,
there is one finite moment
that no infinite joy can disperse
or thought of past happiness
tempt from or dissipate;
now I know the best and the worst;

the seasons revolve around
a pause in the infinite rhythm
of the heart and of heaven.

(pp.314-315)

But it must not be thought that this cancels all the disturbance which has preceded it. Linda Welshimer Wagner lays too much stress upon H.D.'s 'amazing tranquility' (p.536), which is more apparent than real. For although the poem ends in this way, even here it includes references to the doubts which preceded it, for 'the threat of the Labyrinth' is refuted only 'at last' (p.314). The affirmation at the end is very much a matter of stating that all shall be well rather than all is well.

The all-embracing subjectivity of Helen in Egypt indicates a radical uncertainty not only about the meaning of experience, but about the reality of it. This involves a much more thorough questioning than the one I have described in What Do I Love? For H.D. is now asking a much more basic question, she wants to know what she knows, and it appears that nothing stays the same long enough to be knowable, let alone lovable. She is asking questions, in a consciously fictive form, about the difference between reality and fiction, and indicating how often they become confused. So Helen asks:

is it a story told,
a shadow of a shadow,
has it ever happened,
or is it yet to come?
do I myself invent
this tale of my sister's fate?

(p.72)

In the most satisfactory account of Helen in Egypt, L.S. Dembo stresses both this uncertainty and the suffering which is implicit in it. 'For Helen', he says, 'who exists and does not exist, being depends upon mystical knowledge; the primary source of emotion is uncertainty and the goal lies at the end of a labyrinth, at the bottom of a "spiral staircase", or within a convoluted seashell.'⁷ He sees Helen positing 'a whole series of identities unified by a concept of Proteus and the principle of metamorphosis he represents. Greek figures are "translated" into Egyptian, myth into mystery, action into idea. Just as Helen herself, for example, is "accused" of being related to Isis, so she sees Achilles partly as Osiris, partly as Typhon - preserver and destroyer.' (pp.34-35).

Dembo sees only one consistent feature - 'the demand to reconcile dualism, a demand that ends in a tragic fatalism characteristic of H.D.'s poetry.' (p.35). This seems to me to be what Linda Welshimer Wagner misses in speaking of H.D.'s 'amazing tranquility'. As Dembo goes on to say:

The tragic thesis that Love and War, life and death, harmony and discord, are twin aspects of a single process, a pattern, underlies the entire range of Helen's thought ... (p.36)

So:

Love and death are the archetypal dualities to be reconciled in Helen's psychological and cosmic experience, and in their reconciliation, Helen can comprehend that she has been part of a

pattern and thereby be relieved of whatever guilt she may have felt for her role in the ruin of Troy and the carnage among the Greeks. Further dualities are those of time and eternity, intellect and intuition, action and stasis, will and fate, body and soul. Greek intellect, represented by Theseus, is opposed to Egyptian Mystery ... (p.37)

The importance of this insight can hardly be over-estimated in understanding H.D. It is precisely by under-estimating the importance of this that Dembo makes his greatest mistake in his approach to H.D. - and that is in his obsessive insistence upon her aestheticism. To maintain, as Dembo does, that this aestheticism is dominant in her outlook is to ignore how consistently the mature H.D. fought against allowing any one kind of thought to dominate another, and how consistently she sought to reconcile and synthesise, to discover a unity. In placing such a stress, Dembo inevitably interposes another dualism, aestheticism as against mysticism, and H.D. would certainly have struggled against this as she struggled against dualism in any other form. The fact is that to separate the two in examining H.D.'s work is meaningless because they are present as aspects of a single attitude, complementary modes of perception. For H.D., art is a kind of magic, and magic is a kind of art.

In fact, this dualism is analogous to the one which Dembo himself indicates in Helen in Egypt, the one of 'Greek intellect, represented by Theseus', as 'opposed to Egyptian Mystery'. H.D. would certainly have been concerned

to reconcile art and magic as much as intellect and mystery. This, too, is an area where Josephine Jacobsen is (though in a more minor way) mistaken. She points out certain similarities between Helen in Egypt and Thomas Mann's Joseph in Egypt,⁸ and this comparison is, to a large extent, revealing and interesting.⁹ And it is especially revealing in this area of the reconciliation of opposites. Both the novel and the long poem use as their central idea the description of a famous representative of a mythopoeic culture (Greek in H.D.'s case, Semitic in Mann's) finding herself/himself caught up in the totally opposite Egyptian one.

Where the H.D. and the Thomas Mann differ though, is in the way they use this central idea. The poet was preoccupied with the discovery of an ultimate unity, the novelist was preoccupied with indicating how the two cultures differed. He was concerned to differentiate between two contrasting sensibilities. In this way he attempted to define what the Jewish outlook was, and through this he was concerned to analyse in what ways Jewish thought influenced Western sensibility. The following passage demonstrates how he achieved this by examining what a society innocent of the Semitic outlook must have been like:

... Mut tore with hot hands at the pretended fabric of their converse - his fig-leaf, as it were - to uncover the naked truth of the thou and I. She could not know what frightful associations were bound up in Joseph's mind with the idea of uncovering: Canaanitish associations warning against the forbidden thing, against every kind of drunken

shamelessness, going back to the beginning and the place where nakedness and knowledge had sharply confronted each other, with the resulting distinction between good and evil. Such a distinction was foreign to Mut's traditions ... she was quite without understanding of sin, there was no word for it in her vocabulary. (pp.500-501)

The conflict between Joseph and Mut defines the difference between Jew and Egyptian: it is 'a trial of strength between the power of Amun and God the Lord ...' (p.611).

Nowhere, in Helen in Egypt, is there anything like this kind of analysis. Such detail would have been foreign to H.D.'s purpose: she wanted neither her characters nor her mythopoeic cultures to be firmly located. Unfortunately, this often makes her reconciliations seem too easily achieved, and they often remain unconvincing, and sometimes unnoticed. Moreover, we never get the sense of relevance to modern concerns in Helen in Egypt that we do in Joseph in Egypt. Mann's exploration of the Jewish influence on Western sensibility presupposes a belief in evolutionary change which is more or less taken for granted by most twentieth century thinkers, but which H.D. did not share. For her, past and present are only superficially different and

In no wise is the pillar-of-fire
that went before
different from the pillar-of-fire
that comes after ... (T, p.49)

This indicates another fundamental difference in

the two works. Where Mann used Joseph and Mut as devices in his exploration of wider historical and social forces, H.D. presented her characters as infinitely more important than anything which was going on around them. It was her view that historical and social forces, far from determining human personality, are an irrelevance. References to social class, or even to wealth and poverty are almost non-existent in her work. With few exceptions, the effect of social conditions upon consciousness is ignored, even in her novels. She evaded human conflict in any of its forms and even where she could not avoid treating it to some extent - as in Bid Me to Live, where elements of jealousy and resentment seem inevitable - she shied away from it. The conflict in Helen in Egypt seems to be presented in order to be dismissed. It is used as a device by being counterpointed against the love between Helen and Achilles. But it is always kept in the background because, for H.D., it must not be allowed to distract attention from her central characters, especially Helen. For it is Helen who carries most of the poetic meaning of the work: it is she who is representative of eternal values.

H.D.'s preoccupations are again in evidence here, and with their usual force of exclusiveness. For where most modern readers would expect some sympathy to be accorded to the common soldiers, in this poem their deaths are either regarded as unimportant, or, as in the passage quoted above, are transformed into something else - 'the thousand, thousand Greeks/fallen before the Walls,/were as one soul, one pearl' (p.118). The substance of the subject-matter is

glossed over here in a way that looks complacent, but the real fault behind such writing is the eccentricity I discussed in my last chapter. H.D.'s thinking was associative, not logical, and thoroughly unmaterialist - for her, the material world was at most a metaphor for more important truths.

In this passage, as elsewhere in Helen in Egypt, H.D. is stressing the power of the subjective. It is here, therefore, that the issue with which I started this chapter again becomes important. Objectivity, for her, was constantly threatened by the possibility that what appeared real was dreamt, or part of a vision, or that the characters involved were merely phantoms. The apparently reassuring statement in the opening lines of the poem is undermined by an ambiguity:

Do not despair, the hosts
surging beneath the Walls,
(no more than I) are ghosts ... (p.1)

True, they are not ghosts any more than Helen is: but they are ghosts as much as she is. For this reason, H.D.'s poetic transformation of the Greek dead is not as complacent as it might appear - though the way H.D. states it is insensitive. What she is anxious to stress is that the Greek dead are merely characters in a fiction and have been transformed in advance. She indicates throughout her narrative that the subjective (the kiss in the night) can become much more important, in a sense much more real, than the objective reality of the thousand ships: but she insists that it makes no sense to compare them with each other - "can one weigh

the thousand ships against one kiss in the night?" (p.41).

her anatomy quest. Here, we are close to what Norman Holmes Pearson calls H.D.'s 'core myth', her belief, as she put it,

that "Helen in Egypt is a poem that questions values. H.D. asks 'Is it possible that it all happened, the ruin - it would seem not only of Troy, but of the "holocaust of the Greeks," of which she speaks later - in order that two souls or two soul-mates should meet?' (p.5). By asking this she is asking about the value of love, but she is also hinting at the mystical significance of this particular relationship. It is a measure of the extent of H.D.'s belief in subjective values that she can ask this question (even more that she can answer 'It almost seems so'). For H.D., personal experience can attain supreme importance. For her, as for Eliot, certain experiences can become transcendent and timeless, take on the significance of a 'moment in and out of time'.¹⁰ Moreover, in some ways, the view of this which the woman poet presents is more attractive, being more secular and human. Helen is given Christ-like associations: she says 'do not bewail the Fall' (p.1); 'to the Greeks who perished on the long voyage out, or who died imprecating her, beneath the Walls, she says, "you are forgiven"' (p.5); 'Troy-gates' were 'broken' 'in memory of her Body' (p.7). In other words Helen becomes the redeemer, as well as the destroyer, of Troy. But her differences from Christ are stressed as well, and here there is a deliberate flouting of orthodox Christianity. Helen is clearly preferred to Christ because she redeems through

trappings of regenerative femininity. Because of her

sexual love and becomes a source of spiritual truth through her amatory quest. Here, we are close to what Norman Holmes Pearson calls H.D.'s 'core myth', her belief, as she put it, that 'women are individually seeking, as one woman, fragments of the Eternal Lover. As the Eternal Lover has been scattered or dissociated, so she in her search for him.'¹¹

Sexual relationships, in Helen in Egypt, become like the alchemist's crucible, in which the elements are joined and transformed. By this means a discussion about masculinity and femininity is conducted in the poem alongside the motif of transformation. So, for Achilles, Helen is a source of insight:

The symbolic "veil" to which Achilles had enigmatically referred now resolves itself down to the memory of a woman's scarf, blowing in the winter-wind, one day before he had begun to tire of or distrust the original oracle of the purely masculine "iron-ring whom Death made stronger." (p.57)

Achilles, here, is close to a deeper significance through the apparently mundane 'scarf', stressing the power of Woman to encourage perception of more transcendent truths.

This is a fairly conventional idea, and previously used - partly for its conventionality - by André Breton, in whose poetry, as Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out,

it is femininity as such that introduces into civilisation that other element which is the truth of life and of poetry and which alone can deliver humanity.¹²

H.D.'s Helen takes on all the traditional and powerful trappings of regenerative femininity. Because of her

redemptive function she is compared to Christ, but the redemption she brings about is different because it is achieved in a specifically feminine way. Her knowledge 'is intuitive or emotional knowledge, rather than intellectual' (p.13). She 'denies an actual intellectual knowledge of the temple-symbols. But she is nearer to them than the instructed scribe; for her, the secret of the stone-writing is repeated in natural or human symbols. She herself is the writing.' (p.23)

However, H.D. is not content with the traditional view of Woman. She uses its powerful associations but insists upon transforming it at the same time. She insists, therefore, upon seeing Helen from the inside. Here, she reverses Breton, whose

perspective being exclusively poetic, it is exclusively as poetry, hence as the other, that woman is viewed therein. If the question of her own private destiny were raised, the reply would be involved with the ideal of reciprocal love: woman has no vocation other than love; this does not make her inferior, since man's vocation is also love. But one would like to know if for her also love is key to the world and revelation of beauty. Will she find that beauty in her lover, or in her own image? Will she be capable of that poetic action which realizes poetry through a sentient being, or will she limit herself to approving the work of her male? She is poetry in essence, directly - that is to say, for man; we are not told whether she is poetry for herself also. Breton does not speak of woman as subject.

H.D.'s Helen answers Simone de Beauvoir's questions. She is treated as subject; as Breton has 'a unique and eternal love for various women' (p.242), she constructs a unique and eternal love out of her experiences with different men. Love is, for her, 'key to the world and revelation of beauty' as it is for Breton. She finds beauty both in her lover and in her own image. She is capable both of that poetic action which realises poetry through a sentient being, and of approving the work of her male. Like Breton's woman, she is 'poetry in essence' but not simply for man. Her powers of regeneration are of mystical dimensions - this is what the comparison to Christ emphasises: while rooted in sexuality, in Helen's capacity for love demonstrated in her many lovers, her redemptive power also transcends sexual love. She is crucially, therefore, poetry in essence for herself as well as for her men because of her ability to transform herself, to achieve a symbolically exemplary rebirth.

Helen is 'poetry in essence' because it is with essences that H.D. is primarily concerned in Helen in Egypt. What Sartre says of Genet applies much more to H.D.; defining essentialism as 'the hierarchical conception of a world in which forms dovetail',¹³ he says:

Genet's imagination is essentialist ...
In real life, he seeks the Seaman in
every sailor, the Eternal in every pimp. In
his reverie he bends his mind to justifying

his quest. He generates each of his characters out of a higher Essence; he reduces the episode to being merely the manifest illustration of an eternal truth. (pp.40-41)

This is very much what happens in Helen in Egypt, any existential life which the characters have being subordinate to their essentialist function: they are all representative archetypes, though what they represent (even their whole identity) is likely to change.

This, together with the insistent subjectivity of the poem, largely explains the predominant abstractness of Helen in Egypt. This abstractness is central to H.D.'s purpose - without it she would not have been able to achieve the mystical reconciliations which are an integral part of her quest for unity. The way she employs her Greek heroes is also guaranteed to ensure that the abstractness is maintained. The modern reader is unused to being presented with figures like Helen and Achilles, and modern writers who use such figures tend to alter the perspective on them.

H.D. makes no attempt to modernise the treatment of these figures - as Pound did so boldly in Women of Trachis,¹⁴ where he used stark colloquial speech. Nor does she attempt to force the physical reality of the Classical world upon us in the way that Pound does, for instance, in Canto IV:

Palace in smoky light,
Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones,
ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows!

The silver mirrors catch the bright stones and
flare,
Dawn, to our waking, drifts in the green cool
light;
Dew-haze blurs, in the grass, pale ankles
moving.
Beat, beat, whirr, thud in the soft turf
under the apple trees,
Choros nympharum, goat-foot, with the
pale foot alternate;
Crescent of blue-shot waters, green-gold
in the shallows,
A black cock crows in the sea-foam ...¹⁵

The astonishing density of this brings an alien environment physically close to the reader. For H.D., by contrast, it is important that the environment of her poem remain alien. It must remain a strange place where strange things can easily happen.

For this reason the thoroughgoing Imagism of the Pound passage would break the spell in Helen in Egypt. H.D. uses her images sparingly in the poem, and for special effect: never before had she demonstrated such a delicate understanding of the particular effects of which the Imagist image is capable, never before had she manipulated it with such precision and subtlety. Given the subjective framework of the poem, the images themselves emerge self-consciously as subjective events. As I have pointed out before her images had all along been, in actual fact, a product of an inner world: the advance H.D. has made in Helen in Egypt is to present them as such, so that she demonstrates how the mind works in its fictive function of image-making.

In this way, too, H.D. seems almost to have become aware of the opposing pulls of agoraphobia and claustrophobia in her work (which I discussed in Chapter Six). So, images are used in Helen in Egypt as representatives of the objective world, and are received as such in radically opposed ways. As I said earlier in reference to Section 4, Book Four of the 'Pallinode' (pp.57-58), they can be clung to as a reassurance against the shifting and blurring changeableness of the subjective world. In other words they can be resorted to as a remedy for claustrophobia. But they can also represent 'invasion of the limitless' (T, p.9); so in Section 1 of Book 3 of 'Eidolon', the sea imagery enters as suddenly and disconcertingly as the sea imagery in 'Halcyon' (R.R.B., pp. 92-102):

Achilles said, which was the veil,
which was the dream?
they were one - on the horizon,
a sail sensed, not seen;
a bow, a familiar prow,
a hand on the rudder,
ropes, rope-ladders, the smell of tar,
I think he remembered them all,
(when he stooped to gather the sticks),
scattered tackle and gear,
a wheel, a mast, a dipping sail;
he struck the flint ...

but he only saw the ships
assembled at Aulis,
he only remembered his own ship
that would lead them all,
he only saw an image, a wooden image,
a mermaid, Thetis upon the prow. (pp.247 and 249)

The sudden remembering here comes as a profoundly disorienting shock, starting with the idea of all this as being potential ('a sail sensed, not seen') and then moving to an inexorable realisation.

This passage is among the most powerful in the long poem and achieves its effect by contrast with the abstract context out of which it emerges. It is important, nonetheless, to realise H.D.'s artistry in constructing that abstract context, representing as it does the building of the subjective world of the poem. It is in this way that she reproduces the texture of that apprehension of the world which we all share, and it is through this that the entry of hard images produces such a powerful effect. This passage arouses in the reader a sense of recognition because it has the force of sudden shifts in our mental perspective, which are a common experience. This partly explains the peculiar atmosphere of Helen in Egypt and its ability to suggest the atmosphere of constantly being on the edge of realisation, and then, occasionally, to allow that realisation to emerge:

the anger of Paris
was only a breath to fan the flame
of thoughts too deep to remember,
that break through the legend,
the fame of Achilles,
the beauty of Helen,
like fire
through the broken pictures
and a marble-floor.

(pp.268-269)

Moreover, what this passage also represents is H.D.'s playing off of existential incidents against her essentialist background. Through such incidents she brings her characters momentarily but startlingly to life, she manipulates details to suggest a fund of experience beneath the surface of the poem. The most remarkable feature of this is its restraint, and it is no accident that she insists upon the need for exactly this quality in the cinema's treatment of the Classics in a series of articles published thirty-four years before Helen in Egypt:

I am concerned here chiefly with attempts at more subtle simple effects; they so often fail for lack of some precise and definite clear intellect at the back of the whole, one centralizing focus of thought cutting and pruning the too extraneous underbrush of tangled detail. Someone should slash and cut.¹⁶

This is her more general statement of principle. She goes on to specify:

Having become sated with the grandiose, can't someone with exquisite taste and full professional share of technical ability light our souls with enthusiasm over ... one laurel branch, one figure sitting sideways, one gesture (not too frigid and not too stagily static) as for example toward a waiting enemy? (p.34)

It is precisely in this way that she presents certain incidents in the poem which take on a surprising existential.

particularity. An example of this is Section 5 of Book 3 of the 'Eidolon' (pp.256-257), where we are presented with Achilles alone: it is said that he 'skulks in his tent', but in fact he is disguised as a 'hostler', 'wrapped in a woollen cloak', 'with the hood drawn over his head'. He is then described alone, brooding, but the significance of his brooding is vividly impressed upon us:

 he went to the prow
 of his love, his beloved,
 feeling her flanks,
 tearing loose weed from her stern,
 brushing sand from her beams,
 not speaking, but praying ...

Here H.D. is employing precisely that restrained detail of gesture that she had prescribed for the cinema, and it works extremely well. The state of mind of Achilles is evoked by his almost sexual fondling of the beloved image (his 'eidolon'): his need to hold it is a remarkable detail of psychological realism. He clings to it the way I said before that hard images were clung to for comfort against the treacherous changeableness of the subjective world. This established, it is followed by Achilles' determined prayer:

 I will re-join the Greeks
 and the battle before the gate,
 if you promise a swift return,
 if you promise new sails for the fleet
 and a wind to bear us home,

 I am sick of the Trojan plain,
 I would rise, I would fall again
 in a tempest, a hurricane.

(p.257)

Another remarkable example of her use of suggestive detail is Section 1, Book Four of the 'Eidolon' (pp.265-267). Here, she plays off the existential against the essential, so that the two modes of thinking define each other by contrast (as physical images had been superposed for contrast earlier in her work). She opens the passage by presenting the thoughts of Helen as she wakes:

So it was nothing, nothing at all,
the loss, the gain; it was nothing,
the victory ...

But then she moves immediately into a setting of the scene, so that the reflecting mind of Helen is existentially placed:

I am awake
I see things clearly; it is dawn,
the light has changed only a little ...

This leads back to her thoughts, which turn to those of Achilles, and thereby to placing them in a scene:

the arid plain, only the wind,
tearing the canvas loose,
and the tent-pole swaying,
and I lying on my pallet, awake
and hearing the flap of the sail,
the creak of the mast in the mast-hold ...

All this culminates in an essentialist conclusion, with Achilles thinking 'I am immortal ...' and Helen wondering 'did she come, his eidolon?'.

It is through the combining of these opposite elements (abstractness against concrete images; essentialist against existentialist elements; agoraphobia against claustrophobia) that the peculiar atmosphere of Helen in Egypt is created. There is a constant thematic rhythm in the poem involving a movement from the particular to the general and vice versa. This is much more than simply combining image with statement: a technique which I discussed in relation to Trilogy. Here it is a matter of orchestrating a remarkable number of concerns. It takes its most basic and characteristic form in the device of juxtaposing pinpointed images against an abstract vastness. This is done in different ways - temporally (a moment against eternity); spatially (a detail against a panorama); and sometimes mixing the two:

The potion is not poison,
it is not Lethe and forgetfulness
but everlasting memory,
the glory and the beauty of the ships,
the wave that bore them onward
and the shock of hidden shoal,
the peril of the rocks,
the weary fall of sail,
the rope drawn taut,

the breathing and breath-taking
climb and fall, mountain and valley
challenging, the coast
drawn near, drawn far ...

(p.3)

This passage shows remarkable rhythmic subtlety and control. She manipulates the line-lengths (basically three stresses each)

into a near liturgical effect. So the description of the movement of the boat on the sea (lines 4-16) produces its effect by a juxtaposition of dactyl and spondee which enacts the idea of nearness and farness, coming together and falling apart. This rhythm is echoed in the rhythm of battle, and echoed also thematically in the physical nearness - combined with the farness apart of purpose - of the heroes fighting each other. And there is a further contrast between the physical closeness and the significance of the scene, emphasised by the way that they curse Helen 'through eternity' (p.4).

The effect is very like that achieved by a film camera when it moves away from the close-up of soldiers fighting to a view of the whole battle. It is for this reason that H.D.'s interest in cinema at this time is especially relevant; and it is surely significant that she wrote specifically about the cinema and the Classics, since this reflects her own technical problems in approaching a Classical subject. When, therefore, she wrote about the necessity for restraint in the cinema she was also addressing herself to her need for this in dealing with her own subject, so that when she says that

While perhaps some little unexpected
effect of a bare arm lifted might bring
back (as it does sometimes in a theatre)
all of antiquity. (p.39)

this use of detail is clearly also appropriate to her own medium. Moreover, she considered that, in the cinema, 'a

perfect medium has at last been granted us' (p.35) and that

Man has perfected a means of artistic expression, that, I assure you, would have made Phidias turn in his grave ... with envy. Light speaks, is pliant, is malleable.

For this reason it seems to me that H.D. was, in Helen in Egypt, mimicing cinematic effects partly through envy of the cinema's technical possibilities. And it is significant that she chose a famous sculptor as an example of an artist envious of the modern medium. It was the analogy of sculpting with poetry, after all, that she had chosen in 'Red Roses for Bronze' (R.R.B., pp.1-8): and it was this analogy that seemed so damningly appropriate considering the over-static nature of her poetry in 'Hymen' and 'Heliodora and Other Poems'. By contrast she was now praising a medium that is 'pliant' and 'malleable', a medium pre-eminently moving. The implication was that cinema could bring to life an era more vividly than the greatest visual artist contemporary with it could possibly manage.

Therefore, through emulating the cinema, H.D. goes beyond the merely dramatic effect produced by her presentation of the scene in the lines I analysed in Chapter 3 (T, p.136). In Helen in Egypt, too, H.D. presents scenes, and presents ideas and feelings associated with a scene, but she presents them in great profusion. Some occupy a whole section, others are defined imagistically in a line; some are described as though happening in the present

tense, others as though remembered happening (often in a way reminiscent of cinematic flash-back); and others are described in a way that makes their location in time difficult to decide - hence increasing the complexity of H.D.'s effects and also emphasising the timelessness of the world she is creating. The result is that she is able to intercut the past with the present to indicate cause and effect, and to suggest a highly active and deeply felt past being recollected in a puzzled present.

Probably the most effective example of this cinematic intercutting is Book Two of 'Leuke'. In Section 1 (pp.123-124) Paris speaks of how he was shot with a poisoned arrow by Philoctetes and Oenone would not heal him. Although he appears, at this point, to be explaining everything, he does not explain what it is that Oenone 'could not forgive' and 'could not forget' that makes her refuse. The reason is hinted at in Section 2 (pp.125-126) but not fully revealed until Section 4 (p.128): it is jealousy and she will not cure him until he forgets Helen. Meanwhile, in Section 2 there is mention of another grudge:

for Pallas remembered

insult before her altar,

Ajax and the Maiden Cassandra

The soldiers who have been fighting at Troy are swept to 'ignoble death' because of Athene's anger. These soldiers are linked thematically to Oenone and Paris because all of them are unable to forget Helen. The epic cinematic effect of 2 is followed by a more enclosed one in 3 (p.127), which

contains some of the most vivid lines in Helen in Egypt:

Who will forget Helen?
as she fled down the corridor,
the wounded sentry still had breath
to hiss, 'adulteress';
who will forget the veil,
caught on a fallen pilaster,
the shout, then breathless silence
after the gate fell,
silence so imminent,
I heard the very stuff rip
as she tore loose and ran;
who will forget Helen?
why did she limp and turn
at the stair-head and half turn back?
was it a broken sandal?

There seems to be great emotional pressure behind this passage. It describes a moment of extreme desperation, the hatred of the wounded sentry, the fear of Helen. Because of this pressure the details realistically acquire an unusual vividness - Imagism here has psychological validity, since detail is remembered because it has acquired significance through context.

A succession of images is rushed through giving an impression of great urgency - Helen fleeing, the hissing of the dying soldier, the veil, the fallen pilaster, the shout, breathless silence, the fallen gate, imminent silence that seems to rip 'as she tore loose and ran'. Then, with great subtlety, H.D. slows this down almost imperceptibly from

urgency to puzzlement:

why did she limp and turn
at the stair-head and half turn back?
was it a broken sandal?

With remarkable artistry, H.D. makes the slowing here enact both the change from feverish remembering to sudden wondering, and the change from Helen's running away to her limping and half turning back.

This slowing also prepares the way for Section 4 which shifts to Paris' death. Here there is a simplicity which nonetheless contains complex implications and suggests powerful emotions. Personality and feeling are completely defined here - Cenone resentful, jealous, angry, vengefully watching Paris die; Paris defeated, regretful and not regretful, still overwhelmed by his feeling for Helen, dying. There is a suggestion here of the excesses of melodrama of which the cinema (especially in the '30's and '40's) was capable. But H.D. avoids this by placing the passage in a context which distances it, so that the reader's sympathies are not too insistently pounded. Moreover, she provides a moment of calm in the middle of the section ('then I remembered the gate,/the silence').

Coming upon Section 4 makes the previous sections seem like a flash-back, but reaching Section 5 (p.129) makes 4 seem like a flash-back as well. Section 5 represents the present tranquility in which the emotions of the earlier sections are recollected - 'Now it is dark upon Leuke'. But once again Paris speaks of the past and returns to the incident in 3. This is continued in 6 (pp.131-

132), amplifying this scene which is obsessively repeated: here their exchange, as they were trying to escape, is reported in a highly charged, dramatic way. Section 7 (pp.133-134) returns to straightforward narrative, leading once again to a moment of tranquillity, a sense of the crisis being over, and a peace descending in which its meaning must be worked out:

I crawled to the marble ledge,
but the stairs were blasted away,
the Wall was black,
the court-yard empty
save for charred armour ...

The force of this cinematic intercutting of scenes is to reinterpret the story with which H.D. is dealing, to breathe an existential life into the essentialist structure. It operates, that is, like the 'thoughts too deep to remember' (p.268):

that break through the legend,
the fame of Achilles,
the beauty of Helen,
like fire
through the broken pictures
on a marble-floor. (p.269)

This is where H.D.'s tinkering with fictiveness is again explicitly present. The effect in such passages, as I said at the start of this chapter, is to make us doubt the reality of the fiction with which we are presented - to insist to the reader that it is a fiction. But, beyond this, such effects

endow the poetry with a greater sense of reality: for they mimic the many fictive elements contained within reality itself - the way that, through the distorting effects of the mind, fiction and reality are intercut. Throughout Helen in Egypt, then, there are elements that 'break through the legend' and surprise the reader with a disorienting sense of reality.

One of the ways that H.D. achieves this effect is by the use of a vestigial Imagism that brings aspects of the epic into sudden focus:

I remember
the crackle of salt-weed,
the sting of salt as I crept nearer
over shale and the white shells ... (p.232)

The effect of such passages, though, is not one of Imagist definition. The images take their place as one aspect of experience, and are counterpointed against an epic vastness: they are not given their previous function as summarisers of experience as a whole. Most frequently, they enter as isolated items from memory, and are suitable as such in their fixedness.

The most important way, though, that H.D. 'break(s) through the legend' is in her use of characters who are conspicuously human - especially Paris and Theseus. These two men help, in this way, to highlight the humanity of Helen - an aspect of her personality that might otherwise be lost in the prevailing abstractness. Paris is by far the most human figure in the poem. So 'Leuke', Book Three, Section 1

(pp.137-138) is among the most remarkable passages in Helen in Egypt because it deals, not with outstanding qualities of beauty, strength or courage, but with a very mundane quality. Paris is a failure. He is not only a failure on a large scale (which might have an element of nobility in it), he has not only lost a major war. More pathetic, he is a domestic failure: quite simply, he has failed to satisfy his mistress. He says

I mean, I knew you had gone,
gone utterly, as I watched for the dawn;
when the sun came, I knew
you were never satisfied,
and strength came;
I had not satisfied you;
when she finds fulfillment,
I said, she will come back ...

And these simple lines are among the most affecting in the book. So human is Paris felt to be that the device which H.D. uses in Helen in Egypt of suggesting a dream-like quality and so producing a deferment of disbelief, here appears in reverse. So:

when she finds fulfillment,
I said, she will come back;
I was feverish, I called to Oenone,
that wise-woman would heal me;
how did I crawl or fall
through the terraced breach?
what sense lead (sic) me?
I can not remember,
only that it was empty,

a blasted shell, my city, my Wall;
I was king, Hector was slain by Achilles;
my father was slain by Pyrrhus,
Achilles' son; Achilles?
the stone was cool;
how long had I lain there?

We are made to feel that this is a very unusual state of mind because he was 'feverish', he could 'not remember'; his crawling 'through the terraced breach' has an oneiric quality about it, and the last two lines describe him awakening. But the effect of this is not to make the reader accept the classical framework, as elsewhere, but to make him doubt it. For Paris seems strangely incongruous in this classical framework: he is an anti-hero who finds himself in the wrong genre (in cinematic terms it is as though he has wandered into the wrong studio). For this reason he appears almost like a man who has fantasised about a relationship with Helen and about being a Trojan king. So when he says 'I was king, Hector was slain by Achilles;/my father was slain by Pyrrhus' his statements acquire a disorienting ambiguity. The statements can function either as a realisation, an attempt to force himself to realise and hang onto these basic facts, or as an insistence against all evidence to the contrary that the fantasy is true. Both interpretations can equally well explain the intensity of emphasis with which the statements are made.

She is expressing here what Carl Jung says that the alchemists stressed:

The importance, for H.D., of breaking through the legend is explicitly recognised in passages like the final section of the 'Pallinode' (pp.111-112). This is an exhortation to Helen, praising motion, life and experience as against mystical stillness:

a simple spiral-shell may tell
a tale more ancient
than these mysteries;
dare the uncharted seas,
Achilles waits, and life ...

Here, for almost the first time in the book, the rhythms are assured, not nervous and questioning. H.D. stresses experience - intellect is not enough. In Section 3, Book Six of the 'Pallinode', she asks:

how can you find the answer
in the oracles of Greece
or the hieroglyphs of Egypt? (p.85)

And she insists upon intuitive knowledge, the knowledge gained, not through mystical training, but through the understanding that comes through experience. So she says four pages later:

the heart does not wonder?
the heart does not ask?
the heart accepts,
encompasses the whole
of the undecipherable script ... (p.89)

She is stressing here what Carl Jung says that the alchemists stressed:

We are dealing with life-processes which, on account of their numinous character, have from time immemorial provided the strongest incentive for the formation of symbols. These processes are steeped in mystery; they pose riddles with which the human mind will long wrestle for a solution, and perhaps in vain. For, in the last analysis, it is exceedingly doubtful whether human reason is a suitable instrument for this purpose. Not for nothing did alchemy style itself an "art", feeling - and rightly so - that it was concerned with creative processes that can be truly grasped only by experience, though intellect may give them a name.¹⁷

For this reason it is of the utmost importance in Helen in Egypt that the existential elements (in their cinematic form) break through the legend, and the essentialism of the poem. It does not detract from their significance (and certainly not from their poetic importance) that they invariably and inevitably lead to an essentialist conclusion, as in Section 8, Book Two of 'Leuke':

I am the first in all history
to say, she died, died, died
when the Walls fell;
what mystery is more subtle than this?
what spell is more potent?
I saw the pomegranate,
blighted by winter,
I saw the flowering pomegranate
and the cleft fruit on the summer branch ...

It is in Helen's capacity for rebirth, described in this passage, that essential and existential meet. It is an indication of Helen's mystical status, but it is also the basis of her ability continuously to take on new experience and to encompass different kinds of existence. So, another rebirth is described later (pp.177-178) in a more dramatic, less symbolic, way. Here she meets Theseus again, the oldest of her lovers. He, like Paris, is a human figure, but not, like Paris, highly-strung; rather, he is mellow and benevolent. He is characterised by his lack of jealousy about Helen's other lovers and by his concern for her physical comfort. Placed in this context of human warmth, the idea of Helen's rebirth, while retaining its mystical significance, is combined with a straightforward emotional realism which actually aids the mystical significance, since through the rebirth 'her soul must return wholly to her body' (p.169). So the idea of her regeneration - 'my butterfly,/my Psyche, disappear into the web,/the shell, re-integrate ...' (p.177) - is not allowed to become an abstraction. First of all, Helen is cold, and Theseus wraps her in fleece. Secondly, Helen remembers the war (realistically evoked as images, with the associated idea of vivid pictures appearing before the mind's eye on the threshold of sleep). And then their different states of mind are dramatically juxtaposed: his insistent liberalism as he tells her either to remember or forget as she pleases; her ignoring of this and assuming that he is trying to force her to forget, and so insisting on remembering Achilles.

So, although the most continuous impression which Helen in Egypt gives is of being an unfamiliar world, containing unfamiliar sense impressions continuously repeated, and dominated by esoteric and disorienting ideas, there are within it elements which allow the reader to find his bearings. Most important of these is Helen herself. She operates as a unifying factor not only in this poem but in H.D.'s work as a whole. Helen was, for Hilda Doolittle, a life-long obsession. She had written a poem about her as early as 1923.¹⁸ She mentioned her to Freud, and in her book Tribute to Freud (pp.49-50), the associations both with Greece as a whole (Hellas) and with H.D.'s mother, Helen, are delineated. She is mentioned repeatedly with reference to Greta Garbo, in the series of articles on cinema I have quoted earlier in this chapter. So:

Greta Garbo ... gave me a clue, a new angle, and a new sense of elation. This is beauty, and this is a beautiful and young woman not exaggerated in any particular, stepping, frail yet secure across a wasted city ... Before our eyes, the city was unfolded, like some blighted flower, like some modernized epic of Troy town is down ...¹⁹

Again:

War and war and war. Helen who ruined Troy seems to have taken shape, but this time it is Troy by some fantastic readjustment who is about to ruin Helen. (pp.28-29)

And again:

Simonetta, the famous Medician
Venus ... one and one and one, all stand
as witnesses that once in so often,
beauty herself, Helen above Troy, rises
triumphant and denounces the world for
a season and then retires, spins a little
web of illusion and shuffles off to forget
men and their stale formulas (sic) of
existence. Well beauty has been slurred
over and laughed at and forgotten. But
Helen of Troy didn't always stay at home
with Menelaus. (p.32)

In Helen in Egypt, moreover, Helen becomes both the
explorer and the explored: she is a technical device, but also
the subject which all the other technical devices are used to
express. On the one hand, she is the figure whom H.D. uses to
work out the meaning of the script, the hieroglyph; on the
other hand 'She herself is the writing' (p.23). It is largely
through her that the dualisms in the poem are resolved, she is
existential and essential, and she is subject and object. It is
through understanding her that H.D. tries to understand every-
thing else in the poem. It is Helen who has the experience
which discovers eternity in a moment, and it is through her
that H.D. attempts to understand the meaning of the

pause in the infinite rhythm
of the heart and of heaven. (p.315)

Chapter 8 is an account of the aims and achievements of Helen in Egypt: it concentrates upon the conceptions which shape it, and upon the most successful passages. The conceptions are fascinating especially when taken in the perspective of H.D.'s development as a whole; and the most successful passages constitute some of H.D.'s best writing. However, the poem is only a partial success. The peaks of intensity which I have analysed are separated by prosaic troughs which are often far too lengthy. Such troughs are inevitable in a long poem, and they are present in Helen in Egypt largely to explore its shaping conceptions; but they have, in effect, made this long poem too long, and their own lengthiness indicates H.D.'s inability consistently to embody her poem in a sufficiently economic form.

CHAPTER NINE

HERMETIC DEFINITION

She manages to tackle many of her narrative problems with success - probably because of the experience she had already gained in 'The Flowering of the Rod'. Many of the transitions are made with fluency and conviction. But the most severe technical problems posed by Helen in Egypt arise from H.D.'s urge explicitly to interpret the narrative in terms of her characteristic mystical and psychoanalytical preoccupations. Where, in 'The Flowering of the Rod' she allowed these preoccupations to emerge from the story, in Helen in Egypt she insistently points to their presence. So, much of the narrative is transmitted in the language of psychoanalysis, in a 'vocabulary poetically static' of which Josephine Jacobsen has complained.¹ For this reason, Linda Dowling's defence of the prose passages, contending,

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as she does, that they are necessary because 'such tightly honed lyrics as H.D. wrote could not include much transitional material',² is insufficient. While it is reasonable to maintain that H.D. needed her prose introductions in order to meet the need for this transitional material, this can be no excuse for the language in which H.D. chose to present that material. And this defence is further disqualified by the way that much of what could be regarded as transitional material infiltrates what ought to be the tightly honed lyrics. So in Book Five of the 'Pallinode' Helen complains:

I am not happy without her,
Clytaemnestra, my sister;
as I turn by the last pillar,
I find Isis with Nephthys,
the Child's other mother;
the two are inseparable ... (p.71)

Here the number of Greek and Egyptian names swamps the experience and replaces it by a mystical musing. The problem is that the names remain names, they cannot become personalities. This is, of course, part of H.D.'s intention; it is part of her love of the incantatory effect produced by the word music of exotic names, which was in evidence as early as 'The Islands' (C.P., pp.181-185). And she speaks of this explicitly in 'Leuke' Book Six:

We can not altogether understand this
evocation, the rhythms must speak for
themselves and the alliterations, Cypris,
Thetis, Nephthys, Isis, Paris. (p.185)

She wishes to conjure associations from sounds. Unfortunately, the associations here seem to mean more to the poet than is conveyed to the reader, who is left with a curious sense of vacancy, the sense that he is not feeling what he is supposed to be feeling.

Yvor Winters had criticised H.D.'s earliest poems for failing to evoke in the reader the feeling that had evidently been evoked in herself, he said that 'since the relationship between the feeling and the Greek landscape has no comprehensible source and is very strong, one must call it sentimental'.³ In fact, this criticism defines a pitfall into which H.D.'s poetry tended to fall throughout her career: a failure to provide a content substantial enough to match the intensity of tone. Her most important successes result when she most completely bridges the gap between the two.

Winters' criticism acquires most relevance in the context of the poems that date from after his essay, poems where the object of strong feeling is not so much Greece as mysticism of various kinds. This is not the case with Trilogy because here H.D. provides the feelings she expresses with comprehensible sources - delineated with explanation and narration. But while Helen in Egypt contains both explanation and narration - far too much in fact - it is not of the right kind, it seems to take for granted a world of mystical experience which the reader does not take for granted. Where Trilogy explores the psychological meanings of alchemy, magic and angels, and spells out for the reader what relevance these should have for him, Helen in Egypt presents him with a mental territory already shaped in mystical contours.

It is true that many poets have been able to present the reader with such an unexplained mystical world, and not left him with the sense of an expressive gap between their intention and the poetic result. This is true, in particular, of the Symbolist poets. But they had evolved a technique which was peculiarly suitable for the expression of this kind of mystical experience: Symbolism deploys evocation and suggestion in a way that can indicate an infinity of shadowy truth. The occult interests which increasingly occupied H.D. point to an affinity between her and the Symbolists; Wallace Fowlie's description of the Symbolist tradition - quoted in my first chapter - indicates tendencies which are very close to those of H.D.:

Sade, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Lautréamont are alike in this respect. Each, with his own speech and poetic creation, waged a relentless war against human intelligence in its limited aspects of reason, logic, consciousness ... They are diametrically opposed to the rationalistic tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and take their place beside the gnostic writers and the masters of the occult tradition, of all those who tried to break down the rigid framework of logic in order to reach the darker world of dreams and the more luminous world of visions ... The poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and the prose writings of Sade and Lautréamont, form a body of literature which in its deepest meaning is non-literary. It transcends literature by its "sacred" character, by its penetration into the hidden recesses of the mind, by the pure

power of rhythm and sound and image it reveals, by the communication it establishes between the supernatural forces of nature and man.⁴

Like these Symbolist writers, H.D. was preoccupied with the need to penetrate the mind's hidden recesses. She scorned, in Trilogy, 'the dim dimension/where thought dwells', and wanted to move 'beyond thought and idea' into 'Dream,/ Vision' (p.18). Her view of the human mind and of human experience was the polar opposite of the materialist view of William Carlos Williams, which represents Imagism taken to its logical conclusion - 'no ideas but in things'.⁵ H.D.'s technical development represents a continuing attempt to express her mystical outlook, and her continuing move away from Imagism is the result. In Trilogy and Helen in Egypt she did succeed in radically modifying the Imagism of her early work - she moved away from hard-edged definition in a way that considerably increased her expressive range. But her modified Imagism never acquired the suggestive powers of the symbol. True Imagism has a self-conscious flatness, a refusal to resonate; it says, like the title of one of Williams' poems, 'This is Just to Say'⁶ - this poem is not symbolic, it is saying nothing more than this. H.D.'s achievement was to produce an altered form of Imagism that allowed a certain amount of resonance. She never succeeded, however, as both Williams and the Symbolists did, in formulating a technique that fitted her outlook with entire appropriateness: her poetic training had left her with a technique affinitive with that of Williams; her temperament made her outlook affinitive with that of the Symbolists.

In writing Helen in Egypt, therefore, H.D. faced an insurmountable technical problem: she tried to express a vague limitlessness in a style that was still insistent upon clarity and definition - even, to some extent, upon Hulmian limit. While H.D. uses the word symbolism (for instance, on page 247) and while she places the poem against an essentialist background, all the abstract elements in Helen in Egypt are presented through statement rather than image. For since her images, unlike those of the Symbolists, remained predominantly specific and concrete, she was forced to introduce lengthy abstract explanations in order to place them in the mystical context that would endow them with the greater resonance they could not acquire on their own. It is from this, crucially, that the 'vocabulary poetically static', and the excessive length, result.

It is significant, therefore, that H.D. did not consider that even the three hundred and fifteen pages of Helen in Egypt had adequately expressed her intention. She later wrote 'Winter Love', which, as Norman Holmes Pearson has indicated, she thought of as a 'Coda' to Helen in Egypt. As such he regarded it as proof of H.D.'s integrity, of her fidelity to her impulse to work out the theme of Helen. He said that 'Winter Love' picks up 'once more all that her Helens have from the beginning expressed in terms of the quest'. So, when Helen in Egypt was published he wanted to include it as an actual coda: in this way, 'by bringing the legend on down in time' it would show, he thought, 'how she herself had always figured in her own poems'.⁷

This latter point is too obvious, though, to arouse interest in 'Winter Love' which, it seems to me, steps well over the point where integrity turns into repetitiveness. Helen in Egypt, after all, contains repetitions within itself, rehearsals and reprises of the same and similar images and ideas. To return to these was simply redundant on H.D.'s part. The only new things in 'Winter Love' are the strophes and antistrophes, done in what H.D. calls 'a strangely familiar, Swinburnian metre'.⁸ These have a certain interest as a confirmation that H.D.'s earliest poetic concerns were in some ways very far from the pure Poundian Imagist party line. Her comment upon them - 'I can't think that I must be Pound-Eliot'⁸ - has that kind of rebelliousness about it. The impression received here is that this element in the poem is not recently acquired but has always been present and suppressed through the Imagist influence imposed upon it.

This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it represents a return to an early influence. Secondly, and more importantly, it is a further indication of H.D.'s dissatisfaction with the technique of Helen in Egypt, her sense that it was not entirely fitted to her subject. Unfortunately, what the entry of Swinburne into this poem proves is simply that the clearing away of that sort of opulence from her writing was thoroughly necessary for its success. For her imitations of Swinburne replace the austerity which is a characteristic of her best poetry, with a melodrama, a cloying portentousness:

Heavy the hand of Fate,
heavy the chains, the bonds,
heavy, heavy, the weight of Destiny,
and there is no escape
from pre-destined torture and agony;
ground under the stones of Troy,
we are dust for eternity ...

(p.93)

The other two poems that H.D. wrote near the end of her life - 'Sagesse', and 'Hermetic Definition' are much more successful than 'Winter Love'. In fact, they are startling for the way that they show an old woman still striving for new modes of expression. This is especially startling for a reader who read 'Hymen' and 'Heliodora and Other Poems', collections written at what ought to have been the very height of her poetic powers, with fears that her inspiration had dried up. In 'Sagesse' and 'Hermetic Definition', both written in her seventies, H.D. was still making technical changes in her writing: these poems are more directly personal than anything else in her output. This makes them more completely satisfying in their use of mystical ideas than Helen in Egypt, because it places those ideas in a more specific context. So, while these late works do suffer from considerable obscurity, the personal situation which is their basis, does provide a reassuring point of reference, with its characteristic tone and speech rhythms.

The theme of 'Sagesse' has been described by another, later woman poet:

the photograph of an owl ... starts a
train of thought and feeling which leads
poet and reader far back into childhood,
by way of word origins and word-sound

associations, and back again to a present more resonant, more full of possibilities and subtle awareness, because of that journey. The interpenetration of past and present, of mundane reality and intangible reality, is typical of H.D.⁹

Denise Levertov is right to stress that these elements are typical and I have indicated their presence in H.D.'s previous work. But it is also important to stress that they are placed, in 'Sagesse', in a completely new framework.

There is no precedent in H.D.'s poetry for her use of an object like the photograph of the owl as the starting-point of a succession of associations. The sight of this owl arouses H.D.'s mystical suspicions so that she 'must find/the Angel or the Power that rules this hour' (p.58). This angel she finds to be Thopitus, defined by Gustav Davidson as 'in the cabala, an angel invoked in ritual incantation rites.'¹⁰ Davidson also mentions H.D.'s poem as one of only two works which mention the figure - the other being Ambelain's La Kabbale Pratique¹¹ which was, according to Norman Holmes Pearson,⁷ H.D.'s own source. These are, therefore, profoundly esoteric references; but, here anyway, H.D.'s references are appropriate. One of the most important aims of 'Sagesse' is a kind of ritual incantation, the attempt to appeal to attendant spirits.

Moreover, both the use of an ordinary photograph in an ordinary weekly magazine, and the idea that each hour has its attendant angel, stress the presence of the mystical in the everyday which is another central thesis of the poem. It

is this which H.D. expands upon in the second section. The owl, she says, represents God, and the visitors to the zoo will feel this involuntarily - 'they will laugh and linger and some child may shudder,/touched by the majesty ...' (p.59). She also shows within the poem itself that she is aware of this theme and technique:

Germain said, "isn't it over-weighted?
can you have so many angels' names,
a list of dates, months, days,
a prose in-set? or is it poetry? Egypt,
hieratic rhythm, then the most ordinary
association,"
but I said, "isn't that the whole point,
anyway?" (p.66)

H.D. certainly manages, in 'Sagesse', to combine the hieratic and the ordinary: the trouble is that far too often they fail to blend together and balance each other, but remain untransformed, overweighting the poem with both mysticism and ordinariness. The point is that both elements are prosaic when not made meaningful by their context, and their context is too often obscure to achieve this. The result is, at times, long snatches of conversation both from H.D.'s present and her invented English childhood, and long lists of mystical names and etymologies. This is a pity because it tends to obscure the intention of the poem and severely tests the reader's patience, and it detracts from H.D.'s success when she does manage to blend these elements. H.D. clearly enjoys the different rhythms which the introduction of such contrasting subject-matter calls up, and in fact she manipulates these juxtapositions with considerable facility:

A thread, a strand, 72 angels' names ...

how to go on? we have named 7 of these;

the seventh is Senciner, and then, three more,
and then another, Seket and her hour;

O mother-father, Seket-Senciner, at the end, we
found

a bowl, a shell, at first, an owl, a deer,
that's how it started, the child compassed it,
began and closed the circle ...

"now mum's fanciful," she thinks;

we're sitting in our kitchen, here in London,

"duckie, just put the kettle on," mum says,
if only she'd forget that day, last summer,

"you did come over queer," she says,

"what was the matter? four places, ducks,

Uncle Alf's coming in - brr, winter -

real pea-soup outside, yes, draw the curtains,

nice, turkey-red, I always says,

I'm thinking of that screech-owl

and those deer - my, it was hot that day,

do you remember?" (p.76)

The meditation on the names of angels, the tentative attempt to probe their meaning combined with the mystical 'frisson' aroused by the sound of their names, leads to images associated with the figures - 'a bowl, a shell', 'an owl, a deer'. The latter two arouse memories of the day at the zoo described earlier (Section (3) onwards). This in turn leads to the mundane rhythms of Cockney speech, with the suggestion of that continuing mystical imagery ('that screech-owl/and those deer') placed among more trivial conversational items

('brr, winter - /real pea-soup outside' (p.76)).

The result of this kind of writing when, as here, it succeeds, is not simply the interpenetration of past and present which Denise Levertov points out, but an interpenetration of altogether different kinds of experience. This means that H.D., within 'Sagesse', writes what almost amounts to different genres - varying from social realism to fairy tales. With the mention of 'Rinso' in section (22) she pushes her use of the former further than ever before (or after) in her poetry, while, in the same section, she seems to be referring to the Gretel story that she had also used in 'May 1943'. These passages are worth comparing because they indicate that this fairy tale image had a strong effect upon H.D. personally, and because thereby they help to illuminate the significance of each other. The earlier passage explicitly mentions Gretel

Goldie or Gretel in woolen socks
scatters bread-crumbs to show the way
through the dark forest, or did you say
a Saint with Halo beside a wheel
is set on an altar where people kneel,
to take their bread from a priest, instead
of Gretel who changed her crumbs
for pebbles? (What Do I Love, p.12)

The 'Sagesse' passage uses the idea more referentially:

is this being good?
mum says, "good girl"; I do this not for mum
or anyone; I do it for myself; if I go on,
I make a sort of track, I can't say what,
it's pebbles and hard stones, it's something in
a story,
I can't say where it goes -

it goes from where I brush the carpet on the
stair,
to the landing just above. (p.80)

Both passages have that almost hallucinatory quality of H.D.'s writing at its best, that sense of a juxtaposition startling but possessed of a strange psychological validity. Certainly, the idea of the path in the forest becoming the distance between the stairway and the landing has the disorienting sharpness of the invasion of sea imagery in 'Halcyon' (R.R.B., pp.92-102). But the passages do more than simply startle. Their most important function is to delineate what it means to possess the goodness which both girls possess, to identify what kind of goodness that is.

Here again the reader encounters an H.D. preoccupation: the goodness partly represents a way of combating the destructive power of war, and H.D. has described before her 'own personal Phobia, (her) own personal little Dragon of war-terror'. She has mentioned also that she needed to find some 'power' with which to 'order him off, for the time being at any rate, back to his subterranean cavern.' (T.F., p.99). This simple path-making goodness is such a power, it represents the power of the small and apparently powerless against the immense and the unknown, the forest and the subterranean cavern. But it becomes powerful largely through the aid it receives from attendant good angels from which it receives protection, with their ... might of the infinitely great to protect

the most minute, the almost invisible spark,
from the extraneous chaos,
the impenetrable outer gloom. (p.66)

This extraneous chaos, war, the forest, the subterranean cavern, receives here another archetypal expression - H.D.'s favourite one of all, the sea. The next section, using this, is one of the most powerful in the poem and employs similar imagery to the shell-fish passage in Trilogy (pp.8-9). That passage advocates stoic endurance - this one, in 'Sagesse', advocates its opposite, fatalistic submission:

"it is fearful, I was a mirror, an individual,"
cries the shallow rock-pool, "now infinity
claims me; I am everything? but nothing";
peace, salt, you were never as useful as
all that,
peace, flower, you are one of a thousand-
thousand others,
peace, shallow pool, be lost. (p.67)

That passage in 'Sagesse' is the culmination of a series of such passages that punctuate H.D.'s poetic development. As I demonstrated in Chapter Six, they all concern the fear of, or the desire to be, overwhelmed. Here, though, an important psychological element is made explicit for the first time; the rock-pool claims for itself an 'individuality'. This is significant because in 'Sagesse' and 'Hermetic Definition', also for the first time, H.D. examined her own personality, and placed her inner world in perspective within it. This section of 'Sagesse' represents a self-realisation of which the two poems are the product. Moreover, it represents self-realisation not merely because H.D. recognises in it the

psychological meaning of her life-long obsession, but because, for the first time, she accepts that to be overwhelmed is necessary, that to become 'one of a thousand-thousand others' is inevitable. This passage therefore signals the advance that H.D. made in writing 'Sagesse' and 'Hermetic Definition': for the placing of her inner world in perspective was the necessary preliminary to writing poetry of a genuinely personal kind.

So, 'Hermetic Definition' is, at times, very close to the confessional mode. The poem's starting point is H.D.'s frustrated longing for a man thirty years her junior (forty to her seventy), a Newsweek reviewer called Lionel Durand who interviewed H.D. for his review of Bid Me to Live:

Durand's death in January, just nine months after their first meeting, is transformed into a birth, or rebirth, by the creative act of the woman poet ... She is pregnant with the lover she seeks, and month by month, as he is three months, five months, six months "on the way". She writes about him until finally she approaches January, the time of his death, which is the occasion of his rebirth and her delivery from her obsessive love. This birth in the midst of death has a mental as well as a physical dimension, for the poet explores during her nine months of "pregnancy" and throughout all three sections of the poem the hermetic realm of esoteric tradition which proclaims immortality "the unalterable law ... Night brings the Day".¹²

While this is an excellent account of the central motif in the poem, Susan Stanford Friedman overestimates the

importance of Lionel Durand. He is certainly the most important male figure in 'Hermetic Definition' but there are three other men who play their part by contributing significant masculine characteristics. These men are the French poet Saint-John Perse, the French mystical writer Robert Ambelain and the decathlete Rafer Johnson. It is from these four men that H.D. tries to reassemble her Osiris, since she believed that

Even women are individually seeking, as one woman, fragments of the Eternal Lover. As the Eternal Lover has been scattered or dissociated, so she in her search for him.⁸

This is partly why Isis is chosen as an attendant spirit in the poem: she is, as it were, the patron goddess of feminine searchers. Through this search for the Eternal Lover, pieced together from Durand, Perse, Ambelain, and Johnson, H.D. combines a quest for both emotional and spiritual happiness, and here once again sexual and mystical elements come together. Moreover, she combines in this way, what Evelyn Underhill¹³ would identify as two different ways of apprehending 'Absolute Reality', 'A':

Those who conceive the Perfect as a beatific vision exterior to them and very far off, who find in the doctrine of Emanations something which answers to their inward experience, will feel the process of their entrance into reality to be a quest, an arduous journey from the material to the spiritual world. They move away from, rather than transmute to another form, the life of sense. (p.153)

And 'B':

Those for whom mysticism is above all
things an intimate and personal relation,
the satisfaction of a deep desire ...
will fall back upon imagery drawn largely
from the language of earthly passion.
(p.153)

H.D.'s approach to reality is a quest into the life of sense
transmuted by the achievement of an intimate and personal
relation. Even here it is her ability to combine different
ideas which is distinctive, and she had used Evelyn
Underhill's third and final category - those who 'see the
mystic life as involving inward change rather than outgoing
search' and 'choose symbols of growth or transmutation'
(p.153) - in Trilogy, especially 'The Flowering of the Rod'.

It is H.D.'s use of two compellingly emotional
approaches to the mystical life that gives 'Hermetic
Definition' its vividness. At one level the poem is the
equivalent of certain of Yeats' later poems where he admits
that he, an old man, is disturbed by a vigorous sexuality:
like Yeats, as well, H.D. had rarely explored her own
sexuality - certainly never explored it at this length - when
she was younger. For Yeats to have done this was courageous
enough: for an old woman it was that much more so. The first
section of the poem acquires a straightforward human interest
as H.D. expresses these feelings vulnerably, tentatively:

Why did you come
to trouble my decline?
I am old (I was old till you came);
the reddest rose unfolds,
(which is ridiculous
in this time, this place,

unseemly, impossible,
even slightly scandalous),
the reddest rose unfolds ... (p.3)

Here once again is the contrast between social surface (her fear of the unseemliness of this late flowering sexuality) and a deeper mystical significance. So the question is not merely a weary personal one, but an inquiry into what this experience means ultimately - the implication is that there must be a mystical reason for his entry into her life. It is this side of the question which the rest of the poem seeks to answer.

Part of the answer, though, must remain straightforwardly personal. The image of the unfolding of the reddest rose arouses others of an intimate kind:

an intimate of my youth,
a poet wrote
so slow is the rose to open,
so I contemplate these words
and the Latin dedication,
and would decipher my own fate ... (p.13)

She is led back, through the association of these images, from her last love, Lionel Durand, to her first, Ezra Pound. Pound's line becomes, considered from her personal perspective, a commentary upon her own sexual experience. It becomes, ironically, an acknowledgement of the immaturity and unsatisfactoriness of their youthful intimacy.¹⁴ The next section takes the awaking of her sexual awareness a step further, as she quotes lines from her poem 'Red Roses for Bronze' dating from 1930 and says:

my fever, fervour was for one not born
when I wrote this;
the Red-Roses-for-Bronze
roses were for an abstraction ... (p.14)

In other words, her progress here was not progress at all; she had moved only from an unsatisfactory relationship to sexual fantasy. Only now, she goes on to say, has this fantasy become reality: 'now with like fervour, with fever/I offer them to a reality'. This is a central irony in the poem. Only now, in her decline, has she reached a real sexual maturity, because that maturity results from a spiritual realisation, the realisation that the Eternal Lover is scattered, Osiris-like, through many lovers, who each, like Olympic runners (like Rafer Johnson) pass on the torch to the next:

the torch was lit from another before you,
and another and another before that ...

A further irony is that she, the seventy year old, is more attuned to things physical than the man thirty years younger. Due to a heart condition he is forbidden salt and red wine. The lusty associations of the latter are obvious, while salt, in alchemical terms, represents the body:

The principles of the Alchemists are three
in number: Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, i.e.
Body, Soul and Spirit.¹⁵

By comparison with him, then, she becomes aware of, even guilty about, her own physicality:

... I keep remembering

Moreover my glass of red wine; one glass every day
becomes an orgy,
greed devours me ... (p.12)

In this way Durand becomes removed from the physical realm
(and more so because, with his heart condition, he 'might go
at any moment' (p.13)). Moreover, a certain kind of mystical
significance seems to shine out of him:

I say, I don't know what he thinks,
I say, I don't care,
but that isn't true either,
but was it quite fair of fate
to accost me with amber,
Egyptian eyes' amber
in an ordinary man's face? (p.41)

This amber colour connects him with the Egyptian god Amen
who held such a fascination for H.D. In this way he becomes -
in addition to being the fulfilment of her sexual fantasy in
'Red Roses for Bronze' - the fulfilment of her dream in
Trilogy, in which 'Ra, Osiris, Amen appeared/in a spacious,
bare meeting-house'. When this dream ended, she

woke with a start
of wonder and asked myself,
but whose eyes are those eyes?
for the eyes (in the cold,
I marvel to remember)
were all one texture,
as if without pupil
or all pupil, dark
yet very clear with amber
shining ... (p.25)

Moreover, Durand's spiritual status is raised through his death nine months after his meeting with H.D. Through this nine month process he becomes reborn and acquires his position as Osiris in this poem. Here, too, personal and religious elements are combined. Isis' grief over her dead brother/husband, together with her search for his scattered remains, and his later return to life, have a remarkable emotional power. This myth, however, has also acquired other associations through the centuries. Arthur Weigall, in his The Paganism in our Christianity,¹⁶ a book which Norman Holmes Pearson has attested⁷ that H.D. read, points out that it 'exercised considerable influence upon early Christianity' (p.118). So, he says:

while the story of the death and resurrection of Osiris may have influenced the thought of the earliest Christians in regard to the death and resurrection of our Lord, there can be no doubt that the myths of Isis had a direct bearing upon the elevation of Mary, the mother of Jesus, to her celestial position in the Roman Catholic theology. (pp.121-122)

He goes on to specify that:

In her aspect as the mother of Horus, Isis was represented in tens of thousands of statuettes and paintings, holding the divine child in her arms; and when Christianity triumphed these paintings and figures became those of the Madonna and Child without any break in continuity: no archaeologist, in fact, can now tell whether some of these objects represent the one or the other. (p.123)

Such connections clearly fascinated the author of Trilogy with its linking of the pagan and the Christian: where Weigall deplores the pagan inheritance (c.f., for instance, pp.19-20) H.D. celebrates it. 'Hermetic Definition' takes the links into the personal arena, and so dramatises them. In this way, inevitably, and blasphemous though it may be to some minds, H.D. identifies herself with Isis, and, thereby, with Mary. So, the furthest point of H.D.'s separation from Durand is equated with Mary's parturition:

So it was in the winter,
it was in the depth of night,
just as my Christmas candles had burnt out,
that you were born
into a new cycle ... (p.47)

In H.D.'s case, though, the birth is inevitably connected with her writing, she has been pregnant with 'Hermetic Definition' - 'the writing was the un-born,/the conception' (p.54).

Moreover, as well as being assimilated into Christianity, the Osiris legend was used in alchemical texts, as Jung points out:

Osiris plays a certain role in the ancient alchemical texts: the brother/sister or mother/son pair are sometimes called Isis and Osiris. In Olympiodorus Osiris is lead, an arcane substance ... in Firmicus Maternus he is the life-principle. The alchemical interpretation of him as Mercurius has its parallel in the Naassene comparison of Osiris to

Hermes ... He is the dying and
resurgent God-man and hence a parallel
to Christ. He is of a blackish
colour ... in Christian usage the devil,
and in alchemical language the prima
materia.¹⁷

So, alchemically, Osiris is both lead, the 'prima
materia', that which is transformed into gold, and Hermes,
the master of the science, the patron of alchemists, after
whom 'Hermetic Definition' is named. But to understand H.D.'s
thinking in this area it is necessary to refer to Robert
Ambelain, another of the male figures in the poem, referred
to by H.D. as 'Seigneur' (p.42). His book Dans L'Ombre des
Cathédrales,¹⁸ Norman Holmes Pearson describes as 'a ring of
keys to references'.⁷ It is, in a sense, much more even than
that: it provides the basic experience and structure upon
which the poem is written, H.D.'s 'Notre Dame revelation, the
Astrologie, Alchimie, Magie/of the three doors' (p.41). As in
Weigall's book, the central idea is to indicate non-Christian
elements in Christianity, though Ambelain's preoccupation is
with the occult rather than the pagan. So, he shows how Notre
Dame reflects within its architecture and its inscriptions,
the presence of Hermetic elements:

C'est au centre de cet H gigantesque,
initiale d' Hermès, formé par Notre-
Dame tout entière, que s'épanouit la
grande rose de la façade. (p.55)

This is the hermetic rose, the rose of the crucible, as he
goes on to elucidate over a hundred pages later, in a passage
from which H.D. quotes directly (p.13):

Ces floréalis étaient

incontestablement la manifestation
extérieure et profane d'une
cérémonie alchimique de haute volée.

Si nous en doutions, la Cabale
Hermétique nous en donnerait aisément
la clé: flor-réalis, c'est la fleur
(flor) réalisée! Cette fleur, nous la
connaissons, c'est la rose hermétique,
la Pierre Philosophale, la fleur du
creuset ...

(p.193)

The play on etymologies here is strikingly similar to that found so frequently in H.D. Moreover, the rose referred to is clearly one of the starting-points of this recurring image in the poem. It is an image of the recurring cycles of growth and decay in which, H.D. insists, the decay is cancelled out by the recurrence of growth. The rose is also the philosophical stone, which insists upon the recurrence of the possibility of continued creation and transformation. This connects it with the legend of Isis and Osiris, since that legend acquired alchemical associations. Moreover, both are connected through the architecture of Notre-Dame which indicates that Isis was a precursor of Mary:

Et maintenant lecteur ...

souhaitons que pour vous Notre-Dame
soit désormais autre chose qu'une
banale église métropolitaine, mais
la sanctuaire demeuré vivace, où nos
ancêtres les Bar-Isis, vénéraient la
Vierge compatissante et miséricordieuse,
"la Dame des Mots Magiques" "la reine
parfumée et vêtue de lin", "l'Isis au
divin sourire"...

(p.17)

The Isis myth is in this way linked to what Ambelain calls 'les trois sciences hermétiques: 1^{re} Astrologie, la Magie et 1^{re} Alchimie ...', (p.171), each of which has a door named after it in Notre Dame. It is these mystical disciplines which are used to open doors to the meaning of H.D.'s experience as it is described in the poem. Ambelain describes them as 'le sentier magique et alchimique, véritable sésame ouvrant bien des portes à l'étudiant patient.' (p.62). And it is surely upon this 'sésame' that H.D. is punning in her passage about the 'Sesame seed' (p.18). So, her references to Ambelain are continual:

Isis, Iris,
fleur-de-lis,
Bar-Isis is son of Isis,
(bar ou ber ou ben, signifiant fils).
so Bar-Isis is Par-Isis?
Paris anyway;
because you do not drink our wine,
nor salt our salt,
I would enter your senses
through burnt resin and pine-cones
smouldering in a flat dish;
were you a cave-hermit? ... (p.5)

In other words, due to Durand's loss of physicality indicated in his refusal of wine and salt (wine representing blood, and salt being an element, according to Ambelain (p.187), 'matériel et grossier' which must be banished during 'le travail de l'or') H.D. must commune with him in an altogether different way. Burning resin and pine is chosen not merely as a substitute but as something superior, since,

to refer once again to Ambelain:

les jeunes mariés, au retour des
cérémonies nuptiales, étaient précédés de
flambeaux et de torches de pin, rappel
nullement érotique, mais uniquement
hommage rendu à la Vie et à l'
Intelligence mystérieuses qui animent
notre Univers.

What H.D. desires, then, is nothing less than a spiritual
marriage, and she desires furthermore that this marriage
shall be fruitful:

This is my new prayer;
I pray to you?
Paris, Bar-Isis? to Osiris?
or to Isis-self, Egyptian flower,
Notre Dame - do you ever go there?
the stones hold secrets;
they tell us vibration was brought over
by ancient alchemists;
Our Lady keeps tryst,
she commands with her sceptre, (Astrologie
is the first door?)
and the Child champions us;
bid me not despair,
Child of the ancient hierarchy ...
and you to-day.

(p.8)

So, in Notre Dame:

Au sommet du portail, la Mère Divine
tient son Fils sur ses genoux. Droite
sans raideur, elle tient en sa main
gauche un sceptre terminé par un pomme
de pin.

(p.162)

And as Ambelain further elucidates near the end of his book:

En Egypte, en Syrie, les fidèles se
rassemblaient en certains sanctuaires
secrets, d'où ils ressortaient à
minuit en proclamant: "La Vierge
a enfanté, la Lumière croît!" La
Vierge à laquelle ce cri rituel fait
allusion, était Isis, la Vierge - Mère,
épouse d'Osiris et mère d'Horue.
Les Egyptiens représentaient cette
renaissance solaire sous la forme d'un
petit enfant ... (p.289)

This 'renaissance solaire' connected with birth,
renewal connected with continuing creativity, is the most
important key to the affirmation which H.D. makes in the poem.
So, she addresses her composite lover in the final passage of
the poem. He is resurrected as much more than Durand, much
more even than the combination of the masculine figures in
'Hermetic Definition'. He has now acquired associations with
Osiris and even with Christ, and his birth symbolises
immortality:

Now you are born
and it's all over,
will you leave me alone?
whether you have gone to archangels and lovers
or to infernal adventures,
I don't know,
I only know,
this room contains me,
it is enough for me,
there is always an end;
now I draw my nun-grey about me
and know adequately,

the reddest rose,
the unalterable law ...
Night brings the Day.

(p.55)

Progressively throughout her career, H.D. reduced the presence of Imagism in her work - its presence, though, never entirely vanished. It is interesting that, even in her last poem, it enters intermittently. It is most marked in Section (5) of 'Part Two', where it takes the form of her obsessively repeated imagery of the sea-shore. She is referring to 'Athene Hygeia' and hoping that she will be 'our near,/personal patroness': the patroness, in other words, of poets - specifically of H.D. and St.-John Perse. The passage is, in a sense, about imagery and its place in poetry and experience, so that she asks:

Is remembrance chiefly a matter
of twig, leaf, grass, stone?

(p.29)

Her answer is that remembrance is, and is not, this: it takes the form of physical experience, but only because physical experience can represent other aspects of our past and our development. So, she proceeds in Section (6) to contrast her own past and the form it takes in cherished imagery, 'personal treasures', with that of St.-John Perse. That is, his 'phosphorescent inter-play/of gold-flecked or of rainbow-fish' with her 'dusty butter-and-eggs/(wild snap-dragon)/in a hot lane'.

What Section (5) insists upon, however, is that 'twig, leaf, grass, stone' acquire importance because they become

contents of minds. So much depends upon them not because - like Williams' red wheelbarrow¹⁹ - they precede, and are more important than, ideas; but because, while remaining subordinate to ideas, they become representative, they become the form that ideas superficially take. As she says:

... twig, grass, stone,
a light silt of sand
are part of Aegina, the island
and the island is herself, is her ...

That is to say, these physical objects acquire their importance only by becoming personal attributes of the goddess. So, too, she says, after a precise description of 'the sparse sea-grass/ that shows separate salt-spikes/in the dry sand-drift', that this island has become a part, too, of the poet, by being absorbed by her memory. So great is this absorption, that:

I need not turn my head
to assure myself of the sea-ledge,
it is indented like a shell;
I know this, since I came here
before everything was over ...

Reflecting, therefore, upon imagery which has been repeatedly present in her poems since Sea Garden, she is emphasising that these objects acquire importance only when they become imagery, transcending their status as mere objects - that they become important when they cease to be simply physical, and acquire mental associations. This is certainly what had happened to her own imagery throughout her career - it had been received indirectly and second-hand, through the medium of her inner

world. But her recognition of it here indicates how much more knowledgeable H.D. had become about the nature of her images.

In writing 'Hermetic Definition', then, H.D. was aware of what her own form of Imagism was, and had been, to perhaps a greater extent than ever before. This enabled her to use it with a precise appropriateness, to use it to express those feelings which it was most suited to expressing. Moreover, she combined Imagism here with techniques she had learned in the past in the process of her search for greater technical freedom. Perhaps the most important of these was the simple device of speaking directly and personally towards which she had made some steps in her poem 'Red Roses for Bronze', to which, as I have mentioned, H.D. actually refers:

So my Red Roses for Bronze (1930)
bring me to-day, a prophecy ... (p.16)

In writing her last poem, therefore, H.D. was reminded of the first poem she had written that had taken an explicitly personal form. And she returned to that poem's symbols of red roses and bronze as representatives of artistic and athletic success. But, most importantly of all, she returned to its manner, its combination of colloquial idiom and hieratic questioning; as she herself had said in the earlier poem:

I'd hide my fervour in
"that sort of thing
you know how tiresome it is,"
begin my mastery in ironic wise ...
(R.R.B., p.7)

What H.D. had learned, in achieving this combination, was a

liberating casualness which allowed her to widen her range sufficiently to explore her most important subject - the way that humdrum experience can conceal fervour, the way that the everyday and the occult, in all its forms, interrelate.

So, while 'Hermetic Definition' contains many elements which are esoteric and obscure, and is clearly the product of the same outlook as Helen in Egypt, technically it is much more of a coherent success. Her own presence in the poem gives it two technical advantages over her epic - it pre-emptes the need for any explanations of a narrative kind (which contributed so much to the sprawl of the earlier poem) and it automatically provides an orientation for the other characters, all of them receiving a definite status by their relationship to the central idea in the poem, the idea of H.D.'s spiritual pregnancy. The personal nature of the utterance in 'Hermetic Definition' centres it upon specific experience, so substituting for the Imagistic device of the pivotal image. And the attention which H.D. gives in the poem to actual living (or recently living) men substitutes a dramatic vividness for the sensuous one which had been partly lost through her modifications to Imagism. In this way, although the poem moves firmly towards its essentialist conclusions, this essentialism is much more firmly anchored than in Helen in Egypt, much more thoroughly defined by a poetic argument which employs the lived experience of the poet.

The directness of 'Hermetic Definition' is unsurpassed in anything that preceded it. For, while personal, 'Red Roses for Bronze' refuses to disclose much about the personalities involved in the relationship which is its

subject; its intensity hides behind, rather than being expressed by, its images of sculpture, and much of the background to the relationship remains mysterious. So, too, sense that I described in Chapter One, when discussing 'Sea Iris' (Sea Garden, p.40) of a mysterious relationship between the poet and the subject-matter of her poem, is recurrent throughout her work. This is partly the result of the severely objective tendency of the poetic technique, Imagism, in its attempt to cope with the deeply subjective content of her poetry. But it is also the result of what Norman N. Holland has called H.D.'s 'hard protective shell' which hides her 'soft, vulnerable self': 'it was for hardness she longed', he says, 'even in sounds and smells ... Imagism, clearly, served her defensive needs.'²⁰ But 'Hermetic Definition' allows this 'soft vulnerable self' to emerge - in fact H.D.'s revelation of her vulnerability, in her frustrated tenderness for Lionel Durand, is one of the most moving things in all of her writing. For the poem finds additions to, and modifications of, the Imagist mode which are among the most successful in her career, and which allow her to lower the barriers between herself and the reader further than ever before. So the mysteriousness, the sense that what H.D. is saying means more to her than she makes it mean to her readers, is less in evidence in this last poem than in any that preceded it.

CONCLUSION

As early as January 1915, Ezra Pound had written to Harriet Monroe that H.D. ought 'to produce really fine things at great intervals.'¹ This prophecy turned out to be accurate; a reluctant Imagist, she intermittently found a technique which was appropriate to her subject-matter and these moments in her career represent an important achievement. They are important because they disclose to the reader something of the nature of Imagism. But, more significantly, they are important achievements in themselves - they achieve for the reader what all good literature achieves, they express an aspect of experience which had not been expressed so well before.

This is especially true of H.D.'s expression of aspects of what she calls 'the mind's closed recess', 'this retreat from the world' (H.D., p.27). To some extent this attitude seems stereotypically to be that of the self-protective shying away from experience of an over-sensitive person who has been hurt by it in the past. As my quotation from Vincent Quinn at the start of Chapter Five indicates, there was a period in H.D.'s life (at the start of 1919) when she underwent an amount and a variety of suffering that might have caused an over-reaction in a person much less sensitive than herself. The outside world constantly rears up in her work, characteristically imaged as the sea, and she moves constantly between a neurotic fear of it and a desire to be overwhelmed by it altogether. It is in the expression of this paradoxical attitude, which seems to vary between the extremes of claustrophobia and agoraphobia, that much of H.D.'s original contribution lies.

Moreover, H.D. was not content to allow the 'mind's closed recess' to be merely an instrument for self-indulgence. As she stresses in the same passage, it must hold 'the world, past, present ...'. The sea-shell passage (T, pp.8-9) represents a compromise: while shutting out the sea most of the time, it occasionally lets it in - 'prompted by hunger, it opens to the tide-flow'. In this way it survives, and it is partly its capacity for survival that H.D. is praising. This links it to the 'Sea Rose' (S.G., p.1) since, while it lacks that flower's austere beauty, it shares with it a capacity for stoic endurance.

Nonetheless, most of H.D.'s poetry is the product of a thorough absorption in her inner world - a continuous exploration of its labyrinthine ramifications. Helen in Egypt was the culmination of this. H.D.'s singleness of purpose produced narrowness in range but also enhanced the distinctiveness of her writing. However, in writing 'Sagesse' she made a significant advance - in Section (10) there comes a self-realisation which was to prepare her to write in a new way in 'Hermetic Definition'. For H.D., in writing 'Hermetic Definition' seems to have seen her inner world in perspective in a way that she never had before. Previously, her closeness to this imagined territory had been so overpowering that she had been unable to see some of its aspects clearly: a similar kind of closeness to that intimate attention which - as I described in Chapter One - H.D. dedicated to her 'sea iris' (S.G., p.40), an attention so claustrophobically close that it prevents a sharp focus upon its object.

Given her new perspective H.D. was able to enter her

poems as the arbitrator between her inner world and the outer world of her everyday experience. In this way, 'Hermetic Definition' became a drama of interaction between these worlds, between H.D.'s public persona (the one that asks polite questions on pages 10 and 12) and her secreted self with its mystical questioning, and between both these personalities and the male characters in the poem.

The success of 'Hermetic Definition' is equalled by that of Sea Garden and Trilogy and by a number of poems and sections of poems scattered throughout her career, 'fine things', as Pound foresaw, separated by 'great intervals'. This amounts to a highly distinctive body of work. For despite the continuous technical changes that are evident in H.D.'s poetry, her technique is always recognisably hers, and always recognisably a modification of Imagism made to suit her subject-matter. And this subject-matter, too, is always recognisably the product of H.D.'s life-long preoccupations with the inner world which comprehended Greece, Egypt, and their mythologies, combined with magic, alchemy and angels.

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19. Robert Duncan, 'Rites of Participation' 'Part II', Caterpillar, January, 1968, p.149.
20. Thurley, p.113.
21. R.P. Blackmur, 'The Lesser Satisfactions', Poetry, November, 1932, p.94.
22. Williams, Brueghel, p.58.
23. May Sinclair, 'The Poems of H.D.', Fortnightly Review, March 1, 1927, p.330.
24. Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Mythology, Psychoanalysis and the Occult in the Late Poetry of H.D.' (University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. thesis, 1973), p.103.
25. See, for instance, his 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition.
26. Paige, p.45.
27. Swann, p.10.
28. Wallace Martin and Ian Fletcher, A Catalogue of the Imagist Poets (New York, 1966), p.51.

CHAPTER THREE : NOTES

1. 'Hermonax' (pp.86-87) first published in Poetry, February, 1914, p.164; 'Sitalkas' (p.88) in The New Freewoman, September 1, 1913, p.114; 'Orion Dead' (pp.84-85) first called 'Incantation', in The Egoist, February, 1914, p.55; 'Oread' (p.81) in The Egoist, February, 1914, p.55; 'The Pool' (p.82) in Poetry, March, 1915, pp.266-267; 'Moonrise' (p.83) in Poetry, March, 1915, p.265.
2. These poems were all first published in The Egoist: 'The God' (pp.65-67) in January, 1917, pp.2-3; 'Adonis' (pp.68-69) in January, 1917, p.3; 'Pygmalion' (pp.70-73) in February, 1917, p.21; 'Eurydice' (pp.74-79) in May, 1917, pp.54-55; 'The Tribute' (pp.89-101) in November, 1916, pp.165-167.
3. Ian Hamilton, The Visit (London, 1970), p.19.
4. Aldington, Life, p.101.
5. H.D., 'Marianne Moore', p.118.
6. Bradley quoted by Eliot, p.80.
7. Marianne Moore, Collected Poems (New York, 1951), p.60.
8. Williams, 'Prologue to Kora in Hell', in Selected Essays, p.10.
9. Williams, Paterson.
10. W.H. Auden, 'Foreword' to The Green Wall by James Wright (New Haven, 1957), p.ix.
11. Eliot, pp.65-66.
12. Flint, 'Imagisme', p.199.
13. Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', pp.200-201.
14. Swann, p.114.

15. Philip Larkin, The Whitsun Weddings (London, 1964), pp.21-23.
16. Philip Larkin, The Less Deceived (Hessle, Yorkshire, 1955), p.37.
17. Bid Me to Live, p.162. In this autobiographical novel H.D. was describing scenes from her life at the time of the First World War - that is, at the time when most of her Collected Poems were written.
18. Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason (New York, 1947), p.51.
19. Paige, p.45.
20. Ruggero Bianchi, La Poetica Dell' Imagismo (Milan, 1965), p.137.
21. T.S. Eliot, 'Euripides and Professor Murray', in Selected Essays (London, 1972), p.63.
22. T.E. Hulme, Speculations, p.134.
23. Herbert Read, The Contrary Experience (London, 1963), p.176.
24. Swann, p.10. Quoted in Chapter Two, pp.87-88.
25. Edgar Allan Poe, The Complete Tales and Poems (New York, 1938), p.1017.
26. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works (London and Glasgow, 1948), pp.812-813.
27. Algernon Charles Swinburne, The Complete Works (London, 1925), pp.341-342.
28. Moore, p.104.

10. CHAPTER FOUR : NOTES

1. I have used here the invaluable 'H.D.: A Preliminary Checklist' in Contemporary Literature, Autumn, 1969, pp.632-675.
2. I discuss this theme in H.D.'s poetry at greater length in Chapter Six.
3. Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (London, 1972), refers to H.D.'s 'bisexual miseries' (p.176). Norman N. Holland on the other hand, in 'H.D. and the "Blameless Physician"' in Contemporary Literature, Autumn, 1969, quotes Norman Holmes Pearson's description of H.D. as '"passionately heterosexual"' and points out that 'Freud, in H.D.'s account did not single out anything relating to homosexuality as part of her psychic life, although he had read Palimpsest before meeting H.D. and the autobiographical sections of this novel at least raise the issue' (pp.477-478).
4. Vincent Quinn, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) (New Haven, Connecticut, 1967), p.94.
5. Paige, p.45.
6. Pound, Collected Shorter Poems, p.93.
7. Williams, The Collected Later Poems, p.57.
8. Moore, p.60.
9. Norman Holmes Pearson quotes H.D.'s comment: 'women are individually seeking, as one woman, fragments of the Eternal Lover ...', 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition, pages not numbered.

10. 'The Dancer' first published in Life and Letters To-Day, September, 1935, pp.84-93; 'The Poet' first published in Life and Letters To-Day, December, 1935, pp.80-83; collected as The Poet and the Dancer (San Francisco, 1975).
1. Quin, p.118.
2. Swann, p.118.
3. H.D., Laune Moore, p.118.
4. Williams, Collected Earlier Poems, p.277.
5. Coffman, p.63.
6. René Guénon, L'Influence du Symbolisme Français sur la Poésie Américaine (Paris, 1929), p.281.
7. William Carlos Williams, Kora in Hell: Improvisations (Boston, 1920).
8. H.D., Seed, I (January, 1933), p.2.
9. H.D., What Do I Love? (London, 1944), pp.21-24. A photocopy of What Do I Love? was kindly supplied to me by Yale University Library.
10. H.D.'s 'The Poet' and 'The Dancer' are concerned with the same themes and were recently published together (San Francisco, 1975). Page references in the text, though, are to Life and Letters To-Day - respectively, December, and September, 1935.
11. Times Literary Supplement May 8, 1943, p.226.
12. H.D., What Do I Love?, pp.2-12.
13. Wilfred Owen, 'Preface' to The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen (London, 1963), p.31.
14. Eliot, p.190.

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1. Quinn, p.28.
2. Swann, p.20.
3. H.D., 'Marianne Moore', p.118.
4. Williams, Collected Earlier Poems, p.277.
5. Coffman, p.63.
6. René Taupin, L'Influence du Symbolisme Français sur La Poésie Américaine (Paris, 1929), p.281.
7. William Carlos Williams, Kora in Hell: Improvisations (Boston, 1920).
8. H.D., Seed, 1 (January, 1933), p.2.
9. H.D., What Do I Love? (London, 1944), pp.21-24. A photocopy of What Do I Love? was kindly supplied to me by Yale University Library.
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11. Times Literary Supplement May 8, 1943, p.226.
12. H.D., What Do I Love?, pp.3-12.
13. Wilfred Owen, 'Preface' to The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen (London, 1963), p.31.
14. Eliot, p.190.

15. Eliot, 'The Four Quartets', first published separately in 1935, 1940, 1941, 1942. Later published in The Complete Poems and Plays, pp.169-198. See especially the opening passage (pp.171-172) of 'Burnt Norton' for similarities with the H.D. passage.
16. There is an interesting account of life in wartime London by H.D.'s friend Winifred Bryher in her book The Days of Mars; a memoir 1940-1946 (New York, 1971).
17. Eliot, p.179.
18. Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', p.201. He objects to expressions such as 'dim lands of peony', because of the blurring effect. 'It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete.'
19. C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Collected Works IX Part 1 (London, 1959).

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1. Jon Silkin, 'Introduction' to Poetry of the Committed Individual (London, 1973), p.29.
2. C.G. Jung, 'On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art', first published in English in the British Journal of Medical Psychology, III: 3(1925); reprinted in Collected Works XV (London, 1966), 83.
3. Ezra Pound, Lustra, first published in 1916; republished in Collected Shorter Poems.
4. The theme of transformation is an important one in alchemy, in which H.D. was interested, and which I discuss in Chapter Seven.
5. Eliot, p.179.
6. Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', p.201. He objects to expressions such as 'dim lands of peace', because of the blurring effect. 'It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete.'
7. C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Collected Works IX Part 1 (London, 1959).
8. Twentieth Century Literature, December, 1976, p.402.
9. Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (New York, 1917), p.251.
10. Eric W. White, Images of H.D. (London, 1974), p.18.
11. Norman Holmes Pearson, 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition, pages not numbered.

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1. T.S. Eliot, 'Preface' to his translation of Anabasis, a poem by St.-J. Perse (London, 1930), p.8.
2. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (London, 1913), pp.111-112.
3. Sigmund Freud, An Autobiographical Study (London, 1935), pp.71-72.
4. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London, 1817), p.99.
5. William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford, 1926).
6. C.G. Jung, Memories, Dreams and Reflections (New York, 1973), pp.149-150.
7. Friedman, p.65.
8. Euripides Ion, translated with notes by H.D. (London, 1937), p.123.
9. E.D. Greenwood, 'H.D. and the Problem of Escapism', Essays in Criticism, October, 1971, pp.365-376.
10. H.D., 'A Note on Poetry', p.1288.
11. Alfred Satterthwaite, 'John Cournos and "H.D."', Twentieth Century Literature, December, 1976, p.402.
12. Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (New York, 1917), p.251.
13. Eric W. White, Images of H.D. (London, 1976), p.18.
14. Norman Holmes Pearson, 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition, pages not numbered.

15. C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Collected Works XII (London, 1953).
16. C.G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality (London, 1940). Subsequent unfootnoted references to Jung in this chapter are to this work.
17. Martinus Rulandus (Martin Ruland the Elder), A Lexicon of Alchemy (1612). First Public Edition (London, 1964), p.99.
18. Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (London, 1911), p.172.
19. H.D. quoted in his 'Foreword' to Trilogy, p.ix.
20. Her other use of the pronoun was also in the context of wartime London, in 'May 1943', What Do I Love, pp.6-7.
21. John Scoggan, 'Charles Olson's Imago Mundi, H.D.'s Flowering of the Rod, A Study of the Soul in Recent Poetics', Archai, a double issue, December, 1974, p.27.
22. Norman Holmes Pearson, 'Foreword' to Trilogy, p.v.
23. Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (London, 1959), p.17.
24. Ibid., p.26.
25. Patrick Boylan, Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt (Oxford, 1922).
26. Quoted by Pearson in his 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition.
27. Pearson, 'Foreword' to Trilogy, p.ix.
28. Eliot, pp.169-198.
29. H.H. Watts, 'H.D. and the Age of Myth', Sewanee Review, April, 1948, pp.287-303.
30. Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo and Other Works, Complete Psychological Works XIII (London, 1955), 85.
31. C.G. Jung, 'On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art', p.83.
32. Moore, pp.147-148.

33. Williams, Brueghel, pp.1-14. NOTES.
34. Eliot, pp.59-80.
35. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.83.
36. Ezra Pound, The Cantos (London, 1975).
37. C.G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p.213.
38. Underhill, p.173.
39. Flint, 'Imagisme', p.190.
40. Linda Welshimer Wagner, 'Helen in Egypt: A Culmination', Contemporary Literature, Autumn, 1969, p.523.
41. Josephine Jacobsen, 'H.D. in Greece and Egypt', Poetry, June, 1962, p.186.
42. L.S. Beahm, Conceptions of Reality in Modern American Poetry (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p.34.
43. Thomas Mann, Joseph in Egypt (London, 1938).
44. Jacobsen, p.188.
45. Eliot, p.290.
46. Pearson, 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition.
47. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (London, 1953), p.245.
48. Jean Paul Sartre, 'Introduction' to Genet's Our Lady of the Flowers (London, 1964), p.40.
49. Ezra Pound, Waste Land (London, 1956).
50. Ezra Pound, The Cantos, p.13.
51. H.D., 'The Cinema and the Classics', I, 'Beauty', Close-Up, August, 1927, p.33.
52. C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.482.
53. H.D., 'Helen', first published in The Nation and the Athenaeum, January 27, 1923, p.647.
54. H.D., 'The Cinema and the Classics', II, 'Restraint', Close-Up, July, 1927, p.38.

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1. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.85.
2. C.G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p.213.
3. Underhill, p.173.
4. Flint, 'Imagisme', p.199.
5. Linda Welshimer Wagner, 'Helen in Egypt: A Culmination',
Contemporary Literature, Autumn, 1969, p.523.
6. Josephine Jacobsen, 'H.D. in Greece and Egypt', Poetry,
June, 1962, p.186.
7. L.S. Dembo, Conceptions of Reality in Modern American Poetry
(Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p.34.
8. Thomas Mann, Joseph in Egypt (London, 1938).
9. Jacobsen, p.188.
10. Eliot, p.190.
11. Pearson, 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition.
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13. Jean Paul Sartre, 'Introduction' to Genet's Our Lady of the Flowers (London, 1964), p.40.
14. Ezra Pound, Women of Trachis (London, 1956).
15. Ezra Pound, The Cantos, p.13.
16. H.D., 'The Cinema and the Classics', I, 'Beauty', Close-Up,
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19. H.D., 'The Cinema and the Classics', II, 'Restraint',
Close-Up, July, 1927, p.28.

CHAPTER NINE : NOTES

1. Jacobsen, p.189.
2. Wagner, p.534.
3. Winters, p.51.
4. Fowlie, p.231.
5. Williams, Paterson, p.18.
6. Williams, The Collected Earlier Poems, p.354.
7. Pearson, 'Foreword' to Hermetic Definition.
8. H.D. quoted in the same 'Foreword'.
9. Denise Levertov, 'H.D.: An Appreciation', Poetry (June, 1962), p.182.
10. Gustav Davidson, A Dictionary of Angels, Including the Fallen Angels (New York, 1967), p.289.
11. Robert Ambelain, La Kabbale Pratique (Paris, 1951).
12. Friedman, p.214.
13. Underhill, Mysticism.
14. There is an interesting book called End to Torment, ed. Norman Holmes Pearson and Michael King (New York, 1979), which contains a memoir, by H.D., of this courtship, and which was written in 1956 - four years before 'Hermetic Definition'. It also contains Pound's poems for H.D. written during the period of the courtship.
15. Ruland, p.262.
16. Arthur Weigall, The Paganism in our Christianity (London, 1928).

17. C.G. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, Collected Works XIV
(London, 1963), pp.509-510.
18. Robert Ambelain, Dans L'Ombre Des Cathédrales (Paris, 1939).
19. Williams, Collected Earlier Poems, p.277.
20. Norman N. Holland, "H.D. and the "Blameless Physician"",
p.498.

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